

GREEN BELT NORTH OF
LEAMINGTON SPA

**Landscape and Visual
Appraisal**

August 2012

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Appraisal**

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Section 1 Introduction

- 1.1 Cooper Partnership Limited were commissioned in July 2012 by Old Milverton and Blackdown Joint Parish Council to undertake a landscape and visual appraisal of land to the north and south of Leamington Spa, which has been identified by Warwick District Council as suitable for housing in its Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2012: Potentially Suitable Urban/Edge or Urban Sites, and which are contained within the New Local Plan, Preferred Options, May 2012.
- 1.2 The New Local Plan Preferred Options report considered Green Belt sites against the purposes of Green Belts, and also had an analysis of landscape character from published sources, did not undertake detailed site analysis. Landscape was considered amongst a wide range of factors. Sites to the south were considered in 'A Landscape Character Assessment for Land South of Warwick and Leamington', prepared by Richard Morrish Associates Ltd, February 2009, which included the character analysis work from the Preferred Options report as an appendix. Each of the two reports were produced by different consultants and each concluded that sites should be subject to detailed analysis.
- 1.3 However, there is no overall landscape report that considers sites to the north and south in a consistent manner.
- 1.4 Old Milverton and Blackdown Joint Parish Council are objecting to the proposed allocation of two housing sites in Green Belt to the north of Leamington Spa, and have identified an alternative location to the south of the town based on land identified in Map 2 of the Preferred Options report.
- 1.5 The two northern areas (shown on Plan L1 in this report) lie in the Green Belt located 3km from the centre of Leamington Spa on the north-west edge of the built up area:
 - i the western site is known as Land North of Milverton (SHLAA ref. L07) and is defined to the east by the A452, Sandy Lane (running east - west) to the north, while the western boundary follows a field boundary and the southern boundary follows the edge of allotments and property boundaries; and
 - ii the eastern site is known as Land at Blackdown (SHLAA ref. L48) and straddles a different Sandy Lane (running north - south). The Land at Blackdown's northern boundary follows Stoneleigh Road skirting around Blackdown Hill House and estate, West Hill Road forms the eastern boundary, the A445 Leicester Road forms the southern boundary, and the western boundary dog legs around Humber Farm, North Leamington School and Cranford House grounds following field boundaries.
- 1.6 The site to the south of Leamington Spa, known as Lower Heathcote Farm (SHLAA ref. W07), is approximately 3km south of the centre of Leamington Spa. Harbury Lane forms the northern boundary, which excludes Heathcote Park Home Estate, Oakley Wood Road forms the eastern boundary, Europa Way (A452) forms the western boundary, and the sinuous route of Tach Brook defines the southern boundary (refer to Plan L1).
- 1.7 Landscape and visual matters are separate, but linked issues. Landscape relates to the physical landscape resource, for example, landform, existing vegetation, field boundaries, watercourses and other landscape features. Visual relates to the composition of views.

Section 2 Land North of Leamington Spa

Landscape Planning Designations

- 2.1 Although Green Belt Policy is dealt with in detail by Hunter Page Planning, this report considers the most relevant points to landscape and visual issues by way of background.
- 2.2 The landscape context of the site is shown on Plan L1. The two northern sites lie within the administrative boundary of Warwick District Council within Green Belt extending between the northern edge of Leamington Spa and the southern edge of Kenilworth.
- 2.3 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), that came into force in March 2012 (Department for Communities and Local Government), states in paragraph 80 that the Green Belt serves five purposes:
- **'to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;**
 - **to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;**
 - **to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;**
 - **to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and**
 - **to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.'**
- 2.4 Paragraph 85 states that local planning authorities should:
- **...define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.'**
- 2.5 It goes on to say at paragraph 87 that:
- 'As with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances.'**
- 2.6 While paragraph 89 states:
- 'A local planning authority should regard the construction of new buildings as inappropriate in Green Belt...'**

Landscape Character

- 2.7 The northern sites sit on the eastern boundary of National Landscape Character Area 97: Arden in the Countryside Agency's 'Countryside Character - The Character of England's Natural and Man-made Landscape, Volume 5: West Midlands'. Some of the key characteristics relevant for this area are:
- **'Well-wooded farmland landscape with rolling landform.**
 - **...Contrasting patterns of well-hedged, irregular fields and small woodlands interspersed with larger semi-regular fields on former deer parks and estates...**
 - **...Narrow meandering river valleys with long river meadows...'**
- 2.8 At the district level, the Warwickshire Landscapes Project, set up in 1987 in partnership with Warwickshire County Council and the Countryside Commission, places the site in the Arden Character Type and Arden Parklands Character Area, contained in the Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines. The overall character and qualities of this area are defined as:

'An enclosed, gently rolling landscape defined by woodland edges, parkland and belts of trees.'

2.9 Key features include:

- **'Middle distance views enclosed by woodland edge.**
- **Belts of mature trees associated with estatelands...**
- **Large country houses set in mature parkland...**
- **Thick roadside hedgerows...'**

2.10 Within the section titled 'Strategies and Guidelines', it states that:

'The effect of wooded enclosure... is created by the presence of large ancient woodlands and belts of trees. These create a sequence of linked wooded spaces which define the scale and character of the landscape... The overall management strategy is therefore aimed at creating a more unified landscape by enhancing the wooded character of these areas.'

Landform

2.11 The two northern sites are located to the south of the meandering course of the River Avon.

2.12 The sites are on sloping land, initially rising up from the River Avon to approximately 75m AOD before gently sloping down to the built-up edge of Leamington Spa. There is a gentle mound formed on the inner bend of a meander near the settlement of Old Milverton, with a high point of 70m AOD on Sandy Lane (running east - west). A similar more elongated mound (85m AOD) is located at Blackdown Hill, with its crest close to the B4113 (Stoneleigh Road).

2.13 A small tributary of the River Avon cuts east - west through the area in a small valley and passes under the A452 and the Old Milverton Road.

Significant Vegetation

2.14 The eastern portion of the land at Blackdown consists of rectangular and irregular triangular fields whose boundaries are formed by fragmented hedgerows containing scattered deciduous trees. Clumps of mature deciduous estate trees set in the parkland of West Hill house and Blackdown Hill house lie just outside the site's boundaries.

2.15 Minimal riparian vegetation is present along the tributary of the River Avon that crosses the site east - west forming field boundaries.

2.16 The land at Blackdown site has a significant hedgerow on the southern edge along the A445. The northern boundary is formed by a fragmented hedgerow with intermittent mature deciduous trees, while more substantial mature estate trees are present in the land surrounding the Blackdown Hill estate. A boundary hedgerow containing fragmented tree planting around North Leamington School and Humber Farm enclose the site's south-western edge.

2.17 The north - south Sandy Lane is lined by a gappy native deciduous hedge containing scattered mature deciduous trees.

2.18 The western land north of Milverton site consists of larger more rectilinear fields with fragmented hedgerows containing occasional mature trees. The trimmed relatively uniform hedgerow that follows the east - west Sandy Lane becomes larger and contains more substantial trees after the turn off to Sandy Lane Farm, where the road becomes Milverton Lane and is overhung by mature trees around the Woodland Grange development and the Nuffield Health and Warwickshire Hospital.

2.19 The A452 road corridor (Kenilworth Road) that forms the Milverton site's eastern boundary is

enclosed by substantial hedgerows and overhanging mature deciduous trees. A woodland block surrounds the houses to the west of the A452, but is not within the site's boundary.

- 2.20 Hedgerows, ornamental planting and some mature trees are present in a private property and along the allotments that form Milverton site's southern boundary, with one small triangular block of trees pushing into the site's south-west corner.

Public Rights of Way

- 2.21 A footpath runs north - south through the Blackdown site from West Hill Road to the east of Humber Farm.
- 2.22 A footpath runs east - west through the Milverton site from within the residential area along field boundaries, crossing the railway to join Old Milverton Road.

Registered Historic Parkland, Conservation Areas and Listed Building

- 2.23 There are no listed buildings or Conservation Areas within either of the two northern sites. However, a number of Grade II listed buildings (Blackdown Manor, Blackdown Mill and Barn North of Blackdown Farmhouse) lie approximately 1-2km north of the sites and there are a number of listed buildings approximately 1km west of the site in Old Milverton.
- 2.24 The Registered Park and Gardens of Warwick Castle lie approximately 800m to the west of the site, and there is a Registered Park and Garden at Mallory Court 400m east of the site.

Landscape and Visual Issues

- 2.25 The land at Blackdown is relatively visually contained by substantial hedgerows and trees along its periphery/boundary. The small-scale field pattern within the site and trees and woodland in parklands around buildings off-site add to this enclosed character. The slightly elevated north-east corner of the site, at 78m AOD, is glimpsed from Sandy Lane (running north - south). Surrounding road corridors are generally enclosed by deciduous hedgerows and mature trees blocking most views into the site.
- 2.26 The Milverton site has a similar but more open character, with larger fields bounded by smaller fragmented hedgerows with more open views over the site towards the built-up edge of Leamington Spa through a wooded horizon from the higher land in the west. In contrast to the west, the east of the site is visually contained by mature deciduous trees along road corridors and within the grounds of properties adjacent to the site.
- 2.27 Photographs showing typical views towards the sites from publically accessible viewpoints are contained in Appendix 2 of this report.

Viewpoint 1

- 2.28 Viewpoint 1 is taken from Sandy Lane east of the railway looking east. This is the first view of Leamington Spa after having left Old Milverton. The site's western boundary is not clearly demarked and the vista is crossed by intermittent hedges with occasional mature deciduous trees. Various schools hospital buildings and residential roofs are visible along the built-up edge of Leamington Spa through a wooded horizon over flat fields. The red buildings of Sandy Lane farm in the midground are fringed by trees.

Viewpoint 2

- 2.29 Viewpoint 2 takes in a view from the access road to North Leamington School's playing fields off Sandy Road (north - south) looking north-east over arable fields bounded by substantial hedgerows containing mature trees that restrict views. The flat topography and wooded horizon give a sense of enclosure with no long or middle distance views.

Viewpoint 3

- 2.30 Viewpoint 3 looks south from Sandy Lane (north - south) towards the built-up edge of Leamington Spa over arable fields with North Leamington School and its lighting columns for sports fields in the foreground. Residential roofs on the urban edge of Leamington Spa are glimpsed through a wooded horizon over flat fields.
- 2.31 The mature estate trees of Woodland Grange and Cranford House form a dense woodland block around Blackdown roundabout, visually enclosing views from roads leading to and from it.

Viewpoint 4

- 2.32 Viewpoint 4 is taken from the bridge on Sandy Lane (north - south) looking south-east over gently sloping arable fields towards the A445 (Leicester Lane) and the built-up edge of Leamington Spa. Mature deciduous trees in the fragmented hedgerows form a wooded horizon through which residential roofs and some scattered building facades are glimpsed over rising land, creating a relatively clear distinction between country and urban.

Viewpoint 5

- 2.33 Viewpoint 5 is taken from a gateway off West Hill Road south looking towards the built-up edge of Leamington Spa along the A445 (Leicester Lane), which is lined with a substantial and continuous hedgerow. There are open views over arable fields with residential roofs and scattered building facades visible on the wooded horizon.

Assessment

- 2.34 This land is relatively enclosed by hedgerows and blocks of mature woodland with views from road corridors contained by vegetation, although the parcel south of Sandy Lane (north - south) has more open views over arable land.
- 2.35 The wooded character is a key component in the creation of the area; the sequence of linked wooded spaces define the scale and character.
- 2.36 The relative visual enclosure limits visibility from the local road network. However, the enclosed character and generally small field pattern, combined with the separation provided by the wooded nature of the urban edge, produces a landscape character that is relatively intricate and the intrinsic characteristics of which would be severely damaged by development.

Section 3 Land South of Leamington Spa

Landscape Planning Designations

- 3.1 The landscape context of the site is shown in Plan L1. Lower Heathcote Farm and adjoining land lies within the administrative boundary of Warwick District Council and has no designations.

Landscape Character

- 3.2 The southern site sits at the western boundary of National Landscape Character Area 96: Dunsmore and Feldon in the Countryside Agency's 'Countryside Character - The Character of England's Natural and Man-made Landscape, Volume 5: West Midlands'. Some of the key characteristics of relevance to this area are:

- **'Farmland with large geometric fields divided by straight hedges with many hedgerow trees...**
- **Plateau landscape of open, flat, rather empty character, with long views...**
- **Strong urban influence in some areas.'**

- 3.3 At the district level, the Warwickshire Landscapes Project, set up in 1987 in partnership with Warwickshire County Council and the Countryside Commission, places the site in the Feldon Character Type and Feldon Parklands Character Area, contained in the Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines. This landscape is described as:

'Well wooded estate landscape with many large country houses set in mature parkland.'

- 3.4 Some of the key characteristics of relevance to this area are:

- **'A large scale rolling topography with occasional steep scarp slopes...**
- **A nucleated settlement pattern of small estate villages.'**

- 3.5 In the overall guidelines for the Feldon Parklands Landscape Character Area it is stated that:

'Streamlines and primary hedgelines along roadsides... form a key structural element in this landscape. The visual importance of these features is considerably enhanced by the presence of mature trees. These have the effect of filtering views through the landscape and helping to create a better sense of scale and enclosure.'

- 3.6 The site lies to the west of the Feldon Landscape Character Type: Vale Farmland landscape character area, whose overall character is described as:

'A flat open, hedged landscape with few roads or settlements and characterised by wide views to rising ground on one or more sides.'

A landscape characteristic that the site adheres to.

- 3.7 Some of the key characteristics of relevance for this area are:

- **'Broad flat vales with occasional small rounded hills.**
- **A medium to large scale geometric field pattern...'**

Landform

- 3.8 The site is located on land containing tributaries of the River Avon, whose meandering course lies to the west of the site. The land falls through the site down from the southern edge of Leamington Spa (approximately 68m AOD at the east of Harbury Lane and 63m AOD at the west of Harbury

Lane) to the sinuous path of Tach Brook at approximately 50m AOD. South of Tach Brook, the land rises up to Windmill Hill and the settlement of Bishop's Tachbrook at approximately 75m AOD.

- 3.9 South of Lower Heathcote Farm are two small waterbodies used for fishing, that feed into Tach Brook.

Significant Vegetation

- 3.10 The site consists predominantly of large irregular shaped arable fields bounded by small fragmented hedgerows containing occasional mature deciduous trees.
- 3.11 Relatively substantial, sometimes intermittent, hedgerows containing mature trees run along Harbury Lane, the A452 (Europa Way) and Oakley Wood Road.
- 3.12 Continuous riparian vegetation is present in narrow bands either side of the Tach Brook.
- 3.13 A substantial deciduous woodland belt is located east of the A452 (Europa Way), and a triangular woodland block is located east of the site at the junction with Harbury Lane and Oakley Wood Road.
- 3.14 Clusters of deciduous woodland surround the Heathcote Park Home Estate.

Public Rights of Way

- 3.15 There are no public rights of way in the site. One public footpath runs a quarter of a mile south of the site from the Church in Bishop's Tachbrook west past New House Farm to the A452. Informal footpaths lead to Windmill Hill mound.

Registered Historic Parkland, Conservation Areas and Listed Building

- 3.16 There are no listed buildings or Conservation Areas within the site.
- 3.17 The Grove (1570), The Barracks 14 Yards (mid 17th Century) and other associated structures are Grade II listed buildings, and are located on the site's western boundary to the east of Oakley Wood Road, just outside the site boundary. Further south down the Oakley Wood Road, just outside the site boundary, is the Grade II listed Chapel Hill Farm (17th Century). Approximately 300m south of the site boundary is the Grade II listed New House Farm (early 18th Century).
- 3.18 The settlement of Bishop's Tachbrook contains Windmill Hill and the Grade II listed Leopard Public House.

Landscape and Visual Issues

- 3.19 The gently sloping land is generally screened from roads to the north and west by substantial roadside hedgerows containing deciduous trees and some woodland blocks.
- 3.20 The south-facing sloped site is more visible from higher ground to the south. Large fields with fragmented field boundaries and absence of other significant vegetation provides open views from Bishop's Tachbrook towards the urban edge along Harbury Lane and buildings and church spires of Leamington Spa on the horizon beyond, with only some scattered trees.
- 3.21 Photographs showing typical views towards the site from publically accessible viewpoints are contained in Appendix 2.

Viewpoint 6

- 3.22 Viewpoint 6 is taken from a public footpath to the west Bishop's Tachbrook and illustrates the open views over large fields with fragmented hedgerows up to rising ground at the built edge of Leamington Spa. Roofs and residential buildings on Harbury Lane are visible above a hedge and between scattered trees and woodland blocks. Photographs can only show an approximation of

what the viewer experiences on site; in this case, from the photograph location, clearly visible along the skyline is the built form of the edge of Leamington Spa. We have included a slightly zoomed image as Viewpoint 6b.

Viewpoint 7

- 3.23 Viewpoint 7, taken from the A452 (Banbury road) by a track leading to New House Farm, shows the block of mature woodland that contains views from Europa Way (A452). The agricultural buildings surrounding Lower Heathcote Farm are visible in the arable fields, with the white bungalows/static caravans of Heathcote Park Home Estate and residential houses along Harbury Lane visible on a wooded skyline. The built form and roof line of Leamington Spa are viewed in the far distance.

Assessment

- 3.24 The area to the south is much more open to views across the valley of Tach Brook, although those views tend to be limited to the large landscape cell defined by Harbury Lane, Oakley Wood Road and A452 (Europa Way) and the woodlands and hedgerows along them. That vegetation largely screens views from the road network.
- 3.25 However, the character of the site and its context is that of relatively open and large-scale fields and sparse vegetation cover, with a simple landform, defined to the north by the urban edge of Leamington Spa on the skyline.
- 3.26 As a result, we are of the view that this area has the potential to accommodate development with little damage to landscape character or fabric. Indeed, that view is reinforced by 'Landscape Character Assessment for Land South of Warwick and Leamington', February 2009, page 6, which states that:

'...sensitive development could at least be contained 'naturally' by Tach Brook, and it would be reasonably easy to integrate to existing development.'

- 3.27 Coalescence with Bishop's Tachbrook will need to be avoided by careful design and land use.

Section 4 Conclusions

- 4.1 It is clear from our analysis that although the northern sites are more enclosed and therefore less visible from the surrounding area, they have a much more intricate and intimate character than other studies have implied. They also have a much more complex landscape fabric which would be subject to damage by development, and a mature and well vegetated urban edge into which exiting development has been assimilated.

- 4.2 The land to the south is more widely visible, albeit from within a well defined cell in the wider landscape, but it has a broader, larger scale character with few positive defining features, and a largely open edge to urban development. It is also not in the Green Belt. Its potential for development has been identified in the report 'Landscape Character Assessment for Land South of Warwick and Leamington', February 2009, and development could lead to improvement to the landscape fabric by the provision of new woodland, grassland and increased public access as part of a comprehensive development.

Appendix 1:
Plan L1: Development Sites

Do not scale this drawing.
All dimensions to be checked on site.

LEGEND

-  Warwick District Council preferred options for development sites (Note 1)
-  Parish Council's objection sites (Note 2)
-  Parish Council's alternative/preferred locations (Note 2)
-  Green Belt
-  Photo locations

Notes:
1) Taken from Warwick District Council Local Plan Preferred Options May 2012, Map 4
2) Old Milverton and Blackdown Joint Parish Council

L1



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Job
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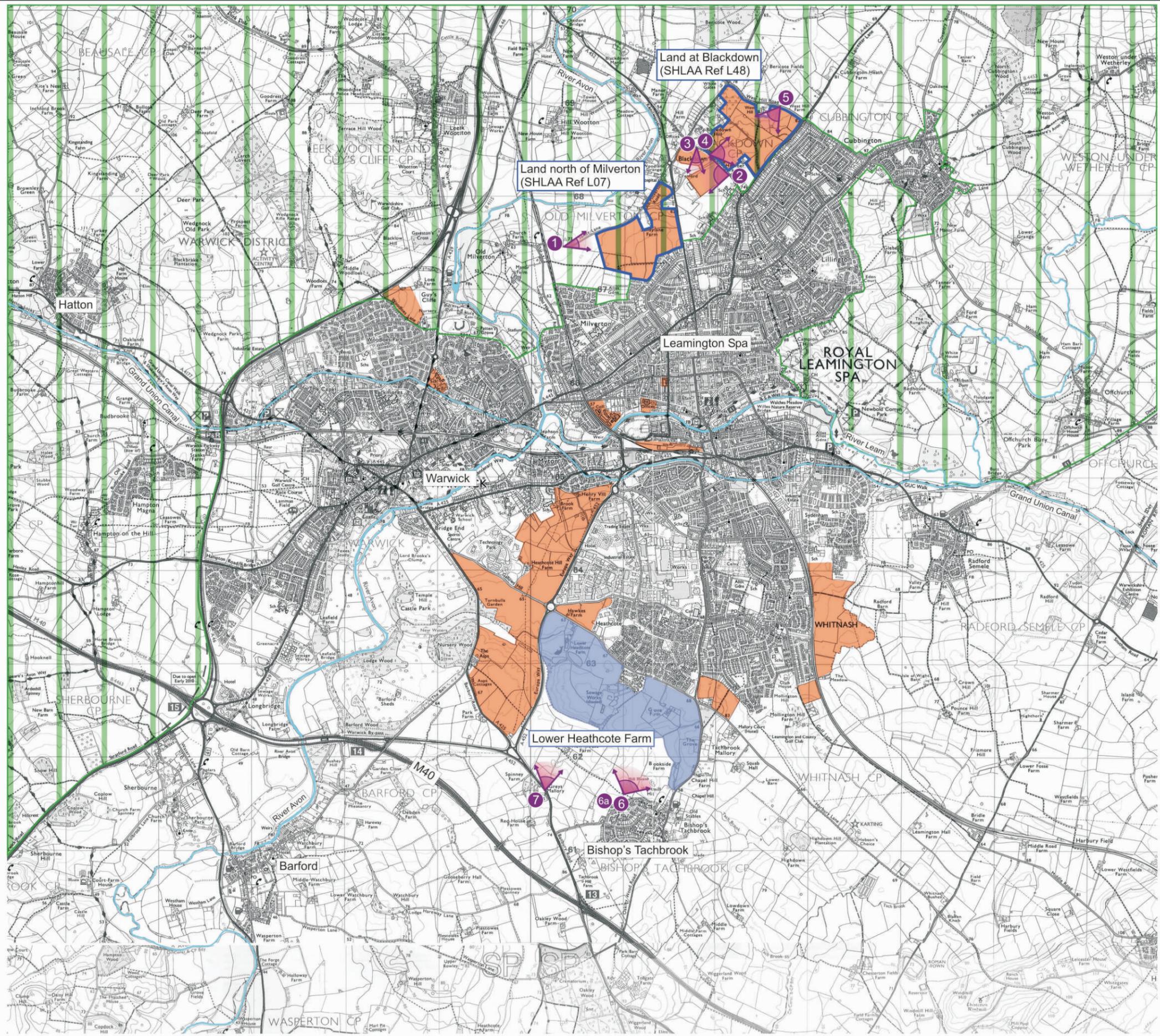
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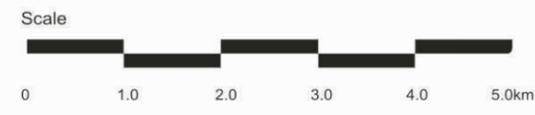
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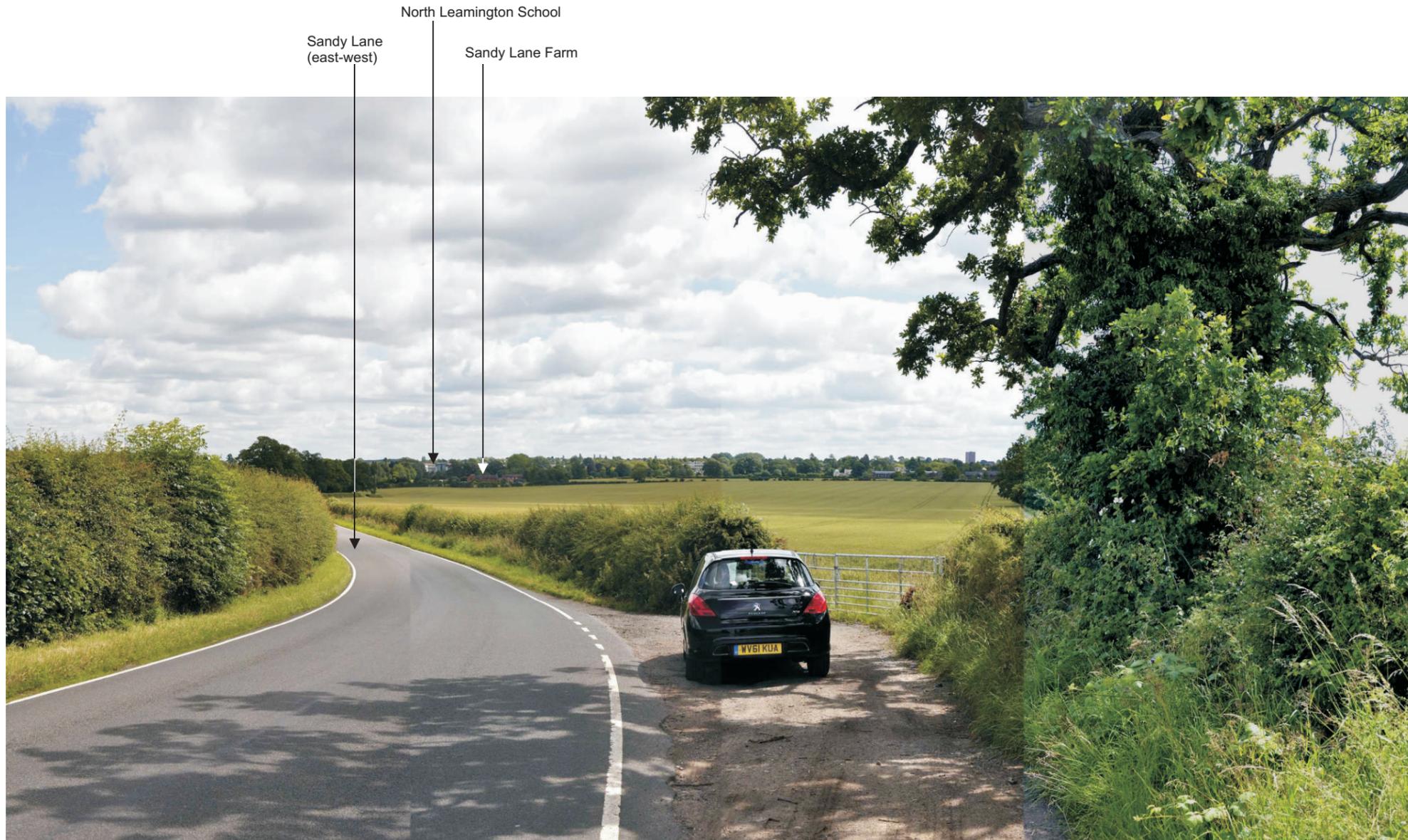
-  LANDSCAPE
-  TOWNSCAPE
-  ENVIRONMENT



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**Appendix 2:
Viewpoints 1-7**



Viewpoint 1: SHLAA REF:L07: Taken from Sandy Lane (east-west), east of Milverton; looking east across the site.

Access road to North
Leamington School playing fields

Mature estate trees around
Cranford House

House on Stoneleigh Road



Viewpoint 2: SHLAA REF:L48: Taken from Sandy Lane (north-south) at North Leamington School playing field access road; looking north-east.



Viewpoint 3: SHLAA REF:L48: Taken from pavement on Sandy Lane (north-south), south of junction with B4113 (Stoneleigh Road); looking south across the site through fragmented hedgerow.

For continuation see sheet no. 03/10

Mature estate trees around Crawford House and Woodland Grange



Viewpoint 3:SHLAA REF:L48: continued.



Viewpoint 4:SHLAA REF:L48: Taken from bridge over stream running under Sandy Lane (north-south); looking south-east across the site.

Houses along the A445
(Leicester Lane)



Viewpoint 5: SHLAA REF:L48: Taken from track gateway off West Hill Road, north of junction with A445 (Leicester Lane); looking south across the site.



Viewpoint 6: Taken from footpath west of Bishop's Tachbrook; looking north over the site.



Viewpoint 6: continued.



Viewpoint 6a: Taken from footpath west of Bishop's Tachbrook; looking north over the site. (Taken with 80mm focal length lens)



Viewpoint 7: Taken from A452 (Banbury Road) at Grey's Mallory; looking north-northeast across the site.

**Appendix 3:
Landscape Character Assessment for Land South of
Warwick and Leamington, Richard Morrish Associates Ltd,
February 2009**

**Landscape Character Assessment
for
Land South of Warwick and Leamington**

February 2009

Prepared for
**Warwick District Council
Riverside House
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Landscape Character Assessment For Land South of Warwick

1.0 Background.

- 1.1 In August 2008, Smith Stuart Reynolds Planning were appointed to undertake an assessment of land around Coventry, Nuneaton, Kenilworth, Warwick and Leamington and to identify whether areas might be suitable for future urban expansion. The study was undertaken jointly on behalf of Coventry City Council, Rugby Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council and Warwick District Council. The land parcels defined were all contained within the West Midlands Green Belt. The study sought to identify land that contributed the least towards the Green Belt and was the least constrained in environmental and physical terms. The data gathered will inform each Council's emerging Core Strategy. Richard Morrish Associates Ltd (Chartered Landscape Architects, and a registered practice of the Landscape Institute) worked with Smith Stuart Reynolds to provide a preliminary landscape assessment of the study areas and to provide an evaluation of the extent to which they contributed towards the planning purposes of Green Belt as set out in PPG2.
- 1.2 The West Midlands Green Belt only extends to areas located north and west of Warwick and Leamington and therefore land south of Warwick and Leamington was not considered in the joint authority Green Belt study.
- 1.3 In December 2008 Richard Morrish Associates (RMA), were appointed to provide a preliminary landscape assessment of land to the south of Warwick and Leamington Spa. The objective was to assess the contribution that these study areas presently make to the existing urban structure of Warwick and Leamington and to evaluate which areas might be considered most important in preserving the character and appearance of the towns in the longer term.
- 1.4 The following report briefly summarises the study methodology and then describes conclusions regarding the study areas. More comprehensive notes on the assessment are provided as Appendix A. As RMA were also involved in the wider Smith Stuart Reynolds study, it has also been possible to make some comparisons with possible development expansion areas identified elsewhere in the District.

2.0 Method of Assessment.

- 2.1 The study has been undertaken using desk-top studies and two field visits undertaken in January and February 2009. Although this time of year has some limitations for landscape assessment, reduced vegetation cover does often allow unrestricted views over the landscape.
- 2.2 The landscape assessment methodology employed has followed advice set out in the published *Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment* (GLVIA) produced by the Landscape Institute in conjunction with the Institute for Environmental Management and Assessment (first published in 1995 and reproduced with amendments in 2002).

- 2.3 Reference has been made to previous landscape studies and plans of the area including:

The Countryside Agency Landscape Character Map of Britain (1999)
The Warwickshire Landscapes Guidelines (1993)
The Warwick District Local Plan (1996–2011 – adopted 2007)

Data has also been gained from reviewing information on ecology, history and national planning designations from websites and other sources. A number of previous studies and statements regarding some of the study areas were also reviewed.

- 2.4 Landscape character areas from the *Warwickshire Landscapes* studies have been mapped as Figure 2.0. A desktop topographical analysis has helped to identify some principle viewsheds in the locality (see Figure 3.0).
- 2.5 In order to avoid lengthy description in this report the findings of the landscape assessment are presented as a tabulation (see Appendix A). This approach provides a simple means of presenting a large data set in a systematic and accessible format. Annotated plans of the sites are also presented in this appendix. More information about local landscape character is provided as Appendix B.

3.0 The Study Areas.

- 3.1 Warwick District Council have identified the following nine study areas: These are identified on Figure 1.0. (Note that there is no 'Area I' to avoid confusion on plans.)

Site A: Land adjacent Stratford Road (approximately 5 hectares)
 Site B: Home Farm, Longbridge (approximately 30 hectares)
 Site C: Europa Way triangle (approximately 70 hectares)
 Site D: Land south of Gallows Hill (approximately 130 hectares)
 Site E: Land south of Harbury Lane (approximately 130 hectares)
 Site F: Land at Woodside Farm (approximately 9 hectares)
 Site G: Land east of Sydenham (approximately 50 hectares)
 Site H: Land south of Sydenham (approximately 45 hectares)
 Site J: Land south of Fieldgate Lane (approximately 4 hectares)

4.0 The Information Gathered.

- 4.1 The tabulated information included in Appendix A provides the following data.
- A general description of the study area and its boundaries.
 - A description of the principal landscape character types and landscape components. (Refer also to Figure 2.0.)
 - General remarks about visual issues. Consideration of the extent to which a development on the site might be seen from other localities.
 - Any historical or cultural information about the site that has been available through brief internet research. We recommend further work is undertaken. The *Warwickshire Historic Landscape Characterisation Project* may assist this research when published (see Appendix B).

- Any ecological data that has been available after brief internet research and the field visit. (A Habitat Biodiversity Audit undertaken on behalf of Warwickshire County Council has been reviewed in which potential SINC sites were identified. These have been mapped – see Appendix A.)
- A general statement on landscape condition.
- A summary of principal planning policy constraints that have been identified.
- Conclusions.

5.0 Summary of Conclusions.

- 5.1 Warwick and Leamington Spa have highly-valued historic cores and Warwick Castle and the associated Castle Park have national heritage significance. Protecting the setting of these features must be considered a principal goal of future development planning in the locality. In addition, and particularly as the towns are important tourist destinations, the quality of approaches to the town should be considered in all development planning. A combination of protection of landscape assets and enhancement or removal of landscape detractors should be considered in strategic planning.
- 5.2 The protection of the River Avon corridor and the river environment must also be given high priority. Seven of the nine study areas are directly related to tributaries of the Avon or Leam and will therefore influence catchment waters. Sustainable development should ensure that any urban expansion does not degrade the Avon environment.
- 5.3 The then Countryside Agency working with Groundwork in 2005 developed a blueprint for successful, sustainable, urban fringe landscapes, some aspects of which might be considered in future planning around Warwick and Leamington. Their recommendations included:
- Creating ‘bridges’ to the countryside for residents by developing an excellent network of off-road paths that avoid barriers such as major roads. This is important for health, recreation and sustainable transport planning.
 - Providing a cultural legacy where the history of the locality is protected and enshrined in the landscape.
 - Creating a nature reserve – where ecological corridors and habitat islands are integrated into settlement ensuring a rich biodiversity and providing many other educational and social benefits.
 - Ensuring a living landscape – where remaining areas of agricultural land are still viable and productive, where woodland and public open space might also be managed for wildlife and/or renewable products, and where renewable energy and sustainable design requirements are integrated into the urban structure.
- 5.4 We summarise our conclusions on the nine study sites as follow:

Study Area	Relative value as the setting for Warwick and Leamington	Comments
A: Land off Stratford Road	Low to Medium	These paddocks are unlikely to be possible to retain as viable agricultural land in an increasingly urban context. Good quality development here could enhance an important approach to Warwick. However constraints include Gog Brook and flood risk, the <i>cordon sanitaire</i> , access to Leafield Farm and proximity to Castle Park.
B: Home Farm, Longbridge	Low to Medium	We would score this area as ‘Low’ at the north end, where well-considered development that met with the site constraints could enhance the approach to Warwick. However at the south end we feel the meadows and farmland setting are important in views of Warwick from the M40. Development that retained this setting would be beneficial.
C: Europa Way Triangle	Low to Medium	Although this wedge of undeveloped land has been a strategic break between ‘Warwick’ and ‘Leamington’, we feel its value to the setting of the towns has been greatly diminished by surrounding land use. We feel that carefully considered

		development here could enhance the setting of the towns and provide a better transition from rural to urban land.
Site D: Land south of Gallows Hill	High	This is generally an area of well maintained agricultural land that is important to the setting of Castle Park and prominent in approaches to Warwick. We feel it should be safeguarded from development. However the former landfill site at Turnbull's Gardens is an anomaly in the landscape that needs additional consideration.
Site E: Land south of Harbury Lane	Medium to High	This area is on a ridge of higher ground that is prominent in some views from the south. Development here would be a relatively prominent urban extension. However sensitive development could at least be contained 'naturally' by Tach Brook, and it would be reasonably easy to integrate to existing development.
Site F: Land at Woodside Farm	Medium	Although this site is partly on high ground, if sensitively developed it could be a relatively discreet urban extension.
Site G: Land east of Sydenham	Medium to High	We feel that retention of this 'green wedge' is essential for the character of Radford – but that small-scale urban expansion on the Radford boundary could be achieved without harming the overall landscape setting. Sensitive design will be essential.
Site H: Land south of Sydenham	Medium	The railway line makes a definitive edge to Whitnash and there are constraints for development of this area. However, as it is relatively hidden from the main towns and their approaches, in theory this area could be developed without significant harm to the landscape setting of Warwick or Leamington.
Site J: Land south of Fieldgate Lane	Medium	This small site is well contained and development here would not have a major impact on the overall setting of the towns. However it has some historical value and could set a precedent for further expansion south.

5.5 Eleven land parcels lying to the north of Warwick and Leamington and within the West Midlands Green Belt were defined in the *Joint Green Belt Study (JGB)*, prepared by Smith Stuart Reynolds and published in January 2009. The scoring by Smith Stuart Reynolds is not directly comparable to that described above as additional criteria were defined in that report. However, for general comparison, the JGB scores are given below – with notes to describe some landscape considerations. (See also Appendix C for a plan of the land parcels.)

Study Area Reference	'Landscape Value' from JGB Study	Comments
WL1 (Land south of Hampton)	High	Generally low lying Avon terrace – prominent in views from major roads and beyond present settlement envelope.
WL2 (Land east of Hampton Magna)	High	Generally quite prominent land, intervisible with historic Warwick and beyond the present settlement envelope. However in the analysis for the JGB study it was considered that there might be scope to enhance the appearance of Hampton Magna with small-scale urban expansion. It was also concluded that there might be scope to enhance the landscape around Warwick Parkway Station, and land to the north and south of the Grand Union Canal with sensitively designed

		mixed-use development. It seemed likely that this could be undertaken without impacting on the setting of the historic core.
WL3 (Northwest of A46)	High	Note above for area around Grand Union Canal.
WL4 (Northwest of A46)	High	These areas function well as Green Belt. It was concluded that 'jumping' the A46 with development would be problematic.
WL5 a / b (Milverton / Avon)	High	Important Avon green wedge with many other Green Belt functions.
WL6 a / b (Sandy Lane / Blackdown)	Medium	The existing settlement edge is quite well defined but there are areas of degraded land along Sandy Lane and possible development opportunities around Blackdown.
WL7 (Blackdown / West Hill)	High	Well preserved rural landscape on higher ground, opposite an established settlement boundary.
WL8 (North of Cubbington)	High	As above.
WL9 (East of Cubbington)	High	As above.
WL 10 (Hill Farm, Lillington)	Medium	It was concluded that urban expansion on the higher ground between Lillington and Cubbington might be possible. Although this would be potentially prominent and there would be constraints with the valley catchment below, it was considered that sensitive design could help mitigate the existing urban edge – which is considered harsh and already prominent.
WL11 (Newbold Comyn)	High	Important recreational 'wedge' between the River Leam and Campion Hills.

- 5.5 We conclude by stressing the importance of promoting high quality sustainable development for any large urban expansion. This will help to ensure the protection of the character and appearance of Warwick and Leamington.
- 5.6 We would recommend that release of land for urban expansion in future is linked to site-specific design guidance and that innovative and distinctive architecture and site master planning is encouraged. New building regulations and the Code for Sustainable Homes should ensure that the technical requirements for good quality development are followed.
- 5.7 We also urge the adoption of policy that will support and sustain better landscape infrastructure within and around development and that the ongoing establishment and management of these areas is enshrined within development control. We feel that emphasis is generally placed on the 'day one' appearance of landscape schemes and not on their long-term management and development. We feel that responsible developers may in fact welcome the concept of spreading landscape implementation costs over a longer period. There is also great potential for community involvement in landscape management works and this can be a catalyst for building good community relations and strong civic pride. Social development and community building should be considered an essential part of sustainable design.

Figures:

Figure 01 Study Areas.

Figure 02 Landscape Character Types

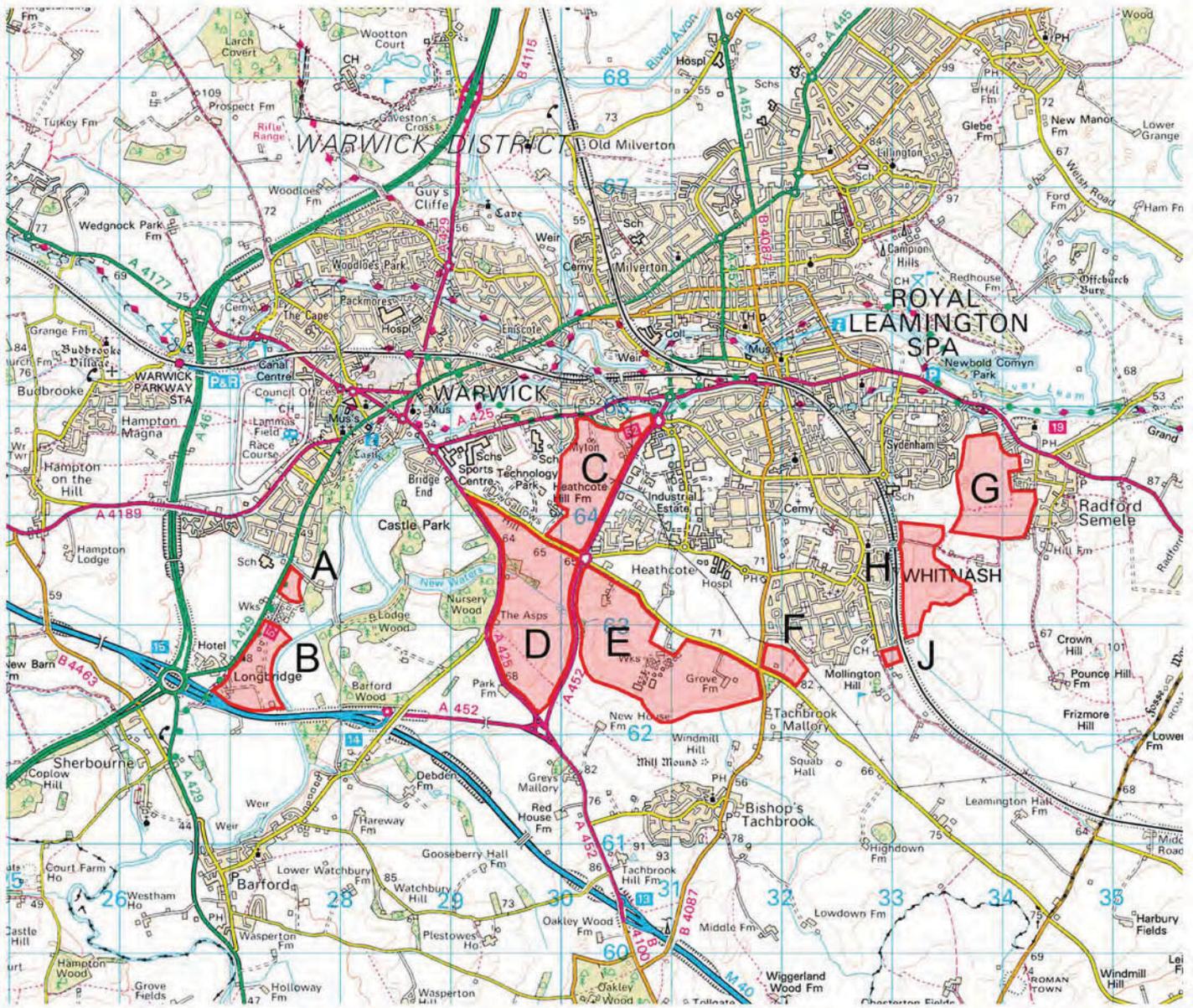
Figure 03 Topographical Analysis

Appendices:

Appendix A: Tabulated assessment for nine study areas
1:10,000 Annotated plans of all Study Areas
Annotated photographs from each study site

Appendix B: Additional information on Landscape Character

Appendix C: Plan – Warwick Land Parcels from the Joint Green Belt Study (Jan 2009)

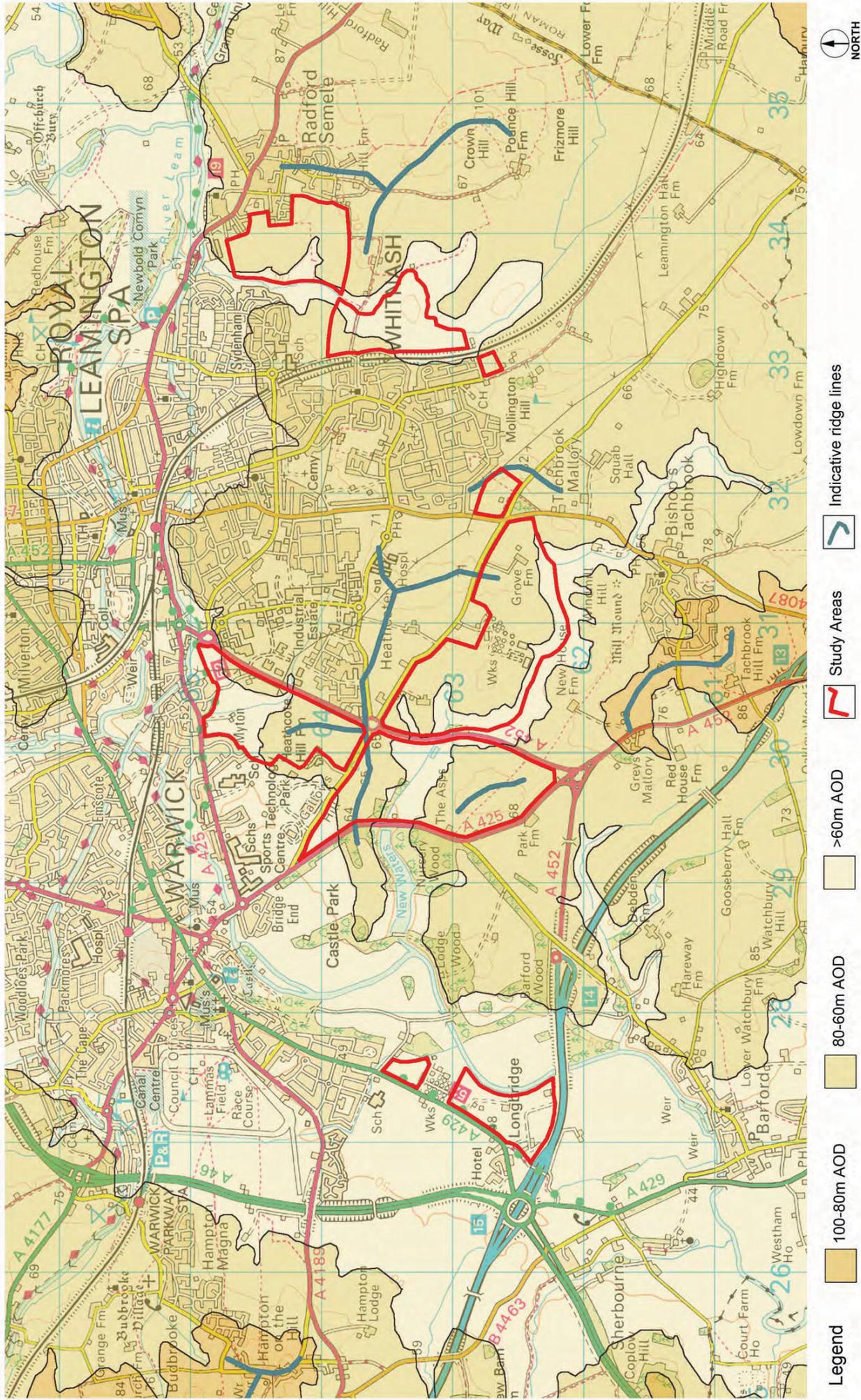


- A - Land at Stratford Road
- B - Home Farm, Longbridge
- C - Europa Way triangle.
- D - Land south of Gallows Hill
- E - Land south of Harbury Lane
- F - Land at Woodside Farm
- G - Land east of Sydenham
- H - Land south of Sydenham
- J - Land south of Fieldgate Lane



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South Warwick Landscape Study.
 Figure 1.0 - Location Plan



South Warwick Landscape Study.
Figure 3.0 - Topographic Analysis

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