

Assessment of the Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

October 2023



LEPUS CONSULTING
LANDSCAPE, ECOLOGY, PLANNING & URBAN SUSTAINABILITY

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Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

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Front cover: View across Portway Hill towards radio transmission towers at Turner's Hill (photo taken by Lepus Consulting).

About this report & notes for readers

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This assessment is based on the best available published information at the time of writing. No attempt to verify secondary data sources has been made and they have been assumed to be accurate as published. This report was prepared between May and October 2023 and is subject to and limited by the information available during this time.

This report has been produced to inform the Sandwell Local Plan.

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Acronyms & Abbreviations

AHHLV	Area of High Historic Landscape Value
ALC	Agricultural Land Classification
APA	Archaeological Priority Area
BBCWT	Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust
BNG	Biodiversity Net Gain
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England
DLUHC	Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
GI	Green Infrastructure
ha	Hectare
LGS	Local Green Space
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LNRN	Local Nature Recovery Network
LPA	Local Planning Authority
LVIA	Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment
NCA	National Character Area
NNR	National Nature Reserve
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
NRN	Nature Recovery Network
OS	Ordnance Survey
PPG	Planning Practice Guidance
PRoW	Public Rights of Way
PSI	Potential Sites of Importance
RHLP	Rowley Hills Local Plan
RHSOS	Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space
SAC	Special Area of Conservation
SADDPD	Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan Document
SINC	Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation
SLINC	Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation
SLP	Sandwell Local Plan
SOS	Strategic Open Space
SPA	Special Protection Area
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
TGN	Technical Guidance Note

Executive Summary

About this report

- E1. Lepus Consulting Ltd has been appointed by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) to undertake an assessment of the Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space (RHSOS) designation. Lepus Consulting Ltd is an environmental planning practice based in Gloucestershire.
- E2. The main objective of the study is to provide a robust evidence base to be able to continue the protection of the RHSOS through a designation in the Sandwell Local Plan (SLP). The Rowley Hills are mostly located in the SLP area (with a small part in Dudley) and comprise four hills; Turner's Hill (the highest point at 271m), Bury Hill, Portway Hill and Darby's Hill. The hills cover an area of approximately 135ha and form a prominent and distinctive landscape feature that can be seen from many parts of the Black Country.
- E3. The RHSOS designation is located within the Rowley Hills. The RHSOS forms an unbroken open space and wildlife corridor from Bumble Hole, Dudley across the top of the Rowley Hills to Wolverhampton Road, Sandwell. The RHSOS was originally identified and designated through the 1987 Rowley Hills District Plan.

Landscape Character Assessment

What is Landscape Character?

- E4. Landscape character may be defined as a distinct and recognisable pattern of elements, or characteristics, in the landscape that make one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse.¹

What is Landscape Character Assessment?

- E5. Landscape Character Assessment is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive. This process results in the production of a Landscape Character Assessment.²

What does this Landscape Character Assessment contain?

- E6. The Landscape Character Assessment divides the RHSOS into Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). Four Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) have been identified in the RHSOS following a baseline study and site visits to analyse landscape character:

¹ Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Date Accessed: 19/07/23]

² Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Date Accessed: 19/07/23]

- LCA 1 – Warrens Hall Park;
- LCA 2 – Warrens Hall Farm;
- LCA 3 – Dudley Golf Club and Turner’s Hill; and
- LCA 4 – Portway Road SOS and Bury Hill Park.

E7. Each LCA includes a description of natural, cultural, social, perceptual and aesthetic qualities and recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness.

Landscape Capacity Assessment

What is Landscape Capacity?

E8. Landscape capacity is the degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character, or overall change of landscape character type. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed.³

What is Landscape Capacity Assessment?

E9. A landscape capacity assessment is most commonly used to:

- Explore whether or not a landscape can accommodate a specified development without significant change to its character or amenity;
- Find the best place to accommodate a specified development with the least disruption to the landscape character; and
- Identify which areas are likely to be most sensitive to changes brought about by introducing a specified development into the landscape.⁴

What does this Landscape Capacity Assessment contain?

E10. A landscape capacity assessment has been undertaken for each LCA to consider whether there is any scope for accommodating residential or economic development in the RHSOS. Landscape capacity is determined by combining landscape sensitivity with landscape value. Landscape capacity is rated according to five orders or magnitude as follows: Low, Medium/Low, Medium, Medium/High and High.

E11. The landscape capacity assessment found that landscape capacity is low at LCA 1, LCA 2 LCA 3 and LCA 4. Areas classified as low capacity mean that the landscape could not accommodate areas of new development without a significant and adverse impact on the landscape character and visual amenity. Occasional very small scale development may be possible providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and surrounding landscape character.

³ Scottish Natural Heritage (2017) A Guide to Commissioning a Landscape Capacity Study.

⁴ Scottish Natural Heritage (2017) A Guide to Commissioning a Landscape Capacity Study.

Visual characteristics

- E12. Panoramic photographs taken from publicly accessible locations have been prepared to illustrate the range of visual characteristics of the Rowley Hills. They offer a range of views taking in several different aspects around the area of search. **Appendix A** provides details of the viewpoint locations and the panoramic photographs, representing the view at each location, can be found in **Appendix B**.

Valued qualities

- E13. In 2021 the Landscape Institute published guidance to inform the assessment of landscape value for areas lying outside national landscape designations. The indicators set out in the LI guidance have been used to inform this assessment of the value of the special qualities of the study area, as described in **Chapter 14**. In summary, the following valued qualities have been identified:

- **Rich geological and industrial history**, evidenced by rock exposures and residual landscape morphology associated with former industries notably former coal mining and quarrying of Rowley Ragstone, recognised through three UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark Geosites.
- A **range of habitats** to support biodiversity including deciduous woodlands, good quality semi-improved grasslands, scrub, hedgerows, ponds and canals.
- **Biodiversity designations** that contribute to landscape character including Warrens Hall Country Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR), three Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), five Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINCs) and five Potential Sites of Importance (PSIs).
- The setting to designated **heritage assets**, including three Grade II Listed Buildings, Cobb's Engine House Scheduled Monument, Windmill End Conservation Area, Warrens Hall Nature Reserve and Bury Hill Park Areas of High Historic Landscape Value (AHHLV) and an Archaeological Priority Area (APA).
- The Rowley Hills form a **prominent and distinctive upland landscape feature** on the horizon of the Black Country.
- The open and undeveloped **skyline** which rises above the surrounding urban areas.
- **Multi-functional green infrastructure** assets such as broadleaved woodlands, grasslands and soils that provide a range of ecosystem services for biodiversity, carbon storage and recreation.
- **Expansive panoramic views** across the Black Country and beyond.
- **Highly valued open spaces** for informal recreation. The network of PRow provides opportunities to benefit local residents' physical health and well-being and providing opportunities for contact with nature within an otherwise heavily built-up area.
- **Relative tranquillity** within enclosed and wooded parts of the designation particularly in the west.

- E14. This assessment has found that the landscape of the RHSOS is highly valuable under the majority of the indicators of landscape value set out in the Landscape Institute TGN 2021 guidelines. The identified special qualities of the landscape should be protected and enhanced for their value to the current and future residents of the local area.

Biodiversity Net Gain

- E15. A separate report has been prepared by Lepus Consulting for SMBC which has identified council-owned land and sites within Sandwell with a view to establishing their suitability for use as receptor sites for ecological and habitat creation projects relating to the delivery of BNG. One potential habitat bank has been identified within the RHSOS: Warrens Hall Park.

Green infrastructure and climate change

- E16. This report has identified numerous multi-functional green infrastructure assets within the RHSOS such as broadleaved woodlands, grasslands and soils that provide a range of ecosystem services for biodiversity, carbon storage and recreation. This report also includes an assessment of the green spaces within the RHSOS and their contribution to Natural England's Accessible Greenspace Standard.

Options for protection

- E17. To ensure development within the RHSOS is strictly controlled, this report reviews the suitability and effectiveness of the following options for protection.

Green Belt

- E18. Whilst the RHSOS separates neighbouring towns from merging into one another to an extent, the designation is not located on the fringes of the wider Birmingham and Black Country urban area, and therefore does not prevent sprawl or encroachment of built-up areas into the surrounding open countryside. For these reasons, this study does not recommend Green Belt as a suitable option for protection for the RHSOS.

Local Green Space

- E19. The RHSOS designation is in close proximity to the community it serves and holds a particular local significance because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, relative tranquillity and richness of wildlife habitats. Whilst advice from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) states that there are 'no hard or fast rules about how big a LGS can be', the RHSOS is likely to be considered to be an 'extensive tract of land' based on its relatively large size. Due to concerns about the size of the RHSOS, this study does not recommend LGS as a suitable option for protection for the RHSOS.

Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space Policy

- E20. To date, SMBC has been successful in preventing inappropriate development from occurring, which has been helped by current planning policy (SAD policy EOS3). Continuing the protection of the RHSOS through a revised policy in the SLP is highly recommended. A revised policy recommendation for the RHSOS is presented in this report. This revised policy recommendation is informed by the findings of the landscape character assessment and landscape evaluation in this report.

Article 4 Direction at Portway Hill

- E21. The Article 4 Direction is located at the highest western extent Portway Hill on a SINC (Portway Hill Open Space SINC) and wildlife corridor. Development at this open and exposed location would potentially impact on the highly valued open and undeveloped skyline and the expansive panoramic views outwards across the Black Country and beyond. For these reasons, the boundary of the Article 4 Direction is considered to still be suitable and should be retained to preserve the openness of the area by preventing any intrusive development.

Existing designations

- E22. A number of biodiversity designations, historic environment and heritage assets and geological designations currently exist either fully or partially within the boundary of the RHSOS designation. These are:

- Warrens Hall Country Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR);
- Three Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs);
- Five Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINCs);
- Five Potential Sites of Importance (PSIs);
- Three Grade II Listed Buildings;
- Cobb's Engine House Scheduled Monument;
- Windmill End Conservation Area;
- Two Areas of High Historic Landscape Value (AHHLV);
- One Archaeological Priority Area (APA); and
- Three UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark Geosites.

1 Introduction

1.1 Appointment and scope of work

1.1.1 Lepus Consulting Ltd has been appointed by the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) to undertake an assessment of the Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space (RHSOS) designation. This assessment will be used as part of the evidence which supports the emerging Sandwell Local Plan (SLP).

1.1.2 Lepus Consulting Ltd is an environmental planning practice specialising in landscape and ecological impact assessment.

1.2 Purpose of this report

1.2.1 A review of the SLP has identified a shortfall in housing and employment land. As a result, areas of open space are under increasing pressure to be reviewed to see if they are surplus to requirement and available for development.

1.2.2 Evidence suggests that there is pressure for additional development on the Rowley Hills. To date, SMBC has been successful in preventing inappropriate development from occurring, which has been helped by current planning policy (SAD policy EOS3), formal recognition of the ecological and geological value of the area and previously through the adoption of the Rowley Hills District Plan in 1987. This sought to maintain and improve the area as open space for recreation and to protect the skyline from inappropriate and intrusive development.

1.2.3 The main objective of the study is to provide a robust evidence base to be able to continue the protection of the RHSOS through a designation in the SLP.

1.2.4 The aims of this study are to:

- Inform the local plan and provide evidence for landscape and open space policy or policies;
- Identify the special qualities of the Rowley Hills to help ensure that new development proposals are of an appropriate design and complements the existing local character;
- Be presented in a way that enables developers and their architects to understand the local character;
- Be useful for development management officers to use when making decisions affecting planning applications;
- Help inform green infrastructure planning and development;
- Demonstrate how benefits can be derived from nature including climate change mitigation and adaptation; and
- Review opportunities for habitat banking.

1.3 Geographic context of the Rowley Hills

1.3.1 The Rowley Hills are mostly located in the SLP area (with a small part in Dudley) and comprise four hills; Turner's Hill (the highest point at 271m), Bury Hill, Portway Hill and Darby's Hill. The hills cover an area of approximately 135ha and form a prominent and distinctive landscape feature that can be seen from many parts of the Black Country. The hills form the central section of an irregular ridge that extends from Sedgley through Dudley and on to Frankley. The Rowley Hills also form an important part of the UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark designation and contain sites of geological importance and interest. Traditionally the hills have been the location for both stone quarrying and coal mining but are now mostly used for informal recreation.

1.4 The Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space

1.4.1 The RHSOS designation is located within the Rowley Hills. The RHSOS forms an unbroken open space and wildlife corridor from Bumble Hole, Dudley across the top of the Rowley Hills to Wolverhampton Road, Sandwell (see **Figure 1.1** and **1.2**). The RHSOS was originally identified and designated through the 1987 Rowley Hills District Plan. It was a principal objective of this Local Plan to create and protect a continuous band of open space linking Bury Hill Park on the north east boundary to Warrens Hall Park on the south west. It also sought to provide recreational opportunities within areas of natural landscape.

1.5 Structure of this report

1.5.1 The following summarises the structure of this report:

- **Chapter 2** – Policy context
- **Chapter 3** – Other plans and policies
- **Chapter 4** – Landscape Character Assessment Methodology
- **Chapter 5** – Landscape Capacity Assessment Methodology
- **Chapter 6** – Existing Landscape Character Assessments
- **Chapter 7** – Landscape Character of the Rowley Hills
- **Chapters 8 to 12** – Landscape Character Areas
- **Chapter 13** – Visual characteristics
- **Chapter 14** – Landscape value of the RHSOS designation
- **Chapter 15** – Biodiversity Net Gain
- **Chapter 16** – Green infrastructure and climate change
- **Chapter 17** – Options for protection
- **Chapter 18** – Summary and conclusions

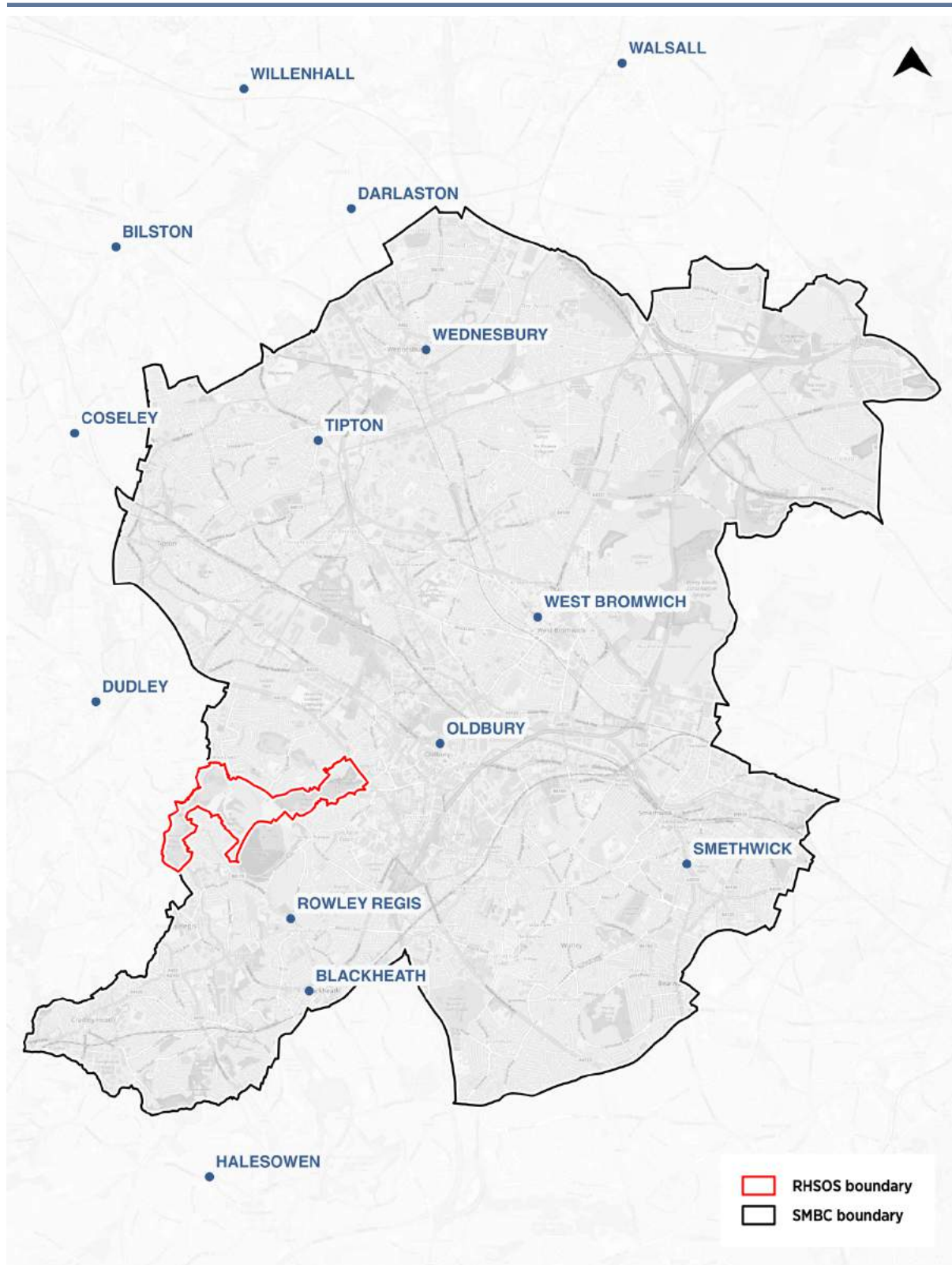


Figure 1.1: RHSOS location map

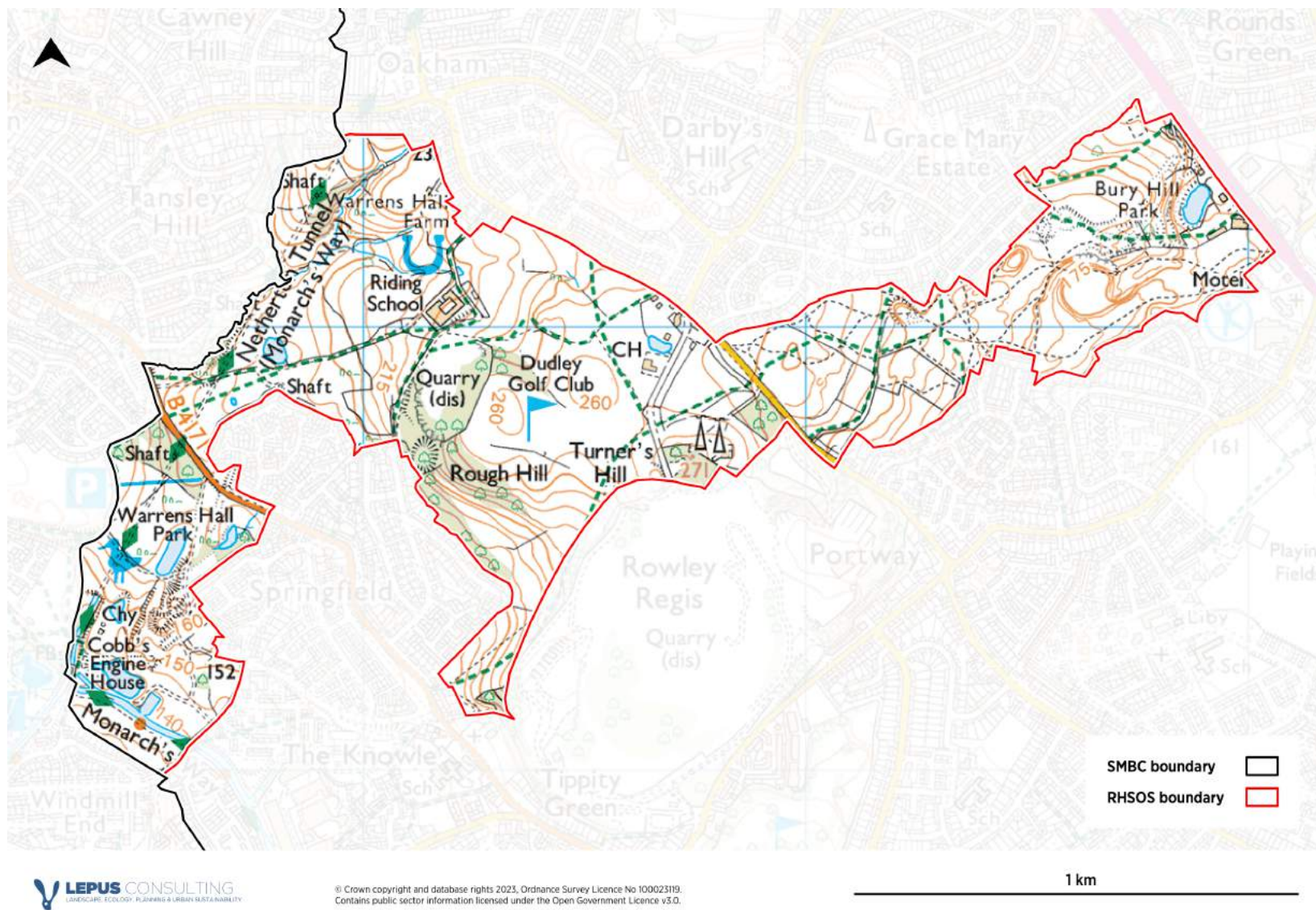


Figure 1.2: RHSOS boundary (New OS License No AC0000824500)

2 Policy context

2.1 National Planning Policy Framework

2.1.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)⁵ published in 2023 acts as guidance for local planning authorities, both in plan preparation and making decisions about planning applications. The environmental objective of the NPPF is:

“to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy”.

2.1.2 In relation to conserving and enhancing the natural environment, paragraph 174 of the 2023 NPPF states:

“Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);

b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services - including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.”

2.1.3 In relation to open space and recreation, Paragraph 98 of the 2023 NPPF states:

“Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities, and can deliver wider benefits for nature and support efforts to address climate change. Planning policies should be based on robust and up-to-date assessments of the need for open space, sport and recreation facilities (including quantitative or qualitative deficits or surpluses) and opportunities for new provision. Information gained from the assessments should be used to determine what open space, sport and recreational provision is needed, which plans should then seek to accommodate.”

⁵ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date Accessed: 14/09/23]

2.1.4 Paragraph 99 states:

“Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing fields, should not be built on unless:

a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or

b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or

c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.”

2.2 Planning Practice Guidance

2.2.1 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on landscape can be found in the Natural Environment category⁶. It states that:

“The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside.

Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary. The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully.

2.3 Rowley Hills Local Plan (1987)

2.3.1 In 1987, the Rowley Hills Local Plan (RHLP)⁷ was prepared by SMBC with inputs from the former West Midlands County Council on those issues considered to be of strategic significance (see the front cover in **Figure 2.1**). The boundary of the RHLP is presented in **Figure 2.2**, the Rowley Hills are located in the centre of the area.

⁶ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2019) Planning Practice Guidance. Natural Environment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/natural-environment#landscape> [Accessed 21/07/23]

⁷ The Borough Council of Sandwell (1987) Rowley Hills District Plan. Proposals Map and Written Statement

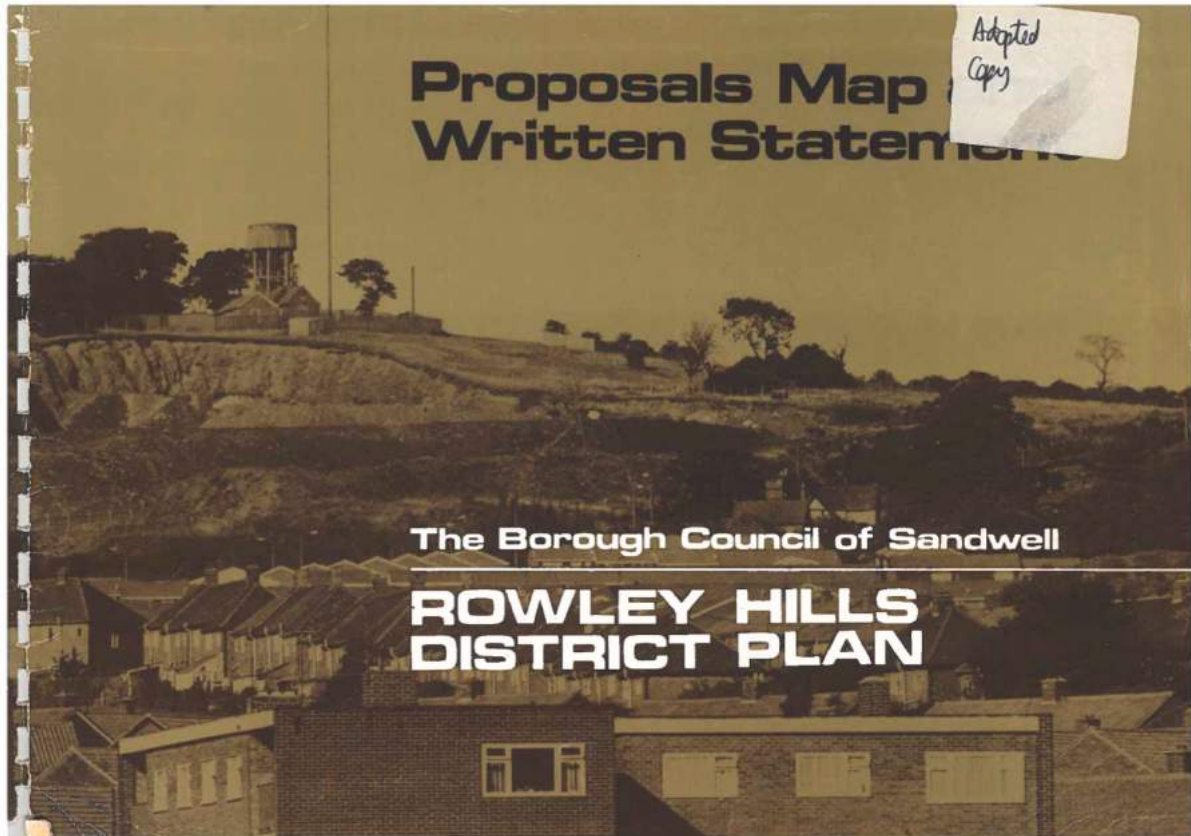


Figure 2.1: Rowley Hills District Plan front cover

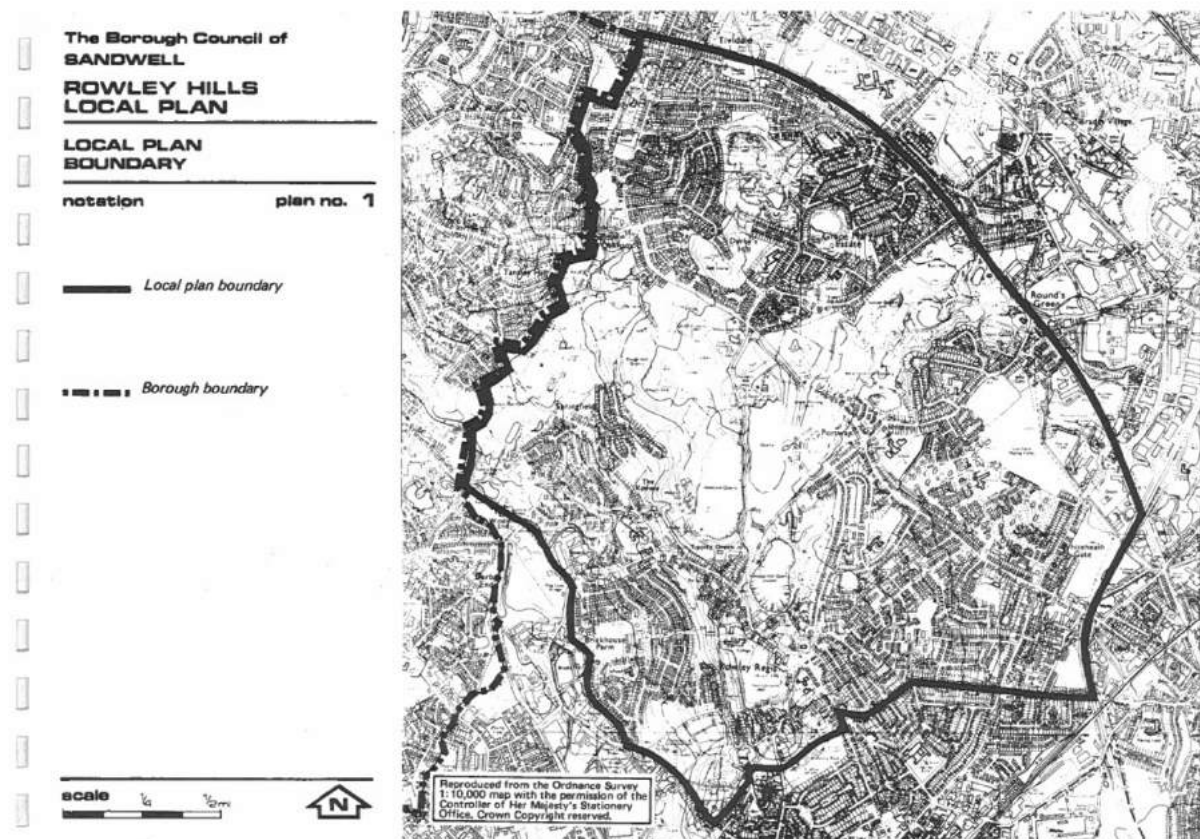


Figure 2.2: Rowley Hills Local Plan boundary

- 2.3.2 The purpose of the RHP was to guide development and land use decisions in the RHP area generally over the following 10 years, and indicate any of SMBC's intentions beyond this period which may affect development within it.
- 2.3.3 The RHP states that the Secretary of State's modifications to the Structure Plan for this area accepted a reduction in the ultimate number of additional houses to be provided in the Rowley Hills, to 1,400 dwellings and reiterated the Panel's recommendations concerning location. This recommendation urged that particular attention be paid to the conservation of the open skyline and the maximisation of opportunities for housing development north east of Darby's Hill.
- 2.3.4 In accordance with these recommendations, the RHP states that SMBC's proposals for housing concentrate on those sites which it considers have the minimal impact on the provision of open space and the retention of the open skyline. Therefore, a band of undeveloped land was established stretching from Bury Hill Park up to the peak of the hills, along the ridge and down through the golf course and riding stables to Warrens Hall Park (see **Figure 2.3**). This band of open space was intended to form part of SMBC's strategy for linear open space and associated walkways to provide, whenever practical, continuous public access via linked areas of urban open space, to the open countryside.

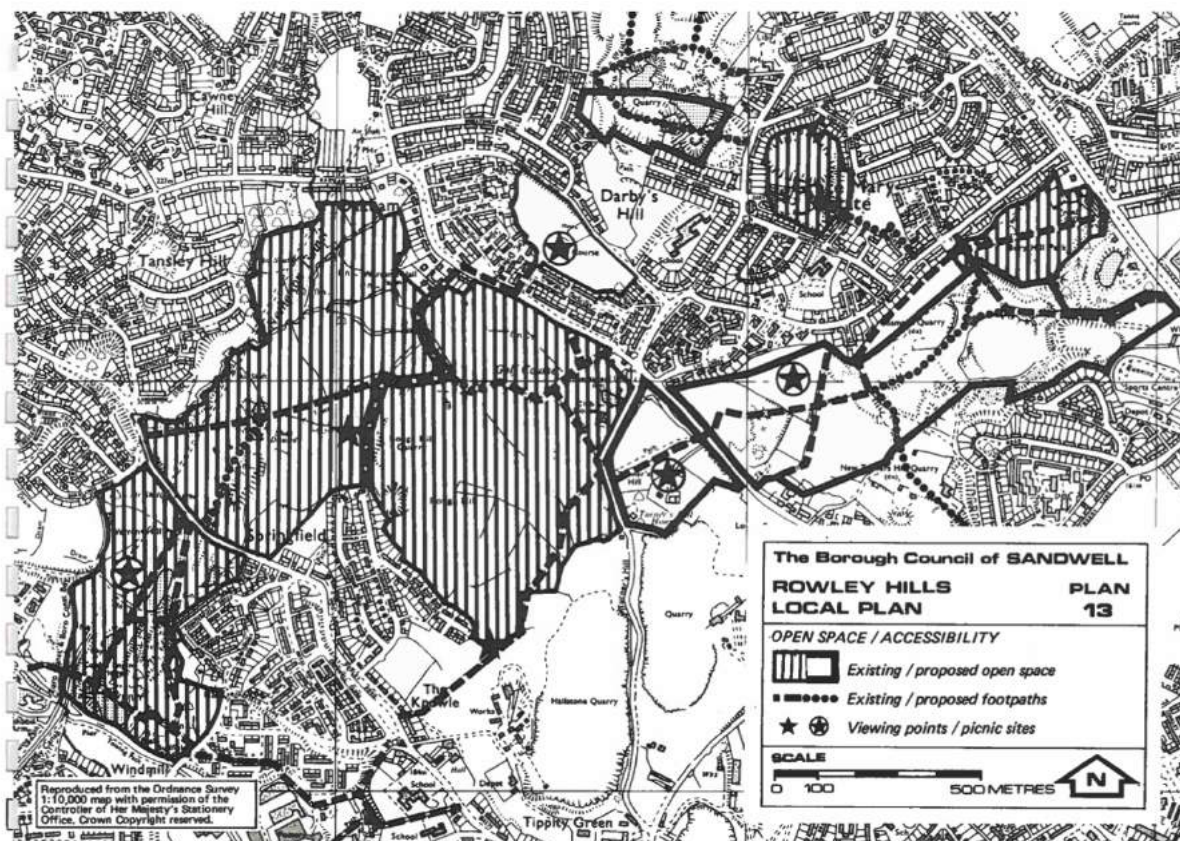


Figure 2.3: Rowley Hills Local Plan Strategic Open Space

- 2.3.5 The following text has been reproduced from the RHLP with regards to the choices of action chosen by SMBC:

“It is a primary objective of the Local Plan to create in the Rowley Hills a continuous band of open space linking Bury Hill Park on the north east boundary to Warrens Hall Park on the south west providing recreational opportunities within areas of natural landscape.

The topography of the Hills makes it difficult to envisage development of the open space for formal recreational activities and the Plan identifies those sites that combine best to create a linear park of predominantly natural landscape. Apart from the possibility of a ski-slope, most recreational provision will be in keeping with the natural setting and concentrate on picnic areas, walkways, and bridlepaths for the visual enjoyment of the surroundings.

Selection of the sites for open space development emphasises those areas which not only have the better natural qualities but also have a greater visual significance through combinations of either elevation, aspect, planting or simply extent. These sites, together with the existing open areas would provide uninterrupted public access along an open space corridor traversing the peak of the Rowley Hills.”

- 2.3.6 The RHLP also included a policy for the protection of the skyline:

“In the past development has taken place in the Rowley Hills which has not taken account of the sensitive nature of upland locations. As a consequence, development has occurred which impinges upon the skyline. As development will continue in the area, care must be taken to ensure that no further infringement of the open skyline occurs.

The Council will require that where development is proposed in sensitive locations the design and layout shall ensure that infringement of the skyline does not occur.”

2.4 The Black Country Core Strategy

- 2.4.1 The four Black Country local authorities of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton worked together to deliver the Black Country Core Strategy (adopted in February 2011)⁸. It sets out how the Black Country should look in 2026 and establishes clear directions for change in order to achieve this transformation.

⁸ Black Country Core Strategy 2011-2023. Available at: <https://blackcountryplan.dudley.gov.uk/t1/p2/> [Accessed 21/07/23]

- 2.4.2 The Core Strategy is a spatial plan, as required by current legislation, which means that it goes well beyond the traditional land-use based development plan and addresses a wide range of activities and interventions that are required to create sustainable communities across the whole of the Black Country. It provides a clear spatial or locational dimension to the regeneration and renaissance of the area, addressing its economic, transportation, social infrastructure and environmental needs whilst reducing its carbon footprint and helping to tackle climate change.
- 2.4.3 The importance of protecting and enhancing the environment and open spaces features strongly in the Black Country Core Strategy; a number of policies summarised below in **Table 2.1** are of particular relevance to this study.

Table 2.1: Relevant planning policies from the Black Country Core Strategy

Policy name	Policy summary
Policy CSP3 Environmental Infrastructure	Development proposals will need to demonstrate that the strategic network of environmental infrastructure will be protected, enhanced and expanded at every opportunity. The environmental infrastructure network comprises open space, sport and recreation facilities, areas of biodiversity and geodiversity importance, wildlife corridors, the canal network, watercourses and drainage systems, air quality and renewable energy generation, pedestrian and cycle routes, areas and buildings of high design quality, and the special character and historic aspects of locally distinctive elements of the Black Country.
ENV1 Nature Conservation	Development within the Black Country will safeguard nature conservation, inside and outside its boundaries
ENV2 Historic Character and Local Distinctiveness	All development should aim to protect and promote the special qualities, historic character and local distinctiveness of the Black Country in order to help maintain its cultural identity and strong sense of place. Development proposals will be required to preserve and, where appropriate, enhance local character and those aspects of the historic environment together with their settings which are recognised as being of special historic, archaeological, architectural, landscape or townscape quality.
ENV6 Open Space, Sport and Recreation	Development that would reduce the overall value of the open space, sport and recreation network in the Black Country will be resisted. Development that would increase the overall value of the open space, sport and recreation network will be encouraged, especially in areas of deficiency.

2.5 Sandwell New Local Plan

- 2.5.1 SMBC is in the process of producing a new Local Plan with a view to adopting it in 2025. Work is required to provide an up-to-date evidence base supporting the emerging Plan, of which this report will form a part.
- 2.5.2 Work on the proposed replacement for the Black Country Core Strategy, the Black Country Plan, stopped last autumn and the four Black Country Authorities, who were working together to deliver the joint strategic plan, are now preparing their own individual local plans.

-
- 2.5.3 The replacement local plan for Sandwell will be known as the SLP. An Issues and Options Review⁹ has been the subject of a (now closed) public consultation (between 6th February and 20th March 2023), whereby the public were asked to give their views on the topics and issues the new plan should cover as it progresses.
- 2.5.4 The SLP Issues and Options Review¹⁰ seeks representations on the level and type of protection that should be given to the Rowley Hills in the future. The consultation is looking for input on how the area should be protected and whether there is any scope for accommodating development in the Rowley Hills without adversely impacting on their historic character, ecological and recreational value, geological importance or open skyline, or whether it will be necessary to enact further protections on the area to prevent additional and inappropriate development from taking place.
- 2.5.5 The aim for the SLP will be to ensure it provides policies and associated guidance at a local level to assist decisions to be made on planning applications in the borough. It will also allocate sites for various uses to ensure that that development occurs in the right place and also provide protection for sites considered to be important for ecological and open space value.
- 2.5.6 Once it is adopted, the SLP will be the spatial expression of the Corporate Plan¹¹ and all the other strategies that Sandwell Council is promoting. It will help to deliver the Council's priorities across a range of policy areas through supporting sustainable development and promoting appropriate land use.

⁹ Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (2023) Sandwell Local Plan Issues and Options Review. Available at: https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/33695/slp_-_issues_and_options_-_main_document [Accessed 19/07/23]

¹⁰ Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (2023) Sandwell Local Plan Issues and Options Review. Available at: https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/33695/slp_-_issues_and_options_-_main_document [Accessed 19/07/23]

¹¹ Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. Sandwell 2020 vision. Corporate Plan 2021-2025. Available at: https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/29963/corporate_plan_-_big_plans_for_a_great_place_for_the_people_of_sandwell [Accessed 15/06/23]

3 Other plans and policies

3.1 Sandwell Green Spaces Audit

- 3.1.1 The SMBC Green Space Strategy¹² recognises the importance of green space in Sandwell for addressing cross cutting issues such as climate change and its importance for recreation and mental health and wellbeing of local communities. The Strategy was informed by a Green Spaces Audit carried out in 2006 (and subsequently updated in 2013 and 2018) which noted that there are some good quality green spaces within Sandwell but identified an historical imbalance across its six main towns. It sets out a framework for green space management and regeneration within Sandwell.
- 3.1.2 The Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan¹³ sets out a three-year strategy to implement the Green Space Strategy recommendations. It notes that a green space audit in 2018 demonstrated the need to address the neighbourhood and local level green spaces for the wards with the lowest amount of high-quality green space, with a larger number of smaller sites (green corridors and amenity green spaces) significantly impacting the quality score for Sandwell green spaces.
- 3.1.3 The Sandwell Green Spaces Audit (2018)¹⁴ identified 543 green spaces in Sandwell. This audit identified eight green spaces that are located within the RHSOS. These spaces are presented on the map in **Figure 3.1** and their characteristics are detailed in **Table 3.1**. The RHSOS is covered almost entirely by these green spaces.

¹² Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. 2010. Green Space Strategy. 2010-2020.

¹³ Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. 2022. Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan 22/23 – 25/26.

¹⁴ Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. 2022. Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan 22/23 – 25/26.

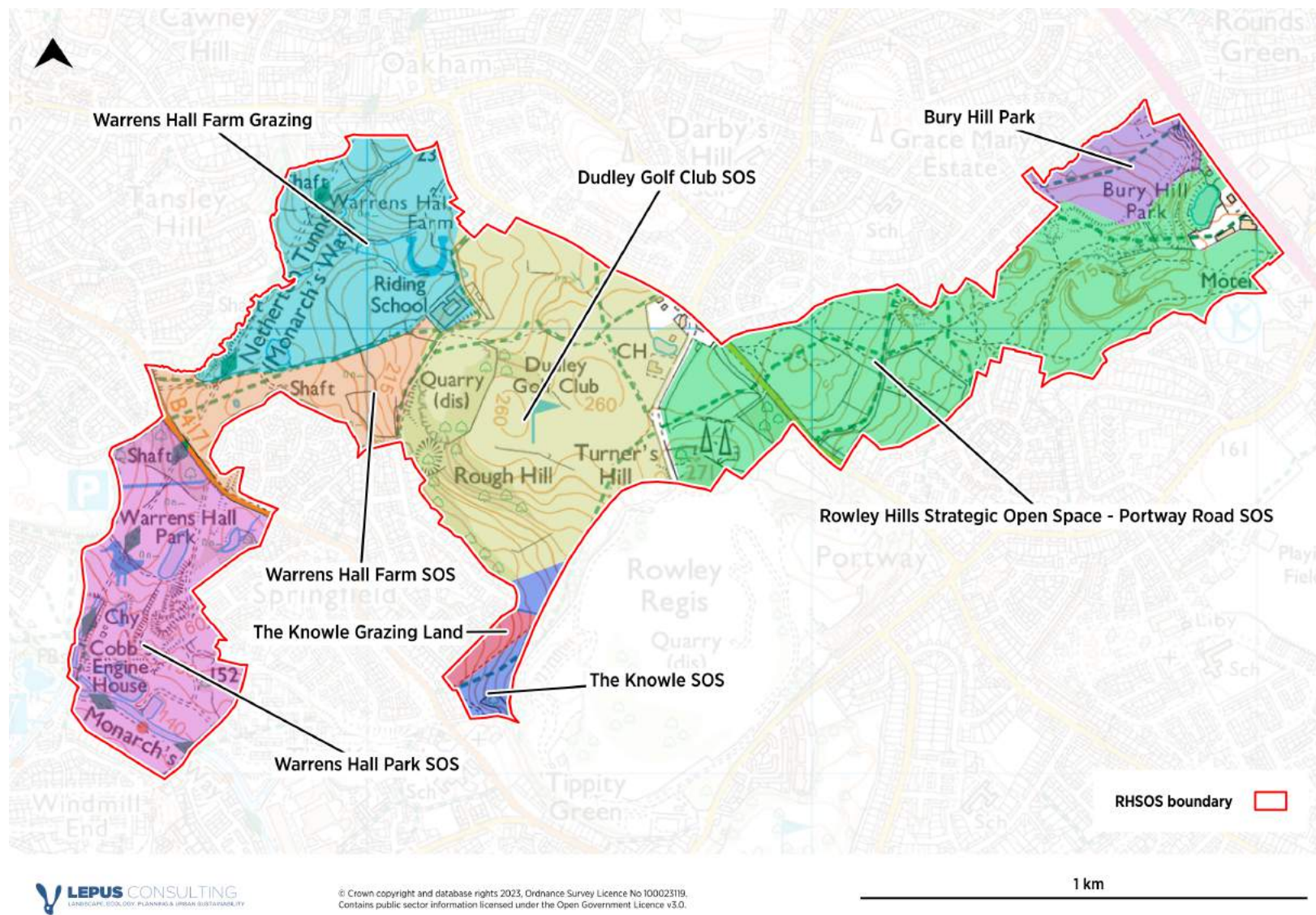


Figure 3.1: Greenspaces identified in Sandwell Green Spaces Audit located in the RHSOS (New OS License No AC0000824500)

Table 3.1: Greenspaces identified in Sandwell Green Spaces Audit located in the RHSOS

Site name	Size (ha)	Typology	Accessibility	Ownership
Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space – Portway Road SOS	39.01	Natural & Semi-Natural Greenspace	Unrestricted	Green Spaces Team confirmed that most of the site is not in SMBC ownership
Dudley Golf Club SOS	34.52	Outdoor Sports Facilities	Limited	Private
Warrens Hall Park SOS	21.4	Parks & Gardens	Unrestricted	SMBC
Warrens Hall Farm Grazing	19.75	Natural & Semi-Natural Greenspace	Not accessible	Green Spaces Team confirmed that most of the site is not in SMBC ownership
Warrens Hall Farm SOS	8.43	Natural & Semi-Natural Greenspace	Unrestricted	SMBC
Bury Hill Park	5.65	Parks & Gardens	Unrestricted	SMBC
The Knowle SOS	4.92 (partially in RHSOS)	Amenity Greenspace	Unrestricted	Private
The Knowle Grazing Land	1.29	Natural & Semi-Natural Greenspace	Not accessible	Not known

Quality and value assessment

- 3.1.4 A total of 209 sites (approximately 40% of green space sites) were assessed for quality and value as part of the Green Spaces Audit 2018 using criteria outlined in the Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan¹⁵. This included five green spaces within the RHSOS (see **Table 3.2** for results).
- 3.1.5 Green spaces were given a score out of 100 for quality and value a rating on a scale from ‘very poor’, ‘poor’, ‘fair’, ‘good’ and ‘very good’. The assessment also included sampling community groups through a community group survey which included ‘Friends of Rowley Hills’.
- 3.1.6 The Friends of Rowley Hills is a local community group. Their website¹⁶ states that their aims are to conserve and enhance the Rowley Hills for the benefit of wildlife and the local community. They support the Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust and their work on the Portway Hill nature reserve.

¹⁵ Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. 2022. Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan 22/23 – 25/26.

¹⁶ Friends of Rowley Hills. Available at: <https://friendsofrowleyhills.org> [Accessed 17/08/23]

Table 3.2: Greenspaces in RHSOS quality and value scores

Greenspace name	Quality score	Quality rating	Value score	Value rating
Bury Hill Park	43	Poor	61.5	Fair
Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space – Portway Road SOS	24	Poor	65.4	Fair
Warrens Hall Park SOS	50	Fair	63.5	Fair
Warrens Hall Farm SOS	24	Poor	58.5	Fair
The Knowle SOS	16	Very poor	53.1	Fair

3.1.7 The Green Spaces Audit 2018 learnings for quality scores includes areas for development which highlights Warrens Hall Park:

“Warrens Hall Park scores decreased from 2013, due to ASB, and improvements needed in accessibility and signage (these improvements have since been completed in 2021).”

3.1.8 Warrens Hall Farm is also highlighted:

“Warrens Hall Farm scored considerably low across most criteria: main issues being broken fencing, unchecked growth, lack of signage – opportunity to increase link between both Warrens Hall sites.”

3.2 Nature Recovery Network

- 3.2.1 The Nature Recovery Network (NRN) is a major commitment in the government's 25 Year Environment Plan to expand, improve and better connect wildlife rich places. The Environment Act 2021 made Local Nature Recovery Networks (LNRN) mandatory. These aim to target action and investment in nature locally and will cover the whole of England.
- 3.2.2 A draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map has been produced by the Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country and the Local Environmental Records Centre (EcoRecord)¹⁷ through analysis of local and national data sets including designated sites, priority habitats, species distribution, land use and ecological connectivity (2021). This drew on the Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area (NIA)¹⁸ Ecological Strategy¹⁹ which identifies the conurbation's Core Ecological Areas, Ecological Linking Areas and Ecological Opportunity Areas through a detailed review of data and evidence collected over 17 years.
- 3.2.3 The Nature Recovery Opportunity Map (**Figure 3.2**) comprises a number of components that depict the areas of current high ecological value, ecological connectivity between these areas, and prioritises opportunities for investment in nature's recovery on a landscape scale. These comprise thirteen **Core Landscapes** and **Priority Network Restoration Zones**. A Statement of Biodiversity Priorities has been produced for each of the ecological sub-areas (Core Landscapes). These meet many of the Defra guidance points for producing a Statement of Biodiversity Priorities.
- 3.2.4 **Core Landscapes** are defined as large areas of land comprised of multiple land use parcels that are ecologically coherent, often sharing similar geology, soil types, habitats, landscape character and land-use history. Core Landscapes typically support the highest abundance and diversity of semi-natural and Priority Habitats. They provide significant opportunity and are a priority for investment in ecological recovery (e.g. habitat restoration and creation). The RHSOS is located within one Core Landscape: CL10 – The Rowley Hills, Bumble Hole and Warren's Hall.
- 3.2.5 **Priority Network Restoration Zones** are those parts of the urban Black Country landscape that contain the highest density of Core Habitat and Core Expansion land use parcels, and which collectively link Core Landscapes. The purpose of Priority Network Restoration Zones is to support the creation of a coherent ecological network across the Black Country landscape, and are where investment in nature's recovery outside of Core Landscapes has been prioritised. The RHSOS is located adjacent to Priority Network Restoration Zones.

¹⁷ Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust. March 2022. Black Country Local Nature Recovery Map and Strategy: an emerging approach.

¹⁸ The 'Living Landscape'.

¹⁹ The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham & Black Country. 2017. Technical Report of the Birmingham and Black Country Nature Improvement Area Ecological Strategy 2017 – 2022.

3.2.6 To produce the Draft Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map (see **Figure 3.2**), the Core Landscapes and Priority Network Restoration Zones were overlain on the components of the Nature Recovery Network Map. Locations where the Core Landscapes directly link with the Natural England's National Habitat Network in adjoining local authority areas are indicated as National Habitat Network Connections.

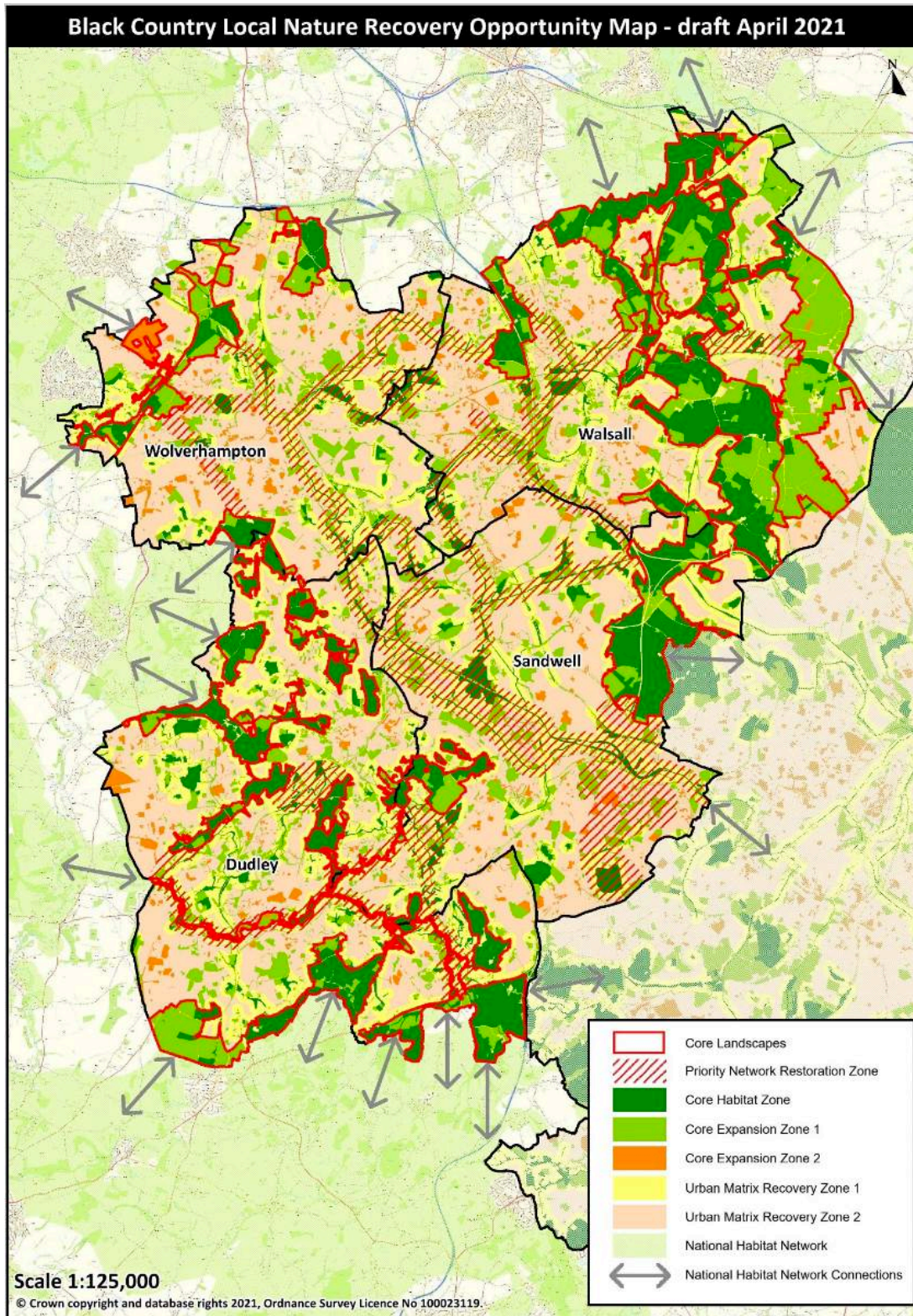


Figure 3.2: Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map

4 Landscape Character Assessment Methodology

4.1 Overview

4.1.1 The methodology for this study has been derived from aspects of:

- ‘Guidelines for Landscape and Visual and Impact Assessment Third Edition’ (2013)²⁰;
- The Countryside Agency Topic Paper 6 (2002) ‘Techniques and criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity’²¹;
- Natural England (2014) ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’²².
- Natural England (2019) ‘An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management’²³;
- Landscape Institute (2021) ‘Assessing landscape value outside national designations’ Technical Guidance Note 02/21²⁴

4.1.2 The assessment can be summarised as having five stages:

- 1) Define the purpose, scope and study area for the project;
- 2) Desk study;
- 3) Field study;
- 4) Classification and description of landscape character areas and types; and
- 5) Evaluation of landscape value.

4.2 Define purpose and scope of the project

4.2.1 The main objective of the study is to provide a robust evidence base to be able to continue the protection of the RHSOS through a designation in the SLP. The purpose of this report is outlined in **Chapter 1**.

²⁰ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition) Abingdon: Routledge

²¹ The Countryside Agency (2002) Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5601625141936128> [Date Accessed: 19/07/23]

²² Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Date Accessed: 19/07/23]

²³ Natural England (2019) ‘An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management’ Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/817928/landscape-sensitivity-assessment-2019.pdf [Date Accessed: 19/07/23]

²⁴ Landscape Institute (2021) ‘Assessing landscape value outside national designations’ TGN 02/21 Available at <https://www.landscapeinstitute.org/publication/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations/> [Date Accessed: 19/07/23]

4.3 Desk study

4.3.1 The desktop study stage consists of an information gathering exercise to prepare a baseline review of natural, cultural and social aspects of the RHSOS.

4.4 Field study

4.4.1 As stated in ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’²⁵:

“the field study is an essential part of the Landscape Character Assessment process. It presents the opportunity to observe and understand how all the factors identified as part of the desk study interact and are perceived and experienced, to give us landscapes of distinct character. It also enables the identification of other factors that are not evident from the desk study and the chance to record aesthetic and perceptual aspects”.

4.4.2 The guidance goes on to explain why landscape character assessment can be used to inform land use planning and specifically local plans. Landscape is typically appreciated under umbrella headings of (i) Natural, (ii) Cultural and Social, and (iii) Perceptual and Aesthetic factors.

4.5 Classification and description of landscape character types and character areas

4.5.1 The landscape character assessment guidance from Natural England states that this part of the process deals with the final classification and description of landscape types and character areas, and explains:

- the difference between landscape types and landscape character areas, and their use;
- classification at different scales;
- involvement of people;
- boundary confirmation;
- naming landscape character types and areas;
- describing landscape character; and
- mapping landscape character types and/or areas.

4.5.2 Overall, the landscape classification was informed by these stages which were used to define areas of distinct, recognisable and consistent character, and groups areas of similar character together. The process of Landscape Character Assessment, as described in ‘An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment’ is illustrated in **Figure 4.1**.

²⁵ Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment.

- 4.5.3 Landscape classification can be prepared at a variety of scales depending on the purpose and scope of the project. The scale of the area to be assessed determines the likely level at which the differences between homogeneous and distinctive factors are separated to identify character areas. The previous stages of assessment have provided a spatially referenced framework on which landscape character descriptions, and judgements about future policy development, design strategies, or land management may be based. Landscape Character Areas do not, generally, include main settlements, although the LCAs may wash over rural dwellings and farmsteads.

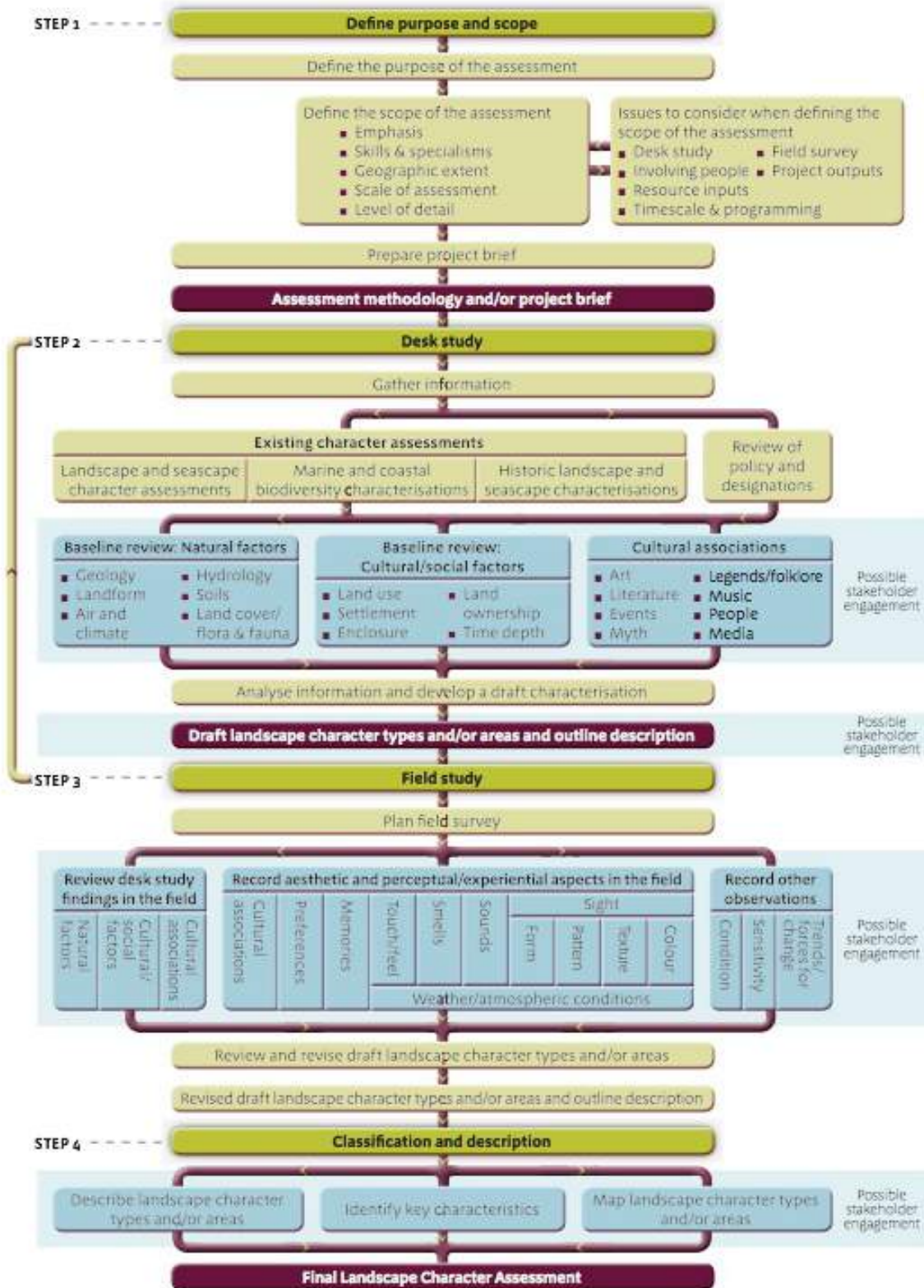


Figure 4.1: Landscape Character Assessment - the process

4.6 Definitions

4.6.1 The definitions presented in **Table 4.1** have been reproduced from Natural England's Landscape Character Assessment Guidance (2014)²⁶ and are used throughout this report.

Table 4.1: Natural England (2014) definitions

Landscape Character Areas*	These are single unique areas which are the discrete geographical areas of a particular landscape type. Each will have its own individual character and identity, even though it shares the same generic characteristics with other areas of the same type.
Landscape Character Assessment	This is the process of identifying and describing variation in the character of the landscape. It seeks to identify and explain the unique combination of elements and features (characteristics) that make landscapes distinctive. This process results in the production of a Landscape Character Assessment.
Landscape Character Types*	These are distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogeneous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but wherever they occur they share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historical land use, and settlement pattern.
Landscape Quality (or condition)**	is based on judgements about the physical state of the landscape, and about its intactness, from visual, functional, and ecological perspectives. It also reflects the state of repair of individual features and elements which make up the character in any one place.
Landscape Value**	The relative value or importance attached to a landscape (often as a basis for designation or recognition), which expresses national or local consensus, because of its quality, special qualities including perceptual aspects such as scenic beauty, tranquillity or wildness, cultural associations or other conservation issues.
Sensitivity ***	A term applied to specific receptors, combining judgements of the susceptibility of the receptor to the specific type of change or development proposed and the value related to that receptor.
Susceptibility ***	The ability of a defined landscape or visual receptor to accommodate the specific proposed development without undue negative consequences.
<p>Sources: * The Countryside Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage (2002) Landscape Character Assessment: Guidance for England and Scotland (CAX 84), the Countryside Commission and Scottish Natural Heritage, April 2002. ** The Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2002), Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment Second Edition, London: Spon Press. *** Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013), Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Third Edition, London: Routledge.</p>	

²⁶ Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Date Accessed: 24/07/23]

5 Landscape Capacity Assessment Methodology

- 5.1.1 SMBC requested that part of this assessment should consider whether there is any scope for accommodating residential or economic development in the RHSOS, assuming it did not have an impact on ecology, historic character, recreational value, geological importance or skyline and if so, identifying what sort and level of development would be appropriate and why.
- 5.1.2 To deliver this task, it is necessary to identify discreet land parcels within the RHSOS to evaluate the different sensitivities of the Rowley Hills to determine the capacity of the landscape to accommodate change. For this study, parcels are defined the boundaries of the landscape character areas.

5.2 Context: Landscape Capacity Studies

- 5.2.1 Best practice guidance does not provide a universal, fixed method for conducting all landscape capacity studies. Instead, the guidance presents a structure under which landscape capacity studies are based, and this will change depending on a number of factors including the location and scale of the study. The methodology for this study is based on guidance taken from the following key texts:

- 'Guidelines for Landscape and Visual and Impact Assessment Third Edition' (2013)²⁷;
- The Countryside Agency Topic Paper 6 (2002) 'Techniques and criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity'²⁸;
- Natural England (2014) 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'²⁹.
- Natural England (2019) 'An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management'³⁰;
- Scottish Natural Heritage (2017) A Guide to Commissioning a Landscape Capacity Study³¹.

²⁷ Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment (2013) Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (Third Edition) Abingdon: Routledge

²⁸ The Countryside Agency (2002) Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/5601625141936128> [Date Accessed: 19/07/23]

²⁹ Natural England (2014) An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/landscape-character-assessments-identify-and-describe-landscape-types> [Date Accessed: 19/07/23]

³⁰ Natural England (2019) 'An approach to landscape sensitivity assessment – to inform spatial planning and land management' Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/817928/landscape-sensitivity-assessment-2019.pdf [Date Accessed: 19/07/23]

³¹ Scottish Natural Heritage (2017) A Guide to Commissioning a Landscape Capacity Study.

5.2.2 Landscape capacity is defined as:

*“the degree to which a particular landscape character type or area is able to accommodate change without significant effects on its character, or overall change of landscape character type. Capacity is likely to vary according to the type and nature of change being proposed”.*³²

E23. A landscape capacity assessment is most commonly used to:

- Explore whether or not a landscape can accommodate a specified development without significant change to its character or amenity;
- Find the best place to accommodate a specified development with the least disruption to the landscape character; and
- Identify which areas are likely to be most sensitive to changes brought about by introducing a specified development into the landscape.³³

5.2.3 The assessment of landscape capacity begins with a desktop assessment to gauge the scope and scale of the study area. This exercise was then followed by the field study. During this phase, the assessment of parcels were ‘ground-truthed’ to determine aesthetic and perceptual factors. The field study is undertaken from public rights of way, highways and publicly accessible open spaces.

5.3 Methodology

5.3.1 The methodology for the assessment of landscape capacity has seven stages:

- Determine landscape character sensitivity;
- Determine visual sensitivity;
- Calculate landscape sensitivity;
- Determine wider landscape sensitivity;
- Calculate overall landscape sensitivity;
- Determine landscape value;
- Calculate landscape capacity.

5.4 Stage 1: Landscape character sensitivity

5.4.1 The assessment of landscape character sensitivity considers natural, cultural and perceptual factors (see **Table 5.1**). The landscape character sensitivity matrix is shown in **Table 5.2**.

5.4.2 Parcels are reviewed to assess their relative landscape character sensitivity. Natural factors, cultural factors and perceptual factors are scored from low (1) to high (5), these scores are then added up (see **Table 5.2**).

³² Scottish Natural Heritage (2017) A Guide to Commissioning a Landscape Capacity Study.

³³ Scottish Natural Heritage (2017) A Guide to Commissioning a Landscape Capacity Study.

5.4.3 To achieve transparency and clarity, sensitivity assessments should aim to:

- Identify criteria which are clearly relevant to the specified development and the landscape which is being assessed;
- Provide a clearly presented assessment of the sensitivity of each individual criterion in each landscape area;
- Make sure that all relevant information is presented in an accessible form – there should be no ‘leaps of faith’, you should be able to understand exactly how the consultants have come up with the sensitivity rating;
- Avoid complexities, such as adding together scores through a series of stages to provide difficult to unravel aggregate scores;
- Avoid ‘weighting’ criteria without a clear rationale – i.e. making some of the criteria more important than the others – unless the reason for doing this is easy to understand and robust;
- Minimise ‘double counting’ or ‘cancelling out’ i.e. when one criterion is very similar to another, or when one attribute of the landscape is scored highly sensitive in relation to one criterion, but then is allocated a lower rating in another criterion;
- Make sure that there is a clear rationale linking analysis, assessment and recommendations or conclusions; and
- Keep it as simple as possible – it needs to be used by people who are not on the steering group. It is important to scrutinise the method to make sure that it is transparent and that it is easy to understand how the overall, final assessment of sensitivity has come about³⁴.

³⁴ Scottish Natural Heritage (2017) A Guide to Commissioning a Landscape Capacity Study.

Table 5.1: Landscape character sensitivity (this is not exhaustive)

Factor	Higher sensitivity	Lower sensitivity
Natural	Native woodland	Plantation
	Significant tree/groups	Insignificant/young trees
	Strong hedgerow structure with hedgerow trees	Weak structure and no trees
	Species rich grassland	Arable field
	Significant water feature(s)	No water feature(s)
	Varied landform and distinctive feature of the area	Uniform landform and lack of topographical features
	Pronounced geology	Lack of geological features
	Soils significantly contribute to landscape features	Soils are not an important feature
	Complex and vulnerable land cover	Simple robust land cover
	Presence of other significant vegetation cover	Absence of other significant vegetation
	Presence of valued wildlife habitats	Absence of valued wildlife habitats
	Significant wetland habitats and meadows	Poor water logged areas
	Presence of common land	No common land
Cultural	Distinctive good quality boundary features	Generic or poor boundary features
	Evidence of surviving part of a historic landscape	No evidence
	Complex historic landscape pattern with good time depth	Simple modern landscape
	Important to setting or in a conservation area	No relationship
	Includes a scheduled ancient monument important to setting	No relationship
	Locally distinctive built form and pattern	Generic built form
	Important to setting of a listed building	No relationship
	Distinctive strong settlement pattern	Generic or eroded pattern
	Locally significant private gardens	Poorly maintained gardens erode the character
	Evidence of visible social cultural associations	Lack of social cultural associations
Perceptual	Quiet area	Noisy area
	Absence of intrusive elements	Intrusive elements present
	Dark skies	High levels of light pollution
	Open exposed landscape	Enclosed visually contained landscape
	Unified landscape with strong landscape pattern	Fragmented/'bitty' or featureless landscape
	Well used area of land appreciated by the public	Inaccessible by public
	Important rights of way	None present
	Well used and valued open air recreational facilities	None present
	Open access land	None present

Table 5.2: Landscape character sensitivity

Natural factors	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Cultural factors	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Perceptual features	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Overall landscape sensitivity	3-4 = Low 5-7 = Med/Low 8-10 = Med 11-13 = Med/High 14-15 = High				

5.5 Stage 2: Visual sensitivity

5.5.1 The assessment of visual sensitivity considers the types of views, the visual receptors and the potential to mitigate (see **Table 5.3**). The visual sensitivity matrix is shown in **Table 5.4**.

5.5.2 Parcels are reviewed to assess their relative visual sensitivity. Types of views, visual receptors and potential to mitigate are scored from low (1) to high (5), these scores are then added up (see **Table 5.4**).

Table 5.3: Visual sensitivity features

Factor	Higher sensitivity	Lower sensitivity
Types of views	Sequenced and exposed views	Fleeting and limited views
	Most of site area visible	Little of site area visible
	Site is a key focus in available wider views	Site is an incidental part of wider views
	Site includes prominent and key landmarks	No landmarks present
	Important vistas or panoramas in/out of the area	Unimportant or no vistas
	Prominent skyline	Not part of skyline
Visual receptors	Large extent or range of key sensitive receptors	Lack of sensitive receptors
	Large number of people see site	Few can see site
	Key view from a sensitive receptor	Views of site are unimportant
	Site is part of valued view	Site does not form a part of a valued view
	Site in key views to/across/out of settlement	Not part of setting of settlement view
Potential to mitigate	Mitigation not very feasible	Mitigation possible
	Mitigation would interrupt key views	Would not obscure key views
	Mitigation would damage local character	Mitigation would not harm local character

Table 5.4: Visual sensitivity matrix

Types of views	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Visual receptors	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Potential to mitigate	L (1)	L/M (2)	M (3)	M/H (4)	H (5)
Overall visual sensitivity	3-4 = Low 5-7 = Med/Low 8-10 = Med 11-13 = Med/High 14-15 = High				

5.6 Stage 3: Landscape sensitivity

5.6.1 Landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity are combined to give the landscape sensitivity (see **Table 5.5**).

Table 5.5: Landscape sensitivity

Visual sensitivity	High	M	M/H	M/H	H	H
	Med/High	M/L	M	M/H	M/H	H
	Medium	M/L	M/L	M	M/H	M/H
	Med/Low	L	M/L	M/L	M	M/H
	Low	L	L	M/L	M/L	M
		Low	Med/Low	Medium	Med/High	High
Landscape character sensitivity						

5.7 Stage 4: Contribution of the land parcel to wider landscape and settlement edge

5.7.1 Stages 1 and 2 assess the landscape and visual characteristics and sensitivity of each land parcel. The sensitivity of each land parcel to development is also affected by the contribution it makes to the adjacent wider landscape and the influence of the settlement edge. The wider landscape sensitivity of each land parcel is assessed as set out in **Table 5.6**.

Table 5.6: Wider landscape sensitivity

Wider landscape sensitivity	Relationship of the site to the wider landscape
Low wider sensitivity	The land parcel is heavily influenced by the built form of nearby settlement and not an important part of the adjacent wider landscape.
Medium/low wider sensitivity	The land parcel is influenced by nearby settlement and has views of some parts of the settlement but shares some of the characteristics of the adjacent wider landscape.
Medium wider sensitivity	The land parcel is partly influenced by the settlement but shares many of the characteristics of the wider landscape, with good physical and/or visual links to the wider landscape.
Medium/high wider sensitivity	The land parcel has strong physical and visual links to the wider landscape and these outweigh any minor influences from the adjacent settlement.
High wider sensitivity	The land parcel is an important part of the wider landscape with which it has strong visual and landscape links. The nearby settlement has little or no effect on the site.

5.7.2 The overall landscape sensitivity of each land parcel is determined by combining the wider landscape sensitivity, as assessed above, with the landscape sensitivity from **Table 5.5** to give overall landscape sensitivity as illustrated in **Table 5.7**.

Table 5.7: Overall landscape sensitivity

Landscape sensitivity of the land parcel	High	M	M/H	M/H	H	H
	Med/High	M/L	M	M/H	M/H	H
	Medium	M/L	M	M	M/H	M/H
	Med/Low	M/L	M/L	M	M	M/H
	Low	L	M/L	M/L	M	M
	Low	Med/Low	Medium	Med/High	High	
Wider landscape sensitivity						

5.8 Stage 5: Landscape assets value criteria

5.8.1 Landscape assets value is calculated using a range of factors. The criteria used to assess the value of these assets is explained in **Table 5.8**. Lepus refined the contents of this list during the field work.

Table 5.8: Landscape assets value criteria

Value	Typical criteria	Typical example
High	Very high importance (or quality) and rarity. No or limited potential for substitution	UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark Geosites
		Scheduled Monument: Cobb's Engine House
Medium/High	High importance (or quality) and rarity. Limited potential for substitution	Area of High Historic Landscape Value
		Windmill End Conservation Area and setting
		Grade II Listed Buildings and their settings
		Priority Habitats that contribute to landscape character
		Public footpaths
		Monarch's Way (Recreational Route)
		Traffic-free cycle route
		Warrens Hall Country Park LNR
Medium	Medium importance (or quality) and rarity. Limited potential for substitution.	Local recreational facilities of community value
		Evidence of ridge and furrow
Medium/Low	Local importance (or quality) and rarity. Limited potential for substitution.	Local buildings of historic interest and their settings
Low	Low importance (or quality) or rarity.	Area of little value and identified for improvement.

5.9 Stage 6: Landscape capacity

5.9.1 The landscape capacity is determined by combining landscape sensitivity with landscape value (see **Table 5.9**).

Table 5.9: Landscape capacity

Overall landscape sensitivity	High	M	M/L	L	L	L
	Med/High	M/H	M	M/L	L	L
	Medium	H	M/H	M	M/L	L
	Med/Low	H	H	M/H	M	M/L
	Low	H	H	H	M/H	M
	Low	Med/Low	Medium	Med/High	High	
Landscape value						

Table 5.10: Guide to orders of magnitude used in the definition of landscape capacity

Low capacity	The landscape could not accommodate areas of new development without a significant and adverse impact on the landscape character and visual amenity. Occasional very small scale development may be possible providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and surrounding landscape character.
Medium / Low capacity	A low amount of development can be accommodated only in limited situations providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and surrounding landscape character.
Medium capacity	The landscape could be able to accommodate areas of new development in some parts providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and surrounding landscape character. There are landscape and visual constraints and therefore the key landscape and visual characteristics must be retained and enhanced.
Medium/ High capacity	The area can accommodate larger amounts of development providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and surrounding landscape character. Certain landscape and visual features in the area may require protection.
High capacity	Much of the area can accommodate significant areas of development providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and surrounding landscape character.

6 Existing Landscape Character Assessments

6.1 Landscape Character Assessment hierarchy

6.1.1 Landscape Character Assessment can be undertaken at a range of scales. The vertical hierarchy of landscape character assessments includes the National Character Areas, county level landscape character assessments (where they exist), protected landscape character assessments such as those prepared for national parks and National Landscapes, and at the district level, where landscape character assessments are often prepared to help inform Local Plans.

6.1.2 The assessment of the RHSOS sits at a level 'underneath' the district. It is important that the process of Landscape Character Assessment helps to ensure consistency of description across boundaries whilst facilitating vertical integration of policy at the same time. The level of detail and cartographic granularity increases as the size of the study area decreases.

6.1.3 The following sections discuss the existing landscape character assessments which help to provide a framework to the landscape context of the RHSOS including:

- National Character Areas; and
- The Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Assessment.

6.2 National Character Areas

6.2.1 At a national level, landscape character has been defined by the assessment work of Natural England, which has divided England into areas of similar landscape character called National Character Areas (NCAs).

6.2.2 The RHSOS is located within the Cannock Chase and Cank Wood National Character Area (NCA)³⁵. A description of this NCA is as follows:

³⁵ Natural England (2014) NCA Profile: 67 Cannock Chase and Cank Wood. Available at: <https://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/2431343?category=587130> [Date accessed: 02/06/23]

“Cannock Chase and Cank Wood NCA is a landscape dominated by its history as a former forest and chase and by the presence at its centre of the South Staffordshire Coalfield. The area has a varied landscape; plantations and heathlands in the north contrast strongly with the dense settlements of the south, interspersed with farmland. There are no major rivers within the NCA, but canals are a significant feature and this includes the supply reservoir at Chasewater. Cannock Chase Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) lies to the north, and immediately south of this is the Forest of Mercia, a Community Forest, which extends into the conurbation”.

6.2.3 Key characteristics of the Cannock Chase and Cank Wood NCA are as follows:

- A varied landscape ranging from the open heathlands and plantations of Cannock Chase, through towns, reclaimed mining sites and new developments, to dense urban areas.
- The dominant rounded central plateau is mainly formed of the Coal Measures of the South Staffordshire Coalfield, with other prominent hills in the south at Wren’s Nest, Castle Hill, Rowley Hills and Barr Beacon.
- Extensive coniferous plantations, woodlands and historic parklands occur across the NCA, even within the urban areas where they are predominantly small and include lots of young plantations.
- Away from the unenclosed landscape of Cannock Chase, fields generally have a regular pattern and are frequently enclosed by mature hedgerows with some hedgerow trees. Here farming is generally mixed with arable cultivation in large fields. Livery is concentrated around the flanks of the Chase.
- Heathland and associated acid grassland were once much more extensive, although significant tracts still remain. Post-industrial sites and remnant countryside within the urban areas provide a mosaic of additional valuable habitats.
- The major rivers of the Trent and Tame lie adjacent to the NCA, both of which lie in broad flood plains. Streams and small rivers such as the Sow and the Penk drain radially from the higher ground into these rivers.
- The canal network is a notable feature and contributes significantly to the drainage of the urban areas.
- Industrial archaeology from the industrial revolution is a characteristic feature.
- The predominant building material of the 19th and early 20th century buildings is red brick, with more modern structures within the urban areas.
- The settlement pattern is complex and contrasting, with some areas densely populated and others relatively sparse. The conurbation includes a mosaic of urban areas, former industrial land and patches of farmland, with an extensive urban fringe.
- The extensive networks of canals and railways reflect the industrial history of the area. Major roads include the M6, the M6 Toll and the A5.

6.3 Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Assessment

6.3.1 The Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Assessment 2019³⁶ study provides an assessment of locally distinctive places, buildings and structures of historic quality and character in the Black Country.

6.3.2 Sandwell has 15 Historic Landscape Character Areas (see **Figure 6.1**). The Rowley Hills are located within 'SD06: Rowley Regis and Blackheath'. A description of land use in this HLC is as follows:

"This character is located in the south-west of the Borough on a sandstone, mudstone and conglomerate geology. The modern character of the area is defined by 20th century housing, with large units of open and recreational space. The older residential housing in the area is located in the south with more recent construction further north. The recreational land is also located in the north of the Character Area and includes a 20th century park and nature reserve and an interwar period golf course in the east with playing fields (situated on former colliery land) and an area of substantial grassland and woodland flank in the west. The area also includes some 20th century industrial sites in the southern part of the Character Area"

Prior to the industrial revolution the character of the area was mostly agricultural, but the presence of coal and 'Rowley rag', a volcanic dolerite stone useful in producing road surfaces, ensured that it rapidly became an area of industrial activity.

Rowley Regis, is the oldest settlement in the area formed from a collection of scattered settlements. The settlement at Blackheath formed much later as a result of industrial expansion. Before this, the area had more commonly been known as 'Bleak Heath' and was mainly uninspiring heath land or farmsteads. Quarrying of dolerite took place from at least the 17th century, but it increased in the early 19th century when the use of Rowley Rag for metalling roads came into its own. From then on, the number of quarries in the area rose dramatically and this contributed to the rapid change in the landscape.

*Like many other parts of the Black Country, the Character Area experienced a dramatic increase in house building in the years between the wars, and much of this survives in its southern part.*³⁷

³⁶ Oxford Archaeology (2019) Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study. Available at: https://blackcountryplan.dudley.gov.uk/media/13895/comp_black-country-hlc-final-report-30-10-2019-lr_redacted.pdf [Date accessed: 02/06/23]

³⁷ Oxford Archaeology (2019) Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study. Available at: https://blackcountryplan.dudley.gov.uk/media/13895/comp_black-country-hlc-final-report-30-10-2019-lr_redacted.pdf [Date accessed: 02/06/23]

Archaeological Priority Areas

- 6.3.3 Archaeological Priority Areas (APAs) are sites with a high potential for archaeological remains of regional or national significance that have not been considered for designation as scheduled monuments, or where there is insufficient data available about the state or preservation of any remains to justify a designation. Located in the west of the RHSOS there is a designated Archaeological Priority Area (APA), Warren's Hall Park, possible Moated Site (see **Figure 7.5**). A summary of this APA from the Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study³⁸ has been reproduced below:

"The APA contains earthwork remains of a ditch which has been interpreted as a possible moated site. The archaeological interest of the APA is derived from the earthwork remains of the possible moat. The APA has the potential to contain below ground archaeological remains associated with a medieval or early post-medieval manor house. The moat has the potential to contain waterlogged deposits which may contain preserved environmental remains and/or organic materials. Such remains could provide insight into the local environment and land use in the area during the medieval period."

Areas of High Historic Landscape Value

- 6.3.4 Areas of High Historic Landscape Value (AHHLV) are areas that contains landscape features (both historic and natural) which are considered to make a significant contribution to the historic landscape character of the Black Country. Two AHHLVs are located in the RHSOS (see **Figure 7.5**). Located to the west of the RHSOS is the Warrens Hall Nature Reserve AHHLV. Located in the east of the study area is Bury Hill Park AHHLV. A summary of the Bury Hill Park AHHLV from the Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study³⁹ has been reproduced below:

"The AHHLV contains Bury Hill Park and has been subject to extensive quarrying over the last 200 years. The area is iconic and distinctive, viewable for many miles due to its height. The AHHLV contains the remains of Samson Quarry, Blue Rock Quarry, Lycross Colliery and a quarry to the east of Turners Hill. The whole area is covered with disused pits and spoil heaps and has the potential to contain disused industrial structures. Prehistoric stone tools have been discovered in a number of the quarries highlighting the potential of the area to contain prehistoric remains."

³⁸ Oxford Archaeology (2019) Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study. Available at: <https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/planning/historic-environment/historic-landscape-characterisation/> [Accessed 11/08/23]

³⁹ Oxford Archaeology (2019) Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study. Available at: <https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/planning/historic-environment/historic-landscape-characterisation/> [Accessed 11/08/23]

- 6.3.5 A summary of the Warrens Hall Nature Reserve AHHLV from the Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study has been reproduced below:

“The AHHLV covers a well preserved coal mining landscape and an important industrial canal junction. The AHHLV derives archaeological interest from the remains of the factories boat yards, coal mines, blast furnaces, iron works, timber yards and brick kilns which once dominated the landscape.”

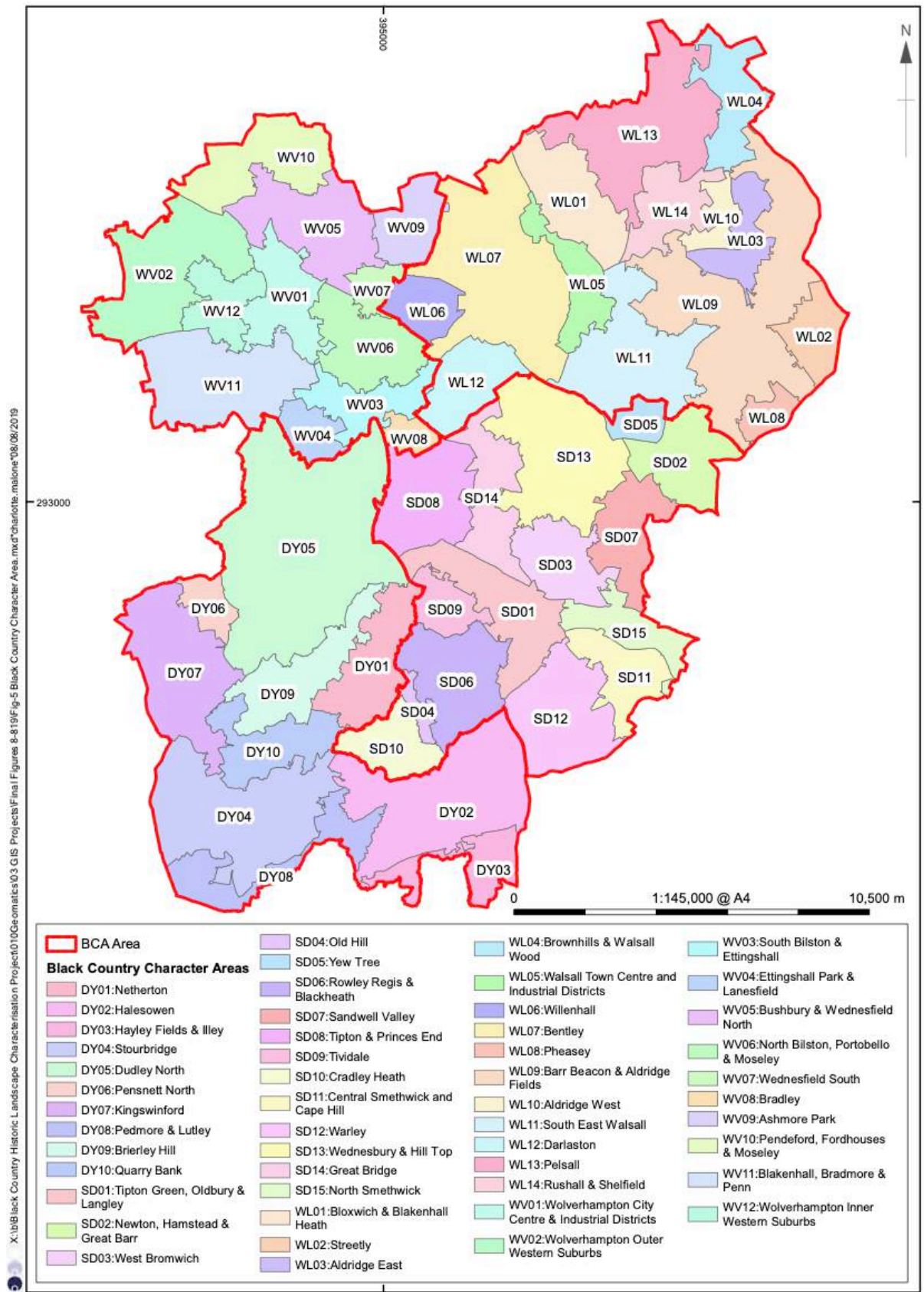


Figure 6.1: The Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Assessment 2019 Character Areas

7 Landscape Character of the Rowley Hills

7.1 Location and boundaries

7.1.1 The RHSOS designation is located within the Rowley Hills. The RHSOS forms an unbroken open space and wildlife corridor from Bumble Hole, Dudley across the top of the Rowley Hills to Wolverhampton Road, Sandwell.

7.2 Key characteristics, distinctiveness, and features

7.2.1 The following paragraphs describe the key landscape characteristics using the headings set out in the Natural England Guidance.

7.2.2 The panoramic photographs prepared to inform the assessment of the visual qualities and relationships of the land within the study area also help to illustrate the key landscape characteristics of the study area (see **Chapter 13**).

7.3 Geology and landform

7.3.1 The geological bedrock of the RHSOS is comprised of:

- Rowley Regis Microgabbro Lopolith – Microgabbro;
- Etruria Formation – Mudstone, sandstone and conglomerate; and
- Etruria Formation – Sandstone⁴⁰.

7.4 Black Country Global Geopark

7.4.1 The Black Country became a UNESCO Global Geopark in 2020 in recognition of the international importance of its natural and cultural heritage⁴¹. Three Geosites are located within the RHSOS:

- The Rowley Hills;
- Blue Rock Quarry; and
- Bumble Hole & Warrens Hall LNR.⁴²

⁴⁰ British Geological Survey (2017) Geology of Britain. Accessed on 22/02/18. Available at: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain3d/index.html?>

⁴¹ Black Country Global Geopark (2023) About the Black Country. Available at: <https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/about/> [Accessed 21/07/23]

⁴² Black Country Global Geopark (2023) Sites to see. Available at: <https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/sites-to-see/> [Accessed 10/08/23]

7.4.2 The location of the Geosites within the RHSOS is presented on the map in **Figure 7.1**.

The Rowley Hills Geosite

7.4.3 A description of the Rowley Hills geosite from the Black Country Geopark Guidebook⁴³ is presented below.

“The Rowley Hills stand proud above the gentle plain of the Black Country coalfield. These hills are formed of very hard rock (dolerite) which has been quarried from the ground for centuries creating a patchwork of open and reclaimed quarry workings. Together, these green spaces make one of the larger Geosites of the Black Country Global Geopark.

This large hilly Geosite has many footpaths crossing its various features. The long history of dolerite quarrying is expressed in many quarries that have now become useful for such things as golf courses and landscape green space. From the geologists point of view these hills contain the finest evidence of the more violent Earth history that created the Black Country. The largest quarry on the hill is the Hailstone Quarry - a very large and deep aggregate quarry that finally ceased its quarrying activity in 2010. Rock exposures show clearly how the dolerite (called Rowley Ragstone by local people), was injected into the coalfields some 307 million years ago and how its hot molten magma scorched the local rocks as it slowly cooled over millions of years. There are spectacular features to be seen including large columnar basalts and eroded ‘giants eyes’ just like those found at the Giants Causeway in Ireland.”

Blue Rock Quarry Geosite

7.4.4 A description of the Blue Rock Quarry geosite from the Black Country Geopark Guidebook⁴⁴ is presented below.

“This Geosite is situated on the edge of long-abandoned dolerite (Rowley Rag) quarries adjacent to a large sloping grassland area, that bursts with wildflowers in the spring and summer months. This site comprises a 20m long derelict quarry face in the restored Samson/Blue Rock quarries. The exposed rocks are entirely weathered igneous rocks locally known as ‘Rowley Ragstone’ (dolerite/microgabbro). They are about 307 million years old from the Carboniferous Period. The rock faces exhibit excellent examples of columnar jointing, nodular exfoliation and weak mineralisation.”

⁴³ Black Country Global Geopark (2022) Great things to see and do in the Black Country Global Geopark. Available at: <https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/sites-to-see/> [Accessed 27/07/23]

⁴⁴ Black Country Global Geopark (2022) Great things to see and do in the Black Country Global Geopark. Available at: <https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/sites-to-see/> [Accessed 27/07/23]

Bumble Hole & Warrens Hall LNR Geosite

- 7.4.5 A description of the Bumble Hole & Warrens Park LNR Geosite from the Black Country Geopark Guidebook⁴⁵ is presented below.

“Bumble Hole and Warrens Hall Local Nature Reserve is a classic coal mining landscape of the Black Country and a very important industrial canal junction that remains a vital inland waterways link to areas beyond the Black Country for tourism and commerce. This Geosite is a lovely large canal-side parkland occupying a large reclaimed area of former industries, including old mines and clay pits, old factories and boatyards, the junction of canals and railways and even the longest canal tunnel in the Black Country.

This was one of the hubs of industrial activity from the 1800’s onward and the site is 50 hectares, including two Local Nature Reserves. Atop its pit-mounds, it offers superb views across the south of the Geopark and beyond, to the Clent, Abberley and Worcestershire’s Malvern Hills. It is on the southern face of the Rowley Hills and straddles the border between the boroughs of Dudley and Sandwell.

The chimney of Windmill End No 3 Colliery (Cobb’s Engine House/Windmill End Pumping Station) is testament to the site’s industrial past, along with the Netherton Canal Tunnel. The chimney is a Scheduled Ancient Monument and a Grade II listed building built around 1831, which originally housed a James Watt beam engine and drained a series of mine workings extending 525 feet (approximately 200m) below the current surface. It ceased work in 1928 and the Newcomen type engine moved to the Henry Ford Museum in Dearborn, Michigan in 1930. The adjacent Netherton Canal Tunnel was the last canal tunnel to be built in Britain during the great canal building age from 1750 - 1860. The ceremonial ‘first sod’ of the earthwork was turned by Lord Ward the Earl of Dudley on 31 December 1855 and the canal opened on 20 August 1858.

7.5 Rowley Rag

- 7.5.1 Information about the Rowley Rag from the Black Country Geological Society⁴⁶ is reproduced below:

“The geology of the Rowley Hills is a story of earthquakes and volcanoes. The hills are made of dolerite (sometimes called basalt) but locally known as Rowley Rag which is a hard dark grey igneous rock which welled up as magma (molten rock) from the depths of Earth 300 million years ago. The dolerite has been extensively quarried, mostly for use as aggregate (crushed rock) providing employment for generations from the surrounding communities. Rag is a modern abbreviation of the more traditional Ragstone, meaning a ragged sharp angled rock. This partly explains why the Rowley Rag has not been used as a building stone

⁴⁵ Black Country Global Geopark (2022) Great things to see and do in the Black Country Global Geopark. Available at: <https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/sites-to-see/> [Accessed 27/07/23]

⁴⁶ The Black Country Geological Society (2023) From the depths of the Earth. Discovering the ancient past of the Rowley Hills. Available at: <https://bcgs.info/pub/local-geology/geological-leaflets-and-guides/rowley-hills-leaflet/> [Accessed 21/07/23]

owing to the difficulty of dressing but rough blocks have been used in walls locally as can be seen at St Giles Church, Rowley.

A traditional landscape feature of the Rowley Hills were drystone walls, some of which still survive, made from Rowley Rag and which served as field boundaries. A hoard of Roman silver coins, mostly dating from the period of Emperor Galba (68-69 AD) was reputedly discovered hidden in one of these walls in the early 19th century. The Portway follows the line of a Roman road and in all probability the Romans used Rowley Rag locally for roadstone. However, the Rowley Rag was probably first dug on an industrial scale in the late 18th century or early 19th century in building the new turnpike roads.

The dolerite has been used for kerbstones, gutters and setts. It is still a common street feature in most of the Black Country but particularly in parts of Rowley, Langleigh and Oldbury. It also famously paved Birmingham in the early 19th century. However, it fell into disfavour as a cobblestone owing to its ability to take a polish which became dangerous for horses. In modern times the Rowley Rag has been a major source of high grade crushed aggregate and coated stone for use as road metal.”

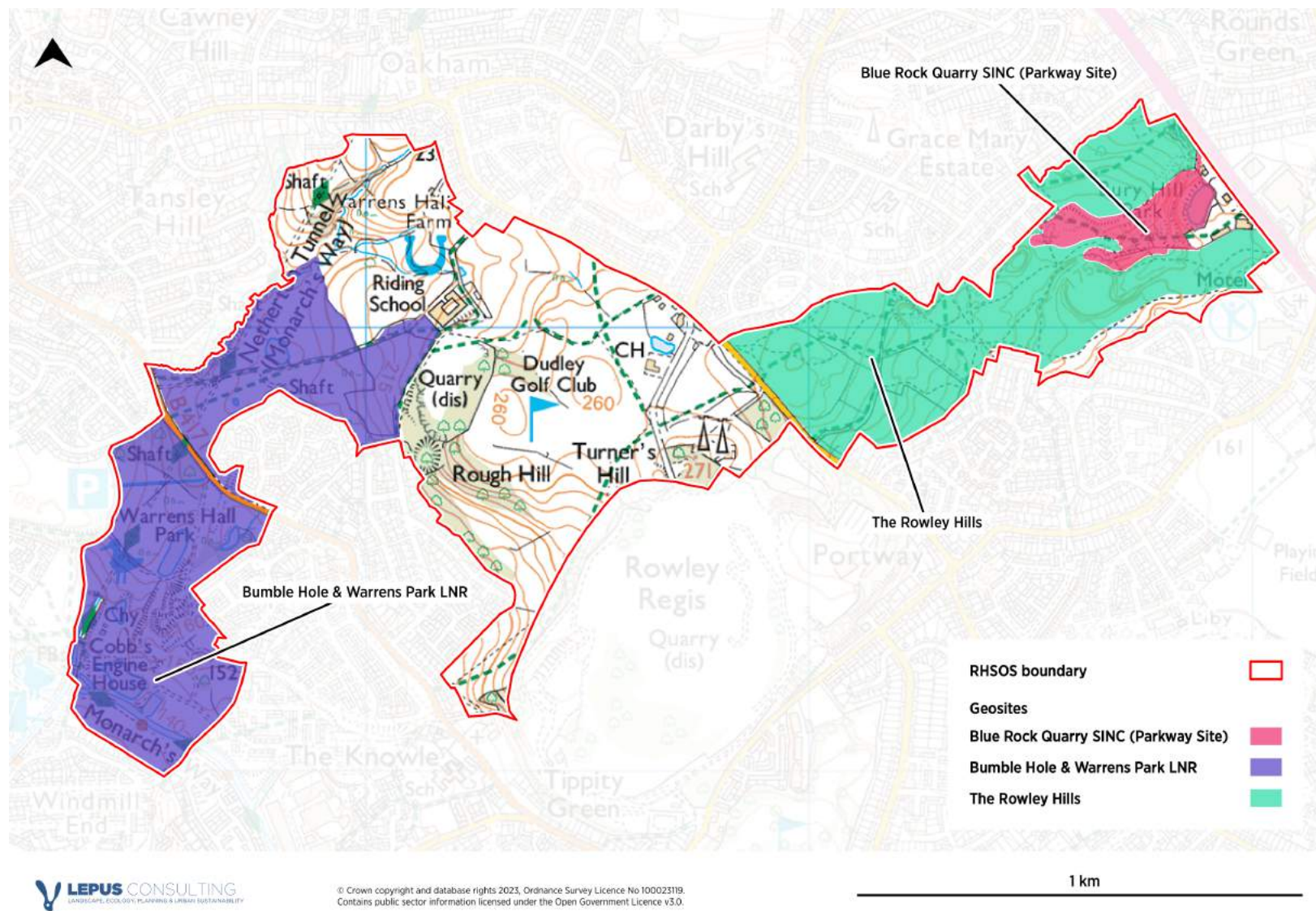


Figure 7.1: Geosites in the RHSOS (New OS License No AC0000824500)

7.6 Topography

- 7.6.1 The Rowley Hills comprise four hills; Turner's Hill (the highest point at 271m), Bury Hill, Portway Hill and Darby's Hill. The area with the lowest elevation within the RHSOS is at the Dudley No.2 Canal in the far south west. The topography of the RHSOS and wider area is shown on the map in **Figure 7.2**, created using OS Terrain 50 data.

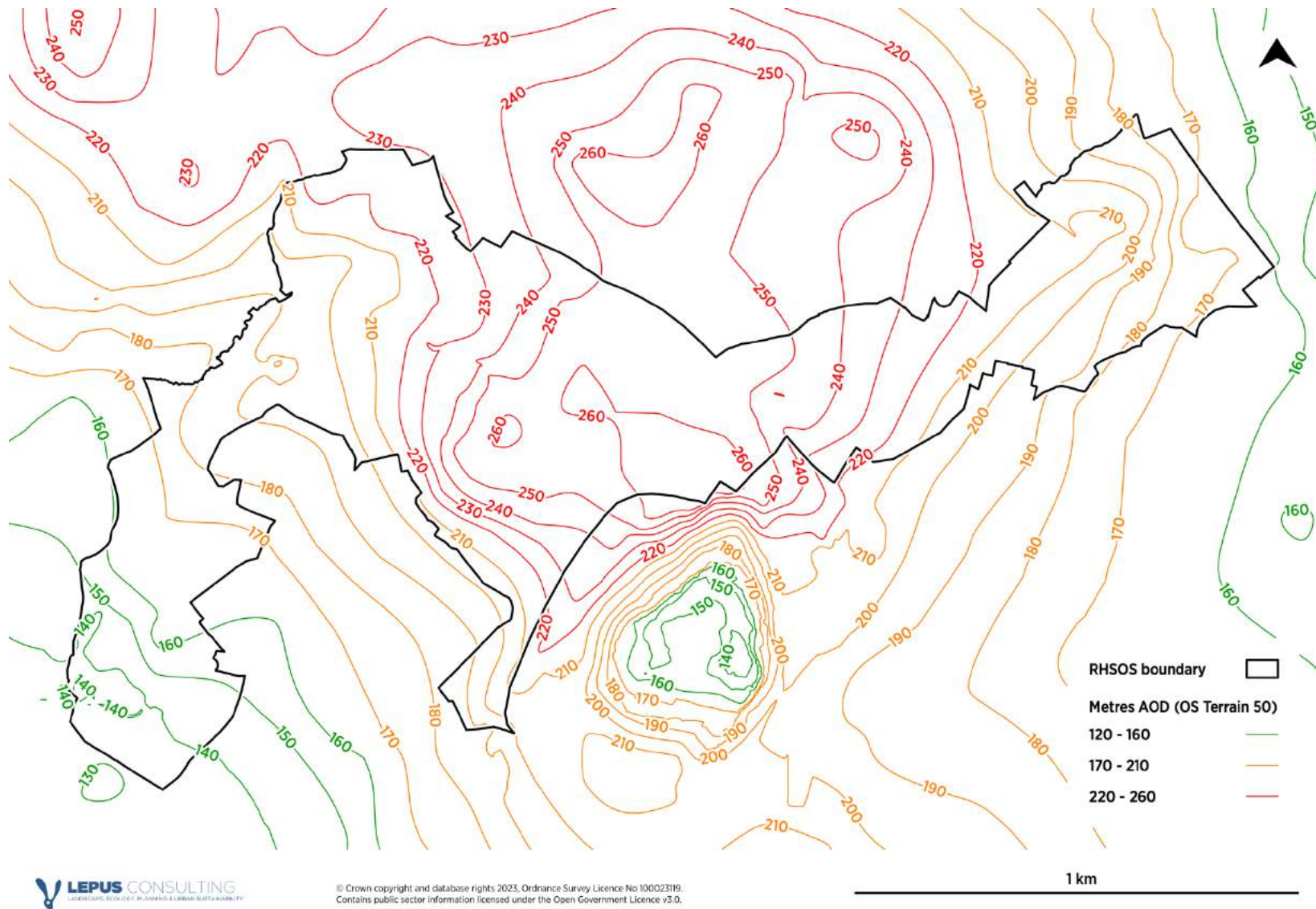


Figure 7.2: Contours at the RHSOS (OS Terrain 50) (New OS License No AC0000824500)

7.7 Habitat Sites

7.7.1 Habitats sites provide valuable ecological infrastructure for the protection of rare, endangered and/or vulnerable natural habitats and species of exceptional importance within the EU. These sites consist of Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) designated under the Habitats Directive, and Special Protection Areas (SPAs) classified under the Birds Directive. Additionally, paragraph 181 of the NPPF (2023) requires that sites listed under the Ramsar Convention are to be given the same protection as fully designated Habitats sites.

7.7.2 There are no Habitats sites within the RHSOS or the SLP area. The closest Habitats sites to Sandwell are 'Fens Pools' SAC approximately 3km to the west and 'Cannock Extension Canal' SAC approximately 8km to the north of the Sandwell boundary. Threats and pressures to Fens Pools include habitat fragmentation and water pollution⁴⁷, and for Cannock Extension Canal water pollution and air pollution are key threats⁴⁸.

7.8 National Nature Reserves

7.8.1 There are no National Nature Reserves (NNRs) located within the RHSOS or the SLP area, but both 'Wren's Nest' and 'Saltwells' NNRs lie within 1km of the Sandwell boundary to the west, in Dudley.

7.9 Sites of Special Scientific Interest

7.9.1 There are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) within the study area or Sandwell. Nearby SSSIs include 'Wren's Nest' and 'The Leasowes' in Dudley.

7.10 Warrens Hall Country Park Local Nature Reserve

7.10.1 Warrens Hall Country Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR) is located within the RHSOS (see **Figure 7.3**). This LNR covers 17ha with prominent features of grasslands, hedgerows, pools and canals⁴⁹. The Bumble Hole LNR is located adjacent to the west of Warrens Hall LNR within the Dudley Metropolitan Borough Council administrative area and outside the RHSOS boundary.

⁴⁷ Natural England (2014) Site Improvement Plan: Fens Pools. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/4872756676001792> [Date accessed: 02/06/23]

⁴⁸ Natural England (2014) Site Improvement Plan: Cannock Extension Canal. Available at: <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/file/6749431462363136> [Date accessed: 02/06/23]

⁴⁹ Visit Sandwell (2023). Warrens Hall Nature Reserve. Available at: <https://www.visitsandwell.com/things-to-see-and-do/warrens-hall-nature-reserve-p1414801> [Date accessed: 02/06/23]

7.11 Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation

7.11.1 Three Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) are located within the RHSOS (see **Figure 7.3**):

- Portway Hill Open Space SINC;
- Rough Hill Quarry SINC; and
- Warrens Hill Farm SINC.

7.12 Portway Hill Open Space SINC

7.12.1 The citation (summary of value) of the Portway Hill Open Space SINC states:

“Portway Hill Open Space, Rowley Hills, is an extensive area of public open space supporting a high diversity of semi-natural habitats. The area forms part of the wider Rowley Hills landscape and includes large areas that were formally quarried and have subsequently been landfilled and capped. In 2011 The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham & the Black Country purchased a 0.75 hectare section of the site which now forms their Rowley Hills Nature Reserve.

*The site is dominated by tall neutral grassland with colonising ruderal vegetation and scattered Hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*) scrub. A large number of grass species are present along with a diverse range of leguminous plants including Bird’s-foot-trefoil (*Lotus corniculatus*), Meadow Vetching (*Lathyrus pratensis*), Bush Vetch (*Vicia sepium*), Common Vetch (*Vicia sativa*), Red (*Trifolium pratense*) and White Clover (*T.repens*), and Lesser Trefoil (*Trifolium dubium*). Notable species within the grasslands include the regionally Rare Bee Orchid (*Ophrys apifera*) and the Uncommon Field Scabious (*Knautia arvensis*) and Wild Carrot (*Daucus carota*).*

*Of particular note are the sparsely vegetated former quarry edges (UKBAP Inland rock and scree), which are floristically diverse, supporting the regionally Very Rare Tall Mouse-ear-hawkweed (*Pilosella praealta*), Rare Fern-grass (*Catapodiumrigidum*), Silver Hair-grass (*Aira caryophyllea*), Hawkweed Oxtongue (*Picris hieracioides*) and Burnet-saxifrage (*Pimpinella saxifraga*) and Uncommon Early Hair-grass (*Aira praecox*) along with Hare’s-foot Clover (*Trifolium arvense*).*

*The areas of dense and scattered scrub provide habitat for a number of birds of conservation concern, including the RSPB Red Listed Skylark (*Alauda arvensis*), Linnet (*Carduelis cannabina*), House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), Starling (*Sturnus vulgaris*), Song Thrush (*Turdus philomelos*) and Lesser Whitethroat (*Sylvia curruca*). Butterflies and moths are particularly well represented with the UKBAP listed Latticed Heath (*Chiasmia clathrata*), Small Heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*), Shaded Broad-bar (*Scotopteryx chenopodiata*) and Six-belted Clearwing (*Bembecia ichneumoniformi*) recorded along with recent records for Green Hairstreak (*Callophrys rubi*) and historic records for Dingy Skipper (*Erynnis tages*). A substantial population of Marbled White (*Melanargia galathea*) is noteworthy.*

The site has considerable geological significance, with public access to the locally significant geology of the 'Rowley Ragstone'. This forms part of a network of other outcrops which are important for an understanding of the origin of the Rowley Hills and the geology of the Black Country. The site has well developed dolerite weathering features including columnar jointing and spheroidal exfoliation.

The site has a rich industrial history which has contributed to local distinctiveness by providing Rowley Rag in the built environment of the local area, as well as local employment. Further interest is provided by extensive tall but gappy hedgerows and lengths of dry stone wall.

Since landfill operations ceased Portway Hill Open Space has formed a significant and valued area of public open space for local people, providing opportunities for learning and outdoor recreation.”⁵⁰

7.13 Rough Hill Quarry SINC

7.13.1 Local site assessment report unavailable.

7.14 Warrens Hill Farm SINC and SLINC

7.14.1 The Warrens Hall Farm SINC/SLINC criteria evaluation form⁵¹ includes management suggestions, social criteria and recommendations. These have been reproduced below.

Warrens Hill Farm SINC and SLINC management suggestions

- The management plan should be implemented with monitoring to ensure diversity of habitat.
- Present horse grazing should be monitored to prevent excessive grazing pressure. Traditional hedgerows should be managed by rotational layering. Rubbish removal.
- Monitoring and control of motorcycling.

Warrens Hill Farm SINC and SLINC social criteria

- The grassland is used for horse grazing connected to the large riding stables.
- The western side has public open space with a track alongside a pond (site of a habitat translocation) used for fishing and informal recreation.
- Motorcycling and littering occurs.
- A large area of the SINC at the south of the site has been destroyed by building.

⁵⁰ Birmingham & Black Country Local Sites Assessment Report. EcoRec. Ref. No. SA059. EcoRec. Site Name: Portway Hill Open Space, Rowley Hills. Report date: January 2013.

⁵¹ Sandwell Site Evaluation – Warrens Hall Farm. Warrens Hall Farm SINC Criteria Evaluation Form. Reproduced by EcoRecord the Ecological Database for the Black Country and Birmingham on behalf of Sandwell MBC and The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country.

Warrens Hill Farm SINC and SLINC recommendations

- Extensive area with a variety of habitats; woodland, scrub, grassland and hedgerows and pond.
- However large southern area lost to development.
- Adjacent northern area of SLINC value with neutral grass fields and hedgerow. The whole site forms a large grazing area for horses to nearby stables and utilised as an amenity area.

7.15 Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation

7.15.1 Five Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINC) are located within the RHSOS (see **Figure 7.3**):

- Bury Hill Park SLINC;
- Dudley Golf Course SLINC;
- Hailstone Quarry SLINC;
- Warrens Hall Farm SLINC; and
- Warrens Hall Park SLINC.

7.16 Bury Hill Park SLINC

7.16.1 Local site assessment report unavailable.

7.17 Dudley Golf Course SLINC

7.17.1 The Dudley Golf Course SINC criteria evaluation form⁵² includes management suggestions and recommendations. These have been reproduced below.

Dudley Golf Course SLINC management suggestions

- The scrub and mosaic of habitats should be maintained by partial cutting and clearing to protect the diversity of the site.
- Monitor and remove sycamore and Japanese knotweed.
- The steep sloping acidic grassland and quarry face should be monitored and maintained by selective clearing to provide open areas.
- Thin planted areas in future to encourage native species.
- The golf course is intensively managed and areas could be managed to protect wildlife value e.g. cut grassland at end of season with removal of cuttings.
- Pond adjacent to track at northern end requires cleaning out with Japanese knotweed eliminated and replaced with native species shrubs. Social Criteria
- The golf course is very well used and the hillside aspect and former quarry face form an important landscape feature with views over a wide area.

⁵² Sandwell Site Evaluation – Dudley Golf Course. Dudley Golf Course SINC Criteria Evaluation Form. Reproduced by EcoRecord the Ecological Database for the Black Country and Birmingham on behalf of Sandwell MBC and The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country.

- Adjacent to the course the quarry / landfill area of grassland and planted areas is public open space but does not appear to have great use due to access being fairly poor.

Dudley Golf Course SLINC recommendations

- Quarry face is a geological feature.
- Acidic grassland contains interesting species e.g. Harebell and Reflexed Stonecrop.
- Worthy of SINC status.
- Adjacent area of acidic and neutral grassland, scrub, planted areas and tall herb compliments the SINC and is worthy of SLINC status.
- Valuable amenity and landscape features with wide views.

7.18 Hailstone Quarry SLINC

7.18.1 A small part of the Hailstone Quarry SINC is located within the RHSOS. The Hailstone Quarry SINC criteria evaluation form⁵³ includes management suggestions, social criteria and recommendations. These have been reproduced below.

Hailstone Quarry SLINC management suggestions

- Most of the steep embankment of tall poplars is inaccessible and should be retained as a screen with a diversity of structure and retaining understorey species.
- Some thinning and replacement planting may be possible in future, species should be monitored and sycamore controlled if necessary.

Hailstone Quarry SLINC social criteria

- The narrow steep embankment has restricted access with a small area to the west with a desire line. It forms a good screen.

Hailstone Quarry SLINC recommendations:

- The SLINC area of Allsops Hill Quarry should be retained and extended to include the triangular area along Portway Road, which has Common Centuary and Red Bartsia.

7.19 Warrens Hall Farm SLINC

7.19.1 See the Warrens Hall Farm SINC information above.

7.20 Warrens Hall Park SLINC

7.20.1 The summary of the Warrens Hall Park SLINC⁵⁴ local site assessment states:

⁵³ Sandwell Site Evaluation – Hailstone Quarry. Hailstone Quarry SINC Criteria Evaluation Form. Reproduced by EcoRecord the Ecological Database for the Black Country and Birmingham on behalf of Sandwell MBC and The Wildlife Trust for Birmingham and the Black Country.

⁵⁴ Sandwell Phase 2 Survey – Warrens Hall Park. SA063. EcoRecord.

“A large area of public space comprising a good range of habitats - scrub, pools, hedgerows and grasslands, all with high wildlife value (this is one of the better sites within Sandwell) and also of some industrial historic interest. The park is managed to some extent - mainly extending to regular mowing - but on the whole is a good example of how a park can have great conservation value.

The park is a link within a chain of good wildlife habitats in this area, with the Dudley Canal and Warrens Hall Farm close by, and contains a good range of plant species. Some are uncommon, such as Yellow Oat Grass, Blue Fleabane, Meadowsweet and a good range of aquatic plants. The park produced an excellent range of bird species, although apart from the pools, the invertebrates and mammals were surprisingly limited. The park appears to be well used by the general public for a whole host of activities.”

7.21 Potential Sites of Importance

7.21.1 Potential Sites of Importance (PSIs) have not yet been assessed against the Local Wildlife and Geological Sites selection criteria but may potentially support species of note, areas of important semi-natural habitat or valuable geological features. PSIs are identified primarily through the use of aerial photography, but also through reference to old maps, existing records and local knowledge. Commonly these sites will not have been subject to the survey work necessary to undertake a Local Wildlife and Geological Sites assessment.

7.21.2 Five PSIs are located either fully or partially within the RHSOS boundary (see **Figure 7.3** and **Table 7.1**).

Table 7.1: Potential Sites of Importance within the RHSOS boundary

Potential Site of Importance	Features	Habitats
Dudley Golf Course	Golf course laid out on former farmland, of which some features still remain such as hedgerows. Part of golf course is designated SINC/SLINC for acidic flora and geological interest. Site forms part of important Rowley Hills Complex.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral Grassland • Lowland Dry Acid Grassland • Hedgerows • Woodland
Turner’s Hill Claypit	Former claypit, now pond with emergent vegetation on southern side and bordered by formal garden to north.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pond
Turner’s Hill Farm Pastures	Series of horse-grazed pastures bounded by hedgerows. Fields depicted on 1st ed. OS map (1880) so may be of pre-enclosure origin.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grassland
Edwin Richards Quarry, Turner’s Hill	Large former quarry supporting a variety of habitats including a large lake, grassland, woodland, several ponds and large areas of rock/bare ground. Peregrine falcons nest on the quarry face. Geological Interest.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lake • Ponds • Wetland • Neutral Grassland • Woodland • Scrub
Cloudland Quarry	Candidate SLINC. A small remnant quarry with an exceptional exposure of Dolerite tucked into the extreme east corner of Dudley Golf Course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Neutral Grassland • Hedgerows • Woodland

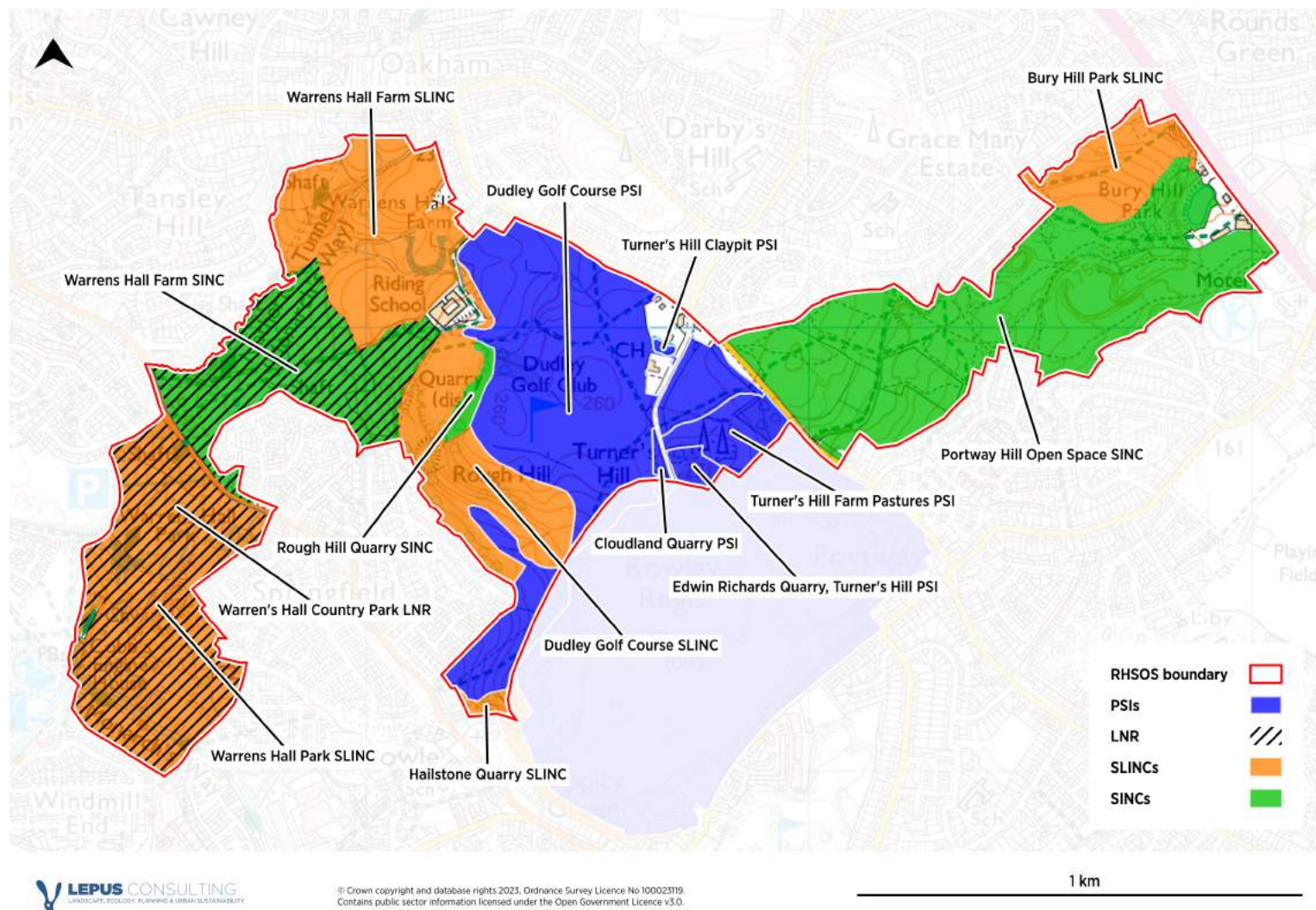


Figure 7.3: Biodiversity designations within the RHSOS⁵⁵ (New OS License No AC0000824500)

⁵⁵ Local Wildlife & Geological Sites © EcoRecord 2023 on behalf of the Birmingham and Black Country Local Sites partnership.

7.22 Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust

7.22.1 Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust (BBCWT) own a nature reserve at Portway Hill. A description of this nature reserve from the BBCWT has been reproduced below:

“Portway Hill, which is part of the Rowley Hills, is one of our newest nature reserves. Just a few acres of grassland high on the Hills looking out over Sandwell, Birmingham and parts of Dudley, but home to an astounding wealth of grassland wildflowers and butterflies. It’s a key part of the wider Rowley Hills grasslands. This small but vital reserve was acquired as part of our appeal to protect the Rowley Hills.

Backed by spectacular rock exposures of the Rowley Rag, carpeted in wildflowers and with butterflies filling the air, there’s no finer place to appreciate the living landscape of wildlife sites in the wider cityscape. The reserve boasts scarce plants, like the exotic Bee Orchid and the unusual hare’s foot clover. The reserve also boasts many important butterfly species, including one of the few colonies of Marbled White Butterflies in Birmingham and the Black Country. The site is excellent for birds with birds of prey such as peregrines and kestrels as well as birds which enjoy the open grassland and those, like warblers, which may be found in the scrub at the edges of the site.”⁵⁶

7.23 Priority Habitats

7.23.1 Deciduous woodlands (Priority Habitat) are located within the RHSOS.

7.24 Soils

7.24.1 The Agricultural Land Classification (ALC) for the entire RHSOS is classified as urban. There are two different soil types across the RHSOS: slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage and freely draining acid loamy soils over rock⁵⁷.

7.25 Hydrology

7.25.1 The Dudley No.2 Canal and the Netherton Tunnel Branch Canal cross through Warrens Hall Country Park LNR in the south western area of the RHSOS. Several bodies of water are located at the RHSOS including Swan Pool, Secret Pool, Top Pool and Island Pool at the Warrens Hall Park and Edale House Lake in the far east of the area.

7.25.2 The RHSOS drains to two river basins: the Severn River basin to the west and the Humber River basin to the east (see **Figure 7.4**).

⁵⁶ Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust. Portway Hill. Available at: <https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/Portway-hill> [Accessed 10/08/23]

⁵⁷ Cranfield Soil and Agrifood Institute (no date) Soilscales map. Available at: <https://www.landis.org.uk/soilscales/index.cfm#> [Accessed: 30/05/23]

7.26 Land cover

7.26.1 Land cover across the RHSOS includes various types of grasslands, broadleaved woodlands, ponds, ruderal vegetation, scrub and small areas of built form including roads, residential properties and commercial developments.

7.27 Hedgerows

7.27.1 Hedgerows can be found within the RHSOS, notably at Portway Hill where tall but gappy hedgerows exist and Sandwell's Historic Environment Records note the presence of an ancient hedgerow in the west of the RHSOS within Warrens Hall Farm Grazing.

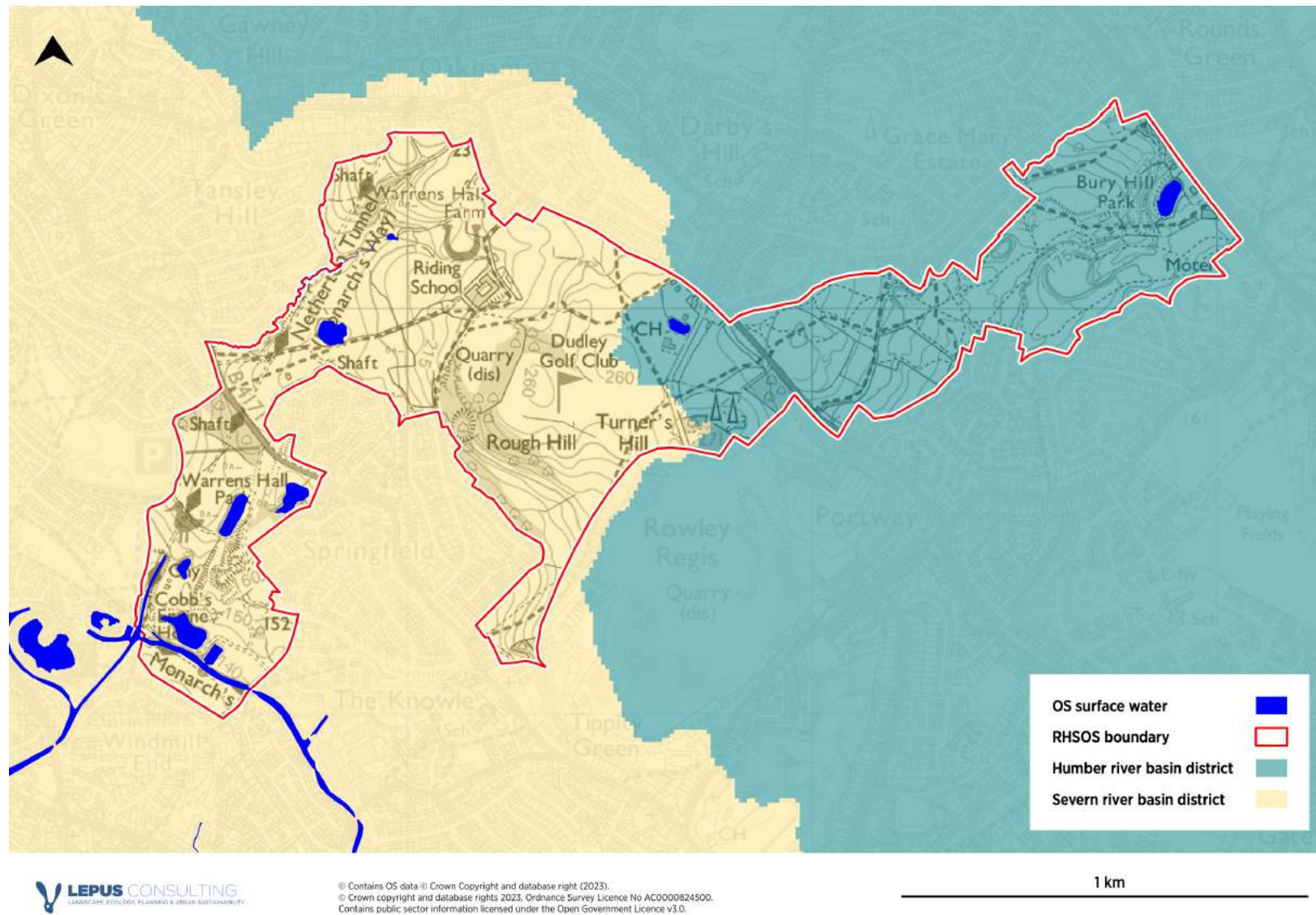


Figure 7.4: River basins and surface water in the RHSOS

7.28 Built form and associated land uses

7.28.1 Tall radio transmission towers are located at the summit of Turner's Hill. A road named 'Turner's Hill' connects Oakham Road to the radio transmission towers at the summit of Turner's Hill. The Dudley Golf Club clubhouse and car park can be accessed via this road.

7.28.2 Commercial development and a residential property accessed via Wolverhampton Road are located at the far east of the RHSOS. A football pitch, basketball court and play area can be found at Bury Hill Park. In the wider area, the RHSOS is surrounded by residential and commercial development in all directions.

Edwin Richards Quarry

7.28.3 The Edwin Richards Quarry is located to the immediate south of the RHSOS and closed in 2008 but has remained under management by FCC Environment. The FCC Environment aim to restore the site and utilise the land for large scale residential development⁵⁸. Since the closure of the quarry there have been attempts to restore and develop the unused land. Three separate planning applications have been submitted to SMBC:

- DC/14/57743 proposed a progressive restoration scheme for infilling of the quarry void with non-hazardous soils, clays and excavation materials;
- DC/14/5774 proposed the development of a waste management facility, comprising of the following: 150,000 tonnes per annum soil treatment facility, 150,000 tonnes per annum waste recycling facility, re-positioned landfill gas utilisation plant, relocated leachate treatment plant, waste vehicle depot with a workshop, office, parking and welfare facility; and
- DC/14/57745 proposed development for up to 281 dwellings⁵⁹.

⁵⁸ FCC Environment (no date). Edwin Richards Quarry. Available at: <https://www.fccenvironment.co.uk/waste-processing/landfill/edwin-richards-quarry/> [Date accessed: 30/05/23]

⁵⁹ FCC Environment (no date). Edwin Richards Quarry. Available at: <https://www.fccenvironment.co.uk/waste-processing/landfill/edwin-richards-quarry/> [Date accessed: 30/05/23]

7.28.4 Most recently the Edwin Richards Quarry has been allocated as a site for development within the abandoned Black Country Plan⁶⁰, the site therefore can be expected to be carried forward within the emerging SLP. The FCC Environment have been given approval to begin a 30-year masterplan to eventually provide 281 dwellings on the site. The site is at the early stages of creating a waste management facility that will treat 150,000 tonnes of soil each year⁶¹. Provectus Soil Management Ltd have opened the 'Maw Green' hazardous soil treatment facility in Crewe⁶² and are working with LCC Environment to help restore the Edwin Richards Quarry through supplying treated soil for the restoration of the quarry⁶³.

7.29 Public Rights of Way

7.29.1 A network of public rights of way (PRoW) cross through the RHSOS including footpaths connecting Bury Hill Park in the east with Warrens Hall Park in the west. Monarch's Way (Recreational Route) follows the Dudley No.2 Canal and the Netherton Tunnel Branch Canal. A traffic-free cycle route runs alongside Dudley No.2 Canal. While the PRoW form the formal footpath network across the area, there is evidence of informal use of various routes across Warrens Hall Park and Portway Hill.

7.30 Listed Buildings

7.30.1 There are three Listed Buildings located within the RHSOS boundary (see **Figure 7.5**):

- South Portal, Netherton Tunnel (Grade II);
- Cobb's Engine House and Chimney (Grade II); and
- Footbridge over Netherton Tunnel (Grade II).

7.31 Scheduled Monuments

7.31.1 One Scheduled Monument is located within the RHSOS: Cobb's Engine House.

7.32 Conservation Areas

7.32.1 The Windmill End Conservation Area is located within the western parts of the RHSOS (see **Figure 7.5**).

⁶⁰ Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. Sandwell Housing Delivery Test Action Plan 2022. Available at:

https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/site_search/results/?q=+housing+delivery+test+action+plan [Date accessed: 30/05/23]

⁶¹ Express and Star (2016). Sandwell News. Available at: <https://www.expressandstar.com/news/local-news/2016/08/16/huge-waste-plant-gets-approval-for-edwin-richards-quarry-site-in-rowley-regis/> [Date accessed: 30/05/23]

⁶² Provectus (no date) Available at: <https://www.soilsuk.com/our-sites/maw-green> [Date accessed: 30/05/23]

⁶³ FCC Environment (2020). FCC Environment and Provectus announce the opening of a new hazardous soil treatment facility. Available at: <https://www.fccenvironment.co.uk/2020/06/30/fcc-environment-and-provectus-announce-the-opening-of-a-new-hazardous-soil-treatment-facility/> [Date accessed: 30/05/23]

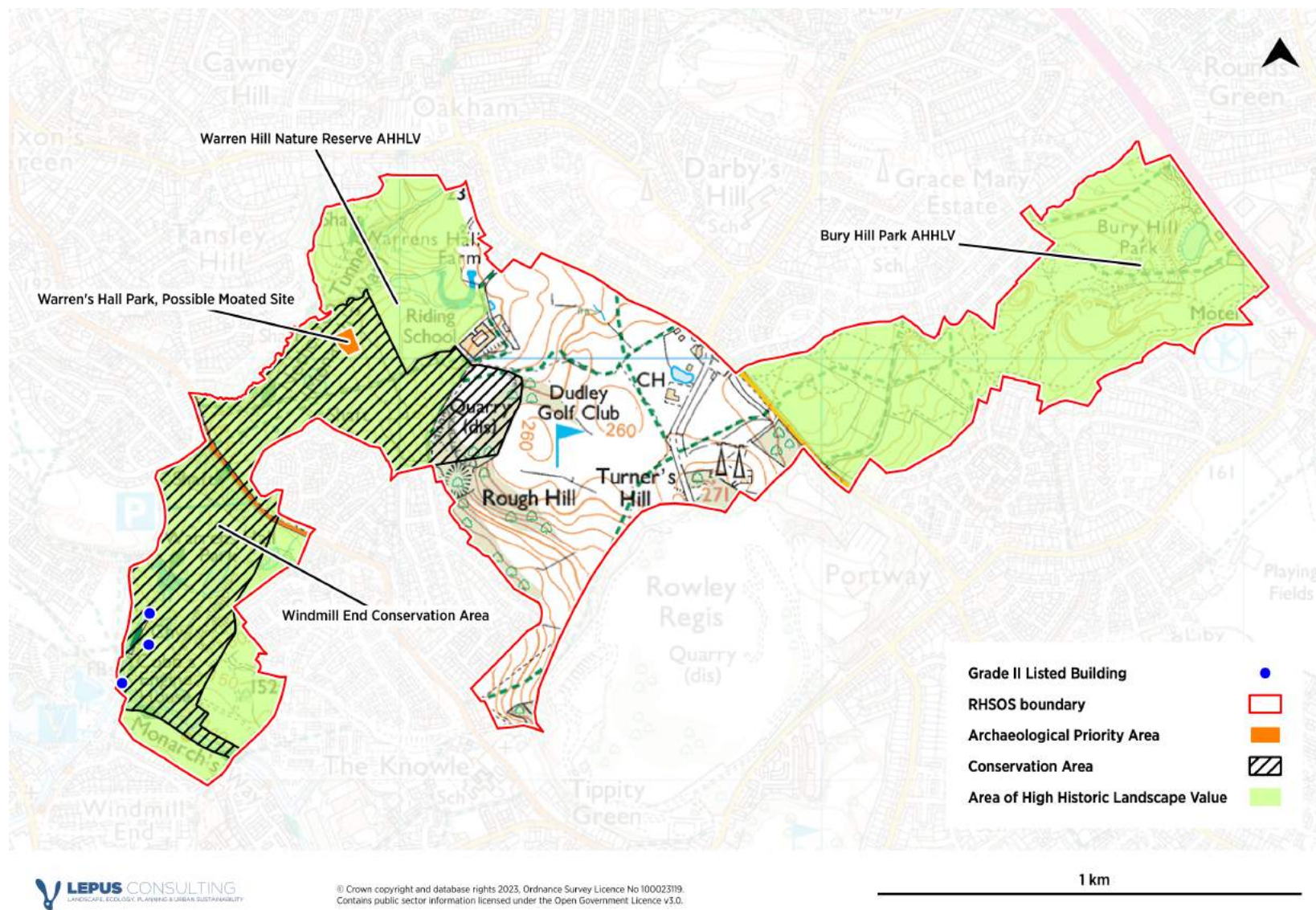


Figure 7.5: Heritage assets and Historic Environment Area Designations (New OS License No AC0000824500)

7.33 **Perceptual and aesthetic factors**

- 7.33.1 The Rowley Hills form a prominent and distinctive landscape feature on the horizon of the Black Country due to their elevated topography and the presence of the tall radio transmission towers at the summit of Turner's Hill. The hills offer panoramic views across the Black Country and beyond including views of the City of Birmingham skyline. Views towards the Clent, Abberley and Malvern Hills of Worcestershire are possible from the upper slopes of Warrens Hall Park.
- 7.33.2 Tranquillity across the RHSOS is relatively good within enclosed and wooded parts of the designation, particularly in the west. Traffic can be heard from the surrounding road network, notably Wolverhampton Road in the east and Portway Hill (road) and Dudley Road that cross through the RHSOS. Noise from traffic on the M5 motorway can be heard from Portway Hill.

8 Landscape Character Areas

8.1 Identification of Landscape Character Areas

8.1.1 The method for undertaking landscape character assessment is summarised in **Chapter 4** of this report. Natural England's guidance, 'An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment'⁶⁴, explains the process of undertaking landscape character assessment and how it can be used to inform land use planning. **Figure 8.1** illustrates the various components that together make a landscape. These are under umbrella headings of (i) natural, (ii) cultural and social, and (iii) perceptual and aesthetic factors.

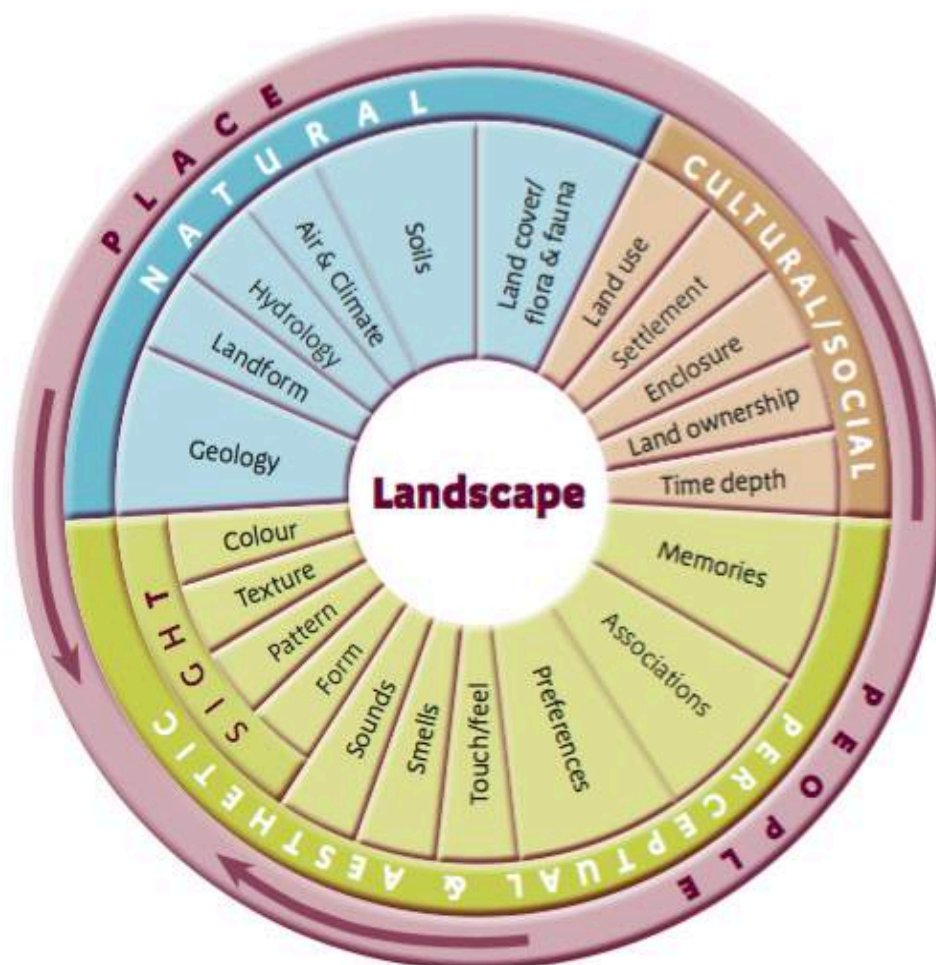


Figure 8.1: What is landscape?

⁶⁴ Natural England (2014). An Approach to Landscape Character Assessment. Available at: https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/691184/landscape-character-assessment.pdf [Date accessed: 18/06/23]

- 8.1.2 Natural England's guidance⁶⁵ includes a definition of landscape character areas. This has been reproduced in **Box 8.1**.

Box 8.1: Landscape types and landscape character areas

Landscape character areas:

- Are the unique individual geographical areas in which landscape types occur;
- Share generic characteristics with other areas of the same type, but have their own particular identity;
- Can often be more readily recognised and identified by non-specialists – sense of place is often important to local people and visitors for example;
- May often be more prevalent than landscape character types, because some types will occur in more than one area;
- Can be identified at each level in the hierarchy of assessment;
- Can provide a good spatially referenced framework from where patterns of local distinctiveness, and factors influencing sense of place, can be drawn; and
- Can be used to develop tailored policies and strategies, that reflect the characteristics that make a given landscape different or special.

8.2 Landscape Character Areas

- 8.2.1 Following a baseline study and site visits to analyse landscape character within the RHSOS area, the following 4 LCAs have been identified. These are presented in **Figure 8.2** and are listed below:

- LCA 1 – Warrens Hall Park;
- LCA 2 – Warrens Hall Farm;
- LCA 3 – Dudley Golf Club and Turner's Hill; and
- LCA 4 – Portway Road SOS and Bury Hill Park.

⁶⁵ *ibid*

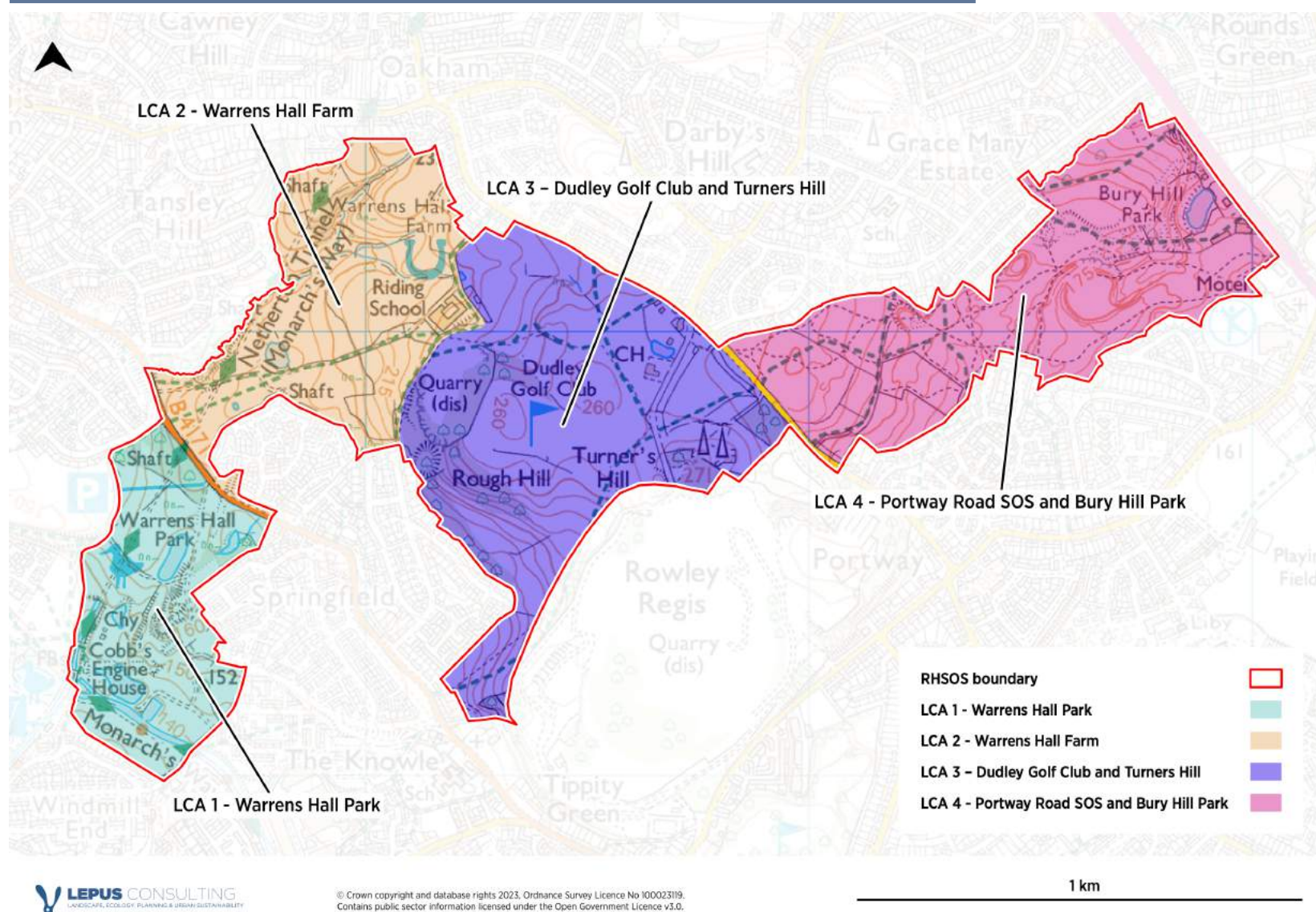


Figure 8.2: Landscape Character Areas in the RHSOS (New OS License No AC0000824500)

8.3 Scale

- 8.3.1 Landscape classification can be prepared at a variety of scales depending on the purpose and scope of the project. The scale of the area to be assessed determines the likely level at which the differences between homogeneous and distinctive factors are separated to identify character areas.
- 8.3.2 The process of characterisation divides landscapes into areas of distinct, recognisable, and consistent character, and groups areas of similar character together. The characterisation provides the spatially referenced framework on which landscape character descriptions, and follow on judgements about future policy development, design strategies, or land management may be based.

9 LCA 1 – Warrens Hall Park

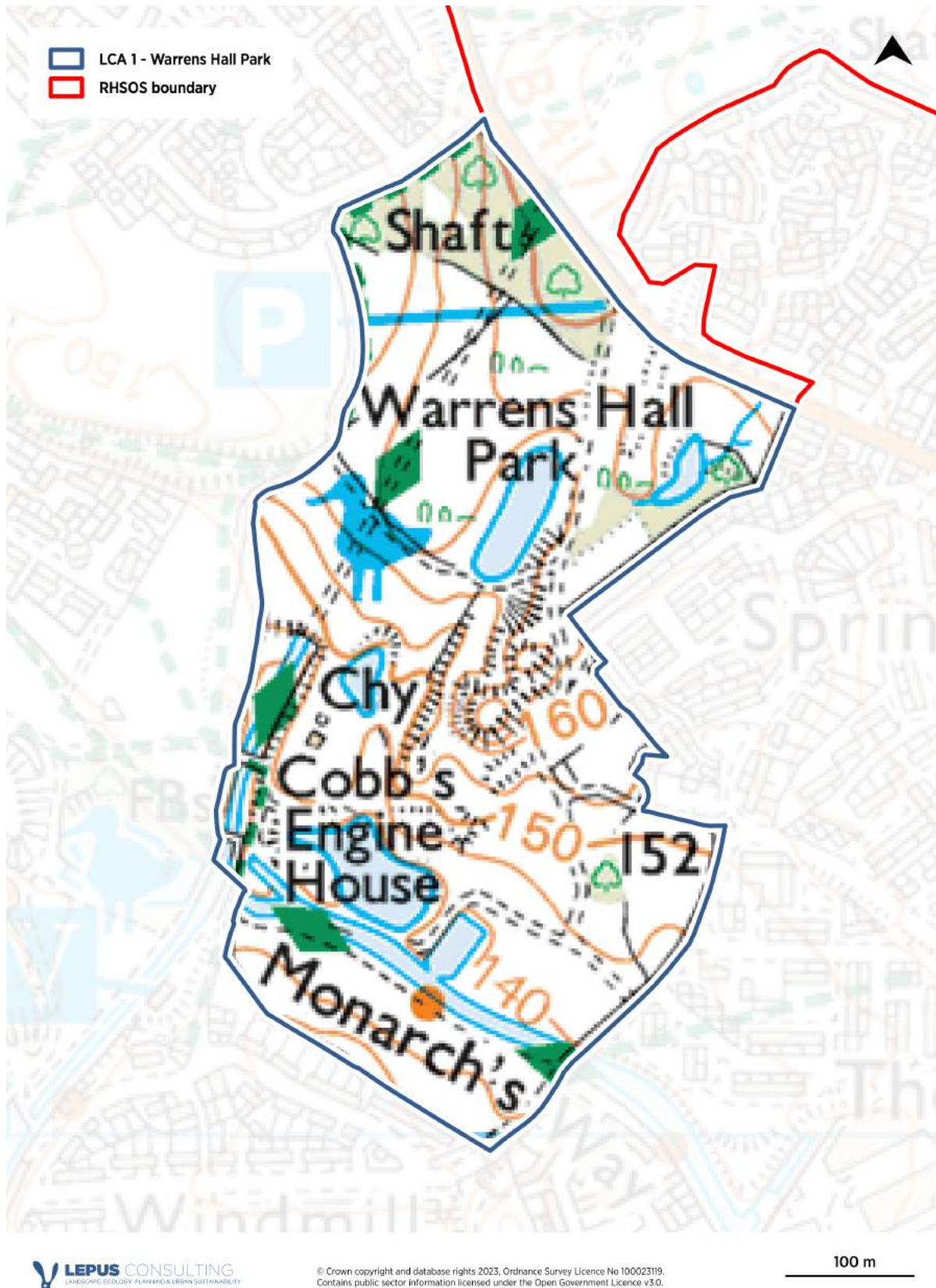


Figure 9.1: LCA 1 – Warrens Hall Park (New OS License No AC0000824500)

9.1 Location and boundaries of LCA 1

9.1.1 The Warrens Hall Park LCA is located in the south west of the RHSOS. This LCA is defined by the Dudley Road to the north, residential properties and Springfield Lane to the east and by the Sandwell LA boundary to the west and south.

9.1.2 The boundary of this LCA follows the same boundary as the Warrens Hall Park SOS green space identified within the Sandwell Green Spaces Audit (2018)⁶⁶ (see **Chapter 3**). Warrens Hall Park SOS is owned by SMBC.

9.2 Characteristics, distinctiveness and features of LCA 1

Natural

- Located entirely within Warrens Hall Country Park LNR and Warrens Hall Park SLINC.
- Strong relationship to the character of the Bumble Hole LNR to the west
- Located entirely within Warrens Hall Nature Reserve AHHLV.
- The topography at this LCA rises in a north easterly direction from Dudley No.2 Canal (at c.130m AOD) to Dudley Road (at c.175m AOD).
- Land cover at this LCA comprises grasslands, woodlands, scrub, hedgerows, canals and ponds.
- Deciduous woodland (Priority Habitat) are present at this LCA.
- Dudley No.2 Canal and the Netherton Tunnel Branch Canal cross through the southern part of this LCA.
- Four ponds are present in this LCA: Swan Pool, Secret Pool, Top Pool and Island Pool.
- The geological bedrock of this area is comprised of: Etruria Formation – Mudstone, sandstone and conglomerate and Etruria Formation – Sandstone⁶⁷.

Cultural and Social

- This LCA contains part of Bumble Hole and Warrens Hall LNR Geosite within the UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark.
- Three Listed Buildings are located within this LCA: South Portal, Netherton Tunnel (Grade II); Cobb's Engine House and Chimney (Grade II); and Footbridge over Netherton Tunnel (Grade II).
- One Scheduled Monument is located within this LCA: Cobb's Engine House, Warley.
- Part of this LCA is located within Windmill End Conservation Area.
- Monarch's Way (Recreational Route) at Netherton Tunnel crosses into and underneath this LCA.
- A traffic-free cycle route runs alongside Dudley No.2 Canal.
- Evidence of former mining activities are present at this LCA including hollows and colonised spoil mounds. A large spoil mound named 'Blow Cold Bank' is located in the centre of this area.

⁶⁶ Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. 2022. Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan 22/23 – 25/26.

⁶⁷ British Geological Survey (2017) Geology of Britain. Accessed on 22/02/18. Available at: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain3d/index.html?>

- This area provides valuable open air recreation opportunities including walking and fishing.
- Sandwell’s Historic Environment Records note the presence of ridge and furrow south east of Banklands Road in the far north of this LCA.

Perceptual and Aesthetic

- Cobb’s Engine House and Chimney is a prominent landmark visible from across the area.
- The elevated topography north of Netherton Tunnel allows for panoramic views outwards to the Clent, Abberley and Malvern Hills of Worcestershire.
- Woodland within this LCA creates a good sense of enclosure from the surrounding urban environs. Edges are generally well vegetated.
- Tranquillity across this LCA is relatively good. More tranquil to the south away from Dudley Road.

9.3 Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness of LCA1

- Conserve and enhance the biodiversity value of the area through protection of the Warrens Hall Country Park LNR and Priority Habitats within this LCA.
- Protect existing semi-improved grasslands and support opportunities to enhance species diversity in the sward, through appropriate seeding and management.
- Conserve the existing panoramic views.

9.4 Landscape capacity

9.4.1 Please refer to **Chapter 5** for methodology of the landscape capacity assessment process. The findings from the assessment of landscape capacity for LCA 1 are presented in **Table 9.1**.

Table 9.1: Landscape capacity assessment results

Landscape character sensitivity	Medium/high
Visual sensitivity	Medium/high
Landscape sensitivity (combines landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity)	Medium/high
Wider landscape sensitivity	Medium
Overall landscape sensitivity (combines landscape sensitivity and wider landscape sensitivity)	Medium/High
Landscape assets value	High
Landscape capacity (combines overall landscape sensitivity and landscape value)	Low

9.4.2 The definition of low capacity as set out in the methodology in **Chapter 5** and restated here for clarity:

“The landscape could not accommodate areas of new development without a significant and adverse impact on the landscape character and visual amenity. Occasional very small scale development may be possible providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and surrounding landscape character.”

Potential effect of development on key landscape characteristics

- Impact on Bumble Hole and Warrens Hall LNR and UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark Geosite
- Impact on Warrens Hall Country Park LNR
- Impact on Warrens Hall Park SLINC
- Loss of deciduous woodland (Priority Habitat) and good quality semi-improved grassland
- Loss of hedgerows
- Impact on Warrens Hall Nature Reserve AHHLV
- Impact on setting of three Listed Buildings
- Impact on setting of Scheduled Monument: Cobb's Engine House
- Impact on setting of Windmill End Conservation Area
- Impact on setting of Monarch's Way (Recreational Route) and traffic-free cycle route
- Impact on setting of Dudley No.2 Canal and the Netherton Tunnel Branch Canal
- Impact on ridge and furrow
- Loss of tranquillity

Potential effect of development on key visual characteristics

- Impact on views from Monarch's Way (Recreational Route) and traffic-free cycle route
- Impact on views from informal footpaths across Warrens Hall Park
- Impact on views from Dudley Road
- Loss of elevated long distance views outwards
- Potential intrusion on the skyline

Potential effect of development on key settlement characteristics

- Erosion of the open space between the surrounding built-up area

Recommendations

- 9.4.3 Residential or economic development at LCA 1 is not recommended due to the potential impact on the key landscape and visual characteristics set out above.



Swan Pool and towers at Turners Hill visible on the horizon



Swan Pool and Cobb's Engine House and Chimney



View looking south towards Cobb's Engine House and Chimney



Grassland and woodland at Warrens Hall Park



View of Netherton Tunnel Branch Canal (looking north)



View of Netherton Tunnel Branch Canal (looking south)

10 LCA 2 – Warrens Hall Farm

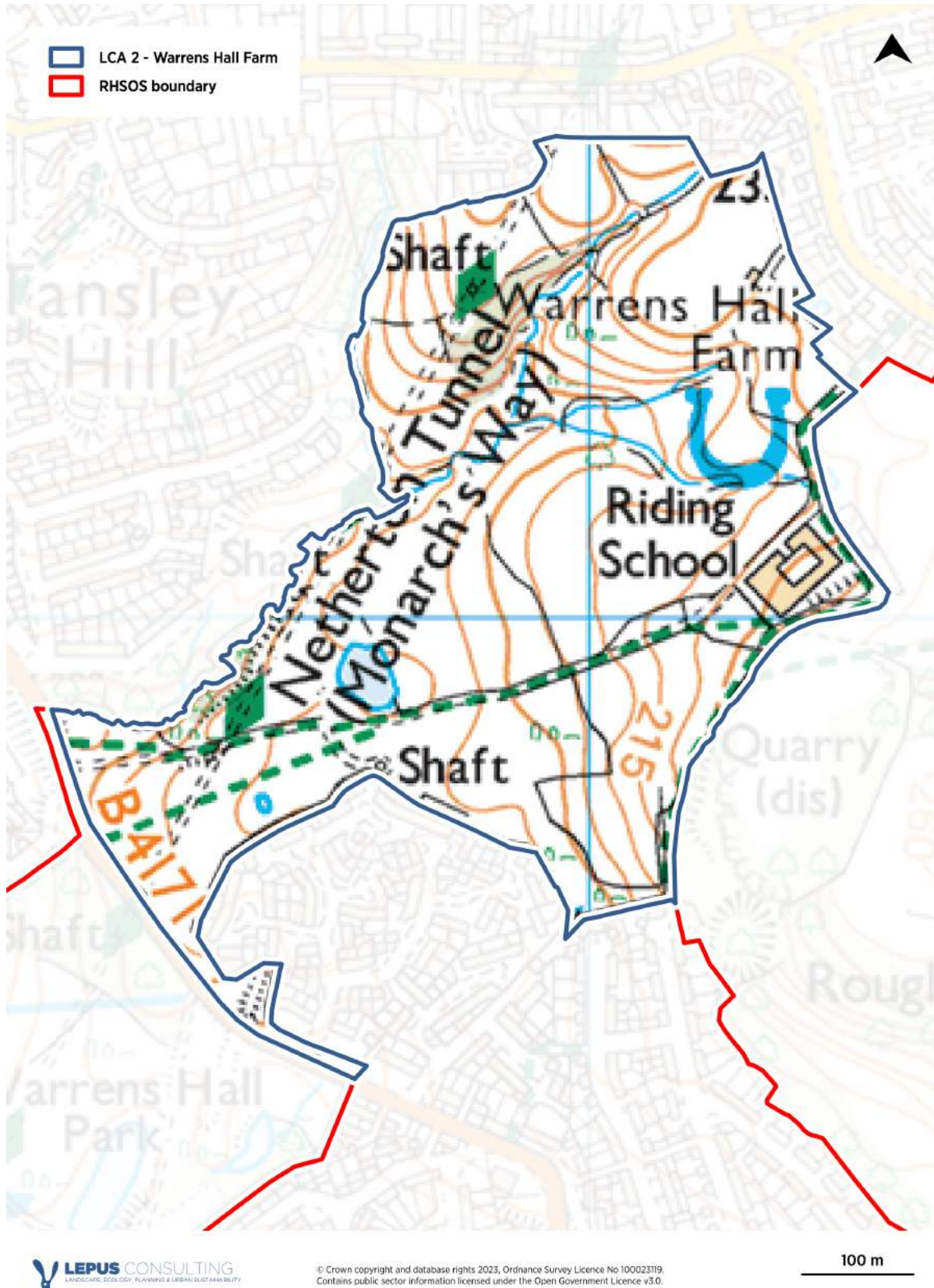


Figure 10.1: LCA 2 – Warrens Hall Farm (New OS Licence No AC0000824500)

10.1 Location and boundaries of LCA 2

10.1.1 The Warrens Hall Farm LCA is located in the north west of the RHSOS. This LCA is defined by residential properties to the north at Oakham Road, by Dudley Golf Club to the east and by residential properties and Dudley Road to the south.

10.1.2 Two green spaces identified within the Sandwell Green Spaces Audit (2018)⁶⁸ (see **Chapter 3**) are located within this LCA:

- Warrens Hall Farm SOS (owned by SMBC); and
- Warrens Hall Grazing (privately owned).

10.2 Characteristics, distinctiveness and features of LCA 2

Natural

- The southern part of this LCA is located within Warrens Hall Country Park LNR and Warrens Hall Farm SINC.
- The northern part of this LCA is located within Warrens Hall Farm SLINC.
- Located almost entirely within Warrens Hall Nature Reserve AHHLV.
- Deciduous woodland (Priority Habitat) and good quality semi-improved grassland are present at this LCA.
- The geological bedrock of this area is comprised of: Rowley Regis Microgabbro Lopolith – Microgabbro, Etruria Formation – Mudstone, sandstone and conglomerate and Etruria Formation – Sandstone⁶⁹.
- Ponds are present including Warrens Hall Farm Pond.
- The topography at this LCA rises from west (at c.175m) to east (at c.230m AOD). The gradients at the northern parts of this LCA are particularly steep with valleys incised by small watercourses.
- This LCA comprises large areas of pasture grazed by horses associated with the nearby Warrens Hall Riding School.
- Woodlands and hedgerows with trees are present across this LCA and fragment the areas of pasture into several smaller enclosures.
- Sandwell's Historic Environment Records note the presence of an ancient hedgerow within this LCA, located along a field boundary within Warrens Hall Farm Grazing.

Cultural and Social

- The southern part of this LCA contains part of Bumble Hole and Warrens Hall LNR Geosite within the UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark.
- Part of this LCA is located within Windmill End Conservation Area.
- An Archaeological Priority Area is located within the LCA, named 'Warrens Hall Park, Possible Moated Site'.
- Monarch's Way (Recreational Route) at Netherton Tunnel crosses underneath this LCA.

⁶⁸ Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. 2022. Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan 22/23 – 25/26.

⁶⁹ British Geological Survey (2017) Geology of Britain. Accessed on 22/02/18. Available at: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain3d/index.html?>

- Netherton Tunnel Air Vent No.4 is located at this LCA.
- A network of PRow (footpaths) cross from east to west connecting Warrens Hall Riding School with Dudley Road. However, northern parts at Warrens Hall Farm are inaccessible.
- Sandwell’s Historic Environment Records note the presence of ridge and furrow within this LCA north east of Netherton Tunnel and to the west of Warrens Hall Farm Pond.

Perceptual and Aesthetic

- Long distance views from footpaths are generally restricted due to the presence of screening green infrastructure along field boundaries.
- Woodland within this LCA creates a good sense of enclosure from the surrounding urban environs.
- Tranquillity across this LCA is relatively good. More tranquil further away from Dudley Road.

10.3 Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness of LCA 2

- Conserve and enhance the biodiversity value of the area through protection of the Warrens Hall Country Park LNR and Priority Habitats within this LCA.
- Support opportunities to enhance the public’s understanding of the special qualities of the landscape of the Rowley Hills, for example through the provision of information boards.
- Strengthen the field pattern by conserving species rich hedgerows and sympathetically maintaining all hedgerows.

10.4 Landscape capacity

10.4.1 Please refer to **Chapter 5** for methodology of the landscape capacity assessment process. The findings from the assessment of landscape capacity for LCA 2 are presented in **Table 10.1**.

Table 10.1: Landscape capacity assessment results

Landscape character sensitivity	Medium/high
Visual sensitivity	Medium
Landscape sensitivity (combines landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity)	Medium/high
Wider landscape sensitivity	Medium
Overall landscape sensitivity (combines landscape sensitivity and wider landscape sensitivity)	Medium/High
Landscape assets value	High
Landscape capacity (combines overall landscape sensitivity and landscape value)	Low

- 10.4.2 The definition of low capacity as set out in the methodology in **Chapter 5** and restated here for clarity:

“The landscape could not accommodate areas of new development without a significant and adverse impact on the landscape character and visual amenity. Occasional very small scale development may be possible providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and surrounding landscape character.”

Potential effect of development on key landscape characteristics

- Impact on Bumble Hole and Warrens Hall LNR and UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark Geosite
- Impact on Warrens Hall Country Park LNR
- Impact on Warrens Hall Farm SINC
- Impact on Warrens Hall Farm SLINC
- Impact on Warrens Hall Nature Reserve AHHLV
- Loss of deciduous woodland (Priority Habitat) and good quality semi-improved grassland
- Loss of hedgerows
- Impact on setting of Windmill End Conservation Area
- Impact on setting of Archaeological Priority Area
- Impact on PRoW (footpaths)
- Impact on ridge and furrow
- Loss of pasture
- Loss of tranquillity

Potential effect of development on key visual characteristics

- Impact on views of pastures and woodlands from PRoW (footpaths)
- Loss of elevated long distance views outwards
- Impact on views from Dudley Road
- Potential intrusion on the skyline

Potential effect of development on key settlement characteristics

- Erosion of the open space between the surrounding built-up area

Recommendations

- 10.4.3 Residential or economic development at LCA 2 is not recommended due to the potential impact on the key landscape and visual characteristics set out above.



View across pastures at Warrens Hall Farm and beyond



View across pastures at Warrens Hall Farm and beyond



View across pastures at Warrens Hall Farm and beyond



View into Dudley Golf Club from LCA 2 - Warrens Hall Farm

11 LCA 3 – Dudley Golf Club and Turner’s Hill

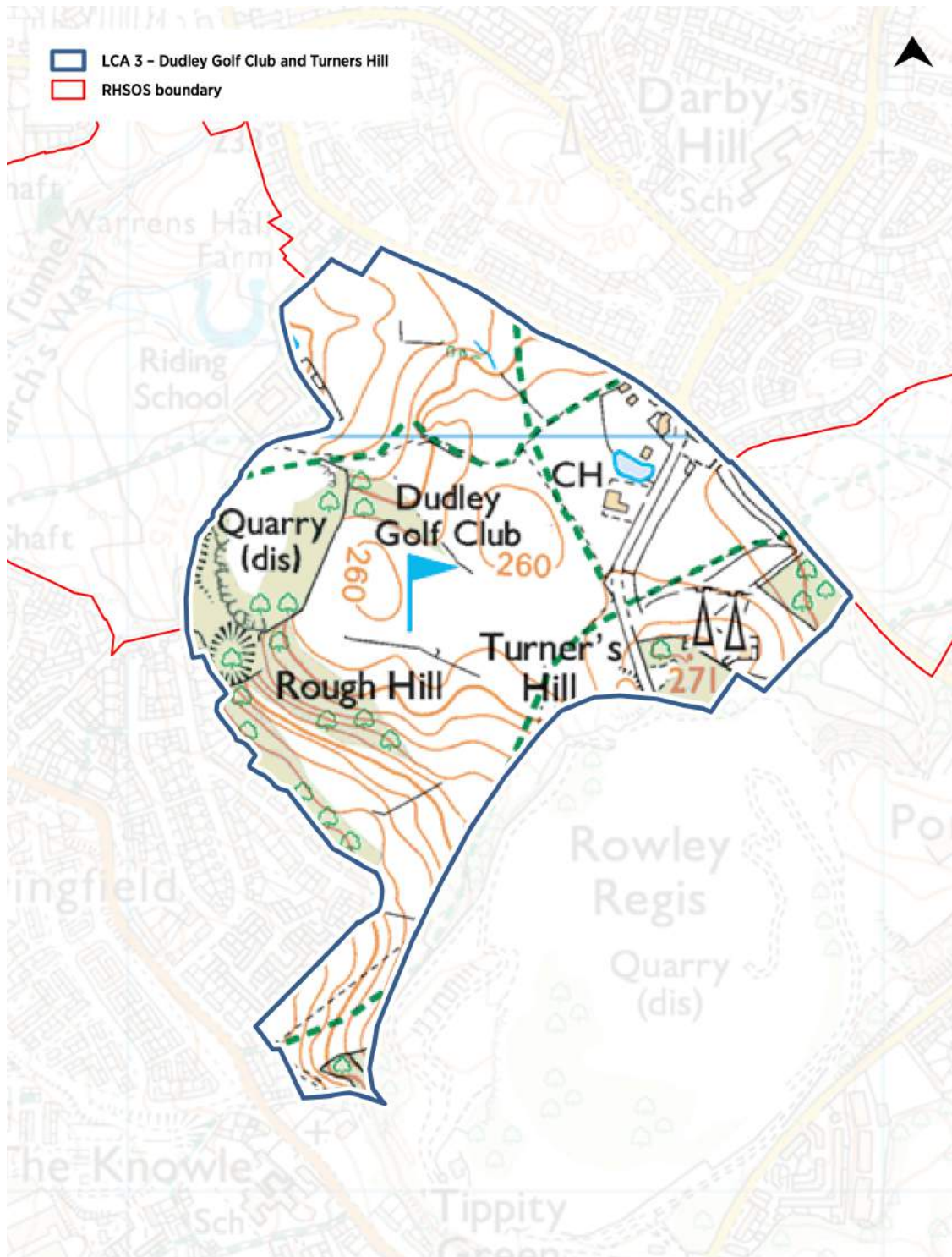


Figure 11.1: LCA 3 – Dudley Golf Club and Turner’s Hill (New OS License No AC0000824500)

11.1 Location and boundaries of LCA 3

11.1.1 The Dudley Golf Club and Turner's Hill LCA is defined by Oakham Road and Portway Hill the north east, by the Edwin Richards Quarry to the south east, by residential properties at Dudley Road, Hailstone Close and Wendover Road to the south west and by LCA 2 – Warrens Hall Farm to the west.

11.1.2 Four green spaces identified within the Sandwell Green Spaces Audit (2018)⁷⁰ (see **Chapter 3**) are located within this LCA:

- Dudley Golf Club SOS (privately owned);
- Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space – Portway Road SOS (partly privately owned);
- The Knowle Grazing Land (ownership not known); and
- The Knowle SOS (privately owned).

11.2 Characteristics, distinctiveness and features of LCA 3

Natural

- Rough Hill Quarry SINC and Dudley Golf Course SLINC are located within this LCA. Part of Hailstone Quarry SLINC and Warrens Hall Farm SLINC are located within this LCA.
- Turner's Hill Claypit PSI and Turner's Hill Farm Pastures PSI are located within this LCA. Dudley Golf Course PSI, Cloudland Quarry PSI and Edwin Richards Quarry, Turner's Hill PSI are partially located within this LCA.
- Deciduous woodland (Priority Habitat) and good quality semi-improved grassland are present at this LCA.
- Fairways at Dudley Golf Club span the central and northern parts of this LCA. Linear pockets of woodland divide the fairways into separate areas of grassland.
- Pastures adjacent to the radio transmission towers at the summit of Turner's Hill are grazed by horses.
- The topography at this LCA rises in all directions towards the summit at Turner's Hill (at 271m AOD). The topography falls sharply at the former Rough Hill quarry adjacent to Dudley Golf Club.
- A pond is present within the grounds of a residential property adjacent to the Dudley Golf Club car park.
- The geological bedrock of this area is comprised of: Rowley Regis Microgabbro Lopolith – Microgabbro and Etruria Formation – Mudstone, sandstone and conglomerate⁷¹.
- To the south, this LCA is located directly adjacent to the Edwin Richards Quarry.

Cultural and Social

- A network of PRow (footpaths) cross through Dudley Golf Club connecting Portway Hill (road) with Turner's Hill, Oakham Road and Warrens Hall Riding School to the west.
- Part of this LCA is located within Windmill End Conservation Area.

⁷⁰ Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. 2022. Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan 22/23 – 25/26.

⁷¹ British Geological Survey (2017) Geology of Britain. Accessed on 22/02/18. Available at: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain3d/index.html?>

- Radio transmission towers are located at the summit of Turner’s Hill.
- A road named ‘Turner’s Hill’ crosses through this LCA from Oakham Road to the radio transmission towers at the summit of Turner’s Hill.
- Residential properties and the Dudley Golf Club clubhouse are located along Turner’s Hill (road).

Perceptual and Aesthetic

- The tall radio transmission towers at the summit of Turner’s Hill are a prominent and distinctive landmark.
- The elevated topography at Dudley Golf Club allows for panoramic views across the Black Country and beyond.
- Tranquillity across this LCA is relatively good. Noise from passing vehicles at Portway Hill and Oakham Road can be heard from parts of this LCA.

11.3 Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness of LCA 3

- Conserve and enhance the biodiversity value of the SINCs, SLINCs and Priority Habitats within this LCA.
- Conserve and enhance the linear wooded features within Dudley Golf Club which act as valuable wildlife corridors between Portway Hill to the east and Warrens Hall Country Park LNR to the west.
- Conserve the existing panoramic views.

11.4 Landscape capacity

11.4.1 Please refer to **Chapter 5** for methodology of the landscape capacity assessment process. The findings from the assessment of landscape capacity for LCA 3 are presented in **Table 11.1**.

Table 11.1: Landscape capacity assessment results

Landscape character sensitivity	Medium
Visual sensitivity	Medium/high
Landscape sensitivity (combines landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity)	Medium/high
Wider landscape sensitivity	Medium
Overall landscape sensitivity (combines landscape sensitivity and wider landscape sensitivity)	Medium/High
Landscape assets value	Medium/high
Landscape capacity (combines overall landscape sensitivity and landscape value)	Low

- 11.4.2 The definition of low capacity as set out in the methodology in **Chapter 5** and restated here for clarity:

“The landscape could not accommodate areas of new development without a significant and adverse impact on the landscape character and visual amenity. Occasional very small scale development may be possible providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and surrounding landscape character.”

Potential effect of development on key landscape characteristics

- Impact on Rough Hill Quarry SINC
- Impact on Dudley Golf Course SLINC
- Impact on Hailstone Quarry SLINC
- Impact on Warrens Hall Farm SLINC
- Loss of deciduous woodland (Priority Habitat) and good quality semi-improved grassland
- Impact on PRoW (footpaths)
- Impact on setting of Windmill End Conservation Area
- Loss of pastures at Turner’s Hill

Potential effect of development on key visual characteristics

- Impact on views from PRoW (footpaths)
- Impact on views from Dudley Golf Course
- Loss of elevated long distance views outwards
- Impact on views from Portway Hill (road) and Oakham Road
- Potential intrusion on the skyline

Potential effect of development on key settlement characteristics

- Erosion of the open space between the surrounding built-up area

Recommendations

- 11.4.3 In exceptional and very small scale situations, urban regeneration and the recycling of derelict or urban land may be possible at LCA 3 providing it does not impact on the key landscape and visual characteristics set out above.
- 11.4.4 For example, in 2019, planning permission was granted for the proposed demolition of existing structures and erection of three houses each with four beds located on land adjacent to Dudley Golf Club at Turner’s Hill (DC/19/62885).

11.4.5 In 2022, a planning application was submitted to demolish the Wheatsheaf, an existing former public house and construct a three-storey building containing 20 apartments with parking to the rear which provides 23 car parking spaces (DC/22/66968)⁷². The Wheatsheaf is located at the junction of Portway Road and Turner's Hill.

11.4.6 The report to planning committee includes the following statement regarding Local Planning Policy SAD EOS3:

"The site forms part of the RHSOS in the Development Plan. Policy SAD EOS3 refers to development not being permitted which would prejudice the character of the Rowley Hills in terms of the wider open space, merging urban areas, the skyline and wildlife. The site itself, is already developed as a public house, the extent of the footprint is not substantially greater, arguably improving the visual appearance of the site and its setting within the RHSOS."

"As referred to above, the site forms part of the RHSOS but is already developed land and so does not prejudice the existing openness of the Rowley Hills."

11.4.7 The report to planning committee includes the following reasons for recommendations:

"The development will not harm the openness of the Rowley Hills, provides a good quality scheme that would deliver much needed homes within the borough and raises no amenity issues."

⁷² Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (2023) Planning – Application Summary. DC/22/66968. Available at: <https://webcaps.sandwell.gov.uk/publicaccess/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=summary&keyVal=RAQHITNRIG700> [Accessed 14/08/23]



Dudley Golf Club



Dudley Golf Club



View from Dudley Golf Club (looking south)



Dudley Golf Club (looking west)



Radio transmission towers at the summit of Turner's Hill



View of Turner's Hill from footpath at Newbury Lane playing fields

12 LCA 4 – Portway Road SOS and Bury Hill Park

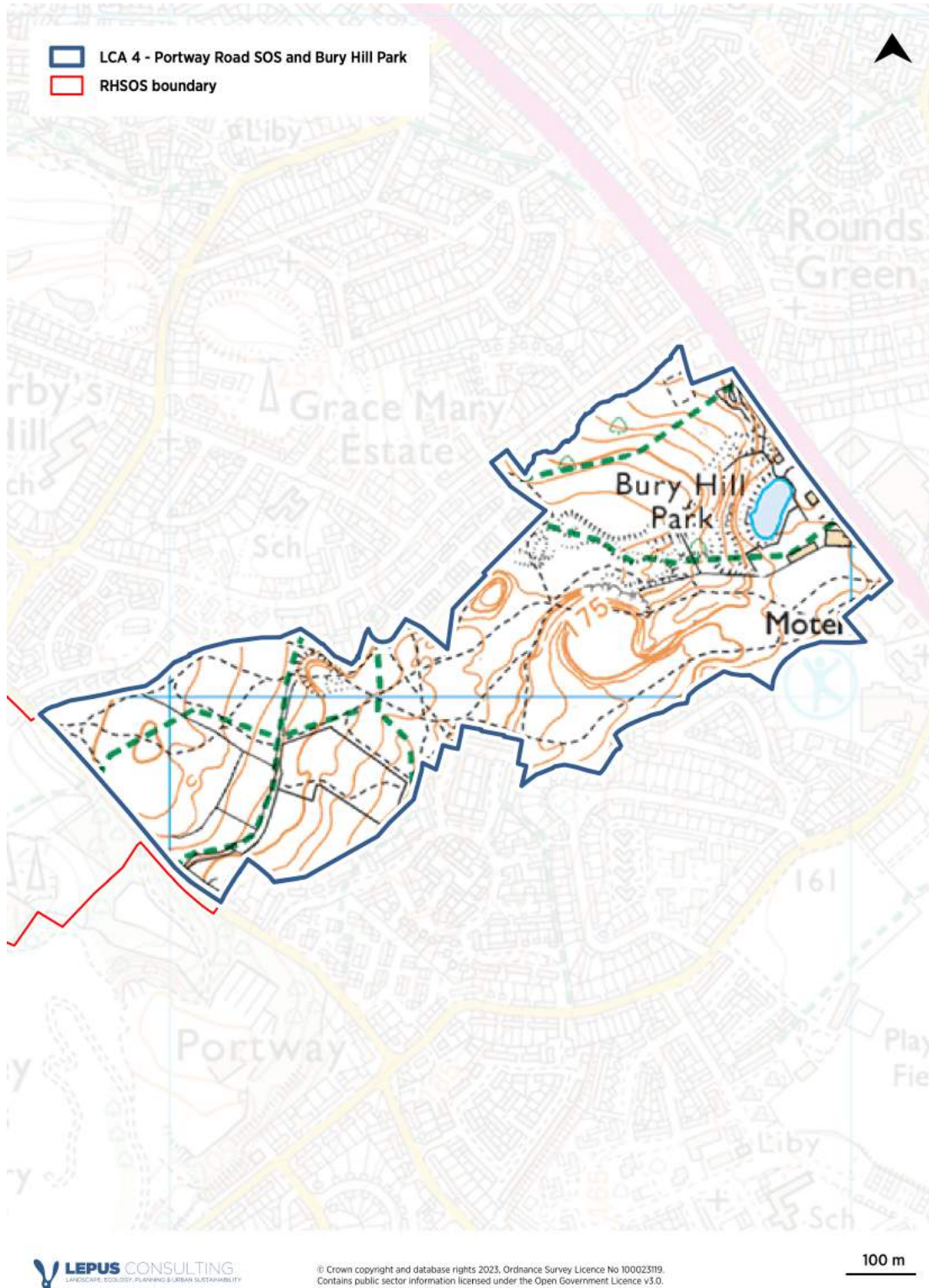


Figure 12.1: LCA 4 – Portway Road SOS and Bury Hill Park (New OS License No AC0000824500)

12.1 Location and boundaries of LCA 4

12.1.1 The Portway Road SOS and Bury Hill Park LCA is defined by residential properties to the north, by Wolverhampton Road to the east, by commercial development (including Portway Lifestyle Centre) and residential buildings to the south and by Portway Hill (road) to the west.

12.1.2 Two green spaces identified within the Sandwell Green Spaces Audit (2018)⁷³ (see **Chapter 3**) are located within this LCA:

- Bury Hill Park (owned by SMBC); and
- Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space – Portway Road SOS (partly privately owned).

12.2 Characteristics, distinctiveness and features of LCA 4

Natural

- Portway Hill Open Space SINC and Bury Hill SLINC are located within this LCA.
- Bury Hill Park AHHLV is located within this LCA.
- Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust own and manage a nature reserve at Portway Hill.
- Deciduous woodland (Priority Habitat) and good quality semi-improved grassland are present at this LCA.
- Land cover at this LCA mostly comprises neutral grassland. Remnants of semi-improved agricultural land are present that survived quarrying throughout the industrial revolution. Areas of broadleaved woodlands, marshy grassland, dense and scattered scrub and ruderal vegetation.
- The geological bedrock of this area is comprised of: Rowley Regis Microgabbro Lopolith – Microgabbro and Etruria Formation – Mudstone, sandstone and conglomerate⁷⁴.
- Rock exposures of Rowley Rag are evident on Portway Hill.
- Edale House Lake is located in the far east of this LCA, between Lakeside Wood and the commercial development at Wolverhampton Road.
- The topography rises sharply at the rockface of the former Blue Rock Quarry towards the plateau at Bury Hill Park.
- The topography of the Portway Road SOS rises from Wolverhampton Road (c.165m AOD) in the east to Portway Hill (c.260m AOD) in the west.

Cultural and Social

- The Rowley Hills and Blue Rock Quarry UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark Geosites are located within this LCA.
- This LCA contains former quarries and collieries that have since been landfilled and capped with operations ending in the late 20th century. This LCA contains the remains

⁷³ Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. 2022. Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan 22/23 – 25/26.

⁷⁴ British Geological Survey (2017) Geology of Britain. Accessed on 22/02/18. Available at: <http://mapapps.bgs.ac.uk/geologyofbritain3d/index.html?>

of Samson Quarry, Blue Rock Quarry, Lyecross Colliery and a quarry to the east of Turners Hill.

- A network of PRoW (footpaths) and paths cross through this LCA.
- Commercial development and a residential property accessed via Wolverhampton Road are located within this LCA in the far east.
- This area provides valuable open air recreation opportunities including walking and fishing.
- A football pitch, basketball court and play area can be found at Bury Hill Park.
- Sandwell's Historic Environment Records note the finding of a neolithic stone axe at Portway Hill.
- A dry-stone wall can be found at Portway Hill, marking the edge of a historic field boundary.

Perceptual and Aesthetic

- The tall radio transmission towers at the summit of Turner's Hill are a prominent and distinctive landmark.
- The elevated topography rising to the west allows for panoramic views across the Black Country and beyond including views of the City of Birmingham skyline.
- Tranquillity across this LCA is relatively good. Noise from traffic on the M5 motorway can be heard from this area which is an aural detractor.

12.3 Recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness of LCA 4

- Conserve and enhance the biodiversity value of the Bury Hill Park SLINC, Portway Hill Open Space SINC and Priority Habitats within this LCA.
- Protect existing semi-improved grasslands and support opportunities to enhance species diversity in the sward, through appropriate seeding and management.
- Conserve the existing panoramic views.
- Support opportunities to enhance the public's understanding of the special qualities of the landscape of the Rowley Hills, for example through the provision of information boards.

12.4 Landscape capacity

12.4.1 Please refer to **Chapter 5** for methodology of the landscape capacity assessment process. The findings from the assessment of landscape capacity for LCA 2 are presented in **Table 12.1**.

Table 12.1: Landscape capacity assessment results

Landscape character sensitivity	Medium
Visual sensitivity	Medium/high
Landscape sensitivity (combines landscape character sensitivity and visual sensitivity)	Medium/high
Wider landscape sensitivity	Medium
Overall landscape sensitivity (combines landscape sensitivity and wider landscape sensitivity)	Medium/High
Landscape assets value	High
Landscape capacity (combines overall landscape sensitivity and landscape value)	Low

12.4.2 The definition of low capacity as set out in the methodology in **Chapter 5** and restated here for clarity:

“The landscape could not accommodate areas of new development without a significant and adverse impact on the landscape character and visual amenity. Occasional very small scale development may be possible providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and surrounding landscape character.”

Potential effect of development on key landscape characteristics

- Impact on the Rowley Hills and Blue Rock Quarry UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark Geosites
- Impact on deciduous woodland (Priority Habitat) and good quality semi-improved grassland
- Impact on Portway Hill Open Space SINC
- Impact on Bury Hill SLINC
- Impact on Bury Hill Park AHHLV
- Impact on PRoW (footpaths)

Potential effect of development on key visual characteristics

- Impact on views from PRoW (footpaths)
- Impact on views from Bury Hill Park
- Impact on views from Portway Hill (road)
- Loss of elevated long distance views outwards
- Potential intrusion on the skyline

Potential effect of development on key settlement characteristics

- Erosion of the open space between the surrounding built-up area

Recommendations

- 12.4.3 Residential or economic development at LCA 4 is not recommended due to the potential impact on the key landscape and visual characteristics set out above.



View of Birmingham skyline from Bury Hill Park



View from Bury Hill Park



View of radio transmission towers from Portway Hill



View from Bury Hill Park



Butterfly at Portway Hill



View of Birmingham skyline from Portway Hill

13 Visual characteristics

13.1 Viewpoint locations

13.1.1 The viewpoint locations have been chosen to illustrate the range of visual characteristics of the Rowley Hills and are presented in **Table 13.1**. They offer a range of views taking in several different aspects around the area of search. For each illustrated photograph, a panoramic view is illustrated using an equivalent focal length of 50mm. All pictures have been taken at an eye level of approximately 150cm.

13.1.2 **Appendix A** provides details of the viewpoint locations and the panoramic photographs, representing the view at each location, can be found in **Appendix B**.

13.1.3 It should be noted that the following visual appraisal is based on foliage present in August 2023. It is possible that there would be greater intervisibility between different parts of the RHSOS during the winter months when foliage cover is reduced.

Table 13.1: Viewpoint locations

Viewpoint Number	Location of Viewpoint/Description
1	Eastern extent of Portway Hill
2a+b+c	Bury Hill Park
3	Footpath at Bury Hill Park
4	Footpath at Portway Hill
5	Turner's Hill
6	Footpath at Dudley Golf Club
7	Footpath at Dudley Golf Club
8a+b	Footpath at Dudley Golf Club
9	Footpath at Warrens Hall Farm
10	Permissive path at Warrens Hall Farm
11	Footpath adjacent to Warrens Hall Riding School
12	Footpath south of Warrens Hall Riding School
13	Warrens Hall Park
14	St Peter's Road bridge over Dudley Canal
15a+b	Footpath at Newbury Lane playing fields
16	Road junction at Turner's Hill and Portway Hill

13.2 Typical visual receptors

Outdoor recreational receptors

- 13.2.1 GLVIA3 suggests that outdoor recreational receptors are classified as being highly sensitive to changes in the landscape, especially those associated with enjoying the landscape as part of their recreational experience. Outdoor recreational receptors include cyclists, horse riders and walkers.
- 13.2.2 A network of public rights of way (PRoW) cross through the RHSOS including footpaths connecting Bury Hill Park in the east with Warrens Hall Park in the west. Monarch's Way (Recreational Route) follows the Dudley No.2 Canal and the Netherton Tunnel Branch Canal. A traffic-free cycle route runs alongside Dudley No.2 Canal.
- 13.2.3 Footpaths at Bury Hill Park in the east are represented by **Viewpoint 2** and **3**. Footpaths at the western extent of Portway Hill are represented by **Viewpoint 4**. Footpaths at Dudley Golf Club are represented by **Viewpoints 6, 7** and **8**. Footpaths at Warrens Hall Farm are represented by **Viewpoints 9, 10, 11** and **12**.
- 13.2.4 Regarding views from outside the RHSOS designation, **Viewpoint 15** represents views from a footpath at Newbury Lane playing fields looking towards the Rowley Hills.
- 13.2.5 While the PRoW form the formal footpath network across the area, there is evidence of informal use of various routes across Warrens Hall Park and Portway Hill. These views are represented by **Viewpoints 1** and **13**.

Road users

- 13.2.6 GLVIA3 suggests that drivers and other road users in motor vehicles are considered as medium to high level visual receptors, depending on the reason for the being in the location.
- 13.2.7 A network of roads surround the RHSOS. Notably, Wolverhampton Road runs adjacent to the far eastern boundary of the RHSOS. Portway Hill (road) and Dudley Road cross through the RHSOS.
- 13.2.8 **Viewpoint 14** represents views towards the Rowley Hills for road users at St Peter's Road bridge over Dudley Canal. **Viewpoint 16** represents views for road users looking out of the RHSOS designation at the road junction at Turner's Hill and Portway Hill.

Residential receptors

- 13.2.9 Landscape assessment and the best practice guidance provided in GLVIA3, focuses on the assessment of public views and public visual amenity. The Landscape Institute's Technical Guidance Note on Residential Visual Amenity Assessment recognises that the planning system is designed to act in the public interest although there are occasions when private interests are considered:

“Changes in views and visual amenity are considered in the planning process. In respect of private views and visual amenity, it is widely known that, no one has ‘a right to a view.’ This includes situations where a residential property’s outlook / visual amenity is judged to be ‘significantly’ affected by a proposed development, a matter which has been confirmed in a number of appeal / public inquiry decisions...”

- 13.2.10 GLVIA3 suggests that, although views from residential dwellings are often not protected by the planning system, residential receptors are likely to be of high sensitivity to changes in views, particularly from rooms and locations within the curtilage of the property that are frequently used during the day.

14 Landscape value of the RHSOS designation

What is landscape value?

14.1.1 The definition of landscape value, particularly in relation to landscapes which lie outside a national landscape designation, has been subject to much discussion amongst landscape assessment practitioners since the term was used in the 2019 National Planning Policy Framework.

14.1.2 In 2021, the Landscape Institute published a Technical Guidance Note (TGN), 'Assessing landscape value outside national designations'⁷⁵ and the advice provided has been used to inform this assessment of the landscape value of the study area. The TGN does not seek to provide an evaluative methodology to replace that provided in other advisory documents, such as Landscape Character Assessment, Landscape Sensitivity Assessment and the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (as referenced in **Chapter 3** of this report). The TGN does, however, set out a series of factors to consider when identifying landscape value (Table 1 of the TGN 02/21 see **Appendix D**). These indicators have been used to form the basis of this assessment. The TGN also sets out some useful definitions relating to the assessment of landscape value.

14.2 Useful definitions (from TGN 02/22)

Landscape qualities: The characteristics or features that are valued

"This term is being used to distinguish landscape qualities from landscape characteristics which are elements, or combinations of elements, which make a particular contribution to landscape character. Landscape qualities (in the sense meant in this TGN) are usually referred to as 'special qualities' or 'special landscape qualities' in relation to nationally designated landscapes. For example, 'special qualities' is a statutory expression used in relation to National Parks, in policy for Scotland's local landscape designations, and is a term used informally to describe components of natural beauty set out in AONB Management Plans".

14.2.1 The TGN states,

"Landscape value can be assessed as an evaluation stage of a landscape character assessment or as a follow-on study. In this case landscape qualities will be identified in relation to individual character areas or types. Currently these are commonly described as 'valued landscape characteristics' or 'landscape qualities'.

⁷⁵ Landscape Institute (2021) 'Technical Guidance Note 02/21: Assessing Landscape Value Outside National Designation' Available at <https://landscapewpstorage01.blob.core.windows.net/www-landscapeinstitute-org/2021/05/tgn-02-21-assessing-landscape-value-outside-national-designations.pdf> [Date accessed 27/05/23]

The relative importance to be attached to each indicator is likely to vary across different landscapes. Once evidence for each factor has been collated and assessed, it is important to step back and judge the overall ‘weight of evidence’ in coming to an overall judgement on landscape value.

While condition/intactness of a landscape is one factor that can influence value, poor landscape management should not be a reason to deny a landscape a valued status if other factors indicate value.”

14.3 Evaluation of the landscape value of the study area

14.3.1 The following provides a summary of the assessment of the value of the landscape within the study area based on the indicators provided in Table 1 of the TGN 02/21. The ‘Definition’ and ‘Examples of indicators’ for each category have been taken from TGN 02/21.

Table 14.1: Natural heritage indicators

Natural heritage definition Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape.	
Examples of indicators	Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area
Presence of wildlife and habitats of ecological interest that contribute to sense of place	<p>There are a variety of habitats across the RHSOS, including deciduous woodlands, good quality semi-improved grasslands, scrub, hedgerows, ponds and canals.</p> <p>Deciduous woodland (Priority Habitat) and good quality semi-improved grassland are located within the RHSOS.</p> <p>Butterfly species have been recorded at Portway Hill including one of the few colonies of Marbled White Butterflies in Birmingham and the Black Country. Birds of prey have also been recorded at Portway Hill, notably peregrines and kestrels⁷⁶.</p> <p>The ecological evaluation of the RHSOS can be found in Chapter 7.</p>
Extent and survival of semi-natural habitat that is characteristic of the landscape type	<p>Semi-natural habitats present across the RHSOS include deciduous woodland, semi-improved grassland, scrub and hedgerows.</p>
Presence of distinctive geological, geomorphological or pedological features	<p>The Rowley Hills rise above the surrounding landscape and form a prominent and distinctive geomorphological feature visible from across the Black Country and beyond. The Rowley Hills comprise four hills; Turner’s Hill (the highest point at 271m), Bury Hill, Portway Hill and Darby’s Hill.</p> <p>The Rowley Hills are made of hard dark grey igneous rocks locally known as Rowley Rag which welled up as magma from the depths of Earth 300 million years ago. Rowley Rag has been extensively quarried, mostly for use as aggregate providing employment for generations from the surrounding communities. The geological evaluation of the RHSOS can be found in Chapter 7.</p> <p>Local walking guides created by the Black Country Geological Society, Friends of Rowley Hills, Sandwell Council and the Black Country Global Geopark provide information for walkers to them help to identify geological and geomorphological features.</p>

⁷⁶ Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust. Portway Hill. Available at: <https://www.bbcwildlife.org.uk/Portway-hill> [Accessed 10/08/23]

Landscape which contains valued natural capital assets that contribute to ecosystem services, for example distinctive ecological communities and habitats that form the basis of ecological networks	The strong network of semi-natural habitats within the RHSOS facilitate the movement of wildlife through the unbroken corridor from the Bumble Hole and Warrens Hall LNRs, across the top of the Rowley Hills to Portway Hill.
Landscape which makes an identified contribution to a nature recovery/ green infrastructure network	<p>The RHSOS has a strong network of semi-natural habitats and PRoW which support a range of multifunctional benefits that green infrastructure can provide, such as good ecological networks and access to informal recreational opportunities which benefit health and well-being in proximity to local residents.</p> <p>The RHSOS is identified within the Black Country Local Nature Recovery Opportunity Map as being located within a Core Landscape: Core Landscape: CL10 – The Rowley Hills, Bumble Hole and Warren’s Hall (see Chapter 3 for details).</p>
Conclusion	The landscape of the RHSOS expresses a good level of special qualities in this category and is considered to have value in relation to natural heritage indicators.

Table 14.2: Cultural heritage indicators

Cultural heritage definition	
Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape.	
Examples of indicators	Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area
Presence of historic landmark structures or designed landscape elements (e.g. follies, monuments, avenues, tree roundels).	<p>Cobb's Engine House and Chimney is Grade II Listed Building (the Engine House is also a Scheduled Monument) located within the Warrens Hall Park dating from 1831. The chimney is a prominent landmark visible from across the local area.</p> <p>South Portal, Netherton Tunnel (Grade II Listed Building) and Footbridge over Netherton Tunnel (Grade II Listed Building) are also located at the Warrens Hall Park, which add to the strong sense of time depth in the local landscape.</p>
Presence of historic parks and gardens, and designed landscapes.	None known to be present.
Landscape which contributes to the significance of heritage assets, for example forming the setting of heritage assets (especially if identified in specialist studies).	<p>Three Listed Buildings are located within the RHSOS: Cobb's Engine House and Chimney (Grade II), South Portal, Netherton Tunnel (Grade II) and Footbridge over Netherton Tunnel (Grade II). Cobb's Engine House is also a Scheduled Monument. The surrounding Warrens Hall Country Park LNR, crossed by numerous PRow and canals provide opportunities for the public to access and enjoy views of these heritage assets in an attractive setting.</p> <p>Windmill End Conservation Area is partially located within the RHSOS at Warrens Hall Park.</p> <p>Two Areas of High Historic Landscape Value (AHHLV) are located within the RHSOS, these are: Bury Hill Park AHHLV and Warrens Hall Nature Reserve AHHLV. These two AHHLV have been designated due to the significance of their archaeological and historic interests.</p>
Landscape which offers a dimension of time depth. This includes natural time depth, e.g. presence of features such as glaciers and peat bogs and cultural time depth e.g. presence of relic farmsteads, ruins, historic field patterns, historic rights of way (e.g. drove roads, salt ways, tracks associated with past industrial activity).	<p>Alongside the various heritage assets, natural and cultural landscape features within the RHSOS also create a dimension of time depth.</p> <p>Sandwell's Historic Environment Records note the presence of ridge and furrow and an ancient hedgerow in the west of the RHSOS within Warrens Hall Farm Grazing. Evidence of former mining activities are present including hollows and colonised spoil mounds including a large spoil mound named 'Blow Cold Bank'.</p> <p>Portway Hill contains former quarries and collieries that have since been landfilled and capped with operations ending in the late 20th century. Portway Hill contains the remains of Samson Quarry, Blue Rock Quarry, Lycross Colliery and a quarry to the east of Turners Hill.</p> <p>The topography falls sharply at the former Rough Hill quarry adjacent to Dudley Golf Club (designated as a SINC). Hailstone Quarry to the south is also designated as a SLINC.</p> <p>A dry-stone wall can be found at Portway Hill, marking the edge of a field boundary.</p>
Conclusion	The landscape of the RHSOS expresses a good level of special qualities in this category and is considered to have value in relation to cultural heritage indicators.

Table 14.3: Landscape condition indicators

Landscape condition definition	
Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure	
Examples of indicators	Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area
Good physical condition/intactness of individual landscape elements (e.g. walls, parkland, trees)	There are examples of landscape elements in good condition, for example, the grasslands and trees at Dudley Golf Club is neatly maintained, the pastures at Warrens Hall Farm are grazed by horses and the grasslands at Warrens Hall Park appear to be mown on a regular basis. The Birmingham & Black Country Wildlife Trust manage their land at the Portway Hill nature reserve.
Good health of elements such as good water quality, good soil health	The RHSOS is located between two river basin districts; the Severn and the Humber. Within the Severn River Basin, the RHSOS is located within the 'Stour (Worcs) source to conf Smestow Bk' water body where the ecological status is 'Poor'. Within the Humber River Basin, the RHSOS is located within the 'Tame (Oldbury Arm) - source to conf R Tame (Wton Arm)' water body where the ecological status is 'moderate'. ⁷⁷
Strong landscape structure (e.g. intact historic field patterns)	At Portway Hill, areas of agricultural land that were never quarried are present, including extensive tall but gappy hedgerows and a length of dry-stone wall. Sandwell's Historic Environment Records note the presence of ridge and furrow and an ancient hedgerow in the west of the RHSOS within Warrens Hall Farm Grazing.
Absence of detracting/incongruous features (or features are present but have little influence)	The tall radio transmission towers at the summit of Turner's Hill are an element of detracting vertical built form.
Conclusion	The landscape condition of the study area is generally good. Landscape elements, such as trees and grasslands are managed well. However, there are landscape detractors which adversely impact the visual character of the RHSOS.

⁷⁷ Environment Agency (2023) Explore catchment data. Available at: <https://environment.data.gov.uk/catchment-planning> [Accessed 17/08/23]

Table 14.4: Associations indicators

Associations definition	
Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts	
Examples of indicators	Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area
Associations with well-known literature, poetry, art, TV/film and music that contribute to perceptions of the landscape	The photograph on the front cover of the book 'In Search of the Wild Asparagus' by Roy Lancaster was taken from the Rowley Hills in the early 1980s. ⁷⁸
Associations with science or other technical achievements	The Cobb's Engine House is the earliest surviving example of its type and one of the few engine houses left in the Black Country. A winding engine of Newcomen type was removed from the Cobb's Engine House in 1928 and transferred to the Henry Ford Museum, Michigan, USA. ⁷⁹
Links to a notable historical event	The Black Country became a UNESCO Global Geopark in 2020 in recognition of the international importance of its natural and cultural heritage. Three Geosites within the Geopark project landscape are located within the RHSOS (see Chapter 7 for details).
Associations with a famous person or people	The Cobb's Engine House and Chimney at Warrens Hall Park was erected by Sir Horace St Paul, a soldier and member of parliament. The ceremonial 'first sod' of the earthwork at the Nethererton Canal Tunnel was turned by Lord Ward the Earl of Dudley in 1855. ⁸⁰
Conclusion	The landscape of the RHSOS expresses a high level of special qualities in this category and is considered to have value in relation to associations, in particular the quarrying of Rowley Ragstone and links to the industrial revolution.

⁷⁸ Friends of Rowley Hills. History. Available at: <https://friendsofrowleyhills.org/about/history/> [Accessed 14/08/23]

⁷⁹ Historic England (2023) Cobb's Engine House and Chimney Warrens Hall Park. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/item/IOE01/01250/31> [Accessed 14/08/23]

⁸⁰ Black Country Global Geopark (2023) Bumble Hole and Warrens Hall LNR Geosite. Available at: <https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/sites-to-see/bumble-hole-and-warrens-hall-lnr/> [Accessed 14/08/23]

Table 14.5: Distinctiveness indicators

Distinctiveness definition	
Landscape that has a strong sense of identity	
Examples of indicators	Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area
Landscape character that has a strong sense of place (showing strength of expression of landscape characteristics)	The landscape character of the RHSOS has a strong sense of place formed notably by the elevated topography, the grasslands, woodlands, canals, heritage assets, former quarries and collieries that can be accessed via the PRow network across the hills.
Presence of distinctive features which are identified as being characteristic of a particular place	The tall radio transmission towers at the summit of Turner's Hill are a prominent and distinctive landmark visible from across the Black Country and beyond.
Presence of rare or unusual features, especially those that help to confer a strong sense of place or identity	Rare or unusual features within the RHSOS include three Listed Buildings: Cobb's Engine House and Chimney (Grade II), South Portal, Netherton Tunnel (Grade II) and Footbridge over Netherton Tunnel (Grade II). Cobb's Engine House is also a Scheduled Monument. Rock exposures of Rowley Rag are evident on Portway Hill.
Landscape which makes an important contribution to the character or identity of a settlement	The Rowley Hills form a prominent and distinctive landscape feature on the horizon of the Black Country due to their elevated topography and the presence of the tall radio transmission towers at the summit of Turner's Hill.
Settlement gateways/approaches which provides a clear sense of arrival and contribute to the character of the settlement (may be ancient/historic)	The RHSOS is surrounded by residential and commercial development in all directions. Portway Hill (road) and Dudley Road cross through the RHSOS.
Conclusion	The landscape of the study area expresses a good level of distinctive special qualities.

Table 14.6: Recreation indicators

Recreation definition	
Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important	
Examples of indicators	Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area
Presence of open access land, common land and public rights of way (particularly National Trails, long distance trails, Coastal Paths and Core Paths) where appreciation of landscape is a feature	A network of PRow cross through the RHSOS including footpaths connecting Bury Hill Park in the east with Warrens Hall Park in the west. Monarch's Way (Recreational Route) follows the Dudley No.2 Canal and the Netherton Tunnel Branch Canal.
Areas with good accessibility that provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and spiritual experience/ inspiration	The RHSOS provides valuable open air recreation opportunities for local people. It is likely that the availability of these attractive hills on the doorstep for many local people, would benefit their physical health and well-being.
Presence of town and village greens	N/A
Other physical evidence of recreational use where experience of landscape is important	While the PRow form the formal footpath network across the area, there is evidence of informal use of various routes across Warrens Hall Park and Portway Hill.
Landscape that forms part of a view that is important to the enjoyment of a recreational activity	The landscape of the RHSOS contributes to the views from the hills in the foreground. Enjoyment of views of the landscape is likely to be a key part of the recreational experience for people enjoying open air recreation.
Conclusion	The RHSOS is highly valued for recreational use by local residents, large areas have unrestricted accessibility and the landscape contributes to the views from the hills.

Table 14.7: Perceptual (scenic) indicators

Perceptual (scenic) definition	
Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense	
Examples of indicators	Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area
Distinctive features, or distinctive combinations of features, such as dramatic or striking landform or harmonious combinations of land cover	The landscape of the RHSOS demonstrates a variety of landscape features, notably the combination of grasslands and broadleaved woodlands across the hills.
Strong aesthetic qualities such as scale, form, colour and texture	The RHSOS is mostly coloured in shades of green due to the strong presence of grasslands and broadleaved woodlands across the hills. The texture of the landscape varies across the hills. At Dudley Golf Club, the fairway grass is closely mown and the pastures at Warrens Hall Farm are grazed by horses. The textures at Portway Hill are comparatively coarser as this area is less intensively managed where marshy grassland, dense and scattered scrub and ruderal vegetation are present.
Presence of natural lines in the landscape (e.g. natural ridgelines, woodland edges, river corridors, coastal edges)	The topography falls sharply at the former Rough Hill quarry adjacent to Dudley Golf Club. The topography rises sharply at the rockface of the former Blue Rock Quarry towards the plateau at Bury Hill Park.
Visual diversity or contrasts which contributes to the appreciation of the landscape	The network of PRoW allows opportunities to experience the more open landscape at Portway Hill and the contrasting sense of enclosure in the west of the hills, particularly where PRoW cross through Warrens Hall Farm.
Memorable/distinctive views and landmarks, or landscape which contributes to distinctive views and landmarks	The Rowley Hills form a prominent and distinctive landscape feature on the horizon of the Black Country due to their elevated topography and the presence of the tall radio transmission towers at the summit of Turner's Hill. Cobb's Engine House and Chimney is a prominent landmark visible from across Warrens Hall Park.
Conclusion	The landscape of the RHSOS expresses a good level of special qualities in this category and is considered to have value in relation to its scenic qualities.

Table 14.8: *Perceptual (wilderness and tranquillity) indicators*

Perceptual (wilderness and tranquillity) definition	
Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies	
Examples of indicators	Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area
High levels of tranquillity or perceptions of tranquillity, including perceived links to nature, dark skies, presence of wildlife/ birdsong and relative peace and quiet.	Tranquillity across the RHSOS is relatively good within enclosed and wooded parts of the designation, particularly in the west. Traffic can be heard from the surrounding road network, notably Wolverhampton Road in the east and Portway Hill (road) and Dudley Road that cross through the RHSOS. Noise from traffic on the M5 motorway can be heard from Portway Hill.
Presence of wild land and perceptions of relative wildness (resulting from a high degree of perceived naturalness, rugged or otherwise challenging terrain, remoteness from public mechanised access and lack of modern artefacts)	The RHSOS is generally well managed and used for nature conservation, grazing and open air recreation. There is a limited sense of wilderness.
Sense of particular remoteness, seclusion or openness	In the wider area, the RHSOS is surrounded by built form in all directions. There is a limited sense of remoteness.
Dark night skies	Dark night skies at the RHSOS are likely to be considerably illuminated from light sources in the surrounding urban area. 'Dark Skies' mapping from CPRE ⁸¹ shows the central and western parts of the hills lie within the 8-16 (NanoWatts/cm ² /sr) category (third brightest of nine). Portway Hill lies within the 16-32 (NanoWatts/cm ² /sr) category (second brightest of nine). The far east of the hills at Bury Hill Park lies within the brightest category at >32 (NanoWatts/cm ² /sr) which extends to the City of Birmingham to the east.
A general absence of intrusive or inharmonious development, land uses, transport and lighting	Development within the RHSOS is minimal. However, the RHSOS is surrounded by built form in all directions.
Conclusion	The landscape of the RHSOS is surrounded by built form which detracts from the sense of wildness and remoteness. However, parts of the hills do provide a relative sense of tranquillity within enclosed and wooded parts of the designation, particularly in the west.

⁸¹ CPRE (2016) England's Light Pollution and Dark Skies. Available at: <https://nightblight.cpre.org.uk/maps/> [Accessed 15/08/23]

Table 14.9: Functional indicators

Functional definition	
Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape	
Examples of indicators	Commentary on the expression of this indicator in the study area
Landscapes and landscape elements that contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape, e.g. natural hydrological systems/floodplains, areas of undisturbed and healthy soils, areas that form carbon sinks such as peat bogs, woodlands and oceans, areas of diverse landcover (benefits pest regulation), pollinator-rich habitats such as wildflower meadows	Broadleaved woodlands across the RHSOS provide carbon sink services.
Areas that form an important part of a multifunctional Green Infrastructure network	A variety of multi-functional green infrastructure assets are located within the RHSOS, providing a range of ecosystem services. These include the broadleaved woodlands that sequester carbon, habitats for a range of wildlife, opportunities for informal recreation and contact with nature which benefits both physical health and well-being.
Landscapes and landscape elements that have strong physical or functional links with an adjacent national landscape designation, or are important to the appreciation of the designated landscape and its special qualities	The RHSOS is not located within or adjacent to a national landscape designation.
Conclusion	The landscape of the RHSOS expresses a strong level of special qualities in this category and is considered to have value in relation to the range of functions the landscape fulfils.

14.4 Summary

14.4.1 The landscape of the RHSOS expresses numerous qualities across a range of indicators that are considered to contribute to its landscape value, as assessed using the Landscape Institute TGN 2021 guidelines. In summary these valued qualities comprise:

- **Rich geological and industrial history**, evidenced by rock exposures and residual landscape morphology associated with former industries notably former coal mining and quarrying of Rowley Ragstone, recognised through three UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark Geosites.
- A **range of habitats** to support biodiversity including deciduous woodlands, good quality semi-improved grasslands, scrub, hedgerows, ponds and canals.
- **Biodiversity designations** that contribute to landscape character including Warrens Hall Country Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR), three Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), five Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINCs) and five Potential Sites of Importance (PSIs).
- The setting to designated **heritage assets**, including three Grade II Listed Buildings, Cobb's Engine House Scheduled Monument, Windmill End Conservation Area, Warrens Hall Nature Reserve and Bury Hill Park Areas of High Historic Landscape Value (AHHLV) and an Archaeological Priority Area (APA).
- The Rowley Hills form a **prominent and distinctive upland landscape feature** on the horizon of the Black Country.
- The open and undeveloped **skyline** which rises above the surrounding urban areas.
- **Multi-functional green infrastructure** assets such as broadleaved woodlands, grasslands and soils that provide a range of ecosystem services for biodiversity, carbon storage and recreation.
- **Expansive panoramic views** across the Black Country and beyond.
- **Highly valued open spaces** for informal recreation. The network of PRow provides opportunities to benefit local residents' physical health and well-being and providing opportunities for contact with nature within an otherwise heavily built-up area.
- **Relative tranquillity** within enclosed and wooded parts of the designation particularly in the west.

14.4.2 This assessment has found that the landscape of the RHSOS is highly valuable under the majority of the indicators of landscape value set out in the Landscape Institute TGN 2021 guidelines. The identified special qualities of the landscape should be protected and enhanced for their value to the current and future residents of the local area.

15 Biodiversity Net Gain

15.1 What is Biodiversity Net Gain?

15.1.1 Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) is an approach aimed at embedding biodiversity within new development to leave it in a measurably better state than before. Whilst legislation protects certain habitats and species, there are limited mechanisms to maintain, enhance and create wildlife outside these protections. BNG enhances the current system of protection for habitats and species which fall outside the current legislative framework for the protection of wildlife⁸².

15.2 Legislative and policy requirements

15.2.1 BNG is a requirement of the Environment Act 2021⁸³, with Schedules 14 and 15 requiring all development under the Town and County Planning Act⁸⁴ to deliver at least 10% BNG from November 2023. Goal 1 of the Environmental Improvement Plan (EIP) promotes BNG to ensure thriving plants and wildlife and that development leaves habitats in a better state for wildlife than before⁸⁵.

15.2.2 The NPPF (2023)⁸⁶ requires Local Planning Authorities (LPAs) when making plans and determining planning applications to deliver BNG stating that they must “secure measurable net gains for biodiversity”.

15.3 Mechanisms for BNG delivery

15.3.1 BNG should firstly be delivered through habitat creation/enhancement via landscaping/green infrastructure on site. Where this is not possible it can be delivered off-site through habitat creation/enhancement, including via habitat banks⁸⁷, with public and private landowners and lastly it can be delivered through largescale habitat projects delivering high value habitats which can also provide long-term nature-based solutions.

⁸² Natural England (2022) Biodiversity Net Gain. An introduction to the benefits. Available at: https://naturalengland.blog.gov.uk/wp-content/uploads/sites/183/2022/04/BNG-Brochure_Final_Compressed-002.pdf [Accessed 12/06/23]

⁸³ The Environment Act 2021 (c. 30). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2021/30/contents> [Date Accessed: 05/05/23]

⁸⁴ The Town and County Planning Act 1990 (c. 8). Available at: <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1990/8/contents> [Date Accessed: 05/05/23]

⁸⁵ HM Government (2023) Environmental Improvement Plan 2023: First Revision of the 25 Year Environment Plan Available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan> [Accessed on 07/02/23]

⁸⁶ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date Accessed: 14/09/23]

⁸⁷ Sites where habitat is created in advance, prior to any loss occurring. This habitat will need to be secured and managed long-term.

15.4 Habitat banks in the RHSOS

- 15.4.1 A separate report has been prepared by Lepus Consulting for SMBC which has identified council-owned land and sites within Sandwell with a view to establishing their suitability for use as receptor sites for ecological and habitat creation projects relating to the delivery of BNG. One potential habitat bank has been identified within the RHSOS: Warrens Hall Park. Please see this report for the assessment of the habitats within Warrens Hall Park and the results from the calculations from the BNG metric.

16 Green infrastructure and climate change

16.1 What is green infrastructure?

16.1.1 Green infrastructure is defined in the National Planning Policy Framework⁸⁸ as:

“A network of multi-functional green and blue spaces and other natural features, urban and rural, which is capable of delivering a wide range of environmental, economic, health and wellbeing benefits for nature, climate, local and wider communities and prosperity.”

16.1.2 A green infrastructure network can include street trees, green roofs/walls, parks, private gardens, allotments, sustainable drainage systems, through to wildlife areas, woodlands, wetlands and natural flood management functioning at local and landscape scale. Linear green infrastructure includes roadside verges, green bridges, field margins, rights of way, access routes, and canals and rivers.⁸⁹

16.2 Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework

16.2.1 Launched in January 2023, Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework provides a structure to analyse where greenspace in urban environments is needed most. The Natural England Green Infrastructure Framework has been prepared to help achieve the Government’s 25 Year Environment Plan, the United Nation’s Sustainable Development Goals and the Convention on Biological Diversity Targets.

16.3 Green infrastructure in the Rowley Hills

16.3.1 The RHSOS is characterised by different types of green infrastructure. **Table 16.1** provides a listing of the various types of green infrastructure assets that are found in the RHSOS.

16.3.2 The green infrastructure assets have been grouped into green infrastructure typologies based on the guidance presented in Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework and adapted to reflect the assets present in the RHSOS.

⁸⁸ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date Accessed: 14/09/23]

⁸⁹ Natural England (2023) What is Green Infrastructure? Available at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/WhatsGreenInfrastructure.aspx> [Accessed 28/07/23]

Table 16.1: Green infrastructure assets in the RHSOS

Green infrastructure typology	Green infrastructure assets	Location(s)
Parks and gardens	Urban parks	Warrens Hall Park and Bury Hill Park
	Private domestic gardens	At Turner's Hill adjacent to Dudley Golf Club
Natural and semi-natural greenspaces	Broadleaved woodlands	Across the RHSOS
	Grasslands	Across the RHSOS
	Hedgerows	Warrens Hall Farm and Portway Hill
Traffic-free access network	PRoW (footpaths)	A network of footpaths connect Bury Hill Park in the east with Warrens Hall Park in the west
	Traffic free cycle route	A traffic-free cycle route runs alongside Dudley No.2 Canal
	Recreational route	Monarch's Way (Recreational Route) follows the Dudley No.2 Canal and the Netherton Tunnel Branch Canal
Outdoor sports facilities	Golf course	Dudley Golf Club
	Equestrian centre	Warrens Hall Riding School
	Natural sports pitches	Football pitch at Bury Hill Park
Blue infrastructure	Ponds	Ponds at Warrens Hall Park and at Portway Hill
	Canals	Dudley No.2 Canal and the Netherton Tunnel Branch Canal
Historic features and the historic environment	Scheduled Monument	Cobb's Engine House
	Listed Buildings	South Portal, Netherton Tunnel (Grade II); Cobb's Engine House and Chimney (Grade II); and Footbridge over Netherton Tunnel (Grade II).
	Conservation Area	Windmill End Conservation Area

16.4 Ecosystem services and green infrastructure

16.4.1 Ecosystem services are the benefits provided to humans by natural systems, from the provision of food and water to recreation and climate regulation. The elements of the natural environment that provide benefits to humans are referred to as 'natural capital'. The UK Natural Capital Committee have defined natural capital as 'elements of nature that directly or indirectly produce value to people'. In urban areas, the elements of the natural environment providing ecosystem services are referred to as 'green infrastructure'.⁹⁰

16.4.2 There are a range of available approaches to identifying and grouping ecosystem services. The Millennium Ecosystem Assessment split ecosystem services into four main categories: supporting services, regulating services, provisioning services and cultural services. The Common International Classification of Ecosystem Services (CICES) developed for natural capital accounting splits ecosystem services into regulating, provisioning and cultural services, with supporting services forming an integral part of functioning ecosystems.

⁹⁰ Houses of Parliament (2017) 'POSTbrief26: Urban Green Infrastructure and Ecosystem Services' Available at <https://post.parliament.uk/research-briefings/post-pb-0026/> [Date accessed: 16/08/23]

West Midlands Natural Capital Atlas: Mapping Indicators

- 16.4.3 The CICES was used to inform the Natural Capital Atlases⁹¹ prepared by Natural England. The West Midlands Natural Capital Atlas: Mapping Indicators report uses sixteen ecosystem services to map the provision of ecosystem services across the West Midlands within hexagonal units measuring five square kilometres. While this scale of assessment does not helpfully inform the assessment of ecosystem services in the Rowley Hills, the study has been used to inform the categorisation of ecosystem services and how these relate to the green infrastructure assets in the RHSOS.
- 16.4.4 Ecosystem services and benefits provided from the West Midlands Natural Capital Atlas: Mapping Indicators has been reproduced in **Table 16.2**. Urban green infrastructure is less likely to contribute to some ecosystem services such as ‘Timber, hay and other materials’, ‘Fish’, ‘Plant based energy’ and ‘Livestock’.

Table 16.2: *Ecosystem services and benefits provided*

Ecosystem Service	Benefits provided
Timber, hay and other materials	Materials e.g. hay, grass for fodder, timber, paper and other products from wood.
Fish and other marine products from wild sources	Products from the sea e.g. fish, shellfish & seaweed for food, fertiliser, angling bait, medicines.
Plant-based energy	Energy from wood.
Cultivated crops and provision of community food	Food from crops e.g. cereals, vegetables, fruit.
Water supply	Plentiful water e.g. water for drinking, domestic use, irrigation, livestock, industrial use including cooling, wildlife.
Livestock	Products from animals e.g. meat, dairy products, honey.
Water quality	Clean water, also underpinning e.g. water supply, sustainable ecosystems, cultural services, health benefits.
Air quality	Clean air, also underpinning health benefits and sustainable ecosystems.
Noise regulation	Health benefits e.g. reduced stress, hypertension, hearing impairment; benefits to sustainable ecosystems through reduction in disturbance; reduced impacts on educational & work performance.
Erosion control	Erosion control e.g. soil/land retention, lack of transport disruption, protection of housing, businesses & infrastructure, reduced health & safety risk, reduced flood risk.
Flood protection	Reduced flood risk e.g. reduced health and safety risk, reduced impact on mental health and well-being, protection of housing, businesses & infrastructure, lack of transport disruption.
Pollination	Pollination underpinning cultivated crops dependent on insect pollination e.g. field beans, apples, plums, pears, cucumbers, strawberries, oil seed rape.
Biodiversity – thriving plants and wildlife	Biodiversity, in and of itself, and underpinning all other services such as recreation (including wildlife watching), tourism, research and education, food from wild populations & aquaculture, flood protection (salt marsh, dunes), climate regulation.

⁹¹ Natural England (2020) 'Natural Capital Atlases: Mapping Indicators for County and City Regions' Available at <http://publications.naturalengland.org.uk/publication/6672365834731520> [Date accessed 16/08/23]

Climate regulation	Equitable climate e.g. reduced risk of drought, flood & extreme weather events, lower summer temperatures, reduced health and safety risks, protection of infrastructure/lack of transport disruption.
Cultural services	Health and wellbeing benefits, including sense of place, spirituality, inspiration, physical and mental wellbeing.
Geodiversity services	Geodiversity, in and of itself and products, such as minerals, materials, fossil fuels and renewable energy, fossils, and underpinning other services (for example by providing landscape features and habitats for example, sea cliffs, reef).

Green infrastructure assets

16.4.5 Green infrastructure assets can supply multifunctional ecosystem services which provide a range of environmental, social and economic benefits. It is crucial that the diversity of these services is considered in policy and decision making. **Table 16.3** has been prepared which shows the number of ecosystem services that are associated with the green infrastructure assets in the RHSOS, grouped into their typologies.

Table 16.3: Green infrastructure assets and ecosystem services

Green infrastructure typology	Green infrastructure assets	Ecosystem services
Parks and gardens	Urban parks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noise regulation Flood protection Biodiversity Climate regulation Cultural services
	Private domestic gardens	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Noise regulation Flood protection Biodiversity Climate regulation Cultural services
Natural and semi-natural greenspaces	Broadleaved woodlands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timber, hay and other materials Plant-based energy Water supply Water quality Air quality Flood protection Biodiversity Climate regulation Cultural services
	Grasslands	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Timber, hay and other materials Water supply Livestock Water quality Flood protection Pollination Biodiversity Climate regulation Cultural services

	Hedgerows	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Air quality • Noise regulation • Biodiversity • Climate regulation • Cultural services
Traffic-free access network	PRoW (footpaths)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural services
	Traffic free cycle route	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural services
	Recreational route	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural services
Outdoor sports facilities	Golf course	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise regulation • Flood protection • Biodiversity • Climate regulation • Cultural services
	Equestrian centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural services
	Natural sports pitches	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Noise regulation • Flood protection • Biodiversity • Climate regulation • Cultural services
	Artificial ball court	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural services
	Children's play area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural services
Blue infrastructure	Ponds	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biodiversity • Cultural services
	Canals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Water supply • Biodiversity • Cultural services
Historic features and the historic environment	Scheduled Monument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural services
	Listed Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural services
	Conservation Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cultural services

16.5 Natural England's Green Infrastructure Standards

16.5.1 The Green Infrastructure Standards are a key component of the Green Infrastructure Framework. They define what good green infrastructure 'looks like' for local planners, developers, parks and greenspace managers and communities, and how to plan it strategically to deliver multiple benefits for people and nature. When used together, these Green Infrastructure Standards will help stakeholders to deliver the 15 Green Infrastructure Principles (see **Figure 16.1**) and enable everyone to benefit from good green infrastructure provision.⁹²

⁹² Natural England (2023) Green Infrastructure Standards. Available at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/GIStandards.aspx> [Accessed 28/07/23]



Figure 16.1: The 15 Green Infrastructure Principles⁹³

16.5.2 The five headline green infrastructure standards are:

- S1: Green Infrastructure Strategy Standard;
- S2: Accessible Greenspace Standard;
- S3: Urban Nature Recovery Standard;
- S4: Urban Greening Factor Standard; and
- S5: Urban Tree Canopy Cover Standard.

16.6 Accessible Greenspace Standard

S2: Accessible greenspace standards – size and proximity criteria

16.6.1 Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework has updated the Accessible Natural Greenspace Standards and they have been renamed ‘Accessible Greenspace Standards’. The Green Infrastructure Framework puts an initial focus on access to green and blue spaces within 15 minutes’ walk from home. The size proximity criteria is as follows:

⁹³ Natural England (2023) Green Infrastructure Standards. Available at: <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk/GreenInfrastructure/GIStandards.aspx> [Accessed 28/07/23]

“Within 15 minutes’ walk:

EITHER a Doorstep or Local Accessible Greenspace:

- *A doorstep greenspace of at least 0.5ha within 200 metres or*
- *A local natural greenspace of at least 2ha within 300 metres walk from home*

AND

- *A medium sized neighbourhood natural greenspace (10ha) within 1km*

AND, beyond 15 minutes’ walk:

- *A medium/large wider neighbourhood natural greenspace (20ha) within 2km*
- *A large district natural greenspace (100ha) within 5km, and*
- *A very large subregional greenspace (500ha) within 10km”.*

S2: Accessible greenspace standards - capacity criteria

16.6.2 Natural England’s Green Infrastructure Framework also sets a target for local authorities to provide 3 hectares of publicly accessible greenspace per 1,000 residents.

S2: Accessible greenspace standards - quality criteria

16.6.3 Accessible greenspace to also meet the Green Flag Award Criteria⁹⁴ and best practice in accessibility for all⁹⁵.

94 Green Flag Award (2023) Available at <https://www.greenflagaward.org/> [Accessed on 02/08/23]

95 The Sensory Trust (2020) ‘By All Reasonable Means: Least restrictive access to the outdoors’ Available at <https://www.sensorytrust.org.uk/uploads/documents/ByAllReasonableMeansEnglandAug2020.pdf> [Accessed on 02/08/23]

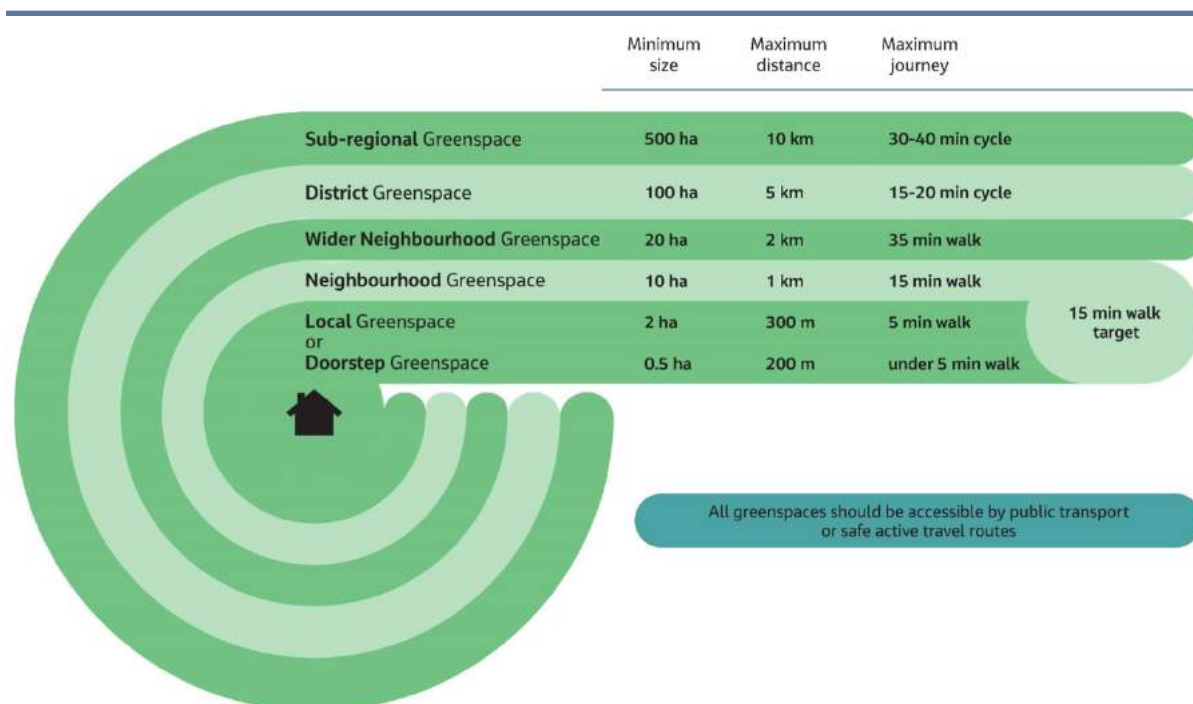


Figure 16.2: Accessible greenspace standards - size-proximity

16.7 Accessible greenspaces in the RHSOS

16.7.1 The Sandwell Green Spaces Audit (2018)⁹⁶ identified eight green spaces that are located within the RHSOS (see **Table 16.4**). Of these eight green spaces, five have unrestricted accessibility. Based on the size criteria (see **Figure 16.2**), there are three greenspaces categorised as ‘local greenspace’ and two greenspaces as ‘wider neighbourhood greenspace’ in the RHSOS.

Table 16.4: Greenspaces identified in Sandwell Green Spaces Audit located in the RHSOS

Site name	Size (ha)	Accessibility	Type of greenspace based on size criteria
Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space – Portway Road SOS	39.01	Unrestricted	Wider neighbourhood greenspace
Warrens Hall Park SOS	21.4	Unrestricted	Wider neighbourhood greenspace
Warrens Hall Farm SOS	8.43	Unrestricted	Local greenspace
Bury Hill Park	5.65	Unrestricted	Local greenspace
The Knowle SOS	4.92 (partially in RHSOS)	Unrestricted	Local greenspace
Warrens Hall Farm Grazing	19.75	Not accessible	N/A
The Knowle Grazing Land	1.29	Not accessible	N/A
Dudley Golf Club SOS	34.52	Limited	N/A

⁹⁶ Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. 2022. Green Spaces Strategy Implementation and Business Plan 22/23 – 25/26.

-
- 16.7.2 The map presented in **Figure 16.3** shows accessible greenspaces across the SLP area above 0.5ha in size. This map also shows buffer zones showing the area served by doorstep, local, neighbourhood and wider neighbourhood greenspaces. There are no district (above 100ha) or sub-regional (above 500ha) greenspaces in the SLP area. This map was created for context to show how the greenspaces within the RHSOS relate with the rest of the SLP area.
- 16.7.3 The map presented in **Figure 16.4** shows the location of wider neighbourhood greenspaces (above 20ha) across the SLP area with buffer zones showing the area served by each greenspace (2km). This map was created to highlight the importance of the two areas of wider neighbourhood greenspace in the RHSOS in providing crucial areas of accessible greenspace particularly in the south western parts of the SLP area.

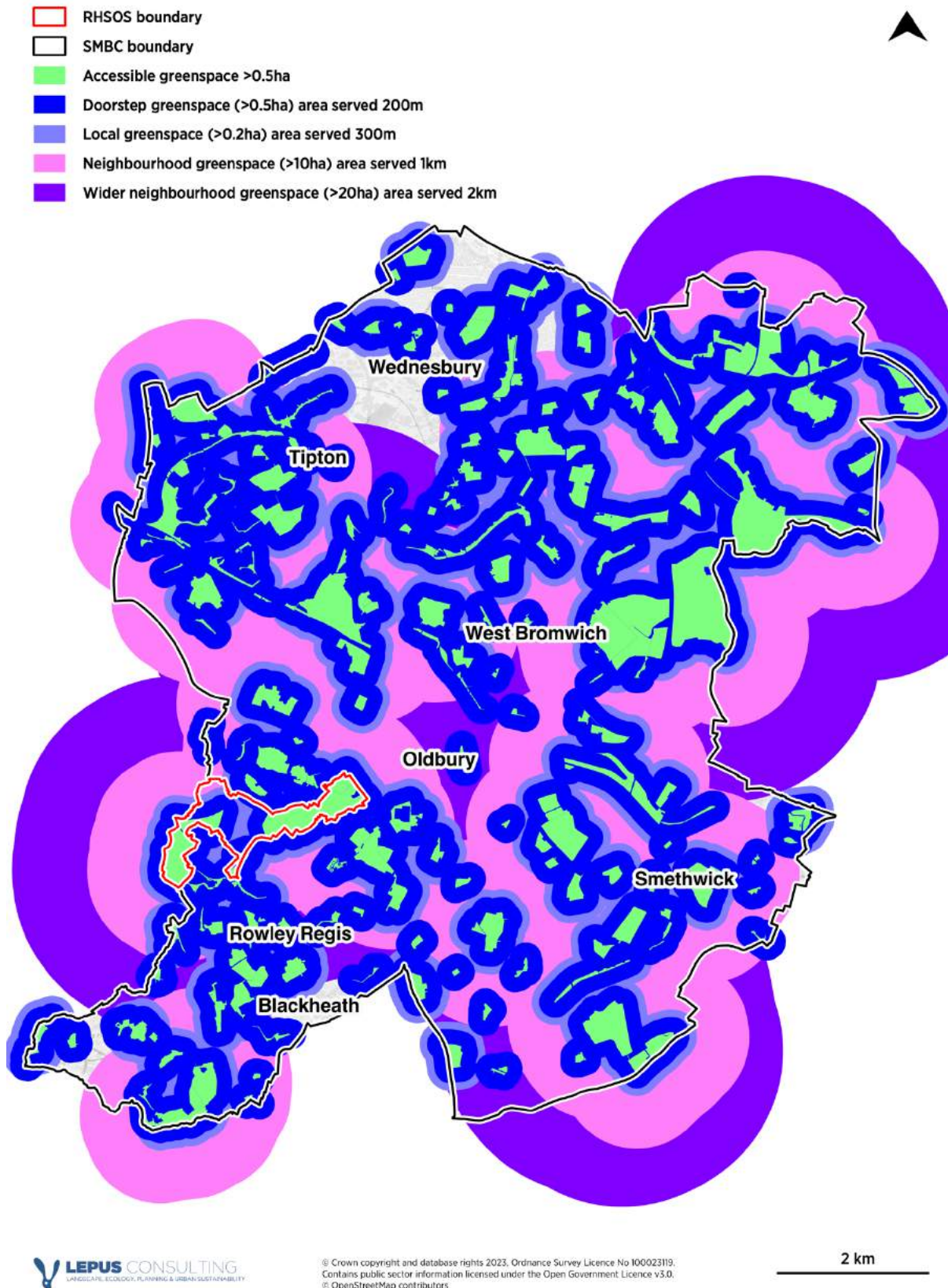


Figure 16.3: Accessible greenspace in Sandwell⁹⁷ (New OS License No AC0000824500)

⁹⁷ Sandwell Green Spaces Audit (2018)

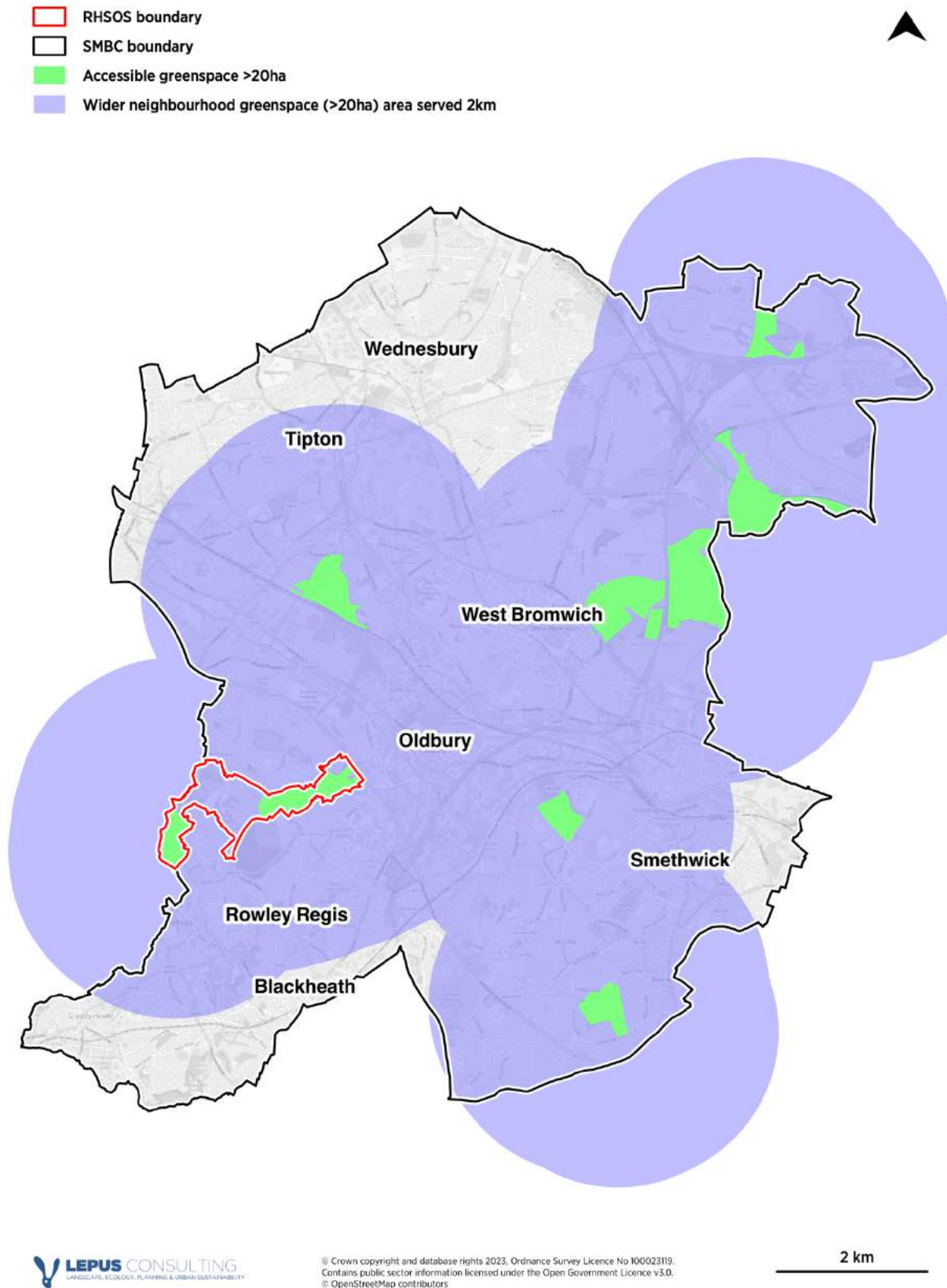


Figure 16.4: Wider neighbourhood greenspace in Sandwell (New OS License No AC0000824500)

17 Options for protection

17.1 Introduction

17.1.1 To date, the SMBC has been successful in preventing inappropriate development from occurring within the RHSOS, which has been helped by current planning policy (SAD policy EOS3), formal recognition of the ecological and geological value of the area and previously through the adoption of the Rowley Hills District Plan in 1987. This sought to maintain and improve the area as open space for recreation and to protect the skyline from inappropriate and intrusive development.

17.1.2 The SLP Issues and Options Review⁹⁸ states that the continued protection of the open and undeveloped nature of the Rowley Hills could also be achieved if the area (or parts of it) were to be designated as Green Belt or Local Green Space (LGS), as set out in the NPPF.

17.1.3 SMBC have requested that this study should set out and assess the options for protection to ensure development in the RHSOS is strictly controlled. This chapter reviews the suitability and effectiveness of the following options for protection:

- Green Belt;
- Local Green Space;
- Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space Policy;
- Article 4 Direction at Portway Hill; and
- Existing biodiversity, geodiversity and heritage designations.

17.2 Green Belt

17.2.1 The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. urban sprawl is a phenomenon whereby cities expand outwards into neighbouring countryside, which eventually results in towns and cities merging and the valuable green space between them being damaged or lost altogether.⁹⁹

17.2.2 It is for local authorities to define and maintain Green Belt land in their local areas. The Government expects local planning authorities with Green Belts to establish Green Belt boundaries in their Local Plans, which can be altered as part of the plan review process.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁸ Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (2023) Sandwell Local Plan Issues and Options Review. Available at: https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/downloads/file/33695/slp_-_issues_and_options_-_main_document [Accessed 19/07/23]

⁹⁹ CPRE (2023) Why do Green Belts exist? Available at: <https://www.cpre.org.uk/explainer/all-you-need-to-know-about-the-green-belt/> [Accessed 11/09/23]

¹⁰⁰ UK Parliament (2023) House of Commons Library. Green Belt. Available at: <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/research-briefings/sn00934/> [Accessed 17/08/23]

Five purposes of the Green Belt

17.2.3 Government policy on protection for the Green Belt is set out in Chapter 13 of the NPPF (2023)¹⁰¹; ‘Protecting Green Belt Land’ which states that the Green Belt serves the following five purposes:

- a) *“to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;*
- b) *to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;*
- c) *to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;*
- d) *to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and*
- e) *to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”*

17.2.4 An assessment of the extent to which the RHSOS serves each of the five purposes of the Green Belt has been provided in **Table 17.1**.

Table 17.1: Five purposes of the Green Belt and the extent to which the RHSOS serves each purpose

Five purposes of the Green Belt	The extent to which the RHSOS serves each purpose
to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas	The RHSOS is not located on the fringes of the wider Birmingham and Black Country urban area, and therefore does not prevent urban sprawl into the surrounding open countryside. However, the RHSOS is surrounded by built form in all directions and provides a valuable area of open space between the surrounding settlements (see the maps of the RHSOS boundary in Chapter 1).
to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another	The RHSOS is surrounded by the urban areas of Rowley Regis to the south, Oldbury to the east and Dudley to the north. The RHSOS separates these neighbouring towns from merging into one another to an extent.
to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment	The RHSOS is surrounded by a heavily built-up area and therefore does not assist in safeguarding the countryside surrounding the wider Birmingham and Black Country urban area from encroachment.
to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns	Development within the RHSOS is likely to impact designated heritage assets including three Grade II Listed Buildings, a Scheduled Monument and Windmill End Conservation Area at Warrens Hall Park. See the Cultural heritage indicators within the evaluation of landscape value in Chapter 14 .
to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land	Options for recycling derelict and other urban land is extremely limited within the RHSOS as formerly derelict land has been reclaimed for open space purposes, or has reverted to greenspace through natural processes

¹⁰¹ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date Accessed: 14/09/23]

17.3 Recommendation

17.3.1 Whilst the RHSOS separates neighbouring towns from merging into one another to an extent, the designation is not located on the fringes of the wider Birmingham and Black Country urban area, and therefore does not prevent sprawl or encroachment of built-up areas into the surrounding open countryside. For these reasons, this study does not recommend Green Belt as a suitable option for protection for the RHSOS.

17.4 Local Green Space

17.4.1 LGS designation is a way to provide special protection against development for green areas of particular importance to local communities¹⁰².

17.4.2 Paragraph 77 of the 2012 NPPF set out the criteria against which LGS designation is considered. These remain substantially unaltered in the 2023¹⁰³ version of the NPPF which states in paragraph 102:

“The Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green space is:

“...a) in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;

b) demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife; and

c) local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.”

17.4.3 Paragraph 103 of the 2023 NPPF sets out the level of protection given to LGS:

“Policies for managing development within a Local Green Space should be consistent with those for Green Belts”.

17.4.4 An assessment of the extent to which the RHSOS meets the criteria against which the LGS designation is considered has been provided in **Table 17.2**.

¹⁰² Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2014) Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space> [Accessed 21/07/23]

¹⁰³ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2023) National Planning Policy Framework. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Date Accessed: 14/09/23]

Table 17.2: NPPF criteria against which LGS designation is considered

NPPF criteria against which LGS designation is considered	The extent to which the RHSOS meets the criteria
in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves	The RHSOS is located in close proximity to the community it serves, being surrounded by residential neighbourhoods and accessible through the network of public rights of way.
demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife	The evaluation of landscape value in Chapter 14 found that the landscape of the RHSOS is highly valuable under the majority of the indicators of landscape value including natural heritage, cultural heritage and recreation.
local in character and is not an extensive tract of land	<p>Advice from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) on the size of the LGS designation states:</p> <p>“There are no hard and fast rules about how big a Local Green Space can be because places are different and a degree of judgment will inevitably be needed. However, paragraph 100 of the National Planning Policy Framework is clear that Local Green Space designation should only be used where the green area concerned is not an extensive tract of land.”¹⁰⁴</p> <p>Research by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)¹⁰⁵ published in 2022 reported that 6,515 green spaces have been protected under the LGS designation in England since its introduction in 2012. CPRE analysis of 1,184 LGSs (18% of all identified LGSs across the country) found that the average size of LGSs is 1.8ha and its median size is 0.6ha. From this selection, 63% of LGSs are less than 1ha and only 3.4% are larger than 10ha. Sizes vary greatly across this selection, ranging from as much as 46.5ha to as little as 0.001ha. The RHSOS designation covers an area of 135ha which is considerably larger than the 1.8ha average LGS size identified in research by CPRE.</p>

17.5 Recommendation

17.5.1 The RHSOS designation is in close proximity to the community it serves and holds a particular local significance because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, relative tranquillity and richness of wildlife habitats. However, the RHSOS designation covers an area of approximately 135ha which is considerably larger than the 1.8ha average LGS size in England identified in research by CPRE¹⁰⁶. Whilst advice from the DLUHC states that there are ‘no hard or fast rules about how big a LGS can be’, the RHSOS is likely to be considered to be an ‘extensive tract of land’ based on its relatively large size. Due to concerns about the size of the RHSOS, this study does not recommend LGS as a suitable option for protection for the RHSOS.

¹⁰⁴ Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (2014) Open space, sports and recreation facilities, public rights of way and local green space. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/open-space-sports-and-recreation-facilities-public-rights-of-way-and-local-green-space#:~:text=Is%20there%20a%20minimum%20area,for%20a%20Local%20Green%20Space.> [Accessed 11/09/23]

¹⁰⁵ CPRE (2022) Local Green Space a tool for people and nature’s wellbeing. Available at: https://www.cpre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Feb-2022_CPRE_Local-Green-Spaces-full-report-1.pdf [Accessed 11/09/23]

¹⁰⁶ CPRE (2022) Local Green Space a tool for people and nature’s wellbeing. Available at: https://www.cpre.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Feb-2022_CPRE_Local-Green-Spaces-full-report-1.pdf [Accessed 11/09/23]

17.6 Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space Policy

Policy SAD EOS3 - Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space

17.6.1 The Sandwell Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan Document (SADDPD) (adopted 2012)¹⁰⁷ is part of the statutory development plan and relates to the strategic Black Country Core Strategy (adopted 2011). The SADDPD currently has a RHSOS designation and associated policy (SAD EOS3 - Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space) protecting the area from development (see **Table 17.3**).

Table 17.3: SAD EOS3 - Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space

SAD EOS3 - Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space
<p>The Policy Map defines the Strategic Open Space within which development will not be permitted that would prejudice the character of the area or its function in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • providing a major area of continuous and wide open space; • preventing the merging of urban areas; • providing an open, natural skyline; • providing for outdoor recreational opportunities for neighbouring urban areas; • providing a range of wildlife habitats and a wildlife corridor; • providing extensive views out over the surrounding areas.

<p>The Rowley Regis area receives much of its unique character from the dominating uplands that provide such a dramatic backdrop. Visible from a considerable distance, the remaining open, natural skyline is essential to this character.</p> <p>The Rowley Hills provide a much-needed openness within an otherwise heavily built-up area offering valuable opportunities and potential for outdoor recreation. However, although it does contain some individual Community Open Spaces, much of the area is not publicly accessible, and recreation is only one aspect of its function and character.</p> <p>The importance of the Hills is derived from their open character, which will be defended from the incursion of built development, or other inappropriate uses.</p>

Monitoring	
Indicator: LOI EOS3 - Loss of land in Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space	Target: Zero

¹⁰⁷ Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (2012) Site Allocations and Delivery Development Plan Document. Available at: https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200275/planning_and_buildings/676/site_allocations_and_delivery_development_plan_document [Accessed 21/07/23]

Revised policy recommendation for the Sandwell Local Plan

- 17.6.2 To date, SMBC has been successful in preventing inappropriate development from occurring, which has been helped by current planning policy (SAD policy EOS3). Continuing the protection of the RHSOS through a revised policy in the SLP is highly recommended. A revised policy recommendation for the RHSOS is presented in **Table 17.4**. This revised policy recommendation is informed by the findings of the landscape character assessment and landscape evaluation from **Chapter 7** to **Chapter 14** of this report.

Table 17.4: Revised policy recommendation - Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space

Revised policy recommendation - Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space
<p>Development will not be permitted within the Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space that would impact valued landscape qualities that are natural, cultural, perceptual and aesthetic:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Wildlife habitats that support biodiversity;• Biodiversity and geological designations;• The setting to designated heritage assets;• The open and undeveloped skyline;• Multi-functional green infrastructure assets;• The expansive panoramic views;• Highly valued open spaces for informal recreation; and• Areas of relative tranquillity.

Justification

The Rowley Hills form a prominent and distinctive upland landscape feature on the horizon of the Black Country. The Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space (RHSOS) designation forms an unbroken open space and wildlife corridor from Bumble Hole, Dudley across the top of the Rowley Hills to Wolverhampton Road, Sandwell. The RHSOS designation expresses numerous valued landscape qualities that will be protected from development:

- Rich geological and industrial history, evidenced by rock exposures and residual landscape morphology associated with former industries notably former coal mining and quarrying of Rowley Ragstone, recognised through three UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark Geosites.
- A range of habitats to support biodiversity including deciduous woodlands, good quality semi-improved grasslands, scrub, hedgerows, ponds and canals.
- Biodiversity designations that contribute to landscape character including Warrens Hall Country Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR), three Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), five Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINCs) and five Potential Sites of Importance (PSIs).
- The setting to designated heritage assets, including three Grade II Listed Buildings, Cobb's Engine House Scheduled Monument, Windmill End Conservation Area, Warrens Hall Nature Reserve and Bury Hill Park Areas of High Historic Landscape Value (AHHLV) and an Archaeological Priority Area (APA).
- The open and undeveloped skyline which rises above the surrounding urban areas.
- Multi-functional green infrastructure assets such as broadleaved woodlands, grasslands and soils that provide a range of ecosystem services for biodiversity, carbon storage and recreation.
- Expansive panoramic views across the Black Country and beyond.
- Highly valued open spaces for informal recreation. The network of PRow provides opportunities to benefit local residents' physical health and well-being and providing opportunities for contact with nature within an otherwise heavily built-up area.
- Relative tranquillity within enclosed and wooded parts of the designation particularly in the west.

17.7 Article 4 Direction at Portway Hill

17.7.1 There is a Town and Country Planning (General Development Procedure) Order 1995 Direction made under Article 4(1) to which Article 5(4) applies at land off Portway Hill within the RHSOS (see location in **Figure 17.1**) that has been in place since 2007. The direction removes all permitted development rights within its boundary. This was intended to protect and preserve the openness of the area by preventing any intrusive development. The full Article 4 Direction is included in **Appendix C**.

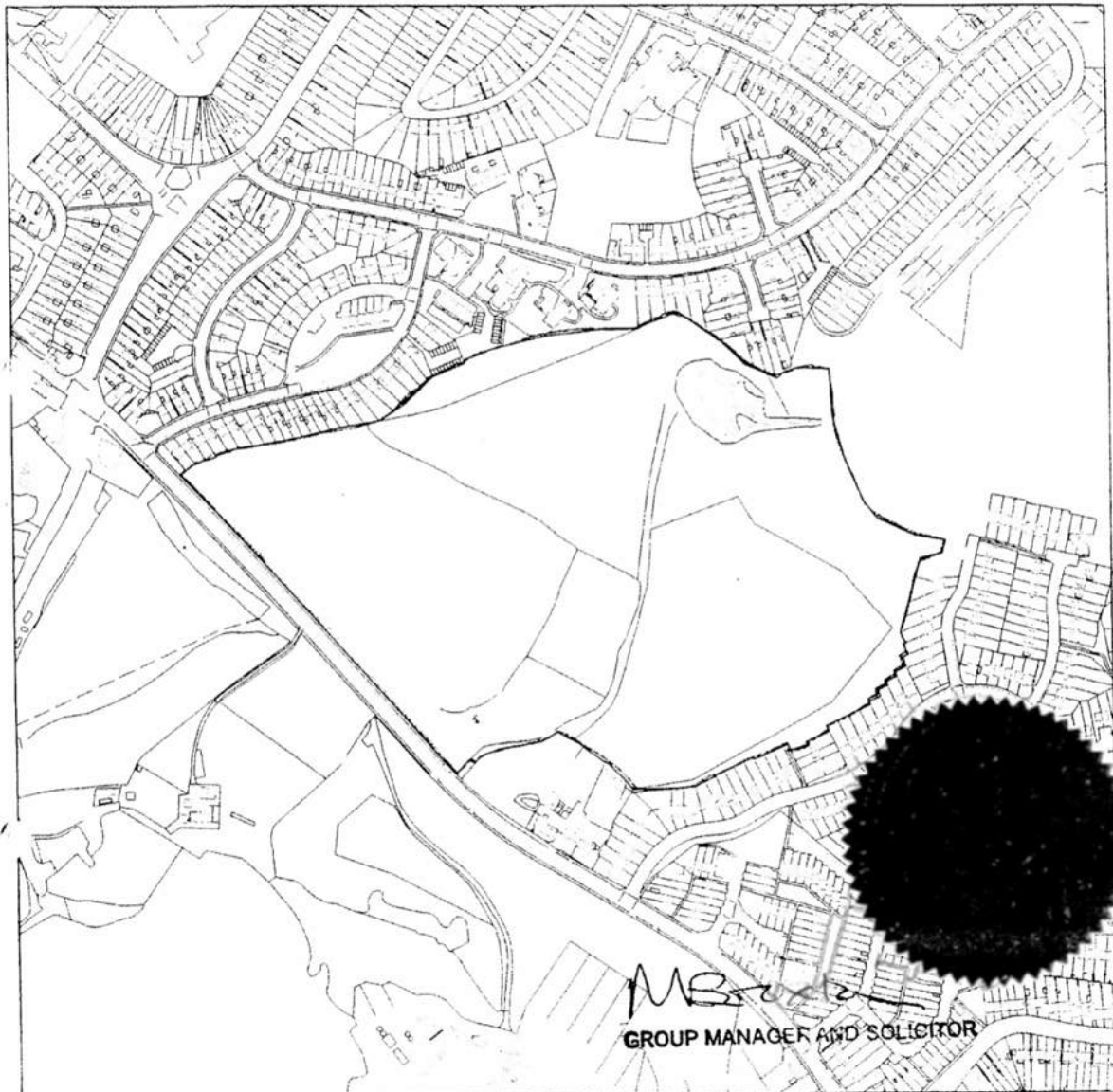
17.8 Recommendation

17.8.1 The Article 4 Direction is located at the highest western extent Portway Hill on a SINC (Portway Hill Open Space SINC) and wildlife corridor. The elevation ranges from approximately 210m AOD to 250m AOD. It is located to the east of the summit of Turner's Hill, the highest point in the Rowley Hills at 271m AOD. Development at this open and exposed location would potentially impact on the highly valued open and undeveloped skyline and the expansive panoramic views outwards across the Black Country and beyond. For these reasons, the boundary of the Article 4 Direction is considered to still be suitable and should be retained to preserve the openness of the area by preventing any intrusive development.

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)



Land at Portway Hill, Rowley Regis, West Midlands



Scale : 1:4445

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Organisation	Sandwell MBC
Department	Planning & Transportation
Comments	
Date	14 May 2007
SLA Number	

Figure 17.1: Article 4 direction at Portway Hill

17.9 Existing designations

17.9.1 A number of designations currently exist either fully or partially within the boundary of the RHSOS designation. These existing designations can be categorised into biodiversity designations, historic environment and heritage assets and geological designations. The designations within the RHSOS are listed in **Table 17.5** alongside the context and the level of protection they each provide.

17.9.2 A spatial multi-criteria infographic has also been prepared (included below this chapter) to help illustrate the different layers of protection provided by the existing designations. This infographic shows that the eastern and western parts of the RHSOS are afforded stronger layers of protection compared with the central region at Dudley Golf Club.

Table 17.5: Existing designations within the RHSOS

Type of designation	Designation	Designations within the RHSOS	Context and level of protection
Biodiversity	Local Nature Reserves (LNRs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Warrens Hall Country Park LNR 	<p>LNRs are a statutory designation made under Section 21 of the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 by principal local authorities. LNRs are places with wildlife or geological features that are of special interest locally.¹⁰⁸</p> <p>LNRs are statutory sites and are given protection against damaging operations and also certain protection against development on and around them. Other statutory sites with a greater level of protection than LNRs include sites that are important on a European scale such as Special Areas of Conservation (SACs) and sites that are important on a national scale such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs) and National Nature Reserves (NNRs).</p>
	Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Portway Hill Open Space SINC Rough Hill Quarry SINC Warrens Hall Farm SINC 	<p>SINCs are Local Sites of Birmingham and the Black Country importance. They are identified by the SINC partnership, which is led by Natural England. Unlike LNRs, SINCs are non-statutory designated sites, but are recognised in the planning system.¹⁰⁹</p>
	Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINCs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bury Hill Park SLINC Dudley Golf Course SLINC Hailstone Quarry SLINC Warrens Hall Farm SLINC Warrens Hall Park SLINC 	<p>SLINCs are Local Sites of borough importance identified by the relevant local authority and the Wildlife Trust. Unlike LNRs, SLINCs are non-statutory designated sites, but are recognised in the planning system.¹¹⁰</p>
	Potential Sites of Importance (PSIs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cloudland Quarry PSI 	<p>PSIs are sites that potentially contain areas of important semi-natural habitat but currently fall outside of the Local Site system.¹¹¹</p>

¹⁰⁸ Natural England (2023) Local Nature Reserves (England). Available at: <https://www.data.gov.uk/dataset/acdf4a9e-a115-41fb-bbe9-603c819aa7f7/local-nature-reserves-england> [Accessed 11/09/23]

¹⁰⁹ EcoRecord (2009) Available at: <http://www.ecorecord.org.uk> [Accessed 11/09/23]

¹¹⁰ EcoRecord (2009) Available at: <http://www.ecorecord.org.uk> [Accessed 11/09/23]

¹¹¹ EcoRecord (2009) Available at: <http://www.ecorecord.org.uk> [Accessed 11/09/23]

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dudley Golf Course PSI • Edwin Richards Quarry, Turner's Hill PSI • Turner's Hill Claypit PSI • Turner's Hill Farm Pastures PSI 	
Historic Environment and Heritage Assets	Conservation Area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Windmill End Conservation Area 	<p>Conservation Areas can be created where a local planning authority identifies an area of special architectural or historic interest, which deserves careful management to protect that character. An area has to be identified by the local authority as having a definite architectural quality or historic interest to merit designation (NPPF paragraph 191).¹¹²</p> <p>Conservation areas do not preclude new development. Some conservation areas are a focus for regeneration and development.¹¹³</p>
	Listed Buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South Portal, Netherton Tunnel (Grade II); • Cobb's Engine House and Chimney (Grade II); and • Footbridge over Netherton Tunnel (Grade II). 	<p>Listing marks and celebrates a building's special architectural and historic interest, and also brings it under the consideration of the planning system, so that it can be protected for future generations.¹¹⁴</p>
	Scheduled Monument	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cobb's Engine House 	<p>Scheduling is the selection of nationally important archaeological sites. Although archaeology is all around us, scheduled sites form a carefully chosen sample of them, which are closely managed.¹¹⁵</p>
	Area of High Historic Landscape Value (AHHLV)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warrens Hall Nature Reserve AHHLV • Bury Hill Park AHHLV 	<p>AHHLVs (identified within the Black Country Landscape Characterisation Study) are areas that contains landscape features (both historic and natural) which are considered to make a significant contribution to the historic landscape character of the Black Country.¹¹⁶</p>
	Archaeological Priority Area (APA)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Warren's Hall Park, possible Moated Site 	<p>APAs are sites with a high potential for archaeological remains of regional or national significance that have not been considered for designation as scheduled monuments, or where there is insufficient data available about the state or preservation of any remains to justify a designation.¹¹⁷</p>

¹¹² Historic England (2023) Designating and Managing a Conservation Area. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/advice/planning/conservation-areas/> [Accessed 11/09/23]

¹¹³ Locality. Making local green space designations in your neighbourhood plan. Available at: <https://neighbourhoodplanning.org/toolkits-and-guidance/making-local-green-space-designations-neighbourhood-plan/> [Accessed 12/09/23]

¹¹⁴ Historic England (2023) Listed Buildings. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/listed-buildings/> [Accessed 15/09/23]

¹¹⁵ Historic England (2023) Scheduled Monuments. Available at: <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/what-is-designation/scheduled-monuments/> [Accessed 15/09/23]

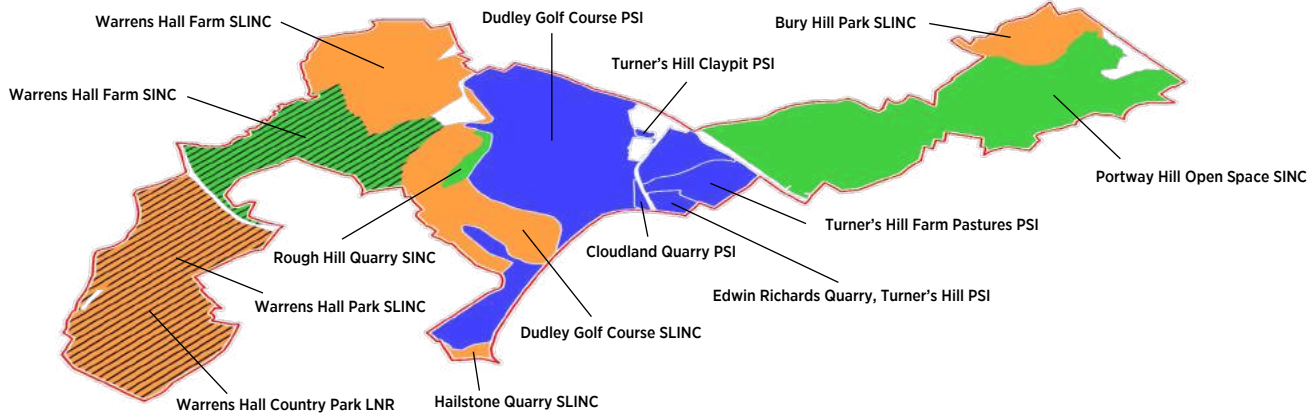
¹¹⁶ Oxford Archaeology (2019) Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study. Available at: <https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/planning/historic-environment/historic-landscape-characterisation/> [Accessed 11/09/23]

¹¹⁷ Oxford Archaeology (2019) Black Country Historic Landscape Characterisation Study. Available at: <https://www.dudley.gov.uk/residents/planning/historic-environment/historic-landscape-characterisation/> [Accessed 11/08/23]

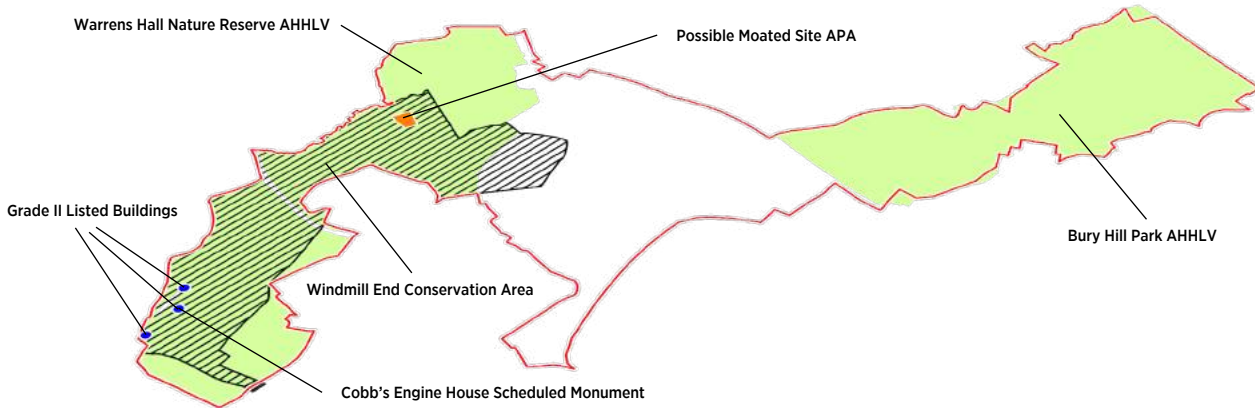
Geological	UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark Geosites	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Bumble Hole & Warrens Park LNR (Geosite)• The Rowley Hills (Geosite)• Blue Rock Quarry (Geosite)	UNESCO defines Global Geoparks as 'single, unified geographical areas where sites and landscapes of international geological significance are managed'. The main emphasis is on protection, education and sustainable development while involving local communities. As of 2019, there are 140 UNESCO Global Geoparks in 38 countries and there are seven in the UK. Within a Geopark the important selected sites are called Geosites. ¹¹⁸
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¹¹⁸ UNESCO (2023) Black Country Global Geopark Guidebook. Available at: <https://blackcountrygeopark.dudley.gov.uk/sites-to-see/> [Accessed 11/09/23]

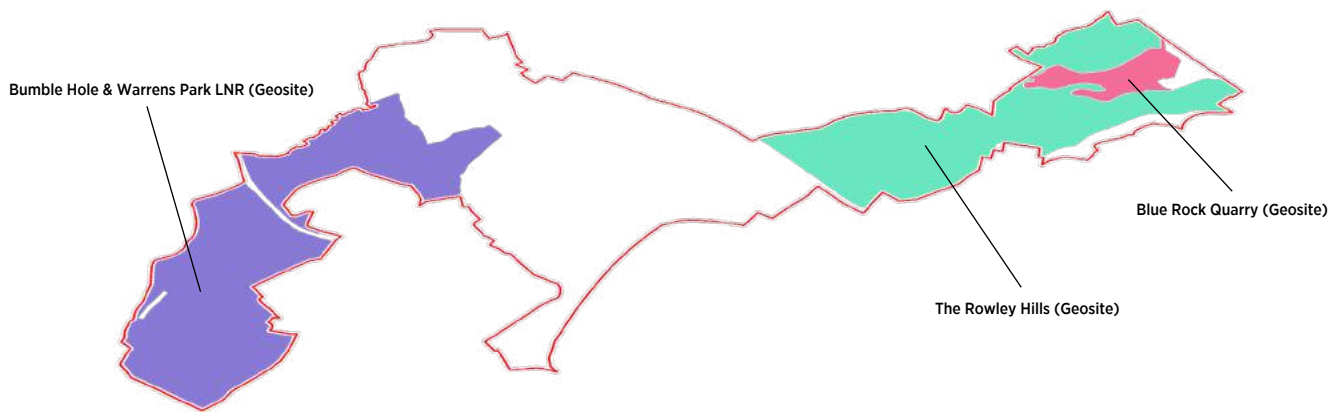
Biodiversity Designations



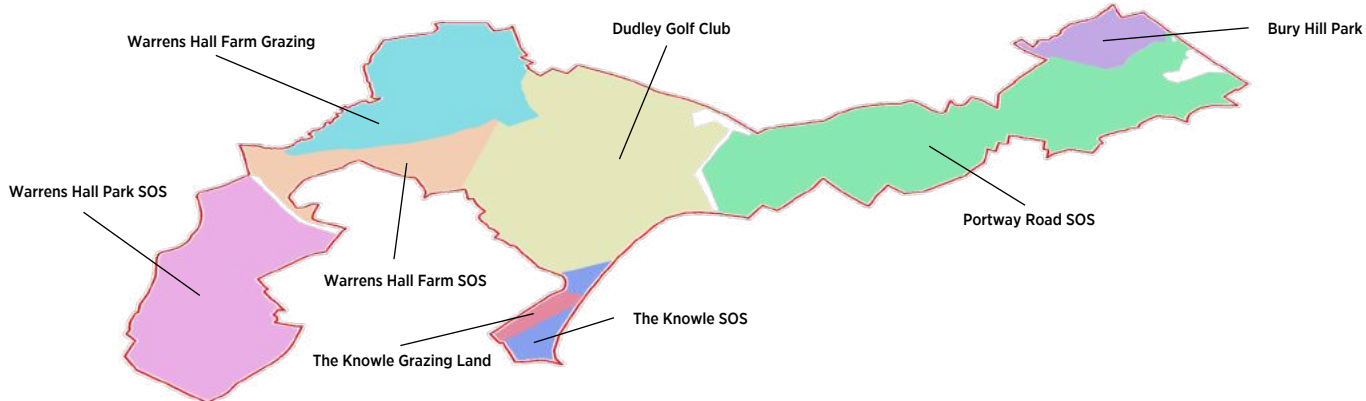
Historic Environment and Heritage Assets



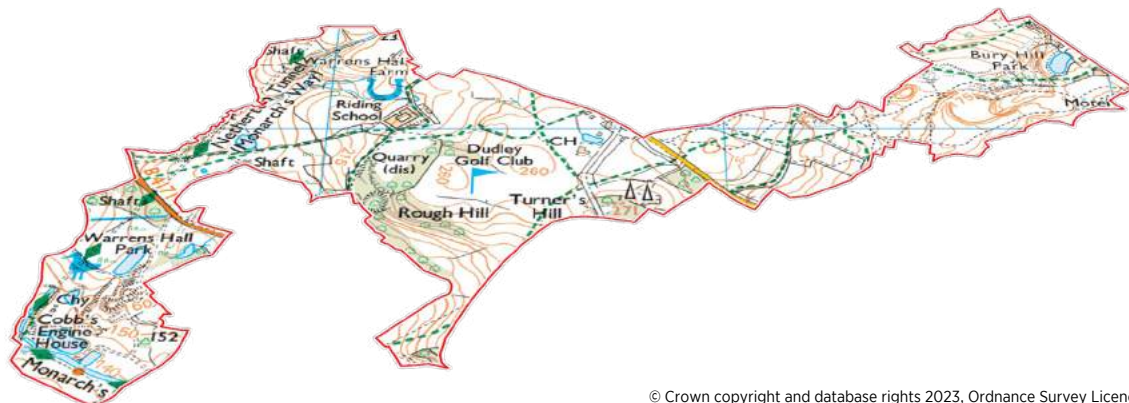
UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark Geosites



Green Spaces Audit 2018



Ordnance Survey



18 Summary and conclusions

18.1 Landscape Character Assessment

18.1.1 The Landscape Character Assessment divides the RHSOS into Landscape Character Areas (LCAs). Four Landscape Character Areas (LCAs) have been identified in the RHSOS following a baseline study and site visits to analyse landscape character:

- LCA 1 – Warrens Hall Park;
- LCA 2 – Warrens Hall Farm;
- LCA 3 – Dudley Golf Club and Turner’s Hill; and
- LCA 4 – Portway Road SOS and Bury Hill Park.

18.1.2 Each LCA includes a description of natural, cultural, social, perceptual and aesthetic qualities and recommendations to plan, manage and protect distinctiveness.

18.2 Landscape Capacity Assessment

18.2.1 The landscape capacity assessment found that landscape capacity is low at LCA 1, LCA 2 LCA 3 and LCA 4. Areas classified as low capacity mean that the landscape could not accommodate areas of new development without a significant and adverse impact on the landscape character and visual amenity. Occasional very small scale development may be possible providing it has regard to the setting and form of existing settlement and surrounding landscape character.

18.3 Valued qualities

18.3.1 This study has found that the landscape of the RHSOS is highly valuable under the majority of the indicators of landscape value set out in the Landscape Institute TGN 2021 guidelines. The identified special qualities of the landscape should be protected and enhanced for their value to the current and future residents of the local area. In summary, the following valued qualities have been identified:

- **Rich geological and industrial history**, evidenced by rock exposures and residual landscape morphology associated with former industries notably former coal mining and quarrying of Rowley Ragstone, recognised through three UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark Geosites.
- A **range of habitats** to support biodiversity including deciduous woodlands, good quality semi-improved grasslands, scrub, hedgerows, ponds and canals.
- **Biodiversity designations** that contribute to landscape character including Warrens Hall Country Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR), three Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs), five Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINCs) and five Potential Sites of Importance (PSIs).
- The setting to designated **heritage assets**, including three Grade II Listed Buildings, Cobb’s Engine House Scheduled Monument, Windmill End Conservation Area, Warrens

Hall Nature Reserve and Bury Hill Park Areas of High Historic Landscape Value (AHHLV) and an Archaeological Priority Area (APA).

- The Rowley Hills form a **prominent and distinctive upland landscape feature** on the horizon of the Black Country.
- The open and undeveloped **skyline** which rises above the surrounding urban areas.
- **Multi-functional green infrastructure** assets such as broadleaved woodlands, grasslands and soils that provide a range of ecosystem services for biodiversity, carbon storage and recreation.
- **Expansive panoramic views** across the Black Country and beyond.
- **Highly valued open spaces** for informal recreation. The network of PRoW provides opportunities to benefit local residents' physical health and well-being and providing opportunities for contact with nature within an otherwise heavily built-up area.
- **Relative tranquillity** within enclosed and wooded parts of the designation particularly in the west.

18.4 Biodiversity Net Gain

- 18.4.1 A separate report has been prepared by Lepus Consulting for SMBC which has identified council-owned land and sites within Sandwell with a view to establishing their suitability for use as receptor sites for ecological and habitat creation projects relating to the delivery of BNG. One potential habitat bank has been identified within the RHSOS: Warrens Hall Park.

18.5 Green infrastructure and climate change

- 18.5.1 This report has identified numerous multi-functional green infrastructure assets within the RHSOS such as broadleaved woodlands, grasslands and soils that provide a range of ecosystem services for biodiversity, carbon storage and recreation. This report also includes an assessment of the green spaces within the RHSOS and their contribution to Natural England's Accessible Greenspace Standard.

18.6 Options for protection

- 18.6.1 To ensure development within the RHSOS is strictly controlled, this report reviews the suitability and effectiveness of the following options for protection.

Green Belt

- 18.6.2 Whilst the RHSOS separates neighbouring towns from merging into one another to an extent, the designation is not located on the fringes of the wider Birmingham and Black Country urban area, and therefore does not prevent sprawl or encroachment of built-up areas into the surrounding open countryside. For these reasons, this study does not recommend Green Belt as a suitable option for protection for the RHSOS.

Local Green Space

- 18.6.3 The RHSOS designation is in close proximity to the community it serves and holds a particular local significance because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value, relative tranquillity and richness of wildlife habitats. Whilst advice from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) states that there are ‘no hard or fast rules about how big a LGS can be’, the RHSOS is likely to be considered to be an ‘extensive tract of land’ based on its relatively large size. Due to concerns about the size of the RHSOS, this study does not recommend LGS as a suitable option for protection for the RHSOS.

Rowley Hills Strategic Open Space Policy

- 18.6.4 To date, SMBC has been successful in preventing inappropriate development from occurring, which has been helped by current planning policy (SAD policy EOS3). Continuing the protection of the RHSOS through a revised policy in the SLP is highly recommended. A revised policy recommendation for the RHSOS is presented in this report. This revised policy recommendation is informed by the findings of the landscape character assessment and landscape evaluation in this report.

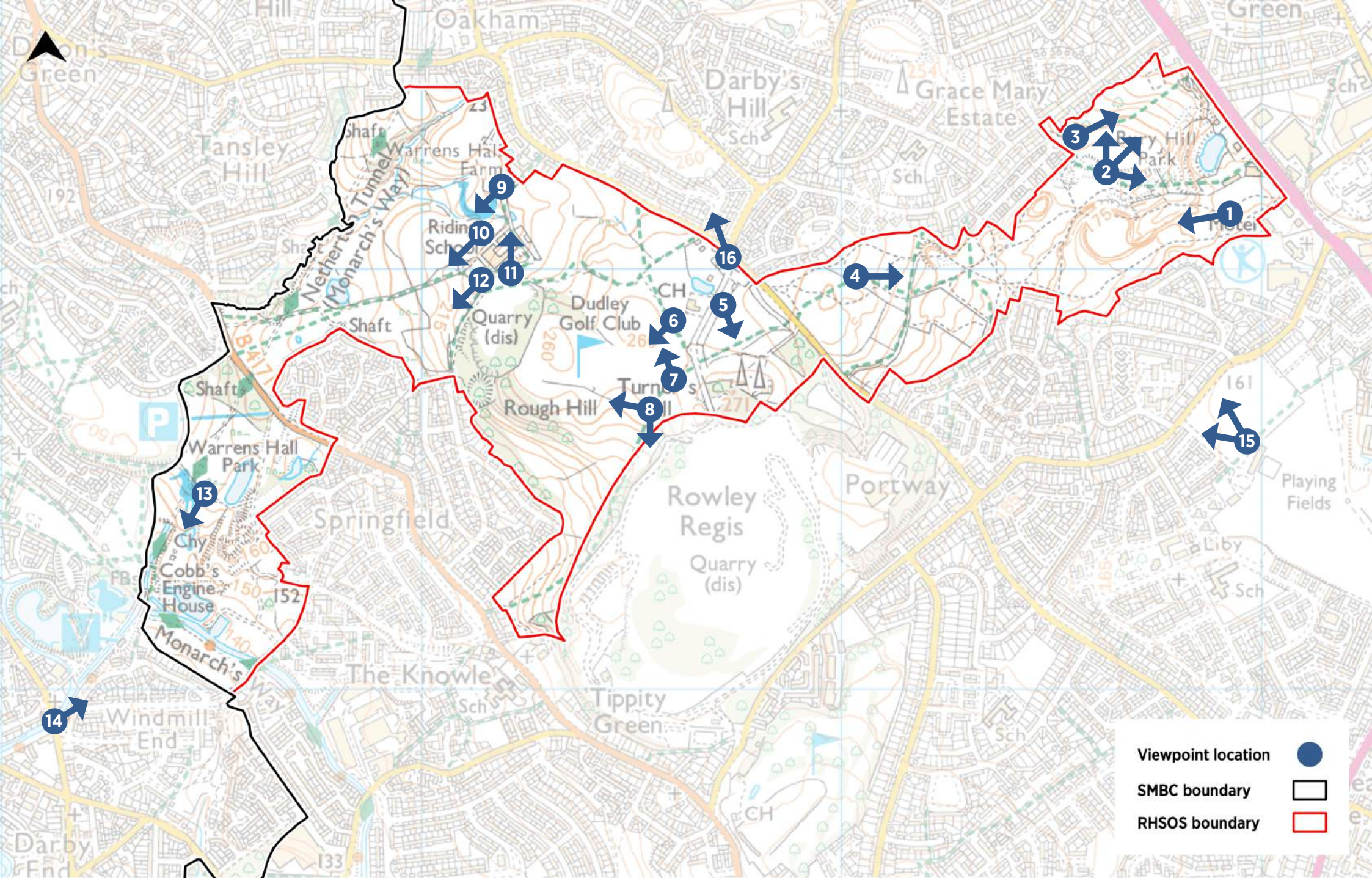
Article 4 Direction at Portway Hill

- 18.6.5 The Article 4 Direction is located at the highest western extent Portway Hill on a SINC (Portway Hill Open Space SINC) and wildlife corridor. Development at this open and exposed location would potentially impact on the highly valued open and undeveloped skyline and the expansive panoramic views outwards across the Black Country and beyond. For these reasons, the boundary of the Article 4 Direction is considered to still be suitable and should be retained to preserve the openness of the area by preventing any intrusive development.

Existing designations

- 18.6.6 A number of biodiversity designations, historic environment and heritage assets and geological designations currently exist either fully or partially within the boundary of the RHSOS designation. These are:
- Warrens Hall Country Park Local Nature Reserve (LNR);
 - Three Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs);
 - Five Sites of Local Importance for Nature Conservation (SLINCs);
 - Five Potential Sites of Importance (PSIs);
 - Three Grade II Listed Buildings;
 - Cobb’s Engine House Scheduled Monument;
 - Windmill End Conservation Area;
 - Two Areas of High Historic Landscape Value (AHHLV);
 - One Archaeological Priority Area (APA); and
 - Three UNESCO Black Country Global Geopark Geosites.

Appendix A: Viewpoint locations map

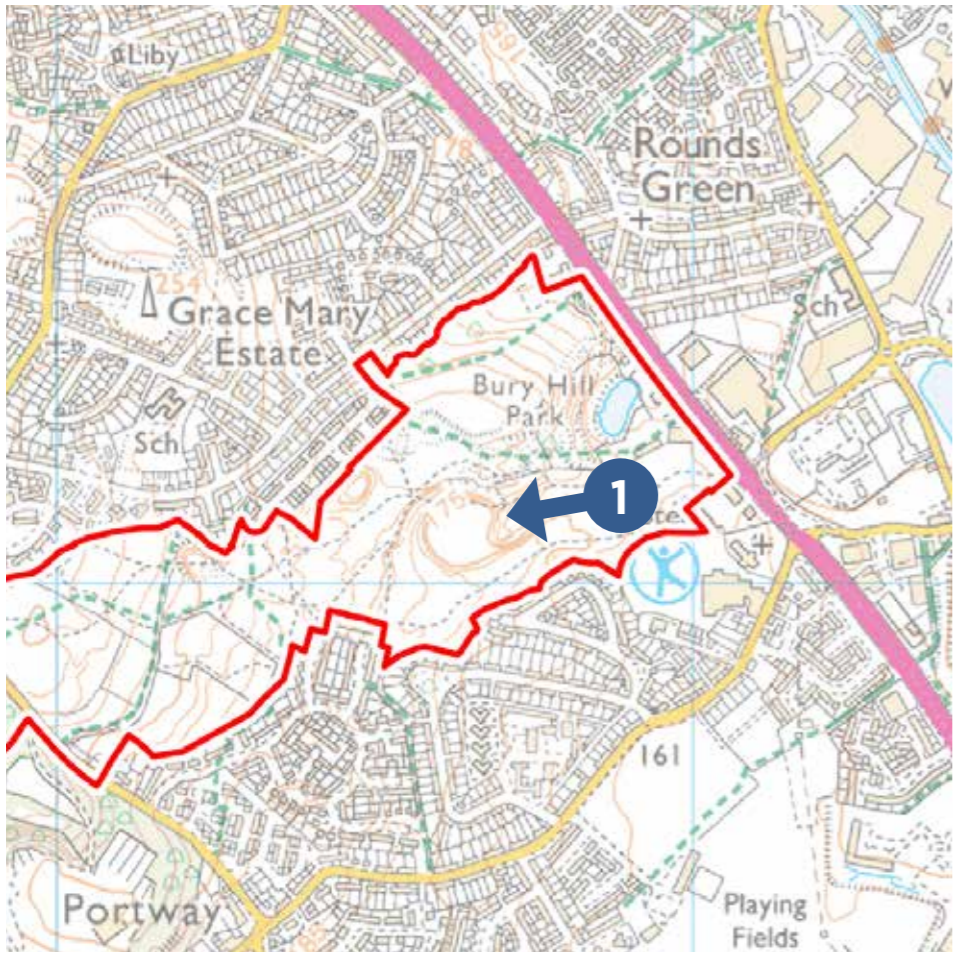


Viewpoint location	●
SMBC boundary	□
RHSOS boundary	□

Appendix B: Panoramic photographs of viewpoints



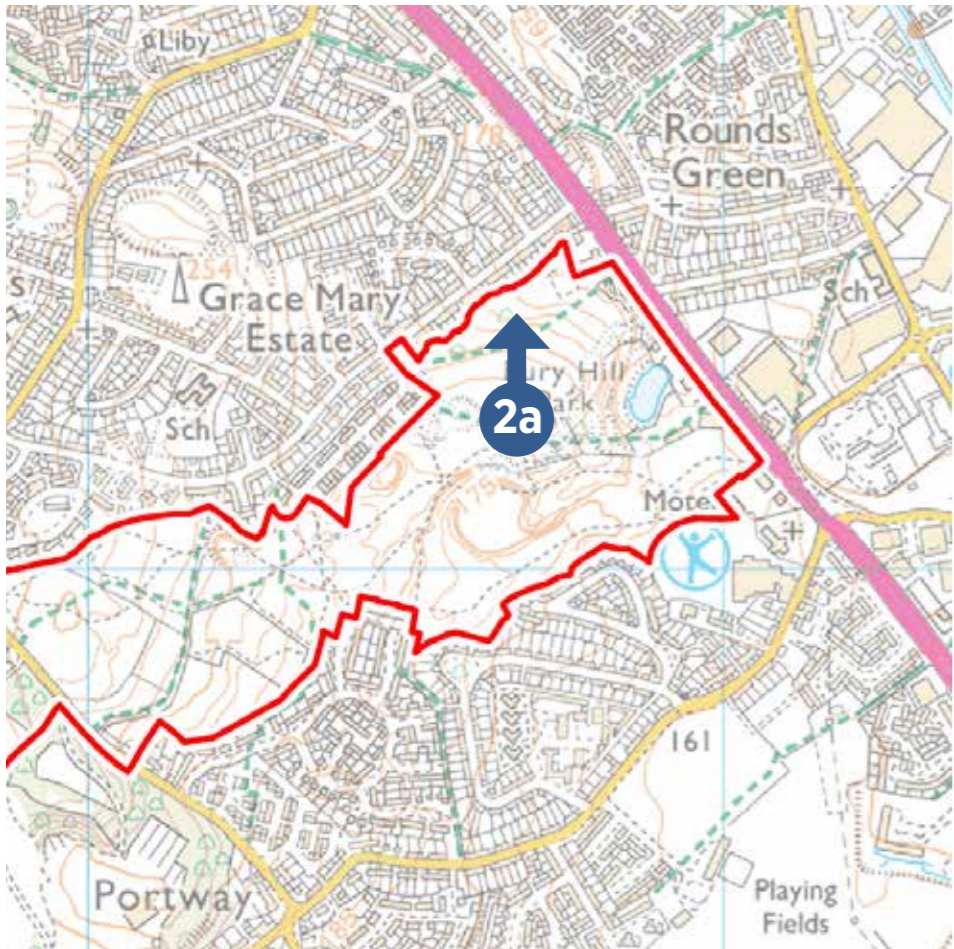
Radio transmission towers at Turner's Hill →



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Viewpoint 1 at Portway Hill (LCA 4)

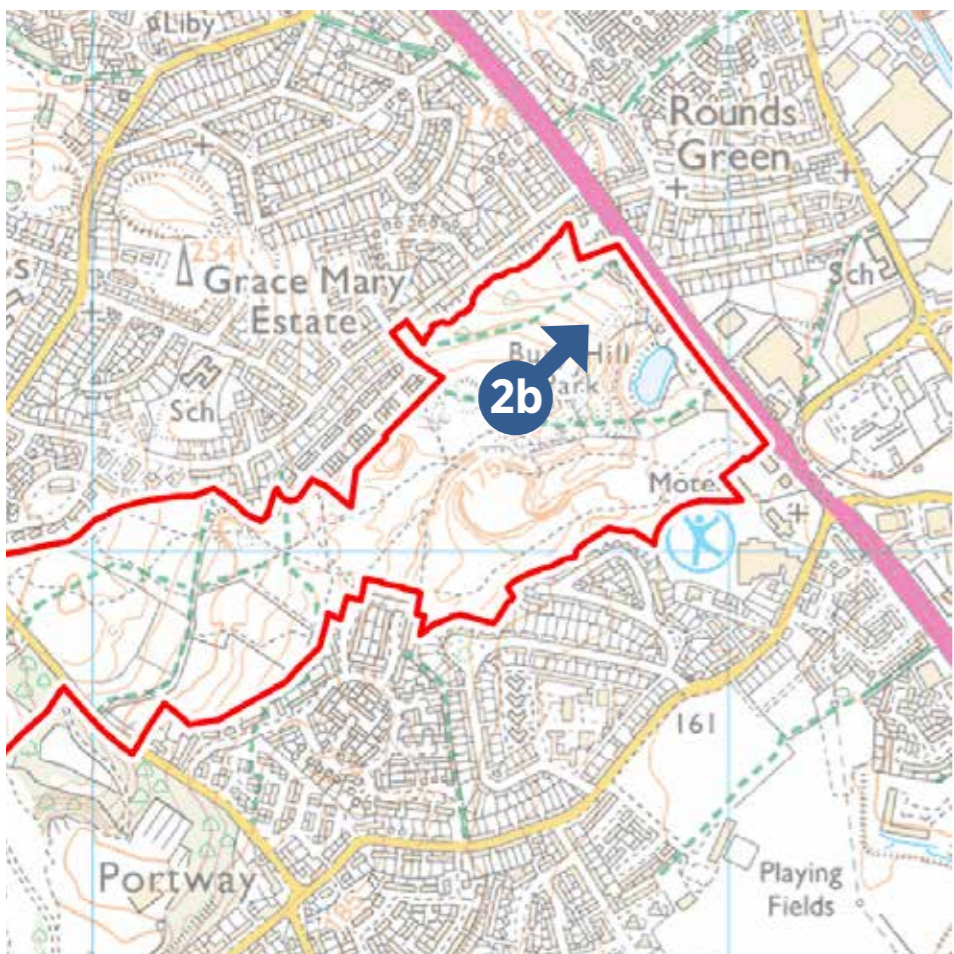
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PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 1	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 180m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Eastern extent of Portway Hill SOS	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
DISTANCE FROM SITE:	On site	SCALE:	Not to scale	SHUTTER SPEED:	1/400
VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking west	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/11



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Viewpoint 2a at Bury Hill Park (LCA 4)

PROJECT CODE:	LC-951	OS GRID REF:	SO 97672 89261	TIME:	10:13 am
PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 2a	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 200m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Bury Hill Park	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
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VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking north	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/16



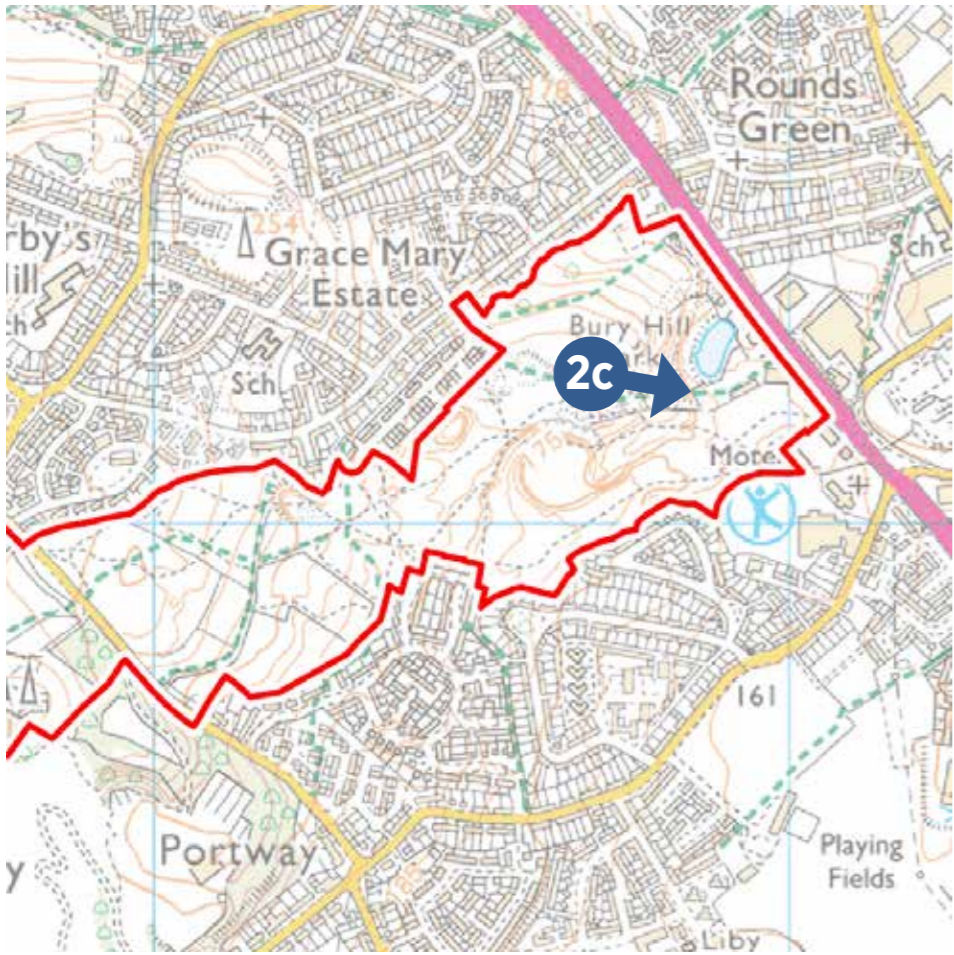
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Viewpoint 2b at Bury Hill Park (LCA 4)

PROJECT CODE:	LC-951	OS GRID REF:	SO 97672 89261	TIME:	10:19 am
PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 2b	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 200m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Bury Hill Park	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
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VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking north east	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/7.1



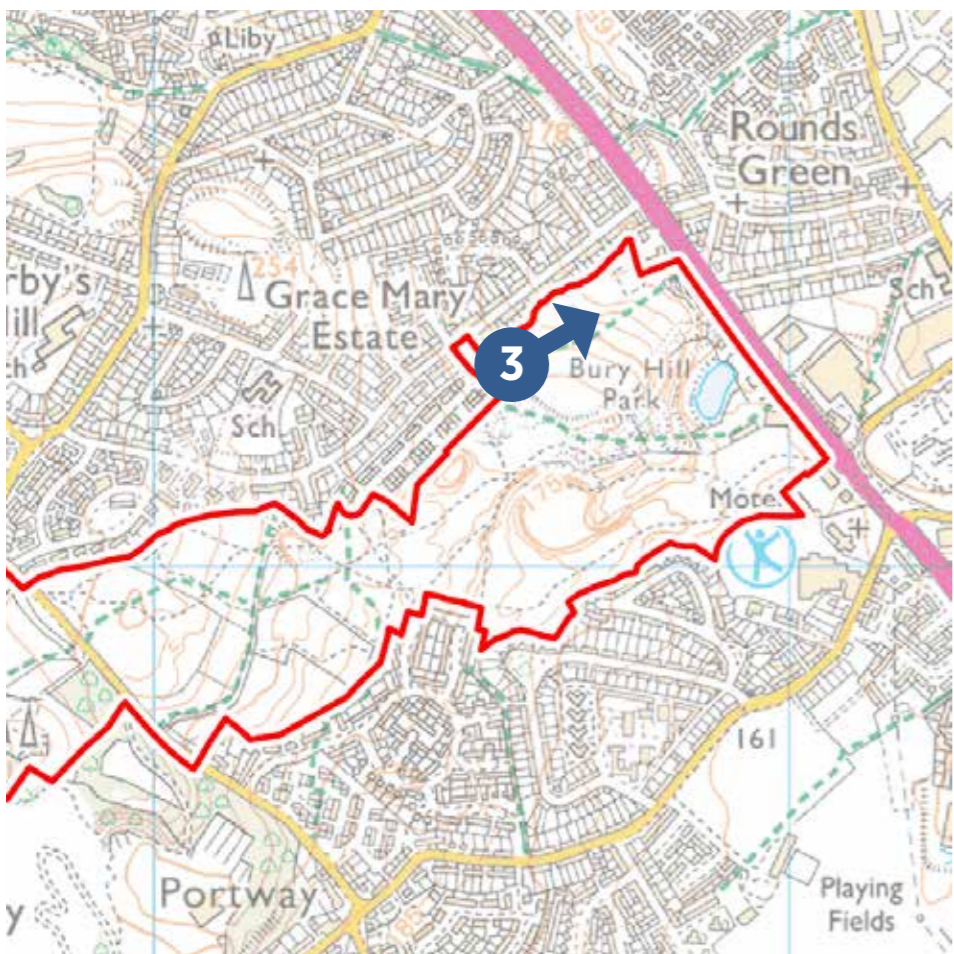
Birmingham skyline



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Viewpoint 2c at Bury Hill Park (LCA 4)

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CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
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VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking east	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/11

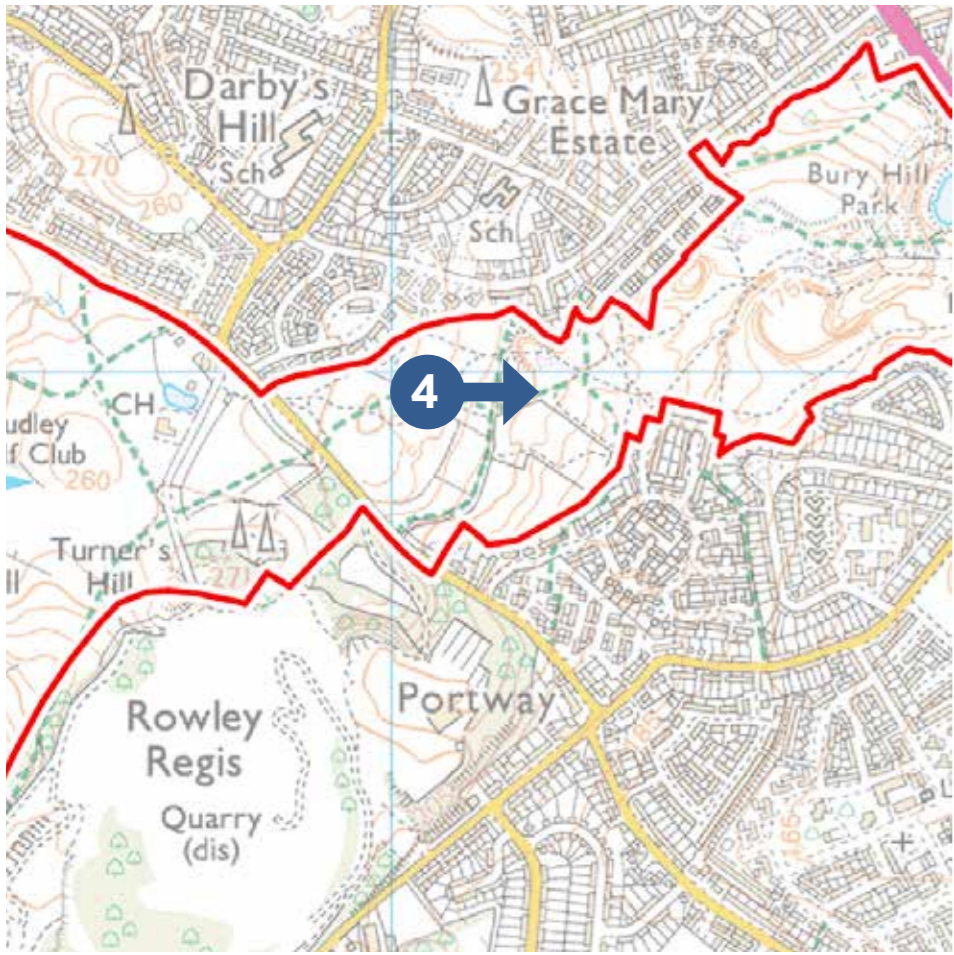


Viewpoint 3 footpath at Bury Hill Park (LCA 4)

PROJECT CODE:	LC-951	OS GRID REF:	SO 97527 89317	TIME:	10:09 am
PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 3	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 200m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Footpath at Bury Hill Park	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
DISTANCE FROM SITE:	On site	SCALE:	Not to scale	SHUTTER SPEED:	1/125
VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking north east	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/16



Birmingham skyline



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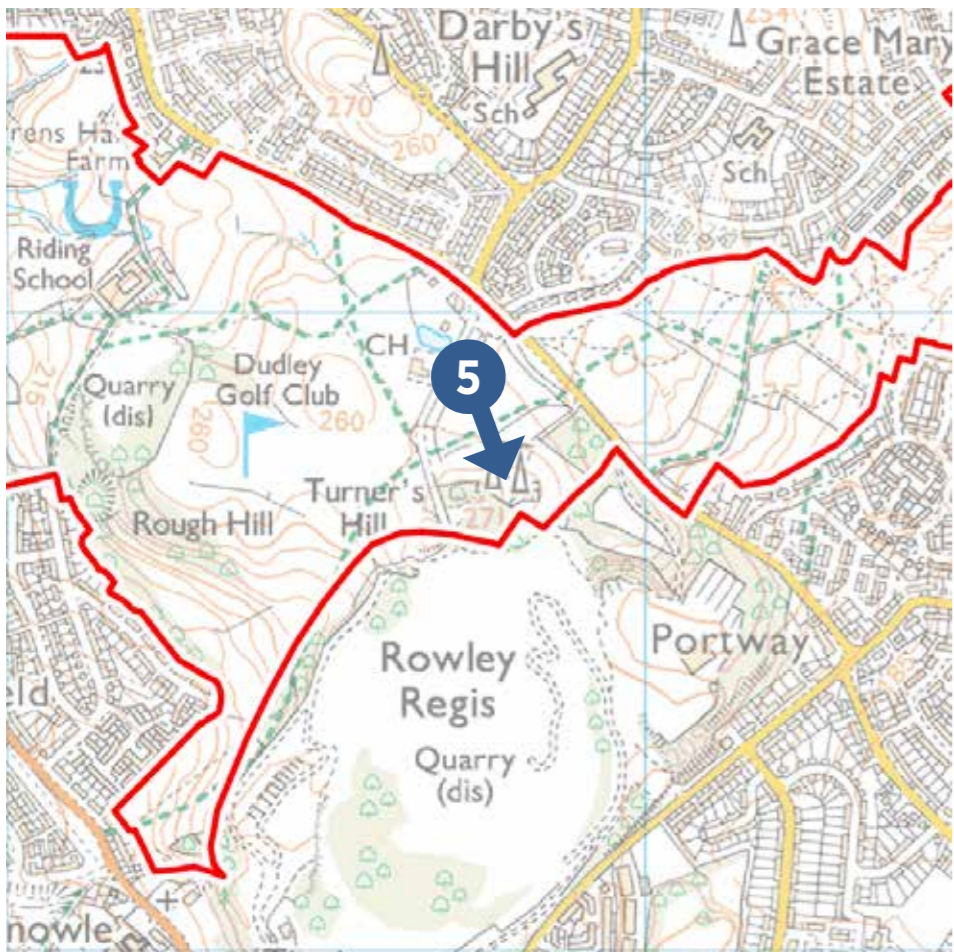
Viewpoint 4 footpath at Portway Hill (LCA 4)

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PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 4	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 250m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Footpath at Portway Hill	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
DISTANCE FROM SITE:	On site	SCALE:	Not to scale	SHUTTER SPEED:	1/400
VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking east	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/10

Radio transmission towers

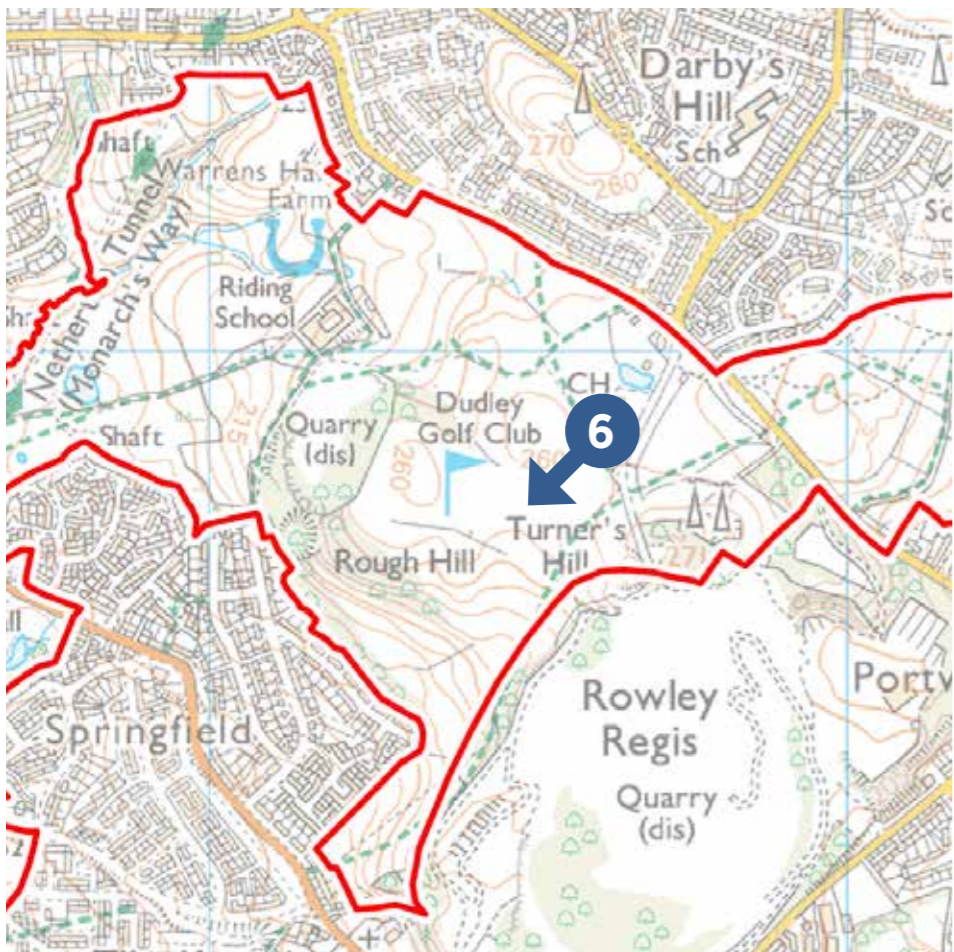


Pasture grazed by horses



Viewpoint 5 at Turner's Hill (LCA 3)

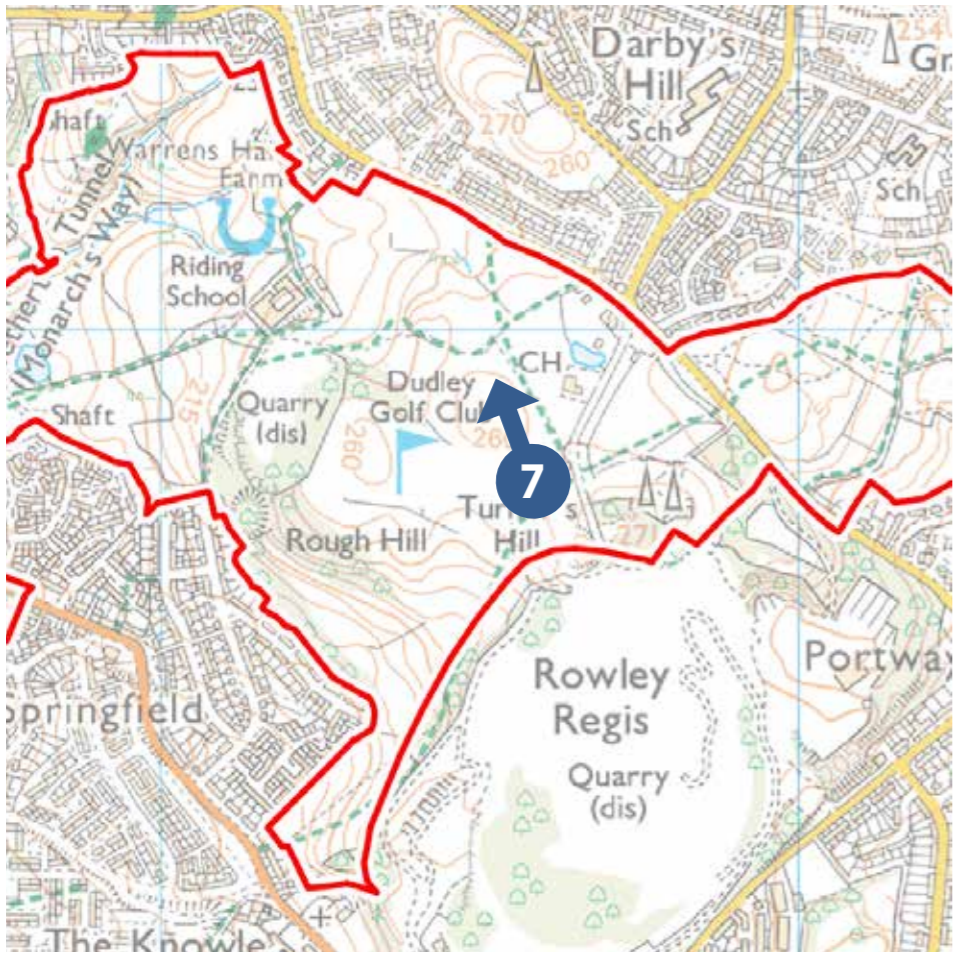
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PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 5	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 260m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Turner's Hill	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
DISTANCE FROM SITE:	On site	SCALE:	Not to scale	SHUTTER SPEED:	1/250
VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking south	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/5.6



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Viewpoint 6 footpath at Dudley Golf Club (LCA 3)

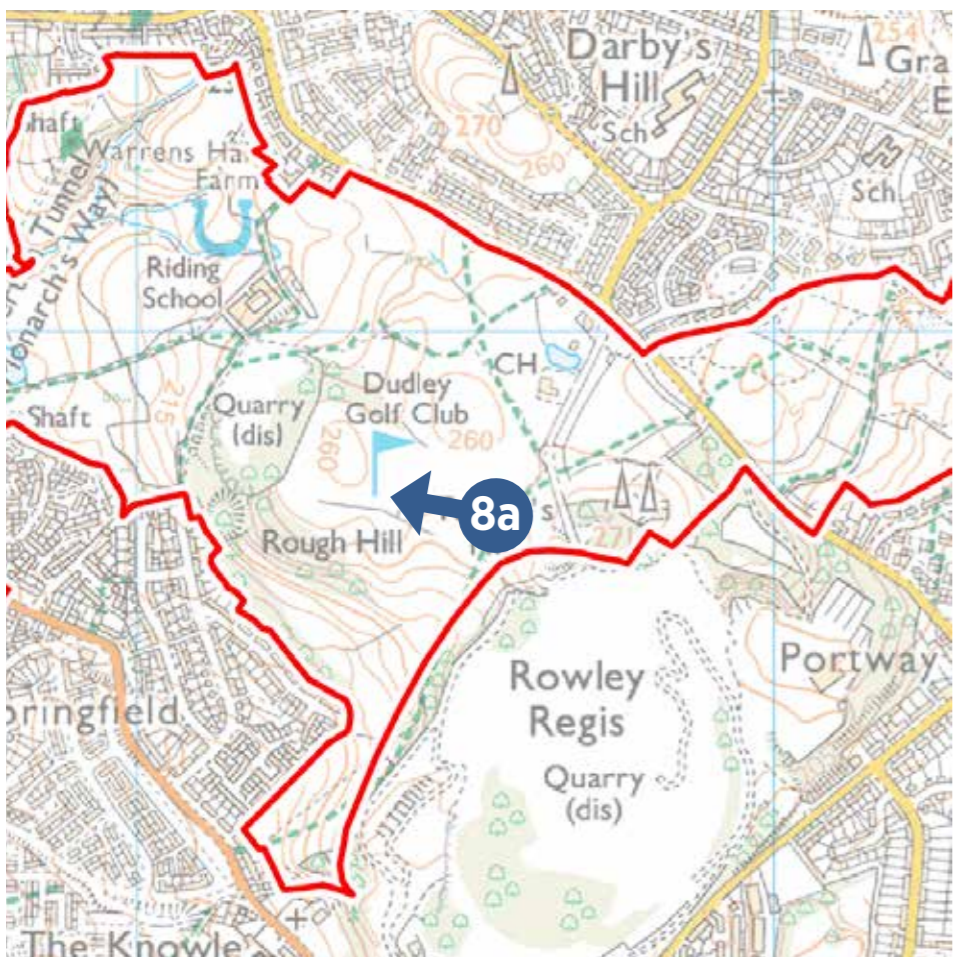
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CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Footpath at Dudley Golf Club	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
DISTANCE FROM SITE:	On site	SCALE:	Not to scale	SHUTTER SPEED:	1/250
VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking south west	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/5.6



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Viewpoint 7 footpath at Dudley Golf Club (LCA 3)

PROJECT CODE:	LC-951	OS GRID REF:	SO 96640 88723	TIME:	09:38 am
PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 7	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 260m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Footpath at Dudley Golf Club	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
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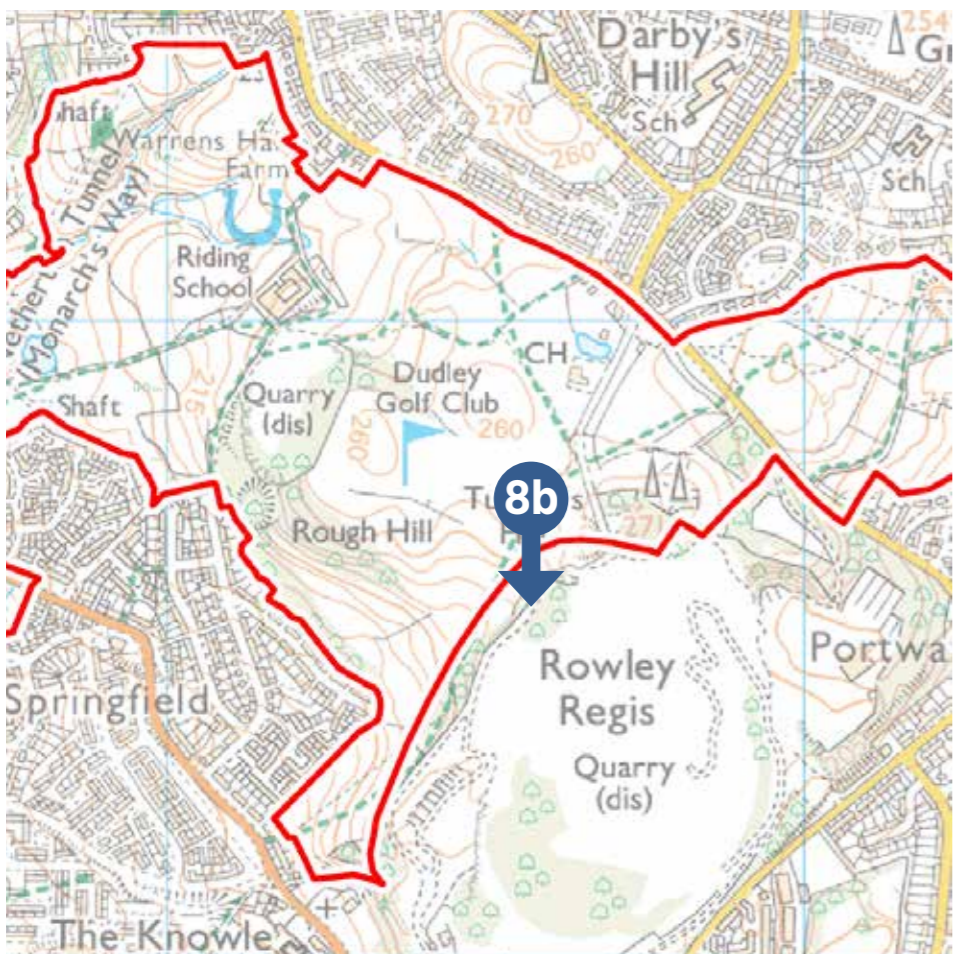


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Viewpoint 8a footpath at Dudley Golf Club (LCA 3)

PROJECT CODE:	LC-951	OS GRID REF:	SO 96629 88684	TIME:	09:36 am
PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 8a	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 260m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Footpath at Dudley Golf Club	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
DISTANCE FROM SITE:	On site	SCALE:	Not to scale	SHUTTER SPEED:	1/160
VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking west	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/14

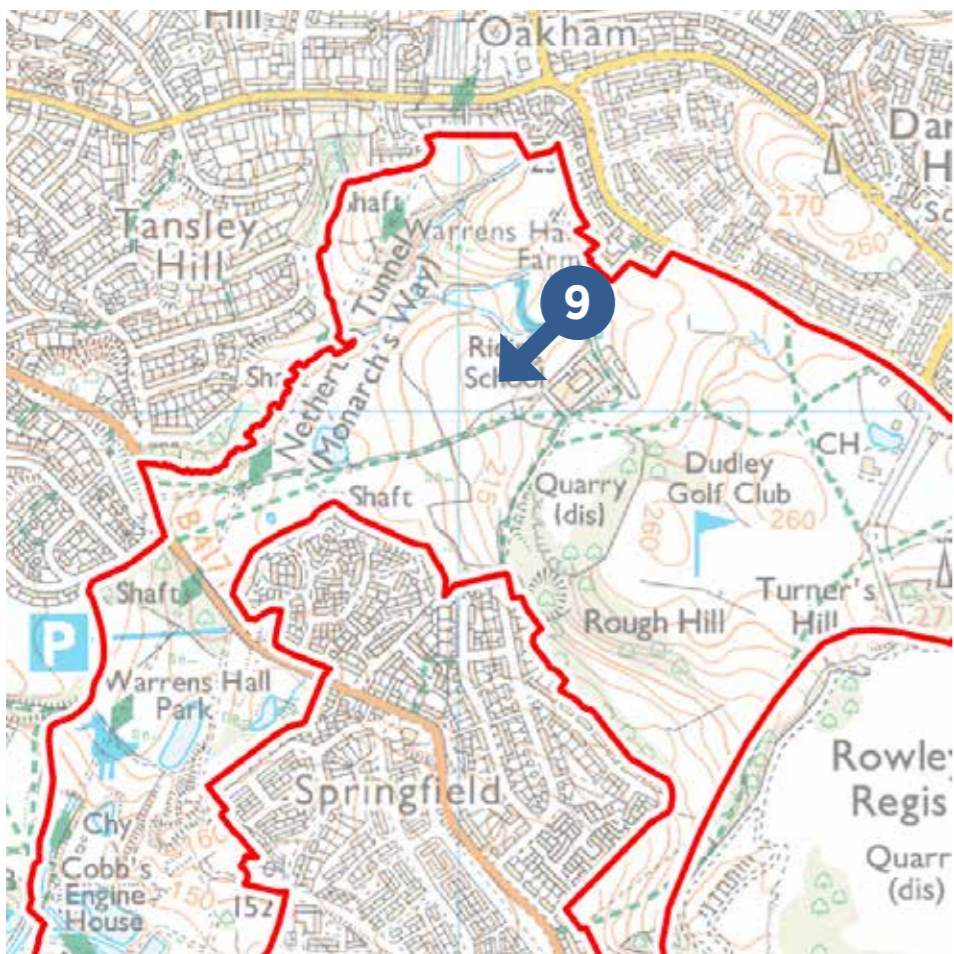
View into Edwin Richards Quarry obscured by vegetation



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Viewpoint 8b footpath at Dudley Golf Club (LCA 3)

PROJECT CODE:	LC-951	OS GRID REF:	SO 96629 88684	TIME:	9:34 am
PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 8b	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 260m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Footpath at Dudley Golf Club	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
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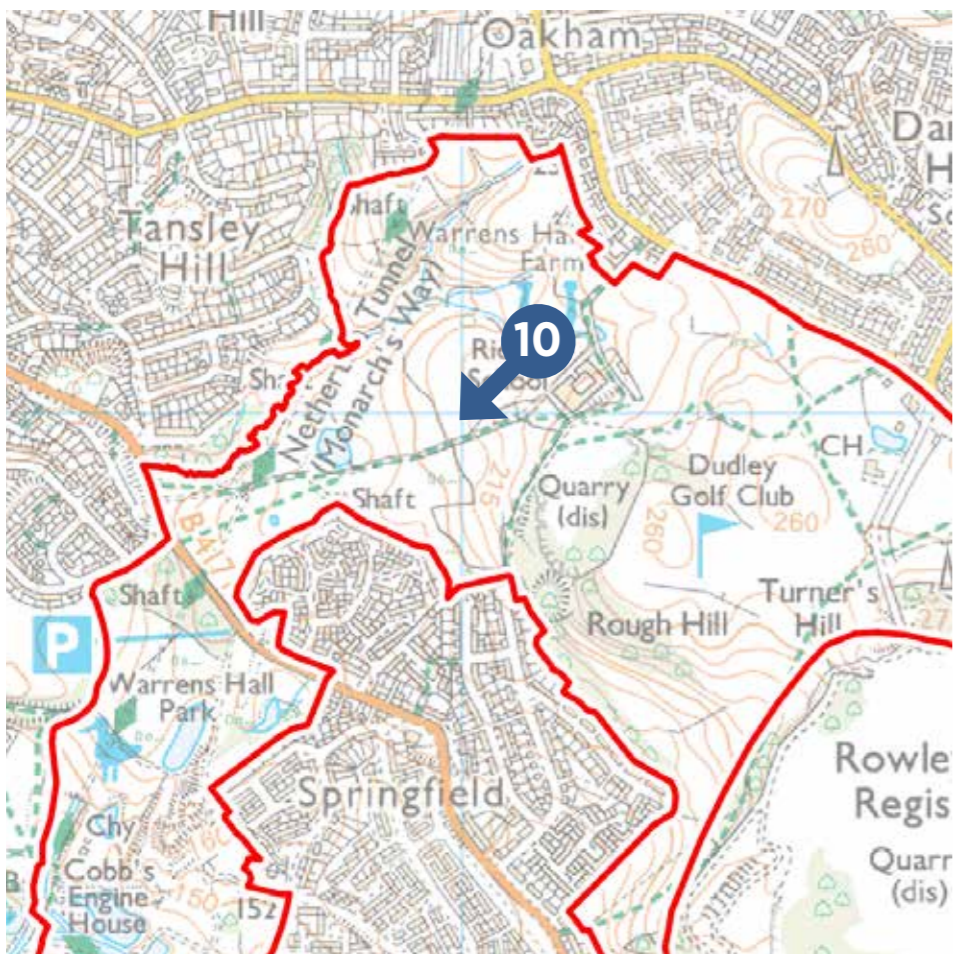
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Viewpoint 9 footpath at Warrens Hall Farm (LCA 2)

PROJECT CODE:	LC-951	OS GRID REF:	SO 96163 89223	TIME:	8:48 am
PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 9	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 220m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Footpath at Warrens Hall Farm	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
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VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking south west	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/8.0



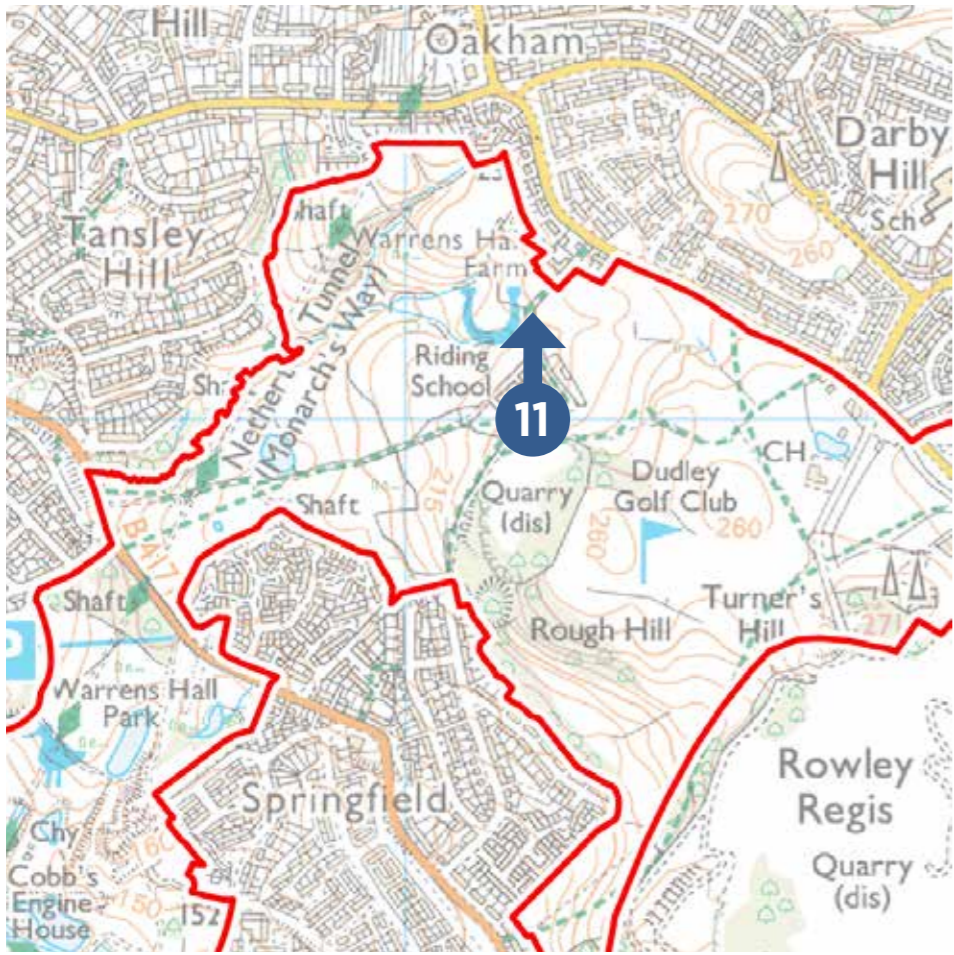
Pasture grazed by horses



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Viewpoint 10 permissive path at Warrens Hall Farm (LCA 2)

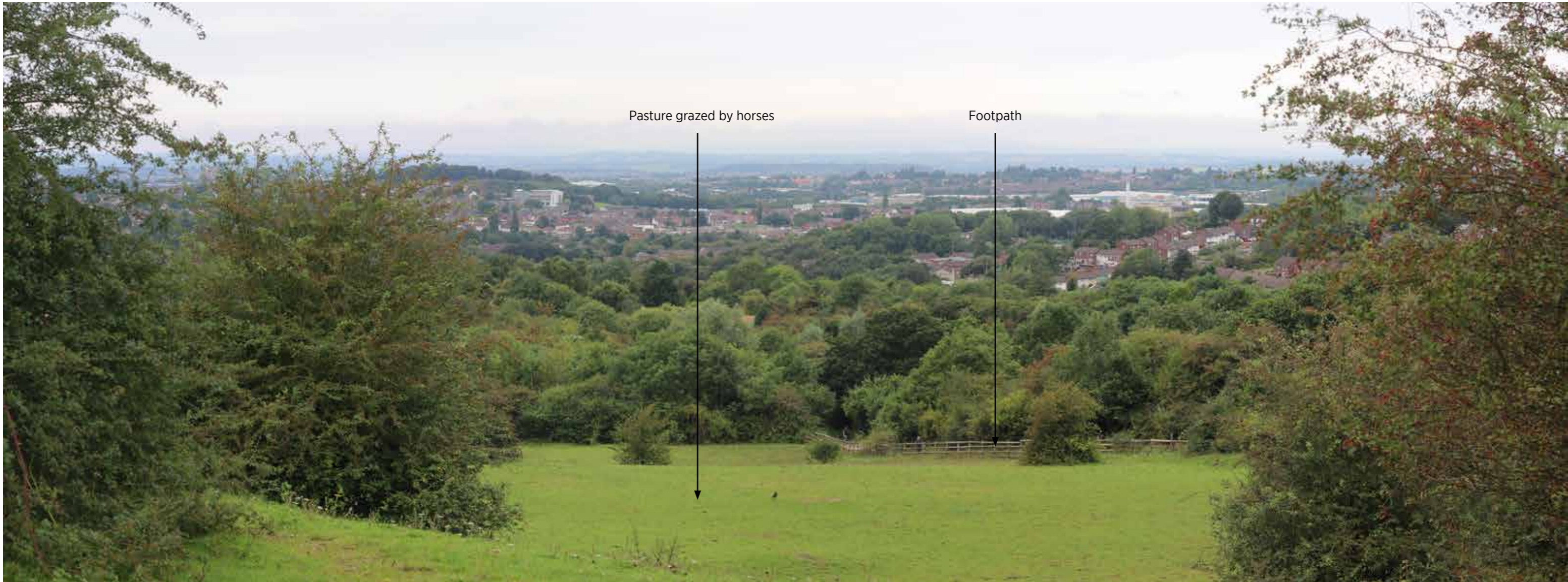
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CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Permissive path at Warrens Hall Farm	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
DISTANCE FROM SITE:	On site	SCALE:	Not to scale	SHUTTER SPEED:	1/250
VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking south west	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/8.0



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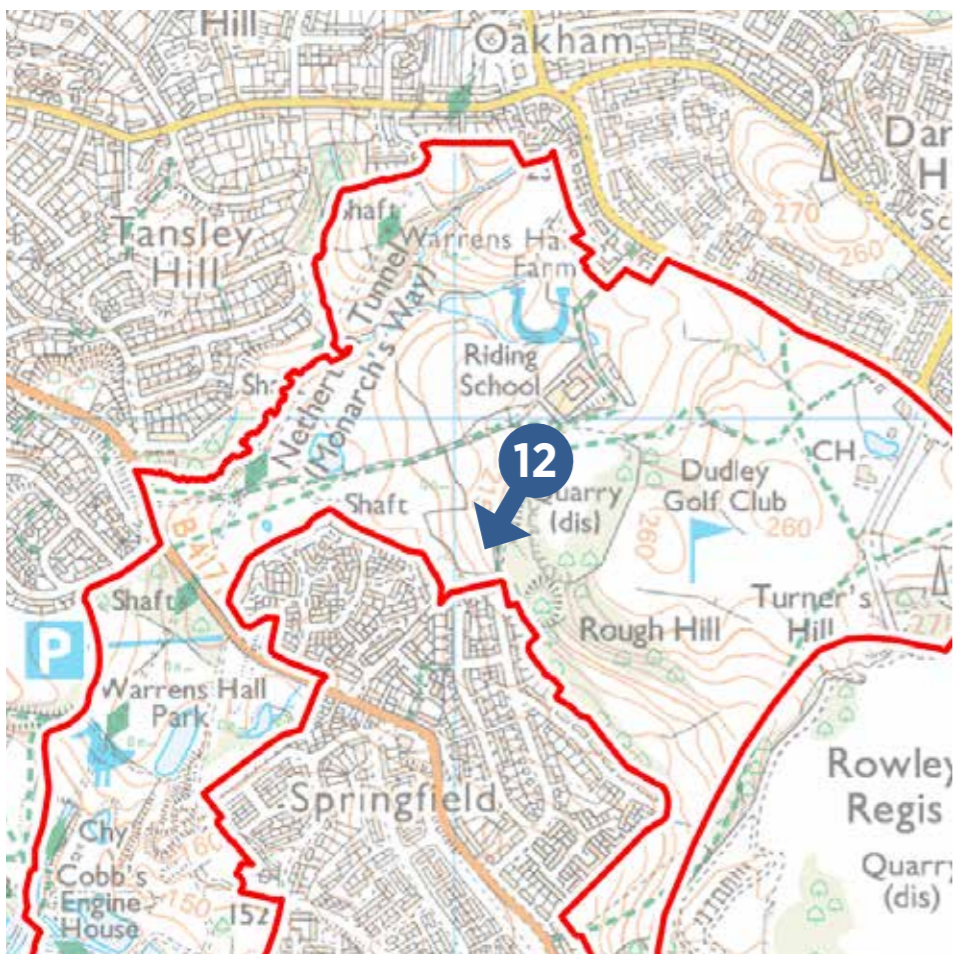
Viewpoint 11 at footpath adjacent to Warrens Hall Riding School (LCA 2)

PROJECT CODE:	LC-951	OS GRID REF:	SO 96202 88999	TIME:	9:00 am
PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 11	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 230m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Footpath adjacent to Warrens Hall Riding School	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
DISTANCE FROM SITE:	On site	SCALE:	Not to scale	SHUTTER SPEED:	1/250
VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking north	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/4.5



Pasture grazed by horses

Footpath



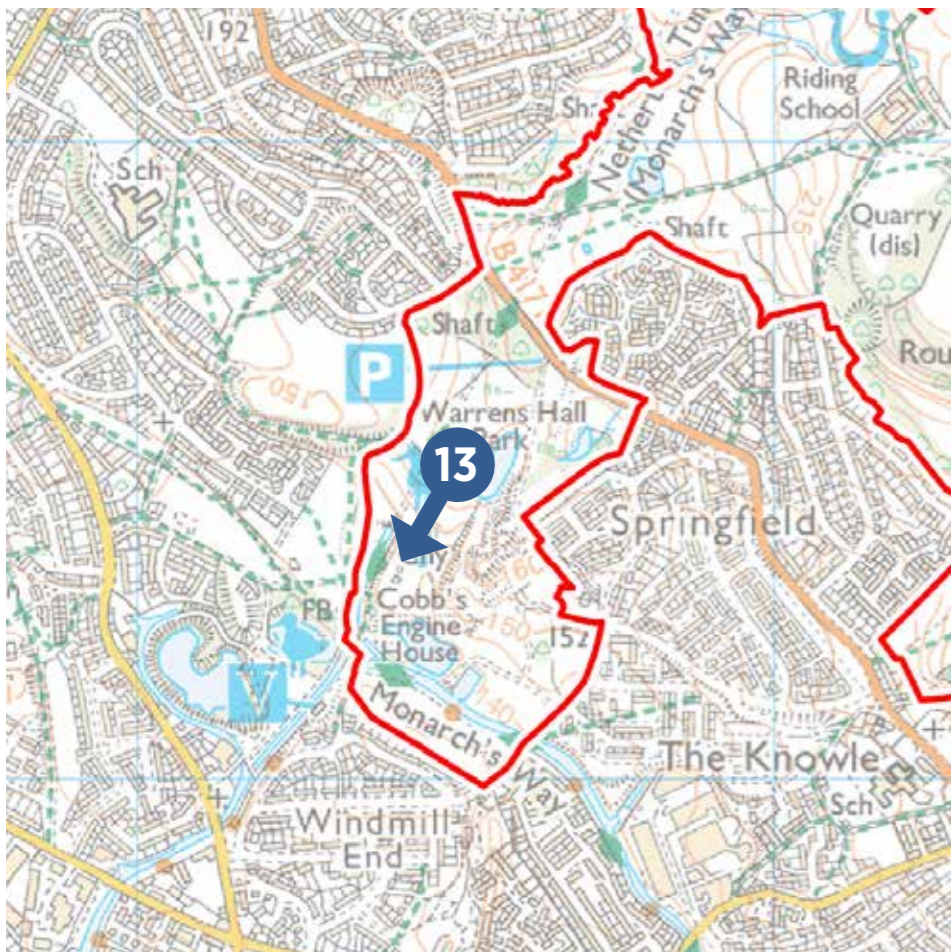
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Viewpoint 12 at footpath south of Warrens Hall Riding School (LCA 2)

PROJECT CODE:	LC-951	OS GRID REF:	SO 96154 88971	TIME:	8:59 am
PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 12	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 220m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Footpath south of Warrens Hall Riding School	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
DISTANCE FROM SITE:	On site	SCALE:	Not to scale	SHUTTER SPEED:	1/250
VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking south west	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/4.5

Woodland creates a sense of enclosure from the surrounding urban environment

Cobb's Engine House and Chimney



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Viewpoint 13 at Warrens Hall Park (LCA 1)

PROJECT CODE: LC-951

PROJECT NAME: Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan

CLIENT: Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council

VIEWPOINT LOCATION: Warrens Hall Park

DISTANCE FROM SITE: On site

VIEWPOINT DIRECTION: Looking south west

OS GRID REF: SO 95492 88447

TITLE: Viewpoint 13

IMAGE TAKEN BY: ND

CHECKED: ND

SCALE: Not to scale

DATE: 23.08.23

TIME: 11:05 am

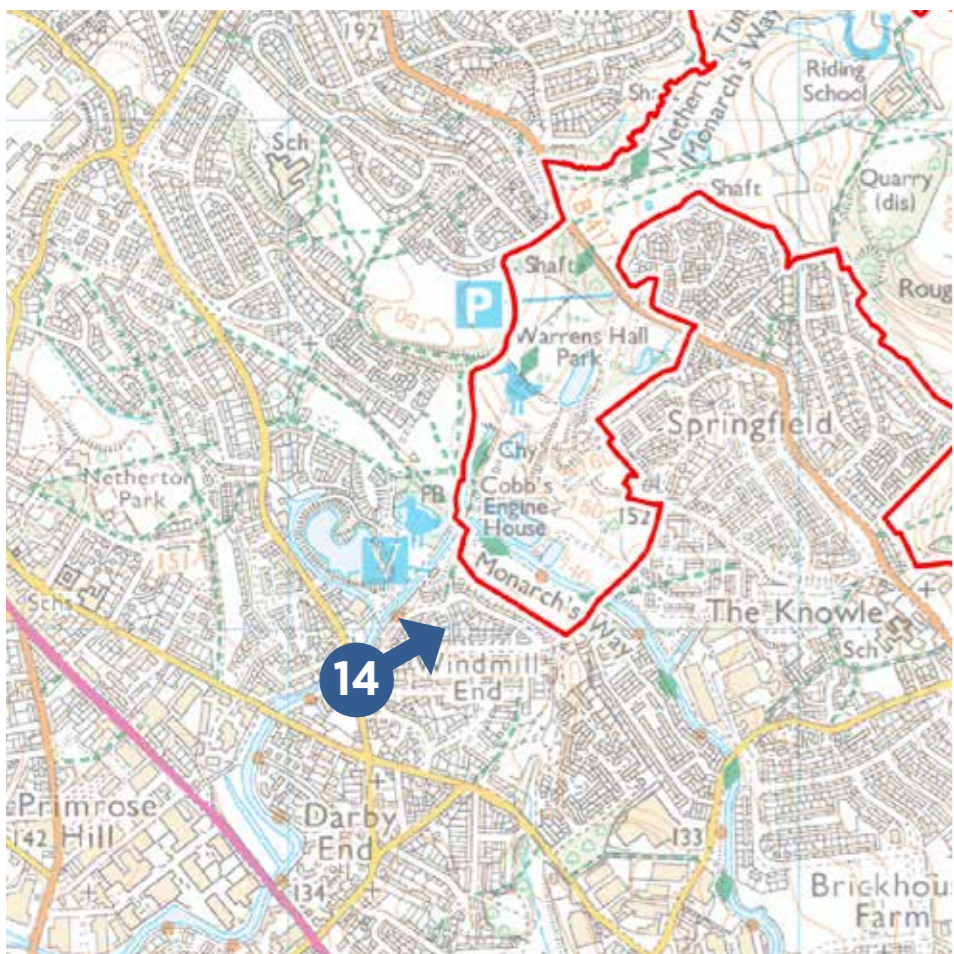
VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD): Approx 160m AOD

CAMERA: Canon EOS 70D

LENS: Canon EF 50mm

SHUTTER SPEED: 1/250

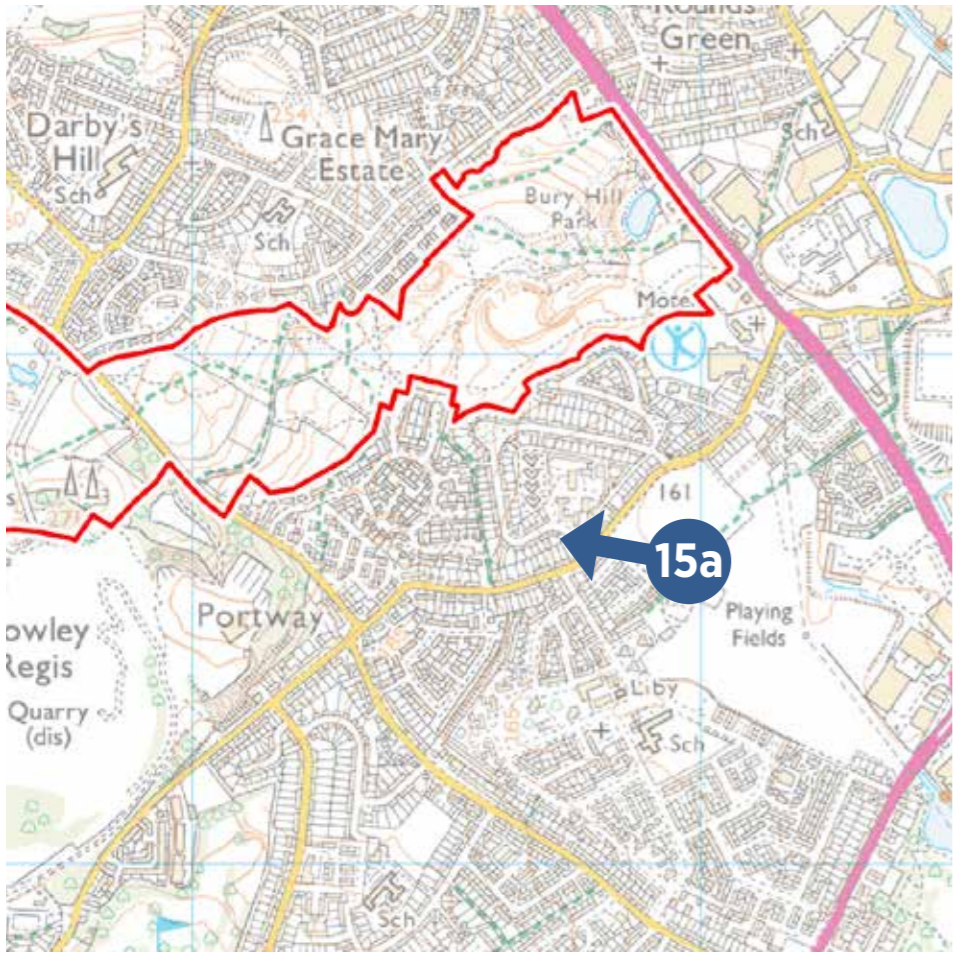
APERTURE: f/8.0



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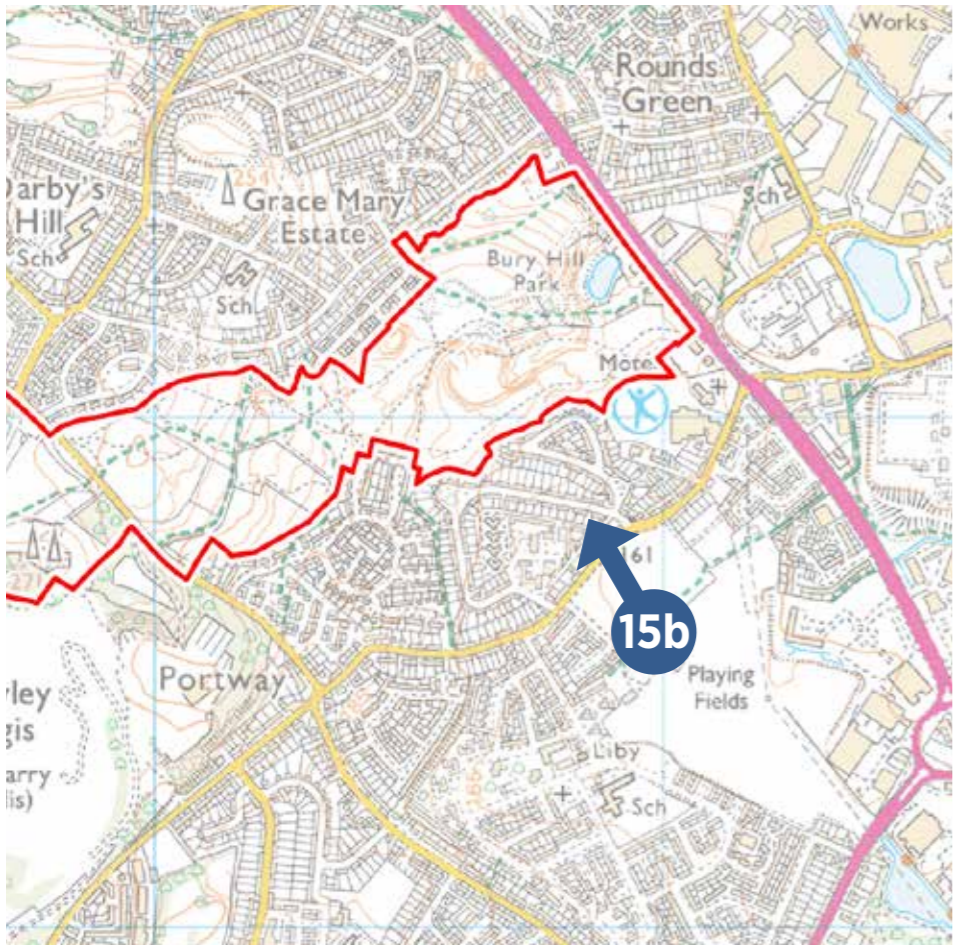
Viewpoint 14 at St Peter's Road bridge over Dudley Canal

PROJECT CODE:	LC-951	OS GRID REF:	SO 95129 87923	TIME:	08:31am
PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 14	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 140m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	St Peter's Road bridge over Dudley Canal	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
DISTANCE FROM SITE:	Approx 300m	SCALE:	Not to scale	SHUTTER SPEED:	1/200
VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking north east	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/4.5



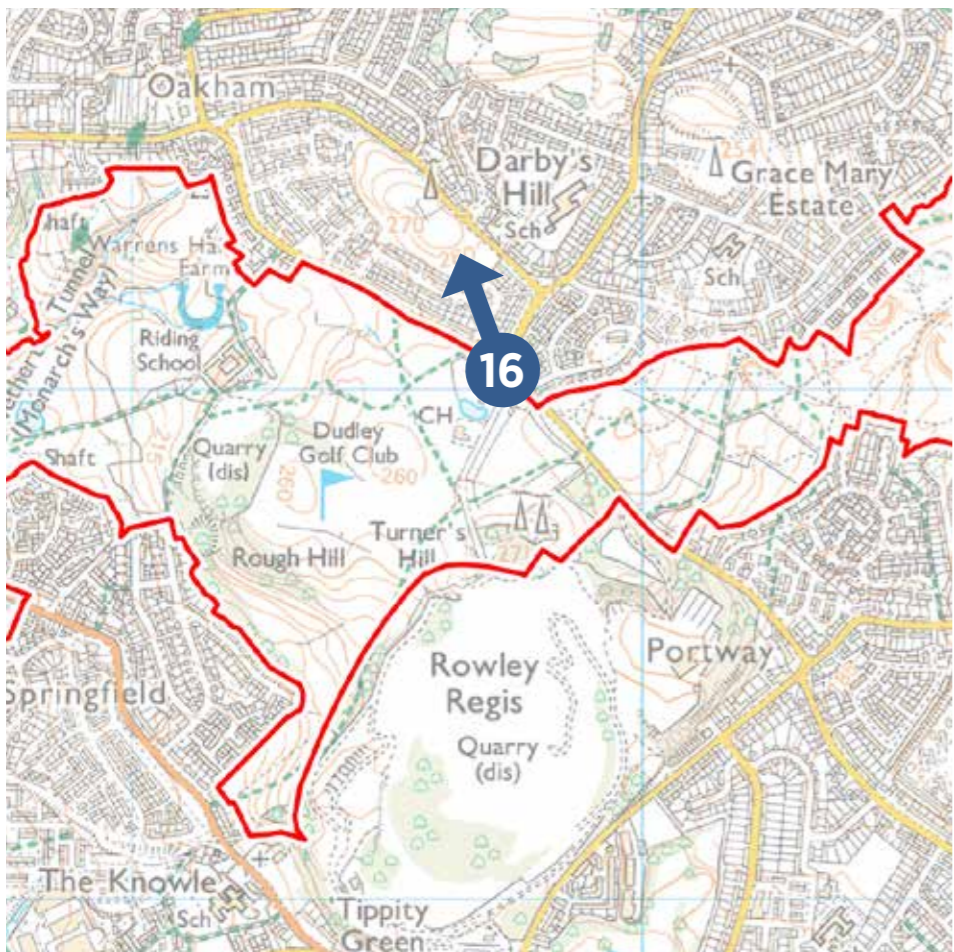
Viewpoint 15a at footpath at Newbury Lane playing fields

PROJECT CODE:	LC-951	OS GRID REF:	SO 97965 88568	TIME:	10:56 am
PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 15a	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 160m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Footpath at Newbury Lane playing fields	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
DISTANCE FROM SITE:	Approx 500m	SCALE:	Not to scale	SHUTTER SPEED:	1/640
VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking west	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/10



Viewpoint 15b at footpath at Newbury Lane playing fields

PROJECT CODE:	LC-951	OS GRID REF:	SO 97965 88568	TIME:	10:57 am
PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 15b	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 160m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Footpath at Newbury Lane playing fields	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
DISTANCE FROM SITE:	Approx 500m	SCALE:	Not to scale	SHUTTER SPEED:	1/800 sec
VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking north	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/10



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Viewpoint 16 at road junction at Turner's Hill and Portway Hill

PROJECT CODE:	LC-951	OS GRID REF:	SO 96741 89017	TIME:	09:57 am
PROJECT NAME:	Assessment of the RHSOS designation for the emerging Sandwell Local Plan	TITLE:	Viewpoint 16	VIEWPOINT HEIGHT (AOD):	Approx 260m AOD
CLIENT:	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council	IMAGE TAKEN BY:	ND	CAMERA:	Canon EOS 70D
VIEWPOINT LOCATION:	Road junction at Turner's Hill and Portway Hill	CHECKED:	ND	LENS:	Canon EF 50mm
DISTANCE FROM SITE:	At site boundary	SCALE:	Not to scale	SHUTTER SPEED:	1/400
VIEWPOINT DIRECTION:	Looking north	DATE:	23.08.23	APERTURE:	f/10

Appendix C: Article 4 Direction at Portway Hill



GOVERNMENT OFFICE
FOR THE WEST MIDLANDS

Mrs P Sharma
Group Manager - Solicitor
Legal Services
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council
Sandwell council House
Oldbury
Sandwell
B69 3DE

Sustainable Futures
Directorate (Planning)

5 St Philip's Place
Colmore Row
Birmingham
B3 2PW

Direct Line: 0121 352 5421

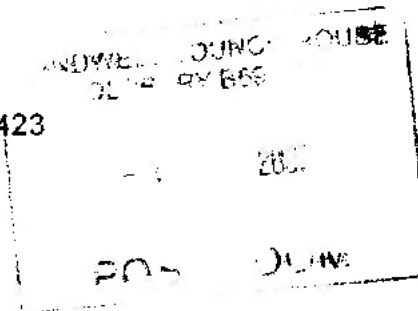
Fax: 0121 352 5224

Email:

Website:

Your Ref: PS/TP/DC/234PO
Our Ref: GOWM/SFD/P_5107/87423

Date: 31 October 2007



Dear Mrs Sharma

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (GENERAL DEVELOPMENT
PROCEDURE) ORDER 1995 DIRECTION MADE UNDER ARTICLE 4(1) TO
WHICH ARTICLE 5(4) APPLIES
LAND OFF PORTWAY HILL, ROWLEY REGIS, SANDWELL, WEST
MIDLANDS**

1. I am directed by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government to refer to your letter of 16 May 2007, and to return herewith one copy of the Direction endorsed with her approval subject to the modification shown in red ink.

2. The Council are requested to notify the owners and occupiers of land on whom this direction was served of the Secretary of State's approval of the direction and the effect of the approval.

Yours sincerely

Judith Pizze
Authorised by the Secretary of State
to sign in that behalf

THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF SANDWELL
TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING
(GENERAL PERMITTED DEVELOPMENT) ORDER 1995

DIRECTION MADE UNDER ARTICLE 4(1)
TO WHICH ARTICLE 5(4) APPLIES

WHEREAS the Council of the Borough of Sandwell being the appropriate local planning authority within the meaning of article 4(6) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 ("the Order"), are satisfied that it is expedient that development of the descriptions set out in the Schedule below should not be carried out on land being the former new Turners Hill, Pancake and Samson Quarries, Portway Hill, Rowley Regis, Sandwell and shown edged red on the attached plan ("the Land"), unless permission is granted on an application made under Part III of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990,

AND WHEREAS the Council consider that development of the said descriptions would seriously prejudice the open character of the land which is designated in the Unitary Development Plan as strategic open space and thereby constitute a threat to the amenities of their area and that the provisions of paragraph 4 of article 5 of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 apply,

NOW THEREFORE the Council in pursuance of the power conferred on them by article 4(1) of the Town and Country Planning (General Permitted Development) Order 1995 hereby direct that the permission granted by article 3 of the said Order shall not apply to development on the said land of the descriptions set out in the Schedule below

THIS DIRECTION is made under article 4(1) of the said Order and, in accordance with article 5(4), shall remain in force until 15th November 2007 (being six months from the date of this Direction) and shall then expire unless it has been approved by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government

SCHEDULE

The erection, construction, maintenance, improvement or alteration of a gate ~~gate~~, fence, wall or other means of enclosure being development comprised within Class A of Part 2 of Schedule 2 to the said Order

The formation, laying out and construction of a means of access to a highway being development comprised within Class B of Part 2 of Schedule 2 to the said Order

THE COMMON SEAL of
THE BOROUGH COUNCIL OF SANDWELL
was hereunto affixed
this 16th day of May 2007 in the presence of

)
)
)
)



GROUP MANAGER AND SOLICITOR

The Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government hereby approves the foregoing Direction subject to the modifications shown in red ink.

Signed by authority of the Secretary of State

Senior Executive Officer
Government Office for the West Midlands

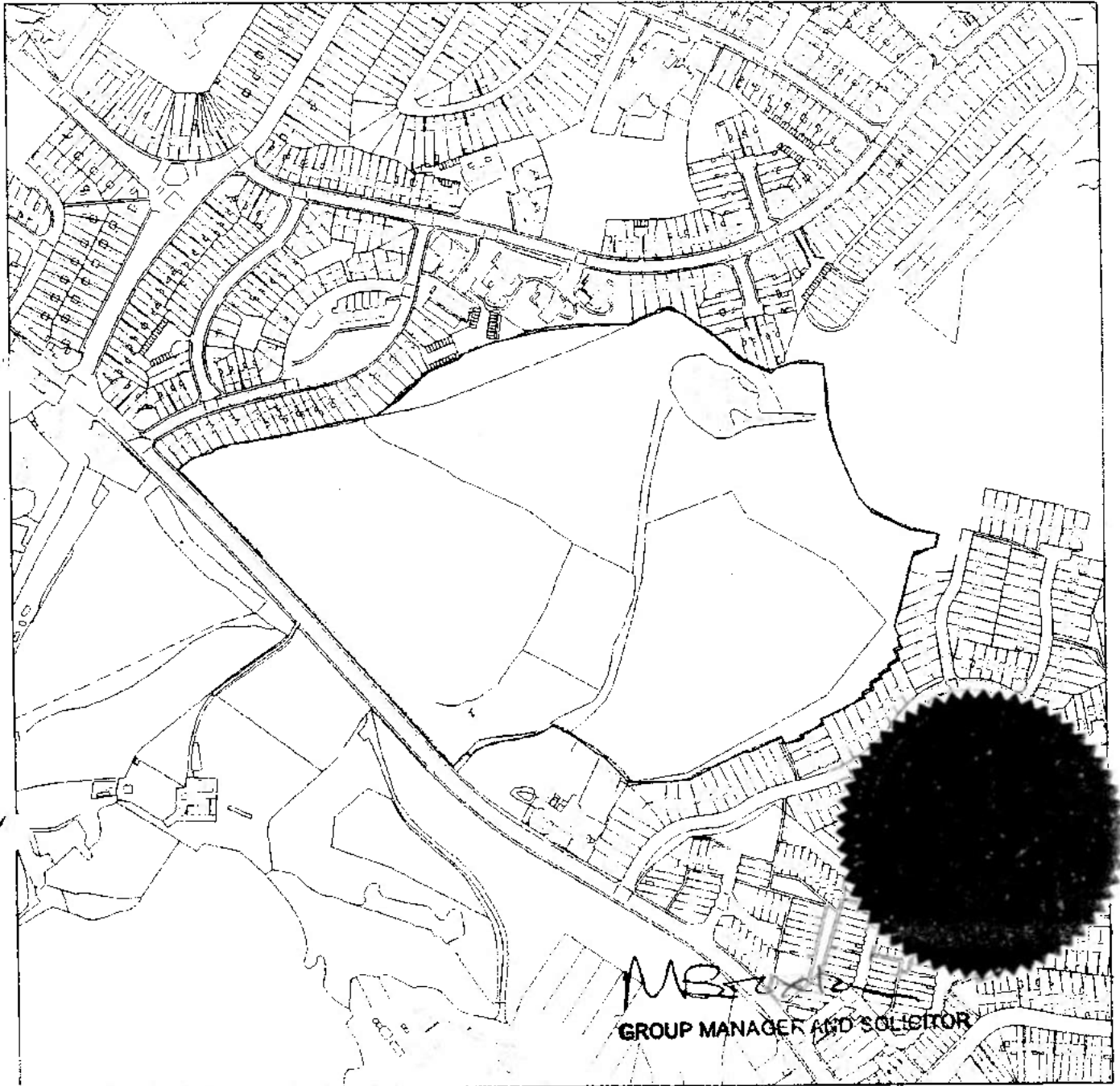
Date: 31/05/07

Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)

Land at Portway Hill, Rowley Regis, West Midlands



GIS by ESRI (UK)



M. B. ...
GROUP MANAGER AND SOLICITOR

Scale : 1:4445

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Produced using ESRI (UK)'s MapExplorer 2.0 - <http://www.esriuk.com>

Organisation	Sandwell MBC
Department	Planning & Transportation
Comments	
Date	14 May 2007
SLA Number	

Appendix D: Landscape Institute Technical Guidance Note 02/21 Table 1

2 Tools to enable practitioners to assess landscape value

This TGN uses the following definitions:

Landscape qualities = characteristics/ features of a landscape that are valued

This term is being used to distinguish landscape qualities from landscape characteristics which are elements, or combinations of elements, which make a particular contribution to landscape character. Landscape qualities (in the sense meant in this TGN) are usually referred to as 'special qualities' or 'special landscape qualities' in relation to nationally designated landscapes. For example, 'special qualities' is a statutory expression used in relation to National Parks, in policy for Scotland's local landscape designations, and is a term used informally to describe components of natural beauty set out in AONB Management Plans³.

Landscape value = the relative value or importance attached to different landscapes by society on account of their landscape qualities (see Table 1).

The definition of landscape value used in this TGN draws on, and is compatible with, the [GLVIA3](#) definition of landscape value as well as Natural England's [definition](#) (Landscape Institute and Institute of Environmental Management & Assessment, 2013; Tudor, 2014). The definition makes it clear that it is 'society' that assigns value to landscapes. However, landscape value means more than popularity and the Landscape Institute suggests that value assessments should be undertaken by a landscape professional, drawing on evidence from stakeholders where available.

2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Assessments of landscape value (for landscapes which are outside, and not candidates for, national designation) may be required at different stages of the planning process, for example:

- *Local planning authorities (LPAs), neighbourhood planning groups and other parties at the evidence-gathering and plan-making stages;*
- *LPAs, applicants/appellants and others considering a site on which future development or other form of change is proposed, usually at the planning application or appeal stage.*

2.1.2 These scenarios are shown by **Figure 1**, along with the type of guidance that might feed in.

³ National Parks are UK-wide. AONBs are found in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, and NSAs are unique to Scotland.



- *NatureScot and Historic Environment Scotland (2020) have jointly produced guidance on designating Local Landscape Areas (LLAs) in Scotland which is intended primarily for local authorities to use in taking forward their own designation process. The guidance acknowledges that local landscape designations are a valuable tool in the development plan toolbox and outlines the process for designating new LLAs and refreshing existing designations, noting that ‘designations do not mean other places are unimportant or not valued’ (paragraph 1.16).*
- *NRW has published LANDMAP Guidance Note 1: LANDMAP and Special Landscape Areas (2017)⁴ which sets out an approach for defining Special Landscape Areas in Wales using LANDMAP⁵ information. These areas may be designated for ‘their intrinsic physical, environmental, visual, cultural and historical importance, which may be considered unique, exceptional or distinctive to the local area’ and they should be ‘important for their distinctive character, qualities and sense of place’.*

2.2.7 The guidance produced by NatureScot and NRW may be helpful for other nations that do not have their own guidance.

2.2.8 Where local designations are used, the identification of their spatial boundaries and their landscape qualities should be supported by evidence.

2.2.9 **Table 1** of this TGN sets out a range of factors that could be considered to define the value of a landscape⁶ and to inform the designation process. These factors are intended to be consistent with the factors set out in existing guidance in relation to local landscape designations in Scotland and Wales, as well as guidance in relation to national landscape designations (e.g. guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England). However, they are not intended to be an exhaustive list.

2.2.10 Stakeholder engagement and early collaboration with local communities will add depth to the assessment by helping the landscape professional to understand what people value about the local landscape. Community engagement should be encouraged whenever practicable in line with existing planning guidance.

Evaluative studies linked to landscape character assessment

2.2.11 The guidance on Landscape Character Assessment (The Countryside Agency and Scottish National Heritage, 2002), which is still in use in Scotland, acknowledges that ‘most assessments will usually move beyond the characterisation stage to the stage of making judgements to inform particular decisions’⁷. Natural England’s 2014 document, which replaced the 2002 guidance in England, also notes that landscape character assessment can be used to identify special qualities and inform judgements (Tudor, 2014). These evaluative studies can be undertaken as an extension to a landscape character assessment, or as a separate follow-on study. Such studies can include the identification of landscape qualities that contribute to the value of landscape areas or types⁸. **Table 1** of this TGN sets out a range of factors that could be considered as part of the process.

2.2.12 In these types of assessments, information from stakeholders (where available) about what is valued should inform the landscape professional’s consideration of landscape value.

Landscape sensitivity studies

2.2.13 Landscape value is assessed as one of the two components of landscape sensitivity in strategic landscape sensitivity assessments. As explained in [Natural England’s An Approach to Landscape Sensitivity Assessment – to Inform Spatial Planning and Land Management](#) (Tudor, 2019), landscape

⁴ <https://naturalresources.wales/media/680613/landmap-guidance-note-1-landmap-slas-2017.pdf>
<https://gov.wales/sites/default/files/publications/2018-12/planning-policy-wales-edition-10.pdf>

⁵ LANDMAP is an all-Wales landscape resource where landscape characteristics, qualities and influences on the landscape are recorded and evaluated.

⁶ It should be noted that designation is a process that may include factors other than landscape value.

⁷ This is a two-stage process with the landscape character assessment being separate from subsequent assessments of value or sensitivity.

⁸ It should be noted that, in Wales, LANDMAP already includes a range of criteria-based evaluations relating to the landscape.



Guidance for assessing landscapes for designation as National Park or Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty in England);

- The term ‘landscape condition’ is used in place of ‘landscape quality (condition)’;
- ‘Rarity’ and ‘representativeness’ are combined into a newly-named factor ‘distinctiveness’; and
- A new factor, ‘function’ is included which addresses the value attached to landscapes which perform a clearly identifiable and valuable function.

2.4.3 It should be noted that the factors are not presented in order of importance.

2.4.4 As with Box 5.1 in GLVIA3, **Table 1** is not intended to be an exhaustive list of factors to be considered when determining the value of landscapes, but to provide a range of factors and indicators that could be considered. This TGN is intended to be complementary to GLVIA3.

Table 1: Range of factors that can be considered when identifying landscape value

Factor	Definition	Examples ¹¹ of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence ¹²
Natural heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of ecological, geological, geomorphological or physiographic interest which contribute positively to the landscape	<p>Presence of wildlife and habitats of ecological interest that contribute to sense of place</p> <p>Extent and survival of semi-natural habitat that is characteristic of the landscape type</p> <p>Presence of distinctive geological, geomorphological or pedological features</p> <p>Landscape which contains valued natural capital assets that contribute to ecosystem services, for example distinctive ecological communities and habitats that form the basis of ecological networks</p> <p>Landscape which makes an identified contribution to a nature recovery/ green infrastructure network</p>	<p>Landscape character assessment</p> <p>LANDMAP Geological Landscape and Landscape Habitats Aspects (in Wales)</p> <p>Ecological and geological designations</p> <p>SSSI citations and condition assessments</p> <p>Geological Conservation Review</p> <p>Habitat surveys</p> <p>Priority habitats</p> <p>Nature recovery networks/ nature pathways</p> <p>Habitat network opportunity mapping/ green infrastructure mapping</p> <p>Catchment management plans</p> <p>Ecosystem services assessment/ schemes</p> <p>Specialist ecological studies</p>
Cultural heritage	Landscape with clear evidence of archaeological, historical or	Presence of historic landmark structures or designed landscape elements (e.g. follies,	Landscape character assessment

¹¹ These examples are not exhaustive.

¹² Evidence may be set out in development plans (or evidence that sits alongside development plans). Online mapping may also provide useful information (see ‘useful data links’ at the end of this TGN).



Factor	Definition	Examples ¹¹ of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence ¹²
	cultural interest which contribute positively to the landscape	<p>monuments, avenues, tree roundels)</p> <p>Presence of historic parks and gardens, and designed landscapes</p> <p>Landscape which contributes to the significance of heritage assets, for example forming the setting of heritage assets (especially if identified in specialist studies)</p> <p>Landscape which offers a dimension of time depth. This includes natural time depth, e.g. presence of features such as glaciers and peat bogs and cultural time depth e.g. presence of relic farmsteads, ruins, historic field patterns, historic rights of way (e.g. drove roads, salt ways, tracks associated with past industrial activity)</p>	<p>LANDMAP Historic Landscape and Cultural Landscape Services Aspect (in Wales)</p> <p>Historic environment and archaeological designations</p> <p>Conservation Area appraisals, Village Design Statements</p> <p>Historic maps</p> <p>Historic landscape character assessments¹³ Historic Land Use Assessment¹⁴ and Historic Area Assessments¹⁵</p> <p>Place names</p> <p>Specialist heritage studies</p>
Landscape condition	Landscape which is in a good physical state both with regard to individual elements and overall landscape structure	<p>Good physical condition/ intactness of individual landscape elements (e.g. walls, parkland, trees)</p> <p>Good health of elements such as good water quality, good soil health</p> <p>Strong landscape structure (e.g. intact historic field patterns)</p> <p>Absence of detracting/ incongruous features (or features are present but have little influence)</p>	<p>Landscape character assessment</p> <p>LANDMAP condition and trend questions (in Wales)</p> <p>Hedgerow/ tree surveys</p> <p>Observations about intactness/ condition made in the field by the assessor</p> <p>SSSI condition assessments</p> <p>Historic landscape character assessments/ map regression analysis</p>
Associations	Landscape which is connected with notable people, events and the arts	Associations with well-known literature, poetry, art, TV/film and music that contribute to perceptions of the landscape	<p>Information about arts and science relating to a place</p> <p>Historical accounts, cultural traditions and folklore</p>

¹³ Historic Landscape Characterisation has developed as a GIS mapping tool to capture how land use has changed and the 'time-depth' of the present-day landscape.

<https://historicengland.org.uk/research/methods/characterisation/historic-landscape-characterisation/>

¹⁴ Mapping of Scotland's Historic Landscape: <https://hllmap.org.uk/>

¹⁵ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/understanding-place-historic-area-assessments/>



Factor	Definition	Examples ¹¹ of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence ¹²
		<p>Associations with science or other technical achievements</p> <p>Links to a notable historical event</p> <p>Associations with a famous person or people</p>	<p>Guidebooks/ published cultural trails</p> <p>LANDMAP Cultural Landscape Services aspect (in Wales)</p>
Distinctiveness	Landscape that has a strong sense of identity	<p>Landscape character that has a strong sense of place (showing strength of expression of landscape characteristics)</p> <p>Presence of distinctive features which are identified as being characteristic of a particular place</p> <p>Presence of rare or unusual features, especially those that help to confer a strong sense of place or identity</p> <p>Landscape which makes an important contribution to the character or identity of a settlement</p> <p>Settlement gateways/approaches which provides a clear sense of arrival and contribute to the character of the settlement (may be ancient/historic)</p>	<p>Landscape character assessment</p> <p>LANDMAP Visual & Sensory question 3 and 25, – Historic Landscape question 4 (in Wales)</p> <p>Guidebooks</p> <p>Observations about identity/ distinctiveness made in the field by the assessor</p>
Recreational	Landscape offering recreational opportunities where experience of landscape is important	<p>Presence of open access land, common land and public rights of way (particularly National Trails, long distance trails, Coastal Paths and Core Paths) where appreciation of landscape is a feature</p> <p>Areas with good accessibility that provide opportunities for outdoor recreation and spiritual experience/ inspiration</p> <p>Presence of town and village greens</p> <p>Other physical evidence of recreational use where experience of landscape is important</p> <p>Landscape that forms part of a view that is important to the</p>	<p>Definitive public rights of way mapping/ OS map data</p> <p>National Trails, long distance trails, Coastal Paths, Core Paths</p> <p>Open access land (including registered common land)</p> <p>Database of registered town or village greens</p> <p>Visitor surveys/ studies</p> <p>Observations about recreational use/ enjoyment made in the field by the assessor</p>



Factor	Definition	Examples ¹¹ of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence ¹²
		enjoyment of a recreational activity	
Perceptual (Scenic)	Landscape that appeals to the senses, primarily the visual sense	<p>Distinctive features, or distinctive combinations of features, such as dramatic or striking landform or harmonious combinations of land cover</p> <p>Strong aesthetic qualities such as scale, form, colour and texture</p> <p>Presence of natural lines in the landscape (e.g. natural ridgelines, woodland edges, river corridors, coastal edges)</p> <p>Visual diversity or contrasts which contributes to the appreciation of the landscape</p> <p>Memorable/ distinctive views and landmarks, or landscape which contributes to distinctive views and landmarks</p>	<p>Landscape character assessment</p> <p>LANDMAP Visual and Sensory scenic quality question 46 (in Wales)</p> <p>Protected views, views studies</p> <p>Areas frequently photographed or used in images used for tourism/ visitor/ promotional purposes, or views described or praised in literature</p> <p>Observations about scenic qualities made in the field by the assessor</p> <p>Conservation Area Appraisals</p> <p>Village Design Statements, or similar</p>
Perceptual (Wildness and tranquillity)	Landscape with a strong perceptual value notably wildness, tranquillity and/or dark skies	<p>High levels of tranquillity or perceptions of tranquillity, including perceived links to nature, dark skies, presence of wildlife/ birdsong and relative peace and quiet¹⁶</p> <p>Presence of wild land and perceptions of relative wildness (resulting from a high degree of perceived naturalness¹⁷, rugged or otherwise challenging terrain, remoteness from public mechanised access and lack of modern artefacts)</p> <p>Sense of particular remoteness, seclusion or openness</p> <p>Dark night skies</p>	<p>Tranquillity mapping and factors which contribute to and detract from tranquillity</p> <p>Dark Skies mapping</p> <p>Wildness mapping, and Wild Land Areas in Scotland</p> <p>Land cover mapping</p> <p>Field survey</p> <p>LANDMAP Visual and Sensory Aspect</p>

¹⁶ More about tranquillity can be found in Landscape Institute Technical Information Note [01/2017](#) (Revised; Landscape Institute, 2017).

¹⁷ Relating to extensive semi-natural vegetation, presence of wildlife and presence of natural processes/ lack of human intervention.



Factor	Definition	Examples ¹¹ of indicators of landscape value	Examples of evidence ¹²
		A general absence of intrusive or inharmonious development, land uses, transport and lighting	
Functional	Landscape which performs a clearly identifiable and valuable function, particularly in the healthy functioning of the landscape	<p>Landscapes and landscape elements that contribute to the healthy functioning of the landscape, e.g. natural hydrological systems/ floodplains, areas of undisturbed and healthy soils, areas that form carbon sinks such as peat bogs, woodlands and oceans, areas of diverse landcover (benefits pest regulation), pollinator-rich habitats such as wildflower meadows</p> <p>Areas that form an important part of a multifunctional Green Infrastructure network</p> <p>Landscapes and landscape elements that have strong physical or functional links with an adjacent national landscape designation, or are important to the appreciation of the designated landscape and its special qualities</p>	<p>Land cover and habitat maps</p> <p>Ecosystem services assessments and mapping (particularly supporting and regulating services)</p> <p>Green infrastructure studies/strategies</p> <p>Development and management plans for nationally-designated landscapes, Local Plans and SPDs</p> <p>Landscape character assessments</p>

The practical application of factors in coming to a judgement on landscape value

2.4.5 The following bullet points provide some advice on the practical application of the factors in **Table 1**:

- *The factors to be considered are not fixed as they need to be appropriate to the particular project and location. It is recommended that the factors used to assess landscape value in a particular assessment are, where appropriate, discussed with the relevant planning authority or statutory consultees.*
- *The indicators of value should be reviewed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account what they contribute (positively or negatively) to a specific landscape. The relative importance to be attached to each indicator is likely to vary across different landscapes. Once evidence for each factor has been collated and assessed, it is important to step back and judge the overall ‘weight of evidence’ in coming to an overall judgement on landscape value.*
- *There are likely to be overlaps between the factors, as well as overlaps with other specialist studies for example in relation to natural and cultural factors. These overlaps should be acknowledged and considered when presenting conclusions on the overall value of the landscape.*
- *While condition/intactness of a landscape is one factor that can influence value, poor landscape management should not be a reason to deny a landscape a valued status if other factors indicate*



Habitat Regulations Assessments

Sustainability Appraisals

Strategic Environmental Assessments

Landscape Character Assessments

Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments

Green Belt Reviews

Expert Witness

Ecological Impact Assessments

Habitat and Ecology Surveys



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