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Black Country Landscape Sensitivity Assessment

Final Report
Prepared by LUC
September 2019



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Front cover: Slacky Lane, Goscote, Wasall

Introduction, Policy Context & Methodology: Towards Heath End, Walsall

Summary of Findings: Fishley, Walsall

City of Wolverhampton: Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal from Wightwick Bridge

Dudley: Looking over Dudley from Wychbury Hill

Sandwell: Charlemont Road, Wigmore Lane, Sandwell

Walsall: Nr Hobs Hole Lane, towards Aldridge, Walsall

Appendix 1: Barr Beacon, Walsall

Appendix 2: Brownhills Common, Walsall

Appendix 3: Lutley Lane, Dudley

Appendix 4: Racecourse Lane, Dudley



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Planning & EIA
Design
Landscape Planning
Landscape Management
Ecology
GIS & Visualisation

LUC LONDON
43 Chalton Street
London
NW1 1JD
T +44 (0)20 7383 5784
london@landuse.co.uk

Offices also in:
Bristol
Edinburgh
Glasgow
Lancaster
Manchester



Land Use Consultants Ltd
Registered in England
Registered number: 2549296
Registered Office:
43 Chalton Street
London NW1 1JD
LUC uses 100% recycled paper

Contents

1	Introduction	1
	Purpose of this study	1
	Assessment Scope	1
	Duty to Co-operate Engagement	2
	Structure of this Report	3
2	Policy and Landscape Context	4
	International	4
	National	4
	Local	5
	Landscape Context and Guidance	5
3	Methodology	7
	The approach to assessing landscape sensitivity	7
	Criteria for Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity	9
	Sensitivity Judgements	13
	Assessment Process and Format of Outputs	14
4	Summary of Findings	22
	City of Wolverhampton Council	26
	Dudley Metropolitan Borough	29
	Sandwell Metropolitan Borough	32
	Walsall Metropolitan Borough	35
	Appendix 1 : Landscape Sensitivity Assessments	38
	Appendix 2 : Black Country Settlement Hierarchy	39
	Appendix 3 : Glossary of Abbreviations	41
	Appendix 4 : Response to comments from Duty to Cooperate Consultees	43

Tables

Table 3.1	Criteria to determine landscape sensitivity	10
Table 3.2	Overall Landscape Sensitivity	13
Table 4.1	Summary of Results	23

Figures

Figure 3.1:	Overview of the Study Area	16
Figure 3.2:	Landscape Assessment Areas: City of Wolverhampton	17
Figure 3.3:	Landscape Assessment Areas: Dudley Metropolitan Borough	18
Figure 3.4:	Landscape Assessment Areas: Sandwell Metropolitan Borough	19
Figure 3.5:	Landscape Assessment Areas: Walsall Metropolitan Borough	20
Figure 4.1:	Constraints: City of Wolverhampton	27
Figure 4.2:	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment: City of Wolverhampton	28
Figure 4.3	Constraints: Dudley Metropolitan Borough	30
Figure 4.4:	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment: Dudley Metropolitan Borough	31

Figure 4.5: Constraints: Sandwell Metropolitan Borough	33
Figure 4.6: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment: Sandwell Metropolitan Borough	34
Figure 4.7: Constraints: Walsall Metropolitan Borough	36
Figure 4.8: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment: Walsall Metropolitan Borough	37

A: Introduction, Policy Context & Methodology



1 Introduction

- 1.1 LUC was commissioned by City of Wolverhampton Council and Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall Metropolitan Borough Councils (together comprising the Black Country) and South Staffordshire District Council in September 2018 to undertake a landscape sensitivity assessment of areas of Green Belt land within the Black Country and South Staffordshire. The Landscape Sensitivity Assessment was undertaken alongside, but discrete from the LUC Green Belt Study for the Black Country and South Staffordshire¹.
- 1.2 This report sets out the findings of the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment for the Black Country only. A separate report has been prepared setting out the findings for South Staffordshire.
- 1.3 The assessment of landscape sensitivity to housing and commercial development uses a criteria-based process to ensure consistent and transparent analysis of sensitivity, drawing on spatial analysis and field based surveys. Detailed information on the methodology used in the study can be found in **Chapter 3**.

Purpose of this study

- 1.4 The purpose of this study is to provide an assessment of the extent to which the character and quality of the landscape abutting the West Midlands conurbation within the Black Country and around settlements in South Staffordshire is, in principle, susceptible to change as a result of introducing built development.
- 1.5 The study forms an important piece of evidence for the preparation of the Black Country Plan and the South Staffordshire Local Plan.
- 1.6 The study concentrates on understanding the sensitivities to development and does not address potential landscape capacity in terms of the quantity of built development, as this is a further stage of assessment that is dependent on a much wider range of considerations other than landscape and visual effects (such as highways impact, ecological effects, archaeological constraints and other environmental and sustainability factors) and consideration of cumulative development, landscape objectives and thresholds of acceptable change.
- 1.7 The study highlights likely landscape and visual sensitivities within each assessment area and provides a broad landscape character based assessment rather than a site level assessment as might be required for a planning application.

Assessment Scope

- 1.8 This study considers the landscape sensitivity of specific areas of Green Belt land identified for more focused assessment in Stage 2 of the LUC *Green Belt Study* within the Black Country and South Staffordshire. This includes:
 - all Green Belt land within the four Black Country boroughs;
 - land within South Staffordshire adjacent to the defined settlements of the City of Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall, encompassing both locations identified through South Staffordshire Council's 'call for sites' exercises and adjacent land without promoted sites;
 - land immediately adjacent to selected South Staffordshire settlements (Tier 1-4 settlements from the 2018 Rural Service and Facilities Audit), again encompassing locations identified

¹ LUC, *Black Country Green Belt Study & South Staffordshire Green Belt Study* (2019; separate reports)

through South Staffordshire Council's 'call for sites' exercises and adjacent land without promoted sites;

- locations away from existing settlement edges that have been identified by South Staffordshire Council as potential sites for new settlements, sustainable urban extensions and employment development.

- 1.9 Landscape areas that lie adjacent to any of the defined settlements outlined above have been reduced in outward extent to the first significant boundary feature, or beyond that to incorporate land identified in South Staffordshire's 'call for sites' exercise.
- 1.10 The overall study area for both the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment and the Stage 2 Green Belt Assessment are therefore the same, other than the inclusion within the former of several areas within South Staffordshire just outside the Green Belt – within designated open countryside - that relate to settlements which border the Green Belt. These additional areas have been identified by South Staffordshire Council.
- 1.11 The 'call for sites' provided in this report are for information only, and may not be comprehensive as new sites may emerge following publication. It should be noted that there are some cross-boundary 'call for sites' which may have been submitted through Black Country and / or South Staffordshire 'call for sites' exercise. A comprehensive and up-to-date map and list of 'call for sites' can be found at: <https://blackcountrycorestrategy.dudley.gov.uk/t5/> and <https://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/planning/shlaa-5-year-supply.cfm>.

Duty to Co-operate Engagement

- 1.12 A method statement setting out the proposed assessment approach for the Black Country and South Staffordshire Landscape Sensitivity Assessment was circulated to the Councils' key stakeholders with whom the Councils' have a duty to cooperate, as well as other organisations the Councils considered necessary. This included the following:
- Birmingham City Council.
 - Bromsgrove District Council.
 - Cannock Chase District Council.
 - Coventry City Council.
 - Environment Agency.
 - Historic England.
 - Lichfield District Council.
 - Natural England.
 - North Warwickshire Borough Council
 - Redditch Borough Council
 - Shropshire Council.
 - South Staffordshire District Council.
 - Stafford Borough Council.
 - Staffordshire County Council.
 - Stratford-on-Avon District Council.
 - Tamworth Borough Council.
 - Telford & Wrekin Council.
 - Wildlife Trust.
 - Wyre Forest District Council.

1.13 Stakeholders were invited to comment on the draft methodology and a summary of their responses and how their comments have been addressed is provided in **Appendix 4**.

Structure of this Report

1.14 This report is structured as follows:

- **Chapter 2** provides the policy context to the study;
- **Chapter 3** presents the methodology; and
- **Chapter 4** provides a summary of the results by authority, with detailed assessment outputs provided at **Appendix 1**.

2 Policy and Landscape Context

International

- 2.1 The European Landscape Convention (ELC) came into force in the UK in March 2007. It establishes the need to recognise landscape in law; to develop landscape policies dedicated to the protection, management and planning of landscapes; and to establish procedures for the participation of the general public and other stakeholders in the creation and implementation of landscape policies.
- 2.2 The ELC definition of 'landscape' recognises that all landscape has value, be they ordinary, degraded or outstanding:
- "Landscape means an area, as perceived by people, whose character is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors".*
- 2.3 Signing up to the ELC means that the UK is committed to protect, manage and develop our landscapes as well as raise landscape awareness, involvement and enjoyment amongst local and visiting communities. Landscape character is defined by the ELC as *"a distinct, recognisable and consistent pattern of elements in the landscape that makes one landscape different from another, rather than better or worse"*.

National

- 2.4 The Government published an updated and revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) in July 2018, which was updated in February 2019, which sets out the environmental, social and economic planning policies for England. The February 2019 NPPF replaced the original version published in March 2012. Central to the NPPF policies is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, that development should be planned for positively and individual proposals should be approved wherever possible.
- 2.5 One of the overarching objectives that underpin the NPPF is set out in Paragraph 8: *"an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment."*
- 2.6 The NPPF supports the contents of the Neighbourhood Planning Act (2017) by making explicit reference to the need for local planning authorities to work with duty to cooperate partners on strategic priorities (paragraph 24) and defined strategic policies that make sufficient provision for climate change mitigation and adaptation and landscape and green infrastructure (paragraph 20).
- 2.7 The NPPF is explicit in its requirement for development plan policies to protect and where appropriate, enhance the landscape. Paragraph 170 states that *"planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by protecting and enhancing valued landscapes"* and *"recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside"*.
- 2.8 At paragraph 127(c) it states that *"Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments ... are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding environment and landscape setting"*.

Local

The Black Country Core Strategy

- 2.9 Adopted in 2011, the Black Country Core Strategy sets out the overall planning strategy for the Black Country until 2026 and explains how the local authorities of Dudley, Sandwell, Walsall and Wolverhampton will deliver the spatial aspects of their vision for the sub-region, as well as how regional and national policies will be applied locally.
- 2.10 The Black Country Core Strategy contains environmental policies including:
- ENV1 Nature Conservation*
- 2.11 *Development within the Black Country will safeguard nature conservation, inside and outside its boundaries by ensuring that:*
- *Development is not permitted where it would harm internationally, nationally, regionally or locally designated nature conservation sites;*
 - *The movement of wildlife within the Black Country and its adjoining areas is not impeded by development; and*
 - *Species which are legally protected, in decline, are rare within the Black Country or are covered by national, regional or local Biodiversity Action Plans will not be harmed by development.*
- ENV2 Historic Character and Local Distinctiveness*
- 2.12 *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. Proposals will be required to preserve and enhance local character, the historic environment and their settings, which may be recognised as being of special historic, archaeological, architectural, landscape or townscape quality.*
- 2.13 Special mention is made of The Beacons shown on the Environment Key Diagram and other largely undeveloped high prominences including views to and from these locations;
- *the Sedgley to Northfield Ridge, including Sedgley Beacon, Wrens Nest;*
 - *Castle Hill and the Rowley Hills (Turner's Hill); and*
 - *the Queslett to Shire Oak Ridge (including Barr Beacon).*
- 2.14 *In addition to statutorily designated and protected historic assets particular attention should be paid to the preservation and enhancement of:*
- *locally listed historic buildings and archaeological sites;*
 - *historic parks and gardens including their settings; and*
 - *locally designated special landscape areas and other heritage based site allocations.*

Landscape Context and Guidance

- 2.15 Landscape Character Assessments produced at national and local levels, as well as other studies, assessments and background documents that are of relevance to the understanding of landscape character in the Black Country and South Staffordshire were used for contextual understanding of the sensitivity of the landscape. These include:
- National Character Area assessments for the Mid Severn Sandstone Plateau; Arden; Shropshire, Cheshire and Staffordshire Plain; and Cannock Chase and Cank Wood;
 - The Planning for Landscape Change SPG (2000). (The Landscape Character Assessment produced for Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan 2010-26, which was subsequently revoked but is still a material consideration);
 - The Black Country – An Historic Landscape Characterisation – English Heritage (2009);
 - The Staffordshire County Council Historic Environment Character Assessment (2011);

- The Cannock Chase AONB Management Plan 2014-19 (Green Belt on the eastern edge of South Staffordshire falls within the AONB, so potential impact of development on the defined 'special qualities' of the designated area will be a consideration);
- The Staffordshire County Council Draft Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment Review (2015) (not adopted);
- The Staffordshire County Council Historic Landscape Characterisation Mapping (2016);
- The Borough-Wide Urban Historic Landscape Characterisation Study for Dudley MBC (2016);
- The South Staffordshire Landscape Sensitivity Study Update (2017);
- Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area Strategic Growth Study (2018) (includes high level analysis of landscape character, topography, land use and drainage patterns); and
- The Black Country-wide Historic Landscape Characterisation Study (currently in production).

3 Methodology

- 3.1 This section sets out the methodology for the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment, undertaken alongside but discrete from the Green Belt Assessment for City of Wolverhampton, Dudley, Sandwell and Walsall (the Black Country) and South Staffordshire. This includes information on the study area and spatial framework, the key sources of evidence used, the assessment criteria, and the process followed.

The approach to assessing landscape sensitivity

- 3.2 There is currently no prescribed method for evaluating the sensitivity of landscape to development. However, the approach taken in this study builds on *Landscape Character Assessment Guidance for England and Scotland Topic Paper 6: Techniques and Criteria for Judging Capacity and Sensitivity* (Scottish Heritage and the former Countryside Agency, 2004) as well as LUC's considerable experience from previous and on-going studies of a similar nature.

- 3.3 Paragraph 4.2 of Topic Paper 6 states that:

"Judging landscape character sensitivity requires professional judgement about the degree to which the landscape in question is robust, in that it is able to accommodate change without adverse impacts on character. This involves making decisions about whether or not significant characteristic elements of the landscape will be liable to loss... and whether important aesthetic aspects of character will be liable to change."

- 3.4 In this study the following definition of sensitivity has been used, which is based on the principles set out in Topic Paper 6. It is also compliant with the third edition of the Guidelines for Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (GLVIA 3, 2013) as well as definitions used in other landscape sensitivity studies of this type²:

Landscape sensitivity is the relative extent to which the character and quality of an area (including its visual attributes) is likely to change as a result of introducing a particular type of development.

- 3.5 This Landscape Sensitivity Assessment is a strategic-level study which considers the landscape and visual sensitivity of each area to the *principle* of built development, without knowing the specific size or exact location of development (as this would be detailed at the planning application level). It was undertaken at a scale of 1:25,000 and does not consider specific development proposals where these might exist (although the locations of sites identified by the Councils through their 'call for sites' exercises are overlaid on the relevant maps for information). A more detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) will be required on a site by site basis in relation to proposals for the development of any specific sites and/ or to inform masterplanning.

Study Area

- 3.6 This assessment considers areas of Green Belt land identified for Stage 2 of the Green Belt Study as set out above and illustrated in **Figure 3.1**. The overall study area for both the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment and the Stage 2 Green Belt Assessment are therefore the same and for this report includes all Green Belt land within the four Black Country boroughs.
- 3.7 However, some areas of Green Belt land were scoped out of the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment due to:

² This definition does not imply any judgement about the type of change that may result from development – it could be positive or negative.

- The presence of known planning constraints (as detailed in the LUC Black Country Green Belt Study methodology³) where development would not be permitted. These 'absolute constraints' were identified as:
 - Cultural Heritage:
 - Scheduled Monuments (SMs).
 - Registered Parks and Gardens (RPGs).
 - Natural Heritage:
 - Special Areas of Conservation (SACs).
 - Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs).
 - Local Nature Reserves (LNRs).
 - Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINCs) / Sites of Biological Importance (SBIs).
 - Ancient Woodland⁴.
 - Other Constraints:
 - Common Land.
 - Flood Zone 3 Areas.
 - Burial Grounds.
- The presence of existing development and a consequent lack of any open areas that preclude a 'landscape' assessment.

3.8 The key constraints which determined the scoping are also shown on figures in Section 4 below. Large areas of constrained land were excluded from assessment areas. However, the shape and complexity of areas of constraint and unconstrained areas have in some instances meant it was not feasible to exclude small or narrow areas of land subject to these constraints. The process resulted in geographically distinct landscape sensitivity assessment areas being identified. These areas, following the removal of land via the scoping out process are illustrated in **Figures 3.2 - 3.5**.

Definition of Landscape Assessment Areas

- 3.9 This assessment is based on a combination of desktop study and field survey.
- 3.10 Within the Black Country, published landscape character assessments are not available other than at the national level (as detailed in Chapter 2). The principal source of written information for carrying out the sensitivity assessment in South Staffordshire is the Planning for Landscape Change SPG (a landscape character assessment produced for Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan 2010-26 in 2000), which was subsequently revoked but is still a material consideration. This was updated in 2015 as the Draft Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment Review but not adopted and is not publicly available.
- 3.11 The overall study area has been subdivided into landscape assessment areas, with the aim of identifying areas with similar characteristics which are therefore likely to be broadly consistent in terms of their sensitivity. These areas have been selected to avoid variation and complexities across each landscape area.
- 3.12 Within South Staffordshire, landscape areas were 'nested' within the framework of the Draft Staffordshire Landscape Character Assessment Review (Staffordshire County Council, 2015), so that areas of consistent landscape character are kept within the same unit. However, in some cases it was appropriate to make a finer grain landscape classification, further refining landscape

³ LUC, *Black Country Green Belt Study & South Staffordshire Green Belt Study* (2019)

⁴ The Ancient Woodland data used in this study is Natural England data. However, it is noted that Dudley and Walsall Councils also have additional information on ancient woodland within these districts, including that reflected in Walsall's Site Allocation Document (adopted January 2019) and Dudley's Borough Development Strategy (2017).

assessment areas into smaller areas, where variations in local landscape character existed and drawing these to physical boundary features.

- 3.13 Within the Black Country, where published landscape character assessments are not available other than at the national level, landscape assessment areas were defined using available data on variations in local landscape character including changes in underlying geology, topography, landscape pattern and land use. Boundaries were drawn to existing features in the landscape i.e. tracing physical features such as field boundaries, roads/railways, watercourses, woodland edges etc. This information was supplemented from mapping, aerial views and other digital and published sources (as listed above Para 2.15).
- 3.14 Landscape areas are defined on a broad character-based framework and not a detailed field by field assessment. A guideline minimum size for landscape assessment areas was set at 20 hectares. This work is not a substitute for detailed Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) which may be required at the allocations / application stage, although it can provide an important baseline for more detailed analysis.
- 3.15 Fieldwork to build on the initial desktop analysis is an essential element of the study. All identified landscape areas were visited, assessed and photographed, and boundaries amended as necessary to reflect findings. The landscape areas were reviewed following site survey and assessment. It is important to note that field survey was undertaken from rights of way and publicly accessible vantage points.

Criteria for Assessment of Landscape Sensitivity

- 3.16 In line with good practice landscape and visual sensitivity is assessed for each landscape area with reference to defined criteria, which are set out in **Table 3.1**, along with examples to illustrate the different levels of sensitivity so that judgements can be clearly traced back to the underlying landscape baseline.
- 3.17 Criteria selection is based on the attributes of the landscape most likely to be affected by development and considered both 'landscape' and 'visual' aspects of sensitivity. The criteria are:
 - Scale (the scale of the landscape);
 - Landform (the topographical complexity of the landscape);
 - Landscape pattern and time depth (the complexity of landscape pattern and the extent to which the landscape has 'time depth' – a sense of being a historic landscape);
 - Natural character (the presence of natural or semi-natural features that are important to landscape character);
 - Built character (the extent that built character contributes to landscape character);
 - Recreational value (the value of the area for recreation in which experience of the landscape is important);
 - Perceptual aspects (qualities such as rurality, traditional land uses with few modern, human influences, sense of remoteness or tranquillity);
 - Settlement setting (the extent to which the area relates or contributes to the form and pattern of existing adjacent settlement, and the character of the adjacent settlement edge);
 - Visual prominence (visual prominence of the area and the character of skylines); and
 - Inter-visibility (the degree of inter-visibility with surrounding designated landscapes and the role the area plays in contributing to valued views).

Table 3.1 Criteria to determine landscape sensitivity

The individual criteria are set out in the table below. Note that the overall rating is based on professional judgement and in some cases one criterion alone may be sufficient to result in a judgement of high sensitivity but more often it is the interaction of factors.

Landscape Sensitivity Assessment Criteria		
<p>Scale</p> <p><i>This considers the scale within the landscape area. Intricate smaller scale landscapes are likely to be more sensitive to the introduction of built development than uniform large scale landscapes because of the risk of development appearing out of scale with the underlying landscape pattern. Field boundaries that are intact (with strong hedgerows and mature trees) increase the sense of intimacy, whereas boundaries that are lost or degraded increase the perceived scale of the landscape.</i></p>		
Low	Moderate	High
Large scale field pattern or land divisions (generally over 20 ha).	Medium scale field pattern or land divisions or a mixture of small scale and large scale fields or land divisions.	Small scale field pattern or land divisions (generally under 5 ha).
<p>Landform</p> <p><i>This considers the shape of the landscape. Smooth, gently undulating or flat landforms are likely to be less sensitive to development than a landscape with a dramatic landform, distinct landform features as development may mask distinctive topographical features that contribute to landscape character.</i></p>		
Low	Moderate	High
Absence of strong topographical variety. Featureless, smooth, very gently undulating or flat landform.	Undulating landform or some distinct landform features.	Presence of strong topographical variety or distinctive landform features e.g. incised valley with prominent slopes.
<p>Landscape pattern and time depth</p> <p><i>This considers the field pattern and historic origin of the landscape area. Landscapes with more irregular field patterns, particularly those of historic origin, are likely to be more sensitive to the introduction of modern development than landscape with regular scale field patterns because of the risk of losing characteristic landscape patterns.</i></p>		
Low	Moderate	High
Simple. Regular or uniform field patterns (mainly of modern origin).	Mixture of simple and complex landscape field patterns.	Complex. Irregular and varied field patterns (including historic field patterns i.e. piecemeal enclosure with irregular boundaries, ridge and furrow). Landscapes designated for their historic value.
<p>'Natural' character</p> <p><i>This considers the 'naturalistic' qualities of the landscape area in terms of the coverage of semi-natural habitats and valued natural features (e.g. trees and hedgerows) which contribute to landscape character and could be vulnerable to loss from development. Areas with frequent natural features (including large areas of designated habitats) result in increased sensitivity to development, while landscape with limited natural features will be less sensitive.</i></p>		
Low	Moderate	High
Lack of semi-natural habitat coverage or valued natural features. e.g. intensively farmed or areas with high levels of existing development or brownfield sites.	Areas of valued semi-natural habitats and features in parts of the landscape, whilst other parts are intensively farmed or developed.	Frequent occurrence of valued natural features (tree, hedgerows, woodland) or areas of semi-natural habitats.

<p>Built character</p> <p><i>This considers the built character of the landscape area with particular reference to the presence of heritage assets that contribute to landscape character (i.e. valued features that may be designated as Conservation Areas, Scheduled Monuments, listed buildings, archaeological features or remains or other features). Landscape with a high density of historic features important to the character of the area is likely to more sensitive to the introduction of modern development than areas where such development already exists.</i></p>		
Low	Moderate	High
Presence or adjacent to modern development or contemporary structures that detract from landscape character, e.g. utility, infrastructure or industrial elements.	Mixture of modern development and historic features important to landscape character.	Presence or adjacent to small scale, historic or vernacular settlement or historic features important to landscape character (e.g. Listed Buildings, archaeological features).
<p>Recreational character</p> <p><i>This criterion considers the presence of features and facilities which enable enjoyment of the landscape, and the importance of these. This may include public rights of way, open access land and outdoor tourist/ visitor attractions with facilities. Recreation activities such as walking, cycling, horse riding or more formal recreation activities where enjoyment of the landscape is important to the experience. Importance of features may be indicated by designation as long distance footpaths or recreation routes, national cycle routes, proximity to areas of local population (such as local parks) and outdoor tourist attractions often marked on Ordinance Survey maps.</i></p>		
Low	Moderate	High
Publicly inaccessible or limited provision of access routes likely to be of community importance. Recreational value limited to community sports facilities (where enjoyment of the landscape is not integral to the activity).	Some Public Rights of Way and footpaths. Landscapes with green spaces or recreation areas valued in the local context.	Landscapes important for access and enjoyment of the landscape e.g. open access land, country parks or outdoor tourist attractions with visitor facilities. Presence of well-connected long distance routes and public rights of way linking centres of population.
<p>Perceptual aspects</p> <p><i>This considers qualities such as rurality (traditional land uses with few modern, human influences), sense of remoteness or tranquillity. High scenic value, freedom from human activity/ disturbance and 'dark skies' would add to sensitivity in this criterion. This is because development will introduce new and uncharacteristic features which may detract from a sense of tranquillity and or remoteness.</i></p>		
Low	Moderate	High
Close to visible or audible signs of human activity and modern development.	Some sense of rural character but with some signs of human activity and modern development.	A rural landscape, remote from visible or audible signs of human activity and modern development.

Settlement setting		
<p><i>The extent to which the landscape area contributes to the identity and distinctiveness of a settlement by way of its character and/ or scenic quality, for example by providing an attractive backdrop, or playing an important part in views from a settlement.</i></p> <p><i>The extent to which the landscape area relates to the form and pattern of the existing adjacent settlement and the character of the adjacent settlement edge, for example if it is well integrated by woodland cover or open and exposed to form a 'hard' edge. This includes the role of significant landscape elements in either separating an undeveloped area from a settled area or linking it to it. The criterion also considers the extent to which the area contributes to a perceived gap between settlements⁵ (the loss of which would increase coalescence).</i></p>		
Low	Moderate	High
<p>Does not provide an attractive backdrop to adjacent settlement or play a separation role.</p> <p>Development could provide the opportunity to improve an existing settlement edge.</p>	<p>Provides some contribution as a backdrop to the adjacent settlement or plays a role in the perception of a gap between settlements.</p> <p>Development would not represent a step-change in settlement form but may adversely affect the existing settlement edge to some extent.</p>	<p>Contributes positively as an attractive backdrop to adjacent settlement, providing a distinctive element in views that are key to the character of the settlement or forms an important part in the perception of a gap between settlements.</p> <p>Development would adversely affect settlement edge (which may be historic or distinctive) or would have a poor relationship with it (crossing a boundary feature or extending into an area with a distinctly different landscape).</p>
Visual prominence		
<p><i>This considers the visual prominence of the landscape area, reflecting the extent of openness or enclosure in the landscape (due to landform and land cover), and extent to which potential development would be visible. It also considers the skyline character of the area including whether it forms a visually distinctive skyline (e.g. due to the presence of important landmark features) or an important undeveloped skyline.</i></p>		
Low	Moderate	High
<p>Non-prominent.</p> <p>Visually enclosed landscape screened by landform or land cover.</p> <p>Does not form a visually distinctive skyline, e.g. natural bowls.</p>	<p>A mixture of prominent and non-prominent.</p> <p>Semi-enclosed or has some enclosed and some open areas or visually distinctive skylines.</p>	<p>Visually prominent.</p> <p>Very open in views from the wider landscape.</p> <p>e.g. open plains/ plateau with no screening land cover.</p> <p>Forms a visually distinctive skyline, e.g. undeveloped skylines or skylines with important landmarks (might include historic monuments or features).</p>
Inter-visibility with adjacent designated landscapes or promoted viewpoints		
<p><i>This considers the role the landscape area plays in contributing to valued views. These are considered to be views within, towards or from Cannock Chase AONB, Registered Parks and Gardens, and all marked and promoted viewpoints.</i></p>		
Low	Moderate	High
<p>Little inter-visibility with adjacent sensitive landscapes (i.e. Cannock Chase AONB or Registered Parks and Gardens) or marked viewpoints (i.e. viewpoints marked on the OS 1:25,000).</p>	<p>Some inter-visibility with surrounding sensitive landscapes or viewpoints.</p>	<p>Strong inter-visibility with sensitive landscapes (i.e. Cannock Chase AONB or Registered Parks and Gardens) or marked viewpoints (i.e. viewpoints marked on the OS 1:25,000).</p>

⁵ The settlement hierarchy within the urban conurbation as agreed with the Black Country local authorities is set out in **Appendix 2**.

- 3.18 There are no designated landscapes (national or local) within the Black Country and therefore little evidence to consider landscape value based on designation as a separate criterion for this study.
- 3.19 Landscapes designated both nationally and locally for their historic value, including Historic Landscape Areas and Registered Parks and Gardens are considered under the 'Landscape Pattern and Time Depth' criteria. The presence of built heritage assets that contribute to landscape character are considered under the 'Built Character' criteria. However, it is worth noting that although the assessment considers the historic character of the landscape, it does not consider specific cultural heritage/archaeological issues associated with individual designated heritage assets and their setting.
- 3.20 Three small assessment areas in South Staffordshire lie within the Cannock Chase AONB. The sensitivity of these areas is considered in the concluding 'Landscape Sensitivity Judgement' with specific reference to the special qualities of the AONB and the value of the protected status of this landscape reflected in the overall judgement.

Sensitivity Judgements

- 3.21 Text is provided for each of the ten sensitivity criteria, reflecting the qualities of the landscape area and the extent to which development could affect these. A three-point rating from 'low' to 'high' landscape sensitivity is used to illustrate levels of landscape sensitivity for each individual criteria – i.e. how sensitive the character and quality of the landscape would be to change.
- 3.22 In assessing landscape and visual sensitivity, reference is made to any designations or constraints which influence judgements. Some of the constraints shown may not directly affect landscape character or sensitivity, but often the areas concerned may also have landscape sensitivities associated with landscape elements – for example the habitats in designated wildlife sites are often also valued in landscape terms.
- 3.23 The judgement on the **overall** landscape sensitivity of the area is based on consideration of the range of sensitivities identified and the weight attached to any particular criteria in the area in question. An overall rating is given on a five point scale. Guideline definitions of sensitivity levels are given in the table below:

Table 3.2 Overall Landscape Sensitivity

Sensitivity	Definition
High	The landscape has strong character and qualities with notable features which are highly sensitive to change as a result of introducing built development
Moderate-high	
Moderate	The landscape has some distinctive characteristics and valued qualities, with some sensitivity to change as a result of introducing built development.
Low-moderate	
Low	The landscape lacks distinct character and qualities and has few notable features, or is robust with regard to introducing built development.

- 3.24 Landscape sensitivity is the result of a complex interplay of often unequally weighted variables (or criteria). The overall assessment of landscape sensitivity is based on professional judgement, taking account of the interplay between criteria, as well as those which might be more important

to the landscape character of any particular assessment area. An area rated as having *high* sensitivity may do so because it has a relatively high sensitivity to a number of different criteria but it may also do so because of a particularly high sensitivity to just one criterion.

- 3.25 The process for defining landscape areas aims to minimise the extent to which significant differences in sensitivity are likely to occur within one area, but in some cases a gradual change in sensitivity can be identified – for example a gradual increase in sensitivity with distance from an existing settlement edge. Limitations in terms of the resolution of the assessment may also mean that different parts of a landscape area are considered to have different levels of sensitivity.
- 3.26 For the smaller landscape areas where there is a gradual change in sensitivity the maps show the highest sensitivity rating and the text will need to be interrogated to show any variations across the landscape area. These would need to be tested further on site in light of the sensitivities identified in the assessment. Significant variations to the overall rating are noted as anomalies. For larger areas, attributes of higher or lower sensitivity than the overall rating are mapped in order to distinguish area of different sensitivity
- 3.27 Whilst landscape sensitivity assessment results provide an initial indication of landscape sensitivity, it should not be interpreted as a definitive statement on the suitability of individual sites for a particular development or land use change. It is not a replacement for detailed studies for specific siting and design and all proposals will need to be assessed on their own merits.

Development types

- 3.28 The relative sensitivity of each landscape area is assessed with respect to the *principle* of any development without knowing the location, layout, density, form, quantity or mitigation proposed of any development which may be constructed.
- 3.29 The assessment addresses the following types of development. These scenarios were agreed with the Black Country authorities as representative of development types that may come forward within the Black Country:
 - Residential dwellings are assumed to be 2-3 storeys – with associated access roads, private gardens and garaging; and/or
 - Commercial industrial units, hotels, warehouses or office blocks - with large expanses of cladding or glass, access roads, large car parks and associated landscaping.
- 3.30 Development of higher height or bulk will generally have a greater impact on the landscape than smaller scale development, and as a result landscape areas are generally considered to have a higher sensitivity to future change from employment development than 2-3 storey residential development.
- 3.31 For the purposes of this study all of the landscape areas have been assessed for housing. Where sites have been promoted for employment and / or where the local authorities have agreed that areas could provide a realistic prospect of accommodating employment landscape sensitivity for employment has also been assessed.

Assessment Process and Format of Outputs

Stage 1: Desk-based assessment

- 3.32 All relevant documents and available GIS data were compiled and reviewed to form the starting point and overall context for the study.
- 3.33 The desktop assessment was informed by mapping, aerial views and other online resources, including Landscape Character Assessments produced at national and local levels, as well as other studies, assessments and background documents (as listed in Chapter 2).
- 3.34 The analysis of sensitivity was informed by analysis of datasets that identify designations or other spatial classifications that might suggest landscape sensitivities – for example, conservation areas, registered parks and gardens, tranquillity and dark skies, ancient woodland and Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) priority habitats. These are particularly useful for those areas where existing published landscape character assessment do not exist (other than at the national level).

Stage 2: Field Verification

- 3.35 A structured process of field survey verification was undertaken by landscape experts in order to test and refine the outputs from the desk study. Each assessment area was visited in turn to record information and take photographs. The field survey was undertaken from roads and public rights of way to gain an understanding of landscape sensitivity.
- 3.36 The landscape assessment fieldwork focused on the relationship between the assessment sites and the adjoining settlement, the landscape setting and wider views, the condition of individual landscape features and perceptual qualities.

Stage 3: Reporting

Appraisal of Landscape Sensitivity

- 3.37 The detailed assessment for each landscape area includes:
- A map (on OS 1:25,000 base) showing the boundaries of the landscape assessment area and illustrating a range of landscape and environmental information representing key constraints to development (i.e. areas within which the Council would not permit development as identified at Stage 2 of the LUC *Green Belt Study*, see para 3.7) which include heritage designations and nature conservation designations, as well as burial grounds, common land and Flood Zone 3 areas.
 - A map (on OS 1:25,000 base) showing the boundaries of the landscape assessment area including any promoted sites within it (as identified at Stage 2 of the Green Belt Study);
 - An aerial view of the assessment area including any sites promoted for development by landowners and/or developers⁶;
 - Illustrative photographs of the assessment area;
 - A brief description of the landscape area, making reference to its location and boundaries;
 - An appraisal of landscape and visual sensitivity against the criteria identified in the methodology.

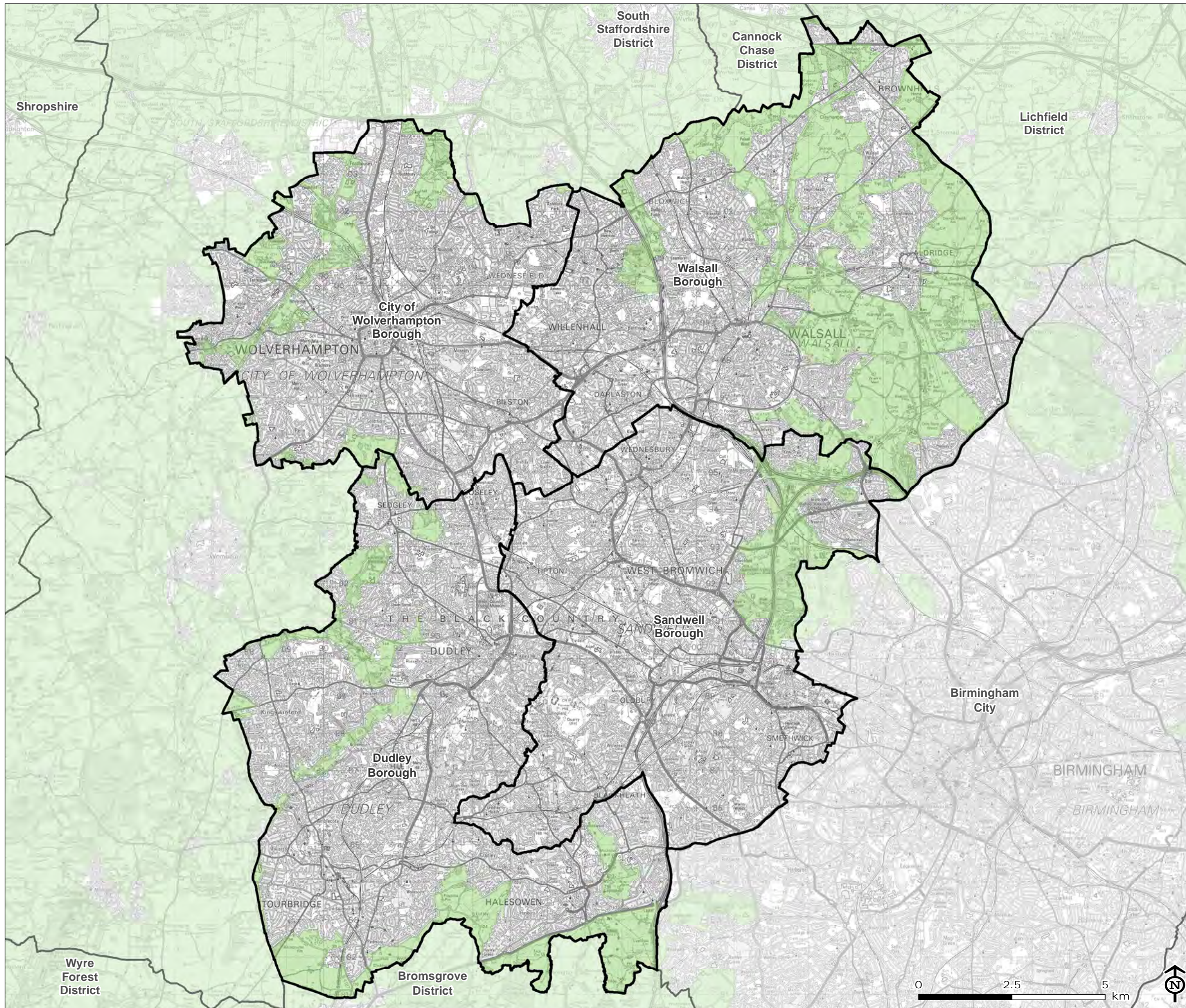
Evaluation of landscape assessment area

- 3.38 A summary justification for the evaluation of the areas' overall landscape sensitivity drawing from information from the individual criteria assessments. Separate ratings for any alternative development scenarios (as detailed in the Green Belt Assessment Stage 2) are noted.
- 3.39 A rating for the sensitivity of the landscape on a five point scale as set out in **Table 3.2** above.
- 3.40 Details of locations or attributes of higher or lower sensitivity than the overall rating, in each area, where appropriate are noted.
- 3.41 Sites promoted for development by landowners and/or developers within the landscape area are noted.
- 3.42 A map of the landscape assessment area illustrating the sensitivity rating across the area will be included, including any significant variations in sensitivity.
- 3.43 The individual assessments can be found at **Appendix 1**.

Summary of findings




- 3.44 Assessment results are summarised in a tabular form in **Chapter 4**, using colour-coding to highlight sensitivity ratings.
- 3.45 Maps are provided to visualise the results of the assessment of landscape sensitivity for each of the Black Country authorities in **Chapter 4**. These are colour-coded to provide a simple overview of the spatial pattern of landscape and visual sensitivities to development across the relevant part of the Borough.

⁶ Sites promoted for development are colour coded as to whether they were received by Black Country (light blue) or South Staffordshire (dark blue) councils. This is most relevant for landscape areas on the edge of the Black Country/South Staffordshire border.



Black Country Landscape Sensitivity

Figure 3.1: Overview of the Study Area

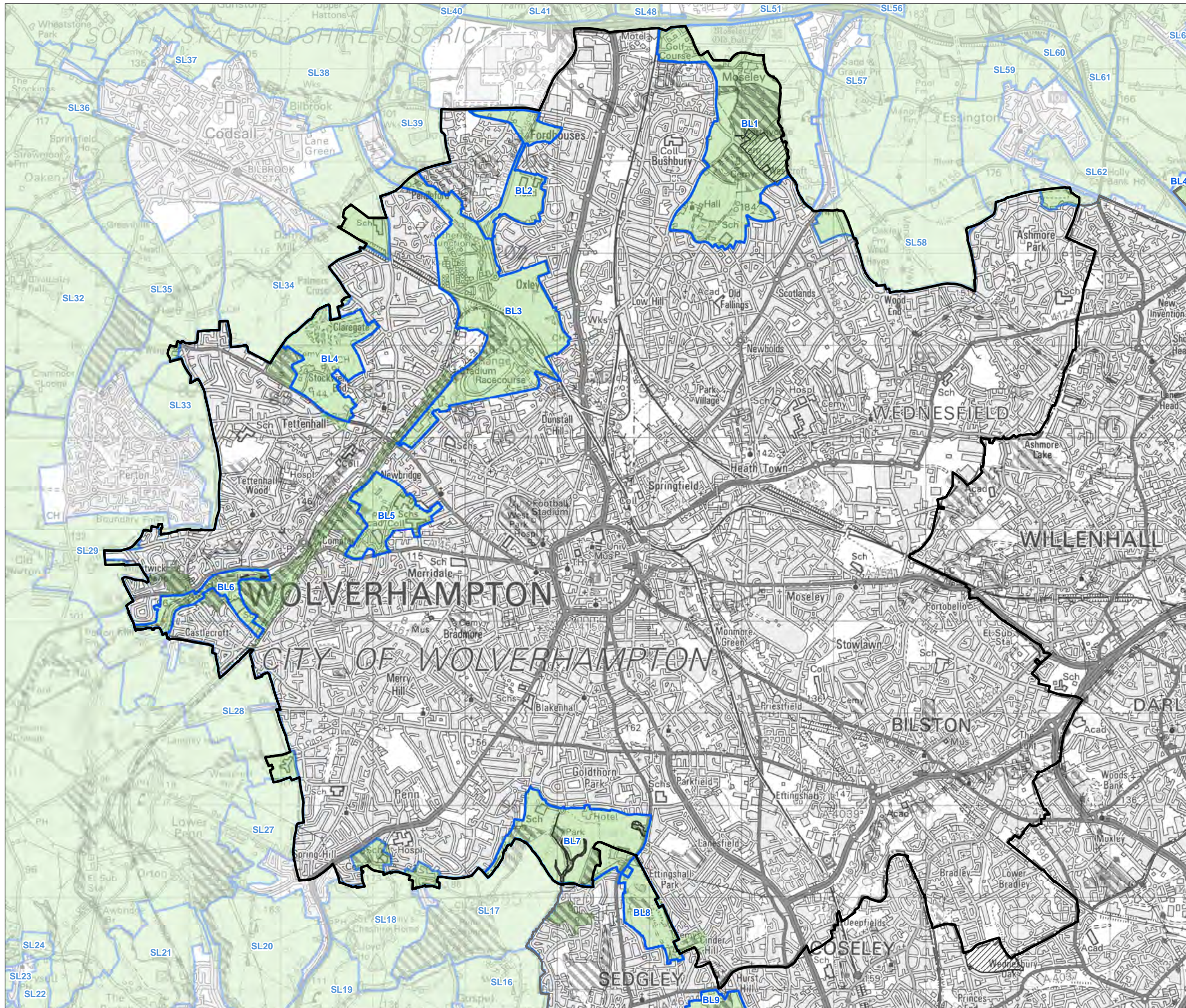
-  Black Country Local Authorities
-  Other Local Authority
-  Green Belt

0 2.5 5 km



Map Scale @A3: 1:100,000





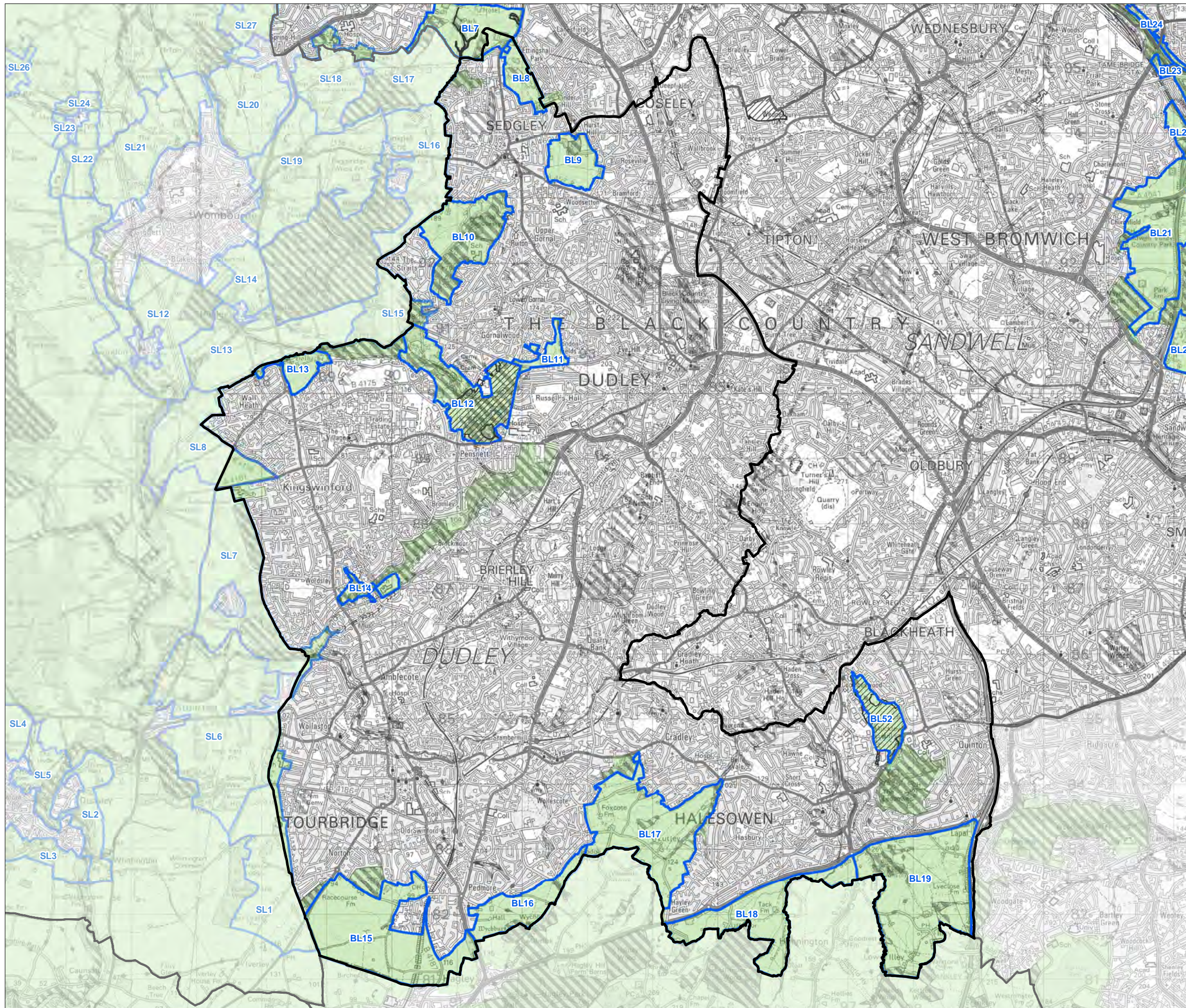
Black Country Landscape Sensitivity

Figure 3.2: Landscape Assessment Areas - City of Wolverhampton Borough

- City of Wolverhampton Borough
- Other Local Authority
- Green Belt
- Landscape area
- Landscape area in South Staffordshire
- Absolute Constraint
- Potential SINC addition
- Potential SINC removal









0 1 km





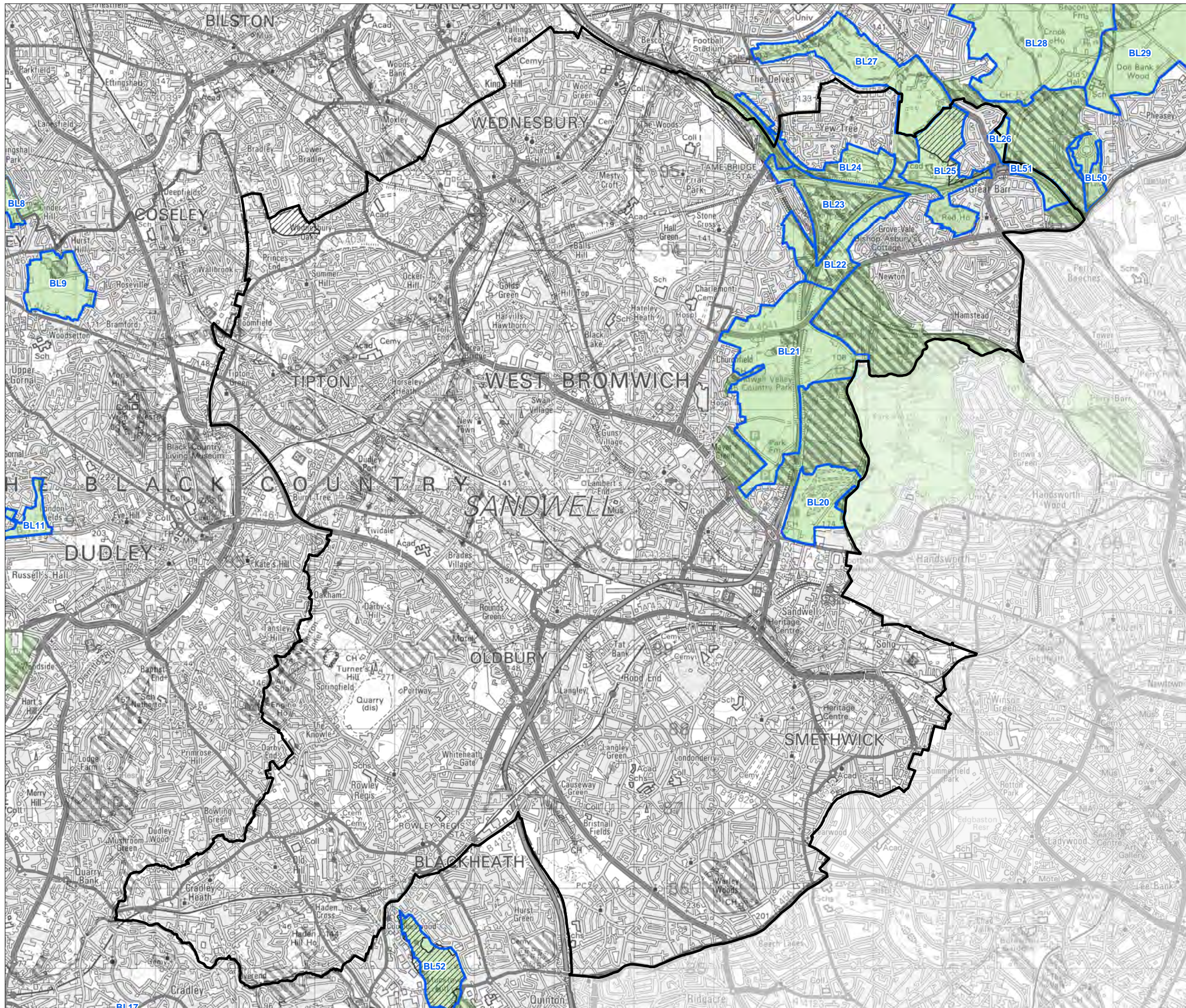
Black Country Landscape Sensitivity

Figure 3.3: Landscape Assessment Areas - Dudley Borough

-  Dudley Borough
-  Other Local Authority
-  Green Belt
-  Landscape area
-  Landscape area in South Staffordshire
-  Absolute Constraint
-  Potential SINC addition
-  Potential SINC removal

0 1.5 km





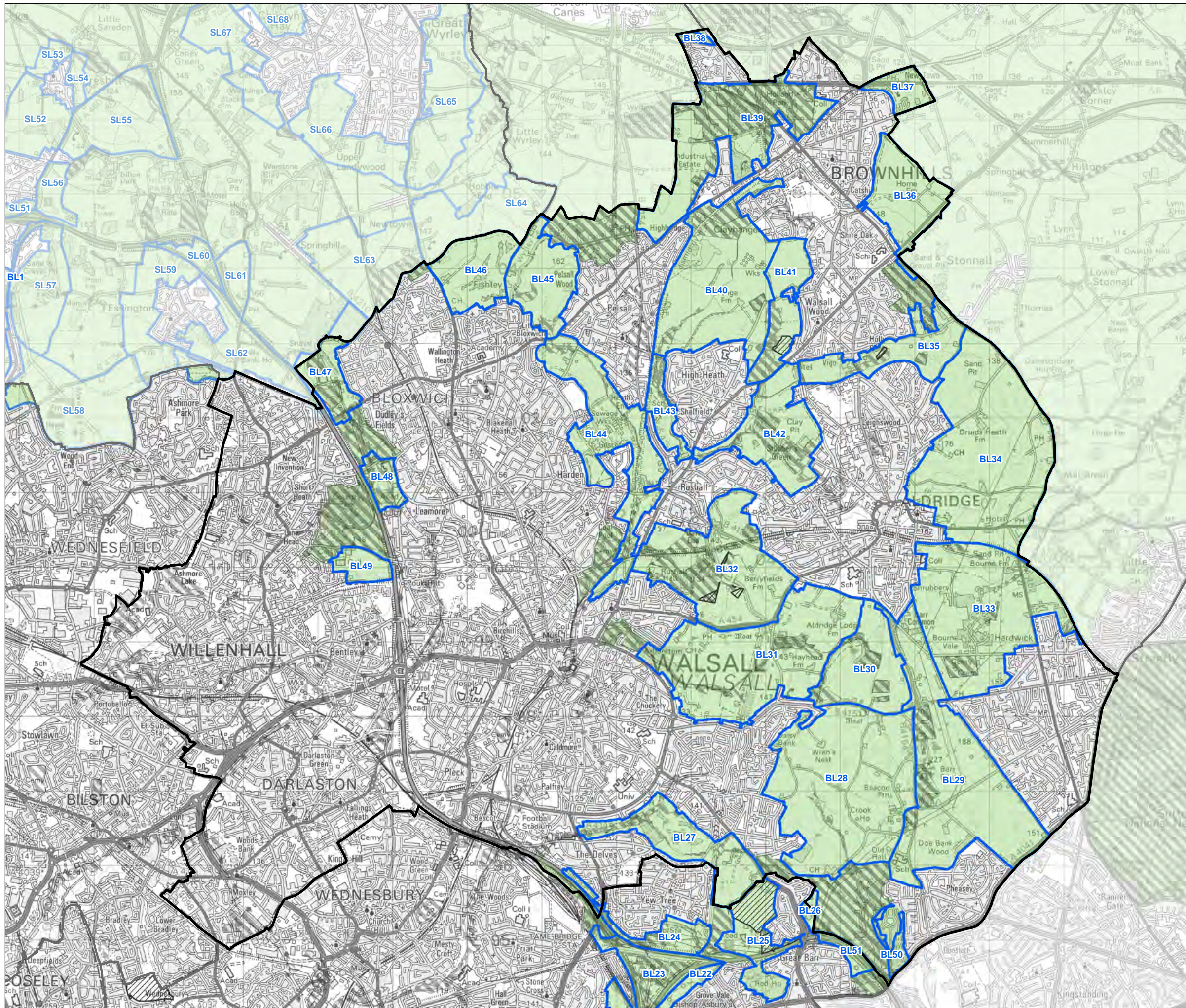
Black Country Landscape Sensitivity

Figure 3.4: Landscape Assessment Areas - Sandwell Borough

- Sandwell Borough
- Other Local Authority
- Green Belt
- Landscape area
- Absolute Constraint
- Potential SINC addition
- Potential SINC removal

0 1.5 km





Black Country Landscape Sensitivity

Figure 3.5: Landscape Assessment Areas - Walsall Borough

- Walsall Borough
- Other Local Authority
- Green Belt
- Landscape area
- Landscape area in South Staffordshire
- Absolute Constraint
- Potential SINC addition
- Potential SINC removal

0 1.5 km



B: Summary of Findings



4 Summary of Findings

- 4.1 The findings for each landscape area are presented in this chapter. The table and figures summarise the sensitivity ratings in table and map format by Council. Note that the assessment for each of the landscape areas should be read in conjunction with these overall findings. In some cases more than one sensitivity rating is provided to indicate where there is spatial variation in sensitivity across an assessment area and where these variations are significant they are shown on the mapping provided, however the text should also be interrogated to identify areas of higher and lower sensitivity.
- 4.2 Areas within the urban conurbation of **Wolverhampton** (e.g. BL2, BL3) can have low-moderate sensitivity to development, due to their flat landform, visual enclosure, historic field pattern that has been eroded by modern development or land use and limited naturalistic qualities. However, such landscapes may play an important role in providing separation between settlements (e.g. BL5, BL7) which increases their sensitivity. Higher landscape sensitivity is often focused on linear features within the areas, such as historic canals or disused railway lines with their associated natural features and recreational uses (e.g. BL7). Areas such as the Conservation Areas at Tettenhall Greens (BL4), Sedgley Park (BL7) or Bushbury Hill (BL1) have higher sensitivity due to the time depth associated with the landscape.
- 4.3 Areas along the southern settlement edge of **Dudley** (BL16-19) are considered to have high or moderate-high sensitivity to residential and employment development, particularly due to the frequent occurrence of natural features related to the watercourses and deciduous woodland (including ancient woodland⁷, the designations as Areas of High Historic Landscape Value and the strong existing settlement edge). Area BL15 has a lower rating due to less extensive natural habitats and time depth that is related to geological rather than landscape features.
- 4.4 Areas of Green Belt within the urban conurbation such as Buckpool and Barrow Hill are largely excluded from this study as they are constrained by ecological designations or existing development. The pockets of open land that remain outside these constraints are considered to have moderate-high or moderate sensitivity and derive their sensitivity from their importance as public open space (e.g. BL11), or their strong contribution as a green setting to the surrounding settlements (e.g. BL8, BL9, BL12).
- 4.5 Areas of lower sensitivity within Dudley include areas on the northern settlement edge (BL13, BL10s1), which provide little contribution as a backdrop to the surrounding settlement and are visually enclosed with few naturalistic qualities (except within the Local Nature Reserve at BL10s2).
- 4.6 All the Green Belt land within **Sandwell** is located within the urban conurbation and the M5 cuts through the area running north-south until its junction with the M6. The influence of the motorway, which is an urbanising feature, and associated modern development, has eroded landscape pattern resulting in low or low-moderate sensitivity to development overall (BL20, BL22, BL23, BL24, BL51). However, such landscapes may play a role in providing separation between settlements (e.g. BL22, BL26, BL51) which increases their sensitivity.
- 4.7 Areas that retain a more rural character with some naturalistic qualities have higher sensitivity (BL25) and only one area (BL21) is distinguished by its combination of historic field patterns, valued natural features and significant recreational value.
- 4.8 Enclosed areas of Green Belt land within the urban conurbation of **Walsall** are generally low-lying and impacted by their close proximity to built up areas and existing development within them which has eroded much of the landscape pattern. As a result many of the criteria score low, however ecological value, recreational value or the role these areas play in providing a separation

⁷ The additional information on ancient woodland held by Dudley Council shows additional areas of ancient woodland to that shown in the Natural England data used for this study. There is a reasonable assumption that the overall LSA rating would not be altered as a result of this additional information on ancient woodland.

between settlements can counterbalance other criteria (BL27, BL43, BL47, BL48, BL49) resulting in a moderate or low-moderate sensitivity to development. Other areas, despite their location retain a sense of rurality and naturalistic character which provide a rural backdrop to the surrounding settlement resulting in moderate sensitivity (BL40, BL42).

- 4.9 The larger areas of open land to the south east of Walsall are generally considered to have moderate-high sensitivity. Despite their location within the urban conurbation, these areas have some sense of rural character with a frequent occurrence of valued natural habitats and significant recreational value (BL31, BL32), particularly either side of the prominent ridgeline of Barr Beacon (BL28, BL29, BL30).
- 4.10 The sense of rural undeveloped character is strong along the eastern settlement edge of Walsall, where the landscape has a sense of time depth and contributes positively as an attractive backdrop to the adjacent settlement, and as a consequence has moderate-high sensitivity to development (BL34, BL35). Sensitivity decreases to moderate where the influence of human development in the form of overhead powerlines, roads, or existing settlement is stronger (BL33, BL36).
- 4.11 Sensitivity to the north of the settlement edge varies, with some areas where the sense of rural character is counterbalanced by modern land uses such as golf clubs, a lack of valued natural features or time depth (BL37, BL46) considered to be of low-moderate sensitivity. Other areas, (BL39, BL45) have specific qualities such as a sense of history or relative tranquility (BL45) or natural qualities such as Brownhills Common (BL39), and so contribute positively to the setting of the surrounding settlement which raises sensitivity to moderate high.

Table 4.1 Summary of Results

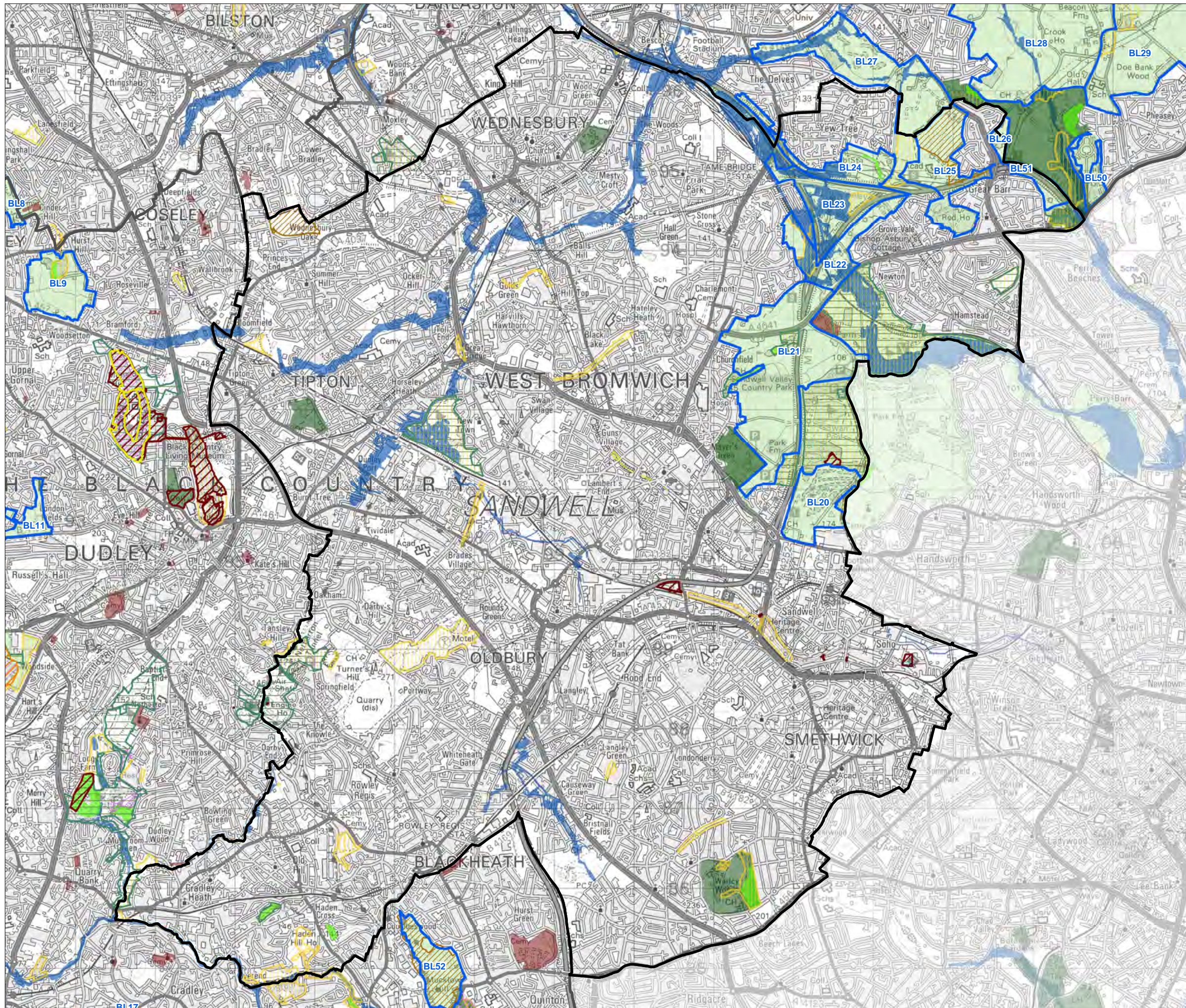
Landscapes area ref	Landscapes area (ha)	Landscapes Sensitivity	Council / Borough
City of Wolverhampton Council			
BL1	147	Moderate	City of Wolverhampton / South Staffordshire
BL1 s2	133.74	Moderate - High	City of Wolverhampton / South Staffordshire
BL2	44.83	Low - Moderate	City of Wolverhampton
BL3	196.81	Low - Moderate	City of Wolverhampton / South Staffordshire
BL4	19.33	Moderate	City of Wolverhampton
BL4 s2	49.28	Low - Moderate	City of Wolverhampton
BL5	24.99	Moderate	City of Wolverhampton
BL5 s2	20.55	Low - Moderate	City of Wolverhampton
BL6	30.15	Moderate - High	City of Wolverhampton
BL7	76.37	Moderate - High	City of Wolverhampton / Dudley
BL7 s2	21.81	Moderate	City of Wolverhampton / Dudley
SL18	112.91	Moderate - High	City of Wolverhampton / South Staffordshire
SL28	171.75	Moderate	City of Wolverhampton / South Staffordshire
SL29	187.1	Moderate	City of Wolverhampton / South Staffordshire
SL29 s2	81.19	Moderate-High	City of Wolverhampton / South Staffordshire
SL34	249.92	Moderate	City of Wolverhampton / South Staffordshire
SL58	157.01	Low - Moderate	City of Wolverhampton / South Staffordshire
SL62	100.59	Low - Moderate	City of Wolverhampton / South Staffordshire

Landscape area ref	Landscape area (ha)	Landscape Sensitivity	Council / Borough
Dudley Metropolitan Borough			
BL7	76.37	Moderate - High	City of Wolverhampton / Dudley
BL7 s2	21.81	Moderate	City of Wolverhampton / Dudley
BL8	34.72	Moderate - High	Dudley
BL9	54.91	Moderate - High	Dudley
BL10	49.01	Low - Moderate	Dudley
BL10 s2	72.72	Moderate	Dudley
BL11	21.2	Moderate	Dudley
BL12	139.11	Moderate - High	Dudley
BL13	18.69	Low	Dudley
BL13 s2	13.33	Low - Moderate	Dudley
BL14	20.28	Moderate - High	Dudley
BL15	223.83	Moderate	Dudley
BL15 s2	20.42	Moderate - High	Dudley
BL16	76.22	High	Dudley
BL17	211.56	Moderate - High	Dudley
BL18	137.16	Moderate - High	Dudley
BL19	214.85	Moderate - High	Dudley
BL19 s2	64.73	High	Dudley
BL52	45.83	Moderate - High	Dudley
SL1	200.59	Moderate	Dudley / South Staffordshire
SL7	228.41	High	Dudley / South Staffordshire
SL8	108.06	Low - Moderate	Dudley / South Staffordshire
SL8 s2	53.19	Moderate	Dudley / South Staffordshire
SL15	82.2	Moderate - High	Dudley / South Staffordshire
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough			
BL20	58.93	Low - Moderate	Sandwell
BL21	216.52	Moderate - High	Sandwell
BL22	54.21	Low - Moderate	Sandwell
BL23	69.81	Low	Sandwell
BL24	44.96	Low	Sandwell / Walsall
BL25	78.7	Moderate	Sandwell
BL26	4.98	Low	Sandwell / Walsall
BL26 s2	2.73	Low - Moderate	Sandwell / Walsall
BL51	14.7	Low - Moderate	Sandwell

Landscape area ref	Landscape area (ha)	Landscape Sensitivity	Council / Borough
Walsall Metropolitan Borough			
BL24	44.96	Low	Sandwell / Walsall
BL26	4.98	Low	Sandwell / Walsall
BL26 s2	2.73	Low - Moderate	Sandwell / Walsall
BL27	118.2	Low - Moderate	Walsall
BL28	361.98	Moderate - High	Walsall
BL29	335.96	Moderate - High	Walsall
BL30	117.8	Moderate - High	Walsall
BL31	299.75	Moderate - High	Walsall
BL32	228.83	Moderate - High	Walsall
BL33	286.51	Moderate	Walsall
BL34	373.52	Moderate - High	Walsall
BL35	73.01	Moderate - High	Walsall
BL35 s2	23.86	Low - Moderate	Walsall
BL36	100.11	Moderate	Walsall
BL37	32.09	Low - Moderate	Walsall
BL38	4.98	Low - Moderate	Walsall
BL39	191.36	Moderate - High	Walsall
BL39 s2	29.03	Moderate	Walsall
BL40	253.93	Moderate	Walsall
BL41	77.37	Moderate - High	Walsall
BL42	128.4	Moderate	Walsall
BL43	35	Moderate	Walsall
BL44	165.26	Moderate - High	Walsall
BL44 s2	19.14	Moderate	Walsall
BL45	96.91	Moderate - High	Walsall
BL46	86.87	Low - Moderate	Walsall
BL47	66.76	Moderate	Walsall / South Staffordshire
BL48	28.49	Moderate	Walsall
BL49	28.69	Low - Moderate	Walsall
BL50	15.24	Moderate - High	Walsall

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough





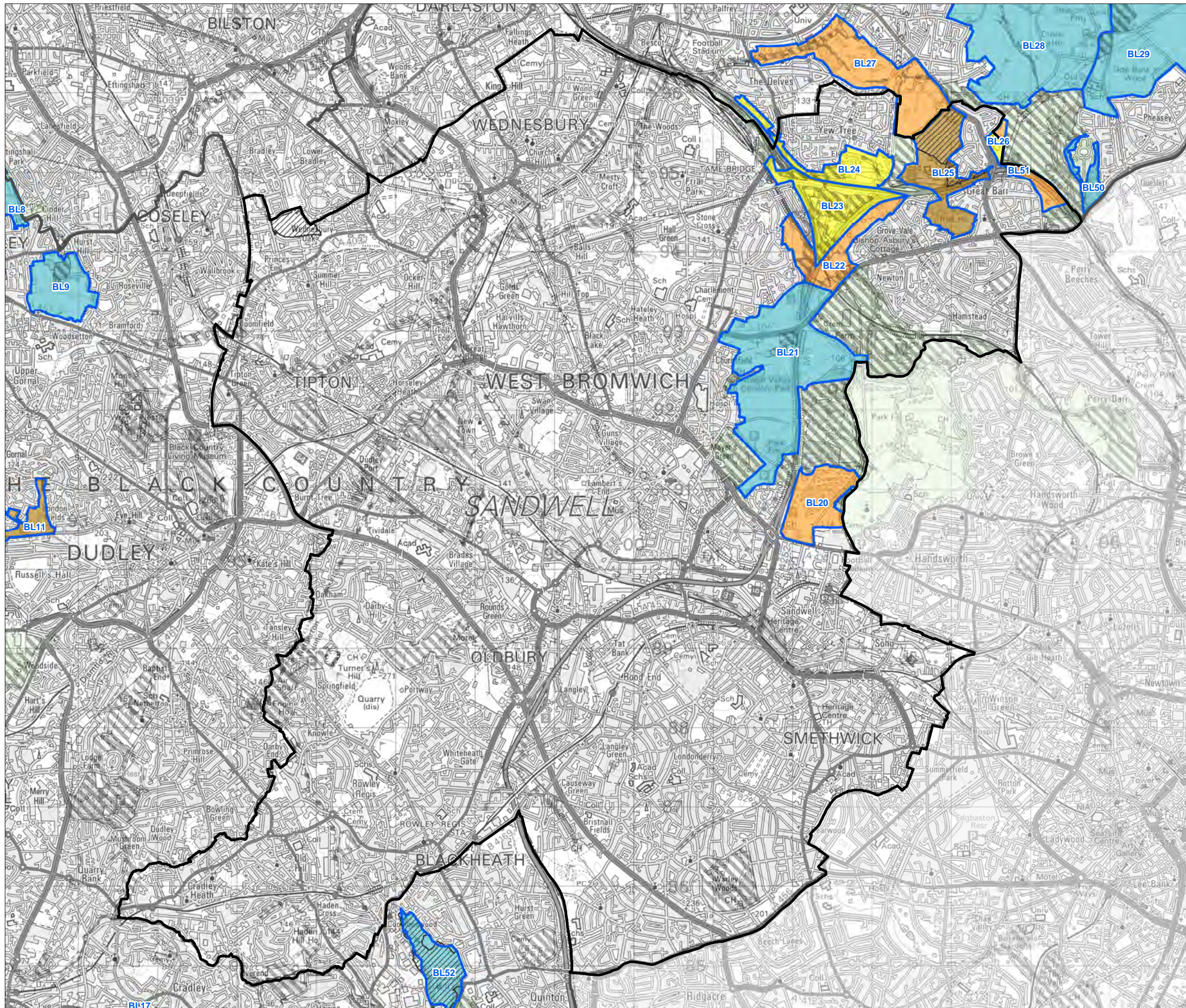
Black Country Landscape Sensitivity

Figure 4.5: Absolute Constraints and Potential SINCs - Sandwell Borough

- Sandwell Borough
- Other Local Authority
- Green Belt
- Landscape area
- Cultural Heritage**
- Registered Parks and Gardens
- Scheduled Monument
- Natural Heritage**
- Ancient Woodland
- Local Nature Reserve
- National Nature Reserve
- Potential SINC addition
- Potential SINC removal
- SINC / SBI
- Site of Special Scientific Interest
- Special Area of Conservation
- Other**
- Burial Ground
- Common Land
- Flood Zone 3

Please note: Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC) are located only within the Black Country and Sites of Biological Importance (SBI) are located only within South Staffordshire. They are the equivalent of one another.

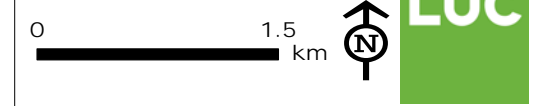
0 1.5 km



Black Country Landscape Sensitivity

Figure 4.6: Landscape Sensitivity Assessment - Sandwell Borough

- Sandwell Borough
 - Other Local Authority
 - Green Belt
 - Landscape area
 - Absolute Constraint
 - Potential SINC addition
 - Potential SINC removal
- Sensitivity rating
- High
 - Moderate - High
 - Moderate
 - Low - Moderate
 - Low



Appendix 1: Landscape Sensitivity Assessments



Location and Landscape Character Context

The area lies to the west of Great Barr, which forms the eastern boundary. The north western boundary is formed by the borough boundary which runs along the Beacon Way, and the southern boundary is formed by the settlement edge of Great Barr and Grove Vale. The M6 motorway runs through the centre of the area.

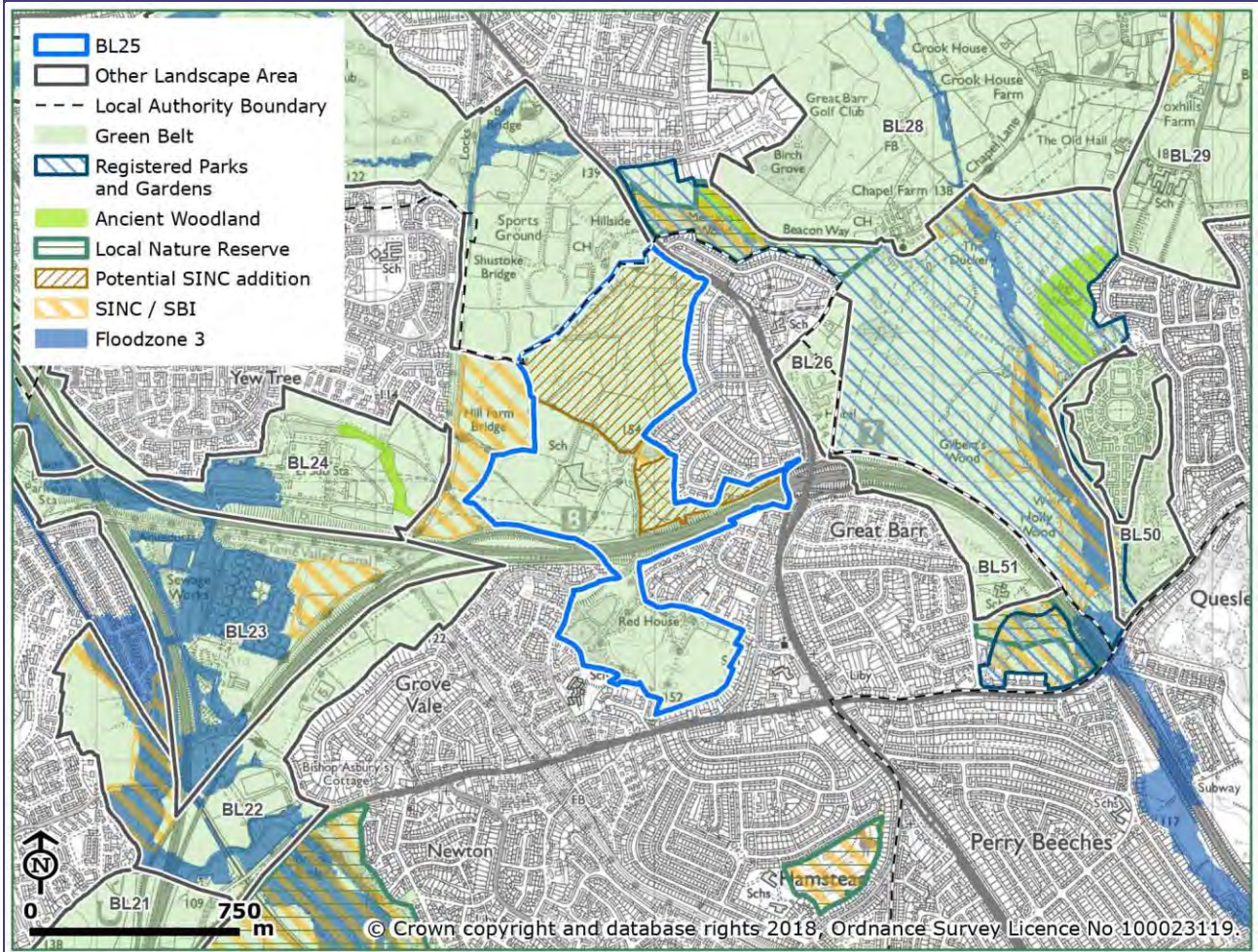
Aerial View of Landscape Area with Promoted Sites



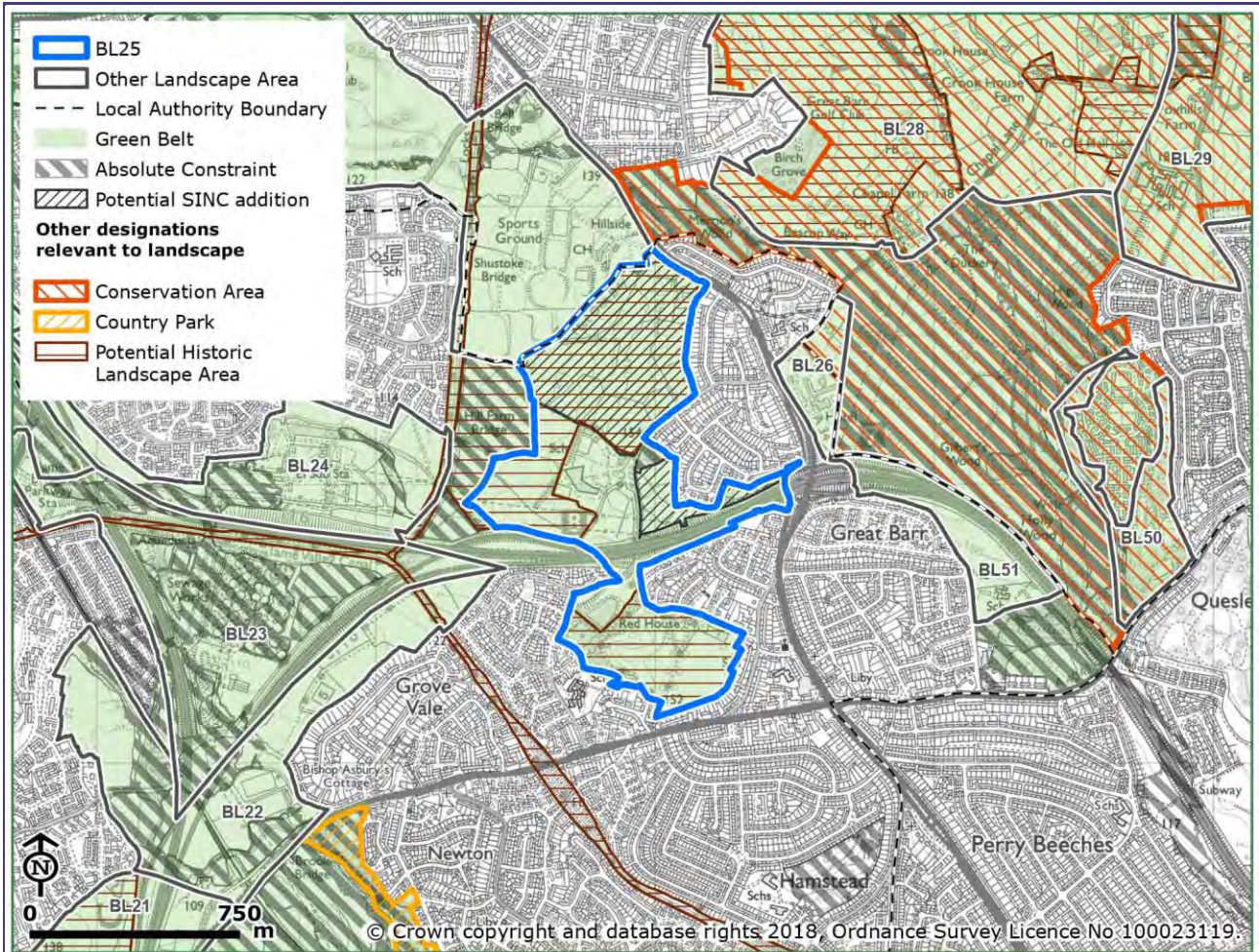
Representative Views



Landscape Assessment Area with Absolute Constraints



Landscape Assessment Area with Absolute Constraints and Other Designations



Appraisal of Landscape Sensitivity

Characteristic / Attribute	Lower Sensitivity to Development	Moderate Sensitivity to Development	Higher Sensitivity to Development
Scale		Redhouse Park south of the M6 is a slightly larger scale, as it is set out as a recreational park.	A predominance of small scale fields divided by largely intact hedgerows and hedgerow trees.
Landform		A gently sloping landform rising from its lowest point in the west at 130m AOD, to its highest point in the east at 160m AOD.	
Landscape pattern and time depth			The area north of the M6 contains a well preserved pre-enclosure field system, with ridge and furrow and other cropmarks, and a number of ancient hedgerows and drainage ditches. It is a potential historic landscape area AHHLV25 Peak House Farm Field System. South of the M6 Red House Park has been a parkland since the late 18th/early 19th century and is a potential historic landscape area DLHHV2 Red House Park.
'Natural' character			A large proportion of the landscape area to the north is identified as priority habitat good quality semi-improved grassland, and identified as a potential SINC. There is priority habitat deciduous woodland along the M6, within Red House Park, and east of Wilderness Lane along the settlement edge, part of which is designated as a SINC.
Built character	Built features within the landscape area include Q3 Academy School, Peak House Farm in the north. A pylon route crosses the south of the area, and the M6 cuts through the south of the area.	The Grade II listed Red House lies within Red House Park.	
Recreational character		The long distance Beacon Way follows the western boundary of the area. A traffic-free cycle route runs through the centre and around Red House Park, which is an important area for recreation.	
Perceptual aspects	The area's rural perceptual qualities are adversely affected by significant road noise from the M6 and A34. The visual impact of the pylon route running through the south of the landscape area also has a negative perceptual impact.		

Settlement setting

The area provides some rural visual setting for parts of Great Barr and provides a contribution as part of the open gap between Great Barr and Walsall. Red House Park acts as an open area separating Grove Vale and Great Barr.

Visual prominence

The landscape area is not visually prominent in the landscape, particularly from the south and west where it is largely screened by woodland and mature hedgerow trees.

More elevated areas to the east along the A34 Birmingham Road are widely visible from large areas of the Black Country.

Inter-visibility with adjacent designated landscapes or promoted view points

The area is not visible from any designated landscapes or viewpoints.

Landscape Assessment Area	Size (ha)	Rating
BL25s1	78.7	Moderate

Landscape Sensitivity Judgement

The landscape area has a moderate landscape sensitivity rating to residential development as it retains many rural qualities, including historic field patterns, ecological value due to the extent of priority habitats and an intact network of mature hedgerows.

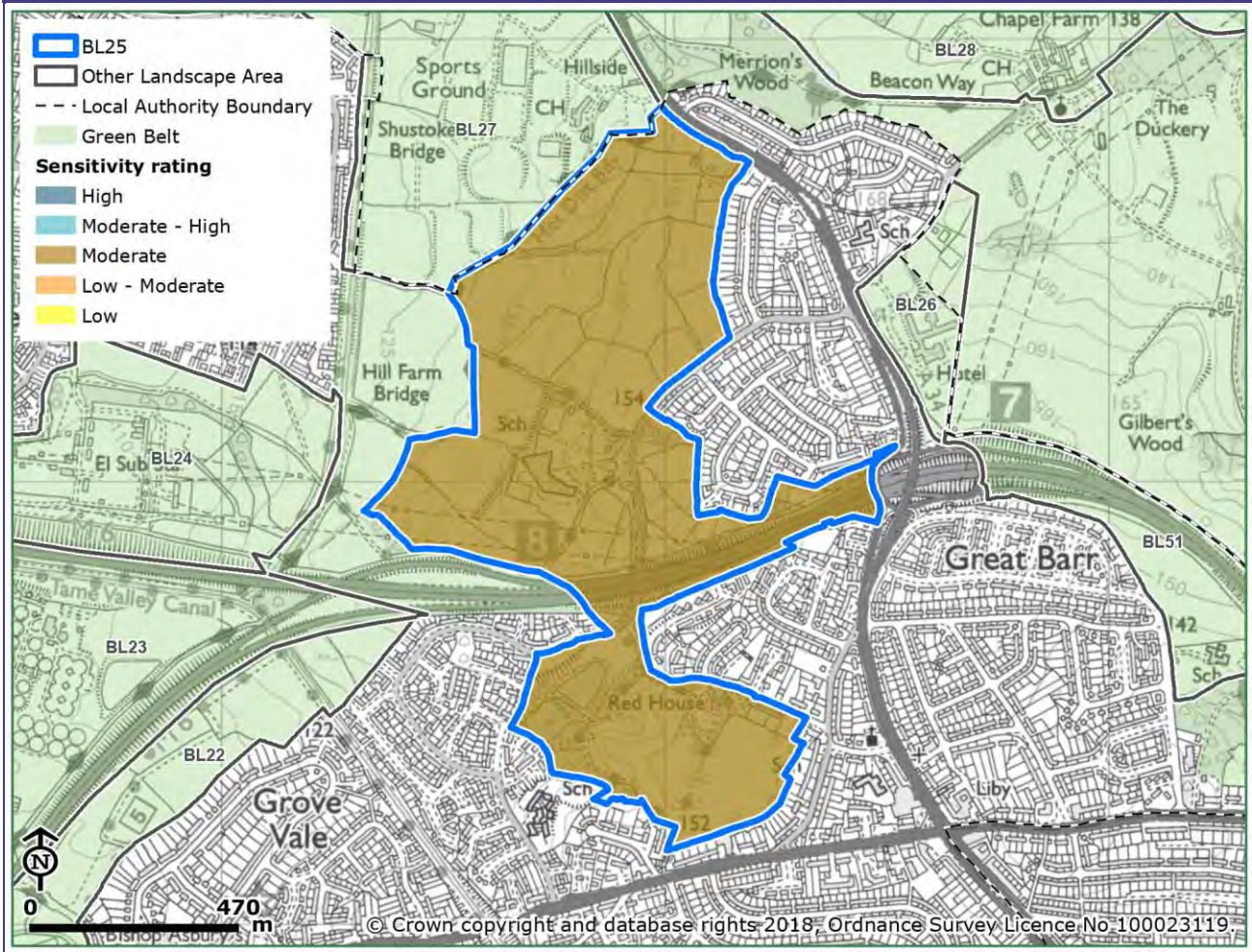
Anomalies to the Overall Landscape Sensitivity Rating

Sensitivity to employment development would be moderate-high, as a larger scale development would be conflict with the small scale of the historic field pattern and potential loss of priority habitats.

List of Promoted Sites within Scenario

Ref: 115 (Employment and housing); Ref: 44 (Housing)

Landscape Sensitivity Rating



Appendix 2: Black Country Settlement Hierarchy



	Wolverhampton	Dudley	Sandwell	Walsall
Main settlements within the urban conurbation	Wolverhampton Bilston Wednesfield	Dudley Brierley Hill Halesowen Stourbridge	West Bromwich Blackheath Cradley Heath Great Bridge Oldbury Smethwick Tipton Wednesbury	Walsall Aldridge Bloxwich Brownhills Darlaston Willenhall
Minor settlements within the urban conurbation	Tettenhall	Coseley Gornal Kingswinford Lye Sedgley	Great Barr	Pelsall Pheasey Rushall Shelfield (including High Heath) Streetly Walsall Wood

Appendix 3: Glossary of Abbreviations



Term	Definition
AOD	Above Ordnance Datum (sea level)
AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty – a statutory national landscape designation
GIS	Geographic Information System
Ha	Hectares
HER	Historic Environment Record
HLC	Historic Landscape Characterisation
Landscape Character Areas (LCAs)	Single unique areas that are the discrete geographical area of a particular landscape type.
Landscape Character Types (LCTs)	Distinct types of landscape that are relatively homogenous in character. They are generic in nature in that they may occur in different areas in different parts of the country, but share broadly similar combinations of geology, topography, drainage patterns, vegetation, historic land use and settlement pattern.
LNR	Local Nature Reserve
LSA	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment
LWS	Local Wildlife Site
NCA	National Character Area – defined within the National Character Area Study, Natural England (2013) - NCAs divide England into 159 distinct natural areas. Each is defined by a unique combination of landscape, biodiversity, geodiversity, history, and cultural and economic activity.
NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
OS	Ordnance Survey
SBI	Sites of Biological Importance (within South Staffordshire, equivalent to SINC in the Black Country)
Scheduled Monument (SM)	Nationally important archaeological sites or historic buildings, given protection against unauthorised change.
SINC	Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (within Black Country, equivalent to SBI in South Staffordshire)
pSINC	Potential Sites of Importance for Nature Conservation (within the Black Country) – recommended for inclusion as SINC but not yet endorsed by the committee.
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

Appendix 4: Response to comments from Duty to Cooperate Consultees



Stakeholder	Comments	LUC Response
Cannock Chase District Council	Landscape Sensitivity Assessment should have regard to existing landscape assessments for the AONB and should also take into consideration neighbouring authority assessments when assessing sites on boundaries to ensure consistency/clear narrative.	The LSA takes account of landscape character assessments for neighbouring areas where available, and the AONB Management Plan and the defined 'special qualities' of the AONB (see chapter 2 Landscape Context and Guidance of each LSA report).
Shropshire Council	Support clear separation of landscape sensitivity considerations from Green Belt purposes assessment.	Noted.
	A different approach is being used for the LSA than that used in Shropshire, primarily around the identification of parcels, and use of a 7 point scale. The council wishes to ensure that the Shropshire and South Staffordshire border areas are treated in a similar manner. However, it is considered that there are no inherent conflicts between the respective approaches.	The area covered by the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA) corresponds with the area assessed in relation to harm at Stage 2 of the Green Belt Study as well as additional areas in South Staffordshire outside the Green Belt subject to call for sites. However, the LSA parcels do not correspond with the GB study parcels, and are defined in relation to areas of similar landscape character. The LSA considers the impact of development in relation to both housing and employment where call for sites propose employment development. A 5 point sensitivity scale has been used for the LSA.
Historic England	Historic England has no concerns in relation to the proposed methodology and welcomes the resources referred to in Para. 5.14 in respect of historic landscape characterisation and the landscape sensitivity assessment process, Stage 1, DBA work proposed.	Noted.