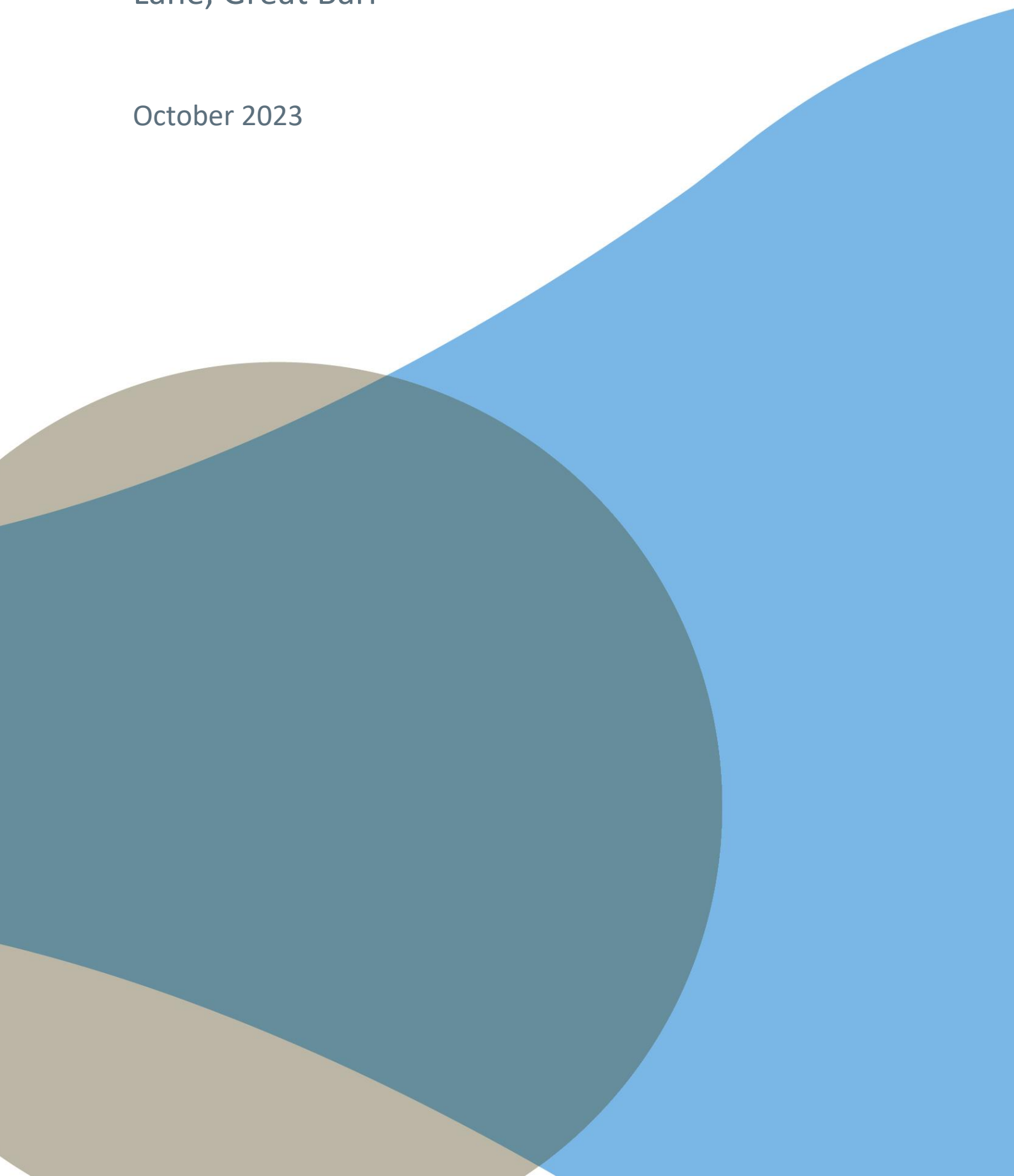


Statement of Community Engagement
Wilderness Park, Land North of Wilderness
Lane, Great Barr

October 2023



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Introduction

- 1.1 This Statement of Community Engagement (SCE) has been prepared by Turley on behalf of Wain Estates (Land) Limited.
- 1.2 This SCE forms part of an outline planning application (with the exception of access) for a residential development of up to 150 dwellings, countryside park and associated infrastructure.
- 1.3 Further details are provided in the accompanying technical reports submitted as part of the planning application. This SCE should be read alongside these other technical documents.
- 1.4 The SCE provides a detailed record of the engagement activities that have taken place, the questions received during the pre-application period and how this has been considered as part of the preparation of the final planning application.

Consultation activity overview

- 1.5 The project team delivered a pre-application engagement programme which included engagement with:
 - Officers at Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC)
 - Elected ward members for Great Barr with Yew Tree ward
 - Member of Parliament for West Bromwich East Nicola Richards MP
 - Mayor of the West Midlands Andy Street and Labour Mayoral candidate Richard Parker
 - Site neighbours
- 1.6 To ensure all interested local stakeholder groups had the opportunity to view and ask questions about the proposals, both digital and physical engagement methods were deployed, including.
 - Briefings offered to local ward members.
 - Briefings offered to Conservative and Labour West Midlands mayoral candidates.
 - Distributing leaflets to 820 addresses neighbouring the site to promote the engagement programme.
 - Sponsoring adverts on Facebook to generate awareness of the proposals within a 1-mile radius of the site.
 - Hosting a dedicated project website at www.greatbarrconsultation.co.uk detailing the proposals and displaying various contact methods outlined below.
 - Hosting a live public webinar via Zoom, containing a presentation about the proposals by the project team and a question and answer session.

- A recording of the webinar was then uploaded to the project website for members of the public to view at anytime from anywhere.

1.7 During the engagement period the website generated a total of 5,900 website visitors (www.greatbarrconsultation.co.uk).

1.8 Questions received during the pre-application engagement period were considered by the project team. They are summarised by theme with answers in **Chapter 4** of this report.

1.9 In summary, the applicant considers that the engagement undertaken with the local community and other key stakeholders has been timely, meaningful and effective.

2. Policy Context

- 2.1 The applicant recognises that the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) places an emphasis on community involvement as an important part of the planning application process. To ensure the approach taken in the pre-application stages of this application is consistent with national and local guidelines, relevant policy was reviewed in full.
- 2.2 The Government's policy on community involvement is set out in a number of statutory and non-statutory documents, including the NPPF (2023) and the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act (2004). Guidance is also provided in the Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement (2016).

National Planning Policy Framework (2023)

- 2.3 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (February 2023) ("the Framework") sets out that the planning system should be a collective enterprise with the purpose of helping deliver sustainable development.
- 2.4 Paragraphs 39-46 specifically promotes early pre-application engagement and the front-loading of consultation and explains that applications that can demonstrate effective pre-application engagement should be favoured over those that cannot. The purpose is to better coordinate public and private resources and help identify issues that can be resolved at the pre-application stage. In addition, paragraph 39 states that as a result, the outcomes for the community are improved and the planning system will function more effectively and efficiently.
- 2.5 As set out in this Statement, comprehensive community engagement has taken place prior to the submission of the planning application, in full accordance with guidance set out within the Framework.

Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council Statement of Community Involvement (2016)

- 2.6 In 2016, Sandwell MBC adopted a Statement of Community Involvement, setting out how to involve communities in the planning decision making process.
- 2.7 The project team has fully reviewed both national and local guidelines on pre-application engagement before creating a bespoke engagement strategy as detailed in the following sections of this statements.
- 2.8 All of the activities undertaken by the applicant and a summary of the feedback received are summarised in this SCE, which demonstrates how the applicant has met and exceeded the requirements set out by SMBC in its SCI.

3. Pre-application consultation activity

- 3.1 An engagement strategy was prepared in line with local and national policies on delivering meaningful and proportionate engagement with the community, as detailed in **Chapter 2**.
- 3.2 The strategy identified key stakeholder groups, outlined the engagement methods and proposed pre-application public consultation timelines.
- 3.3 Details of this pre-application consultation and engagement is included under the sub-headings below.

Pre-application discussions with Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) officers

- 3.4 A Pre-application request was submitted to the Council on 7th August 2023, the Council confirmed receipt on 9th August 2023 and a written response (sent via email) was received on 23rd August 2023.
- 3.5 The response allowed us to confirm the key issues in relation to the proposed development and policy conflicts in terms of the location of the site within the Green Belt and outside of any defined settlement boundary. It also allowed for confirmation that an EIA Screening Report would be required as part of any future application and also the scope of archaeological information required.
- 3.6 Ongoing engagement continued with Council officers during the pre-application engagement and consultation period.

Engaging with key stakeholders

- 3.7 Before launching the consultation, all three site ward councillors were informed of the planning application via email and offered an in-person or virtual briefing.
- 3.8 Councillors were comfortable with receiving information via email and did not express an interest in a meeting.
- 3.9 On 16th August in a regular briefing between Turley and the office of the West Midlands Mayor Andy Street, officers were briefed about the proposals and asked to be kept updated.
- 3.10 On 11th August, Labour's West Midlands mayoral candidate Richard Parker was briefed on the proposals. Mr Parker was not aware of the site and welcomed the information provided. He also shared Labour's emerging national policy on housing on the green belt after recent announcements from the Leader of the Party, Sir Keir Starmer.

Engaging with the community

Leaflet

- 3.11 To promote the consultation, a colour-printed leaflet was posted to 820 local addresses around the site
- 3.12 The leaflet provided a summary of the proposals, advertised the webinar, and promoted the various ways for residents to provide their feedback or ask questions.
- 3.13 A copy of the leaflet is included at **Appendix 2**.
- 3.14 Leaflets were sent to neighbouring addresses in Great Barr on 16th August 2023. The leaflet distribution area can be seen in **Figure 3.1** below.



Figure 3.1: Figure 3.1: Leaflet distribution area

Social Media promotion

- 3.15 To raise awareness within the local community and share information about the proposed development, sponsored adverts were placed on Facebook.

- 3.16 A copy of the social media adverts is included at **Appendix 3**.
- 3.17 The Facebook adverts targeted people living within a 1-mile radius of Wilderness Lane
- 3.18 The Facebook adverts received a total of 21,055 views and 880 link clicks through to www.greatbarrconsultation.co.uk from 21st August to 2nd September 2023.
- 3.19 The Facebook adverts received 22 comments, which have been considered in **Chapter 4**.

Website

- 3.20 A dedicated project website is hosted at www.greatbarrconsultation.co.uk and includes details of the proposals and contact methods for the project team, including an email address contact@greatbarrconsultation.co.uk and a freephone telephone number.
- 3.21 By the end of the feedback period the website had received a total of 5,700 unique page views.
- 3.22 Project website copy is included at **Appendix 4** and the website itself (www.greatbarrconsultation.co.uk) is live and accessible.

Webinar

- 3.23 A live public webinar was hosted via Zoom from 18:00 to 19:00 on 24th August 2023, during which members of the project team presented the proposals and answered questions from the audience. A recording of the webinar is on the project webpage for viewing at any time.
- 3.24 35 people registered for the webinar and 13 people attended the event live.
- 3.25 A copy of the webinar presentation is included at **Appendix 5**.

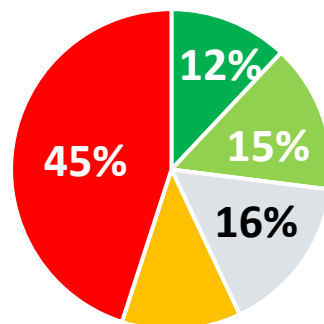
4. Feedback and applicant's response

- 4.1 A total of 151 feedback forms, 14 emails and 6 phone calls forms of feedback were received during the pre-application consultation period, which have all been considered. Feedback received at the consultation webinar and on our social media adverts has been included in this summary.

Quantitative Feedback

- 4.2 The responses to the online feedback form questions, where respondents were asked to rank their agreement with four statements, are represented in the figures below:

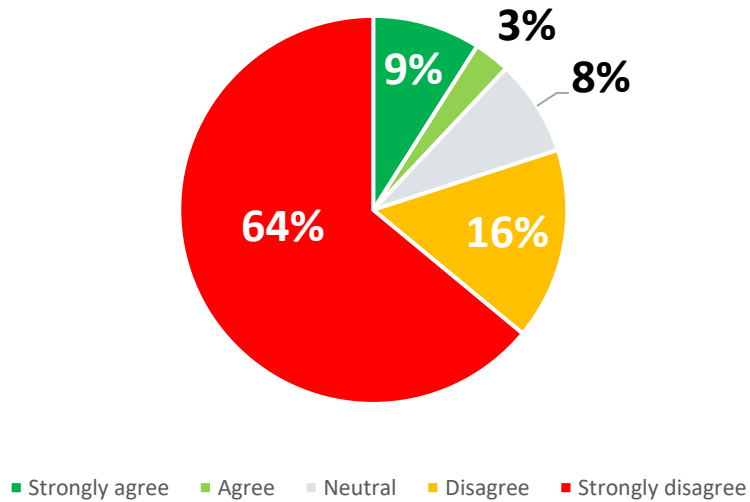
“Using the Green Belt land to create an accessible countryside park which is legally protected via Section 106 arrangements with the council.”



■ Strongly agree ■ Agree ■ Neutral ■ Disagree ■ Strongly disagree

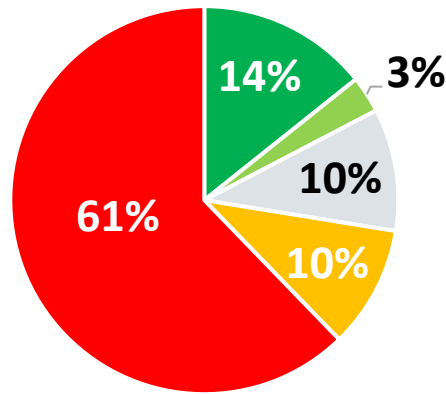
- 4.3 Over a quarter of respondents to the survey provided their support for development on Green Belt land. For a proposed development of this scale, this figure is higher than average and demonstrates how some members of the community understood how the development could facilitate greater legal protection for the existing green space.

“It’s important to provide affordable high -quality housing for residents in Sandwell”



4.4 Although the responses submitted are in favour of not providing affordable housing, our evidence highlights Sandwell’s housing crisis. Based on figures published by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council, the borough has a 19,000 homes shortfall with the need for affordable housing the greatest. This proposed development would provide 40% affordable housing which is in excess of 25% Local Plan Policy requirement, allowing many families the opportunity to buy a property and live in Great Barr.

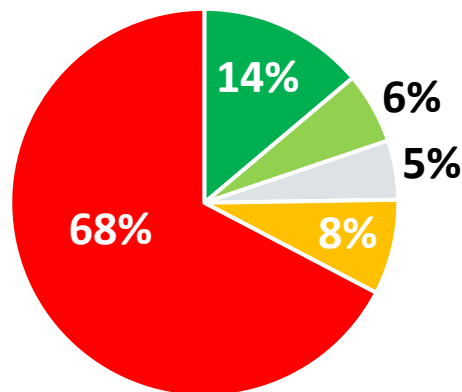
“Creating a new countryside park that is accessible for the whole community.”



■ Strongly agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree

4.5 During the consultation, a number of consultees in the survey and the webinar highlighted local existing parks and green spaces that are already used by the community. This was useful for the project team to understand as the emerging proposals are finalised.

“The development will ensure more local families aren’t forced to move outside of Great Barr when searching for a home.”



■ Strongly agree
 ■ Agree
 ■ Neutral
 ■ Disagree
 ■ Strongly disagree

4.6 Getting young families on the property ladder in Sandwell is important in helping to alleviate the local housing crisis. This was supported by a quarter of the respondents to the survey. Great Bar is an attractive place to live with good transport links and community infrastructure. The key challenge is meeting the demand whilst ensuring there is cohesion with existing residents who are typically older (the site ward has the highest proportion of 65+ in Sandwell) and have lived in Great Barr for many years.

Qualitative Feedback

- 4.7 Questions received during the pre-application period have been considered by the project team with questions posed at the webinar, information event, and via social media summarised in **Table 4.1**.
- 4.8 The applicant’s responses are also included in **Table 4.1**.

Table 4.1 – Summary of questions and applicant’s responses

Question	Applicant’s Response
Why can you not use brownfield sites instead?	<p>The applicant can only prepare a planning application at a site which it controls.</p> <p>Brownfield sites in Sandwell require remediation before being able to deliver housing.</p> <p>SMBC has a Five-Year Housing Land Supply of 1.6 years.</p>
How will the development provide funds for local services?	<p>A Section 106 agreement will be secured in negotiations between the applicant and officers at SMBC. This will contribute towards local infrastructure and will be legally binding.</p>
Could another vehicular access be included in addition to Wilderness Lane?	<p>A development of this size (150 dwellings) would not justify the provision of two access points. Junction modelling has been undertaken that demonstrates that a single point of access onto Wilderness Lane is forecast to operate within capacity with minimal queueing and delay. Therefore, from a capacity perspective, a single point of access would be more than sufficient.</p>
How will the development manage construction traffic?	<p>A Construction Management Plan will be agreed between the applicant and officers at SMBC, which will control how many construction vehicles can arrive and depart on any day. This will include their delivery routes and times.</p>
How will noise and dust during construction be managed?	<p>A Construction Management Plan will be agreed between the applicant and officers at SMBC, which will agree techniques that keep noise and dust to a minimum.</p>
What will be the percentage of affordable housing provided as part of the development?	<p>The development will provide 40% of units as affordable housing. This is a significant increase above the 25% policy requirement, addressing the identified need in the area, in response to historic under delivery.</p>
Could a local shop be included in the development?	<p>This has been considered by the project team, but local shops are available within close proximity to the site.</p>
How will sustainable and active travel be promoted by the development?	<p>The development will benefit from local sustainable transport links. The site is served by local bus services, such as the frequent 51 bus running between Birmingham and</p>

	Walsall, and the A34 will also be served by a future SPRINT rapid transit route. It also offers dedicated pedestrian and cycle routes through the development, connecting to existing sustainable transport networks.
How many bedrooms will be included in the units?	The housing mix will be reserved for consideration at reserved matters stage, guided by local needs and policy guidance on housing mix, type and tenure.
Will the development contain pavements for pedestrians?	Yes. The internal site layout will be considered at reserved matters stage. However, pedestrian footways will be provided alongside the internal vehicular routes as well as dedicated pedestrian and cycle routes - linking to existing routes/pathways.
If the development is sold following planning permission, will the legal guarantees remain?	Yes. Any commitments made in any planning consent is legally binding irrespective of a change in developer.
Will the park be completed at the same time as the homes?	The exact phasing of the park will be agreed at the Reserved Matters stage of the planning application.

4.9 Comments received during the pre-application period have been noted by the project team, which were given at the webinar, information event, and via social media, and summarised in **Table 4.2**.

Comment	No.	Applicants' Response
The development would create increase on traffic levels.	94	Trips will increase as a result of the proposal. The junction capacity modelling has been undertaken for key junctions on the local highway network. This assessment has demonstrated that the development is forecast to have a minimal impact in terms of both queueing and delay across both peak periods, across the modelled network.
The development would increase pressure on local schools.	61	As part of any planning consent, the applicant will enter into a legal agreement with SMBC to provide funding to local education facilities if a need to provide additional school places is identified.
The green space should be retained.	46	The development will provide a legally-guaranteed countryside park, as well as helping meet Sandwell's significant housing shortfall.

The development would increase pressure on local health care services.	46	<p>As part of any planning consent, the applicant will enter into a legal agreement with SMBC to provide funding to local health care services.</p> <p>At the time of writing, all six GP surgeries within a five-mile radius of the site are accepting new patients.</p>
The greenbelt should not be built on.	38	While the site lies within the greenbelt, by including a countryside park in the proposals, the development will provide much needed housing for local people, while also providing a green open space to prevent urban sprawl between Great Barr and neighbouring settlements.
Brownfield sites should be used instead.	26	SMBC does not have a supply of deliverable brownfield sites for housing. The applicant can only submit a deliverable planning application on land which it controls.
The development would destroy local wildlife.	18	The development will deliver a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain on site, ensuring the proposals make appositive contribution to local wildlife.
The development would worsen local air quality.	14	An air quality assessment has been undertaken for the proposed residential development in relation to construction, traffic and pollutants. It concludes that the development is not predicted to result in any new exceedances of the current relevant air quality objectives for England and the impact of the development on local air quality was predicted to be 'negligible'.
There is no need for more affordable homes in Great Barr.	13	In Sandwell 7,384 local families are waiting over two years in some cases for social housing. By providing 40% of units as affordable housing, the development will help local people put a permanent roof over their heads.
There is no need for any more homes in Great Barr.	12	Sandwell currently has a Five Year Land Supply of 1.6 years, which demonstrates its inability to provide housing to meet its needs.
Great Barr needs more affordable housing.	11	In Sandwell 7,384 local families are waiting over two years in some cases for social housing. By providing 40% of units as affordable housing, the development will help

		local people put a permanent roof over their heads.
Great Barr needs more housing.	8	Sandwell currently has a Five Year Land Supply of 1.6 years, which demonstrates its inability to provide housing to meet its needs.
The development would worsen road safety.	8	There are no formal road safety concerns within the vicinity of the site which would need to be addressed as part of the development proposals.
The development would reduce the availability of on-street parking.	7	In line with local council guidelines, on-site parking provision will be agreed at the detailed Reserved Matters stage.
The development would increase crime.	6	There is no evidence that can prove there would be a direct link between this new development and an increase in crime.
Support for a countryside park.	4	The proposals will provide public access to the site in the form of a countryside park. Enhancing the green infrastructure links and countryside access, key benefits of the proposal.
The land could be better used for growing crops.	1	The site is grassland which is mowed, taken off site and used as fodder for cattle elsewhere. Therefore, it is low value in terms of agricultural land.
The development would increase pressure on utilities (water and electricity).	1	As part of any planning consent, the applicant will enter into a legal agreement with SMBC to provide funding to local utilities, where required.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The applicant has undertaken a comprehensive process of pre-application engagement with key stakeholders and the local community.
- 5.2 As a result of the engagement process, the project team has gained a better understanding of the local context and increased awareness of the proposals and afforded the opportunity for residents to feedback on key local issues.
- 5.3 The applicant considers that the pre-application engagement undertaken with the local community and stakeholders has been timely, meaningful and effective.

Appendix 1: Information leaflet



WILDERNESS PARK

Have your say on a new high-quality housing scheme and open space in Great Barr.

Wain Estates is developing plans for around 175 new homes and a countryside park on land north of Wilderness Lane in Great Barr.

We are inviting the community to comment on the plans before finalising and submitting an outline planning application to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

In Sandwell, there is a need for a wide range of housing for the local community. This development would provide around 175 new homes of which 40% would be affordable.



FIND OUT MORE

To find out more please visit our project website at www.greatbarrconsultation.co.uk.

Further details regarding the consultation are included overleaf.



HAVE YOUR SAY

Your views are important to us and we would like to receive your feedback before we finalise our proposals and submit an outline planning application to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. You can share your feedback by:

Visiting our website www.greatbarrconsultation.co.uk and submitting an online feedback form.

Joining our live webinar on Thursday 24th August at 6pm - 7pm (register via our website)

Emailing us at contact@greatbarrconsultation.co.uk.

Calling our Freephone number on 0808 1688 296.

We ask that you share your feedback with us by **Friday 1st September**.

We look forward to hearing your views.




Scan here to find out more

Appendix 2: Social media adverts


Turley Strategic Communications Sponsored ·  ...

Wain Estates is developing proposals for around 175 homes and a new public, countryside park and wants to hear your feedback before submitting an outline planning application.

To learn more about the proposals and submit your feedback, visit: www.greatbarrconsultation.co.uk



greatbarrconsultation.co.uk
Have your say [Learn more](#)

 Like  Comment  Share

Turley Strategic Communications Sponsored ·  ...


Register for a live public webinar to hear from Wain Estates on their proposals for Wilderness Park in Great Barr.

The team is developing proposals for around 175 homes and a new public, countryside park and wants to hear your feedback before sub... [See more](#)




greatbarrconsultation.co.uk
Have your say [Sign Up](#)

 Like  Comment  Share




Turley Strategic Communications Sponsored ·  ...

At a recent virtual event, Wain Estates shared the emerging proposals for Wilderness Park.

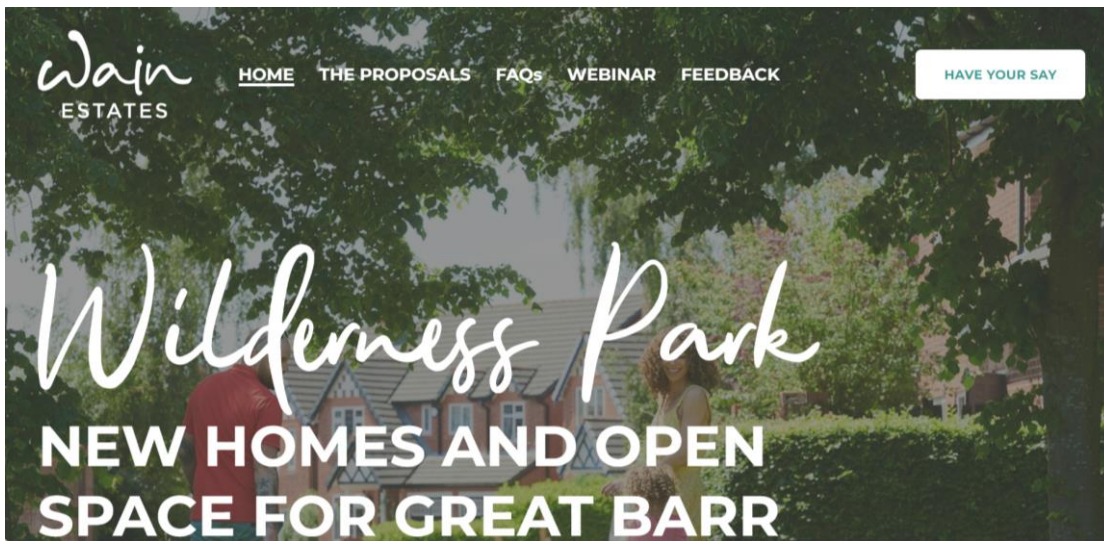
Click on the link below to watch the event back where the team answered questions on its vision for new homes and a new countryside park in Great ... [See more](#)



greatbarrconsultation.co.uk
Have your say [Watch More](#)

 Like  Comment  Share

Appendix 3: Website



Wain Estates is developing plans for around 175 new homes and a countryside park at land north of Wilderness Lane in Great Barr.

Wain Estates is preparing a residential proposal for land north of Wilderness Lane, Great Barr, and intends to submit an outline planning application for around 175 new homes and open space to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council. This website provides the opportunity for you to be part of the pre-application consultation and advice process and provides initial details of the emerging proposal. We welcome your views, which can be provided via the Feedback Survey.



THE PROPOSALS

Wain Estates is preparing an outline planning application for land north of Wilderness Lane, which will include around 175 new homes and a new publicly accessible countryside park. At this stage of the planning process, we are submitting an outline planning application, which will outline the key principles of development in this location.

The proposals will preserve a green buffer between surrounding settlements and deliver a new informal recreation facility for residents of the scheme and the local community, as well as providing a net biodiversity gain.

The final detailed plans will be included in any future reserved matters planning application, which will also require approval from Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.



Site Boundary	Existing contours
Existing vegetation	Potential Development Plots 4.42Ha approx. 175 dwellings (at 40dph)

Appendix 4: Webinar presentation



Wilderness Park (land north of Wilderness Lane), Great Barr

Thursday 24th August, 6pm

Today's agenda

- Introductions (Turley Strat Comms)
- Why Great Barr (Wain Estates)
- The Illustrative Masterplan (FPCR)
- Planning Strategy (Turley)
- Landscape and Countryside Park (FCPR)
- Highways / transport (PJA)
- Pre-application public consultation (Turley Strat Comms)
- Q&A



Today's project team



Why Great Barr

- Sandwell has a 1.6 year housing land supply.
- Sandwell suffered a net loss of 454 affordable homes between 2005 and 2019.
- Great Barr is an attractive place to live but has seen little significant housing development recently.
- Not enough available brownfield land to meet need and proposals on Green Belt land capable of delivering more affordable housing.
- Aging population (site ward has highest proportion of 65+ in Sandwell) and the challenge is to provide housing for younger people.
- Opportunity to create accessible green space for current and future generations.



Benefits

- Up to 175 new homes.
- 40% affordable housing (well above Sandwell's 25% policy requirement).
- Newly accessible green space which will become a legally protected community asset.
- More than 5 times as much open space as developed land.
- Good location for sustainable travel.



Wain
ESTATES

Planning Strategy

- Outline planning application
- 27 hectares of unused and inaccessible agricultural land
- Providing affordable housing above local council policy requirement
- Full survey work being undertaken:
 - Archaeology and heritage
 - Ecology and Biodiversity net gain
 - Landscape and visual impact assessment
 - Flood risk and drainage



Wain
ESTATES

Illustrative masterplan considerations

- Careful study of site to determine suitable areas for development.
- Looked at which areas to keep open, and which to develop.
- Noted lack of public access.
- Carried out landscape, ecological and tree surveys to guide development.
- Consideration of SINC designation.



Wain
ESTATES

Landscaping and countryside park

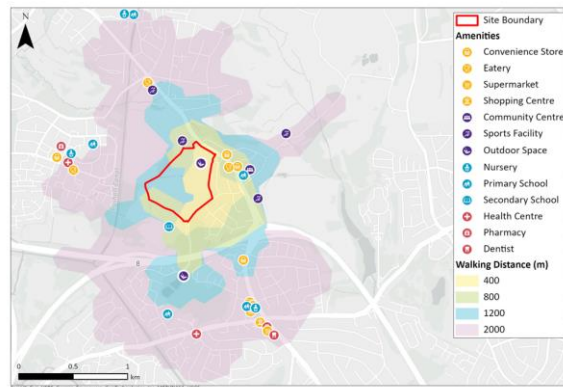
- Accessible countryside park for local residents
- Stronger legal protections than green belt
- Preserving green buffer
- Footpath links to wider area
- Informal recreation
- Enhanced wildlife habitats



Wain
ESTATES

Highways / transport

- Accessible location, with existing local facilities and public transport infrastructure
- Public transport accessibility to be enhanced by A34 SPRINT proposals
- Range of existing infrastructure in place to support local trip making by active travel modes

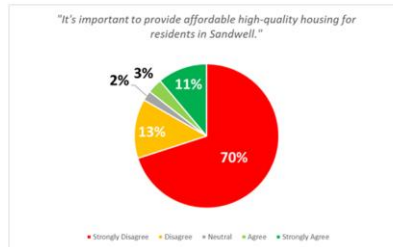
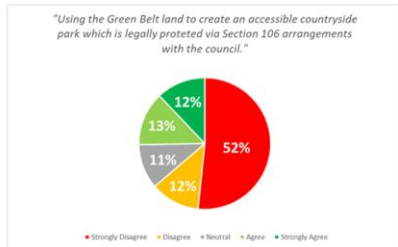


Highways / transport

- Site designed to give priority to active travel modes and direct access to public transport infrastructure.
- Single vehicular access onto Wilderness Lane.
- Full Transport Assessment and Framework Travel Plan currently being prepared, including collection of local transport data.



Feedback to date



Pre-application public consultation

Your views are important to us and we would like to receive further feedback from the public before we finalise the proposals and submit an outline planning application to Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council.

You can share your feedback by:

- visiting www.greatbarrconsultation.co.uk
- calling us on 0808 168 8296
- emailing us at contact@greatbarrconsultation.co.uk



Wilderness Park (land north of Wilderness Lane), Great Barr

[Review the plans](#)

[Ask questions](#)

[Provide your feedback](#)

www.greatbarconsultation.co.uk

