GREEN BELT REVIEW

In respect of

GREEN BELT REVIEW FOR STUDLEY AND WOOTTON WAWEN

On behalf of

BARRATT DAVID WILSON

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# CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>APPENDICES</th>
<th>PAGE(S)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>EXECUTIVE SUMMARY</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1.0 INTRODUCTION</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.0 THE GREEN BELT BOUNDARY</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.0 THE HISTORY OF THE GREEN BELT</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.0 SITE IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6.0 STAGE ONE CONSTRAINT MAPPING CONCLUSIONS - STUDLEY</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7.0 STAGE ONE CONSTRAINT MAPPING CONCLUSIONS - WOOTTON WAWEN</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9.0 OVERALL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS</td>
<td>32</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## APPENDICES
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report has been undertaken on behalf of Barratt David Wilson by RCA Regeneration Ltd and Plan-It, in support of their continued representations to the emerging Stratford-on-Avon District Core Strategy.

It is our view that in order to meet its strategic housing objectives, Stratford-on-Avon District should seek to disperse housing growth throughout its administrative area. We believe this to be the most sustainable development strategy, given the range of services and facilities already in place within the largest rural settlements of the District. We do not believe that the creation of major new settlements is the most sustainable approach and will undermine the continued economic vitality and viability of those rural settlements that are constrained by Green Belt policy.

Given the nature of the District, being largely covered by Green Belt, we believe this necessitates a review of the Green Belt in places in order to identify sites that could be released for housing development.

Studley and Wootton Wawen are the focus of this report because our clients, David Wilson Homes (Mercia) are promoting sites there. Both villages are highly sustainable and offer a range of services and facilities that are often lacking in settlements of their size.
1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Green Belt in Britain was established early after the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act and has fundamentally sought to protect the countryside from urban sprawl, prevent settlement coalescence, protect the setting of historic settlements and facilitate urban regeneration.

1.2 The first part of this report focuses on general issues and then on more specific Green Belt policy within Stratford-on-Avon District with a view to providing a reasoned justification for green belt release through the emerging development plan process.

1.3 There is no specific methodology to conducting a Green Belt Review per se, but the methodology adopted here has been developed from recently completed Green Belt reviews.

1.4 This report begins with an analysis of the history of Green Belt within Stratford-on-Avon District; identifies previous Green Belt reviews; provides the justification for previous areas of development restraint; discusses pressure on the green belt, and then sets out Very Special Circumstances (VSCs) for green belt release.

1.5 The report then analyses the areas around Studley and Wootton Wawen, considering all opportunities for development growth, having regard to the published evidence base underpinning the emerging development plan.

1.6 Landscape and heritage issues are considered alongside an assessment of the green belt boundary (how robust and enduring they are) and the strategic function of the green belt in any particular area (what role it plays in any one particular area).

1.7 We consider that in order to support local housing need in Stratford-on-Avon District, the release of certain areas of green belt land is entirely necessary and
is a more sustainable development strategy to 2031 than that of a major new settlement where there are no services or facilities nearby.
2.0  THE GREEN BELT BOUNDARY

2.1  A large portion of the north-west area of Stratford-on-Avon District (north from Stratford and Alcester) is covered by the West Midlands Green Belt.

2.2  The West Midlands Green Belt covers some 923 square miles. It surrounds Birmingham and Solihull, the Black Country and Coventry, typically extending between 6 and 15 miles outwards from the edges of those major urban areas. The West Midlands Green Belt also contains many ‘holes’ for settlements of varying size, the largest being Redditch, Kidderminster and Cannock as well as several villages which are ‘washed over’ by it. The Map at Table 1 Reveals the Green Belt coverage:

**TABLE 1: West Midlands Green Belt Coverage**

2.3  Within the Stratford-on-Avon District it stretches from the northern edge of Stratford, along the A46 westwards and the A439 eastwards up to the District Boundary with Redditch (apart from small areas of land to the west of Mappleborough Green), Bromsgrove, Solihull and Warwick. The Settlements of Alcester, Henley and Studley are excluded from the Green Belt; however, all other villages within this area are ‘washed over’ by it.
2.4 The Stratford-on-Avon Green Belt area covers some 22,175ha according to the WMRA Green Belt annual monitoring report 2007. Thus, it accommodates the 3rd largest amount of Green Belt land after South Staffordshire and Bridgnorth. The boundary of the Stratford-on-Avon Green Belt is shown on the proposals map as set out in Table 2.

**TABLE 2: Stratford-on-Avon Green Belt Boundary**
3.0 THE HISTORY OF THE GREEN BELT

3.1 The origins of ‘Green Belts’ can be traced back to the biblical times, but the general concept developed in the 16th century when the prevention of the plague was the key reason to maintain a ring of open country around London as well as being a valuable area to grow food for the expanding city.

3.2 In the late 19th Century Ebenezer Howard, the pioneer of British Town and Country Planning envisaged a rural belt around town to maintain links to the countryside.

3.3 However, it was not until 1935 when the Metropolitan Green Belt around London was first proposed by the Greater London Regional planning Committee.

3.4 The Town and Country Planning Act 1947 then, under Section 42 of the Act – Power of local authorities to appropriate certain land for planning purposes, gave Local Authorities power to include Green Belt proposals in their development plans.

3.5 In 1955, Minister of Housing Duncan Sandys encouraged local authorities around the country to consider protecting land around their towns and cities by the formal designation of clearly defined Green Belts.

3.6 It is estimated that Green Belt now covers approximately 12% of England and 20% of the west Midlands Region. There are 14 separate established Green Belts varying in size from 486,000ha around London to just 700ha at Burton on Trent.

3.7 Proposals for a Green Belt around Birmingham and the Black Country appeared in the 1948 Regional Study ‘Conurbation’. In 1955 Circular 42/55 invited Local Authorities to consider designating Green Belts.

3.8 The West Midlands Local Authorities put forward their proposals, initially as amendments to development plans. The West Midlands Green Belt was publicised by the West Midlands New Towns Society.
3.9 The Green Belts remained ‘proposed’ but with policies applied largely as if they were approved, until 1975 when the Secretary of State approved the West Midlands Green Belt.

3.10 Approximately a quarter of the Green Belt remained interim and subject to later review in structure and local plans. This led to some planning disputes, though for the most part the interim Green Belt was treated on a par with its fully designated counterpart. All of the interim Green Belt has now been fully approved and the boundary is as at Table 1 above.

3.11 The Warwickshire Structure Plan supported the role of the Green Belt. However, the saved Warwickshire Structure Plan policies were formally revoked by Statutory Order SI 2013/933. This was laid in Parliament on 24th April 2013 and came into effect on 20th May 2013. As of the 20th May 2013, the saved Warwickshire Structure Plan policies no longer form part of the statutory development plan for Warwickshire.

3.12 Nonetheless it is important to note that paragraph 2.4.4 states that the Green Belt aims to preserve the character and identity of Warwickshire and Warwickshire’s role in the Region. The Green Belt should act as a strong constraint on ‘inappropriate development’ as defined in PPG2, because it represents a considerable asset to the character of the County. It goes on to state the Structure Plan provides no remit for the general review of the Green Belt boundaries in local plans.

3.13 As the Structure Plan has now been revoked, and there is no up to date development plan in place within the District, it would seem an appropriate time to consider a Green Belt Review as it expanded upon throughout this report.
4.0 PLANNING POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Overview of Green Belt Policy

4.1 Following the establishment of the first ‘Green Belt’ by the Greater London Regional Planning Committee in 1935 the principle was enacted in the 1947 Town and Country Planning Act which enabled Local Authorities to designate areas that should be protected from development, including Green Belts, in their Development Plans.

4.2 The Ministry of Housing and Local Government gave advice to Local Authorities on Green Belts in Circular (42/55) and stated that the three main functions of a Green Belt should be:

i) To check the growth of a large built up area;

ii) To prevent neighbouring settlements from merging into another; or

iii) To preserve the special character of a town.

4.3 Further advice was set out in Circular 50/57 which established the principle of ‘white land’. This was land that, although not allocated for development could be developed later without prejudicing the Green Belt.

4.4 A government publication in 1962, The Green Belts, gave more detailed advice on their purpose. It emphasised the strict control of development and that there should be a presumption against built form, although development which would not interfere with the open character of the land might be permissible. It emphasized the recreational value of Green Belts and the need to maintain and improve the landscape.

4.5 Circular 14/84 set out further advice, including the definition of detailed boundaries in Local Plans. It states the essential characteristic of Green Belts is
their permanence and that boundaries should be altered only in exceptional circumstances. It is this part of the policy which has given it such longevity, spanning numerous plan periods locally as well as successive Governments.

4.6 The concept of Green Belts remains an important aspect of planning policy today and the total area protected by Green Belts has increased by 25,000 square hectares since 1977. It is estimated that Green Belts now cover 13% of England.

4.7 It is stated in the Cambridgeshire Green Belt Review that although Green Belts are widely held to be one of the most effective planning policies for protecting the environment around cities, there are concerns about their impact and appropriateness in effective spatial planning. Both the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and the Town and Country Planning Association (TCPA) have called for a review of Green Belt policy.

4.8 While both organisations support Green Belts, they considered an assessment should be carried out to determine how far they could contribute to the achievement of the Government’s objectives of sustainable development. One might argue that there is now a conflict between housing need in sustainable locations and the continued presence of the Green Belt.

4.9 Additionally, both the RTPI and TCPA raise concerns about the impact of Green Belt designation on the rural economy. Strict interpretations about what development is considered appropriate is viewed as “unimaginative“ and “restrictive“ and both organisations seek to promote more effective and positive land uses in the Green Belt.

4.10 Government Circular 42/55 was the first official guidance on the establishment of Green Belts and set out their purpose and related development control policies. This circular was replaced by Planning Policy guidance Note PPG2 in 1988 which was further updated in 1995. In 2001 the 1995 iteration was updated and amended and that remained the primary expression of Government policy in relation to Green Belts until 2012 when the National Planning Policy
Framework (NPPF) replaced all earlier planning policy guidance Notes. The fundamentals of the policy have remained largely the same and remain valid today with very little alteration from the original objectives.

4.11 Details of other relevant planning policy and material considerations are set out below.

**National Planning Policy**

4.12 The National Planning Policy Framework (the Framework) was published in 2012 and sets out planning policy in relation to all areas of development nationally. Prior to this, national planning policy relating to Green Belts was set out in PPG2. This policy document was superseded by the Framework in 2012, although the Framework effectively replicates the spirit and content of PPG2.

4.13 Chapter 9 of the Framework seeks to protect Green Belts and minimise development within existing Green Belt areas. It sets out the 5 main reasons for the implementation of Green belts as set out previously in PPG2 and detailed below.

4.14 The general extent of Green Belts across the country is already established. New Green Belts should only be established in exceptional circumstances, for example when planning for larger scale development such as new settlements or major urban extensions. If proposing a new Green Belt, local planning authorities should:

- Demonstrate why normal planning and development management policies would not be adequate;

- Set out whether any major changes in circumstances have made the adoption of this exceptional measure necessary;
• Show what the consequences of the proposal would be for sustainable development;

• Demonstrate the necessity for the Green Belt and its consistency with Local Plans for adjoining areas; and

• Show how the Green Belt would meet the other objectives of the general extent of Green Belts across the country is already established.

4.15 The Framework states at paragraph 84 that Local Authorities should seek to protect existing Green Belts and when reviewing boundaries they should do so to direct development towards existing urban areas.

4.16 Where reviews are necessary, the Framework states in paragraph 85 that to ensure consistency with the Local Plan Strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development strategies should;

• Not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open;

• Where necessary, identify in their plans areas of ‘safeguarded lane’ between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period;

• Make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following a Local Plan review which proposed the development;

• Satisfy themselves that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the development plan period; and

• Define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent.
4.17 Paragraph 86 of the Framework states that, "If it is necessary to prevent development in a village primarily because of the important contribution which the open character of the village makes to the openness of the Green Belt, the village should be included in the Green Belt. If, however, the character of the village needs to be protected for other reasons, other means should be used, such as conservation area or normal development management policies, and the village should be excluded from the Green Belt".

4.18 Paragraph 87 states, that "as with previous Green Belt policy, inappropriate development is, by definition, harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances".

4.19 Finally, paragraph 88 states that, "when considering any planning application, local planning authorities should ensure that substantial weight is given to any harm to the Green Belt". ’Very special circumstances’ will not exist unless the potential harm to the Green Belt by reason of inappropriateness, and any other harm, is clearly outweighed by other considerations”.

4.20 Government Guidance on Green Belts was previously set out in PPG2. Although this policy has now been superseded; it did set out the fundamental aims of Green Belt policy, and is therefore worth mentioning at this point. The fundamental aim of the policy was to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the most important attribute of Green Belts is their openness.

4.21 The five purposes for including land in the Green Belt as set out in PPG2 are;

i) To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;

ii) To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;

iii) To assist in safeguarding the countryside;
iv) To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and

v) To assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.

4.22 It is therefore evident that there are substantial policies in place at a national level that aim to protect land within the Green Belt and restrict development within it.

4.23 It is also worth clarifying that Green Belt policy is a planning designation as opposed to any other type of landscape designation. The issue was raised in a Westminster Hall debate on 7 May 2008, where Iain Wright, Under Secretary at DCLG, stated the Government position:

4.24 "Perhaps the key point in any discussion about green belt planning policy is to acknowledge that it is a planning designation, as opposed to some sort of assessment of the quality and biodiversity of the land. It was not intended or planned to be a nature or landscape conservation measure, although I fully recognise that biodiversity and the countryside benefit incidentally as a consequence of green belt designation. The objectives of green belt policy remain similar to what they always have been: to check the unplanned and unrestricted sprawl of developed areas, to prevent neighbouring towns and urban areas from merging into one another.....to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment, and to preserve the special character of our historic towns. Another objective, which is often overlooked in discussion of green belt policy...is to assist in the regeneration of our urban communities intention is strategic. If any other designation is required on a particular stretch of land, such as a site of special scientific interest or an area of outstanding natural beauty...that designation and whatever protection it confers would be imposed on top of green belt status, which does not override or compromise them by encouraging the recycling of derelict brownfield and other urban land”

Local Planning Policy
4.25 The Stratford upon Avon District Local Plan sets out the Council’s policies and proposals for the development and use of land for the period up to 2011. It is used as a basis for considering all planning applications, including those for new housing, industrial and commercial development.

4.26 The Plan contains a map of the District - the Proposals Map - that shows a range of designations including those sites earmarked for development, areas subject to specific protection, e.g. Green Belt, and features such as conservation areas and ancient monuments.

4.27 The current Local Plan was adopted on 14 July 2006.

4.28 Policy PR2 sets out the Councils policy in relation to Green Belts. This is detailed below:

4.29 "Within that part of the West Midlands Green Belt in Stratford-on-Avon District, as defined on the Proposals Map, a general presumption against inappropriate development will apply. The following forms of development may be permitted in appropriate circumstances:

a) Development necessary for the continuing operation of agricultural holdings;

b) The re-use and adaption of existing buildings for uses in accordance with policy CTY.2 and CTY.2A;

c) Small-scale housing schemes within or adjacent to an existing settlement specifically to meet an identified local need in accordance with Policy COM.1 and policy CTY.5;

d) Outdoor sport, recreation and leisure including the construction of essential buildings, which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and which do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it;
e) Limited infilling or development of major existing developed sites as identified on the proposals map, for employment or other uses which would have no greater impact on the Green Belt or on the surrounding area than the existing use and which would not be contrary of the overall strategy of the Local Plan;

f) Limited extensions to existing dwellings in accordance with Policy COM.12;

g) The replacement of existing dwellings in accordance with Policy COM.12; or

h) Other uses which preserve the openness of the Green Belt and which do not conflict with the purposes of including land within it.

4.30 By definition all forms of new development are inappropriate within the Green Belt unless listed above.

4.31 Paragraph 3.3.7 of the Explanation for this policy states, “it would be unreasonable to apply Green Belt Policy to prevent a clearly identified need from being met although it will be necessary to show that the impact of any such development on the openness of the Green Belt is minimised”.

4.32 Paragraphs 3.3.12 to 3.3.14 state that at the time of producing the Adopted Local Plan, the Local Authority believed that there were two parcels of land in the Clopton area, previously identified as Areas of Special Restriction should be included within the Green Belt designation. They claimed at para 3.3.15 that there were substantial areas of land abutting the edge of the town which provide sufficient scope for development should this be required in the longer term.

**Emerging Planning Policy**

4.33 The Council is preparing a series of planning documents to guide development and change in the District up to 2028. They will determine where new homes are
built, where new jobs are created and how people can travel to get to the things they need.

4.34 The first and most important of these documents is the Core Strategy, because it will set the course for everything to follow. It will present a vision of how the District will look and function in future years.

4.35 A consultation exercise on issues raised in the Issues and Options document was carried out in May/June 2007.


4.37 A consultation paper was produced in July 2009 setting out three potential housing growth scenarios and outlined some possible development options to meet these scenarios. The Council were seeking views on the proposed development options to meet each growth scenario.

4.38 In February 2010 the Council published a Consultation Core Strategy which put forward a range of possible sites for future development and strategic policies, set within a vision for the District and a range of key objectives. However, in light of the coalition Government's approach to plan-making, it was necessary to reconsider certain matters, particularly in relation to the scale and purpose of housing development.

4.39 A third draft of the Core Strategy - Draft Core Strategy 2012 and accompanying Sustainability Appraisal was published for consultation in February-March 2012.

4.40 The production of the Proposed Submission Core Strategy is ongoing. The Local Development Scheme was reviewed in April 2013 and sets out when this version of the Core Strategy will be placed on deposit for formal representations and the subsequent stages to adoption.
4.41 Following the representations period, the Proposed Submission Core Strategy will be submitted to the Secretary of State for examination. An independent Inspector will decide whether the Core Strategy is 'sound' and can be adopted. Adoption is currently proposed for late 2014.

4.42 In terms of the Green Belt, Section 7.1 of the Draft Core Strategy relates to Green Belts. Policy CS6 states, “The purposes of the Green Belt will be upheld by resisting inappropriate development within it, except in cases where very special circumstances are justified, in accordance with the provisions of Planning Policy Statement 2 (PPG2) or any replacement national policy. The principle of the following forms of development in the Green Belt will be acceptable:

a) A small-scale housing scheme within or adjacent to a Local Service Village, in accordance with Policy CS25 Countryside, subject to its impact on the openness and character of the area being minimal.

b) A small-scale development which meets a housing, employment or other need identified by a local community, in accordance with Policy CS25 Countryside, subject to its impact on the openness and character of the area being minimal.

c) A small-scale extension to or replacement of an existing building for a similar use, as long as the extended or new building does not have a more harmful effect on the openness and character of the area.

d) The limited infilling, redevelopment or change of use of an existing previously developed ('brownfield') site, subject to it not having a greater impact on the openness and character of the area. The proposed form of development should be consistent with the overall development strategy for the District.

e) The construction of new buildings and the carrying out of activities defined in PPG2, or any replacement national policy, as not being inappropriate development in the Green Belt.
4.43 The Green Belt remains a strongly protected area of land within emerging planning policy. Furthermore, the evidence base documents prepared to develop the Core Strategy demonstrate that the Council are reluctant to release additional Green Belt land for housing; however, there are a couple of areas where release is being considered for employment purposes; these will be discussed in more detail later in this report.
5.0 SITE IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND MITIGATION

5.1 The following section provides a desk-top analysis of the key constraints impacting upon Studley and Wootton Wawen.

5.2 Such an exercise defines potential growth sites, which are then further assessed based on landscape, townscape, heritage and visual impact.

5.3 The sites will then be ranked, within stage two, according to their sensitivity in respect of the aforementioned impacts, and the ability to accommodate development.

5.4 As part of the initial phase 1 constraints mapping exercise, the study areas of Studley and Wootton Wawen were defined by utilising the general mapping boundary used within the evidence base supporting the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF) (see REF 001).

The Study Area - Studley

5.5 Consideration was given to the area immediately surrounding the study boundary on the basis that the context of Studley is defined by wider physical features such as: Rough Hill and Wirehill Wood to the north, the rising topography of Spernhall Park and the old manor house to the east, the developed area of Middletown and the Dismantled Railway to the west.

The Study Area – Wootton Wawen

5.6 The Context of Wootton Wawen is defined by wider physical features such as: May’s Wood to the north, foreign Park to the west and the rising topography of Austy Wood to the east.

Constraints Mapping
5.7 The initial desktop mapping exercise focused on the area of Studley and Wootton Wawen, and included a number of key constraints to development in order to identify where sustainable housing growth is possible. These are identified within maps REF 002 – 021, within Appendix 1.

5.8 The constraints included:

- Identification of urban areas in order to discount isolated development sites;
- Major topographical changes;
- Local Plan designations;
- National Landscape Character Zones;
- Local Landscape Character Zones;
- Townscape – character areas, listed buildings, buildings of townscape merit and Scheduled Ancient Monuments;
- Heritage Sensitivity – within Wootten Wawen only;
- Movement and access;
- Land Use and facilities;
- Wider educational facilities; and
- Flood Zones.
6.0 STAGE ONE CONSTRAINT MAPPING CONCLUSIONS - STUDLEY

Settlement Speawl/Merger

6.1 Growth would be constrained to the north of Studley, on the basis that any development could potentially lead to the merger of Studley with the area of Redditch – notwithstanding limited infill, which may be appropriate. On this basis, SU04 should not be carried forward to the stage 2 analysis.

6.2 To the west, there is a similar issue, as there is a potential merger with the village of Middletown. Moreover, the settlement edge is tightly defined by the A448, with the exception of a limited amount of infill development. Any development along the western edge would significantly change the character of the settlement, and consequently SU15 should not be carried forward to the stage 2 analysis.

Topography

6.3 There is some undulation to the north of Studley, which would partially restrict development around this location. This is indicated within plan REF 002 Topography.

Designations

6.4 Plan REF 003 identifies statutory designations. Rough Hill Wood to the north-west comprises Ancient Woodland, along with a Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Reserve, an SSSI and contains a number of trees protected by a blanket Tree Preservation Order. In addition, there are also a number of amenity spaces and allotments adjoinig the urban area.

6.5 The Existing Green Belt designation currently constrains growth tightly around the existing urban area of Studley.
Landscape

6.6 Plan REF 004 indicates the distribution of landscape character areas around Studley. The more sensitive character areas relate to the Wooded Estatelands and the Arden River Valley, which relate back to the The Warwickshire Landscape Assessment and Guidelines (1993), located around the eastern areas of the settlement.

6.7 Whilst these two areas of landscape character designation do not preclude development per se, their sensitivities require careful design consideration. This is described within more detail in section 2.0

Townscape/Heritage

6.8 Plan REF 005 indicates that within the urban area there is a small concentration of listed buildings located along Alcester Road. Further north, around the settlement centre, there are a further 3 listed buildings loosely dispersed around the Alcester Road/High Street junction.

6.9 To the east of the settlement, there is a Scheduled Ancient Monument – comprising the base of the old castle. In addition, Studley Church lies adjacent to the SAM, which is grade II* listed.

6.10 The historic plans (Figures 1 to 4) indicate that Studley developed at the beginning of the 20th century as a linear development pattern, in the form of development blocks, along the A435; as well as a concentration around the junction of Redditch Road and Birmingham Road, to the north. An important feature within this townscape character area is that of development on the eastern side of the A435.

6.11 Within the middle to late 20th century the triangle of roads, that defines Studley, became infilled with largely unsympathetic development that reflected the periodic styles of their time.
6.12 There are also areas of development around the edges of Studley, which adversely impact on the surrounding landscape character, including:

- Suburban housing around Castle Road, significantly changed the eastern settlement boundary, and resulted in unsympathetic development; and
- The location of the Sewage Works to the south east provides a large incongruous complex.

**Movement/Access**

6.13 Plan REF 006 indicates that the two A roads provide physical boundaries as well as access constraints to any future development areas. Any future development should consider how vehicular movement could be enhanced without impacting on areas of the key junctions within the settlement centre.

6.14 There are a number of public footpaths to the north, east and west which permeate the surrounding countryside.

6.15 The National Cycle Network Route 5 and to the Stratford-upon-Avon to Redditch cycle route is located within the urban area of Studley, and there are a number of linkages along Castle Road and Pool Road, to the north of the site.

**Uses/Facilities**

6.16 Plan REF 007 identifies that there are a number of facilities are concentrated around the settlement centre and within the urban area of Studley. Growth beyond sustainable walking distances of these locations, particularly to the southern extremities, is likely to encourage unsustainable patterns of movement with detriment to the environment of Studley.

6.17 Notwithstanding this, there is a broad area to the north and south east of the existing settlement where any potential growth would be highly accessible to the
core of facilities available within the centre; thus, encouraging sustainable patterns of travel.

**Flooding**

6.18 Plan REF 008 indicates broad zones of flood risk. With regards to river flood zones, the plan illustrates that the majority of potential growth sites would not be subject to flood risk, with the exception of Su09 along the River Arrow Valley.

**Visual Receptors**

6.19 Plan REF 009 indicates the areas where there are the most sensitive visual receptors. The most sensitive areas include the users of the footpaths. In particular, the views between Studley Church, and the listed buildings on the crest of the valley slopes are a constraint to development, which require careful design consideration.

6.20 Given the nature of the settlement form to the south (pointed edge) and west (development limited beyond the A448), any potential growth would be visually prominent when viewed from the south (along the A448).

**The Sites - Studley**

6.21 Plan REF 010 identifies the results of the phase 1 mapping exercise which has led us to focus on the 7 sites within the area identified. Plan REF 011 indicates the statutory designations, flood zones, woodland and strategic roads layered on top of each other, with contour lines indicating topographical constraints. The layering effect identifies the areas which are least constrained, and therefore, form the focus of our stage 2 site evaluation. The sites have been referenced as follows:

SU01 – Land off Bromsgrove Road to the north;
SU02 – Land off Brickyard Lane to the west;

SU05 – Land off the B4093 to the west;

SU10 – Land to the south of Gunners Lane;

SU11 – Land off Alcester Road to the west;

SU12 – Land to south east of Alcester Road;

SU14 – Land off Middletown Lane to the west
7.0 STAGE ONR CONSTRAINT MAPPING CONCLUSIONS – WOOTTON WAWEN

Settlement Sprawl/Merger

7.1 There is no constraint placed upon the sites in respect of Sprawl or Merger with other settlements. Wootton Wawen is distinctly separate from Henley-in-Arden to the north, and Little Alne and Bearley Cross to the south. The railway forms a strong boundary to the west of the village. Notwithstanding this, development of parcels WO8 and WO11, WO12 and WO13 would be physically disconnected from the village settlement. Further, WO03 is visually associated visually with farmed landscape to the west. It provides a rural, green buffer between the main part of the settlement and the developed area around the junction 1km north of the settlement centre. Whilst there is some sensitivity associated with the WO03, its further development potential would be explored within the stage 2 assessment.

Topography

7.2 Plan REF 012 show the topography of the area does not present any constraints to development.

Designations

7.3 Plan REF 013 identifies statutory designations. The whole area is designated Green Belt. Ancient Woodlands consist of May’s Wood and Foreign Park to the northwest and Eggwell Wood and Austy Wood to the east.

7.4 There are three Scheduled Ancient Monuments and several listed buildings. These constraints impact upon sites Wo2 and Wo04.
Landscape

7.5 Plan REF 014 indicates the distribution of landscape character areas around Wootton Wawen. The more sensitive character areas are described in the Warwickshire Landscape Assessment and Guidelines (1993) as Wooded Estate lands and Arden River Valleys, located around the eastern areas of the settlement.

7.6 Whilst these two areas of landscape character designation do not preclude development per se, there sensitivities require careful design consideration. This is described within more detail in section 2.0.

Townscape/Heritage

7.7 Records suggest that the village has been inhabited since the 700’s. The majority of development has remained linear with properties situated off the main roads (Plan REF 015).

7.8 The conservation area includes many listed buildings located along Stratford Road. A small group of post-war houses is situated to the west off Alcester Road. The grounds of Wootton Hall have been developed into a secure static caravan park.

7.9 The presence of listed buildings in close proximity of WO02, WO04, WO05, WO06 and WO09 create a significant constraint in terms of impact on setting, which requires careful design consideration.

Movement/ Access
7.10 Plan REF 016 indicates that the A 3400, Stratford Road provides the main access, leading to Reddich and Stratford upon Avon. The majority of identified sites have direct access from Stratford Road.

7.11 A number of footpaths permeate the surrounding countryside in all directions.

7.12 The National Cycle Network Route 5 and to the Stratford-upon-Avon to Redditch cycle route is located within the urban area of Studley, and there are a number of linkages along Castle Road and Pool Road, to the north of the site.

7.13 The railway provides connections to Stratford –upon-Avon and Birmingham.

**Uses/facilities**

7.14 Plan REF 017 identifies the small number of facilities present in the vicinity. Most of the sites are comfortable walking distance from these facilities, with the exception of WO12 and WO13 to the north, which fall over 10 minutes walk from the key facilities.

**Flooding**

7.15 Plan REF 018 indicates broad zones of flood risk. With regards to river flood zones, the plan illustrates that only two of the potential growth sites would be subject to flood risk: WO05, WO10 and WO01.

**Visual Receptors**
7.16 Plan REF 019 indicates the areas where there are the most sensitive visual receptors. The most sensitive areas include the users of the footpaths. In particular, the views from Austy Wood which is on a hill.

The Sites – Wootton Wawen

7.17 Plan REF 020 identifies the results of the phase 1 mapping exercise. Plan REF 021 indicates the statutory designations, flood zones, woodland and strategic roads layered on top of each other, with contour lines indicating topographical constraints. The layering effect identifies the areas which are least constrained, and therefore, form the focus of our stage 2 site evaluation. The sites have been referenced as follows:

WO01 – Land off Alcester Road;

WO03 – Land to the north of Wawensmere Road;

WO09 – Land off Pennyford Lane and Pettiford Lane.
8.0 IMPACT ASSESSMENT OVERVIEW

8.1 The 9 identified sites have been assessed in order to identify the predicted impacts, and the potential severity of impacts, on the following key elements:

- Tree cover and woodland/Landscape Boundaries;
- Public footpaths and cycleways;
- Designated areas;
- Landscape character;
- Townscape character;
- Visual Impacts.

8.2 The impacts identified are those predicted to affect both the site and the wider site townscape and/or landscape context, and this report also gives consideration to likely visual impacts.

8.3 The predicted impacts have been assessed through a combination of desk-top study, using aerial images, maps and ordnance survey data, and on-site survey.

8.4 The assessment identifies the potential mitigation that may be employed in order to avoid or, more likely, to minimise the predicted impacts.

8.5 Appendix 2 associated with this document assesses the potential impacts and mitigation required for each individual site. However, it is possible to draw some general conclusions on potential impacts and the general mitigation required
across the 10 sites. The general impacts and mitigation can be summarised as follows:

**Tree Cover & Woodland**

8.6 The majority of sites contain some trees of landscape value, most of which are located around site boundaries, along historic field boundaries, watercourses and public footpath routes. Sites SU01, SU02, SU10, SU11, WO03 and WO09 in particular have high quality tree lines, tree copses and mature field trees of value, but these are not necessarily a constraint to development as these features can be integrated within any development scheme. Mitigation would include retention of existing trees and tree copses, and integration into any proposed development. Existing trees lines could also be enhanced with additional planting to reinforce existing landscape character.

**Public Footpaths and Cycleways**

8.7 The public footpath routes through or alongside sites SU012, SU02, SU05, SU10, SU14, W001 and W009 have the potential to be directly impacted upon by proposed development of the sites. However, the footpath routes through could be strengthened/reinforced with a landscape buffer, and set back of any proposed development in order to protect their character and quality.

**Designated Areas**

8.8 None of the sites lie within designated areas. However, key designated areas within the surrounding context that require consideration include: Rough Hill Wood to the immediate west is a SSSI, TPO and Wildlife Trust Reserve, listed
buildings and SAM to the east of Studley and centre of Wootton Wawen. Development of site SU10 have the potential to visually impact on the sensitive viewing corridor between these locations; however, retention of an open space corridor within this location would assist in mitigating against any potential impacts. Further, there should be consideration of sensitive views of the SAM within Wootton Wawen.

**Landscape Character**

**Studley**

8.9 Overall, the key issues for consideration in terms of landscape impacts, for the open countryside to the east and west of Bromsgrove Road and Alcester Road, relate to the visual prominence of this area of open land. However, the development of the sites identified would not necessitate substantial urbanisation of these locations; rather, a by drawing in the green networks of open space and planting into the overall structure of the proposals, development could be well integrated into its landscape setting.

8.10 Key landscape features of quality and value are common within all sites, and contribute positively to the clearly defined local and regional landscape character areas. These include; mature hedgerow trees, hedgerows, and undulating topography; Relic Parkland, including groups of trees. Mitigation could include retention and integration of these features into any proposed development, landscape buffers to any key features, such as watercourses and ponds, and reinforcement of any existing green corridors and copses with additional planting. In order to justify development within the site, we believe that there a number of landscape/mitigation principles that should drive the development of a master plan, which incorporates a package of mitigation proposals. It is our view that the provision of a Country Park would be a key benefit to be factored into the planning balance, with the potential to extend the Relic Parkland along the eastern boundary. This would compensate for any impact around the
existing Relic Parkland character area, and allow for the development of a more logical development edge.

**Wootton Wawen**

8.11 The key issues in terms of landscape impacts for Wootton Wawen, is the potential impacts on the farmed landscape to the west, particularly as it provides a rural, green buffer between the main part of the settlement and the developed area around the junction 1km north of the settlement centre.

8.12 To the east, the zone comprises several small pasture fields, but the land here drops gently towards the river.

8.13 Development should be located in close proximity to the existing settlement. The landscape principles of drawing in the green networks of open space and planting into the overall structure of the proposals, development could be well integrated into its landscape setting.

**Townscape Character**

8.14 The townscape of Studley and Wootton Wawen has been analysed, and key townscape character areas identified. The design of any development within sites SU5, SU10, SU11, SU14, WO01, WO03, and WO05 would require an appropriately sensitive design having regard to the visual setting of the listed buildings; new development should utilise typical local materials and incorporates townscape features of value. In relation to SU11, new development would also need to form a new, distinct townscape character area, due to the physical sense of separation of the site from the town. In terms of WO01 and WO03, mitigation for development and loss of open countryside could potentially
include an approach to layout, which references the urban/rural fringe with lower density.

**Visual Impacts**

8.15 In terms of the visual impact resulting from development within the identified sites, the most sensitive viewpoint locations are from public footpaths, local public footpath routes, private residences and, to a lesser degree, local vehicular routes. There are also views between the development gaps along the strategic vehicular routes including the A448 and A435.

8.16 Site SU10 has the potential to negatively impact on views between the SAM and the listed building cluster along Alcester Road. Mitigation against visual impacts on this viewing corridor would need to be extensive, and may require a sufficiently wide open space corridor. SU12, in particular, would result in the potential extension of the settlement beyond the existing settlement edge defined by Alcester Road, which would create a significant impact on users of the footpath of the A road.

8.17 Similarly, there will be some impact on views from the footpath through WO01, in terms of the potential development of the open countryside. Providing the level of mitigation is provided in accordance with that suggested in 2.14, visual impacts from the development would be significantly less, with the mitigation planting helping to soften the impact of development, particularly over time as the landscape matures. WO03, however, has a high degree of inter-visibility to the south west, a character of open countryside to one side of Bromsgrove Road and its role as buffer between the settlement and Middletown. Housing development would close the gap between the settlements or increase the visibility of the settlement from the south and therefore is undesirable.

**Comparison of sites**
Studley

8.18 In terms of comparing the 7 sites identified for their potential to accommodate development (taking into account the landscape, townscape and visual impacts, as well as impacts on designated areas). Appendix 3 provides a comparison matrix for each site based on a scoring system of 0-5 with 0 being the most sensitive, and 5 being the least sensitive to development. An average score is provided, which allows the site sites to be ranked in terms of sensitivity to development. The scoring methodology assumes that the sites are developed in accordance with the mitigation measures suggested within Appendix 2.

8.19 Overall, SU01, SU02, and SU11 were the least sensitive to development, with an average score of 4. SU05, SU10 and SU14 was ranked joint second with an average score of 3.6, based on the fact there was increased sensitivities associated with the footpaths and listed buildings around the site. SU12 was ranked the most sensitive to development on the basis of the visual sensitivities and prominence to the potential projection of the settlement boundary beyond Alcester Way when viewed from the south.

Wootton Wawen

8.20 Of the three sites in Wootton Wawen, WO01 was seen as the least sensitive development, with an average score of 4; this is taking into account that development would follow the mitigation principles of locating development closer to the existing settlement.

8.21 WO09 was ranked as second with an average score of 3.6; again the site had significant visual sensitivities associated with the SAM.

8.22 WO03 was the most sensitive to development on the basis of the potential It would be difficult to mitigate against the potential coalescence of the settlement.
9.0 OVERALL SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

9.1 This report has been undertaken because it is our view that in order to meet its strategic housing objectives, Stratford upon Avon District should seek to disperse housing growth throughout its administrative area as the most sustainable development strategy.

9.2 Given the nature of the District, being largely covered by Green Belt, this necessitates a review of the Green Belt in places in order to identify sites that could be released for housing development.

9.3 Studley and Wootton Wawen are the focus of this report because our clients, David Wilson Homes (Mercia) are promoting sites there. Both villages are highly sustainable and offer a range of services and facilities that are often lacking in settlements of their size.

9.4 In summary, the results of the phase 1 mapping exercise has led us to focus on the 7 sites within Studley and 3 within Wootton Wawen.

9.5 The stage 2 assessment within Studley indicated that all the sites could physically accommodate development. However, in terms of accommodating development, the ranking of the sites sensitivity to landscape, visual and townscape impacts, concludes that SU01, SU02, and SU11 were the least sensitive to development. With SU05, SU10 and SU14 being ranked joint second.

9.6 The stage 2 assessment within Wootton Wawen indicated that, whilst all sites could physically accommodate development, the ranking of the sites sensitivity to landscape, visual and townscape impacts, concludes that WO01, is the least sensitive to development, followed by WO09 and WO03.

9.7 Based on these assessments, we would urge the Council to reconsider its approach to site allocation in the emerging plan and look again at some limited
green belt release to underpin the continued vitality and viability of the large villages, in particular that of Studley and Wootton Wawen.

9.8 It is our therefore our opinion that the sites at Alcester Rd, Studley (SU11) and Alcester Rd, Wootton Wawen (WO1) are the most appropriate for green belt release as this report has demonstrated.

9.9 We are firmly of the opinion that this would be a more sustainable solution to accommodating proportionate housing growth to 2031 (the end of the emerging plan period).
APPENDICES