

2.0 DEVELOPMENT PROPOSALS

2.1 Site Location & Context

2.1.1 The location and context of Bilston Urban Village is shown on **Figure 1.1**. The site is less than 1km south of Bilston High Street, which forms the heart of the community, and some 4km from Wolverhampton City Centre. It already benefits from excellent public transport links, being adjacent to the Midland Metro Line / and the Black Country Route (A463). The site comprises approximately 43 Ha of previously developed land, much of which is characterised by derelict land.

2.2 Existing Site & Access

2.2.1 The area of the proposed Bilston Urban Village, was the location for iron works and for iron stone mining with slag and spoil heaps in the 19th century. The filling associated with the iron works has transformed the original landform of the area with plateaus and ridges formed which are still evident. The Bilston Brook which once ran through a valley through the site is now culverted. Below the ironstone, coal seams were mined from the 18th century leaving mineshafts, which have only recently been filled.

2.2.2 Since the closure of the mines, the site has been the location for the GKN and Metabrasives factories but these were closed by 2001 and much of the site has become derelict since then.

2.2.3 For many years this derelict atmosphere was exacerbated by a large scrapyards in the eastern sector of the site. As a precursor to the remediation process, this has now been secured by compulsory purchase and reclamation has commenced. Parts of the site are now used for formal and informal recreation and the western portion of the site has regenerated into a series of informal grass areas interspersed with regenerating woodland scrub.

2.2.4 Much of the site exhibits characteristics frequently associated with derelict brownfield sites such as a broken topography, lack of maintenance and flytipping with a subsequent detrimental effect on the surrounding areas.

2.2.5 The presence of a large brownfield site close to an urban centre provides an excellent opportunity to accommodate a sustainable urban development. In terms

of local accessibility, the site is closely related to Bilston Town Centre, and there is good scope for level, easily usable connections to both Bilston Town Centre and Wolverhampton City Centre, by foot, cycle, and public transport. Internally, accessibility for the less able can be readily addressed.

2.2.2 Proximity to the potentially attractive corridor of the Bradley Arm of the Birmingham Main Line Canal affords the opportunity to enhance green links and access for both the existing settlement and new residents. Ladymoor Pool also provides strong potential for green links to the south of the site. Bilston High School Sports facilities can be revitalised in order to cater for the requirements of the wider community.

2.3 The Vision for the development

2.3.1 The vision for the development is to provide:

- A high quality sustainable environment which accommodates a balanced mix of homes, employment and community facilities.
- An urban realm which draws upon the best examples of contemporary urban design to create an appealing place to live, work and play.
- A layout which maximises accessibility for all in the widest sense, ranging from walking and cycling at a local level to a choice of high quality public transport for longer journeys.
- A Masterplan which protects and enhances landscape character, visual amenity and bio-diversity within the site, replacing dereliction with new green infrastructure.

2.4 Description of development

2.4.1 The Parameters Plan at **Figure 2.1** shows the extent and layout of the development. The mixed use development will briefly comprise the following:

2.4.2 Bilston Leisure Centre (1.52 ha)

5,600 sq mts leisure facilities in close proximity to Bilston Town Centre and Bilston High School. Together with the proposed community facilities, this will form part of the gateway link from Bilston Town Centre to the proposed development, and will also have a strong connection to the proposed shared use sports pitch facilities.

2.4.3 Community Facilities (1.05 ha)

4,500 sq mts local health care centre in close proximity to Bilston Town Centre, together with other appropriate community uses.

2.4.4 Housing – up to 1040 dwellings (18 ha)

A mix of house types from apartments and town houses to detached and semi – detached, with 30% affordable housing. A net density of 55 / hectare will be achieved in accordance with PPG3.

2.4.5 Employment (3.48 ha plus mixed use)

16,900 m² (B1, (a), (b), (c), employment, start-up workshops and offices. Located in two key gateway areas of the proposed development which will provide easy access and benefit from the existing transport routes of the Metro Line and Black Country Route.

2.4.6 Retail Facilities

22,260 sq mts retail facilities. 1,160 sq mts will be located along the High Street Link within Bilston Town Centre replacing premises lost to the creation of the High Street Link. The remaining 1,100 sq mts will have a central location within the proposed urban village, providing surveillance and active frontage along the Neighbourhood Park. The intention is to improve links to the existing facilities within Bilston Town Centre rather than to recreate a new local centre that would detract from the existing High Street. It will serve only local “top up” needs.

2.5 Design Approach & Guidelines

- 2.5.1 The Design approach is outlined in detail in the Design & Access Statement.
- 2.5.2 Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1-Delivering Sustainable Development) sets out the Government's principles on sustainable development.
- 2.5.3 Good design is essential in order to promote sustainable development, improve the quality of the existing environment, attract business and investment, and reinforce a sense of place.
- 2.5.4 The importance of good design is a recurring theme within Planning Policy Guidance 3 (PPG3-Housing). "By design; Better places to live" (2001-A companion guide to PPG3), explores the principles of good quality urban design and the approach of placemaking.
- 2.5.5 The proposed development will address the following "By design" objectives, establishing;
- Character - A place with its own identity, which builds upon good examples of locally distinctive design.
 - Continuity and Enclosure - A place where public and private spaces are clearly distinguished, to include a green infrastructure framework.
 - Quality of the Public Realm - A place with attractive, enduring and successful outdoor areas that have a clear purpose.
 - Ease of Movement - A place with a clearly defined hierarchy of routes.
 - Legibility - A place that has a strong image and a layout which is easy to understand.
 - Adaptability - A place that provides flexibility.
 - Diversity - A place with variety and choice in terms of housing, employment and leisure opportunities.

Refer to **Figure 2.2** for the Illustrative Layout

2.6 Sustainability

- 2.6.1 Bilston Urban Village, will champion the principles of sustainable development. To achieve these principles, an alternative approach to the more conventional

methods of drainage design and implementation will be adopted. These approaches are more commonly referred to as Sustainable Urban Drainage systems (SUDs) and they attempt to replicate natural drainage, dealing with surface water run off at source

2.6.2 The site is currently drained by the Bilston Brook which runs through the middle of the BUV site from Highfields Road in the south west to Brook Street in the north east. A network of SUDs will run within the public open space and transport corridors.

2.6.3 Energy efficiency and sustainability will be key features of building design. New buildings must be designed to a minimum BREEAM standard of 'very good' and consider sustainability factors throughout the design.

2.7 Landscape & Environment Strategy

In brief, the following will be provided: Refer to **Figure 2.3** for Adoptable Open Space Areas.

2.7.1 Formal Sport Provision - The existing Bilston High School sports pitches will be refurbished and enhanced with upgraded pitches, upgraded tennis courts, and a new play area. It will be re-orientated to provide a link from the School to the Leisure Centre and Community Facilities.

2.7.2 Bilston High School - Improved access points and links to new pedestrian and cycle footpaths will be created, with a strong link to the adjacent leisure and health facilities. Changes in landform will improve surveillance of the playing fields and provide opportunities for new school buildings.

2.7.3 Childrens Equipped Play Area & Casual Informal Play space - A central play area within the neighbourhood park will be designed to meet recognised standards and in response to Wolverhampton City Councils management requirements.

2.7.4 Neighbourhood Park - The central spine Neighbourhood Park will provide areas of informal recreation such as seating areas and grass areas to play informal games, or performance areas for local outdoor events, which will be available to the wider community.

- 2.7.5 Canal - The existing canal towpath will be upgraded and new development will front the towpath to increase surveillance. This will provide a safe and useable canal corridor that could become a major recreational facility. There is potential to create two new canal basins on the site of previous canal basins, which could provide key open spaces within the development.
- 2.7.6 Nature Reserve & Habitat Creation - Existing areas of wildlife interest including the existing newt pond to the south east, and trees adjacent to the canal corridor, can be retained and enhanced with improved public access. New habitat / wildlife areas will be included within the neighbourhood park to create a diverse landscape and provide educational uses for Bilston High School.
- 2.7.7 Allotments - Will form part of the neighbourhood park and will provide opportunities for local residents to be more sustainable. The allotments will also have educational uses for the nearby Bilston High School.

2.8 Management & Maintenance

- 2.8.1 The landscape and open space areas will all be subject to high quality management and maintenance, covered by a management plan agreed with the local authorities.
- 2.8.2 All formal open space including play areas, sports pitches and informal landscape areas within the residential development, are proposed to be adopted by the local authorities. These spaces would be designed and laid out as an integral part of the development and after one year establishment period it is expected that the areas would be adopted by the local authorities subject to payment of a commuted sum. The SUDS areas would similarly be adopted and managed.
- 2.8.3 Fencing would be necessary to prevent unauthorised access / fly tipping and antisocial behaviour during the construction period.

2.9 Assessment of Alternatives

- 2.9.1 The Entec Environmental Statement produced in July 2001 concluded that no alternative sites are available in the Bilston area that can provide the same potential for redevelopment in a location within a regeneration area, adjacent to an existing centre, and on excellent transport links.
- 2.9.2 No further sites have become available in the intervening period and no other major brownfield sites were brought forward as part of the UDP process (revised deposit March 2004)
- 2.9.3 In terms of alternative designs, the masterplan has evolved through a series of design stages to reach a stage suitable for public consultation and infrastructure development. The original concept and key principles from the Andrew Wright Scheme and Entec Environmental Statement of July 2001 have been retained throughout the design.