

5.0 TOWNSCAPE CHARACTER AND VISUAL RESOURCES

5.1 Introduction & Methodology

5.1.2 This chapter details a townscape character and visual resources assessment that has been carried out by Faulks Perry Culley & Rech (FPCR) for the proposed Bilston Urban Village, Wolverhampton. The location and site context is shown on **Figure 1.1**. The study area is shown on **Figure 5.2** and has been assessed by map study and field analysis to determine the likely extent of any potentially significant townscape and visual effects.

5.1.3 The Townscape Character Analysis has been carried out in broad accordance with the Countryside Agencies Guidelines produced in April 2002.

5.1.4 A systematic approach involving desk study and detailed site appraisal is used to identify areas of consistent character and urban form, and to identify assets which contribute to Bilston's local distinctiveness and unique "sense of place". The sensitivity of individual character areas is also evaluated, together with their ability to accommodate change. Sensitivity is closely related to the interaction of local character components. For example, a long established market square surrounded by listed buildings of aesthetic merit is likely to be highly sensitive, whereas a brownfield site within an industrial zone will probably be of low sensitivity.

5.2 BASELINE LOCAL TOWNSCAPE

5.2.1 Topography

5.2.2 The topography of the site is illustrated in **Figure 5.1**. The site generally lies between approximately 130 and 150m AOD.

5.2.3 The area proposed for Bilston Urban Village was the historic 19th century location for ironstone and coal extraction, iron manufacturing and the subsequent disposal of spoil and slag. The filling associated with the iron works has transformed the original valley landform into a series of plateaus and ridges. Significant localised variations in topography within the site include the railway embankment adjacent to Bilston High School, Dudley Street (which sits on a raised embankment through the centre of the site), and some localised spoil mounding adjacent to the canal and scrap yards.

5.2.4 Bilston Brook, which once ran south west to north east within the valley through the core of the site, is now culverted beneath several metres of fill. To the north the land gently rises from the centre of the site towards the Black Country Route and beyond, reaching a high point of approximately 145m AOD within Bilston Town Centre. To the south, the land rises slightly towards the canal and into Bradley, eventually reaching approximately 155m AOD. To the east the land gently drops down to 125m AOD, with the exception of localised steep cuttings and embankments associated at the Metro Line. To the west of the site, the immediate land is generally flat, approximately 135m-140m AOD.

Local Townscape Character

5.2.5 The complex development of Bilston has resulted in a distinct pattern of character areas. These vary from the busy town centre to suburban residential areas and derelict former industrial land. The separate character areas are identified on **Figure 5.2**. Their principal features, key representative viewpoints and sensitivity to change are detailed in the following pages. The implications of redevelopment at Bilston Urban Village are also addressed.

Character Area 1: Bilston Town Centre

5.2.6 This character area extends north from the Black Country Route, and centres on the retail core and pedestrian zone of the High Street. It provides a mix of well used shops, banks and building societies. The character is vibrant and attractive, particularly on market days. However, towards the western end of the High Street there is a slightly neglected feel, with several unused shop fronts, perhaps reflecting the areas remoteness from the historic core of the town around the church and Town Hall

5.2.7 To the south of Church Street is the Covered Market, which becomes a popular focus within the town centre on market days. To the east of the Metro Line is the historic part of the town centre which includes attractive local landmark buildings such as the Town Hall and St Leonard's Church.

5.2.8 The character area currently presents a somewhat utilitarian face towards the Black Country Route. The rear service areas for the shops along the High Street create an unattractive view, and discourage safe and useable pedestrian movement through to the High Street. The Black Country Route currently forms a strong barrier between this character area and the character areas to the south.

5.2.9 Strengths

- Busy, well used High Street
- Attractive Town Hall and St Leonard's Church.
- Popular Market

Weaknesses

- Unattractive view of backs of shops from Black Country Route and unsafe route through to the BCR
- Slightly neglected and run down feel to western end of the high street.
- The Black Country Route forms barrier to the south

5.2.10 In overall terms, this character area is judged to be of medium to high sensitivity, with localised variations. The eastern end adjacent to the Town Hall is of increased sensitivity, whilst the sensitivity is reduced in the western end adjacent to the site. The frontage to the Black Country Route is of low sensitivity.

Character Area 2: Derelict Land

- 5.2.11 This character area includes the majority of the site. Since the closure of the 18th and 19th Century mines, the site has been the location for the GKN and Metabrasives factories. These were closed by 2001 and much of the site has become derelict since then. The large scrap metal yard (now undergoing remediation) is the remaining remnant of the industrial use of the site and characterises the eastern section of the site.
- 5.2.12 The central and western portion of the site has regenerated into a series of informal grass areas, interspersed with immature woodland and scrub, copses of young woodland planting and dense overgrown vegetation. A belt of over mature Poplars through the central part of the site currently provide immediate impact although their long term viability is limited. These are covered by a tree preservation order. Some are already dying back, and may be unsafe as a result.
- 5.2.13 Much of the site exhibits characteristics frequently associated with derelict brownfield sites such as a disturbed topography, a lack of maintenance and fly tipping. A series of footpaths run through the site. These paths are generally unkempt, narrow and have little surveillance.
- 5.2.14 The Canalside and associated towpath to the south of the site provides an important potential recreational facility within the area, but a lack of surveillance and management means that this is currently an underused and unattractive facility.
- 5.2.15 In overall terms, this character area is judged to be of low sensitivity, due to its lack of landscape or townscape features of any merit, and its derelict and disjointed nature.

Character Area 3: Bilston High School and Sports Pitches

- 5.2.16 This character area contains part of the site. The northern boundary is defined by the Black Country Route whilst the southern boundary adjoins the existing derelict land. The character area includes Bilston High School and playing fields, a small block of housing off Linton Croft, and the Fire Station adjacent to Coseley Road.
- 5.2.17 The area is fairly enclosed in character, by the existing disused railway embankment to the west, the Black Country Route to the north, and Dudley Street on a raised embankment to the east of the character area. Immature vegetation and scrub occupy these embankments.

5.2.18 Bilston High School itself comprises various building styles, including the original attractive but somewhat run down victorian school building and the modern and less attractive science block and sports hall. Hard standing areas include the car park and play ground. This playground is currently used as a car park, which consequently does not provide a safe and useable play space.

5.2.19 A footpath runs inbetween the school and the fire station towards Carder Crescent. This is currently secluded and little used. The school frontage onto this footpath is neglected and unattractive. The sports pitches have a similar semi-derelict feel, with a lack of linkage between them and the school buildings.

5.2.20 In overall terms, this character area is judged to be of low-medium sensitivity, due to the potentially attractive school buildings and open space.

Character Area 4: Morrisons Supermarket

5.2.21 A relatively recent addition to the Bilston area, Morrisons supermarket with its car park and petrol station border the northern boundary of the site. The character area also contains a number of small industrial units adjacent to the metro line. Vehicular access to the supermarket is from the Black Country Route, whilst there is a good pedestrian link along Bankfield Road to Bradley. The supermarket is busy and has a well used pedestrian crossing to Bilston Town Centre.

5.2.22 The Morrisons clock tower forms a distinctive focus within the local area, although the general character of the supermarket and environs is rather uninspiring. In overall terms, this character area is judged to be of medium sensitivity.

Character Area 5: East Bilston & Loxdale Area

5.2.23 This character area is located east of the Metro Line and extends from the Black Country Route towards Bradley. The area adjacent to the site consists predominantly of semi-detached and terraced housing and small apartment blocks. Further east are educational and community facilities such as Loxdale School and St Mary's Church.

5.2.24 The housing generally backs onto the metro line along the eastern boundary of the site. This lack of natural surveillance creates an unsafe and secluded feel to the Loxdale Metro Station and footpath adjacent to the Metro Line. This character area is judged to be of low sensitivity.

Character Area 6: Bradley Industrial Area adjacent to Canal

- 5.2.25 This character area is industrial in character and contains a combination of Victorian brick buildings and modern warehouses with associated service yards. The industrial buildings centre on the Canal. This significantly detracts from the character of the canal corridor. In particular the industrial building straddling the canal creates an unappealing, dark and noisy tunnel through which the users of the canal towpath must travel.
- 5.2.26 Bankfield Road runs north south through the centre of this character area. It is a historic route between Bradley & Bilston and is pedestrian only along the section where it crosses the canal. Whilst popular, this route has a lack of surveillance, being fronted by the gable ends of the existing factories, and service yards, and consequently feels unsafe and secluded.
- 5.2.27 In overall terms, this character area is judged to be of low sensitivity, due to the lack of architectural or landscape features of merit. The canal itself has the potential to be substantially enhanced.

Character Area 7: Residential Areas to the South of the Site

- 5.2.28 This character area is located to the south of the site and is predominantly residential in character. Typical housing styles include semi-detached and terraced properties.
- 5.2.29 Carder Crescent is currently an isolated pocket of housing between the canal and the adjacent derelict land. The housing generally backs onto the canal and the run down back walls present an unattractive frontage to the canal towpath. The houses on the south side of the canal also provide largely poor frontage to the canal, and there are poor links from Highfields towards Bilston High School and Bilston Town Centre.
- 5.2.30 In overall terms, this character area is judged to be of low-medium sensitivity, due to the lack of architectural or landscape features of merit. Once again, the canal has the potential for substantial enhancement.

Character Area 8: Ladymoor Pool

- 5.2.31 Ladymoor Pool is located south of the site along Highfields Road. The area provides an informal recreational green space for the surrounding communities. The character of the open space is pleasant and leafy with a belt of mature trees surrounding the open water and mown grassland.
- 5.2.32 In overall terms, this character area is judged to be of medium sensitivity, due its pleasant landscape character but lack of landscape features of outstanding merit.

Character Area 9: Industrial & Residential development adjacent to Broad Lane & Black Country Route

- 5.2.33 This character area is located to the west of the site. It consists of an area of semi-detached and terraced housing situated off Broad Lane, an area of industrial development adjacent to the Black Country Route, and housing north of Millfields Road
- 5.2.34 The houses within the Broad Lanes estate back onto some dense vegetation along the site boundary. There is pedestrian access to the site from Broadmoor Road via a narrow and secluded footpath. Several blocks of recently apartments back onto the site, near the junction of Highfields Road and Broad Lanes. These provide a more appropriate style of housing for the area.
- 5.2.35 The industrial units off Coseley Road and Millfields Road consist of large to medium scale industrial and commercial buildings and yards. They are screened from the Black Country Route by a buffer belt of trees.
- 5.2.36 In overall terms, this character area is judged to be of low-medium sensitivity, due its lack of features of architectural or landscape merit.
- 5.2.37 From the detailed character assessment a number of conclusions have been drawn:
- The character areas are generally of low sensitivity
 - The town centre and Ladymoor Pool character areas have the highest sensitivity due their features of architectural and landscape merit
 - The character area that contains the majority of the site is one of low sensitivity due to the dereliction and disjointed nature of the site.
 - There is tremendous potential for enhancement of townscape character, particularly in relation to the Bradley Canal Arm and the core of the site.

5.3 BASELINE VISUAL ANALYSIS

The interaction of topography, built form and vegetation determines the visual envelope of the site. The previous Environmental Statement produced by Entec has determined the position of key viewpoints 1 to 14. Viewpoints 15 to 17 have been added in order to address the extremities of the site.

The sensitivity of people viewing the site varies depending upon the nature of their location and their context. For example, a residential receptor with both ground and first floor views towards the site may be judged to be of high sensitivity. In contrast, someone travelling who passes the site fleetingly or who is occupied at their place of work would be of low sensitivity,

Viewpoint 1 – Black Country Route (Fig 5.4)

5.3.1 This view is from the road bridge over the metro line on the A463 Black Country Route. Pedestrian and vehicular users of this route have limited views of the site due to the existing mature trees along the southern boundary of the Morrisons site. The high walls of the road bridge also screen views of the site from vehicular users of the Black Country Route.

5.3.2 Morrisons Supermarket, along with its clock tower is highly visible with partial views of the supermarket car park and adjacent industrial sheds. Sensitivity of the receptors is low.

Viewpoint 2 – Footpath Adjacent to Metro Line (Fig 5.4)

5.3.3 This view is from the footpath that leads from Loxdale Metro Station along the Metro Line to Chapel Street. The locally elevated position on the Metro Line embankment creates a strong vista towards the metro line and across to the site. The utilitarian industrial sheds adjacent to the canal are visible on the skyline, with the derelict land and immature scrub within the site to the foreground. Users of the Metro line are unable to view into the site due to the high embankments. Views from the back gardens on Chapel Street and Station Road are generally screened by existing vegetation along the Metro Line embankment. Sensitivity of the residential receptors and footpath users is medium, but the potential to enhance the view is high.

Viewpoint 3 – Canal Bridge on Bankfield Road (Fig 5.5)

- 5.3.4 This view is from the canal bridge on the pedestrian section of Bankfield Road. A utilitarian industrial shed and yard adjacent to the site can be seen in the foreground. Part of the viewpoint includes a view down the narrow footpath, which is insecure, being enclosed on either side by vegetation. St Mary's Church is visible on the skyline. Sensitivity of the receptor is medium but the potential to enhance the view, in particular along the footpath route is high.

Viewpoint 4 – Bankfield Road (Fig 5.5)

- 5.3.5 This represents the view of pedestrian users of the footpath along Bankfield Road. The views into the site are screened by the local topography and dense vegetation, and are overgrown, insecure and unattractive. Sensitivity of the receptor is low, due to the derelict nature of the site. The potential to enhance the view is high.

Viewpoint 5 – Bankfield Road / Morrisons Petrol Station (Fig 5.6)

- 5.3.6 This viewpoint is from the lowest point of the site on Bankfield Road, near Morrisons Petrol station and represents the view of the pedestrian users of the footpath. Views across the site are limited due to the embankments and dense vegetation on either side of Bankfield Road which makes it insecure. Close views are of derelict land and scrub. Sensitivity of the receptor is again low. The potential for enhancement with the introduction of a Neighbourhood Park is very high.

Viewpoint 6 – Dudley Street / Black Country Route (Fig 5.6)

- 5.3.7 This view is from the junction of Dudley Street and the A463 Black Country Route and represents the view from vehicular and pedestrian users. The views into the site are partially screened by poor quality immature vegetation while gaps in the vegetation provide views towards Morrisons Supermarket. The derelict and overgrown land currently creates an unattractive frontage to the Black Country Route and has significant potential to be enhanced as a gateway to the Urban Village. Sensitivity of receptors is low.

Viewpoint 7 – Dudley Street (Fig 5.7)

- 5.3.8 This viewpoint is from Dudley Street, that runs from North to South across the site. The view is dominated by the high wall, which consists of various materials. This blocks any views across the site from this locally elevated position. Pedestrian users of this route can partially see Morrisons Supermarket and St Leonard's Church – a strong local landmark. Sensitivity of the receptor is low. The views could be substantially enhanced.

Viewpoint 8 – Canal Towpath (Fig 5.7)

- 5.3.9 This view is from the canal towpath adjacent to Carder Crescent. Views into the site are screened by a high brick wall and dense vegetation. Modern housing backs onto the southern side of the canal and the rooftop of a utilitarian industrial shed is visible on the skyline. Both sides of the canal have overgrown verges and dense vegetation being insecure/intimidating. Sensitivity of the receptor is medium due to the proximity of the canal but potential to enhance the canalscape is also high.

Viewpoint 9 – Footpath between Carder Crescent & Bilston High School (Fig 5.8)

- 5.3.10 This view is from a footpath junction within partially restored derelict land north of Carder Crescent. The immediate surroundings consist of flat and open grass areas, which are enclosed by embankments and immature vegetation. The view is locally attractive but the general atmosphere from this viewpoint is enclosed and unsafe. Sensitivity of the receptor is medium.

Viewpoint 10 – Footpath between Carder Crescent & Bilston High School (Fig 5.8)

- 5.3.11 This view is from the informal footpath that leads from the previous viewpoint towards Bilston High School. The view is dominated by the school playing fields and tennis courts with partial views of the school and modern buildings such as the sports hall and science block. From this viewpoint landform and vegetation act as a visual and physical barrier between the school and the sports pitches. Sensitivity of the receptor is medium and the potential to enhance views and links to the school are high.

Viewpoint 11 – Footpath Between Canal and Broadmoor Road (Fig 5.9)

- 5.3.12 This view is from the informal footpath junction within a small clearing adjacent to Broadmoor Road. The immediate area consists of flat and open grassland, which is enclosed by embankments and dense vegetation. The vegetation in the viewpoint is a well-established buffer between the site and the houses on Broadmoor Road. Sensitivity of the receptor is medium.

Viewpoint 12 – Canal Towpath (Fig 5.9)

- 5.3.13 This view is from the canal towpath along the southwestern boundary of the site. The view is fairly attractive, but overgrown and unsafe and therefore the footpath is underused. There are noticeable changes in level down into the site. The potential to improve the canal frontage and provide an attractive and useable canal corridor is high. Sensitivity of receptors is medium.

Viewpoint 13 – Banks Bridge (Fig 5.10)

- 5.3.14 This view is from Banks Bridge on Dudley Street and represents a key gateway arrival point into the site. Well-maintained grass verges and trees front the access road into Carder Crescent. Sensitivity of the receptor is low. There is significant potential to improve the gateway view and provide a sense of arrival into Bilston Urban Village.

Viewpoint 14 – Loxdale Station (Fig 5.10)

- 5.3.15 This view is from the footpath adjacent to the Metroline at Loxdale Station. The users of the Metro Line are unable to view into the site from this viewpoint due to the steep embankments and vegetation. Sensitivity of the receptor is low and intervisibility with the site is minimal. The station lacks the reassurance of passive surveillance from overlooking residential properties.

Viewpoint 15 – Coseley Road (Fig 5.11)

- 5.3.16 This view is from Coseley Road, which leads down from the Black Country Route. Views into the site are currently limited by the local topography, dense vegetation and commercial buildings along Coseley Road. Sensitivity of the receptor is low.

Viewpoint 16 – Salop Street and Bankfield Road (Fig 5.11)

- 5.3.17 This view is from the junction of Salop Street and Bankfield Road. Views into the site are screened by the industrial buildings that front the canal. This will form a major pedestrian gateway into the site, and there is strong potential to enhance this link. Receptors are generally of low sensitivity.

Viewpoint 17 – Highfields Road (Fig 5.12)

5.3.18 This view is from Highfields Road near Ladymoor Pool. The immediate area consists of flat derelict land. It is backed onto by the houses off Broadmoor Road. The varied fences and enclosures along the rear gardens present a particularly utilitarian facade. Openings in the vegetation provide partial views of the small industrial buildings off Highfields Road. The land rises up towards the canal, where some mature tree planting is visible. Sensitivity of the receptor is low and the potential to enhance this gateway arrival point into the site is high. The properties on Broadmoor Road are of only medium sensitivity since the primary views are at first floor level.

CONCLUSIONS

5.3.19 This selection of representative viewpoints demonstrates the following aspects of visibility :-

- The interaction of urban fabric and topography creates a fairly small zone of visual influence;
- The sensitivity of receptors varies in relation to type and context, and is predominately low;
- The existing derelict site currently presents an extremely unsatisfactory aspect from several key viewpoints, in particular from the Black Country Route;
- There is excellent potential to enhance some of the attractive features of the site, in particular the canal corridor;
- Few residential areas have significant direct views to the site, as most back onto the site;
- The informal footpaths which crisscross the site are detrimentally affected by the derelict environment, the absence of supervision and the air of neglect. Receptors using the footpaths are of predominantly low sensitivity.

5.4 SCHEME DESCRIPTION AND MITIGATION

5.4.1 The mixed-use scheme briefly comprises:

- Approximately 1040 new residential properties
- New retail office and industrial units
- New community facilities and commercial leisure uses
- New neighbourhood park, wildlife habitats and landscaping, providing a new “green infrastructure” framework for the urban village.

5.4.2 The extent and layout of development has been carefully considered in response to the environmental assessment and has been modified in response to the assessment process to achieve the optimum solution. The design has considered the important key views to and from the site.

5.4.3 The following key solutions relating to townscape character have been identified in the design:

5.4.4 **Central Boulevard -**

This will link through the site from West to East from a new junction off Coseley Road to the existing alignment of Brook Street. An additional boulevard will link a new access at Highfields Road to the Central Spine. It will form a gently curving route through the Neighbourhood Park and will incorporate footpaths and on-street parking. A combined pedestrian / cycle route will follow the alignment of the road within the green spine, which also contains a swale for surface water drainage.

5.4.5 **High Street Link**

This will form a major pedestrian link from the existing Bilston Town Centre to the heart of the Urban Village. It will be fronted by community and leisure buildings adjacent to the Black Country Route and will draw residents down into the proposed Neighbourhood Park that will form a spine through the development.

Bilston High School

5.4.6 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.

5.4.7 Neighbourhood Park

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

5.4.8 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.

5.4.9 As a result of this coordinated approach, the urban village will deliver a sustainable new "green infrastructure" framework which will substantially improve the locality. The current neglected and somewhat hostile routeways which link Bilston to Highfields, Brandley and Loxdale will be replaced by designated manageable greenway routes. There will be life and activity across the site, introducing proprietorial interest and supervision to significantly enhance personal safety.

5.5 TOWNSCAPE EFFECTS

5.5.1 This section details the townscape effects arising from the proposed development of the site.

Character Area 1

5.5.2 The proposals include a High Street Link and proposed mixed use development within this character area. It will improve the character area in a number of ways:

- It will improve the townscape of the currently run down western end of the existing high street.
- It will provide a new pedestrian and cycle link across the Black Country Route. This proposed link will encourage residents of the new development and surrounding areas such as Bradley to use the existing retail and community facilities within Bilston Town Centre along with the proposed leisure and community facilities.
- It will remove the existing utilitarian backs of the high street shops and create an attractive frontage to the Black Country Route.
- The boulevard will include a new plaza and create a high quality streetscape with safer, overlooked active frontages. These proposals will have significant positive beneficial effects on this character area.

5.5.3 Character Area 2

The derelict land is the site for the proposed Urban Village, which will transform the character of the area. It will replace the existing unsafe and derelict land with new facilities, a neighbourhood park and improved pedestrian links and sport facilities. The proposals will have significant positive effects on this character area.

Character Area 3

5.5.4 At present the derelict land and lack of surveillance adjacent to the pitches creates an unsafe environment for the users of these facilities. Improved ground modelling, along with new landscape proposals and re-alignment of sports pitches will provide better links both visually and physically between the school and the proposed community facilities. The diversion of Dudley Street, and the development of a new Leisure Centre will also enhance the character and safety of the area.

5.5.5 A new entrance to the southeast of the school will provide improved access and parking, whilst new residential properties will provide surveillance to the existing unsafe footpath between the school and the fire station. The proposals will have significant positive effects on this character area.

Character Area 4

5.5.6 There will be improved links and access to the supermarket from the proposed development, in particular along Bankfield road. The proposals will have positive beneficial effects on this character area.

5.5.7 Character Areas 5 & 8

These character areas have limited intervisibility with the site due to topography and vegetation. Whilst there will be no direct change to these areas, there will be an indirect regeneration benefit.

Character Area 6

5.5.8 Glasshouse Bridge will be improved to provide a better pedestrian link from Bradley to the proposed development and Bilston Town Centre. This area has potential to be redeveloped to provide an improved canalscape that can be integrated with the proposed development. The proposals will have a slight beneficial impact on this character area.

Character Area 7

5.5.9 Proposed enhancement to the canal corridor and new development fronting the canal will improve the frontage with this character area. Carder Crescent will become integrated with the proposed development and a new pedestrian bridge over the canal will provide a link from the Highfields area through the site to Bilston High School and adjacent community facilities. This will have moderate beneficial impact on this character area, which will be reinforced by the wider regeneration benefits.

Character Area 8

- 5.5.10 The proposed new greenway cycle route and footpath will form a major strategic route, linking the urban village through to Ladymoor Pool. This will encourage more pedestrians and cyclists to Ladymoor Pool and new housing fronting Highfields Road will improve surveillance. Impact will be at least slightly beneficial.

CONCLUSION

- 5.5.11 In conclusion therefore, the proposals would have substantially beneficial effects upon townscape character, particularly in the area adjacent to the town centre, and within the site itself.
- 5.5.12 Whilst the built development would inevitably alter the physical fabric of the site significant opportunities arise to enhance townscape character. These result from the inclusion of a central neighbourhood park, improved landscape to the gateways into the site, and the enhancement of the canal corridor. In particular, the removal of dereliction and decay and the introduction of a managed sustainable green infrastructure framework will be of major importance to the regeneration potential of the whole area.

5.6 VISUAL EFFECTS

5.6.1 This section details the visual effects arising from the proposed development of the site.

Viewpoint 1 – Black Country Route

5.6.2 Due to the minimal view of the site from this viewpoint, the proposals are unlikely to change the view significantly.

Viewpoint 2 – Footpath Adjacent to Metro Line

5.6.3 The proposed housing alongside the metro line will provide improved surveillance and will screen the existing warehouses that sit on the skyline from this view. The existing derelict land will be replaced with a high quality landscaped development. The resulting impact is likely to be at least slightly beneficial.

Viewpoint 3 – Canal Bridge on Bankfield Road

5.6.4 The improvements to this gateway pedestrian route will include widening of the footpath and the introduction of avenue tree planting. Further along the footpath new housing will front onto the footpath, creating better surveillance and a safer environment. Impact will be substantially beneficial.

Viewpoint 4 – 5 Bankfield Road

5.6.5 The removal of the dense vegetation and embankments along Bankfield Road and their replacement with a vibrant street frontage, with avenue tree planting will be substantially beneficial.

Viewpoints 6 – Dudley Street / Black Country Route

5.6.6 The diversion of Dudley Street, and the creation of a new gateway development with associated landscape and boulevard will improve this viewpoint substantially. It will also significantly improve links both visually and physically to the Bilston High School. The impact will be substantially beneficial.

Viewpoint 7 – Dudley Street

- 5.6.7 Dudley Street currently forms a strong visual and physical barrier across the site. The removal of this section of the elevated road will allow the creation of the new central neighbourhood park. Impact will be substantially beneficial and will improve views and links through the new development and beyond.

Viewpoint 8 – Canal Towpath

- 5.6.8 The proposed development fronting onto the canal will improve the canal frontage and views into and out of the site, creating a safer atmosphere with increased surveillance. Improvements to the towpath surfacing, access and street furniture would also help to improve this view. The resulting impact will to be substantially beneficial.

Viewpoint 9 – Derelict Land

- 5.6.9 The existing immature vegetation will be removed, to facilitate the proposed development. However, the Neighbourhood Park through the centre of the site will provide a more appropriate high quality manageable amenity space. The impact on this view is considered to be slightly beneficial.

Viewpoint 10 – Footpath near Sports Pitches

- 5.6.10 The removal of the vegetation and the regrading of the embankment adjacent to the school will improve the visual and physical links between the site and the existing school, and will also allow for the improved layout of the sports pitches and new neighbourhood park. Impact would be substantially beneficial.

Viewpoint 11 – Footpath Between Canal and Broadmoor Road

- 5.6.11 The well-established planting between the site boundary and the houses on Broadmoor Road will be retained enhanced within the proposed Neighbourhood Park. New development fronting the open space will provide better surveillance and a safer access route, and the high quality landscape proposed within the neighbourhood park will substantially benefit this viewpoint.

Viewpoint 12 – Canal Towpath

- 5.6.12 New development fronting the canal towpath will improve the safety of the canal corridor and create a vibrant canalscape. New surfacing and furniture will provide a more aesthetical pleasing managed appearance to the canal banks. Impact would be substantially beneficial.

Viewpoint 13 – Banks Bridge

- 5.6.13 Residential development, potentially adjacent to a new canal basin and high quality landscape, would provide a more appropriate arrival point into the Bilston Urban Village. Tree lined avenues will enhance the existing landscape along Dudley Street and the access road to Carder Crescent, whilst screening the views to neighbouring industrial land. Impact would be substantially beneficial.

Viewpoint 14 – Loxdale Station

- 5.6.14 Due to the minimal view of the site from this viewpoint, the proposals are unlikely to change the view significantly.

Viewpoint 15 – Coseley Road

- 5.6.15 The proposed employment and associated landscape planting fronting Coseley Road will replace the existing derelict land. Impact will be beneficial.

Viewpoint 16 – Salop Street and Bankfield Road

- 5.6.16 Due to the minimal view of the site from this viewpoint, the proposals are unlikely to change the view significantly.

Viewpoint 17 – Highfields Road

- 5.6.17 The views of the unattractive back fences and derelict land will be replaced by development fronting onto a high quality streetscape and gateway arrival point to the new development. Impact will be substantially beneficial.

CONCLUSIONS

5.6.18 In conclusion therefore, the proposal would have a substantially beneficial visual effect on the majority of receptors. These can be summarised as :-

- Providing new high quality landscape and townscape within the urban village.
- Improving surveillance and creating safer access routes and streetscapes
- Enhancing the views into and out of the site.

5.6.19 In addition there will be wider (but less tangible) benefits emerging from the introduction of a high quality sustainable urban environment upon neighbouring areas and receptors passing through the area. A sense of well being should be promoted, improving receptors attitudes and perceptions.

5.7 STATEMENT OF EFFECTS

5.7.1 At present, the site has a major detrimental effect upon Bilston's townscape. It sits within a character area of low sensitivity, which creates a particularly poor impression for any visitors to the town. It also creates an unsafe and unusable area for local residents. There is a lack of connection between the site and the High Street to the north and a lack of use of the potentially attractive canal corridor.

5.7.2 The proposed re-generation of the site provides an important opportunity to substantially enhance the townscape character and visual amenity within the area.

- The new proposals will be of high architectural and urban design quality, and will create a regeneration focus at the heart of Bilston
- The creation of active street frontages, in particular to the canal towpaths, and the existing streets and footpaths, will significantly enhance the safety and appearance of the site.

5.7.3 Great care has been taken with the masterplan to ensure that its scale and massing is in harmony with existing settlement characteristics and development on the site would have only positive effects upon the townscape character. FPCR's analysis has demonstrated that the current proposal would substantially enhance townscape in a manner which is consistent with the thrust of government regeneration policy.

5.7.4 The consequences of the redevelopment will be wholly beneficial, contributing vitality and a 'sense of place' to Bilston. It will provide a clear symbol of dynamic contemporary regeneration at the heart of the town and there will be no conflict with the character and amenity of the local area.