

# Sustainability Appraisal of the Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Development Plan

Reasonable Alternatives

January 2013



LEPUS CONSULTING

LANDSCAPE ECOLOGY, PLANNING AND URBAN SUSTAINABILITY



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Balsall Heath Neighbourhood  
Development Plan  
Reasonable Alternatives*

*Sustainability Appraisal Report*

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# Abbreviations

<b>BCC</b>	Birmingham City Council
<b>BREEAM</b>	BRE Environmental Assessment Methods
<b>CfSH</b>	Code for Sustainable Homes
<b>EIA</b>	Environmental Impact Assessment
<b>GI</b>	Green Infrastructure
<b>HGV</b>	Heavy Goods Vehicle
<b>HLF</b>	Heritage Lottery Fund
<b>JCC</b>	Joseph Chamberlain ex college site
<b>NDP</b>	Neighbourhood Development Plan
<b>PPP</b>	Policy, Plan or Programme
<b>PVC</b>	Photo Voltaic Cells
<b>SA</b>	Sustainability Appraisal
<b>SEA</b>	Strategic Environmental Assessment
<b>SPD</b>	Supplementary Plan Documents
<b>UDP</b>	Unitary Development Plan

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# Executive Summary

This report contains the sustainability appraisal of the reasonable alternatives for the Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Development Plan. This report has been prepared by Lepus Consulting on behalf of Birmingham City Council as part of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process for the Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).

Within the Reasonable Alternatives there are seven place specific sites as well as a section of options relating to the whole area. Overall there are twenty-seven options

The assessment of the Balsall Heath NDP options was undertaken using a high-level assessment technique (further explained in **Chapter 2**). The findings are presented in **Chapter 3** as a matrix and are accompanied by a commentary on the identified effects.

The majority of policy proposals will deliver positive effects across the neighbourhood. Where adverse effects were found, they were often within the 'do nothing' option, due to the potential for negative behaviours or impacts to continue unabated. The following options have been assessed and identified as carrying potential adverse effects:

- Implementing bulky goods consent under option 2 – could lead to an increase in emissions due to likelihood of HGVs;
- Do nothing under option 9 – allows an increase in car use, and the consequent increase in emissions;
- Options 10, 11 and 12 for Highgate Road – development on this site could lead to a reduction in biodiversity due to a reduction in green space;
- Do nothing under option 13 – allows deterioration of locally important sites and buildings of historic interest, the continued dominance of the car, and a division through Balsall Heath;
- Do nothing under option 16 – does not encourage sustainable modes of transport or reduce emissions;
- Do nothing under option 20 – the River Rea is currently assessed as having 'poor' ecological status, this option does not improve the river's quality;
- Do nothing under option 22 – allows the degraded environment to remain.

The following recommendations can be made with regards to the next stage of plan making:

1. Birmingham City Council should seek to avoid those options which have been identified to cause adverse effects within the neighbourhood;
2. Where options with adverse effects are carried through to the next stage, Birmingham City Council should seek to minimise the affects of the adverse effects;
3. Birmingham City Council should seek to clarify those policy options where the SA process has not been able to accurately appraise the potential effects.

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# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Purpose of this SA Report

- 1.1.1 This SA Report has been prepared by Lepus Consulting on behalf of Birmingham City Council as part of the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) process for the Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Development Plan (NDP).
- 1.1.2 Encompassing the latest stage of the SA, this document sets out an assessment of the policies currently proposed to guide growth and regeneration within Balsall Heath. Where appropriate it also sets out a number of recommendations which are intended to strengthen the on-going evolution of the Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Development Plan.
- 1.1.3 SA is the process of informing and influencing the development of the NDP to maximise the sustainability value of the plan. Due to this, the report should be read alongside the Balsall Heath NDP.

## 1.2 Stages of the SA carried out to date: Scoping

- 1.2.1 The first stage in the SA process for the Balsall Heath NDP was the release of the SA Scoping Report to the Consultation Authorities and other stakeholders in October 2012.
- 1.2.2 The Scoping Report establishes the assessment methodology for the SA process. Subsequent to the receipt and consideration of responses received on the Scoping Report was updated to take into account comments received and to reflect new information that has recently become available. Another task was to present information on the Balsall Heath area to allow the Consultation Authorities to form a view on the scope and level of details that will be appropriate for the SA process.

## 1.3 The SA Process

- 1.3.1 The preparation of a reasonable alternative options report is an integral part of the NDP creation process. Options are an important phase of plan making. They provide alternative ways in which the plan can take shape. The exploration of options is a helpful means of shaping and influencing the final format of the NDP. The SA process provides a basis for appraising the effects of each option.
- 1.3.2 It is a requirement of the SEA Directive (2001/42/EC) that reasonable alternatives are assessed during the preparation of a plan or programme; The SEA Directive requires that 'reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and the geographical scope of the plan or programme are identified, described and evaluated' and give 'an outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with' (Article 5.1 and Annex I (h)).

## 1.4 The Neighbourhood Development Plan

- 1.4.1 Under the Localism Act 2011 local communities are able to prepare Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDP) for their area. NDPs represent more detailed and locally specific development plans that guide spatial planning and decisions relating to development proposals in an area.
- 1.4.2 The Balsall Heath NDP will set out detailed policies and proposals which will guide and direct future land use within Balsall Heath. The NDP will conform to policies and proposals laid out within higher tier plans comprising currently the Birmingham Plan (UDP), the emerging Birmingham Development Plan (Core Strategy) and other Supplementary Planning Document (SPDs) relevant to Birmingham.
- 1.4.3 The NDP will follow the procedures and requirements laid down in the Localism Act, The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, and The Neighbourhood Planning (Referendums) Regulations 2012.
- 1.4.4 Overall the Balsall Heath NDP will reflect the wishes, needs, and aspirations of the local community. This will be achieved through consultation and final referendum.
- 1.4.5 The aims of the Neighbourhood Development Plan are as follows:
- To promote a sustainable and healthy community in Balsall Heath which satisfies the social and economic needs of the population while protecting and enhancing the environment (Objective 3 and SP1/3/4);
  - To create a 'heart' for the community in the form of a physical focus for community activities and social interaction (SP3/17/19/21);
  - To protect and enhance the range of commercial and social uses within the local centres of Moseley Road and Ladypool Road (SP19/20/21);
  - To enhance the range and quality of housing in the area to better match the needs of local families and their right to decent housing (SP2/26/27);
  - To promote the capacities of the area to provide suitable local jobs and training opportunities while contributing to the economic well-being of the city and wider area (SP1/3/16/52);
  - To enhance the physical environment of the area in terms of the effective and healthy use of green infrastructure, open space, the quality of the street scene and the reduction of pollution (SP5/6/11/45/46/48/53/54);
  - To conserve and effectively utilise the heritage assets of the area, especially the listed buildings in Moseley Road local centre (SP3, SP50);
  - To improve the connectivity of the area in terms of the movement of people and goods and the availability of digital communication (SP33/34/35/36/37/41);
  - To reduce car dependency and promote walking, cycling and public transport (SP35);
  - To improve the availability of renewable energy and sustainable waste management facilities (SP5/8/9/42/44); and
  - To provide a framework within which the Neighbourhood Forum and its partners can work together to achieve the above aims.

## 1.5 The Balsall Heath Area

- 1.5.1 The Balsall Heath NDP area is located within the Sparkbrook Ward in the Hall Green district of Birmingham. It is located approximately two kilometres to the south east of Birmingham city centre. The Belgrave Middleway (A4540) and Highgate Road border the plan area to the north. It is bordered to the west by the Pershore Road (A441) and to the east by Stoney Lane. The southern boundary of the Balsall Heath NDP skirts the Edgbaston Cricket Ground.
- 1.5.2 The population of Balsall Heath is approximately 15,000. It comprises a large proportion of multicultural and ethnic communities with a range of health needs. Balsall Heath has been identified as a one of 31 priority neighbourhood with a range of health needs and areas of high deprivation. Despite pockets of high deprivation there are a number of vibrant centres that help support the local economy and support local distinctiveness and identity.
- 1.5.3 **Table 1.1** sets out the key facts relating to Neighbourhood Development Plan.

## 1.6 This document

- 1.6.1 The purpose of this SA Report is to evaluate the policies proposed by the Balsall Heath NDP. Through providing this input, it is anticipated that this report will inform and influence the on-going development of the NDP.
- 1.6.2 This SA Report should be read alongside the Balsall Heath NDP to provide sustainability context. It should be noted that this report is not the equivalent of a SA Report in line with the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive; that will be published later in the SA process.
- 1.6.3 This SA Report is structured as follows:
- Chapter 2** sets out the appraisal process and outlines the policies to be assessed;
- Chapter 3** discusses the assessment of the reasonable alternatives;
- Finally **Chapter 4** concludes the report and explains the next steps.

**Table 1.1:** Key facts relating to the Neighbourhood Development Plan

Body responsible for NDP preparation	Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Planning Forum (please note the NDP is the Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Planning Forum's plan, and Birmingham City Council is providing a co-ordination role.	
Local Planning Authority assisting with NDP preparation	Birmingham City Council	
Title of plan	Balsall Heath NDP	
What prompted the plan (e.g. legislative, regulatory or administrative provision)	The Balsall Heath NDP is being prepared to reflect the introduction of the Localism Bill, which seeks to enable local communities to decide the future of the places where they live and work through the preparation of Neighbourhood Development Plans.	
Subject (e.g. transport)	Neighbourhood Plan	
Period covered by the plan	The period until 2026	
Frequency of updates	When required	
Area covered by the plan	Balsall Heath within Sparkbrook Ward (See <b>Figure 1.1</b> )	
Purpose and/ or objectives of the plan	The Balsall Heath NDP will set out detailed policies and proposals which will guide and direct future development within the Balsall Heath area. The NDP will conform to policies and proposals laid out within higher tier plans comprising currently the Birmingham Plan (UDP), the emerging Birmingham Development Plan and other Supplementary Planning Document (SPDs) of Birmingham City Council. It will include an overall strategy for how and where development will take place, location of new homes, jobs, services and facilities. It will enable the local community to meet their needs and aspirations.	
Plan contact point	<p>Joe Holyoak Co-ordinator of the NDP (Architect and urban designer) Studio 312 Zellig The Custard Factory Gibb Street Birmingham B9 4AA Tel: 0121 633 8918 Email: <a href="mailto:jh@joeholyoak.co.uk">jh@joeholyoak.co.uk</a></p>	<p>Kelly Darby Senior Planning Officer Planning and Regeneration Birmingham City Council PO Box 23 Birmingham B1 1TU Tel: 0121 464 9871 Email: <a href="mailto:Kelly.darby@birmingham.gov.uk">Kelly.darby@birmingham.gov.uk</a></p>



Figure 1.1: Balsall Heath NDP (BCC 2013)

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## 2 Methodology

### 2.1 Assessment of the options presented within the Balsall Heath NDP

2.1.1 A full list of the reasonable alternative options can be found in **Table 2.1**. Each of the options was assessed against the thirteen SA Objectives.

### 2.2 Approach to the appraisal of the options

2.2.1 The assessment of the Balsall Heath NDP options was undertaken using a high level assessment technique. The findings are presented in matrix format and are accompanied by a commentary on identified effects. The matrix is not a conclusive tool. Its main function is to identify at a high level whether or not the proposed options are likely to bring positive, adverse or uncertain effects in relation to the SA Objectives. A benefit of this approach is that a range of options can be examined, which can be further assessed if necessary. **Table 2.2** shows the key to identifying whether the effects of an option are positive, adverse or uncertain.

**Table 2.2:** Key to the matrix assessment

Key:	
Likely strong positive effect	++
Likely positive effect	+
Neutral/no effect	0
Likely adverse effect	-
Likely strong adverse effect	--
Uncertain effects	+/-

2.2.2 The SA Objectives have been developed through the Plans, Policies and Programmes (PPP) review, the baseline data collection and the key issues identified for the area during the Scoping Review. The SEA topics identified in Annex I (f) of the SEA Directive were one of the key determinants when considering which SA Objectives should be used for appraisal purposes. The SA Objectives seek to reflect each of these influences to ensure the assessment process is robust and thorough.

2.2.3 The SA Objectives included within the SA Framework, and the sustainability theme to which they relate are set out in **Table 2.3**.

**Table 2.1: Reasonable Alternatives**

Place Specific Options
Former JCC site
1. Do nothing;
2. Implement bulky goods consent;
3. Housing option;
4. Housing-led option and associated mixed use development;
5. Mixed use, including convenience retail (degree of housing along Balsall Heath Road);
6. Mixed use, including employment and hotel;
7. Mixed use, including leisure and horticulture (market garden);
8. Education (new secondary school).
Highgate Road
9. Do nothing;
10. Housing-led option;
11. Offices and employment;
12. Mixed use to include residential and possibly employment and retail.
Moseley Road Neighbourhood Centre (town square)
13. Do nothing;
14. Create square or similar public space;
15. Pursue heritage-led transformation of the area to galvanise existing strong conservation features. Transform to support employment led activities. Might need HLF support.
Balsall Heath Railway Station
16. Do nothing;
17. New railway station (at a number of locations in the plan area).
Calthorpe Park
18. Do nothing;
19. Environmental enhancement to strengthen role as a core part of local green infrastructure with increased tree cover and pollination sites.
River Rea
20. Do nothing;
21. Re-grade.
Old Moseley Road
22. Do nothing;
23. Environmental enhancement.
Area-Wide Options
Sustainable Neighbourhood – future proofing
24. Higher code standards than default level (Code for Sustainable Homes) for new build properties;
25. Micro-electricity generation including water/ wind/ PVC's;
26. No net loss of open space;
27. New allotments alongside the River Rea west of Clevedon Road and Longmore Street.



**Table 2.3: SA Framework**

SA Objective		Sustainability theme
1	Protect, enhance and manage biodiversity and geodiversity.	Biodiversity and geodiversity.
2	Improve air, water and soil qualities through reducing pollution both diffuse and point source.	Air, water and soil.
3	Improve the efficiency of transport networks by increasing the proportion of travel by sustainable modes and by promoting policies that reduce the need to travel.	Climate change, accessibility and transport.
4	Promote and support climate change mitigation through reducing Birmingham's greenhouse gas emissions from all sources.	Climate change.
5	Adapt to the anticipated levels of climate change.	Climate change.
6	Protect and conserve natural resources.	Material assets, air, water and soil.
7	Protect, enhance and manage sites, features, areas and landscapes of archaeological, historical and cultural heritage importance, their setting and significance.	Historic environment and townscape.
8	Protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the townscape, maintaining and strengthening local distinctiveness and sense of place.	Historic environment and townscape.
9	Reduce waste generation and disposal, and promote the waste hierarchy of reduce, reuse, recycle/compost, energy recovery and disposal.	Material assets.
10	Safeguard and improve community health, safety and wellbeing.	Health, population and quality of life.
11	Provide affordable, environmentally sound and good quality housing for all.	Housing, population and quality of life.
12	Reduce poverty and social exclusion and close the gap between the most deprived areas in Balsall Heath and the rest of the ward.	Quality of life, housing.
13	Develop a dynamic, diverse and knowledge-based economy that excels in innovation with higher value, lower impact activities.	Economic factors and quality of life.

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## 3 Appraisal Findings

### 3.1 Introduction

3.1.1 This chapter discusses the assessment of the reasonable alternatives. This section includes the assessment of options within seven place specific sites as well as a section of options relating to the whole area. Overall there are twenty-seven options. **Table 2.1** shows all of the options. Within this chapter, the options within each site are clarified in a table, followed by a matrix summarising the assessment of the options against the thirteen SA Objectives. A commentary explaining the assessment follows each matrix.

### 3.2 Former JCC site

3.2.1 The ex-Joseph Chamberlain sixth form college site is currently a cleared area of land. This piece of land provides an opportunity for new development within Balsall Heath. There are eight options for the former JCC site.

3.2.2 An Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) of the former JCC site was undertaken in 2004, an addendum to update the findings was published in 2011. The EIA report identified a number of local issues. This SA report has used the findings of the EIA report to guide the following assessment. However, the conclusions in this SA report have been worked from a SA framework and discuss issues at a strategic level. SA should not be confused with EIA.

3.2.1 The options are identified in **Table 3.1**. The high-level assessment of these options is shown in **Table 3.2**.

**Table 3.1:** Former JCC site options

Place Specific Options
Former JCC site
1. Do nothing;
2. Implement bulky goods consent;
3. Housing option;
4. Housing-led option and associated mixed use development;
5. Mixed use, including convenience retail (degree of housing along Balsall Heath Road);
6. Mixed use, including employment and hotel;
7. Mixed use, including leisure and horticulture (market garden);
8. Education (new secondary school).

3.2.2 The former Joseph Chamberlain sixth form college site is a brownfield site therefore any attempts to develop at this site would preserve natural resources. Development could also improve accessibility to services, facilities and amenities. Accessibility is likely to be further enhanced within a mixed-use development due to the close proximity of housing and facilities.

**Table 3.2: Former JCC site assessment matrix**

Former JCC Site	SA Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Do nothing	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	-	0	0	0	0	0
Implement bulky goods consent	+/-	0	0	-	+/-	+	0	+/-	0	0	0	+	+
Housing option	+/-	0	0	+/-	+/-	+	0	+/-	0	0	++	+	0
Housing-led option and associated mixed use development	+/-	0	0	+/-	+/-	+	0	+/-	0	0	+	++	+
Mixed use, including convenience retail	+/-	0	0	+/-	+/-	+	0	+/-	0	0	+	++	+
Mixed use, including employment and hotel	+/-	0	0	+/-	+/-	+	0	+/-	0	0	+	++	+
Mixed use, including leisure and horticulture	++	0	0	+/-	+/-	+	0	+/-	0	+	+	++	+
Education	+/-	0	0	0	+/-	+	0	+/-	0	+	0	+	0

- 3.2.3 The site has been cleared, and could already be home to some pioneer plant species. Not developing will allow the continued population of biodiversity on the site. Developing a horticulture facility onsite is likely to increase biodiversity (SA Objective 1). Depending on the design of development, and how much biodiversity and green infrastructure is incorporated, development could increase, or decrease the amount of biodiversity. The ability to adapt to climate change, and the appearance of the townscape also depend on how much green land and GI has been designed into the development.
- 3.2.4 The EIA (ENVIRON 2004) admits that the site is not within a designated area of archaeological importance, although there are 33 listed buildings within one kilometre. All options are assessed as having neutral or no effect on archaeology and historical importance (SA Objective 7) as the updated EIA (ENVIRON 2011) believes there is scarce evidence of prehistoric, roman and medieval use of the site and the effects of development would be insignificant.
- 3.2.5 Implementing development is likely to increase emissions due to an increase in residents and users travelling to this location. This could occur to a greater degree under the bulky goods option as there is a greater chance of heavy goods vehicles (HGV). The design of development, particularly residential and employment, is likely to reduce Balsall Heath’s emissions due to the implementation of CfSH and BREEAM standards. Mixed-use developments could reduce emissions further, as housing and employment/retail are located within proximity to each other and could facilitate walking. In addition, the EIA (ENVIRON 2011) states that the site is suitably located to take advantage of public transport.
- 3.2.6 There are no adverse effects of not developing. However there are a number of proposals which would make good use of the site and provide additional and sustainable uses.

### 3.3 Highgate Road

3.3.1 Highgate Road is a busy road which forms part of Birmingham’s ring road. Housing was present either side of the road, but was cleared a long time ago. This clearance has led to pleasant green spaces bordering the road.

**Table 3.3:** Highgate Road options

Place Specific Options
Highgate Road
9. Do nothing;
10. Housing-led option;
11. Offices and employment;
12. Mixed use to include residential and possibly employment and retail.

3.3.2 There are four options within the Highgate Road site; these are shown in **Table 3.3**. The assessment of options can be found in **Table 3.4**.

**Table 3.4:** Highgate Road assessment matrix

Highgate Road	SA Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Do nothing	+	-	-	-	+	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0
Housing-led option	-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+	0	+/-	0	+/-	++	+	+
Offices and employment	-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+/-	+	0	+/-	0	+/-	0	+	++
Mixed use to include residential and possibly employment and retail	-	+	+	+/-	+/-	+	0	+/-	0	+/-	++	++	++

3.3.3 Highgate Road (A4540) is a main road located to the north of Balsall Heath neighbourhood. As part of Birmingham’s ring road, Highgate road experiences a high level of traffic. Lack of action will ensure the road does not experience a reduction in traffic, or emissions. Currently the road is bordered by green spaces resulting from housing clearance. Doing nothing will protect this green area and safeguard the biodiversity, enable adaption to climate change, as well as preserving the character of the townscape. Developing on this area is likely to reduce biodiversity and open space in the neighbourhood.

3.3.4 The area is well linked to Birmingham city centre, as well as the local centre at Ladypool Road. Developing in this area could (depending on the behaviour of residents and users) lead to more sustainable methods of transportation, if people choose to walk and cycle to amenities, and sustainable modes of transport are supported by the NDP.

3.3.5 Residential development will lead to additional housing in the area. Due to the location of Highgate Road development along the road could improve accessibility of residents to amenities, services and facilities. Accessibility will be increased in a mixed use development due to the inclusion of employment and retail facilities within the development.

### 3.4 Moseley Road Neighbourhood Centre

3.4.1 Moseley Road is one of the local centres within Balsall Heath. It is an important site due to its rich history and its significance for the local economy as much of Balsall Heath’s employment and industry sites are located in this area. An issue regarding the design, use and safety of Moseley Road was highlighted during the Community Planning Workshop where slower speeds and enhanced crossing points were discussed.

**Table 3.5: Moseley Road Neighbourhood Centre options**

Place Specific Options
Moseley Road Neighbourhood Centre (town square)
13. Do nothing;
14. Create square or similar public space;
15. Pursue heritage-led transformation of the area to galvanise existing strong conservation features. Transform to support employment led activities. Might need HLF support.

3.4.2 There are three options for the Moseley Road Neighbourhood Centre; these are shown in **Table 3.5**. The assessment of options can be found in **Table 3.6**.

**Table 3.6: Moseley Road Neighbourhood Centre assessment matrix**

Moseley Road Neighbourhood Centre	SA Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Do nothing	0	-	-	-	-	0	-	-	0	-	0	-	+
Create square or similar public space	+	+	+	+	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	+	+
Pursue heritage-led transformation	0	0	0	0	0	0	++	++	0	0	0	+	++

3.4.3 Moseley Road has a number of important historical buildings such as Balsall Heath Library, a grade II\* listed building. Some of the buildings are in a critical state of disrepair and require protection. The first option which proposes to ‘do nothing’, will not protect and enhance the historically important buildings and they will continue to deteriorate. The main road is traffic-dominated and divides Balsall Heath. By doing nothing, the option allows the use of cars to continue unabated. Use of cars could lead to a worsening air quality, and not reduce the neighbourhood’s emissions. Furthermore, the division through the neighbourhood remains and reduces accessibility to amenities, and does nothing to close the gap between the most deprived areas in Balsall Heath.

3.4.4 Creating a square or a similar public space allows for a safe area for pedestrians and cyclists, allowing them access to the facilities and services throughout the neighbourhood. Implementing improved design could lead to increases in trees and biodiversity, and an improved ability to adapt to climate change.

3.4.5 The final option pursues a focus on the historic environment. Due to the state of the historic buildings on Moseley Road, concentrating on heritage-led transformation could lead to preservation of features of historical significance, as well as the character of the neighbourhood. As the option would be undertaken using employment led activities it is likely the economic vitality of the area would also improve.

### 3.5 Balsall Heath Railway Station

3.5.1 The Birmingham to Bristol Railway Line runs through the area, however there are currently no train stations located within the NDP area. There is strong support for a railway station within Balsall Heath, located on the existing railway line.

**Table 3.7:** Balsall Heath Railway Station options

Place Specific Options
Balsall Heath Railway Station
16. Do nothing;
17. New railway station (at a number of locations in the plan area).

3.5.2 There are two options for Balsall Heath Railway Station which are shown in **Table 3.7**. The high level assessment of options is shown in matrix format in **Table 3.8**.

**Table 3.8:** Balsall Heath Railway Station assessment matrix

Balsall Heath Railway Station	SA Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Do nothing	0	-	-	-	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	0
New railway station	0	+	++	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	0	+	+

3.5.3 The key issues within Balsall Heath are to do with parking and congestion. The area experiences high volumes of traffic. Introduction of a new railway station provides an opportunity for residents to reduce their car use and opt for more sustainable modes of transportation. A modal shift in transport could lead to a reduction in congestion, car emissions, and an improvement in air quality.

3.5.4 A railway station within the neighbourhood is likely to increase local distinctiveness and sense of place. The linkages that a new railway station would produce is likely to support the local economy, providing additional and easier access to facilities. The easy accessibility will also benefit the deprived in the neighbourhood. Not opening a new railway station in Balsall Heath will not expand the transport choices of residents who will in all likelihood continue to drive.

### 3.6 Calthorpe Park

3.6.1 Calthorpe Park is a large, historic, well-established park with a play centre. It forms an important haven for wildlife and contains a large amount of biodiversity. The River Rea runs through the park and provides a significant GI asset linking the park with Cannon Hill Park.

**Table 3.9:** Calthorpe Park options

Place Specific Options
Calthorpe Park
18. Do nothing;
19. Environmental enhancement to strengthen role as a core part of local green infrastructure with increased tree cover and pollination sites.

3.6.2 The options for Calthorpe Park are identified in **Table 3.9**. The high-level assessment of these options is shown in **Table 3.10**.

**Table 3.10:** Calthorpe Park assessment matrix

Calthorpe Park	SA Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Do nothing	+	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	0	0
Environmental enhancement	++	0	+	+	+	0	0	++	0	+	0	0	0

3.6.3 Calthorpe Park is a well-established, large park which contains a variety of biodiversity features and is one of the most prominent green infrastructure assets within Balsall Heath. Green areas within Balsall Heath improve the local distinctiveness and promote a sense of place. Green spaces also help adaption to climate change, and provide an area for sport and active recreation to take place.

3.6.4 Improving and enhancing Calthorpe Park, as proposed by the second option, is likely to heighten the appeal of the park. The second option also recommends increasing tree cover and increasing pollination sites. These recommendations lead the park from being positive for biodiversity to strongly positive for biodiversity.



### 3.7 River Rea

3.7.1 The principle watercourse within Balsall Heath is the River Rea. The watercourse is categorised as having a poor ecological status. It has been heavily modified and runs through culverts in numerous places within Birmingham. Significant improvements to water quality are needed in order to meet Water Framework Directive objectives. The River Rea is an important linear feature and habitat within Balsall Heath. It helps connect Balsall Heath to other areas of the city. It is a good natural resource and has huge multifunctional potential.

**Table 3.11: River Rea options**

Place Specific Options
River Rea
20. Do nothing;
21. Re-grade.

3.7.2 The two River Rea options are identified in **Table 3.11**. The high-level assessment of these options is shown as a matrix in **Table 3.12**.

**Table 3.12: River Rea assessment matrix**

River Rea	SA Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Do nothing	+	-	0	0	-	0	0	+	0	0	0	0	0
Re-grade	+	+	0	0	++	0	0	+	0	+	0	0	0

3.7.3 The River Rea is a good natural resource and has huge multifunctional potential. It runs through Calthorpe Park on the western side of Balsall Heath. The river is currently categorised as having a poor ecological status. Doing nothing will not improve the ecological status of the river, which must reach 'good' water quality status by 2015 (as required by the Water Framework Directive). Western areas of the neighbourhood are under a flood risk from the River Rea.

3.7.4 By re-grading the river channel it reduces the likelihood of flood events occurring and improves Balsall Heath's ability to adapt to climate change. There is also scope for improvements to ecological quality of the water, and potential for the river to be used for recreation to encourage healthy and active lifestyles.

### 3.8 Old Moseley Road

3.8.1 Old Moseley Road is the part of Moseley Road which has been bypassed by Haden Way and Highgate Middleway. There are several buildings of character. However the general environment of Old Moseley Road has become slightly degraded and it contains some un-used buildings.

**Table 3.13:** Old Moseley Road options

Place Specific Options
Old Moseley Road
22. Do nothing;
23. Environmental enhancement.

3.8.2 There are two options for Old Moseley Road are shown in **Table 3.13**. The high level assessment of options is shown in matrix format in **Table 3.14**.

**Table 3.14:** Old Moseley Road assessment matrix

Old Moseley Road	SA Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Do nothing	0	0	0	0	0	0	-	-	0	-	0	0	0
Environmental enhancement	+	0	0	0	0	0	+/-	+	0	+	0	+	+

3.8.3 Old Moseley Road currently has a degraded environment. Environmental enhancements to Old Moseley Road could take the form of tree planting, which would increase biodiversity; lighting, paving and street furniture, which could safeguard community safety and wellbeing. Improvements of this type are likely to lead to an enhancement in appearance and could help manage a sense of place within the neighbourhood. Depending on design and what is implemented, environmental improvements could help protect and enhance the local buildings of character. Doing nothing will not enhance the buildings of character, their setting, or improve the health, safety and wellbeing of users.

### 3.9 Sustainable Neighbourhood

- 3.9.1 There are four ‘future proofing’ options within the sustainable neighbourhoods topic. Unlike the site options, these do not seem to be mutually exclusive and could all be implemented.
- 3.9.2 All of the options proposed within the sustainable neighbourhood heading are positive. Each option caters for different requirements, so together they form a comprehensive sustainability package.

**Table 3.15: Sustainable Neighbourhood options**

Area-Wide Options
Sustainable Neighbourhood – future proofing
24. Higher code standards than default level (Code for Sustainable Homes) for new build properties;
25. Micro-electricity generation including water/ wind/ PVC’s;
26. No net loss of open space;
27. New allotments alongside the River Rea west of Clevedon Road and Longmore Street.

- 3.9.3 The four sustainable neighbourhood options are shown in Table 3.15 and the high-level assessment matrix is Table 3.16.

**Table 3.16: Sustainable Neighbourhood assessment matrix**

Sustainable Neighbourhood	SA Objectives												
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Higher code standards than default level	0	+	0	++	+	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	0
Micro-electricity generation	0	0	0	++	0	+	0	0	0	0	0	0	++
No net loss of open space	++	+	0	0	++	+	0	+	0	+	0	+	0
New allotments alongside the River Rea	++	0	0	0	+	0	0	+	0	+	0	+	+

- 3.9.4 Implementing higher code standards than default levels reduces waste and pollution, conserves natural resources, provides decent housing and helps Balsall Heath adapt to climate change. Its main strength is the reduction in greenhouse gas emissions due to the higher standards.
- 3.9.5 Employing micro-electricity generation protects and conserves natural resources. The option also reduces the emissions of Balsall Heath. Furthermore the option is likely to lead to a diversification of the economy, with the introduction of new business sectors specialising in micro-electricity generation. This could lead to inward investment into the area, as well as encouraging innovation.

- 3.9.6 The specification that there should not be any net loss of open space within Balsall Heath helps improve access to open space as well as protect, enhance and manage the character and appearance of the townscape. This retention of green and open space in Balsall Heath maintains biodiversity and geodiversity and improves the neighbourhood's ability to adapt to climate change.
- 3.9.7 New allotments alongside the River Rea have a similar impact as arresting the loss of open space. Allotments contribute to the biodiversity of the neighbourhood. They also help improve the appearance of the area, provide a source of exercise, and help adaptation to climate change.

## 4 Conclusions

### 4.1 Conclusions and Recommendations

4.1.1 This Sustainability Appraisal was prepared to accompany the assessment of the Balsall Heath Neighbourhood Plan: Reasonable Alternatives. Broadly speaking the majority of policy proposals will deliver positive effects across the neighbourhood.

4.1.2 Where adverse effects were found they were often within the 'do nothing' option due to the potential for negative behaviours or impacts to continue unabated. The following options have been assessed and identified as carrying potential adverse effects:

- Implementing bulky goods consent under option 2 – could lead to an increase in emissions due to likelihood of HGVs;
- Do nothing under option 9 – allows an increase in car use, and the consequent increase in emissions;
- Options 10, 11 and 12 for Highgate Road – development on this site could lead to a reduction in biodiversity due to a reduction in green space;
- Do nothing under option 13 – allows deterioration of locally important sites and buildings of historic interest, the continued dominance of the car, and a division through Balsall Heath;
- Do nothing under option 16 – does not encourage sustainable modes of transport or reduce emissions;
- Do nothing under option 20 – the River Rea is currently assessed as having 'poor' ecological status, this option does not improve the river's quality;
- Do nothing under option 22 – allows the degraded environment to remain.

4.1.3 The following recommendations can be made with regards to the next stage of plan making:

1. Birmingham City Council should seek to avoid those options which have been identified to cause adverse effects within the neighbourhood;
2. Where options with adverse effects are carried through to the next stage, Birmingham City Council should seek to minimise the affects of the adverse effects;
3. Birmingham City Council should seek to clarify those policy options where the SA process has not been able to accurately appraise the potential effects.

### 4.2 Limitations

4.2.1 There are a number of limitations which should be borne in mind when considering the results and conclusions of this assessment.

- Sustainability appraisal is a tool for predicting potential significant effects. The actual effects of the policies may be different from those identified. Prediction of effects is made using an evidence based approach and incorporates a judgement.
- The appraisal has been prepared with the most up to date data available. The matrix should not be regarded as conclusive, its main function is to show visually

whether or not the proposed options are likely to bring positive, adverse or uncertain effects in relation to the SA Objectives.

- Further drafting may be done on the policies, and additional information may come to light before the NP is adopted.
- The strategic nature of the assessment identifies issues which could be improved and can therefore be used to guide the next iteration of the plan. However due to the broad nature of the policies, the assessment does not go into great depth.
- Every attempt has been made to predict effects as accurately as possible using the best available information.
- Many effects will depend on the size and location of development, building design and construction, proximity to sensitive receptors such as wildlife sites, conservation areas, flood risk areas and watercourses, and the range of uses taking place.
- SA should not be confused with EIA.

### 4.3 Next stages

- 4.3.1 These findings will be used to help inform and influence the preparation of the 'Preferred Options' for the NDP. In this context the findings of this assessment should be considered during the on-going progression and evolution of the NDP. The sustainability appraisal will continue to inform and influence the plan process by feeding into the continued development of a NDP document.

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