



# LANDSCAPE ANALYSIS

## BEECHES, BOOTHS AND BARR

**“TOWARDS A GARDEN SUBURB”**  
- PERRY BARR, BIRMINGHAM



## REVISIONS

**Initial Issue**      12th February 2019

**Revision**          **A**      14th February 2019  
                         **B**      19th March 2019

**Produced by**      DSA Environment + Design Ltd.

All images taken by:

**DSA** Environment + Design Ltd  
2a Fleeman Grove  
West Bridgford  
Nottingham  
NG2 5BH

0115 9818 745  
[www.dsa-ed.co.uk](http://www.dsa-ed.co.uk)  
(unless otherwise credited)



# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## THE LANDSCAPE OF PERRY BARR

A study has been undertaken to identify, analyse and advise, from a landscape perspective, the suggested steps to achieving the overall 'garden suburb' vision for the Beeches, Booths and Barr (3Bs) Neighbourhood Plan (NP) forum.

These have been put together following a consultation event with the forum, consideration of scoping material produced (and Birmingham City Council published material), and field work. The Turnberry Park Development Report was also considered .

Helen Metcalfe of Planning With People (PwP) has produced a useful résumé of the NP Forum's 'vision'.

*"In 15 years time, the Beeches Booths and Barr area will be a clean and attractive green area, a **garden suburb** north of the city" ... local people will have easy access to a landscape of*

- 1. Well managed and vibrant streets and public spaces*
- 2. High quality green spaces (parks, waterways and open spaces).*

In order to provide a succinct response to the vision from a landscape point of view, we have chosen the four most (out of nine) relevant 'Community Objectives'. As such, we have directed our guidance towards ideas around how the NP may create easily accessible well managed and vibrant streets and develop high quality park, waterways and open spaces.

The selected community objectives are:

#### Community Objective 1

"The designated parks, gardens and other areas of nature conservation are under-utilized assets. These special areas will be protected and enhanced. Development should not have a negative impact on these protected areas."

#### Community Objective 5

"Improving accessibility to and visibility of the waterways that run through the plan area is supported as it will provide opportunities for exercise and leisure and will enhance the character of the area."

#### Community Objective 7

"Improving the connection between the wide variety of local green spaces by improving and extending routes that create green connections, whilst supporting nature conservation and improving biodiversity is supported."

#### Community Objective 8

"Flooding has significantly affected the quality of life of local people. Development should not increase flood risk. Innovative solutions to reduce the risk of future flood events are supported. "

#### Structure of this Report

We have firstly taken into account the geographical significance of the area, looking at the important 'centres' and 'landmarks' that in and around the site. (Page 5)

We have analysed the original vision for a garden suburb and the key characteristics that make one in order to advise on the necessary changes that should happen to achieve a garden suburb in Perry Barr. (Page 6)

We have then identified and described the existing green spaces and mapped their characteristics on three drawings ('landform and neighbourhoods', 'waterways and flooding' and 'green space and their designations'). Analysis of these maps has helped to better understand the location and causes of the existing problems, to identify where the current assets lie and therefore the opportunities which present themselves to move the area 'towards a garden suburb'. (Page 8-13) The view assessment concludes the analysis of the existing situation and provides a more in depth judgement of street character by illustrating which views (and therefore areas) currently have the required features of a garden suburb. (Page 14-15)

The final two drawings provide information and guidance on the opportunities for improving a) the green space character of Perry Barr and b) the street character of Perry Barr. The 'opportunities for green blue infrastructure' drawing illustrates how targeted improvements in specific areas as part of a spatial strategy will help create the strong landscape framework that is commonly associated with a successful garden suburb. (Page 16-21)

The 'opportunities for creating garden suburb streets' drawing illustrates the location and type of improvements (new hedge planting, new tree planting and sustainable drainage systems [SuDS] retrofit) which could realistically be installed to enhance the garden suburb 'feel' and also provides some general considerations on how best to do so. (Page 22-23)



# CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	3
-------------------	---

## *UNDERSTANDING WHAT MAKES A GARDEN SUBURB?*

I	THE PERRY BARR NEIGHBOURHOOD VISION: “TOWARDS A GARDEN SUBURB”	
	The Aim of the Garden Suburb	6
	The Typical Components of a Garden Suburb: Street	6
	The Typical Components of a Garden Suburb: Green Space	6

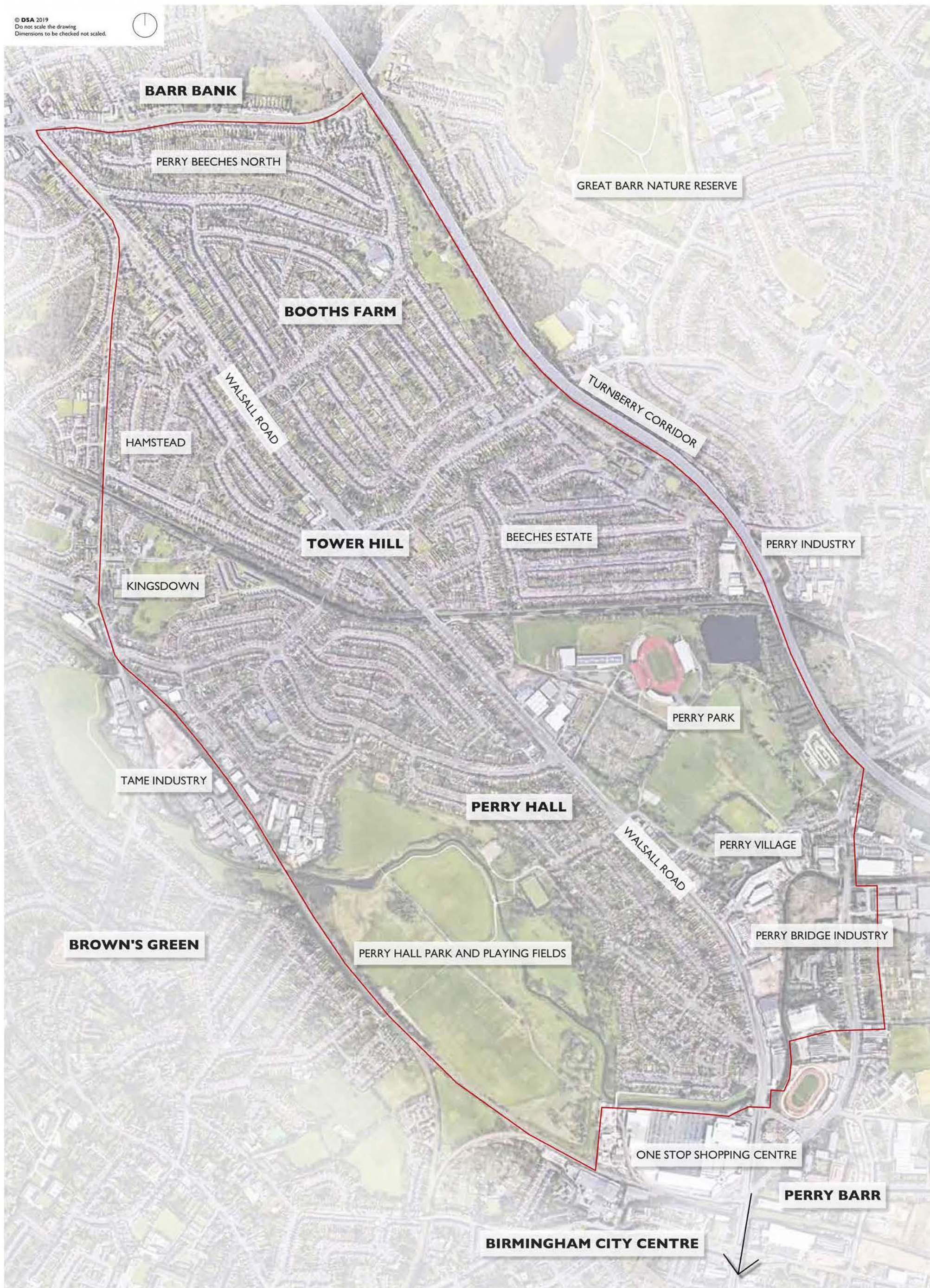
## *UNDERSTANDING THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE OF PERRY BARR: ITS STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES FOR CREATING A GARDEN SUBURB*

2	THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER: POTENTIAL FOR A GARDEN SUBURB?	
	The Current Landscape?	8
	Landform: Perry Barr on the Hill	8
	Designing with Water: Watercourse and Flooding Problems	10
	The Opportunity for retrofit SuDS	10
	The Green Spaces of Perry Barr	12
	Views in Perry Barr: Where is Least Characteristic of a Garden Suburb?	14

## *PRESENTING THE OPPORTUNITIES FOR CREATING A GARDEN SUBURB IN PERRY BARR*

3	LANDSCAPE OPPORTUNITIES	
	The 3B's NP Area as a Whole	16
	Green Blue Infrastructure	16
	Turnberry Park	18
	Perry Hall Park and Playing Fields	20
	The Tame Valley Canal	21
	The Streets	22





0m 100m 200m 500m 1km

1:10,000@A3 1:5,000@A1

## AERIAL PLAN

THE 3B's AND ITS CONTEXT



# THE PERRY BARR NEIGHBOURHOOD VISION “TOWARDS A GARDEN SUBURB”

## THE AIM OF THE GARDEN SUBURB

In order to achieve the vision's aim of achieving the appearance of a 'garden suburb', we believe that some clarification of what a 'garden suburb' might be like is needed. We have decided to split the landscape character of a typical garden suburb into two; the street character and the character of the green spaces themselves. Both the streets and green spaces have some key characteristics that distinguish them from other suburban areas which have been illustrated and described on the cross sections below.

Typically garden suburbs would resemble parts of Hampstead, in north London, developed in the early twentieth century and designed by Raymond Unwin.

Hampstead's aims included:

- It should cater for all income levels
- Housing density should be low.
- Roads should be wide and, importantly, tree lined.
- Houses should be separated by hedges, not walls or fences.
- There would be ample green space, accessible to all
- It should be tranquil (and have no church bells!).

The ideas advanced at Hampstead were inspired by the work of Ebenezer Howard and Unwin's previous experience at Letchworth Garden City in Hertfordshire. Howard was the principal designer behind the Garden Cities movement.

## THE TYPICAL COMPONENTS OF A GARDEN SUBURB STREET

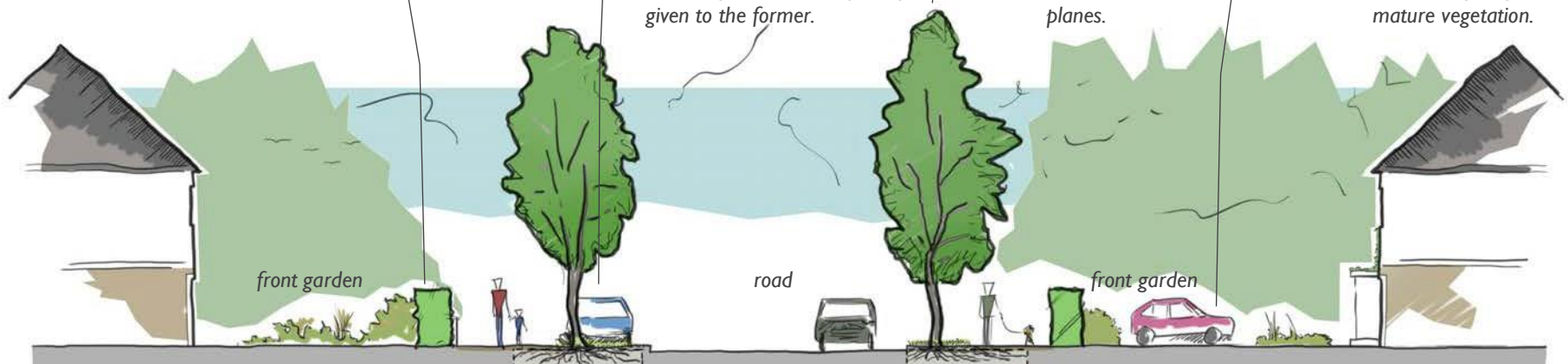
The width of the highway tends to be large to accommodate footpaths on either side of the road, as well as wide green verges to allow trees to establish and grow. Large front gardens means that the width between housing frontages tends to be significant.

Importantly, boundaries to both the pavement and adjacent properties are formed of large hedges and only low fences and walls if necessary.

Roadsides are often formed of a combination of grass verges, on street parking and driveway access, with priority given to the former.

Tree-lined streets using large suitable species such as Limes and London planes.

Off-street parking can be accommodated on large front garden plots but should be screened by large amounts of mature vegetation.



## GREEN SPACE

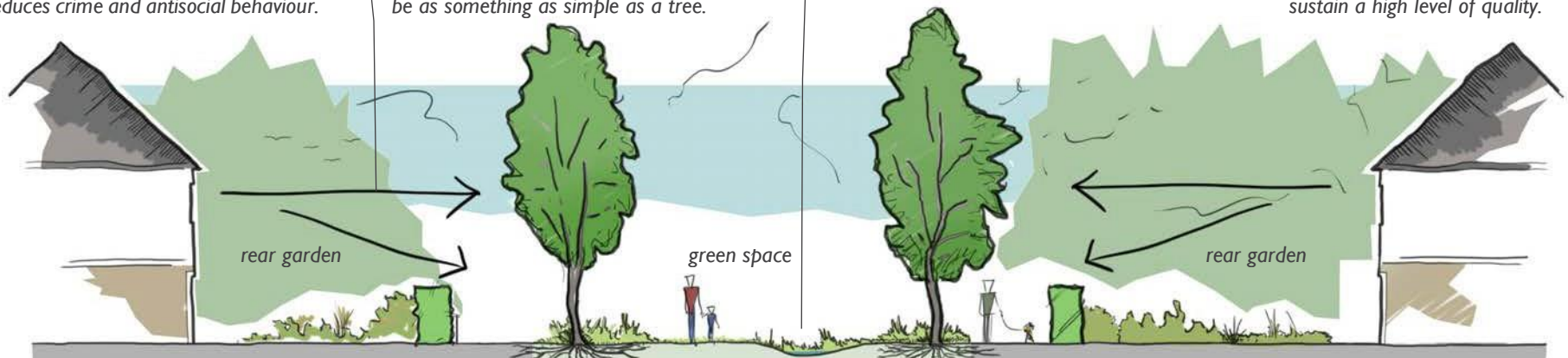
According to the TCPA, green spaces 'should make up at least 40% of a community's total area in a garden suburb'. On the face of it they are no different to green spaces in any other areas - however there are some features they should have:

Green spaces in garden suburbs tend to be heavily overlooked by neighbouring residential properties. This allows for passive surveillance and more often than not, reduces crime and antisocial behaviour.

The more ornamental green spaces often feature a central landmark which people are drawn to and frequently meet at. This could be an decorative fountain or sculpture or may be as something as simple as a tree.

Green spaces are often diverse in usage and offer multiple benefits. The one illustrated shows a small village green which also functions as a swale for water management.

Garden suburb green spaces don't need to be elaborate and expensive. Instead, attention should be paid to the management of green spaces in order to sustain a high level of quality.







Aerial photography of the centre of Hampstead Garden Suburb in London (The Independent, 2018). Although there appears not to be many trees in this image, it does show how one or two large ‘woodland’ sized trees can create a ‘greener’ feel than lots of smaller one. Attention should therefore be paid to protecting the existing mature trees in Perry Barr.



An image of a typical garden suburb street, in Letchworth. The building character is neither special nor distinct but the frontage row of large mature trees and the hedged boundaries create a greener ‘garden suburb’ character. (Pinterest, 2018)



Green spaces in garden suburbs importantly don’t have to be elaborated and over designed. Instead, attention should be focused on creating high quality green spaces, best done so by creating a well managed landscape that is responsive to problems and changes that may arise. (Ustigate Water Play, 2018)



# 2

## THE EXISTING LANDSCAPE CHARACTER POTENTIAL FOR A GARDEN SUBURB?

### THE CURRENT LANDSCAPE

Before suggestions are made on the potential opportunities for creating a garden suburb, it is important to identify and analyse the existing situation. The different features of the landscape that give it its character have been mapped, described and analysed.

These are:

1. The distinct landform of this area and the different neighbourhoods the landform has eventually formed.
2. Existing watercourses (namely the canal and the river) and areas of potential flooding, including the areas of flooding noted by the NP forum as problem areas to be considered.
3. The green space typologies and any designations that will guide any changes to the landscape or important features that could be under threat and should be protected.

A fourth drawing has been produced to illustrate the analysis of the existing typical garden suburb character, to show which areas are currently furthest away from this ultimate overall vision.

The following pages describe and analyse the drawings, highlighting some of the strengths and assets of the existing local landscape as well as some of the weaknesses or threats to creating a garden suburb.

*Existing assets such as the canal seem heavily underused, given the proximal location to the centre of Birmingham and the lack of other 'green corridors'. Mapping the canal as part of a wider network of green blue infrastructure will help to identify where the problems to its underuse may lie or where the opportunities for encouraging greater usage could be developed.*



### LANDFORM: PERRY BARR ON THE HILL

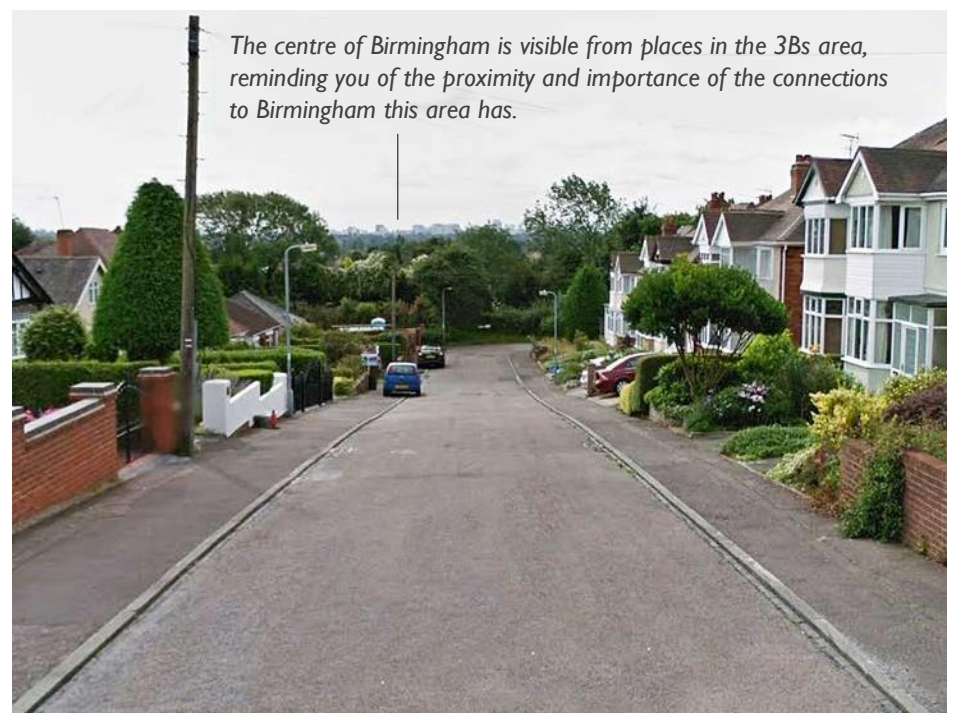
The Perry Barr NP Designated Area lies approximately 4 miles north of the centre of Birmingham. Using the 5m contours on Ordnance Survey mapping we have analysed the existing topography of the 3Bs NP area.

The northern half of Perry Barr sits on a hill (about 60m from top to bottom) and offers characterful narrow views along the less tree lined streets of the wider landscape. The southern half of Perry Barr is much flatter and lower lying, with much of it forming the flood plain to the River Tame. The A34, which divides the NP site into two, connects the two areas as it runs along the top of this northern ridge and descends into Birmingham as it crosses the canal further south.

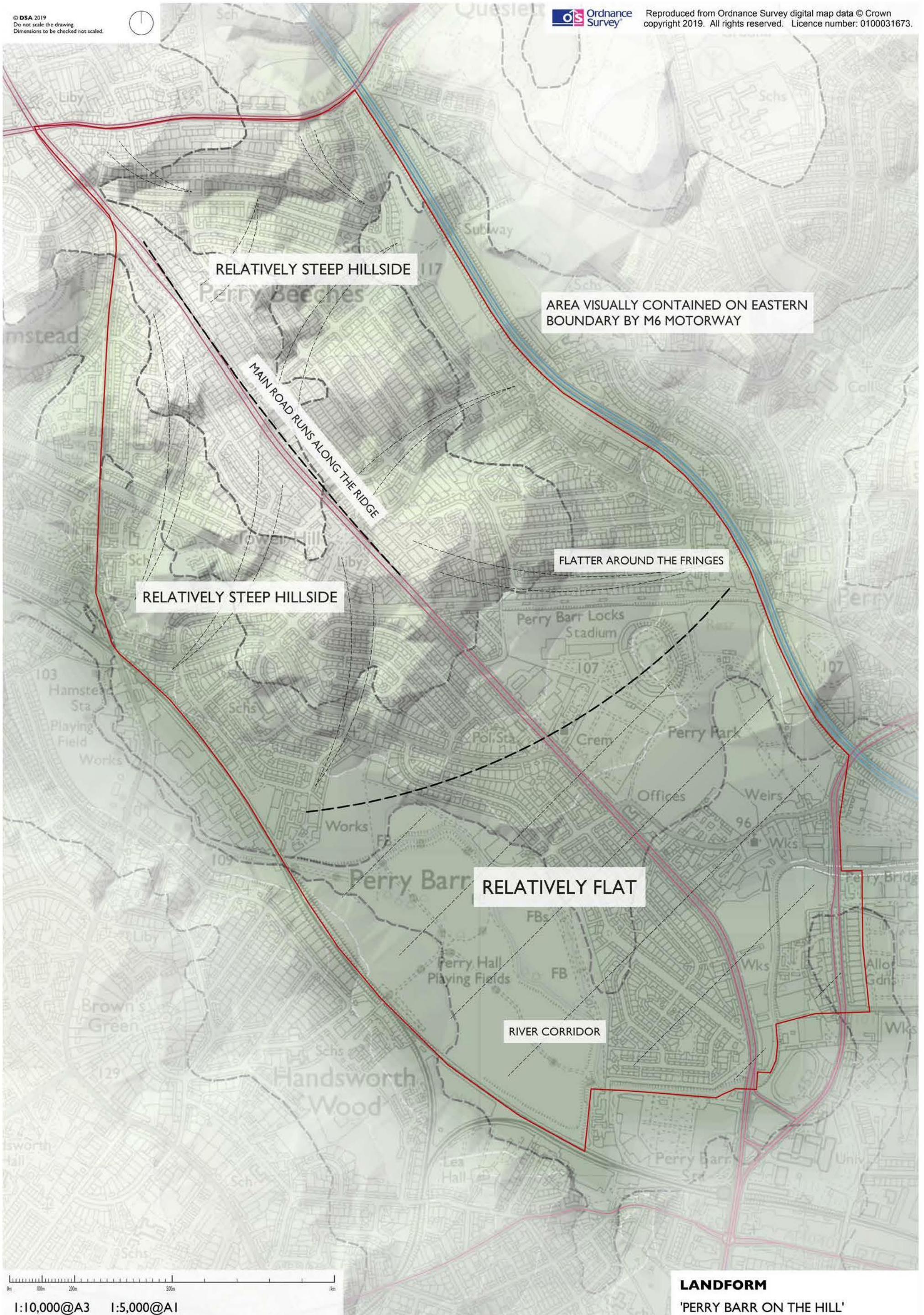
These two perpendicular dividing lines essentially create four distinct 'character areas'.

1. North east quarter - steeply sloping residential area, flatter around the fringes and bounded by two major roads.
2. North west quarter - steeply sloping residential area bound by the A34 and the River Tame Corridor.
3. South west quarter - relatively flat area with some residential streets but mostly important green space that forms part of the green belt.
4. South east quarter - relatively flat area which contains significant industrial areas and the Commonwealth Games redevelopment site in Perry Park.

The development of design ideas should respond to the distinct characteristics and challenges of each area, rather than simply treating the NP area generally as a whole.









# DESIGNING WITH WATER

## WATERCOURSES AND FLOODING PROBLEMS

Community Objective 5 for the NP is to “improve the accessibility and visibility of the waterways”. The drawing on page 11 (local watercourses and potential areas of flooding) shows the water courses and water bodies in the 3Bs NP area. It is evident from the drawing that both watercourses are a major asset and have great potential for providing easy access from the heart of Perry Barr to neighbouring areas of Birmingham.

The Tame Valley canal provides a man-made (but in many ways very ‘natural’) green spine, accessible for the most part and crossing through the centre of the NP area. The steep level changes mean large stretches are secluded, not being visible from the surrounding housing.

## THE OPPORTUNITY FOR RETROFIT SuDS

Traditionally, the approach to surface water has been to transmit the water downstream in the most efficient means possible, typically in a piped network. The result can be to concentrate flows downstream, causing flooding and pollution and drying out the soil in the upper parts of a stream catchment. Soil erosion (due to drying and rapid flows) and biodiversity loss (caused by the loss of wetlands throughout the catchment) may also be the effects.

The aim of sustainable drainage systems or ‘SuDS’ is to not only manage water flows but importantly to gain multiple benefits, rather than just addressing the problems associated with the quantity of water.

Typically SuDS ‘slows the flow’ using a ‘management train’, the first principle of which is to allow rain water to infiltrate into the ground as close as possible to where it lands. This is known as ‘source control’. Through the system, the water is given maximum opportunity to infiltrate, and the features resulting are designed in such a way as to be usable in different ways, biodiverse and attractive. SuDS features are typically open to the air and allow pollutants to be diffused rather than concentrated, and to be treated biologically.

SuDS as a technique is therefore not centrally about flood defence, but incorporates management of water flows as part of a broader strategy to deliver multifunctional spaces.

The River Tame flows from west to east through the southern half of the NP area. Much of the river (especially in the south eastern corner of the NP area) is canalised and difficult to access.

The drawing also shows identified areas of potential flooding, mostly associated with the River Tame.

At a local scale, the NP forum identified areas of historic localised flooding along streets mostly to the north of the Tame valley Canal, caused by the steep slopes and the impermeable nature of the land. It is hoped that SuDS retrofit elements may be able to lessen the impact of localised flooding, an idea which is explained below.

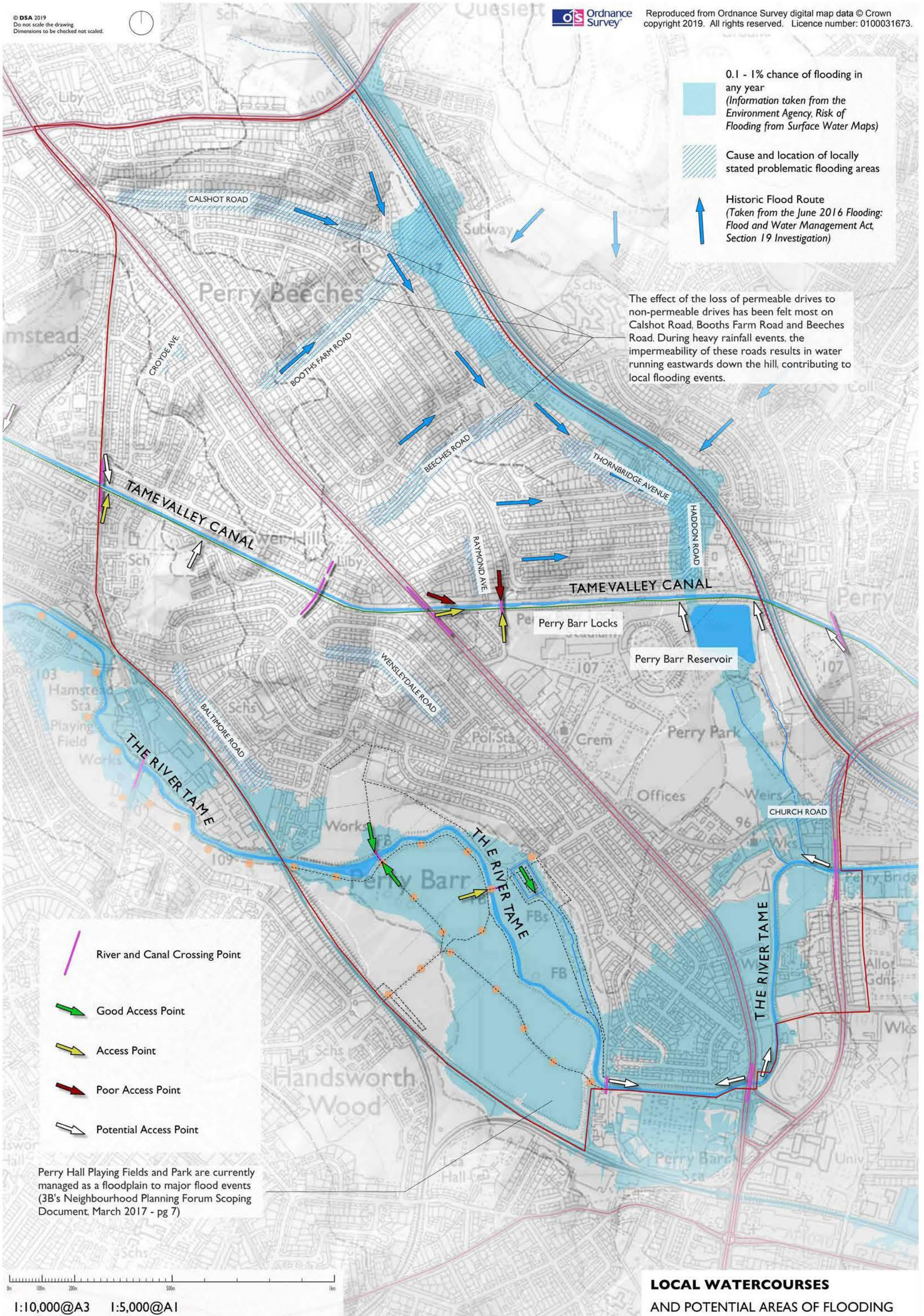


*An example of ‘retrofit SuDS’ on Ribblesdale Road in Nottingham. Small strips of the kerb and pavement have been broken out and replaced with areas of planting to collect water runoff from the road.*



*Another example of retrofitting SuDS, this time in Alma Road in Enfield. Here planted strips have been used as stormwater management, whilst also acting as traffic calming measures.*







# THE GREEN SPACES OF PERRY BARR

## PERRY PARK (COMMONWEALTH GAMES REDEVELOPMENT SITE)



Many of the green spaces have very discreet entrances that feel unsafe and unwelcoming. Perry Park is an exception, having a long open frontage onto Church Road.

## PERRY HALL PARK AND PLAYING FIELDS



The NP area has several really large green spaces, and a tremendous amount of land under Birmingham City Council ownership. Perry Hall Park provides vital large green space that local people play football and cricket in, make use of the cycle track and partake in parkruns.

## TURNBERRY PARK



The green spaces appear for the most part well maintained (although there is variation in this). There are opportunities specifically in Turnberry Park to 'relax' the mowing regime in wooded areas to increase the diversity of habitat.

## WALSALL ROAD AND THORNBRIDGE AVENUE ALLOTMENTS



The NP forum work has revealed that many of the green spaces in the NP area are underutilized. This is not the case with the allotments, which are well secured and in great demand.

## KINGSDOWN PARK



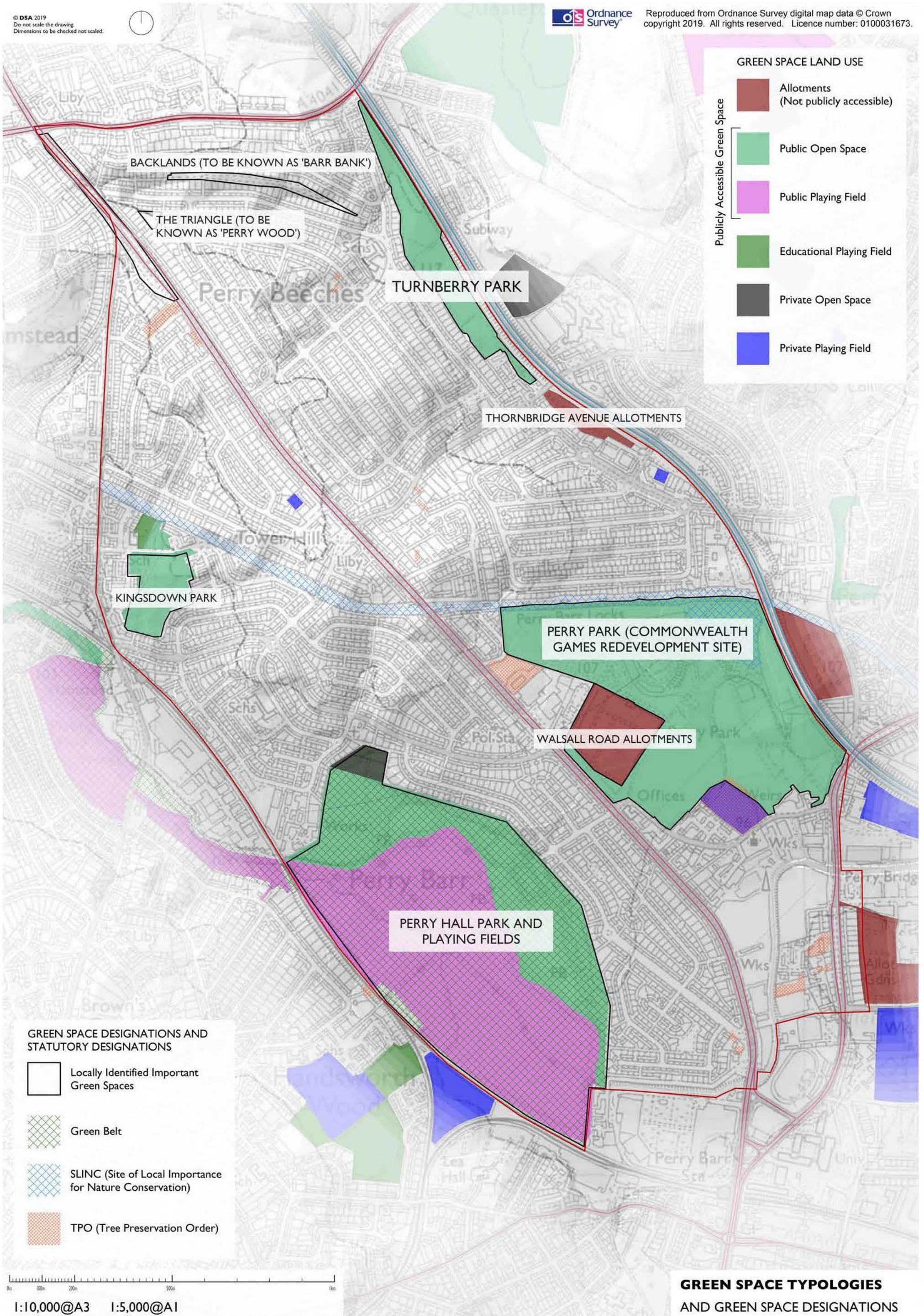
Kingsdown Park has poorly defined entrances and perhaps as a green space offers the opportunity to accommodate some additional development and leisure uses, as well as improved play space and biodiversity.

## 'BACKLANDS AND THE TRIANGLE'



The 'backlands' and 'the triangle' have been identified by the NP group as potential areas of improvement to form 'pocket' parks where access to larger green space is limited. The improvements could include some small scale SuDS, subject to detailed design.







# VIEWS IN PERRY BARR

## WHERE IS LEAST CHARACTERISTIC OF A GARDEN SUBURB?

Two of the key characteristics of a garden suburb are the physical layout of the area and the amount of 'green' that is visible. As the majority of the 3Bs are already built there is little we can change about the physical layout so we are concentrating on the visual aspect of the area's character.

In order to establish the existing 'garden suburb' character of the 3B's NP area we have analysed the existing views. These views have been graded by the distance of the view available and the amount of characteristic 'garden suburb' components present. It is thought that this will allow us to decide where is best to target initial interventions throughout the area.

The length of the line indicates the distance of the view available, for example short lines are enclosed, short views, whereas long lines are expansive and distant. The colour coding is explained to the right.






In essence, areas of red and orange arrows should be a priority for change in order to address the garden suburb vision. Point 'A' looks at an entrance point to Kingsdown Park and typifies an issue found across the area. The entrances to many of the green spaces are well hidden, narrow and only offer limited views of the space behind.

Longstone Road (Point 'B') typifies a street where the once tree lined and vegetated street has been lost to wide tarmac pavements and concreted off street parking. The impact of these changes seem to be wide spread across the NP area, rather than being localised in one area.

Views of the canal (the example being from Point 'C') are almost none existent unless you are on or next to the canal itself. This is due to the change in elevation around the course of the canal which means it is either heavily canalised, enclosed by lock gates or screened behind dense vegetation. There are also very few crossing points over the canal from which to see it; some of the views are partially obscured by fencing.

Point 'D' is located on the busy A34 main road, the location that most people who pass through the area will typically base their visual perception of Perry Barr on. Certain lengths of this road emulate a garden suburb character with trees in the central reservation of the highway. However other parts of the road don't contain garden suburb characteristics, having been lost to the impact of housing and industrial development,

### COLOUR CODING KEY:

- 1  These views contain no green components associated with a garden suburb and in some cases contain detracting features like security fencing.
- 2  Views contain some green components, but ones that are not characteristic of a garden suburb.
- 3  Views contain a single component characteristic of garden suburbs, such as street trees or hedges.
- 4  Views have a combination of components characteristic of garden suburbs, but with evidence of loss of components, such as garden walls or hedges.
- 5  Views contain an ideal combination of garden suburb components with little or no evidence of loss of components, such as garden walls or hedges.



*Hidden entrances to green spaces are common in many places in the 3Bs, such as this one on Rocky Lane to Kingsdown Park. This makes the spaces difficult to enjoy. Addressing this with modest inexpensive landscape interventions would be relatively easy.*



*It's important that main routes carry the character of a garden suburb since that's what most people see.*





### HOUSING

Large areas of the NP area have semi-detached houses with gardens, especially front gardens, that were apparently originally hedged. In some places this is still the case.

### BUILDINGS

Architecturally, the NP area is not especially distinctive, with much housing very similar to surrounding areas.

### CHARACTER

The Neighbourhood Plan Area has a generally weak landscape character; strong infrastructure features like the M6 and railway line delineate it but it lacks a strong intrinsic character.

### PAVING

There has been a steady trend that has apparently accelerated recently, to pave over gardens and create driveways for private cars.

**A**

**B**

**C**

**D**

### HIGHWAY VERGES

Gradually the Neighbourhood Plan area seems to have lost some of the 'soft' parts of the street scene, especially small verges of grass within the highway, between the footway and the road. This is focused in certain areas.

### HIGHWAY TREES - LOSS

Many street trees also appear to have been lost, eroding the 'treed' quality of the public realm and increasing the dominance of built form in the typical street view.

### HIGHWAY TREES - REPLACEMENT FORM

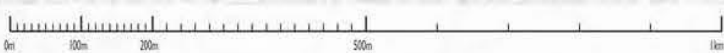
Where trees have been replaced, there seems to be a tendency to use smaller, narrower crowned species (like Sorbus, cherries and pear) in favour of forest-sized large crowned trees like oak and lime.

### HIGHWAY TREES - REPLACEMENT SPECIES

Replacement trees have been mainly ornamental exotic species rather than native, thus eroding biodiversity.

### STREET TREES

Many of the streets in the NP area have mature street trees, planted contemporaneously with the housing development (or even, in places, predating the surrounding buildings). Many are 'forest sized' species like lime, rather than smaller 'sub-canopy' trees like rowan and cherry. These tend to be concentrated in certain areas.



1:10,000@A3 1:5,000@A1

## ASSESSMENT OF EXISTING GARDEN SUBURB CHARACTER

WHICH AREAS HAVE THE CHARACTERISTICS OF A TYPICAL GARDEN SUBURB



# 3

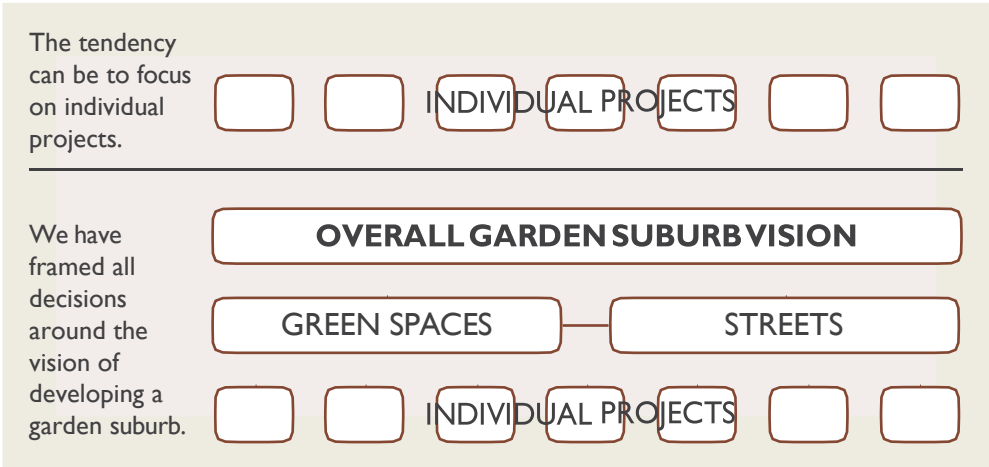
## LANDSCAPE OPPORTUNITIES: THE 3B's NP AREA AS A WHOLE

The next step though would be to focus on some of the identified opportunities and work up proposals for intervention. We have prioritised the potential landscape initiatives for the 3Bs Neighbourhood Plan area into three 'tiers'.

The 'top tier' is the strategic vision for the garden suburb. The second tier includes two elements: streets (protection of existing trees and maintenance of garden boundaries like hedges) and green infrastructure network (including parks).

The third tier would include local action initiatives in areas that are more difficult, where land ownership is uncertain or funding sources hard to identify. It is possible that some lower tier

initiatives may be brought forward separately if circumstances change or funding is unlocked.



## GREEN BLUE INFRASTRUCTURE

The drawing shows the locations of the opportunities that are present across the NP area to improve access to and quality of green spaces (and 'blue' spaces) that together are known as the 'green-blue infrastructure'.

The proposal is to simply 'join up' the green spaces in the NP area, doing so in a number of different ways:

- Improved signage for the green spaces themselves.
- The creation of a new connected pedestrian cycle network, using the existing network as a basis.
- Linking the network into safe routes to school, quiet streets and the greenways that already exist.
- Target certain points on this new 'network' as 'nodes' that would act as orientation points. This would include destinations like shops and schools, as well as features within the green spaces themselves.

We have identified three 'primary nodes' that are readily identifiable and lie along the 'spine' of the A34 Walsall Road (the 'primary route'). Tower Hill (A1) lies at the centre and would be subject of a separate design exercise.

To the north lies the entrance into the 3Bs area at Scott Arms (A2). This is currently traffic-dominated and, slightly to the south, where the road corridor rises onto the ridge, is well vegetated with mature trees. There is an opportunity firstly to protect mature tree planting in this area (some having been lost recently) and to augment the existing planting with new tree planting of suitably tall-growing species.

At the extreme southern end of the 3Bs 'garden suburb' area lies

the River Tame and the interface with the Commonwealth Games housing site (A3); a really important spot where one's impression of the area travelling from the city centre, is formed. Here the opportunity is to introduce connections both along the river and down streets to 'reveal' routes into the park system.

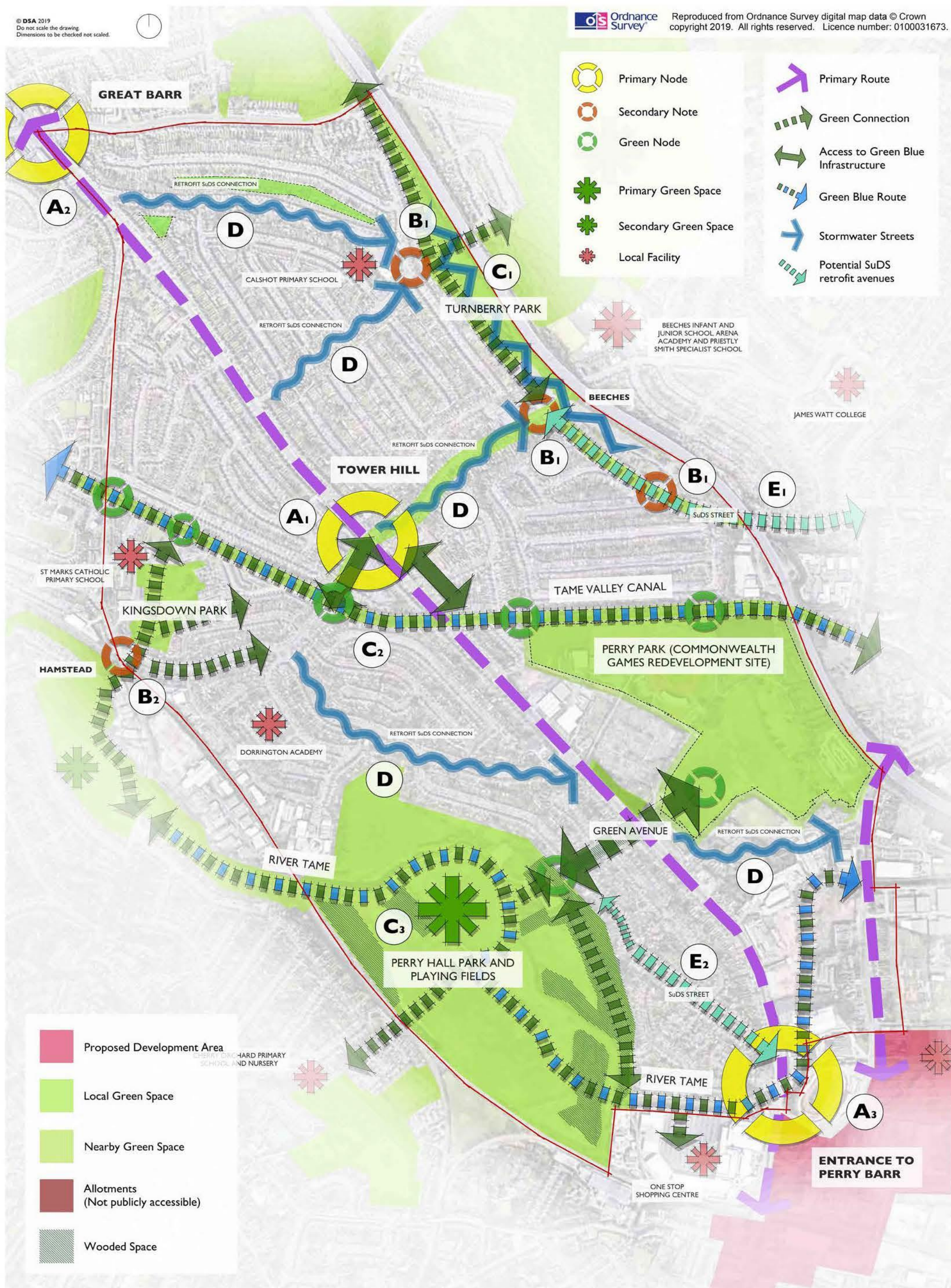
Secondary 'nodes' that form destinations within the 3Bs area include the Beeches shopping areas (B1) and Hamstead shops (B2), close to the railway station. These local community 'hubs' may be used to link the currently used 'grey' infrastructure into the green-blue infrastructure network.

Connecting the existing green spaces, using enhanced and new routes, forms the 'green-blue network'. There are, we think, three 'attention areas' where efforts to do this may be concentrated, together with a number of other locations. The former include the Turnberry Park (C1), Tame Valley Canal (C2) and Perry Hall Park (C3).

The latter include potential improvements to streets to manage stormwater (D, 'stormwater streets'), and connections at a very local level, and in detail, to link together 'local assets' where people might naturally walk. Crucial to this might be connections to schools, so that walking and cycling is encouraged at a young age.

Two 'SuDS avenues' are suggested, that may offer the chance to incorporate larger scale storm water management as part of a wider effort to address flooding. These are Thornbridge Avenue (E1) and Cliveden Avenue (E2).







# OPPORTUNITIES: TURNBERRY PARK

Numerous opportunities are available at Turnberry Park. Firstly an answer is needed on whether, and to what extent, the park would be disrupted in order to potentially retrofit storm water management measures. Ultimately this would be an EA/LLFA decision. But using space for storm water would offer potential benefits to this green space. If this didn't happen, some things can easily be done with the park to hit the community objectives.

The Turnberry Park Consultation and Development Report was completed in autumn 2018 and some interesting points are made. For instance, respondents to the questionnaire feel that the park is under-used. The main reasons for this seem to be that it's uninteresting and that people don't feel safe using it. In these respects it is fairly typical of many urban green spaces in UK.

Increasing confidence in and use of the park must be the ultimate aim of any intervention exercise. This should start with a thorough examination of the existing situation with a detailed series of proposals to achieve the aim. These could include improvements to lighting, CCTV, paving, signage, seating, biodiversity, stormwater management and drainage.

Turnberry Park does have a Friends Group, and supporting this small organisation as a first step is probably the way to go in improving the park. The park though is marginal, largely anonymous and does not form a 'destination' because it's not large enough (unlike Perry Hall Park, for instance). So we suggest the following as priorities in improving this asset:

1. Signage.
2. Accessibility
3. Biodiversity
4. Existing facilities.
5. Maintenance

1. It is apparent from field survey that the park has no formal entrance sign (A). Signage does exist, typically 'blue finger signs' fitted to street furniture (B). This though mostly does not actually direct you to the park. Having arrived (from one of the several entrances) it's not clear that one is 'in' the park anyway (C) (D). All of this adds up to the impression of a difficult-to access, unwelcoming, unloved and anonymous space.

2. Path surfaces within the park are generally very poor (E). Some re-surfacing, with brighter materials (such as tar spray and chip as has been used in Perry Hall Park) is necessary to give all users confidence in using the paths. Where desire lines exist,





paths must be provided. In one place ‘home made’ steps (F) have been installed. This is laudable initiative but certainly looks ‘unofficial’ and potentially opens the local authority up to litigation if not maintained correctly. ‘Soft’ paths surfaces would be very easy to provide using bark-chip or similar to increase the amount of use in wet conditions.

3. The park biodiversity could be improved hugely with some management of existing woodland, which currently lacks understorey and structure (G). This would be a bold move because it would involve tree felling. It is though the sort of work that is routinely done by volunteers acting under the auspices of the TCV or Wildlife Trusts. Such work could easily engage local people and could be combined with new planting to further increase species diversity.

4. The existing facilities, including bins and seating, really do need to be rigorously cleaned and kept in good order (H). Where they are underused or damaged, they should be removed or replaced immediately.

5. Like many other areas, dog fouling and litter are high on the list of complaints of people using the park. Unfortunately there is no way round the need for cleaning up and, as necessary, effective prosecution by the local authority. Possibly signage could assist with this.

Carrying out these works would be very inexpensive and, importantly, very apparent. They would show that the Friends Group could initiate change.





# OPPORTUNITIES: PERRY HALL PARK AND PLAYING FIELDS

Perry Hall Park is a 'green flag' park, with an active and effective friends group and ranger. The issues here centre around the size of the park and the connections between it and the developments at Perry Park and Alexander Stadium and the new housing coming forwards south of the NP Area. We see three major opportunities.

The park has the capacity to accommodate very large numbers of users. It contains a huge variety of landscape, ranging from formal sports to nature conservation areas and including the remains of an historic building. The park is green belt.

Some consideration might be given to the park's name (A) and whether the park is known as 'Perry Hall Park & Playing Fields' as the signs show, or whether it is known as just 'Perry Hall Park'. Again, there's probably a very good reason why things are known as they are, but with potentially thousands of new residents arriving in the area, there may be a chance to 'rebrand' the park (and possibly in combination with Perry Park) to achieve a unity which is currently lacking.

## 1. The Connection

The entrance to the park from the A34 is an opportunity to 'connect' the park with the main 'spine' of the NP Area (B). This could be done using landscape treatments, signage and alterations of the entrance area. Doing this would aim to 'draw' the two parks together and invite access on what is the main entrance.

## 2. River Tame

Opportunities to draw funding from the forthcoming developments should be seized to make the whole of the River Tame (and especially where it leaves the park) much more usable as a walking (and potentially cycling) route (C). The north side of the river (along Regina Drive) suggests itself as suitable, through tackling fly-tipping and improving signage (D).

## 3. Active Uses

A major feather in the park's hat is the Monarchs cycle speedway. This is 'tucked away' in the northern corner, and, being noisy, causes some disturbance to residents there. There is an opportunity to move the cycle speedway track elsewhere, potentially to Perry Park, so that all the active sports facilities form a community in one place. Both of these would increase the tranquillity (and potentially biodiversity) of Perry Hall Park north of river next to the houses. The playing fields would be maintained to the south further away from the houses.





# OPPORTUNITIES: TAME VALLEY CANAL

The NP Forum have discussed the potential opportunity to adopt a portion of the canal. This is a tremendous idea and it's understood that the Canal and Rivers Trust would be amenable to this. In tandem, several points that provide views and/or access to the canal should receive attention.

1. The first of these is the Freeth Bridge in Tower Hill (A). Despite being unattractive and litter strewn, this pedestrian bridge is evidently hugely important for local people and is very well-used as an access route from housing areas to Tower Hill, the 'centre' of the 3Bs. It's therefore vital to get this right.

Unfortunately the signage and interpretation here is in a poor state (B). The addition of guardrails, whilst understandable, is similarly unfortunate and gives the route an oppressive and even threatening feel. Keen investigation should be given to reducing the adverse impact on route quality of the maintenance, appearance and presence of the fencing.

2. The connection to Alexander Stadium may be relatively easy to improve, together with lateral connections along the canal (C). This, like Tower Hill Bridge, is obviously well-used. The route of Rowdale Road is though unannounced and even un-signposted. The connections to Fairview Avenue and the main Walsall Road are similarly anonymous and un-signposted. Clearing vegetation to open up views as well as improving the surface for all users could improve this greatly.





# OPPORTUNITIES: THE STREETS

The drawing on page 17 (Opportunities for Creating Garden Suburb Streets) shows the location, street by street, of potential interventions in the front gardens and the highway that could be made to develop the NP area into a garden suburb. It considers the introduction of three important components: sustainable drainage systems, hedge planting and tree planting.

Their suitability for each street has been judged based on the potential space for installation, the multifunctional benefits it could bring and the impact that such changes would have on 'greening' the views - entitled the "capacity" for each component.

The key to the right illustrates and explains the different colours and symbols on the map.

## THE THREE COMPONENTS

Tree planting, protection and management

Architecturally, the NP area is not especially distinctive. This gives the opportunity for the 'primacy' of 'green infrastructure' which could greatly improve the connection between green spaces and ambience of the street.

Street trees should be identified and catalogued (in part by community representatives) then protected. An audit would assist in the more direct protection of street trees (all or most of which are in Birmingham City Council ownership) at the local level. In places (to be identified as part of an ongoing programme) trees may be either replaced or new trees planted. The latter could occur in tandem with funding from planning gain. Differences in planting on streets, especially tree planting, could have a very strong overall effect on street character, as could the use of native forest sized species, potentially with taller-growing 'exotics'.

Hedge planting and 'softening' of front gardens

The trend to pave over gardens may be arrested and reversed, with some incentives, potentially, and education. Predicted reductions in private car use in the future may assist in this. There may be opportunities to target initiatives in certain areas. Encouraging and incentivising hedge planting between house plots and adjacent to the highway would have the most impact.

Local surface water flooding

Some urban SuDS (sustainable drainage systems) retrofit work (such as that carried out at Alma Road in London, and in Sheffield as part of the 'Grey to Green' project) may alleviate surface water flooding, while at the same time improving the appearance and biodiversity of streets affected.

- s** Capacity for 'Garden Suburb' SuDS retrofit element interventions.
- t** Capacity for 'Garden Suburb' street tree element interventions.
- h** Capacity for 'Garden Suburb' hedge element interventions.
- s/t** Capacity for both 'Garden Suburb' SuDS retrofit and street tree element interventions.
- t/h** Capacity for both 'Garden Suburb' street tree and hedge element interventions.
- h/s** Capacity for both 'Garden Suburb' hedge and SuDS retrofit element interventions.
- 3** Capacity for all three 'Garden Suburb' element interventions; street trees, hedges and SuDS retrofit.
- 0** No capacity for 'Garden Suburb' interventions, either as area already contains ideal mix or there is no space.

## MONSAL ROAD



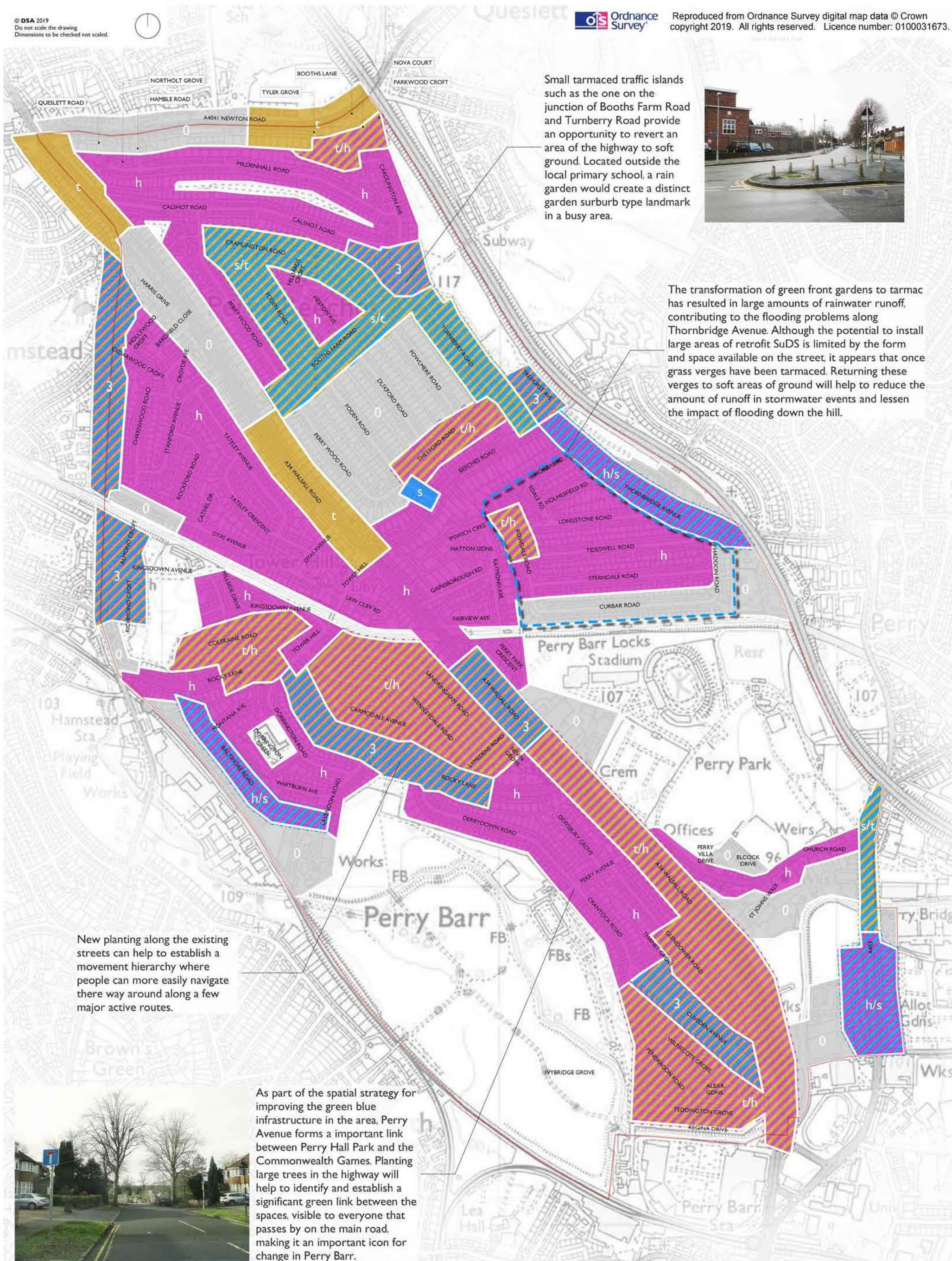
*Monsal Road is an example of a street that has significant loss of its hedged boundaries, with only the remnants remaining. Potential areas of the tarmac verge could be converted to soft verges to reduce rainwater runoff but much of the verge now provides driveway access.*

## CLIVEDEN AVENUE

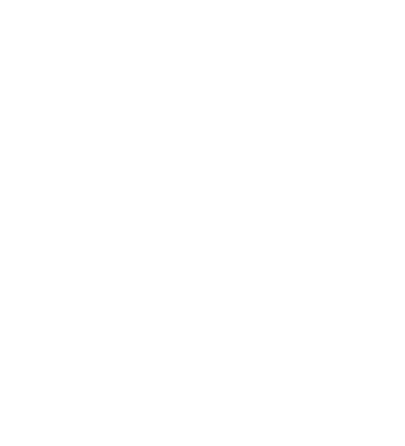
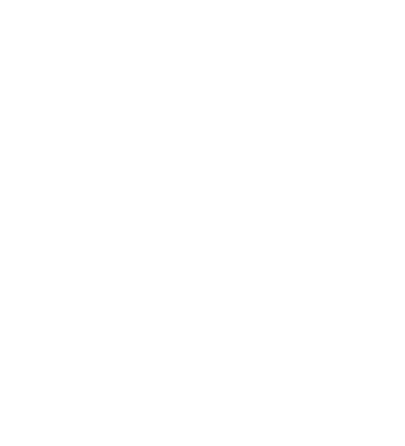


*Cliveden Avenue sits in the River Tame floodplain and is ideal for creating a wide garden suburb type boulevard into the heart of Perry Barr. The large areas of grass verge could accommodate new tree planting as well as a sizeable retrofit SuDS scheme which has potential to become an icon for the area.*









All images taken by:

**DSA** Environment + Design Ltd  
2a Fleeman Grove  
West Bridgford  
Nottingham  
NG2 5BH

0115 9818 745  
[www.dsa-ed.co.uk](http://www.dsa-ed.co.uk)  
(unless otherwise credited)

