

Balsall and Berkswell Parish Councils

BALSALL COMMON CENTRE MASTER PLAN

BASELINE REPORT

Final

This report takes into account the particular instructions and requirements of our client.

It is not intended for and should not be relied upon by any third party and no responsibility is undertaken to any third party.

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ARUP

In association with

URBANSILENCE

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All photos and maps have been prepared by the study team for the purpose of this study unless otherwise credited. Ordnance Survey Map data is used under Berkswell PC authorisation number OS PSMA 100057939. ARUP are authorised to use the OS data for the specific purpose of the Balsall Common master plan project.

1. INTRODUCTION

Balsall Common is the largest village of the rural Parishes of Balsall and Berkswell. It is perfectly placed to access employment and services across a dynamic hinterland including Coventry, Birmingham, business parks and research facilities of international standing.

Within this context, Balsall Common has retained the peacefulness and comfort of being “simply” a nice place to live.

The village centre was built in the post-war period at the crossing of two primary highway links. Development at the time introduced the architectural language of a small town: multi-storey buildings, a range of shops and office units and a broad streetscape. As the village expanded, the centre continued to serve the community well, with shops, hospitality and services conveniently located and easily accessible.

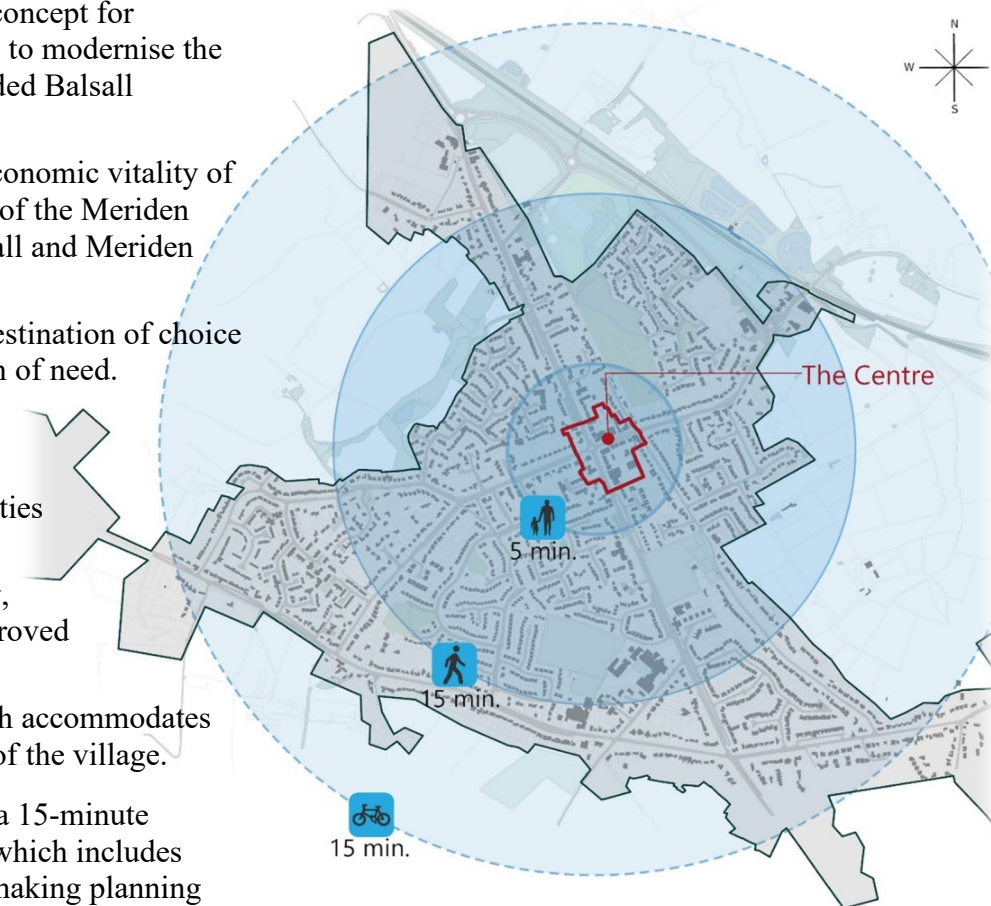
Arup was appointed in December 2020 to identify how the centre should change as a key asset for the community in a rapidly changing context. The Arup team is supported by urban strategists URBAN Silence.

The overall objectives

- To create a vision and concept for improved public spaces to modernise the centre fit for the expanded Balsall Common of the future.
- To facilitate ongoing economic vitality of the centre for residents of the Meriden Ward (Berkswell, Balsall and Meriden Parishes).
- To make the centre a destination of choice rather than a destination of need.
- To improve coherence and sense of identity.
- To maximise opportunities for “greening”.
- To improve traffic flow, parking layout and improved pedestrian experience.
- To create a vision which accommodates planned future growth of the village.

The Centre is the heart of a 15-minute walking and cycling area which includes nearly the whole village, making planning for the ‘15-Minute City’ concept highly relevant.

Fig. 1 - The Centre (Study Area)



2. A RAPIDLY CHANGING CONTEXT

CLIMATE CHANGE

- More awareness of the value of green spaces, trees and biodiversity.
- Growing emphasis on the local.
- Increased importance given to walking and cycling.
- Emerging car changes: electric models and shared mobility.
- Government net zero carbon policy.

SOCIETAL CHANGE

- Expanding online retailing.
- Encouragement for community businesses.
- Working from home, greatly accelerated by the Covid pandemic.
- Discovery of the village, walking and leisure time outdoors as a result of the pandemic.

HS2

- Causing temporary disruption due to construction.
- Delivering new paths and facilities.
- Forming, with time, new economic patterns, with London getting closer.
- Attracting more people to live in the West Midlands.

TOWN CENTRES AND PLANNING POLICY

- High street transformation as a national priority.
- Government support through Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council potentially available.
- Growing support for 15-Minute City concepts and local / community businesses.
- New flexibility with Class E land use class – allowing hybrid uses in a central area.

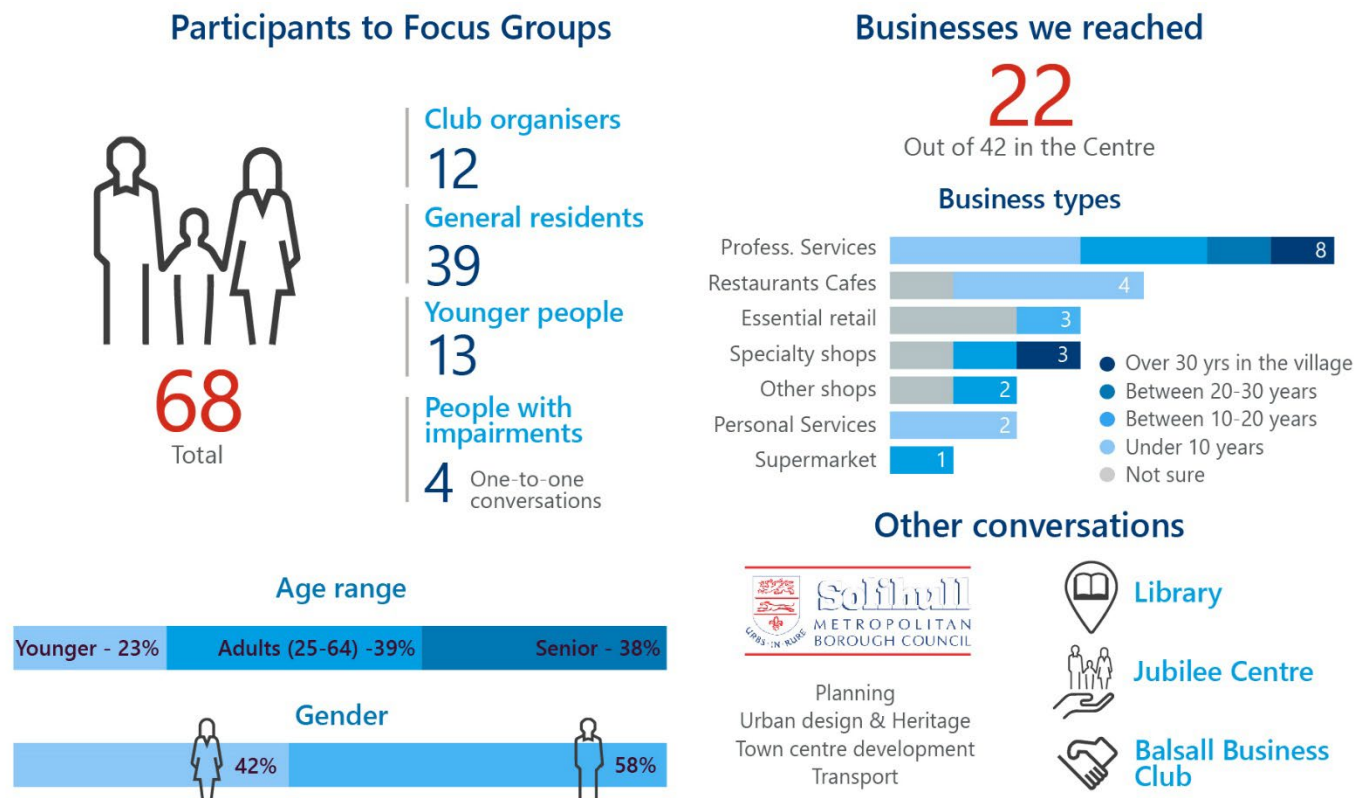
3. UNDERSTANDING THE VILLAGE

KEY FINDINGS

- Most people we talked to are happy to live in the village and appreciate the facilities it offers.
- The happiest appear to be families who moved to Balsall Common more recently (last ten years), especially those who moved from a larger city: they like the community feel, the access to the countryside and the schools.
- Old time residents have a tendency to be nostalgic of the shops which disappeared and dislike the increase in traffic.
- The least attached to the centre of Balsall Common are those residents of the outer villages (except for Berkswell): they typically find that the centre, being neither rich in shops nor of heritage value, has little to offer compared to other nearby destinations.
- Everybody interviewed finds the head-on parking on Station Road daunting and prefers to avoid it.
- Everybody interviewed wants to see some improvement.

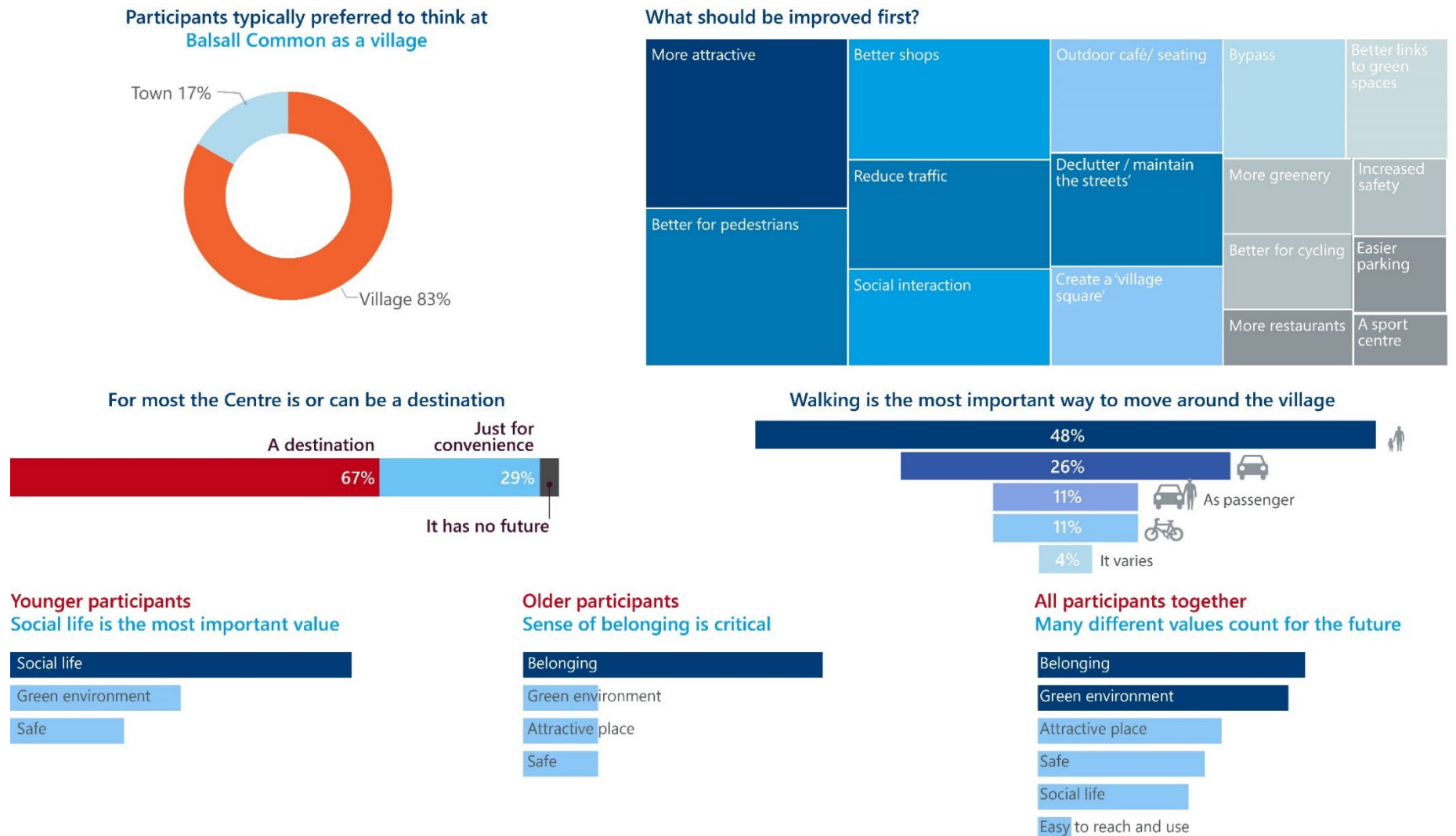
WHOM DID WE SPEAK TO?

Fig. 2 - Participants to Focus Groups and conversations



CURRENT VIEWS

Fig. 3 - Understanding the present through community views



VILLAGE VS. TOWN

Most people and businesses prefer to think of Balsall Common as a village, principally because of its proximity to the countryside, welcoming community and green housing areas. They would like this to continue, and be clearly reflected in the character of the centre.

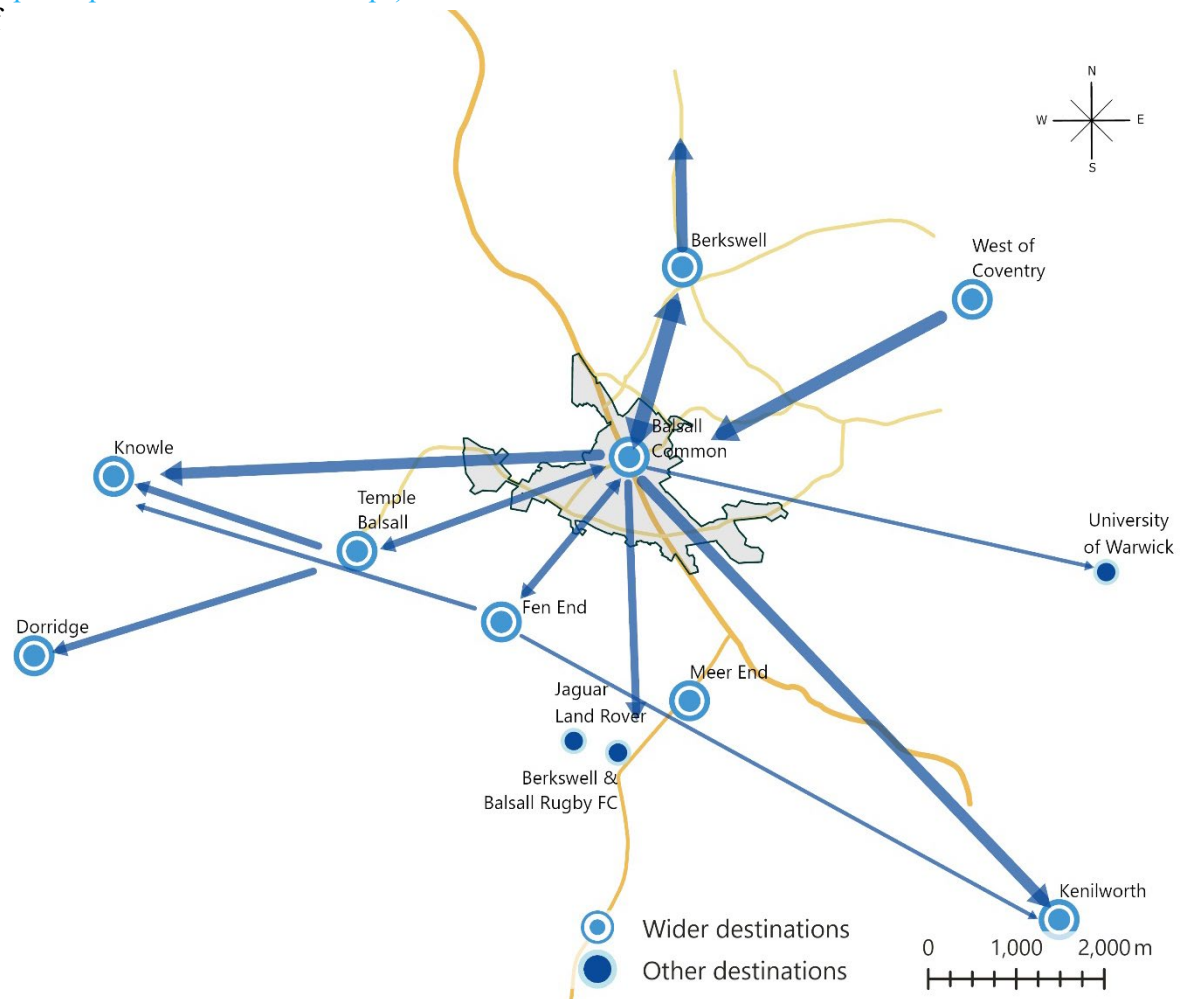
- It should become “a village with the services of a small town” to accommodate future growth.

A DESTINATION

For most residents (including young people), the centre already is a destination within the village, a place of activity and encounters, but one that needs more space for socialising. The village is a key attraction for the west side of Coventry and Berkswell for schools and services.

- More social space, cafes and restaurants with outdoor seating will add vitality and support other local businesses.
- The centre will never be able to compete with historic villages and the larger towns nearby.

Fig. 4 - The centre of Balsall Common is part of a web of destinations (according to the participants to the Focus Groups)



THE CHARACTER OF THE CENTRE

The centre, and the village as a whole, is considered well placed and well connected. Within easy reach of most of the population and on the way towards attractive countryside routes. It is also a friendly place – with known people providing services or serving in shops.

However, it has multiple weaknesses:

- Lack of physical distinctiveness.
- Overwhelming car presence.
- Unpleasant pavements, so affected by the presence of cars that stopping and staying does not seem viable.

THE RANGE OF SHOPS AND BUSINESSES

For the majority of businesses interviewed Balsall Common has: a good size and range of shops; enough scale for customers to do several things each time they visit (with a perceived synergetic range of activities); and yet small enough to attract ‘regulars.’ There is a distinct perception that the centre has a synergetic range of activities, which work

well together. Additional cafés and community activities would be welcome, as these would increase the number and length of visits by locals.

Younger businesses, and businesses whose owners / managers are not local, tend to be more optimistic about the future. Some report that lack of premises is a big issue – as it is difficult to expand.

Passers-by are a significant portion of trade, but locals represent over 50% of customers for most businesses.

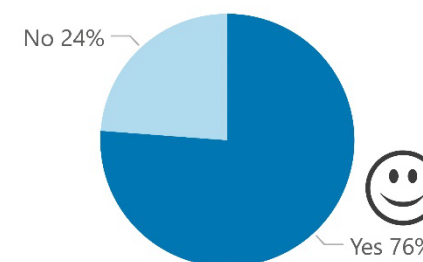
The Balsall Business Club (a group of 130 or so members) is proactively supporting small businesses and encouraging synergies and cross-selling. Traders are welcome, but tend not to participate: they support each other in a neighbourly way, but are not organised for marketing and promotion.

Older residents lament the loss of retail banks in the village centre and other specialist shops that, in their view, added to local character.

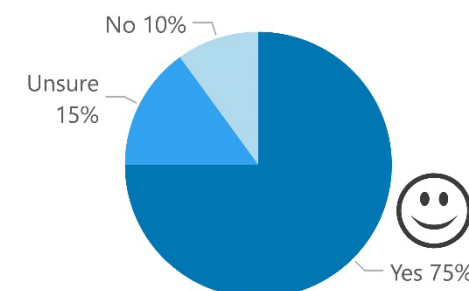
All residents interviewed would like to have more choice of cafes and restaurants.

Fig. 5 - Key views from the businesses

Local businesses are typically optimistic about the future



...and happy with the location



Most of them drive to work



THE IMPORTANCE OF WALKING

Most residents, of all ages and ability, walk on a regular basis when accessing the centre. The Covid pandemic has increased the propensity to walk for errands and for leisure through the centre and to the countryside.

- Better and safer pedestrian facilities are important for all residents, but especially for children and those with impairments, which consider walking in safety essential for their independence and well-being.
- Connections between the centre, the sporting facilities and open spaces in the village and the countryside are essential.

The difficulties associated with parking in the centre mean that many people prefer to walk when practical, and that car trips are more often associated with ‘quick-in / quick-out’ activity, rather than socialising.

- The Co-op car park is of public value despite being private; it is considered by many to be the easiest to use and safest. This drives business to the Co-op, but also supports other activities within easy access.

There is propensity and potential for cycling, but at present, of those interviewed, many people find the centre inadequate for cycle users. However, we understand that passing cyclists find the centre a convenient stopping off point for rest and refreshment.

THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY

When asked about what values would be most important for the future, there was great consensus across genders, age groups and abilities / interests:

- Community life - recognising people’s faces, knowing and being able to count on shop assistants, and meeting people in the street by chance – is a great benefit of living in Balsall Common.
- The range of clubs and associations (from the sports clubs to the U3A and the events in the Library) is significant for a place of this size; most people in the focus groups attended more than one. Clubs and associations evidently play a major role in social resilience – but they feel the strain of needing to scale up to serve a growing influx of people and reliance on a limited number of organisers / co-ordinators.

- ‘Belonging’ is the most important value for older participants: accepting change, as long as the social fabric remains strongly connected.
- Active social life (“a place to meet my mates”) is the most important thing for teenagers and young adults. The size of the village is considered ‘perfect’: small enough to meet friends easily and large enough to have freedom of choice of things to do. At present, social life is stimulated by the school or by sport clubs and later fed by the choice of pubs, sports and outdoor walks. Street safety is key to enable teenagers to be independent.

THE VALUE OF NATURE

A green environment, access and enjoyment of the countryside, long walks, trees and wildlife are important to everyone, but distinctly more important for the younger people of the focus groups. For them, the proximity of nature is the distinguishing identity of the village, with Lavender Hall Park a key highlight of the centre.

MAKING THE CENTRE MORE WELCOMING

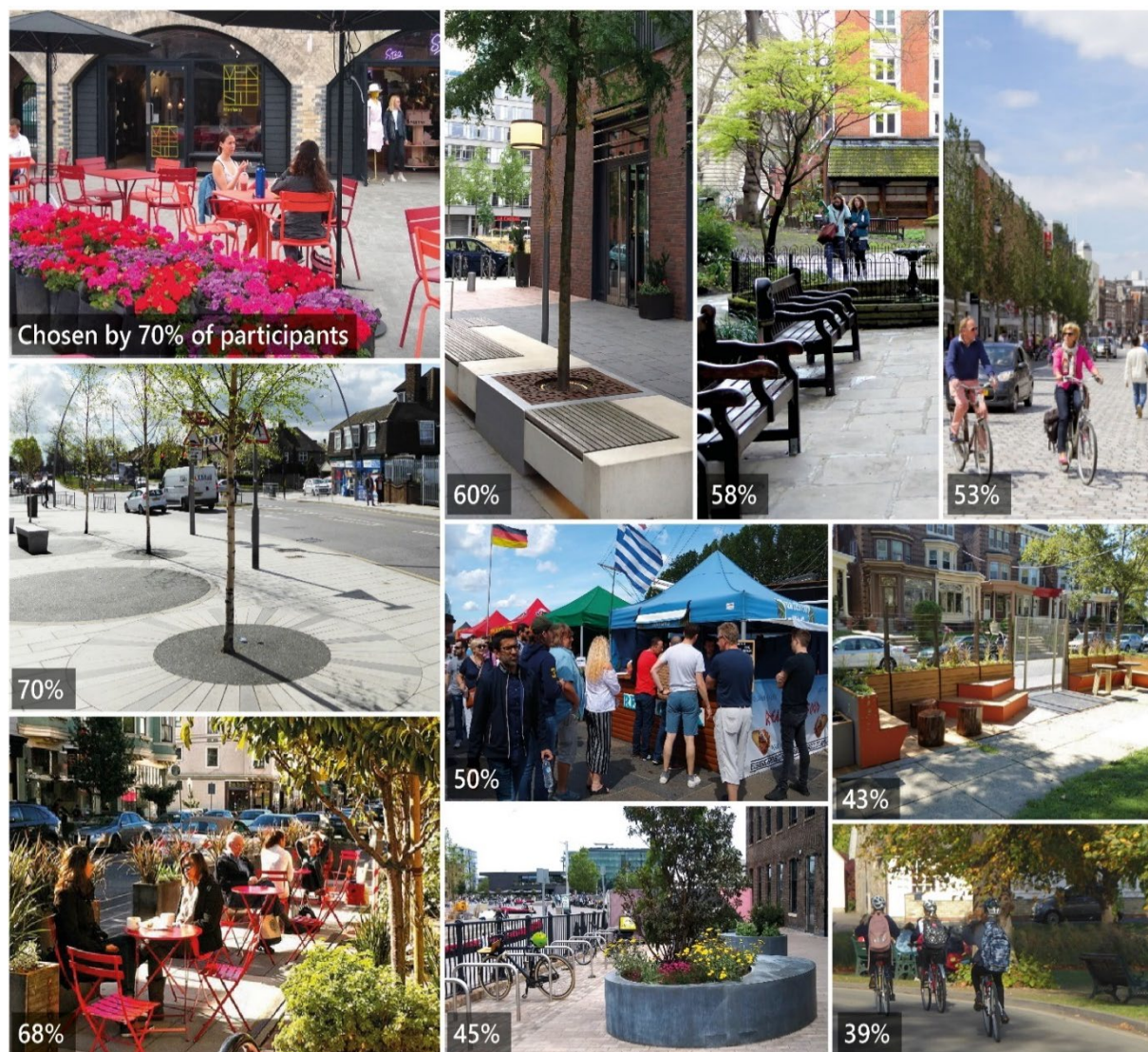
There are some issues that create problems in the centre and reduce its quality:

- There is occasional crime (shoplifting, car theft, etc) reports of expanding drug dealing which appears to be a growing problem since the disappearance of on-street policing.
- Reports that groups of young people congregate in the centre, especially near shops offering free WiFi, sometimes behaving in a way that inhibits others .
- Conflicts in the yard of the Co-op (Hazel Place) between movement, noise, anti-social behaviour have lead to some reports of tension, resulting in restrictions of movement which disadvantage many elderly residents using the Co-op and other shops in the village. Inadequate street lighting in the yard is a problem.

OTHER OBSERVATIONS

- The centre and Balsall Common were a good place to be during the pandemic. Future change should consider how to strengthen resilience, in case this (or a similar emergency) happens again.
- There will be a need to develop new synergies between the centre and other areas where commercial and community uses are likely to emerge, particularly near Berkswell Station, in case a relief road and the Barratt's Farm development create additional demand at this location.
- Increase in housing will require a proportionate expansion of sport and other community facilities. This will require a comprehensive rethink of the location of new facilities, volunteers, connections, and cycling and walking facilities in a way that supports the centre.

Fig. 6 - Exploring preferences for a future refreshed image



THINKING ABOUT THE FUTURE

Participants to the focus groups were invited to respond to a variety of images, used as prompts, as a way to identify potential changes for the future.

Fig. 6 shows the top 10 choices across all participants, with these broad key messages:

- Contemporary but simple design (“timeless” design).
- No ‘mock-villagey’ styles.
- No quirky / hyper-modern features – perceived to be too urban.
- Colour.
- More trees and flowers.
- Pavement cafés and space for people to stay and spend time on the street.
- Space for a market or for events.
- Significantly reduced or eliminated car presence.
- More space for cycling.

4. VILLAGE IDENTITY

There is no recognised and undisputed definition of what a village is: dictionaries often refer to “larger than a hamlet and smaller than a town” or to “having distinctive village life”.

Solihull Local Plan (Draft 2020) does not offer any definition and has no village-specific policy. It nevertheless refers to Balsall Common as a village.

The focus groups used these characteristics to define Balsall Common as a village:

- Close relationship with and easy access to the countryside (for leisure).
- Presence of nature, trees and hedgerows within the settlement.
- A scale that is conducive to a degree of familiarity and social connection: through schools, clubs and activities.
- A familiar range of shops and faces in the centre, with most businesses having personal links with the area (rather than national chains with workers coming in).
- Spacious neighbourhoods.

Some people also highlighted that Balsall Common has the best of both worlds: small

enough for familiarity and nature, but big enough to offer choice and privacy, without need for conformity.

This ambiguous identity is also reflected in more freedom of design, role and character for the future.

LOCAL STORIES

The centre itself has little recognised heritage: no listed buildings (except for The Brickmakers Arms towards the station) and no conservation areas.

Nevertheless, it has a range of local stories and traditions linked to its rural past. Some are still part of the life of some of the old-time residents and may disappear if not recorded and embedded in its identity for the future.

- The legacy of the Templars in the area.
- The role of the village in WW2 as a respite centre for Coventry and the connection with Mrs Milburn’s Diaries.
- The Tipperary Inn, where the First World War eponymous song was allegedly written.

- Unusual shops and the history behind them: such as the Chattaway’s all convenience store or the Balsall Cinema.
- The former Nat West building with its classic forms and triangular front (a locally listed building).
- The persistence of rural place names – like Drovers Close or the role of a Meeting House in Meeting House Lane.

Fig. 7 – The Nature Reserve at the centre of the village (Lavender Hall Park)



5. AT THE CENTRE OF THE COMMUNITY

A WEB OF CONNECTIONS

A WORKPLACE DESTINATION

Travel To Work (TTW) data is only available as part of the 2011 Census, now 10 years old, but still representative of patterns in a pre-pandemic situation.

According to the data, of the 3,500 or so local people in work, 35% worked either from home or locally, while the rest commuted (mainly by car) to Birmingham city centre, Coventry and Solihull. A total of 610 people commuted from other areas into Balsall Common, mostly from the western side of Coventry. Overall, in 2011, the area of Balsall Common was the working base for 1,750 people – perhaps a surprising number, given the perception of the area as a dormitory commuter belt village.

This ‘unseen’ business base is confirmed by conversations with the Balsall Business Club, which includes 130 businesses serving or located in the Balsall area. The Club includes small businesses based at home, those with a ‘studio’ space ancillary to a residential location and activities with established business premises.



Fig. 8 - 2011 Travel to Work towards Balsall Common (all modes, Census 2011)

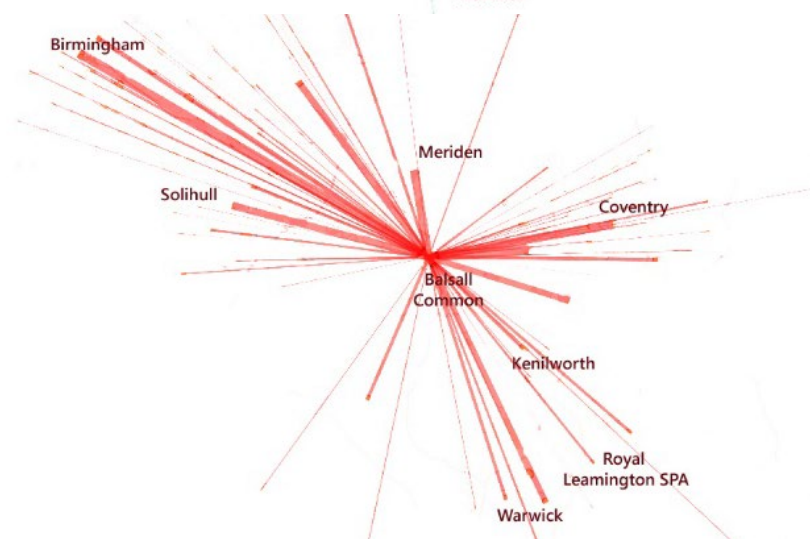


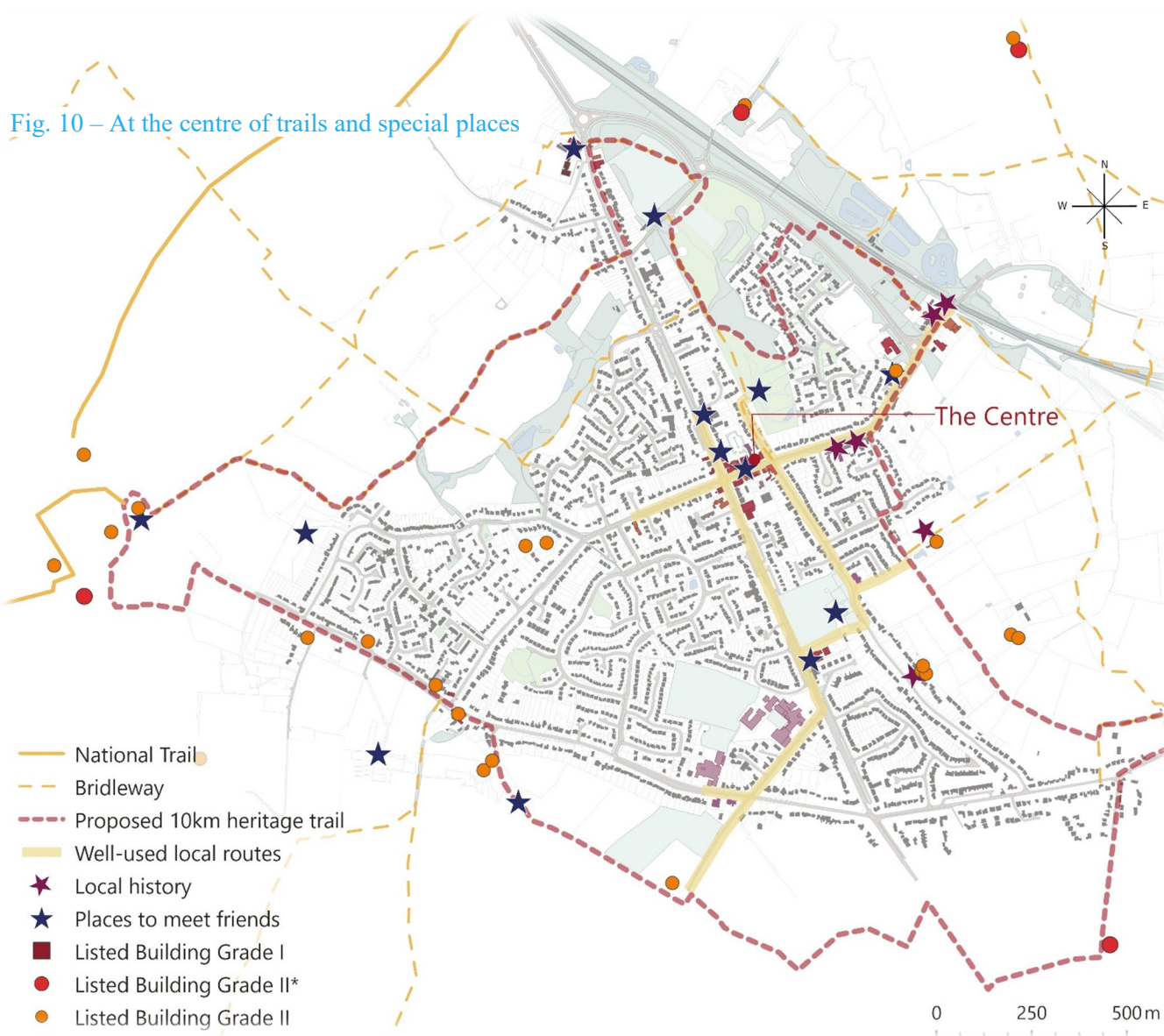
Fig. 9 - 2011 Travel To Work out of Balsall Common (all modes, Census 2011)

LINKS TO THE WIDER AREA

In Balsall Common nearly everything is within a short distance away, making residents gravitate on the centre, and also take advantage of other facilities and attractions, particularly the country walks, the pubs and other environmental or heritage attractions, such as The Windmill, the Greenway or Oakes Farm Shop.

Community groups identified a 10km Heritage Trail surrounding the village and linking many of the listed farms and pubs of the area. This trail, if connected through the centre, would provide an additional layer of identity and a contribution to a healthy life-style.

Fig. 10 – At the centre of trails and special places



THE INTERCONNECTIONS OF THE CENTRE

The economic rationale of the centre has its foundation in serving the local community. While some businesses serve passing trade, the majority report to substantially rely on the local customer base and on residents of surrounding settlements.

The social, health and well-being role of the centre for its community is significant: despite any shortcomings it is still a focal point and a destination – part of a broader range of activities including:

- Community activities and clubs in three halls within 10 minutes of each other.
- Location halfway between the schools and the park, thus becoming a focal point for children.
- Close connection with two major sport clubs potentially safely accessible by young people on foot or by bike.
- Starting point of various walks and trails (see also Fig. 7).
- Along the way to Berkswell railway station .

Fig. 11 - The inter-connections of the centre



SPECIAL PLACES AND EVENTS

In the focus groups, the community has identified special places and events that make a positive contribution to the life of the village. Most of these are identified in Fig. 5.

Within the centre or a short distance away:

- The collection of shops, including Post Office, Chemist, etc.
- The Co-op and its easy to use car park.
- The coffee shop and deli.
- The Library, and the events it provides, including Late Library comedy.
- Christmas lights, the tree and other festive events.
- Lavender Hall Park.
- The Saturday market at the Village Hall, which could be bigger and more central.
- The village festival in summer at Lavender Hall Park.
- The Brickmakers Arm ('Brickies')
- 'The Triangle' – Football Club

- 'Lant' (the facilities of the Tennis and Cricket Club)
- Old Bakery and Stores buildings (converted to housing)
- The Scouts.

Up to 15 minutes cycle ride from the centre:

- The Greenway.
- Oakes Farm shop and café.
- Connections to the countryside starting from Frog Lane and Magpie Lane.
- The old village centre and the Old Forge.
- The U3A – a welcoming place to meet at St. Peter's Church.
- The Windmill.
- Willow Park.
- The allotments.

Slightly further away

- Berkswell and Temple Balsall: history, tea rooms, etc.
- The Rugby Club.
- Jaguar Land Rover track (special events).

Fig. 12 - 'The Triangle',
Home of The Hornets FC



6. THE CENTRE

CURRENT SITUATION

THE BUSINESSES

The centre of Balsall Common has 44 business units, of which:

- 9 provide a variety of services.
- 8 are in the hospitality sector and 8 provide personal care (beauty and hairdressers).
- 12 units offer food and a variety of other convenience and speciality retailing.
- There is only one betting shop, a charity shop and two vacant units, which is an unusually low number for a centre such as this, indicating that the centre is a good location for retail businesses.

Community Perspective

- Businesses report being optimistic about the location and happy with the mix of uses, which creates positive synergies.
- Some in the service sector have been based here for a long time (Fig. 2) and report that lack of larger premises constrains growth.
- Residents would like more variety and better presented shops.

Fig. 13 - 'High street' activities in Balsall Common, according to the new Land Use Class Order



Recent changes to the Land Use Class Order (September 2020)¹ allows flexibility of use for a range of town centre activities: shops, offices, restaurants, etc. This removes the restrictions of ‘primary and secondary’ shopping frontage and allow a more flexible definition of ‘centre’.

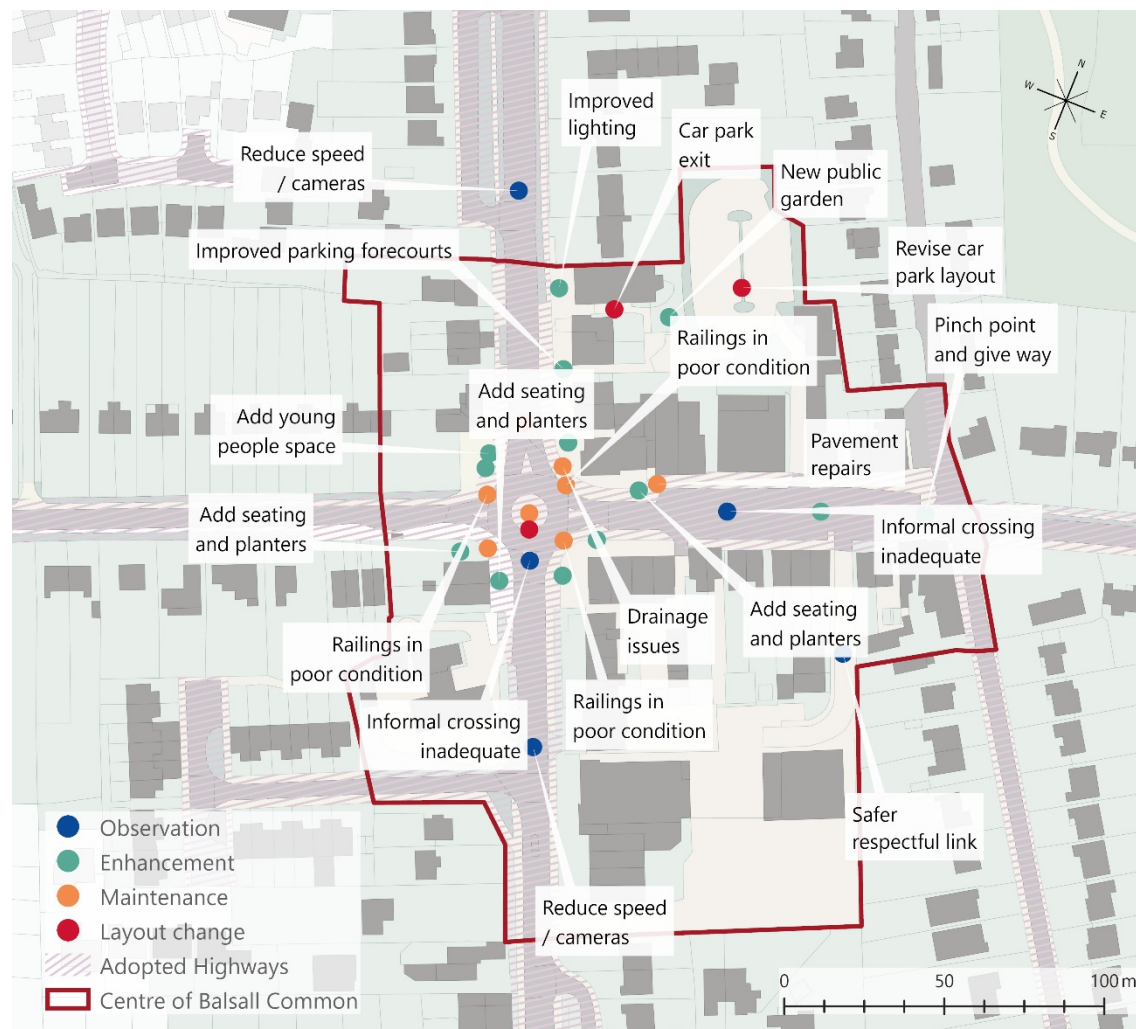
The government is also exploring the potential to permit conversion of Class E uses (town centre ones) to residential, which in Balsall Common would be very damaging.

PUBLIC REALM

The public realm is tired, inconsistent and very poorly maintained. Fig. 7 illustrates some of the opportunities not captured and issues identified by the community.

Overall, it would appear to be poor value for money improving or repairing the current public spaces, even as a short-term measure. There is an expectation that there will be strong support for comprehensive improvement / re-design.

Fig. 14 - Public realm audit based on the assessment made by community members



¹ Use Classes | Change of use | Planning Portal

ASPIRATIONS

KEY MESSAGES FROM THE COMMUNITY

- The community (through the focus groups but also clearly expressed in the Neighbourhood Plans – pg.30) clearly values the village feel and character.
- With a growing population, services, community facilities and employment will need to expand. The centre is very constrained.
- Newer residents find in Balsall Common a great balance between community feel and access to the countryside, and range of services and connections. Old time residents are nostalgic of the previously much closer community.
- Older businesses are in the service sector and are very committed to the village. Newer businesses (cafés and restaurants, personal care) are enthusiastic about the centre – but appear to have a higher level of ‘churn’.
- There is a strong desire for a better presented, safer and pedestrian friendly

centre: with more perceived character and personality. Recognising the modern history of the village there is an acceptance that any changes should not be reflective of a more historic centre such as Berkswell nor or a more urban centre such as local centres in Solihull.

- Social life and sense of belonging are very important: the schools, associations, clubs and community activities provide the key vehicle to build what people recognise as a cherished ‘village life’.
- Nature and the countryside are highly valued, through the presence of trees and greenery with high biodiversity value in the settlement and through access to footpaths and other routes through the countryside.
- There are some concerns with safety and undesirable behaviour which make the centre less welcoming than it should be.

OTHER CONSIDERATIONS

- The centre is very small, particularly if simply identified with the main shopping parade on Station Road. ‘High street uses’ are already overspilling this area – but fail to form a cohesive image. This is already the case for

facilities in close proximity like the Library, the Tamarinds restaurant or the Village Hall. Other destinations like the medical centre or ‘The Brickies’ feel positively detached. This, coupled with lack of land for expansion (see pg.30) constrains the centre and its role in future.

- The centre relies on a network of interconnected activities: shopping, social and leisure. The web of connections should be strengthened.
- The new Land Use Class order (Sept. 2020) offers a broader interpretation of ‘high street uses’ and allows more flexibility. This should be taken advantage of, as long as residential conversions are discouraged or prevented.
- Around 30-35% of local residents do not travel outside the village for work: this is a significant number not always recognised in the ‘commuter settlement’ image of Balsall Common.
- Despite not being as attractive as Kenilworth or Knowle, Balsall Common is considered by many an important local attraction – for its residents but also from Berkswell and the western side of Coventry.

7. GOING AROUND

CURRENT SITUATION

The village of Balsall Common is well connected internally and externally to larger surrounding towns and cities and to the surrounding countryside. The centre of the village with shops and services is at the crossroads of the A425 Kenilworth Road and Station Road.

Balsall Common is bisected by the A452 Kenilworth Road which connects the village to Birmingham and Birmingham Airport to the west and Kenilworth and Leamington Spa to south-east. Station Road passes east-west through the village and connects Balsall Common with Solihull in the west and Coventry in the east.

Berkswell Rail Station is approximately 800m from the village centre and provides access to Birmingham, Coventry and London via the West Coast mainline. The station has parking facilities.

The village has a very good network of walking and cycling routes. The surrounding suburbs are within easy access of both the centre and other facilities in the village. Most of the village, including the outskirts, is

within a 15-minute walk time of the centre (see Fig. 1).

Fig. 15 - The roundabout at the crossroads of the centre: a functional space that keeps pedestrians away



HIGHWAYS & TRAFFIC IN THE VILLAGE CENTRE²

The A452 Kenilworth is a two-lane single carriageway road with sufficient width to accommodate ghost island right turn lanes. The speed limit is 30 mph in the centre increasing to 50 mph on the outskirts. Station Road is a two-lane single carriageway road with a 30 mph speed limit. In the village centre the road widens to accommodate on street vehicle parking.

Two-way weekday traffic volumes on the A452 Kenilworth are circa 17,000 vehicles per day (vpd). Much of it is through traffic: 80% in the peaks as identified in the Draft Local Plan, 2020³. Along Station Road, away from the village centre, two-way weekday traffic volumes are circa 1,300 vpd. At the junction of the A452 Kenilworth Road / Station Road peak hour traffic volumes are as high as 2,200 vehicles per hour approximately. Queue survey data, undertaken during peak periods, indicates that queue lengths frequently exceed 60m

² All traffic survey information is based on Tracsis survey undertaken 5-11/6/2017, supplied by SMBC

(typically 10 vehicle car lengths) on all approaches.

Community perspective

Local residents, in the focus groups, expressed the following views:

- The high traffic volumes on the A452 Kenilworth Road and the congestion, particularly in the village centre.
- Road safety concerns due to the speed of vehicles passing through the village and conflicts between pedestrians and vehicles particularly in the centre.
- The relief road is seen by many as an opportunity to reduce through traffic on the A452 Kenilworth Road and thereby improve pedestrian and cycle accessibility to the centre,
- The perception that the centre is dominated by vehicular traffic and is not pedestrian friendly.

³ [https://www.solihull.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-12/Draft-Submission-Plan-Oct-2020%20\(1\).pdf](https://www.solihull.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2020-12/Draft-Submission-Plan-Oct-2020%20(1).pdf)

Fig. 16 - Wide but unwelcoming public realm



BALSALL COMMON RELIEF ROAD

The proposed Balsall Common Relief Road has several key objectives:

- Facilitate, through early delivery, HS2 activity by providing a construction access route.
- Support development of new homes planned in the village.
- Provide the main vehicular access to the Barratt's Farm development; and
- Relieve through traffic in the centre of the village.

The proposed configuration of the Relief Road is a single carriageway road with potential for walkways and cycleways similar to the existing Hallmeadow Road.

It will provide an alternative to the A452 Kenilworth Road, but it is considered unlikely that it will remove all through traffic from the village centre. The alignment is shown on Fig. 19.

⁴ https://www.solihull.gov.uk/sites/default/files/migrated/LeisureParksEvents_Cycling_and_Walking_foldout_map.pdf

Priorities for the centre:

- Improve road safety
- Address traffic and parking congestion
- Reverse car friendly arrangements and introduce people friendly ones.

WALKING AND CYCLING

Balsall Common has a very good network of walking and cycling routes throughout the village. In addition, the village is of a size in which most internal journeys could feasibly be undertaken by walking and cycling. This will remain the case for most of the proposed new development.

Footpaths are provided alongside most roads and there are attractive footpaths through Lavender Hall Park.

The Solihull Borough Council walking and cycling map⁴ shows that Balsall Common has a combination of shared use cycle routes (along Hallmeadow Road and the A452 Kenilworth Road and shown in red on Fig. 9)

and advisory routes (shown in yellow). Footpaths and Public Rights of Way (PRoW) are shown by the brown dotted lines. Station Road and Meeting House Lane are advisory cycle routes.

The relatively low traffic volumes, 30 mph speed limits and close proximity to attractive surrounding countryside makes Balsall Common a desirable location for cyclists and ramblers. The village centre is also recognised as a convenient stop off point for cyclists.

In the centre of the village along the A452 Kenilworth Road there are signalised pedestrian crossing facilities approximately 30m north of the centre roundabout and south of it in the vicinity of the Co-op supermarket. There is an uncontrolled crossing point with dropped kerbs just south of the centre roundabout.

Fig. 17 - Walking and Cycling Map (Solihull Council) showing the network of advisory and designated routes



On Station Road there is an uncontrolled crossing facility west of the centre roundabout and in the retail core there is a build out of the footpath (between the Tesco express and the One Stop) which reduces the road width to approximately 7m. Pedestrian guard railing has been installed on the approaches to the centre roundabout to help maintain road crossing discipline at the junction.

Community perspective

- Crossing the A452 Kenilworth Road: concerns over safety, particularly for vulnerable users such as young children, and severance as the road acts a barrier which impedes movement across it.
- Station Road: safety concerns crossing the road which is generally very wide (up to 17m); conflicts with vehicle traffic and vehicle overhangs stretching on to the pavement.
- Cycling: crossing the roundabout at the centre and navigating the part of Station Road with cars manoeuvring in and out of parking spaces is considered by many unacceptably dangerous. The cycle parking facilities in the centre are limited

and inconvenient (dark alley by the Library).

- Obstructions, obstacles and clutter such as street furniture which is perceived as unattractive and acts as barrier to free movement. Also, some residents highlighted parked cars on private land.
- Footpath maintenance is an issue, drainage appears inadequate in places and the appearance is perceived to be unattractive (see Fig. 7).
- Demarcation: some residents are unsure of what is public highway and what is private land.
- The route from the Co-op car park to the Station Road via Hazel Place / the Co-op service yard is not a designated public right of way, access is restricted and poorly lit. This route is used in preference by the more vulnerable residents, as the Co-op car park is easier to use than others and the easiest to reach the pharmacy and post office without road crossings. This is perceived as a way to increase business by the Co-op. Footpath access via Kenilworth Road is narrow in places making it difficult for the mobility impaired.

- Access from the Library car park is via a narrow pathway. The narrow width makes access particularly difficult for the mobility impaired.

Key priorities for the centre:

- Increase pedestrian safety.
- Reduce severance / and improve crossing roads.
- Reduce clutter, improve maintenance and make the environment more attractive.
- Improve connections to / from car parks.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Rail

Berkswell Rail Station is approximately 800m from the village centre and provides access to Birmingham, Coventry and London via the West Coast mainline WCML. A car parking facility is also provided.

Train services are frequent, during daytime weekdays typically two per hour (based on existing timetable valid 13/12/20 to 15/5/21). Journey times into Birmingham New Street are typically 22 minutes and London Euston can be reached in under two hours. The convenience and connectivity of the rail services at Berkswell station is one factor that makes Balsall Common an attractive location for commuters.

Once HS2 services are operational commuters will be able to access the new Interchange Station via Birmingham International whilst seating capacity will be freed up on the existing WCML.

Existing access to Berkswell Rail Station is via Station Road and Hallmeadow Road. The latter has dedicated off road cycle facilities and there is an aspiration to improve cycling

facilities along Station Road and provide for it on the proposed Balsall Common Relief Road.

According to the 2011 Census Travel to Work Data, around 130 people travelled to work by train, 60-70% of which went to Birmingham. 2019-2020 Entry-Exit data (pre-pandemic) from the ORR⁵ indicates around 58,000 passengers' movement at Berkswell Station, comparable to Coventry Arena, and around 70% of those of Shirley and Kenilworth. This also equates to 100-150 passengers per day.

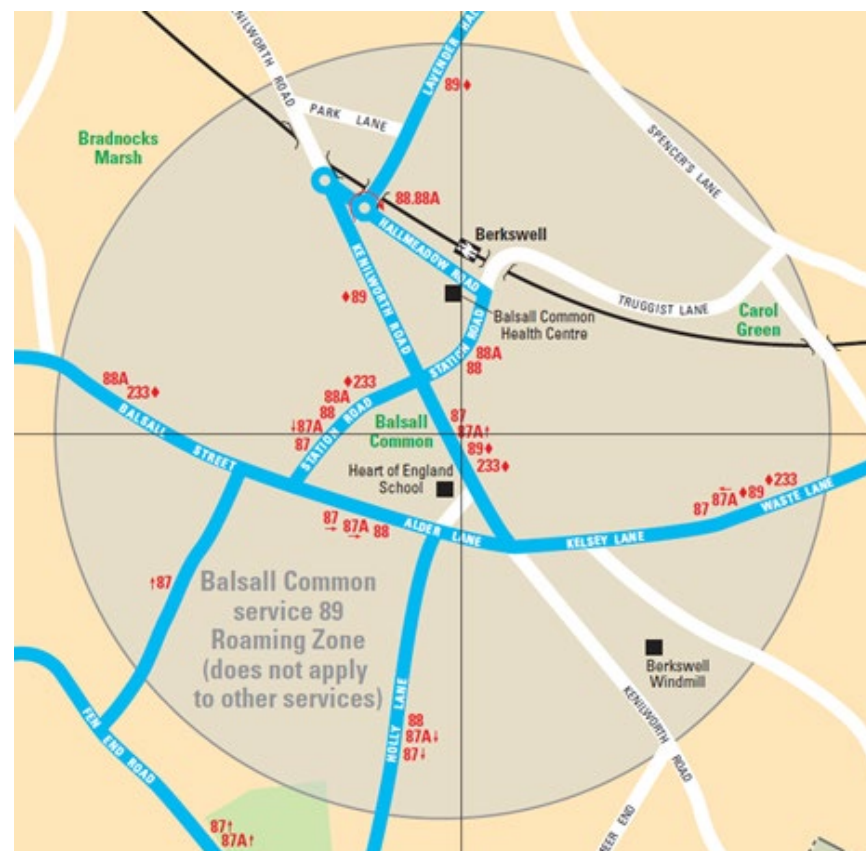
Bus

There are four main bus services serving Balsall Common:

- 87 - Coventry to Solihull via Knowle;
- 88 – Solihull to Balsall Common via Knowle;
- 89 – Solihull to Coventry via Hampton in Arden; and
- 233 – Solihull to Kenilworth via Knowle.

⁵ Office for Rail and Road - [Estimates of station usage | ORR Data Portal](#)

Fig. 18 - Location of bus routes and bus stops⁶



Bus stops serving the village are located on Station Road, just west of the centre roundabout and on the A452 Kenilworth Road in the vicinity of the Library. Further stops are in close proximity to Berkswell Rail Station (see Fig. 10).

Only one of the four bus stops has a dedicated shelter. None have raised kerbs (to aid access for mobility impaired) or real time information displays.

⁶ https://www.networkwestmidlands.com/media/3649/solihull_area_map_web-proof3.pdf

Key priorities for the centre:

- Retain good access to public transport services.
- Improve the appearance and facilities at the bus stops.

PARKING

In the centre there are two public parking areas and a private car park made freely available to the public by the owners: Station Road, the Library car park and the private Co-op parking area. There are further parking allocations spread throughout Balsall Common including Berkswell Rail Station.

On Street – Station Street

- Capacity: there are 43 public parking spaces including 2 disabled spaces and 1 loading / unloading space. All but three spaces are aligned perpendicular to the kerb, the other three are parallel to the kerb.
- Parking is well used throughout the day and vehicles users will often struggle to find a parking space. During the 2017

parking survey the maximum occupancy during the survey period (Tuesday 31 October to Thursday 2nd November 2017) reached 100%.

- Restrictions: parking is limited to two hours with no return for two hours and these restrictions are in place 8am to 6pm Monday to Saturday.

Jubilee Centre / Library car park

- Capacity: there are 61 public parking spaces including 2 disabled spaces.
- Parking is aligned perpendicular to the perimeter surrounding a central core of parking.
- Parking is well used throughout the day. During the 2017 parking survey the maximum occupancy during the survey period (Tuesday 31 October to Thursday 2nd November 2017) was 74%.
- There are no restrictions in place.

Co-op car park

- This is a private car park, used by concession of the owners.

- Capacity, there are 64 spaces including 3 disabled spaces.
- Parking is set out in a herringbone formation. Spaces skirt the perimeter, and these then surround a central core of parking.
- Parking is well used throughout the day. During the 2017 parking survey the maximum occupancy during the survey period (Tuesday 31 October to Thursday 2nd November 2017) was 53%.
- Restrictions, parking is limited to two hours.

Berkswell Train Station

- There are 93 spaces including 5 disabled spaces.
- The car park is typically full during weekdays and demand often exceeds supply leading to overspill parking on nearby roads. During the 2017 parking survey the maximum occupancy during the survey period (Tuesday 31 October to Thursday 2nd November 2017) reached 91%.
- The car park is free for rail users only.

Other parking

- Several businesses located in the centre have their own private parking facilities – some in their forecourts, at the back of the pavement, which they need to cross to access the space.
- Other parking spaces within business private premises and community facilities are available.

Parking Study, October 2020 (by Solihull Borough Council)

The report puts forward the following mitigations to address existing and forecast parking congestion in Balsall Common:

- Extension to Berkswell station parking.
- Option 1 (with Relief Road) – new on-street parking on the A452 close to Station Road in line with A452 public realm improvements (to be confirmed).
- Option 2 – parking controls on the Library Car Park to prioritise demand and monitoring of nearby residential parking.

Community perspective

- Members of the community reported that a different layout at the Library car park could increase the number of spaces.
- The entry-exit access from Station Road to the car park is too narrow to accommodate two larger vehicles crossing each other, and cars often block the footway before being able to re-join the carriageway on Station Road.
- Road safety concerns on Station Road in the village centre particularly when; reversing backwards into oncoming traffic or parked vehicles on the opposite side of the road, also reversing backwards, and also conflicts with pedestrians crossing the road.
- High number of delivery vans occupying spaces on Station Road which use up capacity. Many tend to have long overhangs which encroach on to pavement.
- Difficulty in trying to find a parking space and difficulties in access and egress means some residents avoid using this location for parking.

- Residents report that the Co-op car park is the easiest to use, and through the Hazel Place short cut, the one that gives easy access to pharmacy and post office, therefore convenient for vulnerable users.
- Residents report that people from other areas drive to Berkswell Station to take the train because of the free parking.
- Concern parking, safety and congestion will get worse as the village grows in size.
- There is parking congestion outside schools during pick up off / drop off time and outside sports clubs during match / training days.

Priorities for the centre:

- Optimise parking, as demand typically exceeds supply during busy periods.
- Increase safety of all users on Station Road and reduce congestion created by cars reversing into traffic.
- Address parking congestion and safety concerns, which will worsen if not mitigated as the village grows.

ASPIRATIONS

Enhanced centre – provision of a more desirable centre which is safe for all users, people focused and a place where people are happy to dwell. This will require a comprehensive approach to reductions in speed limits, changes to the parking layout including shared space layout and changes to the layout / reconfiguration of the centre roundabout junction.

Evidence from elsewhere such as Poynton in Cheshire (which has higher traffic volumes than the centre roundabout) indicates that it is feasible to make alterations to the layout.

Enhanced parking accessibility - a clear approach to optimising car parking access and configuration will be necessary. This may or may not result in a change in the number of parking spaces. In all cases, parking convenience should not undermine aspirations for increased access by walking and cycling.

Balsall Common Relief Road – new residential development at Barratt's Farm will contribute to the delivery of a Relief Road, which could provide an alternative to

the Kenilworth Road and which could help remove high volumes of through traffic. This will provide a further opportunity to reallocate road space on the A452 Kenilworth Road.

New walking and cycling routes including plans for cycling improvements to the A452 Kenilworth Road (linked to the Balsall Common Relief Road) and Station Road. Other proposals include extensions to the Greenway to connect with Berkswell station and the wider public right of way network.

New station parking – planned to be delivered after the HS2 construction phase and located on the northern part of Barratt's Farm development and within walking distance of the station.

Improved public transport – including more frequent services and better connections to desirable locations, enclosed shelters and electronic indicator boards providing real time updates. A higher population makes such improvements more commercially viable.

8. PLANNING POLICY

The planning policy framework is made of a recent Local Plan (Submission Draft, 2020) and two Neighbourhood Development Plans. Policies support residential development at Balsall Common, but do not offer a clear vision for the future role and scale of the centre. No land for expansion is identified.

This master plan (defined in the Local Plan) is expected to provide additional guidance.

Policies, however, clearly support:

- Public realm improvements, in which people and sustainability are promoted ahead of vehicular traffic.
- Safer pedestrian movement and traffic calming.
- Improved accessibility by walking and cycling and bus facilities.

The NDPs also commit to the use of CIL funding raised in Balsall Common to the improvement of local infrastructure for its residents, including supporting the centre.

LOCAL PLAN

General Policies

A Submission Draft of the Local Plan was published for consultation in October 2020⁷. Providing for the housing needs of the borough and supporting the development of a growing region has been one of the key priorities of the Plan, secondary only to mitigating and adapting to climate change.

The plan seeks to deliver 15,000 homes, of which 5,720 are to be on newly allocated sites with a ‘balanced dispersal’ approach: the establishment of a selected number of locations where significant growth can be accommodated and serviced.

Balsall Common is one of these locations, taking a large share of development, despite being considered a ‘village’ because of its rail station and highway connections to major employment centres and other facilities, and availability of services such as a large health centre and secondary school. As a result, it is expected to accommodate 1,615 new homes

across six peripheral sites (Policies BC1 to BC6 - see Fig. 19).

The Frog Lane and Windmill Lanes sites are expected to come forward in the first part of the plan period.

Employment growth is planned for the UK Central Hub (Policy P1) comprising the Arden Cross HS2 Station, the NEC, Birmingham Airport and Jaguar Land Rover’s facilities, 20 minutes away from Balsall Common.

Despite significant residential growth at Balsall Common, no specific employment policy or allocation is made. Current employment uses and home working are supported by Policy P3 subject to being compatible to their context.

All new development should contribute to enhance sustainable access and be located with 400m of high frequency bus routes or 800m of a rail station (Policy P7). In Balsall Common this will require investment in improved bus services.

⁷ [Solihull Local Plan Review](#)

New development should also contribute to 10% biodiversity net gain through habitat creation and establishment of a green infrastructure network (Policy P10).

The centre of Balsall Common is a designated Local Centre, where loss of Community and Social Infrastructure will be resisted, and delivery of new facilities encouraged (Policy P19).

SECTION ON BALSALL COMMON

The Local Plan identifies Balsall Common as a centre suitable for growth but recognises that it does not offer significant employment premises. Future growth is nevertheless expected to bring infrastructure benefits, by supporting delivery of:

- **The Balsall Common Relief Road** – expected to relieve traffic in the centre, accommodate additional housing growth and facilitate construction of HS2 activity. The proposed single carriageway Road will provide main vehicle access to Barratts Farm development (see Fig. 19).
- **An Enhanced Centre** – through the preparation of a specific master plan (part of this study).

- **Other transport improvements** - including the provision for additional station parking as part of the Barratt's Farm development and improvements to public transport services driven by increase in population and the future operation of HS2 services.
- **A new primary school** – to be allocated as part of the Barratt's Farm development along Station Road.

As a result of development, it is expected that fewer pupils from the Coventry area will be offered places at the Heart of England secondary school.

The Parish Councils will also benefit from 25% of CIL funding for local priority projects.

The Development Sites

Development expectations for the 6 development sites are identified in Policies BC1 to BC6 and in Concept Masterplans.

All sites are required to make improvements to biodiversity and green infrastructure networks (including enhancements to the Green Belt edge where appropriate), and provide for water management, sustainable travel and connectivity by walking and cycling, and making contribution to physical and social infrastructure.

The Barratt's Farm site should also provide new sport pitches and the other sites should contribute financially to sport provision elsewhere. Contribution to enhancement of the current sport facilities is also expected.

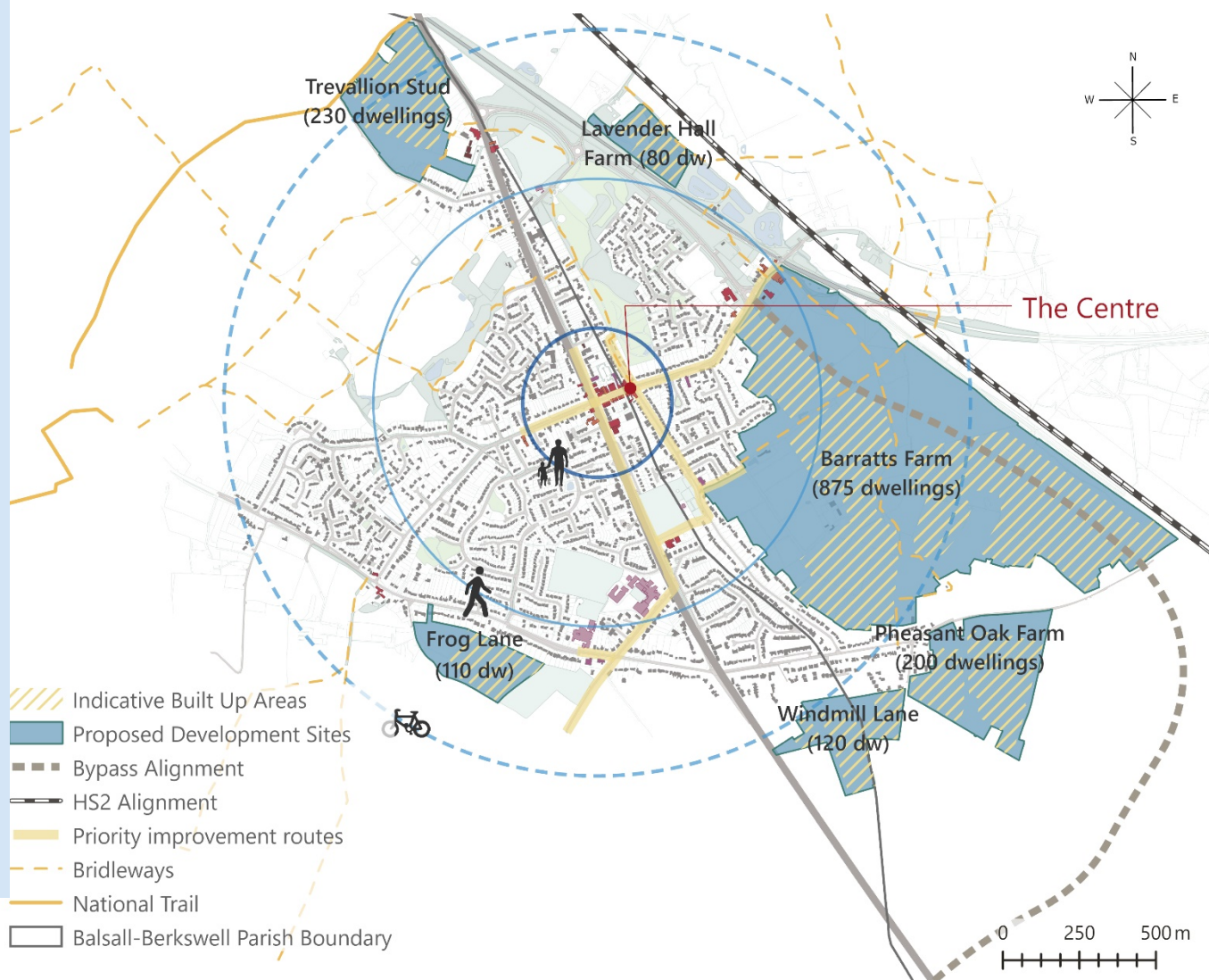
The Windmill Lane site should create a new significant open space to the south of the windmill, to help enjoy its setting.

None of the site is to provide, or make contribution towards, high street or employment uses.

Implications for the centre:

- The Local Plan sees Balsall Common as a commuter location – as it does not encourage any employment growth and only protects the existing centre – without provision for expansion.
- Even without accounting for Working From Home (WHF) trends, in 2011 about 35% of employment was locally based (see pg. 11). This mean that 800-1,200 additional jobs could potentially be based locally during the plan period, should provision be made for them.
- The future green and natural areas could form a cohesive whole and be integrated with the trails that support the centre.
- Walking and cycle links could be the backbone of movement in the village.
- The location of future sport and community facilities should be made purposefully to reinforce the centre.
- Balsall Parish Council observed that the Local Plan failed to provide an overall framework for Balsall Common. It also objected to the inclusion of the Frog Lane site.

Fig. 19 - The proposed development areas



NEIGHBOURHOOD DEVELOPMENT PLANS

Policies relevant to the centre of Balsall Common are also included in the two Neighbourhood Development Plans (NDPs) for the two Parishes. Berkswell NDP was ‘made’ in 2019, while Balsall NDP is awaiting referendum (delayed because of the Covid restrictions).

Both NDPs promote the concept of a village community, by requiring the retention of local character and rural feel for both existing and new development areas. They also promote expansion of biodiversity, wildlife and access to the countryside.

Both NDPs recognise the high level of car ownership and use in the area particularly for commuting to work. Both Plans support walking and cycling strategies within the village to ensure that local roads and the centre are not overwhelmed by traffic associated with future new development. The village centre masterplan will adopt this approach..

Neither Plan includes a vision or specific policies for the centre.

BALSALL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN⁸

The Plan includes policies that:

- Support local employment and promote Working From Home, through inclusion of flexible space in new development and provision of better telecom infrastructure in new development (Policies ECON.1 to 3).
- Enhancement and improvement of existing sport facilities, and new ones compatible with their neighbouring uses are supported (Policy COM.2)
- Encouraging walking and cycling, through provision of new facilities as part of new development (COM.3)
- Requirement for better Green Infrastructure, through high quality and ecologically sensitive landscaping and native tree/hedge planting (Policies NE.1 and NE.4)

An Annex to the Balsall NDP contains relevant Community Aspirations:

- Improvements to road safety and parking in the village centre, including reduction in traffic congestion; safer streets for all road users; provision of additional off-road parking and reduction in speeding traffic. (CA.4). CA.4.d also includes the aspiration for a more desirable centre giving better community focus.
- Support for a village bypass road, specifically to redirect through traffic away from the centre thereby reducing congestion (CA.5). HS2 construction traffic is envisaged to use initial phases of any bypass instead of the A452.
- CA.7 and CA.8 commit to the protection and expansion of playing fields and leisure facilities, including the creation of a gym and other informal play areas.
- Improvements to public transport (CA.9), such as regular bus services to Kenilworth and better service frequency and reliability; and provision of real time bus journey information and enclosed shelters.

⁸ [Balsall Neighbourhood Plan | solihull.gov.uk](https://www.solihull.gov.uk)

BERKSWELL NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN⁹

The Berkswell NDP's vision is clearly focused on the protection of the rural environment of the Meriden Gap and the protection of heritage, character and distinctiveness.

It also supports local economic development (particularly farming businesses) and commits to working with Balsall Parish to improve the centre of Balsall Common (the 'shopping area').

Key Plan policies include:

- Requirement that new development in Balsall Common is served by main roads and maximises accessibility by walking and cycling, and provides new landscape and habitats (Policy B1).
- Support for appropriate conversion of agricultural buildings for small scale business use (B6) and for appropriate Working From Home (B10).
- Improvement of car parking facilities at Berkswell Station, with additional safe

and secure public car parking and convenient cycle parking (B7).

- Requirement for a needs-based assessment for car parking and cycle storage, mindful of specific requirements of Berkswell Neighbourhood Area and high local car ownership (B8).
- Requirement that new development should include connections to existing footpaths and cycle routes and maximise safe accessibility for all non-vehicle users – including users of mobility scooters, wheelchairs and pushchairs. All new and existing pedestrian and cycle routes should be designed to be safe and secure (B9).
- In para 10.10, the NPD highlights the need to improve the centre particularly for parking, access, poor design of public space, lack of public seating and lack of space for local market and the need for a good mix of retail and food outlets.

Within the Annex to the NDP two other important issues are highlighted: the support for extensive traffic calming and road safety

improvements in Balsall Common and the commitment to spend CIL payment arising from Balsall Common developments to improve local infrastructure for its residents.

Implications for the centre:

- No specific policy for the future role of the centre is included in either NDP, so no land for future retail or employment expansion is identified.
- No specific policy prevents the development of retail facilities outside the centre.
- Other policies, however, support local employment, Working From Home, inclusion of walking and cycling provision as part of new development.
- Policies encourage traffic calming, public realm enhancement and walking and cycling improvements.

⁹ [Berkswell Neighbourhood Plan | solihull.gov.uk](https://www.solihull.gov.uk)

OTHER INITIATIVES

SOLIHULL TOWNS AND LOCAL CENTRE RECOVERY PLAN

In response to the Covid pandemic, Solihull Council has developed an Economic Recovery Plan, aiming to mitigate the impact and to ensure a sustainable, inclusive and resilient economic recovery, promoting innovation and a ‘green recovery’, supporting the ‘Transformation’ of high streets in line with changing consumer demand, the future role of retail and developing mixed use, multi-functional spaces.

The centre of Balsall Common (through the Parish Councils) is identified as one of the key partners for an action plan based on the following themes:

1. Streets & Spaces – Creating a safe and welcoming environment for customers and for businesses to operate, encouraging

low carbon forms of transport, including walking and cycling.

2. Branding & Communications – Supporting clear and consistent messages to businesses and consumers, ensuring Covid-safe access and encouraging to ‘Shop Local’ and environmentally sustainable practices.
3. Business Support – Linking our local businesses to developing local, regional and national support programmes, responding to local needs.
4. Partnerships & Structures – Ensuring the right stakeholders are engaged and involved in implementation.
5. Monitoring & Evaluation – Ensuring a co-ordinated plan for each area.

SOLIHULL CYCLING AND WALKING INFRASTRUCTURE PLAN (SCWIP)¹⁰

- The West Midlands Strategic Cycle Network identifies cycle routes and Core Walking Zones (CWZ) to form a cycle network and improvement plan. In the

borough of Solihull, the Strategic Cycle Network includes a route from Balsall Common to Stonebridge via the A452.

- The Solihull Cycle Network identifies a network of routes across the Borough. Balsall Common to Coventry via Station Road and the route above via the A452 have been identified as primary cycle corridors.
- Core Walking Zones (CWZs) have been identified across the Borough to improve the overall pedestrian environment and address issues such as safety and severance. Balsall Common is one of 6 CWZs and the SCWIP includes a number of recommendations.

Implications for the centre:

- It will be important for Balsall Common to proactively participate in the Solihull Town and Local Centre Recovery Plan and capture support for increased resilience.

Walking and cycling measures have a local but also regional dimension.

¹⁰ <https://www.solihull.gov.uk/sites/default/files/Solihull%20LCWIP%20Report.pdf>

9. TOWARDS A VISION

INPUTS FROM LOCAL PEOPLE

At the end of the Focus Groups' meetings, participants were asked to suggest key words that could form part of a future Vision Statement for the centre. 228 suggestions were made. These words were collated, compiled and elaborated in the Word Cloud below, where larger words represent the suggestions more frequently expressed.

Fig. 20 - Key words for a Vision Statement



SOUNDBYTES FROM THE FOCUS GROUPS

- A village with the facilities of a small town.
- A place with a “heart and soul”.
- Not the image of ‘old village’ (plenty of them around anyways) – but a joyous and ‘timeless’ personality.
- A ”Free-to-Roam” village for younger people.
- A place where it is easy to make friends.
- A village you ‘join’.
- A village where people “talk to each other”.
- A place that makes a virtue of staying relatively small.
- A place that is attractive, and capable of attracting people and business – but not a destination.
- The memories of small-scale local stories.
- A network of places for young people: Costa Coffee, pizza, shops, the ‘Triangles’ and walks through the fields.
- More space for retail and more desirable place – a bit more like Knowle.
- Local businesses that are actually stylish.
- Amazing trees in Balsall Common and Lavender Hall Park.

EXPLORING OPTIONS

IMPROVEMENTS WHATEVER THE OPTION (FIXED ELEMENTS)

- Village character with improved facilities.
- More attractive public realm – no value in repairing the existing.
- Reinforce the unity of the core centre.
- Increase greenery (including urban greenery as part of buildings).
- Remove or reconfigure the head-on Station Road car parks.
- Make the cross-roads / roundabout safer for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Make the centre pedestrian friendly – even at the expense of traffic flows.
- Slow down vehicle speeds in the centre with 20mph speed limits on the A452 Kenilworth Road and Station Road in the centre.
- Find a suitable connection across Hazel Place linking the Co-op to the centre.
- Facilitate cycling across the village.
- Improve the conditions for safety.

RANGE OF CHOICES TO BE EXPLORED (VARIABLE ELEMENTS)

Connections and limits

The centre is dependent on its inter-connectedness to the life and destinations of the village (see pg. 11-12). It has also limited potential for intensification.

While the extent of the ‘core’ of the centre is clear, its relationship with the fringes (area of influence) is to be explored to ensure that a ‘rival centre’ does not emerge elsewhere – for example by the station, once the Relief Road and new development take place.

- What is the extent of the ‘area of influence’?
- What is the role of the ‘area of influence’: simply link up dispersed facilities? Or form an integrated mixed use central zone?
- Should high street uses be prevented for developing outside the areas of influence?
- Do greenspaces (parks and sport) belong to the ‘area of influence’?

Fig. 21 - Potential 'areas of influence'



Role of the core village centre

The core village centre could have a role that spans from simple convenience to local community focal point for activities, meeting friends and essential shopping to a buzzing local attraction.

The range of offer, type of service and setting may be different depending on the role.

- A convenience centre relies on passing trade and quick-in / quick-out trade which maximises linked trip: easy reachable (by all modes), convenient parking, good lighting at night and synergetic shopping and services. This type of centre needs to capture parents dropping off their kids a school, pupils after school, people coming home from work, etc. This would be a Restructuring / Repositioning Strategy on the Government’s High Street Task Force scale¹¹.

¹¹ [High Street Recovery to Transformation Route Map \(highstreettaskforce.org.uk\)](https://www.highstreettaskforce.org.uk)

- A community focal point relies more on village connectivity and ease of access and less on passing trade. Convenient cycle and pedestrian routes are very important and so are the connections with associations, clubs, schools, sport etc. The Library, the Jubilee Centre and the halls become key drivers of footfall in the centre, supported by cafés and sitting out space. ‘Blended’ activities (such as a café with study space or a convenience store with an indoor toddler play space, etc) are to be encouraged. This would be a Repositioning Strategy on the High Street Task Force scale.
- The creation of a local attraction will require a Rebranding / Reinventing Strategy, according to the High Street Task Force. This will require better coordination and action by the businesses to collectively improve offer and presentation. A public space and an area for small events (markets, festivals, etc.) and cultural activities will be a priority. The public realm and design will have to have more memorable traits, still suitable to the village, and the experience of night-time very important. It will require

optimisation of parking, but also accepting that quick-in / quick-out is no longer a priority.

The feel and look of the centre

Respecting the feedback of the focus group, the aspirations for the feel of the centre has been narrowed down, but could still range from taking inspiration from the image of a time-honoured village setting to that of a fresher forward-looking village.

- More traditional approaches could be in the choice of materials, even if used in a contemporary way: wood, stone, cast iron, mixed plants and flower baskets, etc. Traditional features (such as chimneys, carvings and other small decorative elements) could be emphasised.
- A fresher look could include a stronger colour palette in flowers and street furniture, well designed modern shop signage and perhaps more emphasis on youthful activities.

The highway arrangements

More emphasis on pedestrian movement could be achieved through a range of restrictions, such as:

- Full pedestrianisation of a part of Station Road and traffic calming on Kenilworth Road – probably dependent on the delivery of the Relief Road.
- Integral share space arrangement for the crossroads and Station Road – Poynton style.
- Partial shared space for a part of Station Road and traffic calming and walking / cycling improvements on Kenilworth Road.
- Carriageway reduction, with traffic calming and walking / cycling improvements on Station Road and Kenilworth Road – Dorridge style.

IDENTIFYING OPTIONS

Improvements that must be made in all cases and ranges of choices (the fixed and variable components) need to be grouped and developed into three simple and easy to understand alternative options, which will include three main parts:

- High-level strategy – for the village as a whole and the ‘area of influence’, to direct development and change in a way that supports the centre.
- Master plan proposals for the centre itself – including land use, public realm, transport and consideration of deliverability.
- Supporting actions – for initiatives that cannot be delivered directly through the master plan: shop front improvements, cultural offer, etc.

The development of options and their discussion to identify the preferred way forward are the focus of the next stage of this study. The strategy and supporting actions may need further study outside the scope of this commission.