



Alcester Neighbourhood Development Plan Local Green Space Site Assessment - August 2018

Site Address	Site Area	Site Ref
River Arrow Nature Reserve, south of Westbury Park and the B4089, Alcester	Approx. 3ha	LGS 2
Plan		
		
Site Description and Current Land Use		
<p>The site is part of a large wedge of green infrastructure that runs through Alcester from north to south. The River Arrow Nature Reserve is an idyllic, tranquil, well-managed and well-used site adjoining the River Arrow to the east with Jubilee Fields beyond. It consists of numerous natural paths (including a circular path), information boards, path signposting, bird boxes, two ponds and pebble beached islands in the river within wetland planting.</p> <p>A dense canopy of veteran and semi-mature trees, shrubs and wildflowers line the site with picket fencing along the western perimeter. To the south of the site is an open area of natural grassland. Lining the exterior of the site to the southwest are residential dwelling and a playing field to the northwest.</p>		
Relevant Planning History		
No relevant planning history found.		

Site Ownership
<p>Owned by Stratford District Council and managed by the Wildlife Trust, with the support of a local group of volunteers. Title Ref: WK393563</p>
Site Constraints
<p>The site sits within the Built-up Area Boundary but is in a designated Area of Restraint (SDC Core Strategy CS 13) and Local Nature Reserve (SDC Core Strategy CS 6)</p> <p>The site is situated in Zone A09 and borders Zone A10 of the B2 Alcester Landscape Sensitivity Study (2011). Both zones are categorised as having high sensitivity to both commercial and residential development. The reports states that:</p> <p><i>“This flat valley floor zone, mostly in the floodplain of the River Arrow, runs through the centre of the settlement separating the older part of the town to the west from the new to the east. It comprises well used and managed amenity space to the east and north west and permanent grazed pasture to the west, part of which is a scheduled ancient monument [Alcester Abbey- with no visible remains] and part of which is the River Arrow local nature reserve. The river has a winding natural course and strong riparian tree cover and with other trees and hedgerows on boundaries strongly enclose the area screening the settlement edge and acting as a setting for the town including Gunners Bridge to the south. Overall the area is either a valuable community resource or provides a rural setting for a SAM. It is therefore highly sensitive and unsuitable for housing development..” p.28</i></p> <p><i>“The area's sensitivity lies in its role as floodplain, its ecological and recreational value along the river corridor, its visual interest and its role as part of the setting for the SAM.” p.31</i></p>
Public Access
<p>The site is open and accessible to the public. Numerous footpaths run through the site. There are access is gained from a cycle/footpath north of the site and from footpaths which run through Abbey Fields and Priory Meadow to the south/</p>
Site Photo




Ecological Significance
<p>River Arrow Reserve was designated a Local Nature Reserve in 1993. The site consists of a mosaic of habitats including ponds, river, meadow and woodland. It supports and is valuable a variety of wildlife including bats, locally rare small teasel, kingfishers and regionally scarce beetles.</p> <p>The banks of the River Arrow are edged with willow, alder, oak and hawthorn, which provide ideal perches for kingfishers. The sloping pebble beach provides the perfect habitat for reeds and wetland plants, as well as offering an attractive feeding area for many birds, amphibians, invertebrates and insects such as grey wagtails and several regionally scarce beetles.</p> <p>The mixed species trees and shrubs are important for a number of birds and mammals as they provide food, shelter and nesting sites. They increase the diversity of insect species (including butterflies and bees which are currently in decline), which are a food source for bird and mammal species and can also play an important role in the pollination of plants and crops in the surrounding area. The diversity and population numbers of insects directly impacts the food chain for other fauna in the area and has a wider impact on the cultivation of crops. These are all vital for the wider food web and species diversity within the town's ecosystem.</p> <p>Within the town, there have been sightings of larger fauna species such as bats, birds of prey (e.g. buzzards and owls), rabbits and hedgehogs. The site plays an important contributory role in the wider ecological significance of the town.</p>
Special Qualities and Local Significance
<p>The site is locally significant because of its important ecological value. It is well used and highly valued by the local community for local residents, visitors and dog walkers being easily accessible from the town centre. In addition to being a popular walking area by residents, the nature reserve is also regularly attended by science groups from nearby Alcester Grammar School to study the flora and wildlife.</p> <p>The special qualities of the site include its strong contribution to local character and green infrastructure. It is also distinctive due to its natural beauty and tranquil, open aspect as well as its views to and gentle sounds of the River Arrow.</p>
Summary and Suitability for Designation as Local Green Space
<p>This site is well related to and appreciated and valued by the local community and makes a positive contribution to the local distinctiveness of the village.</p> <p>The LGS as outlined on the above plan is considered to be suitable for Local Green Space designation in accordance with paragraphs 99-101 of the National Planning Policy Framework in that it is:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves; • demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance because of its recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity and richness of its habitats and wildlife potential; and • local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.