

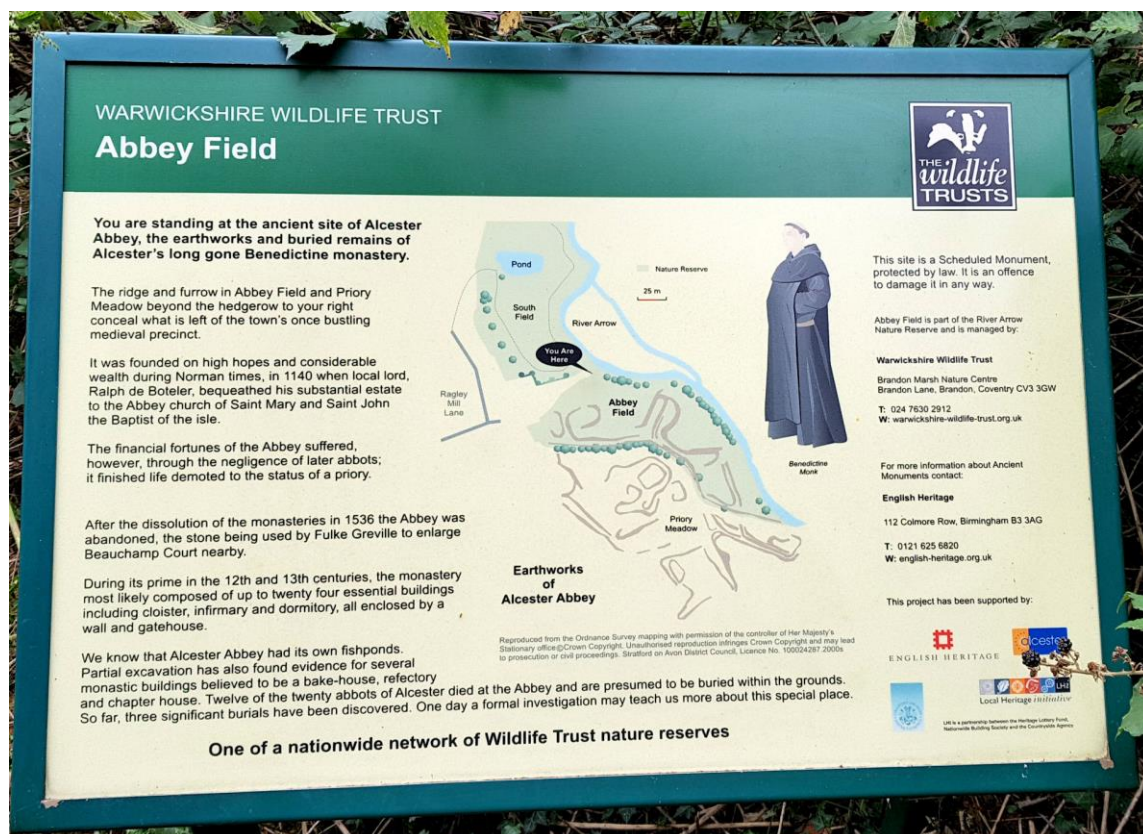


Alcester Neighbourhood Development Plan Local Green Space Site Assessment - August 2018

Site Address	Site Area	Site Ref
Abbey Field, River Arrow Nature Reserve, south of Westbury Park and east of Birmingham Rd, Alcester	Approx. 1.88ha	LGS 3
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. Connected by footpath to the River Arrow Nature Reserve to the north and Priory Meadow to the south, the site consists of open views across a natural and untended grassland. Both formal and informal well-used footpaths traverse this tranquil site. A thicket of mature and semi-mature trees and shrubs line the majority of the site with some mature trees scattered within the site. Buzzards, crows and magpies can be seen and heard flying overhead.</p> <p>The River Arrow that runs along the east boundary can be heard and seen through the trees and wildflowers that line its banks. Views to the recreation grounds to the east are also visible through the trees. Glimpses of buildings can be seen to the east. Information boards about the site sit at its north and south entrances.</p> <p>The site is a noted a Scheduled Monument site of which mounds and depressions are evidence of the Benedictine Abbey that stood here, founded in 1140.</p>		

Relevant Planning History
No relevant planning history found.
Site Ownership
Owned by Stratford District Council. Title Ref: WK393563
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 Scheduled Monument Site (SDC Core Strategy CS 8).</p> <p>The site is situated in Zone A09 of the B2 Alcester Landscape Sensitivity Study (2011). Part of the zone is identified as a Warwickshire Wildlife Reserve. The zone is 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>
Public Access
The site is open and accessible to the public from public footpaths which link it to the River Arrow Nature Reserve to the north and Priory Meadow to the south.
Site Photo




Ecological Significance

The site contains a variety of habitats including the river and open grassland together with a dense thicket of mature/ semi-mature trees and shrubs lining its perimeter. It supports a variety of wildlife including insects, amphibians, invertebrates, mammals and birds. Buzzards, mapies and crows were seen flying overhead.

The banks of the River Arrow are edged with willow, alder, oak and hawthorn, which provide ideal perches for kingfishers. This mix of habitats is 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.

In 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.

Special Qualities and Local Significance

The site is locally significant because of its important ecological value and historical heritage as a Schedule Monument site. 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.

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.

Summary and Suitability for Designation as Local Green Space

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.

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:

- 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.