

## Wolverhampton City Centre & Industrial Districts Character Area (WV01)

### SUMMARY:

This area represents the commercial and industrial core of the city of Wolverhampton, and almost half<sup>1</sup> of its area is given to industrial purposes, the majority of which is currently the result of mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century development. In the south-west of the Character Area, the commercial centre of the city is serviced by the convergence of roads, railways and canals. The Character Area as a whole is largely surrounded by residential suburbs.

### GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

In general, the area lies over mudstone and sandstone, although in its south-east (in Monmore Green), there are coal measures present. The centre of Wolverhampton, in the south-west of the Character Area, is on a promontory (about 160m above sea level) overlooking the areas to the north, east and west (the land rises to the south of the city centre).

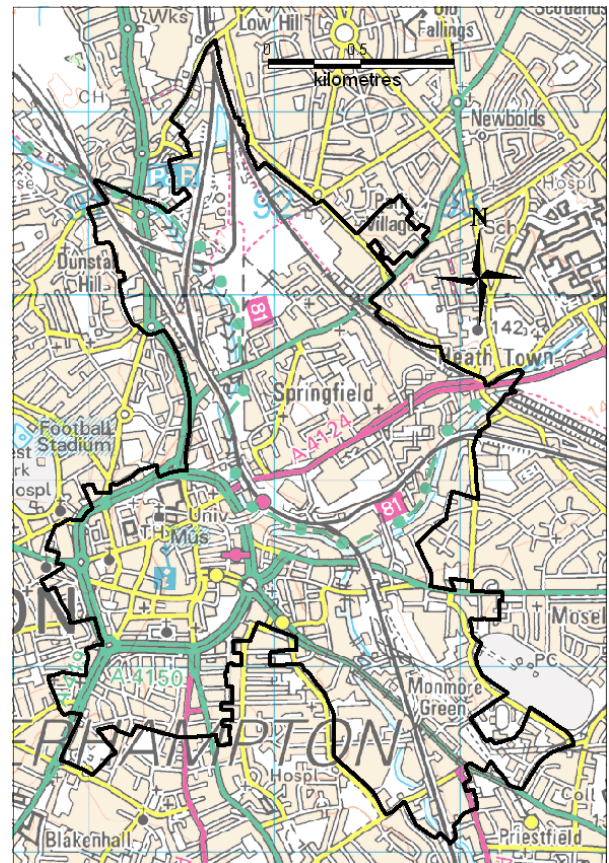
### MODERN CHARACTER:

The largest part of this area is mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century industry, and it contains a third of all Wolverhampton's industrial land. Much is situated next to the network of canals and railways (including, since 1999, the Midland



Older commercial properties dating from the 18<sup>th</sup> & 19<sup>th</sup> centuries are the legacy of a period of the city's development which included the growth associated with the coming of the canals & railways and the associated industry and trade. These buildings now sit alongside, or are overshadowed by, the large late 20<sup>th</sup> century indoor shopping centres, the Mander and Wulfrun centres: the former can be seen in the background of this image.

<sup>1</sup>As recorded in 2000.



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Metro) which converge on the eastern edge of the central commercial district. These connect the city to a national network of rail and waterways.

In addition to these canal and railside industries, the area includes a smaller industrial district just to the south of the city centre between the radial roads out towards Dudley and Penn.

The convergence of major roads forms one of the defining characteristics of the area. In particular, the Wolverhampton ring road fences in the retail and commercial part of the city centre, in some ways separating it from surrounding residential and industrial areas. A substantial amount of land is also incorporated within its roundabouts and associated car

parks. The accessibility of major roads is made use of by some of the largest industrial units in the area, such as the Royal Mail's distribution centre east of the ring road, built on a former railway goods depot and sidings.

Within the ring road, the city retains elements of its medieval planned layout, with its church located on the highest point, and its main street (Dudley Street) running south from this point. These streets at its historic core, together with the planned Georgian suburb around St John's church on what is now the southern part of the ring road, still host many of the buildings dating from the expansion at the time of the arrival of the canals and railways. Alongside these, the city centre is today dominated by later 20<sup>th</sup> century shopping centres, and this area within the ring road is among the largest retail, commercial and cultural centres in the Black Country. As such, it provides services for a substantial part of the surrounding region.

Those neighbourhoods of residential properties which exist in the Character Area are in its north-east, flanking the radial route of the A4124 Wednesfield Road, and are sandwiched between industrial sites. They contain housing from a range of periods, including late 19<sup>th</sup> century terraces and some modern development.

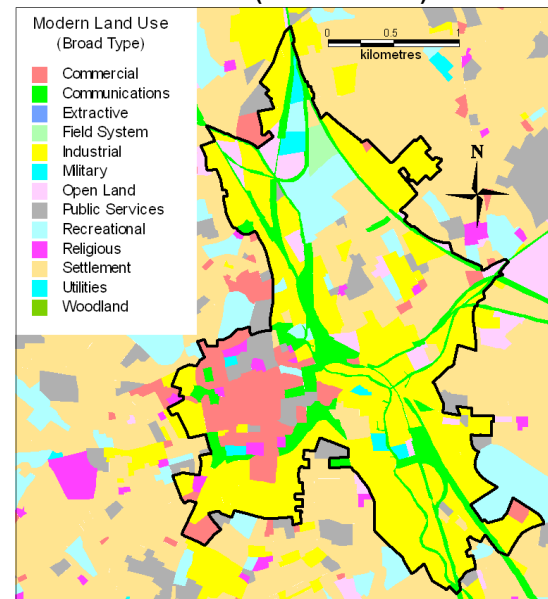
### HISTORIC CHARACTER:

Settlement at Wolverhampton was established at least as long ago as the 10<sup>th</sup> century (a monastery, or Minster church, is believed to have been where St Peter's church is today). The remains of a cross, probably Saxon, stand in St. Peter's church grounds as evidence of these early origins.

The town's early economy was based on the wool trade, which had become established by the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Lock making, for which the town became famous later, began by the 17<sup>th</sup> century and, by the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century, metal working came to dominate economic activity in the area. This developed to include a motor industry and rail locomotive manufacture.

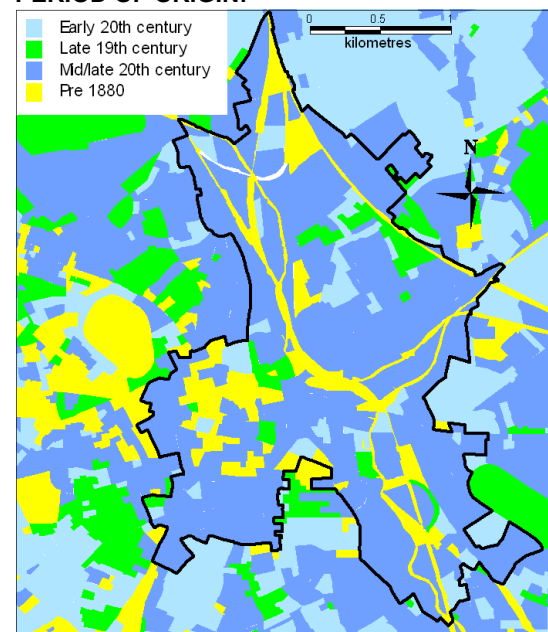
Until the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the area of the modern industrial corridor running north-south to the east of the city centre had been an agricultural landscape. However, in the 1760s, a canal was commissioned to connect Birmingham to the Black Country and, beyond, to link to the Staffordshire & Worcestershire canal north of the town. This new canal ran north-south through the length of the Character Area and remains today. Some thirty years later, the Wyrley and Essington canal was also built to connect Wolverhampton to the coalfield to its east. These canals, together with the railways (including Wolverhampton High and Low Level stations) which were built in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, assisted further industrial development on areas of earlier fields. This development included, for

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### PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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example, the Springfield brewery, and engineering works at Heath Town, both of which had small residential areas associated with them. Reflecting its geology, the south of the Character Area was host to a number of collieries and ironworks.

The 1875 Artisans Dwellings Act formed the basis of the clearance of residential areas near the centre of the town, making way for grand, often public buildings: a process which continued into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Ring Road around the commercial centre of the town was constructed in stages between the 1960s and 1980s.



## Wolverhampton Outer Western Suburbs Character Area (WV02)

### SUMMARY:

This area is dominated by 20<sup>th</sup> century residential neighbourhoods and forms the outer suburbs of the city of Wolverhampton. Its western edge forms the boundary with Staffordshire, while outside its south-eastern limits are the older residential suburbs of the city. Almost three-fifths<sup>1</sup> of land in the Character Area is residential, although it also contains more land given to recreational purposes than any other part of Wolverhampton.

### GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

This area lies entirely over red sandstone and pebble beds and is some distance from the coalfields typical of other parts of the Black Country. Much of the area is on relatively low land, but Tettenhall (generally the area north-west of the B4161 on the adjacent map) sits on a higher escarpment.

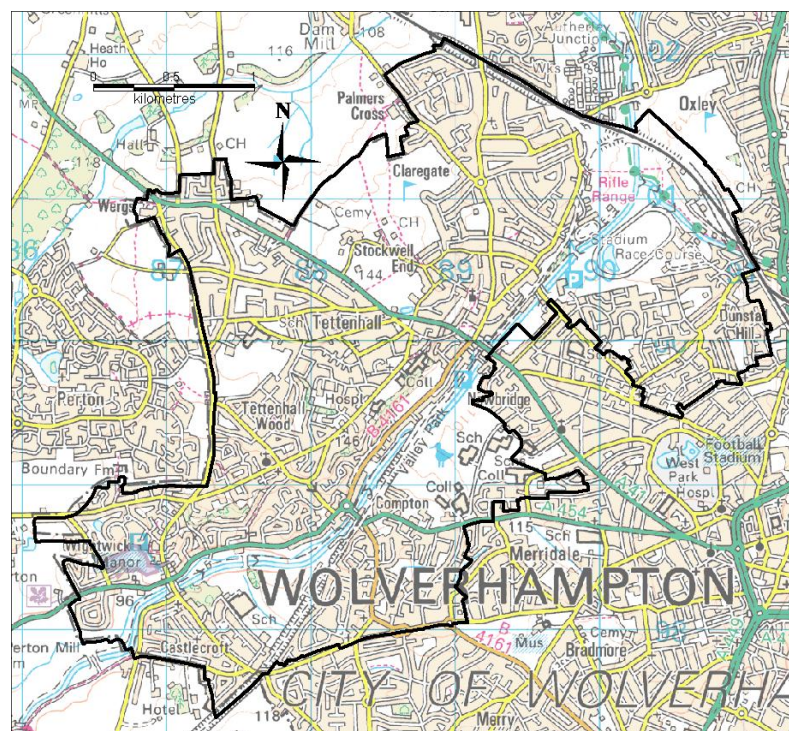
The area is bisected from north-east to south-west by the valley of the Smestow Brook and another significant watercourse, the river Penk, skirts the north-western edge of the area.

### MODERN CHARACTER:

This area comprises largely middle class residential suburbs (housing accounts for four fifths of its area<sup>1</sup>), most of which is as a result of 20<sup>th</sup> century growth. The older residential buildings (surviving from the period before 1900) are clustered around the historic core of Tettenhall (in the centre of the area) and either side of the route from there to the south-west (the modern Wood Road/Mount Road).

The most northerly part of the area (i.e. north of the modern A41 radial / west of the canal) is substantially a result of development in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It is typified by small semi-detached housing and lies next to a golf course.

A disused railway line and canal cross the area in the valley of the Smestow Brook, now the location of a nature reserve. Two areas of mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century housing lie to the south-east of these divisions (they are distinguished from settlement in the adjacent Character Area —*Wolverhampton*



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A view from Tettenhall across the lower land between the suburb and Wolverhampton City Centre

*Inner Western Suburbs*— by their generally later date).

The most southerly of these, to the south-east of the canal bridge at Compton, consists substantially of detached and semi-detached houses built in the 1960s and 70s. north, the area south of Dunstall Race Course consists of housing of more mixed type and origin, but including substantial areas developed in the period since 1970.

<sup>1</sup>As recorded in 2000.

In addition to the golf course and race course already mentioned, substantial recreational facilities in and around this area include two further golf courses just outside its boundary, a park and nature reserve (in the south-central part of the area), and a large leisure centre in its north.

Although this area in some ways represents the western extremity of the Black Country conurbation, there are nevertheless residential areas (Perton and Codsall) in Staffordshire, just beyond the boundary of the modern metropolitan area.

### HISTORIC CHARACTER:

Tettenhall was first mentioned in an Anglo Saxon chronicle of AD910 when a battle is said to have occurred nearby. Two manors are mentioned in Domesday and are later known as *Tettenhall Clericorum*, owned by the Collegiate church, and *Tettenhall Regis*, owned by the Crown. Documentary evidence suggests that a Minster church existed in Tettenhall during the Anglo Saxon period, and that it was probably located upon the site of the present-day parish church.

The settlement at Tettenhall was probably a fairly large sprawling one in the medieval period, arranged around two large greens: one focused around the church below the escarpment; and one on the escarpment itself. The open fields of Tettenhall spread out to the west and north, while mills and associated ponds were strung along the valley of Smestow Brook in the south-east.

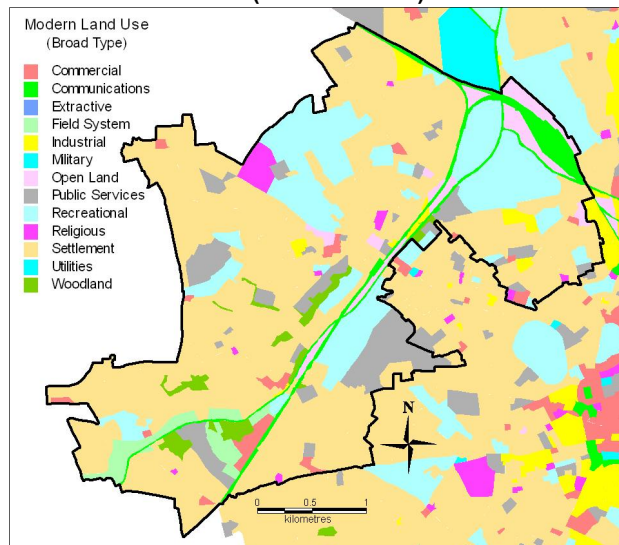
Other medieval settlement took place at Wightwick (south-west of Tettenhall), Compton (south), Wergs (west) and Aldersley (north), all of which belonged to one of the two Tettenhall manors.

Open fields probably also existed, although now to an unknown extent, around Wightwick Manor. Compton's open fields extended southwards from the village.

In the 19<sup>th</sup> century the historic route between Lower and Upper Green at Tettenhall was altered. The original route follows the current Old Hill, where some of the oldest surviving properties are located, but in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century the road was straightened by making a deep cutting through the escarpment to create the present Tettenhall Road, as part of improvements to the London to Holyhead Road.

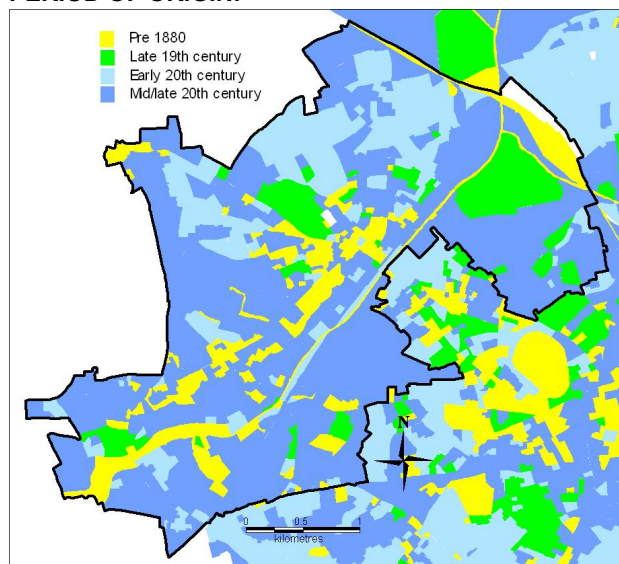
The heath land which existed at Tettenhall Wood until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century had probably been there

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since the medieval period. Once the heath was enclosed, however, the development of houses soon took over. These mainly comprised cottages, semis and detached houses, some of which still survive.

A distinctive feature of the settlement in this area has been large houses such as Wightwick Manor, Compton Hall, Tettenhall Towers and Wrottesley Hall. Some of these houses and/or their grounds have been re-developed but in most cases there are at least remnants in the modern landscape. The farmhouses which were a feature of the agricultural landscape surrounding the settlements have not generally survived into the area's suburban phase.



## South Bilston & Ettingshall Character Area (WV03)

### SUMMARY:

This area is dominated by industrial sites, almost all of them developed in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It includes the commercial centre of Bilston, and more open land than in any other Wolverhampton Character Area — accounting for a quarter of its area<sup>1</sup>. Crossed by numerous major roads, railways and canals, the area also includes some small residential enclaves. Nevertheless, the industrial nature of the Character Area distinguishes it from the residential districts which surround it.

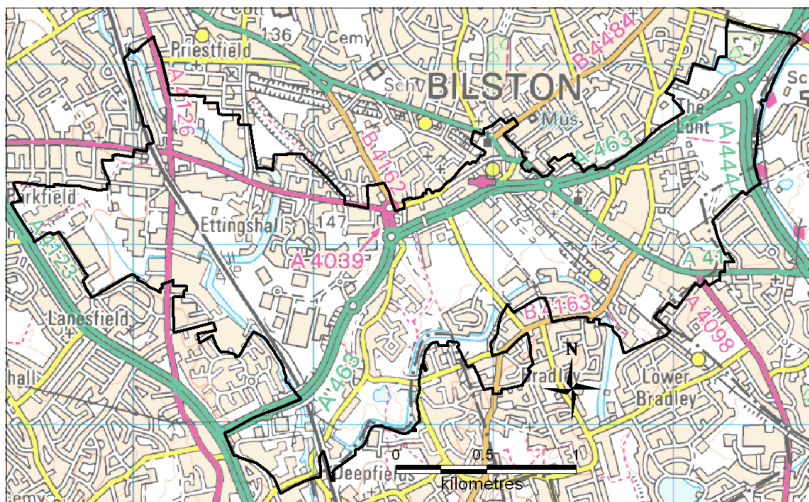
### GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

The area lies entirely on the South Staffordshire Coalfield. This Character Area, together with the area immediately to its north (see *North Bilston, Portobello & Moseley*), represent a relatively low lying area of land (generally below 150m), overlooked by neighbourhoods to the west and south.

### MODERN CHARACTER:

The modern character of this area is shaped by its industry, open land, and transport infrastructure.

It contains a quarter of all industrial land in the city of Wolverhampton, which is spread throughout the Character Area —from Ettingshall in the west to Bilston in the east, and includes a number of 20<sup>th</sup> century depots and engineering and other factories. Even the open land which typifies its modern map is a legacy of an industrial past, being almost all previously used by collieries, factories or railways.



Westgrove House, on the junction on two A-roads in the north-west of the area.

The existing road system in the area is dominated by the dual-carriageway of the A463 or 'Black Country Route'. Since 1995 it has connected Bilston with the main Birmingham/Wolverhampton road in the west and the M6 in the east. The area is also crossed north-south by two rail lines: the West Coast Mainline and the Midland Metro, with its stop at Bilston. Canals form the eastern and southern boundaries of the area and it is also crossed by the main navigable waterway between Wolverhampton and Birmingham.

The commercial core of Bilston is clustered around a high street running east-west and local rail and bus stations. Most of the buildings originate before 1880, but have been added to by 20<sup>th</sup> century retail developments to its south and west.

Characteristic of the area are small, largely isolated residential areas. While some of these consist of small semi-detached and terraced properties originating before 1930, the majority were built later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century on former industrial sites.

The area is currently undergoing enormous change as 40 hectares of land to the south of Bilston town centre have been earmarked for development as Bilston Urban Village, currently the largest regeneration project in the Black Country.

<sup>1</sup>As recorded in 2000.

## HISTORIC CHARACTER:

Settlement had been established at Bilston by the medieval period, which was situated at a crossing point of Darlaston Brook and where a chapel of ease had probably been built by the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century.

Medieval Bilston was surrounded by open fields and it continued to rely on agriculture until the late 18<sup>th</sup>/early 19<sup>th</sup> century. However, other industries were also being carried out in the area during the medieval and early post-medieval period. This included coal mining, first mentioned in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, metal working in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> centuries, and enamelling by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

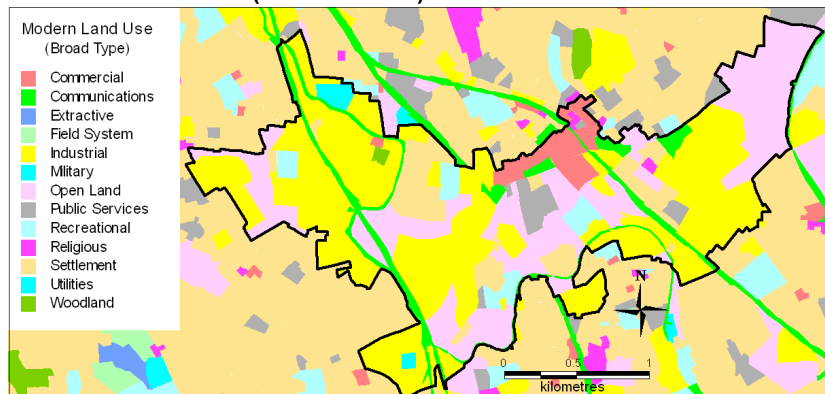
By the 19<sup>th</sup> century the extraction of coal and iron ore in this area expanded considerably as new ways of processing iron ore were developed. The increase in larger scale industry during this period also began to have a dramatic impact on the landscape.

Around Bilston, collieries were located to the west, south-west and east of the town, which itself expanded to include a new development called New Town, along Oxford Road, which was built in 1809.

By the later 19<sup>th</sup> century field systems had all but disappeared as the collieries, stone quarries, metal works (such as the one at Spring Vale, illustrated in the adjacent photo) and housing grew across the area. The collieries in particular were expansive, with scattered cottages found throughout them. In 1873, for example, Bilston was described as being 'surrounded on all sides by ironworks, collieries, iron foundries, and coal mines... beneath the curtain of black smoke which forms the normal canopy'<sup>1</sup>.

By the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century coal extraction in this area was already in decline and, over the course of the following decades, much of the land used for this purpose had been recycled for other industrial or residential development.

## MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



## PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



Bilston Steel Works at Spring Vale, which dominated the centre of the centre of the Character Area, shown here in 1920<sup>1</sup>. In 2000, the area shown in this photograph was open derelict land.

<sup>1</sup>[www.wolverhamptonarchives.dial.pipex.com/local\\_industry\\_3.htm](http://www.wolverhamptonarchives.dial.pipex.com/local_industry_3.htm).



## Ettingshall Park & Lanesfield Character Area (WV04)

### SUMMARY:

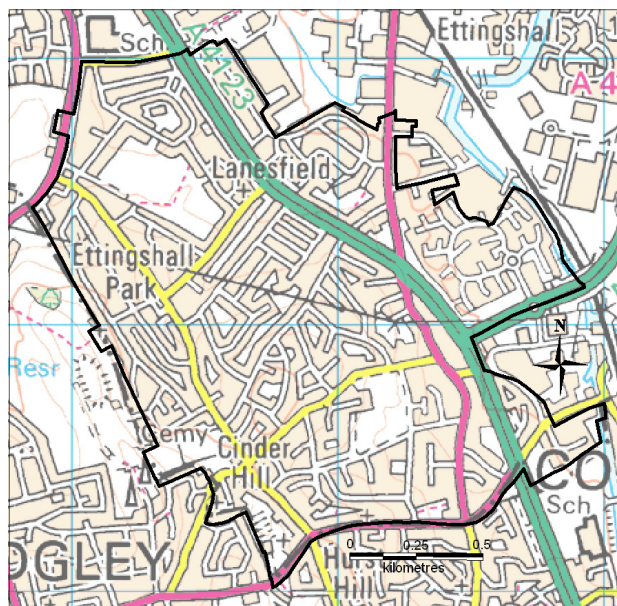
This small Wolverhampton Character Area is overwhelmingly residential (i.e. more than four-fifths of its area<sup>1</sup>), and this aspect of its character distinguishes it from industrial districts located immediately to its north and east, alongside a canal and railway. However, it is in some senses a continuation of residential areas to the south, which are on the other side of the local government boundary with Dudley. The dominant housing type is mid 20<sup>th</sup> century detached, much of which was built on former coal mines or agricultural land.

### GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

The area lies over the South Staffordshire Coalfield which is particularly near the surface in its north and east. The area is on relatively high ground and, in its south eastern corner (shown on the adjacent map as Cinder Hill), it reaches the highest point in Wolverhampton at around 230m as it rises towards Sedgley Beacon (itself within Dudley).

### MODERN CHARACTER:

This area is characterised by 20<sup>th</sup> century housing, largely built on former collieries or agricultural land. It is now one of the Black Country Character Areas most dominated by residential land, more so than any other in Wolverhampton for example, and it has almost no industrial sites within its boundaries. The extent of recreational and open land in the area is near to average for the conurbation and, additionally, it has open fields nearby in the west and south.



Mid 20<sup>th</sup> century housing is typical of that built on the hillside rising from Birmingham New Road in the east to Sedgley Beacon in the west. The area shown here (Stretton Place, in the south-central part of the Character Area) had previously been the site of collieries.

Among the phases of development evident in the modern built environment are three important ones in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the inter-war period the Birmingham New Road (the current A4123) was cut to run north-south through the area, and much of the development along it to-day is from that period (as can be seen from the map overleaf). Secondly, housing from the immediate post war period, and in particular small and medium-sized semi-detached housing from the 1950s, is the dominant type in the area — and even more so in the area to the west of the Birmingham New Road. Thirdly, the late 20<sup>th</sup> century saw the construction of residential streets on former colliery land to the east of the Birmingham New Road, and these exhibit a different character to previous construction, with more detached properties and curved streets and cul-de-sacs.

<sup>1</sup>As recorded in 2000.

### HISTORIC CHARACTER:

The main landscape feature in this area during the medieval period was a deer park, which had been established by 1293 and was probably located in the area around the site of Ettingshall Park Farm in the north-west of the area, although its actual extent is unknown. The area also contains evidence of medieval open fields. Although the manor of Ettingshall is mentioned in Domesday Book and other medieval documents, the precise location and nature of settlement at this time is unknown.

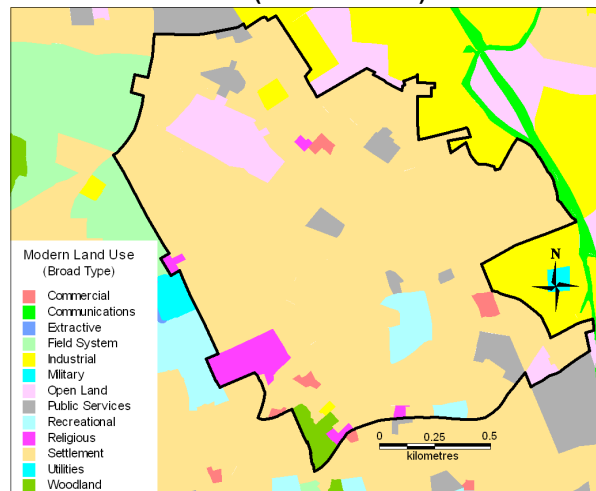
By the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century the main focus of settlement was to the south of the area around Cinder Hill, as well as to the south-west, along the line of the modern Shaw Road and Ettingshall Road/Rookery Roads, some of the first cut through the area.

At the start of the 19<sup>th</sup> century agriculture still dominated the area, but collieries had started to appear nearby. By 1890, the whole of the low lying land on the northern and western sides of the area was dominated by collieries (including Ettingshall Park colliery, Ettingshall colliery, Spring Vale colliery and Rookery colliery). Clay was also being extracted in a small way in parts of the area.

Settlement was however confined largely to Cinder Hill and Hurst Hill, the latter being situated along what is now the A463 and not only the southern limit of the Character Area, but also the modern boundary between Wolverhampton and Dudley.

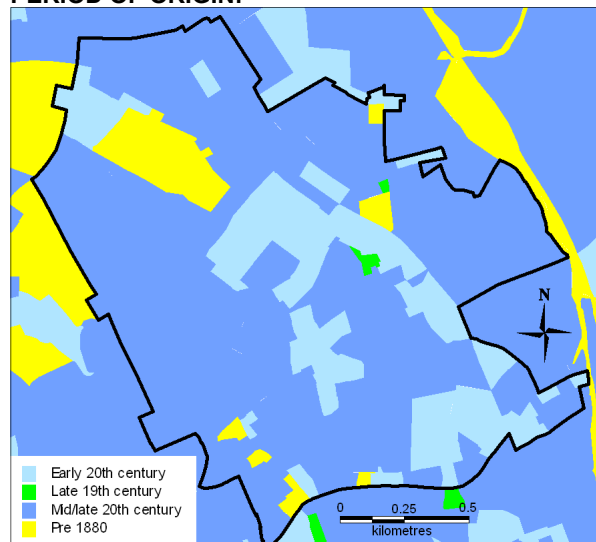
At the time the collieries were active, much of the higher ground in the south-west of the area remained as fields. It stayed largely agricultural until the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century when it was developed for housing. The mid 20<sup>th</sup> century also saw the collieries falling into disuse—a decline which had already started by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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### PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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## Fallings Park & Wednesfield North Character Area (WV05)

### SUMMARY:

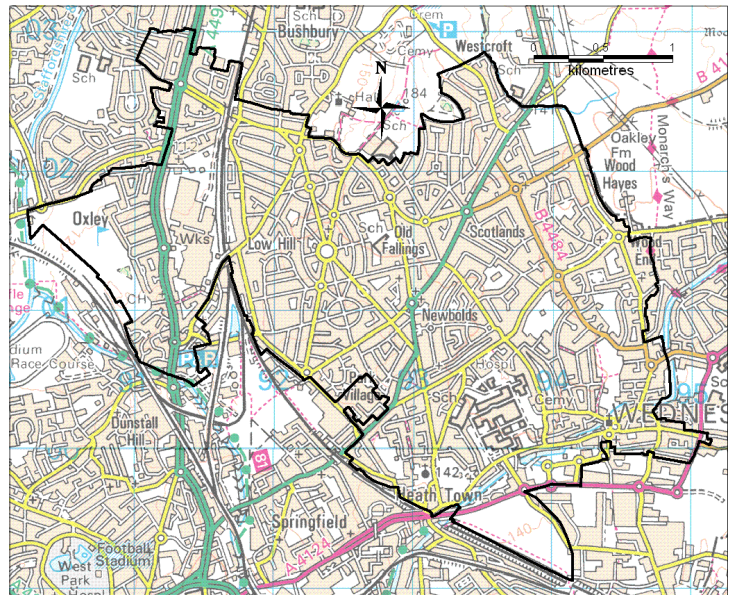
This area includes the north-eastern residential suburbs of Wolverhampton: almost two thirds<sup>1</sup> of its area is taken by housing, the majority of which originates in the first three decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. This character of mainly pre-Second World War housing is not only unusual in the Black Country (only 3 out of 56 Character Areas are of this type), but it distinguishes the area from more industrial districts to the south, and suburbs of later origin to its north and west.

### GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

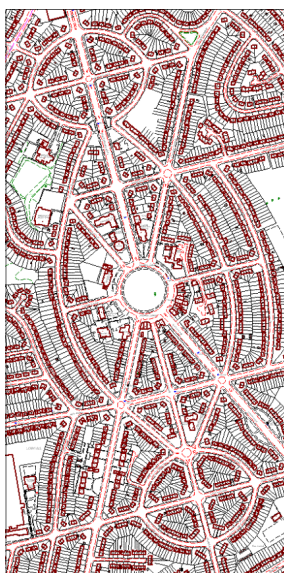
Most of the area lie over either mudstone & sandstone or dolerite. Coal measures exist in its far south-east. The Character Area includes a piece of high ground which peaks at Bushbury Hill (about 179m) in its north. The land in the west of the area (beyond the line of the modern railway running north-south) is significantly lower.

### MODERN CHARACTER:

The majority of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century housing which typifies this area is located in two large estates between the railway line in the west and the Wolverhampton to Cannock Road in the east (the latter road divides the area south-west to north-east).



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The distinctive street pattern of the inter-war housing at Fallings Park Estate  
(Source: *Land-Line*)

The largest of these, Fallings Park Estate, was completed between the wars on agricultural land and around what was for Wolverhampton an unusual geometric street pattern (shown left). This is the largest single area of mixed inter-war semi-detached and terraced housing in the Black Country. A smaller area of similar properties was built to the immediate north-east alongside the Cannock Road.

The most southerly part of the Character Area has a generally older and more mixed character than these estates. In particular, the presence of the Wyrley and Essington Canal, the historic

centre of Wednesfield, the line of the historic route between Wednesfield and Wolverhampton, sites of disused collieries, and a large general hospital (originating as a 19<sup>th</sup> century workhouse) all contribute to this more complex set of origins and land uses.

Similarly, beyond the railway in the west of the Character Area, the housing (here laid out in a more traditional grid of streets) is located between a golf course and the site of a (previously much larger) tyre factory although, like the housing itself, the golf course and factory were constructed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The tyre factory and other industrial sites on the other side of the railway in some ways represent a continuation of industrial land extending to the south<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>1</sup>As recorded in 2000.

<sup>2</sup>See *Wolverhampton City Centre & Industrial Districts Character Area Profile*.

### HISTORIC CHARACTER:

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century this area was still largely agricultural, although at this time the exploitation of the local coalfield was evident in the distinctive landscape of its south-east corner. Settlement in the area was sparse and clustered around farms, manors, or along the few roads leading to the centre of Wolverhampton to its south-west. The largest settlement within its boundaries was in the south-east of the area at Wednesfield, mentioned in the Domesday survey 800 years earlier as Wodnesfelde.

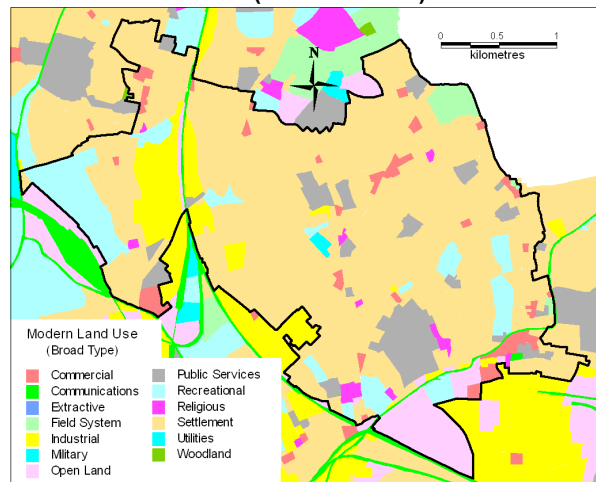
The Wyrley & Essington canal which runs through the centre of Wednesfield had been built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to link Wolverhampton to the coalfield to its east. A further canal, since abandoned, joined the Wyrley & Essington at New Cross, and linked the network with Bentley in the south-east.

The success and expansion of Wednesfield in the 19<sup>th</sup> century has been attributed to its access to the canals, in contrast to the areas to the north of it which did not see substantial settlement until the advent of new 20<sup>th</sup> century suburbs.

1837 saw the arrival of the railways with the opening of the line which now runs north-south through the area and skirts its southern boundary. This linked the area with the cities of Birmingham, Liverpool and Manchester, and there were previously local stations on the line at Heath Town (in the south of the area) and Bushbury (near its centre).

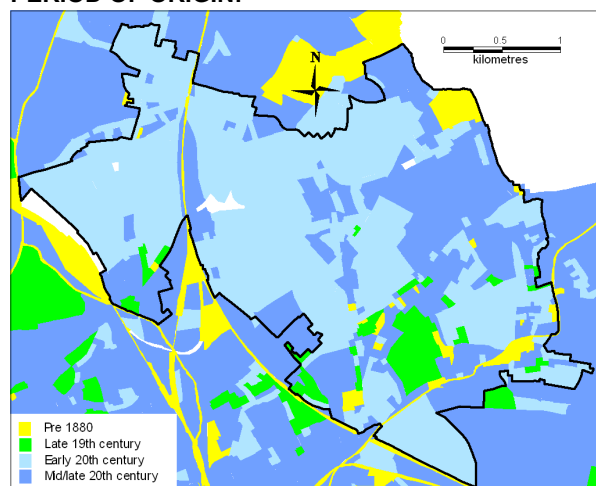
By the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, settlement had started to expand, particularly in the industrial south-east of the area (the workhouse at New Cross was in the centre of this neighbourhood). However, it was the northern agricultural part of the area which hosted the massive expansion of housing and schools in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, providing new residential suburbs for Wolverhampton and creating so much of the area's modern character. At the same time, the largest industrial site in the area, the Goodyear Tyre & Rubber Company was opened.

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### PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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## North Bilston, Portobello & Moseley Character Area (WV06)

### SUMMARY:

This area is generally residential — with more than two-thirds<sup>1</sup> of its area accounted for by housing. However it is nevertheless situated in the core of the Black Country, being largely built on former colliery land, and now surrounded by industrial areas on three sides. Like much of the Black Country, the modern landscape of the Character Area is overwhelmingly of mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century origin.

### GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

The area lies entirely on the South Staffordshire Coalfield. This Character Area, together with the area immediately to its south (see *South Bilston & Ettingshall*), represent a relatively low lying area of land (generally below 150m), overlooked by neighbourhoods to the west and north.

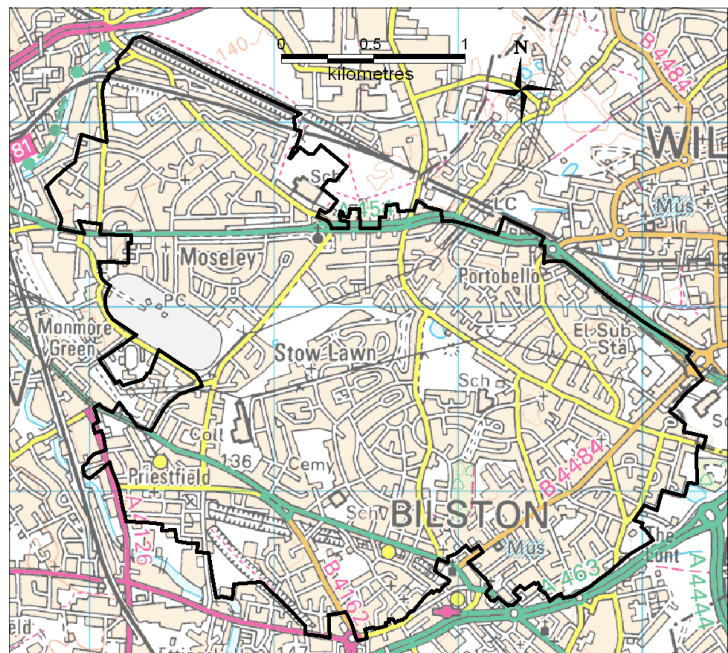
### MODERN CHARACTER:

This area is dominated by mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century housing and open land, the latter being the visible remnants of 19<sup>th</sup> century coal mining carried out extensively across the area. In fact, this area contains more housing built on former mining land than any other Black Country Character Area.

Very few houses survive from before 1920: largely because few existed, the area having been dominated by collieries and the areas of waste generated by them. The open land surviving from this earlier time potentially preserves remnants of this previous phase.

After 1920, housing developed from two different centres: the estates to the south represent the northern expansion of Bilston from when the town had its own council (1894 to 1966); further north, housing represents the furthest reaches of Wolverhampton's eastern suburbs, which first followed the Willenhall Road (the modern A454 which runs in an east-west direction across the north of the area), and then radiated out to the north and south of the road.

Housing from the 1960s onwards is less in evidence, although there are a few neighbourhoods scattered across the area. Small clusters of high rise flats, for example, are strung along its southern edge where it borders the industrial part of Bilston. In addition, three late 20<sup>th</sup> century estates fall within the Character Area, the largest being the one which abuts the Walsall



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border in the north-east, and which consists of small semi-detached and detached properties. The other two, comprising small semis and terraces, are located off Stow Heath Lane, in the centre of the area.

The open land already mentioned includes Stowlawn Wood in the centre of the area. In addition, recreational facilities include East Park (opened in the west of the area in 1896), and Hickman Park (opened in the south in 1911). The greyhound racing stadium adjacent to East Park is later and was built in the inter-war period. Another open area is Bilston Cemetery, in the south, which had been established in the 1850s. Alongside the generally modern housing, there are several schools and a college campus which serve the local population. Most of these facilities were built in the middle or later 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The railways and, more recently the Midland Metro have played an important part in shaping the modern character of settlements like Portobello and Bilston. Two Metro stations now serve the south of the area, linking it to Birmingham and Wolverhampton.

<sup>1</sup>As recorded in 2000.

## HISTORIC CHARACTER:

In the medieval period, much of this area was agricultural and included a section of Bilston's medieval open fields. Other open fields lay to the north and may have been associated with settlement outside of this area. Only two areas of probable Medieval settlement have been suggested, including a moat located off Stow Heath Lane and possible settlement around Moseley Hole Farm, in the centre of the area.

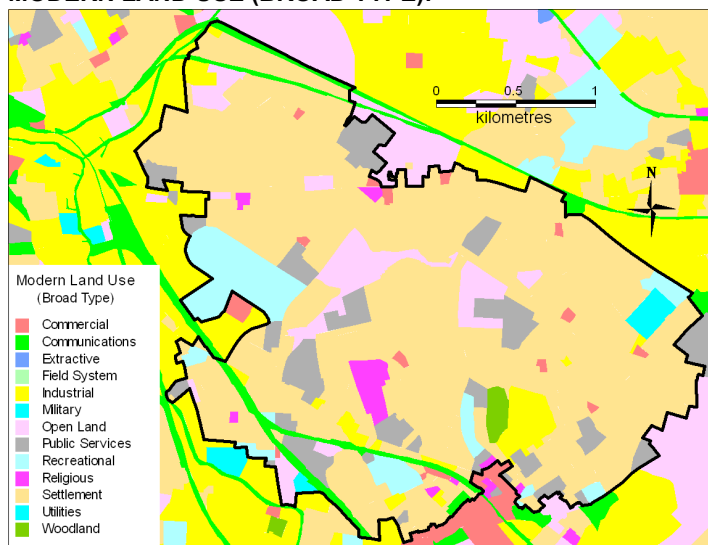
Part of the area may have formed part of Stow Heath: a heath of unknown date and extent, but which may have existed until coal mining began in earnest in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> century. The extent of coal extraction in the area was huge, but by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century most collieries were disused, although associated cottages and squatter settlements still dotted the wastelands. In this period two brickworks were established north of Willenhall Road, one of which survived until at least the inter-war period until it disappeared under new housing.

Settlement had been established at Portobello and Moseley on the Willenhall Road and both mainly consisting of terraces and dating largely to the 19<sup>th</sup> century, although both may have had earlier roots.

The character of coal mining wastes and scattered small settlements continued until the inter war period when modern house building began to increase.

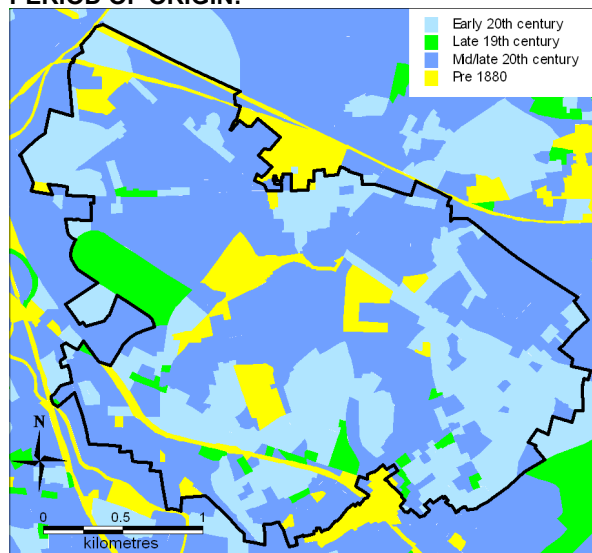
Overall, the late development of the area for residential purposes, at least partly explained by its use for coal extraction, may have also been partly a result of the land's earlier marshy nature and vulnerability to flooding.

## MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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## PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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A photograph of Portobello High Street in 1959 showing, in the right of the picture, 1930s housing of the type which contributed to the transformation of the area from coal extraction to residential. This location is now the line of the modern A454 on the northern edge of the area<sup>2</sup>.

<sup>2</sup>[www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk](http://www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk)



## Wednesfield South Character Area (WV07)

### SUMMARY:

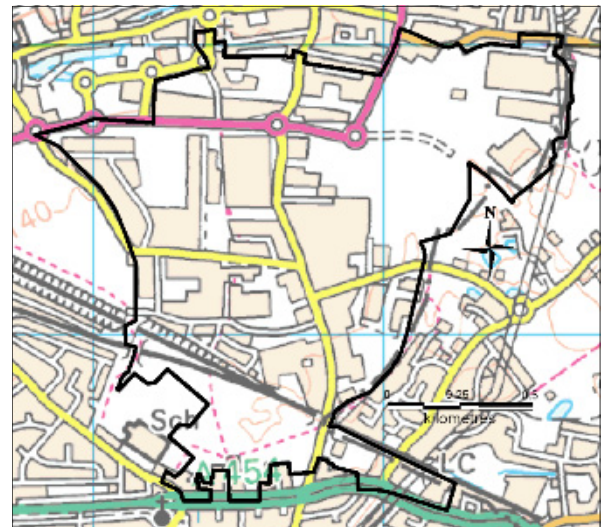
This area is generally industrial — with three-fifths of its area accounted for by factories, workshops and warehouses, and a further fifth by open land<sup>1</sup>. Among the twelve Character Areas in Wolverhampton at least, this is one of the least diverse in terms of its modern use, with only three different types of land use accounting for nearly all of the area. The eastern edge of the area forms the boundary between Wolverhampton and Walsall, and on the other three sides it is bordered by areas of more residential character.

### GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

The area lies over coal measures and, in its northern part, dolerite. It is generally flat land between 130m and 140m above sea level. The original course of the river Tame crossed the area in its south-east.

### MODERN CHARACTER:

This area is dominated by large industrial districts and open land, almost all of which date from the period since the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, and make up what is not only a relatively modern landscape, but also a fast-changing one. For example, according to the HLC<sup>1</sup>, the oldest built structure in the area in 2000 was a late 18<sup>th</sup> century foundry in its north-west.



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Small industrial units, such as those shown here on Phoenix Road, are characteristic of the central and southern parts of the Character Area. Phoenix Road was built in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century on a field next to the (now backfilled) Birmingham Canal Neachells Branch.

Subsequently, however, this foundry has been demolished. Similarly, some of the open land (particularly in the east) has since been redeveloped.

The landscape nevertheless includes several industrial estates, including the Planetary Industrial Estate in the west, the Strawberry Lane, 'Tractor Spares', and Middleton industrial estates in the south, and the Satellite Industrial Park and Neachells Lane Industrial Estate in its centre. Many of these host small industrial units, but the Character Area more generally does include some much larger facilities, such as the Corus site in the far east of the area (see the photograph over the page).

In the south the area is crossed by a modern railway (which includes the junction of two lines). This forms a barrier between industrial areas north of these lines and what is the oldest part of the landscape, the open land south of the railway. This probably was created as a result of the closure of the colliery on the same site in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The northern part of the Character Area was also once crossed by rail lines and canals, and the pattern of modern property boundaries still in part reflects this earlier landscape.

<sup>1</sup>As recorded in 2000.

In the medieval period we know that settlement existed at moated sites at March End (in the north-east of the area) and at Neachells (in the central south-east). By the post-medieval period the latter at least had developed into small hamlets. The area remained primarily agricultural until the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

Meanwhile, in the south and most of the rest of the area large scale coal mining had come to dominate, together with an infrastructure of trackways, canals and railways. This landscape was also particularly visible outside the area to the south-east, in the direction of Willenhall. However, even by the later 19<sup>th</sup> century some of these collieries had already ceased operation and by the early 20<sup>th</sup> century coal mining had completely disappeared from the area, leaving large units of land available for new uses.

The landscape reflects a change which had taken place at this point to an economy which was reliant on the new road systems to service the industry. These not only expanded and enhanced the few routes through the area which had existed in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, but also created new access to the industrial sites, often including large roundabouts at the road junctions which have become characteristic of the area.

Modern Land Use (Broad Type)

- Commercial
- Communications
- Extractive
- Field System
- Industrial
- Military
- Open Land
- Public Services
- Recreational
- Religious
- Settlement
- Utilities
- Woodland

Map of the Lake District showing the distribution of four types of woodland. The legend indicates the following categories:

- Early 20th century (light blue)
- Late 19th century (green)
- Mid/late 20th century (dark blue)
- Pre 1880 (yellow)

The map includes a north arrow and a scale bar from 0 to 0.5 kilometres.

A photograph of the Corus site in Rugeley. In the foreground, a large grey signpost stands on a grassy area. The signpost features the Corus logo at the top, followed by the word 'CORUS' in bold capital letters. Below this, there are two sections: 'ENTRANCE 2' and 'ENTRANCE 1'. Under 'ENTRANCE 2', the following facilities are listed: Steel Processing Centre, Long Products Service Centre, Automotive Centre, Study and Information Centre, Warehouse, and All Goods Vehicles. Under 'ENTRANCE 1', the following facilities are listed: Steel Office and Administration Centre, Visitor Parking, and P.C. Facilities. In the background, a large industrial building with a grey roof and the Corus logo is visible. A paved road leads towards the building, and a green fence separates the parking area from the building. A small orange sign with white text is visible on the fence, indicating directions for 'New Corus Centre', 'Long Products Service Centre', and 'Warehouse'. The sky is blue with scattered white clouds.

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## Bradley Character Area (WV08)

### SUMMARY:

This small area is typified by mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century housing, which makes up three-fifths of its area<sup>1</sup>. Although the area adjoins industrial land to the north, its character of modern settlement is continued in the landscape to the south: it exists as a separate area partly as a result of having local authority boundaries on three sides. These boundaries themselves coincide with the lines of former or current railways and canals.

### GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

The area lies mainly over coal measures for most of its area, although sandstone, mudstone and conglomerate are present in its south. The eastern side of the area (shown as Lower Bradley on the adjacent map), at around 130m, is overlooked by the land to the west (Upper Bradley) which peaks at around 160m (at Batman's Hill).

### MODERN CHARACTER:

This area is generally made up of 20<sup>th</sup> century housing based on what was originally the medieval settlement of Bradley. Houses are generally small, and date to the inter-war and post-war periods. There are also small estates of 1960s or 1970s housing, as well as

three areas built later in the century. As well as these, there are also substantial areas of mid-to-late 20<sup>th</sup> century apartments and maisonettes. Despite the antiquity of this area, Bradley today contains very few old buildings.

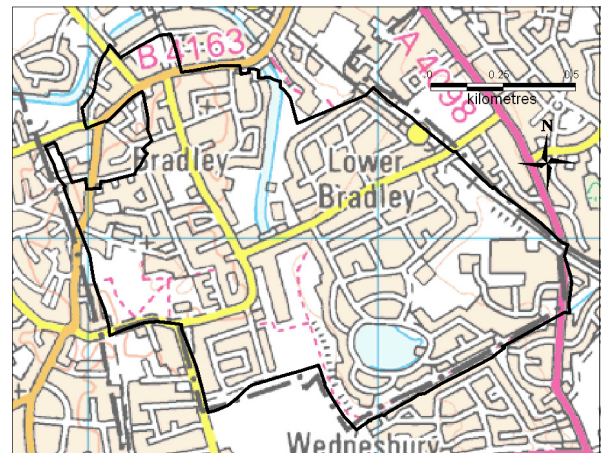
A small number of industrial sites survive in the area from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century and before. In the east of the area one factory remains from the period before 1930, when it was erected on land previously used by Bradley colliery. In the centre of the area, an industrial facility built later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century superseded earlier industry on the same site (previously adjacent to the main line canal).

Although at the time of the HLC<sup>1</sup> the largest area of open space was in the east of the area, most of this has since been used as land for new streets and housing (including Constantine Way). Nevertheless, at the time of writing, open space still exists in the area in several locations: along the line (or former lines) of canals; in a small public park in the north-west of the area (Coronation Park on Wilkinson Avenue); and on Batman's Hill in the south-west (including Hall Green Cemetery).

The canal, which still influences the character of the northern part of the area in particular, is part of a previously more extensive route (see *Historic Character* below), much of which is still preserved in the shape of recreational parts of the neighbourhood. Meanwhile, the former railway line, which forms the north-western boundary of the Character Area, is now the line of the Midland Metro from Birmingham to Wolverhampton: a stop at Bradley Lane serves the local neighbourhood.



Inter-war housing, seen here backing on to the now by-passed route of the main line canal between Birmingham and Wolverhampton.



<sup>1</sup>As recorded in 2000.

### HISTORIC CHARACTER:

Bradley is mentioned in the Domesday Book in 1086, and we know that two moats are located in the area at the beginning of the 12<sup>th</sup> century, although the extent of settlement here at that time is not known with any certainty. The fact that there is no modern centre to Bradley is an indication that settlement here may have always been dispersed.

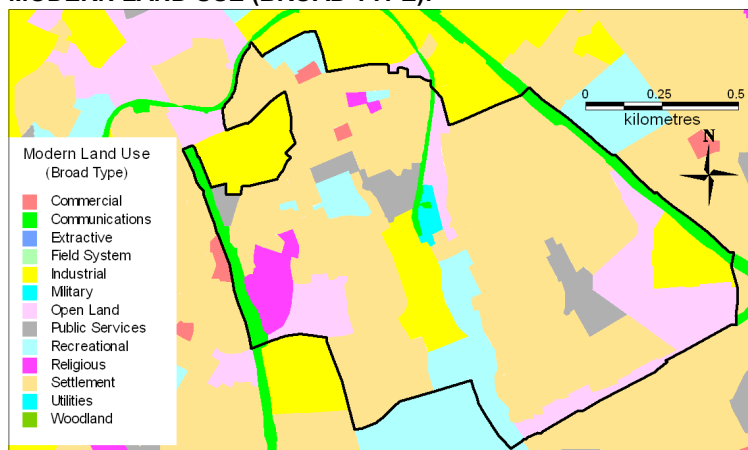
A few open fields may have existed around the moated site at Upper Bradley, and the area was to continue to rely on agriculture until the early 19<sup>th</sup>

century. However, industries had already become established during the medieval and early post-medieval period. This included coal mining, first mentioned in the 14<sup>th</sup> century, metal working in the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century and enamelling by the early 18<sup>th</sup> century.

Bradley is most famed for its involvement in the industrial revolution when the first coke-fired blast furnace in the Black Country opened here sometime between 1766 and 1770 at the former Wilkinson Iron Works (now the site of a primary school). This type of blast furnace made possible the large scale iron trade in the Black Country. It was also the first time a steam engine was used for purposes other than pumping water. The name 'Wilkinson' has since been used to name streets and other public facilities in the Character Area.

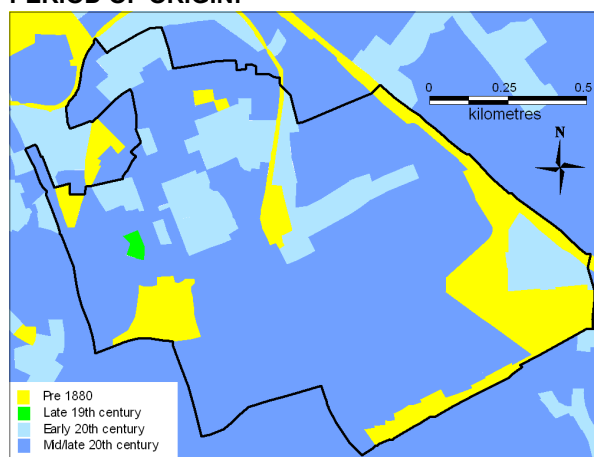
During this period settlement probably expanded considerably in the Bradley area as the iron and coal industries expanded. John Wilkinson, the owner of the furnace, certainly had had homes built for his workers and, by the time his estate was sold in 1836, there were at least 120 of these. Housing was dominated by terraces, which could be found in among the metal works and collieries.

### MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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### PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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Although the first canal route between Birmingham and Wolverhampton was built through Bradley (running north-south through the centre of the area), it was later bypassed by a straighter, more direct route of the Birmingham Mainline to the west, outside of the area.



## Ashmore Park Character Area (WV09)

### SUMMARY:

This area is overwhelmingly residential (housing occupies three-quarters of its area<sup>1</sup>), and also represents a landscape created in the immediate post-war 20<sup>th</sup> century. In many ways, these are characteristics shared by the area to the east (see *Bentley Character Area Profile*), over the boundary between Wolverhampton and Walsall. The area can otherwise be distinguished from the areas to the south which are industrial in character, and from the older housing to the west.

### GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

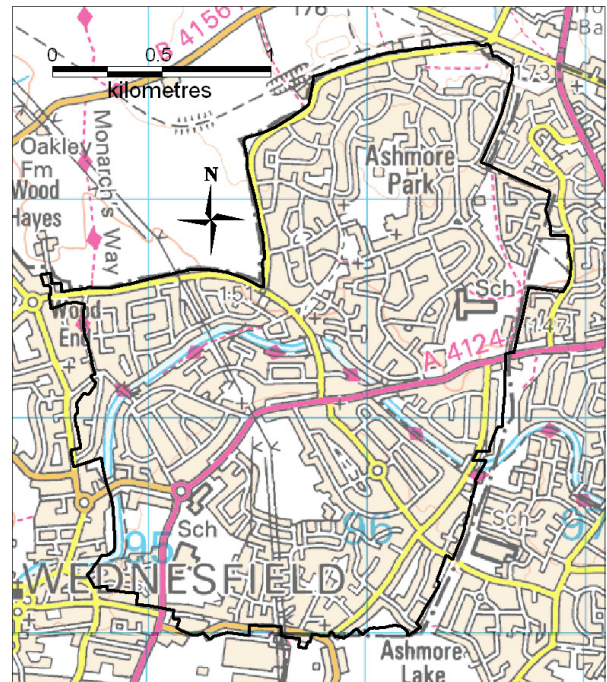
The area lies over coal measures and, in its south-west, dolerite. The north-east of the area is, for the Black Country Boroughs, relatively high ground (around 170m at the area's northern edge) and descends in the south to around 135m.

### MODERN CHARACTER:

This area is dominated by housing interspersed with large school sites and recreational areas.

The housing is overwhelmingly of post-war date, and the vast majority of it originates in the period between 1945 and 1974. The development at Ashmore Park itself, in the northern part of the area, was built in the 1950s and comprises small semi-detached, detached and terraced houses with several areas of apartment blocks. The housing in the southern part of the area represents the earlier expansion of Wednesfield's northern suburbs.

The Character Area includes significant zones of land recorded as being used for public services and



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The Wyrley and Essington canal, seen here in the south-west of the area, was built to service collieries, but adds character to this now overwhelmingly residential area.

recreational purposes. The public services in this case are all primary and secondary schools with playing fields, or youth and community centres. Like the local housing, they were generally built in the mid to late 20<sup>th</sup> century on what were fields. Areas of recreational green space were created at a similar time from earlier field systems or, in the case of Ashmore Park itself, on land previously used by collieries.

<sup>1</sup>As recorded in 2000.

## HISTORIC CHARACTER:

The area has largely comprised field systems throughout most of its mapped history, and only in the last sixty years has it become predominantly residential.

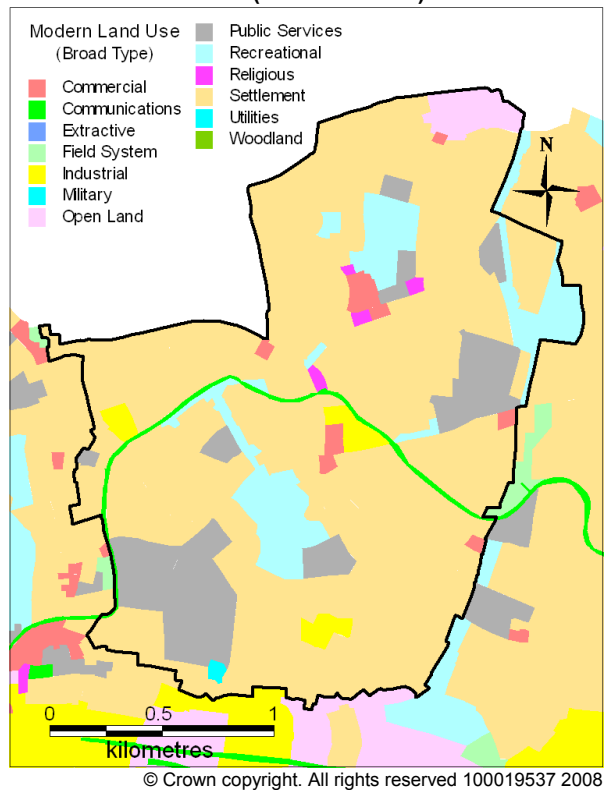
In the medieval period open fields were present in the area, such as around Ashmore Park itself, where a medieval moat survives as an earthwork in front of a shopping centre<sup>2</sup> (the shopping centre is visible as a red commercial area in the north of the adjacent Modern Land Use map). Another moated site developed into Perry Hall, now no longer standing, on the eastern edge of the area.

In addition to the remains of the Ashmore Park moat, one of the other visible features surviving from previous phases of the landscape is the Wyrley and Essington canal, which crosses the middle of the area in an east-west orientation. Built in the late 18<sup>th</sup> century to link Wolverhampton to the coalfield to its east, it provided access to collieries within the area at Perry Hall and Ashmore Park. The Ashmore Park collieries, which were some distance north of the canal, were reached via a long straight trackway which connected with the canal in the middle of the area. The collieries survived until the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, but the area was not given over to whole scale coal mining in the way in which areas further south were: even in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century farming still dominated the landscape.

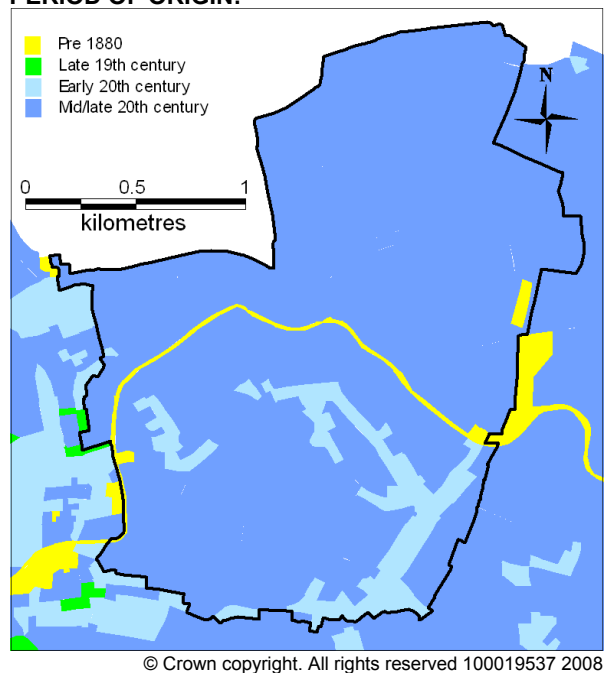
Before the replacement of this agricultural landscape during the 1950s housing expansion, settlement comprised scattered farms and small strings of inter-war semi-detached houses along some of the most important roads (these can be seen in light blue on the Period of Origin map).

The post-war construction boom included the Ashmore Park council estate (the northern part of the Character Area) together with the street network and other associated facilities laid out at the same time.

## MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



## PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



<sup>2</sup>[www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk/listed/localist/ashmore.htm](http://www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk/listed/localist/ashmore.htm)

## Pendeford, Fordhouses & Bushbury Character Area (WV10)

### SUMMARY:

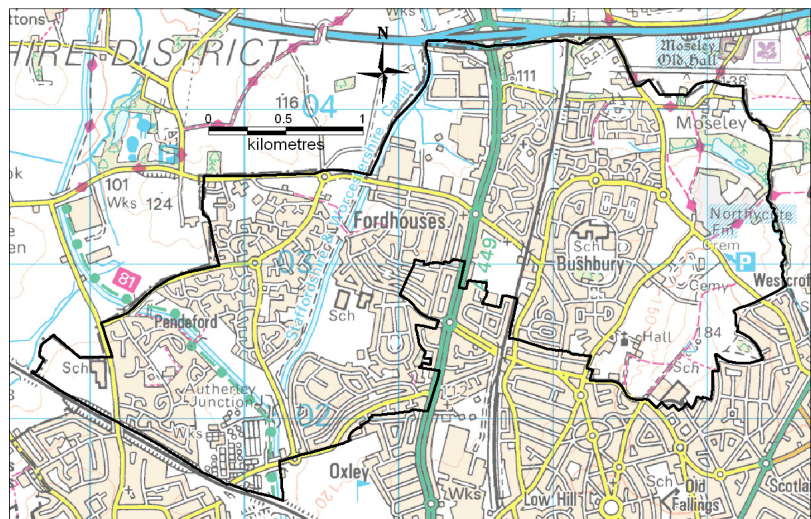
This area is one of relatively new housing: housing accounts for half of the land<sup>1</sup> and almost all of it was constructed in the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The area also contains important sites of industry, public services and recreational facilities, which also all date to the period after 1938. It is the most recently developed suburb of the city of Wolverhampton, as well as its most northerly part.

### GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

The area is situated over red sandstone and pebble beds. It lies around 110m altitude for a large part of its area, and represents some of the lowest lying land in the northern Black Country. The land peaks at Bushbury Hill (about 180m), in the south-east. In the north-east of the area, Waterhead Brook flows out into Staffordshire.

### MODERN CHARACTER:

This area contains some of the most recently developed residential areas in the Black Country, in particular the area to the west of the A449 Stafford Road (shown on the map above in green, running north-south through the area) was first used for housing only in the period since 1974. The housing estates of Dovecotes and Pendeford (the furthest west) are almost exclusively made up of largely small 1980s properties, built to accommodate people probably employed in



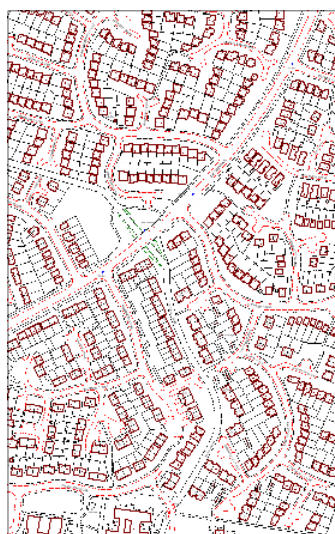
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Wolverhampton. Nearby public services include several schools a community centre and library, which are located to the east and west of the housing.

Some of the oldest districts in the Character Area are those along the line of the Stafford Road, which is the principal road north out of Wolverhampton and now links it to the M54 in the north. This area, Fordhouses, also contains substantial areas of small, mid 20<sup>th</sup> century semi-detached housing. The modern housing in Bushbury (in the east of the area) is mainly made up of more recent semi-detached and detached housing dating to the 1980s.

Substantial recreational land falls within the Character Area, including public open space and sports grounds alongside canals and railways, a public park (on Bushbury Hill), and a country park and nature reserve at Northcote on its eastern edge.

Most of the industrial sites in the area are in its north, to the east of the Staffordshire & Worcestershire canal. However, unlike many of the canalside industrial districts in the Black Country, the use of these sites for industry originates in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, before which the area was largely agricultural. The location of the industry here was more probably determined by its proximity to the Stafford Road and, since it opened to traffic in 1983, the M54.



Twisting crescents leading to fanning cul-de-sacs characterise the street pattern of the 1980s housing built between the Staffordshire & Worcestershire and Shropshire Union canals.

<sup>1</sup>As recorded in 2000.



## HISTORIC CHARACTER:

Before the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, this area mainly comprised fields, some of which were medieval. In Pendeford, to the west, these were most likely associated with settlement to the north at Pendeford Farm or Pendeford Hall, beyond what is now the city boundary.

Barnhurst Farm, in the far west, was probably the site of a medieval homestead. Although it has since been almost entirely replaced, its 17<sup>th</sup> century dovecote survives and has given its name to the area of surrounding modern housing. The farm was bought by the Corporation in 1867 for a (surviving) sewage works. The farm building itself appears to have been the only domestic dwelling in the area until the late 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Pendeford Aerodrome was opened in 1938 on the area between the Shropshire Union canal and the Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal. It closed in the 1970s leaving the land a prime location for a typical mixed 1980s housing estate.

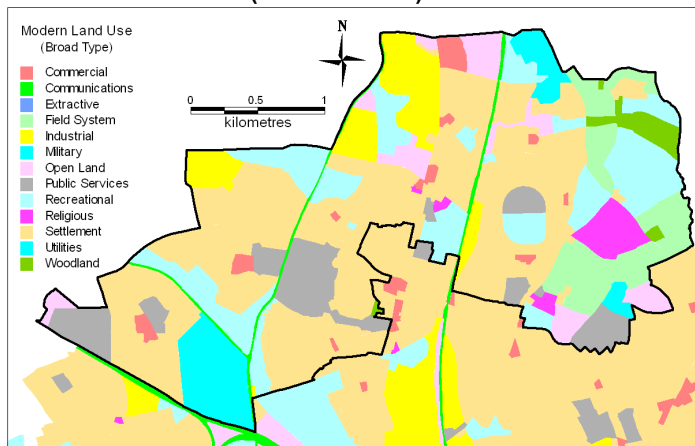
Some of the oldest surviving features in this very modern landscape are the canals and railways. The Staffordshire and Worcestershire canal, which marks a division between Pendeford/Barnhurst in the west and other areas to the east, was built around 1770. The Shropshire Union canal, which joins it on the area's southern boundary, was opened in the 1830s. The railway, which became part of the London Midland and Scottish network, was built in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.



Pendeford airfield, which opened in 1938 and closed in the 1970s, had the effect of preserving open land which was used for housing in the 1980s. The location of the airfield buildings, shown here, is now the site of Pendeford Business Park on the very north-western edge of Wolverhampton<sup>2</sup>.

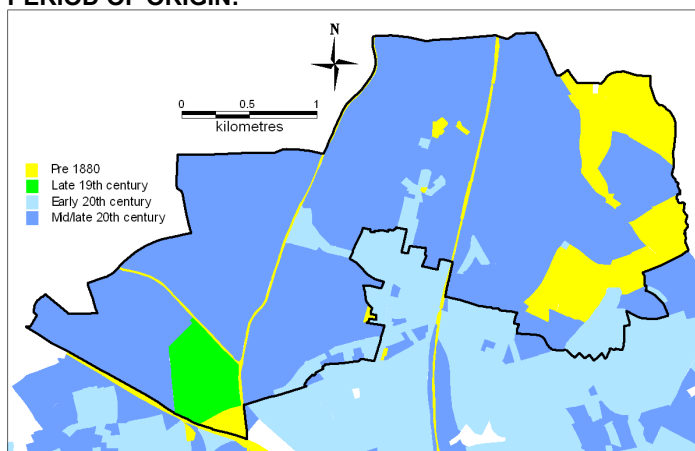
<sup>2</sup>[www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk](http://www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk)

## MODERN LAND USE (BROAD TYPE):



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## PERIOD OF ORIGIN:



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In the east of the area, the modern landscape nevertheless includes more older features, for example Northcote Farm Country Park on the area's eastern edge. Although this was laid out in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, it retains the form of the early 19<sup>th</sup> century landscaped park, and also includes surviving 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century cottages, farms and country houses.

To the north of the what is now Northcote Farm Country Park, two country houses and their parklands dominated the landscape. These were Moseley Hall, just outside the Character Area in Staffordshire (marked on the map on page 1), which was built in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Moseley Court which is now demolished. A large fishpond survives which once separated the land belonging to the two houses, the pond itself beginning its life as one of a string of mill pools along Waterhead Brook.

The area to the south of the pool and brook, effectively a 'green wedge' into the city of Wolverhampton, also includes one of the largest cemeteries in the Black Country, built on former farmland in the 1950s.

## Blakenhall, Bradmore & Penn Character Area (WV11)

### SUMMARY:

Unusually for what is a large area of the Black Country, this suburban section of Wolverhampton is dominated by housing from the early, pre-war part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century; only two of the other 50 or so Character Areas can also be typified in this way. The area can be distinguished from commercial and industrial areas to its north and east. In the west and south the area shares a border with Staffordshire.

### GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

In its east the area lies over coal, but the majority is over red sand-stone and pebble beds or mud-stone. A ridge runs north-south through the middle of the area, peaking at around 180m, while in the west especially the land falls away - to less than 120m at the Staffordshire border.

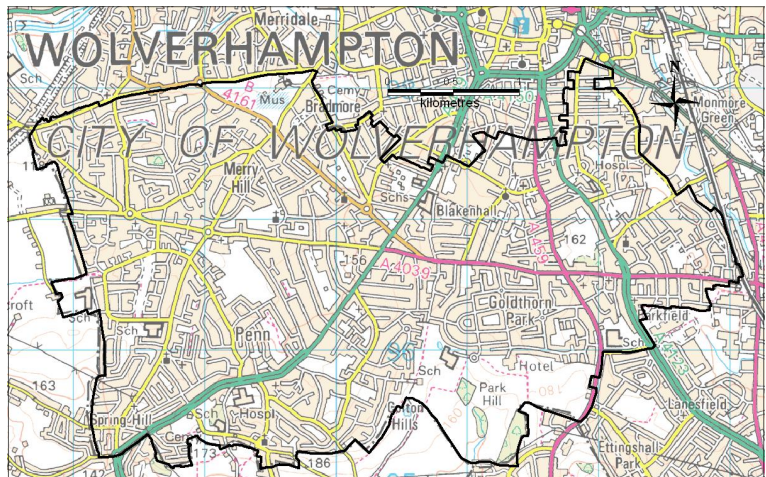
### MODERN CHARACTER:

This area represents a large part of suburban Wolverhampton, the centre of which is to the north. Three quarters of the land<sup>1</sup> is taken by housing, which comprises largely small and medium-sized semi-detached and detached properties from the inter-war period, although particularly in the north and west there are also significant areas of terraces.

The legacy of the large early 20<sup>th</sup> century expansion of the city includes the area around Merry Hill, in the west. This is typified by large areas of small semis built on former fields. The south-west of the area, to the north of the historic settlement of Upper Penn, also includes large areas of similar housing.

The historic settlement of Penn itself (or Upper Penn as it was known), which straddles the main road out of the city to the south-west (the Penn Road - shown in the map above in green), has a more mixed character and retains older properties including Penn Hall (now a school), a pub, almshouses, and church. Two surviving farms and farmland across the border in Staffordshire add to Penn's continuing village feel.

East of Penn Road the inter-war housing continues into Goldthorn Park, a large area of medium-sized semis and detached housing, although its private origins contrast with the municipal estates in the west. To the north, in Blakenhall, the area's largest industrial area is situated, some of which survives from the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.



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Inter-war semis in the north-west of the Character Area

In the south-central part of the area, against the boundary shared with Dudley, and on top of the ridge referred to above, there is an important green space (Park Hill). This is the largest area of field system/ woodland in any single Wolverhampton Character Area and one of the few surviving green belt areas inside the city. Other important recreational zones add to character of the area. These include larger areas such as Bantock Park on Finchfield Road (the latter forms part of the area's northern boundary), Windsor Avenue playing fields in the west, and Phoenix Park in the east. However, it is perhaps the dispersed nature of the recreational land here (there are 15 other sites) which is distinctive.

<sup>1</sup>As recorded in 2000.

## HISTORIC CHARACTER:

One of the oldest known settlements in this area is Upper Penn, in whose churchyard is the base of a Saxon cross. Penn is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, and there are references to a trackway known as Penn Way in the 10<sup>th</sup> century - possibly along the line of the existing Penn Road.

By the medieval period the area had developed vast open fields, some of which possibly belonged to Lower Penn to the south west (in modern Staffordshire). While there is little recorded settlement in the area at the time, by the mid 18<sup>th</sup> century there were many scattered farms and cottages, and it is likely that some may have had medieval origins.

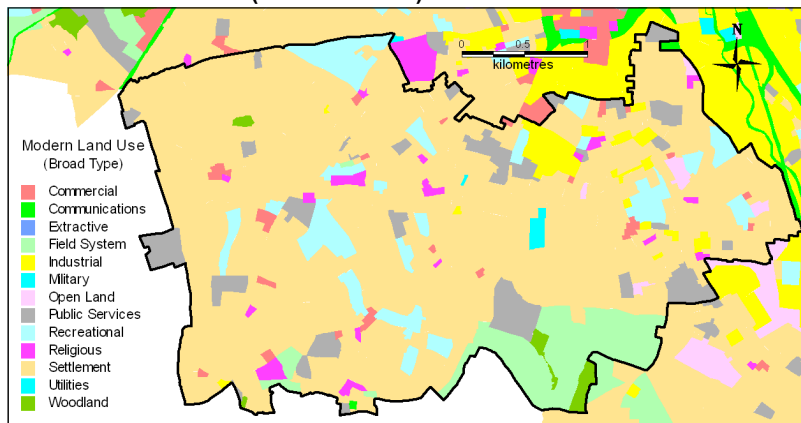
In addition to the north-south routes of the Penn Road and Dudley Road (the modern A459), the main east-west route through the Character Area (including the modern Goldthorn Hill) has probably existed for some time as it appears on Yates' map of 1775.

Overall, by the late 19<sup>th</sup> century the area was still overwhelmingly agricultural, and Upper Penn was a dispersed settlement surrounded by fields. The largest areas of housing at that time however were Penn Fields (on the Penn Road, closer to Wolverhampton) and Blakenhall (on the Dudley Road, just south of the modern Wolverhampton city centre). Despite demolitions, these two areas, together with Upper Penn are the location of most of the buildings in the area with an origin before 1900.



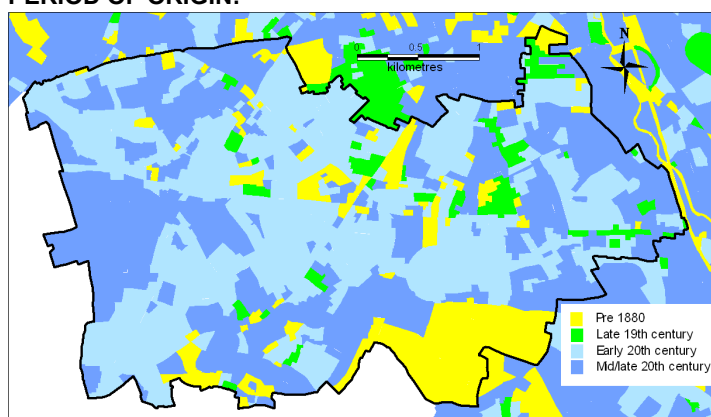
The Penn Road, heading south-west out of Wolverhampton, has been important to the development of the Character Area. Shown here is the former toll gate, located in the centre of the Character Area at the junction with Coalway Lane<sup>2</sup>.

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At least until the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century, Blakenhall existed as a distinct settlement, and contained several streets of terraced housing. However, by 1900 it had merged with Wolverhampton in a corridor of development along the Dudley Road. Later in the 20<sup>th</sup> century much of the terraced housing was replaced by high-rise. The car industry, which has also contributed to Blakenhall's character (it hosted the former Sunbeam factory), was in part based on skills developed in the japanning and tin plate industries.

The particular line of the Dudley Road represented a division within the Character Area in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The area to the west was generally still field systems, while that to the east was dominated by mining and its effects. Cockshutts, Rough Hills and Sedgley Park collieries were among the operations which transformed this part of the landscape.

However, this division is much less visible today: the story of the area since the start of the 20<sup>th</sup> century has meant that both fields and colliery land have been consumed by the growth of suburban housing. At the same time, the modern Birmingham New Road was cut through what had previously been colliery land to form a route from Wolverhampton to the south-east.

<sup>2</sup>[www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk](http://www.localhistory.scit.wlv.ac.uk)



## Wolverhampton Inner Western Suburbs Character Area (WV12)

### SUMMARY:

The landscape in this area is unusual in the modern Black Country in that it contains large numbers of residential properties originating from before the 20<sup>th</sup> century (only one of the other 57 areas is comparable in this respect<sup>1</sup>). The largest single recreational element of the area, West Park, is a significant part of what remains of the Victorian townscape.

### GEOLOGY & TOPOGRAPHY:

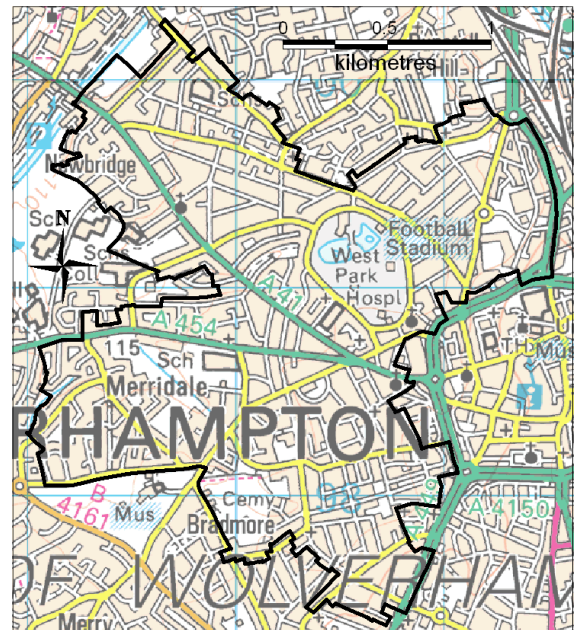
The area lies almost entirely over red sandstone and pebble beds. It is generally at between 130-140m altitude, with the lower land in the north-west.

### MODERN CHARACTER:

This area contains some of the oldest surviving neighbourhoods in the Black Country. It is overwhelmingly residential - almost three quarters of its area is housing<sup>2</sup> and even land given to recreation and public services (e.g. schools) is closely associated.

The oldest surviving areas of housing include two large clusters of pre-1880 development - in the centre of the area around the junction of the Tettenhall and Compton Roads (shown as the A41 and A454 on the adjacent map), and in the north-west around Newhampton Road West. These include terraced housing of a range of sizes, together with some large semi-detached and detached properties. Between these two areas are two unusual streets of villa-type houses (Parkdale East & West) distinctively located either side of a green space.

Later 19<sup>th</sup> century neighbourhoods also remain (particularly in the far south of the area and north-west of West Park) including terraces and small semi-detached



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housing. The area in general contains a significant proportion of the Black Country's Victorian terraces.

The early 20<sup>th</sup> century saw significant infill around West Park, and the western edges of the Character Area were also developed: areas of large detached and semi-detached housing which still survive. In the more working class parts there are also high rise flats which had replaced the 19<sup>th</sup> century terraces by the 1970s: an attempt to change one form of intensive development for another.

Recreational facilities provide both local amenities and attractions to visitors: the Victorian West Park; Wolverhampton Wanderers' 20<sup>th</sup> century stadium in the east; and the inter-war sports ground at Merridale in the west. The open space represented by the cemetery in the south (also at Merridale) also adds to the area's character.

Educational facilities are also an important part of the area's character, and in addition to several primary and secondary schools, the area also includes, on its eastern edge, part of Wolverhampton University.



The main road out of Wolverhampton to the west, shown here at Chapel Ash, on the eastern edge of the Character Area. These shops are, by period of origin, typical of large parts of the area which retain elements of their Victorian character. They now form part of a Conservation Area.

<sup>1</sup>See *Central Smethwick & Cape Hill* Character Area profile.

<sup>2</sup>As recorded in 2000.

## HISTORIC CHARACTER:

Historically this area was made up of field systems and dispersed settlement, including the western open fields of the medieval settlement of Wolverhampton.

The western side of the town was always the most desirable area to live in, for those who could afford it. Not only did the prevailing westerly winds mean the area was relatively free of industrial pollution (which was the case for many English towns), but also this part of the city did not have the coal and iron industries which characterised the eastern side.

Housing began to be built along the main arteries out of the town to the west (the Tettenhall, Compton, Merridale, and Finchfield Roads) from at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century, forming Wolverhampton's first major suburbs. These routes continued to have importance, especially because, unlike other parts of the Black Country, the area has never contained the routes of canals or railways.

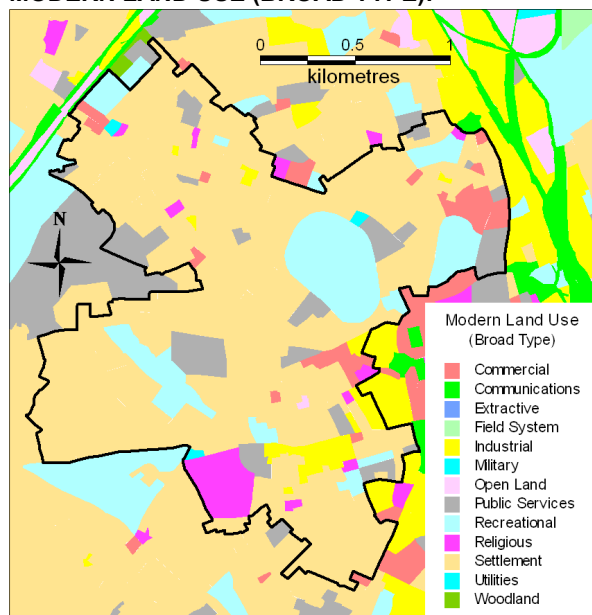
West Park was laid out on the town racecourse (and preserving some of its shape) between these radial roads and was opened in 1881. In the years which followed housing filled in the area around the park, along the lines of the streets and property boundaries which often radiated out from the park and its perimeter road (Park Road).

At the time the Park was opened, substantial areas of field systems still existed within the Character Area, particularly in its south and west. However in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century these were largely given over to housing. Notable areas of remaining open land included Merridale sports fields and neighbouring allotments, and the cemetery nearby. The location of the sports fields and allotments is probably explained by the presence of Graiseley Brook flowing through this part of the area, while the cemetery was laid out before the area was reached by the westward expansion of the town.

For the most part, the neighbourhoods within the area have only experienced one phase of housing. However, in the 20<sup>th</sup> century the need for land increased, and part of the response included the replacement of the first phase of construction. This is particularly evident on the eastern edge of the area where high rise flats and large retail development replaced earlier terraced streets.

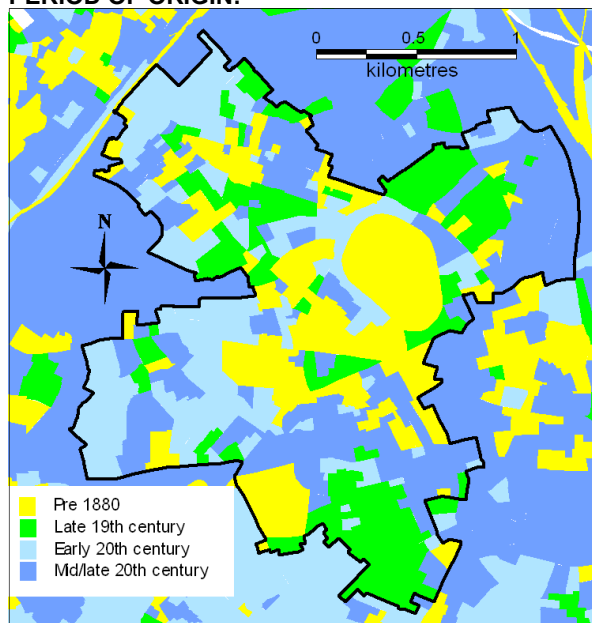
In general, the area has always been agricultural, residential, or recreational. However, there have also

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been some industries which have made an impact on the landscape. Brick making was present in the south-west, before this area also became residential, and this legacy survives in local place names (Great Brickkiln Street, for example). Brewing was also an important industry on the area's western side.