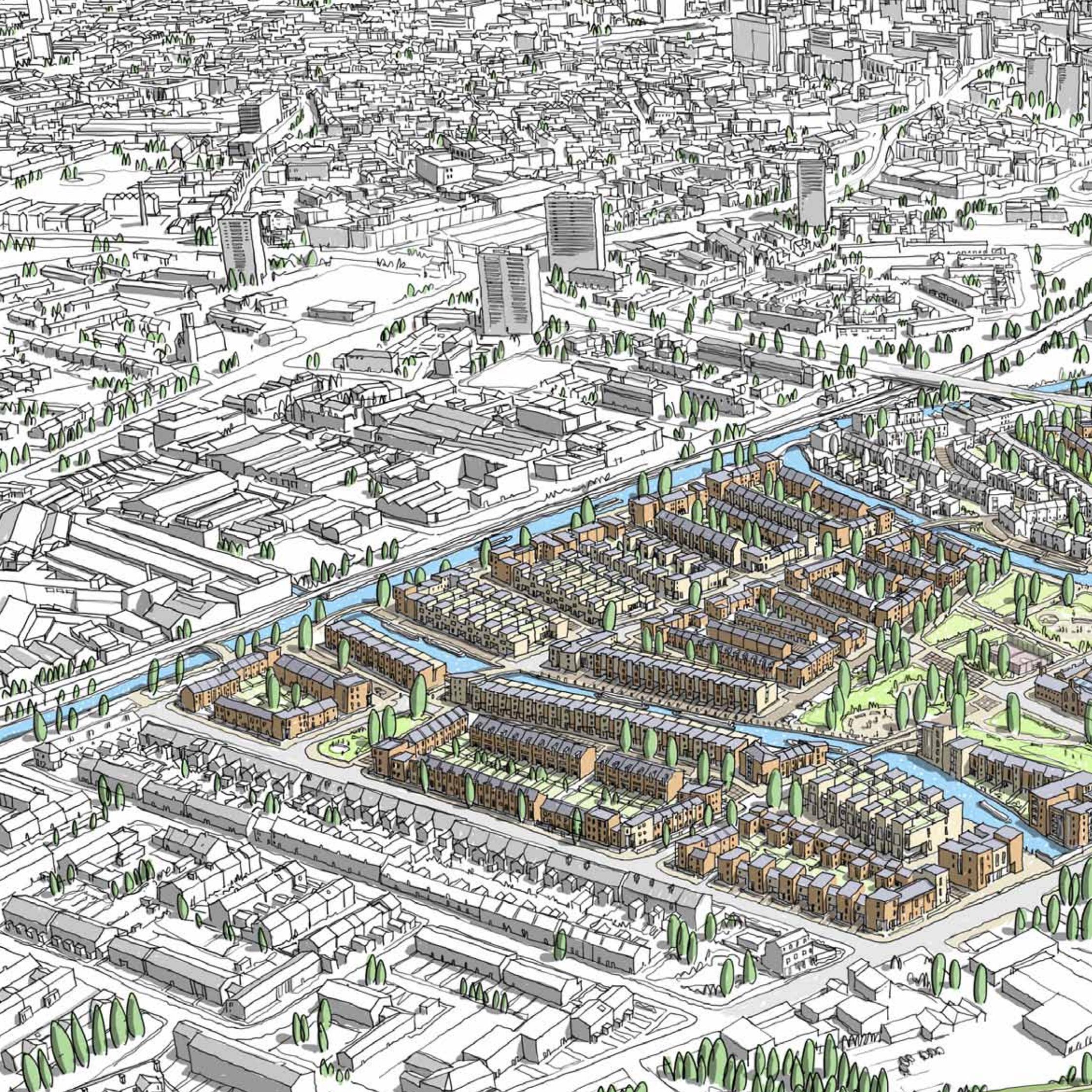


# ICKNIELD PORT LOOP

The creation of a new waterside quarter



**Design and Access Statement**  
Expanded May 2012





## DESIGN AND ACCESS STATEMENT

**Prepared for:**

British Waterways and the  
Homes and Communities Agency

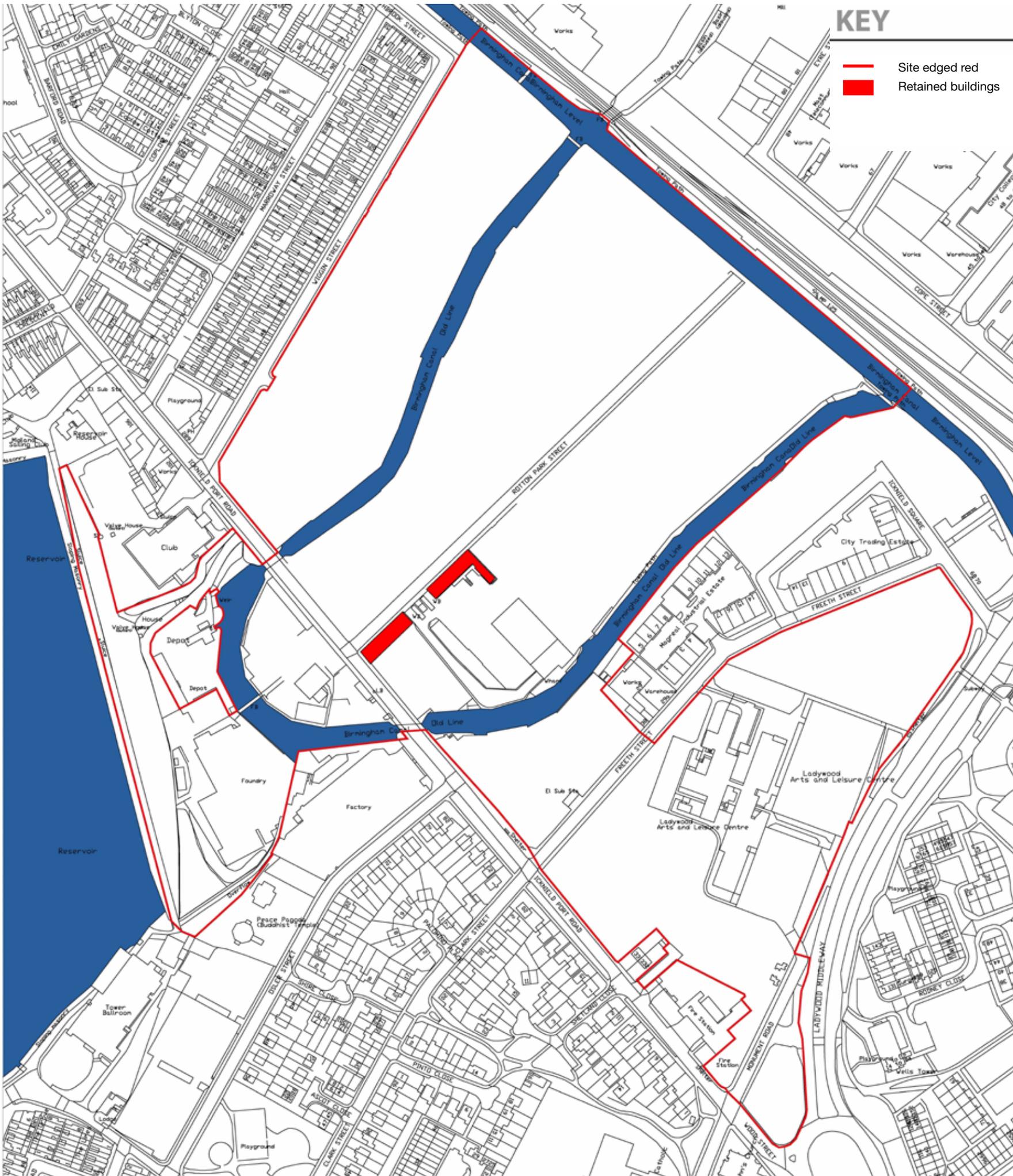
**By:**

URBED and DTZ

31st October 2011







# KEY

- Site edged red
- Retained buildings

In which we describe the status and content of this document.

This Design and Access Statement has been prepared by URBED for the three landowners of the Icknield Port Loop site and the two applicants, British Waterways and the Homes and Community Agency. It describes the illustrative masterplan developed by URBED and includes land use, massing, access, public realm and the waterspace strategy.

The entirety of this document is illustrative. This means that it illustrates how the scheme could be developed in line with this planning application. It is however an outline application and the content of this statement goes beyond the scope and detailed to be fixed at the outline stage. The this statement is therefore supported by a series of regulatory Plans (Appendix 1). These make clear which aspects of the scheme are to be fixed at this stage and which remain illustrative and provide guidance for the reserved matters applications as they come forward.



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# PREVIOUS MASTERPLAN FOR THE SITE



The scheme has a long history and a number of previous masterplans have been developed for the site.

Icknield Port Loop has been identified as a development opportunity for a number of years. As described on the following page it has been identified as a growth node and a Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood in a number of studies as well as in the emerging LDF. There have also been a number of masterplans done for the site including a previous scheme by Glenn Howells Architects for the developer Isis in 2007 (left) and a plan developed as part of draft planning policy by the city council (below).

The current plan started in the Autumn of 2010 and was based on the shared vision of the land owners 'To create by 2025, a high-quality, family orientated, sustainable and mixed-use waterside neighbourhood'

This will support the four strategic principles of growth, connectivity, sustainability and heritage which underpin the vision for Greater Icknield as a new Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood, which will provide new family housing at medium to high densities with innovative family housing typologies. The strategic development and urban design parameters that are to guide the development of this IPL sub-neighbourhood will create a recognisable waterside neighbourhood, with a strong sense of place and internal connections, greater public access to the Edgbaston Reservoir and the canal loop but which will also form an integral part of the city as a whole, fully knitted into surrounding areas with easy access to nearby facilities such as the City Centre, and Dudley Road district centre and the Edgbaston Reservoir. The aim of the landowners is to change the housing market perception of this area. In order to deliver transformational change there are three fundamental components that the scheme must deliver: a new family housing offer; an attractive, safe and accessible environment with a strong sense of place; and an attractive education offer – access to good schools.

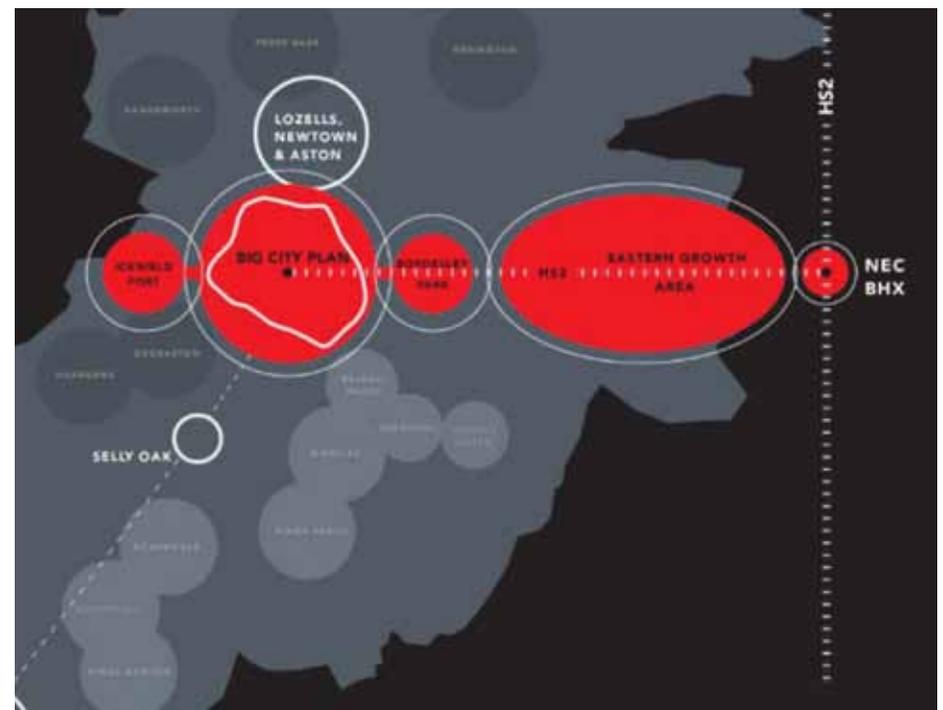
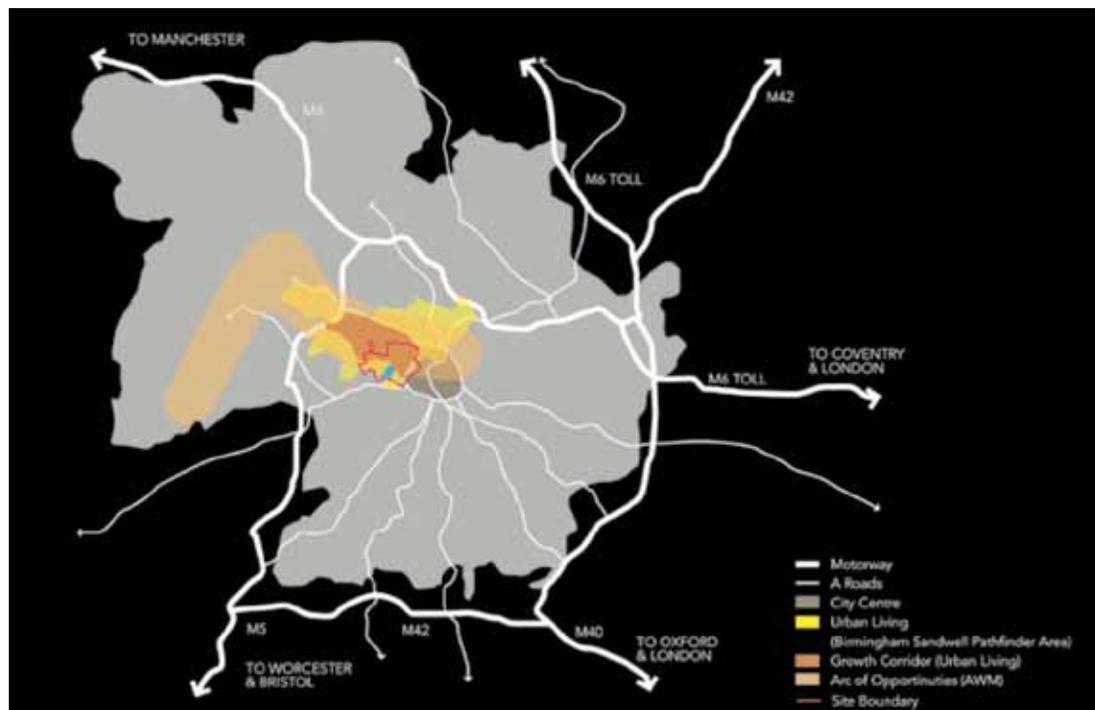
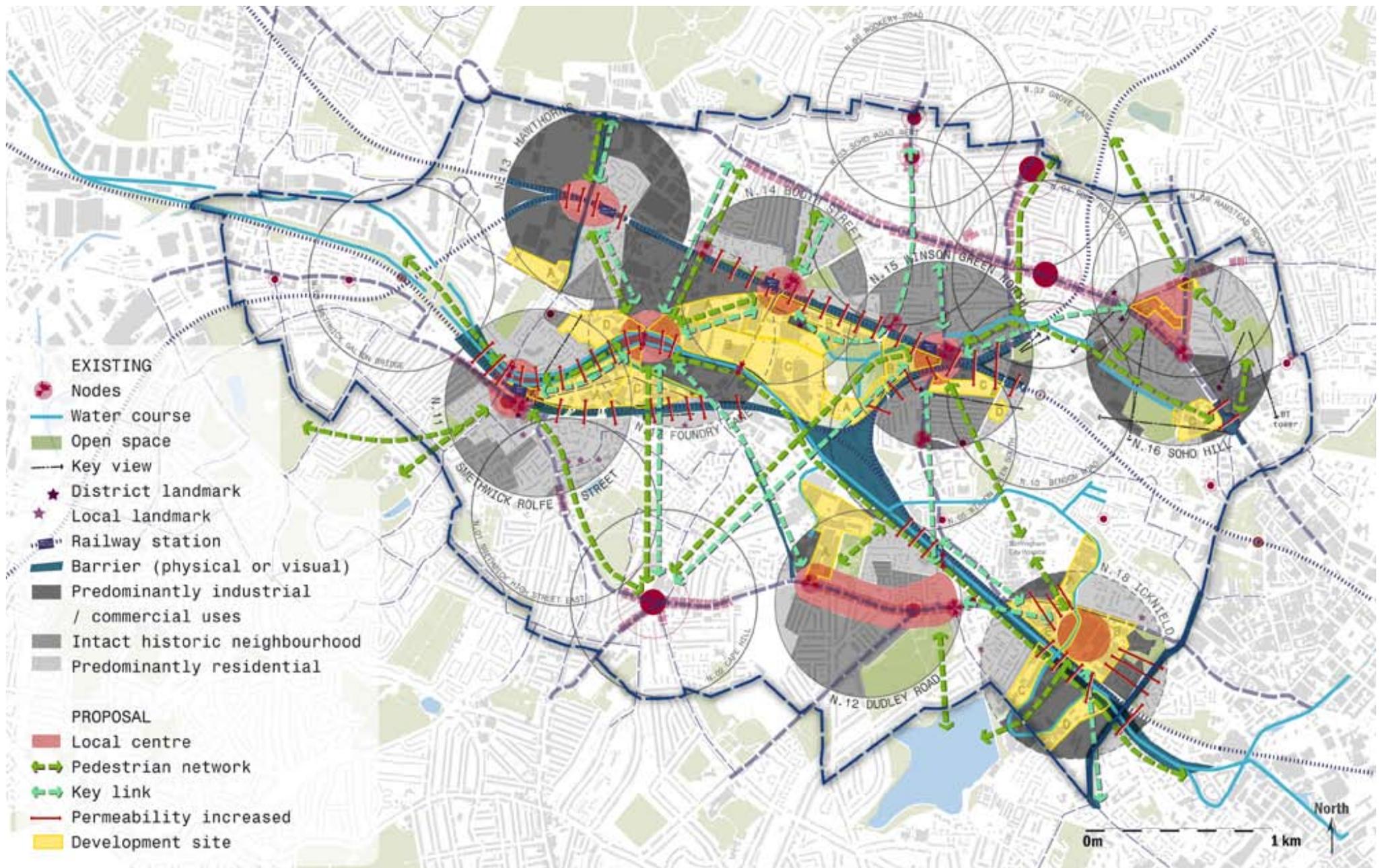
This vision formed the basis of initial masterplanning options work as described on pages 13-15 of this report. Following discussions with the landowners and a workshop including the planning authority a preferred option has been developed. This was the subject of public consultation in October 2011 as described on pages 16 and 17. Following this a series of further changes have been made as the basis of the current masterplan that is described in Section 4 of this report.





# BACKGROUND TO THE SITE





# 2 BACKGROUND TO THE SITE

## THE BIRMINGHAM CONTEXT

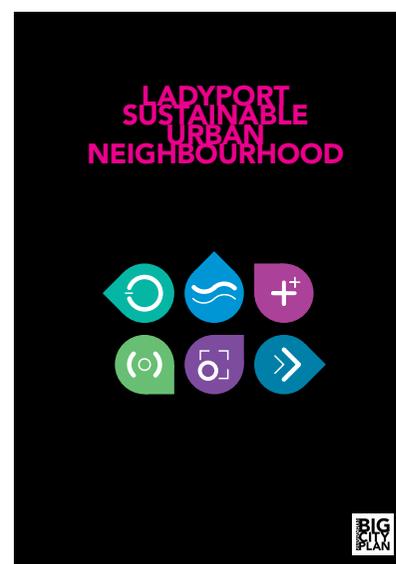
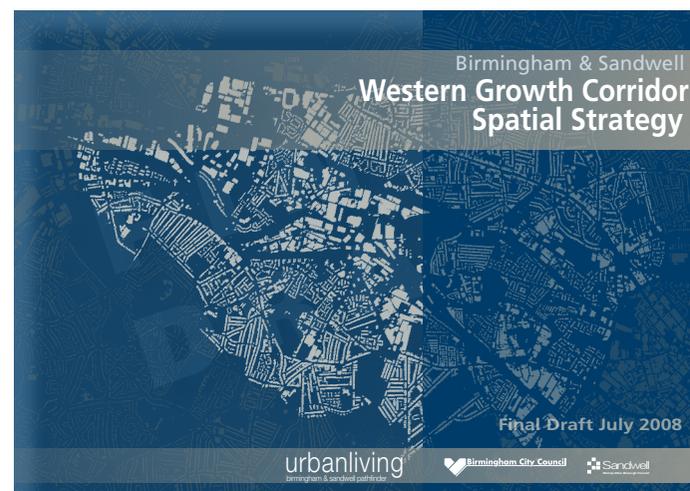
Birmingham is planning major growth over the coming 20 years including 50,000 homes. The Greater Icknield area has been identified as a major opportunity to contribute to this housing growth.

Birmingham's growth agenda envisages that the city's population will grow by 100,000 people by 2026. To achieve this the city needs to build around 50,000 new homes over the next 20 years and create 100,000 new jobs. This is significantly above the city's natural level of growth and planning has been focusing on a series of growth points that can accommodate this level of growth and use it to transform the city.

The largest of these growth points is the city centre, covered by the Big City Plan. Beyond this the greatest concentration of opportunity lies to the west of the city as set out in the Western Growth Strategy agreed in 2009. This in turn recognises Ladyport, or the Greater Icknield Area, as the most significant opportunity to create a new neighbourhood.

This is reflected in the Local Development Framework. The consultation on the Core Strategy closed earlier this year. This recognises the Greater Icknield Area as a *Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood* or SUN – a term coined by URBED in 1995. This has been subject to a number of more detailed studies. The first was a development framework undertaken by the planning authority in 2005. A further study was undertaken by the Landscape Practice in 2009 for Urban Vision that looked at growth along the canal corridor. Another report on the Ladyport SUN was prepared by Urban Initiatives as a follow-on from the Big City Plan in 2009. This is all being pulled together by the Planning Authority into a Supplementary Planning Document for the Greater Icknield Area at present.

The capacity work that was done for the Greater Icknield Area suggested that it had scope for 6,000 new homes. This was based on three density bands; 70, 120 and 180 units/hectare. On this basis the Icknield Port Loop site was estimated to have capacity for 1,800 units based on 14.7 ha developable area. These figures were developed prior to the recession and are now accepted to be out of date. The densities that we are working with on this application are a good deal lower.





1886 PLAN

# 2 BACKGROUND TO THE SITE

# 2 HISTORY

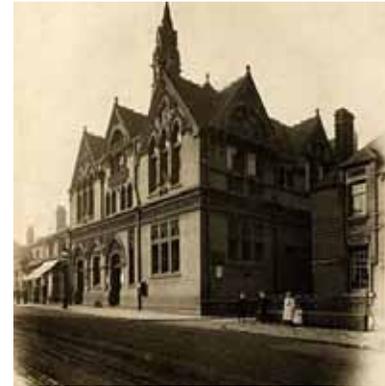
Ickniel Port Road may have Roman origins but the history of the area really starts with the canal age in the 1760s. The area was originally on the edge of the city and is still a transitional area between the inner city and the more affluent neighbourhoods to the west.

Ickniel Port Loop is an area of transition. As the plan to the left from 1886 shows, it remained on the edge of the Victorian city until the end of the 19th century and prior to this had been a genteel area of large estates. By the turn of the century the dense working class neighbourhood had grown up to the east and Monument Road had developed as a major high street, yet to the east of the reservoir and within the loop itself the land was undeveloped.

Ickniel Road is the name of a Roman Road, that linked Watling Street to Fosse Way. It is possible that Ickniel Port Road runs on the line of the original Roman Road but historians think it unlikely.

The Loop and indeed the port dates from 1769 when James Brindley completed his canal to Wolverhampton linking Birmingham to the canal network and kick-starting the Industrial Revolution in the city. The canal followed the 450' contour and meandered wildly. Thomas Telford surveying it in the 1820s described it as: *"little more than a crooked ditch with scarcely the appearance of a haling-path, the horses frequently sliding and staggering in the water, the haling-lines sweeping the ground into the canal, and the entanglement at the meeting of boats being incessant"*.

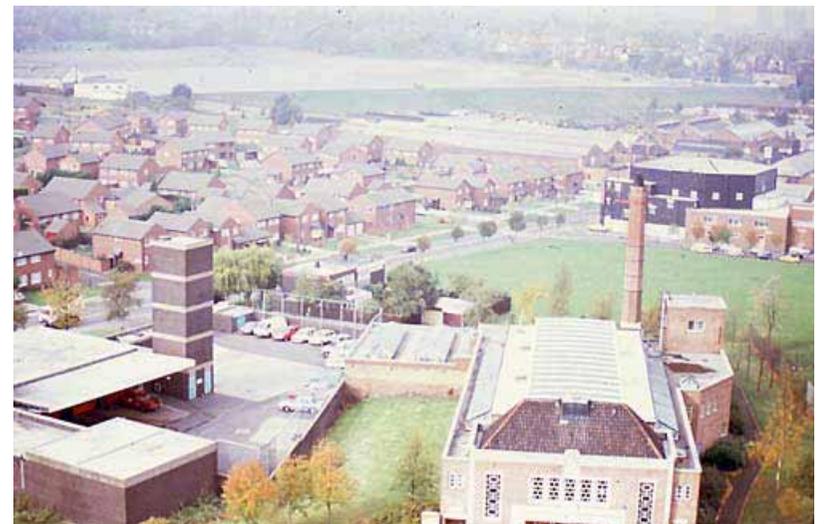
In 1827 Telford opened the Mainline Canal, 18m wide with a towpath on either side, and the loop became something of a backwater. However the canal depot was opened in 1829 and it became a base for maintenance operations. The reservoir was built to serve the mainline canal and was created from the fish pool of the estate of John Perrott, who also left us the Perrott folly on the hill overlooking the reservoir. The reservoir has long been used as a recreational resource for the

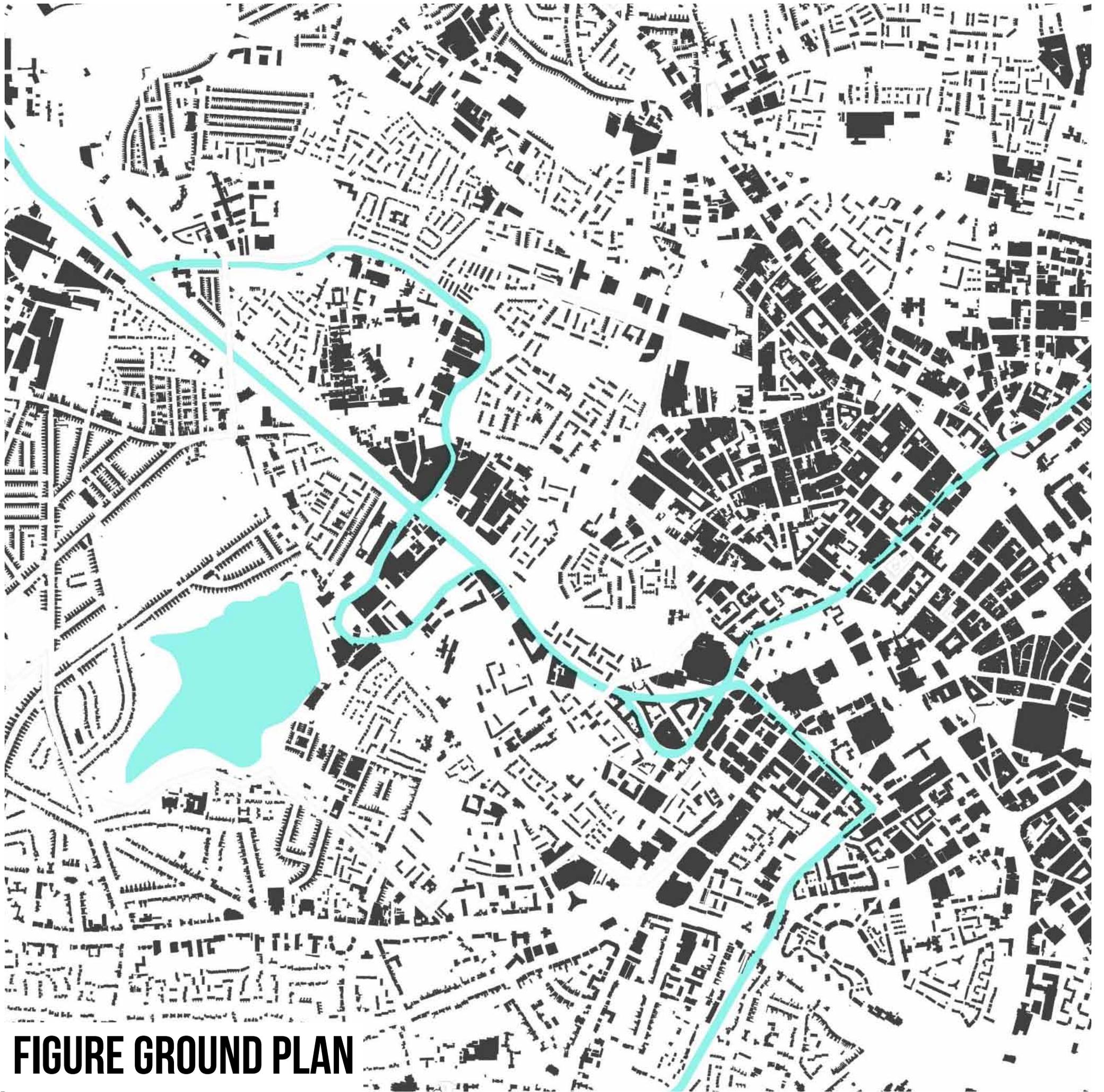


people of Birmingham and between the wars was advertised as an alternative to the seaside.

The land within the loop was undeveloped until the early 19th century when it became built up with factories. The largest was the Dockers Paint and Varnish factory which was well known in the city. The corporation also built a Salvage Depot which opened in 1932 and included the stable block that we are proposing to retain.

The commercial heart of the area was Monument Road which ran on the line of Ladywood Middleway and still exists at the bottom of Ickniel Port Road. This was lined with shops and facilities. Foremost amongst these was the Ladywood Swimming Baths that closed in the 1990s. The area of dense terraced housing in Ladywood was cleared some time before this in the 1960s and replaced with a series of council estates.





**FIGURE GROUND PLAN**

## 2 BACKGROUND TO THE SITE

## 3: URBAN FORM

Icknield Port Loop marks a transition between the dense city centre and the less dense suburbs. The scheme has the potential to mend a fractured area of the city and to rejoin the inner city to the suburbs.



As part of the preparation of this illustrative masterplan, URBED have undertaken a wider study of the urban form of the western part of Birmingham. The figure ground plan to the left shows very clearly the way that Icknield Port Loop is a transitional area between the inner city and the suburbs. The density of the city centre can be seen clearly to the right of the plan. This density would once have spread out to include much of Ladywood which was once a densely-built up inner neighbourhood. The redevelopment of the 1960s has however created a very fragmented urban form in this area and means that Icknield Port feels remote from the city centre even though it is only a ten minute walk.



As the historic plan on the previous page shows, the Middleway marks what was the edge of the Victorian city. Beyond this was an area of manufacturing on both sides of the Main Line Canal together with the hospital. This shows up as large footprint buildings on the plan and most of it is included in the potential developable opportunities within the Greater Icknield Area.



Beyond this to the south and west of the reservoir are suburbs characterised by individual houses with gardens and denser nodes around the local centres on Dudley Road and Hagley Road / Five Ways.

On the basis of this analysis there is an opportunity to develop the Greater Icknield Area as an inner urban neighbourhood that creates a transition between the high-density development of the centre and the low-density of the suburbs. This will help repair some of the urban fracturing in this part of the city and establish a structure that can be continued through the redevelopment of the surrounding area.



Icknield Port Road (top left), The open aspect of the Ladywood Arts and Community Centre (above left), An aerial view from the north looking towards the suburbs of Edgbaston (left) and two views of the British Waterways Depot, the top one from the dam and the bottom looking towards the dam.



# MASTERPLAN DEVELOPMENT



Java Island in Amsterdam and area developed on similar principles to those that we are proposing; high density family housing in an urban context.



# 3 MASTERPLAN DEVELOPMENT

# 1. SCHEME OBJECTIVES

Both the council and the land owners have set out a series of principles to define a Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood in the context of Icknield Port Loop.

The policy context described in section 2.1 sets out a clear aspiration for Icknield Port Loop to be developed as a Sustainable Urban Neighbourhood (SUN). This has been developed by the City Council and the land owners into a set of six principles to guide the development of the area:

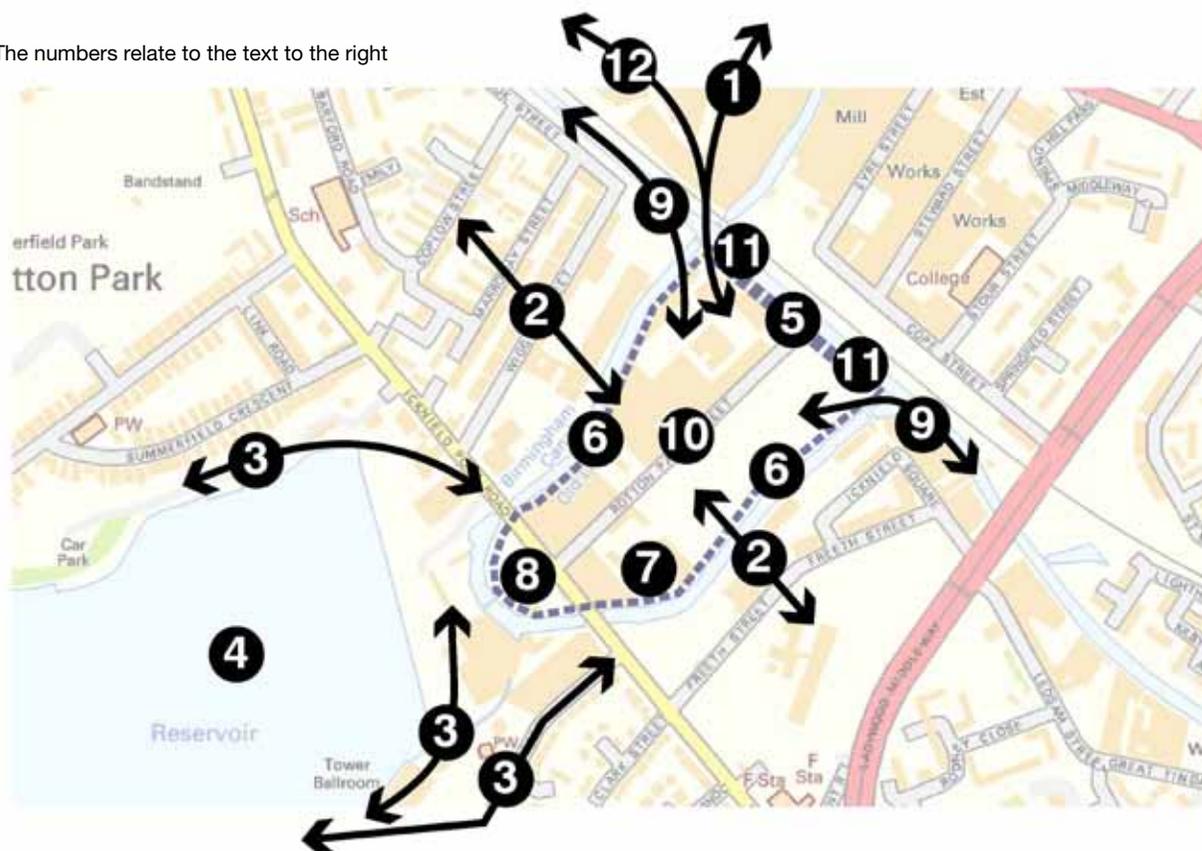
- 1. Meet present and future housing needs:** This relates to a mix of housing, predominantly for families, built at higher densities without compromising space standards and quality.
- 2. High-quality streets and public spaces:** Creating a safe and attractive hierarchy of streets overlooked by development and enclosed by buildings, plus squares, green space and waterside public realm.
- 3. A distinct identity and strong sense of place:** Using the heritage of the canal, reservoir and retained buildings together with quality modern architecture to create somewhere that is memorable.

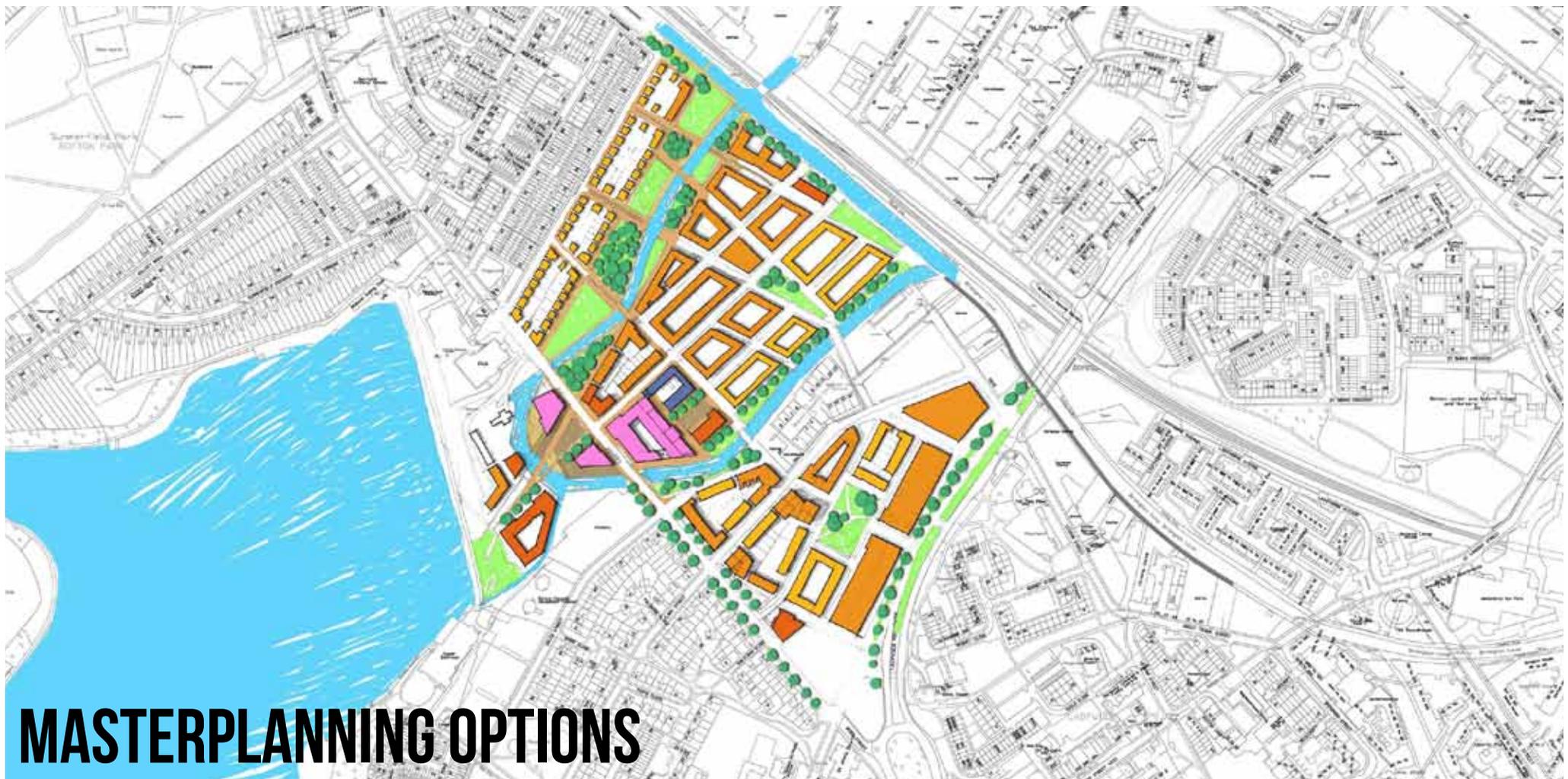
- 4. Connected communities:** Creating a neighbourhood that is integrated with its surroundings with clear pedestrian and public transport links and new bridges over the canal.
- 5. Vibrant mix of uses and community facilities:** Developing facilities at nodes, without challenging the Dudley Road Centre, and supporting a mix of employment and community facilities, alongside housing.
- 6. Sustainable use of resources:** Reducing the consumption of energy and other resources, minimizing car travel generating heat and power locally, reducing water use and promoting recycling and food production.

These have been developed in discussions between the land owners and the Council into a set of urban design guidelines for the site indicated on the plan to the left:

1. Connection to and from the evolving Hospital Development Site at Spring Hill.
2. Connections to and from existing local communities
3. Connections to Edgbaston Reservoir and surrounding landscape
4. Utilise Edgbaston Reservoir and surrounding landscape as a recreational and leisure resource
5. Recognise the Main Line Canal as the Primary Waterfront in terms of scale and function of adjacent development
6. Create a pedestrian route around the "loop", this route should be mostly but not necessarily wholly on the water's edge
7. Presumption in favour of retaining the buildings on lower Rotton Park Street (Eastern Side) on heritage grounds (by BCC), subject to project viability and deliverability.
8. Retain Waterway Operation use of the BW Depot
9. Connections to and from the Mainline Towpath
10. Ensure open space provision within the scheme is useable, flexible and adaptable to cater for the immediate and wider neighbourhood
11. Ensure the junctions between the Icknield Port Canal Loop and Main Line Canal are treated as key corners in the development.
12. Connections to and from the existing neighbourhood centre and facilities on Dudley Road.

The numbers relate to the text to the right





**MASTERPLANNING OPTIONS**

The concept was translated into a series of options for the site by URBED that were developed through workshops with the land owners and the local authority.

The aim of the scheme is to create a high density sustainable urban neighbourhood. The aim is to do this without resorting to small apartments so that we are able to respond to the challenge of creating family housing in an urban context. This is supported by the review of the market undertaken by DTZ and by discussions on housing need with the City's Housing Department.

The vision is therefore to create a model for medium to high density innovative family housing near to Birmingham city centre. The illustrative masterplan was therefore based on an investigation into types of high-density urban family housing developed in similar circumstances elsewhere. URBED undertook a typology study looking at precedents for high-density family housing in European cities. The examples used included the dockland developments in Amsterdam, The Western Harbour in Malmo and Hammarby in Stockholm. Closer to home we also looked at schemes such as the New England

A masterplan by URBED for Blueprint in Leicester based on high density courtyard housing



Quarter in Brighton, various schemes in London, Accordia in Cambridge and the Millennium Community in Telford.

These indicative typologies were presented to the client group and as a result of this we derived three density bands as illustrated to the left:

- 1. 40-50 units/ha:** This is at the upper end of what housebuilders consider to be normal at present (i.e. after the recession). It allows for semi-detached housing with gardens and in-curtilage parking. The precedents include Telford, the New Hall scheme in Harlow and Dutch new towns like Vivehausen and Almere. It is important to the landowners that housing of this density does not imply a standard housebuilder product and they will be seeking high-quality contemporary design.
- 2. 65-75 units/ha:** This is the typical density of Victorian terraces and is intended to be the major part of the scheme. The precedents include Brighton, Accordia in Cambridge and Amsterdam docks. This density can be achieved through a number of housing types including terraces. The illustrative masterplan also includes some more radical courtyard and mews arrangements.
- 3. 120-160 units/ha:** This involves a significant number of apartments and we have been exploring the Swedish model of high density family apartments with large balconies. However there is also scope at this density to include some high density courtyard housing.

These density bands were used as the basis for the option development described overleaf.



The concept and density bands were developed into a series of options that explored the density of the scheme, the configuration of the open space and the mix of uses.

The first step in this was an internal design competition within URBED where different members of the practice developed masterplanning concepts for the site. The two leading contenders are illustrated to the left. The main differences are the treatment of open space. The top scheme that became the preferred option included a series of open spaces in a configuration that provided stronger connections through the site linking surrounding communities and facilities, including the reservoir, as well as a greater range of roles and functions. The second option divorced the new development from the unique site feature, the canal loop and did not optimise the commercial value generated from the waterside location.

The two options were developed into three technical masterplanning options as illustrated below. Two of these were based on the series of open spaces and one on the linear park. These three options were as follows:

**1. High-density, Mixed use:** With 10ha of housing land, 2ha of open space and 5.6ha of employment space. This

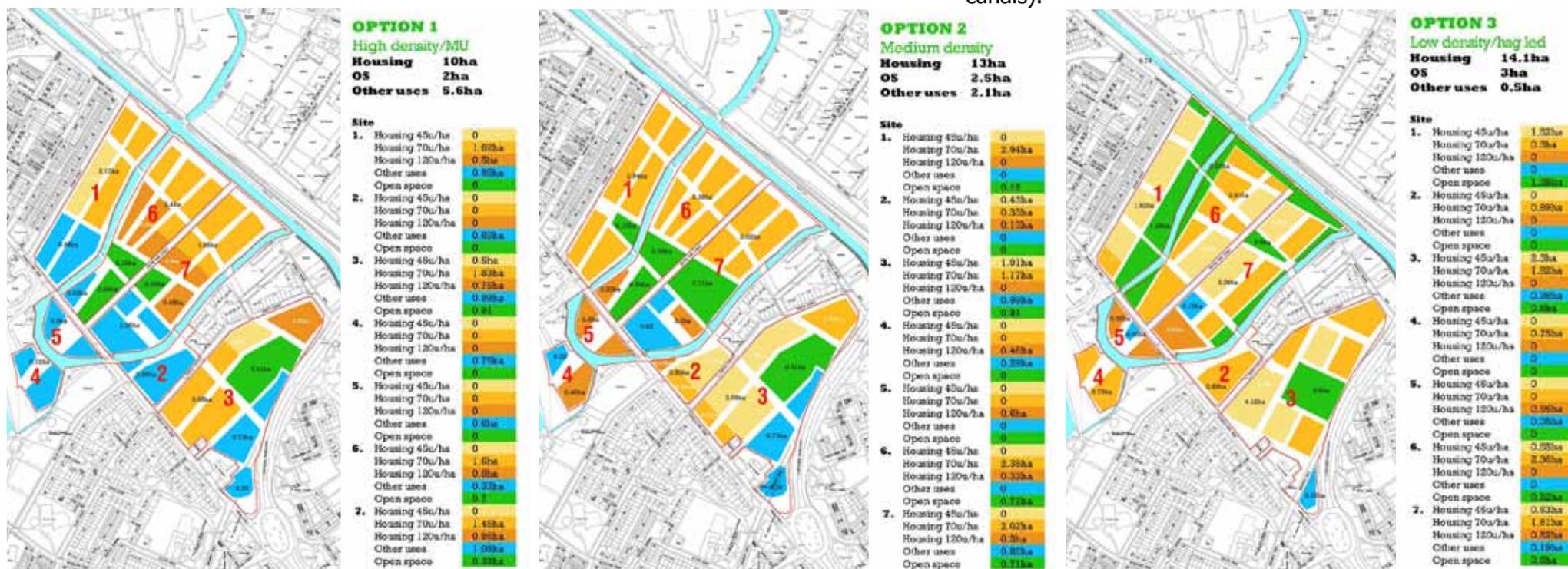
option only had 700-800 homes because the higher densities were cancelled out by the smaller amount of housing land.

**2. Medium Density, partially mixed:** This had 13ha of housing land, 2.5ha of open space and 2.1ha of employment land. It achieved 860-1,000 homes.

**3. Lower density, housing led:** This has 14.1ha of housing land, 3ha of open space and just 0.5ha of employment. It achieved 930-1,130 units.

What this illustrated was that the amount of housing land was more important than the density of the housing. It was also clear that both in terms of housing density and mix of uses, all of the options were below the levels assumed by the planning authority in their planning work on the Greater Icknield Area.

The decision was to develop Option 2 as the preferred option with two important changes: The first was that the employment space could be developed below the high-density housing so occupying the same space. The other was that the open space measure could include the dam and the canals. This allowed us to increase the housing land to 13.84ha and yet increase the open space to 3.1ha (5.2ha including the canals).





# 3 MASTERPLAN DEVELOPMENT

# 4. CONSULTATIONS

The preferred option was developed and tested following discussions with the City's planner's and urban designers and evolved into the plan shown to the left, which was the basis for consultation in September and October 2011.



The consultation Blog (above) and photos of the consultation (right and below)

The consultation plan was based on the option 2 technical masterplan and included around 1000 homes, 7,900m<sup>2</sup> of business space, a hotel retail store and community centre. The consultation included briefings for local members, a workshop with waterway groups and a public consultation that ran from 27th September for three weeks. On the 1st October there was a public exhibition and presentation in the Deaf Cultural Centre on Ladywood Road attended by just over 100 people. A newsletter was produced that was distributed by hand to just under 3,000 homes and a blog set included a questionnaire which was also available in a digital version on the web site.

## Public comments

There were a total of 41 completed questionnaires. Overall the response was very positive to the scheme with 83% strongly supporting the proposals. Generally people were happy to see a residential-based scheme that included family housing rather than a plan dominated by flats. They sup-

ported the level of open space provision and welcomed the new community facility. There was, as anticipated, comments about the replacement of the area's swimming pool which has been closed in the 1990s. This was mentioned by just under half of the respondents although most people recognised that building and running a new swimming pool was likely to be very difficult in the current climate.

One of the concerns raised related to traffic and congestion on the surrounding streets. There was a request that we provide a second pedestrian crossing over the Middleway. There was also concern for the area's heritage and a sadness that so much of the industrial premises were to be demolished. The retention of the Stable Block and Tube Works building was however welcomed.

## Waterways consultation

A workshop with waterway users was held on 5th October and attended by 10 representatives of the Inland Waterways Association and other canal users. They were very supportive of the proposals and the main comments were as follows:

- The pub is very welcome because there isn't a waterside pub within reach of the centre of the city. It did however need sufficient visitor moorings.
- There were concerns about traffic levels on Ickniel Port Road.
- There were comments about the impact of buildings on wind and shading of the canal but it was accepted that the buildings were generally low and would not have a major impact.
- The residential and visitor moorings arrangements were welcomed.
- The linear space along the Mainline Canal was welcomed.
- There was some concern about congestion on the Loop Canal if it becomes popular and is used by canoeists. It was suggested it could become one way if this became an issue.



