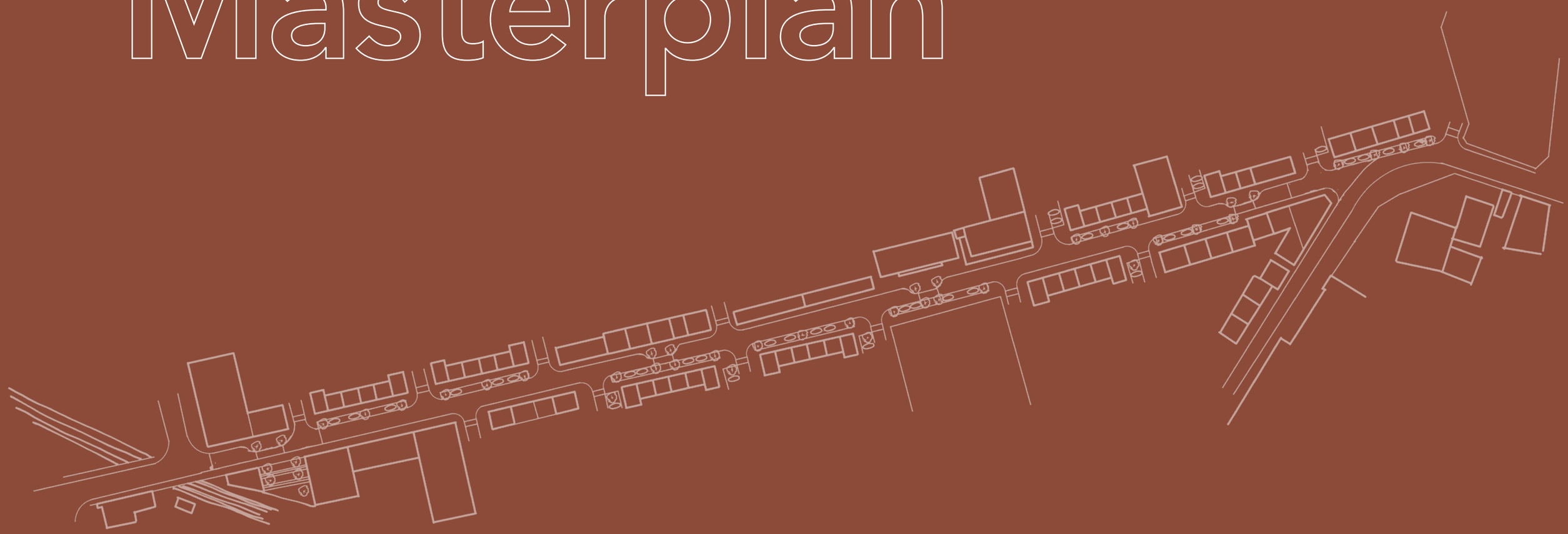
Sandwell
Metropolitan Borough Council

Rolfe Street Masterplan



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This document is to be read in conjunction with reports from the project team, including the Rolfe Street Heritage Assessment by Donald Insall, December 2022.

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Revision History

Revision	Date	By	Checked	Note
01	20.12.22	DS	LG	Draft Issue
02	10.01.23	PM	DS	Issue for SMBC Internal Consultation
03	24.01.23	DS	LG	2nd Issue for SMBC Internal Consultation
04	30.01.23	DS	LG	Issue for Public Consultation
05	26.04.23	DS	LG	Incorporation of consultation feedback
06	09.05.23	DS	LG	Minor amends to SMBC comments

Contents

1.0 Introduction

This masterplan has been produced by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council to set out a vision for the future of the Rolfe Street area of Smethwick, part of the Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor.

Building on the work of the Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework (2022), the masterplan seeks to provide a clear direction for the reinvention of the Rolfe Street area, giving strong guidance for future development.

The masterplan envisages a distinctive, well designed community being created in this well connected and attractive location. This will build on the nationally important history of the site, the success of recent development at Port Loop and Galton Locks, and the successful Towns Fund bid for enabling works at the Enterprise Centre.

A framework is provided for the key urban design principles that should be followed at Rolfe Street, having been consulted on with local stakeholders. A series of distinct Character Areas are identified to help further guide development.

A design code is provided establishing the detailed principles development should follow. This illustrates how current planning policy, locally adopted policy, and national and local good practice guidance can be combined with a respect for the history of the area to create a unique sense of place at Rolfe Street.

2.0 Context & History

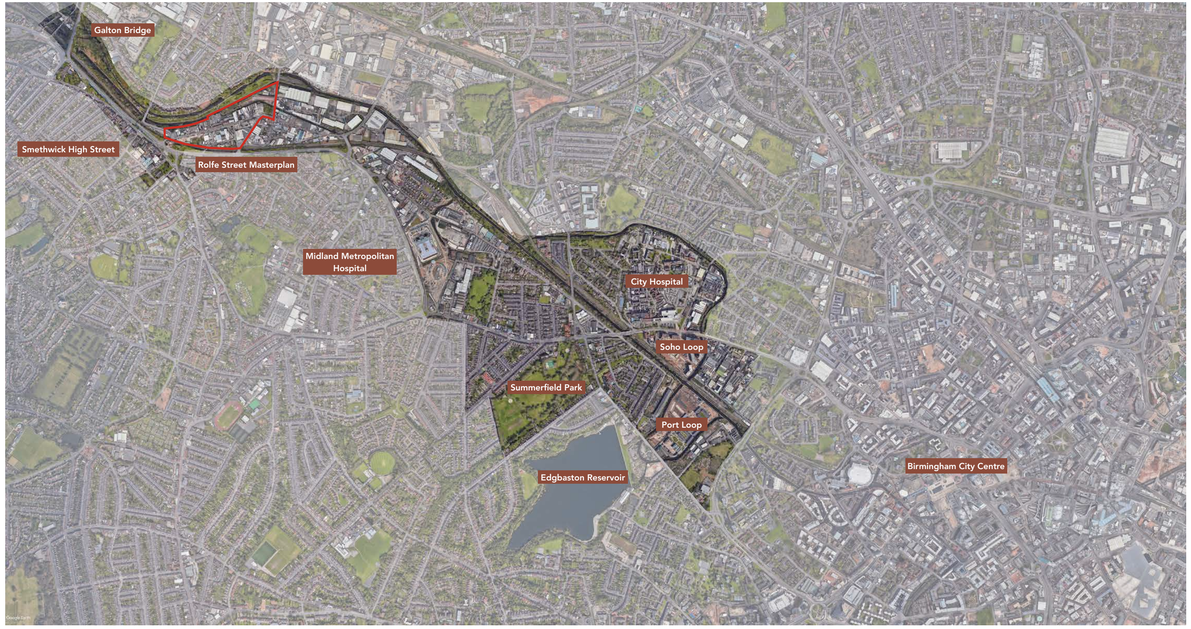
2.1 Location and Context

Rolfe Street is located at the western end of the Smethwick to Birmingham corridor. The corridor is Birmingham and Sandwell's canal district, the historic link between Birmingham and the Black Country and a cradle of the industrial revolution. Today the corridor is one of the most significant areas of brownfield urban renewal in Europe, with potential to deliver 4,000 new homes. Transformational change is already underway with new neighbourhoods at Port Loop and Soho Loop, and the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital nearing completion.

Rolfe Street is highlighted as one of the primary strategic sites in the **Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework** (February 2022), a collaboration between Sandwell and Birmingham Councils, the West Midlands Combined Authority, and others. The document is non-statutory in Sandwell but will be a material consideration in the determination of planning applications. The Rolfe Street Masterplan builds upon and sits alongside the Framework.

Rolfe Street is located adjacent to the vibrant Smethwick High Street, and has a well connected railway station on site with a 6 minute journey to Birmingham, which has seen recent investment including lift provision. It is 15 minutes walk from the new Midland Metropolitan Hospital, and one mile from the new Aquatics Centre delivered as part of the 2022 Commonwealth Games. The site itself is located largely within the Smethwick Galton Valley Conservation Area, and benefits from extensive heritage character, and adjacent green spaces.

Location within the West Midlands



Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor

2.2 Planning Policy

Rolfe Street was first allocated for residential led mixed use development in the **Smethwick Area Action Plan** (2008).

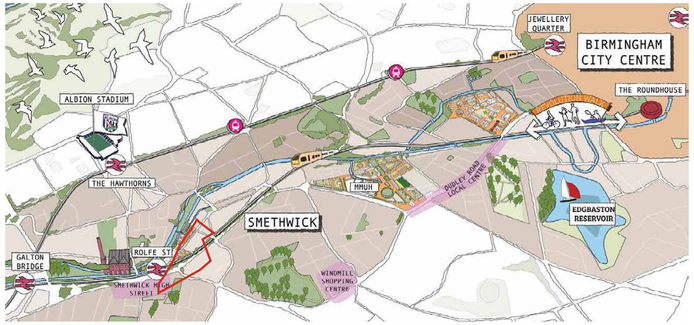
The Black Country Core Strategy (2011) sets out the spatial vision, objectives and strategy for future development in the Black Country up to 2026. It identifies regeneration corridors of which Oldbury-West Bromwich-Smethwick is one.

Sandwell Site Allocations and Delivery DPD (2012) adds further detail to the Core Strategy's regeneration corridors. The plan states that the focus for new housing within the next few years will be within the Smethwick area of the Oldbury-West Bromwich-Smethwick corridor. The DPD estimated a residential capacity of 400 units for the 8.6ha Rolfe Street site, retaining the allocation for residential development.

There has been little change in the area since that time. Applications have come forward for small scale residential development, but they have not led to delivery, despite the successful delivery of well received schemes on immediately adjacent sites such as Galton Locks and Crocketts Lane, which alongside extensive family housing, included conversion of a number of historic buildings into high quality apartments.

Due to the industrial nature of the area, piecemeal development for residential development is now not considered suitable, with a more comprehensive approach seen as the most efficient solution to delivering a high quality residential community. Fragmented ownerships make this difficult to deliver, hence the need for a strong Masterplan to guide delivery to form a cohesive development.

In the production of the Masterplan, consideration has been given to the **National Design Guide** (2019), **National Model Design Code** (2021), the **SMBC Residential Design Guide SPD** (2014), and the **West Midlands Design Charter** (2020)



Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework (extract)

Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework

Rolfe Street Masterplan Site in 2022

2.3 Public Transport and Active Travel

Rolfe Street is exceptionally well connected. From Smethwick Rolfe Street Railway Station, half hourly trains take 6 minutes to get to Birmingham New Street, and 20 minutes to Wolverhampton. The New Main Line canal offers an off road cycling link to Birmingham City Centre, there are high frequency bus connections to Dudley and Birmingham from Smethwick High Street. The Midland Metro's Handsworth Booth Street stop, The Hawthorns metro and railway station, and Smethwick Galton Bridge railway station are all around 15mins walk away.

Rolfe Street Station has already been improved including the provision of lift access. The station has been identified by Sandwell Council as a potential location for a Mobility Hub, following the model proposed by Transport for the West Midlands, integrating rail and bus with cycle storage, cycle hire and e-mobility, to provide a 'last mile' solution to the wider area.

Local cycling network improvements are planned, delivered through the Towns Fund, which will provide better connectivity, as illustrated adjacent. Other funding has been awarded for road/ cycle improvements within the wider corridor area (especially along Dudley Road linking to Sandwell).

Currently the phase 2 extension of the A457 cycleway is underway as part of the wider plans to extend the route to Birmingham. The Phase 2 cycleway extension runs along the A457 Tollhouse Way and Soho Way along the southern site boundary providing opportunities for active mobility routes within the Rolfe Street area to connect with this infrastructure investment.

2.4 Sustainability and Resources

In summer 2019 the West Midlands Combined Authority set a target of the region becoming net zero carbon by 2041. Sandwell Council's Climate Change Strategy 2020–2041 sets out Sandwell's plan for achieving the 2041 target. Together, the public transport and active travel opportunities at Rolfe Street help with the path to Net Zero.

Residential emissions are also cited as a key target for improvement. Solutions such as consideration of orientation and and shading, shared heat pumps and Passivhaus principles should be brought forward at Rolfe Street, to meet the Government's net zero homes strategy.

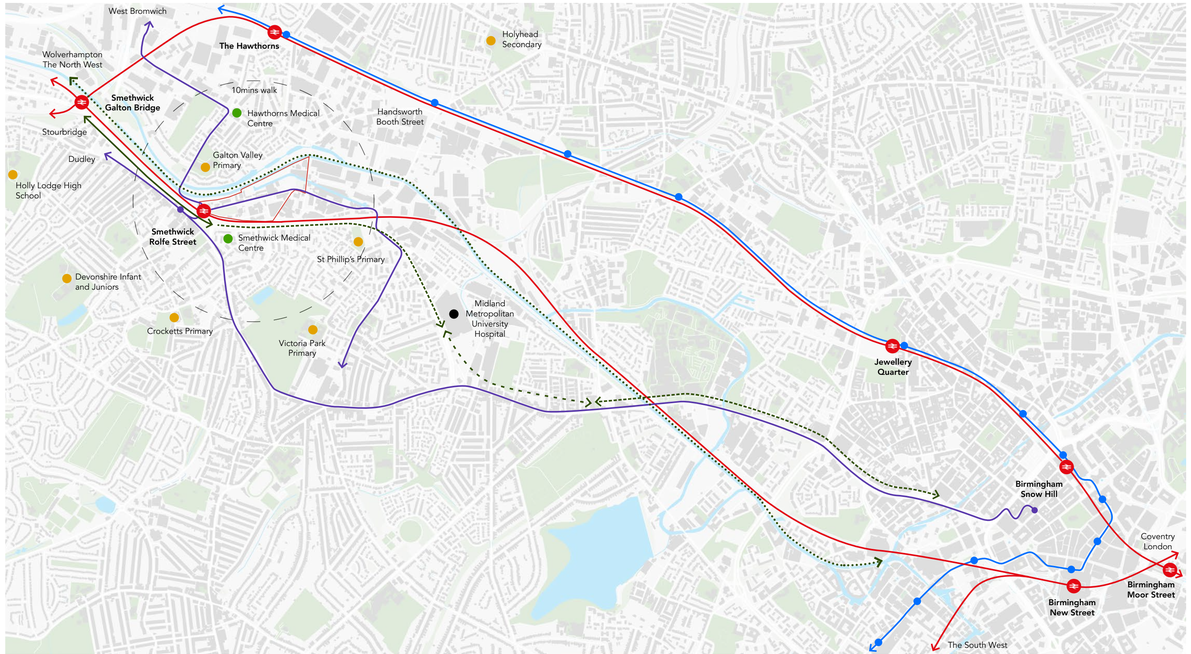
As at Port Loop in Birmingham, there is an opportunity to enhance sustainability and achieve faster delivery at Rolfe Street by using Modern Methods of Construction (MMC). In addition, the re use of existing buildings will reduce embodied carbon.

Delivering net biodiversity gain, local employment opportunities, improved accessibility and affordable homes of a range of tenures will be an important part of the sustainability story at Rolfe Street.

Integrated cycle storage – Triangle, Swindon

Public Transport, Active Travel and Public Services

- Railway
- Midland Metro
- Bus Route
- National cycle route (off road)
- Existing segregated cycle route
- Planned cycle provision – route defined / not defined
- School
- Hospital
- GP Surgery



Public transport, active travel and public services

2.5 Site History

The history of the Rolfe Street area of Smethwick is tied closely to the construction of the Birmingham Old Main Line canal in 1768–69, of which Rolfe Street is the summit. Formerly fields and scattered farms, industry grew alongside the canal.

The Old Main Line's summit quickly became congested and suffered from a lack of water. The Smethwick Engine and associated Engine Arm was constructed over an earlier feeder in the 1790s to alleviate this, but it was insufficient, leading to the construction of the low level, arrow straight New Main Line by Thomas Telford in 1829–30. The Engine Aqueduct was constructed to carry the Engine Arm over the New Main Line.

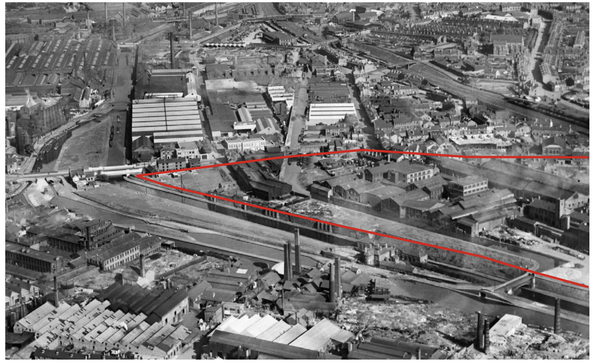
Together with the later railway, these canals, centred on the Aqueduct, form one of the UK's most important records of the rapid technological development in transport infrastructure in the 18th and 19th centuries, spurred by the industrial revolution in the Black Country.

The cutting of the New Main Line galvanised development of the masterplan area which rapidly industrialised, including the construction of the Crown Forge on the Enterprise Centre site. Residential development followed to the south, serving workers in industry, which became known as the New Village. This included commercial buildings on Rolfe Street and Smethwick High Street, and Holy Trinity Church. Rolfe Street became the centre of Smethwick, including a theatre and the public baths, moved to the Black Country Living Museum in the 1980s.

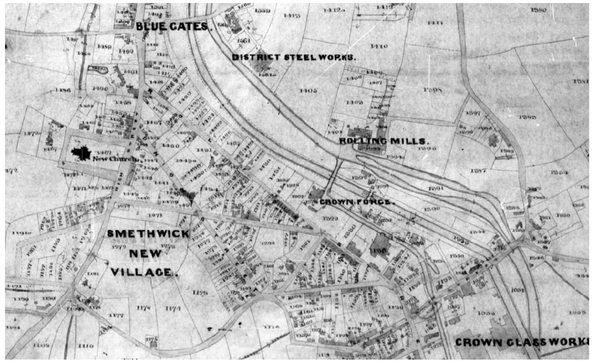
Construction of the railway led to the decline of Rolfe Street as a high street in favour of Smethwick High Street, and the decline of heavy industry alongside the canal. Industrial sites were sold to the public sector, including the former Crown Forge which became a yard for the Smethwick Corporation in the 1890s, the Fire Station in 1910, and Rolfe House, built for housing firemen, in 1933.

By the late 1930s the housing to the south of the site began to be replaced by industry, with the Drop Forge being constructed between Hill Street, Rolfe Street and New Street. This was followed in the 1960s by the demolition of the remaining homes to the west of Hill Street, the re alignment of Cross Street into Buttress Way, and construction of light industrial premises. Since then, there has been little development within the masterplan area.

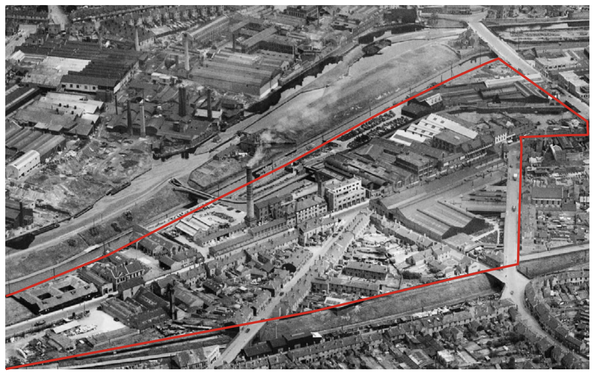
The site history is explored in more detail in the **Rolfe Street Heritage Assessment by Donald Insall** (December 2022)



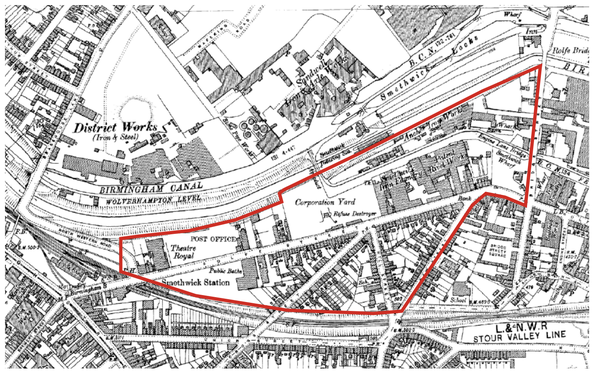
Aerial photograph of masterplan area, 1934



1839 Tithe Map – presence of Crown Forge



Aerial photograph of masterplan area, 1946



1904 Ordnance Survey Map – Industrialisation, Construction of Corporation Yard, Residential Development

2.6 Heritage Significance

Rolfe Street includes a large number of buildings and structures of significance, these sit primarily within the Smethwick Summit, Galton Valley Conservation Area. Together, they are essential components in the story of the area's role in the industrial revolution.

The most important of these is the Grade II* listed Engine Arm Aqueduct, which is an important asset in the history of the development of civil engineering and transportation at the beginning of the 19th century. The retaining wall to the former Corporation Yard, Grade II listed, is an early example of reinforced concrete construction at the beginning of the 20th century.

Assets previously recommended for local listing include elements of the former Corporation Yard, including the warehouse Block 300, and the warehouse frontages to south side of the Engine Arm. These are important due their reflection of the canal's industrial history.

There is a new local list being developed by Sandwell and the masterplan has taken into account the emerging list in the approach taken. Reference has also been made to the **Smethwick Summit, Galton Valley Conservation Area Appraisal** (2003)

Engine Arm Aqueduct from the New Main Line (Grade II* listed, SM)

Block 300, Corporation Yard (Enterprise Centre)

Retaining wall to the Corporation Yard along the New Main Line (Grade II listed)

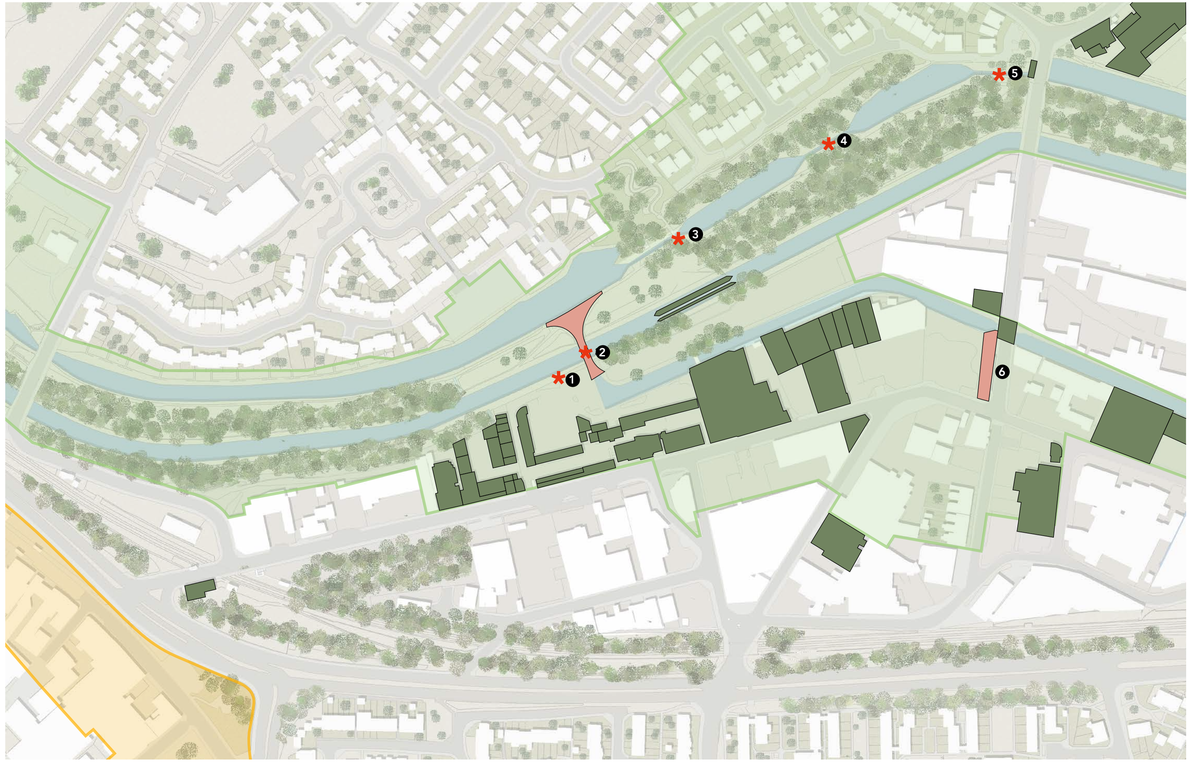
Warehouse frontages to the Engine Arm

Heritage Designations

- Smethwick Summit, Galton Valley Conservation Area
- Smethwick High Street Conservation Area
- Scheduled Monument
- Listed building or structure
- Previously recommended for local listing from the Audit of Heritage Assets within 'Smethwick Summit Galton Valley, Smethwick, Conservation Area Appraisal' (Upson, Kirkham, Cox and Potter 2002)

Heritage Assets

1. Retaining Wall to Corporation Yard
2. Engine Arm Aqueduct
3. Top Lock
4. Middle Lock
5. Bottom Lock
6. Smethwick Engine



Heritage Designations

2.7 Heritage Characterisation

A series of heritage character areas have been identified. These have informed this masterplan's character areas. They include:

- **Historic High Street**: a cluster of civic and public service buildings reflecting the former status of Rolfe Street as a high street
- **Eroded High Street**: where buildings contributing to the high street character have been lost
- **Industrial Backlands**: the area around Buttress Way with detracting character
- **Canalside Industrial**: area with strong connections to the canal
- **Canals**: the historic canal infrastructure, now a green corridor

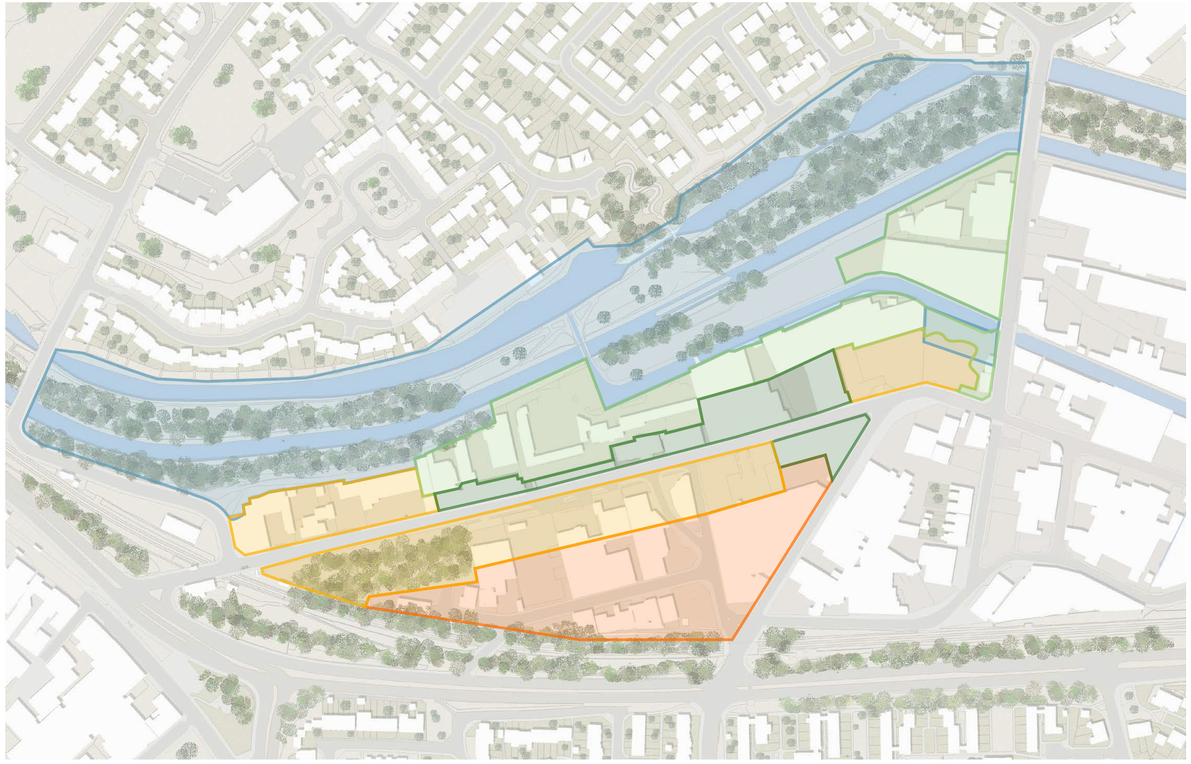
These character areas are explored in more detail in the Rolfe Street Heritage Assessment by Donald Insall, December 2022. This document, and the character areas adjacent, have informed the approach to retention, building form and materiality illustrated in the masterplan.

Former Fire Station on Rolfe Street

67 and 68 Rolfe Street

16 Rolfe Street

Commercial building frontages to Bridge Street



Heritage Character

2.8 Constraints & Opportunities

Primary constraints at Rolfe Street are the busy and narrow Rolfe Street and New Street bisecting the site, the railway line, and changes in level of about 1–2 storeys in a number of locations. The existing industrial nature of the site presents an environment unsuitable for a high quality residential community, suffering from extensive HGV movements and noise pollution. There is much informal and fly parking including across the full width of pavements making streets feel hostile and inaccessible.

Alongside the railway line, the busy Tollhouse Way to the south of the site acts as a barrier to pedestrian movement to the existing community and to Smethwick High Street, with a lack of formal crossing points. The site would benefit from a cycle friendly crossing between the Rolfe Street and New Street junctions with the A457, ideally located at Cross Street.

Pedestrian links to the canals and into the communities to the north are poor, as there is no access across the aqueduct from the site except via a convoluted route alongside the Engine Peninsula. However, there is opportunity to open up a link through the Enterprise Centre onto the west towpath of the Aqueduct through a former gateway, and also to link with the communities and park to the south across Tollhouse Way with improved crossings.

The canal and heritage assets make a positive contribution, lending a strong sense of place and a green corridor for recreation. The proximity of Smethwick High Street, brand new segregated cycle routes, and the on site railway station are significant opportunities.

Constraints

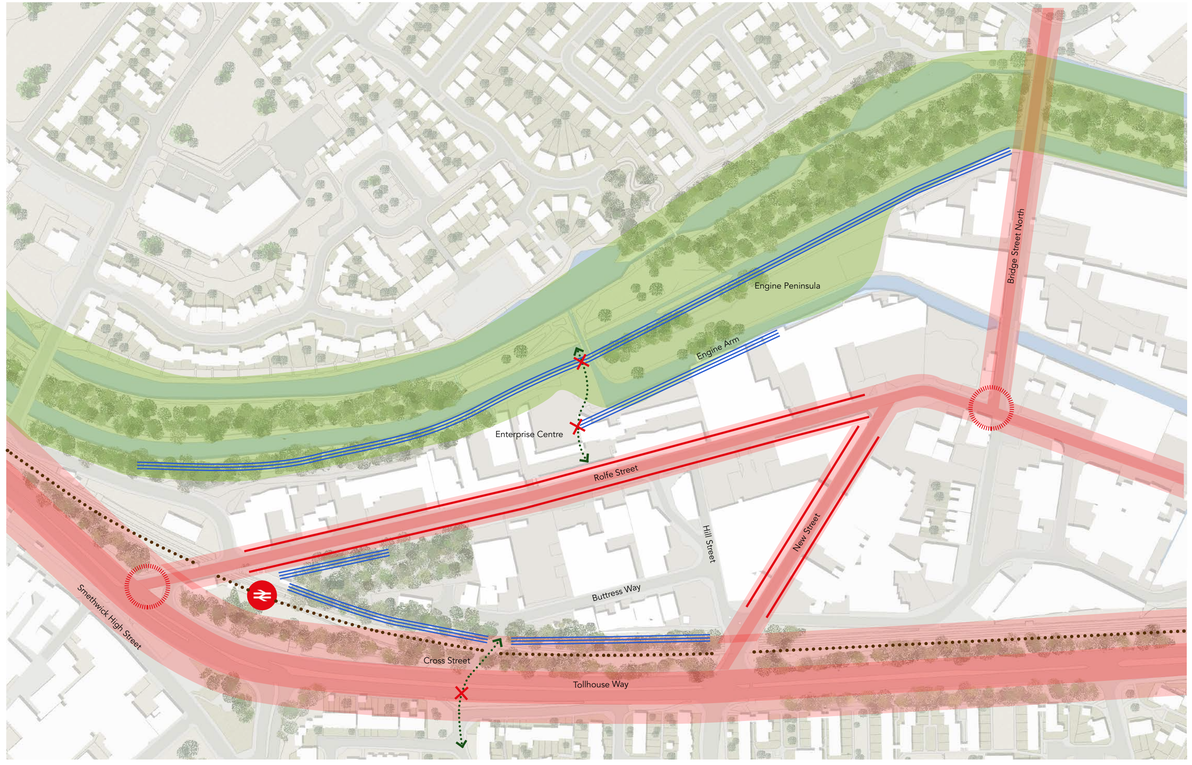
- Heavy traffic, noise and barrier to pedestrian movement
- Existing crossing without pedestrian sequence
- Narrow street with informal parking
- No pedestrian access
- Significant level change
- Railway line

Opportunities

- Canal as green corridor
- Heritage assets
- Station with excellent access to Birmingham New Street (6min) and other destinations

Traffic and informal parking along Rolfe Street

The New Main Line from the Engine Arm Aqueduct



Constraints and Opportunities

3.0 Vision & Place

3.1 Identity

The Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework sets out the principles the Council wish to build upon at Rolfe Street:

- Healthy Centres
- A New Hospital as an anchor institution
- Green Corridor
- An active travel exemplar
- Green New Neighbourhoods
- Healthy Sense of Place

Our vision is for Rolfe Street to be an aspirational place where people want to live, a place that has a unique character which fosters a strong sense of community. This will be achieved through maximising the nationally significant history of the site, a history that connects Rolfe Street to the critical role the Black Country played in the industrial revolution. It will be underpinned by high quality architecture, streets and open spaces for all, and strong links to the existing communities in Smethwick.

Our Vision for Rolfe Street

A place that's Smethwick: an exemplar for the past and future of the Black Country

A historic place: heritage at the heart of a new community

An aspirational place: high quality family homes for all

A connected place: a zero carbon mobility hub, heart of a cycling network, link to MMU Hospital

A green place: new public spaces for a new community, the canal as a green lung, biodiversity net gain

Vision – a new community, anchored by heritage

3.2 A Heritage Armature

Historic buildings are arranged primarily along the north side of Rolfe Street, forming an armature that gives a very strong sense of place, and a link back to the historic high street. Retaining and refurbishing these buildings, alongside new development that maintains the historic building line, will enhance that sense of place and create the primary identity for Rolfe Street. Roof forms, materiality and scale of new development should reflect that of the retained buildings, with a strong and consistent use of red stock brick and blue brick, and highly varied roof forms and heights.

3.3 Exemplar Developments

Particular recent exemplar developments include Port Loop in Birmingham, and Kelham in Sheffield. Both have regenerated former canalside industrial sites into new, distinctive communities, incorporating family housing, with a strong community focus including arts and making and both are located some distance from their respective city centres.

At Kelham in particular numerous historic buildings have been refurbished, and there is a variety of materiality and typologies, adding to the overall sense of place.

Heritage armature along Rolfe Street

A key site in the history of the industrial revolution

Community at Port Loop, Smethwick's history of making

High quality, canalside family homes: Port Loop, Birmingham

Heritage at the heart of a new community – Kelham, Sheffield

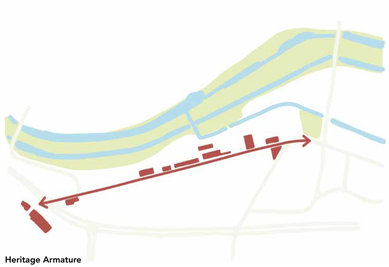
4.0 Urban Design Framework

4.1 Key Moves

Building on the retained heritage armature, Rolfe Street should remain the primary axis, providing principal movement through the site and linking to the station, Smethwick High Street and the Midland Metropolitan University Hospital. Either side of Rolfe Street new connections should be made to the canals, and across Tollhouse Way, retaining existing street alignments.

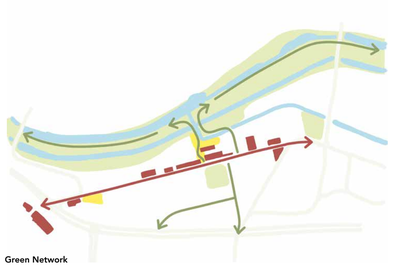
New public open spaces should be provided at key nodes, including at the Engine, Engine Peninsula, and at the heart of the site alongside the Fire Station and Rolfe House. Residential development should follow a clear grid, building on the existing primary streets, and providing links through to New Street and Rolfe Street.

This broad approach and the use of a strong residential grid will echo the historic layout of the residential and industrial uses at Rolfe Street and help provide a link to the past.



Heritage Armature

Rolfe Street, the primary axis, provides a strong sense of place



Green Network

A network of squares, parks and green streets, connecting to the canal and Tollhouse Way.

Flexible Grid

A regular grid of residential streets, reflecting historic alignments

Illustrative masterplan

4.2 Open Space, Public Realm and Nature

Open space and public realm will be essential to creating a high quality community at Rolfe Street. A new square would provide a welcome at Rolfe Street Station, with enhancements made to the connection to Smethwick High Street. The key asset of the Engine Aqueduct should be at the heart of another principal public space, with a quieter character, anchoring the former Corporation Yard.

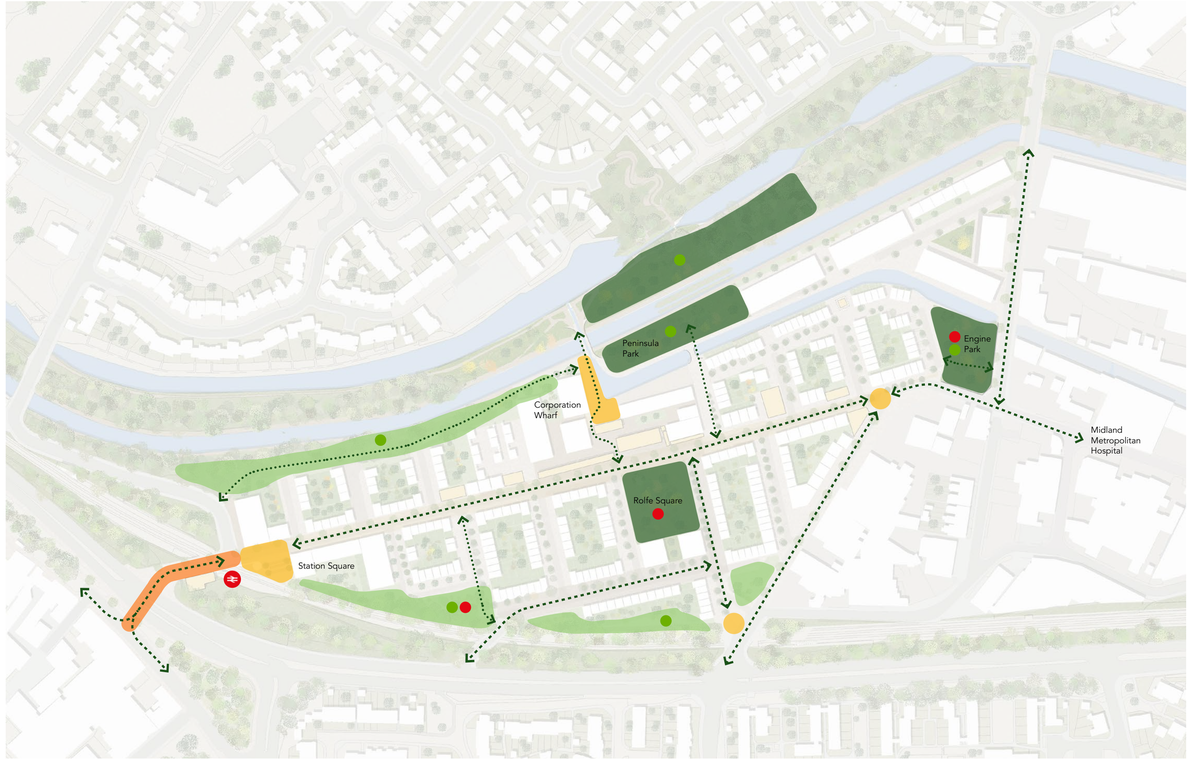
New green spaces should take advantage of the existing landscape at the Smethwick Engine and the nose of the Engine Peninsula, both of which would be less suitable for development due to form and heritage value. In addition, it will be important to provide a new public open space at the heart of the site, Rolfe Square, creating a sense of identity and a formal space for play. The existing inaccessible green space alongside the site of the Smethwick Engine should become Engine Park, enclosed by the historic walls of the Engine site.

Improving accessibility to the canal would also allow greater use of the canal for recreation, with opportunity to gain access to the water for water-based activities such as kayaking and paddle boarding on the quiet Engine Arm, in cooperation with the Canal and Rivers Trust.

Open spaces should also contribute to managing water run off as part of a sustainable urban drainage system. This should be linked to enhanced biodiversity and a broad range of habitat creation.

The site's different green spaces can have different roles in delivering biodiversity net gain and ecological permeability. Planting of native trees will be encouraged as will providing mitigation to any loss of habitat within currently vacant land and historic buildings. Measures such as bird boxes, bat boxes and bricks, bee bricks and hedgehog highways are simple improvements that will be supported in new development. Spaces for food growing and shared communal gardens, as at Port Loop, are encouraged.

Public space and community, Port Loop



Open space, public realm, nature and play

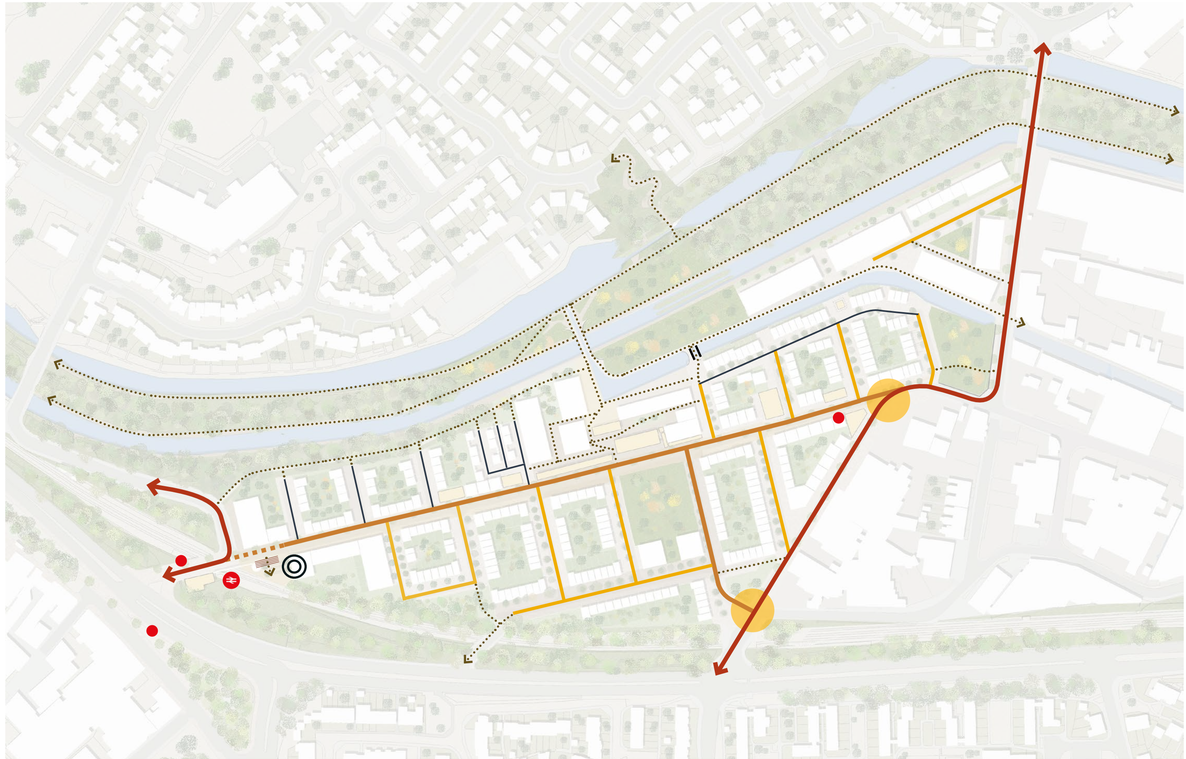
4.3 Street Hierarchy & Movement

A strong street hierarchy will provide legibility and assist in overcoming the challenge of the high vehicular movement across the site, creating quieter residential streets. Key to this is the transformation of Rolfe Street into a lower traffic environment with traffic encouraged to use New Street instead. This could be via street treatment and changes to junctions, or more defined restrictions to create gateway features at either end of Rolfe Street. These would maintain safe and unobstructed access for buses, pedestrians and cyclists, but clearly signal the change in character of Rolfe Street to potential through traffic.

Hill Street and Buttress Way should be transformed into Landscape Streets defining a residential grid to the south of the site. Minor residential streets should lead north and south off Rolfe Street. In combination, this will provide short, legible, deliverable and low traffic residential streets suitable for family housing. This would further enable the uptake of active mobility through walking and cycling with easy linkages to the rail station and the Phase 2 cycleway on the A457 Soho Way via Cross Street.

Streets can act as play spaces and encourage social interaction by careful street design, with pedestrians taking priority over cars. Streets and paths should be well overlooked by homes, providing natural surveillance, including for example along canal frontages.

High quality street environment – Abode, Great Knighton, Cambridge



Street hierarchy and movement

4.4 Height, Density & Typology

Viability and local demand indicate a requirement for a mixture of family homes and apartments at Rolfe Street. A starting point for density should be policy HOU2 of the Black Country Core Strategy, which indicates up to 60 dwellings per hectare in accessible locations. This is in line with the delivery of Port Loop in Birmingham, with family homes in a townhouse format being successfully delivered at 65 dwellings per hectare.

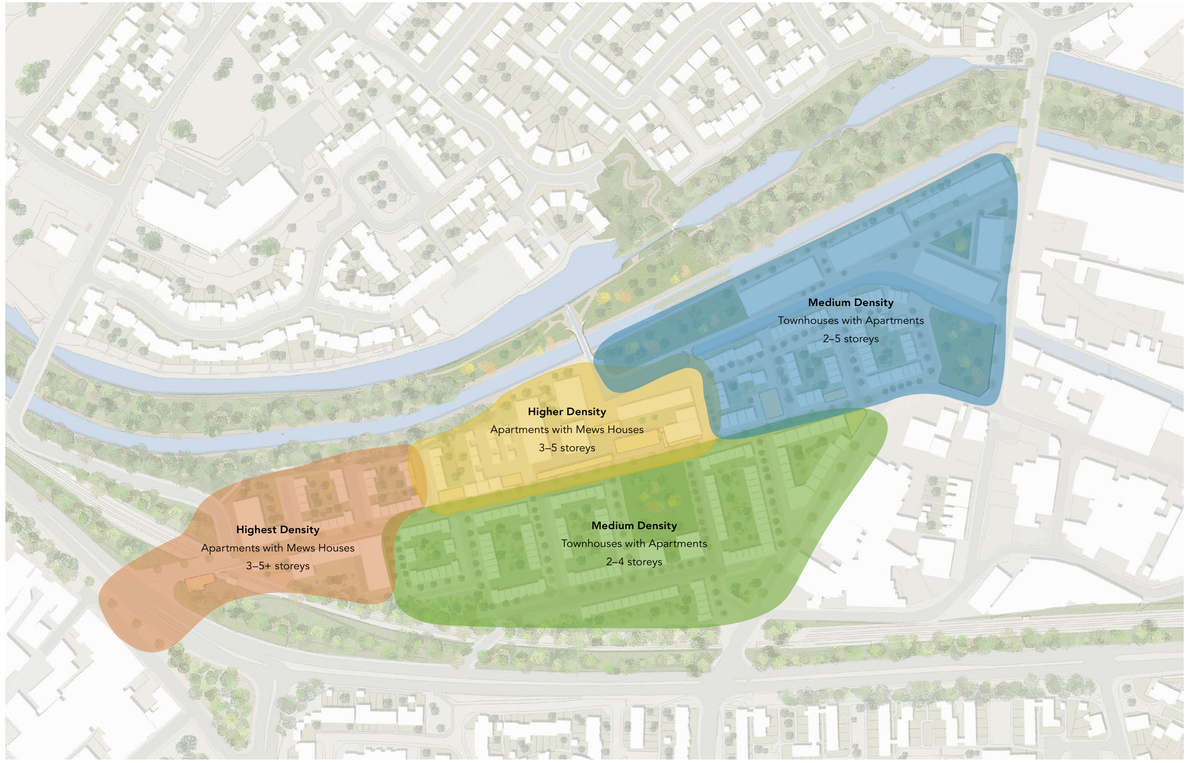
Apartments will typically be at a higher density, and this is especially appropriate adjacent to Rolfe Street Station which has excellent connections to areas of employment. Similarly, development next to the canal, especially at the Enterprise Centre (Corporation Yard) can be at a higher density to align to the form and scale of the retained historic buildings, for example Block 300.

Overall, given the excellent public transport connections at Rolfe Street, a density in excess 60 dwellings per hectare may be appropriate, subject to the careful design of new homes. Maximum heights should respect the existing buildings on site, e.g. the four to five storey Fire Station. More height may be appropriate adjacent to Rolfe Street Station and at other locations across the site, subject to design and viability.

In terms of typology mix, the indicative masterplan layout illustrated in this document reflects the viability work undertaken so far by Sandwell MBC when drafting the Smethwick to Birmingham Corridor Framework, which showed a strong preference for family housing. However a range of typology mixes including greater numbers of apartments would also be possible, as illustrated by the sketches adjacent.

A proving layout has been produced to sit alongside the masterplan, demonstrating that around 600 homes can be delivered on the site at a split of around 45% apartments and 55% houses.

Two approaches to typology that were tested – higher density, apartment led approach (top) or urban house led (bottom)



Indicative height, density and typology strategy

5.0 Character and Design

5.1 Character Areas and Design Coding

To guide development and create a sense of place, four character areas have been defined. Each of these is described in detail, with strategies proposed for development that will, in combination, create a high quality residential community, with strong links to Rolfe Street's history.

For each character area, detailed principles are established for development should follow. In addition, specific guidance is given on Rolfe Street, New Street, residential streets and parking generally, and side wide form, materiality and detailing.

This masterplan document forms a Design Code for Rolfe Street aligned to the **National Model Design Code** (2022). The Design Code illustrates how current planning policy, locally adopted policy, and national and local good practice guidance, including Sandwell Council's **Residential Design Guide** (2014), can be combined with a respect for the history of the area to create a unique sense of place at Rolfe Street.

The illustrative material is drawn to inspire, utilising the opportunities and constraints of the site to their full advantage. In some places the material does not fully adhere to the guidance set out within the Sandwell MBC Residential Design Guide SPD. Where this occurs, the principles shown within this document have taken inspiration from best practice projects, to demonstrate how the appropriate densities on the site could be achieved.

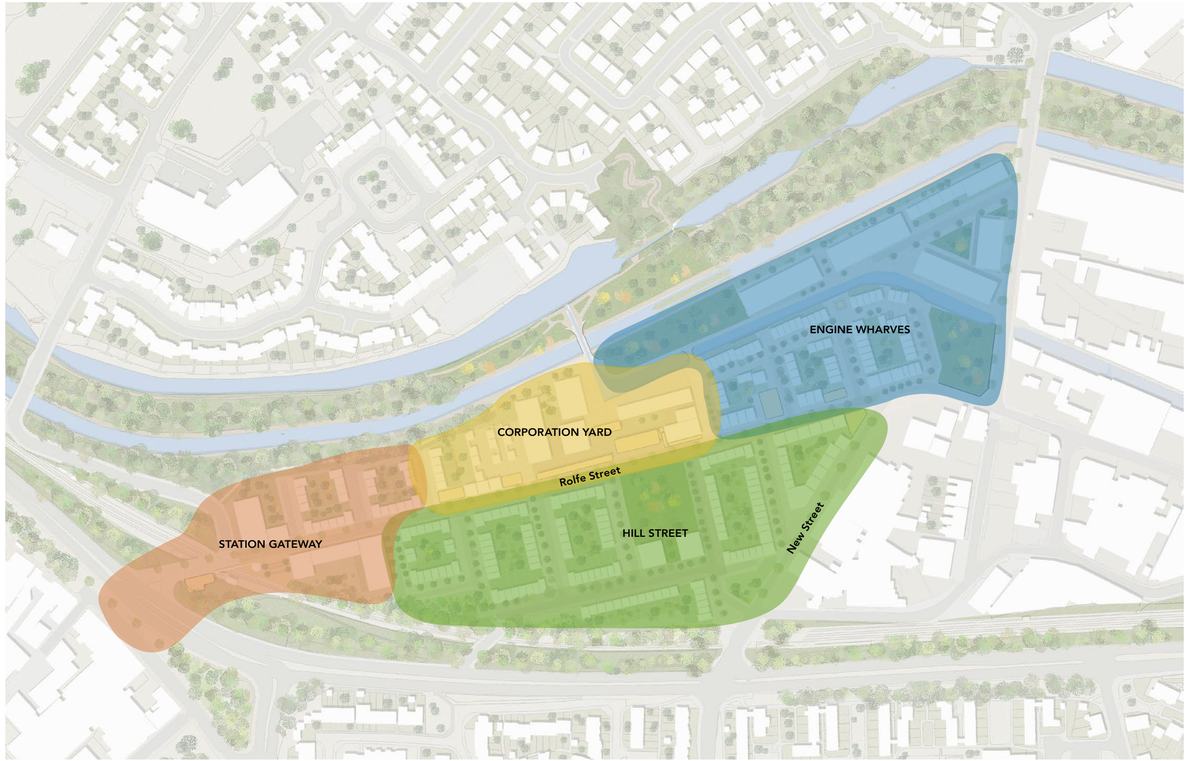
The aim of the Residential Design Guide Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) is to provide clear design guidance for achieving residential development quality within the Borough so that attractive, high-quality, sustainable living environments are created. Proposals should aim to achieve these principles however where proposals do not fully comply with the guidance it should be clearly evidenced how the policy has been mitigated and what the positive implications of doing so are. Development proposals that meet the spirit of the guidance will be received positively.

Corporation Yard

Hill Street

Station Gateway

Engine Wharves



Character Areas

5.2 Station Gateway

Rolfe Street Station will be the primary gateway to the new community at Rolfe Street, providing connectivity across the West Midlands by rail and bus. The former Baths Site is key, owned by Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council and providing a direct link to the station. The site is suitable for a higher density development of apartments in this highly accessible location, acting as a gateway for the new community at Rolfe Street. This is especially appropriate given the level change on site along the length of Rolfe Street.

On the Baths site, a Mobility Hub could be provided, following the model proposed by Transport for the West Midlands, integrating rail and bus with cycle storage, cycle hire and e-mobility, to provide a 'last mile' solution. This is a key part of the West Midlands' Combined Authority's WM 2041 Plan, setting a pathway to Net Zero for the West Midlands. The mobility hub is a key element of the low car aspirations for the site as this will provide private bike storage for residents who cycle from home and take onward journeys by train. It could also provide cycle hire, car club and e-mobility hire options for people visiting or working in the area who are arriving by train or by bus.

A welcoming area of public realm, Station Square, should be provided to tie together the Baths Site, Mobility Hub and Rolfe Street, linking across to Smethwick High Street through crossing and pavement enhancements.

This also functions as a gateway feature at the western end of Rolfe Street, clearly signalling the change in character of Rolfe Street as primarily a local access and bus route.

To the north and east, a transition to family homes is possible. Homes along the canal should be dual aspect, taking advantage of high level views and providing activation onto a pathway facing the canal.

Illustrative Masterplan – Station Gateway

Station Square and the former Baths Site

Rolfe Street station building

Concept for the TfWM Hub, West Midlands Combined Authority

Mews Streets form a higher density transition to family housing

Challenging pedestrian environment at Rolfe Street Station

5.3 Corporation Yard – Vision

At the heart of the Rolfe Street masterplan, the Enterprise Centre should be transformed into a new community, Corporation Yard. Enabling works are soon to start on this site, as part of Sandwell's Towns Fund programme.

Celebrating the importance of the site in the history of the industrial revolution, there is opportunity for higher density mix of apartments, duplexes and mews houses. Built form should respect the height, scale and materiality of the retained buildings from the former Corporation Yard including Block 300, which is four storeys, as documented in the Rolfe Street Heritage Assessment by Donald Insall. Streets and spaces should be tight and urban, reflecting the former industrial use of the site and the existing residential buildings on Rolfe Street.

The existing bricked up gateway onto the western side of the Aqueduct should be restored, providing direct access to the Old and New Main Lines, tying Rolfe Street into the green corridor of the Canal, and linking to existing communities to the North. The listed reinforced concrete wall to the Yard should be preserved and celebrated as part of the Yard's landscape strategy.

The opportunities created by the changes in level across the site should be maximised including potential for undercroft parking and high level views across the canal, whilst providing an accessible route to canal level and communities beyond, potentially by utilising the existing ramped approach.

The relationship with the canal provides opportunities for water based activities such as paddle boarding on the quiet engine arm, which could be encouraged through the provision of pontoons, and there is potential for a new bridge to better connect the engine peninsula.

The Canal and Rivers Trust should be consulted on any proposals relating to the canalside at pre-application stage.

Illustrative Masterplan – Corporation Yard

A potential redeveloped Corporation Yard from the Old Main Line

Corporation Yard – Vision

5.4 Corporation Yard – Heritage Retention

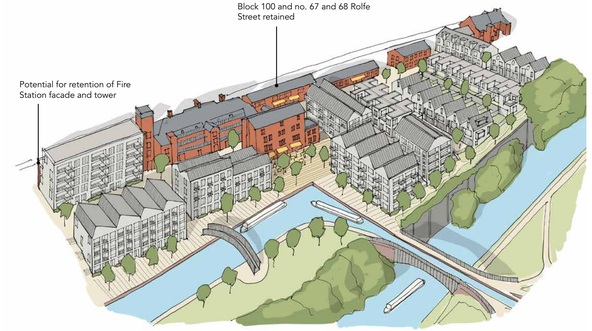
Key to the success of Corporation Yard is the extent of retention. Maximising the number of retained buildings will provide a stronger sense of place. However, it is important that any retained buildings find a viable and sustainable use, potential uses include residential conversion, workspace, business start-up/incubation and maker space. Further surveys and analysis are required to identify viable uses.

Taking into account the heritage significance of each building, and the spatial potential and cost of conversion, two bookend scenarios are suggested for retention, with a sliding scale possible between. In the first, the most high to medium significance buildings are retained, this is preferred. A second option sees only Rolfe House and Block 300 retained, with potential for the demolition of Block 300 if re-use is not viable. All buildings are in a conservation area, so planning consent for demolition is required.

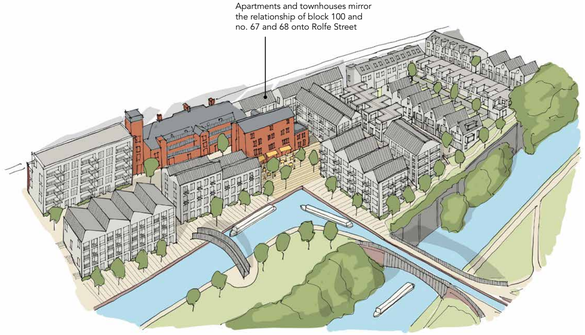
Conversion of Block 300 to non residential use should be considered. Conversion of Block 100 to community, maker space or start-up use should also be considered, as despite being of lower significance, it adds considerable sense of place to the site and Rolfe Street generally, as illustrated.

The benefits of retention of the Rolfe Street Elevation: historic streetscape and strong sense of place

Potential for integration of maker spaces into block 100



Retention Option 1 – Blocks 100, 300, 67–68 Rolfe Street and Rolfe House



Retention Option 2 – Block 300 and Rolfe House only

Corporation Yard – Heritage Significance (Insalls, November 2022)

Existing elevation of no 67 and 68 and Block 100 to Rolfe Street

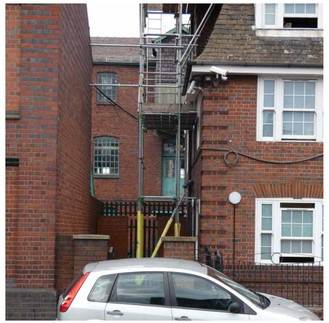
5.5 Corporation Yard – Block 300

Block 300 is of prime importance to the sense of place at Rolfe Street, tying the potential future residential community back into the canal based history of the site. The building also provides an end stop to the canal as it leaves the Engine Arm Aqueduct. Block 300 should therefore be the highest priority for retention in any development at Corporation Yard.

Residential conversion is spatially possible, including into up to 8 apartments. Viability and detailed design of the conversion should be assessed as part of any detailed application for the site. Conversion to community, workspace and maker space would also be possible, if viable, and this would be especially appropriate at ground floor level, alongside uses related to the canal and linking to the work of the Canal and Rivers Trust, such as watersports use or a cafe, or local museum use.

Block 300 – residential conversion options

Potential for Block 300 to be converted to residential, within a new Fire Station Courtyard



Glimpsed view of Block 300 from Rolfe Street

Block 300 at the centre of Corporation Yard, showing alternative approach to architecture

Desire line opened up from Rolfe St toward Block 300

5.6 Corporation Yard – Layout

Proving for logical movement from Rolfe Street through to the Aqueduct towpath will be key to the design of a successful development layout at Corporation Yard, alongside heritage retention where appropriate. The changes in level present a challenge and an opportunity.

A potential approach is to use the change in level to provide undercroft parking, which will allow a much higher density to be achieved above, reflective of the density and building forms of the former yard. This parking should be screened from the canal, preferably with duplex apartments facing onto the canal and into a podium on the upper level.

Duplex apartments would allow direct access onto the canal and activate ground floor frontages. Where housing is proposed, consideration should be given to the introduction of special typologies reflecting the tighter grain of the former yard, such as mews houses.

Gating Corporation Yard will be discouraged in order to deliver enhanced local connectivity over the Engine Arm Aqueduct.

Corporation Yard – Potential Lower Ground Floor Plan

Corporation Yard – Waterside View

Corporation Yard – Potential Upper Ground Floor Plan

5.7 Hill Street

The area around Hill Street was formerly residential, with tight streets providing housing for local industrial employers. At the heart of the masterplan, Hill Street should become a high quality residential community, around central public open space. A townhouse led approach, as at Port Loop, would provide the density needed to make a community on the site viable and not feel isolated.

High quality architecture and streetscape is essential to successful residential delivery. As demonstrated at Port Loop, Kelham in Sheffield and Salford Central, a design led approach can deliver an aspirational place that the community are proud of, a place where people really want to live.

Materiality and form should draw upon the historic architecture, whilst feeling completely new. Streets should make use of shared space principles and incorporate trees, landscape, and high quality materials throughout, with parking carefully managed. Streets should reflect the alignments of the past, re establishing what has been lost. The new public open space at Rolfe Square should be delivered in a way that takes into account any delivery of consented development at the junction of Rolfe Street and Hill Street (DC/22/66575).

Alternative arrangement of Rolfe Square allowing for consented scheme

Hill Street and Rolfe Square – illustrative masterplan

Hill Street – high quality family streets, parking carefully managed, heritage celebrated

Materiality – Rolfe Street

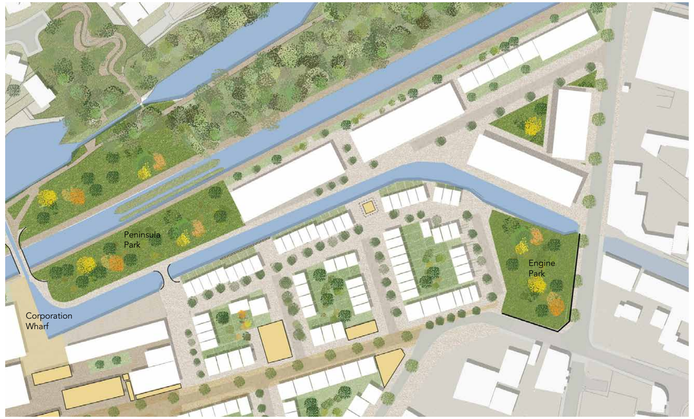
High quality family homes – Salford Central, Port Loop

High quality family homes and streetscape – Dujardin Mews, Enfield

5.8 Engine Wharves

Either side of the Engine Arm, a new community will have a close relationship with the canal. The existing elevations of warehouses along the south side of the canal have been identified as having high heritage significance. There is potential to retain these elevations within any development, and to maintain the relationship with the water on the south side of the canal in any new development, by using bespoke house types. Historic canal features such as the towpath bridge on the Engine Peninsula should be retained. Rear garden walls should be low, as at Port Loop, to maintain a direct connection to the canal.

The Engine Peninsula provides a challenge to development due to a long thin site area. Apartment development is possible and would reflect the historic form. Alternatively, residential development of high quality townhouses, relating to the canal, would provide much needed family homes.



Engine Wharves – illustrative masterplan

Existing warehouse elevations onto the Engine Arm

Existing canalfront relationship onto Engine Arm, including bridge

Engine Wharves – vision

Existing water tower

Homes with a strong canal relationship – Port Loop

Localised heritage retention – Nordhavn, Copenhagen

5.9 Rolfe Street

Rolfe Street varies in width between 13m and 11m, and especially at the eastern end, is narrow. There is much informal and fly parking including across the full width of pavements making streets feel hostile and inaccessible, also inhibiting pedestrian access to bus stops. The welcome at Rolfe Street Station is underwhelming.

In order to provide an environment suitable for a new residential community, the transport character and function of Rolfe Street needs to transition to one which creates a human oriented environment where pedestrians, cyclists and buses take priority. Potential solutions are illustrated adjacent.

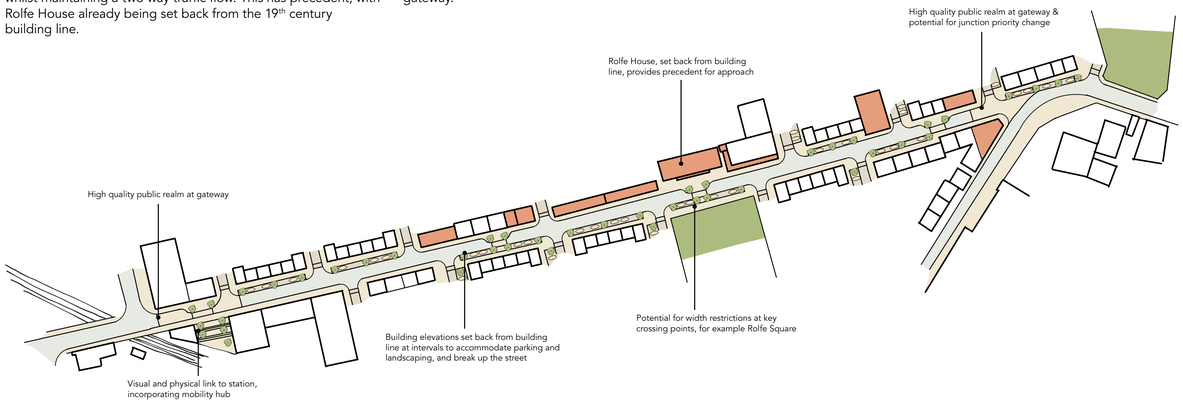
By setting some new development back from the existing building line, parking and landscaping can be provided within Rolfe Street whilst maintaining a two way traffic flow. This has precedent, with Rolfe House already being set back from the 19th century building line.

In addition, carefully landscaped width restrictions and shared surfaces would slow traffic, deter unnecessary through traffic, and encourage movement via other streets such as New Street, providing an environment of high quality for residents.

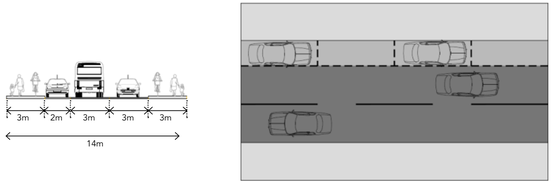
Key to achieving this would be to provide gateway features at ether end of Rolfe Street which would incorporate alternative road surface treatment and high quality public realm enhancements to clearly signal a change in street character and function.

At the eastern end of Rolfe Street this would include edge treatment to encourage pass by traffic flow onto New Street instead of Rolfe Street. At the western end of Rolfe Street the Station/Bath site and mobility hub would form the eastern gateway.

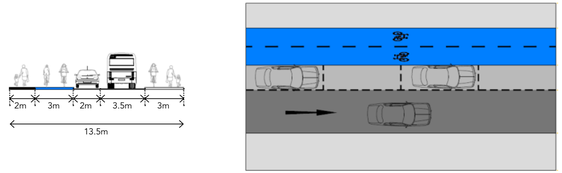
The Strategic Transport Assessment undertaken by Stantec as part of the Masterplan considers various options for the re-configuration of Rolfe Street in order to provide enhanced cycle and pedestrian facilities.



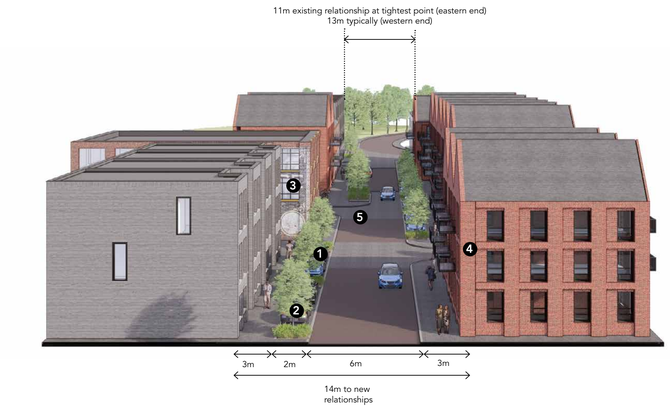
Rolfe Street – strategies in detail



Rolfe Street – street option 1



Rolfe Street – street option 2 - with cycle provision



Rolfe Street – design coding

1. Parallel parking to one side of street
2. Landscape between parking spaces
3. New alignments still have strong relationship to old
4. New buildings mostly 3–4 storeys
5. Opportunity for localised width restrictions to provide landscaped crossing points

5.10 New Street

New Street is also narrow, suffering from many of the same issues as Rolfe Street. The masterplan envisages New Street becoming the principal highway route between Bridge Street North and Tollhouse Way, strategically more important and attractive to traffic than Rolfe Street. To support this, due to the intensity of traffic, building lines to New Street should be set back, with formal parking provided, alongside landscaping.

Building form should be carefully considered, arranged at an angle to New Street where appropriate to avoid directly facing it, to reduce noise levels. The use of dual aspect apartments and houses with service space (kitchens, bathrooms) facing New Street would also be an appropriate approach.

On Bridge Street North, the existing wall to the Smethwick Engine site should be retained, and the archway reopened to provide access to Engine Park, providing a buffer to the traffic at this busy junction.

Former gateway on Bridge Street North, to be opened up into Engine Park

New Street – existing informal parking and width challenges

Triplex corner apartments with own front door: Goldsmith Street, Norwich

New Street – design coding

5.11 Residential Streets and Parking

High quality architecture and streetscape is essential to successful residential delivery, ensuring the creation of a place people want to live. At Rolfe Street, residential streets should create a strong sense of place, whilst meeting requirements for parking, servicing, safety and privacy. Streets can act as play spaces and encourage social interaction by careful street design, with pedestrians taking priority over cars.

Sandwell Council's **Residential Design Guide** (2014) sets out principles for the design of residential streets. Illustrated adjacent are two potential approaches to streets, at high and medium densities, demonstrating an approach to meeting the principles of the Guide in a way appropriate to Rolfe Street.

Careful management of parking is key to high quality residential streetscapes. With Rolfe Streets high public transport and active travel connectivity, a lower parking ratio than that set out in the guide may be appropriate at Rolfe Street, in accordance with the transport analysis undertaken as part of this Masterplan, by Stantec. The adjacent diagrams assume 1 allocated space per dwelling, plus 0.25 visitor or unallocated spaces per dwelling.

This reduced level of parking would need to be approved by the highways authority through providing clear evidence that the levels of carparking are appropriate to the area and would not cause detriment to the highway network. Reasoned justification and evidence for parking provision will need to be provided to support any development proposals coming forward in the future.

1. Allocated parallel parking to one side of street
2. Car port parking within mews to other side
3. Integrated bin and bike stores
4. Potential for back to back mews houses with overlooking carefully controlled
5. Defensible space to back of pavement

Mews Street: design coding

1. Plotfront parking to one side of street
2. Allocated parallel parking to other side
3. Visitor parking and allowance for limited second cars at end of street – approx 0.25 per dwelling
4. Integrated bin and bike stores
5. Control of 3 storey overlooking (e.g. velux windows)
6. Reduced gable to gable: no overlooking, urban environment
7. Defensible space to back of pavement

Townhouse Street: design coding

5.12 Form, Materiality and Detailing

The sense of place at Rolfe Street is reinforced by the variety of roof forms, from flat roofs, to industrial low pitches and the taller pitches and gables of the earlier canalside architecture at the former Enterprise Centre. Roof forms should be carefully considered in new development, with this variety and complexity maintained.

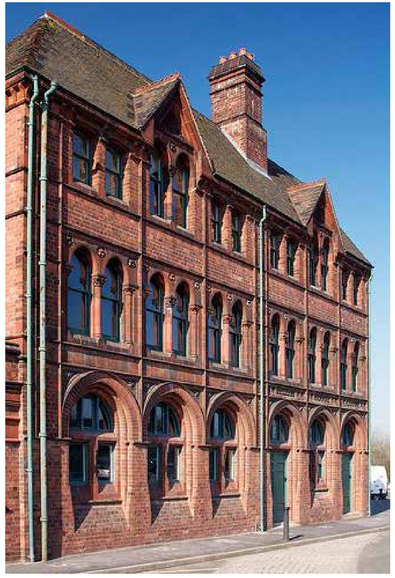
Materiality is key to defining a strong sense of place. Existing buildings at Rolfe Street echo the historic materials of the Black Country, with red stock brick and blue Staffordshire brick being prevalent across the historic buildings on site. Staffordshire brick is used in footing details throughout the Rolfe Street area, with red stock brick above. Roofs were historically slate, or clay tile, with a precedent for metal roofs and detailing to industrial buildings. This should be maintained.

In addition, granite kerbs and setts were present across the area historically, with some still in evidence. Quality materials should be used in the public realm at Rolfe Street, referencing historic materials where appropriate.

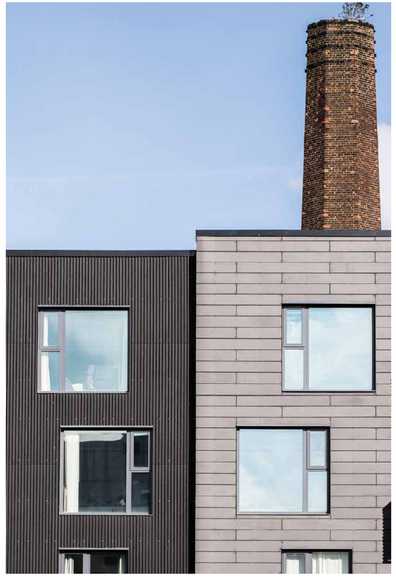
Materiality of new development should draw upon the historic architecture and industrial aesthetic, whilst feeling completely new. This does not mean the universal use of brick, rather, metal and other industrial materials may be appropriate to provide variety, as demonstrated on exemplar projects such as Port Loop and Kelham in Sheffield.

Detailing of windows, downpipes, gables and gutters, parpet caps, entrance canopies and other architectural features will be important at Rolfe Street. The existing industrial architecture has a variety of window forms and metalwork details, from metal Crittall style through to traditional timber sashes, painted in a variety of tones. As at Kelham and Port Loop, quality architectural metalwork will be encouraged with framing arranged and coloured in a way that reinforces the sense of place at Rolfe Street.

Rolfe Street – materiality and detailing



Materiality of the former Rolfe Street Baths – brick and terracotta



Industrial materiality and careful window detailing at Kelham, Sheffield

Materiality, window and metalwork detailing at Port Loop, Birmingham

Historic West Midlands materials – Birmingham Back to Backs

6.0 Phasing and Delivery

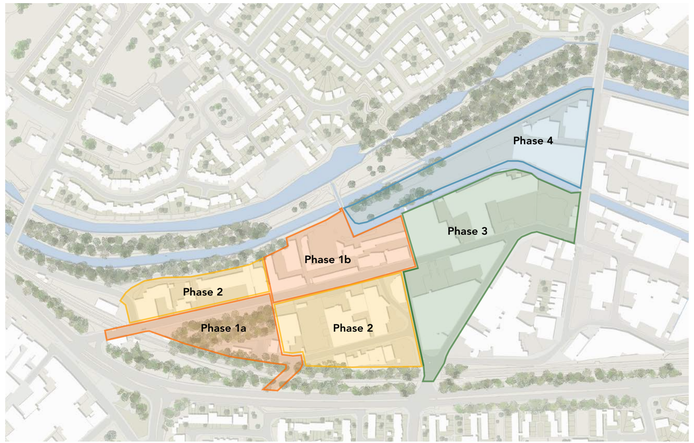
6.1 Phasing Strategy

Phasing at Rolfe Street will be influenced by land ownership and ongoing plans.

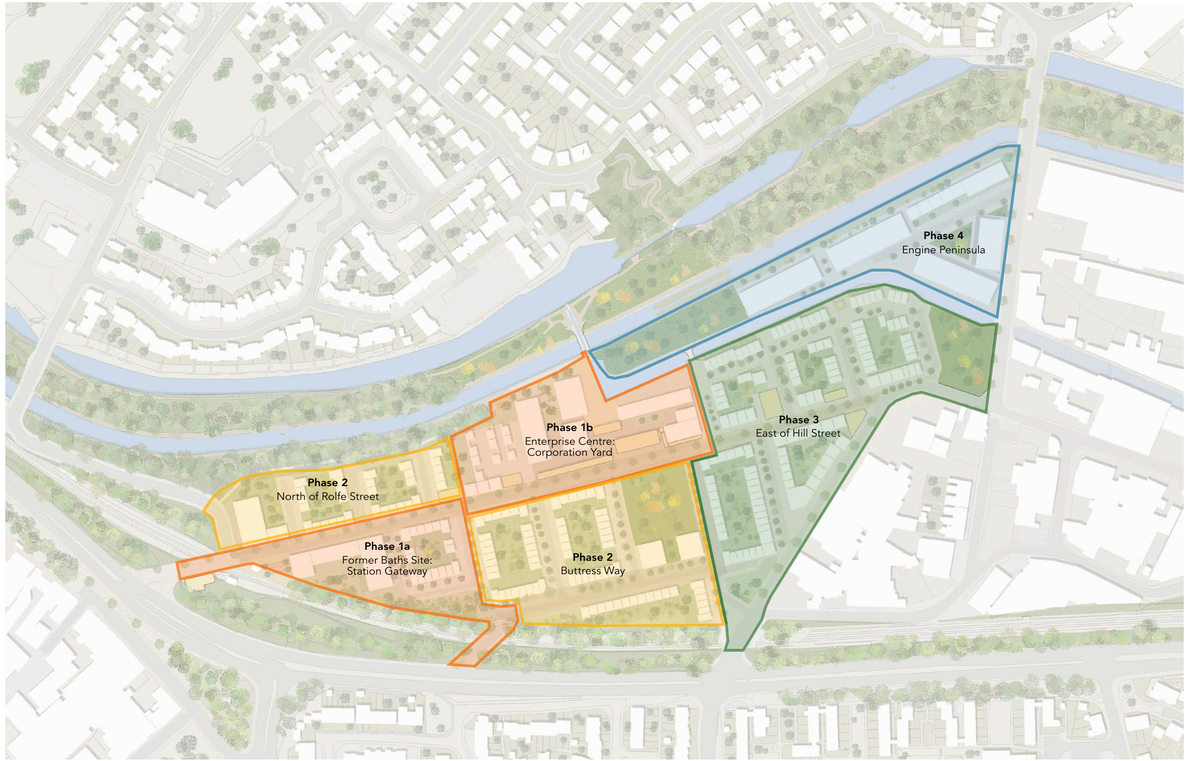
Sandwell Metropolitan Borough Council own the former Baths site and the Enterprise Centre. The Baths site has recently been cleared for development, and Towns Fund funding has been secured to ready the Enterprise Centre site for development. Together, these will form the first phase, although they may be delivered at slightly different times. To enable delivery, the Council will seek a residential development partner alongside enabling funding where appropriate and available. Improvements to the western half of Rolfe Street should be considered at Phase 1 to provide a sense of place and transformation from day one.

Following Phase 1, the transformed sense of place will help enable development on surrounding land mostly not owned by the Council to the north of Rolfe Street and along Buttress Way. Along Buttress Way, there is a mixture of plots owned by the Council and private landowners, thus a partnership between the Council, the Council's development partner, and landowners, may be possible.

It is envisaged the land to the east of Hill Street, alongside the Engine Arm and at the Engine Peninsula will come forward following development of Phase 1 and 2, depending on plans brought forward by landowners.



Potential phasing - existing condition



Potential phasing - illustrative masterplan

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