Residential Density Study

October 2024

Coventry City Council

www.coventry.gov.uk/planning-policy

Contents

Introduction

In undertaking a Local Plan Review, the authority seeks to ensure policies are both robust and evidenced, whilst being representative of both the local context and precedents of development in the City. A review of Plan Policy H9 has been undertaken in order to ascertain if this policy requires revision.

The assessment of this policy is made both in the context of Coventry's distinct local context, precedents of residential development market delivery and national best practice in residential development. In undertaking this study the authority is also aligned to national planning policy guidance which seeks to ensure that Local Authorities make the best use of available development land to meet their local needs.

Executive Summary

The Residential Density Study examines a number of informatives upon the density of residential development in Coventry, concluding in a revised policy recommendation of Local Plan Policy H9. The NPPF specifically encourages the identification of locally set density requirements that reflect local circumstance. In order to support this, the Council's Urban Design & Heritage Team have undertaken an assessment of existing typologies and recent developments throughout Coventry to examine development densities.

Housing density can affect the quality of life, the environment, the economy, and the social cohesion of a place, higher density developments are recognized to encourage the provision and use of public transport and the retention and development of social and community facilities. The study looks to a range of character areas in the city which have evolved in different time periods and planning contexts, identifying representative residential densities for each.

Coventry's residential stock is predominantly apartment based within the City Centre, a mixture of apartment and often terraced to the periphery of the City Centre, and semi-detached in the sub-urban environs, examples of these types are analysed in the report. This element of the study is undertaken to inform any revised planning policy in a contextually responsive manner, whilst the character of areas may change with new development, this existing density character baseline is an important informative to policy evolution.

The study also looks to recently consented residential development proposals across the city, noting that the density policy should always be read in the round with other plan policies. The precedents of approved schemes, then show developments which have met the wider tests of the local plan policies.

Finally, the study looks to national precedents of recognised high-quality residential developments. These precedents inform the study of possible future market delivery trends which are currently emerging, and which may be seen in the City In the coming plan period.

The study concludes with a revised policy H9 recommendation, taking into account the findings of this study and seeking to align to national planning policy objectives of

making best use of available development land and promoting higher density residential development to help meet local needs.

The City Centre

The NPPF, Coventry Local Plan: Policy H9 (2017), and the 2012 Density Paper, established the requirement for reflecting local circumstances and 'ensuring compatibility with the evolving character, quality and amenity of the surrounding area'. Looking to the City Centre as defined in the adopted Local Plan, and its immediate adjacencies, this test of local circumstance is perhaps especially important, where development could be seen to impact upon key cultural assets and city identifiers, a notable test of this type are the protected view cones to the three spires of the City Centre *(fig1)*, this being supported by the tall buildings and view management framework SPD.

The current planning policy H9 promotes a sharp density transition between sites within the Coventry ring road at 200Dph and those outside the ring road, this then being inclusive of areas immediately adjacent to the defined City Centre.

Mapping plays a key role in investigating the evolving, approved scale of development and resultant densities achieved within the last 5 years in the context of the current policy H9, providing a basis to examine the appropriateness of the criteria of policy H9. The mapping provided at figures 1 to 3 help to show the area of distinct policy change which existing in policy H9, showing the context of the city centre and its immediate surrounding area.

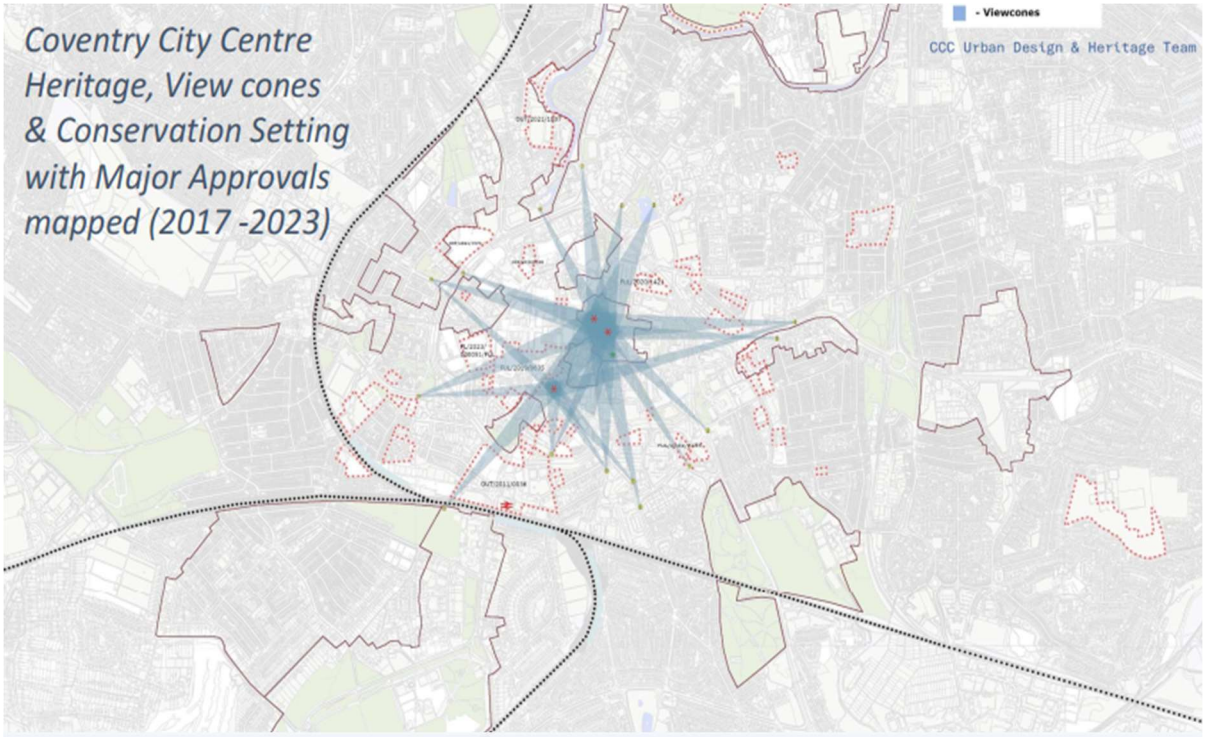

Figure 1 – Coventry City Centre identified views to three spires

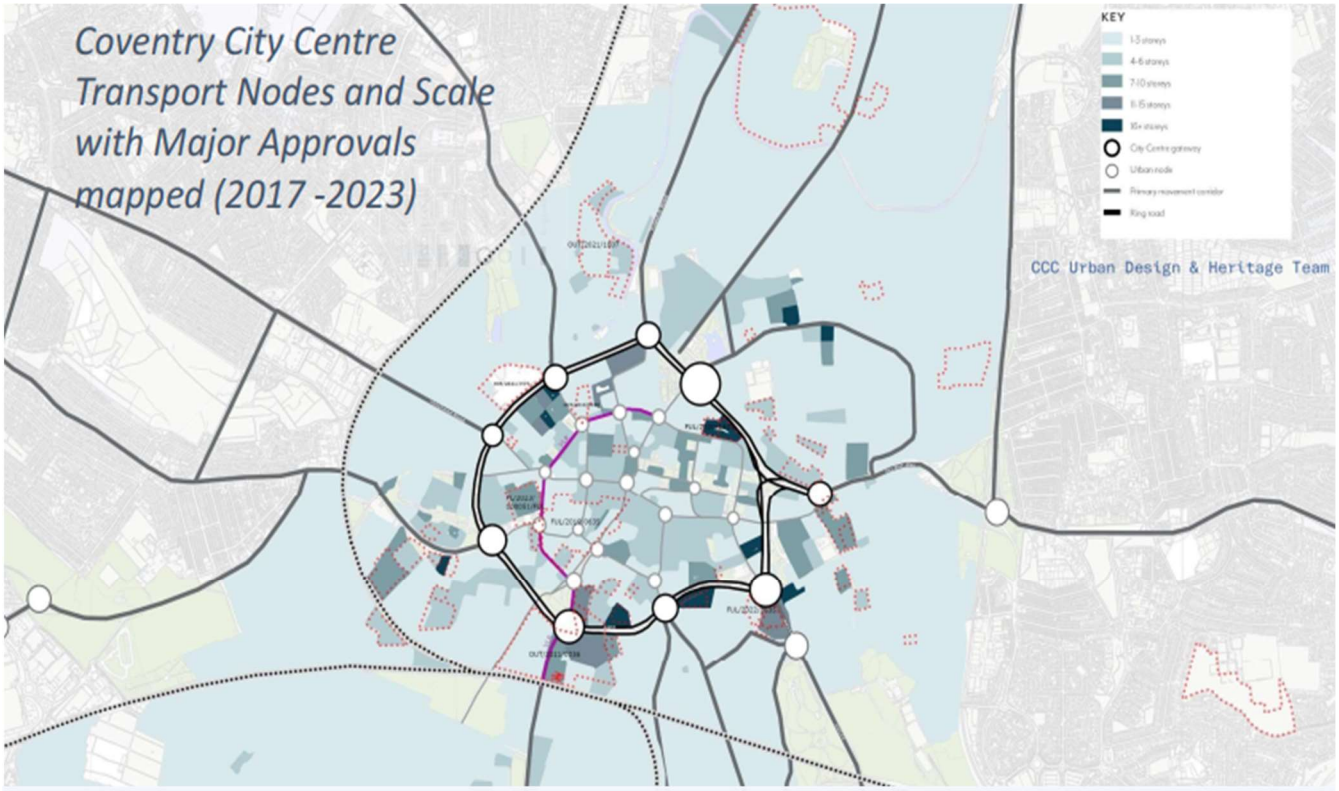

Figure 2 – Transport nodes, City Gateways and Development Scale

Figure 3 – City Centre Green spaces and linkages

Development Precedents – City Core

Building upon the mapping of context and developments within and immediately adjacent to the city ring road, a number of planning approved development precedents have been identified to inform the density study.

It is noted that significant development in the past 5 years within the City Centre has been for the needs of the student market, this PBSA (purpose build student accommodation) development type is not directly engaged by the current plan policy for residential development and therefore the precedents noted in this study are that of open market residential developments.

8 Ironmonger Row

The redevelopment of an office development to deliver city centre residential apartments comprising of 42 1 bed dwellings with axillary services and common room

Key Design Techniques

- Reusing an existing form while utilising a complementary and contemporary elevational treatment to give the block a new lease of life
- Vertical integration offering stores to address the ground floor
- Consideration in treatments to reflect the status of the site within a nodal position in the centre

382dph

Figure 4 – Ironmonger Row Summary

Homes	42
Beds	1
Height	6 Storeys
NDSS	No
Building Type	Apartments: 42
Building Line	Linear
Tenure	Open Market
Rear Garden	No
Front Garden	No
Parking Spaces	N/A
Parking Ratio	N/A
Designer	Corstorphine Wright
Planning Ref.	FUL/2020/1807

Figure 5 – Ironmonger Row Plan

242dph

Co-op Building

The redevelopment of an office development to deliver city centre residential apartments comprising of 63 dwellings with axillary services and common room

Key Design Techniques

- Reusing an existing form while utilising a complementary and contemporary elevational treatment to give the block a new lease of life
- Vertical integration offering stores to address the ground floor
- Consideration in treatments to reflect the status of the site within the streetscene retaining the strong mid century streetscene

Figure 6 – Co-Operative Conversion Summary

Homes	63
Beds	1 - 3
Height	4 Storeys
NDSS	yes
Building Type	Apartments: 63
Building Line	Linear
Tenure	Open Market
Rear Garden	No
Front Garden	No
Parking Spaces	23
Parking Ratio	0.36
Designer	Corstorphine Wright
Planning Ref.	FUL/2017/0585

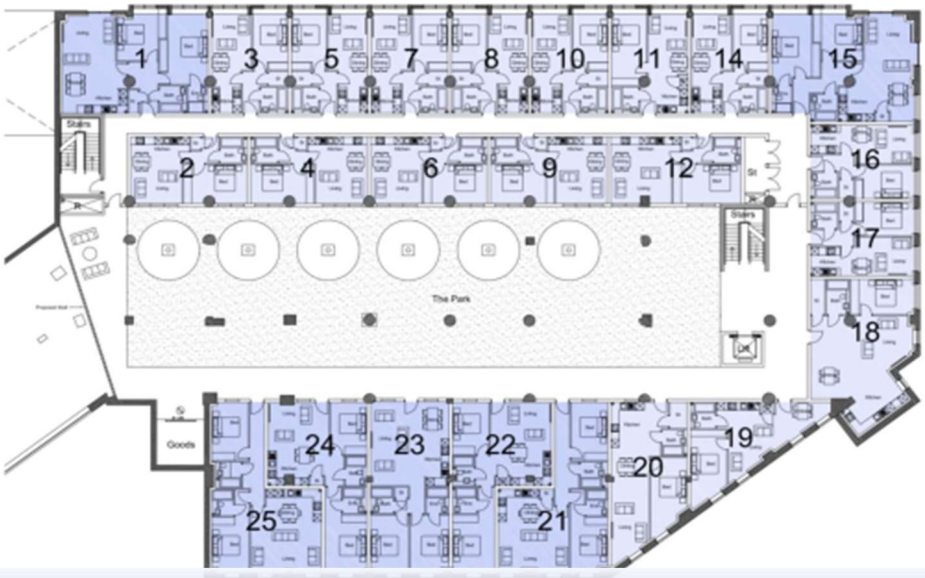

Figure 7 – Co-Operative Conversion Plan

Out of City Century Typologies

Coventry benefits from a wide range of wider character areas which exhibit a range of typologies, the City's pre-war and post-war development has established discernible areas of different influences across the city, making for a stimulating suite of residential typologies, where each which may be seen to articulate a point in time of the City's development.

A sample range of these typologies is here identified, these being identified through seeking to identify the range of residential development across the city, their key characteristics and their broad density precedents.

Urban Terraces

Barras Lane 45 dph

Spon End Conservation Area, which includes a number of 14th and 15th Century listed buildings and several later locally listed buildings such as the 19th Century Spon Gate School and the Malt Shovel Public House. The Conservation Area is bordered to the west by 'The Arches' railway viaduct which is also locally listed. The character of Spon End, which has developed gradually over hundreds of years, contrasts with much of the surrounding area, which was deliberately planned, laid out over a relatively short period of time and consequently is homogenous.

Early developments like the 1950's Wellington Gardens are low level and low density, built of pale brick with copper roofs and are set within generous lawned areas. Contrastingly, the Spon End estate next door is built of concrete and is of a far higher density with far less green space.

Figure 8 – Urban terraced development

Area Typology –

The Victorian Edwardian Terraces

Period – 1900s

Heights – 3 storeys

House type - Terraces/workshops

Parking – Pavements are narrow with no grass verges or trees and cars are parked along the streets.

Setbacks – medium set-back from the pavement and small gardens to the rear.

Streetscene – small front gardens bounded by low brick wall. narrow, straight streets and uniform architecture and roofline.

Block width – 45 meters

Block depth – 135 meters

Materials & elevations – Former watchmakers' housing. Three-storey, red brick, steep pitched clay tiled roof. Sash windows, single vertical glazing bar. Simple stone window cills and lintels

Figure 9 – Urban terraced development

Kingston Road 45 dph

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Early developments like the 1950's Wellington Gardens are low level and low density, built of pale brick with copper roofs and are set within generous lawned areas. Contrastingly, the Spon End estate next door is built of concrete and is of a far higher density with far less green space.

Figure 10 – Urban terraced development

Area Typology –

The Victorian Terraces

Period – 1850s

Heights – 2/3 storeys

House type - Terraces

Parking – Pavements are narrow with no grass verges or trees and cars are parked along the streets.

Setbacks – small set-back from the pavement and small gardens to the rear.

Streetscene – small front gardens bounded by low brick wall. narrow, straight streets and uniform architecture create channelled views.

Block width – 45 meters

Block depth – 170 meters

Materials & elevations – Terracotta detailing on the front elevations, decorative features including bay windows, recessed front doors, featured roof eves and styled door and window lintels

Figure 11 – Urban Terraced Development

Suburban Semi-Detached

Holyhead Road 35 dph

The housing along the Holyhead Road and Barras Lane is grander with extensive terracotta detailing on the front elevations. The narrow, straight streets and uniform architecture create channelled views.
More recent developments built between 1950 and 1975 are the result of comprehensive redevelopment programmes. Early developments like the 1950's Wellington Gardens are lowlevel and low density, built of pale brick with copper roofs and are set within generous lawned areas.
In general, this Character Area comprises of dense housing with little provision for green space in the residential areas. This area is well served with amenities including many of schools, shops, places of worship and sports grounds.

Figure 12 – Semi-detached, sub-urban

Area Typology –

The Edwardian Semi Detached

Period – 1910s

Heights – 2 storeys

House type – Semi Detached

Parking – Pavements are treelined with wide street avenues

Setbacks – large set-back from the pavement and deep gardens to the rear.

Streetscene – set back front gardens bounded by low brick wall, straight streets and uniform architecture with tree create avenues vista.

Block width – 45 meters

Block depth – 170 meters

Materials & elevations –
Edwardian properties often have a front garden and are set back from the pavement. The housing along the Holyhead Road is grander with extensive terracotta detailing on the front elevations.

Figure 13 – Semi-detached, sub-urban

Barker Butts Lane 35 dph

Condon, Edwardian and Inter/Post War
Overall, the architecture is homogenous and repetitive with the exceptions of the garden suburb style developments.
Most houses have bay windows and an arched doorway and are often pebble-dashed. All of the houses have small gardens to the front and rear. In general, the front gardens are bounded by low, brick walls. Consequently, the streets are congested with on-road parking. The pavements are narrow with trees. The straight, congested, narrow roads and pavements with repeating architecture create confined, channelled views

Figure 14 – Semi-detached, sub-urban

Area Typology –

The 1950s and Edwardian Mix

Period – 1950s

Heights – 2 storeys

House type – Semi Detached

Parking – Pavements treelined and cars are parked along the streets.

Setbacks – large set-back from the pavement and large gardens to the rear.

Streetscene –gardens bounded by low brick wall. narrow, straight streets and uniform architecture create channelled views.

Block width – 45 meters

Block depth – 170 meters

Materials & elevations – peddle dashed or red brick including double storey large windows, featured roof eves and styled door and window lintels

Figure 15 – Semi-detached, sub-urban

Consented Residential Developments

Set within this range of characters, recently examples of residential development are also assessed, these developments articulate today's market delivery for this form of development and alignment with other plan policy areas. Analysis of recently consented development schemes in the City seeks to understand the Dph which is currently being promoted and delivered. Density of development is also reported through the Local Authorities Authority Monitoring Report, with the 22/23 publication noting that new permission in 22/23 outside of the ring road presenting a 60 Dph figure average.

Whitley Pumping Station Phase 2

Delivery of a contemporary suburban layout that forms part of a wider Homes England development site creating its own sense of place along London Road.

Key Design Techniques

- Creates an attractive, safe and distinctive environment informed by the existing heritage assets and landscaping features of the site.
- Addresses the public realm by ensuring spaces are positively overlooked.
- Creates an environment with a 'sense of place'.

40dph

Figure 16 – London Road, Whitley

Homes	154
Beds	1 – 5
Height	1 – 4 Storeys
NDSS	Yes
Building Type	Terrace: 27
	Semi: 54
	Detached: 66
	Apartments: 7
Building Line	Fluid Linear
Tenure	Open Market/Affordable
Rear Garden	Yes
Front Garden	Mix
Parking Spaces	327
Parking Ratio	2.12
Designer	Morris Homes
Planning Ref.	PL/2023/0002359/RESM

Figure 17 – London Road, Whitley

Meggit Phase 2

45dph

A contemporary residential redevelopment of the former Meggit Aircraft Brownfield site found on Holbrook Lane.

Key Design Techniques

- Improve and knit the site to the existing pedestrian movement network to offer improved site permeability
- Improved delivery of greenspace
- Linear building plots offering a reflection of the existing urban grain
- Strong activation of streetscenes offering increased passive surveillance capacities

Figure 18 – Holbrook Lane

Homes	223
Beds	2 – 4
Height	2 – 4 Storeys
NDSS	Yes
Building Type	Terrace: 12
	Semi: 110
	Detached: 53
	Apartments: 48
Building Line	Staggered
Tenure	Open Market/Affordable
Rear Garden	Yes
Front Garden	Mix
Parking Spaces	432
Parking Ratio	1.94
Designer	Pegasus
Planning Ref.	FUL/2021/2411

Figure 19 – Holbrook Lane

National Precedents

Set alongside study of typologies and precedents within the City, the study has also drawn reference from national exemplar residential development schemes, in seeking to promote the highest quality development in the future plan period and in anticipation of wider market trends in the evolution of residential development types.

The following precedents show several award-winning residential schemes that provide a mix of typologies within higher density urban developments, delivered with high quality designs balancing built form, open space, user quality of life and assist in fostering cohesive community outcomes. Family unit typologies with integral parking spaces have been sighted as precedent, showing densities ranging from 60dph to 138dph.

Filwood Park 60 dph

Filwood Park is part of the Knowle West Regeneration Framework developed by Bristol City Council with the HCA. Initial proposals were developed with the local community through an intensive Enquiry by Design process. The site creates a parkland pedestrian and cycle connection between Filwood Broadway, the main high street in Knowle West, and Hengrove Way a key artery for Bristol

Key Design Techniques

- Utilises a mix of house typologies from apartments to townhouse designs to deliver a sufficient urban density
- Parking masked by the built form to offer attractive clutter free streetscenes

Homes	150
Beds	2 - 3
Height	2 - 4 Storeys
NDSS	yes
Building Type	Terrace: 54 Semi:14 Detached: 26 Apartments: 56
Building Line	Linear
Tenure	Open Market/ Social
Rear/Roof Garden	Yes
Front Garden	Some
Designer	HTA Design

Figure 20 – Filwood Park

Hobson Square 105dph

The Hobson Square neighbourhood forms the heart of the 2,300-home Great Kneighton masterplan – providing a community focal point of 270 homes, shops and café arranged around landscaped courtyards and a garden square. The scheme comprises 230 apartments and 40 houses, arranged around a series of both public and private amenity spaces.

Key Design Techniques

- Soft landscaped courtyards offering interaction with nature, break out spaces and a sense of place
- Vertical integration offering living space and external amenity to both the ground and top floors
- Compact form of development which offers green frontages to the streetscene

Homes	270
Beds	1 - 4
Height	2 – 4 Storeys
NDSS	yes
Building Type	Terrace: 16 Semi: 10 Apartments: 244
Site Size	2.57 Hectares
Tenure	Open Market/Affordable
Net Density	105
Parking Spaces	248
Parking Ratio	1.08
Designer	TateHindle

Figure 21 – Great Kneighton

The Malings 138 dph

This Award-winning scheme takes cues from the traditional terraced streets to foster a cohesive sense of community. Every home has its own front door that opens directly onto a street with a communal gathering space at its centre. Other features include allotment plots, communal cycle stores and shared recycling spaces. Non-residential units are also offered at quayside level for community and social enterprise uses which enliven the waterside.

Key Design Techniques

- Internal common areas such as lifts, staircases and corridors are eliminated, reducing management charges for residents, while still providing apartment level urban density
- Vertical integration offering stores to address the ground floor

Homes	76
Beds	1 - 5
Height	2 - 6 Storeys
NDSS	yes
Building Type	Terrace: 17 Semi:8 Apartments: 51
Building Line	Fluid Linear
Tenure	Open Market
Rear/Roof Garden	Yes
Front Garden	Some
Parking Spaces	76
Parking Ratio	1
Designer	Ash Sakula

Figure 22 – The Malings, Newcastle

Conclusions and Recommendation

The study has sought to look to a representative range of residential development typologies across the City, identifying that the City Centre holds its own distinct character, where residential development if most often in the form of apartment of one or two bedrooms. Aside the city centre, the typical hosing stock is of two to three storey terraced types, showing a more urban character and a sense of transition in density to the City Centre. In the more outlying sub-urban areas the housing stock is often semi-detached in plan, where residential density is then seen to reduce.

Coventry demonstrates a common and anticipated density pattern, with the scale of built form and residential density increasing to the centre, however, the current planning policy H9 does not currently distinguish in its guidance those areas to the periphery of the centre where higher density is seen to be present, to those which sit in a more sub-urban context. In seeking to ensure that Local Plan Policy promotes the best use of available development land in highly sustainable locations, the study recommends that policy should develop to recognise this.

Within the City Centre, development exceeding the minimum density standard is also observed, however examples of open market residential development within the ring road are currently few, it is possible that this may change in the future plan period. It is also noteworthy that conversion schemes have also achieved a higher residential density figure than policy H9 minimums. The study has also found that current market delivery utilising traditional typologies may often exceed the density guidance currently stated at policy H9 – the study also therefore recommends that this element of the policy be revised to align to these precedents, whilst maintaining reference to other plan policies in order to ensure each scheme be responsive to its own place in the city and its local context. The development of the density policy is therefore proposed to address a number of findings, whilst the evolution of this policy also aligns with best establishing supply calculations and meeting national planning policy aims, the proposed policy is therefore as follows :

Greenfield Sites Current plan policy 30dph minimum
Proposed plan policy 35dph minimum

Whilst limited in availability, these sites may often be found to the edges of existing established development patterns, where their open-ness *may* contribute toward amenity levels, however these may also be viable development sites (subject to other plan policies). Sighting positive precedent of development proposals which maintain qualities of openness and deliver positive development at densities higher than 30dph, a moderate increase to a minimum density guide of 35dph is proposed.

Brownfield sites *Current plan policy 35dph*
Proposed plan policy 45dph

It is both the policy of the Local Authority and National planning policy to promote a brownfield first approach to development, in doing so making best us of this finite resource is a key consideration in the development of plan policy H9. It has been demonstrated that it is achievable to delivery a density of 45dph utilising traditional residential typologies in the city, however a progression to developing a range of new

typologies which seek to promote high quality residential environments and higher densities should be promoted to aid the deliver of hosing stock in the City, precedents including that of Filwood Park (fig20) which employ the use of three storey hosing whilst maintaining a residential aesthetic and with the possibility to taper scale to neighbouring existing contexts offer the city an opportunity to better utilise brownfield land, as such a development to 45dph as a policy minimum is recommended.

City Centre *Current plan policy 200dph within ring road*
Proposed plan policy 250dph within defined city centre

The city centre has developed rapidly in the last plan period, with a greater number of large scale and higher rise development having taken place, much of this development has been of the PBSA type, however the tests of compatibility regarding scale are aligned to that which would be employed to an open market residential use. Looking ahead the city may anticipate a larger amount of open market residential development to take place in and around the city centre, in order that such developments may be in highly sustainable locations. The proposed uplift to a policy minimum of 250dph for new build residential schemes should not yield a demonstrable difference in development scale having been recently seen in the city centre, with many developments being at or exceeding this level in equivalence.

Noting the key green linkages and city gateways which are present in the city today, and alongside precedents of consented schemes aside the ring road, it is also recommended that the distinction of the ring road as the defining density boundary is replaced with instead utilising the already defined city centre boundary. When this policy maintains the requirement to be read in the plan whole, it is assessed that this revision should not cause adverse impact to character, but further promote making best use of previously developed and highly sustainable land.

Establishing a transition zone *Current plan policy 35Dph*
Proposed plan policy 125dph

The study has highlighted that the current density policy fails to be responsive to the transitional nature of existing prevailing townscape in the city, where density is seen to transition toward the city core. Should this policy be taken in isolation, this would promote very sharp and uncomfortable transitions in scale to the city core whilst also being at odds with national planning policy which seeks to promote higher densities in development land located in highly sustainable locations. To address this, the Local Authority propose the introduction of a ‘transition zone’ to the defined city centre boundary, where a minimum density expectation should be set to 50% of the minimum density required within the centre. This policy development will both recognise the area as a sustainable location and align to the aims of the NPPF in uplifting density in urban areas. The policy approach seeks to ease the transitions in scale to the centre in a legible and understandable way, whilst maintaining the primacy of the centre.

This policy approach should maintain the prominence of city centre landmarks, but also recognise the secondary but significant role sites within this area may play in wider townscape. The transition zone is recommended to be a 1200m radial zone from the core civic space of Broadgate Square, where at its greatest an area of circa 600m offset to the established city centre boundary is identified as a zone around the city

centre which warrants the promotion of a higher density approach both through its urban character and its provision of pedestrian and public transport connectivity, however this elevated density guidance must still be able to be delivered in a compatible manner to local context, whilst meeting other plan policy requirements in order to ensure contextual compatibility and the delivery of high quality living environments.

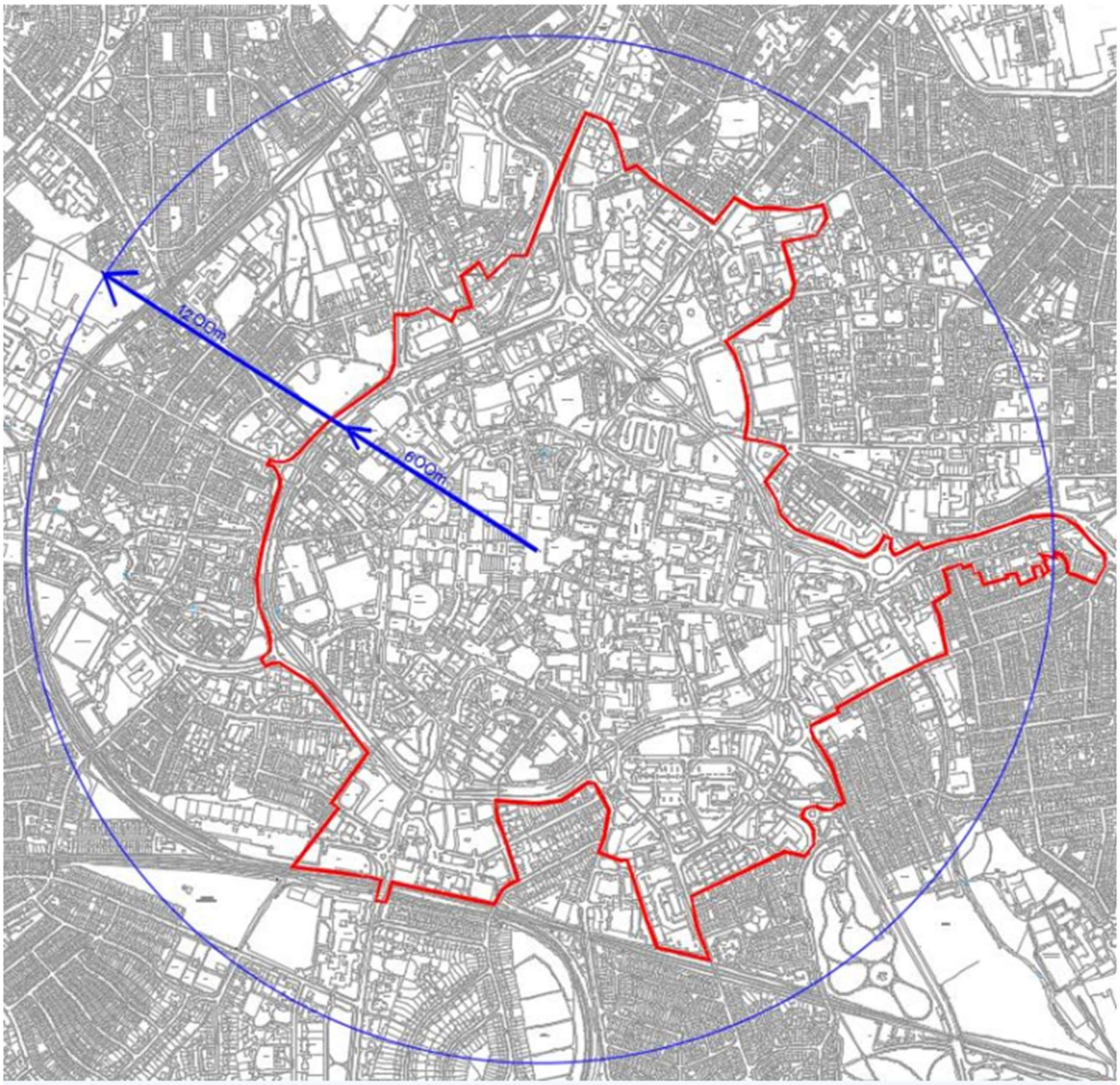

Figure 23 – City Centre Transition Zone