

1 BACKGROUND INFORMATION

1.1 History

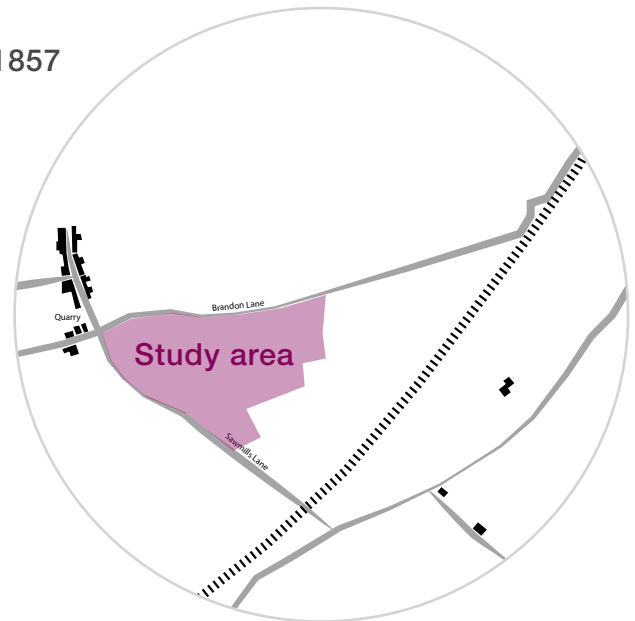
Brandon grew from a small agricultural settlement based around the northern tip of Sawmills Lane. The original Brandon Village now sits within the Brandon Conservation area, which bounds the north-west portion of the study area.

In 1854, the North Eastern Railway was constructed to the south of the village and over the next century the settlement has expanded to the edge of the railway, and beyond.

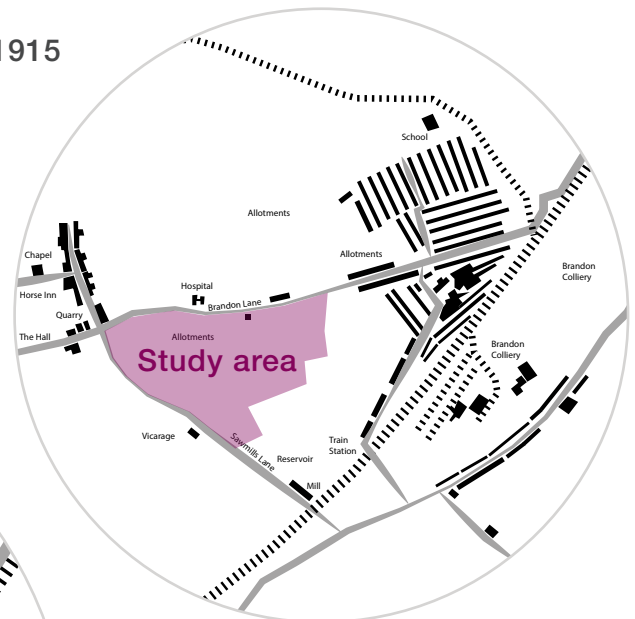
Brandon Colliery was constructed in the latter half of the 19th century, and grew substantially between 1857 and 1915, with construction of a train station and many rows of worker terraces for the miners.

Much of the study area (in purple) was constructed by 1958.

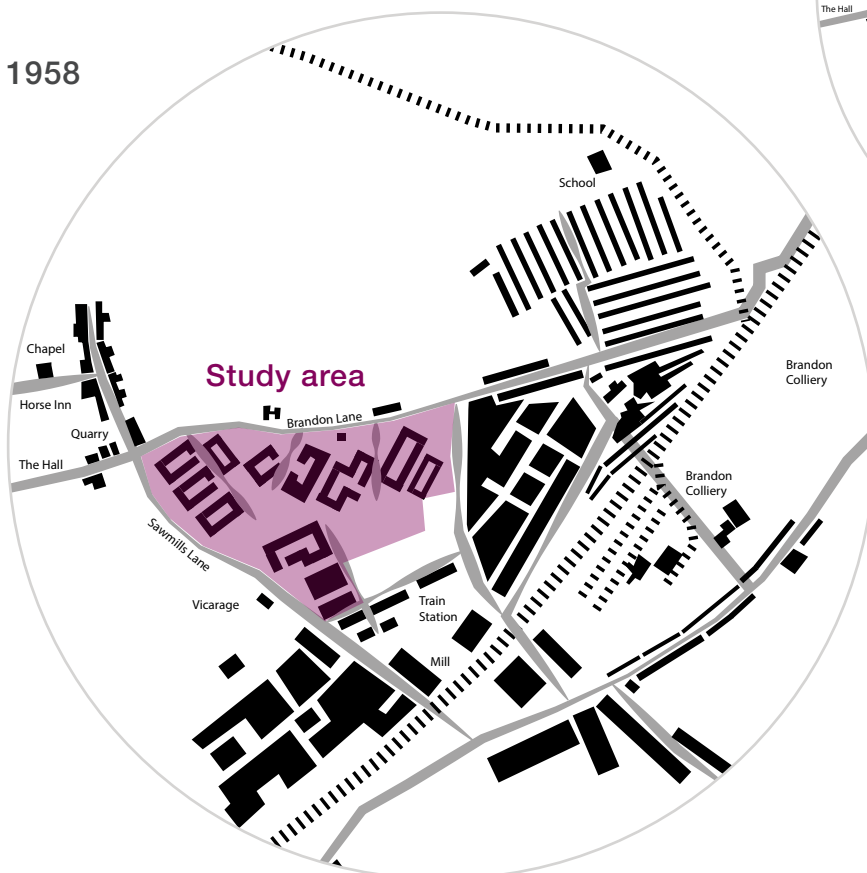
1857



1915



1958



1958 Map: By the mid 20th century, the population had grown significantly in Brandon, as employment at the Brandon and Browney Collieries grew. Much of the estate within the site boundary was constructed by 1958, although Redwood Flats, Rowan Lea and Red Firs were built later and linked the previously disconnected cul-de-sacs together into one area. The original historic centre of Brandon Village now sits on the outskirts of the settlement.

1.2 Brandon Today

Today Brandon has a population of around 10,000. The working age population comprises roughly 60% of residents, and there is a large dependent population with approximately 20% aged under 18, and 20% over 65.

Brandon remains a rural settlement surrounded by agricultural fields. It is well located, and takes approximately 10 - 15 minutes to drive to central Durham (or 25 minutes by bus from the study area).

96% of the population are of British origin, and 98% of the population are white. 76% of the population identify as a Christian.*

Challenges

Generally the population of Brandon experiences higher than average levels of social deprivation, unemployment and poor health.

Crime is viewed as one of the more challenging issues for Brandon, with an average 70 crimes reported each month in 2021.** 38 crimes were recorded within the study area and surrounding roads in August 2021, with violence and sexual offences, criminal damage and arson, and anti-social behaviour being the most commonly reported form of crime - although figures are based on wide police definitions of this type of activity (not just serious crimes). The shopping precinct is identified as a crime hotspot for local people.

* www.citypopulation.de/en/uk/northeastengland/county_durham/E34002054__brandon/

** www.police.uk/pu/your-area/durham-constabulary/durham-meadowfield/



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1.3 Wider Context: Heritage and Character

The site is within 5km of the World Heritage Site Durham Castle and Cathedral, a registered battlefield, and a plethora of listed buildings and Scheduled Ancient Monuments.

It will be important to consider retaining and potentially creating long distance views of these assets from the site and also ensure that development of the site doesn't negatively impact on the setting of these historic features.

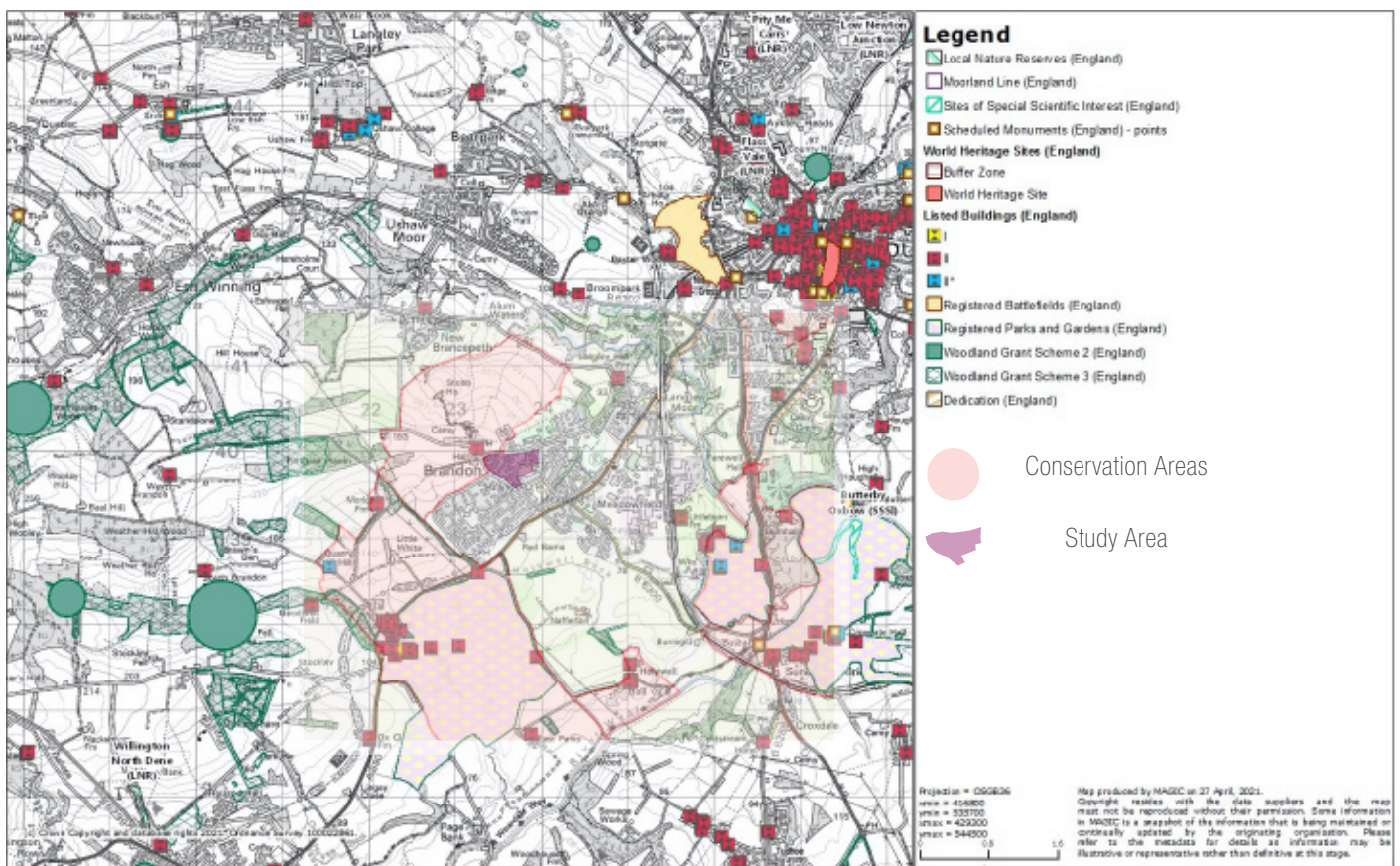
The character of Brandon in relation to other settlements close to the city centre such as Ushaw Moor, Meadowfield and Langley Moor, and the city centre itself, should be considered, particularly due to the World Heritage Site status of parts of the city, and therefore the site's position along a route towards a tourist destination and its proximity to potential 'gateway' features.

Several Grade II listed buildings can be found within the wider area. The potential to retain them in any existing views from within the site should be considered to strengthen the unique character of the development.

Attractive views of the registered Parks and Gardens to the south of the site (Brancepeth Castle) and to the east of the site (Burn Hall and Croxdale Hall) could be strengths of the site that should be considered as part of any masterplan layout.

Strengthening accessibility to the surrounding Registered Parks and Gardens and Ancient Woodland and Priority BAP Heathland habitat should be a key consideration in the design process.

MAP: from Magic Map



1.4 Wider Context: Flooding

Fluvial flood risk is present near Brandon, as shown below in the map on the left. The map on the right shows suggested locations for flood risk management strategies.

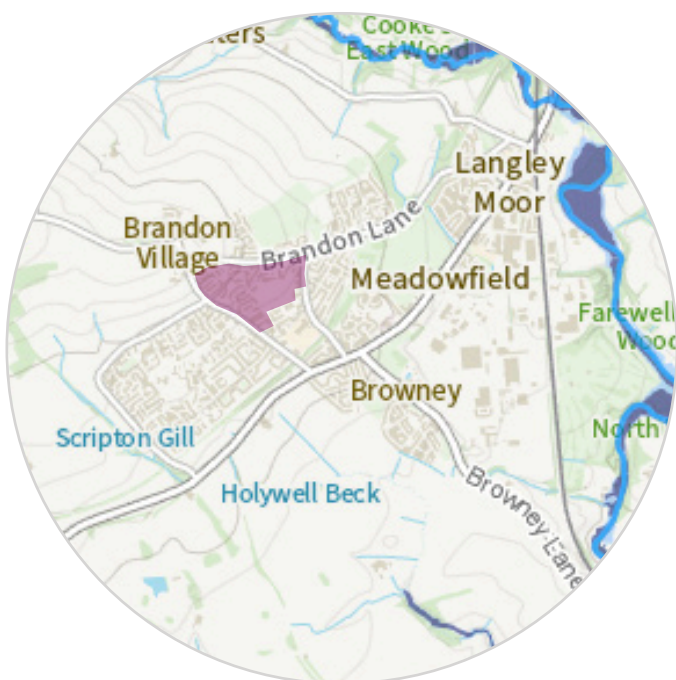
The site falls into a priority area for using woodland to improve the management of water, which includes reducing flooding, reducing water pollution and retaining nutrients and sediment. This is the area marked in yellow.

Several residents reported localised flooding and water pooling due to drainage issue within the estate at certain times of year.

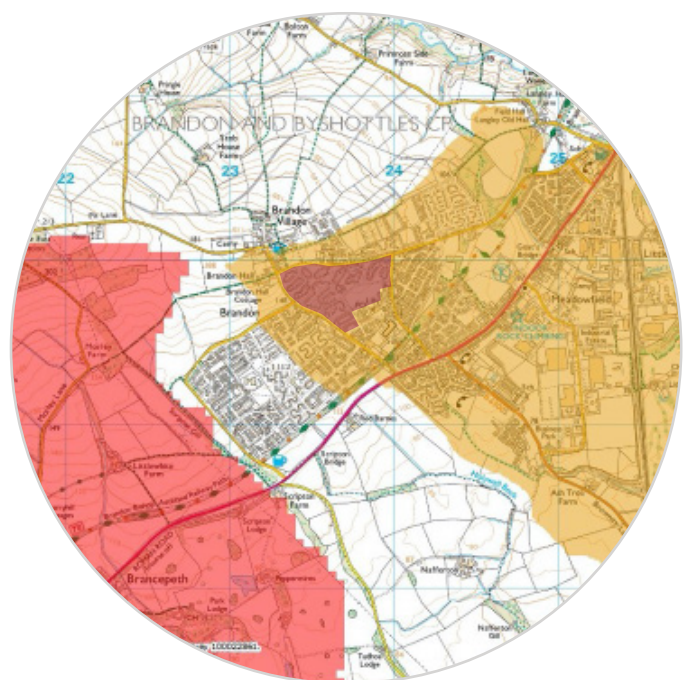
Using Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems (SUDS) as part of the water management initiative for the site will help to address the flood risk and utilise ‘woodland for Water’ principles. This is generally standard for all development sites now, in line with Durham’s Local Plan.

SUDS uses nature to help slow the speed of water run-off, increase absorption in to the soil and living plant and trees, and improve water quality by removing pollutants out of the water. SUDS can also form part of a beautiful and ecologically rich landscape, rich in ‘natural play’ potential.

Environmental agency flood map



Flood risk management priority areas



MAPS: from Magic Map and Environmental Agency

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1.5 Wider Context: Historic Landscape Character

Orchards, horticulture and aquaculture (pink) feature as part of the historic landscape character (post medieval).

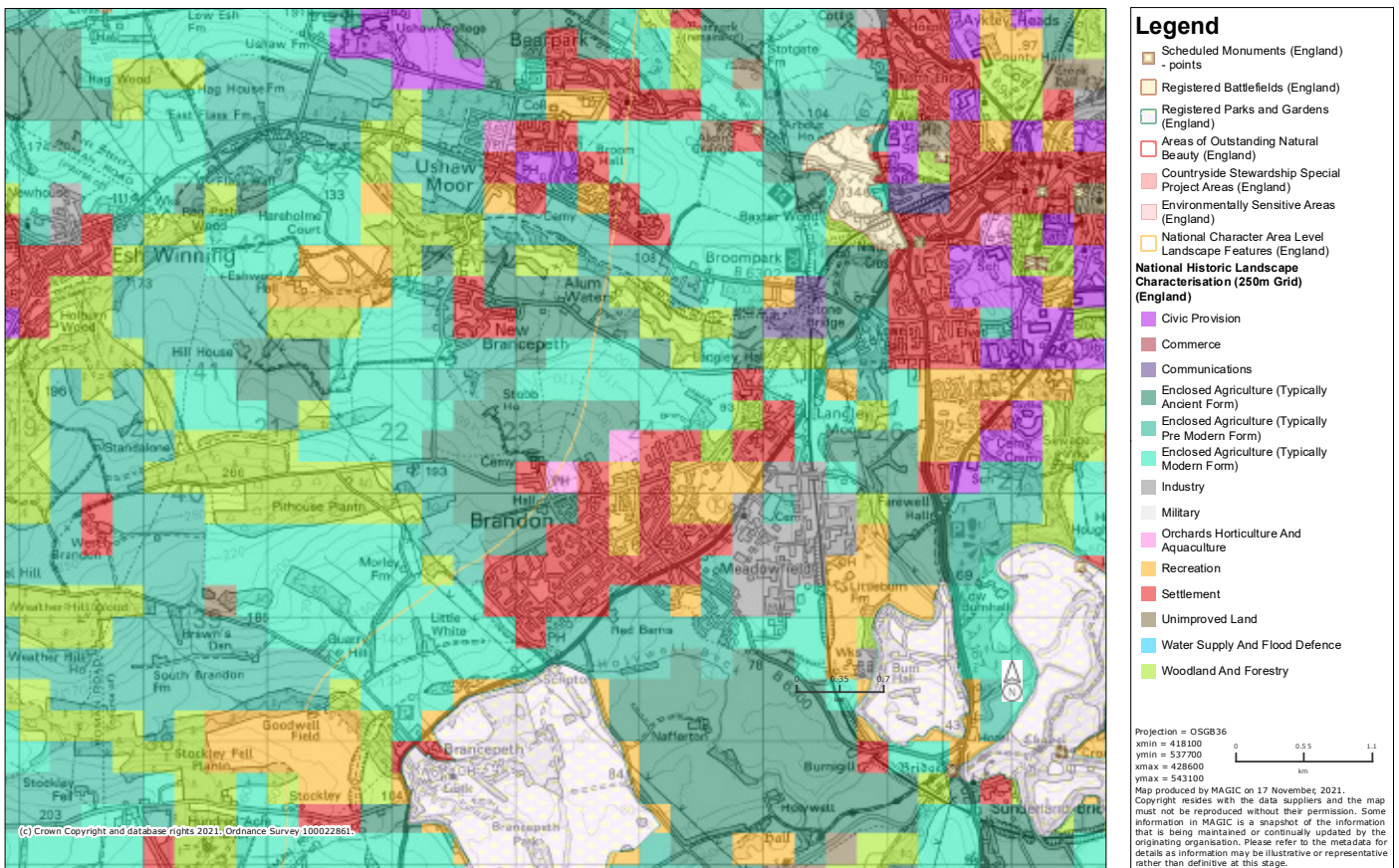
The historic maps on pg.4 also indicate the presence of several allotments on and nearby the site in the early 20th century.

This could be reflected as a feature in the proposed character of the site, by introducing shared gardens and community food growing areas, for example, to reflect the historic uses of the site. This landscape use would support sustainability, community interactions and cohesion, and health and wellbeing.

If these features were introduced, it may be beneficial to have a management company maintain these shared gardens and community growing areas initially

to get them off to a good start, with the longer term ambition for residents to manage them collectively, with those who are keen on gardening/food growing taking a bigger role than others. A neighbourhood officer may be helpful in establishing interest in involvement in this kind of activity to connect interested residents.

MAP: from Magic Map



1.6 Wider Context: Habitats

Ancient and semi-natural woodland is within 1km north of the potential site area. This is an asset as it is a sensitive habitat that supports more threatened species than any other habitat in the UK. It is sensitive to nearby development, but it is unlikely that the site would be considered in close enough proximity to the ancient woodland for it to be a constraint.

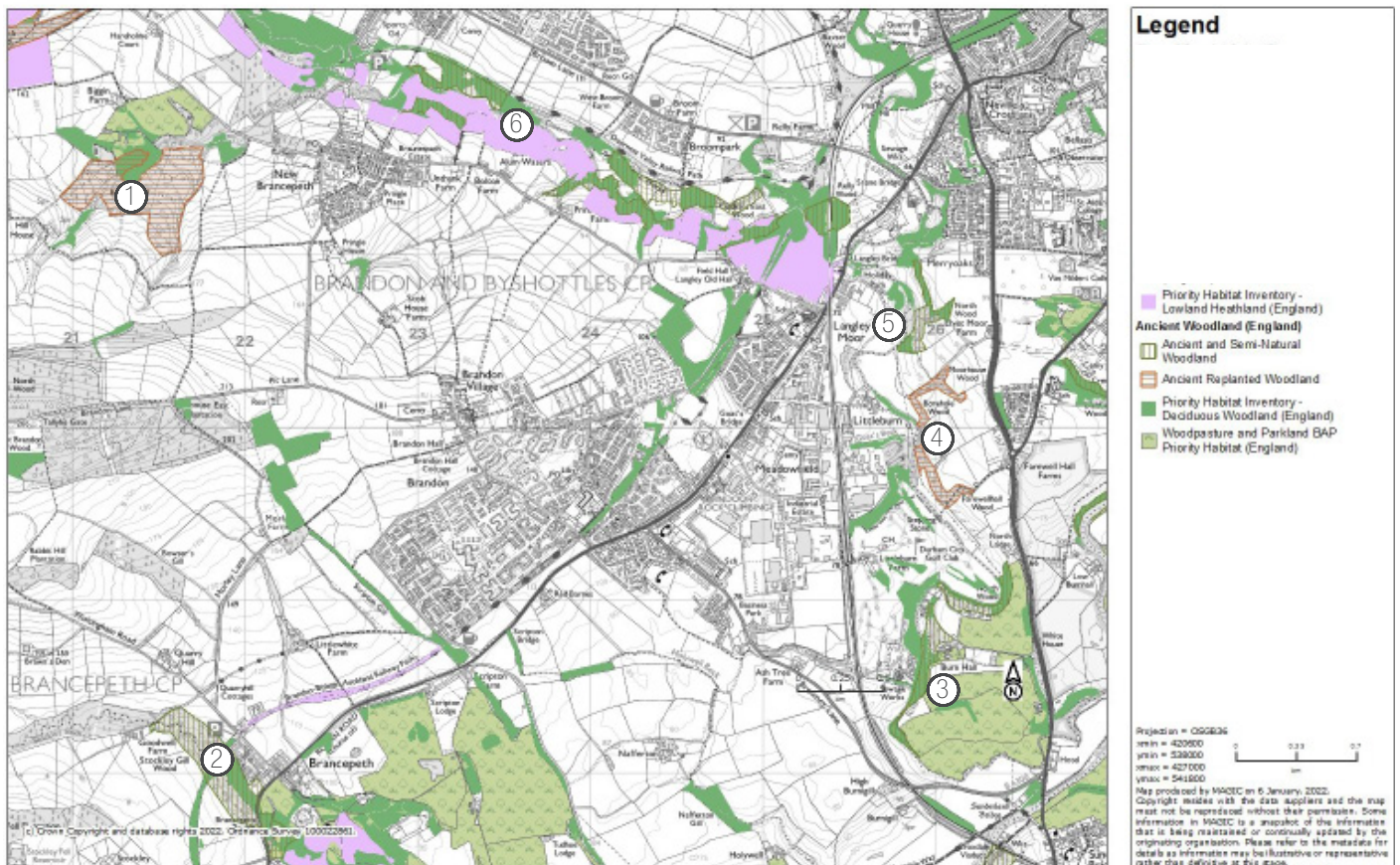
Priority Habitat Lowland Heathland is also found to the north of the site (lilac on plan), intertwined with the ancient woodland. It is appreciated and protected for its unique wildlife and austere beauty, and could be considered as part of the evolving character of the site in the planting scheme.

Wood pasture and parkland BAP Priority Habitat is found to the south of the site and contributes positively to the site setting.

The areas of low habitat value (in black and white on plan) that surround the valuable habitats could be used to improve connections between existing habitat networks, and form public open space for recreational and ecological benefit.

1. Esh Wood
2. Stockley Gill Wood
3. North Wood (Burn Hall)
4. Moorhouse, Borehole and Farewellhall Woods
5. North wood (Elvet Moor Farm)
6. Cooke's Wood

MAP: from Magic Map



1.7 Wider Context: Green Space

Access to green space is one of the main strengths in Brandon. The village is surrounded by farmland and plantations, and there are a good number of footpaths and bridleways linking Brandon to other nearby settlements and green spaces. The Brandon-Bishop Auckland Railway Path is a nine mile trail, which terminates at the Broompark Picnic Area, half an hour walk from where the trail meets Sawmills Lane.

Formal Gardens

Ushaw Historic House and Gardens and South Park at Croxdale Hall are a ten minute drive from the study site. Durham has botanical gardens, formal gardens and parks.

Within Brandon itself, flower gardens and formal parks are more limited. The parks within the village are predominantly grass sports fields.

Sport and Play

There are a good number of formal and informal sport's pitches in close proximity to Brandon. There are two nearby golf courses, several football pitches, Brandon Cricket Club and the District Sport Centre, which has an astroturf, skatepark, basketball court and leisure centre. There is also an indoor climbing centre in Meadowfield.

There are two playgrounds within ten minutes walk from the study site.

Nature

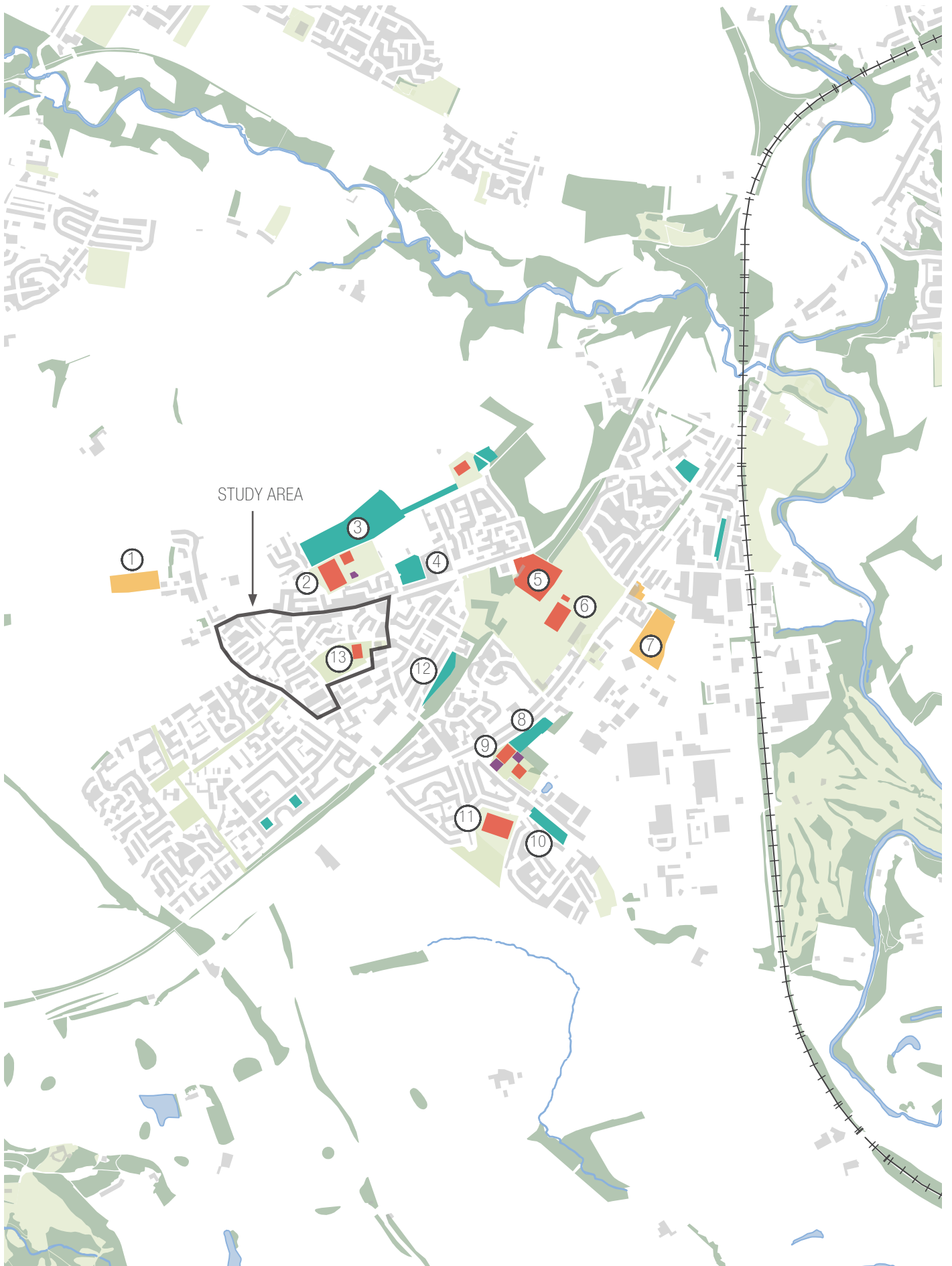
Croxdale Woodland Trust and Flass Vale nature reserves are an hour's walk from the study site (or a ten minute drive).

Food Growing

The map highlights a substantial number of allotments and food growing plots dotted throughout Brandon. Food growing and gardening appears to be very popular within Brandon, which ties in to historic roots.

-  Allotment/ community food growing
-  Playground
-  Sports pitch
-  Formal garden/ cemetery
-  Woodland
-  Grass
-  Water

1. Brandon (St. John) Church Cemetery
2. Brandon United FC Sport Club
3. Deerness Heights Allotment
4. Sycamore Park Allotment
5. Brandon Cricket Club
6. Meadowfield Leisure Centre Green
7. Brandon Cemetery
8. Frederick Street South Allotment
9. Addison Park Recreation Grounds
10. Browney Lane (North) Allotment
11. Browney Lane Playing Field
12. Station Avenue, Brandon Allotment
13. Brandon Estate Playing Field



1.8 Local Planning Policy

Country Durham Plan, Adopted 2020

“The ambition for County Durham is to build a successful and sustainable future in which all of our residents have the opportunity to access good housing and employment in an environment, which delivers a healthy and fulfilled lifestyle”.

Objective 1: Economic Ambition - Improve the economic performance of the whole of County Durham by creating more and better jobs, and reducing unemployment.

Objective 2: Sustainable Communities - Locate new development in areas, which offer the best opportunity for sustainable development patterns.

Objective 3: Housing Need - Deliver new, high quality housing, in a range of house types and tenures while making effective use of existing stock.

Objective 4: Infrastructure - Enable the delivery of the necessary infrastructure such as transport, health and education, digital and green infrastructure, to support new and existing development.

Objective 5: Town Centres - Maintain a clear hierarchy of vibrant, diverse and distinct retail centres that are the focus for commercial, retail, leisure, culture and other appropriate uses.

Objective 6: Rural Economy - Support and improve the rural economy by encouraging diversification, retaining and enhancing key facilities, infrastructure and services while promoting appropriate new development in rural settlements.

Objective 7: Green Belt - Seek to positively enhance its beneficial use, including increased opportunities

to provide access, outdoor sport and recreation, to retain and enhance landscapes, visual amenity and biodiversity.

Objective 8: Effective Use of Land - Make the most effective use of land, buildings and existing infrastructure, re-using land and buildings that have been previously developed, wherever possible.

Objective 9: Natural Environment - Protect, enhance, maintain and manage the county's important natural environment.

Objective 10: Built and Historic Environment - Protect and enhance the significance of County Durham's locally, nationally and internationally important built and historic environment.

Objective 11: Well Designed Places - Ensure the creation of high quality buildings and places that reflect local distinctiveness, promote sustainability, support the transition to a low carbon future and achieve safe and secure communities.

Objective 12: Raising Aspirations - Encourage greater prosperity by supporting education, training and research establishments that help to raise the aspirations of young people. Re-engage adults with work and lifelong learning.

Objective 13: Tackling Deprivation and Inequalities - reduce deprivation, improve health and address social, economic and environmental inequalities.

Objective 14: Quality of Life - Safeguard, enhance and provide a wide range of educational, social, sporting, health, recreational and cultural facilities. Prevent and address pollution issues to contribute to the quality of life, health and well being. Address the needs of those with physical and mental disabilities.

Objective 15: Visitor Economy - Strengthen County Durham's role as a visitor/tourist destination.

Objective 16: Adaptation to Climate Change - Adapt to the impacts of climate change and extreme weather conditions by promoting appropriate sustainable urban drainage systems (SUDs) in new developments, promoting sustainable land management and conservation.

Objective 17: Low Carbon - Support the transition to a low carbon economy by encouraging the use of low and zero carbon technologies, supporting the development of appropriate renewable energy sources and sustainable and active transport.

Objective 18: Sustainable Transport - Ensure that new development can be easily and safely accessed by all modes of transport and, wherever possible, contribute to reducing the need to travel, thereby reducing the impact of traffic and congestion.

Objective 19: Natural Resources - Protect and enhance air, water and soil quality and encourage the efficient and sustainable use of the county's resources.

Objective 20: Supply of Minerals - Meet society's needs and ensure a steady and adequate supply of both energy and non-energy minerals, in accordance with the principles of sustainable development.

Objective 21: Waste Management - Support the development of a network of modern waste management facilities which help ensure that society's waste arisings are managed in accordance with the principles of the waste hierarchy; which facilitate re-use, recycling, composting and recovery of value from waste.

Housing Development

A large proportion of the new houses County Durham needs are already committed either on sites under construction or sites not started with planning permission (15,660 houses as of 1st April 2019). It is likely that not all allocated sites will prove to be deliverable and opportunity therefore remains to bring further sites forward under Policy 6 (Development on Unallocated Sites).

Government guidance under Policy 6 states that local plans may also include allowances for windfall sites (non-allocated sites). It is considered that an allowance of 100 houses per annum on small sites throughout County Durham would be appropriate. Bringing empty homes back in to use is also a key priority for the council.

Planning Applications within Study Area

The Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment 2019 (SHLAA) assessed the sports pitch within the masterplan study area (4/BR/12). The site is identified as outdoor sports space within the Open Space Needs Assessment, and has therefore been deemed unsuitable for development. The vacant plot next to Bone Appetit (4/BR/09) previously had planning permission for 3 dwellings which has lapsed. A more recent as yet undetermined application for the site aims to deliver 12 units. The site is identified as open space in the OSNA.

Several change of use planning applications have been made across the north part of the estate to alter public space to fenced private gardens. Re-allocation of public land to private land could help to regulate the vast quantities of interstitial green space throughout the Brandon Estate.