

Technical note:

Land at Hindlip Hall – review of Green Belt status

1. Background

South Worcestershire Councils have requested the review of the Green Belt status of land at Hindlip Hall. The original review of the potential for inseting of the site was undertaken in 2018 and reported as part of the Strategic Review of Green Belt purposes¹.

In the adopted version of the South Worcestershire Development Plan (February 2016) the land at Hindlip Hall is washed over by Green Belt and is designated as a Major Developed Site (MDS) in the Green Belt.

The site is covered by Policy SWDP 2: Development Strategy and Settlement Hierarchy which includes specific reference as follows:

E. The West Midlands Green Belt will be maintained and development proposed within the Green Belt will be considered in accordance with national policy as set out in the Framework. Development at the Major Developed Sites (listed in Table 3 below) will be limited to within their site boundaries as set out on the Policies Map and will be restricted to limited infilling and the redevelopment of previously developed land. Development proposals within a Major Developed Site boundary should not have any greater impact on the openness of the Green Belt and the purposes of including land within it than the existing development.

Hindlip Park	Major Developed Site restricted to limited infilling and the redevelopment of previously developed land within the identified site boundary for emergency and civil resilience services provision only.
--------------	---

6. The Major Developed Sites (MDS) within the Green Belt all have a lengthy planning history with respect to employment and leisure development. They are predominantly brownfield and are likely to continue to be the subject of further development proposals. In order to help inform investment decisions therefore, applications for employment /leisure development within the defined MDS boundary will be supported subject to more detailed Plan policies, e.g. SWDP 25 – Landscape Character. This is consistent with the Framework (paragraph 89 refers).

Figure 1.1 illustrates the current extent of the MDS which covers the Hindlip Hall site.

¹ South Worcestershire Councils (2018) South Worcestershire Green Belt Study, Part 1: Strategic Assessment

Figure 1.1 Hindlip Park MDS as Defined in the South Worcestershire Development Plan

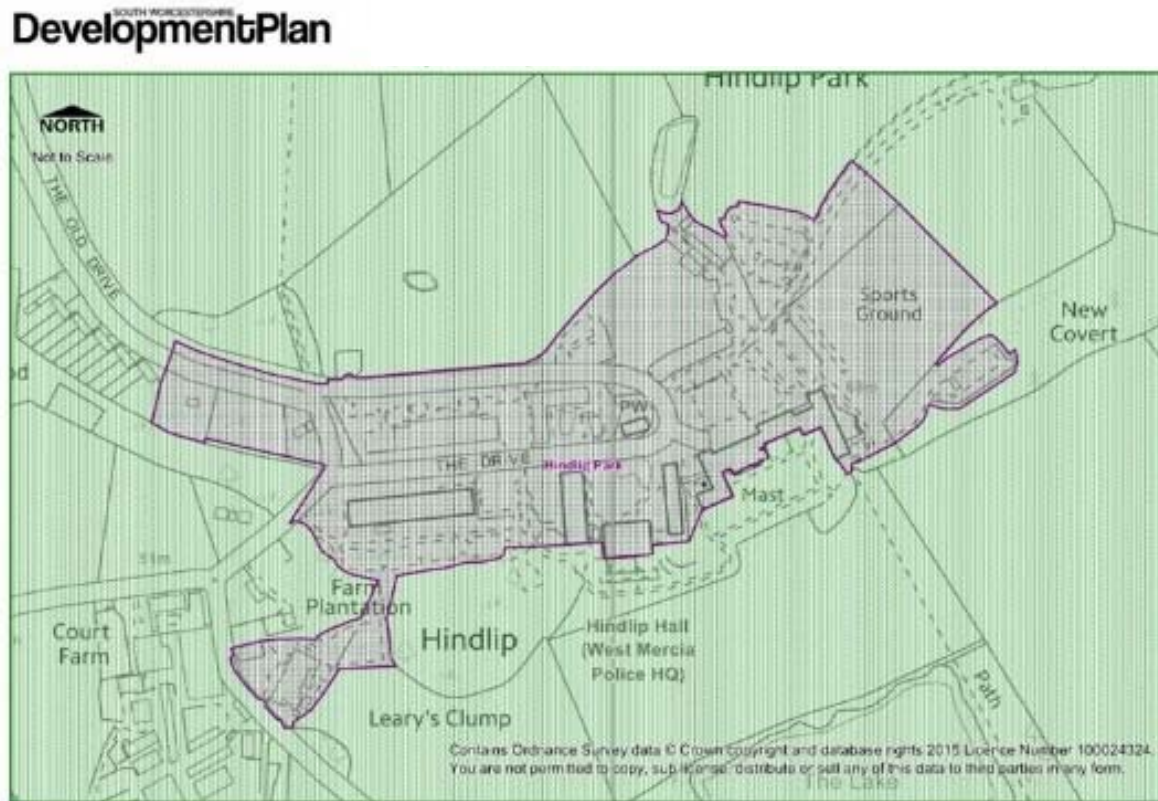


Figure 1.2 Aerial Photograph of the Hindlip Hall Site



The NPPF (2019) does not reference the MDS designation and sets out the following requirement that land should either be removed from the Green Belt (inset) or Green Belt remain washed over:

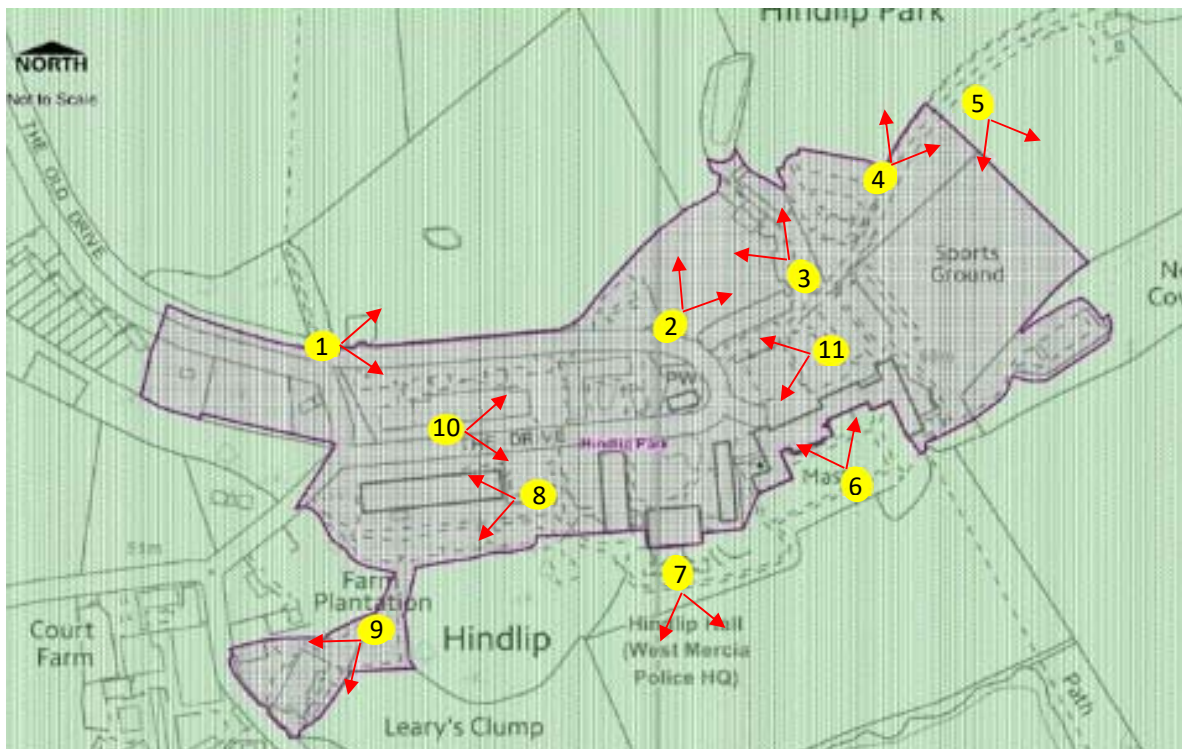
"139. When defining Green Belt boundaries, plans should: a) ensure consistency with the development plan's strategy for meeting identified requirements for sustainable development; b) not include land which it is unnecessary to keep permanently open; c) where necessary, identify areas of safeguarded land between the urban area and the Green Belt, in order to meet longer-term development needs stretching well beyond the plan period; d) make clear that the safeguarded land is not allocated for development at the present time. Planning permission for the permanent development of safeguarded land should only be granted following an update to a plan which proposes the development; e) be able to demonstrate that Green Belt boundaries will not need to be altered at the end of the plan period; and f) define boundaries clearly, using physical features that are readily recognisable and likely to be permanent."

2. Methodology

As part of the strategic assessment of the Green Belt in South Worcestershire², the Hindlip Hall site, along with other MDSs currently within the South Worcestershire Development Plan, was assessed and it recommended that the site should not be inset into the Green Belt. Access to the site was not possible at the time of the original survey. A site visit has now been undertaken (27th August 2019) and a revised site assessment undertaken based on additional observations relating to layout, density, openness and permanence, supported by site photographs (this Technical Note) for consideration by South Worcestershire Councils.

3. Updated Assessment

3.1 Illustrative Photographs of Site Character and Boundary Quality









Viewpoint 11: Looking westwards from Hindlip Hall

3.2 The Current MDS Boundary

The rationale for the precise line of the current MDS boundary is unclear. Whilst some boundaries follow clearly defined physical features, notably to the north along Old Drive, other boundaries are far from distinct, using a combination of hedgerows, woodland edges and building lines (as at the southern edge of the site where Hindlip Hall and various new-build structures are used to create a boundary). Updated Site Assessment

Topic	Criteria	Updated Assessment
General character	Location and overall setting, topography, settlement/building form, building type/age, sense of identity and unity, key focal points.	The site is atop an extended east-west ridge line at 50m-65m AOD, screened by substantial vegetation, particularly to the south. Whilst the majority of the buildings are screened (particularly in the summer months), a substantial telecommunications mast at the centre of the site draws the eye from surrounding land.
Density and layout of buildings	Degree of spaciousness/enclosure.	The site is arranged as a campus-style development, with various buildings of 2/3 storeys situated within areas of generous landscaping and car parking. The overall density of the site is moderate, with various low to medium rise buildings of modern construction to the west of the nineteenth century Hindlip Hall. Some parts of the site are visually enclosed with extensive boundary screening by tree belts and dense hedgerows. These serve to largely visually enclose the site, at least in the summer months, with only glimpsed views of site development available from the surrounding land. To the south, there are expansive views from Hindlip Hall and the Canteen/Lecture Theatre towards Worcester. With glimpsed views into the site from Hindlip Lane.
Interface with the surrounding landscape	Settlement/site depth and density, connection with the surrounding landscape including direct and filtered views to and from the settlement/site	Whilst the immediate landscape setting of the Hall has largely been lost, the site retains a connection with the wider open countryside, with filtered views from and into the site. There are substantial belts of vegetation which contain the visual impact of the buildings, particularly in the summer months.
Relationship with, and contribution to, the openness of the Green Belt	Influence of built form on the visual and physical openness of the Green Belt	Notwithstanding the substantial cumulative physical footprint of the site's buildings, there remains a moderate degree of physical and visual openness, with generous space around the site's buildings (both soft landscaping and car parking). The campus style character of the site means that the sense of a contiguous built form is limited, compared to a series of large units often set within their own curtilage.

Topic	Criteria	Updated Assessment
Contribution of the settlement to Green Belt purposes (nationally and locally defined)	Contribution to preventing sprawl, maintaining separation, preventing encroachment and providing setting	The site is judged to make a Contribution to maintaining the openness of the countryside in light of the visual and physical connection between the site and it's the wider countryside setting. The site also contains the Grade II* listed Hindlip Hall. The site is part of the Green Belt which forms the strategic gap between Droitwich Spa and Worcester, this land being judged to make a Significant Contribution to Green Belt purposes.
Potential for inseting	Judgement in light of the above	Whilst the site has been identified through designation as a MDS, this contains large areas of open land (as curtilage to buildings and wider landscaping) and some boundaries which are not defined by substantial features (such as hedgerows or building lines). If the site is inset then Green Belt policies would not apply and intensification of development (through height or density) could adversely impact the wider Green Belt in this location. In addition, the site lies within an area of Green Belt which has been assessed as making a Significant Contribution to Green Belt purposes reflecting its role in maintaining separation between Droitwich Spa and Worcester, preventing sprawl and encroachment into open countryside. Recommendation: do not inset.

3.3 Observations and Conclusions

In light of the original and updated assessments of the role of the Hindlip Hall site within the Green Belt, there are various policy approaches for addressing the future status of the site within the Green Belt. These include

1. Retain washed-over Green Belt status with no site-specific policy applied.
2. Retain washed-over Green Belt status accompanied by a policy framework for the site to include a clearly defined and justified site boundary
3. Inset the site using the current or amended MDS boundary.

In light of the updated findings of the site survey, the overall conclusions on the visual and physical openness of the site combined with the absence of clear permanent boundaries around much of the site means that **the original recommendation for not insetting the site is upheld. It is reasonable therefore to prepare a policy framework for the site to include a clearly defined and justified site boundary. The policy framework could be in the form of a SPD and include criteria based policies and a requirement for an overall masterplan.** This approach would:

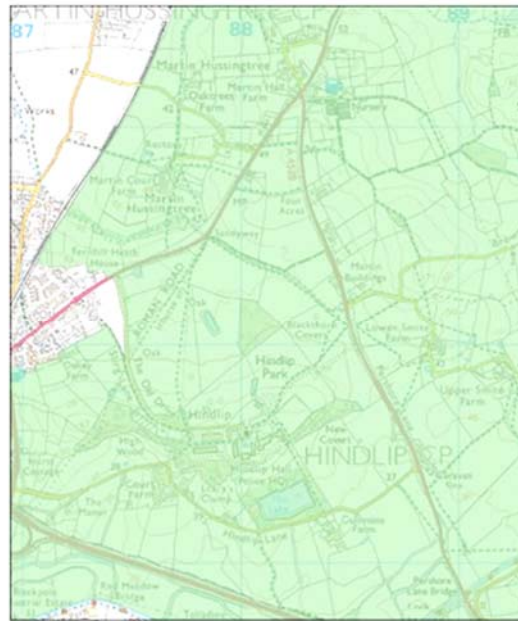
- continue to recognise the strategic sensitivity of the Green Belt in this location;
- be consistent with national Green Belt policy which requires the maintenance of openness and permanence;
- recognise the contribution of the site to the Green Belt locally;

- enable control over the form, density and height of development within the site in order to ensure that the sensitivity of the Green Belt is not compromised whilst recognising the existence of a clear plan for the evolution of the site over the short, medium and longer term;
- allow for the sensitive, masterplan-led development of the site.

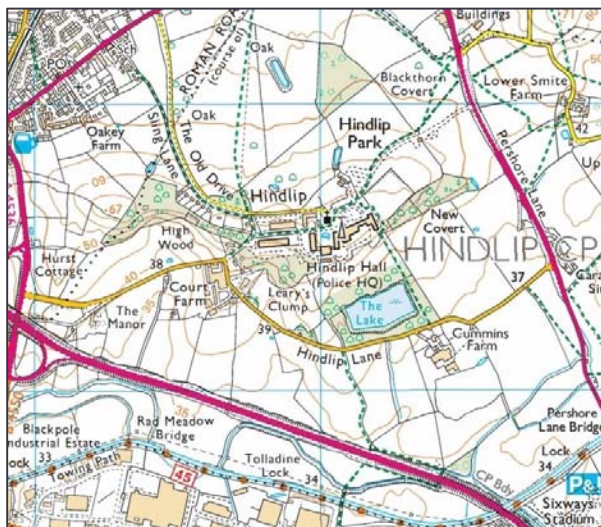
Appendix 1: Outputs from the Existing Appraisal (2018)



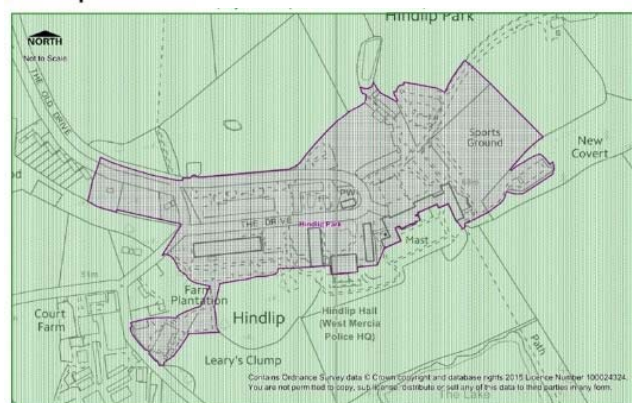
Source: Geo Digitalbase (GeoEye), GeoEye Imagery © 2015, 2014, 2013, 2012, 2011, 2010, and the 2009 year.



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number: 100024324.



Development Plan



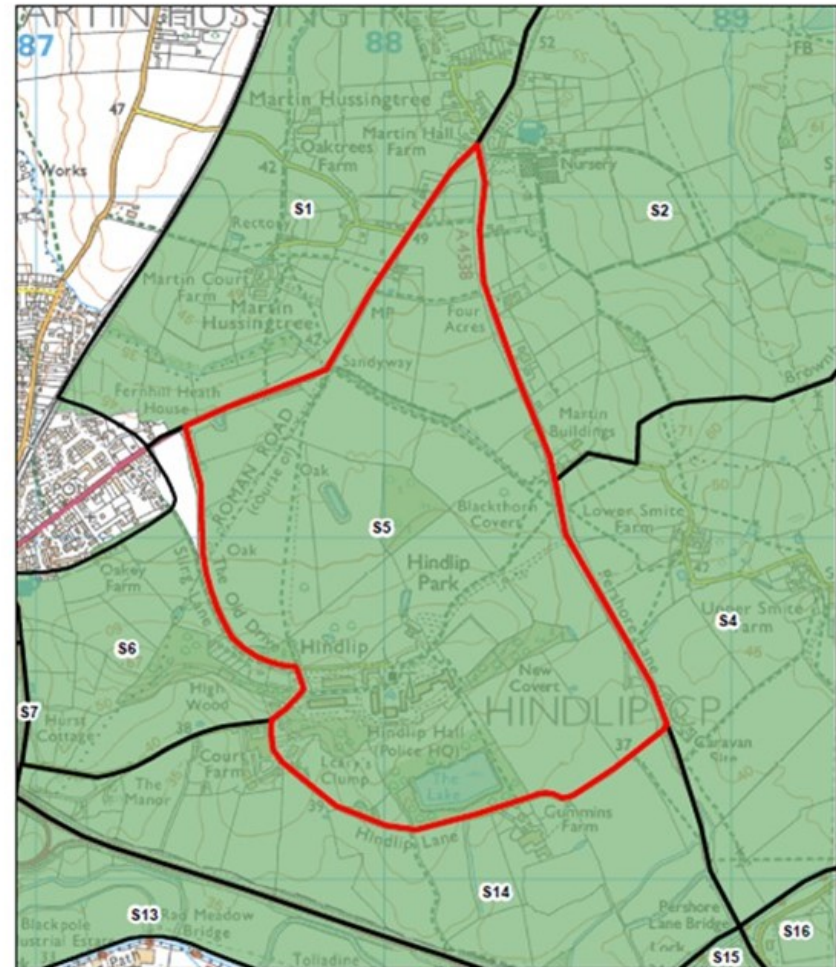
Topic	Criteria	Assessment
General character	Location and overall setting, topography, settlement/building form, building type/age, sense of identity and unity, key focal points	Focused on Hindlip Hall, this is a cluster of substantial buildings on a prominent hill-top site, albeit screened by substantial vegetation, particularly to the south. The most significant feature which draws the eye from

Topic	Criteria	Assessment
		surrounding land is the communications mast at the centre of the site.
Density and layout of buildings	Degree of spaciousness/enclosure, rear garden character	The overall density of the site is moderate to high, with various low-rise buildings of modern construction to the west of the nineteenth century Hindlip Hall.
Interface with the surrounding landscape	Settlement/site depth and density, connection with the surrounding landscape including direct and filtered views to and from the settlement/site	Whilst the original landscape setting of the Hall has largely been lost, the site retains a connection with the wider open countryside, with filtered views from and into the site.
Relationship with, and contribution to, the openness of the Green Belt	Influence of built form on the visual and physical openness of the Green Belt	Notwithstanding the substantial cumulative physical footprint of the site's buildings, there remains a moderate degree of physical and visual openness, with generous space around the site's buildings (both soft landscaping and car parking).
Contribution of the settlement to Green Belt purposes (nationally and locally defined)	Contribution to preventing sprawl, maintaining separation, preventing encroachment and providing setting	The site is judged to make a Contribution to maintaining the openness of the countryside in light of the continuing connection between the site and the wider countryside setting. The site also contains the Grade II* listed Hindlip Hall.
Potential for inseting	Judgement in light of the above	Whilst a site boundary has been identified through designation as a MDS, this contains substantial areas of open land and its boundaries are not defined by substantial features. If further developed, in density extent or height, the visual and physical openness of the Green Belt would be compromised. Recommendation: do not inset.

Appendix 2: Strategic Assessment of Green Belt Purposes (2018)



Source: Esri, DigitalGlobe, GeoEye, Earthstar Geographics, CNES/Airbus DS, USDA, USGS, AeroGRID, IGN, and the GIS User



© Crown Copyright. All rights reserved. Licence number AL100001776.



View northwestwards from Hindlip Lane (viewpoint A)



View southwards from the A4538 Pershore Lane (viewpoint B)



View northeastwards from The Old Drive (viewpoint C)

S5: Land to the between Worcester and Droitwich Spa, to the southwest of the A4538 Pershore Road, bounded to the northwest by the A38 and to the south by Hindlip Lane and to the south west by The Old Drive. Land use is predominantly arable with some woodland. Built development is centred on the significant footprint of the Worcestershire Police HQ associated with Hindlip Hall. Physical openness – high to mixed, reflecting predominantly open countryside, but the presence of the Hindlip Hall site. Visual openness – high, reflecting the presence of long- and middle-distance views across the parcel.	
Purpose & Guide Question	Contribution to Green Belt Purposes / Analysis
To check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas <i>What is the role of the parcel in preventing the extension of an existing development into open land beyond established limits, in light of the presence of significant boundaries?</i>	Contribution The land does not abut a large built-up area but supports Green Belt to the south which does. As such it contributes to fulfilling this purpose.
To prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another <i>What is the role of the parcel in preventing the merger of settlements which might occur through a reduction in the distance between them?</i>	Significant Contribution The land constitutes part of the remaining gap between Droitwich Spa and Worcester (in combination with surrounding Green Belt). As such, the land makes a significant contribution to this purpose.
To assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment <i>What is the role of the parcel in maintaining a sense of openness, particularly in light of proximity to a settlement edge?</i>	Significant Contribution Notwithstanding the cluster of development to the south associated with Hindlip Hall, the land has the quality of open countryside, related to surrounding Green Belt. The current sense of openness, which high visually and moderate to high physically, is sensitive to incremental change.
To preserve the setting and special character of historic towns <i>What is the role of the parcel in respect of the proximity to, and degree of intervisibility with, the core (such as a Conservation Area) of an historic town or settlement?</i>	Contribution The land has no immediate visual or physical connection with the historic centres of Droitwich Spa or Worcester, but nevertheless forms part of the wider countryside context of these towns.
Overall Assessment of Contribution to Green Belt Purposes	Significant Contribution Notwithstanding some intrusion by built development at Hindlip Hall, the land makes a significant contribution to the Green Belt in this location, with a high degree of visual and high to mixed physical openness. In combination with adjacent parcels, the land is a substantial part of the open land between Droitwich Spa and Worcester.

Issued byRobert Deanwood
.....**Approved by**Clive Harridge
.....**Copyright and non-disclosure notice**

The contents and layout of this report are subject to copyright owned by Wood (© Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions UK Limited 2019) save to the extent that copyright has been legally assigned by us to another party or is used by Wood under licence. To the extent that we own the copyright in this report, it may not be copied or used without our prior written agreement for any purpose other than the purpose indicated in this report. The methodology (if any) contained in this report is provided to you in confidence and must not be disclosed or copied to third parties without the prior written agreement of Wood. Disclosure of that information may constitute an actionable breach of confidence or may otherwise prejudice our commercial interests. Any third party who obtains access to this report by any means will, in any event, be subject to the Third Party Disclaimer set out below.

Third party disclaimer

Any disclosure of this report to a third party is subject to this disclaimer. The report was prepared by Wood at the instruction of, and for use by, our client named on the front of the report. It does not in any way constitute advice to any third party who is able to access it by any means. Wood excludes to the fullest extent lawfully permitted all liability whatsoever for any loss or damage howsoever arising from reliance on the contents of this report. We do not however exclude our liability (if any) for personal injury or death resulting from our negligence, for fraud or any other matter in relation to which we cannot legally exclude liability.

Management systems

This document has been produced by Wood Environment & Infrastructure Solutions UK Limited in full compliance with our management systems, which have been certified to ISO 9001, ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 by LRQA.