

Public Document Pack



Agenda Council

Time and Date

2.00 pm on Tuesday, 13th January, 2026

Place

Council Chamber - Council House

1. **Apologies**
2. **Minutes of the Meeting held on 2 December 2025** (Pages 7 - 14)
3. **Coventry Good Citizen Award**
4. **Correspondence and Announcements of the Lord Mayor**
5. **Petitions**
6. **Declarations of Interest**

Matters Left for Determination by the City Council/Recommendations for the City Council

7. **Coventry Very Light Rail** (Pages 15 - 46)

From Cabinet, 16 December 2025

It is anticipated that the following matter will be referred as a Recommendation from Cabinet, 6 January 2026. The report is attached. The relevant Recommendation will be circulated separately.

8. **Brandon Wood Nature Reserve** (Pages 47 - 74)
9. **Question Time** (Pages 75 - 82)
 - 9.1 Written Question – Booklet 1
 - 9.2 Oral Questions to Chairs of Scrutiny Boards/Chair of Scrutiny Co-ordination Committee
 - 9.3 Oral Questions to Chairs of other meetings

- 9.4 Oral Questions to Representatives on Outside Bodies
- 9.5 Oral Questions to Cabinet Members and Deputy Cabinet Members on any matter
10. **Statements**
11. **Debates**

11.1 To be moved by Councillor G Ridley and seconded by Councillor M Heaven

"This Council notes the Government's proposal to allow regional mayors to levy a tourist tax and expresses its serious concern regarding the negative impact this could have on Coventry's visitor economy. In particular, the impact on key local assets such as Coombe Abbey Hotel and heritage attractions like St Mary's Guildhall.

This Council resolves to make immediate, strong representations to the West Midlands Combined Authority and His Majesty's Government, firmly opposing the implementation of a tourist tax within the City of Coventry."

11.2 To be moved by Councillor J Gardiner and seconded by Councillor M Lapsa

"This Council values the British constitutional right for Coventry Citizens to be subject to justice as administered by a jury of their peers and calls upon the government to abandon plans to permanently further restrict the right to trial by jury."

1.3 To be moved by Councillor S Agboola and seconded by Councillor P Seaman

"This Council notes.

- The Government's decision to lift the two-child benefit cap, which will provide fairer support for families and improve outcomes for children across Coventry.
- The reinstatement of the Winter Fuel Allowance, which will offer crucial assistance to older residents and help reduce fuel poverty.

This Council believes:

- These decisions represent an important step towards tackling child poverty, supporting family wellbeing, and protecting vulnerable pensioners.
- Local authorities play a key role in working with government to ensure residents can access the support they are entitled to.

This Council resolves:

- To welcome and endorse the Government's actions as positive measures that will improve the lives of Coventry residents."

11.4 To be moved by Councillor G Lewis and seconded by Councillor E Reeves

"This Council notes:

1. The growing evidence from both public and private sector organizations that suggests that a 4 day working week can deliver significant benefits, including:
 - Improved staff wellbeing and health
 - Enhanced recruitment and retention
 - Maintained or improved productivity and efficiency
 - Reduction of spending on agency staff
2. The example of South Cambridge District Council where core services - including household waste collection, and planning - were maintained or improved, while applications for vacancies rose 120%, staff turnover fell by 40%, resident's services weren't compromised, and annual savings of £370,000 were reported.
3. That Coventry has employed the use of a 4 day week in waste services

This Council believes:

1. The recent letter from Labour's Local Government Secretary Steve Reed discouraging councils from adopting four day week models is concerning, noting that such a position may limit Coventry's ability to attract and retain skilled staff, reduce agency spend, and position it as a forward thinking employer, thereby impacting the council's reputation.
2. Decisions about the working hours and schedule of Council staff should be made by the council on the basis of the requirements of the job, the services residents receive, and the welfare of our employees.

This Council resolves:

1. To explore the possibility of a council wide adoption for a four-day week model, starting with identifying specific departments who would most benefit.
2. Engage with council staff to identify how a four day week could be implemented without disrupting services, or reducing resident satisfaction (i.e. staggering schedules).
3. Outline a timeline for any pilot and any subsequent implementation.
4. Pilot, monitor and report outcomes - including using metrics of staff wellbeing, productivity, service delivery for residents, reduction of agency costs, recruitment, and retention in any trials which take place.
5. To reply to Steve Reed advocating for more flexible and innovative approaches to local government employment practices, identifying successes from other public sector organisations and our own use of a four day week schedule."

Julie Newman, Director of Law and Governance, Council House, Coventry

Monday, 5 January 2026

Note: The person to contact about the agenda and documents for this meeting is Carolyn Sinclair/Suzanne Bennett, Governance Services email: carolyn.sinclair@coventry.gov.uk/suzanne.bennett@coventry.gov.uk

Membership: Councillors F Abbott, S Agboola, N Akhtar, P Akhtar, M Ali, R Bailey (Deputy Chair), L Bigham, J Birdi, J Blundell, R Brown, K Caan, B Christopher, G Duggins, J Gardiner, S Gray, L Harvard, G Hayre, M Heaven, P Hetherton, A Hopkins, J Innes, T Jandu, A Jobbar, S Jobbar, A Kaur, L Kelly, AS Khan, T Khan, R Lakha, R Lancaster (Chair), M Lapsa, J Lepoidevin, G Lewis, G Lloyd, P Male, K Maton, J McNicholas, C Miks, B Mosterman, M Mutton, S Nazir, J O'Boyle, E M Reeves, G Ridley, E Ruane, K Sandhu, T Sawdon, P Seaman, B Singh, R Singh, R Thay, CE Thomas, D Toulson and A Tucker

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Carolyn Sinclair/Suzanne Bennett, Governance Services

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Agenda Item 2

Coventry City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Council held at 2.00 pm on Tuesday, 2 December 2025

Present:

Members: Councillor R Lancaster (Chair)

Councillor F Abbott
Councillor S Agboola
Councillor N Akhtar
Councillor M Ali
Councillor R Bailey
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor J Birdi
Councillor J Blundell
Councillor K Caan
Councillor B Christopher
Councillor J Gardiner
Councillor S Gray
Councillor L Harvard
Councillor G Hayre
Councillor M Heaven
Councillor P Hetherton
Councillor A Hopkins
Councillor T Jandu
Councillor A Jobbar
Councillor S Jobbar
Councillor A Kaur
Councillor L Kelly
Councillor AS Khan
Councillor R Lakha

Councillor M Lapsa
Councillor J Lepoidevin
Councillor G Lloyd
Councillor P Male
Councillor K Maton
Councillor J McNicholas
Councillor C Miks
Councillor B Mosterman
Councillor M Mutton
Councillor S Nazir
Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor E M Reeves
Councillor G Ridley
Councillor E Ruane
Councillor K Sandhu
Councillor T Sawdon
Councillor P Seaman
Councillor B Singh
Councillor R Singh
Councillor CE Thomas
Councillor D Toulson
Councillor A Tucker

Honorary Aldermen: H Fitzpatrick, D Skinner, T Skipper

Apologies: Councillor P Akhtar, R Brown, G Duggins, J Innes, G Lewis and R Thay

Public Business

54. Minutes of the Meeting held on 14 October 2025

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 October 2025 were agreed and signed as a true record.

55. Correspondence and Announcements of the Lord Mayor

Lord Mayor's Christmas Carol Service

The Lord Mayor reminded Members of the upcoming Christmas Carol Service which would be taking place on Monday 8th December at 7.30pm in Holy Trinity Church.

The event was an opportunity to bring together the community in song, reflection, and celebration and would feature traditional carols, readings, and music performed in the stunning surroundings of one of Coventry's most historic churches.

56. **Petitions**

RESOLVED that the following petitions be referred to the appropriate Cabinet Member/City Council body/external organisation:

1. **Request for a one-way system at Brookvale Avenue roundabout – 35 signatures, presented by Councillor CE Thomas.**
2. **Support the Coventry Market Traders – 549 signatures, presented by Councillor J Blundell.**
3. **Reject any plans for the installation of a 20m phone mast in the Earlsdon Conservation Area – 164 signatures, presented by Councillor A Tucker.**
4. **Request the installation of a traffic light pedestrian crossing on Keresley Road at Old Shepherd pub and bus stop – 146 signatures, presented by Councillor B Christopher.**
5. **Issues with inappropriately parked vehicles on Adam Road – 7 signatures, presented by Council AS Khan.**

57. **Declarations of Interest**

There were no declarations of interest.

58. **Licensing Act 2003 - Review of Statement of Licensing Policy 2026-2031**

Further to Minute 48 of the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities meeting, the City Council considered a report of the Director of Law and Governance, which set out the outcome of the eight-week consultation undertaken on the review of the Council's Statement of Licensing Policy for the Licensing Act 2003 and sought approval of a revised policy for the period 2026-2031.

The report had also been considered by the Licensing and Regulatory Committee at its meeting held on 18th November 2025 and they had supported the proposed revised policy.

The Licensing Act 2003 required each Licensing Authority to prepare and publish a Statement of Licensing Policy. The Policy set out how the Licensing Authority intended to approach its licensing responsibilities and promote the four licensing objectives of:

- Preventing of Crime & Disorder
- Promotion of Public Safety
- Prevention of Public Nuisance
- Protection of Children from Harm

The Policy was required to be renewed every five years and was subject to a full consultation process.

The current Statement of Licensing Policy came into effect on 16th March 2021, to cover the period up to 16th March 2026.

At the meetings of the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities on 28th July and the Licensing and Regulatory Committee on 5th August 2025, a report was considered on the draft revised Statement of Licensing Policy and the Director of Law and Governance was authorised to consult on its contents.

Public consultation took place between 12th August and 7th October 2025, which included mail shots to representatives of the licensed trade, clubs and key partners; formally writing to the Chief Officers of the responsible authorities; mail shots to businesses and organisations; and wider public consultation through the City Council website.

There were no major changes to the policy except for some minor wording amendments following the consultation, which were highlighted in the draft revised policy at Appendix 1 of the report.

The revised draft Statement of Licensing Policy was also attached as an appendix to the report. It was recommended that the revised draft Statement of Licensing Policy be recommended for adoption, to take effect from 16th March 2026.

The Cabinet Member, at his meeting on 24 November 2025, had noted the results of the consultation and the comments of the Licensing and Regulatory Committee.

RESOLVED that the City Council adopt the revised Statement of Licensing Policy attached as Appendix 1 to the report.

59. **Polling District and Polling Place Review**

The City Council considered a report of the Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities which sought approval of the revised polling districts and polling place scheme for Coventry, in accordance with Section 18C of the Representation of the People Act 1983.

Appended to the report were:

- Proposed revisions to the polling district and polling place scheme.
- Maps for each ward detailing the suggested polling district with the future proposed polling district names.
- The Acting Returning Officer's recommendations regarding polling stations.

The Review was required following the conclusion of the Local Government Boundary Commission for England's (LGBCE) review of electoral arrangements, which introduced new ward boundaries effective from the May 2026 elections.

The Council was legally required to ensure that polling districts and polling places aligned with the revised ward boundaries and continued to provide accessible and convenient voting facilities for all electors. The Review also addressed concerns from previous elections, including:

- Accessibility issues at existing polling stations, particularly portacabins, which often failed to meet minimum standards for wheelchair users despite investment in ramps and temporary infrastructure.
- Challenges associated with using schools as polling places, including restricted access and increased travel distances for electors.
- Rising venue hire costs and limited availability of suitable alternatives in some areas.

RESOLVED that the City Council:

- (a) Approves the revised polling district and polling place scheme, as detailed in the Appendices to the report.**
- (b) Approves that, if any further polling places become unavailable prior to an election, authority be delegated to the Director of Law & Governance, following consultation with the Leader, Deputy Leader and appropriate Ward Councillors, to make amendments to the scheme as required.**

60. Question Time

Councillors N Akhtar, K Caan, AS Khan, Hetherton and O'Boyle provided written answers to the questions set out in the Questions Booklet, together with oral responses to supplementary questions at the meeting. The following Members answered oral questions put to them by other Members as set out below, together with supplementary questions on the same matters:

	Questions asked by	Question put to	Subject matter
1	Councillor A Kaur	Councillor K Caan	Place Partner with Sport England
2	Councillor A Tucker	Councillor K Sandhu	10-year lease for Earlsdon Library
3	Councillor J Gardiner	Councillor P Hetherton	Public health funerals
4	Councillor G Ridley	Councillor P Hetherton	Removing flags
5	Councillor P Male	Councillor J O'Boyle	Visitor levy for tourism in Coventry
6	Councillor P Male	Councillor AS Khan	Prison sentence reform
7	Councillor R Lakha	Councillor P Seaman	Number of children taken out of poverty
8	Councillor M Lapsa	Councillor P Hetherton	Completion of installation of bollards on Avon Street
9	Councillor A Tucker	Councillor K Sandhu	Reform UK proposals re walking 5m to school
10	Councillor M Lapsa	Councillor AS Khan	Attendance at the Holodomor Remembrance

61. Statements (if any)

There were no statements.

62. Debate - Government Investment to Tackle Homelessness and Rough Sleeping

The following Motion was moved by Councillor N Akhtar and seconded by Councillor S Agboola:

"This Council welcomes the Labour Government's announcement of an £84 million investment to tackle homelessness and rough sleeping this winter, a clear sign of renewed national leadership and a commitment to rebuilding vital public services after years of cuts and underfunding.

This funding will help local authorities strengthen their resources, improve prevention services, and provide better support to rough sleepers and those at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Council further recognises that this investment represents an important step toward reversing the damage caused by the previous Government's policies, which contributed to rising homelessness and rough sleeping across the country."

RESOLVED that the Motion, as set out above, be adopted.

63. Debate - Retain 100% of Net Revenue from Speeding Enforcement Fines

The following Motion was moved by Councillor J Lepoidevin and seconded by Councillor M Heaven:

"This Council calls upon the Secretary of State for Transport to implement a policy change to allow local authorities and/or their designated Road Safety Partnerships to retain 100% of all net revenue from speeding enforcement fines. This retention must be provided on the condition that this funding is ring-fenced exclusively for local road safety initiatives."

RESOLVED that the Motion as set out above be not adopted.

64. Debate - Convert Unused Council-owned Land into Community Gardens or Shared Green Spaces

The following Motion was moved by Councillor M Lapsa and seconded by Councillor J Gardiner:

"This Council commits to investigate the potential to convert suitable unused or underutilised council owned land into community gardens or shared green spaces, to promote physical and mental wellbeing and for local food production"

The following amendment was moved by Councillor J O'Boyle, seconded by Councillor A Jobbar and, in accordance with paragraph 15.1.7 of the Constitution accepted by Councillor Lapsa, thus becoming the substantive Motion:

“At the end of the Motion, insert the following words: “subject to a full Cabinet report.”

The amended Motion now to read:

“This Council commits to investigate the potential to convert suitable unused or underutilised council owned land into community gardens or shared green spaces, to promote physical and mental wellbeing and for local food production subject to a full Cabinet report.”

RESOLVED that the above amended Motion be unanimously adopted.

65. **Debate - Minimise the Use of Pesticides**

The following Motion was moved by Councillor S Gray and seconded by Councillor E Reeves:

“Council notes:

- That pesticides is a term that includes herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and nematicides
- That pesticide use creates health risks for the workers using them and for people who use an area that has been recently sprayed
- That pesticides reduce biodiversity, often killing plants and animals that were not the target
- That there are several effective alternatives to chemical pesticides
- That around half of UK councils have taken steps to reduce the use of chemical pesticides, with several councils banning their use completely

Therefore council resolves:

- To minimise the use of pesticides on council owned and managed land with immediate effect
- To work towards replacing pesticides with other, less risky, methods of pest control
- To lobby the Coventry MPs to support Sian Berry's Private Members Bill "Plant Protection products (Prohibition on Public Sector Use)", which is scheduled to have its second reading on 12th December.”

The following amendment was moved by Councillor P Hetherton, seconded by Councillor S Nazir and, in accordance with paragraph 15.1.7 of the Constitution, accepted by Councillor Gray thus becoming the substantive motion:

“Delete the whole of the eighth bullet point which starts with “To lobby Coventry MPs...” and replace with the following bullet point:

- “To continue to review the use of pesticides with all relevant bodies”

The amended Motion now to read:

“Council notes:

- That pesticides is a term that includes herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, and nematicides
- That pesticide use creates health risks for the workers using them and for people who use an area that has been recently sprayed
- That pesticides reduce biodiversity, often killing plants and animals that were not the target
- That there are several effective alternatives to chemical pesticides
- That around half of UK councils have taken steps to reduce the use of chemical pesticides, with several councils banning their use completely

Therefore Council resolves:

- To minimise the use of pesticides on council owned and managed land with immediate effect
- To work towards replacing pesticides with other, less risky, methods of pest control
- To continue to review the use of pesticides with all relevant bodies

RESOLVED that the above amended Motion be unanimously adopted.

(Meeting closed at 4.50 pm)

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Agenda Item 7

Council – 13 January 2026

**Recommendation from Cabinet
16th December 2025**

Coventry City Council

Minutes of the Meeting of Cabinet held at 2.00 pm on
Tuesday, 16 December 2025

Present:

Members:

Councillor A S Khan (Chair)
Councillor N Akhtar
Councillor L Bigham
Councillor R Brown
Councillor K Caan
Councillor P Hetherton
Councillor J O'Boyle
Councillor K Sandhu
Councillor P Seaman

Non-Voting Deputy

Cabinet Members:

Councillor S Agboola
Councillor P Akhtar
Councillor G Hayre
Councillor S Nazir
Councillor D Toulson

Non-Voting Opposition

Members:

Councillor J Gardiner
Councillor S Gray (Substitute for Councillor E Reeves)
Councillor P Male
Councillor G Ridley

Other Non-Voting

Members:

Councillor R Lakha
Councillor G Lloyd

Employees (by Directorate):

Chief Executive

J Nugent (Chief Executive)

City Services

M Adams (Interim Director of City Services), M O'Connell

Finance and Resources

B Hastie (Director of Finance and Resources), P Helm, T Pinks

Innovation

C Knight (Director of Innovation)

Law and Governance

J Newman (Director of Law and Governance), M Salmon,
C Taylor

Apologies:

Councillor G Duggins
Councillor A Jobbar
Councillor L Kelly
Councillor E Reeves
Councillor R Singh

RECOMMENDATION

Public Business

42. Declarations of Interest

There were no disclosable pecuniary interests.

46. Coventry Very Light Rail

Cabinet considered a report of the Director of Innovation, that would also be considered at the meeting of Council on 13th January 2026, on the Coventry Very Light Rail research and development project

The Coventry Very Light Rail (CVLR) demonstration in the city centre during Summer 2025 was a major success. The mission was to create a tram system that could be installed quickly and at less than half the cost of conventional tram systems: the ground-breaking track was installed in just over eight-weeks and proved that the Council were on target to achieve the target installation cost of circa £10m/km.

The purpose of the report was to seek approval for the construction of an 800m twin track City Centre Demonstrator (CCD) that would operate in a live traffic environment from Coventry Railway Station to Coventry University Technology Park (see Appendix 1 to the report for the route plan). The demonstration phase built on everything learned in the summer and would help to lay the foundations for the first commercial route by:

1. Operating the CVLR vehicle with live traffic – including the installation of an autonomous ready vehicle control system integrated with the city's traffic signal control system.
2. Providing rides for the public and stakeholders to demonstrate how the vehicle has evolved since the On Road Test (ORT) in June 2025 and to take feedback on the system.
3. Demonstrating at scale, using the learnings from the ORT, the speed of installation and affordability of the CVLR track.
4. Expediting the design and delivery process.
5. Utilising learning to inform the business case and design of Coventry's first commercial route and, more widely, to continue to stimulate national and global commercial interest.

The 800m route was intended to form part of the proposed first commercial route (subject to business case approval) running from the railway station to the West Midlands Investment Zone (Greenpower Park), with potential to extend northwards from the railway station through the city centre to connect to Pool Meadow, University Hospital Coventry and Warwickshire (UHCW) and to a Park and Ride at Ansty Park. The 800m demonstrator section would be delivered using allocated grant funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Funding (CRSTS) and was scheduled to be constructed by March 2027. Further funding would be sought from the Transport for City Region (TCR) fund, which replaced CRSTS from 1 April 2027.

As an added benefit, in October 2027 the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) World Congress was being staged at the NEC. This provided an excellent opportunity to showcase, to a global audience the benefits of CVLR using it to carry delegates to the National Transport Design Centre (on the Technology Park) to showcase Coventry's ground-breaking transport innovations.

RESOLVED that Cabinet recommends that Council approves:

- 1) The installation of the CVLR slab track and a short period of operation, of the City Centre Demonstrator (CCD) from Coventry Railway Station to Coventry University Technology Park in a live traffic environment will follow the release of the next phase of approved funding by the DfT.**
- 2) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to operate CVLR in a live traffic environment subject to risks being appropriately mitigated.**
- 3) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation to secure the necessary Statutory approvals to construct CCD.**
- 4) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to enter into all necessary legal agreements for the CCD.**
- 5) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, Director of Regeneration and Economy and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to agree the award of contract(s) and for the Council to enter into all necessary contracts, including but not limited to constructing and operating the CCD.**

- 6) **Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to enter into the appropriate lease agreements for associated infrastructure required to deliver a modified, enhanced CVLR system and its potential to facilitate the construction of conventional tramways to prove out the advanced slab track capabilities.**
- 7) **Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to, subject to the necessary funding being secured, initiate the business case work for a commercial route in Coventry.**

Cabinet
Council

16 December 2025
13 January 2026

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change – Councillor J O’Boyle

Director approving submission of the report:

Director of Innovation

Ward(s) affected:

All

Title: Coventry Very Light Rail

Is this a key decision?

Yes - the proposals involve financial implications in excess of £1m per annum.

Executive summary:

The Coventry Very Light Rail (CVLR) demonstration in the city centre during Summer 2025 was a major success. Our mission is to create a tram system that can be installed quickly and at less than half the cost of conventional tram systems: our ground-breaking track was installed in just over eight weeks and proved that we are on target to achieve our target installation cost of circa £10m/km.

The purpose of this report is to seek approval for the construction of an 800m twin track City Centre Demonstrator (CCD) that will operate in a live traffic environment from Coventry railway station to Coventry University Technology Park (see Appendix 1 to the report for the route plan). This demonstration phase builds on everything learned in the summer and will help to lay the foundations for the first commercial route by:

1. Operating the CVLR vehicle with live traffic – including the installation of an autonomous ready vehicle control system integrated with the city’s traffic signal control system.
2. Providing rides for the public and stakeholders to demonstrate how the vehicle has evolved since the On Road Test (ORT) in June 2025 and to take feedback on the system
3. Demonstrating at scale, using the learnings from the ORT, the speed of installation and affordability of the CVLR track
4. Expediting the design and delivery process

5. Utilising learning to inform the business case and design of Coventry's first commercial route and, more widely, to continue to stimulate national and global commercial interest

The 800m route is intended to form part of the proposed first commercial route (subject to business case approval) running from the railway station to the West Midlands Investment Zone (Greenpower Park), with potential to extend northwards from the railway station through the city centre to connect to Pool Meadow, University Hospital Coventry & Warwickshire (UHCW) and to a Park and Ride at Ansty Park. The 800 m demonstrator section will be delivered using allocated grant funding from the City Region Sustainable Transport Funding (CRSTS) and is scheduled to be constructed by March 2027. Further funding will be sought from the Transport for City Region (TCR) fund, which replaces CRSTS from 1 April 2027.

As an added benefit in October 2027 the Intelligent Transport Systems (ITS) World Congress is being staged at the NEC. This provides an excellent opportunity to showcase, to a global audience the benefits of CVLR using it to carry delegates to the National Transport Design Centre (on the Technology Park) to showcase Coventry's ground-breaking transport innovations.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to recommend that the Council approve:

- 1) The installation of the CVLR slab track and a short period of operation, of the City Centre Demonstrator (CCD) from Coventry Railway Station to Coventry University Technology Park in a live traffic environment will follow the release of the next phase of approved funding by the DfT.
- 2) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to operate CVLR in a live traffic environment subject to risks being appropriately mitigated.
- 3) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation to secure the necessary Statutory approvals to construct CCD.
- 4) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to enter into all necessary legal agreements for the CCD.
- 5) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, Director of Regeneration and Economy and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to agree the award of contract(s) and for the Council to enter into all necessary contracts, including but not limited to constructing and operating the CCD.

- 6) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to enter into the appropriate lease agreements for associated infrastructure required to deliver a modified, enhanced CVLR system and its potential to facilitate the construction of conventional tramways to prove out the advanced slab track capabilities.
- 7) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to, subject to the necessary funding being secured, initiate the business case work for a commercial route in Coventry.

Council is requested to approve:

- 1) The installation of the CVLR slab track and a short period of operation, of the City Centre Demonstrator (CCD) from Coventry Railway Station to Coventry University Technology Park in a live traffic environment will follow the release of the next phase of approved funding by the DfT.
- 2) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to operate CVLR in a live traffic environment subject to risks being appropriately mitigated.
- 3) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation to secure the necessary Statutory approvals to construct CCD.
- 4) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to enter into all necessary legal agreements for the CCD.
- 5) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to agree the award of contract(s) and for the Council to enter into all necessary contracts, including but not limited to constructing and operating the CCD.
- 6) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to enter into the appropriate lease agreements for associated infrastructure required to deliver a modified, enhanced CVLR system and its potential to facilitate the construction of conventional tramways to prove out the advanced slab track capabilities.

- 7) Delegated authority to the Director of Innovation, following consultation with the Director of Law and Governance, the Director of Finance and Resources, the Director of Regeneration and Economy, and Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change, to, subject to the necessary funding being secured, initiate the business case work for a commercial route in Coventry.

List of Appendices included:

The following appendices are attached to the report:

Appendix 1 – City Centre Demonstrator (CCD) Route

Appendix 2 - Equalities Impact Assessment

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents

Council: Implementing the Devolution Agreement – Provision for Mayoral West Midlands Combined Authority 31 May 2016

Cabinet: City Centre South 24th January 2017

Cabinet: Connecting Coventry Strategic Transport Investment Programme 24th January 2017

Cabinet: 2018/19 Transportation and Highway Maintenance Capital Report, 6th March 2018

Cabinet: Coventry Very Light Rail, 12th October 2021

Cabinet: Transportation and Highway Maintenance Capital Programme, 15th March 2022

Cabinet: City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement, 6th September 2022

Cabinet: Coventry Very Light Rail, 7th January 2025

All previous reports are available via the Council's website:

<http://democraticservices.coventry.gov.uk/mgListCommittees.aspx?bcr=1>

Has it or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

Yes - 13th January 2026

Report title: Coventry Very Light Rail

1. Context (or background)

- 1.1 Coventry Very Light Rail (CVLR) is a pioneering research and development project, supported by the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA) and the Department for Transport (DfT) with a £40.5m funding allocation as part of the City Region Sustainable Transport Settlement (CRSTS). Previous Cabinet reports document the context and reasons for delivering the programme.
- 1.2 The project is now gaining widespread attention due to its innovative and cost effective unique trackform and prototype vehicle, which has successfully completed an on-road test in a live, controlled, city centre environment. Around 3,000 people travelled on the vehicle on a short section of track built over a two-month period on Queen Victoria Road and Greyfriars Road, with the vehicle operating on this track over a four-week period.
- 1.3 Prior to the on road test, the vehicle had accumulated over 1000km under test at the Very Light Rail National Innovation Centre (VLRNIC) in Dudley and the track had also been robustly tested at the Council's own depot in Whitley, where a section of track had been laid on an access road used by the Council's refuse vehicles on a daily basis with over two million tonnes passing over it to date. With the data from both test sites, and now from the ORT, we have more certainty about the track and vehicle capabilities. The test tracks have outperformed expectations, and this success has led to the development of an advanced CVLR slab track, known as 'universal track,' which could have applications for conventional Light Rail schemes as well as CVLR.
- 1.4 We are now at the point where the next step for Coventry will be to construct a twin-track, longer demonstration section using the CVLR track and operate a modified new CVLR vehicle. The key aim will be to demonstrate that the track can be installed in a more complex environment at speed and within the cost envelope anticipated and that the vehicle can operate in live traffic.
- 1.5 The specific purpose of the City Centre Demonstrator is to:
 1. Operate the CVLR vehicle in live traffic – including the installation of an autonomous ready vehicle control system integrated with the city's traffic signal control system.
 2. Provide rides for the public, key stakeholders and visitors to the ITS World Congress to obtain further feedback on the system
 3. Demonstrate at scale, using the learnings from the ORT, the speed of installation and affordability of the CVLR track.
 4. Expedite the design and delivery process.
 5. Use the resulting evidence and data to inform the business case and design of Coventry's first commercial route and, more widely, to stimulate national and global commercial interest.
- 1.6 The CVLR vehicle is currently undergoing performance analysis following ORT. In order for the vehicle to achieve the required Case for Safety to permit running in live traffic a new vehicle will be built. This follows an analysis of the costs of modifying the existing vehicle, which showed it is more cost effective to build a new vehicle. There

is sufficient funding within the allocation to do this. This will enable feedback and learning to be incorporated in the new vehicle whilst the original vehicle can continue to be used to trial further innovations. Discussions with local manufacturers have confirmed that delivery of the new vehicle can be achieved in time for the demonstration runs in Autumn 2027.

- 1.7 Stabling, with basic maintenance facilities for the vehicle, will be provided on Coventry University land (as indicated in Appendix 1 to the report) to maintain vehicle performance and protect the vehicle from damage overnight. This will be the subject of a planning application.
- 1.8 During delivery, opportunities will be taken to improve pedestrian and cycle routes, especially in the vicinity of Junction 5 on the ring road, as the CCD route will pass through the southern side of the junction.
- 1.9 In the process of delivering CCD, we will be working closely with utilities companies with a view to leaving the majority of their equipment in situ and providing ducting where appropriate. The successful utility trials that were undertaken as part of the ORT demonstrated that access to equipment under the track can be gained in most cases without having to lift the track.
- 1.10 The CCD route will also potentially form the first section of the wider CVLR network that is in development, with a planned mass transit route connecting the city centre to Greenpower Park and the wider Investment Zone already under investigation as part of the regional VLR programme funded through CRSTS.
- 1.11 As well as offering a solution for Coventry, CVLR could benefit many towns and cities world-wide in the drive to combat climate change. Evidence suggests that rail based public transport systems stimulate modal shift, more than other forms of public transport, thanks to their permanence and quality of service. An integrated transport network, providing appropriate sustainable alternatives for individual journeys, is necessary to drive modal shift. Furthermore, this Coventry innovation offers the potential to create a new manufacturing sector, creating new jobs and skills in the city and wider region.
- 1.12 In parallel to delivering the 800m city centre demonstrator, the CVLR team will collaborate with TfWM and industry experts to further develop Universal Track (as mentioned in paragraph 1.3 of the report). The universal track could be game changing for the industry, as it will mean that standard trams could operate on it, due to the shallow depth and high weight bearing qualities of the slab. This will potentially offer enhanced performance and will benefit other cities as it will be cheaper and quicker to install than traditional light rail track, meaning less disruption to residents, visitors and businesses. To test this development, the team is working with Midland Metro and other tram operators to identify opportunities to trial universal track.
- 1.13 The project is generating world-wide interest, with approaches from interested parties who are keen to see the CVLR system demonstrated to prove the concept. Universal track will open more markets looking to capitalise on the cost savings from not having to re-locate utilities due to the shallow depth and high weight bearing qualities of the slab. The time savings from CVLR track installation are also appealing to other cities

that are keen to minimise disruption to the public and businesses during construction. CCC hold the patents for the technology and are therefore in prime position to exploit the commercial opportunities.

1.14 To increase the commercial opportunity, the next step will build upon ORT to now demonstrate how the whole system technology can integrate into a live City transport network.

1.15 As CVLR continues to be considered a research and development project, there is independent scrutiny of the test results, and an independent review panel (IRP) is in place. The IRP, comprising a number of industry experts, is assessing the outputs/ technical compliance of the ORT and the recommendations from the IRP will be known prior to DfT releasing the funding for construction.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

Option 1 - Recommended – Approve the installation and operation of 800m of twin-track CCD.

2.1. The purpose of CCD is tabled in paragraph 1.5 of the report, but in addition CCD will enable us to:

- Develop the whole system, particularly the vehicle, to integrate into live traffic.
- Showcase the CVLR technology and system to a global audience during the ITS Congress in October 2027, and with accessibility groups, politicians, funders, stakeholders and future investors.
- Further collect technical data to enable the CVLR system to be commercialised.
- Provide greater certainty over capital costs for future business case submissions to secure funding for commercial routes in Coventry and beyond.
- To demonstrate the potential for CVLR to operate autonomously and thereby reducing costs.

2.2. It is intended that the vehicle will be operational for a limited period, at set times during the day. It will offer opportunities for residents and visitors to the ITS congress, as well as partners and possible future investors the chance to experience the system via escorted rides.

2.3. CCC will procure a competent operator who will hold the relevant licences to operate the system. The intention is to procure an operator that will be responsible for the operation of the CVLR system under contract to Coventry City Council and will be the duty holder undertaking both the Infrastructure Manager and Transport Undertaking roles under ROGS 2006. As such they will be responsible for ensuring the safe operation of CVLR during the period of operation and provide the necessary contractual protections for the Council.

2.4. The cost of the CCD will be funded from the current approved CRSTS budget. A change control for the initial section (Stage Gate 3A) to cover the 'prepare to construct' element was approved by DfT on 19 May 2025.

- 2.5. As with any new and innovative project, there are a number of associated risks. The programme risk register is regularly monitored and updated with oversight from Finance, Legal and Procurement.
- 2.6. To mitigate these risks, and to ensure the system operates safely, we are working closely with the Independent Review Panel (IRP) and the Office of Road and Rail (ORR) through our appointed Independent Competent Person (ICP). Stage gate 3B funding cannot be released without agreement from the IRP, who will assess all technical evidence, the case for safety, project costs and risk, with recommendations being presented to the DfT's Roads Investment Committee for approval. We cannot operate without the above and a letter of 'no objection' from the ICP. (Risk is also covered in Section 5 of this report). In addition, CVLR will also be subject to road safety audits (RSA) as is the case for all highway schemes.

Option 2 – Not Recommended – not to proceed with CCD.

- 2.7. This is discounted due to the positive outcomes from the ORT, the need to develop the commercial potential of the CVLR system, the support from WMCA and DfT for continuing with the CVLR programme, and the long-term benefits for Coventry's transport network, along with the potential to create local jobs and economic growth that will be realised through progressing with the development of the CVLR system.
- 2.8. As this is a research and development project, we must collect accurate data and provide the necessary evidence to utility companies, to give them confidence that their apparatus can be left in situ in most cases. Making sure the utility companies are on board is an essential part of the business case for CVLR and its wider adoption. Utilities companies are fully engaged with the project and attended sessions during the On Road Test in June and in August 2025 to provide further confidence in the ability to leave utilities equipment in situ wherever possible.
- 2.9. Installation of CCD also means that we are preparing the city for a first commercial route that would ultimately connect the Investment Zone to the Railway Station and onwards to Pool Meadow and UHCW.
- 2.10. Not proceeding will compromise the benefits of the grant funded investment already made to get the project to this stage. To date the CVLR programme has reaped positive results from the monitoring of both track and vehicle from the test sites, positive reactions from both public and industry sources to the ORT and has received continued support from both DfT and the WMCA to proceed with the second CCD.
- 2.11. CCD is essential to provide further data to feed into the business case work related to a future CVLR network for the city, building on existing mass transit studies (funded through TfWM) that are underway.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1. Engagement with the Friargate Resident Liaison Group was held at the Council House 10 July 2025 with delegations from the Council and Stoney Road Area Residents (STAR) to review CVLR to date and discuss the future for the CCD. Several questions

regarding the reasons for the route were asked and responses provided from the Director of Innovation.

- 3.2. A letter and leaflet, explaining the City Centre Demonstrator plans were delivered to all nearby residents and businesses during week commencing 28 July 2025.
- 3.3. During ORT qualitative surveys were undertaken with visitors. The ORT was well-received by the public, with 85% of people surveyed agreeing they would like to use CVLR regularly.
- 3.4. During November 2025 drop-ins were offered to Park Road businesses and residents and the feedback gathered will be taken into consideration as we design and install the 800m of track.
- 3.5. Further engagement on CCD will take place over the coming months.

4. Timetable for implementing this decision

- 4.1. The CRSTS funding is a 5-year programme from 1 April 2022 – 31 March 2027. Funding has been released to enable CCD design and the procurement of long lead items. Colas Rail Ltd are engaged through their existing contract with CCC. Once funding approval is obtained, the contract for construction can be let, an operator will be procured, and delivery will begin as soon as is practically possible. Construction of the route will take place in 2026/2027 with the CCD operational for public rides in Autumn 2027.

5. Comments from Director of Finance and Resources and Director of Law and Governance

5.1. Financial Implications

- 5.2. The WMCA is the accountable body for the CRSTS funding and grant agreements are put in place between the WMCA and the Council to agree outputs for each stage, the stage gates have been agreed with DfT and WMCA. The CRSTS allocation for CVLR is £40.5m, the Grant Aid agreement for which requires a local (match) contribution of £3.2m. This has previously been approved by Cabinet on 12 October 2021. The Table below illustrates the Stage Gate funding released to date and the expected outcomes for each stage. The team have now finalised Stage Gate 2 outcomes and have initiated Stage Gate 3A deliverables.

Stage Gate	Key Outcomes	Status
1 – R&D Vehicle & Track	Performance tested vehicle with an appropriate safety case that demonstrates how the vehicle can be operated 3 Track Test Sites with data that demonstrates that the track is performing as, or better than, expected	Spent

2 – On Road Test (ORT) Construction and Demonstration Rides	CVLR Track installed for an On Road Test (ORT) of 220m section in Coventry City Centre with vehicle operation in a controlled environment. Approved Case for Safety Partial implementation of City Centre Traffic Management.	Spent 90% and remaining 10% committed
3A – Preparation for Construction of City Centre Demonstrator (CCD)	Vehicle performance and component analysis to develop the Gen 2 specification. Commercial strategy analysis and development. Statutory occupier engagement and process development. Slab track development for standard light rail applications and engineering complexities. Route design for CCD route. Systems integration and lessons learnt.	Released by DfT 19 th May Spend initiated
3B – Construction of CCD	Construction of the ITS route – which is 800m between Coventry Rail Station and Coventry University Technology Park. Modified new Gen1 vehicle. Lessons learnt documentation	To be released (subject to Independent Review Panel of Stage Gate 2 and DfT approval – targeting Jan 26 for release)
CRSTS CVLR Funding		40,500,000
CCC Match Contribution¹		3,200,000
Total		43,700,000

- 5.3. To date, CVLR research and development has been delivered within the budgets set aside, with contingency included in cost estimates for any potential cost overruns.
- 5.4. The IRP assessed the financial forecasts for scheme implementation before Stage Gate 2 funding was released to construct the showcase. The ORT provided reassurance that the forecast costs are realistic and therefore there is confidence that the CCD can be delivered within the construction budget available.
- 5.5. The construction budget will be released subject to DfT approval following IRP analysis of the technical, commercial and case for safety evidence from Stage Gate 2 and partial evidence from Stage Gate 3A.
- 5.6. Within the CRSTS Grant Agreements there is a 10% tolerance on cost and programme. Any spend or programme slippage more than the 10% tolerance will be dealt with through Change Control.
- 5.7. Funding release for each stage gate is dependent on fulfilment of the agreed deliverables (or key objectives) of the preceding stage gates, therefore grant clawback is not a risk for this project.

- 5.8. At present there is a low financial risk that agreements with utility companies will result in the Council being required to give an unlimited indemnity in the event of any damage to their utilities. It should be noted that the risk of damaging a utility asset is low as utilities equipment should be located a minimum of 450mm beneath the road surface (CVLR dig depth is 300m). Furthermore, the CVLR track offers greater protection to underground assets as evidenced by the Council's data collection from trials undertaken to date.
- 5.9. There is provision within the allocated CVLR budget (with no impact on Highways budgets) in the unlikely event such incidents materialise, but it should be noted that the CVLR system is covered by appropriate insurance obtained and held by the Council as was the case during the ORT.
- 5.10. It is envisaged that the tracks would be retained in situ for data collection and as part of the first commercial corridor and funding from the above allocation has been committed to maintain and monitor the tracks.
- 5.11. An allocation of £1m has been agreed as a commuted sum for track and highway maintenance. The amount was calculated using robust specialist market data and ensures future proofing of the route.

5.12. Legal Implications

- 5.13. Certain legal implications associated with installing and operating the CCD have been considered. The key points from the legal analysis are summarised below.

Consenting

- 5.14. The Council as promoter of the City Centre Demonstrator should not assume that it can use its powers as highway authority, street authority, etc, as of right but instead should act as a third party would and apply for the relevant consents from itself as highway authority / street authority (i.e. using ethical walls, etc). This will provide greater transparency / resistance to legal challenge.
- 5.15. Planning permission is not required for the installation of CCD in adopted highway as it is permitted development but planning permission will be required for the vehicle stabling, platforms and any track which is not in adopted highway. The area subject to planning permission is shown in Appendix 1 to the report.
- 5.16. A Transport and Works Act Order (“**TWAO**”) would provide the most certain form of authorisation for the CCD but is not deliverable in the necessary timeframe. A careful use of powers under the Highways Act 1980, street works licences and traffic regulation orders provides sufficient authority and consents to place the necessary works for the road test in the highway, mainly because there are no land requirements to deliver the CCD. However, it should be noted that a TWAO would be required to operate a fare paying passenger service and CCC intends to apply for a TWAO once a commercial route has been funded/ agreed.

5.17. As with conventional construction works, the Health and Safety Executive (“**HSE**”) would largely be the health and safety enforcing authority in respect of the construction of new tramways and extensions to existing systems. The Office of Road and Rail (“**ORR**”) has delegated powers from HSE to look at the implications for operational safety at the time of design and construction of such projects.

5.18. The safety verification process required for safety management systems under the Railways and Other Guided Transport Systems (Safety) Regulations 2006 must be followed in relation to the introduction of new or altered rolling stock or infrastructure.

Key Risks

The top five risks and mitigations are highlighted below:

Technical issues arise with the vehicle, track or infrastructure systems	All aspects of vehicle, track and infrastructure systems are scrutinised and documented at each phase with input from external companies with expertise in track and rolling stock, as well as the IRP (1.15). This process feeds to an appointed Independent Competent Person who signs off each element of the process, implementing the safety verification scheme for the project and ensuring that relevant industry standards are met.
Delays to vehicle build programme for live traffic operation	The vehicle will require some modifications during the new vehicle build to enable operation in live traffic. The team are working with industry experts to achieve Case for Safety sign off ahead of operation in Autumn 2027.
Statutory Occupiers (Utility companies) may not consent to leaving assets in existing positions on the route.	Considerable consultation and collaboration have been undertaken and will continue between CCC and the Statutory Occupiers following the On-Road Test (ORT). Methods of access to assets have been trialled with positive results.
CCC may be liable for personal injury or Third-Party property damage	All road schemes undergo a Stage 1 and 2 Road Safety Audit (RSA) and it will be the same for CVLR. A Stage 3 RSA will be completed prior to operation. Any RSA recommendations made will be assessed, considered and responded to.
Delays to the procurement of an operator	CCC is currently engaging with the market to ensure an operator is procured.

5.19. The Independent Review Panel which provides independent technical and financial challenge was procured via the Council’s existing Framework Agreement for the provision of Research and Development Services.

5.20. There is a detailed live programme risk register which is updated regularly, with the key implementation and operational risks and mitigations relating to the scheme.

5.21. All aspects of vehicle, track and infrastructure system safety are scrutinised and documented at each phase by a safety specialist, who provides advice and produces detailed cases for safety. This process then feeds to an appointed Independent Competent Person (ICP) as required under ROGS 2006 (Railways and Other Guided Transport Systems Safety Regulations 2006).

5.22. The ICP meets regularly with the CVLR teams alongside the safety specialist, and signs off each element of the process, implementing the safety verification scheme for

the project and ensuring that relevant industry standards are met where appropriate. The system only runs with a letter of no objection from the ICP.

5.23. Any risks associated with appointing an operator for the CDD have been mitigated by soft market testing, and confirmation that the operator appointed for the ORT would be prepared to operate the CVLR vehicle in live traffic subject to a letter of no objection from the ICP.

6. Other implications

6.1. How will this contribute to the One Coventry Plan?

[\(https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan\)](https://www.coventry.gov.uk/strategies-plans-policies/one-coventry-plan)

The CVLR programme will contribute to Council Plan objectives such as improving air quality and reducing the impacts of climate change by providing more sustainable forms of public transport, promoting the Council's 'Age Friendly' aspirations and helping to improve the health and wellbeing of the city's residents.

CVLR will ultimately help to address the plan priority of making streets and open spaces more attractive and enjoyable places to be, as well as improving the transport network and connectivity, encouraging investment in the city to promote jobs and growth, which in turn helps to tackle inequalities. CVLR will also enable access to jobs, leisure and study for local people.

6.2. How is risk being managed?

As with all Capital Schemes, CVLR is overseen by the Council's Transport Infrastructure Capital Programme Board, chaired by the Director of City Services, as well as a monthly CVLR Programme Board, chaired by the Director for Innovation, which provides robust governance, monitor progress, risk, and finance. Feeding into the Boards are three steering groups – Vehicle, Track and City Centre Demonstrator Delivery and Operation, each monitor in detail the individual workstreams, with additional monthly cashflow and risk meetings.

CVLR has an established project team in place with a core management team made up of Coventry City Council officers to oversee development and delivery. As part of the key project activities, a programme risk register is established and is regularly monitored, with input from individual project teams and oversight from Finance, Legal and Procurement colleagues to ensure risks are actively managed and mitigations put in place. There is contingency in the budget for each workstream at the appropriate level for stage of development.

To manage physical risks, the Construction and Design Management (CDM) process will be followed to ensure that risks are designed out and that construction takes place by an approved contractor in a safe way.

As mentioned earlier in this report, risk is also scrutinised by the Independent Review Panel and the Independent Competent Person.

6.3. What is the impact on the organisation?

The CVLR programme will be delivered using existing resources where possible, utilising professional services where necessary via the appropriate frameworks. Works will be tendered to external contractors as appropriate.

6.4. Equalities / EIA?

An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been developed to consider any impacts on protected characteristic groups of the city centre demonstration route and any mitigation required. The EIA will be regularly reviewed and updated where necessary. It is acknowledged that by introducing the track onto the existing carriageway that there may be implications for people with disabilities, older people and those using bikes and pushchairs. We will be working with representatives of these groups to understand the best way to mitigate any issues. This may include audio and visual warnings, signage, lighting and anti-slip materials.

We will also investigate similar schemes in other towns and cities to make sure that we can understand and use any examples of best practice.

CCD will provide us with an opportunity to engage with representative groups in the city and to invite them to try the demonstrator and provide feedback ahead of any first route in the city.

There are many positives for passengers from protected characteristic groups of CVLR and the feedback from ORT was invaluable in helping the team plan for the next generation of CVLR vehicle. Other positives in future will include accessible vehicles and stops, access to employment, healthcare and social activities, improved air quality and links to active travel.

The CVLR programme as part of the Connecting Coventry Programme will ultimately improve economic outcomes and transport in the area. No adverse impact on any group protected under the Equalities Act is anticipated.

Accessibility groups will be invited to experience the CCD as part of the trial, and their feedback will be incorporated into the next stages of the project. Further EIA work will be undertaken for the first commercial route.

6.5. Implications for (or impact on) climate change and the environment?

CVLR will help address the 'Net Zero' target for transport, as it is zero emission at point of use and will encourage modal shift.

6.6. Implications for partner organisations?

Coventry City Council will work closely with Transport for West Midlands, and West Midlands Combined Authority through scheme development and delivery. The programme has a robust governance process in place with a regional Programme Board with Department for Transport representatives involved. Coventry will also work with appropriate research and development partners, procured through the R&D framework, at appropriate stages during scheme development and delivery. Coventry is working with relevant supply chain organisations and is working closely with the

appointed contractor Colas Rail Ltd, who come with a breadth of knowledge and experience from delivering traditional light rail schemes nationally and globally. A detailed stakeholder analysis has been developed and will help us understand how we best work with partner organisations.

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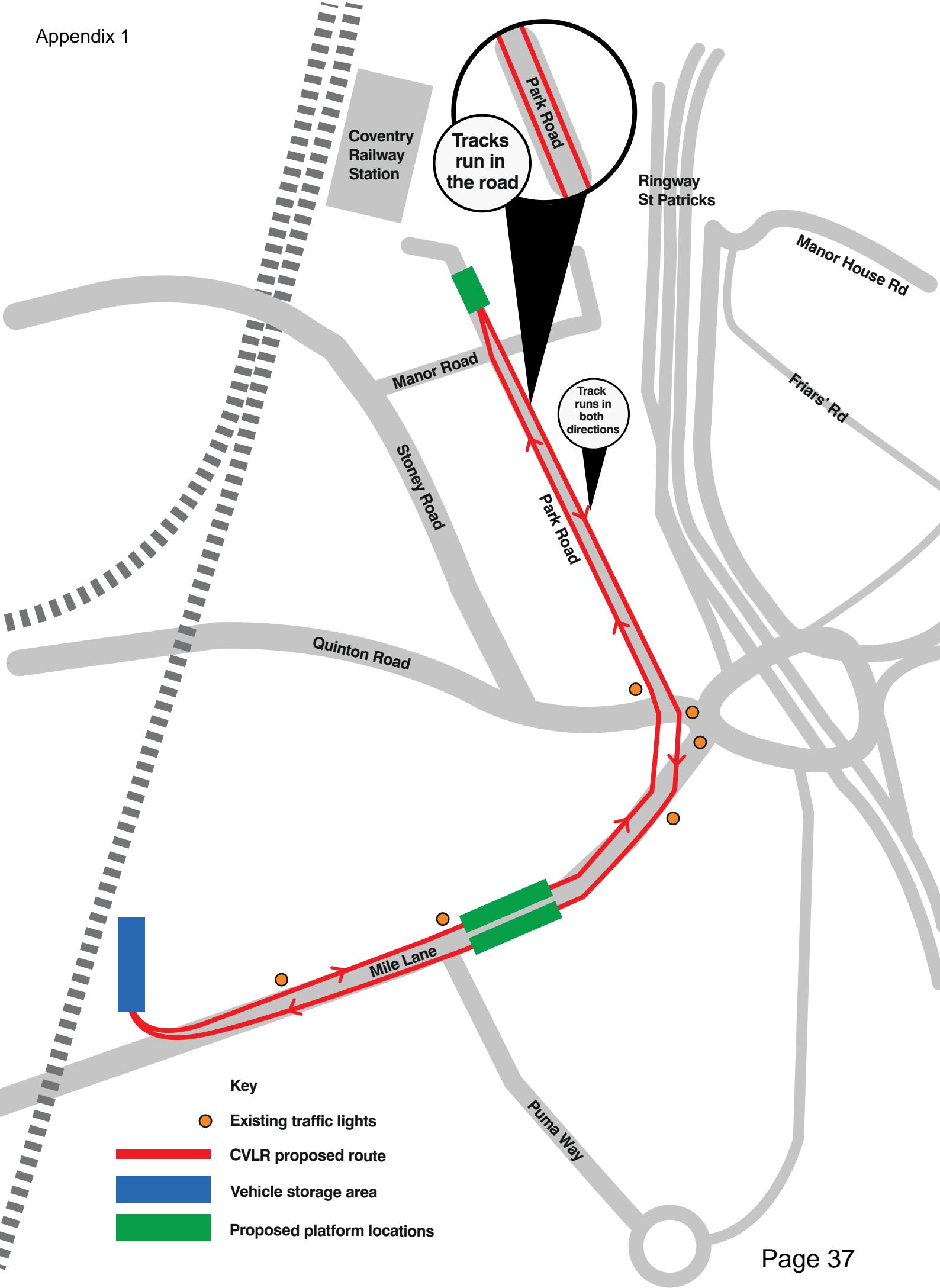
Enquiries should be directed to the above person

Contributor/ approver name	Title	Directorate	Date doc sent out	Date response received or approved
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Equality Impact Assessment

EIA-737608810 - Coventry Very Light Rail - City Centre Demonstrator

Details

Title	Coventry Very Light Rail - City Centre Demonstrator
Author	Simon Colclough (Strategic Commercial Lead)
Head of Service	John Seddon (Strategic Lead - Policy and Innovation)
Cabinet Member	Jim O'Boyle (Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change)
Director	Colin Knight (Finance and Resources)

Context and background

EIA carried out on	New service
Background	<p>Coventry Very Light Rail is now moving to a new phase whereby we will be installing a new track and utilising the CVLR vehicle in a live, unsegregated city environment. The new 800m twin-track will run from the Coventry rail station to the Coventry University Technology Park. The target demonstration dates are October 2027.</p>
	<p>Blue light services CCC Highways CCC Network Management CCC Planning CCC Streetscene and Greenspace Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy Department for Transport Elected members - particularly the Leader, Cabinet Members and Ward Councillors Emergency Planning Friargate Joint Venture Landowners affected by the scheme Office of Rail and Road Transport for West Midlands West Midlands Combined Authority</p>

	Access Department Group Bus / Coach operators Coventry University Designing Out Crime / British Transport Police Disability Groups including National Federation for the Blind, Guide Dogs Association, Coventry Wheelchair users Friargate Resident Liaison Group Stoney Road Area Residents Historic Coventry Trust Local / National environmental bodies Local Business owners Residents associations Schools, shops and small businesses on / adjacent to the route
Stakeholders	Student accommodation Taxi drivers Avanti Trains Bus passengers Community transport groups, e.g. school services, Shopmobility, Meals on Wheels Coventry BID Coventry Society ITS World Congress associates Childrens champion Cross Country Trains Delivery and courier services Federation of Small Businesses National Highways Network Rail Railway Industry Association Residents Royal Mail Special Interest / community groups West Midlands Trains Canal and River Trust Coventry and Warwickshire champions Coventry Rail Action Group Cycling organisations Heart of England Community Partnership Local Media / specialist press Statutory / Community involvement stakeholders including Culture West Mids, DEFRA, Equal Opps Commission, Gypsy Council, National Trust Tourists / visitors
Responsibility	Think Tanks The CVLR Project Team

The City Centre Demonstrator route will provide us with further opportunity to engage with representative groups ahead of any first route in the city.

There are many positives for passengers from protected characteristic groups of a Very Light Rail scheme. These include accessible vehicles and stops, access to employment, improved air quality and links to active travel.

Of the 2382 people who responded to our post-ride questionnaire, 42 had accessibility issues, and 173 were of the age group 70+.

Accessibility groups will be invited to ride on the vehicle and their feedback will be incorporated into any future development.

Coventry demographic information:

Sex and gender

In 2021, the population of Coventry was estimated to be 345,324. This was split approximately 50.1% female and 49.9% male. This is comparable with the estimates for the West Midlands, with 50.8% being female and 49.2% female. These percentages are also in line with national averages.

Age

In 2021, Coventry had a slightly younger population on average than England and Wales combined. The percentage of people aged 20-24 years in Coventry was 8.69%, compared with 5.89% for England and Wales. Furthermore, Coventry had a slightly lower percentage of people in all age groups between 45 and 90 years, compared with England and Wales. This is highlighted in the 70-74 years group. In Coventry, 3.78% of people belong to this group where the national percentage is 5.09%.

Disability

In 2021, the percentage of people in Coventry who self-reported living with health issues that meant day to day activities were limited a lot was 7.4%. This is slightly lower but broadly in line with the national percentage of 7.6%

Sight loss is an impairment that can impact on the affected population's daily activities, for example being able to drive or take the train. The percentage of people living with some level of sight loss in Coventry was estimated to be 2.4% in 2021. This is lower than the average for England at the time, which was 3.3%

Hearing loss can also impact on the population's ability to use public transport. In the UK, there are 12 million adults living with hearing

information loss of greater than 25dBHL. This is equivalent to 1 in 5 people. In Coventry, there are an estimated 230 people who use sign language or other forms of communication as their main language.

Race

In 2021, Coventry was estimated to have a smaller percentage (65.5%) of people who identify as White, than in England overall (81%). The groups with the largest difference to the national average were Asian/Asian British. In Coventry, 18.5% of people identified as being part of these groups. This was higher than England where the percentage was 9.6%

In 2021, the numbers of people in Coventry who do not have English or Welsh as their first language is generally higher than the national average. The percentage of households in Coventry which have no people with English as their first language is 10.6%. This is higher than the percentage for England which is 5%.

Unemployment and deprivation

In 2021, the proportion of people who are unemployed in Coventry (5.6%) is slightly higher than the British average (3.8%). Out of people in full time work, the average weekly pay is slightly lower in Coventry (£630.60) than it is in Britain (£642.20) as a whole. People (aged 16 years and over) are defined as being economically active if they are; in employment, unemployed but looking for work and could start within 2 weeks, or unemployed with an accepted job offer. 28 out of Coventry's 195 neighbourhoods, (14%) are amongst the most deprived 10% in England. Coventry has an IMD rank of 81 out of 317 local authorities nationally, where rank is the most deprived.

Background reports

The CVLR project has been through a number of approvals and the relevant reports are linked below:

Cabinet report - Connecting Coventry, Strategic Transport Investment Programme

24 January 2017

<https://edemocracy.coventry.gov.uk/documents/s32649/Connecting%20Coventry%20-%20Strategic%20Investment%20Programme.pdf>

Cabinet Report - Very Light Rail

18 December 2019

<https://edemocracy.coventry.gov.uk/documents/s51349/Coventry%20Very%20Light%20Rail.pdf>

Coventry Draft Transport Strategy

July 2022

<https://www.coventry.gov.uk/transport-strategy-2/transport-strategy>

Marmot Principles

3. Ensure a healthy standard of living for all
5. Create and develop healthy and sustainable places and communities
6. Strengthen the role and impact of ill health provision
8. Pursue environmental sustainability and health equity

Protected groups - Impact on Coventry Residents and Visitors

Age 0-18 Positive impact - Research has indicated that children, older people and people with disabilities are also more likely to be negatively impacted by air pollution. In the long term, CVLR will help to reduce air pollution by reducing reliance on the car.

As with the On-Road Test (ORT), children and young people will be invited to ride the vehicle and give feedback.

Age 19-64 Positive impact - There are businesses, residential properties, and the University of Coventry along the CCD route. We will need to ensure communication is clear and obtain feedback from all affected.

	<p>Both positive and negative impacts - This is both positive and negative as there will be some pedestrian diversions in place while the construction works take place. There will be clear delineation between the public and the operations during construction, which may include diversion routes. The tracks will remain in the ground after the test and will eventually form part of the first route to the Investment Zone.</p> <p>Age 65+</p> <p>Best practice measures will be used throughout to minimise impacts on air quality and the associated health impacts. These will be addressed through the implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP).</p> <p>Longer term the improvement to transport may benefit older people by reducing isolation. Opportunities to access social activities would be increased by improving transport links.</p> <p>Accessible seating is available on the vehicle and measures will be made to aid the requirements for its use when the demonstration is in progress.</p>
	<p>Both positive and negative impacts - There may be some pedestrian diversions during the construction phase. We will work with the disability groups and the Independent Travel Team to ensure these are suitable for people with disabilities.</p> <p>Disability</p> <p>Accessibility groups will be invited to ride on the vehicle as part of the demonstration event and their feedback will be incorporated in the future developments.</p> <p>Best practice measures will be followed during construction will the implementation of a CEMP.</p> <p>Access and egress onto the vehicle and platforms will be designed in accordance with Inclusivity Mobility guidance.</p> <p>Good lighting will be used to adhere to mobility guidance.</p>
	<p>Gender reassignment</p> <p>No impact -</p>
	<p>Pregnancy and maternity</p> <p>Positive impact - The CVLR vehicle and platforms can accommodate pushchairs as necessary. Rides will be pre-booked to ensure arrangements are made for these requirements.</p> <p>Longer term CVLR will help improve air quality in the area. Pregnant women who are exposed to high levels of pollution are at risk of giving birth to low birthweight baby and low birthweight can lead to an increased risk of children developing chronic diseases.</p>

Race	Positive impact - We will ensure that all communication is accessible and clear for those who have English as an additional language.
Religion and belief	No impact -
Sex	No impact -
Sexual orientation	No impact -

Additional groups

Care experienced	No impact -
Armed forces	No impact -
Socio economic groups	<p>Positive impact - Once the trial phase concludes and the Coventry Very Light Rail (CVLR) is integrated into the city's public transport network, both the vehicles and track systems—designed for local production—will be manufactured in Coventry, boosting local industry and generating employment.</p> <p>The CVLR will supplement Coventry's existing electric bus routes, with planned extensions to strategic locations such as the Coventry Gigafactory and the University of Warwick. These routes are expected to stimulate economic growth in key business zones and enhance connectivity across the city.</p> <p>CVLR will offer a reliable and affordable option for those without access to cars, helping reduce transport inequality. The Battery-powered vehicles eliminate the need for overhead wires and reduce air pollution, contributing to better air quality.</p>

Next steps

Inequality	Action	Owner	Timescale

Monitor and evaluation

Feedback has been obtained from the ORT phase and is being evaluated for implementation into the CCD phase. Furthermore, Coventry University has been engaged to analyse the feedback which will inform decisions on the future development of CVLR. This feedback loop will continue throughout CCD.

Impact on Council staff

Will there be an impact? No

Completion statement

Potential equality impact Both positive and negative impact has been identified for one or more protected groups



Cabinet
Council

6th January 2026
13th January 2026

Name of Cabinet Member:

Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change - Councillor J O'Boyle

Director Approving Submission of the report:

Director for Regeneration and Economy

Ward(s) affected:

None

Title:

Brandon Wood Nature Reserve

Is this a key decision?

Yes - expenditure is in excess of £1m

Executive Summary:

Coventry City Council has a unique opportunity to repurpose the former Brandon Wood Golf Course as a nature reserve, creating rich habitats to support wildlife and developing a new visitor destination for people to enjoy. The UK is one of the most nature depleted nations in the world, with one in six species at risk of extinction. The Council made a commitment in the Climate Change Strategy (2024-2030) to take action to support nature recovery, and this site presents a significant opportunity to do this at scale. The former golf course is 64ha, which means it will be able to support a huge variety of habitats through the creation of wetlands, grassland and shrub. A much bigger opportunity is also unlocked as it will join up a number of parcels of land already being managed for nature covering 356ha in total (see plans in Appendix 1-3). Together this would create the biggest area of land managed for nature anywhere in the West Midlands, and at 6km from the city centre, it will be the closest nature reserve of this scale to a city centre in England.

The golf course was closed to the public in 2020 and a number of options have been assessed to identify the most appropriate future use of the site. The golf course was managed by Coventry Sports Trust, but the site is prone to regular flooding which limited the accessibility of part of the site. It has now been deemed financially unviable to continue as a golf course. In 2024 Defra introduced a new mechanism whereby new developments are required to offset any biodiversity loss through the purchase of 'Biodiversity Net Gain' (BNG) units, which provides a significant new income stream for creating and maintaining areas for nature conservation for 30 years. The business case for the new nature reserve

is based on a sustainable finance model whereby up to 304 BNG units are created that would generate income to cover costs of creating and managing the nature reserve, with no Council funding required.

The BNG units are likely to rely on offset from development taking place outside of the city, including Warwickshire, the West Midlands and potentially nationally, rather than Coventry developments. This is due to Council policy which requires any Coventry developments deliver BNG within the immediate area or close by and within the city boundary as a default position, contributing to an increase in biodiversity rather than being offset elsewhere. This will help to improve the quality of the city's green spaces and waterways and help create new urban nature networks and green corridors across the city for local people to enjoy. Brandon Wood Nature Reserve will provide an experience where people can immerse themselves in nature in a wilder landscape. Any surplus income generated through the sale of BNG units at the nature reserve will be allocated to activities that support biodiversity gain.

Biodiversity Net Gain is still a relatively new market and there is a lot of regional and national variation in unit values, demand and selling of units. Whilst we can be confident there is a pipeline of development in the sub-region and wider region that equates to demand for units, there is less certainty in terms of timing of units being required. However, if this land is not provided by public bodies such as local authorities, it is likely private landowners will directly benefit from selling units which we are already seeing in the sub-region. To help mitigate this risk, a new Natural Capital Investment Strategy (NCIS) has been developed by Warwickshire County Council (WCC), which creates a new partnership between the County, Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) and Coventry City Council to enable us to plan and manage BNG and emerging nature markets more strategically through a collaborative approach. This could help unlock funding to support habitat creation and maintenance for BNG sites. Formal approval to join the NCIS partnership is therefore sought as part of this report. We are also working with WMCA to explore similar opportunities, to ensure we maximise the opportunities to grow nature markets and can directly influence and benefit from where investment is delivered. Given the relatively immature state of BNG market at present, it is proposed that delegated authority is given to continue to work up the investment plan, working with NCIS, WMCA and wider markets to provide a clear pipeline of investment and phase delivery on site accordingly. Works could start as early as the second half of 2026, subject to planning and legal agreements.

The project has been developed with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, who already lease a significant area of land for nature surrounding the golf course, including their headquarters next door Brandon Marsh Nature Reserve which is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. It is proposed that the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Group will enter into a property transaction with the Council, bringing their expertise to maintain the site as part of the wider landscape to maximise a range of diverse habitats that support nature alongside creation of a seamless visitor experience so that people can enjoy visits to the new nature reserve and adjacent sites.

Work has been undertaken to look at how we can maximise visitor experience to the site and encourage local people to connect with nature. It is proposed to undertake improvements to site infrastructure to enhance the visitor experience, which will include upgraded and accessible footpaths, a new car park, benches and wayfinding. The former club house will be demolished, which will help save the Council costs related to security

and business rates. There is also a further opportunity to enhance the visitor experience through creation of new outdoor education, training and wellbeing hub on the site, which could be located on the site of the former club house.

This is currently at concept stage but could be a fantastic opportunity that will complement the Council's other outdoor education facilities in the city and Plas Dol Y Moch and provides a significant natural site on the doorstep of the city for learning and skills. It is proposed that this option is developed in conjunction with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust and is brought back for a decision following due governance process date once a viable business case is developed. This would reduce the extent of the site where BNG units could be delivered by around a third. However, it would provide a significant boost to visitor experience and an opportunity to share associated infrastructure costs. It is therefore recommended that this option is continued to be developed and subject to a future governance decision within the next 12 months, with a backstop position that if this doesn't come forward this part of the site will be part of the wider nature reserve. The financial modelling that supports this decision sets out the potential income that relates to this part of the site and demonstrates that the business case for the nature reserve still remains viable if this section wasn't included in the sale of BNG units.

Recommendations:

Cabinet is requested to recommend that Council:

- 1) Approve the in principal change of use of Brandon Wood Golf Course to a nature reserve and a registered Biodiversity Net Gain habitat bank, including demolition of the former golf club house subject to a formal planning process via Rugby Borough Council to deliver proposed changes to the Site (as shown in Appendix 1 and 3 to the report) and land appropriation within the Council between service areas;
- 2) Delegate authority to the Director of Regeneration and Economic Development, following consultation with the Director of Property Services and Development, the Director of Finance and Resources (s151 Officer), and the Director of Law and Governance and the Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change to:
 - 2a) Enter into the appropriate legal agreements (including but not limited to a property transaction) and to make necessary variations from time to time between the Council and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Group for up to thirty years for the Site.
 - 2b) Undertake all necessary due diligence including the investment strategy and subsequent phasing of the project and enter into necessary legal agreements (and make necessary variations from time to time) to maximise Biodiversity Net Gain Units for the whole Site up to £8m.
 - 2c) Enter into appropriate legal agreements to enable the Council to join the Nature Capital Investment Strategy partnership with Warwickshire County Council and Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council, including acceptance of funding to support delivery of BNG on the Site if this becomes available through the partnership, subject to formal governance processes.

- 2d) Accept up to £2m in the sale of BNG units to deliver the initial phase of delivery of the Site.
- 2e) Approve the addition of up to £1.4 million for the purposes of delivering the Project (subject to the financial mitigations set out in the financial implications).
- 3) Approve that all Biodiversity Net Gain income from the Site is ringfenced and reinvested in biodiversity and enabling activities.

Council is recommended to:

- 1) Approve the in principal change of use of Brandon Wood Golf Course to a nature reserve and a registered Biodiversity Net Gain habitat bank, including demolition of the former golf club house subject to a formal planning process via Rugby Borough Council to deliver proposed changes to the Site (as shown in Appendix 1 and 3 to the report) and land appropriation within the Council between service areas;
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 - 2d) Accept up to £2m in the sale of BNG units to deliver the initial phase of delivery of the Site.
 - 2e) Approve the addition of up to £1.4 million for the purposes of delivering the Project (subject to the financial mitigations set out in the financial implications)
- 3) Approve that all Biodiversity Net Gain income from the Site is ringfenced and reinvested in biodiversity and enabling activities.

Appendices:

- Appendix 1 - Site Plan
- Appendix 2 - Landscape wide plan
- Appendix 3 - Proposed Interventions

Background papers:

None

Other useful documents:

Cabinet Report December 2024: [Agenda item - Climate Change Strategy 2024 - 2030 - Coventry City Council](#)

[Climate Change Strategy – Coventry City Council](#) and [Climate Change Action Plan – Coventry City Council](#)

Warwickshire Local Nature Recovery Strategy. Warwickshire, Coventry and Solihull Local Nature Partnership, 2025
<https://www.wcslnp.co.uk/lnrs>

Environmental Improvement Plan 2025, DEFRA, 2025 (useful background, project contributes to many targets)

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/environmental-improvement-plan-2025>

[The BNG Report: Pricing and Key Insights October 2025, Biodiversity Units UK](#)

All of the above are available from the Council's website:

<http://moderngov.coventry.gov.uk/ieListMeetings.aspx?CommitteeId=124>

Has it been or will it be considered by Scrutiny?

No

Has it been or will it be considered by any other Council Committee, Advisory Panel or other body?

No

Will this report go to Council?

Yes

Report title: Brandon Wood Nature Reserve

1. Context (or background)

Restoring Nature

- 1.1 The UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world; this has implications for the environment, for society and for the economy. Restoring nature is a priority for the UK Government to boost biodiversity has significant wider benefits by creating places that people can enjoy nature is important for health and well-being; a thriving natural environment will help us respond better to climate change; and nature also provides significant economic value.
- 1.2 The UK government is committed to halt the extinction of threatened species and reverse nature loss with the effective recovery and conservation of habitats, with a critical target being to conserve and manage 30% of land, inland waters, coasts, and oceans by 2030. This goal is referred to as '30 by 30'. For Coventry, this currently stands at around 11% and a key challenge is to identify where the extra 19% (or 1874 hectares) is going to be found, given the city's urban geography and limitations on available land. The 64 hectare former Brandon Wood Golf Course site is owned by the Council on the edge of the city boundary, and whilst geographically sits in Warwickshire presents a significant opportunity to support nature on the city's doorstep and connect the site to the wider 293 hectare landscape already being managed for nature to create a fantastic asset for residents and visitor destination (see Appendix 2 to the report).
- 1.3 The West Midlands Combined Authority is one of 48 'Responsible Authorities' across England producing a Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS); a statutory requirement through the Environment Act 2021. The aim is to address the issue of nature depletion as part of a country-wide Nature Recovery Network. The West Midlands LNRS identifies 10 priorities and 62 actions for nature recovery, developed in conjunction with regional stakeholders, including the 7 constituent authorities. Separately Warwickshire is developing a LNRS which Coventry is also responding to, recognising the importance of creating cross-border nature networks. The creation of a new nature reserve on the former golf course will deliver new habitats to support nature conservation that aligns closely with both LNRS. The site will contribute to several national and regional priority habitats featured in the LNRS including wet woodland and reedbed. Potentially this would help reverse the loss of species such as willow tit and numerous invertebrates. Visitors could encounter reintroduced beavers and otters. Ospreys have started to investigate the area, hopefully they will nest on the Wildlife Trust site and will be easily viewed from the new nature reserve without disturbance.
- 1.4 Coventry's Climate Change Strategy (2024-2030) sets out the city's ambitions to support nature recovery and better connect local people to nature. The Strategy was developed in conjunction with the city's Climate Change Board, with recommendations for the city's Nature Pathway provided by key stakeholders including Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, the Environment Agency, Canal and Rivers Trust, informed by extensive public consultation which identified that nature and green space being very important to local people who responded – wanting to see the Council and city go much further in terms of enhancing and expanding spaces

for nature. The Climate Change Action Plan sets out how we are going to deliver the Strategy, which includes a priority action for the delivery of a landscape-scale nature restoration project. The creation of Brandon Wood Nature Reserve will deliver on this action and provides a significant opportunity to go further by working with partners to maximise opportunities for helping wildlife thrive across the wider 293 hectare landscape it sits within.

- 1.5 This will mean better connectivity between the site and surrounding parcels of land already manged for nature, which is part of the Wildlife Trust's Dunsmore Living Landscape project including adjacent Brandon Marsh Nature Reserve Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), Wolston Fields and Steetley Meadows south of the railway line, and to the north Brandon Wood, Brandon Reach, Piles Coppice, alongside Claybrookes Marsh Site SSSI in Binley which can be accessed by foot under the A46. There is also opportunity to better connect the sites to Coombe Abbey in the north. This will create a connected mix of rich habitats for nature to thrive, with improved wayfinding and access for people to explore and enjoy. Much of this natural space already exists on the city's doorstep but is underutilised by local people and this provides a real opportunity to address that, alongside helping to attract visitors from further afield.
- 1.6 Delivering landscape scale interventions to support nature is one of the key priorities in the Climate Change Action Plan, but this must be done in parallel to improving green and blue spaces across the city to support nature, increase climate resilience and for local communities to enjoy. This includes improving the quality and quantity of nature reserves in the city, alongside changing management techniques to create new opportunities to support nature across our parks and open spaces. This includes creating new green corridors to connect natural spaces through tree planting on streets to increase canopy cover across the city and creation of sustainable urban drainage or rain gardens, and could also include green walls, roofs and bus stops with planted areas on roofs, coupled with enhancing the city's water courses through restoring waterways, de-culverting and sustainable urban drainage. These interventions will create more climate resilient streets, help reduce flood risk, provide shade and improving air quality. All BNG income generated at Brandon Wood will be ringfenced and reinvested in biodiversity, alongside this the Council is pursuing other BNG sites to support biodiversity in the city boundary which will help deliver the priorities within the Climate Change Action Plan.
- 1.7 The Council adopted a BNG Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) in December 2022. The purpose of the SPD is to give more detailed guidance on Local Plan Policy GE3: Biodiversity, Geological, Landscape and Archaeological Conservation and its aims to:
 - a. lead to a net gain of biodiversity, where appropriate, by means of an approved ecological assessment of existing site features and of the impacts of development;
 - b. protect or enhance biodiversity assets and secure their long term management and maintenance;
 - c. avoid negative impacts on existing biodiversity;
 - d. preserve species which are legally protected, in decline, are rare within Coventry or which are covered by national, regional or local Biodiversity Action Plans.

Biodiversity Net Gain is an approach to development that aims to leave the natural environment in a measurably better state than it was beforehand. From 2024, the Environment Act 2021 required that all developments provide a minimum of 10% biodiversity gain, managed for a minimum of 30 years. Net gain is assessed using a nationally adopted metric developed by DEFRA. By providing more details around Policy GE3 and the Environment Act 2021, the SPD helps protect and enhance biodiversity in the city by giving clear and understandable advice to people who want to develop in Coventry, which could otherwise reduce the city's biodiversity. This detail includes a more specific breakdown of how different developments can avoid biodiversity loss where possible and then offset other losses either on or off site.

- 1.8 Spending time in nature provides significant health benefits for people's physical and mental wellbeing. Natural England guidelines recommend that everyone should be able to access green space or a waterway within a 15-minute walk from their home. Inequities exist across Coventry in terms of access to green space, which can exacerbate health inequalities. Data shows us that global majority groups are less likely to spend time in nature in comparison to people from white backgrounds. Coventry is a hugely diverse city, with over 40% of our population coming from a global majority background, many of whom live in some of the city's least green areas. We must ensure that access to nature is inclusive and better understand the barriers and enablers to engagement. The Council has recently received nearly £1m Nature Towns and Cities Fund to deliver 'Green for All' to address inequalities and inequities in terms of resident access to nature. This project will enable us to work with communities, targeting those with the least access to nature and global majority communities to better understand barriers to accessing nature. We will work with communities to identify opportunities to improve local green spaces which will enable more residents to connect with nature and develop a funding strategy so that we can use natural capital markets such as BNG to support our most deprived communities. We will also take the learnings from Green for All to consider how we can encourage residents from all backgrounds to visit Brandon Wood Nature Reserve and enjoy the benefits of connecting with nature at scale. This means creating accessible and inclusive visitor facilities, alongside developing opportunities for volunteering, training and education on the site.

The Proposal

- 1.9 The proposals at Brandon Wood Nature Reserve will deliver a new 64ha nature-rich site, creating up to 304 Biodiversity Net Gain units which can be sold to offset developments. There will be a variety of habitats delivered, which includes mixed woodland, hedgerows and a variety of grassland and scrub, alongside wetlands, including ponds, scrapes and reedbeds. To open the site up to visitors, the former golf club house which is in a poor state of disrepair will be demolished, and it's proposed that new facilities created including upgraded car park, toilets, accessible paths and picnic areas, alongside benches on nature routes. There will be routes created so visitors can also access Brandon Marsh from the site.
- 1.10 The site will be managed by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust (via TNS Limited a subsidiary wholly owned by WWT) on behalf of the Council, allowing seamless integration between adjacent Brandon Marsh Nature Reserve next door. The Wildlife Trust will

be responsible for creating and managing the new habitats, which will be done through a range of techniques, including introducing a herd of cattle on the site for natural grazing. The Wildlife Trust will be responsible for delivering the Habitat Management and Monitoring Plan for the site, which is a requirement of BNG to ensure habitats are created and maintained for 30 years. The BNG will be monitored via a conservation covenant between Coventry City Council and Warwickshire County Council.

- 1.11 It is recognised that at present the site is difficult to access by any other means than car. The project will work with stakeholders to bring forward active travel opportunities to the site and surrounding area, including walking and cycling routes, public transport and look at wider connectivity and safety of routes. There are some quick wins that can be delivered to improve wayfinding and accessibility, as people can technically walk from Claybrookes Marsh in Binley directly to Piles Coppice, Binley Woods and onwards, however routes are not clearly signed or promoted. In the medium term, the project will seek to secure funding to deliver a pedestrian crossing on Brandon Lane to help create a safe crossing point to connect the sites together, a more informal crossing currently exists between Brandon Marsh and Brandon Reach. Grant and developer funding will be sought to fund active travel routes which will be part of longer-term plans, with opportunities to connect to Binley Road cycle route and consider wider connectivity to Coombe in the north and Ryton in the south.
- 1.12 Accessibility within the new Brandon Wood Nature Reserve itself will be enhanced, with the creation of dedicated disabled parking and nearby picnic area for visitors to enjoy, a changing place toilet and upgraded paths on the site that are suitable for wheelchairs and hire out all-terrain wheelchairs for visitors keen to explore areas beyond the main path network. A wheelchair accessible viewing platform will also be created in the southern part of the site overlooking the wetland area.
- 1.13 Coventry Outdoors, the Council's Outdoor Education Service, has rapidly expanded over the last four years in response to a significant rise in demand. The current main local base at Coombe Abbey presents constraints that limit further growth and restrict the service's ability to ensure the hub remains able to develop and thrive. As a result, the service has begun exploring opportunities for the development of a new Outdoor Education, Training and Wellbeing Hub that would act as the central operational base, while still retaining some educational delivery and activities at Coombe. A key aim of this development is to strengthen the long-term financial sustainability of Plas Dol-y-Moch—recognising the limitations on capital investment and commercial development at the Plas Dol-y-Moch site itself. Establishing a financially robust hub in Coventry is therefore essential to protecting and securing the future of this highly valued residential outdoor education centre. The proposed Brandon Wood Nature Reserve has been identified as a potential location for the new hub. The proposed development would complement the wider nature reserve by offering outdoor education programmes, adventure and activity sessions, training courses, and wellbeing initiatives. It would also introduce additional on-site facilities for visitors, enabling workshops, classes, and events for a diverse range of users. This enhanced offer would help attract more visitors, increase engagement with nature and the outdoors, and further strengthen the overall outdoor learning ecosystem within Coventry.

- 1.14 At present, the opportunity to create a new facility on the site is still at concept stage and requires further development, which will be done working closely with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. If a new facility is to be located on the new nature reserve site it would have to be located on the site of the golf club house and activities constrained to the top third of the site. This would result in the loss of up to 90 BNG units and associated income but could present a significant opportunity to raise revenue to the Council through the new facility as well as generate wider benefits to children, young people and residents across Coventry, building on the success of the service delivery and ensuring future demand can be met. A range of funding options for the development are currently being explored, including the potential to secure external investment and partnerships to support the delivery of a high-quality, sustainable facility
- 1.15 The outdoor education hub would also help to enhance the site as a visitor destination, as would offer the potential for a cafe and more visitor facilities and activities on site and provides the opportunity to increase footfall through attracting visitors to the site for courses, activities and events. This would need to be achieved in a way that complements the existing offer provided by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust across the wider landscape. This would create huge opportunity to connect people with nature, enhancing wellbeing and promoting sustainability. The business case would need to consider loss of income by not delivering BNG in this part of the site, however it would also offset and reduce some of the infrastructure and overhead costs that the nature reserve would need to cover and helps to create a compelling business case. It is proposed that this proposal is brought back to Cabinet as a separate report for consideration, within 12 months of this report. If this is not viable, the land will be used instead for BNG as part of the nature reserve.
- 1.16 Before arriving at this option, the Council has explored several different uses for the future of the site. The Brandon Wood site was a municipal golf course before closing in 2020 during Covid. This presented an opportunity to review the viability of the site, as golf activities on the site were often constrained by flooding on the southern half of the course often resulting in closure of a number of the golf holes. In its current form it was not considered financially viable to continue without significant investment. Options were explored to identify how golf could be made viable on the site, but these were at significant cost and deemed commercially unviable without substantial capital investment from the Council. Whilst it's recognised that this is a loss of a golf facility in the city, there are alternative golfing provisions.
- 1.17 Other potential uses for the site that have been explored include a hotel, glamping, solar farm and gravel extraction. Options were assessed for viability, however discounted for various reasons including lack of commercial viability and planning and environmental grounds.

Business Case

- 1.18 Biodiversity Net Gain was introduced by Defra in 2024 as a mechanism whereby new developments are required to offset any biodiversity loss through the purchase of 'Biodiversity Net Gain' (BNG) credits, which provides a significant new income stream for creating and maintaining areas for nature conservation for 30 years. This is the basis of the business case for creating a nature reserve at the Brandon Wood, the 64 ha site will generate up to 304 BNG units. The value of units is based on is not

fixed and varies based on market supply and demand but typically ranges from £20,000 to £35,000 per unit. Factors like habitat quality, location, and size influence the final price. Assumptions have been made for the purposes of the commercial model, with units costed at a conservative flat rate of £25,000, however there is potential that they could sell for more or less than this, however we can have a level of confidence given some of the habitats being created are of high value e.g. wetlands which demand far higher unit prices which can be in excess of £50,000.

- 1.19 The income generated from the sale of units will be based on demand from developers seeking to offset biodiversity. Council BNG policy seeks for developments within Coventry to be offset in the city boundary as a default position wherever possible, therefore it is likely that BNG income for Brandon Wood Nature Reserve will be generated from sites outside the city. Whilst we have a good idea of the pipeline of development for the wider region in the coming years that informs there is likely to be a high level of demand for the units, it's more difficult to guarantee timescales of sales particularly as this is a relatively new market. The potential 304 BNG units at the site which would be used to offset development taking place outside of the city, including Warwickshire, the West Midlands and potentially nationally.
- 1.20 Finance Earth have calculated that the demand pipeline for the West Midlands equates to 1323 units in the next 17 years linked to development plans, of which 774 units will be required to be offset in the next seven years. In addition, Warwickshire will require approximately 220 units to be offset in the next five years, some of which could be utilised at Brandon Wood Nature reserve which could be made possible through Coventry joining the Warwickshire and Solihull Natural Capital Investment Strategy Partnership.
- 1.21 Other opportunities for offset include Green Power Park, as they seek to offset BNG funding linked to the development. In summary, we can be confident that the market is there to create demand for all 304 units in the next 5-10 years, generating income to cover habitat creation, management and the majority of infrastructure costs to enhance the visitor experience.
- 1.22 Given the uncertainty regarding the timing of BNG sales, a phased development approach is recommended based on availability of capital up front to avoid the Council having to borrow to cover costs and reduce risk. One route to help alleviate this risk is through Coventry City Council joining a sub-regional Natural Capital Investment Strategy (NCIS) partnership with Warwickshire and Solihull, which this report seeks approval to enter into.
- 1.23 The benefits of joining NCIS mean that the Council will be in a stronger position to secure sales of BNG units at the nature reserve, offsetting developments in Warwickshire and Solihull where off-site habitat banks are sought, subject to Coventry signing up to the NCIS partnership and the associated governance processes.
- 1.24 There is a lack of regional supply of publicly owned BNG sites that are currently registered. If this land is not provided by public bodies such as LAs, it is likely private landowners will directly benefit from selling units which we are already seeing in the subregion. These may well be sites that aren't accessible to the public. Brandon

Wood nature reserve provides a significant opportunity to offset BNG and create a publicly accessible site for people to enjoy. It is proposed that the site could be used to offset existing developments that Warwickshire are seeking to identify BNG sites for, alongside future developments such as Greenpower Park where significant offset of units is required.

- 1.25 Other benefits of joining NCIS mean that we can pool resources and expertise with the other respective authorities, get support with developing BNG markets in Coventry and can work to help regulate BNG market rates across the sub-region and maximise the benefits of improving natural sites locally. We will also work together to explore opportunities to establish other nature markets based on carbon, nutrients, water quality and flood risk within time. There is robust governance in place to manage the partnership, and flexibility for Coventry to decide which sites it seeks to put forward into NCIS. This is important so Coventry can maintain control of how it manages BNG and can ensure that Coventry developments are offset within the city boundary to improve biodiversity across the city.
- 1.26 Separately, West Midlands Combined Authority is exploring the potential of establishing a regional habitat bank to support delivery of the biodiversity enhancements across the region. WMCA have highlighted that there are currently very few opportunities to buy credits in the West Midlands and therefore credits are being purchased for schemes elsewhere in the country. In order to retain the benefits of BNG within the West Midlands, a regional habitat bank special purpose vehicle is being developed, and Local Authorities will be consulted on this over the next few months. It is in Coventry's interest to join this, to ensure we maximise opportunities to market credits for Coventry sites in the wider region as appropriate. The agreement with NCIS won't provide exclusivity and will enable Coventry to also sign up to the WMCA's habitat bank, subject to due diligence.
- 1.27 Several options have been modelled for the commercial case, which include the full site (304 units) and part of the site excluding the northern part of the site which could be used by Outdoor Education, reducing the volume of units to 214. Both scenarios are viable, but it is recommended that the development is phased incrementally to manage cashflow and investment in the site, with a focus on delivery of BNG units initially to create the assets we can sell, alongside demolition of the club house which is currently costing the Council in excess of £70k annually to maintain and is in a poor state of repair.

2. Options considered and recommended proposal

Option 1: Do nothing (Not recommended)

One option is to continue doing nothing with the site. This means the Council will still need to pay annual maintenance costs which are in the region of £50-100k, but the public won't benefit as the site will remain closed. There are still benefits to nature by doing nothing as the site has started to effectively rewild itself, however this option would rule out creating habitats to support BNG credits so would result in a significant loss of potential income to manage the site and means we wouldn't maximise the benefits for wildlife and people. The site currently experiences anti-social behaviour and fly tipping, therefore Council is required to undertake regular patrols and clean-up operations – this would be required to continue.

Option 2: Deliver a nature reserve/habitat bank on part of the site (interim option) (Not recommended)

The starting point for the project where a viable business case already exists means we could proceed with establishing the BNG for the southern part of the site, delivering 214 units. This option would benefit biodiversity and raise income through BNG in order for the site to be managed for nature. As set out in Option A in the financial table in Section 5, this option could generate a surplus income of around £1.8m for the site if the 214 units were sold, that would be reinvested in biodiversity and infrastructure at the site.

As part of the site enabling works, we would seek to demolish the former golf club house and surrounding buildings. The building is subject to regular anti-social behaviour and criminal damage, which is costly and also attracts business rates, equating to annual costs to the Council of around £70k. The buildings are in a very poor state of disrepair, and it is not sustainable to maintain them. This would cost the authority approximately £0.4m It is recommended to proceed with demolition of the club house as soon as possible to reduce financial burden to the Council

This is a viable standalone option, however, this would be a real lost opportunity to create a visitor destination, as well as losing out on the opportunity to make the site more accessible and connected with the wider 293ha landscape which should be a significant asset for local people to enjoy alongside creating an attractive visitor destination. It is therefore proposed that this option is treated as an interim option whilst a decision is taken with regards to the development of the northern part of the site and visitor infrastructure, which is addressed in Options 3 and 4.

Option 3: Deliver a nature reserve and create a visitor destination (Not recommended)

This option assumes that the whole site would be developed as a nature reserve, generating income through the creation of 304 units as shown in Option B in the financial table in Section 5. This option would also deliver infrastructure to create a visitor destination and assumes that no outdoor education facility is delivered on the site. The additional costs for infrastructure to create a visitor destination and operating costs for 30 years are approximately £3.1m, which includes upgrading the car park, accessible footpaths, street furniture, toilet facilities and site management. The total cost to deliver this combined option is £8.1m, which would leave a pressure of around £0.5m. It is expected that the pressure could be managed through a number of options to avoid additional investment by the Council, which includes increasing the unit rate of BNG, phasing the infrastructure delivery incrementally based on income generated and demand, and generating income from other activities such as car park operations and seeking grants or potentially private sector sponsorship to cover some of the interventions.

This option would enable the site to be built out incrementally and be financially sustainable, with investment only taking place once BNG credits are sold to developers to avoid the Council having to invest to cover costs up front. Therefore, if the Council received income in year one by selling units upfront, this will cover demolition of the club house and development of the nature reserve with respect to initial habitat creation costs and management costs. Visitor infrastructure would need to be prioritised and link to funding available through BNG, with delivery of key

infrastructure such as car park and footpath upgrades phased earlier and then build out to include toilets and site ranger as funding becomes available. A monitoring group will be established to manage this process, with regular gateway reviews to inform investment decisions to be made in accordance with delegated authority.

This option delivers the objectives, however, is unlikely to provide any surplus income that could be reinvested in biodiversity. It also wouldn't provide facilities on site to deliver outdoor education which offers a unique opportunity to connect young people and residents with the site, which could also be used to support events, training, conferences etc and provide an enhanced visitor experience through facilities such as a café.

Option 4: Deliver a nature reserve and create a visitor destination, with outdoor education hub (Recommended option)

This option will deliver a nature reserve and enhanced visitor experience through making provision for an outdoor education hub on the site, offering users a unique opportunity for young people and residents to connect with nature through outdoor learning and well-being sessions. This would reduce the amount of BNG delivered on the site by 90 units which does reduce the amount of income BNG will generate on the site, but provides an opportunity to share some of the infrastructure costs referenced in Option 3 and removes the need for separate toilets to be delivered and associated staffing, which reduces the amount of BNG income that would need to be invested in the site, leaving a surplus which could be reinvested in biodiversity and associated activities.

This option would be delivered in 2 stages. This first stage would be to approve the creation of 214 units to the bottom two thirds of the site which would start on site in the second half of 2026, subject to planning. The former club house would be demolished in the north of the site, and the Council would work closely with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust on the development of the business case for the outdoor education facility over the next 12 months. At that stage a political decision will be required whether to proceed with the outdoor education facility, if that didn't go ahead the project would revert to option 4.

As with Option 3, this option would see the site built out incrementally and be financially sustainable, with investment only taking place once BNG credits are sold to developers to avoid the Council having to invest to cover costs up front.

Therefore, if the Council received income in year one by selling units up front, this will fund initial habitat creation to enable development of 214 units on the site. No work would take place on the northern third of the site until a decision is taken around on the outdoor education facility, save for demolition of the club house to reduce ongoing liabilities to the Council as this will be required whether Option 3 or 4 is pursued.

This option will allow more flexibility to accommodate an Outdoor Education facility if a decision is taken to proceed on the site, which would be subject to a further Cabinet decision. Decisions would need to be taken to review how costs are apportioned between the hub and nature reserve as part of the business case development. A monitoring group will be established to manage this process, with regular gateway reviews to inform investment decisions to be made in accordance with delegated authority.

3. Results of consultation undertaken

- 3.1 The proposals respond to consultation undertaken as part of the city's Climate Change Strategy, where a significant amount of feedback from respondents felt nature was an important issue the city need to take more action on, citing a range of reasons related to wildlife and well-being. The Nature Pathway within the Climate Change Strategy directly responds to the challenges we face as a city and sets out clear recommendations for action required to support nature recovery, which includes landscape scale nature restoration projects such as this one.
- 3.2 Consultation has been undertaken with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Trustees as part of the scheme development, who are very much supportive of the nature reserve proposals. The Wildlife Trust is involved in early discussions regarding the Outdoor Education options and principles have been agreed which outline how the organisations will work together to explore this opportunity, ensuring that it complements and adds value to the outdoor education offer the Trust currently deliver at Brandon Marsh.
- 3.3 The project has been developed in consultation with Warwickshire County Council with regard to habitat creation and opportunities to offset units through the Natural Capital Investment Strategy partnership.

4. Timetable for implementing decisions

- 4.1 Work would begin immediately on preparing a planning application for a decision in the first half of 2026, with an expectation that work would commence by the second half of 2026 and take 18 months to complete. During this period, there will be opportunities for local people to have guided tours of the site in development and volunteers to take part in some of the habitat creation works. It is anticipated that all works would be complete and the site fully open to the public by the end of 2027, this will be subject to phasing of the project aligned to the investment plan.

5. Comments from the Director of Finance and Resources and the Director of Law and Governance

5.1 Financial Implications

The business case for this project is proposed to be financially sustainable, with BNG income anticipated to offset costs over 30 years and no investment required. Several scenarios have been modelled to test the variables in terms of visitor infrastructure alongside the impact of introducing the outdoor education hub on the site.

The financial model assumes that the project will receive at least £1.5m investment in year one through selling BNG units up front. This is based on 60 units being purchased for 30 years and cover the costs for habitat creation of 214 units and maintenance of the site for a period until further units are sold.

There are two models presented below, these being:

Option A: this model demonstrates the starting position for the project and aims to create BNG on the lower part of the site only, whilst options for the top part of the site are considered – this aligns with Option 2 above.

This option does not create any visitor experience as this is deemed unnecessary until a decision on how the top part of the site will be utilised (either the Outdoor Education Hub or further BNG units).

This model assumes that the club house will be demolished during prestart activities to ensure that ongoing costs are not incurred for managing repairs, antisocial behaviour etc.

The model demonstrates that this option is financially viable as a standalone project, however the option does not maximise the use of the site for BNG, Outdoor Education or the wider visitor experience.

Option B: this model builds on Option A and considers creating BNG on the remaining part of the site. This option would be further developed if a viable business case for the Outdoor Education Hub is not able to be created. This aligns with Option 3 above.

This option involves the creation of an additional 90 BNG units on the top part of the site, which would bring the total BNG units for sale to 304.

Under this option, the site would be adapted to include a full visitor experience, with a car park, basic visitor facilities and upgraded accessible pathways and viewing platform, as funding to support the project became available through the sale of BNG units. The current model shows a financial pressure of £0.5m. These are currently estimated costs, and the establishment of the project team will work to reduce costs or bring in additional resources to ensure the project remains self sufficient

A model which includes the Outdoor Education Hub (Option 4 above) has not been included, as the infrastructure cost sharing basis for this model has not yet been developed. This business case will be worked on over the coming 12 months and brought forward for consideration as appropriate.

Option	A	B
No. BNG Units Created	214	304
	BNG Site (no visitor Experience) Demolition of the Club House	Full Visitor Experience (No Outdoor Education Facility - site fully BNG) Clubhouse Demolished
BNG Unit creation and maintenance	2,771,436	4,025,201
Golf Club House Demolition	487,902	487,902
Visitor Experience Costs (including infrastructure and staffing)	30,000	2,799,672
Support Costs	74,241	74,241
Business Rates		320,810
Contingency	168,179	385,391
Total Costs	3,531,758	8,093,217
Up front modelled income	(1,500,000)	(1,500,000)
Balance remaining to fund BNG for 30 years	2,031,758	6,593,217
Income from remaining units at £25,000 per unit	(3,850,000)	(6,100,000)
(Surplus)/Deficit	(1,818,242)	493,217

The preferred option would be to deliver the nature reserve and visitor experience, with reduced infrastructure costs as a result of the Outdoor Education Hub occupying the top part of the site. This is the option that the project will work towards modelling, through a phased development approach, and providing a suitable business case can be created, will come forward for consideration within the next 12 months.

The project will seek to further improve any financial the position through:

- a) **BNG units costs** currently the rate of £25k applied is considered cautious, particularly as the site will be creating some high value wetland units which can sell for upwards of £50k each (as demonstrated in the latest [BNG Pricing Report \(October 2025\)](#))

It is proposed that further sensitivity testing is undertaken to refine the BNG rates applied to the site, which could help to offset the existing pressure shown in option B.

When considering the creation of BNG on the lower part of the site only (214 units in total), if the selling price is increased, additional income from the remaining 154 units (214 units created less the 60 which could be purchased up front) could be as follows:

Additional units sold at £/unit	Additional income achievable
30,000	(770,000)
35,000	(1,540,000)
40,000	(2,310,000)

- b) **Other income generation opportunities** this could include the potential to charge for the car park, which will need to be an operational as well as financial decision as part of the phased development approach, as this will need to be balanced with encouraging visitors to the site.
- c) **Business rates** the current profile for business rates assumes an annual cost of nearly £21k until the clubhouse is demolished, with this dropping to a car park only rateable value in the future. There is an opportunity to reduce this and get up to 80% rate relief if WWT operated the car park and toilet, which the project will explore.

Financial Risk

If option A is implemented, which would have an expected 30-year expenditure profile of £3.5m for the delivery and management of 214 BNG units, demolition of the existing club house and relevant other costs, then we would have a liability to maintain the 60 units involved in this initial transaction for the 30 years.

If a scenario arose where the Council were unable to find an active market for the remaining 154 units, at the point at which the decision was made to no longer keep these BNG units available for sale, there would be no ongoing liability to maintain these units.

Whilst there is not a direct correlation between the management of 60 units vs 214, it is anticipated that due to renegotiation of the BNG management programme, a reduction of around a third of the current anticipated costs for habitat management and maintenance could be achieved. If this decision was made in year 10 for example, the total anticipated reduction in liability for the remaining term for the units sold up front is £580k. After achieving the initial income modelled this would leave a gap of £1.4m for which the Council would be liable for costs as funder of last resort.

However, if this scenario was to occur, there are some mitigations which could be investigated, such as, if there is a relevant clause in the Conservation Covenant which allowed the Council to detach or remove part of the site from the BNG scheme (keeping the scheme in place for where BNG has been sold and needs to be delivered for the 30 years) funding from agricultural grants from the government could be considered.

Therefore, to reduce the risk the management cost burden could be relieved (but not to the scale of BNG) by allowing the delivery partner to enter into countryside stewardship funding and this could be taken off the annual management fee. A point to note is that you cannot access these schemes on land delivering BNG so this couldn't happen as well as BNG.

A worked example is that if annual management of the site could be offset by funding for 30 hectares that has been retired to enter stewardship funding, this could reduce the annual management fee burden by £18k potentially, which could reduce the total exposure by up to £360k.

Given the demand for BNG units already exists and is growing, this is considered to be a limited risk to the Council and will be mitigated through robust governance and further developing the investment strategy and phasing to limit exposure as far as possible.

5.2 Legal Implications

There are several legal implications to be considered in regard to this project.

Biodiversity Net Gain

BNG is a mandatory requirement on all new developments under the Environment Act 2024. BNG requires demonstration of a net gain in biodiversity, maintaining these levels for 30 years after creation via a conservation covenant deed. Units will need to be registered on the national BNG register, and a Conservation Covenant put in place with a Responsible Body, which in this case will be Warwickshire County Council, to monitor the habitat management and monitoring plan, to ensure that BNG duties are fulfilled. Management of BNG falls within Ecology Team, as part of the Planning Service, with support from legal and finance services. The Council would have liabilities to WCC as the responsible body. A bond or other security may be required to guarantee the obligations in the conservation covenant deed. A conservation covenant is binding on any successors in title. The Conservation Covenant Deed will be a legal agreement which needs to be entered into to deliver the Project.

Natural Capital Investment Strategy Partnership

This report seeks approval to enter into a sub-regional Natural Capital Investment Strategy Partnership with Warwickshire and Solihull. This will require Coventry to enter into a contract with the authorities to join the partnership, and officers to actively participate in the partnership through attending meetings which include strategic, technical, finance and legal aspects of the governance. The partnership will provide the opportunity for Coventry to secure funding for the creation of BNG units at Brandon Wood Nature Reserve, up to a value of £2m funds that Warwickshire have already secured for biodiversity offset from developments that have already taken place. This will be subject to legal due diligence.

Legal arrangements with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust

The Council will need to enter into a formal agreement with Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Group to deliver habitat creation and maintenance in line with the habitat monitoring and management plan for up to 30 years as Tenant obligations under a property transaction. A Heads of Terms will be created to support the development of the legal arrangements between the organisations, with external legal support involvement as required. Any such agreement with WWT Group thereof that

constitutes a property disposal will need to be undertaken in accordance with Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972.

Site restrictions

The only access to the site is via Brandon Lane and over a Network Rail bridge. An agreement is in place between British Railways Board and the Council that allows the Council and those authorised by it access over the bridge for the purpose of gaining access to and egress from the Council's golf course and clubhouse. The agreement is for 60 years from 1.1.1977 so it will expire in 2037, for payment of a small annual fee, however the terms of the agreement state that if the Council shall at any time sell or otherwise dispose of their said Municipal Golf Course (other than to another Local Authority) or if planning permission is granted to change the user of the Golf Course then any rights over the bridge etc will automatically cease on any of the above scenarios. Therefore, an agreement will be sought with Network Rail at the earliest opportunity to ensure access to the site can be maintained for the change in use. This is considered low risk, however if a situation arose that Network Rail didn't grant access an alternative access would need to be created using adjacent land owned by the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, subject to their agreement and support from Trustees.

There is a covenant in place on the site to allow maintenance access to a telecoms mast which is managed by the Council's operational property team. The project will ensure to continue to provide access as per the covenant agreement.

Procurement Implications

There will be separate procurement exercises undertaken for delivery of enabling and infrastructure works which will be procured in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules and compliance with Procurement Act 2023. This will include a contract to demolish the club house.

Subsidy Control

This Biodiversity Net Gain project with the Wildlife Trust is a not-for-profit environmental restoration initiative. All income from BNG units is ring-fenced and reinvested into habitat creation, monitoring and long-term management. No profit is made and no commercial return is sought. As the activity is fully cost-recovery and delivers a public-good environmental function, it is classified as non-economic under the Subsidy Control Act 2022 and therefore sits outside the definition of a subsidy.

6. Other implications

6.1 How will this contribute to the Council Plan www.coventry.gov.uk/councilplan/?

This will contribute to the One Coventry Plan through delivering interventions at the golf course that will support nature restoration and help to tackle the causes and consequences of Climate Change. This project will directly deliver one of the priority actions within the Climate Change Strategy and Action Plan, supporting landscape-

scale nature recovery and contribute towards Coventry's '30by30' target and delivering against the West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Nature Recovery Strategies. It also provides a potential income stream to support delivery of nature-restoration projects within the city boundary, helping to deliver benefits to the city's more green-deprived neighbourhoods to support the Council's drive to deliver more equal access to green space across Coventry.

The project will also contribute towards the One Coventry priority of financial sustainability, through the proposed funding model which requires no Council investment in the project and provides the capital and revenue funding to support the site for 30 years.

In addition, the project would contribute to the Rugby Local Plan (June 2019), with the site forming part of the Princethorpe Biodiversity Opportunity Area (Policy NE2).

6.2 How is risk being managed?

There are some key risks associated with this project around which include uncertainty of timing of BNG income being generated, variables regarding plans for the northern part of the site, planning requirements, development of license and lease arrangements with the Wildlife Trust, potential issues around access and ensuring that the plans support the area becoming an accessible visitor destination.

However, all of the identified risks can be managed and mitigated with robust governance in place to steer the project, support timely decision making and make the project a success.

A Council Steering Group is already in place which has overseen business case development, this will be expanded to include legal and property teams, alongside Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. There is a clear work programme in place over the next 6 month which will deliver key activities to help de-risk the project as far as possible. This will include:

- Development of Heads of Terms with WWT, leading to development of license agreement with external legal advice to support on structure and terms.
- Planning submitted for demolition of the club house and for habitat creation on site
- Contract awarded for demolition of the club house and works underway
- Further sensitivity testing on commercial model and BNG market to inform investment strategy and phasing via a gateway process, to support delegated authority decision making
- Enter into a legal agreement with Warwickshire County Council to formally join the Natural Capital Investment Strategy Partnership to unlock initial investment and actively participate in NCIS governance
- Apply for Conservation Covenant through Warwickshire County Council and registration of the site for BNG to enable us to start selling units by month 6
- Commence negotiation with Network Rail regarding access to the site over the rail bridge.
- Working with Coventry Outdoors and Warwickshire Wildlife Trust on the development of the outdoor education facility.

No work will commence on site until all of the above activities are complete.

6.3 What is the impact on the organisation?

HR Implications

It is proposed to manage delivery of the project within existing resources, with some funding allocated within the initial 2 years to support project delivery within the Climate Change service, Ecology, Finance, Property and Legal teams.

If the outdoor education facility doesn't go ahead in the future there may be a requirement to also recruit a site ranger to take responsibility for management of the site for visitors, including car park, toilets etc. This has been accounted for in the commercial model.

6.4 Equalities / EIA

The nature reserve will be developed to be an inclusive and accessible site for visitors. There will be dedicated accessible parking bays, accessible paths, alongside opportunity to hire all-terrain wheelchairs to enable visitors to visit a wider range of the site. There will also be accessible toilet facilities, including a changing places toilet, on the site. There will be benches alongside key routes to provide resting spaces for visitors to enjoy the views. There is also an ambition to create an accessible viewing platform over the southern end of the site where visitors can enjoy wetland views. It is acknowledged that not all of this infrastructure is likely to be delivered in the initial project stages, but the introduction of accessible infrastructure will be prioritised as part of the incremental development of the site, with car park and footpath upgrades and benches being key to helping create a site that is accessible for all.

In addition to improving infrastructure for accessibility on site, the project has considered how access can be improved to the area, which is currently only really accessible by car. Some options have been explored that the project would seek to take forward, including safety improvements and a crossing point on Brandon Lane, opportunities for public transport connectivity to the area which we will seek to influence and upgrading walking and cycle infrastructure to enable access from the Binley Cycle route through to the site and connecting to the wider area, including an aspiration to connect up to Coombe Abbey to the north. There is also the opportunity to restore a pedestrian footbridge over the River These measures have not been included in the commercial case for the project, but funding opportunities will be pursued to bring these forwards.

The Council will seek to create an inclusive nature reserve and take the learnings from the Nature Towns and Cities Green for All initiative to consider how we can encourage residents from all backgrounds to visit Brandon Wood Nature Reserve and enjoy the benefits of connecting with nature at scale. This means creating accessible and inclusive visitor facilities, alongside developing opportunities for volunteering, training and education on the site.

An EIA will be completed for the project and will be regularly reviewed and updated.

6.5 Implications for (or impact on) the environment

This project will help to deliver objectives of the Council's Climate Change Strategy, through supporting nature recovery and reducing emissions.

This ambitious project has the potential to create significant benefits to biodiversity at the former golf course site, creating a substantial uplift in the quality of habitats to support nature to thrive. The site is currently woodland and grassland, a mix of habitats will be introduced ranging from wetlands, scrub and higher quality woodland and grassland to support a wide variety of species on the site and create corridors to connect to the wider landscape that is already managed for nature conservation. This is a significant step for Coventry to progress towards '30by30' and aligns with the objectives of the West Midlands and Warwickshire Local Nature Recovery Strategies. The opportunity to reinvest surplus income from the Site in biodiversity will help further boost wildlife and support enabling infrastructure to improve access and facilities at the site to provide more opportunity to connect people with nature.

Nature provides a natural carbon sink. The proposed enhancements at the golf course deliver will help to sequester up to 550 tonnes of carbon annually, which will help in the city's drive to reduce carbon emissions in line with UK government requirements.

6.6 Implications for partner organisations?

This project relies on partner organisation, Warwickshire Wildlife Trust delivering the nature reserve and managing it for 30 years. WWT already lease part of adjacent Brandon Marsh Nature Reserve which is owned by the Council and have been managing it successfully for over three decades. The Trust has been working closely with the Council to develop the project over the last 2 years, and key principles have been agreed in terms of the project structure, governance, habitat creation and management. The Wildlife Trust has consulted with their Board of Trustees who are supportive of the project and will continue to be engaged as heads of terms and legal agreements are developed.

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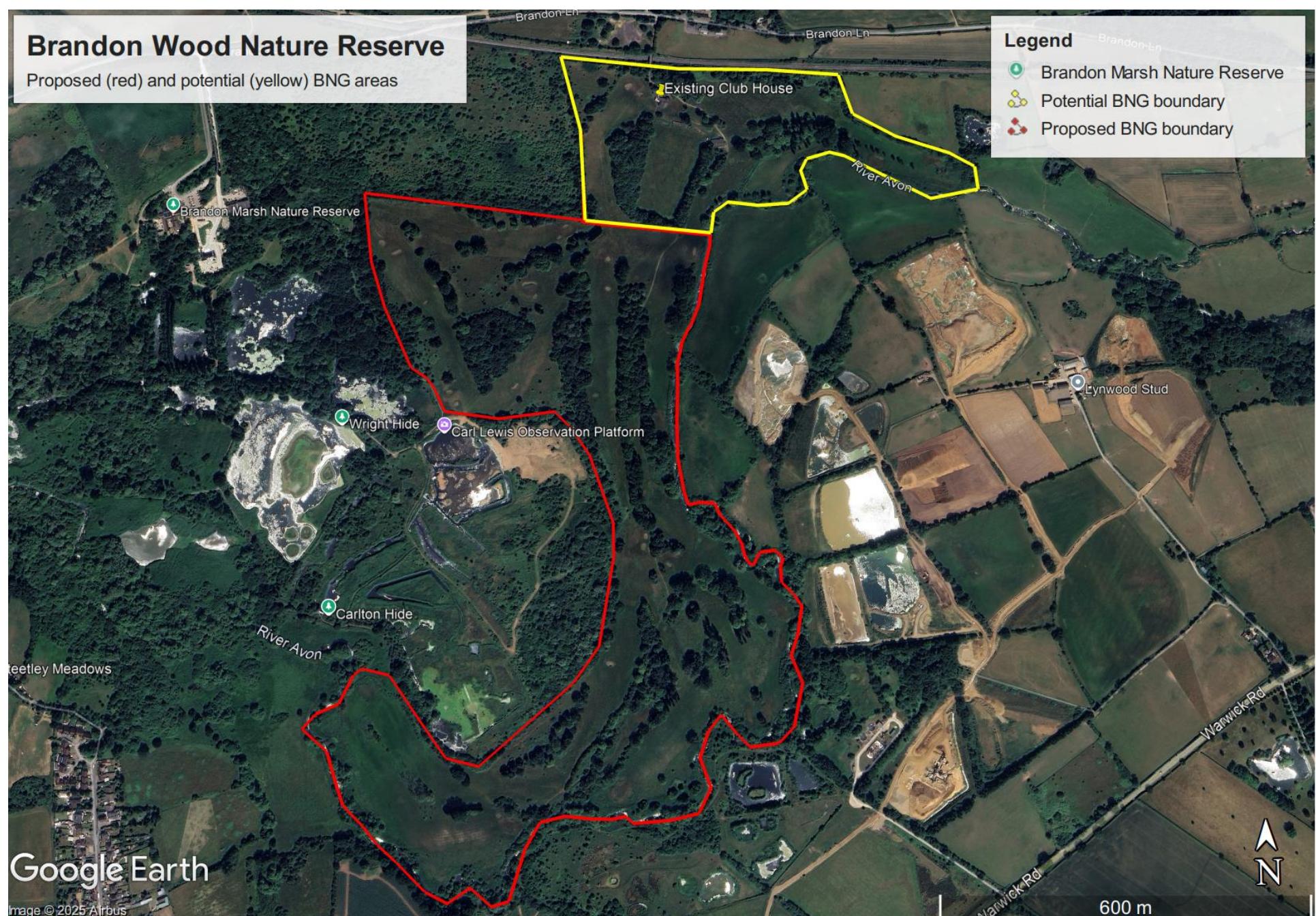
Enquiries should be directed to the above person.

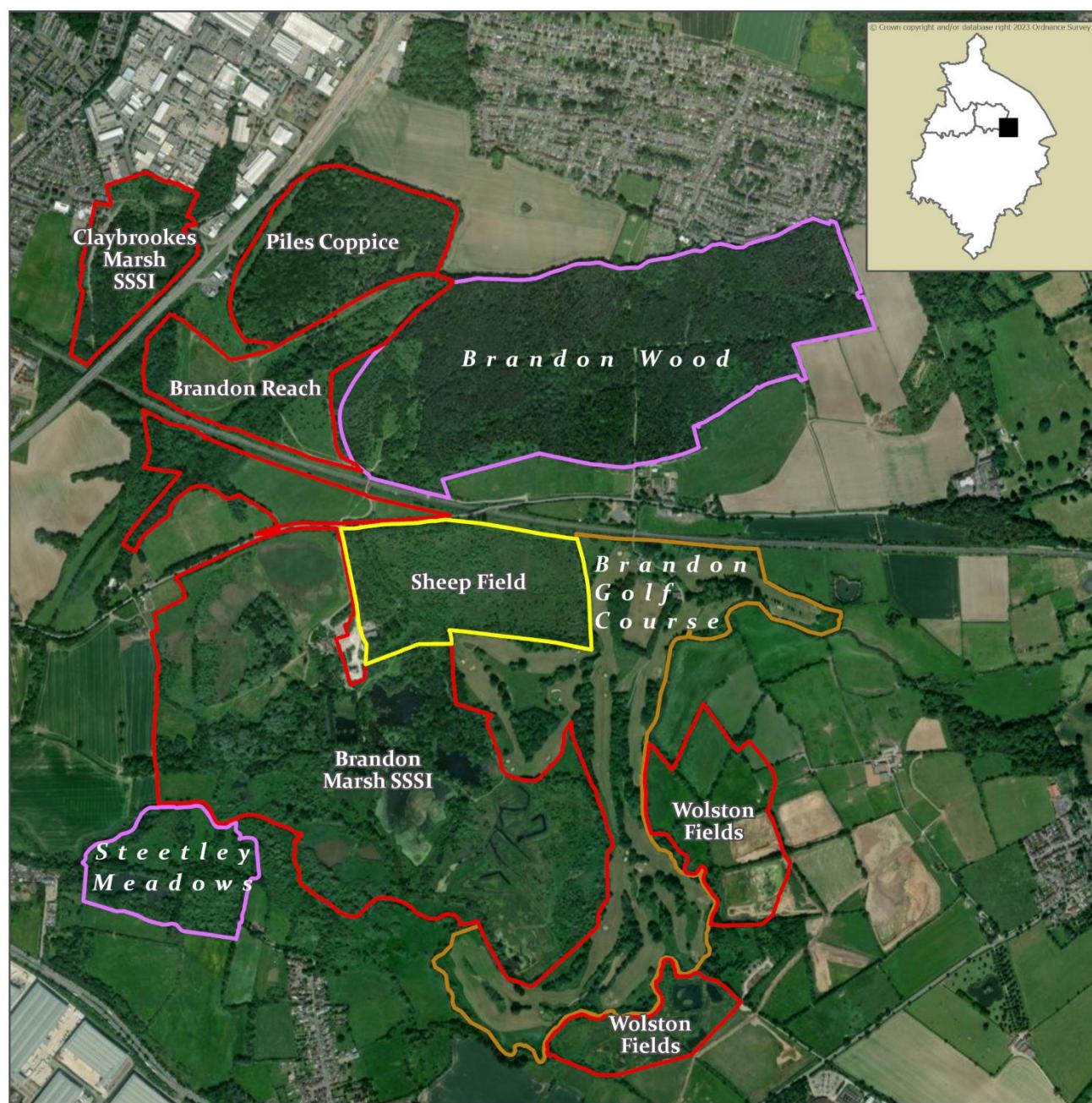
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This report is published on the council's website: www.coventry.gov.uk/council-meeting

Appendix 1 – Site Plan

The plan is of the whole site that occupies Brandon Wood Golf Course. The area outlined in yellow indicates the part of the site that is referred to in the report (including Option 4) where a potential outdoor education facility could be located - if it doesn't proceed will revert to ~ 90 BNG units. The area outlined in red is the land proposed for 214 BNG units.





Brandon Wood Golf Course in wider landscape managed for nature conservation

Legend:

- Red box: Land Managed by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust
- Yellow box: Brandon Golf Course
- Purple box: Other Land Managed for Nature
 - Brandon Wood: Friends of Brandon Wood
 - Steetley Meadows: Ryton Conservation Trust

Metres
0 250 500 1,000

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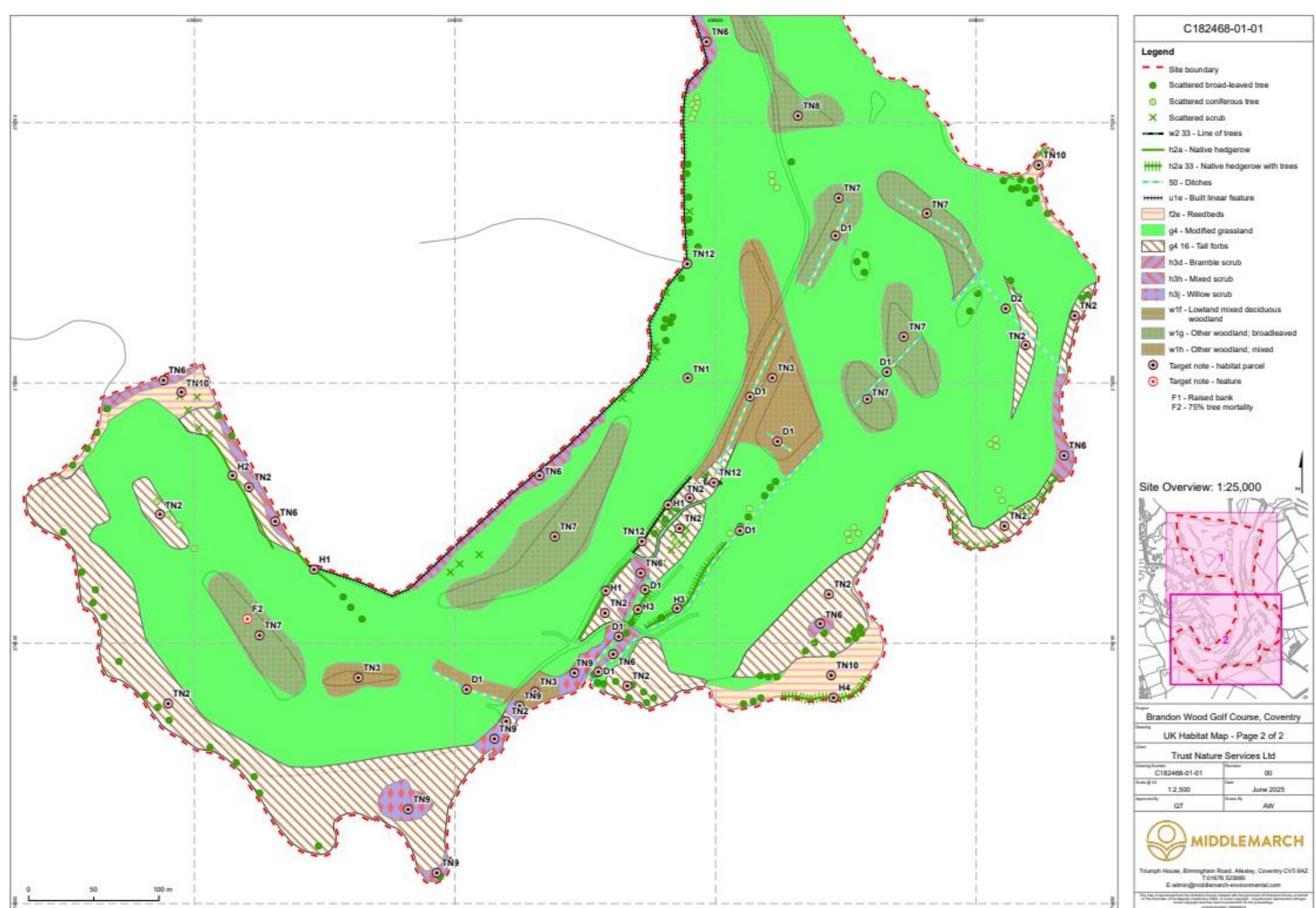
Contains Open Government License v.3.0 data.
Contains data © Warwickshire Wildlife Trust.

Service Layer: Maxar, Microsoft



Appendix 3

Proposed interventions to be delivered at Brandon Wood Nature Reserve produced by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Group





Visual of proposed wetlands, provided by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust Group

Council Meeting

13 January 2026

Booklet 1

Written Questions

1.	QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor G Ridley
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TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor N Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Communities and Housing

TEXT OF QUESTION:

"Following the unlawful demolition of a heritage asset on Earlsdon Street last year a stop notice was issued by the Council. The developer launched an appeal against this decision with the planning inspectorate. Could the Cabinet Member provide an update on the status of this appeal and tell us what further actions he intends to take to resolve this issue?"

2.	QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor G Ridley
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TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor AS Khan, Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities

TEXT OF QUESTION:

"Several local authorities have been piloting the use of drones to tackle fly-tipping. Will the Cabinet Member consider providing officers with this equipment to tackle fly-tipping in Coventry?"

3.	QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor P Male
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TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor O'Boyle, Cabinet Member for Jobs Regeneration and Climate Change

TEXT OF QUESTION:

"Following the announcement that Coventry Airport will close in June 2026, can the Cabinet Member provide Council with an update as to progress in finding a partner to establish a Giga factory on the airport site?"

4.	QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor M Lapsa
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TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor P Seaman, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

TEXT OF QUESTION:

"Subject: Children and Young People taken abroad against their will.

Can the Cabinet Member for Children's Services please advise:

1. How many reports have been received by the Council in the last three

years of children or young people being taken abroad against their wishes, including cases involving suspected forced removal, abandonment, or detention overseas?

2. What safeguarding procedures are in place when the Council becomes aware that a child or young person has been taken out of the UK without consent or is being prevented from returning?"

5. **QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor M Lapsa**

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor P Seaman, Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

TEXT OF QUESTION:

"Subject: Somali girl from Coventry detained in Somalia.

In the context of children and young people being taken abroad against their will, a young Somali girl from Coventry is currently being held in a detention centre in Somalia. It has been reported that she has attempted to escape on three occasions and has approached local police requesting assistance to be taken to the British Embassy.

Given that this young person is from Coventry, can the Cabinet Member clarify:

1. What steps the Council has taken to establish the facts of this case, including liaison with the family, relevant safeguarding partners, and national agencies?
2. What actions, if any, the Council has taken to raise this case with central government, including the Home Office, Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office, or Members of Parliament?
3. How the Council is using its influence to apply pressure on the UK Government to ensure this young person's safety, welfare, and return to the UK, in line with its safeguarding responsibilities?"

6. **QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor M Lapsa**

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor AS Khan, Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities

TEXT OF QUESTION:

"Subject: Sharia Councils and Sharia Courts

Is the Deputy Leader aware of the existence or operation of any Sharia councils, Sharia-based courts, or informal religious arbitration bodies within Coventry?

If such bodies are operating, can the Deputy Cabinet Member clearly set out:

1. What knowledge the Council has of their activities, structure, and scope

of decision-making, and whether the Council has conducted any assessments to determine their impact on residents.

2. What concrete safeguards are in place to ensure that no decisions, advice, or pressures arising from such bodies contravene British law, including but not limited to family law, safeguarding legislation, equality law, and human rights protections.
3. How the Council ensures that women, children, and vulnerable adults are not subjected—directly or indirectly—to coercion, intimidation, or discriminatory practices, particularly in matters relating to marriage, divorce, custody, or personal liberty.
4. What mechanisms exist for individuals who feel pressured or harmed by such bodies to safely report concerns, and how the Council responds when such concerns are raised.
5. Whether the Council has engaged with statutory partners, including the police and safeguarding boards, to ensure that no parallel or unregulated systems of justice are operating in Coventry in a way that undermines the rule of law or statutory safeguarding responsibilities.”

7. QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor M Lapsa

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor AS Khan, Cabinet Member for Policing and Equalities

TEXT OF QUESTION:

“Subject: Neighbourhood Enforcement

For each ward, how many incidents have the Neighbourhood Enforcement Teams dealt with in the last two years, broken down by type of incident?

By ward, how many Penalty Notices were issued for these types of incidents and how many Penalty Notices were paid in that time period?

I would be grateful if the information could be presented in a clear table format where possible.”

8. QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor J Gardiner

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor N Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

TEXT OF QUESTION:

“Subject: Social Housing Waiting List

For each of the Homefinder housing bands for the last four years, please could you detail the numbers of claimants needing to be permanently housed?

What proportion of claimants in each housing band category, for the last four years were British citizens?

What were the average wait times to receive the housing type required (e.g. for 1 bed, 2 beds, three bed family home, 4 beds etc) for each housing band for each of the last four years?

How many families are there currently awaiting a permanent three bed family home and what proportion of these are British citizens?"

9.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor J Gardiner

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor N Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

TEXT OF QUESTION:

"Subject: Temporary Housing

How many single people and families have been housed in temporary housing accommodation for each of the last four years and what proportion of these claimants are British citizens?"

10.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor J Gardiner

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor K Sandhu, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills

TEXT OF QUESTION:

"Subject: SEND Pressure

Please could you quantify the demand for SEND provision over the last 4 years, year on year. What proportion of this demand relates to non-British nationals?

What proportion of SEN language support relates to supporting children for whom English is a second language and what is the rate of change for this kind of language support over the last four years?"

11.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor G Lewis

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor N Akhtar, Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities

TEXT OF QUESTION:

"For Cabinet Member for Housing and Communities on the Subway Project

In July 2024, Unity in Coventry were advised by the Council's officers that there were "no indications that the project wouldn't be signed off," and work subsequently proceeded on that basis, including the award of Prevent funding and extensive community engagement.

However, in March 2025 the project was halted on the grounds of conservation requirements.

Could the Cabinet Member clarify:

- a) Which specific conservation designation, policy, or protection applies to this subway or its tiles, given that the location is neither listed nor within a designated conservation area, and that similar tiled subways elsewhere in the city have been painted?
- b) Why this conservation issue was not identified or communicated at the start of the process, before funding was awarded and public activity commenced?
- c) What concrete steps will the Council take to improve safety for LGBTQ+ residents using this subway between our cities two queer venues."

12.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor G Lewis

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor J O'Boyle, Cabinet Member for Jobs, Regeneration and Climate Change and Councillor K Caan, Cabinet Member for Public Health, Sport and Wellbeing

TEXT OF QUESTION:

"1. Recent data published by Friends of the Earth shows 58% of Coventry homes are rated EPC D or below leaving 85,000 households with avoidably high energy bills, and 19% of households in fuel poverty. Given the significant public benefit of warmer homes could the Cabinet Member outline:

- a) What specific programmes the council is currently encouraging or delivering to improve insulation and energy efficiency, particularly in the private rented sector?
- b) How the council intends to ensure compliance with minimum EPC standards and support households most at risk from cold homes and fuel poverty?

2. The same data published by Friends of the Earth shows 100% of Coventry Neighbourhoods experience air pollution above World Health Organisation guidelines. Could the Cabinet member confirm what steps were being taken across the city to improve air quality?"

13.

QUESTION SUBMITTED BY: Councillor G Lewis

TO BE ANSWERED BY: Councillor G Duggins, Cabinet Member for Policy and Leadership

TEXT OF QUESTION:

- a) Will the Leader of the Council be making a statement about the review of Coventry's Palantir contract?
- b) What is the timeline for review?
- c) and how will members of the public be consulted?

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