

## HEATHER – SITE ASSESSMENT

### SETTLEMENT SUMMARY

#### Settlement Hierarchy

- Heather is a Sustainable Village in the adopted Local Plan.
- It is proposed to remain a Sustainable Village in the new Local Plan.

#### *Key services and facilities*

- Heather has a primary school (Heather Primary). The primary school is gaining an increasing number of pupils from the new housing developments in Ibstock. Further limited expansion may be required but the school site is small with limited capacity for growth. No capacity issues have been identified for the period up to January 2026.
- The closest secondary school is in Ibstock (Ibstock Community College). Ibstock Community College is an 11-16 school. The school is expected to be over capacity from January 2023, with the growth in pupil numbers linked to the South East Coalville development. The school is exploring options to increase pupil capacity using S106 funds. No public transport serves the school from Heather.
- There is no bus service that serves Heather. The nearest bus service is located in Ibstock (Runs Monday to Saturday, every 30 minutes).
- Heather has a convenience store (Day-Today Heather Stores).
- There are limited employment opportunities just outside of the settlement boundary and the closest primary employment area is the South Leicester Industrial Estate in Ellistown.

#### *Other services and facilities*

- The settlement also has a village hall, public houses, place of worship and formal and informal recreation services.
- The closest GP and pharmacy are located in Ibstock along with other services and facilities.

#### Settlement Features

- **River Mease Special Area of Conservation (SAC)** – The catchment for the River Mease SAC is located to the west of the settlement with a separation of over 200m from the settlement. No sites are within the catchment.
- **Flood Zones 2/3a/3b** – Areas at greater risk of flooding are located to the east of the settlement and runs adjacent to/nearby site H1.
- **National Forest** – The settlement and surrounding area is in the National Forest.
- **Minerals Consultation Area (MSA) for Sand and Gravel and Brick/Clay**– The settlement is located in the MSAs for the potential of sand and gravel resources and brick clay resources. All sites are impacted.
- **Mineral Consultation Area (MSA) for at or near surface Coal** - The northern part of the settlement is located in this MCA. Sites H3, H4, H7 and H12 are impacted.
- **Coal Risk Development Areas** -
  - The settlement and surrounding area have a low risk of unrecorded coal mining related hazards.
- **Newton Burgoland Marshes Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)** - Heather is located in the Impact Risk Zone for Newton Burgoland Marshes SSSI.

- Leicestershire & South Derbyshire Coalfield Landscape Character Area (LCA)– all sites are located in this LCA.

### STAGE 1 - SITE IDENTIFICATION

The 2021 SHELAA identifies 11 sites for housing in Heather:

Site Reference	Site Address
H1	Newton Road
H2	Swepstone Road
H3	Adjacent Sparkenhoe Estate, <i>Remainder of Site</i>
H4	Coalfield West
H6	Land at Swepstone Road
H7	Land rear of 55 Mill Lane
H8 (EMP56)	Heather Brickworks, Mill Lane
H9	Land at Heather Hall, Swepstone Road
H10	Land South West of Heather Hall
H11	Land North East of Heather Hall
H12	Land at Corner Farm, No.2 Main Street

### STAGE 2 – SITE SIEVE

Five sites were sieved out at this stage, leaving six sites for further assessment.

Site Reference	Site Address	Reason for being sieved out
H7	Land rear of 55 Mill Lane	Remote from limits to development
H8 (EMP56)	Heather Brickworks, Mill Lane	Outline planning permission
H9	Land at Heather Hall, Swepstone Road	Remote from limits to development
H10	Land South West of Heather Hall	Remote from limits to development
H11	Land North East of Heather Hall	Remote from limits to development

**H8 (EMP56)** has been sieved out for both housing and employment uses.

An increased site area and housing capacity for **H2** was submitted to the Council in March 2022 which also now shows a potential access off Newton Road. It is this increased site area and capacity that has been assessed.

### STAGE 3 - SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

SA Ref	SA Objective	SA Summary
SA1	Improve the health and wellbeing of the District's population	H1 H2, H3, H4 & H12 score <b>significant positive</b> H6 scores <b>minor negative</b>
SA2	Reduce inequalities and ensure fair and equal access and opportunities for all residents	--
SA3	Help create the conditions for communities to thrive	?
SA4	Provide good quality homes that meet local needs in terms of number, type and tenure	++

	in locations where it can deliver the greatest benefits and sustainable access to jobs	
<b>SA5</b>	Support economic growth throughout the District	0
<b>SA6</b>	Enhance the vitality and viability of existing town centres and village centres	H1 H2, H3, H4 and H12 score <b>significant positive</b> H6 scores <b>minor negative</b>
<b>SA7</b>	Provision of a diverse range of employment opportunities that match the skills and needs of local residents	-
<b>SA8</b>	Reduce the need to travel and increase numbers of people walking cycling or using the bus for their day-to-day needs	--
<b>SA9</b>	Reduce air, light and noise pollution to avoid damage to natural systems and protect human health	0
<b>SA11</b>	Ensure the District is resilient to climate change	H1 scores <b>uncertain</b> H2, H3, H4, H6 and H12 score <b>neutral</b>
<b>SA12</b>	Protect and enhance the District's biodiversity and protect areas identified for their nature conservation and geological importance.	--
<b>SA13</b>	Conserve and enhance the quality of the District's landscape and townscape character	--
<b>SA14</b>	Ensure land is used efficiently and effectively	H1, H2, H3, H4 and H6 score <b>significant negative</b> H12 scores <b>minor negative</b>
<b>SA15</b>	Conserve and enhance the character, diversity and local distinctiveness of the District's built and historic heritage	H1, H3, H4 and H12 score <b>neutral</b> H2 and H6 score <b>minor negative</b>
<b>SA16</b>	Protect water resources and ensure they are used efficiently	H1 scores <b>minor negative</b> H2, H3, H4, H6 and H12 scores <b>neutral</b>
<b>SA17</b>	Ensure the efficient use of natural resources, including reducing waste generation	?

#### STAGE 4 – DETAILED SITE ASSESSMENT SUMMARY

##### H1 – Newton Road (4.88ha / about 54 dwellings)

*Services & Facilities* – In line with the parameters in the accompanying methodology none of the sites are within a reasonable walking distance to public transport and employment. However this site is within a good walking distance to a convenience store, primary school and formal and informal recreation. No public transport serves Heather and travel outside the settlement is required to access secondary education, GP and pharmacy services in Ibstock.

## Summary of SA

SA Objectives															
Health and Wellbeing	Inequalities	Community	Housing	Economy	Town/Village centres	Employment	Sustainable travel	Air, Light & Noise	Flooding	Biodiversity & Geodiversity	Landscape	Land-use efficiency	Historic Environment	Water & Soil	Waste
SA1	SA2	SA3	SA4	SA5	SA6	SA7	SA8	SA9	SA11	SA12	SA13	SA14	SA15	SA16	SA17
++	--	?	++	0	++	-	--	0	?	--	--	--	0	-	?

As with all sites in Heather this site performs well against SA4 but poorly against SA2 and SA8 as well as a minor negative against SA7, due to poor transport links, and poor access to employment and a wider range of local services. All sites have scored significant negative against SA12, in part, given their siting within a SSSI Impact Zone. The site also scores poorly in relation to SA14 due to it being a greenfield site of over 1 hectare.

This site is well located to recreational facilities and scores a significant positive against SA1, and its siting adjacent to the settlement boundary also results in a significant positive. However, the impact on overall community cohesion is uncertain (SA3) and a score of uncertain is also found against SA11, due to only part of the site being within Flood Zones 2 and 3.

### Key Planning Considerations –

- Development of the site would increase housing in the settlement by 11%.
- Large greenfield site (Grade 3 Agricultural Land) that adjoins the Limits to Development with residential development along part of its north and west boundary.
- An application previously submitted for 54 dwellings but was withdrawn (16/01149/OUTM).
- Highways advice suggests a suitable access can be provided and no issues over capacity of the local highway network. A number of footpaths cross the site or are along its boundary.
- Potential for impact on biodiversity but this could be addressed through mitigation. Development would need to take account of the Local Wildlife Site/Tree Preservation Order tree within the site. Great Crested Newt (GCN) survey/licensing scheme will be required.
- There is the potential impact on heritage assets as the site abuts a Grade II Listed Building, namely Beresford House and “former farm buildings”. However, the relationship of the farmstead to its farmland has already been compromised due to development that has taken place.
- Very small tip of the site is within Flood Zones 2 & 3 but layout of development could take this into account.
- Potential for the sterilisation of sand and gravel and brick and clay resources across the sites as well as mining related hazards.
- Heather brickworks and Heather Landfill within 150- 370m of the site.
- The site is in a wider parcel of land (16HEA-C) deemed to have a medium landscape sensitivity and medium-low visual sensitivity for housing.(Landscape Sensitivity Study). The adjacent land to the east has also been identified as important or vulnerable landscape feature/area, in the Landscape Study.

*Deliverability/Developability* – The site is being promoted by an agent on behalf of the landowners and a housebuilder is involved. Its availability was confirmed in 2019 but there are questions over the site’s suitability, particularly relating to the scale of development and its relationship with the settlement.

## H2 – Swepestone Road (8.2ha / about 154 dwellings)

Services & Facilities –In line with the parameters in the accompanying methodology none of the sites are within a reasonable walking distance to public transport and employment. However, this site is within a good walking distance to a convenience store, primary school and formal and informal recreation. No public transport serves Heather and travel outside the settlement is required to access secondary education, GP and pharmacy services in Ibstock.

### Summary of SA

SA Objectives																
Health and Wellbeing	Inequalities	Community	Housing	Economy	Town/Village centres	Employment	Sustainable travel	Air, Light & Noise	Flooding	Biodiversity & Geodiversity	Landscape	Land-use efficiency	Historic Environment	Water & Soil	Waste	
SA1	SA2	SA3	SA4	SA5	SA6	SA7	SA8	SA9	SA11	SA12	SA13	SA14	SA15	SA16	SA17	
++	--	?	++	0	++	-	--	0	0	--	--	--	-	0	?	

As with all sites in Heather this site performs well against SA4 but poorly against SA2 and SA8 as well as a minor negative against SA7, due to poor transport links, and poor access to employment and a wider range of local services. All sites have scored significant negative against SA12, in part, given their siting within SSSI Impact Zones. This site also scores poorly in relation to SA14 due to it being a greenfield site of over 1 hectare.

This site is well located to recreational facilities and scores a significant positive against SA1, and its siting adjacent to the settlement boundary also results in a significant positive. However, the impact on overall community cohesion is uncertain (SA3). There is a minor negative score against SA15 due to the siting of a Listed Building (Heather Hall) to the west of the site.

### Key Planning Considerations –

- Development of the site would increase housing in the settlement by 33%.
- Large greenfield site that shares part of its northern boundary with the Limits to Development.
- Site is a mix of Grade 2/3 Agricultural Land, although no issues have been identified due to the potential scale of the loss.
- The site, as originally submitted was landlocked but additional details have since been submitted to show access off Newton Road with the existing farm track closed up. Details of access design and visibility is required for the purpose of highway comments.
- LCC Ecology have advised that there is a potential impact on biodiversity although mitigation may be possible through the use of buffer zones. GCN survey/licensing scheme will be required.

- Site of Heather Hall (Grade II LB) is 165m to the west. However, no heritage issues have been identified.
- There is the potential for the sterilisation of sand and gravel and brick and clay resources across the site as well as coal mining related hazards.
- The site is in a wider parcel of land (16HEA-B) deemed to have medium landscape sensitivity and medium visual sensitivity for housing (Landscape Sensitivity Study). In addition parts of the site are identified as having higher visual sensitivity to development.

Deliverability/Developability – The site has been promoted on behalf of a housebuilder who have secured a local interest in the land. Its availability was confirmed in 2022. However there are questions over the site’s suitability, particularly relating to the scale of development, relationship with the settlement and encroachment into the countryside. Further information is also required to ascertain if safe and appropriate forms of access could be achieved.

### H3 – Adjacent Sparkenhoe Estate, Remainder of Site (4.77ha / about 89 dwellings)

*Services & Facilities* –In line with the parameters in the accompanying methodology none of the sites are within a reasonable walking distance to public transport and employment. However, this site is within a good walking distance to a convenience store, primary school and formal and informal recreation. No public transport serves Heather and travel outside the settlement is required to access secondary education, GP and pharmacy services in Ibstock.

#### Summary of SA

SA Objectives																
Health and Wellbeing	Inequalities	Community	Housing	Economy	Town/Village centres	Employment	Sustainable travel	Air, Light & Noise	Flooding	Biodiversity & Geodiversity	Landscape	Land-use efficiency	Historic Environment	Water & Soil	Waste	
SA1	SA2	SA3	SA4	SA5	SA6	SA7	SA8	SA9	SA11	SA12	SA13	SA14	SA15	SA16	SA17	
++	--	?	++	0	++	-	--	0	0	--	--	--	0	0	?	

As with all sites in Heather this site performs well against SA4 but poorly against SA2 and SA8 as well as a minor negative against SA7, due to poor transport links, and poor access to employment and a wider range of local services. All sites have scored significant negative against SA12 given their siting within SSSI Impact Zones. This site also scores poorly in relation to SA14 due to it being a greenfield site of over 1 hectare.

This site is well located to recreational facilities and therefore scores significant positive against SA1. It also scores a significant positive against SA6 as the site adjoins the settlement boundary. However, the impact on overall community cohesion is uncertain (SA3).

#### Key Planning Considerations –

- Development of the site would increase housing in the settlement by 19%
- Greenfield site (Grade 3 Agricultural Land) outside but adjacent to the Limits to Development. Recently constructed residential development along the site’s most southern boundary. Significant parts of boundary comprise landscaping.

- No specific highway objections have been raised. Access is shown to be from the recent residential development to the south. A secondary access point is suggested from Blackett Drive. Footpaths run cross parts of the site.
- No objection from LCC ecology. Potential for impact on biodiversity but opportunity for mitigation. GCN survey/licensing scheme will be required.
- Potential for the sterilisation of sand and gravel and brick and clay resources across the site as well as coal mining related hazards.
- The site is in a wider parcel of land (16HEA-A & 16HEA-B) deemed to have medium landscape sensitivity and medium visual sensitivity for housing (Landscape Sensitivity Study). The southern part of the site relates well to housing to the east and south.

*Deliverability/Developability* – The site is being promoted by a land promotion company and its availability was confirmed in 2022. It is in a suitable location for housing development and could potentially be developed during the Local Plan period, although there are some concerns over its scale.

#### **H4 – Coalfield West (1.53ha / about 38 dwellings)**

*Services and Facilities* –In line with the parameters in the accompanying methodology none of the sites are within a reasonable walking distance to public transport and employment. However, this site is within a good walking distance to a convenience store, primary school and formal and informal recreation. No public transport serves Heather and travel outside the settlement is required to access secondary education, GP and pharmacy services in Ibstock.

#### *Summary of SA*

SA Objectives																
Health and Wellbeing	Inequalities	Community	Housing	Economy	Town/Village centres	Employment	Sustainable travel	Air, Light & Noise	Flooding	Biodiversity & Geodiversity	Landscape	Land-use efficiency	Historic Environment	Water & Soil	Waste	
SA1	SA2	SA3	SA4	SA5	SA6	SA7	SA8	SA9	SA11	SA12	SA13	SA14	SA15	SA16	SA17	
++	--	?	++	0	++	-	--	0	0	--	--	--	0	0	?	

As with all sites in Heather this site performs well against SA4 but poorly against SA2 and SA8 as well as a minor negative against SA7, due to poor transport links, and poor access to employment and a wider range of local services. All sites have scored significant negative against SA12 given their siting within SSSI Impact Zones. This site also scores poorly in relation to SA14 due to it being a greenfield site of over 1 hectare.

This site is well located to recreational facilities and therefore scores significant positive against SA1. It also scores a significant positive against SA6 as the site adjoins the settlement boundary. However, the impact on overall community cohesion is uncertain (SA3).

#### *Key Planning Considerations* –

- Development of the site would increase housing in the settlement by 8%

- Greenfield site outside but adjacent to the Limits to Development. Landscaping and hedged along its boundaries. Recent residential development to the east and Football Club to the north.
- Grade 2 Agricultural Land but no significant issues are likely in this respect given the scale of the development.
- Planning history for part of this site includes the refusal of planning permission for 4 dwellings (17/00089/OUT) on the grounds of unsustainable development and encroachment into the countryside.
- No highway objections raised although no suitable access has been detailed and access off Normanton Road could be an issue due to the bend on the road. As an alternative access could be through the frontage development onto Ravenstone Road.
- No objection from LCC Ecology. Development should include buffer zones along significant boundary hedges.
- Potential for the sterilisation of sand and gravel resources across the site as well as a low risk of coal mining related hazards across the site.
- The site is in a wider parcel of land (16HEA-A) deemed to have a medium-low landscape sensitivity and medium-low visual sensitivity for housing (Landscape Sensitivity Study).

*Deliverability/Developability* – The site is being promoted on behalf of the landowner. There is no evidence of developer interest and can only be considered potentially available. There are also questions over the site’s suitability in terms of access and its relationship with the settlement pattern.

**H6 – Land at Sweptstone Road (2.01ha / about 38 dwellings)**

*Services and Facilities* – In line with the parameters in the accompanying methodology none of the sites are within a reasonable walking distance to public transport and employment. However, this site is within a reasonable walking distance to a convenience store, primary school and formal recreation but well located in terms of informal recreation. No public transport serves Heather and travel outside the settlement is required to access secondary education, GP and pharmacy services in Ibstock.

*Summary of SA*

SA Objectives															
Health and Wellbeing	Inequalities	Community	Housing	Economy	Town/Village centres	Employment	Sustainable travel	Air, Light & Noise	Flooding	Biodiversity & Geodiversity	Landscape	Land-use efficiency	Historic Environment	Water & Soil	Waste
SA1	SA2	SA3	SA4	SA5	SA6	SA7	SA8	SA9	SA11	SA12	SA13	SA14	SA15	SA16	SA17
-	-	?	++	0	-	-	-	0	0	-	-	-	-	0	?

As with all sites in Heather this site performs well against SA4 but poorly against SA2 and SA8 as well as a minor negative against SA7, due to poor transport links, and poor access to employment and a wider range of local services. All sites have scored significant negative against SA12 given their siting



within SSSI Impact Zones. It also scores poorly in relation to SA14 due to it being a greenfield site of over 1 hectare and SA13, this being a greenfield site detached from the Limits to Development.

This site is not so well located to formal recreation, when compared to other sites, and therefore only scores a minor negative against SA1. It also scores a minor negative against SA6 as it is detached from the settlement boundary and a score of minor negative against SA15 reflects its proximity to a Listed Building (Heather Hall). However, the impact on overall community cohesion is uncertain (SA3).

*Key Planning Considerations –*

- Development of the site would increase housing in the settlement by 8%
- Greenfield site outside and detached from the Limits to Development. Mature trees and hedges on boundary and within the site. Adjacent site is covered by a TPO (Heather Hall which is a Grade II Listed Building). There is also a pond within the site boundary.
- Grade 2 Agricultural Land but no significant issues are likely given the scale of development.
- Site has been subject to two previous planning applications (ref: 16/00617/OUTM – 40 dwellings and withdrawn and 17/00340/OUTM – 38 dwellings. Both have been refused due a poor relationship with Heather and harm to the character and rural appearance of the countryside.
- No highway objections.
- The site comprises Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP) habitats and a Candidate Local Wildlife Site (LWS) that abuts the southern boundary. Potential impacts could be accommodated through mitigation although further survey work needed.
- The site adjoins Heather Hall (to the west), a Grade II Listed Building. Any harm arising from development could be mitigated through careful landscaping and siting and design.
- Potential for the sterilisation of sand and gravel resources as well as brick and clay across the site. There is also a high risk of coal mining related hazards across the site and a Coal Mining Risk Assessment will be required.
- The site is in a wider parcel of land (16HEA-B) deemed to have a medium landscape sensitivity and medium visual sensitivity for housing (Landscape Sensitivity Study).

*Deliverability/Developability –* The site is being promoted on behalf of the landowner with no evidence of developer interest and can only be considered potentially available. There are also questions over the site's suitability in terms of its location.

**H12 – Land at Corner Farm, No.2 Main Street (0.75ha / about 19 dwellings)**

*Services and Facilities –*In line with the parameters in the accompanying methodology none of the sites are within a reasonable walking distance to public transport and employment. However, this site is within a good walking distance to a convenience store, primary school and formal and formal recreation. No public transport serves Heather and travel outside the settlement is required to access secondary education, GP and pharmacy services in Ibstock.

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Health and Wellbeing	Inequalities	Community	Housing	Economy	Town/Village centres	Employment	Sustainable travel	Air, Light & Noise	Flooding	Biodiversity & Geodiversity	Landscape	Land-use efficiency	Historic Environment	Water & Soil	Waste
SA1	SA2	SA3	SA4	SA5	SA6	SA7	SA8	SA9	SA11	SA12	SA13	SA14	SA15	SA16	SA17
++	--	?	++	0	++	-	--	0	0	--	--	-	0	0	?

As with all sites in Heather this site performs well against SA4 but poorly against SA2 and SA8 as well as a minor negative against SA7, due to poor transport links, and poor access to employment and a wider range of local services. All sites have scored significant negative against SA12 given their siting within SSSI Impact Zones.

It however scores minor negative in relation to SA14 due to it being a greenfield site of less than 1 hectare. This site is well located to recreational facilities, and scores significant positive against SA1. It also scores a significant positive against SA6 as the site adjoins the settlement boundary.

### Key Planning Considerations –

- Development of the site would increase housing in the settlement by 4%
- Greenfield site outside and adjacent to the Limits to Development. Landscaping and hedges along its boundaries.
- Grade 2 Agricultural Land although no significant issues are likely given the scale of development.
- Highway concerns have been raised as to whether a safe and suitable access could be achieved due to the proximity of the site in the bend in Normanton Road and the junction to the east.
- Potential for BAP habitats on site (hedgerows, trees and grassland) as well as for the presence of badgers. Suggest further survey work and any mitigation would require buffer zones.
- Potential for the sterilisation of sand and gravel resources as well as brick and clay across the site. There is also a low risk of coal mining related hazards.
- The site is in a wider parcel of land (16HEA-A) deemed to have medium-low landscape sensitivity and medium-low visual sensitivity for housing (Landscape Sensitivity Study).

*Deliverability/Developability* – The site is being promoted on behalf of the landowner with no evidence of developer interest and can only be considered potentially available. There are also questions over the site's suitability, particularly relating to its relationship with the settlement pattern and highway accessibility.

### STAGE 5 – OVERALL CONCLUSIONS

In terms of the outcome from the SA, Sites H3 and H4 are the two better scoring sites. Site H6 scores the worst, it is not so well located in terms of some recreational facilities and is detached from the Limits to Development.

All sites are within the Impact Risk Zone for the Newton Burgoland Marshes SSSI and development would require the incorporation of SuDS with an additional treatment component. However, impacts on the SSSI other than from Water Quality are unlikely, due to the immobile nature of the SSSI features and distance to the site. None of the site's relationships with the SSSI and impact zones is a reason to preclude development.

Of the six sites assessed:

Site **H1** is a large greenfield site on the edge of the settlement. Due its scale, siting and depth of development, it would significantly encroach into the countryside and has a poor relationship with the settlement pattern. A small part of the site is within Flood Zones 2 & 3 but layout of development could take this into account. No highway objections raised.

For **Site H2** an amended site plan has been submitted to show access of Newton Road although there is still uncertainty over the suitability of such an access. However, this site has been discounted due to its scale and siting, as it would result in development that would significantly encroach into the countryside, which has a poor relationship to the settlement pattern. Parts of the site has been identified as having higher visual sensitivity to development.

Site **H3** is a large greenfield site that would result in significant encroachment beyond the building line into the countryside. However, it is well related to the settlement and would be better related to the pattern of development if the site area was reduced to comprise only the field to the north of the recent residential development to the south. A sole vehicular access from the south would be appropriate for this scale of development.

With respect to Site **H4** there is uncertainty over the access, given the sites position on the bend in Normanton Road although there maybe scope to access the site onto Ravenstone Road. However, development would encroach into countryside and be at odds with the linear form of development found in the locality.

Site **H6** is detached from the Limits to Development and has poor relationship with the settlement and pattern of development. It has a comparatively poorer access to the local convenience store, primary school and formal recreation.

For Site **H12** there are highway concerns and uncertainty over whether a safe and suitable access could be achieved due to the proximity of the site in the bend in Normanton Road and the junction to the east. In addition, the development could be at odds with the liner pattern of development in this part of Heather.

## **Recommendations**

Allocate **Land Adjacent Sparkenhoe Industrial Estate (H3)** for around 37 dwellings.