**Key Issues**

- Birmingham City Council’s emerging Local Plan housing requirement challenges the City to find sites for housing schemes to be brought forward and the golf course offered the opportunity to deliver a significant contribution to this, but within an unallocated site.

- The demand for new-build housing in Birmingham was the driver behind a need for maximising residential units and delivering a suitable density for those units within the development. This created space constraints within the Masterplan which were relevant to devising EIA mitigation.

- The site had existed as a golf course for a significant length of time, and as such, whilst managed grass areas dominated, the landscaping on and surrounding the course included some mature vegetation and ecological habitats, as well as potential for protected species.

- Ecus Ltd produced a drainage strategy with extensive use of SuDS for the development. The site’s topography presented significant challenges to developing a suitable strategy within other space constraints. Previous flooding adjacent to site was a concern to local residents emphasised in public consultation.

- The site is surrounded by existing development on all sides, comprising largely residential properties which were key receptors for the EIA.

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**Purpose of the project**

- Bloor Homes commissioned Ecus Ltd to undertake an Environmental Impact Assessment for a residential-led mixed use development in Birmingham.

- This entailed production of a Scoping Report and Environmental Statement, supported by various environmental studies.

- The development could contribute to Birmingham City Council’s emerging Local Plan development requirement of 89,000 new homes to be built in the period 2011 to 2031.

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**Description of the project**

- The site was North Worcestershire Golf Course, between Northfield and Longbridge. The golf club closed in 2015 as it became unviable to operate.

- The site comprised a mature 18-hole golf course, surrounded by existing, largely residential development.

- The proposal was for up to 1,000 residential dwellings, primary school, public open space and associated infrastructure.

- The application was outline with all matters except access reserved.

- Ecus Ltd coordinated the EIA, which included ecology, LVIA, heritage, air quality and water environment as topics, amongst others.
Lessons learnt

- Emerging Local Plan policy for Birmingham suggested that sites such as this should deliver a density of 50 dwellings per hectare, this and the need to achieve a critical overall number of units led to the requirement for development area to be a particular priority in the master planning process.

- Early ecological survey work undertaken by Ecus Ltd allowed constraints for the site to be fed into the project development in a timely fashion, and for the site’s most ecologically valuable habitats to be identified. The mitigation identified within the ecological impact assessment prioritised the retention of these habitats. Space constraints for delivering suitable mitigation were also identified.

- The SuDS strategy for the development made use of the existing watercourse and addressed the need for suitable retention and run-off rates to avoid increasing risk of flooding off-site.

- The required SuDS footprint also created a space consideration in devising the layout of the development.

- Landscape mitigation for the loss of vegetation previously part of the golf course, the retention of perimeter tree belts to limit visual impact on neighbouring receptors and the retention of vegetation that contributes to historic landscape character all provided their own space constraints for the master planning process within the site.

Lessons learnt cont. -

- Establishing the ecological value and constraints of the site early allowed this to be fed into the master planning process.

- Combining mitigation and enhancement benefits for SuDS, ecological habitats and landscape value allowed the development to make best use of space and deliver green infrastructure that aided the outcomes of the EIA alongside benefitting future residents.

- An iterative approach to environmental input for the development layout facilitated multidisciplinary thinking on space-use in a fairly large site in a relatively urban location, with its associated benefits of transport access and sustainability.

- The inclusion of significant planning expertise within the project team aided the consideration of the key environmental issues as part of the project development in light of the local planning policy context.

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