



**AREAS OF SEPARATION
STUDY REPORT
NOVEMBER 2025**



Welcome to
**Clifton - upon -
Dunsmore**
Please drive carefully



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3. INTRODUCTION

SUMMARY

- 3.1. Several of the Borough's villages are in close proximity to the settlement boundaries of Rugby town. It is understood that many residents value the character and identities of these villages which are, at least in part, derived from the degree to which they are physically and visually separated from the town.
- 3.2. Should development occur within the areas that separate these villages from the town, there is a risk that the existing degree of separation will be diminished, or that settlements will eventually coalesce. Therefore, as part of the emerging local plan, the Council's Development Strategy team wish to consider whether a policy can be introduced which provides some protection against this risk while not compromising the other aims of the plan.
- 3.3. This study, which assesses the areas between the town and its nearby villages with a view to identifying the boundaries and characteristics of potential 'areas of separation', is intended to provide an evidence base that can inform such a policy.
- 3.4. No national guidance exists for assessing areas of separation, and no such studies have been undertaken for the Borough in recent history that can be reproduced and updated. Therefore, the methodology used here draws upon studies that have been produced for other local authorities.
- 3.5. In brief, the study finds that:
 - The area between Rugby and Long Lawford is designated Green Belt, and therefore defining an area of separation in this location would be redundant.
 - Little space will remain for an area of separation to be defined between Rugby and Newton if the allocations proposed in the emerging plan proceed.
 - The area between Rugby and Clifton upon Dunsmore contributes strongly to the separation of the two settlements, barring the ribbon development which connects the two along Rugby Road. Therefore, there is a clear opportunity to designate an area of separation in this location.
 - The role that the area between Rugby and Dunchurch and Thurlaston plays in separating the settlements will be diminished once the South West Rugby urban extension is built. Nevertheless, substantial open areas remain which are important for maintaining some degree of separation.
- 3.6. Boundaries are recommended for areas of separation between Rugby and Clifton upon Dunsmore and Rugby and Dunchurch and Thurlaston. A judgement will need to be made by the Council's plan-makers as to whether these are compatible with the objectives and broader array of policies contained within the emerging Local Plan.

SCOPE OF THE STUDY

- 3.7. When identifying potential areas to include in the study, there were two primary considerations: gap size and development pressure. It has been decided that, for the study to be proportionate and suitably focused, consideration will not be given to gaps between the town and villages that are over 1km. For the same reasons, consideration will not be given to gaps between the town and villages where there is little evidence of development pressure (in the form of planning applications or the promotion of land in response to plan-making calls for sites).
- 3.8. Although some of the villages within the Borough are in close proximity to each other, such as Brandon and Wolston which are c.26 metres apart at their closest points, such areas have been excluded from the study as they are not typically under the same level of development pressure as areas in the vicinity of the town, and therefore the risk of coalescence is deemed to be lower.
- 3.9. On this basis, four areas have been identified that lay within the scope of the study:
- Rugby - Clifton-upon Dunsmore
 - Rugby - Dunchurch and Thurlaston
 - Rugby - Long Lawford
 - Rugby - Newton
- 3.10. Nevertheless, the latter two areas have been excluded from receiving a full assessment due to their particular circumstances as explained below.
- 3.11. The area between Rugby and Long Lawford is designated Green Belt. It is considered that an area of separation in this location would provide little in the way of additional protection, given the relative strength of Green Belt policy at a national level, and would therefore be redundant.
- 3.12. The potential area of separation between Rugby and Newton would be reduced to a very small size should the allocations that are proposed in the emerging local plan proceed. Accounting for this, and given the presence of the Great Central Walk Local Nature Reserve and the Coton Park Pool Local Wildlife Site, which already act to constrain development, it is considered that an area of separation in this location is unlikely to serve a significant role.

4. POLICY CONTEXT

SUMMARY

- 4.1. National planning policy¹ and guidance² does not make any provisions for areas of separation (or equivalent concepts under different names). Therefore, it falls to individual Local Planning Authorities to determine the approach that is most appropriate for their area.
- 4.2. Several of the adopted plans of the Borough's neighbouring authorities contain policies that designate and afford protection to areas of separation, including those of Blaby District Council, Harborough District Council, North Warwickshire Borough Council, and Stratford-on-Avon District Council, as do the emerging local plans of South Warwickshire and West Northamptonshire.
- 4.3. The adopted Rugby Borough Local Plan³ does not contain an areas of separation policy, although Policy NE3: Landscape Protection and Enhancement does require development proposals to "guard against the potential for coalescence between existing settlements" (p.76). The most recent Local Plan to contain a policy commensurate with areas of separation was the 1997 Local Plan which included policy R/E11 Areas of Restraint.
- 4.4. None of the villages that fall within the scope of this study are covered by made Neighbourhood Plans.

NATIONAL POLICY

- 4.5. No reference is made to areas of separation (or equivalent concepts under different names) within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) or the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). Therefore it falls to Local Planning Authorities to determine what is most appropriate for their area.
- 4.6. Notwithstanding the above, the NPPF does contain other statements that are of relevance when considering a potential areas of separation policy, including:
 - "Strategic policies should... make sufficient provision for... conservation and enhancement of the natural built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure" (para 20).
 - "Planning policies and decisions should ensure that developments... are sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting" (para 135).

¹ Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024) National Planning Policy Framework. Available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/national-planning-policy-framework--2> [Accessed 16.10.2025].

² Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2024) Planning practice guidance. Available online: <https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/planning-practice-guidance> [Accessed 16.10.2025].

³ Rugby Borough Council (2019) Rugby Borough Council Local Plan 2011-2031. Available online: <https://www.rugby.gov.uk/w/local-plan-2011-31-adoption> [Accessed 16.10.2025].

- “Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by... protecting and enhancing valued landscapes... (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan” (para 187).

4.7. National Planning Practice Guidance on the natural environment builds on these references, giving the following advice about how planning policies can conserve and enhance landscapes:

“The National Planning Policy Framework is clear that plans should recognise the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and that strategic policies should provide for the conservation and enhancement of landscapes. This can include nationally and locally-designated landscapes but also the wider countryside. Where landscapes have a particular local value, it is important for policies to identify their special characteristics and be supported by proportionate evidence. Policies may set out criteria against which proposals for development affecting these areas will be assessed. Plans can also include policies to avoid adverse impacts on landscapes and to set out necessary mitigation measures, such as appropriate design principles and visual screening, where necessary. The cumulative impacts of development on the landscape need to be considered carefully.” (Paragraph: 036 Reference ID: 8-036-20190721)

4.8. As reported by LUC in in their Areas of Separation Report prepared for Harborough District Council in November 2024 (pp. 7-8), this guidance is regularly elaborated on by the Planning Inspectorate through local plan examinations, which have specified that:

- Supporting evidence should take into account potential new boundary features that may alter the risk of settlement coalescence in future (e.g. major infrastructure)⁴;
- Designations to prevent settlement coalescence should only include land that plays a role in maintaining settlement separation rather than other purposes such as protecting the setting of historic environment assets⁵;
- Local designations that preclude certain types or scales of development must be based on evidence, such as a landscape sensitivity study⁶;
- Local designations should be focused on protecting specific areas or features – not all rural areas outside settlement boundaries⁷.

⁴ Fareham Local Plan Examination – The Planning Inspectorate, Report to Fareham Borough Council, May 2015, File Ref: PINS/A1720/429/4

⁵ Canterbury Local Plan Examination. The Planning Inspectorate, Report to Canterbury City Council, June 2017, File Ref: PINS/J2210/429/5

⁶ North Warwickshire Local Plan Examination - The Planning Inspectorate, Report to North Warwickshire Borough Council, December 2015, File Ref: PINS/R3705/429/4

⁷ High Court Judgment between South Northamptonshire Council (claimant) and Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Barwood Land and Estates Ltd (defendants), March 2014 – in particular paragraph 47: Ref [2014] EWHC 573 (Admin)

POLICIES OF NEIGHBOURING AUTHORITIES

4.9. Several neighbouring authorities maintain policies that designate areas of separation between settlements. Others have dropped such policies in favour broader landscape protection policies. The approaches of neighbouring authorities are summarised in the table below.

Local Plan (Year Adopted)	Areas of Separation Policy
Blaby Core Strategy (2013)	This plan has Green Wedge (CS16) and Areas of Separation (CS17) policies. The distinction between the two is that Areas of Separation “function at a very localised scale” and solely exist to prevent coalescence of settlements, whereas Green Wedges operate over larger areas, and have multiple other functions (such as retaining and enhancing public access).
Coventry Reg 19 Plan (2025)	None.
Harborough Local Plan (2019)	Policy GD6 designates two areas of separation and specifies that: “Development in the Areas of Separation will be permitted where it would not compromise, either alone or in conjunction with other existing or proposed development, the effectiveness of the Area of Separation in protecting the identity and distinctiveness of these settlements.”
Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan – Site Allocations and Development Management DPD (2016)	Policy DM4 Safeguarding the Countryside and Settlement Separation does not single out specific areas of separation as was done in prior plans. Instead, it is claimed that this policy “reinforces the value of maintaining the physical and perceived separation between settlements across the entire borough”.
North Warwickshire Local Plan (2021)	Policy LP4 designates a ‘strategic gap’ between Tamworth and Polesworth with Dordon, intended to prevent their coalescence and maintain their separate identities. The policy states that “proposals will not be permitted where they significantly adversely affect the distinctive, separate characters of Tamworth and Polesworth with Dordon. In assessing whether or not that would occur, consideration will be given to any effects in terms of the physical and visual separation between those settlements”.
Nuneaton & Bedworth Local Plan (2019)	Policy ENV2 Areas of Restraint is not carried over from the 2006 local plan, with the 2019 plan instead relying solely on policy NE5 for the protection of landscapes. The approach taken in the new local plan submitted for examination in 2024 does not differ.
South Warwickshire, Reg 18 Plan (2025)	Draft Policy Direction 45 specifies that Areas of Restraint will be utilised across the two districts, with Stratford designations being reviewed, and new designations being identified within Warwick where appropriate. “Areas of Restraint will seek to protect areas that make an important contribution to the character of the settlement. The policy will seek to ensure that development does not harm the open nature of these identified areas, unless the scheme has

	demonstrable community benefits and contributes significantly the Local Plan's core objectives. Projects which enhance the character and visual amenity of Areas of Restraint will be encouraged, as will the promotion of beneficial uses such as public access, nature conservation and food production.”
West Northamptonshire Reg 18 Plan (2024)	Policy BN8 proposes designating areas of ‘Green Wedge’ to maintain the physical and visual separation of settlements and prevent their coalescence. It is claimed that this is necessary to protect the character and identity of settlements.

LOCAL POLICY

- 4.10. The adopted Rugby Borough Council Local Plan does not contain any policies that are intended to maintain designated areas of separation between the town and nearby villages. However, Policy NE3: Landscape Protection and Enhancement (p.76) does require development proposals to “guard against the potential for coalescence between existing settlements” and “aim to either conserve, enhance or restore important landscape features”, which, in the case of areas between the town and nearby villages may potentially include landscape features that contribute towards the degree of settlement separation.
- 4.11. The precursor to NE3 in the 2006 plan (Policy E5 – Landscape and settlement character) also carries an explanation that specifies: “An extension of a settlement, or other development in the countryside, can result in an unsatisfactory reduction in the separation between settlements, which adversely affects their identity” (pp. 36-37).
- 4.12. The last local plan to contain a policy that was intended to maintain areas of separation was the 1997 plan which included policy R/E11 Areas of Restraint (pp. 91-92). This policy designated seven areas of restraint (as shown on the plan’s policies map) and specified that “within these areas permission will not be granted for development that detracts from the open character of the area and the particular contribution that it makes to the structure and character of the town”. The policy is reproduced in full in Appendix A.

NEIGHBOURHOOD PLANS

- 4.13. None of the villages that fall within the scope of this study are covered by made Neighbourhood Plans.
- 4.14. Clifton upon Dunsmore Parish Council have prepared a Neighbourhood Plan⁸ which was being consulted on, in accordance with the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (Regulation 16), at the time of writing this report. Although this Plan does not seek to designate any specific areas of separation, its vision specifies that “Houlton, Rugby, and Clifton upon Dunsmore each have their own individual characteristics that will require a [sic] maintaining an appropriate level of separation, with the specific aim of avoiding each of the entities merging” (p.14).

⁸ Clifton upon Dunsmore Parish Council (2025) Clifton upon Dunsmore Parish Neighbourhood Plan, 2011-2041, Submission Version. Available online: <https://www.rugby.gov.uk/w/Clifton-upon-Dunsmore-neighbourhood-area-designation> [Accessed 16.10.2025].

5. METHODOLOGY

APPROACH

- 5.1. No national guidance exists for assessing areas of separation, and no such studies have been undertaken for the Borough in recent history that can be reproduced and updated. Therefore, the methodology used here draws upon studies that have been produced for other local authorities, such as Harborough District Council (2024)⁹ and North West Leicestershire District Council (2022)¹⁰.
- 5.2. The steps taken in assessing each of the areas are as follows:
- Firstly, the boundaries of each assessment area are established. In all cases, the assessment area encompasses all land between the relevant settlement boundaries (as designated in the adopted Local Plan) where development would have the potential to diminish the existing degree of separation, excluding land that is committed for development or is proposed as an allocation in the emerging local plan.
 - Secondly, the contribution that each assessment area makes towards maintaining separation (i.e. it's "strength") is assessed, accounting for: a) settlement character; b) the degree of physical and visual separation between settlements; and c) the presence of urbanising influences.
 - Thirdly, the factors that are important for preserving separation are identified and explained.
 - Lastly, the impact of any potential site allocations, committed development, or undecided planning applications on the assessment area are considered.
- 5.3. Observations made within the assessments are primarily based on data gathered from desktop reviews of maps and aerial photography, supplemented by site visits where a planning officer has walked through and around the assessment area. Photographs from these site visits are provided in Appendix B.
- 5.4. Following the assessment of each area, boundaries for a potential area of separation are recommended. These differ from the initial assessment areas because any sections which do not contribute to a sense of separation (such as parcels of land containing significant urbanising influences) have been excluded. Judgements will need to be made by the Council's plan-makers as to whether the proposed areas of separation are compatible with the objectives and broader array of policies contained within the emerging Local Plan. This study is presented as evidence, it is not a statement of policy.

⁹ LUC (2024) Areas of Separation: Review of existing and potential areas. Available online: https://www.harborough.gov.uk/download/downloads/id/8784/area_of_separation_study.pdf [Accessed 16.10.2025].

¹⁰ The Landscape Partnership (2022) Area of Separation Study: Coalville Urban Area. Available online: https://www.nwleics.gov.uk/files/documents/area_of_separation_study_update_may_2022/Area%20of%20Separation%20Report%20-%20combined%20report%20and%20appendices%20May%202022.pdf [Accessed 16.10.2025].

EVALUATION CRITERIA

5.5. Potential areas of separation should provide a sense of departure and arrival when travelling through them between settlements. Assessments of each area involve evaluations of three aspects to determine the extent to which this applies, each of which are described below.

SETTLEMENT IDENTITY

5.6. The evaluation of settlement identity considers the extent to which villages that are the focus of a separation assessment area have a distinct character and identity, on the understanding that the case for an area of separation will be stronger where it can be shown to be necessary for maintaining such character or identity. The evaluation primarily relies upon information drawn from conservation area appraisals and parish or neighbourhood plans.

5.7. Land within an assessment area is deemed to make a stronger contribution to settlement identity where:

- It is an important part of a settlement's setting;
- It features prominently in the views to and from the settlement;
- It provides a clear sense of arrival to or departure from the settlement; or,
- It contributes positively to a conservation area.

PHYSICAL AND VISUAL SEPARATION

5.8. The evaluation of physical and visual separation considers the distance between settlements, the presence of separating features (including those created by topography), and the links that currently exist.

5.9. Land within an assessment area is deemed to make a stronger contribution to the separation of settlements where:

- It contributes to a broad gap between settlements;
- It has land cover or a topography which restricts intervisibility between the settlements;
- It has a clear physical feature that marks the settlement edge; or,
- It does not contain direct vehicular links between settlements.

URBANISING INFLUENCES

5.10. The evaluation of urbanising influences considers the presence of existing development within the assessment area. Land is deemed to make a stronger contribution to settlement separation where:

- It lacks any development, or the development which exists is rural in character;
- It lacks infrastructure associated with human activity; or,
- It has natural or semi-natural land uses, such as woodland or wetlands.

6. RUGBY – CLIFTON UPON DUNSMORE ASSESSMENT

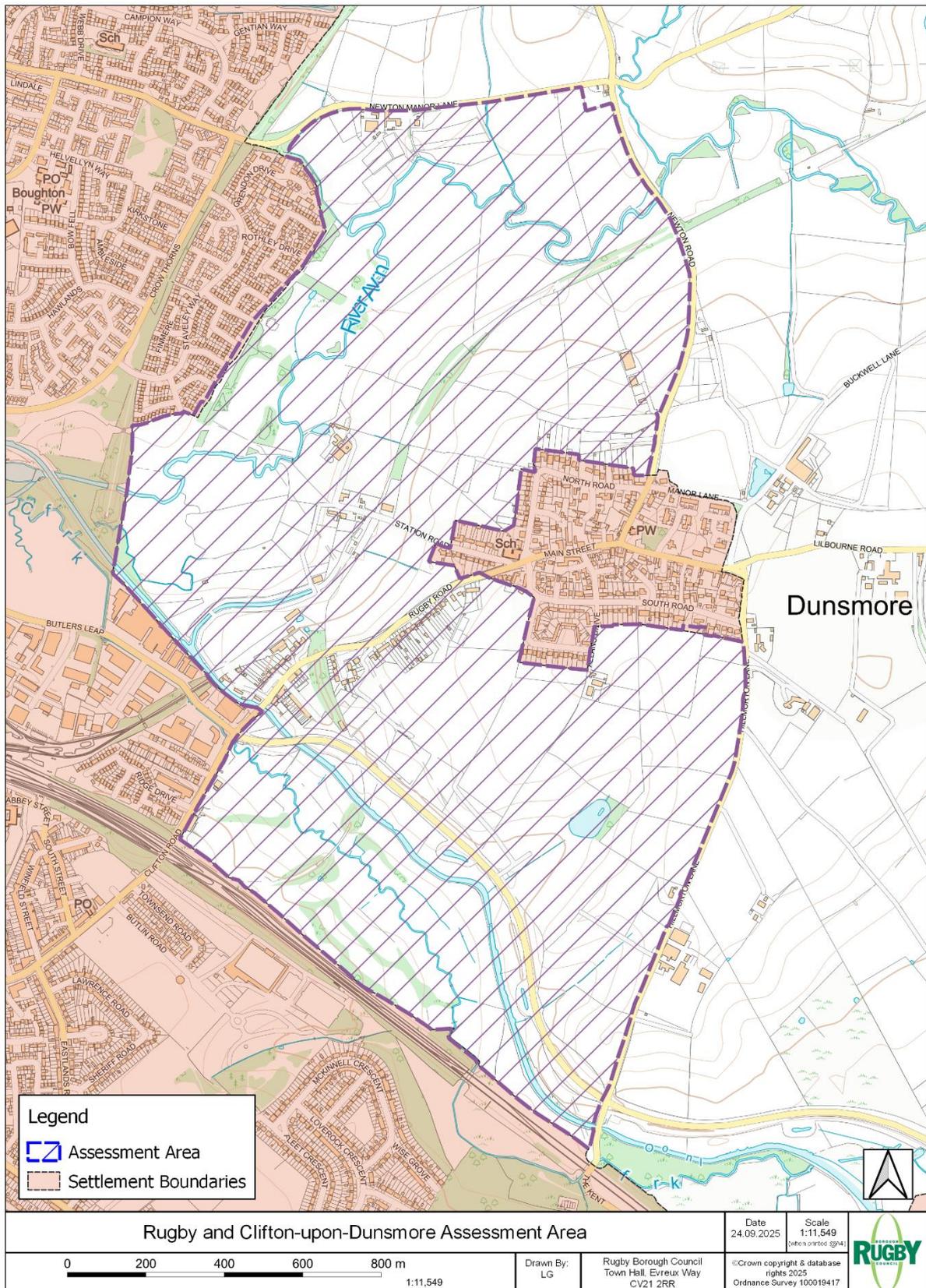


Figure 1: Rugby - Clifton upon Dunsmore assessment area.

CONTEXT

Assessment Area

- 6.1. The assessment area for considering separation between Rugby town and Clifton upon Dunsmore consists of the entirety of the area that lays between the two settlements and is outside of the settlement boundaries as defined by the adopted local plan. The assessment area is bounded by the railway line to the south, by Hillmorton Lane and Newton Road to the east, by Newton Manor Lane to the north, and by the Butlers Leap employment area and residential properties off Staveley Way to the west.

Relationship to Designations

- 6.2. Within the assessment area there are considerable areas of land constrained from development.
- 6.3. As seen in Figure 2, large swathes of land within the area between the Brownsver residential district of Rugby town and the western and northern boundaries of Clifton upon Dunsmore are in Flood Zones 2 and 3 due to the presence of the River Avon. North of the railway that marks part of the town's boundary and to the south of the village there is also another area, currently occupied by Rugby Golf Club, that is within these Flood Zones due to the presence of the Clifton Brook. Furthermore, both of the watercourses that correspond to these Flood Zone areas are designated Local Wildlife Sites.
- 6.4. A historic landfill site (Cala Levante) is located to the southwest of the village, just to the north of Rugby Road.
- 6.5. The entirety of the assessment area is within an Impact Risk Zone for the Cave's Inn Pits SSSI. However, given that these are the outer risk zones, they are unlikely to be restrictive of most types of residential and employment development.

Relationship with Development Allocations

- 6.6. As seen in Figure 3, there is considerable interest shown by landowners and developers in developing land around the village.
- 6.7. The Council's Preferred Option Consultation Document¹¹ proposes three residential allocations at the village, one of which (Site 307) lays within the assessment area. Numerous other parcels of land were put forward in the Call for Sites undertaken between 31 October 2023 and 2 February 2024 as part of the plan-making process. A planning application for a residential development at site 335 was received in August 2025, and an EIA screening request for site 83 was received in October 2025.

¹¹ Rugby Borough Council (2025) Rugby Borough Local Plan Preferred Option Consultation Document. Available online: <https://www.rugby.gov.uk/w/local-plan-review-preferred-options-public-consultation-document> [Accessed 16.10.2025]

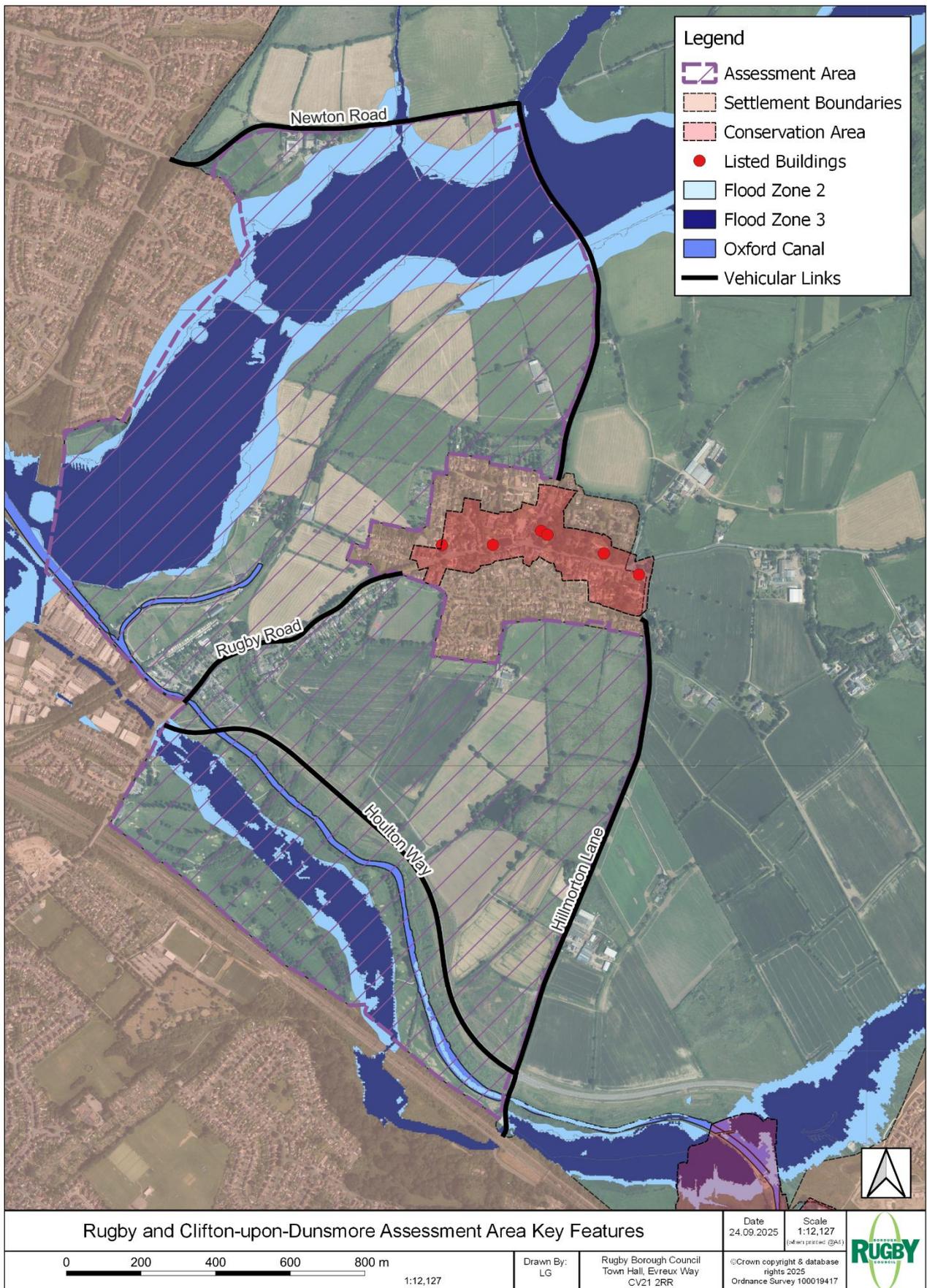


Figure 2: Key features within the Rugby - Clifton upon Dunsmore assessment area.

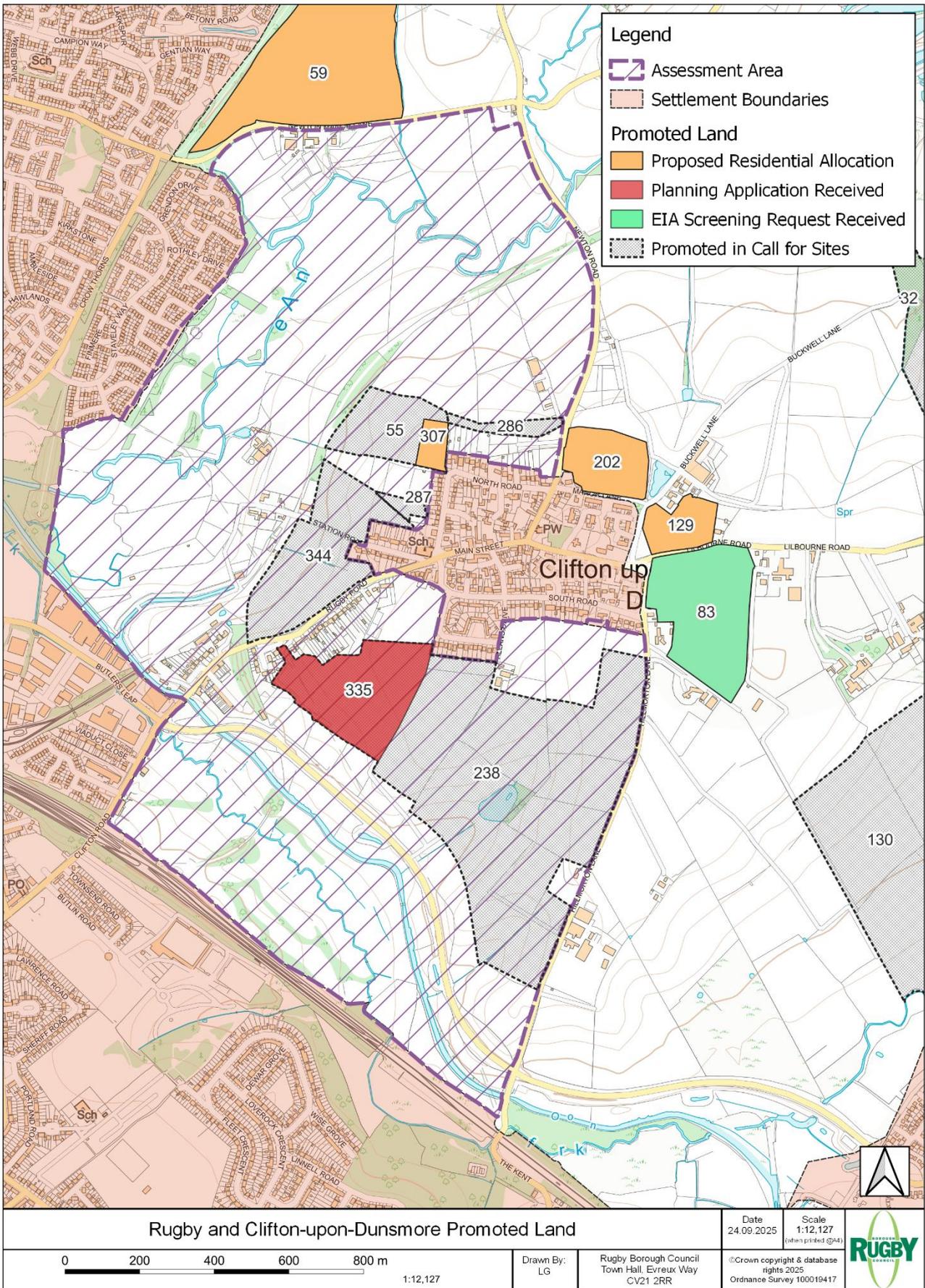


Figure 3: Land promoted in the Rugby - Clifton upon Dunsmore assessment area.

ANALYSIS OF SETTLEMENT GAP

Settlement Identity

- 6.8. Clifton upon Dunsmore is a historic village in a countryside setting. It has a conservation area, whose character has been well maintained, primarily stretching east to west along Main Street. It includes five Grade II listed buildings, one Grade II* listed building (Church of St Mary), and numerous other non-designated buildings of historic importance. Outside of the conservation area there are several more modern sections of the village, including the residential areas along North Road (to the north) and South Road (to the south) which were mostly built-out in the mid-20th century, and the area comprising Hadfield Close and Son Close to the northeast which was constructed on part of the grounds of Clifton Manor in the 1980s. As a result of this modern development, there only remains limited inter-visibility between the Conservation Area and the open countryside that lays within the assessment area, namely views from South Road looking South beyond the recreation ground, and glimpses of countryside looking down Rugby Road and Station Road.
- 6.9. Between the town and the village along Rugby Road there is ribbon development, much of which was initially constructed in the inter-war period. The only breaks in this ribbon between the two settlements are the bridge crossing the Oxford Canal, and the bridge that crosses a disused railway cutting between Vicarage Hill and Rugby Road.

Physical and Visual Separation

- 6.10. The gap between Rugby and Clifton upon Dunsmore varies in length. There is around 1km between the south of the village and the north of the town (the railway); around 700m between the west of the village and the east of the town (residential properties off Staveley Way); and around 600m between the southwest of the village and the Butlers Leap employment area of the town.
- 6.11. Rugby Road acts as the key connecting link between the two settlements, followed by Hillmorton Lane, and the combination of Newton Road and Newton Manor Lane. A pedestrian link is also provided by a public right of way (R114) that crosses from Station Road to the public open space on the eastern edge of Brownsover, however, as this is not paved, its accessibility is limited.
- 6.12. To the south of the village, the physical features that separate the two settlements include the railway, the Oxford Canal, the Houlton Way Road and mature trees along site boundaries. To the west and northwest of the village, the separating physical features include the River Avon, mature trees along site boundaries, and a disused railway line which lays on raised ground in some areas and is accompanied by mature trees along most of its length.
- 6.13. The topography of the assessment area is as follows. Most of the village and the fields directly to its south (including the recreation ground) are on a relatively high plateau (c. 115m) which then slopes away into a valley that reaches its lowest point along the Clifton Brook and the River Avon. The land then rises back up towards the town, although areas of development on the edge of the town, such as the properties of Staveley Way and to the north of Lower Hillmorton Road, are still lower than the village.

6.14. As a result of the topography and the physical features of the assessment area, inter-visibility between the two settlements is restricted to a limited number of vantage points. From Clifton upon Dunsmore distant views of the town (particularly higher buildings such as the Cement Works, church spires, the former Cemex office building, and the Rugby Town FC stands) can be seen from the recreation ground and some parts of the roads that adjoin it, and expansive views of Brownsover and Coton Park can be gained from northern and western parts of the village, such as the northwestern corner of North Road.

Urbanising Influences

6.15. The ribbon development along Rugby Road has a clear urbanising influence. This is strongest closer to Rugby where there is development on both sides of the road, including terraced houses that are not dissimilar to those found in parts of the town, and weaker to the north where there is farmland to the west and expansive views of the countryside that separates Clifton upon Dunsmore from Rugby.

6.16. Aside from the Houlton Way road, the assessment area to the south of the village is composed exclusively of farmland, the golf course, and watercourses, and is therefore considered to be reasonably free of urbanising influences.

6.17. The area to the west and northwest of the village is primarily composed of open farmland and natural and semi-natural space. There are some pockets of development, including Clifton Wharf, farm buildings, and isolated dwellings, however these are all considered to accord with a rural setting, and are therefore not considered to have an urbanising influence.

SETTLEMENT GAP FUNCTION

Key Characteristics of Settlement Gap

6.18. The gap between Rugby and Clifton upon Dunsmore is relatively strong in all areas except for the area of ribbon development along the Rugby Road. The following features are important in retaining a sense of separation between the two settlements:

- The undeveloped river valley which lays between the west of the village and the east of the town, extensive views of which can be seen from Rugby Road and which acts to provide a sense of travelling through the countryside on the approach to Clifton upon Dunsmore.
- The undeveloped farmland which lays between the south of the village and the north of the town as seen from Hillmorton Lane and Houlton Way, which helps to retain the rural character of the settlement gap.
- Mature tree cover on the edge of the town which limits views of Clifton upon Dunsmore from the residential area around Staveley Way.
- The disused railway line and mature trees that accompany it to the west of the village, which act as a feature of physical separation.

Impact of Potential Development Sites

- 6.19. The proposed allocation for 10 dwellings off of North Road (Site 307) within the assessment area would have a negligible impact on the sense of separation between Rugby and Clifton upon Dunsmore given its scale. Sites 286 and 287, which were promoted in the Call for Sites but discounted in the site selection process for the emerging local plan, would likely also have negligible impacts given their scale.
- 6.20. The remaining four sites within the assessment area would each diminish the degree of separation between the town and village to some extent.
- 6.21. By developing almost the entire area that lays between the village and Houlton Way, and reducing the gap between the two settlements to c. 300m at their closest points, site 238 would cause the area to the south of the village to lose its rural character, and diminish the sense of exiting one settlement and then entering another for those travelling along Hillmorton Lane/The Kent.
- 6.22. The development of site 335 (which is a smaller part of 238) would have a less substantial impact, but would still draw the two settlements physically closer and diminish the visual separation achieved by views to the south from the village recreation ground.
- 6.23. Development of sites 55 and 344 would compromise the open countryside which acts to separate the town from the west of the village, with 344 also causing there to be a loss of the remaining sense of separation provided by western views from Rugby Road, exacerbating the urbanising influence of the existing ribbon development.

RECOMMENDED AREA OF SEPARATION BOUNDARIES

- 6.24. The boundaries for the recommended area of separation between Rugby town and Clifton upon Dunsmore, as seen in Figure 4, include all of the assessment area except for the ribbon development along Rugby Road and the area of the proposed allocation (site 307). The former section has been excluded because the urbanising influence of the ribbon development means that much of the land adjoining Rugby Road, barring Sunnycroft Farm immediately to its north, does not contribute to a sense of separation between the two settlements.

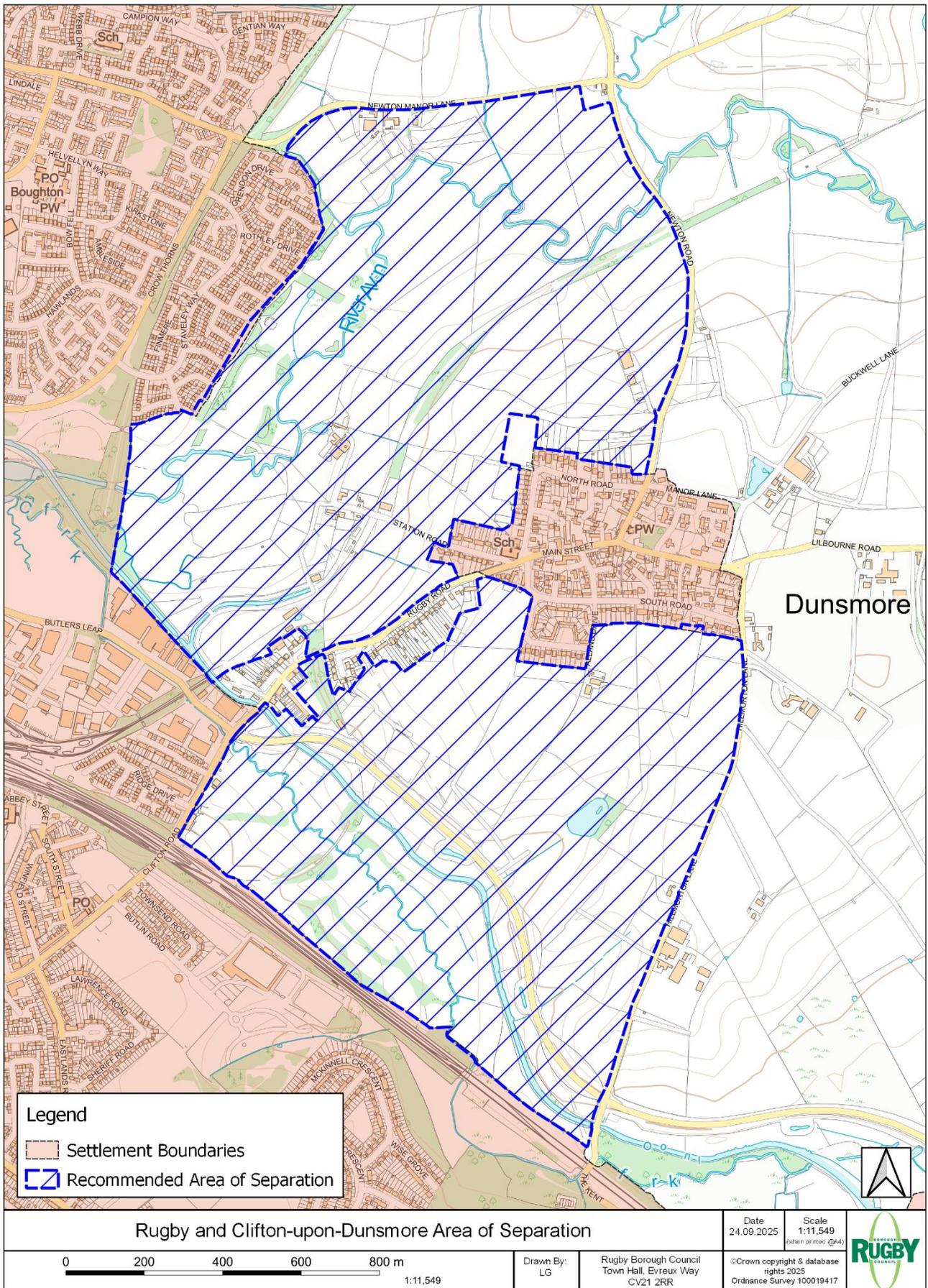


Figure 4: Recommended area of separation for Rugby – Clifton upon Dunsmore.

7. RUGBY – DUNCHURCH AND THURLASTON ASSESSMENT

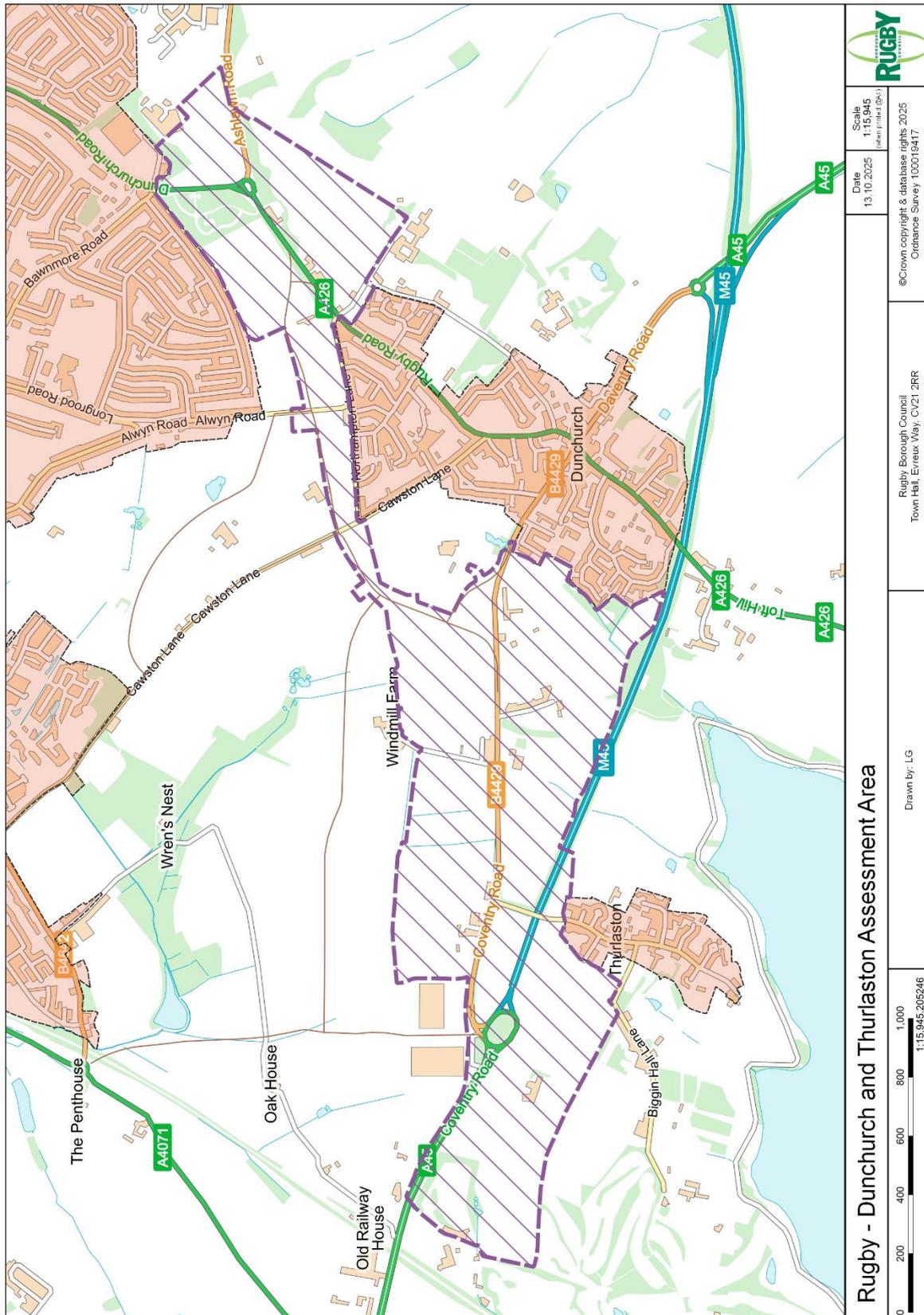


Figure 5: Rugby – Dunchurch and Thurlaston assessment area.

CONTEXT

Assessment Area

- 7.1. The assessment area for considering separation between Rugby town and Dunchurch and Thurlaston consists of the entirety of the area that lays between the town and the two villages and is outside of the settlement boundaries as defined by the adopted local plan – excluding the South West Rugby urban extension allocation (which has yet to be built out).
- 7.2. The assessment area can be described as having three interlinked sections.
 - **Section A:** To the northeast of Dunchurch the assessment area is comprised of the Bilton Grange site, Bilton Fields Farm, Cock Robin Wood, and farmland to the rear of Cock Robin Wood (between Rugby Road and Montague Road). It is intersected by the A426.
 - **Section B:** The central section of the assessment area is the narrowest. It is comprised of the farmland to the north of Northampton Lane that is allocated to become the Homestead Link Road (related to the South West Rugby urban extension).
 - **Section C:** The largest section of the assessment area is that to the west of Dunchurch and north of Thurlaston. This is comprised of farmland, allotments, isolated homes, and a garden nursery to the north of Coventry Road; dwellings, a church, farmland and paddocks to the south of Coventry Road; and Barnwells farm and a golf club driving range to the northwest of Thurslaston. It is intersected by the M45 and Coventry Road.

Relationship to Designations

- 7.3. Within the assessment area there are considerable areas of land constrained from development (see Figure 6).
- 7.4. Section A includes the Bilton Grange registered park and garden and numerous listed buildings that are closely associated with it, including two that are within the assessment area boundary (Cock Robin Cottages and Rugby Road Lodge) and four that are in close proximity (Bilton Grange School, Gatepiers, Inner Lodge and North Lodge). This part of the assessment area also features Cock Robin Wood which is a Local Nature Reserve.
- 7.5. Section B is free of designated constraints, except for being located within the outer bounds of an SSSI Impact Risk Zone.
- 7.6. Much of Section C is within the inner (and more restrictive) rings of the Impact Risk Zone for Draycote Meadows SSSI. It also has a listed building within its boundaries (Lavender Furlong) and is adjacent to the Thurlaston conservation area.

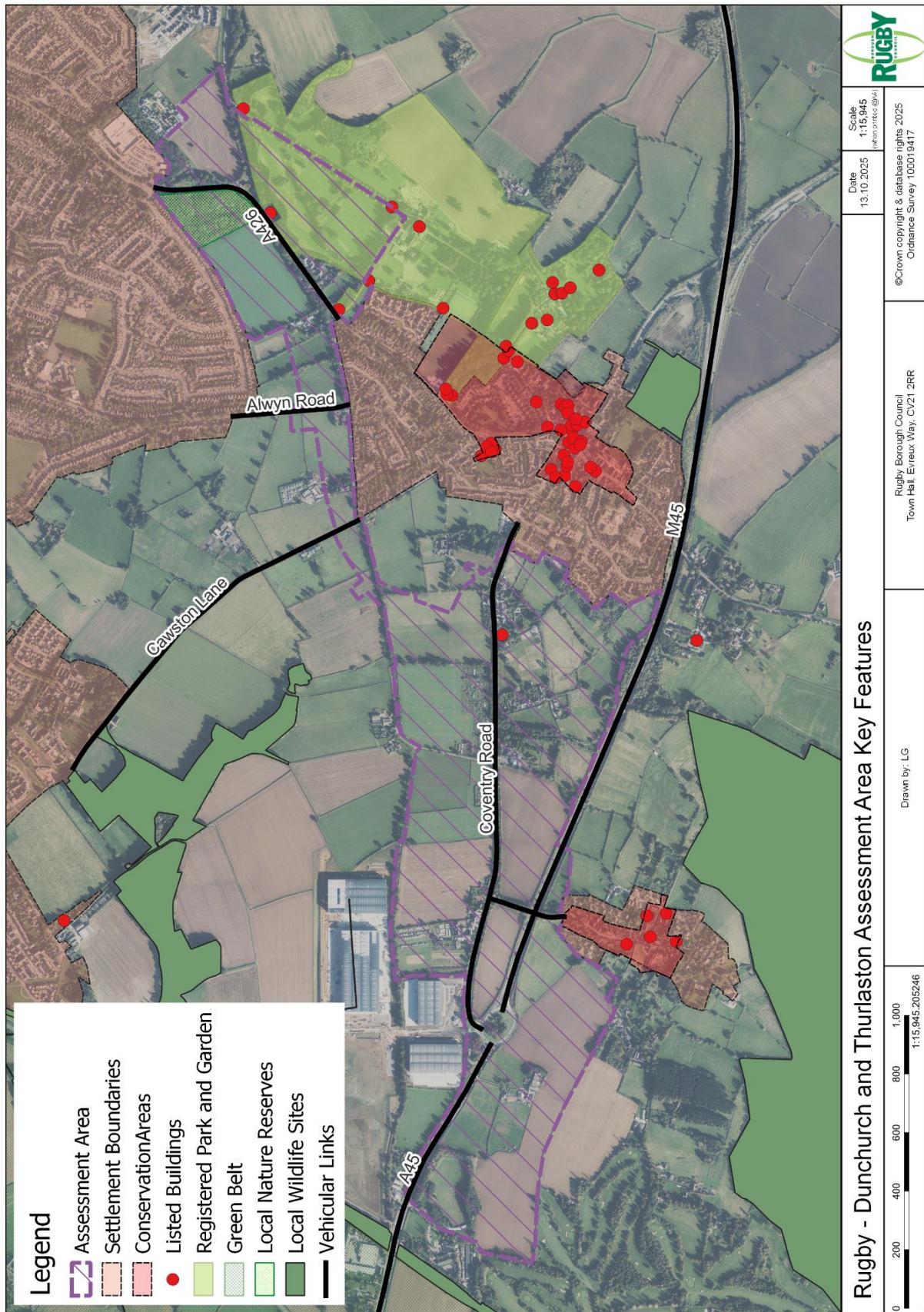


Figure 6: Key features within the Rugby – Dunchurch and Thurlaston assessment area..

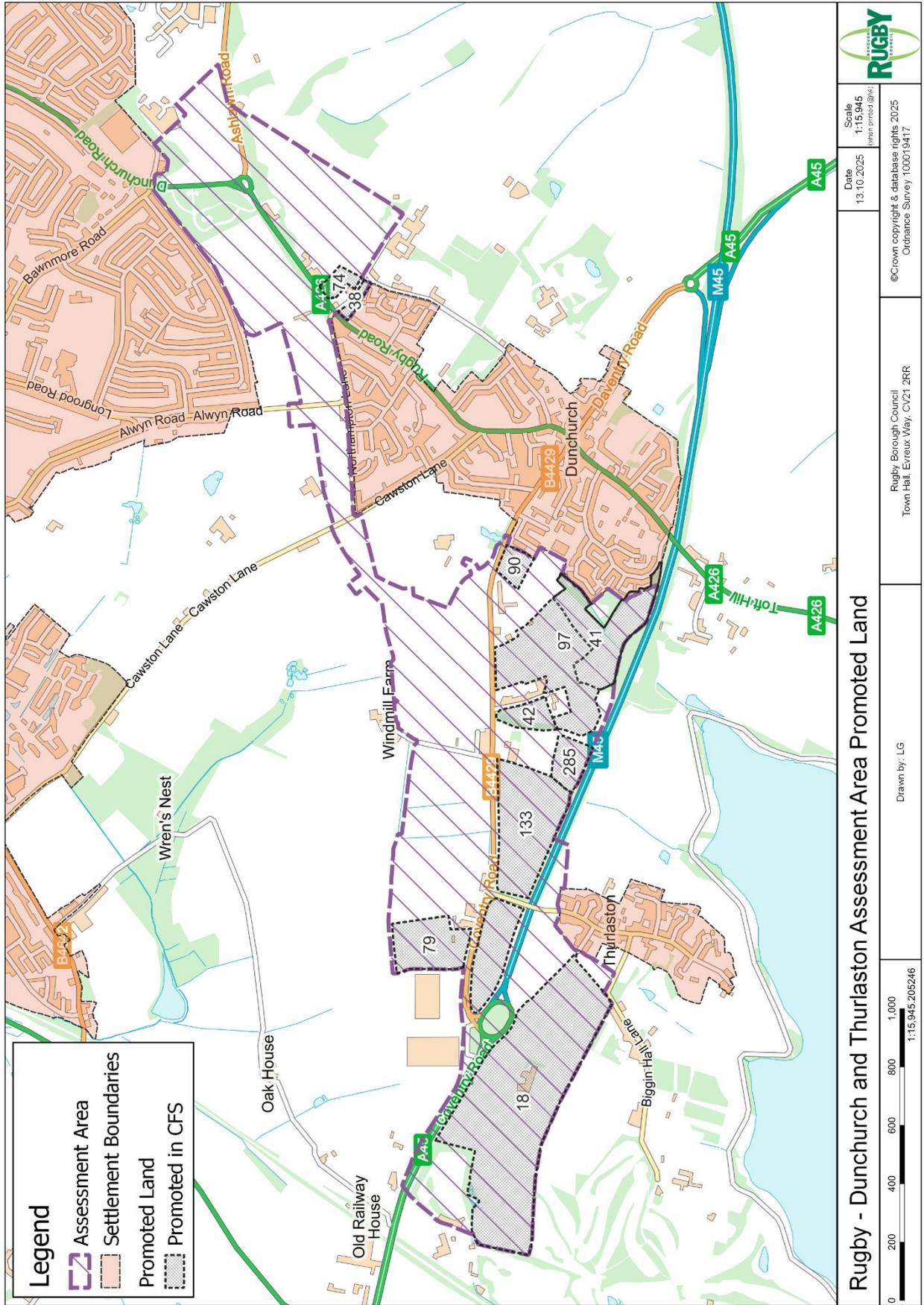


Figure 7: Land promoted in the Rugby – Dunchurch and Thurlaston assessment area.

Relationship with Development Allocations

- 7.7. As seen in Figure 7, there is considerable interest shown by landowners and developers in developing land within the assessment area.
- 7.8. The South West Rugby urban extension (allocated in the adopted Local Plan) is adjacent to the assessment area. The Homestead Link Road, which is the primary piece of highway infrastructure required to enable the delivery of this development, is included within the assessment area, but all other development parcels are excluded.
- 7.9. The Council's Preferred Option Consultation Document proposed two residential allocations within the assessment area, both to the west of Dunchurch (sites 90 and 341), however these will not be retained in the Regulation 19 Local Plan. Numerous other parcels of land within the assessment area were put forward in the Call for Sites concluded in February 2024 as part of the plan-making process, including sites 38 and 74 in Section A of the assessment area (northeast of Dunchurch), and sites 18, 41, 42, 79, 97, 133 and 285 in Section C (north of Thurlaston).

ANALYSIS OF SETTLEMENT GAP

Settlement Identity (Dunchurch)

- 7.10. Dunchurch is a historic village with a conservation area that covers around a quarter of the settlement area and consists of three sub areas: a historic core centred around the village crossroads, a northern section comprising historic and modern development combined with areas of open space, and a small group of cottages located on 'The Heath'. The conservation area encompasses 35 listed buildings and numerous other non-designated buildings of historic importance. Outside of but in close proximity to the boundaries of both the settlement and the conservation area there are numerous other heritage assets, most notably the registered parks and gardens of Bilton Grange School and Dunchurch Lodge and their associated buildings.
- 7.11. The village has grown substantially in the last 100 years, with modern housing developments being constructed to the south (Sandford Way and The Hall Close), to the west (Done Cerce Close and Adkinson Avenue), and to the north (Bilton Lane and the roads branching off it).
- 7.12. As a result of modern development, there is no intervisibility between the conservation area and the open countryside that lays to the west and north of the village (towards Rugby town and Thurlaston). Nevertheless, the presence of rural surroundings on all approaches to the conservation area is considered to be of importance to its setting.

Settlement Identity (Thurlaston)

- 7.13. Thurlaston is a historic village with a character that is formed by low density linear development within an agricultural setting. It has a conservation area (which is in generally good condition) that covers c. 40% of the land within the settlement boundary, stretching along most of Main Street and Church Lane, and which contains five Grade II listed buildings. Most of the dwellings to the north of the village (off Main Street, The Gardens, and Beech Drive) are of a modern 20th century construction, as are those to the south (Pudding Bag Lane, Moat Close and Grays Orchard).

Physical and Visual Separation

- 7.14. The gap between Rugby town and Dunchurch and Thurlaston varies in length and will be significantly changed once the South West Rugby urban extension is built out. Presently, there is around 300m between the north of Dunchurch (Northampton Lane) and the south of Rugby (Montague Road) which will be reduced to around 100-150m once South West Rugby is constructed. Thurlaston is currently around 1.6km from the settlement boundary of Rugby at its nearest point (between Main Street and Cawston Lane) but is only c. 350m from the Symmetry Park industrial estate which forms part of the South West Rugby allocation.
- 7.15. Dunchurch is very well connected to Rugby via three roads: the A426/Rugby Road (connecting to Dunchurch Road and Ashlawn Road), Alwyn Road and Cawston Lane. Rugby Road is a busy A road (A426) that features a designated cycle track, is on the route of bus services, and acts as the primary vehicular connection. By contrast, Thurlaston is less well connected to Rugby as there are no direct roads linking the two settlements. Those travelling from Thurlaston to the town must first either travel through Dunchurch, or travel west on the A45 and then north on the A4071.
- 7.16. To the northeast of Dunchurch (Section A of the assessment area), the key physical features separating the village from the town are Cock Robin Wood, and the mature trees and dense vegetation that line both sides of Rugby Road. To the north of Northampton Lane (Section B), the only physical feature separating the village from the town are the mature trees and vegetation that run along the field boundaries. Once the Homestead Link Road has been constructed, it is expected that this, and the landscaping and planting around it, shall also act as a physical feature of separation.
- 7.17. Given that the land between Dunchurch and Rugby is reasonably flat, intervisibility between the two settlements is limited to the vantage points which are not obscured by vegetation. These are primarily found in the area that lays between the western half of Northampton Lane in the north of the village (between Cawston Lane and Alwyn Road) and the southernmost parts of the town (along Alwyn Road and Montague Road). Once South West Rugby is built the areas of intervisibility may be expanded, depending on how the urban extension is landscaped and screened.
- 7.18. To the north of Thurlaston (Section C), the main physical features separating the village from the town are the M45, Coventry Road, and Cawston Spinney – although the latter will no longer be located between the two settlements once South West Rugby is built out.
- 7.19. There is currently no intervisibility between Thurlaston and Rugby town. Given the area's topography, and the presence of trees and vegetation along the M45 and Coventry Road which act to screen the village, it is expected that most of the South West Rugby urban extension will not be visible from the village either. However, immediately upon exiting the village along Main Street, or via the public right of way that connects Stocks Lane to Biggin Hall Lane, the warehouses of Symmetry Park are prominent in views to the northwest.

Urbanising Influences

- 7.20. The land to the north and northeast of Dunchurch (Sections A and B of the assessment area) is occupied by farmland, a nature reserve, a registered park and garden, and low density housing, all of which in isolation would have a rural character. However, the presence of a very busy A road and a large roundabout, along with their associated signage, paths and crossings, has an urbanising influence on the area.
- 7.21. There is little sense of departure and arrival when travelling between Dunchurch and Rugby along Alwyn Road, given that residential dwellings of both settlements can be seen at nearly all times, and it is expected that the situation shall be similar for Cawston Lane once South West Rugby is built out. There is a clearer sense of departure and arrival when travelling along the A426, although the edges of at least one of the two settlements can be seen at all times.
- 7.22. The land to the west of Dunchurch and north of Thurlaston (Section C) is primarily occupied by farmland, paddocks, allotment gardens, and areas of low-density housing of a rural or semi-rural character. However, there are also significant urbanising influences, including the M45, Coventry Road, and the warehouses of Symmetry Park.
- 7.23. There is a reasonably clear sense of departure and arrival when travelling between Thurlaston and Dunchurch, enhanced by the enclosure of the northern part of Main Street and much of Coventry Road by open countryside. However, the ribbon development that is encountered to the west of the boundary of Dunchurch (on the southern side of Coventry Road) has a minor urbanising influence and weakens the clarity of the village boundary.

SETTLEMENT GAP FUNCTION

Key Characteristics of Settlement Gap

- 7.24. The gap between Rugby and Dunchurch and Thurlaston is relatively weak due to the proximity of the settlements and the presence of urbanising influences within the assessment area. Furthermore the construction of the South West Rugby urban extension is likely to diminish the gap further. The following features are considered to be important in retaining a sense of separation between Rugby and the two villages:
- The strip of undeveloped farmland and woodland to the north of Dunchurch, which acts to provide some limited sense of separation between the two settlements when travelling between them.
 - The mature village-edge tree cover spanning from Alwyn Road, along Northampton Lane and along the A426, which acts to limit intervisibility between the north of the village and the south of the town.
 - The open countryside that encloses Main Street, Thurlaston, which is particularly important for maintaining a rural setting on the approach to the village.
 - The open countryside to the north of Coventry Road and the mature trees along the field boundaries which shall act to separate Dunchurch and Thurlaston from the South West Rugby urban extension.

Impact of Potential Development Sites

- 7.25. The development of the sites in the area immediately to the west of Dunchurch (41, 42, 90, 97, 285) would diminish the degree of physical separation between the western boundary of the village and the southern boundary of the town (inclusive of South West Rugby). Although there is already some limited ribbon development in this area (along Coventry Road) which is strongly associated with the village, this is currently interspersed between open land which contributes to the rural setting of the village and a sense of arrival and departure when travelling between Dunchurch and Symmetry Park (which shall form part of Rugby once South West Rugby is built out). In isolation, the impact of the development of the smaller sites (42, 90, 285) would likely be lower than that of the larger sites (41 and 97).
- 7.26. The development either site 18 or 133 (both of which are promoted for employment purposes) would significantly diminish the degree of separation between Thurlaston and Rugby. Site 18 is within c. 10 metres of the village's western boundary at its nearest point, and, even if development was set back, it is likely that there would be a significant intervisibility and a detrimental impact on the identity of the settlement. Site 133 is within c. 90 metres of the village's northern boundary at its nearest point. At present, intervisibility between the village and the site is mostly obscured by vegetation, however, buildings constructed for employment use would be clearly visible from the bridge that provides the only vehicular access point into the village, and may be visible from certain vantage points within the settlement boundary too. The urbanising effect of this would have a detrimental impact on the village's identity and diminish the sense of arrival and departure through a settlement gap.
- 7.27. The development of the other site to the north of Thurlaston (79), which has been promoted for residential use, would have a less significant impact on the degree of separation between the village and the town, given that part of the site is previously development land, and because the site is partly enclosed by existing residential ribbon development to its east and Symmetry Park to its north and west. Nevertheless, the degree of physical separation between Thurlaston and Rugby would still be diminished, as would be the extent of the village's rural setting.
- 7.28. It is deemed that the development of sites 38 and 74 to the northeast of Dunchurch would not impact the degree of separation between the village and the town to any significant extent. These are small sites which are mostly already enclosed by residential development. It is feasible that their development could have adverse impacts on nearby heritage assets, but that is beyond the scope of this study.

RECOMMENDED AREA OF SEPARATION BOUNDARIES

- 7.29. The recommended boundary for the area of separation between Rugby town and Dunchurch and Thurlaston, as seen in Figure 8, differs from the assessment area in only one way. The area to the south of Rugby Road (A426) has been removed, given that the presence of the Bilton Grange registered park and garden already acts as a significant brake on potential development.

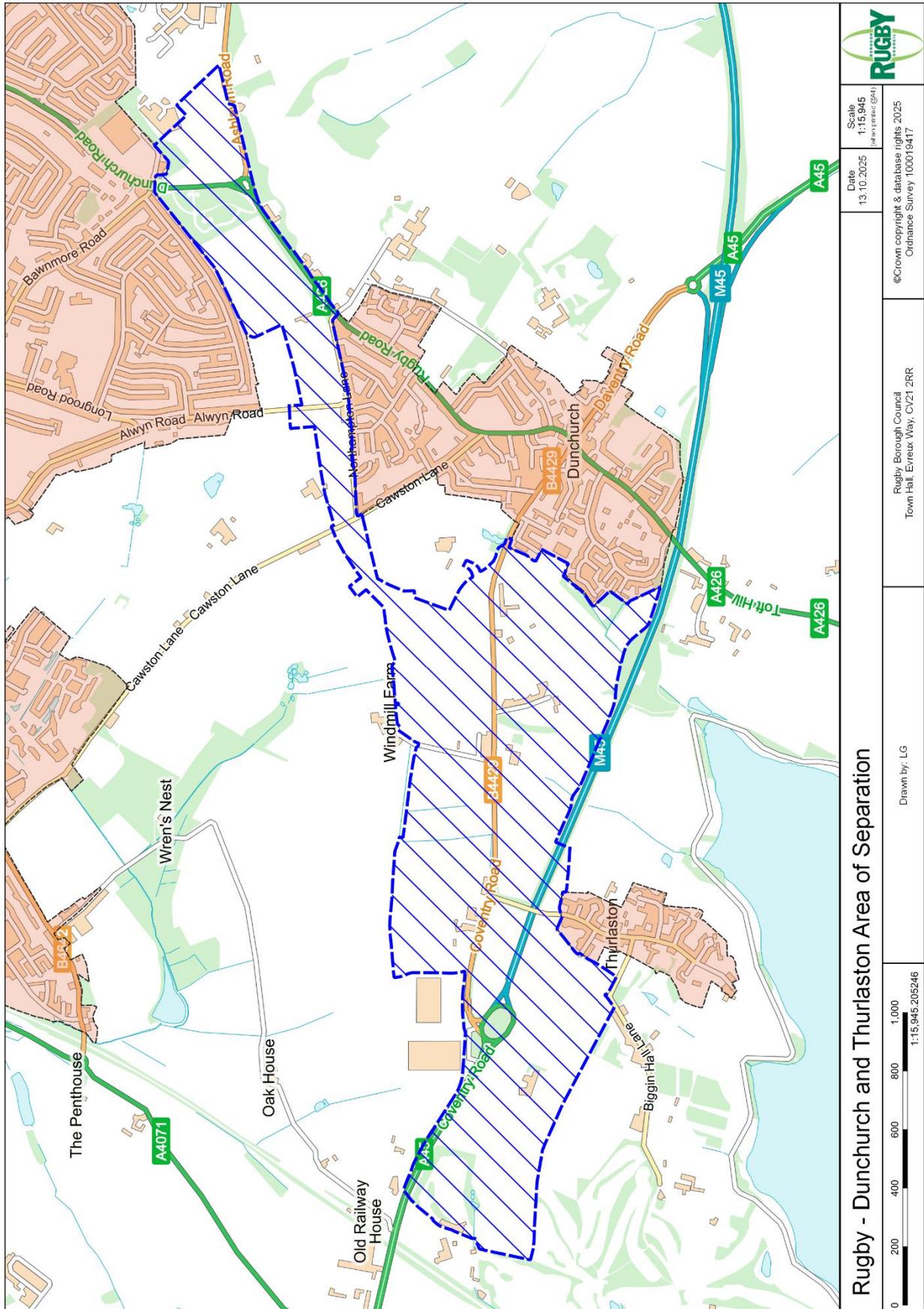


Figure 8: Recommended Area of Separation for Rugby – Dunchurch and Thurlaston.

8. APPENDIX A: AREAS OF RESTRAINT POLICY (1997)

AREAS OF RESTRAINT

POLICY R/E11

THE BOROUGH COUNCIL HAS DEFINED AREAS OF RESTRAINT ON THE PROPOSALS MAP. WITHIN THESE AREAS PERMISSION WILL NOT BE GRANTED FOR DEVELOPMENT THAT DETRACTS FROM THE OPEN CHARACTER OF THE AREA AND THE PARTICULAR CONTRIBUTION THAT IT MAKES TO THE STRUCTURE AND CHARACTER OF THE TOWN.

- 8.28 A major objective of the Warwickshire Structure Plan and the Local Plan is to concentrate growth within towns and to restrain development in rural areas. Green Belt designation is a particular element of this strategy, especially at regional level. However, smaller areas of open space and countryside which are equally important in a more local context are similarly vulnerable to development pressures. Such open spaces also occur as 'green wedges' within the urban area, as well as between the Town and adjacent villages. The value of these spaces lies in their contribution to the retention of the physical identity of nearby villages and the proper structure and character of the Town. They also provide opportunities for formal and informal recreation.

The following areas are identified on the Proposals Map:-

- (a) Generally between Rugby, Brownsver and Clifton upon Dunsmore.

The area extends from the eastern fringes of the town to the village of Clifton upon Dunsmore in the east. Clifton is situated on high ground and overlooks recent development at Brownsver which is located on the western side of the valley of the River Avon. The valley, although prone to flooding, provides an important recreational space and maintains a physical separation between the Town and the nearby village of Clifton which is important to the urban form and character of this part of Rugby.

- b) Generally between Rugby, Brownsver, Coton and Newton.

The area extends from the M6 motorway in the north to Newton Manor Lane in the south. The Area of Restraint in this locality maintains a physical separation between the village of Newton and the housing and employment allocations at Coton. The land rises gently to the west and forms a hill crest to the east of the allocations thus visually separating Newton from future development and maintaining the urban form of Rugby.

- (c) Generally between Rugby, Ashlawn Road and Dunchurch.

The Area of Restraint to the north of Ashlawn Road extends to the southern fringes of the Town across an open, essentially flat area. South of Ashlawn Road the land slopes steadily away with extensive views across the Rainsbrook valley and southwards from Rugby. An area of open countryside penetrates close to the Town Centre at Barby Road. This provides a special character in this location and helps maintain the urban form. At its western end it separates the urban area from the village of Dunchurch, protecting its setting and maintaining urban form. The Area of Restraint at its southern boundary prevents development from encroaching upon the crest of the hill which would then become visible from a considerable distance.

- (d) Alongside the River Avon through Rugby Town.

The Area of Restraint in this location protects both the riverside environment of the Avon and open spaces along its course. The area has also been defined as an Amenity Corridor within the Local Plan in order to enhance its future value as a recreational area for the people of Rugby.

- (e) The Swift Valley between Rugby, Brownsover, Cosford and the M6.

The designated area of land is prominent from the M6 motorway to the north and extends from the line of the former Oxford Canal in the east to a dismantled railway in the west which also forms the outer boundary of the West Midlands Green Belt. The land has a slight south facing slope. It is important to protect it from inappropriate development. The Area of Restraint will also protect the setting of the settlement of Cosford.

- (f) Generally between Nuneaton and Hinckley.

The designated area lies beyond the West Midlands Green Belt and is intended to protect the important gap between the towns of Nuneaton and Hinckley in order to prevent coalescence of the urban areas.

- (g) At Cawston, between the A4071 and Lime Tree Avenue.

This small area of open land forms a valuable 'green wedge' on the urban fringe between the proposed Cawston housing site and existing housing in Lime Tree Avenue. Its designation as an Area of Restraint is important in the local context, because of its vulnerability to development pressures and the importance of the identity of this open area, on the approach to Rugby from the south-west.

9. APPENDIX B: PHOTOS FROM SITE VISITS

CLIFTON UPON DUNSMORE



View of the disused railway cutting which acts to break up ribbon development along Rugby Road.



View from Rugby Road northwards with properties of Station Road in the background.



View from Rugby Road looking southwest with buildings of Rugby town in the distance.



View from the Rugby Road (near the recreation ground) with Rugby cement works in the distance.



View from the southern perimeter of the recreation ground with the north of Rugby town in the distance.



View from Station Road looking southwest with buildings of Rugby town in the distance.



View from the junction of Station Road and Mill Lane looking westwards towards the eastern edge of Rugby town (obscured by woodland).



View from the PRow (R114) to the west of Clifton upon Dunsmore looking southeast towards the properties of Station Road.



View from PRow (R114), adjacent to the River Avon, looking northwest towards the woodland that obscures the residential area around Staveley Way.



View from a path on the eastern edge of Rugby looking across the River Avon towards Rugby Road.



View from Clifton upon Dunsmore cemetery looking northwest with the north of Rugby town in the distance.



View from Newton Road looking south towards Clifton upon Dunsmore.



View from a PRow (R116) southwards across the fields that are to the south of South Road.



View from PRow (R116) looking north towards the rears of the properties of South Road.



View from PRow (R116) looking west with Rugby town in the distance (inc. Rugby cement works).



View from Hillmorton Lane looking south with a railway tunnel leading to The Kent in the distance.



View from Hillmorton Lane looking north with Home Farm on the right.



View from Hillmorton Lane looking west with the Rugby Town FC football ground in the distance.



View from Houlton Way looking northwest with farmland to the south of Clifton upon Dunsmore on the right.



View from Houlton Way looking northwest with properties of Newall Close in the background.



View from Houlton Way looking south with the disused railway bridge that sits within the Rugby Golf Club course in the centre of the shot.



View from Clifton Road looking southwest with properties of Viaduct Close and Ridge Drive on the right and Rugby Golf Club on the left.

DUNCHURCH AND THURLASTON



View from Symmetry Park looking east along the Coventry Road.



View from Coventry Road looking west towards Symmetry Park.



View from the western end of Stocks Lane, Thurlaston looking northwest with Symmetry Park in the background.



View from PRow R185 (Thurlaston) looking northwest across site 18 with Symmetry Park in the background.



View from PRow R185 looking west across site 18 (Barnwell's Farm) with trees obscuring farm buildings in the centre of the short.



View from PRow 185 looking southwest towards Biggin Hall Lane with site 18 to the right.



View from PRoW 185 looking east towards Thurlaston.



View from the north of Thurlaston looking north along Main Street towards the M45 bridge.



View from the M45 bridge (Main Street) looking west with Symmetry Park in the distance.



View from the M45 bridge (Main Street) looking east with Dunchurch Baptist Church in the distance.



View from Coventry Road, near the junction with Main Street, looking east towards Dunchurch.



View from the northern edge of site 133 looking south with buildings of Thurlaston (including the Windmill and church spire) in the distance.



View from Coventry Road, just to the west of the allotments, looking northwest with Symmetry Park in the distance.



View from Coventry Road, just to the east of the allotments, looking north with Cawston Spinney in the distance and properties of Windmill Lane to the right.



View from Coventry Road looking east with Windmill Lane to the left and Dunchurch Baptist Church to the right.



View from Windmill Lane looking east in the direction of the north of Dunchurch.



View from Windmill Lane looking west with Symmetry Park in the distance.



View from PRoW R168 looking west towards Symmetry Park.



View from Northampton Lane (near Barnwell Close) looking north with Rugby Cement Works in the distance.



View from the junction of Northampton Lane with Alwyn Road looking north with properties of Montague Road in the background.



View from Northampton Lane looking east with a green field boundary to the left that acts to screen Montague Road (Rugby) from Dunchurch.



View from Rugby Road (A426), c. 100m to northeast of Bilton Grange Drive, looking north through a gap in the thick vegetation towards Montague Road.



View from Rugby Road (A426), near Cock Robin Wood, looking southwest towards Dunchurch.



View from the A426 (southern edge of Cock Robin Wood) looking east with Ashlawn Road to the right.



View from the footpath to the east of Dunchurch Road (A426) looking east with Ashlawn Gardens in the background.



View from Dunchurch Road (A426), near to the Sainsbury's entrance, looking south in the direction of Bilton Grange registered park and garden.



View from the bus shelter on Dunchurch Road (A426) looking north towards Rugby.



View from Rugby Road (A426) looking southwest towards the boundary of Dunchurch with Bilton Grange on the left.



View from PRoW R174, within site 97, looking southeast with properties of Brook View in the background.



View from PRoW R174, within site 97, looking north towards Coventry Road.



View from PRoW R175y looking north across site 42 with Halfway Lane to the right.



View from PRoW R175y looking west across site 285 towards Thurlaston with the Windmill and church spire in the background.



View from PRoW R174, within site 90, looking southeast towards Dunchurch Junior School.



View from PRoW R174, within site 90, looking east towards properties of Done Cerce Close.