

# RUGBY BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN: PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION (REGULATION 18)

Representations on behalf of [REDACTED]

April 2025

# REPORT

## Document status

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Prepared by:

RPS

Prepared for:

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# 1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 These representations have been prepared on behalf of [REDACTED] ('the landowners') in response to the Rugby Local Plan Preferred Options Document ('the Plan') published by Rugby Borough Council ('the Council'), in regard to the 80 hectare land interests at Tythe Platts Farm, on the edge of Magna Park.
- 1.2 The Council took the decision in October 2023 to progress the Local Plan update under current plan-making system and, as a result, expect to adopt the new Local Plan during 2027 . Any references of relevance to national planning policy in these representations refers to the latest version published in December 2024, in accordance with the transitional arrangements .
- 1.3 We have reviewed the consultation material and set out our representations on the Local Plan, the Interim Sustainability Appraisal ('ISA'), and the various supporting documents as necessary to support this response. We note that the Council has not issued any specific questions to support the consultation, nonetheless our responses are broadly aligned with the draft policies.
- 1.4 RPS and the landowners would welcome further opportunity to engage with Rugby Borough Council (the Council') on the emerging Local Plan review as it moves forward.

## 2 PLAN PERIOD

- 2.1 As part of the issues and options consultation, the Council presented two options for the plan period for the new Local Plan; based on a 2045 or 2050 end date. Following that consultation, the Council has chosen 2045 as the proposed end date, as expressed in draft Policy S2 (Strategy for Homes). This results in an emerging plan period of 21 years (2024-2045) assuming a base date of 2024.
- 2.2 The plan period would be a minimum of 15 years from adoption and which would extend beyond the minimum end date of 2042, in accordance with national policy (NPPF, paragraph 22). Nonetheless, the Council has sought to align the plan period to the emerging employment evidence base (West Midlands Strategic Employment Sites Strategy and Alignment Papers) which together cover the period to 2050. The Council has selected the earlier end date (2045). It is not made clear why the earlier end date has been selected. We suggest it is entirely logical and proportionate for the new plan to align with the evidence base even where this extends beyond the minimum (15 year) timeframe.
- 2.3 In the context of delivering a positive vision for the area, appropriate strategic planning and providing greater certainty for one of the Plans principal stakeholders (consistent with NPPF para 17 and 22), i.e. the development industry we fail to see any logical reason for failing to align to the same end date. Should the Council agree to this there would obviously be the requirement for the Plan to provide land for an additional five years' worth of employment land of @ 70 hectares.
- 2.4 In addition, the South Warwickshire Local Plan is also proposing a plan period up to 2050. We see no reason Rugby should not follow the same timeframe. This would help ensure that development needs across the sub-region (Coventry and Warwickshire) are addressed on a consistent basis and would ensure effective cross-boundary engagement across the different plans.
- 2.5 On this basis, **we recommend that the plan period should be extended from 20245 to cover the period to 2050.**

### 3 STRATEGIC POLICIES ON EMPLOYMENT

#### Employment Land Need and Requirement in Rugby

##### Draft Policy S3

- 3.1 Draft Policy S3 sets out the proposed strategy for employment land up to 2045. The policy makes provision for approximately 284 hectares of land for B2, E(g)(ii) and (iii), and B8 use, which would be sufficient to provide for 1,026,546m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace; and 22,013m<sup>2</sup> of use class E(g)(i) office floorspace (approx. 4.4 hectares).
- 3.2 Under the draft policy, the quantum of need being addressed in the Plan under Policy S3 only accounts for the employment land needs of Rugby and unmet need from Coventry. Nonetheless, as we explain below, the quantum of employment need at the sub-regional scale is substantial and Rugby can play a greater part in meeting this need.

##### Draft Policy S7

- 3.3 Draft Policy S7 also specifically refers to the proposed employment site allocations which have been identified to meet the projected need for employment land over the plan period. Nonetheless, this provides for the future employment land needs of Rugby to 2045, which recommend should look forward over an extended period to 2050. This may well indicate a need for further employment land to be identified in the Plan.
- 3.4 In addition, the Plan proposes the release of two significant land parcels for employment from the Green Belt (Land West of Prologis Park, and Land bound by M69, M6 and B4029, Ansty). This is on the basis that exceptional circumstances exist to justify the release, which we support. We contend that further Green Belt release is justified in suitable locations that can deliver significant employment growth, notably at Tythe Platts Farm.

#### Addressing Wider Strategic Employment Land Need

##### West Midlands and Coventry & Warwickshire

- 3.5 The Development Needs Topic Paper provides a summary of the various components that comprise the total employment land need as it relates to Rugby, but also relating to the wider West Midlands. The topic paper summarises analysis on future needs at the sub-regional level drawn from various evidence documents supporting the Plan; Housing and Economic Needs Assessment for Coventry and Warwickshire (HEDNA), West Midlands Strategic Employment Sites Study (WMSESS), and HEDNA-WMSESS Alignment Paper.
- 3.6 According to the evidence, the Plan is seeking to meet the industrial needs of Rugby as well as the unmet need (45 hectares) for smaller industrial sites coming from Coventry, sufficient to provide for 1,231,987m<sup>2</sup> of floorspace under draft Policy S3.
- 3.7 Nonetheless, the evidence also indicates there is a road-based strategic sites need of 1,555-1,848ha and a rail need of 365-433ha indicating the need for a SFRI within the plan period across

the West Midlands to 2045. Taking account of existing commitments (as of April 2022) there is a residual need of 615-977ha across the West Midlands (WMSESS, paragraph 1.15 / Table 1.1; Alignment Paper, para 2.7 / Table 2.3). As this need only relates to 'strategic need (over 9,000m<sup>2</sup> or more) this does not account for all the need for industrial land across the West Midlands.

3.8 Furthermore, for Coventry & Warwickshire, the total industrial need (for non-strategic and strategic sites) has been estimated and which amounts to between 1,407-1,589 ha 2021-2045, and 1,505-1,687 ha to 2050 (Alignment Paper, Table 3.9).

3.9 **This represents a significant level of need for employment land and which should be addressed as a matter of priority for the West Midlands and Coventry & Warwickshire authorities and it remains unclear how the Rugby Local Plan is proposing to address this.**

3.10 It is not clear at present to what extent the full scale of employment land need identified in the various studies is currently being addressed through emerging plans across the sub-region, or across the West Midlands as a whole. There are currently no agreements or statement of common ground in place, or in progress, which deals specifically with this issue at the sub-regional or regional level. This would point to the possibility, in all likelihood, that **additional land is going to be required to meet the wider employment land need identified for the sub-region (Coventry & Warwickshire), and possibly across the wider West Midlands conurbation.** Such additional employment need would represent an additional level of employment land beyond that through simply expanding the plan period to 2050.

**Leicester and Leicestershire Employment need**

3.11 In addition, information submitted as part of the Harborough District Local Plan, which is now at pre-submission stage, indicates there is an identified need within Leicestershire for 718,875m<sup>2</sup> of rail served and 301,293m<sup>2</sup> of non-rail served logistics sites up to 2041, representing over 1 million sqm of B8 floorspace (excluding other industrial and commercial needs). This is defined as a 'strategic matter' to be addressed through the plan-making process<sup>1</sup>. According to Harborough District Council, this need is to be apportioned across the Leicestershire authorities but this has not yet been finalised. It remains unclear how this need will be apportioned across the Leicestershire authorities.

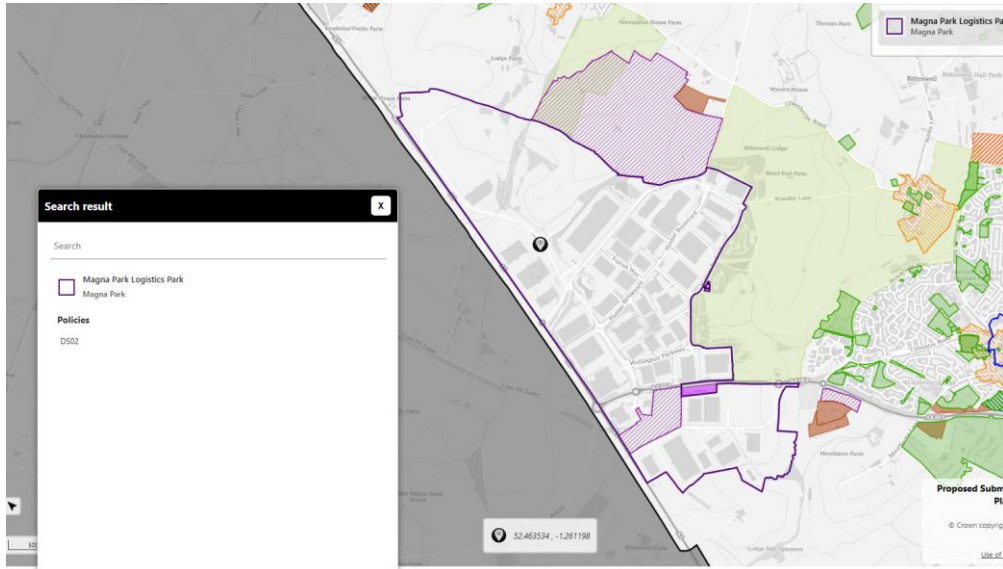
3.12 One of the 'relevant Duty to Cooperate bodies' identified to help address this matter is Rugby Borough Council, which borders Leicestershire. In terms of progress made, a Leicester and Leicestershire wide strategic B8 study is being prepared and the outputs from that study are 'expected later in 2025'. The finalisation of the study, and engagement on how the conclusions of this research may impact upon the approach taken within the respective plans within Leicestershire (and by implication any cross boundary requirements), has not yet been worked through. This may point to further need for employment across the sub-region, and which could point to Rugby Borough as a potential source of land which could assist in meeting the need.

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<sup>1</sup> Harborough Local Plan Duty to Cooperate Statement of Compliance January 2025 (Section 4.0)

3.13 Related to this is another strategic matter relevant to Rugby, and which is being considered through the Harborough Local Plan; the expansion of Magna Park. Magna Park is located in Harborough, but nonetheless shares the boundary with Rugby Borough. An extract taken from the draft Harborough Local Plan shows the extent of Magna Park and its relationship to Rugby.

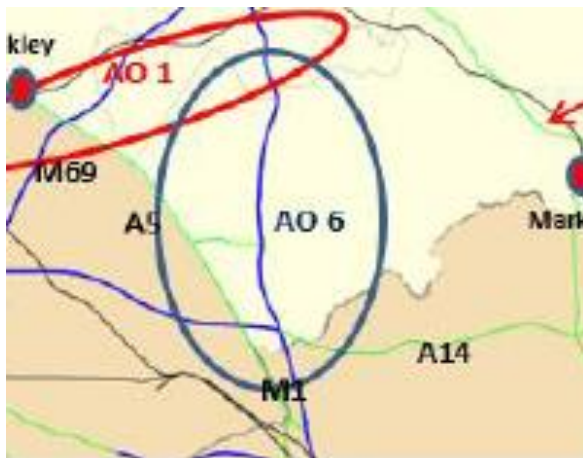
Figure 3-1 Magna Park (policies map extract, Harborough Local Plan)



Source: Harborough District Council

3.14 Earlier work<sup>2</sup> has identified Magna Park as falling within an 'Area of Opportunity' (M1 Corridor south of Leicester) which could accommodate further employment growth, identified within the Warehousing and Logistics in Leicester and Leicestershire: Managing Growth and Change (April 2021) report, which has informed plan making process across the county. This reflects its current status of Magna Park as a major employment provider in the Midlands.

Figure 3-2 Key Areas of Opportunity (road-based) for employment, Leicestershire



<sup>2</sup> Warehousing and Logistics in Leicester and Leicestershire: Managing growth and change, April 2021 (amended March 2022)

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Source: Warehousing and Logistics in Leicester and Leicestershire: Managing growth and change, April 2021 (amended March 2022) Leicester and Leicestershire Authorities, Final Report

- 3.15 The map above is taken from that report, which shows indicatively the extent of Opportunity Area 6, in particular the relationship to the A5 and its proximity to the strategic highway network (SRN) notably the M1, M6, and M69. Furthermore, the Harborough Local Plan growth strategy identifies Magna Park as the '*most appropriate location for strategic B8 growth*'<sup>3</sup>.
- 3.16 **In strategic terms, should further evidence indicate that more land will be required over and above existing need, which could possibly be the case, we contend that the Tythe Platts Farm site represents a suitable candidate site to address such needs. The site is well-located in relation to Magna Park in planning terms and, as a consequence, represents an appropriate location for employment.**
- 3.17 We address site-specific matters in respect of the Tythe Platts Farm site in subsequent sections of this response.

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<sup>3</sup> Harborough Local Plan Duty to Cooperate Statement of Compliance January 2025 (Section 4.0)

## 4 TYTHE PLATTS FARM (OMISSION SITE)

4.1 In light of the issues raised in the previous section, this part of the response sets out the main case for why the Tythe Platts Farm site should be considered as a suitable site for employment in the Plan.

### Site context

4.2 A location plan for the Tythe Platts Farm site is presented below.

**Figure 4-1 Tythe Platts site – location plan (larger parcel)**



4.3 The site covers approximately 80 hectares (195 acres) of land mainly in agricultural use, but is located in close proximity to Magna Park. Magna Park covers over 550 acres and is situated in a location, bounded by the M1, M6 and M69 motorways; widely known as the “Golden Triangle”. This part of the UK is the first choice for logistics due to its strategic position in the centre of the country. It is (currently) home to 29 different occupiers, occupying in excess of 8.3 million sq ft (771,155 sq m) of sustainable logistics floor space in 32 buildings. Magna Park Lutterworth is GLP’s<sup>4</sup> flagship distribution park. Established in 1987 and celebrating its 32nd anniversary in 2019, Magna Park represents the UK’s first and Europe’s largest ‘dedicated distribution location’. It is a private estate

<sup>4</sup> GLP Capital Partners Limited ('GLP'), and certain of its affiliates, excluding its operations in Greater China, is now a part of Ares Management Corporation

and offers a fully managed, dedicated logistics park environment with 24/7 access, 24hr security and a controlled HGV circulation<sup>5</sup>.

4.4 The site itself is formed of a mixture of existing roads and field boundaries, and is situated immediately to the west of the A5 and is also accessible by road to the wider Strategic Road Network, an important benefit for logistic operations.

4.5 The site is also located in the Green Belt.

4.6 Tythe Platts Farm Assessment against Strategic Employment Requirements According to the West Midlands Strategic Employment Sites Study (WMSESS, paragraph 11.30 of the report) accessibility to skilled labour is a top locational factor for manufacturing and logistics occupiers. This can help avoid a mismatch between jobs and population and reduce the need for long distance commuting (which is less sustainable).

4.7 The WMSESS also explains that “strategic sites” should meet the following criteria. We show how the Tythe Platts Farm compares to these criteria, below:

- *Good connections with the strategic highway network (for road) – **the site is very well connected to the Strategic Road Network (A5)***<sup>6</sup>
- *Sufficiently large and flexible - ideally sites would be a minimum of 25ha and readily over 50ha – **the site is well in excess of 50 hectares in size (79 ha, gross)***
- *Is or can be served from an electricity supply grid with sufficient capacity – **no known issues regarding connectivity to utility networks***
- *Is accessible to labour and includes a clear sustainable transport solution for the local road network – **the site is located within 10 miles of Coventry, Hinkley, and Leicester, which provides access to a number of world renowned universities and a strong local and regional workforce straddling both the West and East Midlands regions***
- *Is located away from incompatible land-uses – **whilst the site is greenfield, it is located adjacent to an existing employment area, so highly compatible in terms of employment land uses***
- *The ability to deliver high-bay warehousing – **no known issues preventing this***

4.8 Consequently, the Tythe Platts Farm site performs very well against criteria for judging the location of sites for large-scale strategic employment need and is well-located for manufacturing and logistics operations (given its proximity to Magna Park). The strategic merits of the site for employment use are clearly evident.

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<sup>5</sup> [Home - Magna Park Lutterworth](#)

<sup>6</sup> The strategic road network comprises the trunk motorways and all-purpose trunk roads in England as shown: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/677493/s170085\\_Network\\_Management\\_Map.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/677493/s170085_Network_Management_Map.pdf)

## Site-Specific Merits of the Site

4.9 In addition, strategic factors, there are site-specific considerations which favour the Tythe Platts Farm site.

### Grey Belt considerations

4.10 In particular, consideration should be given to whether or not the site comprises Grey Belt, given its Green Belt status. For the purposes of plan-making (and decision-making) 'grey belt' is defined as land in the Green Belt comprising previously developed land and/or any other land that, in either case, does not strongly contribute to any of purposes (a), (b), or (d) in paragraph 143.

4.11 The relevant Green Belt purposes are as follows:

- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas
- b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another
- d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns

4.12 The Council has not undertaken an up-to-date Green Belt (Or Grey Belt) Assessment (which we advocate) at this stage, which would ideally be the starting point for identifying Grey Belt land, though we understand one is under preparation. The most recent Green Belt covering Rugby Borough was the Coventry & Warwickshire Joint Green Belt Study, published in 2015, but this did not assess the site.

4.13 Planning Practice Guidance provides advice on how to identify grey belt land as part of the assessment<sup>7</sup>. The PPG establishes the five key 'steps', as follows:

- **Step 1** - identify the location and appropriate scale of area/s to be assessed
- **Step 2** - evaluate the contribution each assessment area makes to Green Belt purposes (a), (b), and (d), using the criteria identified below
- **Step 3** - consider whether applying the policies relating to the areas or assets of particular importance in footnote 7 to the NPPF (other than Green Belt) would potentially provide a strong reason for refusing or restricting development of the assessment area
- **Step 4** - identify grey belt land
- **Step 5** - identify if the release or development of the assessment area/s would fundamentally undermine the five Green Belt purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt when considered across the area of the plan

4.14 We have applied these steps to establish whether the site meets the grey belt test.

*Step 1: identify the location and appropriate scale of area/s to be assessed (PPG ID: 64-004)*

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<sup>7</sup> PPG Paragraph: 001-008 Reference ID: 64

- The Tythe Platts Farm site as shown in Figure 4.1 of this response is the appropriate scale and location to be assessed here.

Step 2: evaluate the contribution each assessment area makes to Green Belt purposes (a), (b), and (d) (PPG ID: 64-005)

4.15 Our assessment against the PPG criteria is set out in the following table.

**Table 4-1 Contribution assessment – Tythe Platts Farm**

Purpose	RPS assessment	Contribution
<p><b><u>Purpose A – to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas</u></b></p> <p>This purpose relates to the sprawl of large built up areas. Villages should not be considered large built up areas.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site is largely free from development, but existing features (roads, built development along the eastern boundary, field boundaries) would restrict and contain development on the site</li> <li>• Site is adjacent to or near existing development (site is located adjacent to a large, free-standing employment park) so would not lead to sprawl of a large built-up area</li> <li>• Site is partially enclosed by existing employment uses to the east</li> <li>• If developed, this would represent a logical extension to an adjacent employment use</li> </ul>	Moderate
<p><b><u>Purpose B – to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another</u></b></p> <p>This purpose relates to the merging of towns, not villages</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Site is located on the outer edge of the Coventry &amp; Warwickshire Green Belt and due to its size and extent, forms only a very small part of the Green Belt</li> <li>• Development would not be likely to result in a loss of visual separation between towns, given the site lies over three miles north of Rugby and is separated from Lutterworth (a market town in neighbouring Harborough District) by existing structures (Magna Park)</li> </ul>	Weak / moderate
<p><b><u>Purpose D – to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns</u></b></p> <p>This purpose relates to historic towns, not villages. Where there are no historic towns in the plan area, it may not be necessary to provide detailed assessments against this purpose.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• No evidence to show the site forms part of the setting of a historic town</li> <li>• Site is separated from the nearest town (Lutterworth) to a great extent by existing development</li> <li>• has no visual, physical, or experiential connection to the historic aspects of any historic town</li> </ul>	Weak

4.16 Based on our assessment, we contend the contribution of the site is **moderate to weak**.

Step 3: consider whether applying the policies relating to the areas or assets of particular importance in footnote 7 to the NPPF indicate a ‘strong reason’ for restricting development on the Tythe Platts Farm site (PPG ID:64-006)

- The site does not comprise any land identified under footnote 7 (other than Green Belt), and so step 3 is not triggered.

Step 4: assess whether the Tythe Platts Farm site can be identified as 'grey belt' land (PPG ID:64-007)

- Following Steps 1-3, **the site can be identified as grey belt.**

Step 5: Consider the impact on the remaining Green Belt in the plan area (PPG ID:64-008)

- The release of the Tythe Platts Farm site would not, in our view, affect the ability of all the remaining Green Belt across the Plan in Rugby from serving all five of the Green Belt purposes in a meaningful way, and so would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the Plan as a whole. This is because the extent of the site as a proportion of the overall Green Belt in Rugby is extremely limited and localised in scale and extent.

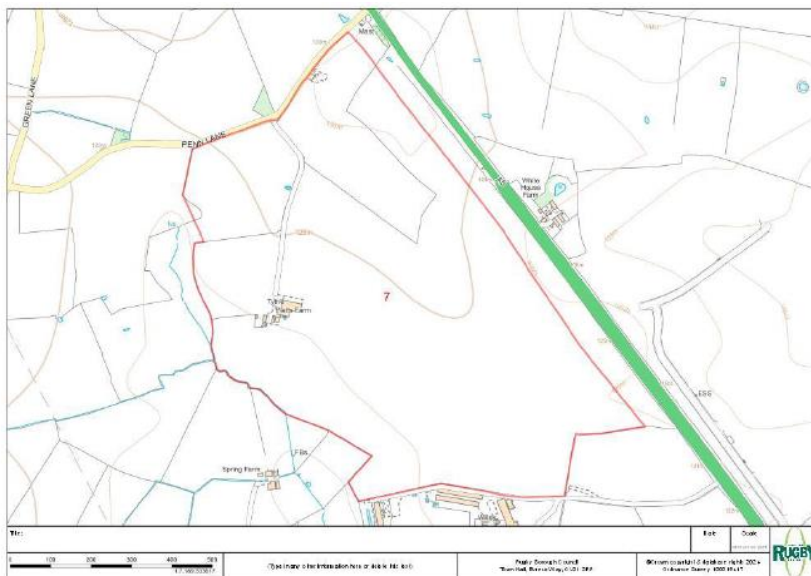
4.17 On this basis, **we contend the Tythe Platts Farm site is grey belt and can be removed from the Green Belt in accordance with national policy and guidance.**

## 5 COUNCIL’S ASSESSMENT OF TYTHE PLATTS FARM

5.1 Despite the strategic and site-specific merits for employment use, highlighted above, the Council has not progressed the site following the outcome of its site assessment process for the Plan. The assessment process has followed three-stages; Stage 1 Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA); Stage 2 Site Options Assessment exercise; Stage 3 Sustainability Appraisal of preferred site options.

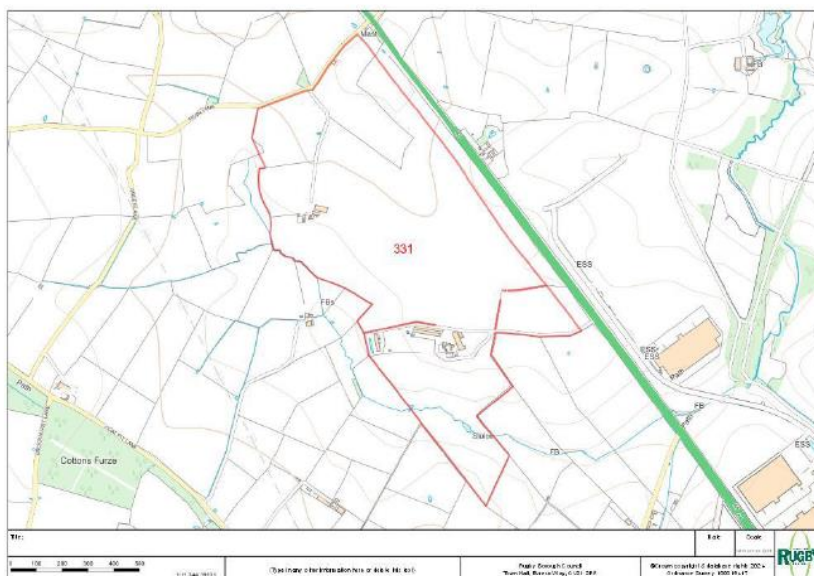
5.2 The site has been considered in various guises by the Council in the assessment, linked to different site boundaries, these are:

- **Site 7: Tythe Platts Farm, West of A5**



5.3 This is extent of the land being promoted by the landowners to whom we are acting on behalf.

- **Site 331: Land at Willey Fields / Tythe Platts Farm (Strategic Employment)**



- 5.4 The assessment boundary for site 331 includes site 7 (the landowner’s land) and an adjacent parcel in separate ownership (site 306). It is not clear why the Council has grouped the two parcels together but may be due to access issues affecting the deliverability of site 306 (it seems to be landlocked) unless it is amalgamated with site 7.
- 5.5 Furthermore, we note that the site boundaries used as a basis for the Council’s assessment of site 7 / 331 is incorrect. The correct site boundary is shown in Figure 4.1 of this response, which shows the eastern boundary line running directly adjacent to the A5, and not set back from it as shown in the map extracts above.
- 5.6 For our response we have reviewed the Council’s findings for the Tythe Platts Farm (Site 7), which relates to the site boundary the landowners are currently promoting and represents a site in single ownership and which can be brought forward independently from other land. We set out our response below.

**Stage 1 Housing and Employment Land Availability Assessment (HELAA)**

*Conclusion: Not currently developable – changes to policy would be required*

Potential Yield

- 5.7 The Council has indicated the site has potential to accommodate 275,000m<sup>2</sup> of employment floorspace. This may have been taken from previous submissions made to the Council, but we contend the site could accommodate more floorspace.
- 5.8 The Council has applied a plot ratio of 0.4 for smaller sites (<9,000m<sup>2</sup>) and 0.35 larger ‘strategic’ sites (>9,000m<sup>2</sup>). Based on these ratios, the site could accommodate between 276,500 to 316,000m<sup>2</sup> of employment floorspace, subject to the final mix of B class uses. The figures are summarised below.

**Table 5-1 Potential floorspace yield, by plot ratio**

Site area (m <sup>2</sup> , gross)	Plot ratio	Floorspace capacity (indicative) – based on gross site area of 90.60 ha / 223.87 acres
790,000	0.35	276,500
790,000	0.4	316,000

- 5.9 The potential floorspace yield on the site has been underestimated, which underscores the potential contribution that the site could make in the future to addressing employment land needs locally, as well as across the wider regions, should further need arise. The figure of 275,000 should be adjusted to reflect the floorspace estimates above.

Available

5.10 Yes – 6-10 years – this is agreed

Achievable

5.11 Yes – this is agreed

Suitable

5.12 *Potentially* – due to Green Belt designation, this is agreed

Suitability commentary

5.13 *Public footpath crosses the site* – agreed, but this does not preclude development across the wider site

5.14 *Small pocket of 1 in 30 Surface water flood risk sits within the west of site* – agreed, but this does not preclude development across the wider site

5.15 *Part of site outside RBC boundary - will need to consult with Harborough LPA* – it is unclear whether any discussions or engagement has been conducted between the two authorities, given the adjacency to Magna Park and the ability of the site to accommodate employment growth.

5.16 *Potential for impacts on the SRN* – some highways impacts (on the A5 and motorway network) are inevitable in this location, but no evidence has been presented to demonstrate that employment development on the site would lead to ‘adverse’ impacts which should be avoided or mitigated<sup>8</sup>, or ‘unacceptable’ impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network, following mitigation, would be severe<sup>9</sup>, in line with national policy and which would indicate the site should not be allocated.

5.17 *Sustainability of location requires further analysis in comparison to other employment locations* – it is unclear whether the Council has considered this point in conducting the assessment of the site. As we have shown, the site is in close proximity to ‘*the UK’s first and Europe’s largest ‘dedicated distribution location’*’ and which clearly supports the potential for further employment growth in this part of the Borough.

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<sup>8</sup> NPPF 2024, para 33, 109f

<sup>9</sup> NPPF 2024, para 116

## Stage 2 Site Options Assessment

### Potential Yield

- 5.18 The same comment on yield which we highlighted under stage 1 also applies to this aspect of stage 2.

### Transport considerations

- 5.19 The Council say the site can be accessed from Penn Lane and potentially the A5. We agree that an appropriate access can be achieved incorporating both these routes (subject to further highway impact assessment work).
- 5.20 The Council refers to 'initial' comments provided by National Highways (NH). NH says that development for warehousing use would mean that trip impacts are lower than other industrial / employment potential. This indicates that any potential significant adverse impacts on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts are likely to be limited.
- 5.21 Nonetheless, we would remind the Council that any assessment should recognise the semi-rural location of the site outside of a major conurbation, which would inevitably mean proportionately more road-based journeys to and from the site. In addition, the assessment should acknowledge the potential for large-scale 'strategic' employment on the site, which could deliver employment uses that could complement and enhance those available uses at Magna Park. These factors should be taken into account in the assessment.

### Ecology

- 5.22 The Council acknowledge the site is not within an Impact Risk Zone of a Site of Special Scientific Interest, nor a Local Wildlife Site, and nor was it comprised of more than 20% medium to high distinctiveness habitat and, on this basis, the site has not been assessed any further for potential ecological constraints.
- 5.23 Accordingly, the assessment does not indicate that ecology considerations would preclude employment development on the site.

### Landscape

- 5.24 The Council say the overall landscape sensitivity of the site is Medium/Low. The assessment does not indicate that landscape sensitivity would preclude employment development on the site.

### Other constraints

- 5.25 The Council highlight the existing Green Belt designation covering the site and suggest that the site could potentially make a strong contribution to 'at least one purpose'. This is a 'catch-all' response applied to all sites within Green Belt locations. However, the Council has not published an up-to-date Green Belt assessment of the site, and so it is wrong to make such an assertion until the evidence has been prepared, consulted on, and properly evaluated through the examination of the Plan. **Based on our grey belt assessment, we contend the site does not make a strong contribution to the green belt purposes.**

***Outcome of further assessment: Not progressed***

- 5.26 The Council has not taken the site forward to the next stage in the process (Sustainability Appraisal of reasonable alternatives).
- 5.27 The reasons given are:
- The site predominantly comprises arable fields.
  - Accessibility by non-car modes scores 'very poorly'.
  - There are low ecology constraints, no identified heritage constraints and landscape sensitivity is medium/low.
  - The site is within the Green Belt.
  - The site is located at distance from other built development except for Magna Park and any future workforce. The site is entirely located within the Green Belt. Other sites opposite Magna Park do not lie within the Green Belt and would be considered preferable.
- 5.28 The Council has scored the site negatively in terms of accessibility. However, it is recognised that good connectivity to the strategic road network is a key, positive factor in determining appropriate locations for large-scale, strategic / warehousing and logistics development, development uses that the Tythe Platts Farm site could accommodate. The Council's assessment in regard to accessibility is unduly harsh and does not reflect the established criteria. It should be amended accordingly.
- 5.29 Similarly, the Council points to 'other sites' opposite Magna Park as being preferable to sites within the Green Belt. However, those sites are located in the adjacent district (Harborough) and have not been considered by the Council in its assessment and would, in any event, be meeting Harborough / Leicestershire's needs, and not the needs of Rugby. It is not appropriate for the Council to attach weight to locations outside the district.
- 5.30 In light of the response above, **we do not consider the factors used by the Council constitute adequate reasons to discount the site at this stage. There are no significant constraints that preclude development coming forward on the Tythe Platts Farm site for employment.**

## 6 SUSTAINABILITY APPRAISAL

- 6.1 National policy makes clear that local plans should be informed throughout their preparation by a sustainability appraisal (SA) that meets the relevant legal requirements<sup>10</sup>. This should demonstrate how the plan has addressed relevant economic, social and environmental objectives, in light of reasonable alternatives. This is important because if the Local Plan is to be soundly based it must be a justified and appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives and based on proportionate evidence (NPPF, para 36).
- 6.2 The Council has issued the next iteration of SA, titled '*Rugby Borough Local Plan Interim SA Report, March 2025*' (ISA). This follows on from the SA Scoping Report published at the Issues and Options consultation stage. The ISA seeks to explain the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with (Defining Growth Scenarios, chapter 5), present an appraisal of the reasonable alternatives (Growth Scenario Appraisal, chapter 6), and explain the Council's reasons for selecting the preferred option (The Preferred Approach, chapter 7).
- 6.3 We have reviewed the ISA and provide our responses in respect of the Tythe Platts Farm site, set out in the commentary below.

### Employment Land Scenarios

- 6.4 Paragraph 5.4.94 of the ISA identifies a number of employment land options which it says "...*can be safely ruled out at this stage in light of the discussion above taken as a whole (but with select reasons given)*...". This includes the Tythe Platts Farm site (site 331). The reasons given for rejecting the site are given as "*within the Green Belt*" and "*not well linked*".
- 6.5 However, as we have explained in this response, we contend the site constitutes Grey Belt land and consequently whilst the site is located within the Green Belt, it nonetheless does not make a strong contribution to the Green Belt purposes in this part of the Borough. For this reason, the existing Green Belt designation covering the site does not, in our view, constitute an adequate reason to reject the employment credentials of the site on purely Green Belt grounds.
- 6.6 We also dispute the suggestion that the site is 'not well linked' (presumably to existing transport connections and / or available labour markets). As we have also explained, the site is located adjacent to the nationally important Magna Park. Paragraph 5.2.42 of the ISA acknowledges that Magna Park is set to expand through further employment land release being taken forward through the Harborough Local Plan. We support this approach. The intention to expand Magna Park also clearly has the support of Harborough District Council. This suggests that any potential adverse impacts on the strategic highway network (SRN) suggested in the Rugby ISA can be suitably

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<sup>10</sup> Such 'relevant' legal requirements refers to Strategic Environmental Assessment, which is defined as a procedure (set out in the *Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004*) which requires the formal environmental assessment of certain plans and programmes (including Local Plans) which are likely to have significant effects on the environment (see definition in the NPPF Glossary)

managed as part of the emerging plan in Harborough, and that an adequate source of workers is available to service the expansion at Magna Park (of which, the ISA also accepts, is expected to come from people living in Rugby Borough). The site is also In any event, the Council presents no evidence which demonstrates that such impacts exist, because it has not published any strategic highway modelling work at this stage. Similarly, as far as we understand, Rugby Borough Council is not objecting to the proposed expansion of Magna Park on the Harborough side of the A5 proposed in the Harborough Local Plan.

- 6.7 Taken together, **we dispute the reasons given in the interim sustainability appraisal for rejecting the Tythe Platts Farm site (site 331) as a potential employment land option at this stage. We contend the site is suitable for employment development whose release, in our view, would not undermine the wider Green Belt.**

## 7 CONCLUSIONS

- 7.1 The representations set out in this submission have been prepared in support of the Tythe Platts Farm site.
- 7.2 In summary, we submit our responses and wish to highlight the following points:
- **The Council should consider extending the plan period from the proposed 2045 to 2050 with circa an additional 70 hectares of employment land.**
  - **Evidence points to a significant employment land need in the West Midlands and Coventry & Warwickshire, but it remains unclear how this need is being addressed across the region - this should be addressed as a matter of priority for those authorities concerned and would point to an additional need beyond the @ 70hectares identified above, through extending the plan period. In addition, uncertainty remains in regard to how the employment land needs of Leicestershire are to be met (which borders the site).**
  - **In order to help address the need, we contend the Tythe Platts Farm site (331) constitutes 'grey belt' and can be removed from the Green Belt for employment purposes, in accordance with national policy and guidance.**
  - **We do not consider the factors put forward by the Council constitute suitable or justified reasons to discount the site at this stage. There are no significant constraints that preclude development coming forward on the site for employment.**
  - **In light of the issue raised in this submission, should further evidence prepared for the Plan indicate that more land will be required over and above existing draft employment allocations, we contend that the Tythe Platts Farm site should be identified as a suitable option for employment.**
- 7.3 RPS and the landowners would welcome further opportunity to engage with Rugby Borough Council (the Council') on the emerging Local Plan review as it moves forward.