

# **Rugby Borough Local Plan Review**

## **Regulation 18 Preferred Options Consultation**

Representations on behalf of Ashfield Land (Harborough)  
Limited)

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## Document Management.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. These representations are made by Pegasus Group, on behalf of Ashfield Land (Harborough) Limited, in response to the Preferred Options consultation for the Rugby Borough Local Plan.
- 1.2. Ashfield Land have land interests east of the A5 totalling 16.52 hectares. The site, which is identified on the Site Location Plan at Appendix A, straddles the boundary between Rugby Borough and Harborough District, with the majority of its area falling within the latter.
- 1.3. These representations have had regard to the published consultation document, accompanying documentation forming the current evidence base, and the national planning context.
- 1.4. The tests of soundness that Development Plans need to meet so as to be legally compliant and found sound, are set out in the National Planning Policy Framework 2024 (NPPF), Paragraph 36:
  - **Positively prepared** – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet objectively assessed needs, and is informed by agreements with other authorities, so that unmet need from neighbouring areas is accommodated where it is practical to do so and is consistent with achieving sustainable development;
  - **Justified** – an appropriate strategy, taking into account the reasonable alternatives, and based on proportionate evidence;
  - **Effective** – deliverable over the Plan period, and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by the statement of common ground; and
  - **Consistent with national policy** – enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the policies in the Framework.
- 1.5. These representations refer directly to the Preferred Options Local Plan and also respond to and comment on the evidence base documents where appropriate.
- 1.6. The representations are submitted via email to [localplan@rugby.gov.uk](mailto:localplan@rugby.gov.uk) as per the procedure set out by the Council.



## 2. POLICY S3: STRATEGY FOR EMPLOYMENT LAND

- 2.1. It is imperative for there to be a sufficient supply of sites to meet the need for employment land, as acknowledged in the Sustainability Appraisal Scoping Report and in line with Paragraph 86 of the NPPF, which states that planning policies should set identify sites to meet the anticipated need for employment land over the plan period. This will allow for economic growth and prosperity in the Borough as encouraged by Paragraph 85. Crucially, the right type of land should be provided in the right places as per Paragraph 8.
- 2.2. The need for additional employment land within Rugby, is identified in the November 2022 Coventry & Warwickshire Housing and Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA). In terms of employment land, this states that 5.2 hectares are required between 2021 – 2041 for office space and 150.5 hectares for general industrial, with 551 hectares of strategic B8 needed across Coventry and Warwickshire as a whole (including Rugby).
- 2.3. By 2050, these figures increase to 6.5, 218.2, and 735 hectares respectively.
- 2.4. Two other evidence base documents have been produced which consider the need for employment land in Rugby over the Plan period, the West Midlands Strategic Employment Land Sites Study (WMSESS 2024) which identifies a need for a total of 68ha of non-strategic industrial space over the period 2021–2045. And a strategic B8 need for between 835ha and 1,017ha across the same period (excluding office space).
- 2.5. The Coventry and Warwickshire LPAs Alignment Paper then sought to bring together the HEDNA 2022 and the 2024 WMSESS. This is reported in the Council's Topic Paper: Development Needs.
- 2.6. The Paper states that there is a residual need as identified in the alignment paper for employment floor space as follows: Offices 6.24ha, industrial land on smaller sites 68ha, industrial land on larger sites 84ha (assumed to be the strategic need).
- 2.7. The Alignment Paper reports 'residual' figures, which is not the total need, and the 'strategic need' appears just related to development within an 'opportunity area' and not based on any numerical apportionment or a review of what each authority can deliver at the strategic level. There is also no consideration of Rugby's location within wider functional economic market areas, such as those within Leicester for example, where Rugby shares a border with Harborough District Council.

- 2.8. The NPPF requires development plans to be positively prepared in order to ensure soundness, and this includes consideration of meeting the need of neighbouring authorities. By focusing on the 'West Midlands' this has not fulfilled the requirement set out in the NPPF and the employment needs of the Borough have not been justified.
- 2.9. Further, the Topic Paper then appears to incorrectly take off further commitments for the period 2022–2024 – the Alignment Paper had already done this.
- 2.10. Notwithstanding, Para 1.36.5 of the Topic Paper then (confusingly given the above figures also taken from the Topic Paper) concludes that the combined gross industrial need (excluding offices) for Rugby is 284ha over the proposed Plan period 2024–2045.
- 2.11. The Council's own evidence base is not clear and justified and needs to be reviewed and properly set out to identify: the employment need, including the strategic requirements, and this should be the basis of Policy S3, not residual need which is then manipulated further with apparent further reductions, but which results in a total higher than the starting point.
- 2.12. Policy S3 as drafted is therefore unsound as it is not fully justified.

### 3. POLICY S7: EMPLOYMENT ALLOCATIONS

- 3.1. With reference to Policy S7: Employment Allocations, there are a series of considerations which must be taken into account when determining where employment land should be located.
- 3.2. As Ashfield Land are promoting a site predominately for warehousing and strategic B8 uses, these representations focus on the locational requirements for this specific type of employment land. The HEDNA (Paragraph 11.22) and guidance in the PPG notes the importance of road accessibility; power supply; proximity to rail terminals; labour availability; and neighbouring activities. Based on this, corridors for B8 development are identified as the M42/A446, M6, M45/A45, and A5 (Paragraph 11.24), Opportunity Area 7 in the WMSESS Paper.
- 3.3. Evidently, these recommendations have influenced the Council's selection of broad locations for strategic employment. These are predominately situated within the identified corridors, on major road networks, and in close proximity to settlements (and, in some instances, existing large employment sites). Whilst these locations are broadly suitable, given that they align with the advice set out in the HEDNA, it is contended that there is scope for further employment land to meet the borough's need along the A5. Specifically, we propose the location north of the M6 and south of the A426. This area has most recently been used for quarrying, manufacturing, and concrete production. The south western edge of this area falls within Rugby Borough. Whilst it is acknowledged that the rest is in Harborough District, it is important to work across boundaries as part of the plan-making process, in accordance with Paragraphs 25 and 26 of the NPPF and tests for soundness, and an employment site here will benefit both Rugby and Harborough economically.
- 3.4. The Site owned by Ashfield Land is a former quarry (all minerals have been extracted and quarrying works have ceased) and is exceptionally well located, sitting within the Golden Triangle, benefitting from easy access to the strategic road network (including the M1, M6 and M69). The Site is also within an identified Area of Opportunity and the 'Golden Triangle' as set out in the Warehousing and Logistics Report 2021 (as amended March 2022). That report identifies, at page 139, that Local Plans should ensure there are vacant plots of land available at strategic sites in at least two Areas of Opportunity within the Golden Triangle. The sites should have the ability to deliver high bay (20m plus) warehouses and have good access. Furthermore, as noted in the HEDNA (Paragraph 11.24), the A5 benefits from rail terminals at Hams Hall and DIRFT. There are no surrounding uses (i.e. residential) which would



conflict with employment uses here; indeed, the area has already been associated with land in an employment use and is not untouched open countryside, although it is acknowledged that it does not classify as previously developed land under the definition set out in the NPPF.

- 3.5. More information about the Site and its merits for employment is included in Section 4 of these representations.

## 4. LAND SOUTH OF GIBBET LANE, SHAWELL

- 4.1. Ashfield Land (Harborough) Limited is promoting land south of Gibbet Lane (see Site Location Plan at Appendix 1) for future employment uses. The Site is to the north east of Rugby Town Centre and north west of the settlement of Shawell. Totalling 16.52ha, the south western part of the Site, adjacent to the A5, falls within Rugby Borough Council's administrative area, whereas the majority of the site is in Harborough District.
- 4.2. The Site is bound by the A5 to the south and west, and Gibbet Lane to the north. It adjoins land associated with the BMI Redland Shawell Plant, and beyond this is the Shawell Sand and Gravel Quarry, operated by Tarmac.
- 4.3. The Site falls within Zone 1 and is at a low risk of fluvial flooding. It is also at a low risk of surface water (pluvial) flooding, although there are some parts of the Site at its southernmost extent adjacent to the A5 that are at a medium risk of surface water flooding. The Site is not in a Conservation Area, nor does it contain any listed buildings.
- 4.4. Other features in the wider vicinity include two Local Wildlife Sites, to the north of Gibbet Lane and to the east along Gibbet Lane. There is a Scheduled Ancient Monument to the south east, on the opposite side of the A5.
- 4.5. The Site has most recently been utilised for quarrying, and excavation of materials under permission granted by Leicestershire County Council on 17 December 2019 (ref: 2018/CM/O147/LCC) for an extension of the surrounding uses, to allow the extraction of sand and gravel at the Site the subject of this enquiry. All minerals (sand and gravel) have been extracted from the Site, and quarrying works have now ceased. Restoration plans have been approved for the restoration of the land to agriculture at the cessation of the quarrying. The restoration plans approved includes that the land will be returned to an agricultural use, a combination of arable and grassland (for pasture) in the form of a shallow bowl, complete with a balancing pond. There is no public access to the site and no public rights of way.
- 4.6. The Site has previously been promoted through the Council's 'call for sites' process and is identified in Harborough's Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) 2024 as Site 21/8074 (Land South of Gibbet Lane). In this, it was concluded that the site was developable, but at the time it was only considered to be potentially suitable and potentially available, but not currently achievable due to the ongoing quarrying works.

- 4.7. In the 2024 HELAA the Site was reconsidered (ref: 24/10255) and considered to be available. Concerns were raised about viability to provide a new roundabout access to the A5 affecting Achievability, and the site's location being in the open countryside and at least 1km from economic or population centres. Notwithstanding, it was considered 'developable' overall, within a timeframe of 11-15 (and beyond) years.
- 4.8. The Site sits within the logistics/employment development 'Golden Triangle' and, as referred to above, is exceptionally well located for such development and within an Area of Opportunity (as per relevant evidence base documents referred above) for the delivery of future employment floorspace, being within 5 minutes' drive of the Strategic Road Network.
- 4.9. Quarrying has now been completed and whilst the Site is to be restored in accordance with the County Council approvals, it is immediately available for development and could deliver high quality employment development to meet the needs of the District to 2041, supporting its position within the Golden Triangle, contributing to economic prosperity and creating jobs.
- 4.10. Ashfield Land are a proven property company. The business has been established for 35 years and has a strong track record and history of delivery across all sectors, with the ability and expertise to bring land forward and deliver development quickly.
- 4.11. It would also provide a location on the A5 to deliver some of the residual B8 strategic employment land arising from the refusal of the Hinckley NRFI. Located on the A5 it would have access directly to the Birch Coppice RFI, which would be considered suitable in accordance with the Council's evidence base referred to in Section 3 above.
- 4.12. The Applicant has considered potential site constraints and has undertaken detailed technical work on a number of matters to demonstrate its suitability and deliverability. This is summarised below.
- 4.13. In terms of highways and transport, a roundabout off the A5 would provide the most suitable access into the Site, similar to that serving Magna Park a short distance to the north. Pre-application discussions have been held with National Highways, Warwickshire County Council Highways and Leicestershire County Council Highways.
- 4.14. National Highways has confirmed that in principle a roundabout access onto the A5 would be acceptable.

- 4.15. Gibbet Lane as a whole has also been considered. Feasibility work is currently being undertaken to understand whether Gibbet Lane could be closed to traffic, with traffic being routed through the Ashfield Land site onto the A5. In turn, there is an opportunity for the Gibbet Lane arm of the Gibbet Lane roundabout to the north west to be closed. It is anticipated that removing an arm of the roundabout would deliver a significant benefit and improve the safety, efficiency and operation of a roundabout that is currently operating over capacity, with no potential solution having been identified by National Highways to address its inefficiencies.
- 4.16. In addition, discussions are being held with Arriva about the delivery of a bus service to serve development on the Site, to provide a sustainable mode of transport for future employees and improve the site's sustainability credentials, overcoming the issue flagged by the SHELAA.
- 4.17. The Site has been the subject of an Environmental Impact Screening Opinion (LPA Ref: R/25/0001), which concluded that development on the site would not require environmental impact assessment.
- 4.18. A Site Layout (Concept Masterplan) has been prepared and can be found in Appendix 3 (Drawing ref: 0611 P01). This demonstrates that the Site could accommodate 58,138sqm (GIA) of employment floorspace for Use Class B8 operations. The Masterplan has been prepared to allow for a bus service turning circle, to take account of landscape constraints and opportunities, ecological considerations and site levels, and indicatively identifies a range of units from 15,000 – 24,000sqm, with access off the A5. Parking is provided for each unit including level access and dock loading doors as required for operational purposes, and units would be designed to accommodate business requirements for employment operators.
- 4.19. It also shows that traffic from Gibbet Lane would be routed through the Site, enabling the Gibbet Lane roundabout improvements mentioned above.

## 5. SUMMARY

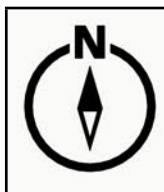
- 5.1. These representations have been prepared by Pegasus Group on behalf of Ashfield Land, who have land interests east of the A5 and south of Gibbet Lane, on the boundary between Rugby Borough and Harborough District. This land is being promoted for employment uses, specifically warehousing.
- 5.2. It is contended that at present the Council's evidence base and proposed policies on the provision of employment land are not justified nor in accordance with national guidance on identifying what the requirements are. There is also no strategic consideration of Rugby's location and interaction with a number of functional economic market areas, such as Leicestershire, or the opportunity that that brings to identify land in a suitable and accessible location that could deliver development that will serve both the road and strategic freight rail network.
- 5.3. The HEDNA highlights that there is a strong demand for B8 units – not just within Rugby, but in the wider region too – and this demand is anticipated to increase in the coming decades. Therefore, it is imperative for sufficient land to be allocated for such units – both strategic warehousing and smaller industrial – so that this demand can be met. With regards to their location, the representations suggest that the area of land east of the A5 and south of the A426 would be a suitable area for employment, given that it meets the locational requirements set out in the HEDNA, including good accessibility. The site south of Gibbet Lane, promoted by Ashfield Land, is suggested as an optimal option which merits consideration; it is not within the Green Belt and as such is preferential to other locations where Green Belt release may be required.
- 5.4. Ashfield Land welcomes the opportunity to continue to comment upon the Local Plan Review. If the Council requires any further information in respect of the site south of Gibbet Lane to assist in accurately assessing it, this can be provided upon request.





## APPENDIX 1: SITE LOCATION PLAN





Barn Yard  
House

A426

A5

GIBBET LANE

Green Lane  
Spinney

A5

A5

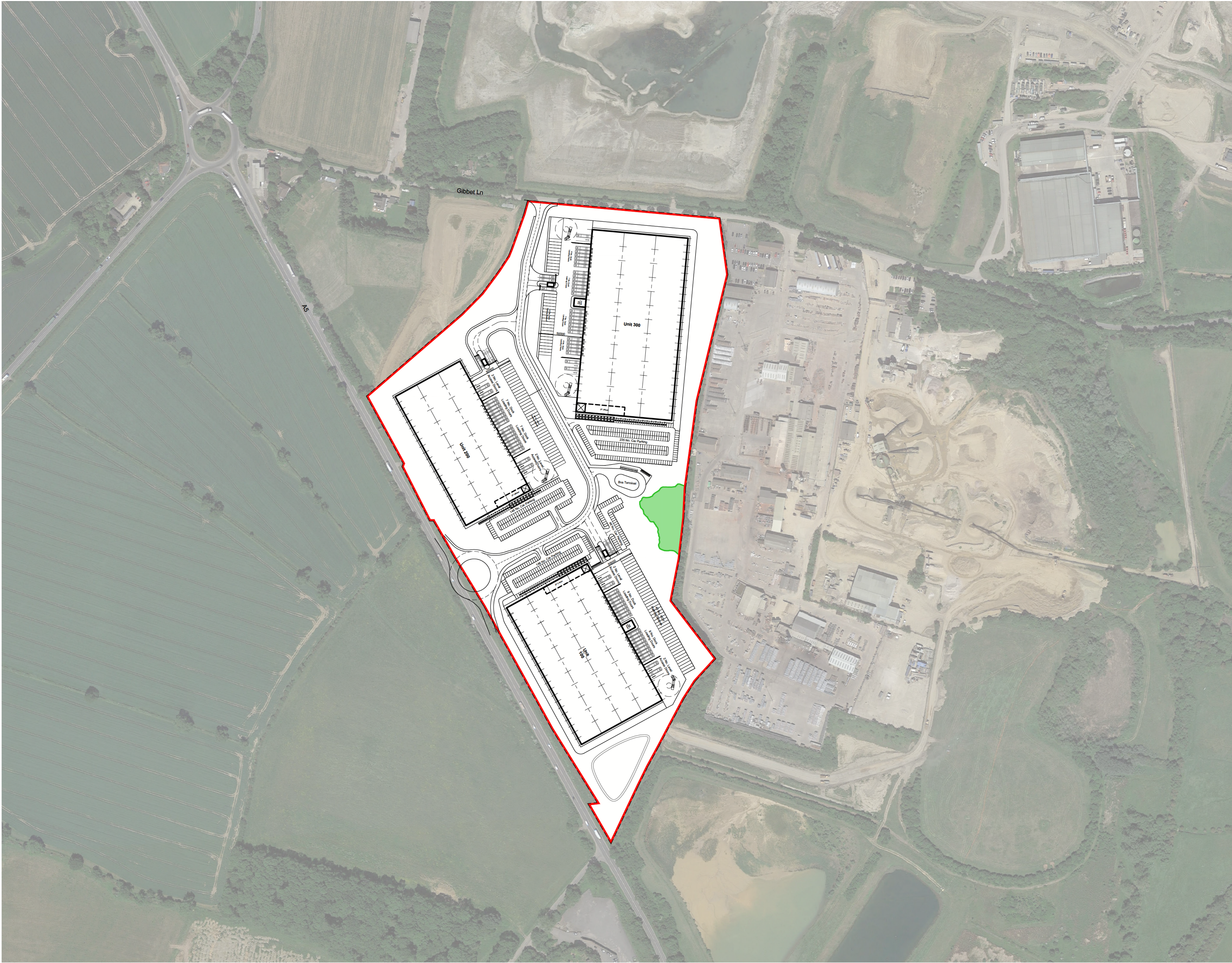
Newton  
Spinney



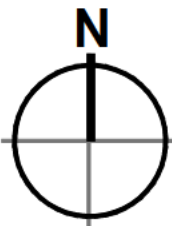


## APPENDIX 2: CONCEPT MASTERPLAN





- Dimensions are in millimeters, unless stated otherwise.  
- Scaling of this drawing is not recommended.  
- It is the recipient's responsibility to print this document to the correct scale.  
- All relevant drawings and specifications should be read in conjunction with this drawing.



Schedule of Accommodation

Total GIA	-	625,791 ft <sup>2</sup>	(58,137 m <sup>2</sup> )
Site Area	-	41.84 acres	16.93 ha
Site Density GIA	-		34.34%

<b>Unit 100</b>			
Warehouse Area	-	197,635 ft <sup>2</sup>	(18,361 m <sup>2</sup> )
Office Area (incl. Gr core)	-	10,401 ft <sup>2</sup>	(966 m <sup>2</sup> )
Transport Office	-	2,500 ft <sup>2</sup>	(232 m <sup>2</sup> )
Gatehouse	-	300 ft <sup>2</sup>	(28 m <sup>2</sup> )
Unit 100 GIA	-	210,836 ft <sup>2</sup>	(19,587 m <sup>2</sup> )

<b>Unit 200</b>			
Warehouse Area	-	148,906 ft <sup>2</sup>	(13,834 m <sup>2</sup> )
Office Area (incl. GF core)	-	7,837 ft <sup>2</sup>	(728 m <sup>2</sup> )
Gatehouse	-	300 ft <sup>2</sup>	(28 m <sup>2</sup> )
Unit 200 GIA	-	157,043 ft <sup>2</sup>	(14,590 m <sup>2</sup> )

<b>Unit 300</b>			
Warehouse Area	-	242,357 ft <sup>2</sup>	(22,516 m <sup>2</sup> )
Office Area (incl. GF core)	-	12,755 ft <sup>2</sup>	(1,185 m <sup>2</sup> )
Transport Office	-	2,500 ft <sup>2</sup>	(232 m <sup>2</sup> )
Gatehouse	-	300 ft <sup>2</sup>	(28 m <sup>2</sup> )
Unit 300 GIA	-	257,912 ft <sup>2</sup>	(23,961 m <sup>2</sup> )

rev	amendments	by	ckd	date
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Gibbet Lane, Shawell

Site Layout - Gibbet Lane Junction

LOD 1	LOI 1
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RIBA PoW Stage:	0 - Strategic Definition
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Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)  
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

## Expertly Done.

DESIGN | ECONOMICS | ENVIRONMENT | HERITAGE | LAND & PROPERTY | PLANNING | TRANSPORT & INFRASTRUCTURE

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