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Dear Sir or Madam

Rugby Borough Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation Response by Barberry

We are instructed by Barberry to submit representations to the Rugby Local Plan Preferred Options Consultation and welcome the opportunity to comment at this time. Barberry are promoting land for employment development at Junction 2 of the M6 at Anstey and consider the site is suitable to meet the employment needs of the Borough and wider sub-region over the plan period. The site is not currently proposed for allocation in the draft Plan and we set out below our objections to this and why we consider the site is suitable. Our representations should be read with this objective in mind.

Policy S1

The policy seeks to direct housing and employment growth to the main Rugby urban area, then the main settlements and finally the other rural settlements. The settlement hierarchy fails to recognise the proximity of the urban edge of Coventry to the Borough and does not identify that it would be suitable to accommodate any future growth. We consider that this is an unsound approach, particularly in light of how the Council is considering to accommodate its employment land requirements and potentially also seeking to accommodate some of the unmet employment land needs arising within Coventry. Barberry consider that if the Council do agree to accommodate some of Coventry's unmet needs this should be done as close to Coventry as possible. The land that Barberry are promoting at Junction 2 of the M6 is considered an entirely suitable location for this purpose. We set out this point below.

Policy S3 – Strategy for Employment Land

The policy identifies a need for 22,013 square metres of office floorspace and 1,026,546 square metres of Class E(g), B2 and B8 floorspace.

To accommodate this, the Council has existing commitments of 282,987 square metres and is proposing new allocations at 5 sites totalling 945,000 square metres. In total, existing commitments and proposed allocations total 1,231,987 square metres of floorspace.

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The Council's Development Needs Topic Paper sets out what the need within the Borough is for small sites and strategic sites. In summary, there is gross need for 265,296 square metres of small sites and 761,250 square metres of large sites, totalling 1,026,546 square metres.

The total floorspace proposed in the Preferred Options Plan is 1,231,987 square metres which is 205,441 square metres more floorspace than is needed by the Borough to meet its needs over the plan period.

Policy S3 does not fully explain why such an over-provision is proposed. However, paragraphs 1.36.7 – 1.36.10 of the Development Needs Topic Paper identifies that Coventry currently has an unmet requirement for small sites of 180,000 square metres or 45 hectares of land. If this were included the gross requirement for Rugby would be 1,206,446 square metres of floorspace which is just less than the 1,231,987 square metres of floorspace that is currently proposed in the Preferred Options Plan.

In over-allocating against the Borough's needs to the tune of 205,441 square metres is it the Council's intention that it will be agreeing to meet in full Coventry's small site unmet requirement? If that is the intention Barberry are supportive in principle of this. However, we do not agree that the allocation of 5 large strategic sites is the most appropriate way to address Coventry's unmet needs and contend that a range of other smaller sites such as the land at Junction 2 of the M6 would be suitable to meet this need.

Notwithstanding our view that the site at Junction 2 is suitable for development it has not been included as a draft allocation in the Preferred Option Plan. We set out below the reasons why we disagree with the Council's assessment and why we consider Site 70 would be an appropriate location to meet future employment needs particularly those arising within Coventry.

Transport and Review of Site Accessibility Scoring

Published alongside the Preferred Options Plan are a number of evidence base documents that assess both the sites that have been submitted via the Call for Sites as well as considering wider issues such as transport, landscape, ecology, heritage and flooding.

The site (Site 70) was assessed first in the HEDNA which confirmed that it is located in the Green Belt, a new access on to the A46 is required and that part of the site was located in Flood Zones 2 and 3 and would need to be excluded for development. A gas pipeline was highlighted as crossing the site. Further assessment was required to determine the location or suitability of the site for employment use.

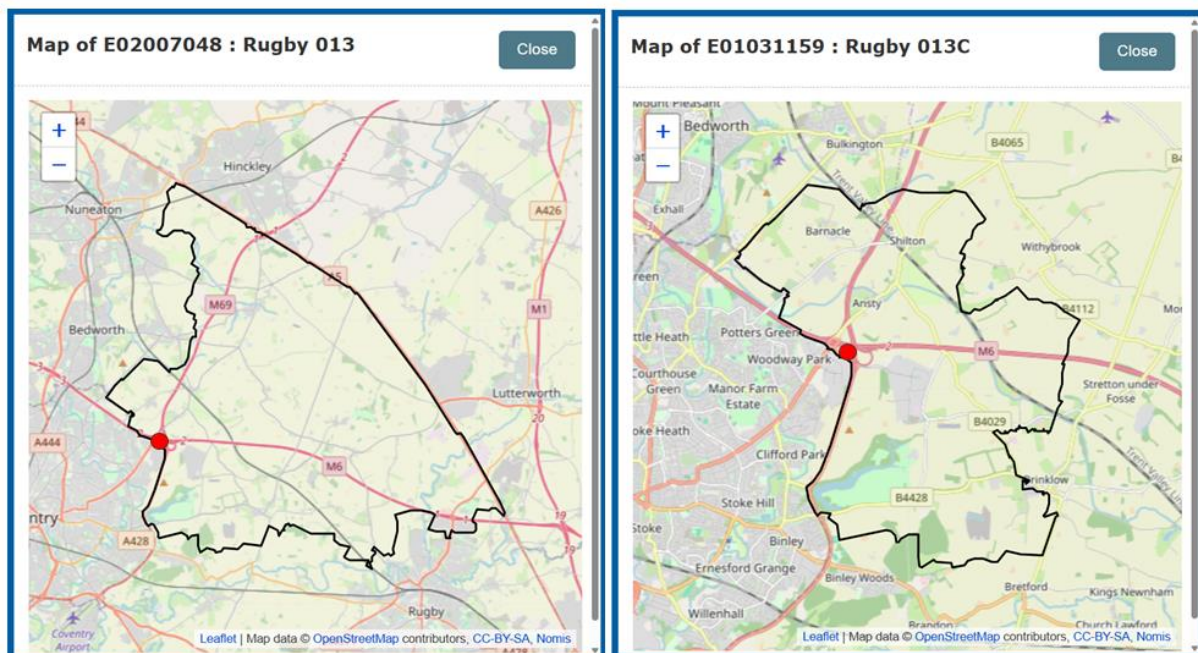
The site was then subsequently assessed as part of the Stage 2 HEDNA assessment. In respect of highways, a high level assessment of accessibility has been undertaken by the local authority to inform the Local Plan allocations and the Preferred Options Plan. The sites have been given a score based on this analysis and ranked accordingly. With regard to Site 70, a score of 38 and a corresponding rank of 56 were awarded.

The accessibility ranking scores for the sites assessed are based on three components which are set out below in Table 1 in relation to Site 70. These individual component scores are based on an assessment of the middle and lower super output areas within which the respective sites are located i.e. they are not site specific.

Table 1 – Site 70 Accessibility Scores

| Component | Area Level | Area Reference | Rank |
|----------------------|------------|------------------------|------|
| MND | LSOA | Rugby 013C | 19 |
| PTAL | MSOA/LSOA | Rugby 013 & Rugby 013C | 11 |
| Bus OD Accessibility | MSOA | Rugby 013 | 8 |
| Total Score | | | 38 |

As can be seen in Table 1, Site 70 falls within the MSOA and LSOA of Rugby 013 and Rugby 013C respectively. These output areas are classified within the analysis as being 'Rural Village and Dispersed' and extracts showing the areas assessed are provided below for context (along with a red dot showing the location of Site 70).



As shown in the images above, the site is located on the periphery of the two output areas used in the assessment. Fundamentally, an analysis undertaken using these generalised output areas does not take into account the fact that the site is located on the edge of a major city (Coventry). As a result, the ranking score assigned to the site is clearly unrepresentative and is instead illustrative of accessibility associated with generalised 'rural village' characteristics of the output areas as a whole. Had the analysis taken into account the edge of city location of the site, it would have undoubtedly been awarded a higher score.

In addition to the above, it is noted that a number of sites near the proposed allocation which scored lower in terms of accessibility have been retained as potential employment allocations including Site 14 (Land North of Ansty Park) which had a rank of 65 and Site 95 (Land bound by M69, M6 and B4029) which had a rank of 69.

A variety of preliminary access options have been considered for the proposed development and all of these include controlled crossings to ensure that there is good foot & cycle connectivity with existing facilities, including the shared foot/ cycleway which routes adjacent to the site along the southern side of the A46. There is also scope to improve off-site connectivity, including the footpath link connecting south into Crosspoint Business Park, and for enhanced bus access to be delivered as part of the proposed development. These

We note that in the Stage 2 HEDNA Site Assessment that the Council confirm that National Highways have not commented on the proposed sites. Despite this, Barberry engaged with National Highways prior to preparing its proposals for the site with the specific reason of seeking to derive a suitable access solution into the site. The proposed access set out below is the one that was discussed with National Highways and which was supported in principle when discussed with them.



Landscape

Flooding

Heritage

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Grey Belt

The site is entirely within the Green Belt. The updated Framework published in December 2024 introduced the concept of Grey Belt land. Additional guidance published in the PPG in February 2025 provides additional guidance on how local planning authorities should perform a review of Green Belt boundaries to meet housing and other development needs whether prior to or as part of the plan making process. The guidance confirms that authorities produce a Green Belt assessment as part of the preparation of a Local Plan and to assist areas against Green Belt purposes a), b) and d) using the criteria in the PPG.

Our own initial assessment of the site against purposes a), b) and d) is set out below.

In respect of purpose a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built up areas, Coventry can be considered a large built up area due to its city status however, due to its proximity to the M69 and M6 motorways any development on the site would not be unrestricted as these road would provide significant barriers containing development. Therefore, development of the site would not be unrestricted. Furthermore, the site is heavily influenced by the M6 and M69 motorways and any future development within the site would be contained by the strong defensible boundaries and would result in limited harm to the amenity of residents further to the north of the M6.

In respect of purpose b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another whilst Coventry could be considered a town due to its size, nearby development to the site would only be villages and therefore any development of the site would not result in towns merging into one another.

Finally, in respect of purpose d) Coventry is not considered an historic town albeit it does have historic features within the city centre. However, any development on the site is unlikely to impact upon it and therefore the contribution to this purpose would be minimal.

We note that the Council is currently preparing a Green Belt assessment and in light of the updated guidance in the PPG that has now been published we welcome the Council's findings on whether or not it considers the site would be Grey Belt. If the site is considered Grey Belt this does not infer that it should be allocated for development, however, if there is a need to release land from the Green Belt to meet wider development needs, Grey Belt land should be considered first over and above other land in the Green Belt that is not Grey Belt. In light of the contribution that the site makes to the 3 purposes set out above we consider that if it were removed from the Green Belt it would have a limited impact on the overall function of the Green Belt as a whole.

Market Facing Development

Having regard to the accessibility of the site and its proximity to both the built up area of Coventry and motorway junctions a scheme delivering mid box units, capable of meeting a more localised need for new premises can be delivered on site. There is significant market interest in the site from a range of occupiers that are attracted by the accessible, sustainable location that is well located to main transport routes and a significant pool of potential employees.

In light of the above, Barberry note that if the intention is to accommodate all of Coventry's smaller sites unmet employment land requirements then it would be entirely appropriate to identify sites capable of delivering employment development in close proximity to the city's urban edge. The site at Junction 2 of the M6 is considered entirely appropriate for this due to its locational proximity to the edge of Coventry meaning that those living in Coventry would be able to access the site either by walking or cycling, vehicular access or bus service provision.

Policy S7 – Employment Allocations

In light of the comments Barberry have set out above in respect of Policy S3 we have a number of concerns about the 5 proposed employment allocations set out within Policy S7. Whilst clearly a number of these sites have been chosen as they are extensions to existing sites (save for Site 95 – Crouner Fields Farm) there does appear merit in why these have been identified as draft allocations. Notwithstanding this Barberry remain concerned that the allocation of these sites if they are intended to assist with meeting wider unmet needs arising within Coventry are not well located to the city and could result in unsustainable commuting patterns if they are intended to attract employees and people working within Coventry.

Barberry are of the view that there is merit in identifying sites on Coventry's urban edge in order to minimise commuting out and to direct development closer to where it is needed. Furthermore, the 5 sites identified are all of a strategic nature whilst that in themselves would not preclude the development of smaller units, clearly smaller sites would be better suited to accommodating a range of different size units in the mid box range.

It is also noted the Crouner Fields Farm development is intended to meet a specific requirement of an occupier and to form a new headquarters. It remains to be seen whether as a result additional employment would be generated outside of the requirement of the intended occupier or whether it would be fully taken up by the end user. Clearly if this is the case this site would have limited benefit in meeting unmet needs arising within Coventry as the floorspace would largely already be accounted for by another occupier. Similarly, Site 14 is intended to be developed for R & D use which would limit the range of potential occupiers that could take up the floorspace on this allocation. A greater range, size and choice of sites is sought in order to meet the needs of both Rugby but also need arising within Coventry.

Policy CL1 – Net Zero Buildings

Barberry are generally supportive of the intention to deliver more energy efficient buildings and have constructed a number of units recently that seek to achieve increasing environmental and sustainability standards within them. From an investor and occupier's perspective new buildings have to achieve and demonstrate high environmental performance in order to be attractive to the market. Barberry would be targeting an 'Excellent' if not 'Outstanding' rating on this building as part of a future development proposal. However, Barberry disagree with the wording of the policy which is considered overly prescriptive and risks becoming out of date once building regulations are published and updated.

Adherence to building regulations is in our view the most appropriate way of ensuring that new development achieves the requisite environmental standards and where these standards are therefore capable of being revised in a less cumbersome process than through a Local Plan review. Furthermore, it is not clear what the legislative or statutory requirement to achieve net zero is and therefore whether there is a legitimate reason to require all new development to achieve net zero at this time.

Policy CL3 – Water Supply, Quality and Efficiency

The policy requires that new non-residential development that is major development shall achieve full credits for Category WATO1 of BREEAM unless it is demonstrated impractical. Whilst Barberry do use BREEAM as a way of measuring and demonstrating the sustainability of its proposed developments the same cannot be said for all developers. Clearly if the aim is to achieve water efficiency Barberry consider that the existing system of building regulations would be more appropriate to ensure that this is met.

Policy EN4 – Biodiversity Net Gain

Barberry welcome the proposed policy that confirms that biodiversity net gain will be dealt with under Part 6 of the Environment Act and that developments will be required to achieve a minimum of 10% gain on the pre-development biodiversity value of the site. Barberry welcome the wording of the policy that sets out where biodiversity net gain can be delivered being either on site, off site within Rugby or through the purchase of credits to deliver gain elsewhere. Barberry consider this provides flexibility in addressing how biodiversity net gain can be delivered particularly if there are limited opportunities to do so on site.

Policy EN5 – Canopy Cover

Barberry are concerned that the proposals to achieve at least 20% canopy cover on post development areas will be particularly hard to achieve on new commercial developments. Commercial developments have a reasonable high plot coverage ratio as sites have to include both parking and surfacing areas for the new buildings. Whilst there is potential to provide canopy cover within parking areas it cannot be said for service yards or service runs. Whilst Barberry are willing to consider opportunities to incorporate tree planting and canopy cover within new developments, achieving a rigid 20% cover may not always be possible and a degree of flexibility in its application to specific uses and sites would be welcomed.

We trust you take our comments into consideration. Should you have any questions or wish to discuss any of the points raised we would be happy to meet with you to do so.

Yours faithfully



