



TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990

**RUGBY BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN
PREFERRED OPTIONS CONSULTATION (REGULATION 18)
MARCH 2025**

**REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF
CATESBY ESTATES**

LAND NORTH OF WARWICK ROAD, WOLSTON (SITE 136)

**MAY 2025
OUR REF: WW/11013**

1.0 LAND TO THE NORTH OF WARWICK ROAD, WOLSTON

- 1.1 This submission is made on behalf of Catesby Estates, in relation to their interests at land north of Warwick Road, Wolston (hereafter referred to as 'the Site'). Catesby Estates welcome the opportunity to be involved in the preparation of the Rugby Borough Local Plan, and it is within this context that they wish to make representations to the Preferred Options Consultation.
- 1.2 The Site has previously been submitted to the Local Plan making process for consideration by L&Q Estates. In August 2024, Urban&Civic plc acquired L&Q Estates from London & Quadrant Housing Trust (L&Q HT). Following this acquisition, the former L&Q Estates portfolio and team has been incorporated within Urban&Civic plc as master developer and Catesby Estates as land promoter.
- 1.3 The Site is shown outlined in red on Drawing SK001 (**Appendix 1**) and is located on the western edge of the village of Wolston, to the north of Warwick Road. It extends to 3.87 ha (9.56 acres) and can deliver a high-quality residential development. The land is available and the development is deliverable and unconstrained technically. A Constraints and Opportunities Plan has been prepared and is included at **Appendix 2**.
- 1.4 It is considered that the site is suitable for a residential allocation by reason of:
- Wolston is categorised as a Main Rural Settlement – a second-tier settlement behind Rugby in terms of its sustainability credentials. It is identified in the Sustainability Appraisal (SA) of the Rugby Borough Local Plan (March 2025) and the Rural Sustainability Study (2025) as the third-most sustainable settlement in the Borough (excluding Rugby) by reason of its access to services, public transport and the internet.
 - There are a range of local services and facilities located within close proximity of the promotion site, including:
 - Wolston Leisure & Community Centre (550m)
 - Wolston Library & Information Centre (700m)
 - Convenience Store (850m)
 - Wolston Surgery (950m)
 - Wolston St Margaret's C of E Primary School (1.1km)
 - The promotion site immediately adjoins the built-up area boundary of Wolston and adjoins existing residential development to the east. The site is contained by Warwick Road to the south, Wolston Fields Farm Road to the west and playing fields associated with Wolston Leisure and Community Centre to the north. Therefore, the development of this site would form an enduring definition to the built-up area boundary.
 - There is a bus stop located on Manor Estate approximately 350m to the east of the site. From this stop, services connect the site to Coventry and Rugby (Bus 86).

- It is considered that the proposals for up to 80 dwellings would not lead to a level of increase in traffic on local roads that would be harmful to the local area. The site can be suitably accessed from Warwick Road via the provision of a new priority T-junction and could be accompanied by an extension of the 30mph speed limit past the site and creation of a village gateway feature. The Stage 2 Site Options Assessment (March 2025) identifies that the surrounding road network has relatively low levels of congestion.
- The site is shown as being in Flood Zone 1 and thus is situated in an area with very low risk of flooding.
- The Stage 2 Site Options Assessment (March 2025) identifies that the landscape sensitivity is Medium/Low. It is submitted that the site would be suitable for development providing roadside trees and hedgerows are reinstated and a landscape buffer is provided between the site and northern part of the parcel.
- The Ecological Constraints Assessment (March 2025) identifies that the site *‘has potential to be taken forward for development subject to demonstrating that there would be no adverse effects upon Brandon Marsh SSSI through sensitive site design and the adoption of appropriate mitigation measures.’*
- The site comprises land in agricultural use. The site’s agricultural land classification comprises predominantly Grade 3 agricultural land, although some Grade 2 land is present to the north west of the site where there is a water body. The loss of this amount of agricultural land should not be regarded as being ‘large’. Indeed, the statutory consultation requirement with DEFRA on development proposals is some 20 hectares.

1.5 The suitability of the site for residential development is confirmed within the Stage 2 Site Options Assessment (March 2025) and the Sustainability Appraisal of the Rugby Borough Local Plan (March 2025) – with both documents identifying the site as a potential option.

1.6 However, an issue has been identified with the capacity of the primary school in the village. On this basis, Draft Policy S6 (Residential Allocations) includes only a small site of 15 homes as a potential allocation within Wolston. Land north of Warwick Road (Site 136), which is capable of delivering up to 80 dwellings, is excluded by reason of the school capacity, as summarised in the SA at Paragraph 5.4.69:

5.4.69. ‘A next port of call is Site 136, but there is no potential for allocation given the primary school issue.’

1.7 Catesby Estates have commissioned a specialist consultant (Turley) to undertake a review of the primary school capacity in Wolston (included at **Appendix 3**).

1.8 Wolston contains a single primary school – St Margaret’s Church of England Primary School. There are a three primary schools within a 2-mile radius of the promotion site, with this distance being significant in the context of the 1996 Education Act which stipulates that this is the furthest a child of primary school age could reasonably be expected to travel.

- 1.9 It is acknowledged that Wolston St Margaret's Church of England Primary School is currently at capacity. It is reportedly able to accommodate 210 pupils but had 225 in the last reported academic year (2023/24). However, by contrast, the schools that are located within a 2-mile radius of the promotion site are under capacity. This serves to offset the rise seen at Wolston St Margaret's if the schools are treated collectively, with a combined pupil roll falling and now standing at c. 81 pupils below their collective capacity.
- 1.10 Warwickshire County Council produces forecasts that estimate pupil numbers up to five years into the future. In the latest WCC Annual Education Sufficiency Update (January 2025), it is anticipated that demand will continue to fall in the "Rugby Rural" planning area that contains all of the nearby schools to Wolston.
- 1.11 Based on the above, there appears to exist – and is forecast to remain – surplus capacity in nearby schools that could theoretically accommodate any demand that would be generated by up to 80 new homes in Wolston, in the event that there is insufficient places at Wolston St Margaret's and it cannot be expanded (the Preferred Options consultation document claims, with no apparent evidence, that there is *'likely no potential'* to do so).
- 1.12 The Council is advised to not only explore the feasibility of expansion but also work with Warwickshire County Council to determine the extent to which Wolston's primary school admits children that could in future be enrolled at undersubscribed schools closer to their homes. The Council should also confirm the availability of forecasts for the school itself, to ascertain whether pupil numbers are likely to reduce from their current level. Only with this information can the Council make an informed judgement on whether Wolston can accommodate new housing development over the Plan Period to 2045, having arguably been premature and influenced only by current trends claiming that it cannot.

2.0 STRATEGY FOR HOMES AND RESIDENTIAL ALLOCATIONS (POLICIES S2 AND S6)

Question 3. To what extent do you agree with the more dispersed overall spatial strategy for new homes?

2.1 Agree.

Question 4. What are the reasons for your answer to question 3 and if you disagree with the proposed spatial strategy what alternative should we pursue?

2.2 The proposed spatial strategy for delivering housing includes a range of small to medium-sized sites. The Rugby urban area remains the principal focus for new housing where, including existing commitments, around 75% of new homes are to be delivered. The consultation document also proposes residential sites across most of the larger villages with Wolvey, Long Lawford and Brinklow having the largest number of proposed homes.

2.3 We are generally supportive of this dispersed strategy, alongside the continued allocation and delivery at large strategic sites. This approach aligns with the Framework which advises that planning policies should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability. There is a requirement for smaller allocations to meet the identified housing needs in the shorter term, in accordance with Paragraph 72 of the Framework, which states:

‘...planning policies should identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability. Planning policies should identify a supply of:

*a) specific, deliverable sites for five years following the intended date of adoption; and
b) specific, developable sites or broad locations for growth, for the subsequent years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15 of the remaining plan period.’*

2.4 It is hence considered that the overall spatial strategy, which proposes smaller allocations across most of the larger villages, is an approach which is more likely to meet the identified housing needs in the shorter term and help achieve and maintain a five-year housing land supply.

2.5 However, we are not supportive of the distribution of housing growth across the villages listed in Draft Policy S6 (Residential Allocations), which proposes the largest number of homes in some of the Borough’s least sustainable villages. In particular, there are residential allocations proposed within some smaller rural villages categorised as ‘Other rural settlements’ in Draft Policy S1 (Settlement Hierarchy) – in which ‘*only limited development*’ is to be permitted by reason of their limited access to services and facilities when compared to the Main Rural Settlements.

2.6 It is considered that the allocation of housing within smaller villages such as Newton, for example, is at odds with the Settlement Hierarchy which serves to direct housing growth to the most sustainable settlements. Such an approach also goes against the conclusions of the Rural Sustainability Study (2025) which states at paragraph 4.13:

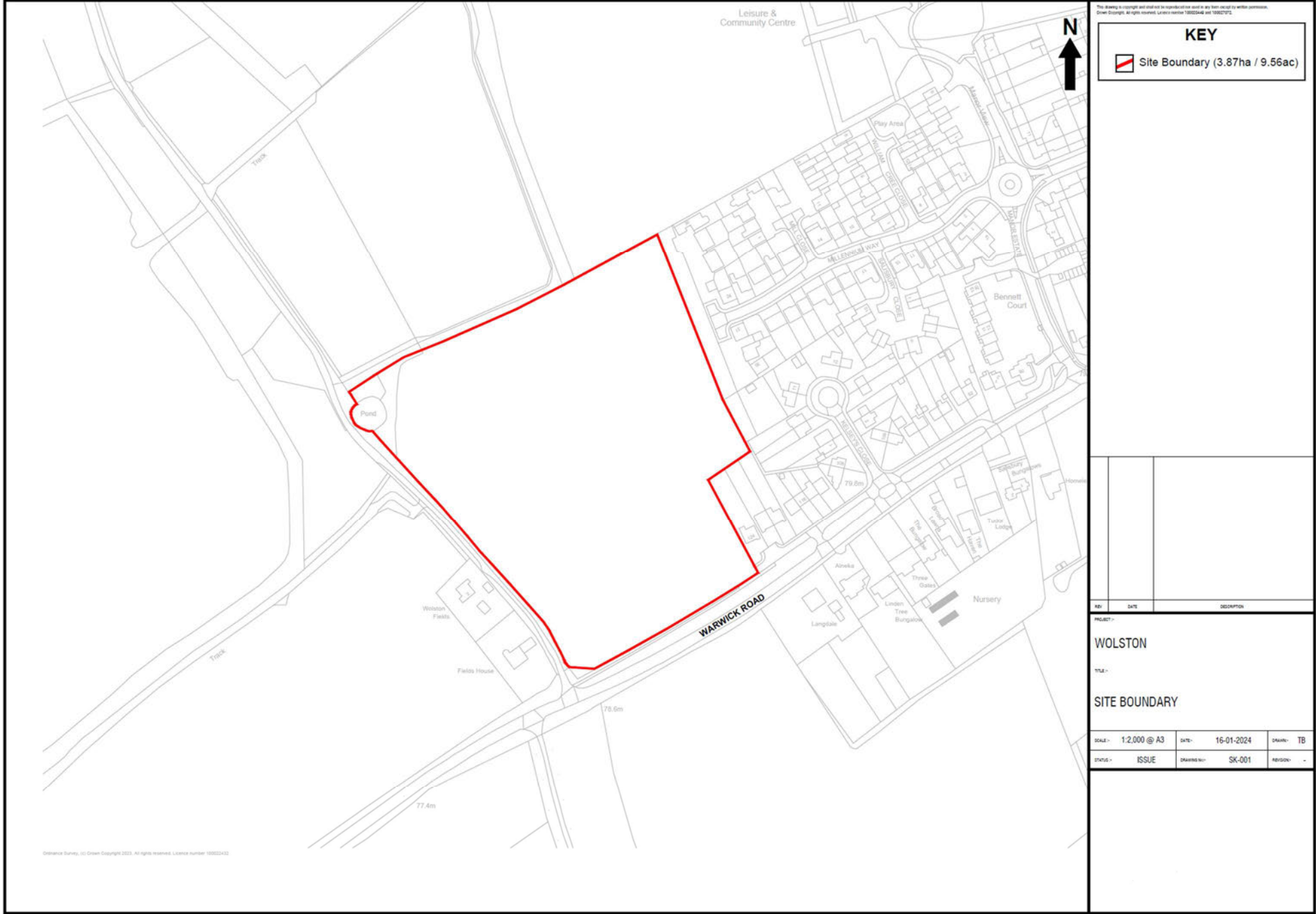
‘The current distinction between Main Rural Settlements and Rural Villages should be retained, with the former sitting above the latter in the settlement hierarchy on the basis that they are more sustainable locations.’

- 2.7 Main Rural Settlements play an important role locally and the settlement hierarchy is intended to support the sustainability and maintenance of existing services, such as schools, by enabling development which will support the local community.
- 2.8 In the Sustainability Appraisal (March 2025), consideration is given to the Rural Sustainability Study (2025) which ranks the sustainability of villages - scored by access to services, public transport and the internet.
- 2.9 Dunchurch has comfortably the best overall score, followed by Binley Woods and Wolston, whilst Wolvey has the lowest overall score. Despite this analysis, the residential allocations in Wolvey amount to 710 dwellings, which is the highest amount of housing development proportionally compared to the other settlements identified for growth in Policy S6 (Residential Allocations).
- 2.10 It is hence considered that the distribution of housing growth should be adjusted to take account of the relative sustainability credentials of settlements as has been established in the Council’s own evidence base documents supporting the plan preparation.
- 2.11 Wolston is one of the Main Rural Settlements in the Borough and comprises the third-most sustainable settlement in the Rural Sustainability Study (2025). The village contains numerous services and facilities including a leisure and community centre, a library, GP, pubs, a convenience store and primary school.
- 2.12 Wolston is clearly a sustainable location to accommodate housing growth in consideration of:
 - i. The pressing need for additional housing within Rugby Borough;
 - ii. The limited ability of Rugby Town to accommodate further growth, considering the maximisation of housing delivery on the urban edge of Rugby as part of the adopted Local Plan;
 - iii. The fact that Wolston comprises a Main Rural Settlement and thus comprises one of the most sustainable settlements in the borough but has not been significantly extended as part of the adopted Local Plan. Indeed, the only allocation in the village for 15 houses has yet to be developed.
- 2.13 However, as has been established, the only residential allocation in Wolston is for 15 houses.
- 2.14 In our submission, restricting growth in Wolston is a wasted opportunity to deliver housing in a sustainable settlement with good access to services, public transport and the internet.

3.0 CONCLUSIONS

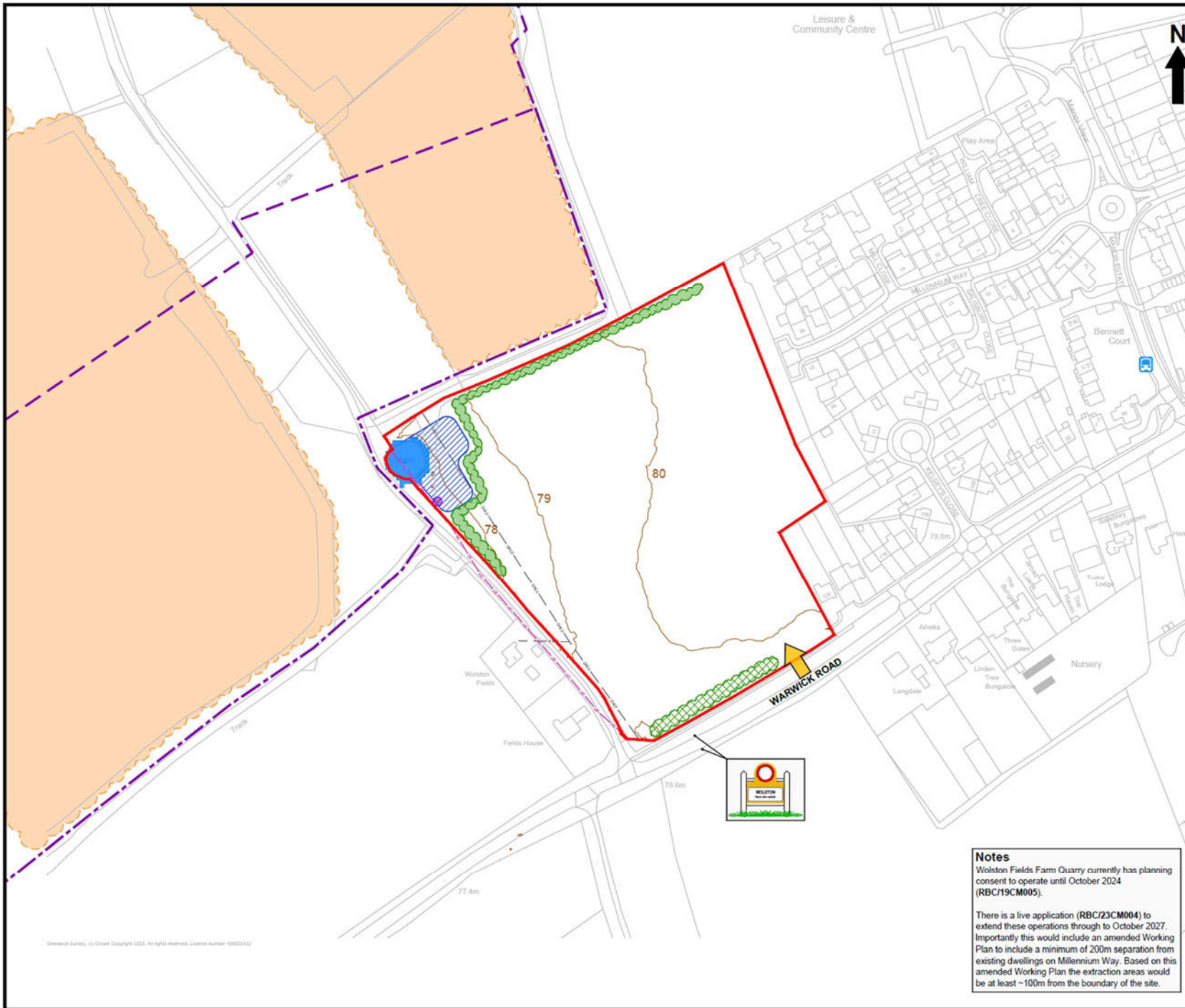
- 3.1 The promotion site would be well connected to the built-up area of Wolston, a village with many local services, and would constitute sustainable development.
- 3.2 The pursuit of sustainable development has three dimensions. This proposed development will contribute to the:
1. Economic dimension:
 - Boost the local economy in terms of employment during construction.
 - Benefits to existing services in the local area.
 2. Social dimension:
 - Providing housing to meet identified needs.
 - Providing high quality mix of residential accommodation.
 - Sustainable location for housing.
 - Provide a safe pedestrian and cycle environment within the development.
 - Providing appropriate open spaces within the development.
 3. Environmental dimension:
 - Enhancement of the landscape with increased landscaping and public open space provision.
 - Enhancement and preservation of existing biodiversity habitats located within and adjacent to the site.
- 3.3 There are no environmental or technical constraints that will prevent a site allocation being deliverable should the Council conclude that exceptional circumstances exist to justify changes to Green Belt boundaries to deliver residential development that will significantly assist in meeting Rugby's identified housing need.
- 3.4 It is submitted that the planning advantage in the overall public interest lies firmly in favour of allocating the site for residential development as part of a mix of planning allocations to deliver housing needed in the Borough.

Appendix 1 – Site Location Plan



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PROJECT: WOLSTON		
TITLE: SITE BOUNDARY		
SCALE: 1:2,000 @ A3	DATE: 16-01-2024	DRAWN: TB
STATUS: ISSUE	DRAWING NO: SK-001	REVISION: -

Appendix 2 – Constraints and Opportunities Plan



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KEY

- Site Boundary (3.87ha / 9.56ac)
- Constraints**
 - Contours (1m, LiDAR)
 - Public Right of Way
 - Public Right of Way - Temporary
 - Low Voltage Overhead Line
 - BT Openreach Overhead Line
 - Surface Water Flood Risk
≥0.1% annual chance
 - Location of Historic Borehole
Groundwater not encountered at 4.5m depth
 - Wolston Fields Farm Quarry
Indicative consented extraction areas, see Notes
- Opportunities**
 - Potential All Modes Access
 - Potential Village Gateway
 - Indicative SuDS
Extension of existing pond
 - Existing Bus Stop
Manor Road, no. 86 service to Rugby and Coventry
 - Indicative Landscape Buffer
 - Indicative Tree & Hedge Planting

REV	DATE	DESCRIPTION
PROJECT -		
WOLSTON		
TITLE -		
CONSTRAINTS & OPPORTUNITIES PLAN		
SCALE -	1:2,000 @ A3	DATE - 16-01-2024
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Notes

Wolston Fields Farm Quarry currently has planning consent to operate until October 2024 (RBC/19CM005).

There is a live application (RBC/23CM004) to extend these operations through to October 2027. Importantly this would include an amended Working Plan to include a minimum of 200m separation from existing dwellings on Millennium Way. Based on this amended Working Plan the extraction areas would be at least ~100m from the boundary of the site.

Appendix 3 – Review of Primary School Capacity in Wolston

Review of Primary School Capacity in Wolston

Catesby Estates

May 2025

- 1. Rugby Borough Council (RBC) is currently consulting on Preferred Options for its new Local Plan¹. It is proposing to allocate only a single site for residential development in the village of Wolston, specifically at Dyers Lane, and anticipates that this will accommodate either 15 self-build plots or specialist housing for older people². It has cited ‘primary school capacity’ as a ‘major issue’ restricting further allocations, stating that:

“...there is no capacity at the [local] school and likely no potential for expansion, such that directing growth to the village would mean that children need to travel to primary school at Ryton-on-Dunsmore or Binley Woods”³

- 2. Turley has been commissioned by Catesby Estates to review this position, and consider whether there could indeed be capacity to absorb any demand for primary school places that would be generated through the development of around 80 new homes on land that it is promoting on Warwick Road (‘the subject site’).

Estimating scale of additional demand

- 3. Warwickshire County Council (WCC) – in its role as the Local Education Authority (LEA) – has an established method of estimating the demand for school places generated by new housing development⁴. This suggests that a scheme of around 80 new homes, all assumed to contain at least two bedrooms – where smaller homes would be discounted – could generate circa 27 children in need of primary school places.

Table 1: Estimating Pupil Yield for Residential Scheme in Rugby Borough

Homes	Pupil yield per academic year per 100 dwellings	Multiplying over 7 academic years (R-Y6)	Number of children needing primary school places
80	4.86	34.02	27.22

Source: WCC; Turley analysis

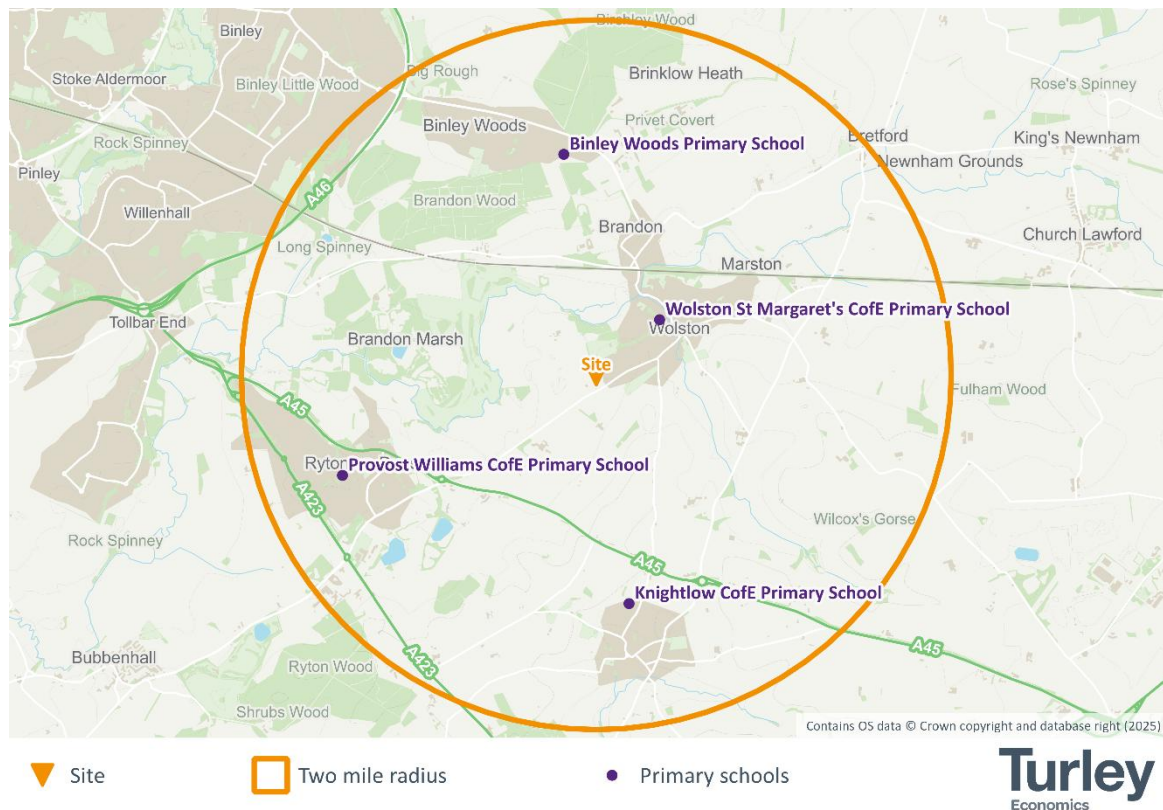
¹ Rugby Borough Council (March 2025) Rugby Borough Local Plan: Preferred Options Consultation Document
² Ibid, p112
³ AECOM (March 2025) Sustainability Appraisal of the Rugby Borough Local Plan: Interim SA Report, paragraph 5.4.67
⁴ Warwickshire County Council (April 2025) Developers’ Guide to Contributions for Education and Early Years Provision, p6



Introducing nearby provision

4. Wolston is home to a single primary school, namely St Margaret's Church of England Primary School. There are though a further three within a two-mile radius of the subject site, with this distance being significant in the context of the 1996 Education Act which stipulates that this is the furthest a child of primary school age could be reasonably expected to travel.

Figure 1: Nearby Primary Schools



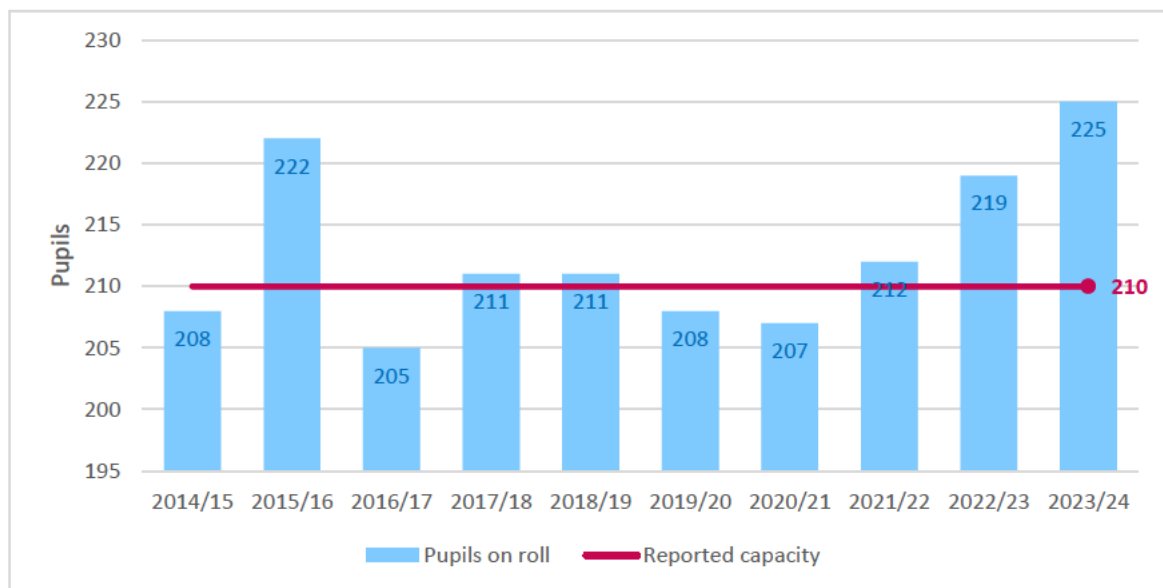
Capacity of nearby schools

5. RBC is correct in stating that there is currently no spare capacity at Wolston St Margaret's Church of England Primary School, as the only school in the village. It is reportedly able to accommodate 210 pupils but had 225 in the last reported academic year⁵ (2023/24). While this represented the largest pupil roll for at least a decade, it is consistent with a longer-term trend with the school having accommodated an average of 211 pupils over the prior nine years, almost exactly aligning with its reported capacity⁶.

Figure 2: Pupils Enrolled at Wolston St Margaret's Church of England Primary School

⁵ Department for Education (June 2024) Schools, pupils and their characteristics

⁶ It is unclear why, or indeed actually whether, pupil numbers spiked in 2015/16



Source: Department for Education; Turley analysis

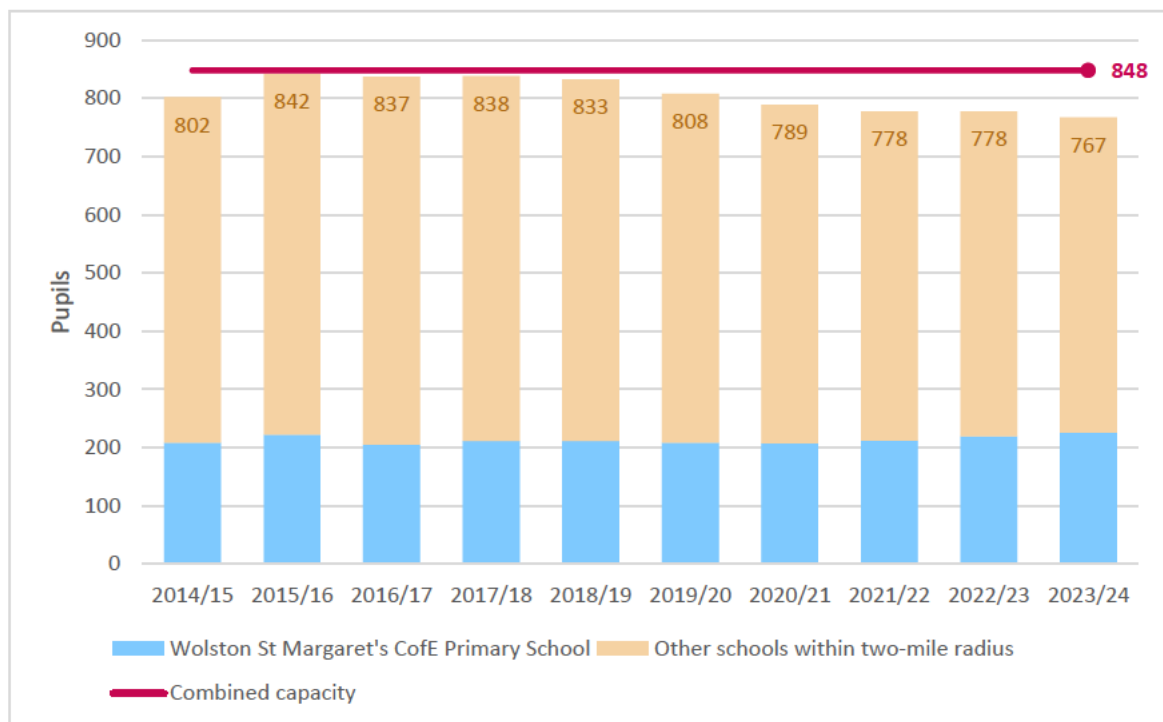
6. This interestingly contrasts with the trend in other nearby schools, all identified at the earlier Figure 1 as being within a two-mile radius of the subject site. These schools were collectively accommodating 632 children as recently as 2016/17 but this has since fallen every year, to the point where 14% fewer children were enrolled in the last one reported⁷ (2023/24). This has served to offset the rise seen at Wolston St Margaret's if the schools are treated collectively, with the combined pupil roll falling and now standing circa 81 pupils below their collective capacity. Equating to nearly 10% of all places, this is approaching double the 5% surplus that WCC seeks to maintain to 'support operational flexibility...and facilitate parental choice'⁸. It has also more than doubled in size in the space of only five years⁹.

Figure 3: Pupils Enrolled at Nearby Primary Schools

⁷ School-level data is tabulated at **Appendix 1**

⁸ Warwickshire County Council (April 2025) Developers' Guide to Contributions for Education and Early Years Provision, p7

⁹ Circa 40 unfilled places were reported in 2019/20



Source: Department for Education; Turley analysis

7. This is naturally subject to change, even if it is extremely difficult – and arguably impossible – to robustly project demand over such a long period as is being covered by the new Local Plan, which will look to 2045¹⁰. WCC does though produce, and each year update, forecasts that estimate pupil numbers up to five years into the future. These are based on ‘GP registration data, existing number of pupils on school rolls, housing development approved at the time of publication, historical parental preference trends and other factors likely to affect admissions to particular schools’¹¹.
8. Its latest forecasts – published in January¹² – suggest that demand will continue to fall in the “Rugby Rural” planning area that contains all of the nearby schools, plus one other¹³. They focus exclusively on admissions into reception, complicating any direct comparison with the analysis presented above, but they clearly anticipate five straight years in which fewer children will be enrolled than could be accommodated even with approved housing development being factored in. This suggests that there would technically be capacity for the schools to admit up to 203 extra children into reception over this five-year period to 2029, and up to 169 even if a surplus of 5% was maintained in line with WCC’s policy.

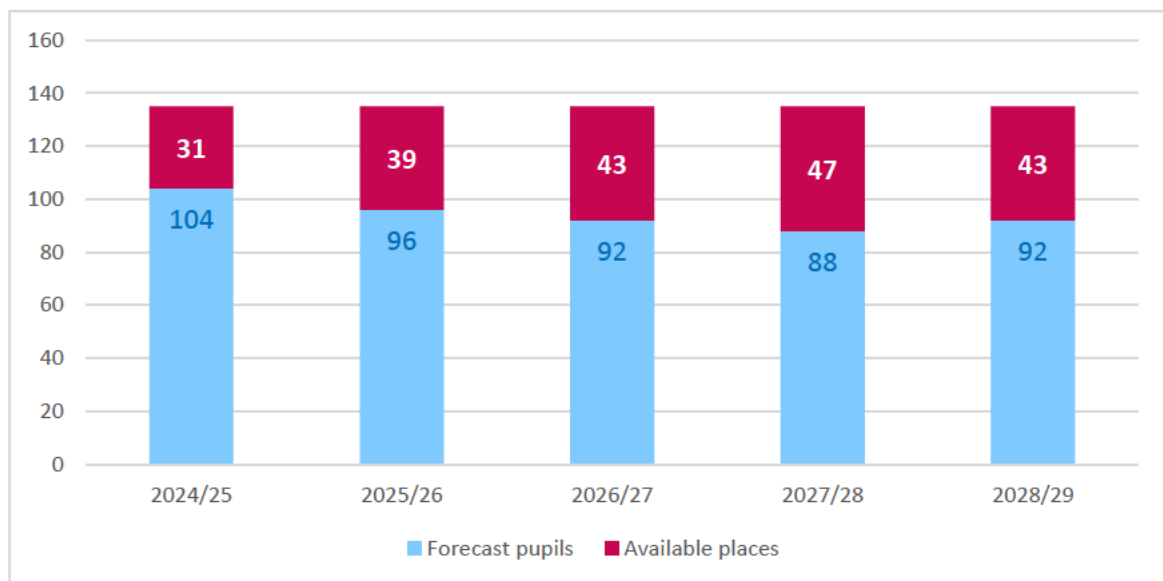
Figure 4: Forecast Surplus in Rugby Rural Planning Area (2024-29)

¹⁰ This particularly reflects uncertainties around future birth rates

¹¹ Warwickshire County Council (April 2025) Developers’ Guide to Contributions for Education and Early Years Provision, p7

¹² Warwickshire County Council (January 2025) Annual Education Sufficiency Update Ages 0-25: Appendices

¹³ Our Lady’s Catholic Primary School, Princethorpe – see **Appendix 1** for details on the capacity of this school



Source: WCC

Accessibility of nearby schools

9. Based on the above, there appears to exist – and is forecast to remain – surplus capacity in nearby schools that could theoretically accommodate any demand that would be generated by up to 80 new homes in Wolston, in the event that there are insufficient places at Wolston St Margaret's and it cannot be expanded (RBC having claimed, with no apparent evidence, that there is '*likely no potential*' to do so).
10. There is though the issue of how accessible these other schools actually are from the subject site, as while they are all within a two-mile radius this does not necessarily mean that there is a safe walking route to each one. Indeed, further investigation suggests that it would be challenging to claim that a child could safely walk to *any* of the other nearby schools, as:
 - The closest, **Provost Williams CofE Primary School**, would be less than two miles away on foot but the journey would unavoidably include Warwick Road which lacks street lighting and has a very narrow pavement in places;
 - The route to **Knightlow CofE Primary School** would only be around two miles if a child was to walk down Stretton Road – which has no pavement – and then traverse London Road (A45) across a designated but uncontrolled crossing; and
 - The route to **Binley Woods Primary School** would be continuously paved but slightly longer than two miles, requiring a walk through Wolston and Brandon onto Rugby Road (A428).
11. While this does limit the prospect of these schools themselves helping to accommodate demand generated by the subject site, they could still form an important part of a solution. If Wolston St Margaret's is currently admitting children that live within a reasonable distance of these other schools – and cannot expand to keep doing so – there is a scenario in which the other schools would accommodate at least some such children in future, where WCC's allocations policy would

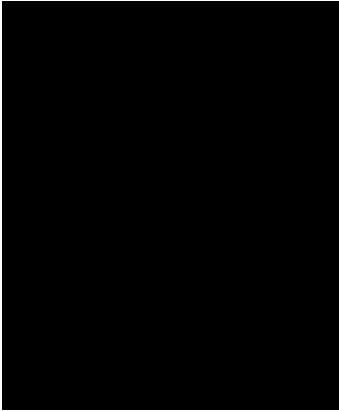
likely give children living on the subject site greater priority¹⁴. This would arguably even benefit those nearby schools that are seeing pupil numbers fall – like Provost Williams and Binley Woods – by unlocking a new source of demand and thus helping to sustain them into the future.

12. RBC is strongly advised to consider this scenario further, liaising with WCC to obtain more detailed admissions data than is publicly reported and so determine the extent to which Wolston St Margaret's currently admits children that could in future be enrolled at undersubscribed schools closer to their homes. It is also advised to explore the availability of forecasts for Wolston St Margaret's itself, as opposed to the wider planning area, so as to understand whether pupil numbers are indeed likely to fall in the coming years. Only with this information can RBC make an informed judgement on whether Wolston can accommodate new housing development over the period to 2045, having arguably been premature and influenced only by *current* trends in claiming that it cannot.

Summary and conclusions

13. RBC is proposing to severely limit the number of residential allocations that it makes in the village of Wolston, through its new Local Plan, having expressed concern about the capacity of the local primary school.
14. This appears to have been based on an overly simplistic interpretation of the current position. While the local school is indeed operating beyond its reported capacity, and has generally done so throughout the last decade, this will not necessarily remain the case over the period to 2045. It is one of five schools collectively forecast to see admissions drop over the next five years alone.
15. Several of the other nearby schools are already seeing pupil numbers fall, leaving a growing number of unfilled places. While a lack of safe walking routes could prevent them from accommodating demand generated by new housing in Wolston, they could still help to meet demand that has *historically* been met by its local school, some of which could well have come from families living closer to them. This would free up places for new residents of the village, including up to 27 children that could live in circa 80 homes proposed on the site being promoted by Catesby Estates. Even this would not be necessary if the school could be expanded, with RBC having seemingly not given proper consideration to this potential solution.
16. RBC is advised to not only explore the feasibility of expansion but also work with WCC to determine the extent to which Wolston's primary school admits children that could in future be enrolled at undersubscribed schools closer to their homes. It should also confirm the availability of forecasts for the school itself, to ascertain whether pupil numbers are likely to reduce from their current level. Only with this information can it make an informed judgement on whether Wolston can accommodate new housing development over the period to 2045, having arguably been premature and influenced only by current trends in claiming that it cannot.

¹⁴ Warwickshire County Council (2024) Admission Arrangements 2025/26 for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools. This confirms that children living in a school's "priority area" will be given greater priority than those living elsewhere, even if a sibling is already enrolled

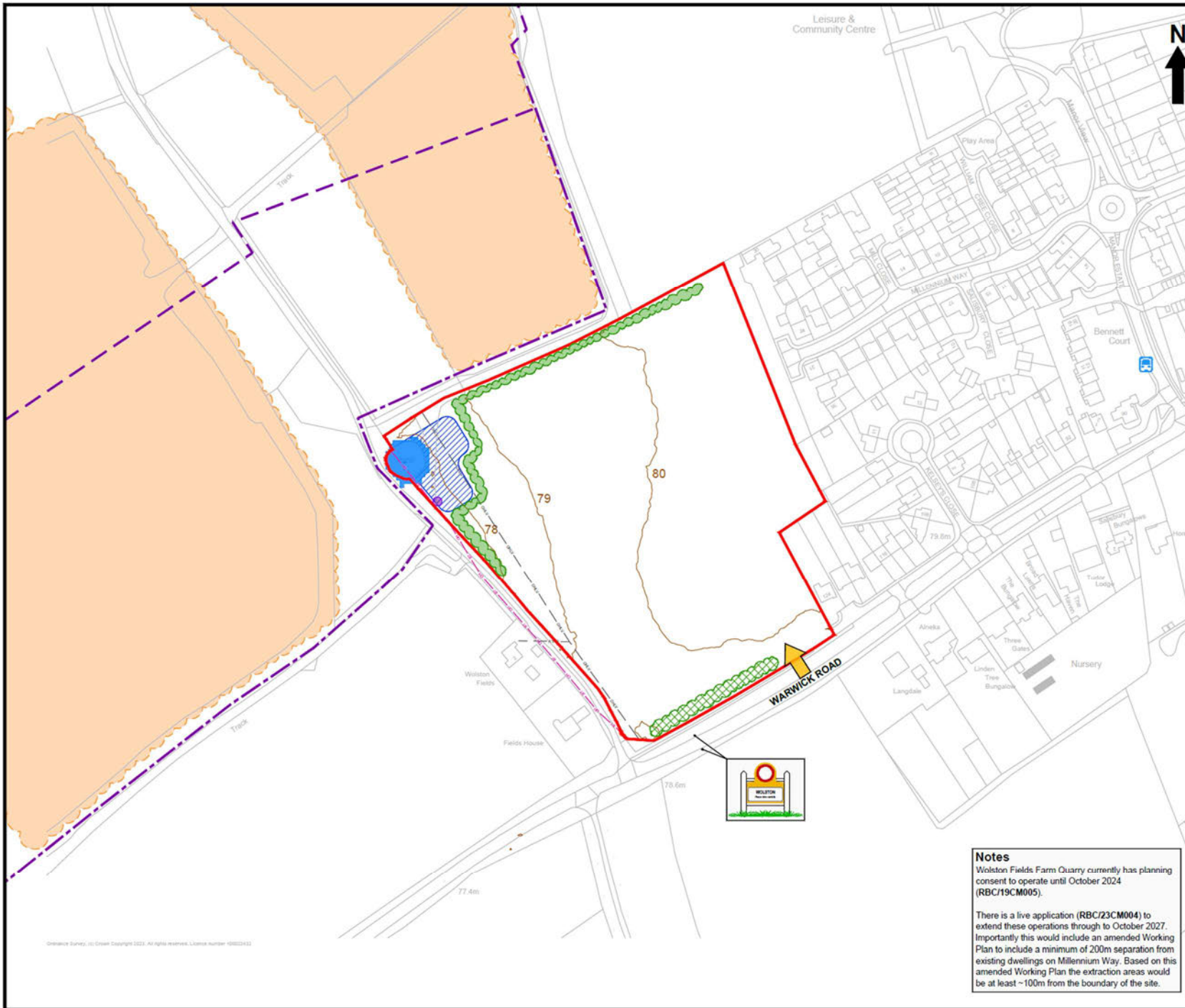


Appendix 1: Pupil Numbers at Nearby Schools

Closest to subject site →				
	Provost Williams CofE Primary School	Knightlow CofE Primary School	Binley Woods Primary School	Our Lady Catholic Primary School, Princethorpe ¹⁵
Distance ¹⁶	1.8 miles	2.0 miles	2.1 miles	3.5 miles
Capacity	210	218	210	119
2014/15	183	211	200	121
2015/16	208	211	201	121
2016/17	217	211	204	120
2017/18	208	215	204	120
2018/19	200	221	201	122
2019/20	180	218	202	112
2020/21	181	213	188	105
2021/22	173	218	175	109
2022/23	162	218	179	108
2023/24	138	219	185	104
Unfilled places	72	0	25	15
%	34%	0%	12%	13%
KEY	Over capacity		Under capacity	

¹⁵ Beyond a two-mile radius but part of the “Rugby Rural” planning area defined by WCC

¹⁶ Approximate walking distance, calculated using Google Maps



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KEY

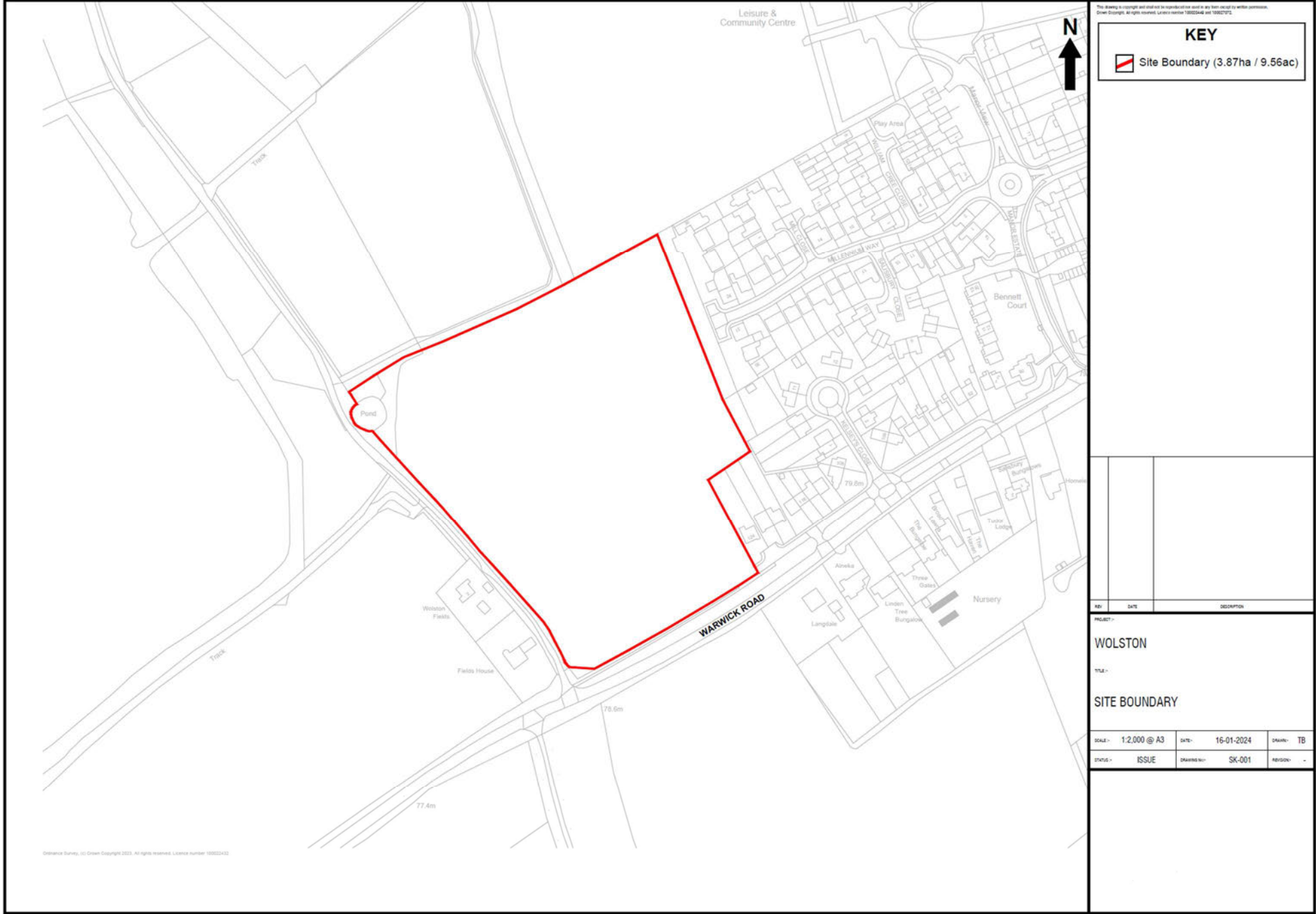
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 - Location of Historic Borehole
Groundwater not encountered at 4.5m depth
 - Wolston Fields Farm Quarry
Indicative consented extraction areas, see Notes
- Opportunities**
 - Potential All Modes Access
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 - Existing Bus Stop
Manor Road, no. 86 service to Rugby and Coventry
 - Indicative Landscape Buffer
 - Indicative Tree & Hedge Planting

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KEY

Site Boundary (3.87ha / 9.56ac)

PROJECT		DATE	DESCRIPTION
WOLSTON			
TITLE			
SITE BOUNDARY			
SCALE	1:2,000 @ A3	DATE	16-01-2024
STATUS	ISSUE	DRAWING NO	SK-001
		DESIGNER	TB

Review of Primary School Capacity in Wolston

Catesby Estates

May 2025

- 1. Rugby Borough Council (RBC) is currently consulting on Preferred Options for its new Local Plan¹. It is proposing to allocate only a single site for residential development in the village of Wolston, specifically at Dyers Lane, and anticipates that this will accommodate either 15 self-build plots or specialist housing for older people². It has cited ‘primary school capacity’ as a ‘major issue’ restricting further allocations, stating that:

“...there is no capacity at the [local] school and likely no potential for expansion, such that directing growth to the village would mean that children need to travel to primary school at Ryton-on-Dunsmore or Binley Woods”³

- 2. Turley has been commissioned by Catesby Estates to review this position, and consider whether there could indeed be capacity to absorb any demand for primary school places that would be generated through the development of around 80 new homes on land that it is promoting on Warwick Road (‘the subject site’).

Estimating scale of additional demand

- 3. Warwickshire County Council (WCC) – in its role as the Local Education Authority (LEA) – has an established method of estimating the demand for school places generated by new housing development⁴. This suggests that a scheme of around 80 new homes, all assumed to contain at least two bedrooms – where smaller homes would be discounted – could generate circa 27 children in need of primary school places.

Table 1: Estimating Pupil Yield for Residential Scheme in Rugby Borough

Homes	Pupil yield per academic year per 100 dwellings	Multiplying over 7 academic years (R-Y6)	Number of children needing primary school places
80	4.86	34.02	27.22

Source: WCC; Turley analysis

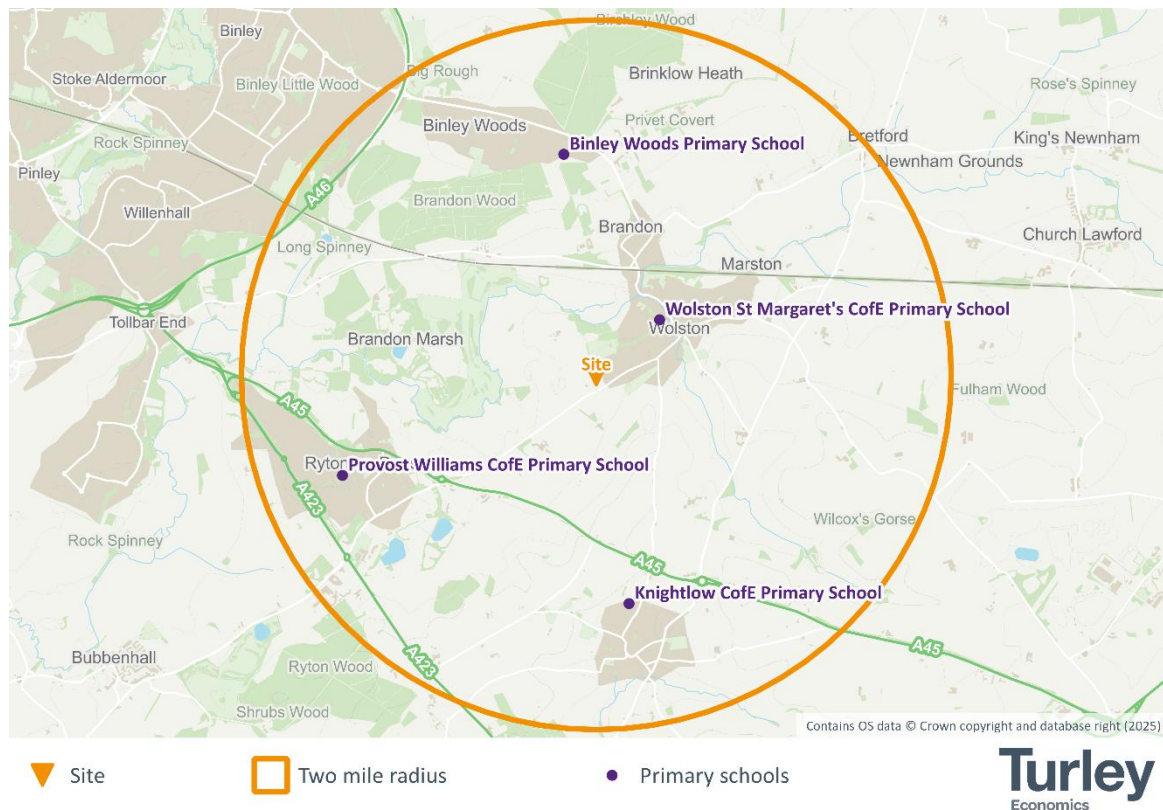
¹ Rugby Borough Council (March 2025) Rugby Borough Local Plan: Preferred Options Consultation Document
² Ibid, p112
³ AECOM (March 2025) Sustainability Appraisal of the Rugby Borough Local Plan: Interim SA Report, paragraph 5.4.67
⁴ Warwickshire County Council (April 2025) Developers’ Guide to Contributions for Education and Early Years Provision, p6



Introducing nearby provision

4. Wolston is home to a single primary school, namely St Margaret's Church of England Primary School. There are though a further three within a two-mile radius of the subject site, with this distance being significant in the context of the 1996 Education Act which stipulates that this is the furthest a child of primary school age could be reasonably expected to travel.

Figure 1: Nearby Primary Schools



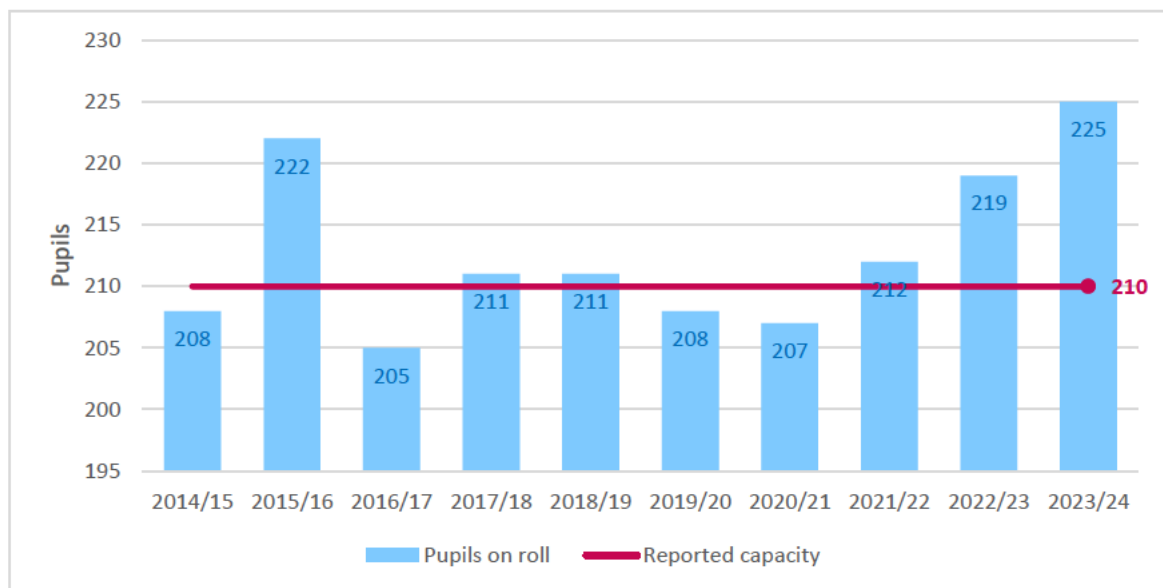
Capacity of nearby schools

5. RBC is correct in stating that there is currently no spare capacity at Wolston St Margaret's Church of England Primary School, as the only school in the village. It is reportedly able to accommodate 210 pupils but had 225 in the last reported academic year⁵ (2023/24). While this represented the largest pupil roll for at least a decade, it is consistent with a longer-term trend with the school having accommodated an average of 211 pupils over the prior nine years, almost exactly aligning with its reported capacity⁶.

Figure 2: Pupils Enrolled at Wolston St Margaret's Church of England Primary School

⁵ Department for Education (June 2024) Schools, pupils and their characteristics

⁶ It is unclear why, or indeed actually whether, pupil numbers spiked in 2015/16



Source: Department for Education; Turley analysis

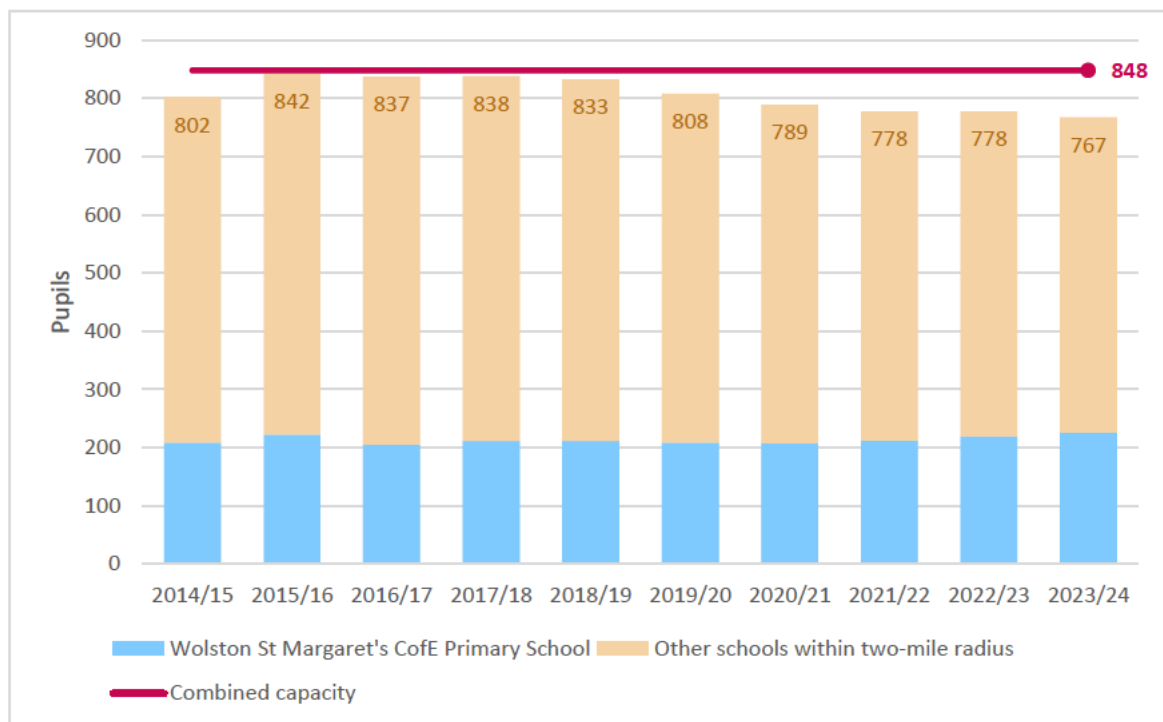
6. This interestingly contrasts with the trend in other nearby schools, all identified at the earlier Figure 1 as being within a two-mile radius of the subject site. These schools were collectively accommodating 632 children as recently as 2016/17 but this has since fallen every year, to the point where 14% fewer children were enrolled in the last one reported⁷ (2023/24). This has served to offset the rise seen at Wolston St Margaret's if the schools are treated collectively, with the combined pupil roll falling and now standing circa 81 pupils below their collective capacity. Equating to nearly 10% of all places, this is approaching double the 5% surplus that WCC seeks to maintain to 'support operational flexibility...and facilitate parental choice'⁸. It has also more than doubled in size in the space of only five years⁹.

Figure 3: Pupils Enrolled at Nearby Primary Schools

⁷ School-level data is tabulated at **Appendix 1**

⁸ Warwickshire County Council (April 2025) Developers' Guide to Contributions for Education and Early Years Provision, p7

⁹ Circa 40 unfilled places were reported in 2019/20



Source: Department for Education; Turley analysis

7. This is naturally subject to change, even if it is extremely difficult – and arguably impossible – to robustly project demand over such a long period as is being covered by the new Local Plan, which will look to 2045¹⁰. WCC does though produce, and each year update, forecasts that estimate pupil numbers up to five years into the future. These are based on ‘GP registration data, existing number of pupils on school rolls, housing development approved at the time of publication, historical parental preference trends and other factors likely to affect admissions to particular schools’¹¹.
8. Its latest forecasts – published in January¹² – suggest that demand will continue to fall in the “Rugby Rural” planning area that contains all of the nearby schools, plus one other¹³. They focus exclusively on admissions into reception, complicating any direct comparison with the analysis presented above, but they clearly anticipate five straight years in which fewer children will be enrolled than could be accommodated even with approved housing development being factored in. This suggests that there would technically be capacity for the schools to admit up to 203 extra children into reception over this five-year period to 2029, and up to 169 even if a surplus of 5% was maintained in line with WCC’s policy.

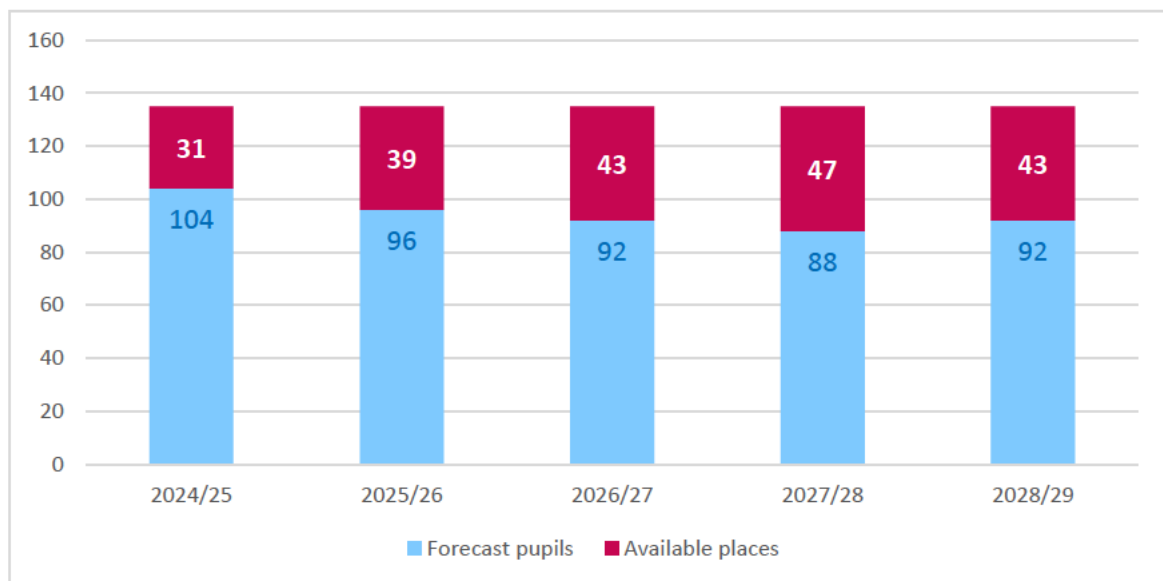
Figure 4: Forecast Surplus in Rugby Rural Planning Area (2024-29)

¹⁰ This particularly reflects uncertainties around future birth rates

¹¹ Warwickshire County Council (April 2025) Developers’ Guide to Contributions for Education and Early Years Provision, p7

¹² Warwickshire County Council (January 2025) Annual Education Sufficiency Update Ages 0-25: Appendices

¹³ Our Lady’s Catholic Primary School, Princethorpe – see **Appendix 1** for details on the capacity of this school



Source: WCC

Accessibility of nearby schools

9. Based on the above, there appears to exist – and is forecast to remain – surplus capacity in nearby schools that could theoretically accommodate any demand that would be generated by up to 80 new homes in Wolston, in the event that there are insufficient places at Wolston St Margaret's and it cannot be expanded (RBC having claimed, with no apparent evidence, that there is '*likely no potential*' to do so).
10. There is though the issue of how accessible these other schools actually are from the subject site, as while they are all within a two-mile radius this does not necessarily mean that there is a safe walking route to each one. Indeed, further investigation suggests that it would be challenging to claim that a child could safely walk to *any* of the other nearby schools, as:
 - The closest, **Provost Williams CofE Primary School**, would be less than two miles away on foot but the journey would unavoidably include Warwick Road which lacks street lighting and has a very narrow pavement in places;
 - The route to **Knightlow CofE Primary School** would only be around two miles if a child was to walk down Stretton Road – which has no pavement – and then traverse London Road (A45) across a designated but uncontrolled crossing; and
 - The route to **Binley Woods Primary School** would be continuously paved but slightly longer than two miles, requiring a walk through Wolston and Brandon onto Rugby Road (A428).
11. While this does limit the prospect of these schools themselves helping to accommodate demand generated by the subject site, they could still form an important part of a solution. If Wolston St Margaret's is currently admitting children that live within a reasonable distance of these other schools – and cannot expand to keep doing so – there is a scenario in which the other schools would accommodate at least some such children in future, where WCC's allocations policy would

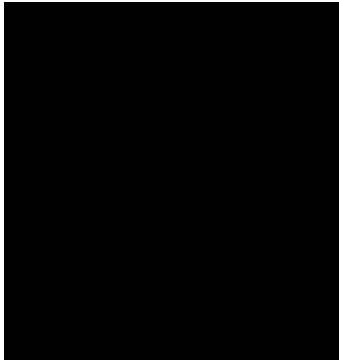
likely give children living on the subject site greater priority¹⁴. This would arguably even benefit those nearby schools that are seeing pupil numbers fall – like Provost Williams and Binley Woods – by unlocking a new source of demand and thus helping to sustain them into the future.

12. RBC is strongly advised to consider this scenario further, liaising with WCC to obtain more detailed admissions data than is publicly reported and so determine the extent to which Wolston St Margaret's currently admits children that could in future be enrolled at undersubscribed schools closer to their homes. It is also advised to explore the availability of forecasts for Wolston St Margaret's itself, as opposed to the wider planning area, so as to understand whether pupil numbers are indeed likely to fall in the coming years. Only with this information can RBC make an informed judgement on whether Wolston can accommodate new housing development over the period to 2045, having arguably been premature and influenced only by *current* trends in claiming that it cannot.

Summary and conclusions

13. RBC is proposing to severely limit the number of residential allocations that it makes in the village of Wolston, through its new Local Plan, having expressed concern about the capacity of the local primary school.
14. This appears to have been based on an overly simplistic interpretation of the current position. While the local school is indeed operating beyond its reported capacity, and has generally done so throughout the last decade, this will not necessarily remain the case over the period to 2045. It is one of five schools collectively forecast to see admissions drop over the next five years alone.
15. Several of the other nearby schools are already seeing pupil numbers fall, leaving a growing number of unfilled places. While a lack of safe walking routes could prevent them from accommodating demand generated by new housing in Wolston, they could still help to meet demand that has *historically* been met by its local school, some of which could well have come from families living closer to them. This would free up places for new residents of the village, including up to 27 children that could live in circa 80 homes proposed on the site being promoted by Catesby Estates. Even this would not be necessary if the school could be expanded, with RBC having seemingly not given proper consideration to this potential solution.
16. RBC is advised to not only explore the feasibility of expansion but also work with WCC to determine the extent to which Wolston's primary school admits children that could in future be enrolled at undersubscribed schools closer to their homes. It should also confirm the availability of forecasts for the school itself, to ascertain whether pupil numbers are likely to reduce from their current level. Only with this information can it make an informed judgement on whether Wolston can accommodate new housing development over the period to 2045, having arguably been premature and influenced only by current trends in claiming that it cannot.

¹⁴ Warwickshire County Council (2024) Admission Arrangements 2025/26 for Community and Voluntary Controlled Schools. This confirms that children living in a school's "priority area" will be given greater priority than those living elsewhere, even if a sibling is already enrolled



Appendix 1: Pupil Numbers at Nearby Schools

Closest to subject site →				
	Provost Williams CofE Primary School	Knightlow CofE Primary School	Binley Woods Primary School	Our Lady Catholic Primary School, Princethorpe ¹⁵
Distance ¹⁶	1.8 miles	2.0 miles	2.1 miles	3.5 miles
Capacity	210	218	210	119
2014/15	183	211	200	121
2015/16	208	211	201	121
2016/17	217	211	204	120
2017/18	208	215	204	120
2018/19	200	221	201	122
2019/20	180	218	202	112
2020/21	181	213	188	105
2021/22	173	218	175	109
2022/23	162	218	179	108
2023/24	138	219	185	104
Unfilled places	72	0	25	15
%	34%	0%	12%	13%
KEY	Over capacity		Under capacity	

¹⁵ Beyond a two-mile radius but part of the “Rugby Rural” planning area defined by WCC

¹⁶ Approximate walking distance, calculated using Google Maps