CHFIELDS

Newton Manor Lane, Rugby Rugby Local Plan Review -Preferred Options Consultation (Regulation 18)

Representations on behalf of Latimer Developments Ltd

Rugby Borough Council

19 May 2025



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Appendices

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1.0 Introduction

- These representations to the Rugby Borough Local Plan: Preferred Option Consultation Document (March 2025) ("PO") have been prepared by Lichfields on behalf of Latimer Developments Ltd ("Latimer").
- 1.2 We focus on the strategic matters, housing allocations and relevant development management policies that are contained within the PO consultation document and relate specifically to Latimer's land interests at Newton Manor Lane, Rugby ("the Site").
- Importantly, Latimer welcomes the Council allocating the Site in the PO and seeks to work constructively with the Council as it progresses towards the submission and adoption of the Local Plan Review and trusts that the comments contained within this document will assist Officers in this regard.

Plan Making To Date

- On 14th December 2022, the Council decided to go ahead with a full update of the Local Plan policies. The Issues and Options consultation and 'Call for Sites' exercise to inform their Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) was undertaken in late 2023/early 2024.
- The Council also published an updated Local Development Scheme (LDS) in October 2024. This sets out the timetable for progressing the new Local to adoption. Following the current PO (Regulation 18) consultation, Pre-submission consultation is due in January 2026, submission for examination in June 2026 and adoption by the middle of 2027.

Land at Newton Manor Lane, Rugby

- Latimer has been promoting land at Newton Manor Lane, Rugby for landscape-led residential development since the Local Plan review was commenced, and as noted above, this site has been included with the PO consultation as a draft allocation for residential development of up to 240 dwellings (Site reference: 59).
- Latimer's vision for the site has been informed by analysis of local context and a focus on sustainability and health and wellbeing with the creation of significant amounts of attractive and publicly accessible green space, SuDS and biodiversity enhancements. Importantly, Latimer has the capability and expertise to deliver this vision for the site and is committed to working constructively with the Council and local stakeholders through the plan-making process.
- 1.8 The draft allocation at Newton Manor Lane site alongside the draft allocation of land for a secondary school under Policy I6, which is also land under Latimer's control. A Vision Document and Concept Masterplan were previously produced for the residential land, underpinned by some baseline technical work. The Concept Masterplan has been updated to include the adjoining secondary school land and is included at **Appendix 1**. Technical work, including updated ecology surveys, is currently ongoing to inform the evolving design of the site.

Structure

- 1.9 These representations are structured around and respond to the relevant questions within the Questionnaire on Rugby's Preferred Options Consultation Document and the policies to which the questions relate.
 - Strategy for homes and residential allocations (policies S2 and S6)
 - Climate
 - Environment
 - Housing
 - Design
 - Infrastructure

Areas of Response

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 Latimer **strongly agree** with and support the more dispersed overall spatial strategy for new homes proposed within the PO as set out in Draft Policy S2: Strategy for Homes.
- Latimer also **strongly agree** and support the Council allocating land at Newton Manor Lane for circa 240 dwellings within Draft Policy S6: Residential Allocations as part of the more dispersed spatial strategy for the Borough within the PO.

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?

LHN and Housing Requirement Figure

- 2.3 Draft Policy S2: Strategy for Homes states, "To meet our future need for housing, 12,978 new homes will be delivered in the period 2024-2045 (618 each year)". This aligns with the Rugby's LHN figure in accordance with the Government's standard method for calculating housing need published in December 2024. The policy continues to outline the sites and locations where the new homes will be delivered, which totals 14,134 dwellings. This is 9% more than the minimum requirement, providing a buffer, in accordance with NPPF paragraph 78.
- 2.4 Notwithstanding the above, the Council may want to look at providing a buffer of greater than 9% to ensure additional 'headroom' within the Council's proposed supply to accommodate any delays and provide further flexibility. It is typically suggested that 15-20% buffer is good practice, especially where delivery has previously been an identified issue, and is an approach endorsed by Inspectors in the following examples below:

Chelmsford: 18% buffer

South Kesteven: 18% buffer

Harrogate: 25% buffer

South Oxfordshire: 27% buffer

Mansfield: 34% buffer

Guildford: 36% buffer

Chesterfield: 59% buffer

2.5 With regards to Draft Policy S2, it is not considered that there is any justification for setting the housing requirement at a figure below LHN, given the limited nature of constraints affecting the Borough and recognising delivery rates of circa 1,000 dpa over recent years.

- In terms of setting a housing requirement above LHN, it is noted that this should be kept under review as the Local Plan progresses towards Regulation 19 stage, as required by the Planning Practice Guidance (ID: 2a-008 and 2a-009). In this regard, the Standard Method charged in April in accordance with updates to Affordability Ratios and the LHN figure for Rugby Borough is now 625 dpa. The slightly higher LHN will need to be reflected in the Pre-Submission Plan in due course.
- This is particularly pertinent with regards to monitoring any unmet needs emerging from neighbouring areas, primarily Coventry, and considering the need for additional housing allocations to reflect requirements for infrastructure investment and the delivery of accelerated levels of affordable housing in line with NPPF paragraph 67.
- 2.8 Specifically, the Interim SA identifies that there is a high-level case for remaining open to the possibility of higher growth scenarios, relating to affordable housing need. and this is something that the Council should consider further before reaching the Regulation 19 stage. In this regard, the Coventry and Warwickshire HEDNA identified a net affordable housing need of 495 dpa, which is nearly 80% of their overall LHN. Given the likely levels of shortfall identified, the Council should consider this further before reaching the Regulation 19 stage.

Reasonable Alternatives

- 2.9 Under draft Policy S6, the Strategic Urban Extensions (SUEs) at Houlton, South West Rugby and Eden Park allocated as part of the currently adopted Local Plan are being rolled forward and will continue to be built out during the forthcoming plan period, but the departure from this approach with the more dispersed spatial strategy proposed within the PO is welcomed by Latimer.
- 2.10 Notwithstanding this, NPPF para 36b states that for a plan to be found 'sound', it must set out an appropriate strategy, taking account of reasonable alternatives, and be based on proportionate evidence. As such, the Council also needs to robustly test reasonable alternatives for the spatial distribution of the Borough's housing needs through the Sustainability Appraisal [SA] process at an early stage as per the requirements of paragraph 33 of the NPPF, the PPG¹, and Friends of the Earth High Court judgment.
- In accordance with this requirement, the Council have published an Interim SA in March 2025 as part of the PO consultation. It is noted that a full SA report is not yet available, but that it will be published as part of the Proposed Submission version Regulation 19 consultation due to take place in early 2026.
- 2.12 Whilst the Interim SA has not looked at individual site allocations at this stage, a number of alternative growth scenarios to inform the PO spatial strategy have been appraised including those highlighted in the PO consultation questionnaire; the first being land at Lodge Farm for a new village (1,800-2,000 homes by 2045); and the second being land at Cosford as an SUE (1,800-2,000 dwellings by 2045).
- 2.13 The Interim SA rightly notes that Rugby "must be the focus for growth through the Local Plan" by virtue of being the largest settlement within the Borough and the top of the settlement hierarchy. However, it also highlights that Rugby has been subject to very high

levels of committed growth over recent years which will continue into the next plan period with the continued delivery of SUEs at Houlton, South West Rugby and Eden Park.

It is well established that SUEs typically face delivery challenges in terms of infrastructure and delays in commencement, which have been evident in Rugby previously, and in this regard, Latimer supports the departure from this strategy moving forward. NPPF paragraph 73 promotes the development of a good mix of sites and states that, "small and medium sized sites can make an important contribution to meeting housing requirements of an area....and are often built-out relatively quickly."

2.15 With regards to the option of a New Settlement away from Rugby and the allocation of land at Lodge Farm, this option is not supported by Latimer, and it is evident that from the Interim SA that this option should not be pursued within the Local Plan review. Lodge Farm New Settlement was an allocation within the adopted Local Plan but was subsequently removed by the Inspector due to poor accessibility (especially by sustainable transport modes), significant adverse impacts on landscape, and substantial harm to the significance of heritage assets (IR para 127-156). Finally, it was concluded that Lodge Farm was not an appropriate site, that it's allocation was not justified nor an effective response to addressing the needs of Rugby, and that it did not accord with national policy in enabling the delivery of sustainable development.

Latimer support the conclusions of the Interim SA with regard to alternative growth scenarios relating to further SUEs and a new settlement, as the concerns previously raised with options are still relevant and have not changed. It is also evidently the case that a further SUE and/or new settlement are not needed in order for Rugby to deliver its LHN and include a 9% buffer.

It is also important to note that the NPPF shifts the need to consider viability to the planmaking stage, requiring authorities to identify a sufficient supply and mix of sites, taking into account their availability, suitability and likely economic viability (Para 72). The PPG provides further clarity for new settlements, stating that local planning authorities should demonstrate that there is a reasonable prospect that large-scale developments can come forward. In particular, this should include a realistic assessment of the prospect of sites being developed and should engage with infrastructure providers to ensure that the infrastructure requirements are not beyond what could reasonably be considered to be achievable within the planned timescales.

Land at Newton Manor Lane, Rugby (Site Ref: 59)

As previously noted, Latimer has been promoting their land interests at Newton Manor Lane, Rugby (Site ref: 59) as part of the Local Plan review. They welcome the proposed allocation of the site for residential development with land for a secondary school. Latimer consider that the site provides an ideal opportunity to deliver a high-quality, attractive and well-integrated new neighbourhood, on a relatively unconstrained site which forms a natural and logical extension to Rugby accessible to existing facilities and community services.

2.19 The Site Selection Methodology published as part of the PO consultation, identifies three stages of the site selection process and development of reasonable alternatives, which include Stage 1 HELAA, Stage 2 Detailed Site Assessment (within the Site Options

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Assessment) and Stage 3 SA. As noted previously, the full SA will be published as part of the Regulation 19 consultation next year.

The Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) published in March 2025 provides an initial high-level assessment and confirms that the site is available, achievable and potentially suitable. The assessment proforma in Appendix 4 concludes that further assessment is required to determine if the site is locationally appropriate in comparison to other options. A Stage 2 Site Options Assessment has also been published in March 2025 and provides a more detailed appraisal of land at Newton Manor Lane, and again concludes that it is a "potential site option" on the basis that it is not located in the Green Belt, the surrounding road network has relatively low levels of congestion, it rates comparatively well for accessibility by non-car modes, there are no heritage constraints identified and medium/low landscape sensitivity. It is also noted that the provision of land for a school is a significant opportunity.

Whilst Latimer is supportive of the conclusions reached relating to the site within stages 1 and 2, it will be imperative that the dispersed spatial strategy and the appraisal of proposed allocation against other options is evidenced in the final version of the Sustainability Appraisal, to ensure that the allocation is fully justified and 'sound'. On a related point, it will also be necessary for the Council to undertake a Sequential Test for any sites proposed for allocation and subject to fluvial flood risk and/or surface flood risk to ensure that the requirements of NPPF paragraph 172 have been met as part of the plan making process.

Land at Newton Manor Lane encompasses an area of approximately 28 ha, is currently used as agricultural land and is accessed via Newton Manor Lane, which runs along the southern boundary of the site. The site adjoins the built-up area boundary of Rugby offering a suitable opportunity for a medium-sized extension to the settlement. The site is bound to the northwest by the Great Central Walk, which follows the route of a disused railway line and is designated as the Ashlawn Cutting Local Nature Reserve (LNR). It is now a recreational route for pedestrians and cyclists. Existing residential areas of Rugby dating back 20 years, are located on the other side of the Great Central Walk. The site is bound to the east by a hedgerow along which runs a stream which is a tributary of the River Avon located further south. East of this is a series of pastoral fields. The built edge of Newton village lies approximately 150m east of the site at its closest point.

The development proposal will provide an array of social, environmental and economic benefits, including but not limited to:

- The provision of approximately 240 dwellings towards meeting the needs of the Borough
- Provision of land for a secondary school to address significant issues with secondary school capacity in Rugby, particularly in the north of Rugby
- Latimer has the in-house capability to deliver affordable and private sale products
 which the developer can flex to suit individual sites, accelerate delivery and deliver
 market need to operate in varied economic cycles. This includes a range of affordable
 tenures such as shared ownership, affordable rent and social rent.
- A network of safe, convenient and direct pedestrian and cycle paths which provide connectivity to the surrounding area of Rugby and local amenities and facilities

- Short and direct walking and cycling connections will make public transport an easy choice to make. The 20-minute neighbourhood concept has been made a priority
- More than 10 ha of new public open space will provide recreational opportunities, children's play facilities, Trim-Trail, community orchards, allotments and ecological enhancements including biodiversity net gain
- Large wildlife corridors will enhance the surrounding local wildlife and nature sites, ensuring the new homes complement and respect these local wildlife assets. New planting will be provided and existing open space will be enhanced
- Latimer is committed to delivering Net Zero Carbon housing by 2030 that incorporates the latest energy-efficient materials and technology
- The development will generate additional residential expenditure in the local economy
- The site is located in a well-connected location which will ensure good accessibility to
 existing local community facilities for future residents. This will help provide a high
 quality of life for future residents. The proposal will also provide a secondary school in
 order to help reduce the pressure on higher education provision
- The development will maintain the separation gap between Rugby and Newton, ensuring that settlement character is maintained
- As previously noted, technical survey and assessment work relating to the site is ongoing, and Latimer consider that all technical constraints can be fully addressed and mitigated as part of the future development of the site. Given the scale of development envisaged, Latimer strongly contends that the site could be delivered well within the plan period at a realistic and deliverable rate. In addition, it is considered that there is clear evidence that the site is viable and deliverable at the scale of development expected within the plan period.
- 2.25 To summarise, Latimer strongly supports draft polices S2 and S6 and the inclusion of land at Newton Manor Lane as an allocation within the PO. The site will deliver new dwellings to meet Rugby Borough's Housing needs whilst also contributing towards helping the Council meet its wider vision and sustainability objectives.

Question 6 - The development sites annex lists development requirements for the allocated sites. Are there additional or different requirements we should be seeking? Please specify which site you are referring to.

- Latimer note the requirements contained within the Development Sites Annex relating to the proposed allocation of their land interests at Newton Manor Lane, Rugby (Site Ref: 59), but do not have any further comments relating to these at this stage.
- The Concept Masterplan for the site is included at **Appendix 1** and demonstrates how the development could potentially meet the development requirements identified, including pedestrian and cycle links through the development and connecting to the Great Central Wak and Coton Park East, maintaining and integrating existing Public Rights of Way through the site, and inclusion of community orchard and allotments.

Climate

Question 11 - To what extent do you agree with the approach to reducing emissions and adapting to the effects of climate change?

- 2.28 Latimer broadly **agree** with the approach to reducing emissions and adapting to climate change contained in draft Policies CL2 CL4.
- However, with regards to draft Policy CL1 (Net zero buildings), Latimer **disagree** with the requirement for all new buildings to be net zero in operation.

Question 12 - What are the reasons for your answer to question 11?

- 2.30 Latimer recognises the importance of policies that address the effects of climate change with proactive sustainable measures and is committed to all their new homes being net zero carbon in operation by 2030. However, Latimer does not support draft Policy CL1 as currently worded, and considers that it is not sufficiently flexible, fit for purpose and well evidenced as required by the NPPF.
- 2.31 Whilst the Council is within its right to deviate from Building Regulations, the NPPF is clear that the "preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and upto-date evidence." In this context, whilst supportive in principle, Latimer is concerned that the Council is seeking to make provision for apolicy that deviates from the national requirements and will not currently be achievable for many housebuilders/developers.
- 2.32 Latimer would also note that other Councils have proposed a similar requirement for developments, which have not been accepted by Inspectors. In particular, in 2022 West Oxfordshire District Council submitted its Area Action Plan (AAP) for a Salt Cross Garden Village. The AAP included Draft Policy 2 (Net Zero Carbon Development), which required all new development to be net zero on-site.
- 2.33 The Inspector felt that the policy was inconsistent with national policy, as the standards within it amounted to a significant uplift on Building Regulations, which conflicted with then Secretary of State for Communities and Government Eric Pickles MP's Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) in March 2015, which remains current national policy on this matter.
- 2.34 The Inspector also highlighted that whilst Section 1 of the Planning and Energy Act 2008 does allow for some policies to exceed energy requirements of building regulations if they are deemed reasonable and consistent with national policies, in that instance, the requirements were not reasonable (IR30). Furthermore, the Inspector highlighted that:
 - There was a lack of evidence base to demonstrate the appropriateness of building typologies and how key performance indicators were selected over alternatives
 - The standards within the plan were too rigid, and could not be realistically met by the end user, and
 - The standards of the policy were not flexible when having regard to the ever-changing net zero building policy nor to "technological and market advancements and more stringent nationally set standards, including within the Building Regulations" (IR137)

In light of the above, Latimer would highlight that the Government's intention is to achieve zero carbon through a step-by-step introduction of higher building regulations, and it is considered that the Council should provide the flexibility within Policy CL1 to align with this approach.

Environment

Question 17 – To what extent do you agree with the document's environmental policies?

2.36 Latimer broadly **agree** with draft Policies EN1 - EN8 relating to protecting or enhancing the environment.

Question 18 - What are the reasons for your answer to question 17?

2.37 With regards to Policy EN4 (Biodiversity net gain), Latimer support the requirement to deliver at least 10% biodiversity net gain on all developments in line with the Environment Act and in accordance with the Planning Practice Guidance which states,

"Plan-makers should not seek a higher percentage than the statutory objective of 10% biodiversity net gain, either on an area-wide basis or for specific allocations for development unless justified. To justify such policies they will need to be evidenced including as to local need for a higher percentage, local opportunities for a higher percentage and any impacts on viability for development. Consideration will also need to be given to how the policy will be implemented." (PPG ID:74-006)

In relation to Policy EN5 (Canopy cover), Latimer supports the Council's recognition of the importance of retaining canopy cover and mitigating against its loss as part of development. Latimer also support the text at para 5.16 which acknowledges that a degree of flexibility may be required in certain cases and that there may be sites for which achieving 20% canopy cover is not possible or desirable. In such circumstances, the Council may negotiate an alternative level. However, Latimer consider that this wording should be included within the policy text itself.

Housing

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Question 19 - To what extent do you agree with the document's housing policies?

Latimer broadly **agree** with draft Policies H1 – H7 relating to housing.

Question 20 - What are the reasons for your answer to question 19?

In general, Latimer is supportive of draft Policy H1 (Housing Mix) and the requirement for major development sites to accommodate a range of dwelling sizes on site. Latimer consider that a degree of flexibility should be included within the policy text itself to reflect site-specific circumstances and reflect variations and localised needs within different parts of the Borough.

The supporting text for draft policies H2 (Affordable Housing) at paragraph 6.5 recognises that viability issues may result in developments that cannot support a policy-compliant

level of affordable housing, but again, Latimer consider that this should be included within the policy itself.

Design

Question 23 - To what extent do you agree with the document's design policies?

2.42 Latimer **agree** with the design policies proposed in the PO consultation and have no further comments to provide relating to their content at this stage.

Infrastructure

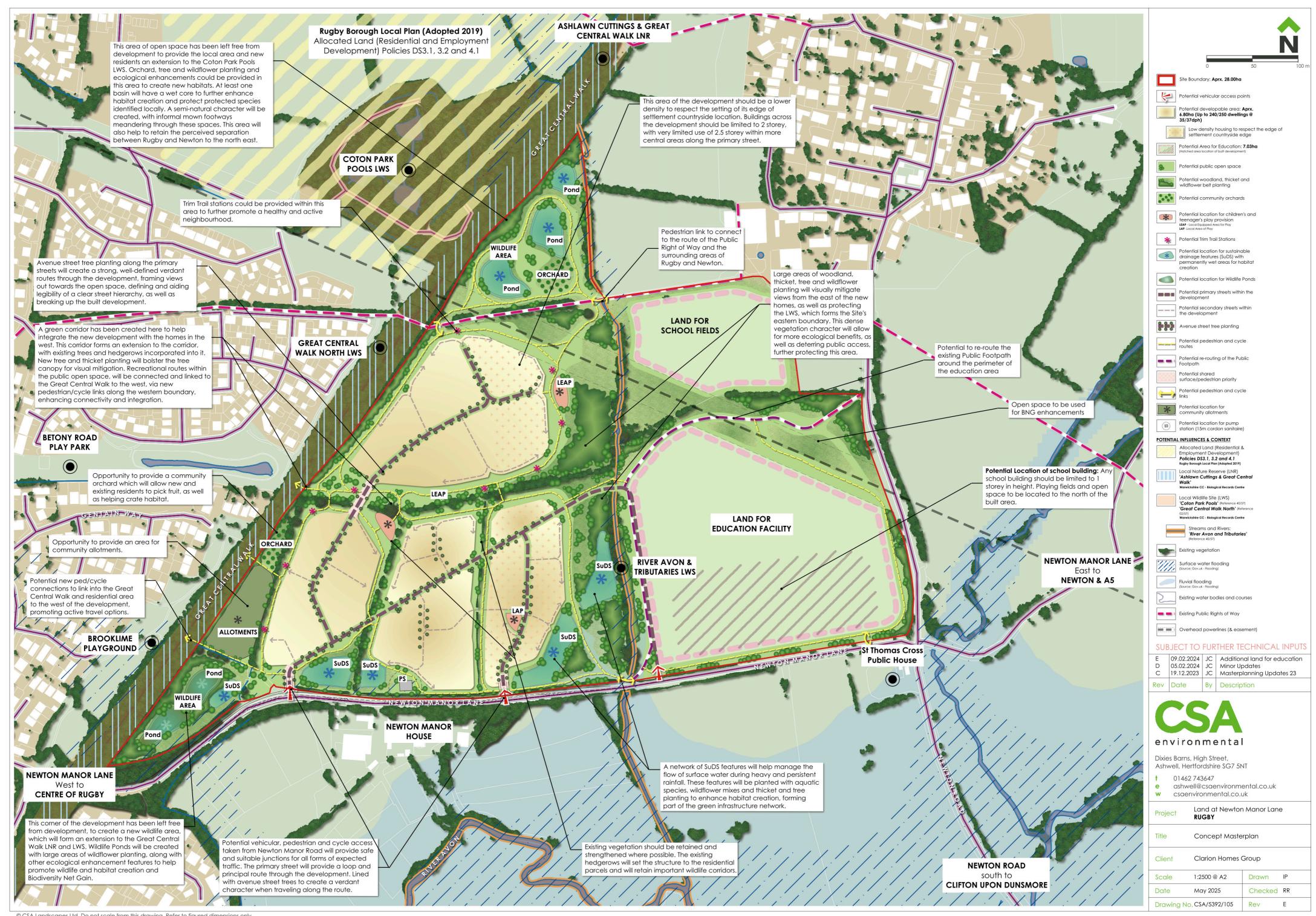
Question 25 - To what extent do you agree with the document's infrastructure policies?

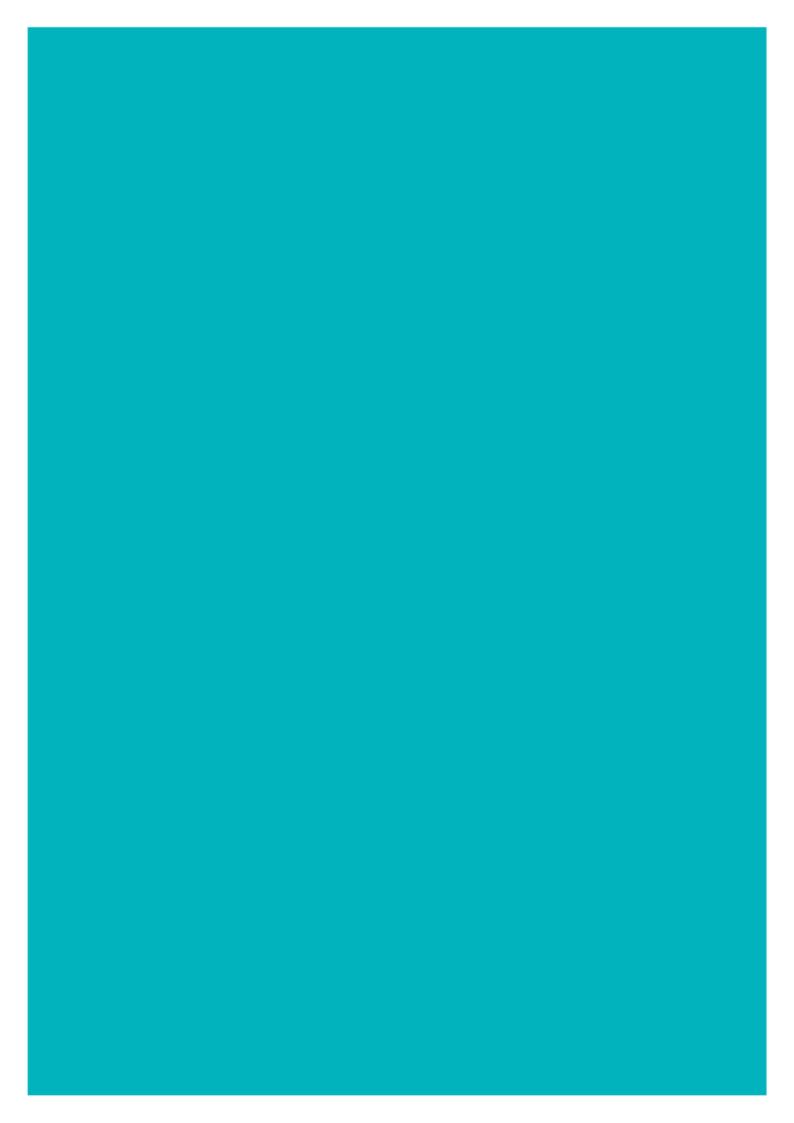
2.43 Latimer broadly agree with the policies within the PO consultation relating to infrastructure and **strongly agree** with Policy I6 (Secondary education) and the allocation of land for a new 6FE plus sixth form secondary school at St Thomas Cross in northeast Rugby.

Question 26 - What are the reasons for your answer to question 25?

- 2.44 Latimer's land interests at Newton Manor Lane, Rugby extend to include an area for a new secondary school and strongly support the proposed allocation under draft policy I6 of the PO. The Concept Masterplan at **Appendix 1** identifies how the school site would integrate with the residential development and the surrounding area, maintaining a gap between the built development and the edge of the village of Newton by locating playing fields to the north and east.
- 2.45 As noted previously in these representations, the site is located within a sustainable location, close to the existing urban edge of Rugby, is accessible by public transport and does not suffer from any existing highway and traffic issues. It is relatively unconstrained, and it is considered that any technical issues could all be addressed and mitigated as part of the future development.
- 2.46 Whilst Latimer strongly support the proposed allocation of land for a secondary school, and the need is set out within the Interim SA, it is important that sufficient evidence is provided to fully demonstrate this need and evidence the process that has been undertaken to select the proposed allocation site. This will be necessary to support the Pre-submission Plan and ensure that the Plan is found 'sound' by an Inspector.
- In this regard, it is noted that an Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) is not provided as part of the PO consultation, but that it is the Council's intention to produce this later in the plan making process. An IDP identifying the need for the secondary school to support future development within the Borough and outlining how this will be provided will be critical to underpinning the allocation of land for the secondary school.

Appendix 1 Concept Masterplan





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