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Dear Sir/Madam

**South Staffordshire Local Plan Review (2018 – 2038) : Preferred Options Consultation (November 2021)
Land at the Hatherton House Hotel, Pinfold Lane, Penkridge on behalf of Roundleaf Limited**

Introduction

Cerda Planning Ltd. has been instructed by Roundleaf Limited (hereafter Roundleaf) to prepare these representations to the South Staffordshire Local Plan Review Preferred Options Consultation. Roundleaf Limited are the owners of the existing Hatherton House Hotel off Pinfold Lane, Penkridge which lies on the western side of the village beyond the railway line.

Whilst we acknowledge that the plan is at Regulation 18 stage, these representations are made in the context of the requirement for Local Plans to be legally compliant and sound. The tests of soundness are set out at paragraph 35 of the Framework. In brief, a plan will be sound if it is:

- positively prepared;
- justified;
- effective; and
- consistent with national policy

These representations raise concerns with the emerging plan's soundness. More specifically, with the Plan's strategy, both in terms of overall levels of housing growth proposed without an agreed strategy for meeting the wider HMA shortfall and the distribution of homes within the plan area. Concerns are also raised with the Council's

evidence base prepared to date, specifically in the robustness and fairness of the site assessment work which has informed the decisions made on the draft allocations.

In raising these concerns, we submit that the Hatherton Hotel site represents a sustainable option to help address the identified deficiencies in the soundness of the plan through the delivery of up to 90 new homes (including up to 30% affordable), plus other key benefits for the wider village in a highly sustainable location that both aligns strongly with the council's aims of delivering sustainable housing growth and boosts the supply of housing that is deliverable within the early part of the plan.

To this end, these representations seek to propose the allocation and redevelopment of the site in question as a potential housing site, proposing the existing buildings be suitably converted and parts of the site redeveloped for circa 90 new homes as a proposed housing allocation in the Local Plan Review.

It should also be noted that the site in question was the subject of a submission under the Council's rolling 'call for sites' programme at the end of April 2021 but does not currently appear as a nominated site in the Council's current Strategic Housing & Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA), nor on the relevant map of those sites that have been considered in the immediate vicinity of Penkridge. We would trust that, with the information provided in support of the previous 'call for sites' submission and these current representations, that further consideration will now be given by the Council to the contribution that the allocation of this site could make to meeting the overall housing strategy in the Local Plan Review.

These representations also set out our client's position in relation to the emerging policies as set out in the South Staffordshire Local Plan Review Preferred Options (PO) document November 202 with particular focus on the emerging spatial strategy in relation to housing growth and the direction it has taken subsequent to the Issues & Options document which was previously subject to public consultation in October 2018.

In terms of format, the representations are split into various sections which consider the following main issues:

- Site location and context
- The overall housing need within the Black Country;
- Delivery from the proposed allocations;
- Wider spatial planning for the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area;
- The Site Assessments;
- Conclusion and case for allocation of the site.

Site Location and Context

As set out above, the site in question lies to the west of the built-up edge of Penkridge, the urban area of which is enclosed by the route of the M6 motorway to the east, and the West Coast main railway line to the west, the eastern side of which is the defined settlement boundary in the western part of the settlement. The site is accessed by road

from the central part of the settlement from Pinfold Lane. There are also a number of pedestrian routes which link the site with the village centre to the east. The area of the site is approximately 1.3 hectares (3.2 acres).

The site is currently operating as the Hatherton House Hotel Stafford South, having done so since 1991, prior to which it had operated as a country club since the 1980s. The existing hotel has 51 en-suite bedrooms, four function rooms, a leisure club and restaurant, bar. The site includes ancillary car parking areas for guests along the north-eastern and south-eastern sides of the site, with the main concentration of buildings along the south-western side of the site. The oldest part of those buildings comprises the former rectory to the nearby St. Michaels & All Angels Church. The rectory was built in the 1830s and is a Grade II Listed Building.

The site is also extremely well sited with regard to the railway station which lies adjacent to the south-eastern corner of the site to which pedestrian access can be provided.

Housing Needs

Applying the standard method, South Staffordshire's housing need for the 2021-2038 period is set at 4,131 dwellings. Completions in the district since the start of the plan period (2018-2021) total 750 dwellings. In addition, a contribution of 4,000 dwellings is planned towards the unmet needs of the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area (GBBCHMA) within which South Staffordshire is located. The total number of dwellings proposed is therefore 8,881 over the plan period.

Inherent to the draft plan is an acknowledgement that one of its key roles is to assist in meeting the significant unmet needs of the GBBCHMA area (*our emphasis*). Principally, the unmet needs arise from Birmingham City and the combined Black Country Authorities.

The issue of unmet need in this HMA was crystallised through the examination and adoption of the Birmingham City Development Plan (BDP). Upon adoption in 2017, the BDP acknowledged that it would fall short of meeting its identified need by 37,900 homes (to 2031). Subsequent to BDP plan adoption, the various HMA authorities have produced collective 'position statements' to demonstrate how they have been working to address this unmet need. As part of this process, it has also become apparent that a significant unmet need is also arising in the Black Country authorities which, based on its recently published Regulation 18 plan, stands at 28,239 homes (to 2039).

In the meantime, based on the contributions set out in plans within the HMA which have either been submitted for examination, examined or adopted, the total contribution to unmet need arising from Birmingham to 2031 amounts to just some 8,600 dwellings (North Warwickshire – 3,790, Solihull - 2,105 and Stratford – 2,720). Evidently, almost 5 years on from the adoption of the BDP, less than a quarter of the total unmet need arising from Birmingham is 'locked into' a plan.

Combined with the unmet need (currently 28,239 homes) coming out of the Black Country, it is clear that the scale of the problem is significant.

Whilst we acknowledge that the most recent and third position statement (3PS) published in September 2020 on the matter of unmet need by the authorities that comprise the GBBCHMA asserts that the Birmingham shortfall has reduced significantly, chiefly through a large increase to Birmingham's supply, we assert that as an untested position, it cannot be relied upon for planning making purposes.

Accordingly, the scale of unmet need to 2031 and beyond remains in our view, substantial. Of greater significance is the fact that the scale of the problem is increasing, particularly as there is likely to be further unmet need arising out of Birmingham City when the cap on the application of the standard method is lifted from January 2022. It is of significance that Birmingham is subject to the 35% uplift as one of the largest 20 cities in England. Indeed, Birmingham City Council has announced that review of the plan will be undertaken.

Despite the unmet need growing across the GBBCHMA, we note that South Staffordshire's contribution has remained a constant since it was first identified in 2018. Accordingly, we assert that if the GBBCHMA authorities are to actually deal satisfactorily with the issue of unmet need to 2031 and beyond, then contributions need to increase across the board. South Staffordshire being no exception.

A 4,000 home contribution represents some 6.6% of the overall minimum unmet need of 60,855 dwellings to 2036 across the HMA as identified in the GL Hearn Strategic Growth Study, February 2018. We assert that by 2038 (which is when this plan period extends to) for the reasons given, unmet need in the HMA is likely to be in the region of 70,000 homes.

Accordingly, if South Staffs are to maintain the same proportion of contribution (6.6%), then an additional 620 homes needs to be planned for. That said, given the strong spatial connection that South Staffs has with the Black Country, we submit that a higher percentage contribution would be appropriate. 8% for example would result in an overall contribution of 5,600 homes towards meeting the HMA's unmet needs, 1,600 more than are currently planned for.

We submit, therefore, that for this Plan to be justified and effective, there needs to be a greater contribution towards meeting the unmet needs arising within the GBBCHMA. Owing to the way in which existing settlements within South Staffordshire are constrained by the Green Belt, it follows that additional Green Belt land on the edge of settlements will need to be found to accommodate this additional and much needed housing growth.

Spatial Strategy

Paras.4.14 to 4.20 inclusive refer to the Spatial Strategy for Housing and how the required levels of housing are to be accommodated within the district and para.4.14 advises that the current strategy is based upon work carried out in the Spatial Housing Strategy and Infrastructure Delivery (SHSID) report, consultation upon which was undertaken in October 2019. The SHSID sought to look at how the proposed housing target could be distributed where, at para.2.10, there is provided a list of strategic themes against which each strategy option was considered. Of these strategy themes, the following are particularly relevant to the consideration of the site in question, namely:

- *Prioritising Green Belt land release in areas of lesser Green Belt harm, and*
- *Giving first consideration to Green Belt land which is previously developed or well-served by public transport.*

Para.3.2 of the report referred to the policies of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) 2019, now updated to the July 2021 edition, and provides a list of bullet points to which particular regard was placed in forming the strategy, of which the following is relevant to the consideration of the site in question:

- *Prioritising the release of Green Belt which is previously developed or well-served by public transport (para.138 - now para.142 of the 2021 NPPF)*

The report acknowledges the work undertaken in the 2019 Green Belt in preparing each Spatial Option, which is further considered in relation to the site in question in the following section. In addition, the report considered environmental constraints, the availability of sites, the GBBCHMA Strategic Growth Study 2018, and various other matters and studies.

Having undertaken the appropriate research, the report concluded that the preferred approach to the strategy for the delivery of homes in the Local Plan Review would be Housing Option G, one of seven under consideration. In general terms, Option G would provide for the following: infrastructure-led development with a garden village area of search (along the A449 corridor) beyond the plan period, in addition, housing would be focused in the Tier 1 (including Penkrigde) to 4 villages (60%) and urban extensions (to the north of the Black Country conurbation) and some in the rural villages. It was also acknowledged that, along with the other six Housing Options, Option G would also require the release of Green Belt land to deliver the strategy but also seeking to ensure that Green Belt release is minimised and avoiding the most sensitive areas of the Green Belt at the same time.

The details of Option G in the report states that the option would meet the preferred housing target of 8,845 dwellings in the period 2018-2037 and which is now stated as a slightly higher figure of 8,881 dwellings in the published PO document (Table 7 on p.30). However, as has been indicated previously in these representations,

due to an increase in the level of unmet need arising from the GBBCHMA, it is likely that this figure will need to be reviewed which, of course, has implications for the overall housing strategy in the Local Plan Review.

As is stated in the SHSID report, Option G proposed growth in the villages dispersed across all four villages tiers, with a larger proportion of housing growth being focused on the Tier 1 and 2 villages where significant opportunities to achieve infrastructure improvements through new development exist, having regard to other environmental constraints.

Growth would be attributed to the settlements in accordance with their level within the hierarchy, with larger levels of growth being attributed to the settlements which sit higher in the hierarchy and, conversely, lower levels of growth to those which sit lower. The settlement hierarchy within the District was originally determined in the Rural Services and Facilities Audit in 2019, which has been updated as part of the Local Plan Review in 2021. This establishes that there are five Tiers within the hierarchy and is based upon the settlement's access to a range of services and facilities relative to other settlements within the district.

Penkridge sits within Tier 1, along with four other settlements which are identified as being those with greatest access to services and facilities. The common theme within these settlements is that they typically have food stores, a wider range of services and facilities than other villages, a range of educational establishments, access to a train station and good access to employment and wider facilities outside the village via public transport. Penkridge, along with Codsall/Bilbrook, are noted that they both have large village centres and have better retail access.

In September 2021 as part of the Local Plan Review, the Council published a Housing Site Selection Topic Paper which summarises the selected housing sites and the wider housing strategy and builds on the previous consultation undertaken in 2019. At para.1.5, it notes that a number of amendments to the site selection process have been made since the previous consultation and includes, amongst others, ensuring that sites in Tier 1-4 villages or urban edge locations which do not strictly conform to the preferred Spatial Option G of the 2019 consultation would not be excluded from assessment.

Chapter 2 of the Topic Paper has regard to identifying and narrowing down sites for consideration as potential housing sites and refers to the various 'call for sites' consultations over the years and acknowledges that the Council's Strategic Housing & Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) is used to identify a shortlist of sites. In order to do so, the SHELAA uses a series of classifications to categorise sites which are provided in a table in para.2.2 as follows:

S1	Sites currently suitable for housing and deliverable within 5 years
S2	Sites currently suitable for housing and developable between 5 and 10 years
S3	Sites currently suitable for housing and developable 10+ years
NCD1	Sites potentially suitable for housing but not currently developable because of a policy designation (eg Green Belt/Open Countryside/Employment Land/outside current Spatial Strategy/Safeguarded Land Policy)
NCD2	Sites potentially suitable for housing but not currently developable because of other constraints
NS	Sites which are unsuitable because of constraints which cannot be overcome.

As noted previously in these representations, whilst the site in question had previously been proposed as a housing site in 'call for sites' submission in April 2021, it has not been assessed in the current SHELAA 2021 and so has not been categorised in line with the above table.

Para.2.3 of the Topic Paper states that the SHELAA will only consider the allocation of sites which are either suitable (i.e. S1,S2 and S3) or could be made suitable through the removal of a policy or physical constraint (i.e. NCD1 and NCD2). It is considered that, as a previously developed site within the Green Belt, its potential to create harm to the Green Belt would be relatively low and, if the only constraint to the potential allocation of the site is that relating to the Green Belt policy then, presumably, the site should be within NCD1 category given that the *only* apparent imposition upon it being allocated is the application of that policy. There are no other known constraints that would otherwise prevent the allocation and subsequent redevelopment of the site in question.

Chapter 5 of the Topic Paper reviews the site assessment findings for each settlement and urban edge locations in the District following the filtering process and Penkrige is considered in greater detail at section 5.2. Para.5.2.1 acknowledges that significant housing growth will be located in the settlement over the Plan period, recognising the settlement's level of facilities and transport links; the recommendations of the GBBCHMA Strategic Growth Study 2018 which identified land to the north of the village as a potential strategic development location, together with the availability of non-Green Belt land (*our emphasis*). Para.5.2.2 advises that planning permissions and dwellings completed can deliver approximately 504 dwellings in the settlement post April 2018, but does not include any small site permissions (less than 10 dwellings).

Paras.5.2.7-5.2.9 inclusive have regard to the reasons for the allocation of Open Countryside immediately to the north of the village, one of the principal reasons for which is that the Council's site selection process had not revealed that there were any additional deliverable sites within the development boundary to realise the Spatial Housing Strategy. On that basis, the release of significant additional land outside the development boundary would be required, either to the north or to the south of the village. As noted in the previous paragraph, land to the north in Open Countryside was identified in the Strategic Growth Study, and was preferred to the release of land in the Green Belt to the south.

At para.4.16 of the PO document, the findings of the Housing Site Selection Topic Paper are made known and, amongst other things, at the first bullet point, confirms that increasing growth to the north of Penkrige would better

reflect the findings of the GBBCHMA Strategic Growth Study and non-Green Belt land available to the north of the village.

This feeds into Table 8 on page 32 of the PO which provides details of the Spatial Housing Strategy 2018-2038 for the various settlements and urban extensions across the District and confirms that the Tier 1 villages are to receive 39.7% of the total proportion of housing delivery during the Plan period, of which Penkridge is to receive 17.2%, of which 504 dwellings will be existing planning permissions and allocations; 88 dwellings would be on safeguarded land, and 1129 would be new allocations. The total number of proposed dwellings for Penkridge would, therefore, be 1,721.

Table 8 also provides that 'windfall' development on small sites will account for 4.5%, or 450 units, of the overall housing numbers during the Plan period. What is not clear, however, is whether this level of 'windfall' development can be supported through evidence from the Council. If this proposed level of development is proven to be wildly optimistic, there can be no guarantee that sites will come forward in those numbers, then it would be better for the proposed housing strategy to allocate further sites across the district, particularly on any previously-developed sites in highly sustainable locations in the Green Belt that may come forward, as these would have a greater likelihood of being developed if there was certainty of them being able to come through the Local Plan Review process.

Moreover, if the housing need is increased to take account of the requirement to proportionately maintain the contribution to the GBBCHMA shortfall, then the total identified 'allocations' is short of the identified need by a minimum of 620 homes. As such, we would assert that this is too great a gap to be made up by windfall development and that further allocations will be required across the District. In order that a more equitable distribution of dwellings is made across the District, it is considered that further, appropriate locations can be made within those villages where there are no significant policy objections or constraints to development. It is contended that further sites in Penkridge would be appropriate to receive an allocation within a revised housing strategy in the Local Plan Review, and the site of the Hatherton House Hotel in Pinfold Lane, as a previously-developed site in the Green Belt, is a highly appropriate location to provide for that allocation having regard to all planning relevant policy and other technical considerations.

Accordingly, we would contend that **Policy DS3 – The Spatial Strategy to 2038** requires some redrafting to ensure that the delivery of the homes presently identified for allocation through the Local Plan review should be much closer to the identified minimum need having full regard to the requirement to increase the contribution towards the unmet needs arising from GBBCHMA overspill. The policy also confirms that the Tier 1 settlements will continue to support windfall housing growth where it is consistent with other Local Plan policies. (*our emphasis*)

The housing strategy in the PO of the Local Plan Review places a significant and heavy reliance on significant reliance on major allocations coming through in the Tier 1 villages of Penkridge (1130 homes) and Codsall/Bilbrook (666), Wombourne (239) together with strategic urban extensions around the edge of the West Midlands conurbation (2,960) and these in total account for the vast majority of new homes coming through the Plan. This

strategy is, of course, all well and good in delivering large numbers of homes, however, this leaves no head room in the plan or in terms of delivering those numbers if the standard method is relied upon.

By placing reliance upon a small number of large sites to deliver the vast majority of the new homes required within the Plan period, this strategy can only work if *all* of those sites come forward within the proposed timeframe. If there are delays in bringing just one of those large sites forward, this would be highly risky to the delivery of the overall housing strategy within the Local Plan Review. As such, it is considered that there should be a rethinking of the proposed housing strategy to allow for other sites, particularly upon previously-developed land in highly sustainable locations, to come through to take up the slack should there be any delay in bringing the large allocations through.

Section 6 of the PO has regard to Development Management Policies, and for the policies relating to Community Services, Facilities and Infrastructure, **Policy EC7** has regard to **Protecting Community Services and Facilities**, whilst supporting the retention of the existing approach from the adopted Core Strategy, support will also be given to the provision of new services and facilities.

Green Belt

Section 4 of the Preferred Options Document has regard to the *Development Strategy* and the first part of the section has regard to the **Green Belt**.

At para.3.49 of the PO document, the Strategic Objectives of the Plan are outlined and, in respect of the Development Strategy, Strategic Objective 1 is stated as being to *'protect the Green Belt and Open Countryside as far as possible, ensuring that where Green Belt release is necessary that mechanisms are in place to secure compensatory improvements to the environmental quality and accessibility of the remaining Green Belt'*. As the Council has alluded to in this Strategic Objective for the Local Plan Review, it is, therefore, inevitable that in order to accommodate future housing growth, there must be some release of Green Belt land, not only to meet the needs arising from the Council's own housing requirements, but also to accommodate the unmet needs arising from the studies undertaken in the adjoining metropolitan area of the West Midlands as outlined in the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Areas (GBBCHMA) study.

In July 2019, the Council published a Green Belt Study (undertaken by Land Use Consultants on the Council's behalf) which, as noted at para.2.27 of the main report, confirms that just under 80% of the administrative area of the village is designated as Green Belt, with a significant part of the remaining area lying within the open countryside in the north-western part of the District. As such, outside of the urban areas of the main towns and other villages, the potential for accommodating the future housing needs as set out in the development strategy for the Local Plan Review must be set and assessed against this restrictive policy background. The Green Belt Study is a major part of the background information supporting the preparation of the Local Plan Review.

As part of the Green Belt study Appendix 1 Stage1 Contribution Assessments, Penkridge was included as part of the larger Parcel S32, being defined as a much larger parcel of land of the area between Wolverhampton and Stafford and covering some 7,308 hectares being the largest parcel within the study area. In terms of the contribution towards the five purposes for including land within the Green Belt (NPPF para.138), the Study advised as in respect of Sub-Parcel 32A follows:

- 1st purpose : to check unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas - *weak / no contribution*
- 2nd purpose : to prevent neighbouring towns from merging – *weak / no contribution*
- 3rd purpose : safeguarding the countryside from encroachment – *strong*
- 4th purpose : to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns – *weak / no contribution*
- 5th purpose : to assist in urban regeneration – *strong*

The larger Parcel 32 area was broken down into a series of thirteen Sub-Parcels for further assessment in Appendix 3 (Stage 2 Harm Assessments) of the Green Belt Study and, of these, Sub-Parcel S32F relates to the area West and South of Penkridge, the description of the Sub-Parcel being *'farmland and fields lying to the south-west of the inset settlement of Penkridge. Bound to the west by the River Penk'*. The area encompassed by Sub-Parcel 32F is some 257 hectares in total.

The Report then considered two scenarios for the potential release of land to the west of the railway line (S32Fs1 – 172Ha), where the site in question is located, and to the south of Penkridge (S32Fs2 – 54Ha). The report states that the sub-parcel *'makes a strong contribution to preventing encroachment on the countryside'* and where the railway line *'creates a strong boundary separating this land and the inset settlement of Penkridge to the northeast'* and *'forming a consistent settlement boundary'* where *'release of this land would significantly weaken the Green Belt'*.

In terms of S32Fs1, whilst it was concluded that the harm upon the Green Belt would be **high**, it should, be acknowledged that the assessment does not draw distinction between the site in question which comprises previously-developed and the remainder of this sub-parcel which comprises open countryside with very little in the way of any built development other than agricultural premises and the occasional isolated dwelling. Accordingly, it is contended that the assessment is not reflective of the site's strategic Green Belt performance and should not therefore be used as a basis to discount its potential suitability for allocation for new housing in the Local Plan Review. The evidence base in the Green Study that has been used as a tool for site assessment of the Green Belt around Penkridge is, in our opinion, flawed.

In our own assessment of the site, we consider that the site performs worse in Green Belt terms than the Council's own evidence would suggest. As such, the Council must ensure that the assessment work carried out in support of the Local Plan Review is robust and correct and, in respect of the Hatherton House Hotel site, it is not correct at this time and we would encourage the Council to review the assessment of this site again before the next stage of the Plan's preparation.

In this regard, and in the light of no formal and detailed assessment of the site in question being available to establish the harm that would be caused to the Green Belt terms, as it was considered as part of a wider parcel of land is not necessarily representative of the site to which these representations relate. In applying the five purposes for including land with the Green Belt, and in the light of the assessment criteria stated in Section 6 (Stage 2 Methodology) of the Green Belt Study main report, our own observations in relation to the assessment of the Harm that the development of the Hatherton House Hotel site only would cause to the Green Belt is as follows.

1st Purpose (*to check the unrestricted sprawl of urban areas*): Whilst it is acknowledged that the site in question is located to the west of the railway line, and therefore separate from the main built-up area of the settlement, the site comprises previously-developed land within the Green Belt and it is not anticipated that any redevelopment proposals for the site in question would expand beyond the existing site boundaries. As such, there would be no sprawl of the urban area of the settlement. We contend, therefore, that as far as the site is concerned in relation to the harm that would be caused to the Green Belt, it would only have **low** harm in respect of this purpose.

2nd Purpose (*to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another*): The nearest major town is Newport in Shropshire, approximately 17 kms (10 miles) to the north-west, and the village of Wheaton Aston is approximately 6.4 kms (4 miles) to the south-west. As such, the redevelopment of this site would not lead to the merging of any nearby town or even another settlement. Our assessment is, therefore, that site would only have **very low** harm in respect of this purpose.

3rd Purpose (*to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment*): As noted above, the site in question comprises previously-developed land and its redevelopment would not encroach upon the countryside. Therefore, we would contend that the site would have **low harm** against this purpose.

4th Purpose (*to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns*): the site in question is not located next to any historic town, as such, there would be **very low harm** to the Green Belt in relation to this purpose.

5th Purpose (*to assist in urban regeneration*): The Green Belt study acknowledges the extent of the Green Belt across the District and, in table 3.2, acknowledges that there are only 13.11 hectares of land on the Brownfield Register across the District. On balance, given this statistic, it is contended that this purpose should not perform part of the assessment criteria as the Local Plan Review acknowledges that a significant area of Green Belt land will be required to fulfil the Local Plan Review's housing requirements over the plan period. As noted above, the site in question comprises previously-developed land within the Green Belt. Para.142 of the NPPF is clear that, '*where it has been concluded that it is necessary to release Green Belt land for development, plans should give first consideration to land which has been previously-developed and/or is well-served by public transport*'. On balance, therefore, it is considered that **very low harm** would result to the Green Belt in respect of this purpose.

Section 7 of the Green Belt Study has regard to the Stage 2 Findings and, as noted previously, the harm rating given for Sub-Parcel S32Fs1 is **high**, that is, *‘where land makes a moderate contribution to one of the Green Belt purposes and a weak contribution to the others, but where its release would significantly weaken the adjacent Green Belt (for example by isolating an area of Green Belt that makes a stronger contribution)’*. It should, of course, be acknowledged that this harm rating relates to a considerably wider area of open countryside, and does not take into account of the merits of individual sites. For previously-developed sites, such as the Hatherton House Hotel site, the harm caused to the Green Belt caused by their redevelopment would be significantly less than that which would be attributable to the development of greenfield sites .

In applying our own assessment for the site in question, it our assertion that the overall score for just the site in question should be **very low to low** in terms of the level of harm upon the Green Belt, that is, *‘where land makes a relatively weak contribution to two of the Green Belt purposes and a weak contribution to the others, but where its release would partially weaken the adjacent Green Belt (for example by increasing containment of adjacent open land, or by creating a less consistent boundary line)’*, would be attributed if all of the site in question were to be developed for housing.

In summary, therefore, we would request that the Council gives further consideration to a re-evaluation of the site in terms of the purposes for maintaining its designation within the Green Belt and for its release as a potential housing allocation in the next stage of the Plan’s preparation.

Development Principles

Our client advises that it has become increasingly difficult to make the hotel financially viable in recent years, largely as a consequence of falling demand and the fact that the operational, management and maintenance costs for the hotel are very high. Redevelopment in the manner proposed would have the advantage of removing the less responsive additions to the heritage asset, better revealing its significance, securing its long-term future and delivering a significant quantum of homes on a previously developed site which is geographically well aligned with the identified options in the emerging spatial strategy.

In support of these representations, some initial development proposals have been prepared to show how the site could be developed if it were to be allocated for housing in the Local Plan Review. Our client’s intention would be to demolish all of the leisure suite attached to the south-eastern end of the listed building, convert the retained elements of that part of the site to create apartments, and also to struct new, standalone apartment blocks within the remainder of the site. Various technical reports have been prepared to address certain matters regarding the proposed redevelopment of the site, which are summarised as follows.

Heritage : An Historic Building Report has been prepared by Donald Insall Associates which confirms its legal status as a Hatherton House Hotel is Grade II listed (List entry number 1374093, listed as Hatherton Restaurant).

The site is not located within a Conservation Area, however, it is in close proximity to the Penkrige Conservation Area, which is to the east of the railway line.

In terms of the Assessment of Significance, at the heart of this sprawling hotel complex is a Regency parsonage, built within substantial formal gardens in *circa* 1831, and extended in the later 19th century. Much of the building's special interest is unapparent at first glance - being largely concealed by excessive and poor quality late-twentieth century additions which have overwhelmed the historic building at its core. Despite the regrettable and numerous accretions, it remains, through its relationship to the Church, and its surviving form and historic features, a valuable example of a Regency English parsonage, and a quintessential feature of the archetypal English village. More specifically, the building is a legacy of the early 19th century parsonage building boom in England. This is manifest in both the building's setting and its architectural style which are both typical of the period.

In terms of a significance hierarchy, the Regency parsonage at the heart of the site is of significance, despite the many ways in which modern alterations have undermined this. The surviving C19th fabric, features and plan form are of the highest relative significance and offer the least flexibility for change. Areas of historic fabric which have been modified as a result of alterations in the C20th are of relatively modest significance and offer more scope for change. All of the late C20th additions are considered to detract from the building's significance and offer an opportunity for enhancement.

Ecology: A Preliminary Ecological Appraisal and Bat Activity Survey has been prepared by Elite Ecology. The PEA survey revealed numerous habitats on site including : Mixed Scattered Trees; Poor Semi-improved Grassland; Amenity Grassland; Introduced Shrub; Native Species-rich Intact Hedge; Buildings and Bare Ground.

There were no designated sites revealed from the ecological data set provided by SER on or adjacent to the site. Therefore, the proposed re-development will have negligible impact upon any designated sites as the works are due to remain within the site boundary. No habitats of conservation concern are located on the site itself. Therefore, the proposed scheme of works will not impact upon any rare or valuable habitats. It is recommended that designated wildlife corridors are incorporated into the design scheme of the site. This will be identified within a soft landscaping plan that will also offer a management strategy that is required to be adhered to. Linear features that enhance the site for a number of species should also be included into the scheme of works.

Amphibians: To ensure that no great crested newts are present on site, it is recommended that all ponds within 250m are tested for their presence. The recommended methodology will be to undertake an environmental DNA (eDNA) survey of the pond are undertaken between mid-April and late June.

Bats: The recommendations for Hatherton House Hotel can be summarised as follows:

- Apply for a Natural England development licence to legally carry out the works.
- No development works can commence until 1st of October.

- At the start of the works, site supervision by a licenced bat ecologist in accordance with the Natural England Development Licence will be required.
- Prior to works commencing, a single 2F Schwegler Bat Box will be installed to relocate any bats encountered during the works.
- Install four Eco Bat Boxes or four Integrated Eco Bat Boxes at the completion of the works. It may also be necessary to include temporary compensation during the construction phase.
- Optional: Install further Eco Bat Boxes around the site.

Birds: As a precautionary measure, it is recommended that any tree removal is undertaken outside of the bird breeding season which runs from March to August, inclusive. If these features are required to be altered during the bird breeding season, then a further inspection by a suitably qualified ecologist is required no more than 24 hours before this process commences to ensure that no active nest site is illegally destroyed. If an active nest is found, an exclusion zone around the nest will be necessary to preserve this feature until the chicks have fledged the nest.

Hedgehogs: If scrub or dense vegetation is cleared between the 1st November and 31st March, then an inspection by a suitably qualified ecologist is required to ensure no hibernating hedgehogs are present on site. It is recommended that precautionary measures are incorporated if construction is undertaken at other times of the year to create provisions for hedgehogs to escape from all trenches dug into the ground. Should this information be strictly adhered to, then the development works will not negatively impact on the local mammal populations.

Site Enhancement: Any proposed site enhancements will need to ensure a Net Gain in biodiversity occurs.

Trees: An Arboricultural Survey and Report of the site has been prepared by ACS Consulting to provide a condition survey of existing trees upon the site and to identify any which are to be retained and any which can be removed due to their condition or other defects.

The site has a number of desirable specimens that have a poor relationship with the current property restricting development opportunities, however, there is a large car park which offers a number of opportunities. The structure planting is rather poor and of little value in this area. Removal of any trees can be mitigated against with a high-quality landscape scheme introducing new planting to compensate for any lost trees. The incorporation of desirable specimens and good spatial locations allied with tree protection measures should satisfy the LPA's tree protection measures and good arboricultural practice.

Landscape: A Landscape and Visual Appraisal of the site has been prepared by DSA Environment & Design. Landscape effects, with the appropriate landscape enhancement, mitigation and management, are predicted to be slight adverse during construction with the potential for some slight beneficial effects. Both the wider landscape and the site show evidence of landscape degradation and incongruous landscape features have also contributed to this. There is a major opportunity to restore the immediate setting of the development to be characteristic of the wider

landscape, creating more historically appropriate green space would help to place the buildings in a strong landscape framework.

Visual effects are predicted to be slight adverse on the visual amenity of the wider landscape, possibly changing to beneficial in places, with the implementation of the mitigation proposals. The retention of existing mature trees and screening vegetation are key to achieving low adverse effects. Establishing strong hedge boundaries to replace the degraded fenced boundaries that exist is also key.

The aim of the proposal is to restore the 'primacy' of the historic grade II listed 'old rectory' building. There are also opportunities for strengthening the green belt edge as part of a wider green infrastructure network, improving the entrance into Penkrige, more sustainable drainage and short sustainable pedestrian links to the neighbouring railway station and town centre.

Highways: a Technical Highways Report has been prepared by Edwards & Edwards Consultancy Ltd. which indicates that the TRICS analysis undertaken for the site has revealed that the existing development of the site as an hotel has the potential to generate more traffic than the proposed 64 apartments during the day and during the AM and PM peak periods.

Accordingly, the proposed development would not result in an adverse vehicular impact at the existing vehicle access or on the wider highway network either in junction capacity or highway safety terms. In the context of the NPPF, there would, therefore, be no residual impact to consider and hence no need for a Transport Assessment or Transport Statement that considers the impact of traffic on the network beyond the site boundary.

In the context of the local planning policies the information required to support a future planning application should focus on the following matters:

1. The vehicle access to the site and how this can be improved.
2. On-site parking and whether 1.5 spaces/apartment, which will be unallocated, is acceptable to the highway authority.
3. The on-site cycle parking requirements.
4. How sustainable access to and from the site can be achieved.
5. Whether a Travel Plan is required.

Noise: An Environmental Noise Assessment of the site has been undertaken by Peak Acoustics where monitoring confirmed that noise affecting the development was determined to be primarily from the adjacent rail line and station. Due to the nature or character of the external noise that will affect the proposed site, lower design limits were derived for internal noise levels. Due to the size of the proposed site and differing exposure to the rail line and station, the site was split into zones with Zone 1 being worst affected, Zone 2, and Zone 3 being less affected.

A passive ventilation strategy has been proposed due to the levels and character of noise affecting the development. This strategy permits occupants to fully close their windows whilst still maintaining thermal comfort and respite from the external noise. All habitable rooms should be provided with mechanical ventilation or an attenuated passive ventilation system which provides an open area equivalent to an open window to negate the need for open windows for the purpose of ventilation.

Drainage: At the time of writing of these representations, a Flood Risk Assessment and Draft Drainage have yet to be finalised, however, the Environment Agency's Flood Map for Planning indicates that the hotel site lies within Flood Zone 1 and is at the lowest risk of flooding from fluvial sources. Areas on the opposite side of Pinfold Lane, as does a short stretch of the highway, lie within Flood Zone 3.

In terms of the potential of flood risk from surface water, the Flood Map for Planning indicates that the site is at very low risk of flooding from such sources.

At this stage, the final design of the drainage system to be incorporated into any proposed redevelopment of the site is not known, however, it is not anticipated that this would raise any issues.

In summary, therefore, it is considered that there are no substantive technical or other policy reasons why this site could not be redeveloped in line with the principles and the above information provided in support of these representations.

Conclusions

It is acknowledged that Penkrudge, as a Tier 1 settlement, will be one of the principal focus points for new housing development within the District's Settlement Hierarchy in line with the Council's current development strategy in the Preferred Options document.

However, as has been demonstrated in these representations, there is a shortfall in the numbers of dwellings that are proposed to be allocated due to higher unmet housing needs arising from the Greater Birmingham and Black Country Housing Market Area. As such, it is considered that further housing allocations should be made through the Local Plan Review, particularly in the most sustainable locations or where they would have minimal impact upon the most sensitive locations, particularly within the Green Belt. The redevelopment of previously-developed sites in the Green Belt, and stated in the National Planning Policy Framework, should always be favoured before other, more environmentally damaging options or where they may be in less sustainable locations.

In that regard, the site of the Hatherton House Hotel in Pinfold Lane in Penkrudge is proposed as a potential housing allocation under the Local Plan Review, where we would contend that there would be no substantive planning reasons why the site could not come forward for its redevelopment in whole for housing development.

We look forward to the next stage in the preparation of the Local Plan Review and, should you have any further questions with regard to these present representations, please do not hesitate to contact us.

Yours faithfully,

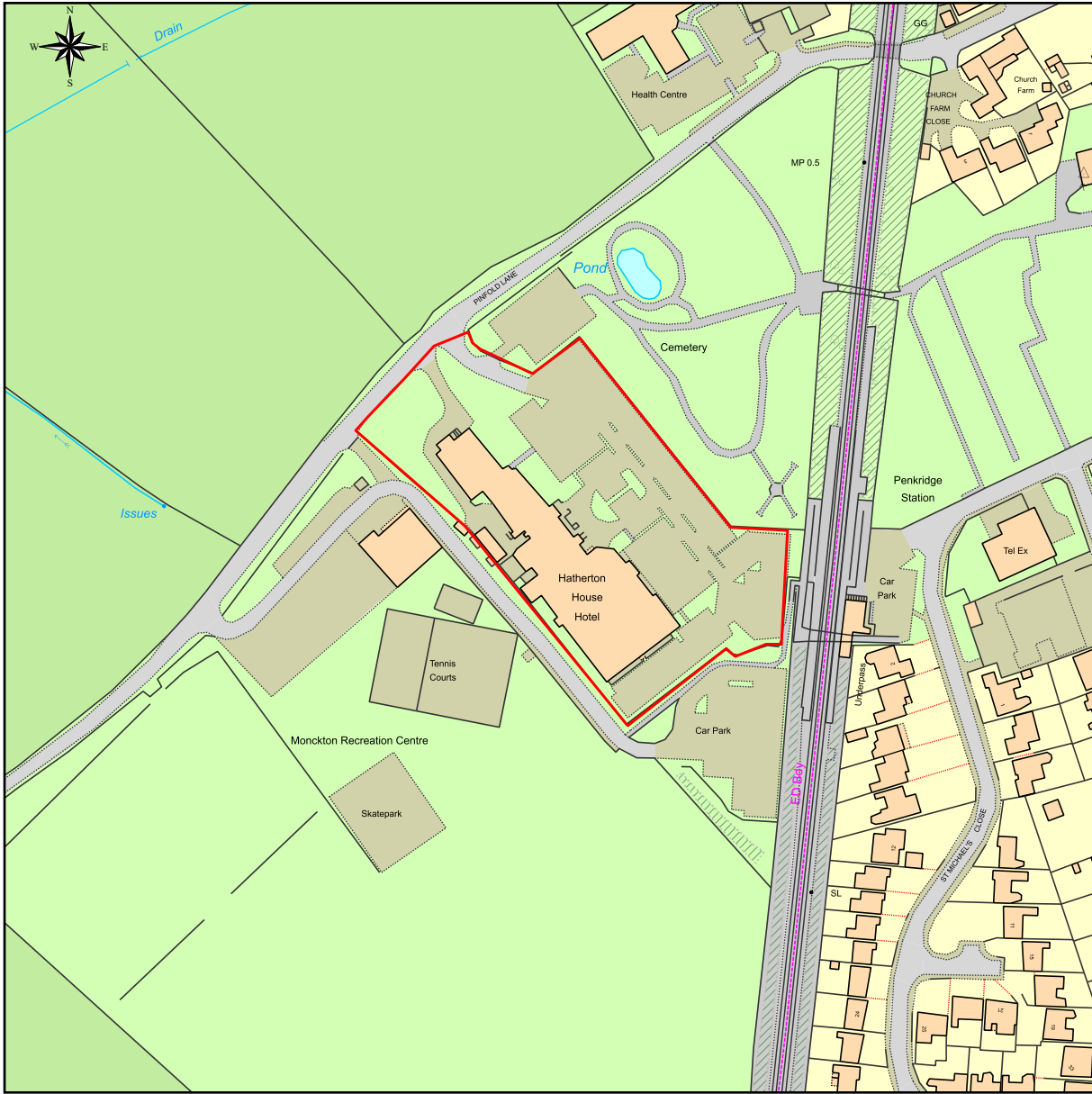
A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G. Parkes', written in a cursive style.

GRAHAM PARKES BSc (Hons) Dip TP MRTPI

Principal Planner

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Location Plan : Hatherton House Hotel, Pinfold Lane, Penkridge



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0m 25m 50m 75m 100m 125m 150m 175m 200m

Scale: 1:2500, paper size: A4

21.156



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plans

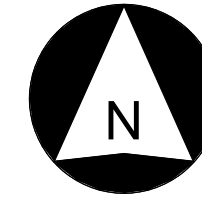
Existing hotel refurbishment:

- 1 - Studio flat
- 11 - One bed flats
- 16 - Two bed flats

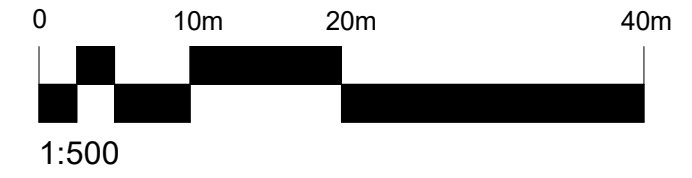
New build (tbc):

- 2 - One bed flats
- 36 - Two bed flats

92 Parking spaces in total



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B	24.01.20	Notes revised	VZ	AH
A	20.09.19	Flat 13 omitted	VZ	AH
Rev	Date	Description	By	Chk

PRELIMINARY

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Drawing title:
Site Layout

Scale(s): 1 : 500	Size: A2	First issue: 24.08.17	Drawn: VZ	Checked: AH
Job no: L1701	Drawing no: SK17	Rev: B		