



**DRAFT BOROUGH OF REDDITCH LOCAL PLAN NO.
4**

**REPRESENTATIONS ON BEHALF OF PERSIMMON
HOMES SOUTH MIDLANDS IN RESPECT OF**

LAND AT BROCKHILL EAST

MAY 2013

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1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 RPS Planning & Development (RPS) has been retained by Persimmon Homes South Midlands (Persimmon) who control land at Brockhill East, to make representations to the Draft Redditch Borough Local Plan No. 4. The land in question straddles the Borough boundary with Bromsgrove District and lies to the north-east of the recent Brockhill development (Plan RPS1). RPS1 also identifies the Borough boundary for clarity.
- 1.2 Previous representations were made on behalf of Persimmon to the Redditch Growth consultation in March 2010, a consultation which was run jointly by Redditch and Bromsgrove Councils identifying the need for a contribution of some 3,000 dwellings to be provided in Bromsgrove District on the edge of the Redditch urban area to meet the needs of the town. Representations were also made to the Redditch Revised preferred Draft Core Strategy in March 2011 in support of development at the Brockhill East location.
- 1.3 RPS has also made separate representations on behalf of Persimmon to the Housing Growth Consultation, and also to the draft Local Plan No 4 jointly with Miller Strategic Land and Southern & Regional Developments in relation to land at Brockhill West at Redditch.

Scope of representations

- 1.4 These representations are made in advance of the revocation of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy, the Orders for which were laid before Parliament in April 2013 and will come into force on 20 May 2013. However the evidence base in relation to district-level housing requirements underpinning the West Midlands RSS Phase 2 Revision remains and has some weight, having been through formal independent scrutiny and reported on by the Examination Panel in 2009.
- 1.5 The representations focus on those relevant to housing land requirements and supply, the need for Green Belt release and the policy specific to Brockhill East.

2 REPRESENTATIONS

- 2.1 This Section provides specific responses to elements of the Draft Redditch Borough Local Plan No. 4.

Policies Map

- 2.2 RPS supports the inclusion of Brockhill East as a Strategic Site on the draft Policies Map. However, it has issue on a number of counts with the representation of the allocation on the Policies Map which the Key describes, variously, as “*Sites allocated for housing development to meet the Strategic Housing Target for the period 2011-2030 (Policy 4 Housing Provision)*”, “*Sites allocated for employment development to meet the Strategic Employment Target for the period 2011-2030 (Policy 22 Employment Land Provision)*”, and “*Primarily Open Space (Policy 13 Primarily Open Space)*”.
- 2.3 First, it is considered that the land east of the railway line should form a separate allocation. This land is not only within separate control, but also has the benefit of a ‘resolution to grant’ planning permission committee decision from the Borough Council for residential and business uses.
- 2.4 Secondly, the strategic allocation site should include the area currently described as Primarily Open Space without distinguishing the uses. Part of this area is under construction for housing within the Phase 1 permitted area and the land is crossed by the western section of the Weights Lane Link road. It is Persimmon's intention that the 'Red Ditch Park' will become a public access open space area as part of the implementation of the strategic allocation. The area shown as 'Primarily Open Space' will be required in part for implementation of the necessary Sustainable Urban Drainage proposals and may also be slightly affected by necessary new roads to access the development. The current designation approach lacks consistency with the rest of the strategic allocation where there will be further very extensive areas of green space which ultimately can be identified as public open space in future plans.
- 2.5 Finally, the Community Woodland area should be excluded from the allocation. Whilst it is recognised that this area of woodland will form part of the masterplanned area and will contribute towards the overall Green Infrastructure in the greater Brockhill area, the Woodland is outside the developable area of Brockhill East; it is associated with and linked by virtue of a Section 106 Agreement, to the adjoining Oaklands development approved in the 1990s.

Key Diagram

- 2.6 The identification of the Strategic Site and Cross Boundary Housing Site in the vicinity of Brockhill is supported.

Policy 2: Settlement Hierarchy

- 2.7 Persimmon supports the general settlement hierarchy set out in the policy, however with respect the Redditch urban area and the given that cross-boundary urban extensions into the Green Belt are required for release to meet identified housing requirements, the policy should be explicit in acknowledging this. RPS suggests the following text to substitute for the second sentence of bullet one of the policy:

“As not all needs can be met within the Borough, some development will be delivered on previously identified Green Belt in Bromsgrove District adjacent to the Borough boundary in urban extensions.”

2.8 Additionally, the Reasoned Justification to the policy should be similarly explicit in the known facts that neither the urban area nor the Borough itself can appropriately accommodate Redditch's housing needs, as was recognised in the submitted West Midlands RSS Preferred Option in 2007, by the West Midlands RSS Panel in September 2009, and by the Council in 2010 in the joint ‘Redditch Growth Consultation’ published with Bromsgrove District Council.

2.9 This recognition should also extend to the need for all sites to contribute early to providing housing and necessary strategic infrastructure in order to maintain the Council's rolling 5-year housing land supply. The justification text should refer to the development strategy in Policy 3 which states that Strategic Sites can come forward immediately rather than allow a suggestion that there is an intention to phase urban sites before non-urban allocations.

Policy 3: Development Strategy

2.10 Whilst Persimmon is supportive that the policy allows Strategic Sites to come forward immediately, the first phase of the Brockhill East site is already under construction and the remainder of the land west of the railway line in Redditch Borough is the subject of constructive pre-application discussion with officers. Accordingly, it would be most appropriate for the Reasoned Justification to acknowledge this.

2.11 There is concern that the final paragraph of the policy is the only monitoring or implementation policy in the draft Local Plan (see subsequent comments on the Monitoring and Implementation section). As currently drafted the policy is not strong enough in its measures to ensure delivery of the Plan's Development Strategy; to ‘endeavour’ is merely to ‘try’ or ‘attempt’, whereas the Council will need to ensure delivery. RPS suggests that the word ‘endeavour’ is replaced by:

“..actively engage with developers...”

Policy 4: Housing Provision and Appendix 2

2.12 The West Midlands RSS Review 2 Panel recommended that housing provision for 2006-2026 within Redditch should be at least 4,000 dwellings, with an additional 3,000 provision needed to meet the needs of Redditch adjoining the town's boundary where Green Belt adjustment would be required.

2.13 It must also be noted that the NPPF seeks Local Planning Authorities to boost housing growth, i.e. not to restrain growth, and that in the absence of Regional Plans there is a duty to co-operate including within the context of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs). RPS commends the more recent co-operation between Bromsgrove and Redditch Councils in this context. However, there should be recognition within the wider Greater Birmingham & Solihull LEP that in the context of currently emerging plans, there is likely to be a housing shortfall of about 50,000 homes over the 20 year period to 2033 below the objectively assessed need, due principally to under-provision within Birmingham.

2.14 Given the reduction of the provision from that recommended in the Panel Report, and the above factors, and the need to provide sufficient new homes to meet needs, RPS suggest that the

housing requirement on the policy is stated as a minimum figure. RPS therefore suggests that paragraph 1 of Policy 4 is revised as follows:

“Provision is made for the construction and completion of at least 6,380 dwellings between 2011 and 3030 to meet the local housing requirements identified in the Strategic Housing Market Assessment.”

2.15 Persimmon considers that Policy 4 is onerous in requiring that all new residential development is expected to comply with the Lifetime Homes Standard. The issue for Persimmon is in concerns to viability in the context of other expected costs including affordable housing and infrastructure costs, including potentially a Community Infrastructure Levy.

2.16 **Appendix 2** shows that the despite active allocation of available housing sites the Council is 3,434 below strategic housing target. This is clear justification of need for cross-boundary development. Persimmon fully supports the proposed allocation of the strategic site at Brockhill East in Bromsgrove District (Site 2) to meet part of the cross-boundary requirement. In meeting Redditch's growth requirements to 2030 there will need to be a revision of the Green Belt boundary. In altering the Green Belt boundary, a permanent change should be made which addresses foreseeable future growth needs without the need to alter the boundary again at the end of the plan period. Accordingly, there should be a cross-reference in this Local Plan to the expectation that the Bromsgrove District Local Plan will both allocate land for cross-boundary growth and identify safeguarded land for longer term development needs. RPS jointly with FPCR (landscape consultants) has identified a suitable boundary through work undertaken in a Green Belt Review Study in December 2009, previously submitted to both Local Planning Authorities, which identified Weights Lane, Butlers Hill Wood and Cladshill Wood as strong containing features. It is noted that the Site 2 Proposal reflects the containment afforded by Weights Lane on its northern boundary.

Policy 6: Affordable Housing

2.17 Persimmon considers the expectation of a 30% affordable housing contribution as likely to be reasonable, subject to site-by-site viability considerations and evidence.

Policy 8: Green Belt

2.18 Persimmon supports the position that all the remaining designated Green Belt will be in the south west of the Borough. This will be consistent with the appropriate allocation for development of land to the north west of the town for planned sustainable housing led growth at Brockhill East and Brockhill West.

2.19 Persimmon welcomes the acknowledgement in the policy that the exceptional circumstances that are required to amend the Green Belt boundary have been demonstrated in the wealth of evidence demonstrating the sustainability of the Brockhill East land and its limited contribution to Green Belt purposes, as also reflected in the RPS/FPCR Green Belt Review document of December 2009.

Policy 12: Open Space provision

2.20 It is unreasonable for the policy to defer what should be a local plan policy requirement to SPD or worse to “... any other form of planning obligation the Council adopts.”. The purpose of SPD is

not to make policy but instead to add detail to enable applicants to make successful applications (NPPF paragraph 153). That the policy deregulates any future requirement to as yet unknown “planning obligation” or indeed to an as yet unspecified CIL, is quite unreasonable. The Local Plan policy should provide clear parameters which can then be elaborated in subordinate and later documents.

- 2.21 Insofar as this SPD is concerned, it is somewhat out of date having been produced to provide more detailed guidance on the Borough of Redditch Local Plan No.3 Policy R.3 ‘Provision of Informal Unrestricted Open Spaces’, Policy R.4 ‘Provision and Location of Children’s Play Areas’, and Policy R.5 ‘Playing Pitch Provision’. It has not been through independent examination and should not form the Council’s policy. If the Local Plan is to rely on CIL to enable its implementation, then the CIL documents should be consulted upon alongside the Local Plan.

Policy 13: Primarily Open Space

- 2.22 Whilst not wishing to make comment on the wording of this policy, Persimmon has concerns about the designation of part of Brockhill East Strategic Site housing allocation as Primarily Open Space (POS) as identified above in the context of the Policies Map. RPS contends that identifying this area as primarily open space outside the context of the strategic allocation site boundary is inconsistent with the aim that the Brockhill East area should be planned comprehensively. Part of the POS land is under construction for housing and the Weights Lane Link road crosses it. Logically, the remainder of the land should form public open space associated with the masterplanned Brockhill East urban extension, allowing for sustainable urban drainage measures and other necessary infrastructure including road links where appropriate. Masterplanning and development management processes will in due course be the optimal means of defining the best location for open spaces within the development.
- 2.23 It is Persimmon’s intention that the ‘Red Ditch Park’ will be delivered as public open space through the next planning application for the Brockhill East urban extension.

Policy 16: Natural Environment

- 2.24 Criteria iv and v could well be onerous and indeed unachievable for some developments. RPS suggest the substitution of the word “expected” in the first paragraph of the policy with the words **“developers will be encouraged”**, and replacement criteria as follows:

“iv. avoid any significant adverse impact on skylines and hill features, including established views of those features;

v. where possible retain existing trees (including Ancient Trees), woodlands and hedgerows:”

Policy 20: Transport Requirements for New Development

- 2.25 The requirement in criterion iv for all proposals to be located within 250 m of local services (a parade of local shops or a district centre) and a public transport link (bus stop or railway station) may not be achievable for all developments or parts of developments, either preventing otherwise exemplary schemes or rendering the policy incapable of implementation. To avoid this, RPS suggests the following rewording of the criterion:

“iv. all proposals should strive to ensure that they are located within 250m of local services ... etc.”

Policy 22: Employment Land Provision

- 2.26 Persimmon welcomes the acknowledgement that cross-boundary provision is required to make up the employment requirement.

Policy 27: Supporting Education, Training and Skills

- 2.27 It is difficult to see how the requirement on developers to educate or train local residents in essential employability skills is justified in terms of CIL Regulation 122, or indeed is implementable in development management terms. The requirement fails in terms of CIL Regulation 122 in not being:
- a. necessary to make to any development acceptable in planning terms;
 - b. directly related to the development; and
 - c. unable to be fairly and reasonably related to the scale and kind to the development.

- 2.28 RPS therefore seeks deletion of the policy.

Policy 46: Brockhill East

- 2.29 Persimmon supports the allocation of the Brockhill East Strategic Site as a sustainable urban extension to the Redditch urban area. It further supports the acknowledgement that the exceptional circumstances needed to remove the site from the Green Belt have been demonstrated. The evidence base confirms from all appropriate sustainable development assessment criteria that Brockhill East is the most suitable location for growth at Redditch given inter alia its proximity to the town centre, its use of an Area of Development Restraint, its containment by the topography, the potential for community building through relocation of the existing Holyoakes First School into the area, potential for high frequency bus services, and access to existing and planned employment. The first phase of the development is under construction and a resolution has been granted for development to the east of the railway line. Weights Lane is a logical and strong Green Belt boundary to the north of the site.
- 2.30 However, while welcoming some changes to the Strategic Site allocation policy from the previous proposal in 2011, Persimmon has some specific concerns over elements of the policy, as follows.
- 2.31 **Criterion ii:** It is unreasonable to expect that the employment development should be delivered concurrently with the other phased development as it would not be viable to build speculative employment premises, putting at risk delivery of housing in the quantities the Plan envisages. RPS suggests that an appropriate approach would be to require serviced employment land to be provided concurrently or in phases to match housing delivery and for the employment land to be actively marketed, as has been applied for the first permitted development phase at Brockhill East.
- 2.32 **Criterion ix:** Persimmon objects to the reference to the Green Infrastructure Concept Statement (in the policy and the reasoned justification), a document that has not been published and is not

available for comment. Either references should be deleted from the Local Plan or the reasoned justification could signal the Council's intention to prepare it to guide development proposals.

- 2.33 That the policy makes no mention of the draft Primarily Open Space allocation on the site is supported. Objections to this designation on the Brockhill East allocation on the Policies' Map and to Policy 13 explain that the detailed open space disposition on the site should be determined at the master-planning stage when public access can also be addressed.

Monitoring & Implementation

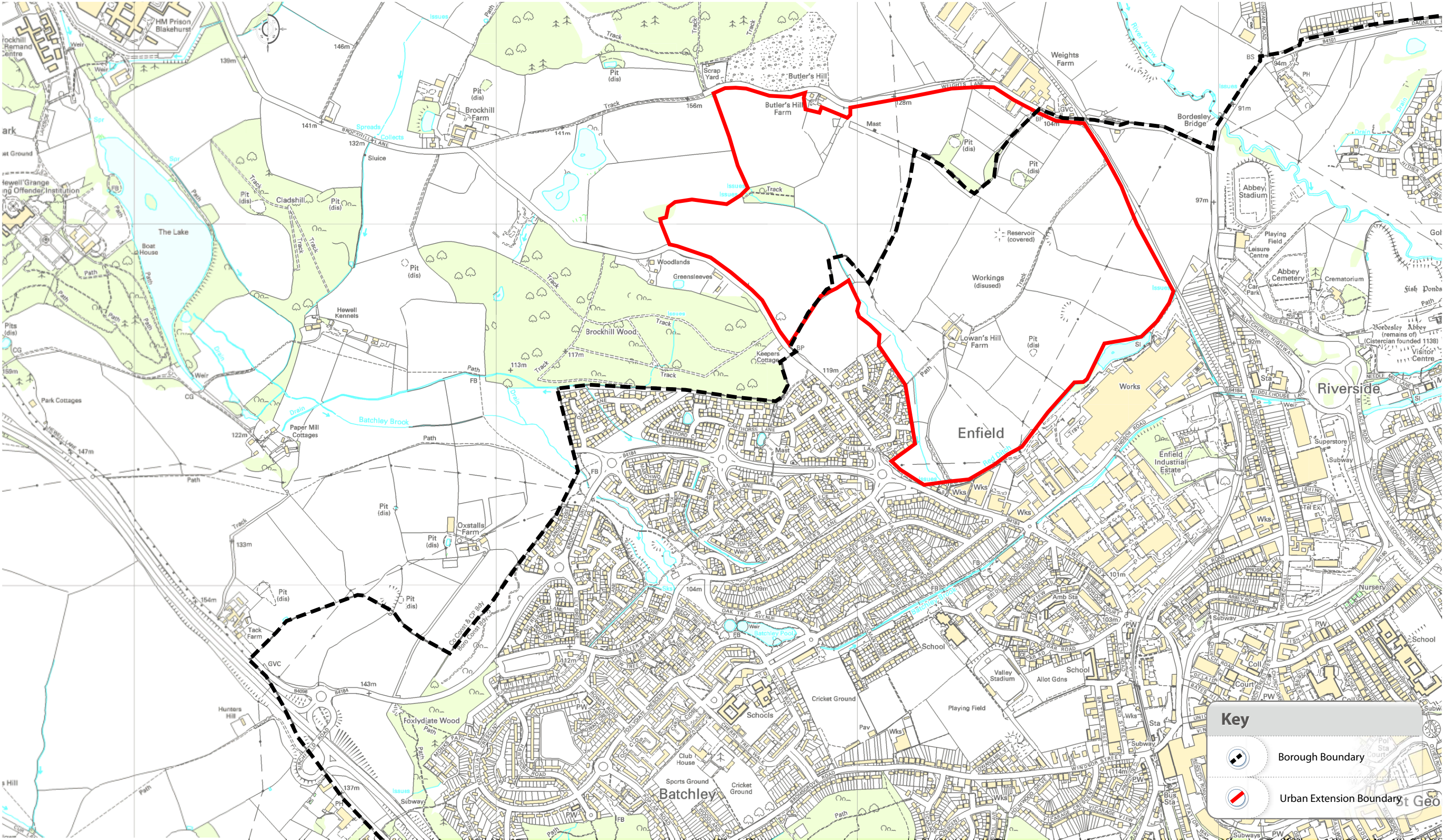
- 2.34 The implementation of the Local Plan is crucial to the health and well-being of the local population; it therefore warrants a Local Plan policy that sets out the actions that will be taken not only to monitor delivery but also to set out the circumstances when it will be judged that a partial or total review of the plan will be undertaken.

3 CONCLUSIONS

- 3.1 RPS and Persimmon Homes fully supports the identification of Brockhill East as a Strategic Site in the Draft Borough of Redditch Local Plan No. 4. albeit subject to amendments with regard the area identified as Primarily Open Space and to the community woodland.
- 3.2 Brockhill East has been appropriately identified as a highly sustainable urban extension proposed strategic allocation to meet the objectively assessed housing growth needs of Redditch. The location benefits from close proximity to the town centre, good access to existing and proposed employment, good topographical containment, clear scope for effective community planning given the proposed relocation of Holyoakes First School into the heart of the site, and the ability to serve the development with a high frequency bus service.
- 3.3 The first phase of the Brockhill East site is already under construction and the remaining land to the west of the railway line in Redditch Borough is the subject of constructive pre-application discussion with planning officers.
- 3.4 Persimmon also supports the acknowledgment given to cross-boundary land requirements and to the fact that the exceptional circumstances needed to remove the site from the Green Belt have been demonstrated.
- 3.5 The proposals can be successfully extended in the future to the north west in Bromsgrove District for which land should be excluded from the Green Belt and safeguarded for potential longer term growth, for which the NPPF provides in the context of Green Belt policies, following on from PPG2.
- 3.6 Accordingly, the Local Plan should express the expectation that the Bromsgrove District Local Plan will allocate land for cross-boundary housing growth to the extent of some 600 to 670 dwellings by 2030 and also will identify safeguarded land for longer-term development needs.
- 3.7 Detailed comments have been made on a number of policies including Policy 46 on the Brockhill East strategic site and the Policies Map. The identified area of Primarily Open Space forming the aspirational 'Red Ditch Park' should be subsumed within the strategic site allocation whereby the Park can be realised as public access open space for the first time in conjunction with the planned development alongside other green space within the development through the masterplanning process.
- 3.8 These representations are commended to Redditch Borough Council. RPS and Persimmon remain committed to working constructively with the Council to bring the Brockhill East proposal forward to the benefit of the wider area.

APPENDIX 1

Site Location Plan RPS1



SCALE: NTS