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Planning Policy & Strategy Team  
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20 March 2017

Dear Sirs

## **SHROPSHIRE PARTIAL LOCAL PLAN REVIEW AND CALL FOR SITES EXERCISE**

### **WOODHOUSE ESTATE, OSWESTRY**

We write to submit representations on behalf of The Woodhouse Estate in response to the Local Plan Partial Review Issues and Strategic Options Consultation (March 2017) and Call for Sites Exercise.

The partial review seeks views on the key issues and strategic options including; housing requirement, strategies for employment growth and delivering development in rural settlements.

The Call for Sites is a request for potential development sites to be submitted to the council for consideration within the Strategic Land Availability Assessment.

The purpose of these representations is to:

- (a) demonstrate that the Rednal Industrial Estates can be extended and infilled to provide additional employment land to expand the choice of sites to meet demand in Shropshire; and
- (b) demonstrate that the settlements of Grimpo, Rednal and Haughton are suitable for designation as a cluster to accommodate housing growth for meeting Shropshire's housing needs and to contribute to the retention and enhancement of existing services, facilities and employment.

### **Background**

The Rednal Industrial Estates are to the southeast of Oswestry off the A5 Strategic Road Network. These are part of Woodhouse Estate and have around 60 commercial units split across the two sites Site A and Site B. The sites are successful and are at capacity and there is strong demand for the scale and specification of units on offer.

A proportion of the commercial space is more than two thirds of a century old and therefore requires redevelopment to meet current standards.

The settlements of Rednal, Haughton and Grimpo are located close to the industrial estates, there has been little growth in the settlements for many years but demand for housing in this location is strong in part due to the success of the industrial estate. There are amenities and services in the nearby settlement of West Felton and in the wider area.

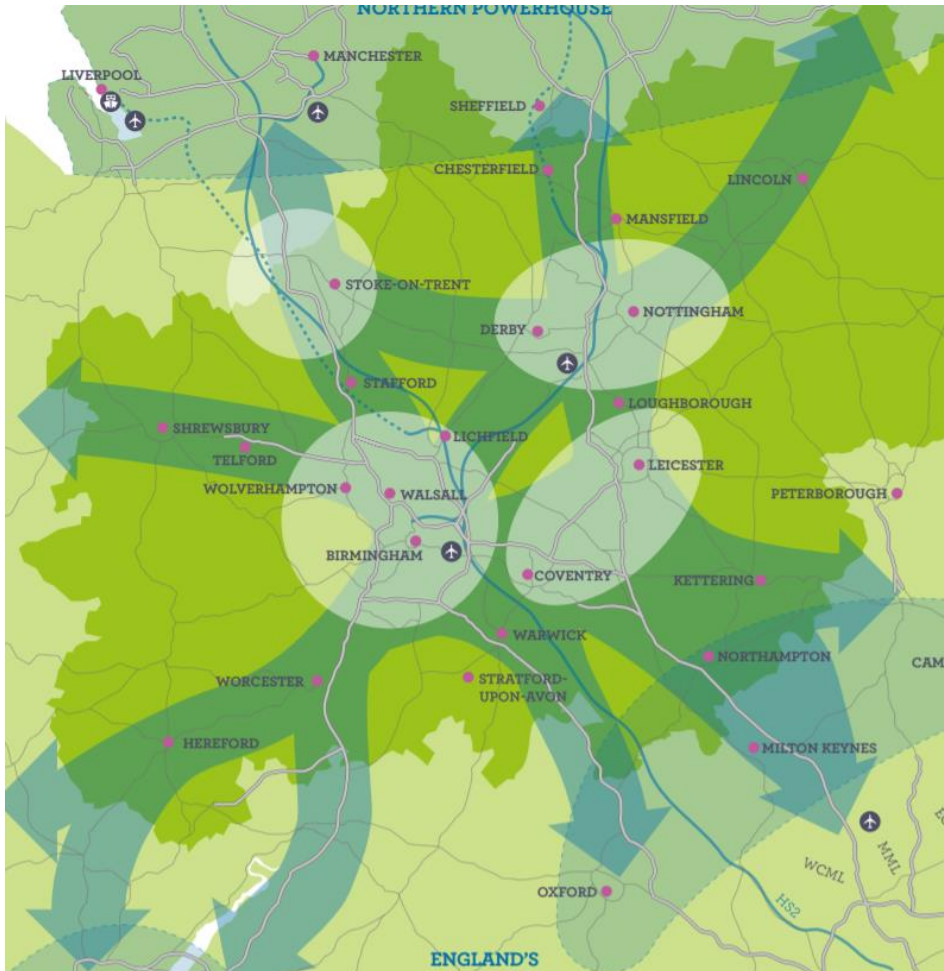
### **Strategic objectives of the Local Plan review**

The strategic objectives of the Local Plan review which are relevant to these representations are as follows;

- Ensure a deliverable Development Plan for Shropshire which secures a five year land supply for both housing and employment development and maintains local planning control over decision making, in accordance with the policies in the Local Plan;
- Support rural communities through the delivery of local housing and employment opportunities appropriate to the role, size and function of each settlement (Core Strategy Objective 3);
- Promote sustainable economic development and growth by providing a flexible and responsive supply of employment land and premises, and the development of further/higher education and training opportunities, to support business development, satisfy the changing needs and demands of the Shropshire economy, promote inward investment, and help generate skilled, well paid employment opportunities (Core Strategy Objective 6).

### **Midlands Connect**

Rednal Industrial Estates are located within an “intensive growth corridor” identified as part of the Midlands Connect Strategy. The strategy establishes a spatial framework for investment in order to maximise the benefits of HS2.



Source: Midlands Connect Strategy: Powering the Midlands Engine

Oswestry is also identified as the location of a strategic growth site in the Midlands and the Marches LEP. Strategic investment is targeted towards the Oswestry Innovation Park, the development and success of the new strategic employment site to the west of Oswestry will be dependent on a supply of incubator units to feed it. Rednal is close to the A5 (Strategic Road Network) and 4.7 miles from the Oswestry Innovation Park and other employment sites to the west of Oswestry and therefore well placed to provide the incubator units that are required.

### Employment Land Review

Shropshire Council last undertook an employment land review in 2009. The report assesses the demand for and the supply of employment land and premises (Use Class B) in the borough in April 2009 and the need for new employment land provision for the period to 2026.

Within the ELR the land which makes up the existing industrial estate is

included as part of the Employment Areas Assessment and identified as 'making a contribution' towards the employment land supply. The assessment indicates the quality of the land and the capability to accommodate the different types of occupier.

The employment areas are graded A\*- C. The Rednal Industrial Estate was rated 'C' the lowest grade. Grade C are described as often low cost employment space found in rural areas where function comes before form. These units are still recognised as an important part of the portfolio and offer rural diversification opportunities.

The assessment found that the estate was suitable for 'general industry / business area' and 'incubator / SME cluster sites'.

The employment land review follows the ODPM guidance notes which promote a three stage process for identifying employment land. Stage three involves reviewing the existing portfolio of land and identifying gaps in this portfolio. Additional sites should therefore be allocated, if necessary, to fill these gaps.

The Employment Land Review found that in the North West of the county there was a shortage of readily available land. Furthermore the ELR goes on to state that economic development in rural areas is better served by property led development rather than land availability because of economic viability issues associated with new build costs and low rental returns.

Whilst the ELR is not considered to be up to date it provides an insight into employment land provision within Shropshire. The proposed extension to the industrial estate is a direct, market led response from the site owners who see the potential of creating more commercial space at the site. This in turn addresses the lack of readily available land in the north west of the county.

### **Extension of the Rednal Industrial Estate**

In accordance with the following strategic objective the owners of the site seek the extension of the Rednal Industrial Estate to provide a further supply of employment premises;

Promote sustainable economic development and growth by providing a flexible and responsive supply of employment land and premises, and the development of further/higher education and training opportunities, to support business development, satisfy the changing needs and demands of the Shropshire economy, promote inward investment, and help generate skilled, well paid employment opportunities (Core Strategy Objective 6)

The land will provide industrial and business space similar in scale to that already provided within the existing industrial estate – albeit modern and efficient buildings.

Plans are attached to this letter showing the proposed extent of the employment sites proposed for allocation.

The owners have seen considerable demand for the existing units and therefore are confident that there will be similar demand for additional units. Both sites are full and enquiries have been turned away since January. There is a clearly a demand for units at this location. The units range from 26 sqm to 1,040 sqm. A letter of support from the owners confirming the demand for units is attached with this letter.

The Rednal Industrial Estate acts as an incubator for businesses in Oswestry. Historically many business start-ups based at Rednal have relocated to Oswestry after becoming established.

The allocation of this land for employment use will satisfy the above objective of the local plan. The extension to the existing industrial estate will provide flexible employment land and premises which will support local business development and the demands of the Shropshire economy.

Furthermore the allocation of the site is in accordance with Core Strategy Policy CS13 – Economic Development, Enterprise and Employment which places emphasis on the following points considered relevant to the site;

- Promoting Shropshire as a business investment location and a place for a range of business types to start up, invest and grow, recognising the economic benefits of Shropshire’s environment and quality of life as unique selling points which need to be valued, conserved and enhanced; and
- Planning and managing a responsive and flexible supply of employment land and premises comprising a range and choice of sites in appropriate locations to meet the needs of business.

#### Exploiting Investment Opportunities (issues options Q6)

The choice and diversity of Shropshire’s employment is key to ensuring the optimum conditions for economic growth. The last ELR recognises the importance of rural Grade C employment land. The expansion of the Rednal sites will provide incubator units to feed the strategic sites at the main centres of employment at Shrewsbury and Oswestry.

The expansion of established employment sites is a sustainable approach to growth as existing infrastructure is established and the presence of existing businesses attracts similar complementary supply chain related businesses.

#### Economic Option (issues options Q8)

Option 2 of the issues and options proposal is most appropriate as it proposes to diversify the employment offer as a principal means of boosting the economically active population from in-migration and by drawing people into or retaining them in employment within the County.

### Future of existing buildings and structures

Many of the buildings at the Rednal Industrial Estates were built during the second world war and need considerable improvement / replacement. The expansion of the industrial estate will provide a return on investment that can be re-invested into the existing units to secure long-term viability.

### **Allocation of Rednal, Grimpo and Haughton as a Cluster in the Local Plan (issues options Q13)**

Policy CS4 of the Core Strategy says:

In the rural area, communities will become more sustainable by allowing development in Community Hubs and Community Clusters that helps rebalance rural communities by providing facilities, economic development or housing for local needs, and is of a scale that is appropriate to the settlement;

The supporting text to Policy CS4 confirms that rather than abandoning settlements that have lost services as perpetually 'unsustainable', this approach seeks to improve the sustainability of rural settlements and their hinterlands, even those that start from a low base. This is key to the rural rebalance

The issues and options Local Plan Review consultation document says that monitoring shows that the current strategic distribution of growth – rural rebalance – that focuses 35% of overall housing requirement in the rural area is working effectively.

At this level of growth there will be a need for additional development in rural settlements. One way of achieving this level of growth would be to establish additional hubs and clusters in rural areas. The success of the employment sites at Rednal is leading to an increased demand for homes close to the employment site. The designation of Grimpo, Haughton and Rednal would contribute to the sustainability of the employment site (by giving people the opportunity to work closer to their employment) and would allow reinvestment by the Woodhouse Estate into the industrial site to make improvements to the existing stock of commercial units.

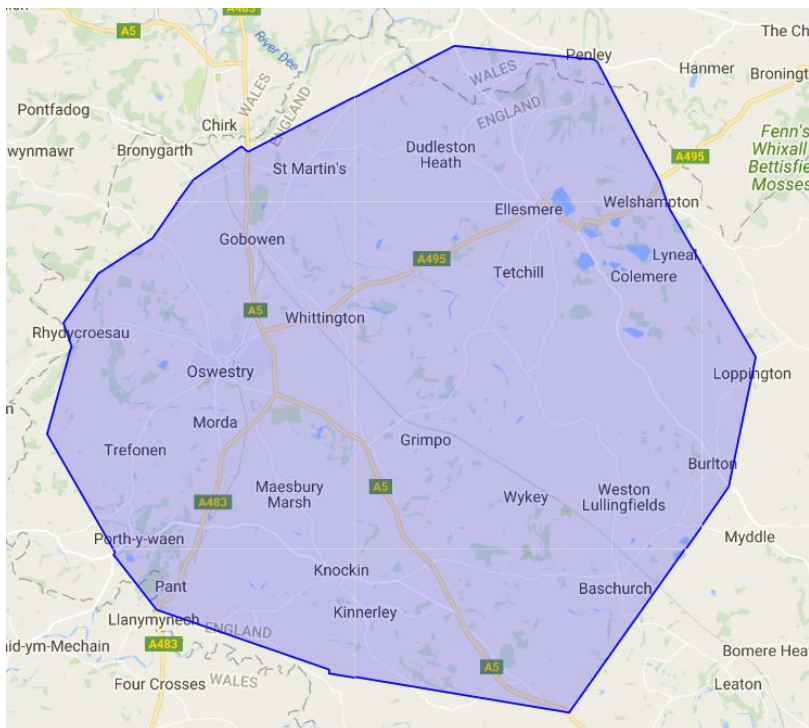
### Suitability of proposed cluster

West Felton Parish Area includes good transport links, services and amenities. The services and amenities are dependent on increased housing growth. Sustainable housing growth at Grimpo, Haughton and Rednal will help to maintain and enhance existing services and amenities. Paragraph 55 of the NPPF acknowledges that development in rural areas can support services and urges that it should be located where it can maintain and enhance the vitality of rural communities.

The designation of Haughton, Rednal and Grimpo as a cluster is in keeping with the objectives of the core strategy by enhancing vitality of the rural community. There is also an identified demand for housing in this location and the growth will contribute to the economy of the rural area.

### Accessibility and Connectivity

The distance from services, facilities and employment is one of several factors to be considered in determining whether the settlements of Grimpo, Haughton and Rednal should be designated as a cluster.



Twenty minute drive time of the proposed cluster

The proposed cluster is approximately 2 miles from the no70 Shrewsbury to Oswestry bus route which has regular services Monday to Saturday. The cluster is approximately 2 miles from the local centre of West Felton and twenty minutes drive time from Oswestry, Baschurch, Ellesmere, Gobowen and Whittington.

The proposed cluster is close to major employment centres: Oswestry (4 miles); Robert Jones Agnes Hunt (6 miles); ABP (4 miles), and the Rednal Industrial Estates are on the doorstep of the proposed cluster. 50 to 60 businesses currently trade from the industrial sites and there is demand from the owners of businesses based at Rednal for dwellings in the local area.

There is a network of walkable (and rideable (also by bicycle)) paths in the area under the Natural England Permissive Access scheme which connect to the

wider network of established rights of way including the canal towpath.

#### Cluster Socio-economic benefits

Development of housing in the cluster will bring several social, economic and environmental benefits to the local community, including:

- Provision of a mix of housing, included much needed family homes to help address the needs of existing residents and the forecast requirements Shropshire over the next 20 years;
- Enabling new families and young couples to move into the area and diversifying the ageing population dynamic;
- New affordable housing to help address local affordability issues;
- Injection of significant expenditure from new residents to support existing local shops and services;
- Increased council tax funding to facilitate the council in continually improving on existing services, facilities and infrastructure; and
- Generation of community infrastructure levy and new homes bonus monies for the council and parish council.

#### Community Engagement

The Woodhouse Estate intends to fully engage with West Felton Parish Council concerning the proposal to allocate the proposed cluster.

#### **Deliverability of Employment and Housing Land**

Paragraph 47 of the NPPF requires local planning authorities to use their evidence base to ensure that their Local Plan meets the full objectively assessed needs for market and affordable housing in the housing market area. In doing so, it is required to identify and update annually a supply of specific 'deliverable' (see below) sites sufficient to provide five years' worth of housing against their housing requirements. Additionally, to identify a supply of specific, 'developable' (see below) sites or broad locations for growth, for years 6-10 and, where possible, for years 11-15.

To be considered deliverable, sites should be available now, offer a suitable location for development now, and be achievable with a realistic prospect that housing will be delivered on the site within five years and in particular that development of the site is viable. The accompanying Planning Practice Guidance (paragraph 031) makes it clear that planning permission or allocation in a development plan is not a prerequisite for a site being deliverable in terms of the five year supply.

To be considered developable, sites should be in a suitable location for housing development and there should be a reasonable prospect that the site is available and could be viably developed at the point envisaged.



Land at Grimpo, Rednal and Haughton is deliverable for housing and land at Rednal Industrial Estates is deliverable for employment on the following basis:  
Available

- The site is being promoted by Woodhouse Estate and is available for development immediately. The land is vacant. The current use is agricultural.
- There are no known external factors that would render sites unavailable.
- There are no land ownership issues that would prevent sites from being brought forward immediately for development.
- The Woodhouse Estate would seek to start developing the site immediately, which would contribute considerably to the local authority's 5 year housing and employment land supply and deliver highly anticipated new homes early in the Plan period.

#### Suitable

Land available for development adjoins the settlements proposed within the cluster and the Rednal Industrial estates. The sites are well connected to services, facilities, employment and public transport links.

There are no environmental factors that would render the site as unsuitable for residential development. Additional survey work will be carried out during the local plan review process to provide evidence of this.

The development of employment and residential land will help support the future viability and availability of existing services and facilities in the parish in keeping with the Core Strategy rural rebalance objectives of the Core Strategy.

The site is therefore considered to be suitable in accordance with the requirements as set out in the NPPF

#### Achievable

Woodhouse Estate intends to develop the commercial land itself and either develop the houses itself or as a joint venture with local developers. There is a therefore a realistic likelihood that a viable development could be brought forward. There are no known constraints to development of the land available for employment and residential development.

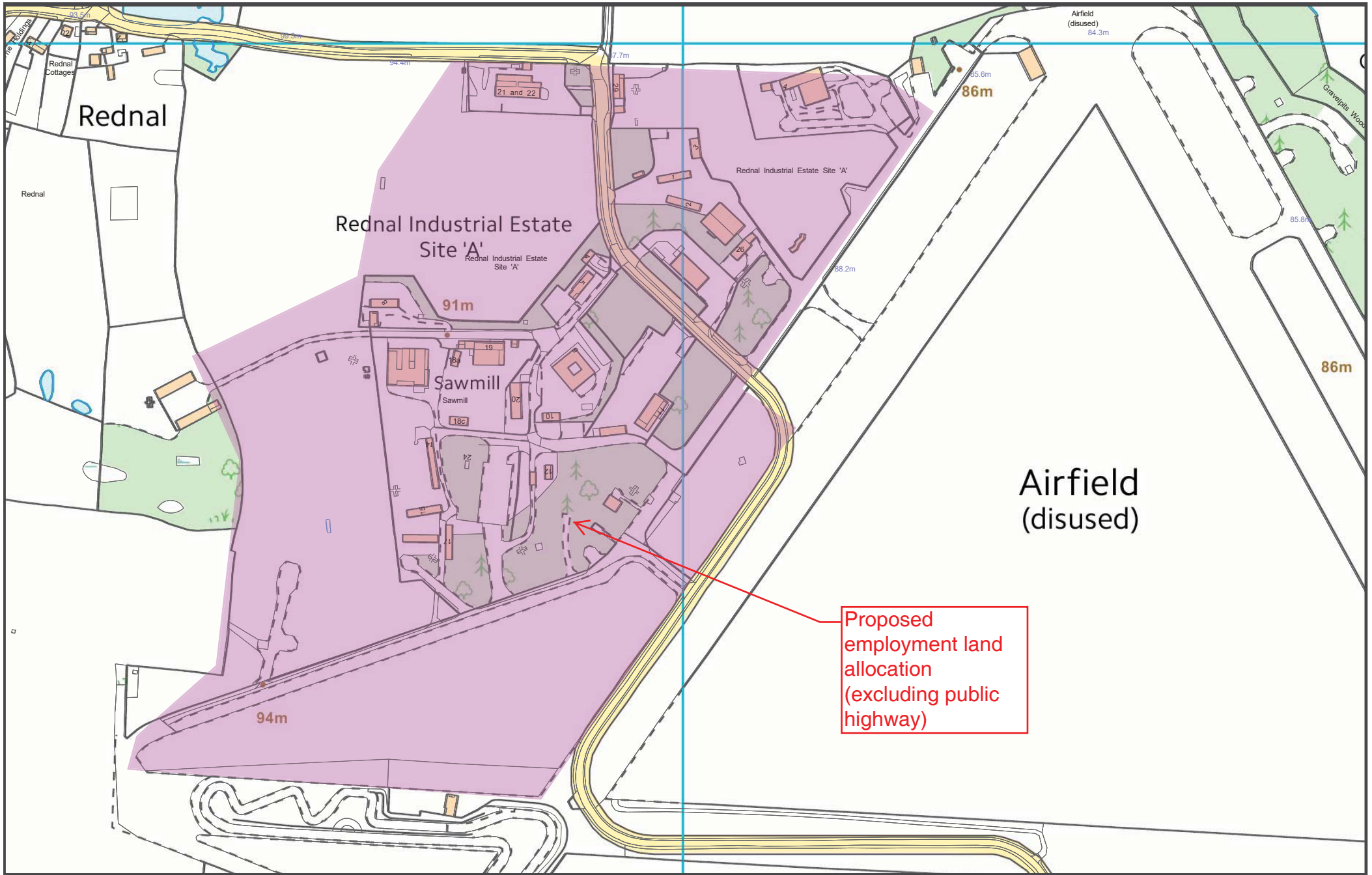
Yours faithfully

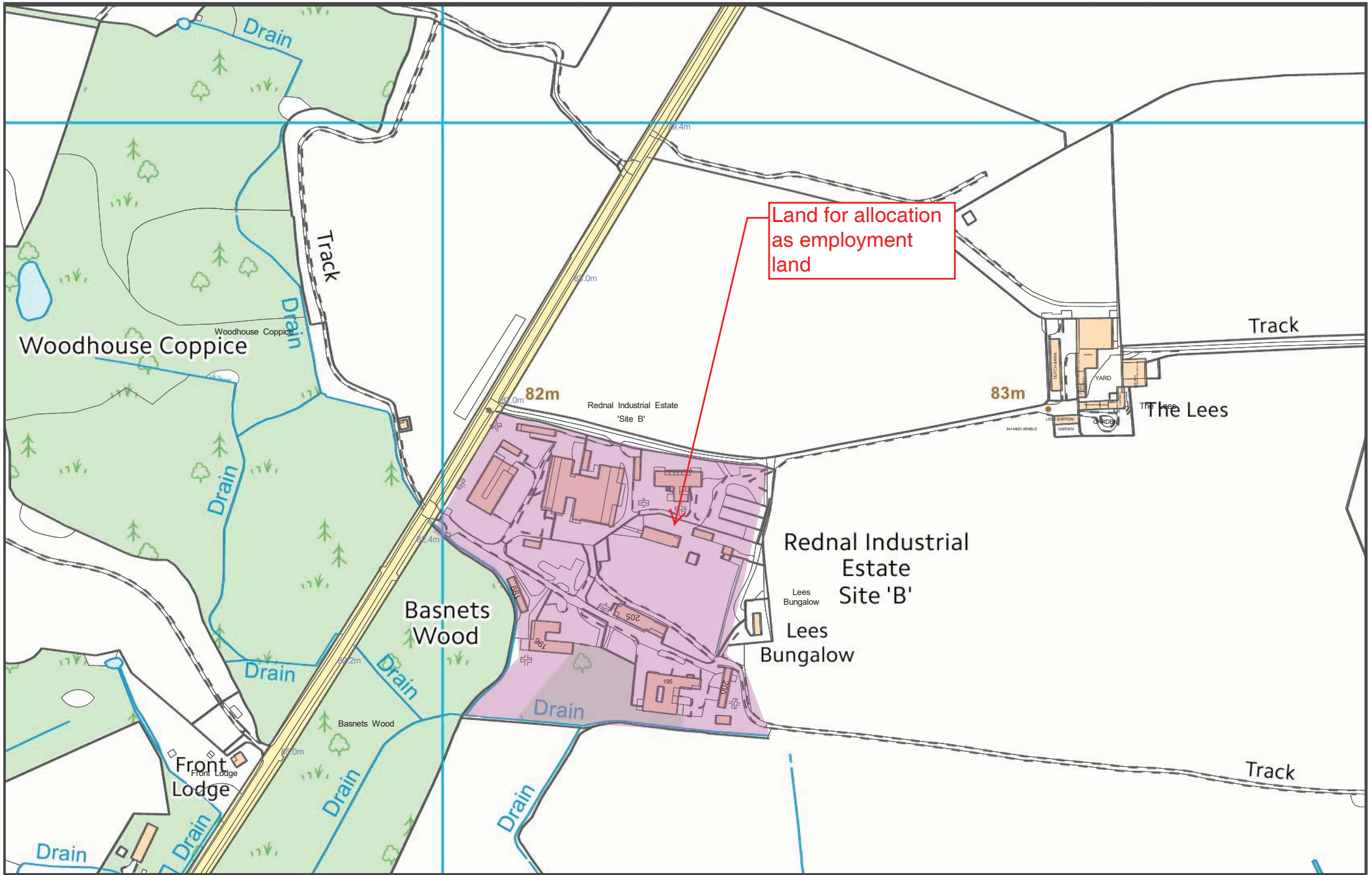
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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Guy Maxfield', written in a cursive style.

Guy Maxfield

Enc: Plans of proposed Employment Land at Rednal  
Letter of support from owners of Rednal industrial estate





# Woodhouse Estate

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Oswestry

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To Whom it May Concern

We are writing as owners of an estate in the vicinity of Oswestry which includes grassland and farmland, both in-hand and let; woodland, some 25 residential let properties and around 60 commercial units situated on two industrial sites. It has been some time since we had any properties unoccupied for any longer than a month, and despite not running any active marketing campaigns, as we have been fully let for so long, we still receive weekly enquiries for units, and have regular enquiries for residential properties.

We are confident that there is abundant demand and that we would quickly let any new commercial or residential units. We get the most enquiries for smaller commercial units and would ideally like to build units ranging from 1,000-5,000 sq ft in equal proportions to cater for the demand. For residential properties enquiries are usually from couples and therefore 2-3 bed affordable homes would meet demand.

Rednal is a popular location for both small business and residential tenants as it offers all the benefits of rural living, with quick access to the A5 and beyond. We are on a cycle route, adjacent to canal tow path, and have permissive rights of way along many field margins. We also have an excellent local shop at West Felton, offering a Post Office and parcel collection service. The pub at Queens Head is thriving and has recently been shortlisted for a prize for its food. There are good local primary, secondary, colleges and private schools all within a few miles. Several of our commercial tenants are residential tenants, and more would like to be so if there were opportunity. There are good options for employment for others at local large employers such as ABP and Kronospan, as well as the plethora of business in Oswestry town and on the main industrial sites surrounding it. The local train station at Gobowen has good national links, and we are well under an hour away from two international airports.

Our industrial estates offer local small businesses affordable space with good access to the A5. Many of our tenants trade with other local businesses and we have a strong internal supply chain whereby they use the services of other tenants.

The estate is in partnership with a Shropshire micro-ISP who provide tenants with affordable wireless 'Air-to-Air' broadband internet with speeds up to 50Mbps.

Having successfully installed a biomass heating system at one location on the Estate, we are keen to look at further renewable schemes such as district heating from biomass and greywater recycling.