
Heritage assessment of local plan site allocations for Rugby Borough Council

Addendums to: Site 121 Land at Walsgrave Hill

April 2026 (Addendum A), August 2026 (Addendum B)

Node was originally appointed in November 2024 to support Rugby Borough Council (RBC) in the baseline review of a selection of sites nominated for allocation within the emerging local plan.

Two elements of additional commentary and assessment were requested following submission of further representations, evidence and information in respect of Site 121 'Land at Walsgrave Hill'.

The first of April 2026 addresses:

- Representations from Historic England
- Submissions of evidence from the site promotor of April 2026 including:
 - Illustrative landscape and mitigation strategy (BCA Design; UMC Architects)
 - Verified views and Zones of Theoretical Visibility (BCA Design)
 - Heritage and landscape analysis/technical note (BCA Design & Stantec)

The additional commentary focused on the substantive matter as to whether the submitted evidence demonstrated potential for heritage harms to be sufficiently mitigated, and enhancements suitably achieved for the site to be justifiably allocated for the proposed development form and quantum. Specifically, whether it has been sufficiently evidenced that there was potential for such a scheme to be compliant with the heritage policies of National Planning Policy Framework, and that the local planning authority can fulfil their statutory duties within Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990.

The second of August 2026 provides comment on the submission of a detailed assessment of the setting of Coombe Abbey, and the contributions made by it and, in turn, the site to significance (Marrons August 2026).

The following note provides commentary in response to these submissions. It does not supersede the original assessment, which, on review, is considered to remain valid. That original assessment is repeated first and verbatim, for ease of cross reference.

Original Assessment (March 2025)

121: Land at Walsgrave Hill

Site reference: 121

Parish: Ansty, Coombe Fields

Ward: Revel and Binley Woods

Grid reference: 439491, 280573

Current use: Agricultural

Proposed use: Employment

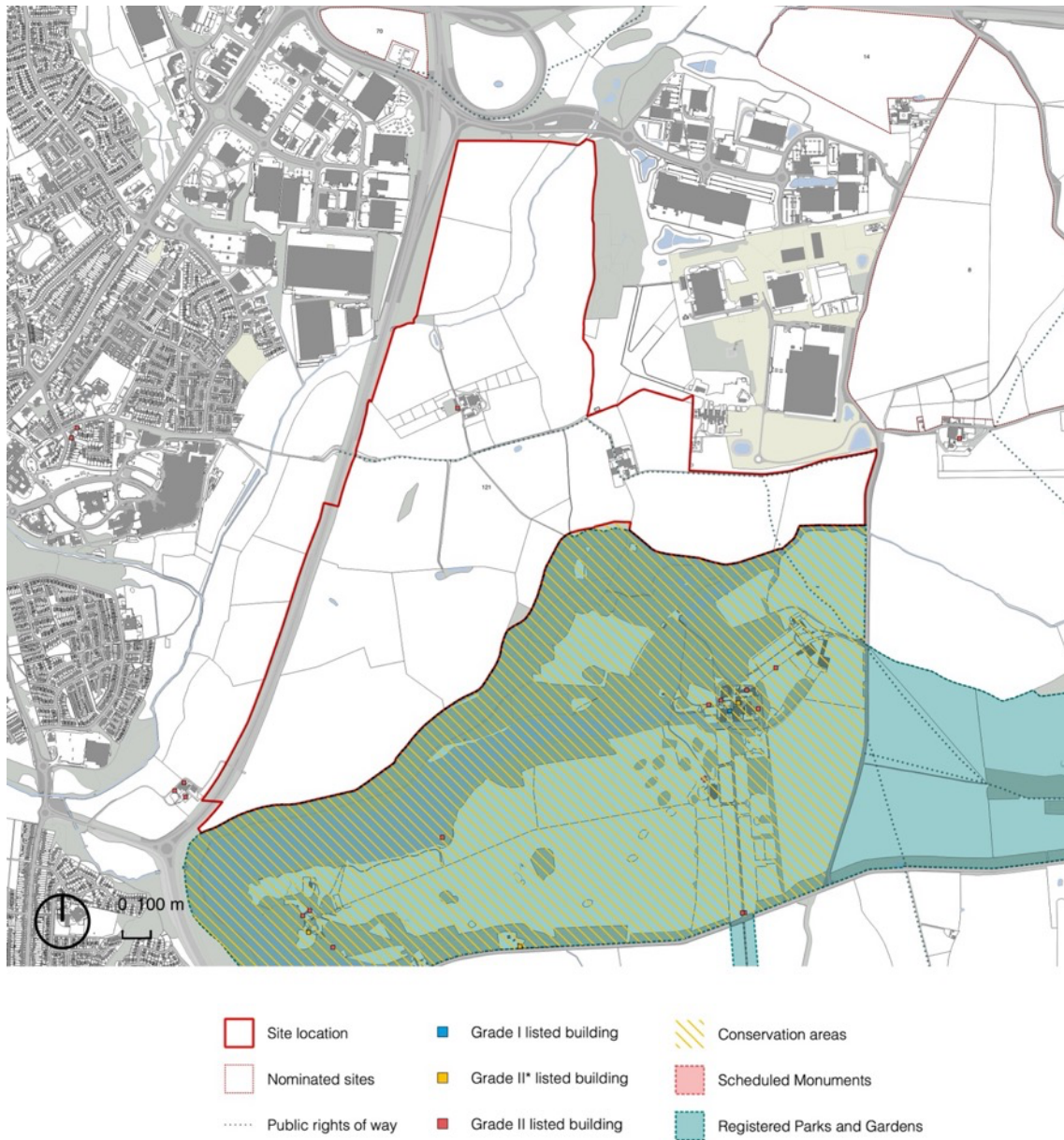
Summary

The site is located east of Coventry and to the far west of the historic settlement of Brinklow. It includes Walsgrave Hill Farmhouse, a late 18th-century grade II listed building. The site is also adjacent to the grade II* Coombe Abbey Registered Park and Garden, and the Coombe Abbey Conservation Area.

The northern boundary of the Registered Park and Garden offers open views across the site, which is formed of agricultural land interspersed with historic farmsteads. The site is also bisected by a public right of way, offering views towards Coventry city centre and the surrounding countryside. However, modern developments, including industrial sheds and the M6 motorway, intrude into the landscape, and have begun to erode at the setting of the Registered Park and Garden, and the historic farmsteads.

Key concerns include the further encroachment of modern development into the setting of Coombe Abbey and the historic farmsteads, and the erosion of the tranquil setting of the park which is a primary feature of its significance.

To mitigate harm, any development should be concentrated away from the Registered Park and Garden's boundary, and a robust mitigation strategy delivered including planting and cut and fill exercises. The restoration of historic farm buildings and their integration into the site, enhanced screening, and sensitive design could also help mitigate impacts. The design should reflect local precedents, and the public rights of way should be improved to strengthen connections with the surrounding historic landscape.



Site location and designated heritage assets

Heritage context

The site is located to the east of Coventry, and to the far west of the historic settlement of Brinklow.

There is one listed building within the site: Walsgrave Hill Farmhouse (grade II listed, NHLE reference: 1233531). The farmhouse originates from the late 18th century and is two storeys, plus an attic, constructed of brick with gabled dormers. The site comprises an important element of its setting, providing open views across the countryside. However, the industrial development to the east has already begun to alter this setting and is intrusive to the backdrop of the farmhouse.

The entire southern boundary of the site borders with the grade II* Coombe Abbey Registered Park and Garden (NHLE 1000408), and the Coombe Abbey Conservation Area.

The registered park and garden and conservation area is a late 18th century park landscaped by Lancelot Brown, together with mid-and late- 19th century formal gardens, which incorporate elements of late 16th and early 17th century formal gardens.

The registered park and garden listing description notes that the land to the west, north and north-east is agricultural, and that there are “*views across the surrounding agricultural land to the north and north-east from within the site.*” It is also noted that a former drive extended west-north-west across agricultural land and parkland to reach the house. However, this drive had been removed by the late 19th century.

The informal pleasure grounds are the part of the registered park and garden which border the site’s southern extent. Comprised of areas of lawn and woodland planting with 19th and 20th century specimen trees and shrubs, with larger groups of ornamental trees and conifers to the north-east. The listing description notes that “*the pleasure grounds are today significantly simplified and reduced in area than shown on William Miller’s plan of 1897.*” Areas of park also lie to the north-west of the house; these areas remain pasture with scattered trees and more extensive areas of plantation.

From within the northern boundary of the registered park and garden, views outwards are generally well-contained. As a result of this, within the registered park and garden boundary, there is a clear sense of isolation and separation from the nearby urban context of Coventry. However, there are sporadic and open views across open countryside as one travels throughout the parkland. The mid to eastern sections of the northern boundary of the registered park and garden have experienced some infringement of views out to the surrounding countryside by the industrial sheds which have been constructed, including the Rolls Royce facility. It should be noted, however, that this visibility is seasonal and would be better screened in the summer months.

The conservation area character appraisal notes that “*the wider countryside setting is at times read in conjunction with the land within the conservation area; at other times the impact of the surrounding land is limited by the enclosure created by planting*”.

Within the registered park and garden are a number of listed buildings, including Coombe Abbey (grade I listed, NHLE reference: 1233485) and other associated structures including the stable block, tennis courts and cottages. These buildings are well screened from the site, and are not visible from the surrounding public right of way network.

The site itself is comprised of agricultural land, interspersed with a small number of historic farmsteads, including the listed Walsgrave Hill.

It is bisected by a public right of way which runs east-west through the middle. Much of its trajectory follows an informal access track which leads to Walsgrave Hill Farmhouse. It is situated on a plateau

in the land, with views afforded back down towards Coombe Abbey to the south, with its woodland boundary and specimen trees alluding to its designed landscape.

Views are also afforded from this public right of way across to the industrial sheds to the east, and over open countryside, with Coventry city centre and its cathedral spire visible in the far distance to the west.

The topography of the site drops in level to the north and south from the public right of way and Walsgrave Hill Farmhouse. The presence of urban form, both from the industrial sheds and Coventry city centre is generally established in many of these views.

The site's northern boundary is defined by the M6 and a road network leading to the industrial park, which bounds much of the site's eastern boundary. To the west is the A46 road network.

Close to the site's south-western boundary is a historic farmstead comprised of a cluster of listed buildings, including: Hungerley Hall Farmhouse (grade II listed, NHLE reference: 1265694), Barn north of Hungerley Hall Farmhouse (grade II listed, NHLE 1226789), and Granary, Cowshed and Stable Range (grade II listed, NHLE reference: 1265638). These buildings have group value and make an important contribution to the rural setting of the site, and of Coombe Abbey. However, these buildings have been severed from the site, and their setting altered significantly due to the Coventry Eastern Bypass/A46 which runs adjacent to the farmstead, and along the western boundary of the site.

The site's wider setting is characterised by views to Coventry city centre to the far west, including glimpses of its famous 'Three Spires' landmarks. To the north is the M6, and to the far west is the historic settlement of Brinklow. To the south, past Coombe Abbey, is further agricultural land.

A collection of other historic landscape features is also recorded on the Historic Environment Record (e.g. ridge and furrow earthworks and features associated with Coombe Abbey).

Potential impacts

- Further encroachment of modern development into outward rural views from the northern boundary of the registered park and garden, or loss of those views to screening measures (e.g. landscape bunds).
- Erosion of the tranquil setting of the registered park and garden, through visual and audible distractions created by industry.
- Erosion of the setting of the historic farmsteads, including Walsgrave Hill Farmhouse (within the site) and Hungerley Hall Farmhouse (to the south-west of the site).
- Erosion of the registered park and garden and its listed buildings' special character and appearance through poor quality of design and construction.

Or, enhancement of local built character through well-considered design, and quality construction.

Avoiding harm & maximising enhancements

- Development should be avoided in and near to the part of the site which proximate to the registered park and garden boundary. The topography of the southern section of the site is much lower, and the land then rises up to a plateau marked by the public right of way further north. Any development in this southern section of the site would therefore be much more prominent from the registered park and garden. The impact of any development would therefore be variable dependent on its location. There is lesser sensitivity in the northern section of the site (north of the public right of way) as the topography of the land begins to sweep back down, and is less visible from the registered park and garden.
- Definition of maximum height parameters across the site (varying with sensitivity) and devising of a cut and fill strategy to set built form down into the landscape, and reduce visual prominence and perceived scale of buildings.
- Consideration of design, materiality, and architectural detail to help reduce perceived visual impacts arising from the proposed built form where it is visible,
- Retention, restoration and sensitive re-purposing of historic agricultural buildings to provide optimum viable uses for their long-term conservation.
- Apply the design guidance of the National Farmsteads Assessment Framework and reference to the Warwickshire Historic Farmsteads Characterisation Project evidence base in site planning and design, to maximise opportunities for enhancement and mitigate potential harm.
- Reinforce planted boundaries to the site, particularly to the west, to screen, or filter views in, and out. Priority should be given to screening views from the registered park and garden and from the historic farmsteads.
- Bespoke design, aligned to local precedent, and appropriately drawn from local guidance.
- Public right of way enhancement to improve connections into the registered park and garden, and into the wider historic landscape.
- Restoration of the former drive, identified in the registered park and garden's listing description, which extended west-north-west across agricultural land and parkland to reach the house.
- Possible utilisation/ integration of historic farmstead buildings within the employment site. Whilst development may cause harm to their setting, it could generate long-term viable re-use of the buildings.

Additional comments/notes

- The site may be of high archaeological potential, and careful reference to the archaeological desk-based assessment for site nominations is encouraged.
- A landscape visual impact assessment should be completed to ensure appropriate consideration of landscape value and important views.
- Review of this assessment was requested by Rugby Borough Council following, and with reference to submissions of a proposed masterplan (UMC Architects, May 2025) and preliminary heritage assessment note (Stantec, July 2025). We consider the original comments as to the heritage context, potential impacts, and enhancement/mitigation strategy to remain valid, and have adopted additional potential mitigation measures proposed within the heritage note.

We note, however, that the submitted masterplan and note alone are insufficient for the LPA to make informed judgements. As a minimum, a more detailed heritage, landscape and visual assessment should be provided, with a proportionate suite of supporting evidence (ZTVs, verified views etc.), prior to any decision making as to the developable area. This is on account of the high significance of the heritage assets affected, and high potential for impacts.

Site photographs



Glimpsed views out from the registered park and garden looking north-west into the surrounding countryside (the site), where the topography rises.



Open views out into the site, as viewed from trails along the north-western boundary of the registered park and garden



Part of the western portion of the site, as viewed from the very north-western boundary of the registered park and garden.



Representative photo of the glimpsed views out to the site (in winter) from the northern boundary of the registered park and garden.



View from the permissive footpath which leads out from the northern boundary of the registered park and garden, into the site.



The southern section of the site, viewed from the very edge of the registered park and garden. The land rises to the public right of way, which sits on a plateau.



View from the permissive footpath within the site, looking east towards the modern industrial sheds. The boundary of the registered park and garden is to the right.



View from the permissive footpath within the site, looking south. The boundary of the registered park and garden can be seen in the distance, which is characterised by a dense grouping of ornamental trees.



Looking south back towards the registered park and garden, viewed from the plateau of the public right of way.



View of Walsgrave Hill Farmhouse, viewed from the public right of way.

Addendum A : April 2026

Potential impacts

The submitted evidence, including verified views and ZTVs are considered to ratify the conclusions of the original assessment as to the potential nature and extent of impacts. In summary:

- The verified views at 'Year 0' (before mitigation has matured) illustrate that the south-western proposed industrial units (601, 602, and 701) could be prominent in views out from the registered park and garden's northern boundaries, looking across its immediate rural setting. This would introduce development of form, scale and massing alien to the prevailing open rural character and detract from significance.
- Landscape re-profiling alone (e.g. bunds) would represent insufficient mitigation. A landscape- and heritage- led mitigation and enhancement strategy is necessary, across a large swathe of the southern elements of the allocation site.
- The grade II listed farmhouse Walsgrave Hill Farmhouse would be subsumed by modern, industrial development, overwriting its rural landscape setting from which it draws significance.

Avoiding harm

The indicative landscape masterplan and mitigation strategy, illustrated by verified views and ZTV modelling provides evidence that:

- Progressive visual screening of the industrial units is feasible from the northern perimeter of the registered park and garden through a combination of land reprofiling and extensive new woodland belts. Such measures would require alteration to the open pastoral character (which itself contributes to significance); however, such change could be delivered in a manner than does not significantly detract, should the new woodland structure align to local, historic precedents and avoided an artificial appearance (e.g. linear arrangements of coniferous planting). The degree of screening would be seasonal: of greatest effect in spring/summer, with more potential for filtered views in Autumn/Winter.
- Consideration of the existing landform to guide the scale, footprint, and location of the southern-most units and infrastructure (including access roads) can deliver some additional mitigation.
- Development could be made effectively imperceptible from the large majority of the Registered Park and Garden, including in winter months; in areas where the designed landscape is best preserved and appreciated; and in the immediate setting of its constituent listed buildings, including Coombe Abbey.
- Design and mitigation could ensure the areas of greatest residual effects upon the registered park and garden are experienced in areas of reduced accessibility to members of the public (e.g. proximate to Unit 701).

Maximising enhancements

The submissions illustrate that the allocation provides opportunities for enhancements consistent with the objectives of Historic England's HEAN3 guidance and constituting additional public benefits. In particular:

- A significant extension of the area of publicly accessible amenity landscape associated to the Country Park.
- Enhancements of surviving but degraded historic hedgerows and woodland elements within the site, historically associated to the estate landscape.
- Improved pedestrian and cycle links between the Registered Park and Garden and residential areas in the east of Coventry, and potential future connections to the emerging light rail system. Elevating levels of accessibility to the historic landscape that is largely reliant on vehicular access.
- Interpretation opportunities to enable greater understanding of the registered park and garden's significance.
- Securing a long-term, viable use for the grade II listed Walsgrave Hill Farm, as a focal point within both the new development and extended country park landscape.

Positions

Coombe Abbey Registered Park and Garden & Conservation Area

It remains our judgement that the proposed form and extent of development within the allocation site have the potential to present high-level impacts to the significance of a nationally important, and highly designated historic landscape.

However, we are satisfied that the evidence submitted illustrates potential for those impacts to be mitigated by a suitably ambitious heritage- and landscape-led strategy. This includes measures to both reduce the level of harm and provide compensatory enhancements to be weighed in balance.

We do not consider it possible for the proposed quantum, form, and location of development to be delivered in a manner that wholly mitigates heritage harm. Residual impacts will likely remain through: the proximity of the development's south-western-most units to the registered park and garden; seasonal, filtered visibility of units in certain views from its northern boundary; a reduction in the original extent of open, pastoral views in outward views; and the potential influence of noise and light pollution from industrial activity.

Balancing the nature and extent of potential effects with the demonstrated capacity for their mitigation, we conclude that there is scope for heritage impact to be contained to the "less than substantial harm" category of NPPF. We anticipate the 'Year 0' (at point of completion) impact would likely be towards the upper end of that spectrum, on account of the prominence of new industrial units in multiple locations, and the legibility of the mitigation measures as being artificial constructions. The level of harm could reduce, and become more geographically focussed, as the mitigation matures, bringing impact into at least the 'moderate less than substantial' bracket, and potentially lower. Such an outcome would, however, be subject to the extent and ambition of mitigation measures matching those of the submitted, illustrative proposals.

Walsgrave Hill Farmhouse

It remains our judgement that the proposed form and extent of development within the allocation site have the potential to present notable impacts to the significance of the grade II listed farmhouse.

In both their form and function farmsteads are intrinsically linked to their surrounding rural landscapes. The setting of Walsgrave Hill Farm has been altered, but the functional relationship to an agricultural environment remains clearly tangible, and an important element of how significance is understood and appreciated. Much of that rural landscape would be overwritten, should the allocation be brought forward. As such, I disagree with findings of the April 2026 Stantec technical note as to the likely degree of harm (*"...within the bracket of less than substantial harm, at the lower end..."*; paragraph 6.32) and consider the harm to land at least at the moderate level.

Nonetheless, it is recognised that should the allocation proceed the likely viability of the farmstead complex continuing in its original use would be diminished. In such a circumstance, a design and planning strategy that secured an alternative, long-term viable use for the historic farm buildings would be desirable. Particularly so as a focal point for communal activity within a wider landscape framework, as illustrated within the indicative proposals. While such an outcome would not reduce the harm incurred through the loss of the farmstead's original setting, it is likely to provide other heritage and public benefits that can be weighed against those impacts in the planning balance.

Addendum B : August 2026

The *Marrons* August 2026 assessment 'Coombe Abbey Setting Assessment' has been reviewed, and is considered to be:

- Informed by a sufficient evidence base.
- Compliant with the good practice assessment frameworks of guidance including Historic England's GPA3 'The Setting of Heritage Assets'¹.
- A reasonable representation of:
 - The significance of the registered park and garden and its constituent heritage assets;
 - The nature and extent of their setting, and the contributions this makes to heritage significance; and
 - The nature and extent of contribution of the site to setting and significance.

The substantive positions of the assessment are agreed with in that the site:

- Does not contribute to the principal elements nor attributes of the designated heritage assets' significance.
- Makes a minor contribution to setting through forming part of the wider rural landscape context. That contribution is diluted by the present character and modern intrusions, but remains legible.
- Development within the site has potential to bring harm, subject to the scale, form and layout of development, but there is capacity for mitigation through considered design.

¹ <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/publications/gpa3-setting-of-heritage-assets/heag180-gpa3-setting-heritage-assets/>