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Written Response to the Coventry Local Plan: Barr's Hill School Playing Fields

The Futures Trust is a Multi Academy Trust, a charitable company run solely for the educational benefit of its students. The Trust comprises two secondary schools, President Kennedy School and Barr's Hill School based in Coventry. The Trust owns a substantial parcel of land covering 98055 square metres (22 acres), noted within the Local Plan as 'Barr's Hill School and Community College Playing Fields'.



LAND OFF WASTE LANE, COVENTRY - SITE LOCATION PLAN

The 2016 Strategic Housing and Land Assessment Report which supports the Local Plan, refers to the land as Bab59 on page 196. It states that the “*site is likely to represent a viable development option*” however “*residential development is likely to result in an unacceptable loss of established playing fields and recreation land. Site is therefore considered unsuitable at this time.*” The report states that the “*Site appears to be in active recreation use at this current time.*”

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The Trust would like to highlight that this assumption is unsound. During the development of the Local Plan, the Trust was not contacted by the City Council to establish how the land is currently used. The Trust believes that these unused playing fields represent a significant missed opportunity for Coventry and that the Local Plan has failed to take into account the site as a reasonable alternative because the assumptions made are not based on sound evidence.

In the distant past, this land was used by Barr's Hill School, but the travelling time from the school site along the busy Radford Road to the land at Waste Lane precludes the use of the site for sport within the school day.

The land is maintained by the Trust, but offers no benefit to its students.

The Trust wishes to propose that site marked 'Barr's Hill School and Community College Playing Fields' is considered as a viable site within the Local Plan for development to meet the needs of Coventry and its citizens. The Trust envisages that this might include the development of the land to offer additional educational facilities and the need for additional school places generated by the Keresley Urban Development (see pages 68-69, Technical Appendix to the Local Plan) or alternatively housing development. The Trust proposes that the land is identified as an allocation under Policy H2 and removed from the Green Belt status under policy GB1.

The Trust notes that a central theme to the Local Plan is the city's substantial population growth, constrained city boundaries restraining growth options and a need to develop additional housing. The plan identifies a need to secure suitable land for development. Assuming all the proposals listed with the Local Plan there will still be a shortfall of 1,150 homes.

Although Barr's Hill School's former playing fields are currently designated as Green Belt, the land is bordered on three sides by urban development and a primary school (Keresley Grange Primary School which is due to join The Futures Trust later this year). To the North, the site is bordered by Waste Lane and by Coundon Hall Park. The Local Plan specifies that Coundon Hall Park will continue to provide readily accessible public green recreational space and public playing fields for use by the local community.

The Trust wishes to work with the City Council productively to explore the potential of this site to meet the needs defined in the Local Plan. Early conversations regarding possible uses for the land have taken place with other head teachers in the city's Secondary Schools Partnership as well as with Kirsten Nelson, The city's Director of Education. Some work has already been undertaken to explore development options commissioned by Ashley Simpson, Head of Schools Capital Strategy and Premises Services, Coventry City Council with the full support of Local Councillors.

The Local Plan contains some strikingly similar precedents, notably Lyng Hall School's playing fields (Table 4.2 site reference 2.10, the former Lyng Hall playing fields) which have been allocated for housing development providing 185 new homes. In addition, a playing field, south of Finham Park School currently designated as Green Belt land has been reserved for potential development within policy GB2.

Land adjacent to Barr's Hill School's former playing fields, The Grange Children's Home, is allocated within the Local Plan for housing development (see Table 4.2 as site reference HD 2.25 Waste Lane). **The Futures Trust has no objection to this development.** However, there is an opportunity to extend this specified development to the adjacent land owned by the Trust.

The Futures Trust is a charity and no individual would profit from the disposal of the land. Under its Articles of Association, if the land were to be allocated for productive use and sold, The Futures Trust would be required to reinvest any proceeds from the sale of this land into providing enhanced educational outcomes for its students, benefitting generations of young people in Coventry.

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