

**Statement of Common Ground between the South
Worcestershire Councils (Malvern Hills District
Council, Wychavon District Council and Worcester City
Council) and Planning Prospects Ltd (PPL) on behalf of
Gtech for WCEM02, Land at the Junction of Berkeley
Way and Parsonage Way**



Date: February 2025

Statement of Common Ground

**Gtech – WCEM02 – Land at the Junction of Berkeley Way and Parsonage Way,
Worcester**

Proposed Employment Site Allocation

February 2025

1.0 Introduction - Purpose of this Statement

This document is a Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) prepared by Planning Prospects Ltd (PPL) on behalf of Gtech the site promoter, developer and intended occupiers for the proposed employment allocation on land at Berkeley Way, Worcester and has been prepared in collaboration and agreement with Officers of the Councils preparing the South Worcester Development Plan Review (SWDPR) (“the Council”).

It describes the site, its location and key features. It also provides some information regarding Gtech, a brief review of their company history, success and ambition for growth and how this site is part of those future growth plans. It explains the relatively recent planning history of the site, including planning permission granted for Gtech for new premises for them on the site as well as summarising some of the key development issues associated with the site which were pertinent to the determination of the previous planning application but have now been able to establish some key principles for the successful development of the site.

The Statement confirms in this context that the site is suitable, available and the expected development of the site achievable including within the timeframes of the Development Plan.

2.0 Structure of Statement

The SoCG includes the following:

- Description of the site and surrounding area
- Gtech and the site
- Site Proposals / Employment Development Potential
- Relevant planning history
- Principal Planning Considerations
- Summary of Agreed Matters

The SoCG is made in agreement between the parties and is confirmed as such by the signatories set out at the end of the Statement.

3.0 The Site and Context

The proposed allocation site is located 500m west of Junction 6 of the M5. It is bounded by the B4639 Berkeley Way to the north, A4440 Parsonage Way to the east and St. Nicholas Lane to the south. Berkeley Way forms a junction with Parsonage Way at a roundabout on the north eastern corner of the site.

The site is undeveloped, greenfield land which is roughly triangular in shape and generally consists of some young native woodland and dense scrub with unmanaged trees.

The topography of the site is undulating with a localised ridgeline through the centre of the site. From here the site falls away to the east and west. The highest levels of the site are to the centre of the southern boundary and the land continues to rise gradually beyond this point up to St Nicholas Church. The levels generally vary between 36.7m and 44.5m Above Ordnance Datum (AOD) at each boundary.

Vehicular access to the site is currently obtained via St Nicholas Lane to the south of the site. Public footpath WN – 519 (A) commences on the south side of the road northwest of St Nicholas Church to the west of Trotshill Farm, where it connects to public footpaths WN-540 and WN-550. An unmetalled unclassified road (UUCR) runs for 92 metres on the opposite side of the A4440 Parsonage Way to the east of the site (WN- 51850) and there are carriageway footpaths that run alongside the northern side of the B4639 Berkeley Way and either side of Wainwright Road.

The site is well served by public transport by First Bus routes 34 and 35A that run along Wainwright Road, Berkeley Way and Hastings Drive in the vicinity of the site and onward into Worcester City Centre via Rainbow Hill and Tolladine Road routes.

The surrounding area is of a mixed character. To the north of the site, across the B4639 Berkeley Way, lies the established existing employment area of Berkeley Business Park. This forms part of a long corridor of industrial development to the north of the City between Junction 6 of the M5 to the east and the B4850 Blackpole Road to the west. The Business Park contains a varied range of businesses and employment uses, as well as other ancillary uses such as car sales showrooms, hotel and pub/ restaurants and some local retail functions at Brindley Place. The headquarters for Worcester Bosch stands immediately opposite the site on Berkeley Way. This industrial development is contained by the Worcester to Birmingham Canal Conservation Area corridor to the north. The existing housing area at Warndon Villages is the dominant use to the south and south west of the site, together with other green amenity space.

4.0 Gtech and the Site

Grey Technology Ltd, which uses the trade mark Gtech, is an independent British company designing and manufacturing cordless home and garden appliances such as vacuum cleaners, floor sweepers, grass trimmers, lawn mowers, hedge trimmers and power tools. Mindful of potential direct and indirect impacts on the environment, Gtech produce extremely power efficient and long lasting (20 year working life) products and fully meet their statutory requirements for Streamlined Energy and Carbon Reporting which includes disclosure of the company's carbon emissions.

Gtech was founded by Nick Grey in Worcester, Worcestershire. Starting in a garage in 2001, the Gtech team moved to their first office in 2005. In 2016, Gtech moved to its current Worcester premises at Brindley Road, Warndon which is located less than 1 km to the west of the proposed site allocation further along Berkeley Way. The Worcester Headquarters is home to the Company's experts in Design, Engineering, Purchasing, Finance and Customer Support, IT and Marketing and is the major hub of the business.

The Company is a high profile, nationally renown, innovating, high technology company which is a major success story for the City. The business is now long established and committed to the City, with a track record of growth and a significant ambition to grow further. The Company already turns over nearly £50M and has budget growth through into 2025 for a turnover of nearly £80M, employing over 100 people across many different roles.

A clear and secure property strategy is part of the business and its potential for growth which may otherwise be stifled. The property which they own at Berkeley Way which is proposed for allocation in the SWDPR is part of their future plans for growth. They are committed to the site, noting particularly the following;

1. It is of a size suited to their needs for additional floorspace in future needs
2. It is in a location which is both well related to the existing premises which is important, both for business continuity, efficiency and importantly retention and consistency of location for staff
3. The location suits the business, is in Worcester, in a part of the site well connected and accessible to its workforce including through sustainable travel options
4. Locationally the site is particularly suited, works particularly well from a business strategy perspective, Worcester is strategically located well from a regional and national perspective with good transport links.

The allocation of the site links to business needs and supports the approach set out in the NPPF which seeks to ensure that planning policies and decisions create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. The proposals support and are directly linked to economic growth and productivity, taking into account this local business need and opportunities for development.

5.0 Site Proposals / Employment Development Potential

The site has the potential for a new employment development, similar to that previously granted planning permission or alternatives to similar principles subject to Gtech's needs.

The nature of the location lends itself to a high quality employment development, suited to a headquarter business need requirement like Gtech, where the site could occupy a range of related functions for this type of business including uses comprising research and development of products and processes as well as general industrial purposes, with wider ancillary functions within administrative office uses, IT, storage and distribution of products as well as for Gtech, some potential for head quarter meeting spaces, product showroom and investment centre.

The previous approved development for the site was described as *'New headquarters employment development comprising offices, research and development facilities with access from Berkeley Way, car parking, landscaping and associated works.'*

The proposal comprised a mixed employment use building designed in order to meet the operational needs of Gtech going forward. The brief for the site includes the need for the following;

- Accommodate their expanding operation, increased turnover and need for additional space
- Provide a site which can accommodate customer services, research and development as well as product storage and distribution from a single site.
- Provide new modern accommodation which reflects their high technology sector and meets the Company's requirement for modern sustainable building and efficiency
- Continues to contribute to the City economy
- Can be a secure site which can ensure protection of sensitive existing copyright and emerging technologies
- Can be developed in a short time frame to budget with minimal disruption to existing business operations and transfer of staff and business functions.
- Is in a location which ideally retains the Company's position in the City, but is highly accessible to essential infrastructure, retains staff skills and will be least affected by future development in the surrounding area in years to come.

Gtech view this site and proposed development to be the only site and development in the City to achieve the above.

In the approved proposals, the building itself was located towards to the east part of the site and was generally divided into three sections to provide office and customer service facilities, research and development workshop space and storage and distribution warehouse floor space.

The office component of the development was accommodated to the eastern end of the building, across two floors, to provide around 1510 sq m of floorspace. The research and development workshop area was located on the centre ground floor part of the building and provided around 540 sq m of floorspace.

Access to the site was approved via a new entrance on Berkeley Way. There was no access to the site for vehicles from either Hastings Drive or St Nicholas Lane eliminating any potential for traffic disruption to nearby residential properties. Car parking was provided in the centre of the site in proximity to the building entrance with a dedicated service area for HGV's segregating their use from the staff and visitor circulation space.

Extensive tree planting and managed landscaping was proposed for much of the site particularly to the west retaining and enhancing a significant green planted framework within which the development sat.

The proposed building itself was of a distinctive modern design with a high architectural quality which made a positive contribution to this gateway entrance to the City. Alongside the use of high quality materials, the building incorporated part green roof and was to be constructed to high sustainable building standards. It made use of existing site levels, cutting into the existing site and retaining a strong landscaped edge particularly to the south to the boundary with nearby housing. Setting the building at the lower level, together with this dense screen of vegetation created a positive relationship to existing residential properties, screening views of the Gtech building and site from the residential properties to the south of the site.

In other directions the development held a prominent position on the approach to the City located on a major traffic island with a clear road frontage. The proposals created a gateway approach to the City, with a new modern building making positive contribution to the street scene set with a managed and high quality landscape context which, overall, maintained and enhanced the green landscape context of the site.

6.0 The Previous Planning Permission

The previous planning permission for the site was granted by Worcester City Council under application reference P15P0013, described as “ New headquarters employment development comprising offices, research and development facilities with access from Berkeley Way, car parking, landscaping and associated works” and dated 22nd December 2016. The permission was granted subject to conditions.

The general layout for the development was as below;



The proposed building was designed as below;



Applications were submitted to vary a number of the planning conditions including an application 19/00651/REM to vary conditions 5, 6, 13, 14, 15, 17, 21 and 27 of planning approval P15P0013 which related to the timing for the installation of services, landscaping, access, CEMP, Earthworks, Archaeology, Renewable energy, drainage and access and application 19/00826/REM to vary Condition 7 of P15P0013 and Condition 7 of 19/00651/REM. The essential aim of the amendments to the conditions was to allow for some variance to a number of pre-commencements conditions to be adjusted to allow a greater degree of flexibility in order

to allow the implementation of the planning permission before it was due to lapse in December 2019. A number of other conditions, including those which were required to remain as pre-commencement, particularly relating to ecology mitigation, enhancement as well as an Ecological Construction Method Statement were applied for and conditions discharged.

Whether or not Gtech continue the implementation of the previous extant planning permission for the site, or in their current evolution and consideration of floorspace and property needs seek to adjust and refine the scheme seeking planning permission for an alternative development on the site, the previous planning permission shows one way in which the site can be developed successfully and how generally planning permission can be secured for the development of the site.

7.0 Principal Planning Considerations

The following sets out some principal planning considerations associated with the site – it is not an exhaustive list as other detailed matters would be addressed through normal development control functions and the submission of a planning application if/as proposals for the site change. However it sets out some headline matters;

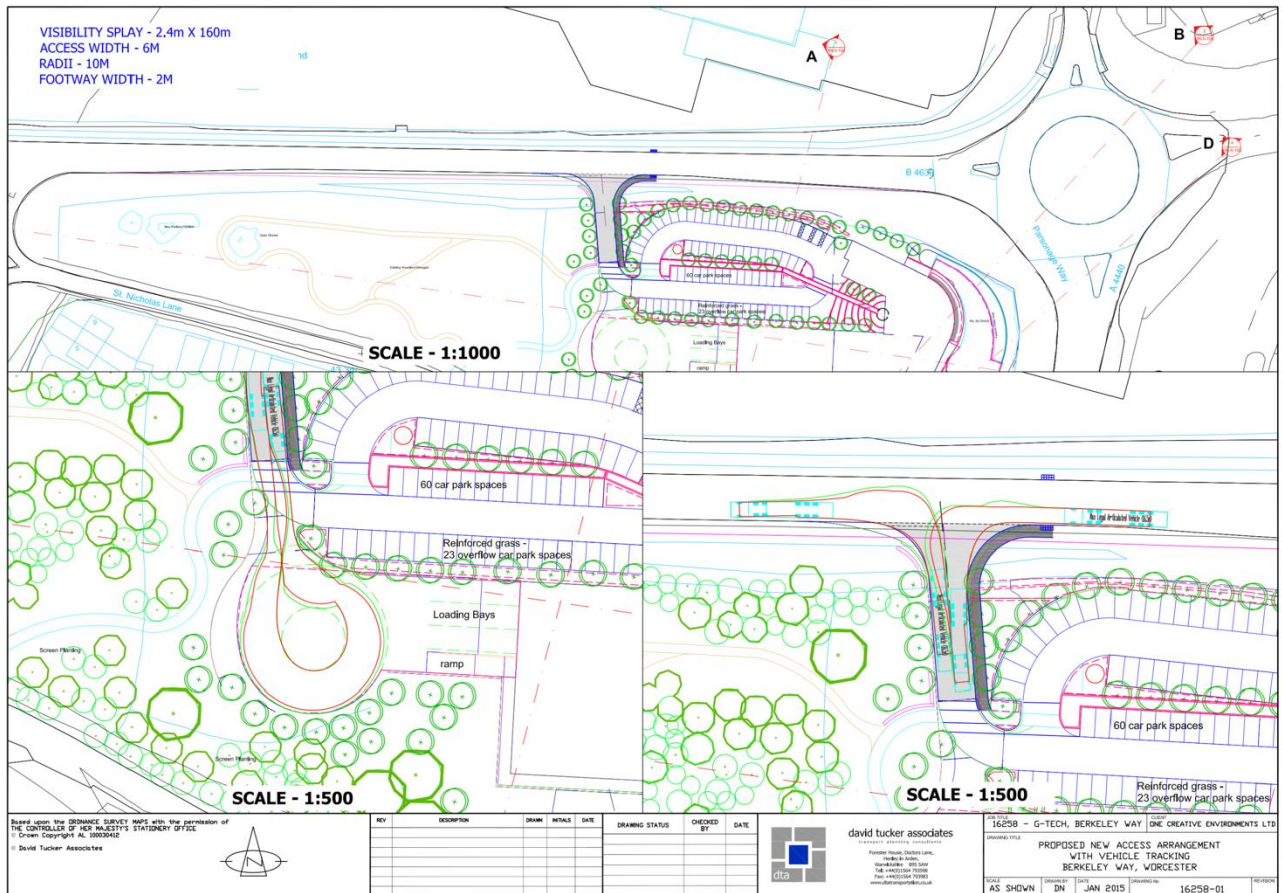
Landscape and Ecology

The site is not designated as a statutory nature conservation site, nor has any non-statutory wildlife designation. It is not included in the Ancient Woodland Inventory (AWI), or any other inventory of priority habitat. Previous proposals were submitted with ecology surveys conducted in accordance with best practice guidelines and the findings were used to inform a full Ecological Impact Appraisal (EIA) of the development proposals. At the time and in response to those previous proposals, Worcestershire Wildlife Trust and the Council's Landscape and Biodiversity Adviser raised no objection. The site has the ability to incorporate a number of habitat enhancements for nature conservation and ecological enhancement to be implemented and monitored using an Ecological Management Plan in a similar way as proposed through the previous planning permission. Due requirement for Biodiversity Net Gain will also be necessary.

In terms of the development potential of the site and landscape, a proposed development can still be set within an extensive landscaped context. There are opportunities to provide new planting and this area of landscaping can come under positive management for the first time. Some parts of the site are likely to be retained as green infrastructure and landscaping with opportunities for biodiversity gains.

Highway Matters

The previous application included an access of Berkeley Way with no access to the south of the site adjacent to residential properties and it is considered the access strategy for the site would be consistent generally with that previously approved.



Key matters previous assessed confirmed the suitability of the proposed junction, trip generation and distribution, traffic impact owing to the potential for additional traffic resulting from the development to use the local highway network, accessibility and permeability for pedestrians and cyclists, improvements to public transport and Travel Plan. These were all considered in detail by the Highway Authorities including Worcestershire County and Highway England who raised no objection.

Heritage

Nearby heritage assets include five listed buildings to the south: the Church of St Nicholas was listed grade I on 14 March 1969; Warndon Court was listed grade II* on the same day. Later, on 26 November 1986, the stables about 20 metres North-East of Warndon Court; a barn about 50 metres South-East of Warndon Court, and another barn, about 50 metres North-West of Warndon Court, were all listed grade II. The majority of the site lies within an Archaeologically Sensitive Area as indicated within the SWDPR Regulation 19 Publication Interactive Map. The site adjoins the Warndon Court conservation area which include part of St Nicholas Lane. Individually and collectively, these are very important heritage assets and conservation of the assets themselves and their setting is very important to Worcester.

However, there is no direct physical impact on the designated assets such that the consideration relating to these is about setting. As shown in the previous development as approved, the site has the potential for a proposed development which would not be visible or otherwise perceptible from within the heritage assets, as the site is well screened by trees and hedges and these will be maintained and enhanced.

The City Council's Planning & Conservation Officer raised no objection to the previous proposals.

Flood Risk

The site is in Flood Zone 1. The previous proposals for the site were accompanied by a sustainable drainage strategy, the principles for which raised no objection from the Lead Local Flood Authorities (LLFA) or South Worcestershire Land Drainage Partnership (SWLDP).

Residential Amenity

There is existing housing to the south. Noting the previous planning approval, the proposal have the potential through layout and design to be brought forward in an acceptable manner in relation to noise, air quality, flooding and overall cumulative effect, with mitigation measures as appropriate. Construction activities can be controlled by implementation of a Construction Environmental Management Plan to ensure that the development would be acceptable with regard to construction, traffic and operational noise, local air quality and construction dust.

8.0 Summary of Agreed Principal Matters

The following summary matters are agreed.

Site Name/Reference number:	WCEM02 – Land at the Junction of Berkeley Way and Parsonage Way, Worcester
Name of Promoter/Developer:	Gtech are owners of the site and the site is part of the Company's business planning and growth strategy
Site Area	1.84ha, approximate 2,915 square meters in employment floorspace.
Availability	The site is available now and is in the freehold ownership of the business. There are no impediments to its immediate delivery subject to normal planning and construction tendering and procurement processes
Suitability	The site has an extant planning permission for employment development which has been part implemented under reference P15P0013. The previous planning permission is evidence of how the site can be suitable for a proposed employment development and address expected planning requirements. There is no fundamental changes in planning since the previous permissions which would suggest any insurmountable planning issues to a further planning

	permission being granted for a similar or alternative employment development on the site to meet Gtech's needs.
Achievability	No viability issues are evident in respect of the delivery of the development nor any site specific constraints which cannot readily be addressed through the planning process. There are no abnormal or extraordinary infrastructure requirements associated with the development of the site
Timeframes for delivery?	The site already has an extant planning permission for employment development which has been part implemented under reference P15P0013. The development (or similar amended scheme subject to a further alternative planning permission) is currently expected to progress within 3 – 5 years

9.0 Signatories

This is the Statement of Common Ground which accurately reflects the planning principles and potential for the site as proposed to be allocated for employment development at Berkeley Way, Worcester.

This SoCG has been agreed and signed by the following:

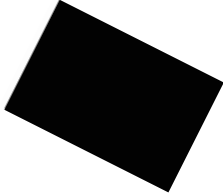
<p>South Worcestershire Councils</p> <p>Name: Ian MacLeod</p> <p>Position: Director of Planning and Infrastructure, Malvern Hills District Council and Wychavon District Council</p> <p>Date agreed: 10th February 2025</p> <p>Signature:</p> 	<p>Planning Prospects Ltd</p> <p>Name: Jason Tait</p> <p>Position: Director, Planning Prospects Ltd, on behalf of Gtech</p> <p>Date agreed: 3rd February 2025</p> <p>Signature:</p> 
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And,

Name: Duncan Rudge

Position: Head of Planning, Worcester City Council

Date agreed: 6th February 2025



Signature: