BIRMINGHAM CITY COUNCIL

ASTON, NEWTOWN AND LOZELLS AREA ACTION PLAN

EXAMINATION IN PUBLIC

Hearing Statement prepared by Birmingham City Council Planning & Regeneration

January 2012

Hearing Matter 1 – Overall Strategy, the Economy and Transport

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This statement sets out the Council's response to the Issues raised under Hearing Matter 1 of the Hearing Programme in relation to overall strategy, the economy and transport.

2.0 Response to Issues

Issue 1.1 Relationship to other plans and strategies

- (i) What are the implications of adopting the AAP ahead of the Birmingham Core Strategy? Do any issues cast doubt on a smooth relationship between the two plans?
- 2.1 A consultation draft of the Birmingham Core Strategy was published in December 2010 following Issues and Options Consultation in 2008. In line with the revised LDS (January 2012) a draft Submission document will be published in October 2012. It is not considered that there are any issues which cast doubt on the appropriateness of adopting the AAP in advance of the Core Strategy and the two plans are consistent in relation to the key proposals. The Longbridge Area Action Plan (adopted in February 2009) demonstrates that it is possible to adopt an AAP in advance of the Core Strategy and by taking this approach key development proposals can be advanced without delaying progress.
- 2.2 The following is a summary of the key proposals in the AAP and how they are consistent with the emerging Core Strategy and where relevant the Regional Spatial Strategy.

Regional Investment Site (RIS)

2.3 The concept of Regional Investment Sites was introduced through the Regional Spatial Strategy for the West Midlands. Although the RSS will be abolished as a result of the Localism Bill (November 2011), the evidence base underpinning the RSS is still relevant to the proposal for a RIS in Aston. The extant RSS for the West Midlands was adopted in (January 2008). The RSS supports the provision of a portfolio of employment land (PA6) across the West Midlands. The portfolio of land consists of locally significant

employment sites and regionally significant sites including Regional Investment Sites. Policy PA7 states that Regional Investment Sites are high quality sites which play an important role in diversifying the Region's economy. Development on RIS is restricted to Classes B1 and, where appropriate B2. The policy requires that at least one RIS should be available to serve the needs of each Regeneration Zone and High Technology Corridor. The policy states that there is a need to identify a RIS to serve the West Birmingham and South Black Country Regeneration Zone (WB&SBC RZ). The majority of the AAP area was originally covered by the WB&SBC RZ although the RIS itself was located in the East Birmingham and North Solihull Regeneration Zone.

- 2.4 The RSS was in the process of being reviewed when the Regional Assembly was abolished. The Phase 2 Review of the RSS dealt with a number of issues including employment land provision. Policy PA7 was to remain largely unchanged and the need for a site to serve the WB&SBC RZ is a requirement of the policy, which also mentions a possible shortage of RIS land in the East Birmingham North Solihull Regeneration Zone. At the Examination into the RSS Phase 2, Birmingham City Council drew attention to the emerging RIS at East Aston as having potential to serve both of these zones.
- 2.5 The RSS Panel Report was published in September 2009 and states in para. 5.19:

"Birmingham City Council drew attention to the identification of a prospective RIS at Aston in the East Birmingham-North Solihull Regeneration Zone (RZ). It was questioned by developer interests as potentially not providing an attractive enough environment but this does not seem to us a good reason for not seeking to pursue such a proposal that would fit squarely with the desired emphasis on urban renaissance. It would seem to provide a distinctive offer from the less urban contexts of BBP (Birmingham Business Park) and BVBP (Blythe Valley Business Park) so the three should be complementary. Although not yet in a published AAP we can therefore see every reason for explicit endorsement in the RSS and recommend accordingly."

- 2.6 The AAP therefore in designating land for a RIS at East Aston is in accordance with the provisions of Policy PA7 and received explicit endorsement in the RSS Phase 2 Panel Report.
- 2.7 The approach to employment land provision in the emerging Core Strategy is consistent with the extant RSS. The Core Strategy supports the provision of Regional Investment Sites at Longbridge and East Aston (SP13) as part of a portfolio of employment land. Further details on the Aston RIS are provided in NW3. It should also be noted that there were no objections to the principle of the proposed RIS at East Aston in response to the Consultation Draft of the Core Strategy.

Housing

2.8 The Core Strategy Consultation Draft identifies a housing requirement for Birmingham of 50,600 dwellings. The AAP identifies potential for 1,671 new homes to be built in the Plan area over the period 2010 to 2026 (policy H1). The AAP will therefore make an important contribution towards the City's housing requirement.

Local Centres and Perry Barr

- 2.9 The Core Strategy introduces the concept of District Centre Growth Points which are centres with potential for additional growth including retail, office, leisure and high density housing. The concept received support at the Issues and Options Stage and was carried forward into the Consultation Draft. Perry Barr, which is within the AAP area, is identified as a District Centre Growth Point with potential for 10,000 sqm of office development between 2006-2026 and 25,000sqm of retail comparison consisting of 12,500 sqm between 2008-2021 and a further 12,500 sqm between 2021 and 2026.
- 2.10 As noted in response to issue 1.8 below, it has subsequently been agreed to reduce the comparison retail provision to 20,000sqm consisting of 10,000sqm between 2008-2021 and a further 10,000sqm between 2021 and 2026. This change will be reflected in the draft submission version of the Core Strategy due to be published in October 2012.
- 2.11 The AAP therefore reflects the general approach in the Core Strategy and the most recent up to date evidence base in terms of appropriate additional comparison retail provision in Perry Barr.
 - (ii) What should be the relationship between the AAP and the adopted Birmingham UDP? Is it sufficient for the AAP just to refer to the UDP open space standards, or should the AAP have other important policy hooks?
- 2.12 The existing statutory development plan for the City, until the adoption of the Core Strategy, is the Birmingham Unitary Development Plan. This Plan was originally adopted in 1993. It was subsequently revised and the modified version adopted in October 2005.
- 2.13 There are 3 key themes in the UDP; economic revitalisation, urban and social regeneration and environmental quality. It is a plan that emphasises the importance of having an integrated approach to regeneration that combines physical, social and economic measures. The AAP continues these themes through its policies and proposals.
- 2.14 The AAP will replace parts of Chapters 10 and 12 of the UDP. In particular UDP Policies HR3 Central Handsworth, and HR22 Newtown will be replaced by the AAP Policies H7 and LC1 and LC2. These changes are outlined in Appendix A of the AAP and the schedule of suggested changes.
- 2.15 Given that the UDP is the extant Development Plan, the AAP should be consistent with its key policy objectives. In this respect the AAP supports key themes within the UDP such as economic revitalisation, urban regeneration, diversifying the economic base, increasing employment opportunities, providing a portfolio of employment sites and attracting inward investment. The UDP Alterations had previously proposed a Premium Employment Site at Bassetts Pole in Sutton Coldfield (equivalent to the Regional Investment Site at Aston) in the Green Belt to meet the demands of high quality occupiers. This proposal was deleted following the advice of the UDP Inspector who suggested that brownfield opportunities should be considered. The approach recommended by the UDP Inspector has been taken forward in proposing the Aston RIS.

2.16 It is not considered necessary for the AAP to refer in detail to City wide policies within the UDP such as open space standards or affordable housing. These City-wide strategic policies will apply across the AAP area and will be replaced by the equivalent policies within the Core Strategy. The approach within the AAP needs to be – and is - consistent with these strategic policies.

(iii) What has been the role of the Birmingham Sustainable Community Strategy in informing and guiding the AAP?

2.17 The Sustainable Community Strategy, Birmingham 2026, sets out 5 key outcomes which have influenced the preparation of the AAP. These are: to succeed economically; to stay safe in a clean; green city; be healthy; enjoy a high quality of life; and make a contribution. The key proposals within the AAP that address these principles are the development of a Regional Investment Site and the expansion of Perry Barr/ Birchfield Local Centre to facilitate economic growth and therefore jobs for the area's residents. The Plan seeks through its environment and open space strategy / green infrastructure proposals to improve the quality of life in the area by improving the natural and built environment, and through its housing regeneration proposals in Lozells and Newtown to tackle community safety issues through the redesign and redevelopment of a number of estates. The Plan also contributes to a healthier lifestyle through encouraging more pedestrian/cycle routes in the area, facilitating new sports/leisure facilities e.g. the MvPlace centre, Finally, the Plan has, through its development and in conjunction with contributory master-planning of a number of sub-areas, actively sought to engage and get local people involved in the formulation of the Plan.

Issue 1.2 "How does the AAP relate to the main recommendations of the Sustainability Appraisal (NTS6). Are there any areas of conflict, and if so, how have they been resolved?

- 2.18 The Sustainability Appraisal of the AAP previously carried out at the Preferred Options and Publication Stages identified a number of areas of conflict. These included the potential loss of open space; an underutilisation of the opportunities afforded by the river corridors in the AAP area notably the River Tame corridor; issues linked to the under-provision of sustainable waste management facilities in the AAP area; the need to link green infrastructure improvements in the AAP area with the city –wide GIS currently being developed for Birmingham; further opportunities to promote and enhance biodiversity networks in the AAP area, and issues related to flood risk.
- 2.19 The Submission Document through its revised policies and proposals seeks to address these issues. In particular, the inclusion of a proposed Open Space Strategy in the Plan area, together with policies to encourage green links particularly along water corridors has sought to address any loss of open space, through improving linkages from residential areas to areas of open space both within and beyond the Plan area. The latter seeks to link with the emerging Green Infrastructure Strategy for the City particularly in relation to the River Tame. Policy OS10 has been introduced to protect and encourage biodiversity and water quality in the Plan area. The Submission Plan has also been founded on further flood risk modelling of the Hockley Brook to justify the allocation of sites for development in the Newtown area, and takes into account the proposed changes to the River Tame flood risk zones that will come into effect following the implementation of the Environment Agencies' River Tame Strategy.

- Issue 1.3 "Relationship to other areas: Should the AAP provide more focus on its relationship to neighbouring areas, including demonstrating on the plans the importance of such relationships, e.g. the relationship between Perry Barr and The Hub?"
- 2.20 The AAP Plan boundary has been set on the former Aston Pride New Deal for Communities area (Aston/Witton), the former Urban Living Housing Market Renewal Pathfinder area within Birmingham (Lozells/Newtown) and upon the key growth area identified in the emerging Core Strategy at Birchfield/Perry Barr. The Plan, however, does seek to identify linkages with adjoining areas including the "Big City Plan" area to the south of the AAP area. The Big City Plan, adopted by the Council in 2010, provides a non-statutory Development Framework for the growth of Birmingham City Centre. The Big City Plan at its northern boundary with the Outer Ring Road (A4040) covers the St George's area, a predominantly industrial area but with residential pockets. Section 3 paragraph 3.27 of the AAP recognises the relationship between the Plan area and the adjoining St. George's area and seeks to improve linkages between these areas. This will be progressed through a Newtown Regeneration Framework, which will include the St George's area and which will be brought forward in the next 12 months.
- 2.21 The AAP also seeks to provide through its proposed Open Space Strategy the creation of linkages from within residential areas to major areas of open space close to the Plan area. The Plan seeks to acknowledge the benefits of improved connectivity to Handsworth Park, for example, for communities in the north and west of the Plan area.
- 2.22 The Hub development site has not been included in the Plan's boundaries as this major site already had planning permission at the time of the Plan's inception. Section 3 paragraph 3.35 of AAP acknowledges the relationship between the AAP area and the Hub. The site has been largely built out on its eastern portion for employment uses and it is anticipated that the development of the remaining land will continue for these uses. However, it is accepted that the AAP could be strengthened in terms of exploring linkages on Plan 1 between the Hub and the surrounding communities, including connectivity with Birmingham City University Perry Barr Campus.

Issue 1.4 Impact of the emerging Core Strategy: In what ways will the AAP influence the emerging Core Strategy?

2.23 As noted in addressing Issue 1.1 the AAP takes forward key policy aspirations in the Core Strategy.

Issue 1.5 Regional Investment Site (policies R1-R6)

2.24 A separate Situation Update is provided in relation to the Regional Investment Site (see attached document).

Issue 1.6 Employment provision: How can the AAP address worklessness (para. 3.7)?

2.25 The Aston, Newtown and Lozells areas contain some of the highest unemployment rates in the country as highlighted in the table below.

Ward	Total Number Unemployed	% of Ward Unemployed
Aston	2612	30.5
Lozells & East Handsworth	2526	27.9
Perry Barr	842	8.1
Birmingham	50828	12.5
UK	1598600	5.6

Creating new employment opportunities and linking these opportunities to generate local jobs is therefore a priority for the AAP. The AAP contains some significant employment generating proposals including the RIS, growth of Perry Barr centre and regenerating existing industrial areas. The AAP also contains a policy (ES1) which supports initiatives to get local people into jobs and improve the local skills base. These proposals can help address some of the unemployment issues within the AAP area.

Issue 1.7 What are the difference between Core Employment Areas and Industrial Regeneration Areas?

2.26 Core Employment Areas are identified in the Core Strategy (SP12) as areas which will be retained in employment use and will act as a focus for economic regeneration. The Core Employment Areas contain some of the main industrial redevelopment opportunities in the City. The Industrial Regeneration Areas identified within the AAP are mainly older industrial areas which have potential for improvement. These areas have been the subject of previous grant schemes to improve their quality and it is anticipated that similar grant schemes will become available during the Plan period.

Issue 1.8 Retail provision: The comparison retail figures for Perry Barr/Birchfield District Centre in policy LC1 differ from those in the Draft Core Strategy (12,500sm gross for both 2008-2021 and 2021-2026 in Core Strategy SP18, compared with 10,000sm gross for both 2008-2021 and 2021-2026 in AAP policy LC1). Which figure should prevail and why?

- 2.27 The draft Core Strategy identifies Perry Barr as a District Centre Growth Point (policy SP17). The proposed levels of growth are based on the Birmingham Retail Needs Assessment (Roger Tym). While this predates the recession, all forecasting agencies are still projecting significant comparison retail expenditure growth over the plan period. The Core Strategy and the AAP both recognise that it would not be appropriate to commit the post 2021 growth at this stage because of the inevitable uncertainties around longer term projections.
- 2.28 The quantum of comparison retail floor space proposed for the centre in the draft Core Strategy is 12,500 sq. m. gross 2008 21 and a further 12,500 sq. m. gross 2012 26 (policy SP18). The floor space requirement contained in the Publication AAP was the same as this.
- 2.29 Objections were received to this level of floor space from Walsall MBC (in relation to both the AAP and the Core Strategy) and from Sandwell MBC (in relation only to the Core Strategy.)

In response to these objections the City Council has agreed to make a small reduction in the quantum of retail floor space proposed to 10,000 sq. m. 2008 – 21 and a further 10,000 sq.m. 2021 – 26. This adjustment does not affect the status of the Centre within the City's retail hierarchy as set out in policy SP18 of the Core Strategy, but does ensure that the approach remains clearly consistent with policy PA 11 of the West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy which currently remains part of the Development Plan.

2.30 An identical adjustment will be made to the figures in the Core Strategy when it reaches its Publication stage.

For these reasons the Submission AAP figures prevail.

Issue 1.9 Is the retail provision likely to impact significantly on the retail viability of Walsall and West Bromwich Centres?

- 2.31 Perry Barry has significant potential to accommodate growth within the District Centre boundary. A Draft Regeneration Framework has been prepared for the A34 North Corridor (October 2011). The Draft Framework identifies significant opportunities to support the transformation of Perry Barr Centre including proposals to remove the A34 flyover which will unlock the potential of the Gyratory site and improve linkages with the One Stop Shopping Centre. The growth of Perry Barr Centre will also support and be complementary to the improvement of the Birmingham City University Campus.
- 2.32 An assessment of the impact of the retail proposals at Perry Barr has been undertaken by Holliss Vincent, and the resultant report forms part of the evidence base for the AAP. This confirms that there will be no significant adverse retail impact on either Walsall or West Bromwich town centres.
- 2.33 In terms of office development at Perry Barr, the AAP proposes 10,000 sm gross between 2006 2026. This figure is consistent with the Core Strategy which identifies Perry Barr as a District Centre Growth Point. This is twice the RSS threshold of 5,000 sqm. However, there are many examples of office schemes larger than 5,000 sqm being approved outside the network of strategic centres (e.g. Longbridge, Edgbaston Cricket Ground, Selly Oak and more outside Birmingham).
- 2.34 The RSS proposes 220,000 sqm in Walsall and the same in West Bromwich between 2006-2026 within this context the proposal for Perry Barr is relatively modest and not remotely threatening to the role of either of these Centres.
- 2.35 It is also worth noting that the UDP supports additional office development at Perry Barr (para 10.13) so this is therefore a continuation of the City Council's existing policy approach.

Issue 1.10 Sports Provision: Does the AAP address the role of sport in achieving regeneration and other planning objectives at an appropriate level?

2.36 The AAP recognises the importance that formal and informal recreation can make to the quality of life of the area's residents. Public consultation during the formulation of the Plan, together with baseline evidence regarding open

space/playing field provision, has highlighted the need to support existing and encourage new sports facilities in the Plan area. Over recent years there has been substantial investment in new facilities, as well as investment in existing facilities to enhance current provision.

- 2.37 The Plan has provided the planning context for the City's investment in sport through its Building for the Schools Programme. An investment of £16million in Broadway School has enabled the upgrading of sports facilities. An additional £32 million at Holte, Mayfield and Lozells (HML) School also will deliver upgraded indoor and outdoor 'dual use' (open to the community) sports facilities. Both schools will offer sports and leisure provision at the heart of their communities. The development of the MyPlace centre at Six Ways (£5 million) also includes new indoor sports facilities.
- 2.38 Sport is an important element of the Plan in relation to its proposals for the Perry Barr/Birchfield area. This is with regard to Birmingham City University's Sports Village, and the provision of a £1.2 million Community Sports Hub at Council playing fields at Holford Lane which the Plan excludes from development. Investment of £7 million in the new Doug Ellis Centre at BCU Perry Barr has provided further enhanced leisure facilities in the area. Local regeneration objectives have also been addressed through the Aston Hall & Park Development Project. This £12.5 million scheme has provided improvements and additions to the recreational and sports facilities, including a new Community Sports Pavilion.
- 2.39 The Plan has also supported the opening of a new Futsal Arena in Newtown, which provides international 5 a-side indoor playing facilities approved FIFA and UEFA. This facility is a major contributor to supporting the community regeneration of Newtown. The Plan likewise identifies the contribution of the MyPlace Centre (with its indoor sports facility) in Newtown to supporting wider housing regeneration investment.
- 2.40 Through its policies, the AAP will ensure that replacement provision for any loss of sports facility or open space is required in line with the UDP and emerging policies in the Core Strategy. For example, it is recognised that replacement sports and leisure facilities will be required as part of the RIS development for any loss of existing leisure/sports facilities.
- 2.41 The Plan seeks to support the above investment, protect existing facilities and encourage further provision as part of a wider regeneration agenda of creating sustainable communities, and creating a healthy city under the Council's Sustainable Community Strategy objectives.
- 2.42 In response to the objection from R&D Aggregates it should be emphasised that neither the AAP nor the A34 Corridor Framework propose the development of the Greyhound Stadium.

Issues 1.11 - 1.19

A separate Statement is provided on transport matters in relation to Issues 1.11 to 1.19.

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Hearing Matter 1 – Overall Strategy, the Economy and Transport

Issue 1.5 – Regional Investment Site: Situation Update

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This statement sets out the Council's response to the issues raised under Hearing Matter 1 of the Hearing Programme in relation to the Regional Investment Site.

2.0 Response to Issues

Issue 1.5 (i) Is the estimated 3,000 new jobs justified in the current economic climate?

2.1 The methodology used to calculate the estimated job generation from the RIS is based on the ODPM Employment Land Review Guidance Note (December 2004). The Guidance Note identifies average employment densities and plot ratios for different types of employment development such as offices and general industrial. Using these assumptions it is possible to estimate the job generated from a development.

Issue 1.5 (ii) Does the site meet all the criteria in West Midlands RSS PA7B (ii) ?

- 2.2 The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS11 Jan 2008) in policy PA7 sets out the selection criteria for Regional Investment Sites (RIS). The following is an assessment of how the proposed Aston East RIS performs against these criteria:
- 2.3 (i) Size between 25-50 ha. The gross area of the Aston East RIS is 20 hectares. This is below the recommended size range, but because of its urban location, relatively high density development can be achieved compared to larger greenfield RIS schemes elsewhere in the region. However, should the RIS be a greater success over the next 15 years and if there is sufficient demand to justify its extension in the future, there is potential to extend the site further. In this way the eventual size of the RIS would fall within the recommended range.

- 2.4 (ii) High Quality Sites Attractive to National & Internal Investors The Phase 1 area fronting Salford Park Lake, with the elevated Aston Expressway as a backdrop, undoubtedly provides a unique environment with exciting urban design potential. The visual prominence of the site from the motorway will also be an attractive location factor for major corporate occupiers. The individual plots on the Holte & Priory sites are sufficiently large to create comprehensive campus environments in the range of 5-20,000 m² which is likely to be the size requirement for major corporate occupiers. A variety and mix of B1a, B1b, B1c and B2 land uses can be accommodated. This could include buildings that can accommodate a hybrid of such uses.
- 2.5 (iii) Served by Multi-modal Transport Aston East railway station is within walking distance and Lichfield Road is to be a bus showcase corridor into the City Centre. However, there is a need to improve east/west links to surrounding communities in Aston and Small Heath. If the HS2 high speed rail link goes ahead, the site will also be near the proposed Birmingham Eastside station.
- 2.6 (iv) Well Related to the Motorway Network The site adjoins the Salford Circus access to the M6 motorway and the A38M Aston Expressway into the City Centre.
- 2.7 (v) Located to Areas of Greatest Need Aston East is close to some of the most deprived communities in Birmingham at Aston, Nechells and Small Heath. The Aston East RIS will make an important contribution towards addressing worklessness in the AAP area and policy ES1 aims to ensure that local people benefit from the new employment opportunities created.
- 2.8 (vi) Accessible to Education & Training Opportunities The site is well located in relation to Aston University and the City of Birmingham University at Perry Barr.
- 2.9 (vii) It should serve a Regeneration Zone and/or High Technology Corridor Aston East is located within a former Regeneration Zone and close to deprived communities in Aston and Nechells. Aston East is also located within the A38 Birmingham High Technology Corridor and would be a key node for attracting and showcasing high technology development with links to Aston University.
 - Issue 1.5 (iii) Is the long period since the inception of the Aston RIS (over 10 years) an argument for proposing something less ambitious, perhaps with more general industry and a lower jobs expectation?
- 2.10 The first formal stage of the preparation of the AAP began in 2007 with the publication of the Issues and Options Report. This report identified the potential for a Regional Investment Site as one of four options. This was the first time that the possibility of a RIS had been considered and therefore the statement that the inception of the RIS was over 10 years ago is incorrect.
- 2.11 There are strong reasons for supporting a RIS in this location. As noted in response to issue 1.6 below the Aston/Newtown/Lozells areas have very high rates of worklessness and one of the highest rates of unemployment in the Country. This reflects in part the areas' reliance on traditional manufacturing and general industry. There remains a strong industrial base in the area,

including the adjoining Heartlands Industrial Area and the AAP supports this by identifying industrial regeneration areas (policy IR p.27). There is also a major general industrial site available at 'the Hub' immediately adjacent to the AAP area. This site still offers over 20 hectares of land for general industrial uses, which are still expected to play a major role in providing local employment.

- 2.12 There is however a need to diversify the economic base of the area and the RIS offers the opportunity to achieve this by attracting offices, research and development and high quality manufacturing to the area. These uses also offer the potential for higher rates of job generation than general industrial uses and the AAP includes policies to link the jobs created to the local community (policy ES1). A less ambitious general industrial use is therefore not considered to be appropriate.
- 2.13 It should also be noted that the RIS has never been actively marketed, although, the marketing advice provided by Ancer Spa as part of the Viability and Delivery assessment, supports the delivery of a RIS in this location. Recent demand for land at other strategically significant employment sites, including other RIS in West Midlands, has also increased. For example, Jaguar Land Rover are proposing a new engine plant at the I54 site in Wolverhampton and Aero Engine Controls (a high-technology aerospace company) have recently announced that they intend to build a new purpose built facility at the RIS at Birmingham Business Park.

Issue 1.5 (iv) Are the land acquisitions and phasing assumptions in Table 1 realistic?

- 2.14 The majority of land in Phase 1, with the exception of the former Concentric Controls, is in public sector ownership with the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) owning the majority of this land. 8.5 hectares is owned by the public sector out of a total site area for phase 1 of 10.55 ha. Phase 1 therefore contains half of the total RIS area and is likely to act as a catalyst for bringing forward the latter phases of the development. The HCA is working closely with the City Council to bring Phase 1 forward for development and is about to commission consultants to prepare a Development Strategy for Phase 1.
- 2.15 In response to the objection from Mercian Business Services the City Council recognises and values the role small businesses play in supporting the local economy and creating local employment. However, the objective of a RIS is to create a high quality business environment which supports the diversification of the local economy. Opportunities to create this type of site within the urban area are limited and site at Aston presents a rare opportunity to achieve this type of high quality development. The current use of the Concentric Controls site does not meet the objectives of the RIS and the City Council will work closely with the new owner, to enable the effective relocation of the various companies operating on this site, within the local area. There is a significant reservoir of general industrial land nearby to accommodate any relocations. The Ancer Spa Viability and Delivery Assessment provides an overview of the industrial market in the area with paras 3.3.2 and 3.3.3 (p.11) summarising the availability of small workshops/commercial units. It notes that there remains a reasonably large supply of unoccupied workshop and other commercial space in the local area.

- The Telson Centre in Aston and Aston Seedbed Centre, for example, both have high levels of vacancies.
- 2.16 The time frame for bring forward Phase 1 extends to 2015 and given the limited land acquisitions this timetable for delivery is considered realistic.
- 2.17 Parts of Phase 2 (2.7 ha) and Phase 3 (1.3 ha) are also in the ownership of the City Council and HCA and there is the potential for further development plots to be assembled after 2016. For the latter parts of the Plan period, it is expected that market conditions will improve and the private sector will be able to take on a more proactive role in taking forward development.

Issue 1.5 (vii) How will policy R1 define 'high quality' B2 uses, and how will it prevent possible change of use within B2 to less appropriate uses?

- 2.18 Any subsequent planning permission for the RIS will require the developer to prepare a Scheme of Management. The scheme of management will ensure that the site is used for purposes that meet the RIS objectives of attracting high quality technology related investment to diversify the economy. It will set out the measures to be established to provide effective control of uses including the issue of controlling appropriate high quality B2 uses.
- 2.19 The requirement for a scheme of management reflects the approach taken at the Longbridge RIS and other High-Technology Sites such as Pebble Mill.
- 2.20 As the requirement for a scheme of management is specifically referred to in the Longbridge AAP, it is suggested in the schedule of changes that similar reference is made in policy R5 of the Aston/Newtown/Lozells AAP.

Issue 1.5 (viii) How is small scale retail defined?

2.21 Small scale retail is defined as supporting the main use of the site in policy R1. It is suggested in the schedule of changes that a specific size threshold of 2,000 sqm gross is included to give a clearer definition of 'small scale retail'.

Issue 1.5 (x) Will the proposed development framework be an informal document, outside the LDF?

2.22 Yes. The AAP provides sufficient statutory guidance for developers and an informal development framework will therefore be prepared in conjunction with the HCA to take Phase 1 of the Regional Investment Site forward.

Issue 1.5 (xi) Does the requirement for an outline planning permission for the whole site limit or delay the ability of phased development of the RIS?

2.23 The City Council accepts that an outline planning permission is not required for the whole site and that this could act as a deterrent to bringing forward Phase 1 for development by imposing unnecessary costs and delays. It is therefore suggested that reference to the need for an outline application is deleted from para. 3.16 of the AAP (see schedule of changes).

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Hearing Matter 1 – Overall Strategy, the Economy and Transport

Issues 1.5 (v), (vi), (ix) and 1.11 – 1.19 Transport

1.0 Introduction

1.1 This statement sets out the Council's response to the Issues raised under Hearing Matter 1 of the Hearing Programme in relation to Transport issues.

2.0 Response to Issues

Issue 1.5 (v) Can it be demonstrated that the impact on the strategic road network will be acceptable? Is the Framework Travel Plan realistic and capable of effective monitoring?

- 2.1 The City Council has worked closely with the Highways Agency (HA) to assess the traffic impact of the RIS on the strategic road network (SRN), including additional modelling tests to evaluate impacts on M6 Junction 6 and the Salford Circus junction below. These tests have shown that whilst additional AAP traffic has a slight detrimental impact on the SRN, such impacts are within an overall context of existing congestion at this location. The HA has confirmed in writing that they are content that the AAP proposals are capable of being accommodated on the SRN without giving rise to unacceptable detriment to the safety or operation of the network.
- 2.2 The Framework Travel Plan (FTP) sets out a range of sustainable transport measures that can be employed by site occupiers to reduce travel dependency on the private car. Such measures have proved workable and successful at many developments across the City and throughout the country. Individual workplace travel plans will sit beneath the FTP for each specific RIS development/occupier, with such plans secured through appropriate planning conditions and Section 106 Agreements as necessary. An effective monitoring regime will be a requirement for these specific plans, with monitoring and evaluation support provided by the City Council's Travelwise team.

Issue 1.5 (vi) What elements of a high quality public transport system are proposed, and how will these be delivered and funded? If bus

penetration within the RIS is viewed as essential, should this be included within the AAP?

- 2.3 The RIS site is currently well served by public transport, with frequent heavy rail services on the cross-city and Walsall lines calling at Aston Station and 'showcase' style bus services on the Lichfield Road. Enhancements will be required to provide safe and easy access between Aston Station/bus stops and the RIS, including improved route surfacing, lighting, wayfinding and CCTV. In addition, improved passenger information, including real time information is proposed at new stop locations. Funding and delivery of such enhancements will be undertaken through Section 106/278 Agreements where possible, with additional support provided from Centro in the case of passenger information.
- 2.4 Bus penetration within the RIS itself is not seen as essential, with 5 bus stops located within 400m of the site (an acceptable walking distance), however, improved bus linkages between the residential communities of Newtown, Lozells and South Aston, and the RIS are required is set out in Policy T3.

Issue 1.5 (ix) What are the S 106/S278 highways and transport costs in policy R6? Are they all essential prior to development, or are some schemes desirable but not essential?

- 2.5 The S106/S278 highways and transport costs in Policy R6 have been estimated at £7m, although funding support from the City Council's and Centro's capital programmes is possible where projects meet West Midlands Local Transport Plan 3 targets and objectives. Expressions of interest have also been submitted for key infrastructure to the Greater Birmingham and Solihull Local Enterprise Partnership's Growing Places fund allocation of £14.9m. Discussions with Centro have identified that improved bus linkages with the RIS are best delivered through the market through the diversion/extension of existing services.
- 2.6 Highway works to the junctions of Lichfield Road/Aston Hall Road, Aston Hall Road/Electric Avenue and to Salford Circus will be essential prior to development. The essentiality of other improvements will be determined on the basis of more detailed development proposals.

Issue 1.11 Is there a conflict between improvements to Villa Park and RIS parking requirements?

2.7 Under an existing Section 106 Agreement with Aston Villa Football Club (AVFC), AVFC is required to provide a minimum of 3,334 off street parking spaces within a 30 minute walk of Villa Park. Whilst 900 spaces are currently provided at the Serpentine site, which comprises part of the proposed RIS, the latest review of the AVFC travel plan in September 2010 indicated overall off street parking provision of 4,575 spaces. As such, even if dual use of future RIS parking provision is discounted, the overall provision provided by AVFC is within the terms of the Section 106 Agreement. Should further off street parking space be required in the future, this is the responsibility of AVFC to identify and provide.

Issue 1.12 Is policy LC1 appropriately worded in relation to the future of Perry Barr stadium?

- 2.8 Policy LC1 seeks to encourage growth of the Perry Barr/Birchfield District Centre and is thought appropriately to ensure that the Perry Barr Stadium site is recognised as a potential one for offering enhanced leisure facilities and a greater variety of uses for the local and wider community. The policy also ensures that, should the site come forward for redevelopment, the existing provision is retained locally on an equally accessible site.
 - Issue 1.13 Transport provision: Is the transport vision translated into sufficient detail in the relevant AAP policies for the plan to be effective? Does the AAP positively promote (a) reducing the growth in number and length of motorised journeys; (b) promoting economic regeneration; and (c) ensuring accessibility for all?
- 2.9 The AAP transport policies, supported by Plan 2 (Movement Framework) provide a clear and sufficiently detailed multi modal transport vision for the AAP area, which accords with the land uses proposed.
- 2.10 The AAP positively promotes development in areas already well served by good public transport services and seeks to further reduce the growth and length of motorised journeys through travel planning, public transport improvements, car parking restraint and enhancements to walking and cycling provision.
- 2.11 The AAP identifies the key infrastructure necessary to unlock and support economic regeneration sites within the plan area, whilst also ensuring that access to and within the area is provided in a sustainable and multi modal manner.
 - Issue 1.14 In what ways can policy T1 improve east-west links across the area? Is it sufficiently clear on who is expected to fund and implement the public transport improvements?
- 2.12 Policy T1 refers to area wide transport proposals that will enhance access and travel throughout the Plan Area in all directions, supported by measures detailed in the other transport policies. Policy T1 specifically supports eastwest movement through junction capacity enhancements, smarter choices measures, improved accessibility, reduction of severance created by the A34 and enhanced east-west public transport links.
- 2.13 Improvements to public transport infrastructure will be funded through S106/S278 Agreements with developers, with support where appropriate from the City Council's and Centro's capital programmes. Enhanced east-west bus services could be supported by developers through S106 Agreements. However, discussions with Centro have identified the most sustainable solution as the extension/diversion of existing services provided by the market.
 - Issue 1.15 The AAP outlines the problems associated with the Perry Barr/Birchfield District Centre and the railway station; should it contain proposals to address these issues?
- 2.14 Policies T8, T9 and T10 contain proposals to address problems associated with the Perry Barr/Birchfield District Centre and the railway station, including junction improvements, pedestrian/cycle linkages and public transport enhancements.

2.15 The City Council and Centro have undertaken and continue to progress initial design and feasibility work to inform how such proposals may be taken forward in the future to accommodate existing traffic, the land uses proposed within the AAP, a potential rapid transit system and an enhanced public transport interchange including an improved station at Perry Barr. Joint working with the owners of the One Stop Shopping Centre, other land owners, Centro and Network Rail will be essential so as to align and agree traffic, transport and access requirements with proposed land uses and development aspirations.

Issue 1.16 In relation to para 6.7, what 'configuration' of the A34 is proposed, and should the AAP be more detailed and/or annotate the scheme on the Proposals Map?

2.16 The AAP aims to only set out a strategic direction for the A34 Corridor and the Perry Barr/Birchfield Local Centre, which it runs through. Initial work, as referenced above, to inform future possible highway configurations has been undertaken and continues to be progressed by the City Council and Centro. Further more detailed work will need to be undertaken with key stakeholders to inform the development of the draft Perry Barr/Birchfield/A34 N Corridor Regeneration Framework and ensure that proposed configurations can accommodate existing traffic, the land uses proposed within the AAP and public transport enhancements. There are no proposals within the AAP to remove grade separation on the A34 N. It is therefore not possible to provide more details or annotate the scheme on the Proposals Map.

Issue 1.17 Should the AAP make reference to the *Birmingham Vision for Movement* aspiration for a "well connected city", and in particular the A34 a rapid transport priority (in policy T7) and the A38 strategic bus route (no policy as such in AAP)?

2.17 The 'Birmingham Vision for Movement' is referenced within the Transport Strategy that forms a supporting document to the AAP. The A34 rapid transit priority as stated is already set out in Policy T7, whilst the A38 bus route is not specifically relevant to accessing the plan area, as it runs through the area via the A38 (M) Aston Expressway.

Issue 1.18 Is the AAP provision for cycling at an appropriate level?

2.18 The AAP provides an appropriate level for cycle provision in that it is stated as a priority and key focus of all objectives for accessibility and sustainable travel. Measures within Travel Plans and Policies T1, T4, T6 and T7 are identified to include cycle route provision, crossings, signing, and parking facilities to enhance existing provision within the plan area.

Issue 1.19 Are there any proposals for new development outside the plan area which could have traffic implications within the plan area, e.g. relocation of the wholesale market to Witton Square?

2.19 There are no proposals for new development outside of the plan area that could have traffic implications within the plan area. The proposal to relocate the Birmingham Wholesale Markets to Witton is no longer being progressed as an option.