

Comments of Birmingham City Council concerning HS2 and Washwood Heath Exam 140, 141 and 143)

Comments of CPRE Warwickshire (Exam 140) and Project Fields (Exam 141)

Both CPRE Warwickshire and Project Fields make observations in support of the letter to the HS2 Select Committee (Exam 139) on behalf of AXA REIM (Friends Life) as owners of the former LDV site at Washwood Heath.

CPRE Warwickshire and Project Fields support for the AXA position is noted, however the AXA letter is a submission to the Select Committee and is not a final decision on the issue.

The Chair of the HS2 Select Committee's announcement on the 16th December (Exam 137) incorporated the following;

- That the Committee did not believe that there is enough evidence to support a move of the depot from Washwood Heath.
- That the Committee "Impress on HS2 the need to adjust the scheme so that there is minimum land take and for the shortest time with sensible placing of balancing ponds and a hand-back configuration that after construction will attract maximum business use of the residual site." The City Council considers that this request is in accordance with what Birmingham City Council has been seeking to achieve through its Washwood Heath assurance which incorporated a review of the depot design and water attenuation measures at Washwood Heath (Exam 138)
- The Select Committee announcement also makes reference to whether agreement can also be reached on the alternative depot layout put forward by AXA on the 12th December (Exam 139 – the letter is actually dated 10th December).

As a result of this decision HS2 have now commenced a review of the depot layout and water attenuation measures in accordance with the Select Committee's instruction. As part of this review representatives of both the City Council and AXA have been invited to what is anticipated to be a series of meetings and technical workshops with HS2 and their technical advisors (an initial meeting on the scope of the works has been held).

It is understood that this process may also consider the timescale of any land take for construction purposes – the scheme put forward as part of the HS2 Bill incorporates both permanent land take for the depot as proposed at that time and the use of all the land at Washwood Heath for construction purposes. The proposed scheme also identifies an area of land as being "returned to suitable development use" (estimated to be 15 hectares). The AXA letter puts forward a layout that could release up to 33 hectares of development land which it is proposed could be released much sooner (if the construction proposals are amended).

The City Council's position in terms of the site is that it is Core Employment land and that if it were not for the HS2 Bill this would form part of the supply of Best Quality employment land.

The City Council is engaged and participating in the review of the depot at Washwood Heath and the potential release of more land for development is both consistent with its representations to

government throughout the process and the agreed assurances with the Secretary of State for Transport. However the City Council is not in control of the process – it is being progressed through an Act of Parliament.

The City Council's position is that regardless of the situation at Washwood Heath, and whether 15 hectares or 33 hectares of land (or somewhere in between) is released for development at some point in the future, Birmingham's need in terms of employment land is such that exceptional circumstances still exist which justify the release of Green Belt land at Peddimore.

As presented in Exam 42 there is an overall target for 224 ha of Best Quality employment land against a known supply of 84ha or 164ha if Peddimore is included. The addition of Washwood Heath would therefore make an important contribution towards achieving an adequate supply of Best Quality land over the plan period but it is not sufficient to address the overall shortage of land which justifies the release of Peddimore from the Green Belt.

Policy GA6 safeguards 40 ha of the Peddimore site for B1 (c) and B2 uses, while allowing the rest of the site to be developed for a wider range of uses including B1 (c) and B2 as well as B1 (b) and B8. It does not identify 40 ha solely for B8 development as suggested by CPRE Warwickshire and Project Fields.

Comments of Savills on behalf of AXA REIM (Friends Life) (Exam 143)

There are a number of areas of agreement with AXA in terms of Washwood Heath including that if the land was not affected by HS2 then it would contribute to the supply of Best Quality employment land over the plan period. Both representatives of AXA and the City Council are participating in the review of the depot layout with HS2 with similar objectives of minimising the depot layout, bringing forward development land as soon as possible in accordance with the Select Committee instruction and the need to address high unemployment in the Washwood Heath area and Hodge Hill Constituency.

The City Council's comments on the Washwood Heath position are set out above and in addition the City Council has the following observations:

- Background section – the City Council was not present at AXA's Select Committee appearance. The layout of the depot and the location of balancing ponds is an issue that is to be considered in the review process that has now commenced.
- Exam 138 – as set out in Exam 138 the City Council considers that its assurances require both that the land required for the operation of the railway and depot is minimised and that the water attenuation measures proposed are reviewed.
- It should be noted that the reference to 47ha of employment land is land within the HS2 Safeguarded Area. The Safeguarded Area is land that is protected from conflicting development through the planning process for the construction and operation of the new railway. At this stage it is not certain (or indeed likely) that all of the businesses within the Safeguarded Area will need to be relocated. Both the City Council and HS2 Ltd are working to minimise the impact on existing businesses; indeed it is noted that the HS2 Select Committee statement on Washwood Heath also states that "We reiterate our general view,

which applies to rural areas but also elsewhere that land take should be the minimum as far as possible” (Exam 137). Nevertheless it is acknowledged that HS2 will have an impact on existing businesses in Birmingham and that these will need to be relocated (hence the assurance on business relocations in Exam 138).