

CALL FOR SITES REPRESENTATION

Land off Timmis Road, Lye






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Client reference: RCA586c

Monday, 29 October 2018

Last User: CR

QMS

Author:	[REDACTED]
Checked:	SG
Version issued to:	Submission
	Other:
Version for:	Client
Date:	29/10/2018 17:29:35
File Location:	RCA586c/V3
RCA QMS CERTIFICATION	  RICS ®  RTPI mediation of space - making of place
	RCAF010

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

1	INTRODUCTION	1
2	SITE AND SURROUNDINGS	2
3	POLICY CONTEXT	3
4	KEY CONSIDERATIONS	5
	Historic Uses	5
	Planning History	7
	Constraints	7
	Contaminated Land	Error! Bookmark not defined.
	Existing policy implications	9
5	CONCLUSION	11

FIGURES

Figure 1 - Site Location Plan and Aerial Photograph.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 2 - 1st edition OS (1880).....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 3 - 1950s OS Plan	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 4 - 1960s OS Plan	6
Figure 5 - 1970s OS Plan	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 6 – Easements	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 7 – Mineshafts.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.
Figure 8 - Indicative Residential Layout.....	Error! Bookmark not defined.

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This representation is made on behalf of Ruskin Properties Limited ('the client') by RCA Regeneration Limited ('the agent') as part of the Call for Sites consultation into the review of the Black Country Core Strategy to support the delivery of sufficient housing and employment land for development to meet long term needs up to 2036.
- 1.2 It is acknowledged that the Core Strategy is not the vehicle for the identification of specific sites. However, it is important that as part of the evidence gathering exercise to feed into the review that a realistic consideration is made of available, suitable and deliverable sites. This is to inform the direction and focus of growth and to inform the need to release additional land for housing and employment purposes.
- 1.3 As such, by way of background, this report describes the specific site that is subject to these representations, the current policy context and key material considerations that are pertinent in moving forward with appropriate development on the site.

2 SITE AND SURROUNDINGS

- 2.1 The site measures 0.6 hectares and comprises undeveloped land lying between existing industrial units to the north and east and residential properties to the west. The site is not in use. It is site is relatively flat, with an existing access off Timmis Road to the east and Bagley Street to the north-west. Figure 1 below shows the location of the site in relation to the surrounding area.
- 2.2 Its former (historic) uses are understood to have included brickworks and some mining activity. There is some made ground included within the site.

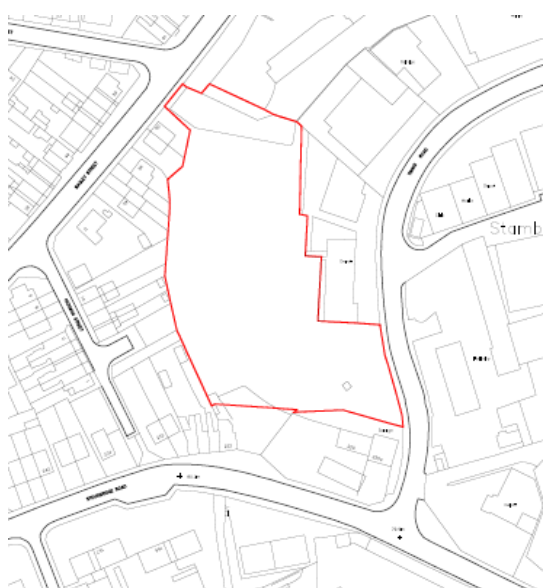


Figure 1 - Site Location Plan and Aerial Photograph

3 POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The site currently lies within the growth network of the adopted Black Country Core Strategy falling within Regeneration Corridor 13 (Jewellery Line-Rowley-Regis-Stourbridge Junction). The growth network is the focus for housing and employment development up to 2026. The strategic planning policy context seeks the consolidation of Regeneration Corridor 13 for housing-led regeneration. This includes the redevelopment of older industrial areas for housing development once these become obsolete and unviable. The strategy seeks to increase the catchment areas of existing rail stations through the creation of sustainable urban villages within close proximity to the stations of Blackheath, Cradley Heath and Lye but recognises the importance of housing development within small centres in terms of overall regeneration benefits.
- 3.2 The key diagram associated with the adopted Core Strategy for RC13 identifies land to the west of Lye of which this site forms part of as being for local employment retention rather than for housing growth.
- 3.3 The subsequent Dudley Borough Development Strategy designates the site (ES13.3) as an employment opportunity site to be delivered 2016-2021. The designated site immediately adjoins the Stambermill industrial estate identified as a local quality employment area (Policy L7). Both Stambermill industrial estate and site ES13.3 therefore contribute towards the Borough's employment land requirements forming part of supply up to 2026.
- 3.4 The review of the Black Country Core Strategy has begun to plan for development up to 2036. A number of studies have been commissioned to inform the development potential of land within the urban areas and the need for the release of Green Belt to meet the housing and employment needs of the Black Country, the Greater Birmingham HMA and the aspirations of the West Midlands Strategic Economic Plan.
- 3.5 The G L Hearn Greater Birmingham HMA Strategic Growth Study (February 2018) has assessed the growth needs of the Greater Birmingham and Black Country HMA. This being between 256,000 and 310,000 new homes to 2036. The Greater Birmingham and Black Country HMA Strategic Growth Study updated need and supply figures for the wider Housing Market Area, estimating a shortfall of between 28,150 homes up to 2031 and 32,700 homes for 2031-36.
- 3.6 The Black Country published the Black Country Urban Capacity Review in May 2018 following the G L Hearn report to identify existing housing and employment land supply to meet the current plan period and to act as a working document informing the BCCS review up to 2036. This report identifies a need for an additional 350 hectares of employment land with a

particular shortage in large, high quality employment sites with a specific need for large scale, rail-based logistics provision to serve the Black Country.

- 3.7 The strategy for delivering sufficient growth to meet the needs of the HMA is yet to be concluded but both the G L Hearn report and the Black Country Urban Capacity Analysis (May 2018) agree that the Black Country does not have sufficient land within the urban area to meet its housing and employment growth needs.
- 3.8 Continuing to make an effective use of suitable brownfield sites and utilising land that is currently under-used will be important in balancing the continued need for urban regeneration and the requirement to release Green Belt land to meet strategic housing requirements whether this be through sustainable urban extensions or new villages/settlements. The potential supply from obsolete and unviable employment land to maximise urban supply will remain an important part of the strategy whilst progressing local Green Belt reviews to ensure that sufficient housing growth is delivered to meet unmet need.
- 3.9 Whilst there will therefore remain a need to safeguard suitable employment areas, existing employment areas that are no longer 'fit for purpose' should be considered for redevelopment to alternative uses, especially housing. These redundant employment areas will contribute towards meeting housing land requirements collectively reducing the need for Green Belt release in relation to housing development. Against this context, it is therefore important that the review of the BCCS revisits existing sites designated for employment use against suitability, site constraints and viability.

4 KEY CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 Land at Timmis Road lies on the edge of Stambermill Industrial Estate (a local quality employment area) and a residential area (Bagley Street and Stourbridge Road). The site lies to the west of Lye centre where the BCCS and adopted Development Strategy has sought the managed release of employment land for housing development in the interests of regeneration. To this end, a large number of existing employment sites have been designated for mixed use within the Development Strategy to allow the principle of a range of uses to be established, including housing development. It is therefore unclear, when set against this context, why land at Timmis Road was considered appropriate for employment use only as part of the Development Strategy when the site clearly sits on the periphery of Stambermill being located immediately adjacent to existing residential development.

Historic Uses

4.2 As previously stated, the site historically formed part of a brickworks as shown on the 1st edition OS map (1880). The brickworks remained in place until the 1960s when the Stambermill industrial estate was developed. This development did not include the erection of any buildings on the site subject to this representation suggesting that the site has remained undeveloped and unused for decades. Figures 2-5 below illustrate this point.

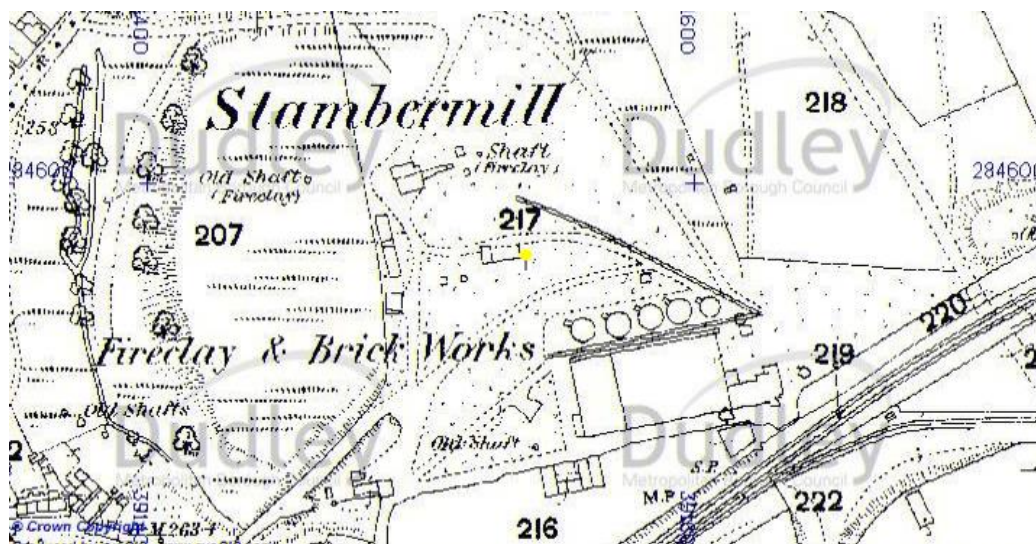


Figure 2 - 1st edition OS (1880)

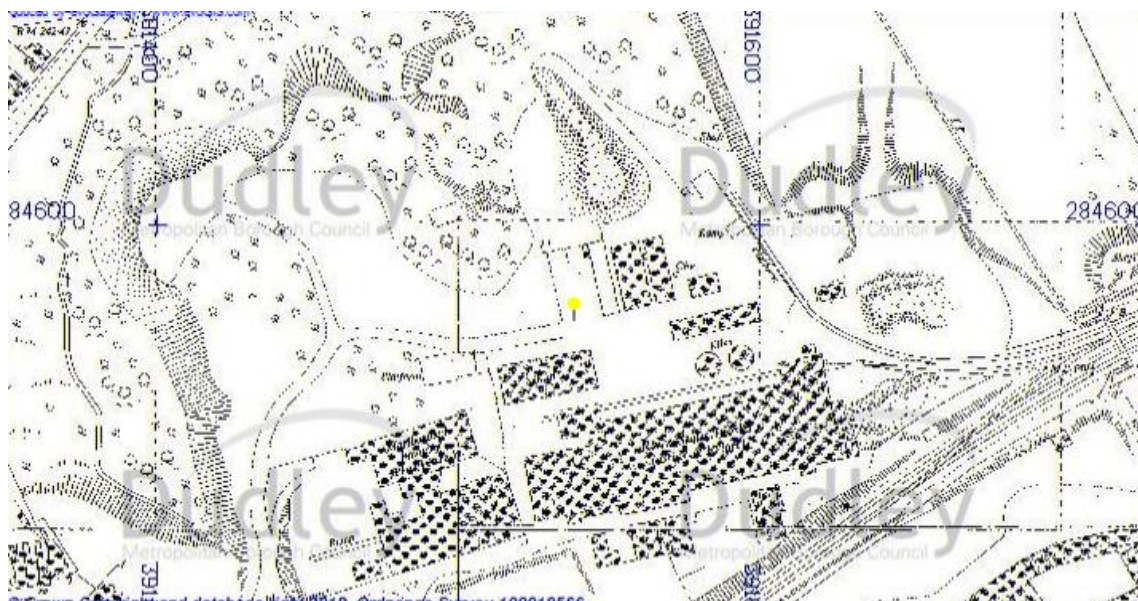


Figure 3 - 1950s OS Plan

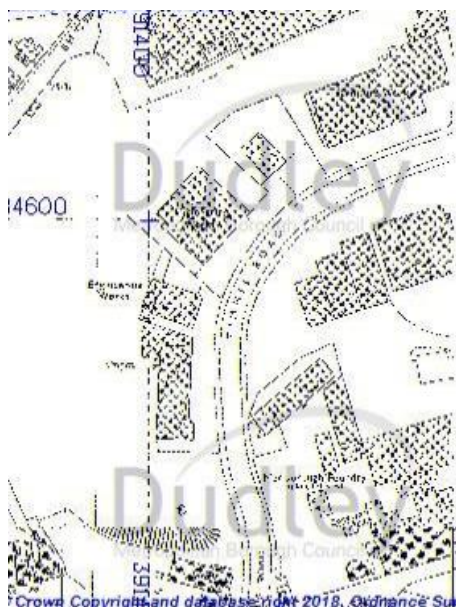


Figure 4 - 1960s OS Plan



Figure 5 - 1970s OS Plan

Planning History

- 4.3 The site comprises an extensive planning history with a number of planning applications approved in the 1970s for warehouse development. Despite the approvals, none of the schemes were implemented. More recently, two planning applications were submitted in 2008 and 2009 for the change of use of the land for the display, storage and sales of commercial vehicles, both applications were withdrawn.

Constraints

- 4.4 The site comprises both a foul sewer and culverted watercourse running through the site, each requiring a 5m easement either side. The location of the main sewer and surface water pipes are shown below in Figure 6.

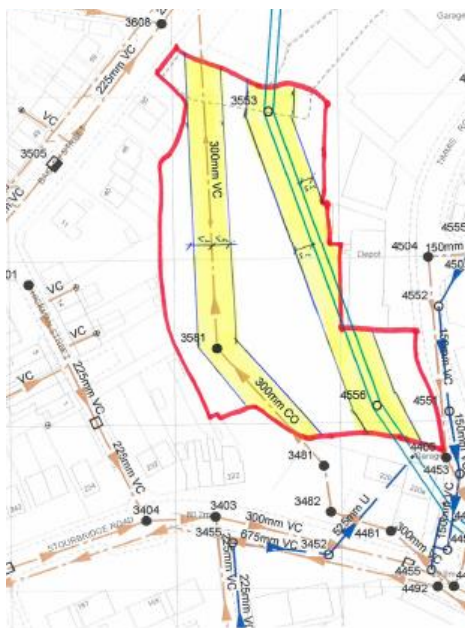


Figure 6 - Easements

4.5 In addition, the site lies within a former coal mining area, with the southern part of the site comprising two disused mineshafts. Intrusive works have not yet taken place to identify the exact location of the shafts and to determine the extent of stabilisation works and stand-off zones that will be required and the resultant impact upon the development potential of the site. The site lies within an area of ancient shallow mining before records were kept. There is therefore additional potential that other unrecorded shafts could exist within the site. The general location of the two identified mine entries is shown in Figure 7 below.

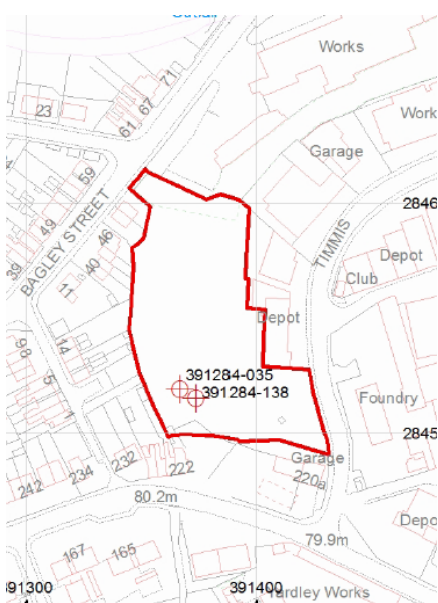


Figure 7 - Mineshafts

- 4.6 A Coal Mining Risk Assessment has been prepared in relation to the site which also confirms that as a result of the historical uses there is a significant layer of Made Ground present of variable thickness and composition. Intrusive works have not yet been undertaken (Phase 2 SI) to confirm its depth to advise on potential ground instability issues and resultant foundation design.

Existing policy implications

- 4.7 Policy DEL2 of the adopted BCCS seeks to manage the balance between employment and housing land to ensure that the Black Country retains a sufficient supply of employment land whilst balancing the need to release land for housing development to facilitate housing growth and wider regeneration objectives up to 2026.

- 4.8 The sentiments of this policy are not disputed, but it is important that in identifying the broad locations for growth as part of the review of the BCCS that the evidence base sitting behind the strategy includes a realistic assessment of the suitability, availability and deliverability of a site for that particular use.

- 4.9 Policy DEL2 specifically states that:

"Before releasing any employment land in the Black Country we will first ensure the retention of an adequate supply of occupied and available employment land to meet defined needs..."

- 4.10 Land at Timmis Road is undeveloped and under-utilised and has not been in active use since the site was worked for coal and in use associated with the former brick works as shown on the historic mapping above. Planning applications submitted in the 1970s and 2008/09 for industrial/commercial development were never implemented. The site is therefore not fulfilling a role or function as an employment site and not contributing towards employment land supply failing to be delivered.

- 4.11 The site is severely constrained in terms of the presence of a main sewer, culverted watercourse, mineshafts and Made Ground as set out in this report. These constraints have clearly prevented the site coming forward for employment use in practical and viability terms. The development of the site for housing will not result in the displacement of any active business and the site is clearly unviable and undeliverable as an employment site for those reasons already outlined.

- 4.12 An indicative layout has been prepared for the site for residential purposes demonstrating that housing can be delivered despite the site constraints. Many of the existing employment uses that immediately adjoin the eastern boundary of the site fall within light industrial and

office/training uses that would be compatible with residential development. The development of the site for housing would result in comprehensive development that would not prejudice the continued function of the adjoining employment uses with positive regeneration benefits within a sustainable location.



Figure 7 - Indicative layout

5 CONCLUSION

- 5.1 Land at Timmis Road lies within the existing established urban area between Lye and Stourbridge, along a sustainable route close to shops and services such as public transport. The site lies between an established residential and employment area but with the site itself remaining undeveloped for decades failing to contribute towards either employment or housing land supply. The key diagram associated with the adopted BCCS and the site-specific designation within the adopted Borough Development Strategy seeks the development of the site for employment purposes.
- 5.2 This site is obsolete in terms of its employment potential being undeveloped and under-utilised for decades. The site is not fit for purpose or viable as an employment site given its site-specific constraints and the inevitable costs associated with site clean-up and remediation.
- 5.3 The site could be developed for housing without adversely impacting upon existing businesses and which would have overriding positive regeneration benefits through the provision of new housing within the existing urban area. The site should therefore be identified and included within the Call for Sites process as a housing site informing the review of the BCCS as contributing towards future housing supply and inclusion as a housing site within the subsequent review of the Dudley Site Allocations Document. The site will contribute towards housing provision within the urban area being available, suitable and deliverable for residential development.