

Clearly we are at initial stages on the Land Allocations Document and there is a need for this site to progress through the document and as part of a comprehensive and strategic assessment. I recognise that the above timescales are long and there is a need to assess these further in terms of national guidance seeking a more proactive, responsive and speedier planning system which is less driven by process. The Localism Bill (published later this month) should outline this process and drive forward, I hope, to a quicker production of this document.

Before I deal with the illustrative sketch plan, there are two matters that need to be clarified. The first of these is related to the remediation you claim to have undertaken on site. We would be grateful if you could supply the details of this. Secondly, we need to discuss further the marketing exercise you have undertaken and the type of interest expressed in the site.

In relation to the plan (and again with the caveat that the Council reserves its position in relation to any proposal), I have the following observations.

(1) I understand the need for the site to be used productively, and can also agree in principle that, if there is to be commercial development as well as leisure development, industrial development is most appropriate, given that there is no scope for town centre type uses, such as offices or shops. Neither, given Walsall's good supply of land for housing as set out in our SHLAA, is there any need to use this land for residential development.

(2). I note you are confident that a major employer could be attracted to the site. I regard it as essential that, should the site be released, it should be on a non-speculative basis for an inward investor.

(3). The sketch has only one large industrial unit, with the rest being composed of small units with the floorspace of 2,200m²-2500sqm. Walsall's main problem is a relative abundance of small to very small sites for industry, with a lack of large sites that generate outside investment interest. I note your comment that it would be difficult to attract a single user to this site. But I consider the opportunity provided by the size of this site, which if included within the LAD would be one of the biggest in the Borough, warrants an offer that would provide for one or more large inward investors, rather than simply providing a set of small units that would be more likely to absorb relocations from the existing stock in Walsall. I consider that the layout should be revised to provide for larger units, which could always be subdivided at a later date, rather than starting off with one large and 6 small units. It might be possible to provide for this, and the leisure/recreation units, through a small extension of the site into adjoining land.

(4) The sports pitches and changing facility are welcome and in line with current UDP policy LC2.2 which also governs this site. There will be a need to assess this in light of maximum car parking standards and the need to promote alternative modes of transport. The need to develop links to the surrounding area also needs to be considered. The requirements for maintenance and equipment storage also need to be considered. It may be that the leisure use would be more land hungry than currently shown. Equally it may be better to locate the leisure facility closer to the southern boundary to develop better links to future public transport and residential properties.

(5) There is no apparent indication of any Greenway provision on this plan. Equally, the design will need to be influenced by any ecological value identified on the site. The proposal needs to include provision for the Greenway along the old rail line to the south, to link in with both the recreation and employment uses and the development of formal pedestrian and cycling links to residential properties. In doing so providing sustainable transport facilities for the adjoining residential catchment, I note relatively limited space has been provided for future metro links and this requirement and need should be discussed in more detail, particularly with mitigation in mind the Greenway also needs to be designed so as to allow the ex rail alignment to be used for metro in future.

(6) The proposal also needs to include a qualitative Greenway running down the eastern side of the site. Indeed, you need to explore, as part of a wider benefit associated with the scheme, a