



Wyre Forest District

Site Allocations and Policies Plan

Examination

Matter 8: South Kidderminster Enterprise Park

WFDC Response

14th January 2013

Matter 8 - South Kidderminster Enterprise Park

1. Are policies SAL.SK1, SK2 & SK3 consistent with the Waste Core Strategy in terms of the uses proposed?

- 1.1 It is considered that Policies SAL.SK1, SK2 and SK3 are consistent with the Waste Core Strategy (SD010). The suggested approach to the future development of these sites has been discussed further with Worcestershire County Council through the Statement of Common Ground (SOCG6). Taking each of these policies in turn, the following comments are made:

Policy SAL.SK1: South Kidderminster Enterprise Park

- 1.2 It is not considered that waste development would be excluded from this area. The policy promotes development that *positively contributes to the economic wellbeing of the District*. It is considered that waste related development proposals would fall within this category. There are not any specific use classes identified to cover the South Kidderminster Area and so the policy is not prescriptive, it merely reflects that economic generating uses will be considered favourably, subject to conformity with the other policies in the plan. Therefore, it is not considered that any changes to this policy are required as waste related development could come forward, which would mean that it is consistent with the Waste Core Strategy.

Policy SAL.SK2: Former British Sugar Site

- 1.3 This site has outline planning approval for the uses included in the policy. Therefore, it is not considered that a waste facility will be brought forward in this location and the policy reflects this. However, the proposed changes to Policy SAL.GPB1 identified in the main modifications would allow for an application to be considered for a waste facility at this site. It is therefore considered that the current policy reflects the planning permission that is in place and will likely be implemented. Furthermore, changes proposed to the policy framework in SAL.GPB1, would add extra flexibility for a waste development to be considered at this site, should there be demand for such a use.

Policy SAL.SK3: Oasis Arts and Crafts and Reilloc Chain

- 1.4 It is anticipated that this site is likely to be developed for residential uses and the reference to the B use classes is in order to maintain other parts of the site in their current form. It is not considered that the site, given the potential for new residential development, is likely to come forward for waste related development. Therefore, its suitability as a location for a waste facility is questionable and not considered to be deliverable. It should also be noted that this particular site does not fall within the Waste Core Strategy's 'Areas of Search', which is included at Annex A of the document, and so is not considered to be a site that would be required to meet the needs of the Waste Core Strategy.
- 1.5 The approach outlined above has been agreed by Worcestershire County Council through the Statement of Common Ground (SOCG6). It is therefore considered to be a robust approach and, subject to the proposed change for Policy SAL.GPB1 (SALMOD15) would be acceptable to Worcestershire County Council in order to improve the consistency with the Waste Core Strategy for Worcestershire. It is therefore considered that, as submitted, the Site Allocations and Policies is sound and justified in its approach.

2. Is Policy SAL.SK1 consistent with the Framework in terms of the longer term protection of employment sites?

- 2.1 It is considered that the policy framework provided by SAL.SK1 is consistent with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (Paragraph 22). The policy seeks to provide a strategic approach to encouraging new development within the southern area of Kidderminster, where the majority of employment facilities and opportunities lie. This is considered to be consistent with the NPPF which identifies that planning should encourage economic growth and identify priority areas for economic regeneration, infrastructure provision and environmental enhancement.
- 2.2 The SKEP remains a key economic area for the District. This has been recognised by the fact it was proposed by the Worcestershire Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) as the one area in Worcestershire to apply for Enterprise Zone status. Whilst this application was ultimately unsuccessful, the view from the Worcestershire LEP (combined public and private sector) was that this was an appropriate area for targeting economic

development. This has been reinforced by funding received by the former British Sugar Site from both the Worcestershire LEP and the Greater Birmingham and Solihull (GBS) LEP as part of the Growing Places Fund. The area is also part of the GBS LEP Enterprise Belt area, which will provide significant links for economic growth opportunities in North Worcestershire, South Staffordshire and Solihull.

- 2.3 Overall, it is considered that policy SAL.SK1 is an appropriate and justified approach to future development in this location. It should be noted that although the focus is on economic development within this corridor, it does not mean that other uses will not be permitted. This is highlighted by the site specific policies SAL.SK2 (Former British Sugar Site) and SAL.SK3 (Oasis Arts & Crafts and Reilloc Chain), which seek to provide for other forms of development within this corridor.
- 2.4 This policy does not seek to protect sites for employment uses in the longer term; instead it provides a strategic and comprehensive framework to suggest what development in this corridor should achieve. It is therefore considered to be a sound approach in line with the ambitions of the District Council and the two Local Enterprise Partnerships with which the District Council is actively involved, as well as being in line with the aims of the NPPF in terms of building a strong economy.

3. Is economic development within the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park, in particular land in the ownership of Revelan, justified and deliverable given the current economic circumstances?

- 3.1 This question relates specifically to the land parcels in the ownership of Revelan, which are the former Romwire Site and the former Ceramaspeed building.
- 3.2 The provisions of Paragraph 22 of the NPPF (SD001) which seek to avoid the long term protection of employment land are noted by the District Council.
- 3.3 Whilst it is understood that the long term protection of employment sites should be avoided, this needs to be understood in the context of whether or not there is a *reasonable prospect* of the allocated sites coming forward for economic development. Equally important is for the Council to provide *for different land uses to support*

sustainable local communities. Therefore, the wider context of the allocation of land and the potential for economic development needs to be fully understood.

- 3.4 Key to ensuring a sustainable development pattern within the District is providing for a balance of land uses as set out in the overarching development strategy contained within the District's Adopted Core Strategy (SD003). This is an important strand of the NPPF and one of the three dimensions of sustainable development, which is identified as follows:

"An economic role – contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation". (Paragraph 7)

- 3.5 Therefore, the Council has an obligation to ensure that sufficient space is available to support economic growth in the future. In terms of the level of land required, this has been set through the adopted Core Strategy at a requirement of 44ha of land between 2006 and 2026. It is considered that the sites in the ownership of Revelan provide important space to meet this requirement.
- 3.6 The location of the sites is considered to be suitable for economic development, as identified by the investment within this area over the past 5 years. This has included new development space for companies and has proved popular in a challenging economic climate. The area is centrally located within the District and is set to benefit from infrastructure improvements as a result of the redevelopment of the former British Sugar site that will implement the Hoobrook Link Road and improve direct access to the motorway network.
- 3.7 The approach to the policy preparation is considered to be in line with the NPPF which identifies that *"Policies should be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan and to allow a rapid response to change in economic circumstance"*. It is considered that providing a reservoir of potential employment land to allow for an uplift in economic circumstances is an appropriate approach to the future development aspirations of the District, and is in line with the approach to sustainable development.

- 3.8 The next section refers to the individual sites in Revelan's ownership which were the basis of the representations received.

Former Romwire Site

- 3.9 The first of the two sites in Revelan's ownership is the former Romwire Site, located along Walter Nash Road in Kidderminster. This is a cleared, 5 hectare flat site that is situated within the South Kidderminster Enterprise Park area.

- 3.10 In terms of considering whether or not there is *a reasonable prospect* of this site being used for economic development purposes (the test suggested by the NPPF), attention is drawn to the recent planning permission that was granted for the site, 10/0751/FULL. This application was for "*Change of use of site and construction of a new two storey car showroom building, single storey valet unit, associated refuse enclosures and fencing, plus hard and soft landscaping to a brownfield site*". This application was granted planning permission in March 2011. Unfortunately the proposed operator has now advised the owners that they no longer wish to acquire the site, due to a temporary extension to their existing leasehold site. However, it is important to note that there was interest in the site, during more difficult economic times, and the main reason for the development not proceeding was related to the existing operations of the company, rather than the site itself.

- 3.11 Furthermore, as identified by the representations made by Revelan, there was also interest in the site for a bespoke retail outlet, Countrywide. However, they have now advised Revelan Group that their interest in the site is on hold.

- 3.12 Whilst these two interests in the site have not currently been implemented, they do show a *reasonable interest* in the land for economic development purposes during a fairly depressed economic market. Furthermore, the implementation of these proposals would have seen a significant part of the site developed for economic use.

- 3.13 It is also important to note that the site is surrounded on all sides by other employment uses. To the north of the site is a well occupied industrial estate, to the east of the site is Brintons carpet manufacturers and to the west of the site the new Finepoint development is currently in the process of being developed through a

phased approach. To the south of the site runs the Stourport Road which divides this area with other industrial uses to the south. It is clear, therefore, that this area is heavily focussed on business and the economy, with existing important businesses being located here and new developments being implemented. It is not considered, therefore, that other uses would be suitable within this industrialised location. Furthermore, there are concerns about potential noise pollution issues for this location if other uses, such as residential, were to be considered.

3.14 Overall, it is considered that this site is located in a key employment corridor within the District and should be retained for economic development purposes over the lifetime of the plan (which runs to 2026).

Former Ceramaspeed Site

3.15 The second site under consideration is the former Ceramaspeed site, also located along Walter Nash Road.

3.16 In terms of considering whether or not there is a *reasonable prospect* of this site being used for economic development purposes (the test suggested by the NPPF), attention is drawn to the recent planning permissions that have been granted for this particular unit, as follows:

- 09/0379/FULL: Extension of part of low bay factory to line through with existing high bay part of factory, addition of two plant rooms on south elevation in existing service yard
- 09/0380/Full: Change of use from former factory for the manufacture of Ceramaspeed Heaters for glass ceramic cooking appliances to B1/B2 & B8 uses
- 10/0085/Full: Formation of dock leveller bays to southern elevation, erection of open sided storage canopies, the installation of wood dust extraction unit, removal of internal office accommodation and the alteration of operating hours to 24 hours

- 12/0228/FULL: Extension of part of low bay factory to line through with existing high bay part of factory, addition of two plant rooms on south elevation in existing service yard (Renewal of Planning Permission 09/0379/FULL)

3.17 It is clear to see from the recent planning approvals that there remains interest in this site for employment purposes. It should also be noted that before the closure of the previous company (Ceramaspeed) in 2008, the unit had been in active economic use since its construction and opening in 1992. It is therefore considered that there is sufficient evidence to suggest that the site still remains attractive as a potential new employment provider and relatively recent interest has been shown in the unit and that there is a *'reasonable prospect'* of the site being used for economic development purposes. It is not therefore considered that alternative uses should be considered at this site at the current time. Furthermore, and as identified above, recent economic developments in and around this location highlight that the location is generally good for business and should be supported and protected for this purpose.

3.18 Overall, it is considered that the proposed allocations provide for a balanced approach to land requirements and will enable sustainable development to occur over the plan period. It is therefore considered that the Plan is sound, justified, effective and consistent with National Policy and no changes are proposed in this regard.

4. Is the indicative phasing period for Oasis Arts & Crafts and Reilloc Chain justified?

4.1 A proposed amendment is suggested for the phasing of the Oasis Arts and Crafts and Reilloc Chain site to reflect recent changes in circumstances and proposed timing of development. It is anticipated that some of the site could be delivered in the near future as grant funding has become available for one of the Council's partner Registered Providers and a housing scheme on the Reilloc Chain part of the site is likely to be implemented in 2014. The District Council considers that the site's delivery could be phased with the Reilloc Chain element coming forward earlier in the plan period. Development would need to be designed to link with Phase 2 for Oasis Arts and Crafts which is likely to come forward later in the plan period. To reflect this

change in circumstances it is proposed that the Site Allocations and Policies be updated to bring the phasing period forward.