

13 March 2015  
BDP Programme Officer 130315



Ian Kemp  
Programme Office  
Birmingham Development Plan  
49 All Saints Place  
Bromsgrove  
Worcestershire  
B61 0AX  
United Kingdom

Paul Rouse  
E: [prouse@savills.com](mailto:prouse@savills.com)  
DL: +44 (0) 121 634 8431  
F: +44 (0) 121 633 3666

Innovation Court  
121 Edmund Street  
Birmingham B3 2HJ  
T: +44 (0) 121 633 3733  
[savills.com](http://savills.com)

By Email  
E: [ikemp@icloud.com](mailto:ikemp@icloud.com)

Dear Mr Kemp

**Birmingham Development Plan Examination  
Employment Land  
EXAM 137 - 139 relating to Washwood Heath**

Further to your email dated 19 February I write to provide a response from AXA REIM (Friends Life). Please accept my apologies for this being after the deadline that you set. The matters set out below are not representations seeking to promote a position, but are simply points of clarification to assist the Inspector with understanding the information before him. As such, I trust that the Inspector will accept this letter and its contents.

**Background**

The statement from the Chair of the Select Committee requires some understanding of the technical issues surrounding the HS2 Hybrid Bill proposal for the Rolling Stock Maintenance Depot (RSMD) at Washwood Heath (WWH).

The HS2 Hybrid Bill proposal is to take all of the Washwood Heath site (approximately 64ha) in connection with the HS2 proposals. Of that 64ha approximately 9ha is occupied by existing employment operations that would have been expected to remain in situ, and the remaining 55ha is a high quality employment development site that were it not for the HS2 Bill would form part of the supply of Best Quality employment land.

Of the 64ha WWH site, part is required for the provision of the HS2 tracks from the stem of the Y network to the proposed Curzon Station. That part required for the tracks necessitates the relocation of the UK Mail operation (demolition) and the relocation of Cemex (severed from its rail connection). A strip of approx 2ha across the northern edge of the AXA development site is also required for the HS2 track provision. No part of the PXP (9ha) or St Modwen (21ha) development sites is required for the HS2 track. We estimate that of the 64ha WWH site, approximately 5ha is required for the HS2 tracks. The balance of the Cemex and UK Mail sites not required for the HS2 track, could be added to the residual development land at WWH if the RSMD was not located at WWH. The RSMD is therefore taking approximately 59ha of development land (55ha existing and 4ha created from residual Cemex and UK Mail land).

The RSMD Bill proposal includes 3 balancing ponds as part of a drainage strategy. One balancing pond forms part of the drainage proposal for the RSMD site. The other two ponds are part of the drainage for the HS2 tracks to the east and west of the WWH site. AXA demonstrated in its evidence to Select Committee that the two track balancing ponds could be relocated off site on other HS2 land, and the RSMD balancing pond is not required at all or could be provided as an attenuation facility beneath part of the RSMD.

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The Bill proposal is to take part of the WWH site for use in construction only and then to release that land post construction of HS2. There has been no definition within the Bill or otherwise from HS2 to date, as to the area of land that might be released post construction, what the condition or accessibility of that land might be, or when it might be released.

### **EXAM 137 Select Committee Transcript**

Select Committee has recognised there is a need to address the high unemployment in the Washwood Heath area in and around the Hodge Hill constituency. Select Committee has directed HS2 Ltd to minimise the land take at WWH for the RSMD, and to minimise the land take for balancing ponds and for construction use. If any land is required for construction only, then any land that is proposed to be handed back should maximise the business use of that land. This will require any hand back land to be of a type and configuration which is relevant to business needs and to be have appropriate access and be otherwise unconstrained. Hand back of land post construction is unlikely to take place during the Plan period.

HS2 Ltd has been specifically instructed to seek agreement with AXA taking account of the recent AXA proposals of 12 December (letter from AXA plus enclosures dated 10 December 2014) which places all of the RSMD and on site drainage on the western part of the site (part AXA Cemex residual and St Modwen land). The requirement on HS2 to seek to reach agreement with AXA over this proposal is much more significant for the employment land supply in Birmingham and the Birmingham Development Plan than the Assurances related to WWH in EXAM 138. The Assurances simply state that HS2 will look at tightening up its existing Bill proposals, and not release any land ahead of construction completion which will be beyond 2028 on current programme. The instruction from Select Committee requires HS2 to seek to agree to the much more efficient alternative proposals put forward by AXA which would enable release of land in the short term.

AXA has pursued HS2 Ltd to take action in response to the Select Committee instruction, as a result of which a meeting between the parties has taken place and further meetings are planned to agree the process of review which HS2 Ltd will undertake. That process of review has not yet begun, but is proposed to be complete by 30 June 2015. The timescale for any subsequent action in response to the position reached is unknown.

### **EXAM 138 Assurances Letter**

The letter of Assurances from HS2 Ltd to BCC and Centro, sets out legally binding commitments that the Secretary of State has made. Those specific to the WWH site and the RSMD are set out at section 4. They require minimisation of land take for the RSMD and ponds and earliest release of land taken for construction, but do not require HS2 to rethink its Bill proposal.

Section 6 Business Relocation is the most important and pertinent Assurance to the employment land matters for the Inspector to consider. This requires that all of the businesses identified in the areas shaded on EXAM 48 are provided with the opportunity to relocate in the Birmingham area. This places a requirement for 47ha of employment land in addition to the need identified by BCC in its evidence. Displacement by HS2 was not factored into the evidence base.

### **EXAM 139 AXA letter**

The AXA letter and enclosures dated 10<sup>th</sup> December 2014 set out an alternative proposal to the two relocation options for the RSMD which AXA presented in evidence to Select Committee. This third option retains all the functionality of the Bill proposal, but shows how it can be accommodated on substantially less land at WWH.

The letter explains the merits of the proposals. The plan shows how the RSMD could be accommodated and the area of approximately 33ha of employment land that could be made available. Provided HS2 did not impair road access, this would continue to be Best Quality employment land.

The sheet enclosed with the letter explains the importance of the potential contribution the PXP land and residual AXA, and UK Mail land could make if it is released from the Bill limits of land to be acquired. That is to say the contribution it can make if HS2 excludes it from the proposals thereby enabling it be removed from statutory blight.

It may be helpful to be aware that although point 7 of the letter states that the proposal will take slightly more land at Saltley Business Park this does not actually mean that any additional business would be displaced, or employment development site area lost. The additional strip of land required for the two head shunt tracks at Saltley is occupied by existing buildings which are proposed to be acquired in any event by HS2 as they are required for the branch line required to access any depot located at WWH. The AXA Option 3 proposals therefore have no net impact on employment uses or land availability at Saltley and does not change the figure of 47ha of existing developed employment land to be lost to HS2 as produced by BCC as EXAM 48. A plan is enclosed to illustrate this. The buildings shaded blue are necessary for HS2 to acquire in order to construct the branch line to access the RSMD at WWH (middle two tracks). The tracks through to Curzon Street are the western most pair. The addition of two short head shunt tracks (eastern most pair) do not affect any buildings other than those shaded blue.

## Conclusion

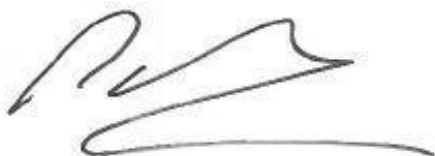
It is apparent that in the absence of HS2 55ha of development land at Washwood Heath would be contributing to the supply of Best Quality employment land in the City for the plan period.

If just the HS2 line was proposed and not the RSMD at WWH, then 55 – 59 ha of Best Quality employment land could (if released from the HS2 Bill) contribute to the supply of Best Quality employment land for the plan period.

AXA has put forward a proposal which HS2 must consider and seek to reach agreement about with AXA. That proposal would release 33ha of Best Quality employment land to contribute to the supply in the plan period.

HS2 and BCC have committed to offer relocation to the occupiers of 47ha of sites that will be displaced by HS2. That land requirement is not reflected in the evidence base.

Yours sincerely



Paul Rouse  
Director

Enc – plan

**Saltley Business Park**

**Buildings Required to be Demolished by RSMD Branch Line  
Also showing HS2 track to Curzon Station and headshunt tracks for AXA Option.**

