

Walsall Council WALSALL EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW 2011 UPDATE



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APPENDIX

Walsall Borough Sites Map

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In this technical report we look at each of the Borough's employment areas. As discussed elsewhere the Black Country Core Strategy requires the Borough to manage its employment land portfolio by classifying sites as either 'High' or 'Local' quality. It also requires the Borough to manage the transition of sites from local into high quality; or from local to other uses dependent on demand.
- 1.2 We classify the areas in five ways.
- Firstly those which are already, using the BCC classification, high quality employment areas. These should be safeguarded from other uses in line with the Core Strategy policy controlling high quality sites.
 - Secondly we have identified a set of potential high quality areas; these are areas which today do not qualify as high quality but may do in the future, The Council should use whatever powers available (development management but also more positive powers) to help secure high quality development and occupiers on these sites. The loss of these areas or sites to alternative uses should be strongly resisted. Particular attention should be paid to any clear and available development areas with potential for high quality development; reflecting the Borough's lack of 'clean' development sites.
 - Thirdly we have identified a set of local quality areas; those we think will continue to provide for non high quality employment in the Borough but should not aspire to 'high quality'. Because these areas are not 'high quality' using the BCS definition does not mean that they should not be renewed nor subject to investment. Also it does not mean that where circumstances merit 'high quality' development should not be encouraged. Again, the loss of these areas to alternative uses should be strongly resisted.
 - The fourth group of areas are those which are in employment use today but we think, using the BCCS quantitative targets as a guide, should be released to other uses if the opportunity arises ('consider for release'). This is a problematic classification because the BCCS targets are long term; so we know that by the end of the plan period the stock of land will be less than today. It is very difficult for either us, or the Council, to determine which order these sites should be lost in (or indeed whether they will be lost at all). This is a function of the market and the occupiers. Firm guidance on the approach to be taken is found in the BCS, policy DEL 2.
 - Lastly we have identified a small number of vacant sites which we don't consider are fit for purpose and should not be retained in the employment land stock. Their immediate loss from the stock will not harm the supply of employment space in the Borough,
 - Our plans also show where there is consent for housing (even if subject to S106 provisions). Many of these sites were released from the employment land supply before the Core Strategy criteria came into effect in February 2011. If the planning permission for housing lapses they should be reviewed according to the Core Strategy criteria to ensure that any good quality employment sites are not lost.

- 1.3 A restrictive stance to releasing the fourth type of area ('consider for release') is warranted because many of the sites are occupied at the moment. These businesses provide valuable local employment opportunities and in a Borough with a recognised regeneration need (including a risk of high unemployment and deprivation) policy makers should not proactively encourage redevelopment of active employment sites. There is also a risk that on many sites where the existing employment use is marginal the businesses will be unviable to relocate.
- 1.4 In this context the focus must therefore be on retaining extant businesses. The 'consider for release' designation therefore does not necessarily mean that the sites will be lost. There are cases where the occupier may wish to invest in their site and where other policies support this we would expect it to be welcomed. If one occupier does invest in their site this may mean that the Council needs to reassess the desirability of releasing other parts of the area; especially where releasing part of the site may conflict with the remaining employment use in the area as a whole.
- 1.5 There is also an added reason for taking a cautious approach to releasing these areas. The SHLAA, much of which was done concurrently with the ELR, has demonstrated ample capacity to ensure a 5 year housing supply and beyond, based on planning consents, allocations and sites where there has been an unimplemented consent for housing in the recent past. Thus there is no urgency in transferring any employment land to housing.
- 1.6 While the analysis is comprehensive, and the vast majority of sites are covered, there will always remain a few very small isolated units not individually classified. This includes a number in the Green Belt, some farm diversification schemes and small uses in residential areas.
- 1.7 The loss of these sites or areas is unlikely to be detrimental to the Borough employment land supply; so if offered for redevelopment should be subject to policy DEL2. However other policies of the plan may restrict the scope of the site for an alternative use. For example a low intensity employment use may be more desirable on wider policy grounds than an alternative use.
- 1.8 The classification of sites is not precise; the Core Strategy outlines a list of criteria which a high quality area may adhere to; but is careful to state that the list is not a mechanical tick box check list. A site or area does not have to meet all the criteria to still be classed as high quality.
- 1.9 Also the Strategy is very dependent on the market upgrading employment areas over time; so in making our recommendations we have the very difficult job of trying to predict what the market may do in the future. This is made even more difficult because the transformational nature of the Black Country Strategy is such that we cannot simply read today's market signals and from that infer what will happen in the future.
- 1.10 There is a temptation to promote the easiest to deliver and best employment sites to secure a simple housing win; but this would be short sighted. The stock of employment land is a finite resource with little opportunity to provide new sites; especially those

which share (potential) high quality characteristics. The housing agenda should not be delivered at the expense of the long term stock of employment land.

- 1.11 As pointed out above, offices are outwith the scope of this study in view of the strong policy direction to regard them as town centre uses, and given that they have a crucial role to play in the maintenance of vitality and viability of Walsall's town centres. There is a lack of an office market in the Borough at the moment, and the plans to increase supply are very ambitious.
- 1.12 The main proposal is to concentrate office investment at the Walsall Gigaport site north of the town centre Ring Road but within the town centre boundary around the newly relocated Walsall College. Recent building work has started for an office for Walsall Housing Group on the part of the Gigaport between Hatherton Road and Teddesley Street. The other town centre office area is proposed to be around the Walsall Waterfront, which abuts the Town Wharf Business park, which we discuss below. We suggest a few cases where other offices, and community uses, could take the place of present industry - but subject to the same proviso regarding the transfer of such sites to housing.
- 1.13 Although we have, at great effort with the help of the Council, classified most employment areas in line with guidance in the BCS this will always be a matter of subjective judgment. Decision makers will need to take a pragmatic approach to the employment land supply. This should be guided on one side by the aspirational Core Strategy whose implementation will be dependent on securing a supply of employment land but also by market realities.
- 1.14 The market is key to the process; delivering and securing a viable supply of land. But decision makers should be cautious about reading short term market signals, or basing their decisions simply on past market performance, The Core Strategy is aspirational and a deliberate objective is to break from the Black Country's prior poor economic performance. So in reaching any decision about the longer term viability of sites and areas, both the Council and land owners should also be considering the area's future role in the plan led transformed Walsall.
- 1.15 Each site or area has been reviewed by Walsall Borough since our 2010 report. This update reflects any changes noted.
- 1.16 For simplicity we have not renumbered areas sequentially; where area numbers are missing they will have been removed because they have been lost from the supply.
- 1.17 A small number of newly identified areas have been added. Where these are not well related to a 2010 area we have added these as '2XX'. Otherwise we have used the original area number but potentially split the area into a/b/c sub parts.
- 1.18 This chapter takes each area in turn:
 - Aldridge & Brownhills
 - Bloxwich
 - North Walsall
 - South Walsall

- Willenhall
- Darlaston

2 ALDRIDGE & BROWNHILLS

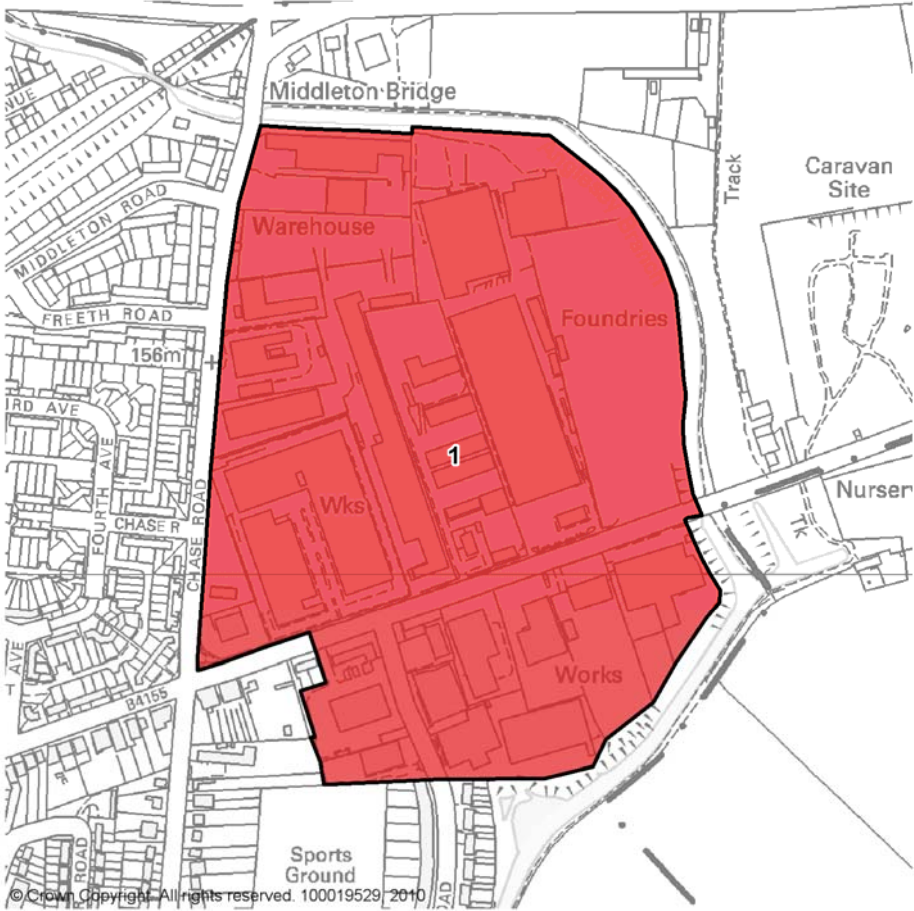
- 2.1 Aldridge and Brownhills are at the eastern end of the Borough; largely separated from Walsall by Green Belt. Within the Green Belt, a few very small isolated industrial or quasi-industrial operations exist; these are largely outgrowths and conversions of farm buildings. We consider that these are not a formal part of the Borough's industrial land supply, and could be transferred to uses that are more compatible with the greenbelt, subject again to DEL2 policies.

Brownhills

- 2.2 Brownhills is at the north eastern edge of the Borough approximately mid way between central Walsall and Lichfield. Brownhills was a mining area until the pits were closed in the 1950s. The area now gains much of its employment from manufacturing and distribution similar to much of the rest of Walsall Borough.
- 2.3 The area is one of the Borough's most accessible locations. The A5 runs along the north of the area and Brownhills is directly linked to the M6 Toll road. Recently, since our last report there has been a large amount of employment development interest in Brownhills.
- 2.4 There are three main employment areas in Brownhills; each around 20 hectares: Newtown, Coppice Side and Maybrook / Lindon Road. There are also a number of smaller sites.

Newtown - 1 (20.3ha)

Figure 2.1 - Newtown area 1



Recommendation: Retain site 1 as Potential High Quality

The Employment Area Today

- 2.5 The area, a Core Employment Area in the UDP, is on the north eastern edge of a predominantly residential district and comprises a mixture of single large occupiers, warehouses, assorted light industrial (such as metal fabrication), and small service uses (including WBC offices).
- 2.6 Access to the area via the strategic highway network is good (from junction T6 of the M6 Toll), and local access is adequate, albeit via some relatively minor residential roads.
- 2.7 Many of the old industrial units are in a poor condition, and the internal environment is generally not well maintained. In our last review of the site there appeared to be a high level of vacancy and dereliction. But over the past couple of years this appears to have been taken up with renewed market interest.
- 2.8 The previously vacant and contaminated land parcel to the east, owned by Castings Ltd, is being remediated prior to use by Castings, an advanced manufacturing company who are located next door. We understand this is to allow them to expand to cope with

a surge of orders from the Far East. The company expects to complete the development in February 2012.

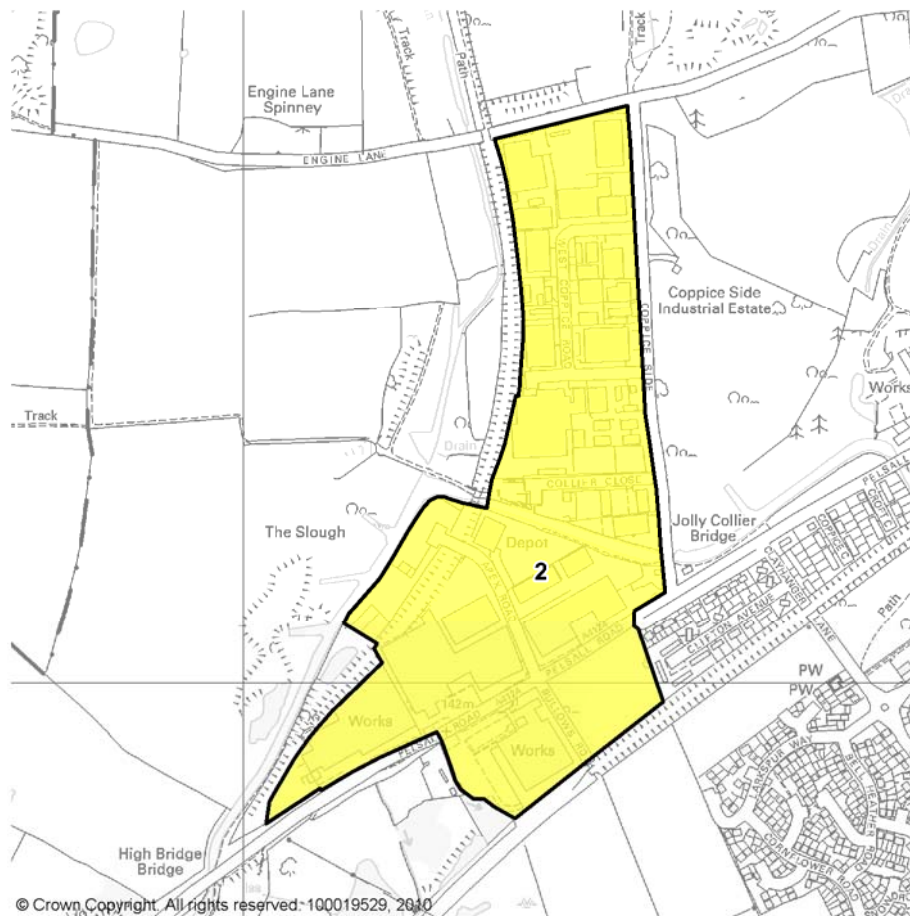
- 2.9 Another previously vacant site at the corner of Sadler Rd and Lichfield Rd has been recently developed by Gullivers, for an MOT testing and vehicle repair workshop.

The Future

- 2.10 Although most of this area is currently characterised by poorer quality industrial units, it is largely unconstrained and if the regeneration agenda is successful, and Walsall attracts new occupiers seeking higher quality sites, this is one of the likely candidates. On balance the good access justifies its potential for high quality uses.
- 2.11 In our last study we said that improving this to a high quality area will be challenging. However there is evidence that the market is delivering and the site justifies its classification as a high quality site.
- 2.12 The Southern part of the area, fronting Lichfield Road has some vacant units. Some units have been renewed in the past 10 years or so, most noticeably Gulliver's on the western edge of the area but other parts remain in need of investment. Because of this there may be a temptation to release parts of the area, but this is the most viable for high quality redevelopment; benefiting from a good frontage onto Lichfield Road. If the regeneration agenda is to be achieved, this type of area will need protecting.
- 2.13 As discussed elsewhere the Borough's land supply is a long term asset and the supply of potential high quality land finite; without building in the greenbelt or finding new urban sites where the pressure for residential development is likely to make new employment provision unviable the Borough needs to manage its existing stock. In order to meet the Core Strategy target for high quality employment land this part of the area is very likely to be needed.

Coppice Side - 2 (22.4ha)

Figure 2.2 - Coppice side area 2



Recommendation: Retain area 2 as Local Quality

The Employment Area Today

- 2.14 One mile west of Newtown is another large Core Employment Area; Coppice Side.
- 2.15 This is a prominent, strategic employment area between Coppice Side and Pelsall Lane. The bulk of the area, to the north of Pelsall Lane and the Wyrley and Essington canal, comprises a number of small industrial/manufacturing warehouses of varying quality, although internal access and servicing is generally good and there are relatively few vacancies.
- 2.16 There are two potential development sites; one undeveloped site south of Pelsall Road (1.5ha) which is one of the Borough's very few clean and unconstrained development sites.
- 2.17 The other development site is in the south west corner of the site (Former Wagon Automotive). This became available at the end of 2008 following the collapse of Wagon. Most of this was developed in 2010/11 to house the Council's depot which relocated from its previous site in North Walsall. The remainder of this site, edged by the canal, the depot and Pelsall Rd, is currently vacant, and would suit a similar sui generis type

use to the depot, as well as local industry. Although this is a redevelopment site it is not understood to be contaminated or abnormally difficult to redevelop for employment.

- 2.18 As with Newtown, most of this area is unconstrained by neighbouring residential development. The area benefits from direct access onto the major road network and comparatively easy access to the Motorway.

The Future

- 2.19 This is one of the Borough's better employment areas and should be retained for employment use. Its slightly poorer access (compared to Newtown) means this area is less likely to be considered potential high quality. Also, this area over time is changing its character towards local quality employment types. However this should not undermine its role as a very important and good quality local employment site.
- 2.20 As noted above the southern development parcel, to the east of Bullows Road, is one of the few clean development sites Walsall has in its portfolio. The Council should actively seek a new employment use on the site. Appropriate development, especially for a new 'clean' occupier, well planned and laid out is unlikely to be overly constrained by the residential adjoining to the east.

Lindon Road North - 3 (0.8ha)

- 2.21 (Note - Area 4 has been developed for housing since our last report)

Figure 2.3 - Lindon Road North area 3

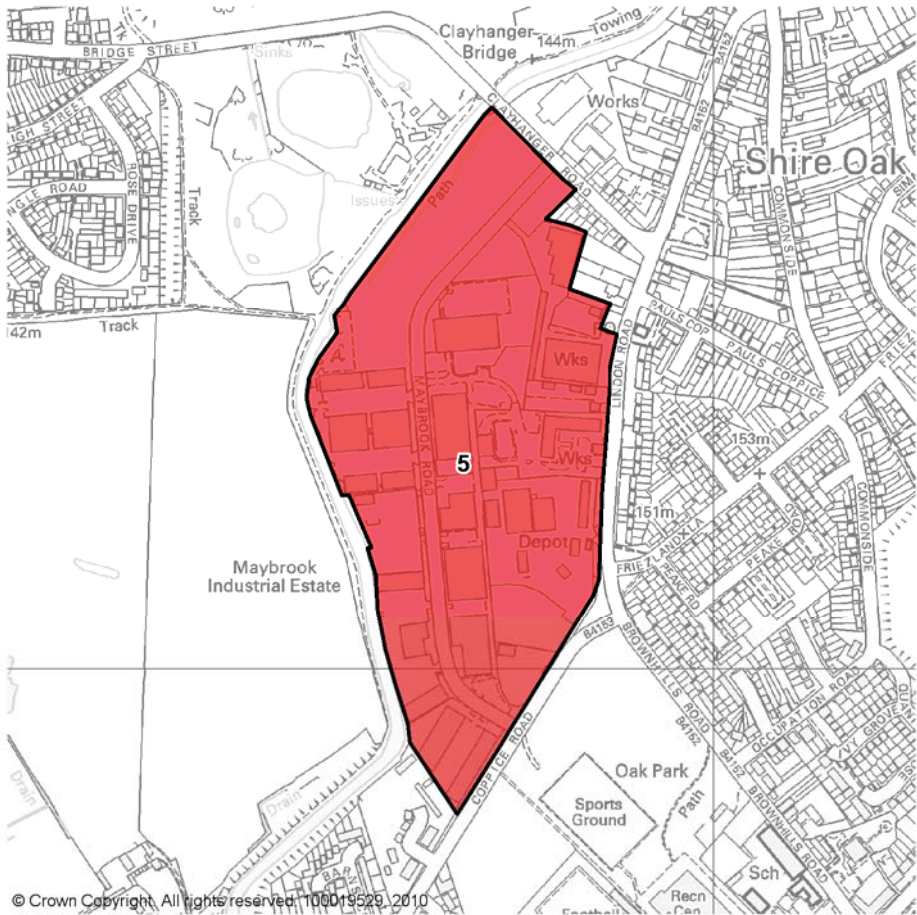


Recommendation: Consider area 3 for release

- 2.22 Area 3, a collection of small industrial / Garage units, is hemmed in by housing development. This would previously have formed part of a larger Maybrook / Lindon Road employment area. But this is now isolated from site 5, the main Maybrook/London Rd employment area, by housing, which also abuts it to the north. Should the units be redeveloped we see limited value in trying to protect them for ongoing employment use.

Maybrook (inc. Lindon Road) - 5 (16.6ha)

Figure 2.4 - Maybrook (including Lindon Road) area 5



Recommendation: Retain area 5 as Potential High Quality

The Employment Area Today

- 2.23 The third main employment area in Brownhills is located further south and accessed primarily off Lindon Road. This whole area is 22ha and this includes a development site in the north west of the area abutting the canal, and a smaller one on the opposite side of the road.
- 2.24 This area has two broad elements. There are a number of newer, reasonable quality units accessed off Maybrook road. This is a core employment area in the UDP. Compared to the relatively poor quality of the Borough’s stock most of these units are high quality. New manufacturing investment has recently been developed by Heathyards, a pipework manufacturing company, on part of the vacant site at the north end of Maybrook Road. The company plan further expansion on the remainder of the site. A smaller vacant site on the other side of the road still remains, though it has recently been the subject of an application for housing.
- 2.25 The other part of this area is accessed directly from Lindon Road. This includes a number of older units, depots and vacant space which requires investment and renewal. Part of this (the Brownhills Business park) was subject to a planning appeal

against the refusal of residential development in 2009; this was withdrawn in December 2011.

The Future

- 2.26 In common with much of the Brownhills stock this area is one of the better available in the Borough. The Maybrook Road area is a purpose built, modern employment area with good distributor roads, access and servicing.
- 2.27 The recent investment by Heathyards demonstrates a clear demand for sites in the area; even for sites which have until now been undeveloped since the 1960s.
- 2.28 The areas facing Lindon Road do not benefit from the estate-like environment of the Maybrook Road part. But part of this is because the units are older and in need of investment / renewal. The Maybrook Road area demonstrates that there is demand for better quality industrial units in the location; so the first policy option for the Council should be to encourage regeneration / renewal of the older units off Lindon Road to try and foster this demand. There is evidence elsewhere in the Borough of developers investing in protected employment sites.
- 2.29 This policy stance would be in accordance with the emerging Core Strategy which requires the Borough to, where possible, encourage the upgrading of sites from poorer quality 'local' to higher quality. This will by default require a strong policy stance; residential development is likely to be more attractive to owners than re-investing in employment stock but as discussed the stock of employment land is finite and the Council needs to carefully control what it has because it cannot rely on developers providing new land.
- 2.30 With the exception of the northern edge both sides of the area form a coherent parcel of employment land. There is a risk that this area will lose its integrity, like the former northern part of the area off Clayhanger Road - which has now largely been lost to housing. Introducing residential into the area may make it even less likely that the remaining industrial stock could be improved to meet the high quality criterion. If housing is implemented on the Brownhills Business Park element it will constrain the remaining frontages into Lindon Road. In this case it would threaten the retention of the remaining Lindon Road frontage sites could be retained in employment use.
- 2.31 We understand that there is also pressure to develop the remaining small development parcel at Clayhanger Road/Maybrook Road for residential. It is already adjacent and opposite residential development and this may encourage further incremental residential development. However it is also adjacent to some noisy industrial units, with their access running along the rear of the site. It will also be opposite the larger development parcel, which should be developed for more industrial / warehousing. So this site as a residential option will in time become further isolated and surrounded by industrial uses. Maybrook Road is an industrial estate road, used by HGV traffic (and parking) and residential development along it should not be encouraged.

- 2.32 The two sides of the Maybrook/Lindon Rd area should be viewed as a coherent parcel of employment land; and owners collectively encouraged to invest in the areas / estates.

Hall Lane - 6 (6.3ha)

Figure 2.5 - Hall Lane area 6



Recommendation: Retain area 6 as Local Quality

The Employment Area Today

- 2.33 There are a few smaller employment areas south of Brownhills around Walsall Wood, another ex-mining area. The largest of these is the 6ha Hall Lane area. This is a mixed employment and retail area situated around Walsall Road and Hall Lane.
- 2.34 The units fronting Walsall Road accommodate a range of retail warehouse type uses, are small to medium in size, and are generally in good order. Larger industrial, warehousing and storage units are concentrated on Hall Lane, and appear to be generally well maintained and fit for purpose. The area accommodates a couple of pub / hotel units on the other side of the Lichfield Road.
- 2.35 Access and servicing arrangements for the area as a whole are adequate. There are no clear operational constraints, although a small part of the area does adjoin a residential area.
- 2.36 The south eastern corner of the former area, on Boatman's Lane, has already been redeveloped for residential.

The Future

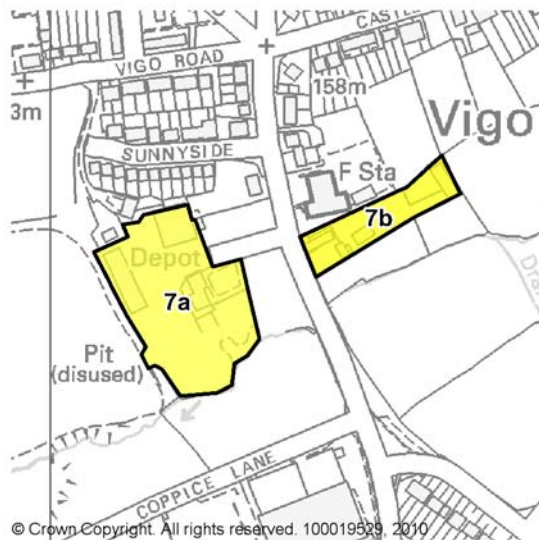
- 2.37 The area is characteristic of many of the Walsall areas; it is not a traditional industrial estate but a organic collection of industrial and commercial units. It appears well let and in demand although it should be noted that many of the units are more retail related.

The area appears to carry some limited critical mass for these types of units and this weighs in its favour as being retained as an employment area.

- 2.38 Most of the area is isolated from residential development, which is rather unusual in Walsall. Further piecemeal development of the area for residential should be resisted; as it could undermine the continuing viability of the remaining units.

Sites at Vigo - 7a (0.4ha) & 7b (1.2ha)

Figure 2.6 - Sites at Vigo (7a & 7b)



Recommendation: Retain sites 7a & 7b as Local quality

- 2.39 There are two small free-standing employment sites to the south of Walsall Wood: one 1.2ha site at Sunnyside Farm and another 0.4ha site on the eastern side of Walsall Wood Road. Both sites are in use and occupied. The units at Sunnyside Farm are relatively modern and in better condition than many of the units at the larger Hall Lane area. Reflecting this, the site should be retained for employment use.
- 2.40 The smaller site on the opposite side of the road appears to be a conversion of older premises. Access to the employment buildings is past residential properties and the long term merits of protecting the site are more limited. However, the site appears to provide, smaller reasonable quality office space; a type of space not readily available in the Borough and so this should also be retained for the foreseeable future.

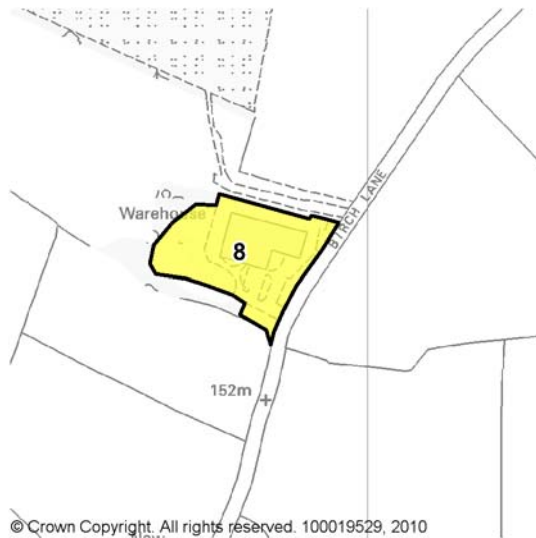
Aldridge

- 2.41 Like Brownhills to the north Aldridge is an ex-mining town largely separated from the Walsall conurbation and is distinctly its own settlement. Aldridge is larger than Brownhills and has seen more residential development over the years.
- 2.42 However, unlike Brownhills, where the employment sites are scattered around the town, Aldridge has a distinct industrial / employment area to the north and west of the town. This large expanse of employment land covers nearly 200 ha. When this is considered as a whole it forms the Borough's largest employment area. But within the wider area

many the estates and land parcels share little in common. Aldridge is relatively far from the motorway network; but has done relatively well to attract new industrial investment in the Middlemore Lane/Wharf Approach area in spite of this.

Birch Lane Stonnall - 8 (1.6ha)

Figure 2.7 - Birch Lane Stonnall area 8

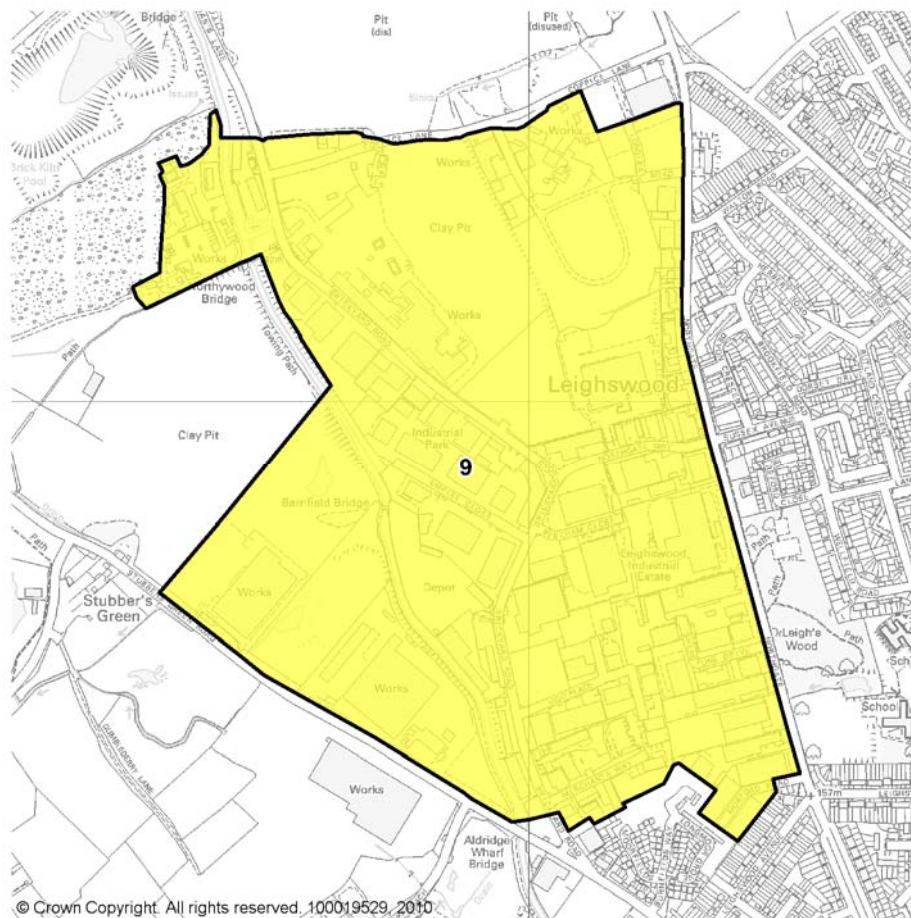


Recommendation: Retain site 8 as Local Quality

- 2.43 The area is in use for multiple occupiers. This is the largest of a small number of works in the Green Belt which have grown up over the years. It provides a mixture of small-scale industry and trade retail outlets. It should be retained for industry for the foreseeable future.

Aldridge North - 9 (93ha)

Figure 2.8 - Aldridge North area 9



Recommendation: Retain area 9 as Local Quality

The Employment Area Today

- 2.44 The large employment area to the north of Aldridge includes a number of older, established, employment estates together with undeveloped land and active brickworks. The wider area has a legacy of clay mining and uncontrolled tipping which makes development or redevelopment complicated.
- 2.45 In the south of area the established estates (including sites along Brickyard Road, Northgate Way and Empire Close) are largely well occupied and fit for purpose. There is evidence of continued investment and renewal in the stock.
- 2.46 In the north of the area a vacant site on Brickyard Road is being developed by Interserve, a waste management company who need to relocate and expand, We also understand that a further application for a new unit along Brickyard Road has recently been received. In the middle of the area the former Netszch Mastermix site, in the Vigo area has recent planning consent for a small speculative industrial development.
- 2.47 However the north eastern parts of the area are more problematic. The former clay pits were filled in the 1960s with uncontrolled waste. Some parts of the northern area have

been developed, including a small estate immediately south of Coppice Lane, and other areas have been prepared for open storage.

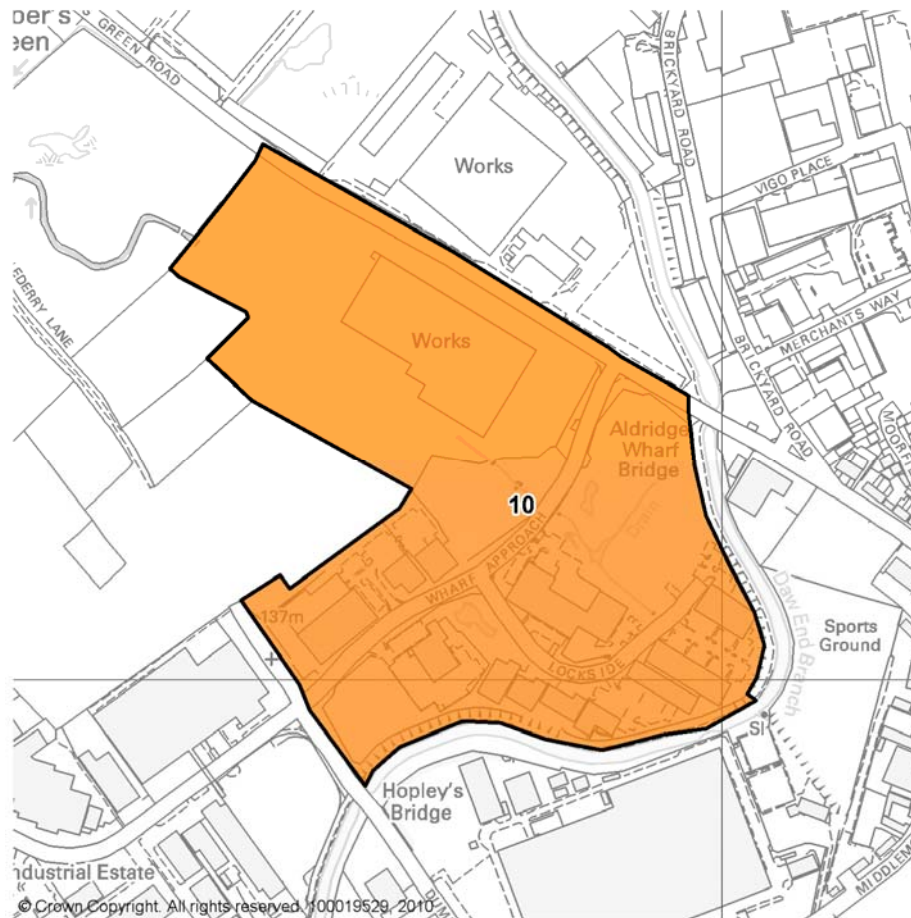
- 2.48 In common with many other Walsall estates the frontage along Northgate accommodates a range of trade retail-type premises in addition to more traditional employment units. A few sites in the Brickyard Road area are used for storage. The north eastern corner of the area has been developed for a Focus DIY superstore (now closed). Whilst not currently part of the industrial land supply, the potential to re-use the site for industry, given its proximity to other vacant industrial sites, should be reviewed.

The Future

- 2.49 There appears to be market demand for employment space in this location; as noted, the established estates appear capable of renewing themselves and vacancy does not appear to be a problem.
- 2.50 There is no doubt that the majority of the area should be retained for employment. However there are parts of where ground conditions may restrict development. There is an argument that the former tip should not be considered employment land. However we note that these type of constraints will also affect any other development proposal and residential may be more difficult to accommodate than a low intensity employment use, such as open storage.
- 2.51 There is a risk that continued encroachment of housing into the area could undermine the viability of the established estates. While in Walsall residential development is often found adjacent to industrial areas, the higher density and massing of new development means that at times new residential units are only a few metres away from the occupied employment units; for example new redevelopment in the south of this wider area around the Burnfields Close area. This may hinder further renewal and investment in the area; partly by increasing 'hope values' but also complicating redevelopment itself.

Wharf Approach - 10 (20.2ha)

Figure 2.9 - Wharf Approach area 10

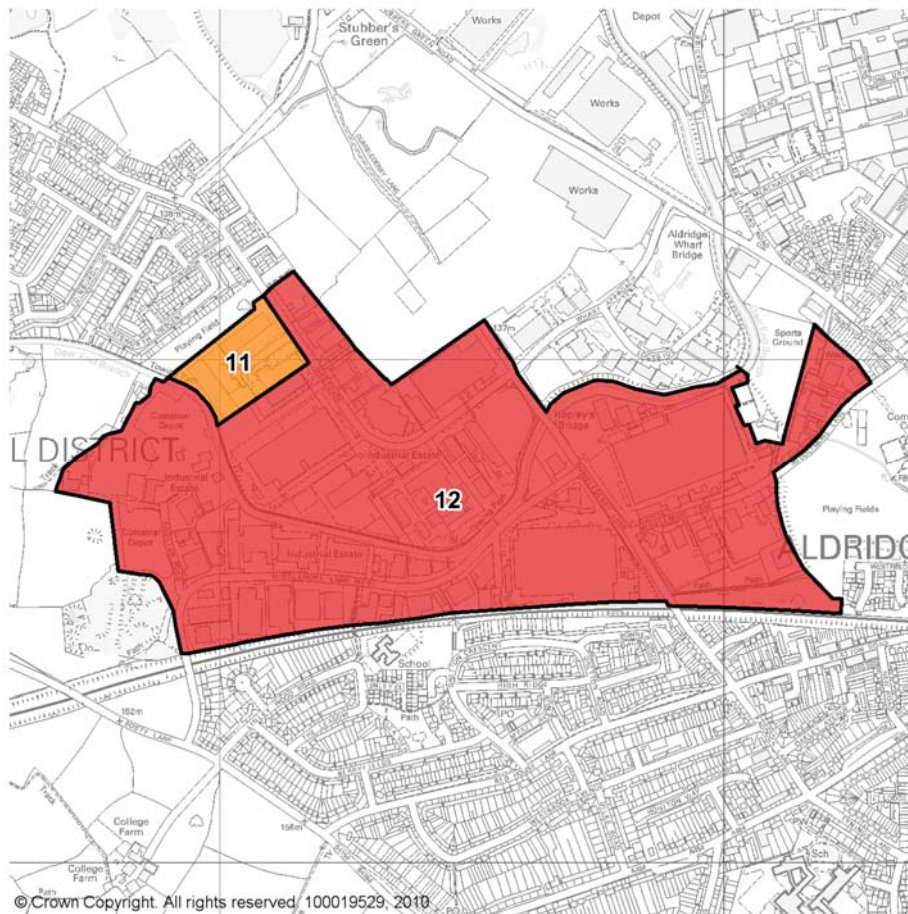


Recommendation: Retain area 10 as Existing High Quality

- 2.52 Immediately south of the Aldridge North area is the Wharf Approach, an area of new industrial and warehouse units. Most units are standard small to medium sized industrial units and include an element of office space. However the area also includes the large Istock facility. Although this is clearly a different type of unit to the wider area it is a new, modern, purpose built facility and could be considered high quality development.
- 2.53 The area represents one of the Borough's largest parcels of existing high quality development. It has seen a relatively large amount of recent modern industrial investment; notably Shaylor's, Hellerman Tyton, and the Rossway Business Park, and the environment is good quality. There is one remaining vacant site which is not presently on the market. In accordance with the Core Strategy, the area should be retained for employment use,

Middlemore and Westgate - 11 (3.2ha) & 12 (66.5ha)

Figure 2.10 - Middlemore and Westgate areas 11 & 12



Recommendation: **Retain area 11 as Existing High Quality**
 Retain area 12 as Potential High Quality

The Employment Area Today

- 2.54 The transition between the Wharf Approach area, Westgate and Middlemore Lane is not clearly differentiated. But the character of buildings in Westgate and Middlemore is older; some newer units are mixed with older ones. Westgate and Middlemore also accommodate some larger, older units not found at Wharf Approach.
- 2.55 The southern part of the area, south of the canal, is bisected by Middlemore Lane, and comprises a number of generally good quality purpose-built industrial/warehousing units, accommodating a range of operational businesses (such as engineering, metal fabrication, builders, carpenters and caterers).
- 2.56 This part of the area includes some very large plants but also contains thriving companies that have to operate at two or more premises, such as Geddes Packaging and Mellish engineering. At the western end of Middlemore Lane six new industrial/warehouse units (Aldridge Fields Business Park, the former Corby Windows site) have recently been completed. At the moment only two remain available.

- 2.57 The Anglian Road area contains a large predominantly open site used to accommodate storage containers. Some containers are used as self storage facility. While not an overly attractive land use the site is perfectly fit for purpose. At the eastern end the area includes a small finger of employment uses, isolated from the rest of the area by playing fields.
- 2.58 North of the canal the Westgate area is broadly similar; including a mix of open storage (Wernick Hire; modular building hire), large units including Greenstar (Recycling) and smaller flexible space (Westgate Trading Estate). The western end the Westgate Park (Tintagel Way) accommodates some newer units which could be considered existing high quality. To the northwest, Valen Industries, who manufacture stainless steel fittings with an international customer base, have recently expanded and upgraded their premises. This demonstrates the area's potential as high quality land.
- 2.59 There is a very small development site to the rear of the area which is accessed alongside Greenstar. This currently has consent for B8. A larger vacant site lies between Middlemore Lane and the rail line. Part of this, the former Jack Allen site, is on the market, though the southern part, UDP allocation E27, the former Aldridge rail sidings, is Council-owned, and there are flooding issues.
- 2.60 Opposite the Jack Allen site, on the eastern section of Middlemore Lane, is the large but underused McKechnie Brass factory. The company was recently in administration but we understand that they have healthy orders and have recently been taken over.
- 2.61 The largest premises on the market in Walsall, the former GKN site, is being progressed with a view to a sale. If this does not materialise, there is an argument in favour of clearing and redeveloping what would be a large, attractive site with a good environment. It would be particularly useful to accommodate expanding but constrained companies, including those operating from two or more premises.

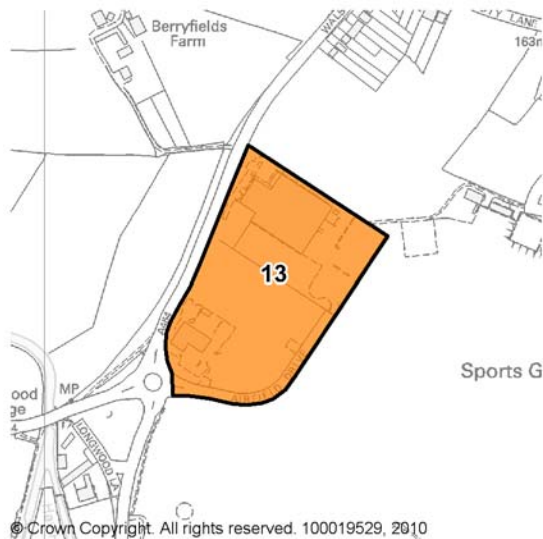
The Future

- 2.62 We suggest that the area is considered Potential High Quality employment land with the small area around Tintagel Way as existing High Quality.
- 2.63 There is already a mix of buildings on the sites, some of which in isolation could be considered high quality. Over time, as with the recent Valen redevelopment, we expect the wider area to improve as buildings are redeveloped and the wider area regenerated. Although some units are vacant, pending redevelopment and renewal there is evident market demand for higher quality units in this location.
- 2.64 Care needs to be taken with the large storage operations currently on some sites. The area is clearly attractive to these types of occupiers; they benefit from the large open plots of land and may be difficult to re-accommodate on other sites in the Borough. So for the time being the Council may need to be selective in proactively seeking renewal in the area.
- 2.65 Most of the site forms a coherent employment area; separated from residential or other non-conforming uses. Any proposal to diversify the area; introducing less compatible uses should be resisted.

- 2.66 The only exception is perhaps the eastern 'finger' which is largely separated from the main employment area. The loss of this part would be unlikely to harm the integrity of the wider employment area. But the area appears popular and well occupied. It is also the part of the site closest to Aldridge district centre. If presented for redevelopment the Council should try to keep the site in employment use; and subject to market conditions at the time look at providing small new office units in the area reflecting its accessible location, whilst of course ensuring compliance with town centre policies. An automatic presumption that because it is isolated from the main estate and so should be lost to housing should be avoided. Any proposal to release this area needs thoroughly market testing.

Aldridge Park - 13 (5.7ha)

Figure 2.11 - Aldridge Park area 13



Recommendation: Retain site 13 as Existing High Quality

- 2.67 Immediately south of Aldridge is the new, high quality, Aldridge Park employment area. Although the area is isolated from the town the employment allocation is the product of the former airfield located on site.
- 2.68 Part of the area has been developed for a new car showroom but other parts remain as more modern manufacturing uses, including Rotometrics and Azzurri. There is some vacant land to the rear.
- 2.69 As an existing high quality area this should be protected for employment uses.

Bridle Lane, Streetly - 15 (0.5ha)

Figure 2.12 - Bridle Lane, Streetly area 15



Recommendation: Consider area 15 for release (note: the base map has not been updated for the 2011 update. The 'works' and 'factory' buildings have now been redeveloped for housing)

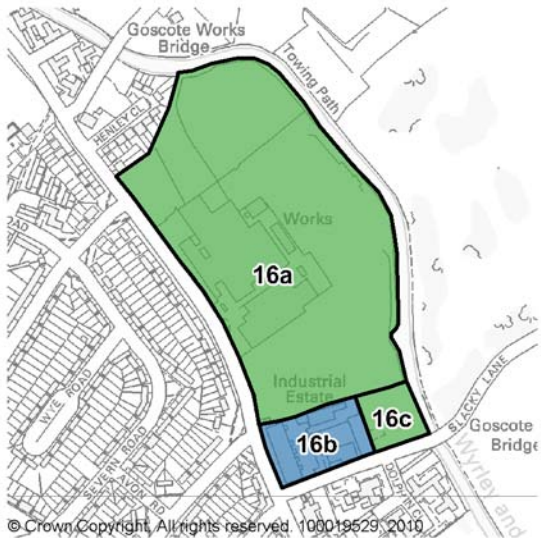
- 2.70 To the southeast of Aldridge is the comparatively wealthy suburb/settlement of Streetly. The area is predominantly residential; including larger detached 1960s dwellings.
- 2.71 Until recently there was a 5ha mixed employment site at Bridle Lane/Enterprise Drive. Most of the site has recently been redeveloped for housing and now only 0.5ha remains in employment use.
- 2.72 The long term future of this site is questionable. On one hand it now remains the only occupied employment site in the area. However it is an allocated housing site in the UDP. The remaining employment site's access and environment is now compromised by the new, high density housing close by. Also, access is through the new residential area. The remaining site has no prominence onto any major road.
- 2.73 So we recommend that this site be considered for release; when it falls vacant there is very little likelihood of keeping this site in an employment use.

3 BLOXWICH

3.1 The town of Bloxwich has a distinct identity with its own history and town centre. But unlike towns to the west of Walsall, which are separated from Walsall by the motorway or the towns to the east, which are surrounded by the greenbelt, Bloxwich forms part of the wider Walsall urban area.

Goscote Lane A, B & C - 16a (8.9ha), 16b (0.9ha), 16c (0.5ha)

Figure 3.1 - Goscote Lane areas 16a, 16b & 16c

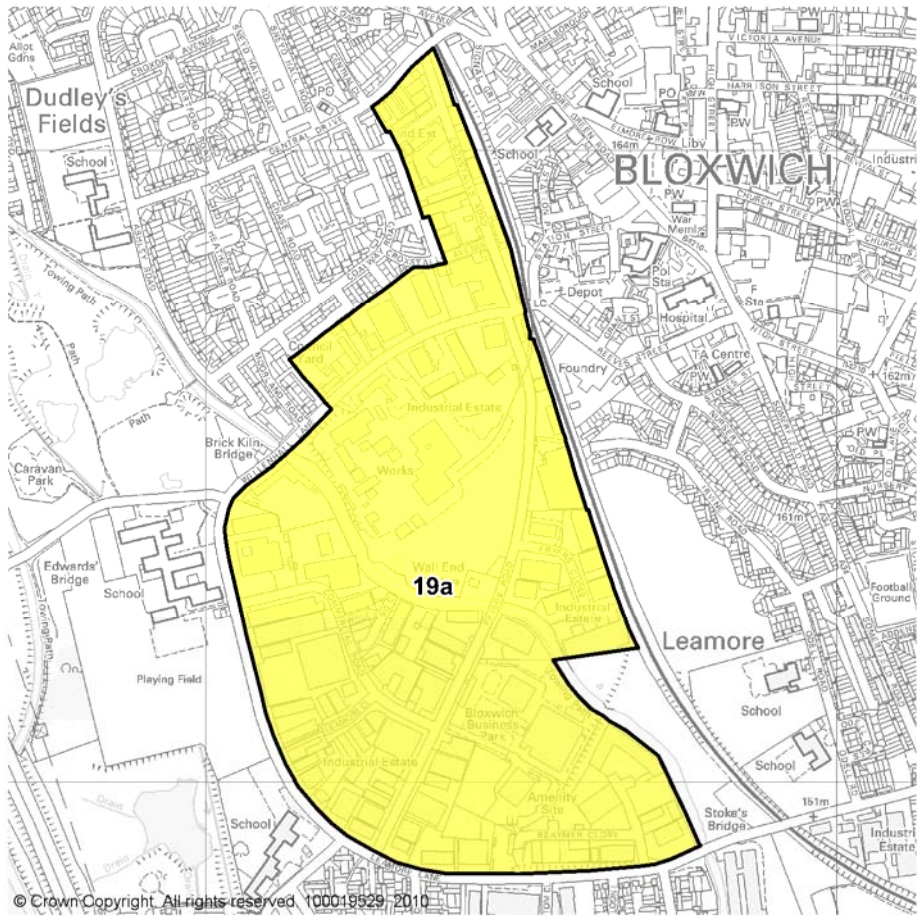


Recommendation: Consider site 16b for release
Release sites 16a & 16c

- 3.2 This is a long established industrial area formally occupied by an IMI copper works and more recently Cerro EMS. Virtually all of the IMI site (16a) has now been cleared but future development impaired because the site is known to be heavily contaminated.
- 3.3 The ex IMI site is large (indeed it is presently one of Walsall’s largest vacants site after IMI Reservoir Place and the Former Moxley Tip) but because of its isolation and distance from the motorway network as well as difficult development prospects there is little merit in seeking ongoing employment use. Trying to do so may only constrain and hinder redevelopment and remediation of the site when its potential role in the employment land portfolio is marginal at best,
- 3.4 Without the critical mass of the main part of the site there is probably no long term future for the smaller parcels. Site C, at Canalside Close is a small and undeveloped but is also known to be constrained and unlikely to be developed for employment. Site B is in active employment use (The Goscote Industrial Estate), and there has been recent interest in developing it for a car breaker’s yard. However it is unlikely to be sustainable as an isolated employment site in the long term.

Leamore Business Park -19a (50ha)

Figure 3.2 - Leamore Business Park area 19a



Recommendation: Retain site 19a as Local Quality

The Employment Site Today

- 3.5 The main Bloxwich employment area is at the southwestern end of Bloxwich. It could be considered an extension of the north Walsall sites with a previous formally unbroken band of employment areas stretching from Walsall town centre to Bloxwich. But this band has now been broken and housing completed, under construction and permitted towards the eastern end of Leamore Lane, adjacent to the canal. However, as it is such a large employment area this break does not threaten the area’s integrity.
- 3.6 The area is occupied by a wide range of users, from traditional Walsall metal recycling to newer light industrial and small scale distribution. Some operators, such as Paddock Fabrications, work from a variety of small premises in the area. The core of the area is at Fryers Road, the former Trident Alloys, and presents a scene of heavy industry. Part of this, UDP allocation E24, is now vacant, and has poor ground conditions. It was once rail connected but this is no longer active. There is also a relatively large waste management presence in this area, notably a Council facility and a variety of smaller private concerns. The Reaymer Close area has a cluster of trade/retail and service uses such as crane hire, and Leamore Windows, a prominent local windows and double

glazing manufacturer and fitter, has its headquarters here. However, access to the major road network is relatively poor; there is no direct or near direct access to the Motorway and no near motorway standard road similar to the Keyway or Black Country route. More recently, the northern part of this site off Willenhall was cleared and forms a relatively large (and rare, in this part of the Borough) development opportunity. There are a few other very small sites off Willenhall Lane.

3.7 But this area appears to serve a important local market, probably reflecting the poor access it has not attracted major distribution firms such as those found at Willenhall or Darlaston. The mix of activity is similar to much of the northern part of Aldridge.

The Future

3.8 The area should be protected for ongoing local quality employment. Its relative inaccessibility means that it is unlikely to become high quality over time.

3.9 Within the area there are a number of development opportunities; including large cleared sites and some small parcels which look like they have never been developed. A local quality designation should not undermine efforts to secure a good quality of employment development on these sites; local quality does not necessary mean old or near life expired. Even 'local quality' stock, as defined in the Core Strategy needs renewing the re-providing over time. There is current interest in small scale redevelopments and upgrading, and for waste management uses on the larger vacant sites.

North and South of Reeves Street - 20 (0.4ha) & 21 (1.2ha)

Figure 3.3 - North and South of Reeves Street area 20 & 21



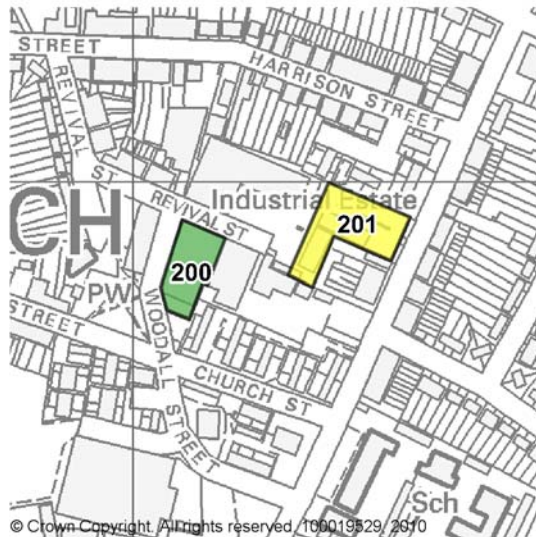
Recommendation: Consider area 20 for release
 Site 21 has planning permission for housing

3.10 These are two isolated employment areas. Site 21, very constrained between the railway and housing immediately adjoining, with terrible local access, is the former Chamberlin & Hill foundry which recently rationalised its Walsall operations into site 43

in the Chuckery (see further below). This vacant land now has a permission for housing. Site 20, which is still in operation, should be released subject to the provisions of DEL2. There is no merit in seeking the retention of these sites.

Revival Street & Old Hall - 200 (0.2ha) & 201 (0.3ha)

Figure 3.4 - Revival Street & Old Hall areas 200 & 201

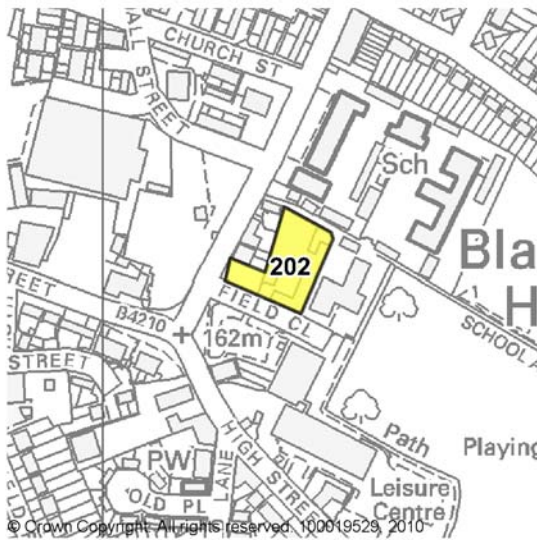


**Recommendation: Release area 200
 Retain area 201 as Local Quality**

- 3.11 Revival Street (new site 200) consists of a recently vacant site constrained by adjoining housing. It could be released immediately for alternative uses.
- 3.12 The neighbouring Old Hall Business Park (new site 201) is a still largely occupied by a number of small industrial units, but again constrained by alternative uses on all sides. However the buildings have been placed with these constraints in mind and the units are mostly set back from residential properties. The units benefit from off road access and private parking. Many make use of this and operate a trade counters and semi-retail units. The bowling alley to the rear of the site is not in industrial use but the property shares industrial characteristics and could be redeveloped (or reused) for an employment use or an alternative, but compatible use. On balance the site should be retained as local quality.

Pinfold Industrial Estate - 202 (0.3ha)

Figure 3.5 - Pinfold Industrial Estate area 202



Recommendation: Retain area 202 as Local Quality

- 3.13 This small site, with entrances off Field Close and Field Road, lies at the back of a pub and borders a community centre to the east. Planning permission for housing has recently lapsed prior to the new JCS policies taking effect. As with Old Hall (site 201) some of the buildings are modern and have been built with these constraints in mind. Also the access is not constrained by housing.
- 3.14 On balance the site should be retained as local quality. If a residential application is made to release the site the applicant will need to demonstrate that it meets to criteria now given in the JCS and DEL 2.

Former British Lion Works - 203 (0.3ha)

Figure 3.5 - Former British Lion Works area 203

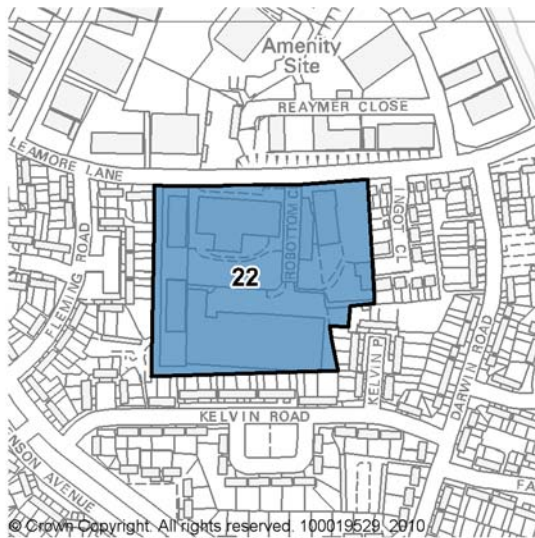


Recommendation: Release area 203

- 3.15 This is another small, vacant and isolated area at the back of housing and bordering the canal. There is a current outline planning application for housing, but with no decision.
- 3.16 Access is through residential roads one of which is constrained (weak bridge) and unsuitable for industrial traffic. The site could be released immediately .

Robottom Close - 22 (3.8ha)

Figure 3.4 - Robottom Close area 22



Recommendation: Consider site 22 for release

- 3.17 Immediately south of the main employment area is Robottom Close (area 22). Viewed from Leamore Lane it is an extension of the wider employment area, but unlike the main area is constrained by housing on three sides; which may limit any redevelopment opportunity for new employment floor space in the future. However there has been recent small-scale redevelopment which demonstrates continued market interest in the site and weights against its release.
- 3.18 The loss of this area is unlikely to harm the integrity for the neighbouring large employment area to the north. By retaining the larger area to the north, there is unlikely to be a local deficiency in employment land in this part of the borough.
- 3.19 At the moment there does not appear to be a strong rationale to release the area, with renewed interest in the Borough's industrial portfolio. However in the long term, if market interest weakens this site could be considered for release and consolidate any local demand on the larger area to the north.

4 NORTH WALSALL

- 4.1 North Walsall is a very complex employment area; including some of the Borough's best employment developments and high profile companies in close proximity to the Borough's most constrained traditional employment sites,
- 4.2 Broadly the closer to the town centre the poorer the employment space on offer and the more constrained the sites; reflecting their industrial heritage. Large parts of the stock are obsolete and the area's characteristics mean that redevelopment and renewal is not a practical recommendation.
- 4.3 Some larger employment sites in the south, such as Hospital Street, have already been lost to housing. Most of the sites very close to the town centre have no prospect in the Borough long term employment land portfolio,

Newfield Close Areas - 23 to 29:

23 - Leamore Lane / Green Lane (2.4ha)

24 - Deeley's Castings (2.5ha, permission for housing subject to S106)

25 - British Car Auctions (3.6ha)

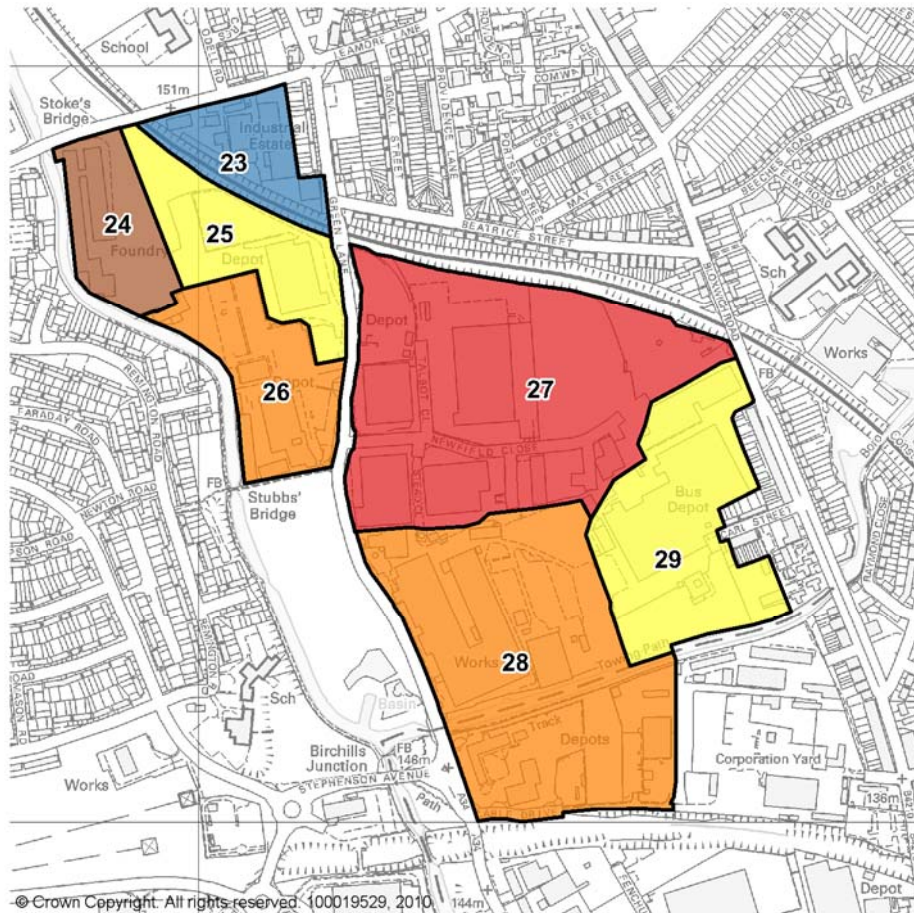
26 - South Staffs Water (3.6ha)

27 - Green Lane / Newfield Close (12.7ha)

28 - TK Maxx / Homeserve (Green Lane) (11.5ha)

29 - Carl Street / Bloxwich Road (6.1ha; part housing permission on vacant land to the rear)

Figure 4.1 - Newfield Close Areas 23 to 29



Recommendation: **Retain areas 26 & 28 as Existing High Quality**
 Retain area 27 as Potential High Quality
 Retain areas 25 & 29 as Local Quality
 Consider area 23 for release
 Site 24 has planning permission (subject to S106) for housing

The Employment Area Today

- 4.4 North of area 32 is a large employment / industrial area we have split into sites 23 - 29 because each parcel is slightly different; in terms of its existing occupancy but also future potential.
- 4.5 The area includes two of the Borough's largest office developments. Area 28 includes the large Homeserve headquarters. Homeserve were originally part of the local water company (South Staffs Water) but they have now diversified into a large insurance and emergency repair company in its own right. Area 28 also accommodates the new UK distribution HQ of TK Maxx; another example of 'high quality' occupiers (as defined by the Black Country evidence base).
- 4.6 Site 26 accommodates the other office building; South Staffs Water's own HQ. The physical building is older than Homeserve but still capable of being classed 'high quality'.

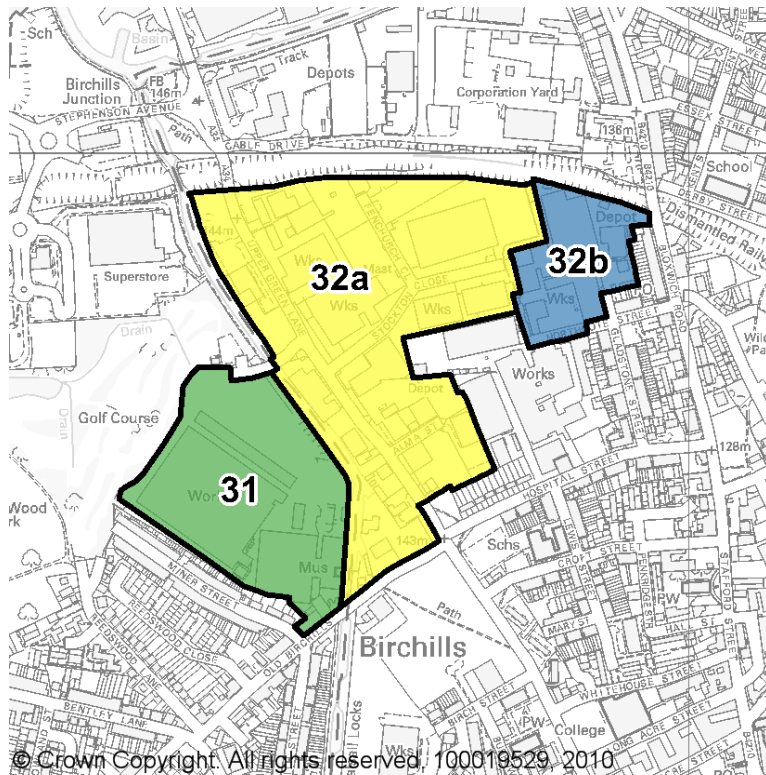
- 4.7 Area 27, between site 26 and 28, is a large industrial estate, based around Newfield Close, which accommodates a number of large warehouse / industrial units. Although some of these are now quite old (for large warehouse units; which often have a shorter lifespan than many traditional employment buildings) and empty, the area is such that there should be no physical constraints to redevelopment or renewal for new large warehouse units. There is development interest in the vacant site at Newfield Close, which is one of the relatively few readily available and good quality vacant sites in the Borough.
- 4.8 Site 25 is occupied by British Car Auctions; and is mostly used for open storage. The shape of the parcel makes accessing the rear, away from the existing buildings difficult and may hinder renewal for any large units; similar to those found on area 27.
- 4.9 On the eastern side of the area, site 29 is accessed from the more residential Bloxwich Road, with less good access to the Motorway and other main roads. However Area 29 includes the large National Express West Midlands bus depot. This serves local destinations where a high level of accessibility to the national road network is not needed.

The Future

- 4.10 The existing high quality areas should be protected as existing high quality development. Also high quality development (or redevelopment) should be encouraged in area 27; this already has many high quality characteristics and could potentially be considered high quality at the moment.
- 4.11 The British Car Auctions site should be retained for ongoing local quality employment; the shape of the land parcel would make redevelopment for large units difficult and the need to access the rear of the site from the narrow frontage will limit redevelopment potential.
- 4.12 We previously (2010) suggested site 29 could be considered for release. But we understand that there are no proposals to relocate this depot and a lack of alternative sites if it was to be moved. So the site should be retained. If the bus depot is retained this will also mean that the WS2 site should also be retained to prevent the site becoming fragmented and introducing residential into a coherent industrial area. Also we understand there has been interest in WS2 with a number of relocations onto the site.
- 4.13 Site 24 (Deeley's Casting) has a pre JCS resolution to release for housing (pending s106). This has yet to be implemented. If the opportunity arises the Council should re-consider this release with a mind to retaining the site as industrial. As a industrial development site it is unconstrained by its neighbours.
- 4.14 Site 23 is an isolated, small industrial estate hemmed in by housing and the rail cutting, which is similar to nearby site 22 (Bloxwich) could also be considered for release.

*Former Caparo, Green Lane / Stockton Close & Northcote Street - 31 (6.6ha),
32a (14.3ha) & 32b (2.7ha)*

Figure 4.2 - Former Caparo, Green Lane / Stockton Close and Northcote Street areas 31, 32a & 32b



Recommendation: **Retain 32a as Local Quality**
 Consider area 32b for release
 Release Site 31

The Employment Area Today

- 4.15 Site 31, the former Caparo site, is large but with poor access and immediately adjoining housing, with poor ground conditions. It is separated from the rest of the UDP Core Employment Area by the canal. A housing permission has recently lapsed. Previous industrial activity resulted in complaints from the residents nearby, as a result of which the company, while it was on the site, operated under a voluntary curfew. Whilst there could still be some potential, for modern industrial units, its separation from the rest of the industrial area and its other problems mean that on balance we consider it should be released immediately for housing.
- 4.16 Area 32 is what remains of the larger core employment area. It accommodates a number of large occupiers including MacNellie & Son and Metafin, operating from more than one premises. The frontage to upper Green Lane accommodates number of quasi retail/ trade service uses such as Howdens operating from light industrial units together with a few very small vacant sites.

- 4.17 The majority of the area takes its access from Green Lane and on towards the Motorway past Reedswood Way. The smaller 32b area is the former Stokes Forgings which takes its access from the less accessible Bloxwich Road. This part of the site is also more constrained with some parts locally accessed from residential Northcote Street as opposed to the wide and fit for purpose estate roads such as Stockton Close.

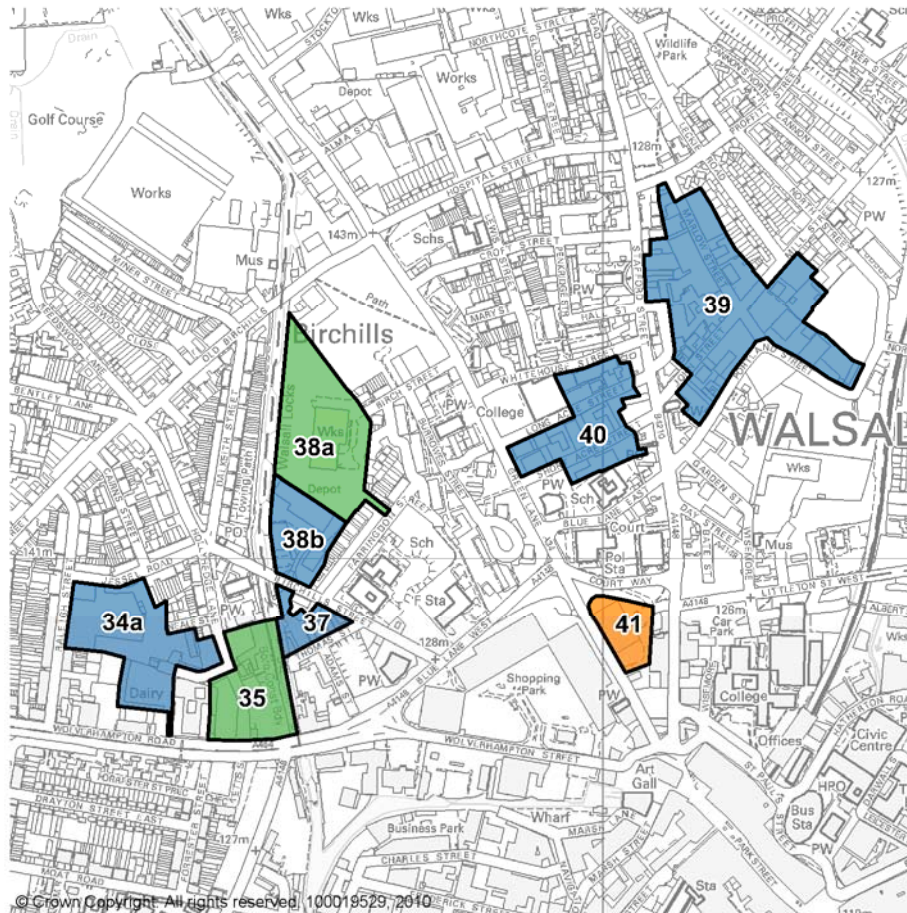
The Future

- 4.18 The eastern part of this area, including the former Stokes Forging works, is the subject of interest from Metafin, a leading paint coating manufacturer who intend to move there and consolidate from their two existing premises on Green Lane. There has also been a recent consent for a small-scale industrial unit on Northcote Street. This suggests that, in spite of its constraints, and the close proximity of residential areas, the area has a future as an employment site. But industrial uses will need to be managed carefully in order to protect residential amenity. With this proviso, we consider that, on balance the Stokes forgings area could be retained for industry although in the long term maybe released..
- 4.19 In relation to the western end of the site, there has been some renewal of the stock over time and there appears to be market interest in the site. The frontages onto Green Lane are often quasi retail but this is a reasonable location for this type of user.
- 4.20 The area is close to some existing high quality development, immediately to the north. There is an argument that this area shares some similar characteristics. But on the whole we consider this a good quality local employment area, accommodating viable local businesses and unlikely to be redeveloped or available to be upgraded any time soon.

North Central Walsall areas - 34 to 41:

- 34a - Raleigh Street / Hollyhedge Lane A (2.3ha)
- 35 - Hollyhedge Lane (1.7ha)
- 37 - Birchills Street / Thomas Street (0.5ha)
- 38a - Former Metal Casements (2.6ha)
- 38b – District Business Park (1.1ha)
- 39 - Portland Street / Marlow Street Industrial Area (4.7ha)
- 40 - Longacre Street (1.9ha)
- 41 - Albert Jagger Works (0.7ha)

Figure 4.3 - North Central Walsall areas 34 to 41



Recommendation: **Retain site 41 as Existing High Quality**
 Consider areas 34a, 37, 38b, 39 & 40 for release
 Release areas 35 & 38a

- 4.21 At the very southern end of the area, on the edge of Walsall town centre, there remain some employment uses and former employment sites which are pending redevelopment. In the Portland Street/Long Acre Street area there are a complex mix of industrial, commercial and community uses based around the Stafford Street local centre. For example Rose Engineering of Marlow Street is close to Kwik Fit, a haulage business, a coach depot and a bakery.
- 4.22 Collectively there is no merit in trying to redevelop these sites for a traditional employment use; so they should be released from the employment land supply subject to DEL2.
- 4.23 However in some cases the Council may wish to try and promote office-type uses on the sites immediately abutting the town centre around the Flour Mill before reaching a conclusion that they should be released to a non-economic use. The demand and supply of town centre office land is outside the scope of this project. But we are aware that the council may wish to promote office space in the Gigaport and around the core of the town centre as opposed to these more northern sites. If office space is not desirable we would suggest that, in the Stafford Street area around Portland Street and Longacres Street there could be scope for other non traditional economic uses which

are comparable with nearby residential and benefit from being near the town centre; using Walsall College as an example.

- 4.24 The units on 38b are modern and good quality. While long term release may be desirable, if it supports the regeneration of the wider area, we would not expect this to be considered until the units reach obsolescence. Realistically this may not be until the end of the plan period.
- 4.25 The only exception to this is site 41, Albert Jagger. As part of a wider redevelopment scheme the occupier was provided with a new, high quality facility. This should be retained as high quality employment land.

Reedswood Way - 58 (4.1ha)

Figure 4.4 - Reedswood Way site 58



Recommendation: Retain site 58 as Potential High Quality

The Employment Area Today

- 4.26 Reedswood Way is one of the Borough's few unconstrained and remediated employment sites, well connected to Junction 10 M6. Indeed it is presently the Borough's largest such site. (Larger sites such as Former Moxley Tip and the IMI sites at Goscote and Pleck are severely contaminated). This was achieved as part of the wider remediation of the area which included the neighbouring retail park in the 1990s. However the employment element has remained undeveloped. The site owner, Park Hill, has just lost an appeal against the refusal of permission for housing.

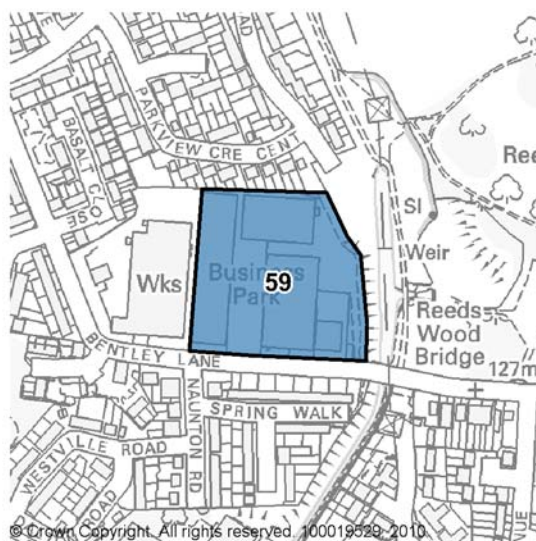
The Future

- 4.27 The Black Country evidence base concludes that this is a potential high quality site and viable for development; it is largely free of 'economic constraints' (see corrected Nov 09 version).

- 4.28 Cleared and available development land in Walsall and the Black Country in general is a scarce commodity; most larger sites are contaminated, require remediation and there is frequently insufficient value in the site to justify this expensive remediation. So this opportunity is rare in that the site has been cleared and prepared ready for development.
- 4.29 There however remains the question of why the site has not been taken up. Part of the answer may be that the site is not actively marketed for employment use. A search of Focus only finds historic (over 10 years old) references; there are no agents boards or signs and the site has a history of being promoted for residential.
- 4.30 But this is not a new finding; the Black Country Study and evidence discuss this at length. The Core Strategy seeks a step change in the areas offer and if successful (as a package of wider measures) this will be one of the easiest sites to start delivering new high quality space.
- 4.31 So the site should continue to be protected for employment use.

Bentley Lane - 59 (1.9ha)

Figure 4.5 - Bentley Lane area 59



Recommendation: Consider area 59 for release

The Employment Area Today

- 4.32 North of the Maple Leaf area, taking access from Bentley Lane, is a small established employment area; part of which has already been lost to housing.
- 4.33 Although in the west of the borough and geographically close to the M6 there is no direct access the Motorway junctions. Access is via the largely residential road network around Bentley Lane.
- 4.34 As noted part of the site has been lost to residential but around 2ha remain (the Bentley Road Industrial Estate, Sidhu Fashions and some smaller units). The remaining units are mostly old but appear to still be fit for purpose.

The Future

- 4.35 The continued presence of industrial and warehousing units on this location is not certain. Part of the area has already been lost to residential; further isolating the remaining employment uses. While the units remain viable they should remain in employment use but in the long term it is unlikely that the sites can be renewed for new employment uses, especially given the local focus on the more accessible sites in the area.

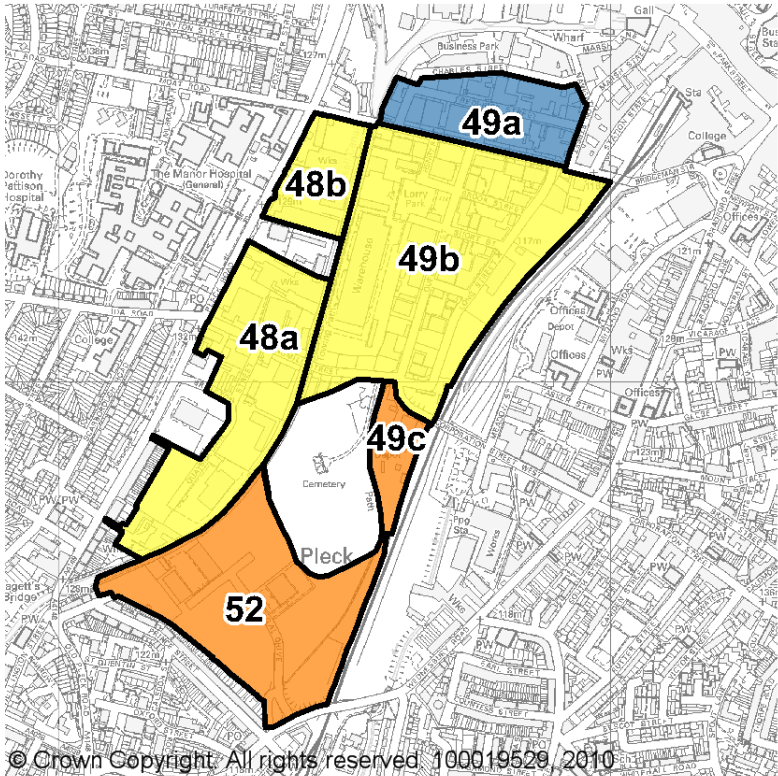
5 SOUTH WALSALL

Pleck

- 5.1 South of Walsall town centre, along either side of the railway line towards Bescot, is a series of industrial areas at Pleck.
- 5.2 The employment area west of the railway used to stretch further north; north of Charles Street and along the canal but this part has now been lost to housing, as part of the wider Waterfront regeneration scheme.
- 5.3 Also east of the railway some of the sites have been redeveloped for housing.

Areas between Pleck Road and the Railway - 48a (8.7ha), 48b (2.7ha), 49a (4.3ha), 49b (16.2ha), 49c (1.6ha) & 52 (10.4ha)

Figure 5.1 - Areas between Pleck Road and the Railway, 48, 49a, 49b, 49c & 52



Recommendation: Retain areas 49c and 52 as Existing High Quality
Retain areas 48a, 48b and 49b as Local Quality
Consider site 49a for release

- 5.4 The larger employment area to the south and south-west of Walsall Town Centre surrounds the Pleck Cemetery, but is split into two by the Walsall canal. Unlike the areas to the east this area retains its character as a predominantly industrial and commercial location; housing has only taken the previous northern edge adjoining the town centre and canal.

The Employment Area Today

- 5.5 The area is divided into five parts. The southernmost part (52) is Walsall Enterprise Park; a modern high quality industrial / warehouse development. This was formally Pleck Gasworks but has been developed over the last 10 years by St Modwen. There are only a few vacant units and three small remaining vacant sites.
- 5.6 Area 48 runs along Pleck Road opposite Walsall's Manor hospital. The southern parts of the estate, Manor Quays, accommodates new high quality units; although the largest and most visible unit is a car showroom there are some modern more conventional employment units. The central part around Brineton Street has a very poor environment. The northern part of the area is poorer quality industrial stock; but over the years this too has seen some investment and renewal.
- 5.7 The employment area east of the canal and mostly along Queen Street (49b) is a large, mixed employment area, characteristic of the Black Country. The area south of Bridgman Street is termed 'Premier Business Park'. Despite being poorer quality than the newer St Modwen estate to the South the site remains a large local quality employment area. The largest occupier is Cashmore's metal manufacturing on Upper Brook Street, but there is a high proportion of sui generis/service uses. The area is however well managed and at the southern end, Network Rail has developed a new training facility which is high quality (49c).

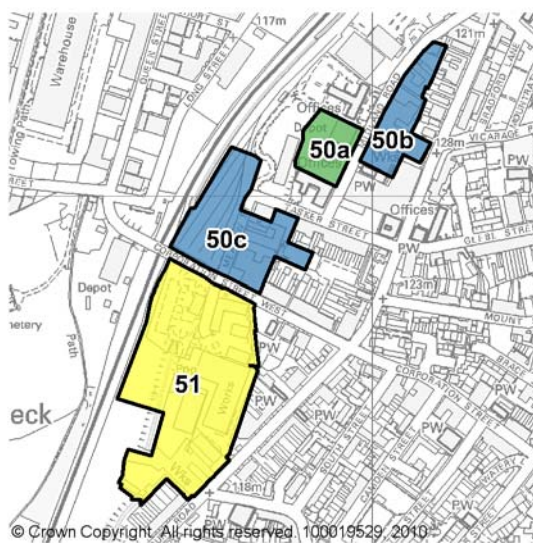
The Future

- 5.8 The stronger parts of the area are evidently in the South; the Walsall Enterprise Park is an existing high quality supply and the southern parts of the Pleck Road area share similar characteristics. These are both designated as 'best quality' areas in the UDP.
- 5.9 Further north, closer to the town centre, in the Town Wharf Business Park, the offer is poorer. North of Bridgman Street is within Walsall town centre. Residential, office and leisure development has been progressed here along the canal frontage as part of the Walsall waterfront regeneration scheme. Other residential development has already been permitted and the potential hope value could, in part, be responsible for the lack of interest in the area.
- 5.10 Our recommendation is that the Council consider the Enterprise Park (52) and new Network Rail training facility existing high quality (49c) with the employment areas south of Bridgeman Street (areas 48 & 49b) as retained local quality. The small area north of Bridgeman Street should be considered for release.
- 5.11 However, as an option the Council may consider redrawing the northern boundary of the site and managing the release of more town centre land; either for residential or mixed with offices. This study does not look at the supply and demand of land for offices. But to us this area would appear suitable for offices; market demand willing. The default option for renewal should not be simply residential development. The natural boundary for this may be Bridgeman Street; retaining employment to the south while managing the transition to the north.

- 5.12 Ideally we would also suggest encouraging redevelopment and renewal of the site on the corner of Bridgman Street and the railway (just south of Bridgeman Street) along with the sites outside of the employment area around the station. But this part of the site appears to be a viable employment business at the moment, including specialist plant which may be difficult to re-accommodate. The Intercoat Paints site however at present presents a very poor gateway to the wider employment area.

Midland Road , Meadow Street and Wednesbury Road / Corporation Street - 50a (0.7ha), 50b (1ha), 50c (2ha) & 51 (4.7ha)

Figure 5.2 - Wednesbury Road / Corporation Street (51), Midland Road (50a & 50c) and Meadow Street (50c)



Recommendation: **Retain area 51 as Local Quality**
 Consider areas 50b & 50c for release
 Release area 50a

The Employment Area Today

- 5.13 The two main areas east of the railway are around Midland Road and Wednesbury Road. The northern of the two areas, Midland Road, has lost its integrity as an employment area in recent years. North of Tasker Street this area is now within the Walsall town centre boundary as designated in the UDP. Many individual sites have been redeveloped for housing, some in the middle of remaining employment.
- 5.14 What now remains is a mix of residential, some older industrial and newer office buildings. The remaining older industrial buildings are in poor condition and no longer fit for purpose, though there is one manufacturing company - Walsall Security Printing - still in operation.. Part of this area is occupied by a confined car scrap yard.
- 5.15 The southern part of the area, north of Wednesbury Road, retains its industrial character although some units appear to be in use as community facilities. There are signs of investment and redevelopment - recent permission has been given to redevelop the Walsall Electrolytic Plating Works.

The Future

- 5.16 In the northern part, a traditional employment land designation is no longer appropriate. The future of the area is one as mixed office and residential area; we don't see any long term future in retaining the remaining industry.
- 5.17 The vacant site (50a) should be released immediately as it is surrounded by office and housing uses and the others considered for release over the life of the plan (50b & c)
- 5.18 For the parts of the area within the town centre the policy focus should be on trying to secure new offices where possible; building on the limited, although quite modern office provision already in the area.
- 5.19 In the southern part we suggest the area should be retained as employment land (local quality). It still serves a local purpose and should be protected. However this is one site which the Council should keep under review; there is demand for non employment uses (churches, community facilities etc) and this is a reasonably accessible site which may be suitable to accommodate this type of development in the future.

Small, isolated employment areas south and east of the town centre

- 5.20 There are a number of isolated employment sites/areas to the south and east of the town centre including:
 - 42 - Lower Rushall Street (0.2ha)
 - 43 - Chamberlin and Hill, Lincoln Road (1.1ha)
 - 44 - Eldon Street (2.8ha)
 - 45 - New Street / Bath Street (1.3ha)
 - 46 - Windmill Street (0.8ha)

Figure 5.3 - Small, isolated employment sites and areas south and east of the town centre



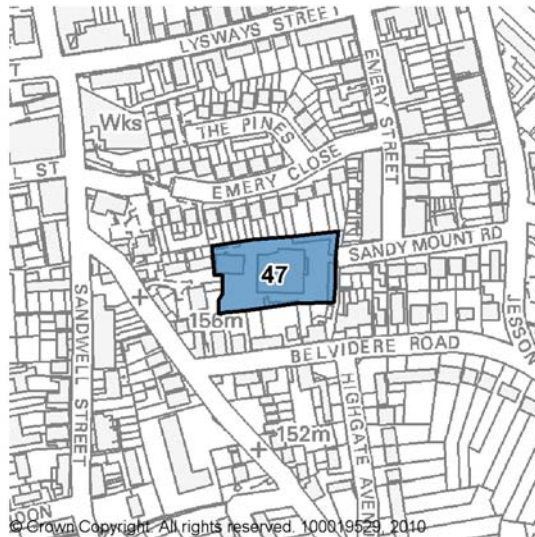
Recommendation: Consider areas/sites 42, 43, 44, 45 & 46a for release

- 5.21 These are isolated employment areas of mixed quality and value to the Borough’s employment land offer. Many serve very local needs and provide for the service sector (MOT garages etc). An exception is the highly constrained Chamberlin & Hill works in the Chuckery, a foundry bounded on all sides by housing. We understand from the Council that it is currently recovering strongly from the recession.
- 5.22 All of these are constrained by residential and other commercial uses which will make redevelopment and renewal for new employment uses very difficult.
- 5.23 Despite this, most of the sites are occupied at the moment; so the Council should be cautious about proactively releasing them from the employment land supply. So we classify these sites as ‘consider for release’.
- 5.24 In line with this approach the Council should resist releasing these sites while they remain viable for employment. The Council’s automatic policy approach should not be permissive to a change of use away from employment. Instead a request for the change of use should be carefully tested; against market conditions and the likelihood the site will be re-occupied or redeveloped for employment.
- 5.25 This should include looking at the demand for garages and quasi retail type activities as well as community uses which may be more suitable in these kinds of areas than on the better quality employment sites. We would prefer to retain the main estates for uses

which are less compatible with residential. Site 45 is within the town Centre and so before releasing the Council should also consider town centre uses, for example, offices and community uses.

Highgate Brewery - 47 (0.5ha)

Figure 5.4 - Highgate brewery site 47



Recommendation: Consider site 47 for release

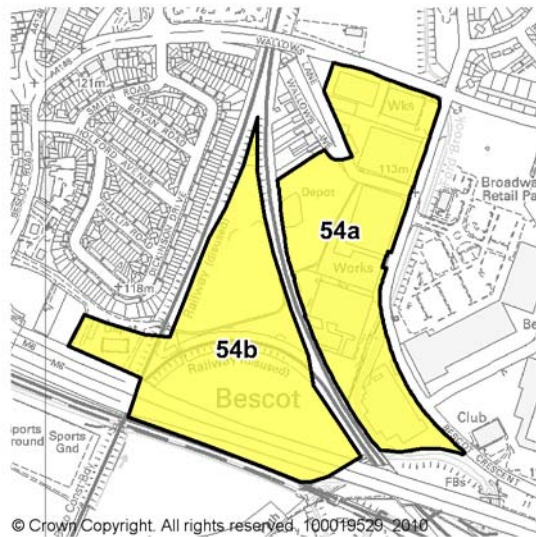
- 5.26 The site has recently been brought back into use as an active brewery. But like many of the sites in this part of the Borough it is constrained. The long term future of the site is probably complicated by the conservation area status which will limit flexibility. While the site remains valuable for a brewery it should be retained as employment use; if it falls vacant the Council should reconsider the merit of retaining the site.

Bescot

- 5.27 In the south of Borough Bescot is best known as the location of the new Walsall Football Ground, the Bescot Retail Park (formally Broadwalk) and the Park Inn Hotel. However the area, like most of the Borough has an industrial heritage.
- 5.28 A few industrial and employment areas remain, the most noticeable being the headquarters of the RAC.

Bescot Crescent & Bescot Triangle- 54a (7.3ha) & 54b (7.9ha)

Figure 5.5 - Bescot Crescent & Bescot Triangle areas 54a & 54b



Recommendation: Retain areas 54a & 54b as Local Quality

The Employment Area Today

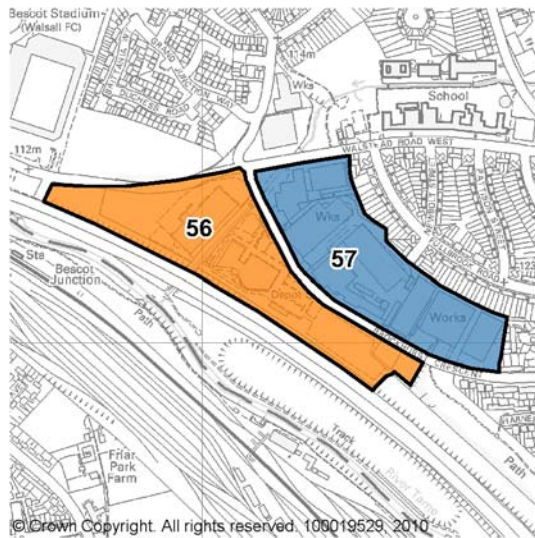
- 5.29 The crescent site is closer to the M6 Junction 9 than Brockhurst Crescent and not constrained by residential uses, except possibly at its northwest corner. It benefits from greater prominence than the rear of the Brockhurst Crescent estate. It is also mostly occupied by generally pre-war stock, including such names as Barhale Construction and Ingersoll Rand; with much less evidence of decline. Most of the units are fit for purpose industrial units.
- 5.30 There is also an area of land, the Bescot Triangle (54b) bounded by the M6 and various railway lines with very constrained road access from Bescot Road. The southern portion of this appears to be in use for an aggregates recycling operation. This land would at best appear to be of marginal usefulness to industry or any other use, though there might be the possibility of using it for either rail related uses or storage/aggregates recycling.

The Future

- 5.31 The key characteristics outlined above suggests that the area should be retained for local quality employment.. Most of the units are older, although fit for purpose. There is no evidence of market demand to replace them with new, high quality buildings; this suggests it may not suitable to be classed as potential high quality. But this should not preclude high quality development in the future; only that there is no evidence of this type of development at the moment.

Brockhurst Crescent - 56 (5.9ha) & 57 (5.3ha)

Figure 5.6 - Brockhurst Crescent areas 56 & 57



**Recommendation: Retain area 56 as Existing High Quality
Consider area 57 for release**

The Employment Area Today

- 5.32 The Brockhurst Crescent employment area is broadly split into two halves. The southern, higher quality part (56) accommodates the RAC offices at the eastern end and a modern Middleton Paper facility in the west, together with a small vacant land opposite the new hotel. A large part of the land area is used as car parking for the RAC. These two units are high quality; and this part of the site can be considered existing high quality.
- 5.33 The eastern area (57) includes older industrial property with little evidence of renewal and investment. Many units are vacant, though there are a few small companies in operation. The former Firststeel premises are on the market. There is a planning permission for housing covering most of this area, including the vacant land adjoining the Transaxle works on Walstead Rd West. The units back onto established residential property; at the eastern end of the area the industrial units also face residential units. Access at the eastern end of Brockhurst Crescent is restricted for HGVs and other wide loads. Some former employment land to the north of this area has already been lost to housing.

The Future

- 5.34 The future of these areas is less of an employment area but more of a couple of isolated but major employment units. There are complex land ownership issues. The eastern part (57) already shows signs of decline; we see limited opportunity to continue to protect this part of the site from other uses.
- 5.35 Despite the fact that at the moment part of the site looks suitable to be released there is an argument that the site should be protected; and new uses encouraged; potentially

building on the reasonable access to the Motorway. However we think the better prospect is to focus this effort on the nearby site 54 at Bescot Crescent to the west.

- 5.36 The southern part (56), including the RAC, Middleton Paper and small development site is existing high quality land and should be protected. The sites are clearly visible from the Motorway (one of the reasons why the RAC is located here). Unlike the eastern part of the area, this area retains some valuable prominence.

Walsall Road - 204 (1.1ha)

Figure 5.7- Walsall Road area 204



Recommendation: Retain area 204 as Local Quality

- 5.37 This is a site was previously omitted from the 2010 study. It has reasonable access and most units are used for trade counters. However the location suits an industrial use and the occupiers would appear to enjoy the visible frontage.

East of Junction 10

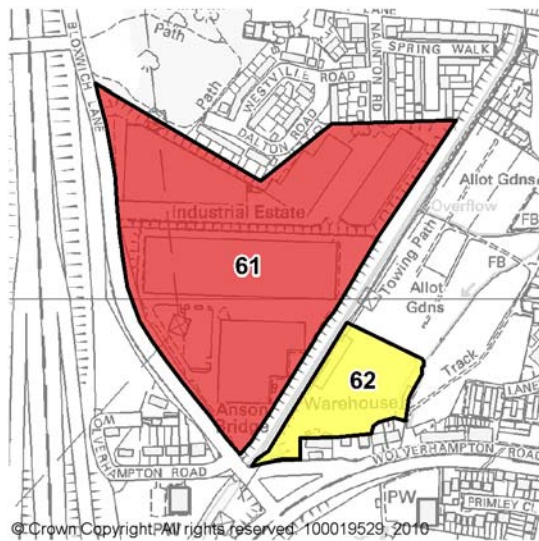
- 5.38 The South Walsall area includes those sites broadly south and west of the town centre up to the Motorway. So it covers the employment areas at Bescot, Pleck, Tempus 10, Reedswood Way, the former IMI works and smaller sites in the general area.

The M6 employment areas

- 5.39 The M6 runs to the western edge of the South Walsall Area. This includes a number of the Borough's employment sites and areas that are adjacent to or near the M6.

Maple Leaf - 61 (7.8ha) & 62 (1.3ha)

Figure 5.8 - Maple Leaf areas 61 & 62



Recommendation: **Retain area 61 as Potential High Quality**
 Retain site 62 as Local Quality

The Employment Area Today

- 5.40 Just north of the Tempus 10 area are a couple of well established employment areas at Maple Leaf.
- 5.41 The main area is at 61 but adjacent, opposite the canal, is a smaller established employment area at site 62 (East of Maple Leaf).
- 5.42 The two areas have little in common beyond their geographic proximity. This smaller site is occupied by low grade industrial uses and some retail / garage uses. Most the site is open space used for storage including scrap metal.
- 5.43 The larger area is a more developed employment area including the Bloxwich Estate and the Maple Leaf estate. The flexible warehouse / industrial units are not new (1980s) but of fair quality; several of the Maple Leaf units have been refurbished and are currently available. Unit 1 for example is available refurbished at £3.50 per sq ft. Current operators include Willenhall Tubes & Forging, Blakemore's cash and carry , Admiral Self Storage and ACF Car Finances.

The Future

- 5.44 By virtue of their access and proximity to Tempus 10 both areas should be targeted for new high quality development.
- 5.45 The smaller of the areas has seen no renewal or investment for some time; it is a well established local quality site and should continue to be protected. However if it becomes available for redevelopment the Council should reconsider this assessment and look at promoting new, high quality employment on the site, capitalising on the high profile frontage onto Wolverhampton Road.

- 5.46 There is a case for considering this a potential high quality site but the lack of apparent investment over the years and incumbent occupiers which are incompatible with new high quality development means we think that the site should be protected for local quality uses.
- 5.47 The larger part of the area has seen continued investment and refurbishment over the years and is already an established industrial / warehousing location. To date investment in the sites has been limited to refurbishment of the existing units. But it is likely that over the lifetime of the plan the estates may need more substantial renewal and in this case there will be the opportunity to improve the whole area to one more resembling a 'high quality' site.

Tempus 10 - 63 (1.7ha) & 64 (1.7ha)

Figure 5.9 - Tempus 10 sites 63 & 64



Recommendation: Retain sites 63 & 64 as Potential High Quality

The Employment Area Today

- 5.48 The Tempus 10 site is one of the select few high quality development sites in Walsall which is currently being marketed. These are based originally on a single large site, but two hotels and fast food outlet are now located in the middle of the site, splitting the remaining employment elements into two. The northern part of the site is marketed as Tempus 10 'Onyx' and the southern part 'Opal' The southern part is covered by UDP policy JP4.1. The sites now form part of the Black Country Enterprise Zone focused on the Darlaston and north Wolverhampton areas (see the Darlaston chapter).
- 5.49 The total capacity of the site northern Onyx parcel is up to 9,500 square metres of high quality B1 office and B8 warehousing space, for which there is planning permission. It is currently being marketed as three units totalling 8,000 square metres with 'generous' car parking.

- 5.50 The southern Opal site is available as a 'flexible development opportunity' although holds outline planning permission for up to 9,500 square metres of B2/B8 space.
- 5.51 In between the two, the food retail and hotel elements of the wider scheme are complete and trading leaving just the employment elements.

The Future

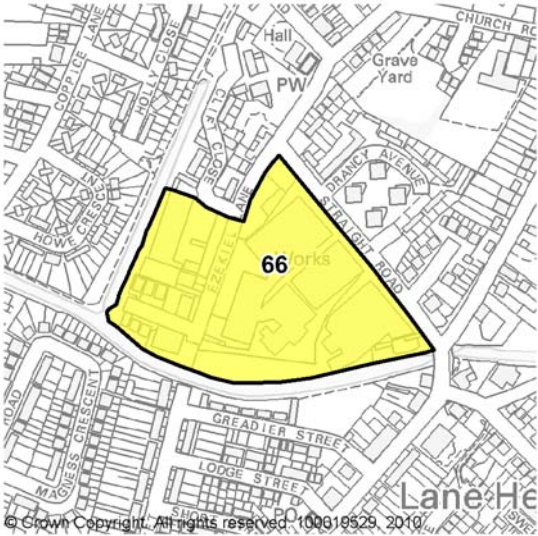
- 5.52 On paper these sites are probably the best Walsall has to offer (at the moment). The lack of take-up is probably more related to the wider sub regional and national market conditions as opposed to any individual site failing. The sites are marketed very much at the sub regional and regional occupier.
- 5.53 As discussed elsewhere high quality office development of this nature is not common in Walsall. It has no market presence as a high quality office location. But as noted the site is probably viewed more as a M6 site as opposed to a Walsall site so competes with other similar developments over a large distance.
- 5.54 For general industrial the sites do not match the predominant market requirement for existing Walsall occupiers; existing occupiers and largely value driven and so unlikely to be attracted to new high quality motorway development. For them there is a plentiful supply of cheaper space in Walsall; including on other potential high quality sites. Again this is more likely to appeal to the regional or sub regional occupier for whom high quality motorway access is an attribute they are willing to pay for.
- 5.55 In summary these sites, their location and quality of proposed development is not a product Walsall is known to offer. But they embody the type of site, and the type of occupier which Walsall needs in the future. Similar comments could hold true for the Reedswood Way site.
- 5.56 These sites highlight the challenge Walsall faces implementing the Black Country Vision and attracting new employers to the area. They tick all the boxes available to the town planners but still the market has been reluctant to take them up.
- 5.57 There is no question that the sites should not continue to be protected and promoted for high quality employment use. If this sites were lost from the supply it would be a critical blow to the whole strategy.

6 WILLENHALL

6.1 The Willenhall area includes the northern part of the Darlaston industrial area broadly north of the Black Country Route and west of the Motorway. This area has good accessibility via the Black Country Route and Keyway, and is characterised by larger and newer warehousing and general industrial units. The core of Willenhall, to the east of the district centre, is an older industrial area resembling the Northcote Street/Portland Street area of Walsall. To the north, Ashmore Lake is a larger discrete employment area that hosts some larger industrial and warehousing outfits.

Ezekiel Lane - 66 (4.8ha)

Figure 6.1 - Ezekiel Lane area 66

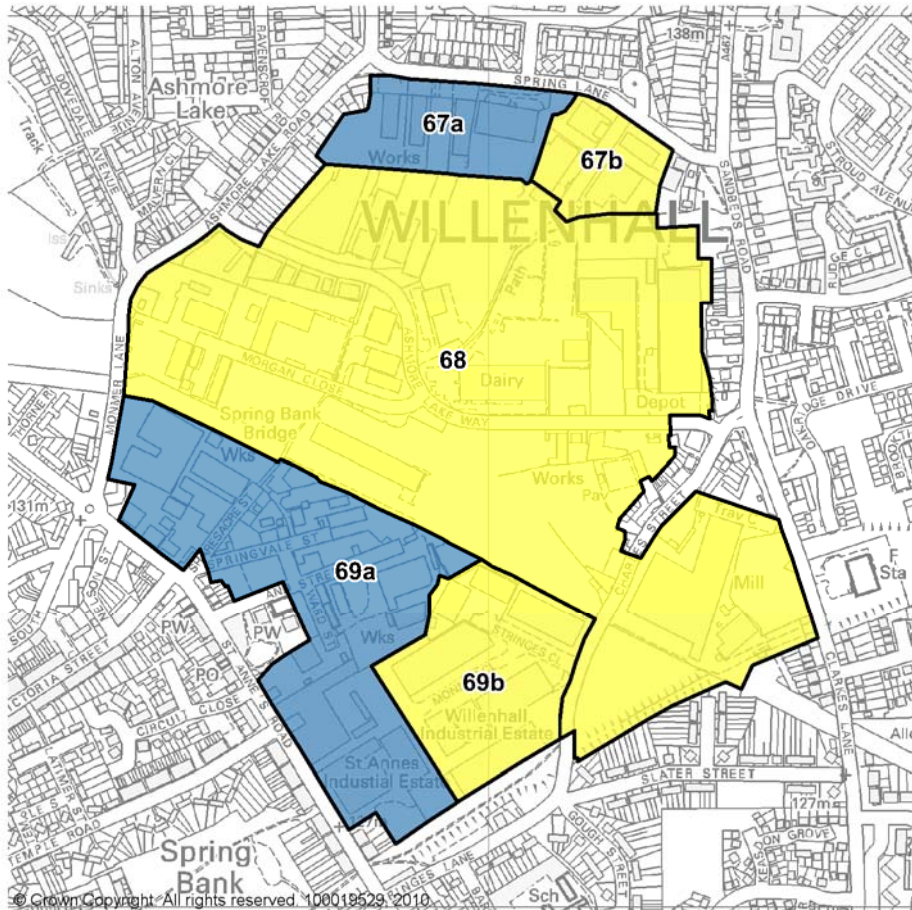


Recommendation: Retain area 66 as Local Quality

- 6.2 This is a local quality employment area in the north of Willenhall containing a mix of metal manufacturing, such as Interpress and Midland Pressure Diecasting, and sui generis type uses. It has seen some renewal in recent years, for example the Arrow Industrial Estate, and redevelopment and refurbishment of the Alvar Industrial estate, in the middle of the area, is currently in progress.
- 6.3 There are some vacant units in the area but piecemeal redevelopment for non-employment may threaten the integrity of the employment area. Whilst access is rather poor, the interest in redevelopment shows that the area is still attractive to industry in the context of the recent manufacturing upturn.

Ashmore Lake - 67a (2.3ha), 67b (1.5ha), 68 (26ha), 69a (8.4ha) and 69b (3.9ha)

Figure 6.2 - Ashmore Lake areas 67a, 67b, 68, 69a & 69b



Recommendation: Retain areas 67b, 68 & 69b as Local Quality
Consider areas 67a & 69a for release

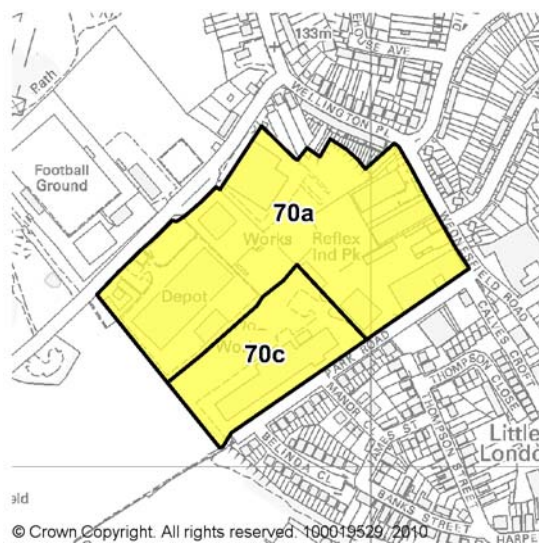
- 6.4 The Ashmore Lake area is located to the North of Willenhall and along with the Longacres estate is the second main Willenhall estate (the South Willenhall estates being a continuation of Darlaston).
- 6.5 The area did not benefit from the major Black Country road improvements of the 1980s and 1990s which provided the Keyway and Black Country Route. This employment area remains relatively isolated from the main road network.
- 6.6 However the core of the estate, the Ashmore Lake industrial area, remains a well occupied industrial area including relevantly new mix of properties; most of which are reasonable quality and fit for purpose. The estate includes a relatively new Robert Wiseman Dairy and another of the borough's larger employers - Nightfreight, an expanding business that deals with bulky and outsized parcels between commercial businesses. Its current headquarters are also in Willenhall, at Crestwood House off New Road.
- 6.7 Whilst Robert Wiseman and Nightfreight are UK-wide businesses, the rest of the area caters mainly for local quality uses. The recently cleared site at Electrium Point is

attracting interest for an ambulance hub. In view of this, the central core of Ashmore Lake should be retained for local quality employment.

- 6.8 In this classification we also include the nearby Wye Foundry forge site (which could if redeveloped present a reasonably large development opportunity site) and the small, new Rainbow Business Park.
- 6.9 Outside of the area's core, that part accessed from Ashmore Lake Way, vacancy rates are higher and a number of the units require investment and renewal. The northern edge, along Spring Lane, has particularly poor access and any intensification of the employment use could adversely affect the amenity of the nearby, and opposite, residential area. There is little merit in trying to proactively encourage redevelopment when the buildings become obsolete
- 6.10 Our 2010 report suggested releasing site 67. But the Council reports that some units are now fully occupied and in market demand. So at for the time being those units should benefit from protection; although this should be kept under review.
- 6.11 The rationale for retaining the southern part of the area, St Anne's and Stringes Lane is less clear than Ashmore Lake Way. Some parts of the area are constrained with particularly poor internal access roads; particularly around St Anne's. There is a cluster of waste management facilities at Forge Street and Sharesacre Street. There have been housing permissions here in the past, though these have now lapsed (such as the former ROH Wheels site on St Anne's Road) There is a comparatively large vacant site at Monmer Lane/St Anne's Road. When the opportunity arises this part of the site should be considered for release.
- 6.12 The Stringes Close area (69b) site is much better and should be retained; although kept under review.

Noose Lane - 70a (6.7ha) & 70c (2.2ha)

Figure 6.3 - Noose Lane area 70a & 70c



Recommendation: Retain areas 70a & 70c as local quality

The Employment Area Today

- 6.13 West of Ashmore Lake is the Noose Lane employment area. This composed of two broad parts; the larger northern part accessed off Noose Lane, which in turn has quite good access to the Keyway and the Black Country Route, and the southern part accessed from either Park Road or Wednesfield Road.
- 6.14 The northern part has seen continual redevelopment and accommodates the UK hub of the modern Aspray distribution depot. Aspray operate from a number of premises and are looking to expand.
- 6.15 The southern part of the area, where access is slightly poorer, is composed of more traditional users such as Victoria Drop Forgings and Guardian Locks, has not attracted major distribution users but has also seen some small scale renewal.

The Future

- 6.16 The rear of the site (the vacant part of George Carter Pressings) which is currently accessed from Park Road, is the subject of interest from Aspray to expand their premises. This will be the most efficient use of this site, as Aspray will be able to retain the access from a new enlarged premises on Noose Lane. At the moment the area is local quality.

Calves Croft - 70b (1.7ha) & 70d (0.5ha)

Figure 6.4 - Calves Croft areas 70b & 70d

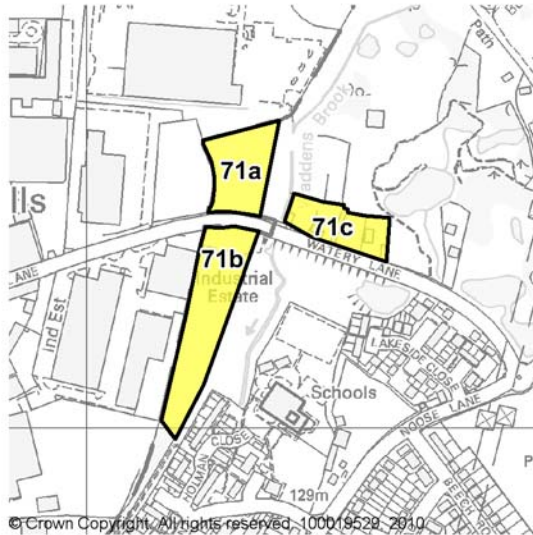


Recommendation: Consider area 70b for release
Release area 70d

- 6.17 Around the Noose Lane area is a number of smaller industrial units that are constrained by housing. If these are made available for redevelopment they should be considered for release.

North and South of Watery Lane & Watery Lane - 71a (0.6ha), 71b (1ha) & 71c (0.5ha)

Figure 6.5 - North and South of Watery Lane & Watery Lane areas 71a, 71b & 71c

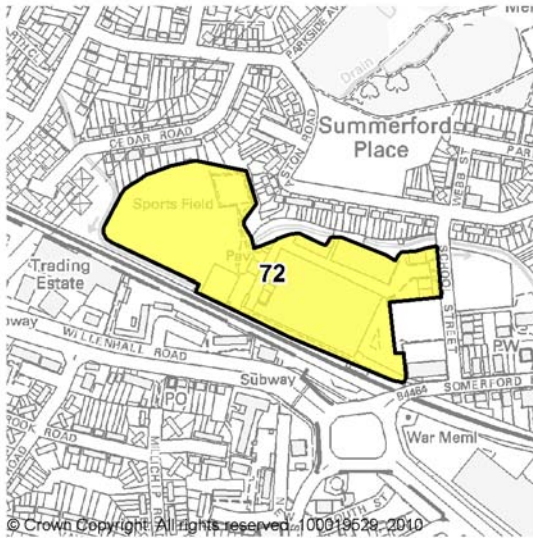


Recommendation: Retain sites 71a, 71b & 71c as Local Quality

- 6.18 The sites north and south of Watery Lane are located on the western edge of the borough and form part of the PDH industrial estate in Wolverhampton. The northern sites consist of vacant scrubland and a scrapyards that has recently come into the industrial land supply through a retrospective planning permission.
- 6.19 Access to the southern part of the southern site (71b) is through existing units whilst access to the northern part of the southern site is directly from Watery Lane. The Northern part of the site is hard standing.
- 6.20 Although not in Walsall Council's administrative area, the PDH industrial estate gives both sites some employment context and therefore they should be retained as local quality employment land.

Assa Abloy - 72 (4.6ha)

Figure 6.6 - Assa Abloy site 72

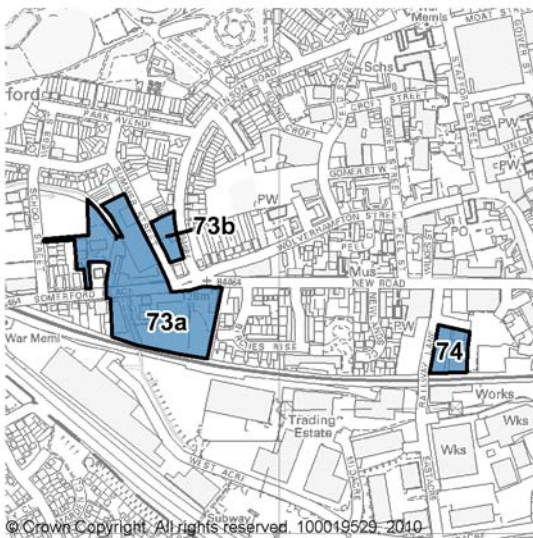


Recommendation: Retain site 72 as Local Quality

- 6.21 West of central Willenhall central is the long established Assa Abloy site. This is one of the few remaining companies still related to the Willenhall lock making heritage. The site is purpose built, in sole occupancy and unlikely to be available for redevelopment. So it should be retained for local quality employment. If it does become available an alternative employment use, potentially high quality, should be considered. The site is close to the Keyway although local access onto the site may need improvements.

School Street, Pinson Road & Dimminsdale - 73a (2.7ha), 73b (0.2ha) & 74 (0.35ha)

Figure 6.7 - School Street, Pinson Road & Dimminsdale sites 73a, 73b & 74

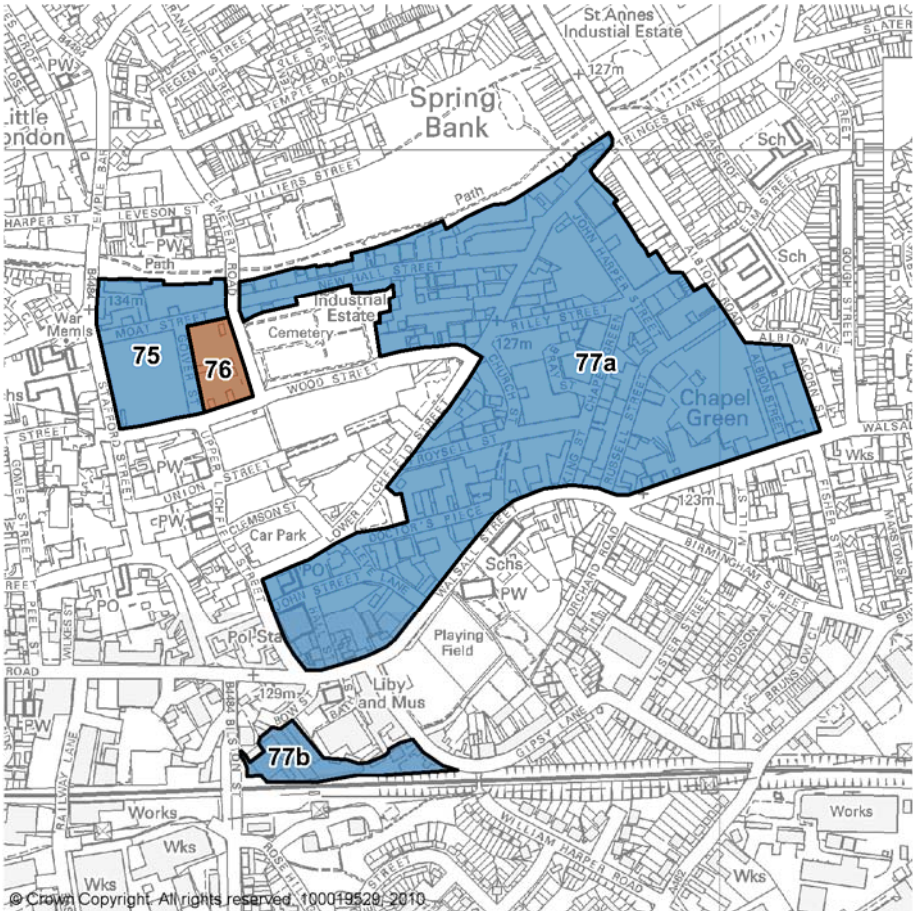


Recommendation: Consider sites 73a, 73b & 74 for release

- 6.22 The western site (73a), largely based on the Middleton works, is constrained by residential development which would make renewal and intensification for employment use difficult. The centre site (73b), also occupied by Middleton’s is also constrained. The eastern site (74) is constrained and isolated.
- 6.23 Providing the Core Strategy criteria regarding release of sites and re-accommodation of any remaining occupiers is adhered to, the loss of either site would not harm the Borough’s employment land portfolio.

Willenhall Central - 75 (2ha), 76 (0.6ha), 77a (16.8 ha) & 77b (0.8ha)

Figure 6.8 - Willenhall Central areas 75, 76, 77a & 77b



Recommendation: Consider areas 75, 77a & 77b for release
 Site 76 has planning permission for housing

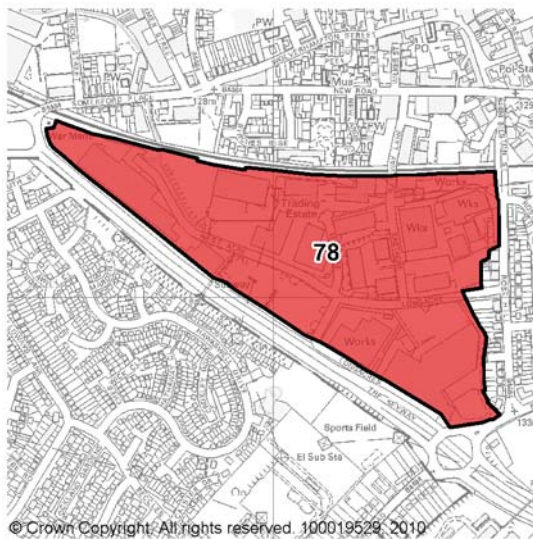
- 6.24 The rationale to release this area, when the opportunity arises, is already well established. The Central Willenhall employment areas are generally constrained and mostly obsolete. The integrity of any of the larger areas of employment, for example Gower Street and Moat Street has already been lost
- 6.25 There are some remaining employment businesses in the area, such as Tildesleys which operate a forge alongside the railway line just south of Willenhall Town centre,

and wish to improve their premises. Core Strategy policies seek to protect these and encourage their relocation. So despite the over arching residential push in the area the Council still needs to exercise some caution when promoting (or permitting) residential development on any remaining employment parcels.

- 6.26 A particular note of caution should be that employment areas around the centre sometimes accommodate quasi retail, garage and motor repair type uses. These can be complementary to the town centre, relying on passing trade and linked trips. As such there may be merit in retaining or seeking their re-accommodation within the area as part of any renewal.

Longacre - 78 (21.1ha)

Figure 6.9 - Longacre area 78

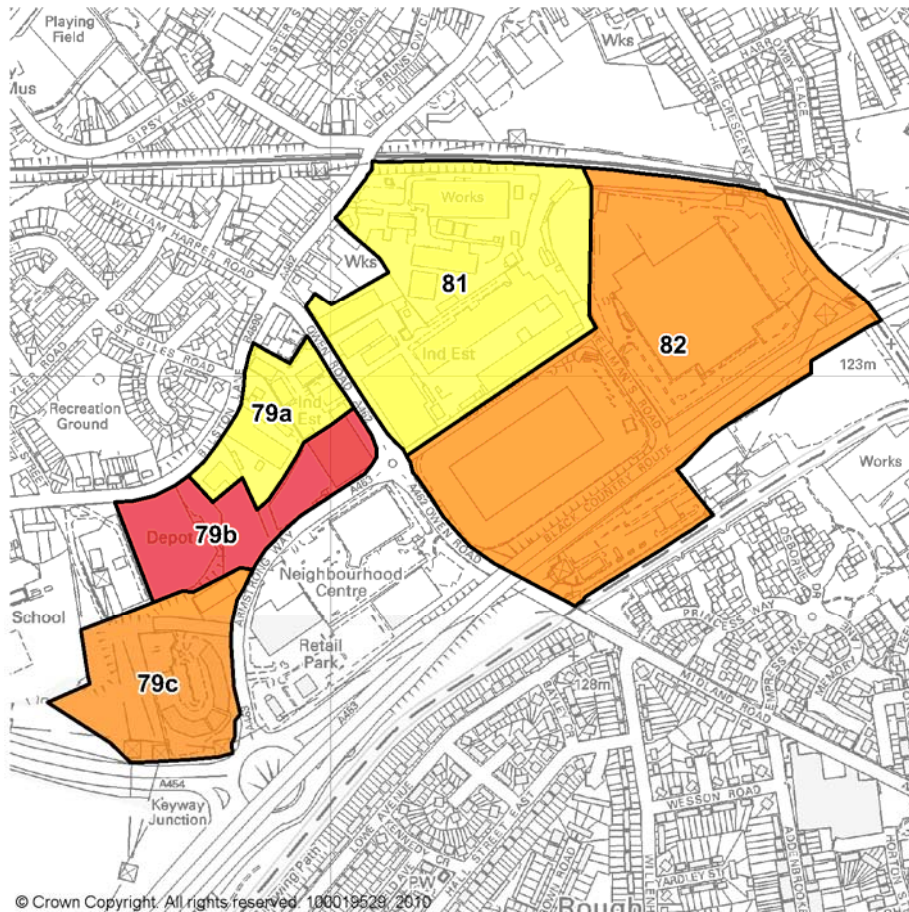


Recommendation: Retain area 78 as Potential High Quality

- 6.27 The Longacre estate runs along the Keyway but does not benefit from direct access; instead access is via Rose Hill to the Keyway / Bilston Road junction, and the access is somewhat constrained by housing on Rose Hill.
- 6.28 It is best known for its largest occupier; AF Blakemore who own SPAR, and the Hooty's retail warehouse. There are a couple of vacant sites, one fairly recently cleared, the other longstanding and affected by mineshafts.
- 6.29 The area has continued to be renewed over time and could be considered a high quality site. Although large parts are used for truck storage, which may not look like it is meeting any high quality criteria, this type of activity is integral to the operation of Blakemore; who are one of the Borough's largest and most prominent employers. It should be remembered that not all 'high quality' development should meet simplistic visual criteria.
- 6.30 However access will remain an ongoing potential issue. But this clearly does not constrain the area, otherwise we may not have seen the continual renewal in recent years.

South Willenhall areas - 79a (1.9ha), 79b (2.7ha), 79c (3.4ha), 81 (8.1ha) & 82 (13.9ha)

Figure 6.10 - South Willenhall areas 79a, 79b, 79c, 81 & 82



Recommendation: **Retain areas 79c & 82 as Existing High Quality**
 Retain area 79b as Potential High Quality
 Retain areas 79a & 81 as Local Quality

- 6.31 These areas, although part of Willenhall, are the natural extension to the Darlaston heavy industry Area which stretches south to the former IMI Copper Works. Historically the Rubery Owen steelworks covered this area extensively.
- 6.32 However unlike much of the Darlaston Area this area does not need major accesses and highway improvements. The sites take good access from the Keyway/Black Country Route junction and onwards through the rest of the West Midlands and M6.
- 6.33 Probably reflecting this high accessibility the area includes one of the Borough's largest high quality developments of new generation warehouse/distribution units at area 82. One of these units is occupied by the national headquarters of Poundland but the second has been taken up by Yodel after being vacated by City Link. Yodel, a logistics company, have also acquired the Huf UK site and the site on Bilston Lane to use as a depot, repair, parking and administration.

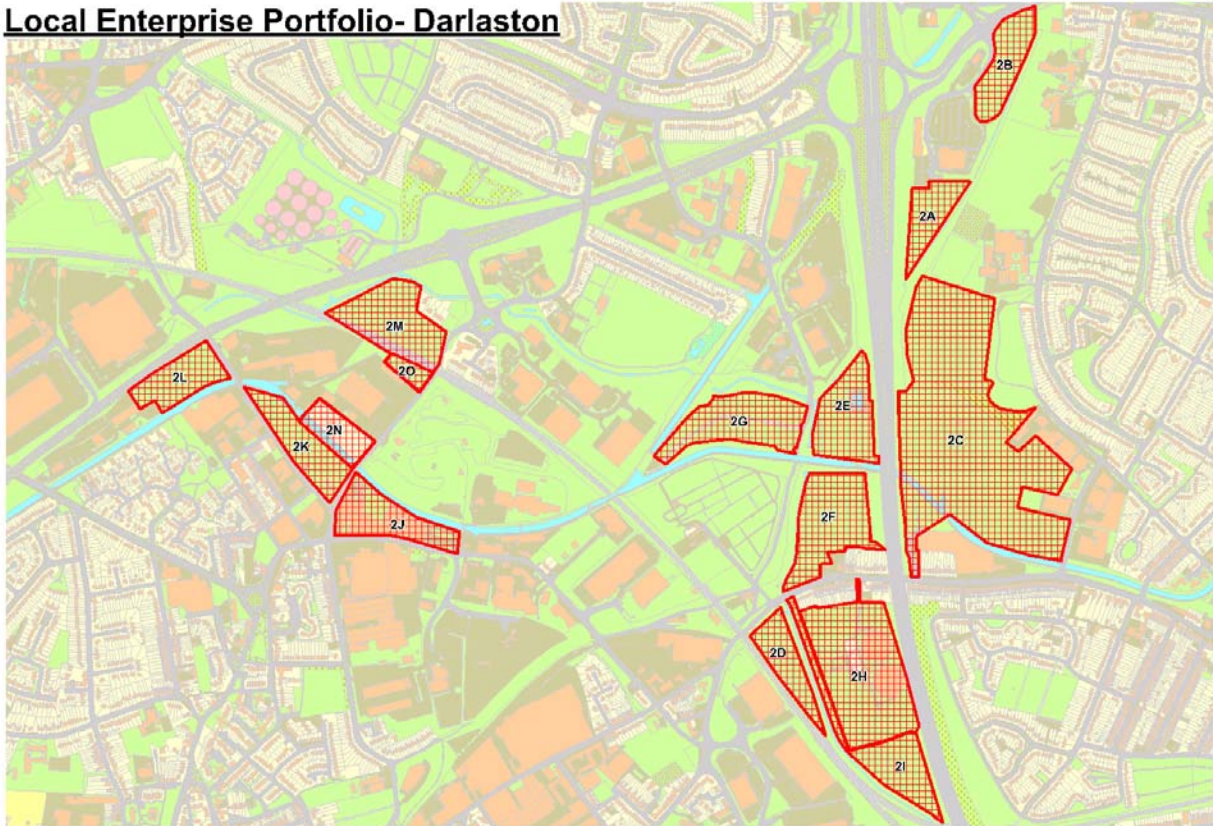
- 6.34 Immediately north of this is an older industrial area at Owen Road / Bilston Road. This area is much more fragmented than the Poundland / Citylink part of the area. Some parcels take access from Bilston Road, others Owen Road and a small site opposite the former Citylink depot. This fragmented nature may make redevelopment for high quality space more problematic; several land parcels would need combining and most of the site reconfiguring to secure the type of development. This does not preclude the possibility that the area could be upgraded over time but we think it less likely than other parts of the area. Conversely, it could also supply a need to relocate 'bad neighbour uses' from other parts of the upgraded stock.
- 6.35 There is an existing planning permission for housing on the Brookside Metals, a leading producer of gunmetal, brass and copper ingots. It is important to make every effort to retain this company in the Borough. Should the housing permission lapse, the employment potential of the site would need to be re-assessed. For this reason, and because it is currently in use, we think the whole of this area should continue to be classed as local quality and retained if possible.
- 6.36 The third area in this location is site 79. This is a complex area. Classifying the site is complicated; the south western corner has been developed for motor trade which is often considered an employment use although does not match the type of development the Core Strategy is targeting on the high quality employment sites. It is however high quality development and could be considered high quality employment land.
- 6.37 The middle part of the area (79b) is now part of the Yodel development (see above).
- 6.38 The northern part is a mix of older industrial units similar to area 81. The north eastern corner of the site has recently been lost to residential; highlighting the risk that non employment uses will take isolated parcels of employment and creeping into well established employment areas. As with area 81 this is more likely to remain local quality employment; especially given that plots take access from Bilston Lane as opposed to Armstrong Way. It is possible that over the lifetime of the plan these parcels could be re-configured to make larger development sites facing Armstrong Way and extend the high quality employment land. The fact that sites are accessed from Bilston Lane as opposed to Armstrong Way should not be used as a justification to release these sites; compared to many local quality areas Bilston Road is unconstrained and benefits from good access to the Keyway.

7 DARLASTON

- 7.1 Darlaston presents the Borough with its greatest challenge but also its most concentrated opportunity in industrial employment terms, and is currently the focus of a major regeneration effort, known as the Darlaston Strategic Regeneration Area. It is a classic Black Country town specialising in heavy engineering and (previously) steelmaking with its employment areas more or less surrounding its residential areas. But it also is close to the M6 junctions 9 and 10, and therein lies its potential. However the sites and the area in general is problematic to develop. The industrial heritage has left poor ground conditions and expensive remediation bills. Also despite the area's proximity to the motorway, access is not universally good; whilst railway and canals tend to chop up the area. Internal access can also be poor with sub standard access roads and narrow junctions and bridges.

- 7.2 There is a concerted effort underway to tackle these problems. The Department for Communities & Local Government (CLG) has now formally approved the location of the Black Country Enterprise Zone. The Zone comprises a portfolio of development sites situated in Darlaston and Wolverhampton North and totals over 120 hectares. The boundaries of the zone are yet to be finalised, but it is envisaged, The Darlaston part of the Zone comprises a cluster of 15 sites, including Phoenix 10, either side of the M6 at Junction 10 providing some 45 hectares of land; the Wolverhampton North part of the Zone is made up of the regionally significant i54 site which has recently been announced as the site to accommodate the new JLR engine plant and a number of development opportunities in the immediate surrounding area. The Black Country Enterprise Zone will offer business rate discounts, the possibility of enhanced capital allowances, access to superfast broadband and a simplified approach to planning. Discussions with CLG have confirmed that the Black Country Enterprise Zone should be operational by 1 April 2012.

Figure 7.1 - Enterprise Zone

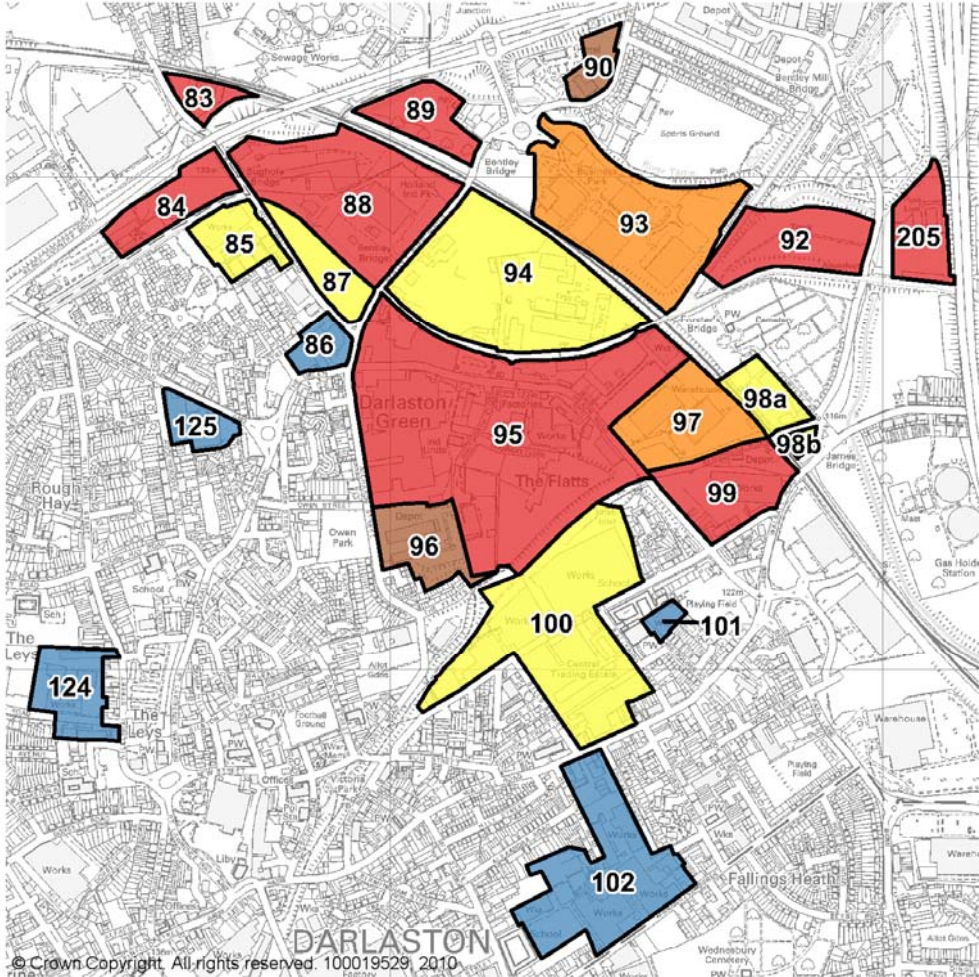


- 7.3 In December 2011 the Government approved funding for a programme to improve access to the Darlaston and Pleck areas from M6 Junctions 9 and 10, focusing on improvements to Bentley Mill Way and Bentley Road South, and various junction improvements in the area. Following funding and planning permission, the highway infrastructure is planned to start in early 2013 and complete in summer 2015.
- 7.4 The area accommodates some occupiers which may be considered incompatible with high quality development; most noticeably large scrap metal facilities; but there are high quality areas such as at the eastern end of Heath Road and Axxess 10, which enjoys good access to the BCR.

Darlaston Strategic Development Area and adjoining areas

- 83 - Willenhall Road (Opposite Poundland) (0.9ha)
- 84 - Central Point (2.3ha)
- 85 - Willenhall Rd (Queen St) (1.9ha)
- 86 - Willenhall Rd (Castle St) (1.7ha)
- 87 - Willenhall Rd (Former Garrington) (1ha)
- 88 - Holland Industrial Park (8ha)
- 89 - Black Country Route Junction 1 Site B (2ha)
- 90 - Bentley Road North (1ha)
- 92 - Aspect 2000 (3.7ha)
- 93 - Axxess 10 (8.4ha)
- 94 - E.M.R. (10ha)
- 95 - Central Darlaston (21.4ha)
- 96 - Whitworth Close (2.6ha)
- 97 - Heath Road / Kendricks Road (4ha)
- 98a - Cemetery Road (1.5ha)
- 98b - Former Railway Tavern (0.3ha)
- 99 - Station Street / Heath Road (3.5ha)
- 100 - Station Street West (10.6ha)
- 101 - Westbourne Road, Darlaston (0.4ha)
- 102 - Franchise Street (7ha)
- 124 - Stafford Road East (2.5ha)
- 125 - Addenbroke Street (1.2ha)
- 205 Benley Mill Way East (2.2ha)

Figure 7.2 - Central Darlaston and Darlaston Green Employment Area, areas/sites 83 to 90, 92 to 102, 124 to 125 & 205



Recommendation: Retain sites 83, 84, 88, 89, 92, 95, 99 & 205 as Potential High Quality
 Retain sites 93 & 97 as Existing High Quality
 Retain sites 85, 87, 94, 98a, 98b & 100 as Local Quality
 Consider sites 86, 101, 102, 124 & 125 for release
 Sites 90, 96 have planning permission for housing

The Employment Area Today

- 7.5 This is a very large and complex employment area including a mix of uses ranging from scrap metal and fridge recycling through to high quality distribution units.
- 7.6 This mix makes its assessment and classification very difficult. The success of the area will be vital to the Black Country Strategy simply because of the mass of employment space,
- 7.7 Accessibility is the key to the area; where accessibility to the motorway is good the parcels exhibit high quality characteristics; for example Access 10 (area 93) compared to the nearby sites access from Bentley Road South. Access 10 has clear access to the Motorway; Bentley Road South is weight limited and generally more constrained,

though the Council is improving the bridges as part of its Darlaston Strategic Development Area (DSDA) Access Project.

- 7.8 These access improvements should make the core of the area much more accessible; removing constraints along the South Road (onto Heath Road in the core of the site) and Bentley Mill Way at the eastern end.

The Future

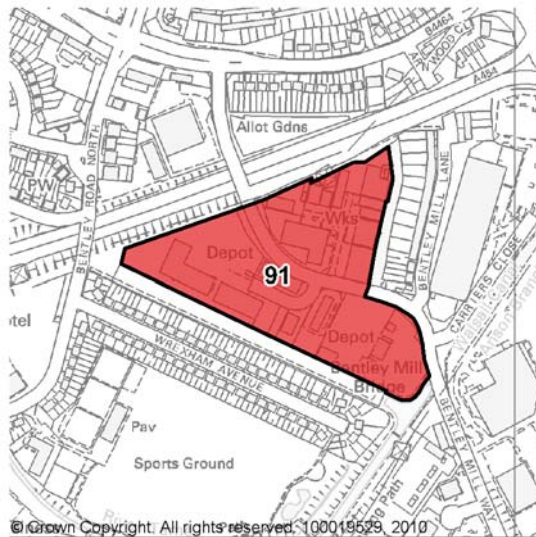
- 7.9 Subject to the highway improvements the majority of the area core should be considered potential high quality (83, 84, 87, 89, 88, 92, 95, 99 and 205). Site 90 has planning permission for housing but should this lapse it could also be considered PHQ.
- 7.10 There are however a few exceptions where the existing use may make this transition to a high quality site more problematic.
- 7.11 The E.M.R. Site (94) is at the core of the area and is the Borough's largest waste and recycling site; processing 350,000 tonnes of scrap metal and 300,000 recycled fridges a year. In their submission in support of the local access improvements (March 2010) E.M.R stated they have active plans to rail connect their site once the rail bridge has been upgraded.
- 7.12 It is unlikely a similar site could be identified for them in the Borough; especially one which is rail connected. So the Core Strategy caveats which protect existing local quality occupiers and re-accommodating them before upgrading their site is unlikely to apply.
- 7.13 Similarly it may be difficult to re-locate the waste / recycling facility on the smaller Cemetery Road Site (98). So we treat these two areas as retained local quality sites.
- 7.14 Site 100 (Station Road West), though it includes the large and internationally-orientated ZF Lemforder Works, is probably too far removed from the core of the area and the access improvements to be classed potential high quality; but will continue to provide important local quality space - even more vital as the rest of the area is upgraded and existing businesses relocate. The same is also potentially true of site 85, Willenhall Rd (Queen St) although for this site the arguments for high or local quality are finely balanced.
- 7.15 Within the wider area there are a few sites where we consider the employment space could be released without harming the integrity of the site. Site 86 Willenhall Rd (Castle St) adjoins existing residential. It consists mainly of derelict premises and a waste recycling outfit. Its loss from the employment land supply is unlikely to be detrimental and may improve the area overall. The development parcels are likely to be too small for new warehouse development which is in market demand in this location.
- 7.16 Sites 101, 102, 122, 124, and 125 are all isolated sites in the Darlaston area which are unlikely to be viable for redevelopment if they fall vacant. Site 102 (Franchise Street) is largest of these. It is occupied by a variety of industrial and service uses, most prominently Corus, and viable at the moment. But access is from a variety of surrounding roads which are residential in nature. We know that less local quality land is needed in Walsall and we cannot protect all the existing stock. This is one of the

weaker local quality sites and one the Council may, in the long term, no longer wish to protect it.

- 7.17 A similar argument also applies to the collection of sites further west; where residential has already taken the more marginal sites.

Bentley Mill Close - 91 (5ha)

Figure 7.3 - Bentley Mill Close area 91

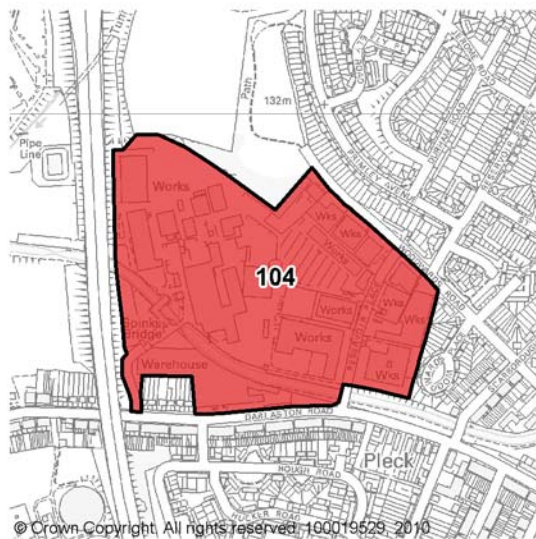


Recommendation: Retain area 91 as Potential High Quality

- 7.18 This is a relatively small employment area which benefits from good strategic access from the A454 Black Country Road. Internal access and servicing arrangements (via Bentley Mill Way, Bentley Mill Close and Longmore Avenue) are also adequate. The area is separated from the larger Darlaston employment area by a string of retail and leisure units.
- 7.19 At the moment the area comprises a variety of small to medium industrial/warehousing units of moderate to good quality, such as Stanley Horne Nuts and Bolts and Dapp Hydraulic, most of which seem to be occupied, and haulage vehicle storage uses. There are no obvious operational constraints affecting the site, which is generally fit for purpose.
- 7.20 Because of the area's high level of accessibility and proximity to the Motorway Junction this should be considered a potential high quality employment site. There is some evidence of renewal and replacement with the area accommodating some new units (as at Dapp Hydraulic on Bentley Mill Close).

Former IMI Copper Works - 104 (16.1ha)

Figure 7.4 - Former IMI Copper Works site 104



Recommendation: Retain as Potential High Quality

The Employment Area Today

- 7.21 This area includes the former Copper Works is the largest vacant site in Walsall; it is also one of the most problematic. The site also now includes a disused part of the Alumwell school playing fields. There are also a few industrial units adjoining the site to the east and south. The site forms part of the Black Country Enterprise Zone.
- 7.22 The area is visible from the Motorway but not immediately accessible; being constrained by the local road network. The ground is heavily contaminated and is leaching into groundwater. The site itself is bisected by the canal.
- 7.23 The IMI site was purchased by AWM in 2008 who, working with the Walsall Regeneration Company, intended to rapidly remediate the site and present it to the market as a readily available development opportunity sometime in 2011. It was hoped that the site would appeal to Motorway linked distribution companies.
- 7.24 However this timetable has been put in question because of funding constraints and market fragility. The Regeneration Company has also closed. The IMI site has transferred from AWM to the Homes and Communities agency as part of AWM's Stewardship agreement, allowing negotiations to continue with the prospective purchaser.

The Future

- 7.25 The area is identified in the Black Country evidence base as a potential high quality development site. If the development constraints can be overcome there is no reason to question this conclusion.
- 7.26 The access package is required to improve accessibility within the area and increase the area's market attractiveness, so improving values and making development more

viable. On site works are required to solve the ground conditions problems in relation to IMI .

- 7.27 Other public funding (Regional Growth Fund 2) remains in question. The business case for developing the IMI site is in preparation by the site's prospective purchaser with public sector support. In addition, the site is the key to the success of the Black Country Enterprise Zone in Darlaston/Pleck.

Rear of the Globe Public House & Boxpool Site - 105 (3.3ha) & 109 (1.7ha)

Figure 7.5 - Rear of the Globe Public House (105) & Boxpool Site (109)

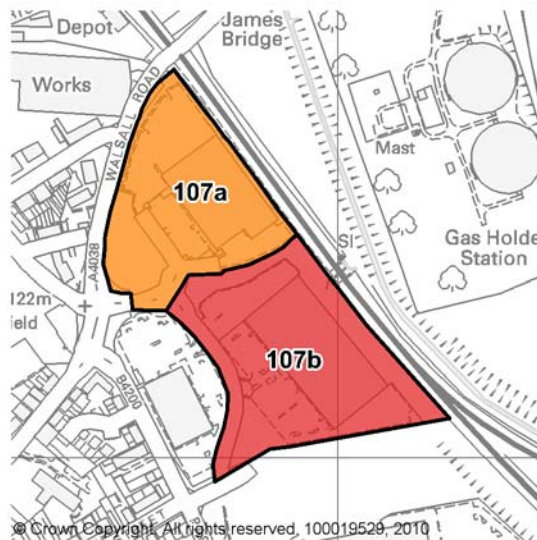


Recommendation: Retain sites 105 & 109 as Potential High Quality

- 7.28 These sites are very close to IMI. Rear of Globe indeed has the same severe ground problems. They should both be suitable for high quality development. Access improvements are planned to Bentley Mill Way.
- 7.29 The site to the rear of the Globe site has previously had planning permission of employment units although this has recently lapsed. The Boxpool site has had its site level raised to facilitate future development (removing the risk of flooding) and could now be considered a readily available site. It has a permission to accommodate Darlaston Builders Merchants.
- 7.30 Both sites should continue to be protected for employment use.

James Bridge (West of Railway Line) - 107a (2.5ha) & 107b (3.3ha)

Figure 7.6 - James Bridge (West of Railway Line) sites 107a & 107b

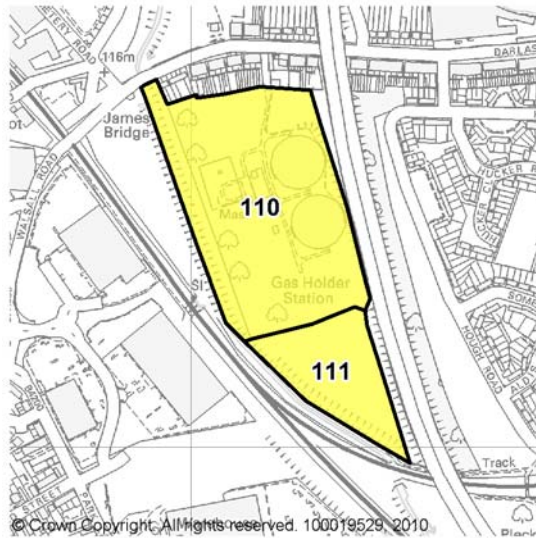


Recommendation: **Retain sites 107b as Potential High Quality**
 Retain site 107a as Existing High Quality

- 7.31 This area used to be part of the Triplex Lloyd steelworks that stretched as far as M6 Junction 9 in Sandwell. Over the years, retailing and leisure uses have proliferated in this area. In the Walsall part, there is a bingo club and IKEA (and a recent warehouse extension to the IKEA store).
- 7.32 But a large amount of employment land remains. The larger part of this area, site 107, has been developed for two high quality units for Aqualux and Blakemore. Blakemore is high quality but Aqualux does not appear to meet the classification set out in the Core Strategy - although they occupy a good quality unit. There is also a very small parcel of undeveloped land in area 107a. Although not far from the access contained sites including IMI and the Gas Holders these parcels benefit from access through Wednesbury. They illustrate the fact that when local conditions are right these types of sites can successfully be developed as high quality sites.

James Bridge Gas Holders and land to rear - 110 (6.5ha) & 111 (1.9ha)

Figure 7.7 - James Bridge Gas Holders and land to rear sites 110 & 111



Recommendation: Retain sites 110 & 111 as Local Quality

The Employment Area Today

- 7.33 The Gasholder site together with the parcel to the south is potentially a large development site. At the moment the gas holders are still present on site although no longer operational.
- 7.34 The site to the south is currently constrained by the gas holders, with very difficult access.

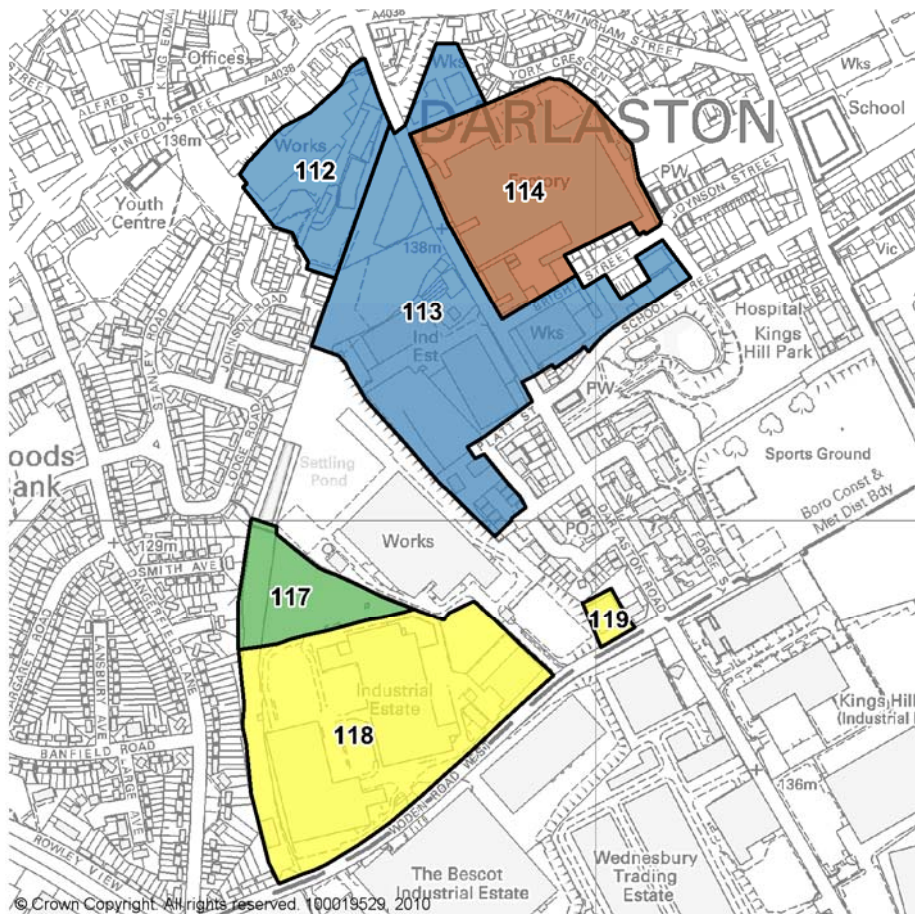
The Future

- 7.35 We understand that gas holders are to be removed, opening up the area for development. But this is dependent on the wider area access improvements; as with IMI this area it is visible from the Motorway but not easily accessible to it - which offsets its profile.
- 7.36 In an area where the Strategy is promoting high quality employment uses these two sites combined could contribute. So they should be protected for employment uses.
- 7.37 At the moment we consider them local quality. Both sites have poor access from Darlston Road which would be unsuitable for intensive traffic associated with a high quality industrial or distribution use. They also lack prominence from the local road network.
- 7.38 These constraints to high quality development could be overcome as part of the development proposal; access to the local road network from the gas holder part of the site could be improved if some of the neighbouring residential units are brought into the scheme. Development of the southern parcel is probably contingent on opening through the gas holders; otherwise the site can only realistically be used for low intensity storage uses.

- 7.39 So as a minimum they should be retained for local quality; optimistically high quality development is a possibility.

South Darlaston - 112 (2.1ha), 113 (7.2ha), 114 (4.3ha), 117 (1.4ha), 118 (6.6ha) & 119 (0.21ha)

Figure 7.8 - South Darlaston sites 112 to 119



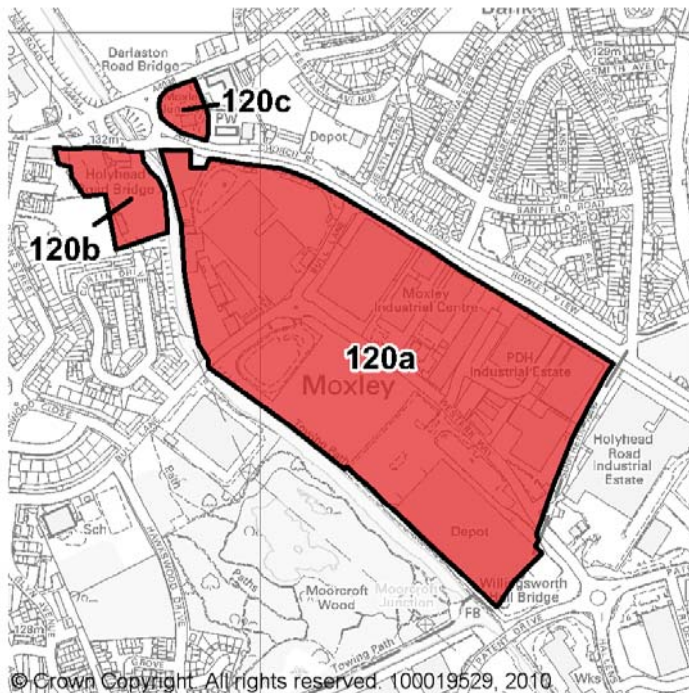
Recommendation: Retain area 118 & site 119 as Local Quality
Consider areas 112 & 113 for release
Release site 117
Site 114 -has planning permission for housing

- 7.40 This area, stretching from Darlaston town centre to the southern boundary of the Borough, was once a well established employment area; forming an extension to the large estates in Wednesbury.
- 7.41 But the integrity of the area has now been lost. Residential building has been completed or permitted on many plots (including the TRW lying between 113 and 117) which runs through the middle of the area. The development site at 117 (Eldon Wall, UDP allocated E6) is constrained by the housing on adjacent sites and unlikely to be developed for employment. But there are still some active employment uses

- 7.42 We would advocate the retention of the southern part of the area; where the sites face the established employment uses in Wednesbury and can be easily accessed from the Black Country New Road (Site 118 and the very small site 119, Abbachem). But the future of the Darlaston Road parts of the area are less certain (113 & 112). As with the nearby site 102, they may be suitable for release towards the end of the plan period.

Western Way - Moxley, Holyhead Road Bridge & Moxley Junction -120a (22ha), 120b (1.4ha) & 120c (0.4ha)

Figure 7.9 - Western Way - Moxley area, Holyhead Road Bridge & Moxley Junction areas 120a, 120b & 120c

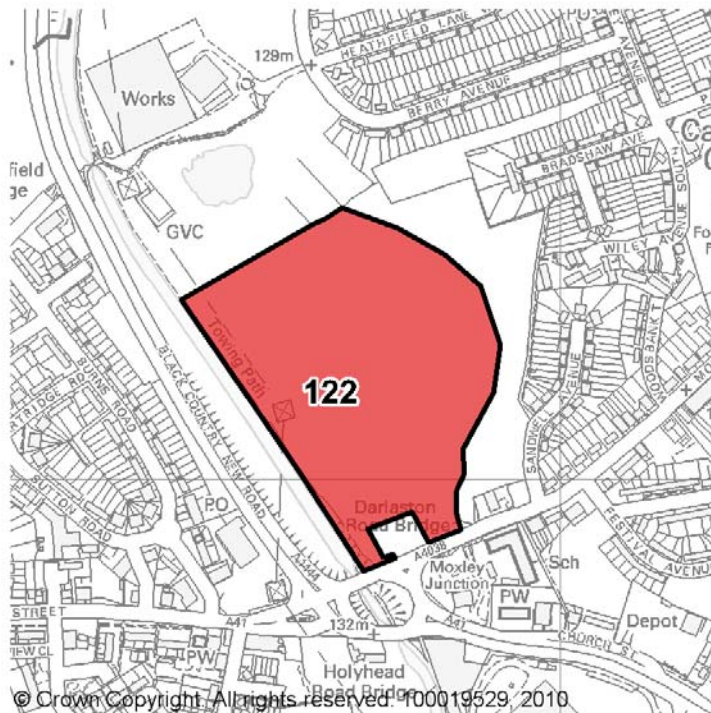


Recommendation: Retain areas 120a, 120b & 120c as Potential High Quality

- 7.43 A little further west of the South Darlaston Sites, fronting the Black Country New Road, is a well established employment area at Western Way (Also known as Holyhead).
- 7.44 This is generally a mixed but potential high quality employment area comprising various storage, distribution, industrial and manufacturing uses (including Kepston, an advanced manufacturing business serving the autosport, defence and aerospace industries; the Metal Centre, an industrial distribution business, and Credential, a tyre recycling centre).
- 7.45 The site appears to be mostly occupied, and with a few exceptions, the majority of units are relatively new and appear to be well maintained. The northern end of the site is the former Wesson Ductile works on Bull Lane, which was cleared in April 2011. This site provides a good development opportunity for high quality employment and we understand there is already development interest..
- 7.46 Access via Holyhead Road/Church Street seems to be good and there do not appear to be any operational constraints.

Former Moxley Tip - 122 (8ha)

Figure 7.11 - Former Moxley Tip area 122



Recommendation: Retain site 122 as Potential High Quality

- 7.53 The former Moxley Tip site (122b) is a large (8ha) site well positioned just off the Black Country Route with potential direct access from the Moxley Junction roundabout.
- 7.54 Despite its good location, there is concern over the ground condition due to previous uncontrolled refuse tipping. There are obvious remediation issues, and the former APUK site immediately to the north already has planning permission for housing.
- 7.55 However ground condition problems are almost endemic across the whole Black Country; if every site with uncertain ground conditions was released from the employment land supply there would be very little development land left. Ground conditions aside the site's accessibility makes it one of better sites in Walsall for new development. As such it should be retained for employment use and the Council and its partners should work to remediate it and overcome any abnormal development costs. We understand that there is current interest in developing the site for industry.

APPENDIX

Walsall Borough Employment Areas Plan

Note: This is a very large file intended to be viewed electronically (PDF) or printed at A1 Scale.