

THE COLLECTIVE OF PARISH COUNCILS AGAINST THE WEST MIDLANDS INTERCHANGE DEADLINE 8 REPRESENTATIONS

The Collective believes that there are still questions to be answered regarding the very special circumstances required to release 300 hectares of much valued Green Belt land in South Staffordshire for a Strategic Rail Freight Interchange to serve the West Midlands.

The Collective is of the view that the applicant is seeking to acquire more land than is necessary to serve this need.

The applicants state that their Dashboard is relatively simple, however, the appraisal which sits behind it is complex. The Collective agrees; it is impossible to challenge the analysis of viability and costs without access to the confidential commercial information required. The Collective is left to accept the Savills report on trust and do not have the opportunity to challenge the information with an independent report in order to protect much valued Green Belt. The release of Green Belt land is a high hurdle to overcome.

Viability

The Savills' Report states that land values in the West Midlands are very substantially lower than those achieved in the M1 Corridor, do they mean that land costs are lower thus making the acquisition cheaper or are they inferring that after 17 years of development the SRFI will not achieve the same values as other SRFIs along the M1 Corridor? Should the latter be the case then it has to be accepted that this is speculative and The Collective does not believe that a larger scale of development is necessary to recoup their fixed early costs. It should also be noted here that the DIRFT is in the M1 Corridor and that it was the subject of three separate planning applications; why is this not relevant to WMI where applications could be staged as the development progresses?

The NPS does not set a limit on the scale of the SRFI development but many of the other permitted SRFIS have not been in Green Belt; the NPS is clear that SRFI capacity needs to match the demands of the market (2.58) and the logistics sector (2.47). However, as stated in previous representations The Collective believes that Hinckley is an alternative site, not in Green Belt, which will satisfy soem of those needs.

Inglewood Land

The Inglewood Land is to the extreme east of the proposed site and crosses the defensible boundary of Vicarage Road.

The applicants state that the scheme would not be viable without the Inglewood Land. Unfortunately, as stated previously The Collective is unable to dispute this statement without seeing fully transparent, withheld, confidential information to support their statement.

The applicants want to bring this land forward in the early phases of development, thus removing the risk which is highest at the outset. However, in The Collective's view this will result in considerable risk of releasing a Green Belt site for speculative, stand alone, warehouses served only by road with the uncertainty of the Rail Hub being in place for another six years. If the Rail Hub is developed it should be noted that The Inglewood Site will not have rail sidings and would have to rely on Tug Masters crossing Vicarage Road in order to access The Rail Hub some distance away.

21st August 2019