

Wigan Council Brief – February 2010



Introduction

Wigan Council requires a market appraisal of employment sites proposed in the Council's Core Strategy Preferred Options. The appraisal will inform the Core Strategy and form a key element of the robust and credible evidence base needed to support it. The Core Strategy is the key development plan document within the Local Development Framework (LDF). The Council consulted on its Preferred Options in August 2009 and is currently working towards a publication version of the Core Strategy. This is scheduled for September 2010 prior to Examination in Public and adoption in 2011. The Core Strategy will have a plan period of 2011-2026.

Broadly, the Council wishes the study to establish:

- The economic prospects of the employment sites proposed in the LDF Core Strategy;
- The employment types and sectors that the sites are likely to attract;
- The issues that the Council needs to concentrate on to enable the sites to be delivered;
- When the sites are realistically going to be delivered e.g. short, medium or long term; and
- To what extent ownership constrains the deliverability of the sites.

Sites to be included

The specific employment sites to be included within the study are:

- The Bell, Lamberhead Green
- Landgate, Bryn
- Stubshaw Cross, Ashton
- Extension to Chanters Industrial Estate, Atherton
- Chaddock Lane, Astley
- Pemberton Park
- Westwood

Five of these employment sites are within key strategic sites proposed in the Core Strategy Preferred Options. Pemberton Park and Westwood are employment applications allocated in the current Unitary Development Plan that are proposed to be carried forward as allocations in the Core Strategy. These two sites are familiar to B2B International having been included in previous studies relating to the Wigan Economic Development Zone.

A description of the sites and the key issues that exist are set out below.

The Bell, Lamberhead Green

- 62 hectare site located within the Green Belt adjacent to the M6 motorway at Orrell.
- Approximately 35 hectares (60%) proposed for employment uses; the remainder as open space
- Office development to the south of the site close to A577 and high frequency bus services between Wigan and Skelmersdale
- Factory and warehousing units to the rear alongside the motorway
- High visual presence from the M6
- Immediate access to Junction 26 of the M6 and Junction 1 of the M58
- New road infrastructure providing a 'front door' and direct motorway access to both Heinz and Martland Park
- Local labour force

With a high visual presence and immediate access to/from the strategic road network, the Council envisages that this site has the potential to transform Wigan's economy, boost the borough's image as a business location and consequently help to uplift the borough's existing employment areas. However, as the site is located within the Green Belt, the Council will need a strong case to bring it forward. There is also significant local opposition to the proposed site. The scheme does have business support from businesses located at Martland Park.

Additional questions include:

- Would this site help to radically modernise Wigan, and the perception of Wigan, as a business location?
- To what extent could the Bell attract sectors to Wigan that would not otherwise come, and what would those sectors best be in order to maximise the potential of the site?
- How attractive is this site in relation to other sites, or potential sites, in the sub-region e.g. Daresbury, Kingswood, Birchwood, Cutacre, and Preston East?
- How significant is the M58 to the attractiveness of the site (access to Liverpool John Lennon Airport, Liverpool Docks and port)?
- Would development at The Bell stimulate or inhibit business investment at Westwood and Pemberton Park?
- Would it boost Martland Park in the way envisaged?
- Is there a better site in and around Wigan?
- Are the types of employment proposed achievable?

Landgate, Bryn

- 45 hectare site;
- Strategic location only 2 minutes drive to M6 at Junction 25 (access to/from south only);
- Offices to the front along the A49 Wigan Road and factory/warehousing uses to the rear;

- Predominantly greenfield farmland, with fishing pond and trees in the north eastern corner;
- The majority of the site is within a landfill gas consultation zone.

Stubshaw Cross, Ashton

- 33 hectare greenfield site;
- Proposed for mixed employment uses, predominantly industry and warehousing, as an extension to the South Lancashire Industrial Estate;
- Within 2 miles of 3 motorway junctions on the M6. However, heavy traffic congestion in Ashton town centre and at Bryn Cross currently impedes access. Together with Landgate, development of the site will deliver new highway infrastructure providing direct access from Bolton Road to Junction 25. The route has two potential northern sections – the Ashton Northern Bypass or the Bryn Cross diversion.
- Junction 25 has access to/from the south only.

Additional questions:

- To what extent will the restricted motorway access constrain business investment?
- Will the Bryn Cross diversion be adequate to make the site attractive?

Extension to Chanters Industrial Estate, Atherton

- Approximately 12 hectares;
- Proposed for low amenity employment uses as an extension to the existing Chanters Industrial Estate;
- Predominantly in Council ownership;
- Landfill gas site;
- Contamination issues and unstable land associated with tipping and landfilling.

Additional questions:

- Is there demand for low amenity employment uses in the Borough and in this part of the Borough in particular?
- Is this a suitable location for them?

Chaddock Lane, Astley

- 17.6 hectares
- Greenfield site with outline consent for employment uses
- Strategic location off the A580 East Lancashire Road with easy access to the Regional Centre and the strategic road network (M60, M62, M61 and M6).
- Single ownership – Peel Holdings
- Leasehold

Westwood

- 44 hectare site less than a mile from Wigan town centre and less than two miles from Junction 25 of the M6 motorway.
- One of the largest remaining brownfield sites in the borough
- The majority of the site has outline planning permission for B1 uses.
- Major infrastructure works have been undertaken in recent years providing a greatly enhanced site entrance.
- A planning application has been approved for a road scheme that would link the site by dual carriageway to the M6 at Junction 25 – only part funded.
- With the road and dual carriageway access to the motorway, the site is 100% developable.
- Without the road, the site has constrained access and only partly developable.

Additional questions:

- What could Westwood deliver with the road scheme?
- What could Westwood deliver without the road scheme?
- What sectors/type of development could be delivered in each scenario?
- Would development at The Bell stimulate or hinder the delivery of Westwood?
- What potential has the site for comprehensive redevelopment? Or should the site be developed incrementally?

Pemberton Park

- 20 hectare site just over a mile from Junction 25 of the M6
- Adjacent to Pemberton railway station
- Well placed for office and light industrial development
- Application for a mix of residential, employment uses and commercial development approved subject to s106 agreements
- Land remediation required

Additional questions:

- Would business investment at Pemberton Park be hindered or stimulated by development at The Bell?

Phase One

The research requirements of the study are:

- To establish the views of developers and agents on:
 - The economic prospects of the employment sites proposed in the Core Strategy;

- The sectors that the sites are likely to attract;
- What the Council will need to do to bring the sites forward effectively;
- When the sites are realistically going to come forward within the plan period.
- What extent ownership constrains the deliverability of the sites;
- The additional questions raised within the site portraits.

Around 30 developers and agents should be consulted as part of the study; these should be active in the North of England and should not include landowners of the sites.

Methodology

The methodology for this will involve:

- Telephone surveys – detailed interviews with developers and agents
- The setting up of an online forum over at least a two day period. This will enable:
 - Interaction between the researcher and the agents and developers
 - Multiple dialogue and interaction between the agents and developers
 - Access to maps, aerial photographs and background documents relating to the sites;
 - Users to access the site throughout the day to answer questions when convenient
 - Active participation by at least 30 agents and developers.

Phase Two

The research requirements are:

- Verification of attitudes towards the sites. Is there a consensus view or have attitudes altered amongst developers and agents?
- Analysis of the findings from Phase One.

Timescale

- 22nd March – Submission of draft report
- 25th March – Meeting
- 31st March – Production of final report

The project must be completed by week ending 31 March 2010. This includes production of the final report and it to be signed off by Head of Planning and Transport Strategy.

Contract Award process information

Proposals should include details of the work programme to achieve the tasks set out above. The programme should identify stages and identify reporting proposals.

It is the contractor's responsibility to collect any district data and specify requirements to districts. The Client Group will assist in this task. The contractor in the tender submission should identify any constraints and difficulties in the whole work programme.

Duration, staff effort and timetable

The work will commence 22 February 2010. All work must be completed and outputs provided in the required formats by 31 March 2010. The contractor should provide a timetable including the allocation of staff resources, phased deliverables, any consultations and Client Group meetings.

Cost

The bidder must submit a detailed cost summary as well as relevant stage and total project costing including costs of inception and project update meetings.

Price variations over the period of the contract must be advised. The submission must state the factor and reasons for any variation.

If additional costs are associated with the implementation of the project, costs should be spread over the period of the contract and incorporated in the price of each unit of output.

Payments

Bidders must indicate whether they have the capacity to accept electronic funds transfer as a facility for contractual payments.

Payment will be made on satisfactory completion of the project which will be taken to be approval by the Council of the final report. This is expected to take place by 31st March 2010.

General conditions

Submissions should be made in accordance with the requirements of this brief including the delivery of a draft final report by the specified deadline. The Council will confirm in writing if the bid submission has been accepted.

Conflicts of interest

Declaration

Bidders must declare to the Council any matter or issue which is, may be perceived to be or may lead to, a conflict of interest regarding their proposal to undertake the work. If any conflict of interest is identified the contractor must complete a declaration of interest form.

Confidentiality

Ownership of proposals

Except for accepted prices, all supporting information provided by both successful and unsuccessful bidders will be considered as having been submitted in confidence. All proposals will become and remain the property of the Council.

Lobbying of tenders

Bidders must not seek to exert influence on the outcome of the assessment process by lobbying, directly or indirectly, staff or Elected members of Wigan Council, or other council in Greater Manchester, or staff of AGMA, or members of Parliament for Greater Manchester will be grounds for disqualification of the bidder from further consideration.

Contract Documents

Any resulting Contract will consist of the Contract Particulars (to be completed), the Standard Terms and Conditions and any Special Terms and Conditions (as detailed in this document) and will be subject to English law.

This procurement complies with the restricted procedure under EU procurement rules and the Council cannot enter into any negotiations on the Tender or Contract.