

Bath and North East Somerset – Draft Core Strategy – Response to Inspector's main matters and questions on behalf of St James's Investments and Tesco UK Stores Limited

Our clients own the former Bath Press site located in the Lower Bristol Road, which is currently the subject of a mixed-use planning application proposing employment, retail, community and residential uses.

The Bath Press site covers over three hectares of land and has remained largely redundant since the closure of the former press business in 2007. With its prominent location within the river corridor and close proximity to the city centre, this brownfield site offers significant potential to contribute towards the city's wider need for convenience retail, large space employment and residential provision. The redevelopment of this site will also assist the council in their regeneration aims for the Western Riverside area and specifically the removal of the Windsor Gas Holder Station.

Whilst it is acknowledged that the Core Strategy is a strategic document that does not address individual sites, it is clear that the regeneration of the Bath Spatial Area during the life of the Core Strategy is heavily reliant on the removal of the Windsor Gas Holder Station during the early part of the plan period. Without its removal the Health and Safety Executive have stated their continued objection to most forms of development within a 300m radius of the gas holder site (plan attached). This stance would effectively sterilize a large swathe of land within the Bath Spatial Area from being redeveloped, including most of the Western Riverside.

Our clients have been working with the lead regeneration developer of Bath Western Riverside, Crest Nicholson, as well as the utility contractor, Wales and West to formulate detailed proposals for the decommissioning and replacement of the remaining gas storage holder. We contend that this proposal offers the only realistic strategy, in terms of deliverability and viability, to overcome the Health and Safety Executive's concerns and therefore release this land to deliver the council's aims for the Bath Spatial Area. Without this proposal we consider that the gas holder site is likely to remain in-situ for the foreseeable future and the anticipated regeneration of this land set out in the Core Strategy will not come forward.

We elaborate on these points in direct responses to the Inspector's questions below:

From the representations on the proposed changes it is clear that its removal is necessary for the planned scale of development to be achieved. Do the proposed changes appropriately reflect the constraint?

Without the removal of the gas holder station, the Health and Safety Executive objection would remain, which would effectively prevent much of the planned development coming forward at Bath Western Riverside. This would then undermine a significant element of the Core Strategy and raise questions over its deliverability.

Is there an agreed programme to secure its removal? What are the views of the owner/operator of the facility and is there a practical/technically deliverable solution for its removal? What is the likely timescale?

Our clients have been working with the adjacent landowners and Wales and West and have now entered into a developer's agreement to secure the removal of the gas holder station. This has been made subject to receiving planning permission for the current application on the Bath Press site. The total works package would take three years to complete and would need to be undertaken in full before redevelopment works could take place.

TP8 (paragraph 17) suggests a cost of about £11m. How will this be funded? What are the views of the proposed developer of this area on securing its removal? If a substantial contribution required from public funds, is such a contribution realistic?

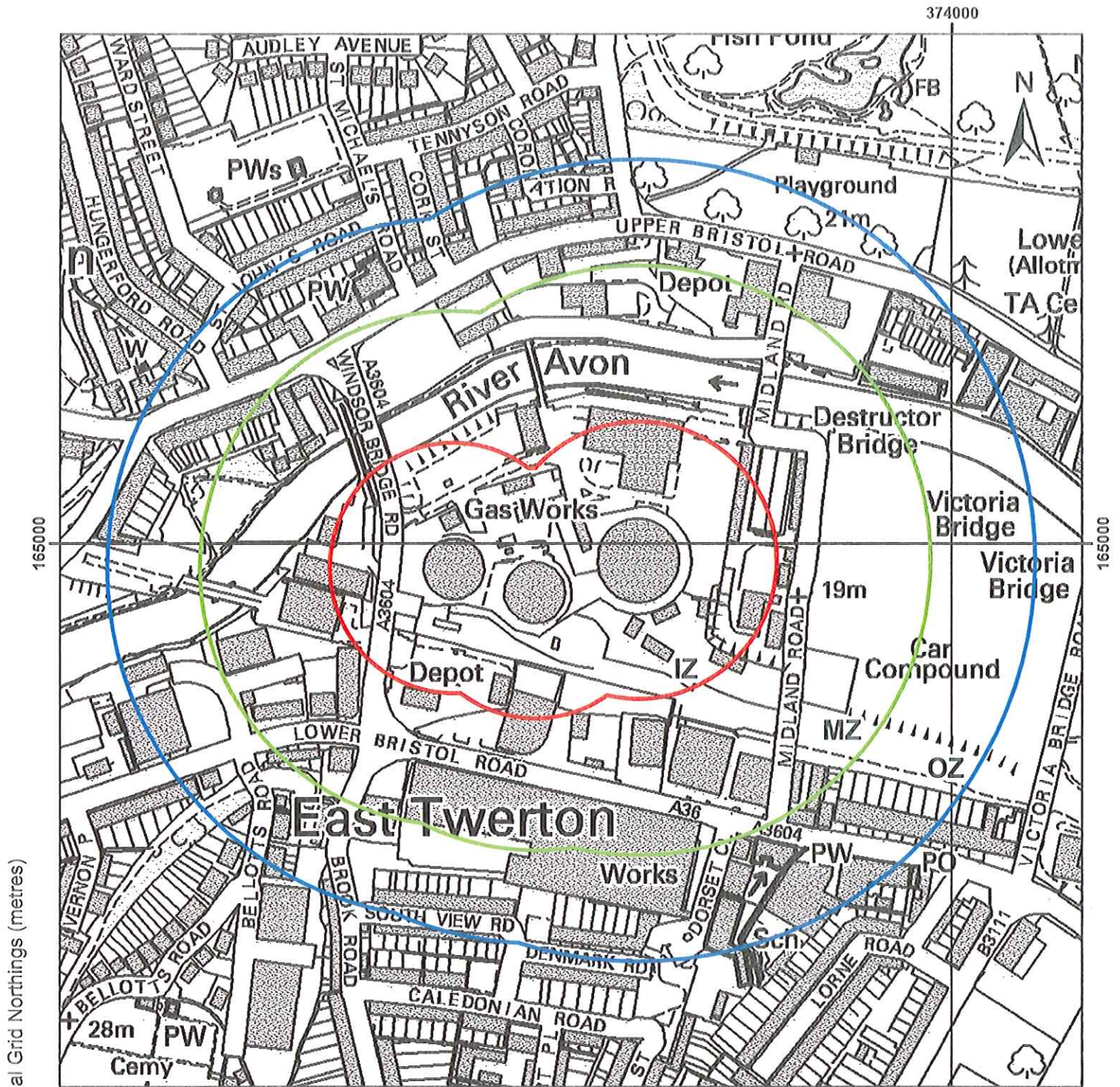
Our clients have agreed to contribute towards the cost of the gas holder removal, which together with the agreed funding from the other landowners would cover the works. We do not believe that these costs would be met by public funds in the absence of our client's contribution.

What scale of development could be delivered if it were to remain operational?

Given the extent of the Health and Safety Executive's safety zone, the achievable scale of development if the gas holder station were to remain would be dramatically reduced. While we do not consider it our role to provide a precise estimate of the development achievable in this scenario, we do consider that this would significantly undermine the objectives of the Core Strategy.

In the light of all the above, does any need to remove the Gas Holder undermine confidence in delivery of Bath Western Riverside?

We consider that the removal of the Windsor Gas Holder Station during the early part of the plan period is essential to the wider delivery of the Bath Spatial Area. Our clients have prepared a detailed proposal to achieve this aim, which we consider to be the only feasible approach to address this issue. Without this offer, we consider that the necessary works would be unviable and the gas holder station would be likely to remain. In this scenario the council's aspirations for this area would not be delivered and a major component of the Core Strategy would be in doubt.



National Grid Northings (metres)

National Grid Eastings (metres)

HSE Consultation Zones

Transco, Windsor House Holder Station, Windsor Bridge Road, Bath, BA2 3AU

HSE HID CI5 Ref: H1596
Grid Ref: ST 737 749

Prepared - September 2006
This map supersedes all previous or undated maps

- IZ = Inner Zone
- MZ = Middle Zone
- OZ = Outer Zone

