

*Borough of Oadby & Wigston*



# Oadby & Wigston

## Employment Sites Supplementary Planning Document

September 2011



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## Executive Summary

- i) This Employment Sites Supplementary Planning Document has been prepared in order to supplement policies in relation to Identified Employment Areas and other employment land contained in the saved Oadby and Wigston Local Plan (1999) and adopted Oadby and Wigston Core Strategy (2010).
- ii) For some time now, the Borough's portfolio of identified employment land has been under increasing pressure from applications for non-traditional employment uses. This has been of concern to the Borough Council due to the limited amount of employment land available and its importance to the strength of the local economy.
- iii) In response to this concern, this Employment Sites Supplementary Planning Document has been prepared to help protect the most valuable employment land and to provide advice to prospective applicants and the general public on the criteria against which proposals for the alternative use of business, industrial and warehouse land will be considered and/or acceptable in different employment areas.
- iv) Chapters 1 to 4 of the document contain an outline of the wider policy background and evidence relevant to the development and release of employment land in the Borough, a depiction of the current local economic context. The aim is to present the logic as to the need for additional guidance to help determine applications for proposals that are on or affect employment land. The Supplementary Planning Document takes forward some of the recommendations of the Employment Sites and Brownfield Land Study (2010), for example, the recommendation to categorise the Identified Employment Sites into a hierarchy to demonstrate which sites are important to sustain and which may accommodate an element of flexibility.
- v) Chapter 5 sets out the five policy approaches the Council will consider and necessary supporting evidence required when determining applications that affect the different types of employment land in the Borough. Each of the policy approaches are outlined as follows.
- vi) Supplementary Employment Policy 1 – Identified Employment Sites Hierarchy sets out how the currently designated Identified Employment Areas (as defined in saved Local Plan policy Employment Proposal 1) fall within the three hierarchical categories of Core, Base and Release. The aim of implementing the hierarchy recommendations is to ensure that the loss of the best and most sustainable of the Borough's employment land is resisted plus provide greater clarity to developers, land owners and local businesses.
- vii) Supplementary Employment Policy 2 – Core Identified Employment Sites, Supplementary Employment Policy 3 – Base Identified Employment Sites and Supplementary Employment Policy 4 – Release Identified Employment Sites provide the policy detail relevant to each category of the hierarchy.

- viii) Supplementary Employment Policy 2 covers Core sites, where there will be a presumption against re-development or re-use of sites/premises for non-B uses. This is because the Core sites are considered to be crucial to sustaining the local economy as they provide concentrations of economic activity and of good overall quality and are deemed most sustainable in the long term in terms of scale and location.
- ix) Supplementary Employment Policy 3 relates to Base sites. The sites that fall within this category are still considered as vital to the functioning of the local economic market, it is accepted that a more flexible approach to allowing non-B uses may be appropriate. However, it is still desirable to retain equivalent economic activity on these sites; therefore Supplementary Employment Policy 3 seeks to effectively manage such change.
- x) Supplementary Employment Policy 4 deals with those sites that the Employment Sites and Brownfield Land Study (2010) suggests are removed from the Borough's portfolio of employment land because they are no longer viable for employment generating uses.
- xi) Supplementary Employment Policy 5 - Other Employment Land and Premises provides guidance in relation to other land and premises that are currently used for employment uses but have not been designated as Identified Employment Areas in the saved Local Plan. Whether to designate some of these sites as Identified Employment Sites will need to be decided through production of the Allocations Development Plan Document. However, Supplementary Employment Policy 5 seeks to retain the most viable and sustainable locations prior to production of the Allocations Development Plan Document.

## Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this Employment Land Supplementary Planning Document is to support the Council's planning policies in relation to Identified Employment Sites and other employment land within the Borough of Oadby and Wigston. It sets out the circumstances in which the release of employment land and premises for alternative uses will be considered. Once adopted, the Employment Land Supplementary Planning Document will be used as a material consideration in the determination of applications for planning permission.
- 1.2 This Supplementary Planning Document builds upon the Borough Council's economic development objectives contained in the adopted Core Strategy (October 2010), the saved Oadby and Wigston Local Plan (1999), the Oadby and Wigston Sustainable Community Strategy (2008), The Oadby and Wigston Economic Development Strategy (2009) and the Oadby and Wigston Employment Sites and Brownfield Land Study (September 2010). The Borough Council is committed to achieving these objectives and seeks to actively encourage new employment generating development within the Borough coupled with retaining a suitable supply of developable land for employment purposes and creating sustainable job opportunities for local people.
- 1.3 This Supplementary Planning Document expands on the following saved Local Plan policies
  - Employment Proposal 1 (Identified Employment Areas),
  - Employment Proposal 4 (Impact of Development on Adjoining Areas),
  - Employment Proposal 6 (Land to South of Magna Road),
  - Employment Proposal 9 (Business Start Up Units),
  - Employment Proposal 10 (Employment Uses out side of Identified Employment Areas) and;
  - Employment Proposal 11 (Employment Land adjacent to Bennett Way and Station Street).
- 1.4 In addition, this Supplementary Planning Document supplements the adopted Core Strategy, in particular Core Strategy Policy 1 Spatial Strategy for Development in the Borough of Oadby and Wigston. The document has also been drafted in accordance with national planning policy and guidance which is referred to as necessary throughout this document.
- 1.5 For the purposes of this Supplementary Planning Document, employment uses are defined as those that fall within Use Class B1 – Business, Use Class B2 – General Industrial and Use Class B8 Storage and Distribution plus 'Sui-Generis' which are unclassified commercial uses that have similar characteristics to industry or storage, for example a scrap yard or motor vehicle breakers yard, as per the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 as amended.

- 1.6 Identified Employment Areas are defined in the saved Local Plan Employment Proposal 1 and are illustrated on the adopted Proposals Map.. Proposals that relate to unidentified employment sites or premises should refer to saved Local Plan Employment Proposal 10. The Borough's Employment Sites and Brownfield Land Study (2010) looked at both the Identified Employment Areas and also other sites the Council identified as currently being in employment use. For information the Identified Employment Areas and other employment sites considered in the study are listed in Table 1 below The scope of this Supplementary Planning Document therefore extends to all sites and premises that are currently in, or were last in employment use (where vacant) and sites proposed for new employment use.

**Table 1 – List of Identified Employment Areas and other employment sites**

<b>Identified Employment Areas</b>	<b>Other Employment Sites</b>
Magna Road, South Wigston	Highfield Drive, Wigston
Tigers Close, South Wigston	Canal Street, South Wigston
St Thomas Road, South Wigston	Park Road, South Wigston
North Street, Wigston	Station Street, South Wigston
Chartwell Drive, Wigston	Kirkdale Road, South Wigston
Gloucester Crescent, South Wigston	
Cross Street/Regent Street, Oadby	
Kenilworth Drive, Oadby	
Railway Triangle, South Wigston	

- 1.7 Other non-B Class uses can provide employment and wider regeneration benefits when situated on Identified Employment Areas such as fitness studios and crèches. Such uses reflect the definition of economic development as set out in paragraph 4 of Planning Policy Statement 4 Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth i.e.: '*economic development includes development within B Use Classes, public and community uses and main town centre uses*'. The appropriateness of such uses on Identified Employment Areas would be dependent upon compliance with other relevant policy and there being no demonstrable harm to adjacent uses, such as, other businesses or residential areas or in the case of retail, the Borough's town and district centres. The Borough's policy on consideration of such proposals is contained in Chapter 5 of this document.
- 1.8 Roger Tym and Partners were appointed by Oadby and Wigston Borough Council to undertake an assessment of the Borough's employment and other brownfield land. The purpose of the study was to provide evidence to support the development of policies and proposals for the Local Development Framework, in particular this Supplementary Planning Document, the forthcoming Allocations Development Plan Document and the Employment and Enterprise Action Plan which is currently being prepared.

- 1.9 The study had three main aims
- To articulate the employment requirements stemming from the ‘top down’ sub-regional Employment Land Study (PACEC 2008) by ‘unpacking’ some of the figures and assumptions contained in that document;
  - To undertake a detailed assessment of the Borough’s employment sites to provide a ‘bottom up’ site assessment by using the Site Assessment Matrix developed by Roger Tym and Partners as a basis for developing an employment site hierarchy; and
  - To assimilate and fine tune the findings from the Site Assessment Matrix and illustrate what is working well, what is not and then assessing what capacity, if any, there was for change.
- 1.10 The Employment Sites Supplementary Planning Document will be subject to regular review and will be revised following adoption of the forthcoming Allocations Development Plan Document where this effects the designation of Identified Employment Sites.

## 2. Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 The key aims of this Supplementary Planning Document are:
- To enable employment generating development to take place in the best locations available to meet economic development objectives contained in the saved Local Plan policy, adopted Core Strategy and the Economic Development Strategy.
  - Ensure an appropriate supply of employment land on a hierarchy of Identified Employment Sites and other land to allow the Borough to respond and adapt to changing employment and economic development needs over time; and
- 2.2 From the above aims the following objectives have been derived:
- ***To provide guidance and clarity as to where the Borough Council will require Identified Employment Areas to be retained for employment (B Class) uses and where the Borough Council may allow some flexibility in terms of the release of sites or premises for other uses.***  
This will ensure that sites and individual premises that are vital to the sustainability of the local economy remain in employment use whilst allowing regeneration and other benefits to be realised through redevelopment and release of sites and premises that are unsuitable or unviable for continued employment use.

- ***To implement the recommended Identified Employment Sites Hierarchy as set out within the Employment Sites and Brownfield Land Study (2010)***

The implementation of the site hierarchy recommended in the Employment Sites and Brownfield Land Study (2010) allows the Borough Council to identify those sites that are considered to be of greatest importance in supporting economic growth within the Borough and therefore which sites need to be afforded the greatest protection from inappropriate uses whilst providing clarity to developers and the public as to where flexibility will and won't be permitted.

- ***Encourage the development of new high quality employment development to meet the needs of local firms and people.***

The availability of high quality employment premises is vital in attracting inward investment into the borough and retaining local businesses.

### **3. Planning Policy and Evidence Studies**

#### **National Planning Policy and Evidence**

##### **3.1 Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) – Delivering Sustainable Development**

PPS1 sets out the key principles in providing for sustainable development. It stipulates that planning authorities should ensure that suitable locations are made available for industrial, commercial, retail, public sector, tourism and leisure development so that the economy can prosper (paragraph 23).

##### **3.2 Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) - Housing**

PPS3 requires local planning authorities to consider a range of incentives or interventions that could help to ensure that previously developed (brownfield) land is developed. This should include considering whether sites that are currently allocated for industrial or commercial use could be more appropriately re-allocated for housing development (paragraph 44).

##### **3.3 Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4) – Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth**

PPS4 sets out the Government's planning policies for economic development and identifies an overarching objective of achieving sustainable economic growth.

##### **3.4 To help achieve sustainable economic growth, the Government's objectives for planning are to:**

- build prosperous communities by improving the economic performance of cities, towns, regions, sub-regions and local areas, both urban and rural;
- reduce the gap in economic growth rates between regions, promoting regeneration and tackling deprivation;

- deliver more sustainable patterns of development, reduce the need to travel, especially by car and respond to climate change;
  - promote the vitality and viability of town and other centres as important places for communities; and
  - raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas by promoting thriving, inclusive and locally distinctive rural communities whilst continuing to protect the open countryside for the benefit of all.
- 3.5 Established employment areas can contribute to a number of these Government objectives, for example by ensuring a range of sites and premises to support economic growth and by providing local employment opportunities close to areas of deprivation. Maintaining a range of established employment areas close to where people live can also help to reduce the need to travel.
- 3.6 Better Places to Work (CABE 2005)  
'Better Places to Work' provides advice on improving the quality of new work places. It sets out six principles that contribute to a better place to work that can be influenced through positive planning.
- 3.7 The six principles are:
- Ease of movement and legibility
  - Character, quality and continuity
  - Diversity
  - Sustainability
  - Adaptability
  - Management

### **Sub Regional**

- 3.8 Leicestershire Housing Market Area Employment Land Study (PACEC 2008)  
Consultants PACEC prepared the Leicester and Leicestershire Employment Land Study (2008) on behalf of the Leicester Shire Economic Partnership. The study was to examine the supply and demand for employment land across the Leicestershire housing market area and therefore provide the evidence base for:
- Joint employment land planning and delivery
  - Employment land policies and allocations in Local Development Frameworks; and
  - Investment priorities and targets for Local Area Agreements and Multi-Area Agreement.
- 3.9 The study helped articulate the strategic employment land requirements and distribution of growth for the housing market area and was used to inform the development of policy within the Oadby and Wigston Core Strategy.

## Local Planning Policy

- 3.10 Oadby and Wigston Local Plan  
The Oadby and Wigston Local Plan contains saved policies in relation to employment land and development and the criteria against which schemes will be assessed. In particular, it provides the policy context for Identified Employment Areas which this Supplementary Planning Document seeks to emphasise.
- 3.11 Relevant saved policies that this Supplementary Planning Document relates to are:  
Employment Proposal 1 – Identified Employment Areas  
Employment Proposal 4 – Impact of Development on Adjoining Areas  
Employment Proposal 10 – Employment Uses outside the Identified Employment Areas
- 3.12 The Employment Sites Supplementary Planning Document has also been prepared with reference to the adopted Core Strategy.
- 3.13 The Oadby and Wigston Employment Land and Premises Assessment (March 2006)  
The Oadby and Wigston Employment Land and Premises Assessment, published in March 2006, found that the majority of businesses in the Borough are small with only 10 per cent employing more than 50 people. The provision of smaller units should be a priority when regenerating existing employment land and/or establishing new employment land.
- 3.14 Oadby and Wigston adopted Core Strategy (September 2010)  
The Oadby and Wigston Borough Core Strategy was adopted in September 2010. The Vision for Oadby and Wigston, as set out in the adopted Core Strategy is:
- People aspire to live in the Borough of Oadby and Wigston because it is a safe, clean and attractive place, with a prosperous economy, vibrant town centres and healthy empowered communities.***
- 3.15 Core Strategy Policy 1 Spatial Strategy for Development in the Borough of Oadby and Wigston sets out the key spatial policy objectives for the Borough of Oadby and Wigston. It states what kind of development, how much of and where development will take place for the period up to 2026. Regeneration of Wigston town centre and Oadby and South Wigston district centres underpins much of the policy direction. However, the Core Strategy Policy 1 also describes what the Borough's requirements for employment and economic development are. In addition, Core Strategy Policy 1 seeks to achieve regeneration of Identified Employment Areas and other employment land in the Borough with the focus on providing land for smaller business uses plus enabling the expansion of existing employment users where sustainable.

- 3.16 In order to deliver the Vision and Spatial Objectives for Oadby and Wigston as it relates to employment growth, the Borough will:
- Identify land for the development of 5,800 sq metres of office floor space to be provided in the centres of Wigston and Oadby and 1.3 hectares of industrial and warehousing land between 2008 and 2026.
  - Allocate land for one 'Direction for Growth' adjoining the Leicester Principal Urban Area on land to the south east of Wigston in the Allocations Development Plan Document. The 'Direction for Growth' will be a mixed use development area including up to 3.5 hectares of new B1 and B2 employment land. This allocation will replace the equivalent amount of poor quality employment land on existing Identified Employment Areas in the Borough.
- 3.17 The specific development requirements for different land uses set out in the Core Strategy will be expressed in more detail through other Development Plan Documents, in particular, the Town Centre Masterplan Area Action Plan and the Allocation Development Plan Document.
- 3.18 Additionally, policy and guidance contained in the Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document may be relevant to employment development and should be adhered to in conjunction with other policies.
- 3.19 Applicants for planning permission are advised to refer to the saved Local Plan and adopted Core Strategy for further guidance.
- 3.20 Business Needs Survey (June 2010)  
Oadby and Wigston Borough Council commissioned consultants in February 2010 to undertake a survey of businesses in the Borough to provide the Council with a better understanding of their needs as outlined below:
- An enhanced understanding of the composition of the business base;
  - Identification of key business drivers and barriers to growth;
  - Greater understanding of business perceptions of the area and key business support agencies;
  - An informed assessment of the key business support and physical improvements required as incentives to locate in the area;
  - Data and evidence including a database of local companies to inform partnership working;
  - Guidance to support the development of Business Link's Business Plan in areas of business and training support needs; and
  - Information to support the planning process in terms of accommodation, location, design, crime prevention, environmental and transport policies.

- 3.21 Employment Sites and Brownfield Land Study (September 2010)  
Roger Tym and Partners were appointed by Oadby and Wigston Borough Council to undertake an assessment of the Borough's employment and other brownfield land. The purpose of the study was to provide evidence to support development of policies and proposals for the Local Development Framework, in particular this Supplementary Planning Document, the forthcoming Allocations Development Plan Document and the Economic Development Strategy. The main requirements of the study were:
- Articulate the employment requirements stemming from the 'top down' sub-regional Employment Land Study (PACEC) by unpacking some of the figures and assumptions included in this;
  - Undertake a detailed assessment of the Borough's employment sites to provide a 'bottom up' site assessment by utilising a Site Assessment Matrix developed by RTP as a basis for developing an employment site hierarchy; and
  - Assimilating and fine tuning the findings from the above by articulating what is working well, what is not and then assessing the capacity for change
- 3.22 The study found that, on the whole, the Borough was performing well. However there were some areas of creeping under-performance. The study suggested that the challenge for the Borough would not be about allocating new land and safeguarding new sites, it would be more about developing a sophisticated approach to 'change management' by putting in place appropriate policy mechanisms for the careful release of unsuitable land, recycling land and reinventing other land whilst meeting the need to allocate new land.
- 3.23 Through a Site Assessment Matrix all the Borough's Identified Employment Areas and other employment land have been grouped within a hierarchy of three distinct categories; Core, Base and Release. The report defines the three categories as follows:
- **Core Employment Site:** Good quality employment site, serving incoming or local clients with a local, regional or national presence and of a scale and vibrancy to be regarded as a highly important contributor to the local economy. The Core Employment Sites should be safeguarded for employment use and pressure from non-B Class employment should be resisted.
  - **Base Employment Site:** These sites are very important to the local market at present providing valuable employment premises. Loss of employment use should be strongly resisted, except in circumstances where the only way to stimulate re-use of vacant property is through the mixed use redevelopment of the site. The presumption thus is in favour of retention for employment use. However, in circumstances where there has been long term vacancy of obsolete buildings, then a degree of flexibility should be exercised within this category, combined with proactive support, to bring about new modern employment (non-B Class) re-use.

- **Release Employment Site:** These are obsolete employment sites and premises that are no longer suitable for modern efficient employment requirements because they are dominated by buildings that have come to the end of their economic life and have been vacant for a long time, combined with poor site suitability in terms of access, site layout and location. Release Employment Sites should be removed from the employment sites portfolio and released for other usage.

3.24 The recommended employment sites hierarchy put forward in the Employment Sites and Brownfield Land Study (2010) includes current employment land that does not fall within Identified Employment Areas. The various sites are therefore not specifically identified in the saved Local Plan or designated on the proposals map. The decision whether to designate these sites will be need to be considered through the Allocations Development Plan Document.

#### 4. Local Economic Context

4.1 The Borough's Identified Employment Areas accommodate development falling within Uses Classes B1, B2 and B8. These areas have developed and evolved over a number of decades and the premises are often not appropriate for technological or knowledge based activities. Developing such sites to an appropriate standard will require significant and comprehensive regeneration.

4.2 The poor availability of suitable land and/or premises is seen as a constraint to growth and companies may harbour concerns about the perceived poor environment and image of identified employment land. This has led to poor take-up of existing employment land and premises for employment purposes. Due to this there has been a consequent pressure to permit non-employment uses in the Identified Employment Areas and a decline in the overall quantity and quality of employment land in the Borough.

4.3 Whilst proud of its engineering and manufacturing base, the Borough of Oadby and Wigston has to be mindful of the risks associated with an over-reliance on a limited number of businesses within a limited number of sectors no matter how important and vibrant. A key theme of all its recent strategies has been the need to diversify its economy. The Borough is seeking to widen its manufacturing base and, crucially, to encourage new, knowledge based activities, thus becoming a much more attractive business location and place to work.

4.4 In addition, the Borough's Employment Sites and Brownfield Land Study (2010) identified that the Borough currently had a particularly strong representation within the food, construction and distribution, public administration and education and health sectors. Many of these sectors have developed into significant economic clusters particularly within food production and manufacturing of building products, services and materials.

The study further recommends that the incidence of these economic clusters should be supported and encouraged, especially through developing links with the local universities and college. To strengthen this important aspect of the Borough's local economy would be the basis of wider economic strength in the Borough.

4.5 Strategic Priorities for Economic Development in Oadby and Wigston:  
*Economic Development Strategy 1: Developing a sustainable and successful business base and creating diverse employment opportunities*

Ensuring business success in the Borough is key to improving the quality of life for the community. Local businesses should be supported and encouraged to grow whilst at the same time appropriate inward investment to the Borough should be encouraged and facilitated.

A. 'Supporting Oadby and Wigston's established and prospective businesses and encouraging sustainable growth'

4.6 The Council wants to actively support local businesses in the Borough. Over 10 per cent of the Borough's employment is still in manufacturing industries and with recent declines in this sector due to economic restructuring in recent years, it is essential that the Borough Council supports businesses in any way that it can. The Borough Council wants to engage in a two-way dialogue with businesses so it can effectively respond to changing economic climates and provide support when and where it is needed.

B. Marketing and improving the attractiveness of the Borough of Oadby and Wigston as a key business location

4.7 The Borough Council wants to be more successful in attracting inward investment compared to recent years. Most employment growth and new job creation has been by indigenous businesses expanding.

4.8 Attracting inward investment is essential in creating a dynamic and diverse business base and the Council will focus on promoting the Borough of Oadby and Wigston as a great place to live, as well as do business, promoting the Borough as a sustainable business location.

4.9 *Economic Development Strategy 2: Supporting the local workforce*

Supporting the local workforce means helping people in the Borough to fulfil their economic potential, whether it be by starting a new business or engaging in further learning and training opportunities. The Borough has fairly low unemployment rates when compared nationally, however there are areas in the Borough which has a high-proportion of economically inactive residents.

A. 'Upskilling local workforce to help residents of the Borough of Oadby and Wigston to fulfil their learning and employment potential'

4.10 Although the Borough has generally high levels of skills attainment, the employment profile suggests many highly skilled people migrate from the Borough to work. This could be due to the lack of employment opportunities in highly skilled, knowledge economy sector within the Borough, but by increasing skills levels it will make the Borough a more attractive place to locate this higher end employment and will increase employment prospects within the Borough.

B. 'Promoting entrepreneurialism in the Borough and supporting new business start-ups'

4.11 New business start-ups provide opportunities to create new employment opportunities and diversify the local economy

4.12 *Economic Development Strategy 3: Town Centre Regeneration*

The regeneration of towns is a key issue of national planning policy and is central to the economic prosperity of the Borough. It is important to create distinctive roles for town centres in neighbouring localities to ensure that 'clone towns' are not created.

A. '*Regenerating Oadby, Wigston and South Wigston's town centres as vibrant places to live, work and play and visit*'.

4.13 Oadby and Wigston: The two key towns of Oadby and Wigston are currently in the process of developing Town Centre Masterplans Area Action Plans which will serve to identify areas of opportunity within the towns, including investment opportunities for private developers and opportunities to improve the public realm, transport and facilities in the town centres.

4.14 South Wigston: South Wigston represents the third centre in Oadby and Wigston Borough and acts as a district centre. In contrast to the centres of Oadby and Wigston, South Wigston still embraces manufacturing and associated employment in close proximity to its retailing.

4.15 A Masterplan was undertaken in 2004 which looked into how regeneration in the community can take place, some actions from this are still ongoing, however, a review of the Masterplan was undertaken in 2008 which gave a new focus to South Wigston Regeneration and acts as the guiding document to rejuvenate the settlement.

## **5. Policy Approaches to the Retention or Release of Sites**

5.1 As demonstrated in the preceding chapters, there is a clear need to safeguard the Borough's Identified Employment Areas and some of the other employment sites for employment generating uses (in particular B Class), and improve and regenerate them in order to sustain a range of suitable employment sites to respond to current economic needs and future change and demand.

- 5.2 The following section sets out detailed guidance as to the policies and necessary supporting evidence requirements for proposals that would affect Identified Employment Sites and other employment land. Each application is treated on its own merits; however reference should be made to the Employment Sites and Brownfield Land Study (2010) for advice as to the likelihood of a proposal being successful on a particular site. Consideration will only be given to alternative uses where an applicant can clearly demonstrate there is no demand for the site and that it is unviable to retain in employment use. This includes taking into account the potential to refurbish existing premises or the redevelopment of the site for new employment uses. By “suitable, in land use terms” this means having regard to material planning considerations, such as, traffic impact or impact on amenity. The onus will be on the applicant to prove their case and how their proposal meets relevant policy contained in this Supplementary Planning Document and other relevant policies within the saved Local Plan and the adopted Core Strategy.

**Supplementary Employment Policy 1 – Identified Employment Sites Hierarchy**

The Borough Council will implement the Identified Employment Sites hierarchy as set out in the Employment Sites and Brownfield Land Study (2010) as follows:

**Core Employment Sites:**

Magna Road, South Wigston (5)	Chartwell Drive, Wigston (6)
Tigers Close, South Wigston (1)	Gloucester Crescent, South Wigston (3)
St. Thomas Road, South Wigston (2)	Cross Street/Regent Street, Oadby (9)
North Street/Wakes Road, Wigston (7)	

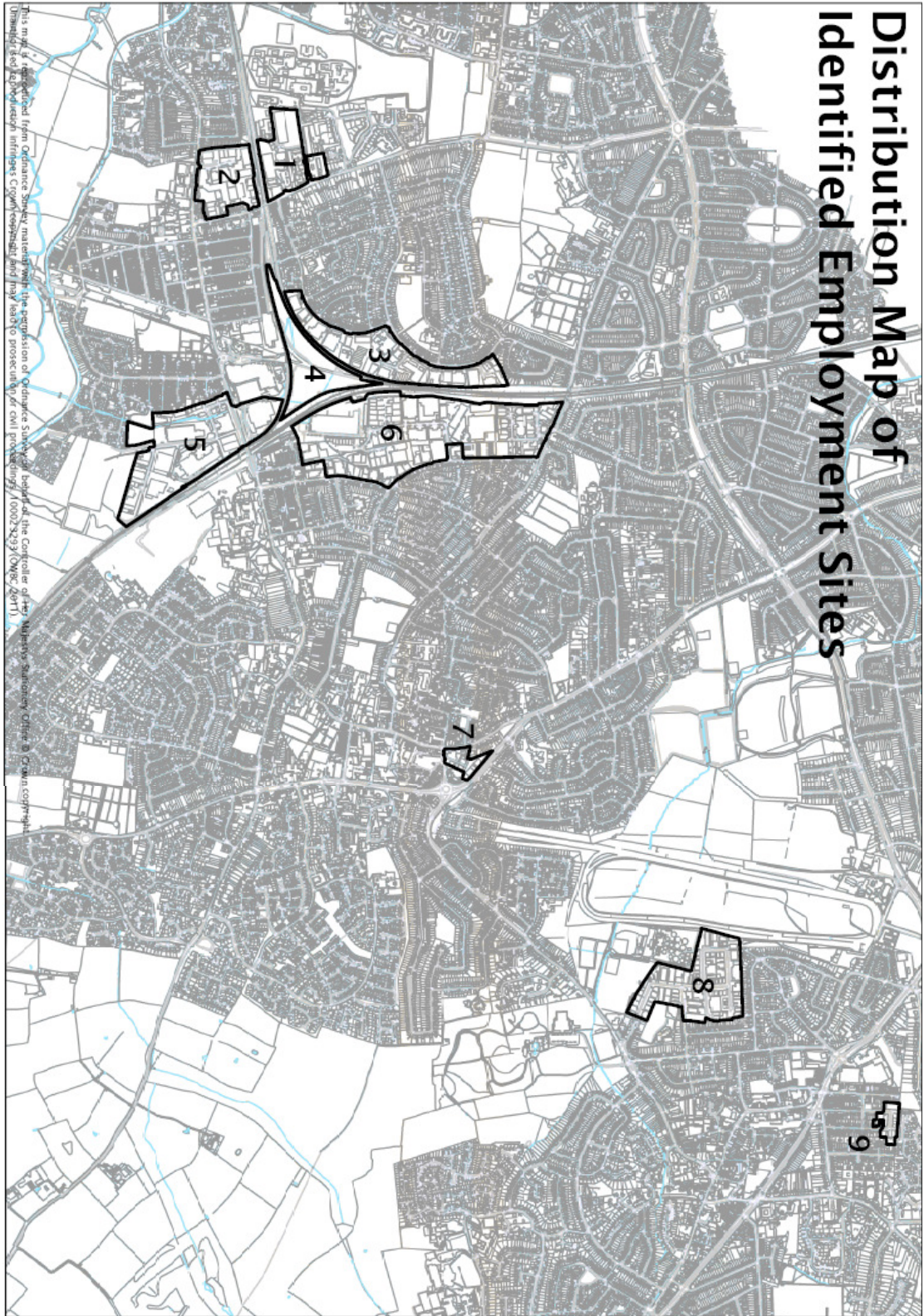
**Base Employment Sites:**

Kenilworth Drive, Oadby (8)

**Release Employment Site:**

The Railway Triangle, South Wigston (4)

*Please note: numbering is for mapping purposes only (see map on next page) and bears no relevance to the level of the site within the hierarchy.*



**Reasoned justification**

- 5.3 Implementation of the Employment Sites and Brownfield Land Study recommendation, in relation to re-categorising the Identified Employment Sites between three hierarchal levels, will allow the Borough council to begin the process of change management with regard to employment land and local economic development.
- 5.4 The new hierarchy of sites will help to better translate the likely quantum of employment loss and articulate where best this loss could be channelled or resisted, and to assist the scope for longer term recycling of some land back to employment use through the development of appropriate spatial policy.
- 5.5 The new hierarchy of Identified Employment Sites will provide greater clarity to developers, landowners, local businesses, investors and the Borough's residents about where employment provision will be sustained, released, and improved as well as highlighting where change may be acceptable.
- 5.6 Supplementary Employment Policy 1 does not include all the sites recommended by the Employment Sites and Brownfield Land Study (2010) to be included within the hierarchy. This is because some of the sites are not designated as employment land on the adopted Proposals Map. The designation of further land as Identified Employment Areas will need to be considered through the Allocations Development Plan Document.

**Supplementary Employment Policy 2 - Core Identified Employment Sites**

Proposals for the re-use or redevelopment of sites or premises within Core Identified Employment Sites for non-B Class uses will be resisted.

**Reasoned justification**

- 5.7 The Borough's Identified Employment Areas will be safeguarded for employment use. Pressure for development or re-development for non B class uses will not be permitted. The Identified Employment Areas play a highly important part in contributing the local economy. These areas provide concentrations of industrial activity and are of good quality and of a scale to serve the needs of incoming clients (some with a regional and national presence) as well as the local market. Given the Borough's tight land constraints it is imperative that there is no erosion of the designated land available for B Class employment.

### **Supplementary Employment Policy 3 - Base Identified Employment Areas**

On sites that fall within the Base Identified Employment Areas category there will be a presumption for the retention of B Class Uses. Proposals for non-B Class uses may be acceptable where it can be demonstrated that:

- the level of employment density generated is broadly similar to that which could be expected from the existing use, or where the premises are vacant, the previous use based on the following employment density assumptions:
  - Office development - 18 square metres per full time equivalent employee
  - General business development – 30 square metres per full time equivalent employee
  - Warehouse development – 50 square metres per full time equivalent employee
  - Non-B Use Class development – 40 square metres per employee
- the proposed use is ancillary or complementary to an existing or proposed B Class use;
- There are insufficient suitable alternative sites for the proposed development;
- Refurbishment of the premises or redevelopment of the site for continued B Class employment use is not viable;
- the proposed use will not compromise the operating conditions of other remaining employment uses or the existing and potential future use of neighbouring sites for employment;
- there is no current or likely future demand for the site or buildings for B Class employment purposes;
- in order to enable regeneration or improvement of the remainder of the site for continued employment use, a change of use to a non-B Class use as part of a mixed use scheme be allowed; and
- the proposed use is a public or community use and there are no alternative sites available, there is a demonstrable local need for that use and that it will deliver economic development benefits or other uses that provide either:
  - employment opportunities
  - generates wealth; or
  - produces or generates an economic output or product

Retail and other main town centre uses will not be acceptable.

Evidence as to how the proposal accords with this policy should be contained in a Supporting Statement to be submitted with the planning application.

- 5.8 Unlike Core Employment Sites where the Council will seek to resist any change of use from B Class employment use, the Borough Council accepts that Base Employment Sites will be under continued pressure to accommodate a wider range of uses. This is further highlighted in the Borough's Employment Sites and Brownfield Land Study. Supplementary Employment Policy 3 - Base Identified Employment Areas contains criteria to more effectively manage and determine any release of land on Base Employment Sites for non-B Class uses.
- 5.9 Although the Base Identified Employment Areas provide a valuable source of employment premises and perform an important function in the local economic market at present, it is recognised that a more flexible approach to the types of use on these sites may be appropriate where it can be shown that allowing non traditional employment generating uses can generate wider benefits and aid the performance of a site, provide additional employment opportunities or regenerate poor quality premises.
- 5.10 Employment Density  
Employment density is a measurement of the average floorspace per person in a building dependent on Use Class. It is therefore a measure of how much each person occupies within the workplace. This can be a useful tool for a wide variety of purposes, such as, economic impact appraisal, traffic generation studies, and to specify current and future floorspace requirements for building occupiers. Often there is a need to identify the scale of employment lost/generated or likely to be lost/generated at sites/buildings which are to be redeveloped or undergo a change of use. This should be done using surveys of actual employment as far as possible, but where such data is not available then floorspace densities provide a good indication of employment levels lost and generated.
- 5.11 For the purposes of this Supplementary Planning Document average employment density figures are being used to inform the release/allocation of employment land.
- 5.12 Average floor space densities from surveys of large numbers of buildings and uses provide density figures that can be relied upon to provide a reasonable degree of accuracy. However, very little survey work of this scale has been carried out recently. The most recent study that has provided the basis for the employment density figures within Supplementary Employment Policies 2 and 3 is the Employment Densities: A Full Guide study (2001).
- 5.13 This study was prepared by Arup Economics and Planning on behalf of English Partnerships and the Regional Development Agencies. It contained employment density assumptions for a range of B Class and other uses expressed as gross internal floor space. Gross internal floor space is generally the measurement used by developers. It is the entire area inside external walls of a building and includes internal walls, corridors, lifts, plant rooms and service accommodation. The density figures contained in the

report reflect the median figures from a range of sources although it is advised that an element of subjective adjustment should occur based on local evidence such as types of activity, or a decline in a particular sector.

- 5.14 The figures in this Supplementary Planning Document are the average densities calculated in the study apart from that related to warehousing. This is because the average has been calculated from combining the density for general warehousing and large scale or high bay warehousing. As it is unlikely that the Borough could accommodate large scale or high bay warehousing due to land and scale constraints, it is felt that the general warehousing figure will be sufficient.
- 5.15 The number of employees which should be measured to calculate employment density should be expressed as Full-Time Equivalent. This would allow the hours worked by part-time staff (permanent and on-site contract staff) to be aggregated and shown as a whole employee. It is calculated by dividing the total number of part-time hours by the number of hours in the working week.
- 5.16 Implementation of this aspect of the policy would allow for the loss of B class employment to be compensated for by the retention of a similar level of workforce on site.
- 5.17 Employment density figures for the proposed and previous use should be included in the Supporting Statement.
- 5.18 Ancillary and/or Complementary Uses  
Where it is determined that the proposed use would be ancillary to an existing or proposed B Class use no planning permission will be required. Applicants will be required through their Supporting Statement to show how the proposed use compliments what is already there or also proposed.
- 5.19 Insufficient or No Suitable Alternative Sites Available  
Much of the pressure for the release of employment land for other uses on the Borough's Identified Employment Sites comes from applicants asserting that there are insufficient or no alternative sites available to meet their needs as opposed to the site in question.
- 5.20 Applicants proposing a non-B Class development on a Base Employment Site, because they believe there are insufficient or no suitable alternative sites to meet the needs of the development elsewhere, should provide in their Supporting Statement evidence to support this. This should take the form of a list of alternative sites/premises that have been considered and details explaining why each one was not suitable and the reasons why the proposal needs to be situated on the sites/premises in question.
- 5.21 Where the proposal is for a main town centre uses, as defined in paragraph 7 of Planning Policy Statement 4, a sequential test and impact assessment may be appropriate. Reference should be made to the appropriate policies in Planning Policy Statement 4.

5.22 Viability

It is important in these challenging economic times that the applications for change of use do not result in the loss of valuable employment land and premises of which there will be renewed demand once the economy begins to recover. This is particularly relevant to the Borough of Oadby and Wigston that already has a lack of quality employment land and is constrained in its ability to bring forward more land over time.

5.23 Due to the generally cynical view of the property market during times of economic downturn it is important that the release of employment land is not determined solely on poor market conditions at a given point in time. Indeed, costs and values are subject to frequent change over time and in order to make contemporary decisions at the time an application is received it is important that questions of viability are set at prevailing market rates within any viability appraisal, rather than the price paid which may be significantly different from the current market value. These prevailing rates should be based on evidence from recent comparable transactions in the area.

5.24 However, to take account of changing market circumstances it is necessary to consider likely changes in market conditions which could impact upon development viability. To allow too much employment land to be realised for non-employment uses due to current (early 2011) market values could lead to a major shortfall in the future which the Borough would have difficulty recouping. This would have a significant impact on local economic health and growth as well as the provision of local employment opportunities.

5.25 The Employment Sites and Brownfield Land Study (2010) provides some insight into the Borough's employment areas from a market perspective especially towards modern employment users. It accepts that there will always be a need for lower grade employment areas and indeed, highlights that the prevalence of such in the Borough is not seen as a problem by occupiers (this is supported by the Business Needs Survey (2010)).

5.26 The Supporting Statement should include a clear appraisal of the potential to redevelop/reuse the site/premises in question for a range of employment generating uses having regard to the site and its context. The appraisal should consider a range of potential employment uses for the site/premises to include:

- the re-use, complete redevelopment or refurbishment of the premises for the current or alternative uses;
- the sub-division or joining up of plots/sites;
- a revision to the servicing and access arrangements;
- the value of land/premises (both leasehold and freehold at prevailing market rates);
- development costs;
- any abnormal costs; and
- any available grants

- 5.27 The viability appraisal should be prepared by a suitably qualified person or organisation.
- 5.28 The Borough Council will take evidence offered by applicants into account, and exercise its judgement on an individual site basis to determine whether a particular site could be viable for employment development.
- 5.29 Proposed use would not compromise existing and potential employment uses  
Proposals for the reuse or redevelopment of sites or buildings within an Identified Employment Area for non-B Class employment uses should be accompanied by evidence to demonstrate that the proposed development would not compromise the operating conditions of other remaining employment users (including vacant or underused) or the potential future use of neighbouring sites for employment purposes. This is to ensure that redevelopment proposals do not affect or restrict the functioning of other business occupiers which could lead to the decline of the remainder of the employment site and thus erode the Borough's employment land supply further.
- 5.30 In order to justify their proposal on these grounds applicants will need to include within the Supporting Statement the following information:
- Details of any adjacent employment uses and the types of activities that are currently taking place or are likely to take place in the future;
  - An analysis of any potential conflicts between those remaining uses/facilities and the proposed non-employment use, including an assessment of issues such as:
    - noise;
    - odour, dust or other emissions;
    - hours of operation;
    - vibration;
    - light;
    - vehicular access, parking and servicing; and
    - safety and security.
- 5.31 The analysis should include details of any measures that could be put in place to mitigate these issues.
- 5.32 This consideration will be particularly important where residential or similarly sensitive land uses are proposed to be introduced into Identified Employment Areas. The future occupiers of any such development would rightly expect to enjoy an appropriate standard of amenity. Without careful consideration of the potential impacts on existing industrial or other employment operations or their future amenity, prior to the development being permitted, there is a risk that the development would give rise to increased levels of complaints, requiring restrictions to be placed on those operations, which might undermine their future viability. Recreational and community uses generally have an expectation of higher environmental and landscape quality and this should be respected in any approval process.

5.33 Demand and Marketing

Whatever the current market climate there will always be an ongoing gross demand for employment land and premises. However, the type and scale of particular employment uses is also likely to decline over time. In order to aid decisions as to whether to release employment land, it is necessary to determine whether there is likely to be any continuing interest in a particular site/premises for employment use and as such whether it remains a viable element of the Borough's portfolio and hierarchy of sites.

5.34 The onus will be on the applicant to clearly demonstrate a lack of current or likely future demand through a Market Demand Appraisal. Again this should be prepared by a suitably qualified person or organisation with knowledge of the local employment market. The appraisal should provide evidence based conclusions as to the reasons why demand for employment purposes has not been and is unlikely to be realised for the site/premises.

5.35 The level of detail and type of evidence and analysis submitted in the Supporting Statement should be proportionate to the scale and nature of the site/premises in question. The Market Demand Appraisal should illustrate how the site/premises has been widely marketed for sale and/or rent at the market price for a minimum of 12 months. Details of the following should also been included:

- the marketing strategy used;
- how offers received were considered and reasons for rejection; and
- how adverts were displayed, where they were displayed and circulated and their format.

5.36 Mixed Use and Enabling Development

Where it cannot be demonstrated that there is a case for alternative non-employment development, a mixed-use scheme could provide a solution. Alternative uses should be limited to enabling development on part of the site to permit the remainder to be improved or redeveloped for continued employment use. Furthermore, the amount of enabling development must be proportionate to the investment required to allow the continued employment use of the other part of the site. The extent of the enabling development needed to facilitate investment in employment provision should be demonstrated through a development appraisal/residual evaluation.

5.37 Where mixed-use developments are proposed, the site layout should be designed to minimise the possibility of conflicts between different uses. For example, where the proposal lies adjacent to another industrial site and involves an element of residential development, it may be appropriate to separate the residential and existing industrial uses with a light industrial, office, or other employment use that is acceptable in residential areas. This will not only protect the residential amenity of the proposed development, but also help to prevent the possibility of redevelopment on the adjacent industrial site for alternative uses on the grounds that it is no longer acceptable in land-use terms.

- 5.38 Alternative development will not be permitted if it would detract from or conflict with the employment use of other nearby employment sites. This is to avoid the 'domino-effect' of a site that has been redeveloped or reused for non-employment uses giving rise to circumstances under which it is appropriate to 'release' the adjacent site, when previously it would not have been justified under the terms of the policy.
- 5.39 The general move away from manufacturing industry towards lower impact industrial, office and service industries means that mixed use schemes may be well placed to:
- enable high quality employment development on part of the site;
  - remove or reduce the impact of detrimental neighbouring uses adjacent to residential or other sensitive land uses;
  - enable a larger number of skilled jobs to be accommodated on a smaller site;
  - enable physical regeneration / environmental improvements
- 5.40 Enabling development which allows employment development that contributes to the economic development aspirations of the Council may help to justify the partial release of the site from employment uses where, for example, there is a high demand for small to medium scale B1(a), B1(b) and B1(c) units and small B2 industrial starter units and workshops.
- 5.41 Even for flexible sites, the Council wants to improve employment outputs as detailed in the Sustainable Community Strategy and the Economic Development Strategy with jobs that:
- are better paid;
  - are more highly skilled;
  - are in the identified growth sectors; or
  - meet local demand.
- 5.42 High quality, modern and flexible premises are required to meet the needs of the Borough and contribute to the aspirations of the Economic Development Strategy.
- 5.43 The Council will require robust evidence that the additional value created by a smaller amount of space given over to high quality jobs involving significant economic outputs outweighs the prospects for the site and its buildings in their current state. It would usually be expected that the number of jobs supported by the new mixed-use development would be at least the number previously supported on the larger whole site. However, given the number of under-used industrial premises in the Borough, there may be a requirement to provide employment development which would support a larger number of jobs than the site had previously supported.

- 5.44 When considering the new types of employment that could be provided, applicants should also remember that B1(a) office development is considered to be a town centre use and proposals outside of the town and district centres may be subject to a sequential test as required by Planning Policy Statement 4.
- 5.45 Where a mixed use/enabling development approach is followed, any permission granted by the Borough Council will be conditioned so that development is phased and the delivery of the employment element is guaranteed before the delivery of the non employment use.
- 5.46 New employment development proposed as part of a mixed-use scheme should be designed to be flexible and adaptable so that the development does not become quickly obsolete. When considering any future proposals to further rationalise these sites, the Borough Council will carefully scrutinise the efforts made by the original developer in ensuring that the development is adaptable to future needs.
- 5.47 Retail, public and community uses  
Retail and other main town centre uses will not be acceptable on Base Employment Sites as this would likely have a detrimental effect on the vitality and viability of Wigston town centre and the district centres of Oadby and South Wigston.
- 5.48 Public and community uses are also best suited in town centres, as supported by Planning Policy Statement 4. However, paragraph 4 of Planning Policy Statement 4 defines economic development as also relating to public and community uses.
- 5.49 The Supporting Statement should clearly set out why it is considered there are no suitable alternative sites available. In order to confirm that there are no other sites available, a list of alternative buildings that have been considered should be submitted, including details explaining why each one was not suitable and the reasons why the proposal needs to be situated on the site/premises in question.
- 5.50 In addition, evidence will need to be submitted with the Supporting Statement that clearly shows there is a demonstrable local need for this use.
- 5.51 Any proposal for a community building that has the potential to have an adverse effect on existing business or other adjoining users for example residential areas will not be acceptable.
- 5.52 Where the proposal is for a main town centre uses (as defined in Planning Policy Statement 4) then a sequential test and impact assessment may be appropriate. Reference should be made to the appropriate policies in Planning Policy Statement 4.

5.53 Use of Planning Conditions

The use of planning conditions is covered in Planning Circular 11/95 - The Use of Conditions in Planning Permissions. Paragraph 14 includes the 6 tests that must be adhered to when applying conditions to planning permissions. Planning conditions need to be:

- 1 necessary
- 2 relevant to planning
- 3 relevant to the development
- 4 enforceable
- 5 precise
- 6 reasonable in other respects

**Supplementary Employment Policy 4 - Release Identified Employment Sites**

These sites are obsolete and are no-longer viable for employment generating uses and can therefore be released for other more appropriate uses. These sites will be removed from the portfolio of Identified Employment Sites through the Allocations Development Plan Document.

**Reasoned justification**

- 5.54 The location and boundaries of the Identified Employment Areas will be reviewed as part of production of the Allocations Development Planning Document. The Employment Sites and Brownfield Study (2010) has already identified the sites at Kirkdale Road and The Railway Triangle as being obsolete.
- 5.55 Prior to their release from the Borough's portfolio of sites through the Allocations Development Planning Document, alternative non-B Class uses will be considered where they meet other policies in the saved Local Plan and adopted Core Strategy.

**Supplementary Employment Policy 5 – Other Employment Land and Premises**

Proposals that would affect employment land outside of Identified Employment Areas will only be permitted where:

- the proposal is in accordance with other policy that has precedence at national or local level;
- the land or premises are no longer suitable for employment use,
- the land or premises are no longer viable for employment use;
- there is no likelihood of the land or premises being in demand for employment use, now or in the future; and
- the existing use is considered incompatible with surrounding uses.

Proposals will need to be accompanied by a Supporting Statement demonstrating compliance with this policy.

**Reasoned justification**

- 5.56 There are several sites throughout the Borough that are used for employment uses but are not designated as Identified Employment Areas. Many of these still perform a valuable function in the local employment market and normally provide vital small-scale business premises. However, many are located adjacent to or within primarily residential areas. Such sites will be subject to review through production or the Allocations Development Plan Document and may be designated as part of the Identified Employment Sites portfolio.
- 5.57 Because of the lack of employment land and prior to production of the Allocations Development Plan Document, proposals for the redevelopment of unidentified employment land and premises will need to be justified and evidenced via submission of a Supporting Statement.
- 5.58 The Supporting Statement should outline:
- how the proposal accords with other policy that has precedence at national or local level;
  - why the land or premises are no longer suitable for employment use,
  - why the land or premises are no longer viable for employment use;
  - why there is no likelihood of the land or premises being in demand for employment use, now or in the future; and
  - why the existing use is considered incompatible with surrounding uses.

**Draft Employment Sites  
Supplementary Planning  
Document**

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**Oadby and Wigston Borough Council**

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