

EMPLOYMENT (STRATEGIC CHALLENGES)

Employment need
Identified Employment Areas (new and existing)



*Oadby and Wigston
Borough Council
Leicestershire*

Employment need

What the Government says:

- 4.1 NPPF suggests that *'strategic policies should set out the overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development and make sufficient provision for...employment development'*. Guidance set out in the relevant parts of the NPPG, suggest that strategic policy making authorities must prepare a robust evidence base to understand local business need, market signals and market conditions.
- 4.2 Further, the NPPF suggests that new homes should be provided in locations that will support a sustainable community with sufficient access to service and employment opportunities.

What the Council says:

- 4.3 Across Leicester and Leicestershire, the local planning authorities are working collaboratively to plan for the long term employment needs of the Leicester & Leicestershire Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA). A Strategic Growth Plan looking forward to the year 2050 has been produced and signed up to by each of the Leicester and Leicestershire local authorities.
- 4.4 Leicester City Council has indicated that it may well be unable to deliver its full employment need. All local authorities within Leicester and Leicestershire are working together to produce a Statement of Common Ground that will address the issue of Leicester City's unmet need. Due to the nature of the Borough area, it is not expected that any of Leicester City's unmet need could be provided within the Borough area, however this has yet to be determined.
- 4.5 The Council's current Local Plan sets out an employment land requirement of just over 8 hectares within the Borough area over the Plan period to 2031. This level of need was set out within the Employment Land and Premises Study that was a local piece of evidence produced for the Borough area only. Currently the Council has granted planning permission for some 5 hectares of the 8 hectares required. However, as of now, none of the 5 hectares permitted has progressed further than the planning stage.
- 4.6 Even though evidence suggested to the contrary, over recent years, the Borough has not seen significant demand for large scale or strategic employment growth. The main types of employment change has been associated with smaller scale extensions to existing employment use properties and churn involving demolition and rebuilding of redundant properties or properties that are near 'end of life'. Also the Council is not aware of any significant anecdotal need for additional employment land.
- 4.7 The vast majority of the Borough's employment land is situated on designated sites, known as 'Identified Employment Areas'. These areas are dominated by B1, B2 and B8 Uses, and are appropriately managed to ensure that they remain in predominant employment use.
- 4.8 Currently the Council is working with all local authorities within Leicester and Leicestershire to produce a local employment land needs assessment, in the form of a Housing and Employment Needs Assessment (HENA). Currently no employment land need information is available from this project, however when complete, the HENA will set out the local employment need for each of the local authorities within Leicester and Leicestershire.



Potential options:

- Subject to an employment need being identified, concentrate additional employment land allocations adjacent to existing areas of employment use.
- Subject to an employment need being identified, focus new employment development towards the greenfield areas of the Borough only. In essence, creating a new employment area.
- Take a balanced approach to the location of new employment development with a mix of urban development and greenfield land development.

Questions:

- Should the Council use the outputs of the HENA to specify the employment need of the Borough area or produce an up-to-date Employment Land and Premises Study?
- Is there any other method for calculating the Borough's employment need?
- Where should additional employment land development be located if a need arises?

Please explain your answer in a few words. Also, if there are other options that you feel are more appropriate please explain.



Identified Employment Areas (new and existing)

What the government says:

- 4.9 NPPF states that local authorities and planning policies *‘should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt...the approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future’*.
- 4.10 Further, NPPF suggests that planning policies *‘should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations’*.

What the Council says:

- 4.11 Within the Borough area, the Council ensures that sufficient land is available for a number of different uses, including, housing, retail, leisure and employment.
- 4.12 To ensure that the Borough area has sufficient land supply of much needed B Class (employment) Uses, the Council allocates specific areas, or clusters, known as ‘Identified Employment Areas’; which are mapped on the Council’s Adopted Policies Map. The Borough area has 8 of these areas. Alongside the Health and the Education sectors, Manufacturing employs the highest number of people within the Borough area (13.2 per cent each). The ‘employment sector’ (B Class Uses) as a whole, employs over 20 per cent of all those people with jobs in the Borough. Thus, B Class employment businesses are vitally important to the Borough’s workforce and local community.
- 4.13 The Identified Employment Areas within the Borough have been designated for over 20 years and are areas that have the highest concentration of larger scale, long standing employment uses. Policy and guidance at a national level, suggests that these areas should be safeguarded from inappropriate development that negatively affects the critically important role that they play within the local economy, as once lost or diluted it would be very difficult to replace.
- 4.14 In addition, due to the nature of employment uses, for example, the times at which they operate and the regular vehicle movements, it is fitting to have all such uses within the same areas or clusters, as it is, for example with leisure and retail uses within town and district centres.
- 4.15 The Council is aware that national policy and guidance, suggests that local authorities should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. The Council is proactive in its approach, and does not protect employment land for the ‘sake of protecting it’. The Local Plan includes a hierarchy of Identified Employment Area categories.
- 4.16 Each of the Identified Employment Areas within the Borough has been assessed and has been classified within a specific category. The site categories are ‘Core’, ‘Base’ and ‘Release’. Each of the three categorisations are explained in more detail in the Council’s Identified Employment Land Supplementary Planning Document.



4.17 The Council has current policy relating to the protection of Identified Employment Areas set out in the current Local Plan. Local Plan Policy 25 – Protecting Identified Employment Areas is a criteria based policy that allows for change and evolution of a site depending on the Identified Employment Areas categorisation in which it is located within and the need for the sites retention and / or renewal.

Potential options:

- Continue to designate the Identified Employment Areas within the Borough area, and carry forward the current Local Plan policy approach ensuring that it is up-to-date with current national planning and guidance.
- Continue to designate the Identified Employment Areas within the Borough area, but change the policy approach, for example, amend the criteria that is currently set out within current Local Plan policy.
- Reassess all of the Identified Employment Areas to see whether or not the current categorisations are accurate and up-to-date.
- Discontinue each of the Identified Employment Areas within the Borough and have no specific planning policy approach for protection of employment land.

Questions:

- Which are the above potential options would be the most appropriate approach for managing the supply of employment land within the Borough area?
- If you consider that the most appropriate approach is to continue to designate Identified Employment Areas, but amend the policy criteria, what criteria do you consider should be used within a new policy approach?
- If you consider that the most appropriate approach is to discontinue each of the Identified Employment Areas within the Borough and have no specific planning policy approach, how do you consider that the Council best protects employment land for B Class employment businesses to locate, evolve and grow?

Please explain your answer in a few words. Also, if there are other options that you feel are more appropriate please explain.

