

WELLINGBOROUGH EMPLOYMENT LAND STUDY

FOR THE
BOROUGH COUNCIL OF
WELLINGBOROUGH



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NORTOFT

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WELLINGBOROUGH EMPLOYMENT STUDY

CONTENTS

Chapter 1 : Introduction and Methodology

1.1 Introduction	p5
1.2 Context	p5
1.3 Policy Objectives and Drivers for the New Growth in Employment	p6
1.4 Methodology	p7
1.5 Types of Employment Land	p8
1.6 Market Appraisal and Planning Policy	p10

Chapter 2 : Economic Strategy and Planning Policy Drivers

2.1 Introduction	p12
2.2 Policies and Strategies	p12
2.3 Policy and Strategy Drivers	p14

Chapter 3 : Market Appraisal

3.1 Office Market	p36
3.2 Industrial Markets	p44
3.4 Distribution Market	p54

Chapter 4 : Site Identification and Assessment

4.1 Introduction	p59
4.2 Principles for Site identification	p60
4.3 Identifying Specific Locations	p63
4.4 Initial Assessment of Sites	p68
4.5 Refinement of sites	p69
4.6 Conclusions	p78
4.7 Map: Site Area Boundaries explanation	p79
Map: Town and Wider Sites Locations	p80
Map: Town Centre Sites Locations	p81

Chapter 5 : Summary of Key Sites

5.1 Key sites Analysis : Commercial	p82
5.2 Key Sites Analysis : Sustainability	p86
5.3 Relative Commercial and Sustainable Deliverability Graph	p89
5.4 Key Sites Information and Prioritisation Summary Table	p90

Chapter 6 : Wider Spatial Planning Conclusions

6.1 Introduction	p93
6.2 Key Outcomes	p93
6.3 Implications of CoPELA (draft)	p96

Appendix A:

Abstracts from Key Economic Strategies and Planning Policies	p98
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

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INTRODUCTION AND METHODOLOGY

1.1 Introduction

The Borough Council of Wellingborough (BCW) commissioned Nortoft Partnerships Limited (Nortoft) and Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH) to undertake the identification and assessment of future employment sites as part of the evidence base for the Local Development Framework.

1.2 Context

The Borough of Wellingborough is an area of 163 sq km situated in the eastern half of Northamptonshire and lies about 65 miles from both London and Birmingham. It is located in the most southern tip of the East Midlands Region.

The population of the Borough is 73,100 and approximately 47,000 live within the urban area and the rest in the rural areas of the Borough. The urban area is surrounded by 19 villages that range in size from Earls Barton (population 5353) and Irchester (population 4807) to Hardwick (population 70) and Strixton (population 32). Much of the Borough remains essentially rural and is primarily comprised of gently undulating farmland.

Wellingborough benefits from good road connections and has a number of key transport corridors. The A45 provides an east-west route and leads directly to junctions 15, 15A and 16 of the M1. The A509 provides a north-south route, which links to the A14 (M1-A1 link) at Kettering, providing a route to the M1 and M6 as well as the East Coast Ports. Wellingborough's railway station is on the Midland Mainline linking it to London, Nottingham, Leicester, Derby, Sheffield, and Leeds. The average journey time to London (St Pancras) is 50 minutes and the station is served by at least 2 trains per hour and up to 4 trains per hour in peak hours.

Existing sites allocated for employment are identified in the Borough of Wellingborough Local Plan (including the Local Plan Alteration adopted in 2004).

This Alteration, which is only 2 years old, focussed on the urban extension for Wellingborough East and the allocation of housing and employment sites within the town. With the advent of major, further new growth and the introduction of a new planning system, the Local Plan will be replaced by Development Plan Documents that form part of the Local Development Framework (LDF). The Core Spatial Strategy is being prepared for the whole of North Northamptonshire by a Joint Planning Unit whilst the Borough Council is preparing a Site Specific Proposals Development Plan Document (DPD) and a Town Centre Area Action Plan.

The need for an employment land review and identification of new sites is needed now, so that it can both better meet current economic development needs, more strategically respond to the needs of the market and feed into the emerging Site Specific Proposals DPD and Town Centre Area Action Plan.

The priority is to be able to provide a robust basis for policy development for the emerging LDF. There is also evidence of market demand found in the fact that major applications that include very substantial elements of employment land may soon to be submitted. Whilst these may in theory be able to be addressed as departures to the Local Plan, it is more appropriate to have them considered within a more researched local planning policy context.

The Core Spatial Strategy and the future economic development strategy of the Borough is being largely led by the approved Milton Keynes and South Midlands (MKSM) Growth Areas Agenda. Wellingborough is identified as needing to plan for some 13,800 new jobs up to 2021, so as to ensure that housing provision and employment are balanced supporting sustainable development.

1.3 Policy Objectives and Drivers for the New Growth in Employment

The Government's national policy and the Regional Spatial Strategy for the East Midlands (RSS8) already set the scene for this part of the Country. RSS8 indicates a need to provide for 52,100 new homes and 43,800 new jobs in North Northamptonshire between 2001 and 2021 with 34,100 of these homes to be located in the towns of Kettering, Corby and Wellingborough. A total of 12,800 of the new homes should be located within the Borough of Wellingborough.

The LDF Spatial Objectives for Employment

The following bullet points are abstracts from the draft objectives for the Site Specific Proposals Development Plan Document (Issues and Options Feb 2006) that specifically relate to employment issues:

- To locate development where it will provide the opportunity for people to satisfy their day-to-day needs for employment, shopping, education and other services locally or in locations which minimise the need to travel and where there are modes of transport available in addition to the motor car.
- To locate development where it will ensure the maximum use of previously developed land and minimise the loss of countryside and the best and most versatile agricultural land.
- To ensure that the provision of new (12,800 units) housing is accompanied by the creation of 13,800 new jobs to meet indicative employment needs to 2021 and that housing and employment growth takes place in balance.
- To provide for the development of employment land on a variety of sites to support an increased diversity of employment opportunities and attract high quality investment and skilled jobs.

1.4 Employment Study Methodology

The core brief for the Wellingborough Employment Study was to:

- Identify potential sites for employment development; specifically B1, B2 and B8 use classes.
- Assess those potential sites for suitability of development and deliverability both in terms of sustainability and commercial viability.

- Produce a list of options of sites with an appraisal of the pros and cons of each
- Provide an assessment of the viability and deliverability of the sites
- Provide a final selection of prioritised deliverable sites and;
- Set this within the context of the Northamptonshire Commercial Property and Employment Land Assessment Review - CoPELA (Tym and LSH 2006)

In order to achieve the above Nortoft and LSH were to undertake:

- an employment market appraisal;
- an economic strategy and planning policy appraisal
- a sites assessment process

1.5 Types of Employment Land

The requirement for this study is to focus on the identification of sustainable yet deliverable locations.

The policy base for the writing of employment land reviews is set out in the ODPM's Employment Land Reviews Guidance Note. Here it is stated that: "Employment Land Reviews are a key component of the evidence base for policy and proposals in Local Development Frameworks (LDFs) and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSSs) and form part of the continuing 'plan, monitor and manage' approach to creating spatial strategies at the regional and local levels. The prioritisation of identified employment land in this employment study reflects the given split in employment types assessed on supply and demand by the Council having taken into account detailed regional, sub-regional and local research and policy". The relevant stage in the ODPM (now DCLG) identified process is "Stage 3: Identifying a 'New' Portfolio of Sites".

The identification of locations has been informed by the relevant needs of different types of specified employment land use, specifically being B1, B2 and B8 uses, as understood from local market research and from the CoPELA Review (Tym and LSH 2006). It is to be noted that retail and other employment uses are not part of this study.

The implications of the emerging CoPELA Review (Tym/LSH July 2006) are dealt with in Chapter 6.

This study is specifically intended to identify future employment needs within the broader remit of the emerging draft Core Spatial Strategy for North Northamptonshire (CSS). It also considers land already allocated for employment development (but not developed) from the Local Plan. These are identified so that "new" land can be identified.

The Council on commissioning this report asked for existing permissions not yet built to be considered but not speculative applications or applications likely to be submitted. The consultants have however made some consideration of possible land areas within the area of search, broadly in line with the emerging Core Spatial Strategy for North Northamptonshire (CSS), but in part with a view to other potential major application areas.

This report prioritised sites so as to allow for flexibility to determine the amount of land to be allocated within the CSS and LDF. The amount of land will be in part influenced by the emerging CoPELA results and in part by the need to secure 13,800 jobs.

Others may make a case that wider than local needs and demands may require a regional or even national allocation of more land. This however is beyond the scope of this report.

The study thus allows for consideration of land with best potential for employment uses not only up to 2021 but also to cover the period between 2021 and 2031. It is recognised though that predictions of supply/demand, land employment type and location for the period from 2021 to 2031 will need to be reviewed on a rolling basis as circumstances change.

This study identifies the following types of employment land that are suitable for B1, B2 and/or B8.

Potential sites were assessed for their deliverability and were split into five categories (e.g. in Chapter 5 Sites deliverability graph) as follows:

- Most deliverable land that is available or likely to be available in the very near future - by about 2010. [DARK GREEN]
- Most deliverable land that is very likely to become available in the future possibly requiring some intervention e.g. with provision of major infrastructure (by about 2016) [LIGHT/HATCHED GREEN]
- Land with lower and/or delayed deliverability [YELLOW]
- Land with even lower and/or delayed deliverability [ORANGE]
- Land with least likelihood of being suitable or available for employment in the foreseeable future. [RED]

1.6 Market appraisal and planning policy

A detailed market appraisal and an analysis of relevant planning policy have been undertaken (see chapter 2).

These baseline studies were then used to help identify the above prioritisation of potential employment sites.