

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **SITE IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT**

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## **SITE IDENTIFICATION AND ASSESSMENT**

### **4.1 Introduction**

(a) The brief for this study included the following basic aims:

- Identify potential sites within the Borough for employment development; employment development in this instance relates to the B1, B2 and B8 use classes.
- Assess the sustainability and commercial deliverability of the potential sites.
- Produce a list of site options with an appraisal of the pros and cons of each
- Provide an assessment of the viability of the sites, details of the likely costs of development and identify any potential impediments to the development of those sites, including areas likely to incur abnormal costs.
- Take on board the advice within the employment land reviews guidance note published by the ODPM (now DCLG) in 2004 as well as relevant planning policies. Particularly relevant is Guidance "Step 13"

(b) The project outcome should provide a list of sites capable of accommodating the envisaged future quantity of land for employment development. These sites will have been assessed for their suitability both in terms of their likely sustainability (including planning policy, environmental and social impacts) as well as their commercial viability (including market /constraints). They may be of a strategic nature (e.g. one site that accommodates a large proportion of the envisaged requirement) or a mixture of smaller sites. The key is to provide an assessment of the sites to produce a portfolio that meets the local and strategic planning and economic objectives and be deliverable through meeting market needs (e.g. existing businesses and developers).

(c) Recommendations as to the order of preference of such sites (in terms of those that best meet the planning and commercial objectives) should be made.

(d) The emerging CoPELA review study should be used as a baseline to help inform demand/supply issues.

## **4.2 Principles for Site identification**

### (a) Principles

The main search areas were identified by addressing the relevant local, regional and national planning and economic policy background. The detailed policy considerations have been summarised in the Economic Strategy and Planning Policy Drivers chapter of this report.

Key drivers from this policy analysis identified certain key criteria that included the following:

- To locate development where it will 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 identify sites that could provide land to support the creation of 13,800 new jobs to meet indicative employment needs to 2021 in order to ensure that housing and employment growth take place in balance.
- To provide for the development of employment land on a variety of sites, including a variety of ownerships) to support an increased diversity of employment opportunities and attract high quality investment and skilled jobs.
- In particular, to prioritise sites that are in and immediately around Wellingborough town.
- Where suitable sites cannot be identified in the above locations, other locations may be considered, but the principles of sustainability and commercial deliverability need to be balanced.
- Timely deliverability is a high priority as the provision of jobs in the Borough is essential to the economic and social well-being of the community.
- Site location criteria have also been refined by other factors such as environmental sensitivities (e.g. high visibility to the surrounding countryside and proximity to

environmentally sensitive areas etc) and deliverability factors (e.g. the willingness of the landowner/developer to release the land etc).

#### (b) Sustainable Urban Extensions

Another policy driver, as highlighted in the emerging Core Spatial Strategy, stresses that employment land should be included within “sustainable urban extensions” to the East and North-West of Wellingborough. This study has given some weight within the planning deliverability analysis to these emerging CSS locations.

A balance has to be struck between identifying land that has certainty of delivery; identifying land for those employment uses that are site specific and/or may not best be located in the places where the sustainable urban extensions will be; and identifying land to be allocated within sustainable urban extensions when these do come on line. Therefore there is still some uncertainty in identifying employment land parcels within these urban extensions, for example the boundaries of sites N1 to N5 (incl) and sites to the East of Stanton Cross will need to be reviewed at an early stage.

#### (c) Future of the A14

Another key unknown variable is the location of the proposed re-alignment of the A14. Any new road scheme eventually decided upon is unlikely to open until after 2013. For the purposes of this study, however, no re-alignment has been considered although the location and delivery of the Isham bypass and proposed extension to Wellingborough (Park Farm A509) has been assumed, as has the Stanton Cross detailed planning permission for access routes.

#### (c) The Three Growth Towns

Finally there is an issue of the relationships within the North Northamptonshire Growth Area as a whole. The 3 towns (Corby, Kettering and Wellingborough) are discrete units and the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS8) stresses the need to ensure their continued physical separation. However there may be advantages of closer economic links.

It is better for the sustainability, vitality and viability of the three main towns if local interaction between them is strengthened. For example, enhancing the scale and choice of employment offered by the three towns to its combined workforce, means travel to work and business-to-business activities would be kept local. This is better than, by default, encouraging travel to say Leicester, Birmingham, Peterborough, Milton Keynes or London.

The implication here is that sites that lie along the main north-south links between the three towns should be given more weight. The land north of Park Farm Industrial Estate is an example, as are the sites that lie along the Eastern relief Road (Stanton Cross Access Routes 6, 6-7 and 7) down to the A45.

The Wilby Way roundabout area could also be considered as a significant hub given that Northampton is a Growth area and there is likely to be very high commercial demand for such an accessible and prominent site. However there are identified sustainable urban extension locations to be considered as well as sustainability issues that have to be assessed, as this report identifies in the sites analysis section.

#### (d) Deliverability

The thrust of this study has been to focus early delivery on sites that have a high likelihood of delivery in the period up to 2021. Sites associated with sustainable urban extensions, should be brought forward as part of those urban extensions.

#### (e) Rolling Review

The issues and uncertainties highlighted above, combined with recent Government advice on good practice means that the Employment Study should best be reviewed on a rolling basis both as the planning process moves forward, and as market supply and demand factors change. Once this study has fed into the emerging Local Development Framework (LDF), a first review should perhaps then take place 18 months to 2 years on (in 2008). This will allow for the adoption of the Core Strategy/Local Development Framework. A second major review might then be appropriate in around 2010/11.

### **4.3 Identifying Specific Locations**

#### **(a) General**

The Council requested that locations be identified for the purposes of strategic planning and that these locations by the nature of this study would have boundaries and developable areas that were only approximate.

Nortoft and LSH identified a broad search limit as discussed in the paragraphs below. Extensive research was also undertaken with all key landowners, agents and developers to help identify potential sites and further search areas. Nortoft and LSH also undertook specific enquiries in relation to sites that best fitted the planning and policy drivers.

Once sites with potential had been identified, further discussions were held with: landowners, agents and developers; planning and economic development officers of the Borough Council; officers of the NNT Joint Planning Unit; the County Council; Invest Northamptonshire and others. These discussions allowed for a second opinion on the consultants' selection of sites as well as the opportunity to ensure that key sites had not been missed.

#### **(b) Town and Town Centre Locations**

The identification of town and town centre sites, particularly for B1 and B2 uses, is a planning priority. Essentially most town/town centre sites already have a use, so the emphasis is on regeneration, intensification and change of use.

Wellingborough town centre has several sites/areas that can offer opportunities for employment; however, these sites are mostly likely to consist of mixed development with a strong emphasis on the provision of retail development. This is because the need for increased retail has been assessed by Roger Tym Associates as being in the region of 20,000 sqm up to 2021, which is likely to take up the majority of town centre development land. The town centre sites identified in the study will provide some opportunities for an

important but relatively small net area of B1 employment development. Some sites can be expected to be developed as part of the town centre regeneration in areas such as the High Street Development within about a 5-7 year period (i.e. by 2010/12)

These sites include the High Street development site; the Sheep Street offices above the Swansgate Centre and other sites that are being further investigated through the Town Centre AAP process.

Provision for high quality headquarters and other major office sites adjacent to the station are to be considered as very important and site E2 is particularly important for this (ref Station Island SPD and developer interest). This site has the potential to allow for a major allocation of B1, which would be in excess of current Local Plan allocations, as for example being proposed by the current promoter of the site. However this would need to be assessed in terms of meeting planning needs. Site E1 (Eastfield Rd) is currently allocated for mixed use but housing dominated site. Developer interest suggests further intensifications of housing densities. One option worth exploring, from an employment planning perspective, is to increase the B1 employment use of this site with its unique proximity to the station and links to Station Island (site E2).

Other town sites are grouped:

- within the Finedon Road Industrial Estate where both redeveloped sites and new sites could come forward ;
- within the Denington Industrial Estate where limited opportunities for redevelopment from B2 to B1 may be commercially viable in the longer term;
- within "Land to the South of the Railway" ( the old abattoir area adjacent to Kangaroo Spinney on Irthlingborough Rd);
- within the Eastfield Road development area (although housing needs are likely to significantly limit the availability of land for employment) and;

- within the Stanton Cross development (subject to agreement on s106, detailed planning etc).

Some of the above sites, particularly those on brownfield land, would benefit from grant aid, such as the Fit for Market Fund or similar, to help clear any final viability gap.

Funding for major strategic access works would need to be developer funded or may be sought via NNDC and the Council from DCLG/DfT/Dti.

Other sites within the town may come forward where, for example, previous B2 employment uses could change to B1. Some of these site areas are not included in the study and may be considered as windfall sites.

Other sites identified around the edge of Wellingborough town are dealt with below under 'Peripheral Sites'.

#### (c) Peripheral Sites

A "search limit" around the periphery of the town was agreed with the Council officers. (see search area diagram). This search limit identified a land area well in excess of any identified proposed employment area needs. It also covered emerging sites as defined in the CoPELA Review (Tym and LSH 2006)

Sites were examined right around the town within the agreed search limit:

- to the East, avoiding coalescence with Finedon, up to the Sidegate Lane Landfill site, and Finedon Top Lodge plantations and Borough boundary;
- to the South generally down to the River Nene floodplain and avoiding coalescence with Great Doddington
- to the West potentially avoiding coalescence with Wilby, extending Park Farm Industrial Estate and up to the proposed A509 extension joining Park Farm Way,

- to the North-West avoiding coalescence with the Harrowdens and from the eastbound arm of the proposed Isham Bypass extension round to Redhill Grange.
- to the North infilling the Redhill Grange to Finedon Rd Industrial Estate gap and up to the railway line and Ise floodplain

As stated above the Council requested that locations be identified for the purposes of strategic planning and that these locations by the nature of this study, would have boundaries and developable areas that were only approximate. The emerging Site Specific DPD will need to look in more detail at the precise boundaries.

These peripheral sites can be of significant size and can therefore help deliver any large scale new employment land that is needed. Some are close to high quality transport routes (e.g. A45 and A509) and thus are commercially attractive, particularly to those uses that need access to wider markets (e.g. B8) and those that need prominent sites (some B1). There are also environmental benefits to be derived from locating HGV movements away from residential areas.

The search limit allows for several sites that are attractive for research and development (R&D) high-tec offices and could provide a high quality environment, accessible to the wider transport network and in a parkland setting (as also recognised in the emerging North Northamptonshire Core Spatial Strategy). The sites identified are also reasonably accessible to the town centre and residential areas. Good examples of this are the: N3 and N4 sites (near Blackberry Fox Covert), which are set in rolling countryside adjacent to mature woodlands; and some of the "EE" sites north of South View Farm and adjacent to Sidegate Lane (in the latter case once the landfill operations have been complete around 2012). The Wilby Way roundabout site (W5) would also be very commercially attractive for such uses subject to the consideration of sustainability issues (notably visual impact on Wilby), timing issues as the site is not identified in the Core Spatial Strategy and access issues related to the Wilby Way Roundabout on the A45.

Other such parkland sites may be found within the current proposed Stanton Cross development (e.g. sites E4 and E13) in suitably attractive settings.

These sites though are not as sustainable in environmental terms as town centre sites. however the Core spatial strategy encourages location of new major employment sites within sustainable urban extensions. These sites have been identified because of the overall locational needs listed above, coupled with the wider sustainability need to ensure jobs can be located through sites that will be developed in the short to medium term, be competitive with other towns' sites, and so help support locally available jobs-led growth.

Thus a balance is being struck between environmental protection and economic development, which is the basis of holistic sustainability in the context of the wider MKSM Growth area policies, and to support the thrust of emerging job targets and policies in the Local Development Framework.

#### (d) Rural

Whilst large scale sites in and around urban areas have been identified, Borough economic priorities identify the need to provide employment opportunities for rural communities as well. Particularly with new technology, employment in villages can help deliver high quality and highly skilled jobs through small B1 office locations and, in some exceptional instances, by the provision of related and appropriate B2 development.

Recent market experience and future market predictions strongly favour small rural office developments as might typically be found in the conversion of a set of traditional farm buildings, as long as the market is not swamped by too many such developments in one area or at one time.

The village and rural environment is very sensitive to the type, scale and location of such development, and there are clear policies regarding inappropriate development in open countryside. This needs to be balanced against the deliverability of high priority economic targets, and the need to provide employment in rural areas.

It is therefore felt that with sufficient planning protection and with a clear policy on the amount, scale, location, phasing, quality and type of employment that a set amount of rural office development should be positively encouraged.

(e) Small sites in larger rural settlements

Whilst urban brownfield sites have been identified in this study, the development opportunities for small sites in the larger villages of Earls Barton, Wollaston, Bozeat, Irchester and Finedon should also be encouraged where such sites typically have existing employment use, that could be intensified or “upgraded” in a way that does not increase conflicts with neighbouring uses. For example from some poorer quality B2 uses upgraded, to higher quality, more intensive B1 uses.

Such redevelopment would need to be able to be achieved in a sustainable manner. As it is not that practical to make a conclusive study of where such sites may be located or when they might come onto the market, and the fact that such sites will generally not make a major impact on the overall scale of provision needed, it is suggested that these be considered as potential windfall sites, but not counted in the totals for this study.

#### **4.4 Initial Assessment of Sites**

(a) Once the refined search area and initial discussions with planners, landowners and agents had been undertaken a detailed list of factors was then taken into account for each site, broadly split into commercial/economic factors and sustainable/environmental/social factors. Sites that best met a combination of the commercial and sustainability criteria were identified as having a high priority.

(b) The appraisal of the sustainable/environmental/social factors was based on:

- Landscape (topography, impact on landscape, agricultural land quality)
- Biodiversity
- Cultural and heritage impacts

- Sustainable access (for customers, services and employees; close to station and/or main road network without impact in residential areas or through villages / countryside);
- Access to/for employees and potential to benefit local deprivation areas; (ease of employees accessing site, ease of access through non-car travel; closeness to deprived wards; access for workers to facilities - lunchtimes etc);
- Impact on residential areas and other nearby uses
- Impact on proposed draft "Strategic Gap"
- Fit within current/emerging planning policy (e.g. draft CSS urban extension locations)

(c) The appraisal of the commercial/economic factors included:

- Site access for commercial use (including workforce availability; accessibility to the main trunk road network)
- Site prominence in terms of commercial visibility/prominence attractiveness of the surrounding areas to business; proximity to similar uses
- Site costs (overall development costs including site estimated abnormals; existing land use and planning permissions)
- Current developer interest
- Deliverability overview (based on costs of land/rents; site availability; sites constraints; complexity of land assembly; supply/demand/ market conditions/market activity; likelihood of early development)

#### **4.5 Refinement of sites**

##### (a) Putting sites into categories

The sites assessments were based on a qualitative judgement taking into account all the above factors and expressing them as a numerical summary, so as to be able to plot the relative position of the sites in relation to a combined assessment of the commercial and sustainable factors. This was a useful aid from which site assessments were further checked and refined on planning and deliverability grounds. It is to be stressed that qualitative

judgements were given more weight than the quantitative assessments, the latter only being used as a guide to relative broad deliverability assessment.

The relative deliverability priority of sites was thus assessed on a qualitative basis supported by using a graph (see key sites graph diagram) summarising commercial and sustainability benefits. Potential sites were split into five categories, as follows:

- Sites that are most deliverable and are likely to be available in the near future or would be available given likely intervention funding to mitigate abnormal costs such as major infrastructure provision. These sites are coloured dark green on the site assessment sheets/plans.
- Land that is likely to be deliverable at a later stage, perhaps before 2016, but where some land may be dependant on the determination of major housing allocations as part of as yet unplanned sustainable urban extension(s). These sites are hatched in light green in the site assessment sheets and plans.
- Land that may be of a higher deliverability at a later stage that is not identified in current or emerging planning policies and is given a lower priority in this study. Perhaps for consideration after 2021. These sites are coloured yellow in the site assessment sheets/plans.
- Land that is of a lower priority for deliverability and may have significant sustainable or commercial deliverability issues at this time. These sites are coloured dark orange or red in the site assessment sheets/plans.
- Land with a low or no reasonable likelihood of being suitable or available for employment. These sites are left blank on the site assessment plans. These might include floodplain areas, or areas outside of the search area (too far out).

Sites in the first two categories (green sites) form the pool from which the final top deliverable sites can be chosen. Although sites in the third and fourth categories (yellow and orange sites) are not seen as current priorities/easily deliverable, there could be some exceptions, for example where the site is a marginal "green" site (such as site W5 near Wilby Way roundabout), or if major limitations / uncertainties were overcome (e.g. through intervention funding to overcome say site accessibility). Clearly for those sites close to, and on either side of the boundaries (e.g. immediately either side of the yellow/ green

boundary) it is not a simple case of "in" or "out" but being very close in terms of deliverability.

**Worked examples:**

(The extracts below are copied from the key sites spreadsheet for commercial and sustainable delivery)

Sustainability											
Site ID	Location	Comment	Landscape	Bio-diversity	Cultural Heritage	Sustainable access	Deprivation	Impact on existing housing/ other uses	Proposed LDF "Strategic Gap"?	Planning Policy	Rank block 1-4
N4	W'borough Grange Farm	North extension of Park Farm IE. Housing competition?					some yellow	some yellow	n/a	some orange	3.25
W2	Appelby Lodge Farm	Westwards expansion of town not so sustainable; impact on open countryside. Prologis.	also grade 2 agricultural			Some red			n/a		2.50

Commercial Deliverability											
Site ID	Location	Comment		Site access	Site prominence	Site costs (abnormals etc)	Current Developer interest	Deliverability Overview	Rank block 1-4		
N4	W'borough Grange Farm	North extension of Park Farm IE. Housing competition? Assume even if major housing site then mixed with significant employment, best focussed at eastern end. Assume Isham bypass extension in place. Nearer A45	Potential developer interest. Employment B1 ( c ), B2, B8. Rental values circa £4.50 - £5 psf p.a. Freehold value circa £55 psf. Net yield circa 6.5%.					(SOME O)	3.25		
W2	Appleby Lodge Farm	Westwards expansion of town not so sustainable; impact on open countryside	Potential developer/occupier interest. B1 industrial, B2 or B8. Access improvements required. B8 value £4.65 psf pa. Capital Value £60 psf. Net yield 6.0%. B1C/B2 £4.50 - £5.25 psf. Net yield 6.5%. Offices £175 & £14.50 psf.	O (SOME Y)	O (SOME Y)		Y/O	Y/O	2.75		

In the Sustainability table above; the landscape, biodiversity and cultural heritage assessment was derived from the County Council's own appraisal of the North Northants

towns Core Spatial Strategy map-based analysis of Wellingborough. The employment sites were superimposed over the search areas used in the environmental appraisal and used the individual appraisals rather than the combined appraisal, given that they seen by the County Council as the more robust.

*Example:* The N4 site in landscape terms did not overlay areas of high/er landscape value (so yellow); whilst the W2 site overlaid some small areas of landscape importance (so orange). Also in this case the W2 site overlaid soil of agricultural grade 2 the highest grade in Wellingborough (from DEFRA/MAFF maps) and so would further confirm the colour as a definite orange rather than a marginal orange.

Sustainable Access assesses the sites in relation to their closeness to the town centre, with a view on direct access through good road links and the actual/potential cycling/walking and bus links. It was judged not appropriate to assume potential road links or major new public transport ideas except for those with planning permission and/or confirmed delivery.

*Example:* N4 was an orange given it is located away from the town centre, but still adjacent to current housing areas with bus services and cycle routes. W2 is similar to N4 but that much further away on far side of the Park Farm Industrial Estate - hence "some red". These tow examples would compare to all Town Centre sites that gain a clear yellow.

Deprivation was assessed by considering the accessible distance between sites and the more deprived town wards (including Swanspool, Hemmingwell, Brickhill, Queensway and Croyland - as defined in Northants Observatory IMD revised 2004 Super-output areas).

*Example:* N4 was orange with some yellow as although not adjacent to the most deprived wards, Hemmingwell and Queensway are within cycling and just within walking distance. W2 though is on the far side of Park Farm and both in distance and perceptually and merits a red (just).

Impact on existing housing/other uses was assessed by the closeness and exposure of the potential sites to nearby housing or other amenity uses including footpaths. Closeness to other employment land was seen as plus factor.

*Example:* N4 Wellingborough Grange is in an open countryside site but immediately over the road from the Redwell housing area, so gets an orange with some yellow, whereas W2 being away from all housing and adjacent to Park farm IE employment merits a yellow.

Proposed LDF Strategic Gaps section was assessed on how close the proposed site was to the draft strategic gaps identified in the Preferred Options for North Northamptonshire. Whilst it is recognised these gaps have not yet been agreed/adopted it was felt that some weight should be given to these.

*Example:* N4 and W2 are not near such gaps and do not score an orange or red. (Rather than allocate a positive yellow to those away from the strategic gaps these sites were left as n/a or blank).

In Planning Policy: This is based on the emerging Core Spatial Strategy Preferred Options for North Northamptonshire, directions of growth for those sites outside the current town boundary, based on existing permissions for sites such as Stanton Cross, and for regeneration sites based on current land use.

*Example:* N4 scores a yellow with some orange, this is because part of the site is near/on the approximate area of the indicative Preferred Options North-West Wellingborough area for growth. However W2 scores a red for the same issue as it is effectively in open countryside away from any indications of growth.

These same two sites when assessed for commercial deliverability.

Site Access: The assessment relates to the commercial ease of access eg how close a site is to the major road network particularly to the A45, and to the A14.

*Example:* N4 is adjacent to the ring road/Park Farm Way and the proposed A509 bypass to the A14, so it scores a yellow, whilst W2 is set back from Park Farm Way, although close to Park Farm Way, it scores an orange with some yellow.

Site Prominence: The assessment relates to how prominent the site is judged in terms of being seen from the major road network and in particular major road junctions. Its view from other roads and railway would also figure, but judged not as strongly in terms of numbers seeing the location.

*Example:* W2 scores an orange as it is tucked away behind Park Farm Industrial Estate, whereas N4 would be highly prominent in a prominent sloped site at the junction of the A509/Niort Way and A509 bypass and so scores a clear yellow.

Site Costs Abnormals: A combination of on-site factors including sloping ground, pylons, floodplain, potential contamination (eg due to current or previous use) and cost of replacing existing use.

*Examples:* both sites are on Greenfield sites, though W2 has pylons and a brook, whilst N4 has slopes and a brook, both are scored similarly with orange.

Current Developer Interest: This is based on the current market assessment and so takes into account current deliverability.

*Examples:* N4 is a known site identified as a potential development site for some years with an active promoter and a wide range of development opportunities (e.g. B1, B2 and B8 with other complimentary uses). It is likely to be judged by other developers as a priority site. W2 has a commercial promoter, but a more limited range of development options (essentially B8 and a developer more able to take a longer term view on the site) so it scores a close orange with some yellow.

Deliverability Overview: This is an overall feeling for the site from an independent commercial agents viewpoint (LSH) and takes into account past, current and expected market trends (as detailed in Chapter 3), as well as an overview of how the other commercial assessed factors interact.

*Examples:* It is known that W2 has a clear developer interest/active promotion, but has a more limited range of development options and a developer who can take a longer-term view. However the B8 market demand is very high and supply low so it is a borderline orange/yellow. N4 is a more prominent site adjacent to existing and proposed main road links in a prominent position and a wider range of development opportunities, with promoters more likely to want a shorter term delivery. It will very marketable and deliverable and so gets a yellow/some orange.

### Summary of Examples

Each of the assessed factors was nominally given equal weight.

In commercial terms N4 has 3 definite "yellows" , 1 marginal "yellow" and one "orange" such it is judged to gain a high score of 3.25 (max available score being 4).

W2 has two "oranges", and 3 marginal orange/yellows and so a score of 2.75, still quite high, but not as high as N4.

In sustainable terms N4 has one yellow, one marginal yellow, two marginal orange/yellows and 3 oranges. Thus it achieves a high score of 3.25. However W2 has one yellow, three oranges, a marginal orange/red and two clear reds. This is a poor score with some substantial issues (reds) and only gains a 2.5.

So for N4 the high commercial score is combined with the high sustainable score the net result is a highly deliverable site, of some size, that should be considered as high priority in the emerging LDF. Such is its suggested importance that a view may be taken to protect this site for employment, even if there is housing development interest.

In the case of site W2 it is unlikely to be identified as a priority site, even with clear developer interest, because it is both commercially and particularly sustainably weaker than most of the other assessed sites.

LSH and Nortoft then reviewed the relative position of all sites in relation to each other and in relation to existing town employment sites, to confirm in their judgement the relationships, and checked some of the marginal score assessments such as borderline yellow and oranges. The final commercial and sustainability scores are therefore mainly from the "average" of the individually assessed factors, considered where some issues were significant (such as some major "red" issues), took an overall view on deliverability and importantly took a judged view on the relative positioning of the sites. The scores for the sustainability and the commercial deliverability were not added together, but a matrix graph was created so as to be able to compare the relative strengths and weakness of the sites. The final deliverability rankings were therefore based on informed judgement rather than relying on an empirical assessment.

These relationships are graphically shown on the key sites graph. The graph best helps analyse the relationship in relative priority terms between all sites. The allocation of green, yellow, orange and red is arbitrary only in the sense that the lines separating the colours could be moved. This will not of course affect the relative positioning of the sites.

This therefore gives a most useful tool as new allocation of employment land. Further work will be needed by the Council to refine the site choice for new employment land based on the supply/demand conclusions from the emerging CoPELA review, and other LDF policy work on type of employment desired (e.g. confirmation of the importance of attracting environmental industries).

## **(b) Site Allocation by Land Use**

Sites were prioritised that would best meet the land requirements identified by the Council for B1, B2 and B8 uses.

“Logistics Plus” may need to be supported by suitable employment land allocations. Such developments are advocated by Invest Northamptonshire, based on wider external research, and are being considered by the Borough Council. Logistics-Plus sites would essentially provide more jobs per hectare and higher quality jobs than could be delivered by traditional B8 distribution sites. This is achieved by co-locating a firm’s distribution B8 with its related B2 (e.g. product assembly) and related B1 (e.g. headquarter management) uses and offers the added advantage of reducing transport waste between assembly and delivery functions.

The CoPELA study identified a current surplus of B2 uses. Market analysis by LSH, however, has identified that there is a need to provide for new forms of B2, particularly those associated with distribution, as above, and also those associated with hi-tec industries and priority clusters (e.g. environmental technologies). The authors of this study would suggest that B2 and B8 allocations be merged. Where there is a need to limit the size of the B8 sheds then size limits can be imposed through planning policy or planning conditions. On large sites, this type of mixed allocation will be particularly attractive to distribution firms bringing headquarters functions to Wellingborough and in the case of the smaller/size limited sites this may encourage growth and retention of existing smaller operations.

A final detailed analysis of deliverable sites was undertaken and this confirmed those sites that would best:

- benefit balanced sustainability and commercial needs;
- meet planning policy and economic development drivers;
- deliver the specific amount of B1, B2/B8 land requirements; and
- be best likely to be delivered in time to support jobs led growth during the plan period to 2021.

## **4.6 Conclusions**

This Employment Study has assessed all sites within the search area for their sustainable and commercial deliverability in line with market appraisal and planning policies. The location and size of these sites is identified in the sites analysis section of this report.

Given the nature of the emerging Core Spatial Strategy an early and on-going review of the site boundaries will be needed.

The sites have been assessed in relative deliverability terms, allowing allocation of sites through the Local Development Framework to match B1, B2 and B8 land allocation needs as defined through other emerging supply/demand studies. The emerging CoPELA review (draft July 2006) and its interpretation at local level will identify the amount of B-Class employment land needed

There are challenging targets set within the emerging Core Spatial Strategy, informed by the Regional Spatial Strategy, to deliver 13,800 jobs by 2021, and in particular to deliver the right sort of higher skilled jobs. Chapter 6 this study examines the emerging CoPELA review and makes the links between job numbers and identified land.

A land area in excess of expected minimum needs has therefore been identified in this study. This will enable the Council to be better informed should a higher allocation of land be needed, for whatever reason. For example it may be helpful to have larger strategic sites identified, in excess of local identified need should a national/regional employment opportunity arise, and this study's search limit is wide enough to allow for such future consideration. It may also be helpful to identify land in excess of minimum targets so as to better allow a wider range of sites thus making the Wellingborough offer to prospective employers more attractive.