

# Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough – Part 2 Local Plan Examination

Matter 7 - Is the Plan effective in  
delivering economic prosperity in line  
with the JCS?

Date: March 2018

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement provides the response of the Borough Council of Wellingborough (BCW) to the following issues and questions raised by the Inspector relating to Matter 7 of the examination into the Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough (PBW).

### **Matter 7 - Is the Plan effective in delivering economic prosperity in line with the JCS?**

- 7.1 *Does the Plan establish a sustainable framework for achieving the employment objectives of the JCS e.g. policy 22, including the provision of a sustainable balance between housing and employment?*
- 7.2 *Are policies E1 and E2 for established industrial estates sound, and are the boundaries of these sites appropriately drawn?*
- 7.3 *Is policy E3 for employment outside established employment estates sound?*
- 7.4 *Are the retail and town centre provisions in the Plan (policies R1-3) sound?*

- 1.2 References used in this statement (e.g. CON 1) relate to documents held in the examination library available on the council website on the [examination page](#).

## 2. Response of the BCW to the specific questions relating to Matter 7

### **7.1 Does the Plan establish a sustainable framework for achieving the employment objectives of the JCS e.g. policy 22, including the provision of a sustainable balance between housing and employment?**

- 2.1 The employment strategy in the Plan is based on a robust evidence base. The Employment Land Supply Update ([ECO 1](#)) clearly shows a significant amount of commitments and the Employment Land Review ([ECO 2](#)) demonstrates that these commitments, together with the existing sites provide a portfolio of sites to meet the borough's needs.
- 2.2 The councils response to whether the employment strategy is appropriate is set out in paragraphs 4.36-4.42 of [CON 9](#). This sets out that the Plan establishes a sustainable framework for achieving the employment objectives of the JCS and ensure a sustainable balance between housing and employment, an issue that was considered extensively during the preparation of the JCS. The JCS Inspector considered the deliverability of the employment strategy in the JCS extensively and his conclusions at paragraphs 83-84 of his report ([JCS 2](#)) are relevant (also set out at para 4.38 of [CON 9](#)).
- 2.3 It is clear that there is a range of different sites across the borough to deliver the employment growth outlined in [ECO 2](#) and [ECO 1](#). There is a robust employment strategy based on safeguarding and enhancing existing sites and delivering sites that are committed to support the local economy. Paragraph 4.37 of [CON 9](#) shows that the number of business within the borough continues to growth, suggesting a healthy local

economy. Work has now started on the Leyland scheme referred to in paragraph 4.40 of [CON 9 \(https://www.semlep.com/news/2018/work-starts-on-site-for-new-42500-sq-ft-industrial-development-at-leyland-trading-estate-wellingborough/\)](https://www.semlep.com/news/2018/work-starts-on-site-for-new-42500-sq-ft-industrial-development-at-leyland-trading-estate-wellingborough/).

- 2.4 It is noteworthy that the Joint Planning Committee confirmed that the Publication Plan for the Borough of Wellingborough was in conformity with the JCS at its 7<sup>th</sup> November 2017 meeting ([JCS 4](#) and [JCS 5](#)). There have also been very few objections to the soundness of the employment strategy with the Plan, illustrating that is appropriate, sustainable and deliverable.

## **7.2 Are policies E1 and E2 for established industrial estates sound, and are the boundaries of these sites appropriately drawn?**

- 2.5 Policies E1 and E2 set out a flexible approach for site improvements and changes of use at existing established industrial estates, which form the bulk of employment land in the borough. The policies will ensure that there are a sufficient range of sites available for smaller and local business, and therefore alongside strategic sites ensure a robust portfolio of employment land within the borough to meet its needs. Both of the policies are based on a robust evidence base including [ECO 1](#) & [2](#).
- 2.6 The rationale for policy E1, including the evidence base on which it is based and its relationship with Policy 22 of the JCS is set out in paragraphs 6.1.1-6.1.8 of the PBW. The policy deals with modernising and enhancing existing industrial estates, taking forward conclusions of the Employment Land Review ([ECO 2](#)) that some estates will require refurbishment of older buildings and some general improvements to access. The support of Northamptonshire County Council Highways to the policy is noted and welcomed.
- 2.7 As set out in para 4.40 of [CON 9](#) the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) has recently identified £1.26M for funding to improve the Leyland industrial estate from the Local Growth fund. This emphasises that the policy framework to modernise and enhance existing industrial estates is sound and deliverable. As referred to in paragraph 2.3 above, work has now commenced on this scheme.
- 2.8 The rationale for Policy E2 and its evidence base is set out in paragraphs 6.1.9-6.1.12 of the Plan. Policy E2 is considered to give sufficient flexibility to non B uses whilst still ensuring that an appropriate range of sites and premises remain available for small to medium sized B use businesses.
- 2.9 It is considered that the boundaries of the established industrial estates are appropriately drawn, they simply identify the extent of the existing employment areas. As referred to in Policy E1, once the strategic employment commitment at Appleby Lodge (shown on the Town Inset of the Policies Map) and the employment elements of the SUEs have been developed they will also be treated as established industrial estates for the purposes of Policies E1, E2 and E3.

## **7.3 Is policy E3 for employment outside established employment estates sound?**

- 2.10 Policy E3 recognises the contribution of employment outside established employment estates. The council places great importance on local business and jobs. The plan will aim to, wherever appropriate, promote the retention of these businesses and premises in

business and industrial use but allows some flexibility for changes of use, consistent with the provisions of Policy 22 of the JCS. The rationale for Policy E3 is set out in paragraphs 6.2.1-6.2.2 of the PBW which is consistent with guidance in paragraph 22 of the NPPF.

#### **7.4 Are the retail and town centre provisions in the Plan (policies R1-3) sound?**

- 2.11 The retail and town centre provisions in the Plan (Policies R1-3) are sound and based on a robust evidence base. The rationale for the retail and town centre provisions including the relationship with the NPPF and the JCS is set out in paragraphs 8.0.1-8.4.5 of the Plan. It is noteworthy that no objections have been made to the soundness of this section of the Plan.
- 2.12 The policies (R1-3) reflect the impact of Rushden Lakes on available retail capacity, and are consistent with the provisions of Policy 12 of the JCS, which does not identify a need for additional comparison floorspace in Wellingborough. The policies have been informed by a robust evidence base, including the North Northamptonshire Retail Capacity Update 2014 ([ECO 4](#)). This update and the WYG Town Centre and Retail Study ([ECO 3](#)) both show that spending on comparison goods could support some additional comparison floorspace in Wellingborough after 2026, but that this is dependent on the performance of the Rushden Lakes scheme. The retail hierarchy (Policy R1) is consistent with the spatial strategy of the JCS and the sequential approach set out in the NPPF. Policy R2 plans positively for the provision of local shops and guards against the unnecessary loss of valued facilities as set out in paragraph 70 of the NPPF. The Local Impact Threshold (Policy R3) is based on robust locally specific evidence, taking account of the impacts of Rushden Lakes and other schemes and accords with paragraph 26 of the NPPF.