

Examination of the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan (2011 to 2029)

MF27 – Employment Sites and B8 Uses

1. Introduction

- 1.1 At the Local Plan hearing session on 3 November 2015 the Inspector expressed concern regarding the council's ability to respond to the current demand for storage and distribution floorspace. Consequently he issued a note to the council which stated that:

“Policy EP1 encourages inward investment and employment growth, but refers to the allocation of new employment sites in a subsequent DPD, which could be adopted some time away.

There is a clear need for the Local Plan to be positively prepared and to accord with the Government's Growth Agenda. In particular, the Local Plan should not hold up the implementation of new businesses within the Borough, especially within sectors such as storage and distribution (Use Class B8) for which the ELR Update (PS/02/23) states in paragraph 1.1.10 that strong evidence for market demands exists.

Given the strategic considerations, in what ways can Policy EP1 provide the necessary strategic direction to steer potential users of large employment sites to appropriate sites in the very near future?”

2. Proposed amendments

- 2.1 In response to the Inspector's concerns, policy EP1 is proposed to be amended in order to provide a policy framework which will allow the council to respond appropriately to the current market demand for storage and distribution floorspace. The amendments proposed seek to reflect the evidence contained within the council's Employment Land Review (ELR), and the information provided by Barton Willmore, on behalf of Segro, through their various submissions in respect of the Submission Local Plan. The proposed new amendments, which primarily relate to the inclusion of a new section relating specifically to storage and distribution, are shown as tracked changes in section 3.
- 2.2 Turning more specifically to the proposed new policy criteria, the first clause, g), relates to mitigating landscape impact, which pertains to paragraph 3.7 in Barton Willmore's Assessment of B8 Floorspace Need:

“Segro Properties Ltd are aware that B8 development requires significant green infrastructure to frame a development site, and protect the landscape and visual amenity of the area.”

The clause provides additional detail in relation to this element of the policy in order to help applicants and decision makers appropriately assess potential sites and forms of development.

- 2.3 In addition, Barton Willmore's September submission sets out the following assessment of storage and distribution site requirements:

"The suitability of a site should be based upon, amongst other things, its accessibility for HGV's, connections to the transportation network, accessibility of public transport, labour force and the ability to operate without affecting residential amenity¹."

Clause h) draws on the reference in Barton Willmore's submission to the need to ensure that storage and distribution premises are able to operate in a manner which is compatible with residential development. This principle also applies to other land uses and therefore a more general term of "neighbouring uses" has been included within clause h).

- 2.4 The specification of 'high quality' floorspace, clause i), reflects the findings of the ELR 2014 (paragraphs 5.19 and 5.20) and Barton Willmore's reference to the need for grade A space².
- 2.5 Clause j) responds to the importance of the strategic road network and the need for sites to be accessibility by HGVs, as per the quotation from the Barton Willmore submission set out above in paragraph 2.3. Closely associated with these transport considerations is the need to ensure that proposals do not have a severe highways impact and this is covered in clause k).
- 2.6 Given the scale of development potentially required, clause l) is proposed in order to ensure that the delivery of such a site(s) is provided in a manner which successfully mitigates any impacts on the character of any nearby settlements. The final policy criterion m), is proposed in order to prevent unchecked levels of development coming forward via this policy.
- 2.7 In addition, the council proposes to include additional supporting text for policy EP1. The supporting text clarifies that the amendments to policy EP1 provide a mechanism for storage and distribution floorspace requirements to be met in the very near future if suitable sites come forward. Supporting text is also proposed which expands on the policy criteria referred to above, providing additional clarity and guidance for developers and decision makers.
- 2.8 Other amendments are also proposed, pertaining to the section on industrial and warehousing, to clarify that the focus for the council's employment land needs relates to storage and distribution floorspace.

¹ Barton Willmore reference 24329/A5/P2a/AB September 2015 paragraph 2.20

² Barton Willmore reference 24329/A5/P1/JR/ac June 2015 para 4.6

3. Conclusion

3.1 It is considered that the proposed amendments provide an appropriate level of guidance to the development industry and decision makers regarding the characteristics of suitable storage and distribution sites and will ensure that the Plan accords with the Government's growth agenda and complies with paragraphs 19 and 21 of the NPPF.

3.2 The council proposes to amend policy EP1 and supporting text as set out below.

7.7

Industrial/storage and distribution and Warehousing

- *Basingstoke town is an important commercial centre in Hampshire with a large concentration of industrial and storage and distribution ~~warehousing~~ floorspace.*
- *The industrial commercial property market in the borough functions well with a vacancy rate of 8 percent. This is within the thresholds for a functioning property market.*
- *There is a need to maintain a supply of good quality and affordable start up units.*
- *Market signals indicate that there is demand for land for new industrial and storage and warehousing ~~and distribution~~ premises in the borough from potential inward investors, though with a clear emphasis on storage and distribution.*
- ~~*There could be a need for up to 5,200 sqm² of industrial floorspace over the local plan period.*~~
- *The proximity of Basingstoke town to the south coast and strategic road network makes it particularly appealing for ~~logistics~~ storage and distribution use. Over the plan period the borough will require up to 122,000 sqm⁴ of storage and distribution floorspace to meet future needs. The report identifies that there is a shortfall of land for storage and distribution uses in the borough and suggests that the council explore opportunities for allocating new employment sites. There is a lack of medium sized sites available for storage and distribution ~~warehousing~~.*
- *Land currently designated for industrial and ~~warehousing~~ storage and distribution uses should be protected, subject to viability. ~~The allocation of~~ Providing a new site or sites for ~~industrial and~~ storage and distribution uses would provide flexibility and allow a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.*

7.8 The ELR identifies that Basingstoke and Deane has a relatively tight labour market. One possible way to mitigate this is through maximising the potential

of the existing population to fill jobs created in the borough, through the use of employment, skills and training development initiatives. Such initiatives could be sought through section 106 agreements.

- 7.9 The allocated Strategic Employment Areas, as defined on the Policies Map, are the main locations for employment development in the borough, reflecting their suitability and scope to accommodate development in the future. However, it is acknowledged that to meet the identified and forecast needs for the storage and distribution sector of both the industrial and distribution sectors, the council will need to identify sites for such uses. ~~These allocations will be achieved~~ made through the production of a subsequent Development Plan Document.

Policy EP1 – Economic Growth and Investment

Within the period 2011-2029, the Local plan will aim to support the creation of between 450-700 jobs per annum (8,100-12,600 during the plan period).

Inward investment and the growth and retention of existing business will be enabled by:

- a) *Protecting strategic employment sites for employment use (B-class) and enabling the regeneration / redevelopment of these sites for employment uses;*
- b) *Allocating a new employment site or sites for ~~industrial~~, storage and distribution uses in a subsequent Development Plan Document;*
- c) *Permitting employment uses at the strategic housing sites detailed in Policies SS3.10 and 3.11 where the employment use is of a scale and type appropriate to the sites location and where they will contribute to the creation of a sustainable mixed use community*

Opportunities to develop the following key employment sectors will be supported:

- d) *Specialist / advanced manufacturing (including research and development)*
- e) *Financial and business services in Basingstoke town centre and the established office locations of Basing View, Chineham Business Park (including Hampshire International Business Park) and Viables.*
- f) *Storage and distribution~~Distribution and logistics~~ in suitable locations.*

Development proposals for storage and distribution floorspace, outside of the existing Strategic Employment Areas, which come forward in advance of a subsequent DPD, will be permitted which are:

- g) Able to successfully mitigate the landscape impact, which will include the provision of sufficient space for appropriate soft landscaping/green infrastructure, appropriate location of development within the site, and utilise a design, and layout of built form and use of materials in order to ensure that any landscape impacts are minimised;*
- h) Compatible with any neighbouring uses, including residential properties;*
- i) For the provision of high quality floorspace;*
- j) Well related to the strategic road network and easily accessible for HGV's;*

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| <p>k) <u>Capable of being provided without having a severe highways impact;</u></p> <p>l) <u>Able to successfully mitigate the impact of the development on the character of nearby settlements; and</u></p> <p>m) <u>Able to demonstrate there is a proven need for the floorspace proposed.</u></p> |
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7.9a For the purposes of Policy EP1 an 'employment use' includes the B Class uses i.e. B1 business (including offices), B2 general industry and B8 storage/distribution uses. The policy sets out the strategic approach to employment development in the borough.

7.10 The retention of the Strategic Employment Areas is seen as important in maintaining an employment land supply that provides a range of sites across the borough. Policy EP2 provides more detail on the protection afforded to such areas. The regeneration and intensification of existing employment sites will be supported to allow businesses to expand and enable the provision of modern employment stock to replace properties that are reaching the end of their functional life.

7.11 The borough has a diverse employment base and the policy sets out the key employment sectors that the council is seeking to support in the borough to enhance the diversity of the boroughs economy over the Local Plan Period.

7.11a The ELR suggests that the existing Strategic Employment Areas are unlikely to be able to accommodate all of the borough's requirements for new storage and distribution floorspace over the Plan period. Therefore, the council will make provision for additional storage and distribution floorspace through a subsequent DPD. Planning applications for additional storage and distribution floorspace, which come forward in advance of a subsequent DPD, will be assessed against the requirements set out in policy EP1, as well as all other relevant policies.

7.11b The stipulations set out in the policy respond to the specific planning issues associated with the provision of storage and distribution facilities. The nature of modern storage and distribution facilities are generally likely to result in some adverse impacts on local landscape character and visual amenity. It will be important to locate any built form within parts of the site that will minimise these impacts. The sympathetic design of built form, layout and materials used will also assist in minimising impacts on the local area. The size and scale of modern storage and distribution facilities will also generally require extensive soft landscaping/green infrastructure in order to minimise their impact on the character of the area. Accordingly, it is important to ensure that such sites allow sufficient space to provide for a suitable landscape scheme in accordance with the council's relevant policies (including EM1 - Landscape and EM10 - Delivering High Quality Development). Storage and distribution facilities can be difficult to reconcile with neighbouring uses, particularly residential development, owing to issues such as hours of operations. Therefore, such sites should be provided in a manner which successfully minimises impacts on neighbouring uses. Evidence demonstrates that such sites need to be high quality (ideally grade A space) in order to meet commercial requirements. Such sites rely on good access to the strategic

road network (principally the M3 corridor) and need to be easily accessible for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs).