

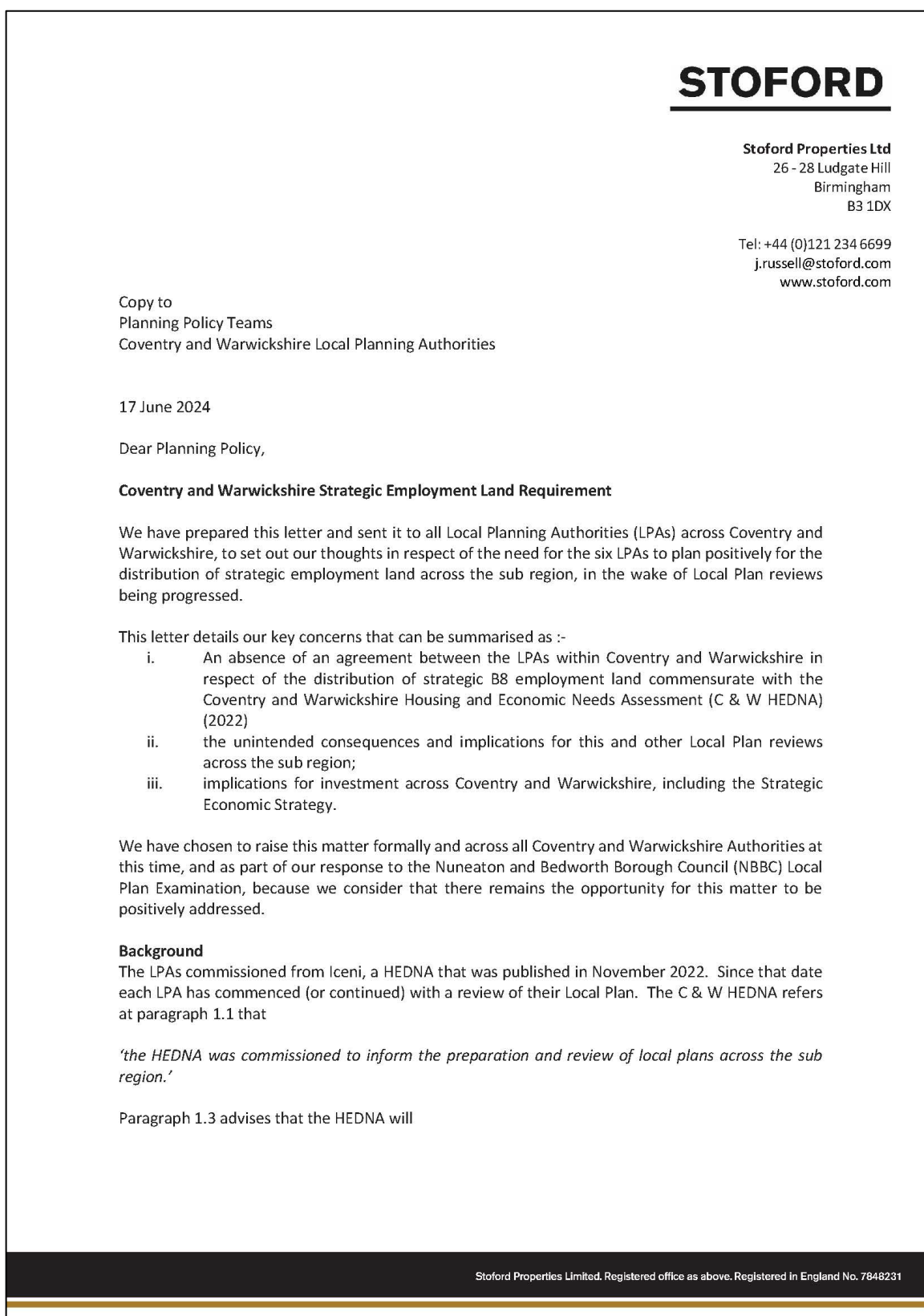
Matter 2 – Vision, Strategic Objectives and Development Strategy

Issue 2: Has the development strategy and the overall distribution of development been positively prepared, is it justified by a robust and credible evidence base, and is it consistent with national policy?

Q27. Does the development strategy in general, and Strategic Policy DS3 incorporate sufficient flexibility within it? Particularly with regard to the potential for unmet housing and employment need arising from neighbouring areas in the future.

- 1.1. 'Strategic Policy DS2 – Settlement hierarchy and roles' in **CD1** is evidenced on the Council's Accessibility and Settlement Hierarchy Study 2023 **[EB1]**. However, this does not consider the strategic road network, and accessibility to this in the scoring criteria which is key to strategic employment occupiers.
- 1.2. As required by the NPPF, planning policies should '*recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors*' (paragraph 87). Policy DS2 in **CD1** does not acknowledge, nor allow for the locational requirements of strategic warehousing to deviate from the settlement hierarchy. Therefore, under Policy DS2 of the submitted Plan **[CD1]**, any new unallocated development for strategic warehousing purposes outside of the settlement boundaries would be considered inappropriate. The policy should incorporate flexibility recognising that strategic warehousing development has different locational requirements to other uses such as housing that may justify development outside of settlement boundaries.
- 1.3. 'Strategic Policy DS3 – Overall development needs' in **CD1** states that: "*By 2039, as a minimum, the following levels of housing and employment development will be planned for and provided within Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough:... 19.4ha of employment land for strategic B8 warehousing and distribution development (indicative)*".
- 1.4. As set out in our letter at **Figure 1**, which has been sent to the Coventry and Warwickshire authorities (including Nuneaton and Bedworth) and Warwickshire County Council, we consider the method used to arrive at the figure of 19.4ha of employment land for strategic B8 development is unsound and the resultant quantum (19.4ha) far too low to meaningfully contribute to the overall sub regional strategic B8 requirement of 709ha (by 2050) or 606ha by 2041 identified in the Coventry and Warwickshire HEDNA **[EB7.1]**.
- 1.5. We are also concerned that if this approach is accepted at Examination it could set a serious precedent for limiting economic growth and investment in strategic warehousing and logistics across the Coventry and Warwickshire sub region and there is real risk that the overall need will not be met.

Figure 1: Letter to Coventry and Warwickshire LPAs, and Warwickshire County Council



'inform consideration of the scale and distribution of development within the sub region, particularly post 2031, which is to be addressed through a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Coventry and Warwickshire Authorities.' [my emphasis]

The HEDNA concludes that there is a Strategic B8 requirement across Coventry and Warwickshire of 606ha to be met by 2041, and 709h to be met by 2050. The MOU is intended to agree this distribution across the sub region.

Despite the Nuneaton and Bedworth Local Plan being submitted for Examination (that commences on 9 July 2024), the Memorandum of Understanding is not published within the Examination Library. There are Statements of Common Ground (SOCG) and letters, which we summarise below. At the crux of the issue is the decision by NBBC to identify a strategic B8 employment land requirement of just 19.4ha for a period 2021-2031, and, the failure of the Council to allocate any new sites to meet strategic B8 needs.

Coventry City Council

A SOCG (**Examination Document CD6.1**) dated January 2024 refers to the NBBC minimum requirement of 19.4ha of strategic B8 warehousing and distribution land. There is reference to this being a 'minimum' due to joint work which is cited as currently ongoing and the unknown outcome of the West Midlands Strategic Employment Sites Study (WMSESS). However, we note that the WMSESS has now been released to the LPAs and therefore this Study should now be used alongside the HEDNA to inform an agreed distribution of strategic employment land. No such progress is apparent and, in our view, the NBBC Examination will proceed and the risk of the HEDNA evidence and requirement not being addressed presents a real risk to strategic employment delivery across the sub region.

North Warwickshire Borough Council

North Warwickshire have submitted a letter to the Examination (**Examination Document CD5**) and the Council considers there should be provision of strategic employment sites included in the NBBC Plan. In terms of comparable timelines for review, North Warwickshire have commenced their review process with a Call for Sites exercise in May 2024. They have not published a figure that identifies their share of the Strategic B8 requirement.

Rugby Borough Council

Within the SOCG (**CD6.2**), Rugby Borough Council consider that the submitted plan underestimates the proportion of the allocated land that would be developed for strategic warehouses and therefore contribute to the C&W HEDNA sub regional strategic distribution need. In terms of comparable timelines for review, Rugby Borough have commenced their review process with a Call for Sites and Issues and Options consultation in January 2024. They have not published a figure that identifies their share of the Strategic B8 requirement.

Stratford on Avon District and Warwick District Council's

The Councils refer to the C & W HEDNA recommendation that the assessment of the supply of suitable locations for strategic B8 land is coordinated at a sub-regional level. They comment that it would not be appropriate to simply replicate past development patterns in respect of the spatial distribution of development by local authority. They state that it is the intention that once the WMSESS is published that the outcomes and final figure included in that Study will be considered by NBBC either in the Submission Document or at the Examination, depending on the timing and publication of the Study.

The Study has been received by the LPAs however it is not publicly available; and has not been incorporated into the Submission nor the Examination process.

Our concerns with the NBBC Local Plan

i. Not in accordance with the HEDNA

It is our position that as things stand, the NBBC Local Plan Examination is proceeding with a submitted Plan that does not respond to the recommendations of the evidence base – namely the HEDNA.

Paragraph 31 of the NPPF states that

‘the preparation and review of all policies should be underpinned by relevant and up to date evidence. This should be adequate and proportionate, focused tightly on supporting and justifying the policies concerned, and take into account relevant market signals.’

ii. No agreed MOU

The submitted Plan is not underpinned by the evidence within the HEDNA, which recommends a MOU be agreed. Instead, NBBC rely upon a more localised Assessment of Employment Land Needs (May 2022) (**Examination Document EB6**) and a further document **EB10** Nuneaton and Bedworth Employment Land Portfolio. The summary of the Industrial Market (which encompasses B8 Use) within paragraph 3.19 of EB6 identifies

‘market conditions in this sector are very strong at the time of writing, with availability and the immediate pipeline of space low which set against strong market conditions had led to rising rents and land values. This points to a need to bring forward additional sites’ [my emphasis]

iii. No additional site are allocated

However, in response to this evidence (and that of the C&W HEDNA), the submitted NBBC Local Plan does not allocate any additional sites for industrial or strategic warehousing development beyond those that were previously allocated in the adopted Local Plan (2019). Furthermore, every site within that Plan (and now reallocated within the Submission Plan) has progressed. All but two have received planning permission (one of these two, is pending). Four of the six allocations (carried forwards from 2019) have either completed or are under construction. No sites are available to meet the Strategic B8 needs of 606ha by 2041, or 709ha by 2050, as per the HEDNA.

As a result, the NBBC Local Plan being examined fails to take account of both the C&W HEDNA and the NBBC HEDNA, and market signals evidenced within it – contrary to the NPPF.

iv. A failure to meet strategic B8 needs

The NBBC HEDNA (**EB6**) incorrectly identifies 3 sites (Faultlands Farm, Pheonix Way and Bowling Green Lane) as potentially suitable sites for meeting the strategic B8 need. We disagree, because these three sites were allocated as part of the 2019 Local Plan process to meet the needs identified within that Local Plan (covering a different and shorter Plan Period) and predate the HEDNA evidence base. All of these sites also have progressed significantly since their initial allocation and will not be available to meet as yet, unidentified quantum of need arising from the future division of over 700ha (by 2050) of strategic B8 requirement stemming from the C &W HEDNA. **EB6** also highlights that these three sites are also unlikely to be fully developed for strategic B8 uses. **EB6** concludes at paragraph 10.25

- that NBBC will need to work with others in the sub region to confirm what proportion of the need for strategic warehousing it might accommodate. This exercise remains incomplete.
- The analysis within EB6 assumes that the future provision is in line with past trends (accounting for circa 19% of the sub regional total). This would equate to over 130ha of land. This has not been carried forward within the Submission Local Plan.

v. An objection to 19.4ha identified as meeting strategic needs by NBBC

The approach taken by the Local Plan reflects Examination Document **EB10** – Nuneaton and Bedworth Employment Land Portfolio. Within this document, the NBBC concludes that strategic employment needs for B8 uses should be 19.4ha. The figure is arrived at by a calculation that cannot be considered to be statistically sound. The document states at paragraph 6.10

A check through the detailed completions data suggests that over the 2016-21 period considered in the local evidence, strategic B8 completions would have comprised one unit: 1 St George's Way in Bermuda Park (21,554 sq.m) which was completed in 2019/20. On this basis and taking account of strategic B8 development as a proportion of overall industrial and warehouse completions between 2016-21, we calculate that of the 82.5 ha identified as needed, the implicit assumption would have been that 19.4 ha of this was for strategic B8 development specifically.

Therefore, consultants for NBBC simply assessed a five year period of completions data, and took from that, the completed floorspace where a unit was over 9,000sqm. This led to the assumption that one unit – 1 St Georges Way was representative of meeting strategic needs over that five year period. This trend of just one unit is then extrapolated across the NBBC Plan Period of 2021-2039. This approach is flawed for a number of reasons:-

- i. The Local Plan was not adopted until 2019. The allocated sites (which could support units of over 9,000sqm) were thus allocated and available for only 2 years within that five year period of assessment
- ii. The adoption of the Local Plan was key, given a number of sites able to support units of over 9,000qm were on site where Green Belt release was necessary
- iii. With the Local Plan only adopted in 2019, the period of time since 2019 for allocated sites to come through the planning application system, and subsequently units be constructed and completed, will naturally mean that completions in the period to 2021 will be limited, and skew the data used to calculate the proportion of 606ha (by 2041) that NBBC should receive. It is notable that of the allocations in 2019, only 2ha were non Green Belt. Since 2021, we have seen this picture change further (with more completions) and this is not reflected in the submitted Local Plan despite evidence being available.
- iv. The approach taken fails to secure an agreed approach and distribution of the C&W HEDNA figure for strategic B8 land, as recommended within the HEDNA and as referred to throughout the SOCG between the neighbouring LPAs
- v. The approach taken is based on an assessment of completions that arise from an already constrained land supply and thus will naturally be suppressed

vi. Implications for the sub region

Our concern is that the approach taken by the NBBC Local Plan could set a serious precedent for limiting economic growth and investment in strategic warehousing and logistics across the Coventry and Warwickshire sub region if the figure of 19.4ha is accepted for NBBC at Examination by the Inspectors.

This figure barely 'dents' the overall sub regional strategic B8 requirement of 709ha (by 2050) or 606ha by 2041. It leaves the residual LPAs (Rugby, Warwick, Stratford on Avon, North Warwickshire and Coventry) with 690ha to distribute by 2050, or almost 590ha by 2041. This residual figure is going to be challenging for those LPAs. By comparison, Rugby's adopted Local Plan (2019) had an employment target of 110ha across B1/2/8 (inclusive of any 'strategic needs' and a further target of 98ha to meet needs arising from Coventry at that time). If, as part of this Local Plan review, the residual figure of almost 600ha of strategic B8 land by 2040 is to be distributed amongst the remaining LPAs, the consequences for those Councils are quite significant.


We believe that locations such as Rugby, North Warwickshire, Warwick for example are well placed to accept additional growth to meet the B8 strategic requirement, however what is important initially, is that LPAs such as Rugby, have the opportunity with other neighbouring authorities to agree the distribution of the sub regional strategic B8 requirements and are not left in position where they may also decide to not meet a fair and proportionate amount of that need. Equally it is well known that Coventry City Council would struggle to meet a proportionate share (e.g. 100ha of Strategic B8 land) within its administrative boundaries – particularly given it looked to Rugby Borough to accommodate 98ha in 2019. Thus will the NBBC Plan risk setting a precedent for Coventry to follow? Whilst areas such as North Warwickshire are supported by a strong motorway network to assist in the delivery of strategic B8 land, conversely, Stratford and Warwick Districts are more constrained by the locations of their motorway junctions and how they relate to their urban areas.

Concluding remarks

The summary of the above is that the LPAs really must work together and agree a fair distribution of the strategic B8 requirements across the sub region, before any Local Plan review is completed. To not do so risks the delivery of the Warwickshire Strategic Economic Plan; individual Economic Strategies; and fails to attract and provide for strategic investment which could otherwise secure jobs, training, skills and business rates across the entire sub region.

It is our hope that the distribution of this letter, and presenting it to the Inspectors examining the NBBC Local Plan, that this matter will be addressed, and we strongly support the efforts of those LPAs who are willing to do so.

Yours sincerely,



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- 1.6. Paragraph 1.3 advises that the Coventry and Warwickshire HEDNA [EB7.1] will *‘inform consideration of the scale and distribution of development within the sub region, particularly post 2031, which is to be addressed through a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the Coventry and Warwickshire Authorities.’*
- 1.7. The HEDNA [EB7.1] concludes that there is a Strategic B8 requirement across Coventry and Warwickshire of 606ha to be met by 2041, and 709h to be met by 2050, and that an MOU is the mechanism by which to agree this distribution across the sub region.
- 1.8. The MOU is not published within the Examination Library and as far as we are concerned the overall requirement is yet to be disaggregated between the authorities. Thus, the decision to progress the plan for 19.4ha is premature to the disaggregation of B8 strategic land across the sub-region.
- 1.9. Since 19.4ha represents only 2.7% of the overall sub regional strategic B8 requirement of 709ha (to 2050) and only 3.2% of the 606ha requirement to 2041 this barely ‘dents’ the overall sub regional strategic B8 requirement. If this figure is accepted it will leave a residual figure of almost 587ha of strategic B8 land by 2040 to be distributed amongst the remaining authorities. The challenge of this will be compounded by Coventry who have known difficulties with meeting their own needs within their administrative boundaries.
- 1.10. In our view, the apportionment of sub-regional needs for strategic B8 development must be agreed amongst the authorities before the Local Plan review is complete. Distribution of the sub-regional need will provide the requisite evidence to inform an appropriate strategy for the Borough, that through additional site allocations can deliver its agreed proportion. It will also establish whether unmet needs of neighbouring authorities are to be met in the Borough.
- 1.11. In the interest of soundness, an agreed MOU is necessary now to ensure that the Plan is positively prepared, justified and effective across the Plan period in accordance with the NPPF (paragraph 35). We consider the issue of strategic B8 need at a sub-regional level is too important to be deferred via a future Plan Review, or similar mechanism, and the consequences of not addressing this need now are too great.