

Savills on behalf of Arbury Estate

Respondent ID: 106

Matter - 4 Employment

Issue 1: Whether the strategic policies regarding employment make sufficient provision for employment land throughout the plan period.

40. Is the amount and type of employment land set out in Strategic Policy DS3 soundly based and does it accord with the evidence and national planning policy and guidance? Given that the sub-regional HEDNA identifies a lower figure for employment land within the Borough, what evidence is the Council relying on and why is this evidence preferred/considered to be more robust?

As written we consider the plan presents some confusion in respect of the largest employment opportunities. Generally, when referring to strategic employment sites (e.g. in employment land studies) these are generally sites of 25+ha that will deliver units of >9,000sqm (circa 100,000sqft +). These sites may also serve a greater than local need, often providing support across a sub-region or wider region / UK or International. The plan has identified strategic employment opportunities.

We do not consider that the amount and type of employment land set out in Strategic Policy DS3 to be soundly based because:

- The plan already has no sites that are identified for strategic employment requirements that could meet a sub-regional / regional need when most of its immediate neighbours have no land to offer such opportunities (insert strategic plan of M6 Corridor)
- The Plan has identified only one single site for strategic B8 need at Faultlands and this has been built and sold – which leaves a plan that has yet to be adopted without any further strategic B8 opportunities and a reliance on windfall (as per Appendix C – Employment Trajectory).
- Paragraph 6.46 is clear that the other large employment allocations at Wilsons Lane, Prologis Extension, Coventry Road and Bowling Green Lane
- The Plan as drafted presents a strategy which relies on windfall – yet the sites that are most suited to large and/or strategic B8 uses are within Green Belt.
- The Borough has an issue of out commuting which we consider to be an issue above and beyond the need identified in the HEDNA – and as written the plan will not address this problem and nor does it support windfall proposals where unforeseen investment opportunities come forward.

We do not consider that Policy DS3 accords with the evidence base or national planning policy and guidance for the reasons set out in detail under our response to Q41. Whilst the Sub-Regional HEDNA identifies a lower figure for employment land within the Borough, this is explained in the additional evidence base documents.

Paragraph 2.26 of the “Towards a Housing Requirement for Nuneaton and Bedworth” document (published November 2022) states the difference between the HEDNA and sub-regional HEDNA is that the HEDNA (May 2022) took account of more recent completions in the period 2016-2021, whereas the sub-regional HEDNA considered completions over a 7 year period 2011-2019. Moreover the NBBC HEDNA (May 2022) considered all industrial and warehousing development whereas the sub-regional HEDNA sought to remove completions related to strategic B8 development and consider this separately – this reduced the completions projection by 19%. Paragraph 4.17 of the “Towards a Housing Requirement for Nuneaton and Bedworth” document states that the 80.5ha need identified is an assessment of Nuneaton and Bedworth’s employment land need, as well as a contribution to sub-regional strategic B8 warehousing and distribution needs which were identified in the sub-regional HEDNA.

Paragraph 6.41 of the draft Borough Plan shows the breakdown of how the figure of 87.85ha of total employment land need is derived for the period 2021-2039. An “indicative minimum provision for strategic B8 needs” is shown as 19.4ha of this. However, we do not consider that 19.4Ha meets the strategic definition but rather large scale within the Borough. Furthermore, as set out in our responses to other questions raised on employment, there are no other strategic sites now available to meet additional strategic

41. Has the evidence base supporting the proposed level of employment land been prepared in accordance with advice within the PPG? In particular, has it had sufficient regard to market signals and market intelligence?

The Framework and the PGG both present many policies and guidance which encourage LPA’s to plan for future economic growth and provide opportunities for employment which also seek to minimise the number and length of journeys, including:

Paragraph 85 provides very clear advice on the approach that should be taken to policy making, namely to **“create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.”** (Savills emphasis)

Paragraph 110 indicates that planning policies should: *“support an appropriate mix of uses across an area, and within larger scale sites, to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities”*. (Savills emphasis). Given that the draft plan recognises that there are issues of out commuting¹, lower than average household earnings² and the highest levels of deprivation in Warwickshire³, then there is a clear and obvious opportunity for Nuneaton to reverse some of this, with the large swathes of land it has available along the A444 to deliver new large-scale or strategic employment opportunities, creating more jobs within its administrative boundary. Furthermore, the other direct benefit to the Borough Council would be the increase in business rates. This approach would meet Government advice, go towards properly addressing long-standing employment, deprivation and out commuting issues that the Borough has faced for too long. The approach taken by the Borough Council in preparing the local plan review is based on suppressed demand. A report by Savills entitled “Employment Land Need Assessment Nuneaton & Bedworth” was produced in September 2022 and informed this statement and previous representations to the Borough Plan review. The document is appended to this hearing statement for reference.

It is also considered that a combination of not looking backwards and avoiding a strategy based on previous take up, reviewing and accepting market signals would lead to a more ambitious plan that seeks to deliver large and strategic scale opportunities. Two of the other neighbouring LPAs, in Birmingham and Coventry have little or no land available to offer such large scale or strategic opportunities and this should also be factored in to the Borough Council’s assessment. Whilst it is recognised that the West Midlands Strategic Employment Sites Study Report has not been finalised, the Borough is an obvious location on this stretch of the M6 corridor to identify new large and strategic employment opportunities because its neighbours cannot do this so easily.

The PPG⁴ advises that *“In gathering evidence to plan for business uses, strategic policy making authorities will need to liaise closely with the business community, taking account of the Local Industrial Strategy, to understand their current and potential future requirements.”* It goes on to list what LPA must assess including:

¹ Reg 19 N&BBC Publication Draft Plan p7 Para 3.3

² Reg 19 N&BBC Publication Draft Plan p7 Para 3.3

³ Nuneaton and Bedworth Local Plan (June 2019) para 2.13

⁴ Paragraph: 026 Reference ID: 2a-026-20190220

- the existing stock of land for employment uses within the area
- the recent pattern of employment land supply and loss – for example based on extant planning permissions and planning applications (or losses to permitted development)
- evidence of market demand (including the locational and premises requirements of particular types of business) – sourced from local data and market intelligence, such as recent surveys of business needs, discussions with developers and property agents and engagement with business and economic forums;
- wider market signals relating to economic growth, diversification and innovation; and
- any evidence of market failure – such as physical or ownership constraints that prevent the employment site being used effectively.

In terms of market signals, the issues raised above were identified back in 2019 and clearly set out in the Coventry and Warwickshire Sub-Regional Employment Market Signal Study prepared by BBP Regeneration. The key points to note included:

- Paragraph 9.19 – growing levels of demand and shortage of supply will lead to a rise in gaps in the future
- Paragraph 9.20 – a strategic approach is needed to meet the critical needs of business – both in terms of releasing more land for traditional employment.

Paragraph 9.25 of the BBP Report also identified many property demand conclusions and underlying issues, including:

- Clear evidence of existing and future demand for both industrial land and premises in Coventry and Warwickshire, above and beyond existing levels of supply – was this missed by NBBC?
- Strong and continues demand from the logistics / distribution sector, particularly for units in excess of 100,000sqft (in some cases well in excess of this figure) and from developers and owner occupiers – was this missed by NBBC?
- Take up of B2/B8 storage and distribution premises over the last three years has averaged at 5m sq ft per annum – build to suit should not be underestimated – has this also been missed by NBBC?

There is no clearer evidence of market signals available than the scale (and speed) of demand in the area for strategic employment opportunities with good access to the A444 than at Faultlands. The key information and timeline relating to this is set out below:

- June 2017 – Outline Application (reference 034901) was validated by NBBC for the *“Redevelopment of existing land for up to 92,904 sqm of B2 (General industrial) and B8 (Storage and distribution) floorspace including associated engineering and ground modelling works, vehicular access, landscaping, sustainable drainage, car parking and all ancillary enabling and infrastructure works (including demolition of existing buildings)”*
- End of 2019 – Marketing of the site commences with a sale agreed in early 2020.
- November 2020 – Outline planning application is formally approved following the signing of the S106.
- March 2021 – Exchange of contracts and completion on the sale of the site.
- November 2021 – Full planning application (reference 038238) for preliminary ground works and construction of a temporary haul roads to support the construction of Phase 1 is approved by NBBC.
- January 2022 – Reserved matters application (reference 038406) for the erection of employment building on Phase 1 is approved by NBBC.
- May 2022 - Reserved matters application (reference 038687) for the erection of employment building on Phase 2 is approved by NBBC.
- Late 2022/Early 2023 – Tenant takes occupation prior to completion.
- October 2023 – Both units are completed. We understand when fully occupied approximately 500 jobs will have been created.

The marketing particulars showing further details are appended to this submission.

Whilst we understand that the Inspectors are not necessarily reviewing omission sites, it should be recognised that there are a number of willing land owners at this Local Plan Examination that have land that is both available and suitable for meeting the employment requirements of the Borough which are clear and obvious. However, mirrored with these opportunities and evidence base requirements there is a plan which has been prepared that fails to take account of these available employment land opportunities.

42. The employment trajectory (Appendix C) shows that all of the strategic employment allocations will be delivered by 2029? Is this trajectory realistic and supported by evidence?

We consider that the trajectory presented at Appendix C is realistic (but not sound) and represents the stark reality and outcomes of the draft local plan, namely that it is behind the curve in terms of large-scale and modern employment land requirements. This position is clearly evidenced by the three largest employment allocations being built out and completed or significantly progressed and close to delivery.

Strategic Employment Allocation	Planning Application Reference	Planning Application Details	Status of Planning Application	Status of Strategic Allocation
SEA1 – Faultlands	034901	Outline planning application for “ <i>Redevelopment of existing land for up to 92,904 sqm of B2 (General industrial) and B8 (Storage and distribution) floorspace including associated engineering and ground modelling works, vehicular access, landscaping, sustainable drainage, car parking and all ancillary enabling and infrastructure works (including demolition of existing buildings) (Outline including access)</i> ”	Approved 04/11/2020	Marketing of the site commenced at the end of 2019 and a sale was agreed in early 2020. The exchange of contracts and completion took place in March 2021. The tenant, Rhenus
	038238	Full planning application for “ <i>Construction of one-way temporary haul road including improvements to existing access points on Gipsy Lane entrance and Coventry Road exit to include advanced site demolition, utility diversions, the provision of ground remodelling and installation of new utilities to support the construction of the first phase of development on the site</i> ”.	Approved 17/11/2021	Warehousing Solutions UK, took occupation prior to completion in late 2022/early 2023. The first unit was completed in June 2023 and the second unit by the end of October 2023.
	038406	Phase 1 – Reserved matters application for “ <i>Erection of employment building on phase 1 including all associated works and infrastructure</i> ”.	Approved 19/01/2022	

	038687	Phase 2 – Reserved matters application for “ <i>Erection of employment building on Phase 2 including all associated works and infrastructure</i> ”.	Approved 27/05/2022	
SEA2 – Wilsons Lane	037237	Outline planning application for “ <i>Demolition of existing buildings and the erection of up to 73 dwellings and up to 55,750 sqm of employment/commercial floor space (comprising of 50,000 sqm of B8 use (including 2,500 sqm ancillary E(g)(i) office) and 5,750 sqm of B2/B8/E(g)(iii) uses (including 300 sqm ancillary E(g)(i) office)), complete with access, local area for play (LAP), land remodelling, landscaping, attenuation and the diversion of a Public Right of Way (REF B25) with all matters reserved except for access.</i> ” Submitted on behalf of L&Q Estates	Approved by NBBC 21/03/2023	It is understood the residential element of the site will be delivered by Taylor Wimpey which construction expected to start in early 2025 and the commercial land has been sold to Panattoni in June 2024.
	OUT/2020/1505	Cross boundary application in Coventry City Authority Area for same development as reference 037237.	Refused by CCC and allowed at appeal on 15/09/2023	
SEA6 – Bowling Green Lane	039611	Outline planning application for <i>demolition of all existing structures on site, the development of up to 60,000 sq m of commercial/industrial floorspace (Use Classes B2/B8/E(g)(ii and iii)) including ancillary office space (Use Class E(g)(i)) together with internal access roads, service yards, parking, landscaping, drainage and associated works with all matters reserved (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) except for access to Bowling Green Lane and the widening of the carriageway of School Lane and associated works</i> ” Submitted by Opus Land Limited.	Pending determination by NBBC	The planning application for the Site is pending determination. The signed SOCG submitted as part of the examination (CD30) states that “Opus Land is confident the site will be developed within 5 years”

This means that in the next 3-4 years all three of the large employment allocations will have been taken up.

The Council's plan for large-scale industrial and logistics employment opportunities is clear - that once the allocated sites have been built and sold the reliance moves away from a plan-led system to one of windfall. Should the plan be adopted in 2025, then according to the plan (appendix C) that has been presented for Examination, there is still 10 years of windfall proposed after the allocations have been delivered.

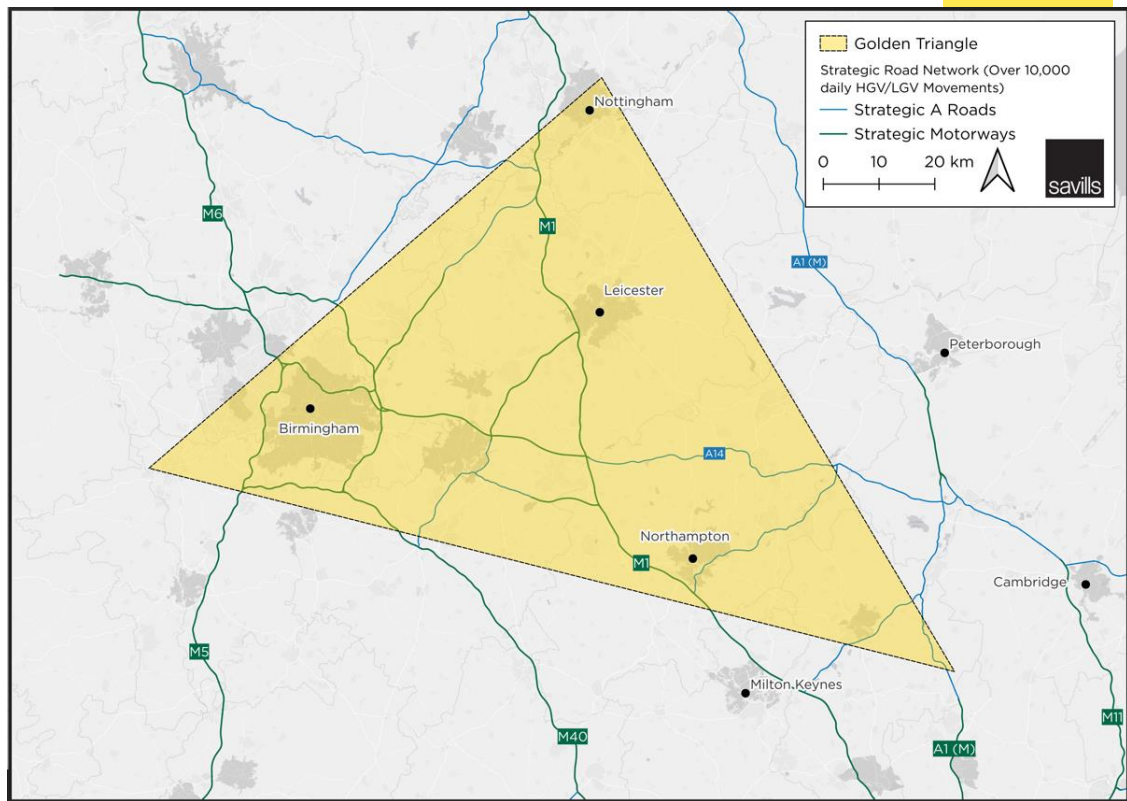
The status of the emerging large-scale employment sites, that represent the plan-led investment opportunities (e.g. replacement of existing poor quality employment stock or the support for new inwards investment) are clear and close to being completed. Thereafter, the delivery of large-scale employment and investment in the Borough will be left to windfall only. The significant flaw in this plan is that it contains no windfall policies and therefore it is unclear how or where this windfall development could take place. This position is made worse when the Green Belt status of the southern part of the Borough (closest to the A444 and M6) is taken into account. We are unable to see how such windfall could occur for large-scale (or strategic) employment once the draft allocation sites have been delivered.

As a consequence of the poor approach taken to the forward planning of large and strategic employment opportunities, it is considered that the vision and Strategic Objectives 1,2 and 5 will fail. It is a backward looking strategy and will only ever achieve what it always has. The plan should place a greater emphasis on market signal and demand and plan appropriately and then add additional opportunities for windfall and market churn.

43. All of the strategic employment allocations included in the Plan are brought forward from the adopted plan. Given this, is there a need to include new strategic employment allocations in the Plan? If not, why not?

It is clear from the response we have set out above to Q41 and Q42 that there is a very strong evidence for the need to include other new strategic employment allocations in the plan. However, we consider that first a clear understanding and distinction is needed between local needs and the strategic employment needs. The evidence prepared in support of the local plan should include for a range of small, medium and large-scale local needs. Thereafter, there will be further sub-regional and regional employment needs which will be driven by the availability of good locations for modern employment facilities. Given that in most cases this will require quick access / close proximity to the motorway network, then sites around the A444 and M6 motorway will be the first places to identify such sites.

Moreover, Nuneaton is at the heart of the stingiest Industrial and Logistics market in the country referred to as the "Golden Triangle" (see plan overleaf).



Given the Council highlights⁵ that Nuneaton and Bedworth has the highest levels of deprivation across Warwickshire and ranks 111th most deprived LA district nationally (out of 326) that it would have taken more positive steps to address such performance issues. Bullet point 3 of paragraph 3.3 of the Borough Plan review consultation document highlights out commuting to Coventry, Leicestershire and elsewhere in Warwickshire as an economic issue for the Borough.

This has not happened and represents a failure to address the impending release of the West Midlands Strategic Employment Sites Study Report which is expected to seek the identification of strategic employment sites around the West Midlands. Whilst the Council may not know what the final outcomes and recommendations of this report are, as one of the few LPA's with land opportunities close to the motorway network in the West Midlands that lies within the "Golden Triangle", if they were serious about placing the Borough at the fore of delivering one of these strategic employment opportunities, it would have identified, even safeguarded, a suitable site of circa 25+Ha. It hasn't identified a single strategic employment site and therefore it is concluded that the plan is not forward thinking or ambitious in respect of strategic employment requirements for at least the next 15 years.

It is clear from the delivery of sites such as Faultlands and the significant interest and progress towards the delivery of the other two large scale employment sites that the demand for large-scale employment has been strong. When the preparation of the plan the plan review was being undertaken, the interest in the allocated sites was evident

⁵ Nuneaton and Bedworth Local Plan (June 2019) para 2.13

- 44. Has the employment strategy had regard to the Coventry and Warwickshire Sub-Regional Market Signals Study 2018? If not, why not? Is this document being reviewed? If so, when is an update to it likely to be published?**

We have responded to the concerns regarding the council approach to the Sub Regional Market Signals Study in response to Q40 - 43.

- 45. Does the Plan make sufficient provision for B8 strategic warehousing to the end of the plan period having regard to the fact that no new employment allocations are proposed? Paragraph 6.46 of the plan refers to the strategic B8 need being met by the Faultlands development. Given that the Faultlands development is not an allocated site (it is stated that it was removed due to the site being under construction), how is the Plan meeting the strategic B8 need identified in Strategic Policy DS3?**

We have responded to the concerns regarding the council approach to the Sub Regional Market Signals Study in response to Q40 - 43.