

3.0 **Employment**

Background

- 3.1 North Hertfordshire is a prosperous district, which has experienced employment growth and low unemployment, close to the county average. Average weekly earnings, both residence and especially workplace based, are somewhat lower than the county average. House prices are also rather lower than the county average. For the great majority of these measures North Hertfordshire performs better than Stevenage and Luton.
- 3.1 Industrially the district has held onto much of its manufacturing during the last decade, following significant decreases in this sector during the 1980s. It has relied for growth on mainly business and other services. Other sectors with an above the regional average representation include metals, textiles and clothing, and chemicals. With a smaller than average unit size (for the region) the business sector is less susceptible than most areas to closures.
- 3.2 The Council is keen to maintain and improve the health of the economy. One of the strategic objectives in the Council's Core Strategy – Preferred Options, is to 'provide for employment opportunities in the District, encouraging a diversified economy'. One way in which the Local Development Framework can assist in a healthy economy is by ensuring that there is adequate land available for employment purposes.

How much employment land do we need to provide?

- 3.3 The East of England Plan (Draft Regional Spatial Strategy) sets out the requirements of the District with regard to employment. The Plan has not been adopted yet but the most recent version required the District, along with Stevenage Borough and East Herts District to make provision for 18,000 jobs between 2001 and 2021. There is nothing in the Plan which sets out how much employment land each District should provide. How these job numbers were to be split between the three authorities is also not stated in the Plan.

Employment land review

- 3.4 The Council appointed consultants to carry out an Employment Land Review, taking account of the requirements of the East of England Plan. The was produced in November 2006, and updated in February 2007 to take account of the Secretary of State's Proposed Modifications to the East of England Plan. The consultants calculated the requirement for jobs by relating it to the likely increase in dwellings in the District, set out in the East of England Plan.
- 3.5 The process commences with the assumed dwellings increase, converts this to households and then to the economically active population, and finally derives an assumed jobs total from this estimate and an assumed commuting balance in the target year. A variety of assumptions have to be made, not only regarding the % of population who are economically active but for unemployment, double jobbing etc.
- 3.6 Starting with a dwelling requirement of 6,200 in North Hertfordshire, the methodology leads to an increase in jobs of 7,640 between 2001-2021.

Meeting the need

- 3.7 The employment land requirement will potentially be met from a number of sources of supply, including –

Completions –

This is employment development which has already been built between 2001 and 2006.

Outstanding commitments –

These are sites which have been granted planning permission but which have either not been started or are under construction.

Current allocations in the save Local Plan which are outstanding –

These are a small number of sites which were allocated in the Local plan, but which have yet to be built.

New site allocations -

The additional sites which have been put forward in this document for consultation.

- 3.8 At 31 March 2007 there was 27,185m² (7.1Ha) outstanding capacity of employment floorspace. This included 19,373 m² (4.8Ha) of planning permissions not yet implemented and 7,812 m² (2.3Ha) of Local Plan sites which have yet to be completed.
- 3.9 In coming to a conclusion about the amount of new land to be allocated, the consultants have taken account of all the different sources of supply, and estimated that 7-8 hectares of additional land should be allocated to provide for the indicative job target of 7,640 jobs.
- 3.10 The available land supply was calculated by the consultants to be 34 hectares. Included within that were the proposed allocated sites as follows:
- Baldock restraint area, Royston Road, Baldock - 6.2Ha
 - Letchworth power station, Works Road, Letchworth Garden City - 1.56Ha
 - Land north of York Way, Royston - 11.76Ha
 - Transco site, Cadwell Lane, Hitchin (assumes 50% of land reserved for employment use) – 5Ha
 - Total – **24.52Ha**
- 3.11 There appears to be an over-supply of potential sites for employment use.

Question 1:

Do you consider that the Council should only allocate enough land to meet the needs identified in the employment land review, which was 7 to 8 hectares, or should the Council allocate more or less than this?

Question 2:

Do you consider that any of the sites mentioned above would be unsuitable for employment development, and/or unlikely to come forward within the LDF period? Please indicate which sites and your reasons.

- 3.12 This Issues and Options Paper is an opportunity for the Council to gain information on other potential sites. Landowners and others are encouraged to submit details of sites which they consider to be suitable and available for employment development.

Question 3:

Do you know of any other sites, not included in the section above, which might be appropriate for business/employment use? Please specify the site, the owners (if known), and why you consider it is a suitable site.

- 3.13 It has been proposed by landowners, Members and officers that some sites which are currently in employment or other use are allowed to change their use to residential. These sites are as follows:

- Norton Way North, Letchworth Garden City – 1.78Ha
- Birds Hill, Letchworth Garden City – 1.1Ha
- Icknield Way, Baldock – 0.91Ha
- Cooks Way, Hitchin – 1.18Ha
- Lower Gower Road, Royston – 0.53Ha
- Lumen Road, Rosyton – 1.5Ha

- Total – **14.8Ha**

Question 4:

Do you consider that any of these sites should be allowed to change use to residential, if so why do you consider it is a suitable site?

Question 5:

Do you know of any other sites, not included in the section above, which might be appropriate to change from employment use to residential or other use? Please specify the site, the owners (if known), and why you consider it is a suitable site.

List of Employment Sites – plans and details for each follow:

B/e01: Land at Royston Road, Baldock

B/e02: Land at Royston Road, Baldock

B/e03: Icknield Way, Baldock

H/e01: Former Transco Site, Cadwell Lane, Hitchin

H/e02: Land North-East of Wilbury Way, Hitchin

L/e01: Former power station, Works Road, Letchworth Garden City

R/e01: Land north of York Way, Royston

R/e02: Lumen Road, Royston

