

Core Strategy and Development Control Policies DPD



Independent Examination

# Employment Land Allocations

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**HD/CFD/SRS6**

# Subject Response Statement 6

## Employment Land Allocations

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### 1.0 Introduction

1.1 This Subject Response Statement has been prepared as part of a series of statements to provide additional information on a range of themes that have been raised by objectors in their Amplified Statements, specifically in relation to week 2 and subsequent weeks of the Examination in Public. They serve to provide additional information on a specific topic area and are crossed referred to within the Council's individual responses to amplified statements.

1.2 Nine Subject Response Statements have been prepared addressing the following topics to be covered during the Examination in Public:

1. The Green Belt
2. Housing Trajectory
3. Sustainability Appraisal
4. Infrastructure Delivery/ Standard Charges
5. Conformity with the Regional Spatial Strategy
6. Employment Land Allocations
7. Housing Delivery and Capacity
8. Green Wedges
9. Monitoring and Review

1.3 This Subject Response Statement addresses the employment land allocations that have been proposed within the Core Strategy and the contribution that these can make to the economic growth of the Borough in line with the primary economic objectives of the Spatial Strategy, namely:

**ECP1** : Maintain the Borough's economic competitiveness in a region of major growth and change by responding positively to economic change

**ECP2** : Reinforce Chelmsford town's leading sub-regional economic role by attracting new commercial investment and reinforcing the town's attractiveness and competitiveness by enhancing civic and cultural activity.

**ECP 3** : Enhance Chelmsford's role as a Regional Transport Node

**ECP 4** : Enhance the viability and vitality of South Woodham Ferrers town centre and secondary local centres

**ECP 5** : Support essential commercial transport movement related to Borough business activity on road and rail networks.

- 1.4 Specifically this Subject Response Statement addresses the following key issues:
- a) the requirement for new employment land allocations
  - b) how the Council came to select the employment allocations within the Core Strategy
  - c) whether alternative employment allocations were assessed (including options within the Green Belt) as part of the identification of the employment allocations
  - d) whether there is a need for additional employment land allocations to be identified within the Core Strategy
  - e) what contribution the employment land allocations can make in terms of delivering the Borough's job growth targets.

## 2.0 **National and Regional Policy Context**

### **National**

- 2.1 The most up to date national policy advice in relation to the allocation of land for employment purposes is contained within Planning Policy Statement 1 (Developing Sustainable Development) and the advice published by the Government's Employment Land Reviews Guidance Note published in December 2004.
- 2.2 Paragraph 23 of PPS 1 (Sustainable Economic Development) sets out at (iii) that planning authorities should ensure that suitable locations are available for industrial, commercial, retail, public sector (e.g health and education) tourism and leisure developments, so that the economy can prosper.
- 2.3 The Employment Land Reviews Guidance Note advises local planning authorities to ensure that there is adequate provision of employment land that can be safeguarded against competing, higher value land uses and that an appropriate portfolio of employment sites are available to provide sufficient choice of sites and premises to meet foreseeable needs.

### **Regional**

- 2.4 In the Draft East of England Plan (Secretary of State's Proposed Changes, December 2006) Policies E2 and E3 are the most relevant to the issue of the allocation of land for employment purposes. Policy E2 (Provision of Land for Employment) states that Local Development Documents should ensure that an adequate range of sites/premises (including dedicated land/sites and mixed used sites) is identified and then allocated and safeguarded to meet the indicative job growth targets of Policy E1. Policy E3 (Regionally Strategic Employment Locations) identifies Chelmsford as a location where regionally

strategic employment sites should be identified through employment land reviews.

- 2.5 In terms of providing for economic growth the Development Plan system is now jobs led. In effect, this means that the starting point for local planning authorities is the indicative job growth target contained within the Regional Spatial Strategy, rather than an allocation of employment land. The conversion of these targets to the need for new employment land allocations is a matter for Local Development Documents informed by Employment Land Reviews and other evidence. Furthermore, in having a jobs led approach to accommodating growth it is important to also consider the potential that can be achieved through uses beyond the B Use Classes which has traditionally been the approach taken.
- 2.6 EEDA and EERA are currently in the process of providing further advice and guidance in respect of employment land review preparation in the context of Policies EI-E3 of the East of England Plan. Chelmsford Borough Council published its Employment Land Review in April 2006. The main conclusions of this are:
- a) although there is no short term issue regarding employment land supply there will be a need for employment allocations to satisfy demand upto 2021.
  - b) consideration should be given to the development of a science park in conjunction with the local universities if the Borough wishes to develop a knowledge based economy.
  - c) there is a need for new flexible accommodation to meet the needs of business start ups and businesses wishing to expand locally, particularly small and medium sized enterprises where supply of premises is low.
  - d) existing employment land should be protected from inappropriate uses.
  - e) Chelmsford town centre provides an opportunity to meet future employment growth.
- 2.7 The Regional Economic Strategy “A Shared Vision” was published by the East of England Development Agency in November 2004 and is in the process of being reviewed. The Draft East of England Plan is the spatial dimension to the delivery of the Regional Economic Strategy, which sets out 7 key goals as follows:
- 1. A skills base that can support a world-class economy
  - 2. Growing competitiveness, productivity and entrepreneurship
  - 3. Global leadership in developing and realising innovation in science, technology and research
  - 4. High quality places to live, work and visit
  - 5. Social inclusion and broad participation in the regional economy
  - 6. Making the most from the development of international gateways and national and regional transport corridors

## 7. A leading information society

Goal 4 is particularly relevant in terms of future employment land allocations and makes specific reference to the need to ensure a high quality supply of business land and premises.

### 3.0 **The Employment Land Allocations identified in the Core Strategy**

3.1 In the context of the Draft East of England Plan, Chelmsford is required to accommodate a share of the 42,000 job target for Central and North Essex – Chelmsford, Maldon, Braintree, Uttlesford and Harlow (Policy EI of the Secretary of State's Proposed Changes to the East of England Plan). There is no specific target for the Borough, but recent studies by the Borough Council indicate that Chelmsford has the potential to provide for in the region of 20,600 jobs within the plan period (Topic Paper 3, Economy/Employment BD/CFD/091 – Employment Forecast 2001-2021)

3.3 The Core Strategy promotes a policy framework that seeks to identify, in spatial terms, where the Borough can provide future economic growth. This includes focusing future growth within established employment areas, promoting a range of sites within the town centre and identifying new employment areas that will be identified in the North Chelmsford Area Action Plan, the Chelmsford Town Centre Area Action Plan and the Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

The future employment areas proposed within the Core Strategy are:

- a) Temple Farm, West Hanningfield
- b) Mid Essex Gravel Pits, Essex Regiment Way, Broomfield
- c) The new greenfield neighbourhoods to the north of Chelmsford

3.4 Economic growth, to meet the targets of the Draft East of England Plan will, in addition, be met through the development of a series of opportunity sites within Chelmsford Town Centre (including major retail expansion), the development of sites already committed for employment purposes and the retention and protection of existing employment areas from inappropriate development. Such an approach is consistent with national and regional policy advice and the conclusions of the 2006 Employment Land Review.

### 4.0 **The Key Issues**

#### 4.1 ***The requirement and need for new employment land allocations***

4.2 Chelmsford's economy has shown very steady growth in recent years. Over 8,200 new jobs have been created within the Borough between 2001-2005 (source: ABI data) and despite a restructuring in the local economy over the last 30 years the Borough has been extremely resilient in the face of changing economic circumstances.

- 4.3 As the economy has restructured the Borough has maintained an adequate and suitable portfolio of employment sites to meet the changing needs of business. This has been achieved through a balance of the allocation of new land, the protection of existing employment land and the re-use and development of land within the existing urban area.
- 4.4 The Borough Council's vision for Chelmsford is to become the economic, cultural, leisure and shopping Capital of Essex and a leading regional centre in the East of England. The Core Strategy sets out a spatial approach to achieving this in terms of future economic growth, and this vision is now being further developed through the "Chelmsford Tomorrow" corporate strategy.
- 4.5 This is now reinforced by the identification of Chelmsford as a Key Centre for Development and Change within the East of England Plan.
- 4.6 The starting point for assessing the need for new land allocations is the Draft East of England Plan (Secretary of State's Proposed Changes, December 2006) which sets out a shared job target for Central and North Essex of 42,000 jobs. This has evolved from an indicative target of just 9,600 jobs for the Rest of Essex identified within the Draft East of England Plan (December 2004), and which was the sub-regional target at the time of the Core Strategy's preparation. The Panel's Recommendations on the Draft East of England Plan (published in June 2006) set an increased target of 25,000 jobs for the Rest of Essex (defined as Harlow, Uttlesford, Chelmsford, Braintree, Maldon and Rochford). Without a specific target for the Borough, it is difficult for local planning authorities to be specific in planning for future economic growth, although a primary objective is to seek to align jobs and housing growth. The emerging employment strategy has therefore needed to be robust in order to meet the increasing share being allocated to the sub-region wherein Chelmsford is located.
- 4.7 The role of Chelmsford as a key economic centre is now highlighted within the Draft East of England Plan, and this places a greater emphasis on the role that Chelmsford should play in delivering future regional economic growth. Chelmsford Borough Council is confident that it can and will make a significant contribution to the Central and North Essex indicative job target, probably well beyond its share, through the Core Strategy. This can be achieved through the approach being advocated within the Core Strategy to focus development within the urban area, but also provide for some new allocations of land to meet future needs. Such an approach will provide a flexible portfolio of suitable sites to meet future needs in accordance with national and regional policy.
- 4.8 The Employment Forecast contained within Topic Paper 3 indicates that job growth in the region of 20,600 jobs can be achieved through this approach without the need for further employment land allocations beyond that which have been proposed in the Core Strategy and which will be identified in the North Chelmsford Area Action Plan, Chelmsford Town Centre Area Action Plan and Site Allocations Development Plan Document.

- 4.9 ***How were the employment land allocations contained within the Core Strategy identified?***
- 4.10 Topic Paper 1 (The Borough Wide Spatial Strategy) sets out the approach that the Council took in developing the Core Strategy. This included the appraisal of a number of sites, some of which included an element of employment provision within them.
- 4.11 At the Reg 25. Issues and Options consultation stage there was very strong support for the Council developing an approach that supported local economic development including support for providing a mixture of job opportunities within new commercial development and balancing the need for housing land against the demand for commercial uses. This was further supported at this stage by a strong consensus that Chelmsford Town Centre should continue to have a strong commercial focus and that all development should minimise its impact on the environment as far as possible.
- 4.12 It was upon the basis of this consultation that the Council moved onto its Reg. 26 Preferred Options consultation. Having regard to the key themes and strategic objectives the Council identified that a central element of the approach would be to strive to secure a diverse and successful economy, with economic growth being encouraged in all sectors. Whilst Chelmsford Town Centre was identified as the major employment location to support this growth it was at this stage that it was recognised that other parts of the Borough will play a key role in delivering future employment growth. Specifically, the development of the new greenfield neighbourhoods were identified at the Reg 26 stage as being suitable locations for the provision of employment opportunities as well as the allocation of other land to ensure a range of sites will be available. The two locations that were identified at this stage to provide additional flexibility were Temple Farm and Essex Regiment Way, both of which occupy strategic locations and both of which were allocations carried forward from the 2004 withdrawn Local Plan, but which remained agreed Council policy for this Core Strategy.
- 4.13 ***Were alternative employment land allocations assessed (including land within the Metropolitan Green Belt)?***
- 4.14 Although one of the new employment areas is located within the Green Belt (Temple Farm) this has been identified as it is considered to be a brownfield site in a strategic location that can not only make a contribution to future economic growth in the context of identified future growth sectors (particularly distribution), but where development can be achieved in a manner that will not harm the overall function and purpose of this part of the Green Belt. The site has been in employment use for many years, although significant parts of the site have been affected by unauthorised uses and activities resulting in the site requiring significant environmental improvement. Land at Essex Regiment Way, Broomfield (which has been previously developed for mineral workings and associated processing plant), occupies a similar strategic location. Employment uses on this site could be

linked to the new neighbourhoods to the north of Chelmsford and the existing leisure facilities within this area, with accompanying improvements to public transport provision. Both locations are considered to be suitable and sustainable locations to accommodate business growth.

- 4.15 On this basis, no other sites for employment were considered within the Green Belt, the protection of which is a central element of the Spatial Strategy. Given that the Council's view is that it can meet its job growth targets on a range of sites, both within the urban area, at the new neighbourhoods and through the new allocations, there is no need to consider the release of other Green Belt land to meet the economic objectives of the Core Strategy. This is entirely consistent with national and regional policy in respect of the Green Belt.
- 4.16 Subject Response Statement 1 (The Green Belt) contains further detail on the issue of reviewing Green Belt boundaries within the Borough.
- 4.17 ***Is there a need for additional employment land allocations within the Core Strategy and will the employment land allocations make a contribution to economic growth within the Borough?***
- 4.18 The Borough Council considers that the employment land allocations identified in the Core Strategy have the potential to provide for in the range of 3,000 jobs based on the assumptions made in the Employment Forecast contained as Appendix 1 to Topic Paper 3 (Economy/Employment). This is an important contribution to overall job growth, but other elements of the Core Strategy are central to future growth. The Borough Council estimates that up to 20,600 jobs can be provided within the Borough within the plan period to 2021. Their contribution to overall economic growth is therefore substantial, although a major element of job growth is estimated to take place within the town centre (8,100 jobs).
- 4.19 The Borough Council is confident that the Spatial Strategy will deliver a suitable range of sites to meet the likely levels of economic growth in the Borough (in all likelihood above its share of the 42,000 job target identified for Central and North Essex in the East of England Plan) and that there is no need for additional employment land allocations to be proposed at this stage.
- 4.20 ***How will the Council monitor the employment land supply, take up rates and job growth?***
- 4.21 The monitoring of job growth, particularly in the absence of district level targets, is not a straight-forward process. The Annual Business Inquiry does provide a starting point for this, but there can be discrepancies of data particularly at the local level and so ABI data should be treated with caution and supplemented with local based information. The Borough Council will work with Essex County Council to produce an annual monitoring report, which will address the issue of employment growth and the supply of commercial floorspace within the Borough. In addition the Council, through its economic development activities, will regularly assess where there is a

particular shortage of supply of land or premises to meet specific identified business needs. Together, this will inform the first review of the Core Strategy at which point the issue of whether there is sufficient land allocated to meet future economic growth needs can be addressed if necessary.

## **5.0 Conclusion**

5.1 In summary the Borough Council's position is that:

a) the Borough Council is very confident that the Core Strategy can set the framework through which a substantial share of the Central and North Essex target of 42,000 jobs contained within the Draft East of England Plan can be provided.

b) the Core Strategy sets out an approach to delivering a potential 20,600 jobs within the plan period through a range of development options that includes maximising the opportunities in Chelmsford town centre, as well as identifying additional land to support future economic growth.

c) the employment land allocations identified would make a significant contribution to future economic growth and that this is part of the overall job growth that will be brought about through other strands of the Core Strategy. The allocation of these sites will ensure that the Borough has a suitable portfolio of sites in order to meet future needs and this is consistent with national and regional policy.

d) there is no need to identify additional employment land allocations within the Core Strategy.

## **6.0 Relevant Documents**

6.1 This Subject Response Statement draws on the following documents:

a) Chelmsford Borough Employment Land Review 2006

b) Topic Paper 1 – The Borough Wide Spatial Strategy

c) Topic Paper 3 – Economy and Employment

d) Subject Response Statement 1 – The Green Belt

e) Mid Essex Economic Futures, University of the West of England March 2006

f) A Shared Vision – The Regional Economic Strategy November 2004

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