

Employment and the Economy

Policy CS 9

Location and Type of Business Development

The Council seeks to facilitate and promote the growth and forecasted change of business development in the plan period in order to:

- manage the growth of B1 floorspace to meet future requirements;
- manage the reduction of land for B2 uses, whilst maintaining a sufficient portfolio of sites suitable for such uses; and
- retain a portfolio of sites for B8 uses in suitable locations.

This will be achieved through the following:

(a) The appropriate location of business development:

Proposals for industry, distribution and storage uses will be directed to the District's defined Protected Employment Areas⁽⁶³⁾, and existing suitably located employment sites and premises. Any proposals for such uses outside these areas/locations will be assessed by the Council against the following:

- compatibility with uses in the area surrounding the proposals and potential impacts on those uses; and
- capacity and impact on the road network and access by sustainable modes of transport.

New office development will be directed towards West Berkshire's town and district centres as outlined in policy CS11. The scale of development will be appropriate to the size and character of the centre.

If no suitable sites are available within an existing centre, then the following sequential approach will be taken for accommodating additional offices in the review of Protected Employment Areas and any allocations in the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD. This sequential approach should also be used in support of any planning application for office development outside defined centres:

- Edge of centre: suitably located brownfield site or Protected Employment Area within an edge of centre location, and Newbury Business Park.
- Out of centre: brownfield site or Protected Employment Area within an out of centre location, with good accessibility by alternative modes of transport.
- Other existing employment sites and premises not in an edge of centre or out of centre location.

Proposals for non town centre uses which seek the loss of office floorspace within defined town and district centres will need to demonstrate that the proposal maintains the vitality of the existing centre and would not substantially prejudice the overall supply of office floorspace over the Core Strategy period in that centre.

63 Protected Employment Areas are outlined within Appendix G. These designations will continue to be in use until reviewed under the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD

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In making allocations for residential development in the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD the need for any complementary element of business development or other economic use to achieve an appropriate sustainable development, commensurate with the scale of any proposed allocation will be considered.

(b) Protecting Employment Areas:

Protected Employment Areas are parcels of land throughout the District designated for B uses⁽⁶⁴⁾. The continued designation, role and boundaries of existing Protected Employment Areas will be reviewed in the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD (or other subsequent Development Plan Document) to achieve a balanced portfolio of fit for purpose sites to meet future requirements. In the interim, subject to the application of the sequential test for any proposed town centre uses, proposals for employment generating uses, other than B class uses, within Protected Employment Areas will be favourably considered where these would be complementary to the existing business use in that location, and consistent with the integrity and function of the location for employment purposes. Proposals for such non B class employment generating uses which are likely to substantially prejudice the strategy set out at the start of this policy, will not be permitted.

Business development will be supported on existing employment sites, particularly on those sites seen as strategically important for the District's economy – New Greenham Park, Vodafone HQ, and the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE). The Site Allocations and Delivery DPD will assess the role and function of these three sites to determine whether they should be designated as Protected Employment Areas or an alternative bespoke designation consistent with their importance to the local economy.

(c) Managing the scale, type and intensification of business development:

A range of types and sizes of employment sites and premises will be encouraged throughout the District to meet the needs of the local economy. Proposals for business development should be in keeping with the surrounding environment, not conflict with existing uses, and promote sustainable transport.

More efficient use of existing sites and premises should be made in order to attract inward investment, respond to modern business requirements, and meet the demand for employment land over the plan period. The Council will promote the intensification, redevelopment, and upgrade of existing, vacant and/or derelict employment sites and premises for business development.

Explanation of the Policy

5.45 The overall aim of this policy is to set the framework to facilitate and promote the growth and forecasted change of business development across the District over the plan period.

5.46 Evidence⁽⁶⁵⁾ indicates that West Berkshire has a sufficient supply of employment land to meet demand to 2026, and thus no need to plan for a net increase in employment land stock. Whilst a sufficient supply exists, it is not necessarily in the correct use class. The Employment Land Assessment (ELA) concludes that over the plan period there is a shortfall of B1 floorspace by approximately 121,000sqm, a surplus of B2 space by approximately 65,000sqm due to declining demand, and a potential shortfall in the longer term of B8 floorspace of approximately 24,000sqm. Policy CS9 therefore sets out the framework to ensure this imbalance in employment land supply is addressed over the plan period, through the effective utilisation of existing employment sites and premises. The Council

64 B uses refer to those uses identified within The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) – (B1; B2; B8)

65 [Employment Land Assessment](#), DTZ 2007 available at www.westberks.gov.uk

seeks to ensure that sufficient sites are provided in the right locations to foster sustainable economic growth. This means maintaining a portfolio of sites suitable to meet demand for B8 in suitable locations; managing an excess supply of B2 floorspace whilst ensuring enough sites and premises are retained for such uses; and, facilitating the growth of B1 floorspace to meet future requirements.

5.47 As the Core Strategy sets out a long term approach to business development, and circumstances surrounding economic development are constantly changing, the scale of development required within each use class to meet economic demands will be monitored⁽⁶⁶⁾. Through the Annual Monitoring Report the supply of employment land for B uses will be updated annually to reflect any market changes.

5.48 National policy sets out the definition of economic development which goes beyond B uses to include main town centre uses, as well as community and public uses. This policy (CS9) specifically deals with business development (B1/B2/B8) in order to ensure the health of the District's business areas and Protected Employment Areas are maintained. Other uses falling under the definition within national policy are addressed through policy CS11 and/or the Area Delivery Plan policies.

5.49 Policy CS9 applies to business uses throughout the whole District. Given the rural nature of West Berkshire and the importance of sustaining the District's rural areas, policy CS10 presents additional policy provision for the rural economy/enterprises.

The appropriate location of business development:

5.50 The policy seeks to support and build upon West Berkshire's vibrant and successful economy through continued business development in sustainable locations.

5.51 Industrial, warehousing, and distribution developments will be focused in areas of existing employment activity, and within defined Protected Employment Areas. The location of any B2 and B8 uses should be in areas with good access to major road/freight route networks, and should not conflict with surrounding uses. The Council's ELA highlights that although the level of B2 activity in the District is low, most of the B2 floorspace is located to the east of Newbury, south east Thatcham mainly at Colthrop, and close to the A4 at Beenham. It also indicates that the majority of B8 floorspace is located to the south of Newbury at New Greenham Park, to the south east of Thatcham, and in the west of the District near Hungerford and north of the M4 near Lambourn.

5.52 Office development will be directed towards West Berkshire's town and district centres, where development will be accessible and well served by a choice of transport modes in accordance with national policy. Policy CS11 sets out the District's hierarchy of centres based on their scale, character, and function. The main focus for office development is Newbury town centre given its role within the District, and the nature and size of development which already exists. With Newbury being the focus for housing development over the plan period, it is important that any new employment development is balanced with housing locations and is suitably located to cater for future demand and reduce out-commuting from the District. More limited office development will also be directed towards West Berkshire's other town and district centres, Thatcham, Hungerford, Pangbourne, Lambourn, and Theale. As the character of these centres is more rural in nature with small unit sizes and low density development, it is important that the scale of any new office development in these locations is appropriate to the size and character of the centre.

5.53 Policy CS9 takes a sequential approach to office development in accordance with national policy. This means the Council will seek to locate office development within existing centres in the first instance. However, given the size and character of existing centres not all office development can be accommodated within the District's centres, and therefore flexibility must be applied to the location of B1a office space through the sequential approach. If no suitable available sites can be

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found within an existing centre, then a suitable edge of centre location will be sought, followed by an accessible out of centre location. Such locations, for example Newbury Business Park, Hambridge Road/Lane and Arlington Business Park, already host some of the District's office floorspace and play a strategic role in providing offices for businesses that demand large floorplates and modern accommodation. Other edge of centre locations, such as London Road Industrial Estates, have the potential for redevelopment and the ability to deliver a greater employment base on these sites. It is the Council's preferred approach that if an edge of centre or out of centre site must be utilised for office development, then the site should be located within an existing Protected Employment Area or suitable brownfield site which is in a sustainable location, well served by a choice of transport modes.

5.54 In terms of sequentially preferable locations for office development, the following sequence is appropriate in accordance with national policy:

1. Sites within existing town and district centres.
2. Suitably located brownfield sites or Protected Employment Area within an edge of centre location, and Newbury Business Park. Protected Employment Areas in such locations are: London Road Industrial Estates; Hambridge Road/Lane; Green Lane; Charnham Park; Station Yard; Arlington Business Park; Station Road and adjacent Estates.
3. Brownfield sites or Protected Employment Area within an out of centre location with good accessibility by alternative modes of transport. Protected Employment Areas in such locations are: Turnpike Road Estate; Castle Estate; Colthrop Estate; Smitham Bridge Hungerford Trading Estate; Horseshoe Park; Calleva Park.
4. Other existing employment sites and premises not in an edge of centre or out of centre location.

5.55 Newbury Business Park, although located in an out of centre location in accordance with the definitions set out in national policy, has been placed within the edge of centre category in terms of the sequential approach to B1a uses. The Council feel that given the characteristics of the Business Park and the scale of B1a floorspace which currently exists, the sequential approach could undermine the role, vitality, and function of the site if it was to be considered as an out of centre location, second to those sites in edge of centre locations.

5.56 To ensure the vitality of West Berkshire's town and district centres, the loss of office floorspace to a non town centre use will be resisted, where the loss of such floorspace would impact upon the vitality of the centre and/or would substantially prejudice the overall supply of floorspace within that centre.

Protecting Employment Areas:

5.57 In order to address the imbalance in employment land supply mentioned above, a comprehensive assessment of existing Protected Employment Areas and their boundaries will take place as part of the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD. The review of the Protected Employment Areas will provide the scope and flexibility to reinforce the existing employment land stock to provide a balanced portfolio of sites to meet future demand.

5.58 The Employment Land Assessment (and any subsequent updates) will be used as a starting point for the review of the role and function of each Protected Employment Area. Evidence such as business surveys, Annual Monitoring Reports, and the composition of each Protected Employment Area, including the age, quality, location, and capacity of sites and premises, must be taken into account, together with the surrounding uses. The review will also assess the suitability of Protected Employment Areas for B1a uses through a sequential approach to site location and any potential impact upon existing centres. This holistic review may result in some land becoming available for alternative uses, however this will need to be reassessed at the time taking into account any changes which may arise in the supply of, and demand for, employment land through an update to the Employment Land Assessment to inform the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD.

5.59 As mentioned above, Protected Employment Areas have been designated for B class uses to ensure sufficient sites are provided in suitable locations to foster business development and promote sustainable economic growth across the District. In the meantime, prior to the review of the Protected Employment Areas, policy CS9 allows for employment generating uses other than B class uses to be located within Protected Employment Areas if they are complementary to the existing business use in that location, and where they are consistent with the integrity and function of the location for employment purposes. This is subject to the application of the sequential test for town centre uses. However, proposals for such employment generating uses which are not a B class use, will not be permitted within Protected Employment Areas if they are likely to substantially prejudice the strategy set out within this policy, in terms of managing the changing needs for B class use.

5.60 New Greenham Park, Vodafone HQ at The Connection, and the Atomic Weapons Establishment (AWE) are three strategically important employment locations for the West Berkshire economy. All three sites comprise of a large amount of business floorspace and are large local employers, but at the same time, their role and functionality within the economy differ. The Council will support business development within these sites, particularly that which enhances the contribution to the local economy. The Site Allocations and Delivery DPD will assess their role and function to determine whether they should be designated as Protected Employment Areas or be given an alternative bespoke designation consistent with their importance to the local economy.

Managing the scale, type, and intensification of business development:

5.61 Policy CS9 promotes appropriate intensification and redevelopment of existing sites and premises in accordance with national policy. The approach encourages a strong mix/range of premises and promotes the redevelopment of vacant and/or derelict buildings in order to keep the market attractive to modern investment.

5.62 To ensure the health of the local economy is maintained it is important to provide a variety of size and type of employment premises of an appropriate scale and intensity. The Council will therefore encourage proposals which seek to upgrade or redevelop existing or vacant premises, especially within Protected Employment Areas, which will enhance the flexibility and availability of employment space.

5.63 Intensification of office development will be looked upon favourably especially within existing centres and edge of centre locations in Newbury and Theale where demand for office space is high, provided the scale and intensity is not out of proportion with the character of the surrounding areas.

5.64 Business development within the District is dominated by small and medium sized units, typically in B1 use. Demand for such accommodation is likely to be met through smaller individual sites and within multi-occupancy employment areas. The Council will encourage proposals for small and medium sized businesses and ensure that opportunities are provided for them to grow within the District.

Delivery and Monitoring

The policy will be delivered through the development management process and through subsequent policies set out in the Site Allocations and Delivery DPD. Working in partnership with the Local Strategic Partnership and continuing to build relationships with local businesses will all be key to policy delivery.

The Council will regularly monitor and review the delivery of economic development across the District through planning commitments and completions. The AMR will assess various indicators including the total amount of additional employment floorspace, total amount of employment land available, and total amount of employment land lost to alternative uses.