

CHAPTER 8 - EMPLOYMENT

8.1. EMPLOYMENT: GENERAL

Objections

Rep No	Name	Rep No	Name
4109	Lucas Aerospace	5081	Tring Environmental Forum

Key Issues

- (a) Whether business, industry and warehousing are adequately defined in terms of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987. (4109)
- (b) Does the Employment chapter of the plan take into account sustainable development principles in accordance with relevant Government guidance. (5081)

Inspector’s Conclusions

(a) *Definition of terms*

- 8.1.1. The terms business, offices, industry, and storage and distribution are used throughout the employment section, sometimes qualified with reference to the appropriate Use Class. Whilst in most cases the intentions of the Plan are clear, in some instances there is potential for confusion. For example, the reasoning behind Policy 30 refers at paragraph 8.23 to provision for *offices, industry and storage and distribution*, followed by provision for *new business floorspace*. It is not obvious whether the reference to business floorspace relates to the whole of the B1 Use Class, or only to offices. Although the background to the policy (paragraph 8.25 onwards) provides some explanation by relating these terms to the Use Classes Order, the use of capital letters for *Offices, Storage and Distribution* and so on could imply that a direct relationship with the Order only occurs when the term begins with a capital letter. Furthermore, paragraph 8.25 mentions the *General Industrial Use Class* – it is not apparent whether this is the same as *industry* in paragraph 8.23, or whether it is intended to be different.
- 8.1.2. The Council points to paragraph 8.6 of the Plan, which states that *business, industry or storage and distribution uses* are those *falling within Use Classes B1, B2 and B8 of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987*. However, by not specifying that each term relates to a specific Use Class, it is not clear where the distinction between these terms lies. In particular, it is desirable for the Plan to indicate whether a use within Class B1(c) – often described as light industry – comes within the term business or industry. I believe that if greater clarity were provided in this paragraph, by defining each term in relation to a specific Use Class (including the sub-divisions within Class B1), the potential for confusion would be removed. I also believe that the use of capital letters for the terms is unnecessary; moreover, as the technique is only used intermittently, it could cause ambiguities in interpretation.
- 8.1.3. I recommend that the categories of employment use be precisely defined in paragraph 8.6 in relation to the divisions and sub-divisions of the Use Classes Order, and that capital letters are not used. Once these terms have been precisely defined, it is important that they are used carefully and consistently throughout the Plan. Accordingly, the text should be amended where necessary so that it conforms to the stated definitions.

(b) Sustainable development principles

- 8.1.4. The strategic framework for the employment strategy is established in Structure Plan policy 14 (CD32). This seeks to foster economic growth in accordance with the Bright Green Industrial Strategy, which recognises the need for a balanced supply of employment floorspace and an economy based on environmental sustainability, emphasising the quality of life and looking beyond mass production. The development of Key Employment Sites is seen to be important in securing sustainable long term economic growth and in meeting the needs of companies at the forefront of the knowledge economy. The Structure Plan recognises that provision should also be made for traditional forms of employment, including manufacturing industry.
- 8.1.5. The Local Plan closely follows this strategic approach. It aims to provide sufficient opportunities to meet the full employment needs of the Borough’s residents, whilst resisting a level of development that would generate labour shortages. It acknowledges that sufficient land is already allocated for employment use, and seeks to control the growth of office floorspace because of its higher job creation capacity. Within the existing level of provision the Plan seeks to facilitate opportunities for all types of business and industry, including sites for specialised technological industries, general industry, storage and distribution, and core office locations. Some land not required to meet full employment needs is allocated for housing.
- 8.1.6. The sustainable approach to business development advocated by Tring Environmental Forum, including the concept of adding value to goods and retaining the ownership of businesses within the local area, is largely beyond the control of the planning system. Furthermore, I am not persuaded that a focus on manufacturing industry rather than distribution is necessarily more sustainable in the longer term. Whilst I acknowledge the arguments against large-scale road based distribution, I suspect that any shortage of warehouse sites close to the strategic road network is likely to result in the development of less accessible locations elsewhere, rather than changes in the mode of transport or operating practices. In addition, as the pattern of general manufacturing decline is forecast to continue, and given the environmental constraints of the area and the skills of the workforce, I think it is sustainable to concentrate on high technology industry. Indeed, this is a sector in which the proportion of added value is normally very substantial.
- 8.1.7. I believe that, within the limitations of land use planning, sustainability objectives have been applied to the overall approach to employment. I regard the aim of providing for full employment and re-allocating surplus employment land for housing as a specific manifestation of these objectives, in that it creates opportunities for reducing travel between homes and jobs. Strategies such as concentrating employment development in the main towns, promoting offices in locations that are accessible by public transport, and providing a range employment sites, also contribute to sustainability objectives. Accordingly I consider that the balanced approach to employment provision, in both quantitative and qualitative terms, reflects sustainable development principles.

Recommendation

8.1.8. The Plan be modified as follows:

- (a) paragraph 8.6 be amended so that each type of use mentioned in the employment section is defined, where appropriate, in terms of a specific class of the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987;
- (b) the definitions in (a) above should be used consistently throughout the Plan, with the text being amended where necessary.

8.2. POLICY 28: EMPLOYMENT STRATEGY - ACHIEVING FULL EMPLOYMENT

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
426	East of England Tourist Board	4056	HCC Environment Department
1303	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society	4489	Prudential Assurance Company Ltd
3082	Mr C Selly	4534	John Dickinson Stationary Ltd
3094	B & M Care	5082	Tring Environmental Forum

Supports

1894	Chiltern District Council	5012L	MSAS Global Logistics Ltd
1907	Hemel Hempstead Team Parish PCC		

Key Issues

- (a) Should the reference to full employment be retained. (4489, 4534, 5082)
- (b) Have the weaknesses of the Structure Plan studies been taken into account, and should the Pinda tables remain in the final version of the plan. (3094, 4056)
- (c) Is the amount of land allocated for employment sufficient to meet the Borough’s needs over the period of the plan. Alternatively, is there a surplus of employment land that could be redeveloped for housing. (1303, 3094)
- (d) Should a quantitative indicator be included to show when there is a serious imbalance between jobs and the workforce. (3094)
- (e) Should a criteria be added to policy 28 encouraging small businesses and in particular the re-use of redundant buildings in rural areas for this use. (1303)
- (f) Is the job generating potential of tourism fully recognised by policy 28. (426)
- (g) Should policy 28 be redrafted to outline a sustainable business development strategy. (5082)
- (h) Whether there is a specific need for additional employment land at Tring. (3082)

Inspector’s Conclusions

(a) Full employment

8.2.1. The Council indicates at paragraph 4.4.9 of the Employment Topic Report (CD55) that the term ‘full employment’ assumes a level of frictional unemployment to allow for

those persons who are between jobs or who are unable to work because of long term illness, and so on. Table 14 of the Report assumes a range between 1.5% and 2%, a reduction from the 2.5% used in the table at paragraph 8.14 of the Plan because of a tightening in the way that unemployment is measured. The authority suggests that this range is commonly used to reflect normal turnover in the labour market, below which unemployment is likely to fall. With recorded unemployment levels at or below the lower end of this range during the latter part of 1999 and the first half of 2000, I believe that the Council’s assumption is reasonable.

- 8.2.2. Tring Environmental Forum is concerned that full employment is not achievable at a local level, arguing that the measures necessary to implement it would cause overheating of the economy and drive up the demand for housing and services. I recognise that full employment is a somewhat crude measure of the balance between the demand for and supply of jobs within a local area. Because it is based on resident population, it provides no measure of the location of employment opportunities, thereby concealing substantial commuting flows. Nonetheless the concept is used in the Structure Plan, and I regard it as a reasonable basis upon which assessments of employment land supply should be made. Whilst unsustainable consequences are likely to arise should more jobs be provided than are needed, in my view the consequences in terms of social deprivation of not aiming for full employment are equally undesirable. I recommend no change should be made to the Plan in response to these objections.

(b) *Structure Plan forecasts*

Note: Although these objections have been made under Policy 28, they are perhaps more relevant to the forecasts of employment land that are included in the Background to Policy 30.

- 8.2.3. The Structure Plan employment forecasts form the basis of the job requirement and floorspace demand assessments used in the plan. They are derived from a study of long term employment land needs prepared by Pieda (CD114), which produces four forecasts using alternative methodologies and different policy assumptions. These range from a conventional model based on population forecasts and planned housing allocations, which predicts the lowest job increases and floorspace demand, to an employment forecasting model based on a continuation of the existing policy framework for the County, which produces the highest increases.
- 8.2.4. For each forecast two methods are used to estimate the floorspace demand. The approach preferred by Pieda is the equilibrium method, which essentially predicts the degree of change over the forecast period and assumes that demand and supply are in balance at the start of the period. The alternative is the baseline method, which assumes that existing floorspace data is an accurate base from which to calculate any change in demand.
- 8.2.5. A number of objectors caution against the use of forecast figures derived from the Pieda study for precise calculations of employment land. The County Council indicates that the quantitative outputs of the study are now known to be questionable, and argues that the floorspace tabulations in the Deposit Draft plan give rise to an over-precise numerical justification for policies. Quite small changes in sensitive

variables can produce large differences in the forecasts, and the Pidea study recognised the inherent weaknesses in applying County-wide results to individual Districts.

- 8.2.6. As an illustration of this, I calculate that the employment (base) model forecast of total floorspace for Dacorum at 1996 is 43% higher than the estimate of existing floorspace at that time, compared with a County-wide figure that is some 19% higher. The comparable figures for the population (conventional) model are 30% higher for the County and 57% higher for Dacorum. Whilst some difference from the estimates is to be expected, to my mind the significantly greater divergence for the smaller area casts some doubt on the reliability of the statistics produced at Borough level.
- 8.2.7. The Employment Technical Report (CD55) demonstrates the difficulties that occur when attempting to derive a precise employment land requirement from the Pidea figures. For business (B1) floorspace the Council uses the high (base) and low (conventional) forecasts to provide an indication of the potential range of provision. Table 15 of the Report shows that the variation between these forecasts at 2011 is relatively small, with a spread of less than 4% being consistent with the spread for the County as a whole. The plan then uses the baseline method to relate these forecasts to the most recent floorspace stock figures (as adjusted from 1991), to which commitments and planned losses are added. This process gives a net range of provision that equates to the difference between high and low forecasts.
- 8.2.8. The drawback of this approach lies in the assumption that the floorspace stock figure at 1996 is broadly in line with the 1996 forecast demand as predicted by the models. As already demonstrated, there is in fact a substantial difference between these figures. The implication of the Table 15 approach is that there is a shortfall of over 100,000 sq m of business floorspace against even the low forecast, suggesting that substantial additional employment land allocations might be required.
- 8.2.9. To overcome the problem of relating the forecasts to actual floorspace stock assessments, the Council introduced during the inquiry business floorspace forecasts based on the equilibrium method. Tables B and C of the Additional Explanatory Note to the Employment Topic Report predict a much smaller overall demand for business floorspace than the baseline forecast. In principle I consider that this approach has much to commend it, for by focusing on change over a relatively short time period, the margin for error should be significantly reduced. Furthermore the results of this approach appear to be far more realistic, in that the forecasts are more closely allied to floorspace demands based on a continuation of past trends.
- 8.2.10. There is, however, one fundamental shortcoming of the equilibrium approach. It shows a far wider range between high and low forecasts, representing a spread of over 12%. In addition, there is no overlap between the two methods, for the baseline forecast range of demand is substantially above the equilibrium range. In the Additional Note the Council states that the equilibrium method is more robust, but concludes that both methods provide useful guides, suggesting that the differences between them underline the need for regular monitoring. The authority prefers the equilibrium method for testing the adequacy of supply in terms of the objectives of Policy 28, but gives greater weight to the baseline method when identifying a ceiling or policy constraint, as occurs with Policy 30. I am not sure about the logic behind this reasoning, and I wonder whether it might instead be an attempt to try to fit otherwise irreconcilable predictions to the real world situation.

- 8.2.11. The picture is further confused by the Council choosing to use the equilibrium method alone for its assessment of B2 and B8 floorspace. The forecasts show a loss of industrial floorspace and an increase in warehousing over the plan period, as would be expected, but to my mind the difficulty occurs – as with the B1 forecast – with the size of the difference between the high and low forecasts. If the B2 and B8 forecasts are combined, which was accepted at the inquiry as a reasonable basis for assessment, the range amounts to 111,030 sq m of floorspace. At average densities this equates to almost 28 ha of land, or over 2200 jobs. Similarly the range between high and low forecasts of B1 floorspace is 85,140 sq m, or over 21 ha and almost 3,000 jobs.
- 8.2.12. The overall range of provision for employment land using the equilibrium method amounts to some 49 ha of land. This is almost twice the area of land covered by the employment proposal sites, and is roughly equivalent to 20% of the existing employment land supply. It is wholly unrealistic, in my view, for this to reasonably be regarded as a potential range of provision. Instead I believe that it casts serious doubts on the value of the equilibrium method as a tool of prediction.
- 8.2.13. The fundamental flaw, it seems to me, stems from the use of employment (base) and population (conventional) forecasts in the same tabulation. Although the two models produce results at 2011 in which the range between high and low forecasts is entirely reasonable, because they start from different perspectives they converge over time. Consequently the unacceptably large range between high and low forecasts in the Council’s Tables 16 and B is primarily a function of the significant differences between the models’ 1996 floorspace predictions. The Piedad study makes it clear that comparisons across forecasts are not valid, and the Council’s tabulations bear this out.
- 8.2.14. In the light of these findings I believe that the weaknesses of the Structure Plan studies have not been fully recognised in the Plan. In my opinion the Council places undue reliance on detailed floorspace forecasts that many objectors feel to be suspect, a view which my analysis has confirmed. Moreover, the weaknesses have been compounded by comparisons across forecasting models that cannot validly be made. The attempt to use inherently dissimilar models as upper and lower limits to development produces a potential range of provision that is so large as to be meaningless as a tool of prediction. The fact that the Council regards the forecasts as assessments rather than targets for provision is, to my mind, a tacit acknowledgement that they should not be accorded the same status as, say, the housing forecasts.
- 8.2.15. I conclude that the inclusion of the floorspace calculations in the Plan accords them a sense of worth that is misleading. I note that the Panel report into the Structure Plan (CD30) found that there was no point – and potential for harm – in including guideline figures in that document, though it recognised that decisions about the long term supply and demand for floorspace have to be made at District level. The Panel concluded that a system of monitoring which would give the most up-to-date assessment possible would be the best basis for determining floorspace demand.
- 8.2.16. Having regard to the detailed monitoring of employment land that has taken place in Dacorum for many years, and the general acceptance of the reliability of this exercise, I believe that a reasonably accurate picture of past changes has been compiled. Whilst there are limitations over the extent to which recent trends can be used to inform predictions of long-term change, from the robustness of the data they would appear to provide a reasonable basis for assessing floorspace needs in the short-term. In these

circumstances, I recommend that the detailed floorspace assessments based on the Pidea forecasts should be deleted from the Plan.

(c) *Sufficiency or surplus of employment land supply*

Note: Although these objections have been made under Policy 28, they are perhaps more relevant to the to forecasts of employment land that are included in the Background to Policy 30.

- 8.2.17. An analysis of the adequacy of the employment land supply depends upon balancing the need for employment floorspace against the supply that is likely to materialise as a result of the Plan’s policies and proposals. The difficulties in forecasting future demand have been outlined in the preceding section. In this section I shall focus primarily on the supply of employment land, and then reconcile this with the forecast demand for floorspace.

Existing floorspace

- 8.2.18. The two main components of the land supply are the existing floorspace figures and the planned change to 2011. Calculations of the existing floorspace are obtained from continual monitoring of planning permissions and completions from a 1991 base, which itself derives from Inland Revenue figures of a few years earlier. At the inquiry it was acknowledged that the base was likely to be fairly reliable, and as the records since then are detailed, the accuracy of past monitoring was not challenged. Errors and omissions will undoubtedly occur, not least from the exclusion of alterations and extensions that benefit from permitted development rights, and clearly these inaccuracies will increase with the passage of time from the base date. Nevertheless there is no evidence to suggest that the monitoring process has led to significant errors, and in the absence of any alternative method of assessment, I accept that the process provides a reasonably accurate estimate of past changes.
- 8.2.19. Three ‘snapshots’ of current floorspace have been supplied during the preparation of the Plan, at 1.4.1997 (in the Deposit Draft, CD52), at 1.4.1999 (in the Employment Topic Report, CD55), and at 1.4.2000 (in the Additional Explanatory Note to CD55 and other inquiry documents). The 1999 and 2000 figures are probably the most robust, as they were subject to the greatest scrutiny at the inquiry. Although initially there were a large number of inconsistencies in the data, most arose from differences in categorisation. For example, there was some debate about whether certain sites should be included as completions or commitments, but the precise category matters little – in cases of doubt, I have taken the Council’s view to ensure consistency with earlier figures. Potentially more significant are differences about the class of development, particularly the division between B1 and B2/B8; again I have accepted the authority’s opinion for the same reason. Overall I am satisfied that the completions and commitments figures are now broadly accurate, and that they can be used to estimate the current land supply with a reasonable degree of confidence.
- 8.2.20. An important component of the existing land supply is the amount of vacant floorspace. High vacancy levels mask a true assessment of productive capacity and constitute a reserve of floorspace that can result in increased employment at existing sites. The Structure Plan (CD32) considers that 5% of vacant floorspace is sufficient to allow for normal stock turnover in the context of a vigorous local economy, whilst

the Roger Tym report (CD115) suggests that a reasonable range is 5% - 10%. In 1998 vacancy rates of 7% for B1 floorspace and 11% for B2/B8 floorspace were recorded for Dacorum. However, evidence produced at the inquiry suggested that by April 2000 these rates had fallen by almost half, which supports the view of commercial agents that there are relatively few properties on the market in the Borough. It seems reasonable to conclude that there is currently no significant reserve of vacant floorspace that could be used to boost the supply of employment land.

Planned changes in floorspace

- 8.2.21. Turning to the planned change to 2011, this is made up of commitments (ie sites with planning permission), the capacity of employment Proposal Sites (allocations), and forecast losses of employment land. The commitments are the most reliable source and, with completion probable during the Plan period, they represent a firm indicator of future development. As to allocations, a significant number of the Proposal Sites have already been developed, and as employment land is in short supply it is reasonable to assume that most of the remaining allocations should also be completed during the Plan period.
- 8.2.22. There are two sites where this does not apply, however. Firstly, in my consideration of Proposal Site TWA9, I have concluded that the property is most likely to remain in its existing retail use (see Chapter 17 paragraphs 17.25.1 to 17.25.12); I have therefore deleted the potential gain of 1,200 sq m of B1 floorspace from the calculations.
- 8.2.23. The second variation to the planned changes concerns the major allocation at North East Hemel Hempstead (Proposal Site E4), which has remained undeveloped for many years because of access problems. An alternative access route has now been identified (see Part 4 of the Plan), though because of the scale of the works involved this may take some time to implement. The developable area of Site E4 extends to 20.1ha, though I am proposing that part of this land be added to Housing Site H27 (see Chapter 7). A total of 3.5ha would be lost (3.2ha for housing and 0.3ha for open space), creating an employment site of 16.6ha. As I discuss later in my consideration of Site E4 (see paragraphs 8.15.4 to 8.15.6), I believe that this reduced site should be retained wholly for specialised technological activities or activities which are in the national or regional interest.
- 8.2.24. It is reasonable to assume that most of Site E4 would be completed during the Plan period. However, given its size, the current lack of access and my proposed restriction on use, I believe that it would be sensible to plan for about 25% of the site remaining undeveloped by 2011. The resultant 12.5ha would provide some 50,000 sq m of B1 floorspace (I have assumed that the floorspace is most likely to be B1, though there could be an element of B2 or B8, particularly if part were developed for activities in the national or regional interest). The loss of the 26,800 sq m of B2 and B8 floorspace proposed by the Council for Site E4 would be partly off-set by the reinstatement of Employment Site E2 (see section 8.14), which would provide some 11,200 sq m of floorspace.
- 8.2.25. The planned losses from employment comprise those sites that are allocated for alternative uses, and those where a change to housing is encouraged by Policy 33. Three of the four allocated sites have already been lost to employment use, and there is a high probability of the fourth (Site TWA8) being redeveloped. There is much less

certainty, however, about the Policy 33 sites. I indicate in Chapter 17 (see paragraphs 17.16.1 to 17.16.15) that two of the sites (Frogmore Road and Corner Hall) are not suitable for conversion, and these should be deleted from the floorspace calculations.

- 8.2.26. The Council recognises that it is unlikely that all of the other Policy 33 sites will be completely lost to employment during the Plan period. Because of the multiplicity of ownerships, and the likelihood that some businesses will not be able to find suitable alternative accommodation, I share that view. Taking these factors into account, I believe that it would be more realistic to assume planned B1 losses of 14,500 sq m, B2 losses of 60,000 sq m, and B8 losses of 8,000 sq m. Total planned losses are therefore 82,500 sq m, compared with the Council’s figure of 101,027 sq m.

Current trends

- 8.2.27. Structure Plan policy 14 indicates that an adequate and balanced supply of employment floorspace should be based on monitoring trends in floorspace stock, vacancy levels and commitments. The Panel conducting the Structure Plan review concurred, suggesting that this should give the most up-to-date assessment possible at the relevant times. A number of clear trends emerge from an analysis of the statistics.
- 8.2.28. Firstly, since the gains of the early 1990s, the supply of office and other B1 floorspace has remained relatively constant. Most completed schemes have been small scale, and any gains in floorspace have been largely offset by losses elsewhere. With anticipated losses of B1 floorspace substantially exceeding current commitments, future planned additions to the stock depend heavily on the development of the key employment site at North East Hemel Hempstead. Secondly, while the supply of industrial (B2) floorspace also appears to have remained relatively stable in recent years, the decline of the early to mid 1990s is set to continue as planned losses (including some that have already occurred) far exceed the capacity of proposals sites. Thirdly, the only significant growth since 1995 has been in the warehousing and distribution sector (B8), where some 33,000 sq m of floorspace has been added and further additions are imminent with the completion of Proposals Sites E3 and E6.

Other influences on floorspace provision

- 8.2.29. The Council argues that a variety of other factors have the potential to generate (mostly) unplanned increases in floorspace, thereby affecting the outcome at year 2011. Perhaps the most significant is the increase in floorspace on already developed sites, either through extensions or through wholesale redevelopment. The Council estimates that some 15,000 sq m of additional (mainly business) floorspace has arisen over the last 5 years as a result of firms expanding, and assumes that this process will continue. Furthermore it is argued that there is considerable pressure for the redevelopment of the more outdated premises for office use, particularly in the GEAs identified as core office locations (see Policy 31). Indeed, a concern about the potential for rapid office growth, similar to that which occurred during the late 1980s and early 1990s, is the reason for the proposed ceiling on B1 floorspace in Policy 30. It is believed that opportunities for increases in office floorspace are also likely to occur within the town and local centres, such as at the ‘Plough’ roundabout site at Hemel Hempstead where some 4,000 sq m of B1 floorspace has been assumed as part of a mixed use development.

- 8.2.30. It is difficult to predict the extent to which existing sites will be redeveloped, and the scale of any resulting gains in floorspace. Those employment areas classified as core office locations are likely to represent the main opportunity for significant floorspace additions, as the viability of such schemes depends upon the higher rental levels that can be achieved for offices. The Council points to the office boom of the late 1980s and early 1990s in Hemel Hempstead, in particular, which was largely the result of redevelopment of employment sites. Its perception is that office demand is cyclical, and that Hemel Hempstead is likely to prove an attractive location for B1 development in the future.
- 8.2.31. The Roger Tym study (CD115) suggests that Hemel Hempstead is on the edge of the area of highest demand for office space in Hertfordshire, where the larger, more mobile occupiers might be attracted to high quality space funded by the major institutions. The view of local agents is that demand for high quality office space currently exceeds supply, and with falling vacancy rates and few secondary properties coming on to the market, such demand is unsatisfied through a lack of available space.
- 8.2.32. In these circumstances, and given the relatively favourable economic conditions of the latter part of the 1990s, I find it surprising that there are few current proposals for redevelopment for office use. The only sizeable scheme is the Lucas site, where there has been a proposal to replace the existing factory on Maylands Avenue with offices as part of a larger development that includes Housing Proposal Site H15A. Whilst the submitted scheme has been refused planning permission, and I recommend against the housing element in Chapter 7, it demonstrates that there is the potential for an extra 9,000 sq m of floorspace, representing about a 25% increase. This would be a significant addition to the supply of B1 floorspace, and a corresponding increase in the number of jobs because of the lower floorspace demands of office employees. Whether or not the Lucas factory site is redeveloped, I think it is realistic to anticipate some unplanned gains of B1 floorspace, but based on recent trends I think that these are unlikely to be substantial. It is highly improbable, in my view that the overall growth would come anywhere near the ceiling proposed in Policy 30.
- 8.2.33. Moreover, any B1 gains through redevelopment will often be associated with further losses of B2 and B8 floorspace. Redevelopment of outdated industrial and warehouse premises for similar uses is also likely to occur as part of the natural process of stock replenishment, but if the experience of the past is repeated, this is more likely to produce net reductions of floorspace rather than increases. A recently proposed scheme for the redevelopment of a large warehouse on the Kodak site at Swallowdale exemplifies this trend, as the 11 B2/B8 units to be built would reduce the floorspace by about 7,500 sq m, a decrease of around 25%. Nevertheless, because the switch to a mix of uses should lead to higher job densities, the number of people employed on this site is forecast to rise marginally. Both the Kodak and Lucas illustrations demonstrate that the ultimate objective of the employment land forecasting process, the number of jobs provided, is particularly sensitive to the type of floorspace that is built.
- 8.2.34. A second factor that could produce increases in floorspace is the density of new employment development, which the Council has assumed to be 4,000 sq m per hectare, ie 40% site coverage. It is clear that the authority considers this to be a cautious estimate, as it expects the impact of changes to car parking standards and Green Transport Plans to produce higher plot ratios. From the limited evidence presented at the inquiry it appears that some current schemes are being developed at

plot ratios of 43-44%, and there is the possibility that this could increase towards 50% (which is the figure assumed in the Pidea Report (CD114)) with the implementation of maximum parking standards. The greatest change is likely with B8 and, to a lesser extent, B2 developments, for it is in these Use Classes that the standards have been most significantly reduced.

- 8.2.35. Whether higher plot ratios will be achieved on new development sites is debatable, in my view, particularly as most of the land is concentrated at Site E4. This is located on the fringe of the north-east Hemel Hempstead employment area, where accessibility by public transport is currently poor. The high costs associated with the off-site infrastructure needed to bring this site forward might make significant investment in Green Transport Plans difficult to secure in the initial phases of the development. Alternatively, insistence on reduced parking standards might reduce the attractiveness of the site, causing development to proceed at a slower rate than anticipated. It is also possible that, with the focus on specialised technology firms, some sites will be developed by companies for their own use, with greater likelihood of expansion land being retained than is the case with speculative development. Taking these factors into account, I do not believe that it would be appropriate to plan for an overall floorspace yield on new sites of more than 4,000 sq m per hectare.
- 8.2.36. Other contributions to the employment needs of Dacorum’s workforce arise from developments at Hemel Hempstead that are just outside the Borough and within St Alban’s District. Two warehouses providing over 17,300 sq m of B8 floorspace have recently been completed at Punchbowl Park, which lies to the north of Three Cherry Trees Lane adjacent to the Buncefield GEA. This site is effectively part of the large employment area to the north-east of Hemel Hempstead, and serves the same labour market. Consequently it is reasonable to regard it as an addition to the Borough’s supply of B8 floorspace. Similarly the land allocated for strategic employment development in this location (Proposal Site E4) includes a small area within St Alban’s District, though as this can only be accessed from the much larger site in Dacorum, it is doubtful whether this is likely to be developed during the Plan period.

Balancing supply against forecast demand

- 8.2.37. How does this analysis of the supply of floorspace relate to the forecast demand? Despite my criticisms of the methodologies employed, it is nonetheless necessary to make some assessment of supply against the forecasts of demand because of the lack of alternative approaches. As I indicate in the preceding sub-section, I find the equilibrium approach to be potentially the most reliable indicator of demand, though I am concerned about the substantial difference between high and low forecasts. It is important, in my view, that the most up-to-date figures are used, particularly as the equilibrium method relies on changes to a relatively recent base date, and I have therefore based my assessment on the Council’s final version of Table C in LPA Document 1143.
- 8.2.38. Dealing first with the B1 forecast, it is necessary to update the revised Table C by the smaller planned losses and the changes to Sites E4 and TWA9 specified in the preceding sub-sections. When this is done, it is apparent that the development proposed in the Plan would produce a level of B1 floorspace at 2011 that is just below the middle of the forecast range. The same analysis for B8 floorspace produces a figure that is slightly more towards the lower end of the range, about one third above

the low forecast. If the Punchbowl Park provision is added into the B8 equation, which I believe is reasonable as it adjoins north-east Hemel Hempstead, the projected floorspace ends up being above the mid point of the forecast range. The figure for B2 floorspace, however, is about 10% below the forecast range, equating to a higher level of net losses of B2 floorspace than predicted. If the B2 and B8 figures are added together, which in practice is the basis on which the land use categorisations and allocations are made, the combined provision is within the forecast range, about 30% above the low figure.

- 8.2.39. On the basis of this analysis, it would seem that the amount of employment floorspace proposed in the Plan is probably about right. I recognise that it would be wrong to place too much reliance on a forecasting process that has recognised limitations, but in the absence of any other forecasting tool I am reassured by the fact that the anticipated outcome is comfortably within the range of demand predictions. I acknowledge that the Council regards the low forecast as the minimum necessary to meet the projected needs of the local workforce. However, given my concern about the excessively wide ranges produced by the equilibrium forecasts, there is potentially a risk of under-provision if the target was set at the low end of the range. Instead it seems to me that it is preferable to plan for an outcome that is closer to the mid-point. The fact that the figures are generally below this mid-point suggests that the overall provision is not excessive. On the other hand I do not consider that it is unduly restrictive, as the total level of floorspace is sufficiently above the low forecast to allow for a margin of error and some flexibility in implementation.
- 8.2.40. Perhaps the main question arises over the apparent imbalance between the B2 and B8 forecasts, but to my mind this is simply a reflection of market conditions and the demand for land in Dacorum, particularly at north-east Hemel Hempstead. It is evident from the allocations already developed that a very large proportion of B2/B8 land has been used for large-scale distribution. Given the good accessibility to the principal road network, there is little prospect that this will change in the foreseeable future. I am aware that the Council would prefer to stem the decline in B2 floorspace, but I think it likely that the trend for manufacturing to move to other parts of the country, where wage costs in particular are much lower, is set to continue. On the other hand, the overall analysis does suggest that the B1 land supply is reasonably well placed to deliver the broad thrust of the strategic employment policy, with its focus on the knowledge economy and the Bright Green strategy.
- 8.2.41. The results of the quantitative analysis also appear consistent with a more subjective appraisal based on recent trends in provision and current demands for floorspace. There is clear evidence of a demand for B1 floorspace, which should largely be met by the North East Hemel Hempstead allocation. There is also a strong demand for B8 floorspace, as demonstrated by recent completions. I suspect that there may well be a market requirement for more B8 floorspace than is planned, but I do not believe that this would be in the best interests of the workforce or consistent with the promotion the Bright Green strategy. Indeed, if anything I regard the proposed level of B8 floorspace as slightly on the high side, as I discuss under Site E2.
- 8.2.42. I conclude that the demand for employment floorspace and the supply that would result from the policies and proposals of the Plan are broadly in balance. There is certainly no evidence of a substantial mismatch at the end of the Plan period, though it is clear that the current demand for B1 floorspace is largely unsatisfied because the

main source of supply, Site E4, is not yet available. The main unknown factors, such as the density of development and the redevelopment potential, are mostly on the side of an increase in overall provision, so I am confident that there should not be a lower level of employment provision, and therefore jobs, than is needed by 2011. Consequently, apart from the changes I have already identified, I recommend no further modification to the level of employment provision in the Plan in response to these objections.

(d) *Indicator of balance between jobs and workforce*

8.2.43. The objector is concerned that Policy 28 does not define when a serious imbalance is deemed to have occurred between the number of jobs available and the number of jobs needed, and argues that a quantitative indicator should be included to provide certainty. The Council points out that at any particular time the assessment of balance has to take into account the complex variables listed in the Policy, and the authority is uncertain how an indicator could be devised to take them all into account. I share the Council’s view, for in the absence of any suggestion from the objector, I find it difficult to imagine that one quantitative parameter, or even a series of them, could be derived now to cater for the unpredictable variability of future change. Instead I believe that regular monitoring of the variables, coupled with periodic assessments to establish whether supply and demand remain reasonably in balance, should be sufficient to enable any serious imbalance to be identified. I recommend no change in response to this objection.

(e) *Small businesses and redundant buildings in rural areas*

8.2.44. Policy 28 establishes the employment strategy for the Borough, and does not seek to differentiate between different types of business. The aim is to achieve a balance between the supply of land for employment and the number of jobs needed in the Borough, and the policy sets out the parameters by which this balance will be assessed. In my view it would not be appropriate to single out a particular type of business in this policy. The Council recognises the importance of small businesses by encouraging specific provision for small firms in Policy 36. This also refers to other opportunities for small firms to secure premises, including the re-use of buildings in rural areas under Policy 106. I therefore believe that the concerns of the objector are appropriately addressed elsewhere in the Plan.

(f) *Tourism*

8.2.45. The objector is concerned that the potential for tourism to provide a significant number of jobs is not fully recognised in Policy 28. It seems to me, however, that there is no implicit reference in the policy to the scale of the jobs provided by activities not falling within the definition of employment generating uses. Indeed, the specific inclusion of tourism within the list of other job providing uses could be taken as a recognition of the significance of the jobs created by the tourist industry. I recommend no change in response to this objection.

(g) *Sustainable business development*

8.2.46. The objector argues that instead of emphasising full employment, a sustainable business strategy should be outlined which encourages existing businesses to

redevelop their sites, thereby favouring more sustainable manufacturing technologies and reducing energy demand. To my mind, however, these two objectives need not be mutually incompatible. Policy 28 deals with managing the supply of land to achieve full employment, which in itself I regard as a sustainable model for the local economy. Whether a particular development reflects sustainability principles is not, in my view, an issue for a policy that aims to achieve full employment. Instead, I regard it as a detailed matter that is properly addressed by other Policies, such as 8 and 9, which seek to optimise the use of urban land and to minimise any adverse impact of development on the environment. I recommend no modification should be made in response to this objection.

(h) Land at Tring

- 8.2.47. The objector contends that the substantial level of out-commuting from Tring is contrary to the Structure Plan and Local Plan objectives of providing local employment, minimising travel and encouraging the growth of the knowledge economy. The significant imbalance between jobs and workers in Tring could be overcome, it is argued, by a business park, which would attract employers requiring a predominantly professional and managerial workforce. The provision of such a facility would accord with sustainable development principles, and a suitable site is identified to the east of Tring.
- 8.2.48. In my view there are two important questions to be asked when assessing the merits of the suggested 13.3ha business park - would greater local employment significantly reduce overall travel to work, and would the proposal accord with the employment strategy of the Plan. On the first matter the Council estimates that, at average employment densities, a business park of the size proposed might be expected to provide some 2,000 jobs, which would represent an increase of over 60% in the supply of jobs in Tring. While some of these jobs would undoubtedly be taken by local people, with the current low rate of unemployment it is likely to take some time for significant numbers of local residents to switch from working outside Tring.
- 8.2.49. Even if, in the longer term, half the jobs on the proposed development were to be taken by local people, the remainder would involve in-commuting from outside the settlement. It seems likely, therefore, that although the suggested business park could be expected to reduce out-commuting, it would also lead to a substantial increase in in-commuting. Moreover many workers travelling to Tring would probably come from sizeable settlements which already have a good supply of local jobs. Consequently it is far from certain that the proposed business park would produce overall benefits in terms of sustainability and reduced travel to work.
- 8.2.50. Turning to the second matter, Policy 28 states that sufficient land is provided within the Borough as a whole to enable full employment to be achieved, and indicates that the supply of land will not be reviewed unless there is a serious imbalance between job supply and job demand. The statistics demonstrate that there is a reasonable balance in Dacorum, with 61% of residents working in the Borough and sufficient jobs for 83% of the economically active residents. Subsequent policies and site-specific proposals seek to ensure that this balance is maintained throughout the Plan period, mainly by utilising land already used or allocated for employment purposes.

8.2.51. There is no requirement, however, for the balance between job supply and demand to apply to individual settlements within the Borough. Indeed, in a locality that is characterised by settlements that are reasonably close together and connected by good transport links, I believe it is unrealistic to expect small areas to have a high degree of self-containment. As there is no evidence of a serious imbalance at Borough level, I do not believe that there is any justification for reviewing the supply of land and allocating the site promoted at Tring. I recommend no change to the Plan in response to this objection.

Recommendation

8.2.52. **No modification be made to Policy 28.**

8.2.53. **The Plan be modified by deleting from the Background to Policy 30 the Tables giving floorspace assessments based on the Pidea forecasts, and consequential amendments be made to the text.**

8.3. POLICY 29: THE EMPLOYMENT LAND SUPPLY

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
358	Great Gaddesden Parish Council	3749	Government Office for East of England
1304	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society	4325	Mrs A J Nobbs
1801	Water End & Upper Gade Valley Conservation Society	5083	Tring Environmental Forum
3106	B & M Care		

Supports

1895	Chiltern District Council	3105	B & M Care
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Key Issues

- (a) Should the policy explain the criteria used to determine which land has been included in the different categories forming the minimum employment land supply. (3106)
- (b) Should category (d) of the policy be amended to refer to ‘major developed sites’ in the Green Belt. (3749)
- (c) Should a phrase be added stating that the supply of employment land will be kept under review and modified as new employment patterns come forward. (358,1304,1801)
- (d) Is the idea of an over-supply of employment land, leading to enforced change of use to housing, counter to the aim of regenerating towns. (4325)
- (e) Is policy 29 necessary, or should it be deleted. (5083)

Inspector’s Conclusions

(a) *Criteria for determining categories of land supply*

8.3.1. There is nothing unusual or exceptional in the way that the Policy identifies the minimum supply of employment land, in my view, for it merely lists established employment areas in various locations, together with proposals sites. I consider that

any clarification that is necessary to help categorise employment land or sites is more appropriately included in the policies which deal with the specific types of land, particularly Policies 31 and 32. I recommend no change to the Plan in response to this objection.

(b) Green Belt sites

8.3.2. The two identified employment sites in the Green Belt are considered by the Council to make a significant contribution to the employment land supply, and it is therefore appropriate that they should be included under Policy 29. I conclude in my consideration of Policy 32 that they should also be regarded as major developed sites for the purposes of PPG2, and in Chapter 4 I recommend that a separate policy be introduced to identify and control the development of all such sites. As I discuss under Policy 32, in this way the issues pertaining to major developed sites in the Green Belt are separated from those relating to employment. Moreover, because not all the Borough’s major developed sites are in employment use, then it would be wrong for the issue of major developed sites to be exclusively an employment section issue. I believe that this approach satisfactorily addresses the issue raised by the objector, and I recommend no further change to the Plan.

(c) Review and modification of land supply

8.3.3. It is suggested that, with industry and commerce undergoing rapid change, there is little point in retaining employment land that is unlikely to be needed. This argument goes to the heart of the debate over the adequacy of the land supply that is addressed at Policy 28. All parties accept the need for regular monitoring, and in view of the uncertainties surrounding the employment forecasts, the Council is carrying this out. Policy 28 establishes the circumstances in which the supply of land might be changed, indicating that a review will only occur if the supply of jobs becomes seriously out of balance with the need for them. I have accepted that this is an appropriate yardstick, and in my view it is not necessary to duplicate this “monitor and manage” process in Policy 29.

(d) Housing use of employment land

8.3.4. The objector accepts that non-viable industrial areas should be redeveloped for other uses, but is concerned that the idea of an over-supply of employment land might lead to an enforced change of use where businesses are thriving, which would be counter to the aim of regeneration within towns. I recognise that it would be undesirable to require the removal of land that is necessary for employment use, but again this is essentially a matter for the balance between supply and demand that is governed by Policy 28. The purpose of Policy 29 is to retain sufficient land to achieve full employment, so by implication other land not identified is surplus to fulfilling that objective. It therefore follows, in my view, that the aim of regeneration is not prejudiced by Policy 29. I deal with the matter of enforced changes of use under Policy 33, in which the sites proposed for conversion are identified. I recommend no change to the Plan in response to this objection.

(e) Deletion of Policy 29

- 8.3.5. It is argued that the policy serves no useful purpose apart from linking a number of other policies in the chapter, and that the link to the notion of full employment makes no sense. I have dealt with the objector’s concern about full employment under Policy 28. As to the usefulness of the policy, I have some sympathy with the view that the policy is not strictly necessary, though I approach it from a different standpoint. My concerns stem from the complex interrelationship between Policies 28 and 29, and the feeling that a simpler, more straightforward policy approach could be devised by amalgamating the two.
- 8.3.6. I fully accept that it is important to define the aim of the employment strategy, to identify the minimum supply of land necessary to achieve that aim, and to indicate how that supply is to be managed. To my mind this is one process, and could form one policy. If there is a preference for the policy to be divided, I consider that it would be more logical to separate the monitoring and management from the objective and the identification of the land supply. This would then provide an element of consistency with Policy 30, which is also a management policy designed to impose an upper (rather than a lower) limit on the provision of employment floorspace.
- 8.3.7. I am aware that a similar format to that proposed is used in the Adopted Plan, and it may be that there are other compelling arguments that warrant the retention of this approach. I would, however, encourage the Council to consider the alternatives I have suggested, which I believe would simplify the Plan and remove the overlap between Policies 28 and 29.

Recommendation

- 8.3.8. **The Council reviews the function of Policy 29 and its relationship with Policy 28 to see whether the Plan could be simplified by combining both policies into one.**

8.4. POLICY 30: CONTROL OF FLOORSPACE ON EMPLOYMENT LAND

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
1305	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society	4535	John Dickinson Stationery Ltd
1527	Kings Langley & District Residents’ Association	5084	Tring Environmental Forum
3750	Government Office for East of England		

Counter Objections

To pre-inquiry change 60			
5367PC	J Sainsbury’s Developments	5419PC	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society
To pre-inquiry change 61			
5368PC	J Sainsbury’s Developments	5693PC	Kings Langley & District Residents’
5420PC	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society		

Supports

5013L	MSAS Global Logistics Ltd
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Key Issues

- (a) Does the policy make clear whether one or more of the criteria need to be met. (1305, 3750, 4535)
- (b) Should a community settlement appraisal have been carried out to identify the needs of local businesses. (5084)
- (c) Does the policy, as amended by Pre Inquiry Change 60, take into account the changing pattern of industry and structure of employment. Could the provision of employment land be reduced by encouraging the intensification of uses, particularly office development, on existing employment sites. (1527, 5419PC, 5420PC, 5693PC)
- (d) Does the policy lead to excess provision of employment floorspace. Should the low rather than the high forecast of business floorspace be used. (1527, 5084, 5420PC, 5693PC)
- (e) Should the provisions of sub-paragraph (c) of the policy be removed. (5420PC)
- (f) Should the employment floorspace figures include land in retail use at Apsley Mills retail park, or should these areas be categorised as local/district centres. (5367PC, 5368PC)

Inspector’s Conclusions

Note: For a detailed analysis of the forecasting methodology, and of the balance between the supply and demand for employment land, see the conclusions at sub-sections (b) and (c) of Policy 28.

(a) *One or more criteria*

8.4.1. A number of objectors contend that it is not clear whether the criteria of Policy 30 are alternatives, such that only one needs to be satisfied before the business floorspace ceiling can be breached, or whether all are required to be met. I share this view, for the intent of the policy is not entirely clear even with the inclusion of “or” after criterion (e), as it could be argued that only the last two are alternatives. I recognise that by taking the policy in the round and reading the text it becomes apparent that the ceiling may be breached by satisfying any one of the criteria. Nevertheless I believe that it is desirable to remove any doubt about the interpretation of the policy. I regard the suggestion of GOEE, which would insert the phrase “satisfies one or more of the following criteria” at the end of the second paragraph, as the neatest way of achieving this objective.

(b) *Community settlement appraisals and local business needs*

8.4.2. Structure Plan policy 3 encourages the preparation of comprehensive settlement appraisals (CSAs) for towns, to improve community involvement in the local planning process. Whilst I believe that such appraisals would be beneficial, as indicated at paragraphs 2.6.2 and 4.1.1, their absence is no reason to delay the Plan at this stage. I also share the Council’s view that it would be difficult to use CSAs to improve estimates of local employment land needs. Whilst it is arguable that in certain instances, such as at Tring, a prior indication of the strength of public reaction to the loss of employment land might have obviated the need for Pre Inquiry Changes, there is no reason to believe that the current version of the Plan would be materially different if CSAs had been prepared.

8.4.3. It is important that the Borough’s economy is not constrained by the lack of opportunities for local businesses to expand or redevelop. The Plan identifies a wide range of employment land and aims to ensure that sufficient land for each broad type of use is maintained. The needs of both large and small enterprises are recognised, and the Plan makes it clear that much of the anticipated increase in floorspace is likely to result from business expansion or redevelopment. In addition, Policy 30 allows the business floorspace ceiling to be exceeded if, amongst other criteria, it caters for the needs of an existing business in Dacorum; in this way local needs are favoured should there be a major growth in business floorspace. I therefore consider that the needs of local businesses are adequately addressed in the Plan.

(c) *Changing structure of employment and intensification of uses*

8.4.4. It is evident that the change from a traditional manufacturing economy to a technological and knowledge economy has been taking place in Dacorum for many years, and the Bright Green strategy suggests that this trend is set to continue. The Plan includes many references to the land demand implications of this change, such as the lower floorspace per worker for office and other B1 development, and various factors leading to increases in site coverage. Indeed, the potential for higher employment densities has been taken into account when reaching the conclusion that there is sufficient employment land identified to meet the needs of the area, with a surplus that can be reallocated for housing. I am satisfied that the Plan fully addresses the likely structural changes in industry and employment.

8.4.5. In relation to encouraging the associated intensification of use, the Council is more concerned that the rapid boom of the 1980s might be repeated, leading to overheating of the local economy, rather than fearing that redevelopment for office use will not occur. This is the reason for the floorspace ceiling imposed in Policy 30. Further controls are included in Policy 31, which directs business use to certain core office locations. At the heart of the Council’s strategy is the desire to retain a balance of employment land, maintaining sufficient flexibility to support a range of businesses and industry whilst seeking to ensure that the land supply is neither too large nor too small.

8.4.6. There are significant difficulties in determining whether or not the overall scale of employment land provision and the balance between uses has been appropriately judged, as is evident from my consideration under Policy 28 and in the following section. Nevertheless, I do not believe that it is necessary for Policy 30 to directly encourage the intensification of uses on existing employment sites, especially as the main intent of the policy is to place a ceiling on the growth of office floorspace.

(d) *Limitation on business floorspace*

8.4.7. The objectors argue that the policy would lead to an over-provision of employment floorspace, and believe that a greater intensity of development on existing and proposed employment sites could enable the amount of land required for employment purposes to be reduced. It is argued that rather than using the high forecast figure of 217,000 sq m for the provision of business (B1) floorspace, the low forecast figure of 190,000 sq m should be used instead. The Council acknowledges that the figure is on the high side, and believes that it should be regarded as a ceiling rather than a target; to this end PICs 60 and 61, and FCs 1 and 2, are proposed.

- 8.4.8. I examine in some detail the shortcomings of the Structure Plan forecasts at sub-section (b) of Policy 28 (see paragraphs 8.2.3 to 8.2.16). In particular I focus on the different forecasting methodologies used by the Council, concluding that in principle the equilibrium method should potentially be more reliable because it deals with change over a shorter period of time. However the ceiling figure proposed in Policy 30 is derived from the baseline forecast, which produces a range of B1 floorspace provision that is far above that derived from the equilibrium method (even allowing for the longer time period of the baseline forecast). By way of illustration, subtracting the approximately 45,000 sq m of B1 floorspace completed in the 1991-1996 period gives a 1996-2011 range of provision between 145,000 sq m (low) and 172,000 sq m (high) under the baseline method. The equivalent range using the equilibrium method, taken from Table C of CD55, is between 2,690 sq m (low) and 87,830 sq m (high).
- 8.4.9. I tried very hard at the inquiry, and in my subsequent deliberations, to make some sense of these figures, but I cannot reconcile them. As I indicate in my conclusions at Policy 28, the baseline method gives a realistic range of provision, but relies on floorspace figures that bear little relation to the forecasts. The equilibrium method seems to more accurately reflect the proposed strategy, and appears to be consistent with a continuation of recent trends, but produces an unreasonably wide range of provision. The Council has attempted to rationalise the inconsistency between these methodologies by treating the figure in Policy 30 as a ceiling rather than a target, but I am not sure that it has fully examined the consequences of this approach.
- 8.4.10. I calculate that the planned growth in B1 floorspace over the Plan period is about 71,500 sq m (45,000 sq m in the period to 1996, plus 26,500 sq m, the development sub-total from Table C as amended – see sub-section (c) of Policy 28 for details). This is some 145,500 sq m less than the ceiling used in Policy 31. At an average density of about 25 sq m per employee for B1 development (which assumes that most B1 floorspace would be offices), nearly 6,000 additional jobs could be created before the policy is breached. I am not convinced that the Council has considered the implications of this level of growth for the local economy in terms of increased in-commuting and congestion, the demand for more housing, significantly higher house prices, and adverse social and environmental consequences. Even if the high forecast figure of the equilibrium model (87,800 sq m) is used as an acceptable outcome, the Policy 30 ceiling would permit an additional 84,200 sq m of B1 floorspace to be built, equivalent to nearly 3,400 jobs.
- 8.4.11. The Council argues in CD55 that overheating of the local economy is only likely to occur beyond the 217,000 sq m threshold, but I wonder whether this threshold is too high. Much depends on how the gain in B1 floorspace is derived. If it occurs through the redevelopment of B2/B8 industrial sites, with consequent job losses in those sectors, then the net increase in employment is likely to be much lower than if it results from the redevelopment or extension of existing B1 sites. Is it really appropriate to consider B1 floorspace in isolation when setting a ceiling figure? Furthermore, I can find little justification for using the two different methodologies in the forecasting process. If, as the Council acknowledges, the equilibrium method is more robust, then surely there is a strong case for using it to determine the ceiling of provision as well as the minimum demand.
- 8.4.12. I accept that a ceiling figure for B1 floorspace is desirable in principle to act as a safeguard against a potentially damaging growth-spiral. Consequently I agree with the

wording changes proposed by FCs 1 and 2. However, the implications of the chosen figure should be fully assessed, including its relationship with the total supply of jobs rather than B1 jobs alone. In practice, I believe that there is little prospect of B1 floorspace provision approaching anywhere near the ceiling proposed in Policy 30 if recent trends continue. Nevertheless, this is not sufficient reason for the inclusion of a figure that appears to be so out of step with the other forecasts. I recommend that the Council re-assess the 217,000 sq m ceiling in Policy 30, and provide a figure that can be justified in terms of the methodology used elsewhere in the employment forecasting process, and its wider impact on the local economy. Consequential amendments may be required to the text, including that amended by PICs 60 and 61.

(e) *Sub-paragraph (c)*

- 8.4.13. The objector argues that the criteria of sub-paragraph (c) are no longer relevant to the needs of business today, and may discourage smaller businesses from opening, particularly in residential or rural areas. Criteria (a) to (f) only come into force when the maximum business floorspace ceiling is exceeded, however, and by restricting office growth they are designed to prevent the local economy from overheating. Furthermore the policy does allow small-scale proposals to exceed the ceiling by the inclusion of criterion (b), thereby providing some flexibility. It should also be noted that Policy 30 would not normally apply to any businesses seeking premises in housing or rural areas, for most such locations would be outside the identified employment land supply. In the circumstances I believe that the criteria at sub-paragraph (c) are appropriate, and I recommend that no change be made in response to this objection.

(f) *Retail uses at Apsley Mills retail park*

- 8.4.14. These objections are supplementary to Rep No 4507, made against Policy 31, and relate to the inclusion of the retail park at Apsley Mills within a General Employment Area. I deal with this matter under Policy 31, for this is the part of the Plan that defines the GEAs (see paragraphs 8.5.9 to 8.5.13). I address the question of whether the retail park should be classed as a defined retail centre in Chapter 9 (see paragraphs 9.4.19 to 9.4.21). The employment floorspace figures do not include sites in retail use, so there is no need for any adjustment to be made to the calculations as a result of these objections.

Recommendation

- 8.4.15. **The Plan be modified as follows:**

- (a) the phrase “if a proposal satisfies one or more of the following criteria” be inserted at the end of the second paragraph of Policy 30;**
- (b) FC1 and FC2 be adopted;**
- (c) the Council re-assess the 217,000 sq m ceiling in Policy 30, and provide a figure that can be justified in terms of the methodology used elsewhere in the employment forecasting process, and its wider impact on the local economy;**

(d) amend the background text in accordance with PICs 61 and 62, subject to the wording being altered to take account of any changes made in response to my recommendations on Policy 28 and item (c) above.

8.5. POLICY 31: GENERAL EMPLOYMENT AREAS

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
374	Tesco Stores Ltd	2060	Gillian Knowles
427	East of England Tourist Board	2855	British Waterways
791	R Spratt	2856	British Waterways
793	Justhold Ltd	2857	British Waterways
795*	Mrs M Purves	3107	B & M Care
797	Rose Brothers	3751	Government Office For East of England
799	Mr S Banfather	3990	Quintain Estates & Development plc
801	Mr A L Durrant	4174	English Partnerships
803	Chiltern Print Finishing	4261	Tring & District Residents’ Association
805	Mr Simon Hunt	4263*	Tring & District Residents’ Association
807	Diamond Cutter (Herts) Ltd	4483	Pendragon plc
809	Actspeed Ltd	4490	Prudential Assurance Company Ltd
811	M Plastics (Fabrications)	4507	J Sainsbury’s Developments
813*	Mr John Purves	4536	John Dickinson Stationery Ltd
1048	Tring Metal Polishing	4770	Berkhamsted Town Council
1052	Mr Peter Green	5026L	Safeway Stores plc
1174	Mr C H Gray	5030L	The Original Radiator Cabinet Co Ltd
1560	Tring Town Council	5085	Tring Environmental Forum
1561	Tring Town Council		

Counter Objections

To pre-inquiry change 62			
5369PC	J Sainsbury’s Developments		
To pre-inquiry change 63			
5326PC	Wilcon Development Group Ltd	5679PC	Apsley Developments Ltd
5626PC	The Directors of Shendish Manor Estate	5745PC	Felden Park Farms Ltd
To pre-inquiry change 64			
5678PC	Apsley Developments Ltd	5802PC	The Directors of Shendish Manor Estate
5747PC	Felden Park Farms Ltd		
To pre-inquiry change 65			
5283PC	Tring Town Council		
To pre-inquiry change 66			
5284PC	Tring Town Council		

Supports

1306	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society	5014L	MSAS Global Logistics Ltd
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Supports for pre-inquiry changes

For pre-inquiry change 63			
5421PC	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society	5704PC	Lucas Aerospace
5701PC	Lucas Aerospace		
For pre-inquiry change 64			
5422PC	CPRE- The Hertfordshire Society		
For pre-inquiry change 65			
5423PC	CPRE- The Hertfordshire Society	5733PC	Tring & District Residents’ Association
For pre-inquiry change 66			
5226PC	Mr Peter Barker	5304PC	A & M Contracts Ltd
5228PC	Mr A L Durrant	5424PC	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society
5230PC	R Spratt	5585PC	David Hinds Ltd
5233PC	Mr John Purves	5587PC	Universal Information Services
5235PC	Mrs M Purves	5606PC	Mrs B Lea
5238PC	Actspeed Ltd	5734PC	Tring & District Residents’ Association
5302PC	Mr Peter Green		

Key Issues

- (a) Does the policy make clear what is meant by business development. Should criterion (a) read ‘unsuitable’ rather than ‘suitable’, and should the basis for such unsuitability be explained. (3751, 4110, 4174, 5369PC)
- (b) Should business uses be the primary uses within core office locations. (4174)
- (c) Should the policy allow uses other than Class B development within GEAs, subject to no unacceptable community or environmental harm occurring. (5026L)
- (d) Should employment areas be based on capacity criteria and effects on local amenity. (5085)
- (e) Is it appropriate that large retail and commercial uses should be designated as GEAs, particularly when it is likely that most will not be redeveloped during the plan period. (374, 791, 1177, 1561, 3107, 4483, 4490, 4507, 4536)
- (f) Whether Proposals Site E2 is needed for employment uses, or whether it is better used for residential development as proposed in Pre Inquiry Changes 63 and 64. (5326PC, 5626PC, 5678PC, 5679PC, 5745PC, 5747PC, 5802PC)
- (g) Does the hotel permitted in the Maylands Avenue GEA need a frontage visible from Breakspear Way. (427)
- (h) Whether Swallowdale GEA in general or the objection site in particular should be allocated for business development as well as industry and warehousing. (3990)
- (i) Should part of the Breakspear Way GEA be allocated for residential use. (2060)
- (j) Should Brook Street and Akeman Street GEAs be encouraged to be redeveloped for housing in view of the limited availability of employment land in Tring. (791, 793, 795, 797, 799, 801, 803, 805, 807, 809, 811, 813, 1048, 1052, 1174, 1560, 4263, 5030)
- (k) Are the Brook Street and Akeman Street sites accurately described. (4261, 4263, 5283, 5284)
- (l) Is adequate provision made in the Icknield Way GEA for screening and buffer areas to adjacent housing.
- (m) Should there be a reference to the need for formal approval for connections to canal towpaths. Should reference be made to the plans of the Canal and Riverside Partnership in relation to River Park. (2855, 2856, 2857, 4770)

Inspector’s Conclusions

(a) *Clarity of Policy*

- 8.5.1. I have recognised the need for greater clarity of terms, including the scope of ‘business’, in my general comments on the employment chapter (paragraph 8.1.3). My recommendation is that all terms are defined at paragraph 8.6 of the Plan according to the categories of the Use Classes Order. If this is adopted, then further clarification is unnecessary. In these circumstances it would follow that all uses falling within Class B of the Order are acceptable in core office locations. This is clearly the Council’s intention, as indicated in paragraph 8.45.
- 8.5.2. The one location where there is potential for confusion, it seems to me, is Breakspear Park, for in the Table of GEAs the words “office use appropriate” appear in the column describing other significant uses and planning requirements. As this is a core

office location, the phrase would seem to be superfluous. Furthermore, as the phrase is not repeated in the Table against other core office areas, the inconsistency could create an element of doubt about the precise interpretation of the policy. The Council’s view is that the large modern office building on the site makes it particularly appropriate for this use. I agree that this is so, but to avoid any confusion I recommend that the Council’s phrase be substituted by “particularly suitable for office use”.

- 8.5.3. PIC62 corrected an error in the Plan, making it clear that the restriction on the redevelopment for business use of industrial or storage and distribution sites would be relaxed if a site is unsuitable for B2 or B8 uses. This objection is therefore satisfied. One objector considers that some explanation of what unsuitable circumstances might include would be desirable, suggesting that it might be where the site adjoins residential or shopping areas. The Council indicates that the factors that have influenced the allocation of main uses to different areas are set out in paragraph 8.44 of CD52, and proposes that unsuitability would also be judged against these factors.
- 8.5.4. Although some important matters, such as amenity and/or the potential for disturbance, do not appear in the list at paragraph 8.44, I consider that most others are addressed. In any event, I do not believe that it is either necessary or desirable to separately identify what is unsuitable, particularly in the terms suggested by the objector, for a generalised approach is unlikely to be appropriate to all situations. Each particular circumstance is likely to be different, and needs to be judged on its individual merits against the overall policy framework. I recommend no change in response to this objection.

(b) *Business use as primary use within core office locations*

- 8.5.5. The objector seeks greater flexibility in the Plan by allowing for the possibility of existing non-office uses within core office locations being replaced by other uses. The suggested change would have wider repercussions, however, for it would permit a proportion of non-business uses within core office locations. In some instances the policy does allow this to happen, for alongside certain core office locations in the Table of GEAs are listed a variety of ‘other significant uses’. However, to my mind the suggested change could lead to a substantial dilution of the core office principle. The objector’s notion of a primary use implies an unspecified but nonetheless significant level of secondary uses, which would be contrary to the Council’s aim of concentrating office development in the most suitable locations. I share the authority’s view that there are distinct advantages from directing office development towards the core locations, and I consider that Policy 31 is appropriately worded in this respect.

(c) *Other uses within GEAs*

- 8.5.6. The objector believes that retail development can have many benefits on employment land, and argues that within GEAs the policy should allow for uses other than those within the B Classes, subject to no community or environmental harm occurring. The Council points out that in certain locations other uses are permitted, as detailed in the planning requirements for each site. With separate provision being made for most other uses, including retail, the authority believes that these other uses should not generally be permitted in GEAs.

8.5.7. I agree with this approach, primarily because one of the main purposes of designating the vast majority of employment land as GEAs is to maintain an adequate supply to meet the needs of the Borough’s workforce. I have established under Policy 28 that there should be an appropriate balance between demand and supply, but there does not appear to be a significant surplus. Relaxing the policy to allow other uses, particularly uses that can command high land values such as retailing, could in time significantly undermine the employment strategy. It could also have an adverse affect on town centres, and the potential for retail uses to spring up in many different locations would not accord with the objective of minimising the need to travel. I recommend no change in response to this objection.

(d) Capacity criteria and effects on local amenity

8.5.8. The objector argues that the policy should identify the location of different classes of employment development based on capacity criteria and the potential effects on local amenity. It seems to me that in many respects the Plan does take these matters into account. In some instances the designation of the permitted uses is determined by amenity considerations, while the planning requirements for each GEA include major constraints and opportunities which are largely a response to aspects of the surrounding environment. Furthermore an assessment of capacity is generally conducted at the detailed proposals stage, given the variations in scale that can occur between developments within the same Use Class. When formulating local plan policies a balance has to be struck between ensuring that different types of development are directed to the most appropriate locations, and leaving sufficient overall flexibility to cater for a broad range of uses. In my opinion the balance between flexibility and control is about right, and I am satisfied that the criteria used by the Council to identify the different classes of employment development are appropriate.

(e) Designation of retail uses as GEAs

8.5.9. Tesco Stores Ltd objects to the site of its store at London Road, Tring being designated as a GEA for business and industrial uses. It points out that the store has only recently opened, it is trading well, and there is no prospect of it closing in the foreseeable future and becoming available for other uses. A similar objection is made by Sainsburys to the designation of the Apsley Mills retail park as a GEA. It believes that the area should be acknowledged as a local or district centre, and that the employment area designation runs counter to the advice in PPG6. Like Tesco, it argues that there is no prospect of the land being redeveloped for employment use because retailing has a higher land value.

8.5.10. The Council accepts that the retail uses on both sites are likely to remain throughout the Plan period, and indicates that the GEA designations do not affect the current retailing operations. Furthermore, the designations would not prevent proper consideration of retail proposals on the site. However, the authority considers employment to be the preferred use if there is any redevelopment in the future. It argues that both sites are well located for employment development, having good road access, and would contribute to the desired spread of opportunities throughout the Borough. It believes that in Tring the need for employment land is greater than that for retailing, because there is a limited supply of new employment sites and a high level of out-commuting from the town. At Apsley it considers that the range of

adjacent uses, including industry, and the proximity to the station and the A41, make employment the desirable alternative use.

- 8.5.11. There are a number of retail locations throughout the Borough that have been designated as GEAs in the Plan. I am somewhat perplexed by these designations, for retailing is clearly outside the Council’s definition of employment generating uses (Use Classes B1, B2 and B8). In addition, these retail sites are excluded from the assessments of floorspace or employment land supply, and the jobs provided do not figure in the employment calculations. It therefore does not make sense, in my view, for them to be designated as GEAs. The fact that many of the retail sites formerly supported employment uses is now irrelevant, and a preference for employment as an alternative future use is not sufficient reason to justify their identification as GEAs at the present time. Moreover I believe that the designations are contrary to the advice at paragraph 3.23 of PPG6. This indicates that retail development should not normally be allowed on land designated for other (particularly employment) uses in a development plan. Consequently I believe that, in principle, retail sites should not be designated as GEAs.
- 8.5.12. The Inspector who granted planning permission on appeal for the Tesco store at Tring concluded that the need to use the site for retail development outweighed the need to retain it for employment purposes. The company indicates that since the opening of the store there has been a significant decrease in the outflow from the town of main food expenditure, and that the number of occupied retail units in Tring town centre has slightly increased. Other evidence appears to support this. There is nothing, therefore, in the particular circumstances of the Tring site that would cause me to waver from my general conviction that retail sites should not be designated as GEAs. Indeed, the success of the store reinforces the view that the designation is entirely inappropriate.
- 8.5.13. The retail park at Apsley also appears to fulfil an important role in the shopping hierarchy, especially for non-food warehousing. I address the question of whether this site should be designated as a local centre in Chapter 9. In the circumstances I recommend that both the Apsley Mills and the London Road, Tring sites be deleted from the Table of GEAs, and that the Proposals Map be amended accordingly.

(f) *Proposals Site E2*

- 8.5.14. The objectors to the deletion of Employment Site E2, as proposed by PIC63, contend that it is necessary to retain the site as part of the Borough’s employment land supply. I deal with this issue later in the Chapter, when I examine Site E2 at some length (see paragraphs 8.14.2 to 8.14.12). I conclude by recommending that the Council reassess the need for the site, particularly in the form and location proposed in the Deposit Draft. Whether or not PIC63 is to be adopted depends wholly on the Council’s conclusion on the treatment of Site E2.

(g) *Hotel within Maylands Avenue GEA*

- 8.5.15. The Tourist Board considers that any hotel within the Maylands Avenue GEA should have a frontage that is visible from Breakspear Way. There is no specific proposal for a hotel within the GEA, however, for it is merely identified as a potential use that would be acceptable. Because only a limited part of the GEA is visible from Breakspear Way, it seems to me that it would be unduly restrictive to impose such a

constraint. I share the Council’s view that the provision of a hotel will ultimately be determined by the availability of sites and a marketing judgement as to the viability of such a development. I consider that the enabling nature of Policy 31 is appropriate, and I see no reason to modify the plan in response to this objection.

(h) Business use within non-business GEAs

- 8.5.16. Quintain Estates and Development plc are seeking a change in the policy designation of a small parcel of land to the east of the Atlas Copco works at the junction of Swallowdale Lane and Eastman Way, Hemel Hempstead. The land is within the Swallowdale GEA, which is proposed for industry (B2) and storage and distribution (B8) uses in Policy 31. The objector argues that the allocation for this site should be extended to include business (B1) use, either individually as a specific allocation, or through an addition to the exceptions to Policy 31 which permit business use development in non-business GEAs. I deal with the question of a site-specific designation at the end of this chapter (see paragraphs 8.20.3 to 8.20.6). In this subsection I shall address the wider issues pertaining to the suggested change to Policy 31.
- 8.5.17. Under Policy 31, business uses are not normally permitted in non-mixed use GEAs except as an ancillary or small scale use, or where an established business use would be replaced, or where a specific type of modern industrial or mixed use building would be provided. The objector proposes a further exception, allowing development for business use if the supply of B2 and B8 floorspace within the District would not be adversely affected. It is argued that the approach in Policy 31 is too inflexible, particularly in a situation where the demand for B1 floorspace is high and the supply is tight. The control over employment uses is believed to be contrary to the underlying objectives of the Use Classes Order and the County Council’s view that such flexibility should generally be retained. It is also against consultants’ advice about the need for pragmatism and flexibility to meet the requirements of occupiers. The objector suggests that where flexibility has been allowed, as in the Maylands GEA, an appropriate mix of employment uses has evolved which respects environmental and urban design considerations as well as accommodating occupier preferences.
- 8.5.18. I have discussed the adequacy of the supply of land for business use under Policy 28. Whilst I have some concern about the rate at which the opportunities available for business development are being taken up, I do not believe that, given the overall constraints on employment land in Dacorum, there is a serious shortfall in the potential supply of land for B1 uses. I therefore attach little weight to the arguments about the quantum of B1 land in the context of this objection. More relevant, in my view, is the adequacy of the supply of B2 land. There is a significant and continuing decline in the general industrial sector in Dacorum, and it is important that the policies of the Plan should attempt to maintain a reasonable balance between different types of job opportunities. There is already a significant bias in B2/B8 provision towards storage and distribution uses, and it seems to me that the approach suggested by the objector could further hasten the loss of general industrial development.
- 8.5.19. It might be argued that the current position relating to B2 and B8 land is not so critical because of the way in which the proposed addition to Policy 31 is phrased, in that a business use development could only occur if the supply of B2 and B8 floorspace was not adversely affected. However, I have strong reservations about the appropriateness of such a test as a development control tool. Any assessment would depend upon

reliable statistics and regular monitoring, and I suspect that only in times of an acknowledged and continuing surplus of B2/B8 land would there be no dispute about the absence of an adverse effect. Not only do I regard the suggested addition as too vague and uncertain to be an acceptable criterion, but also it might not bring about the desired result as far as the objector is concerned.

8.5.20. It is necessary to consider the effect of the proposed change on the Council’s strategy of identifying particular GEAs for a limited range of employment uses. As I indicate in the sub-section above concerning the Maylands Avenue GEA, I support the Council’s identification of different employment areas to meet particular needs where it can be justified. Indeed, to maintain the overall balance in the variety of provision that is sought by all parties, it is reasonable to argue that proposed core office locations such as Maylands Avenue require other areas to be precluded from B1 use.

8.5.21. I fully accept that it is possible to be too prescriptive, but provided a substantial part of the employment land supply remains available for the full range of employment uses, which is the case in Dacorum, I consider that the identification of certain specialised areas has significant benefits. This accords with Government advice in PPG4 which, whilst encouraging plans to provide for choice, flexibility and competition, recognises that there may be advantages in channelling specific types of employment development into particular locations. In my view the proposed change would significantly weaken the strategy of concentrating particular developments in certain areas, to the detriment of the Plan as a whole. I recommend no change in response to this objection.

(i) Residential use at Breakspear Way

8.5.22. As part of an objection to housing development on Green Belt land, the objector suggests that the building within the Breakspear Way GEA could be converted into apartments for London commuters. The principle of converting some land in employment use to housing is clearly an important aspect of the Plan. However, to make best use of resources and ensure a reasonable prospect of implementation, the Council has tended to designate redundant sites or those which are under-used or out-dated. The office development at Breakspear Way is a relatively modern, high quality building that is fully let, and occupies a prominent site on the edge of Hemel Hempstead. I see no reason to disagree with the Council’s view that the building is best suited to employment use, and I also think it is unlikely that it would become available for housing during the Plan period.

(j) Redevelopment of employment land in Tring

8.5.23. For the settlement of Tring, the Deposit Draft (CD46) identified three of the five GEAs from the Adopted Plan (CD39) as areas where housing development would be encouraged under Policy 33. This provoked a substantial body of objection to the potential loss of the Akeman Street and Brook Street areas, particularly from many owners of the small firms that occupy these sites, who feared the closure of their businesses. Other objectors thought that there is already a shortage of employment sites in Tring, which results in high levels of out commuting. In response to the representations the Council has agreed to retain Akeman Street and Brook Street as GEAs under Policy 31, as proposed in PICs 65 and 66.

- 8.5.24. While it is not uncommon for small towns like Tring to experience substantial out commuting, it is evident that the supply of land for employment purposes is limited. The only sizeable GEA, at Icknield Way, is largely complete, with only Proposals Site E8 remaining to be developed. This 0.8ha area of land is far too small to accommodate the businesses that could have been displaced from the Akeman Street, Brook Street and Western Road sites proposed for housing in the Deposit Draft Plan. It is also doubtful, in my view, whether many of the occupiers of these old established premises would be able to afford the rental levels commanded by new property. The Pre Inquiry Changes mean that only the Western Road GEA would remain as a potential housing site, and this area is less intensively occupied than the other two, with a sizeable part currently vacant.
- 8.5.25. I have already indicated my belief that Tring is approaching its development capacity, and the constraints of the Green Belt and AONB apply equally to the search for employment land as they do for housing. In this context I believe that the most economically desirable and environmentally sustainable strategy is to retain the Akeman Street and Brook Street sites in employment use, for they appear to provide highly sought after small premises and to give employment to a significant number of Tring residents. This would leave the small Icknield Way site (E8) available for new or expanding enterprises, including any potential relocations from Western Road. I regard this as the most appropriate balance between employment and housing land in Tring, and I recommend that the plan be modified in accordance with PICs 65 and 66.

(k) Accuracy of Brook Street and Akeman Street notations

- 8.5.26. The boundary of the Brook Street employment area, as drawn on both the Deposit Draft Proposals Map (CD46) and Map 16 in the Pre Inquiry Changes (CD49) includes a pair of semi-detached houses (Nos 21 and 22 Brook Street) at its northern end. The Council indicates that it has used the boundary of the original GEA, as set out in the Adopted Plan (CD39), and argues that employment is the preferred use should any redevelopment take place on the site.
- 8.5.27. I believe that policies which promote the retention of existing uses should be accompanied by maps which accurately portray the area of land in those uses unless there is some good reason for not so doing. In the Brook Street case I do not share the Council’s view that redevelopment of the houses for employment use would be preferable. Despite its location within a predominantly residential area, the Brook Street site is denoted as an industrial (B2 use) GEA. I suspect that an important factor in determining that this site is suitable for industrial rather than business use is its physical form. The buildings that comprise this former silk mill create a high wall around the boundary of the site, which appears to contain the activity within the site and limit the spread of noise and other disturbance.
- 8.5.28. The two houses are outside the enclosed site, however, and have rear gardens adjacent to Brook Street. To my mind there is a risk that the redevelopment of this more open site for general industry could cause harm to the occupiers of the dwellings on the eastern side of Brook Street. I also note that the house that physically adjoins the south-western corner of the silk mill site is not included within the GEA boundary, despite being more appropriately located for industrial use than Nos 21 and 22. Consequently, both to protect the living conditions of nearby occupiers and to ensure

consistency, I recommend that the boundary of the GEA be altered so as to exclude Nos 21 and 22 Brook Street.

- 8.5.29. I apply similar principles to my consideration of the Akeman Street GEA boundary, though in this case the error is one of omission. The property on the corner with Albert Street, No 64-66 Akeman Street, is an existing industrial use that lies outside the GEA despite adjoining it and appearing to be part of it. The Council relies again on the boundary shown on the Adopted Plan, and argues that because the character of this part of Akeman Street is different, being narrower, the site is considered more suitable for residential use.
- 8.5.30. I find this argument unconvincing, for not only is Akeman Street narrow along its entire length, with no discernible change in character, but the business (Class B1) uses permitted here should be capable of operating without harm in a residential area. The fact that this site might not have been part of the original GEA is no reason to exclude it now, particularly as it is occupied by a modern industrial building, which is unlikely to become obsolete during the plan period. In the interests of accuracy and consistency I recommend that the boundary of the GEA be extended to include 64-66 Akeman Street.
- 8.5.31. PIC65 includes the phrase “Enable future access from Langdon Street” in the planning requirements for the Akeman Street GEA. As an access already exists from Langdon Street, I share Tring Town Council’s view that the phrase is inaccurate. Whilst matters such as this are relatively trivial, I believe that greater accuracy is likely to increase public confidence in the Plan. I accept that any redevelopment of this GEA should maintain access from Langdon Street, and recommend that this wording be used in preference to that in PIC65.

(l) Icknield Way GEA

- 8.5.32. The Residents Association is concerned that in the past the treatment of the boundary between the Icknield Way industrial estate and the houses to the south has been substandard. It feels that problems of disturbance from the industrial site could be ameliorated by better quality and more effective screening and buffer zones, and argues that Policy 31 should recognise the potential for conflict. This objection is also made to Proposals Sites E7 and E8, and I deal with the matter in more detail later in this chapter. As far as Policy 31 is concerned, the Table of GEAs identifies the main planning requirements for each area, and includes under Icknield Way a requirement for landscaping on the boundaries with housing and the Green Belt. Bearing in mind the general nature of the Policy, I regard this as sufficient recognition of the problem raised by the objector. I therefore consider that the Policy does not require modification in this respect.

(m) GEAs adjacent to canal

- 8.5.33. British Waterways contends that the references to “Canalside enhancement” in the Table of GEAs for sites adjacent to the Grand Union Canal should indicate that its approval might be needed before any formal connections are made to the towpath. Berkhamsted Town Council suggests that the River Park GEA should conform to the published plans of the Canal and Riverside Partnership (CARP). In my view both these suggestions go beyond the level of detail that would be appropriate for this

general policy. I note, however, that under the planning requirements in the Table of GEAs there are many cross-references to other relevant policies of the Plan. As the canalside environment is addressed in some detail in Policy 112, and the associated text mentions the CARP study, it seems to me that it would be helpful if all the references to “Canalside enhancement” in the Table were followed by “(see Policy 112)”. I recommend that the Plan be modified accordingly.

Recommendation

8.5.34. **The Plan be modified in accordance with PICs 62 and 66, and as follows:**

- (a) **the words “Office use appropriate” in the Breakspear Park GEA be replaced by “Particularly suitable for office use”;**
- (b) **PIC64 be not adopted;**
- (c) **London Road, Tring and Apsley Mills retail park be deleted from the Table of GEAs, and the Proposals Map be amended accordingly;**
- (d) **if Site E2 is retained in the Plan, PIC63 be not adopted;**
- (e) **PIC65 be adopted, subject to the words “Enable future” being replaced by “Maintain”;**
- (f) **references to “Canalside enhancement” in the Table of GEAs be followed by “(see Policy 112)”;**
- (g) **the boundaries of the Brook Street and Akeman Street GEAs on the Proposals Map be amended to show the full extent of land in employment use.**

8.6. POLICY 32: EMPLOYMENT AREAS IN THE GREEN BELT

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
370	Three Valleys Wate plc	4283	J W Ward & Son Ltd
1068	J W Ward & Son Ltd	4798	H M Prison Service
1959	Cougar Enterprises Ltd	5020L	Margram plc
3108	B & M Care	5086	Tring Environmental Forum
3752	Government Office for East of England		

Support

1307 CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society

Key Issues

- (a) Should the employment areas be more clearly identified as major developed sites in the Green Belt. (3752)
- (b) Should The Mount Prison be identified as an employment area in the Green Belt and be designated as a major developed site. (4798)

- (c) Should Ashlyns Hall be identified as an employment area in the Green Belt and be designated as a major developed site. (3108)
- (d) Should Bourne End service area be identified as an employment area in the Green Belt. (5020L)
- (e) Should Friars Wash Pumping Station be designated as a major developed site in the Green Belt. (370)
- (f) Is a separate policy required for Bourne End Mills, and should the wording relating to the access from Bourne End Lane be amended. (1068, 4283)
- (g) Does the requirement for development to make a ‘positive contribution’ to the character of the Green Belt accord with Government advice. (1959, 4798)
- (h) Should the requirement for a comprehensive redevelopment scheme be strengthened. (5086)
- (i) Are the boundaries on the Proposals Map precise. (3752)

Inspector’s Conclusions

General issues

- 8.6.1. Policy 32 has two main objectives. Firstly it identifies the larger employment areas in the Green Belt and seeks to retain them in employment use because they form part of the minimum land supply under Policy 29. Secondly it treats these sites as major developed sites in the Green Belt, and broadly applies the provisions of PPG2 Annex C. In this way the policy enables some development and redevelopment to take place which would otherwise be inappropriate in the Green Belt. Two employment areas in the Green Belt are identified by the Council, Bourne End Mills and Bovingdon Brickworks. These sites have been selected because they provide an opportunity for environmental improvements without adding to the impact of the development on the Green Belt. The authority acknowledges that there are a significant number of other developed sites in the Green Belt, but because they do not satisfy the environmental improvement test, it argues that they should remain subject to normal Green Belt constraints.
- 8.6.2. I do not agree with the Council that the identification of major developed sites should be determined solely by the opportunities presented for environmental improvements. By focusing on this aspect the authority has not, in my view, interpreted with sufficient precision the provisions of PPG2 Annex C. On the one hand Policy 32 allows ‘expansion of floorspace’ instead of ‘limited infilling’, which is the phrase used - and defined - in Annex C. Although the Policy uses similar criteria to Annex C, I believe that the absence of any reference to infilling could permit a greater amount of development than is intended by PPG2. On the other hand, the ‘positive contribution’ element of the Policy goes beyond the requirements of PPG2. Whilst landscape enhancement and removal of damaged land are objectives of Green Belts, both paragraphs C3 and C4 of Annex C require development not to have a greater impact on the Green Belt, rather than make a positive contribution to it. Indeed, the general test in paragraph 3.15 of PPG2 is merely that development should not harm visual amenity.
- 8.6.3. For these reasons, and to provide a consistent treatment for all major developed sites in the Green Belt, I believe that the twin objectives of Policy 32 should be separated. I recommend in Chapter 4 paragraph 4.11.41 the inclusion of an additional policy that

identifies major developed sites in the Green Belt and permits limited infilling or redevelopment in line with the Annex C advice. Rather than repeating in Policy 32 the criteria controlling infilling or redevelopment, I believe that a cross-reference to the new policy would suffice. Policy 32 could then deal with the Council’s requirements for the employment areas independent of Green Belt issues.

8.6.4. I turn now to the appropriateness of the two identified employment areas in the Green Belt as major developed sites. Whilst Bourne End Mills is both extensive and highly developed, I have reservations about the inclusion of Bovingdon Brickworks. I question whether the developed part of this site (as denoted by the Council) is sufficiently large to be regarded as a major site, particularly as it includes substantial areas of hardstanding and open storage. Moreover, the buildings cover a smaller area of ground than a number of other locations in the Green Belt that the Council has chosen not to classify as major developed sites, such as Ashridge Management College and Ashlyns School.

8.6.5. PPG2 contains only limited guidance on the selection of major developed sites in the Green Belt. Plainly they must be “major”, and paragraph C1 of Annex C also refers to them as “substantial”. Some examples are given, including factories, collieries, power stations, hospitals, and research and education establishments. Although a brickworks has some similarities to a factory or a colliery, to my mind the Bovingdon site is too small in scale to properly be regarded as major or substantial. I appreciate that the predominantly old buildings on the site present opportunities for environmental improvement through redevelopment, as stated at paragraph C4, but I do not share the Council’s view that this should be the sole criterion for selection. Paragraph C3, for example, refers to the benefits of securing jobs and prosperity, and the general tenor of Annex C is to permit the continued use and redevelopment of large ‘brownfield’ sites provided the impact on the Green Belt does not increase.

8.6.6. There is, however, another consideration that must be taken into account with Bovingdon Brickworks, and that is the need to retain the site as part of the minimum employment land supply. It is clear from paragraph 3.4 of PPG2 that new industrial buildings in the Green Belt are inappropriate development unless they benefit from the provisions of Annex C. As a result, there would normally be a strong presumption against limited infilling or redevelopment at the Brickworks unless very special circumstances could be demonstrated. This could make it difficult for firms to improve their premises, and might threaten the longer-term availability of the floorspace provided at the site. Furthermore there is a real prospect that if the site (or any part of it) were to be lost to employment use, the need for employment land would create pressure for the release of other Green Belt land elsewhere in Dacorum. Consequently whilst Bovingdon Brickworks is not a major developed site in terms of its scale, I believe that the importance of retaining it for employment purposes is sufficient reason to treat it as if it were one.

(a) *Identification as major developed sites*

8.6.7. The background to Policy 32 does indicate that the two identified employment areas are treated as major developed sites in the Green Belt, though I acknowledge the objector’s point that they could be more clearly identified as such. PIC4 has improved the Plan by listing the major developed sites in the text following the Green Belt policy. Notwithstanding this change, the modifications I have recommended to the

way that major developed sites should be treated in the Plan (see above) would undoubtedly provide the clarity sought by the objector.

(b) The Mount Prison, Bovingdon

- 8.6.8. H M Prison Service is one of a number of objectors seeking to have additional sites identified as major developed sites in the Green Belt. The Service has made representations against Policy 32 because it appeared to be most relevant to this matter, though it accepts that the site could equally be designated elsewhere in the Plan. It seems to me that there are two separate issues to be addressed. Firstly, does the site merit designation as a major developed site in line with the PPG2 advice, and secondly, if so identified, should the site be included as an employment area under Policy 32.
- 8.6.9. The prison occupies a 15.4ha site on the north-west edge of Bovingdon village. Within the fenced secure area is an extensive range of buildings providing accommodation, workshops, welfare and education facilities for some 750 inmates and over 300 staff. There is no doubt in my mind that the site is major, for its operational area is substantially larger than all of the sites accepted by the Council as major developed sites. It is also developed, for it has a nucleus of buildings that extend across most of the central and western parts of the site. From the plans the buildings appear to cover at least twice the ground area of those at the nearby Bovingdon Brickworks, and a greater area than those at Bourne End Mills. Coupled with the tall perimeter wall and fence that encloses most of the site, the prison represents a substantial intrusion into the Green Belt and a corresponding loss of openness.
- 8.6.10. Paragraph C3 of Annex C enables limited infilling at major developed sites where this would not further prejudice the Green Belt. I believe that some infilling of the small gaps between existing buildings could occur at the prison without having any greater impact on the purposes of including land in the Green Belt, without exceeding the height of existing buildings, or without leading to a major increase in the developed proportion of the site. It seems likely that any such development would contribute to jobs and prosperity, so I am satisfied that the tests of paragraph C3 could be met. To my mind the provisions of paragraph C4 are less appropriate to this site because most of the buildings are relatively modern, making redevelopment unlikely during the period of the Plan. Nevertheless there may well be limited opportunities for environmental improvement should parts of the site be rebuilt, and I see no reason why the criteria of paragraph C4 should not be satisfied. Taking into account the substantial size of the site, the concentrated form of development and the absence of further harm to the Green Belt from limited infilling or redevelopment, I conclude that The Mount Prison should be identified as a major developed site.
- 8.6.11. Although the prison is a significant local employer, it is a *sui generis* use that is outside the B Class uses which are, by virtue of paragraph 8.6 of the Plan, the only concern of the employment section. The site does not contribute to the variety of sites in the employment land supply, and is not part of the minimum land supply. Consequently I believe that, because of the way that the Plan is structured, it would not be appropriate to include the prison as an employment area under Policy 32. Instead I see no reason why the site should not simply be identified in the list of major developed sites under the recommended new Green Belt policy. This forms part of my recommendation at paragraph 4.11.41. If there is a need for any site-specific

requirements, I suggest that the Council include a new policy in the section on social and community facilities, for a prison is an institutional use provided for the benefit of the community at large.

(c) *Ashlyns Hall, Berkhamsted*

8.6.12. B & M Care object to the failure to identify Ashlyns Hall as an employment area in the Green Belt. The company argues that the site makes a substantial contribution to employment, with over 200 employees, and provides high quality business accommodation that has attracted national and international companies that contribute significantly to the local economy. It appears, however, that the objector’s main purpose is to have Ashlyns Hall designated a major developed site, rather than seeking recognition for the contribution the site makes to the employment land supply. The company contends that the developed part of the site meets the Council’s requirement of being self-contained and relatively compact, thereby warranting consideration as a major developed site. It believes that limited infilling and redevelopment could be carried out in accordance with the advice in PPG2 Annex C without undermining the purposes of the Green Belt designation. Such a policy context would provide flexibility for the modest growth requirements of the companies established on the site.

8.6.13. Ashlyns Hall includes a Grade II listed building, a listed stable block, a residential care home and other buildings situated within mature landscaped grounds to the south of Berkhamsted. Whilst the buildings form a reasonably compact group within the site, they are not particularly extensive and they are separated by areas of hardstanding and landscaping. Indeed, the buildings cover a smaller area of land than those at Bovingdon Brickworks, which I have already indicated does not warrant ‘major developed site’ status on the basis of its size. In addition the free-standing nature of the buildings gives limited scope for infilling without affecting the openness of the Green Belt, and the high quality of the development means that there is little opportunity to secure environmental improvement through redevelopment. To my mind Ashlyns Hall is typical of many developments where commercial and business uses have moved into former ‘country houses’ in the Green Belt, and is not sufficiently large or densely developed to constitute a major developed site. Accordingly I find no justification for modifying the Plan in this respect.

(d) *Bourne End service area*

8.6.14. A petrol filling station, a fast food restaurant and a hotel have been built at this service area for users of the A41 trunk road. The built development is dispersed across the site, with each element surrounded by a sizeable hard surfaced area used for vehicle manoeuvring and parking. Although the three-storey hotel and the large expanses of lit hardstanding contribute to the prominence of the service station in the landscape, the site is relatively small and the area of land covered by buildings appears less than at Ashlyns Hall. The buildings are of a functional design but they are also modern, with little prospect of redevelopment in the foreseeable future, and as at Ashlyns Hall there is little scope for limited infilling without affecting the Green Belt.

8.6.15. Margram plc argue that the site complements the nearby Bourne End Mills employment area, and should therefore be similarly designated as a major developed site to reflect its commercial character and built form. However the type and scale of

development at Bourne End Mills is very different, consisting of an extensive and tightly-knit complex of industrial buildings with poorly surfaced circulation areas and little landscaping. In my opinion the two sites are clearly distinct, separated by the access road and an area of undeveloped land. Consequently I consider that the service area is too small to be regarded as a major developed site in its own right under the terms of PPG2, and that the separation from Bourne End Mills is too great for it to be regarded as an extension of that site. For these reasons, and also because the facilities at the service area are not Use Class B employment uses, I conclude that the site does not warrant designation as an employment area in the Green Belt.

(e) *Friars Wash pumping station*

- 8.6.16. Friars Wash Pumping Station consists of a brick building and a small number of tanks and other structures sited within a 2ha grassed compound on the northern side of the A5 trunk road close to junction 9 of the M1 motorway. Because the site is predominantly open and the sole building is domestic in scale, the pumping station has only limited impact on the openness of the Green Belt. There is no doubt in my mind that the development is far too small to be considered major or substantial, as required by PPG2 Annex C, and with so few structures on the site it would seem unlikely that any infilling could satisfy the criteria of paragraph C3. I am aware that a new hotel and restaurant has recently been built on the opposite side of the A5 (Leisure and Tourism Proposal Site L8), but even this much larger development is not, in my view, a major developed site. Moreover, it has no direct relationship with the pumping station. I recommend that the plan be not modified in response to this objection.

(f) *Bourne End Mills*

- 8.6.17. J W Ward & Son Ltd object to the requirement of the Deposit Draft Plan (CD 46) that no further development will be permitted at Bourne End Mills until vehicular access from the site to Bourne End Lane has been closed. PIC67 recognises that vehicular access to Bourne End Lane from part of the site is still possible following the creation of the link to the A41, and seeks to control future development so that the objective of closure is achieved. In my view the Pre Inquiry Change introduces a desirable degree of flexibility into the policy. It would enable permission to be granted for minor development that could not reasonably be expected to bring about the road closure, whilst indicating that more substantive development should contribute to the closure objective. I therefore consider that PIC67 overcomes this objection, and I support it.
- 8.6.18. The company also argues that a new policy should be included specifically to control development at Bourne End Mills. I consider this matter later in the Chapter, under the section dealing with suggested new policies (see paragraph 8.12.2).

(g) *Appropriateness of the “positive contribution” requirement.*

- 8.6.19. Policy 32 states that the expansion of floorspace or redevelopment will only be permitted where a proposal makes a positive contribution to the character, appearance, purpose and objectives (or functions) of the Green Belt. The objectors believe that the ‘positive contribution’ requirement fails to respect Government advice in PPG2. It is also argued that the policy itself is confused, as the subsequent criteria essentially impose a ‘no greater impact’ test. It is suggested that the policy should be focused on

preventing harm and preserving the openness of the Green Belt, thereby better reflecting the broad thrust of Government advice.

8.6.20. As I have already indicated, I believe that this argument has some validity. I do not share the Council’s view that the sole criterion for the selection of major developed sites should be the opportunity for environmental improvement. Instead, I am recommending the inclusion of a separate policy for major developed sites in Part 3 Section 1, where consistency with PPG2 is more appropriately addressed (paragraph 4.11.41). By imposing similar criteria on infilling and redevelopment to those in Annex C, this new policy would provide the conformity sought by the objectors.

8.6.21. The separation of Policy 32 from the Annex C advice does, in my view, allow the Council more freedom to seek additional measures at those major developed sites that are also identified as employment sites. The two areas selected are both established sites that have an adverse impact on the surrounding rural area, so the case for environmental improvement is strong. Consequently I see no reason why development that is permitted under my recommended Green Belt policy should not also be required to make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the rural locality. However, for the reasons already discussed I do not believe that it would be appropriate to relate this positive contribution to the purpose and objectives of the Green Belt, as the Deposit Draft policy does. The requirement should be independent of Green Belt policy, and the revisions I propose to Policy 32 reflect this.

(h) *Comprehensive redevelopment scheme*

8.6.22. The objector contends that clause (f) of the policy as drafted, which requires redevelopment to form part of a long term comprehensive plan for the whole site, is not strong enough to enforce the part of PPG2 paragraph C4 that seeks the preparation of an agreed development brief. To my mind, however, there is no significant difference between the wording used by the Council and that proposed by the objector. Moreover, I note that the Council’s phrase appears in PPG2 at paragraph C7. I also see no reason why the sought-after comprehensive plan should be difficult to enforce. Provided clause (f) remains part of Policy 32, as I believe it should, I do not think that its wording requires modification.

(i) *Accuracy of employment area boundaries*

8.6.23. The Government Office questions whether the boundaries of the employment areas in the Green Belt have been correctly drawn on the Proposals Map, and points to an inconsistency between the boundary of Bovingdon Brickworks as shown on the Proposals Map and on the Bovingdon Airfield Sites Map. It seems to me that any variation in the boundary is only slight, and could easily be a consequence of the form of notation used on the Airfield Sites Map. Furthermore, the use of an incorrect scale on the Airfield Sites Map might be a source of confusion. The Council has indicated that the boundary on the Proposals Map is accurate, and as this boundary is generally drawn tightly around the developed part of the site, I consider that it is correct. I see no reason to alter the notation on the Airfield Sites Map, though I accept that the scale should be corrected.

8.6.24. The boundary of Bourne End Mills is more widely drawn, however, and includes areas of undeveloped open land beyond the southern and western extremities of the built development. The Council indicates that the boundary is based on the site of the

former sawmill plus land allocated in an earlier Plan, the latter being intended for car parking and landscaping. I saw on my visits that the southern and western perimeter of the site is denoted by a substantial bund, but that much of the land between the bund and the buildings is unused and derelict. It appears that the uses currently operating from the site are able to accommodate their car parking needs close to the buildings.

8.6.25. I note that there is an extant planning permission for car parking which could still be implemented, but I am not sure why this would prevent the boundary from being drawn closer to the buildings. It is certainly not consistent with the way that the boundary has been drawn at Bovingdon Brickworks. The advantage of a more tightly defined site is that it would help to restrict any future redevelopment to the currently developed area. I recommend that the Council give consideration to redrawing the boundary at Bourne End Mills closer to the existing built development.

Recommendation

8.6.26. **The Plan be modified as follows:-**

(a) **the elements of Policy 32 relating to major developed sites in the Green Belt be deleted and be incorporated in a new Green Belt policy in Part 3 Section 1 which identifies major developed sites and sets out criteria for the control of development (see paragraph 4.11.41);**

(b) **as a consequence, the text of Policy 32 be amended to read:**

“Employment generating uses will be retained in the employment areas in the Green Belt set out below. Expansion of floor space or redevelopment will only be permitted if it conforms with the criteria set out in Policy 3A relating to major developed sites in the Green Belt. Proposals should also make a positive contribution to the character and appearance of the rural locality.

Redevelopment, whether partial or complete, should:

- (a) respect and retain important existing landscape features;**
- (b) be satisfactorily related to and integrated with land and land uses surrounding the site; and**
- (c) form part of a long-term comprehensive plan for the whole site.”**

(c) **the Table of Employment Areas be amended in accordance with PIC67.**

8.6.27. **The Council gives consideration to redrawing the boundary of the Bourne End Mills employment area, as shown on the Proposals Map, closer to the existing built development.**

8.7. POLICY 33: CONVERSION OF EMPLOYMENT LAND TO HOUSING AND OTHER USES

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
792	R Spratt	3753	Government Office for East of England
794	Justbold Ltd	4221	Mr C Kruger

796*	Mrs M Purves	4222	Mr A McCabe
798	Rose Brothers	4223	R J Brown
800	Mr S Banfather	4224	I Redfern
802	Mr A L Durrant	4225	Mr J Iles
804	Chiltern Print Finishing	4226	Chiltern Beverages Ltd
806	Mr Simon Hunt	4229	Tring Chamber of Commerce
808	Diamond Cutter (Herts) Ltd	4232	Mr B Kazer
810	Actspeed Ltd	4234	J C Charcharos
812	M Plastics (Fabrications)	4237	Mr N Hadland
814*	Mr John Purves	4238	Mr D Baker
956	Lattice Property	4239	Mr B I Carter
1036	G Grace & Son	4240	Mr P Knight
1049	Tring Metal Polishing	4243	X-Tex Systems Ltd
1051	Mr D J Metcalfe	4244	X-Tex Systems Ltd
1053	Mr Peter Green	4245	X-Tex Systems Ltd
1103	Mrs Violet Brand	4246	X-Tex Systems Ltd
1113	Mr M J McFarland	4247	Michelle Hadland
1178	Mr C H Gray	4267*	Tring and District Residents’ Association
1308*	CPRE – The Hertfordshire Society	4289*	Mrs B Lea
1565*	Tring Town Council	4326	Mrs A J Nobbs
1737	Mrs M Wilson	4537	John Dickinson Stationery Ltd
1753	Berkhamsted Town Council	4678	HCC Corporate Services Department
1840	Aylesbury Vale District Council	4693	Mrs B J Brown
1940	H & I Glasser Ltd	5018L*	Mr M Hicks
2858	British Waterways	5031L	The Original Radiator Cabinet Compa
3118	Tring Liberal Democrats	5087	Tring Environmental Forum
3719	Silvermere Developments		

Counter-Objection

To pre-inquiry change 69

5286PC Tring Town Council

Support

4251 Glaxo Wellcome plc

Supports for pre-inquiry changes

For pre-inquiry change 68

5285PC Tring Town Council

5425PC CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society

For pre-inquiry change 69

5220PC Rose Brothers

5227PC Mr Peter Barker

5229PC Mr A L Durrant

5231PC R Spratt

5232PC Mr Simon Hunt

5234PC Mr John Purves

5236PC Mrs M Purves

5239PC Actspeed Ltd

5303PC Mr Peter Green

5582PC Mr B Kazer

5607PC Mrs B Lea

5305PC A & M Contracts Ltd

5426PC CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society

5583PC Mr B Kazer

5584PC M Plastics (Fabrications)

5586PC David Hinds Ltd

5588PC Universal Information Services

5608PC Mrs B Lea

5735PC Tring and District Residents’ Association

Key Issues

- (a) Does the policy give undue encouragement to the redevelopment of employment sites. Should the policy provide more detail about the occupation of the sites, the process of relocation, and the consequences of any job losses. Should there be particular planning grounds for the reallocation of sites (1840, 3753, 5087)
- (b) Would the ‘planning requirements’ in the Table be better described as ‘key design requirements’. Should there be a reference to the planning requirements that will result from the application of other policies in the Plan. (4678)
- (c) Should the policy apply to sites in selected rural villages. (1940)
- (d) Should the Gas Board land at London Road be included as a site for conversion to housing. (956)
- (e) Should British Waterways operational land adjoining Apsley Lock be included within the Ebbens Road area for conversion to housing. (2858)
- (f) Should the policy refer to links between Berkhamsted’s key throughways. (1753)

- (g) Whether the areas proposed for conversion to housing at Tring would be better retained as employment land. (792, 794, 796, 798, 800, 802, 804, 806, 808, 810, 812, 814, 1036, 1049, 1051, 1053, 1103, 1113, 1178, 1308, 1565, 1737, 1840, 3118, 3719, 4221, 4222, 4223, 4224, 4225, 4226, 4229, 4232, 4234, 4237, 4238, 4239, 4240, 4243, 4244, 4245, 4246, 4247, 4267, 4289, 4326, 4693, 5018L, 5031L, 5087)
- (h) Is the boundary of the Brook Street employment area correctly drawn. (5286PC)
- (i) Whether the policy has any relevance to the designation of Apsley Mills as a GEA. (4537)

Inspector’s Conclusions

(a) *Consequences of loss of employment sites and reasons for site selection*

- 8.7.1. Aylesbury Vale District Council is concerned about the loss of small businesses in rural towns and villages, which often occupy inexpensive ‘nursery’ units that are difficult to replace. It argues that Policy 33 could upset the balance between employment and housing, and lead to a demand for employment development elsewhere, possibly on greenfield sites. The Government Office suggests that the Plan should indicate which of the sites are currently occupied, whether they will be under any pressure to relocate and what assistance will be given, and what steps will be taken to ensure that there will be no avoidable loss of jobs. Tring Environmental Forum argues that there should be a clear planning reason for selecting the sites for conversion, based on factors such as the adverse effects of the existing uses, or a lack of viability of the site for employment use.
- 8.7.2. The objectors question both the rationale behind the policy and the process by which the sites have been selected. They raise matters that, in my view, should have been uppermost in the Council’s mind when devising the policy and identifying the land suitable for conversion to housing. Dealing firstly with the justification for the policy, the Council argues that it accords with national and local planning objectives, which give priority to the re-use for housing of previously-developed land in urban areas. It is based in particular on Structure Plan Policy 14, which amongst other matters promotes the planned regeneration of existing employment land and buildings. However, this policy states that only existing employment provision which is no longer required to meet future employment requirements, and business and community needs, may be re-used for other purposes. There is no indication in the Plan that Policy 33 only applies to sites that are no longer needed for employment purposes, but merely that it relates to land outside the GEAs and employment proposal sites.
- 8.7.3. It is not at all clear how the Council came to choose the sites proposed for conversion. It seems to have focused on the Borough-wide supply of employment land, determining that the sites were not needed to achieve full employment, without considering more local factors. I was somewhat surprised to learn during the inquiry that the authority appeared not to have assessed the consequences of selection under this policy for the individual firms concerned, and that no prior discussion had taken place with any of the businesses. The fact that the Council has chosen a number of sites which provide important local employment opportunities may well be the reason for the substantial number of objections to Policy 33, and to the equivalent policy TWA4 in Two Waters and Apsley. As a result of the objections the Council has deleted two of the three proposed conversion sites in Tring, and I have made similar recommendations for some of the TWA sites.

- 8.7.4. The local plan public participation exercise has had the effect of demonstrating to the Council those sites where the case for retention in employment use is strong. What is not clear, however, is whether the sites that were not subject to objection are surplus to the requirements of the firms concerned. Nevertheless, as the Council points out, there is no pressure on firms to move, and it is not assumed that any individual site will come forward during the Plan period. In effect the policy identifies a pool of opportunity sites, and the authority assumes that a relatively small number will actually be converted during the Plan period. The removal of those sites where there is no real prospect of conversion lends the policy greater credibility, and on balance I am satisfied that a specific test of redundancy is not necessary for the sites that remain. I believe that the policy (as suggested for modification) has a reasonable prospect of being implemented, at least to the limited extent that the Council envisages.
- 8.7.5. In response to some of the other points raised by the objectors, I see no real benefit from the policy indicating the nature of occupation or the consequences for employment. Whilst it would have been preferable if the Council had explained the rationale behind the selection process, that stage has now effectively been surpassed. The point about assistance being available to help relocation remains valid. In Policy 34 the Council states that assistance will be given to help firms relocate under that policy, and the authority indicates that similar assistance will be available to firms occupying the Policy 33 sites. For the sake of consistency, I believe that Policy 33 should make this clear. Moreover, it is possible that the availability of such assistance might increase the likelihood of the conversion to housing being achieved on some of the sites.
- 8.7.6. I do not believe that the Plan would be improved by deleting the Table and redrafting the Policy with criteria to determine how sites should be identified, as one objector suggests. Instead I think it desirable that the Plan should specify the opportunities for conversion, as Structure Plan Policy 14 suggests. As to the loss of small sites in rural towns and villages, most of the identified sites that remain are in the larger settlements, and under Policy 34 there is now a presumption against the re-use of employment sites in the small villages and rural area.
- 8.7.7. The final matter to address is the general presumption in favour of the conversion of unidentified sites that is implicit in the first paragraph of Policy 33. It is difficult to establish the potential impact of a provision such as this, for there is no evidence of the number, size or distribution of the sites to which it could apply. Small employment sites within the fabric of urban areas are often a significant source of jobs, and can also provide important services for local communities. They are typically located in older premises which can be afforded by new and growing enterprises, and are usually a particularly sustainable form of employment as they can reduce the need to travel outside the settlement. I suspect that there may be a relatively small pool of such sites in Hemel Hempstead, given its planned ‘new town’ origins, but there are likely to be more in the older settlements of the Borough.
- 8.7.8. Employment opportunities in the settlements outside Hemel Hempstead are relatively scarce, so the loss of unidentified sites to housing could have significant adverse consequences. Coupled with the fact that Structure Plan Policy 14 suggests that the regeneration sites should be identified in local plans, I consider that the non site-specific presumption in favour of conversion that is contained within the first paragraph of Policy 33 should be removed. This does not mean that sites in the larger

settlements could not be converted to other uses, for alternative development would be permitted under Policy 34 if it accords with the development strategy.

- 8.7.9. In conclusion, I consider that the general presumption in favour of the conversion of unidentified sites that is implicit in the first paragraph of Policy 33 should be removed, and that a sentence should be added indicating that assistance will be given to help firms relocate.

(b) *Planning requirements and other policies of the Plan*

- 8.7.10. Hertfordshire CC argues that the ‘planning requirements’ in the Table that forms part of Policy 33 appears to focus on design aspects, in contrast to the more comprehensive list of requirements that occurs in the schedule of housing sites. Because matters such as the need for off-site highway works, affordable housing and community infrastructure are included in the planning requirements for housing sites, it suggests that the description in Policy 33 should be changed to ‘key design requirements’. It also suggests that Policy 33 should include a reference to additional planning requirements that may result from the application of other policies of the Plan.

- 8.7.11. It is right, as the Council points out, that no policy of the Plan stands alone, for each individual development proposal has to be assessed against all relevant policies. I agree with the Council, therefore, that it is unnecessary to add to Policy 33 the possibility that additional requirements may result from the application of other policies. However I also acknowledge the objector’s point about proposals sites being treated consistently throughout the Plan, for in my experience differences in approach can all too easily lead to disputes and difficulties at the implementation stage. I therefore agree with the objector that the phrase ‘planning requirements’ should cover the same matters wherever it is used to allocate housing land in the Plan.

- 8.7.12. The schedule of Housing Proposals Sites, as amended by the Pre Inquiry Changes, identifies in the ‘planning requirements’ section those sites where, for example, a contribution to education provision is required or where a high proportion of affordable housing is sought. In my view similar matters should be included, where appropriate, in the Policy 33 sites. The Council acknowledges that there are some deficiencies in education provision that housing development on these sites should address, though no information is provided and it is not clear whether this applies to all the sites. For example, it would seem inconsistent to require additional education facilities for the small site at Gossams End (East)/Stag Lane (East), Berkhamsted, when there is no mention of a similar requirement under the adjacent and much larger Housing Proposal Site H4. Rather than the blanket requirement that all sites should contribute to educational provision, as suggested by FC85, it would be preferable and consistent to add the phrase to the planning requirements of any site to which it applies. In these circumstances, and provided all other foreseeable requirements were similarly noted, there would be no reason to change the term ‘planning requirements’.

(c) *Sites in selected rural villages*

- 8.7.13. The objector supports the aim of Policy 33, but considers that it should be applied more widely, not just to the named towns and large villages. It is argued that similar benefits could be derived from the conversion of badly sited and redundant employment sites in selected smaller villages. The Council contends that Policy 34

facilitates the redevelopment for housing of problem sites in selected small villages, and that it is not therefore necessary to include these settlements under Policy 33.

- 8.7.14. Whilst the Council’s argument is probably valid for the Composite Draft version of Policy 34, the changes occasioned by FCs 51 and 53 alter the emphasis of that policy, seeking now to protect the employment opportunities provided in these small settlements. I discuss this matter under my consideration of Policy 34. However, I think it right that the presumption in favour of conversion to housing should be restricted to the larger settlements, for otherwise there could be a potential conflict with the development strategy and Policy 4. I recommend no change in response to this objection.

(d) Gas Board land at London Road

- 8.7.15. The purpose of Policy 33 is to promote and facilitate the conversion to housing where there is considerable uncertainty about the likelihood of this being achieved on a particular site during the Plan period. Where the prospect of housing development taking place is much stronger, the site is allocated as a Housing Proposal Site. The Gas Board land at London Road falls into the latter category, and is proposed as Site TWA8 in the Composite Plan. There is no need for it to also appear in the Table of Policy 33 sites, and indeed it would be inconsistent for it to do so. I recommend no change in response to this objection.

(e) British Waterways land at Ebbens Road

- 8.7.16. British Waterways argues that the Ebbens Road site, as shown on the Proposals Map, should include its operational land adjoining Apsley Lock. A similar objection has been made to Policy TWA4, and I consider this matter in Chapter 17 (see paragraphs 17.16.26 to 17.16.27). I conclude that in principle it is reasonable for the section yard to be regarded as an integral part of the canal rather than the employment site, and I recommend no change to the Plan in response to this objection.

(f) Links within Berkhamsted

- 8.7.17. I share the Council’s view that as the two Berkhamsted sites are relatively small and not adjacent to the canal, they do not offer the opportunity to link High Street with the canal. I recommend no change to the Plan in response to this objection.

(g) Conversion of employment land at Tring

- 8.7.18. A large number of objectors opposed the proposed conversion to housing of the employment land at Akeman Street, Brook Street and Western Road, Tring. In response, the Council decided to delete the first two sites from Policy 33 and retain them as General Employment Areas (PICs 68 and 69). I support these changes for the reasons set out under Policy 31 (paragraphs 8.5.23 to 8.5.25).

(h) Boundary of Brook Street employment area

- 8.7.19. I have dealt with the objection to the inclusion of two dwellings within the Brook Street General Employment Area under Policy 31. I conclude that the plan should be amended to exclude these properties from the GEA (paragraph 8.5.28).

(i) Apsley Mills GEA

8.7.20. I am at a loss to understand how Policy 33 has any relevance to the designation of Apsley Mills as a GEA, a matter that I have addressed under Policy 31. The objector has not provided any supporting information to explain the objection. I recommend no change to the Policy.

(j) Consequential changes

8.7.21. Policy 34 states that redevelopment for employment purposes will not be permitted on the sites identified for conversion to housing. In my conclusions on this policy I indicate that this statement would be better included in Policy 33 (see paragraph 8.8.3). It should be inserted before the final sentence of the Policy.

Recommendation

8.7.22. **The Plan be modified in accordance with PICs 68 and 69 and as follows:**

- (a) remove from the first paragraph of Policy 33 the general presumption in favour of the conversion to housing of unidentified sites in the larger settlements;**
- (b) a sentence be added to the end of the first paragraph indicating that firms will be offered assistance to help them relocate;**
- (c) FC85 be not adopted. Instead, for each site where the housing development would generate a requirement for education facilities or for any other identifiable need, the nature of the required provision be specified in the Table to Policy 33 under Planning Requirements;**
- (d) the following sentence be inserted after the first sentence of the final paragraph of Policy 33. “Redevelopment for employment purposes of the areas listed in the Table will not be permitted”.**

8.8. POLICY 34: OTHER LAND WITH ESTABLISHED EMPLOYMENT GENERATING USES

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
1941	H & I Glasser Ltd	3754	Government Office for East of England
2173	The British Film Institute	5088	Tring Environmental Forum

Support

1309 CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society

Key Issues

(a) Are criteria (b) and (c) unduly onerous. (3754)

- (b) Does the relationship with the development strategy require clarification, and should the Policy state that housing will be an acceptable alternative use. (1941)
- (c) Should the policy address larger scale redevelopment of sizeable employment generating sites. (2173)
- (d) Is further clarification needed on established uses. (5088)

Inspector’s Conclusions

General issues

- 8.8.1. The Plan recognises that established Use Class B uses which lie outside the identified employment areas make a significant contribution to the number of jobs and the variety of premises available. The purpose of Policy 34, as set out in the Deposit Draft Plan (CD46), is to enable these uses to remain unless they cause environmental problems, and to allow limited new development or redevelopment for employment purposes. The background to the Policy explains that these locations have the least favourable attributes for employment use, and that alternative uses – principally housing – can be permitted where other criteria are satisfied.
- 8.8.2. I am not convinced that the Policy is phrased in the way that best describes either its intent or its relationship with Policy 33. The first sentence refers to established employment generating uses *not being disturbed* unless they cause environmental problems. Not only is it somewhat unusual to direct a policy towards existing uses that are to remain unchanged, but the presumption against disturbance is at odds with Policy 33, where encouragement is given to convert employment sites in towns and larger villages to housing. In my view the first part of Policy 34 would be improved by being positively phrased, directly addressing those uses that cause environmental problems and encouraging them to relocate.
- 8.8.3. I also believe that it would be simpler to identify the land to which the policy relates by indicating that it does not form part of the minimum employment land supply (Policy 29). Similarly, land identified for conversion to housing within the Table of Policy 33 should be excluded, for it seems logical that the sites listed in Policy 33 should not form part of the ‘other’ land covered by Policy 34. This would also mean that the presumption against redevelopment for employment purposes of the Policy 33 sites should be moved to that policy, ensuring that the full picture relating to the identified conversion sites was readily apparent.
- 8.8.4. To my mind the paragraph introducing the criteria for small-scale development and redevelopment is unclear, for the basis on which it is acceptable (or appropriate, as FC50 proposes) for established employment generating uses to remain is not stated. From the tenor of the policy it would seem that the flexibility is meant to relate to uses that do not cause environmental problems; if this is so, then this phrase should be used. This would have the added advantage of removing the option of small-scale development from lawful enterprises that do cause problems but which cannot be persuaded to relocate. As the policy is currently phrased, such businesses could argue that it is acceptable (or appropriate) for them to remain by virtue of their lawfulness, thereby enabling expansion within the terms of the Policy.
- 8.8.5. Although no Pre Inquiry Changes were made to Policy 34, the Council introduced a series of Further Changes (Nos 50-55 and 59) in response to the objections, with the

intention of clarifying the policy. It seems to me that these changes have introduced a new element into the policy, which seeks to protect employment sites in the Rural Area and Green Belt for the contribution they make to local employment opportunities. Nevertheless, the amended policy better reflects Government advice in PPG7. This indicates at paragraphs 3.8 to 3.11 that rural businesses have a vital role in promoting healthy economic activity in rural areas, and that local plan policies should allow for reasonable future expansion of business premises in the countryside.

- 8.8.6. Whilst I believe that most of the Further Changes improve the Policy, I think that some additional changes are required to the accompanying text. FC53 suggests the retention of employment uses in the Rural Area or Green Belt where there are a limited number of employment opportunities, whereas the change to the Policy (FC51) seeks the retention of all sites that provide local employment opportunities. The text should be amended to more accurately reflect the policy. Furthermore, I do not understand the scope of the final part of FC53. If it is meant to relate to redevelopment for non-employment uses, it should be more explicit; if it is intended to relate to other employment uses, then it is difficult to see how redevelopment could not respect the criteria of the policy if it was to be acceptable.
- 8.8.7. The other text changes relate to paragraphs 8.57 and 8.61 of CD52, and concern the uneasy relationship between the promotion of local employment opportunities and the encouragement of alternative uses, principally housing. In my view greater recognition is required of the difference in approach to employment uses within and outside the Rural Area and Green Belt.

(a) Onerous criteria

- 8.8.8. In response to the GOEE objection, the Council proposes to broaden the scope for small-scale employment development and redevelopment on sites in the Rural Area by enabling a site to extend if significant planning advantages would result (FC59). There is, however, no change to the requirement that the overall impact of the site must be significantly reduced, the Council arguing that this restriction is reasonable in rural locations.
- 8.8.9. It seems to me that the Council’s analysis fails to take into account the fact that the sites to which sub-paragraph (b) applies are those where it is appropriate for the employment generating use to remain, ie those which do not cause environmental problems. I can see no justification for requiring new development to significantly reduce the impact of a use which use does not currently have an unacceptable impact. The criterion is clearly contrary to paragraph 3.11 of PPG7, and is unduly onerous. Furthermore, I am not convinced that the GOEE suggestion that *every effort be made to reduce the overall impact of the use...* is sufficiently precise. Instead I see no reason why the requirement in sub-paragraph (a) should not suffice, which requires there to be *no undesirable impact on adjoining property and on the surrounding area*. As there would then be no difference between the policy for towns, larger villages and selected small villages and that for the Rural Area, sub-paragraphs (a) and (b) could be combined.
- 8.8.10. I turn now to sub-paragraph (c) and the approach to sites in the Green Belt. I acknowledge that the Policy bluntly states that new development or redevelopment will normally be refused unless there are very special circumstances, but this merely

reflects the presumption against inappropriate development found in PPG2. I do not believe it to be overly restrictive, as GOEE suggests, and I see no reason to change this element of the Policy.

(b) *Alternative uses and development strategy*

8.8.11. H & I Glasser originally objected to the fact that, unlike the situation with Policy 33, Policy 34 contains no reference to the acceptability of housing as an alternative use. With the further changes altering the policy by seeking to protect employment sites in the Rural Area or Green Belt from changes to other uses, thereby making the Policy more restrictive, the objection is strengthened. As I have already indicated, however, I believe that this statement conforms to the advice in PPG7, and is therefore justified. I recognise that housing is not specifically mentioned as an appropriate alternative use where a change from employment use is acceptable, but I regard the reference to the development strategy as the correct approach. It must be right that an alternative use should accord with the overall principles that govern any new use, and these vary depending upon the nature of the area. Consequently I do not accept that it is necessary to modify the policy (as amended) in response to these objections.

(c) *Larger scale redevelopment of sizeable employment sites*

8.8.12. This is one of a number of objections that seek greater flexibility within the Plan to facilitate development at the British Film Institute (BFI) site at Berkhamsted, which is in the Green Belt. The objector believes that the factors addressed by the policy, such as established employment uses creating environmental problems, resulting in relocation being desirable, are not matters that apply to the BFI operation. Moreover, relocation is not only unnecessary, it is not a viable option. Consequently it is argued that the scale of expansion envisaged by the Institute, which is larger than the “small scale development or redevelopment” addressed by Policy 34, should be given a policy context. It is suggested that larger scale redevelopment should be accompanied by a master plan, as well as taking into account the criteria at part (a) of the policy and the Environmental Guidelines.

8.8.13. The objector accepts that the objection is predicated on the success of the case made for taking the BFI site out of the Green Belt. However, I have already concluded that it would not be appropriate to alter the Green Belt boundary in this way (see paragraphs 4.22.1 to 4.22.21). In addition, I have also determined that the site is not sufficiently large to warrant designation as a ‘major developed site’ within the Green Belt (see paragraph 4.11.37). As a result, any development at the site has to be considered in the context of the normal Green Belt policies, with a presumption against inappropriate development unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated to exist.

8.8.14. I have already acknowledged, however, that much of the built development on the site has been permitted on this basis in the past, and there is no reason to suppose that this test would not be met in the future should further essential development be proposed. I recognise that the objector is likely to regard this situation as unsatisfactory, but in my view it is important that the Plan provides a consistent policy framework rather than make exceptions to take account of individual cases. I recommend no change to the Plan in response to this objection.

(d) Established uses

8.8.15. The objector believes that the policy is confused because of the limited powers available to the Council to take action against established uses, and considers that it should be redrafted to outline the procedures for assessing applications for established (ie lawful) uses under Part VII of the 1990 Act. It seems to me, however, that Policy 34 is not intended to deal with the matter of lawfulness, but instead provides guidance for those employment uses which lawfully exist (for whatever reason) outside the main employment areas. The Council’s enforcement strategy is appropriate for dealing with breaches of planning control, and does not require elaboration here. I do accept that the relationship between Policy 34 and the paragraphs which state the powers available to the Council could be better explained, perhaps by simply indicating that most established uses have become lawful under the Planning Acts. Whilst the Council might wish to amend the text to clarify this aspect, I am nevertheless satisfied that the scope and intention of the Policy is entirely suitable.

Recommendation

8.8.16. **The Plan be modified as follows:**

- (a) delete the first three paragraphs of Policy 34 and replace them by more positively phrased paragraphs along the following lines:**

“Established employment generating uses not included within the minimum supply of employment land (Policy 29) or identified for conversion to housing (Policy 33), and which cause environmental problems in terms of noise, smell, pollution, safety or traffic generation, will be encouraged to relocate. Where appropriate, firms will be offered help in their search for new sites. The conversion of premises vacated by firms to an alternative employment generating use will be accepted, provided the new use will not cause any environmental problems.

Where an established employment generating use does not cause environmental problems, new small-scale employment development and redevelopment will be permitted on the following basis:”;

- (b) delete sub-paragraph (a) of Policy 34 and replace it by:**

“In the towns, large villages, selected small villages and the Rural Area:”

Criteria (i) and (ii) remain unchanged;

- (c) delete sub-paragraph (b) (and consequently do not adopt FC59), and re-label sub-paragraph (c) as (b);**
- (d) amend final two paragraphs of Policy 34 in accordance with FCs 51 and 52;**
- (e) clarify the text at paragraph 8.56 (FC53) to ensure it is consistent with FC51 and that the meaning of the final sentence is obvious. Amend paragraphs 8.57 and 8.61 (including FCs 54 and 55 if appropriate) to remove the tension**

between the promotion of redevelopment for housing and the desire to retain certain sites in employment use;

(f) consider whether further explanation is needed about the relationship between the Policy and the concept of lawful use.

8.9. POLICY 35 – LAND AT NORTH EAST HEMEL HEMPSTEAD

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
1531	Gazeley Properties Ltd	4181	English Partnerships
2120	The Crown Estate	4274	The Hunters Oak Residents’ Group
4111	Lucas Aerospace	4281	Mr Ian Stowe

Support

1310 CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society

Key Issues

- (a) Should the policy refer to activities in the national or regional interest. (1531, 2120, 4181)
- (b) Should references to a waste incinerator at North East Hemel Hempstead be deleted. (1531, 4274, 4281)
- (c) Should the site at North East Hemel Hempstead be developed as it will lead to a loss of countryside and increased traffic. (4281)
- (d) Is Policy 35 inconsistent with the description of Site E4. (4111)
- (e) Is the policy statement unduly prescriptive and restrictive. (1531)

Inspector’s Conclusions

(a) Activities in the national or regional interest

8.9.1. Structure Plan Policy 15 retains the allocation of a key employment site at North East Hemel Hempstead, indicating that priority should be given to specialised technological activities (STAs) or other activities which are in the national or regional interest. The site is proposed as a new General Employment Area under Local Plan Policy 35, which includes the reference to STAs, but only mentions activities in the national or regional interest in the supporting text. The objectors consider that in this respect the Plan is not in conformity with the Structure Plan, and they are concerned that the omission reduces the priority given to activities which are in the national or regional interest.

8.9.2. The Council acknowledges that Policy 35 gives greater priority to meeting the need for STAs, but maintains that any need for activities in the national or regional interest will be given priority over other non-STA uses. In its view activities in the national or regional interest should not be part of the policy because, by their nature, they would be exceptions which would require an unusual or special need to be demonstrated. To add them to the policy could lead to arguments that an exceptional need no longer had

to be justified, opening the door for activities which, for example, operate on a regional basis or serve a regional catchment.

- 8.9.3. The purpose of a local plan is to interpret the strategic policies of the structure plan and provide detailed guidance for day-to-day planning decisions. As a general rule, therefore, local plan policies should be consistent with the structure plan unless there is a good reason why the two plans should differ. I am aware that the County Council has not objected to the approach taken in the Local Plan, and that the Plan is considered to be in general conformity with the Structure Plan, but in respect of the key employment site there is a clear inconsistency between the plans. Moreover, PPG12 advises in paragraph 24 of Annex A that the reasoned justification in a local plan should not contain policies and proposals that will be used for taking decisions on planning applications. Consequently any priority that is to be given to activities in the national or regional interest, whether equal to or less than that given to STAs, should be indicated in the policy rather than the supporting text.
- 8.9.4. The interpretation of ‘other activities which are in the national or regional interest’ is not straightforward, for there is no definition in the Structure Plan. Indeed a previous Local Plan Inspector accepted that the phrase should not form part of the equivalent policy in the Adopted Plan because, amongst other reasons, it was an undesirably vague land use term. To my mind, however, the appropriate solution to an ambiguity of this nature is to provide a definition or sufficient information in the Local Plan to ensure that the phrase is capable of meaningful interpretation. In my view the word ‘other’ is significant to understanding the phrase, for this creates a link with the STAs. The policy gives priority to STAs at this key employment site because these activities are expected to bring particular skills and expertise that would contribute to the Bright Green strategy, thereby generating benefits over and above those deriving from the general supply of jobs. Applying this principle to activities in the national or regional interest, additional benefits might arise from development that has a special scale, status or market significance, with perhaps an expectation of greater spin-offs for the local economy than would normally be the case.
- 8.9.5. A definition along these lines would ensure that a business that was merely conducted on a national or regional basis, such as a major distribution depot, would not satisfy the policy. Nevertheless it would not be necessary for a potential occupier to demonstrate an ‘exceptional need’, as proposed by the Council. This argument is typically used to justify developments for which a need outweighs a significant conflict with policy. It has little relevance, in my view, to a situation where the need is for employment and the policy is merely seeking to regulate the type of employment activity proposed on land that is allocated for employment use. Whilst the policy would clearly require activities in the national or regional interest to be distinguished from the general employment provision, the assessment should be based not on the particular needs of the company involved, but on the extra benefits that the enterprise would bring to the wider area.
- 8.9.6. I conclude that Policy 35 as drafted is not consistent with Structure Plan Policy 15, and I find no convincing justification for the way in which ‘activities in the national or regional interest’ are treated differently in the two plans. I therefore recommend that the phrase be included in Policy 35, and that the text be amended to explain how the phrase is to be interpreted.

(b) *References to an incinerator*

8.9.7. The references to a waste incinerator form part of the detailed policy guidance for North East Hemel Hempstead that comprises Part 4.6 of the Plan, and I deal with this objection at that point in my report (see Chapter 16).

(c) *Loss of countryside and increased traffic*

8.9.8. The objections to the loss of countryside and green cover go to the principle of this development. I have indicated under Policy 28 that while the overall provision of employment land in the Plan is adequate to provide sufficient jobs during the Plan period, the proposed supply depends in large measure on the development of the site at North East Hemel Hempstead. This area has long been identified as a key employment site in the Structure Plan, and I accept that the major contribution the development will make to the Hertfordshire economy outweighs the loss of agricultural land. I agree with the Council that overall tree cover should increase as a result of new planting, though I suspect that this is likely to be little consolation to the residents of Hunters Oak for the loss of open fields close to their properties. As to the increased traffic flows that would result, the Plan requires the developer to fund substantial highway improvements, including part of the North East Relief Road, to cater for the traffic impact of the scheme. In these circumstances I consider that the allocation is acceptable, and I recommend no modification should be made to the Plan in response to this objection.

(d) *Consistency with Site E4 and consequential amendments*

8.9.9. The objector argues that Policy 35 is inconsistent with Employment Proposal Site E4, insofar as it does not indicate that the proposed General Employment Area could accommodate development in Use Classes B1(b), B1(c), B2 and B8. It is debatable, in my view, whether this amount of detail is necessary for a policy that introduces the principle of a new employment area and sets out its main purpose, which is to cater for specialised technological activities (STAs). The Council promotes this key employment site in two other parts of the Plan, at Site E4 and as Part 4.6 of the Area Proposals. In this context I believe it would be reasonable for the acceptable range of employment uses to be included within the Schedule of Proposal Sites, in common with other entries.

8.9.10. However, my recommendations in Chapter 16 of this report, where I consider the objections to Part 4.6 of the Plan, fundamentally change the purposes of Policy 35 and Site E4, and the balance between them. Firstly I recommend that a definition of STAs should be included in the text that follows Policy 35, so as to provide greater clarity about the uses acceptable at this site. Secondly I consider that the Area Proposals for North East Hemel Hempstead are too detailed and should be deleted, with those policy elements that are essential to the proper development of the site being added to the ‘planning requirements’ of Site E4. In addition, in sub-section (a) above I recommend that activities in the national or regional interest should be included in Policy 35, with clarification about the interpretation of this phrase in the subsequent text.

8.9.11. In effect, Policy 35 should both introduce the new General Employment Area and establish the purposes for which the land is to be developed, whilst Site E4 should set out the detailed requirements. In these circumstances I believe that it would be

appropriate for Policy 35 to fully describe the range of acceptable employment uses. However, as I indicate in my consideration of Site E4, because of its reduced size I do not believe that any part of the land should form part of the general B2/B8 employment land supply. Consequently the only B2/B8 uses that would be acceptable are those that satisfy the definition of STAs or activities in the national/regional interest. It is not therefore necessary to refer to B2/B8 uses in the Policy. On the other hand, to provide some flexibility it is important to include a reference to ancillary office (Class B1(a)) uses in both the Policy and the text, as I recommend in Chapter 16 paragraph 16.3.8.

8.9.12. As a further consequence of my suggested deletion of the detailed guidance in Part 4.6, the reference in Policy 35 to other parts of the Plan should relate only to Employment Proposals Site E4.

(e) Prescriptive policy statement

8.9.13. As I indicate in the preceding section, I broadly agree with the objector that the policy statement in Part 4.6 is too detailed to form part of the Local Plan. However most of the detailed matters addressed by the objector do not relate to Policy 35, but are more appropriately dealt with in my consideration of the North East Hemel Hempstead Area Proposals in Chapter 16 of this report. I recommend no further changes to Policy 35 in response to this objection.

Recommendation

8.9.14. **The Plan be modified as follows:**

- (a) the words “or other activities which are in the national or regional interest” be inserted after ‘specialised technological activities’;**
- (b) a clause be added to Policy 35 indicating that any office use (Class B1(a)) should be ancillary to the specified uses;**
- (c) the reference to detailed policy guidance in Part 4 of the Plan be deleted;**
- (d) a definition or guidance on the interpretation of ‘specialised technological activities’, ‘activities in the national or regional interest’, and ‘ancillary office use’ be added to the text following Policy 35.**

8.10. POLICY 36: PROVISION FOR SMALL FIRMS

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
1566	Tring Town Council	5089	Tring Environmental Forum

Supports

978	Mr C H Gray	1311	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society
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Key Issues

- (a) Should the Policy include provision for small firms in Tring. (1566)
- (b) Should the Policy discourage B8 uses from urban centres. (5089)

Inspector’s Conclusions

General issues

8.10.1. In my view there is potential for uncertainty and misunderstanding between Policy 36, which encourages the provision of small business, industrial and storage/distribution units in GEAs and town centres, and Policies 31 and 38, which establish the acceptable uses in those areas. I am concerned that there is a conflict between the full range of employment uses proposed in Policy 36, and the identification of appropriate uses in particular locations in the two other policies. The Council indicates that Policies 31 and 38 establish what is appropriate in specific locations, with the limitations on use in these policies therefore taking precedence. I agree that this is the desirable way for these policies to interact, but I believe that this interrelationship should be more clearly stated. It seems to me that the greater clarity I seek could be achieved by simply adding the phrase “subject to the requirements of Policies 31 and 38” to the end of the first sentence of Policy 36. I recommend that the plan be modified accordingly.

(a) Provision for small firms in Tring

8.10.2. Tring Town Council contends that the Policy in the Deposit Draft (CD46) is at odds with Policies 31 and 33, which promote the conversion to housing of three sites in Tring that provide accommodation for small businesses. The Council has responded to the widespread objection to the loss of employment land in Tring by proposing PICs 65, 66, 68 and 69, which would retain the Akeman Street and Brook Street sites in their current uses. Indeed, the amended Policy 31 specifically states that the small units at Brook Street should be retained. I have indicated my support for this amendment in paragraphs 8.5.23 to 8.5.25. I am satisfied that these GEAs, together with that proposed at Icknield Way as Employment Site E8, provide adequate opportunities for small businesses in Tring. No further modification is necessary in response to this objection.

(b) B8 uses in urban centres

8.10.3. The objector is opposed to small storage and distribution uses in urban centres because they are generally low intensity users of land that can have high traffic impacts. Whilst I recognise that this argument has some merit, Policy 36 has to be read in conjunction with the principal policy relating to town centres, Policy 38. In relation to the range of employment uses, this policy only identifies business development as being appropriate, suggesting that B2 and B8 uses would generally not be acceptable. I indicate in paragraph 8.10.1 above my concern about the potential for this kind of misunderstanding with Policy 36, and I recommend the inclusion of cross-references to other relevant policies. I believe this should address the concerns of this objector.

Recommendation

8.10.4. Policy 36 be modified by inserting “, subject to the requirements of Policies 31 and 38.” at the end of the first sentence.

8.11. POLICY 37: ENVIRONMENTAL IMPROVEMENTS

Objection

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
1754	Berkhamsted Town Council

Supports

1154	Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust	4939L	English Nature
1312	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society		

Key Issue

(a) Whether the policy should refer to a landscape buffer at the Northbridge Road GEA. (1754)

Inspector’s Conclusions

8.11.1. The objector considers that Policy 37 should emphasise the retention of a landscape buffer between residential property and the riverside environment, in accordance with the plans of the Canal and Riverside Partnership (CARP). The Northbridge Road GEA is the only new employment location needing special attention under Policy 37, and the only boundary between this GEA and a residential area forms part of Proposals Site E1. I share the Council’s view that the appropriate places for the type of detailed planning requirements suggested by the objector is under the site-specific policies. Indeed, there is a specific requirement under Site E1 for the landscape buffer to residential property to be maintained and strengthened. Furthermore, I indicate elsewhere in the Plan that it would be helpful if the references to canalside enhancement in Policies 31 and E1 also cross-referred to Policy 112, where the CARP study is mentioned. I conclude that the level of detail suggested by the objector would not be appropriate for Policy 37.

Recommendation

8.11.2. No modification be made in response to this objection.

8.12. EMPLOYMENT: SUGGESTED NEW POLICY

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
1217	Orange Personal Communications Services Ltd	4284	J W Ward & Son Ltd

Key Issues

- (a) Should there be a policy on home-based working and teleworking. (1217)
- (b) Should there be a policy for Bourne End Employment Area. (4284)

Inspector’s Conclusions

(a) *Home-based working and tele-working*

8.12.1. The objector argues that the increasingly important role of telecommunications in facilitating decentralised working patterns, which contribute to the Plan’s sustainable development strategy, warrants a new policy to encourage home-based working. The objector does not provide any examples of situations in which the policies as drafted would prejudice home working or tele-working, however, nor is the wording of a suggested policy produced. Whilst I acknowledge that work patterns are changing as a result of the growth in telecommunications, I share the Council’s view that the existing policies of the Plan are adequate to deal with this matter. Most small-scale proposals are unlikely to require planning permission, and there is nothing to persuade me that, as a matter of principle, larger-scale schemes merit any relaxation of the Plan’s development strategy or its other policies. In these circumstances I do not believe that an additional policy is necessary.

(b) *Bourne End employment area*

8.12.2. The objection by J W Ward & Son Ltd is linked to the company’s objection to Policy 32 (see paragraph 8.6.17), and promotes a new policy specifically for Bourne End Mills. The suggested policy would be based on Policy 32, but would allow development on a larger area than is currently occupied by buildings, reflecting an earlier scheme for the site. It would enable some expansion of floorspace, and redevelopment, where a proposal would make a positive contribution to the character, appearance, purpose and objectives of the Green Belt.

8.12.3. It seems to me, however, that such a proposal is too permissive, in that it would allow a scale of new development in the Green Belt that would be contrary to the advice in PPG2. Although I have suggested that the policy relating to major developed sites in the Green Belt should be separate from that relating to employment areas in the Green Belt (see paragraph 8.6.3), there is no justifiable reason, in my view, for giving scope for more development at Bourne End Mills than is permitted by PPG2. Indeed, in pursuit of this objective I have recommended under Policy 32 that the Council consider drawing the boundary of the site more tightly around the existing buildings.

8.12.4. I acknowledge that the site is prominent and obtrusive in the landscape, but a policy that reflects the advice at paragraph C4 of PPG2 Annex C is intended to provide, through redevelopment, opportunities for environmental improvement. A revised Policy 32, along the lines I suggest, is adequate to deal with the employment aspects of the Green Belt sites, and the Planning Requirements element of the Table is the appropriate means of dealing with site specific matters. I therefore conclude that a separate policy is unnecessary.

Recommendation

8.12.5. **No modification be made in response to these objections.**

**8.13. EMPLOYMENT PROPOSAL SITE E1
NORTHBRIDGE ROAD, BERKHAMSTED**

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
1016	Berkhamsted Citizens’ Association	2859	British Waterways
1755	Berkhamsted Town Council	4068	HCC Environment Department

Support for pre-inquiry change

For pre-inquiry change 70
5427PC CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society

Key Issues

- (a) Should the planning requirements refer to detailed matters such as the exclusion of noisy uses, the retention of a green screen, canalside enhancement, and the need for an archaeological survey. (1016, 1755, 2859, 4068)

Inspector’s Conclusions

- 8.13.1. The site is situated at the north-western end of the Northbridge Road GEA and is the last remaining area of undeveloped land. There is no objection to the principle of allocating this site for employment use. The objectors are concerned about the details of future development, particularly the impact of noisy uses on the adjoining houses in Tortoiseshell Way. Other matters include the retention of a “green screen” to the landscape buffer in accordance with the plans of the Canal and Riverside Partnership (CARP), and the vagueness of the reference to the canalside enhancement.
- 8.13.2. The site is allocated for business, industry and storage and distribution uses, so there is clearly some potential for noisy uses to have an adverse impact on adjacent housing. However, one of the stated planning requirements is the maintenance and strengthening of a landscape buffer to residential property. The Council argues that this provides protection to the occupiers of the dwellings that back onto the site. No details are given about the width or treatment of this buffer, however, so it is not possible to determine its adequacy. I recognise that such a buffer could give the necessary protection, though unless it was substantial much would depend upon the nature of the uses permitted close to the site boundary – industrial uses would have the potential to create more noise than business uses, for example.
- 8.13.3. In these circumstances the protection of the residential environment is likely to depend upon the general development control policies, particularly Policy 9. Criterion (d) indicates that development must avoid harm to the surrounding neighbourhood and adjoining properties through matters such as noise and disturbance. Whilst this leaves the question of acceptability to the implementation stage, I am satisfied that the overall policy framework is sufficient to ensure that the living conditions of those living close to the site should not be unduly affected by the development of site E1.

8.13.4. I have already addressed the concerns of Berkhamstead Town Council and British Waterways under Policies 31 and 37 in relation to the existing Northbridge Road employment area (see paragraphs 8.5.33 and 8.11.1). Even within the site-specific policy it is not necessary, in my view, for the planning requirements to include greater detail than identifying the need for a landscape buffer, as the form it should take is more appropriately addressed at the design stage. I have previously indicated that the references to the canalside enhancement should include a cross-reference to Policy 112, where the CARP study is mentioned in the accompanying text, and the same would apply to this policy. This would provide sufficient information for developers about the overall approach to the Grand Union Canal and give guidance on other available sources.

8.13.5. The County Council’s objection relates to the significant archaeological potential thought to be present on the site. The Council has responded with PIC70, which adds a clause to the planning requirements that requires an archaeological evaluation of the site. I agree that it is important in this way to highlight the archaeological constraint, and I support the Pre Inquiry Change.

Recommendation

8.13.6. **The Plan be modified in accordance with PIC70 and as follows:**

(a) “(see Policy 112)” be inserted after “Canalside enhancement” in Proposals Site E1.

**8.14. EMPLOYMENT PROPOSAL SITE E2
BUNCEFIELD LANE (WEST) / WOOD LANE (SOUTH) (KODAK SPORTS GROUND)**

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
4069	HCC Environment Department	4190	English Partnerships
4112*	Lucas Aerospace	5163	Mr Tony McWalter MP

Counter-Objections

To pre-inquiry change 71

5327PC	Wilcon Development Group Ltd	5677PC	Apsley Developments Ltd
5627PC	The Directors of Shendish Manor Estate	5746PC	Felden Park Farms Ltd

Support for pre-inquiry changes

For pre-inquiry change 71

5428PC	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society	5702PC	Lucas Aerospace
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Key Issues

- (a) Should Site E2 be reallocated for residential development as part of a larger development site. (4112, 4190, 5163)
- (b) Is Site E2 needed to maintain an adequate supply of employment land. (5327PC, 5627PC, 5677PC, 5746PC)
- (c) Is Site E2 an appropriate location for B2/B8 employment uses. (4112, 5163)
- (d) Should the potential archaeological interest be recognised. (4069)

- (e) Is the site within the Buncefield Oil Terminal consultation zone. (4112)

Inspector’s Conclusions

(a) *Reallocation for residential development*

8.14.1. The objector’s contention that the land would be better suited to residential use is part of the case in support of the Housing Proposal Site H15A. I have considered the factors for and against the comprehensive mixed-use development proposed for the Breakspear Way site in Chapter 7, where I conclude that its shortcomings as a location for housing outweigh the advantages of reducing the amount of land taken elsewhere from the Green Belt. The objector also raises questions about the suitability of the site for employment purposes, which I address in sub-section (c) below.

(b) *Retain site for employment use*

8.14.2. The objectors to the deletion of Employment Site E2, as proposed by PIC71, contend that it is necessary to retain the site as part of the Borough’s employment land supply. I deal with this issue at some length earlier in the Chapter, under Policy 28, where I conclude that the supply that follows from my proposals is broadly in balance with the demand for employment floorspace. In reaching this conclusion I have included Site E2 in my assessment, estimating that its 2.8ha of land would provide some 11,200 sq m of B8 floorspace. I do recognise in my analysis that the level of B8 floorspace is slightly on the high side, being above the mid-point of the forecast range, but when viewed in combination with the B2 floorspace position, which is below the low forecast, the provision appears to be about right. The loss of Site E2 would have an adverse effect on this assessment, although the combined B2/B8 figure would remain a reasonable amount above the minimum requirement. Nevertheless it would remove some of the margin that is desirable to allow for the inherent shortcomings of the assessment process and variations that will arise during implementation.

8.14.3. In terms of achieving a better balance between the need for different classes of employment land, it would have been preferable if Site E2 could have been allocated solely for B2 use, thereby helping to arrest the general industrial decline in the Borough. However the demand in this part of Hemel Hempstead, which has excellent access to the motorway network, is predominantly for warehouse and distribution uses. From evidence given to the inquiry it appears that these uses can generally command higher land values or rental levels, so in commercial terms there is much greater likelihood of a B8 use.

8.14.4. It is also questionable whether a B2 allocation would have been taken up, given the current low levels of demand for general industrial sites. In addition, the location of the site adjacent to the housing at Hales Park does not favour industrial use, for it is possible that a greater proportion of this relatively small site would be needed to provide sufficient separation between the two uses to protect residential amenity. Although the allocation in the Deposit Draft does allow for the development of both uses, I agree with the Council that storage and distribution is by far the most likely outcome in this case.

8.14.5. In these circumstances it is pertinent to consider whether the employment needs of the Borough would be best served by B8 development on Site E2. From the floorspace

assessments it is clear that the planned provision will exceed the minimum requirement for B8 floorspace by a considerable margin. Furthermore, as I indicate in my analysis of Policy 28, additional B8 floorspace has recently been completed at Punchbowl Park in St Albans District, which immediately adjoins the north east Hemel Hempstead employment area and serves the same labour market. Taken together, the provision of B8 floorspace is likely to be towards the high end of the forecast range.

- 8.14.6. There are two potentially significant consequences of a land supply that is biased towards B8 provision. Firstly, because of the low employment densities that typically result from the provision of large distribution depots, a high proportion of B8 floorspace could result in fewer jobs than are actually needed to meet the needs of the local workforce. Secondly, a preponderance of B8 uses is not particularly consistent with the promotion of the Bright Green strategy, which seeks to develop skills and promote innovation.
- 8.14.7. I have concluded elsewhere in the Plan that Site H15A is not suitable for housing, but also that it is not essential to retain the existing uses on this land provided alternative provision is made (see Leisure Sites L9 and L14). An obvious consequence of these conclusions is that there is a large area of land adjacent to Breakspear Way that has significant development potential for an appropriate use or uses. I consider that employment development is the most logical use, given the surrounding pattern of uses and the unsuitability of the site for housing. As it is important to both preserve the attractive main approach to Hemel Hempstead and to protect the amenity of Hales Park residents, this is likely to be restricted to the B1 use class.
- 8.14.8. It occurs to me that the potential redevelopment of the Lucas site creates the opportunity for a much larger, high quality ‘business park’ that, over time, could extend from Maylands Avenue across this land. Eventually it could reach as far as Site E2, which would then take its access from the west as well as (or perhaps instead of) an access to the north. A master plan approach could ensure that the area is designed to provide facilities and amenities for the wider area, with open spaces and landscaping contributing to a prestigious “gateway” development on the A414 approach to the town.
- 8.14.9. A major new development such as this is not required within the present Plan period, and is likely to meet some of the employment needs of the Borough into the medium-term future. It is desirable that the concept is considered at this stage, however, because the redevelopment of the Lucas site would be the critical first phase, establishing the character of the scheme as well as providing much of the infrastructure around which the remainder of the development would be based.
- 8.14.10. If the idea is thought to have some merit, it also presents an opportunity to consider whether Site E2 should remain as proposed in the Deposit Draft, or whether it would be more advantageous to allocate a similar area for B1 use adjoining the eastern edge of the Lucas site. The latter course of action would not only address the bias towards B8 provision, but would also increase the amount of land available for the ‘business park’ during the Plan period, perhaps increasing the prospects of implementation. Even if the major ‘business park’ concept is rejected, it might still be beneficial to re-allocate the E2 land for B1 development at the eastern edge of the Lucas site if the redevelopment of the existing factory remains likely.

- 8.14.11. I appreciate that this is not a matter that was raised during the Local Plan inquiry, and I fully acknowledge that I do not have the evidence upon which to base an informed judgement about the concept. It may be, for example, that there are technical constraints that render such a scheme impractical, or that it would have significant adverse consequences in terms of journeys to work and sustainability. Nevertheless I firmly believe that it merits further investigation, for it has the potential to contribute to the employment needs of the Borough in the longer term, providing some flexibility in a locality where the identification of new land for built development is increasingly difficult due to the constraints of the Green Belt.
- 8.14.12. I recommend that the Council reassess the need for Site E2 in the light of the high proportion of B8 floorspace already developed or planned. It should also consider whether it would be more advantageous to replace the allocation with a broadly similar area of land adjacent to the Lucas site as part of a larger B1 development.

(c) *Appropriateness for B2/B8 uses*

- 8.14.13. Some objectors believe that Site E2 is not appropriate for employment use, for a variety of reasons. One argument is that B2 and B8 uses are incompatible with the adjoining land uses, and that the site is therefore more sustainable as part of a mixed-use residential development. I have dealt with the housing aspects of the sustainability issue in Chapter 7, where I conclude that, compared to most other housing sites, the location does not fare well in sustainability terms. As an employment location I acknowledge that there are limitations resulting from the adjoining land uses, as the need for a wide buffer zone to the Hales Park housing potentially detracts from the efficient use of land. On the other hand there would be benefits from the proximity of the site to the vast employment area to the north, insofar as the development would make use of the associated infrastructure, and it would be well placed in relation to the proposed park and ride site at Breakspear Way. Overall I consider that the sustainability arguments do not come down strongly for or against the development of Site E2 for employment purposes.
- 8.14.14. A further potential constraint on the development of the site for employment use is the need for off-site access works to provide a suitable road link to Boundary Way. I agree that it would not be appropriate to serve the site from Wood End Lane, and that it would therefore be necessary to widen and improve the existing road to provide a connection to the recently developed roundabout to the north.
- 8.14.15. There was some debate at the inquiry, and in subsequent correspondence, about the practicality of achieving a suitable link within the land available. It appears that some land to the east would be required to enable the road to be constructed to the required standard, but as this land is owned by the Council, it is reasonable to assume that it could be made available. At no time has the Council suggested that the implementation of this link road would not be possible, and clearly the authority must have addressed this matter when allocating the site in the Deposit Draft. Furthermore, the comments of the local highway authority on the objector’s supplementary evidence do not infer that a solution could not be found. I therefore conclude that a link is feasible. I do acknowledge, however, that the cost of the off-site highway works could detract from the attractiveness of the site.

8.14.16. Overall I consider that B2 and B8 development would be an acceptable form of development, though clearly the site has limitations for these uses. However, for the reasons given in the preceding sub-section, I question whether B2/B8 are the most desirable uses for the land. I therefore recommend no further change in response to these objections.

(d) Archaeological issues

8.14.17. The County Council believes that important archaeological remains are likely given the location of the site within an Area of Archaeological Significance and adjacent to a Scheduled Ancient Monument. It therefore considers that any development of Site E2 should be subject to a programme of archaeological assessment. The Borough Council agrees, pointing out that this matter was incorporated into the planning requirements for Site H15A, and suggesting that a similar wording should be included for Site E2 if this is to be retained in the Plan. Given the presence of known archaeological remains in the locality, I accept that a reference in the planning requirements is warranted should the Council decide to retain Site E2.

(e) Buncefield Oil Terminal consultation zone

8.14.18. The objector contends that the site is not within the 190m consultation zone for the Buncefield Oil Terminal, and that the reference in the Planning Requirements should therefore be deleted. The Council accepts that all of the site is outside the 190m zone, and would have proposed a pre-inquiry change for deletion had the proposal remained in the Composite Plan. I recommend that this modification be made if the Council decides to retain Site E2 in the Plan.

(f) Consequential amendment

8.14.19. The Planning Requirements for Site E2 in the Deposit Draft indicate that development is conditional upon the replacement of the playing fields to a suitable alternative site. I discuss this in my analysis of the overall supply of playing pitches in Hemel Hempstead under Leisure Site L14 (see Chapter 12 paragraph 12.31.2). From the evidence to the inquiry it appears that the pitches and other facilities have not been used for well over five years, and have therefore not contributed to the supply of playing space throughout this period. For this reason I question whether direct replacement is necessary. In any event, as I indicate in Chapter 12, there is sufficient space within Leisure Site L2 to replace the pitches that have been lost on the site should this be seen as a necessary requirement. Consequently, I recommend that the need for replacement playing fields should be subject to further scrutiny.

Recommendation

8.14.20. **The Council reassess the need for Proposal Site E2 in the light of the high proportion of B8 floorspace already developed or planned, and consider whether it would be more advantageous to replace the allocation with a broadly similar area of land adjacent to the Lucas site as part of a larger B1 development.**

8.14.21. **If the Council decides to retain Site E2 in the Plan, and thereby not to adopt PIC71, then the Planning Requirements be modified as follows:**

- (a) the sentence relating to the Buncefield Oil Terminal consultation zone be deleted;
- (b) a sentence be added requiring an archaeological evaluation of the site, together with the implementation of any necessary mitigation measures;
- (c) the need for the provision of replacement playing fields on an alternative site be reassessed.

8.15. EMPLOYMENT PROPOSAL SITE E4 THREE CHERRY TREES LANE (EAST)

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
1528	Kings Langley & District Residents’ Association	4070	HCC Environment Department
1532	Gazeley Properties Ltd	4182	English Partnerships
1592	Councillor Janet Anderson	4209	Hemel Hempstead Open Spaces Society
1665	Kings Langley Branch of Hemel Hempstead Conservative	5805	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society
2121	The Crown Estate		

Key Issues

- (a) Should Site E4 at Three Cherry Trees Lane be developed for housing, either wholly or in part. (1528,1592, 1665, 4209, 5805)
- (b) Should the planning requirements include a reference to activities in the national or regional interest. (1532, 2121, 4182)
- (c) Should a reference be made to the archaeological potential of the site. (4070)

Inspector’s Conclusions

(a) *Alternative use for housing*

8.15.1. Most objectors propose that the whole of Site E4 should be developed for housing, arguing that this is a better use for a site that adjoins an existing residential area and Housing Proposal Site H27. Others suggest that part of the land should be re-allocated for this use, as an extension of Site H27. It is claimed that there is little demand for employment land at present, as forecast by Pidea at the Structure Plan EIP. Increasing the supply of housing from this site would relieve pressure on the Green Belt.

8.15.2. The principle of developing land at North East Hemel Hempstead for employment use has been enshrined in both local and strategic planning policies since the mid-1980s. It was affirmed most recently in the 1998 Structure Plan, where the land is identified as a key employment site that is expected to play a major long-term role in the Hertfordshire economy. Because a significant surplus of employment land existed in the County, consideration was given to releasing the whole of the site for housing at the time the Structure Plan was prepared. The EIP Panel considered that, because of its proximity to the existing employment area, the majority of the land was best suited to employment uses. The Panel accepted, however, that a site for some 200 dwellings could be released at its northern end. The Composite Draft closely follows this

strategic guidance, allocating Site H27 for some 230 houses and retaining the larger land area as Employment Site E4.

- 8.15.3. The adequacy of the supply of land for employment use in Dacorum has been examined in some detail under Policy 28. The loss of fewer existing employment sites to housing under Policy 33, plus the retention of Site E2, have enabled a reassessment of the minimum employment land supply necessary to sustain the objective of full employment throughout the Plan period. Because the land at North East Hemel Hempstead is one of the few areas in Dacorum which has the potential to accommodate a shift in the balance between employment and housing land, it has become a key site in this process. I have concluded that there is sufficient employment land elsewhere to allow Housing Site H27 to be extended by 3.5ha, with Site E4 being reduced by a similar amount to 16.6ha.
- 8.15.4. The one remaining question is the mix of employment uses appropriate for this smaller site. In the Composite Draft the Council proposed that it should be two-thirds B1 use and one-third B2/B8 uses, with the B1 element amounting to 13.4ha. In its forecasts the Council has assumed that most of the B1 floorspace would come from specialised technological activities (STAs), though it accepts that some of these might fall within the B2 Use Class. The B2/B8 floorspace would mainly form part of the unrestricted employment land supply.
- 8.15.5. I am concerned, however, that dividing this smaller site in the same way would significantly diminish the attractiveness and success of the specific purpose for which this key employment site has long been reserved. Structure Plan policy 15 firmly promotes the site for STAs or other activities which are in the national or regional interest, giving them priority within the then larger allocation. There is a significant risk, in my view, that retaining some of the reduced site for general B2/B8 provision would leave too small an area for these targeted activities. In addition, the promotion of an hotel within the site, which I support, has the potential to further reduce the available employment land.
- 8.15.6. I recognise that some land is needed in Dacorum for general employment provision, but Site E2 is now available, and the relocation needs of local firms will be less with fewer Policy 33 sites. I also believe that the attractiveness of Site E4 as a location where companies in the specialised technology field can congregate might be greater if the land were reserved solely for such uses. Indeed, it might be more difficult to find a discrete part of this smaller site where general industry or (more likely) a distribution depot could be accommodated without having an effect on the priority activities. I therefore propose that the whole of Site E4 be allocated for STA purposes or other activities in the national or regional interest.

(b) *Activities in the national or regional interest*

- 8.15.7. The objectors contend that ‘activities in the national or regional interest’ should be included, along with specialised technological activities, as a primary use for this key employment site, thereby ensuring consistency with Structure Plan policy 15. I have dealt with the matter under Policy 35, where I conclude that the phrase should form part of that Policy. As a consequence, the ‘Proposal’ element of Site E4 should be similarly amended.

(c) *Archaeological potential*

8.15.8. The County Council believes that the site has significant archaeological potential, and should therefore be subject to a programme of archaeological evaluation and the implementation of any necessary mitigation measures. In response the Council promoted PIC218, which adds to the development requirements in Part 4.6 of the Plan a clause stating that proposals to address these archaeological matters should form part of the detailed planning briefs. I agree that the Plan should identify the need for archaeological investigation and any subsequent mitigation, and as I have proposed that Part 4.6 is deleted in its entirety (see Chapter 16), it should be identified as a planning requirement of Site E4. I recommend that the Plan be modified accordingly.

(d) *Consequential amendments*

8.15.9. A number of consequential amendments follow from my recommendation that Part 4.6 of the plan, the Area Proposals for North East Hemel Hempstead, is far too detailed for inclusion in a local plan and should be deleted (see Chapter 16). At paragraph 16.2.5 I conclude that the policy elements within Part 4.6 that are essential to the proper development of the site should be included within the ‘planning requirements’ in the appropriate Schedules of Proposals Sites. Some of these matters were subject to objections, and my conclusions on these are set out in that Chapter. I recommend at paragraphs 16.3.7 and 16.3.8 that Class B1(a) office use should be ancillary to other uses, and I list in paragraph 16.3.16 five requirements that relate to highways and access. I indicate at paragraph 16.3.21 that encouragement should be given to the development of a hotel within the site, and at paragraph 16.3.24 I recommend that the provision of small units should be retained in the policy.

8.15.10. Certain other matters to which there was no objection also need to form part of the planning requirements. These are the need for a comprehensively planned and phased development based on a master-plan approach, a high standard of design and landscaping to create an employment area of high visual and environmental quality, the retention of existing landscape features, and the provision of a landscaped buffer adjoining Housing Site H27.

(e) *Site boundary*

8.15.11. Although there was no objection to the boundary of Site E4, it is important in my view that the area identified only includes land that is allocated for employment or for other uses appropriate to an employment area. I have indicated in Chapter 7 my view that the travellers’ site which fronts Three Cherry Trees Lane should be treated as a residential site that meets the specific needs of gypsies, rather than serving a social or community purpose as suggested by the Council. In any event, the travellers’ site is clearly not available for employment use, nor is there any realistic prospect of it becoming available during the Plan period. In these circumstances, and in addition to the amendment required as a result of the expansion of Site H27, I recommend that the boundary of Site E4 be redrawn to exclude the travellers’ site.

Recommendation

8.15.12. **The Plan be modified as follows:**

- (a) the ‘Proposal’ element of Site E4 be revised to refer solely to specialised technological activities and activities in the national or regional interest;
- (b) the ‘planning requirements’ element of Site E4 be re-drafted to include the following matters:
- Comprehensively planned and phased development based on master-plan approach;
 - Office uses to be ancillary to specified uses;
 - Provision of small units to foster the growth of small firms;
 - Hotel with conference facilities encouraged;
 - Highways and access requirements –
vehicular access from Three Cherry Trees Lane, with at least two junctions,
phased road improvements to facilitate the North East Relief Road,
other off-site highway improvements to cater for traffic,
provision of on- and off-site footpaths and cycleways,
passenger transport access, including bus link to housing site;
 - High standard of design and landscaping to create high quality environment;
 - Retention of existing landscape features;
 - Landscape buffer to housing site;
 - Scheme of archaeological evaluation and mitigation.
- (c) the boundary of the site on the Proposals Map be re-drawn to exclude the travellers’ site fronting Three Cherry Trees Lane and the 3.5ha to be added to the adjoining housing and open space areas.

8.16. EMPLOYMENT PROPOSAL SITE E5 THREE CHERRY TREES LANE (WEST) / FINWAY ROAD

Objection

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
1484*	HCC Environment Department

Supports for pre-inquiry change

For pre-inquiry change 72			
5249PC	English Nature	5429PC	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society

Key Issue

- (a) Whether the planning requirements for Site E5 should make reference to protecting the Nicky Line Wildlife Site. (1484)

Inspector’s Conclusion

- 8.16.1. The site impacts on a small part of the Nicky Line wildlife site, and the County Council considered that the issue should be resolved if development was to proceed. I note that part of the recently completed development has removed some vegetation

close to the railway line. PIC72 proposes the insertion of a sentence indicating that the wildlife site is to be protected, which I support.

Recommendation

8.16.2. **The Plan be modified in accordance with PIC72.**

**8.17. EMPLOYMENT PROPOSAL SITE E7
ICKNIELD WAY, TRING**

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
1153	Herts & Middlesex Wildlife Trust	3119	Tring Liberal Democrats
1175	Mr C H Gray	4276	Mrs Helena Holliday
1485	HCC Environment Department	4694	Mrs B J Brown

Support

4264 Tring and District Residents’ Association

Supports for pre-inquiry changes

For pre-inquiry change 73			
5250PC	English Nature	5430PC	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society
For pre-inquiry change 74			
5431PC	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society		

Key Issue

- (a) Is the use of a greenfield site for employment use justified, and should the wildlife interest be recognised. (1153,1175, 1485, 3119, 4276, 4694)

Inspector’s Conclusion

- 8.17.1. The objectors question both the justification for this greenfield site, especially if associated with the conversion of employment land to housing elsewhere in Tring, and the relationship of any development to the Wildlife Site designation. The Council proposed PICs 73 and 74, which require the development to take nature conservation interests into account and to safeguard the character and amenity of the adjoining residential area.
- 8.17.2. This long-standing employment allocation has now been taken up, and the site is occupied by a production warehouse with ancillary offices. A landscaping scheme has been implemented as part of the development. In these circumstances there is nothing to be gained by commenting on these objections. For the sake of completeness I support PICs 73 and 74, and I recommend that the “Progress” section of the Policy, and the Proposals Map, be up-dated to reflect the development of the site.

Recommendation

8.17.3. **The Plan be modified in accordance with PICs 73 and 74, and the “Progress” section of the Policy, and the Proposals Map, be up-dated to indicate that the site has been developed.**

8.18. EMPLOYMENT PROPOSAL SITE E8 MISWELL LANE, TRING

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
1176	Mr C H Gray	4265	Tring and District Residents’ Association
3120	Tring Liberal Democrats	4277	Mrs Helena Holiday
4161	Mr R Mildred	4695	Mrs B J Brown

Key Issues

- (a) Should Site E8 be allocated for employment use. (1176, 3120, 4161, 4277)
- (b) Is the proposal consistent with Structure Plan policy. (4695)
- (c) Should the area to the north of Site E8 should be included within the designation. (4265)
- (d) Whether the site should be restricted to B1 use. (4265)
- (e) Is the requirement for landscaping adequate. (4277)
- (f) Can a safe access be achieved to Icknield Way. (4277)

Inspector’s Conclusions

(a) *Appropriateness of land for employment use*

8.18.1. As with Proposal Site E7, the objectors argue that there is no justification for using undeveloped land for employment purposes, particularly if associated with the conversion of existing employment land to housing. I have considered the supply of employment land in Tring under Policy 31, where I indicate that Site E8 is the only land now available for development. Even with the Council’s decision to retain Akeman Street and Brook Street in employment use, I conclude that Site E8 is needed to provide local employment opportunities for new or expanding enterprises, including any displaced from the site at Western Road where housing development is encouraged under Policy 33.

8.18.2. I appreciate that the allocation is likely to lead to the loss of the pleasant rural quality that exists at the northern end of Miswell Lane. However, the existence of a small parcel of agricultural land within the settlement is somewhat anomalous, and the site therefore represents an obvious development opportunity. Moreover, there would be a similar loss of environmental quality were the site to be developed for housing, as suggested by many of the objectors. In my view the site represents a logical extension of the adjoining industrial estate, and given the limited supply of employment land in Tring, I consider it to be appropriately allocated for employment use.

(b) *Consistency with Structure Plan*

8.18.3. The objector’s main concern relates to the loss of the Akeman Street, Brook Street and Western Road employment areas, which the Council has largely addressed through PICs 65 and 66. It is argued that the employment strategy for Tring, including the enlargement of the Icknield Way industrial estate, would be contrary to Structure Plan Policy 14, particularly the criteria relating to the needs of local people and a desirable mix of uses in urban areas. Whilst I have some sympathy with the objector insofar as

the objections made to the Deposit Draft Plan, I believe that the changes proposed in PICs 65 and 66 adequately resolve this matter. In my view the provision of employment land through site E8, coupled with the retention of two of the three smaller employment areas, reflect the balanced and sustainable approach sought by Structure Plan Policy 14. I therefore conclude that the proposed allocation is consistent with Structure Plan policy.

(c) Extension to north

- 8.18.4. The objector supports the allocation but argues that it should be extended to the north so as to include the land on the corner of Icknield Way that is partially occupied by a vacant commercial garage and associated small dwelling. This would ‘square-off’ the GEA in a logical manner and provide additional employment land to compensate for other sites in the town that have recently been lost to retail use and housing.
- 8.18.5. The Proposals Map shows that the land referred to by the objector is already part of the Icknield Way GEA. In the Council’s view it therefore represents an opportunity for redevelopment for employment uses, and is distinct from Site E8, which is vacant land available for immediate use. The authority considers that the issues surrounding the land to the north are more complex than those relating to Site E8, and does not wish to detract from the ready availability of the allocated land.
- 8.18.6. I do not believe that there is much to choose between the alternative ways of identifying the land to the north of Site E8. I acknowledge that, as a general rule, site-specific allocations should relate to land that is not already used for the proposed purpose, though in this case the established employment use only covers part of the land to the north. Whilst an extension to the allocation could highlight the availability of this corner site, I recognise that the additional complexities could reduce the likelihood of an early implementation of Site E8. On balance I do not believe that the Plan would be materially improved by extending the allocation site, and I therefore recommend no change to its boundary.

(d) Restriction to business use

- 8.18.7. The restriction to Class B1 use is sought as a means of ensuring that the uses operated from site E8 do not adversely affect the occupiers of the adjacent residential properties. It follows problems that have occurred on other parts of the industrial estate, where Class B2 and B8 uses have led to complaints from nearby residents. In my view this is a justifiable ground for concern, as there are dwellings adjoining two sides of the site. It is clear, however, that the Council recognises the potential for disturbance, for the proposal requires development to safeguard the character and amenity of the adjoining residential area. It is not uncommon in Dacorum for housing to be adjacent to industrial areas, and I am satisfied that problems of noise and other disturbance could be adequately addressed by careful design and layout. In view of the limited opportunities that are available for employment development in Tring, I share the Council’s view that it would be unduly restrictive to allow only B1 uses on Site E8.

(e) Adequacy of landscaping requirement

8.18.8. The proposal stipulates that a landscape buffer is required along the north-east and south-east boundaries of the site. The objector argues that landscaping is needed to all boundaries of the site except for the south-west, where it adjoins existing industrial uses, and is also concerned about the quality of this landscaping. In my view it is not necessary to require the north-west boundary to be landscaped because this part of the site adjoins the designated employment area, notwithstanding that only part of this land supports an established employment use. As to the quality of the landscaping between the site and the adjacent houses, this is largely a matter of detailed design at the implementation stage. I therefore see no reason to modify the policy in response to this objection.

(f) Safe access to Icknield Way

8.18.9. The northern end of Miswell Lane is not wide enough to allow two large vehicles to pass, and this causes difficulties at the junction with Icknield Way. Whilst it is a requirement of Site E8 that safe access is provided onto Icknield Way, there is no indication as to how this might occur. The Council suggests that it may be possible through the existing industrial area, or onto Miswell Lane, or directly to Icknield Way. It seems to me that none of these options is without some potential difficulty. The route through the industrial estate passes between two existing factories and is partly used for parking and storage, though there is probably sufficient overall width. Access to Miswell Lane would almost certainly necessitate its widening at the northern end, involving land outside the allocation. Similarly the direct access to Icknield Way would mean crossing additional land, and might result in closely-spaced junctions. Despite these problems there is no evidence that a satisfactory solution could not be achieved. In these circumstances I am satisfied that the policy is adequate and does not require modification.

Recommendation

8.18.10. **No modification be made in response to these objections.**

8.19. SCHEDULE OF EMPLOYMENT PROPOSAL SITES: TWO WATERS & APSLEY

Counter -Objections

To pre-inquiry change 75

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
5628PC	The Directors of Shendish Manor Estate	5748PC	Felden Park Farms Ltd
5676PC	Apsley Developments Ltd		

Support for pre-inquiry change

For pre-inquiry change 75

5432PC	CPRE - The Hertfordshire Society
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Key Issue

- (a) Whether land at the Gas Board site and to the rear, London Road, Hemel Hempstead should be retained as a proposal in the Schedule of Employment Proposal Sites. (5628PC, 5676PC, 5748PC)

Inspector’s Conclusion

8.19.1. The objections to proposal site TWA8 are considered in Chapter 17, which deals with the Area Proposals for Two Waters and Apsley.

8.20. EMPLOYMENT: SUGGESTED NEW PROPOSAL SITES

Objections

<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>	<i>Rep No</i>	<i>Name</i>
1313*	CPRE – The Hertfordshire Society	3991	Quintain Estates & Development plc
3083	Mr C Selly	4460	Aitchison Rafferty
3720	Silvermere Developments	5187	Messrs A R & Executors of C Glenister

Key Issues

- (a) Whether additional employment land should be allocated to avoid a monopoly land ownership position. (4460)
- (b) Whether additional land should be allocated for business use and if so whether the objector’s site in Swallowdale GEA should be so allocated. (3991)
- (c) Whether Akeman Street and Brook Street, Tring should be included in the Plan as Employment Proposal Sites. (1313)
- (d) Whether a site at Dunsley and Cow Lane Farms should be designated for a mix of uses including employment. (3720)
- (e) Whether land between Marshcroft Lane and Station Road, Tring should be allocated for a business park. (3083)
- (f) Whether land south of Bovingdon should be added to the list of Employment Proposal Sites. (5187)

Inspector’s Conclusions

(a) *Release of additional employment land to compensate for monopoly land owner*

8.20.1. Because most of the land zoned for employment use is owned by English Partnerships, the objector argues that this monopoly supply works against an open market in employment land. As the statutory provisions of this organisation require disposals at the highest market price, there is an incentive to ration the supply of land. It is suggested that additional employment land be allocated to avoid this unsatisfactory arrangement.

8.20.2. The identity of landowners is not generally a concern of the planning system unless, for whatever reason, ownership becomes a constraint to development. I note that English Partnerships’ ownership only relates to sites in Hemel Hempstead, though I appreciate that these comprise most of the significant development opportunities. There is no evidence, however, that any of the allocated sites are not likely to be available for development during the Plan period. Indeed, with English Partnerships owning sites E3, E5 and E6, which are now mostly developed, it appears that the desired land releases are taking place. With no apparent constraints to the availability

of the large E4 site, where English Partnerships is one of a number of owners, I find no justification for additional employment land allocations on ownership grounds.

(b) Class B1 use at Swallowdale GEA, Hemel Hempstead

- 8.20.3. This objection is part of Quintain’s contention that a site within the Swallowdale GEA should be re-designated to include B1 as well as B2 and B8 uses. I have dealt with the issues regarding the adequacy of different categories of land supply and a proposed addition to Policy 31 in my consideration of that policy. I find there that the case for greater flexibility in the restrictions on non-mixed GEAs does not merit the change suggested by the objector (see paragraphs 8.5.16 to 8.5.21). In this section I shall consider the issue of whether the land should be separately identified as an employment proposal site, which is the approach preferred by the objector.
- 8.20.4. The case for a specific allocation is based on the particular circumstances of the site, which is currently a grassed landscaped area on the corner of Swallowdale Lane and Eastman Way. It was formerly part of the holding of the adjacent factory, Atlas Copco, but has remained undeveloped and is currently surplus to the company’s requirements. The objector argues that the small size of the site makes it unlikely that a B2 or B8 unit could physically be accommodated in an environmentally acceptable manner, whereas it is large enough for the lower space requirements of an office development. It is contended that site is prominent in visual and urban design terms, and has more in common with the office locations on the nearby Swallowdale Lane and Maylands Avenue frontages than with the industrial uses to the north. Consequently it is felt that the environment would be improved by a quality B1 development that would provide a landmark building at the gateway to the surrounding GEAs. There is also a covenant on the land that limits the developable area and precludes the remainder being used for B2 and B8 development before 2013.
- 8.20.5. The objector is seeking to add B1 use to the current B2/B8 designation, rather than substitute it. It is not argued, therefore, that a B2 or B8 development would be intrinsically unacceptable on the site. Whilst I acknowledge that a B1 designation might produce a development of higher visual quality, I see no reason why a small, carefully designed industrial or warehouse building should not be appropriate in this location. Though the prominence of the site on the roundabout junction, and its small size, may limit the development options, it nonetheless contributes to the variety of provision within the Swallowdale GEA, being one of the few remaining undeveloped sites in the area.
- 8.20.6. The facts that buildings to the west have been converted to office use, and that Proposal Site E5 includes a number of small business units (based on a long-standing planning permission), do not in my view detract from the predominance of industry and warehousing in Swallowdale. Nor do I place much weight on the existence of the restrictive covenant, for it appears to have been willingly agreed at the time of land acquisition, and no serious attempts have been made to remove it by negotiation. Having taken all these matters into account, I can find no compelling reason for departing from the Council’s view that the site is best retained for B2 or B8 development within the Swallowdale GEA. Consequently I conclude that it should not be separately allocated for B1, B2 and B8 uses.

(c) Akeman Street and Brook Street, Tring

8.20.7. The CPRE considers that the sites at Akeman Street and Brook Street, Tring, should be added to the Schedule of Employment Proposal Sites. I have already dealt with the substantive matters relating to this objection under Policy 31, where I indicate my support for the retention of these employment areas as proposed in PICs 65 and 66. Both sites are established industrial areas, and I agree with the Council that they are properly included as existing General Employment Areas in the Table of Policy 31. Consequently it would not be appropriate, in my view, to refer to them in the Schedule of Proposal Sites.

(d) Dunsley and Cow Lane Farms, Tring

8.20.8. Silvermere Developments contends that the large area of farmland bounded by Cow Lane, London Road and Station Road at Tring is suitable for a mixture of residential, employment and leisure uses. I have dealt with the housing issues raised by this objection in Chapter 7 (see section 7.62), where I conclude that Tring has reached its development capacity because of the constraints around the town and the limitations of its infrastructure. The Plan allocates only a limited amount of land for housing in Tring, and any small increase in the demand for local jobs thus generated is likely to be met by the allocation sites E7 and E8. Consequently, although the objector gives no indication of the size of the proposed employment site, I find the release of any part of this land for employment would not be required to meet local employment needs.

8.20.9. In the wider context, the Structure Plan makes it clear that there is already sufficient existing and allocated land for employment use in Hertfordshire to sustain full employment and economic growth, with Policy 14 indicating that new land allocations will only be required exceptionally. Furthermore, the entire objection site is in the Green Belt and a Landscape Conservation Area, where there is a strong presumption against new built development. In view of the absence of need and the strong policies against the proposed allocation, I find no justification for the release of even a small part of this site.

(e) Land between Marshcroft Lane and Station Road, Tring

8.20.10. This objection is one of a number of related representations which seek the allocation of a sizeable area of land adjoining the eastern edge of Tring. The objector contends that the significant imbalance between jobs and workers in Tring could be overcome by a business park that would attract employers requiring a predominantly professional and managerial workforce. It is suggested that the provision of such a facility would accord with sustainable development principles, and satisfy Structure and Local Plan objectives. A site of some 13.3ha is identified to the east of Tring, between Marshcroft lane and Station Road which, it is argued, would entail only a small re-alignment of the Green Belt boundary. I have dealt with the need for additional employment land and the balance between job supply and demand earlier in this Chapter (see paragraphs 8.2.17 to 8.2.42), and with the proposed release of this land from the Green Belt in Chapter 4 (see paragraphs 4.41.4 to 4.41.5). In this section I shall deal with the site-specific issues relating to the proposed development.

8.20.11. The fields that comprise the objection site create a broadly rectangular parcel of flat, uncultivated land adjacent to residential development along Marshcroft Lane and

Grove Road. The houses along and off Grove Road currently define the eastern edge of Tring, and the proposed business park would represent a clear extension of the settlement into the surrounding countryside. Access to the site would probably be taken from Station Road, and the local highway authority considers that the significant increase in traffic would have a detrimental impact on the highway network surrounding the site. There is insufficient evidence, however, for me to determine whether or not the network could be improved to satisfactorily accommodate the traffic generated by the proposal. The site is accessible by public transport, being served by a number of bus routes, and is on the road that leads to Tring station, though this is not within easy walking distance.

- 8.20.12. As well as being within the Green Belt, the site is part of a Landscape Conservation Area and the Station Road frontage adjoins the Chilterns AONB. Policy 97 of the Plan indicates that insensitive development proposals that would harm the character, appearance and high visual quality of Landscape Conservation Areas will be refused. Most of the land is also identified as an area of archaeological significance, though there is no information upon which to assess whether the preservation of archaeological remains in situ would be merited under Policy 114.
- 8.20.13. The Green Belt and Landscape Conservation Area designations, and potentially the highways and archaeological interests, all militate against the development of the site. Consequently, even if there was a case for the release of additional employment land, consideration is likely to be given first to sites that have fewer constraints. It is acknowledged that most of these will not be around Tring, which I have accepted has little capacity to take further development. However, the interests of sustainability are not served by treating Tring as an island, and it is right that employment sites should be sought in the larger settlements that are accessible to greater numbers of workers.
- 8.20.14. I therefore conclude that the site is not an appropriate location for a business park. When coupled with my earlier conclusions that the proposal would be unlikely to reduce overall levels of commuting, and that there is no justification for the release of additional land for employment, the case against the objection site is compelling. I recommend no change to the Plan in response to this objection.

(f) Land between Ley Hill Road and Bakers Wood, Bovington

- 8.20.15. The objectors argue for substantial employment and residential allocations to the south-east of Bovington Brickworks, and the consequent removal of this land from the Green Belt. I have dealt previously with the Green Belt (see Chapter 4 paragraph 4.27.29) and housing (see Chapter 7 section 7.52) issues, so in this section I shall focus on employment matters. The Structure Plan establishes the broad framework, indicating that there is more than sufficient existing and identified land in Hertfordshire to meet the County’s employment needs, and stating in Policy 14 that new land releases should only be made in exceptional circumstances.
- 8.20.16. I have accepted that there is a surplus of employment land in Dacorum which can help to satisfy the housing needs of the Borough (see Policy 29), so it follows that there is no general need for additional employment allocations. As the objection site extends to over 14ha and could provide some 1,500 jobs, it would clearly have consequences far beyond the local area and would conflict with the strategy of concentrating

development in the towns. It would also be likely to result in substantial commuting from outside Bovingdon, contrary to the sustainability objectives of the Plan.

8.20.17. Bovingdon is defined in the Plan as a large village where development opportunities are limited to those within the existing boundary. The objection site lies almost 500m beyond the south-western edge of the village, and is within the countryside as well as the Green Belt. The site includes the Bovingdon Brickworks employment area discussed under Policy 32, which I regard as a small but significant element in the employment land supply. Nonetheless I support the Council’s decision to draw the boundary of this area tightly around the built part of the site, with the aim of protecting the Green Belt from encroachment.

8.20.18. I observed during my site inspections that part of the objection site to the south-east of the designated employment area is used for open storage in what appears to be an uncontrolled manner, apparently without planning permission. However neither this incursion, nor the generally derelict nature of the site or the availability of utility services, comprise the exceptional circumstances that would justify the allocation of a large new employment site in this rural locality or its removal from the Green Belt.

Recommendation

8.20.19. **No modifications be made to the Schedule of Employment Proposals Sites in response to these objections.**

END OF CHAPTER 8