

12. Providing for Offices, Industry, Storage and Distribution

- 12.1. Employment uses (offices, research, industrial, storage and distribution, also called B-class uses) are a key component of the local economy, and provide just under half of all jobs in the borough. It is therefore important to identify and provide a minimum area of employment land for the B-class uses throughout the plan period. This will help to achieve full employment, while prevailing levels of out-commuting can continue. The minimum area of employment land includes land already used for B-class uses and proposed new sites.
- 12.2. Most of these types of uses are located within General Employment Areas (GEAs) whose role is to ensure that appropriate land is set aside and protected for different employment uses. The principal GEAs are located in the three towns. Maylands Business Park is made up of five separate GEAs and is the largest concentration of employment floorspace in the borough. The majority of the jobs growth forecast for employment uses will be directed there as part of the regeneration aims to strengthen its role. Whilst the general approach is to prevent the loss of employment floorspace within GEAs, the Hicks Road GEA in Markyate will be remodelled through mixed use redevelopment (see Section 26).
- 12.3. GEAs play a major role in the local economy and provide B-class employment floorspace in a range of locations and with a range of different sized units. This variety is important for maintaining diversity within Dacorum's economy, which has a high number of small and medium sized businesses. Small businesses are defined as those which employ fewer than 50 people. Over 98% of all businesses in the borough are categorised as 'small' and together they employ nearly two thirds of all employees. It is important that there is an adequate supply of employment floorspace to cater for these needs.
- 12.4. GEAs are sometimes the most appropriate location for non B-class uses, such as car showrooms, hotels and bulky leisure uses. Whilst these types of use will not be encouraged in GEAs, they may be permissible as an exception to policy where clear justification exists and they comply with other policies and objectives.
- 12.5. Evidence of market conditions will play an important role in assessing development proposals. It is recommended in the Employment Land Update 2011 that the Council should adopt the figure of 131,000 sq. metres of net additional floorspace as a land provision target for the Core Strategy. However, this report stated that planning policy should allow for the possibility that the forecast demand may not materialise. Therefore, it advised that office development should be phased over the plan period; targets and allocations should be reviewed regularly in the light of actual take-up, market conditions and the latest economic forecasts; and there may be managed release of office sites which are no longer attractive, viable or suitable for offices.

Offices

- 12.6. Office jobs account for around a quarter of total jobs within Dacorum and are mainly located within GEAs and town centres. New office jobs will make a significant contribution to the borough's total additional jobs over the plan period. The

Employment Land Update¹ forecasts that approximately 7,000 new office jobs will be provided within the borough from 2006-2031.

- 12.7. It is recommended in the Employment Land Update 2011 that the Council should adopt the figure of 131,000 sq. metres of net additional floorspace as a land provision target for the Core Strategy. However, this report stated that planning policy should allow for the possibility that the forecast demand may not materialise. Therefore, it advised that office development should be phased over the plan period; targets and allocations should be reviewed regularly in the light of actual take-up, market conditions and the latest economic forecasts; and there may be managed release of office sites which are no longer attractive, viable or suitable for offices.
- 12.8. Technical work² has identified the lack of a defined office location in Hemel Hempstead, and the homogeneity of the type of available office floorspace as weaknesses of the local office market. This will be addressed through the East Hemel Hempstead AAP and the Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan.
- 12.9. The majority of employment jobs growth will be directed to Maylands Business Park as part of the regeneration aim to strengthen its role. The East Hemel Hempstead AAP will guide the regeneration of Maylands Business Park according to the character areas identified in the Maylands Masterplan. The Maylands Gateway will provide the most prominent location for new offices. The Face of Maylands will also be an important office location.
- 12.10. The Hemel Hempstead Town Centre Masterplan will guide the regeneration of the town centre according to the character areas set out in the Hemel Hempstead Place Strategy and Policy CS33. The Masterplan will consider the most appropriate location for different uses including offices in Hemel Hempstead town centre. This will add to the overall employment offer within the town and complement the space available in out-of-centre locations, such as Maylands Business Park.
- 12.11. Town centres make an important contribution to the overall supply and diversity of office floorspace, and are particularly important for small and medium sized offices and professional services, such as lawyers. Offices also support the shops and services in town centres, helping to maintain their vibrancy and vitality. It is desirable, in sustainability terms, for offices to be located in town centres with good public transport access.
- 12.12. An appropriate range of office floorspace must be provided to attract a range of occupiers; this will mean a variety of sizes of offices and a mix of new and older office buildings. Flexibility to accommodate changing market conditions and to attract a mix of businesses will also be important for the success of the borough's office market. A series of 'core office locations' are identified to where business uses, and particularly office development, is directed.

Industry, Storage and Distribution

- 12.13. Industrial and storage floorspace provide a different type of employment to office floorspace. It is important to have a healthy mix of different types of employment (B-

¹ Dacorum Employment Land Update. Roger Tym and Partners, July 2011.

² South West Herts Employment Space Study, Roger Tym and Partners, 2005

class) floorspace to provide an appropriate range of jobs for the skill set of local residents. Recent changes in the local and national economy has meant there has been a significant fall in the total floorspace of factories and a rise in the total amount of warehouse floorspace, of approximately equal quantities.

- 12.14. Hemel Hempstead is home to the main industrial concentration in south west Hertfordshire and one of the main distribution centres around the M25 and southern part of the M1. The location of Maylands Business Park is a significant comparative advantage for its role as a distribution centre.
- 12.15. Industrial and storage floorspace will continue to make an important contribution to the borough's overall employment mix. In the early part of the plan period the forecast demand for industrial, storage and distribution floorspace and the planned supply of land (including proposed losses of employment sites to other uses) were in balance. However the Employment Land Update³ forecast that there would be a fall in the number of jobs in the two sectors of approximately 3,500 over the period 2006-2031. Given predicted changes in job densities and the possibility that market demand may have been underestimated by the study, a target of nil net change in floorspace is considered reasonable.
- 12.16. The Council will manage the borough's land supply through the development plan in order to maintain this market balance. Existing employment sites will normally be retained.

³ Dacorum Employment Land Update, Roger Tym and Partners, July 2011.

POLICY CS15: Offices, Research, Industry, Storage and Distribution

A minimum area of land will be identified and retained for B class uses. It comprises:

- General Employment Areas;
- employment proposal sites;
- land in town and local centres; and
- employment areas in the Green Belt.

The area will be managed so that between 2006 and 2031:

- a target of around 131,000 sq m (net) additional office floorspace can be met: and
- the stock of floorspace for industry, storage and distribution remains broadly unchanged.

Development proposals that include provision for small businesses will be encouraged.

General Employment Areas will be protected for B-class uses. New B-class development within General Employment Areas will be supported provided that it:

- (a) is in accordance with the specific uses permissible in each General Employment Area; and
- (b) contributes to environmental improvements within the General Employment Area.

New office uses will be directed to core office locations and Hemel Hempstead town centre.

Monitoring:

Indicator	Target
Net change in floorspace	-
- by activity B1(a) office, B2 industry and B8 storage	
- by location i.e. settlement and type of employment area	

Delivery will be achieved by:

- designation of specific sites and consideration of their delivery through the Site Allocations DPD and East Hemel Hempstead Area Action Plan DPD;
- detailed policies in the Development Management DPD;
- partnership working with the Local Enterprise Partnership, the Economic Development team at Hertfordshire County Council, the local business community, and business support partners; and
- implementation of the Dacorum Development Programme.