

Strategic Employment Provision

Context

- 3.3.152 There is increasing pressure on existing employment land provision in the borough from alternative uses. Recent changes to permitted development rights introduced by central government are resulting in a loss of employment sites to residential uses, at a time when the economy is growing, but still fragile from the recent economic downturn. The NPPF highlights the importance of planning to support existing business sectors and identifying and planning for new or emerging sectors that are likely to locate in the area. In addition it is increasingly clear that some nearby authorities may not be able to fully meet their own employment needs. Gaps in the range, type and quality of business premises currently available in the borough and across the wider Gatwick Diamond area to serve business needs have been identified through both the Coast to Capital Strategic Economic Plan (2014) and evidence commissioned by the Council.
- 3.3.153 The principle of larger 'strategic' employment developments has been identified in previous studies about the wider Gatwick Diamond area within which the borough sits, including in the Gatwick Diamond Initiative LDF Group Study (2008) and the Gatwick Diamond Futures Plan (2008).
- 3.3.154 The potential for strategic employment developments has also been recognised by the Coast to Capital Local Enterprise Partnership, with the 'heart of the Diamond' being identified as a strategic growth location that should be a focal point for future inward investment and growth.

Core Strategy

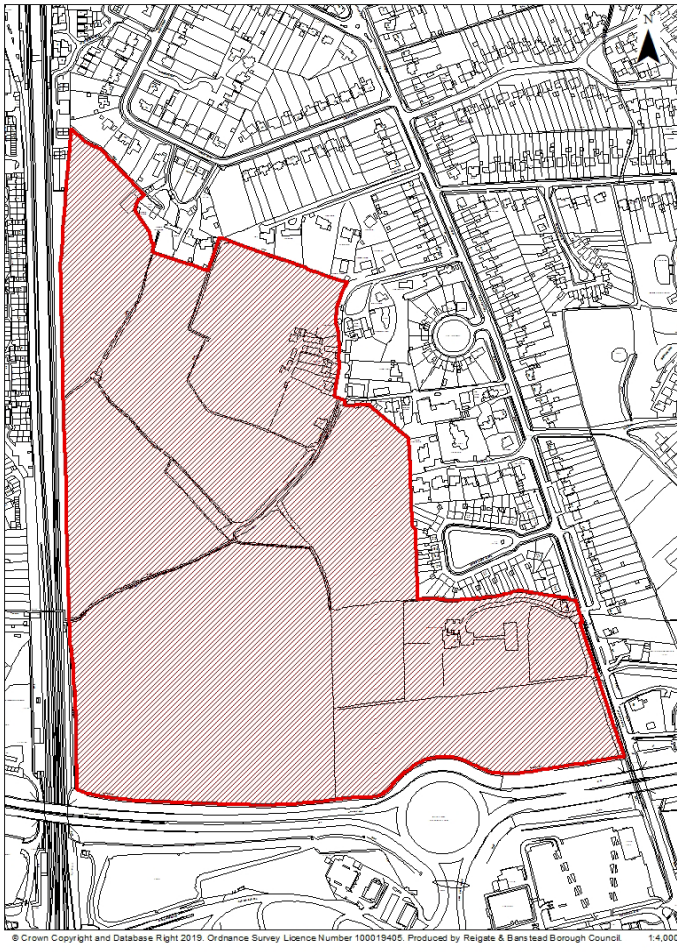
- 3.3.155 The Core Strategy envisages that the majority of employment provision in the borough will be made through the reuse and intensification of existing employment land, however national policy changes discussed above, in particular the office to residential permitted development rights, mean that this is likely to be challenging.
- 3.3.156 Whilst the Core Strategy does not explicitly plan for greenfield employment provision, it recognises that unanticipated strategic proposals may come forward. Core Strategy Policy CS5 includes a criterion to ensure that "new employment development outside [existing employment areas] reflects wider policy priorities and is located in accordance with sustainability principles".
- 3.3.157 Following additional studies of employment land and need it is clear that there is great potential for increased provision for "strategic employment" floorspace i.e. floorspace that is suitable for larger businesses or collections of businesses, or which is aligned to the needs of growth or strategically important business sectors.

Horley Strategic Business Park

- 3.3.158 Land west of Balcombe Road, Horley adjacent to the M23 spur road to Gatwick Airport, which previously was designated as part of the Rural Surrounds of Horley in the 2005 Borough Local Plan, provides a singular opportunity to address this need. However, this requires sensitive consideration of environmental and other factors such as traffic to ensure that the development of this site achieves its full sub-regional potential whilst respecting other longstanding planning policy objectives and to meet the planning constraints as identified in the policy. No alternative sites have been identified within the borough that have the potential to deliver strategic employment floorspace in a highly desirable and accessible location within the short to medium term.
- 3.3.159 The planning of a successful office-led strategic business park of this scale will require careful attention to key components as set out in the following policy.

Policy HOR9 - Horley Strategic Business Park

HOR9: Horley Strategic Business Park, Horley



Site area:

31ha

Existing/previous use:

Fields

Source:

HELAA Ref: HC11, HC12, HC28, and HC33

Development timeframes:

See below

Allocation:

The site is allocated for:

- A strategic business park of predominantly offices
- A complementary range of commercial, retail and leisure facilities to serve and facilitate the main business use of the site
- At least 5 ha of new high quality public open space, including parkland and outdoor sports facilities

Requirements:

Development will be subject to the following requirements and considerations:

Movement and Accessibility:

- Demonstrate through a Transport Assessment that there will be no severe residual impact on the local and strategic road network, taking into account the operation of Gatwick Airport as nationally significant infrastructure, the impact of committed developments in the borough and surrounding areas including West Sussex and any necessary mitigation
- A new dedicated, direct access onto the strategic road network (M23 spur)
- A cap on number of vehicles accessing the site per hour from the strategic road network M23 J9A spur (and how to monitor and enforce this if it is breached) if needed. To be determined at the planning application stage
- A secondary access to the site from Balcombe Road for use by emergency services, public transport and other sustainable transport modes. The secondary access will also be available for use by a limited number of registered vehicles of local employees using the site. The number and proportion of registered vehicles permitted to access the site via Balcombe Road shall be assessed and agreed at the planning application stage and will be restricted/enforced through a planning obligation or planning condition(s). Use of this secondary access shall be subject to appropriate local road network mitigation and/or improvements together with robust mechanisms (such as ANPR and/or barriers) to prevent traffic from Balcombe Road accessing the strategic road network through the site (or vice versa)

Policy HOR9 - Horley Strategic Business Park (continued)

- Measures and improvements to manage the impact of additional traffic on surrounding local roads
- Provision of appropriate levels of on-site parking and a comprehensive Travel Plan
- Improvements to public transport facilities, including existing bus infrastructure/passenger facilities, a financial contribution to increase capacity at Gatwick Airport station if determined to be required as part of a planning application, and measures to maximise the accessibility of routes/services to future occupiers in and around the site
- Upgrading and extension of pedestrian/cycle routes from the Business Park to Horley town centre and Gatwick Airport station
- Public Right of Way footpath (362a) to be retained or re-routed across the site to maintain a pedestrian link from Balcombe Road to the footbridge across the railway
- Air quality modelling should be submitted alongside a Transport Assessment, to include consideration of cumulative impacts

Drainage:

- A site-specific flood risk assessment must be undertaken which takes account of the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) Level 2 (2017)
- Layout to ensure no buildings other than carparks and supporting infrastructure on land within Flood Zone 2, and incorporate a buffer zone and improvements to the ditch network within the site
- Inclusion of flood mitigation and attenuation measures as appropriate. These measures should ensure no increase in the risk of flooding to the site and nearby properties and should seek opportunities to reduce both the cause and impact of existing flooding. Opportunities to reduce cause and impact of flooding should be explored
- Measures to manage and reduce surface water run-off including a comprehensive system of SuDS
- Early discussions with Thames Water are needed to consider on- and off-site drainage requirements and the likely load/flow from the proposed development, to ensure that sufficient wastewater capacity is available when required, and consider the potential need for trade effluent license (depending on uses proposed)

Design:

- Design and layout to achieve an appropriate transition to, and relationship with, neighbouring residential and countryside areas, including through appropriate height, massing and siting of buildings and suitable consideration of shared boundaries to include measures to reinforce existing tree and hedgerow screening
- Inclusion of an appropriate landscape buffer, and public open space, to reinforce the distinctive identity of Horley and its separation from Gatwick Airport (and Crawley) and the wider countryside setting to the east of the site
- Buildings to be of an exemplar standard of design to reflect the strategic business park concept including sufficient flexibility and adaptability in building parameters and to provide adaptability to cater for a range of micro- businesses, expanding and established businesses and major occupiers and to be complemented by high quality public realm

Policy HOR9 - Horley Strategic Business Park (continued)

- Protection and enhancement of existing trees and hedgerows where possible and enhancement of green/blue infrastructure on site, and reflecting the River Mole Biodiversity Opportunity Area
- Height and design of buildings, lighting and other design aspects to be consistent with the operational standards of Gatwick Airport and to respect aerodrome safeguarding requirements
- As the southern part of the site is within the 57dB LEQ airport noise contour, design of buildings within this area must ensure an appropriate interior environment for users
- Provide measures to minimise the impact of lighting upon neighbouring residential and adjoining countryside areas which are intrinsically dark to avoid light pollution to the night sky
- Mitigate noise intrusion from activities on the site to adjacent residential and open areas
- Development proposals must have regard to conserving the setting of the Listed Buildings at Fishers Farm and the locally listed buildings at Bayhorne Farm and Bayhorne. The retention of important hedgerows will be encouraged as will retention of a buffer to the green corridor along Balcombe Road to retain the historic landscape character

Uses:

The predominant use of the site should be for B1a purposes with limited B1b, B1c, B8, and non-B Class uses including appropriate airport-related Sui Generis uses.

Complementary uses could include on-site catering, limited retail provision, hotel and conference facilities, gym, crèche and medical services and similar provision but not at a scale likely to significantly divert trade from the wider area or to detract from the prime focus of the site as a Strategic Business Park.

An impact assessment must be produced in line with national policy.

Delivery:

Planning conditions and obligations to control delivery of the development, the use of the site and appropriate off- site considerations will be required, including for infrastructure, open space and social commitments. These will include:

- Requirement for ongoing economic impacts testing
- Use of local labour, local supply chain procurement and similar skills/capacity support (in conjunction with local education and training providers)
- Measures to encourage use of transport to provide non-car alternatives to facilitate accessibility not reliant on the use of private cars
- Provision and delivery of the public open space area

The development of the site will be in accordance with an agreed master plan, produced by the site promoter in consultation with the Council, and requiring comprehensive development in line with the above requirements. The master plan will be submitted at the outline planning application stage to assist the consideration of subsequent planning application (s) and must include phasing, programming of infrastructure and details on quantum of development and appropriate uses.

To assist with the proper planning and on-going functioning of the site Supplementary Planning Guidance will be provided.

Explanation:

Availability

3.3.160 There is a reasonable prospect of the site being made available for development. The Council has entered into a joint venture to help bring forward development in this location and the use of CPO powers for site assembly has, in principle, been confirmed by the Council.

Key Considerations

- In the northern part of the site some areas are at risk of flooding (Flood Zone 2).
- In the southern part of the site the land is affected by 57dB LAeq airport noise contour.
- There is a well-established need to reflect consistency with the policies of adjacent local authorities to preserve the distinctiveness, setting and individual character of Horley, Gatwick Airport and Crawley.
- Any proposals would need to have regard to conserving the setting of the nearby Listed Buildings as well as retention of historic hedgerows and a buffer to the green corridor along Balcombe Road to retain the undesignated historic landscape character.
- There are a number of access solutions to the strategic road network that could range from a new access to the existing roundabout through to a grade-separated junction, depending on the level of development traffic, other committed development in the local area and surrounding network traffic flows. The means of access will need to comply with the Secretary of State's for Transport's policy as set out in Department for Transport Circular 02/2013 (or any successor) and the Licence from the Secretary of State for Transport appointing Highways England as a strategic roads company. Any access arrangement should be viable and deliverable.

Site Context

3.3.161 This site is located to the western side of Balcombe Road, a short distance from Horley town centre and Gatwick airport to the south. The main site comprises predominantly open fields which are used for a combination of grazing and equestrian activities. An existing small office set within large grounds also forms part of the site.

3.3.162 The site is in a highly accessible location, with good access to the M23 spur linking the site to the strategic road network and scope for direct pedestrian access to the Gatwick Airport Terminal and associated railway station providing direct links to London and other town and cities in South East England.

Evidence Base

3.3.163 The development of a Strategic Employment site in this location would support the local economy by providing:

- a highly visible centre for business and innovation in the local area
- specialised modern property and facilities for businesses; and
- the creation of flexible space to support new businesses to start and grow-on within the same facility.

3.3.164 *Advice on Scope for a Strategic Employment Site within Reigate and Banstead (2014)* was prepared by Nathaniel Litchfield and Partners to inform the Regulation 18 version of the DMP. This explored the potential scope of, and market demand for, strategic employment provision in the south of Reigate and Banstead. It concluded that:

- It will be a key challenge for the Gatwick Diamond sub-region to be able to accommodate business expansion and relocation moving forward.
- Demand for a strategic business site is likely to be driven by occupiers seeking a highly accessible location.
- A mixed employment area is considered to have greatest potential to meet current identified

needs; as would an office/business park; however, the latter has higher risks in terms of market demand/occupation.

- Reigate and Banstead borough is well placed to capture strategic employment needs.
- Land within the south of Reigate and Banstead borough provides a relatively unconstrained opportunity to accommodate a strategic employment site. The south of Horley is an optimal location from the perspective of connectivity.
- 20-30ha of land is likely to be required to provide sufficient “critical mass” for an office/ business park, 40-50ha would be required for a mixed employment area.

3.3.165 This advice paper informed the *Strategic Employment Site Opportunity Study* which also forms part of the DMP evidence base. This study identifies this site as being potentially suitable for strategic employment provision.

3.3.166 Fit with critical success factors:

- The potential development site is assessed as having a strong fit with all of the critical success factors for a strategic employment site, in particular providing a highly accessible location with potential for direct access onto the strategic road network.
- It is also large enough to meet the minimum size likely to be required (20ha), is well related to the existing town centre of Horley and has prominence on the M23 spur and in relation to Gatwick airport, with scope for direct access to the strategic road network.

3.3.167 A subsequent *Strategic Employment Site: Economic Assessment (Task 1 and 2) (2017)* has been prepared by Chilmark Consulting to further report on the suitability of the allocation of this site as a Strategic Business Park. This evidence tested current market indications and good practice and advised on the likely demand for and economic impact of indicative floorspace allocations. Detailed master planning and further market testing will advise on the final quantum and mix consistent with the underlying Strategic Business Park concept. Indicative quanta are as follows:

- Up to 200,000sqm of B1 floorspace, predominantly focusing on B1(a), B1(b) and B1(c) including floorspace for new incubator/start-up units/Small Medium Enterprise.
- Up to 10,500 sqm of community facilities, including A1 (predominantly convenience shops); A3 (Food and Drink); D1 (Children’s Nursery) and/or D2 (Gymnasium).

3.3.168 The borough currently hosts a number of national and international employers, although the majority of businesses in the borough are small or micro business. In line with the study recommendations the site should provide office space for incubator/start-ups, expanding/stable businesses and major/anchor occupiers, as well as provision of shared specialist facilities and shared meeting and conference space. This would support existing business whilst also attracting bigger employers which provide a large number of jobs and support the local economy.

3.3.169 To make the business park a coherent business community, the design and management must ensure as much interaction as possible between the people working within the business park. This may be achieved by providing for:

- on-site catering
- limited retail provision (predominantly convenience)
- gym
- crèche
- medical services and local pharmacy

Delivery

3.3.170 The timing of delivery (possibly to continue beyond this plan period) and the need to ensure that there is a high level of overall quality in terms of the design and performance of the site as whole requires a clear set of design principles and codes be created. This will allow effective control of the overall development over time and ensure future phases (which may be at the end or beyond the current plan period) can be controlled and permitted swiftly. This will also ensure

that the impact on the surrounding area is properly managed and minimised, with infrastructure improvements and mitigation provided when needed to support the development, including cross-boundary infrastructure whilst allowing flexibility for future market changes. This will be delivered through a supplementary planning document to facilitate the masterplanning and subsequent stages in the achievement of the objectives and development of the site and to ensure wider public engagement in the detailed planning of this important site.

- 3.3.171 The economic impacts identified in the *Strategic Employment Site: Economic Assessment (Task 2) Study (2017)* are based on a notional scheme and include some assumptions made about floorspace mix, etc. Further work on scheme design will need to identify detailed floorspace mix, taking into account economic impact and economic circumstances. This means that the final scheme may vary from the indicative maximum floorspace levels stated above. Therefore, there will be a need to ensure ongoing economic effects modelling and impact testing as the proposed scheme is implemented and constructed. Ongoing economic impacts testing will therefore need to be incorporated into any future S106 planning obligation for the potential Strategic Employment site's development.
- 3.3.172 Given the large scale and strategic nature of this site, ongoing dialogue with strategic partners, including cross boundary cooperation, will be important to achieve the good planning, delivery and success of the Business Park in economic, transport, social and environmental terms.