

Employment Land Task and Finish Planning Policy Note

Affordable Employment Land:

- Issue: There is anecdotal and documented evidence of a shortage of affordable employment units. There is only a limited margin in the value of developing such sites and consequently there is latent demand currently not being met.
- Response: Identify a means by which the supply of affordable, starter-type employment units can be delivered. There are two identified means by which this can be done:
 - Planning-based solutions: boosted through allocation, a streamlined LDO identifying suitable sites or more criteria-based LDO which sets the broader locations and parameters subject to which starter units can be delivered.
 - Broader Council enabling or development partner involvement: could include investigation of investing in direct delivery either through pump priming sites and site preparation works or acting as developer and retaining an interest in units to then be let to end occupiers. There is a direct example of this on the former Thales site on Lisieux Way

Employment Land as part of Larger Mixed-use Development Allocations:

- Issue: There are a number of examples where employment parcels of larger mixed-use allocations such as Norton Trading Estate and Monkton Heathfield have not kept pace with housing. Developers have argued that sites are not viable and in some instances not deliverable by virtue of lack of interest where sites have been marketed. There has been pressure to release land for other uses, principally residential development.
- Response: Reappraise the supply of employment sites particularly those larger parcels which are part of mixed-use allocations. This would normally be a matter for the review of the development plan (our Core Strategy).
 - Planning-based solutions: review existing employment land allocations against evidence of quantitative and qualitative need and make recommendations for the release/partial release and subsequent deallocation or reallocation of those sites which fail to meet criteria. For land that is retained, the planning system should provide maximum surety that employment space is delivered; this may include revisiting appropriate wording to S106 agreements and policy (when the development plan is reviewed). As a general rule it will be important to stress that employment elements of larger mixed-use proposals need to be seen as part of this overall mix and consequently their viability should be considered as part of overall scheme viability in much the same way as affordable housing or other infrastructural requirements provided for through S106 or CIL would be.

- Broader Council enabling or development partner involvement: this could include investigation of investing public money in direct delivery either through pump priming sites and site preparation works or acting as developer and retaining an interest in units to then be let to end occupiers. In addition, brokered discussions with key developers, particularly where there may be pressure to release land for other uses ahead of development plan review may be required to ensure where land is released, there can be confidence employment land can still be delivered where appropriate.

Research and Innovation Centre:

- Issue: There is a consensus that the key outcome we would wish to achieve for Prosperity is improved productivity although this has not yet been articulated in high level strategy. Members of the Task and Finish Group have identified the potential role for a Research and Innovation Centre in driving increases in GVA.
- Response: In order to respond to the T&F ambition we would need to undertake considerable due diligence in preparing a Business Case to support such a proposal and prior to this have this ambition framed by full council support. Key steps could include:
 - Identify potential sectors for investment and potential end users/investors
 - Understand land and premises requirements including supporting infrastructure
 - Undertake call for sites to identify potential locations (which could include a cluster-based, polycentric approach)
 - Appraise site options
 - Explore and develop finance models which could include Council retaining a stake along similar lines as discussed above
 - Make recommendations to Council to pursue (or not), if supported, a decision would need to be made on the best delivery vehicle through the planning process which could include the use of a LDO

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