

**Test Valley Revised Local Plan
DPD 2011-2029
Regulation 22 – Submission to
Secretary of State**

**Policy LE10
Retention of Employment Land
and Strategic Employment Sites
Topic Paper**

July 2014

REVISED LOCAL PLAN

TOPIC PAPER – POLICY LE10 RETENTION OF EMPLOYMENT LAND AND STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT SITES

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This paper has been prepared to provide the background justification for Policy LE10 which would apply to development for alternative uses on employment sites. Additionally for the sites designated as Strategic Employment Sites it also seeks to protect their primary use for employment.

2 Policy Background

- 2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) paragraphs 18-22 sets out the Government's planning policies for building a strong and competitive economy, including the need for sites for employment use

“Para.18: The Government is committed to securing economic growth in order to create jobs and prosperity, building on the country's inherent strengths, and to meeting the twin challenges of global competition and of a low carbon future.”

“Para.19: The Government is committed to ensuring that the planning system does everything it can to support sustainable economic growth. Planning should operate to encourage and not act as an impediment to sustainable growth. Therefore significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth through the planning system.”

“Para.20: To help achieve economic growth, local planning authorities, should plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century”

“Para.21: Investment in business should not be over-burdened by the combined requirements of planning policy expectations...In drawing up Local Plans, local planning authorities should:

- *set out a clear economic vision and strategy for their area which proactively encourages sustainable economic growth;*
- *set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;*
- *support existing business sectors, taking account of whether they are expanding or contracting and, where possible, identify and plan for new or*

emerging sectors likely to locate in their area. Policies should be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan and to allow a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances;...

“Para.22: Planning policies should avoid the long term protection of sites allocated for employment use where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for that purpose. Land allocations should be regularly reviewed. Where there is no reasonable prospect of a site being used for the allocated employment use, applications for alternative uses of land or buildings should be treated on their merits having regard to market signals and the relative need for different land uses to support sustainable local communities.

- 2.2 The NPPF does not provide a definition of Strategic Employment Sites. The selection of such sites has been informed by the evidence base and consideration of local employment sites (see Section 4 Strategic Employment Sites).

3 Retention of Employment Land

- 3.1 The policy has been written to reflect NPPF paras.18-22 and provide a local policy framework for the consideration of development proposals.
- 3.2 Employment sites will make a major contributions towards the growth, strength and diversity of the local economy in the future and provide a significant proportion of job opportunities. The provision of local employment opportunities is also an important factor in ensuring sustainable development, both in terms of minimising travel and ensuring a successful local economy.
- 3.3 The evidence base was considered the future of the local economy *A Long Term Economic Strategy for Test Valley (LTES), 2007, Experian, and Test Valley LTES Update, 2012, Experian*; and the need of the employment land *Test Valley Employment Land Review and Andover Employment Floorspace Demand Study (ELR), 2008, DTZ and Test Valley Employment Land Update, 2012, DTZ*. Account has also been taken under the Duty to Co-operate of the *South Hampshire Strategy* of the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH) and its evidence base.
- 3.4 The ELR assessed the requirement for future employment land and compared that with the quantitative and qualitative suitability of employment sites to meet these requirements. It then made recommendations to inform the future portfolio of sites which has informed the individual employment site allocations.

- 3.5 The ELR indicates that there is a requirement for additional employment land and that this existing stock should be protected from changes of use where it continues to make an important contribution to meeting business property needs.
- 3.6 There is considered to be a need to retain good quality employment sites for the future. It is therefore necessary to provide for a range and choice of employment sites and premises which are suitable to meet market demand but in quantitative and qualitative terms. Existing sites and premises form a significant contribution towards providing this suite of provision. These should be protected from inappropriate loss to other uses where they are still required and suitable for future needs.
- 3.7 The Borough contains a number of sites, which have been specifically designed and developed for employment purposes over time, such as business parks, science parks and industrial estates (see also Section 4 Strategic Employment Sites below). These are also individual premises located throughout the Borough which together contribute to providing the range and choice of provision.

4 Strategic Employment Sites

- 4.1 For Strategic Employment Sites these are covered separately by the policy with a further level of protection which reflects their existing status and importance. These comprise large sites which have been specifically developed for employment uses.
- 4.2 These sites are large in scale and many contain a large number of individual sites and premises, such that that a single site accommodates a large number of businesses. Others contain only a single business or a smaller number of businesses, but due to the scale of floorspace and/or size of the site are significant employment sites in their own right.
- 4.3 The designated Strategic Employment sites are listed in Annex E: Strategic Employment Sites of the plan. This list (sites no.1-22) is as informed by the evidence base *Test Valley Employment Land Review and Andover Employment Floorspace Demand Study, 2008, DTZ*.
- 4.4 Additionally Dean Hill Park, West Dean (site no.23) was added to the list at the Regulation 18 Preferred Options consultation stage following a request for its inclusion, as the site (former MOD Defence Munitions site) has development in recent years into a significant sized employment site, which

included a large number of sizable businesses. In light of this it was considered worthy of inclusion, whilst it has not been originally.

- 4.5 Following a review, at the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission consultation stage, three further sites: School Lane Industrial Estate, Chandler's Ford; Hampshire Corporate Park, Chandler's Ford and South of Brownhill Way, Nursling (sites no.24-26) were also added to this list. These comprise sites of which part lies with the Borough and part within adjoining local planning authorities. The first two at Chandler's Ford within Eastleigh Borough and the third within Southampton City. On their own the area of the two Chandler's Ford within Test Valley is relatively minor, although when considered as part of the wider employment site as a whole it was considered following a review that these should also be included. Eastleigh Borough have defined them as Strategic Employment Sites in their draft Local Plan, which has been submitted for examination. The site South of Brownhill Way, Nursling (to which Policy LE4 applies) has full planning permission for a 38,200sqm distribution warehouse, plus 4,500sqm of offices and plant for Lidl (11/02859/FULLS). 26,200sqm of this floorspace is within Test Valley and the remainder within Southampton City. This development is now under construction and it is therefore considered justified that it be included.

5 Retention of Employment Land and Strategic Employment Sites (Policy LE10)

Policy LE10: Retention of Employment Land and Strategic Employment Sites

On existing employment sites, allocated sites, or sites with planning permission for employment use, which has not yet been fully implemented, development for an alternative use will be permitted provided that:

- a) the land is no longer required to meet the economic development needs of the area; or**
- b) the current activity is causing, or could cause significant harm to the character of the area or the amenities of residents; or**
- c) it would not have a significant detrimental impact on the operation of the remaining occupiers of the site.**

On strategic employment sites identified in Annex E development for an alternative use will be permitted provided that:-

- d) it would not have a significant detrimental impact upon the continued primary use of the site for employment; and**
- e) criteria a), b) and c) have been satisfied.**

- 5.1 The policy seeks to protect the suite of existing sites and premises from inappropriate loss to other uses, where this is likely to have a detrimental impact on the local economy and result in a lack of sufficient provision to meet business needs.

- 5.2 The policy seeks to strike the appropriate balance between the need to protect existing employment sites and premises from inappropriate changes to other uses, (and particularly where this would have an impact on the continued primary use for employment uses of Strategic Employment Sites), whilst allowing for changes of use where there is evidence of a lack of market demand, the site/premises being no longer suitable to modern requirements, other than there are significant environmental or amenity concerns.
- 5.3 Taking account of the NPPF and the circumstances of employment sites and premises within Test Valley, it is considered that the policy is justified.