

Technical Note for partner Local Planning Authorities on translation of job numbers into employment land requirements

Background

1. This note sets out how the employment land numbers in the Core Spatial Strategy should be translated into employment land requirements through the Site Specific Development Plan Documents (DPDs) prepared by the districts which will be informed by their own Employment Land Reviews. This approach is set out in the CSS through paragraph 3.91 and through Policy 12. It is important to implement a common approach across North Northamptonshire, to provide certainty to both the public and private sectors.
2. The job numbers set out in the CSS are based on a robust evidence base including CoPELA 2003¹, which informed the North Northamptonshire Employment Land Futures Report, 2005², and the CoPELA 2006³ update. The detailed methodology is included in the respective studies and a range of documents produced by the Joint Planning Unit⁴.

Identifying Employment Land requirements

3. The job numbers that are set out by district and sector in Table 6 of the CSS should be turned into land quantities by way of job/floorspace ratios and then floorspace/site area ratios. The basic process is as follows:
4. The B use class job numbers are converted into floorspace at the following ratios these are based on best practice guidance, and are consistent with county and regional employment land studies:

| | |
|----|--------------------------|
| B1 | 1 job / 18 square metres |
| B2 | 1 job / 35 square metres |
| B8 | 1 job / 88 square metres |

¹ Roger Tym & Partners and Innes England- Northamptonshire Commercial Property and Employment Land Assessment Final Report December 2003

² Roger Tym & Partners and Innes England- North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit Employment Land Futures Final Report November 2005

³ Roger Tym & Partners and Lambert Smith Hampton- Northamptonshire Commercial Property and Employment Land Assessment Final Report December 2006

⁴ North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit- Employment Matters in the North Northamptonshire CSS- technical note March 2007, North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit- Public Examination Background Paper 4: Employment August 2007, North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit- Core Spatial Strategy Public Examination Response Statement to Session 11 October 2007

5. The resultant floorspace quantities shall be converted into land requirement assuming a 40% plot ratio (4000 sq metres would occupy a 1 hectare site). A higher plot ratio can be assumed for town centre development, but the precise figure will be dependent upon the particular local circumstances (average density, appearance, etc.) and this should be determined at the district level.
6. The extent of losses from the B use classes that have occurred over time (for example when an office building or factory has been redeveloped for residential use) should be analysed and extrapolated through to 2021. These potential losses should be added to the total land identified.
7. The resultant land requirement should be compared to supply as it stood in 2001, augmented by information on the quality of sites and completed developments that have occurred since (especially in the case of sites that were allocated on a 'suitable for B1, B2 and B8 use' basis with no distinctions between the use made in policy at the time). This is particularly important for B2 uses as removal of available land for manufacturing, etc. could impinge upon local economic performance, despite forecasted long-run declines in employment in this sector.
8. CoPELA 2006⁵ recommends the addition of a margin of some 5 years' net demand – a quarter of the demand forecast for the period 2001 - 2021. This is referred to in paragraph 3.91 of the CSS. Such additions must also be included when considering the quantity of employment land to allocate.
9. Other data, such as that available from the Valuation Office Agency (VOA) and past planning applications could (and should) also be used to supplement the above. The use of supplementary data and methodologies should be explored for each district, particularly for the B2 and B8 uses as employment forecasts do not necessarily provide accurate measures of floorspace demand (due to the structure of the particular sectors and the local economies).

Assessing existing sites

10. It is important that in assessing the supply of existing sites, or the suitability of prospective new allocations, that their quality is considered. This is in both commercial attractiveness and general sustainability terms. Details of this approach (as required by the CSS) are to be found in:

“Employment Land Reviews: Guidance Note” published by the ODPM in December 2004⁶.

⁵ Roger Tym & Partners and Lambert Smith Hampton- Northamptonshire Commercial Property and Employment Land Assessment Final Report December 2006

⁶ ODPM Employment Land Reviews Guidance Note 2004

11. This provides detailed information on the three Steps involved in producing Employment Land Reviews

Stage 1- take stock of the existing situation, including an initial assessment of 'fitness for purpose' of existing allocated employment sites.

Stage 2- assess, by a variety of means (ie economic forecasting using a consistent base, consideration of recent trends, assessment of local property market circumstances and wider economic policy drivers) the scale and nature of likely demand for employment land and the available supply in quantitative terms.

Stage 3- undertake a more detailed review of site supply and quality and identify and designate specific new employment sites in order to create a balanced local employment land portfolio, that provides a high quality range of sites to facilitate jobs growth.

12. Further information on job/floorspace and floorspace/land ratios under differing circumstances is also set out in Appendix D of the document⁷ and a range of information is available through the North Northamptonshire Employment Land Futures Report 2005⁸, and the CoPELA 2006⁹ update.

Addressing shortfall

13. The results of the analysis set out above will inform the site specific DPDs in delivering the job requirements of the CSS. Para 3.91 of the CSS outlines that a reasonably flexible approach will need to be taken, with some slack (over-allocation) in the system to cater for development time lags as well as to provide a margin for choice and uncertainty. Given the areas status as a growth area and the nature of much existing supply, this slack should be the equivalent of 5 years demand (gross take up).

⁷ ODPM Employment Land Reviews Guidance Note 2004

⁸ Roger Tym & Partners and Innes England- North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit Employment Land Futures Final Report November 2005

⁹ Roger Tym & Partners and Lambert Smith Hampton- Northamptonshire Commercial Property and Employment Land Assessment Final Report December 2006