

EMPLOYMENT



EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

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7. EMPLOYMENT

INTRODUCTION

- 7.1 The securing of sufficient and suitable job opportunities to meet the needs of existing and future residents in the Plan Area is fundamental to people's economic well-being and quality of life. The national and local economies have recovered from the recession of the early 1990s, and unemployment both nationally and locally has fallen significantly. The local economy is now more diverse than previously, but still has structural weaknesses. There are also an increasing number of external influences on the local economy not least the local impact of the vast increase in the world wide competition for goods and services. The Policies of this chapter seek to address long term structural problems in the local economy and seek to help maintain a competitive edge to the local economy.
- 7.2 The Plan Area's economy, although relatively prosperous, is still heavily reliant on a few traditional industries, such as textiles and engineering, for a significant proportion of its total employment. Many of the firms in these sectors are particularly vulnerable to the effects of recession and to external competition. There is a considerable concentration of these companies in the inner areas of Leicester. In response to this situation, the Three Councils have adopted a strategy that seeks to diversify the local economy while at the same time supporting traditional industries wherever possible.
- 7.3 Although unemployment in the Plan Area at 3.2% (April 1998) is currently below the national average of 4.9%, this disguises the fact that there are considerable concentrations of unemployment in the Leicester Priority Area and in parts of the other main towns. The City of Leicester as a whole has an unemployment rate of 6.9% and in some City wards male unemployment exceeds 18%. Overall, the unemployment rate is 5.9% in Loughborough and male unemployment exceeds 9% in two wards. More dispersed pockets of unemployment exist in the former coalfield areas of the North West Leicestershire Coalfield Priority Area and also in the rural areas. The Policies of this Plan seek to address these problems by directing employment growth to locations that are accessible to residents of the Regeneration Areas (addressed by Strategy Policy 13) and which offer a realistic choice of transport.
- 7.4 Technical Paper 1: Housing and Employment, which has been published to accompany this Consultation Draft Plan, gives additional background information on specific aspects of the following employment policies.

QUANTITY OF EMPLOYMENT LAND FOR NEW DEVELOPMENT

- 7.5 The adopted Structure Plan provides for 1035 hectares of employment land between 1996 and 2006. Much of this has been committed but remains available. On the basis of past rates of employment land take-up there is sufficient employment land in the Plan Area overall to meet needs up to 2011. Employment forecasts prepared by Business Strategies Limited (BSL), on behalf of the Leicestershire Economic Development Partnership, indicate that most new jobs will be in existing firms and in sectors for which employment land is not specifically provided, such as retail.
- 7.6 It is important to minimise future land take, especially of greenfield sites, by encouraging the re-use of urban brownfield sites. This Consultation Draft Structure Plan therefore proposes only a limited amount of new employment land to be provided over

and above that established in the adopted Structure Plan. This additional employment land is required in order to make up particular shortfalls in certain localities, to provide for a range and choice of sites, to assist economic diversification and to balance housing and employment. The total provision will be sufficient to accommodate the expansion and relocation of existing employers and to enable the diversification of the economy through inward investment of new employers, whilst protecting the local environment. In addition, a research project has been commissioned to examine the needs of firms in terms of land and premises, and will be taken into account at the Deposit Stage.

- 7.7 Employment land is that within the Town and Country Planning Use Classes B1, B2 and B8. It is recognised that other forms of development which fall within other Use Classes, such as retail or leisure development, will contribute to employment creation. The allocations for employment land take this into account. Policies guiding other employment generating development are included elsewhere in the Plan.
- 7.8 The figures in Employment Policy 1 exclude land which may be needed for any major structural landscaping and major distributor roads. Other on-site infrastructure, such as access roads, ancillary landscaping, car parking and buildings, are all included in the net figure. It is expected that net and gross figures will often be the same and only in very large or prestigious schemes, such as science parks, will it be reasonable to make a deduction for major structural landscaping or distributor roads.
- 7.9 Employment land has been allocated to each Local Planning Authority in a quantity reflecting the strategic objectives of the Plan, the commercial viability of the location, the availability of suitable sites, the level of employment land already committed and the accessibility to the site by a sufficient workforce.

Table 7.1: Summary of Employment Land Supply by Local Plan Area				
Local Plan Area & Sub Area of District	Total Provision 1991-2011	Land Started 4/91 to 4/97	Land Committed at 1997	Balance
Blaby	145	35	110	0
Central Leicestershire	142	35	107	0
Rest	3	1	2	0
Charnwood	127	16	71	40
Central Leicestershire	39	0	19	20
Rest	88	16	52	20
Harborough	179	29	131	20
Central Leicestershire	24	1	3	20
Rest	155	28	127	0
Hinckley & Bosworth	107	6	76	25
Central Leicestershire	20	1	19	0
Rest	87	5	57	25
Leicester	106	20	86	0
Melton	101	17	84	0
NW Leicestershire	385	67	308	10
Oadby & Wigston	28	0	12	15
Rutland	48	10	37	0
Total Plan Area	1226	201	914	110
Central Leicestershire	359	58	246	55
Rest	867	144	668	55

7.10 Of the total 1226 hectares allocated, approximately 201 hectares had been started by 31st March 1997 and a further 914 hectares had been “committed” for development (defined as land with planning permission or land allocated for employment use in Local Plans). This leaves a balance of some 110 hectares to be identified (see Table 7.1).

7.11 It is recognised that, because of the nature of employment development, the actual level of employment generated from a specified amount of land can be very variable. Consequently, the employment generation from these allocations could be quite different from that originally anticipated. For this reason, the figures may be applied with some degree of flexibility. However, the Three Councils agree that they should not be significantly exceeded or under provided for. This is because they fulfil a number of important strategic roles. For instance, they provide guidance on the desired distribution of growth in the Plan Area and guard against the danger of “overheating”

caused by too much development in a particular locality. The Three Councils consider that if it should become apparent that the figures require significant revision, then they should be reassessed as part of the Structure Plan review.

- 7.12 Local Planning Authorities should ensure that sufficient employment land is provided to meet the planned needs of the Plan Area in the period up to 2011. All land developed for employment purposes (i.e., within use classes B1 to B8) should be measured against the totals identified in Employment Policy 1. This will include changes of use and redevelopment of land and premises from other uses.
- 7.13 To promote diversification of the local economy, a wide portfolio of employment sites should be allocated for a variety of small and larger employers in suitable locations. Such sites should be located in accordance with the guidance set out in Strategy Policy 2.

Employment Policy 1: Quantity of Employment Land for New Development

Provision will be made for the development of about 1226 hectares of land for employment in the industrial, office, warehousing and distribution sectors (“B” Use Class) in the Plan Area between 1991 - 2011 to be distributed as follows:

Local Plan Area	Hectares		
	Central Leicestershire	Rest of Local Plan Area	Total
Blaby	142	3	145
Charnwood	39	88	127
Harborough	24	155	179
Hinckley & Bosworth	20	87	107
Leicester	106	0	106
Melton	0	101	101
NW Leicestershire	0	385	385
Oadby & Wigston	28	0	28
Rutland	0	48	48
Total Plan Area	359	867	1226

The provision of a range of sites for employment uses in terms of size, quality and location will be sought.

STRATEGIC EMPLOYMENT SITES

- 7.14 The adopted Structure Plan made provision for four High Quality Employment Sites (HQES) in order to attract and retain prestigious firms. Of these three have been committed for this purpose. The fourth, in Harborough District, has not been allocated in the Harborough District Local Plan and Leicestershire County Council has stated that this Local Plan is not in general conformity with the adopted Structure Plan since it does not allocate a HQES.
- 7.15 Research has indicated that the market for such sites in Leicestershire is limited, since local firms, with relatively small space requirements, predominate. There is, therefore, no evidence to support any additional HQES and indeed it could be argued that such sites might compete with urban brownfield and town centre sites in such a limited market. Nevertheless, a considerable amount of land has been committed in the form of HQES and this remains available for prestige firms.
- 7.16 As stated above, overall there is sufficient employment land to meet needs arising over the Plan period on the basis of past take up rates and the overall balance with future population and housing requirements. Further research relating to the demand for sites and premises will refine this assessment. However, there is still a need for additional prime employment sites, defined as Strategic Employment Sites, in order to:
- a) support the diversification of the economy;
 - b) provide an appropriate portfolio of sites;
 - c) attract new businesses and retain local companies;
 - d) provide for a relatively high level of relocation mainly within the Plan Area as identified by the Company Relocation and Economic Development Observatory (CREDO) analysis;
 - e) meet the need to balance housing and employment; and
 - f) meet qualitative and quantitative shortfalls in employment land in particular localities.
- 7.17 Strategic Employment Sites are suitable for a wide range of users in Use Classes B1(b), B1(c), B2 and B8 and should be of a good quality in order to attract and retain quality firms. However, within the B2 Use Class, it may be appropriate to attach relevant planning conditions commensurate with maintaining a good quality setting.
- 7.18 Other policies in the Plan seek to steer major office development to town centres. It is not intended that major office development be allowed on Strategic Employment Sites, which are intended mainly to support manufacturing. The development of offices as part of a Strategic Employment Site in a peripheral location could have a detrimental effect on the vitality and viability of town centres and on travel patterns. It will be appropriate, therefore, to impose restrictions on office development on such sites. This should include the restriction of permitted development rights within the B1 Use Class.
- 7.19 The Three Councils remain of the view that there is a need for a Strategic Employment Site in the south east quadrant of Leicester and its adjoining settlements to meet the needs of existing firms, to achieve a better balance between housing and employment in the locality and to support economic diversification and regeneration. The Three Councils also remain of the view that the best location for this Strategic Employment Site is in Harborough District, adjoining Oadby and Wigston. The site should be about 20 hectares in size.

- 7.20 A shortfall of employment land has also been identified in Hinckley and Bosworth. A Strategic Employment Site, of about 25 hectares, should be identified in Hinckley and Bosworth, close to Hinckley.
- 7.21 Provision should also be made for Strategic Employment Sites in Charnwood of about 20 hectares each, one close to Loughborough and one close to Leicester, and in Oadby and Wigston of about 15 hectares, to balance the need for strategic housing sites in these locations. Further guidance is given in Strategy Policy 3.
- 7.22 In terms of good design, further guidance is given in Strategy Policy 11 and with regards to the use of energy, further guidance is given in Resource Management Policies 2 and 3.

Employment Policy 2: Strategic Employment Sites

Provision will be made for five Strategic Employment Sites for B1(b), B1(c) B2 and B8 uses. They will be within Charnwood District (one close to Loughborough and one close to Leicester), Harborough District (close to Leicester and Oadby and Wigston), Hinckley and Bosworth District (close to Hinckley) and Oadby and Wigston District. These should be:

- a) in locations which adjoin the urban areas with good access to the road network;**
- b) in locations which are accessible by public transport; and**
- c) of a good standard of design, layout and landscaping.**

Other sites may also be brought forward which meet the needs of the Plan Area from the general supply of employment land.

B1 (a) office development will be restricted on Strategic Employment Sites.

OFFICE DEVELOPMENT

- 7.23 Both Regional Planning Guidance (RPG 8) and the adopted Structure Plan recognise the contribution of offices to the vitality and viability of town centres. RPG8 advises that, as a result of the high number of trips generated, new office development should normally be accommodated within town centres well served by public transport and that sites outside urban areas should be avoided. It also highlights the potential of reusing redundant industrial or warehouse buildings for office use.
- 7.24 Since the publication of RPG8 and the adoption of the Structure Plan, further Government guidance on the present and future roles of town centres has emerged in the revised PPG6 'Town Centres and Retail Developments'. This guidance introduced the "sequential" approach for all key town centre uses, including offices, which attract many people. These uses should be located in existing centres where access by a choice of travel modes is easy and convenient. Where no suitable sites or buildings are

available, the preferred location should be edge-of-centre sites, district and local centres and only then, out-of-centre sites that are accessible by a choice of transport.

- 7.25 Since the introduction of the B1 Business Use Class in 1987, Local Planning Authorities have been hampered in their efforts to restrict office development to town centres. The B1 Use Class includes offices, light industry and research and development and properties may alternate between these uses without the need for planning permission. In the City of Leicester Local Plan there was a successful attempt to define office areas in the City Centre in which, for environmental reasons, only B1 office uses would be acceptable.
- 7.26 Major office development is defined in this Plan as comprising over 1,000 square metres of floorspace and typically employing at least between 50 and 70 people on site. The number of trips generated by new development will largely be determined by the number of employees located within the development.
- 7.27 Most major office development will be located in Leicester's Central Area, which already has a large office area and is well served by public transport. Office development in the rest of the Plan Area should be located within the Central Areas of Ashby, Beaumont Leys, Blaby, Coalville, Hamilton, Hinckley, Loughborough, Lutterworth, Market Harborough, Melton Mowbray, Oadby, Oakham, Wigston Magna and Uppingham, where it is well served by public transport and where it is readily accessible by cycling and walking.
- 7.28 If development is proposed elsewhere, either at edge-of-centre or in out-of-centre sites, the onus will be on the developer to show that all potential town centre options have been assessed and are unable to provide the required site. If an out-of-centre development is proposed, all suitable edge-of-centre sites must also have been taken into account. Any proposed edge-of-centre or out-of-centre sites must also be accessible by a choice of means of transport.
- 7.29 This sequential approach will also be applied to extensions to existing development, where the total floorspace of the existing premises and the proposed extension will amount to 1000 square metres or more. It is not intended to stifle the indigenous growth of existing firms in less accessible locations, merely to seek to control the perpetuation of less sustainable patterns of land use.

Employment Policy 3: Office Development

Major office development should be located within Leicester City Centre or central areas that are well served by public transport.

Edge-of-centre sites will only be considered where there are no central area sites available.

The expansion of existing office developments in out-of-centre locations into major office developments will not be permitted.

SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY PARKS

- 7.30 The adopted Structure Plan makes provision for small scale technology transfer facilities close to centres of higher education and for one high quality B1 Science and Technology Park in a location with good transport links to higher education centres. Land for such a Science and Technology Park has yet to be identified although provision for smaller scale facilities has been made close to the Universities of Leicester and Loughborough. The Three Councils remain of the view that the identification of larger site(s) for one or more high quality Science and Technology Park(s) close to one or more of the Plan Area's higher education facilities will assist in economic diversification, as will continued encouragement of small scale facilities for technology transfer.
- 7.31 Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City and a number of Leicestershire District Councils are currently commissioning a study to examine the scope for providing additional site(s) and premises for firms for attracting and retaining technically advanced companies. Guidance on the best means of controlling land uses is also being sought. The results of this study will be fed into the review of this Plan and may result in changes to the Draft Plan at Deposit stage.
- 7.32 The success of the Loughborough Science Park illustrates perfectly how a partnership between local authorities and the private sector can produce a high quality employment site that allows technically advanced commercial companies to locate or expand close to the University to facilitate technology transfer. In addition to Loughborough Science Park, Bede Island North Research and Business Park has been developed as a flagship project of the Leicester City Challenge. This again has been achieved through public and private sector partnership. Such sites are intended to help companies at the outset to develop production as an extension of new research. Larger scale production can be catered for on other sites further away from the campus, but with good transport links between the two. The Plan Area is fortunate in having three Universities, which represent a major resource.
- 7.33 The Three Councils' support for the Leicester Priority Area means they will seek to facilitate the refurbishment of older, disused inner city buildings, close to the Universities, for science and technology transfer (see Strategy Policy 13).
- 7.34 At a subsequent stage it is hoped that businesses looking for sites larger than those offered at a technology transfer site may be accommodated on a high quality Science and Technology Park. This should be situated to provide close links with the Universities. The site may be part of an existing or proposed employment land allocation, including one of the committed High Quality Employment Sites, or alternatively, it may be on another site, additional to the land identified in Employment Policy 1.
- 7.35 Development on all sites should offer high quality premises, designed to meet the needs of technology related research and development. Buildings should be affordable and sufficiently flexible to meet the changing needs of occupiers as they, and their processes, evolve and grow. The development as a whole should be of high quality, offering a prestige location and attractive working conditions, thus allowing the resident firms to attract the highest calibre of employees.

- 7.36 Research has shown that Universities and Local Authorities are the primary sponsors of science and technology schemes. It is intended to foster the:
- a) academic benefits of employment links to University Centres of Excellence;
 - b) transfer of technology between Universities and industry; and
 - c) introduction and growth of technically advanced commercial companies.
- 7.37 These intentions will assist in addressing the need to diversify the economy of the Plan Area and to reduce unemployment, particularly in the Leicester Priority Area. An influx of new businesses operating close to the City's Universities would contribute significantly to the realisation of these aims.

Employment Policy 4: Science and Technology Parks

Planning permission will be granted for small scale facilities for technology transfer close to centres of higher education and for one high quality B1 science and technology park.

Land for the science park may be in addition to the employment land proposed in Employment Policy 1 and will be located in an area with good transport links to the centres of higher education.

Development on these sites will be required to provide a high standard of design and layout commensurate with a high quality business environment.

Restrictions limiting the use of such sites to B1(b) of the Use Classes Order should be imposed.

EXPANSION AND RELOCATION OF EXISTING EMPLOYMENT USES

- 7.38 The employment forecasts prepared by BSL, suggest that much employment growth will take place in existing and indigenous local firms. The long term viability and prosperity of local companies is essential to the well being of the local economy. For this reason, support will generally be given to the expansion of existing employers where suitable land is available close by and expansion is acceptable in terms of its effect on the surrounding area and environment. Where the Local Planning Authority feels these difficulties cannot be resolved at the present site, they should seek to identify an alternative, more suitable, location from the general supply of land.
- 7.39 It must be recognised that many firms rely on the close proximity of traditional labour and product markets. In addition, an area may rely on a local employer for many of its employment, social and commercial activities. The desirability of relocating an employer away from their existing site should be considered through the Local Plan process. These factors should be taken into account when assessing the suitability of the proposed alternative location within the overall aims of the Plan.

- 7.40 Local Planning Authorities should seek, wherever practical, to identify the future premises needs of local firms. This should be done by consulting local business on land use plans and other relevant strategies. Such information can then be used when assessing proposals or in formulating Local Plans.
- 7.41 Encouragement should be given to existing employers. This will include giving sympathetic consideration and support, where appropriate, to proposals for expansion and relocation of existing employers to suitable locations within the Plan Area.
- 7.42 It is intended to implement a variety of measures as identified in the Leicestershire Economic Development Partnership Strategy and Operational Plan, and the relevant Economic Regeneration and Action Plans of the Three Councils, to monitor progress and support existing employers through advice, training initiatives and practical assistance.

Employment Policy 5: Expansion and Relocation of Existing Employment Uses

Planning permission will be granted for the expansion of existing employment uses unless unacceptable environmental conditions would result.

Provision may be made for existing firms to relocate from constrained or inappropriate sites provided the new site is chosen in accordance with Strategy Policy 2.

PROTECTION OF EMPLOYMENT LAND AND BUILDINGS

- 7.43 With the emphasis being placed on the need to locate development where it can provide a realistic choice of transport, employment sites will become premium locations for development for other land uses.
- 7.44 Within the context that much employment growth will take place within existing sites and premises, and in order to maximise the use of existing prime employment land, the purpose of this Policy is to ensure that the use of key sites for employment purposes is not compromised. A flexible approach can be taken towards the re-use of other sites and buildings, particularly where this would contribute to the principles of sustainable development and maximise the use of urban areas.
- 7.45 Key employment sites will be defined according to two criteria:
- a) their existing or potential access by means of transport other than the private car, and their proximity to strategic transport routes, particularly rail, and the strategic road network, to facilitate the efficient movement of goods; and
 - b) their importance in providing local employment opportunities, to maintain an appropriate mix of accessible employment opportunities within particular localities.
- 7.46 High Quality Employment Sites, Strategic Employment Sites, and regional storage and distribution centres will qualify as key employment sites.

- 7.47 Whilst the principle of retaining existing employment land can be generally applied, there will be specific circumstances where this is not desirable. These circumstances include where an employment use has an adverse impact on a neighbouring existing or planned residential area, for example, as a result of excessive vehicle movements. Also, where sites and premises no longer meet the needs of modern businesses due to their incapability to accommodate new manufacturing plant or information technology infrastructure. In addition, in these instances, it should be established that there is no realistic prospect of employment related development taking place. In such circumstances a more flexible approach will be required, particularly if it contributes to mixed use development or maximises the use of urban areas, whilst not significantly detracting from the overall supply of employment land in a locality.
- 7.48 New activities may be introduced in or within the curtilage of an employment development, provided that they remain ancillary to the main use and account for only a small proportion of total floorspace or site coverage. Such ancillary uses include cafe/restaurant facilities, training facilities and small scale factory shops.
- 7.49 The appropriateness of each change in land use will be assessed according to the state of the building or land itself, the surrounding land use, and the location of the proposed change.

Employment Policy 6: Protection of Employment Land and Buildings

Key existing and planned employment sites will be identified and safeguarded from other development proposals.

Change of use of existing and planned employment land or buildings to other uses or mixed development will only be permitted if:

- a) the change will not result in a shortage of employment land or buildings in the area;**
- b) the land and buildings are unfit for employment purposes;**
- c) the site would make an important contribution to improving the urban environment; or**
- d) the use is ancillary to an existing or proposed employment use.**

SAFEGUARDING HIGH QUALITY EMPLOYMENT SITES

- 7.50 The adopted Structure Plan makes provision for the allocation of four High Quality Employment Sites (HQES). These are to be in Blaby District (close to Leicester and Oadby and Wigston), Harborough District (close to Leicester and Oadby and Wigston) and North West Leicestershire (one in the Priority Area and one well-related to junction 23a/24 of the M1). The HQES are intended to attract and retain prestige companies. It is important, therefore, that they are safeguarded for B1 and B2 uses that are

commensurate with a high quality setting, and not developed for other uses for which there may be greater demand in the short to medium term. The establishment of these sites, however, does not preclude high quality business development on other sites elsewhere in the Plan Area.

- 7.51 Three HQES sites have been identified. These include, Grove Park, Blaby and two in North West Leicestershire at Ashby Park, and at Finger Farm and Gimbro Farm, which either individually or in combination satisfy the requirements for a HQES well related to junction 23a/24. Ashby Park is being built, whilst the others all have planning permission. The fourth HQES site in Harborough District has not been allocated. Whilst the Three Councils consider that there is insufficient evidence to justify additional HQES sites, they remain of the view that a prime employment site should be made available in Harborough District close to Leicester and Oadby and Wigston (see Employment Policy 3). The three committed HQES sites should continue to be safeguarded for high quality B1/B2 employment uses as it is important to have these sites available to attract and retain prestigious companies.
- 7.52 In providing for a HQES to be in a location well related to M1 junctions 23a/24, it was recognised that the location does not offer the prospect of providing a realistic choice of transport but was considered to be an acceptable exception for a limited amount of economic development.
- 7.53 The Three Councils have kept under review the prospect of achieving “transport choice” to this location but remain of the view that this is neither feasible nor realistic at present. The vicinity of junction 23a/24 is not regarded as being sustainable and further large scale employment development will be resisted by the Three Councils.
- 7.54 Employment land committed for HQES should be safeguarded and brought forward and developed to an appropriately high standard.

Employment Policy 7: Safeguarding High Quality Employment Sites

Employment land “committed” as High Quality Employment Sites should be safeguarded for this purpose.

STORAGE AND DISTRIBUTION

- 7.55 The attractiveness of the Plan Area for storage and distribution, Use Class B8, is recognised. The adopted Structure Plan allocated land for two regional storage and distribution centres, one at Magna Park, Lutterworth and the other at the former Castle Donington Power Station. Whilst there is no need to allocate land for additional regional storage and distribution centres, it is important that the two allocated sites are reserved for this purpose and not released for other uses, unless it can be demonstrated that there is a clear surplus of such land in the area and development is unlikely in the foreseeable future.
- 7.56 Many large scale storage and distribution facilities have a low density of employment. It is important to protect employment land from such uses where it is required to stimulate local employment opportunities and to broaden the local economy.

- 7.57 Large scale storage and distribution uses can also generate significant numbers of lorry trips, which are inappropriate to residential and central urban areas, villages and minor roads. For reasons of noise, vibration and congestion, such facilities are best located away from such sensitive areas.
- 7.58 The environmental impact of storage and distribution operations can further be reduced by encouraging a modal shift from road to rail for freight transport. Rail transit has considerable advantages for the bulk movement of freight over long distances, particularly with the development of rail freight interchanges and the opening of the Channel Tunnel. The Three Councils therefore prefer sites to be capable of direct access by rail transport, whilst recognising the continuing importance of highly accessible sites well related to the primary road network to the storage and distribution sector.
- 7.59 Freight transport and handling is also a significant area of activity at East Midlands Airport, and these operations are subject to Strategy Policy 17 and Accessibility and Transport Policy 13, which deal specifically with development at the airport.

Employment Policy 8: Storage and Distribution

The use of employment land for storage and distribution (Class B8) uses will be permitted provided that:

- a) the land is not required for other employment uses, particularly those which contribute towards the diversification of the Plan Area or local economies;**
- b) development would not cause environmental problems; and**
- c) the potential of sites to be served by railway sidings is maximised.**

Employment land “committed” for regional storage and distribution should be safeguarded for this purpose.

There is no further requirement for additional regional storage and distribution facilities within the Plan Area.

THE RURAL ECONOMY

- 7.60 Rural areas are continuing to go through a period of adjustment as the numbers employed in agriculture and other land based industries fall, and the agricultural industry looks to diversify its activities. Changes to the Common Agricultural Policy and the current General Agreement on Trades and Tariffs contribute to continuing uncertainty about the future of rural areas.
- 7.61 The adopted Structure Plan provided for small scale employment uses within and adjoining rural settlements in order to maintain economically and socially balanced rural communities and to reduce the need for people to travel long distances to work.

This remains a valid approach. However, changes are required to reflect the strategic aim of focusing development in rural centres, which have a reasonable level of services and facilities and where development can also help in regenerating the rural economy. The need for appropriate small scale employment development in other villages is also recognised where this will help maintain and enhance local communities.

- 7.62 This Policy seeks to provide for appropriate employment development in rural centres. Such centres should be identified on the basis that they have a reasonable level of services and facilities and are accessible by public transport, cycling and walking. See Strategy Policy 2 for further guidance. The need for the regeneration of a particular settlement, or the potential role that such a settlement could play in regenerating a wider area, are also relevant considerations. Particular priority will be given to providing employment opportunities in rural centres which can fulfil a regeneration role. The provision of suitable local employment opportunities in rural centres will also assist in reducing the need for people to travel long distances to work. New development should not, however, be permitted in locations that would cause damage to the environment and character of villages, or harm residential amenity.
- 7.63 In other settlements, the provision of small scale employment uses that will assist in securing an appropriate mix of jobs within individual settlements and contribute to rural diversification will also be permitted. Such development should be in keeping with the size, form and character of the village. Development in locations which gives rise to unacceptable traffic effects or to an unacceptable increase in car usage will be resisted.
- 7.64 In both rural centres and other settlements, preference will be given to the re-use of suitable derelict, vacant and underused land and buildings before greenfield sites are considered. It would be desirable to increase employment in manufacturing and technology based industries in rural areas, and the development and re-use of suitable buildings for such uses which require a high quality environment will allow new employment opportunities to be created. The Narborough Wood Farm Business Park in Blaby District is one such example.

Employment Policy 9: The Rural Economy

Provision will be made within and adjoining Rural Centres for employment development either in the form of new development or from the conversion of existing rural buildings subject to:

- a) it being of a scale, character and type that is appropriate to the rural centre; and**
- b) it does not lead to a dispersal of employment activities which would undermine the vitality of the rural centre.**

In other settlements, small scale employment development will be permitted either in the form of new development or from the conversion of existing rural buildings provided that it is in keeping with the form, character and setting of the village and will not have an unacceptable adverse impact in terms of traffic generated, access or parking arrangements.

In both rural centres and other settlements, priority will be given to the re-use of existing rural buildings, vacant, derelict and underused land.

PROVISION OF SUB-REGIONAL EXHIBITION AND CONFERENCE CENTRE.

- 7.65 Within the Plan Area, there are currently several small conference and exhibition centres serving small catchment areas. There is a need for a larger facility to complement the rising regional, national and international status of the area. The Plan Area is at the heart of the national transport system making it an ideal setting for such a development.
- 7.66 Proposals for a centre that can provide the necessary size and quality required of sub-regional facility for major conferences will generally be supported. This will only be the case, however, where the proposals can provide good access by a variety of transport modes, including rail, and they are acceptable within the overall context of this Consultation Draft Structure Plan.

Employment Policy 10: Provision of a Sub-regional Exhibition and Conference Centre

The development of a single large scale exhibition and conference facility in a location offering a realistic choice of transport and well related to the national road network will be supported.

HAZARDOUS INSTALLATIONS

- 7.67 Certain employment developments are likely to contain processes or by-products that are of a hazardous nature. The immediate danger from these installations will be considered before an application for planning permission is granted, particularly the proximity to residential and other incompatible developments. In the control of hazardous land uses, account should be taken of the various legal provisions implementing the requirements of European Union law, together with other relevant national provisions.
- 7.68 Safeguarding the local environment will also be a primary concern when determining proposals. Those which may cause or threaten unacceptable damage to the local environment will not be permitted.
- 7.69 At those sites deemed suitable for hazardous installations, contingency plans for emergencies should be in place and constantly updated. Rapid access arrangements that ensure emergency services can quickly reach the development should form part of such proposals. Wherever possible, hazardous substances should be transported by rail.
- 7.70 Further guidance on pollution is provided in Resource Management Policy 1 and Resource Management Policies 2 and 3 address energy issues.

Employment Policy 11: Hazardous Installations

Proposals for hazardous installations will only be permitted if:

- a) there would be no adverse effects on the population and the environment; and**
- b) adequate access arrangements are made on to the rail network or the specified road network for the transportation of hazardous materials.**