Hart Local Plan:
Strategy and Sites 2016 - 2032
Topic Paper: Employment
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Introduction

1. This topic paper outlines the background to the development of the following employment policies in the Local Plan chapter Sustainable Economic Development:
   - Policy ED1: New Employment
   - Policy ED2: Safeguarding Employment Land and Premises (B-Use Classes)
   - Policy ED3: The Rural Economy

2. Achieving future economic prosperity in the district is a key aspect of Hart’s Local Plan vision and is supported by three Local Plan objectives:
   - **Objective 3:** To provide for longer term development needs through planning for a sustainable new settlement within the Murrell Green/Winchfield Area of Search.
   - **Objective 5:** To support the vitality and viability of the District’s town and village centres to serve the needs of residents.
   - **Objective 6:** To support economic growth by protecting and providing a range of size and types of employment land and buildings, including those supporting the rural economy.

3. The overall approach seeks to retain existing businesses and to attract new ones. The provision of sufficient employment land and premises to meet identified needs is identified as key to achieving this.

Purpose of the Employment Background Paper

4. This background paper has been developed to provide support to the Proposed Submission Hart Local Plan Strategy and Sites 2016 – 2032. It contents may be further updated before the Plan is submitted following the receipt of any comments on the Local Plan.

Supporting Evidence

National Planning Guidance

5. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) identifies the economy as one of the key components of sustainable development (paragraph 7). Paragraphs 18 to 22 explain how planning can help to build a strong and competitive economy through positively planning for the needs of businesses and support the growth of town and other centres. Paragraph 28 explains the key elements of supporting a strong rural economy. Paragraph 156 requires local
plans to have strategic policies on jobs, homes and other matters. Paragraphs 160-161 identify the need to work together with other relevant authorities to understand business needs, likely changes in the market and any barriers to investment. This information should be used to assess the needs for land for economic development, its sufficiency and suitability.

6. Government guidance on housing and economic development needs assessments and housing and economic land availability assessment is set out in detail in the National Planning Practice Guidance.

Evidence Base

LEP Strategic Economic Plan

7. Hart, together with adjoining districts of Rushmoor and Surrey Heath are located within the Enterprise M3 Local Enterprise Partnership (LEP) area. Enterprise M3 LEP covers a large area stretching approximately seventy-five miles through Hampshire and Surrey from the New Forest in the south, to the edge of Heathrow Airport in the north. The LEP identifies the area as a whole as having an advanced knowledge-based economy with high levels of innovation and productivity. Key economic attributes include:-

a. Enterprise M3 has a far higher number of businesses per 1,000 population than England as a whole
b. The area has the third highest GVA per capita nationally at £25,300, which is 18% above the national average and increasing at a higher rate than any other LEP area
c. Job growth in the Enterprise M3 area was the second fastest in the South East between 2010 and 2012, well ahead of the regional and national averages.
d. Strengths in the following sectors: ICT and digital media; financial and professional services; pharmaceuticals and healthcare; advanced engineering and marine; aerospace and defence; and energy and environment sectors.
e. Enterprise M3 is one of the key workforce arteries supporting the London economy, with more than one in ten economically active/employed residents of the Enterprise M3 area travelling to London to work.

8. The Strategy for Growth discussion document (December 2012) splits the LEP into three main areas:

a. The North (areas neighbouring the M25 including Guildford, Woking and the Farnborough / Camberley / Aldershot conurbation): With strong links to London and the Thames Valley, it includes a large number of international headquarters and technology based businesses. It comprises some large urban centres with light industry and vibrant service sectors.
b. The Centre (including Basingstoke and Winchester): Predominantly a rural economy but with significant urban centres. There are some large businesses (particularly in Basingstoke) but contains largely small-scale service businesses. Prosperity largely based on employment flow north or south.

c. The South (New Forest/ southern fringe including Whitehill and Bordon and Waverley): Similar to the Centre (above) apart from an industrial fringe along Solent. The area has a strong emphasis on environmental assets, tourism and leisure industries.

9. The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) sets out a vision for the Enterprise M3 area:-

‘the premier location in the country for enterprise and economic growth, balanced with an excellent environment and quality of life’.

10. The SEP identifies the LEP area as having world-class sectors in **ICT and digital media, pharmaceuticals, aerospace and defence** and **professional and business services**, which are supported by knowledge-based businesses, traditional and high value manufacturing and services, and world-class higher-level skills. These are four sectors which are identified as priority sectors by the LEP.

11. In addition, there are eight niche sectors in which the area has established strengths which the LEP aims to support:

   Satellite Technologies  
   5G Mobile Communication Technologies  
   Cyber Security  
   Advanced Material and Nano-technology  
   Photonics  
   Advanced Aerospace / Automotive Manufacturing  
   Animal Health  
   Computer Games and Entertainment Technologies

12. The following key economic assets of the LEP are located within the Hart/Rushmoor/Surrey Heath Functional Economic Area: QinetiQ / Cody Technology Park (Hart/Rushmoor); RAF Odiham (Hart), Fluor (Rushmoor); TAG Farnborough (Rushmoor); Farnborough College of Technology (Rushmoor); Aldershot Garrison (Rushmoor); Sandhurst Military Academy (Surrey Heath).

13. Enterprise M3 are in the early stages of updating the Strategic Economic Plan. Consultation on the economic priorities has been undertaken and wider consultation events are taking place to inform an Industrial Strategy to be published in early 2018.

**Local Strategies and evidence**

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14. Hart District Council's **Corporate Plan 2017 - 2022** contains the main themes and objectives of the Council. It includes an overarching priority to ensure 'A Thriving Local Economy' and sets out the following aims:

- Support our town and village centres;
- Support the local economy;
- Support residents in becoming economically active; and,
- Ensuring an appropriate supply of employment land and premises.

15. The **Hart Economic Development Strategy** (EDS) has three principal economic priorities:

1. **Dynamic Business Base**
   Business dynamism is fundamental to the success of the local economy. Hart has some successful and influential global companies. It also has many vibrant micro and small businesses and home-based and pre-incorporated businesses. These smaller firms are the lifeblood of Hart's rural economy. More can be done to exploit Hart's rural potential and make the most of forthcoming rural economic development measures. The mission for this strategic objective is simple; it is about business growth.

2. **Competitive Advantage**
   The skills of residents and workers also contribute to Hart's exceptional economic profile and competitive advantage. The District wants to maintain its highly skilled and well qualified workforce and the Council is acutely aware of the need to create more opportunities for young people as its population continues to age.

3. **Desirable Business Location**
   Hart's sense of place is important. Preserving its distinctive identity is important but there is a need to recognise that its thriving businesses need space to grow and connections need to improve. Hart's natural assets make it an attractive place to be but the Council wants its centres to thrive and become destinations of choice for visitors.

16. Hart's strong economy brings many economic opportunities. The EDS notes that there is scope to enhance sites and premises to encourage more grow-on units for the district’s unregistered businesses or home workers looking to move to the next step. The enterprise survival rates are good within Hart and the Council can take an active interest in retention and supporting their aspirations, promoting strategic sites and securing investment in high tech industries via Enterprise M3.

17. **Hart District Local Plan** Saved Policies (2006) provide the current Local Plan policy context. However, these will be replaced once the emerging Local Plan is adopted. The existing relevant policies are listed below:-
URB 2 – 6 General policies for business development in urban areas.

URB 7 Seeks to resist development that would result in the loss of an existing employment site unless the present use harms the character or amenities of its surroundings, the site is not capable of continuing satisfactorily in an employment use, or there would be substantial benefits to the locality. The supporting text to this policy emphasises the aim of retaining and encouraging skilled jobs in the employment areas.

RUR12 Deals with permission for business development or change of use to business (B1) use subject to a number of criteria including scale and the impact on amenity and the character of the building or setting. The supporting text recognises that small-scale business development in rural settlements can help to diversify the local economy and provide jobs for local residents.

RUR13 – 15 Development of the local rural economy having regard to the qualities of the countryside.

RUR 16 Loss of employment uses will not be permitted.

18. The Employment Land Review 2016 (ELR) has been prepared by Wessex Economics and provides an update to the previous ELR, 2015. The ELR is a key piece of evidence that has informed the Local Plan Submission version. The focus of the study is the strategic employment land issues across the Hart/Rushmoor/Surrey Heath FEA, taking account of demand/supply factors. The three authorities have strong economic linkages and together form a single Functional Economic Area (FEA). This study identifies the likely needs of the local economy over the period 2014-2032, drawing out the economic issues and employment requirements of each district.

19. The ELR update has been part of a combined study involving the preparation of both an updated Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) and this ELR. The focus of the report is on the employment space needs for the B class sectors below:

   B1 Business (offices, research & development, light industry);
   B2 General Industrial; and
   B8 Storage or Distribution (wholesale warehouses, distribution centres).

20. The ELR assessed and reviewed 76 employment sites across the three local authority areas (see ELR, Appendix 1), including the 24 employment areas within Hart which are listed below. The adequacy of this land supply was then assessed against expected job growth over the Plan period.
Hart Employment Sites

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Site Reference</th>
<th>Site Name</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>H1</td>
<td>Ancells Business Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H2</td>
<td>Bartley Point</td>
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<tr>
<td>H3</td>
<td>Bartley Wood</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H4</td>
<td>Blackbushe Business Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H5</td>
<td>Civic Quarter</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H6</td>
<td>Cody Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H7</td>
<td>Eversley Haulage Yard</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H8</td>
<td>Fleet Business Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H9</td>
<td>Grove Farm Barn Workshops</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H10</td>
<td>Guillemont Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H11</td>
<td>Hurst Farm, Taplin’s Lane</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H12</td>
<td>Lodge Farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H13</td>
<td>Meadows Business Park</td>
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<tr>
<td>H14</td>
<td>Murrell Green Business Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H15</td>
<td>Optrex Business Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H16</td>
<td>Osborne Way</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H17</td>
<td>Eversley Storage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H18</td>
<td>Potters Industrial Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H19</td>
<td>Rawlings Road Depot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H20</td>
<td>Redfields Business Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H21</td>
<td>Beacon Point</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H22</td>
<td>Waterfront Business Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H23</td>
<td>Wychwood Carp Farm</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H24</td>
<td>Finns Business Park</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

21. Within Hart, the main centres of economic activity include Fleet town centre, Bartley Wood Business Park in Hook, Ancells Business Park in Fleet and mixed use sites at Osborn Way, Hook and Blackbushe Business Park. In addition, the rural area has a range of flexible employment space providing for a range of Small and Medium sized Enterprises. This includes a number of small towns and villages eg. Hook and Hartley Wintney and there are also a significant number of converted agricultural buildings that form an important element of supply for local firms.

22. The ELR identifies that Hart experienced strong job growth between 1998 and 2014 and in 2014, Hart had a total of 40,800 jobs. The largest employment sectors in the district include
wholesale and retail trade, accommodation and food services, information and communication and professional, scientific and technical activities.

23. Hart’s main office centres are located in Fleet and Hook, with the majority concentrated around Fleet. This has modern stock such as at Waterfront Business Park. This is considered to be performing well, due to its high quality stock and prominent location adjacent to the town’s railway station. There are also a range of town centre and edge of centre business parks with good motorway and rail links to London with access to a large pool of skilled labour.

24. There is however, an over-supply of lower grade stock with a concentration of dated, larger footprints at Ancells Business Park. This employment area is experiencing relatively high vacancy levels, though this is predominately as the result of the larger footprint buildings being vacant. There have also been a number of office to residential prior approvals permitted at Ancells Business Park.

25. The main office site in Hook is at Bartley Wood Business Park on the town’s southern edge, where occupiers include Virgin Media, HP, Serco and Lenovo in a range of modern buildings. However, as with Ancells Business Park, there has been pressure for office to residential conversions through the prior approval process.

26. Historically, there has been demand for out of town centre offices from small businesses, rural enterprises and some small office occupiers. The choice of premises available varies significantly from converted agricultural barns providing storage/workshop space, to purpose-built office buildings. Occupancy rates at such premises are generally high demonstrating that they meet a market need.

27. Hart provides a range of industrial accommodation with the bulk of the District’s provision being located as follows:

- Church Crookham provides industrial accommodation at four sites, two of which are small scale and meet the needs of SMEs (Fleet Business Park and Potters Industrial Estate); whilst one of the remaining sites has been developed as a bespoke manufacturing facility for a single occupier (Vertu - now vacant). Redfield’s Lane provides larger footprint industrial accommodation.
- Fleet provides limited industrial accommodation, although outside of the settlement there is some industrial accommodation at Cody Technology Park (part in Hart District, part in Rushmoor). Cody Park provides a secure site for datacentre occupiers.
- Hook provides good quality industrial floorspace in close proximity to public transport infrastructure and the strategic highway network (M3 Junction 5) at Osborne Way, an established industrial area providing a mix of unit types and sizes. Bartley Point is a warehouse / industrial development.
28. There appears to be strong demand from small flexible businesses / light industrial premises to support rural enterprises and SMEs. The types of premises vary significantly from basic converted agricultural barns providing storage/workshop space, to purpose-built light industrial / storage units, such as those at Murrell Green Business Park located on the A30 between Hook and Hartley Wintney. Occupancy rates at such accommodation is high demonstrating that there is demand for such accommodation.

29. The study identifies that in quantitative terms there is a sufficient pipeline supply of employment land to meet the needs of the FEA authorities until 2032, for both industrial and office accommodation. However, a significant part of this land supply is from planning permissions that have not yet commenced.

30. The ELR recommends that in developing emerging plans, the FEA authorities should assign the employment sites assessed in the study as either a :-

   a. Strategic Employment Site:
   b. Locally Important Employment Site;
   c. Strategic or Locally Important Employment Site but revise the site boundary;
   d. Or to not allocate the site.

31. The ELR identified approximately 523ha of employment land across all the sites assessed in the FEA and of this, 54ha (10%) of employment land was recorded as being available for development. It concludes that:-

   a. office based sectors will continue to play an important role across the FEA for future economic growth and that there is a small surplus of office floorspace to meet future needs. However, the balance between supply and demand is fairly tight so the position will need to be monitored.
   b. the importance of the industrial sectors in the FEA is recognised at the sub regional level and industrial sites need to be given sufficient protection to prevent them from being lost.

32. Overall therefore, the ELR concludes that existing employment floorspace and commitments are sufficient to meet employment needs and provide for expected job growth (1,200 jobs per annum across the FEA) over the period to 2032. However, employment land is relatively tight and the position needs to be kept under review given the uncertainty over the level of conversions from offices to residential under permitted development rights. It is also important to note that the ELR recommends due to the demand for industrial floorspace, that established industrial employment sites continue to be protected and their continued redevelopment or regeneration is encouraged and expanded to meet their business needs. Given the identified adequacy of existing floorspace and the allocation of Strategic and Locally Important Employment Sites and development opportunities within them, it is not proposed to make new employment allocations in the proposed Submission Local Plan. In the medium
to long term, Policy SS3 Area of Search for New Settlement provides an opportunity for additional employment floorspace.

33. Outside of the main towns, the importance of the employment provision in the rural parts of Hart is acknowledged. Vacancy rates for rural premises is noted as being low, so indicating that demand for such premises is stable. Providing a positive policy framework to encourage rural enterprise is seen as an appropriate way forward.

**Hart Local Plan Proposed Submission Version**

34. The Hart Local Plan Regulation 19 document contains three policies relating to employment, ED1-3 (paras 39-48). These draft policies are set out in Appendix 2.

35. Overall, the ELR concludes that there is sufficient employment space across the FEA, though the position is strongest for office uses. Over the longer term, it is recognised that further vacant floorspace may come back into use and increase the overall surplus. Other unknown factors include whether rural windfall sites will continue to come forward and if the decline in employment densities due to changing working practices and technological advances will continue. The ELR identifies there may be qualitative factors leading to additional employment land being needed, for example, through improving the provision of choice for an established business.

36. Overall the ELR advocates an approach where industrial land allocations, prominent business park locations and well performing rural employment sites are protected. The Local Plan needs to provide a choice of sites and locations to meet the needs of different sectors and occupier needs. The Strategic Employment Sites are those that fulfil a strategic function within the FEA and align with the Enterprise M3 priority sectors. These sites support or could support the FEA’s core sectors eg. business services. Locally Important Employment Sites are those sites are not considered as fulfilling the function of a strategic employment site but play an important role in servicing the local economy. These sites are generally smaller, proving locations for local businesses or bad neighbour activities.

37. During the recent public consultation on the *Hart Local Plan Regulation 18 document*, a number of comments were received on policies ED1-3. These included concern over the low level of employment land provision; objections to protecting brownfield land for employment uses; objections to the re-use or conversion of employment sites for housing; an objection to the focus on rural employment and objection to the allocation of Rawlings Depot in Hook as a Locally Important Employment Area. A comment also sought an extension to Cody Technology Park for QinetiQ.

38. **Policy ED1: New Employment** - the policy seeks to promote new development for employment purposes within identified Strategic or Locally Important Employment Areas, or
within a settlement boundary, on previously developed land or within a rural area. These locations provide opportunities for additional employment floorspace in a sustainable way. The policy also seeks opportunities to deliver local skills and training on major developments where possible. Policy ED1 works alongside NBE1 ‘Development in the Countryside’ and ED3 ‘The Rural Economy’ to provide opportunities for the expansion of existing businesses or enterprises on previously developed land. This provides flexibility in order to help meet qualitative needs.

39. **Policy ED2: Safeguarding Employment Land and Premises (B Use Class)** - the policy sets out the areas protected for employment use in the district (see Appendix 1). These are divided into strategic employment areas (the larger, good quality employment sites, important for future economic growth) and locally important employment areas (locally significant, providing jobs and services to the towns and villages where they are located). This draws strongly on the ELR site assessments and reflects the importance of protecting the existing employment sites.

40. The Strategic Employment Areas provide local employment but are important to the sub-regional economy. These sites are therefore most strongly protected in the Local Plan for continued B-class uses.

41. A more flexible approach is taken on changes of use on Locally Important Employment Areas to other non-B use commercial uses, though a continued employment use is preferred. Therefore, where a change of use is proposed, a marketing campaign of at least 6 months is required to support a change of use application. The policy identifies four criteria which also need to be met.

42. Following the public consultation in 2017, Rawlings Depot, Hook has been deleted as a Locally Important Employment Area, enabling a suitable use to come forward over the Plan period. The Council is assisting the current occupiers in identifying a suitable alternative site.

43. The Hart Local Plan Strategy and Sites document, Policy SS3: New Settlement at Murrell Green/Winchfield Area of Search identifies that provision of an employment area will form part of the development of a masterplan for the development. This will provide longer term opportunities for new employment land to contribute to developing a sustainable settlement.

44. **Policy ED3: The Rural Economy** – the policy sets out the circumstances where economic development is supported within the rural area. Four criteria include a change of use or conversion of an existing building, replacement buildings or extension, where it supports continuation of a business or expansion or is for establishing a rural enterprise. A further four criteria consider impacts on for example, landscape, residential amenity and the local highway network. The policy seeks to support economic development of an appropriate scale and use within a rural setting.
45. A number of employment areas in the district have been subject to pressure for change of use to residential (Appendix 3) through the use of permitted development rights even at Strategic Employment Areas. In response to this and to support the implementation of Policy ED1 and ED2, the Council's Planning Committee is considering a report on 14th February 2018 to seek agreement to begin the process of placing an Article 4 Direction on the Strategic and Locally important Employment Sites, removing permitted development rights for a change of use to residential.

Conclusions

46. The employment policies in the Hart Local Plan Strategy and Sites document are based on an up-to-date and robust evidence base informed by the ELR and other supporting documents. The three employment policies were amended in response to comments received on the Regulation 18 draft Local Plan. Further long term opportunities for additional employment provision will be provided through the masterplanning and policy development for a new settlement at Murrell Green/Winchfield.
Appendix 1 Location Map of Strategic and Local Employment Areas
Appendix 2 Employment Policies in the Proposed Submission
Hart Local Plan

Policy ED1 New employment

Employment proposals (B Use Class) will be supported:

a) within Strategic or Locally Important Employment Sites; or
b) on a suitable site within a settlement policy boundary;
c) on suitable previously developed land appropriate for the proposed use; or
d) within the countryside provided they comply with Policies NBE1 and ED3 or otherwise demonstrate an overriding need for the development at that location and the proposal complies with other plan policies.

Where feasible, major developments should deliver local skills and training initiatives.

Policy ED2 Safeguarding Employment Land and Premises (B-Use Classes)

1. Strategic Employment Sites

To contribute towards meeting the future economic growth needs of the District and the wider Functional Economic Area, the following sites are designated as Strategic Employment Sites and given the highest protection and safeguarding against loss to non-B-class employment uses by protecting them for B-class uses.

i. Bartley Wood, Hook
ii. Bartley Point, Hook
iii. Cody Technology Park, Farnborough
iv. Meadows Business Park, Blackwater
v. Osborn Way, Hook
vi. Waterfront Business Park, Fleet

The redevelopment and regeneration of these sites will be supported to provide B-class employment floorspace that meets the needs of the market.

Small-scale proposals for changes of use or redevelopment to non-B-class employment uses at the above sites will be supported where they would provide complementary use(s)\(^1\) that are not detrimental to the function and operation of the Strategic Employment Area.

\(^1\)Such as small scale convenience retail and food and drink establishments which serve the employment area
2. Locally Important Employment Sites

To contribute towards meeting the future economic growth needs of the District, the following sites are designated as Locally Important Employment Sites and will be given protection against loss to non-B-class employment uses by protecting them for B-class uses:

vii. Ancells Business Park, Fleet
viii. Blackbushe Business Park
ix. Eversley Haulage Yard
x. Eversley Storage
xi. Finn’s Business Park, Crondall
xii. Fleet Business Park, Church Crookham
xiii. Grove Farm Barn, Crookham Village
xiv. Lodge Farm, North Warnborough
xv. Murrell Green Business Park
xvi. Potters Industrial Park, Church Crookham
xvii. Redfields Business Park, Church Crookham
xviii. Optrex Business Park, Rotherwick
xix. Beacon Hill Road, Church Crookham

In cases where planning permission is required, the change of use or redevelopment of land and buildings in defined Locally Important Employment Sites will only be supported if it can be demonstrated that:

a) there are no strong economic reasons to retain the employment use;

b) market signals indicate that the premises / site are unlikely to be utilised for employment use; or

c) the proposed use is of a similar character\(^2\) to employment uses in Use Classes B1, B2 and B8; or

d) the site is not appropriate for the continuation of its employment use due to a significant detriment to the environment or amenity of the area.

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\(^2\)Use classes that are of similar character will reflect the level of employment proposed, and the skills required and could include sui-generis uses but will not include town centre uses (e.g. uses in class A1 – A5).
Policy ED3 The Rural Economy

To support the rural economy, development proposals for economic uses in the countryside will be supported where they:

a) are for a change of use or conversion of a suitable permanent building or for a new small-scale building that is appropriate to a rural area, located in or on the edge of an existing settlement; or

b) are for a replacement building or extension to a building in line with Policy NBE1; or

c) enable the continuing sustainability or expansion of a business or enterprise, including development where it supports a farm diversification scheme and the main agricultural enterprise; or

d) provide business floorspace that would enable the establishment of rural enterprises; or

e) in the case of new buildings, and extensions to existing buildings, are supported by evidence of need for the scale of the development proposed.

All development proposals must be of a use and scale that is appropriate to the site and location when considering:

i. landscape, heritage and environmental impacts;

ii. impacts on residential amenity;

iii. the accessibility of the site; and

iv. the impact on the local highway network including the type of traffic generated, the appropriateness for the local highway network to accommodate the development and the impact on their character.
Appendix 3 Prior Permissions for Change of Use from Employment to Residential Use