

WALWORTH BUSINESS PARK, ANDOVER

PLANNING GUIDANCE NOTE

1 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council is actively progressing a long term strategy to rejuvenate the Walworth Business Park, through a joint venture arrangement with a private sector partner. Significant recent investment has been made as a first stage in environmental improvements to landscaping alongside Walworth Road, together with enhanced signage and branding.
- 1.2 Enabling a prosperous economy is one of the Council's six key priorities and working to rejuvenate Andover's commercial estates the top action under this heading.

2 Status

- 2.1 This guidance note is written for the Walworth Business Park, including the extension land to the east (see para.4.4). The broad principles apply to all business parks and industrial estates and all other employment sites and premises throughout the Borough.
- 2.2 It sets guidance on the control of changes of use of land and premises and sets out the process and justification needed in order to comply with relevant planning policies. It should be read alongside the adopted *Test Valley Borough Local Plan 2006* and other relevant Council planning policy documents forming part of the Local Development Framework (LDF).
- 2.3 It was approved by the Cabinet on 17 February 2010.

3 Background

- 3.1 Originally envisaged as part of the Town Development Agreement of the early 1960s, Walworth was laid out in the 1970s and 1980s. It forms the oldest and largest commercial area in Andover at over 200 acres and with 2.8M sq.ft of commercial floorspace.
- 3.2 In recent years however, due to change in the economy, there has been a loss of manufacturing jobs, for which the factories were originally designed. Additionally the age of many buildings means that they do not now meet enhanced building specifications required by modern business and levels of vacancy have increased.
- 3.3 The reduction in the remaining years left on ground leases originally granted in the 1960s for 99 to 125 years, together with complex patterns of ownership and leasing structure has acted as a barrier to the viability of new investment in refurbishment and redevelopment.

4 Planning Context

- 4.1 The overall aim is to provide land and premises for new and existing businesses to grow, to provide jobs to meet the needs of the local labour force, to enhance economic competitiveness and to allow for existing employment areas to respond to new forms of employment in the future. Walworth makes a major contribution to the local economy, alongside the other employment sites within the town and the economic role of the town centre.
- 4.2 It is recognised that the structure of local economy has changed and there is now low demand for manufacturing and general industrial (Class B2) use for which many premises on Walworth were originally built. However, the Council wish to retain a predominantly business/employment area where traditional business (Class B) uses continue to predominate. Other uses may be appropriate subject to compliance with planning policies and national planning guidance.
- 4.3 Notwithstanding the current economic climate, it remains important to take a long term strategic approach to the future of Walworth and the wider local economy. Andover has a high level of self containment in terms of the local labour market and given planned growth in the town's population due to significant new housing, additional local job opportunities are vital for the long term wellbeing of the town. Major new communities are being developed on the eastern side of the town; 2,500 dwellings at East Anton and 1,200 at Picket Twenty. In total 6,100 new homes are planned over the 20 years to 2026 and this will increase the town's population to over 50,000 residents.
- 4.4 Land to the east of the existing business park is allocated as an extension to Walworth (Local Plan Policy AND 03.1) for employment use within Class B1(b), Class B1(c), Class B2 and Class B8. This together with the refurbishment of existing buildings and the redevelopment of existing plots, will allow opportunities for local firms to grow and new businesses to locate in Andover.
- 4.5 The Council commissioned the *Test Valley Employment Land Review and Andover Employment Floorspace Demand Study (ELR) 2008* as part of the evidence base to inform the Core Strategy. The study found that whilst there is sufficient local supply of employment land in Andover, the existing strategic sites, including Walworth, should be retained in employment use.
- 4.6 Walworth is included as a Cluster Site within the *Employment Land in Hampshire - Large Site Assessment Study 2009* undertaken by Hampshire Economic Partnership (HEP), due to the multiple large site developments it contains. As such, it is of considerable strategic importance for employment land.
- 4.7 Walworth has good access to the Strategic Road Network (SRN), with close proximity to the A303(T) affording accessible links to the A34(T) and M3.

5 Planning Policy

- 5.1 Applications for the change of use of existing land and premises will be assessed against Local Plan Policy ESN 15 (see Section 6).

LOCAL PLAN POLICY ESN 15 RETENTION OF EMPLOYMENT LAND

On existing employment sites within settlements, development for an alternative use will not be permitted unless the activity is causing, or could cause, significant harm to the character of the area or the amenities of residents.

On existing employment sites, allocated employment sites, or sites with planning permission for employment use, which have not yet been fully developed, development for an alternative use will not be permitted unless the land is no longer required to meet economic development needs.

- 5.2 The policy seeks to balance the continuing needs for traditional business uses (within Use Classes B1, B2 and B8) with more sui generis uses and other commercial use. It is considered important to retain the existing and allocated sites for continued employment use.
- 5.3 National guidance in *Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4): Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth* is also a material consideration and the relevant policies of the *South East Plan* are also applicable.
- 5.4 PPS4 includes within the definition of economic development; Class B uses, retail development, leisure, entertainment and more intensive sport and recreation use and arts, culture and tourism development. The overarching objective is sustainable economic growth and regeneration investment priorities should be identified.
- 5.5 A positive approach and constructive approach should be taken towards planning applications for economic land uses and flexible policies set to respond to changing economic circumstances. In considering proposals, weight should be given to the regeneration, social inclusion and mixed use development benefits, but only where these comply with town centre planning policy.

Class B Uses

- 5.4 For the purposes of Local Plan Policy ESN 15 the definition of employment use is those uses which lie within Classes B1, B2 and B8 and akin sui generis uses.

Class B1 Business

B1a Offices

B1b Research and Development

B1c Light Industry

Class B2 General Industrial

Class B8 Storage and Distribution

Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended)

- 5.5 A number of general open Class B (i.e. Classes, B1, B2 and B8) planning permissions have been granted for existing buildings in order to provide flexibility to replace historic restricted permissions for specific use classes or specific named uses under different former planning rules. The Council is open for this to continue and will in principle treat such proposals favourably, subject to compatibility with adjacent plots and the overall layout of the business park.

6 Non Class B Uses

- 6.1 The principle of any non Class B uses and its potential location should ideally be discussed with the Council as local planning authority prior to the submission of a planning application and a formal Pre-Application Advice Request is encouraged. The location of these would need to be compatible with adjacent plots and overall layout of the business park. Where there are opportunities for the appropriate clustering of similar or complementary uses this will be encouraged.

- 6.2 The following uses are in principle acceptable, subject to compliance with the requirements of Local Plan Policy ESN 15 (see Annex A for further information):

Local shop

Support facilities for businesses

Children's nursery

Car showrooms

Trade Counters

Retail activity where ancillary to showrooms, themselves ancillary with storage and distribution

- 6.3 Other commercial uses, (e.g. relocating from less appropriate locations in the town) will exceptionally be considered if deemed acceptable and appropriate in scale and location. Activities such as recycling or the processing of materials would be considered on this basis.

6.4 Housing will not be permitted, due to compatibility and amenity issues.

Retail, Leisure and other Town Centre Uses

6.5 These uses would be permitted subject to compliance with Local Plan Policy ESN17 and PPS4, in addition to Local Plan Policy ESN 15 (see Annex A for further information).

LOCAL PLAN POLICY ESN 17 MAJOR DEVELOPMENT AND OTHER KEY TOWN CENTRE USES

Retail developments, and other key town centre uses (such as large scale commercial offices, entertainment and leisure facilities) will be permitted within the town centres of Andover or Romsey (as defined on Inset Maps 2 & 4), provided that they are designed at a scale appropriate to the size of the centre.

Development for significant retail, commercial, entertainment or leisure facilities outside Andover and Romsey town centres will not be permitted if it could be accommodated within a town centre, edge of centre of local centre (in order of preference).

Any development that would harm the vitality and viability of town centres will not be permitted.

6.6 Examples of recent permitted uses on business parks in Andover where these requirements have been met include:

- Gymnasium,
- Sports and fitness clubs,
- Children's play centre, and
- Hotel

6.7 Uses which fall within the scope of 'town centre uses' defined in Local Plan Policy ESN 17 and national guidance in *Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4): Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth*, must additionally be assessed against this policy and be subject to a 'sequential' approach to site selection assessment, as set out in PPS4. It will need to be demonstrated that there is no site or premises within the town centre or on the 'edge of (the town) centre' suitable and available to accommodate the development.

6.8 Edge of centre is defined as, within 300 metres of the Primary Shopping Area boundary for retail development and within 300 metres of the Town Centre boundary for development of other town centre uses. Both these boundaries are as defined in the Local Plan.

6.9 Major retail and major town centre uses (over 2,500 square metres) are also likely to be additionally subject to an assessment of 'significant adverse impact' on the town centre as set out in PPS4.

7 Marketing Information

- 7.1 Developments for changes of use which are for non Class B uses, must be justified in term of Policy ESN 15 criterion in that the site or premises is no longer required to meet economic development needs. In order to provide this supporting evidence is required to be submitted (see Annex A for further information).
- 7.2 It will be expected that evidence of appropriate marketing for a period of six months at a reasonable valuation figure be provided to accompany a planning application. Evidence of marketing of a directly comparable building in close proximity within the last three months may be sufficient to meet this requirement, provided this relationship with the building the subject of the planning application can be satisfactorily demonstrated. Vacancy in itself will not be sufficient to satisfactorily demonstrate a lack of commercial demand.
- 7.3 If a building is deemed to be no longer suitable or viable for a particular type of continued employment use, then it should be marketed for change of use or redevelopment for another type of employment use (within Classes B1, B2 and B8), prior to the consideration of other uses.

8 Quality of Development, Design and Standards

- 8.1 For all development there is a need to ensure that the level of parking provision and the standards of landscaping and the sustainability and quality of buildings is appropriate.
- 8.2 Development should comply with current parking standards as set out in Local Plan Annex 2.
- 8.3 The provision of landscaping is an important element in the layout of Walworth and in creating a quality environment and setting for buildings. A Draft Landscaping Improvement Scheme for Walworth was reported to the Cabinet on 19 December 2007 (Item 12). The provision of landscape should be in line with this strategy and existing valuable features should be retained to maintain the environment and opportunities for enhancement considered.
- 8.4 The layout and design of development should be of a high standard and the external treatment and materials of buildings appropriate to that of a business park. In prominent locations, such as along Walworth Road and at key junctions, design is particularly important.
- 8.5 In terms of sustainability and the environmental standards of new and refurbished buildings, they should be designed to maximise energy efficiency and water conservation opportunities. New buildings should ideally meet BREEAM 'Very Good' or an equivalent standard.
- 8.6 In principle, where practical, the provision of on-site renewable energy generation is encouraged.

9 Developer Contributions

- 9.1 The Council may seek s106 and s278 developer contributions from any development in accordance with the adopted *Infrastructure and Developer Contributions Supplementary Planning Document (SPD)* (February 2009).

Planning Policy and Transport Service
Planning and Building Service
February 2010

INFORMATION TO SUPPORT PLANNING APPLICATIONS

Applications for non Class B uses (including retail, leisure or town centre uses)

The following planning policies and national planning guidance is particularly relevant:

- Local Plan Policy ESN 15
- Local Plan Policy ESN 17
- Planning Policy Statement 4 (PPS4) Planning for Sustainable Economic Growth

In order to comply with Local Plan Policy ESN 15 and PPS4, for development or change of use for any use(s) other than within Class B, the following evidence must be submitted with the application:

- a) An assessment that demonstrates that the existing activity is causing, or could cause, significant harm to the character of the area or the amenities of residents.
- b) An assessment that demonstrates that the land is no longer required to meet economic development needs.
- c) Vacancy in itself is not sufficient. Details of the length of vacancy should be provided.
- d) Evidence of six months marketing of the site or premises should be submitted with the application. This should provide full details of the form and nature of the marketing which has been undertaken together with details of the price and terms on which this has been made. The valuation figure will be expected to be reasonable. This should include how the site or premises has been advertised/publicised and the level of interest which this has generated.
- e) Alternatively where evidence can be provided (which fully satisfies d) above) for the marketing of a directly comparable building in close proximity to the site or premises which has been undertaken within the last three months this may be sufficient.
- f) If it is considered that the premises are no longer suitable or viable for a particular type of continued employment use then the marketing should include for a change of use to other use(s) within Classes B1, B2 or B8. This should be undertaken prior to consideration for non Class B uses.

For uses that fall within the scope of 'town centre uses' (including retail and leisure) as defined in PPS4, in order to comply with Local Plan Policy ESN 17 and PPS4, the following evidence must also be submitted with the application.

- g) A 'sequential approach assessment', which is in accordance with PPS4 requirements. This should demonstrate that there is no site or premises within the town centre or on the edge of the town centre which is suitable and available to accommodate the development. This should be based upon the site and premises requirements of the development.

For retail development, edge of town centre is defined as within 300 metres of the Primary Shopping Area boundary as defined in the Local Plan.

For other town centre uses development, edge of town centre is defined as within 300 metres of the Town Centre boundary as defined in the Local Plan.

- h) A 'significant adverse impact' assessment for major retail and major town centre uses (including leisure) over 2,500 square metres, which is in accordance with PPS4 requirements.