

## Examination of the North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031

### Statement of Stevenage Borough Council

#### Matter 13 – Economic development (B Class Uses) (Policies SP3, ETC1 and ETC2)

*13.4 As I understand it, the Plan provides some employment land to address a shortfall in Stevenage.*

*a) Is that correct?*

*b) If so, what amount of employment land is aimed at meeting the shortfall in Stevenage?*

*c) Are specific sites explicitly earmarked for this purpose?*

*d) What evidence underpins all of this?*

1. The Stevenage Employment Technical Paper Update (Dec 2016) (Appendix 1) provides an up-to-date assessment of employment need for Stevenage and was relied upon to inform the Stevenage Borough Local Plan (SBLP) (ORD6). This takes into account the 2016 EEFM forecasts and identifies a need for around 30ha of employment land to 2031 (para 2.29).
2. Table 3.1 of the Employment Paper identifies that 18.5ha land supply can be identified within the Borough boundary. This includes the allocation of new employment sites within the SBLP, any existing commitments and the intensification of the existing Employment Areas. All positively assessed sites from the Strategic Land Availability Assessment have been brought forward for employment use, where possible, which includes the allocation of a Green Belt site. The SBLP policies also strongly protect the existing Employment Areas from any further loss.
3. However, this still results in a shortfall of around 11.5ha. As such, Stevenage is reliant on its neighbours under the Duty to Co-operate.
4. The Inspector's Report into the SBLP (ED16) agrees that the target of 30ha employment land is appropriate (para 67) and recognises the difficulties Stevenage face in seeking to meet these needs. Main Modifications are recommended, to detail the shortfall figure within the plan itself and to ensure it is clear how this shortfall will be met.
5. The FEMA (E3) identifies that Stevenage is located within a wider A1(M) corridor market area. This broadly covers the areas of Stevenage, North Hertfordshire and the eastern half of Central Bedfordshire (see Chapter 3).

6. In an MoU between NHDC and SBC (MOU11), the level of shortfall is agreed and it is also agreed that, *'having regard to updated evidence produced by NHDC, the additional employment land identified in Policy SP3 of the plan could address these unmet needs in full'*.
7. In our representations at the Regulation 19 stage, Stevenage Borough Council raised concerns about the commitment to provide additional employment land to meet Stevenage's unmet needs not being explicitly referenced within the NHDC plan. A Modification has since been proposed by NHDC (LPS, p2) to amend the wording of Policy SP3, to specify that the supply of employment land required to 2031 should also include *'provision towards unmet needs for employment arising from Stevenage'*. SBC supports this proposed modification.
8. **Subject to this proposed modification being included in the final version of the plan, following examination, this would resolve our objections in this regard.**
9. As referenced more fully in our Matter 7 statement, consideration should also be given to the future employment needs of SBC, beyond the plan period. It is likely that SBC will again look to NHDC (and other neighbouring authorities) to help provide for any unmet needs. As such, consideration should be given to this issue when determining the most appropriate Green Belt boundaries and the appropriateness of adding additional land into the Green Belt, thus limiting development potential.