

HINCKLEY & BOSWORTH BOROUGH LOCAL PLAN 2024–2045

REGULATION 19 (PRE-SUBMISSION) TOPIC PAPER

Employment Land Provision

July 2026

Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council

This Topic Paper forms part of the evidence base supporting the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Local Plan and should be read alongside the Local Plan, the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024), and the employment evidence base identified in Section 5.

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1. Introduction and Purpose of this Topic Paper

- 1.1.1 This Topic Paper has been prepared by Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council ("the Council") to support the Regulation 19 Pre-Submission Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan 2024–2045 ("the Local Plan"). It sets out the evidence base, methodology and policy justification underpinning the Local Plan's approach to employment land provision and demonstrates how the strategy for general employment and strategic B8 (logistics, distribution and warehousing) floorspace has been arrived at.
- 1.1.2 The paper explains how the Council has identified the quantum of employment land needed over the plan period, how this need has been translated into a deliverable portfolio of site allocations and policies, and how the approach responds to national policy, sub-regional evidence and Duty to Cooperate obligations with neighbouring authorities in Leicester and Leicestershire and beyond. A central purpose of the paper is to demonstrate the clear line of reasoning between the evidence base, the employment land requirements in Policy PS04, and the allocations selected to meet those requirements with sufficient flexibility, market choice and delivery factors.
- 1.1.3 The paper is intended to assist an Inspector examining the soundness of the Local Plan, and other interested parties, in understanding the rationale for the employment land strategy set out in Policy PS04 (Delivering Sustainable Growth), the individual strategic site-specific employment policies PS13–PS17, and the Economic Prosperity Policies EP01–EP06.
- 1.1.4 Information in relation to site selection is contained in the separate Site Selection Topic Paper which forms part of the Regulation 19 Consultation documentation available on the Councils' website.

1.2 Status and Scope

- 1.2.1 This Topic Paper is a supporting evidence document. It does not form part of the statutory development plan; the policies of the Local Plan itself carry statutory weight. Where reference is made in this paper to evidence base documents, those documents are identified in full in Section 5 and are available separately as part of the Local Plan evidence base on the Councils website.
- 1.2.2 The paper focuses specifically on employment land provision: general employment uses (Use Class E(g)(i)–(iii), B2 and non-strategic B8) and strategic B8 logistics, distribution and warehousing floorspace (units of 9,000 sqm or more). It does not address retail, town centre or leisure land use requirements, nor does it repeat the full reasoning for housing land supply.
- 1.2.3 The paper should be read alongside the Local Plan (Regulation 19, Pre-Submission version, July 2026), the National Planning Policy Framework (December 2024) ("the NPPF"), the Hinckley and Bosworth Employment Land and Premises Study (Lambert Smith Hampton, August 2024) ("the 2024 ELR"), the Hinckley and Bosworth Employment Land Review Update 2025 (Lambert Smith Hampton, December 2025) ("the 2025 ELR Update"), and the Leicester & Leicestershire Strategic Distribution Floorspace Needs Update and Apportionment Report (October 2025, amended January 2026) and its January 2026 Errata (together "the Strategic B8 Study"). All these documents are available to view on the Councils website.

2. National Planning Policy Context

2.1 Building a Strong, Competitive Economy

- 2.1.1 Chapter 6 of the NPPF (2024) requires planning policies and decisions to "help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt", placing significant weight on the need to support economic growth and productivity (paragraph 85). Paragraph 86 requires plans to set out a clear economic vision and strategy, to set criteria and identify strategic sites for local and inward investment, and to be flexible enough to accommodate needs that were not anticipated in the plan.
- 2.1.2 Paragraph 87(b) is of particular relevance to this Topic Paper. It requires planning policies and decisions to make provision for "storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations that allow for the efficient and reliable handling of goods, especially where this is needed to support the supply chain, transport innovation and decarbonisation." This provides direct national policy support for the identification of strategic B8 allocations in suitably accessible locations, such as those adjoining the A5 corridor and the M1, addressed in Section 8 of this paper.
- 2.1.3 Paragraph 88 requires planning policies and decisions to enable the sustainable growth and expansion of businesses in rural areas, and the development and diversification of agricultural and other land-based rural businesses; this underpins Policy EP04 (Growing and Diversifying the Rural Economy).

2.2 Plan-Making, Soundness and Flexibility

- 2.2.1 Paragraph 11 of the NPPF establishes the presumption in favour of sustainable development. For plan-making, strategic policies should, as a minimum, provide for objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, including employment. Paragraph 20 requires strategic policies to make sufficient provision for employment, and paragraph 23 requires strategic policies to provide a clear strategy for bringing sufficient land forward, and at a sufficient rate, to address objectively assessed needs over the plan period.
- 2.2.2 Paragraph 36 sets out the four tests of soundness against which the Local Plan, including its employment land strategy, will be examined: that it is Positively Prepared, Justified (an appropriate strategy, taking into account reasonable alternatives and based on proportionate evidence), Effective (deliverable over the plan period, based on effective joint working on cross-boundary matters) and Consistent with National Policy. Section 12 of this paper draws these threads together against each of these tests.
- 2.2.3 Paragraph 127 requires planning policies and decisions to reflect changes in the demand for land, informed by regular review of allocated land and land availability; where there is no reasonable prospect of an allocated use coming forward, plans should reallocate or deallocate accordingly. This principle is reflected in the Local Plan's approach to monitoring and its early review mechanism (Policy PS18), addressed in Section 10 of this paper.

2.3 Cross-Boundary Cooperation

- 2.3.1 Paragraphs 24–28 of the NPPF require local planning authorities to cooperate on strategic matters that cross administrative boundaries, and to prepare and maintain Statements of Common Ground documenting cross-boundary matters and progress in addressing them. Strategic B8 logistics and warehousing floorspace is, by its nature, a matter that operates at a sub-regional and regional scale rather than being containable within a single local authority

boundary, and paragraph 28 is therefore of central importance to the strategic B8 element of the Local Plan's employment strategy, addressed in Section 9 below.

- 2.3.2 Paragraph 36(c) requires the Local Plan to be "Effective" — deliverable over the plan period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters that have been dealt with rather than deferred, as evidenced by a statement of common ground. The Council's approach to strategic B8 provision, informed by the Strategic B8 Study prepared jointly by the Leicester and Leicestershire authorities, is central to demonstrating this test is met. Ongoing discussions on these matters through the various joint working groups such as the Policy Officers Forum (POF), Task and Finish and Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire Association of Planning Officers (CSWAPO).

3. Strategic and Sub-Regional Context

3.1 The Leicester and Leicestershire Functional Economic Market Area

- 3.1.1 Hinckley & Bosworth forms part of the wider Leicester and Leicestershire Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA). The borough's economy is closely linked to that of neighbouring authorities, and to the wider Midlands 'Golden Triangle' — the area bounded broadly by the M1, M6 and M42 which is nationally recognised as the prime location for logistics and distribution facilities serving the whole of England and Wales within a typical HGV drive-time.
- 3.1.2 The Local Plan's spatial portrait recognises that economic prosperity is central to the long-term sustainability of the borough, and that the NPPF (2024) reaffirms the Government's commitment to ensuring the planning system actively supports economic development. The Local Plan seeks to create the conditions for strong, resilient and competitive economic growth across the borough, recognising the importance of both the local economy and the wider regional context of the Golden Triangle.

3.2 MIRA Technology Park and the A5 Corridor

- 3.2.1 The borough hosts Horiba MIRA Technology Park, a nationally and internationally significant automotive research and development cluster extending to some 332 hectares and supporting over 35 major companies, including Bosch, Haldex, Aston Martin, Toyota, Jaguar Land Rover and 3M. Part of the site has held Enterprise Zone status since August 2011, focused on Advanced Manufacturing/Engineering, Automotive, Defence, Mobility, Clean Technology and Transport, and MIRA is currently the only transport-sector-focused Enterprise Zone in the country. Policy EP05 makes specific provision for the continued growth of MIRA, including a minimum of 24.53 hectares of available developable land as identified in the most up-to-date Employment Land and Premises Study¹.
- 3.2.2 MIRA occupies a strategically significant position on the A5 corridor, which also underpins the location of the strategic B8 allocations addressed in Section 8 of this paper. The A5 corridor benefits from strong cross-boundary connections into Leicestershire, Warwickshire (Nuneaton & Bedworth, North Warwickshire, Rugby), West Midlands (Birmingham and Solihull) and Staffordshire (Tamworth, Lichfield and Cannock Chase) and its importance to the delivery of strategic employment growth is reflected throughout the Local Plan's spatial strategy.

¹ Table 33, Page 118, Employment Land Review (2024).

3.3 Golden Triangle Warehousing Demand

- 3.3.1 The 2024 ELR confirms that demand for B8 logistics and warehousing in Hinckley & Bosworth is predominantly regional and national in character, rather than driven by "last mile" local requirements. Occupiers seek locations within the Golden Triangle with direct access to the strategic road network. Within this sub-region, highway capacity and Green Belt constraints elsewhere mean that relatively little land remains available and allocated for logistics at the historic core of the Golden Triangle, and demand has increasingly extended to locations such as Hinckley & Bosworth with good, but not core, strategic highway access.
- 3.3.2 The 2024 ELR notes that Hinckley & Bosworth has historically delivered the vast majority of strategic B8 floorspace built in Leicestershire, reflecting its position as the Leicestershire district closest to the core of the Golden Triangle. Of the 187.7 hectares of employment land taken up across the borough between 1999 and 2023, some 121.4 hectares (nearly two-thirds) was for strategic B8 development².

4. Local Economic Profile

- 4.1.1 Employment amongst 16–64 year olds across the borough stood at 82.3% in the year to December 2023, higher than the East Midlands average of 75.5%. Unemployment stood at 3.4% in the year to December 2023 (up from 2.1% the previous year) but remained below the East Midlands average of 3.7%. Pockets of deprivation persist, particularly in urban areas, associated with income deprivation, unemployment and lower educational attainment, alongside a wider Leicestershire context of comparatively low productivity, lower wages and high rates of out-commuting to Leicester, Birmingham and Coventry.
- 4.1.2 The rural economy makes a significant contribution to the borough: paragraph 4.4.17 of the 2024 ELR records that 42% of total jobs in Hinckley & Bosworth are located in rural areas, underpinning the Local Plan's policy support for rural economic diversification through Policy EP04.
- 4.1.3 The borough's key employers span advanced manufacturing and automotive R&D (MIRA and its associated cluster, Triumph Motorcycles), logistics and distribution (Tesco Distribution Depot, Caterpillar/Neovia at Desford, Aldi Distribution Centre at Nailstone, and the emerging Hinckley Park/Wapping and Harrow Farm B8 cluster on the A5 corridor), and a range of smaller industrial estates serving local and sub-regional markets across the settlement hierarchy.

5. Evidence Base

5.1 Employment Land and Premises Study (2024) and 2025 ELR Update

- 5.1.1 The Employment Land and Premises Study (Lambert Smith Hampton, August 2024) is the principal evidence base document underpinning the Local Plan's employment land strategy. It assessed the borough's economic context, the amount and type of employment land likely to be needed, the quality and suitability of existing employment sites, and made recommendations on future allocations.
- 5.1.2 The 2024 ELR modelled employment land need using economic forecasts from three providers — Cambridge Econometrics (CE), Oxford Economics (OE) and Experian — converting forecast sectoral jobs growth into a land requirement via a sequence of floorspace and density assumptions, plot ratios and an allowance for changing working patterns (see Figure 3 of the

² Table 35, page 121, Employment Land Review (2024)

2025 ELR Update, reproduced in outline below). It also tested sensitivity scenarios reflecting the Hinckley National Rail Freight Interchange (HNRFI) proposal (which at the time the evidence was being prepared was pending through the NSIP process and was subsequently refused on the 10/03/2025) and scenarios based on past completions trends.

- 5.1.3 Across all scenarios, the 2024 ELR identified a general employment land requirement (Class E(g)(i)–(iii) and B2/B8) of between 43.9 hectares and 65.7 hectares for the period 2020–2041 (Table 68 of the 2024 ELR). The 2024 ELR's key conclusion was that the labour-demand approach, while useful for general employment uses, is not a robust method for forecasting strategic B8 floorspace, because the link between jobs growth and floorspace that holds for most employment uses breaks down for large-scale, highly automated warehousing where additional floorspace does not translate into a proportionate increase in jobs. The 2024 ELR therefore recommended that strategic B8 land requirements be considered separately from general employment need, informed by the sub-regional Strategic B8 Study (Section 5.2 below).
- 5.1.4 For general employment (excluding strategic B8), the 2024 ELR's supply-side assessment found 24.53 hectares of available land reserved for the automotive sector at MIRA (sufficient for the plan period) and a further 13.08 hectares across ten other available general employment sites (7.98 hectares excluding the former Cadent site, subsequently allocated for housing under Policy PS05). Against an assessed need of 43.9–65.7 hectares, and having regard to the top of this range to ensure economic growth is properly supported, the 2024 ELR identified a shortfall and recommended that the Council: (a) allocate a further 33 hectares of land for general employment development; (b) identify additional land for strategic B8 in line with the recommendations of the county-wide Strategic B8 Study; and (c) preserve the existing allocations at MIRA. The evidence therefore does not simply identify a numerical requirement; it also points to the need for a portfolio of sites capable of responding to different market segments, delivery timescales and site-specific constraints.
- 5.1.5 The Hinckley and Bosworth Employment Land Review Update 2025 (Lambert Smith Hampton, December 2025) (the 2025 ELR Update) provides a selective update to the 2024 ELR to reflect: the Local Plan's revised plan period of 2024–2045; an additional year of employment completions data (to 2024); updated CE, OE and Experian econometric forecasts; and an assessment of 34 additional potential employment sites identified through the Council's subsequent Call for Sites. The 2025 ELR Update confirms that the methodology and overall conclusions of the 2024 ELR remain robust and that the evidence base as a whole is suitable for informing strategic employment policies.
- 5.1.6 The updated 2024–45 forecasts show a wider range of jobs growth (3,300–7,400 jobs, an annual growth rate of 0.3–0.7%) than the WFH-sensitivity scenarios in the 2024 ELR, translating into an updated general employment land requirement of between 33.2 hectares (CE forecast) and 61.7 hectares (Experian forecast), with an average of 47.0 hectares. Projections based on past completions trends (excluding strategic B8) show a similar range of 57.6–66.5 hectares. The 2025 ELR Update concludes that planning for the higher end of the updated range provides an appropriate basis for identifying future employment land needs, consistent with the 2024 ELR's approach.
- 5.1.7 The Call for Sites assessment in the 2025 ELR Update identified a number of additional potential sites suited to large-scale distribution uses (in excess of 2 hectares and within 2km of the strategic highway network), including sites at Burbage, Markfield, Groby, Hinckley and Fenny Drayton, several of which inform the reasonable alternatives considered by the Council in identifying the strategic B8 allocations addressed in Section 8.

5.2 The Leicester & Leicestershire Strategic Distribution Study

- 5.2.1 Because demand for strategic B8 floorspace (units of 9,000 sqm and above) operates at a regional and national scale rather than being containable within a single local authority area, the Leicester and Leicestershire authorities have historically planned jointly for this need. The most recent iteration of this joint evidence is the Leicester & Leicestershire Strategic Distribution Floorspace Needs Update and Apportionment Report (October 2025, corrected January 2026), prepared to update the earlier 2021 GL Hearn study "Warehousing and Logistics in Leicester and Leicestershire: Managing Growth and Change", and its accompanying Errata (January 2026).
- 5.2.2 The Strategic B8 Study identifies the need for additional strategic distribution floorspace across Leicester and Leicestershire to 2046, reflecting structural changes in the logistics sector including growth in e-commerce, supply chain resilience ("just-in-case" stockholding replacing "just-in-time"), and demand for modern, high-quality warehousing capable of accommodating automation and decarbonisation technology. The Study concludes that existing commitments across the sub-region will only meet needs in the short term, with a clear requirement for new sites to come forward from 2028 onwards.
- 5.2.3 In apportioning this sub-regional requirement, the Study identifies a need for Hinckley & Bosworth of 755,800 sqm, representing 19% of Leicestershire's total strategic B8 need. Recorded completions and commitments as at the 2023/24 monitoring base date total 327,000 sqm, giving a residual requirement of 428,800 sqm to be planned for over the period 2028–2046. Adjusted to the Local Plan's own base date and plan period (2024–2045), this equates to a requirement of 690,081 sqm from 2028 onward (see Table 2 in Section 7.2 below). The Study's apportionment provides the quantitative starting point for Policy PS04, while its Areas of Opportunity and locational analysis provide the qualitative basis for selecting allocations that are suitably accessible, capable of serving the strategic logistics market and sufficiently varied to provide occupier choice.
- 5.2.4 The Study identifies broad "Areas of Opportunity" for strategic distribution development based on accessibility to the strategic road network and other locational factors, including an A5 (North) Area of Opportunity, within which the Hinckley Park/Wapping and Harrow Farm and Soar Brook sites are located, and the M1 Junction 22 broad location associated with the Cliffe Hill Farm site at Markfield. The January 2026 Errata makes a technical correction to the Study but confirms that this does not affect its overall findings or apportionment.

5.3 Other Evidence

- 5.3.1 The employment land strategy is also informed by, and cross-referenced against, other parts of the Local Plan evidence base including the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), the Landscape Character Assessment and Landscape Sensitivity Study, the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, the Heritage Impact Assessments prepared for individual strategic sites, and the Infrastructure Delivery Plan (IDP) and Infrastructure Delivery Schedule, which together inform the site-specific requirements set out in Policies PS14–PS17.
- 5.3.2 Monitoring evidence maintained by the Council, underpins the completions and commitments figures reported in Policy PS04 and this Topic Paper (table 1 and 2). These figures are an interim position at this stage as the final completion and commitment figures for 2024 / 2025 are still under review and will be updated in due course for submission.

6. Identifying the Employment Land Requirement

6.1 General Employment Need

6.1.1 Drawing on the 2024 ELR and the 2025 ELR Update, the Local Plan identifies an evidenced general employment land need of 64.1 hectares over the plan period (2024–2045), reflecting the upper part of the range identified across the economic forecasting and completions-trend scenarios, consistent with the ELR's advice that the Council should plan for the higher end of the identified range to ensure economic growth is properly supported.

6.1.2 Table 1 below replicates how the employment land need is met as per the calculation set out in Policy PS04.

Ref	Component	Hectares
A	Employment land completions (2024–2026)	11.54
B	Remaining employment land supply (commitments, 2024–2026)	73.28
C	Evidenced general employment land need (2024–2045)	64.1
D	Allocations (excluding site ref. GRO003: Land North of Glenfield, Groby)	40.24
E	Total plan provision	177.63

Table 1: Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan Employment Land Provision (2024–2045) — General Employment (Class E(g)(i), E(g)(ii) & E(g)(iii)) and non-strategic B8 (ha). Source: Local Plan Policy PS04, Table 6.

6.1.3 The total plan provision of 177.63 hectares — comprising committed supply already benefiting from planning permission (completions and commitments of 84.82 hectares) together with new allocations of 40.24 hectares (excluding the Directions for Growth land at Groby, which lies adjacent to the proposed employment allocation within neighbouring Blaby district) — provides comfortably in excess of the identified 64.1 hectare requirement. This headroom is a deliberate feature of the strategy, reflecting the historic volatility of employment completions, the practical reality that not every committed or allocated site will come forward at the same rate, and the need to provide genuine choice and flexibility for the market, consistent with paragraph 86(e) of the NPPF.

6.2 Strategic B8 Need

6.2.1 As explained in Section 5.2, the strategic B8 requirement is derived from the sub-regional apportionment set out in the Strategic B8 Study rather than from the borough-level economic forecasting used for general employment, reflecting the regional and national character of demand for large-format logistics floorspace. Table 2 below reproduces Policy PS04's calculation for strategic B8.

Ref	Component	sqm
A	Employment land completions (strategic B8, 9,000 sqm+) (2024–2026)	31,666
B	Remaining employment land supply (commitments, 2024–2026)	143,114
C	Total (A+B)	174,780
D	Evidenced employment land need — strategic B8 (9,000 sqm+, from 2028 onward)	690,081
E	Need after supply removed (D–C)	515,201

Ref	Component	sqm
F	Allocations	628,239
G	Surplus	112,938
H	Overall plan provision (C+F)	803,019

Table 2: Hinckley & Bosworth Local Plan Employment Land Provision (2024–2045) — Strategic B8 (sqm). Source: Local Plan Policy PS04, Table 7.

- 6.2.2 The residual need of 515,201 sqm (after netting off existing completions and commitments) is met through a portfolio of strategic B8 allocations totalling 628,239 sqm, generating a surplus of 112,938 sqm above the minimum requirement. Combined with existing supply, the overall plan provision of 803,019 sqm represents approximately 116% of the total identified need of 690,081 sqm.
- 6.2.3 The Local Plan is explicit that the minimum strategic B8 requirement in Policy PS04 (approximately 300,000 sqm of new allocations, once existing supply is taken into account) should not be interpreted as a ceiling on strategic B8 development. The rationale for allocating a larger portfolio than the identified minimum is addressed in Section 6.3 below.

6.3 The Case for a Portfolio Approach

- 6.3.1 The Local Plan deliberately identifies a portfolio of strategic B8 opportunities that exceeds the minimum floorspace provision identified in Policy PS04. This is a flexible response to the evidence that strategic logistics demand is sub-regional and national in character, that development requirements vary significantly by occupier, and that delivery of large-format B8 floorspace depends on a limited number of sites with different infrastructure, environmental and market factors. This approach reflects: the borough's established role within the L&L FEMA and the wider Golden Triangle; the need to provide flexibility and resilience within the strategic employment land portfolio; and the differing characteristics, market attractiveness and delivery trajectories of individual sites, some of which may not come forward, or may come forward more slowly than others, over the plan period.
- 6.3.2 Strategic logistics development is influenced by wider regional and national market drivers including infrastructure provision (in this case, principally the A5 Hinckley–Tamworth corridor and the Hinckley Western Link Road), site assembly and viability considerations that are outside the Council's direct control. A portfolio approach, providing a range of sites with differing characteristics, allows the market to bring forward the most suitable and deliverable opportunities first, while ensuring that if any individual site is delayed or does not come forward, the overall strategy is not undermined.
- 6.3.3 The portfolio approach also provides genuine market choice. Modern B8 operators require sites capable of accommodating different unit sizes, operational models, occupier phasing, access arrangements, automation requirements, power needs and opportunities for decarbonisation. The allocations respond to different parts of this market: the A5/Hinckley Park cluster provides continuity with an established logistics location and access to the A5 corridor, while the M1 Junction 22 location offers an alternative strategic road network location serving a different, evidenced, occupier catchment. Providing a choice of suitably accessible sites therefore helps the Local Plan respond to occupier requirements and changing economic circumstances over the plan period, rather than assuming that all strategic B8 demand can be met in one location or through a single delivery route. This is consistent with paragraph 86(e) of the NPPF, which requires planning policies to be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the

plan, and paragraph 87(b), which supports storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales in suitably accessible locations that allow for the efficient and reliable handling of goods. This approach is further supported by the Council's monitoring and early review framework under Policy PS18, addressed in section 10.

7. Policy Approach to Employment Land Provision

7.1 Policy PS04 — Provision of Overall Development

7.1.1 Policy PS04 sets the strategic framework for employment land provision, establishing that the Local Plan provides for both general employment land to meet local business needs, and strategic B8 logistics floorspace reflecting the borough's role in the wider logistics market. This dual approach is intended to support economic growth, inward investment and job creation while ensuring a balanced and flexible employment land portfolio, consistent with the evidence base set out in Section 5. Policy PS04 therefore functions as the bridge between the evidence-based requirements identified in Section 6 and the allocations identified in Section 8: the figures establish the scale of need, while the allocations provide the practical means of meeting that need with an appropriate margin for flexibility, market choice and delivery factors.

7.1.2 Delivery and flexibility are addressed through ongoing monitoring via the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR), informed by the Infrastructure Delivery Plan and supported by viability and deliverability evidence, with the Council committed to taking action where delivery falls below expectations, including, where necessary, through the early review mechanism in Policy PS18.

7.2 Policy EP01 — Existing Employment Areas

7.2.1 Policy EP01 protects the borough's stock of existing employment areas, categorised (consistent with the approach in the current adopted Local Plan) into three tiers, each with its own test for non-employment development:

Policy EP01 – Existing Employment Areas (summary of operative wording)

Category A: Key Employment Areas — land and premises protected for employment use only; non-employment uses supported only in exceptional circumstances where clearly small-scale and ancillary to, or directly supporting, the area's primary employment function, without significant adverse impact on surrounding employment uses or the efficient use of the wider area.

Category B: Fit for Purpose Employment Areas — employment use retained where possible; non-employment uses supported where the scale proposed is limited and proportionate, or where it is demonstrated that: (i) the site/premises is no longer suitable or adaptable for modern employment use; and/or (ii) it has been genuinely marketed for employment use for at least 12 months at reasonable market values without success; and/or (iii) the proposal delivers demonstrable environmental or community benefits that clearly outweigh the harm from losing employment land.

Category C: Lower Quality Employment Areas — a more flexible approach is taken; non-employment uses supported where they would not cause unacceptable impacts on, or prejudice the continued viable use of, remaining employment premises in the area.

7.2.2 The categorisation is based on the 2024 ELR (Chapter 7 and Appendices 2–3), which assessed each existing employment area in the borough against this three-tier approach. Category A areas include the borough's key strategic employment locations — Hinckley Park, Sketchley Meadows, Logix Distribution Park, Harrowbrook Industrial Estate, Tungsten Park and the Triumph Motorcycles and Tesco Distribution sites in the Hinckley Urban Area; MIRA, Caterpillar/Neovia and Peckleton Lane Business Park in the Desford area; and the three Mountpark Bardon phases. This protection is important to ensuring that existing employment

floorspace — which forms the largest single component of the borough's employment land stock — is not eroded through incremental loss to non-employment uses over the plan period, in line with paragraph 127 of the NPPF.

- 7.2.3 Where a proposal relies on an absence of demand for continued employment use, Policy EP01 requires proportionate and robust marketing evidence — normally a documented marketing strategy and campaign at reasonable market values for a continuous period of at least 12 months — demonstrating the level and nature of interest received and how the marketing approach was targeted at likely employment occupiers. This reflects national policy's expectation that authorities avoid long-term protection of sites where there is no reasonable prospect of continued employment use, while ensuring that land is not prematurely released.
- 7.2.4 The reasoned justification also recognises that a wider range of uses is increasingly coming forward within traditional employment areas — including vehicle hire, fuel stations, motor vehicle sales, training centres, nurseries and indoor sport/recreation — which can support local jobs and services. Such proposals would be assessed on their merits but are generally expected to be directed first to Category C areas, then Category B, having regard to the protected role of Category A Key Employment Areas. MIRA Technology Park Enterprise Zone is identified as a Category A area but is additionally subject to the site-specific criteria in Policy EP05 (Section 7.6).

7.3 Policy EP02 — New Employment Development on Non-Allocated Sites

- 7.3.1 Policy EP02 recognises that reliance solely on protected and allocated employment sites may not adequately accommodate evolving business requirements over a 21-year plan period, and provides a sequential mechanism through which employment development — Use Class E(g), B2 and B8 — can come forward on non-allocated sites.

Policy EP02 – New Employment Development on Non-Allocated Sites (summary of operative wording)

New employment development is supported within existing employment areas (Policy EP01). Outside those areas, development is permitted only where no suitable alternative site is available, applying a sequential test in the following order: (a) existing employment areas suitable for the scale, type and use proposed; (b) within settlement boundaries; (c) on previously developed land, including re-use of former employment sites no longer fit for purpose; (d) adjacent to existing employment areas; and (e) adjacent to settlement boundaries.

All proposals must additionally demonstrate: a significant contribution to the borough's economy and job creation; that delivery of other allocated employment sites (Policies PS13–PS17) is not undermined; support for sustainable transport; good design; no loss of valued landscapes, green infrastructure, biodiversity or best and most versatile agricultural land; adaptability to modern flexible business needs; climate change mitigation; and, in rural settlements, support for the rural economy or local services.

Standalone Use Class E(g) office development is treated as a Main Town Centre Use and directed in the first instance to Hinckley Town Centre and edge-of-centre locations (Policy TDC01); standalone office development elsewhere is supported only where no suitable town centre or edge-of-centre site is available and the proposal would not undermine centre vitality and viability.

- 7.3.2 This sequential mechanism provides an important contingency alongside the allocated portfolio, consistent with paragraph 86(e) of the NPPF's requirement for flexibility to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan. It is deliberately structured so that development on non-allocated land cannot undermine delivery of the strategic B8 and general employment allocations that meet the Local Plan's identified requirement, addressed in Sections 6 and 8.
- 7.3.3 The office sequential test reflects the approach required by paragraphs 90–91 of the NPPF for Main Town Centre Uses, and the 2024 ELR's finding (paragraph 11.2.4) that Hinckley's office

market is limited, secondary and unlikely to see speculative development, such that a flexible approach — including office space within farm diversification schemes under Policy EP04 and within Hinckley's Flexible Mixed-Use Area under Policy CT01 — should satisfy demand over the plan period without the need for a standalone office allocation.

7.4 Policy EP03 — Education and Skills for a Strong Local Workforce

Policy EP03 – Education and Skills for a Strong Local Workforce (summary of operative wording)

Development delivering employment for local people and improved local skills is supported, proportionate to its scale and the relevant labour market. Major commercial development over 10,000 sqm, and major residential development over 200 dwellings, must submit a Local Employment and Training Strategy (LETS), secured through Section 106 agreements where proportionate and viable. LETS must have regard to the nature of the development, the needs of relevant sectors, and the availability of skills — including identified skills gaps — within the local and sub-regional labour market. Individual or cumulative workforce impacts may be addressed on-site or through proportionate off-site financial contributions to employment and skills initiatives.

- 7.4.1 The 10,000 sqm commercial threshold means that each of the four strategic B8 allocations in Policies PS14–PS17 (Section 8.2) is expected to trigger a LETS, ensuring that the substantial quantum of strategic B8 floorspace coming forward through the Local Plan translates into meaningful local employment, training and apprenticeship benefits during both construction and operation, working in partnership with Leicestershire County Council, the Leicester & Leicestershire Business and Skills Partnership, the Council's own Employment & Skills Taskforce, the Hinckley BID and local schools, colleges and academies.
- 7.4.2 The policy responds directly to the local labour market context set out in Section 4: employment among 16–64 year olds (82.3%) above the East Midlands average, but unemployment (3.4%) that has risen and pockets of deprivation associated with lower educational attainment, alongside a wider sub-regional pattern of comparatively low productivity and high out-commuting. The reasoned justification recognises that sectors such as strategic distribution and advanced manufacturing often draw on labour markets wider than the immediate local area, and that the Council will apply the policy flexibly and proportionately in that context.

7.5 Policy EP04 — Growing and Diversifying the Rural Economy

Policy EP04 – Growing and Diversifying the Rural Economy (summary of operative wording)

Proposals for the growth and diversification of the rural economy are supported where accompanied by a proportionate Rural Economy Statement demonstrating the contribution to economic growth and business viability; comprise the re-use/extension of an existing suitable building or a new building of appropriate scale, form and design (having regard to Policies HPD01 and PS23); do not introduce permanent residential use (save where supported by Policies HH07–HH09); and demonstrate that effects on landscape, the natural and historic environment, amenity, accessibility and the local highway network have been taken into account. New buildings and infrastructure needed for rural businesses to grow, modernise and operate efficiently, including in support of climate change objectives, are supported where of an appropriate rural scale and design. Tourism accommodation proposals according with 'A National Forest Design Guide: Sustainable Tourism Accommodation' are supported.

- 7.5.1 Reflecting the finding at paragraph 4.4.17 of the 2024 ELR that 42% of total jobs in Hinckley & Bosworth are located in rural areas, Policy EP04 supports the sustainable growth, expansion and diversification of rural businesses — including agricultural diversification, renewable energy, farm produce processing and retailing, sustainable tourism, and digital infrastructure — subject to a proportionate evidence base and criteria addressing landscape, heritage,

amenity and highway impacts, consistent with paragraph 88 of the NPPF's support for rural business growth, farm diversification and sustainable rural tourism.

7.6 Policy EP05 — MIRA Technology Park: Employment and Enterprise Zone Development

Policy EP05 – MIRA Technology Park: Employment and Enterprise Zone Development (summary of operative wording)

Within the MIRA Technology Park site, the Council will continue to support high-quality employment development in line with the Enterprise Zone strategy, specifically: (a) development related to the business sectors associated with the Enterprise Zone, including automotive research, development and innovation; and (b) other uses where they support the preferred business sectors, do not undermine the functionality of the wider MIRA site, would not cause unacceptable highway impacts, and are of a scale and appearance compatible with the surrounding character. Non-employment uses are not supported unless they meet these criteria and demonstrate clear, evidenced compatibility with the site. A minimum of 24 hectares of available developable land is identified within MIRA Technology Park, as set out in the most up-to-date Employment Land and Premises Study.

7.6.1 Policy EP05 supports the continued growth of MIRA Technology Park for uses associated with its Enterprise Zone status, held since August 2011 and focused on Advanced Manufacturing/Engineering, Automotive, Defence, Mobility, Clean Technology and Transport — MIRA is currently the only transport-sector-focused Enterprise Zone in the country. The wider 332-hectare campus supports over 35 major companies including Bosch, Haldex, Aston Martin, Toyota, Jaguar Land Rover and 3M, and continues to expand, including through a further permission granted on 22 December 2025 for MIRA South in neighbouring North Warwickshire (ref. PAP/2022/0423), which — while outside the borough — will help meet demand for advanced manufacturing premises over the plan period and complements the 24 hectares of available land identified within Hinckley & Bosworth itself.

7.6.2 Given its distinct, high-value, R&D-led character, sui generis Enterprise Zone status and separate market, MIRA is treated as a discrete component of the borough's employment offer in the Local Plan, separate from the general employment and strategic B8 figures reported in Tables 1 and 2. The 2024 ELR found the identified 24 hectares sufficient to meet the needs of this specialist sector over the plan period, having regard to recent take-up rates (Section 8.3). The policy's reasoned justification also records the importance of continued collaboration with Nuneaton & Bedworth and North Warwickshire Borough Councils, and National Highways, Leicestershire County Council and Warwickshire County Council as highway authorities, given the A5's role as MIRA's primary access route — reinforcing the Duty to Cooperate themes addressed in Section 9.

8. Site Allocations: Meeting the Identified Requirement

8.1 General Employment Allocations

8.1.1 New general employment allocations (excluding GRO003, which lies adjacent to a proposed employment allocation within neighbouring Blaby district) total 40.24 hectares, comprising:

- BAG002: Land at Wiggs Farm, Wood Lane/Station Road, Bagworth — 11 hectares;
- BURB003: Land adjoining Hinckley Waste Water Treatment Works, Brookfield Road, Burbage — 10.64 hectares;
- ES001: Earl Shilton Sustainable Urban Extension — up to 5.3 hectares of employment land as part of the wider strategic housing allocation (Policy PS06);

- BAR001: Barwell Sustainable Urban Extension — 6.5 hectares of employment land as part of the wider strategic housing allocation (Policy PS07); and
- BURB004: Land at Start Farm, Burbage — 7.1 hectares.

8.1.2 GRO003 (Land North of Glenfield, Groby, 10.64 hectares) is identified as a Direction for Growth and is excluded from the headline general employment total in Table 1 above because it lies adjacent to a proposed employment allocation within the administrative area of Blaby district. It is reliant on the Blaby allocation to be delivered and reflects the need for continuing cross-boundary cooperation delivery in this location.

8.1.3 Together with committed supply (completions and commitments totalling 84.82 hectares), these allocations provide total plan provision of 177.63 hectares against an identified need of 64.1 hectares — a level of headroom the Council considers necessary and proportionate for the reasons set out in Section 6.3. This demonstrates the Local Plan's evidence-to-allocation chain for general employment: the ELR identifies the need and shortfall, Policy PS04 records the requirement and existing supply, and the selected allocations provide a deliverable portfolio with capacity to accommodate delivery uncertainty and a range of local employment needs over the plan period.

8.2 Strategic B8 Allocations

8.2.1 Four strategic B8 sites are allocated, together providing 628,239 sqm of strategic B8 floorspace. All four sites lie on, or in close proximity to, the strategic road network — principally the A5 Hinckley–Tamworth corridor and the M1 — consistent with the locational logic of the Strategic B8 Study and paragraph 87(b) of the NPPF. The allocations are not simply a response to a numerical shortfall: they have been selected as a portfolio which links the apportioned requirement to the Study's Areas of Opportunity, supports market choice between the A5 and M1 corridors, and reduces the risk that reliance on a single location would undermine delivery of the strategic B8 requirement.

Policy PS14 — HIN003: Land at Wapping and Harrow Farm, Watling Street, Hinckley (152,640 sqm)

8.2.2 This site adjoins the A5 (Watling Street) and forms part of the borough's established cluster of large-scale logistics development at Hinckley Island, alongside the existing Hinckley Park/DPD and Neovia developments addressed in Section 10.2. Its allocation reflects direct frontage to the strategic road network and its role in consolidating logistics activity along this corridor.

Policy PS15 — BURB001: Land South of Soar Brook, Burbage (300,000 sqm)

8.2.3 Land South of Soar Brook is identified within the A5 (North) Area of Opportunity in the Strategic B8 Study and represents the second phase of a two-phase strategic employment allocation alongside BURB002 (Policy PS16), together providing a logical extension to the existing Hinckley Park development. The site is subject to environmental sensitivities, including heritage assets at Wigston Parva and Mill Meadow and flood risk associated with Soar Brook, addressed through a comprehensive suite of design, landscape, heritage and flood risk mitigation requirements within the policy, including a requirement for a comprehensive masterplan and design code.

Policy PS16 — BURB002: Land East of Hinckley Park, Burbage (120,000 sqm)

8.2.4 Land East of Hinckley Park benefits from an established access via the existing Hinckley Park roundabout and forms the first phase of delivery in the Soar Brook/Hinckley Park logistics cluster, ahead of the adjoining BURB001 allocation. The site similarly requires biodiversity, flood risk, heritage (including the Watling Street Roman Road) and transport mitigation, and a

proportionate contribution towards the Hinckley Western Link Road where development would rely upon or benefit from it.

Policy PS17 — MARK004: Land at Cliffe Hill Farm (Junction 22, M1), Markfield (up to 42,599 sqm strategic B8; 64,794 sqm total employment floorspace)

- 8.2.5 This site sits at the M1 Junction 22 broad location identified in the Strategic B8 Study, providing direct access to the M1 and A50. The site is the subject of a live planning application (ref. 25/00931/FUL, correct as of May 2026) for a B2/B8 industrial and logistics park comprising six units ranging from 2,639 sqm to 21,065 sqm and totalling 64,794 sqm of employment floorspace.
- 8.2.6 This site lies in close proximity to the border with North West Leicestershire District Council who are also (at the time of writing this paper out for Regulation 19 consultation on their local plan). Committee papers from November 2025³ indicate that meeting the full site allocation apportionment in the Bardon area (J22) is not possible at present, this allocation at Cliffe Hill Farm could help address this.
- 8.2.7 The Local Plan makes clear that it would not be appropriate to require an already-submitted application to retrospectively comply with the policy, but that decision-makers should take a balanced approach reflecting the stage of plan preparation and the increasing weight the emerging policy carries as the Local Plan progresses towards adoption, consistent with paragraph 49 of the NPPF.

8.3 MIRA Technology Park

- 8.3.1 As set out in Section 7.6, Policy EP05 identifies a minimum of 24 hectares of available developable land at MIRA, which the 2024 ELR found sufficient to meet needs for this specialist automotive R&D sector over the plan period, having regard to recent take-up rates and the availability of complementary land at the neighbouring MIRA South site in North Warwickshire. The MIRA Technology Park South Site allocation within North Warwickshire has been granted planning permission and is capable of delivering approximately 2.3 million sq ft of advanced manufacturing and industrial floorspace, reinforcing the strategic employment function of the A5 corridor.

9. Duty to Cooperate and Cross-Boundary Delivery of Strategic B8

- 9.1.1 As explained in Section 5.2, the strategic B8 requirement for Hinckley & Bosworth is not derived in isolation but through joint working with the other Leicester and Leicestershire authorities, reflecting the sub-regional and national character of demand for large-format logistics floorspace. This joint approach builds on a long-established pattern of cooperation on strategic distribution matters across the sub-region, dating back to the 2021 GL Hearn study and now updated through the Strategic B8 Study.
- 9.1.2 The Strategic B8 Study identifies broad Areas of Opportunity across Leicester and Leicestershire based on accessibility and other locational criteria, and apportions the identified sub-regional need between authorities and locations accordingly. Hinckley & Bosworth's apportionment of 755,800 sqm (19% of the Leicestershire total) reflects both the borough's

³ [Agenda for Local Plan Committee on Wednesday, 19th November, 2025, 6.00 pm - North West Leicestershire District Council](#)

historic role in delivering the majority of Leicestershire's strategic B8 floorspace (see Section 3.3) and its favourable access to the Golden Triangle core via the A5 and M1.

- 9.1.3 The individual strategic B8 site policies (PS14–PS17) each expressly require development to be informed by the relevant constraints, opportunities and recommendations of the Strategic B8 Study (and any successor documents), ensuring that site-level delivery remains aligned with the sub-regional evidence base as it evolves through the plan period. . This provides an explicit policy link between the evidence that identifies the scale and broad location of need, the Policy PS04 requirement, and the individual allocations through which that requirement is to be delivered.
- 9.1.4 Beyond strategic B8, cross-boundary cooperation is also reflected in the treatment of GRO003 (Land North of Glenfield, Groby), which straddles the boundary with Blaby district, and in the recognition that MIRA's growth has direct implications for, and depends on cooperation with, Nuneaton & Bedworth and North Warwickshire Borough Councils and the relevant highway authorities (National Highways, Leicestershire County Council and Warwickshire County Council) given the A5's role as the primary access route to the site. Furthermore, paragraph 8.2.6 recognises how the allocation at J22 could assist an identified need in the wider NWL District area.
- 9.1.5 Taken together, this pattern of joint evidence-gathering, shared apportionment methodology and site-specific policy alignment is intended to demonstrate that the Local Plan satisfies the paragraph 36(c) soundness test of "Effective" — deliverable over the plan period and based on effective joint working on cross-boundary strategic matters, evidenced through the Strategic B8 Study and associated cooperation with Duty to Cooperate partners.

10. Monitoring, Delivery and Trajectory

10.1 Completions and Commitments

- 10.1.1 The completions and commitments figures reported in Policy PS04 (Tables 1 and 2 above) are underpinned by monitoring evidence maintained by the Council. As stated in paragraph 5.3.2, these figures are an interim position at this stage as the final completion and commitment figures for 2024 / 2025 are still under review and will be updated in due course for submission.
- 10.1.2 This monitoring evidence will continue to inform the Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) over the plan period, tracking delivery against Policy PS04 and providing the evidential trigger, where necessary, for the early review mechanism in Policy PS18. Monitoring will therefore test whether the evidence and allocations remain effective in practice: whether identified needs are being met, whether committed and allocated sites are delivering at the anticipated rate, and whether any additional flexibility or policy response is required.

10.2 Flexibility and the Portfolio Approach

- 10.2.1 As explained in Section 6.3, the Council has deliberately built headroom into both the general employment and strategic B8 portfolios. This is not intended to signal an unconstrained approach to employment land release, but reflects a realistic assessment — grounded in the historic volatility of completions data set out in the 2024 ELR and 2025 ELR Update, and in the site-specific delivery risks identified for each strategic B8 allocation (transport mitigation, habitat and flood risk constraints, and dependency on wider infrastructure such as the Hinckley Western Link Road) — that not all allocated capacity will be built out at a uniform rate.

11. Consideration of Reasonable Alternatives and the Sustainability Appraisal

11.1 The Role of the Sustainability Appraisal

- 11.1.1 Paragraph 36(b) of the NPPF requires the Local Plan to be Justified: an appropriate strategy, taking into account reasonable alternatives and based on proportionate evidence. This requirement is addressed through the Council's Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment (SA/HRA) of the Regulation 19 Local Plan (July 2026), prepared to meet the requirements of the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 (the "SEA Regulations"), which sits alongside the site-level alternatives testing carried out through the 2025 ELR Update's Call for Sites assessment (Section 5.1.7).
- 11.1.2 The SA appraises the Local Plan's policies and site allocations against a 14-objective sustainability framework, including SA Objective 12 ("Economy and Employment") which is directly engaged by the policies and allocations addressed in this Topic Paper. Each policy and site allocation is scored on a seven-point scale from significant negative (--) to significant positive (++), with narrative reasoning for each score.

11.2 Alternative Spatial Strategy Options

- 11.2.1 At an early stage of plan preparation, the SA tested six reasonable alternative spatial strategy options for accommodating the borough's development needs as a whole (of which employment land forms part): (1) a Neighbourhood Development Plan-led approach; (2) continuation of the adopted Core Strategy with no new Local Plan; (3) focusing growth around key transport and accessibility corridors; (4) a new garden village/new town of at least 1,500 homes; (5) proportionate growth of key rural centres; and (6) a mixed approach combining elements of the above.
- 11.2.2 The SA found that all six options would generally support the SA's social and economic objectives, including the promotion of a sustainable and diverse economy, but identified that Option 4 (Garden village/new town) carried the greatest risk of significant negative environmental effects, while Options 2 (Core Strategy approach) and 3 (Key transport corridors) presented "slightly lower risks in relation to the SA environmental objectives and... slightly greater benefits in relation to the SA social and economic objectives." No single option was found to be clearly superior across all objectives. The Local Plan's eventual spatial strategy — combining protection and intensification of existing employment areas, sustainable urban extensions with integrated employment land, and strategic B8 allocations concentrated along the A5 and M1 corridors — reflects this transport-corridor-focused logic (Option 3) blended with proportionate rural growth (Option 5), consistent with a hybrid "Option 6" approach.

11.3 SA Appraisal of the Employment Policies

- 11.3.1 The SA's policy-level appraisal (SA Report Appendix B/C.7, "Economic Prosperity") scores every employment policy addressed in Section 7 of this Topic Paper as delivering a significant positive (++) effect against SA Objective 12 (Economy and Employment), summarised in Table 3 below.

Policy	SA Objective 12 score	SA summary reasoning
PS04 — Provision of Overall Development	++	10 employment allocations across different locations; significant positive impact on economy and employment;

Policy	SA Objective 12 score	SA summary reasoning
		neutral on other SA objectives at this policy level (site-specific effects addressed under PS14–PS17).
EP01 — Existing Employment Areas	++	Core function is to support business activity and employment, enabling growth and productivity; also minor positive effects on land quality/soils (efficient use of existing land) and social deprivation (accessible jobs).
EP02 — New Employment Development on Non-Allocated Sites	++	Directs development to previously developed land and locations near existing employment areas; minor positive effects also identified for air quality, climate change, biodiversity, land quality and access to public services through the policy's design and transport requirements.
EP03 — Education and Skills for a Strong Local Workforce	++	Wider skills and training availability expected to improve unemployment rates and educational attainment; minor positive effect on reducing social deprivation and access to public services.
EP04 — Growing and Diversifying the Rural Economy	+	Diversification of rural land (renewable energy, sustainable farming, tourism, infrastructure) creates new job opportunities; mixed positive/negative effects on landscape and biodiversity reflect the trade-off of enabling limited rural development.
EP05 — MIRA Technology Park	++	High-value automotive R&D employment in a nationally accessible location; overall positive impact on the economy and employment, neutral on all other SA objectives.

Table 3: Summary of Sustainability Appraisal policy-level scoring against SA Objective 12 (Economy and Employment). Source: HBBC Regulation 19 Local Plan Sustainability Appraisal and Habitats Regulation Assessment (July 2026), Appendix B/C.7.

- 11.3.2 The SA's narrative reasoning for Policy EP01 identifies a tension the policy must manage: concentrating employment activity within defined existing employment areas reduces pressure on undeveloped land and greenfield habitat (a positive), but several existing estates are "visually poor, with large sheds, signage and hardstanding areas which detract from landscape quality" (a negative), resulting in a mixed landscape score notwithstanding the policy's strong positive economic contribution.
- 11.3.3 For Policy EP02, the SA specifically endorses the sequential, criteria-based approach set out in Section 7.3 of this Topic Paper, finding that directing non-allocated development towards previously developed land and locations near existing employment areas, subject to design, transport and environmental safeguards, delivers positive outcomes not only for the economy but also — through the policy's detailed criteria — for air quality, climate change, biodiversity, land quality and access to public services.

11.4 SA Appraisal of the Strategic B8 Site Allocations

- 11.4.1 Each of the four strategic B8 site allocations (Policies PS14–PS17, Section 8.2) has been individually appraised against the full 14-objective SA framework. Table 4 summarises the SA Objective 12 (Economy and Employment) score for each site, alongside the principal environmental sensitivities the SA identifies and the mitigation embedded within each policy.

Policy / Site	SA Obj. 12 score	Principal SA findings
PS14 — HIN004 Wapping and Harrow Farm (152,640 sqm)	++ (significant positive)	47.84 ha of B2/B8 floorspace; watercourse bisects the site; mixed landscape/biodiversity effects mitigated by LVIA, blue/green infrastructure and an 8–10m watercourse buffer; minor positive on reducing social deprivation via entry-level jobs.
PS15 — BURB001 Land South of Soar Brook (300,000 sqm)	++ (significant positive)	Extension to Hinckley Park; mixed landscape effects from loss of open green space, mitigated by LVIA and landscaping partly to protect the setting of the Wigston Parva heritage asset; minor positive on the historic environment through required archaeological investigation.
PS16 — BURB002 Land East of Hinckley Park (120,000 sqm)	++ (significant positive)	First-phase extension to Hinckley Park; mixed landscape/biodiversity effects from reduced openness, mitigated by LVIA, watercourse buffering and natural flood management; minor positive on flood risk.
PS17 — MARK004 Cliffe Hill Farm, M1 J22 (64,794 sqm total; 42,599 sqm strategic B8)	+ (minor positive)	Smaller allocation than PS14–PS16, hence a lesser (minor rather than significant) economic score; site contains habitats of moderate distinctiveness and priority woodland (risk of fragmentation), close to Cliffe Hill Quarry SSSI; mitigated by environmental mitigation, landscape buffers and green infrastructure, though minor negative landscape/biodiversity effects remain.

Table 4: Summary of Sustainability Appraisal site-level scoring for the strategic B8 allocations.

Source: SA Report, Appendix B.14–B.17.

11.4.2 All four strategic B8 policies are found by the SA to generate the same recurring pattern of effects: minor negative effects on air quality (from HGV-associated NO_x and PM_{2.5} emissions) and mixed effects on climate change (increased vehicle emissions offset by the requirement for climate-resilient design and compliance with the Ultra-Low Energy, Net Zero Carbon Budget Assessment and Renewable Energy Spatial Assessment under Policies ER01–ER05); alongside consistently significant or minor positive effects on the economy and employment (SA Objective 12) and, in most cases, minor positive effects on reducing social deprivation through the creation of accessible, including entry-level, jobs.

11.4.3 The Habitats Regulation Assessment component of the SA/HRA screened the strategic B8 sites for potential impacts on European protected sites; the Wapping and Harrow Farm (PS14) and Cliffe Hill Farm (PS17) sites were confirmed to lie at least 5km from the nearest such designation, with no identified impact pathway, and no likely significant effects requiring Appropriate Assessment were identified for the strategic B8 allocations.

11.5 Reasonable Alternative Sites Not Taken Forward

11.5.1 The SA's site-level reasonable alternatives testing (SA Report Section 6.6 and Appendix C) illustrates why certain alternative sites adjoining the preferred strategic B8 locations were not carried forward for allocation. For example, Land North of Soar Brook, Burbage (LPR16B, 71 hectares) was assessed as a reasonable alternative in the vicinity of the allocated Land South of Soar Brook site (PS15). The SA scored LPR16B poorly against several environmental objectives — significant negative effects on biodiversity (due to traditional orchard and deciduous woodland priority habitat bordering the developable area), water quality (a watercourse and WFD water body crossing the site) and flood risk (partly within Flood Zone 2/3 with additional surface water flood risk) — and, being a housing-led

reasonable alternative rather than an employment allocation, was found to make only a minor positive contribution to SA Objective 12 without delivering additional employment floorspace. This contrasts with the significant positive economic contribution and more limited environmental constraints identified for the allocated Land South of Soar Brook site under Policy PS15.

- 11.5.2 This pattern — where alternative sites in reasonably comparable locations were found to carry materially greater environmental constraints, or would not deliver a comparable quantum or type of employment floorspace, than the sites ultimately allocated — is repeated across the wider set of 61 reasonable alternative sites tested in the SA, and corroborates the site selection reasoning summarised against the 2025 ELR Update's Call for Sites assessment in Section 5.1.7 above.
- 11.5.3 For general employment allocations, the sequential and criteria-based approach in Policy EP02 (Section 7.3) provides an ongoing mechanism for testing whether non-allocated sites represent suitable alternatives to allocated employment land as and when specific proposals come forward, ensuring the Local Plan retains flexibility to respond to evidence and market signals that were not fully known at the plan-making stage.
- 11.5.4 Further information around site selection is available on the Councils website in the separate site selection topic paper accompanying the regulation 19 consultation.

12. Soundness Conclusion

- 12.1.1 This Topic Paper has set out the evidence base, methodology and policy justification for the Local Plan's approach to employment land provision. It has also demonstrated the clear relationship between the evidence, the requirements in Policy PS04 and the allocations selected to meet those requirements. Drawing the strands of the preceding sections together against each of the four soundness tests in paragraph 36 of the NPPF:

Positively Prepared

- 12.1.2 The Local Plan provides for general employment land in excess of the identified need of 64.1 hectares (177.63 hectares total plan provision), and for strategic B8 floorspace in excess of the identified need of 690,081 sqm (803,019 sqm total plan provision), reflecting a positive and proactive approach to accommodating both local business needs and the borough's established sub-regional role in strategic logistics — a positive contribution confirmed independently by the significant positive SA Objective 12 scores recorded against every employment policy and strategic B8 allocation in Section 11.

Justified

- 12.1.3 The strategy is founded on proportionate, up-to-date evidence — the 2024 ELR, the 2025 ELR Update and the sub-regional Strategic B8 Study — and has had regard to reasonable alternatives through the Call for Sites assessment, the Sustainability Appraisal's testing of six alternative spatial strategy options and 61 reasonable alternative sites, as set out in Section 11 and the site selection topic paper. Where the SA has identified environmental sensitivities at the allocated sites (for example, biodiversity and heritage considerations at PS15 and PS16, and habitat and SSSI proximity at PS17), these have been translated directly into the mitigation requirements embedded within the relevant site policies. The resulting allocations are justified because they flow from the identified quantitative requirements and from the qualitative evidence on accessibility, market demand, delivery constraints and the need for a portfolio that provides flexibility and occupier choice.

Effective

12.1.4 The strategy is deliverable over the plan period, informed by site-specific transport, flood risk, heritage and infrastructure requirements embedded within Policies PS14–PS17 and confirmed through the SA/HRA process (including the screening out of likely significant effects on European protected sites), and by a portfolio approach that provides resilience against individual site delivery risk. By allocating a range of suitably accessible sites rather than relying on a single location, the Local Plan improves the likelihood that the identified strategic B8 requirement can be met. It is founded on effective, ongoing joint working with Duty to Cooperate partners across Leicester and Leicestershire on the cross-boundary matter of strategic B8 provision, as evidenced by the Strategic B8 Study.

Consistent with National Policy

12.1.5 The strategy responds directly to the requirements of NPPF Chapter 6, in particular the specific national policy support in paragraph 87(b) for storage and distribution operations in suitably accessible locations, and reflects the plan-making requirements of paragraphs 20, 23 and 24–28 regarding sufficient provision, deliverability and cross-boundary cooperation, and of the SEA Regulations regarding the appraisal of reasonable alternatives.

12.1.6 On this basis, the Council considers that the Local Plan's approach to employment land provision is sound.

References

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