

Inspector's suggested changes to Council's proposed Policy CS16 for employment land/economic prosperity (change C9d - Appendix 4 in CND125)

1. I have reviewed the new employment policy (CS16) proposed by the Council in the light of my previous advice (4 May 2011), the representations made on the proposed change and national policy. I consider that further changes are needed.
2. The overall aim should refer to sites and premises which are attractive to the market.
3. Consistent with my understanding of the Council's intentions, the policy should give explicit encouragement to redevelopment to make more efficient use of sites and the provision of modern premises and recognition of the role of mixed use schemes in bringing forward employment opportunities which would not otherwise be realised.
4. The commitment to review the sites currently protected by Local Plan policies E2 and E3 needs to be amplified to clarify the scope of the intended review and its aim. It also needs to be made clear that the policies applying to any such designated sites will be reviewed in the Delivery DPD. This will enable any policies to be framed in the light of future national policy in the forthcoming NPPF.
5. Pending this review, the Core Strategy needs to signal a more flexible approach to economic development within these designated areas consistent with national advice in PPS4. My suggested wording is not intended to exclude any of the circumstances listed in the existing wording, but to make it more flexible to encompass other types of economic development.
6. The policy rightly sets out circumstances whereby small employment sites may be redeveloped for residential purposes if there is no reasonable prospect of the site being used for employment or if the location or use causes highway or amenity problems. However, these exceptions should be applied now to all employment sites, including E2 and E3 sites since, if the criteria are met, the loss of such employment sites would be justified. With this approach the structure of this part of the policy can be simplified. I have sought to make this wording more positive. Whilst the policy cannot determine whether the new use itself would be acceptable it can and should make clear that the loss of employment land in these circumstances is acceptable, hence the change from *may* to *will*.
7. There are probably several ways that the necessary aims of the policy could be worded. I have sought only to make sufficient changes to make the policy sound. This represents the minimum necessary for this purpose rather than what might be considered desirable or achievable with more work.
8. I would be grateful if the Council could indicate whether it accepts all or some of the suggested wording and whether wording along the lines suggested would need to be an Inspector imposed change. I am also interested in the views of other parties, particularly those who made representations on this change. I would be particularly grateful for any comments on the detailed wording and whether it achieves my stated aims.
9. In responding to my previous advice the Council has proposed a new strategic objective and a new target (proposed change C2c in CDN125). The target (year on year increase in the number of people employed) appears particularly ambitious and I have not seen evidence that it is deliverable. I would be grateful

if the Council would review this target again. It may be that such a target or other targets would be applicable for an initial period only.

10. Finally, in the context of the suggest policy wording, should local plan policy E1 still be saved? Among other matters this limits new business development to the designated sites under E2, E3 and E4. Is this an unnecessary/or arbitrary restriction on where economic development can take place?

11. Comments should be sent to the Programme Officer by **15 September 2011**.

Proposed wording for Policy CS16 (showing my changes to the Council's proposed text).

The Council will aim to secure the long-term retention of a portfolio of employment sites and premises within the District which are attractive to market demands and which will provide a range of jobs to meet local needs.

The redevelopment of existing employment sites and premises for employment use to make more efficient use of sites and provide modern premises attractive to the market will be encouraged. Mixed use schemes will be acceptable where these would facilitate employment development which would not otherwise be realised.

~~To this end, the Council will review all employment sites currently covered by Policies E2 and E3 in the Adopted Chiltern District Local Plan in the Delivery DPD.~~

The continued designation, role and boundaries of sites currently covered by Policies E2 and E3 in the Adopted Chiltern District Local Plan will be reviewed in the Delivery DPD to achieve a balanced portfolio of fit for purpose sites attractive to market demands. The policies applying to any defined sites will be reviewed in the Delivery DPD.

Pending the above review of sites and subject to the application of the sequential test for any proposed town centre uses, proposals for economic development or community facilities will be favourably considered where these would be complementary to the existing business use in that location and consistent with the integrity and function of the location for employment purposes.

~~Existing employment land and premises in Use Classes B1, B2 and B8 in the Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987 (as amended) will be protected and retained for employment use, unless:~~

~~a) — Replaced by comparable employment development within Use Classes B1, B2 or B8; or~~

~~b) — The proposed use provides employment and is in the interests of the community, such as a health facility, day nursery or leisure facility, or~~

~~c) — If in a District Centre, is an appropriate town centre use which adds to its vitality and viability;~~ or*

~~d) — The site is no longer allocated for retention as an identified employment site following the review mentioned above.~~

Changes of use of an employment use to residential use will be acceptable on the upper floors of properties within the three District Shopping Centres as defined on the Proposals Map.

Where an employment site (including sites covered by policies E2 and E3) is:

a) within the built-up areas excluded from the Green Belt, and
b) ~~too small to be protected by "saved" policies E2 and E3 of the Adopted Chiltern Local Plan, and~~
the loss of employment land as a result of redevelopment for other uses, including residential use, including accommodation for those with special needs, may will be acceptable where there is no reasonable prospect of the site being used for employment purposes, or where it is creating significant amenity issues, or where the existing use is creating highway problems ~~safety~~ issues.

**Simon Emerson
Inspector
26 August 2011.**