

APPENDIX A

Policy Appraisal

A. Policy Appraisal

A.1 National Policy

A.1.1 Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1): Delivering Sustainable Development

PPS1 sets out the overarching planning policies on the delivery of sustainable development through the planning system. The PPS states that planning should facilitate and promote sustainable development and inclusive patterns of urban and rural development by making suitable land available for development in line with economic, social and environmental objectives to improve people's quality of life; contributing to sustainable economic development; protecting and enhancing the natural and historic environment, the quality and character of the countryside, and existing communities; ensuring high quality development through good and inclusive design, and the efficient use of resources; and, ensuring that development supports existing communities and contributes to the creation of safe, sustainable, liveable and mixed communities with good access to jobs and key services for all members of the community.

PPS1 reaffirms that the plan-led system, and the certainty and predictability it aims to provide, is central to planning and plays a key role in integrating sustainable development objectives. It notes that where the development plan contains relevant policies, applications for planning permission should be determined in line with the plan, unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

A.1.2 Planning Policy Guidance Note 3 (PPG3): Supporting the Delivery of New Housing

In January 2005, the ODPM introduced new paragraph 42(a) to PPG3. It highlights the local planning authorities consider favourably planning applications for housing or mixed use developments which concern land allocated for industrial or commercial use unless:

'it can be demonstrated, preferably through an up-to-date review of employment land, that there is a realistic prospect of the allocation being taken up for its stated use in the plan period'.

Clearly, the amendment to PPG3 highlights the importance of undertaking robust employment land assessments to ensure that land allocated for employment is suitable for this use. For sites where this is not the case, consideration should be given to the potential for transfer to other uses, particularly residential and mixed use development.

A.1.3 Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3): Housing

Draft PPS3 will in due course replace PPG3 published in March 2000 and Planning Circular 6/98: *Planning and Affordable Housing*. Within PPS3 it is stated that for sites not allocated within the local plan for housing, local planning authorities should consider favourably planning applications on sites, allocated or

previously used for industrial and commercial use, which are no longer identified as needed for that use.

A.1.4 Planning Policy Guidance Note 4 (PPG4): Industrial & Commercial Development & Small Firms.

PPG4 emphasises that one of the Governments key aims is to encourage continued economic development in a way which is compatible with its stated environmental objectives. The guidance emphasises the importance of taking into account both the locational demands of industry and commerce and the maintenance and improvement of environmental quality.

As part of the update of PPG4 to PPS4, the ODPM issued in May 2004, a research document to inform the new guidance. This document is considered below:

Planning for Economic Development (PPS4) (ODPM 2004)

This report highlights that positive proactive planning for economic development is not firmly embedded in the current planning system. A number of important recommendations are made in respect of the policy development and implementation aspects of planning for economic development:

- ◆ There is a need for greater integration between the planning system and wider economic strategies, programmes and initiatives.
- ◆ All local authorities should undertake an assessment of the demand for and supply of employment land with regular reviews at least every three years.
- ◆ The approach to the allocation of employment land should be guided at the regional level by the application of standard techniques to assess demand and supply. Guidance should also be provided in respect of the criteria for assessing the quality of employment sites. This should focus on factors of market realism and sustainability.
- ◆ Following the demand-supply assessments and reviews, local authorities should consider de-allocating or allowing change of use of allocated employment land if there is no reasonable chance of the site coming forward in the medium term.
- ◆ Guided by reasoning and appropriate criteria, local authorities should adopt policies to safeguard employment land. This should not be used as a means to hoard employment land and should be subject to regular review (see above).
- ◆ The Use Class Order can hinder policies aimed at supporting particular sectors or types of businesses. However, local authorities should consider identifying sites for specific activities and types of organisations (e.g. small firms) where this is consistent with economic and regeneration priorities for the area.
- ◆ Comprehensive monitoring systems should be introduced, not only to assess the stock of employment land but also evaluations of the effectiveness of economic policies.

A.1.5 Planning Policy Statement 6 (PPS6): Planning for Town Centres

PPS6 states that 'sustainable development is the core principle underpinning planning' and 'the planning system has a key role in facilitating and promoting sustainable and inclusive patterns of development, including the creation of vital and viable town centres'. The Government's key objective for town centres therefore is to promote their vitality and viability. In doing so PPS6 states that the sequential approach to site selection should be applied to all development proposals for sites that are not in an existing centre or allocated in an up-to-date development plan document. It advises that in selecting sites, all options should be thoroughly assessed before less central sites are considered.

A.1.6 Planning Policy Statement 7 (PPS7): Sustainable Development in Rural Areas (ODPM, 2004)

The objectives of PPS7 are:

- ◆ To raise the quality of life and the environment in rural areas;
- ◆ To promote more sustainable patterns of development;
- ◆ Promoting the development of the English regions by improving their economic performance so that all are able to reach their full potential (by developing competitive, diverse and thriving rural enterprise); and
- ◆ To promote sustainable, diverse and adaptable agricultural sectors.

PPS7 states that in rural areas, planning authorities should focus new development in or near to local service centres where employment, housing, services and other facilities can be provided close together. However, it goes on to highlight that:

'Planning authorities should set out in LDDs their policies for allowing some limited development in, or next to, rural settlements that are not designated as local service centres, in order to meet local business and community needs and to maintain the vitality of these communities. In particular, authorities should be supportive of small-scale development of this nature where it provides the most sustainable option in villages that are remote from, and have poor public transport link with, service centres.'

In meeting the economic needs of rural areas, PPS7 states that local planning authorities should:

- (i) identify in LDDs suitable sites for future economic development, particularly in those rural areas where there is a need for employment creation and economic regeneration;
- (ii) set out in LDDs their criteria for permitting economic development in different locations, including the future expansion of business premises, to facilitate healthy and diverse economic activity in rural areas.

A.1.7 Employment Land Reviews: Guidance Notes (ODPM, 2004)

In December 2004, the ODPM issued a guide for planning authorities in respect of assessing the demand for, and supply of, land for employment. The guide is particularly aimed at helping authorities assess the suitability of sites for

employment development, safeguard the best sites in the face of competition from other higher value uses and help identify those which are no longer suitable for employment development which should be made available for other uses.

The guide identifies a three step process in undertaking employment land reviews:

- ◆ Stage 1 – Taking stock of the existing situation, including an initial assessment of ‘fitness for purpose’ of existing allocated employment sites;
- ◆ Stage 2 – Creating a picture of future requirements by using a variety of means to assess the scale and nature of likely demand for employment land and the available supply in quantitative terms¹;
- ◆ Stage 3 – Identifying a ‘new’ portfolio of sites through a more detailed review of site supply and quality and identify and designate specific new employment sites in order to create a balanced local employment land portfolio.

During Stage 1, the guide suggests undertaking an initial appraisal process. Depending on local circumstances, the purpose of the Stage 1 appraisal is to:

- ◆ Confirm a selection of ‘high quality’ employment allocations which should, without doubt, be safeguarded for future employment use; and/or
- ◆ Assess the suitability of large, underused or vacant industrial sites for redevelopment or upgrading (for continued employment use); and/or
- ◆ Identify employment sites which clearly could be released for other uses.

In boxes 4.5 and 4.6, the guide identifies sets of criteria which can be applied to guide the Stage 1 appraisal. These are set out in Tables A.1 and A.2 below.

Table A.1 - Criteria to Assess Whether Employment Sites are to be Released

Criteria	Issues
Market Attractiveness Factors	<p>Has the site been formally identified for employment for at least 10 years?</p> <p>Has there been any recent development activity, within the last 5 years?</p> <p>Is the site being actively marketed as an employment site?</p> <p>Is the site owned by a developer or other agency known to undertake employment development?</p> <p>Is the site in multiple ownership/occupation, or owned by an organisation unlikely to bring forward for development?</p> <p>Is there a valid permission for employment development, likely to meet market requirements? Or for an alternative use?</p> <p>Would employment development on this site be viable, without public funding to resolve infrastructure or other on-site constraints?</p>
Sustainable	Would the site be allocated today for employment development,

¹ Assessment methods identified include economic forecasting, consideration of recent trends and/or assessment of local property market conditions).

Development Factors	<p>measured against present sustainability criteria (including public transport and freight access, environmental impacts and brownfield/greenfield considerations)?</p> <p>Is employment the only acceptable form of built development on this site (e.g. because of on-site contamination, adjoining uses or sustainable development reasons)?</p>
Strategic Planning Factors	<p>Is the site within an area identified as of strategic importance to the delivery of the RSS/RES?</p> <p>Is the site identified or likely to be required for a specific user or specialist use?</p> <p>Is the site part of a comprehensive or long term development or regeneration proposal, which depends on the site being developed for employment uses?</p> <p>Is there public funding committed (or likely to be provided) sufficient to overcome infrastructure or on-site constraints to make employment development viable?</p> <p>Are there any other policy considerations, such as emerging strategic objectives or spatial vision, which should override any decision to release the site?</p>

Source: ODPM, 2004

Table A.2 - Criteria to Identify 'High Quality' Allocated Employment Sites

Criteria	Issues
Market Attractiveness Factors	<p>Has there been any recent development activity, within the last 5 years?</p> <p>Is the site being actively marketed as an employment site?</p> <p>Has there been any recent market activity?</p> <p>Is the whole site owned by a developer or another agency which undertakes employment development?</p> <p>Is development for employment viable, with any public funding if it is committed?</p> <p>Is the site immediately available?</p>
Sustainable Development Factors	<p>Does the site meet present (and expected future) sustainability criteria (including public transport and freight access, on and off-site environmental impacts)?</p>
Strategic Planning Factors	<p>Is the site within an area identified as of strategic importance to the delivery of the RSS/RES?</p> <p>Is the site identified or likely to be required for a specific user or specialist use?</p> <p>Is the site part of a comprehensive or long term development or regeneration proposal, which depends on the site being developed for employment uses?</p> <p>Is the site important in delivering other economic development objectives or the spatial strategy?</p>

Source: ODPM, 2004

The outcome of Stage 1 is to grade sites so that the 'best' sites definitely to be retained, other sites for further appraisal and those sites to be released are clearly defined.

Stage 2 identifies a range of complementary techniques to provide a quantitative estimate of future requirements for employment land and premises. It is stated that any quantitative assessment of employment land requirements, particularly for individual authorities, needs to be informed by the use of forecasts and surveys. The guide sets out a selection of methods for forecasting future employment levels and the translation of these forecasts to land and/or floorspace requirements. It is highlighted that quantitative assessment of employment land requirements are not reliable over the time horizons of RSSs. It is recommended that they be updated regularly, at no more than five yearly intervals.

Stage 3 of the appraisal process represents the detailed site assessment and search. This stage should confirm which sites are likely to respond well to the expectations of occupiers and property developers and also meet sustainability criteria. The objective is to undertake a review of the existing portfolio of employment sites, against defined criteria. Table A.3 shows the criteria for assessing the quality, market demand and availability of existing employment sites.

Table A.3 - Detailed Appraisal Criteria (Quality, Market Demand & Availability)

Criteria	Issues
Base Information	Site area, floorspace, vacant land etc
Quality of Existing Portfolio & Internal Environment	Age & quality of buildings Noise and other obvious pollutants State of the external areas and public realm Parking, internal circulation and servicing
Quality of the Wider Environment	Adjacent land uses constraining operations or quality of uses on site Perception of the wider environment quality Local facilities for workforce
Strategic Access	Ease of access to main road network Proximity to rail, sea and air freight
Market Conditions/Perception & Demand	Strength of local demand in segment Recent market activity on site Likely market demand and viability of development without intervention
Ownership and User Constraints on Development/Redevelopment	Identify and number freehold owners Identity of leasehold or other occupiers, length of lease etc Ransom strips or other known constraints on development
Site Development Constraints	Site access Topography, size and shape Utilities

(undeveloped sites only)	On-site environmental (nature conservation, trees, cultural heritage, landscape) Contamination/ land stability/ on-site structures Amenity of adjacent occupiers
Accessibility	Workforce catchment Access by public transport
Sequential test and Brownfield / Greenfield	Urban, urban edge or outside urban Previously developed in whole or part
Social and Regeneration Policy	Availability of other jobs locally Deprivation in local communities Priority regeneration designation Potential availability of 'gap' funding to develop Ability of site of support particular economic development priority
Other Policy Considerations	Alternative uses if no longer allocated for employment Other material policy considerations.

Source: ODPM, 2004

The detailed site appraisal should indicate whether or not there is a shortfall in the supply of land and premises for particular market segments. If this is the case, the criteria should be adjusted and used to identify 'new' employment sites. In Chapter 4 the type of likely shortfalls are identified. These included sites for high quality accommodation, for new service industries; better access, particularly for large scale distribution and, in some areas, additional sites to provide a choice between suppliers.

The site appraisal proforma used to collect site information in May, 2006 is located in Appendix C.

A.2 Regional and Sub-Regional Policy

A.2.1 Prosperity for All - West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS)

The key regional policy document is the (June 2004) Regional Spatial Strategy (previously Regional Planning Guidance) for the West Midlands. Under the heading 'Prosperity for All', the RSS sets out a number of key policies to encourage the diversification and modernisation of the regional economy. These reflect the approach advocated in the Regional Economic Strategy (RES) 'Delivering Advantage' prepared by AWM, this framework will have a strong policy impact on future land allocations.

The West Midlands Regional Spatial Strategy the vision of the plan is defined by a broad view that:

'The overall vision for the West Midlands is one of an economically successful, outward looking and adaptable Region, which is rich in culture and environment, where all people, working together, are able to meet their aspirations and needs without prejudicing the quality of life of future generations.'

Ensuring the provision of employment land in the right amounts of the right type in the right places is a key part to the Regional Spatial Strategy. Policy PA6 states that the portfolio should be developed in accordance with the Spatial Strategy and will include a hierarchy of sites:

- ◆ First tier sites/locations of Regional significance; and,
- ◆ Second tier, locally significant employment for which development plans should establish the level and distribution for their areas within the following categories:
 - Sub-regional Employment Site;
 - Good Quality Employment Sites; and,
 - Other Employment Sites.

Policy PA5 (Employment Areas in Need of Modernisation and Renewal) states that there is an urgent need to renew existing employment areas whose worn-out untidy appearance discourages new investment and encourages further decline.

Regional Investment Sites (Policy PA7), development on RIS will be strictly controlled to ensure that they support the objectives of Spatial Strategy. In relation to South Staffordshire's Regeneration Zone it is noted that it is currently considered to be adequately served by RIS.

A.2.2 Staffordshire and Stoke on Trent Structure Plan 1996 – 2011

At a more strategic level, the current Structure Plan, which has provided guidance to LPAs on employment land requirements, is soon to be superseded leaving regional planning with a major role in setting the context for a consideration of employment land policy. Adopted in May 2001, the plan is defined by 5 key aims:

- ◆ increase the prosperity of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent and reduce unemployment levels;
- ◆ maintain and enhance environmental quality;
- ◆ meet identified housing needs;
- ◆ develop a more sustainable integrated accessibility strategy;
- ◆ revitalise the image of Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent.

In terms of sub-area strategy the main points of the North Staffordshire sub-area strategy are:

- ◆ urban and rural regeneration including the consolidation and expansion of indigenous industry;
- ◆ employment land provision at strategic gateways to the urban core and along intervening strategic transportation corridors;
- ◆ reassess current industrial land allocations and possibly reallocate some for alternative uses;
- ◆ maintain the general form and function of Green Belt;
- ◆ seek additional quality housing land;
- ◆ maintain and develop the commercial, retail, cultural and leisure focus of the subregional centre (Hanley and the complementary Festival Park) for investment and
- ◆ innovation, whilst protecting the vitality and viability of other centres; and
- ◆ encourage the development of offices with a national, regional and sub-regional role.

Employment Development

Policy E1 sets out the provision made for about 1,245 hectares (gross) of employment land in the industrial, office, warehousing and distribution sectors (Class B uses) between 1996 and 2011. This was allocated throughout the county as is shown in Table A.4 below.

Table A.4 - Employment Land Provision

Area	Amount (Ha)
East Staffordshire	250
Stoke-on-Trent	240
Lichfield	185
Stafford	150
Newcastle	120
Tamworth	120
Cannock Chase	80
South Staffordshire	60
Staffordshire Moorlands	40
Total	1,245 hectares

Source: *Staffordshire and Stoke-on-Trent Structure Plan, 1996/2011*

The basis for the figures is commitments already made including large sites with planning permission, which are under construction or newly completed and sites allocated in Local Plans. Separate provision is made within the Structure Plan for new Premium Sites within policy E4.

Policy E2 states that existing allocation and expiring permissions for employment land should be reviewed to see whether reallocation for alternative uses would provide for more sustainable development. The provision of new employment land should complement rather than duplicate the existing stock of sites by creating a more diverse land portfolio.

Policy E3 indicates that new employment sites should be located where the requirements of those firms most likely to be accommodated on them can be met. The principle underlying this policy is the reconciliation of the needs of modern employment and developers with the imperative that development should not compromise the ability of communities to develop sustainably.

Policy E8 states that development which would lead to the loss of business or general industrial land considered to be necessary to meet market requirements and provide a diverse portfolio of employment opportunities, will be resisted, subject to the provisions for review contained in Policy E2.

With regard to the rural economy development related to the operational requirements of the agricultural industry will be supported having regard to improving or maintaining the local economy and protecting the local countryside character and the environment.

A.2.3 Regional Economic Strategy- Advantage West Midlands

Delivering Advantage, the West Midlands Economic Strategy for 2004–2010, sets out a Vision for transforming the West Midlands into a world-class region by 2010.

The Vision for 2010 is ‘The West Midlands is [to be] recognised as a world-class region in which to invest, work, learn, visit and live and the most successful in creating wealth to benefit all of its people’.

As the strategy recognises the West Midlands has long been known as the manufacturing heartland of the UK, boasting globally recognised names. However, traditional industries are now being complemented by emerging sectors such as media and medical technologies, fed by the 13 higher education institutions throughout the region.

There are 13 challenges listed which fall under the following 4 broad pillars, the most relevant to this study being Pillars 1 and 3, see below.

Pillar 1 – Developing a Diverse and Dynamic Business Base

Important challenges here include:

- ◆ Enterprise- to increase and sustain employment and productivity by developing a world-class enterprise culture which is critical to a successful

region. This must have a strong focus on young people, as they are crucial to the future prosperity of the region;

- ◆ Manufacturing – to carry out the modernisation and diversification essential in the manufacturing industry that forms the bedrock of our regional economy;
- ◆ The West Midlands is the heart of UK manufacturing. Manufacturing makes a larger contribution to the West Midland's economy than it does in any other UK region. Over 20% of West Midlanders in employment work in the manufacturing sector, compared with just over 15% nationally. It is also fundamental to the culture and social fabric of many areas;
- ◆ However, employment continues to decline in manufacturing, especially in low value-added sectors, and sectors facing low-cost overseas competition or overcapacity in international markets. On average, productivity rates in the manufacturing sector are low by UK standards and even further behind many European countries. The challenge with manufacturing is to ensure that low value-added sectors modernise and move up the value chain and the region as a whole must diversify into more high-technology based activity.

Pillar 3 – Creating the Conditions for Growth

Important challenges here include:

Transport – to address the inadequacies of the transport infrastructure through partners developing innovative ways to create the sustainable, world-class transport system the region needs.

Inadequacies in the region's transport infrastructure have been recognised to have a major negative impact on the regional economy, and adversely affect the choices people make about where to live and work.

Development Sites – to ensure that Regional Planning Guidance is implemented, so that sites are made available to meet the needs of business or reused for other purposes.

Only 39% of the region's land stock for future employment use is currently available to companies and there are significant gaps in the availability of large sites across the region. The challenge is to ensure that Regional Planning Guidance is implemented and sites are made available to meet the needs of business and to increase investment.

Housing – to link housing availability and quality to employment opportunities.

To ensure that the four Pillars drive the region's actions and responses effectively and with the greatest impact, Advantage West Midlands made the tough choice to focus its efforts on three agreed Key Delivery Mechanisms: Regeneration Zones; Business Clusters; and High Technology Corridors.

Regeneration Zones raise employment levels, increase business activity and improve the quality of life in the most deprived areas of the region by strengthening links between areas of need and areas of opportunity. There is one

rural and five urban Regeneration Zones, which cut across administrative boundaries.

Business Clusters improve collaboration between companies in the same field, and improve access to new technologies, research and development, targeted business support and supply chains, and shared expertise. Advantage West Midlands identifies the following priority clusters, based on their current strength in the region and their potential to create lasting wealth and employment:

- ◆ Transport Technologies - Automotive, Rail and Aerospace;
- ◆ Building Technologies;
- ◆ Food and Drink;
- ◆ Tourism and Leisure;
- ◆ High Value Added Consumer Products;
- ◆ Manufacturing;
- ◆ Growing clusters considered developing industries with growth potential include:
 - Specialist Business and Professional Services;
 - ICT; and,
 - Environmental Technologies.

High Technology Corridors offer existing businesses opportunities to modernise and diversify, and attract and develop new high-tech, high value-added businesses using existing research institutions, the shared knowledge pool of our universities, and property opportunities such as incubator and 'grow-on' space. Three High Technology Corridors are under development by sub-regional partnerships, and the projects already agreed should bring in over £20 million of private sector investment over the next seven years.

Action Plan

This Action Plan comprises the 45 actions agreed by partners and partnerships. These will ensure delivery of the West Midlands Economic Strategy under the four Pillars and Powerful Voice for the Region. The actions are identified in broad terms and then show the key steps to be completed over the next three years. The ones relevant to this employment land study are shown in the Table below.

Table A.5 – RES Action Plan Key Steps

Create a supportive environment that helps grow manufacturing enterprise.
Develop a strategy to encourage business start ups and to improve survival rates, including the use of business incubation
Develop an integrated approach to increase innovation and knowledge transfer into the business base to create higher added value products and services, through implementation of an updated Regional Innovation Strategy.
Implement the overall Cluster Action Plan through targeted interventions selected by business to improve the future prospects for Business Clusters.

Implement the regional inward investment strategy to ensure that the region continues to attract new businesses in the ten Business Clusters.
Implement an Entrepreneurship Strategy, especially to engage young people and other (traditionally excluded) groups in developing the skills required to start up a small business.
Champion the delivery of the Regional Transport Strategy and Regional 'Transport Priorities'.
Implement a strategic land use programme.

A.2.4 Midlands Way

Smart Growth: the Midlands Way outlines a bespoke Midlands response to the challenges of the Deputy Prime Minister's Sustainable Communities Plan and national productivity drivers. Smart Growth is about how the Midlands can help its own communities, whilst also contributing to the delivery of national targets and objectives.

The vision of the Midlands Way is to:

'Drive forward the engines of economic growth across the English Midlands, nurturing and re-igniting the indigenous sparks of innovation, enterprise and creativity, to accelerate the evolution and delivery of sustainable communities fit for the 21st Century'.

The challenges that SMART Growth: the Midlands Way must respond to are significant, these being:

- ◆ the relentless need to modernise and diversify our industrial base;
- ◆ to improve our educational and skills attainment across the board; and
- ◆ to build the capacity of our urban areas to attract and retain people and firms.

Smart Growth Action Proposals include:

- (i) SMART Productivity - raising productivity through smart use of technology and knowledge. A key action is building critical mass in existing and emerging areas of technological strength, particularly where these fit with priorities identified in regional strategies (e.g. further support for the development of advanced manufacturing services would help modernise the Midlands manufacturing sector and may also facilitate international links with centres of low-cost manufacturing in countries of origin).
- (ii) SMART Connections - developing gateways and linkages including improvements to transport and communications links, people and community linkages, and recognising our facilities and events as gateways – connecting us across the Midlands, with other parts of the UK, and internationally
- (iii) SMART Renaissance - creating conditions for choice and growth including promoting polycentricity, improving living environments through housing choice and high quality services, enabling employment, a creative approach to land assembly and use, improving the public realm, providing infrastructure for growth, and skills for renaissance.

A.2.5 Staffordshire Moorlands Economic Strategy 2000/05

This new strategy aims to set a five year framework for the sustainable development of the Staffordshire Moorlands economy.

The strategy recognises that presently in many respects Staffordshire Moorlands is fortunate to have a relatively strong local economy. For example, average unemployment rates are below the national average. However it is recognised that there are hidden weaknesses in the local economy such as dependence on traditional industries; issues about long hours and low pay; and difficulties faced by particular geographic communities.

The key characteristics highlighted are:

- ◆ In terms of demographics- there is an ageing population residing in the area with insufficient opportunities for young people pushing them to leave the area;
- ◆ In terms of economic structure- traditional industries are in decline which need to adapt to new market conditions whilst the service sector must continue to grow. There is also a dependence on jobs outside the Moorlands and low rates of new business formation; and,
- ◆ In terms of social profile- Insecure and often poorly paid employment among part of the population alongside relative affluence and people with high incomes. There also many villages, some with strong active communities, others with more dispersed and isolated dwellings, which provide a good quality of life to the affluent but there may be increasing isolation and deprivation for those who are less well off.

The following aspirations are outlined for 2005:

- ◆ Bring pay of lowest paid up to the national average;
- ◆ Keep Staffordshire Moorlands unemployment below national average;
- ◆ Bring unemployment rates in Biddulph East and Leek North East below national average;
- ◆ Bring youth unemployment levels below national average;
- ◆ Keep long- term unemployment below the national average;
- ◆ Bring rate of business formation nearer to U.K. average;
- ◆ Bring farm income levels nearer to U.K. average household disposable incomes;
- ◆ Bring Staffordshire Moorlands figure nearer to regional position; and,
- ◆ Increase visitor spend and tourism supported jobs.

The vision for Staffordshire Moorlands is “to build a sustainable economy in the Staffordshire Moorlands in which local people can have secure and well paid jobs, businesses thrive and the environment is enhanced”

There are four main priorities. The first relates to Business Investment and Diversification. This involves encouraging the growth of new and existing businesses, helping them to invest in the local area and to adapt to change in

ways which will build a sustainable and diversified business base in Staffordshire Moorlands.

Skills and Jobs are also prioritised which involves helping local people to develop their skills, to improve their employability and their access to jobs, as well as to improve their income by accessing better paid jobs.

Community regeneration is also to be encouraged, which involves supporting people to get involved in the regeneration of their communities.

Sustainable Development and Infrastructure is also highlighted- involving developing a local infrastructure which encourages business growth and investment as well as helping people to access jobs while maintaining a high quality of life for local residents and enhancing the local environment.

The Sustainable Development and Infrastructure priority relates directly to this study, a specific aim under this pillar is to encourage the provision of a range of land and buildings for industrial and commercial use at a scale and type which will enhance villages and towns and facilitate the provision of local jobs. Other objectives include promoting the availability of sites and buildings, particularly major sites in the District and encouraging and facilitating the development of key employment sites.

A.2.6 Local Futures 'State of the District' Report

Local Futures Audit of Staffordshire Moorlands has captured the 'state of the borough' according to snapshots of local, economic, social and environmental conditions. The report provides a synthesis showing how the district stands within Britain and within the West Midlands. This is outlined under the following headings:

- ◆ **Economic Development** - Staffordshire Moorlands scores a D overall for economic performance ('A' representing the strongest performance, ranging to 'E' representing the weakest). The district has a small economy with low productivity, a below average skills base and low levels of enterprise. The principal strength is its labour market, where employment and economic activity levels are very high.
- ◆ **Social Profile** - Although scores here are better than above there is a clear link between a poorly performing economy and low prosperity levels.
- ◆ **Environment** - the district, typical of a rural area, has poor access to amenities but local services are good. The overall score is low due to poor growth in commercial space and low connectivity.

The paper highlights that in practical terms Staffordshire Moorlands needs to build policy and capacity in four competitive areas of the knowledge economy, which are as follows:

- ◆ Entrepreneurship, business clusters and networks- strengthening the supporting economic institutional framework.
- ◆ Local innovation- improving product and process innovation across the business economy, based on collaboration between firms, the public sector, universities, colleges and other key players.

- ◆ An educated, skilled and flexible workforce- built around the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) strategic area reviews and workforce development strategies, including improvements in IT skills and reducing education deprivation.
- ◆ Infrastructure- Staffordshire Moorlands' knowledge economy will require an advanced electronic infrastructure and a variety of e-services for a more technology-based economy and society.

A.2.7 Study of the Creative Industries in the Staffordshire Moorlands: Shop Floor or Shop Window?

The report estimates that there might be 2,233 people employed in the creative industries in Staffordshire Moorlands.

The creative industries tend to share the following characteristics:

- ◆ Predominantly 'traditional' activities;
- ◆ Half are sole traders;
- ◆ They are concentrated in the Leek area (53%), the Biddulph area (20%), Cheadle (20%) and other (7%);
- ◆ Only 16% of businesses are under 5 years old;
- ◆ There are 1,007 full time and 54 part time employees; and,
- ◆ For over 50% of these businesses, the Staffordshire Moorlands is not a market; 50% list the UK as a market; 25% have international markets, and the West Midlands region was not a market for 75% of respondents.

The perceived support and advice needs of Creative Industries (CIs) can be summarised as follows:

- ◆ Start-up capital;
- ◆ Business support and advice; information on 'the basics' such as national insurance and tax for the self-employed;
- ◆ Training and development;
- ◆ Marketing;
- ◆ Information about opportunities- funding, jobs, partnerships, marketing;
- ◆ Networking;
- ◆ Empathy and mentoring for sole traders; and,
- ◆ Encouragement and inspiration for self-employed/entrepreneurs; perhaps a resettlement programme for people after retirement/redundancy.

There have been attempts by towns and businesses to link to the Peak District, Alton Towers, Biddulph Grange Garden and the Stoke attractions- some links do well but with limited success as far as Creative Industries are concerned. These attractions bring in different markets- working, family, specialist interest etc. The tourism potential for craft based creative industries in the area is felt to be quite high, especially in Leek and the rural areas- less so in Biddulph and Cheadle. The textile history in the area, in Biddulph as well as Leek, could be exploited, as could the tradition of arts and crafts. There is the perception that visitors do not

stay because 'much of the interesting activity is invisible'. Creative industries need to increase their offer to tourists.

The conclusions drawn from the report include:

- ◆ The creative industries are a substantial, albeit fragmented, industry: whilst there is no one dominant individual organisation- collectively it 'adds up' to a sizeable and significant sector
- ◆ The creative industries are an established sector in Staffordshire Moorlands, with little evidence yet of many new start-ups or a great deal of 'high tech' creative activity.
- ◆ The creative industries, with the exception of the antiques/retail sector, are predominantly a producing, not a marketing industry- the sector is more of a shop floor than a shop window. Whilst producing skills may be necessary for expansion, business skills are required now, and marketing is essential.
- ◆ Creative industries suffer from a combination of the area's low profile, exacerbated by being under the shadow of surrounding high profile areas- especially the peak district- therefore the sector needs to go out more to its markets
- ◆ Tourist-focused creative businesses need to join together with each other/other attractions to become an attraction in their own right- and in groupings that make sense to the tourist. They need to establish an identity.
- ◆ There is a need for immediate and active collaboration with other authorities, partners and agencies, so as to create the critical mass to draw down funding.
- ◆ There is a need for a focus/icon building/location for the creative industries development in the area, with flexible space for production, retail and development activities. In choosing the location, tourism needs must be considered.
- ◆ In moving to the future- there is a need to be:
 - a) realistic- you cannot compete with Birmingham/Manchester; and;
 - b) go with the flow i.e. presently creative industries in the Staffordshire Moorlands are essentially traditional not new media/high tech.
- ◆ The Staffordshire Moorlands creative industries need to raise their profile and their critical mass if they are to secure more creative industries development funding.
- ◆ Marketing is essential and a key question is whether to 'go it alone' or whether to join forces with/be subsumed into the adjoining peak district and/or Stoke initiatives and identities.
- ◆ Also consider how to exploit the existing local experiences/expertise in national and international marketing.
- ◆ If the tourist market and local markets are to be exploited then the following needs to be addressed: an identity for the area; an identity for the sector; an identification of markets for sectors/specialisms; and the amateur market is essentially local strengthen local communications/grapevine.

A.3 Local Policy

A.3.1 Staffordshire Moorlands Development Control Report to Cabinet on Leek Employment Sites, November 2004

Staffordshire Moorlands Development Control Report to Cabinet on Leek Employment Sites, November 2004 was considered as part of the document review.

A.3.2 Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan

The Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan was adopted in September 1998. Policy E1 makes a provision for a total of 19.7 hectares of land to be developed in the Staffordshire Moorlands for general employment purposes within classes B1 and B2.

Policy E2 states that Staffordshire Moorlands has allocated a site of about 50 hectares at the junction of the A50(T) with the Blythe Bridge Bypass which will be developed as a premium employment site. This site serves the North Staffordshire sub-region comprising the Staffordshire Moorlands district, Newcastle Borough and City of Stoke-on-Trent, to help broaden the economic base of North Staffordshire by attracting further inward investment.

With regard to development in the countryside, policy E3 states that applications for agricultural land or buildings may be approved provided that they will diversify the rural economy by providing wide and varied opportunities for rural people. The aim of this policy is to encourage a healthy rural economy.

Policy E7 states that development involving the loss of existing employment sites will not be permitted except where it can be shown that the location is undesirable in environmental or traffic terms and where an alternative site is available.

A.3.3 Staffordshire Moorlands Local Development Framework

In accordance with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, Staffordshire Moorlands District Council is currently working on their Local Development Framework (LDF). The Core Strategy for Staffordshire Moorlands is now being prepared. Consultation on Issues and Options is expected in late 2006.

The first document produced as part of this process is the Biddulph Town Centre Area Action Plan. The AAP and accompanying evidence base was submitted to the Secretary of State for independent examination in January 2006. The examination in public will be held in October 2006, with the adoption of the town centre AAP scheduled for Spring 2007.

A.3.4 Biddulph Town Centre Area Action Plan

As part of the LDF the Biddulph Area Action Plan (AAP) has been produced in accordance with national, regional and county planning policies. The AAP will

supersede that part of the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan and those policies which have a direct relevance to the Biddulph Town Centre area. The AAP is the statutory planning document for assessing planning applications in the town centre and will allocate sites for certain uses. The following policies have been developed for sites identified within the AAP:

- ◆ Policy DS1 Wharf Road Site;
- ◆ Policy DS2 Bypass Site;
- ◆ Policy DS3 Library Site and Adjoining Land;
- ◆ Policy DS4 Walley Street Area;
- ◆ Policy DS5 Numbers 2-32 High Street;
- ◆ Policy DS6 77 Tunstall Road; and
- ◆ Policy DS7 Open Land between Walley Street Area and Bypass.

The key policies in the Regional Spatial Strategy which are relevant to Biddulph Town Centre include:

Policy UR2 – Towns and Cities outside major urban areas;

Policy UR3 – Enhancing the role of City, Town and District Centres;

Policy PA11 – The Network of Town and City Centres; and,

Policy RR3 – Market Towns.

Key policies relating to the Staffordshire and Stoke Structure Plan include:

Policy T1 – Ensuring the futures of town centres;

Policy T2 – Access to town centres;

Policy E2 – Increasing the choice of sites;

Policy E3 – Locational factors for the new sites; and

Policy H3 – Mixed use developments.

The Structure Plan identifies Biddulph as a priority location in North Staffordshire. The AAP has six main objectives which include:

- (i) A local shopping centre that attracts residents from all parts of Biddulph, as well as visitors from outside the town;
- (ii) A sustainable mix retail, service community and residential uses;
- (iii) Improved local employment opportunities;
- (iv) A high quality, well designed, safe and integrated centre;
- (v) A centre accessible by a choice of transport modes; and,
- (vi) A locally distinctive town centre where environmental and heritage assets are maximised.

Indicators have been derived to monitor the performance in relation to the six AAP objectives

A.3.5 Staffordshire Moorlands Mills Study

The Staffordshire Moorlands Mills Study provides 'an audit of the former textile mills in Leek and Cheadle', with an underlying purpose to 'produce an action plan for each mill...concentrating on those with greatest potential for future employment use'.

The study recommended that a general policy be included in the emerging Local Plan encouraging the re-use of all vacant or under-used mill floorspace for either employment, including live-work schemes, or residential purposes.

A.3.6 Employment Sites

Foker Grange Development Brief

In October 2003 a planning brief was produced by Staffordshire Moorlands District Council to promote the development of Foker Grange in Leek. The Brief provides guidance on the relevant planning policies, the history of the site, the site's landscape characteristics and the preferred options and requirements for the development of the site. However this site was fully considered by planning committee and rejected as a potential development site.

Blythe Bridge Employment Site

The Blythe Bridge site is being promoted as a premium employment site and its allocation is a response to an acute lack of high quality employment land throughout North Staffordshire. The principle of the site's development is being established by the Staffordshire Moorlands Local Plan due to the need to provide sites of a quality which can attract inward investment and contribute to job creation and diversification.

Victoria Business Park

The business park is situated on the A527 Tunstall Road, Biddulph. The development site extends to 9.89 hectares and has been fully serviced including the provision of a main estate road.