

SSJ Neighbourhood Plan

Business and Employment Opportunities – R1

January 2015



NP REF 10.02.01

Introduction

Sherborne St John is a fairly compact rural village within 3 miles of the large Basingstoke urban area. There are approximately 1000 residents with a good proportion over 60. There are around 54 businesses operating in the Parish ranging from offices in homes to a few converted business 'park-like' areas such as that on Vyne and Cranes roads containing small businesses, a residential home, one pub and 2 shops (one of which is closing due to the retirement of the current owner) and agricultural farms/units. The emphasis is towards small businesses which employ between 1-25+ people.

All registered businesses in the Parish were contacted and asked to complete a short consultation document and their comments, together with those from the residential questionnaire, did not reveal any significant problems.

Evidence Based information

In reviewing documents issued by Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council in support of the draft Local Plan – Employment Land Requirements in N Hants (2008) and Employment Land Review updated report 2013 – the emphasis is for redevelopment and improvement of the present industrial and offices areas with little relating to rural employment or business development.

Basingstoke and Deane has a successful economy which has generated 7500 extra jobs between 2001 and 2011 and demonstrated resilience throughout the economic down turn due to the broad range of businesses in the borough that sit within a wide range of sectors. The borough's strong economic performance is demonstrated by the productivity measure (Gross Value Added) which is higher than that of the borough's neighbouring boroughs and districts with the exception of West Berkshire. The borough has higher business start-up rates and lower failure rates than the regional and national averages, demonstrating the importance of the borough's SME business base. There is a mismatch between residence and workplace earnings in the borough due to a significant number of the borough's residents commuting to London and other major economic centres such as Reading where higher wages are on offer. The borough has historically attracted significant inward investment and whilst there has been a decline in recent years due to the economic down turn, there have been some recent high profile investments in the Borough.

The Employment Land Review has been prepared to inform the development of the Council's Local Plan to 2029. The study provides current information on the borough's existing employment sites and premises, and assesses future floor-space needs and land requirements for B class employment uses (offices, industry and warehousing) under a range of different growth scenarios. It also considers the current and future balance of demand and supply for employment land in the borough, and appropriate policy approaches in relation to employment floor-space for the final Local Plan.

As detailed below the emphasis is on B class sector much of which has little, or no, relevance to Sherborne St John Parish.

1.6 The key aims of this ELR update are to:

- Establish how the economic situation in Basingstoke and Deane has changed since the previous ELR was undertaken in 2009;
- Analyse recent and current commercial property market trends in Basingstoke and Deane and its functional market area;
- Undertake a review of current employment floor-space provision in the Borough;

The focus of this report is on the employment space needs for the group of B class sectors outlined below:

- B1 Business (offices, research & development, light industry);
- B2 General Industrial; and
- B8 Storage or Distribution (wholesale warehouses, distribution centres).

1.9 Demand for B-class employment land and floor-space is considered in this report. Industrial space includes both manufacturing (which includes industrial) and storage and distribution uses. This study identifies the employment growth potential of some other economic development uses as defined by the NPPF such as education, health and retail.

Policies EC2 and EC5 appear to be the only ones with relevance to the Parish in supporting the development of business premises or employment.

3.7 The following table provides an overview of the relevant Local Plan policies:

Local Plan Policy	Policy purpose
Policy EC1 – Employment Areas	States that employment development and redevelopment proposals will be permitted within the boundaries of the defined employment areas.
Policy EC2 – Employment Areas	Sets out policy criteria that applications for re-using land for alternate uses at the defined employment locations will be judged against.
Policy EC3 – Office and High Tech Employment Uses	States that at five of the defined employment areas, proposals for employment uses outside B1(a) and B1(b) of the use classes order will not be permitted at these locations unless the proposal is to meet the needs of an existing occupier.
Policy EC4 – Loss of Local Employment Opportunities	Sets out the criteria for determining applications which result in the loss of employment in employment use outside of Basingstoke Town to other uses.
Policy EC5 – Live/Work units	Provides a policy that is supportive of the establishment of live work units in suitable locations.

Provision for start ups / small businesses

While the ELR report 2013 notes:

6.17 The borough provides a range of accommodation to support business start ups and small businesses which make a valuable contribution to the borough's economy.

6.18 The borough contains a number of small office suites (serviced offices) to support businesses requiring such floor-space which is predominantly located in Basingstoke Town. Examples include the Innovation Centre at Basing View, Basepoint Business Centre, Regus and Worting House. In addition, smaller office provision is available outside of Basingstoke Town, for example at Campbell Court in Bramley.

And details Bramley :

9.44 The village of Bramley contains an established and allocated employment site of 3.5Ha. Campbell Court provides 29 office suites of circa 250sqm of floor-space. The units are in an attractive setting and are located a relatively short distance from the A33. At the time of site survey there were vacant units at the site being marketed, although this is to be expected given the current economic conditions and need for some vacant floor-space as part of a functioning commercial property market.

The final comment:

Agents have identified that there is no demand for additional employment land at Bramley given the Villages proximity to established employment areas in Basingstoke and good transport links by both private motor vehicle and public transport to the established employment locations of Basingstoke and Reading

Would support the view that ,as Sherborne St John is in a similar position they are therefore not in need of the provision of 'employment land'.

The most important points for the Parish are that rural business and employment development needs 'a (BDBC Local Plan) positive policy framework' specific to rural areas:

Rural/other settlements

9.46 Rural business space accommodates a proportion of the borough's employment requirements, reflecting the large area of the borough that is rural and increasing diversification within the agriculture sector. Demand for rural space is difficult to determine, although vacancy rates for such premises appear to be low and it can be assumed that demand is stable. Employment floor-space that has been delivered or received consent in rural areas over recent years has been through windfall development. In reality, the provision of a positive policy framework that encourages rural enterprise and diversification schemes represents the most appropriate way of ensuring that rural needs can be met.

Conclusion

While the ELR report finishes with the following points:

10.43 It is also important that the borough continues to provide a range of affordable workshop space for small high growth start-up businesses, by:

- *Seeking to resist the loss of premises that provide suitable accommodation for SMEs*
- *Seeking to provide smaller units within larger employment, residential or mixed use schemes that come forward.*

These really relate to the existing sites in the borough and not to small rural Parishes.

While consultation through the Neighbourhood Plan process did reveal the need for some increase in business premises in the Parish, the emphasis was on 'small' in keeping with the rural character and was mainly for agriculturally-linked development. The provision of faster broadband was the only consistent comment needed for business development.

While some parish residents were employed in the current businesses in the Parish and some people worked from their own home, the majority of working people travelled out of the Parish to their work.