



Economy and Employment

Topic Paper No 8 – Summary

Introduction

The planning system should support economic and employment growth. The development plan has a fundamental role in making provision for and encouraging employment development in order to revitalize and broaden the local economy and stimulate employment opportunities.

Context

Flintshire acts as a key focal point for the wider regional economy of North Wales and the North West, providing for example, 'high value' manufacturing employment at Deeside Industrial Park and Broughton. As a result Flintshire makes a very important contribution to both the Welsh and UK economy. But it is important that the economy continues to build upon its strengths by improving the quality and value of existing sectors and making the most of its environmental and geological advantages. The Wales Spatial Plan says the focus should be on developing existing key sectors such as high value manufacturing.

The sub-regional importance of Flintshire is demonstrated by the award of Enterprise Zone status for the area from Deeside Industrial Park, south eastwards to Hawarden Industrial Estate. Enterprise Zone status brings with it financial incentives and scope for a simplified planning regime. In the early part of the Plan period it should provide a major stimulus of the economy of the County.

Tourism also makes an important contribution to the local and regional economy and the issue of tourism is addressed in Topic Paper no. 18

The role of the Plan

A key objective for the Plan will be to develop an economic vision which is realistic and sustainable. The vision must also be consistent with other aspects of the Plan such as housing and transportation.

The economic vision should place Flintshire in its wider regional / sub-regional context to ensure economic visions are mutually consistent and complementary. The Plan's economic vision needs to reflect the uncertain economic future by acknowledging key uncertainties and putting in place mechanisms which will provide the flexibility to adjust to changing circumstances. However, it will also need to build upon the impetus created by the Enterprise Zone.

Key Employment and Economy Plans and Strategies

- A Winning Wales, National Economic Development Strategy (2002)
- Economic Renewal: A New Direction (July 2010)
- One Wales: One Planet – The Sustainable Development Scheme of the Welsh Assembly Government (May 2009)
- Rural Development Plan for Wales (2007-2013)
- Planning Policy Wales (Edition 5, November 2012) (Welsh Government)
- Draft Technical Advice Note (TAN) 23 Economic Development (Welsh Government 2013)
- North Wales Local Authorities – Economic Ambition, A Strategy for Change 2012

- NE Wales / West Cheshire Sub-Regional Spatial Strategy 2004 – 2021 (2006)
- Flintshire County Council Employment Land Review (2009)

Trends

In previous development plans it has become practice to over-allocate employment land in order to provide for a range of employment sites by location, size and type in order to provide for a degree of flexibility. A robust review of existing sites is needed alongside an assessment of the amount and the type of sites likely to be required over the Plan period, in order to determine whether existing sites are still capable of meeting the needs of modern employers.

Issues to be addressed by the Plan

- ensure an up to date and appropriate evidence base to set out an economic vision for the Plan area;
- a more robust forecast of land provision for the employment uses;
- ensure existing employment sites are protected from inappropriate development;
- provide the right amount of land and mix of sites to meet market demand;
- Ensure that there is a close correlation between the economic growth aspirations of the Plan and provision of housing
- establish whether specific locations are necessary for bad neighbour industries;
- seek to promote and facilitate development that will deliver regeneration benefits;
- Seek to improve accessibility to key employment sites via a range of means of transport
- prioritise sites that deliver appropriate job and training opportunities to disadvantaged communities;
- ensure the inclusion of criteria-based policies to deal with unallocated sites and help respond to unexpected change;
- allow for new economic development in and adjoining rural settlements and identify suitable

sites via a criteria based approach;

- encourage farm diversification and new rural development opportunities;
- identify protection zones around establishments that hold hazardous substances and protect the ability of existing establishments to operate or expand by preventing the incremental development of vulnerable uses in the vicinity of such sites.

Potential Land Use Policies / Proposals

The UDP contained 7 policies and proposals within the 'Employment' chapter. Many of these are detailed policies and whilst some are used, in many instances guidance is available elsewhere in the Plan, or the policies could be amalgamated to be more concise and focused. Following an assessment of the UDP policies it is proposed that the key policies and proposals are broadly along the lines of:

- Allocating individual sites for employment proposals
- Designating 'Principal Employment Areas' (PEA's) to identify where new employment development will generally be acceptable.
- Providing guidance on the location of other employment development outside allocations and PEAs, i.e. within settlement boundaries, or through the conversion of existing buildings outside settlement boundaries and the development of land on the edge of rural settlements.
- Providing guidance on small scale farm diversification proposals.
- The expansion of existing employment operations.
- The protection of employment land and buildings from the establishment of other uses such as new housing, retail and commercial proposals.

Further Evidence Needed

- Employment Land Review
- Economic Forecasting