

3A: Economic Development

3A(i)

- 3.1 The evidence base underpinning the employment land provisions in Table 8.2 is sound.
- 3.2 Table 8.2 contains an arithmetical error. The projected annual take up rate in Lancashire (D) should be 75.02 hectares.
- 3.3 In Table 8.3 the direction of the indicative change 2005 – 2025 in B1, B2 and B8 is correct. The County Council does not have a view on the quantum of the changes.

3A(ii)

- 3.4 The County Council would support the inclusion of employment land provision at a District level in RSS. Such an approach is necessary so that RSS can fulfil its role of providing a meaningful strategic context for the preparation of LDDs. Without a framework there is concern that local issues may give rise to instances of oversupply or undersupply of land, resulting potentially in a pattern of land supply not reflecting RSS and RTS.
- 3.5 District Councils may be able to offer advice during the debate on Matter 9 as to appropriate district figures if this approach is pursued.
- 3.6 It would be preferable for Table 8.2 to be adjusted with city region, rather than county, boundaries being used.

3A(iii)

- 3.7 Many of the sites listed in Table 8.1 have a long history behind them. The basis for selecting the 'broad locations' is summarised in NWDA's report 'Strategic Regional Sites – Evidence Base and Emerging Issues' (January 2005).
- 3.8 In Lancashire:
- 'North of Leyland/Bamber Bridge' was included on a 'Regional Business Location' and 'North West Chorley' as a 'Strategic Location for Development' in the Lancashire Structure Plan 1991-2006 (February 1997).
 - Both of these locations were included in RPG13 (March 2003) as Regional Investment Sites (RISs).
 - 'East of Blackburn/Hyndburn' and 'South of Lancaster' were added in RES 2003 (March 2003).
 - All four locations are identified in the adopted Joint Lancashire Structure Plan 2001-2016 (2005) as RISs.

- 'North West Chorley' is allocated as a RIS in the adopted Chorley Borough Local Plan. 'North of Leyland/Bamber Bridge' is allocated as a Major Inward Investment Site in the adopted South Ribble Local Plan. 'South of Lancaster' is allocated as a Business Park in the adopted Lancaster Local Plan. 'East of Blackburn/Hyndburn' is allocated as Employment land in the adopted Hyndburn Local Plan. On adoption of the Joint Lancashire Structure Plan 2001-2016, the County Council stated that the relevant local plans were not in conformity with the structure plan in respect of the designation of these sites (s35 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990). The designation 'RIS' therefore applies.
- Planning permissions exist for the 'North West Chorley' location and it is currently being redeveloped; planning applications have been submitted for the 'South of Lancaster' location and for part of the area at the 'East of Blackburn/Hyndburn' location.

3.9 Against this background it would be better if Table 8.1 were recast to recognise that these locations do not all have the same status within the planning system. They should be recategorised as:

- Under Development
- Commitments
- New Proposals

3.10 It would be preferable if RSS policy limited itself to the 'new proposals' category, with a separate table and supporting text recording the status and stage of development of the other locations. Such an approach would have two further advantages:

- It would be more 'user friendly' in that sites under development and commitments could be referred to by name, rather than the descriptions of broad locations that are used in Table 8.1 to comply with the advice in paragraph 1.16 of PPS11.
- It would demonstrate that progress is actually being made to develop sites and bring additional jobs to the North West.

3.11 The text that supports Policy W2 should clarify and justify why particular locations are identified as Reserve Sites and should also specify how long they are to be reserved for.

3.12 In Lancashire, Table 8.1 includes only one site that has not been tested at Structure Plan EIPs and Local Plan Inquiries: 'Central Preston'. The County Council cannot offer any specific advice, as it has not been involved in its proposed designation. However, that general location can be regarded as particularly sustainable: it will comprise previously developed land, is well served by public transport networks, is physically close to the city centre, the university and areas of deprivation characterised by below average wages and multi-cultural communities.

3.13 Three of the 5 locations 'North of Leyland/Bamber Bridge', 'East of Blackburn/Hyndburn' and 'South of Lancaster' would involve the development of greenfield land. The County Council considers that the economic and social gains arising from the development of these sites would be sufficient to outweigh the loss of greenfield land.

3.14 'North of Leyland/Bamber Bridge' has considerable advantages:

- Its potential to stimulate significant investment.
- Its ability to increase the choice of available employment sites in Central Lancashire.
- Its proximity to residential areas of Leyland and Bamber Bridge.
- Its potential to improve deprived local wards.

The 'North of Leyland/Bamber Bridge' site is directly accessed from Junction 1a of the M65 close to the M6/M61. It has regular bus services along perimeter roads providing links to Preston, Leyland and Wigan. A Quality Bus Route is currently being developed along one of these corridors. This could be diverted into the site when the development proceeds. The site is approximately one mile from Leyland station. It would be technically feasible to provide a direct rail link to the West Coast Main Line.

3.15 'East of Blackburn/Hyndburn' will assist economic growth in East Lancashire and is identified in RES as a site of regional significance. To reduce the area's reliance on manufacturing a significant proportion of Whitebirk will be used to attract knowledge-based industry. The 'East of Blackburn/Hyndburn' has high frequency Quality Bus Service along its northern and southern boundaries providing links to Blackburn and Accrington. These are being significantly enhanced as part of the East Lancashire Rapid Transit proposals (Draft RSS Table 10.2b). Substantial preliminary work has been undertaken on developing a business case for a new station at Greenbank, close to the site, but funding has not yet been identified. The site is close to Junction 6 of the M65.

3.16 The main strength of 'South of Lancaster' lies in its relationship to Lancaster University. The intention is to use the location to grow businesses that grow out of University activities, but cannot be located within its physically constrained campus. The attraction of key specialist activity to the location would make the location a significant economic driver. The location is adjacent to a high frequency Quality Bus Corridor that provides frequent links to Lancaster and Morecambe. It is situated on the A6 about 2 miles from Junction 33 of the M6 and approximately 2 miles from Lancaster Station on the West Coast Main Line.

3.17 While some of the locations cannot be regarded as ideal in terms of fully complying with the spatial framework, they are generally satisfactory:

- The broad locations 'East of Blackburn/Hyndburn', 'North of Leyland/Bamber Bridge', 'South of Lancaster' (and 'North West Chorley', which is being

developed) are at the edge of urban areas rather than within them. It is doubtful whether developments of this size could be accommodated within urban areas and the County Council is attempting to tie them into the spatial framework through improved public transport (Quality Bus Routes).

- Central Preston fully accords with the spatial framework and regeneration priorities. The proposed Knowledge Nuclei site will be located in or close to the City Centre and University, within easy walking distance of the Railway Station and close to the Bus Station. Preston is defined as a 'Key Interchange' in Appendix RT1.1 of draft RSS. The proposal is therefore located in an excellent location for high quality public transport.
- Development of the various locations will help maximise growth opportunities within the CLCR.

3A(iv)

- 3.18 Policy W2 should clearly state that office development at these locations should be related to their function as regional investment sites or knowledge nuclei sites. Significant B1 office development would be inappropriate unless it could be demonstrated that it could not be equally well accommodated in town/city centre locations or other urban locations served by public transport (i.e. the sequential test will be applied).

3A(v)

- 3.19 Action 81 of the RES 2006 is to identify and pursue sites for major investment that would otherwise not take place in the North West in manufacturing, knowledge based industry, corporate headquarters and R&D. There is no justification in Policy W2 or the Technical Appendix as to why large-scale manufacturing investment is to be accommodated on Regional Investment Sites and headquarter functions on knowledge-nuclei sites. A justification needs to be provided.
- 3.20 The County Council accepts the view of the NWDA that there is evidence of potential future demand and a shortage of suitable sites (Action 81 of RES (2006)).