

Warrington Local Plan Examination

**Inspectors' Guidance Note
Additional hearing session concerning
the employment land requirement**

*Updates in red font

1. Following the last of the scheduled hearing sessions on 6 October 2022 and the receipt of outstanding items of information we wrote to the Council on 16 December 2022 setting out our conclusions on key issues of soundness. This included our view that the employment land requirement for the plan period should be reduced from 316.26ha to 168ha. The letter set out the basis for this conclusion. The Council responded on 22 December 2022 confirming that it wished to proceed towards public consultation on main modifications in accordance with our conclusions and drew our attention to the fact that it would seek the views of its consultants in relation to employment land (BE Group). These views were provided in a letter from BE Group on 13 January 2023.
2. We subsequently provided the Council with an outline of all the main modifications which we considered were necessary to make the Local Plan sound. The Council produced a comprehensive schedule of proposed main modifications, and this was subject to public consultation for six weeks from 15 March 2023¹.
3. Whilst representations were received on a wide range of main modifications, there were substantial technical submissions in relation to the proposed reduction in the employment land requirement and the related deletion of the proposed South East Warrington Employment Area (Policy MD6). The representations on behalf of Liberty Properties Ltd and Langtree Property Partners Ltd in particular set out detailed information and alternative methodologies to arrive at an employment land requirement for the Borough. They raise substantial concerns over the basis for our conclusion on the matter.
4. In light of this, we consider it appropriate to hold an additional hearing session to discuss the employment land requirement for the Borough.
5. The additional hearing session will be held on **Thursday 13 July 2023, starting at 9.30am**. A full day has been scheduled. It will be held at the **Halliwell Jones Stadium, Mike Gregory Way, Warrington WA2 7NE**.
6. The participants for the original hearing session on Matter 5 (Economic growth and development) held on 9 September 2022 can attend and speak at the additional hearing session. We will consider requests from others to attend and speak at the session on their merits. As previously, the session will be open to others to observe.
7. The additional hearing session will **only** concern the issue of the overall employment land requirement for the Borough. Whilst the relationship between the employment

¹ The Council have recently become aware of issues with the notification of this consultation and have therefore re-opened the consultation for another six weeks from 24 May 2023.

land requirement and anticipated labour supply (as a result of housing growth) will be discussed, the housing requirement itself will not be. Likewise, whilst reference is likely to be made to the South East Warrington Employment Area, the session will not be revisiting the detail of the site allocation or its merits.

8. The focus for the additional hearing session will be our letter of 16 December 2022, the response to it by BE Group and the detailed representations on behalf of Liberty Properties Ltd and Langtree Property Partners Ltd.
9. Specific issues that will be considered include:
 - Past trends in employment land/floorspace take up in different sectors.
 - The use of past take up trends to predict future requirements.
 - Past trends in jobs growth in different sectors.
 - The appropriate time period to analyse past trends.
 - Job densities in different sectors.
 - Employment growth forecasts in different sectors, how this relates to “employment land” and “non-employment land” and the implications of this for the amount of land required to be allocated in the Local Plan.
 - The relationship between the amount of employment land to be provided, the jobs growth that would occur and anticipated total labour supply (as a result of planned housing growth), taking account of the role of different sectors in employment growth and the differing needs for land to be allocated.
 - Specific evidence on the scale of land/floorspace required for storage and distribution uses (Class B8).
 - Information on vacancy rates, rental values, net absorption, age of stock and redevelopment of sites and the implications of this.
 - The relationship of Warrington to other parts of the region/sub-region in terms of the market for employment land and in particular Class B8.
 - The regional/sub-regional picture in terms of the requirements for employment land overall and in particular Class B8.
 - The availability of sites in the region/sub-region (those with planning permission and those allocated in Local Plans), particularly those in locations competing with Warrington. The specific position regarding land at Omega West in St Helens.
10. The key documents relevant to the hearing session are listed below, along with their reference numbers and these are available on the examination webpage:
 - Warrington EDNA Refresh 2021 – EC2
 - Warrington Local Plan Consultation Responses Review 2022 – EC1
 - Warrington Local Housing Needs Assessment Update 2021 – H2
 - WBC written statement for Matter 5 – M5.01
 - Notes produced by WBC on employment capacity – CD10 and CD10a
 - Inspectors’ letter of 16 December 2022 – ID06
 - WBC response of 22 December 2022 – CD66
 - BE Group response on behalf of WBC – CD67
 - Schedule of Proposed Main Modifications – ID09
 - Representation on proposed main modifications including appendices from Liberty Properties Ltd – MMC051

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- Representation on proposed main modifications including appendices from Langtree Property Partners Ltd – MMC086
- Representation on proposed main modifications from St Modwen Properties – MMC061
- Hearing Statements from St Modwen Properties – M5.10, M5.10a and M5.10b

11. The Council should submit a written statement addressing the issues set out above and responding to information and evidence submitted in representations on the main modifications as appropriate. Other participants at the hearing session can also submit written statements, although they can rely on previous submissions if they choose.

12. All written statements should be submitted to the Programme Officer **by 5pm on Monday 19 June 2023**. Those wishing to speak at the hearing session should confirm this with the Programme Officer by the **same deadline**.

Kevin Ward and Andrea Mageean
INSPECTORS