

Darlington Local Plan

Skerningham Estates Limited (ID: 1250841)

Matter 7 Statement – Economic development

Issued May 2021

1.1 Our Client (Skerningham Estates Limited) responds to Question 7.2.

Economic development

Q7.2 Subject to the Council’s proposed modifications, will the existing employment sites listed in Policy E1 Table 7.2 and allocations listed in Policy E2 Table 7.3 provide sufficient opportunities to meet the anticipated need for business, industrial and storage/distribution development over the plan period?

- 1.2 Taken together, Policy E1 (Table 7.2) and Policy E2 (Table 7.3) would result in a supply of 158.1ha of employment land in Darlington over the Plan period. The tables provide helpful clarity regarding the suggested employment uses for each site, with some flexibility for those locations where the Council considers that a range of uses are likely to be appropriate. This balance of policy precision and flexibility is welcomed. The proposed modifications ensure that the suggested uses reflect the updated Use Class Order (2020).
- 1.3 In overall terms, the proposed supply of 158.10ha would be sufficient to meet anticipated needs to 2036, whilst providing an appropriate margin or buffer (see Matter 2). In addition, the list of sites included within Tables 7.2 and 7.3 provides a balanced portfolio that is well positioned to support economic growth over the Plan period. This is considered below in the context of: site quality/suitability; site size; and site availability/constraints.

Quality and Suitability

- 1.4 As part of the Council’s Employment Land Review: Update 2019 the 29 sites to be allocated/protected under Policies E1 and E2 were assessed using an objective, criteria-based scoring approach. The criteria used to establish each site’s quality and suitability for employment uses are consistent with Paragraph 3-015-20190722 of the Planning Practice Guidance (Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment) and the ODPM ‘brown book’ guidance on Employment Land Reviews. The seven criteria are listed below:
- Strategic access;
 - Local road access;
 - Proximity to urban areas and access to labour and services;
 - Compatibility of adjoining uses;
 - Site characteristics and development constraints;
 - Market attractiveness; and
 - Planning/sustainability factors.

- 1.5 The results of the site assessment exercise are summarised in Table 1. This demonstrates that 21 sites (comprising of 125.88ha of available land) are considered, by Council officers, to be of good or excellent quality. This equates to 72% of sites or 80% of available land. As such, the Council's supply of sites leaves the Borough well placed to meet the needs of modern occupiers over the Plan period.

Table 1 Quality of Available Employment Land

Score	DBC Quality Assessment	No. of Sites	Available Net (ha)
30-35	Excellent	11	113.95
25-29	Good	10	11.93
20-24	Average	5	4.71
<20	Poor	3	27.51
		29	158.10

Source: Employment Land Review: Update 2019

Site Size

- 1.6 The provision of employment sites of varying sizes is important to the economic competitiveness of an area. Within Darlington, available general employment sites range in size from 0.11ha to 49.00ha. This includes serviced plots on established industrial estates, as well as larger sites which could accommodate a single, major investor (or be sub-divided to meet a range of business requirements). It is clear, therefore that the portfolio provides a choice of sites by size and this is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2 Available Employment Sites by Size

DBC Site Ref	Site Name	Net Available (ha)
351	South West TCF / Beaumont Street	0.11
358	Yarm Road Industrial Estate	1.31
355	Lingfield Point	1.92
360	Heighington Lane North	3.99
357	Morton Park	4.05
368	Central Park South	4.21
342	Faverdale East Business Park	4.26
359	Morton Palms Business Park	4.26
404	Teesside Airport North	4.71
80	East of Lingfield Point	7.21
343	Faverdale Industrial Estate	7.83
367	Link 66 / Symmetry Park	9.17
362	Teesside Airport South	27.51
356	Ingenium Parc	28.56
185	Greater Faverdale	49.00
	Total	158.10

Source: Employment Land Review: Update 2019

Availability and Constraints

- 1.7 It is important to have a supply of land which is readily available for development, to ensure that economic growth is not constrained in the short term. In recognition of this, some local authorities adopt a ‘monitor and manage’ approach by seeking to ensure a rolling supply of immediately available sites equivalent to five years of demand.
- 1.8 Analysis undertaken by Lambert Smith Hampton, on behalf of Skerningham Estates Limited, indicates that the proposed supply of employment land set out in Policies E1 and E2 comprises of:
- 37.98ha of immediately available land (with plot sizes ranging from 0.11ha to 9.17ha); and
 - 120.11ha of land currently requiring preparation.
- 1.9 Darlington’s Employment Land Review: Update 2019 considers two alternative forecasting techniques in estimating future land needs¹: past take-up, which generates a requirement for 5.5ha of land per annum; and projected jobs growth, which generates a requirement for 7.5ha per annum. On this basis, a supply of 37.98ha of immediately available land would be sufficient to meet between 5.1 and 6.9 years of demand. It therefore follows that opportunities to develop employment premises in the short term are not constrained. Over the medium-to-long term, investment in infrastructure can bring forward a further 120.11ha of development land to meet needs during the Plan period.

Summary

- 1.10 Skerningham Estates Limited remain committed to delivering up to 30 hectares of employment land as part of the Skerningham Garden Community, to create a holistic, sustainable community. The Council’s Submission Draft Local Plan makes provision for the need for employment land at Skerningham to be considered when the Local Plan is next reviewed and as part of any future update/review of the Borough’s employment land evidence.
- 1.11 Such an approach is supported by our client’s response to Matter 2, which has demonstrated that Darlington’s Submission Draft Local Plan allocates sufficient land to meet projected demand over the period to 2036. It is also supported by the text above, which illustrates that there are no qualitative gaps in the portfolio that would need to be addressed through additional land allocations.
- 1.12 The Skerningham Garden Community is intended, therefore, to contribute to Darlington’s employment land supply from 2036 onwards. This is appropriate given that the Local Plan identifies a balanced supply (which excludes land at Skerningham). In the event that the Borough’s supply begins to tighten earlier than anticipated – as a result of greater than expected demand or the non-delivery of sites – Skerningham Estates Limited could accelerate the delivery of employment land to ensure that local economic growth is not constrained.

Word Count: 853

¹ NB – both figures exclude any allowance for past losses