



High Wycombe

Property Market Analysis and Sequential Test

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For Wycombe District Council Property Services

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1.0 Introduction

Savills has been instructed by the Wycombe District Council (WDC) to propose preferred uses for the Cressex (Handy Cross), Cressex Island and Compair sites. The report also includes a sequential analysis of High Wycombe Town Centre which considers whether the preferred uses could be accommodated in or on the edge of the town centre.

The following uses are under consideration by WDC:

New Sports Centre
Offices
Hotel
Commercial Leisure
Large format retail members only Retail Warehouse
Transport Hub [coaches]

Section 2 is written from a market perspective and considers the market demand and requirements for these uses.

Section 3 sets down the process of sequential analysis as defined by PPS6.

Section 4 establishes need (or otherwise) for the various uses in accordance with PPS6 paragraph 2.28.

Section 5 is a sequential consideration of the sites in High Wycombe, which should be read in conjunction with table 1.

Section 6 is a summary of the appropriate uses for the sites considered in the report.

Section 7 is Savills' conclusions and identification of the preferred uses for the Cressex (Handy Cross), Cressex Island and Compair sites.

2.0 Market Analysis of Uses

The market analysis considers the market demand for office, leisure and hotel accommodation in High Wycombe.

There is no established market for the other uses identified in the previous section of this report although they will have to compete for available land in any relocation scenario. Other uses, particularly residential will provide a minimum land value in many cases.

2.1 Offices

High Wycombe has never been cited as a mainstream "Thames Valley" town for Headquarters office occupiers as immediate competitors namely Marlow, Uxbridge and Maidenhead have continued to prosper delivering sites for large office schemes with motorway accessibility. The Handy Cross site could be the first High Wycombe site to genuinely offer the office market a substantive amount of high profile, premium office buildings well served by the new junction improvements and direct motorway access. We believe the site can accommodate at minimum of 25-30,000 sq m.

WDC carried out an Economy Study in 2004 that made employment land recommendations and recognised the need to provide land for high quality (knowledge based) users. This need is partly due to High Wycombe's lack of prime office space as the town centre is dominated by accommodation constructed in the 1980s and earlier, much of which is in need of refurbishment and is in units of less than 1,000 sq m. This type of accommodation may appeal to smaller local office occupiers but is not of a size or quality to attract high quality knowledge based occupiers or encourage new corporates from some of the surrounding counties to better serviced headquarter sites such as those that can be delivered at the Handy Cross site.

2.1.1 Demand & Take up

There is no independent published data available for High Wycombe Town Centre. This indicates that there may be a relatively small amount of data available to capture.

The take-up of office accommodation in the High Wycombe District increased from 9,100 sq m (98,000 sq ft) in 2004 to 24,990 sq m (269,000 sq ft) in 2005 and in the first two quarters of 2006 demand was recorded at 14,307 sq m (154,000 sq ft), an increase of 5% over the previous 6 month period (PROMIS*live*).

Over the last five years to quarter two of 2006 there have been no transactions over 9,290 sq m (100,000 sq ft), 5 deals of 4,645-9,290 sq m (50-100,000 sq ft), 4 deals of 2,323-4,645 sq m (25-50,000 sq ft) and the majority of transactions have been for units under 2,323 sq m (25,000 sq ft). This is principally due to the lack of modern office accommodation with large clear floorplates, necessary to attract major office occupiers.

Pre-lets have been limited and in the past 5 years to 2005 have averaged 371 sq m (4,000 sq ft) per annum or 2% of the total take up, this compares with an average of 12% for the M25 West.

Much of the accommodation that has been occupied has been weighted towards out of town offices with take-up being split 14% town centre and 86% out of town offices in areas such as Wooburn Green and Marlow. The reason for this is due to the convenient road access the out of town offices offer and due to the poor quality of accommodation in the town centre.

Multiplex's development of the Eden shopping centre will provide over 85,000 sq m of retail and leisure floorspace in the town centre of High Wycombe. The development is scheduled for completion in Spring 2008 and will provide 54 new shops, restaurants and a cinema with House of Fraser and Marks and Spencer as the retail anchor stores. The quality and scale of the development is anticipated to attract people from throughout the county of Buckinghamshire and beyond.

Currently, High Wycombe does not have a comparative office development to match the retail offering of Eden. The development of Eden will undoubtedly generate demand for further development in High Wycombe to include offices. The development of a minimum of 25,000-30,000 sq m of offices in a prestigious prominent location combined with the retail facilities of Eden could provide the opportunity for High Wycombe to become a major destination within Buckinghamshire and the Thames Valley.

2.1.2 Supply

The High Wycombe District is estimated to have an office stock of 439,074 sq m (4,726,189 sq ft), of which approximately 6,000 sq m (65,000 sq ft) was completed in 2005 and only 743 sq m (8,000 sq ft) is scheduled to complete in 2006, these figures compare with a historic peak of completions of 49,145 sq m (529,000 sq ft) in 1989.

The majority of the office accommodation in High Wycombe town is centred around Easton Street, Castle Street, Crendon Street, Corporation Street and Oxford Road. The most recent development being Aria House on Oxford Road, a 4,087 sq m (44,000 sq ft) development completed in 2001 and let to the Department of Work and Pensions in 2002.

Other major office developments in High Wycombe are predominantly out of town and include the former Dun & Bradstreet offices, now occupied and owned by Johnson & Johnson to the south of the town centre adjacent to the M40.

Kingsmead Business Park is two miles to the east of the town centre and is considered by local agents to be the prime location for office occupiers in High Wycombe. Additionally the Marlow area, albeit some distance from High Wycombe town centre, has emerged as an important office location. Three sites have been developed adjacent to one another: Globe Park, Globeside and Marlow International Park.

Other business parks include Mercury Park and Glory Park at Wooburn Green five miles south east of the town, Bourne End Business Centre seven miles south of the town and Vantage 5 at Stokenchurch eight miles north-west of the town.

The Office for National Statistics (ONS) estimates that availability in the High Wycombe District is 35,294 sq m (379,911 sq ft) at mid 2006, which equates to an availability rate of 8% which is below the 15.5% availability rate for the M25 West Centres and 11.7% for the office PROMIS Centres.

2.1.3 Development Pipeline

There is 130,063 sq m (1.4 million sq ft) of accommodation in High Wycombe's development pipeline. 120,772 sq m (1.3 million sq ft) has planning permission. However, the majority of the development is planned as out of town development some distance from High Wycombe town centre and its communication links.

Of the schemes with planning permission, two are over 9,290 sq m (100,000 sq ft), these schemes include Development Securities expansion of 9,847 sq m (106,000 sq ft) at Globeside and 16,722 sq m (180,000 sq ft) at Glory Park, both of which are out of town developments. Potentially, these developments could accommodate large national office occupiers but they are not in close proximity to the communications and town centre facilities of High Wycombe and are therefore unlikely to provide prestige headquarter type offices that large knowledge based occupiers require.

A further seven schemes between 4,645-9,290 sq m (50-100,000 sq ft) have planning permission and include a 8,603 sq m (92,600 sq ft) mixed use development at the Paper Mill and Sewage Works sites on London Road, and a 6,875 sq m (74,000 sq ft) office scheme on Henley Road, Marlow.

The freehold interest of Saunderton Business Park, known as the 'Molins site' is currently available for sale. The 26 acre site is four miles to the north west of High Wycombe town centre and was primarily used for B2 industrial use for Molins plc, who manufacture packaging machinery, however an outline planning application was submitted in August 2006 to develop 56,000 sq m (602,799 sq ft) of B1 office accommodation. The development of this scheme to provide a significant office scheme is dependent on the success of the planning application, which is uncertain, particularly as a similar application was refused in December 2005. The agents selling the development opportunity anticipate that the site will be sold for in excess of £20 million.

The Molins site offers the potential to develop large scale offices to attract occupiers to the High Wycombe area. But the site does not benefit from the communication infrastructure and is not as accessible as either the Cressex (Handy Cross) or Cressex Island sites.

2.1.4 Market Values

Rents

2006's lettings in High Wycombe have been limited to units of a maximum size of 650 sq m (7,000 sq ft) primarily due to the lack of good quality accommodation to attract any substantial requirements. Evidence of some of the most recent lettings in High Wycombe in 2006 is shown in the table below:

Address	Size (sq ft)	Rent achieved (£ per sq ft)
Abbey Barn Business Centre	2,500	£17.50
Wye River Studios, West Wycombe Road	3,500	£11.75
Furlong Road, Bourne End	7,000	£15.00
Priory Gate House, Priory Road	760	£11.00
Glory Park	3,800	£24.00 + rent free
Kingsmead Business Park	7,000	£22.00
Easton Street	2,000	£10.00
Lancaster Court, Cressex Business Park	2,000	£15.00
Mercury Park, Wooburn Green	4,500	£22.50
Mercury Park, Wooburn Green	4,500	£22.50
Cliveden Office Village	5,000	£15.00
Sword House, Totteridge Street	5,900	£12.00

There have also been a number of transactions at the out of town offices near Marlow, such as Navteq who have occupied 465 sq m (5,000 sq ft) on a 5 year sub lease from Ikon with 6 months rent free at Globeside II in Marlow at a rent reflecting £24.50 per sq ft in August 2006. At Globeside I Ixia have occupied 557 sq m (6,000 sq ft) on a 10 year lease, with a 5 year break with 6 months rent free.

Globeside Business Park is located to the west of Globe Park and adjacent to the railway station in Marlow. The accommodation available represents high quality grade A accommodation, hence the rents achieved are significantly above the rents achieved for the letting of property in High Wycombe

town centre. This leads to the conclusion that there are currently occupiers in the market who require good quality accommodation.

The transactional evidence reveals that the rents achieved in the town centre are approximately £10-£15 per sq ft and below the rents of over £20 per sq ft achieved at the out of town offices. The level of the out of town office rents achieved indicates that there is demand for good quality office accommodation in the High Wycombe area. This suggests that the development of a large scale office development could attract national occupiers who would pay higher rents to occupy modern accommodation with good access and facilities such as a health and fitness club, dry cleaners, café/restaurant and convenience store.

To attract major occupiers large scale accommodation of a minimum 25,000-30,000 sq m and up to 100,000 sq m would need to be developed as high quality knowledge based occupiers are highly unlikely to occupy 1,000-2,000 sq m of offices in various locations throughout High Wycombe. The offices would need to offer large clear floorplates with air conditioning, lifts, raised floors, suspended ceilings and possibly various other facilities frequently seen on modern business parks such as a health and fitness club, a café/restaurant, a dry cleaning service and newsagents.

Yield

This section of the report identifies some of the recent transactions in High Wycombe and the yields that have been achieved.

In January 2006 GMAC House in High Wycombe town centre sold at a net initial yield reflecting 6.6%. The property is let to the General Motors Group of Companies and provides a good specification comprising air conditioning, raised floors, suspended ceilings and lifts.

In February 2006 the multi let 1980s Lincoln's Inn Business Park in High Wycombe was sold by DTZ Investment Managers for a net initial yield reflecting approximately 8%. The Park was built in the late 1980s and some elements are over rented (i.e. the current rent passing exceeds the rents being achieved for similar properties in the market).

In January 2006 St Johns Court on Easton Street in High Wycombe was sold by Comland Commercial plc to a private client fund of Axa plc for £4.53 million reflecting an initial yield of 7.47%. The property was constructed in 1984 to provide circa 2,053 sq m (22,094 sq ft) of office accommodation which is currently let in its entirety to the RAC plc and sublet in part to Hyundai Motor UK Ltd.

2.1.5 Requirements

Savills' opinion is that in order to establish High Wycombe as an attractive market for major international office occupiers a significant amount of accommodation would need to be developed.

The development of a minimum of 25,000 – 30,000 sq m of offices in several headquarters type buildings would be the appropriate amount to generate the critical mass necessary to attract and retain several major occupiers. The development of less accommodation than this is unlikely to attract major international occupiers to establish High Wycombe as a significant office location and to compete with the other office locations in the Thames Valley.

Moreover, the development of less than 25,000 sq m of office accommodation could result in the new offices competing with the existing town centre offices and encouraging the existing smaller business occupiers to relocate leading to an increase in the vacancy rate for town centre offices.

The current office availability in High Wycombe: small units, of predominantly less than 7,000 sq ft will not meet the requirements of large occupiers. High quality, knowledge based users require large, modern offices in prestige locations which benefit from good communications. These offices need to benefit from flexible floorplates that can be sub divided to allow alternative office configurations,

suitable for different types of occupiers and to allow occupiers to expand their businesses as and when they require. To create a prestige location a minimum of 25,000 – 30,000 sq m needs to be developed on a prominent site so as to attract a suitable tenant with a good covenant strength.

2.1.6 Conclusions on offices

The location and communications available to the town suggests that High Wycombe should attract international and national office occupiers and should be a prime office location. However, the town has not appealed to a significant number of major national occupiers like other of the towns in the Thames Valley such as Reading, Uxbridge and Maidenhead.

The steep topography due to High Wycombe's location in a valley is one explanation of why the town has not drawn greater numbers of major office occupiers. The lack of good quality accommodation in units of greater than 1,000 sq m (10,000 sq ft) has also prohibited major occupiers from locating in the area.

Developers have been deterred from developing new property in the town centre as the rents that are being achieved are not great enough to generate the appropriate returns. Additionally, currently the town centre does not offer many appropriate development opportunities and developers are unlikely to develop offices on small and piecemeal sites within the town centre.

Notwithstanding this the rents that are being achieved out of town indicate that there is potential demand to develop new grade A accommodation to attract major office occupiers to High Wycombe but it is essential that this accommodation is provided in an appropriately prominent and prestigious location.

Whilst the attributes of High Wycombe (rail access to London, retail and residential accommodation) are attractive to these occupiers these characteristics are not sufficient to attract major new occupiers into the town centre. The development of a minimum of 25,000 – 30,000 sq m and up to 50,000 sq m of grade A accommodation should be the appropriate quantity and quality of development to attract demand from other locations particularly the Thames Valley, Heathrow and London overspill opportunities.

2.2 Hotels

The UK hotel market has been through challenging times in recent years, particularly in London following the events of 11 September 2001, SARS and the war in Iraq. Hotels outside London did not experience the impacts of 11 September quite as severely nor were they effected to such a degree by the events of 7 July 2005 as central London.

However, the latest data available from TRI Hospitality Consulting, for the twelve months to end December 2005, shows a positive picture for the future. For 2005, the occupancy rate for UK hotels was down slightly from 73.1% in 2004 to 72.5%, although room rates increased by 3.8%.

2.2.1 Demand

The average room rates in key locations throughout the UK range from £52 in Coventry to £89 in Brighton. Locations like Brighton and Reading have taken the top two spots, showing a £20 premium to Bristol and Manchester, this suggests that pricing pressure is affecting the larger regional cities, where supply is higher.

Much of High Wycombe's demand is driven by the business market and to a lesser extent the leisure market. The town's proximity to Heathrow airport has also generated demand for hotel rooms and conference facilities.

2.2.2 Supply

In 2006 there have been 16 new hotel openings in the UK offering an additional 2,081 rooms. London dominates the openings and those outside of London are spread out over a wide geographical area, stretching from Cornwall to Lancashire. The nearest new hotels to High Wycombe to open have been in Reading and Milton Keynes.

The study commissioned by WDC and prepared by Tourism Solutions reveals that High Wycombe is the location for over 20 hotels and that there is a significant level of competition in the surrounding area.

Despite this, there are relatively few major hotel operators in the town centre and Tourism Solutions' report revealed that there is demand for 240-440 new hotel bedrooms. Furthermore Savills' Hotels team are aware that several hotel groups have serious requirements to locate in the town. Those that have indicated they have requirements to locate in High Wycombe include ACCOR (Etap and Ibis) and Travelodge.

2.2.3 Market Values

Rents

Savills' Hotels team have estimated that a 100-120 room hotel would command a rent of circa £3,000-£4,000 per room which equates to an annual rent of approximately £300,000 - £480,000.

These values are on the basis of a hotel let to occupiers such as ACCOR who require rooms of 16.4 sq m (177 sq ft) with circa 20 rooms per floor with restaurant space of circa 3,600 sq m (38,750 sq ft). Similar values would apply to a hotel let to the Travelodge group who require rooms of 21 sq m (226 sq ft).

Yields

Between January 2005 and November 2006 there were 22 major hotel transactions. The value of these hotels has ranged from £6 million to £1 billion.

The weight of money in the property sector and lending by banks has driven yields lower. This has resulted in some owners selling their investments to capitalise on healthy valuation levels. All types of property sub-sectors, including hotels, have been targeted by both private and institutional investors.

Hotel occupiers have agreed to leases of various duration. For example ACCOR have recently agreed leases of circa 15 years whilst Travelodge have agreed leases of 25 years.

Savills' Hotels team are of the opinion that the ACCOR group could command yields of circa 5.5% whilst Travelodge would achieve a sharper yield of 4.5% to 5%.

2.2.4 Requirements

Tourism Solutions reported that there is potential demand in High Wycombe for several new hotels of various quality ranging from a four star hotel to a two star hotel.

Savills' Hotels department has confirmed that currently several hoteliers have requirements for High Wycombe including the following:

- ACCOR (Ibis Hotel) – two star – 80-120 rooms;
- Travelodge – two star – 60-120 rooms.

Several other hoteliers are believed to have requirements but would need further, more detailed information regarding precise location and size of site to confirm their requirements.

2.2.5 Conclusions on hotels

The transport links, the demand from hotel occupiers and the lack of significant competition in the market means that the development of hotels is viable. The potential development opportunities include the "Backland" site in the town centre and the Compar site to the north west of the town.

However despite hotel operators requirements neither of these sites are appropriately positioned as they are too great a distance from both the motorway and the train station and may consequently not attract a major hotel operator.

The other sites in the town centre, that may offer potential for hotel development are currently occupied by offices which command higher values than hotels, thus redevelopment of these sites is currently not a viable option.

In consideration of the above, the most appropriate location could be either the core of the town centre, adjacent to Junction 4 of the M40 or both. Both locations could be viable, particularly as Tourism Solutions' report identified that there is demand for the provision of more than one hotel. The development of a hotel adjacent to a new headquarters office development at Junction 4 of the M40 could benefit both uses by attracting international occupiers and provide a prestigious gateway to High Wycombe.

2.3 Commercial Leisure

2.3.1 Demand

The commercial leisure sector was strong in the late 1990's when there was strong demand for leisure sites in all locations from heavily acquisitive private and listed businesses. Since then, the sector has reached maturity and new openings are slowing.

2005 and 2006 has been a turbulent period for consumer spending. There has been a delayed reaction by consumers due to their lack of confidence in their own financial futures, and the high levels of debt. Some areas of spending have been more resilient than others and it is clear that spending on goods has been harder hit than spending on services.

Recent trends in consumer spending on leisure and recreational services show that while growth slowed in 2004 (from 2.9% to 1.7% per annum), it actually accelerated back to 2.9% per annum in 2005. This is due to the fact that spending on services is generally less volatile than spending on goods, and this is particularly true for spending on leisure services. Over the last 40 years spending on leisure and recreational services has been the ninth least volatile of all categories of consumer spending. The only things being less volatile being relatively fixed costs such as spending on rent, insurance and utilities.

The lack of a significant health and fitness operator in High Wycombe and the growth in spending in the leisure sector suggests that there is demand for an appropriately located health and fitness facility. Furthermore, it is evident that High Wycombe does not have comparable leisure facilities to similar towns in the surrounding area. The mainstream occupiers in the towns surrounding High Wycombe include:

- Slough – LA Fitness and Holmes Place
- Maidenhead – David Lloyd and Holmes Place
- Watford – David Lloyd and Living Well
- Bracknell – Esporta and Living Well

The above towns benefit from at least two mainstream national leisure operators and several independent health and fitness operators, suggesting that there is a 'gap' in the market in High Wycombe and demand for the development of a comparable leisure facility.

2.3.2 Supply

Odyssey health club at Wooburn Green, south west of High Wycombe and Junction 4 of the M40 provides circa 3,700 sq m (40,000 sq ft) of accommodation. Fitness First at High Wycombe Retail Park on London Road, Wycombe Marsh, also provides a relatively small health and fitness facility of circa 1,500-2,000 sq m and does not benefit from a swimming pool or racquets club. However, no other significant health and fitness operators are located in the vicinity of High Wycombe, thus there is poor health and leisure facilities for the local residents, particular those who live between the north of Junction 4 of the M40 and Amersham.

Due to the lack of health and fitness facilities in High Wycombe, several large health and fitness operators are believed to have requirements for development sites in High Wycombe. We understand, these operators may include David Lloyd and Esporta Health and Fitness.

Both operators are major players in the health and leisure sector. David Lloyd has been building and operating leisure clubs since 1982. Currently they have 59 clubs across the United Kingdom and 10 in Europe. Esporta has 52 clubs throughout the UK. The company has just been sold by Duke Street Capital to the Halabi family trust and as a result is rapidly trying to expand their operations and reportedly has £100 million set aside to expand.

2.3.3 Market Values

Occupier demand has slowed as there has been considerable corporate consolidation in the health and leisure sector, driven primarily by the venture capital companies. This has meant that as far as occupiers are concerned, many areas have now reached a suitable level of health club provision. However, this does not apply to High Wycombe as no significant health and fitness clubs have been opened and both Esporta and David Lloyd are believed to have active requirements.

With regard to consumers it is evident that one side effect of the current low levels of consumer confidence in the UK economy has been a degree of price sensitivity emerging in the health and fitness sector. Operators are reporting that consumers are being much less loyal to clubs in general, and taking advantage of new member offers to make savings. Furthermore, consumers are favouring the mid-market and "value for money" operators going forward, this potentially exposes the high end operators. The impact of this has been an inevitable decline in the amount operators are prepared to pay for sites. We anticipate that, as the sector is maturing it is unlikely that there will be any significant upward growth in values.

The price health and fitness operators are prepared to pay for sites has stabilised and they will typically pay circa £500,000 per acre for a standard development opportunity. However, clubs such as Esporta and David Lloyd may pay circa £1,000,000 per acre for development sites in prosperous areas with good visibility and access to the motorway network.

The active requirements of the health and fitness operators suggests that potentially circa £1 Million per acre could be achievable for a well located site in High Wycombe.

Yields

The volume of investment in commercial leisure schemes has grown significantly over the last decade. In the early 1990's transaction volumes seldom went over £100 million, but since then an increasing recognition of the attractions of the sector (as well a general enthusiasm for property investments in general), particularly amongst the institutions, has led to volumes of £675m in 2004 and just under £1 billion in 2005.

Health and fitness centres still have significant attractions to certain types of investors, particularly those who are comfortable with opportunities that require intensive asset management. A major attraction of the sector continues to be the longer than average leases on offer, with 20-25 year leases still prevalent. Furthermore, the fact that a significant proportion of leases are on fixed uplifts is seen as a major attraction, particularly as the growth in open-market rents has slowed.

Another attraction of the health and fitness sector over the last five years has been the differential between leisure yields and those on comparable assets such as shopping centres and retail warehouse parks. While the gap has narrowed from its 200 basis point differential in the early 1990's, the gap remains a healthy 50 basis points above retail yields at approximately 5.5%.

The increase in investor demand over the last five years has meant that the leisure sector has experienced yield hardening, as seen elsewhere in the commercial property sector. This, rather than rental growth, has been the key driver of the sector's total returns. According to the Information Property Databank (IPD) the sector's average total return in 2005 was 18.0%, marginally below the All Property total return of 19.1%.

The commercial leisure investment market is expected to stabilise, however, the differential in pricing between leisure property and other assets will continue to tighten slightly. The reason for this is that the sector is still maturing as an asset class, and an increasing number of investors who are already familiar with the asset management attractions of large retail schemes, are becoming aware of the similar attraction of leisure schemes. This, added to the longer than average lease lengths and fixed

uplifts available in the leisure market, should ensure an increased demand for leisure property investments in the future.

2.3.4 Requirements

Both David Lloyd and Esporta have requirements for High Wycombe. Both leisure operators fitness clubs frequently include swimming pools and racquets club along with other facilities including crèches, restaurants and health and beauty facilities. Both Esporta and David Lloyd have similar requirements with regards to sites for the development of new clubs.

David Lloyd have requirements for 47 towns and High Wycombe is one of these. They require 6,600-9,290 sq m (70,000-100,000 sq ft) with a site area of 2.5-5 acres to provide the following facilities: 4 indoor tennis courts, 4 badminton courts, a 8,500 sq ft fitness hall, a 25 metre indoor pool, a spa bath, a sauna, a steam room and a crèche along with 250 car parking spaces.

We believe, Esporta Health and Fitness may have a requirement for a site of between 2-5 acres to provide 4,600-7,900 sq m (50,000-85,000 sq ft) of leisure space which could include a requirement for tennis courts, a swimming pool, exercise studios, sauna, spa, crèche and café. Esporta Health and Fitness prefer to acquire the freehold interest rather than leasehold interest in potential development opportunities.

2.3.5 Conclusion on commercial Leisure

The lack of provision of leisure facilities in High Wycombe and requirements from major health and fitness operators to locate in the High Wycombe area suggests that there is potential to develop a new health and fitness facility.

The size of appropriate facilities precludes development in the town centre. Commercial leisure would not compete with other land uses such as offices, as office developers are more likely to have the ability to pay higher values for town centre sites.

Furthermore, any new development will require good access and parking facilities particularly as health and fitness facilities are frequently demanded at peak times of traffic, such as the early evenings and mornings. The generation of traffic could be a constraint to development and any new development will need to exercise demand management to control the amount of car parking.

The sports centre, currently located on the Handy Cross site, is according to WDC in need of refurbishment. A potential option could be to provide a new sports centre in partnership with a commercial leisure facility. This type of partnership has been developed in other areas of the country but the potential in High Wycombe would need further investigation.

The development of a commercial leisure facility could benefit the residents of High Wycombe and the surrounding area by providing new facilities. However, unlike the development of circa 30,000 sq m of offices, the development of commercial leisure will not provide the opportunity to attract major international companies to High Wycombe and potentially alter the economic background of the town.

3.0 Sequential Analysis

Planning Policy Statement 6 (Planning for Town Centres) sets out the Government's national policies and principles on town centres and the main town centre uses.

The main town centre uses to which PPS6 applies are as follows (PPS6, paragraph 1.8):

- retail (including warehouse clubs and factory outlet centres)
- leisure, entertainment facilities and the more intensive sport and recreation uses (including cinemas, restaurants, drive-through restaurants, bars and pubs, night-clubs, casinos, health and fitness centres, indoor bowling centres and bingo halls);
- offices, both commercial and those of public bodies; and
- arts, culture and tourism (theatres, museums, galleries and concert halls, hotels and conference facilities).

The Government's policy approach, as set out throughout PPS6 (see for example paragraph 1.3) is to promote and enhance existing centres by focusing development in such centres and encouraging a wide range of services in a good environment, accessible to all.

PPS6 paragraph 2.28 states that in selecting sites for development, local planning authorities should:

- a) assess the need for development;
- b) identify the appropriate scale of development;
- c) apply the sequential approach to site selection;
- d) assess the impact of development on existing centres; and
- e) ensure that locations are accessible and well served by a choice of means of transport.

PPS6 paragraph 2.44 states that the sequential approach requires that locations are considered in the following order:

- first, locations in appropriate existing centres where suitable sites or buildings for conversion are, or are likely to become, available within the development plan document period, taking account of an appropriate scale or development in relation to the role and function of the centre; and then
- edge-of-centre locations, with preference given to sites that are or will be well-connected to the centre; and then
- out-of-centre sites, with preference given to sites which are or will be well served by a choice of means of transport and have a high likelihood of forming links with the centre.

PPS6 Annex A table 2 defines town centre, edge of centre and out of centre locations.

'Town Centre' is defined as including the primary shopping area and other areas of predominantly leisure, business and other main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area. The adopted local plan does not define a town centre boundary so for the purposes of PPS 6, the adopted local plan 'primary shopping area' which is considered to constitute the town centre boundary in PPS6 terms. This accords with the definition in table 2.

'Edge of centre' for town centre uses other than retail is defined as within 300 m of the town centre boundary. 'Edge of centre' for office development is considered to be within 500 m of a public transport interchange.

The above definitions are shown as applicable to High Wycombe on map 1.

4.0 Need for Proposed Uses and Appropriate Scale of Development

Advice from the WDC and the market overview section of this report has suggested that the following requirement details would be appropriate for the preferred uses:

	Potential End User	Required Site Area	Floorspace	Requirements
New Sports Centre	WDC	5 acres/2 ha (assuming decked car parking)	7,000 to 10,000 sq m	Assuming running track is relocated elsewhere
Offices	Speculative but aimed at HQ for major operation	7.5 -10 acres/ 3-4 ha	25,000 to 30,000 sq m (assume core of three occupiers) and potentially up to 50,000 sq m	Some parking required
Hotel	Various hotel operators	0.4 acres/0.1 ha in town centre	3,000 to 4,000 sq m	Larger site required outside town centre, dependent on location
Commercial Leisure	David Lloyd	2.5-5 acres/1-2 ha	7,000 to 10,000 sq m	
Retail	Costco	7-12 acres/ 2.8-4.9 ha	13,000 sq m	500-550 parking spaces
Transport Hub	Bucks County Council	5 acres/ 2 ha		Within 2 minutes drive time of M40. Bucks County Council consider Handy Cross sports centre the only appropriate location.

This section assesses the need for the suggested uses and the appropriate scale of development in accordance with PPS6 paragraph 2.28 sections a) and b).

4.1 New Sports Centre

The existing WDC sports centre at Handy Cross is, according to WDC, in need of refurbishment. The existing buildings need significant attention and are not expected to remain in viable use for more than approximately the next five years.

It is therefore a stated intention of WDC to replace the existing sports centre. The new facilities are required to be operational by 2011 to ensure that they are in place before the anticipated lifespan of the existing facilities expires. In addition, WDC wish to have improved facilities available in 2011 in order to allow them to bid to provide facilities to Olympic athletes to train and acclimatise in the run up to the 2012 Olympics.

4.2 Offices

WDC commissioned an Economy Study in 2004. The study was instructed to inform the LDF process and, in particular, "make specific recommendations for key areas of potential change, particularly in respect of the employment land policy approach most appropriate for the LDF."

The Economy Study found that historically the sub-regional market has perceived High Wycombe to be the poor cousin of the Thames Valley in terms of being a location for high technology, knowledge-based industry (paragraph 4.4). In addition, the lack of high quality employment land supply has inhibited High Wycombe's growth (paragraph 4.6).

The Study concluded that "the current qualitative supply of employment land is insufficient to achieve the emerging economic vision for Wycombe" (para 11.4). The recommendations of the Study are that

in the short term (to 2016) to redevelop and improve existing business locations. In the longer term, the Study concludes that “the portfolio of employment land in High Wycombe would be strengthened significantly by the allocation of some new employment land to improve the District’s potential role as a prestige business location.”

The Executive Summary (page xiv) concludes that “significant progress should be made in improving the qualitative offer of the District’s employment land portfolio. During the period 2011-16, the amount of readily available land and premises suitable for high quality/prestige users (knowledge based activities) should have increased significantly.”

The Economy study therefore provides clear evidence that further high quality employment sites should be allocated.

The market analysis section of this report highlights that in order to provide ‘land and premises suitable for high quality/prestige user’ High Wycombe will need to provide a different office offer to that currently available. There is good availability of ‘local’ offices (such as Buckingham House, Clock Tower House and Buckingham Place). These would not be considered by the high quality/prestige users identified by the Economy Study, who typically require large floorspace and a prestige and visible location.

The market analysis section therefore recommends that in order to provide land and premises suitable for high quality/prestige users it is necessary to seek a site of some 3-4 ha which could offer a minimum of 25,000-30,000 sq m of floorspace.

4.3 Hotels

WDC commissioned Tourism Solutions to prepare an assessment of hotel provision in 2003. The study found that there was demand for the following hotel provision:

- one four star hotel of 100-150 rooms;
- one three star hotel of 100-130 rooms; and
- one-two budget hotels of 50-100 rooms.

4.4 Commercial Leisure [David Lloyd]

The Council commissioned a Retail and Town Centre Uses Study in 2004. This found that there were no major national operators of commercial leisure uses or private health and fitness clubs in the District (paragraph 7.27). The Eden development will include an element of leisure provision.

The Study found that the potential demand for health club membership appeared to be significant and highlighted that a national operator had a requirement for a large new health club in High Wycombe (paragraph 7.30). The Study therefore concluded that demand for an additional health and fitness club in High Wycombe ‘appears to be strong.’

4.5 Large Format Members only Retail Warehouse

The Retail and Town Centre Uses Study in 2004 was updated in July 2006 (published February 2007). This concluded there will be little quantitative need for new convenience sales floorspace (update paragraph 4.36). The Study found that there may be scope for between 3,100 sq m and 5,600 sq m of comparison retail floorspace in High Wycombe by 2016, but concluded that this should be capable of being accommodated within or adjacent to the town centre.

Therefore there is currently no justification in PPS6 terms for retail allocations to be made outside High Wycombe Town Centre.

4.6 Transport Hub [coaches]

Buckinghamshire County Council have put forward proposals to provide a regional coach station to enable coaches to stop in High Wycombe. There is understood to be demand for coach operators to stop in High Wycombe, although they would require a site immediately adjacent (within 2 minutes drive) to a motorway junction.

4.7 Summary

In summary, need (in accordance with PPS6 paragraph 2.28 subsection (a)) is considered to exist for the following uses:

- office (with an emphasis on high quality, knowledge based users);
- hotels;
- commercial leisure; and
- transport hub.

4.8 Appropriate Scale of Development

High Wycombe town centre is designated a “Primary Regional Centre” in the emerging Regional Spatial Strategy. The SEEDA Regional Economic Strategy accordingly 2006-2016 identifies High Wycombe as a Regional Hub. Therefore it is an appropriate location to propose large scale proposals for all the above land uses.

5.0 Sequential Analysis of High Wycombe Town Centre

A sequential analysis of High Wycombe Town Centre was carried out in November 2006. This included a desktop analysis of a town centre plan and a number of site visits plus conversations with relevant stakeholders and landowners.

The full sequential analysis of town centre sites is contained within table 1. The following paragraphs are a commentary on the table.

5.1 A. TOWN CENTRE

The adopted local plan to 2011 town centre boundary is defined by the Town Centre Inset Map Boundary.. The boundary broadly constitutes the railway line to the north as far east as the railway station, Crendon Street to the east, Queen Victoria Road and Abbey Way and Lily's Walk and then Bridge Street back up to the railway line (see map 2). The town centre boundary is being revised through the Site Allocations Development Plan Document which will be published in Spring 2007.

5.1.1 'Core Area'/Eden Redevelopment

The core of the town centre is the shopping area focussed on High Street, between the railway line, Crendon Street, the A40 (Abbey Way) and Archway (see map 2).

The core of the town centre is densely developed. It contains many of the primary shopping streets of High Wycombe and is the prime location for high street retailers. Almost all the frontages within the core area are protected retail frontages. Many of the streets are pedestrianised. Much of the area is within the town centre Conservation Area and there are a number of listed and locally important buildings.

None of the 'core' area is allocated for development in either the adopted local plan or the Wycombe Development Framework. The core area falls within multiple land ownerships. From discussions with stakeholders and the Council, there is no known process of land assembly coming forward to promote large scale redevelopment of the town centre.

The Eden redevelopment, adjacent to the core area (see map 2), is currently underway. It will provide a significant addition to the retail floorspace in High Wycombe. As the development is currently underway, and includes large multi storey buildings which take up most of the site, there is considered to be little scope for further development.

For these reasons, the 'core area' is not considered capable of accommodating the preferred uses within the short to medium term.

5.1.2 'East' side – Station and Surrounding

The east side of High Wycombe town centre is considered to be particularly suitable for office development due to its proximity to the railway station and established office uses such as the District Council, County Council and law courts.

Station (Map 2, site 8)

The key site in this area is the station site. Chiltern Trains and its Joint Venture partner, Transcend, is understood to be working up development proposals for development decked over the station car park ready for a planning application to be submitted in Spring 2008. This is understood not to currently include office use.

The station site has a number of significant constraints. There is a listed building at the site entrance which must be retained. The railway line is a barrier to development and it is understood that the

developers do not consider decking over the railway lines to be viable. Existing customer car parking must at least be retained.

The gross site area is below the 3 ha size considered necessary to provide the type of high quality/prestigious office use highlighted by the need section. Given the site constraints, it is questionable how much of the site may be available for office or hotel development.

Land ownership is also complicated. The freeholder of the site is Network Rail and Chiltern Trains, who are putting forward the development proposals, have sixteen years remaining on their lease. Railway redevelopment proposals are notoriously difficult to bring forward and no evidence has yet been provided to demonstrate that redevelopment is either deliverable or viable. Any proposals to bridge the railway must be viewed with scepticism.

In summary, the station site has theoretical potential for large scale office and hotel development, although it is questionable whether the style and amount of office floorspace for which there is identified need can be achieved on the site. There are also issues concerning deliverability and viability, which would significantly affect the developers ability to attract a pre-let; as it is very unlikely that the scheme and its location would attract any new knowledge based occupier to the town. If this site can be delivered it is perceived to be a possible "back" office location for a London based business, public sector or quasi office use such as education and not suitable for the development of accommodation for high quality knowledge based office occupiers.

Duke Street (Map 2, site 8a)

Duke Street is to the north of the railway station and owned by WDC. In planning policy terms, it has been considered to be part of the station redevelopment allocation, although it is physically separated from the station by the railway lines and embankment.

The site is significantly smaller than the minimum 3 ha required for the style and amount of floorspace for which there is identified need. Car parking on the site would need to be replaced which further diminishes the developable area. The site is also fairly remote from the main employment and is accessed through a predominately residential area and with no direct access from the station.

The site could accommodate local offices, a hotel or residential.

Telephone Exchange and Surrounding Area (Map 2, site 9)

The area of land between Crendon Street, the railway line and the A40 is dominated by the telephone exchange and the Easton Street car park. Telereal advise that the telephone exchange is operational and not currently being considered for redevelopment. Further east along Easton Street are a number of office buildings, including Tellabs and Buckinghamshire County Council. These offices are in a variety of land ownerships. They are typically well let and it is considered unlikely they could be viably redeveloped in the short term. There may be some very long term potential for redevelopment.

PO Sorting Office/Council Offices and Surrounds (Map 2, site 10)

The area between the A40 and Abbey Way is dominated by the Council buildings. Whilst these buildings are not particularly high density development they are relatively modern and it is doubtful that they could be viably redeveloped to provide additional value.

The other main buildings in this area are the Post Office sorting office and law courts which both remain operational and are not currently being considered for redevelopment.

Abbey Way Health Centre (Map 2, site 13)

The Abbey Way Health Centre could have potential for office development. However, a covenant on the site is understood to preclude commercial development. In addition, multi storey development

may well be considered to be of an inappropriate scale and character given the surrounding area and accordingly be resisted by the Council's planning department on urban design grounds.

5.1.3 'South' side

British Legion etc. (Map 2, site 11)

The site opposite Marlow Hill is currently occupied by the police and fire station and British Legion. These are low rise buildings and low value uses which could well be relocated. The site has been allocated for redevelopment in the adopted local plan and WDF, which anticipates leisure/arts uses on the site associated with the university and theatre.

Each of the uses will need to be relocated and the fire and police station in particular will have specific relocation requirements. There is no landowner agreement and the process of seeking relocation sites has not yet begun and therefore development is seen as very much a long term proposal.

If the site is assembled it would be in a good location in the town centre and facing Marlow Hill. It could well be of interest to office or hotel developers, although the potential site area (0.8 ha) is small compared to the requirements for the office use highlighted by the Economy Study..

Others

BCUC are not considering relocating from their existing campus between Lily's Walk and Queen Alexandra Road (map 2, site 12) and accordingly this is not considered further. The former gas works site (map 2, site 3) has permission for retail development and is understood to be under offer to a developer for retail use. Given the high values associated with retail development, it is considered likely that retail will be the predominant form of development on this site, although there may be smaller elements of residential or leisure uses.

Jarvis (Castle) House and Buckingham House (currently vacant) are adjacent office buildings on the south side of Lily's Walk/Desborough Road. Further west along Desborough Road is a large warehouse building occupied by Safestore. These sites (all map 2, site 6) could be considered as a potential development site, but given their location and the level of development existing on the sites, it is considered unlikely that large scale redevelopment would prove viable. Lily's Walk is not considered to be a suitable location for 'prestige' office development.

5.1.4 North West

As discussed in the market section above, it is considered that the north west area of town is not an appropriate location for the type of high quality, knowledge based office development for which there is need. The north west area is some distance from the railway station and perceived to be more difficult to access from the motorway network.

Collins House (Map 2, site 5)

Desborough Road is developing as a secondary shopping area where there is little scope for redevelopment. One possibility exists surrounding Collins House, where there is a section of land between Bridge Street and Mendy Street that has not been used for the Eden redevelopment. This is occupied predominately by Collins House but also by a number of other office buildings, including Network House and contractor offices in conjunction with the Eden developers.

WDC is a major landowner here and is hoping to secure vacant possession of Collins House by 2009/10 although this is uncertain due to the presence of tenants with a long lease and potential right-to-buy issues.

Collins House could accommodate office development aimed at local businesses, but given the close proximity to the town centre it is likely that a mixed use approach including retail and residential would be most appropriate. There may also be scope to include a hotel. Collins House is not a prestigious location and nor is there sufficient space (0.4 ha) to accommodate the scale of development necessary to attract high quality/prestige users.

Westbourne Street (Map 2, site 4)

To the rear of the student village is an area in light industrial use around Westbourne Street, Baker Street and Short Street. WDC's land ownership includes two car parks and it is assembling more land. WDC do not intend to commence major redevelopment of this area in the short term as it has taken the decision to ensure that the site remains available for car parking whilst the development of the Eden shopping extension and also the Sainsbury's redevelopment are underway. In both cases, the Council intends to use its land to ensure that sufficient car parking is available, which would preclude major development for the next five years.

Sainsbury Redevelopment (Map 2, site 1)

The Sainsbury's redevelopment proposal will occupy most of the land between Oxford Road and Archway. There will be a small area of land transferred to the Council after completion of the Sainsbury's redevelopment, although the location between a supermarket and railway line is not considered an ideal location for prestige offices.

Others

On the north side of Oxford Road is the job centre and a range of office buildings. These are relatively modern (particularly the Buckingham House development) and let and redevelopment is unlikely to be viable.

BCUC student village (map 2, site 7) is on the opposite side of Bridge Street, but the accommodation is relatively modern and it is understood that BCUC are not considering relocation.

5.2 B. EDGE OF TOWN

Much of the edge of High Wycombe town centre is in residential use and therefore not available for large scale redevelopment. Exceptions to this include the light industrial area to the west of the town around Baker Street, Short Street and the further extent of the 'Backland' site, which is considered above. Two other exceptions are considered fully below:

Compair (Map 2, site 14)

To the north of the town centre is the Compair site (north of Morrisons). The very south part of this site is within 300 m. of the town centre boundary and 500 m. of the bus station and hence 'edge-of-centre' in PPS6 terms for leisure and office uses. It is understood that the site will soon be within WDC's ownership.

The site is large (c 8 ha) and could physically accommodate any of the land uses under consideration.

The site is considered to be the wrong side of the town to attract high quality office use. The site is some distance from the railway station and would be perceived to be some distance from the motorway, particularly as it is on the opposite side of the town centre. Accordingly, it is not considered further for office use.

It is considered the site could well be appropriate for leisure or commercial leisure use, although this will require a more detailed assessment of viability.

The Valley Centre

The Valley Centre is within 500 m. of the railway station and hence is considered 'edge of centre' with respect to office uses in PPS6 terms.

The Valley Centre is a range of units in light industrial use, with some offices. It appears to be well let. Given the existing land use and the somewhat peripheral location, it is unlikely that redevelopment for any of the uses under consideration would be either viable or supported by the market.

Hospital

The Hospital is a significant collection of buildings and there are no known plans for redevelopment or relocation.

5.3 C. Out of Centre

The third preference of the sequential test is 'out-of-centre sites, with preference given to sites which are or will be well served by a choice of means of transport and have a high likelihood of forming links with the centre.'

As previously discussed, the Economy Study highlights the need for a major programme of improvement in the qualitative offer of employment sites in the District (para 11.20) and a consideration of the case for identifying a new element of land for high quality employment uses (para 11.21).

The market overview section of this report highlights the findings of the Economy Study and concludes that to meet these findings, the development of a minimum of 25,000 – 30,000 sq m and up to 50,000 sq m of grade A accommodation should be the appropriate quantity and quality of development to attract demand from other locations particularly the Thames Valley, Heathrow and London overspill opportunities. The market overview section finds that the potential location for such floorspace is sensitive and only the right location will attract a high quality or prestige user.

The larger out of centre sites around High Wycombe have been considered for high quality/prestige users office development. These include:

- Cressex Business Park
- Thames Estate
- Molins
- Ibstone Road.

There is also significant land to the west of the town centre that is in employment use. This includes industrial estates directly to the west of the town centre (see discussion on Westbourne Road, above) and further out to the former Verco site. However, none of this land would be suitable for high quality/prestige office users given the general location, distance from the town centre and railway and bus stations.

The Cressex Business Park is fairly well let and is an established business location. The southern parts of the site constitute particularly good stock and redevelopment is unlikely. The more central and northern parts of the site have more potential for development.

Other sites around High Wycombe are not considered to meet the criteria laid out by the market overview section of this report and as such would not be attractive to high quality/prestige users. The out of town sites also cannot meet the PPS6 requirement that an out of centre site must offer a means of transport and a high likelihood of forming links with the centre.

The Handy Cross site (location of existing sports centre) has good potential to be well served by a choice of means of transport by co-aligning the need to provide high quality/prestige office floorspace and a new transport hub. The provision of both a transport hub and employment development on the Handy Cross site would allow users of the business development to travel to the site using the bus or coach services. The transport hub would also develop good links to the town centre.

The Handy Cross site is of sufficient size to provide high quality/prestige office floorspace. The location adjacent to the M40 will be attractive to office developers and users.

The Handy Cross site scores highly against PPS6 requirements for out of centre sites to be able to offer a choice of means of transport and a high likelihood of forming links with the centre because of the proposed transport hub. It is considered unlikely that any out of centre sites would be able to provide greater transport choice or links to the centre than the Cressex Island site.

In line with the Economy Study, it is not considered that the provision of significant office floorspace at Handy Cross will be detrimental to other employment sites in High Wycombe and its surroundings. The identified requirement which this report suggests is provided at Handy Cross is quite different to the offer of other employment sites in Wycombe and is not considered to compete with such sites. Indeed, it is quite possible that attracting high quality/prestige office users to Handy Cross will increase demand for space at other employment sites in the District. This may, in turn, be a catalyst for redevelopment of some of the town centre sites that have been highlighted as having long term development potential.

6. Summary

The following sites may be appropriate for the uses for which there is identified need:

6.1 Office (with an emphasis on high quality, knowledge based users)

The Economy Study makes a clear recommendation that future planning policy should make available land and premises suitable for high quality/prestige users (knowledge based activities).

Advice above is that in order to encourage such a use, it is necessary to provide a 3-4 ha site capable of accommodating a minimum of 25,000-30,000 sq m of floorspace with large floor plates that have the potential to be sub divided.

It is not surprising that such a site is not readily available in the town centre. The railway station remains the best prospect to provide such a site, the developable area is well under the 3 ha suggested minimum size and there must be doubts as to whether sufficient floorspace can be achieved to attract the sort of high quality/prestige operator identified in the Economy Study. There are also doubts relating to whether such a scheme would be viable or deliverable. It is also noted that the current development proposal for the railway station does not include office development.

Sites to the north west of the town centre, including the Baker Street/Short Street area would not be attractive to the high quality/prestige users suggested by the Economy Study.

There are a number of sites in the town centre, including at Archway, Collins House and Duke Street Car Park that could provide limited office development targeted at local firms and businesses, but these are not the sort of locations that would attract the type of end user advised by the Economy Study. There are a number of longer term possibilities, such as the BT exchange and surrounding area, but there is no certainty that these will come forward in the timescale envisaged by the Economy Study.

Of the potential out of town development sites in the vicinity of High Wycombe, many have little opportunity to provide a range of transport choices and hence would not be appropriate sites in accordance with PPS6. These sites still have an important role to play in the overall provision of employment land within the District, but cannot meet the requirement as identified. However, the Handy Cross site could offer a good range of transport choice if it came forward in conjunction with the transport hub proposal. This would improve links nationwide (via coach services) and provide frequent links to the town centre.

The development of a major office scheme on the Handy Cross site provides an opportunity to develop a minimum of 25,000 sq m and potentially over 50,000 sq m of offices that will be in keeping with the calibre of the new town centre retail offer provided by the Eden redevelopment. Such development has the potential to take High Wycombe from a market town with industrial heritage to a prime location for major international corporations.

6.2 Hotels

There are a number of sites in and on the edge of the town centre that may be able to accommodate a hotel. These include Collins House, the railway station and Duke Street car park. Such potential would need to be subject to a more detailed viability analysis.

However, it is evident that several major hotel operators have requirements for High Wycombe both within and on the edge of the town centre. The proximity of Heathrow airport and the potential business requirement for hotel accommodation means that a hotel development adjacent to the motorway and the town centre is viable in market terms.

The combined development of a large hotel adjacent to a new office development in close proximity to the motorway could provide a significant level of synergy and attract major international companies

to High Wycombe. However, a hotel located in the town centre would not achieve this objective, which leads to the conclusion that there may be an opportunity to develop a hotel in the town centre and a further hotel adjacent to the motorway.

6.3 Leisure/Commercial leisure

Opportunities for leisure uses are reduced due to the large ideally level site area required by such uses. Accordingly, in the town centre or adjacent areas, only the Westbourne Street ('Backland') and 'Compair' sites have potential for leisure/commercial leisure uses.

The Council's intention (as major landowner) is to delay comprehensive development on the Backland site pending the Eden and Sainsbury's redevelopment proposals (and an assessment of parking requirements on their completion). This means that site redevelopment is unlikely to begin until 2012 at the earliest. This would not allow WDC to deliver a leisure centre on the 'Backland' site by 2011.

There appears to be no reason why leisure or commercial leisure development should not come forward on the Compair site, subject to land ownership issues.

With active requirements from both David Lloyd and Esporta there is potential to develop a facility on the Compair site that will serve the resident population between High Wycombe and Amersham.

6.4 Transport Hub

Given the operator's requirements to be within 2 minutes drive of the M40 motorway and due to the lack of space, High Wycombe Town Centre has to be discarded as a potential location for the transport hub.

7. Conclusion

Savills has been instructed by WDC to propose the preferred uses for the Cressex (Handy Cross), Cressex Island and Compair sites. There are conflicts between the most appropriate uses for the sites in market terms and planning terms. Below is a summary of the appropriate uses for the sites in market terms.

7.1 Cressex site (Handy Cross)

The site would be ideally suited for the development of a minimum of 25,000-30,000 sq m and potentially up to 100,000 sq m of offices. The Cressex site is the most preferential site for the development of offices to attract high quality users as recommended in the WDC Economy Study 2004. Such development could provide the opportunity to attract major national office occupiers and create a prime office location to compete with the existing office markets in the Thames Valley.

This type of development would require significant public transport improvements to provide better links to the town centre and railway station. The Cressex site could also be suitable for a transport hub in accordance with Buckinghamshire County Council's requirement to provide additional public transport capacity and would ensure the office development was sustainable in line with national and local planning policy.

In any event we would expect "green" travel plans, car shares, parking charges to be provided in addition to other facilities being accommodated on the site including a hotel and crèche. A hotel development adjacent to a new office development could provide the required synergy to attract international investors to High Wycombe. Notwithstanding this, hotel proposals would need to take into account the availability of town centre sites for hotel development.

7.2 Cressex Island

The site could be suitable for the development of a transport hub, although it is understood that it may not meet operator requirements in terms of drivetime to the M40 for those operators who wish to use this facility as a peak hour stopping point between Oxford / Birmingham and London. However, a dedicated "High Wycombe Tube" would not face such difficulties.

The site may also be suitable for commercial leisure (David Lloyd) and new residential property. In developing new residential property, the siting of the living accommodation would need to consider the noise and pollution generated by the motorway, however this may be mitigated by the provision of effective sound barriers and landscaping.

The retail and town centre uses study 2004 concluded that currently there is little need for new retail floorspace. However, if in the future there is a proven need for retail accommodation such as Costco then this site could be suitable.

7.3 Compair site

The Retail and Commercial Uses Study 2004 concluded that the demand for a new health and fitness club in High Wycombe is strong. This is evident in David Lloyd's active requirement to locate in the town. The Compair site provides the opportunity to develop a new health and fitness facility to serve High Wycombe and the surrounding area. There is also potential for the development of residential property on the site or a student village for Buckingham Chilterns University College.