

A. Strategy and Policy Context

INTRODUCTION

- A.1 This Appendix provides a detailed review of the strategies and plan relevant to the economy study.

REGIONAL AND SUB-REGIONAL STRATEGIES

Regional Planning Guidance

- A.2 Existing regional planning objectives are contained in RPG9 (GOSE, 2001). This provides the strategic context of development plans in the region. The central principles for shaping employment policies are contained in the following policies:

- RE3 – advocating a long-term and holistic approach to economic development, RPG9 requires development plans to take account of local economic development strategies and reflect local capacity in terms of labour, skills, land availability, transport infrastructure, local economic strengths, clusters and changing working practices.
- RE5 – promotes the better use of existing employment land resources including new policies and proposals which emerge from a review of existing and potential employment sites: local authorities are encouraged to examine the scope for intensification, mixed-use, improved marketability and access by public transport.
- RE8 – Wycombe forms part of the ‘Western Policy Area’, where it is recognised that past rates of economic and housing growth have led to increasing pressure on local infrastructure, land resources and house prices (commonly referred to as ‘overheating’). The Western Policy Area includes the Thames Valley sub-region where ‘hotspots’ should be identified in order that specific policies are developed to make more efficient use of employment land, implement traffic management and parking controls, encourage improved public transport provision and provide mechanisms for the provision of more affordable housing. Whilst Wycombe is characterised by problems of high house prices, market pressure for the redevelopment of employment land for housing and traffic congestion, research carried out for Bucks Economic Partnership inferred that Wycombe does not have all the characteristics of a ‘true hotspot’. The

report concluded that Wycombe is still undergoing structural economic change and the local economy is not weighted towards high value / knowledge-based employment like other parts of the Thames Valley¹. Wycombe District Council expressed an opinion in 2000 that the District had the propensity to become a hotspot². Consequently, it was recommended that policy should remain one of restraint and that it was not appropriate to allocate any additional employment land. The extent to which the District may be regarded as a hotspot is an important factor when considering potential employment land policies in the LDF.

- RE9 – promoting business clusters, concentrations of high value activities and a culture of innovation (including the provision of incubator space and accommodation for small and growing businesses).
- RE10 – encourage economic diversity particularly through the development of the SME base, reduction of dependence of single sectors and the promotion of key growth sectors.

Milton Keynes-South Midlands Sub-Regional Strategy

- A.3 Following the publication of the Deputy Prime Minister's Communities Plan, a draft amendment to RPG9 has been proposed in respect of the Milton Keynes-South Midlands area. These proposals are set out in the consultation draft issued in July 2003 and were considered at the Examination in Public held in April 2004.
- A.4 Aylesbury is located in the south of the sub-regional growth area. The consultation strategy identifies significant levels of housing and employment growth for Aylesbury and Milton Keynes. These are summarised as follows:
- Up to 35,100 dwellings in the Milton Keynes Growth area including 2500 within Aylesbury Vale District between 2001 and 2016;
 - Up to 13,900 dwellings in Aylesbury Vale District (excluding 2500 attributable to Milton Keynes), of which 10,600 should be accommodated within the urban area of Aylesbury town.

¹ Bucks Economic Prospects Study (June 2003), Roger Tym and Partners for Buckinghamshire Economic Partnership.

² Wycombe District Local Plan to 2011 – Public Local Inquiry Topic Paper 4 – Employment (August 2000), Wycombe District Council.

- The draft guidance specifies that 40% of the dwellings for Aylesbury should be affordable.

A.5 The detailed consultancy report which provided an input to the draft guidance was issued in May 2003³. This contained indicative housing and employment growth estimates for the periods 2001-2016 and the longer term (2001-2031). These are summarised in the table below.

Housing and Employment Growth Proposed for Aylesbury

	2001-2016	2001-2031
Job Growth	12,600	28,000
Housing Growth	13,900*	31,000

* excludes 2,500 dwellings adjoining Milton Keynes within Aylesbury Vale District. Source: Roger Tym & Partners, Three Dragons & Halcrow, May 2003.

A.6 In July 2003, WDC responded to the draft amendments with objections regarding the lack of strategic transport proposals to the south of Aylesbury and lack of delivery mechanisms to be put in place to provide additional jobs as well as housing. WDC is concerned that the proposals will increase pressure on existing transport infrastructure in the District and surrounding area. WDC also consider that the role of Aylesbury and Milton Keynes as a growth location should include meeting an element of the affordable housing need of areas such as Wycombe where land is more constrained.

Regional Spatial Strategy ('The South East Plan')

A.7 Whilst RPG9 has provided an important context for the deposit Buckinghamshire Structure Plan and the recently Adopted Wycombe Local Plan, it is important for the Economic Vision study not to be wholly constrained by its policies. The Government's reform of the planning system includes the preparation of Regional Spatial Strategies which directly will provide the context for new LDFs and Local Development Documents (LDDs). The South East England Regional Assembly is responsible for the preparation of the draft Spatial Strategy. It will be particularly important for Wycombe to ensure that local economic and community priorities are reflected in the emerging spatial strategy. In doing so effectively, WDC should ensure that future local economic and planning priorities are clearly established within a

³ Roger Tym & Partners, Three Dragons and Halcrow.

sub-regional and regional context. In other words, future policies should highlight and define the role of Wycombe in relation to the rest of Buckinghamshire and surrounding districts, the M40 Corridor, the Thames Valley / M4 Corridor, London and the South East as a whole.

- A.8 Shaping the Regional Spatial Strategy may also increasingly more pressing from WDC given that the Bucks Structure Plan is unlikely to be progressed beyond the deposit stage. The Spatial Strategy ultimately will replace the draft Structure Plan policies.
- A.9 A critical component of the Spatial Strategy particularly at a sub-regional level, will be the issue of balance between labour supply (housing provision) and labour demand (employment growth). Indeed, Wycombe and the surrounding Districts will need to consider the extent to which the question of labour force balance is a desirable or realistic objective to follow as part of the LDF and spatial strategy process. For example, this may include the option of increasing house building rates in order to achieve a greater balance between labour supply and demand. However, if a degree of imbalance is accepted then it will be important to give particular consideration to the solutions for mitigating the impacts arising from this imbalance.
- A.10 Theoretically, there are a number of ways in which employment demand may be met by a higher proportion of local workers:
- increasing the magnitude of the local labour force through population growth (providing more housing);
 - reducing out-commuting by providing local jobs which meet the needs of the existing resident population;
 - increasing the employability of under-used labour resources through appropriate training and education measures;
 - pursuing a targeted educational programme for the future local workforce aimed at meeting the recruitment needs of indigenous industries and inward investors;
 - increasing the rate of economic activity, particularly amongst females and in areas where rates are comparatively low (e.g. more deprived areas).

- A.11 There is no single panacea for reducing the imbalance between labour supply and demand. Indeed, the Bucks Economic Prospects study which compared the effects of market-led and housing-constrained population / employment forecasts, indicated that the former (which allowed for a relatively high level of population growth) generated only a marginal increase in net in-commuting compared to the latter.
- A.12 In developing an Economic Vision for Wycombe District, this study has given consideration to the 'labour supply-demand' issue. For example, the objective of increasing self-containment without a substantial increase in house building has been assessed against the District's existing and future role as an employment centre and the Community Plan's objective of ensuring a thriving economy. Whilst increasing labour force capacity through educational, training and workforce participation measures are essential components of the Economic Vision / Strategy, it is also necessary to identify new ways of tackling problems of labour supply-demand imbalance. These may include targeted investment in sustainable transport options in partnership with other local authorities, provision of affordable housing for key workers and those on low incomes, and support facilities for those with caring responsibilities (including childcare).

Regional Economic Strategy

- A.13 SEEDA's Vision for the South East for the period 2002-2012 is:

'A prosperous region delivering a high quality of life and environment for everyone, now and in the future'.

- A.14 The RES promotes the concept of 'Smart Growth' that maximises the benefit gained from scarce resources: growth driven by productivity gains, not by resource intensive and low value added activity. Five objectives of the RES are established:

- Competitive Businesses;
- Successful People;
- Vibrant Communities;

- Effective Infrastructure; and
- Sustainable Use of Natural Resources.

A.15 Smart growth means the region's economy needs to support:

- Social progress which recognises the needs of everyone, with strong communities and diverse opportunities;
- Effective protection of and investment in environmental assets, ensuring a distinctive, diverse and attractive landscape through high quality development;
- Prudent use of natural resources; and
- Maintenance of high and stable levels of economic growth and employment, with a strong, diverse and dynamic economy.

A.16 The RES states that the route to improving long term performance lies in raising productivity. The key drivers of productivity are identified as: skills; investment (in people, research and development, land and premises, capital equipment and infrastructure); enterprise; and competition.

A.17 SEEDA's strategy endorses RPG's inclusion of Wycombe as part of the Western Policy Area where the priority is to build on existing economic strengths in order to achieve sustainable growth with minimum additional pressures on land and labour.

A.18 The strategy advocated a targeted approach to the promotion and development of key sectors: Three sector groupings are identified:

- Sectors driven by new and emerging technologies with transformational potential: pharmaceuticals, biotechnology and healthcare, ICT, media/creative industries, and environmental technologies;

- Major employers and economic drivers throughout the region: tourism and leisure, freight transport and logistics, construction and property services, financial and professional services, and land based industries.
- Manufacturing sectors with high value added growth potential, underpinning the region's international trade performance: advanced engineering (including automotive), aerospace and defence, and marine technologies.

A.19 A number of existing business concentrations, clusters and networks are identified by the strategy. For Bucks, these are: rural industries and tourism; motorsport and automotive; and advanced engineering.

A.20 The RES is supplemented by draft sub-regional Action Plans. These highlight that Bucks suffers from congestion, skill shortages and high land prices. However, it is also noted that prosperity masks the existence of pockets of deprivation, particularly in High Wycombe. Cressex Business Park is identified as the County's major industrial estate although access and infrastructure problems are highlighted as a constraint to its growth / improvement. Importantly, the RES Action Plan states that Bucks should now engage more actively in the inward investment market particularly following recent closures and contractions in the County. A lack of full range University facilities is considered a constraint to the economic prospects of the County.

A.21 A number of priorities are established by the Action Plan for Bucks Economic Partnership:

- Improvements to Junction 4 of the M40 and improved access to Cressex Business Park (including the Cressexpress);
- Engagement in the inward investment market;
- Establishments of Enterprise Hubs and Gateways in Aylesbury, Wycombe and/or the Chilterns to better strengthen the commercialisation of innovations and build greater industry-education links (Wycombe District is involved in the establishment of a Industrial Design Enterprise Hub and the Chilterns Woodworks Enterprise Gateway);

- Encourage farm diversification, rural tourism and availability and uptake of broadband ICT.

Buckinghamshire Economic Strategy

A.22 In 2002, Buckinghamshire Economic Partnership issued a joint Economic Strategy for the County (Bucks Means Business 2002-2006). The objectives of the Strategy are to:

- Promote a competitive and diverse business sector with increasing value-added per employee and an increasing representation of knowledge-based industries;
- Improve the skills and knowledge base of the workforce as a means of enhancing productivity and employability and consequently reducing social disadvantage;
- Enhance the business environment with improvements in transportation and communication networks and development of high quality commercial sites in appropriate locations;
- Maintain and enhance the high quality of natural environment which distinguishes Buckinghamshire through promoting sustainable business practices and energy efficiency;
- Promote Buckinghamshire as an attractive place to live and work, supporting projects which sustain the economy and attracting appropriate new investment; and
- Develop robust organisational arrangements through partnership development which will result in a co-ordinated and effective framework for business support.

A.23 In developing the strategy, the Partnership conducted a number of brainstorming events to review the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats facing the County. A number of important themes emerged from these events:

- The need to capitalise on the locational advantages of Buckinghamshire through being highly selective about the type of development to be encouraged;
- The importance of maintaining a high level of skills in the local workforce;
- The significance of a healthy service and support sector;
- The key role of reducing congestion and maintaining a high quality environment; and
- Recognising that high aggregate levels of wealth can mask pockets of deprivation.

A.24 The Partnership is revising the economic strategy during 2004.

Thames Valley Economic Strategy

A.25 Wycombe lies in the northern section of the Thames Valley sub-region, although it has not yet established a clear role in the sub-regional economy. The Thames Valley is regarded as one of the top ten knowledge-based regions in Europe. Indeed, the Vision of the Thames Valley Economic Partnership is for the sub-region to become the knowledge capital of Europe:

‘Over the next 10 years, the Thames Valley will develop its knowledge base to advance its position as one of the most prosperous, skilful and creative sub-regional economies in Europe’.

A.26 The TV strategy contains eight strategic priorities:

- Sustain economic development by adding value to business activities;
- Strengthen the links between research, education and business;
- Make learning exciting and accessible to all;
- Promote a culture of entrepreneurialism and develop an infrastructure to sustain it;

- Promote inward investment, particularly from companies in key sectors such as ICT and Life Sciences;
- Secure specific improvements in the infrastructure;
- Ensure that economic development sustains – and wherever possible enhances – the quality of the natural and built environment;
- Encourage innovation and entrepreneurship.

A.27 Four key sectors groups are targeted for inward investment in the sub-region: ICT; Life Science / Biotechnology / Pharmaceuticals; Automotive / Advanced Engineering; and Environmental Technology.

Thames Valley Multi-Modal Study

A.28 The study highlights congestion to be a major problem in the sub-region. It recommends that an integrated multi-modal hub-and-spoke system is established with eight major hub sites. High Wycombe is identified as a sub-regional hub which should be connected to Maidenhead and Reading through new inter-urban bus services. The study also recommends localised highway improvements on corridors under stress including the A404 between the M4 and High Wycombe. It also identifies the potential for investment in creating a public transport corridor between High Wycombe, Bourne End and Maidenhead. The section of the M40 that passes High Wycombe is also designated for improved management.

Western Corridor Sub Regional Study

A.29 The Western Corridor Sub Regional Study (2004) recognises that accessibility, the District's traditional selling point, is being undermined by heavy road and rail congestion. The Study concludes that the affluence of the area, and the associated high level of car ownership, means the region has a significantly higher proportion of long distance commuters than the national average, with up to 80% of work related journeys being made by means of private car. A further factor that contributes towards road traffic congestion in the District is the conflict between local and national traffic; the District's trunk roads are not solely used by local traffic, they are also heavily used by through traffic. One of the primary implications of this is that the District's business can be adversely affected by road traffic congestion that is merely

passing through the area and contributes little or nothing to the District's economy as a whole.

A.30 The study highlights that whilst the east / west rail corridors are well established in the area, the north / south links are not as good. In order to address this deficiency, the Multi-Modal Study proposes new public transport options for the District using a series of inter-urban bus links between public transport 'hubs'. The following routes are intended to be operational from 2006 and will improve the accessibility of the Wycombe District by public transport from the south.

- Guildford – Bracknell – Maidenhead – High Wycombe;
- Reading – Maidenhead – High Wycombe; and
- Bracknell – Ascot – Slough – Beaconsfield – High Wycombe.

Buckinghamshire Structure Plan

A.31 The Draft Deposit Structure Plan was issued in July 2003. It highlights that the main employment generating development in the County will be planned for Aylesbury. However, the plan states that Local Development Documents (in Southern Buckinghamshire) may identify areas for new high quality employment generating development, provided they are in sustainable locations and would not result in a net increase in the total amount of employment land.

A.32 The Structure Plan gives particular encouragement to low impact, high value-added businesses insofar as these would not displace existing employment uses for which there is a continuing local need.

A.33 Of particular importance to Wycombe, the Deposit Structure Plan highlights the need to examine and test the potential need for a new high quality urban business park on previously developed land within the High Wycombe urban area. Consideration must be given to the labour supply-demand balance, transport impact and scope for providing job opportunities for local residents.

A.34 Policy 16 relates to the future use of existing employment sites. In line with Government policy guidance, it requires local authorities to undertake a

review of their portfolios of employment sites. This review should have regard to:

- The suitability for continued employment use;
- Floorspace requirements of local employers and inward investors;
- Employment characteristics of the local labour force;
- Compatibility of uses with surrounding land uses;
- Impacts on the road network; and
- Implications for local economic vibrancy and sustainability.

A.35 In considering the transfer / redevelopment of employment sites to other uses, the Structure Plan asks authorities to investigate ways to harness any uplift in development value to further other planning objectives such as the provision of affordable housing or community facilities, or the development of new incubator space elsewhere.

A.36 This study will define the criteria to be used in assessing employment sites in the District. Whilst having regard to strategic and national policy, these criteria will be closely tied to the District's emerging vision and economic needs.

A.37 Policy 17 of the Deposit Structure Plan promotes the provision of incubator and managed workspace to meet the needs of SMEs and new start-ups in appropriate locations. The plan highlights that average new business formation rates in Buckinghamshire are lower than the rest of the South East.

A.38 In the light of proposals contained in the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Bill, work on the Buckinghamshire Structure Plan has been suspended. It now seems unlikely that the Plan will be progressed beyond the deposit stage. Consequently, the policies will not hold as much status if they would if the plan was adopted. Moreover, the regional spatial strategy may ultimately replace the deposit Structure Plan and has the potential to change the direction of policies in Buckinghamshire.

A.39 The draft Structure Plan's housing chapter provides for 19,600 net additional dwellings in the four Districts between 2001 and 2016. Wycombe is required by the Plan to provide a total of 5,200 net additional dwellings during the Plan period, of which approximately 1,900 should be accommodated during the periods 2001-06 and 2006-11. The remaining 1,400 are to be provided during 2011-16. Based on annual completion rates, the District is on target to meeting the Structure Plan housing distribution.

LOCAL STRATEGIES

Wycombe Local Plan

A.40 The Wycombe Local Plan to 2011 was adopted in January 2004. Chapter 4 (Employment) establishes the Council's current vision for the local economy:

'to achieve a prosperous, dynamic and sustainable local economy which meets the need for local jobs and maintains a diverse business community within established environmental designations'.

A.41 The Local Plan highlights that the Council supports the creation of a dynamic economy and wishes to continue to attract investment and jobs in the future growth industries.

A.42 The objectives of the Employment Chapter are:

- To provide an ongoing supply of employment land to meet the needs of the local workforce, local business and inward investment compatible with the need to protect environmental quality;
- To seek a close correlation of homes and jobs, including the opportunity for residents to work locally in accessible locations in order to reduce car dependency;
- Make the best use of existing employment land to facilitate continued investment and upgrading of existing sites and premises for employment uses;
- To maintain and support existing rural employment opportunities and to enable existing rural businesses to continue.

- A.43 The Plan highlights that established employment areas and scattered employment sites make a significant contribution to employment land supply in the District. It seeks to protect these sites and recognises their role in the maintenance and restructuring of the local economy. Moreover, it is stated that if the continued loss of employment areas to other uses continues at the level experienced in recent years, this will prejudice the Plan's ability to support a diverse and dynamic economy.
- A.44 In accordance with the adopted Structure Plan, Policy E1 enables new employment land provision to be made in the High Wycombe area only if an equivalent amount of employment land (in the District) is substituted for redevelopment for non-employment uses. It also allows for: small scale provision within the limits of Princes Risborough; meeting local need in rural settlements; and new employment development in High Wycombe Town Centre so long as no net loss of residential or retail floorspace takes place.
- A.45 The Plan identifies six designated business parks in the District (34ha in total), only one of which is undeveloped (Beacon Heights, Stokenchurch). Policy E2 permits B1 development at these business parks.
- A.46 Existing employment areas in the District cover a total of 143ha. Policy E3 protects these area from redevelopment for uses falling outside B1, B2 and B8 Use Classes. The need to protect these sites was supported by the Inspector at the Local Plan Inquiry, when a significant number of employment sites were subject to pressure from objectors for their transfer to residential use (e.g. Hypnos site, Princes Risborough; land off Gomm Road / Tannery Road; and Verco land off Chapel Lane).
- A.47 Policy E4 relates to existing Scattered Employment Generating Sites (of which there are approximately 300 covering 86ha in total). The Policy permits employment uses provided it would not be detrimental to the functioning or amenity of surrounding land uses. Importantly, non-employment development is permitted by the Policy if it can be demonstrated that:
- Retention for employment uses is no longer practical;
 - The proposed use is compatible with the surrounding area; or
 - The proposed use is a sui generic use akin to an employment use.

- A.48 The Plan allows for a mixed-use redevelopment scheme at an existing employment site at Wycombe Marsh. The scheme must include the retention of at least 2ha for employment uses.
- A.49 To the west of Princes Risborough, the Princes Estate is allocated for comprehensive redevelopment as a key strategic employment site.
- A.50 Following the Inspector's recommendation at the Local Plan Inquiry, the Plan does not include an allocation for a new business park in the High Wycombe urban area. The Inspector argued that there was no strong strategic policy direction in favour of providing a new business park, unemployment was low and there was evidence of employment land supply being 'substantial' (an estimated 20 years supply based on annual completion rates during the 1990s). He stated that to allocate a new business park could exacerbate current economic and environmental pressures. He also noted that significant growth in office floorspace in the District had taken place without the allocation of major new sites⁴.
- A.51 The Inspector rejected proposals for a new business park as part of a new village to the west of High Wycombe (Wycombe Air Park). He also considered that other available sites may meet modern business needs in a more sustainable manner compared to the allocation of new business park. These sites include, for example, premises at Kingsmead and the Mercury Centre, Wycombe Marsh (2ha), Globeside, Glory Mill and Compair (the latter is now subject to a major proposal to relocate and expand the College / University). The Inspector regarded the Compair and De La Rue sites as scarce, good quality employment sites that should be resisted for redevelopment for residential use.
- A.52 It is important for the Economic Vision not to be constrained by the Adopted Local Plan or the Inspector's Recommendations. Whilst having regard to the need for integration and coherence, the Economic Vision must take a long term and strategic view of the role of the Wycombe local economy. The Vision should allow for short-term fluctuations in local economic conditions and should clearly identify the role of the local economy with the sub-regional and regional economies. Strong decisions may need to be taken in order to establish a sustainable long term Vision which meets both the needs of businesses and the local community.

⁴ Wycombe District Local Plan Inquiry (December, 2002) – Inspector's Report.

Transport

- A.53 The Local Plan recognises the need to move away from *accommodating* additional traffic towards demand management, and in particular ensuring that any new employment locations are accessible by sustainable modes of travel. The Local Plan establishes Public Transport Accessibility Zones (Policy T3) across the District as a means of establishing how easily a given site can be reached using public transport. As such, the provision of parking permitted is less in zones that are most easily accessible by public transport.
- A.54 Locations that are highly accessible by public transport, by foot, or by cycle, are expected to be developed at high densities in order to maximise the effectiveness of this strategic objective. This policy means that major developments proposed for areas that are poorly served by public transport, which are predicted to generate significant levels of travel demand may require network improvements to achieve adequate access (Policy T3). Such developments are also likely to require the preparation of Green Travel Plans (Policy T1).

Wycombe Community Plan

- A.55 The existing Community Plan for Wycombe was approved in 2002 and contains a four-part vision for the District. An element of that Vision is to ensure a 'thriving economy'. The objectives for Economic Development are to:
- Take positive action to improve access to employment for all and to ensure that local people can gain the skills needed to meet local business needs;
 - Target job creation and training to reduce deprivation and disadvantage;
 - Promote a modern and diverse employment base in both rural and urban areas;
 - Provide practical support to local businesses to enable them to grow and improve their competitiveness;

- Promote our town centres as vibrant and vital locations that are a focus for commerce and the community;
- Encourage and promote sustainable tourist initiatives; dn
- Encourage local employers and agencies to adopt environmentally friendly and sustainable policies and work practices.

A.56 The economic development objectives are supported by a set of 9 targets to be met by March 2005. These are focused on:

- Promoting sustainable business practices;
- Increasing the economic impact of tourism in the District;
- Raising the profile of High Wycombe town centre (including implementation of Town Centre Redevelopment);
- Raising average earnings;
- Increasing the up-take of training amongst residents and improving basic skills of disadvantaged and deprived communities;
- Reducing long term unemployment and the problems associated with unemployment;
- Improving English language skills for speakers of other languages and those in excluded and hard to reach communities.

A.57 It is important to highlight that all aspects of the Community Plan are of relevance to the Economic Vision for Wycombe. This includes community and social priorities such as: encouraging integrated local area regeneration; increasing social inclusion and participation; improving the health and well-being of the communities; achieving Lifelong Learning targets; and promoting equality of opportunity for all.

A.58 The Community Plan currently is being reviewed and is due to be finalised in Spring 2005. This study will feed into the review process.

High Wycombe Town Centre Parking and Access Strategy

- A.59 Closely linked to the Town Centre Masterplan study (including Town Centre Redevelopment and other major planned and proposed developments) is the Parking and Access Strategy. WDC issued a Consultation Paper in December 2003 which set out the objectives and key measures of the strategy. The key objective is the strategy is 'the delivery of good quality parking, public transport and other improvements for people to access the town centre, to complement the various regeneration projects'. In addition to Town Centre Redevelopment, these regeneration projects include: Sainsbury's / Dovecote; Compair site; Railway Station; Fire Station; Bucks Chiltern University College; and former gasworks.

M40 Junction 4 / Handy Cross Roundabout

This junction is the primary access point to the motorway network from High Wycombe, and also serves as an important function for local traffic crossing the M40 between Marlow and high Wycombe. It is generally recognised that the junction is congested during peak hours and cannot adequately cope with the demands that are placed upon it. A report published by the GOSE (2001) acknowledged the difficulties associated with the junction and proposed measures designed to alleviate the delays associated with this junction. The Highways Agency has approved plans to improve the junction and roundabout.

B. Strategic Economic and Labour Market Scenarios

INTRODUCTION

- B.1 This Appendix explores three scenarios which have been developed to illustrate a range of growth situations. These have been prepared having particular regard to the issue of employment demand (jobs) and labour supply balance (housing). Whilst quantitative estimates of employment and labour supply are provided by the scenarios, these should not be regarded as predictive forecasts. The scenarios demonstrate the implications for labour market balance of varying supply and demand assumptions.
- B.2 Whilst achieving a quantitative balance between labour demand and supply may not be in itself a practical or an achievable objective, the scenarios presented below highlight in theoretical terms a range of basic options for addressing and/or managing the balance issue in Wycombe District.
- B.3 In response to the study's terms of reference, the Appendix also provides in quantitative terms, the potential implications of each scenario on employment land need/demand. Again, these should not be regarded as predictive forecasts but an illustration of potential employment land demand associated with a range of key labour market assumptions. Consideration is also given to related policy issues, particularly housing provision and transport need.
- B.4 A critical purpose of the Appendix is to test a range of employment, labour force and housing growth scenarios against the objectives outlined by the strategic economic framework in Section 8. The scenarios provide a means for testing the relationship between the key components of the economic development framework and a range of strategic land-use planning options. It is important to highlight that the labour market scenarios set out in this Appendix are not intended to represent the three economic strategy scenarios described in Section 6 of the main report.
- B.5 It is critical to highlight that the scenarios presented in this Appendix relate only to Wycombe District. Whilst it is possible for the District Council and its partners to influence factors which determine local labour market balance, it is inappropriate for future policy decisions to be taken in isolation to the wider Western Corridor sub-region (where the issue of balance is of particular concern to local authorities and SEERA). Indeed, complementing current research being undertaken by SEERA, the findings of this study should

provide an input to the emerging regional spatial strategy / sub-regional spatial strategy.

LIMITATIONS

- B.6 It is essential to highlight that quantitative forecasts of employment land need are notoriously difficult, particularly in reflecting market realism and changing economic requirements within a local economy. It is reasonable to argue that there is no direct relationship between net employment growth in a local economy and the take-up of employment land. Indeed, it should be noted that over the last 10 years or so Wycombe District has seen significant job growth with significant loss of B Use Class land to other uses. These difficulties are highlighted by research recently carried out on behalf of ODPM⁵. A general consensus has emerged from the ODPM research and other studies undertaken in the South East (and beyond) that the quality of employment land supply is more critical to economic prosperity than the absolute quantity of supply. Future policies contained in Local Development Documents should reflect the need to balance the emphasis between quantity and quality.
- B.7 In light of the health warnings given above, it is necessary to stress that the estimates provided below should be considered as a theoretical illustration of growth scenarios based on available information.
- B.8 As highlighted in the main report, it was recommended that Wycombe District Council focus on a number of key factors when shaping employment land policy in the LDF:
- (i) Marshalling the forces of economic growth by restructuring the qualitative supply of employment sites to meet identified economic priorities (a significant element of which will involve the redevelopment and improvement of existing employment areas); and
 - (ii) Reallocating in the short term approximately 35 ha of existing employment land for alternative uses excluding employment-led mixed use development.
- B.9 Whilst the value of quantitative estimates are limited, it is clear that the issue of balance is particularly important in the Western Corridor. This has recently

⁵ ODPM (May 2004): Planning for Economic Development – ECOTEC and Roger Tym & Partners.

been emphasised by research undertaken by SEERA. The Western Corridor Study highlights that the overall degree of imbalance within the sub-region is likely to grow and that substantial amounts of additional house building would be required to make an impact on it. However, it should be noted that the degree of imbalance varies between local authorities in the sub-region. Indeed, the available data indicates that Wycombe displayed a relatively even balance between employment and labour supply. Nevertheless, self-containment in the District is undermined by a high level of in and out commuting, particularly the latter.

- B.10 The research conducted by SEERA infers that the prohibitive scale of additional house building that would be required to achieve a greater degree of balance in the sub-region is such that local authorities should consider the most effective ways of living with and managing the imbalance.

THE SCENARIOS

- B.11 The three growth scenarios considered are as follows:

- a) Low housing growth & low employment growth (restrictive housing and labour supply policy and moderately proactive economic policy);
- b) Moderate housing growth & moderate employment growth (moderate increase in housing provision / labour supply and proactive economic policy); and
- c) Low housing growth & Low-moderate employment growth (restrictive housing and labour supply policy and proactive economic policy).

- B.12 Table B1 sets out the core labour market assumptions underlying each scenario whilst Table B2 draws out the key implications of each. It is important to highlight a number of key methodological factors which underpin the growth scenarios set out in Tables B1 and B2:

- (i) Estimates have been made of the number of working people in Wycombe. This is likely to be marginally lower than the total number of jobs in the district given that some people will have more than one job⁶. It will be recalled that the 2001 Census recorded a significantly lower

⁶ Census does not provide a reliable means for estimating those with more than one job.

level of 'workplace population' than the jobs estimate provided by the Annual Business Inquiry (ABI) especially when an allowance is made for self-employment. ONS partially explains this variance by differences in survey methodology and definition. For example, the ABI has a greater potential to double count those with more than one job. In some local authority areas, it also has the particular potential of counting jobs which are actually located outside the district (resulting from surveys of HQs / profit centres based in one district but with significant numbers of employees elsewhere). It may be appropriate for Wycombe DC to explore with ONS the main reasons for discrepancy between the two data sets. For the purpose of preparing the scenarios, we have provided an estimate of people working in Wycombe which is closer to the Census workplace results than the ABI results presented earlier in this report. Although it should be stressed that relative change in labour demand and supply is the critical consideration in this analysis, the 'working in Wycombe' estimates have been used because: it is a more appropriate measure than jobs when exploring the labour market balance issue; and the Census is a 100% sample of households and should provide a more accurate estimate of the workplace population in Wycombe.

- (ii) Estimates of redevelopment and new employment land allocations have been guided using forecasts of employment change which relate closely to the estimates of 'workers in Wycombe'. The estimates of employment incorporate a model which separates employment requiring B Use Class accommodation from other types of employment. Floorspace and employment land estimates are provided by applying standard employment densities and plot ratio indices to the employment data. These estimates are approximate only and are informed by qualitative factors considered by this study as well as quantitative indicators. For each of the scenarios, it is assumed that 40% of net employment growth is accommodated in vacant premises or as a result of redevelopment and/or upgrading of existing sites and premises.
- (iii) Estimates of replacement land have also been provided for each of the scenarios. These represent an approximate amount of existing stock which should be redeveloped and/or upgraded in order to upgrade decaying stock and to assist in the restructuring of the local economy. This process will be important in preventing the closure or the migration

of existing firms out of Wycombe (e.g to Aylesbury) and to improving the competitiveness of the District's business base. Informed by the employment land review, replacement demand / need is assumed to be constant for all three scenarios at approximately 45 ha for the period 2001-2016 (3 ha per annum). Whilst this process will be important in raising output levels (through an increase in business productivity), it is assumed that the 'replacement requirement' will result in no net change in total employment levels.

- (iv) In addition to accommodating replacement demand, the scenarios assume that an element of redevelopment will be required to accommodate net employment growth in the period up to 2016. This amount varies according to the degree of employment growth assumed in the scenarios. Any remaining net employment growth is assumed to require the allocation of fresh employment land. However, in all three scenarios, the allocation of new employment land is assumed to be outweighed by the loss of existing employment land (see below). In other words, the scenarios imply no net addition to the existing stock of employment land as recorded in 2004.
- (v) As stated above, the scenarios assume that a significant amount of existing employment land will be redeveloped for alternative uses in the short term (approximately 35 ha excluding employment-led mixed use redevelopment). Additional employment land may be lost as a result of planned mixed-use development. Furthermore, in the medium term, changes in occupier requirements may result in some small employment sites becoming unviable for this use. Consequently, such sites may also result in a reduction in the existing stock of employment land.
- (vi) It is important to highlight that the extent to which redevelopment / improvement of existing sites and premises takes place will depend on market forces and the ability of WDC and its partners to facilitate the process. A strong and proactive public sector approach will be required to lead and manage the regeneration of employment sites.

Table B1 – Labour Market Growth Assumptions

Scenario		2001	2016	01-16	01-16 (%)	% pa
A	Workers in Wycombe	85,000	92,000	7,000	8.2%	0.5%
	Resident Labour Force	88,000	84,000	-4,000	-4.5%	-0.3%
	<i>Balance</i>	<i>-3,000</i>	<i>+8,000</i>			
B	Workers in Wycombe	85,000	97,000	12,000	14%	0.9%
	Resident Labour Force	88,000	94,600	6,600	7.5%	0.5%
	<i>Balance</i>	<i>-3,000</i>	<i>+2,400</i>			
C	Workers in Wycombe	85,000	94,500	9,500	11.2%	0.7%
	Resident Labour Force	88,000	85,400	-2,600	-3.0%	-0.2%
	<i>Balance</i>	<i>-3,000</i>	<i>+9,100</i>			

Source: Atkins Economics

Table B2 – Policy Implications of Growth Scenarios

A- Low Housing Growth / Low Employment Growth	
Key Features	
Additional Housing 2001-2016	5,400 (existing strategic housing policy context)
B Use Class Employment	4,200
Non B Use Class Employment	2,800
Redeveloped / improved Employment Land to accommodate replacement demand (1)	45 ha
Redeveloped / improved Employment Land to accommodate element of net additional employment growth (2)	10 ha
Total redeveloped / improved land (3)	55 ha
New Employment Land to accommodate residual net additional employment growth (4)	15 ha
Implications	
Economic Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Significantly lower rate of employment growth compared to that experienced between 1991 and 2001 as a result of highly selective economic and development policies. Inward investment promotion is unlikely to form part of the Council's economic development strategy given the presumption of minimising employment growth. • Decline in population / labour supply also has dampening effect on employment growth. However, national economic trends and Wycombe's relative economic strength will result in employment growth in the District which may be at a rate above the scenario assumptions. • Highly selective approach to development inhibits scope for diversification of economy but allows for retention most of the existing indigenous industrial activities. • Decline in labour force and low growth in employment opportunities / choice restricts ability of local stakeholders to increase average participation rates. • Redevelopment of existing employment land will take place as a result of proactive economic development and regeneration policies. The Council's role as a landowner will be particularly important in this regard. However, the scale of high quality redevelopment will be limited as investors and developers will be discouraged by a contracting labour supply, high wages and a lack of longer term higher quality site opportunities (for expansion and reinvestment).

A- Low Housing Growth / Low Employment Growth	
	<p>Restrictive housing supply policy will also result in upward forces on residential land values, having the effect of undermining the viability of existing industrial locations.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A proactive economic development approach may require some form of longer term reserve of high quality employment land. This will be required to ensure some progress is made in diversifying the local economy and providing for small scale investment from businesses representing key sectors and functions. • Local economy increasingly vulnerable to competition from surrounding areas and entrepreneurial activity may be constrained by high house prices, limited labour supply and lack of expansion sites. Potential movement of existing firms out of District. • Opportunities for spin-off economic benefits from University emerge from proactive economic development approach. However, these are not maximised as local land, labour and entrepreneurial capacity is constrained. • Attempts to secure S106 agreements may deter some developers from investing in the District unless the right sites can be provided.
Labour Market Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Imbalance deteriorates in line with current research findings of SEERA. • Despite low level of employment growth, net in-commuting to the District increases largely as a result of a shrinking local workforce. • Selective economic and development policies encourage the creation of some additional knowledge intensive jobs but of an insufficient scale and diversity to make an impact on the level of out commuting from the District. • Pressure on housing market driven by resident commuters and lack of opportunities for additional accommodation.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced pressure for new infrastructure to serve sub-regionally significant inward investment development sites. • Need for improvement in public transport access opportunities to High Wycombe town centre as retail customer and employment demand increases. • Increased pressure on local transport network as commuting increases.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced pressure for sites which can cater for inward investment / institutional investment. However, the proactive economic development approach will be undermined unless some additional employment land is reserved for some local economic diversification. • Lower additional employment land requirement implied by this scenario will provide focus for regenerating existing employment sites. Whilst regeneration of sites will take place, the scale and quality of this process will be inhibited by a strongly selective economic strategy. Council controlled employment sites is likely to account for the majority of

A- Low Housing Growth / Low Employment Growth	
	<p>regenerated employment land.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical mass of private sector investment in public facilities not achieved due to constrained development activity. • Social exclusion deterioration as a result of growing disparities in access to (affordable) housing and appropriate employment. • Some ethnic businesses indigenous to Wycombe decide to relocate out of the district as housing and economic opportunities are limited. • Encouragement of higher quality design. • Process of economic diversification takes place slowly but not to the District’s potential.
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • More proactive economic development and employment land policies but highly selective. Inward investment activity would not be promoted by WDC policy. • Employment land policies would have to be made more flexible to encourage regeneration of existing sites. However, the approach to containing employment and labour supply growth may restrict the effectiveness of such policies. • Strategic housing policy context remains unchanged.
Impact on MKSM sub-regional growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insignificant impact on Aylesbury employment market given the significant reduction in Wycombe’s employment growth rate. • Increasing pressure for Wycombe employment growth to source labour from Aylesbury given the restrictive housing policy under this Scenario. • Wycombe’s economy becoming increasingly open to competition from Aylesbury / South Midlands as a result of the strong economic growth policies being pursued in these locations (aided by financial investment from ODPM).

Notes:

- (1) Redevelopment to accommodate upgrading of decaying stock and to facilitate restructuring of existing levels of employment (ie. increasing output per worker – ‘spaceless growth’);
- (2) Proportion of net additional employment growth accommodated through redevelopment, improvement and intensification;
- (3) (1) + (2);
- (4) Remaining net additional employment growth required to be accommodated on fresh employment land.

B - Moderate Housing Growth / Moderate Employment Growth	
Key Features	
Additional Housing 2001-2016	7,400 (addition of 2,000 to existing strategic planning allocation)
B Use Class Employment	7,200
Non B Use Class Employment	4,800
Redeveloped / improved Employment Land to accommodate replacement demand (1)	45 ha
Redeveloped / improved Employment Land to accommodate element of net additional employment growth (2)	17 ha
Total redeveloped / improved land (3)	62 ha
New Employment Land to accommodate residual net additional employment growth (4)	26 ha
Implications	
Economic Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Moderate employment growth but lower to that anticipated in the national economy. Significantly lower than rates of growth experienced during period 1991-2001. • Proactive economic policy approach enables marshalling of economic growth to take place in favour of key sectors and clusters. • Proactive policy approach enables effective use of S106 and other policy instruments. • Increased diversification of local economy. • Improving competitiveness of local economy relative to other areas in the Thames Valley and South East. • Opportunity to define strong image for Wycombe as a business and visitor location. • Increased provision of knowledge intensive employers providing high quality employment. • Scenario strongly complements proposals for High Wycombe town centre regeneration plans and major projects including expansion of University. • Proactive policy enables improved provision of workspace for small businesses.
Labour Market Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increase in housing provision allows for increase in local labour force which has added effect of raising investor / business confidence in the area. • Improved balance between jobs and labour force

B - Moderate Housing Growth / Moderate Employment Growth	
	<p>achieved by additional housing provision (compared to situation in 2001). Also, greater choice of high quality jobs allows for successful implementation of initiatives to raise workforce participation rates.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pressure for increased in-commuting also minimised by provision of additional housing to accommodate a locally resident workforce (need for additional housing provision to target economically active market and affordable sector). • Opportunities for clawback of some out-commuters as new high quality job opportunities arise.
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for appraisal of transportation needs to serve redeveloped and new employment sites, particularly with regard to public transport opportunities. • Need to ensure public transport opportunities to High Wycombe town centre are increased significantly (e.g. Park and Ride). This will be required to accommodate customer and worker retail demand. Success of High Wycombe regeneration proposals will depend in part on ability to secure sustainable transport options for lower paid retail and related workers. • Need for strong policy approach to encourage and justify developer contributions to meeting common transport objectives. Strong and proactive encouragement in the adoption of green travel plans. • Need for improvement of Handycross roundabout.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Momentum achieved to facilitate significant brownfield redevelopment. • Encouragement of higher quality design. • Access to private sector investment to assist in funding of public facilities including affordable housing, public transport and community assets. • Diversification of economy to ensure its long term sustainability. • Opportunity to increase provision of affordable housing and to reduce social exclusion (in term of access to employment and housing).
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Change in strategic housing policy context and strongly proactive economic / labour market policy approach. Increase in housing provision / labour supply enables economic / labour market policies to operate more effectively. • Additional housing and employment allocations, including provision of key sites for targeted inward investment and SME development. • Stronger policy context provided to enable system of developer contributions / tariffs to work effectively and fairly. • Increases opportunity to provide a greater amount of affordable housing.

B - Moderate Housing Growth / Moderate Employment Growth	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport strategy required to complement new economic and housing strategy.
Impact on MKSM sub-regional growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Insignificant impact on Aylesbury employment market. Scale of employment growth in Wycombe (12,000) similar to that planned for Aylesbury. However, the planned rate of employment growth for Aylesbury is similar to the rate of growth experienced in the District during the 1990s. During this period, Wycombe experienced high rates of growth. • Likelihood of sourcing significant workforce numbers from Aylesbury is low given the increase in provision of housing in Wycombe and investment in employment generating floorspace in Aylesbury / Milton Keynes and South Midlands.

Notes:

- (1) Redevelopment to accommodate upgrading of decaying stock and to facilitate restructuring of existing levels of employment (ie. increasing output per worker – ‘spaceless growth’);
- (2) Proportion of net additional employment growth accommodated through redevelopment, improvement and intensification;
- (3) (1) + (2);
- (4) Remaining net additional employment growth required to be accommodated on fresh employment land.

C - Low Housing Growth / Low-Moderate Employment Growth	
Key Features	
Additional Housing 2001-2016	5,400 (existing strategic planning context)
B Use Class Employment	5,700
Non B Use Class Employment	3,800
Redeveloped / improved Employment Land to accommodate replacement demand (1)	45 ha
Redeveloped / improved Employment Land to accommodate element of net additional employment growth (2)	14 ha
Total redeveloped / improved land (3)	59 ha
New Employment Land to accommodate residual net additional employment growth (4)	21 ha
Implications	
Economic Role	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Low to moderate employment growth – lower than national trends and historical growth rates. • Diversification of local economy encouraged and small scale inward investment attracted to Wycombe. • Longer term diversification dampened as indigenous firms and inward investors deterred by excessive shortages of labour and key skills. This includes a shortage of key workers, clerical staff, young professionals and other sections of the labour market excluded by high house prices and lack of affordable housing options. • Strong demand for redeveloped employment land and new sites to facilitate economic diversification.
Labour Market Balance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Net in-commuting to District increases significantly despite modest level of job increase. This is accounted for by the restrictive housing policy approach. • Proactive economic and labour market initiatives slow down the decrease in workforce participation. However, the lack of accommodation choice prevents any opportunity to increase local labour supply. • Strong competition for labour and high level of unfilled vacancies. • Some clawback of existing out-commuters as a result of new high quality job opportunities.

C - Low Housing Growth / Low-Moderate Employment Growth	
Transportation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for appraisal of transportation needs to serve redeveloped and new employment sites, particularly with regard to public transport opportunities. • Need to ensure public transport opportunities to High Wycombe town centre are increased significantly (e.g. Park and Ride). This will be required to accommodate customer and worker retail demand. Success of High Wycombe regeneration proposals will depend in part on ability to secure sustainable transport options for lower paid retail and related workers. • Need for strong policy approach to encourage and justify developer contributions to meeting common transport objectives. Strong and proactive encouragement in the adoption of green travel plans. • Low housing provision reduces overall contribution of commercial sector to provision of infrastructure investment. Consequently, some significant gaps in provision remain. • Need for improvement of Handycross roundabout.
Sustainability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased polarisation of local communities resulting from constraints on housing choice, particularly for affordable housing. • Encouragement of higher quality design and mixed use development. • Momentum for redevelopment of existing employment sites established but economic objectives will also require new land / allocations. • Danger that some local SMEs and ethnic businesses may to an extent be squeezed out of the market for high quality employment premises, particularly towards the end of the Plan period.
Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Existing strategic housing policies remain unchanged. • Proactive approach in encouraging mixed use development and a more flexible approach to employment land policy. • New employment land policies required to facilitate redevelopment and to provide new allocations. • Strong public transportation policies required.
Impact on MKSM sub-regional growth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employment growth unlikely to distract from employment market in Aylesbury. • Increased pressure to source labour from growth zones including Aylesbury and South Midlands.

Notes:

- (1) Redevelopment to accommodate upgrading of decaying stock and to facilitate restructuring of existing levels of employment (ie. increasing output per worker – ‘spaceless growth’);
- (2) Proportion of net additional employment growth accommodated through redevelopment, improvement and intensification;
- (3) (1) + (2);
- (4) Remaining net additional employment growth required to be accommodated on fresh employment land.

Key Scenario Assumptions

Scenario A:

- Population declines from 162,100 to 159,800 in accordance with Bucks CC housing-constrained population projections;
- Working age population decreases by 7,100 in accordance with Bucks CC projections;
- Working age population fall from 66% in 2001 to 63% 2016 (as proportion of total population);
- Economic activity rates rise from 82% in 2001 to 84% in 2016;
- Housing requirement 2001-2016: 5,400 as set out in draft Structure Plan.

Scenario B:

- Population increases from 162,100 to 164,800;
- Average household size: 2.51 (2001 ratio for Wycombe) – assume one household per dwelling;
- Working age population increases from 107,000 in 2001 to 108,768 in 2016;
- Working age population remains at 66% throughout period (as proportion of total population). Assisted by creation of high quality jobs and living opportunities and proactive marketing of Wycombe;
- Economic activity rates rise from 82% in 2001 to 87% in 2016. Assisted by high quality job opportunities and labour market initiatives;
- Housing requirement: 7,400 to accommodate increase in working age population (amounts to an additional 2,000 dwellings on top of the draft Structure Plan allocation).

Scenario C:

- Population declines from 162,100 to 159,800 in accordance with Bucks CC housing-constrained population projections;
- Working age population decreases by 7,100 in accordance with Bucks CC projections;
- Working age population fall from 66% in 2001 to 63% 2016 (as proportion of total population);
- Economic activity rates rise from 82% in 2001 to 85.5% in 2016 assisted by labour market initiatives;
- Housing requirement 2001-2016: 5,400 as set out in draft Structure Plan.

All Scenarios:

- B use class jobs assumed 60% of total employment;
- Assumed fixed employment: land ratio of 1:60 sqm. (equivalent to worker-floorspace ratio of 1:24sqm. and plot ratio of 40%). This is based on para 4.27 DTZ report to SEERA⁷ skewed towards B1 uses;
- Gross additional employment land demand: net additional workers in Wycombe x 60sqm;
- Replacement demand assumed 3 ha per annum (45 ha 2001-2016);
- Redeveloped / improved land required to accommodate proportion of net additional employment demand assumed 40% of gross employment land demand;
- Existing employment land transferred to other uses – at least 35 ha;
- The estimates of new employment land required are particularly sensitive to the assumptions made about the employment: land ratio and the redeveloped/improved employment land proportion.

⁷ Use of Business Space and Changing Working Practices in the South East (May 2004) – DTZ for SEERA.

**C. KEY COMPONENTS OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT
STRATEGY FOR WYCOMBE**

INTRODUCTION

- C.1 This appendix sets out the rationale and key components of the major sub-strategies identified in Section 9 as the basis for a detailed Economic Development Strategy for Wycombe.
- C.2 The sub-strategies identified in the following tables relate to the strategic objectives set out in Section 8 (Strategic Economic Framework). The following economic development themes are explored:
- Sector development;
 - Business growth, development and investment;
 - Labour market development;
 - Community support and development; and
 - Corporate Marketing.
- C.3 For each theme, the main areas for development are highlighted along with key opportunities based on existing trends and initiatives. It is important to highlight that a number of related developments already have been put in place by the Council and/or identified for action under the Best Value Review of Economic Development services.
- C.4 Reflecting the emphasis of the study brief, recommendations for employment land supply are discussed in detail in the main report, particularly in Sections 10 and 11.

SECTOR DEVELOPMENT

- C.5 The major thrust of this sub-strategy will be to target a healthy range of value-added sector development opportunities to:
- ensure that a higher proportion of high productivity service and production activities are embedded in the Wycombe economy (SMART growth);

- reduce dependency of sectors vulnerable to decline;
- minimise the effect of economic shocks;
- widen the range of career opportunities for local people in knowledge based activities;
- provide opportunities for greater integration between the expanding University knowledge base in the District and the local business and labour market base; and
- maintain and develop a competitive edge in a number of niche industries which will assist in establishing Wycombe as a good place to do business within the regional context.

C.6 Particular sectors where there are significant opportunities for strong investment and development potential include:

- R&D and Life Sciences
- High Value Furniture and Wood Products Designer Making
- ICT and Software Engineering
- Creative and Cultural Industries
- High Value Production and Lean Manufacturing
- Headquarters Operations
- High Value Business Services
- Sales Representation and Light Distribution
- Speciality Retailing
- Tourism, Sport and Leisure

- Rural Industries
- Environmental Industries

C.7 Table B1 explores some of the development opportunities associated with each of the sectors identified above.

Sector	Case for Development in Wycombe	Existing or Required Development Catalysts
R&D and Life Sciences	<p>Large scientifically qualified labour market domiciled between London and Oxford</p> <p>Proximity to Heathrow</p> <p>Johnson & Johnson have a research and development operation within the area, a production facility at Saunderton and have significantly expanded their Finance, Administration and Sales operations.</p> <p>The District also has a recent history of pharmaceutical activity including Monsanto, taken over by Pharmacia / Pfizer.</p>	<p>Creation of attractive business park or headquarters site development opportunities close to the motorway.</p>
High Value Furniture & Wood Products Designer Making	<p>Historically Wycombe's most prominent sector, the furniture industry, is faced with a number of adverse influences. There is increasing competition from cheaper imports; retailers tend not to use the UK for their sourcing as tastes have moved towards products with a shorter product life, which is more suitable to a low-cost manufacturing environment.</p> <p>There is scope for encouraging the development of a cluster of designer makers and encouraging the link to localised short batch high value manufacturing which would remain viable within the UK, facilitated through the Enterprise Gateway.</p>	<p>The wood industries Enterprise Gateway has been established on a site at Princes Risborough, which was the former BRE Forest Products Research Station. The focus of the Enterprise Gateway is on designer furniture makers, using locally grown timber, in such product areas as bespoke kitchens, and other products utilising wood.</p> <p>The core role of the Enterprise Gateway is to provide informal advice and signposting, and eventually, hopefully a workshop and specialist manufacturing tools, networking of existing furniture makers and to identify uses for locally produced timber. A website is being developed to enable promotion of these services and to help businesses promote themselves collaboratively. Marketing is a major problem in this sector as small businesses need to establish their brand, image and style, yet they are quite small producers.</p>

Sector	Case for Development in Wycombe	Existing or Required Development Catalysts
		<p>A further stage of development will be to create an incubator serving the sector and business start ups more generally, co-located with the University, and the possible creation of a move-on enterprise centre adjacent to the Ercol site at Princes Risborough.</p> <p>There are major opportunities for the further development of related design and craft skills.</p>
ICT & Software Engineering	<p>The area is ideally suited as a strategic location for ICT and software engineering businesses servicing key markets in the Thames Valley, Milton Keynes, London and internationally.</p> <p>Prior to the recession in the sector, which is now recovering, ICT has been an important source of inward investment for the district.</p>	<p>Definition of a clear offer for business accommodation, and possible initiatives to support the local supply of skills in software engineering.</p>
Creative & Cultural Industries	<p>There is a major opportunity to develop a creative and cultural quarter for the town centre or in Desborough, both of which require market re-positioning to stimulate regeneration.</p> <p>A nucleus of creative and cultural activities can have a major impact on physical regeneration, business growth, local area image, tourism and leisure activity and opportunities for engagement of socially excluded communities.</p> <p>There is a strong arts community network in Wycombe.</p> <p>There is much contact between the area and with the film industry. Given the proximity to Shepperton and Pinewood Studios and the National Film School in Beaconsfield.</p> <p>Manufacturers within Buckinghamshire are faced with competitive pressures. However, they can offer core technologies with potential for high value wealth</p>	<p>The proposed Enterprise Hub will have as its core sector specialism the promotion of design activities.</p> <p>BCUC is interested in developing more design related activity within its educational programmes.</p> <p>There are a range of site development opportunities which could be considered for the creation of affordable workspace for creative businesses, such as the old Fire Station and Victorian factory units suitable for sub-division in Desborough.</p> <p>A comprehensive strategy needs to be devised which can tie together the various elements of a creative and cultural industries development strategy.</p>

Sector	Case for Development in Wycombe	Existing or Required Development Catalysts
	creation through design-related activity.	
High Value Production & Lean Manufacturing	<p>With manufacturing generally, there is generally a move to relocate operations to the EU accession states and to major Far Eastern countries, given that the UK now finds it difficult to compete in production processes which are labour intensive.</p> <p>Wycombe has the potential to build on a cluster of automotive manufacturers in surrounding sub-regions (e.g. Oxfordshire) and is already the location for Medina Cars which distribute and service Lamborghinis. A major overseas Motor Manufacturer specialising in high performance cars is understood to be interested in moving to the area.</p>	<p>SEEDA are the leading RDA for the provision of advice and support on lean manufacturing, and there is major scope for this to be applied more widely within the Wycombe area.</p> <p>There is a need to identify suitable sites and locations for which would be attractive to inward investment from advanced manufacturing operations.</p> <p>BCUC has the potential to play a major role in the development of young businesses with design expertise that can be applied to advanced manufacturing.</p>
Headquarter Operations	Headquarters operations are major source of high quality, well paid jobs, and can widen the choice of employment opportunities for those with good qualifications, living within the town.	Creation of attractive business park or headquarters site development opportunities close to the motorway and potentially in High Wycombe town centre.
High Value Business Services	The area has a large number of small, high value service providers in such areas as software development, web design and management consultancy. The rate of business start up and survival is generally high.	Provision of additional managed workspace for start up businesses, and an increase in the supply of move-on accommodation.
Sales Representation & Light Distribution	<p>Foreign owned sales representatives' offices have been a major source of inward investment in Wycombe in recent years, due to the area's proximity to Heathrow.</p> <p>After initial set up, these operations give rise to small scale distribution activities.</p> <p>There is a regular demand for trade counter units.</p> <p>These activities are relatively labour intensive and not excessively</p>	A clear offer for these activities needs to be defined within the employment land strategy.

Sector	Case for Development in Wycombe	Existing or Required Development Catalysts
	detrimental to the environment, unlike heavy distribution.	
Retailing	<p>It will be important to maximise additionality provided by the Town Centre Regeneration Scheme (TCR) in High Wycombe (in term of retail offer and job generation).</p> <p>As the TCR shifts the centre of the town westwards, the east end has a need and an opportunity to become more attractive to small niche operators, as well as professional services and A3 users.</p> <p>A strong speciality retailing sector would link in significantly to a tourism and leisure development strategy.</p>	<p>The town centre masterplan and retail studies are the key vehicle for defining the scope for further development of retailing within the town.</p> <p>TCR may include a range of kiosk type and small units also suitable for speciality retailing.</p>
Tourism, Sport and Leisure	<p>Wycombe has considerable potential as a short-break tourism destination serving the London and International markets.</p> <p>Major elements of its offer could potentially include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • River holidays on the Thames • Walking and other leisure related activities within the Chilterns and other high quality landscape areas • Exploiting visitor potential that could be created through town centre redevelopment such as in the cultural and creative and speciality retailing areas • Setting up a possible furniture museum • Business tourism - conferences and seminars. • Attracting more investment from quality hotel operators. There is much interest in the area from hotel operators. <p>Linked to the tourism sector is the potential for the development of a high quality leisure and sporting role</p>	<p>There is potential to encourage WASPs to remain in the area as a key anchor for a sports and leisure cluster. The National Sports Centre in Maidenhead could be an important catalyst and cost consolidation for this sports centre cluster.</p> <p>Development of a high quality multi-functional sports centre provides an important opportunity to raise the leisure offer of Wycombe.</p> <p>A comprehensive feasibility assessment is required to measure the potential economic development potential of the tourism, sport and leisure sector in Wycombe. This should include an evaluation of suitable site availability.</p> <p>Further investigation should take place into the role of leisure and sport facilities as complementary activities within or adjacent to essentially employment sites. One of more key sites may be considered as flagship projects for leisure and sport in the District.</p>

Sector	Case for Development in Wycombe	Existing or Required Development Catalysts
	<p>for the local economy. Diversity is a particular strength for Wycombe.</p> <p>High Wycombe currently is home London Wasps and Wycombe Wanderers.</p> <p>Provision of high quality leisure facilities provide an important complement to the experience of a location as a good place to do business.</p>	
Environmental Industries	<p>The creation of a suitable location for low tech waste management and recycling in a managed environment would be a useful source of job creation, and can release some low grade sites elsewhere for higher grade development.</p> <p>Higher value environmental industries, ranging from high technology products to a range of professional and educational services, are a major growth industry.</p> <p>The area's woodland assets which are under-utilised could provide an opportunity for a biomass energy demonstration project.</p>	Identification of suitable locations in which to locate and cluster environmental industries within the district and associated development initiatives, where a viable commercial case can be proven.

Framework for Sector Development Activity

C.8 A successful sector development programme within Wycombe will be dependent on devising sub-strategies for each niche area to be targeted. In each case, these sub-strategies will need to address the following factors.

- (i) *Detailed Assessment of Sector Development Opportunities*
- Size, structure and significance of the sector in the area.

- The underlying case for specific business within each sector developing within particular parts of the district e.g. size and nature of accessible markets; local industry profile and strengths; availability of specialist skills.
- Scope of business development opportunities.
- Understanding the barriers to growth and development of indigenous businesses in each sector.
- The potential and mechanisms for developing useful sector networks across the area as a means of engaging and supporting them .
- Supply chains and the existing and potential inter-relationships, setting baselines as to who the participants are, their size, and geographic clustering, and evaluating their potential for growth and development.
- Defining targets for the types of inward investment which could strengthen each sector, such as through the attraction of a major purchaser, and the offer that needs to be created for such opportunities to be realised.
- Prospects for indigenous business expansions as well as inward investment.
- Areas of support likely to have greatest impact on local sector cluster development.

(ii) Measures to Support Sector Growth and Development

- Measures necessary to strengthen the overall support offer appropriate to each sector.
- Establishing the institutional links, cultures and resources that need to be created and linked together to provide the support environment these businesses need to develop individually and collaboratively.
- Developing tailored mechanisms for delivering business support to start up businesses and existing businesses with strong growth potential.
- Identifying how incubator schemes or other specialised workspace can be used to create and build on opportunities for identified cluster development, particularly where support structures are being developed or are in place.

- Marshalling demand for and developing tailored management development and skills training which can assist businesses to unlock the potential of their workforces, and allow their knowledge, creativity and commitment to be fully exploited, and to acquire, develop and apply best practice.

SUPPORTING BUSINESS GROWTH, DEVELOPMENT & INVESTMENT

C.9 The table below highlights the key areas for development by Wycombe DC and its partners in respect of business growth, development and investment. The action themes described relate to the strategic objectives set out in Section 8 of the main report.

Business Growth, Development and Investment Initiatives

Action Area	Key Areas for Development
<p>Improving Operation Conditions for Businesses</p>	<p>Improving the choice and availability of alternative types of specialist business accommodation and development sites.</p> <p>Ensuring that the focal points of business activity within the district are not subject to significant congestion and allow for efficient accessibility to markets, suppliers and labour markets.</p> <p>Improving the existing conditions and potential of particular sub-areas of the district and what measures could enhance their scope for attracting high quality employment and other forms of investment, sector by sector.</p> <p>Increasing the supply of affordable housing.</p> <p>Ensuring provision of high quality leisure and recreational facilities / opportunities.</p>
<p>Strengthening Business Support</p>	<p>Wycombe is an area of high employment and is characterised by a pattern of high businesses start up with low failure rates. The main constraint to business growth tends to be in attracting appropriate staff of the right calibre and skills; this problem is compounded by the cost of living and low unemployment within the area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strengthening the range of business support services available to meet the growth needs of each sector for alternative client groups, (e.g. support for start ups, innovative businesses and SMEs generally and in sectors targeted for support). Major gaps in available provision will need to be understood and addressed. • Education and skills levels of the workforce to support key growth sectors, highlighting the scope, direction and priorities for workforce development, and how FE/HE and other partners and providers can work together to address key skills deficiencies. • Developing the business support roles and potential impact of the University, and the catalysts that could be created for innovation support and the development of new knowledge bases within the area. <p>Enterprise Hubs are based around sectors and high tech activity and in the case of Wycombe, the focus will be on developing businesses associated with design activities. It will provide the basis for supporting businesses with strong prospects for growth through a number of processes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enabling businesses to learn from and do business with each other. • Identifying the right sources of finance and creation of links between finance and investment ready companies. • Ensuring young and growing companies have access to flexible premises to support successive stages of development. • Affiliation to a specialist knowledge base. • Linking these companies to the business advice, mentoring and training they need to ensure they develop the management capability to survive and prosper.

Action Area	Key Areas for Development
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Proving access to flexible workspace. <p>The Chiltern Enterprise Gateway has a particular focus on the wood industries, but is also a key vehicle for potentially providing business support to a wide range of start up and small businesses within the local area. It will be important to ensure that these two key resources are assisted in maximising their impact on local business and the local economy, by ensuring that the roles of all complementary areas of business support, networks and supporting infrastructure are suitably clarified and that they work in close cooperation with the Enterprise Hub and Gateway.</p> <p>Once tested, it may be considered appropriate to roll out the approach taken by the Enterprise Hub and Gateway model to other sectors and business activities.</p>
Targeting Inward Investment	<p>Sector targeting is an appropriate approach for Wycombe. The District is attractive to inward investors due to the accessibility of its customer base, given the proximity to London and the South East and the fact that many of their clients are in Europe and easily accessible via Heathrow. Sectors with potential for targeting initiatives were identified earlier.</p> <p>It is important for WDC to communicate these opportunities to investor support partners such as SEEDA, Buckinghamshire Economic Partnership, Thames Valley Economic Partnership and other key intermediary bodies (including inward investment brokers).</p> <p><i>Offer Development</i></p> <p>The main elements of the offer package will typically include site/premises, skills, training packages, specialised business support and provision of information to assist business location decisions. A clear offer needs to be developed and articulated, based on appropriate market intelligence. This 'offer' may be encapsulated in a variety of channels include a marketing strategy and on-line / website.</p> <p><i>Image Development</i></p> <p>Wycombe needs to polish its image as a good place to do business and to visit. It has a number of significant and strategic advantages, particularly those associated with road, rail and air access and available skills. However, the District lacks a clear identity to distinguish itself from areas such as the Thames Valley, Milton Keynes and Oxfordshire. This image should be promoted in a variety of ways including marketing material. However, action must also take place on the ground including the provision of appropriate investment sites and a co-ordinated skills strategy.</p> <p><i>Investment Facilitation</i></p> <p>Wycombe District Council already has a capability offering inward investment client handling and management and for inquiries. This involves working closely with the economic partnerships and intermediary bodies. It is important that this capability is maintained and developed, particularly from the point of view of assembling and communicating a more competitive product offer for each sector being targeted.</p>
Business Retention & Investor Development	<p>The Wycombe area has been faced with a number of closures and downsizing by major employers.</p>

Action Area	Key Areas for Development
	<p>Close attention will need to continue to be paid to the provision of effective business retention support to large and medium sized companies in sectors of particular importance in the local economy. This is an area which already well developed, through the joint working of the SEEDA Investor Development Manager, the economic partnerships and specialist officers within the District Council. Key support activities need to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • maintaining a close dialogue with key employers in order to understand their development plans the local concerns and issues facing them and to coordinate solutions • ensuring full support in assisting such employers to adapt or expand their operations on their existing sites or where necessary to find alternative sites within the district; • offering specialist forms of business support, such as lean manufacturing, where this can create the case for remaining in the area on the basis of higher margins an lower costs • addressing skills development needs of these employers through sector focused workforce develop programmes and the setting up and support of centres of excellence; • channelling in the views of major employers about the key priorities for improvements to public transport and the general operating environment.
Town Centre Development	<p>The strategic economic objective would be to maximise the offer of the town centre in terms of traditional and speciality retail, culture, leisure and entertainment and to tourist visitors and spending, in a manner which will maximise its sub-regional competitiveness and minimise spending leakage.</p> <p>It is essential that town centre development and revitalisation activity takes account of the following needs and opportunities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Its role as a key location for young and growing businesses in sectors identified for development: speciality retailing; creative industries, high value business services; leisure and entertainment. • The significance of the town centre in widening and deepening the tourism visitor offer of the District. • How creative and cultural activities could be developed and accommodated in or close to the town centre, not only to provide a new economic focus for the District, but also to create a milieu which can feed interest from local and tourist visitors. • Its role in enhancing the image of the area, not only to spending visitors but also to potential investors. • Synergies with key developments such as the relocation of the University, and structures and measures which can assist it in engaging more closely with local communities. • Linkages that can be created to boost the prospects for increase business activity in the Desborough area.
Supporting the Rural Economy	<p>There is a need to address the needs and potential of the rural economy given the considerable decline in farming, and the fact that much of the area is</p>

Action Area	Key Areas for Development
	<p>AONB within the district. Some communities are struggling as a result of these constraints. A strategy for the rural industries needs to be fully articulated addressing such factors as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Measures to stimulate the rural economy, such as through encouragement of home working, incubation units, the provision of business support services and telecommunications. • The need for people to work in a more flexible way such as through remote working from locations at home or near to home. • The need to create opportunities for communities in the more remote rural areas, not only for employment but for access to training provision as well. • The potential for the environmental industries lend themselves to the development of important, high value rural industries. These can contribute to the sustainability and economic vibrancy of rural communities. • The necessary synergies with other economic development programmes within the District which can be identified and exploited, e.g. business incubation, the proposed furniture cluster move on accommodation at Princes Risborough, the tourism strategy, and the wider development of initiatives to develop the wood related industries. <p>The Chiltern Enterprise Gateway has as part of its remit the support of rural industries, and is already active in business development initiatives related to the rural economy. It will be important for a clear programme of rural development activities to be set out.</p>

LABOUR MARKET DEVELOPMENT

C.10 Wycombe has very mixed communities which reflect patterns of both very high and very low educational achievement. It has a high proportion of ethnic minorities and whilst primary education does not show a striking difference, at secondary school level there is a significant gap. Wycombe’s performance at ‘A’ Level is below the national average.

C.11 The broadest issue is of general skills shortages in most of the traditional skilled occupations to varying degrees. Major problems are currently experienced in construction, engineering, retailing and amongst management occupations.

C.12 The Learning and Skills Council has the fundamental objective of increasing skills through qualifications and by engaging more people in learning and is

targeting sectors which have the largest skills needs. It is also seeking to encourage employers to express their needs more succinctly, to review their methods of recruitment, to get involved with training, and to work with colleges and training providers who can provide much more targeted provision.

C.13 To support these needs, more can be done through collaborative approaches to make it easier to take up learning from a practical point of view:

- (i) *Closer Collaboration with Employers.* Promoting flexible practices more conducive to the take-up of education and training, such as services for carers, flexible working hours and the encouragement of continued vocational education and career development routes.
- (ii) *Improving structures for development of young people.* Level 3 qualifications are particularly important to improving the performance and productivity of employees. There is a need for employers to understand the importance of encouraging individuals to continue with their studies and in parallel for supporting career development structures to be put in place.
- (iii) *Improving Quality and Flexibility of Provision.* One of the barriers to creating higher levels of qualifications within the workforce is the inflexibility of training provision. For example, most qualifications require students to start in September and there are limited opportunities to enter training at other times of the year. Similarly, the length of courses can be a major deterrent for those considering self advancement. Therefore, the need for greater flexibility in the delivery of education and training is particularly important. Provision of on-line learning may increase access to flexible learning arrangements as would the provision of community based learning facilities. This should include learning facilities co-located with other key services including retail centres, childcare facilities, libraries leisure centres.
- (iv) *E Learning and Mentoring.* The ability for individuals to use electronic learning media will be key, not just at the established learning centres, but in remote areas such as rural locations. Along with the growth of e learning, e mentoring will grow as a key activity in workforce development. The development of broadband infrastructure, and suitable access points within communities will therefore will be an important factor in achieving these benefits.

- (v) *Promoting higher levels of management development.* If more Managing Directors and Managers are aware of the benefits training can bring, training activity is likely to be disseminated more widely amongst businesses. Local business organisations such as the Chambers of Commerce have an important role in facilitating a training culture within the private sector.

C.14 Supporting key actions in addressing the workforce development needs of Wycombe would need to include:

- development of local employment action plans to target areas of labour shortage, and to tap into under-exploited areas of the labour market, such as the economically inactive and socially excluded. Increasing economic activity rates is also particularly important in raising the opportunities for local jobs to be taken by local people (labour market balance);
- providing the necessary support to those both in and out of work to access education and training, through effective sign posting, advice and guidance and social support services and more flexible forms of training provision.

C.15 In parallel, more needs to be done in terms of coordination between the University and other education providers in terms of:

- concerted working with local companies in the sub-region to support new investments and expansions;
- defining joint plans to identify growth opportunities in the economy and labour market and to develop initiatives to address these;
- applying appropriate resources to co-ordinate the process of employer engagement regarding skills, education and training requirements.

COMMUNITY SUPPORT AND DEVELOPMENT

C.16 The review of socio-economic conditions showed that Wycombe is characterised by significant spatial and social differentials in terms of income,

access to employment and other measures of deprivation. Local communities which display high rates of deprivation relative to most other parts of the South East include Micklefield, Lane End, Castlefield, Booker, Oakridge and Tinkers Wood. Consequently, it is essential that the economic development priorities for Wycombe make appropriate provision for facilitating a reduction in social deprivation and an increase in social enterprise activity.

- C.17 An additional facet of the community profile of Wycombe is the growing proportion of ethnic groups which make up the District's population. The diverse nature of the District's population is a strength and an important opportunity for economic growth and diversification. Ethnic groups in Wycombe are characterised by a culture of entrepreneurship. In releasing this enterprise capacity in Wycombe, appropriate community development initiatives should be devised with the potential to support a wide spectrum of social businesses.

Existing Strengths

- C.18 The Council's Best Value Review of Economic Development Services highlights the solid foundations of community development activity already established in the District. For example, the SKIDZ project is a highly successful scheme to provide vocational training for disaffected young people and those excluded from work or education. Moreover, the project takes an innovative approach to engaging young people whilst delivering skills in motor mechanics and allied trades. It also provides disadvantaged young people with the opportunity to develop social skills and to obtain a greater sense of social and economic responsibility (e.g. safer driving and reduced car crime). SKIDZ is a registered charity managed by a partnership of community representatives, statutory agencies and local businesses. It is funded by a wide range of public and private sector organisations.
- C.19 Wycombe is also developing a successful track record in the facilitation of social and community enterprise activity. This includes the HOW2 initiative which was partly funded by the Single Regeneration Budget. The Council is considering options for rolling out this approach across the District.

Next Steps

- C.20 The DTI has highlighted the significance that social enterprise can make to reducing social exclusion and deprivation. Moreover, these community-based

businesses can make a major contribution to local urban regeneration and economic development objectives. In taking forward the community support agenda in Wycombe, the Council has a leading role to play in:

- facilitating local partnerships which can deliver innovative learning projects for disadvantaged groups;
- working closely with the voluntary and community sectors to define local projects which are bespoke to circumstances in Wycombe and the surrounding areas;
- developing business support mechanisms which meet the needs of new and growing ethnic enterprises;
- providing a focus on self-help and business advice by shifting the focus of projects away from grant dependency to one of facilitating the financial viability of community – led enterprise activity;
- examining the opportunity for some local Council services to be delivered by local community enterprise organisations (e.g. environmental improvements, building maintenance and repair);
- identify and gain the support of business champions within the local community to encourage and motivate excluded and disadvantaged groups; and
- ensuring community and social support efforts are equally distributed between urban and rural communities throughout the District.

CORPORATE MARKETING

C.21 This study has highlighted that over the last decade, Wycombe District has lacked a clear economic role and image. In fact, the area has failed to replace its legacy as a furniture production location with a unique and modern business image. It is important to develop and promote the key strengths and opportunities offered by Wycombe, if the District is to firmly establish itself as a good place to do business.

C.22 The Council's Best Value Review process highlighted that significant steps are being taken to promote the District's strengths as a business location. Indeed, it has already been highlighted that the Council's emerging economic vision focuses on:

- The District's gateway role in accessing the Chilterns;
- The District's hub role in retail, transport and enterprise terms; and
- The District's high quality offer in terms of countryside trips and holidays.

C.23 The components of this emerging vision is supported by the research conducted during this study. However, it is important to highlight a more proactive economic development strategy will need to be put in place to ensure that the vision is realised. This study recommends such a strategy.

C.24 In developing further the economic vision and identifying the unique selling points (USPs) of Wycombe, the study demonstrates the potential economic value of the following characteristics (including those identified above):

- (i) The gateway and strategic transport location between the Thames Valley and the South Midlands. Wycombe is particularly well connected to the national road network with easy access to the M40, M4 and M25. The pivotal position of Wycombe will be reinforced with the completion of Terminal 5 as accessibility to the UK's most important airport will be increased. This is a particular strength in terms of potential business investment.
- (ii) The proximity of the M40 to High Wycombe provides a major opportunity to collectively link prestige and highly visible economic locations along the route. This concept is highlighted in the recommended employment land strategy although the 'necklace' of sites provides a range of employment, retail and related activities. This group of gateways sites run from Junction 3 to Junction 5 and potentially include one or two new high profile developments.
- (iii) Wycombe has demonstrated its potential to develop a high quality and varied range of sport, leisure and tourism facilities. Moreover, this unique offer extends from participation in sport and leisure to the entertainment associated with major sporting events. The diversity and

quality potentially offered by Wycombe in terms of these inter-related sectors is substantial in economic terms.

- (iv) Whilst the High Wycombe Town Centre Regeneration Scheme provides the main catalyst, the District has particular strengths and opportunities to develop a unique collection of cultural, creative and retail related activities. These sectors potentially have strong linkages with the sport, leisure and tourism sectors identified above.
- (v) Despite the steady decline of the traditional furniture sector, Wycombe has the potential to become a regional centre for industrial design and a driver for new product development and process innovation.
- (vi) Wycombe has the potential to become one of the most diversified local economies in the South East. This is particularly important in sheltering the area from fluctuations in economic cycles and distinguishing Wycombe from the Thames Valley.
- (vii) Wycombe has the potential to become a regional leader in developing successful social and community enterprise. This is particularly important within a District and Region, both of which generally are considered relatively prosperous.

Marketing Initiatives

C.25 The Best Value review has highlighted a number of important marketing and promotion activities which should be implemented in Wycombe. These include: working closely with Thames Valley and Buckinghamshire Economic Partnerships in promoting Wycombe; developing a wide partnership to external marketing; and establish a signposting and support service for inward investment inquiries.

C.26 In the light of the need for Wycombe to establish a strong economic image to businesses and external organisations, it is appropriate for the Council to take the lead in developing a marketing strategy for the District. This should be used as a channel for defining Wycombe's economic and wider role to the outside world. Such an initiative should be clearly targeted and developed from within a strong partnership of public and private sector interests.

**D. EMPLOYMENT LAND REVIEW SITE PROFORMA &
GUIDANCE NOTES**

See separate documents.

E. KEY FEATURES OF EMPLOYMENT LAND CHANGE SITES

See separate documents.

F. REVIEW OF KEY SITES

INTRODUCTION

F.1 In accordance with the study brief, a preliminary review of 21 existing and potential locations within the district was carried out. The purpose of the review was to:

- Examine the key issues relating to each site in terms of its occupier and property mix, location, access, planning, amenity and environment issues and qualitative factors
- Identify the position of each site within the context of the commercial property market taking account of the existing market but also accounting for the likely appeal of the site during bouyant market conditions; and
- Identifying the likely scope for change at each site including possibilities for re-focusing the role the sites currently perform relative to the emerging strategic economic framework for Wycombe.

STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS

F.2 Prior to considering each of the sites in turn it was important to situate the main settlements in Wycombe within the sub regional property market. Informal consultation with local commercial property agents was used to identify the key factors considered by investors and potential occupiers when choosing a business location. These include:

- (i) Access: Ease of access to Heathrow Airport is often cited as one of the main search parameter by businesses when identifying suitable sites. Commercial property agents report that this is particularly the case for multinational companies within several of the target sectors identified in the sector growth strategy who are searching for potential sites to accommodate HQ functions. American investors and American owned companies are particularly demanding in seeking to fulfil this search parameter. Access is also a high priority for all employment uses specifically ease of access to the strategic road network measured in terms of the travel time to nearest major motorway/dual carriageway junction (taking account of congestion issues). Many businesses also

have a requirement to be within easy road and/or rail access to London.

- (ii) The other location parameter is the proximity to a town centre. Whilst lower down the order of priorities this factor acts to differentiate sites within towns. Sites close to town centre sites are preferred to more peripheral locations due to the range of town centre amenities because of their nodal role within public transport and local road networks. Town centres also may contain functions which are attractive to particular occupiers (i.e proximity to colleges/universities, proximity to law courts etc.).
- (iii) Quality of labour: The quality of labour is another key issue raised by potential investors. This not only applies to sectors with highly specialised human resource needs but other sectors as well. Thus the skills profile of the area and general levels of educational attainment are also an important consideration.
- (iv) Quality of life factors are also important to potential investors including housing availability and price and the attractiveness of residential environments. Issues including the performance and reputation of local schools, lifestyle factors, and recreational needs all represent important considerations to decision makers.

F.3 Once all of the above considerations have been met all businesses have specific needs in relation to the property itself including size, quality, age/condition, access/servicing, parking and security requirements.

EXISTING MARKET STRUCTURE WITHIN THE SUB REGION

F.4 Taking into account the issues described above within the South Buckinghamshire/Berkshire context. In general, accessible locations along the M4 corridor are the preferred areas for B class activities. The centres which generate the most interest from prospective occupiers are Reading and Maidenhead due to their excellent road links to Heathrow and rail links to London.

F.5 Within Wycombe District, Marlow and to a lesser extent Bourne End are positioned within the M4 commercial property market and fulfil a subsidiary

role meeting the needs of firms who have a requirement to be within the M4 corridor but not within one of the larger centres. These towns are not as highly rated as other locations due to the relatively poor rail access and their distance from a junction on the M4.

- F.6 The M40 corridor is considered by the market to be secondary to the M4 corridor due to its slightly further distance to Heathrow. Within Wycombe District the Loudwater/Wooburn Green area is the preferred location due to its closer proximity to the M25. This area also benefits from not being associated with the negative perceptions some prospective investors hold of High Wycombe.
- F.7 Both High Wycombe and Slough are viewed less favourably by the market than their locational position would suggest. This poor perception is partly due to their more traditional industrial structure which has been dominated by manufacturing and their workforce which is viewed as less well equipped to meet the labour requirements of prospective firms.
- F.8 After locations located within the M4 commercial property market and the Loudwater/Wooburn area, High Wycombe is the next most preferred location within the District for prospective occupiers. The town has the largest employment base of all of the settlements within the District in terms of its size and range of firms.
- F.9 Beyond High Wycombe, other settlements both along the M40 and less accessible locations such as Princes Risborough viewed as far less attractive business locations particularly by large firms and institutional investors. However, there is local property market for B class accommodation.
- F.10 In addition to the M40 corridor other locations which have a foothold within the “Heathrow” commercial property market are a range of locations West London, Bracknell and to a lesser extent Watford, Guildford and the M3 Corridor. Once Terminal 5 at Heathrow is completed access to the Terminal is understood to be directly from the M25. This has the potential to improve the relative commercial property market position of towns along the M40 and elsewhere, whilst locations which have poorer access to the new terminal (such as locations within west London) may find it harder to attract investment than at present.

MARKET CONDITIONS

- F.11 The attractiveness of sites within the district to new commercial property investment is also strongly influenced by prevailing market conditions. Within favourable market conditions locations will be able to attract different type and range of users/property mix compared with other times. Therefore within the sites strategy it is important to consider how sites may be best positioned within the market place to benefit from improved market conditions.
- F.12 It is important that the future role/range of uses for each site reflects the need for realism of what may be achieved over the strategy period. Other than in a very vibrant market it is possible that some sites may not prove attractive to the commercial property market without an enabling element to the development. In practice this may include pursuing a mixed use approach to sites which may include introducing a supporting retail, commercial leisure or housing component to deliver employment generating activities.
- F.13 Recent market conditions have been unfavourable to new commercial property development. There is a significant amount of vacant office accommodation both within the M4 and London markets. It is likely that this existing stock within these markets would need to be taken up (at least in part) prior to new developments within the M4 and M40 being sought by institutional investors or prospective occupiers. However, the macro-economic outlook for the region is favourable and within the sub regional property market there is evidence that the market is clearing with owners accepting lower returns for the premises to be let.
- F.14 Despite this optimism, at present there is a large stock of vacant premises on the market particularly considering existing take up rates. Levels of vacancy and take up rates for each of the major settlements competing with High Wycombe within the sub region are shown in Table F.1 below. These figures are based upon LSH property intelligence and a telephone survey of local agents. It was not possible to collect similar information from High Wycombe as local agents were unwilling to divulge information for commercial confidentiality reasons.

Table F.1 – Vacant office floorspace and take up – competing centres

Town	Vacant Office Floorspace (sq.ft.)	Floorspace Take Up 2003 (sq.ft)
Slough	1,050,000	88,000
Marlow	550,000	30,000
Maidenhead	720,000	115,000
Reading	1,085,000	186,000
Bracknell	875,000	36,000
Total	4,280,000	455,000

F.15 In addition to the quantity of floorspace it is also important to consider the whether the floorspace is of suitable quality. Quality levels are partly a function of the age and condition of the premises. However, the location and expected rental value influence the quality of the building and its fitting out when the building is first developed. In considering these factors the quality of the building stock in High Wycombe tends to be poorer in quality than competing centres to the south given the lower rental values which can be commanded at existing office locations in the town.

ASSESSMENT OF STRATEGIC SITES

F.16 The issues and opportunities associated with the 21 sites selected by the Council for preliminary review are considered in turn.

M4 Corridor

F.17 There were two sites located within the M4 market.

Field House Lane, Marlow

F.18 This site forms part of a wider concentration of employment uses including Globe Park located to the east of the site which has links via Parkway to the A404 and M4.

F.19 The site comprises of a mix of premises including 2-4 storey office accommodation although towards the edges of the estate premises comprise of older 1-2 storey light industrial units of poorer quality. The site directly adjoins Marlow railway station although the Marlow branch does not provide a

direct service to London and is not considered a key factor in attracting investors. The site adjoins residential neighbourhoods to the north and south and is located only a short distance from the town centre.

- F.20 At present there is a significant quantity of vacant B1 accommodation located within the estate and within the adjacent Globeside development. Although significant levels of vacancy exist, given the age and quality of these premises it is considered that this is a short term phenomenon and that vacant accommodation would be taken up rapidly within an improved market.
- F.21 Given the position of Marlow within the M4 market it is likely that the older premises in the Fieldhouse Lane area would in the longer term prove attractive to the market to be redeveloped for further B1 office development of similar nature to that located on Globeside. However, access and parking considerations may constrain the extent to which intensification of employment at this location would be feasible.
- F.22 The town represents an attractive location to prospective investors due to quality of life factors including the good reputation of local schools, attractive residential environments and town centre. The location of the Fieldhouse Lane Estate within the town is also good as there is access to the strategic road network and Marlow Town Centre. However, it is understood that there are significant traffic congestion issues on the local road network particularly from Park side to the A404 at peak times (even without existing premises on the estate being fully occupied). This constraint would need to be overcome prior to an intensification of B1 uses on the site. It is likely that the location would be suitable for residential development (either wholly or partly). The area closest to the railway station would reduce possible amenity issues if part of the site is required to meet local housing needs.

Wessex Road, Bourne End

- F.23 Wessex Road is a traditional industrial area comprising of a mix of 1-2 storey light industrial units developed in the late 70s/early 80s. At present the estate is almost fully occupied. The site is located on the edge of Bourne End and is further from the town centre and railway station than other sites which have been brought forward for office use.
- F.24 It is unlikely that the redevelopment for office use would cause an imbalance in the economy as existing users could be displaced to other locations within

the District. However bringing the site forward for office use would require a significant uplift in the market to make redevelopment viable.

Loudwater/Wooburn

Glory Park, Wooburn Green

- F.25 This site has outline planning permission for B1 redevelopment. A Reserved matters application has been submitted by New Federal Inc for 22,300 sq.m of floorspace. Ref. (DNG/03/07435/REM).
- F.26 Compared with other locations within High Wycombe the site is located in a marketable area located close to junction 3 of the M40. The site itself whilst not obviously an employment location (now sandwiched between 2 housing areas) would prove attractive to the market due to the potential to establish a business environment of high quality. However, the lack of visibility of the site and poor local road access may deter some potential occupiers.
- F.27 Despite these issues the site may prove attractive if it was marketed as a high quality campus style HQ development with possibly 3-4 buildings developed within a landscaped environment making use of the natural features on site.

High Wycombe

Cressex Business Park

- F.28 Cressex Business Park is the largest concentration of employment related uses in High Wycombe outside of the town centre. The site has developed incrementally and includes a wide range of premises. The estate lacks coherence and appears fragmented due to the way in which the estate has developed and the wide range of activities which are accommodated within the estate. The property portfolio within the estate includes:

- Areas A & B - Turnpike Road/Castle Estate: This area is mixed and includes the Castle estate which accommodates storage and distribution functions associated with John Lewis. The area also includes modern 2

storey office accommodate and the Lexmark premises. The area has a high level of occupancy.

- Area C - Blenheim Road: An established area of light industrial units approximately 20-30 years old. This area has a high level of occupancy and accommodates a range of activities in manufacturing, distribution and other services.
- Area D - The Gateway Centre: This site managed by Slough Estates comprises of medium sized flexible B1 units developed within the last 10 years. The development is of a high quality and has a high level of occupancy.
- Area E - The centre of the estate includes several sites accessed directly from Coronation Road, Lancaster Road and Fleming Way and can be subdivided into four areas running from west to east. The western end of the parcel is highly fragmented and mixed in character. The access to several sites is poor and the building stock is generally in poorer condition and older than other parts of the estate. The area includes a range of low value added activities including car repair workshops. Adjoining this area to the east is York Way. This small site provides accommodation for small businesses within a former factory building which has been upgraded and subdivided. To the east of York Way is Cliveden Business Centre, this site comprises of a modern 2 storey courtyard office development. The site experiences parking problems even though one of the units is not currently occupied. At the far eastern edge of the area fronting Lancaster road are a small number of free standing workshop type units. While fully occupied these units are more than 50 years old, poor in quality and have the potential to be redeveloped over the course of the strategy.
- Areas F, I, J & K - Lincoln Road area: This area comprises of a wide range of activities. The building stock is generally older and in poor condition in comparison with other areas of the estate. The majority of activities located within the estate are of a general industrial nature and there is low representation within target growth sectors. Lincoln Road includes the Cressex Enterprise Centre (Area K) comprising of modern 2 storey incubator which has a high level of occupancy and Chancery Court (Area F) which comprises of office accommodation which is fully occupied. However within Areas I & J vacancy levels are higher than other areas of the estate. There is scope for change within this part of the estate as

there is vacant land fronting onto Lincoln Road and a number of other premises which are either underutilised or in poor condition. There is also potential for Area J to be redeveloped as these buildings are likely to reach the end of their life over the next 15 years.

- Area G located at the northern end of Wellington Road has a greater has received some investment in recent years area as premises have been redeveloped or upgraded. At present there area small number of vacant units.
- Area H is split into two distinguishable areas. The western half comprises of the Merlin Centre, this site has been developed within the last 10 years and includes a range of medium sized flexible units. The estate accommodates a several occupiers whose main activity is distribution although other activities are also represented. The eastern half of the parcel includes several premises fronting on to Wellington Road. These premises are among the oldest premises within the estate and whilst occupied at present have the potential to be selectively redeveloped as opportunities arise.
- Area L - Halifax Road and Century Point: This area includes the modern Century Point development which offers modern flexible workspace accommodating a range of functions. Around the fringe of the estate the building stock fronting Halifax Road and Stirling Road is more mixed. Several sites have been redeveloped on a piecemeal basis over the last 10 years. However, there are a small number of sites within this area which appear vacant or underutilised.

F.29 The Cressex Business Park has a good reputation within the local commercial property market and maintains a high level of occupancy. The estate is offers good access to the strategic road network as it is located within close proximity of Junction 4 of the M40. However, local road access to the estate is poor as the estate can only be accessed through established residential areas. The local road network to the estate also experiences congestion even during off peak periods. The estate is not viewed as a “prestige” location by potential occupiers as the qualitative condition of the estate is mixed. It lacks a coherent identity due to its fragmented pattern of development and its lack of presence and visibility from major transport corridors.

- F.30 There is scope for change within the estate. The main opportunities for re-focusing the role of the estate in the medium term lie within the Lincoln Road area, within the centre of the estate, south of Coronation Way (the western part of Area E) and west of Halifax Road/Stirling Road (the western edge of Area L) where there are either vacant land, sites which are underutilised or premises in poor condition. Within these areas there are opportunities to bring forward modern premises through the redevelopment of individual sites or through the assembly of clusters of sites. Along Lincoln road some sites have been cleared in readiness for development.
- F.31 The most appropriate form of accommodation is likely to be a range of flexible B1 units of different sizes accommodating a mix of production, office, storage and distribution functions. It is considered that the bus depot proposals currently being considered by the Council are not likely to represent the most appropriate use of land within the estate given the basic low value added nature of this activity. Such a development would also send the wrong signals to the market and could harm the potential for the economic role of the estate to be re-focused as a location for higher value activities.
- F.32 In order to secure the future of the estate and to improve its marketability there would also be a need to improve to improve the image of the estate through upgrading on site infrastructure and establishing a common brand for the Cressex Business Park. A range of improvements would be of value to existing and prospective occupiers including:
- Introducing communal security arrangements for the estate possibly including controlled access to the estate;
 - Upgrading and re-surfacing of internal roads which they are in poor condition;
 - Enhancement of hard and soft landscaping within the estate including improvements to footpaths and amenity areas within the estate;
 - Rationalisation of signage and development of a new approach to signage including estate location plans, road signs etc to assist in establishing a coherent estate identity; and

- Establishing a focus within the estate perhaps incorporating a management office/enterprise centre, estate amenities including food and drink outlets, cash point, crèche, sitting out areas etc.
- F.33 The Council has recently reviewed its approach to the renewal of ground leases within Cressex Business Park. It is understood that ground leases will not be renewed on condition that the landowner agrees to upgrade or redevelop premises. The removal of the ownership constraint is likely to stimulate investment in sites and premises.
- F.34 To encourage investment within the estate it is essential that the Council re-invests the capital receipts from the renewal of leases to facilitate the improvements identified above. Where possible the Council should seek matching funding/contributions from the private sector.
- F.35 As the Cressex BP functions as one of the main employment locations within High Wycombe for general industry/small business (e.g. builders yards, car repair, storage) it may be appropriate to bring forward premises at less strategic locations within the town (e.g. Land adjacent to Verco, Wycombe Marsh) which are less attractive to prospective inward investors within the target growth sectors but nevertheless represent adequate locations to meet the local needs for B1 premises. This would enable the identity and role of the estate to be re-focused in the longer term to accommodate users within the target growth sectors.
- F.36 Establishing an office park within the estate is a possibility in the long term, although, the site would be viewed as a marginal/less preferred location for an office park by the market due to its lack of prominence/visibility and the difficulty of establishing a distinctive identity within an area which accommodates such a diverse range of uses. There are also other potential locations which would better meet the needs of the office market closer to Junction 4 of the M40 and adjacent to High Wycombe station.

Compair and De La Rue

- F.37 These 2 sites were until recently factory sites occupied by a single user. Both sites are intensively developed. The Compair site includes a range of buildings between 2-4 storeys in height and is very densely developed whilst

the De La Rue site consists of a small 3 storey office building with a production facility located to the rear. Given the density of development and the bespoke nature of both premises it is unlikely that re-use of the existing premises would be feasible or make most effective use of the opportunities at either location.

- F.38 As a future location for B class uses the site is less attractive than other locations within High Wycombe due to the comparatively poor access to the M40 (unlike locations to south or east of the town centre). However, the site would be preferred to for example the land adjacent to Verco site due its close proximity to the town centre.
- F.39 The opportunity to establish a campus for the local university would yield greater employment densities than other potential employment development opportunities relating to the site and would have the advantage of achieving a comprehensive approach to redevelopment of both sites enabling the development of a new urban quarter.
- F.40 It is possible that the De La Rue site could potentially accommodate a courtyard office type development given the potentially high environmental quality of the site (it adjoins open space to the north). There are also opportunities to develop business accommodation linked to the university. The development of a business incubator/managed workspace accommodation combined with supporting initiatives within the university to foster start up and spin off companies would maximise the economic development benefits relating to co-location of facilities. An element of enabling development is likely to be required for the university to develop such as scheme.

Desborough Area

- F.41 The Desborough area is a mixed use neighbourhood containing both employment and housing uses. Employment uses represent the biggest land use in Desborough (in terms of area), however, the existing premises are generally old and in poor condition with inadequate access and parking arrangements. The close juxtaposition of housing and employment uses in some cases gives rise to land use conflicts between adjacent uses some of which are not resolved by mitigation measures. The range of activities represented within Desborough includes high representation of traditional industries such as furniture, storage and small scale distribution and small

business activities. The area is popular among entrepreneurs within local ethnic minority communities and provides offers affordable accommodation to business start ups and small businesses.

F.42 The area has the potential to perform a continued employment role however there are several issues which need to be addressed:

- The need to address the real/perceived image of Desborough as a high crime area which may discourage some businesses from locating to the area;
- The access, servicing and parking arrangements associated with some sites is inadequate but may have potential to be improved; and
- The age and condition of the building stock means that some premises no longer meet the needs of some businesses occupiers. Some of the buildings are inflexible and difficult to re-use without significant alteration. A significant proportion of the older building stock is vacant or underutilised (for example upper floors).

F.43 The area has great potential to accommodate employment, residential and live-work premises. The activities could be accommodated through the redevelopment of individual or clusters of sites. There is also potential to improve the environmental quality of the area making use of the potential offered by the proximity to the River Wye, greening initiatives and traffic management measures.

F.44 Some premises may be suitable for re-use and may have the potential to be subdivided and converted into small incubator type office accommodation/flexible workspace. However the findings of the site appraisals indicate that a substantial proportion of the building stock at many sites is old and poor quality. In such cases redevelopment would be more beneficial in meeting the needs of the economic strategy.

F.45 Potential also exists for all or part of sites to accommodate live-work accommodation or residential uses subject to amenity, access and parking issues being addressed.

- F.46 There is strong pressure for residential development on employment sites in the Desborough area given the higher land values that can be achieved for residential development. The individual site survey findings concluded that for the Desborough can be summarised as a two pronged approach to existing employment sites which is directed towards improve the quality and range of business accommodation within Desborough and meeting wider regeneration objectives.
- F.47 Large sites within Desborough have largely been identified for redevelopment for employment led mixed use with the objective of maintaining or increasing employment levels. More than 50% of the site area should be retained in employment use. An enabling element would be required to enable high quality modern employment accommodation to be provided and to facilitate the assembly of land parcels in multiple ownership. It is envisaged that within Desborough a range of business would be provided which may include incubator/start up premises, live-work units, light industrial units of a range of sizes and small scale office accommodation and workshop type uses. The other elements of the mix should include residential, open space and other land uses which contribute towards enhancing the image of the area as a mixed use neighbourhood.
- F.48 For smaller sites mixed use development has been identified as the preferred option where sites adjoin larger parcels which have opportunities for change. Smaller stand alone land parcels have been identified as having potential for alternative uses including housing where there are significant amenity/environmental conflicts with neighbouring land uses or where significant access constraints exist. Where these problems are not apparent and where the quality of the building premises appears adequate for existing and potential occupiers “no change” was identified as the preferred option.
- F.49 This approach acknowledges that for larger sites redevelopment of employment premises is unlikely to take place over the course of the strategy without an element of enabling development.

Land adjacent to Verco, Chapel Lane

- F.50 Land to the south of Verco is currently underutilised. The site comprises of a small number of 2/3 storey office buildings accompanied by warehousing/production facilities to the rear. Several of the buildings are currently leased on a temporary basis. The southernmost portion of the site

accommodates lockup/garage type accommodation which is used for car repairs. The area to the north of the River Wye remains occupied by Verco.

- F.51 The location of the site on the western site of the High Wycombe built up area away from the town centre is less attractive to investors than either Cressex or Compair/De La Rue sites. This is due to poorer accessibility to the strategic road network (although the A4010 runs past the site) and congestion issues on the A40 and at Cressex.
- F.52 Given that the site is likely to be relatively less attractive to commercial property developers than other sites elsewhere in the district and within High Wycombe it is possible that it would be difficult to bring forward the site in poor-normal market conditions without an enabling residential element to the development. It is envisaged that an employment led mixed use approach to the site (similar to the larger Desborough sites) would enable the estate to be upgraded for employment use. It is likely that small-medium sized units serving the local SME market would be marketable at this location. The site could perhaps serve as an attractive location to businesses displaced from Cressex by higher value uses or small businesses seeking to expand from Desbrough.

Wycombe Marsh/Wye Valley Industrial Estate

- F.53 Outline planning permission exists for 2ha of employment uses at Wycombe Marsh. Planning permission has also been granted for the redevelopment of Wye Industrial Estate as a business park.
- F.54 Wycombe Marsh/Wye Industrial Estate is not a prime employment location as it is not well positioned in relation to the strategic road network. Although the site adjoins the A40 London Road and is located equidistant between High Wycombe Town Centre and Junction 3 of the M40 at Loudwater the site does not enjoy the locational benefits offered by either of these locations. The congestion problems associated with London Road also reduce the attractiveness of the site to potential investors.
- F.55 Despite these issues the site does have the potential to accommodate employment uses particularly as part of a comprehensive mixed use scheme. There is potential to develop small and medium sized units up to 20,000 sq ft in size serving the local High Wycombe market, there is also likely to be potential for attracting specialist or sui generis uses which do not necessarily

require an accessible or prominent location. In a rising market there is also likely to be potential for accommodating speculative higher value office uses. However, the location is less suitable in terms of accessibility and sustainability terms than town centre sites located closer to motorway junctions.

- F.56 In order to improve the attractiveness of the site for employment uses. There should be dedicated and direct access from the employment area onto London Road. A frontage onto London Road would also improve the visibility and prominence of the site and as a result its attractiveness to higher value employment uses.

Future employment locations

High Wycombe Railway Station & Easton Street/BT area

- F.57 A development brief has been adopted for the station site including the car park to the east. There is also potential to develop proposals for underutilised sites located on Easton Street including the BT Site which in combination could establish a new urban quarter. Whilst it is understood that proposals for the railway station/car park are likely to be progressed separately it is important that they are not developed in isolation from opportunities relating to the surrounding land parcels.
- F.58 This location represents a prime opportunity to bring forward office uses at a sustainable location as part of a comprehensive mixed use development. A site in close proximity to the station would be attractive to those occupiers within the target growth sectors which require office or HQ accommodation.
- F.59 The existing uses to the south of the station site include a 4 storey multi-storey car park and a 3 – 4 storey telephone exchange. The Tellab site is 3-4 storeys height. Given the existing scale of development there is likely to be potential to redevelop the site at a similar or greater density of development to make best use of the topography of the site. To the north of the station there is an opportunity to redevelop the Duke Street car park for office uses.
- F.60 Recent experience at Maidenhead station shows that the market is not currently able to support office schemes which include proposals for decking over existing railway tracks to utilise the airspace above. However, this does

not preclude this option in the long term. It is also possible to have a partial aerial walkway across the tracks which may be fronted by commercial uses.

F.61 In order to maximise the attractiveness of the office element of a possible scheme to prospective investors the following issues will need to be addressed to maximise the marketability of the site:

- B1 office uses should be separated within the site. It is important that office buildings including HQ specification accommodation are key landmark buildings and are not hidden or masked by other uses;
- The office component should be located or concentrated in close proximity to the station rather than at the periphery of the site;
- The office element should be capable of subdivision in order to provide flexibility of occupation. It may be preferable to develop 2 or more separately accessed offices rather than a single office development which may be difficult to let or bring forward;
- Prospective investors have a preference for office premises which have dedicated access, servicing and parking arrangements;
- Security reasons are paramount to certain office occupiers. Prospective American investors rate security concerns as a priority and are wary of shared parking facilities;

F.62 It is important that potential land use conflicts and amenity issues are addressed within proposals. Particular concerns include definition of clear responsibilities for the management and maintenance of the public realm, and minimisation within the scheme for any amenity impacts associated with adjoining uses such as noise from A3 uses or the railway line.

F.63 It is also important that other elements of the mix should complement the office component of the scheme including the type of A3 uses and A1 retailer representation (if proposed). A commercial health club/leisure use may also be attractive given its proximity to the station.

- F.64 There are 4 edge of town sites located on the southern periphery of the High Wycombe urban area.

Cressex Gateway

Island Site

- F.65 The Island site is located between John Hall Way and Crest Road. It currently car parking currently takes up a third of the site area with the remainder of the site comprising of scrubland. The site slopes downwards from north east to south west. To the east of the site is a cinema complex, to the south lies a range of recreation, community and A3 uses and the Asda superstore. Immediately to the west lies the High Wycombe YMCA and to the north lies an area of residential development although this does not front directly onto John Hall Way.
- F.66 The site is not currently allocated within the Local Plan for Employment uses. Although it is located in close proximity to the motorway junction the established pattern of land use means that it would be difficult to establish the appropriate environment necessary to support a stand alone business park/industrial area. The range of adjoining tenants, access and parking issues also reduce the attractiveness of the site for employment uses.
- F.67 The site is likely to be most attractive to the market as retail/commercial leisure uses which would be consistent with the existing pattern of land use. However, traffic generation issues and planning policy constraints (including the PPG 6 sequential test) are likely to preclude the site being brought forward for this use. The area is not particularly attractive as a residential site due to the proximity of the site to the motorway and the potential conflicts between housing and adjoining uses.
- F.68 Potential exists for the sports centre to be relocated from its existing site to the east of the Cressex junction. This would enable co-location of indoor facilities with other outdoor sports facilities to the west of the island site. In the short term there are also proposals to establish a temporary park and ride facility on the site.

Wycombe Sports Centre

- F.69 This site currently accommodates the largest Council managed indoor sports centre in the district. The sports centre incorporates a swimming pool, indoor sports hall, outdoor synthetic athletics track and floodlit artificial turf pitches. The site has access from a signalised junction on Marlow Hill and is in close proximity to Junction 4 of the M40.
- F.70 The existing sports facilities appear well used, however the buildings appear to be around 40 years old and the condition of the exterior of the buildings suggests that they may be reaching the end of their life. It is possible that significant investment may be required to upgrade the building. It would be necessary to undertake a more detailed building and investment appraisal of whether the refurbishment or replacement of the buildings represents the most sustainable approach to overcoming this issue. If redevelopment is the most viable option then there is an opportunity to relocate the facilities to a more centrally located site or to the Cressex Island site.
- F.71 The sports centre site would be a highly attractive location to a range of B1 & B8 users including high value office uses and users requiring a business park type environment. The site would be attractive to potential occupiers within the target growth sectors who require a prime location. It is possible that a range of employment activities could be accommodated within the site. Of all the locations in the High Wycombe urban area this site represents the largest and most attractive opportunity to establish office or high quality HQ uses.
- F.72 The main constraint which may affect bringing forward this site for development is the capacity of Junction 4 which may need to be overcome, even taking into consideration the programmed improvements. Other key constraints include the feasibility of relocating the existing uses to one or more alternative sites and traffic generation effects associated with the proposed use. It is unlikely that the market will be prepared to bear the cost of re-providing the sports facilities at an alternative site if the site is allocated only for B1 uses. A mixture of residential and employment development may enable the relocation of the sports centre. However, a combination uses may erode the image and attractiveness of the site as a prestige location.

RAF Daws Hill/Abbey Barn Lane South

- F.73 RAF Daws Hill is a MoD establishment. It primarily accommodates a range of residential and community uses. It is understood that the site may be vacated by its existing user by 2011.
- F.74 The major constraints to the redevelopment of this site to include an employment component are the traffic generation effects associated with intensification of uses on the site and the capacity of the local road network particularly Daws Hill Lane and Marlow Hill.
- F.75 Abbey Barn Lane South adjoins the eastern edge of RAF Daws Hill. At present the site is in agricultural use. The site incorporates and adjoins a number of areas of established woodland, an AONB and areas subject to local landscape designations.
- F.76 The development of an isolated stand alone business park at either location would not perform well against a range of sustainability indicators. The sites would also not be attractive to the market unless it was possible to establish a new link road directly from the M40 which adjoins the site. A large quantum of mixed use development including housing at both locations is likely to be required to justify such an investment.
- F.77 The development of a new cluster of employment activity with good access to the M40 remains a possibility in the long term, possibly towards the end of the strategy period. This opportunity would prove attractive to potential users in the strategic growth sectors. The phasing of bringing forward this land will depend on the the attractiveness/take up of other employment land, market conditions and other developments within the sub-region.

Wycombe Air Park

- F.78 The Wycombe Air Park is an established airfield supporting commercial leisure flying. A wide range of ancillary uses are accommodated within buildings formerly used for aviation related activities.
- F.79 The site is located south of the M40 beyond the edge of the High Wycombe urban area and currently lies within the Metropolitan Green Belt. The site is also subject to the same access constraints affecting the Cressex Island Site

as access to the Handy Cross junction would be via Cressex Road and John Hall Way.

- F.80 The existing policy constraints and the availability of better located brownfield and green field sites in and adjoining High Wycombe mean that the possibility to intensify employment uses on a comprehensive basis is only likely to be a realistic prospect in the very long term. In the medium to long term a less radical option may exist linked to the expiry of the current leases in 13 years time. It is understood that the airfield is a viable concern and options for change are likely to pertain to the existing cluster of buildings on the eastern edge of the site. Assuming retention of the airfield use there may be potential to upgrade/rationalise the existing building stock for employment uses without intensifying the amount of built development on site. Such proposals would need to be consistent with greenbelt policy constraints and not be shown to discourage the redevelopment/regeneration of brownfield employment sites within the urban area.

Other Locations

Princes Risborough Station Area and Ercol

- F.81 Princess Risborough does not represent a primary commercial property location. This is due to its distance from London and relatively poor access to the primary road network. The location is viewed by the market as a 'no mans land' between London and Birmingham. As a result the town does not fulfil the location parameters of a significant proportion of prospective investors.
- F.82 Despite this relative locational disadvantage compared with other settlements in the district Princes Risborough does have a niche role to perform. The availability of sites and lower rental values makes the location potentially attractive to locally based companies seeking large sites which may not be available or affordable elsewhere within the District (e.g. Ercol). However, the size of the local labour force may restrict the capability of Princes Risborough to accommodate further large firms. Although there is an allocation within the adopted plan to locate 600 homes at Princes Risborough which will increase the local labour supply.
- F.83 The two identified sites within Princes Risborough are the 10.4 ha Princes Estate site located on the western edge of the town and the 5.71 ha station

area. Both sites would be suitable for accommodating of a mix of small and medium sized flexible workspace serving the local business market. The type of property could include a small and medium sized flexible business units and a small courtyard office suite type development (although the market for the latter type of development is untested). There is also likely to be a market for freehold premises on both sites. This portfolio of accommodation would be able provide local employment opportunities to support housing growth within the town.

- F.84 The land adjoining Ercol is the most attractive of the two sites to bring forward small and medium sized units and to bring forward further premises to support the growth of the Enterprise Gateway. The Station area also has the potential to incorporate an employment component perhaps as part of a mixed use development. The type of accommodation which may be sought could include a small business centre or flexible start-up/office suite accommodation or small start up units.

Stockwell's Timber Yard/Beacon Heights, Stokenchurch

- F.85 Stokenchurch does not represent a primary commercial property location. This is due to its distance from London, its lack of reputation as an employment location and its comparatively small workforce. However, the area does have the advantage of close proximity to Junction 5 of the M40 and does not suffer from the congestion issues associated with the Handycross Junction. Given its somewhat remote location the town is unlikely to fulfil the location parameters of a significant proportion of prospective investors.
- F.86 This is demonstrated by the speculative Beacon Hill Business Park development which gained planning permission at the very height of the last commercial office boom. Only one unit was let at this location as a pre-let and there has been almost no interest in developing further office/business park type premises at this location due to the availability of more attractive sites and premises further down the M40 corridor and within the M4 corridor.
- F.87 Despite this relative locational disadvantage compared with other settlements in the district Stokenchurch does have a niche role to perform. Sites located close to Junction 5 of the Motorway may also prove attractive to a 'footloose' business seeking to develop bespoke premises. However, the market for sites in Stokenchurch is likely to comprise primarily of local businesses requiring

modern small-medium sized units and small to medium sized firms requiring B8 distribution facilities but not necessarily in a prime location. The remote location also means that sites in Stokenchurch have the potential to satisfy the need for freehold premises.

- F.88 In addition to the Princes Risborough and Stokenchurch sites there are 4 further locations which are located in the countryside rather than within or on the edge of settlements. All sites are located within The Chilterns AONB, in addition TRADA, Molins and Binders Yard are located within the Metropolitan Green Belt and the former Water Research Centre at Medmenham is located within the Thames floodplain.
- F.89 All of the locations are relatively isolated with very poor access to the primary road network and as a result do not represent particularly attractive locations to prospective external investors. However, all sites either currently or at one time accommodated employment generating uses on site. Given the remote location of all of the sites it is likely that almost all trips to the sites will be made by car. Re-establishing employment uses at these locations or intensifying the use of sites will increase traffic on the local road network which is not compatible with the sustainability objectives of reducing the need to travel or encouraging development which has the potential to be served by a variety of transport modes.
- F.90 However there are a range of employment generating activities which have the potential to be accommodated on the 4 sites subject to planning policy issues being addressed particularly those relating to the green belt, AONB, access and trip generation:
- Tourism/Leisure/Sports uses perhaps including hotel/conference centre, short stay accommodation and outdoor recreation facilities. The locations which have the environmental quality to support these uses are the Water Research Centre at Medmenham which occupies a location adjacent to the River Thames and TRADA which is located close to a number of existing attractions in the Chiltern Hills.
 - Institutional uses (e.g. private educational/religious establishment, criminal justice facilities). Of the 4 sites the former Molins Site at Saunderton is likely to be the most suitable for accommodating such uses;

- Environmental industries including waste management/transfer. The Molins Site has the potential to be developed as an environmental industries cluster. The potential exists at this site for incoming or outgoing materials to be transported by rail. The principle of establishing a rail sidings linked to the Chilterns line would need to be determined in consultation with Network Rail;
- Mixed use development. The Molins site has the potential to be developed as a housing led mixed use site should the employment led options for re-use of the site not prove feasible;
- Sui Generis Uses (e.g Garden Centres etc). Several sui generis uses which have the potential to be accommodated at a remote locations due to the 'specialist' nature of the services which is able to draw customers from a wider catchment than the immediate locality;
- Sub-division and re-let of existing premises. The option exists either to re-let all or part of the existing premises with little or no refurbishment or upgrading works. The subdivision of larger premises into smaller premises is also a possibility. Such premises are unlikely to serve the target growth sectors. However, these opportunities do satisfy the needs of small firms requiring low quality, low cost premises and also are used for long term storage. The TRADA and Molins Sites have the potential to fulfil this role.

F.91 The Binders Yard Site in Cryers Hill represents an anomaly compared with the other sites as it is a major developed site within the Green Belt which is well utilised. Although the range of enterprises located within the site are low value uses and the quality of the estate environment is low grade levels of occupancy are relatively high. Given the location and access to the site it is unlikely to be attractive as a redevelopment opportunity for employment use. There are likely to be difficulties with land assembly. It is also unlikely that existing uses located at the site or would be prepared to pay for require a higher standard of premises. There is also a need to accommodate such uses somewhere within the District. Given the gradual development of the site there are problems relating to site access, circulation and amenity issues relating to the site. Ideally these issues should be addressed through the planning process as and when opportunities arise to improve the existing situation.

