

**Representations to the Harborough Local Plan –
Regulation 19 Proposed Draft Local Plan
Submission.**

Land West of Rockingham Road, Market Harborough.

On behalf of Steindale Properties Limited.

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1. Policy DS02

- 1.1. At the Regulation 18 stage, Steindale’s representations set out the requirement for the Local Plan to be innovative and proactive in its strategy for encouraging sustainable economic growth, to ensure that the NPPF’s expectations for economic growth and productivity could be met. The growth projections for the District illustrate a significant upward trend in the elderly population, meaning it is important to attract younger people to the District. The supporting text to Policy DS01 (paragraph 4.3) recognises the need to accommodate the growing population through the provision of a sufficient number of new homes and other needs including new jobs. The provision of local jobs that are accessible will assist in supporting a balanced population and sustainable growth, as well as continue to ensure that a range of employment opportunities are provided for an economically active population.

The reasoning for higher employment growth

- 1.2. The draft Local Plan has not been innovative or pragmatic in its approach to ensuring the District’s existing and future economic needs are planned for. The Development Strategy Paper (PRE-NLP 5, February 2025) confirms that a medium growth employment strategy has been taken forward, rather than high growth. This option has been selected despite the Sustainability Appraisal (S-NLP 4, February 2025) demonstrating that the negative effects associated with both options would be equal and the high growth option performing the best in terms of providing the greatest variety of employment opportunities.
- 1.3. Steindale continues to encourage the Council to take an ambitious approach towards the strengthening of the local economy, in a manner that drives prosperity, supports existing and new businesses, allows for the provision of supporting infrastructure and ensures the delivery of local jobs in sustainable locations. Additionally, the enclosed Economic Need Analysis (**Appendix 1**) explains that the creation of new businesses in Harborough is lagging behind the national trends in job growth. A support of strong economic growth is needed to ensure this does not turn into a downward trend in job creation in the long-term. Higher growth and the diversity that comes with it will also allow for more ‘higher skilled’ jobs to be created – which is recognised in the Council’s Economic Development Strategy 2024-2031¹ as being important to address income inequality that persists in the District.

Comments on spatial distribution of employment growth

- 1.4. Steindale’s previous representations also strongly recommended the spatial diversification of new employment land – directing new employment growth towards sustainable and accessible locations, and seeking to align new employment provision with areas of significant housing growth. Market Harborough meets both these criteria, being a highly sustainable location that has a good concentration of existing jobs and is allocated to deliver 1,350 new homes through the new Local Plan.
- 1.5. The supporting evidence for the draft Local Plan also recognises this. Paragraph 8.4 of the Local Housing and Employment Land Evidence (EMP-NLP 2, February 2025) identifies Market

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https://www.harborough.gov.uk/downloads/file/8465/emerging_economic_development_strategy_2024-2031

Harborough as one of the District's main economic centres with a good concentration of jobs. Paragraph 8.21 states that there is currently a broad balance between jobs and homes in Market Harborough.

- 1.6. However, this is not borne out in the employment strategy that is set out in the draft Local Plan (in Policy DS02). Only one strategic employment allocation is made in Market Harborough at Compass Point Business Park (MH6), which itself is an allocation carried over from the adopted Local Plan (raising questions about timing and deliverability). The only other employment allocation is 0.6ha of land at Leicester Road (MH5) – a site on which, it should be noted, the Council refused an application in May 2023 for B2, B8 and E(g) uses² due to issues of access and transport impacts.
- 1.7. Given the role of Market Harborough as an economic centre, it is also relevant to consider the employment strategy from a District-wide perspective. At paragraph 4.9, the draft Local Plan claims, *"Our strategy identifies a pattern of development that seeks to support our economy, provide a balance between homes and jobs in the district."* The vast majority of new residential allocations / commitments are located in the east and north of the District as set out in Policy DS01 and illustrated by Figure 2. This is further exaggerated by the concentration of new homes adjoining east of the Leicester Urban Area (2,450 homes) and 1,350 homes in Market Harborough.
- 1.8. Conversely, the draft Local Plan seeks to concentrate new employment provision in the east of the District, at Magna Park. Although the Development Strategy Paper (PRE-NLP 5, February 2025) states that employment growth options 2 (focussing new employment in the main economic centres and sustainable settlements) and 3 (aligning employment land growth with new housing growth) from the Regulation 18 consultation. This though does not seem to be reflected in the allocations that have been identified.
- 1.9. Of the 60ha of employment allocation land identified, around 70% is located in the west of the District at Magna Park. This concentration is perhaps best exemplified by Figure 2 in the draft Local Plan, which highlights Magna Park as part of the development strategy but does not highlight any other employment sites in the District. The importance of Magna Park as an employment site, and its location within the logistics 'Golden Triangle', is recognised but there is a risk that the draft Local Plan is placing an over-reliance on Magna Park without proper consideration of alternatives. The enclosed Economic Need Analysis (**Appendix 1**) provides further evidence of the need for balanced and sustainable growth across the District to ensure that the increasing demand for strategic employment land can be met.
- 1.10. As well as allowing for a positively prepared and effective Local Plan to be prepared, this amend in strategy would allow the Local Plan to be sufficiently flexible to respond to changing circumstances in specific sectoral requirements should these arise, given there is the possibility of one or even two distinct economic cycles during the plan period. Economic growth is driven by increasing employment and productivity rates, which is why building sufficient resilience into the Local Plan is important.

² [22/00664/OUT](#)



- 1.11. The draft Local Plan may be vulnerable to challenge on effectiveness and flexibility, especially if allocated sites underperform – with the risk being greater given the current concentration of strategic employment at Magna Park.
- 1.12. Providing a better balance of employment land in the east of the District will help to diversify the employment offer and better meet the needs for jobs arising in the wider District in a sustainable manner. Providing additional employment land in Market Harborough would be a logical approach due to its sustainability, location for future growth and its function as an economic centre that serves the surrounding area. Market Harborough also has a good relationship with Leicester City, which is important because the District forms part of the wider Leicester and Leicestershire housing market and functional economic area, and also because the draft Local Plan seeks to accommodate a portion of Leicester City's unmet industrial need to 2036.
- 1.13. The matter of ensuring a sustainable employment strategy is followed must be emphasised. The Sustainability Appraisal (S-NLP 4) highlights the negative climate change impacts associated with the expansion of Magna Park, as a result of the additional vehicular traffic. The draft Local Plan needs to carefully consider the alternative options available which would allow jobs to be created closer to where new residents will be, improving the ability to travel by sustainable modes of travel.

Steindale's recommended solution

- 1.14. There are employment sites available that have been identified through the SHELAA as being available and that are located in or adjoining Market Harborough. Steindale submitted one such site through the 2024 Call for Sites process, which is located at Rockingham Road, Market Harborough and is promoted for employment development. The site lies directly adjacent to the settlement boundary of Market Harborough (confirmed as being a highly sustainable settlement), and its surrounding area is a well-established hub for employment, logistics and light industrial uses. The adopted Local Plan identifies the area east of the site as a Key Employment Area (Policy BE3), and the area to the south as a General Employment Area (Policy BE3). The site therefore represents a logical expansion of Market Harborough's existing employment provision, with quick and easy access to the strategic highway network and sustainable connections via rail and bus for local workers to access the site.
- 1.15. The site is suitable, available and achievable for sustainable development. It has direct highway frontage with Rockingham Road (the A4304) with no constraints to achieving a safe and suitable access. The site is actively promoted by Steindale Properties Limited, which has an option on the site that can be exercised at the appropriate time. The site is therefore available for development with no legal or ownership constraints. As delivery of the site is not dependent on the provision of any strategic infrastructure, the site would be developable early in the Local Plan period.
- 1.16. The SHELAA Update 2024 (HSG-NLP 6) agrees, identifying the site (under reference 24/10398 as shown in **Appendix 2**) as being deliverable and developable (for employment uses), albeit suggesting the site can deliver 25,200sqm within 6-10 years. Steindale is actively working on promoting the delivery of the site, and contends that it can actually be delivered within 0-5 years. It should also be noted that the site has not been subject to detailed capacity testing yet, and so the floorspace quoted in the SHELAA is based on the Council's own estimate based on an average density of 4,000sqm/ha. The SHELAA Site Companion Guide (HSG-NLP 4) reviews the site in more detail and confirms the site is available,

achievable and potentially suitable, concluding *'The site would provide an attractive location for employment uses'*. Despite this assessment of suitability, there appears to be a lack of consideration within the draft Local Plan for alternative employment allocations such as this site – and the important role that can be played in boosting the supply of economic land, and associated jobs growth, in the District.

- 1.17. The only constraint flagged by the SHELAA is the potential impact of Flood Zone 3 on how the site could be developed. Steindale is taking an active and pragmatic role in the promotion of this site, and has thus been engaged in ongoing discussions with the Environment Agency regarding development on the site, with recent dialogue indicating positive movement on flood risk mitigation.
- 1.18. It is noted that the SHELAA does not raise any other constraints as potentially restricting development. Notwithstanding, the site is clearly a logical extension of existing development. It would continue the existing linear development that has taken place to the east of Rockingham Road, and would be of a suitable scale that would not cause coalescence with Great Bowden. It is noted that Great Bowden Neighbourhood Plan has an Area of Separation policy which stops at the site boundary – providing extra protection to land between the site and Great Bowden.
- 1.19. Work is also being progressed on other relevant technical matters as required to clarify the developable area of the site and its capacity, as well as any mitigation measures that may be required. This includes undertaking landscape appraisal, biodiversity and arboricultural surveys, and undertaking a detailed review of the site access strategy to confirm that a safe and policy-compliant access strategy can be demonstrated.
- 1.20. Steindale Properties Limited will continue with this work, and is confident in the deliverability of the site. Steindale is willing to continue engaging with the Council to provide any information necessary (as appropriate at this promotion stage) to further demonstrate the deliverability of the site.
- 1.21. The whole site, part of which falls within the neighbouring North Northamptonshire Council – Kettering area, is suitable and capable of delivering strategic scale employment, which would support the needs for strategic housing growth that have been identified. There is clearly a need for strategic scale employment as discussed in the accompanying Economic Need Analysis (**Appendix 1**), and this site would allow new jobs to be created on a sustainable site close to where existing and new residents will be living.
- 1.22. However, it is also feasible to deliver non-strategic industrial and distribution uses (within the part of the site which falls solely within Harborough District Council) to contribute towards a diversification of employment uses in the District. The location of the site on a key gateway into Market Harborough is also suitable to deliver supporting uses, such as drive-thru units and electric vehicle charging forecourt. Steindale is also currently investigating the feasibility of delivering a Data Centre on this site. This flexibility in the type and amount of uses that can be delivered make the site suitable for allocation to fill the 'gaps' in the employment market which cannot be met by the current employment allocations made by the draft Local Plan.
- 1.23. It should be noted that the northern part of the site is located in the Kettering area of North Northamptonshire. Representations will be made to the emerging Local Plan for North Northamptonshire at the appropriate time, for employment uses at the site. However, given the site is more closely related to the built area of Market Harborough, it is logical to refer



primarily to emerging policies in the Harborough Local Plan and its supporting evidence base when assessing the deliverability of this site and its suitability for employment uses.

Summary – Proposed Amendment

- 1.24. Accordingly, Steindale requests an additional employment allocation at Land West of Rockingham Road (SHELAA Update 2024 (HSG-NLP 6) site reference 24/10398) and a more balanced spatial distribution of employment growth.

2. Policy DSO4 – Areas of Separation

- 2.1. The approach taken to Areas of Separation in the Draft Local Plan is not sound. In the Regulation 18 consultation, the Council recognised that the Areas of Separation were a longstanding designation that needed review to ensure they remain fit for purpose and consistent with national policy. A review has been undertaken (LAN-NLP 1, November 2024) but this is not thorough or robust as it has not assessed, fundamentally, whether any of the existing or proposed Areas of Separation are required – and if they are, whether the boundaries of those Areas of Separation (AoS) are necessary.
- 2.2. Instead, an approach has been taken of excluding the potential site allocations from the assessment areas, with the assessment commenting on the impact on settlement gaps if the allocations were to be taken forward. Or in the case of OAI, the assessment at the request of the Council, seeks to “*suggest a boundary for an AoS that would represent the minimum area required to retain clear separation*” between the relevant settlements.
- 2.3. This approach suggests there is flexibility in the extent of the current AoS, and that there is scope for development to take place within the AoS without impacting on the overarching goal of maintaining a sense of separation between settlements. This though is not reflected in the relevant policies as presented in the Draft Local Plan.
- 2.4. Criterion 2 of draft Policy DSO4 sets out the policy requirement for new development within AoS to “*avoid coalescence and preserve the existing visual and physical separation*”. This does not reflect the evidence set out in LAN-NLP 1. Taking the Great Bowden and Market Harborough AoS as an example, it is clear in the findings of LAN-NLP 1 that the key area of sensitivity is the southern edge of Great Bowden, around Great Bowden Road / Station Road. The area east of Great Bowden is recognised as being a significant separation gap, and although the A4304 is established as the boundary, there is no reason given for why the River Welland could not perform the same function.
- 2.5. While Policy DSO4 as drafted does not restrict outright development in an AoS, that is how the policy will be applied in practice unless the policy is very clearly drafted. Steindale strongly recommends that the wording of the policy is reviewed to ensure its application is not overly restrictive. In addition to ensuring both the policy and the boundaries of the AoS is in line with the evidence as discussed above, a clear definition of ‘coalescence’ and how a development’s impact on coalescence will be assessed. This will provide clarity to those making applications, and ensure that a consistent approach is taken by decision makers.
- 2.6. Draft Policies APO3 and APO4 both also contain a criterion (the same criterion) relating to development in AoS:

“Within Areas of Separation, development will only be permitted where this does not compromise, either alone or in conjunction with other existing or permitted development, the effectiveness of the Area of Separation in protecting the identity and distinctiveness of these settlements and supports the strategic objectives in Policy DSO4.”
- 2.7. This duplication is considered to be unnecessary – a reference in each policy only needs to be made to Policy DSO4 rather than setting out a further policy requirement controlling development in AoS.



Summary – Proposed Amendment

- 2.8. Accordingly, Steindale recommends revised wording to clarify the meaning of 'coalescence' and avoid over-restriction, and suggest removing the duplicated AoS policy tests in APO3 and APO4.



Appendix 1: Economic Analysis

Economic Need Analysis.

Rockingham Road, Market Harborough.

On behalf of Steindale Properties Ltd.

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Executive Summary

Background

This report has been produced on behalf of Steindale Properties Ltd in relation to a site on land at Rockingham Road in Harborough. It assesses demographic and labour market trends in Harborough to help inform representations to the Regulation 19 consultation of the area's new Local Plan.

Population change

Recent population growth in Harborough has been driven by internal migration, suggesting that it is an attractive place where people want to live. The District is projected to see a significant increase in the number of people aged 65+ over the next 20 years. This makes it vital to attract younger people to the area in order to support more balanced population growth. Creating new jobs will play a major role in this, which will be closely linked to have a suitable supply of employment land in good quality locations.

Labour market growth

Analysis of Harborough's labour market performance over the period 2015–23 indicates that supporting stronger jobs growth needs to be a key long-term priority for the Council. From a sector perspective, the Site on Rockingham Road is located in an area that already has a concentration of manufacturing and transport & storage jobs. If the Site is developed, it can help to support growth in two important sectors for the Harborough economy, while helping to boost the District's labour market performance.

Employment Land Need in the Local Plan

The Regulation 19 Local Plan identifies a need for 60ha of employment land in Harborough between 2020 and 2041. Taking into account completions of employment land and new developments in the pipeline as of 31 March 2025, there is a modest surplus of 5.9ha, although the balance position for different types of use varies and the overall surplus masks shortfalls in key sectors such as manufacturing (B2) and light industrial (E(g)(iii)). The need for larger scale strategic distribution sites is expected to be met by development at Magna Park and on land at Coventry Road.

The most up to date research on the logistics market highlights the ongoing dominance of the East Midlands. It is important that other locations across Harborough are considered to help meet future demand in the District, rather than just focusing on two sites. This can help to support more balanced growth across the District. The Site at Rockingham Road is one such location that can help to achieve this. The Site could also potentially accommodate a data centre, which would help to meet the needs of a modern economy (paragraph 86 of the NPPF) and the growing demand from AI and edge computing. Employment land delivery must also keep pace with housing delivery to avoid commuting-based outflow and increased carbon impacts.

The evidence presented in this report strongly supports the allocation of Rockingham Road as a sustainable and deliverable employment site that can help address employment land gaps and promote demographic balance. From a policy perspective, the following recommendations are made:

- Reallocate surplus supply to more balanced locations in Harborough.
- Recognise the development of data centres as being part of modern economic needs.



1. Introduction

Scope and Purpose

- 1.1. This report has been produced on behalf of Steindale Properties Ltd in relation to a site on land at Rockingham Road in Harborough. It assesses demographic and labour market trends in Harborough to help inform representations to the Regulation 19 consultation of the area's new Local Plan. It reviews the proposed employment land need identified, alongside the evidence base underpinning it.

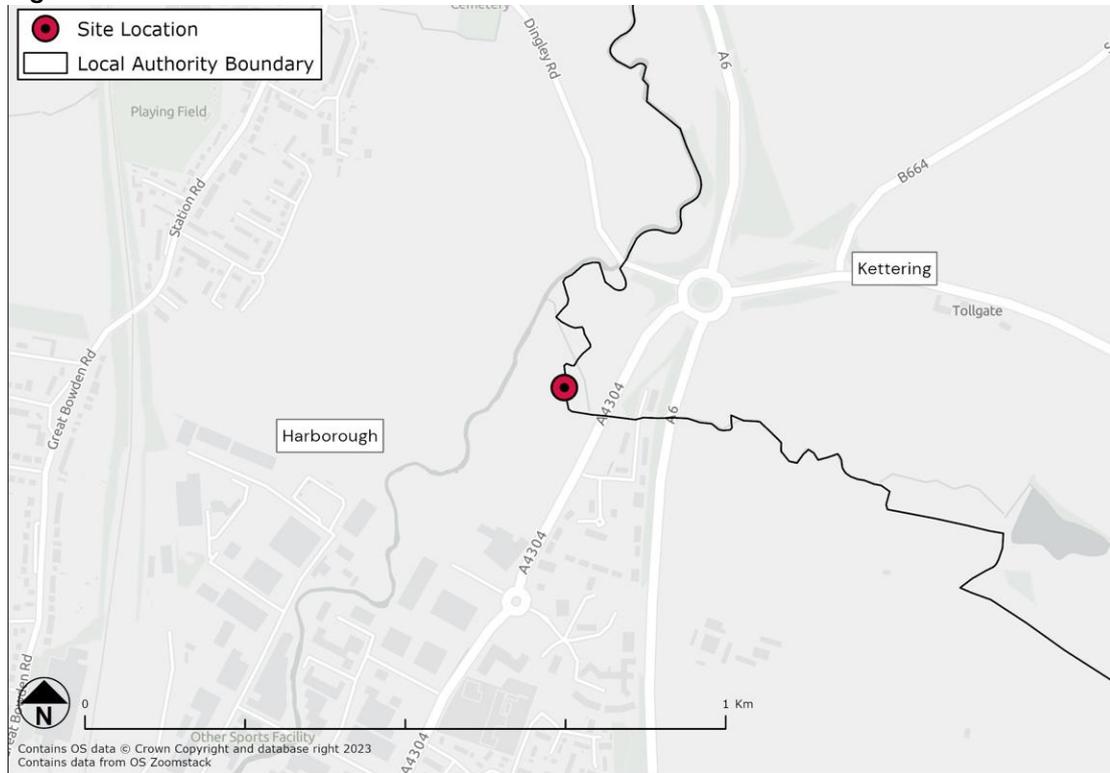
Report Structure

- 1.2. The report is structured as follows:
 - **Section 2** provides an overview of the Site location.
 - **Section 3** analyses population change in Harborough, both past and future, looking at which age groups are driving the change.
 - **Section 4** provides analysis of labour market trends in Harborough, considering past trends and key sectors.
 - **Section 5** analyses the supporting evidence base of the Issues and Options Consultation document, focusing on the Leicester & Leicestershire Housing and Economic Needs Assessment and the Leicester & Leicestershire Strategic Distribution Study.
 - **Section 6** provides overall conclusions and considers the extent to which the proposed employment land requirements outlined in the Issues and Options Consultation document are sufficient for Harborough.

2. The Site

- 2.1. The Site is located on land at Rockingham Road in Harborough (see Figure 2.1). It is currently used for grazing and it extends to approximately 6 hectares. It is located adjacent to the north-eastern fringes of Market Harborough. Part of the Site is in neighbouring Kettering, as shown in Figure 2.1. However, the data presented in this report focus solely on Harborough and its new Local Plan.
- 2.2. The Site has the potential to deliver ‘strategic’ and ‘non-strategic’ employment floorspace for Class B2 General Industry and B8 Storage & Distribution, E(g) Offices, Electric Vehicle Charging Forecourt (Sui Generis) and Class E/Sui Generis Quick Service Drive-Thru Units, alongside landscaping and flood mitigation.

Figure 2.1: Site Location



3. Analysis of past and future population trends in Harborough.

Introduction

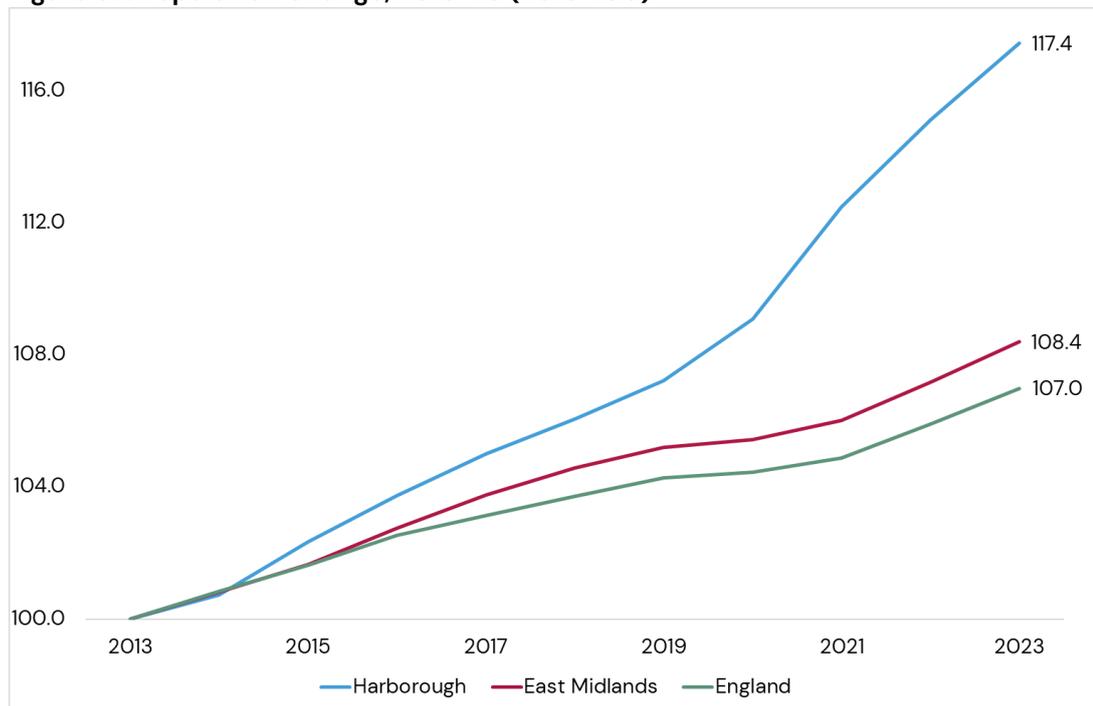
3.1. This section of the report analyses population data for the local authority of Harborough, the East Midlands region and England, looking at past change as well as projected long-term change.

Population Change

Past Trends

3.2. Mid-year population estimates published by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) show the total population of Harborough is 102,581 as of 2023. Figure 3.1 presents population change between 2013 and 2023. Over this timeframe, the population of Harborough increased by 17.4% - equating to an absolute increase of around 15,235 more people. This was significantly above the corresponding rate in the East Midlands (8.4%) and England (7.0%).

Figure 3.1: Population Change, 2013-23 (2013=100)



Source: ONS, Mid-Year Population Estimates

- 3.3. Tables 3.1–3.3 show population change by age between 2013 and 2023 in Harborough, the East Midlands and England. In relative terms, the 65+ cohort in Harborough grew at the highest rate, with growth of 31.8% (5,514 additional people). This was higher than the growth seen in the East Midlands (18.2%) and England (16.1%) for the 65+ cohort over the same timeframe.
- 3.4. The number of working age people (16–64) increased by 8,057 (15.0%) in Harborough from 2013–23, which was a notably higher increase than that seen in the East Midlands (6.2%) and England (5.2%). Those aged 0–15 also increased at a higher rate in Harborough (1,664, or 10.2%) when compared with the East Midlands (6.2%) and England (4.6%).

Table 3.1: Population change by age in Harborough, 2013–23

	2013	2023	Absolute Change	% Change
0–15	16,286	17,950	1,664	10.2%
16–64	53,705	61,762	8,057	15.0%
65+	17,355	22,869	5,514	31.8%
Total	87,346	102,581	15,235	17.4%

Source: ONS, Mid-Year Population Estimates

Table 3.2: Population change by age in the East Midlands, 2013–23

	2013	2023	Absolute Change	% Change
0–15	848,227	901,113	52,886	6.2%
16–64	2,920,926	3,103,073	182,147	6.2%
65+	835,415	987,079	151,664	18.2%
Total	4,604,568	4,991,265	386,697	8.4%

Source: ONS, Mid-Year Population Estimates

Table 3.3: Population change by age in England, 2013–23

	2013	2023	Absolute Change	% Change
0–15	10,180,497	10,648,350	467,853	4.6%
16–64	34,453,788	36,258,886	1,805,098	5.2%
65+	9,284,401	10,783,087	1,498,686	16.1%
Total	53,918,686	57,690,323	3,771,637	7.0%

Source: ONS, Mid-Year Population Estimates

- 3.5. Table 3.4 presents the components of population change in Harborough over the period 2013 to 2023. As shown, population change in Harborough is mainly being driven by internal migration. For all listed years internal net migration in Harborough has contributed the largest quantity of people to the local authority.

Table 3.4: Components of Change in Harborough, 2013–2023

Year	Pop Start	<i>Births</i>	<i>Deaths</i>	Natural Change	Internal Net Migration	International Net Migration	Other Change	Pop End
Mid 2013	86,350	791	786	5	1,005	-32	18	87,346
Mid 2014	87,346	807	732	75	567	-6	9	87,991
Mid 2015	87,991	873	838	35	1,340	-15	51	89,402
Mid 2016	89,402	845	790	55	1,126	3	24	90,610
Mid 2017	90,610	767	819	-52	1,147	-33	46	91,718
Mid 2018	91,718	827	839	-12	916	-92	118	92,648
Mid 2019	92,648	791	827	-36	1,049	-105	105	93,661
Mid 2020	93,661	820	960	-140	1,684	-112	195	95,288
Mid 2021	95,288	865	932	-67	2,978	-63	118	98,254
Mid 2022	98,254	877	966	-89	2,172	268	-55	100,550
Mid 2023	100,550	897	1038	-141	1,880	259	33	102,581

Source: ONS

Future Trends

- 3.6. The most recent subnational population projections (2018-based) were published by ONS in March 2020, and these indicate that the population of Harborough is expected to increase by 17,724 between 2020 and 2041¹ (a rise of 18.7%). The growth rates in the East Midlands and England are projected to be lower, at 11.6% and 8.2% respectively.
- 3.7. Looking at the population projections for Harborough in more detail, between 2020 and 2041 the working age population (16-64) and those aged 65+ in Harborough are projected to increase by 9.9% (5,592) and 50.8% (10,751) respectively. The population aged 0-15 is expected to increase during this period by 8.1% (1,392). All age groups in Harborough are projected to increase by larger proportions compared to the same age groups in the East Midlands and England.
- 3.8. Further details on projected population change in Harborough, the East Midlands and England are given in Tables 3.4-3.6. With the projections indicating that the trend of an ageing population is expected to become more significant in Harborough in the future when compared to past trends, this makes it vital that new job opportunities are created that can attract younger people to the area. This will help to support a more balanced and sustainable population in Harborough.

Table 3.4: Population projections in Harborough, 2020-41

	2020	2041	Absolute Change	% Change
0-15	17,261	18,653	1,392	8.1%
16-64	56,216	61,808	5,592	9.9%
65+	21,151	31,902	10,751	50.8%
Total	94,635	112,359	17,724	18.7%

Source: ONS, 2018-based Population Projections

Table 3.5: Population projections in the East Midlands, 2020-41

	2020	2041	Absolute Change	% Change
0-15	909,128	920,976	11,848	1.3%
16-64	3,013,257	3,177,573	164,316	5.5%
65+	959,880	1,348,458	388,578	40.5%
Total	4,882,230	5,446,988	564,758	11.6%

Source: ONS, 2018-based Population Projections

Table 3.6: Population projections in England, 2020-41

	2020	2041	Absolute Change	% Change
0-15	10,878,807	10,524,366	-354,441	-3.3%
16-64	35,294,330	36,228,027	933,697	2.6%
65+	10,505,345	14,601,606	4,096,261	39.0%
Total	56,678,468	61,353,966	4,675,498	8.2%

Source: ONS, 2018-based Population Projections

¹ Population projections have been analysed up to 2041 as that covers the timeframe in the intended Local Plan.



Summary

- 3.9. Harborough has experienced significant population growth over the last decade, growing by 17.4% between 2013 and 2023. This was well above the national and regional increases over the same timeframe of 7.0% and 8.4% respectively. Looking at the components of population change, internal migration has been the main driver of growth in Harborough over the last decade.
- 3.10. In terms of future growth, Harborough is projected to outperform regional and national trends in the long-term. Between 2020 and 2041, the number of people in the District is estimated to grow by 18.7%, compared with 11.6% in the East Midlands and 8.2% in England. In absolute terms, population growth in Harborough is projected to be just over 17,700 over the 21-year period. More than half this is accounted for by an increase in the number of people aged 65+ (10,751).
- 3.11. The fact that internal migration has been the main driver of growth in Harborough over the last decade suggests the District is somewhere that people want to live. The trend of an ageing population makes it imperative to attract people of a younger age in order to support more balanced population growth. Creating new jobs will play a major role in this, as too will the provision of suitable employment land.

4. Labour Market Analysis.

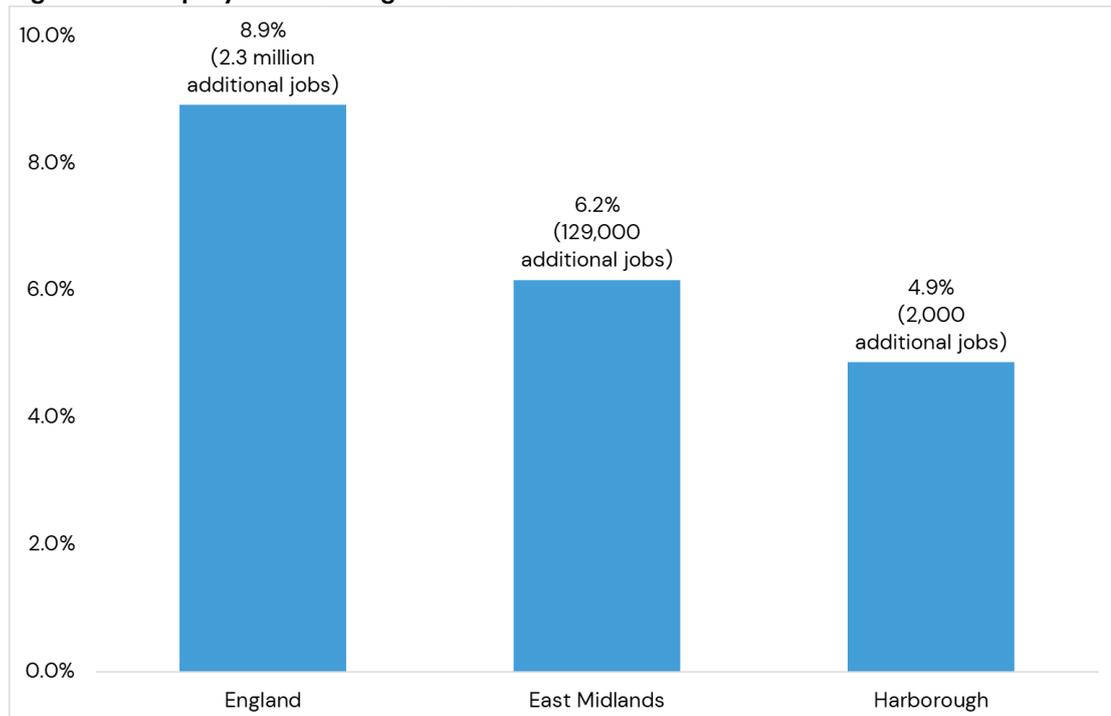
Introduction

4.1. This section of the report looks at the labour market in Harborough along with regional and national comparators. It also analyses existing concentrations of manufacturing and warehousing employment in the Districts, which are sectors that could both be supported by developing the site at Rockingham Road.

Labour Market Trends

4.2. As shown in Figure 4.1, according to the Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), there are around 43,000 jobs in Harborough as of 2023, including self-employment. Between 2015 and 2023, Harborough experienced jobs growth of 4.9% (2,000 additional jobs). This was lower than the corresponding jobs growth in the East Midlands (6.2%) and England (8.9%).

Figure 4.1: Employment Change 2015–2023



Source: ONS, Business Register and Employment Survey

4.3. Looking at employment by sector in Harborough, the wholesale & retail sector accounts for the highest proportion of total employment at 19.3% and supports around 8,250 jobs. In the East Midlands and England, public admin, education & health sector accounts for the highest proportion of total jobs, at 26.8% and 25.9% respectively. Table 4.1 gives full details on the employment shares in the three areas as of 2023.

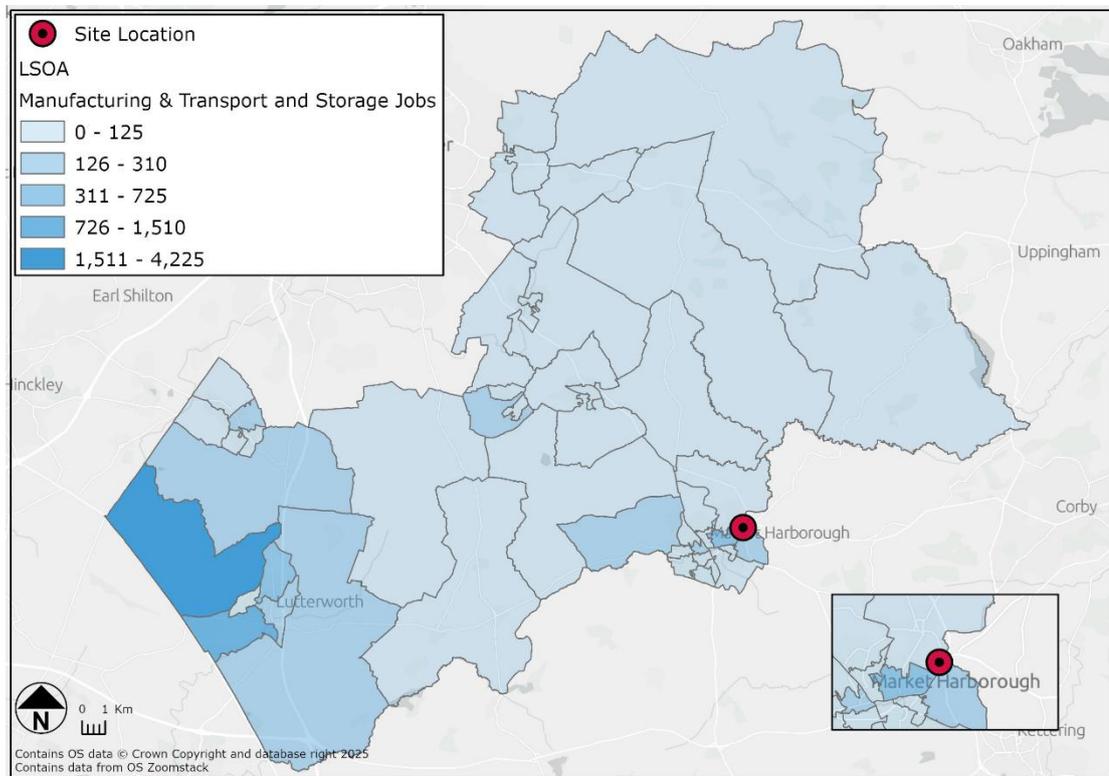
Table 4.1: Employment by sector, 2023

	Harborough	East Midlands	England
Agriculture, mining, utilities etc.	4.7%	3.0%	2.3%
Manufacturing	7.0%	11.9%	7.3%
Construction	4.1%	4.4%	4.8%
Wholesale & retail	19.3%	15.1%	13.7%
Transport & storage	16.4%	6.9%	5.1%
Accommodation & food services	8.2%	7.0%	7.8%
Information & communication	2.3%	2.7%	4.7%
Business, financial & professional services	18.5%	18.0%	23.9%
Public admin, education & health	15.9%	26.8%	25.9%
Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services	3.5%	4.2%	4.6%

Source: ONS, Business Register and Employment Survey

- 4.4. Given the Site has the potential to accommodate B2 (industrial) and B8 (warehousing) uses, the location of manufacturing and transport & storage jobs in Harborough has been analysed in further detail. These are the two employment sectors that align most closely with B2 and B8 uses.
- 4.5. As shown in Figure 4.2, the highest concentration of manufacturing and transport & storage jobs are in the south west of Harborough. Significantly, there is also a concentration of these jobs in the area where the Site is located, suggesting it is a popular location for more industrial type employment uses.

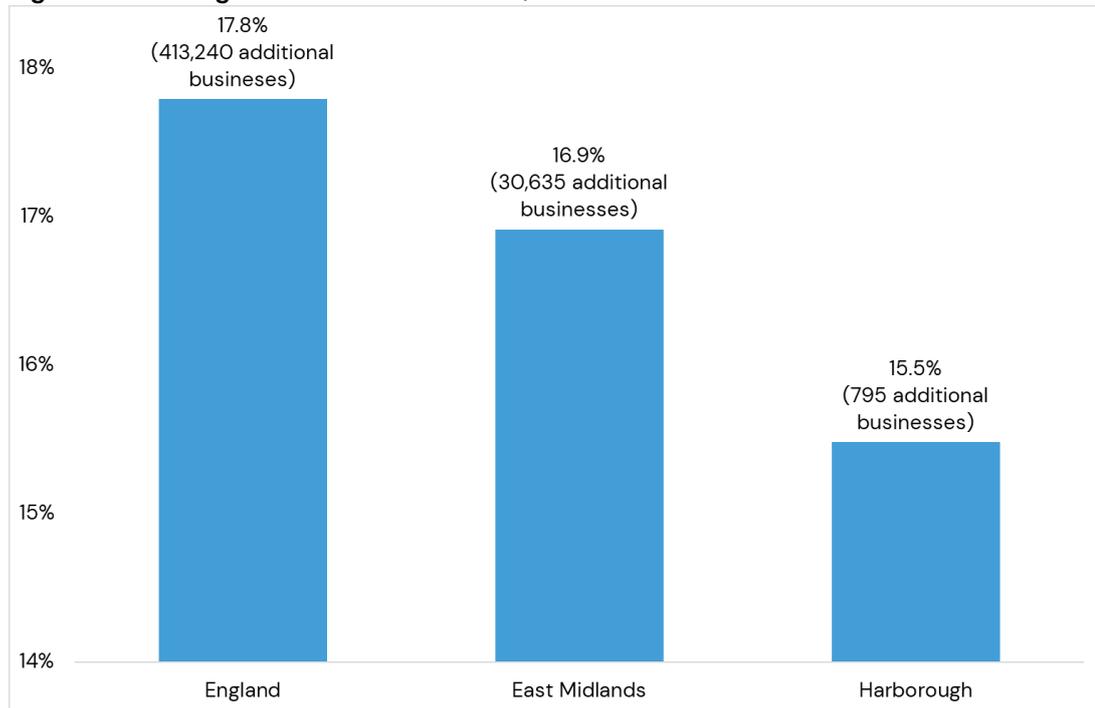
Figure 4.2: Concentration of Manufacturing and Transport & Storage Jobs in Harborough, 2023.



Source: ONS, Business Register and Employment Survey

- 4.6. Figure 4.3 shows the change in the number of businesses in Harborough between 2014 and 2024. It also presents the change for comparator areas of the East Midlands and England. The number of businesses in Harborough grew by 15.5% between 2014 and 2024, equating to 795 new businesses. This was below the rate of growth for both the East Midlands (16.9%) and England (17.8%).
- 4.7. Figure 4.4 presents data on business start-ups in Harborough, the East Midlands and England between 2018 and 2023, expressed per 10,000 resident working age population. This provides a proxy for levels of entrepreneurship in each area. It can be seen that Harborough has outperformed the East Midlands in this respect for every year presented in the chart. It has also performed well relative to England, especially in 2023 when there were 85.8 business start-up per 10,000 resident working age population in Harborough, compared with 77.7 in England and 66.0 in the East Midlands.
- 4.8. The data on change in business numbers (Figure 4.3) suggest that Harborough needs to continue to see an increase in the number of new companies if it is to close the gap with the regional and national trends in terms of growth. This in turn can help the District maintain its strong performance in terms of start-ups (Figure 4.4). This makes the provision of sufficient employment land in suitable locations absolutely vital if the District is to encourage business growth.

Figure 4.3: Change in Business Numbers, 2014–2024



Source: ONS, UK Business Count

Figure 4.4: Business Start-Ups per 10,000 Resident Working Age (16–64) Population, 2018–23



Source: Pegasus Group, using ONS Business Demography & ONS mid-year population estimates



Summary

- 4.9. Harborough's labour market has been out performance by regional and national trends since 2015. Supporting stronger jobs growth therefore needs to be a long-term priority for the Council. From a sector perspective, the Site on Rockingham Road is located in an area that already has a concentration of manufacturing and transport & storage jobs, indicating that it is already a popular location for industrial-related employment. If the Site is developed, it can therefore help to support growth in two important sectors for the Harborough economy.

5. Employment Land Requirements in Harborough

5.1. The Regulation 19 Local Plan identifies a need for 60ha of employment land in Harborough between 2020 and 2041. Table 5.1 shows how this breaks down by land type.

Table 5.1: Employment land needs in Harborough, 2020–41

Land Type	Employment Land (ha)
E(g)(i) Offices	6.8
E(g)(ii) Research & Development	2.8
E(g)(iii) Light Industrial	11.9
B2 Industrial	21.5
B8 Small Distribution/Warehousing	12.9
Industrial Vacancy Adjustment	4.2
Total	60.1

Source: Regulation 19 Local Plan (Table 3)

5.2. Table 5.2 shows the overall supply/demand balance as of 31 March 2023, taking into account completions of employment land and new developments in the pipeline. There is a modest surplus although the balance position for different types of use varies and the overall surplus masks shortfalls in key sectors such as industrial (B2) and light industrial (E(g)(iii)).

Table 5.2: Total Employment Surplus/Deficit Balance in Harborough up to 2041

	E(g)(i) Offices	E(g)(ii) R&D	E(g)(iii) Light Industrial	B2 Industrial	Non- Strategic B8 (units <9,000 sqm)	Total
Need 2020–2041	6.8	2.8	13.0	23.5	14.1	60.2
Gross Completions 2020/21 – 2022/23	0.3	0.00	2.1	1.1	1.8	5.1
Commitments at 31/3/23 *	11.3	-0.6	4.5	11.6	23.4	50.2
Residual Need to plan (at 31/3/23)	+4.8	-3.4	-6.4	-10.8	+11.1	-4.9
Recommended allocations	4.1	2.4	3.5	0.8	0.0	10.8
Surplus / Deficit Balance	+8.9	-1.0	-3.0	-10.0	11.1	+5.9

Source: Regulation 19 Local Plan (Table 4)

5.3. In addition to the above, the Local Plan notes that floorspace for Strategic Distribution for large-scale warehousing (B8 units of more than 9,000 sq. m. gross) will be provided in Harborough. It notes that such development should form an extension of, or be on a site within, Magna Park in the following locations:

- 55,000 sq. m. on land south of George House, Coventry Road, in accordance with Policy SA01.

- 285,000 sq. m. on land at Mere Lane, Magna Park, in accordance with Policy SA01.

5.4. Part of the evidence base for the Regulation 19 Local Plan includes the *Strategic B8 Needs Sensitivity Report* for Leicester & Leicestershire, produced by Icenl in December 2024. The report provides an interim assessment on the need for strategic B8 development across Leicester & Leicestershire. This includes an interim apportionment of need for such space in Harborough, in order to inform the preparation of its Local Plan. It is likely that the need figures referred to in paragraph 5.3 for the Coventry Road and Magan Park sites will have been informed by this report. A key point to note in this respect is that the December 2024 need report states that the interim apportionment of need for Harborough may require review in due course.

5.5. The December 2024 need report is an update of similar exercise undertaken in 2021. A significant finding to emerge from the most recent study is that there has been a significant increase in B8 floorspace need across Leicester & Leicestershire. In even more recent analysis on the logistics market for Q1 2025, CBRE² highlight the following:

- On a 12-month rolling basis for the period ending Q1 2025, the East Midlands accounted for 30.7% of all logistics take-up across England and Scotland. This was significantly higher than the second placed region of the South East, which accounted for 16.5% of take-up.

Summary

5.6. Taking into account the strength of the East Midlands logistics market, clearly there are certain areas of the region that will play a key role in meeting future demand for strategic warehousing space. Given Harborough's location, it is not unreasonable to expect the District to be one of these areas and development at Magana Park reflects this. It is important that other locations across Harborough are considered to help meet future demand, however, in order to support balanced and sustainable growth across the District. The Site at Rockingham Road is one such location. Furthermore, with 1,350 homes proposed for Market Harborough and 2,450 east of Leicester, employment land delivery must keep pace to avoid commuting-based outflow and increased carbon impacts.

5.7. The District's ageing population and its recent labour market performance suggest that the Council needs to be more ambitious in growing its economy and attracting younger people to the area. As it stands, the Local Plan could limit growth, especially taking into account the East Midlands major role in the logistics sector. Furthermore, paragraph 86 of the December 2024 NPPF highlights that planning policies should take account of facilitating development to meet the needs of a modern economy, including by identifying suitable locations for certain uses. One such use is logistics, while the NPPF also mentions data centres in this respect and this could also be a potential use for the Site.

² UK Logistics Q1 2025 CBRE Research, April 2025.

6. Summary & conclusions.

- 6.1. The evidence presented in this report strongly supports the allocation of Rockingham Road as a sustainable and deliverable employment site that can help address employment land gaps and promote demographic balance.

Population change

- 6.2. Recent population growth in Harborough has been driven by internal migration, suggesting that it is an attractive place where people want to live. Looking to the future and in line with most other parts of the country, the District is projected to see a significant increase in the number of people aged 65+ over the next 20 years or so. The ageing population makes it vital to attract younger people to the area in order to support more balanced population growth. Creating new jobs will play a major role in this, which will be closely linked to having a suitable supply of employment land in good quality locations.

Labour market growth

- 6.3. Analysis of Harborough's labour market performance over the period 2015–23 indicates that supporting stronger jobs growth needs to be a long-term priority for the Council. From a sector perspective, the Site on Rockingham Road is located in an area that already has a concentration of manufacturing and transport & storage jobs. If the Site is developed, it can therefore help to support growth in two important sectors for the Harborough economy, while helping to boost the District's overall labour market performance.

Employment Land Need in the Local Plan

- 6.4. The Regulation 19 Local Plan identifies a need for 60ha of employment land in Harborough between 2020 and 2041. Taking into account completions of employment land and new developments in the pipeline as of 31 March 2025, there is a modest surplus of 5.9ha, although the balance position for different types of use varies. In addition to this, the need for larger scale strategic distribution sites is expected to be met by development at Magna Park and on land at Coventry Road.
- 6.5. The most up to date research on the logistics market highlights the ongoing dominance of the East Midlands in helping to meet demand. It is important that other locations across Harborough are considered to help meet future demand in the District, rather than just focusing on two sites. This can help to support more balanced growth across the District. The Site at Rockingham Road is one such location that can help to achieve this and not just by growing the logistics sector. The Site could also potentially accommodate a data centre, which would help to meet the needs of a modern economy, as outlined in paragraph 86 of the NPPF. In addition, with 1,350 homes proposed for Market Harborough and 2,450 east of Leicester, employment land delivery must keep pace to avoid commuting-based outflow and increased carbon impacts.



Policy Implications

6.6. From a policy perspective:

- The Draft Submission Local Plan risks causing unbalanced growth in Harborough, which in turn would lead to the District not achieving its economic growth potential.
- The allocation of the Site on land at Rockingham Road will strengthen the employment land offer of Harborough for industrial, light industrial and/or warehousing floorspace, as well as having a potential use as a data centre site. Any one of these types of floorspace can help to attract younger people to the area by creating new jobs, which would have a positive impact from a demographic, economic and sustainability perspective.

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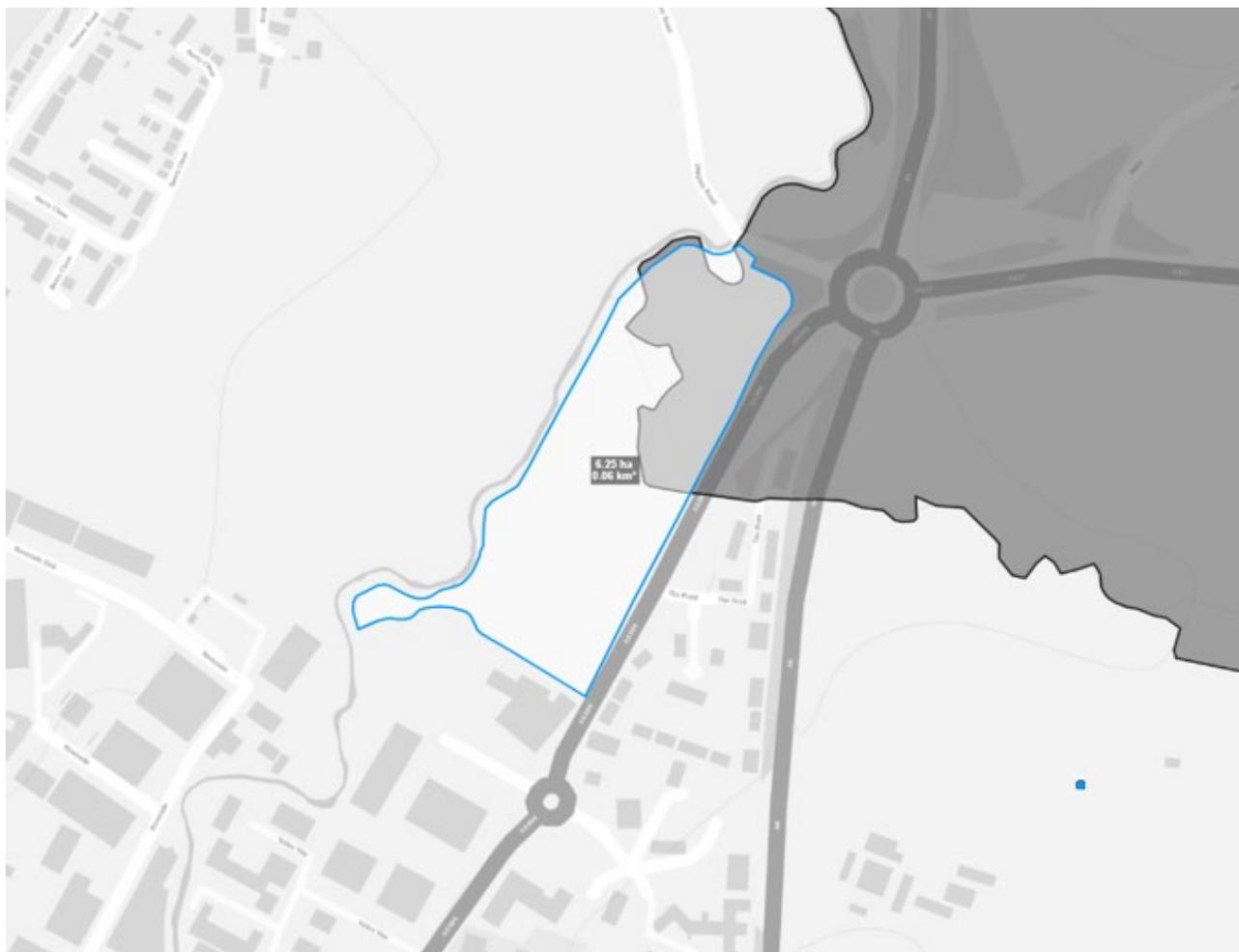
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Appendix 2: Site Location Plan (SHELAA Extract: Site Reference 24/10398)



Town & Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended)
Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004

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