

Rockingham Phase 1

Employment-led Mixed Use Development

Author: **Hamish Robertshaw**

Date: **18 December 2014 (rev.1)**

LPA reference: **2014/1055**

Subject/title: **Employment and Town Centre Uses: Catchment Area and Sequential Assessment**

INTRODUCTION

This note is supplementary to the planning application for employment-led mixed use development (Rockingham 1) located north of the Dearne Valley Parkway (LPA ref. 2014/1055). As the development proposal includes an element of food/drink and hotel accommodation, officers have requested an indication of the catchment area of these uses to allow assessment against national and local planning policy for town centre uses and the protection of employment land.

This note provides further explanation of the proposed town centre use and assesses these in the context of relevant policy and in relation to nearby designated centres, thereby demonstrating that the sequential test is satisfied.

NATIONAL PLANNING POLICY FRAMEWORK AND PLANNING PRACTICE GUIDANCE

The application site is out-of-centre in National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) terms. Paragraph 24 of the NPPF states that:

“Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses that are not in an existing centre and are not in accordance with an up-to-date Local Plan. They should require applications for main town centre uses to be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations and only if suitable sites are not available should out of centre sites be considered. When considering edge of centre and out of centre proposals, preference should be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre. Applicants and local planning authorities should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale.”

To meet the terms of the sequential test, alternative sites within a realistically defined catchment should be considered for their availability, suitability and viability. Only if no such alternative, sequentially-preferable sites exist is the sequential test passed.

It is important to note that the NPPF is silent on the need for applications for town centre uses in out-of-centre locations to demonstrate whether the proposed development can be disaggregated into specific parts at one or more sequentially-preferable site. This, and more generally the importance of having regard for the commercial requirements of developers in the application of the sequential test, is reinforced by recent legal judgements (including Tesco v Dundee in the Scottish Supreme Court).

The national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) further states that the sequential test ‘should recognise that certain main town centre uses have particular market and locational requirements which mean that they may only be accommodated in specific locations’ (paragraph 011). Officers have confirmed already that disaggregation does not need to be considered given the nature and function of the uses proposed.

As demonstrated in the submitted Planning Statement (Section 8), the complementary town centre uses proposed at the application site are key to the success and delivery of the site as a whole and will provide (inter alia) essential support for the employment-led scheme. No alternative site could support this identified need and function. That said, for completeness and in order to satisfy the sequential test, alternative sites within a realistic catchment are considered below in terms of their availability, suitability and viability to accommodate the town centre uses proposed.

LOCAL PLANNING POLICY

Emerging planning policy in the Local Plan Consultation Draft 2014 reflects the National Planning Policy Framework. Draft Policy TC1 on Town Centres (and the corresponding Core Strategy Policy CSP1) states that:

“Edge of centre and out of centre development will only be allowed where it meets the requirements of NPPF.”

Officers have confirmed already that an Impact Assessment is only required for retail and leisure development (as per draft Policy TC3) and is therefore not applicable to this proposal.

SEQUENTIAL ASSESSMENT

The notes and diagrams below seek to identify the realistic catchment area of the town centre uses forming part of the Rockingham Phase 1 employment-led mixed use development and to demonstrate that whilst this is an ‘out of centre’ location there are no sequentially preferable sites which are available and suitable for the delivery of this scheme.

1. The Rockingham Phase 1 application site extends to 8.4ha and represents the smallest of Harworth Estates’ three Rockingham sites that are proposed for employment development.
2. As outlined in the Planning Statement, the proposed Rockingham Phase 1 development will not exceed 16,000sqm floorspace, of which a maximum 1,900sqm (12%) may be food & drink (A3/A4/A5) uses, 2,700sqm (17%) hotel (C1) and 2,000sqm (13%) car showroom/garage (*sui generis*/B2). Should all of these ‘non employment’ uses be provided they would represent a minority (42%) of the total floorspace.
3. The floorspace-by-use parameters have been designed to allow flexibility. It is extremely unlikely that the full range and full extent of the ‘non employment’ uses will come forward. The illustrative masterplan shows a development of 14,650sqm in total, of which employment uses (B1c/B8) total 10,920sqm (75%), food & drink (A3/A4/A5) uses 1,870sqm (13%) and car showroom/garage (*sui generis*/B2) 1,860sqm (13%).
4. Rockingham Phase 1 is an employment-led mixed use development. The ‘town centre uses’ within this comprise food & drink (A3/A4/A5) of up to 1,900sqm and a hotel (C1) of up to 2,700sqm. As outlined in the Planning Statement, the catchment of these will be generated by the following users:
 - users of the proposed development (and future phases);
 - passers-by; and
 - local people (food/drink only).

- The catchment area of users of the proposed development is that of the Dearne Valley Parkway sites only, as broadly indicated in the map extract below (fig.1). All food/drink and accommodation elements of the scheme will serve users of the Dearne Valley Parkway developments.

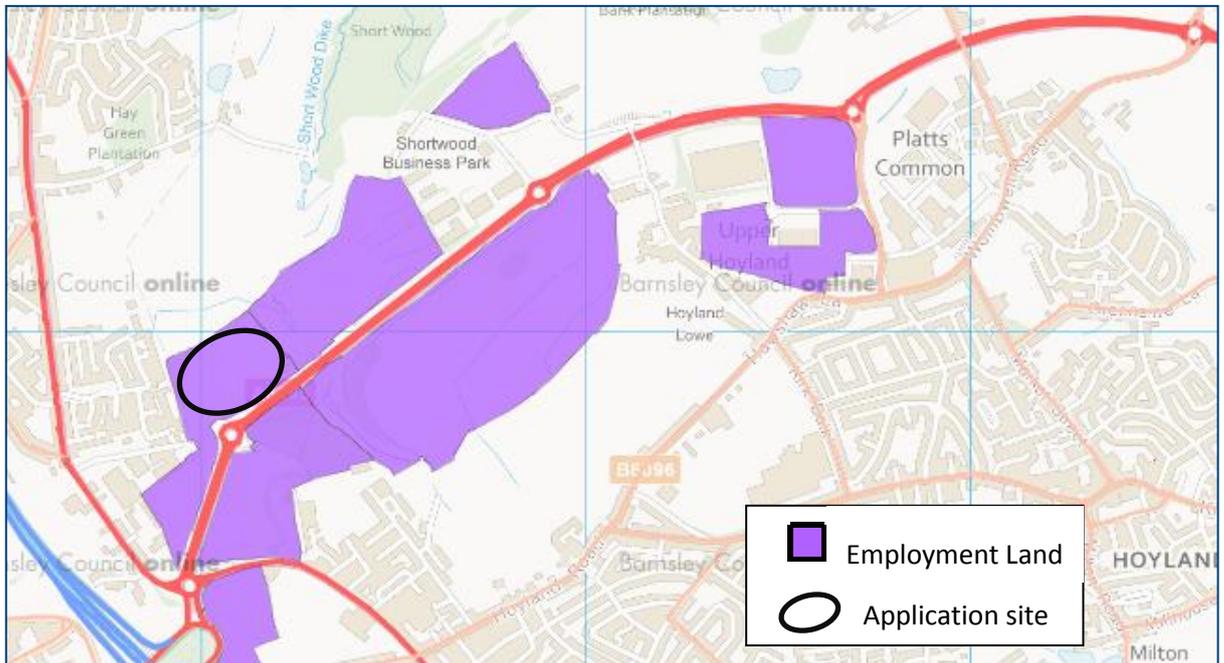


Fig.1 – Extract of draft Development Sites and Places DPD Proposals Map (October 2014) showing Employment Land Allocations only

- The catchment of passers-by is indeterminable, but importantly, the use does not generate the trip as they are passing already. The drive-thru provision within the scheme will primarily serve customers who are passers-by.
- We consider the catchment of local people is those, realistically, within walking distance of the site. The 'town centre uses' should benefit the local population but would not be a destination from further afield. It is expected that local people will primarily use the pub/restaurant element of the scheme and may access this on foot.
- Whilst a node-based drive time isochrone is not considered to be representative of the actual operation of the site and uses, especially given its location close to the motorway junction and main distributor roads, which will generate a very large area within a short drive time, it has been agreed with the Council that a 10 minute drive catchment will be defined. This is shown on the diagram below (fig.2).
- The application site location is 'out of centre'. The nearest local centre is at Hoyland Common (as shown on the map extract below, fig.3), the nearest point of which falls within the 10 minute walk radius, with the majority falling with 15 minutes. Google maps data indicates the nearest point to be a 2 minute drive from the site.

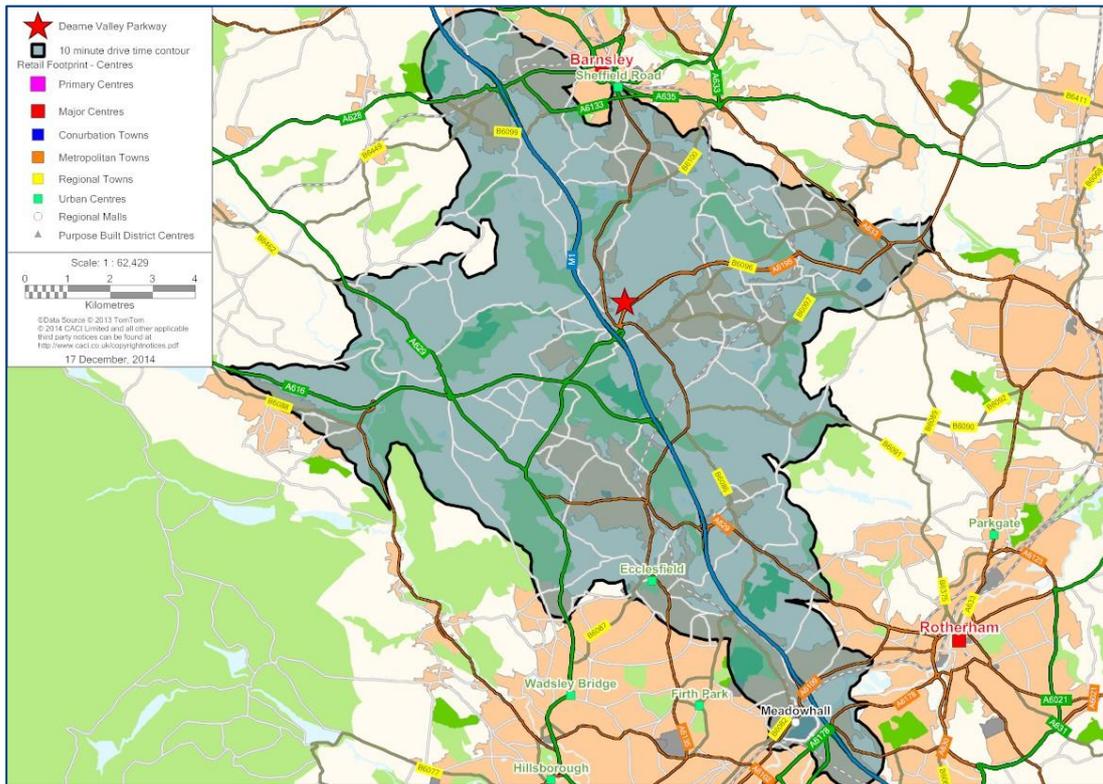


Fig.2 – 10 Minute Drive Time Isochrone

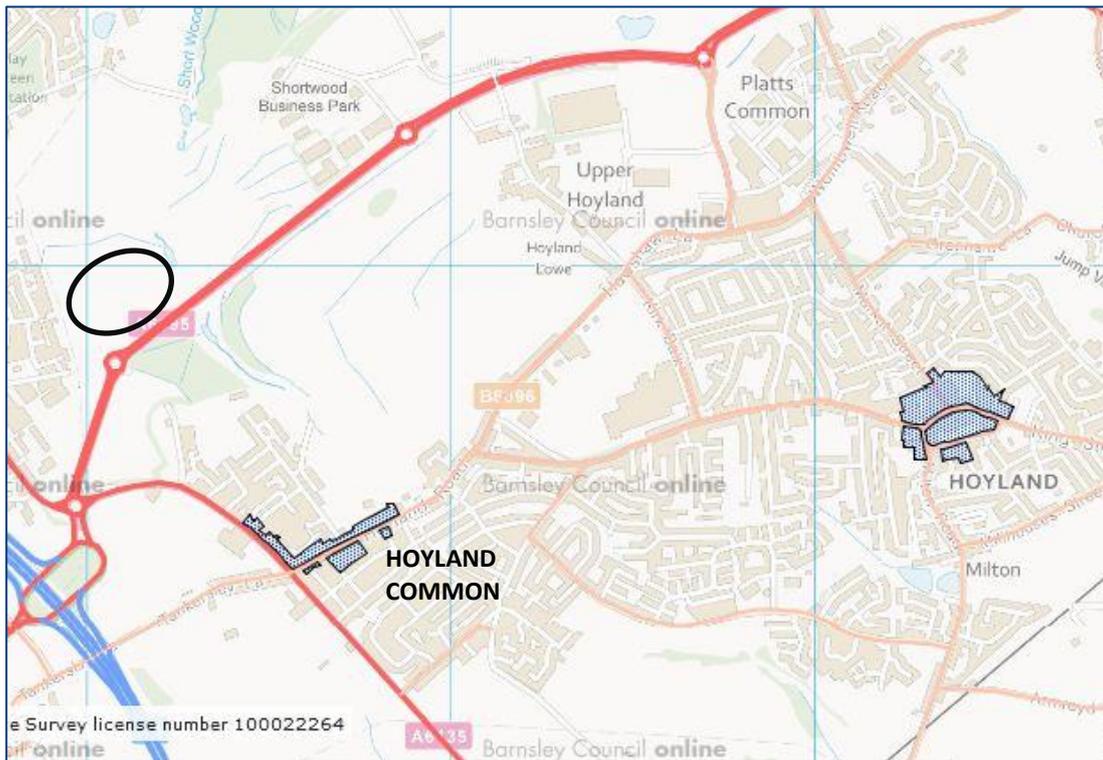


Fig.3 – Extract of UDP Proposals Map, which is essentially consistent with the draft Development Sites and Places DPD Proposals Map (October 2014), showing location of local and district centres

10. Given the scale and function of the development proposed, there is no site within the Hoyland Common local centre capable of accommodating the development.

11. There is also not considered to be any suitable site available at the edge of this centre. The NPPF defines 'edge of centre' as a location within 300 metres of a town centre boundary. A linear distance of 300m from the nearest point of the Hoyland Common local centre in the direction of the application site is shown on the diagram below (fig.4).

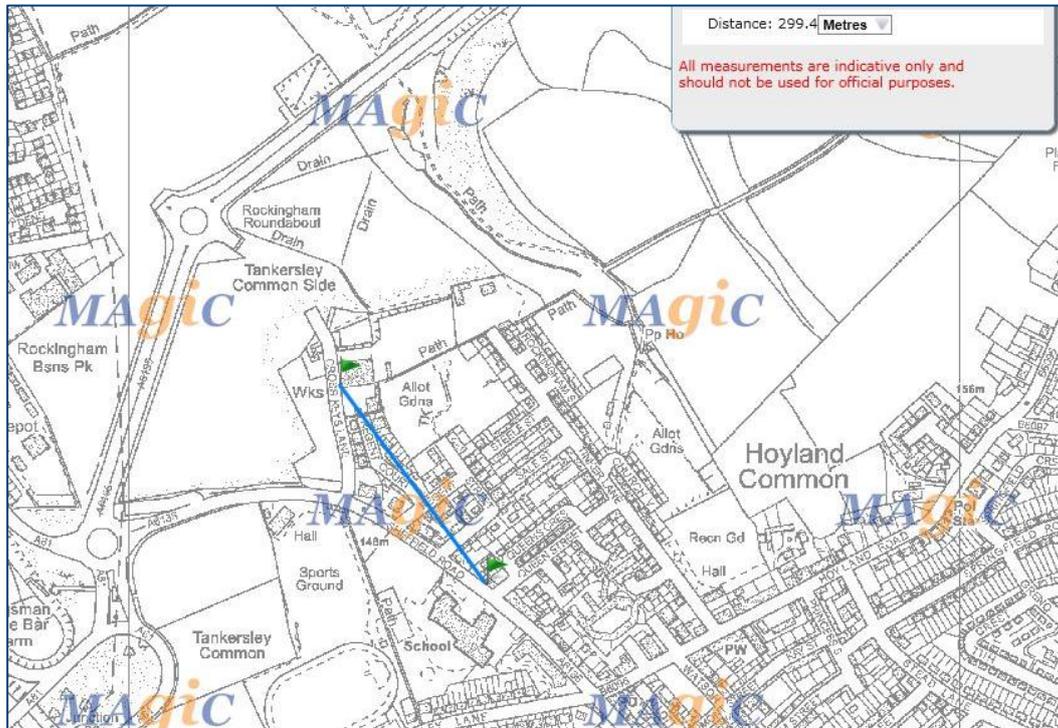


Fig.4 – Indication of 300m linear distance from edge of Hoyland Common Local Centre

12. Whilst a small part of the land west of Cross Keys Lane which is subject of an employment allocation does lie within 300m of the local centre boundary, this site is considered feasible to accommodate the proposed development given its emerging proposed use for highways infrastructure as part of the Birdwell Junction improvement scheme as shown on the diagram below (fig.5) from the current planning application.
13. The next nearest centre is Hoyland Town Centre, which is a 30+ minute walk or 5 minute drive (Google) at the nearest point. Given the scale and function of the development proposed there is not considered to be any site within or on the edge of this town centre capable of accommodating the development.



Fig.5 – Extract of Birdwell Junction improvement scheme proposed layout

14. The defined 10 minute drive time catchment area extends beyond Barnsley and into Sheffield and Rotherham. When consulted on a development proposal including town centre uses in close proximity to the application site, the local planning authorities identified three sites within the catchment with potential for town centre use development in sequentially preferable locations. These sites are:
 - Former YEB Depot, Harborough Hill Road, Barnsley
 - Heelis Street, Barnsley; and
 - Manchester Road, Stocksbridge, Sheffield

15. These sites are assessed below for their suitability and availability to accommodate the Rockingham Phase 1 development.

16. The **Former YEB Depot, Harborough Hill Road, Barnsley** site extends to 1.4ha and formerly benefited from planning permission for retail development of c.7,000sqm floorspace. This site lies within the main urban area of Barnsley and is considered to be ‘edge of centre’. The site is not suitable for the Rockingham Phase 1 development given its size and location which could not accommodate employment units of the scale and type proposed at the application site.

17. The site at **Heelis Street, Barnsley** extends to 2.9ha and benefits from planning permission for retail development of c.9,000sqm floorspace. Similar to the former YEB Depot site, this site lies within the main urban area of Barnsley and is considered to be ‘edge of centre’. The site is not suitable for the Rockingham Phase 1 development given its size and location which could not accommodate employment units of the scale and type proposed at the application site. It is understood that this site is identified as a supermarket site by the Council and landowner, which would cast doubt on its availability for mixed use employment-led development.

18. The **Manchester Road, Stocksbridge** site extends to 9.2ha and benefits from planning permission for retail development of c.14,000sqm floorspace. Whilst the site is large enough to accommodate the Rockingham Phase 1 development it is understood that preliminary works to this development have commenced and a committed supermarket operator in place for a c.5,800sqm foodstore. The site is not therefore considered to be available.
19. It is therefore concluded that none of the sites identified within the defined catchment area are suitable and available for development of the type proposed in the Rockingham Phase 1 scheme. Accordingly the sequential assessment is satisfied.

EMPLOYMENT USE ALLOCATION

As outlined in the Planning Statement, the application site is allocated as employment land. Core Strategy policy CSP19 states that existing employment land will be retained in order to safeguard existing or potential jobs. The redevelopment of employment land and buildings for non-employment uses will only take place if redevelopment would not result in a loss of existing jobs or employment potential; and there will still be an adequate supply of employment land in the locality.

The planning application seeks permission for up to 15,000sqm of employment (B1c/B8) development within a total floorspace of up to 16,000sqm. As outlined above, the floorspace-by-use parameters have been designed to allow flexibility. It is extremely unlikely that the full range and full extent of the employment or 'non employment' uses will come forward. The illustrative masterplan shows a development of 14,650sqm in total, of which employment uses (B1c/B8) total 10,920sqm (75%), food & drink (A3/A4/A5) uses 1,870sqm (13%) and car showroom/garage (*sui generis*/B2) 1,860sqm (13%).

The development proposed is an **employment-led** mixed use development. The majority of the floorspace to be developed will be for traditional employment uses, whilst the 'non employment' uses include car showroom/garage, hotel and pub/restaurants each of which generate employment. The majority of the development therefore conforms fully to policy CSP19 whilst the minority part serves to provide employment also.

Furthermore, the inclusion of the ancillary/complementary 'non employment' uses serves to make the employment development more attractive to investors, developers and occupiers. This applies not only to the employment uses within Rockingham Phase 1 but to the future employment phases which will be served by the food/drink and hotel uses at Rockingham 1 given its accessible, gateway location.

The inclusion of ancillary/complementary 'non employment' uses also serves to enhance the sustainability of employment development in locations such as this by offering food/drink and accommodation to businesses on or close to the site and thereby reducing the generation of vehicle movements, for instance for lunch or to meeting space.

It is understood that the borough has a recognised shortage of employment land. However, this site has been subject of allocation from the UDP (or possibly before) and has not been brought forward for development. The Council's current Local Plan consultation document indicates substantial additional allocations of employment land across the borough and around Hoyland in particular.

The inclusion of a minority element of 'non employment' uses at this allocated site is not therefore considered to be material to supply or delivery of employment development within Barnsley to date or in future. It is not therefore considered that the employment-led mixed use development proposed constitutes the loss of employment land or contravention of policy CSP19.

The 'non employment' elements are intended not only to facilitate the delivery of employment development of a site that has been allocated but undeveloped for an extended period of time, but also to be a catalyst for the take-up of the wider employment development opportunities in this area.

CONCLUSION

The assessment outlined above demonstrates that the proposed development satisfies the requirements of the sequential test insofar as there are no more-centrally located development sites which are suitable and available for the type of development proposed.

The assessment also demonstrates that the inclusion of a minority element of ancillary/complementary 'non employment' uses serves to facilitate the delivery of employment development on an allocated employment site which has been vacant in the long term. The ancillary/complementary uses are also expected to be a catalyst for further employment development in Hoyland in accordance with emerging site allocations. The proposed development does not constitute a reduction in the supply of employment land given the uses proposed, the long-term vacancy of this site and the emerging employment allocations in this area.