

MS-TP3: Employment

In response to Inspector's Initial Letter [IDJB-01] Annex 1:

(f) Business and economic needs and land supply.

January 2026



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1. Compliance with the NPPF (September 2023)

- 1.1. National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), September 2023 version, Chapter 6: Building a Strong and Competitive Economy requires Plans to set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth. It states that plans should set criteria for local inward investment to match the strategy and meet the anticipated needs over the plan period. In terms of rural economic development Plans should enable the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas.
- 1.2. The Submission Draft District Plan reflects the requirements of paragraph 82 of the NPPF by setting out a clear economic vision and strategy in Chapters 5 and 6 which translate into policies **DPE1 – DPE9**. Policy DPE1: Sustainable Economic Development sets the overarching framework, by encouraging high value employment, supporting existing businesses, promoting inward investment and seeking appropriate infrastructure to support growth. Delivery of this is also supported by the Council’s Sustainable Economy Strategy. (see section 5 below).
- 1.3. The Submission Draft District Plan is based on a vision for the district which includes ‘promoting economic vitality’ as a priority. The priority areas are supported by strategic objectives which guide the strategy and policies within the Submission Draft District Plan. There are 5 strategic objectives supporting delivery of ‘promoting economic vitality’ and these are set out below:
 7. To promote a place which is attractive to a full range of businesses, and where local enterprise thrives.
 8. To provide opportunities for people to live and work within their communities, reducing the need for commuting, including through good digital connectivity.
 9. To create and maintain town and village centres that are vibrant, attractive and successful and that meet the needs of the community.
 10. To support a strong and diverse rural economy in the villages and the countryside.
 11. To support and enhance the attractiveness of Mid Sussex as a visitor destination.
- 1.4. In combination, policies DPE1-DPE9 aim to deliver the Council’s vision and strategy for sustainable economic growth, making Mid Sussex a vibrant and attractive place for business and people to thrive providing the opportunity for residents to work locally and reduce the need to commute.

2. Economic Needs Evidence Base

Northern West Sussex Economic Growth Assessment Update (2020)

- 2.1. The Northern West Sussex Economic Growth Assessment Update (EGA 2020) [ED1] was prepared on behalf of the Northern West Sussex authorities (Crawley Borough Council, Horsham District Council and Mid Sussex District Council), to provide an up-to-date, robust and comprehensive evidence base for employment and economic development needs associated with the three authority areas up to 2036.
- 2.2. Due to the different stages of Local Plan preparation that each authority was at during its preparation, the analysis presented for Mid Sussex District Council is more focused than for the other two authorities. The EGA 2020 update does not give any consideration to economic growth potential within Mid Sussex but does provide updated market demand intelligence and advice on cross boundary implications in terms of accommodating economic growth across Northern West Sussex, in conjunction with Crawley and Horsham.

Northern West Sussex Economic Growth Assessment Focussed Update for Mid Sussex (2022)

- 2.3. Following the Northern West Sussex Economic Growth Assessment Update (2020) the Northern West Sussex Economic Growth Assessment Focussed Update for Mid Sussex (EGA 2022) [ED2] was prepared to update the findings of the 2020 EGA as they relate to Mid Sussex. The EGA 2022 focussed update provides supplementary and updated economic evidence specifically to inform the approach to the economic growth and employment land policies within the Submission Draft District Plan for the period between 2021 – 2038.
- 2.4. The scope of the study considers the following:
- The impact of covid on the economy and how it has affected local growth prospects;
 - The implications of the new Class E and related PD rights
 - Updated economic growth scenarios and employment land requirements drawing on latest job forecasts, take-up monitoring data and the Standard Method housing requirement
 - Assessing the updated demand / supply balance position for employment land and provide policy recommendations for the emerging Local Plan
- 2.5. The EGA (2022) identifies in Table 5.1 that the adopted Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (2018) and the Mid Sussex Site Allocations DPD (2022) together **provide a total of 36.42 ha** of employment allocations. It identifies that, at the time of preparation, 25.36 ha have planning permission, and therefore there is a remaining 11.1 ha of employment allocations that have not yet received planning permission.

- 2.6. The EGA (2022) concludes that once the forecasts of future employment need are compared with the identified employment supply, **there is a surplus varying between 60,020 sqm (17.2 ha) and 137,770 sqm (35.2 ha)** and that there is adequate land to accommodate the need arising for all the different types of employment use. Therefore, no further land needs to be identified to accommodate the indigenous employment need requirements arising for the Local Plan period 2021 – 2038.

Focussed Update to Northern West Sussex Economic Growth Assessment for Mid Sussex Addendum (2026)

- 2.7. In response to the request from the Inspector to provide an update on business and economic needs, the Council has commissioned Lichfields to undertake a focussed update to the 2022 EGA. The focussed update concentrates on Chapter 4 ‘Growth Scenarios and Employment Land Requirements’ of the 2022 EGA.
- 2.8. The three economic growth scenarios in the existing EGA will be updated covering the Local Plan period to take account of the latest economic outlook, assumptions and data regarding future forecasts.
- 2.9. Scenario 1 (baseline labour demand) will draw on Experian employment forecast data which takes account of the latest macroeconomic assumptions. Scenario 2 (baseline labour supply) will align with the standard method housing requirement and associated assumptions regarding working-age population growth over the Local Plan period. This scenario will draw on demographic assumptions and data from the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) for Mid Sussex District [H1] and subsequent 2024 update [H6]. Scenario 3 (past take-up) will draw on the latest Council monitoring data / West Sussex County data on employment land development within the District over the last few years.
- 2.10. Outputs from the updated scenarios will be presented in terms of employment floorspace (sqm) and land (ha) requirements over the Local Plan period to 2040, using a methodology consistent with the original EGA.
- 2.11. It is anticipated that this work will be completed to inform the Inspector’s Matters and Issues for Examination, the deadline for which is 13th February 2026.

3. Adopted Development Plan approach to business and economic needs

- 3.1. The adopted Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 and subsequent Site Allocations DPD took a proactive approach to supporting economic growth. Both provided for allocations significantly in excess of employment need. Therefore, the Council has a strong supply of employment land already planned for, with some of these allocations progressing to completion. It is for this reason that policy DPE3: Employment Allocations did not include any further allocations beyond the quantum of employment land planned for on the Significant Sites DPSC1-DPSC3. This aligned with the most up-to-date employment evidence at the time of submission.
- 3.2. As a summary, the existing allocations are set out below.

Adopted Mid Sussex District Plan 2014 – 2031 (2018)

- 3.3. The approach to business and economic needs in the adopted Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (2018) [BD1] is set out in Policy DP1: Sustainable Economic Development and Policy DP14: Sustainable Rural Development and the Rural Economy.
- 3.4. Policy DP1 sets out how delivering the required jobs per year over the plan period (543 jobs per year) will be achieved through the allocation of 25 hectares of employment land at Burgess Hill. In addition to this, the policy seeks to protect and make effective use of allocated and existing employment land and premises.
- 3.5. The employment land at Burgess Hill has been consented and is largely complete.

Sites Allocation DPD 2022

- 3.6. The Site Allocations DPD (2022) [BD2] meets the commitment set out in the adopted Mid Sussex District Plan 2014-2031 (2018) to ensure the Council can demonstrate that it is meeting the housing and employment requirements established.
- 3.7. Policies SA2 - SA88 in the Sites Allocations DPD allocates sufficient employment land to meet the residual need and Policy SA9 allocates a site for a Science and Technology Park west of Burgess Hill both in line with the policy requirements set out in DP1.
- 3.8. Paragraph 2.8 of the Sites Allocations DPD sets out that since the adoption of the District Plan in 2018, the approved masterplan for the Northern Arc concluded that it is only possible to bring forward 4ha of the 10ha employment land within the site. However, two additional sites (Former Handcross Garden Centre, Handcross – 2.7ha; and Land west of Copthorne - 3.6ha) received planning permission. This addresses the shortfall in employment land expected at the Northern Arc.

- 3.9. This, therefore, left a residual requirement of 10-15 hectares to be allocated in the Site Allocations Document. The Sites DPD Policy SA1: Sustainable Economic Development – Additional Site Allocations allocates 6 additional sites for employment use, plus expansion at Bolney Grange Business Park, totalling approximately 17 ha. These sites, and their current status, are set out in Table 1 below.

Table 1 Policy SA1: Sustainable Economic Development - Additional Site Allocations (Policies SA2-8)

Settlement	Policy Ref.	Site Name	Employment Uses	Available Land (ha)	Status
Burgess Hill	SA2	Burnside Centre, Victoria Road	E(g)/B2	0.96	
Burgess Hill	SA3	Site of former KDG, Victoria Road	E(g)/B2/B8	1.1	
Copthorne	SA4	Land north of the A264 at junction 10 of M23	E(g)/B8	2.7	Complete
Bolney (and part Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common)	SA5	Land at Bolney Grange Business Park	E(g)/B2/B8	7	Outline application (DM/23/3208) for erection of 10 x Class E(g), B2 and B8 flexible use commercial units approved 09/06/25.
Bolney (and part Hurstpierpoint and Sayers Common)	SA6	Marylands Nursery, Cowfold Road	B8	2.4	Complete
Pease Pottage	SA7	Cedars, Brighton Road	E(g)/B2/B8	2.3	Complete
Pease Pottage	SA8	Pease Pottage Nurseries, Brighton Road	E(g)/B2/B8	1	
Total				17.45	

Policy SA9: Science and Technology Park

- 3.10. Policy SA9: Science and Technology Park (STP) allocates a site north of the A2300 to the west of Burgess Hill with a gross site area totalling 48.75 ha for a Science and Technology Park which will comprise employment accommodation capable of accommodating a minimum of 2,500 jobs in E(g) and B2 use classes.
- 3.11. The STP over provides employment space beyond what is needed in the district and was not included as contributing towards the needs figures identified during the District Plan, Sites DPD and Submission Draft District Plan preparation.
- 3.12. A priority in the Council's SES is to support and grow the innovative businesses in Mid Sussex and the surrounding areas by developing a campus space that will bring together these types of businesses into a regional cluster.
- 3.13. There is ongoing and continuous engagement with the two landowners of the site. The Council is working with the landowners to identify levers to move the allocation to a planning application.
- 3.14. The Council is also directly engaging with potential future occupiers. This includes a locally based company Universal Quantum (UQ) who are market leaders in the Quantum Sector. The Council is engaging with UQ to support their aspiration to continue to grow whilst remaining in Mid Sussex.
- 3.15. To support this in 2025 the Council commissioned consultants Oxford Economics to assess the potential economic benefits of quantum computing for Sussex and Greater Brighton. This demonstrated the huge growth potential in terms of scale, market share, jobs and economic activity. One of the key elements to support and realise this growth is a suitable site to accommodate the significant and rapid growth.

Policy SA34: Existing Employment Sites

- 3.16. In addition to allocating additional land for employment use, Policy SA34: Existing Employment Sites seeks to protect existing employment sites, classified as those in use classes E(g), B2 and B8, by resisting development proposals that would involve their loss. The policy also provides some flexibility, however, and supports proposals on Existing Employment Sites that would involve the loss of employment land or premises, where it can be demonstrated that the site/premises are no longer needed and/or viable for employment use. This policy has been transferred into the Submission Draft District Plan as policy DPE2: Existing Employment Sites. The Council will respond to the Inspector's Comments and Proposed Modifications to policies (IDJB-02) on this policy in due course.

4. Submission Draft District Plan approach to business and economic needs

- 4.1. Policy DPE3: Employment Allocations is informed by the EGA (2022) which identifies the employment need over the plan period based on demographic data and employment growth projections aligned with forecast housing growth set out in Policy DPH1: Housing.
- 4.2. As set out in section 1 of this paper, the EGA 2022 identifies no outstanding residual employment need, as there is sufficient committed supply. Table 2 below shows the Requirement (ha) against the committed supply (ha) and shows an oversupply of 17.2ha. As shown in Table 1 above, these translations have subsequently translated to permissions and completions on site at the rate anticipated.

Table 2 Employment requirement against committed supply (Source: Submission Draft Mid Sussex District Plan 2021-2039, page 123)

Use	Requirement (ha)	Committed supply (ha)	Over-Supply / Deficit (ha)
Office - E(g)(i)/(iii)	3.4	4.9	+1.5
Light Industrial - E(g)(iii)	29.6	12.9	-9
General Industrial - B2	-7.7		
Storage and Distribution - B8	1.8	18.9	+17.1
Mixed B1	n/a	7.6	+7.6
TOTAL	27.1	44.3	+17.2

- 4.3. The Submission Draft District Plan therefore does not allocate additional employment land. However, a number of the Significant Sites i.e. DPSC2: Land at Crabbet Park and DPSC3: Land to the South of Reeds Lane, are to provide a mix of uses on site, including employment space, to assist in creating sustainable communities and enabling opportunities for residents to live and work locally, reducing the need to travel.
- 4.4. Should the further update to the EGA indicate that further employment land needs to be found, the Council's response to the Inspector's Matters and Issues [IDJB-03] will set out how the Council proposes to respond to this.

5. Sustainable Economy Strategy 2025 – 2028 (SES)

- 5.1. The Sustainable Economy Strategy and Action Plan ([SES](#)) [ED6] has been refreshed for 2025-2028 to build on the work completed under the previous strategy [ED4] and to continue towards achieving the long-term vision. The SES is relevant, as it identifies actions to achieve economic growth to support delivery of the proposed policies in the District Plan.
- 5.2. The SES action plan supports the delivery of Policy DPE1: Sustainable Economic Development by:
- attracting and promoting inward investment
 - facilitating high value employment development
 - promoting effective partnership working to secure key supporting infrastructure including rolling out full fibre and 5G infrastructure
 - revitalising the town centres including the development of Business Improvement Districts in the main towns
 - supporting development of centres of excellence and clusters of specialist industries
- 5.3. The SES is based on evidence provided in the District Profile 2025-2028. This recognises the high levels of employment and educational attainment in Mid Sussex, while also recognising that the population is ageing and the proportion of working-age residents reducing. The Action Plan responds to this by promoting access to training, which will give local people the opportunity to develop the skills they need to secure quality jobs, and to encourage residents to stay and work locally.
- 5.4. The District Profile identifies a decline in the number of active enterprises in Mid Sussex and the high proportion of businesses in the district that employ fewer than 10 people (89.6%). The Action Plan focusses on supporting businesses to start up, grow and thrive in the district.