

# ED.4.2.3

## Supplementary information concerning employer relocation from the Canal Quarter

### Background

In pursuing the aspirations for the Canal Quarter a key objective is to ensure that existing employers who need to decant in order to allow redevelopment are retained within the town, or where this is not possible within the district.

In developing the Core Strategy allowance has been made for employment land at two sites 'East of Birmingham Road' and 'South of Alcester Road.'

Consultants Peter Brett Associates (PBA) were appointed to assess the viability and deliverability of the Canal Quarter and the two associated employment sites. Their report concluded that the Canal Quarter could make a contribution to housing need within the plan period but questioned the need for the release of land East of Birmingham Road because certain companies have indicated that they would be unlikely to move within the plan period.

Under the topic of building a strong competitive economy, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) states:

*"In drawing up Local Plans, local planning authorities should (Page 7, our emphasis):*

- *Support existing business sectors, taking account of whether they are expanding or contracting and, where possible, identify and plan for new or emerging sectors likely to locate in their area. **Policies should be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan and to allow a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.**"*

### How much land will be required within the plan period to accommodate firms relocating from the Canal Quarter?

It is very difficult to quantify the amount of land that might be needed in the plan period. Discussions have been held with some of the larger occupants of the Canal Quarter but have not yet been held with all occupants – this process would be undertaken as part of more detailed work on implementing the policy.

Companies affected by the proposals might:

- Relocate within the Canal Quarter (which includes provision for 3ha of employment land);
- Relocate to vacant premises elsewhere within the town or district; or
- Relocate to new employment site(s) identified within the Core Strategy.

It is possible that in relocating firms would take the opportunity to move into smaller or larger premises than those they currently have, again making it difficult to quantify the amount of land required.

Not all existing operations would need to continue to be co-located if they were to move. For example, the Listers' vehicle preparation facility on Masons Road is relatively footloose and would not necessarily have to sit adjacent to their showrooms. Further,

some employers have indicated that it is difficult to predict what their future needs might be as circumstances can change rapidly.

DCS is a major existing employer located in part within the Canal Quarter and in discussions with PBA indicated a need for a 10 hectare site to allow them to consolidate their existing operations. This makes any relocation decision by DCS critical to the overall requirement for land. DCS could potentially take up the majority of the land likely to be made available South of Alcester Road for firms relocating from the Canal Quarter, creating a risk that other existing employers are lost to the town if this were to be the sole new site allocated. However, at present it is uncertain whether or not DCS will move, either at all or to this location.

Setting this aside, it is apparent from the desktop exercise undertaken by officers that the best available estimates of the land requirement for relocation are about 20 hectares (with Western Road included) or about 16 hectares (without Western Road). This allows for the proposed retention of some employment uses within the regenerated area. As such, and having regard to the advice contained in the NPPF, there is considered to be a case to include the proposed allocation 'East of Birmingham Road'. This case exists even assuming that some employers do not relocate until beyond 2031- allocating the site would provide further contingency should these moves take place earlier than anticipated.