Towcester Delivery Document
Land North of Towcester

November 2018
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Camilla Duckworth

Client
Turley

Our reference
IMPQ3006

1 Nov 2018
1. Introduction

Background of report

1.1 This document has been prepared on behalf of IM Properties (IMP), and accompanies their submission of representations to South Northamptonshire’s Submission Draft Local Plan Part 2, for land to the north of Towcester (‘the Site’).

1.2 The purpose of this document is to demonstrate the suitability, deliverability, and viability of the Site for a new high-quality major employment scheme. The document outlines the supporting information provided to accompany the representations; which indicates that the Site can make a valuable contribution to meeting the employment land needs of the District, and should be included as an employment allocation within South Northamptonshire’s Local Plan Part 2.

1.3 The document will consider the following matters:

- Employment opportunities, growth, and demand within South Northamptonshire; specifically Towcester;
- Review of planning policy with regards to employment;
- Growth opportunities within Towcester;
- Summary of technical surveys to date;
- Opportunities and constraints of the Site;
- Economic benefits to development of the Site;
- Delivery of the Site; and
- Conclusion

1.4 The evidence base used within this document are:

- National Planning Policy Framework (2012);
- West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy (Part 1);
- South Northamptonshire Local Plan ‘Saved Policies’ (2014);
- South Northamptonshire Emerging Local Plan (Part 2);
- South Northamptonshire Draft Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment;
- South Northamptonshire Economic Growth Strategy 2016-19;
- South Northamptonshire Local Economic Assessment Update 2017;
Site Context

1.5 The Site comprises approximately 21 hectares to the north of Towcester, immediately adjacent to the Towcester Bypass/A43. The Site is greenfield land, predominately used for agriculture, mainly arable; and is identified as Grade 3 (Good to Moderate) agricultural land within the Agricultural Land Classifications.

1.6 The site is split into two parcels, the main one being to the east of Tiffield Road\(^1\), and the other being to the west of Tiffield Road. The smaller parcel to the west will be utilised to support the development of the larger parcel (such as earthworks), and also has the potential to be used for community uses in the future.

1.7 The Site is relatively flat, with a slope in gradient towards the south-western corner. Access into the Site is currently taken from the A43 opposite the Northamptonshire Road/A43 junction; and from the west, opposite the Brickyard Farm Kennels.

1.8 Between the two parcels of land is a country lane, Tiffield Road, providing a connection between the A43 and the village of Tiffield. Further west of the smaller parcel of land, the Site directly adjoins the emerging Local Plan draft employment allocation PTE1: Bell Plantation. Immediately to the south is the Towcester Bypass/A43 and further south an existing residential area. To the north and east the site is bordered by arable farmland and areas of woodland.

1.9 Visually, the Site is well contained, with mature trees and hedgerows along the site boundary. An existing mature hedgerow and Old Solider Spinney woodland adjoin the

\(^1\) Also known as Donkey Lane
Site to the north-east, providing screening from the surrounding countryside. To the north-west is Williams Barn Farmyard and associated landscaping, which provide further screening from the northern boundary. Along the western periphery thick vegetation and mature trees line either side of Tiffield Road, screening the Site from the west. Either side of the A43 Bypass is bound by mature trees, hedgerows, and vegetation, providing a high level of screening to the Site from the A43 and the residential estate along the Site’s southern boundary.

1.10 A footpath (SB32) and existing watercourse cross the south-west corner of the Site. The footpath comes to a dead-end where it meets with the A43. Electricity powerlines currently cross the site from the south-west corner, to the northern boundary and beyond. There is also evidence of former pit workings and a dismantled railway line within the site boundary, to the north-east.

1.11 A site boundary plan is included within Appendix 1; along with a design parameters plan, which identifies the developable commercial area for an employment (B1/B2/B8) scheme on the larger parcel of land; highlighting the deliverability and suitability of the Site for employment.
2. Why Towcester? – the role of the town and the District

2.1 In terms of understanding the case for growth at Towcester, and the significant advantage if the Local Plan allocated the IMP site, it is useful to consider the context for directing economic growth to the District, and then Towcester as a focus. This section will therefore consider these two elements.

South Northamptonshire - as an attractive location

2.2 South Northamptonshire District is strategically located within the heart of the Country. ‘London and Birmingham are just an hour away by motorway and rail, whilst trunk roads link to the District with other major towns in the region, such as Northampton, Oxford, Milton Keynes and Peterborough. Both the M1 motorway and west coast mainline (London-Glasgow) pass through the area, as does the M40 that provides an alternative route between London and Birmingham and the Chiltern railway line (London to Birmingham).’ ‘The town is strategically located with good accessibility to the M1 to the east, M40 to the east and is at the crossroads of the A5 and A43.’ (paras. 2.1.3 and 13.2.1 South Northamptonshire Council’s Submission Draft Local Plan Part 2). It is these key road links that benefits the IMP site at Towcester and from which direct access can be achieved through an improved junction arrangement, which is discussed within paragraph 4.21 of this report.

2.3 The benefits of such connections can also serve to encourage out-commuting, as the Local Plan Part 2 acknowledges at paragraph 2.1.3, and section 5.1 of the GVA 2017 Economic Growth Strategy 2016-19. Ensuring that there are sufficient employment land opportunities within the District to attract employers and investors, to create jobs, and thus provide opportunities of reversing this trend, we believe, is one means of addressing this. Critical to this being successful is understanding whether the District can attract this level of investment and support increased economic growth.

South Northamptonshire - an opportunity for growth

2.4 ‘South Northamptonshire has one of the lowest unemployment levels and one of the highest employment levels in the UK with a highly skilled and professional resident workforce.’ (para. 2.1.16 Local Plan Part 2). The Local Plan also acknowledges within Section 5.2, that it will be necessary to build on these features through a focus on skills and employment. Our accompanying Local Plan representations in response to the allocation of the IMP site as an employment site (Policy AL3: Land at Tiffield Lane, Towcester) confirm that this employment allocation would facilitate such levels of skills and employment, being achieved.

2.5 The Local Economic Assessment Update 2017 acknowledges (para. 4.27) that there is a demand for larger industrial units (freehold) than is currently available within the District. The recent development and current interest in strategic distribution schemes along the M1 corridor is also evidence of this demand – for example Grange Park at Junction 15 - allowing existing companies to expand, as well as providing opportunities for new investors into the District.
2.6 The Business Register Employment Survey (BRES) provides an indication of recent employment growth. The following graph illustrates growth within the District and compares this to the South East Midlands and England for the period 2009 to 2015. In the last three years the rate of change in employment growth has been higher in the District than in England as a whole, and in the last two years, it has been higher than the South East Midlands.

**Annual Change in Employment Growth 2009-2015**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>South Northamptonshire</th>
<th>South East Midlands</th>
<th>England</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2009/10</td>
<td>-0.1%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010/11</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0.5%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011/12</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
<td>0%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012/13</td>
<td>1%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013/14</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014/15</td>
<td>1.2%</td>
<td>0.3%</td>
<td>0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: BRES*

2.7 The Local Economic Assessment Update 2017 confirms at para. 4.26 that there is a healthy industrial market, with desire for a range of unit sizes. It confirms there is currently a demand for units ranging between 5,000 – 10,000 sq. m. and 10,000+ sq. m. With 16% of transactions afforded to units over 10,001 sq. m. (para 4.26), there is an opportunity to capitalise on this footprint, and in order to achieve this, sites capable of delivering modern high quality floorspace, need to be identified through the Local Plan. We comment on the failure of the Local Plan to do so robustly in our representations to Policy Employment 2, Towcester Employment 1 and 3, and Rural Employment 1 and 2.

**South Northamptonshire – a supply of skilled labour**

2.8 It is important to align new employment opportunities with the skills profile of the local population. Data taken from the 2011 Census identifies Towcester, and South Northamptonshire as a whole, as having a comparatively large proportion of residents with degree level qualifications, surpassing the national average. The Local Economic Assessment Update 2017 (Figure 10), provides further data from the Annual Population Survey 2015, which confirms less than 5% of the working population have no qualifications, and over 90% have an NVQ Level 1 qualification or higher.

**South Northamptonshire – a shortage of land and premises**

2.9 The latest West Northamptonshire Annual Monitoring Report (2016/17) identifies a shortfall between the provision of B1/B2 and B8 floorspace provided between 2011 and 2016, and the anticipated demand as of 2016 (Table 3). The Report identifies a shortfall
of approximately 130,000 sq. m. of B2/B8 floorspace within West Northamptonshire. This confirms that there is a continued demand for B use classes of employment development within the West Northamptonshire, including South Northamptonshire.

2.10 In South Northamptonshire, Table 3 of the West Northamptonshire Annual Monitoring Report (2015/2016) (AMR) shown below, identifies that over the 2010-2016 some 59,654 sq. m. (net) additional B1/B2/B8 floorspace was delivered within South Northamptonshire District Council. However the same table shows losses of 90,962 sq. m. (net) of B1/B2/B8 floorspace in South Northamptonshire District. The AMR masks this loss of floorspace because of significant net additional floorspace delivery in the two other Districts.

**Delivery of Additional Employment Floorspace in West Northamptonshire 2010-16**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>B1</th>
<th>B2</th>
<th>B8</th>
<th>B2/B8 Combined</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2010-11</td>
<td>DDC</td>
<td>-1353</td>
<td>1840</td>
<td>-240</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>910</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2011-12</td>
<td>DDC</td>
<td>10862</td>
<td>22301</td>
<td>71276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>3932</td>
<td>44517</td>
<td>1993</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SNC</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>200</td>
<td>500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2012-13</td>
<td>DDC</td>
<td>-1809</td>
<td>19484</td>
<td>-234</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>99</td>
<td>203</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SNC</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1837</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013-14</td>
<td>DDC</td>
<td>3455</td>
<td>267</td>
<td>388</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>4879</td>
<td>6004</td>
<td>2046</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SNC</td>
<td>-964</td>
<td>536</td>
<td>5500</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2014-15</td>
<td>DDC</td>
<td>523</td>
<td>1094</td>
<td>60040</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>-7691</td>
<td>2176</td>
<td>33042</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SNC</td>
<td>2912</td>
<td>-39512</td>
<td>-44331</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2015-16</td>
<td>DDC</td>
<td>2111</td>
<td>13253</td>
<td>79525</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NBC</td>
<td>-2042</td>
<td>9550</td>
<td>11615</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>SNC</td>
<td>-6155</td>
<td>1691</td>
<td>45468</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>2566</td>
<td>57093</td>
<td>286721</td>
<td>343814</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Demand</td>
<td>108623</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>477366</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Difference</td>
<td>-106057</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-133552</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: West Northants JPU and partner Councils*

2.11 The South Northamptonshire Employment Land Study 2014 (SNELS) provides commentary at para. 7.5 on the current employment stock and confirms that:

‘Whilst generally the current employment stock is of good quality, there is little ‘slack’ within the market in the form of vacant high quality stock. Further there are limited opportunities to deliver additional floorspace within existing sites as most have been fully developed within their existing boundaries. As a result, securing the delivery of new sites will be critical.’

2.12 The South Northamptonshire Employment Land Study 2014 (SNELS) also identifies ‘strategic distribution’ at para. 7.10 as one of the three key opportunity areas for growth
within South Northamptonshire. The IMP site is ideally positioned adjacent to the A43 to deliver such B8 uses, alongside those within B1 and B2 sectors.

**South Northamptonshire – aligning housing and economic growth**

2.13 The West Northamptonshire JCS identifies a requirement of approximately 11,020 dwellings within South Northamptonshire over the Plan period (2011 - 2029). At District level, Towcester is allocated approximately 2,650 dwellings over the Plan period within the West Northamptonshire JCS. These figures included the Northampton Related Development Area (NRDA) requirement. If the NRDA is excluded from the assessment, South Northamptonshire’s housing need over the Plan period is just under 6,500 dwellings.

2.14 The majority of the housing requirement will be delivered through the Towcester Sustainable Urban Extension (2,100 by 2029). The WNJCS Policy T3 requires 70% of the 15.5ha of employment land within the SUE to be delivered by 2029, and the AMR 2015 advises at para 3.32 that this will be achieved by 2024. The rate of housing delivery (within the SNDC Housing Land Supply June 2017 Report) that the SUE is meant to be achieving alongside this this employment land, is at a proposed rate of an average 175 dwellings per annum at the SUE (Appendix 4, to that Report). Given that on average, the District has only achieved an average delivery rate of 273 dwellings per annum across Towcester, Brackley and the Rural Area in years 2001-2011, and 377 on average per annum across 2011-2017, it is questionable whether one site can achieve such high levels of housing delivery. If this is delayed, the effects on the delivery of the employment element of the SUE at Towcester could result in the further shortfall in employment land availability.

2.15 Compounded with this is the current consultation by CLG on the calculation of Objectively Assessed Housing Needs and how this might affect future plan making within the District. An uplift in the OAN for the District, would need to be aligned to the economic growth strategy and employment land allocation for South Northamptonshire District Council. The absence of the Local Plan to apply flexibility and headroom is made within our accompanying representations.

**Towcester**

2.16 Towcester is centrally located within South Northamptonshire, and is one of two first tier settlements within the District, as identified within the South Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2. The town has a population of approximately 10,000 (WNJCS paragraph 4.15), with the ability and opportunity to expand, and currently has outline permission for an urban extension to the south (providing 2,100 dwellings and 15.5 hectares of employment land by 2029).

2.17 Towcester is strategically located with good accessibility to the M1 to the east, M40 and A5 to the west, and A43 along its southern boundary. The town has good accessibility to public transport with a number of regular bus services running through the town (and directly past IM’s site), connecting it to the neighbouring towns of Brackley, Milton Keynes, Northampton, and surrounding villages.
2.18 Towcester is currently of a size, both in terms of population and services offer, which is able to support a growth in economic development. With the impending growth of the town's population through the SUE, there is a further need and opportunity for the expansion and strengthening of the local economy to provide job opportunities for the growing community; and offers a great opportunity to utilise and exploit Towcester’s local labour market.

2.19 Towcester has a number of existing employments areas, predominantly to the north within close proximity to the Site. The majority of these are small industrial business parks. Existing businesses within this area consist of manufacturers, car showrooms, foodstores, and distributors. However, there is opportunity within Towcester to expand on the current employment offer to provide for a growing population and continue strengthening Towcester’s employment offer; and look to reduce out-commuting.

2.20 In meeting this demand for high quality industrial units within South Northamptonshire, Towcester is seen as the most appropriate location for employment growth (para 5.6 of Local Plan, and Policy S1 of the WNJCS), due to its size, location, and future growth potential.

2.21 Local Policy and Strategy consistently notes that South Northamptonshire has a high out-commute of labour, with 72% of residents working outside of the district, as measured by the 2011 Census. The 2011 Census identifies that 42% of Towcester residents worked within South Northamptonshire in 2011; with approximately 22% of residents working within Towcester. This concludes that over a half of Towcester
residents work outside of South Northamptonshire; mainly in Milton Keynes and Northampton.

**Table 2.1: Main Places of Work for Towcester Residents 2011**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Place of Work</th>
<th>Proportion of Towcester Residents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Towcester</td>
<td>22%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Northamptonshire²</td>
<td>42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Milton Keynes</td>
<td>19%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Northampton</td>
<td>14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aylesbury Vale</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cherwell</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daventry</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Census 2011*

2.22 The development of new sites for high quality employment in sustainable locations, including IMP’s site, on the edge of a Tier 1 Settlement will help in reducing the high level of out-commuting within Towcester and South Northamptonshire, by providing an increase in employment choice for Towcester residents.

2.23 Approximately 64.2% of Towcester’s population were 16-65 (working age) in 2011, higher than the average for South Northamptonshire (60.7%), and slightly higher than national average (63.1%). The South Northamptonshire Local Economic Assessment Update 2017 identifies a high economic activity rate of 80% in 2015. The 2011 Census data identifies only 17% of Towcester residents do not have any qualifications, lower than the average for South East Midlands LEP (20%) and England (22%). It also has a higher level of residents with degree level qualifications or above (30%). This is higher than the average for South East Midlands LEP and England (both at 27%).

2.24 Given the availability of a highly skilled workforce, Towcester is therefore an attractive area for investors who can source a local, yet skilled, supply of labour.

² Including Towcester
3. Planning Policy Review

3.1 It is considered that the development site offers an excellent and sustainable opportunity to contribute to a range of key national and local planning and economic objectives, as evidenced through the following documents:

- National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (2012);
- West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Local Plan (Part 1);
- South Northamptonshire Local Plan ‘Saved Policies’ (2014);
- Emerging South Northamptonshire Local Plan (Part 2);
- Towcester Masterplan 2011; and
- Other relevant economic evidence reports


3.2 The revised National Planning Policy Framework (“NPPF”) was adopted in July 2018 and is a material consideration in the determination of all planning applications. At its heart is a ‘presumption in favour of sustainable development’.

3.3 Paragraph 8 of the NPPF (2018) sets out that achieving sustainable development means that the planning system has three overarching objectives which are interdependent and need to be pursued in mutually supportive ways. These objectives include the following:

(a) “an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;

(b) a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering a well-designed and safe built environment, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and

(c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”
The NPPF contains advice on the delivery of sustainable development across thirteen key themes, including 'Building a strong, competitive economy' which confirms that decisions should help to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt, and making provision for storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations.

**National Planning Policy Framework (2012)**

The NPPF (2012) continues to form the basis for Local Plan making for plans submitted for examination before 24 January 2019.

The NPPF (2012) sets out a number of core planning principles, the most notable to the proposed development at Towcester being:

‘proactively drive and support sustainable economic development to deliver the homes, business and industrial units, infrastructure and thriving local places that the country needs’.

The growth of the economy is a key priority for the Government, and is highlighted within the NPPF (2012), confirming the planning system will do ‘everything it can to support sustainable economic growth’. It requires local planning authorities to plan proactively to meet the development needs of business and support an economy fit for the 21st century. It is expected that a sufficient supply of sites are identified to meet the employment needs of an area, which responds positively to opportunities, taking account of market signals.

Paragraph 21 sets outs that when drawing up Local Plans, local planning authorities should:

- set out a clear economic vision and strategy;
- set criteria, or identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;
- support existing business sectors; and
- ensure policies are flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan and to allow a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

**West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy Part 1**

The adopted JCS sets out the economic context of the West Northamptonshire region and (at paragraphs 4.20 and 4.53) emphasises the attractiveness of the area to the warehouse and storage industry; due to its excellent road and rail connections. It is recognised that these conditions have facilitated a strong growth pattern in this sector and that further demand for B8 premises is expected to remain high.

In this context, however, the JCS only allocates ‘strategic’ employment sites which are 40 hectares or above. Sites below this threshold are expected to be identified as part of the preparation of Part 2 Local Plans and are expected to be ‘considered positively’,...
provided they comply with the objectives of the JCS including local priorities and considerations.

3.11 Part of the JCS vision is that the West Northamptonshire area will be ‘a location of choice’ for diverse employment opportunities drawing upon the area’s proximity to London and Birmingham, and its strategic transport network connections to other parts of the UK. New development is intended to be focused on the four main towns, including Towcester to foster successful and expanded economies in these locations.

3.12 Under Policy E1 of the JCS, it is accepted that new commercial floorspace at Towcester can be appropriate, provided it is of a scale that is proportionate to the function of the town.

3.13 Within Policy T4 ‘Transport Improvements for Towcester’ the JCS supports the extension of walking and cycling networks to connect new development to the town centre, and secure junction improvements to the A43. These are also included in the JCS infrastructure schedule. The Site, subject of our Client’s representations, provides an opportunity for improved pedestrian and cycle connections to the town centre, and improvements to the A43/Northamptonshire Road junction, through junction improvement works - via the creation of a roundabout. This will provide significantly enhanced access across the A43 and improve junction safety for vehicles access the A43.

South Northamptonshire Local Plan ‘Saved Policies’ (2014)

A main objective of the Local Plan ‘Saved Policies’ is to provide a range of employment opportunities and enhance the prosperity of the local economy along with ensuring the long term social and economic vitality of local communities is met.

Emerging South Northamptonshire Local Plan (Part 2)

3.14 Once adopted, the emerging Local Plan Part 2 will sit alongside the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy; providing detailed planning policies for the South Northamptonshire area.

3.15 The Local Plan Part 2 identifies Towcester as a Rural Service Centre; one of two first tier settlements within the District. The emerging Local Plan confirms that these settlements are to be the primary focus for new development, including housing, and employment; in order to deliver sustainable development, reduce the need to travel by car and shorten commuting distances, and safeguard the settlements strategic role as an employment and service centre.

3.16 The emerging Local Plan aims to support sustainable economic growth within the District; helping to provide employment opportunities which promote a reduction in the level of out-commuting, traffic congestion, and increase job density within existing settlements.

3.17 ‘Policy EMP3: New Employment Development’ confirms appropriate employment development will be directed to the most sustainable locations in accordance with
‘Policy SS1: The Settlement Hierarchy’. Development is also appropriate on suitable sites outside of the settlement confines where they are allocated for employment use.

3.18 ‘Policy AL3: Land at Tifffield Lane, Towcester’ confirms allocation of the Site for employment uses subject to specific criteria including a coordinated and comprehensive planning approach, access and transport requirements and specific design and place shaping principles.

Other relevant economic evidence reports:

National and Sub-Regional Policy Context

_The Midlands Engine for Growth Prospectus_

3.19 The Midlands Engine for Growth Prospectus 2015 was prepared by the Midlands’ 11 Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) to promote the region to investors and trade partners, and deliver growth, increase exports and jobs – driving economic growth within the East and West Midlands.

3.20 The Prospectus responds to the Government’s ambitions to create 300,000 in the Midlands by 2020 and grow the regional economy by £34 billion by 2030. The Prospectus further identifies advanced manufacturing as the ‘bedrock of the Midlands economy [which]…supports a host of other associated industries and sectors’. While the Midlands Engine is being promoted by the public sector, it is recognised that the private sector will drive the growth of the region. This will include manufacturing and its supply chain, high performance technology, food and drink, energy, medicine, and creative and professional sectors.

_South East Midlands LEP: Strategic Economic Plan (revised November 2017)_

3.21 The Strategic Economic Plan (SEP) identifies the LEP area as ‘the most innovative LEP area in the country’ and aims to ensure ‘the South East Midlands economy not only continues to thrive, but contributes even more to the success of UK plc’.

3.22 The grow of jobs by 10% by 2025 is one of the key aims of the SEP. It seeks to facilitate this growth through the delivery of new economic development. Much of which will be led by the private sector, with major inward investment, taking advantage of excellent road and rail links to the north and south. The proposed delivery of circa 130,000 new homes and circa 170,000 apprenticeships by 2025/2026 will help to grow the population and labour force of District.

3.23 The logistics sector is identified as one of the areas’ major strengths, with potential for rapid growth over the coming years. Manufacturing and advanced technology are also strong sectors with the South East Midlands. All these sectors are able to capitalise on the area’s (including Towcester’s) competitive advantage; which includes its accessibility to the national road network, increasing workforce and low property costs. The development of the IMP site has the potential to support this growth in the logistics, manufacturing, and advanced technology sectors within South East Midlands, in addition to other B1 and B2 uses it has the potential to accommodate.
Local Policy and Strategy Context

**South Northamptonshire Economic Growth Strategy**

3.24 The Economic Growth Strategy 2016 looks to identify and overcome the challenges and opportunities within the district. It recognises the historically high levels of out-commuting and low job density.

3.25 The report looks to improve skills and employment, strengthening the economics of towns and villages within the district. It identifies the importance of increasing take-up of local job opportunities, particularly the future workforce. It looks to secure future employment opportunities through inward investment, and maintaining a supply of strategic sites, rural employment sites and other local employment sites. Ensuring sufficient premises are available to support the growth of local businesses is also identified as a key priority, with the Council specifically seeking to grow the logistics sector and capitalise on the district’s locational advantage.

**South Northamptonshire Logistics Study**

3.26 The South Northamptonshire Logistics Study (May 2017) confirms South Northamptonshire’s strategic location within the UK as a major advantage point for the logistics and distribution sectors. Section 3 of the Study states that over 90% of England and Wales can be reached from the District within 4 hours.

3.27 The ‘Golden Triangle’ is a regional concept which is used to describe the largest concentration of logistics and distribution operations in Europe; much of which is concentrated within the M1/M6, A14, and A43/A45. Towcester sits within this ‘Golden Triangle’ (para 4.8)

3.28 The Study explains (para 5.1) that the drivers for demand in South Northamptonshire in relation to logistics and distribution include:

- Central location – infrastructure connections;
- Accessibility to the supporting supply chain;
- Readily available ‘fit for purpose’ employment land;
- The relationship with other growth sectors and activities, i.e. motorsport and higher value engineering; and
- Population growth.

3.29 Paragraphs 5.14 and 5.15 confirm that there is a significant level of occupier demand for logistics, with Northampton historically providing the majority of stock - although these existing employment sites have limited vacant availability. It further confirms that:

‘operators are being ‘squeezed’ out of Northampton and, in order to retain staff, [are] seeking new space within South Northamptonshire’.

3.30 Section 7 of the Study confirms that the demand within these sectors will continue to grow due to significant drivers, such as a growing e-commerce (online retail sales), growing investment in logistics from mega e-commerce companies (such as Amazon),
rapidly changing technologies and rising efficiencies, as well as infrastructure improvements. It should be noted, however, that the top challenge identified within paragraph 7.4 is the lack of supply of grade A quality logistics space.

3.31 Within the Conclusion of the Study, it is confirmed that the potential for growth in the logistics sector in South Northamptonshire will be ‘determined as much by the availability of suitable fit for purpose space as it will any projection of future growth’.

**Towcester Masterplan**

3.32 The Masterplan (2011) provides a framework for future development of Towcester; recognising the town strategic location within the national highway network, skilled workforce, and issues of out-commuting.

3.33 The Masterplan recognises that the forecast level of growth in housing supply will need to be supported by a range of new employment opportunities. It aims to secure a diverse range of quality local employment opportunities across all sectors, reflecting the local skills base. The Plan recognises a number of challenges; including a reduction in public sector employment, a growing population, and high levels of out-commuting; and looks to encourage residents to live and work locally as well as diversify the local economy.

3.34 The Masterplan identifies a number of key sectors for Towcester; motorsport, retail, light engineering, office work, distribution, and tourism. It also looks to attract businesses that complement the town and reflect the economic strengths of the region.
4. Why this site?

4.1 This section analyses the Site based on potential growth areas of Towcester and the technical work undertaken to date for the Site.

Growth Opportunities within Towcester

4.2 In reviewing optimal employment growth opportunities within Towcester, a plan has been produced (Appendix 2), providing a high level review of Towcester and the potential for medium sized employment development sites around the settlement, having regard to physical and environmental constraints. The exercise points clearly towards the direction for future employment growth to be towards the north of Towcester. This is explored below.

4.3 With regard to Appendix 2, development of land to the north-east of Towcester is restricted by Towcester’s Conservation Area, a Special Landscape Area, and a Historic Parks, Gardens and Battlefields which covered Easton Neston Country House and Parkland. Moving clockwise, to the south-east, additional employment development is restricted by Towcester Racecourse and the emerging Local Plan Employment Allocation, PTE 2: Towcester Racecourse. The approved Sustainable Urban Extension to the south of Towcester restricts the potential for additional employment development along this boundary. Directing growth to the south-west and north-west of Towcester is constrained by the potential for coalescence of existing residential dwellings, farms, and the village of Greens Norton with the Towcester’s boundary. Land to the west does not have the advantage of proximity to an existing employment area. Directing growth to the west would be detached from the settlement, with countryside adjoining it on three sides.

4.4 Therefore growth to the north of Towcester presents a clear, and relatively unconstrained, location for additional employment growth. The Submission Draft Local Plan proposes the allocation of employment land to the north of Towcester; at AL1: Bell Plantation, AL2: Woolgrowers Field, and AL3: Tiffield Lane (IMP Site). As a relatively unconstrained site (see ‘Opportunities and Constraints below, within Section 4) and located north of Towcester, this Delivery Document explores the attributes and benefits of identifying the Site for development. This document should be read alongside the representations submitted by IMP.

Technical Surveys and Reports

4.5 A number of technical studies have been undertaken for the Site to date which confirm deliverability. A summary of the work undertaken is provided below.

Access and Movement

4.6 Access and sustainable movement is critical to facilitating an employment site’s deliverability and sustainability (para 29 of the NPPF 2012). The NPPF 2012 (para 32) states that development should provide the opportunity for sustainable transport modes, and safe and suitable access. This is further supported within the West Northamptonshire JCS, within Policies S10, C1, and C2, which express the desire for
improved sustainable modes of transport – promoting walking, cycling and public transport.

4.7 A significant amount of work has already been undertaken to date to inform discussions with Highways England, Northamptonshire County Council, and local stakeholders in terms of the Transport and Access Strategy. We are currently in detailed scoping discussions with the County Council and Highways England in terms of testing the scheme using the Towcester Traffic Model.

4.8 A Transport and Access Strategy has been produced in relation to development of the Site following discussions with Highways England; confirming its strategic location between the M1, M40, and A5, and that subject to an appropriate TA and design works, there are no objections in principle to the development, and it being served off the existing junction point – via an improved junction.

4.9 Following on from those discussions, the Submission Draft Local Plan sets out four transport related tests against which the development will be tested as follows:

- A new roundabout facility will be provided at the junction of the aA43 and the Northampton road (Hulcote Turn) and the layout of the proposal will enable the closure of the central reservation turn at the Tiffield Lane junction in order to improve road safety on the A43;

- Good accessibility to public transport services should be provided for, including contributions to the cost of diverting existing routes through the site or to support existing local services and to promote sustainable travel;

- A transport assessment and travel plan will be required to assess the transportation implications of the proposed development and to identify appropriate mitigation measures; and

4.10 Provision of new footpaths and cycleways that link to existing networks and safe crossing points on the A43. In terms of access, a TRICS assessment undertaken by IMP’s appointed transport consultants for a mixed employment (B1, B2, and B8 use) scheme confirms upgrading the existing Northamptonshire Road junction to a new roundabout would operate within capacity and improve safety. There have been a number of collisions near to the existing junction, one being fatal. The upgraded junction will therefore offer significant highway safety benefits. It will also allow for the closure of the central reservation at Tiffield Lane. A junction improvement plan for Northamptonshire Road/A43 junction is included within Appendix 1. On this basis the scheme can and will fully meet the first policy test.

4.11 In terms of accessibility the site is located in close proximity to Towcester. The scheme will deliver improved connectivity between the Site and Towcester town centre through pedestrian improvement works (supporting Policies S10, C1, and C2 of the West Northamptonshire JCS). Most notably, the A43 junction improvements that would be delivered by the development site access would provide safe crossing facilities for pedestrians and cyclists onto Northampton Road, providing access to the town centre. There is also potential for improved pedestrian/cycle connectivity to the neighbouring
employment allocation (Policy AL1: Bell Plantation); providing a safe access from the Bell Plantation into Towcester via the improved A43 junction.

4.12 Although there have been changes to local bus services, there is significant potential to improve bus access for the site and for the town in general. At present a number of buses run along the A43. In particular, the X89 runs from Milton Keynes to Northampton on an hourly basis. This could diverted into the site and frequency significantly enhanced as a result of the development. There are also options for reintroducing the local town circle service (no. 87 bus route) which ran on a loop through Towcester town centre, passing the IMP site. There is potential for the reinstated route to be diverted into the IMP site, providing a service for local people to access the employment site. On this basis the scheme can and will fully meet the second and fourth policy tests.

4.13 As set out above, a detailed scoping assessment has been submitted to the County Council to inform the Transport Assessment for the site. As part of this, IMP have committed significant investment in updating and running the Northamptonshire Strategy Transport Model. This will test the development in terms of impacts on local roads and take into account wider growth in the area. The outputs of the model will inform off site mitigation if required and will also feed into the Air Quality assessments that will be required as part of a planning application. Initial assessments as part of the scoping report have confirmed that the wider impact will be limited in terms of peak hour capacity.

Air Quality

4.14 A review of available data shows that although the Site does not fall within an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA), South Northamptonshire Council have declared an AQMA through the centre of Towcester along the A5 Watling Street. Whilst it is unlikely that the development of the site for the uses proposed would result in significant impact on air quality and the AQMA itself, consideration does need to be given to any potential implications of the proposed access arrangements on the AQMA.

4.15 As referred to above, IMP are currently undertaking traffic modelling which will take into account any potential impacts on the local road network, and this work will feed into a detailed Air Quality Assessment to support the development. Should any impacts on the AQMA be anticipated, the assessment will explore appropriate measures to ensure any impacts are suitably mitigated.

Landscape and Ecology

4.16 The NPPF references conservation and enhancement of ecology highly (para 17 – Core Principles), with those areas of significant ecological interest protected from development (para 109). The ecological importance of potential employment sites are also considered within Parts 2 and 3 of the South Northamptonshire’s Draft HELAA.

4.17 New development must take account of existing biodiversity (para 10.16 of WNJCS) within a site and the surrounding area. In order to understand the biodiversity of IMP’s site, a number of ecological surveys were undertaken for the Site in 2016. These included:

- Preliminary Ecological Appraisal;
• Extended Phase 1 Habitat Survey;
• Hedgerow Regulations (1997) Assessment;
• Great Crested Newt Survey;
• Breeding Bird Survey;
• Bat Activity Surveys;
• Preliminary Ground Level Bat Roost Assessment and Potential Roost Features Inspection Survey of Trees;
• Initial Badger Survey;
• Reptile Survey; and,
• Dusk Emergence and Dawn Re-entry Bat Surveys

4.18 The survey work indicates that there are likely habitats within the hedgerows and trees along the periphery of the Site. However these could be retained (with the exception for where access to the site might need to punctuate the site boundary), with potential for ecological enhancements (such as the inclusion of biodiversity enhancement measures within the developments landscaping scheme) to help mitigate against any loss of habitat within the site.

4.19 The survey work identifies the presence of suitable habitats on site for protected species. Evidence of badgers was identified on site; however, no setts were recorded. A small number of trees along the periphery of the Site have been identified as roost locations. It is likely that trees along the periphery will be retained as part of a development scheme. Commuting and foraging bats have been identified within the north-eastern boundary of the Site; however suitable habitat is widespread within the area, so the impact on bats is low.

4.20 Likewise, a small number of breeding birds were identified on site. However, impact to them is low due to the widespread suitable habitat within the surrounding area. Overall, the survey work considered the Site to be of low value for the breeding bird population.

4.21 It is concluded that the ecology of the Site is not so significant that mitigation and enhancement measures, such as the inclusion of replacement and additional planting, improved site biodiversity, and overnight construction covers, can be put in place to ensure the protection of species. This is in line with mitigation measure for the protection and enhancement of biodiversity as reference within Policy BN2 of the West Northamptonshire JCS, and para 118 of the NPPF.

4.22 Landscape is also important to the consideration of new development within the West Northamptonshire JCS (Policy BN5). Towcester’s landscape setting is considered to be of medium sensitivity due to the historic parks, gardens, and woodland along the eastern boundary of the town (para 14.3 within the WNJCS).
Policy T3 expresses the desire for development within Towcester to respect the landscape setting. In order to confirm that proposed employment development at the Site respects Towcester’s landscape setting, an initial baseline Landscape Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) was undertaken in 2016. This assessed the Site as having some degree of contribution to the identified characteristics within the ‘6: Undulating Claylands’ LCT and the ‘6a: The Tove Catchment’ LCA. The Site reflects the undulating landform; the patterns of arable and pastoral land use; and, the presence of hedgerow field boundaries. It is also considered that the landscape elements identified in the Site reflect the variable condition described within the Northamptonshire Current Landscape Character Assessment.

However, there are features within, and around, the Site that reduce the rural quality and condition of the landscape, include the electricity pylons prominent in views; the mast adjacent to Old Soldier Spinney; fragmented hedgerows in the western field and post and wire fencing; and, noise intrusion from both the A43 and A5. The Site is also well contained due to existing landscape buffers along the Site’s periphery. In conclusion, the LVIA assesses the Site as having moderate to minor value.

There is also potential for the Site to enhance its landscaping and connectivity with the surrounding countryside, ensuring it performs well against the ecological and landscape polices identified above within both the NPPF and West Northamptonshire JCS; enhancing the biodiversity and landscaping of the Site, ensuring it respects the neighbouring countryside.

**Earthworks and Drainage**

Avoiding inappropriate development in area at risk of flooding is important to the Governments challenge to meet with a changing climate (para 100 of the NPPF). It is also referenced highly within the West Northamptonshire JCS (Policy BN7). To ensure IMP’s site is not located within a high risk flood zone (zones 2 and 3), and that the risk of flooding at IMP’s site does not increase on site, or within the surrounding area, a Flood Risk Assessment was carried out in 2016, confirming the Site sits within Flood Zone 1 ‘less than 1 in 1,000 annual probability or river or sea flooding’, with a low risk of surface water flooding.

Furthermore, surface water can be attenuated within the site, and it is proposed that outflow from the site will be restricted to greenfield run off rates.

Positive discussions have been held with Anglian Water with regards to an appropriate foul water drainage strategy. A Preliminary Risk Assessment was also carried out, which confirms that there is little risk to controlled waters and human health.

**Heritage**

Protection, conservation, and enhancement of the built heritage is regarded as important when proposing new development within the NPPF (para 131) and WNJCS (Policy S10).

Although located just over 0.8 km from the Grade II* Easton Neston Registered Park and Garden, which is also designated as a Conservation Area and a Special Landscape Area, the Site has little impact on these designations due to the existing significant landscape buffer along the southern boundary of the A43. The landscape buffer consists
of large mature trees, and dense mature hedgerow and vegetation, at approximately 70
metres in width, along most of the buffer. The landscape buffer extends for
approximately 1.2 km along the southern boundary of the A43 to the east of the site;
along the south of the Site; and to the west of the site up to the existing A43/A5 junction.

4.31 Existing development is established in close proximity to the listed property and
designated areas. The residential estate to the south of the Site and the A43 is located
less than 0.5 km from Easton Neston Country House. It too has a landscape buffer
preventing any visual impact on the listed property and designated area.

4.32 It is concluded that survey work will be required to confirm the development of the Site
for employment uses will not have an impact on any surrounding heritage assets.
However, at this stage, the Site is well screened from nearby heritage assets, with a
precedent of existing development close to the heritage assets, including the A43 dual-
carriageway and residential estates. It is, therefore, unlikely the development of the Site
will have a significant adverse impact on any surrounding heritage assets; and therefore
performs well against para 129 of the NPPF.

Utilities

4.33 An initial review of existing utilities on site and within the vicinity, and potential for new
connections to the Site, has been undertaken. The review confirms that there are a
small number of existing utilities on site (identified within Appendix 3), mainly to the
north-east; however these can be accommodated on site or locally diverted and there
are no significant constraints to development. It should be noted that the presence of
existing utilities shows that existing infrastructure (subject to some reinforcement) is
available to a proposed employment development, improving its deliverability.

Water

4.34 Consultation with Anglian Water has not highlighted any significant issues with
development of this site. Anglian Water have identified that there is the potential for the
need to divert a water pipe to the south of the Site, if the proposed development layout
intrudes on the easement of the pipe. However, there were no issues highlighted that
could not be mitigated at the design stage of development on this site. Confirmation has
also been is given confirming that the Site benefits from two strategic water mains,
which have been designed to cater for predicted growth in the area. There is potential
for the Site to connect to these systems to facilitate development. Anglian Water have
also advised that waste water flows from the development can be accommodated with a
contribution towards some additional capacity in the existing system.

Opportunities and Constraints

4.35 Through an assessment of the site, technical surveys, national and local policy, and an
understanding of South Northamptonshire’s economy, constraints and opportunities of
the Site have been identified (Opportunities and Constraints Plans in Appendix 3). A
small number of constraints are identified; the majority are only minor and can be
addressed. Largely, the Site provides a relatively unconstrained opportunity, not only for
high quality development, but also to provide positive benefits for Towcester and the
wider South Northamptonshire economy.
Table 4.1: Site Opportunities

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Opportunities</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Scale and mix of units</td>
<td>The scale of the Site is proportionate to the size and population of Towcester, whilst providing a different offering to that already provided by existing employment sites within Towcester. The Site offers an opportunity for an employment development of B1, B2, and B8 uses, with a total floorspace ranging between 50,000 to 90,000 sq. m, accommodating individual units ranging between 4,400 to 28,500 sq. m. This is not currently an offer that can be accommodated within existing employment sites, which cater for smaller units sizes. The IMP proposal would cater for mainly medium to large sized companies (but with the flexibility to also offer smaller units) who are not seeking to locate to strategic sites, where rent per sq. m. is likely to be higher, and equally are not seeking rail served sites such as those being promoted at junction 15; but are looking for a prestigious high-end business site that can accommodate medium to large sized units with access to the national road network and local labour force.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Providing flexible requirements</td>
<td>The Site has the ability to respond to market requirements, be that small, medium or large sized units; as well as the opportunity for providing freehold or leasehold units.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long lasting economic benefits</td>
<td>The development of the Site will provide a long lasting economic benefit to Towcester and South Northamptonshire; as well as helping to strengthen and retain Towcester’s employment offering. The specific economic benefits of the Site are detailed within the ‘Economic Benefits’ section below. However an overview of these opportunities are:</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainable growth of Towcester</td>
<td>The development of the Site for employment will provide an opportunity for sustainable growth of Towcester. The Site is located along the northern edge of Towcester, within close proximity to the town centre and an accessible commuting distance from the majority of Towcester’s residential areas. It is also located adjacent to Towcester’s main exiting employment area; providing an opportunity to grow the northern part of the town as the Towcester’s employment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
In addition to providing sustainable growth within Towcester, the development of the Site has the potential to support Towcester’s town centre. Although there is no suggestion that the town centre is under performing, it is clear that the town has to compete with neighbouring larger towns (such as Northampton and Milton Keynes); and have to find new ways to encourage and maintain the town centres’ economy. This is a concern that is raised within Section 4 of Towcester’s Masterplan. Committee minutes from South Northamptonshire’s Planning Policy and Regeneration Strategy Committee – 25th January 2017 also confirm that there were 12 vacant town centre units at the beginning of the year. South Northamptonshire has resorted to bring into effect (as of 1 April 2017) a ‘Business Rates Incentive Scheme’ to promote the use of vacant units, and encourage a vibrant town centre.

The development of IMP’s site provides an opportunity to help support Towcester’s town centre and encourage its growth; increasing the potential for local expenditure arising from job creation at the IMP site, enabling it to provide an increased offering and compete with the larger neighbouring towns.

- **Strategically located**
  - The Site is strategically located and well served by existing national and regional road networks. Accessed off the A43, (which provides a direct connection to the M1 and M40) the Site is served by excellent transport links. It is also closely located to the A5, providing connections to Milton Keynes and other neighbouring towns.

- **Gateway into Towcester**
  - There is potential for the Site to provide a gateway to Towcester and its employment ‘hub’ from the M1.

- **Potential link with neighbouring employment allocation**
  - The Site has the potential to link with the neighbouring employment allocation (Bell Plantation – Policy AL1), providing a suitable expansion of Towcester’s employment area.

- **Occupier interest**
  - There is strong evidence of market/occupier interest in the Site; and it is clear from advice provided to IMP that the Site will be attractive to a range of employment uses.

- **No significant constraints to the site**
  - As confirmed within the existing technical work undertaken to date, there are no significant constraints preventing the development of the Site which cannot be resolved or reasonably mitigated.

- **Improved safety of Northamptonshire Road/A43 junction**
  - There is an opportunity to improve the safety of the existing Northampton Road/A43 junction to the east of the site. It is proposed that the junction be upgraded to a roundabout, providing a safer and more accessible junction for those accessing the A43 from the Site.
and Northampton Road.

Existing landscaping buffers

An existing landscape buffer of mature trees and hedgerow is located along the southern side of the A43, providing a visual buffer to the existing residential estate and Special Landscape Area/Conservation Area at Easton Neston Country House. The northern boundary of the Site is well screened by Williams Barn Farmyard and associated landscaping to the north-west, an established hedgerow running from the north-eastern corner of the Site to the centre, and the Old Solider Spinney woodland to the north-east. A further landscape buffer is also present along the western boundary, abutting Tiffield Road. The extent of the landscape buffers, and photographs can be found within the opportunities and constraints plans within Appendix 3 and landscape context plan within Appendix 4.

Long-term stewardship of the site

The long-term stewardship of the Site would be overseen by IMP, who have an excellent reputation for the delivery and management of high-quality industrial and commercial developments.

Table 4.2: Site Constraints

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Constraints</th>
<th>Reasoning</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Suitable site access</td>
<td>Currently the existing access onto the A43 is via an agricultural field access. Improvement works would be required to provide a suitable access to the Site from the A43. As confirmed by the existing transport strategy work, improvements of this junction are possible, and there are no objections in principle to this improvement work by Highways England. Furthermore, and as stated above, the works will provide for enhancement of the junction, improving its safety for vehicles and pedestrians. Further detailed assessments, including Air, Noise, and Transport Assessments, will accompany a future planning application for this site to ensure a suitable improvement works are proposed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Existing services and watercourse</td>
<td>As identified within the Constraints Plan in Appendix 3, there are a number of existing services and a watercourse which run across of the Site. These have been identified as minor constraints and can be accommodated (or diverted) within the proposals. This can be evidenced on the enclosed illustrative masterplan.</td>
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</table>

Economic Benefits

4.36 An initial assessment of the likely economic benefits generated by development of the Site for employment development of approximately 78,000 sq. m. of new industrial,
logistics and B1c uses floorspace, and 1,900 sq. m. of associated new retail/roadside uses, including two car showrooms, was undertaken in November 2017. It is considered that the conclusions of this assessment remain valid.

4.37 The development benefits will be both direct and indirect. They will be financial and skills related, and will cross both construction and operational phases.

4.38 The development will have lasting economic benefits; providing local investment and jobs to support existing and future populations, increased local expenditure, and supporting growth and resilience to the local economy through increased values for commercial property and strengthening the mix of businesses within Towcester.

Construction Phase
- Estimated potential construction expenditure of approximately £46.4 million;
- Potential to support approximately 66 FTE jobs over the construction period. Equivalent to circa 31 FTE construction jobs annually over a 5 year construction period;
- Potential for an additional 5 FTE jobs per annum across South Northamptonshire through indirect and induced effects;
- Potential for an approximate 25 net additional FTE employment opportunities generated annually for residents within the district;
- Total potential contribution of approximately £9 million in GVA to the local economy during construction; and
- Training opportunities over the lifetime of the project across a wide range of disciplines, be that building construction or delivery of wider infrastructure e.g. landscaping.

Operational Phase
- Creation of a potential circa 1,326 gross additional jobs on site through new commercial (B1c, B2, B8) floorspace;
- Through the development of the Site, there is potential for circa 497 net additional FTE employment opportunities for local residents of South Northamptonshire, many of whom are currently out-commuting out of the District;
- Of this total, 99 jobs could be created through indirect (within the supply chains) and induced (as a result of expenditure from employees’ wages) employment effects;
- Potential annual contribution of £26.7 million in GVA (£21.6 million direct and £5.1 million indirect) to the South Northamptonshire economy;
- Potential uplift of approaching £3 million in additional business rate revenue annually, based on IMP estimates; and
• Direct wage expenditure effect associated with net jobs generated by the proposed development equates to potential £14.3 million per annum, in addition to an annual indirect wage expenditure effect of potential circa £3.1 million across the local impact area.
5. Delivery of the Site

5.1 Both the land owners and developers (IM Properties) of the Site are committed to the delivery of an employment scheme; and there is ongoing investment in the site to ensure the earliest delivery of the project. IMP have a track record of delivery of employment schemes within the Midlands, and across the UK; and have set out a timeline of the route to delivery below.

5.2 An experienced project team, with significant knowledge of the Site and South Northamptonshire, are involved with the delivery of this Site. To date, a large proportion of technical works has been completed, which have not highlighted any significant issues which would prevent the delivery of this Site for employment development.

**Figure 5.1: Delivery Timeline**

- **November 2018**: Submission of representations
- **Early 2019**: Technical Reports Completed (No significant issues arising)
- **Early 2019**: Finalisation of masterplan
- **Spring/Summer 2019**: Submission and determination of planning application
- **Early 2020**: Construction commences
6. Conclusion

6.1 The IMP site, subject of this Delivery Document and the accompanying representations to the South Northamptonshire Local Plan Part 2, comprises approximately 21 hectares to the north of Towcester, immediately adjacent to the Towcester Bypass/A43 and the settlement boundary of Towcester. The Site is currently greenfield, arable land, with a number of mature trees and hedgerows along its periphery.

6.2 Towcester, and the Site, are centrally located within South Northamptonshire, and strategically located between the M1 and M40, with quick and easy access via the A43. The Site is also closely located to the A5, providing connections to Milton Keynes and neighbouring towns.

6.3 With Towcester’s imminent growth through development of the SUE, existing employment areas to the north, and two of the three draft employment site allocations identified to the north of Towcester, the Site is well positioned to further strengthen the town’s employment offering through additional sustainable development for employment uses. As identified within this report, it is important to align new employment opportunities with the skill profiles of the local population. Census data has shown that Towcester, and South Northamptonshire as a whole, have a high proportion of the working population with a qualification of NVQ Level1 or higher (over 90%). However, there is currently a high percentage of out-commuting within both South Northamptonshire (72%) and Towcester (78%). The development of the Site will provide greater employment opportunities for Towcester’s working population, which meets with the local skill set, and in turn help reduce levels of out-commuting within Towcester, and South Northamptonshire.

6.4 Relevant planning policies and economic evidence reports support the growth of the South Northamptonshire’s and Towcester’s economy, with emphasis on diverse employment opportunities within areas strategically located to national and regional road networks; helping improve inward investment into the District, and supported by the imminent growth of Towcester’s population. It has also been evidenced that there is a healthy industrial market within South Northamptonshire, which is set to continue. However, there is currently a shortfall high quality stock, most notably for units sizes ranging between 5,000 to 10,000 + sq. m. IMP’s site provides an opportunity to create a high quality employment site, with connects to the strategic road network, that can meet the demands of the local market for a range of medium to large sized units.

6.5 As identified within Section 4, growth to the north of Towcester presents a clear and least constrained direction for additional employment growth. Technical survey work undertaken to date confirms that the Site is deliverable and achievable, with no significant constraints to the opportunity for sustainable development at the Site. This is reinforced through the allocation of the site as an employment site within the Submission Draft Local Plan (Policy AL3).

6.6 As an employment allocation, the Site presents an opportunity for Towcester to grow and strengthen its employment offering, reducing out-commuting; and currently has market/occupier interest.
6.7 Continuous investment is being made in the IMP site to ensure the earliest delivery of the project and associated economic benefits. The long-term stewardship of the Site is to be overseen by IM Properties, who have an excellent reputation in delivering and managing high quality industrial and commercial developments.

6.8 Further still, the Site would provide a gateway into Towcester, whilst at the same time benefits from existing landscaping along the site periphery, as well as the potential for additional landscaping, ensuring that development will provide a harmonious relationship with the neighbouring countryside. The Site has the ability to improve the safety of the existing Northampton Road/A43 junction, through improvements works; whilst at the same time enhancing sustainable transport connections for those living in Towcester to commute to work.

6.9 To that end, given the relatively unconstrained nature of the Site, the substantial economic and social benefits for Towcester, and South Northamptonshire, and the Site’s allocation and for employment development within the Local Plan (Policy AL3), it can be concluded that the Site is deliverable, sustainable, and achievable, for a new high quality employment development at a sustainable location. The employment development opportunity at the IMP site could help to promote the economic competitiveness of Towcester and South Northamptonshire, whilst meeting a demand for high quality employment scheme of B1c, B2, and B8 uses. The Site could also accommodate the needs of medium to large sized companies who are not looking to locate at strategic employment sites.
Appendix 1: Site Boundary Plan, Site Design Parameters Plan, and Junction Improvement Plan
Industrial + Logistics

Building Form to Address Roundabout & Roadside Frontage

Pond

Workings (dis)

LEGEND

Industrial + Logistics use

Uses to Address Roundabout and Roadside Frontage

Proposed 10m Landscaping buffer

New roundabout and access road position to reduce impact on A43

Proposed pedestrian & cycle links
Appendix 2: Towcester’s Employment Development Opportunities Plan