

planning  
transport  
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infrastructure

Response to Inspector's Issues & Questions: Matter 10 Response  
on behalf of Gallagher Properties Ltd

June 2022 JB/14494



# Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>INTRODUCTION .....</b>	<b>2</b>
1.1	Background .....	2
<b>2</b>	<b>ISSUE 1: KEY EMPLOYMENT AREAS .....</b>	<b>4</b>
2.1	Introduction.....	4
2.2	Q1. What are the Key Employment Sites, how have they been defined and is their inclusion in the Plan justified by appropriate, up-to-date evidence? .....	4
2.3	Q2. Are the boundaries of the Key Employment Sites accurately shown on the submission version policies maps? .....	5
2.4	Q4. Does the Plan help to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt as required by paragraph 81 of the Framework? .....	5
<b>3</b>	<b>ISSUE 2: EMPLOYMENT SITE ALLOCATIONS .....</b>	<b>6</b>
3.1	STR/SS1 – Land East of Maidstone Road and Land East of Transfesa Road, Paddock Wood	6
3.2	Q7. For each site, how has the scale of proposed development been determined and is it appropriate and justified in this location? .....	6
3.3	Q8. Is it sufficiently clear to decision-makers, developers and local communities the type and amount of development proposed on each site? .....	6
3.4	Q9. How will each site be delivered? Will they be tied to the delivery of new housing or developed individually? .....	7
3.5	Q10. How will the proposed employment sites include pedestrian links from the proposed new areas of housing, as required by Policy STR/SS1? (especially land east of Transfesa Road) .....	7

# 1 Introduction

## 1.1 Background

1.1.1 This Statement has been prepared by DHA Planning on behalf of Gallagher Properties Ltd in response to the Inspector's Questions on Matter 10 (Employment, Economic Development and Infrastructure) in respect of the Tunbridge Wells Borough Council Local Plan Examination.

1.1.2 Gallagher is promoting land at Swatlands Farm, Lucks Lane that forms part of the employment allocations proposed for the expansion of Paddock Wood. The site location is shown in Figure 1.1.



Figure 1.1: Site location plan

1.1.3 The site is one of the proposed employment sites as identified in Policy STR/SS1(g), which also confirms that the site will be a Key Employment Area to which Policy ED1 will apply. It forms part of the Northern Parcel as shown on Map 27 of the Submission Local Plan (SLP).

1.1.4 The site is located to the south-east of Maidstone Road and south of Lucks Lane. It lies adjacent to, but outside, the defined Limits to Built Development (LBD)

boundary of Paddock Wood in the adopted Local Plan, but within the proposed Paddock Wood STR/SS1 Strategic Development Area and within the proposed Provisional LBD in the SLP.

- 1.1.5 The site is located within what is currently open countryside. However it is not located within the Green Belt or an AONB.
- 1.1.6 The site comprises an undeveloped parcel of agricultural land, immediately adjacent to the existing Transfesa Industrial Estate, which is to the south. It has a largely grassed surfaced with boundaries are marked by hedgerows and trees. A small wooded area lies to the west, adjacent to Maidstone Road, and a central tree/hedge line which partially divides the site. There is also a water course running along the rear boundary of the site and a small stream that runs across part of the site from Lucks Lane.
- 1.1.7 Gallaghers are proposing to develop the site for employment development. It is currently anticipated that a range of size and types of employment units could be provided on the site, providing just over 18,000 sqm of employment floorspace within up to seven buildings.

## 2 Issue 1: Key Employment Areas

### 2.1 Introduction

2.1.1 Where relevant, Gallagher respond to the Inspector's questions as follows.

### 2.2 Q1. What are the Key Employment Sites, how have they been defined and is their inclusion in the Plan justified by appropriate, up-to-date evidence?

2.2.1 Gallagher fully support the identification of their proposed development site as a Key Employment Site. The Council's SHELAA site assessment confirms that the site is suitable for economic uses, and is available and deliverable, as a logical extension to a Key Employment Area.<sup>1</sup>

2.2.2 The site is deliverable in the short term and therefore represents an excellent opportunity to deliver meaningful new employment, and by providing the type of units for which there is currently the highest level of demand.

2.2.3 Gallagher has contributed to the initial masterplanning work already undertaken by David Lock Associates and has attended the Paddock Wood Strategic Sites Workshops held to date. The proposed employment development at Swatlands Farm is in line with the masterplanning work which has been carried out to date.

2.2.4 NPPF paragraph 82d requires planning policies *"to be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan... and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances."*

2.2.5 Whilst residential developers and future occupiers benefit from a wide range of sites and locations, commercial developers and occupiers are often constrained to a much more limited range. If one or more large sites do not come forward as expected, or if allocated sites do not meet the commercial needs of potential occupiers (and indeed existing companies looking to expand locally), they can often find themselves without suitable options. As a result, they can either miss the opportunity to grow, by staying where they are, or they choose to relocate further afield. Rarely will they compromise by investing significant sums of money in sites which do not meet their needs.

2.2.6 This is recognised in the Council's Economic Development Strategy, which concludes amongst other things that a shortage of sites is a major constraint for local businesses and is a barrier to inward investment.

2.2.7 We therefore agree with the Council's proposed strategy of ensuring that, as well as providing a minimum quantum of employment development land, other factors are taken into account including the need to provide a range of types of sites; the spatial spread of the main centres of employment; the suitability, availability and achievability of sites; and the need to maintain a continuity of supply of sites and premises. The Local Plan cannot and should not be reliant on too small a number of employment allocations which may, for a variety of reasons, be unsuitable to

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<sup>1</sup> [Core Document 3.77](#) Site 347, p.95

meet the needs of particular visitors and/or may not be delivered quickly (or indeed at all).

2.2.8 Furthermore, new high quality employment sites in Paddock Wood, and particularly in this location, are also an essential catalyst for the translocation of businesses from the town centre, allowing the redevelopment of brown field industrial sites into more sustainable mixed-use schemes (which we support).

**2.3 Q2. Are the boundaries of the Key Employment Sites accurately shown on the submission version policies maps?**

2.3.1 The whole of Gallagher's site falls within the Key Employment Site designation as shown on the Policies Map, which is considered accurate and correct insofar as it relates to this site.

**2.4 Q4. Does the Plan help to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt as required by paragraph 81 of the Framework?**

2.4.1 Gallagher welcomes the approach taken by TWBC to ensure that a range of employment site types and locations are provided for within the plan. Gallagher also welcomes the flexibility shown within Policy ED1 in relation to the range of employment uses allowed for. Both of these factors are essential in ensuring that businesses can invest, expand and adapt as necessary. In turn these factors lead to naturally diverse and high-value built assets i.e. a successful quality development

### **3 Issue 2: Employment Site Allocations**

#### **3.1 STR/SS1 – Land East of Maidstone Road and Land East of Transfesa Road, Paddock Wood**

3.1.1 Where relevant, Gallagher respond to the Inspector's questions as follows, in relation to the Swatlands Farm site.

#### **3.2 Q7. For each site, how has the scale of proposed development been determined and is it appropriate and justified in this location?**

3.2.1 As well as taking part in the Paddock Wood Strategic Sites Workshops and contributing to the David Lock Associates masterplanning exercise for Paddock Wood, Gallaghers have undertaken pre-application discussions with TWBC in relation to a proposed development scheme for the Swatlands Farm site which is due to be submitted as a planning application within the next few weeks.

3.2.2 The proposals drawn up for the site are for a scheme of just over 18,000sqm of Class E, B2 and B8 uses on a developable area of around 5.26ha in accordance with both the emerging Local Plan and the Strategic Sites Masterplanning and Infrastructure Main Report. Gallagher have had regard to the masterplanning documents throughout the development of these proposals.

3.2.3 Gallagher have also undertaken consultation with Design South East, Paddock Wood Town Council and local residents, including through an online public consultation held in February 2022.

3.2.4 Gallagher are confident that there is strong demand for the proposed uses in Paddock Wood, having received interest from several potential occupiers. As a locally based, family-run developer and landlord that specialises solely on delivering commercial property in Kent and the South East, Gallagher Properties Limited has an excellent reputation for delivering the highest quality spaces on both a speculative and build-to-suit basis.

3.2.5 Gallaghers have a track record of providing a wide range of employment uses, and have previously constructed units for smaller businesses on a speculative basis, for example at Nepicar Park at Wrotham (Tonbridge & Malling), and wider mixed use developments such as Eclipse Park, Maidstone. Details of the Nepicar development were appended to their Regulation 19 representations.

#### **3.3 Q8. Is it sufficiently clear to decision-makers, developers and local communities the type and amount of development proposed on each site?**

3.3.1 Gallagher considers that Policy STR/SS1 and its cross references to ED1 are sufficiently clear about what is expected. It is essential that, in order to create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt, planning policies allow flexibility and do not impose unnecessary constraints.

3.3.2 Individual businesses can have significantly different needs and are unlikely to want to invest in new commercial floorspace unless they can be confident that

their needs will be met. Too many local plans have sought to provide arbitrary constraints on employment building sizes, layouts and uses which then constrain the potential for the sites to meet the needs of some local businesses. For example, some authorities have sought to introduce policies restricting employment uses on a site to a particular sector or development type which it would like to attract, but the reality is that such restrictions do little to encourage such uses to the site – rather they just prevent other perfectly acceptable uses from coming there instead.

3.3.3 We therefore applaud the approach being taken by TWBC to identify land as employment land for a wide range of identified uses, and to then allow the details to be determined through planning applications.

3.3.4 Any development must still accord with the other development management policies set out in the plan, and so the Council continues to retain full control to ensure that the proposed uses, layouts and design are appropriate for the site. Various other parameters must still be considered – including for example flood risk, landscape impacts and ecological habitats.

**3.4 Q9. How will each site be delivered? Will they be tied to the delivery of new housing or developed individually?**

3.4.1 There is strong existing demand for additional employment in floorspace in Paddock Wood and so we see no reason to prevent the employment sites coming forward without delay. It is important that employment land comes forward at an early stage to complement residential growth. Given the recent residential developments that are already being delivered in Paddock Wood, it is important that employment opportunities are brought forward sooner rather than later to help cater for that housing growth.

3.4.2 Gallagher has worked closely with the local authority to ensure that the proposals accord with the wider masterplan, for example by ensuring that pedestrian and cycle links through the site can be connected into the wider networks envisaged through the masterplan.

**3.5 Q10. How will the proposed employment sites include pedestrian links from the proposed new areas of housing, as required by Policy STR/SS1? (especially land east of Transfesa Road)**

3.5.1 The proposed Paddock Wood masterplan shown in the Strategic Sites Masterplanning and Infrastructure Main Report identifies a network of pedestrian routes linking the proposed new areas of housing with the rest of the town. This includes several routes which emerge from the west onto Maidstone Road in the vicinity of the Swatlands Farm site. The scheme also encourages recreational/leisure walks through enhanced landscaped areas as well as managing commuter activity.

3.5.2 Whilst not clearly shown on the masterplan, there is also an existing public right of way running along the southern boundary of the Swatlands Farm site, connecting Maidstone Road and Lucks Lane, emerging close to the railway crossing. The development proposals for Swatlands Farm seek to maximise



pedestrian connectivity with the rest of the town by providing numerous pedestrian connections with this existing public right of way, Maidstone Road and Lucks Lane. This includes connections towards the proposed employment land parcel immediately to the north of Swatlands Farm.

- 3.5.3 These existing (orange solid line) and proposed (orange dashed line) connections are shown in Figure 3.1.



Figure 3.1: Existing and proposed pedestrian connections