

Part I: Summary Proof of Evidence on  
Employment Need from a Studies  
Perspective for Land North East of  
Junction 10 M42, Tamworth

Prepared for:

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## 1. About the Author

- 1.1. I, Jon Turner MRICS, am a chartered surveyor specialising in development consultancy since 2002 for both the public and private sectors in the Midlands, with a focus on central and local government. Recent clients include Birmingham City Council, Walsall Council, and Derby Council.
- 1.2. In this context, I consider that I am well placed to comment on the employment land need evidence for the Appeal Site from an employment need and studies perspective.
- 1.3. C&W is one of the largest commercial property consultancies serving the UK. It is a multi-disciplinary practice, but it is particularly well known for its expertise and experience within Industrial and Logistics (“I&L”) and office property.
- 1.4. The content of my proof of evidence contains my professional opinion and is produced in full accordance with my professional code of conduct. I am aware of my duties to the Inquiry to provide my opinion irrespective of by whom I am instructed. I can therefore confirm that the content of this proof is true to the best of my knowledge or belief.

## 2. Scope of Evidence

- 2.1. To fully understand the strategic employment land need position that is relevant to the Appeal Site the accompanying Cushman & Wakefield Employment Land Study May 2024 (“C&WELS”) is provided at Appendix 1 of the Joint Appendices that accompanies my proof of evidence.

### The C&WELS

- 2.2. The C&WELS provides the most comprehensive and current evidence base for strategic employment land in the location of the Appeal Site.
- 2.3. The C&WELS establishes that strategic employment land for I&L Big Box development (buildings  $\geq 100,000$  sq. ft.) is a specific and distinct market segment of the overall employment land market and that there is an immediate need for such land regionally, sub-regionally, and locally.
- 2.4. Unless otherwise indicated references to paragraphs and figures in my proof of evidence relate to the C&WELS.
- 2.5. The C&WELS was jointly authored by myself with the assistance from colleagues including David Binks MRICS, who authored Section 4,5, and 6. I authored Section 3.
- 2.6. I strongly advise the Inspector to read the Study in full to gain a comprehensive understanding of the employment land need position in relation to this Appeal.

### Proof of Evidence

- 2.7. From a studies perspective, my proof of evidence:
- Provides a brief analysis of the studies published over the last decade which identify and establish the immediate need for Big Box logistics strategic employment land in the area generally and in the location of the Appeal Site specifically (Section 3).  
  
(For a comprehensive analysis of the relevant studies the C&WELS should be read in full).
  - Draws on evidence in the C&WELS to demonstrate that at the regional, sub-regional, and local level (in North Warwickshire) there has been a long standing chronic under-delivery of strategic sites and demonstrates that in employment need terms LP6 is triggered (Section 4).
  - Details how the Appeal Site is the most obvious location to meet the immediate need demonstrated.

### 3. Summary of Proof of Evidence

- 3.1. The systemic failure of the planning system has created a regional local disconnect in which the loose arrangement of the 'duty to cooperate' has not placed a sufficient imperative on local planning authorities to plan and provide for strategic issues, such as strategic employment land.
- 3.2. It is in this system that North Warwickshire Borough Council (NWBC), and indeed other local authorities across the country, has insufficiently planned to address the strategic need evidence base, citing, as the North Warwickshire Local Plan does in (**paragraph 7.41, page 35, CD-F1**), that such development could be located elsewhere across the East and West Midlands. The consequence of that abrogative stance is that on both a quantitative and qualitative basis, strategic employment land (particularly large scale logistics employment land) has not been provided for in the locations in which it is needed, ignoring the substantial evidence base.
- 3.3. The C&WELS provides an up to date summary of provision of strategic employment land in North Warwickshire and neighbouring local authorities, showing that in most cases they have not provided for large scale strategic employment land (paragraphs 2.16 to 2.36 and Figures 2B on page 12, 2C on page 13, and 3 on page 13) in spite of a number of iterations of the plan making process since the abandonment of the regional tier of planning.
- 3.4. Successive iterations of the NWBC plan making process (Core Strategy 2014 & Local Plan 2021) have not addressed the evidenced and identified sub-regional and regional need and instead favoured metrics relating to local need. Mr Hann explains in his evidence that the Local Plan Inspector expressly recognised this approach and therefore recommended a policy approach that would enable this need to be addressed at a development management level, absent a further review of the plan.
- 3.5. It was in this context of a serious lack of strategic employment land provision by the Core Strategy and the failure of NWBC to address strategic level employment land, that St Modwen's Tamworth Logistics Park, located at J10M42 in North Warwickshire was allowed at Appeal (**CD-K2**) on 26<sup>th</sup> November 2016.
- 3.6. In spite of this appeal decision and further evidence, for example, from the Coventry & Warwickshire Market Signals Study 2019 regarding the need to immediately allocate large scale B8 logistics land along key transport corridors (the study is summarised in paragraphs 3.108 to 3.113) and significant unmet need from adjacent administrative areas – notably – Birmingham (paragraph 3.121 to 3.131), NWBC continued their local plan making process focusing primarily on local need and not addressing the evidence of strategic employment need.
- 3.7. Indeed the C&WELS details that at examination, the Local Plan Inspector accepted this position, directing that the 100 hectare quantum of employment land was required to become a 'minimum' amount and policy LP6 was required as a clear mechanism for decision makers to facilitate further employment land within Area A (covering the western half of North Warwickshire) where that land could not be provided for by allocations or forecasted supply in the Local Plan. Notably the Inspector required the introduction of LP6 in order to be consistent with the NPPF and make the plan sound. The Inspectors approach was predicated on the basis that it was not at that point possible to quantify the extent of that strategic need that needed to be met in North Warwickshire.

- 3.8. In this context of a reluctance by NWBC to address the evidenced strategic need it is perhaps unsurprising that the readily available supply of land capable of accommodating large scale logistics buildings rapidly ran out in North Warwickshire – i.e. reached ‘0’(zero) years’ supply – by 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022 as evidenced by NWBC’s own Annual Monitoring Report 2023 – approximately 6 month’s after the adoption of the Local Plan (paragraphs 3.186 to 3.197).
- 3.9. It should be noted that in North Warwickshire large scale logistics land for Big Box developments has accounted for 91.81% of completion rates since 2019 and 86.17% since 2011 (See Figure 19 of the C&WELS).
- 3.10. It is also telling that due to the demand-supply imbalance evidenced in the C&WELS and my proof that, two further sites both within the Green Belt are being promoted on a speculative basis within North Warwickshire for large scale logistics use. The promoters of those sites are arguing that the very special circumstances required for Green Belt release exist.
- 3.11. Mr Hann explains the approach of national policy that all matters being equal non-Green Belt sites should always be used in preference to Green Belt sites which benefit from the highest tier of planning policy protection.
- 3.12. The forward planning response from North Warwickshire has been extremely slow in its approach to addressing this identified ‘gap’ in employment land supply. Indeed, a draft employment land development plan document (which has already been delayed) is currently only at a very initial draft stage, that being Scope, Issues, and Options.
- 3.13. Moreover, the Scope, Issues, and Options paper does not expressly state that it will address the identified need for strategic logistics land meaning there is no certainty, or realistic prospect of at least before 2030 strategic employment land need being met through the plan led system.
- 3.14. In the absence of a market response triggering LP6, it is almost impossible to conceive of North Warwickshire being able to contribute to the provision of strategic employment land for a significant period and certainly not before 2030, despite compelling evidence that it needs to do so.
- 3.15. There are two employment need ‘limbs’ to LP6, ‘either or’ of which needs to be satisfied in order to engage the policy, so long as that need cannot be met by allocations or forecasted supply.
- 3.16. The C&WELS details that large scale industrial and logistics developments known as ‘Big Box’ (≥100,000+ sq. ft) are a specific market segment – “a certain type” of the overall employment land market, with a distinct set of characteristics (paragraph 4.1).
- 3.17. The proposals therefore meet the LP6 requirement for being a ‘certain type of employment land’, by nature of being a distinct market segment of the overall employment land market with specific locational requirements and characteristics.
- 3.18. In addition, the proposals also meet the other limb of LP6 of ‘immediate need’ within the specific market segment for which they are proposed.



- 3.19. Occupiers seek to focus on development land with planning certainty and risk reduced and minimised, typically seeking delivery of a development within a 2-year time period, which in development terms is considered as immediate. This was expressly recognised in WMESS 2021. Only a very small minority of requirements can wait longer. The market’s method of being in a position to service such immediate demand is through either providing serviced land plots for build to suit developments or speculative construction of buildings.
- 3.20. Within that context, it is unrealistic to expect occupiers to commit to a timeframe of an uncertain period, without any guarantee of achieving a successful outcome. Moreover, this is especially the case, when following consent being achieved strategic employment sites of scale often (but not in the case of the Appeal Site) require significant offsite and onsite enabling works to create serviced plots to meet immediate demand.
- 3.21. Occupiers, therefore, will in the majority of requirements focus on developments where planning and infrastructure has already been secured and provided on a speculative basis, the majority will not accept an uncertain planning environment or unknown delivery timescales whilst planning is secured. Our market research confirms this approach where of all Midlands Grade A taken up in 2023, 88.3% of that take up was for speculative or build to suit development on serviced development plots.
- 3.22. The C&WELS provides land supply in years’ take up by reference to historic take up over a five year period against existing supply. The table below provides the relevant land supply of land available for large scale logistics at each level, also providing a reference to the relevant paragraph of the C&WELS.

3.23. Table 1: Large scale logistics land supply from C&W ELS

Level	Land Supply (Years)	Reference
Regional (Golden Triangle)	0.92 (11 months)	Paragraph 5.21
Sub-Regional (Area A, Area 2, M42 Corridor + J11)	0.25-0.29 (3-3.5 months)	Paragraphs 5.29 – 5.31
Local (North Warwickshire)	0	Paragraph 5.39

- 3.24. In Big Box sector terms – the distinct market segment to which the Appeal relates - this data cannot be interpreted as anything other than an acute and immediate need to identify large scale strategic employment land for logistics purposes.
- 3.25. My proof demonstrates that of the employment allocations in the Local Plan only E2 – Land to the West of Birch Coppice (5.1 hectares) is potentially suitable for B8 storage. This allocation, however, has timing constraints requiring the relocation of 1.5 hectares of allotments prior to commencement of construction. In addition, it is understood that access would need to be through a 3<sup>rd</sup> party private road and once other development considerations have been taken into account including landscaping, sustainable drainage features, and estate roads, would likely only yield a maximum of 3 to 3.5 hectares of net developable land.
- 3.26. It is clear that the allocations in the North Warwickshire Local Plan cannot meet the immediate need for strategic employment land for Big Box logistics from allocations or forecasted supply.

- 3.27. My proof and the C&WELS details the appropriateness of the Appeal Site to meet immediate need at a national, regional, and sub-regional level.
- Nationally, in terms of its compliance with UK Government Plans and Strategies (as detailed in the C&WELS).
  - Regionally, in terms of it lying at a key nodal point at the heart of the Golden Triangle with easy access to the motorway and strategic road network, and being rail served.
  - Sub-regionally, being located within Area A as defined by LP6 and WMSESS 2015, Area 2 as defined by WMSESS 2021, and outside of the national designation of the Green Belt.
- 3.28. It is capable of being delivered in a very short time frame of 2-3 years (see occupier programme in Appendix 3), which as understood in the context of strategic land of the type proposed, as being available for immediate delivery.
- 3.29. Indeed, given the evidence presented in the C&WELS and this proof, in my view, the Appeal Site is the most appropriate location within North Warwickshire, sub-regionally, and regionally for a new strategic site to be identified.
- 3.30. That conclusion aligns with the WMSESS 2021 analysis of potential sites which ranked the Appeal Site as top against 30 other potential sites to deliver strategic employment land in the West Midlands.
- 3.31. For these reasons, I see the Appeal Site as being absolutely appropriate to meet the evidenced immediate need for the certain type of employment for which it is proposed, and suggest it represents the obvious and most suitable location having regard to all of the issues considered.
- 3.32. Having regard to the evidence presented in the C&WELS and my proof, in my view, the Appeal Site represents the most obvious opportunity which stands out regionally, sub-regionally, and locally. I know of no better site within the Borough or sub-region to meet the immediate need and demand identified for strategic employment land – the distinct market segment for which it is proposed.



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