

Stroud Emerging Planning Strategy

Representation by Smiths (Gloucester) Limited January 2019

Background

1. Smith's (Gloucester) Limited is a successful local family business established over 35 years ago and is a major employer in Stroud employing nearly 500 with a large proportion of this based in the District. The company is growing and anticipates that in the next couple of years its employment will increase by a further 100. This document is submitted as Smiths representation on the Stroud Emerging Planning Strategy.

General Overall Comment

2. Smiths operates a number of sites in the District and is keen to ensure that the growth of the business is not compromised but supported by planning policies, in line with the NPPF which looks to planning policies to support economic growth and take into account local business needs. Having reviewed the Emerging Planning Strategy Smiths consider that it does not provide a positive approach for the continuing growth of its business and indeed some of the detail represents a business threat.

Key Issues Comment

3. The focus of the key issues in the Emerging Planning Strategy, perhaps understandably, relates to delivering much needed housing. Smiths do see the provision of further housing as essential particularly adequate affordable housing; indeed Smiths have a small amount of residential property housing members of its work force and would, if an opportunity arose, develop further properties for affordable rental. However Smiths concerns relate to the lack of emphasis on economic growth and consider this is an omission in the key issues. Smiths consider the key issues should include the need for meaningful economic growth in the District that will allow growth and expansion of established local businesses as well as encouraging new business.

Questions 2.1a&b

4. Smiths are concerned that the strategy does not sufficiently address assisting and supporting existing businesses.

Questions 3.2a&b

5. Smiths support SO2 however it should be expanded to include an emphasis to positively support local businesses already providing employment in the District.

Questions 4.2a&b

Emerging Growth Strategy

6. Smiths consider Option 1 does not support their business interests and prefer option 3, with a dispersed approach to support employment activities/businesses which are not based in the main centres.

Question 5.0

Stonehouse Cluster Mini vision

7. The employment contribution in Stonehouse is acknowledged but going forward the focus is on the employment development in the Oldends/Stroudwater area which does not support Smiths or other established businesses outside this area. The mini vision should seek to support existing established businesses in a more meaningful manner.

Severn Cluster Mini vision

8. The mini vision has no focus for employment development. There are several small but well established business sites along the A38 corridor and cumulatively their contribution to the economy cannot be ignored. Here the A38 and M5 provide excellent communications links close to major centres in an area relatively unconstrained by landscape and conservation designations. There is no mention of employment in the mini vision nor any potential employment sites identified. Smiths, in line with their preference for a dispersal option for development and the lack of meaningful support the Emerging Strategy Paper has for existing businesses considers this a failing the in mini vision which should be addressed.

Question 5.1

Comments on specific sites:

SALA ref: EAS002

Site name: Land rear of Alkerton Court

Parish: Eastington

Gross site area: 6.67 hectares

SALA conclusion: Future Potential

9. The Emerging Strategy Paper comments that Eastington is a 'dormitory' settlement. This, without qualification, appears at odds with statement that it is a modest net importer of workers.
10. The Issues and Options paper identified broad locations for growth around Eastington which included Alkerton Court to the west side of Eastington. The Emerging Strategy Paper does not identify any development sites at Eastington.
11. The adopted Eastington Neighbourhood Plan does not identify land at Alkerton Court as employment land however it is clear they support Smiths, paragraph 9.1.9 states *the NDP wishes to support and encourage Home Working and low cost premises for our local entrepreneurs, larger employers like Smiths.*
12. The Stroud Strategic Assessment of Land Availability (SALA) informs the emerging policy documents as to potential developments sites. SALA lists the site EAS002 for future potential development at Alkerton Court. The southern end of this is occupied by Smiths together and the rest is agricultural land largely to the north. Alkerton Court is Smiths Headquarters and they have operated here for over 20 years. The land to the north is the logical and only practical option to allow them to expand, given the constraints of highways and existing built development.
13. The aerial photo overleaf shows the boundary of EAS002 outlined red and the extent of Smiths occupation, over 2.7ha, wholly within EAS002 is clear.

Aerial Photograph of Alkerton Court with EAS002 boundary annotated



14. Smiths' site at Alkerton is long established and as the headquarters site it is particularly significant for the business. Permissions have been granted for Smiths operations here including the most recent permission (over 10 years ago) converting old farm buildings into offices. The farmhouse is occupied as a residential property and the remaining agricultural buildings which have not been converted are pig pens with no meaningful potential for conversion notwithstanding they are actively used for livestock.

15. The SALA comments for EAS002 include the statements *'The Smith's Depot appears to be an anomaly in this location, especially around the listed building. Any expansion or additional employment uses would be undesirable.'* And that *'there is a reasonable prospect of a partial reconfiguration of current uses in the future'*.

16. Smiths are not aware of the source of the latter comments and are deeply concerned that the SALA comments appear to be actively seeking the redevelopment of a site which already has a well-established business/employment use.

17. Notwithstanding the NPPF requires planning polices to support existing businesses, the NPPF is clear that planning policies should ensure new development can integrate with existing businesses and not result in an existing business being subject to unreasonable restrictions as a result of development permitted after they were established. Smiths cannot see how housing could be promoted immediately adjacent to their operations at Alkerton.

18. This reinforces Smiths concerns of over bias in the Emerging Strategy for housing to the detriment of existing business and sustainable economic growth such that the Emerging Planning Strategy represents an agent for change which could have a significant adverse disadvantage for Smiths existing business never mind preventing its further growth.

SALA ref: HAR009

Site name: Moreton Valence Airfield

Parish: Hardwicke

Gross site area: 13.92 hectares

SALA conclusion: Future Potential

19. The site is identified as having future potential for development. Smiths' view is that employment development, particularly where there are established businesses, should be supported in the Severn Cluster and this site should be included in the Emerging Planning Strategy for employment use. The site is already partly occupied by a number of employment uses, including a number of open yard operations. They benefit from a direct access onto the A38, being relatively remote from residential development and also free from conservation/heritage/landscape designations. The development potential is listed as offices and light industrial units yet it is clear this location is well suited to a wider range of employment uses and the development potential comments should reflect this.

SALA ref: STR049

Site name: Brunsdons Yard

Parish: Cainscross

Gross site area: 4.06 hectares

SALA conclusion: Deliverable

20. This site is in the SALA as a deliverable site. By way of up-date to the SALA site description it should be noted that the site is now partially occupied in an employment use. Smith's concern is that whilst this land is identified as a deliverable site in the SALA it is not identified on any plans in the Emerging Strategy Paper, even as an 'alternative site' 'not to be included'. The site should be included for employment use. The development potential is listed as light industrial and warehousing but this should be expanded to allow a range of wider industrial/employment uses reflecting the current use at STR049 allowing the likes of depots and open yard uses, uses which are very difficult to find sites for.