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Chapter 5: Building a Strong Competitive Economy

5.1 This chapter explains how the Local Plan will support Basildon's economy by protecting and optimising employment land and encouraging sustainable business growth. It identifies key Employment Areas, sets out acceptable uses and redevelopment guidance, and highlights measures to improve infrastructure, accessibility, and environmental performance. The policies aim to ensure new and existing businesses contribute positively to the local economy and communities.

5.2 The *NPPF* highlights the role of a Local Plan in preparing and planning for sustainable economic growth and attracting inward investment. Opportunities for economic growth in Basildon will be realised by maintaining and optimising the Borough's employment floorspace offer. This will be achieved by protecting employment land and encouraging its innovative re-use in ways that meet market needs.

5.3 Understanding how the employment land market works, there is a need to provide a contingency allowance to account for 'windfall losses' and 'churn'. Windfall losses recognise that a proportion of designated employment land will not be entirely used by B and E(g) class employment use. This allowance covers unexpected losses of employment land, such as conversion to residential or leisure uses from premises where demand is low, as well as changes in business and sector needs over time. Businesses may need to relocate to sites that better suit their operations, and in some cases, an existing business may close and a new business take over the site for redevelopment. To facilitate this, a certain level of vacant land and premises is needed, referred to as 'churn'.

5.4 The Council will support a growing and diversifying economy. Sustainable economic growth is crucial to addressing current challenges, including tackling deprivation. Planning policies will be used to realise the opportunities identified in the Council's *Economic Development Strategy* and to enable growth across the Borough. Creating thriving business locations is an important element of the Council's local planning and economic strategies and contributes to promoting sustainable patterns of development.

5.5 Taking these considerations into account, the Council's *Employment Land Review 2025* identifies a need to allocate 69 hectares of new land for employment purposes over the lifetime of the local plan.

5.6 The Council defines 'employment-generating' development as proposals within classes B2, B8 and E(g) of the Use Classes Order. Other commercial, business and service uses, including those within use classes E(a) to E(f), are predominantly 'Main Town Centre Uses' as defined by the *NPPF*.

5.7 There are thirteen main Employment Areas in the borough. These will be protected to provide for B2, B8 and E(g) Class employment floorspace, together with other associated employment-generating Uses, including Sui Generis, over the Plan period. These Employment Areas are as follows:

a. Burnt Mills, Basildon;

b. Cranes, Basildon;

c. Case New Holland Tractor Park, Basildon;

d. Festival Business Park, Basildon;

e. Pipps Hill, Basildon;

f. Laindon North, Laindon;

g. Wrexham Road, Laindon;

h. Southfields, Laindon;

i. SS&C House, St Nicholas Lane, Basildon;

j. Terminus Drive, Pitsea;

k. Radford Way Business Park, Billericay;

l. Wickford Business Park, Hurricane Way, Wickford; and

m. Ford Dunton Campus, Basildon.

5.8 In these locations, proposals for employment-generating development will be supported where they make efficient use of land or buildings and contribute positively to sustainable economic growth, both within the relevant employment area and across the Borough.

5.9 Existing employment sites, particularly smaller sites, can often face pressures for redevelopment or change to alternative uses. The Council's policy approach seeks to limit the loss of these sites to ensure that employment-generating uses are maintained wherever possible.

5.10 Protecting the main designated town centres for their retail function is a key objective of the Local Plan. While the Council aims to regenerate Basildon Town Centre and realise the associated economic benefits of such, including new employment-generating floorspace, a proliferation of Class E(a) uses in the identified Employment Areas could undermine this objective. Class E(a) uses will therefore be limited, with the exception of small-scale proposals (in terms of floorspace) where the retail provision is ancillary and complements the predominant employment offering within the Employment Area.

5.11 To provide flexibility, certain uses outside Classes E(g), B2 and B8 may be considered appropriate within designated Employment Areas, where justified. Such uses can still provide valuable employment-generating opportunities and contribute positively to the character, mix, and vitality of these areas. Any proposal for a non-Class E(g), B2, or B8 use must be supported by evidence to show that there is no reasonable prospect of the site being used for, or converted to, another employment use within these classes. The type and extent of evidence required will depend on the scale and location of the proposal and should include a comprehensive marketing campaign over a period of at least 2 years before a planning application is submitted. Proposals will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. Certain uses may be deemed unacceptable where they would, individually or collectively, undermine other policy objectives of the Local Plan. The specific form and nature of new employment allocations, and acceptable uses, are set out in the relevant site allocation policy.

5.12 Where the Council receives an application for redevelopment or change of use within designated Employment Areas, proposals should demonstrate their continued employment function and not be detrimental to the wider area, neighbours or wider Strategic Priorities and Principles set out in the Local Plan.

5.13 The impacts generated by a new use will need to be carefully assessed particularly in relation to their effects on neighbouring occupiers within the Employment Area. For example, proposed uses should not create unacceptable conflict between uses, or result in issues such as excessive traffic generation, inadequate parking, noise, or odours. Such impacts could negatively affect the day-to-day operation of the Employment Area and the businesses already established there.

5.14 The Local Plan recognises that businesses need appropriate support in today's economic climate. As such there are measures to improve the ongoing function and general sustainability of the existing Employment Areas so they can continue to meet needs of businesses over the Plan period and beyond. This could include local transport measures or other accessibility improvements that promote choice, provision for micro-energy generation where appropriate to enhance future environmental and building standards, and provision of on-site energy generation and storage to provide lower-cost, secure energy supply to resident businesses. Facilities and amenities that support the needs of businesses and the workforce will be supported where

they are proportionate and complementary to the primary employment function of the site.

5.15 Support will be given to improved provision of sustainable and active travel measures to designated Employment Areas.

5.16 Should the Use Classes Order be amended during the lifespan of this Local Plan, the most closely corresponding new Use Classes to those previously categorised as B2, B8, E(g) and E Use Classes will apply for the purpose of implementing the policies in this chapter.

5.17 If no such amendments occur, the definition of B2, B8 and E(g) Use Classes as at the date of the adoption of this Plan will apply for the purposes of implementing the policies in this chapter. Appropriate conditions or similar mechanisms will be used to secure compliance with the relevant provisions.

POLICY EMP1: Securing Economic Growth

To deliver sustainable economic growth in the Borough, the Council will:

1. Protect and enhance existing Employment Areas as set out in the policies map in order to meet the needs of existing and new businesses, including the protection of land specifically for Class E(g), B2 industrial, and B8 storage and distribution uses and other uses of similar employment nature, in line with Policy EMP2;
2. Make provision for a minimum of 135 ha of land to deliver additional employment development Class E(g) uses, B2 industrial uses and B8 storage and distribution uses;
3. Ensure all existing and new employment land provision is accessed by frequent and high-quality sustainable and active travel modes, linking existing and new residential areas with job opportunities in the borough;
4. Allocate rural enterprise sites within the Green Belt to protect local employment floorspace in rural locations;
5. Provide local employment opportunities which make the best use of brownfield sites without causing harm to the Green Belt or its purposes;
6. Facilitate the training and education of local people to gain skills required to enter or remain part of the local workforce;
7. Ensure professional and vocational training facilities are appropriately located and accessible;
8. Support and facilitate proposals and initiatives which contribute to implementing the priorities identified in the Council's Economic Development Strategy; and
9. Ensure the regeneration of Basildon Town Centre, which will be a catalyst for economic growth and will assist in the provision of new jobs and new office floorspace.

Reasoned Justification

5.18 The *NPPF* sets out the specific requirements for local planning authorities to plan for sustainable economic growth. Local planning authorities are expected to identify priority areas for economic regeneration, infrastructure provision, and environmental enhancement. Planning policies should establish a clear economic vision and strategy for the area, proactively encourage sustainable economic growth, and support existing business sectors. Policies should also define criteria, or identify strategic sites, to guide local and inward investment in line with the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the Plan period; and to ensure compliance with the Adopted Essex Minerals Local Plan and Adopted Essex and Southend on Sea Waste Local Plan. This approach will promote the development of clusters and networks of knowledge-driven, creative, and high-technology industries, as well as storage and distribution operations and other employment-generating uses of varying scales in suitably accessible locations.

Policy Links

- SG1 – Growth Needs
- EMP2 - Protecting Employment Areas
- EMP4 - Rural Enterprise Sites
- EMP5 - Aligning Skills and Jobs
- EMP6 - Locations for Employment Development
- R1 - Supporting Town Centres
- R2 - Development in Basildon Town Centre
- R7 - Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres
- CC1 - Responding to Climate Change
- GB2 - New Development in the Green Belt
- STAT1 - Strategic Transport

Evidence Links

- South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment (2017)
- Basildon Employment Land Needs Assessment (2025)
- Basildon Borough Employment Land & Premises Study (2013)
- National Planning Policy for Waste (2014)
- Essex and Southend on Sea Waste Local Plan (2017)

POLICY EMP2: Protecting Employment Areas

Within the Employment Areas and new employment site allocations, as shown on the Policies Map, the Council will seek to provide and retain Class E(g), B2 and B8 Use Classes or other 'sui generis' uses of a similar employment-generating nature.

Reasoned Justification

5.19 The *NPPF* sets out the specific requirements for local planning authorities to plan for sustainable economic growth. Local planning authorities are expected to identify priority areas for economic regeneration, infrastructure provision, and environmental enhancement. Planning policies should establish a clear economic vision and strategy for the area, proactively encourage sustainable economic growth, and support existing business sectors. Policies should also define criteria, or identify strategic sites, to guide local and inward investment in line with the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the Plan period. This approach will promote the development of clusters and networks of knowledge-driven, creative, and high-technology industries, as well as storage and distribution operations of varying scales in suitably accessible locations.

Policy Links

- SG1 - Growth Needs
- SG2 - Settlement Hierarchy
- EMP1 - Securing Economic Growth
- R1 - Supporting Town Centres
- R7 - Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres

Evidence Links

- Employment Site Appraisal (2025)
- South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment (2017)
- Basildon Employment Land Needs Assessment (2025)
- Basildon Borough Employment Land & Premises Study (2013)
- National Planning Policy for Waste (2014)
- Essex and Southend on Sea Waste Local Plan (2017)

POLICY EMP3: Changes of Use of Employment Land or Premises

Where proposals involve a change of use of premises from E(g), B2 and B8 uses or loss of Employment Land, planning permission will be granted where the following criteria are satisfied:

1. The premises or land cannot be readily used for, or converted to, another Class E(g), B2, B8 or other 'sui generis' Use Class of a similar employment nature;
2. The proposed use provides employment at the application site;
3. The proposed use will not adversely impact upon the operation and function of the Employment Area, or introduce unacceptable conflict between neighbouring uses;
4. The proposed use is appropriate to the location of the site and its relationship to the local transport network;
5. There is no adverse impact on the employment area as a result of pollution and disturbance, access, parking, and servicing arrangements;
6. There are no adverse impacts on residential amenity, or environmental quality;
7. The accommodation provided is flexible and suitable to meet future needs and requirements of larger businesses and small to medium enterprise firms, where appropriate;
8. The scale, bulk and appearance of the development is compatible with the character of its surroundings;
9. On-site servicing and space for waiting goods vehicles is provided to an adequate standard;
10. The premises or land have been vacant and pro-actively marketed for B or E(g) class use for at least 2 years.
11. The site is no longer suitable, viable or appropriate for employment purposes;
12. The loss of the land/premises results in wider social, environmental, or economic benefits which clearly outweigh the loss;
13. It is demonstrated that the location of the use within an employment area does not undermine the vitality or viability of town centres or local centres;
14. The proposed use is compatible with other existing uses within the employment area, having regard to any potential harm to local amenity; and
15. The proposed use would not result in an increase in flood risk vulnerability of the development.

Proposals will be expected to consider opportunities to promote appropriate infrastructure improvements and measures to promote sustainable and active travel opportunities to and within the designated employment area.

Reasoned Justification

5.20 The *NPPF* sets out the specific requirements for local planning authorities to plan for sustainable economic growth. Planning policies should, in turn, set out a clear economic vision and strategy for the area, pro-actively encourage sustainable economic growth, and support existing business sectors. However, there will be instances where premises are no longer required for their existing use, and brownfield sites should be given appropriate consideration for redevelopment or alternative uses. A policy is therefore required to establish clear criteria for determining when the reuse or redevelopment of such premises will be acceptable.

Policy Links

- SG1 - Growth Needs
- SG3 - Spatial Distribution of Growth
- EMP7 - Non-B or E(g) Class Uses in Employment Areas
- D1 - Design and Place Shaping Principles
- INF1 - Infrastructure Delivery
- INF2 - Securing Infrastructure Contributions
- INF3 - Social and Community Infrastructure

Evidence Links

- Employment Site Appraisal (2025)
- South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment (2017)
- Basildon Employment Land Needs Assessment (2025)
- Basildon Borough Employment Land & Premises Study (2013)

Rural Enterprise Sites

5.21 The *NPPF* expects planning policies to support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas through both conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings. They should also promote development and diversification of land-based rural businesses and support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments.

5.22 In 2017 the Council commissioned an Economic Development Needs Assessment for the now withdrawn Local Plan. This identified a number of employment sites outside of the main urban areas in the Borough which have a certain amount of vacant or underutilised land and could provide opportunities for additional employment land in rural areas.

5.23 In 2013, the condition of nine existing employment sites located outside of the main urban areas was assessed by an *Employment Land and Premises Study (ELPS)*. Sites located at Pitsea Hall Lane, Sadlers Farm, and London Road (Vange) performed poorly in the assessment. Although these sites are currently occupied, if they become vacant, they may be more difficult to re-let due to their poor condition. Guildprime, White Bridge Farm, the London Road, Billericay Clusters, Vange Wharf and Annwood Lodge all received a fair score and may have limited redevelopment opportunities, such as upgrading premises and improving the layout of the sites. Bluehouse Farm (Pitsea) and Barleylands Depot (Billericay) received good scores. Guildprime, London Road Clusters, and Vange Wharf were determined by the study to have no scope for further change in terms of meeting the need for new employment land. However, the ELPS recommended that they should be protected as employment sites for B and E(g) Class employment uses.

5.24 Given the age of the ELPS, an updated appraisal of existing Employment Sites in the Borough was completed in Q3 2025. The findings indicate that there is very limited scope for employment redevelopment within the identified rural sites, with the exception of the undeveloped land at Blue House Farm (East).

5.25 Where rural employment locations remain in active business use, and opportunities for making the best use of land to support economic growth are supported in principle, any development and growth must be in the context of the local surroundings. The scale and nature of proposals in these locations will be constrained by the landscape, existing streetscapes (where present), and Green Belt. Appropriate access arrangements for servicing, employees and customers, will also need to be demonstrated.

POLICY EMP4: Rural Enterprise Sites

1. To support the rural economy and provide greater flexibility to the employment land supply, the following existing Rural Enterprise Sites, as identified on the Policies Map, will be retained for B and E(g) Class employment purposes and other employment-generating uses as appropriate to their location:
    a. Guildprime Business Park, Great Burstead & South Green, Billericay;
    b. Vange Wharf, Pitsea;
    c. Blue House Farm, Pitsea;
    d. Whites Bridge Farm, Crays Hill;
    e. Annwood Lodge, Wickford;
    f. Barleylands Farm; and
    g. Barleylands Depot, Billericay.

2. At the locations listed in part 1 of this policy, the following types of development will be accepted, subject to compliance with the requirements of part 3 of this policy:
    a. Extension or expansion of an existing business or intensification of employment uses within the defined site boundary;
    b. Agricultural diversification;
    c. Change of use or conversion of a permanent and soundly constructed agricultural building; or
    d. Uses with a strong functional link back to local agriculture, forestry, or other rural activity.

3. The types of development listed in part 2 of this policy will be supported within the locations listed in part 1 where the following criteria can be met:
    a. The proposal would improve the balance of jobs to working age population within the immediate vicinity, and
    b. The scale of employment is appropriate to the accessibility of the site by public transport, cycling and walking, and the standard of highways, and
    c. The proposal respects the character and qualities of the landscape and the setting of any affected settlement or protected landscape and includes effective mitigation measures to avoid adverse effects or minimise them to acceptable levels.

Reasoned Justification

5.26 The *NPPF* expects planning policies to support the sustainable growth and expansion of all types of business in rural areas through both conversion of existing buildings and well-designed new buildings. Planning policies should also promote development and diversification of land-based rural businesses and support sustainable rural tourism and leisure developments.

Policy Links

- SG1 - Growth Needs
- SG2 - Settlement Hierarchy
- EMP6 - Locations for Employment Development
- D1 - Design and Place Shaping Principles
- D2 - Major Developments - Design
- D3 - Design in Smaller Scale Projects
- INF1 - Infrastructure Delivery
- INF2 - Securing Infrastructure Contributions
- INF3 - Social and Community Infrastructure

Evidence Links

- Employment Site Appraisal (2025)
- South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment (2017)
- Basildon Employment Land Needs Assessment (2025)
- Basildon Borough Employment Land & Premises Study (2013)

Aligning Skills and Jobs

5.27 The generation of Social Value sits at the heart of the planning system. At a policy making level, Social Value is already integrated within national guidance and this filters through to local authorities through the *National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)*. The *NPPF* establishes the achievement of Sustainable Development as a golden thread running throughout the operation of the planning system.

5.28 Basildon Borough Council's Economic Development Strategy seeks to improve the employment prospects, education, and skills of local people. It also aims to promote local supply chain linkages through supporting lower-skilled residents into training and work, to avoid them being marginalised in the labour market and to ensure improvements in the Borough's economy are shared evenly.

5.29 Opportunities for local people to be engaged in the local economy through skills development and training can be created through the effective use of planning incentives and Section 106 (S106) legal agreements. Favourable consideration may be given to proposals that deliver higher skilled jobs, while S106 agreements can be used to secure commitments for direct skills training opportunities or apprenticeships within the construction industry which helps to form stronger connections with local suppliers. Additionally, the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) regulations allow for development contributions to be directed towards education and skills training infrastructure. These measures will complement the work undertaken by the Council's economic development team and its partners, including education and training providers, to increase the uptake of skills training and learning opportunities amongst local residents.

POLICY EMP5: Aligning Skills and Jobs

All applicants submitting Major development proposals (as defined in the Glossary) will be required to work with the Council and its partners to secure improvements to skills levels and employment amongst local residents.

This will include the following:

1. Provide apprenticeship/training posts for local young people, with a focus on those not in education, employment, and training;
2. Provide training in conjunction with South Essex training providers for employees of the proposal, seeking to improve skills levels amongst the workforce to NVQ level 3 or higher; and develop procurement plans which proactively make use of local labour;
3. Submit an 'employment and skills plan' to demonstrate how the development proposal will secure improvements to skills levels and employment amongst local residents during the construction phase and eventual occupation of the building;
4. Quantify the use of local labour from within the developer's project team and within the company;
5. Procure goods and services from local contractors, sub-contractors, and suppliers to support the employment of the local community where economically and practically feasible; and
6. In exceptional circumstances, the Council may accept financial contributions in lieu of steps 'a' to 'e', above.

The Council will secure financial contributions, by legal agreement, towards the implementation and delivery of the applicant's agreed employment and skills plans.

Reasoned Justification

5.30 Economic growth creates opportunities for training and to develop the skills of Basildon residents. The Council is keen to ensure that these opportunities are increasingly made available to residents.

5.31 The Council will continue to support employment and training initiatives that maximise local employment opportunities and address skills gaps in the local workforce. For major developments, planning obligations will be used as necessary to ensure that job opportunities and apprenticeships are notified to the council or appropriate nominated agencies, enabling local people the opportunity to access vacant roles.

5.32 The Council will work with local training providers to ensure that local residents have access to the right skills training to take advantage of opportunities created by new development, both during the construction phase and once the development is operational.

Policy Links

- SG1 - Growth Needs
- EMP1 - Securing Economic Growth
- EMP4 - Rural Enterprise Sites
- HC3 - Strategic Approach to Education, Skills and Learning

Evidence Links

- South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment (2017)

Development Management Policies

Locations for Employment Development

5.33 The *NPPF* requires local planning authorities to establish criteria, or identify strategic sites, to support local and inward investment in line with the economic development strategy and to meet employment needs over the plan period. Planning policies and decisions should create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand, and adapt, placing significant weight on the need to support sustainable economic growth and productivity, while taking into account the needs of different businesses.

POLICY EMP6: Locations for Employment Development

New B and E(g) Use Classes for employment development, and other employment-generating uses, will be permitted on sites allocated for employment use within this plan, subject to compliance with the requirements of any site-specific allocation, and where all of the following criteria are met:

1. There is no adverse impact as a result of pollution and disturbance, access, parking, and servicing in the area;
2. The development is flexible, adaptable, and suitable to meet future needs and requirements of larger businesses and small to medium enterprise firms, where appropriate;
3. The scale, bulk and appearance of the development is compatible with the character of its surroundings; and
4. On-site servicing and space for waiting goods vehicles is provided to an adequate standard.

Reasoned Justification

5.34 The *NPPF* requires Local Plans to proactively drive and support sustainable economic development. To achieve this, the Council have identified opportunities to provide additional land to ensure that there are an appropriate quantity and range of employment land to enable the local economy to function efficiently.

Policy Links

- SG1 - Growth Needs
- EMP1 - Securing Economic Growth
- D1 - Design and Place Shaping Principles
- D2 - Major Developments - Design
- AQMP1 - Mitigating Air Quality and Wider Environmental Pollution Issues
- STAT1 - Strategic Transport
- INF1 - Infrastructure Delivery
- INF2 - Securing Infrastructure Contributions

Evidence Links

- South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment (2017)
- Basildon Employment Land Needs Assessment (2025)
- Basildon Borough Employment Land & Premises Study (2013)

Non-B or E(g) Use Classes in Employment Areas

5.35 The *NPPF* makes clear that long-term protection of employment allocations should be avoided where there is no reasonable prospect of development coming forward. However, it also emphasises that plan-making must be underpinned by an up-to-date and relevant evidence base and should respond to market signals to ensure adequate provision of appropriate employment land to meet the needs of the business community.

POLICY EMP7: Non-B or E(g) Use Classes in Employment Areas

1. Any proposals for new non-B or E(g) Use Classes within employment sites allocated for employment use, within defined Employment Areas or Rural Enterprise Sites, that are likely to dilute the function of the Employment Area or undermine the strategic approach to employment growth will not normally be acceptable.

2. Where a proposal seeks to redevelop or convert a building within a defined Employment Area into a non-B or E(g) Use Class, and where planning consent for this change of use is required, permission will only be granted where the following criteria are met:

   a. Coherent evidence is provided to demonstrate that the premises has been vacant and pro-actively marketed as Use Classes B or E(g) for a minimum period of 2 years;

   b. Evidence clearly demonstrates that the level of future demand for use of the building under Use Class B or E(g) has sufficiently dropped within the Borough; and that this would justify the loss of the B or E(g) Use Class employment space specifically designated to meet the need for this purpose over the

plan period. The Council will refer to the latest Needs Assessment to identify need;

c. Where a retail Use Class is proposed, the evidence must demonstrate that the siting of a retail use within the employment area would not undermine the vitality or viability of town centres or local centres. Sequential testing may be required, and a Retail Impact Assessment should accompany the proposal if the development has an internal floorspace of more than 280m2.

d. Evidence demonstrates that the proposed new Use Class is compatible with other existing Uses within the employment area, having regard to any potential harm to productivity levels, the local environment, or to the health and well-being of employees or potential users.

Reasoned Justification

5.36 The *NPPF* expects planning policies to be sufficiently flexible to accommodate needs not anticipated in the Plan and to allow a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

5.37 The *Basildon Retail and Leisure Needs Study (Vo.1 2024)* advise that an impact threshold of 280 sqm gross is the most appropriate and robust for assessing the impacts of any proposed retail/leisure developments outside of defined centres in accordance with the *NPPF*.

Policy Links

- SG1 - Growth Needs
- EMP3 - Changes of Use of Employment Land or Premises
- EMP4 - Rural Enterprise Sites
- R1 - Supporting Town Centres

Evidence Links

- South Essex Economic Development Needs Assessment (2017)
- Basildon Employment Land Needs Assessment (2025)
- Basildon Borough Employment Land & Premises Study (2013)

