

EMPLOYMENT POLICIES

POLICY E1 – Meeting employment needs

- ddd) The Guildford Society agrees that Guildford has been one of the most economically successful towns over the past 30 years, and supports the importance of the University, Surrey Research Park and The Pirbright Institute as key enablers of the growth of high value enterprises with high value jobs. The Society also supports efforts to expand and retain existing corporate and professional services operations, particularly in the town centre.
- eee) Employment provision is under threat from infrastructure deficit, there is evidence that businesses are put off by congestion, and a lack of high quality commercial space and affordable housing.
- fff) The Guildford Society also notes the emerging desire, via LEPs and County Councils, to collaborate in an arc of towns around London, stretching from Cambridge via Oxford to Reading, Guildford and Ashford. This is a major opportunity for high tech businesses to collaborate. Guildford, with the right vision and leadership, can build on Guildford's strengths. The Guildford Society believes the plan should have clear proposals to participate in this LEP driven strategy to ensure the town attracts high value employment to the town.
- ggg) We are concerned the council has yet to plan for changes in the need for Retail space. Recent developments indicate retail is moving either to mega shopping centres e.g. White City Westfield type developments and to on-line shopping. It is also noted that the Gross Value Added of Retail employment is low. The Guildford Society believes the local plan needs to be built on an explicit aim to bring high value employment to the borough with retail development being restricted to local requirements e.g. supermarket expansion, and expansion of small retail offers or market space and restaurant space to support leisure in the town centre. The local plan makes no mention of these strategic choices, assuming 'business as usual'.
- hhh) The current Plan proposes a Guildford with a quantum leap in shopping space, in the town centre that will be inaccessible due to inadequate transport provision. New housing is scattered around the edges of the town centre, also with inadequate transport and other facilities. Proposed employment centres may exacerbate transport difficulties e.g. more cross-town commuting.
- iii) **Policy E1** has been revised to reflect the change in the lifetime of the Local Plan. However, as a result, the number of class B1 jobs has been increased from 3,200 to 4,100. The reason for this increase is unclear and has not been referenced within the summary of changes to the Local Plan which accompanies the document. However, in direct contradiction to this increase, the amount of floorspace allocated for these jobs has decreased from a range of 37,000-47,000 sq m to a range of 36,100 - 43,700. Again, the reason for this change remains unclear and requires further clarification.
- jjj) The Guildford Society believes in enabling economic growth but it should be high quality, high value whilst delivering environmental quality for the community. The current draft Local Plan fundamentally fails to consider how this can be achieved in the planning area as a whole.
- jjj.a) [There needs to be a statement on employment priorities which highlights that professional workers with high GVAs have been largely responsible for Guildford's impressive economic growth.](#)
- jjj.b) [Due to high housing costs, many of these types of employees cannot afford to live here.](#)
- jjj.c) [Companies and Government utilities, hospitals and schools cannot recruit skilled staff.](#)
- jjj.d) [Priority should be given to the provision of skilled worker housing. This does not eliminate the need for supporting less skilled workers, or for welfare housing, but](#)

recognises the need to strike a balance between them. Without promoting the most productive labour skills the others will not prosper.

POLICY E7 – Guildford Town Centre

- cccc.a) Guildford has traditionally been a market town with a prosperous commuting labour force. This has changed in the last few decades and retail only employs around 10% of the labour force compared with professional services over three times that. The GVA from professional services employees averages out at around £ 75,000 pa compared with retail GVA on an equivalent basis of less than £25.000.
- cccc.b) This has important planning implications in determining which areas are most important for development, what housing and infrastructure requirements need to be met. The current emphasis on retail development needs to be reconsidered in view of these changing needs, with greater emphasis on the cluster of high-value activities around the University Research Park and hospital. Housing, especially for skilled workers, should have a higher priority over retail development.
- cccc) We strongly welcome the inclusion at **4.4.54** of the phrase: ‘The historic built environment also significantly contributes to Guildford’s appeal.’ We would like the Council to add reference here to the setting in a gap in the North Downs, and to the importance of cross-town views.
- dddd) The Society is very disappointed that the **Vision** (between **4.4.72** and **4.4.73**) **has been deleted** – albeit parts of the vision do appear elsewhere. This was a fine statement of intent and the additional words in **4.4.74** do not adequately compensate for its loss. Not only should it be retained, but the Vision should also include the new strategic infrastructure necessary for the good functioning of the town – especially the future of the gyratory and bus interchange provision. We would advocate the new bridge proposed by Guildford Vision Group.
- eeee) The Society is also devastated to see the **removal of the part of Policy E7** that calls for *‘more varied uses during the evening and night time, including along the riverside, with residents and visitors feeling safe; active use of the riverside and the river; more effective routes within and across the town centre for pedestrians and cyclists; new public squares and other informal meeting areas.’* We request that these aspirations be reinstated as part of **Policy E7**.
- ffff) We do, however, agree with the added wording at paragraph **4.4.74** although it does not by itself make up for the loss referred to above.
- gggg) At least some of the **deleted paragraph 4.4.86** should be reinstated as an indication of intent. We recommend rewording rather than deleting **4.4.86** as follows: “River flooding risk is currently a significant constraint in redeveloping Guildford town centre. Several prominent riverside sites that have no building footprint cannot be allocated for redevelopment because of river flooding without a comprehensive plan to try to resolve these flooding issues, including technical solutions to remove the sites from the floodplain.”
- hhhh) Under **Monitoring Factors**, there is a target for A1 Retail space and A3 Food and Beverage space of 41,000sqm and 6,000sqm respectively – exactly the same as the revised **Policy A6** provision at North Street. This implies no other new A1 or A3 space anywhere else in the town centre for twenty years. **Many of our members (including our Local Economy Group) believe that a major retail development at North Street should be rejected on the grounds of the scale of retail provision, where the Carter Jonas report seems to struggle to justify the quantum, and where there is a recognised need for more residential units.** Planning decisions on this site, where the Local Planning Authority has a landed interest, should be made based on public benefits not commercial ones.

- iii) The Guildford Society is concerned for the future of retail, and is keen to point out the relatively poor contribution retail space makes to Gross Value Added (GVA) when compared to business space and residential accommodation. The use of GVA needs to be introduced to assist in determining better resource allocation, especially between housing versus retail development, and helping identify optimum locations.
- jjjj) This **Policy E7** should include a clause on the provision of employment floor space (see our comments on **Policy E2(1)** above). As it stands the plan is inconsistent here. There should also be a Monitoring Indicator for the amount of net employment floorspace provided.
- kkkk) The Guildford Society strongly believes that it is misguided to strike out the Allies & Morrison Vision and Town Centre Master Plan as Key Evidence, and to qualify the Town Centre Regeneration Strategy as carrying no weight. ***The result is that there is no strategic spatial evidence for this, the most important part of the Borough.***

A6. North Street Redevelopment, Guildford – The Guildford Society is engaged with the developers and the Council in discussions around this important strategic site. We are concerned about the allocation of uses and areas when compared to the total stated need for the town. We welcome a successful development of this site and we have already articulated our concern that the future of retailing is by no means assured, the GVA generated from retail trails far behind other uses, and there is a need to ensure the development is successful. We would be keen to see a policy direction that looks towards space that can easily be brought into alternative uses – particularly a greater amount of residential use. The use of some of the development to displace the Odeon cinema would help to increase the overall amount of residential development in the town centre.

[We have already stressed that retail development has a low GVA. A principal concern on this geographically-constrained site is difficult traffic access](#)

[The amount of retail development proposed, some 39,000 sm, is close onto 40 % of current retail and far too great for an already constrained town centre. More specifically the retail forecast used is based on a Consultant’s report by Carter Jonas which has four basic flaws.](#)

1. [the retail data used is national data which ignores Guildford’s access problems.](#)
2. [internet shopping has had a huge growth in Guildford and many shops have closed.](#)
3. [the plan itself does not appear to take into account the existence of an already well-established retail centre \(The Guildford Society recognises this and urges the Council to assess the impact, which it does not appear explicitly to have done\).](#)
4. [finally, and most important this is a retail forecast for private development to the exclusion of other uses and assuming land is plentiful for all competing uses rather than constrained as it is in Guildford town centre. Guildford, in our judgement, needs a much better-balanced solution with housing and town centre employment playing a much larger part.](#)