

19<sup>th</sup> January 2026

Response submitted by email only to: [planningpolicy@northwarks.gov.uk](mailto:planningpolicy@northwarks.gov.uk)

Dear Sir / Madam,

**Re: North Warwickshire Local Plan – Issues & Options Consultation (Regulation 18)**

**Introduction**

The Land, Planning and Development Federation (LPDF) welcomes the opportunity to respond to the North Warwickshire Local Plan (NWLP) Issues and Options (Regulation 18) consultation. This representation has been prepared by the LPDF on behalf of a Consortium of its members and other organisations active within the commercial sector (including promoters, developers and specialist consultants involved in industrial and logistics schemes). This response is focused on Policies LP5, LP6 and LP39. The Consortium has a shared interest in the future growth, development, and sustainable planning of North Warwickshire as it relates to these policies.

**About the LPDF**

The LPDF seeks to represent the UK's leading land promoters, home builders and commercial developers. LPDF members support the housebuilding and commercial development sectors by promoting sites through the planning system, providing "shovel ready" land with a planning permission which can facilitate the delivery of infrastructure and serviced land parcels.

The LPDF seeks to actively engage with government on planning, housing and commercial development policy and to educate the wider public on the social, environmental and economic benefits of development through an evidenced based approach.

The LPDF encourages its members to deliver well designed, high quality, sustainable places which deliver a mix of housing types and tenures, commercial spaces and community uses that have a positive social, environmental, and economic impact.

Our key values include:

- Working in a positive and cooperative way with central and local government and key stakeholders, to deliver a planning system capable of supplying the homes and employment space we need.
- Promoting research and an evidence-led approach to policy development.
- Increasing the supply of new homes to meet demand and make home ownership a realistic possibility for all those who aspire to it.
- Ensuring that we build the affordable homes of all types and tenures that this country so desperately needs.
- Delivering new employment space to meet demand from businesses and support economic growth.
- Championing the impact of increased housing delivery on reducing intergenerational unfairness.



- Creating well designed, high quality and sustainable places to live and work.
- Educating and informing about the social, environmental and economic benefits of development.
- Supporting diversity of delivery in the market and championing SME developers.
- Promoting diversity and inclusivity within the sector.

### **Overarching comments**

The LPDF Consortium welcomes the opportunity to comment on the North Warwickshire Local Plan Issues and Options (I&O) consultation. However, the Consortium has significant concerns regarding the lack of detail, evidence, and strategic clarity presented at this early stage, which materially limits the ability of stakeholders to engage meaningfully with the consultation.

Firstly, the I&O consultation is not supported by a sufficiently transparent or comprehensive evidence base. Key documents that the Council appears to rely upon, including the North Warwickshire Employment Sites Study and the Green Belt Assessment, have not been published or made available for scrutiny. In the absence of this evidence, it is not possible to properly assess the appropriateness or robustness of the emerging spatial strategy, growth options, or policy direction. The Consortium therefore considers that a further Regulation 18 consultation is necessary, one which develops the Council's spatial strategy and land allocations in greater detail and is supported by the publication of the full evidence base to enable informed and constructive representations.

Secondly, the I&O consultation demonstrates a limited and unbalanced consideration of employment land and employment development. Whilst the growth options and Green Belt discussion are largely framed around housing delivery, there is little meaningful acknowledgement of how employment needs will be planned for or met through the Local Plan. This reflects a longstanding pattern in North Warwickshire's plan-making, including the adopted 2021 Local Plan and the preceding 2014 Core Strategy, where insufficient engagement with employment land requirements has resulted in a significant and persistent unmet need for employment land over at least the past decade.

Finally, the I&O consultation does not adequately reflect the national policy context relating to economic growth and employment development. There is limited acknowledgement of the changes introduced by the 2024 National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly the strengthened emphasis on planning positively for economic growth. Furthermore, the Council will need to have regard to the practical implications of the emerging draft 2025 NPPF once adopted, which further reinforces the requirement for Local Plans to proactively identify and deliver sufficient employment land as part of a coherent and growth-focused strategy, as well as National Decision-Making Policies (NDMPs) which support growth in Green/Grey Belt and out-of-settlement locations where there is an evidenced unmet need, in principle. This is particularly relevant as Annex A makes clear that development plan policies which are in any way inconsistent with NDMPs should be given very limited weight (except where they have been examined and adopted against the 2025 NPPF). Without properly addressing these policy changes, the emerging Local Plan risks being unsound and misaligned with national objectives for economic growth and productivity. It also risks losing local policy control over the determination of planning applications for employment development.

### **Policy LP5 – Amount of Development**

As a starting point, the draft NWLP must be underpinned by a robust and up-to-date evidence base to ensure that its policies meet identified employment needs in full. Without such an evidence base, the Plan cannot be appropriately justified and risks failing the soundness tests at examination.



The current evidence base is wholly inadequate, contrary to the clear requirements of the NPPF. The absence of such evidence (including the North Warwickshire Employment Sites Study) precludes any meaningful engagement in the draft Plan or the process of consultation.

Irrespective of the specific employment evidence studies relied upon, it must clearly identify objectively assessed employment needs for the entire Plan period and be informed by an understanding of the relevant functional economic market area (FEMA). Objectively assessed needs should not be derived solely from historic trends within North Warwickshire, as future employment growth is unlikely to simply replicate past patterns and must take account of anticipated structural and market-led economic change.

Moreover, employment demand and economic growth are shaped by factors that extend beyond the Borough's administrative boundaries. The assessment of employment needs must therefore look beyond North Warwickshire in isolation and reflect its role within the wider economic area. Decisions regarding whether, and where, new employment development is required cannot be made without proper regard to these wider functional economic relationships.

### **Policy LP6 – Additional Employment Development**

Policy LP6 is intrinsically linked to the Council's approach in Policy LP5 and, as such, is undermined by the failure to fully identify and plan for objectively assessed employment needs. Before establishing a policy framework for accommodating additional employment land, the Council must ensure that the Local Plan is supported by an up-to-date and robust evidence base capable of adequately assessing employment requirements and informing the allocation of sufficient and appropriate sites.

Once objectively assessed employment needs have been properly identified, Policy LP6 should be framed in a way that positively enables additional employment land to come forward in suitable locations where it would meet identified needs. As currently drafted, however, proposed replacement Policy LP6 is overly prescriptive and restrictive, limiting the Plan's ability to respond to market demand and changing economic circumstances.

The Consortium considers that, in its current form, the proposed Policy LP6 is inconsistent with national planning policy and risks undermining the effective delivery of employment and logistics development within North Warwickshire. We therefore strongly recommend that the policy is amended to introduce an appropriate degree of flexibility, allowing additional employment land that meets the needs of existing and future businesses to be brought forward over the Plan period. This approach would ensure that the planning system operates as a positive driver of economic growth, in line with Government objectives, rather than acting as a constraint, and would allow the Plan to respond effectively to unforeseen employment needs.

The Consortium's detailed comments in respect of Policy LP6 Option 2 are set out below:

#### **Policy introduction (prior to the criteria)**

The test of "unacceptable adverse impact" on the Local Highway Network is more onerous than the extant NPPF.

There is no indication of what is meant by "an exceptional need". The Policy also fails to recognise that (in reality) all large logistics sites will be outside development boundaries. Indeed, given the requirement for direct access to the Strategic Road Network, this is almost inevitable.



### Criterion (a) – To the satisfaction of the Council

Demonstrating a matter “to the satisfaction of the Council” is inherently vague and appears to give an unfettered discretion to the LPA.

#### Criterion (a)(i) – Immediate requirement

It is unclear what is meant to be an “immediate requirement”. Given the lead in times for such complex developments, developers and promoters will always be looking to meet at least 2-3 years hence. The “Immediate needs” should already be met by allocations in the Plan.

The requirement within Policy LP6 for development to demonstrate an “immediate requirement” goes beyond the approach set out in national planning policy. Paragraph 86 of the NPPF supports plan-making that is positive and flexible, and which makes provision not only for anticipated economic needs but also for unanticipated needs over the plan period.

Employment development, and in particular logistics and larger-scale commercial development, typically requires a significant lead-in time, often spanning several years, from site identification through planning, infrastructure provision, and delivery. Requiring evidence of an immediate requirement risks rendering the policy unworkable in practice, as it fails to reflect the realities of how the employment market operates. Such an approach would significantly constrain the ability of the Local Plan to respond positively to market demand and changing economic circumstances.

#### Criterion a(ii): Requirement to secure an end user

Criterion a(ii) of the policy, which seeks to require the securing of an end user through a Section 106 agreement, is considered disproportionate and unjustified. Securing an occupier(s) is not necessary to make employment development acceptable in planning terms and therefore does not meet the statutory tests for planning obligations, including necessity and reasonableness.

Furthermore, this requirement risks fettering delivery by excluding otherwise suitable and policy-compliant schemes simply because a tenant(s) has not yet been identified at the point of application. Large schemes which may take time to secure several tenants or occupiers across multiple buildings will be particularly penalised. This is particularly problematic for speculative employment and logistics development, which is a well-established and legitimate delivery model and is often essential to meeting market demand efficiently.

The planning system is not personal, and there is no basis to tie consented developments to individual occupiers, who may fail and leave a unit vacant and/or merge with another company to form a separate entity. This requirement is unnecessarily bureaucratic.

#### Criterion b: Search area for alternative sites

The requirement under criterion b to demonstrate the absence of suitable sites within an excessively wide and undefined search area is unreasonable. The policy fails to define the search area by reference to functional economic geographies or occupier requirements and does not adequately reflect the way in which different employment sectors operate.



As a result, the criterion places an undue and unnecessary burden on applicants and risks acting as an unjustified barrier to development. A more proportionate approach would be to acknowledge FEMAs and the specific locational needs of different types of employment uses.

#### Criterion c (i): Accessibility to Market Towns

Criterion c (i) seeks to require development to be accessible to the market towns of the Borough. This requirement is at odds with paragraph 87(b) of the NPPF, which recognises that different employment sectors have distinct and varied locational requirements.

In particular, storage and distribution uses, at a range of scales, often require strategic access to the primary road network, including proximity to key motorway junctions and rail freight interchanges, rather than being close to town centres. The criterion therefore fails to adequately consider or accommodate the operational needs of key employment sectors and risks discouraging and displacing development that would otherwise align with national policy objectives for economic growth.

#### Criterion (c)(iii) – Environment / amenity

The test of “no detriment” to environmental factors is wholly unrealistic. Logistics cannot be developed without inevitable adverse impacts. The issue is whether they are outweighed by the need and benefits of the development.

#### Criterion c (iv): Requirement for detailed masterplan

Criterion c (iv)’s requirement for a detailed masterplan of the site to be agreed prior to planning permission being approved effectively precludes the submission of outline applications which is unreasonable and potentially unlawful.

#### Responsiveness to market signals and flexibility

The emerging Draft NPPF 2025 places increased emphasis on the need for local planning policies to be responsive to market signals and capable of accommodating unanticipated needs. Policy LP6, as currently drafted, is overly prescriptive and lacks the necessary flexibility to respond to changing economic conditions over the plan period.

By imposing rigid requirements relating to timing, occupiers, location, and accessibility, the policy risks undermining the Local Plan’s ability to support sustainable economic growth and investment in North Warwickshire.

#### **Policy LP39 – Employment Allocations**

The LPDF consortium objects to Policy LP39 on the basis that it fails to make adequate provision for identified B8 (storage and distribution) needs and does not support the delivery of strategic-scale employment development within the Plan period.

Apart from the identification of two potential new sites (at Dordon and Birch Coppice), Policy LP39 relies almost entirely on carrying forward existing employment allocations from the adopted Local Plan. This approach is insufficient to meet current and future B8 requirements, particularly in the context of changes in market demand, supply chain logistics, and the increasing need for larger, well-connected strategic sites. Simply rolling forward historic allocations does not constitute a positive or effective strategy for addressing objectively assessed employment needs.

As drafted, Policy LP39 therefore fails to provide a robust, flexible, and effective framework for meeting B8 needs and supporting economic growth. The LPDF consortium considers that the policy should be revisited to ensure that the



Plan identifies and allocates additional, suitably located, and deliverable sites capable of accommodating strategic-scale B8 development, informed by an up-to-date and market-responsive evidence base. Without such changes, the policy risks constraining investment, limiting economic growth, and rendering the Local Plan unsound.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, the members of this LPDF consortium consider that proposed replacement Policy LP6 requires significant revision to ensure it is consistent with national planning policy and capable of supporting the effective delivery of employment development. In its current form, the policy lacks the necessary flexibility and market responsiveness and is therefore unlikely to meet the Borough’s objectively assessed employment needs.

Taken together, Policies LP5 and LP6 reflect a locally constrained and inflexible approach to future employment land delivery which risks acting as a barrier to investment and economic growth. This approach is at odds with national objectives for economic growth and productivity, as well as the Government’s proposed strategic planning reforms, including the anticipated introduction of Strategic Development Strategies (SDS).

To be sound and future-proofed, the draft NWLP must be underpinned by a robust, up-to-date and outward-looking evidence base, plan positively for employment needs across the functional economic area and include policies that provide sufficient flexibility to respond to changing economic circumstances and strategic growth opportunities. Without such changes, the draft Local Plan will remain fundamentally misaligned with the Government’s ambitions for sustainable economic growth and the emerging strategic planning framework.

### **Consortium Contributors**

This consultation response has been prepared by the LPDF on behalf of a consortium of its members (and other organisations within the sector) with experience in the promotion, delivery, and occupation of employment and logistics development. The consortium contributors to this response are:

- Richborough
- Stoford
- Boyer
- IM Properties
- Tritax

Collectively, these organisations represent a broad range of expertise across land promotion, development, investment, and planning consultancy, with a shared interest in ensuring that the NWLP provides a flexible, effective, and policy-compliant framework for economic growth.

