

6.0 Employment

Introduction

6.1 Guildford Borough has a buoyant economy with low unemployment and a diverse economic base. In addition to the broad employment sectors of commercial offices and industrial uses, significant employment opportunities are provided by the education and health sector, Ministry of Defence, local and national government and the retail sector.

6.2 The Plan includes proposals which will see the number of students and employment at the University of Surrey expand considerably over the next 20 years. The University is a major employer in the Borough, at present having about 2500 staff. Whilst this expansion may have only limited impact in the Plan period in the longer term it may have a greater impact with increased pressure for housing. In accordance with the principles being followed to contain further pressures on the local labour supply and on housing, the University will be providing staff and student housing on site.

The Surrey Structure Plan 1994

6.3 The Structure Plan advocates a general slowing down in the rates of development reflecting the environmental constraints that exist in the County, (including Green Belt and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty), adopted regional guidance, which notes that in Surrey a reduction in the rate of economic development is appropriate. During the period of the Structure Plan (up to 2006) the economic needs of the County will be met primarily by the following approach;

1. promoting redevelopment or change of use of existing industrial and commercial premises,
2. continued implementation of vacant land allocated in existing Local Plans, and

3. resisting the loss of suitably located industrial and commercial land to non employment uses.

6.4 The approach of the Structure Plan to the Surrey economy is to ensure that the wealth creating capacity of the County should be maintained and encouraged to renew itself over time.

The Surrey Economic Audit 1996

6.5 The Surrey Economic Audit was prepared by the Surrey Training and Enterprise Council and Surrey County Council Economic Development Office. It provides a snapshot of the economic situation of the County in early 1996. It recognises that employment sectors which contribute most to wealth creation should be supported, the need to encourage the diversity of the local economy while enhancing the quality of the County's environment and that unemployment levels have reached the stage where labour shortages are likely to occur.

The Guildford Economy

6.6 Following the recession of the late 1980's and early 1990's, Guildford's economy at the end of 1998 was relatively buoyant with unemployment levels well below the national average, falling steadily since 1992. Between 1995 and 1998 unemployment in Guildford Borough has been consistently low. The chart shows how the unemployment rate has changed in Guildford from 1991 to 2002.

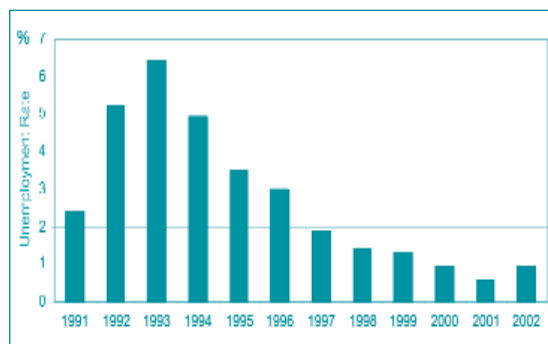


Fig 6.1 Unemployment levels

6.7 Since 1980 there has been significant employment development in the Borough. Firms are attracted to Guildford due to its attractive environment, skilled workforce and close proximity to London and major South East airports. Guildford accommodates many major employers in a variety of sectors.

6.8 In 1991 jobs in Guildford Borough totalled 58,000 which represents a 10% increase from 1981. Employment in the Borough is increasingly dominated by the service sector; in 1991 approximately 82% of the workforce were employed in the service sector compared to only 10% in manufacturing. The Surrey Economic Audit has forecast that in the period 1995-2005 jobs in business services, construction and public services will increase the most.

Guildford Action Plan for Business

6.9 In consultation with the local business community, Guildford Borough Council has prepared the Guildford Action Plan for Business that seeks to enhance the local economy.

6.10 Resources for economic development are limited in the South East, so the Action Plan focuses on achieving a small range of projects that are considered to be important, but also achievable within the resources available.

6.11 The Action Plan provides economic information on Guildford and outlines the key issues of the economy. A series of actions and initiatives are set out which seek to assist local businesses and encourage the continued prosperity of the local economy.

Objectives

6.12 Guildford experiences strong pressures for development. Any further increase in employment development could lead to demands for the release of more land for housing and therefore put pressure on the Green Belt and result in labour shortages (due to consistently low unemployment rates and a static population) for existing businesses and more congestion due to increased in-commuting.

6.13 The Borough Council considers that there is enough employment land and premises to meet the needs of the economy within the Plan period. Only one new site is allocated: the Thames Water Utilities land at Slyfield Industrial Estate.

6.14 The aim of the Plan is to maintain the current supply of employment land. This will be achieved by the following objectives:

1. Promoting employment development on existing allocated sites;
2. Resisting the loss of existing employment land and premises to other uses;
3. Supporting the redevelopment of existing employment premises and land for employment uses;
4. Supporting the diversification of the rural economy;
5. Encouraging the provision of premises suitable for small firms; and
6. Encouraging redevelopment of inappropriately located premises.

Supporting measures

6.15 These objectives will be achieved through the implementation of the policies and proposals set out in the Plan and by the following supporting measures;

1. continue to make available units for small firms on Borough Council owned industrial estates,
2. take into account the needs of small firms when releasing Council owned employment land for development, and
3. make sites available at Slyfield Industrial Estate for displaced non conforming uses.

Employment Chapter Definitions

6.16 For the purposes of this Plan, the term 'employment' refers to all uses in Classes B1 - B8 of the Use Classes Order 1987

and includes 'business' (Class B1(a), B1(b) and B1(c)), 'industrial' (Class B2) and 'warehousing' (Class B8).

Proposal E1
ALLOCATION OF BUSINESS, INDUSTRIAL AND WAREHOUSING LAND

Planning permission for business, industrial and warehousing uses will be granted on land at:

1. Thames Water Utilities, Slyfield Industrial Estate, Guildford
2. Slyfield Industrial Estate extension, Guildford
3. Lysons Avenue, Ash Vale

As shown on the Proposals Map.

Policy E2
REDEVELOPMENT OF EXISTING BUSINESS, INDUSTRIAL AND WAREHOUSING LAND IN URBAN AREAS AND WITHIN IDENTIFIED SETTLEMENTS IN THE GREEN BELT.

Planning permission for the re-use of existing business, industrial and warehousing land in the urban areas, or within identified settlements in the Green Belt will be granted for:

1. The part or total redevelopment of existing business, industrial and warehousing premises or land;
2. The expansion of an existing firm where it can be satisfactorily accommodated within the existing curtilage of the premises or on immediately adjacent land;
3. Changes of use to other business, industrial and warehousing uses.

Provided that any development is suitably located in terms of its impact on the environment, levels of traffic movement, its accessibility to public transport and its links with the infrastructure, and its impact on the amenity of the area or adjoining occupiers.

Thames Water Utilities Land (TWU)

6.17 The allocation of the TWU Land provides opportunities for industrial and/or waste related uses and non-conforming uses. There would also be potential for further open space provision and expansion of the Riverside Park.

Slyfield Industrial Estate Extension

6.18 This site was originally allocated in the 1987 Local Plan and the land is being marketed in phases.

6.19 The extension is subject to a Development Brief that was approved by the Borough Council in September 1996 and updated in May 1998.

Lysons Avenue, Ash Vale

6.20 The allocation of three small sites at Lysons Avenue in Ash Vale for employment uses was identified in the 1993 Local Plan. Two of these have now been developed, with one remaining.

6.21 All the allocated sites will need to be investigated for contamination to ensure that their development does not give rise to health or environmental risks.

6.22 The maintenance and renewal of the Guildford economy will depend largely on the redevelopment of existing land and premises in the urban areas and village settlements identified in the Plan under RE3. The Council considers that there is sufficient employment land through vacant sites and unimplemented planning permissions and continued redevelopments to meet the needs of the local economy.

6.23 With the exception of the sites in Proposal E1 and sites in Chapter 9 Guildford Town Redevelopment Sites Chapter, there will be no further release of land for employment use within this Plan period.

6.24 The Borough Council recognises the importance of small business units in the Guildford economy. The Economic Strategy for Surrey identifies Surrey as a county of small businesses with more than 90% of all Surrey businesses employing less than 25 people. It identifies one of the weaknesses of the Surrey economy as the lack of accommodation for small firms.

6.25 This is the case in Guildford where demand for small units in the Borough has been identified as a specific need. The small units that the Borough Council owns and manages at Lysons Avenue and at Slyfield Industrial Estate are consistently full and a survey of local estate agents has confirmed that the demand for small units is not satisfied locally.

6.26 To ameliorate this problem, the Borough Council will use its own landholdings at Slyfield Industrial Estate for the provision of small units. Where appropriate, the Borough Council will encourage the provision of small units when large sites are redeveloped.

6.27 The development of employment land and premises within the Countryside Beyond the Green Belt is dealt with under Policy RE4.

6.28 Because of their importance to the Guildford economy the Council accepts that there may be very special circumstances to justify allowing minor extensions to, the employment premises in the Green Belt outside identified settlement boundaries (identified under Policy RE3), provided that the developments do not harm the purposes of the Green Belt, and in particular its openness.

**Policy E3
SAFEGUARDING EXISTING AND
ALLOCATED BUSINESS, INDUSTRIAL
AND WAREHOUSING LAND**

The loss of business, industrial and warehousing premises to non-employment uses will not be permitted unless:

Continued

1. The retention of the land or premises has been explored fully without success; or
2. The land or premises are unsuitably located in terms of its impact on the environment, levels of traffic movement, its accessibility to public transport and its link with the infrastructure, and its impact on the amenity of the area or adjoining occupiers;

And there is existing suitably located land or premises either on the market or with outstanding planning permission, for any displaced firms.

6.29 In order to maintain a diverse range of business, industrial and warehousing premises to meet the needs of local firms the Borough Council will resist the loss of suitably located premises unless it can be fully proved by a comprehensive marketing strategy that the land or premises are no longer required for employment uses. Each case will be considered on its merits but the Borough Council will expect the marketing strategy to have normally taken place for a continual period of 12 months prior to the submission of any application to change from employment use. The Borough Council will only consider the loss of premises where it can be proved that the site is no longer suitable for employment use.

6.30 The Borough Council recognises that there are some business, industrial and warehousing premises which are inappropriately located in terms of adverse environmental effects, including sites within or adjacent to residential areas or in areas of high amenity such as the Green Belt and the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Where the Borough Council considers that the existing use is inappropriate to the location, and where suitable alternative accommodation could be made available for any displaced firms, it will encourage the redevelopment of such sites. The Borough Council will ensure that the new use of the site will be appropriate to the location.

**Policy E4
RESTRAINT ON BUSINESS,
INDUSTRIAL AND WAREHOUSING
EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT**

Additional business, industrial and warehousing development will normally be permitted only on sites identified for such purposes in proposal E1, the Guildford town redevelopment sites chapter and existing sites in accordance with policy E2.

Development proposals which make provision for the modest expansion needs of existing firms on immediately adjacent land or the accommodation of small firms are not prohibited by this policy where they comply with other policies of the plan.

- 6.31 The Surrey Economic Audit has forecast that existing allocated employment land and unimplemated planning permissions could enable the number of jobs in the county to grow by 11,300 in the period 1995 - 2005.
- 6.32 During the same period the economically active population is forecast to remain stable.
- 6.33 Future supply of employment land in Guildford Borough is as follows:

Site Allocations

Allocations	Site Area	
	Hectares	Acres
Thames Water Utilities Land	6.6	16.31
Slyfield Industrial Estate Expansion	14.52	35.88
Lysons Avenue Site C	0.63	1.56
TOTAL	21.75	53.75



Fig 6.2 Unimplemented Planning Permissions - March 2002¹¹

- 6.34 The Borough Council considers that there is enough land and premises to meet the needs of the Borough's existing and future population and allow for the expansion of existing firms within this Plan period.
- 6.35 Any further increase in employment could lead to demands for the release of more land for housing and therefore put pressure on the Green Belt and result in labour shortages for existing businesses and more congestion due to increased in-commuting. This Policy seeks to restrict additional new employment development to those sites identified in Proposal E1 and Policy E2.

**Policy E5
HOMEWORING**

Planning permission will be permitted for homeworking proposals provided that they do not lead to an unacceptable increase in traffic generation and harm to the amenity enjoyed by adjacent occupiers of buildings.

- 6.36 Currently only a small proportion of the workforce work from home in the UK, approximately 3% of employees in firms with over 1,000 staff. However, it is anticipated that homeworking will increase mainly due to advances in IT such as the Internet and e-mail connections that equip people to work from home. The Borough Council recognises the benefit particularly in terms of reduced in-commuting. However, the amenity of nearby residents will be protected.
- 6.37 Often planning permission will not be needed for homeworking. Where the level of activity is such that permission is required there should be no unacceptable increase in traffic generation and no harm to the amenities of occupiers of neighbouring properties as a result of an increase in homeworking. The Council will produce a guidance note explaining in detail in what circumstances planning permission is needed.

¹¹ Source: Guildford Borough Council Planning Monitoring System

