

# 6 EMPLOYMENT

## Introduction

- 6.1** The Local Plan Review recognises the importance of a strong local economy and its role in supporting the Borough Council's aims of achieving sustainable regeneration. The economy of the South East of England is generally buoyant, although some parts of the region have not shown the same level of sustained economic progress as others.
- 6.2** Although overall unemployment figures in Gosport have fallen to just above Hampshire's overall figures, this has been reflected in increased out commuting by private car to employment sites along the M27 Corridor and further afield rather than by significant new employment within the peninsula. The 2001 Census indicated that almost 18200 residents out-commute from Gosport each day whilst only 7600 workers commuted into the Borough. This represents an increase of 41% of out-commuting since the 1991 Census and a 27% increase of in-commuting.
- 6.3** Given this background the policies and proposals for employment generating development reflect the Borough Council's aim of providing a framework for diverse economic growth and regeneration. At the same time, however, the Borough Council is aware of the need to maintain the quality of the environment and to make the best use of resources, both in terms of land and the skills of the Borough's workforce. There is a limited supply of development land within the Borough, and there is competition between various land uses for this limited supply. The Borough Council considers that it is important that an adequate amount of land is allocated for employment uses so that its regeneration objectives are met and a more sustainable pattern of development is achieved in accordance with Government guidance.
- 6.4** Gosport Town Centre is the Borough's commercial and administrative centre, although the town has not experienced the growth in office employment that has occurred in some other major town centres. The Local Plan Review area's other principal employment areas are located in the A32 corridor, particularly towards the northern part of the Borough. There are also several major Ministry of Defence establishments which provide a significant level of civilian employment in various locations within the Local Plan Review area.
- 6.5** Employment in the Borough of Gosport has had, and will continue to have, a significant dependence upon jobs directly or indirectly provided by the Ministry of Defence. The level and nature of employment provided by the defence sector has altered significantly as a direct effect of the 'Peace Dividend' which has led to the rationalisation of Royal Navy operations around Portsmouth Harbour and associated support facilities throughout the Borough. Many defence establishments have been declared surplus to requirements and are being released by the Ministry of Defence, while other sites are being identified as core sites to be retained. Both released and core sites provide the opportunity for the provision of new activities that will diversify the economic base within the Borough and make use of the traditional skills of the local workforce in defence related and marine industries.

- 6.6** The Borough Council's Economic Regeneration Strategy provides the framework for the Council's investment and policy formation in respect of the economic regeneration of the Borough. It covers the three distinct but inter-related areas of economic development, social inclusion and community safety and sets out key priorities and performance indicators for each of these. The Strategy provides contextual information and an overview of national and regional policy frameworks and initiatives. The Strategy is underpinned by a commitment to achieving sustainable development and seeks to encourage complementary patterns and rates of growth and investment.
- 6.7** The Harbour Economic Development Forum (HEDF) is a partnership of the four local authorities of Gosport, Fareham, Havant and Portsmouth aiming to encourage economic prosperity in the region. The HEDF provides inward investment and business development advice, support advice on Council services to businesses throughout South East Hampshire, promotion and marketing of the area for investment, PROP South East – a computerised database of available commercial premises and land and access to local economic data, statistics, profiles and information. The property information system gives clear indication of the demand and supply of both industrial and office floorspace. An assessment of recent data shows that despite some recent additions to the industrial market demand still outstrips supply. In the case of office development there is virtually no office floorspace on the market and the analysis shows that there is a demand for office floorspace that cannot be met.
- 6.8** The proposed release of former Ministry of Defence land will provide sites for new employment, but the development of these sites will be dependent upon the provision of new transport infrastructure, the construction of the Cherque Farm Link Road, the Newgate Lane Improvement Scheme and improvements to public transport, including the Gosport–Fareham–Portsmouth LRT Scheme if this proceeds. An increase in employment opportunities will assist in reducing the current level of out commuting from the Borough and enable a more sustainable pattern of development in accordance with the Government's objectives, as set out in PPG13: *Transport*, to reduce the need to travel and to reduce journey lengths.
- 6.9** Although there is a demonstrated need to provide employment land to support the regeneration of Gosport, PPG3: *Housing* requires local authorities to review their existing allocations for employment land and to consider whether some of the land could be used for housing or mixed-use developments. The 1995 Gosport Borough Local Plan allocated four sites for industrial and business use (Classes B1 and B2). Two of these sites are subject to development proposals; one is required for works in connection with the Gosport–Fareham–Portsmouth LRT Scheme and the fourth is required for future health and community facilities. Therefore none of the sites allocated in the previous Local Plan are suitable to be reallocated for housing.
- 6.10** It is recognised that the local economy will be strengthened by the provision of a diverse range of employment types. Proposals in this Local Plan Review are designed to ensure that sufficient land is available to provide for these opportunities. In this context employment generally refers to a broad range of activities, including offices, light and general industry, warehousing and distribution, tourism and high technology related jobs. It is acknowledged that retail, leisure and other community services can provide employment opportunities and these are considered in other chapters of the Plan.

## Policy Background

- 6.11** The Government in its Regional Planning Guidance for the South East (RPG9), published in 2001, has included Gosport within the South Hampshire Priority Area for Economic Regeneration. The key aims of this designation are to maximise the area's economic potential, maximise the potential for urban renaissance and mixed communities, enable social inclusion, target funding to tackle deprivation and enhance skills. RPG9 states that economic diversity should be encouraged by providing for a range of employment opportunities in terms of size of facility.
- 6.12** The Hampshire County Structure Plan 1996–2011 (Review) states that local authorities in their local plans should make provision for the needs of existing businesses, encourage the creation of new job opportunities and take advantage of particular business, industrial or locational opportunities within their area. Local authorities should assist these aims by making provision for a reasonable range of types and sizes of sites in a variety of locations and focus on the regeneration of urban areas.

## Objectives for Employment

- 6.13** The employment objectives below have been derived from the Plan's overall strategy set out in Chapter 2. In meeting the employment needs of the Borough, the Council will:
- promote and improve the economic well-being of the Local Plan Review area;
  - facilitate new development or redevelopment to provide new job opportunities;
  - encourage a more diverse employment base and reduce dependence on defence related industries;
  - provide for the consolidation and expansion of existing employment uses where appropriate;
  - retain major employment sites within the Borough to facilitate a sustainable pattern of development;
  - facilitate provision of tourism related employment; and
  - provide for a range of sites for small and medium sized businesses.