

Economic Development Group Meeting

Monday 26th January 2015

Present

David Watson (Chairman)
Peter Bowers
Anthony Bird
David McGifford
Tim McCloud
Lee Riley
Brian Hogan
Andy Pear

1. Apologies

Nigel Moorhouse, Peter Aston, Simon Critchley

2. Group size

It was agreed that Simon Critchley would be welcomed to the group, but, the group was now an ideal size and no new members were required

Objective

Promote Congleton as a business location and build a sustainable and varied employment destination, by protecting employment land for future business growth and improving quality, access and infrastructure

Key Points

- Congleton has an ever increasing over 65 population. Currently the percentage stands at 22.4% with a significant risk of Congleton becoming a dormitory town.
- Current Job Density is 0.57 as compared to 0.81 in Crewe, 0.78 in Macclesfield and an average of 0.74 for Cheshire East as a whole.
- Due to the high percentage of 65+ residents the group does not believe that we should aim to increase the job density for the existing population.
- We should, however, aim to match the current Cheshire East average job density of 0.74 for the planned growth in population (higher percentage of working age inhabitants)
- 3500 homes planned through to 2030 equates to 7000 jobs, i.e. we require 5180 new jobs (7000 x 0.74)
- Assume that 1180 jobs will be created by increased retail, leisure and growth of existing companies on existing sites. **Is there any data to support this?**
- The group aim is to provide employment land through to 2030 to support the requirement for the balance of an additional 4000 jobs in the service and manufacturing sectors. The group agreed that we do not want to overcook the

number of jobs required or indeed increase the amount of employment land required.

- Protect employment land for future jobs growth
- DM to contact Adrian Fisher CEC to discuss our aims of Master Planning
- Beyond this the aim of the group is to provide an 'unbounded' business park on the west of the town to allow for further expansion as and when required
- The split of the 4000 jobs to be agreed. **Should it be 2000 'office' and 2000 'industrial'? 'Office' provides many more jobs per acre but who can advise us on the prospects of attracting jobs for each category?**
- Need to identify the number of jobs that will be created in the health, education and retail sector as demand increases from the population emanating from the new homes

Future Consideration??

- Many existing businesses are surrounded by residential areas with the resultant traffic and noise issues. Would any businesses consider relocating from other parts of the town to the extended business parks allowing their current premises to be redeveloped for housing?
- Need a policy for employment sites and in particular brownfield sites in our plan within the Town boundaries
- No public transport to the new business parks
- Business Park areas to be landscaped to allow close proximity to housing developments
- Would we express support for other groups including development of the town centre?
- Focus to be on job creation (skilled jobs for the manufacturing and service industries?), i.e. not a 200,000 sq.ft. warehouse employing six people?
- Insufficient business properties to attract larger companies. Can we provide examples?
- Home grown companies move away when they require larger premises, i.e. Congleton not only missing the opportunity of the new roles created but the existing ones moving out of the town. Can we provide examples?
- The new employment sites are outside the Town boundary therefore we need to liaise with CEC and the neighbouring parishes on this aspect
- Should we be promoting other benefits of businesses in Congleton?
 - a. Trading with local suppliers (manufacturing, service and retail) due to convenience of location
 - b. A significant percentage of the hotel rooms (with resultant benefit to public houses and restaurants) are booked via local businesses
 - c. Support / sponsorship of local charities
 - d. Support / sponsorship of local schools
 - e. Support / sponsorship of local sports teams

3. Date of next meeting

3pm Monday 9th February 2015 at TMC