

Scottish Borders Council
Employment Land Audit
Overview

1. Purpose of the Employment Land Audit

- 1.1 The Employment Land Audit monitors the supply, take-up and status of business and industrial land within the Scottish Borders, in accordance with the National Planning Framework 4. Businesses have a variety of size and quality requirements, so the audit assesses the range and choice of the sites, which make up the supply. The audit also identifies the availability and constraints of sites, and monitors windfall employment developments.
- 1.2 The audit is undertaken annually for the period in order to monitor the changing pattern of business and industrial development activity within the Scottish Borders. The base date for the published data of each audit is 31 March (starting on 1 April of the previous year). The audit records:
- the **established employment land supply**;
 - the **take-up of employment land**; and
 - any **windfall employment developments**

2. Planning Policy

2.1 National Planning Policy

The [National Planning Framework 4](#) (NPF4) for Scotland, was adopted by Scottish Ministers in February 2023. NPF4 is a long-term plan, looking to 2045, that guides spatial development, sets out national policies, designates national developments and highlights regional spatial priorities. It now forms part of the Local Development Plan, so influences planning decisions throughout the Scottish Borders. [Policy 26 \(Business and Industry\)](#) states that Local Development Plans “*should allocate sufficient land for business and industry, taking into account business and industry land audits, in particular ensuring that there is a suitable range of sites that meet current market demand, location, size and quality in terms of accessibility and services. This allocation should take account of local economic strategies and support broader objectives of delivering a low carbon and net zero economic recovery, and a fairer and more inclusive wellbeing economy.*”

2.2 Regional Spatial Strategy

The Planning (Scotland) Act 2019 establishes a duty for a planning authority, or planning authorities acting jointly, to prepare and adopt a Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for their region. Scottish Borders Council has been involved in the production of two Indicative Regional Spatial Strategies (iRSS); one for the South of Scotland and the second for Edinburgh and South-East Scotland. This recognises the importance of the City Region but also the emerging importance of the South of Scotland collaborative approach with Dumfries & Galloway Council. Both strategies were approved by the Council in September 2020 and were submitted to the Scottish Government. The Strategies then informed the development of NPF4 in conjunction with other iRSS from around Scotland.

The iRSS articulate a number of shared outcomes and strategic development projects we would like to see achieved and delivered in our region by 2050. The Regional Spatial Strategies will develop further since the adoption of NPF4 and the development of statutory guidance, moving them from interim to formal status. Scottish Borders Council will work with other authorities and partner organisations, using established connections across both South of Scotland and Edinburgh and South-East Scotland regions, to develop Regional Spatial Strategies moving forward in line with the priorities set out in NPF4.

2.3 Local Planning Policy

The Scottish Borders Local Development Plan (LDP) was adopted in August 2024 and sets out the primary policy context for development within the Scottish Borders, including in relation to employment land.

The monitoring period of the Employment Land Audit is up to the end of March each year. This audit covers the period April 2023 to March 2024 and it was the Scottish Borders LDP 2016 that was the relevant LDP at this time. Policy ED1 - Protection of Business and Industrial Land of the LDP 2016 establishes a hierarchy of business and industrial land and aims to ensure an adequate supply is retained and not diluted by a proliferation of other uses. The policy recognises the financial difficulty, resulting from market failure, in bringing forward new employment land. The policy, therefore, protects resources into the long term and complements the Council's [Economic Strategy](#). The hierarchy identifies key areas of Strategic High Amenity business land (class 4 only) and Strategic (class 4, 5 or 6) business and industrial land. Policy ED1 provides them with rigorous policy protection as it recognises the difficulty in bringing these sites forward. District level employment sites and local sites are also identified, each with different levels of protection.

The Scottish Borders LDP 2024 allocates new business and industrial sites as well as mixed use sites, which incorporate business and industrial uses. This LDP will inform the succeeding Employment Land Audit which includes new business and industrial allocations in Eshiels, Galashiels, Greenlaw, Hawick, Kelso, Westruther and Yetholm. These sites were allocated due to a shortfall being identified within these areas.

3. Methodology

- 3.1 The adopted Local Development Plan (LDP) 2016 sets out the allocations as the basis for establishing the employment land supply within the Scottish Borders. The established Employment land supply is the total area of:
- Business and Industrial sites (including safeguarded business and industrial land) which were undeveloped or under construction on 31 March of the year of the audit.
 - Mixed use or redevelopment sites with potential to be developed for business and industrial use, which were undeveloped or under construction on 31 March of the year of the audit.
- 3.2 The take-up of employment land is the total area of land supply, which has been developed (completed) over the previous 12 months.
- 3.3 The audit also monitors windfall employment developments. These are new business or industrial developments (use classes 4 (business), 5 (industrial) and/or 6 (storage and distribution) on sites which do not form part of the employment land supply (*i.e.* on land not allocated for business and industrial use within the LDP) and were not previously in employment use.
- 3.4 The audit is managed through a database which holds detailed information on each site, including:
- a unique reference number and site name;
 - status;
 - availability (immediate, 1-5 years, beyond 5 years, under construction, taken-up);
 - tenure;
 - ownership (where known);
 - existing use (brownfield, greenfield);

- planning status (full planning permission, planning permission in principle, no planning permission, completed);
- site area;
- LDP designation
- constraints (ownership, contamination, infrastructure, marketability, physical); and
- site servicing (serviced, partially serviced, not serviced).

3.5 The data is recorded spatially using Geographic Information System (GIS) and [web maps](#) detailing the sites are published online. Sites with buildings are not recorded within the audit.