

## Put employment land on mayors' agenda



This summer Turley published the report *Industrial revolution: better planning guidance for business*. Our research explored the Government's guidance for local authorities undertaking employment land reviews as set out in the National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance.

Our aim was to consider how well aligned recent ELRs are to this guidance. Planning for business requirements is an important part of the NPPF and needs to be balanced against the need for homes. Both are essential in the right quantities and in the right locations in order to ensure that the economy functions effectively.

Our research examined land reviews for 10% of councils across England and highlighted limitations in the way that business land and property is planned for.

First, the generalised nature of the Government's guidance means that it is applied in different ways in different places.

Second, and perhaps most concerning, there is a lack of meaningful engagement with business which is needed to understand its future property and location requirements. Engagement is clearly a two-way process, meaning that councils, land owners, developers

and businesses all need to be speaking.

Third, B2 (industrial) and B8 (warehouse) uses are often grouped together and treated homogeneously under the category “general industrial” uses. This overlooks nuances in sector-based property requirements and means business needs are masked.

We tested these findings through senior roundtable sessions with business leaders in Birmingham, Manchester and London, co-hosted with Addleshaw Goddard and the British Property Federation.

While the discussions identified issues specific to each location, there was one overriding consistent message: markets don't match local authority boundaries and a wider perspective on employment land is needed.

Areas such as regions are still important and can approximate the level at which business location decisions are made.

With councils understandably pre-occupied with what is occurring within their own boundaries, the more footloose nature of industrial and logistics activities become “someone else's problem” and can fall through the gaps in planning policy. This hinders businesses and developers from meeting property needs. This is being evidenced across the country with site availability becoming a barrier to realising business growth requirements.

With the newly established city region mayors responsible for six combined authorities (Cambridgeshire and Peterborough, Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, the Tees Valley, the West of England and the West Midlands) accounting for a total population of 9.5m people, there is a very real opportunity to implement a joined-up approach.

This should be one that takes a more strategic view on employment land needs and plans for this need across the functional economic market area.

If city region elected mayors use their powers to take a co-ordinated approach to strategic planning across the combined authority area, this will ensure that needs are met and not consigned to a “larger than local” or “too difficult” category.

This presents a prime opportunity for England's newly elected regional mayors to recognise employment land for industry as an essential part of their plan making for prosperity.

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**Link to web page:** <https://www.turley.co.uk/intelligence/put-employment-land-mayors-agenda>