

Location of New Office Development

The NPPF defines office development as a main town centre use. Therefore the 'Sequential Test' applies and such development should normally be accommodated within defined centres unless it can be demonstrated that there are no sites within such centres which are suitable and available to accommodate the proposed development. If this can be demonstrated, then development should be located in edge-of-centre locations where possible (i.e. within 300 metres of the boundary of a defined centre or within 500 metres of a public transport interchange) and only if no such sites are suitable and available should out-of-centre sites be considered (NPPF paragraph 24).

There is also a requirement in the NPPF (paragraph 26) for large scale office development proposals of 2,500 square metres gross or more to be accompanied by an Impact Assessment to examine whether or not the proposal is acceptable in terms of its impact on the vitality and viability of defined centres and to ensure that it does not have an adverse impact on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in office development within defined centres.

Policy JE4: Location of Office Development

1. New office development (including change of use of buildings to provide office accommodation and the expansion of existing office uses) should normally be sited within Coventry city centre or other defined centres (as defined on the Policies Map).
2. The Friargate site within Coventry city centre is the Council's preferred location for new large-scale office development. This site is allocated for primarily B1 office development under Policy JE2.
3. Proposals for new office development in other locations will only be permitted if the following criteria are satisfied:
 - a) Having regard to locational factors, there are no suitable sequentially preferable sites available within the city centre, another defined centre or in an edge-of-centre location (if no Defined Centre sites are suitable and available); or
 - b) The proposal is for small scale rural offices;
4. In addition to at least one of the above criteria being satisfied it will also need to be demonstrated that:
 - a) The proposal would not have a significant adverse impact on the vitality and viability of defined centres and on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in office development within a defined centre; and
 - b) The site is accessible by a choice of means of transport or will be made accessible by a choice of means of transport as a consequence of planning permission being granted for the development; and
 - c) There is good access from the development to a primary route on the highway network and an acceptable impact on the capacity of that network; and
 - d) The proposals are compatible with other Plan Policies.

5. Proposals for new office development outside of Defined Centres shall be accompanied by a Sequential Assessment and where a proposal is for 2,500 square metres (gross) or more of office floor space an Impact Assessment shall also be provided which examines the impact of the proposal on the vitality and viability of Defined Centres and its impact on existing, committed and planned public and private investment in office development within Defined Centres.

Both the Council and the CWLEP are promoting the Friargate redevelopment as the new business district for Coventry city centre. Friargate is shown on the Policies Map as lying within a defined centre and is allocated under Policy JE2 for primarily B1 office purposes. It is considered that this key site will be the focus for large scale new office development (1,000 square metres gross floor space or greater) within the city over the plan period.

It is acknowledged that in some instances it may not be possible for new office development to be located in a defined centre due to particular locational factors. However, robust justification will need to be provided to demonstrate that sequentially preferable sites are not suitable due to such locational factors. In this regard the NPPF is clear that applicants should demonstrate flexibility on issues such as format and scale and the NPPG on Ensuring the Vitality of Town Centres also states that land ownership matters are not considered to constitute robust justification.

Policy JE4 applies to both employment sites allocated in this Plan and windfall sites that may come forward for development.