**sWINDON bOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Specification For**

**Swindon Borough Employment Study (2023)**

**Lot A – Employment Needs and Land Supply Study**

**Lot B – Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Needs Study**

**Lot C – Both Lot A and B**

**Notice ReF: DN670692**



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| **INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT** |

**Setting the Ambition**

1. Swindon Borough Council is in the process of preparing a new Local Plan with a 30-year plus vision and functional plan period to at least 2042. This requires long range thinking about the nature of the economy, work and growth.
2. The Council is working alongside a range of stakeholders including Business West, Swindon Chamber of Commerce, University of the West of England and Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership to develop a clear and progressive vision for the local economy and offer that supports key strengths including locational advantages and develops the economic base and opportunities for business growth.
3. The Council is keen to commission new evidence to align with the new economic vision / direction work that includes an updated employment needs and land supply assessment together with an update to the retail and commercial leisure evidence base.
4. This is an important study and the Council is keen to appoint a suitably qualified and experienced set of consultants that can frame technical analysis work within a much larger context and take an integrated approach to growth. This is a multi-lot commission and the detailed requirements are outlined in the individual lot sections of the specification.

**Spatial and Economic Portrait**

1. The New Swindon Local Plan will cover the whole of the Borough of Swindon. The Borough is 230km2 in area and in 2021 had a population of approximately 233,400 people[[1]](#footnote-2). It consists of the large urban area of Swindon itself, the market town of Highworth to the northeast, the large village of Wroughton to the south, and a number of smaller villages and hamlets.
2. At the heart of Swindon’s urban area is Swindon town centre, Swindon train station and Swindon’s Railway Conservation Area[[2]](#footnote-3); the historic Great Western Railway (GWR) environment around Swindon train station is of international importance and provides a rich source of local social and historic study interest. The remainder of the Borough is predominantly characterised by high quality landscape, including parts of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Thames Vale. A rich variety of historic and natural features within the Borough’s towns, villages and countryside all positively contribute towards local distinctiveness, character, appearance and a sense of identity.
3. Strategically, the Borough is centrally located on the Great Western Railway line between Cardiff and London and on the M4 corridor between Bristol and Reading and is an important location for business and residential development in the South West region. The Borough’s population has grown significantly over the past 50 years and the latest Census data from 2021 shows an 11.6% rise in population within the Borough from 2011 to 2021 alone[[3]](#footnote-4). The Borough is also identified by the Centre for Economics and Business Research as one of the ‘top ten towns and cities in the UK’ with the fastest-growing economies by the end of 2023.
4. In spatial terms, whilst a small percentage of growth is programmed towards rural settlements under the Local Plan 2026, the adopted spatial strategy predominantly continues a long-standing pattern of accommodating growth through large-scale expansion of Swindon’s urban area.
5. However, the regeneration of Swindon Town Centre is now a key strategic corporate priority and the Council has been active in leveraging the buildings and land it controls to support a £100m investment programme. Key projects such as the redevelopment of Kimmerfields and North Star are progressing and a major new bus interchange at Fleming Way is now under construction. A spatial strategy refocused more on Swindon Town Centre is already therefore emerging along with a spatial approach which seeks to promote new mixed-use and residential growth in and around centres and other accessible locations where growth would more directly support and benefit from existing (and new) services, facilities and transport links.
6. The future role of centres within the Borough’s town centre network will be a fundamental consideration of this commission and questions around their function as key services centres, leisure destinations, key employment hubs, as well as new residential neighbourhoods, will all need to be explored.
7. Land designated for employment use is also predominantly located within Swindon urban area with smaller clusters of employment land located at the rural settlements of Highworth and Wroughton. Within Swindon urban area, industrial and warehouse uses have historically taken route along the railway line corridor and in reference to the strategic road network, particularly the A419 and A420. A corridor of office space is also present, running from Swindon station and town centre down towards the M4 where a series of out-of-centre office complexes are located.
8. The study will need to review the future role and inter-connections between employment, retail and leisure uses as part of town centre regeneration in particular. Swindon is also a popular destination for logistics / distribution uses and is home to a major Amazon warehouse depot at Symmetry Park employing in excess of 2,000 people. There will be a need through the study to develop a detailed understanding of the key changes in retailing and how this has driven a need for specific types of supporting employment land space requirements and further trends or directions in the sector.

**The Development Plan**

1. For Swindon Borough, the Development Plan consists of the following documents:
   * Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 (adopted Mar-2015);
   * Swindon Central Area Action Plan (February 2009)
   * Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Core Strategy (2009)
   * Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Development Control Policies Development Plan Document (DPD) (2009)
   * Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Site Allocations DPD (2012)
   * Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Core Strategy (2009)
   * Wiltshire and Swindon Development Control Policies DPD (2009)
   * Wiltshire and Swindon Waste Site Allocations DPD (2012)
   * Made Neighbourhood Plans: Wroughton (2016); Highworth (2017); South Marston Village (2017); Hannington (2018); Stratton St Margaret (2021); Blunsdon East (2021)
2. In addition to this, a policy in the Wiltshire and Swindon Minerals Local Plan (adopted in 2001) continues to be saved and has yet to be superseded by more recent documents.

**Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026**

1. In March 2015, the Council adopted the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026 which set requirements for delivering 22,000 new homes and a total of 119.5 ha of employment land during the Plan period of 2011 to 2026.
2. Whilst 42ha of the 119.5ha required was to come from extant permissions, the Plan allocated an additional 77.5 ha of employment land. There is a strong focus upon strategic sites within the adopted Local Plan 2026 for the delivery of both new housing and new employment land. In total, 72.5ha out of the 77.5ha of newly allocated employment land was expected to be delivered as part of strategic site allocations. Table 1 below sets out these strategic sites and the contribution expected as well as some commentary around delivery status

**Table 1: Strategic Sites**

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| **Strategic site name** | **Residential component** | **Employment land component** | **Status @ 1-Apr-23** |
| Tadpole Garden Village | circa 1,650 homes (largely built out) | 5 ha | Housing largely built out. Employment land failed to attract employment uses and is now occupied by a school. |
| Commonhead / Badbury Park | circa 1,200 homes (largely built out) | 15 ha | Housing largely built out. Employment land not delivered and instead is currently under construction for further housing. |
| Wichelstowe | up to 4,500 homes (partially build out) | 12.5 ha | Housing partially built out. Employment land not yet delivered. |
| Kingsdown | circa 1,650 homes | None. | Construction not started and no housing delivered to date. |
| New Eastern Villages | circa 8,000 homes | 40 ha | Housebuilding has started at Redlands. Warehousing delivered on 37 ha symmetry park. |
| Employment land allocated within strategic site allocations: |  | 72.5 ha |  |

1. Outside of strategic site allocations, the Local Plan 2026 allocates 5 ha of employment land adjacent to the settlement boundary of Highworth and makes provision for 90,000m2 of new office floorspace within ‘Swindon Central Area’. There are concerns that historically employment land associated with strategic site allocations has been poorly located, not directly accessible from the primary or secondary road network and insufficiently well differentiated and connected to housing areas. In common with other parts of the country Swindon has also witnessed an erosion of office space through permitted development rights and conversions to residential. Some of the centres and out of town retail estates are also struggling with occupancy levels.

**New Local Plan**

18. Swindon Borough Council has been in the process of producing a Local Plan Review since 2015, and has undertaken multiple rounds of consultation. This has included two Regulation 18 consultations in 2017 and 2019, and further to this the Council consulted on two separate Regulation 19 consultations in Dec 2019 and July 2021.

19. However, following the 2021 Regulation 19 consultation, an important proposed allocation site was withdrawn at Full Council and the deliverability of other key strategic sites is under review. Further internal and external review of work underpinning the plan has also been undertaken, which has identified the need to revisit supporting evidence including site allocation material and technical work on housing, employment land, retail and commercial leisure, transport modelling, sport and recreation, infrastructure planning and strategic flood risk analysis.

20. The employment evidence base for the plan needs a move forward in terms of both breadth of vision but also the technical study period and related information with the new plan looking at a plan period of circa 2023-42 with visioning to 2050 and beyond.

21. The New Plan provides the opportunity to consider how planning policies and strategies might be reimagined in a way that is more aligned with current Council priorities for the Borough. The regeneration of Swindon Town Centre is a particular area of focus for the Council at present which is not sufficiently explored in detail as an option for growth. Furthermore, it provides an opportunity to revisit the spatial strategy to better integrate housing and economic growth, as well as encourage sustainable transport and connectivity through the consideration of options focused around public transport corridors and infrastructure hubs.

22. The preparation of a New Local Plan is a key Council priority because of its role in supporting town centre regeneration, housing and economic growth and environmental improvements across the Borough, in providing homes and jobs in sustainable well-connected locations for a growing population and in responding to challenges posed by climate change. It also has a key role in setting out policies and designations to protect the Borough’s environmental assets – its countryside, wildlife habitats and biodiversity, its parks, playing pitches and open spaces and its built heritage including its conservation areas and listed buildings.

23. There is also a need to refocus the Plan to ensure current local, national and global priorities such as climate change and achieving net zero emissions are central themes, both within policy and the consideration of spatial strategy and growth options. Redefining economic growth within the context of environmental constraints and new sectoral opportunities is also central to this brief. A future fit strategy will need to ensure that:

* A resilient approach is developed to effectively manage the impact of climate change, including the provision of new and improved infrastructure;
* Places and movement strategies evolve to sustain local services and facilities while minimising environmental impacts;
* The protection and restoration of ecological systems is prioritised, and
* Economic opportunities are re-defined in support of a transition to high value but low carbon economy.

24. The Borough also faces a number of challenges in relation to health and inequality, including: economic inequalities. A summary of key challenges in terms of the Levelling Up agenda has been set out in the Council most recent public health annual report[[4]](#footnote-5).

25. The Council’s programme for the production of the new Local Plan is set out in its Local Development Scheme (LDS) which is available to view on the Council’s [website](https://www.swindon.gov.uk/downloads/download/2286/swindon_local_development_scheme). Under the latest LDS, key dates are set out in Table 2 below.

**Table 2: Local Development Scheme – Key Stages**

| **Key Stage** | **Dates** |
| --- | --- |
| Public consultation on Regulation 18 | Autumn 2023 |
| Public consultation on Regulation 19 | Summer 2024 |
| Submission to Secretary of State (Regulation 22) | Late 2024 |

26. Upon adoption, the Plan will supersede all saved policies in the Swindon Borough Local Plan 2026, and also in the Swindon Central Area Action Plan. The Plan is also likely to supersede mineral and waste policies to form a single integrated plan.

**Evidence and Studies to Date**

27. The following information and background material will be available for this commission:

* Swindon Employment Land Review Final Report (SBC / Lichfield, 2017);
* Swindon & Wiltshire Functional Economic Market Area Assessment Report (Dec-2016);
* Swindon Retail and Leisure Needs Assessment Final Report (SBC / Lichfields, 2017);
* Swindon Economic Strategy – 2021 to 2026;
* Swindon – Town Investment Plan (Swindon Town Deal Board / Stantec) and supporting material;
* collated set of regeneration site information;
* specialist sector reports, and
* employment site database accurate to circa January 2021.

**Approach to Working**

1. It is expected that the commissioned consultants will work collaboratively with Council Officers, key stakeholders and other consultants to co-develop the different aspects of the employment commission in order to facilitate the sharing of knowledge and skills. Bidders will be expected to outline their methodology for co-development and approach to maximising learning and development opportunities as part of their submission.
2. Core reporting outputs are included within the relevant tables under the Lot information.

**LOT DETAILS**

1. This contract is to be treated as three lots:

Lot A – Employment Needs and Land Supply Study

Lot B – Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Needs Study

Lot C – Packaged Lot of both Lot A and B.

If bidding for one lot only and successfully appointed there will be an expectation to work closely with other consultants appointed on the other lot. The Lots have been included as technically separable and contain distinct work tasks of an evolving nature.

1. In the evaluation of Lot C, the tender submission will be evaluated noting any delivery efficiencies identified. The overall assessment process will consist of the following:

* Lot A tender submissions evaluated and the preferred bidder identified.
* Lot B tender submissions evaluated and the preferred bidder identified.
* Lot C (packaged Lot) preferred bidder identified.
* Preferred Bidder from Lot A and B combined scoring evaluated against Lot C (packaged Lot) preferred bidder scoring.

**LENGTH OF CONTRACT**

1. It is anticipated that the contract will cover the period to February 2024. Any extension will be agreed by both parties.

**OBJECTIVES AND REQUIREMENTS**

1. The overall technical components of the briefs are set out below in Table 3 and within the individual Lots. At a headline level the commissioning group is also keen for this work to deliver:

* Fundamentally a robust set of research and analysis to inform sound policy recommendations for the new Local Plan.
* A defined robust network of ‘town’ centres, with some reflection on how the currently adopted spatial strategy, with its emphasis on urban extensions and new settlement growth, might affect the vitality and viability of the established network.
* Analysis and recommendations on the scale and more fine-grained detail of change in Swindon Town Centre that can be supported through the new Local Plan process recognising a need to balance economic and housing growth, in their various forms.
* A review of the continued implications of hybrid and flexible working on residential areas and in housing design together with the potential need to refresh commercial office design and urban places to offer more than places of work.
* A better understanding of which employment sectors want to grow in the Borough and Swindon’s sub-region but can’t due to lack of the right land in the right location.
* Consideration as to how Swindon can best utilise its land to attract knowledge economy sectors prevalent in the Oxford area and support the creation of

sector specific clusters through its Local Plan.

* Guidance on how the Borough can support the creation of a knowledge cluster in Central Swindon through its Local Plan.
* Consideration of independent businesses that want to grow themselves through asset ownership models and not rent from a conglomerate and further support independent expansions.
* The extent of supporting or ancillary facilities required to support specific areas of employment growth, particularly within logistics and distribution - lorry parks, restaurants, bathing and refuelling facilities plus overnight stops.

1. A summary of the core detailed requirements of the commission by Lot is also outlined below in Table 3 and explored in detail within the relevant sections of the specification.

**Table 3: Technical Requirements**

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| **Area** | **Requirement Details** |
| **Lot A – Employment Needs and Land Supply Study** | |
| Part A – Economic Profile and Functional Economic Market Area | * Updated economic profile with scorecard and set of indicators. * Updated Functional Economic Market Area |
| Part B – Employment Needs and Space Requirements | * Methodology Paper * Econometrical Forecasts x 3 * Adjusted ‘policy on’ forecasts * Review of past employment delivery and permission pipeline. * Define inputs for the Swindon Housing Study * Case studies and best practice regarding town centre regeneration and growth. * Various areas of trend and opportunity analysis. * Practically applied methodology and conversion of employment forecasts to land requirements. |
| Part C – Land, Premises and Spaces | * Updated analysis of employment floorspace within the Borough and spatial distribution. * Advice on an improved employment land database. * Review and analysis of employment land / floorspace losses and gains. * Commercial agent property market review and interviews. * Detailed employment sites assessment with an agreed methodology. |
| Part D – Demand and Supply Balance | * Employment land supply and need balance / equilibrium assessment |
| Part E – Skills Base and Future Requirements | * Recommendations on skills and training pathways to support growth and meeting requirements. |
| Part F – Conclusions and Recommendations | * A series of conclusions together with policy and site / spatial / skills recommendations. |
| **Lot B – Retail and Main Town Centre Uses Needs Study** | |
| Part A – Retail Changes and Hierarchy of Centres | * Strategic overview of town centre issues covering macro trends, policy context and change, local priorities and directions. * Update of the retail destination assessment using an appropriate comparative matrix and catchment area. * Hierarchy of centres – review and sense check. |
| Part B – Retail and Service Provision: Centre Health Checks | * Health Check methodology. * Population profile. * Trend and comparative analysis of mix of retailers and occupancy including vacancy rates. * Breakdown, summary and comparative analysis of retailer representation. * Breakdown, summary and comparative analysis of non-retailer representation. * Audit of the centres according to agreed criteria with Council support. * Household survey – questionnaire to be agreed with the Council. * Potential shopper street survey. * Commercial information and local agents’ interviews. |
| Part C – Establishing Future Needs | * Methodology – retail floorspace forecasting. * High-level assessment of retail trends. * Population and expenditure forecasts. * Borough quantitative and qualitative forecasts for comparison and convenience floorspace. * Town centre and other centres position statement(s). * Online retail and distribution – futures paper. * Recommendations concerning town centre strategy, reducing vacancy levels, lower grade town centre uses and areas of future risk. * Stakeholder workshop |
| Part D – Defining Policies and Parameters | * Define a robust network and hierarchy of town centres. * Defining the extent of town centres including primary shopping areas, and make clear the range of uses permitted in such locations. * Setting the broad scale, range and type of twin centre use development likely to be needed. * Establish a locally set floorspace threshold for applications for retail and leisure development for which above the threshold floorspace level impact assessments will be required. * Scoping the extent of a sequential test framework. |
| Part E – Conclusions and Recommendations | * A series of conclusions together with policy and site / spatial recommendations. |
| **LOT A – EMPLOYMENT NEEDS AND LAND SUPPLY STUDY** | | | |

**Part A – Economic Profile and Functional Economic Market Area (FEMA)**

1. The Council is working with a series of strategic partners on the development of a long range and transformational economic ‘growth vision’ and programme of interventions for the Swindon economy. Partners include: Business West, Swindon Chamber of Commerce, University of West of England and Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership. This work will need to feed into this current commission and is likely to focus upon skills, infrastructure and sectoral opportunities and strengths. These may include the green and circular economy; knowledge economy; rail infrastructure and logistics strengths.

Economic Profile

1. The first part of the commission will involve updating and developing an economic profile together with a headline review of the functional economic market area. Key technical components of the economic profile could include:

* Review of jobs and employment
* Sectoral structure analysis
* Labour market – skills, wages and inequality
* Economic indicators of business innovation / green economy
* Overall size of the economy

1. The Council is keen to establish a refreshed set of indicators or a data scorecard to benchmark economic performance. This will also eventually form part of an update to the Council’s Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) and monitoring framework to the new Local Plan.

Functional Economic Market Area

1. The Swindon FEMA has historically been defined as having a relatively strong eastwards focus towards the Thames Valley and Oxfordshire reflective of automotive connections in part. It will be important to review the FEMA and whether relationships are changing. Important considerations are likely to include any changing travel to work patterns and the import / export of labour. The physical scale of the FEMA will also be useful to review within the context of Duty to Cooperate discussions and growth pressures and demands outside the administrative boundary of the LPA. Core elements of the work are likely to include:

* a review of previous FEMA research;
* travel to work and housing market area evidence, and
* an analysis of population profiles, health service geographies and media catchments

1. The location grade of Swindon Town as a retail, business and visitor destination will also need to form part of the thinking in analysing the economic market area and catchment distance of visitors.

**Part B – Employment Needs and Space Requirements**

Methodology and Practical Approach

1. One of the core components of this commission is an updated assessment of future requirements for employment space through the plan period. It will be important for the methodology developed to consider the extent of recent macro-economic events and to structure an approach which reads across various sources and approaches to forecasting.
2. This study is also taking an integrated approach to understanding town centre and other uses and future demand / needs and the overall methodology will need to consider the extended breadth of the study.
3. A requirement of the study will be to set out a clear methodology and stepped process for converting employment projections to floorspace and land requirements.

Baseline and Adjusted Forecasts – Employment Growth

1. The commissioning team is keen to update forecast sector and related jobs growth using the main econometrical forecasting houses – Cambridge, Oxford and Experian. This will provide a range of initial employment sector base outputs. The previous work undertaken by Lichfields[[5]](#footnote-6) considered baseline labour demand using Cambridge and Oxford with additional averaged figures.
2. Work will also need to be undertaken on adjusted or ‘policy on’ labour demand – this may take the form of various growth scenarios. It will be important to work closely with the consultants and stakeholders developing the overall economic growth vision to ensure that the scenario work reflects priorities but can also be translated in practical application through the forecasting.
3. In line with previous commissioning and standards for undertaking similar work there will also need to be a review of past trends in completion of employment space. The Council is currently collating the data to better inform this work plus complete a series of end of year site monitoring assessments. This work will also include establishing current pipeline supply (extant planning permissions) for inclusion in the report analysis.
4. The Council is commissioning separate work on a Swindon Housing Study to include reviewing the Government’s Standard Method housing outputs for Swindon Borough. Part of this review involves analysing whether exceptional circumstances justify an alternative approach which also reflects current and future demographic trends and market signals. This commission will need to:

* review and refer to estimates of future growth of the labour supply drawing upon population forecast developed in the Swindon Housing Study, and also
* produce employment-led demographic scenarios that can be utilised within the Swindon Housing Study.

1. It is also expected that this part of the employment study with also consider such matters as ‘double jobbing’ and changes in the labour market. If we reflect on changes to the labour market over the last 20-30 years, there is a clear need to think about the future directions of work – particularly given the long-range nature of the local plan both in terms of technical deliverability and also vision.
2. A key focus for this commission is a broader and more integrated approach to employment growth and uses. This includes reading across not only traditional ‘b uses’ but also town centre uses and flexibilities. Further developing a clear vision and direction for Swindon Town Centre is both a challenge and opportunity and is a very significant focus for investment and regeneration. This necessitates a holistic and possibly more fine-grained approach to employment use analysis together with a review of spatial and design-led solutions. Review of best practice case studies could help inform directions.
3. The study will also need to focus upon trend and opportunity analysis concerning:

* home-working and office trends and new directions – particularly reflective of post-Covid demand implications;
* the changing nature and characteristics of logistic, movement and industrial / warehouse needs – emergence of dark warehouses, seasonal fluxes in expansion demand, employment building density and intensification of employment needs, together with the infrastructure and ancillary uses to support distribution uses;
* an analysis of strategic growth areas, including New Eastern Villages – employment land designations within strategic sites which has generally not been delivered, apart from Symmetry Park (NEV) and the vision / delivery of local centres is in some cases uncertain – consideration also in light of retaining a strong commercial core around the town centre;
* a sectoral analysis of smaller scale employment uses and occupiers which are more compatible with urban and town centres, providing the opportunity to support regeneration;
* an analysis of the employment needs of other identified priority growth sectors – for example green and knowledge economies and opportunities to support growth within Swindon, and
* gap and barriers to growth – an analysis of employment needs in sectors which may be looking to expand but can’t currently, including demand for certain types of buildings / premises.

Some of this commission focus will obviously connect to land, premises and spaces section of the brief, as well as demand considerations.

Employment Floorspace and Hectare Assessment

1. The study will need to develop a clear methodology for the conversion of employment forecasts to net employment space requirements and then to gross employment space requirements recognising the potential need to apply an allowance factor (safety margin); future losses and replacement considerations for more traditional employment uses and also the integrated nature of the study in terms of employment and retail / leisure and town centre uses.

**Part C – Land, Premises and Spaces**

Overview

1. The last set of plan evidence work on Swindon’s employment land status was undertaken in 2017 and the Council maintained a database of employment estates and occupier information to 2021. This database is searchable (includes over 1300 entries) by employment area / zone, business address, business trading category and occupancy. This information will be available for this commission but the Council is seeking advice through this tendering process to create a smarter and less resource intensive platform to assist in occupier monitoring and employment data and intelligence collection.
2. The Council is updating vacant / undeveloped land within existing employment areas / zones as part of new annual monitoring work programming. Work has also commenced on reviewing employment losses and take-up levels following a review of planning applications and delivery taken forward from 2014 which tends to be the cut off point for the data sources for the 2017 Lichfields Report on Employment Land referenced previously.
3. The Council has also recently concluded a new call for sites exercise and there may be other employment sites of note (not necessary defined as designated employment land) in developing the overall base set of information.

Employment Land and Spaces

1. The Council requires an update to employment floorspace (by broad type) within the Borough and an analysis of spatial distribution. This part of the commission should include comparative and time-period analysis.
2. Historic and more recent information supplied by the Council on gross employment completions and employment space losses will help in determining net completion levels and an overview of historic development rates which forms part of this commission’s outputs. Information will also be supplied by the Council on Prior Approval housing monitoring (mainly office to residential) and resultant impacts. This material will need to be reviewed or sense checked as part of the commission.

Commercial Property Market Intelligence

1. The study will also need to integrate an update to the commercial market review for Swindon, which was last analysed in 2017. Key aspects of this part of the commission to include:

* Review of market geography
* Commercial market segments – offices and industrial
* Key changes / variables since 2017.

Attention will need to be paid to the findings from this part of the study and any implications for the FEMA. The Council will work with the consultant team to finalise the set of commercial agent property interview questions.

Review and Evaluation of Employment Sites Portfolio

1. The commissioning team is looking for a review and update to the Borough wide employment sites portfolio last undertaken in 2017. This will involve circa 40 employment areas / sites which equates to a land take of about 1000 ha, including sites submitted under the recent Call for Sites exercise. There have been some changes at a strategic level in the employment portfolio including the New Eastern Villages employment hub sites and with a planning application to redevelop the former Honda site at South Marston to create a logistics and manufacturing centres (mixture of employment uses including light industrial, storage and distribution, general industrial and manufacturing uses) on the 145-hectare site.
2. The Council will work with the appointed consultants to finalise the list of areas / sites for review and the exact methodology for assessment. As a guide the previous study included the following information:

General Information

* Total site area
* Estimate of undeveloped land
* Current policy status
* Current mix of uses
* Sequential status (out of town for example)
* Site density

Site Assessment Criteria

* Strategic road access
* Local accessibility
* Proximity to Urban Areas and Access to Labour and Services
* Proximity to Incompatible Uses
* Site Characteristics and Development Constraints
* Market Attractiveness
* Planning Factors
* Barriers to Delivery
* Potential Employment Uses
* Timescale / Availability

1. As part of the employment site evaluation criteria attention will also need to be paid to the quality of transport connections – particularly active travel and bus connections and scope to introduce services / infrastructure. This forms part of wider thinking about carbon profiling for employment areas and the consultants are expected to consider with the evaluation criteria options to off-set or reduce carbon outputs including opportunities to introduce green infrastructure and bio-diversity improvements.
2. The Council is looking to take an integrated approach to development planning and the employment sites work will also need to consider options to integrate appropriate employment uses within Swindon Town centre as part of diversification of the economic base and possible replacements for areas where retail / commercial leisure uses are failing or need support. There might be for example an opportunity to explore mixed use light industrial or research and design / technology type occupiers for small business occupiers in addition to offices and professional services.
3. Consideration of options for the protection of key employment locations (including town centre offices) should also form part of this study. Conversely the Council is keen to better understand the possible future of more poorly performing retail and employment areas and in some cases edge of town centre locations and scope to enhance or introduce other types of uses including residential.
4. Part of the commission should also evaluate the extent and options to make better use of existing and new employment areas through industrial intensification and co-location of uses and improvements to build density, with a more progressive approach to integrated uses (various types including residential), building heights and the use of external spaces including car parking areas and more of a focus upon serving employment sites with improved sustainable transport options. Benchmark studies in this area include the Greater London Authority Industrial Intensification and Co-Location Study.
5. The healthcheck methodology / approach identified for retail / town centre areas under Lot B may yield additional criteria which may be useful to include within the employment site evaluations.
6. While the main focus is updating evidence on the employment portfolio at a site by site level, the Council will be looking to evaluate clusters of sites and strategic employment site options within the Sustainability Appraisal work programme to ensure that the various layers of growth (housing and employment) and supporting infrastructure are considered holistically.

**Part D – Demand and Supply Balance**

1. The reporting will need to draw conclusions on both the quantitative and qualitative balance of employment land use demand versus employment space provision (supply). There may be a need to test the balance through a series of scenario analyses.
2. This part of the study should also dovetail with any further findings coming out of the Swindon economic growth vision work stream.

**Part E – Skills Base and Future Requirements**

1. The achievement of equilibrium or a best fit in terms of demand meets supply can be a fairly abstract process and it would also be useful for this study to explore skills and training pathways to support growth and meeting requirements, including clean / green economy and other ‘policy on’ measures identified through this commission and the wider Swindon Economic Growth vision work.
2. The green economy sectoral growth areas could include for example:

* **Power** – including renewables (such as wind, solar and hydropower), nuclear power, grid infrastructure, energy storage and smart systems technology;
* **Business and industry** – including hydrogen production and industrial use, carbon capture, utilisation & storage (CCUS) and industrial decarbonisation;
* **Homes and buildings** – including retrofit, building new energy-efficient homes, heat pumps, smart devices and controls, heat networks and hydrogen boilers;
* **Transport** – including low or zero emission vehicles, aviation and maritime, rail, public transport and walking or cycling;
* **Natural resources** – including nature restoration, tree planting and decarbonising agriculture, waste management and recycling;
* **Enabling decarbonisation** – including science and innovation for climate change, green finance, circular economy and energy networks;
* **Climate adaptation** – including flood defences, retrofitting of buildings to be resilient to extreme weather/climate events, nature-based solutions to reduce climate impacts and civil and mechanical engineering for infrastructure adaptation.[[6]](#footnote-7)

1. Attention could also be applied to competitive positioning / opportunities and productivity gains. This includes the knowledge economy. It is anticipated that this study will provide a platform or framework to build upon through wider sectoral and business to business engagement.

**Part F – Conclusions and Recommendations**

1. The study will need to draw together a series of conclusions together with policy and site / spatial recommendations. This will include steps to achieve the recommendations including any commentary concerning labour need / supply and skills gap.

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| **LOT B – RETAIL AND MAIN TOWN CENTRE USES NEEDS STUDY** |

**Part A – Retail Changes and Hierarchy of Centres**

Introduction

1. Like many areas, Swindon has witnessed changes in shopping behaviour and patterns driven by a move to online shopping in part and consumers also being more selective in their spending patterns, influenced also by social media, the pandemic, environmental consciousness and cost of living factors.
2. The impact of changing patterns of shopping and leisure use has not only been felt on the ‘traditional’ High Street, but also in out-of-town shopping destinations and parades and local centres serving very local neighbourhood needs. Convenience retailing has also seen the rapid growth of discount supermarkets and further diversification and competition within the sector.
3. The regeneration of Swindon Town Centre is a key strategic corporate priority and it is critical that the New Local Plan, through its planning policies and spatial strategy promotes the long-term vitality and viability of centres within Swindon’s town centre network.
4. Swindon also has a valuable role to play in serving much wider retail warehousing and distribution needs as part of changing retail models and these considerations also forms part of the overall study – with a particular focus within Lot 1.

Policy background

1. Chapter 7 of the NPPF (Ensuring the vitality of town centres) requires local planning authorities to ‘define a network and hierarchy of town centres and promote their long-term vitality and viability’. The framework particularly highlights that key to promoting the vitality and viability of centres is through allowing them to ‘grow and diversify’ – particularly in regards to retail, leisure and the inclusion of residential uses.
2. The NPPF also requires local planning authorities to define the extent of primary shopping areas, retain and enhance existing markets, and allocate a range of suitable sites in town centres to meet ‘the scale and type of development likely to be needed, looking at least ten years ahead’.
3. Chapter 8 of the NPPF (Promoting healthy and safe communities) also sets out the need ‘to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places’ which, amongst other positive qualities, help to promote social interaction and enable and support healthy lifestyles. The creation of ‘strong neighbourhood centres’ and provision of local shops are explicitly highlighted as important to this end (paragraph 92) along with ensuring that community facilities (such as local shops) are safeguarded and allowed to adapt so that provision can be retained and day-to-day needs are met (paragraph 93).

Previous evidence documents

1. The Council is looking to generally update the retail and leisure needs study – last produced by Lichfields in 2017 but to also include:

* an expansion and deeper dive on the hierarchy of centres – particularly local centres serving smaller catchments;
* an updated healthcheck analysis of the defined centres, and.
* a far more detailed review of the role, function and regeneration opportunities within Swindon Town – particularly in relation to core retail areas, other employment and residential use options and a stronger design led focus for Swindon Town Centre in particular.

If tendering only for Lot B there will need to be a close working relationship with consultants undertaking the employment needs and land supply study.

Strategic Overview

1. The first element of the commission is an update on the background / strategic context to retail, commercial leisure and town centre uses, including the types of trends noted above in the Introduction. This background analysis can be fairly high level but will be important in framing the study. The scope of the study will include retail need (convenience and comparison) plus other town centre issues, including commercial leisure uses, restaurants, bars and takeaways.
2. In this section of the study it will also be important to include a focus upon the value of High Streets and retail environments, including their social value and the role flexible adaptive high street strategies can play in supporting and retaining vibrant trading environments. The review will also need to draw out the specific policy requirements concerning town centre uses as set out in the NPPF and practical changes to the Use Classes Order and resultant implications.
3. There will also need to be a read across of the Council’s approach to urban regeneration and key strategic physical projects. This includes the town centre, outer urban areas and strategic growth areas such as Wichelstowe and New Eastern Villages.
4. The consultants undertaken this study will need to be mindful of the work undertaken in the Lot A commission, cross-over issues are likely to include:

* town centre trends and directions including - office trends and new directions – particularly reflective of post-Covid demand implications;
* the current design-led work outputs for Swindon Town Centre in particular looking at regeneration priority sites and future options for mixed use development;
* an analysis of strategic growth areas, including Wichelstowe and New Eastern Villages – Swindon has a strong growth pipeline – including new centres, and
* the possible integration of smaller scale employment uses which are more compatible with urban and town centres.

Hierarchy of Centres

1. The Swindon Borough is on the axis of various South West / South East markets and as a shopping and visitor destination has a wide range of competing retail / town centres. This part of the commission will need to consider an update of the retail destination assessment using an appropriate comparative matrix and catchment area. The previous study utilised Venuescore.
2. At a local level, the Borough contains Swindon Town Centre, which is supported by district/primary rural centres at Swindon Old Town, Highworth, Wroughton, Gorse Hill, Cavendish Square, West Swindon Shopping Centre and Orbital Retail Park, plus a number of smaller local centres catering for local needs. Outside of the town centre, the Swindon Designer Outlet provides a specialist out-of-centre / edge of centre shopping experience, and Swindon contains a number of retail parks. The Borough also has a range of new and to be delivered centres associated with strategic growth sites within the currently adopted Local Plan.
3. Table 4 below sets out the current Borough hierarchy of centres as it stands in terms of established, recently opened and proposed through planning permissions. It does not include any changes to centres or additional centres which may be identified through the new plan-making process. The successful consultant team will be expected to sense check the centres information and to inform more detailed work on retail and service provision.

**Table 4: Current and Proposed Centres**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Current** | **New / Updated (Work in Progress)** |
| **Swindon Central Area** | **Swindon Central Area** |
| Swindon Central Area | Swindon Town Centre  Swindon Designer Outlet |
| **District Centres** | **District Centres** |
| Cavendish Square  Gorse Hill  Orbital Retail park  Swindon Old Town  West Swindon | Cavendish Square  Gorse Hill  Orbital Retail park  Swindon Old Town  West Swindon  Great Stall West (Proposed) |
| **Local Centres** | **Local and Neighbourhood Centres** |
| Abbey Meads Village Centre  Beechcroft Road, Upper Stratton  Braydon Court, Penhill  Clive Parade, Cricklade Road  Covingham Square, Covingham  Eldene Local Centre  Ermin Street  Ferndale Road  Freshbrook Centre  Gateway, Coate (not yet built)  Grange Drive, Lower Stratton  Guildford Avenue, Lawn  Hannington Close, Penhill  Liden Centre  Marlowe Avenue, Walcot  Newburgh Place, Highworth  Nythe Road, Nythe  Peatmoor Centre  Purton Road, Moredon  Rodbourne Road  Shaw Village Centre  Sherbourne Place, Nythe  Shopping Area contained within Manchester Road, Corporation Street and Broad Street  Shopping Area contained within Moredon Road, Whitworth Road and Cheney Manor Road  St Andrews Ridge Village Centre  St John Road, Wroughton  Sussex Square, Walcot East  Taw Hill (Haydonwick)  Thames Avenue, Haydon Wick  The Circle, Pinehurst  Toothill Centre  Westcott Place/ Park Lane Area  Windbrook Meadow, Upper Stratton  Wingate Parade | Abbey Meads Village Centre  Beechcroft Road, Upper Stratton  Braydon Court, Penhill  Clive Parade, Cricklade Road  Covingham Square, Covingham  Eldene Local Centre  Ermin Street  Ferndale Road  Freshbrook Centre  Gateway, Coate (not yet built)  Grange Drive, Lower Stratton  Guildford Avenue, Lawn  Hannington Close, Penhill  Liden Centre  Marlowe Avenue, Walcot  Newburgh Place, Highworth  Nythe Road, Nythe  Peatmoor Centre  Purton Road, Moredon  Rodbourne Road  Shaw Village Centre  Sherbourne Place, Nythe  Shopping Area contained within Manchester Road, Corporation Street and Broad Street  Shopping Area contained within Moredon Road, Whitworth Road and Cheney Manor Road  St Andrews Ridge Village Centre  St John Road, Wroughton  Sussex Square, Walcot East  Taw Hill (Haydonwick)  Thames Avenue, Haydon Wick  The Circle, Pinehurst  Toothill Centre  Westcott Place/ Park Lane Area  Windbrook Meadow, Upper Stratton  Wingate Parade  Commonhead (New)  Kingsdown (New)  Tadpole (New)  Wichelstowe (New) |
| **Primary Rural Centres** | **Village Centres** |
| Highworth Town Centre  Wroughton Village Centre | Highworth  Wroughton  Kingsdown (Proposed)  South Marston (Proposed)  Rowborough (Proposed)  Lotmead / Lower Lotmead (Proposed)  Great Stall East (Proposed)  Foxbridge (Proposed)  Redlands (Proposed) |

1. The study should differentiate between:

* ‘town centres’ as defined under the NPPF;
* small parades of shops of purely neighbourhood significance, and
* existing out-of-centre developments.

1. Specific advice and recommendations are sought on defining a robust town centre network and hierarchy, with some reflection and commentary around how the New Eastern Villages growth could impact the vitality and viability of established centres, particularly Swindon Town Centre.

**Part B – Retail and Service Provision: Centre Health Checks**

1. The Council is keen that an updated ‘health check’ is undertaken of the centres within the Borough with a similar methodology to the Lichfields 2017 study for time period comparative purposes but which also expands the range of centres covered and some of the survey focus. The methodology for the health check part of the study should be clearly set out in the tender submission.
2. A summary of the key elements of the health check from the previous study is outlined below in Table 5, plus commentary from the Council on additional, supplementary or supporting work undertaken.

**Table 5: Components of the Health Check**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Health Check Element** | **Work Tasks** | **Notes** |
| **Population Profile** | Overall Borough population profile with sub-areas, including income levels and any customer segmentations. | This may include the use of Experian Mosaic or similar. |
| **Mix of Uses and Retailer Occupancy** | Trend and comparative analysis – including regional / national benchmarking.  Vacancy levels will also need to be detailed and benchmarked. | Swindon Town Centre - GOAD GIS data and report available for 2022 survey period and in hard copy for periods previously. The Council is undertaking similar survey analysis for other centres and this will be available for the consultant team. |
| **Retailer Representation** | Breakdown and summary of unit / occupier types and extent of multiples. Benchmarking against regional / national averages also required. | General trade information will be supplied by the Council – opening hours / general constraints on trading. This may include access to the former BID partnership data-sets. |
| **Service Uses** | Non-retail breakdown and summaries. Benchmarking against regional / national averages also required. | Base information will be supplied through survey work undertaken by the Council. |
| **Characteristics of the Shopping Area** | Audit of centres according to:   * + - * + Regeneration / physical projects.         + Local environmental quality.         + Perception of safety.         + Accessibility and movement   Crime incident statistics would also be useful to all include within this section.  A wider review of centre accessibility will also need to be undertaken by the consultants looking at cycling, bus, rail and parking. | The Council can supply an overview of regeneration work and priorities in the town centre plus an overview of other centres.  As part of annual monitoring work, the Council will also provide raw audit data on environmental, safety and accessibility for each centre.  Pedestrian flow data is available in part for Swindon Town Centre.  Parish Councils may also hold very localised information which would be useful for the study as a whole. |
| **Customer Views on Shops and Services** | The Consultant team will need to organise household and possibly street surveys to gather customer views on shopping patterns in a robust manner. This will also include catchment analysis and local expenditure estimates.  The questionnaire will need to be agreed with the Council. | Survey zones will need to be agreed with the Council and link to work also undertaken on employment and housing market areas. |
| **Commercial Information** | The consultant team will need to collate information on commercial yields and rents and benchmark against national / regional comparators.  A selective set of interviews with local commercial agents would also be useful. | Local contact list can be supplied. |

1. The key findings from Part B of the study should be drawn out to inform other elements of the commission including existing consumer spending patterns.

**Part C – Establishing Future Needs**

1. The consultant team will need to build upon the findings from Part A and B of the commission to create a forecast of future retail and town centre requirements. The previous study included:

* population and expenditure projections
* review of the balance between expenditure and expected turnover
* estimate of quantitative and qualitative need
* any identification of surplus expenditure capacity
* implications for proposed schemes and developments more generally

A clear methodology for estimating requirements for retail floorspace will need to be set out. Elements of the potential approach are set out below.

Retail Trends and Formats

1. The economy has generally continued to see a further loss of big brands from the High Street since the 2017 Lichfields Report was completed, but post COVID there has been a return in demand for physical stores. There will be a requirement in this study to set the broad retail trend assumptions over the short, medium and longer term aligned to the new plan period - potentially 2023-2042. The last evidence study included a focus upon the economic downturn, general retail trends and new forms of retailing, but priorities for retailers and customers are continuing changing and could include a move towards more personalised consumer experiences, shifting environmental values, further automation of tasks and engaging with customers in new social media formats, through artificial intelligence and presenting improved brand loyalty offers.
2. It will also be important for the commission to include a focus upon practical retail expenditure growth and trends at a macro level together with their implications. Since broadly April 2021 according to ONS figures[[7]](#footnote-8), there has been a divergence in retail volume and value sales with sales volumes falling by 1.0% in December 2022 continuing a downward trend against a broad upward trend in value in retail sales for the same period.
3. From a complex and variable mix of trends the successful consultant team will need to establish a pathway of key evidenced assumptions to inform the study.

Population and Expenditure

1. The study will need to include an indication of population growth and ensure that this is broadly consistent with other areas of the plan evidence looking at similar forecasts and projections (housing and employment for example). Once the base population data is set, projections will need to be made for spending per head for convenience and comparison retail, within defined zones.
2. It should be possible to establish the existing retail floorspace from earlier parts of the study and also draw from the findings of the household surveys to provide a profile of existing spending patterns. It would be useful to compare these findings with the Lichfields 2017 report and benchmark against other studies or areas.

Retail Floorspace

1. From the findings in the study the consultant team will need to extrapolate the quantitative capacity and forecasts for both comparison and convenience retail floorspace for the Borough. Planning monitoring information may be available on potential retail losses and gains through non-implemented planning permissions and other pipeline information on strategic growth sites.
2. Qualitative comparison and convenience retail needs for the Borough will also require analysis, the previous retail study included a focus upon:

* deficiencies or 'gaps' in existing provision;
* consumer choice and competition;
* overtrading, congestion and overcrowding of existing stores;
* location specific needs such as underserved markets; and
* the quality of existing provision.

Centres Review - Retail

1. The consultant team will need to review the findings to date from the health check analysis to the earlier findings under the establishing future needs element of the study to provide a position statement about the Swindon Town Centre and other key centre locations to be agreed and included on the Local Plan policies map.
2. The quantitative and qualitative need (‘capacity’) for new retail floorspace and commercial leisure uses should align with requirements set out in the NPPF/G and look at least ten years ahead (NPPF, paragraph 86d).
3. This evidence report is going to be important as part of wider considerations including masterplanning and regeneration concerning the future directions for Swindon Town Centre in particular and the extent of remaining retail floorspace required. The challenge is to maintain a vibrant centre – meeting a diverse range of consumer needs but also with sufficient flexibility to encourage new growth opportunities and a diversification in land uses.

Main Town Centre Uses and Other Considerations

1. The study should also provide a strong methodology and approach to consider the potential or otherwise for main town centre uses that are additional to retail as defined by NPPF Annex 2. The study will be developed within the context of changes to the Use Classes Order (UCO) and new Class E in particular.
2. The study should consider the full extent of development sites required to meet the scale and type of uses across retail and other main town centre uses required to meet needs – looking at least 10 years ahead and ideally as part of a longer-range vision.
3. Swindon has a strong presence of online retail and distribution and it would be useful for the study to provide future directions over extent of changes and trends within this sector, and as part of cross-over work on employment land under Lot A. This may also include innovation and emerging demands in the sector for local (last mile) distribution / collection points.
4. Advice and recommendations on regenerating areas blighted by shop vacancies is likely to be a key issue and whether the consolidation of town centres through shrinking retail boundaries may help improve the quality on offer within designated centres overall. Concentrations of lower grade town centre uses and areas of risk of further occupier decline would also be useful to review. Further advice and recommendations are also required concerning catchment / viability thresholds for lower tier local / neighbourhood centres.
5. Advice is also sought about how to retain and support the primacy of Swindon Town Centre as an office location. There may be a cross-over with this area of analysis and Lot A and out of centre offices.
6. Findings from this part of the study are likely to be subject to a workshop event with local retail and town centre use stakeholders.

**Part D – Setting Policies and Parameters**

1. Much has changed in retailing over the recent past and much has also changed in terms of the Use Classes Order and Class E Uses which covers a wide range of town centre use types. Part of town centre and retail plan-making is still very traditional and there are certain requirements which will need to be included in support and within the Local Plan to be found sound including:

* **Defining a robust network and hierarchy of town centres**.
* **Defining the extent of town centres and primary shopping areas**, and making clear the range of uses permitted in such locations, and areas predominantly occupied by main town centre uses within or adjacent to the primary shopping area.
* **Setting the broad scale, range and type of town centre development likely to be needed.** Meeting anticipated needs for retail, leisure, office and other main town centre uses should not be compromised by limited site availability.
* Establishing a **locally set floorspace threshold** for applications for retail and leisure development for which above the threshold floorspace level impact assessments will be required.
* **Scoping the extent of a sequential test framework**.

1. Depending upon the outcomes of this commission and other studies the future definition of town centres and primary shopping areas may be significantly different from the current adopted plan.
2. Part D of the study will involve working with consultant teams, urban designers and regeneration specialists to define these policy and spatial areas linked to this evidence and work ongoing in terms of master-planning and regeneration initiatives.

**Part E – Recommendations**

1. The study will need to draw together a series of conclusions together with policy and site / spatial recommendations.

**REPORTING AND EXAMINATION SUPPORT**

1. The study report will become a document referred to and relied upon at the examination into the Local Plan. This commission excludes work which may be required relating to:

* report updates linked to representations raised at Regulation 18 stage.
* development and submission of hearing statements;
* in person appearance either at the table or in support at the actual examination in public, and
* work required to support modifications arising from the examination hearing sessions.

1. The specification response allows for the submission of information on hourly / daily rates for responses to representation / report adjustments and examination process plus an indication of key likely personal which may be available to support.

**CORE REPORTING OUTPUTS / DELIVERABLES**

1. It is anticipated that the commission will commence in March 2023 and will be delivered in parallel with the Local Plan preparation timetable set out below.

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Date** | **Local Plan Stages** | **Estimated Commission Stages / Outputs** | |
|  |  | **Lot 1** | **Lot 2** |
| **w/c 26th June 2023** |  | Inception and project set-up | Inception and project set-up |
| **End July 2023** |  | Part A – Economic Profile and Functional Economic Market Area | Part A – Retail Changes and Hierarchy of Centres |
| **End August 2023** |  | Part B – Employment Needs and Space Requirements |  |
| **End September 2023** |  |  | Part B – Retail and Service Provision: Centre Health Checks |
| **End October 2023** |  | Part C – Land, Premises and Spaces  Part D – Demand and Supply Balance | Part C – Establishing Future Needs |
| **Mid November 2023** |  | Part E – Skills Base and Future Requirements  Part F – Conclusions and Recommendations | Part D – Defining Policies and Parameters  Part E – Conclusions and Recommendations |
|  |  |  |  |
| **Late November 2023** | Regulation 18 Public Consultation | Draft Report published for consultation feedback. |  |
| **February 2024+** |  | Review and response to report related representations |  |
| **February 2024+** |  | Update report |  |
| **Summer 2024** | Regulation 19 Public Consultation | Publish Reg. 19 Local Plan and supporting evidence |  |
| **Early Autumn 2024** |  | Review and response to report related representations |  |

1. The consultants’ names and company will appear as the authors of the report(s), and those responsible for preparing it will sign the report(s).
2. The intellectual property rights for all works as carried out and delivered would be held by Swindon Borough Council.
3. Final reports should be produced with formatting which is accessible to people with disabilities and evaluated through an accessibility checker before being finalised.
4. Any maps and geographic datasets should be compatible with the Council’s GIS software (QGIS) which will include the submission of Shapefiles (.shp).
5. Variations to the requirements of this Specification will be given consideration where accompanied by a reasonable justification based on the Consultants availability or expert advice. (This addresses Q7 in the ‘Instructions to Bidders’).

**LENGTH OF CONTRACT**

1. It is anticipated that the contract will cover the period to February 2024. Any extension will be agreed in writing by all parties.

**PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATION**

1. The commission will need to be delivered in line with the outlined timetable. Excellent project, time management, proofing and quality control skills will be needed. Consultants will therefore need to demonstrate that they have the capacity as well as the expertise to deliver. They will need to provide a clear plan for the rapid delivery of robust outputs in line with this specification and draw on their own expertise and experience to ensure all the critical elements of the specification are delivered.
2. The Council will nominate a lead officer to have overall management of the commission, supported by an internal working group (from its Planning Policy section supported by officers from other Council departments). The consultant is required to nominate a senior person to be in overall charge of the study with whom the Council shall liaise as the main point of contact.
3. The consultant will keep the Council’s project manager informed at all stages of the study and should provide a regular flow of information on the progress of the project against the timetable, any issues or difficulties arising, and proposals for their resolution, including details of their effect on the timetable. Project risks and mitigation will be identified and escalated.
4. The consultant’s approach to data protection is required. At minimum, the consultant should ensure that it satisfies any legal requirements.
5. Communications will mainly be by email and MS Teams video conferencing. Meetings will be either in person at the Council offices in Swindon and via MS Teams. Other attendance in Swindon may be required for events and workshops.
6. The commission will require the consultant team to familiarise themselves with the geography and key aspects of the spatial area. This is likely to involve area and site visits.

**TRADE ASSOCIATIONS /MEMBERSHIPS / QUALIFICATIONS**

1. It is expected that the successful consultant team will include individuals with corporate membership of the Royal Town Planning Institute along with any other memberships relevant to economic commissions including Institute for Economic Development (IED) and Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS). It is however, not a pass or fail criteria on the tender evaluation.

**CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

1. The consultant will be required to demonstrate that undertaking the study will not result in, or cause any conflicts of interest. In particular, attention should be drawn to the possibility of the consultant or any sub-consultant making representations or undertaking related work for objectors during any of the Council’s Local Plan processes.

**TIMESCALES**

1. Full timescales including those relating to the submission and evaluation of tenders and the awarding of the contract are set out below as a best estimate:

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| **Step** | **Date** |
| Publication of tender documentation | 17th May 2023 |
| Clarification questions deadline | 26th May 2023 17:00 hrs |
| Response to clarification questions | 31st May 2023 |
| Tender submission deadline | 16th June 2023 17:00hrs |
| Evaluation Schedule | w/c 19th June 2023 |
| Preferred supplier(s) selected | w/c 19th June 2023 |
| Contract(s) starts date | w/c 26th June 2023 |
| Inception meeting | w/c 26th June 2023 |

**PAYMENT MILESTONES**

1. The milestones for payment will be as follows based upon satisfactory completion of work stages:

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Estimated Commission Stages / Outputs** | | **Payment Schedule** | |
| **Lot 1** | **Lot 2** | **Lot 1** | **Lot 2** |
| Inception and project set-up | Inception and project set-up |  |  |
| Part A – Economic Profile and Functional Economic Market Area | Part A – Retail Changes and Hierarchy of Centres | 10% | 10% |
| Part B – Employment Needs and Space Requirements |  | 25% |  |
|  | Part B – Retail and Service Provision: Centre Health Checks |  | 30% |
| Part C – Land, Premises and Spaces  Part D – Demand and Supply Balance | Part C – Establishing Future Needs | 25%  20% | 30% |
| Part E – Skills Base and Future Requirements  Part F – Conclusions and Recommendations | Part D – Defining Policies and Parameters  Part E – Conclusions and Recommendations | 10%  10% | 20%  10% |
|  |  | 100% | 100% |

1. The Council will expect to be invoiced initially at the conclusion of the tasks and this invoice should fully itemise the works undertaken. If subsequent follow up works are arranged a second invoice stage would be required
2. The overall approach to the work, timetable and terms of payment will be finalised and agreed at the inception meeting.
3. **Importantly, any matters relating to contractual terms should be raised and resolved during the tendering process and as part of the clarification questions to the Council.**

1. [Swindon population change, Census 2021 – ONS](https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E06000030/) [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
2. [Conservation areas | Swindon Borough Council](https://www.swindon.gov.uk/info/20059/land_and_premises/373/find_out_about_conservation_areas) [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
3. [Swindon population change, Census 2021 – ONS](https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censuspopulationchange/E06000030/) [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
4. [Public health annual report | Swindon Borough Council](https://www.swindon.gov.uk/downloads/file/7767/public_health_annual_report) [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
5. [Swindon Employment Land Review Final Report March 2017 | Swindon Borough Council](https://www.swindon.gov.uk/downloads/download/504/swindon_employment_land_review_final_report_march_2017) [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
6. Information taken from Green Jobs Taskforce – Report to Government, Industry and the Skills Sector 2022 [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
7. ONS Volume and value sales, seasonably adjusted, Great Britain, December 2019 to December 2022, ONS – Monthly Business Survey, Retail Sales Inquiry. [↑](#footnote-ref-8)