

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council – Employment Land Review Update



Final Report

May 2026

CBRE Ltd on behalf of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

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Executive Summary

CBRE have prepared this Employment Land Review Update (ELR) on behalf of Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC) to inform the preparation of its Regulation 19 consultation of the new Local Plan (2026-2042). CBRE completed the original ELR on behalf of the Council in 2022. Following the Regulation 18 consultation, the decision has been made to update evidence ahead of Regulation 19 and submission.

Local Planning Authorities are required to produce robust studies to assess their employment land position to understand the makeup of employment land and its provision in their authority area, the needs and challenges faced by its existing business community, and to plan appropriately for the provision of employment land over the plan period. For the avoidance of doubt this ELR has focused on identifying what the future requirements (demand) could be for industrial and office floorspace. It also considers policy interventions relating to employment land to help bring sites forward for employment use or support particular kinds of employment development, as part of economic development and regeneration programmes.

The 2022 ELR reviewed the existing portfolio of employment areas in Stockport focusing on allocations and sites/premises under construction for Class E offices (formerly B1), B2 & B8 uses and will inform plan/policy making. This hasn't been updated as little has changed, nor is it reproduced in this report. It identified existing employment sites that are no longer suitable for future employment uses and could therefore be considered for alternative uses and advises on the quantum of employment land forecast to be required over the plan period.

This ELR provides the following recommendations:

Employment Land Requirement - Offices

19 hectares of E class office space is to be provided over the plan period - this should be accommodated in the town centre and the existing employment areas.

Employment Land Requirement – Industrial/ Logistics

26 hectares of B2/8 space is to be provided over the plan period - this should be delivered via sites identified and allocated through the Local Plan and new sites. It is recognised that SMBC have insufficient allocated land to accommodate this and that additional land will need to be identified in the borough.

Government policy is very clear about the need to identify strategic land in appropriate locations. Regional and national logistics operators require a very specific set of locational circumstances in order to be successful. The key location requirements of regional and national logistics operators include:

- A nationally strategic location, regional and national distribution requires a strategic location in a national context which is within 4-5 hours' drive of key population centres, accessible to key deep-sea ports, sea freight, and key freight hubs and directly connected to the national strategic road network.
- A locally strategic location with direct access to the Strategic Road Network, ideally land directly adjacent to motorway junctions and a ready access to a local pool of labour.
- Suitable site/physical characteristics to accommodate the scale and type of development to meet occupier needs including a site of sufficient size and scale to deliver large scale modern logistics to Grade A standard of a size and scale that can deliver buildings in excess of 250,000sqft in size and up to 1,000,000sqft in a single building.

- Sites that are deliverable and viable.
- Ready and immediate access to the strategic highways network with capacity to handle the development on local roads/junctions. Prime sites will be located adjacent to motorway junctions.

Neither existing employment land sites and premises nor the redevelopment of these should be considered as a source of land to meet this shortfall. Many of these sites are not located in areas that would be attractive to the modern occupier, nor do they provide fit for purpose stock.

SMBC should look at other locations within their borough which meet occupier needs. It is therefore likely that green belt release will need to be considered to fulfil this requirement as this requirement cannot be met in the urban area. Not all of this will be required on large sites as there will be some more localised demand on smaller sites.

Existing Employment Areas

A review of key employment sites and their layout should be undertaken to understand how the increase of non-traditional employment uses within their boundaries is impacting upon them. A suitable variety of employment areas should be provided to cater for the needs of both traditional and non-traditional employment generating uses. It is therefore considered that some degree of policy flexibility to enable non-traditional uses in employment areas is appropriate.

It is recommended that the assessment of the balance between the positive and negative impacts of specific proposals should also be used to resist against further non-traditional employment uses on a site-by-site basis, where the harm to the employment cluster would clearly outweigh the immediate benefits of increased diversity and immediate non-traditional employment generation.

Improving Stock

It is recommended that a programme of rationalisation is undertaken. This should include identifying key ‘good’ and high-performing ‘moderate’ sites in good locations to maximise their attractiveness through improvements to access, infrastructure, amenity and stock. The Local Plan will protect employment areas for employment generating uses given likely interest from non-employment uses such as residential.

Opportunities could be sought to re-provide poorly located stock within better performing employment areas. This could enable the release of some poor quality sites in unsuitable employment locations for alternative uses.

This rationalisation program may need to be supplemented by the release of greenfield sites in strategic locations if green belt and other related transport considerations can be overcome. Subject to the sites put forward being appropriate, it is considered that this could have a positive impact on economic activity in the Borough and should be considered within emerging growth policies.

Mill Buildings

It is clear that the stock is slowly becoming less and less suitable for employment use and some are increasingly being considered for residential refurbishment/conversion. Due to the condition, format and layout of many mill buildings it is considered that much of the space within these buildings is simply unsuitable for employment uses. This level of vacancy is unsustainable given current pressures on land within the Borough and it is recommended that the Council update their Mill Study to identify which premises could be redeveloped for alternative uses including residential.

This sector is characterised by widespread market failure and as a result would benefit from public sector intervention. It is recommended that SMBC give consideration to specific measures and as a starting point we recommend:

- Preparation of bespoke business plans for certain key assets, which would set-out the most appropriate route to delivery of improvements for the properties, assessing whether demolition or upgrade is most appropriate, what the mix of uses could be and a route to delivery, based on engagement with the landowners.
- Direct public involvement in the redevelopment or upgrade of buildings. This might be achieved by purchase and self-delivery, however careful consideration would be required in order to assess the cost/benefits of such an approach.

The current policy context provides considerable support for the redevelopment/repurposing of mill buildings. There is clear scope to use resources from bodies such as Historic England and Homes England in projects where their involvement would be of benefit and we recommend that SMBC engage with these parties to explore opportunities to mutual benefit.

Finally it is recommended that SMBC could take on the role as a facilitator of the improvement of stock, linking landowners with supportive public organisations and providing an adequate regulatory framework to unlock projects on a site-by-site basis.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 CBRE have been appointed by Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council (SMBC/ ‘the Borough’) to prepare this update of the Employment Land Review (ELR) as part of its evidence base to inform the preparation of its new Local Plan (2026-2042). This has been developed in accordance with the latest guidance and policy from the Government and in full recognition of market circumstances and economic conditions.
- 1.2 Local Planning Authorities are required to produce robust studies to assess their employment position to understand the makeup of employment land and provision in their authority area, the needs and challenges faced by its existing business community, and to plan appropriately for the provision of employment land over the plan period. For the avoidance of doubt this employment land review has focused on identifying what the future requirements (demand) could be for industrial and office floorspace.
- 1.3 As well as land-use planning, ELR’s should help inform policy interventions relating to employment land, for example to help bring sites forward for employment use or support particular kinds of employment development, as part of economic development and regeneration programmes.
- 1.4 The previous 2022 ELR undertook a comprehensive assessment of the existing portfolio of employment areas in Stockport focused on allocations and sites/premises under construction for Class E offices (formerly B1), B2 & B8 uses used to inform plan/policy making. The ELR 2022 concluded that in the existing employment land supply, the majority is in active Class E offices/B2/8 use and is safeguarded for continuing employment use. Some sites have been redeveloped for alternative uses.
- 1.5 An ELR should also identify existing employment sites that are no longer suitable for future employment uses and could therefore be considered for alternative uses. This was undertaken in the 2022 ELR but hasn’t been repeated here as little has changed. For the avoidance of doubt it is not the role of an ELR to provide opinion on the suitability of specific alternative uses for sites.
- 1.6 The identification of a robust and defensible portfolio of both strategic and locally important employment sites is a key part of plan/policy making. SMBC will consider what additional land needs to be allocated in light of the expected demand highlighted in this report.
- 1.7 SMBC has prepared this Employment Land Review to help in the development of robust and informed land use, planning and economic policies.
- 1.8 For the avoidance of doubt SMBC have been advised by the Planning Inspectorate (PINS) that the Plan needs to get to Examination in Public (EIP) by late 2027 by which time the current employment land evidence will be 5 years old and as a result PINS have advised that it needs to be updated. To ensure that the date for EIP is met the Local Plan needs to reach the Regulation 19 consultation stage by summer 2026.
- 1.9 This updated report is required to inform this and to ensure alignment with the revised Local Plan timeline to 2042. As such the input on supply side site assessment relies on the 2022 ELR as it has understood little has changed since.

Study Objectives

- 1.10 The overall purpose of this Update to the Employment Land Review is to assess current and future demand for employment land and to consider whether existing supply and allocated sites are sufficient to meet projected demand and forecast requirements.

1.11 Local Planning Authorities are required to produce robust studies to assess their employment position to understand the makeup of employment land and provision in their authority area, the needs and challenges faced by its existing business community, and to plan for prospective employers in the context of local circumstances and market conditions. As such, the Employment Land Review will seek to achieve the following key objectives:

- Establish a functional market area;
- Understand the quantity and quality of existing employment provision;
- Audit the supply of land identified for employment use to understand the prospects of development (based on 2022 data);
- Assess how much land will be required for employment development over the plan period based on market conditions, forecast and modelling data, and growth scenarios; and
- Make recommendations with respect to:
 - Whether existing or committed employment sites should be retained for employment use or be released for other uses.
 - The extent of land that should be identified for employment use.
 - The formation of planning policy in response to local market circumstances.

1.12 Pursuant to this, the study seeks to:

- Audit the supply of land already identified for employment (based on 2022 data);
- Assess how much land will be required for employment during the plan period, based on market conditions and policy objectives;
- Compare this requirement with supply both quantitatively and qualitatively;
- Make recommendations about:
 - Any existing employment sites that should be retained;
 - Any further land that should be identified for employment; and
 - Any existing or committed employment sites that should be released for other uses.

Report Structure

1.13 This report is structured as follows:

- Section 2 – Study Area Context: Provides an overview of the Borough, in socio-economic terms.
- Section 3 – Planning and Economic Policy: Considers the National and Local Planning Policy that is relevant to the study.
- Section 4 – Commercial Land Market: Local Land and Property Markets Reviews the current property market conditions within Stockport.

- Section 5 – Future Requirements: Assesses the projected employment land needs for the Borough up to 2042.
- Section 6 - Conclusions: Details the findings of the assessments undertaken considering the implications in terms of land use and planning policy.
- Section 7 - Recommendations: Identifies the key recommendations.

2. Study Area Context

Introduction

- 2.1 The functional economic area relevant to SMBC is considered to be Greater Manchester. On this basis contextual analysis and the market assessment relates to Greater Manchester, where appropriate. This is only representative of its economic geography as SMBC have sole responsibility for plan making and are not dependent on Places for Everyone, a long-term plan for Greater Manchester (which took effect on 21 March 2024 and became part of the statutory development plan of the nine Greater Manchester districts). SMBC withdrew from this in December 2020.
- 2.2 This section considers the Borough within the context of Greater Manchester and provides an overview in terms of social and economic matters.

Stockport Metropolitan Borough

- 2.3 SMBC stretches from the borders of the Peak District National Park and the Pennine foothills to the boundary of Manchester and borders the Cheshire plain covering an area of 126,000 square km (km²). The Borough lies in the south eastern part of the Greater Manchester conurbation and has the third largest population of the sub-region. Stockport Town Centre is located in the west with other smaller district centres spread throughout the Borough.
- 2.4 SMBC has a mix of both urban and semi-rural environments. Open countryside on the eastern and southern parts of the Borough and river valleys extending to the heart of the urban area provide valuable ‘green lungs’ and opportunities for informal recreation, walking and cycling.
- 2.5 The government approved the expansion of Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation (‘MDC’) (Greater Manchester’s first MDC) in February 2026 and has since tripled its boundary to cover the ‘Town Centre East’ area. This marks the transition to the newly designated Stockport Town Centre MDC, strengthening the ability of the MDC to deliver high-quality development, unlock investment, and support sustainable growth. The MDC have released a Strategic Business Plan covering the period 2025 – 2030¹, which defines the objectives and delivery commitments across this time period. With relevance to this ELR review, this includes [inter alia]:
 - Delivering at least 250 new homes, of all types and tenures for all income groups - per year to 2030.
 - Bring forward schemes for meanwhile use of sites and buildings awaiting development which support the formation of new communities and nurture existing ones within and surrounding Town Centre West.
 - Maximise the MDC contribution to the creation of good quality jobs and economic activity both directly in Town Centre West and indirectly in the wider Town Centre through:

¹ Available at <https://www.stockportmdc.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/09/MDC-Business-Plan-202530-FINAL.pdf>

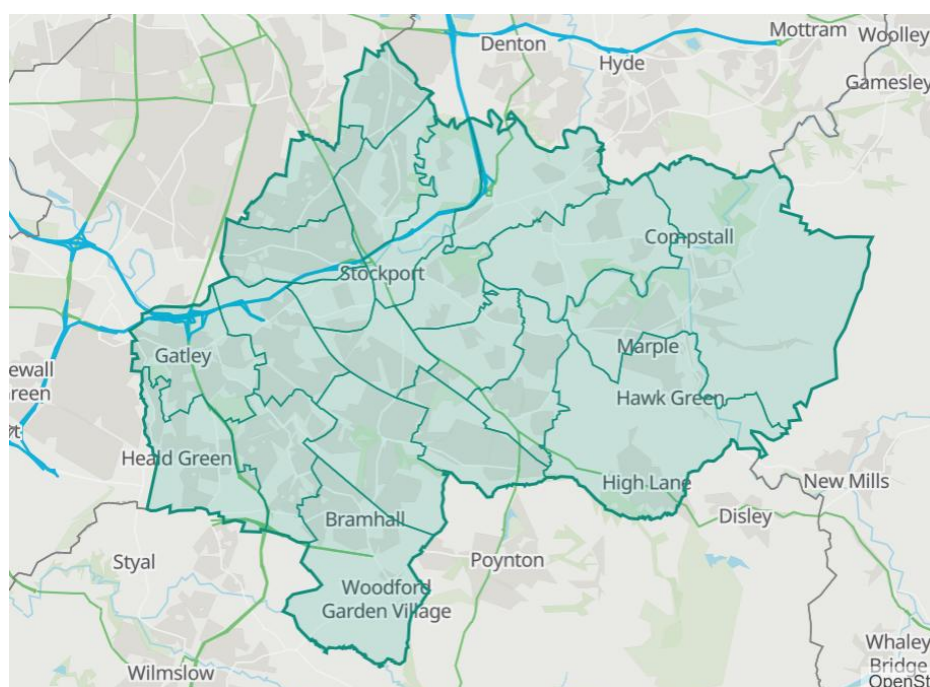
- Leveraging the scale of investment in development in Town Centre West to act as a catalyst for growth of employment and skills opportunities in the construction sector for Stockport residents, especially in relation to modern, green methods of construction.
 - Delivering new employment workspace, including future phases of the masterplan for Stockport Exchange.
 - Seeking to match the provision of employment floorspace with end users who are committed to the creation of good quality jobs and the flourishing of Stockport as a strategic growth location for Greater Manchester.
 - Partnering with organisations in the foundational, digital and green sectors to utilise Town Centre West as an incubator of innovation and inclusive growth.
 - Collaborating with Stockport Council and other partners to attract major employers to the town centre, including the relocation of Stepping Hill hospital.
- 2.6 The SMBC Green Belt Assessment (prepared by LUC, October 2025²) identifies that Stockport has 5,861 hectares of Green Belt land, which represents almost half of the total authority area. The Green Belt is predominately comprised of open farmland, however there are areas of development within the Green Belt at various locations, with the densest concentration of development to the south of the borough around Woodford.

Committee and Ward Areas – Stockport Borough

- 2.7 The urban areas of SMBC comprise a number of communities or towns which are broadly concentrated around Stockport Town Centre and 8 District Centres. The District Centres are Bramhall, Cheadle, Cheadle Hulme, Edgeley, Hazel Grove, Houldsworth Square (Reddish), Marple and Romiley.
- 2.8 The Borough is divided into the 7 Committee Areas: Bramhall and Cheadle Hulme South, Cheadle, Heaton and Reddish, Marple, Stepping Hill, Stockport Central and Werneth and is subdivided into 21 Wards (identified at Figure 2.1 below).

² <https://live-iag-static-assets.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/pdf/Local+Plan+evidence/Stockport+Draft+Final+Green+Belt+Assessment.pdf>

Figure 2.1 - Stockport Metropolitan District Ward Map



Source: ONS, 2026

Social Baseline

- 2.9 Between the last two censuses³, the population of SMBC increased by 4.1%, from around 283,300 in 2011 to around 294,800 in 2021. The population in SMBC increased by a smaller percentage (4.1%) between 2011 - 2021 than the overall population of the North West (5.2%), and by a smaller percentage than the overall population of England (6.6%).
- 2.10 In 2021, SMBC was home to around 16.7 people per football pitch-sized piece of land, compared with 16 in 2011. SMBC was among the top 30% most densely populated English local authority areas at the time of the last census (2021). Of this population, just under 61% are aged between 16 and 64 (comprising the working age population), a 1% decrease from the 2015 figures.
- 2.11 Between the last two censuses, the average (median) age of people in SMBC increased by one year, from 41 to 42 years of age. SMBC had a higher average (median) age than the North West as a whole in 2021 (40 years) and a higher average (median) age than England (40 years). The number of people aged 65 to 74 years rose by just over 4,400 (an increase of 16.7%), while the number of residents between 35 and 49 years fell by around 3,100 (4.9% decrease). Growing SMBC's population will therefore be an important component for addressing the Borough's ageing population. This will be supported through the range of housing developments coming forward through Town Centre West which will deliver a mix of housing at different price

³ Hereafter referring to the time period between the 2011 Census and the 2021 Census.
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/visualisations/censusareachanges/E08000007/>

points and tenures. As outlined in the draft Local Plan, the borough needs to understand how it can facilitate the delivery of a projected local housing need of at least 25,371 homes from 2026 to 2042.

- 2.12 To address the demographic disparities across SMBC, the forthcoming Economic Plan and Local Plan may need to consider the distribution of future development to ensure balanced, productive communities are created.

Economic and Educational Baseline

- 2.13 In 2023, the job density of SMBC was measured as 0.81, meaning that there is enough jobs within the local authority to provide work for 81% of the working age residents⁴. This is similar to the Job Density for the North West regionally (0.82)⁵, but lower than that for England (0.87)⁶. This means that on comparison, Stockport has fewer jobs available relative to its working age population than the North West and England. The Stockport Economic Plan (2022), notes that c103,000 people commute into SMBC for work and 114,000 people commute out of the borough, meaning that Stockport has a net outflow of 11,000 people.
- 2.14 Overall Higher Education (HE) participation masks significant variances in aspiration and participation. HE participation in Stockport's suburbs is significantly higher than in the north of the borough. Residents in Stockport are generally educated to a higher level in comparison to the North West regionally, and England 53.1% of SMBC residents are educated to a Level 4 qualification or above, compared to 47.7% in the North West, and 48% for England as a whole. Similarly, a lower percentage of Stockport residents have no qualifications (4%), when compared to the North West (7.7%) and England (6.1%).
- 2.15 SMBC have a key ambition to support residents to have the best education, skills, and qualifications at all stages of their lives⁷. SMBC have set aspirational targets for educational attainment to support their ambition for Stockport schools to be the best in the country with every child included in their success. This has resulted in significant improvements in many areas especially in reading, outcomes for boys, outcomes for disadvantaged learners and for children with Special Education Needs (SEN).

Future projections for SMBC (ONS 2022 Projection Modelling)

- 2.16 The Office for National Statistics identifies that the population of SMBC is projected to increase from 297,191 people in 2022 to 315,310 people in 2032⁸. The biggest factor in this population change is net internal migration, which will increase the population by 13,583 people, increasing the population by 4.6%. In 2032, 20% of the population in SMBC is projected to be aged 65 years or over, up from 19% in 2022. In 2032, 21% of people are projected to be aged 18 years and under, down from 22% in 2022. This is above average for England in 2032 (20%).

⁴ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/query/asv2htm>

⁵ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/lor/2013265922/report.aspx>

⁶ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/reports/lmp/lor/2092957699/report.aspx>

⁷ <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/our-4-big-ambitions/education-work-and-skills#:~:text=Progress%20in%202024&text=We%20had%20some%20of%20our,for%20children%20at%20SEN%20Support.>

⁸ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/subnationalpopulationprojectionsforengland/2022based>

Transport

- 2.17 SMBC town centre is well served by public transport with good radial routes to most locations within the Borough and regionally, however public transport for some areas of the borough is limited particularly for orbital movements.
- 2.18 As set out in the draft Greater Manchester Transport Strategy 2050 and supporting Stockport Delivery Plan (2027 – 2037) transport investment is required in the future to sustain, grow and transform the Bee Network⁹ and the wider transport network through to 2050.
- 2.19 SMBC has 4 key transport projects all of which will increase the accessibility to employment in the Borough:
1. **Cheadle train station** - £9m Towns Fund project to bring a train station back to Cheadle for the first time since the 1960s. It will connect Cheadle to the wider public transport network, transforming accessibility to Stockport Town Centre and beyond. The bid also included comprehensive active travel proposals which include a network of new cycleways to link together residential, employment and transport destinations. Promoting health and reducing local congestion. A planning application for the provision of the new railway station was approved in October 2023 but construction is yet to commence.
 2. **A34 Corridor** – Construction is underway for a package of cycling and walking and highways improvements along this key route connecting Stockport, Manchester and Cheshire East, and includes a mix of local and longer distance traffic. The route is identified as one of the most congested in the borough. The phased construction began in 2024 and is scheduled to be completed by 2028.
 3. **A6 Corridor** – This is one of the most congested corridors in the borough and a popular public transport, walking and cycling route. Multiple local authorities including Cheshire East Council, Derbyshire County Council and High Peak Borough Council are currently delivering the Mayor's Challenge Fund, a Greater Manchester-wide programme to make journeys on foot or by bicycle easier and has already seen the Bramhall Park to A6 scheme completed in summer 2022.
 4. **Bee Network** - The Bee Network is Greater Manchester's vision for a fully integrated, London-style transport system, combining buses, trams, cycling, walking, and local rail by 2028. It offers simplified, capped fares and "tap and go" payments to create a sustainable, affordable, and accessible network. Local rail services will be integrated by 2030 in three phases, starting with 17 stations by December 2026.
- 2.20 The introduction of Stockport Interchange in March 2024 has redefined the town's connectivity and contains a new 2-acre park, named as Viaduct Park, new walking and cycling links to the railway station and the town centre, and is the first phase of the transformational regeneration of Stockport Town Centre West. The Interchange features 18 bus stands and has been delivered in partnership with Transport for Greater Manchester and the Greater Manchester Combined Authority, alongside construction company Willmott Dixon.

⁹ The Greater Manchester Bee Network is a new, unified public transport system integrating buses, trams (Metrolink), commuter rail lines, and active travel (walking, cycling, wheeling) under local control. It aims to provide seamless, affordable, and sustainable travel, aiming for a fully integrated, London-style system by 2028.

Economy

- 2.21 Mid-year population estimates from the ONS identify a total of 185,090 residents in SMBC within working age (16-64). Workplace based weekly pay (gross) is lower for Stockport (£717.00) than regionally in the North West (£734.00) and England (£770.70)¹⁰. Similarly, residence based earnings in SMBC (£781.70) are higher than regionally in the North West (£734.80) and England (£769.50). This means that SMBC has high-paying jobs within the area but also suggest that the authority is home to residents which commute to higher-paying jobs in other authorities. 15.9% of SMBC residents are employed within 'Human health and social work activities' like the North West average (15.6%), but marginally higher than that for England (13.5%). At the time of the Census 2021, 139,806 residents in Stockport were aged 16 years and over and in employment the week before the census.
- 2.22 Around 36,200 people or 20.3% of the population aged 16 to 64 years in SMBC were "economically inactive"¹¹ in the year ending December 2023. This compares with around 30,500 people (17.1%) in the year ending December 2022. Economic inactivity in SMBC is lower than across the North West and Great Britain. Across the North West, 23.3% of people aged 16 to 64 years were economically inactive during the year ending December 2023, around the same rate as the year ending December 2022 when 23.3% were economically inactive.
- 2.23 SMBC (35.9%) has higher than average percentage of residents employed within SOC2020 Professional Occupations, compared to the North West (26.8%) and England (27.2%). Nevertheless, SMBC has been experiencing major business resurgence, driven by a £1bn+ regeneration project offering strong transport links, affordable commercial spaces and tailored support through the Greater Manchester Business Growth Hub.
- 2.24 Over the past decade, SMBC has seen significant growth in its local economy, providing opportunities for new investments, business expansion, and job creation, notably¹²:
- GDP per head increased by 28% (2020–2023), outperforming the Greater Manchester average.
 - Employment base grew 13% between 2015 and 2022.
 - Stockport accounts for 9% of Greater Manchester's total employment, the 4th largest employment hub in the region.
 - Over 12,500 active businesses employing 139,000+ people (2023).
 - 4th largest economy in Greater Manchester by GVA contribution.
- 2.25 SMBC has nationally significant employment and business specialisms – Stockport retains specialism above the national average across a range of sectors such as Manufacturing, Wholesale and Logistics. However, a

¹⁰ https://public.tableau.com/app/profile/stockport.council/viz/EconomicOverview_16795945371700/Population

¹¹ People are classed as "economically inactive" if they are not in employment but don't meet the criteria for being "unemployed". This means they have not been seeking work within the previous four weeks or were unable to start work within the next two weeks. Common reasons include being retired, looking after the home or family or being temporarily or long-term sick and disabled.

¹² Stockport Economic Plan Delivery Plan 2025 – 2028 <https://www.onestockport.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Stockport-Economic-Delivery-Plan-2025-28-1.pdf>

- lack of business dynamism and poor survival rates means that Stockport is increasingly reliant on a small group of major employers.
- 2.26 SMBC’S economy lost an estimated £700m due to the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 – equivalent to 10% of total output. Accommodation and Food Services were the most significantly affected sectors – losing an estimated £100m of output in 2020.
- 2.27 SMBC aims to maintain a competitive strength across different industry sectors, as well as support the growth of niche sectors and innovative businesses, including¹³:
- 2,970 new jobs are expected to be created in administrative and support service activities between 2026 and 2042.
 - 1,870 new jobs are expected to be created in construction between 2026 and 2042.
 - 1,840 new jobs are expected to be created in professional, scientific and technical activities between 2026 and 2042.
- 2.28 Data suggests there remain significant additional opportunities for growth in Greater Manchester. Whilst Greater Manchester’s share of the UK economy has risen to 4.1%, up from 3.6% in 2015, this is still a lower share than expected based on Greater Manchester’s share of the UK working age population (4.4%)¹⁴.
- 2.29 SMBC is located within the ‘Airport City and Southern Growth Corridor’ as defined in the Greater Manchester Growth Plan. Identified as a significant area to unlock new homes and space for new businesses. The Airport and Southern Growth Corridor are identified to deliver 362,919sqm of employment floorspace, alongside 13,571 new homes. Weaknesses in connectivity, housing affordability, skills attainment, business investment in R&D, and health-related economic inactivity continue to constrain the city region’s economic performance. Uneven spatial distribution of growth risks reinforcing disparities between places, while capacity pressures—within transport networks, education and training systems, and parts of the labour market—may limit the realisation of emerging opportunities. The Greater Manchester Growth Plan notes that addressing these issues will require greater devolution and sustained partnership across national and local government, employers, education providers, and civic institutions.
- 2.30 The Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation (SMDC) Draft Strategic Business Plan 2025–2030, notes there is a commitment to increasing employment and economic growth in Town Centre West and has supported the further development of SMBC’s flagship new commercial quarter at Stockport Exchange in partnership with Muse Developments. Since the establishment of the MDC, over 170,000 sq ft of Grade A office space has been created across three phases:
- No.1 Stockport Exchange a 50,000 sq ft office building is fully let and Holiday Inn Express both completed in late 2017.
 - No.2 Stockport Exchange a 61,300 sq ft office building completed in spring 2020 and is fully let.

¹³ <https://www.stockport.gov.uk/economic-information/growth-sectors>

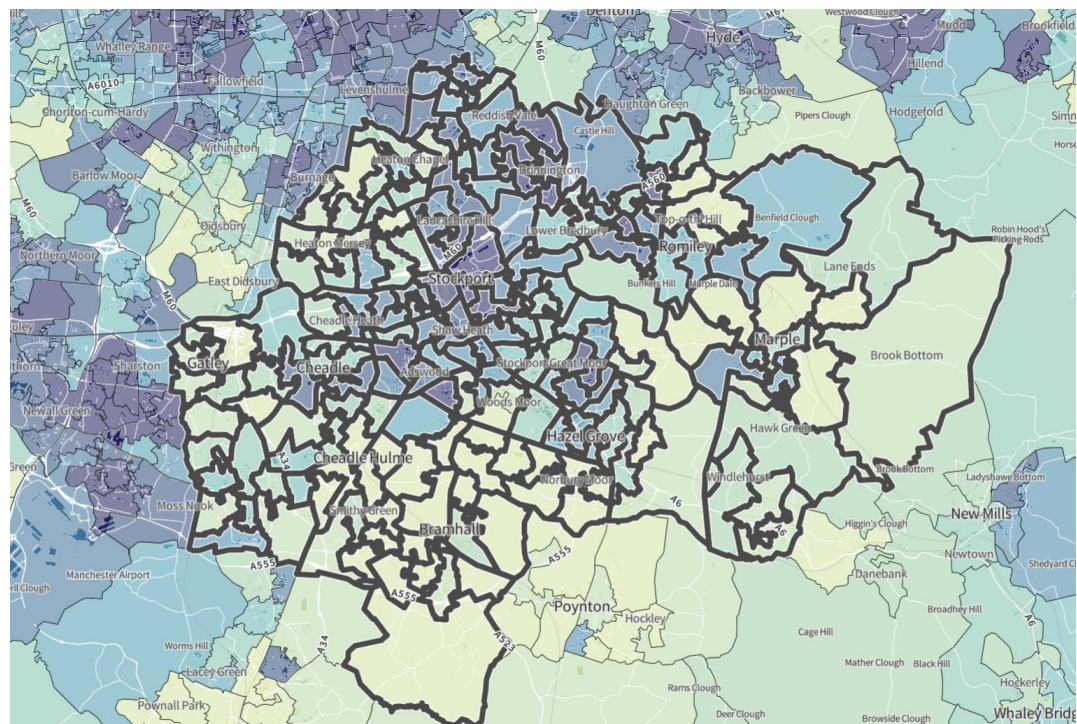
¹⁴ <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/dwen3ltn/ifs-gm-economic-growth-paper-web-final-accessible.pdf>

- No. 3 Stockport Exchange a 64,000 sq ft Grade A office space and a new 400 space car park completed in December 2023. The car park will provide all the future parking needs for the occupiers of the Exchange, including the provision for all the spaces to be used for electric vehicle charging.
- 2.31 No 1. And No. 2 Stockport Exchange are home to occupiers such as Stagecoach and BASF as well as rapidly growing firms Music Magpie and O'Neill Patient. In April 2024 Hursts (a local accountancy firm) moved into No. 3 Stockport Exchange and several potential occupiers are in discussions for space on the remaining floors.
- 2.32 In 2019, Cushman & Wakefield estimated that delivering the 4,000 new homes and 1 million sq. ft. of employment floorspace identified in the Town Centre West Strategic Regeneration Framework would require development capital investment of around £1bn. To respond to this, and in line with the Town Centre West Strategic Framework, the MDC investment facility has been successfully used to leverage substantial public and private sector funding, including £12m of Homes England grant (supporting the Interchange and Weir Mill schemes) and £7.2m from the Brownfield Housing Fund (for Interchange, Stopford Park and St Thomas' Gardens). Public sector investment has demonstrably helped unlock private sector funding from developers and joint venture partners, notably at Stockport Interchange and Stockport Exchange.
- 2.33 A further private sector investment of circa. £250m is anticipated in the next phase of the SMDC pipeline, alongside public investment from Stockport Council. In addition to these capital investments the Council have secured substantial revenue funding from a variety of public and private sources to support the operations of the MDC. Between 2022–2025, these sums have totaled more than the total annual SMDC revenue budget, allowing the Council to increase their impact.

Indices of Deprivation

- 2.34 The English Indices of Deprivation provide a relative measure of deprivation across England and was most recently updated in 2025. Areas are ranked based upon seven different dimensions of deprivation and an overall composite measure of multiple deprivation, which is a weighted index comprising the scores of the different domains. These domains are:
- **Income:** Measures the proportion of the population experiencing deprivation relating to low income. This domain has a weight of 22.5% in the final index.
 - **Employment:** Measures the proportion of working age population involuntarily excluded from the labour market. This domain has a weight of 22.5% in the final index.
 - **Education:** Measures the lack of attainment and skills in the local population. This domain has a weight of 13.5% in the final index.
 - **Health:** Measures the risk of premature death and impairment of life quality through poor physical/mental health. This domain has a weight of 13.5% in the final index.
 - **Crime:** Measures the risk of personal and material victimization at local level. This domain has a weight of 9.3% in the final index.
 - **Barriers to Housing & Services.** Measures the physical and financial accessibility of housing and local services. This domain has a weight of 9.3% in the final index.
 - **Living Environment.** Measures the quality of both the 'indoor' and 'outdoor' local environment. This domain has a weight of 9.3% in the final index.
- 2.35 SMBC as an authority is less deprived Overall (IMD) than 62% of local authority districts in England. This means that 38% of local authorities in England are less deprived than SMBC. Figure 2.2 identifies the average IMD score of the different wards of the Borough, where a darker colour denotes higher deprivation levels in the area. This demonstrates that despite overall being one of the least deprived of the Greater Manchester local authorities, the detailed IMD picture indicates large inequalities within the Borough, which comprises a mixture of very prosperous neighbourhoods and more highly deprived areas. The wards towards the periphery and semi-rural areas of Stockport are generally less deprived than areas within the town centre.

Figure 2.2 - Stockport Wards IMD2025 Scores



Showing **Overall (IMD)** deprivation for neighbourhoods (LSOAs) in England



Source: UK gov.uk 2026

Stockport Property Market

- 2.36 Stockport's commercial property market is experiencing a significant surge, driven by a £1 billion town centre regeneration, high tenant demand, and strong rental growth, with a notable 16.1% growth observed in some areas. Key sectors contributing to this boom include some demand for modern Grade A office space, particularly at Stockport Exchange, revitalised retail in the Underbanks and Merseyway Shopping Centre providing Stockport's major retail offer, and a robust industrial sector.
- 2.37 As per Aspinall Verdi's Commercial Market Paper (March 2026)¹⁵ evidence has been gathered for each submarket in Stockport, utilising CoStar data to assess average yields for the industrial, retail and office markets. Knight Frank's Investment Yield Guide has also been used to benchmark Aspinall Verdi's assumptions.

¹⁵ Aspinall Verdi – Commercial Market Paper for Stockport Borough Council (March 2026)

- 2.38 In relation to Stockport's office market, vacancy levels within Stockport are stable, and lower than the wider Manchester market. This shows signs that the submarket is performing well and that the demand is relatively aligned with the supply, supporting steady occupancy rates. Overall office market yield average is 10.5%, reflecting the stronger yields able to be achieved by new-build, high quality space.
- 2.39 Stockport's industrial market experienced a more negative absorption than positive since 2024. For the Stockport market, vacancy is likely to slightly decrease, then remain steady until 2029, as per Aspinall Verdi's Commercial Market Paper (March 2026). The rental market has shown moderate growth of 6.5% over the past year, with an overall industrial market yield of 7.5%.
- 2.40 Stockport's retail market is performing steadily, with a mix of town centre retail and leisure facilities. The main retail park acts as a natural extension to the town centre, with additional provision available at Stanley Green Retail Park in Cheadle Hulme and Redrock's the Light. There is a broad range of occupiers, with rental growth which has been modest but positive, with increases of 1.2% over the past year and 6.5% over three years, as per Aspinall Verdi's Commercial Market Paper (March 2026). The retail market yield is 8% for retail and 7% for mixed use development (including retail shopping centres, retail parks and mixed-use schemes).
- 2.41 Several key factors are driving the commercial property market in 2026. The Town Centre West area has undergone massive transformation, including new transport infrastructure and commercial spaces, as a result of the extensive regeneration efforts. Stockport has witnessed some of the fastest rental growth across the UK, positioning it as a prime location for investors seeking high rental yields. There is a notable gap between industrial and office supply, with approximately 1.65 years' supply of available industrial premises and limited high-quality modern spaces, creating significant demand for premium assets. Commercial properties in Stockport are offering competitive returns, with yields often ranging between 6-7%, coupled with more affordable entry prices compared to national averages.
- 2.42 Stockport Exchange serves as a prime office hub, attracting businesses due to its excellent connectivity to Manchester and via rail across the UK. The Underbanks and Merseyway Shopping Centre are the retail core, with Merseyway Shopping Centre providing traditional retail options and the Underbanks offering unique, independent spaces.
- 2.43 The investment and development outlook for Stockport is positive. Investors can anticipate rental yields of 6-7% in the town centre, with strong capital growth potential fueled by ongoing development. Commercial property prices generally range between £77 to £218 per square foot, indicating strong rental income potential. The £1 billion town centre regeneration is actively increasing property values and demand, making Stockport a top choice for commercial investment in the northwest. Additionally, future commercial property rates will be affected by the 2026 revaluations, which are based on 2024 rental values.

Future Economy of Stockport

- 2.44 The Economic Plan Delivery Plan 2025-2028 sets out a programme of actions for the period 2025-2028, whilst continuing to build on the strong foundations set down in preceding years (2022-2025). The four core priorities, established in the One Stockport Economic Plan 2022-2030, remain unchanged, reflecting the borough's long-term commitment to inclusive growth, resilience, and partnership working.
- 2.45 The Delivery Plan identifies Stockport's opportunities and challenges and outlines a set of actions, aligned to the four strategic priorities (Enterprising and Productive / Climate Friendly and Resilient / Fair and Inclusive / Accessible and Connected), ensuring continued focus and coordination across all delivery partners.
- 2.46 The Delivery Plan has highlighted the following Big Ticket Items that are intended to deliver significant impact for the borough.
- Enterprising and Productive:
 - Deliver projects that create the spaces required to bring additional jobs and businesses at St Thomas' Gardens, flexible office and co-working space and creative studios; and

- Deliver an extended Mayoral Development Corporation, tripling the boundary to encompass 280 acres across the town centre.
 - Climate Friendly and Resilient:
 - Completion of Cheadle Eco Park - 115,000 sqft of new, net zero carbon industrial units providing space to support growth in the green tech, clean tech, and renewables sectors; and
 - Deliver a low carbon Complete the development of Cheadle Eco Park – 115,000 sqft of new, net zero carbon industrial units providing space to support growth in the green tech, clean tech, and renewables sectors. Accessible and Connected: District Heat Network within the town centre, in collaboration with government and private sector partners.
 - Fair and Inclusive:
 - Deliver the Construction Skills Hub; and
 - Create a network of LiveWell Centres across the borough, including targeted skills outreach.
 - Accessible and Connected:
 - Extend Metrolink to Stockport – develop and submit the business case to secure investment; and
 - Complete construction of Cheadle Railway Station to enhance connectivity at Cheadle.
- 2.47 Delivering the Items identified will continue to be overseen by the Stockport Economic Alliance, with delivery led by a broad network of partners across Stockport and Greater Manchester.
- 2.48 Furthermore, The Stockport Mayoral Development Corporation ('SMDC') DRAFT Strategic Business Plan 2025 – 30 has highlighted a further private sector investment of circa. £250m is anticipated in the next phase of the SMDC pipeline, alongside public investment from Stockport Council.
- 2.49 There has been no further update to Hatch's Baseline Report which was part of the Economic Plan Evidence Base 2022 and was reported in the 2022 ELR.

Sectors

- 2.50 Stockport's GVA was estimated at £6.5 billion by end of 2023, contributing significantly to Greater Manchester's growth. However, Stockport's GVA growth continues to lag national and regional averages, a trend acknowledged in the 2022 Economic Plan.
- 2.51 Stockport's current significant business sectors include professional, scientific and technical activities, and health and social work. Historically (up to 2018), financial services (+132%) and professional, scientific and technical activities (+96%) showed the strongest productivity growth.
- 2.52 The property sector, particularly in Stockport, saw a surge in October 2024 with new real estate businesses, making up 17.5% of total contributions. However, traditional sectors like manufacturing, wholesale, and retail are forecast to decline, necessitating diversification.
- 2.53 Stockport exhibits similar industry contributions to England in some areas but has historically shown higher growth in finance and technical activities. Currently, consultancy and IT services are experiencing significant growth, with many new firms established in October 2024.
- 2.54 As of December 2022, the sectors with the most companies in Stockport were:
- Professional, scientific and technical activities (16.95%).
 - Wholesale and retail trade/repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles (14.18%).

- Administrative and support service activities (12.22%).
 - Health and social work also remains a significant sector.
- 2.55 There are also four sectors in SMBC that are business ‘specialisms’. A sector is considered specialised if it has a Location Quotient (LQ) over 1.2. LQ is a method of quantifying how concentrated a particular industry is in a region as compared to the nation. It can reveal what makes a particular region “unique” in comparison to the national average. These ‘specialisms’ are: ‘Manufacturing – Creative and Media’ with an LQ of 1.6; ‘Manufacturing – Higher Tech’ with an LQ of 1.2; ‘Other Services’ with an LQ of 1.3, which includes hairdressing and other beauty treatment, renting and leasing of vehicles and other personal services and finally ‘Wholesale’ which has an LQ of 1.4.
- 2.56 Within SMBC, different sectors are located in different hubs across the region remain as previously identified:
- Higher Tech Manufacturing concentrations are in northern central Stockport rising towards Portwood, as well as Hazel Grove.
 - Warehousing and Logistics also has a greater mass within the central Stockport, with these units generally being within the 50-300 ‘employment count’. Cheadle also has a greater spread of warehousing and industrial units however these being between the 0-50 ‘employment count’ sector.
 - The concentration of the Knowledge Economy businesses are in the central Stockport region.
- 2.57 SMBC still lacks ‘Large’ Knowledge Economy Businesses (+250 employees). The economy is dominated by micro-enterprises, with 3,645 ‘Micro’ Knowledge Economy Businesses (0-9 employees) dispersed primarily in the west of the region, with clusters in Marple and Romiley. This micro-business landscape is supported by a highly skilled workforce, fostering growth in knowledge-intensive sectors.

3. Planning and Economic Policy

Introduction

- 3.1 This section provides an overview of relevant national planning policy and current and emerging local planning policy relating to the delivery of employment land.

National Planning Policy

National Planning Policy Framework

- 3.2 National Planning Policy and Guidance relating to Employment is contained within the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG). In March 2012, the Government adopted the NPPF. In March 2014, the Government published the supporting NPPG. This guidance is intended to sit alongside the NPPF and aims to provide additional clarity and information in respect of NPPF Policy. This Employment Land Review has regard to both the National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance.
- 3.3 The revised NPPF was published in December 2024 (and amended in February 2025), the document sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these should be applied. It provides a framework within which locally prepared plans for housing and other development can be produced. The NPPF requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.
- 3.4 Paragraph 85 of the NPPF states that *“Planning policies and decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand, and adapt. Significant weight should be placed on the need to support economic growth and productivity, considering both local needs and wider opportunities for development. The approach taken should allow each area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses and address the challenges of the future.”*
- 3.5 Paragraph 86 of the NPPF states that *“Planning policies should:*
- a) set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to the national industrial strategy and any relevant Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration;*
 - b) set criteria, and identify strategic sites, for local and inward investment to match the strategy and to meet anticipated needs over the plan period;*
 - c) pay particular regard to facilitating development to meet the needs of a modern economy, including by identifying suitable locations for uses such as laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics;*
 - d) seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment; and*
 - e) be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, and allow for new and flexible working practices and spaces to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.”*
- 3.6 Paragraph 87 of the NPPF states that *“Planning policies and decisions should recognise and address the specific locational requirements of different sectors. This includes making provision for:*

a) clusters or networks of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries; and for new, expanded or upgraded facilities and infrastructure that are needed to support the growth of these industries (including data centres and grid connections);

b) storage and distribution operations at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations that allow for the efficient and reliable handling of goods, especially where this is needed to support the supply chain, transport innovation and decarbonisation; and

c) the expansion or modernisation of other industries of local, regional or national importance to support economic growth and resilience”

- 3.7 Paragraphs 85, 86 & 87 of the NPPF are clear that planning policies must help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand and adapt and that they should reflect market need.

National Planning Policy Framework (December 2025) Draft Text for Consultation

- 3.8 A consultation on the revised National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) ran from 16 December 2025 to 10 March 2026.
- 3.9 The draft NPPF addresses employment land and commercial development, reflective of the Government’s drive to economic growth and national prosperity. The framework emphasises that planning policies should “pay particular regard to facilitating development to meet the needs of a modern economy, including by identifying suitable locations for uses such as laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics”. The significance of the reference to the modern economy suggests an increased focus in supporting the digital economy.
- 3.10 Chapter 2 ‘Plan-making policies’ sets out policies that are designed to support the implementation of the new plan-making system, alongside new regulations and guidance. It is split into three sections. Following a brief factual description of the required parts of the development plan, the first section sets out policies on the role that each type of plan is intended to play, and what should be done in pursuit of this. There is then a set of policies on preparing plans, followed by a section setting out policy on the approach to examining each type of plan.
- 3.11 Chapter 3 ‘Decision-making policies’ is proposing to recast the principles of the government’s expectations about how applicants and local planning authorities should engage through the planning application process that is found within Chapter 4 of the current Framework. These principles are proposed to be recast into a clearer set of general and cross-cutting national-decision making policies.
- 3.12 Chapter 4 ‘Achieving sustainable development’ sets out core policies for how plans and planning decisions should approach sustainable development. While they build on aspects of Chapter 2 of the current Framework, including a new presumption in favour of sustainable development, they introduce a more spatial aspect, especially in relation to decision-making. This is a gap in the current Framework, while aspects of the current document point to types of development which may or may not be acceptable in different locations (especially within the Green Belt), the current Framework lacks a comprehensive approach of the type found in many local plans.
- 3.13 Chapter 7 ‘Building a strong, effective economy’ is concerned about building a strong, effective economy and is intended to replace Chapter 6 of the current Framework. These policies aim to provide clear planning policy support for a wide range of businesses and to support long term economic growth both locally and nationally.
- 3.14 Chapter 8 ‘Ensuring the vitality of town centres’ retains the core principle that ‘main town centre uses’ should be located within existing town centres wherever possible, with development outside these areas only considered when suitable sites are not available. This section replaces Chapter 7 of the current Framework.

- 3.15 Chapter 12 ‘Making effective use of land’ sets out new proposals to meet the objective of making the best use of land, and includes redrafted policies previously set out in Chapter 11 of the current Framework. Well-connected locations can reduce the need to travel, require less land for parking and road infrastructure, and better support opportunities for active travel (walking, cycling and wheeling). As a result, higher density development can create sustainable and well-designed places. This section seeks to optimise land use in well-connected locations, such as around train stations, by introducing national minimum density requirements in these locations.

National Planning Practice Guidance – Assessing Economic and Housing Development Needs

- 3.16 NPPG provides specific guidance to support Local Planning Authorities in objectively assessing and evidencing development needs for economic development and plan for business (which includes main town centre uses).
- 3.17 Paragraph: 041 61-041-20190315 advises that authorities use the following to assess:
- a) *The need for land or floorspace for economic development, including both the quantitative or qualitative need for all foreseeable types of economic activity over the plan period, including for retail and leisure development;*
 - b) *The existing and future supply of land available for economic development and its suitability to meet the identified needs. This should be undertaken at the same time as, or combined with, Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessments and should include a reappraisal of the suitability of previously allocated land;*
 - c) *The likely availability and achievability of employment-led development, taking into account market signals;*
 - d) *The role, capacity and function of town centres and the relationship between them, including any trends in the performance of centres;*
 - e) *Locations of deprivation which may benefit from planned remedial action; and*
 - f) *The needs of the farming and food production industries, including the location and extent of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and the ways in which planning could support investment in those industries.*
- 3.18 NPPG paragraph reference 2a-025-20190220 states that regarding economic development, strategic policy-making authorities will need to prepare a robust evidence base to understand existing business needs, which will need to be kept under review to reflect local circumstances and market conditions. National economic trends may not automatically translate to particular areas with a distinct employment base. Where appropriate, local planning authorities can use their Authority Monitoring Report and the plan review process to ensure that their evidence base remains up to date.
- 3.19 Functional economic market areas can overlap several administrative areas so strategic policy-making authorities may have to carry out assessments of need on a cross-boundary basis with neighbouring authorities within their functional economic market area. Local Enterprise Partnerships (and county councils) can play a key role in this process.
- 3.20 NPPG Paragraph 2a-026-20190220 gathering evidence to plan for business uses, strategic policy making authorities will need to liaise closely with the business community taking account of the Local Industrial Strategy, to understand their current and potential future requirements. They will need to assess:

- The best fit functional economic market area;
- The existing stock of land for employment uses within the area;
- The recent pattern of employment land supply and loss – for example based on extant planning permissions and planning applications (or losses to permitted development);
- Evidence of market demand (including the locational and premises requirements of particular types of business) – sourced from local data and market intelligence, such as recent surveys of business needs, discussions with developers and property agents and engagement with business and economic forums;
- Wider market signals relating to economic growth, diversification and innovation; and
- Any evidence of market failure – such as physical or ownership constraints that prevent the employment site being used effectively.

Assessment of Land Availability

- 3.21 NPPG paragraph reference 3-008-20190722 provides guidance which states that the assessment needs to identify all sites and broad locations (regardless of the amount of development needed) in order to provide a complete audit of available land. The process of the assessment will, however, provide the information to enable an identification of sites and locations that are most suitable for the level of development required.
- 3.22 The guidance goes on to state in Paragraph 3-009-20190722 that plan-makers will need to assess a range of different site sizes from small-scale sites to opportunities for large-scale developments such as village and town extensions and new settlements where appropriate.
- 3.23 It may be appropriate to consider all sites and broad locations capable of delivering economic development on sites of 0.25 hectares (or 500 square metres of floor space) and above.
- 3.24 Paragraph reference 3-012-20190722 states if the process to identify land is to be transparent and identify as many potential opportunities as possible, it is important to issue a call for sites and broad locations for development. This needs to be aimed at as wide an audience as is practicable so that those not normally involved in property development have the opportunity to contribute. This can include notifying parish councils and neighbourhood forums, landowners, developers, businesses and relevant local interest groups, as well as local publicity. A call for sites will need to set out the information sought from respondents, which could include:
- Site location;
 - Suggested potential type of development (e.g. economic development uses – retail, leisure, cultural, office, warehousing etc; residential – by different tenures, types and needs of different groups such as older people housing, private rented housing and people wishing to build or commission their own homes);
 - The scale of development; and
 - Constraints to development.

Sub-Regional Planning Policy

- 3.25 As referred to previously Stockport Borough are preparing their own Local Plan having withdrawn from their involvement in the Greater Manchester Spatial Framework (GMSF), now referred to as Places for Everyone (PfE), in December 2020. Whilst Greater Manchester remains the economic geography, politically the Local

Authority have the autonomy for plan making. Places for Everyone (formerly GMSF) focuses on key strategic matters in the region and is therefore contains policies of relevance for plan making in Stockport.

- 3.26 Places for Everyone became part of the statutory development plan for each of the nine PforE authorities (Bolton, Bury, Manchester, Oldham, Rochdale, Salford, Tameside, Trafford and Wigan) on March 21, 2024.
- 3.27 Whilst Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council have withdrawn from the Greater Manchester Combined Authority Spatial Framework, the implementation of this plan will still impact the region due to geographic proximity to the impacted area.

Local Planning Policy

The Development Plan

- 3.28 The policies which are used to manage development in Stockport are those set out in the Core Strategy DPD (2011) along with policies set out in the Greater Manchester Joint Waste DPD (2012) and the Greater Manchester Joint Minerals DPD (2013) and those saved policies of the Stockport Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Review (May 2006) which are not superseded by the Core Strategy, Joint Waste or Joint Minerals DPDs.

Adopted Plan: Stockport Core Strategy (2011)

- 3.29 The Core Strategy sets an overall strategy and vision, establishing the broad aims and objectives for the use of land in Stockport. It outlines how future strategic development needs including housing, employment, retail, education and healthcare will be met, providing the overall context for how policies and proposals will be used to promote positive change and guide planning and other policy decisions across the Borough.

Core Policy CS7 - Accommodating Economic Development

Class E office uses

- 3.30 Development of class E office uses will be focused in the Town Centre, increasing and improving the available office space in the Borough's most sustainable location.
- 3.31 Office and other types of Class E development will also be encouraged in the M60 Gateway, taking advantage of the location close to the Town Centre, thus helping to develop an agglomeration of similar sites. This will enable Stockport to develop land for the growth sectors.
- 3.32 The majority of the forecasted 110,000sqm of additional floorspace requirement forecast for the plan period has been advised to be located in the Town Centre/M60 Gateway. Class E office development will also be encouraged on suitable existing employment sites and in and around District Centres. The employment areas not already mentioned above which are most suitable for office use include Cheadle Royal, Bramhall Moor Lane, Bird Hall Lane, Stanley Green, Battersea Road. Other sites, such as Shepley Lane, Marple and Melford Road are suitable for offices, amongst other employment uses. Stockport's District Centre office market is driven by a local skilled workforce and local amenities and to a lesser extent their existing stock of premises. The key centres in this regard are Bramhall, Cheadle, Cheadle Hulme, and Hazel Grove.

Industrial (B2) and Warehousing (B8) Uses

- 3.33 Whilst it is acknowledged that the net level of heavy industrial uses is likely to decline in the Borough, new units are still likely to be required. Consequently, such uses will still need to be provided for and existing employment areas are considered to be the appropriate locations to accommodate these, as well as the moderate rise in warehousing development.

- 3.34 B2 and B8 uses, which are likely to generate heavy goods traffic or be otherwise incompatible with residential areas, will be directed to employment areas with good access to the National Strategic Road Network and Local Primary Road Network, or where such access can be provided. For example, the Bredbury Industrial Area has the opportunity to provide sites for industrial and warehouse uses, due to the size of the plots, the proximity to the motorway network and the fact that there are few residential properties near to the core of the site.
- 3.35 The Council will seek to build upon the benefits that clustering of employment uses can bring, with different areas having different roles to play. Those sites identified for employment purposes of this nature will be protected for the purposes of employment and related ancillary uses.
- 3.36 It is expected that the majority of the heavy industrial uses will be located on the existing employment areas, rather than in the Town Centre/M60 Gateway, although there may be some scope for such uses on MEDS sites where there are existing similar uses. An exception to this in the M60 Gateway Area would be the development of land at Tiviot Way, which is well located for the motorway network. Warehousing uses should be located on employment areas with good connections to the National Strategic Road Network and Local Primary Road Network, such as Bredbury Industrial Area.

Other Employment Uses

- 3.37 The Council will ensure that where proposals provide employment opportunities or contribute positively to the economy and where they meet the overarching aims of the Core Strategy, they are assessed accordingly. They will be encouraged in those areas where other employment uses are expected to develop. Other employment uses which are not traditional “B” Use classes and which are regarded as 'Town Centre uses', such as retail and leisure will be subject to sequential testing as set out in the NPPF.
- 3.38 Small-scale employment development for new premises or uses in other areas, such as residential or rural locations, will be acceptable provided they meet criteria set out in development management policies.

Development Management Policy AED-1

- 3.39 Employment Development in the Town Centre and M60 Gateway - The Council will encourage development of Class E employment uses in Stockport Town Centre and M60 Gateway Area, including the redevelopment of existing office space which is currently underused.

Development Management Policy AED-2

- 3.40 Employment Development in District Centres - The Council will encourage development of office uses in District Centres, including the redevelopment of existing office space which is currently underused.

Development Management Policy AED-3

- 3.41 Employment Development in Employment Areas - The Council will protect employment areas for employment generating uses. Within these areas the Council will have regard to the requirement for flexibility for employment generating uses beyond the traditional employment uses of Class E offices, B2 and B8, based on the criteria set out in PPS4.

Development Management Policy AED-4

- 3.42 Employment Development in Rural Areas - The Council will encourage employment development in rural areas where it is of an appropriate type and scale. This will include the encouragement of new economic development and the need for existing employment sites to be used for employment purposes rather than non-employment uses, thus maintaining the supply of employment sites in these areas.

Development Management Policy AED-5

- 3.43 Education, Skills and Training Provision - The Council will ensure that developers of new employment uses will be required to provide training or funding to provide education and training, in order to help local residents develop the necessary skills to access the jobs being created in the borough. In addition, where appropriate end users will be required to recruit a certain percentage of the workforce from particular geographical areas, focusing on Neighbourhood Renewal Priority Areas.

Development Management Policy AED-6

- 3.44 Employment Sites Outside Protected Employment Areas – Proposals for the change of use or redevelopment of employment sites outside designated employment areas which result in the loss of that use will not normally be permitted unless:
- a) It can be demonstrated that the site is no longer viable as an employment use;
 - b) The proposal will not adversely affect the operations of neighbouring premises;
 - c) The loss of employment land would not lead to significantly longer journey to work patterns; and
 - d) The development does not conflict with other policies.
- 3.45 The extension of existing employment premises will be permitted where it does not conflict with other policies.

Saved Policies of the Unitary Development Plan Review (2006)

- 3.46 The Stockport Unitary Development Plan (UDP) Review (adopted 31st May 2006) also forms part of the current statutory development plan for the Borough.

Policy E1.1 Location of new Industrial Development

- 3.47 This advises that new industrial developments (Use Classes B2 and B8) will be permitted:
- a) Within existing and proposed Employment Areas identified on the Proposals Map;
 - b) Within appropriate sites in the Stockport M60 Gateway; or
 - c) Within Policy Guidance Areas where industry would be an acceptable use.
- 3.48 This policy also states that proposals for industrial developments outside these areas may also be permitted provided that they do not conflict with other UDP policies and that all sites for industrial development should be appropriate in size and scale to their surrounding area, must not conflict with other UDP policies for housing, retail and the protection of the built and natural environment, as well as having good access to the highway network and public transport.

Policy E1.2 Location of New Business Premises and Offices

- 3.49 Policy E1.2 states that new business premises and office developments will be permitted in the following areas:
- a) Within Employment Areas identified on the Proposals Map, on appropriate sites within the Stockport M60 Gateway, or in Policy Guidance Areas where office and business uses are listed as acceptable;
 - b) Within or adjacent to the town centre and district centres.

- 3.50 Policy E1.2 states that proposals for office developments outside these areas may also be permitted provided that they do not conflict with other UDP policies. All sites for office development should be appropriate in size and scale to their surrounding area, must not conflict with other UDP policies for housing, retail and the protection of the built and natural environment, as well as having good access to the highway network and public transport.

Policy E3.1 Protection of Employment Areas

- 3.51 Policy E3.1 advises that in Employment Areas shown on the Proposals Map, development involving business and light industry (Class E), general industry (B2) or warehousing (B8) will be permitted, provided that development on land close to residential areas will not have a materially detrimental effect on the living conditions of residents.
- 3.52 This policy also states that alternative uses, which will be considered on their merits, taking into account the factors set out below, include:
- a) Sui generis commercial uses, such as car showrooms, where they create job opportunities, assist in the regeneration of an employment area, or may enable the retention and/or expansion of existing firms and are proposed in conjunction with employment uses such as servicing and workshop facilities.
 - b) Complementary commercial and leisure uses, where suitable sites can be identified. Such uses could include indoor sports facilities and food and drink outlets of a modest scale, hotels, day nurseries and other uses that can provide a service to local firms or people working in the area.
- 3.53 Policy E3.1 states that development within both these categories will only be permitted if the extent to which the area can function as an Employment Area will be maintained or enhanced. Factors to be taken into account are job creation, the availability of land for employment uses and the compatibility of the proposed use with the use of the adjacent land for employment purposes. Proposals involving the following uses are likely to be deemed unacceptable: retailing, retail warehousing, airport related car parking and housing.

Policy E3.2 Refurbishment of Older Buildings in Employment Areas

- 3.54 This policy states that the Council will permit the refurbishment of mills and other buildings in Employment Areas for continued industrial or business use and that proposals for non-employment use may also be considered in the retention of a building that is listed or in a Conservation Area.

Policy E4.2 Office Conversion

- 3.55 This policy advises that within the Town Centre, District and Local Centres the Council will permit the conversion of appropriate buildings into office suites, subject to the consideration of other relevant UDP policies, including the protection of retail frontages.
- 3.56 The policy goes on to state that proposals for converting premises or parts of buildings outside these areas will also be allowed provided:
- a) The degree of intensification of use likely to arise is minimal;
 - b) The impact upon the highway network is acceptable and there is access to the site by sustainable transport modes;
 - c) The proposal is without adverse impact upon the character and environment of the surrounding area; and
 - d) Both Policies HP1.3 (Avoidance of Loss of Dwellings) and TD1.4 (Parking In Developments) can be satisfied.

Stockport Local Plan: Strategic Evidence Base

One Stockport Borough Plan and One Stockport Economic Plan Delivery Plan 2025-28

- 3.57 The One Stockport Borough Plan identifies the following priority areas for action of relevance to employment issues:
- a) Support the development of the green economy and create a broader framework for defining what we mean by inclusive growth;
 - b) Create new innovation and start-up space in the Town Centre;
 - c) Commits to developing a new skills and employment programme to ensure the right training, opportunities and qualifications are available locally. The Economic baseline can get under the skin of existing provision and how it aligns to Stockport's growth sectors;
 - d) Council will continue to promote apprenticeships as a key route into the labour market;
 - e) Focus on retraining and life-long learning enabling those from all ages to get back into employment; and
 - f) Become a digitally inclusive and radical borough by ensuring digital literacy and leading digital connectivity.
- 3.58 The One Stockport Economic Plan Delivery Plan 2025-2028 highlights the importance of providing high quality sites which are also in the locations which can maximise their potential.
- 3.59 A key focus of the Plan is to create additional flexible office accommodation and co-working space for small and growing businesses across Stockport town centre, supporting innovation and creativity.
- 3.60 The Climate Action (CAN) Strategy, 2025 to 2030 outlines Stockport's need to act upon the climate crisis and identifies the workstreams which underpin their intended over the next five years. The aim of the plan is to allow and provide a platform for collaboration amongst public sector, businesses and residents.
- 3.61 The CANs relevance to the economic strategy is set out below:
- a) Strategy sets out the initial actions that Stockport Council will take to make a difference on climate change over the next five years to begin the journey to net-zero;
 - b) Council have committed to incorporate climate impact assessment by incorporating it into decision making, report templates and all key strategies; and
 - c) All future development within the borough will need to respond to this strategy if the authority is to meet net zero targets. All future developments will need to be future-proofed.

Stockport Local Plan Review: Emerging Draft Policies

- 3.62 Stockport have an emerging plan, 'The Stockport Local Plan'. The Stockport Local Plan will provide the overall spatial vision and framework for the future sustainable development of the borough. It will address needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities, and infrastructure, as well as providing a basis for safeguarding the environment, adapting to climate change and securing good design.
- 3.63 It will be used to assess planning applications for new developments in Stockport over the next 15 years once adopted. It will help deliver the vision that partners, stakeholders and residents set out in the 'One Stockport

- Borough Plan’. The feedback from residents and stakeholders received during the development of the Borough Plan has been used to guide the overall principles which will underpin the Local Plan.
- 3.64 Public consultation on the draft Local Plan (Regulation 18) was held from 6 November to 21 December 2025. The Local Development Scheme (September 2025) identifies that further consultation seeking input on specific elements of the draft plan prior to the publication stage will take place before the Publication (Regulation 19) stage anticipated in June-July 2026. Submission is anticipated for November 2026 with the Examination in Public scheduled for spring 2027 and Adoption in winter 2027/2028.
 - 3.65 The Local Plan Review highlights green and digital sectors, along with other new sectors such as financial and professional services and life sciences are increasingly showing their presence in the borough and will require accessible and high-quality commercial premises, and so it is crucial that the conditions are right to allow for diversity and enable the local economy sufficient room to grow.
 - 3.66 The Council states that it will maintain the existing employment land as well as adding new land and premises to support the local economic growth. The Council will also look to promote economic diversity and support new business development through their emerging policy.
 - 3.67 Focus on key employment locations is also included within the Draft Policies BUS 1: Economy and employment principles; BUS 2: Key Employment Locations; Bus 3a: Employment Areas; BUS 3b: New employment development locations; and BUS4 Employment uses outside of designated employment areas.
 - 3.68 In particular, Draft Policy BUS 1: Economy and Employment Principles will support economic growth by: maintaining a diverse supply of employment sites; safeguarding and intensifying Employment Areas (allowing mixed-uses if integrity is maintained); enabling improvement and modernisation of existing premises; encouraging new employment, including emerging sectors, data centres, and skills development; promoting the re-use of buildings like mills for employment; and favoring proposals incorporating ESG principles, sustainable construction, health/wellness facilities, and local apprenticeships.
 - 3.69 Draft Policy BUS 2: Key Employment Locations prioritises that Class E offices are permitted in/on centre edges (as per Draft Policy CEN 4), primarily in the town centre (particularly Exchange Quarter). Small, ancillary offices outside the town centre are also supported. Employment Areas (including Green Belt) will be protected/enhanced for diverse borough-wide premises. Warehouse uses will require proximity to the Primary Route Network, minimising residential impact.
 - 3.70 Within allocated Employment Areas, as per Draft Policy BUS 3a: Employment Areas, development for industry, warehousing, and other employment-generating uses is permitted. Offices are only allowed if Policy CEN 4's sequential test is satisfied. Vacant land or premises in these areas can be released for alternative uses if there's no significant impact on the Employment Area's function (considering job creation and compatibility), and either the site is identified for alternative uses in a council-endorsed plan or a 12-month market appraisal confirms no current or future employment demand.
 - 3.71 Draft Policy 3b: New Employment Development Locations allocates sites for the development of industrial or warehousing and distribution (logistics) employment floorspace, with the minimum floorspace required. Necessary infrastructure improvements must be brought about through future planning applications, including mitigation of development traffic impact, provision of appropriate public transport and sustainable modes of travel.
 - 3.72 Draft Policy BUS 4: Employment uses outside of designated employment areas permits employment development outside designated Employment Areas if proposals are accessible by walking, cycling, and public transport, provide adequate vehicular access/parking (as per Draft Policy INF 14/15), do not harm neighboring amenity or local character, align with Draft Policy HOM 3, satisfy Draft Policy CEN 4's sequential test for town

centre uses, and do not conflict with other policies. The loss of existing employment uses is acceptable only when a 12-month market appraisal demonstrates no current or future demand for employment on the site.

- 3.73 The emerging policies also state the Council’s intention to improve local skills and provide employment opportunities to the local population. The vision is to favourably consider proposals which consider the environment and social governance to their design, including those which include sustainable construction methods and include ancillary facilities which improve mental health and wellness.
- 3.74 Working patterns are set to fluctuate and demand is likely to increase for spaces that are between home and the office and offer a variety of formats to meet needs. As such, affordable workspace and flexible terms for occupancy will be crucial in ensuring the borough continues to be well placed to attract SMEs to start up and/or grow a business. Draft Policy BUS 5: Flexible workspace considers the flexible nature that employment provision should allow for, which regard to supporting entrepreneurial start-up culture and the change in working patterns.
- 3.75 Draft Policy BUS 6: Local Employment and Training states that for developments that exceed the £1 million design and build cost threshold, the Council will seek to enter into an Employment and Skills Agreement via a planning obligation with the developer or applicant. If any proposals do not meet this but create at least 20 additional FTE end user jobs, this will also be subject to the requirements. To note, the One Stockport Economic Plan sets out to improve access to training and skills, and the One Stockport Economic Plan prioritises a fair and inclusive economy. Furthermore, Stockport’s Social Value Charter 2023 includes a commitment to delivering a social value vision.

4. Commercial Land Market

Introduction

4.1 This section provides an overview of the commercial land market sector in Stockport for industrial and office floorspace and is informed by:

- CBRE Research:
- *Greater Manchester Combined Authority: Greater Manchester Local Growth Plan (January 2026)*¹⁶
- *Greater Manchester Combined Authority: Greater Manchester Sector Development Plan: Advanced Materials and Advanced Manufacturing (November 2025)*¹⁷
- *Hatch on behalf of Stockport Borough Council: One Stockport Economic Plan (August 2022)*¹⁸
- *The Stockport Economic Alliance: Economic Plan Delivery Plan 2025 – 2028*¹⁹
- *Aspinall Verdi for Stockport Borough Council: Commercial Market Paper March 2026*²⁰

4.2 Due to current global geopolitical tensions it is difficult to assess the potential long-term impact for the commercial employment land market, and consequently for future demand for industrial, logistics, and office floorspace. As such, the forecasts contained within the documents referenced at paragraph 4.1 above, and relied upon throughout this section, have been prepared on the basis of prevailing market conditions and do not explicitly account for the potential impacts of these geopolitical tensions.

Engagement with commercial property agents in northwest

4.3 In order to understand the current commercial property market in Stockport since 2022, conversations have been undertaken with commercial property agents to understand the status of the commercial property market in Stockport at present, strengths and weaknesses of the market, perceived trends and desires for potential businesses and how the market could be strengthened moving forward. We summarise the key findings below.

Performance of the commercial property market

4.4 The commercial property market in Stockport is performing relatively well overall, particularly within the industrial sector where demand remains strong, rents have grown steadily, and vacancy rates remain comparatively low. The office market is more mixed, with steady demand for mid-market and flexible office space, although higher-specification Grade A offices are experiencing weaker take-up and higher vacancy

¹⁶ <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/what-we-do/economy/greater-manchester-local-growth-plan/>

¹⁷ <https://www.greatermanchester-ca.gov.uk/media/gdldwt/sector-development-plan-advanced-materials-advanced-manufacturing.pdf>

¹⁸ <https://www.onestockport.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/stockport-draft-economic-plan.pdf>

¹⁹ <https://www.onestockport.co.uk/wp-content/uploads/2025/11/Stockport-Economic-Delivery-Plan-2025-28-1.pdf>

²⁰ Aspinall Verdi for Stockport Borough Council: Commercial Market Paper March 2026

levels. Retail performance has improved in parts of the town centre through regeneration, leisure, and food and beverage growth, although retail challenges remain.

Strengths that the Borough has that attract and retain businesses seeking commercial property

- 4.5 The Borough's main strengths are its strategic connectivity, comparatively affordable rents (versus Manchester City Centre), strong motorway and rail access, proximity to Manchester Airport, and ongoing regeneration activity including Stockport Exchange, the Interchange, and town centre improvements. Businesses are also attracted by the growing evening economy, flexible workspace provision, established industrial estates, and the Borough's critical mass of existing businesses and employment sectors such as manufacturing, logistics, and wholesale.

Weaknesses that the Borough has that deter and put off businesses seeking commercial property

- 4.6 Key weaknesses include a shortage of modern, fit-for-purpose commercial premises, particularly industrial and office stock in the right locations. Development viability is constrained by high build and site remediation costs, while some occupiers may perceive Stockport as a secondary office location relative to Manchester City Centre. The office market also shows weaker demand for premium Grade A space, reflecting occupier sensitivity to costs. Retail centres continue to face pressure from online shopping, business rates, and competition from out-of-centre destinations and Manchester City Centre.

Vacancy levels

- 4.7 Vacancy levels are generally stable and relatively healthy compared with wider Greater Manchester averages. Office vacancy in Stockport stood at 6.7% in Q1 2026, below Manchester's wider average, although vacancy is significantly higher in Grade A office buildings at 12.6%. Industrial vacancy has risen from historic lows to around 5.7%, largely due to recent logistics completions, but remains modest overall and is forecast to reduce again over time. Retail vacancy issues persist, although regeneration activity has helped repurpose some previously vacant units.

Popular areas

- 4.8 Popular commercial locations include Stockport Exchange, STOK, Merseyway Innovation Centre, Cheadle Royal Business Park, Aurora Stockport, Stanley Green Business Park, and established industrial estates such as Bredbury Park Industrial Estate and Newby Road Industrial Estate. The town centres Underbanks and Market Place areas have also become increasingly attractive for food, beverage, and leisure operators due to improving footfall and evening economy activity.

Features which put off occupiers/end users

- 4.9 Features which may deter occupiers include limited availability of modern high-quality space, higher rents attached to premium office buildings, outdated secondary stock and limited viability for larger industrial sheds. Some town centre retail units may also be less attractive due to changing retail patterns, competition from online retail, and physical constraints affecting leisure and large-format occupiers.

Ways to improve the commercial property offer

- 4.10 The commercial property offer could be improved through continued regeneration and infrastructure investment, increased delivery of modern flexible commercial space, further refurbishment of secondary office stock, and expansion of smaller industrial/start-up units where demand is strongest. Improving transport connectivity, supporting mixed-use redevelopment, encouraging ESG-compliant and energy-efficient buildings, and continuing to strengthen the town centre leisure and food and beverage offer would also help attract and retain occupiers.

- 4.11 In summary, the commercial property market in Stockport is currently performing relatively strongly overall, supported by ongoing regeneration, strong transport connectivity, and comparatively affordable occupational costs relative to Manchester city centre.
- 4.12 The Borough continues to attract businesses due to its strategic location on the M60 motorway network, fast rail connections to Manchester and London, proximity to Manchester Airport, and improving town centre environment. Significant public and private sector investment, including developments such as Stockport Exchange, STOK, the Interchange, and town centre leisure and residential schemes, has strengthened market confidence and enhanced the attractiveness of the Borough to occupiers and investors.
- 4.13 However, challenges remain around the supply of modern fit-for-purpose accommodation, development viability, and competition from Manchester city centre and out-of-centre locations.

Stockport Metropolitan Borough Employment Land Market

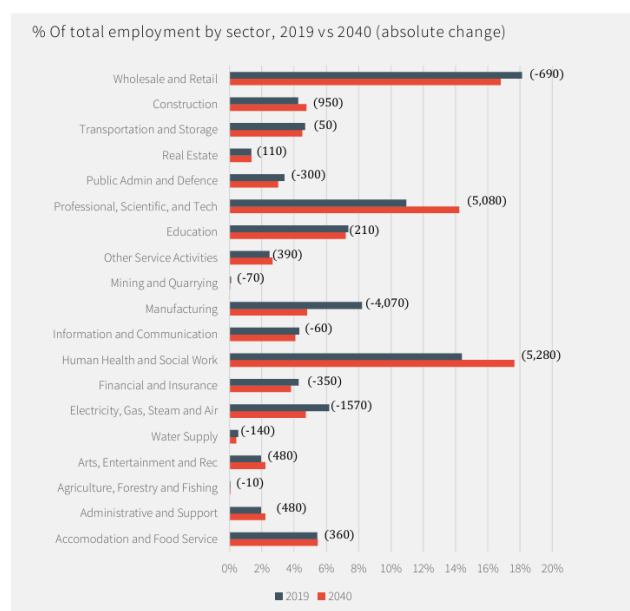
- 4.14 SMBC supports over 12,500 businesses and approximately 139,000 jobs, with GDP per head growing faster than the Greater Manchester average between 2020–2023. Stockport Exchange (Phases 1–4) has already delivered c.375,000 sq ft of Grade A office space, helping reposition the Stockport town centre as a viable alternative to Manchester city centre. Further phases of Stockport Exchange (5–8) are planned, reinforcing SMBC’s pipeline of high-quality employment floorspace aimed at professional, technical and creative occupier. Stockport currently has c.1.46 million sqm of industrial floorspace, with a recent policy focus on protecting and upgrading employment sites to accommodate future growth sectors, including advanced manufacturing, green technology and logistics²¹.
- 4.15 SMBC accounts for c.9% of Greater Manchester employment and is the 4th largest employment hub in the city-region.). The Gross Domestic Product per head of SMBC has increased by 28% between 2020–2023, outperforming the Greater Manchester average and reinforcing Stockport’s growing economic weight within the city region. SMBC sits at the heart of the Southern Growth Corridor, benefiting from direct rail connectivity to major UK city hubs, proximity to Manchester Airport, and strategic road access, supporting localised demand for employment floorspace.
- 4.16 SMBC has a substantial existing employment base of c.2.47 million sqm of floorspace, including:
- c.1.46 million sqm industrial floorspace.
 - c.380,000 sqm office.
 - c.630,000 sqm retail.
- 4.17 The Stockport Economic Delivery Plan identifies the need to retain, upgrade and grow high-quality employment land, ensuring sufficient industrial and commercial floorspace to support an increase in the

²¹ *Greater Manchester Combined Authority: Greater Manchester Sector Development Plan: Advanced Materials and Advanced Manufacturing (November 2025)*

number of businesses operating in the borough of at least 1.5% per annum. Cheadle Eco Business Park is a flagship industrial project, delivering 115,000 sq ft of net-zero carbon industrial units targeted at green tech, clean tech and renewables sectors, reinforcing Stockport's role in the low-carbon economy. The Economic Delivery Plan further highlights the importance of accessible, well-located employment space to remain competitive amid pressure from alternative land uses.

- 4.18 The Stockport Economic Plan highlights the importance of diversifying SMBC's economy for future resilience. A lack of business dynamism and poor survival rates risks undermining the Borough's recent growth. Despite hosting a micro-business dominated economy, there is little evidence of an entrepreneurial start-up culture. Existing employment specialisms are also forecast to decline, making economic diversification an urgent necessity. Key employment sectors such as manufacturing and utilities are forecast to shrink by over 5,000 jobs by 2040. Furthermore, current trends around automation in key sectors, such as logistics and distribution, further strengthens the need for economic diversification.

Figure 4.1 - Stockport % of total employment by sector, 2019 to 2040 (absolute change).



Source: Stockport Economic Plan

- 4.19 The 2022 Employment Land Review prepared by CBRE identified the following considerations from the Stockport Economic Plan, which are considered to remain relevant for the purposes of this review, notwithstanding the anticipated future update to the Stockport Economic Plan:
- There were sharp rises in office vacancies in 2020, however the quality of space could define Stockport's future competitiveness. Almost half (47%) of Stockport's commercial property is comprised of industrial space. However, based on the borough's previous and forecast growth, it is likely to pivot towards office space in the future – with knowledge intensive businesses one of the borough's principal growth sectors.
 - Commercial property vacancy rates in Stockport had been consistently low and falling since 2011 across all property typologies.
 - Office vacancy rose sharply in 2020, potentially driven by companies choosing not to renew leases until the future of work and space requirements become clearer.
 - Despite the ongoing uncertainty regarding the future of work and rising vacancies, sales and leasing deal flows have remained consistent over the last five years – reflecting strong market confidence that Stockport will be able to bounce back quickly from the pandemic.

- Steady lease and sales completions across all commercial typologies suggests that the impact on Stockport’s commercial property market has been far less severe than what has been seen in city centres such as London, Manchester, and Birmingham.
- 4.20 The UK Government has recognised that Greater Manchester has strengths in all 8 of the sectors in the National Industrial Strategy – life sciences, digital and tech, creative industries, advanced manufacturing, clean energy, business and professional services, financial services and security and defence. Since the 2019 Greater Manchester Independent Prosperity Review and the Greater Manchester Local Industrial Strategy, the Greater Manchester Growth Plan notes how the Greater Manchester Combined Authorities (‘GMCA’) have been deepening their understanding of industrial frontiers and how they can support the evolution of those sectors that drive competitive advantage and innovation-led growth. This includes how to build the vital talent pipeline that will help these sectors thrive and grow, including through the education.
- 4.21 In addition, GMCA recognises that growth sectors and the overall economic success of the area is supported by other industries – logistics, engineering and construction, and the foundational and visitor economies. The Greater Manchester Growth Plan notes actions to support these industries underway in the city-region through programmes established under the Local Industrial Strategy, such as the Foundational Economy Innovation Fund and the GM Visitor Economy Strategy. Logistics, engineering, and construction sectors will continue to be supported under the overarching delivery framework of the Greater Manchester Strategy.
- 4.22 For context, we provide below a commentary of the current performance of industrial and office sectors nationally.

Regional Employment Land Market

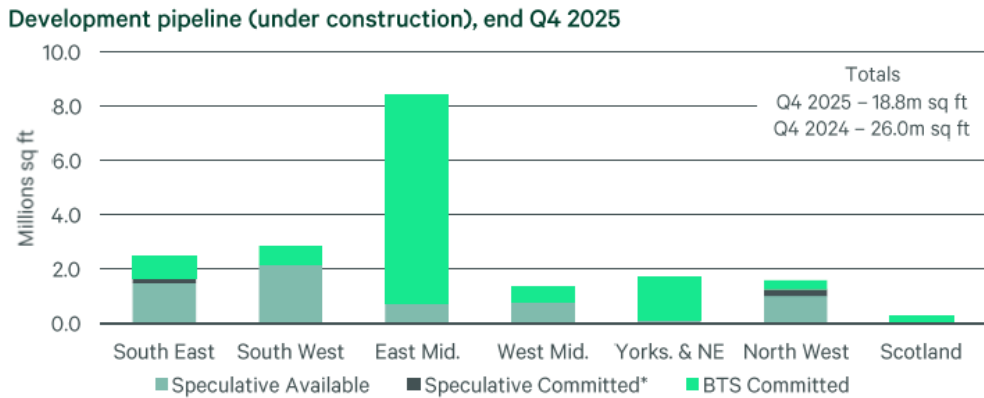
Offices

- 4.23 The Greater Manchester Growth Plan identifies that the city-region’s growth is beginning to outstrip the UK average and growth in the country’s other main metropolitan areas, including London.
- 4.24 Manchester’s commercial office market shows strong demand and low prime vacancy, outperforming European hubs. Despite a lack of new supply in 2026 due to development finance, the market addresses demand by focusing on comprehensive, high-quality refurbishments, which now comprise over 68% of the office pipeline. Manchester’s office market began 2026 strongly, with prime rents expected to exceed £50 per sqft for the first time, as demand for high-quality workspace continues to outstrip supply.

Logistics

- 4.25 The amount of logistics floorspace under construction across the UK at the end of Q4 2025 fell by 4% over the quarter to 18.8m sq ft. Of the space under construction across the UK, 12m sq ft was build to suit (BTS) space, and speculative space under construction totalled 6.7m sq ft. Throughout Q4 2025, prime rents increased by 2.2% in the North West. Throughout 2025, the only regions not to see rental growth of logistics floorspace were South East and West Midlands.

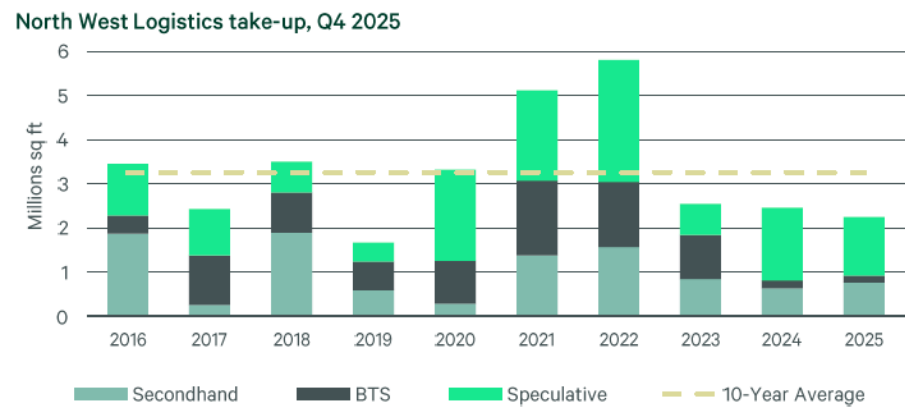
Figure 4.2 - Logistics Development pipeline (under construction), end Q4 2025



Source: CBRE 2026

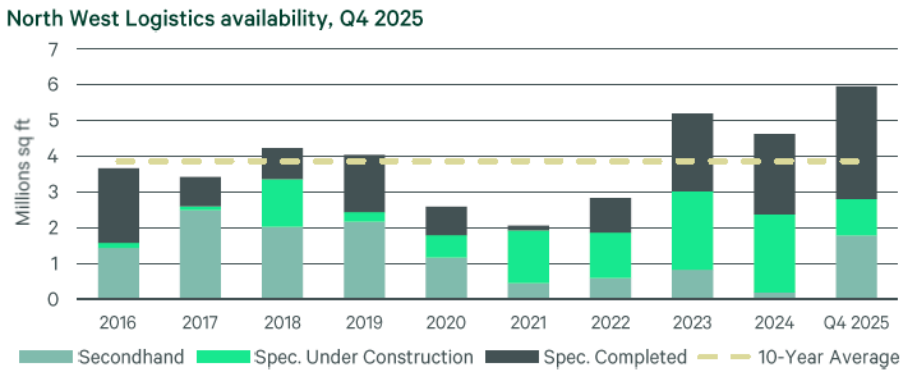
- 4.26 The North West saw 609,000 sq ft of logistics floor space take-up in Q4 2025, bringing the year total to 2.3m, an 8% decrease from 2024. The decrease in logistics floorspace take-up may be attributed to a lack of Grade A logistics floorspace availability, with occupiers favouring this specification over the more readily available Grade B and C second-hand space.
- 4.27 Speculative space accounted for the largest share of take-up at 59%, followed by second-hand (34%) and BTS (7%) spaces in 2025. There was a 53% decrease in under offer space, totalling 900,000 sq ft at the end of Q4 2025. During Q4 2025, North West availability increased by 15% to 5.9m sq ft, driven by a rise in both second-hand and speculative under construction spaces. As a result, the North West vacancy rate grew by 53bps to 6.90%. The North West prime rent increased by 25 pence to £11.75 psf in Q4 2025, and the big box prime yield remained at 5.25%.
- 4.28 Stockport's industrial market is robust, with low vacancy rates at established Aurora Stockport and Cheadle Eco Park. Local smaller firms drive demand for units sized 2,000-3,000 sq ft, with additional need for 1,500 sq ft starter units, while larger sheds have seen little interest. Land allocated for commercial or industrial development has not been developed due to a high cost of site mitigation and/or the high costs associated with building works in the Borough.
- 4.29 It is worth noting that data centres are continuing to strengthen, and within the region, Kao Data has secured approval for a £350 million, 40MW sustainable data centre at Kenwood Point, aimed at AI and advanced computing workloads.

Figure 4.3 - North West Logistics take-up, Q4 2025



Source: CBRE 2026

Figure 4.4 - North West Logistics availability, Q4 2025



Source: CBRE 2026

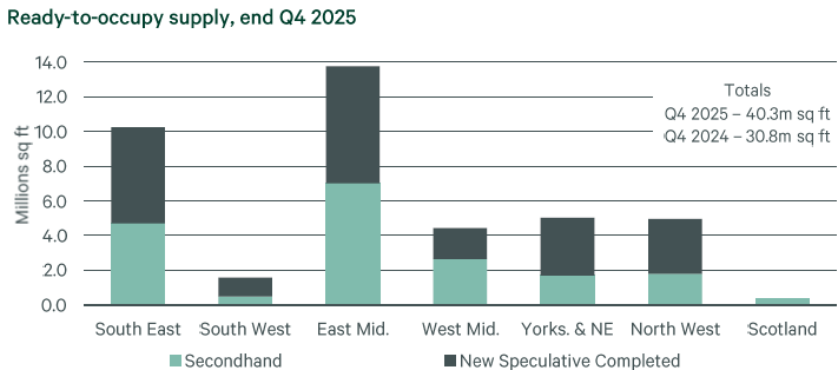
National Overview – Industrial

- 4.30 The occupational market dynamics for Logistics floorspace is to be driven by a softer development pipeline in 2026. Vacancy is expected to reduce following a strong year for completions in 2025, as net absorption will align more closely to completions in 2025. It is expected that tenants and occupiers will favour high-quality pipeline spaces in 2026, reducing the available pipeline of build-to-suit spaces. The occupational outlook is distinctly sector-dependent, but most asset types will see a boost as improving macroeconomic conditions support business productivity and the progression of government initiatives. In the more traditional sectors, including industrial and logistics and offices, supply dynamics will continue to shape the 2026 outlook with demand firmly focused on high-quality, well-located spaces.
- 4.31 UK logistics take-up in 2025 totalled 25.6 million sq ft, up 22% year-on-year, demonstrating continued occupier demand despite wider economic uncertainty. Vacancy increased to c.7.1% by Q4 2025, driven primarily by higher second-hand space, but is expected to stabilise and gradually fall during 2026 as completions slow and net absorption aligns more closely with demand. Build-to-suit space dominates the development pipeline, reinforcing a preference for modern, energy-efficient logistics accommodation.

Regions with constrained supply (including the North West) are forecast to continue seeing rental growth through 2026.

- 4.32 The logistics development pipeline in the UK declined throughout 2025, which is set to continue in 2026 as space currently under construction completes. Most of the space under construction is for build-to-suit space, which, once completed, will increase occupied stock. However, as occupiers have been consolidating their portfolios, this could lead to more backfill vacancy.

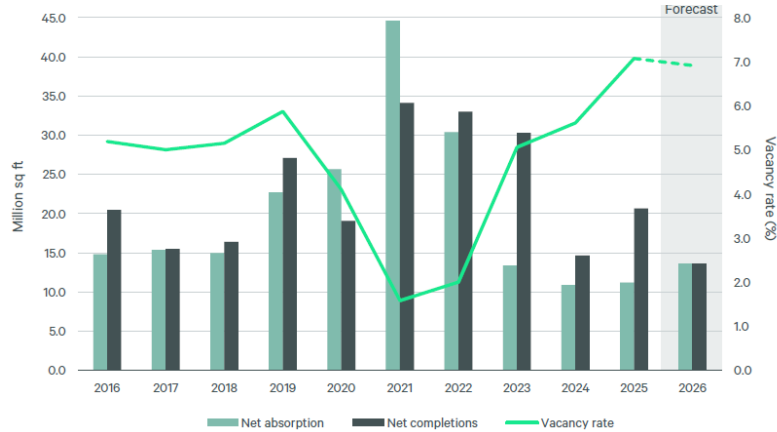
Figure 4.5 - UK Office Market Ready-to-occupy supply, end Q4 2025



Source: CBRE 2026

- 4.33 UK logistics markets saw resilient demand in 2025 as leasing volumes increased by 22% year-on-year. In addition to completions, increases in second-hand availability pushed the UK vacancy rate up to 7.1% in Q4 2025, however this softened net absorption in Q4. In 2026, net absorption is forecast to match net completions, and therefore vacancy rates are expected to gradually fall. The rate of decline will be affected by demand for second-hand space, and how much second-hand space is returned to the market as occupiers move into build-to-suit units.

Figure 4.6 - UK logistics net absorption, net completions, and vacancy rate.



Source: CBRE 2026

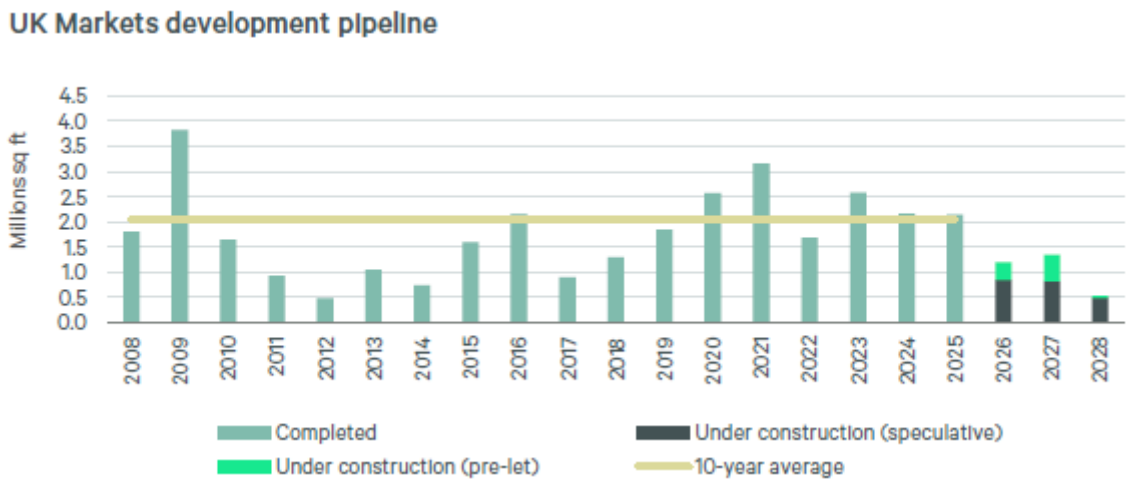
- 4.34 Leasing activity throughout 2025 was driven by third-party logistics (‘3PL’)/distribution, and manufacturing and construction occupiers. This trend is set to continue in the near-term as the e-commerce saturation rate has moderated and 3PLs from other regions are expanding into European markets. Demand will be complemented by steady leasing activity from retail occupiers, particularly food and other retailers.

- 4.35 In addition to take-up increasing in 2025, 12-month rolling net absorption across the UK is also higher than the level at the end of 2024, highlighting the resilience of the occupational market, despite economic uncertainty. It is expected that absorption will remain stable or slightly increase in 2026, as it is anticipated interest rate cuts and falling inflation will boost business sentiment and consumer confidence.
- 4.36 Furthermore, the data centre sector continues to demonstrate robust performance. Furthermore, Aged Care Facilities are anticipated to perform solidly. Interestingly, prime office assets rank as the third strongest sector, highlighting sustained demand for best-in-class properties. This strong performance in prime offices stands in contrast to the projected decline in value for secondary office assets.

National Overview – Offices

- 4.37 From a macroeconomic perspective, several metrics associated with the UK Real Estate Market are set to improve, including the 2025 UK Autumn Budget which has brought greater certainty into 2026. However, growth is expected to slow during 2026, originating from global uncertainty alongside slow and fiscal policies as a result of the 2025 UK Autumn Budget. The office market for high-quality, well-located stock remains tight, which occupants expected to renew or regear their leases and spaces to remain above average. This trend is expected to promote growth in prime rents and push demand for leases outside of core locations.
- 4.38 UK office take-up in 2025 remained robust, with Central London accounting for 11.4 million sq ft and regional “Big Six” markets (including Manchester) totalling c.4.2 million sq ft. Total unlet office space under construction nationally equates to just c.1.3 years of supply, reflecting a structural shortage of Grade A offices. Prime office rents grew sharply in 2025 and are forecast to continue rising in 2026, including in leading regional cities such as Manchester and Birmingham. Demand is increasingly spilling into peripheral and non-core locations as occupiers seek value and availability, benefiting well-connected town centres and edge-of-city markets. Completions reached 2.1m sq ft over the year, broadly in line with long-term average delivery levels.

Figure 4.7 - UK markets development pipeline.



Source: CBRE 2026

- 4.39 Take-up for offices in the UK Markets totalled 2m sq ft in the last quarter of 2025, an increase of 54% on the previous quarter. This brought the full year take-up to 5.8m sq ft, a 4% fall compared to 2024 but, 2% up on the five-year average. Demand for best-in-class space continues, with eight of the top ten deals during Q4 2025 taking place in new or early marketed space. The professional sector has been responsible for the

largest share of take-up in the last 12 months (18%), followed by the manufacturing, industrial & energy sector, accounting for 17% of the total during the period.

4.40 Availability across the UK Markets decreased by 6% quarter-on-quarter, to stand at 19.3m sq ft at the end of Q4, as new supply remained constrained. This is a 9% fall compared to the same period in 2024 and broadly in-line with the five-year average. The quarterly decrease in supply was driven by a 17% fall in newly or early marketed space, and a 3% increase in second-hand space. Despite the overall supply remaining above trend, the supply for new space stood 2% lower compared the long-term average.

Figure 4.8 - UK Markets availability and availability rates



Source: CBRE 2026

4.41 The workplace is undergoing a profound transformation, with the office reimagined as a dynamic hub for connection, collaboration and community. The widespread adoption of hybrid work has catalysed this shift, compelling organisations to adopt proactive strategies that optimize space. However, globally the average building utilisation rate has dramatically increased to 53%, its highest since before March 2020. This is a significant jump from 38% in 2024 and 35% in 2023²².

²² <https://www.cbre.com/insights/articles/the-hybrid-reality-why-the-office-is-more-important-than-ever>

5. Future Requirements

- 5.1 In this section we identify the potential future quantum of employment land required for offices (E) and industrial/warehousing (B2/8) uses within Stockport Borough Council (SMBC) up to 2042.
- 5.2 We have prepared an econometric demand model and the purposes of this ELR we have focussed on the 17-year Local Plan period (2026-2042) and three scenarios which consider historic take up rates.

Approach to Forecasting Demand

- 5.3 We have prepared an employment growth demand forecast using current industry standard econometric data from Oxford Economics (OE).
- 5.4 The OE data specifically focusses upon population and economic forecasting for Stockport Borough and forecasts population growth and employees in employment by business sector. The model utilises historic economic data along with trend analysis based on established economic theory and has been widely used by Local Authorities in the preparation of ELRs. From this we have been able to calculate a floorspace need from employment land and translate this into land requirements and we explain this approach below.
- 5.5 Following this we undertook an assessment to compare the outcomes of the demand models against how we would expect the property market to perform to provide a degree of validation for the forecasts. This was considered in light of historic take up and trend analysis and we applied three market scenarios (weak, average and strong) of how the market performed during a thirteen-year period (2012/13-2024/25). We compared the outcome of this process with that of the demand model and advise on what quantum of demand the Local Plan should look to provide for in the Local Plan period 2026-2042.

Calculating a Land Requirement

- 5.6 There are three steps to translate the Oxford economic forecast into a land requirement as follows;
 - Stage 1: Employment Projections 2026-2042 by E (office), B2 and B8 use class;
 - Stage 2: Converting projected jobs into floorspace; and
 - Stage 3: Converting floorspace into hectares.

Stage 1: Employment Projections up to 2042

- 5.7 The forecast models provide as an output the future employee numbers by sector. The employee numbers used are based on the 2007 Standard Industrial Classification (SIC). Those uses that are not deemed to be traditional employment uses (i.e. those uses highlighted within the SIC Codes which create employment but are not considered to fall within E, B2 and B8 use classes) are excluded. These include agriculture forestry, fishing; mining and quarrying; electricity, gas, steam and air conditioning supply; wholesale and retail trade; accommodation and food service activities; education; human health and social work activities; arts, entertainment and recreation; and other service activities. This leaves the sectors driving employment land demand as below:
 - Information & communication (Use Class – E).
 - Financial & insurance activities (Use Class – E).

- Real estate activities (Use Class – E).
- Professional, scientific & technical activities (Use Class – E).
- Administrative & support service activities (Use Class – E).
- Public administration & defence (Use Class – E).
- Manufacturing (Use Class – B2).
- Water supply; sewerage, waste management (Use Class – B8).
- Construction (Use Class – B8).
- Transportation & storage (Use Class – B).

5.8 The employment projections by use class up to 2042 for the econometric model is provided within Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Projected jobs by Sector for Stockport Borough up to 2042

Sectors	Use Class	2026	2042	Change	% Change
Information & communication	E	5,880	6,190	310	5.27%
Financial & insurance activities	E	5,200	5,180	-20	-0.38%
Real estate activities	E	2,360	2,220	-140	-5.93%
Professional, scientific & technical activities	E	15,060	16,900	1,840	12.22%
Administrative & support service activities	E	17,760	20,730	2,970	16.72%
Public administration & defence	E	5,230	4,750	-480	-9.18%
Manufacturing	B2	11,020	7,940	-3,080	-27.95%
Water supply; sewerage, waste management	B8	1,550	890	-660	-42.58%
Construction	B8	10,340	12,210	1,870	18.09%
Transportation & storage	B8	5,410	6,070	660	12.20%

Source: Oxford Economics 2026/CBRE 2026

Key - sectors that are expected to see a reduction in the number of jobs over the plan period

- 5.9 Employment in construction (18.09%) and admin and support service activities (16.72%) is forecast to increase over the plan period with double digit percentage growth also forecast in professional, scientific and technical, and transportation and storage.
- 5.10 The forecast identifies manufacturing employment (B2) to contract by over 27% during the plan period. A significant reduction in job numbers (42.58%) is also expected in the water supply industry (B8).

- 5.11 Table 5.2 breaks this down further by use class showing the total projected change in job numbers within Stockport between 2026 and 2042.

Table 5.2 Projected jobs by Use Class Sector for Stockport Borough up to 2042

Model	Use Class	2026	2042	Change	% Change
OE	E	51,490	55,970	4,480	8.7%
OE	B2/8	28,320	27,110	-1,210	-4.27%

Source: Oxford Economics 2026/CBRE 2026

Key - sectors that are expected to see a reduction in the number of jobs over the plan period

- 5.12 At a use class level, levels of employment are expected to grow over the plan period for E, but to contract for B2/8 employment. However, these broad forecast trends clearly hide finer variation at a sector-by-sector level as shown in Table 5.1.

Stage 2: Converting jobs into floorspace

- 5.13 Once individual employment sectors have been identified and have been allocated Use Classes, it is possible to convert employment figures into floorspace requirements. This is undertaken by using the following industry standard employment densities.

Table 5.3 – Employment Densities

E	Financial and Professional	11 sqm per employee
E	General Office Figure (Blended)	12.5 sqm per employee
B2	General Industrial Buildings	36 sqm per employee
B2	Light Industry	47 sqm per employee
B8	Warehousing	77 sqm per employee

Source: Homes England 2015

- 5.14 Taking account of these employment densities, the employment projections in Table 5.1 can be converted into floorspace as identified below in Table 5.4.

Table 5.4 Projected floorspace by Sector for Stockport Borough up to 2042

Sectors	Use Class	2026	2042	Change	% Change
sqm					
Information & communication	E	73,500	77,375	3,875	5.27%
Financial & insurance activities	E	57,200	56,980	-220	-0.38%
Real estate activities	E	25,960	24,420	-1,540	-5.93%
Professional, scientific & technical activities	E	165,660	185,900	20,240	12.22%
Administrative & support service activities	E	222,000	259,125	37,125	16.72%

Public administration & defence	E	65,375	59,375	-6,000	-9.18%
Manufacturing	B2	517,940	373,180	-144,760	-27.95%
Water supply; sewerage, waste management	B8	72,850	41,830	-31,020	-42.58%
Construction	B8	372,240	439,560	67,320	18.09%
Transportation & storage	B8	416,570	467,390	50,820	12.20%

Source: Oxford Economics 2026/CBRE 2026

Key - sectors that are expected to see a reduction in the number of jobs over the plan period

- 5.15 By combining floorspace figures together in terms of the five bespoke density conversions shown above, it is now possible to establish overall figures for E class Office and B2/8 Industrial/Warehouse floorspace.

Table 5.5 Projected floorspace by Employment Use Class for Stockport Borough up to 2042

Use Class	2026	2042	Change	% Change
	sqm			
E	609,695	663,175	53,480	8.77%
B2/8	1,379,600	1,321,960	-57,640	-4.18%

Source: Oxford Economics 2026/CBRE 2026

Key - sectors that are expected to see a reduction in the number of jobs over the plan period

Stage 3: Converting floorspace into hectares

- 5.16 Once the overall floorspace has been established, it is possible to convert the floorspace figures into hectares by applying density rates. The density rates applied to floorspace are as follows:
- Office Floorspace: 4,000sqm/hectare; and
 - Industrial/Warehouse Floorspace: 4,500sqm/hectare.
- 5.17 This calculation assumes that a building occupies 40% (Office)/45% (Industrial) of the total plot of employment land, with the remainder of the site taken up with car parking, landscaping and other ancillary uses. It is appreciated that these figures can be subject to significant variations based upon the location of an individual plot and the uses proposed within the plot, however this assumption is made in line with other studies and industry benchmarks. It should be noted that if office space demand was specifically orientated towards town centres for policy or regeneration needs then this is likely to be developed at higher percentages as a result of tall office buildings with increased floorspace on smaller plot areas.
- 5.18 Upon applying these factors to the overall employment figures, the employment land requirement in hectares can be established as shown in Table 5.6 below for E class Offices and B2/8 Industrial/Warehouse space plus the cumulative change.

Table 5.6 Projected land by Use Class for Stockport Borough up to 2042

Year	E	Cumulative Change	B2/8	Cumulative Change
2026	152	0	307	0
2027	153	1	300	-7
2028	155	2	301	-6
2029	156	3	302	-5
2030	157	4	302	-5
2031	158	6	301	-5
2032	159	7	301	-6
2033	160	7	300	-6
2034	160	8	300	-7
2035	161	9	299	-8
2036	162	9	298	-9
2037	162	10	297	-9
2038	163	11	296	-10
2039	164	11	296	-11
2040	164	12	295	-12
2041	165	13	294	-12
2042	166	13	294	-13

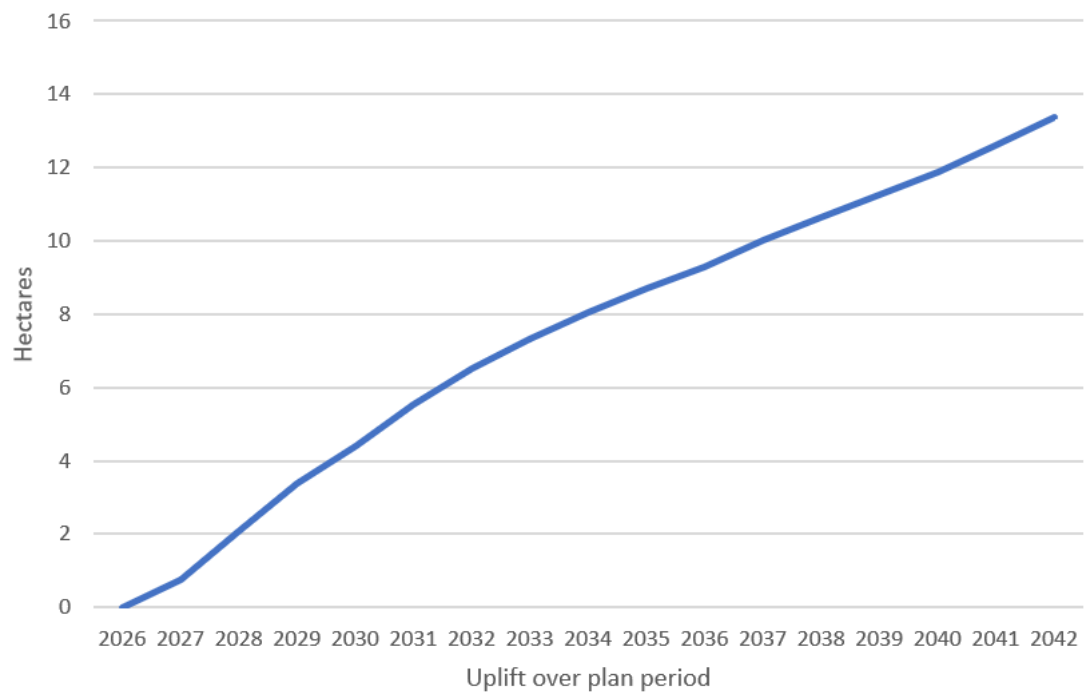
Source: Oxford Economics 2026/CBRE 2026

Key - sectors that are expected to see a reduction in the number of jobs over the plan period

Outcomes

- 5.19 As shown in Table 5.6 this method of calculation suggests that based on this demand forecast there would be a need for an additional 13 hectares of office (E) land up to 2042 as shown by Figure 5.1. This is aligned with what we would expect the market to require.

Figure 5.1 – E class offices Employment Land requirement for Stockport Borough up to 2042



Source: Oxford Economics 2026/CBRE 2026

- 5.20 In contrast the model indicates that 13 ha of B2/8 industrial/warehousing land is likely to become redundant and the sector shrink. This is shown by Figure 5.2 below.

Figure 5.2 B2/8 Employment Land Requirement for Stockport Borough up to 2042



Source: Oxford Economics 2026/CBRE 2026

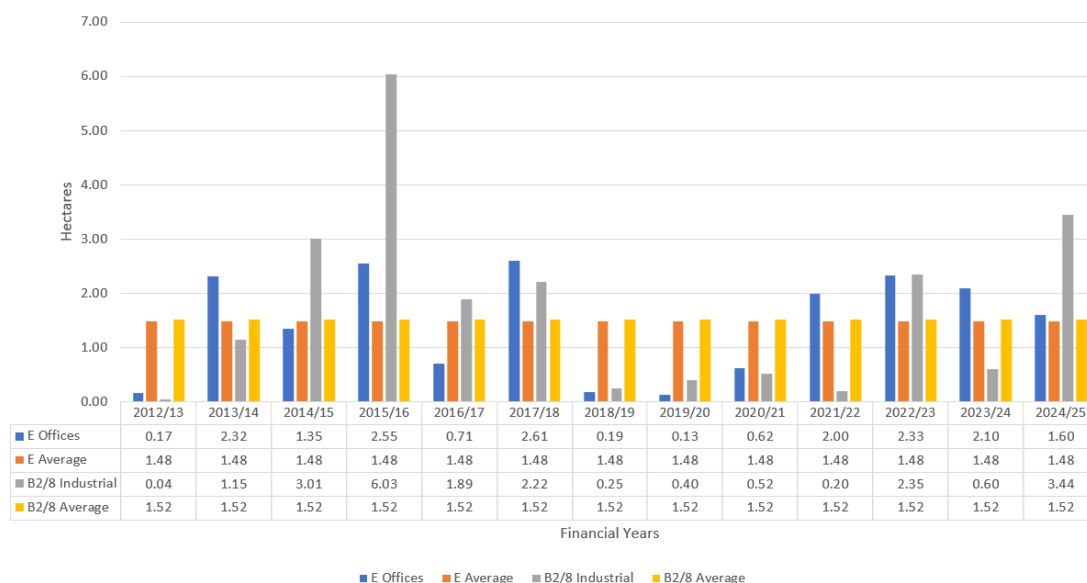
- 5.21 Whilst the office requirement appears to fall within what the market is likely to expect as a growth trajectory the industrial/warehouse deficit is not.
- 5.22 Whilst it is recognised that traditional manufacturing and related industries are in decline there has been considerable growth in recent years in the logistics sector with demand exceeding supply and land values rising to all-time highs. Whilst on balance we would have still expected a contraction in the overall amount of land occupied for industrial and warehousing this will mask the needs of relocations, new emerging and growing sectors such as logistics and higher end manufacturing. The work being undertaken in the Mayoral Development Corporation is relevant here where some existing employment areas are being redeveloped for office and residential uses. Failing to make allowance for these types of demand would constrain the local economy and would not be a sensible basis for employment land planning. For this reason the validation exercise is essential to understand what past trends (take up rates) indicate for this and the offices sector.

Validation

- 5.23 There are however a number of recognised limitations with a demand model as they primarily relate to historic trends and do not take account of factors such as:
- Variations in market conditions;
 - Loss of employment land/market churn; and
 - Occupier choice.
- 5.24 Whilst the OE forecast is more recent they will not reflect the current global geopolitical tensions which are starting to impact the cost of living with recent significant cost increases to petrol and diesel fuel, increasing inflation and interest rates all of which will impact business decision making. Forecasts can be impacted by sudden shifts in the economy and although the model seeks to smooth these impacts out, they are still prone to variation over relatively short periods of time.

- 5.25 Therefore in the interests of ensuring that a robust assessment is undertaken we have assessed historic take up rates for employment land for Stockport Borough over a thirteen-year period (2012/13-2024/25) to consider other growth scenarios as shown in Figure 5.3 below.

Figure 5.3 Historic Take Up Rates in Stockport Borough (2012/13 to 2024/25)



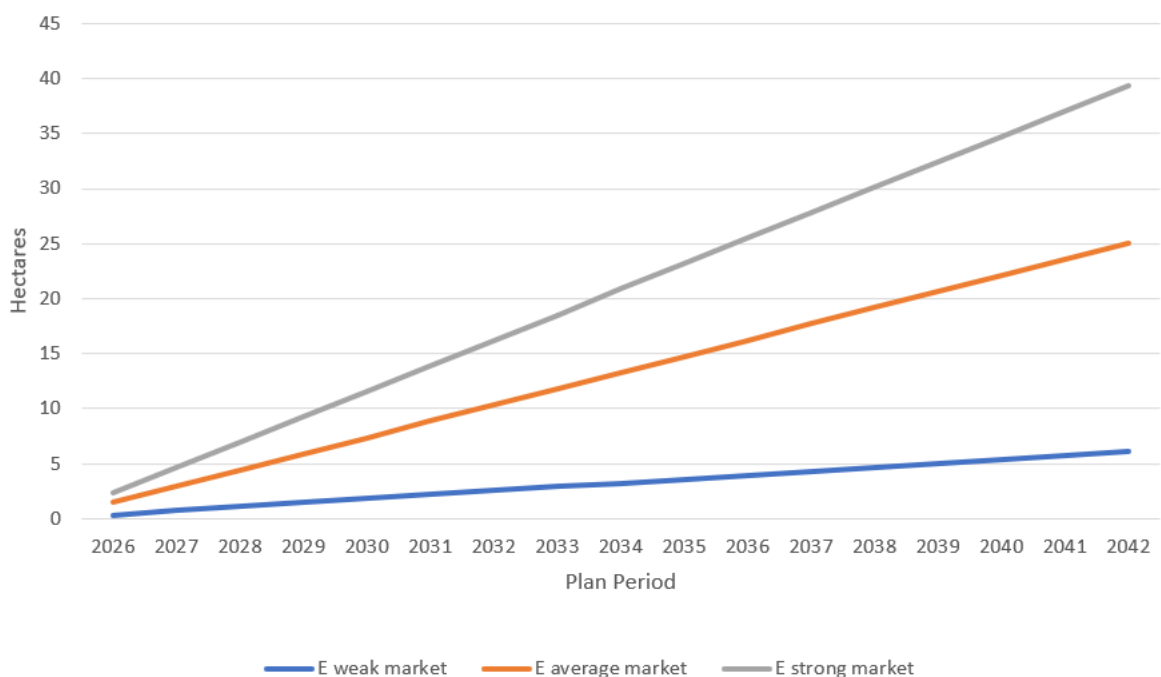
Source: SMBC Annual Monitoring Reports 2012-2025/CBRE 2025

- 5.26 By analysing take up we can test the outcomes of the demand models which are prepared using historic economic data along with trend analysis based on established economic theory. Whilst trend analysis has its own restrictions and would not be used to provide detailed projections in isolation, it does allow a 'sense-check' of the demand models outputs and is therefore a useful tool in validating the demand model outcomes. In the case of Stockport we have trend data covering the period 2012/13 to 2024/25 a period of 13 years, this enables consideration of long-term trends covering a range of economic and market conditions as well as allowing analysis of shorter-term peaks and troughs in the market.
- 5.27 The thirteen-year period which we analysed has been categorised to cover weak, average and strong market conditions based on the following assumptions:
- Weak market where annual take up is below 1 ha:
 - E class offices: during 5 financial years of 2012/13, 2016/17 and 2018/19-2020/21 with this period exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic from March 2020 with average take up extrapolated across the 13 years of 0.36 hectares (ha) pa; and
 - B2/B8: during 6 financial years of 2012/13, 2018/19-2021/22 and 2023/24 with average take up extrapolated across the 13 years of 0.33 hectares (ha) pa.
 - Average market take-up where annual take up is between 1-2 ha
 - E class offices: during 2 financial years of 2014/15 and 2024/25 with average take up extrapolated across the 13 years of 1.48 hectares (ha) pa; and

- B2/B8: during 2 financial years of 2013/14 and 2016/17 with average take up extrapolated across the 13 years of 1.52 hectares (ha) pa.
- Strong market where annual take up is above 2 ha
 - E class offices: during 6 financial years of 2013/14, 2015/16, 2017/18 and 2021/22-2023/24 with average take up extrapolated across the 13 years of 2.32 hectares (ha) pa; and
 - B2/B8: during 5 financial years of 2014/15, 2015/16, 2017/18, 2022/23 and 2024/25 with average take up extrapolated across the 13 years of 3.41 hectares (ha) pa.

5.28 We have extrapolated the average take up as above over the plan period as shown in Figures 5.4 & 5.5 below.

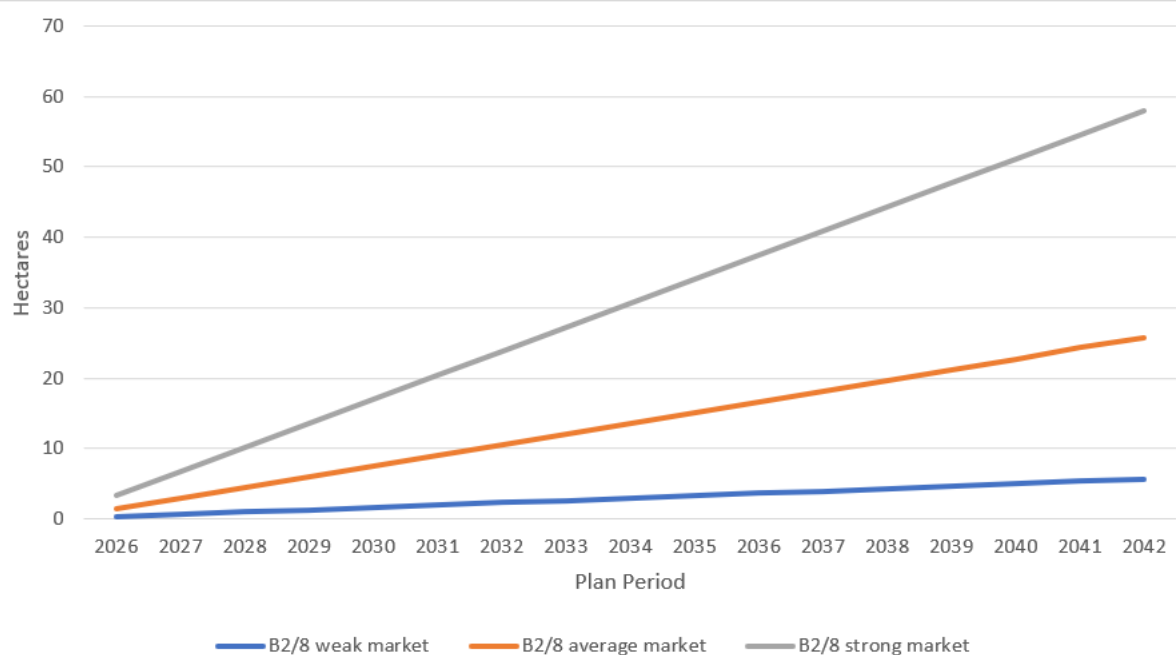
Figure 5.4 Demand for E class offices based on Historic Take Up Rates in Stockport Borough up to 2042



Source: SMBC Annual Monitoring Reports 2012-2025/CBRE 2026

5.29 Fig 5.4 shows a requirement in all three scenarios with forecast demand over the plan period for E class offices employment land:

- Weak market – 6 hectares;
- Average market – 25 hectares; and
- Strong market – 40 hectares.

Figure 5.5 Demand for B2/8 based on Historic Take Up Rates in Stockport Borough up to 2042

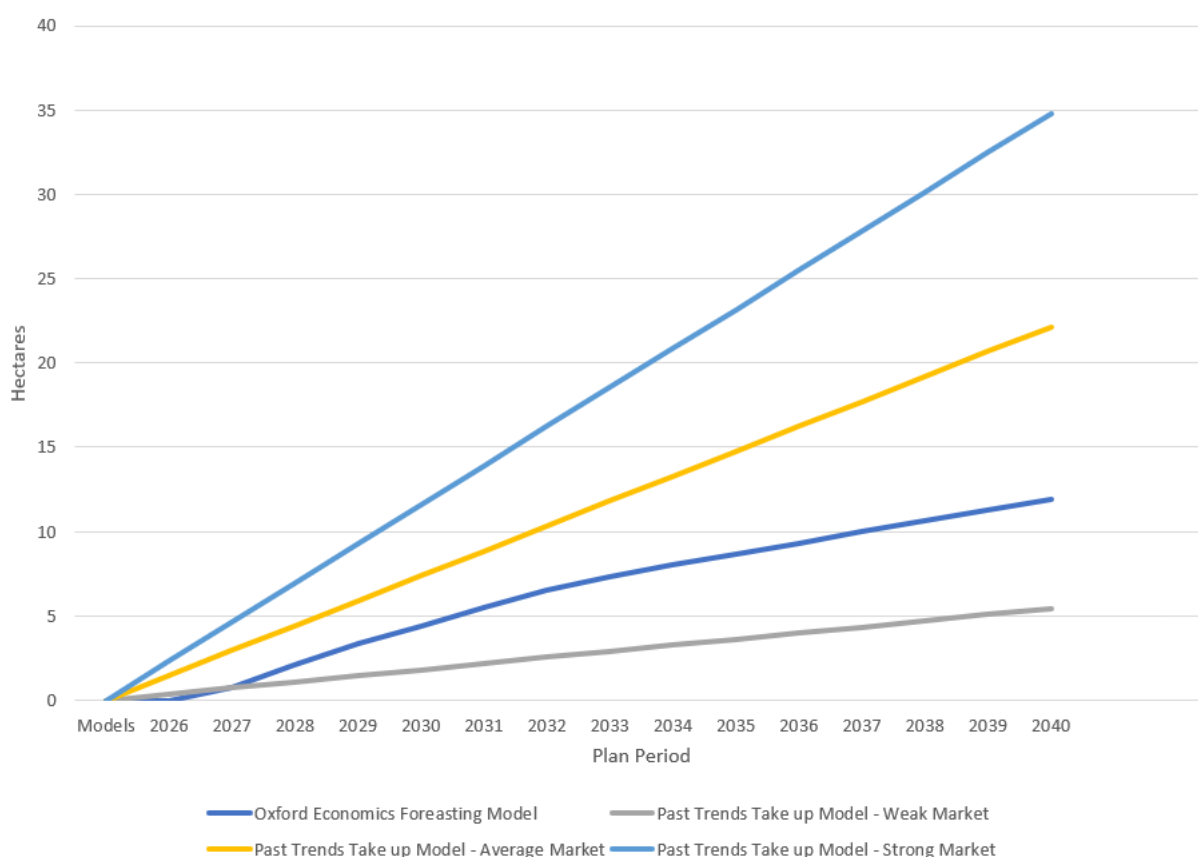
Source: SMBC Annual Monitoring Reports 2012-2025/CBRE 2026

5.30 Unlike the econometric demand model this approach (Fig 5.5) shows there to be a need to provide employment land for B2/8 uses in all three scenarios with forecast demand exceeding that of E class offices in overall quantum terms:

- Weak market – 6 hectares;
- Average market – 26 hectares; and
- Strong market – 58 hectares.

Summary

5.31 Based on the analysis above we present the four demand models for E class (offices) employment land in Figure 5.6 and B2/8 (industrial/warehouses) in Figure 5.7.

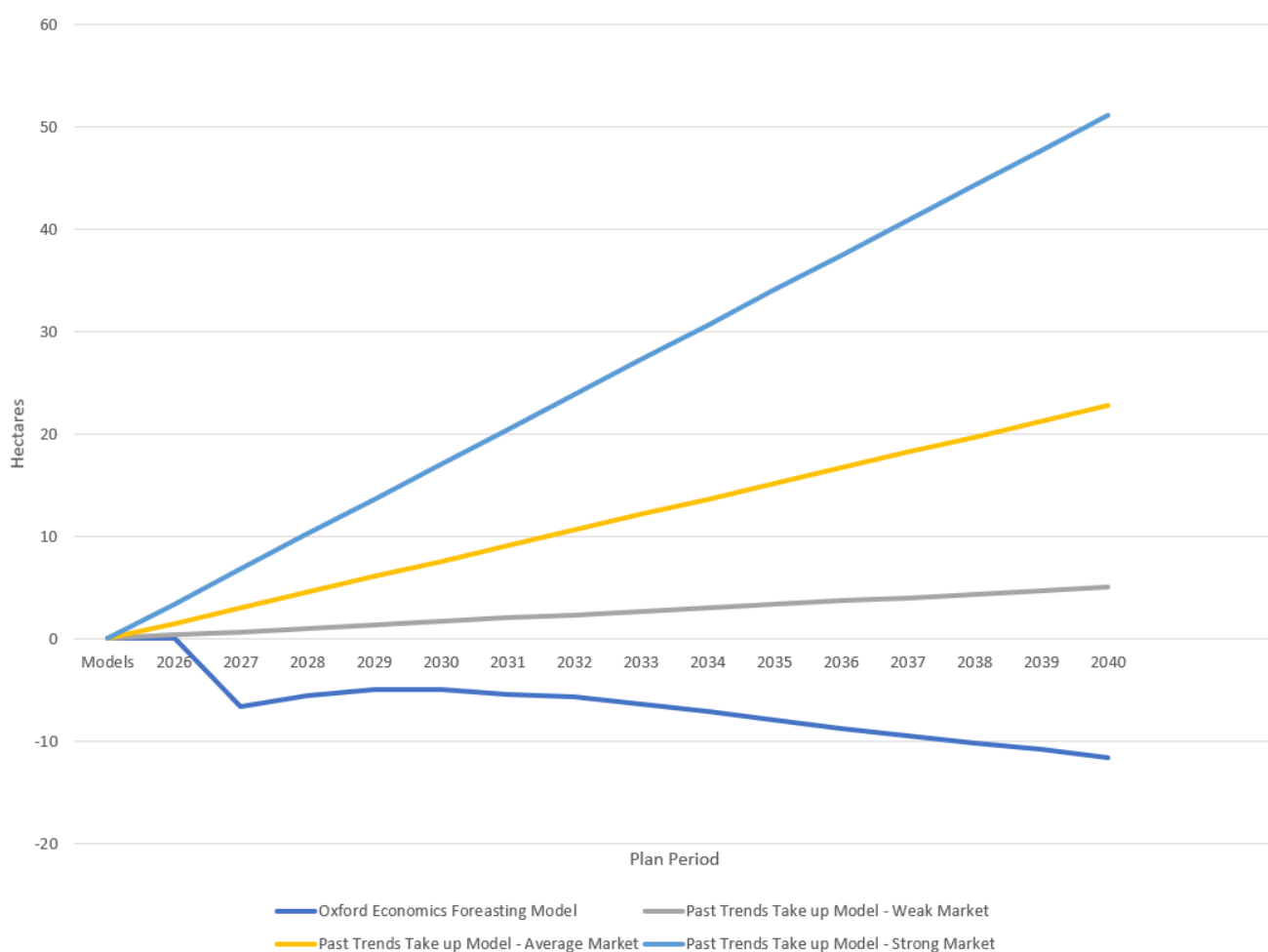
Figure 5.6 Demand Forecasts for E class offices Employment in Stockport Borough up to 2042

Source: Oxford Economics 2026/SMBC Annual Monitoring Reports 2012-2025/CBRE 2026

5.32 The four scenarios presented in Figure 5.6 show demand for growth in the E class offices employment land sector over the plan period for E class offices land as follows:

- Weak market - 6 hectares;
- Oxford Economics Forecast Model – 13.5 hectares;
- Average market – 25 hectares; and
- Strong market - 39 hectares.

5.33 Given that the OE data shows 13.5ha and an average market at 25ha it would appear prudent to use an average between these so using the midpoint this is 19.25 (say 19). This was 18 ha in the 2022 ELR but can be justified given the market evidence of a developing office market in Stockport town centre evidenced by the take up at No. 3 Stockport Exchange in the intervening 4 years and the likelihood that additional space will be needed over the plan period to accommodate growth.

Figure 5.7 Demand Forecasts for B2/8 Employment in Stockport Borough up to 2042

Source: Oxford Economics 2026/SMBC Annual Monitoring Reports 2012-2021/CBRE 2026

5.34 The four scenarios presented in Figure 5.7 are at odds as the econometric demand model forecasts contraction in the B2/8 sector whereas the historic take-up models indicate that the sector will grow as follows:

- Oxford Economics Forecasting Model – minus 13 hectares;
- Weak market - 6 hectares;
- Average market – 26 hectares; and
- Strong market - 58 hectares.

5.35 The B2/8 industrial and warehousing figures from the demand model are in deficit and are well below the historic trends associated with both a weak, average and strong market. The reason for this is that the employment projections from the demand model identify that some industrial sectors will shrink in size over the coming years as a result of changes in market conditions.

- 5.36 Notwithstanding this, it is important to note that there are a number of difficulties associated with longer-term forecasting and whilst the B2/8 industrial projections do indicate that there may be a drop in overall industrial land requirements, in practice this may not be the case.
- 5.37 Whilst the forecasting work undertaken does represent the best available method for assessing future requirements, even with the refinements that have been undertaken, the model does still have some limitations. For instance, the model does not account for inward investment or the ability of a high-quality product in a good location to attract businesses from outside the Borough. If suitable, high-quality accommodation is provided within the Borough then this could have the potential to create its own market, as evidenced by the success of recent large strategic warehousing developments delivered in neighbouring Local Authorities across the North-West i.e. Warrington. This is not accounted for within the forecast. The reduction in demand for industrial employment land identified in the econometric forecasts should therefore be considered within the context of the wider study.
- 5.38 It is accepted that the take-up trend analysis also has limitations as they do not take account of future changes in employment provision and emergence of new market sectors that utilise floorspace in differing ways.
- 5.39 Notwithstanding this, the trend analysis provides a useful cross referral function and reinforces the assertion that there will be an increased requirement in employment land throughout the study period, even though the quantitative requirement might be less important than qualitative needs.
- 5.40 In summary then this sector from the one perspective is likely to expect significant decline in traditional manufacturing industries over the plan period, but conversely the Local Plan will still need to accommodate for growth in the sector. This will include higher tech manufacturing, aspects of scientific and technical services growth as well as logistics demand and inward investment.
- 5.41 The type of requirements in the logistics and distribution sector that is driving demand require fit for purpose, new and modern, accessible space and would not necessarily locate in existing stock and whilst redevelopment may well take place this will take time to realise new space with periods of vacancy prior to the planning and construction process. On this basis it will be necessary for the Local Plan to adequately provide for B2/8 requirements in appropriate locations. We recommend that 26 hectares (the average market scenario) is adopted for this over the plan period (2026-2042).
- 5.42 As such we consider that the Local Plan should provide an average of 1.12ha. of additional employment land per year for E class office development and 1.53ha for B2/8 development.
- 5.43 Over the plan period to 2042 this would result in:
- Use Class E (offices) – 19 hectares; and
 - Use Classes B2/8 (industrial) – 26 hectares.
- 5.44 This represents a robust reflection of the likely future land requirements for the Borough.

6. Conclusions

- 6.1 This section outlines the key conclusions of this employment land review and considers the implications in terms of land use and planning policy.

Stockport Commercial Market

- 6.2 Stockport's commercial property market is experiencing a significant boom, primarily fueled by a £1 billion town centre regeneration that is driving high tenant demand and substantial rental growth across all sectors. This investment has positioned Stockport as an attractive location for investors, offering competitive yields typically ranging from 6% to 7% and affordable entry prices compared to national averages. The market is characterised by some of the fastest rental growth in the UK, making it a prime target for those seeking strong returns.
- 6.3 Key drivers include the transformative effects of regeneration, surging demand for commercial spaces, and a notable supply shortage in both industrial premises and high-quality modern offices, intensifying competition for premium assets. Areas like Stockport Exchange are emerging as prime office hubs due to excellent connectivity, while the retail and industrial sectors also exhibit strong demand and revitalisation. This ongoing development and investment are increasing property values and demand, cementing Stockport's status as a leading choice for commercial investment in the northwest.
- 6.4 There is an insufficient supply of modern, fit-for-purpose commercial premises, particularly office and industrial stock in the correct locations.

Industrial and Logistics

- 6.5 The key messages for the industrial and logistics sector of relevance to this ELR are:
- Contributes to the levelling up agenda in the North and the Midlands bridging the productivity and GVA gap.
 - Provides diverse occupations and higher value/tech jobs dispelling sector misconceptions.
 - Logistics demand will remain high as the macroeconomic recovery takes shape and further e-commerce growth is expected.
 - Insufficient land being provided and Local Authorities need to proactively provide sufficient supply in accessible locations close to labour supply.
 - Continued strong rental growth is anticipated as fierce competition creates a significant demand and supply imbalance. Though speculative development is at an all-time high it is insufficient to meet demand, hence vacancy rates remain low.
 - Site availability, protracted planning processes and ongoing supply chain disruption are affecting construction costs and timings, making the supply response challenging.
 - The repositioning of assets in the urban environment along with sustainability and ESG requirements are making way for new types of logistics assets.

- Multi-floor industrial/logistics facilities are starting to emerge in London/southeast and this new product might provide opportunity in the North and Midlands to increase floorspace on smaller sites.
- The data centre sector continues to exhibit sustained strength, a trend largely attributable to its growing popularity and reference in the NPPF as a need that planning policies should plan for.

Offices

6.6 The key messages for the offices sector relevant to this ELR are:

- Take-up will return to trend levels driven by healthy levels of job growth and the release of pent-up demand.
- ESG will take centre stage as occupiers focus on acquiring the highest quality, greenest buildings available. This flight to quality will lead to a divergence in performance between prime and secondary stock.
- New occupational strategies will be introduced by occupiers to incorporate hybrid working but rhetoric about the future of the office will remain.
- Given the rise in flexible working patterns and attempts to attract employees back to the office will lead to occupiers placing greater emphasis on curating great ‘work experiences’ through integrated space, technology and service.
- Regeneration areas in Stockport town centre i.e. MDC to continue to be the focus of Grade A office floorspace with other supply provided in existing employment areas.

Existing Employment Areas

6.7 The key findings from the 2022 ELR are summarised below.

- Issues associated with the areas assessed relate to quality of stock, access and connectivity, conflicts with surrounding uses; infrastructure and amenity. Sites that score highly generally perform well in respect of these key criteria, whilst poorer scoring sites tend to display fundamental issues relating to 2 or more of these criteria.
- However, many poorer quality employment sites appear to be well occupied. This is interesting and suggests that whilst employment sites are well used, individual units are not always fully occupied, meaning that accommodation within the Borough is not being utilised efficiently. This is further indication that there is a lack of suitable stock. This in turn, will restrict the ability of some local businesses to find more suitable premises meaning that (as a result of a lack of options) some businesses will be required to occupy lower quality accommodation than they would ideally require.
- Whilst occupancy levels within employment sites are good (considering the quality of some of the sites) many industrial employment sites have a relatively large proportion of non-traditional employment uses that whilst generating employment, do not specifically fall within a E/B2/B8 use-class. These could typically include (but are by no means limited to) uses such as: go karting; crèches/nurseries; retailing and gym/fitness centres and make an important contribution to their communities and the economy.
- As set out in national policy a suitable variety of employment areas should be provided to cater for the needs of both traditional and non-traditional employment generating uses. It is therefore considered that some degree of policy flexibility to enable non-traditional uses in employment areas is appropriate.

Improving Stock

- 6.8 The findings in the 2022 ELR indicated that there is a need for additional, better-quality, well-located stock across office and industrial sectors. Without intervention, it is expected that the overall stock quality will continue deteriorating following the trends observed in the past years, adversely impacting the ability of the Borough to attract and retain high-economic value businesses.
- 6.9 Work undertaken in respect of future floorspace and employment land requirements suggests that it is highly likely that this better stock could be provided through the upgrade of underperforming employment sites within the M60 Gateway Area.

Mill Buildings

- 6.10 As per the 2022 ELR and according to data compiled by SMBC Stockport have 48 mill buildings some of which offer employment floorspace. Some of these mills (9) were included in the assessment of existing supply referred to above.
- 6.11 Of the 9 we assessed 8/9 of the mill buildings fall within the poorer or moderately performing sites. In spite of this many of these mill buildings are well used with multiple occupancy of traditional B class employment, mixed use i.e. retail, leisure and digital businesses and some residential in part/full as part of a change of use/refurbishment programme. These mill buildings do provide relatively cheap space to businesses operating on low margins that cannot afford higher quality/price space. These businesses can still play an important role in supporting local employment.
- 6.12 All mill buildings including those not assessed are monitored by SMBC. For many no action is proposed as many generally experience high levels of vacancy and as such they are often the subject of very little investment. As a result of this lack of investment, stock is slowly becoming less and less suitable for employment use and some are increasingly being considered for residential refurbishment/conversion
- 6.13 These facilities are generally poorly located, in a poor state of repair and would require significant investment to bring them into suitable condition. In addition many mill sites are subject to heritage restrictions (within Conservation Areas, subject to national and local listings etc) making redevelopment more difficult
- 6.14 Due to the condition, format and layout of many mill buildings it is considered that much of the space within these buildings is simply unsuitable for employment uses. This level of vacancy is unsustainable given current pressures on land within the Borough and steps will need to be taken to ensure that these vacant spaces are utilised more effectively. Successful mill buildings are generally characterised by having:
- Proactive landowners
 - Significant investment;
 - Anchor occupiers;
 - Large areas of business incubation space; and/or,
 - Large areas of “non-traditional employment” leisure & retail floorspace.
- 6.15 Given the limited availability of investment for this type of product, as well as limited interest from traditional E/B2/B8 use class occupiers, we consider that it is unlikely that investment opportunities or interest from relevant occupiers will be sufficient to address current vacancy levels.

- 6.16 Viability is a key issue facing the ongoing maintenance and management of mill buildings and retaining employment use at many mill locations will be difficult without large-scale investment and significant works to buildings to improve the format of space. Without investment or regeneration, vacant mill stock will deteriorate further. As such, it might in some cases be reasonable to enable the release of mill buildings for non-employment uses.

Future Requirements

Offices

- 6.17 The growth scenarios that were considered show demand for growth in the E class offices employment land sector over the plan period as follows:
- Weak market - 6 hectares;
 - Oxford Economics Forecast Model – 13.5 hectares;
 - Average market – 25 hectares; and
 - Strong market - 39 hectares.
- 6.18 Given that the OE data shows 13.5ha and an average market at 25ha it would appear prudent to use an average between these so using the midpoint this is 19.25 (say 19). This was 18 ha in the 2022 ELR but can be justified given the market evidence of a developing office market in Stockport town centre evidenced by the take-up at No. 3 Stockport Exchange in the intervening 4 years and the likelihood that additional space will be needed over the plan period to accommodate growth.
- 6.19 Land area in hectares should be seen as a guide in identifying an employment land requirement as town centre office developments are often densely developed and we therefore recommend that a floorspace requirement over the plan period is considered. This is sensible given the market evidence of a developing office market in Stockport Town Centre in the Mayoral Development Corporation (MDC) and the likelihood that additional space will be needed over the plan period to accommodate growth in this regeneration area additional to what is already planned in the town centre including the MDC and existing employment areas and floorspace.

Industrial/Logistics

- 6.20 The econometric demand models considered growth scenarios which forecasted contraction in the B2/8 sector whereas the historic take-up models indicate that the sector will grow as follows:
- Oxford Economics Forecast Model – minus 13 hectares;
 - Weak market - 6 hectares;
 - Average market – 26 hectares; and
 - Strong market - 58 hectares.
- 6.21 The B2/8 industrial and warehousing figures from the demand models are all in deficit and are well below the historic trends associated with both a weak, average and strong market. The reason for this is that the employment projections from the demand model identify that some industrial sectors will shrink in size over the coming years as a result of changes in market conditions.

- 6.22 Notwithstanding this, it is important to note that there are a number of difficulties associated with longer-term forecasting and whilst the B2/8 industrial projections do indicate that there may be a drop in overall industrial land requirements, in practice this may not be the case.
- 6.23 Whilst the forecasting work undertaken does represent the best available method for assessing future requirements, even with the refinements that have been undertaken, the model does still have some limitations. For instance, the model does not account for inward investment or the ability of a high-quality product in a good location to attract businesses from outside the Borough. If suitable, high quality accommodation is provided within the Borough then this could have the potential to create its own market. This is not accounted for within the forecast. The reduction in demand for industrial employment land identified in the econometric forecasts should therefore be considered within the context of the wider study.
- 6.24 It is accepted that the take-up trend analysis also have limitations as they do not take account of future changes in employment provision and emergence of new market sectors that utilise floorspace in differing ways. The trend analysis provides a useful cross referral function and reinforces the assertion that there will be an increased requirement in employment land throughout the study period, even though the quantitative requirement might be less important than qualitative needs.
- 6.25 In summary then this sector from the one perspective is likely to expect significant decline in traditional manufacturing industries over the plan period, but conversely the Local Plan will need to accommodate for the growth sector such as higher tech manufacturing, aspects of scientific and technical as well as logistics as evidenced in the commercial market analysis plus growth relocations and inward investment.
- 6.26 The type of requirements in the logistics and distribution sector that is driving demand require fit for purpose, new and modern, accessible space and would not locate in existing stock and whilst redevelopment may well take place this will take time to realise new space with periods of vacancy prior to the planning and construction process. On this basis it will be necessary for the Local Plan to adequately provide for B2/8 requirements in appropriate locations throughout the plan period we therefore recommend that 29 hectares is adopted for this. This long term average of development has been based upon long term trend data built up over 9 years which reflects a range of economic circumstances and whilst there may be demand generated from changes in the logistics market it is speculative to assume this.

Overall Requirement

- 6.27 This ELR concludes that the Local Plan should provide an average of 1.12ha. of additional employment land per year for E class office development and 1.53ha for B2/8 development.
- 6.28 Over the plan period to 2042 this would result in:
- Use Class E – 19 hectares; and
 - Use Classes B2/8 – 26 hectares.
- 6.29 This represents a robust reflection of the likely future land requirements for the Borough.
- 6.30 It is recommended that SMBC review the findings of this ELR alongside the pipeline of allocated employment land which is yet to come forward to determine the quantum of new employment land that needs to be allocated in the emerging Local Plan to 2042.

7. Recommendations

- 7.1 This section outlines the key recommendations for this employment land review.

Employment Land Requirement – Offices

- 7.2 It is recommended that the employment land requirement of 19 hectares over the plan period is accommodated in the town centre with the focus being in the regeneration area of the Mayoral Development Corporation in the town centre and the existing employment areas.

Employment Land Requirement – Industrial/Logistics

- 7.3 The employment land requirement of 26 hectares over the plan period is recommended to be provided via sites identified and allocated through the Local Plan and new sites. It is recognised that SMBC have insufficient allocated land to accommodate this and that additional land will need to be identified in the borough.
- 7.4 The locational characteristics of sites for logistics operators are unique, the requirements thought are embedded in national planning policy in the NPPF at Paragraph 87 which recognises that planning policies should recognise the specific locational requirements of different sectors, including storage, distribution and logistics, which should be provided at a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations.
- 7.5 Planning Practice Guidance advises how authorities should assess need and allocate space for logistics as follows:
- The logistics industry plays a critical role in enabling an efficient, sustainable and effective supply of goods for consumers and businesses, as well as contributing to local employment opportunities, and has distinct locational requirements that need to be considered in formulating planning policies (separately from those relating to general industrial land).
 - Strategic facilities serving national or regional markets are likely to require significant amounts of land, good access to strategic transport networks, sufficient power capacity and access to appropriately skilled local labour. Where a need for such facilities may exist, strategic policy-making authorities should collaborate with other authorities, infrastructure providers and other interests to identify the scale of need across the relevant market areas.
 - Strategic policy-making authorities will then need to consider the most appropriate locations for meeting these identified needs (whether through the expansion of existing sites or development of new ones).
 - Authorities will also need to assess the extent to which land and policy support is required for other forms of logistics requirements, including the needs of SMEs and of ‘last mile’ facilities serving local markets. A range of up-to-date evidence may have to be considered in establishing the appropriate amount, type and location of provision, including market signals, anticipated changes in the local population and the housing stock as well as the local business base and infrastructure availability.
- 7.6 Government policy is very clear about the need to identify strategic land in appropriate locations.

- 7.7 Based on CBRE's experience, regional and national logistics operators require a very specific set of locational circumstances in order to be successful. The key location requirements of regional and national logistics operators include:
- A nationally strategic location – regional and national distribution requires a strategic location in a national context which is:
 - Within 4-5 hours' drive of key population centres in the north and south to provide efficient access to markets, retailers, and consumers;
 - Accessible to key deep-sea ports, sea freight, and key freight hubs; and
 - Directly connected to the national strategic road network.
 - A locally strategic location – major logistics centres, in addition to being located in a strategic location nationally, must within its locality be located with:
 - Direct access to the Strategic Road Network, with ready preference being for land directly adjacent to motorway junctions; and
 - Ready access to a local pool of labour, including training and education providers who can deliver the skills and employees required to meet the modern needs of logistics operators – ranging from entry level to highly skilled jobs.
 - Suitable site/physical characteristics – the site itself must be appropriate and suitable to accommodate the scale and type of development to meet occupier needs. This includes:
 - A site of sufficient size and scale to deliver large scale modern logistics to Grade A standard – usually of a size and scale that can deliver buildings in excess of 250,000sqft in size and up to 1,000,000sqft in a single building;
 - Sites that are deliverable and viable – in essence not encumbered by significant constraints (contamination etc); and
 - Ready and immediate access to the strategic highways network with capacity to handle the development on local roads/junctions. Prime sites will be located adjacent to motorway junctions.
- 7.8 Given the conclusions of this ELR and the advice above neither existing employment land sites and premises nor the redevelopment of these should be considered as a source of land to meet this shortfall. Many of these sites are not located in areas that would be attractive to the modern occupier, nor do they provide fit for purpose stock.
- 7.9 It is therefore recommended that SMBC look at other locations within their borough which meet the occupier needs as highlighted above. It is therefore likely that greenbelt release will need to be considered to fulfil this requirement as this requirement cannot be met in the urban area.
- 7.10 Not all of this will be required on large sites as there will be some more localised demand on smaller sites referred to as urban logistics provision.
- 7.11 Furthermore, Stockport's economy is predominantly comprised of small businesses. The development of modern, fit-for-purpose office and industrial uses can significantly bolster the growth of small businesses by addressing key needs related to cost, flexibility and choice through the creation of additional flexible office space and co-working space, supporting innovation and creativity.

Existing Employment Areas

- 7.12 Whilst occupancy levels within employment sites are good inspite of quality challenges many industrial employment sites have a relatively large proportion of non-traditional employment uses that whilst generating employment, do not specifically fall within a E/B2/B8 use-class. These could typically include (but are by no means limited to) uses such as: go karting, crèches/nurseries, retailing and gym/fitness centres and make an important contribution to their communities and the economy.
- 7.13 It is recommended that a review of key employment sites and their layout should be undertaken to understand how the increase of non-traditional employment uses within their boundaries is impacting upon them.
- 7.14 As set out in national policy a suitable variety of employment areas should be provided to cater for the needs of both traditional and non-traditional employment generating uses. It is therefore considered that some degree of policy flexibility to enable non-traditional uses in employment areas is appropriate.
- 7.15 In parallel, it is recommended that the assessment of the balance between the positive and negative impacts of specific proposals should also be used to resist against further non-traditional employment uses on a site-by-site basis, where the harm to the employment cluster would clearly outweigh the immediate benefits of increased diversity and immediate non-traditional employment generation.

Improving Stock

- 7.16 It is recommended that a programme of rationalisation is undertaken. This should include identifying key ‘good’ and high-performing ‘moderate’ sites in good locations i.e. M60 gateway area and maximising their attractiveness through improvements to access, infrastructure, amenity and stock. The Local Plan will need to protect employment areas for employment generating uses given likely interest from non-employment uses such as residential.
- 7.17 Where possible, opportunities could be sought to re-provide poorly located stock within better performing employment areas. This could enable the release of some poor-quality sites in unsuitable employment locations for alternative uses.
- 7.18 This rationalisation program may need to be supplemented by the release of greenfield sites in strategic locations if green belt and other related transport considerations can be overcome. Subject to the sites put forward being appropriate, it is considered that this could have a positive impact on economic activity in the Borough and should be considered within emerging growth policies.

Mill Buildings

- 7.19 It is clear that the stock is slowly becoming less and less suitable for employment use and some are increasingly being considered for residential refurbishment/conversion. Due to the condition, format and layout of many mill buildings it is considered that much of the space within these buildings is simply unsuitable for employment uses. This level of vacancy is unsustainable given current pressures on land within the Borough and it is recommended that the Council update their Mill Study to identify which premises could be redeveloped for alternative uses including residential.

- 7.20 Given the fact that the trends in this sector are characterised by widespread market failure, it is considered that the issue could benefit from some degree of public sector intervention. It is recommended that SMBC consider what specific measures could be considered. As a starting point we recommend the following:
- 7.21 Preparation of bespoke business plans for certain key assets, which would set out the most appropriate route to delivery of improvements for the properties, assessing whether demolition or upgrade is most appropriate, what the mix of uses could be and a route to delivery, based on engagement with the landowners.
- 7.22 Direct public involvement in the redevelopment or upgrading of buildings. This might be achieved by purchase and self-delivery; however careful consideration is required in order to assess the cost/benefits of such an approach.
- 7.23 The current policy context provides considerable support for the redevelopment/repurposing of mill buildings. There is clear scope to use resources from bodies such as Historic England and Homes England in projects where their involvement would be of benefit and we recommend that SMBC engage with these parties to explore opportunities to mutual benefit.
- 7.24 Finally, it is recommended that SMBC could take on the role as a facilitator of the improvement of stock, linking landowners with supportive public organisations and providing an adequate regulatory framework to unlock projects on a site-by-site basis.

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