

# **EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT CAPACITY IN BATH, KEYNSHAM AND NORTON-RADSTOCK AREA 2006-2026**

## **ECONOMIC & EMPLOYMENT IMPLICATIONS FOR BATH & NORTH EAST SOMERSET**

### **Introduction**

1. Attached in Annex 1 are tables summarising the assessed employment development and job growth capacity of Bath, Keynsham and the Midsomer Norton and Radstock area. This information reflects the employment capacity assessment for Bath set out in the 'Bath & North East Somerset Urban Capacity Study 2006-2026: Results and Conclusions' document (originally submitted to the EiP Panel in support of the Council's response to the draft RSS) and for Keynsham and the Midsomer Norton and Radstock area supplements the earlier work. Notes are also attached to the capacity tables briefly outlining the site assumptions made. Set out below are brief notes interpreting the capacity conclusions in the context of the likely economic implications for the District.

### **Bath**

2. Bath, as an identified SSCT in the draft RSS, is the focus for future employment growth with the majority of jobs being created in the professional and business services, retail and tourism sectors. Employment capacity studies for the city indicate that potentially sites could be brought forward to accommodate much of the proposed growth through high density mixed use redevelopment of sites within and adjoining the city centre in locations which would meet the needs of those businesses sectors. The draft RSS proposes job growth in the Bath TTWA of between 16,000 and 20,000 during the RSS period. The West of England Partnership considers this projection to be over optimistic and suggests a more realistic range of 12,000 – 16,000. The capacity studies suggest that 8,500+ of this job growth could be accommodated on sites within the city, with potential additional provision within mixed-use urban extension(s).
3. The redevelopment opportunities assessed will allow a broad balance to be maintained between future housing and employment in the city but will result in significant displacement of existing businesses, mainly in the industrial sectors. Although future forecasts on industrial employment change vary in 2003 the BLRS study, carried out for the Council by Roger Tym and Partners, suggested that over the next 10 years the city could lose up to 17,500sqm of industrial floor space, an average 1,750 sqm per annum, as employment in the industrial sectors reduces. However to realise the redevelopment of sites in the city will result in the loss of up to 62,000 sqm of floorspace, an average of 3,100 sqm per annum, nearly twice the predicted rate of loss.

4. Business Surveys in Bath have shown that companies in the industrial sectors find it extremely difficult to find new employment space. The vacancy rate for industrial property in the city is less than 1% and no new industrial sites are planned. Many of the companies involved supply goods and services to a local customer base and employ local people. New local industrial floor space will be required during the RSS plan period.

### **Keynsham**

5. In Keynsham there is an estimated capacity to bring forward up to about 3,500 new jobs. Again this exceeds the number required to balance with the proposed housing expansion in the town but would assist in addressing the high levels of out commuting. Nearly 70% of the workforce are employed elsewhere, principally in Bristol and Bath.
6. Keynsham is strategically located between Bristol and Bath and has good communication links. However there is little floorspace available, the vacancy rate for industrial floorspace standing at 0.3%. The Council's overall planning objective is to ensure that greater opportunities are available to residents to work locally and the Ernst and Young Business Plan identifies that the town would be able to attract business investment from the wider sub-region, including business displacement from Bath.

### **Midsomer Norton and Radstock area**

7. In Midsomer Norton and Radstock and the surrounding rural areas, including the villages of Paulton, and Peasdown, capacity studies suggest that there is the potential to accommodate more than 3,000 new jobs. This exceeds the number needed to balance with the new housing currently proposed for the area.
8. However the Midsomer Norton and Radstock area, with its over reliance on printing and packaging sector employment, is vulnerable to economic restructuring and has seen two major factory closures in 2005 and 2006. The B&NES Business Plan, produced for the Council by Ernst & Young proposes that priority is given to attracting new employment to the area and the Council's strategic planning objective is to ensure that sufficient land is available in the area to enable regeneration.
9. Currently a high proportion of the working age population in the Midsomer Norton and Radstock commute out of the area for work, mainly to Bath. Promoting more local employment could help to address this situation.
10. Over 1,000 jobs, mainly in the industrial sectors, are likely to be displaced from Bath as outlined in paragraph 3 above. The wider

Midsomer Norton & Radstock area has a supply of land suitable for such uses and seeking to attract the displaced jobs from Bath would help to offset local job losses and strengthen the economy in the south of the District.