

**Bath and North East Somerset Council**  
**Local Plan 2022 – 2042**

**Options Consultation**  
**February 2024**

**Topic Paper: Jobs and Economy**

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**Bath & North East  
Somerset Council**

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**Improving People's Lives**

## Contents

<b>1</b>	<b>Background.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>2</b>	<b>Launch Document Consultation and Engagement Responses.....</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>3</b>	<b>Current position.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>4</b>	<b>Proposed Policy Areas.....</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>5</b>	<b>Policy J/O: Office Development including change of use of offices to residential and other uses .....</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>6</b>	<b>Policy J/I Strategic and Locally Significant Industrial Sites .....</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>7</b>	<b>Policy J/UI Undesignated Industrial Sites .....</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>8</b>	<b>Policy J/EM: Supporting Economic Growth.....</b>	<b>19</b>

# 1 Background

- 1.1 Bath and North East Somerset Council's (B&NES) new Local Plan will review the Core Strategy, Placemaking Plan and Local Plan Partial update and establish the planning framework for Bath and North East Somerset to 2042. It will contain a vision, strategy and policies to guide and manage how the district grows and changes over the next 20 years, and how planning applications for new development are decided.
- 1.2 The present employment growth forecast produced for the B&NES Core Strategy, identified the need to deliver 10,300 net new jobs in the area by 2029. Supported by the objectives of the B&NES Economic Strategy the intention was to focus these jobs on a range of key high value sectors on sites identified in the B&NES Placemaking Plan.
- 1.3 To inform the Local Plan Options for the period up to 2042, updated forecasts for jobs based on future economic projections have been undertaken. In addition, the study establishes land requirements, and considers delivery policies in terms of managing the development and loss of employment land use classes - relating to Class E(g) uses Offices, Research and Development, Light Industrial; B2 (General Industrial) and B8 (Warehousing).

## 2 Launch Document Consultation and Engagement Responses

- 2.1 The B&NES Local Plan 2022 to 2042: Launch Document consultation in October 2022 set out that the council's primary ambition for the Local Plan was to seek to deliver our main overriding purpose: "To improve people's lives". The primary ambitions, which are drawn from the Corporate Strategy, the One Shared Vision, and other key emerging strategies (such as the Economic Strategy and Health & Well-being Strategy) included "Creating opportunities for sustainable economic development, the types of jobs that are needed in our communities, and ensuring that there is the right type of space available for businesses to grow."
- 2.2 The Launch document noted that the Council will work with communities and stakeholders to identify the key challenges in B&NES, and the objectives and policies needed to address these issues.

- 2.3 A consultation report for the Launch Document - “Local Plan 2022-2042 Launch Consultation Findings Report” - sets out responses to the primary ambitions identified in the scope of the Local Plan. Respondents were generally supportive of the council's objectives to support sustainable economic growth and create job opportunities in the area. However, there were calls for more investment in local infrastructure, such as broadband and transport links, to support business development.
- 2.4 Additional issues raised included:
- Development of towns outside of Bath to reduce commuting.
- 2.5 Additional Evidence Areas included:
- Barriers to social mobility and well-being
  - Levelling up in Bath
  - Digital infrastructure
  - Creative industries
  - Tourism/visitor economy
  - Innovative construction methods and materials for a sustainable industry

### **3 Current position**

- 3.1 Currently the Local Plan spatial strategy aims to focus employment in the main settlements to promote sustainable development.
- 3.2 The overarching strategy for B&NES is to promote sustainable development by:

*1: focussing new housing, jobs and community facilities in Bath, Keynsham, and the Somer Valley particularly ensuring:*

*a: there is the necessary modern office space in Bath within or adjoining the city centre to enable diversification of the economy whilst maintaining the unique heritage of the City*

*b: sufficient space is available in Keynsham to reposition the town as a more significant business location whilst retaining its separate identity*

*c: there is deliverable space to enable job growth in the towns and principal villages in the Somer Valley to create a thriving and vibrant area which is more self-reliant socially and economically.*

*development in rural areas is located at settlements with a good range of local facilities and with good access to public transport*

## **4 Proposed Policy Areas**

4.1 The following proposed policy areas are addressed in this topic paper. For each of these, further detail is provided on the national, regional and local policy context, current evidence, further work and proposed Options.

- Policy J/O Office Development including change of use of offices to residential
- Policy J/I Strategic and Locally Significant Industrial Sites Development
- Policy J/UI Undesignated Industrial Sites Development
- Policy J/ EM Employment and Skills

## **5 Policy J/O: Office Development including change of use of offices to residential and other uses**

### **National Context**

- 5.1 The NPPF requires that Local Plans should be prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development “and make sufficient provision for: a) housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development.”
- 5.2 Paragraph 85 of the National Planning Policy Framework (2023) 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, taking into account both local business needs and wider opportunities for development.
- 5.3 Paragraph 86 includes that that planning policies should, ‘be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, allow for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.’
- 5.4 On 1st September 2020 the Government introduced a number of significant changes to the Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended), which have implications in planning for business uses.
- 5.5 A new Use Class E ‘Commercial, Business and Service’ was introduced combining a number of uses including offices, research and development and light industry (former use class B1) and high street uses including shops (former use class A1), financial and professional (former A2 use), restaurants and cafes (former A3), together with parts of former class D1 (non-residential institutions) and class D2 (assembly and leisure).
- 5.6 The introduction of Use Class E introduces significant flexibility, allowing change between any of the different sub uses (a) to (g) within Use Class E without the need for planning permission, as movement from one primary use to another would not constitute ‘development’.

- 5.7 In addition, with effect from 1st August 2021 Class MA was inserted in the Town and Country Planning Act General Permitted Development Order. Class MA permits development consisting of a change of use of a building and any land within its curtilage from a use falling within Class E (ie including offices and light industry), to a use falling within Class C3 (dwellinghouses). There are a number of exemptions and conditions, for example Article 2(3) Land is exempt including National Landscape Areas and World Heritage Sites (ie Bath), and Listed Buildings are also exempt. There are a number of requirements for eligibility including the requirement for the building to be vacant for a period of 3 months prior to the application for Prior Approval. There is a maximum floor space of 1,500 square metres. A Prior Approval Application must be made.
- 5.8 Offices are classed as a “Main Town Centre Use” within the NPPF. The Town Centres section of the NPPF states *“Local planning authorities should apply a sequential test to planning applications for main town centre uses which are neither in an existing centre nor in accordance with an up-to-date plan. Main town centre uses should be located in town centres, then in edge of centre locations; and only if suitable sites are not available (or expected to become available within a reasonable period) should out of centre sites be considered.”*
- 5.9 In relation to definition of Edge of Centre, the NPPF states *“Edge of centre: ... For office development, this includes locations outside the town centre but within 500 metres of a public transport interchange. In determining whether a site falls within the definition of edge of centre, account should be taken of local circumstances.”*
- 5.10 The national Planning Practice Guidance states that 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.

## **Regional / Local Context**

- 5.11 The Economic Strategy *“Building A Fair, Green, Creative and Connected Bath with North East Somerset”* which was approved in February 2024 sets out key delivery points including *“Promote new and emerging developments for businesses including Bath Quays and Somer Valley Enterprise Zone”*; and *“Accelerate digital infrastructure rollout, including gigabit, superfast broadband and 5G to ensure all businesses and residents across B&NES benefit from improved connectivity”*. In terms of locations, the Economic Strategy aims to *“Develop a riverside tech and innovation corridor that links existing assets from Manvers St to Bath Quays”*.

- 5.12 The current Local Plan makes provision for new employment floorspace, including offices, in the place-based strategies and district wide development management policies.
- 5.13 In accordance with the town centres first principle within the NPPF offices as a town centre use are directed to town centre locations. Current adopted Policy ED1A - "*Office Development*" states "*Proposals for office development within city and town centre boundaries, or on sites specifically allocated for this purpose are acceptable in principle.*"
- 5.14 The current Local Plan contains policies relating to loss of office development. Policy ED1B includes a presumption in favour of change of use from office to residential, having regard to permitted development rights and previous national guidance, unless strong economic reasons exist. Currently the key tests to assess whether strong economic reasons exist are a) that the site is within one of the designated areas (including for example Bath Central Area) and b) the loss of the space would be a significant loss to strategically important office accommodation in B&NES and significantly harm the Council's ability to plan positively for economic development. Further criteria are set out relating to assessing whether strong economic reasons exist including the quality of accommodation, market signals and achievement of Core Strategy policy targets for additional office space.
- 5.15 Policy ED1C relates to the change of use and redevelopment of office use to other town centre uses (not within Use Class E). This states that the change of use to other town centre uses will not normally be permitted, unless the space is of particularly poor quality in relation to the total stock of the city, or, if this is not common ground, the space has been marketed for 12 months. It states that economic and social benefits of the alternative proposal, could, in exceptional cases, outweigh the policy presumption.
- 5.16 There has been a significant loss of offices since 2011, and this has cumulatively undermined the Council's ability to achieve economic development objectives. The Annual Monitoring Report indicates an overall net loss of office floorspace within the district of 30,929 sq m between 2011 and 2022 and in Bath there has been a net loss of 23,225sq m for the same period.



## Evidence Base

- 5.17 Hardisty Jones Associates (HJA) in partnership with Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH) were commissioned in 2023 by the five administrative authorities within the West of England area (Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire Council and the West of England Combined Authority) to prepare evidence on employment growth across the sub region, drawing on a consistent methodological approach. The specific requirements of each authority vary and are subject to separate reports for each authority. Hardisty Jones Associates have therefore prepared an Economic Needs Assessment on behalf of the council to help inform the Local Plan 2022-2042.
- 5.18 The report provides a set of updated economic and employment land demand forecasts, an updated commercial market summary and updates to the quantitative assessment of allocated and consented employment sites and premises.
- 5.19 In order to identify the future employment land and premises requirements for B&NES the study considered the predicted changes within employment sectors in relation to planning use classes and then identified the property and land requirements using employment and development density assumptions. These outputs are then considered in relation to wider market factors, particularly the need to allow for churn in the commercial property market and the replacement and upgrading of existing accommodation.
- 5.20 The report indicates the total employment growth across employment scenarios 2023 – 2043 equates to 15,000 jobs based on labour market balance (Oxford Economics calculated 16,000 and Cambridge Economics calculated 14,000).
- 5.21 The report contains a review of the commercial office market by Lambert Smith Hampton in the West of England. Some key points which are relevant to the provision of office space include the following:
- Financial and Professional Service sector is one of the largest in the region and continues to show growth. Businesses in this sector primarily require office buildings of grade A specification.
  - Tech and Digital sector predominantly occupy offices of mainly grade A and B specification, although there is also growing demand for hybrid properties with lab space.
  - There is a good level of requirements in this sector for offices, especially in smaller start-up companies. These companies tend to prefer to cluster together, and therefore serviced offices/managed workspace will be important for their growth.

- Creative and Digital Media companies sector primarily seek office buildings, although some have requirements for hybrid or industrial buildings for studios or storage. Occupiers seeking office space have mixed quality and specification requirements. Large companies seek better quality accommodation, but some smaller occupiers require cheaper space.
- Changes to government legislation on EPC certification requirements for commercial buildings may lead to cheaper offices becoming unlettable. Whilst larger and well backed companies will take grade A space, and start-ups/micro business will be able to look at the serviced office sector, cost-conscious companies that need their own office may not have options.
- The Health and Life Sciences sector businesses tend to cluster together, and are often located near universities, science parks, or hospitals, and are normally looking at lab enabled space that is flexible in terms of use and growth.

5.22 The study findings in relation to net new floorspace and land requirements for offices between 2023- 2043 are set out in Table 1 below. Some of this net requirement can be provided on commitments including existing undeveloped site allocations, however these allocations will be reviewed as part of the draft Local Plan.

**Table 1: Net Additional Office Floorspace and Land Requirements for B&NES Sub Areas (2023 – 2043)**

<b>Sub Areas:</b>	<b>Bath City</b>	<b>Keynsham</b>	<b>Somer Valley</b>	<b>Rural Areas</b>
Net Floorspace Requirement (sq m)	67,000 – 69,000	11,000	8,000	6,000
Land Requirement (ha)	8-9	1	1	1

- 5.23 The introduction of the E Use Class allows the change of use to other uses within the Class E use. In addition, while permitted development rights are in place for change of use from Class E to residential, there is increasing pressure for redevelopment of office and light industrial stocks to other uses. There are also losses of employment property for other reasons, whether occupation by non-employment users (e.g. the growth in leisure occupiers within former industrial and warehousing premises) or redevelopment for non-employment uses.

### **Further work required**

- 5.24 Following the identification of floorspace and land requirements in each of the sub areas, and having regard to existing allocations and commitments, sites will be allocated within the draft Local Plan to accommodate the required growth.

### **Proposed Policy Approach /Options**

- 5.25 Given the significant loss of offices, to mainly residential uses, there is a need to provide clearer policy criteria relating to protecting office floorspace, in association with providing further modern high quality office floorspace. The stock of office floor space in B&NES needs to be managed, upgraded and increased to enable the delivery of the identified need for offices, and the Council's Economic Strategy.
- 5.26 It is acknowledged that occupiers seeking office space have mixed quality and specification requirements. Whilst larger and well backed companies will take grade A space, and start-ups/micro business will be able to look at the serviced office sector, cost-conscious companies that need their own office may not have options.
- 5.27 Therefore, the policy approach is to encourage the development of Grade A offices to meet the need for high quality floorspace, and upgrading of Grade B offices. With regard to smaller premises within Georgian buildings these should not be retained where they are generally of poor quality, however retaining some Georgian stock will provide diversity in supply and meet the needs of certain small occupiers and sectors. Hence, we need to ensure that the policy can protect office stock on a case by case basis. All planning decisions will be made on the basis of all the policies within the development plan and other relevant material planning considerations.
- 5.28 The following options in relation to protecting office development from change of use to other higher value uses is as follows:

## Option 1

Not permit redevelopment / change of use to residential, (including all types of residential plus Purpose Built Student Accommodation) unless it can be robustly evidenced that:

- a) the site is of poor quality; and
- b) no longer suited to current or future business needs; and
- c) there is a lack of demand for office use; and
- d) there is a supply of available alternative premises in the locality, suitable for any displaced existing occupiers or potential occupiers looking for premises in the locality.

In the case of redevelopment change of use to non residential (non Class E) uses, the above criteria would apply. In addition, the proposal will be required to secure suitable alternative employment opportunities of at least equivalent economic benefit.

Issues to be taken into account will be site information including access considerations, EPC maintenance costs, the cost and ability to upgrade the floorspace, and rental information

## Option 2

- Above option together with adding the requirement to demonstrate there is a lack of demand for office use by a marketing statement and evidence of marketing for 12 months This will enable rural areas to retain local employment opportunities which is in accordance with sustainable development.

## 6 Policy J/I Strategic and Locally Significant Industrial Sites

### National Context

- 6.1 The NPPF para 85 states “*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, taking into account both local business 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. This is particularly important where Britain can be a global leader in driving innovation, and in areas with high levels of productivity, which should be able to capitalise on their performance and potential*”
- 6.2 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) on Economic Development Needs Assessments and Economic Land Availability Assessment offer guidance to support local planning authorities on assessing the need for economic development. It recognises that need can be both qualitative and quantitative in nature, and stresses the importance of a robust, yet proportionate, evidence base.

### Regional / Local Context

- 6.3 The West of England Industrial Strategy was published in July 2019 and has four main priorities which are considered key to the West of England’s economy, and approach:
- Cross-sectoral innovation - Fostering cross-sectoral innovation from research through to commercialisation.
  - Inclusive growth - Ensuring that growth is inclusive, with a focus on opportunities for employment and progression for all.
  - Productivity challenge - Addressing the productivity challenge, including adopting new technology and management practices and supporting businesses to trade
  - Innovation in infrastructure delivery - Capitalising on the region’s innovative strengths to deliver the infrastructure necessary for future growth.
- 6.4 Reflecting this, and local economic issues, the B&NES Economic Strategy “*Building A Fair, Green, Creative and Connected Bath with North East Somerset*” indicates key delivery points including “*Promote new and emerging developments for businesses including Bath Quays and Somer Valley Enterprise Zone*”.

In terms of locations, the Economic Strategy aims to “*Develop a riverside tech and innovation corridor that links existing assets from Manvers St to Bath Quays*”.

- 6.5 The council’s Annual Monitoring Report shows that there has been a significant loss of industrial and warehousing floorspace in the district since 2011 in the current period. The Annual Monitoring Report indicates an overall net loss of industrial and warehousing floorspace within the district of -87,221 sq m between 2011 and 2022.

## **Evidence Base**

- 6.6 Hardisty Jones Associates (HJA) in partnership with Lambert Smith Hampton (LSH) were commissioned in 2023 by the five administrative authorities within the West of England area (Bath & North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, North Somerset Council, South Gloucestershire Council and the West of England Combined Authority) to prepare evidence on employment growth across the sub region, drawing on a consistent methodological approach. The specific requirements of each authority vary and are subject to separate reports for each authority.
- 6.7 The study provides a set of updated economic and employment land demand forecasts; an updated commercial market summary and updates to the quantitative assessment of allocated and consented employment sites and premises.
- 6.8 In order to identify the future employment land and premises requirements for B&NES the study considered the predicted changes within employment sectors in relation to planning use classes and then identified the property and land requirements using employment and development density assumptions. These outputs were then considered in relation to wider market factors, particularly the need to allow for churn in the commercial property market and the replacement and upgrading of existing accommodation. The findings in relation to net new industrial floorspace and land requirements 2023- 2043 are set out in Table 2 below, and for warehousing and logistics space in Table 3 below.

**Table 2: Net Additional Industrial Floorspace and Land Requirements for B&NES Sub Areas (2023 – 2043)**

<b>Industrial Floorspace</b>	<b>Bath City</b>	<b>Keynsham</b>	<b>Rural Areas</b>	<b>Somer Valley</b>
Net Floorspace Requirement (sq m)	5,000 – 15,000	7,000 – 9,000	14,000 – 17,000	27,000 – 36,000
Land Requirement (ha)	1 – 4	2	3 – 4	7 - 9

**Table 3: Estimated Net Warehousing & Logistics Floorspace Requirements 2023 - 2043**

<b>Warehousing &amp; Logistics Floorspace</b>	<b>Bath City</b>	<b>Keynsham</b>	<b>Rural Areas</b>	<b>Somer Valley</b>
Net Floorspace Requirement (sq m)	25,000 – 26,000	19,000	17,000	21,000
Land Requirement (hectares)	5	4	3	4

- 6.9 Details of the sectors analysis in the report are set out in section 5 re offices above.

### **Further work required**

- 6.10 Following the identification of floorspace and land requirements in each of the sub areas, and having regard to existing allocations and commitments, sites for industrial uses will be allocated within the draft Local Plan.

### **Proposed Policy Approach and Options**

- 6.11 Based on the need for new floorspace and the significant loss of industrial and warehousing floorspace sites within the district, there is a need to protect existing sites. The policy approach is therefore to safeguard strategic and locally significant industrial sites due to their economic importance to the district and in order to support a diverse and inclusive economy. This would assist in meeting the forecast need for industrial and warehousing /last mile logistics uses and facilitating the forecast job growth within the Plan period. This reflects the priorities of the Economic Strategy, supports the growing economic sectors and aligns with housing growth.
- 6.12 The aim is to reserve these areas for industrial, distribution and related uses only. The areas are suitable for the retention and renewal of industrial and warehousing premises and are able to accommodate a wide range of sectors including research and development (use class E(g)(ii)), creative industries, health and life sciences and a variety of general industry (Class E (g)(iii) and B2 together with warehousing/ last mile logistics (B8).
- 6.13 The proposed approach in relation to new industrial development and the protection of sites is as follows:

#### **Option**

- Light industrial, heavy industrial, warehousing (classes E(g)(ii),(iii), B2, B8),and builders merchants will be acceptable in principle within Strategic and Locally Significant Industrial Sites

Development involving the loss of industrial and distribution floorspace/land will not be permitted unless the development is for a use referred to above; and would not have an adverse impact on the operation of the remaining premises, site.

- 6.14 The sites proposed to be designated Strategic and Locally Significant are listed below.



## **7 Proposed Safeguarded Strategic and Locally Significant Industrial Sites**

### **Bath**

- Newbridge Riverside (Brassmill Lane, Locksbrook Road Estate and The Maltings) excluding Locksbrook Creativity Hub and the Fashion Collection Archive.
- Victoria Park Business Centre, Kelso Place, Lower Weston, Bath
- Stable Yard, Windsor Bridge Road, Twerton, Bath
- Railway Arches, Wood Street, Lower Bristol Road, Bath
- Polamco, Western Lock, Lower Bristol Road, Bath
- Pinesway Industrial Estate, Ivo Peters Road, Bath
- Commercial space, Cheltenham Street, Bath
- Bath Self Storage, Bellotts Road, Twerton, Bath
- M & B Engineering, Bellotts Road, Twerton, Bath
- Booker Mcconnell Plc, Bellotts Road, Twerton, Bath
- Workman's Yard, Claude Avenue, Twerton, Bath
- Commercial space, Lymore Gardens, Twerton, Bath,
- Commercial buildings to the north of Dartmouth Avenue, Twerton, Bath
- Bath Trade Park, Westmoreland Station Road, Westmoreland, Bath
- Broadway Court, Miles Street, Widcombe, Bath
- Ferry Court, Ferry Lane, Bathwick, Bath
- Cross Manufacturing, Midford Road, Odd Down, Bath

### **Keynsham**

- Broadmead Lane, Ashmead Road & Unity Road Estate, including World's End Lane Extension
- Pixash Lane
- Wansdyke Workshops, Unity Road, Keynsham

## **Somer Valley**

- Bath Business Park, Peasedown St John
- Old Mills Industrial Estate, Paulton
- Midsomer Enterprise Park, Radstock
- Mill Road, Radstock
- Haydon Industrial Estate, Radstock
- Westfield Industrial Estate
- Coombend, Radstock
- Former Sewage Works, Welton Hollow and Land West of Midsomer Enterprise Park

## **Rural Areas**

- Cloud Hill Industrial Estate/Trident Works, Temple Cloud
- Temple Bridge Business Park, Temple Cloud
- Hallatrow Business Park, Wells Road, Hallatrow
- Farrington Fields Trading Estate, Farrington Gurney
- Church Farm Business Park, Ashton Hill, Corston
- Burnett Business Park, Gypsy Lane, Keynsham
- Timsbury Village Workshops, Hayeswood Road, Timsbury

## **8 Policy J/UI Undesignated Industrial Sites**

### **National Context**

8.1 Refer to paragraphs 6.1 and 6.2 above.

### **Regional / Local Context**

8.2 Refer to section 6 above for details of evidence. Reflecting the significant losses of industrial land that have occurred in the current Local Plan period; and the increased demand for industrial accommodation; there is an established need for industrial premises in the district and a chronic shortage, particularly in Bath. To help meet this need, all existing industrial and warehousing premises should be protected from redevelopment to higher value uses, in particular residential. Many of the existing smaller scale industrial and warehousing premises are within residential areas or closely related to villages and hence serve a local need and are easily accessible to communities enabling the potential for active travel, and the reduction in commuting distance.

### **Policy Approach Option**

8.3 In light of the chronic shortage of industrial and warehouse premises and loss of premises to higher value uses, we propose to strengthen the policy on non-designated industrial sites to provide greater policy protection. In particular, we will require evidence to demonstrate that tenants have not been served notice with a view to redevelopment, and premises have not been run down by a lack of maintenance with a view to redevelopment to higher value uses.

8.4 There may also be the potential to redevelop or intensify the use of some of these sites for industrial and warehouse uses and this will be acceptable in principle. In order to assist with the viability of redevelopment or intensification it may be necessary to incorporate an element of higher value uses. Subject to other policies higher value uses may be acceptable as an element of a proposed scheme, but only where there is no net loss of floorspace on the site that is currently used for or, if vacant, last used for industrial and warehousing purposes. In addition, the higher value uses will exclude Purpose Built Student Accommodation.

8.5 Our proposed policy approach is outlined as follows:

## Option

- Light industrial, heavy industrial, warehousing (classes E(g)(ii),(iii), B2, B8), builders merchants will be acceptable in principle.
- A number of criteria will need to be demonstrated in the case of development involving the net loss of industrial and warehousing/logistics floorspace, including:
  - if the premises are vacant the reasons for vacancy
  - evidence that the site has not been made purposefully vacant;
  - details of maintenance demonstrating that the site has not purposefully been left to disrepair;
  - viability assessment which considers the ability of the current or alternative employment use to continue;
  - marketing evidence to enable the determination of whether there is genuinely no demand to continue in its current planning use; and marketing for one year based on a protocol to be set out.The criteria relating to ensuring that the development does not adversely affect remaining industrial uses would be retained.

## 9 Policy J/EM: Supporting Economic Growth

### National Context

- 9.1 The NPPF states at para 86 that planning policies should “*a) set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration.*”

### Regional / Local Context

- 9.2 A West of England Employment and Skills Plan was published in June 2023. It states:

*“Despite progress and the region continuing to see above average levels of productivity, low rates of unemployment, and a highly skilled workforce, structural challenges remain, and these have been exacerbated by wider national and international economic uncertainty.*

*For instance:*

- *Skills miss-matches with skills shortages in some sectors, but also within geographic and demographic communities where individuals struggle to access opportunities;*
- *Low pay, particularly for part time workers, and insecure employment;*
- *Wage and occupational inequality and lack of progression in work;*
- *Growing polarisation between higher and lower skilled occupations*
- *Greater difficulty for those with special education needs to gain work experience and employment;*
- *Lower than average progression to higher level learning;*
- *Low awareness and participation in apprenticeship opportunities;*
- *Low uptake of apprenticeships as a route to talent supply/development within certain key industrial sectors*

9.3 The Plan recognises that digital and green skills are so important to the future of our economy, that they must be integrated into all objectives and actions.

9.4 The council's Health & Wellbeing Strategy includes one of four priorities - "*Improve skills, good work, and employment*". As part of this it states we will "*Support the development of and access to an inclusive labour market, focusing on engaging our populations most at risk of inequalities in accessing and maintaining good work*".

9.5 The Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document sets out requirements for Targeted Recruitment and Training.

## **Proposed Policy Approach and Options**

9.6 In order to reinforce the Council's objective of delivering sustainable and inclusive growth and securing a workforce with the necessary skills to ensure a prosperous economy and having regard to the Planning Obligations SPD, it is proposed to have a new policy encouraging the provision of training schemes.

9.7 The proposed option is as follows:

- **Option**

Require an Employment, Apprenticeship and Training Plan, and financial contribution having regard to the Planning Obligations Supplementary Planning Document, for all developments of 10 or more Residential and Extra Care units and all Commercial Premises (including Purpose Built Student Accommodation and Care Homes) of over 1,000sq m, to be prepared in partnership with B&NES Council.