Southend Employment Supply Topic Paper

October 2026

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1. Introduction

1.1 Southend-on-Sea City Council (the 'Council') is preparing a new Local Plan for the City that will set out a framework to direct development in the area to 2045. In accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and associated Planning Practice Guidance, the Local Plan will need to accommodate a range of residential, economic and other development needs.

1.2 To provide the context and the supporting narrative of the various Local Plan Policies, a series of Topic Papers has been prepared based on the Local Plan evidence base as well as the outcomes of the various Local Plan consultation stages. In this context, this Employment Supply Topic Paper presents the employment supply identified to accommodate the arising floorspace and land requirements in the City over the 2025-2045 Plan period. In doing so, it informs the proposed Strategic Policy SP6: Securing a Thriving Economy and Visitor Destination, as well as the proposed Policy DM6.3: Employment Areas.

1.3 These policies have been informed by various evidence base studies, including the Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (2026 and previous iterations), Integrated Needs Assessment ('INA', 2026) and in particular, INA Part B: Economic Development Needs (2026 – 'INA Part B'), the Employment Intensification Study (2026), Employment Area Surveys and Employment Site Release Topic Paper (2021).

1.4 INA Part B estimates a recommended requirement for between 58,600 sq.m (11.2 ha) and 68,300 sq.m (13.6 ha). This is further split to around 25,600 sq.m (6.7 ha) of office (including R&D) floorspace and between 33,000 sq.m (8.3 ha) and 42,700 sq.m (around 10.7 ha) of industrial (including light industrial) and storage and distribution space. This is sufficient to accommodate the economic needs aligned with the planned housing delivery target of 735 dwellings per annum ('dpa').

1.5 The City is constrained in terms of the availability of land, particularly given its geography. In addition, there are competing land uses, primarily including land for housing with significantly increased identified needs in the context of the government standard method for assessing local housing need, and a number of environmental designations, particularly along the coast. In this context, it is important to ensure that any available land is utilised to accommodate all the different development needs most effectively and efficiently. On this basis, the Council commissioned an Employment Intensification Study (2026) to provide a high-level appraisal of the intensification potential for each Employment Growth Area within the city and to determine if any other employment areas have potential for intensification; it also considers the employment potential of an additional site within the central area (EA019 Whitegate Road), which is not a designated employment area but has been identified through the plan preparation process as having potential for future employment floorspace provision.

1.6 A total of 68,400 sq.m of employment floorspace through 15.1ha of land has been identified to accommodate the aforementioned economic development needs. In particular, a total of 39 sites were reviewed, of which 13 have been identified to provide for future growth as detailed in Section 4 below.

2. Context

2.1 This section summarises the relevant planning policy and guidance as well as the regional and local strategies, which have informed the preparation of the Local Plan in relation to employment land. This paper is prepared to relate to the Regulation 19 version of the Local Plan and is prepared in the context of the 2024 version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), against which it is intended the Regulation 19 Local Plan will be examined in line with transitional arrangements. A new NPPF was published in August 2026, but all references in this paper refer to the 2024 NPPF, unless otherwise stated.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

2.2 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, 2024) sets out the Government's overarching economic objective for the planning system to help create the conditions in which business can invest, expand and adapt to support the need for economic growth and productivity through sustainable development.

2.3 NPPF paragraphs 85 to 87 set out the requirements for planning policies, whilst focusing on the importance for local authorities to obtain sufficient land availability for employment use to support businesses to access further opportunities, whether this is through innovation or investment in infrastructure. In particular:

- Planning policies should set out a positive economic vision and strategy which proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, economic development and regeneration;
- Planning policies should identify the locational requirements of different sectors, which suit certain sites to make the provision of similar industries. Decisions should be made to provide for a variety of scales and in suitably accessible locations for certain sectors.
- Planning policies and decisions should seek to address potential barriers to investment, such as inadequate infrastructure, services or housing, or a poor environment. They should also be flexible enough to accommodate needs not anticipated in the plan, by allowing for new and flexible working practices (such as live-work accommodation), and to enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.

Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)

2.4 Planning Practice Guidance sets out methodologies for assessing housing and economic development needs for local authorities. This includes further guidance for planning authorities on preparing robust evidence to understand existing and future needs, which will need to be kept under review to reflect local circumstances and market conditions. This will provide, in particular, an understanding of current and forecast economic trends, which inform the economic development needs and employment land requirements. This should also include engagement with the local business community and key economic stakeholders as stated in PPG paragraphs 025 to 032.

Southend Economic Growth Strategy 2024-2028

2.5 This Strategy sets out the ambition to make best use of the Council's resources to grow the city's economy in a sustainable way, securing inward investment into the area, improving business conditions, making Southend the best place in the UK to start and grow a small business and enhancing skills and job opportunities for residents. The Strategy sets out the following objectives:

- support established businesses in Southend to achieve sustainable economic growth;
- promote Southend as the home of micro, small and medium-sized enterprises; and
- support employees, business owners, job seekers, and students in Southend to achieve their career ambitions.

2.6 It then goes on to indicate how these objectives could be achieved, through three main concepts: grow the economy, attract investment and support entrepreneurship. The suggested methods to achieve this are summarised as follows:

- assisting with the implementation of full-fibre technology, which will benefit home-based businesses and job sites alike;
- organising the 'South Essex No Use Empty Scheme' to provide low-interest financing to prospective tenants of empty buildings;
- creating and introducing a fresh place-based brand for the city to attract investors and market economic prospects, and encourage and facilitate chances for local investment;
- working with the owners and operators of strategic employment sites to improve their appeal, competitiveness, and accessibility to a wide range of potential users and employers; and
- protecting and advancing the employment possibilities from investment initiatives in the city and the surrounding area, such as those at the Lower Thames Crossing, Southend Airport Business Park, and Thames Freeport.

3. Overview of Employment Land Supply

3.1 The City's existing employment areas and proposed employment allocations have been assessed to understand if they function adequately, are fit-for-purpose and capable of accommodating modern business needs, to determine whether they should either be safeguarded to continue accommodating economic activity, or be released if they are no longer fit-for-purpose and would be better suited to accommodate other uses.

3.2 A total of 39 sites are considered below, collating details across the evidence base to inform the proposed employment policies and allocations. Of these, 13 sites have been identified to provide additional capacity, totalling 68,400 sq.m of additional employment floorspace.

3.3 For the purposes of their capacity assessment herein, these sites have been categorised as follows:

a. Employment Growth Areas;
b. Industrial/Business Estates.
c. Employment Allocations; and
d. Mixed-use Allocations.

a) Employment Growth Areas

3.4 There are six Employment Growth Areas ('EGAs') proposed within Policy DM6.3 Southend's Employment Areas, which comprise existing employment areas that should continue to be protected for employment use, and which have identified potential for further intensification due to extant permissions or pending decisions, their planning history (i.e., lapsed permissions for employment space with potential to come forward), or they have been identified for potential further intensification through the Employment Intensification Study (2026). On this basis, developments comprising E(g), B2 and/or B8 Use Classes are encouraged alongside ancillary amenity space that will enhance further their functionality. These are summarised in Table 3 1 below.

Table 3-1 Future potential capacity at Employment Growth Areas: floorspace (sq.m) and land (ha)

Site	Total Future Capacity	
	Floorspace (sq.m)	Land (ha)
Airport Business Park (EA051)*	16,500	4.1
Progress Road Employment Area (EA033)	11,000	2.5
Stock Road Employment Area (EA009)	1,900	0.4
Temple Farm Employment Area (EA010)	2,000	0.5
Thanet Grange Employment Area (EA011)	0	0.0
Vanguard Way Employment Area (HEA271; EA014) (including Elm Road Gas Holders (HEA164) and Adjacent Land (HEA165))**	9,600	1.7
Total	**41,000**	**9.2**

Source: Southend-on-Sea City Council, Various evidence / Lichfields analysis
N.B. Figures may not sum due to rounding.
*Airport Business Park is located in Rochford District, however, the employment land, floorspace and jobs arising from development are split equally between Southend City and Rochford as per the 2014 Joint London Southend Airport and Environs Area Action Plan (JAAP).
** Elm Road Gas Holders (HEA164) and Adjacent Land (HEA165) to provide 8,000 sq.m of floorspace across 1.4 ha.

3.5 Across these sites, there is a total potential net additional capacity of c. 41,000 sq.m (or 9.2 ha) over the plan period to 2045. Each of these sites is discussed below.

Airport Business Park

3.6 The Airport Business Park (EA051) was allocated originally within the JAAP1, with the employment land, floorspace and jobs arising from development split equally between Southend and Rochford. As such, half of the floorspace delivered on site forms part of the city's employment capacity, with the other half attributed to Rochford.

3.7 Based on monitoring data provided by Rochford District Council, extant and pending permissions as of March 2026 totalled just under 33,000 sq.m across 8.1 ha, including 18,300 sq.m of B2/B8 floorspace, 6,600 sq.m of E(g) office floorspace, and 8,100 sq.m of flexible Class E(g), B2 or B8 floorspace. As 50% of employment floorspace delivered at the Airport Business Park contributes to Southend's supply, the site is to provide 16,500 sq.m across 4.1 ha of flexible Class E(g), B2 and/or B8 uses for Southend.

Progress Road

3.8 The Progress Road Employment Area (EA033) is in the northwest of Southend, directly accessible from the A127 to the south, and Rayleigh Road A1015 to the north. The land area totals 21.5 ha. This busy, well-occupied employment area has been assessed to have potential for intensification, including vacant and underutilised areas as part of the Employment Intensification Study (2026), alongside extant planning permissions.

3.9 There are three extant permissions for employment uses at Progress Road, totalling c. 5,000 sq.m:

[1] Rochford District Council and Southend City Council (2014) Joint London Southend Airport and Environs Area Action Plan. Available at: https://www.rochford.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2022-11/planning_jaap_adoptedversion.pdf

- 24/01934/FULM for a new/reinstated B8 warehouse;
- 24/00355/FULM for five light industrial units; and
- 25/00938/FULM for a lorry tractor exportation site and open flexible commercial storage yard.

3.10 According to the Employment Intensification Study (2026), there could be potential for c. 6,000 sq.m to be provided through intensification based on further liaison with the landowner(s)/promoter(s). Therefore, the site is considered to have an overall additional capacity of c. 11,000 sq.m of Class E(g), B2 and B8 floorspace.

Stock Road

3.11 The Stock Road Employment Area (EA009) is a large industrial estate covering an area of 21.4 ha to the north of central Southend, adjoining Temple Farm Industrial Estate. The site hosts a range of properties, primarily within Use Class B2 and B8, providing over 50,000 sq.m of floorspace for employment uses. The Stock Road site includes a small cluster of businesses related to medical product manufacturing and logistics.

3.12 The site is well-occupied, and the existing premises are of a range of ages and qualities, with some units dating to the post-war period, while more recent development has focused on Class E(g) uses.

3.13 There is an extant permission for the development of 10 commercial units is to provide c. 1,900 sq.m of net additional employment floorspace (Ref. 24/01299/FULM). There are no other pending, extant or lapsed permissions on the site, and the Employment Intensification Study (2026) does not consider there to be potential for further intensification of uses given the size, layout, and current occupation of the site.

Temple Farm

3.14 Temple Farm Employment Area (EA010) abuts the northern edge of Stock Road Employment Area in the north of Southend, close to the boundary with Rochford. The site is generally well occupied, although there are some vacancies within the smaller clusters of units within the estate. .

3.15 This site is subject to the following extant permissions totalling around 2,000 sqm:

- 26/00120/FUL for two warehouse buildings (Use Class B2) totalling 1,700 sq.m. This is considered to maximise the development potential of the plot due to its footprint, prevailing building heights within the wider site and proximity to a cemetery where receptors may be sensitive to taller built form. The application would result in the loss of c 240 sq.m of existing B8 floorspace, implying an overall net gain in employment floorspace on the site of c 1,500 sq.m; and
- 24/00455/FUL for uplift and extension to an existing building to provide 515 sq.m of additional commercial floorspace (E(g)).

Thanet Grange

3.16 Thanet Grange Employment Area (EA011) is located south-east of London Southend Airport. It is a 5.4 ha site comprising a large office block of c. 16,800 sq.m. NatWest Group

is the landowner and sole occupier of the premises. There are no relevant pending, extant or lapsed permissions on the site.

3.17 Any future development or intensification of the site would be dependent on whether the landowner (NatWest Group) would be willing to either release part of the parking area to facilitate additional space or promote the site for more intensive development.

3.18 The Employment Intensification Study identifies that there may be future potential for up to 3,000 sq.m GIA of Class E(g) floorspace over three storeys in line with neighbouring building heights. However, given that the site is owned by a single owner/occupier, this supply could only be considered available to a specific occupier and, therefore, is not considered available to accommodate wider general business needs across the city. For these reasons, this has not been included within the quantitative estimates of future supply.

Vanguard Way

3.19 The Vanguard Way Employment Area (HEA271; EA014) is located in Shoeburyness with units for heavy industrial processes and distribution, covering 10.7 ha. Much of the site, including the Seedbed Business Centre, is owned by the Council.

3.20 The site has been assessed in the Employment Intensification Study (2026) which identifies additional potential capacity for 1,600 sq.m of employment space over 0.3 ha at the site based on a previous lapsed permission for the development of light industrial units (Ref. 22/00840/FULM).

Elm Road Gasholders and Adjacent Land, part of Vanguard Way

3.21 Adjacent to the Vanguard Way Employment Area, permission was granted in April 2026 for a B8 storage yard on the former gas holder site at Elm Road in Shoeburyness (HEA164) (Ref. 25/00922/FUL), providing 4,500 sq.m of floorspace (0.78 ha).

3.22 The freehold for an adjacent parcel of land immediately east of the site (HEA165) is held by the same owner, and as such, the site has been considered for potential development for the purposes of utilising and intensifying employment land opportunities. On this basis, an additional 3,500 sq.m of industrial/warehousing floorspace on 0.6 ha of land could be accommodated, based on the proposed plot ratio at the Elm Road Gasholders. This would be subject to further liaison with landowner(s)/promoter(s).

3.23 Therefore, these two adjoining sites would have the capacity to provide c. 8,000 sq.m of employment floorspace. Given that these sites are adjacent to Vanguard Way Employment Area, it is proposed that the boundary of Vanguard Way Employment Growth Area is amended/expanded to include them. When combined with the intensification potential of the existing employment area at Vanguard Way, in total, 9,600 sq.m of potential new employment floorspace across 1.7 ha forms part of the future supply.

b) Existing Employment Areas: Industrial/Business Estates

3.24 There are 11 existing Employment Areas (totalling 33.1ha), referred to as Industrial/Business Estates proposed within Policy DM6.3 Southend's Employment Areas. These areas should be protected to ensure that the existing well-established business activity can be maintained. On this basis, developments comprising Class E(g),

B2 and/or B8 uses are encouraged alongside ancillary amenity space that will further en hance their functionality. These areas are listed in Table 3-2.

Table 3-2 Land at Existing Employment Areas: Industrial/Business Estates (ha)

Existing Employment Areas: Industrial/Business Estates	Existing land area (ha)
Airbourne Close (EA001)	2.0
Airborne Industrial Estate (EA001)	1.4
Aviation Way (EA002)	1.6
Campfield Road (HEA268; EA033)	6.1
Comet Way (EA004)	6.1
Laurence Industrial Estate (EA005)	1.3
Priory Works (EA007)	1.0
Rosshill Industrial Park (EA008)	1.1
Short Street (EA035)	4.0
Tickfield Avenue Depot (HEA206; EA012)	1.2
Towerfield Road (HEA270; EA013)	7.2
Total	**33.1**

Source: Southend-on-Sea City Council (2026)
N.B. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

3.25 It should be noted that most of these sites are well-developed and accommodate important business activity, as discussed below.

Airborne Close & Airborne Industrial Estate

3.26 Airborne Close and Airborne Industrial Estate (EA001) cover 2.0 ha and 1.4 ha, respectively, located in the west of the city on the A127. Premises on the sites are predominantly for industrial and distribution use, in addition to a self-storage facility and small office block, providing just under 16,000 sq.m of employment floorspace. The Employment Area Surveys 2024 and 2025 noted that the premises across the two sites are of mixed quality and condition.

3.27 Both sites were assessed for their intensification potential within the Employment Intensification Study (2026). It was concluded that the size, layout and current extent of occupation restrict potential for further intensification. There are no relevant pending, extant or lapsed permissions for development on either site.

Aviation Way

3.28 Aviation Way (EA002) is located near the western edge of London Southend Airport, straddling the boundary between Rochford and Southend. The portion of the site within Southend includes two B2/B8 warehouses with supporting E(g)(i) office uses occupied by a long-standing single tenant, a sports footwear retailer. There are no relevant pending, extant or lapsed permissions on the site.

Campfield Road

3.29 Campfield Road (HEA268; EA033) covers an area of 6.1 ha in Shoeburyness, next to the Towerfield Road Industrial Estate, hosting two large industrial units (Use Class B2/B8).

Both units are of good quality and fully occupied by single, long-standing tenants. There are no lapsed, extant or pending planning applications for development on the site.

Comet Way

3.30 Comet Way (EA004) is located north west of London Southend Airport, opposite the Aviation Way and Laurence Industrial Estate sites, covering an area of 6.2 ha. There are no extant or pending permissions for employment uses at the site, and the Employment Intensification Study concluded that further potential for intensification at Comet Way is currently restricted by its size, layout, and extent of occupation; external areas are used for parking, access, servicing and/or storage use. Proximity to an existing residential area and the airport could potentially inform the scale extent and location of any development on the site. The site however continues to provide an important employment offer and function and should continue to be protected.

Laurence Industrial Estate

3.31 The Laurence Industrial Estate (EA005) is located in the north of Southend, close to the Aviation Way and Comet Way sites, and provides 39 small-scale premises of good quality and generally well-occupied. There are no extant or pending permissions for development on the site, and it continues to provide an important employment offer and function, and should continue to be protected.

Priory Works

3.32 Located to the north of the Southend Central Area, near Prittlewell station, Priory Works (EA007) covers 0.96ha and hosts (primarily) older, small-scale Class B2/ B8 uses. There is limited potential for intensification; there are no extant or pending permissions on the site, and the Employment Intensification Study has not identified any further potential for intensification on-site. It continues to provide an important employment offer and function, and should continue to be protected.

Rosshill Industrial Estate

3.33 Rosshill Industrial Estate (EA008) is located on Sutton Road, immediately opposite the Stock Road employment area. The site area is 1.1 ha. Units at Rosshill Industrial Estate typically date from the 1980s or 1990s, with a newer extension to the site built in 2008, providing approximately 3,700 sq.m of employment floorspace across B2 and B8 uses. It continues to provide an important employment offer and function, and should continue to be protected.

Short Street

3.34 The Short Street site (EA035) covers an area of 4.0 hectares located off Queensway to the north of the city centre. It comprises a small industrial/business estate including Royal Mail's Southend Mail Processing Unit and Delivery Office, in addition to Victoria Business Park. Southend City Council's grit depot is also located within the site. While no potential for intensification has been identified, it continues to provide an important employment offer and function, and should continue to be protected.

Tickfield Avenue Depot

3.35 The Tickfield Avenue Depot site (EA012; HEA206) covers an area of 1.2 ha within the central area, close to Prittlewell Station. The primary building on the site was converted for use as a Use Class F1 (former Class D1) conference facility, namely The Tickfield Centre, in 2010 (Ref. 09/01701/BC3). Other commercial units on the site include two garages and the premises for a removals company. White no potential for intensification has been identified, it continues to provide an important employment offer and function, and should continue to be protected.

Towerfield Road

3.36 Covering an area of 7.2 ha in Shoeburyness, next to the Campfield Road site, Towerfield Road (HEA270; EA013) hosts more than 60 premises of mixed quality and age. While the site was considered as a potential Employment Growth Area at the Regulation 18 stage, there are no extant or pending permissions for the site and the Employment Intensification Study has concluded that the layout and current extent of occupation restricts potential for further intensification. However, it continues to provide an important employment offer and function and should be protected as an Existing Employment Area.

c) Employment Allocations

3.37 There are two proposed employment allocations for the Local Plan, namely Land at Nestuda Way (taken forward from the 2014 JAAP) and the Whitegate Road site in the city centre. Together, these two allocations have a net capacity for 6,700 sq.m of employment floorspace across 2.8 ha of land over the plan period to 2045.

Table 3-3 Total future development capacity at employment allocations: floorspace (sq.m) and land (ha)

Site	Total Future Capacity	
	Floorspace (sq.m)	Land (ha)
Land at Nestuda Way (CA004)	5,000	2.8
Whitegate Road (EA019)	1,700	0.06
Total	**6,700**	**2.86**

Source: Southend-on-Sea City Council / Lichfields analysis.
N.B. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Land at Nestuda Way

3.38 Land at Nestuda Way (CA004) comprises 2.8 ha located south-west of London Southend Airport and falls within the Airport Public Safety Zone (PSZ), precluding residential development as well as being subject to height restrictions.

3.39 The site is proposed as a commercial and employment allocation within the Local Plan, identified to have a capacity of up to 5,000 sq.m for Class E, B2 and B8 uses. The site has also been identified to have the potential to accommodate other Sui Generis or airport servicing and/or airport-related uses, such as airport parking spaces, electric vehicle charging stations, and other relevant uses in conformity with the employment location.

Whitegate Road

3.40 Whitegate Road (EA019) is a small vacant site of just 0.06 ha adjacent to the High Street within Southend Central Area, with potential for infill development/ intensification

opportunity. There are no existing, lapsed or pending permissions on the site. Based on the existing built form north of the site, the Employment Intensification Study considers that there may be potential for Class E(g) development of up to 1,650 sq.m over five storeys. This assumes a small amount of accessible parking and a loading area at ground level. It is recommended that an allocation is progressed for the site.

d) Mixed-use Allocations

3.41 There are three potential mixed-use allocations/ opportunity sites, including the Better Queensway regeneration scheme and The Victoria Shopping Centre site in the city centre. The Better Queensway project is an existing allocation within the Southend Central Area Action Plan (SCAAP, 2018). There is also recognised to be potential for mixed-use allocations to land north of Southend (it is noted that these sites are located within the Green Belt, it is not the purpose of this paper to comment on matters of Green Belt, and as such commentary included looks at theoretical potential supply).

Table 3-4 Total future development capacity at mixed use allocations: floorspace (sq.m) and land (ha)

Site	Total Capacity	
	Floorspace (sq.m)	Land (ha)
Better Queensway (HEA096; EA039)	4,700	0.2*
Land North of Southend (CA001; CA002; CA003; HEA143; EA020)	12,500**	2.45
Victoria Shopping Centre (CA010)	3,500	0.4
Total	**20,700**	**3.05**

Source: Southend-on-Sea City Council and Prior + Partners (2026)

*Estimate based on the overall plot ratio for Queensway redevelopment.
**Estimate based on a 50% plot ratio based on the findings of the Employment Intensification Study (2026)
N.B. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Better Queensway (HEA096)

3.42 The Better Queensway site (HEA096; EA039), which covers an area of 10.5 ha within Southend City Centre, is an existing mixed-use allocation within the Southend Central Area Action Plan (SCAAP, 2018) and has extant hybrid planning permission. Based on the baseline analysis informing the SCAAP 2018, the identified net employment space within E(g)/B2/B8 Use Classes capacity totals c. 4,700 sq.m; this figure should be kept under review as the scheme particulars may be subject to future change. It is identified within the Local Plan as a site allocation.

The Victoria Shopping Centre (Broad Location/ Opportunity Site CA010)

3.43 The existing Victoria Plaza shopping centre has a number of vacant units, and would benefit from diversification including office, additional food and drink outlets, and leisure/recreation opportunities. There is considered to be a reasonable prospect that this diversification will occur during the plan period, with c. 3,500 sq.m of Class E(g) office floorspace in the City Centre assumed as part of this. It is identified within the Local Plan as a broad location/ opportunity site.

Land North of Southend

3.44 Assumptions relating to potential for employment provision within the sites that comprise Land North of Southend indicate potential for 12,500 sq.m of employment floorspace here,

comprising E(g)/ B use classes, and other commercial floorspace and community facilities to create vibrant local centres.

e) Supply Position

3.45 Table 3-5 summarises the supply position that has been identified to support the economic activity of the city and accommodate the economic needs to 2045. There is a total of 68,400 sq.m of additional land identified as potentially coming forward to 2045. The estimation of floorspace is considered more accurate than the land area, given that in some cases the latter relates to total site areas that may accommodate other uses alongside employment uses.

Table 3-5 Employment Supply Position: floorspace (sq.m) and land (ha)

	Total Future Supply	
	Floorspace (sq.m)	Land (ha)
Employment Growth Areas	41,000	9.20
Industrial/Business Estates	0	0.00
Employment Allocations	6,700	2.86
Mixed Use Allocations	20,700	3.05
Total Supply	**68,400**	**15.1**

Source: Southend City Council (2026)
N.B. Figures may not sum due to rounding.

4. Releases of Employment Land

4.1 The 2021 Employment Release Topic Paper assesses the future potential of employment areas identified as either performing poorly compared to other employment areas, or as less well-suited to meeting future needs based on earlier economic evidence. The Employment Release Topic Paper has supported Policy DM6.3b: Existing Employment Areas to be removed from employment area designation.

f) Existing Employment Areas to be removed

4.2 Three sites were identified in the Employment Release Topic Paper as sites to be released from employment uses (i.e., E(g), B2 and B8 Use Classes) to accommodate potential for other development needs:

- **Grainger Road (HEA267; EA032 – 2.8ha):** Accessibility, parking and circulation space is constrained, particularly within the site and for large/ heavy vehicles, and there are neighbouring residential uses. The site has had high vacancy rates for a number of years, with poor quality stock condition. On this basis, in addition to viability constraints on the refurbishment or redevelopment of the existing stock for industrial uses, the site was recommended for release from employment area designation. The site is instead recommended as having potential for cultural-led mixed-use redevelopment with residential and live-work units, in addition to modern commercial floorspace on part of the site, with amenity space and landscaping.
- **Prince Close (HEA266; EA006 – 0.6ha):** a small employment area located directly off the A127 and approximately half of the site has been redeveloped in recent years for residential uses, while the remaining units have attracted other uses such as a gym and music studio. As a result, only a small portion still in Class B industrial use (c. 200 sq.m). It is also surrounded by residential uses to the south and east, and has constraints in terms of vehicle access and circulation. On this basis, the site was recommended for release from employment designation to provide opportunities for a residential-led development.
- **Terminal Close (HEA265; EA036 – 1.49ha):** is located in Shoeburyness, directly north of Shoeburyness train station and sidings, and surrounded by residential uses. There are a number of vacancies across the site, alongside other non-Class B industrial/warehousing uses, resulting in a limited industrial activity on site. Access is also limited. As such, the site was proposed for release from employment uses to provide potential for mixed-use residential-led development and potential for small-scale, modern commercial floorspace.

4.3 Across the three employment sites identified for release to alternative uses, redevelopment would result in the loss of 11,800 sq.m of employment floorspace or 3.6 ha of land. However, given that Grainger and Terminal Close are not specifically being promoted for redevelopment, the Local Plan identifies these as broad locations/ opportunity sites that may be in part delivered beyond the plan period. The exact loss of employment floorspace is unknown at this time.

g) Former Employment Areas to be removed

4.4 There are two further sites, namely Prittlebrook Industrial Estate and Shoebury Garrison (Phase 1), which are no longer primarily in employment use as both have been redeveloped to other (and primarily residential) uses, and as such, can be released from employment designations through the Local Plan:

- **(Former) Prittlebrook Industrial Estate:** The site was redeveloped in the mid-2010s (Ref. 14/00943/FULM) for residential use (230+ new homes) with a hospice and a supermarket to the front of the site.
- **Shoebury Garrison (Phase 1):** The area is now predominantly residential, with further new residential development underway. The original three office buildings on the site have since been surrounded by residential uses, with one converted to convenience retail uses. As such, the employment element of the site is no longer required to be designated.

h) Summary

4.5 A total of five previously designated employment areas are proposed to be released through the emerging Local Plan. As discussed above, these sites are either performing poorly and are not expected to meaningfully contribute to meeting future needs, or have already been developed for other uses.

5.Policies

5.1 The emerging Local Plan aims to support the economic prosperity of the City by providing the necessary additional space to facilitate the economic development needs expected by 2045, and supporting local businesses and attracting new investment.

5.2 On this basis, the City's employment areas should provide space for Class E(g), B2 and B8 uses. In addition, supporting Sui Generis uses of an employment nature and ancillary amenities will be permitted as appropriate and where it can be demonstrated that they complement the function and character of the employment areas.

5.3 This section sets out the purpose and justification for the proposed employment policies with reference to the supporting evidence base.

i) Policy DM6.1: Employment Sectors

Policy DM6.1: Employment Sectors
1. New employment development proposals will be supported where they contribute to the promotion of sustainable economic growth and increase the capacity and quality of employment land, floorspace and jobs in the city.
1. Southend City Centre and Southend Central Neighbourhood will form the primary location for major economic growth.
2. To attract and promote investment and maximise benefits, employment development proposals of the appropriate type, scale and character that are focused on the Economic Sectors identified within Policy Table DM6.1 will principally be directed to the identified Priority Locations (Policy Table DM6.1), alongside the rest of Southend's Employment Areas identified in Policy DM6.3a, with any exceptions to be considered on an individual site basis.

Justification

5.4 Proposed Policy DM6.1 seeks to encourage economic growth, as well as identify the key economic sectors and priority locations for them in Southend. Enabling economic growth has a key role to play in levelling up disparities across the city and bringing about positive changes. The Southend Economic Growth Strategy (2024-2028) highlights the importance of supporting established businesses and organisations across the city to achieve sustainable economic growth, particularly within key economic sectors, and driving the development of local skills and training, employment and infrastructure. It recognises the important role of micro, small and medium enterprises within Southend, and promotes them to deliver a growing business base in the city.

5.5 The Southend INA (2026) estimates a recommended requirement of 58,600 sqm to 68,300 sq.m. In particular, the assessment concludes that:

- In terms of **office space requirements, a balanced approach would be to plan for around 25,600 sq.m,** reflecting Scenario 3B Labour Supply 735dpa (in relation to a

housing provision of 735 dpa, including hybrid working patterns adjustment). This estimate comprises the most balanced figure across the six scenarios tested in the study. It is also close (albeit slightly lower) than the requirement identified by Scenario 1B Labour Demand Changing Working Patterns in Office-Based Sectors. Although the office market is relatively weak and very localised currently, the Plan is recommended to provide for the long-term and seek to accommodate a modest scale of future growth to help encourage and sustain a diversified economy and allow local service sectors to grow.

- Regarding **light industrial, industrial and storage and distribution space requirements, a range between 33,000 sq.m and 42,700 sq.m** has been recommended to inform the Plan's provision. The lower end is based on Scenario 3B Labour Supply 735 dpa, while the upper reflects better the emerging market trends, allowing for some further flexibility and can potentially cater for any latent demand in the market as estimated by the Labour Demand Scenarios 1A & 1B.

5.6 On this basis, taking into account supply, the Council aims to provide for 68,400 sq.m in total on a flexible basis across E(g) and B uses as far as possible. However, and aligned with the Council's Economic Strategy, the Policy also identifies the Key Economic Sectors and the Priority Locations to ensure that anticipated economic opportunities can be accommodated.

j) Policy DM6.3: Employment Areas

Policy DM6.3: Employment Areas
1. Major development proposals within the city's Employment Areas (Policy Table DM6.3a), as defined on the Policies Map, should make provision for a range of flexible unit sizes, including accommodation that supports small and medium sized enterprises, to ensure the needs of businesses are met. This should take account of the location and type of business(es) proposed to ensure land is used efficiently. Where appropriate, incubator/ seedbed/ enterprise centre, 'grow on', and/ or affordable workspaces will be sought. Opportunities to enhance sustainable connections to the Employment Areas will be encouraged, and development should have regard to principles set out in Policy DM7.1 to ensure good quality design is achieved, including Secured by Design principles.
2. The Council will investigate the use of Article 4 Directions where appropriate in the city's Employment Areas to ensure their commercial function is maintained and protected from loss of commercial premises through the introduction of residential uses.
3. Support the retention, enhancement and development of Class B and Class E(g)i-iii uses within the city's Employment Areas (Policy Table DM6.3a) that contribute to the delivery of new jobs, in accordance with Policy SP6, and provide well-designed buildings and flexible layouts. Proposals that fall outside of a Class B and Class E(g)i-iii employment use will only be granted permission where:

i. the development proposal is a 'Sui Generis' use of a similar employment nature, which is compatible with and will not compromise the operating conditions of the Employment Area; or

ii. the development proposal is in conformity with a planning brief, or similar document, that has been adopted by the Council for the concerned site, which sets out other appropriate uses; or

iii. it can be demonstrated to the Council's satisfaction that:

a) there is no long term or reasonable prospect of the site concerned being used for Class B or Class E(g)i-iii purposes*; and

b) the use is compatible with and will not compromise the operating conditions for other employment uses or the potential future use of neighbouring sites for employment uses; and

c) the alternative use cannot be reasonably located elsewhere within the area it serves**; and

d) the use will not give rise to unacceptable traffic generation, noise, odour or vehicle parking; or,

e) the development will be a complementary and supporting use, which is both subservient and ancillary to the principal employment use and serves the daytime needs of the employment area's working population and will not result in a material change to the character and function of the area.

4. The Employment Growth Areas (Policy Table DM6.3a) will be promoted as locations for increased modern employment floorspace.

5. The Employment Areas should remain the primary focus for employment uses. Proposals for employment generating uses located outside of the Employment Areas will be permitted in principle where they do not impact upon the amenity of the surrounding uses and do not conflict with other local plan policies and in line with Policy SP1 and SP2.

6. Outside the Employment Areas, proposals for alternative uses on sites used (or last used) for employment purposes, including sites for sui generis uses of an employment nature, will be permitted where it can be demonstrated that:

i. it will no longer be effective or viable to accommodate the continued use of the site for employment purposes***;

ii. use of the site for Class B use gives rise to unacceptable environmental problems; and

iii. an alternative use or mix of uses will give greater potential benefits to the community and environment than continued employment use.

7. Development proposals for sensitive uses, including residential, in close proximity to or within the Employment Areas, must not put at risk the survival of uses and existing industries which are important to the city's economy and the Agent of Change Principle will apply (Policy DM9.3).

** This should include a minimum 1-year active marketing exercise where the vacant site/ floorspace has been offered for sale or letting on the open market at a realistic price and that no reasonable offers have been refused. In exceptional cases related to site specific circumstances, where the vacancy period has been less than 1 year, a robust market demand analysis which supplements any marketing and vacancy evidence may be considered acceptable. Appendix 5 Part A and B set out the information to be provided in relation to marketing and market demand.*

*** The Council will make a judgement about the extent of the area based upon the site's characteristics and the proposed use.*

**** Appendix 5 Part C sets out the information to be provided as part of this appraisal.*

k) Justification

5.7 Proposed Policy DM6.3 sets out the approach to managing the city's employment areas. Developable land in Southend is a limited resource which needs to be effectively utilised to facilitate economic growth. Employment land in Southend has relatively lower land values compared to other land uses, such as residential, and as a consequence it is necessary for land in employment use to be safeguarded or allocated as such in order to facilitate present and future economic growth. On this basis, the city's existing designated Employment Areas have been reviewed to determine whether they continue to serve a clear purpose in terms of employment land provision and local jobs generation.

5.8 The city's Employment Areas (Policy Table DM6.3a) are recommended to be protected and maintained for employment uses. The Employment Areas, alongside the City Centre and the wider Southend Central Neighbourhood, form a network of locations where new economic development and investment will be focused. The retention and provision of employment areas is necessary to enable balanced job and housing growth within Southend, in accordance with Strategic Policies SP5 and SP6.

5.9 The Employment Areas contain a range of sites and premises that meet the needs of the business community. Within this context, the Employment Growth Areas as well as those new employment locations including those being part of mixed-use allocations (see Policy Table DM6.3a) are recognised for their potential to provide for increased/modern employment floorspace. These sites – which includes green belt sites (land north of Southend) - provide opportunities to intensify employment uses and make efficient and effective use of land for employment purposes. These areas are expected to provide approximately an additional 68,400 sq.m of floorspace.

5.10 There are several other employment areas within the city that fall under the category of industrial/business estates (see Table 5-1 below). These employment areas also provide an important economic function and will therefore be retained and protected for employment uses, although an increase in employment floorspace in these locations is

not projected. Within all employment areas, it will be important to ensure that any new employment floorspace is designed to respond to changing business needs and supporting economic growth, and encourage regeneration and renewal. For example, by allowing capacity and flexibility for 'grow-on' space as well as larger footprint space where appropriate and having regard to the character and function of each employment area. It is expected that the majority of growth within the employment areas will take place within the employment growth areas.

Table 5-1: Employment Areas and Proposed Employment/ Mixed Use Allocations

Designation	Name of Employment Area	Future Employment Floorspace Capacity (sq.m)
Employment Growth Areas	Airport Business Park	16,500
	Progress Road	11,000
	Stock Road	1,900
	Temple Farm	2,000
	Thanet Grange	-
	Vanguard Way including Elm Road Gas Holders and Adjacent Land	9,600
Employment Allocations	Whitegate Road, City Centre	1,700
	Land at Nestuda Way	5,000
Mixed Use Allocations	Better Queensway	4,700
	Land North of Southend	12,500
	City Centre including Victoria Plaza	3,500
Industrial/Business Estates	Airbourne Close	-
	Airbourne Industrial Estate	-
	Aviation Way	-
	Campfield Road	-
	Comet Way	
	Laurence Industrial Estate	-
	Priory Works	-
	Rosshill Industrial Park	-
	Short Street	-
	Tickfield Avenue Depot	-
	Towerfield Road	
Total Additional Capacity (sqm)		**68,400**

5.11 Micro, small and medium Enterprises make an important contribution to the Southend economy. The Economic Growth Strategy (2024-2028) seeks to promote Southend as the home of such businesses, focusing on sectors that bring the greatest value. To facilitate growth, it is recognised that micro, small and medium enterprises are likely to require flexible layouts, with potential for incubator, micro spaces and 'grow-on' spaces, and flexibly designed, medium-sized premises to meet the needs of businesses in the middle stage of growth. Consideration should be given to their provision within

employment areas as appropriate (recognising that some existing employment areas, such as Vanguard Way, already include such premises).

5.12 In terms of permitted development rights, the Council will investigate the use of an Article 4 Direction for the city's Employment Areas as appropriate, particularly if there is a prevalence of Class E and Class B8 uses within an employment area that could – subject to the prior approval process – be permitted to change to residential use, and which would be detrimental to a function and continued viability as an employment site.

l) Policy DM6.3b: Existing Employment Areas to be removed from employment area designation

5.13 There are five sites that have been identified as either poorly performing and/ or their context does not imply that they will make a meaningful contribution to future supply, or have already been redeveloped to other non-employment-generating uses, based on the Employment Site Release Topic Paper (2021) and Employment Areas Surveys (2024).

5.14 The employment area designation of these five sites totalling 3.6 ha will be removed to assist regeneration and create potential to deliver a mix of uses. Table 5-2 provides the details of these areas. These sites would comprise broad locations for future growth aligned with NNPF (paragraph 72b), which outlines that authorities can identify broad locations for growth/ opportunity sites where possible that could come forward in later years of the Plan period.

5.15 This will allow a 'plan-first' approach in the redevelopment of those areas and enhance their future development and delivery. Future reviews of the Local Plan can determine whether the designation of Broad Locations/ Opportunity Sites has been effective in bringing sites forward.

5.16 In particular, the Council will support the redevelopment of those sites to provide additional new homes that relate better to nearby existing residential properties and may include an element of new commercial floorspace (further details provided within site allocations within the Local Plan). A Development Brief and/ or design code should be agreed with the Council to successfully guide and manage redevelopment, providing high-quality, energy-efficient buildings and well-designed neighbourhoods.

Table 5-2: Existing Employment Areas to be removed from employment area designation

Employment Area	Description/ Justification	Recommendation
Grainger Road	Located in Southend Central, bounded by residential uses to the north and south, Short Street Employment Area to the east, and Sutton Road and Greyhound Way to the west. Notable areas of poorer quality stock within the estate, with limited road access, and narrow/ limited access and circulation and parking space within the estate, particularly for large/ heavy vehicles, prevalence of vacancies and non-B class/E(g) employment uses.	Remove employment area designation. Development in accordance with site allocation HEA267.
Prince Close	Small area located directly off the A127. A former large factory on the eastern part of the site has been redeveloped for residential. On the remainder of the site, there is a mix of uses, and therefore a small proportion of the site remains in B class/E(g) employment use. Other factors include restricted road access passing through residential areas, constraints on site for vehicle access, and adjacent to residential uses.	Remove employment area designation. Development in accordance with site allocation HEA266.
Terminal Close	Located in Shoeburyness, directly north of the train station and sidings, and surrounded by residential uses. There is limited road access – one access point onto/ out of the site, and limited circulation space. There are a number of vacancies across the site, and other non-B class/ E(g) employment uses, and poorer/ dated quality of stock.	Remove employment area designation. Development in accordance with site allocation HEA265.
Former Employment Areas already redeveloped for mixed use		
(Former) Prittle Brook Industrial Estate	*The former Prittle Brook Industrial Estate has been redeveloped, primarily for residential use with a hospice and supermarket to the front of the site, the site therefore necessitates release from its employment designation.*	*Remove employment area designation – site has been redeveloped, primarily for residential use.*
Shoebury Garrison (Phase 1)	*A small area located in the east of the City. Since the construction of three office buildings on part of the site, a number of residential properties have been built around them, and one of the commercial buildings is in retail use, and another has been converted to residential. Residential uses dominate this area.*	*Remove employment area designation – site has been redeveloped, primarily for residential use.*