

# Gravesham

## Call for Employment Sites

September 2024



## What is the background to the project?

### Overview

- Gravesham Borough Council's [Corporate Plan](#), includes key commitments to energise the local economy, revitalize towns and elevate the borough's skills offer.
- As part of these ambitions, the council is working to prepare information and evidence to inform the Council's emerging Local Plan and Economic Development activities.
- As part of this process, we are seeking to gain insights into the needs of businesses and other employers; and, to identify additional employment sites (beyond existing allocations and established employment locations) to deliver on the future growth requirements of existing businesses and new startups.
- We are also looking to businesses and landowners to submit potential employment sites for consideration. Proposals could cover both traditional and non-traditional employment spaces, including novel uses.
- Once employment sites (land or existing sites / buildings for redevelopment) have been put forward, these sites will be considered as part of the emerging Local Plan, with suitable sites being potentially considered for future land allocations, exploration of financing / funding opportunities, partnership delivery, acquisition, promotion etc.
- This document is being used to brief stakeholders on the project and its key requirements and to invite submission of appropriate sites that may support Gravesham's Corporate Plan objectives. The document has been split into the following key areas:
  - 1) **Gravesham's economic ambitions**
  - 2) **Performance of Gravesham's commercial market**
  - 3) **Traditional spaces that can achieve local economic ambitions**
  - 4) **Non-traditional spaces that can achieve local economic ambitions**
  - 5) **Call for sites**
  - 6) **Next steps**

### Purpose of the Project

- The Council's Corporate Plan sets out clear objectives to energise the economy, revitalise our towns and elevate the skills offer for local residents and businesses.
- This call for sites exercise will seek to unlock the potential of the local economy for the Borough's businesses and residents.
- Ensuring the needs of the local economy, businesses and residents are at the forefront of our thinking, by seeking to respond to demand from within the business and wider community, for space to further grow new and existing enterprises.
- If you have property or are aware of land or property that could be suitable for an existing or novel employment-generating use, please do get in touch to talk it through, or simply submit details.

### Who are we looking to speak to?

- We are looking to speak to anyone with a demonstrable interest in how we can practically provide new or improved space to accommodate local enterprise, of all types.
- You might be:
  - *A local landowner or business with your own property or land holdings, looking to add / adapt your existing premises or to redevelop in full or part, for a different type of employment-generating use.*
  - *A property agent, developer or landowner, with existing or potential new sites that you would like to offer for assessment and feedback by independent consultants working for the Borough.*
  - *A business new to the area, looking to invest in a new employment-generating use.*
  - *A building contractor specialising in employment spaces such as offices (including flexible workspaces), light industrial or production space.*
  - *A rural landowner, with an interest in diversification or new land-based industries (farming innovation, visitor economy, localised power generation – for example).*

# Economic Development Ambitions

## Gravesham's Economic Ambitions

### The Corporate Plan 2023-27

The Corporate Plan presents a clear ambition for the borough. In working towards this, the plan establishes the strategic direction for the council through a suite of corporate objectives and supporting policy commitments that will guide everything we do.

The Corporate Plan includes the following commitments:

- **Vibrant Gravesham:** with partners, secure a holistic programme of strategic regeneration and critical infrastructure that enhances quality of life, promotes civic pride, and acts as a catalyst for economic development.
- **Energised economy:** attract new investment to deliver a more balanced local economy and provide a platform for sustainable growth, supporting existing companies and inspiring new business start-ups.
- **Skills offer:** upgrade Gravesham's employment profile by championing a one-stop service, proactively connecting industry with key partner agencies, schools, colleges, and training providers.
- **Revitalised towns:** as the heartbeat of our borough, deliver a suite of innovative initiatives to create attractive and resilient town centres, supported by an efficient and valued town centre team.
- **Sustainable development:** deliver positive development management, framed by a sound Local Plan that enhances our unique natural and built environment.



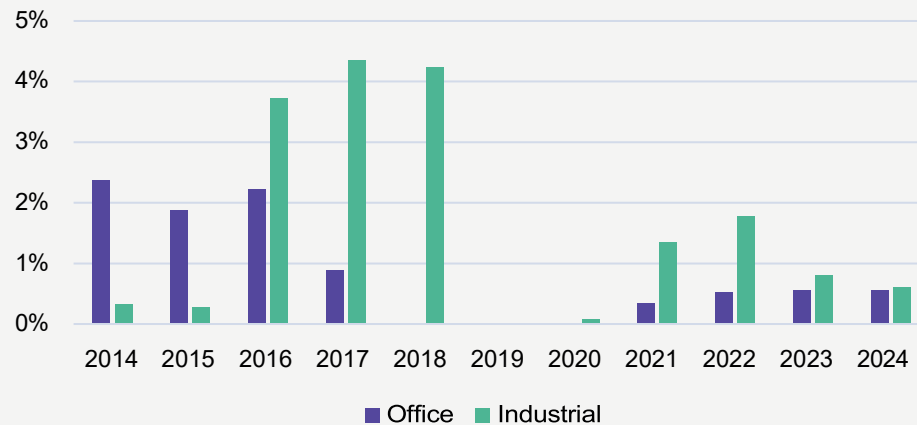
# Commercial Performance

## Performance of Gravesham's commercial market

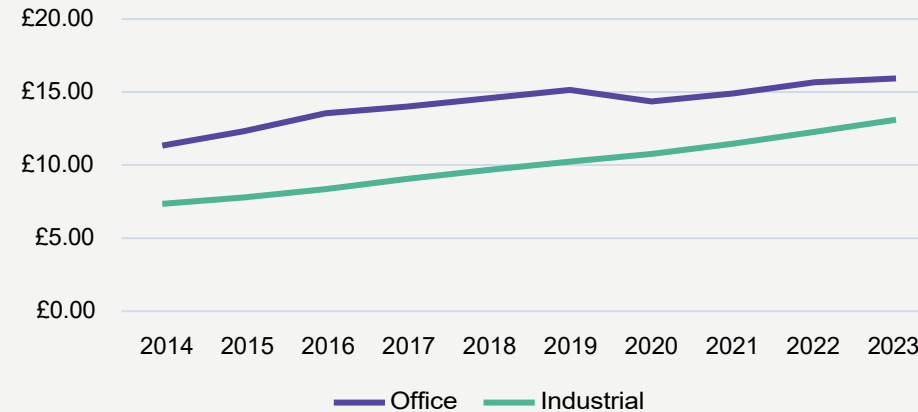
### Commercial Stock Overview

	Total Properties	Total Floorspace	Total Floorspace Growth (10 years)	Current Rents (2024)	Rental Growth (10 years)	Current Vacancy (2024)
Office	118	652,381	0%	£15.94	29%	1%
Industrial	129	3,398,562	5%	£13.10	44%	1%

### Vacancy Rates



### Rental Values



- Office and Industrial stock give an indication of the local market for business premises, though we are interested in all types of space including novel types and uses for all sectors.
- There has been **limited delivery** of new office and industrial stock within the borough over the last 10 years.
- **Vacancy rates have remained at low-levels** over a 10-year period for both offices and industrial space. They are now at sub 1% for both uses, indicating a level of vacancy that does not provide healthy opportunity for churn.
- Despite limited delivery of new stock, **rental values have continued to grow** for both offices and industrial space.
- These indicators combined indicate a clear **imbalance** between the depth of **demand** in the market and current available **supply**. This is limiting the ability to the local economy to grow and support economic development ambitions for Gravesham.
- It is in this context that GBC wish to identify **new sites** to deliver high-quality, market facing employment development. Given the local economy is more industrial in nature these types of uses are considered the priority, though it is recognised that office-based sectors (incl. micro business space) could play more of a role in the borough's future.

# Commercial Space Examples

## Traditional spaces that can achieve local economic ambitions

### Employment Spaces – Business Units

- Given the economic and commercial context described above, GBC is seeking additional sites that can support a range of traditional commercial uses. These are primarily industrial in nature.
- Example uses have been provided below and in the images to the right. These are indicative of the sorts of uses that could support economic development objectives. However, the council is not prescriptive on suggested uses and will consider a range of options.

Number	Descriptor	Typical Size
1	Small scale warehouse / distribution	5,000 – 10,000 sq ft
2	Small scale light industrial / manufacturing	Sub – 5,000 sq ft
3	Mid box warehouse / distribution	25,000 – 50,000 sq ft
4	SME flexible office accommodation	Mixed floorplates from c. 500 – 10,000 sq ft
5	Science & Innovation	Mixed spaces
6	Co-working	Shared space, typically over 10,000 sq ft.
7	Makerspace	Open-plan shared workshop – sizes vary.



1  
Tonbridge Trade Park, Kent



2  
Precision 2 Business Park, Sittingbourne, Kent



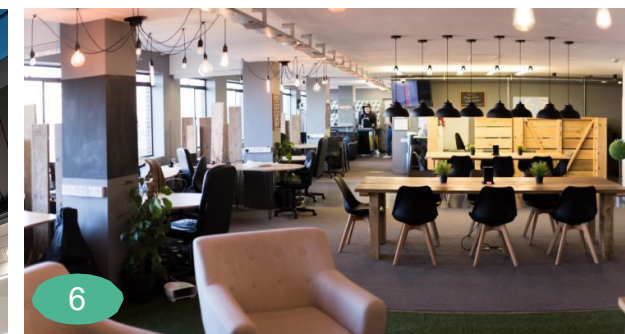
3  
LOC8, Maidstone, Kent



4  
Box City, Sunderland Quay, Rochester



5  
Kent Science Park, Sittingbourne, Kent



6  
Dragon Co-Working, Medway, Kent



7  
The Shed, University of Kent

# Commercial Space Examples

## Non-traditional spaces that can achieve local economic ambitions

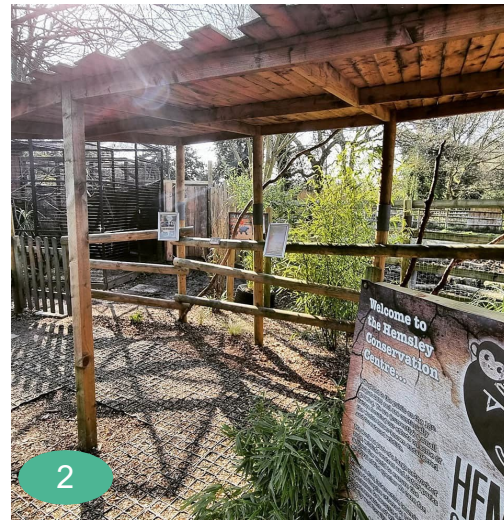
### Employment Spaces-Diversification

- GBC is also seeking sites that can support a range of more novel uses.
- Example uses have been provided below and in the images to the right. It is recognised that by definition, novel uses may come in a wide array of sites and configurations. The council is not prescriptive on suggested uses and will consider a range of options. Examples are simply provided as a guide.

Number	Descriptor
1	Office space, an exhibition hall and meeting rooms.
2 / 3 / 4	Farm diversification projects & attractions
5	Tethered Living
6	Food and Beverage



1  
Woodland Enterprise Centre, Flimwell.



2  
Hemsley Conservation Centre, Kent



3  
Denbies Wine Estate, Dorking



4  
Eastwell Manor, Ashford, Kent



5  
Flimwell Park, Kent



6  
The Wishful Thinker, Lenham

# Call for Sites

## What sites will support delivery of this space?

### Land Requirements

- We are seeking landowners (and/or agents) to submit sites that may be suitable to accommodate the types of uses set out on the previous slide.
- Once employment sites have been put forward, we will evaluate the suitability of each to support local economic ambitions and the emerging Local Plan. Sites put forward will be considered via the emerging Local Plan process for allocation (if appropriate). In addition to this, consideration will be given to whether opportunities exist to explore external financing / funding opportunities, partnership delivery, acquisition, promotion etc, of sites to support.

**Participation in this study is done so at the promoters' risk and participation does not guarantee sites will be included or further dialogue will follow.**

- You may be contacted for further information, should we have queries in relation to your site during it's assessment.
- It is critical that site submissions present development opportunities that will meet occupier requirements. Typically, occupiers in either the knowledge economy, or the manufacturing/industrial/ distribution sectors will have a distinct set of needs:
- **Well located sites:**
  - In industrial terms, a location that allows optimal servicing of customer base, access to the supply chain, strategic road access, and access to a supply of labour and power.
  - In office terms, a location that provides access to highly-skilled labour is very important.
  - Clustering with other businesses is likely to create the most attractive environment.
  - For all uses, accessibility with strong public transport, digital connectivity and access to local amenities is a key requirement.
- **High specification facilities**
  - In both industrial and office terms, and with more novel uses, strong ESG credentials and enhanced working environment for employees are important.
- GBC is open to receiving site submissions in a variety of configurations, sizes and locations including sites unsuitable for housing that may better suit employment uses.



## What are the next steps?

### Information Requirements

[Proposed sites can be submitted via our online form](#) alongside relevant information. This information is required to help us assess and short list relevant sites. The type of information we are looking for is set out below.

#### Basic Details & Planning Status:

- What is the site name/ address?
- What is the site size (ha)?
- What is the existing use of the site?
- Is there any active planning application, allocation, or planning designation on the site?
- What is the site's ownership?

#### Site Opportunities / Constraints:

- What uses are most appropriate on the site?
- Why is this site deemed suitable?
- Are there any known constraints / barriers to development on the site e.g. legal covenants?
- How accessible is the site?
- What are the sites' neighbouring uses?

### Project Timescales

- Once the information has been collected, it will be considered as part of the information being developed as part of the local plan process.
- The work that follows will:
  - 1) Provide an assessment of the future economic growth potential of the borough.
  - 2) Deliver a more detailed assessment of sites that could potentially assist in delivering further economic growth within the Borough.
  - 3) Feed-in to the emerging local plan process.
- This call for sites exercise will form an integral part of this report.
- Please can suitable sites be submitted as soon as possible and no later than the **end of October 2024**. [Click here to access the form for completion](#).
- Once sites have been considered by the Council, should we have any queries we will be in touch. If there is any additional support that can be offered to assist the delivery of a site, we will provide you with further information and details of next steps.
- If you have any questions, please reach out to  
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