

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Local Plan



Employment Areas Survey

2024



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Cheshire West
and Chester

Established Employment Areas Survey 2024

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1 Introduction

1 Introduction

1.1 A review of established employment areas within Cheshire West and Chester has been undertaken to provide supporting evidence for future updates to the Local Plan.

1.2 The Council's Local Plan (Part One) Strategic Policies was adopted January 2015, with the Local Plan (Part Two) Land Allocations and Detailed Policies adopted July 2019. The economic policies in the adopted plan were informed by evidence in the Employment Land Study (2009) and Employment Land Study Update (2013) respectively, alongside other evidence reports on specific employment areas and land availability. The employment land study provided a full assessment of the supply and demand for employment land (offices, industrial, warehousing and distribution) taking account of a range of factors. This included national policies, sub-regional analysis with adjacent areas, property market trends, business needs, land supply, demand analysis (historic take up and economic forecasts). It made recommendations on the identification of employment land allocations, and future employment requirements, in the local plan. The adopted Local Plan seeks to deliver 365ha employment land 2010-2030, to provide for a range of types and sizes of site in locations across the borough.

1.3 Since adoption of the Local Plans, the Council's Annual Monitoring Reports (AMR) monitor progress on the quantitative supply and delivery of employment land, including key sites. They also contain quantitative information on loss of employment land to other uses. There is some evidence through the AMR data, alongside other national policy/legislative changes, that in specific locations the borough's employment land and premises are no longer viable and being redeveloped to alternative uses.

1.4 The quality of the borough's employment locations is an important factor in supporting future economic growth and development. Given the pressure for redevelopment to other uses, the Employment Land Study (2009 and 2013) included an appraisal of the main employment areas of the borough, their role and function, and suitability to future market demands. It identified their position in the borough's settlement hierarchy, and also provided a hierarchy of employment areas across the borough.

1.5 This report reviews the borough's established employment areas in 2023, to identify any changes in quality or type that have taken place since these previous employment land studies and since the start of the plan period. This survey will be used to inform additional evidence information required for the local plan, including future Economic Needs Assessments and Economic Land Availability Assessments.

2 Policy context

2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF December 2024) promotes sustainable development, which helps to build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places to support economic growth, innovation and improved productivity⁽ⁱ⁾. Strategic policies of the local plan should set out the strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places making sufficient provision for employment and commercial development and infrastructure.⁽ⁱⁱ⁾

2.2 The Government's Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides guidance on the evidence required to plan for future business needs, to understand current and future requirements.⁽ⁱⁱⁱ⁾ This includes an assessment of the stock of land for employment uses within an area, alongside recent patterns of employment land supply and loss. This will be assessed through this report, to be considered alongside the Council's AMR data. In addition, an Economic Needs Assessment will be prepared for the borough to be read alongside this Employment Areas Survey and other relevant supporting evidence.

2.3 Other factors to be considered include evidence of market signals, market demand, business needs surveys, property market data and consultations with developers, agents, businesses or economic forums. Further evidence on these factors, and engagement with relevant stakeholders, will also be considered in the preparation of the new Local Plan.

2.4 NPPF requires the Local Plan to have regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration^(iv). Cheshire West and Chester sits within the Cheshire and Warrington sub-region. The Cheshire and Warrington Local Enterprise Partnership produced updated economic data and evidence in September 2022 for the Sustainable Economic Plan [Cheshire and Warrington Sustainable & Inclusive Economic Plan - Cheshire and Warrington](#)

2.5 Economic data is available in the Cheshire and Warrington Local Industrial Strategy 2019/20 https://cheshireandwarrington.com/media/nllbfshc/ai-9-lis-summary-doc_march-19_low.pdf, and Cheshire West and Chester Local Area Industrial Strategy 2019 [ai-9-lis-summary-doc_march-19_low.pdf \(cheshireandwarrington.com\)](#).

2.6 The Cheshire West and Chester Inclusive Economy Strategy 2022 provides further context on the borough's economy and sets the vision for future economic growth in the borough. [Inclusive Economy | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)

Nationally significant infrastructure projects

2.7 The Government also sets out policies and guidance for Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (NSIPs). These are treated separately to normal local authority planning policies as they are large scale projects due to their size and importance to wider communities (for example power stations, highways, renewable energy, pipe lines, port and transport infrastructure). The National Policy Statement for ports (January 2012) emphasises the role of ports in the UK economy for the movement of freight and bulky goods. It is noted that some of the borough's employment areas may be affected by nationally

i NPPF 2024 paragraph 85

ii NPPF 2024 paragraph 20

iii PPG paragraph: 026 Reference ID: 2a-026-20190220, revision date 20 02 2019

iv NPPF paragraph 86

2 Policy context

significant infrastructure projects. Further information on specific NSIP's can be found at: [Welcome to Find a National Infrastructure Project](#)

Location and type of employment areas 3

3 Location and type of employment areas

3.1 The Local Plan settlement strategy includes the main urban areas of Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich, Winsford and the rural area. Within the rural area there are key services centres, which provide a good range of services and facilities. The distribution of employment land, sites and premises across the borough is uneven, with Ellesmere Port being the most industrialised, having the majority of employment areas and larger sites and greater land availability.

3.2 The borough's employment land portfolio caters for a wide range of sizes and types of business. Previous Employment Land Studies have identified an employment hierarchy for Cheshire West and Chester comprised of;

- Flagship sites – those sites of a scale, location and setting capable of meeting sub-regional demands, or new investment opportunities
- Specialist / Narrow Band Areas – sites and locations with specialist uses, or growth sectors.
- Key employment areas – those which have an influence across the borough, or a size and presence to meet a range of employment uses, will cater for indigenous business growth
- Key local areas – offer employment opportunities to a local area, providing expansion opportunities for small/medium enterprises and start ups
- Key rural areas – offer employment opportunities to rural areas, expansion needs of rural businesses or rural start up industries.

3.3 There are also some major employers located in the borough including; Essar, Encirc, Stellantis/Vauxhall, Urenco, Thor specialities, Tata chemicals. The borough's portfolio of employment land may also include expansion/surplus land for these major employers.

3.4 The adopted Local Plan makes employment land allocations to meet the borough's needs to 2030. These undeveloped employment land allocations are an important part of the employment land portfolio for the borough, offering opportunities for new development and investment. The Employment Areas Survey only reviews established/built employment areas in the borough. The review of undeveloped land allocations will be undertaken through the Council's Land Availability Assessment.

4 Purpose of the study

4 Purpose of the study

4.1 The overall purpose of the study is;

- To undertake a qualitative assessment of established employment areas in the borough, to inform future planning policies on employment land (for retention, refurbishment or release for alternative uses)
- To inform the Land Availability Assessment, including the identification of vacant or surplus land and premises. The survey will inform the assessment of specific sites for suitability, availability and achievability for future employment use
- To provide a broad assessment to inform future stages of the Council's Local Plan

4.2 The survey has been undertaken by planning policy officers and gathers together information on the borough's employment areas, providing a broad assessment of quality. Further technical expertise will be required to assess viability, or detailed technical or environmental constraints. Further consultation will also be required with agents, developers and landowners in relation to the local property market and future demands.

Employment area identification 5

5 Employment area identification

5.1 The employment areas included in the survey have been identified from the following sources: Cheshire West and Chester employment land studies, planning application records, planning policy representations, CWAC property data on business sites and premises, local knowledge. Following consultation on the Draft Employment Areas Survey from January to March 2024, some additional employment areas have been identified and included within the Survey.

5.2 The survey assesses established Business Parks and Industrial Estates in the borough, which cater specifically for office, industrial, warehousing or distribution needs or specialist sectors^(v). Although Chester City Centre and the town centres of Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford contain a wide range of commercial and economic uses, this report does not include a town centre assessment or health check. It is anticipated further evidence on this alongside retail trends may be required to provide a full evidence base for the Local Plan.

5.3 The employment areas identified in previous employment land studies, their location in the settlement hierarchy and employment area hierarchy, are identified in **Appendix A 'Employment Land Study Update 2013: employment hierarchy'** These have been reviewed for inclusion in this Study. **Appendix A 'Employment Land Study Update 2013: employment hierarchy'** identifies the areas which still form an important part of the borough's employment land portfolio, and those sites discounted from further assessment (for example, if redevelopment to alternative use has taken place). There are 67 employment areas shortlisted for assessment in this Study; 58 employment areas were included in the Draft Report and a further 9 employment areas were identified through the evidence base consultation 2024.

5.4 A full list of areas to be included in the survey is listed in **Appendix B 'Employment areas included within the 2024 survey'**. The employment areas identified range in size and location across the borough. The survey aims to look a broad range of employment areas, but is not intended to be an exhaustive list of sites and premises.

v These relate to use classes E(g)(i - iii) B2, B8, applicable sui generis uses - see **G 'Glossary'**

6 Methodology and assessment criteria

6 Methodology and assessment criteria

6.1 The previous Employment Land Study (2009) and Employment Land Study Update (2013) reviewed the portfolio of employment land in the borough and analysed specific sites that formed part of the employment land supply at that point in time. The sites were assessed using a standard scoring method against a 9 measures including ^(vi) This was a market led appraisal which used a numerical scoring system to illustrate how attractive a site may be to developers and occupiers. It did not address sustainability issues as these would be assessed through the preparation of the Local Plan.:

- i. proximity to the strategic highway network,
- ii. prominence,
- iii. public transport,
- iv. planning status,
- v. services availability,
- vi. constraints,
- vii. environmental setting,
- viii. flexibility and
- ix. availability.

6.2 The current survey provides a broad qualitative analysis of established employment areas in the borough, rather than specific sites. Further details of the scoring criteria area contained in **Appendix C 'Assessment criteria'** The scoring criteria has been adapted from the previous studies to include criteria on:

- i. Strategic Transport by non-road (port, rail) freight,
- ii. Strategic Road accessibility,
- iii. Local Accessibility,
- iv. Public Transport Accessibility,
- v. Prominence and Environmental Setting,
- vi. Proximity to urban areas, labour supply and skilled workforce,
- vii. Compatibility of uses within and adjacent to the employment area,
- viii. Market Attractiveness,
- ix. Infrastructure and services availability and
- x. Constraints and suitability.

6.3 Wherever possible, data has been obtained using GIS/desktop methods or secondary data sources as set out in **Appendix D 'Data sources'**. Site visits were undertaken where necessary to obtain additional information or primary data collection. For each category a broad score of good, average or poor is provided.

6.4 As with the previous Studies, the assessments are not intended to be a direct comparison of individual sites, but to provide an overview of the type and quality of employment areas in the borough and for the main spatial areas of Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich, Winsford and the rural area. The adopted Local Plan provides for a range of sizes and types of employment land borough wide to meet the needs of different businesses.

vi Employment Land Study (2009, BE Group) para 9.34 and Appendix 7; Employment Land Study Update (2013) para 7.27

Methodology and assessment criteria 6

6.5 In general terms, it is important that the sites that score well are protected from alternative forms of development. In some instances lower scoring sites play an important role in meeting the needs of different sectors and local economic needs and continue to provide a valuable resource. However, in some cases they may also offer opportunities for refurbishment and redevelopment. The outcomes of the report will consider:

- **Good quality area** – strategic location, good accessibility and connectivity, good property market attractiveness and capable of being retained for employment use. Capable of meeting expansion needs of businesses or provides space for new investment. Provides business space to meet a local demand for the local area, or support the rural economy.
- **Average quality area** – potential to be retained for employment use or to meet a specific type of need. May require further refurbishment or investment to improve the offer and attractiveness. Further information on economic viability may be required. Some vacant premises, but evidence that land/premises are being actively marketed for sale/let.
- **Poor Quality area** – Limited prominence, accessibility or poor environmental quality. Evidence of high vacancy levels. Incompatibility with surrounding uses.

6.6 Where there are vacant development sites identified within an employment area, further assessment may be made through the Council's Land Availability Assessment to consider the suitability, availability and achievability of this land for continued economic and/or alternative use.

7 Outcomes and findings

7 Outcomes and findings

7.1 The Employment Land Study Update (2013) included 45 areas in the employment hierarchy summarised in **Appendix A 'Employment Land Study Update 2013: employment hierarchy'**. These were reviewed for inclusion in the study and 14 areas were discounted from further consideration. Areas were discounted where they had been redeveloped for other uses or located in city/town centres and were not included in this study. An additional 27 employment areas in the borough were identified from other sources.

7.2 The Established Employment Areas assessed are set out in **Appendix B 'Employment areas included within the 2024 survey'**. There were 58 areas in total shortlisted for review. Table 7.1 'Borough wide distribution of Employment areas' shows the distribution of these employment locations, and overall area, across the borough.

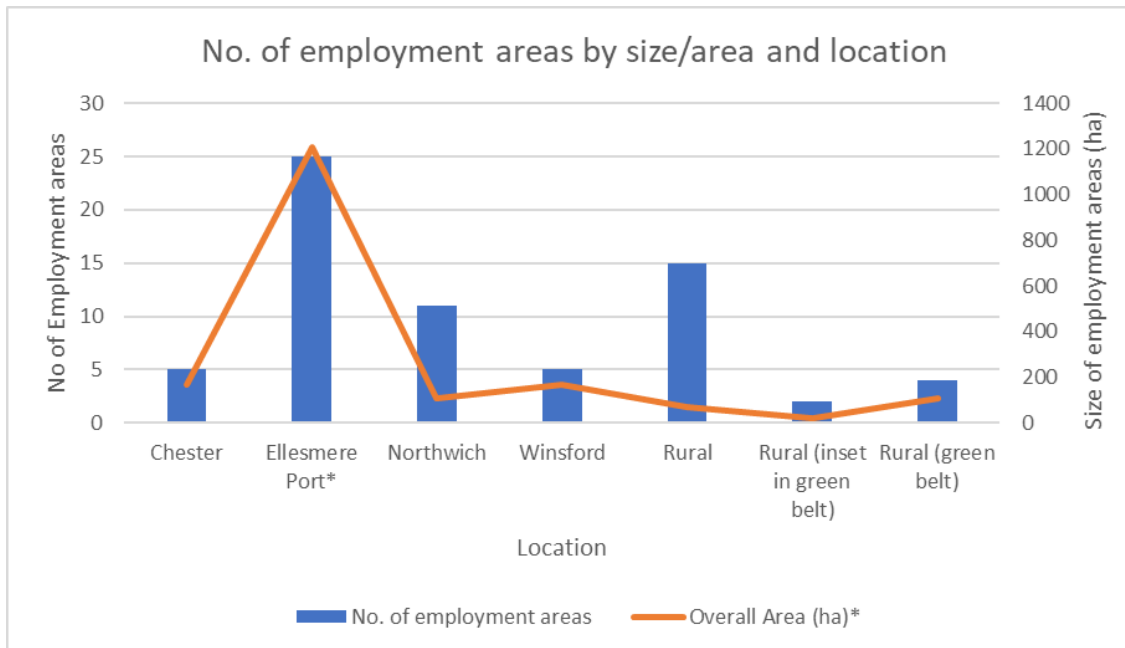
Table 7.1 Borough wide distribution of Employment areas

Spatial area	No. of employment areas	Overall Area (ha) ^(vii)
Chester	5	169
Ellesmere Port*	25	1208
Northwich	11	106
Winsford	5	166
Rural	15	69
Rural (inset in green belt)	2	22
Rural (green belt)	4	107
Total	67	1847

vii Stanlow and Rossmore Road Industrial Estate areas (ha) are adjusted to avoid double counting with other employment areas that fall within their boundaries.

Outcomes and findings 7

Figure 7.1 Employment areas by size and location



Overview

Employment areas analysis by size (ha)

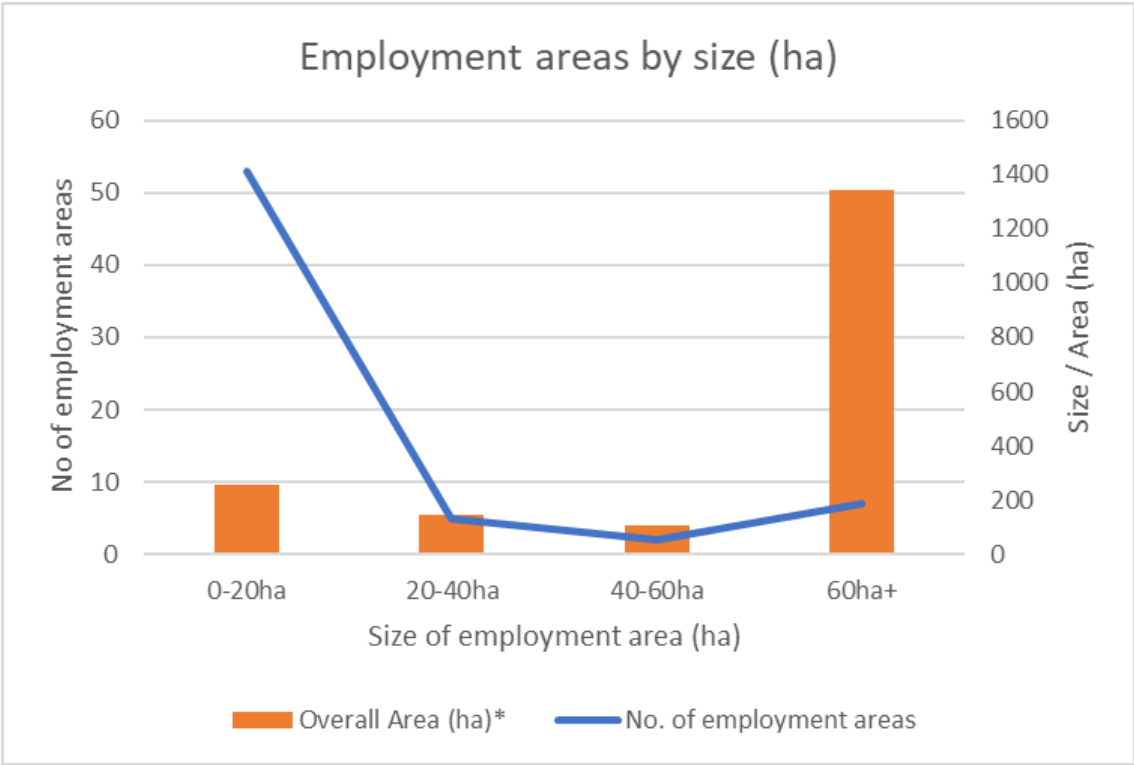
7.3 Table 7.2 'Number of employment areas by size (ha)' shows the size of employment areas across the borough. The majority of the employment land portfolio is between 0-20ha in size.

Table 7.2 Number of employment areas by size (ha)

Size	No. of employment areas	Overall Area (ha)*
0-20ha	53	259
20-40ha	5	144
40-60ha	2	105
60ha+	7	1340
Total	67	1848

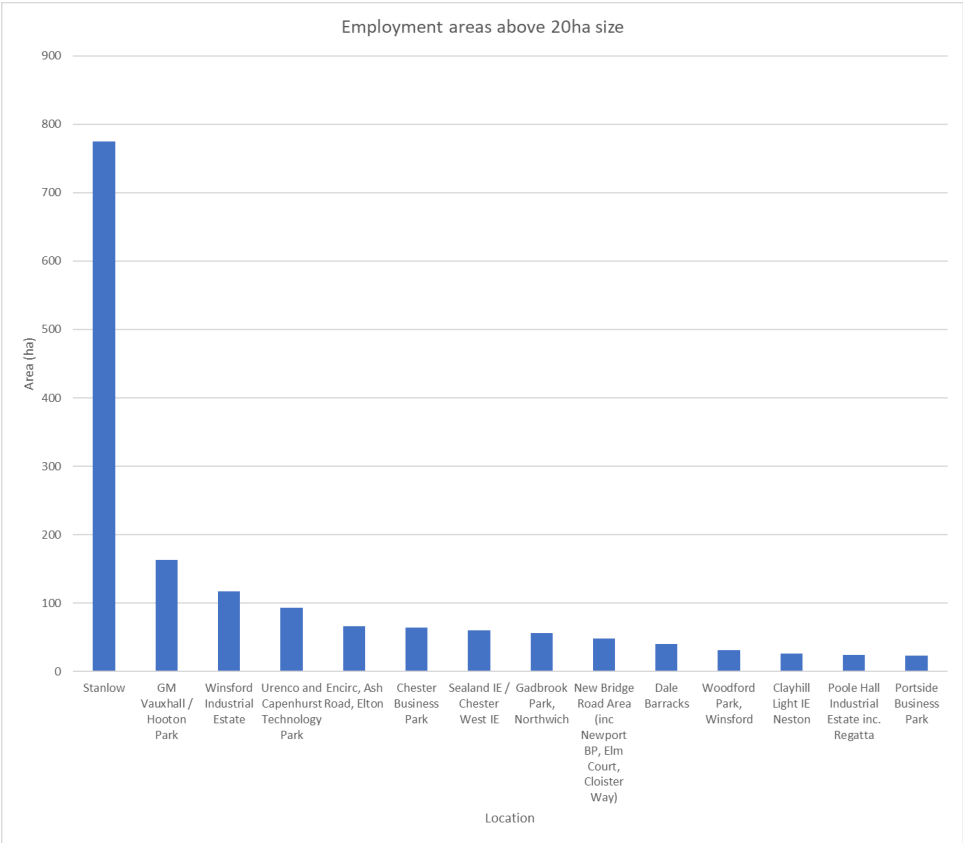
7 Outcomes and findings

Figure 7.2 Employment areas by size (ha)



7.4 The graph below shows the largest employment areas in the borough that are over 20ha in size.

Figure 7.3 Employment areas above 20ha size



Outcomes and findings 7

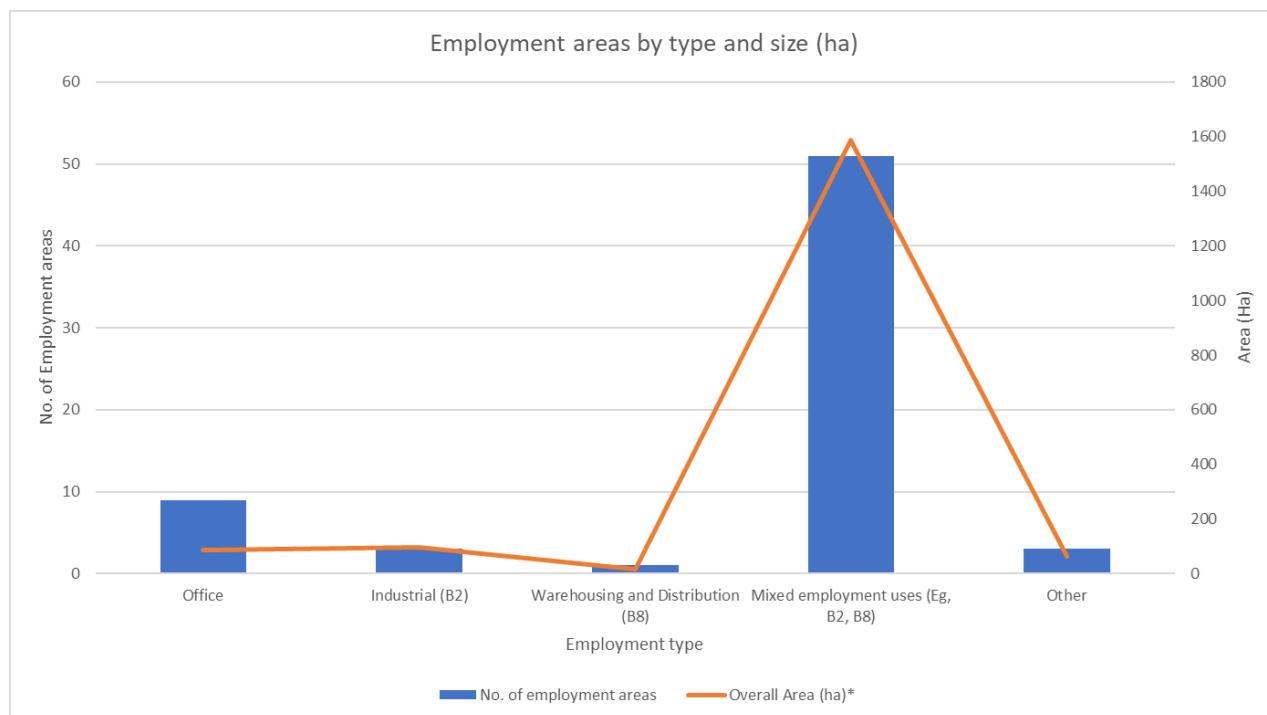
Employment areas analysis by Type

7.5 Table 7.3 'Employment areas by type' provides an analysis of employment areas by broad type of use. The majority of employment areas provide for a flexible wide range of uses.

Table 7.3 Employment areas by type

Type	No. of employment areas	Overall Area (ha)*
Office (Eg)	9	87
Industrial (B2)	3	95
Warehousing and Distribution (B8)	1	15
Mixed employment uses (Eg, B2, B8)	51	1586
Other	3	62
Total	67	1845

Figure 7.4 Employment areas by type and size (ha)



7 Outcomes and findings

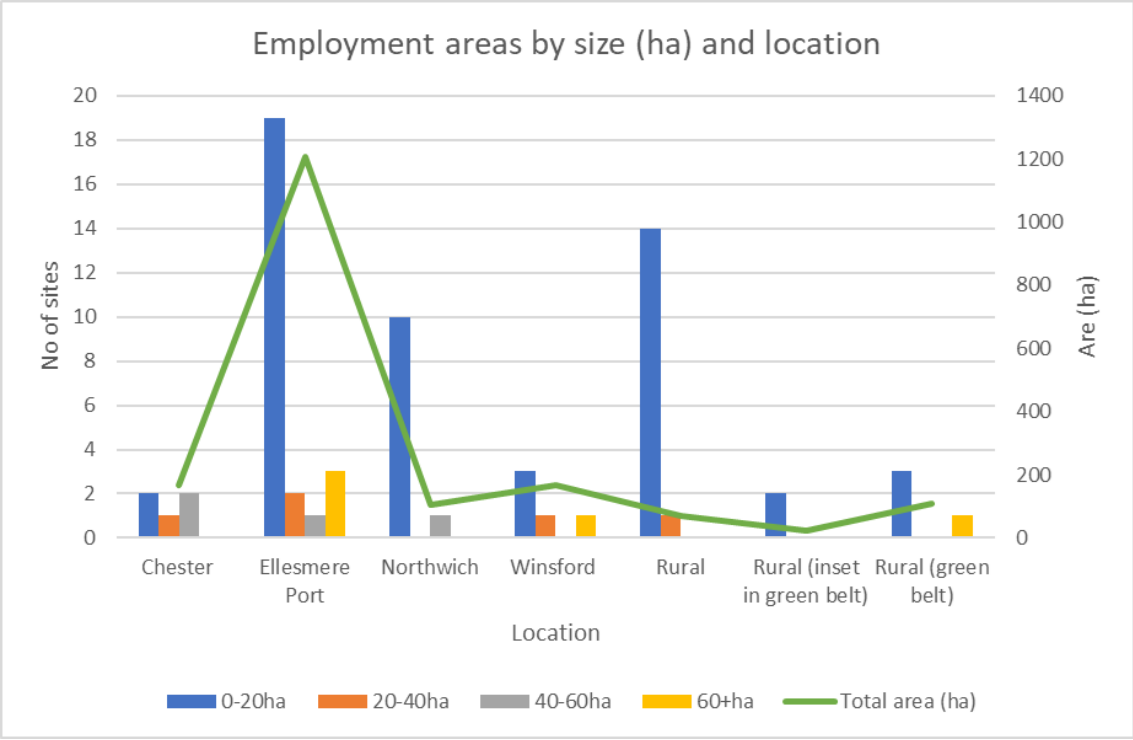
Employment area summary by Local Plan area

7.6 Table 7.4 'Employment areas by size (ha) and distribution across the borough' below shows the distribution of employment areas by size and location across the borough.

Table 7.4 Employment areas by size (ha) and distribution across the borough

Spatial area	0-20ha	20-40ha	40-60ha	60+ha	Total no of sites	Total area (ha)
Chester	2	1	2	0	5	169
Ellesmere Port	19	2	1	3	25	1208
Northwich	10	0	1	0	11	106
Winsford	3	1	0	1	5	166
Rural	14	1	0	0	15	69
Rural (inset in green belt)	2	0	0	0	2	22
Rural (green belt)	3	0	0	1	4	107
Total	53	5	4	5	67	1847

Figure 7.5 Employment areas by size (ha) and location



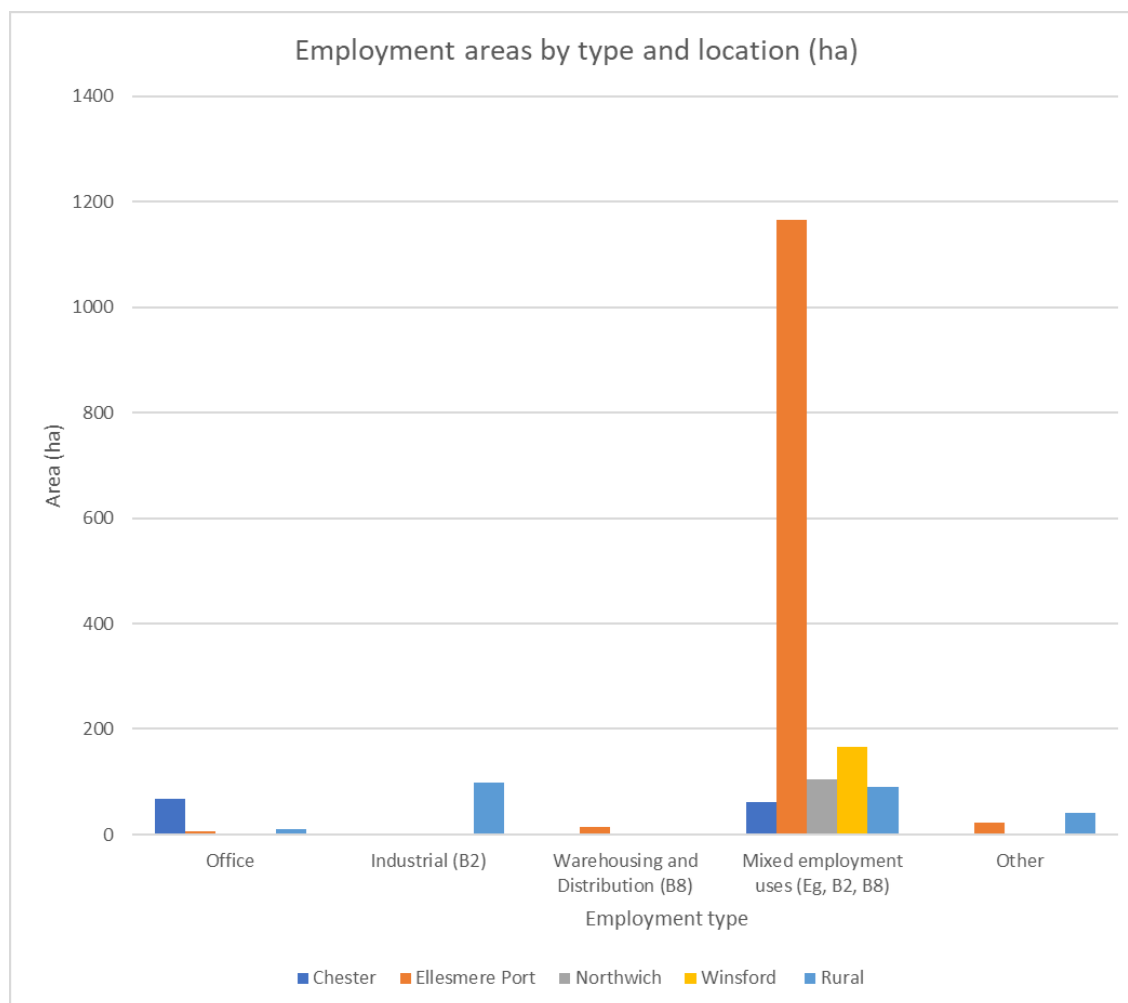
7.7 Table 7.5 'Employment areas by type'shows the distribution of employment areas by size and type across the borough.

Outcomes and findings 7

Table 7.5 Employment areas by type

Type	Chester (ha)	Ellesmere Port (ha)	Northwich (ha)	Winsford (ha)	Rural (ha)	No. of employment areas	Overall Area (ha)*
Office (Eg)	67.68	7.05	2.37	0	9.94	9	87
Industrial (B2)	0	0	0	0	98	3	98
Warehousing and Distribution (B8)	0	14.89	0	0	0	1	15
Mixed employment uses (Eg, B2, B8)	62	1165	104	166	90	51	1586
Other	0	22	0	0	40	3	62
Total	129.68	1208.94	106.37	166	237.94	67	1848

Figure 7.6 Employment areas by type and location (ha)



7 Outcomes and findings

Quality Assessment of established employment areas

7.8 The following section summarises the outcomes borough wide and by spatial area. **Appendix E 'Employment area appraisals/scoring tables'** provides a summary of the scoring against the 10 measures set out in the methodology for each of the shortlisted employment areas.

Table 7.6 Summary quality assessment borough wide employment areas

Area scoring	No. of employment areas	Overall Area (ha)*
Good	41	1695
Average	21	119
Poor	5	34
Total	67	1848

7.9 Table 7.7 'Overall quality assessment by location (number of employment areas)' below shows the spatial distribution of these sites.

Table 7.7 Overall quality assessment by location (number of employment areas)

Area Scoring	Chester	Ellesmere Port	Northwich	Winsford	Rural
Good	3	18	7	2	11
Average	2	5	3	3	8
Poor	0	2	1	0	2
Total	5	25	11	5	21

7.10 Table 7.8 'Overall quality of employment areas by type and location (no. of areas)' reviews the quality of these sites by type and location.

Table 7.8 Overall quality of employment areas by type and location (no. of areas)

Type	Area Scoring	Chester	Ellesmere Port	Northwich	Winsford	Rural	Total
Office	Good	1	3	1	0	3	8
	Average	1	0	0	0	0	1
	Poor	0	0	0	0	0	0
Industrial	Good	0	0	0	0	2	2
	Average	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Poor	0	0	0	0	1	1
Warehouse/distribution	Good	0	1	0	0	0	1
	Average	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Poor	0	0	0	0	0	0

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Type	Area Scoring	Chester	Ellesmere Port	Northwich	Winsford	Rural	Total
Mixed	Good	1	12	6	2	6	27
	Average	1	5	3	3	8	20
	Poor	0	2	1	0	1	4
Other	Good	1	1	0	0	0	2
	Average	0	0	0	0	0	0
	Poor	0	0	0	0	0	0
Totals		5	25	11	5	21	67

Chester

7.11 The analysis shows that there are 5 primary established employment areas for Chester urban area (the city centre sites were discounted from analysis in this survey). Two of these employment areas are of significant size (>60ha); Chester Business Park (located in the green belt) and Chester West/Sealand Industrial Estate. Both these employment areas score well on strategic transport, prominence and public transport accessibility objectives. Cheshire West/Sealand Industrial Estate scores lower on the compatibility of uses within the employment area. There are a relatively high proportion of uses for retail, car showrooms or trade counters within the employment area.

7.12 Chester Business Quarter is the another key employment area identified within Chester. This scores well on public transport accessibility being located adjacent to Chester Railway Station. The first phase of office development 'One City Place' has taken place, which is a flagship scheme, providing high quality office floorspace of BREEAM excellent standard. However remaining phases of office development have yet to take place. There are large areas of vacant land centrally located, in use as car parking. The office premises of Charterhall House and Tower House are vacant and marketed, with some signs of disrepair. There is planning permission for alternative hotel use on one of the former office plots, with residential planning permissions to the south of the area adjacent the canal. As such the quality of the area overall is average, there is scope for refurbishment and regeneration to provide for a mix of commercial uses.

7.13 Dale Barracks is identified as a specialist employment area for Chester, and is also key commercial site in the Green Belt. The area scores well on local transport accessibility and has a prominent location on the edge of Chester. A smaller business park is identified at Lightfoot Street, Hoole. However this is located in a mainly residential area and adjacent to the railway line/Chester railway station. It is average quality and has a mix of commercial properties and uses.

Ellesmere Port

7.14 Ellesmere Port has the largest number of employment areas within the borough, with 25 areas shortlisted. It also has the most large scale areas with 6 locations over 20ha in size; Stanlow, New Bridge Road, Hooton Park, Rossmore Industrial Estate, Portside Business Park and Encirc Glass. The combination of sites, together with other smaller employment areas, form the Ellesmere Port Industrial Area (Origin [ORIGIN Ellesmere Port | Cheshire West and Chester Council](#)). It is a strategic location for new economic development, investment and specialist industries linked to green technologies, petro-chemicals and advanced motor manufacturing. These sites have scored well against the strategic

7 Outcomes and findings

road accessibility objective with excellent access to the motorway network M53 and M56. They have a highly prominent location visible from the motorway network and further afield. The areas have mostly retained commercial uses falling within use classes B2 (general industrial) and B8 (warehousing and distribution) and score well on the compatibility objective and market attractiveness. There is evidence of employment land take up and new purpose built premises being built since 2010, including speculative developments taking place. New large scale high quality buildings have been developed at PLP/Northside and Link Logistics Park.

7.15 Overall 18 of the employment areas within Ellesmere Port are identified as good quality. There are a small number of sites with average/poor quality facilities where there may be an opportunity for refurbishment, improvement and regeneration. Some of the employment areas score average/poor against the constraints objective, given the prevalence of physical/environmental constraints such as flood zones, hazard zones, peaty soils and ecological areas.

7.16 Most of the employment areas in Ellesmere Port provide for a mix of employment types (primarily general industrial processes and warehousing/distribution). There are 2 purpose built good quality office parks (Cheshire Oaks Business Park and Rossmore Business Village). Whilst there is an undeveloped employment land allocation in the Local Plan at Cheshire Oaks Business Park, this has planning permission for an alternative use on part of the site.

7.17 The study has assessed established business areas/industrial estates. In addition there are major employers located in Ellesmere Port with large scale sites and scope for expansion (Encirc, Protos). Protos is a being developed as a multi-modal resource recovery park and energy from waste facility, for use in connection with the recycling, recovery and reprocessing of waste materials. The operational plots at Protos are included in this survey. Protos is being developed in a number of phases and is a significant scale (50ha) and is expected to deliver significant economic benefits to the area.

Northwich

7.18 There are 11 employment areas assessed within Northwich, 10 of these are 0-20ha in size. There is a lack of employment areas within the 20-40ha and >60ha size brackets in Northwich. However, there is an undeveloped employment land allocation to the south west of Gadbrook Park (not included within this study). This is approximately 30ha and would therefore fill this gap in provision. Gadbrook Park is 56ha in size and a strategic location on the edge of Northwich. This scores 'good' on the prominence and environmental setting objective. Roberts Bakery occupies a prominent position at the entrance to the business park (general industrial use), the remainder of the business park is primarily offices. The business park includes an undeveloped employment land allocation, and there is currently a relatively high proportion of vacant premises so has scored average on the 'market attractiveness' objective. Purpose built office parks are most likely to have been impacted by the covid pandemic, and increase in people working from home. When the business park was fully occupied, signage indicates on street parking was a concern for some businesses.

7.19 Table 7.7 'Overall quality assessment by location (number of employment areas)' shows that the employment areas in Northwich cover a broad range of employment types and there is a fairly balanced provision of offices, general industrial units and distribution facilities. Cheshire Business Park (Lostock Triangle) offers good quality office accommodation.

7.20 Cosgrove industrial estate, Soot Hill and Denton Drive Industrial Estate were identified as average quality employment areas. At the time of the survey, highway construction works were taking place to Soot Hill following a land slip therefore this affected the scoring for the local accessibility objective. Cosgrove Industrial estate scored as low prominence from surrounding routes, as it lies adjacent to the

Outcomes and findings 7

River Weaver and therefore flood risk was identified as a constraint. However the area was well-occupied and there is evidence of employment land take up since 2010 so it scored good on market attractiveness objective. Denton Drive was also identified as low prominence to the rear of Northwich retail park. It had mixed quality buildings, some open storage, on street parking issues, retail uses to front with Chester Way. Therefore it didn't score as highly on the compatibility objective. Likewise constraints included flood zone, overhead lines and hazard zone which affected the overall scoring. Additional small scale general industrial areas in Northwich include Riverside Business Centre, Hartford Business Centre and Duttons Business Centre.

7.21 Winnington Industrial Estate Northwich is located adjacent to the Winnington Urban Village residential scheme. Part of the area (former Yoxhall Joinery) has planning permission for residential use, therefore the character of this employment area has changed over time. There is new provision of small-medium size employment units close by at Winnington Avenue Business Park, which offers good quality commercial premises currently available and marketed.

7.22 The study has assessed established business areas/industrial estates. In addition, there are some major employers located in Northwich with large scale facilities for a specific occupier, which adds to overall employment provision. (Tata, Lostock Works, Thor Specialities).

Winsford

7.23 Winsford has a fairly low number of shortlisted employment areas (5 areas), however one of these is a significant scale – Winsford Industrial Estate is the 3rd largest in the borough at 118ha (after Stanlow and Hooton Park Ellesmere Port). Winsford Industrial Estate scores well for public transport accessibility, compatibility and market attractiveness objectives. It is in a very prominent location on the main routes into Winsford. There is new development taking place to the north of Road One, adjacent to the defined boundary for the Industrial Estate. There is additional undeveloped expansion land allocated through the adopted Local Plan and made Winsford Neighbourhood Plan.

7.24 Winsford lacks provision of dedicated office parks – the employment areas identified provide for a mix of employment types, mainly general industrial and warehousing/distribution uses with ancillary offices. Woodford Park is identified as another good quality employment location, in a prominent position off the A54 to the west of Winsford. There is evidence of employment land take up since 2010 and a small undeveloped local plan allocation in the area. It is well occupied and scores well against the compatibility of uses objective.

7.25 Smokehall Industrial Estate, Wharton Industrial Estate and Queens Court Industrial Estate are identified as average quality (when considered for general industrial and warehousing/distribution uses). Smokehall Industrial Estate scored less favourably on accessibility and is adjacent to new residential development. Wharton Industrial Estate has a wide mix of uses including retail. Queens Court is designated in the Winsford Neighbourhood Plan for mixed use redevelopment, but to include improved commercial units.

Rural area

7.26 There are 21 employment areas located in the rural area – 5 are within the key service centres of Tarvin, Tattenhall, Neston and Tarporley; 8 are in countryside locations; 2 are inset within the green belt and 6 are within the green belt and countryside. Most of these employment areas are small scale 0-20ha in size (18 employment areas). Chester Gates is 17ha, whereas the remaining rural employment areas are under 10ha, 12 of the areas are under 5ha size. Beachdean Manufacturing (Cheshire Ice Cream) is identified as an important rural employer located in the countryside close to Tattenhall.

7 Outcomes and findings

7.27 Urenco and Capenhurst Technology park is a specialist employment area located in the green belt. It is the 4th largest employment area in the borough in this survey. Clayhill Industrial Estate is 26ha located at Neston. The University of Liverpool Leahurst is identified as an employment area in the green belt (8ha), uses are primarily linked to the university use, with some research and redevelopment.

7.28 Most of the rural employment areas are flexible to meet a mix of types of employment use. Generally these sites score less favourably on the transport/local accessibility, prominence and environmental setting, proximity to labour supply objectives. In some instances there is insufficient data on infrastructure and services availability.

Vacant land within employment areas

7.29 The Cheshire West and Chester Land Availability Assessment (LAA) – Stage One Outcomes (2025) provides an analysis of potential development sites within established employment areas. This identifies that there are 173 opportunity sites identified within the 67 established employment areas across the borough. Further details can be found in the LAA Stage One Outcomes Report, analysis by established employment areas. Further analysis of the suitability, availability and achievability of these sites for development will be undertaken through the LAA.

7.30 It is recognised that within established employment areas there is likely to be an element of 'churn', i.e. the recycling and redevelopment of employment sites. This situation can change depending on the local property market and business requirements (for example, intentions to remain, expand or downsize etc.) and only provides a snapshot of information at a given point in time. Table 7.9 'Vacant land / development opportunities within established employment areas' summarises the additional vacant land within the 67 shortlisted employment areas, that was identified in the LAA.

Table 7.9 Vacant land / development opportunities within established employment areas

Spatial area	No of shortlisted Employment Areas	Land identified in LAA Stage One (ha)
Chester	15	19.36
Ellesmere Port	91	350
Northwich	17	21
Winsford	20	37
Rural	30	38
Total	173	466

7.31 Chester is the area with the least amount of vacant land with potential for refurbishment or redevelopment. This includes land allocated through the adopted Local Plan, at Chester Business Quarter for mixed use employment led redevelopment, at Chester Business Park a key site within the green belt and Chester West/Sealand Industrial Estate safeguarded for employment use. The employment areas which have the greatest proportion of vacant land are in the Ellesmere Port area. The majority of these sites are within Stanlow and therefore may only be suitable and available for specialist industrial uses, in connection with the refinery.

Outcomes and findings 7

7.32 In Northwich, 10 of the vacant sites identified are concentrated within Gadbrook Park which is safeguarded for employment use in the adopted Local Plan. This is a relatively high proportion of vacant land/premises within the business park. Winsford has a relatively low amount of vacant land within the established employment areas. However, the employment area boundaries for Winsford do not include the undeveloped local plan and neighbourhood plan employment land allocations at Winsford Industrial Estate which would provide additional capacity. In the rural area there is a relatively high proportion of vacant land within established employment areas - these include the undeveloped local plan allocations for the rural area at Clayhill Industrial Estate Neston, Chowley Oak, Monument Place Farndon. It also includes land at Urenco/Capenhurst technology park which is identified as a key commercial site within the Green Belt in the Local Plan.

Borough wide employment area portfolio

7.33 Appendix F 'Employment area hierarchy and broad locations' lists each of the shortlisted employment areas by market segment. The table below reviews the borough's portfolio of employment areas by market segment and location. Employment areas may fall into more than one category, therefore the totals will not reflect the overall shortlist of 67 areas that were surveyed. Provision across a broad range of market segments will cater for demand for different types and sizes of site; to support the growth of new businesses, allow for the expansion of current employers and to provide sites for new inward investment. The table shows there is good amount of provision across all market segments across the borough.

7.34 Ellesmere Port has the most sites that are flagships or strategically located, due to excellent transport connectivity close to the M56, M53, Manchester Ship Canal and with rail discharge and port facilities.

7.35 Specialist areas are mostly located in Ellesmere Port (Ellesmere Port Docks, Stanlow, Hooton Park), and Northwich (New Cheshire Business Park Wincham). In the rural area Urenco Capenhurst and the University of Liverpool Leahurst are identified as specialist sectors, both of these employment areas are located in the North Cheshire Green Belt.

7.36 There is good provision of general industrial/business areas across the borough, to cater for employment demands borough wide and in each of the urban areas of Chester, Ellesmere Port Northwich and Winsford.

7.37 There are 17 rural employment areas; 4 of these are within the key service centres of Tattenhall, Neston, Tarvin and Tarporley, 6 are located in the countryside, 2 are inset in the green belt and 4 are small scale rural employment areas in the green belt.

7.38 There are 2 other employment areas identified where the character has changed over time, through redevelopment of the surrounding areas for residential use.

7 Outcomes and findings

Table 7.10 No. of employment areas by location and market segment

Market Segment	Chester	Ellesmere Port	Northwich	Winsford	Rural	No. of Emp areas
Flagships / strategic location	1	11	1	1	1	15
Specialist	1	6	1	0	2	10
General Industrial / Business Areas	3	14	9	4	0	30
Rural employment area	0	0	0	0	18	18
Other	0	0	1	0	1	2

8 Conclusion

8.1 The borough has a strong portfolio of employment areas, which cater for a range of sizes and types of businesses. There is provision for various types of employment use (office, general industrial development, warehousing and distribution) with the majority of the portfolio being flexible to meet the requirements of different users/occupiers. The established employment areas can provide for a range of market segments, ranging from large scale/strategic areas and specialist users to smaller employment parks in the rural area. There is some vacant land within these employment areas where new development could take place in the future.

8.2 Most of the employment areas in the borough are good quality. There are some weaknesses identified in specific areas, where buildings/premises may benefit from further investment and refurbishment. It should be noted that poor/average quality areas are an important part of the overall mix of premises/sites on offer, to meet the needs of specific industries or where open storage of products and materials is necessary.

8.3 There has been some loss of traditional employment premises to alternative uses in urban areas, for example retail uses and trade counters or other non-commercial uses such as residential development.

8.4 Out of town office parks appear to have had less development taking place since the start of the local plan period (2010) and have marketed premises/floorspace availability. This type of employment offer has been impacted by the covid pandemic and changes in working practices such as working from home.

8.5 The study provides a snapshot of established employment areas across the borough to inform the preparation of the Council's new local plan. It considers the suitability of these areas to be safeguarded for continued employment use, or their capacity to accommodate future employment growth. Further evidence on Economic Needs will be required to understand the future demand for employment land/premises in the borough. Planning Practice Guidance recommends analysing supply and demand, as this allows policy makers to identify whether there is a mismatch between quantitative and qualitative supply of and demand for employment sites. The Employment Areas Survey should be read alongside other supporting evidence reports including the Council's Land Availability Assessment and Places Paper.

A Employment Land Study Update 2013: employment hierarchy

A Employment Land Study Update 2013: employment hierarchy

Table A.1 ELSU areas carried forward for assesment

Location (LP settlement hierarchy)	Hierarchy (2013)	Employment location
Chester	Flagships	Chester Business Park
Chester	Key employment areas	Sealand IE / Chester West IE
Ellesmere Port	Flagships	Cheshire Oaks Business Park
Ellesmere Port	Narrow Band Areas	Ellesmere Port Docks
Ellesmere Port	Narrow Band Areas	GM Vauxhall / Hooton Park
Ellesmere Port	Key employment areas	Pioneer Park, Ellesmere Port
Ellesmere Port	Key employment areas	Rossmore Road IE
Ellesmere Port	Narrow Band Areas	Stanlow, Ellesmere Port
Ellesmere Port	Narrow Band Area	Encirc Glass
Northwich	Flagships	Cheshire Business Park (Lostock Triangle / Admirals Court)
Northwich	Key Local Areas	Cosgrove Industrial Estate, Soothill
Northwich	Flagships	Gadbrook Park Northwich
Northwich	Key employment areas	New Cheshire Business Park, Northwich
Northwich	Key employment areas	Stanney Mill Road IE, Ellesmere Port
Northwich	Key employment areas	Wincham Business Park, Northwich
Northwich	Key Local Areas	Winnington Industrial Estate, Northwich
Rural	Narrow Band Areas	Capenhurst Technology Park / Urenco
Rural	Key employment areas	Chester Gates
Rural	Key Rural Areas	Chowley Oak, Tattenhall
Rural	Key Rural Areas	Monument Farm, Farndon
Rural	Key Local Areas	Oaklands Office Park, Hooton
Rural	Key Rural Areas	Weaver Park Industrial Estate, Frodsham
Rural	Key Rural Areas	Hampton Heath Industrial Estate
Rural (KSC)	Key Local Areas	Clayhill Light IE, Neston
Rural (KSC)	Key Local Areas	Meres Edge Business Park, Helsby
Rural (KSC)	Key Rural Areas	Portal Business Park, Tarporley
Winsford	Key employment areas	Denton Drive Industrial Estate

Employment Land Study Update 2013: employment hierarchy A

Location (LP settlement hierarchy)	Hierarchy (2013)	Employment location
Winsford	Others	Smokehall Industrial Estate, Winsford
Winsford	Other	Wharton Industrial Estate, Winsford
Winsford	Key employment areas	Winsford Industrial Estate
Winsford	Key employment areas	Woodford Park Industrial Estate, Winsford

Table A.2 ELSU areas discounted from further assessment, August 2023

Location (LP settlement hierarchy)	Hierarchy (2013)	Employment location	Reason
Chester	Flagship	Chester Central (inc Hoole Lane, Gorse Stacks, Black Diamond St)	Gorse Stacks now developed, Black Diamond Street permission for alternative uses, Hoole Lane within the CBQ area.
Chester	Flagship	Chester City centre	City centre wide range of non-B class uses
Ellesmere Port	Key employment areas	Countess of Chester	Medical and healthcare, non-B class uses, Commercial site in the Green Belt
Ellesmere Port	Key employment areas	Ellesmere Port Town Centre	Town centre wide range of non-B class use
Ellesmere Port	Narrow Band Areas	Kemira / Ince Marshes	Kemira (now CF Fertilisers) site for a major employer now vacant. Ince Marshes (now Protos) is being developed and waste allocation in Local Plan.
Northwich	Key employment areas	Northwich Town Centre	Town centre wide range of non-B class use
Rural	Key Rural Areas	Bellmeadow Business Park	Redeveloped for alternative use
Rural	Others	Crowton Mill	Redeveloped for alternative use
Rural	Key Rural Areas	Cuddington Works, Bryn	Redeveloped for alternative use
Rural	Key Rural Areas	Dane Manor	Redeveloped for alternative use
Rural	Key Rural Areas	Marley Tileworks	Redeveloped for alternative use
Rural	Key Rural Areas	Mollington Grange	Redeveloped for alternative use
Rural	Key Rural Areas	Bolesworth Estate	Wide area covering multiple sites. Individual areas are included such as Canalside, Chowley Oak.
Winsford	Key employment areas	Winsford Town centre	Town centre wide range of non-B class use

B Employment areas included within the 2024 survey

B Employment areas included within the 2024 survey

Table B.1 Employment areas included in the Study

Location (LP settlement hierarchy)	Employment location
Chester	One City Place and Chester Business Quarter (CBQ1)
Chester	Sealand Industrial Estate / Chester West Employment Park
Chester	Lightfoot Street, Hoole, Chester
Chester (GB)	Chester Business Park
Chester (GB)	Dale Barracks
Ellesmere Port	Cheshire Oaks Business Park
Ellesmere Port	Pioneer Park, Ellesmere Port
Ellesmere Port	Rossmore Road IE
Ellesmere Port	New Bridge Road area (inc Newport Business Park, Cloister Way)
Ellesmere Port	Link Logistics Park Ellesmere Port
Ellesmere Port	Ellesmere Port Docks
Ellesmere Port	GM Vauxhall / Hooton Park
Ellesmere Port	Stanlow, Ellesmere Port
Ellesmere Port	Aviator Park, Hooton Park
Ellesmere Port	Canalside / canal bridge enterprise park, Ellesmere Port
Ellesmere Port	Meadow Lane Industrial Park
Ellesmere Port	Poole Hall Industrial Estate Ellesmere Port
Ellesmere Port	Portside Business Park, Ellesmere Port
Ellesmere Port	Rossmore Business Park
Ellesmere Port	Rossmore Business Village
Ellesmere Port	Stanlaw Abbey Business Centre
Ellesmere Port	Stanney Ten Industrial Estate
Ellesmere Port	Thornton Road Industrial Estate
Ellesmere Port	Venture Point Business Park
Ellesmere Port	Regatta, PLP and Northside
Ellesmere Port	Encirc, Ash Road, Elton
Ellesmere Port	Protos operational areas
Ellesmere Port	Cedab Road Industrial Estate
Northwich	Gadbrook Park Northwich
Northwich	Cheshire Business Park (Lostock Triangle / Admirals Court)
Northwich	New Cheshire Business Park, Northwich
Northwich	Stanney Mill Road IE, Ellesmere Port

Employment areas included within the 2024 survey B

Location (LP settlement hierarchy)	Employment location
Northwich	Wincham Business Park, Northwich
Northwich	Cosgrove Industrial Estate, Soothill
Northwich	Winnington Industrial Estate, Northwich
Northwich	Winnington Business Park and Avenue Engineering, Northwich
Northwich	Riverside Business Centre, Northwich
Northwich	Duttons Business Centre, Northwich
Northwich	Hartford Business Centre
Rural	Chester Gates
Rural	Oaklands Office Park, Hooton
Rural	Chowley Oak, Tattenhall
Rural	Monument Farm, Farndon
Rural	Weaver Park Industrial Estate, Frodsham
Rural	Canalside Tattenhall / Crows Nest
Rural	Waverton Business Park
Rural	Hooton Works Trading Estate
Rural	Hampton Heath Industrial Estate
Rural	New Russia Hall Gatesheath
Rural	Town House Farm, Clotton
Rural	Bechdean Manufacturing, Drumland Hall Farm, Tattenhall
Rural (GB inset)	Barrowmore Industrial Estate
Rural (GB)	Capenhurst Technology Park and Urenco, Capenhurst
Rural (GB)	University of Liverpool, Leahurst campus
Rural (KSC)	Clayhill Light IE, Neston
Rural (KSC)	Meres Edge Business Park, Helsby
Rural (KSC)	Portal Business Park, Tarporley
Rural (KSC)	Barbour Square Tattenhall
Rural (KSC)	Pool Bank Tarvin
Rural (KSC)	Tarporley Business Centre / Birch Heath Rd units
Winsford	Denton Drive Industrial Estate
Winsford	Winsford Industrial Estate
Winsford	Woodford Park Industrial Estate, Winsford
Winsford	Queens Court Industrial Estate, Winsford
Winsford	Wharton Industrial Estate, Winsford
Winsford	Smokehall Industrial Estate, Winsford

C Assessment criteria

C Assessment criteria

Table C.1 Methodology Qualitative Assessment Criteria

	Criteria	Score	Description
1.	Strategic Transport by non-road (port, rail) freight	Good	Has multi-modal capability within the employment area (rail head, canal wharf)
		Average	Multi-modal links within 1km, or opportunity for future provision
		Poor	No multi-modal capability within 1km
2.	Strategic Road accessibility	Good	Within 0.5km of strategic road network junction (motorways, A550 and A55)
		Average	Within 1km to strategic road network junction (motorways, A550 and A55)
		Poor	>1km to strategic road network junction (motorways, A550 and A55)
3.	Local Accessibility	Good	Good connectivity via A and B roads, junctions have good visibility, with walking and/or cycling opportunities
		Average	Good connectivity via A and B roads, but limited access for walking/cycling
		Poor	Poor accessibility from A and B roads, poor quality narrow roads and/or junction access, no walking/cycling links
4.	Public Transport Accessibility	Good	Bus stops within the area or close by (<0.5km) and rail station (<2km). Frequent services operate.
		Average	Within 1km bus stop. Frequent service operates.
		Poor	Limited public transport availability, or poor frequency of service.
5.	Prominence and Environmental Setting	Good	Good quality industrial/business park, adjacent to and visible from a strategic route (motorways, A550 and A55), clear signage

Assessment criteria C

	Criteria	Score	Description
			to/from the area, good quality modern buildings, good internal layout, no environmental concerns
		Average	Moderate quality industrial/business park, has local prominence visible from A road, good signage within the estate, some good quality buildings but some may require refurbishment/improvement to meet future occupiers needs, good layout, some evidence of poor environmental quality (i.e. open storage, litter)
		Poor	Poor quality industrial/business park, poor quality buildings and design/layout, some environmental concerns (noise, odour, open storage etc), limited prominence from surrounding area.
6.	Proximity to urban areas, labour supply and skilled workforce	Good	Within the urban areas of Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich, Winsford. Location within 2km of Further or Higher Education facility.
		Average	Adjacent to main urban areas, or within/adjacent to key service centres. Location within 2km of Further or Higher Education facility.
		Poor	Countryside location outside of established settlements. Further than 2km to Further or Higher Education.
7.	Compatibility of uses within and adjacent to the employment area	Good	An established employment area, the type of employment use is compatible with surrounding uses. Within the employment area the type of uses are predominantly still for employment. May include areas for expansion of a specific employer.
		Average	An established employment area, with some surrounding incompatible uses or with some redevelopment to alternative use. Within the employment area, there may be other alternative uses, developed over time which may change the overall nature of the area.

C Assessment criteria

	Criteria	Score	Description
		Poor	An established employment use (office, industry, warehousing) directly adjacent to non-compatible use. Proliferation of non-employment / other uses within the employment area, or evidence of redevelopment to other uses/loss of employment land is taking place.
8.	Market Attractiveness *	Good	Area for a specific major employer/expansion or suitable for specialist uses. Offers flexibility to provide for a wide range of occupiers/investors, ability to refurbish and or sub-divide. Evidence of recent investment/refurbishment for employment uses. Low property vacancy and marketing.
		Average	Established employment area, some alternative uses already taken place within the employment area, evidence of marketing, vacancy levels fairly high (>25%)
		Poor	Unattractive appearance. High level of vacant premises or land. Evidence of long term underinvestment or vacancy, commercial viability unknown. Mix of uses, including non-employment uses.
9.	Infrastructure and services availability**	Good	All services provided and likely to be able to connect to the network (electricity, water, broadband) Potential opportunity for renewable energy or electricity generation, considering SPEN capacity. Provision of EV charging.
		Average	Priority services no abnormal costs, judgement on services availability between good/poor range.
		Poor	Some services are unavailable, SPEN connectivity restricted, or limited opportunity for generation.
10.	Constraints and suitability ***	Good	Employment area with few constraints that would limit continued/future employment use

Assessment criteria C

	Criteria	Score	Description
		Average	Some physical or environmental constraints identified that may restrict future use/development, but may be capable of mitigation.
		Poor	Physical or environmental constraints identified that would be incompatible with further employment use or require significant mitigation

D Data sources

D Data sources

Table D.1 Data Sources for site scoring criteria

No.	Criteria	Data Source
1	Strategic Transport by non-road (port, rail) freight	GIS Data - rail heads and canal wharfs/berths and with 1km buffer, with employment areas. Uses Local Plan (Part Two) policy M8 Safeguarded Minerals Infrastructure to identify port and rail facilities.
2	Strategic Road accessibility	GIS Data - the strategic road network in Cheshire West and Chester includes the M56 and M53 motorways, the A550 and A55. Analysis considers whether employment areas are within 0.5km, 1km or >1km buffer of junctions.
3	Local Accessibility	GIS Data - map of A and B roads, cycle routes, footpaths within or adjacent the employment areas On site - review of local accessibility including highways/junction access, internal road layout and legibility, active travel opportunities (walking/cycling) and accessibility from surrounding road network.
4	Public Transport Accessibility	GIS Data - bus stops 0.5km, 0.5-1km and >1km from the area. Railway stations within a 2km buffer of the area. National cycle network routes.
5	Prominence and Environmental Setting	On site - judgement on a range of factors including (i) location and setting of the surrounding area, (ii) Visibility from SRN, A and B roads, (iii) signage on main routes and within the employment area (iv) building quality and design (v) amenity impacts such as noise, odour, dust, disturbance, litter, graffiti (vi) landscaping (vi) main occupiers (vii) vacant land and/or premises
6	Proximity to urban areas, labour supply and skilled workforce	GIS Data - proximity to further and higher education. Identifies sites within a 2km buffer of a further or higher education facility Census 2021 economic activity rate
7	Compatibility of uses within and adjacent to the employment area	GIS based Planning Land use and property data - land use types, commercial and non-commercial uses and sub types On site - identification of potential vacant, available or under used land. Cheshire West and Chester Land Availability Data - includes sites identified via 'call for sites', desktop survey of vacant and underused land
8	Market Attractiveness ^(viii)	GIS based Planning Land use and property data - land use types, commercial and non-commercial uses and sub types. Overall mix of employment types within an established employment area. CWAC employment land monitoring data - take up and losses of employment land since 2010.

viii Market attractiveness for employment use. This considers a range of factors including (1) strategic transport accessibility, (5) prominence and environmental setting, and flexibility to meet the needs of a wide range of occupiers. This criteria will be considered through overall assessment of the employment area, secondary data sources will consider vacancy levels in the area. Further

Data sources D

No.	Criteria	Data Source
		<p>Property market data - marketed available land and floorspace (as at September 2022)</p> <p>On site - judgement on a range of factors including identification of marketing, vacant premises or land. Main occupiers, expansion opportunities for specific firms, specialisation of uses within an area. Building quality and design. Potential flexibility and adaptability of plots. Visible constraints or amenity issues. Car parking and HGV spaces.</p> <p>CWAC Business Rates data - estimates of empty premises</p>
9	Infrastructure and services availability ^(ix)	<p>Electricity connectivity - SPEN electricity connection map ConnectMore Interactive Map - SP Energy Networks HV 500kVA and HV 2500kVA estimate of high voltage network capacity at August 2023. SP data is updated on a regular basis, data is based on the beta version of the ConnectMore Interactive map.</p> <p>Electricity generation - SPEN electricity generation heat map SPM Heat Map - SP Energy Networks Provides an indication of the potential opportunities to connect Distributed Generation (DG) to the 11kV, 33kV and 132kV network in the SP Manweb plc licence area (Cheshire, Merseyside, N.Shropshire, N.Wales). The data shows each substation and circuit have been assigned categories: Green: All operational factors are within tolerable limits and so opportunities may exist to connect additional Distributed Generation without reinforcing the network (subject to detailed studies). Amber: At least one factor is nearing its operational limit and hence, depending on the nature of the application, network reinforcement may be required. However, this can only be confirmed by detailed network analysis. Red: At least one factor is close to its operational limit and so installation of most levels of Distributed Generation and a local connection is highly unlikely. It may also require extensive reinforcement works or given the lack of a local connection, require an extensive amount of sole user assets to facilitate such a connection.</p> <p>Water - on established sites this is assumed available, unless any alternative information is available.</p>
10	Constraints and suitability ^(x)	<p>GIS Data - the following planning constraints have been considered; HSE Zones, hazardous pipelines and buffers, designated ecological areas, historic assets, environmental protection data on contaminated land, Air Quality Management Areas (AQMA), Overhead lines and flood risk.</p>

consultation may be required with local commercial agents and developers, landowners and key stakeholders.

ix This is a high level assessment, further consultation would be required with infrastructure providers to provide a more detailed understanding on specific sites

x Constraints may be physical, environmental, planning or legal for example: flood risk, ground conditions, ecology, legal/ownership limitations, hazard zones, pipelines/infrastructure constraints, historic assets, access restrictions, Neighbourhood plan policies. If vacant land/sites are identified within established employment areas, they may be assessed further through the Council's Land Availability Assessment.

E Employment area appraisals/scoring tables

E Employment area appraisals/scoring tables

The table below provides a summary of the rating against each of the study objectives for the established employment areas.

Table E.1

	Good		Average		Poor		Insufficient data
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Table E.2

Emp Area Reference	Spatial Area	Location	Strategic Transport by non-road (port, rail) freight	Strategic Road accessibility	Local Accessibility	Public Transport Accessibility	Prominence and Environmental Setting	Proximity to urban areas, labour supply and skilled workforce	Compatibility of uses within and adjacent to the employment area	Market Attractiveness *	Infrastructure and services availability	Constraints and suitability **	OVERALL RATING	Market segment
C01	Chester	Chester Business Park											GOOD	Flagship / strategic location
C02	Chester	One City Place and Chester Business Quarter (CBQ1)											AVERAGE	General industrial/business area
C03	Chester	Sealand IE / Chester West IE											GOOD	General industrial/business area
C04	Chester	Dale Barracks											GOOD	Specialist (Single employer)
C05	Chester	Lightfoot Street, Hoole, Chester											AVERAGE	General industrial / business area
EP01	Ellesmere Port	Aviator Park, Hooton Park											GOOD	Strategic location
EP02	Ellesmere Port	Canalside / canal bridge enterprise park / Meadow Lane Industrial Estate Ellesmere Port											AVERAGE	General industrial/business area
EP03	Ellesmere Port	Cheshire Oaks Business Park											GOOD	General industrial/business area
EP04	Ellesmere Port	Ellesmere Port Docks											GOOD	Specialist / strategic location
EP05	Ellesmere Port	GM Vauxhall / Hooton Park											GOOD	Specialist / strategic location
EP06	Ellesmere Port	Link Logistics Park Ellesmere Port (Port Bridgewater)											GOOD	Flagship / strategic location
EP07	Ellesmere Port	New Bridge Road area (inc Newport Business Park, Cloister Way)											GOOD	Strategic location
EP08	Ellesmere Port	Pioneer Park, Ellesmere Port											GOOD	Strategic location
EP09	Ellesmere Port	Poole Hall Industrial Estate Ellesmere Port											GOOD	General industrial/business area
EP10	Ellesmere Port	Portside Business Park, Ellesmere Port (inc Merseyton Rd)											POOR	General industrial/business area
EP11	Ellesmere Port	PLP and Northside, Ellesmere Port											GOOD	Strategic location

Emp Area Reference	Spatial Area	Location	Strategic Transport by non-road (port, rail) freight	Strategic Road accessibility	Local Accessibility	Public Transport Accessibility	Prominence and Environmental Setting	Proximity to urban areas, labour supply and skilled workforce	Compatibility of uses within and adjacent to the employment area	Market Attractiveness *	Infrastructure and services availability	Constraints and suitability **	OVERALL RATING	Market segment
EP12	Ellesmere Port	Rossmore - Westminster Industrial Estate											POOR	General industrial/business area
EP13	Ellesmere Port	Rossmore Business Park											AVERAGE	General industrial/business area
EP14	Ellesmere Port	Rossmore Business Village											GOOD	General industrial/business area
EP15	Ellesmere Port	Rossmore Road - Junction 8 Business Park											GOOD	General industrial/business area
EP16	Ellesmere Port	Rossmore Road Industrial Estate											AVERAGE	General industrial/business area
EP17	Ellesmere Port	Stanlaw Abbey Business Centre											GOOD	General industrial/business area
EP18	Ellesmere Port	Stanlow, Ellesmere Port											GOOD	Specialist / strategic location
EP19	Ellesmere Port	Stanney Mill Road IE, Ellesmere Port											GOOD	Specialist / strategic location
EP20	Ellesmere Port	Stanney Ten Industrial Estate											GOOD	General industrial/business area / strategic location
EP21	Ellesmere Port	Thornton Road Industrial Estate											AVERAGE	General industrial/business area
EP22	Ellesmere Port	Venture Point Business Park											GOOD	General industrial/business area / strategic location
EP23	Ellesmere Port	Encirc, Ash Road, Elton											GOOD	Specialist (Single employer)
EP24	Ellesmere Port	Protos - operational and under construction 2024 (plots 3, 8, 9A)											GOOD	Specialist
EP25	Ellesmere Port	Cedab Road Industrial Estate											AVERAGE	General industrial / business area
N01	Northwich	Cheshire Business Park (Lostock Triangle / Admirals Court)											GOOD	General industrial/business area
N02	Northwich	Cosgrove Industrial Estate, Soothill											AVERAGE	General industrial/business area
N03	Northwich	Denton Drive Industrial Estate											AVERAGE	General industrial/business area
N04	Northwich	Gadbrook Park Northwich											GOOD	Flagship / Strategic location
N05	Northwich	New Cheshire Business Park, Northwich											GOOD	Specialist / General industrial/business area

Emp Area Reference	Spatial Area	Location	Strategic Transport by non-road (port, rail) freight	Strategic Road accessibility	Local Accessibility	Public Transport Accessibility	Prominence and Environmental Setting	Proximity to urban areas, labour supply and skilled workforce	Compatibility of uses within and adjacent to the employment area	Market Attractiveness *	Infrastructure and services availability	Constraints and suitability **	OVERALL RATING	Market segment
N06	Northwich	Wincham Business Park, Northwich											GOOD	General industrial/business area
N07	Northwich	Winnington Industrial Estate, Northwich											POOR	Other
N08	Northwich	Winnington Avenue BP and Avenue Engineering (LP allocation)											GOOD	General industrial/business area
N09	Northwich	Riverside Business Centre, Northwich											AVERAGE	General industrial / business area
N10	Northwich	Duttons Business Centre, Northwich											GOOD	General industrial / business area
N11	Northwich	Hartford Business Centre											GOOD	General industrial / business area
R01	Rural	Canalside Tattenhall / Crows Nest											AVERAGE	Rural employment area
R02	Rural (GB inset)	Chester Gates											GOOD	Rural employment area
R03	Rural	Chowley Oak, Tattenhall											GOOD	Rural employment area
R04	Rural	Hampton Heath Industrial Estate											GOOD	Rural employment area
R05	Rural (GB)	Hooton Works Trading Estate											AVERAGE	Rural employment area
R06	Rural	Monument Farm, Farndon											AVERAGE	Rural employment area
R07	Rural	New Russia Hall Gatesheath											GOOD	Rural employment area
R08	Rural (GB)	Oaklands Office Park, Hooton											GOOD	Rural employment area
R09	Rural	Town House Farm, Clotton											GOOD	Rural employment area
R10	Rural (GB)	Waverton Business Park											AVERAGE	Rural employment area
R11	Rural (GB)	Weaver Park Industrial Estate, Frodsham											POOR	Rural employment area
R12	Rural (GB inset)	Barrowmore Industrial Estate											AVERAGE	Rural employment area
R13	Rural (GB)	Urenco, Capenhurst / Capenhurst Technology Park											GOOD	Specialist / Strategic location
R14	Rural (KSC)	Barbour Square Tattenhall											GOOD	Rural employment area
R15	Rural (KSC)	Clayhill Light IE, Neston											AVERAGE	Rural employment area
R16	Rural (KSC)	Meres Edge Business Park, Helsby											POOR	Other
R17	Rural (KSC)	Pool Bank Tarvin											AVERAGE	Rural employment area
R18	Rural (KSC)	Portal Business Park, Tarporley											GOOD	Rural employment area

Emp Area Reference	Spatial Area	Location	Strategic Transport by non-road (port, rail) freight	Strategic Road accessibility	Local Accessibility	Public Transport Accessibility	Prominence and Environmental Setting	Proximity to urban areas, labour supply and skilled workforce	Compatibility of uses within and adjacent to the employment area	Market Attractiveness *	Infrastructure and services availability	Constraints and suitability **	OVERALL RATING	Market segment
R19	Rural (KSC)	Tarporley Business Centre / Birch Heath Rd units											AVERAGE	Rural employment area
R20	Rural (GB)	University of Liverpool, Leahurst											GOOD	Specialist
R21	Rural	Beachdean Manufacturing, Drumlan Hall Farm, Tattenhall											GOOD	Rural employment area (Single employer)
W01	Winsford	Queens Court Industrial Estate, Winsford											AVERAGE	General industrial/business area
W02	Winsford	Smokehall Industrial Estate, Winsford											AVERAGE	General industrial/business area
W03	Winsford	Wharton Industrial Estate, Winsford											AVERAGE	General industrial/business area
W04	Winsford	Winsford Industrial Estate											GOOD	Flagship / Strategic location
W05	Winsford	Woodford Park Industrial Estate, Winsford											GOOD	General industrial/business area

Employment area hierarchy and broad locations F

F Employment area hierarchy and broad locations

Table F.1

Market segment ^(xi)	Description	CWAC Employment Areas
Flagships / strategic location	Employment areas or broad locations of a scale, location or setting capable of attracting new inward investment of national, regional or sub-regional significance. May include major employers including advanced manufacturing or distribution, or dedicated office locations.	<p>Chester Business Park</p> <p>Aviator Park, Hooton Park</p> <p>Ellesmere Port Docks</p> <p>GM Vauxhall / Hooton Park</p> <p>Link Logistics Park Ellesmere Port</p> <p>Pioneer Park, Ellesmere Port</p> <p>PLP and Northside, Ellesmere Port</p> <p>Stanlow, Ellesmere Port</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - New Bridge Road area - Stanney Mill Road IE, Ellesmere Port - Stanney Ten Industrial Estate - Venture Point Business Park <p>Gadbrook Park Northwich</p> <p>Urenco, Capenhurst / Capenhurst Technology Park</p> <p>Winsford Industrial Estate</p>
Specialist	These areas cater for specialist uses, or the needs of specific large scale employers/occupiers. The uses are likely to be B2/B8 or sui generis – primarily waste or petro-chemical industries.	<p>Ellesmere Port Docks</p> <p>GM Vauxhall / Hooton Park</p> <p>Stanlow, Ellesmere Port</p> <p>Stanney Mill Road IE, Ellesmere Port</p> <p>Encirc (single employer)</p> <p>Protos operational areas</p> <p>New Cheshire Business Park, Northwich</p> <p>Urenco, Capenhurst / Capenhurst Technology Park</p>

xi Employment areas may fall within one or more identified segments

F Employment area hierarchy and broad locations

Market segment ^(xi)	Description	CWAC Employment Areas
		University of Liverpool, Leahurst Dale Barracks, Chester
General industrial/business area	These primarily cater for the needs within the borough and indigenous businesses, offering a range of employment uses, including small-medium enterprises. These serve the urban areas of Chester, Ellesmere Port, Northwich and Winsford. They provide for expansion needs of specific companies or new business start ups.	One City Place and Chester Business Quarter (CBQ1) Sealand IE / Chester West IE Lightfoot Street, Hoole Canalside / canal bridge enterprise park / Meadow Lane Industrial Estate Ellesmere Port Cedab Road Industrial Estate Cheshire Oaks Business Park Poole Hall Industrial Estate Ellesmere Port Portside Business Park, Ellesmere Port Rossmore - Westminster Industrial Estate Rossmore Business Park Rossmore Business Village Rossmore Road - Junction 8 Business Park Rossmore Road Industrial Estate Stanlaw Abbey Business Centre Stanney Ten Industrial Estate Thornton Road Industrial Estate Venture Point Business Park Cheshire Business Park (Lostock Triangle / Admirals Court) Cosgrove Industrial Estate, Soothill Denton Drive Industrial Estate Duttons Business Centre, Northwich Hartford Business Centre New Cheshire Business Park, Northwich

xi Employment areas may fall within one or more identified segments

Employment area hierarchy and broad locations F

Market segment ^(xi)	Description	CWAC Employment Areas
		Riverside Business Centre, Northwich Wincham Business Park, Northwich Winnington Avenue BP and Avenue Engineering Queens Court Industrial Estate, Winsford Smokehall Industrial Estate, Winsford Wharton Industrial Estate, Winsford Woodford Park Industrial Estate, Winsford
Rural employment area	These provide employment opportunities in the rural area, primarily for small-medium scale industries.	Beachdean Manufacturing, Tattenhall (single employer) Canalside Tattenhall / Crows Nest Chester Gates Chowley Oak, Tattenhall Hampton Heath Industrial Estate Hooton Works Trading Estate Monument Farm, Farndon New Russia Hall Gatesheath Oaklands Office Park, Hooton Town House Farm, Clotton Waverton Business Park Weaver Park Industrial Estate, Frodsham Barrowmore Industrial Estate Barbour Square Tattenhall Clayhill Light IE, Neston Pool Bank Tarvin Portal Business Park, Tarporley Tarporley Business Centre / Birch Heath Rd units

xi Employment areas may fall within one or more identified segments

F Employment area hierarchy and broad locations

Market segment ^(xi)	Description	CWAC Employment Areas
Other	These areas make a limited contribution towards the employment portfolio, the nature or character of these areas may have changed over time, or there may be scope for redevelopment.	Winnington Industrial Estate, Northwich Meres Edge Business Park, Helsby

*

xi Employment areas may fall within one or more identified segments

G Glossary

Employment land - development of land falling within use classes B1, B2 and B8 or applicable sui generis uses of the Use Classes Order 1987 as amended.

Use Classes Order

Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) Order 1987, as amended 1 September 2020.

- **Class E. Commercial, Business and Service** Use, or part use, for all or any of the following purposes; (g) for— (i) an office to carry out any operational or administrative functions; (ii) the research and development of products or processes, or (iii) any industrial process, being a use, which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area by reason of noise, vibration, smell, fumes, smoke, soot, ash, dust or grit.
- **Class B2. General industrial** Use for the carrying on of an industrial process other than one falling within class E(g) above (previously use class B1) or within classes B3 to B7 specialist industrial groups.
- **Class B8. Storage or distribution** Use for storage or as a distribution centre.
- **Sui generis** - 'Sui generis' is a Latin term that, in this context, means 'in a class of its own'. Certain uses are specifically defined and excluded from classification by legislation, and therefore become 'sui generis'.

Green Belt - area of land, largely rural in character, which is adjacent to the main urban areas and which is generally protected from development by restrictions on building imposed through national planning policy.

Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (HELAA) - an assessment of land/sites for development potential, and deliverability (see National Planning Practice Guidance).

Housing and Economic Needs Assessment (HEDNA) – an assessment of the economic needs to reflect local circumstances and economic conditions of an area (see National Planning Practice Guidance)

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - the Government's policies for plan making (Local Plans) and decision taking (development management).

National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) - the Government's web-based resource launched in March 2014, which brings together planning guidance on various topics to supplement the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Neighbourhood Plan - a plan prepared by a Parish Council or Neighbourhood Forum for a particular neighbourhood area (made under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004).

H Draft Employment Areas Survey Consultation Statement

H Draft Employment Areas Survey Consultation Statement

The Draft Employment Areas Survey Report was available for public consultation **22 January 2024 - 17 March 2024**. This included supporting excel information on the employment area appraisals, and mapping information to comment on specific areas within the survey, or to identify additional areas to be considered in the future. The consultation took place alongside other evidence base documents which will support and inform the preparation of the Council's next Local Plan. This included; Land Availability Assessment: Stage One Outcomes and Call for sites 2023 and the Draft Places Background Paper 2023.

Consultation Responses to the Draft Employment Areas Survey

This section details the main issues raised during consultation on the Employment Areas Survey. Full details of the comments received and the Council's response are available to view separately.

Methodology feedback

- The scoring criteria used in the Draft Report was generally supported
- Consider NPPF and ensure integration between land use and transport. Transport links and services are required to support significant scale employment areas. Work on the Local Plan and Local Transport Plan should be co-ordinated.
- National Highways would recommend consultation throughout the production of the transport evidence base to agree an approach to the delivery of mitigation (both in terms of phasing and funding) at sites that will have an impact on the operation of the SRN, or will be reliant on the dependable operation of the network. Furthermore, it may be suitable to produce a separate document on the SRN that would best allow for a sufficiently detailed and coherent assessment of the SRN and points of interaction with the adjacent local highway network
- National Highways – considering the accessibility of the SRN, should support the SRN's prime function of enabling the long-distance movement of people and goods, as set out in the Circular and National Highways 'Planning for the Future' guidance. The plan should also be developed using the 'Transport evidence bases in plan making and decision taking' guidance, which has been published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities.
- The type and nature of land use near to the canal network, can affect the waterways and network infrastructure and the Canal and River Trust should be kept informed of future assessments of employment sites.
- Some inconsistencies with the Places Background Paper and Draft employment areas (e.g. Chester/Mostyn area – Dale Barracks).

Future Demand for employment land

- The demand for traditional office space has significantly reduced, or changed, post covid and with the increase in home working.
- Support for the aims of the Survey – review of sites for retention, refurbishment or release to alternative uses

Draft Employment Areas Survey Consultation Statement H

- Support to consider alternative uses such as housing where appropriate, to reduce pressure on greenfield and green belt land.
- Agree with the employment land hierarchy and in particular identification of flagship/strategic sites
- Regionally there is demand for new industrial and warehouse stock since 2021, and a shortage across a range of sizes of units
- Support for the identification of Ellesmere Port as the focus for employment development – much of the land is not of a suitable size or location to accommodate developments at or around Protos, Ellesmere Port has excellent transport connections including the Manchester Ship Canal port facilities and rail.
- The economic needs of key service centres will differ from major employment areas and these should be supported. Digital connectivity in rural areas is important.
- Neighbourhood plans in rural areas recognise and support local economies and services.
- The port interests within the sub-region are primarily based around the Manchester Ship Canal – the canal plays an important regional role in transporting freight to greater Manchester.
- Planning Act 2008, the Government will review the National Policy Statement for Ports - The strategic importance of port facilities is recognised at a national and regional level. This strategic importance must also be recognised at a local level through the development plan.
- The rural economy is diverse and incorporates sectors linked to farming, food production and agriculture. Broad areas of opportunity include; (i) Developing a valuable, low density tourism cluster (ii) Repurposing of surplus rural buildings towards driving economic growth and (iii) Accelerating the growth of clusters around Agri-tech and local SMEs.
- Agri-Tech is an incredibly diverse sector for technological or science-based innovation aimed at improving the productivity and sustainability of agriculture. In addition, Agri-Tech includes on-site storage and processing of food and non-food products; and animal health/ welfare of farmed livestock and fish, companion animals and horses (Chowley Oak).
- Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) land use planning processes, may apply in some areas within ONR consultation zones.
- The emerging Local Plan should be aspirational in determining a target figure for the supply of employment land in order to continue to bolster growth across Cheshire West and Chester.
- In addition to the established industries within Ellesmere Port, should recognise the employment opportunities associated the retail and leisure locations across the settlement, most notably Cheshire Oaks, the UK's largest Designer Outlet destination
- Support for the preparation of an Economic Needs Assessment and Economic Land Availability Assessment to support the Local Plan.

H Draft Employment Areas Survey Consultation Statement

- Recognise the importance of not relying solely on established Employment Areas as allocations within the emerging Local Plan. New employment allocations for Ellesmere Port should be provided.
- General comments on the local economies of specific settlements, in conjunction with sites promoted for housing (Redrow).

Comments on specific employment areas identified within the Survey

Area specific comments were made on the following Employment Areas:

Chester	Chester Business Park (C01)
Ellesmere Port	Portside Business Park (EP10)
Northwich	Wincham Business Park (N06); New Cheshire Business Park (N05); Gadbrook Park (N04)
Winsford	Winsford Industrial Estate (W04)
Rural	Mere's Edge Helsby (R16); Hampton Heath Industrial Estate (R04); Barbour Square, Tattenhall (R14); New Russia Hall Gatesheath (R07); Chowley Oak (R03) and expansion land; Canalside / Crows Nest, Tattenhall (R01)

Identification of additional employment areas to include in the Survey

Additional employment areas were put forward for consideration in the Report, as shown in the table below.

Chester	Defence Infrastructure Organisation re; Dale Barracks – welcome the opportunity to discuss the site and any future employment opportunities.
Ellesmere Port	<p>Protos, Ellesmere Port - Important to note Protos and the surrounding land, and its role as part of the borough's key strategic developments such as ORIGIN, but also NZNW. Protos can deliver significant economic benefits. The delivery of Hynet has links to plots at Protos.</p> <p>Booston Oil Depot – should be identified as it is part of available employment land in Ellesmere Port</p> <p>Land at Station Road, Ince - should be identified as it is part of available employment land in Ellesmere Port</p> <p>Encirc – The Encirc facility should be included in the assessment and considered in future evidence base documents and planning policies. There is a resolution to grant planning permission 22/03693/Ful for the development of an automated warehouse. The Study should not discount sites for a large single employer.</p>
Northwich	n/a
Winsford	n/a
Rural	Land off Holmes Chapel Road, Middlewich – the site is part of the borough's employment land supply and should be included in the Survey, an assessment against the criteria in the EAS has been provided.

Draft Employment Areas Survey Consultation Statement H

Chowley Oak – potential for agri-tech business cluster and further expansion.

Drumlan Hall Farm is currently occupied by Beechdean Manufacturing and Tattenhall Dairy Products (manufacturer of Cheshire Farm Ice Cream), both large employers within the Tattenhall area. The operations should be protected through the formal allocation of the existing site as land available for employment.

Bolesworth Estate have submitted plans to redevelop Harthill School – opportunity for a sensitively designed tourism cluster.

Sites promoted through the Employment Areas Survey and Land Availability Assessment

Comments were made alongside other evidence base reports (Places Paper, Land Availability Assessment and Call for Sites), in connection with sites being promoted for new development (employment or housing).

- North of Middlewich Road, Winsford – adjacent to the east of Winsford Industrial Estate, promoted for a science park for small businesses
- Land surrounding Protos – cluster innovative technologies, energy generation and resource management (within green belt). Proposals are tied to low carbon industry and a net zero industrial cluster.
- Land off Holmes Chapel Road, Middlewich – ‘Cheshire Fresh’. The site benefits from an extant planning permission for a major employment-led mixed-use development, which includes some retail uses.
- Land adjoining Wincham Business Park / Industrial Estate – located within the Green Belt.
- Expansion land around Chowley Oak.
- Land adjacent to New Russia Hall Gatesheath.
- West of M6 junction 18 (land at Sproston Green).
- Gadbrook Park.
- Land south of Ellesmere Port - a broad location 256.6ha within the Green Belt.

Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in Audio, Braille, Large Print or other formats. If you would like a copy in a different format, in another language or require a BSL interpreter, please email us at **equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk**

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