

# Bishop's Stortford Employment Study

East Hertfordshire District Council

April 2026

Prepared for:

East Hertfordshire District Council

Prepared by:

AECOM Limited  
Aldgate Tower  
2 Lemn Street  
London E1 8FA  
United Kingdom

T: +44 (0)20 7061 7000  
aecom.com

© 2026 AECOM Limited. All Rights Reserved.

## Table of Contents

1.	Executive Summary .....	1
2.	Introduction.....	5
3.	Strategic Context.....	7
4.	Socio-economic Profile.....	15
5.	Property Market Assessment .....	28
6.	Existing Employment Sites.....	53
7.	Land for Employment Development.....	63
8.	Conclusions and Recommendations.....	68

## Figures

Figure 4-1	Map of LSOAs to define 'Bishop's Stortford' .....	15
Figure 4-2	Map of LSOAs to define 'Bishop's Stortford + Stansted' .....	16
Figure 4-3	Population breakdown by age (2024).....	17
Figure 4-4	Change in employment in Bishop's Stortford 2015-2024 .....	22
Figure 4-5	Change in employment in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted 2015-2024.....	22
Figure 5-1	Office Properties in Bishop's Stortford Town Centre by Typology .....	30
Figure 5-2	Office properties – vacancy rate (2014 Q1 to 2025 Q4).....	32
Figure 5-3	Office properties – building stock size .....	33
Figure 5-4	Office Properties in Bishop's Stortford Town Centre by Size .....	34
Figure 5-5	Office properties – building stock age .....	35
Figure 5-6	Office Properties in Bishop's Stortford Town Centre by Age .....	36
Figure 5-7	Office properties – CoStar building quality score .....	37
Figure 5-8	Market rent (£/sqm) in Bishop's Stortford .....	38
Figure 5-9	Historic net absorption of office floorspace in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (2014-2025, sqm).....	39
Figure 5-10	Industrial Vacancy Rate (2014 Q1 to 2025 Q4).....	42
Figure 5-11	Warehousing and Storage Vacancy Rate (2014 Q1 to 2025 Q4).....	43
Figure 5-12	Industrial Market rent Q1 2014 to Q4 2025 (£/sqm).....	44
Figure 5-13	Warehousing and Storage Market rent Q1 2014 to Q4 2025 (£/sqm) .....	45
Figure 5-14	Historic net absorption of industrial floorspace in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted and East Herts (2014-2025, sqm) .....	46
Figure 5-15	Historic net absorption of warehousing and storage floorspace in Bishop's Stortford, Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, and East Herts (2014-2025, sqm).....	47
Figure 5-16	EPC Certificates in Bishop's Stortford by building use type .....	50
Figure 5-17	MEES compliance of present EPC certificates with anticipated regulation changes (sqm) .....	51

## Tables

Table 4-1	Economic activity and inactivity (16+, excluding full-time students) (2021).....	18
Table 4-2	Change in economic activity between 2011 and 2021 in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted .....	19
Table 4-3	Qualification level of residents aged 16 years and over .....	19
Table 4-4	Employment by industry (2024) .....	20
Table 4-5	Occupation of residents aged 16 years and over .....	23
Table 4-6	Business counts by employment size band .....	24
Table 4-7	Change in business counts (2016 to 2025) .....	24
Table 5-1	Office properties – buildings and floorspace .....	29
Table 5-2	Office properties – vacancy (2025 Q4) .....	31
Table 5-3	Office Rental Values (£/sqm) (2025 Q4) .....	38

Table 5-4 Industrial properties – buildings and floorspace.....	41
Table 5-5 Industrial properties – Vacancy Rate (2025 Q4) .....	41
Table 5-6 Market rental values – Industrial and Warehousing and Storage (£/sqm) (2025 Q4).....	43
Table 6-1 Overview of Raynham Road / Dunmow Road Industrial Estate (2025 Q4) .....	54
Table 6-2 Overview of Haslemere Estate (2025 Q4) .....	55
Table 6-3 Overview of Twyford Road (2025 Q4) .....	56
Table 6-4 Overview of Stansted Road (2025 Q4) .....	57
Table 6-5 Overview of Woodside (2025 Q4) .....	58
Table 6-6 Overview of Millside Industrial Estate (2025 Q4) .....	59
Table 6-7 Overview of Southmill Trading Estate .....	59
Table 6-8 Overview of Thorley Fields Business Park.....	60
Table 6-9 Overview of Bishop's Stortford Town Centre.....	61
Table 7-1 Employment density assumptions.....	65
Table 7-2 Estimate of FTE Jobs Generated by the Development of Vacant Land at Bishop's Stortford North.....	65
Table 7-3 Estimate of FTE Jobs Generated by the Development of Vacant Land at The Goods Yard	66
Table 7-4 Estimate of FTE Jobs Generated by Land at Old River Lane (Ref 3/25/1949/FUL).....	67
Table 7-5 Summary of Potential Employment Generated by Vacant Land and Pipeline Supply.....	67
Table 8-1 Conclusions and Recommendations.....	73

# 1. Executive Summary

## 1.1 Study context

- 1.1.1 AECOM was commissioned by East Herts District Council to deliver an Employment Study for Bishop's Stortford. The Employment Study forms part of the evidence base to underpin the review of the new East Herts Local Plan) and will support with determining future planning applications. Additional consideration of the area surrounding London Stansted Airport is provided, given its strategic importance (hereafter referred to as 'Bishop's Stortford + Stansted').

## 1.2 Policy and strategic context

- 1.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provides overarching guidance on the Government's development aims and describes the Government's vision for building a strong, competitive economy. It emphasises that Local Plans should present robust evidence to support clearly defined designations and allocations of land for employment uses. Furthermore, the need for an evidence base to assist in understanding existing business needs, local circumstances and market conditions is also emphasised in the national Planning Practice Guidance (PPG). Whilst this Study is not an economic needs assessment and therefore does not need to align with this guidance, it is relevant for consideration in the context of understanding employment needs in Bishop's Stortford.
- 1.2.2 At the local level, the current District Plan identifies Bishop's Stortford as a Strategic Opportunity Site within the UK Innovation Corridor. This corridor is outlined as one of the engines of UK growth, with world class industries, businesses, and knowledge-based economy. Policy BISH1 identifies that new employment floorspace will be delivered primarily within Bishop's Stortford town centre and the strategic allocations of Bishop's Stortford North and Bishop's Stortford South. Policy BISH3 and Policy BISH5 identify new Employment Areas within these strategic allocations respectively. Additional employment opportunities will come forward through mixed-use schemes at The Goods Yard (Policy BISH7) and Old River Lane (Policy BISH8).

## 1.3 Socioeconomic profile

- 1.3.1 The socio-economic baseline analysis has identified that Bishop's Stortford performs relatively strongly compared to East Herts and the regional and national picture, with its resident population more economically active and skilled than the comparator areas.
- 1.3.2 The employment profile of Bishop's Stortford is broadly comparable to East Herts and the regional and national picture. It registers sizable proportions of employment in the retail and education sectors. In relation to the sectors driving office-based employment, the proportion of the professional, scientific and technical and business administration and support services sectors in Bishop's Stortford are lower than East Herts but greater than the regional and national average.
- 1.3.3 Since 2015, Bishop's Stortford has seen most notable growth in the education sector, with other increases in employment registered in business administration and support services, accommodation and food services, and financial and insurance sectors. Conversely, there has been a fall in employment in retail, health, and wholesale sectors.
- 1.3.4 The majority of businesses in Bishop's Stortford are classed as micro (0-9 employees). This is higher than the rates in East Herts, East of England, and England. Bishop's Stortford has a lower proportion of small and medium-sized businesses than the comparator areas, and has no large businesses.

- 1.3.5 Outward commuter movements from both Bishop's Stortford exceed inward commuter movements by 6,027. The local authorities of significance for both study areas include Uttlesford, East Herts, Harlow, and the City of London.
- 1.3.6 Population growth was significantly higher in both Bishop's Stortford between 2015 and 2024 than in East Herts, the East of England, and England. Population projections are not available at the Bishop's Stortford level. However, the current housing trajectory, detailing the known commitments, suggests the potential for between 1,023 – 2,118 new homes to be delivered in Bishop's Stortford. With an average household size of 2.37 in East Herts, this indicatively suggests the potential for 2,425 – 5,020 additional residents, of which 1,186 – 2,456 would be expected to be aged 16 and over and economically active.

## 1.4 Property market and existing employment sites

### Office Market

- 1.4.1 Bishop's Stortford represents a significant share of the East Herts office market, accounting for 32.8% of office properties. However, overall, the size of the market is relatively small, as evidenced by the wider Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area offering more than double the amount of floorspace (108,472 square metres (sqm)) compared with Bishop's Stortford alone (54,006 sqm).
- 1.4.2 Bishop's Stortford's office market is dominated by smaller units, and the office stock in Bishop's Stortford is relatively old, with 35.9% of offices being built before 1960, higher than East Herts, the East of England, and England. Modern office development is limited, accounting for 5.3% of stock, below regional and national averages.
- 1.4.3 Vacancy levels have fluctuated over time, mirroring wider economic and structural changes in office demand, however vacancy rates currently stand at 3.1%, indicating comparatively strong occupancy.
- 1.4.4 Bishop's Stortford attracts lower market rental values for office use classes than the wider Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area and regional and national averages. This is reflective of the small size of the market and the age, size and quality profile of office stock in the town.

### Industrial Market

- 1.4.5 The industrial market comprises 133,239 sqm of floorspace in Bishop's Stortford, ~80% of which is warehousing and storage. The vacancy rate for industrial floorspace in Bishop's Stortford is below the regional and national average, reflecting a lack of spare capacity. Warehousing and storage uses have the highest vacancy rate, across all comparator areas, albeit this is broadly in line with accepted frictional vacancy rates.
- 1.4.6 Bishop's Stortford attracts higher market rental values for industrial property types than the East of England and England, however the highest industrial market rents are found in East Herts. For warehousing and storage, the market rental values in Bishop's Stortford are in line with the national average but lower than observed in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, East of England and East Herts.
- 1.4.7 Between 2014 and 2025, market rental values for all use classes exhibited an overall increase. However, the increase in market rental values is greater in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted than Bishop's Stortford, potentially reflecting the higher quality stock in proximity to the airport.

### Influences on Demand

- 1.4.8 There are a number of external factors which could influence the demand for employment floorspace in Bishop's Stortford over the coming years. These include the future expansion of Stansted Airport, with passenger capacity set to increase to between 48 and 51 million people per year by 2040. This could attract businesses that rely on "just-in-time" deliveries, such as high-tech manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and perishable goods, fostering the development of surrounding logistics parks and industrial estates and the development of

office and commercial space to attract firms seeking connectivity or the proximity to the airport. It would be anticipated that much of the demand could be met through sites in proximity to the airport, however some could spill over into Bishop's Stortford.

- 1.4.9 Other considerations include the proposed introduction of minimum energy efficiency standards which, while providing a strong incentive for the modernisation and upgrading of privately let business floorspace, could also present challenges for office stock in Bishop's Stortford, which includes a relatively high proportion of older buildings and conversions rather than purpose-built office space. Similarly, the evolution of changing space requirements for office and knowledge work following the Covid-19 pandemic has, and will continue to influence the demand for employment floorspace in Bishop's Stortford.

## Existing Employment Sites

- 1.4.10 There are eight key employment sites in Bishop's Stortford, providing 32.3 ha of allocated employment land and 170,946 sqm of employment generating floorspace. These sites include: Raynham Road / Dunmow Road Industrial Estate, Haslemere Estate, Twyford Road, Stansted Road, Woodside, Millside Industrial Estate, Southmill Trading Estate, and Thorley Fields Business Park. Through these sites Bishop's Stortford offers a varied and flexible stock of employment floorspace, comprised of some larger sites which incorporate multiple adjacent industrial estates, and some very small sites which accommodate smaller-scale businesses and services.
- 1.4.11 In addition, Bishop's Stortford town centre plays a vital role in providing office space in East Herts, linked to its strong connectivity and amenities which are key attractors for office occupiers. The town centre comprises 75 office properties, providing access to a range of office spaces ranging from 13 sqm to 3,690 sqm.

## 1.5 Land available for development

- 1.5.1 It is relevant to the development of policy for Bishop's Stortford to know how many jobs could be created should vacant land through undeveloped allocations and applications in the planning pipeline come forward for development.
- 1.5.2 Analysis suggests that there are three potential sources of land available for development: the 4 hectares within the development at Bishop's Stortford North (BISH3), as outlined in the East Herts District Plan (2018); the potential for some employment development to come forward as part of the mixed use development at The Goods Yard (BISH7) (3/22/1613/OUT and 3/24/1707/FUL) and; as part of mixed-use development at a 1.27 hectare parcel of land At Old River Lane (BISH8) (3/25/1949/FUL).
- 1.5.3 Taken together, the analysis suggests that the development of Bishop's Stortford North, The Goods Yard and Old River Lane could result in the generation of between 223 and 725 FTE jobs across the employment land use classes.

Site	Floorspace (sqm)		FTE Jobs	
	Low	High	Low	High
Bishop's Stortford North	8,325	10,638	164	465
The Goods Yard	570	1,899	44	146
Old River Lane	197	1,480	15	114
Total	9,092	14,017	223	725

- 1.5.4 If delivered, these jobs would represent growth of 2-5% on current workplace employment in Bishop's Stortford. However, it should be recognised that additional jobs could also be delivered across non-employment uses such as retail, food and beverage and healthcare.

## 1.6 Conclusions and recommendations

1.6.1 The Conclusions and Recommendations of this Study are summarised below.

Topic	Conclusion/Recommendation
Is it desirable to increase the number of jobs in Bishop's Stortford?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The analysis has demonstrated that additional employment land is required in Bishop's Stortford to meet identified demand for industrial needs and the lack of spare capacity in the market.</li> <li>Demand is more muted for office space; however, the age and quality profile of stock presents potential future challenges in retaining occupants and safeguarding stock given future minimum energy efficiency standards.</li> <li>Future population growth associated with the current commitments in the housing trajectory for Bishop's Stortford suggests the need to deliver jobs in order to support sustainable development.</li> </ul>
What sort of jobs could be attracted or developed in Bishop's Stortford? Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bishop's Stortford has a high proportion of employment in knowledge intensive business services such as professional, scientific and technical, information &amp; communication, financial and insurance.</li> <li>Its position as part of the UK Innovation Corridor Core Area could attract occupiers across the health, life sciences and pharmaceuticals, advanced engineering and aerospace sectors.</li> <li>Conditions to harness opportunities related to AI and data centre development could be realised if appropriate sites exist.</li> <li>Stated expansion could increase interest from transport and storage companies; with warehousing and storage also vital for sectors across the economy including advanced manufacturing and life sciences.</li> </ul>
What actions need to be taken to achieve the desired outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>There is a need to provide choice in order to accommodate a range of potential occupiers across light industrial (E(g)(iii), general industrial (B2) and warehousing and storage (B8) uses.</li> <li>Delivery of small and medium-sized premises (under 2,000 sqm) should be encouraged reflecting the current mix of provision in the town (and generally the District) across both office and industrial.</li> <li>The Council should safeguard existing sites where possible.</li> <li>The Council should continue to work proactively with the applicants at Old River Lane and The Goods Yard to encourage the delivery of some modern office floorspace on site, subject to viability.</li> <li>The Council should continue to work proactively with the applicant at Bishop's Stortford North to encourage the delivery of employment floorspace on the site.</li> <li>The Council should consider the role of more innovative office supply options should applications arise, for instance the colocation of office space alongside other more novel uses and co-working spaces.</li> <li>The Council should consider the potential for the allocation of additional employment land in Bishop's Stortford to accommodate identified industrial demand. In considering additional employment land, or whether the existing supply of employment land is fit for purpose, a number of criteria should be considered, including those set out in Section 8.4.8.</li> <li>The Council should continue to regularly monitor changes to existing and newly delivered employment space to identify evolving occupier/developer patterns and inform any policy responses that will be required. This is important given that some newly delivered employment space may come forward within the E Use class where there is flexibility for space assigned to E(g) use to later switch to other, non-employment land, uses.</li> <li>The Council should review the opportunities to work with landlords and occupiers to improve office properties in Bishop's Stortford town centre before they become non-compliant with minimum energy efficiency standards.</li> <li>Should existing employment land be lost to other uses, or permissions including employment space do not come forward, or are developed for different uses than have been consented, this land or floorspace should be re-provided to a similar or improved quantity and quality specification.</li> </ul>

## 2. Introduction

### 2.1 Study context

- 2.1.1 East Herts District Council has commissioned AECOM to deliver an Employment Study for Bishop's Stortford.
- 2.1.2 In 2023, the Council agreed to undertake a review of East Herts District Plan (2018). Formal work to update the Plan commenced at the end of 2025 and the Council is currently updating its evidence base to support the new Local Plan. In line with this, an update of the Bishop's Stortford Employment Study is required as part of this evidence base and to support with determining future planning applications.
- 2.1.3 Bishop's Stortford has seen considerable development over recent years, driven by the two strategic allocations at Bishop's Stortford North and South. The town's location and strategic transport links to London and Cambridge – alongside increasing national demand for housing, infrastructure, industry, and employment opportunities – could place pressure on Bishop's Stortford to accommodate growth. Furthermore, Bishop's Stortford is in close proximity to London Stansted Airport and the East Herts district accounts for the highest percentage share (18.4%) of the 12,200 employees at the airport. The airport has significant expansion plans over the coming years which could influence demand for employment floorspace in Bishop's Stortford. This report provides additional consideration of the wider area surrounding London Stansted Airport (hereafter referred to as 'Bishop's Stortford + Stansted') given this context.
- 2.1.4 This Study builds on previous analysis undertaken for Bishop's Stortford, which informed the employment strategy for the town set out in the District Plan (2018). The Town Wide Employment Study for Bishop's Stortford, delivered in 2013, also established an overall vision and objectives for employment growth in Bishop's Stortford, considering the likely growth in the resident population and workforce of the town over the local plan period, the need for employment land to provide local employment opportunities and how this might be achieved.
- 2.1.5 In this Study, employment land is defined as land with business activities falling under the E(g), B2, and B8 use classes as per the Use Classes Order 1987 (as amended). These include:
- E(g) i) office ii) the research and development of products or processes or iii) any industrial process, (which can be carried out in any residential area without causing detriment to the amenity of the area);
  - B2 – general industrial; and
  - B8 – storage and distribution.

### 2.2 Approach

- 2.2.1 In order to develop an evidence base to determine the need to support employment in Bishop's Stortford, our approach includes a number of key elements:
- Understand the existing situation:
    - Analysis of socioeconomic conditions
    - Assessment of the local commercial property market, informed by desktop research using the CoStar database and conversations with 3 local property market agents;
    - A supply-side assessment of the town's current employment sites informed by desktop research and field surveys undertaken by the Council.
  - Estimate future requirements:

- Understand the likely future demand for employment space in the town, including through the agent conversations and discussions with Council officers;
- Identify what level of employment could be supported on existing vacant land and commitments within approved planning applications.
- Conclusions and recommendations:
  - Set out evidence-based conclusions and recommendations for supporting employment in Bishop's Stortford.

## 2.3 Report structure

2.3.1 This report is structured as follows:

- Section 3 sets out the policy and strategic context.
- Section 4 presents the socio-economic characteristics of Bishop's Stortford, compared against the local authority area, regional and national geographies.
- Section 5 outlines a review of activity in the commercial property market compared against the local authority area, regional and national geographies, with specific consideration of the office stock in Bishop's Stortford town centre.
- Section 6 provides an overview of the existing employment sites in Bishop's Stortford.
- Section 7 identifies the potential employment supported by the land available for employment development in Bishop's Stortford.
- Section 8 brings together the findings of each task to provide recommendations and conclusions and outline an overall strategy for development of employment land in Bishop's Stortford.

## 3. Strategic Context

### 3.1 Introduction

- 3.1.1 The following section provides an overview of the local area and the relevant policy and strategic context to employment and employment land in Bishop's Stortford at the national, sub-regional, local authority and neighbourhood level.

### 3.2 Background context

- 3.2.1 Bishop's Stortford is a growing market town of approximately 44,000 residents, located 3 km west of London Stansted Airport, in the east of the East Herts District. Despite its relatively modest size, it functions as the largest settlement in the district and has experienced sustained growth due to its strong transport connections linkages to economic centres such as London and Cambridge. The town is surrounded by a predominantly rural landscape, enabling it to retain much of its historic character while continuing to serve as a key service centre for the wider area.
- 3.2.2 London Stansted Airport, located adjacent to Bishop's Stortford in neighbouring Uttlesford, is a major international airport serving the south-east of England. As London's third-busiest airport, it connects more than 29 million passengers to over 40 countries annually and supports more than 12,000 on-site jobs<sup>1</sup>. The airport also benefits from direct rail links to central London in 47 minutes<sup>2</sup>. Stansted Airport is currently working on a £1.1bn expansion, approved by the government in 2023, to increase capacity at the airport from up to 35 million passenger per annum to 43 million passenger per annum. The airport's owner, Manchester Airports Group, has subsequently received approval, subject to Section 106 agreement, to increase passenger capacity at the airport to between 48 and 51 million people per year by 2040.
- 3.2.3 Bishop's Stortford benefits from strong transport connectivity. Bishop's Stortford Railway Station is located in close proximity to the town centre and sits on the West Anglia Main Line, with Greater Anglia services providing direct connections to London Liverpool Street, Stratford, and Cambridge. Road connectivity is also strong, with the M11 motorway running to the east of the town via Junction 8, providing access north to Cambridge and south-west to Harlow and London. Additional key routes include the A120, which links the town to Stansted Airport, the A10 to the west, and several local routes such as the A1060, A1184, A1250, and B1383. Several bus services also operate in Bishop's Stortford (e.g. 309, 509, 510, 511, and 723), comprising local routes serving the town and connections to Stansted Airport, Harlow, Hertford, and Stevenage. As a result, employment opportunities for residents of Bishop's Stortford are primarily located in Uttlesford, other areas of East Herts, Harlow, and the City of London, with approximately 27.9% of residents working and living in Bishop's Stortford<sup>3</sup>.
- 3.2.4 The town is also relatively well-served by active travel routes, with the National Cycle Network Route 11 (currently incomplete) running through the town centre and National Cycle Network Route 16 passing to the north-east of Bishop's Stortford.

## 3.3 National planning policy and guidance

### National Planning Policy Framework (2024)

- 3.3.1 The National Planning Policy Framework<sup>4</sup> (NPPF), published in 2024, consolidates the Government's economic, environmental, and social planning policies for England and provides overarching guidance on the Government's development aims. At the heart of the

<sup>1</sup> London Stansted Airport (2026) About Us. Available at: <https://www.stanstedairport.com/about-us/> [Accessed: 14/01/26].

<sup>2</sup> London Stansted Airport (2026) Facts and figures. Available at: <https://www.stanstedairport.com/about-us/london-stansted-airport-and-mag/facts-and-figures/> [Accessed: 14/01/25].

<sup>3</sup> Office for National Statistics (ONS) (2012) Census 2011

<sup>4</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (2024) National Planning Policy Framework

NPPF is a presumption in favour of sustainable development, which the Government states should be seen as a common theme running through plan-making and decision-taking.

- 3.3.2 In relation to the economy and employment land, the NPPF states that planning decisions should help create the conditions in which businesses can invest, expand, and adapt. They should support economic growth and productivity, considering both local business needs and wider opportunities for development. Decisions should also allow an area to build on its strengths, counter any weaknesses, and address any challenges of the future.
- 3.3.3 In addition, the NPPF aims to identify strategic sites for local and inward investment, address potential barriers to investment, allow for new and flexible working practices, and enable a rapid response to changes in economic circumstances.
- 3.3.4 The NPPF has introduced a number of reformed policies. Chapter 6: 'Building a strong, competitive economy' sets out that planning policies and decisions should *"pay particular regard to facilitating development to meet the needs of a modern economy, including by identifying suitable locations for uses such as laboratories, gigafactories, data centres, digital infrastructure, freight and logistics"*. Locational requirements of sectors are highlighted and with regard to clusters of knowledge and data-driven, creative or high technology industries that *"new, expanded or upgraded facilities and infrastructure that are needed to support the growth of these industries"* are made provision for in planning policies. Provision should also be made for the *"expansion or modernisation of other industries of local, regional or national importance to support economic growth and resilience."*

## Draft National Planning Policy Framework (2025)

- 3.3.5 The Government has recently consulted on an updated draft of the NPPF, published in December 2025<sup>5</sup>. It sets out proposed policy changes to unlock more homes and further support commercial development required to drive growth.
- 3.3.6 Chapter 7: 'Building a strong, effective economy' is proposed to replace Chapter 6 of the current NPPF<sup>6</sup>. Key changes include a requirement for decision-makers to give substantial weight to the economic benefits of proposals for commercial development, particularly those supporting improvements in freight and logistics. The chapter also sets out that plans should avoid overly prescriptive requirements on acceptable employment uses, enabling greater flexibility to respond to changing commercial property demands. An updated NPPF is expected to be published in summer 2026.

## Planning Practice Guidance (2019)

- 3.3.7 Planning Practice Guidance (PPG)<sup>7</sup> supports the NPPF and includes guidance on housing and economic needs assessments and housing and economic land availability assessments.
- 3.3.8 Whilst this Study is not an economic needs assessment and therefore does not need to align with this guidance, it is relevant for consideration in the context of understanding employment needs in Bishop's Stortford.
- 3.3.9 Guidance on housing and economic needs assessments states that authorities need to prepare an evidence base to understand existing business needs, which will have to reflect local circumstances and market conditions. This includes assessing the best fit functional economic market area (FEMA), existing stock of land for employment uses within the area,

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) National Planning Policy Framework: Plan-making and national decision-making policies. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/697b71c52ff8d10a830d5d4a/Draft\\_NPPF\\_December\\_2025.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/697b71c52ff8d10a830d5d4a/Draft_NPPF_December_2025.pdf) [Accessed: 03/02/26].

<sup>6</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2025) Proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework and other changes to the planning system. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/697b6bc6aacd0dc9777b4fd2/December\\_2025\\_NPPF\\_Consultation.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/697b6bc6aacd0dc9777b4fd2/December_2025_NPPF_Consultation.pdf) [Accessed: 03/02/26].

<sup>7</sup> Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (2019). Planning Practice Guidance

recent pattern of employment land supply and loss, market demand and failure, and wider market signals relating to economic growth.

- 3.3.10 For housing and economic land availability assessments, PPG requires local planning authorities to work with other local authorities within the functional economic market area when assessing availability of land. A wide range of sites should be considered including existing sites that could be improved, intensified or changed.

## The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy (2025)

- 3.3.11 The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy 2025<sup>8</sup>, published in June 2026 by the Department for Business and Trade, sets out the UK Government's 10-year plan to make the UK the best country to invest in anywhere in the world. It is focused on long-term sustainable growth in the highest potential growth driving sectors which are best placed to create the wealth, jobs, and higher wages needed by communities across the UK.
- 3.3.12 In regard to these highest potential growth driving sectors, eight sectors have been identified that will create the greatest opportunity for the economy and businesses based on existing and emerging strengths. These are: Advanced Manufacturing, Clean Energy, Defence, Digital and Technologies, Creative Industries, Financial Services, Life Sciences, and Professional and Business Services. The resilience of these eight key sectors will be strengthened by supporting the foundational industries and their supply chains which provide vital materials and parts, from steel to chemicals, or manage essential infrastructure, from ports to electricity networks.
- 3.3.13 Bishop's Stortford could benefit from the national focus on these sectors driving economic resilience and innovation. With the UK's shift toward Net Zero and digital transformation, aligning local policies with national priorities can attract investment and support high-value job creation. Strengthening infrastructure, workforce development, and industry partnerships will position the region as a competitive hub for growth. Notably, Bishop's Stortford lies within the UK Innovation Corridor Core Area, which prioritises Life Sciences alongside Advanced Engineering and Manufacturing<sup>9</sup>.

## 3.4 Local planning policy and guidance

### East Herts District Plan (2018)

- 3.4.1 The East Herts District Plan (adopted in 2018)<sup>10</sup> establishes how development will be planned and delivered across East Herts over the period from 2011 to 2033. It sets out the strategy and policies for delivering growth and identifies appropriate areas and sites for development. These policies are then used to shape decisions on planning applications in the district.
- 3.4.2 The District Plan highlights 10 strategic objectives to form the basis of the policies, relating to climate change, community, housing, design, education and employment, accessibility, provision of facilities, health and wellbeing, biodiversity and infrastructure.
- 3.4.3 Objectives relevant to Bishop's Stortford and employment land within Bishop's Stortford include:
- Objective 5 – *"To foster entrepreneurial endeavour through educational attainment and encourage small and medium enterprises through maximising existing employment opportunities and clusters"*;

<sup>8</sup> Department for Business and Trade (2025). The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy. Available at: [https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68595e56db8e139f95652dc6/industrial\\_strategy\\_policy\\_paper.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/68595e56db8e139f95652dc6/industrial_strategy_policy_paper.pdf) [Accessed: 30/01/26].

<sup>9</sup> Hertfordshire Futures (2025) Hertfordshire Local Enterprise Partnership Building Our Industrial Strategy: Our response. Available at: <https://www.hertfordshirefutures.co.uk/media/nvxcftww/hertfordshire-lep-is-report-interactive.pdf> [Accessed: 11/02/26].

<sup>10</sup> East Herts Council (2018). East Herts District Plan 2018.

- Objective 6 – *“To improve access opportunities, minimise the need to travel, and encourage necessary journeys to be made by sustainable means to ease congestion and help reduce East Herts’ carbon footprint”*; and
- Objective 10 – *“To ensure that development occurs in parallel with provision of the necessary infrastructure, including enhancement and provision of green infrastructure.”*

3.4.4 Section 2.6 of the District Plan identifies Bishop's Stortford as a Strategic Opportunity Site within the LSCC Core Area, comprising the districts of Broxbourne, East Herts, Epping Forest, Harlow and Uttlesford. The Corridor is described as a major engine of UK economic growth, characterised by globally competitive industries and a strong knowledge-based economy.

3.4.5 Relevant areas of the vision to Bishop's Stortford's employment land are set out in the following:

*“The Core Area will build on its key strengths including its skilled workforce in sectors such as health, life sciences and pharmaceuticals, advanced engineering and aerospace, its high quality environment and educational opportunities. Together with Stansted Airport, the local authorities will delivery sustainable growth which supports the economic ambitions of the LSCC and the UK through: [...]*

- *Capitalising on existing economic sectors and promoting growth of expanding industries including in the food production, life sciences, pharmaceuticals and technology sectors; tourism including hotels, Stansted's expansion [...];*
- *Working with partners to secure investment in major infrastructure including increasing rail capacity on the West Anglia Mainline and maximising the opportunities that Crossrail 2 can deliver, together with road improvements including a new junction on the M11 at 7A and improvements to junctions 7 and 8, and to the A414, A120, A10 and M25; and delivery of superfast broadband;*
- *Supporting the delivery of new jobs in the Harlow Enterprise Zone, and the north side of Stansted Airport, Broxbourne Park Blaza, Brookfield and Bishop's Stortford – all identified as Strategic Opportunity Sites within the corridor [...]*

*The Core Area supports the development and sustainable growth of Greater Harlow and key growth locations at Broxbourne, Brookfield and Bishop's Stortford together with Stansted Airport growing to its full permitted capacity and as a business growth hub. These centres, with proportionate growth throughout the wider area, and the right investment, would create an economic powerhouse”.*

3.4.6 Chapter 5 of the District Plan sets out the development strategy for Bishop's Stortford, identifying economic development as a key growth area. The town is designated as the Principal Town Centre in East Herts, with a strong retail and leisure offer, and is positioned as an attractive location for businesses and new employment opportunities given its proximity to the M11 motorway and Stansted Airport.

3.4.7 Policy BISH11 'Employment in Bishop's Stortford' designates the following locations as Employment Areas:

- *“(a) Raynham Road/Dunmow Road Industrial Estate (incorporating Stortford Hall Industrial Estate, The Links Business Centre, Raynham Road/Myson Way, Raynham Road West, and Raynham Road East between The Links Business Centre and Raynham Close);*
- *(b) Haslemere Estate;*
- *(c) Twyford Road;*
- *(d) Stansted Road (incorporating Goodlife Park, Stort Valley Industrial Estate, and Birchanger Industrial Estate);*
- *(e) Woodside;*
- *(f) Millside Industrial Estate; and*

- (g) *Southmill Trading Estate*".
- 3.4.8 Policy BISH1 identifies that new employment and retail floorspace will be delivered primarily within the town centre and the strategic allocations of Bishop's Stortford North and Bishop's Stortford South. Policy BISH3 and Policy BISH5 identify new Employment Areas within these strategic allocations respectively. Additional employment opportunities will come forward through mixed-use schemes at the Goods Yard (Policy BISH7) and Old River Lane (Policy BISH8). The Mill Site (Policy BISH9) is also a designated Employment Area until it becomes available for redevelopment.
- 3.4.9 Policy DPS1 commits East Herts District Council to providing a minimum of 10,800 new jobs, 19,020 hectares of new employment land for a mix of B class uses, and an additional 7,100 square metres (sqm) of convenience and 5,700 sqm of comparison retail floor space.
- 3.4.10 Other policies in the East Herts District Plan of relevance to Bishop's Stortford and employment land include:
- Policy BISH1 'Development in Bishop's Stortford' – A minimum of 4,426 homes will be delivered across the plan period, with sites allocated in Policy BISH3, Policy BISH4, Policy BISH5, Policy BISH6, Policy BISH7, Policy BISH8, Policy BISH9, and Policy BISH10.
  - Policy DPS2 'The Development Strategy 2011-2033' – Sets out the strategy to deliver sustainable development in accordance with sites within urban areas, including Bishop's Stortford, Buntingford, Hertford, Sawbridgeworth and Ware;
  - Policy ED1 'Employment' – Allocates land for industry within designated employment areas, comprising a mix of use classes (e.g. B1 (now E(g)), B2 and B8). The provision of new employment uses should be flexible in design, able to respond to the changing needs, be energy efficient, have fully integrated communications technology and be accessed by sustainable transport modes; and
  - Policy ED2 'Rural Economy' – Supports proposals for creating new employment generating uses or supporting the sustainable growth and expansion of existing businesses in rural areas where they are appropriately and sustainably located and do not conflict with other policies within the District Plan.

## New Local Plan

- 3.4.11 In October 2023, the Council agreed that East Herts District Plan 2018 needs updating and that work should commence on updating the technical studies and other preparatory work required to provide a robust evidence base. Now the Government has published the Local Planning Regulations (2026), the Council will commence formal work on the new Local Plan this year. This Study will provide an updated assessment of the employment market in Bishop's Stortford, to consider changes in the local context and provide robust evidence that can inform the emerging Local Plan.

## Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041 (2026)

- 3.4.12 Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041 (adopted in 2026)<sup>11</sup> establishes how development will be planned and delivered across Uttlesford over the period from 2021 to 2041. It sets out the strategy and policies for delivering growth and identifies appropriate areas and sites for development. These policies are then used to shape decisions on planning applications in the district.
- 3.4.13 The Local Plan highlights three strategic objectives to form the basis of the policies, relating to minimising environmental impact, recognising and supporting economic opportunities, and providing adequate and timely infrastructure to support development.

<sup>11</sup> Uttlesford District Council (2026) Uttlesford Local Plan 2021-2041. Available at: <https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/local-plan> [Accessed: 22/04/26].

- 3.4.14 Policies relevant to Bishop's Stortford, recognising the role of Stansted Airport to the town, include:
- Core Policy 4 'Meeting Business and Employment Needs' – Sets out the employment allocations in the district across research and development, industrial, storage and distribution, and office uses;
  - Core Policy 10 'South Uttlesford Area Strategy' – Allocates 36 hectares (ha) of employment land within the South Uttlesford Area;
  - Core Policy 11 'London Stansted Airport' – Supports the continued operation and planned expansion of Stansted Airport;
  - Core Policy 12 'Stansted Airport Countryside Protection Zone' (CPZ) – Defines the CPZ around the airport to conserve and enhance the rural character of the area. by setting out the conditions in which development may be permitted;
  - Core Policy 45 'Protection of Existing Employment Space' – Safeguards existing employment spaces including offices, warehouses, and industrial uses, and sets out the requirements for proposals that result in the loss of permanent jobs or employment floorspace;
  - Core Policy 46: 'Development at Allocated Employment Sites' – Safeguards strategic allocations for employment-generating uses; and
  - Core Policy 48 'New Employment Development on Unallocated Sites' – Supports new employment proposals on appropriate unallocated sites identified through the policy criteria.
- 3.4.15 Chapter 4 of the Local Plan sets out the Spatial Strategy for Uttlesford and identifies the appropriate locations for development, including the amount of employment land required. It highlights that there is a limited supply of industrial land within Uttlesford and within 10 miles of Bishop's Stortford.
- 3.4.16 Chapter 6 of the Local Plan sets out the South Uttlesford Area Strategy, which spans the east-west corridor between the M11 motorway, Stansted Airport, and Great Dunmow. The chapter highlights the strategic importance of the employment and transport corridor, with significant economic importance placed on activity generated by Stansted Airport. The strategy identifies the need for a mix of employment uses within the area, including both large scale commercial sites and smaller employment unites, as well as office space. This includes the Northside scheme adjoining the airport, with consent for 195,000 sqm of industrial (B1) floorspace.
- 3.4.17 Chapter 7 of the Local Plan sets out the Stansted Mountfitchet and Elsenham Area Strategy, located to the north-east of Bishop's Stortford. The chapter highlights the reliance on nearby settlements for employment opportunities at Stansted Airport, Bishop's Stortford, and London. The strategy protects existing employment and sets out the provision of 5.5 ha of new employment land in Elsenham (Water Circle Estate, Gaunt's End).

## Neighbourhood Plan for Silverleys and Meads Wards 2021-2033

- 3.4.18 The Bishop's Stortford Town Council Neighbourhood Plan for Silverleys and Meads Wards 2021-2033<sup>12</sup> set out planning policies to provide a vision for the future of these areas.
- 3.4.19 The Neighbourhood Plan provides an overview of the current situation in the Silverleys and Meads wards in Bishop's Stortford in terms of business and employment. It notes that there is an "*inadequate supply of modern business space to accommodate the potential for employment growth but relatively low unemployment*". It also highlights the tension between those wishing to see local employment opportunities expand and those concerned that

<sup>12</sup> Bishop's Stortford Town Council (2021) Bishop's Stortford Town Council Neighbourhood Plan for Silverleys and Meads Wards (1<sup>st</sup> Revision) 2021-2033. Available at: [https://www.bishopstortfordtc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/basic\\_pages/Silverleys%20and%20Meads%20Neighbourhood%20Plan%201st%20Revision.pdf](https://www.bishopstortfordtc.gov.uk/sites/default/files/basic_pages/Silverleys%20and%20Meads%20Neighbourhood%20Plan%201st%20Revision.pdf) [Accessed: 14/01/26].

expansion might damage the town's character. The Neighbourhood Plan sets out the following objectives relating to business and employment:

- *“Create new employment opportunities for local residents while protecting amenities for residents;*
- *Create a welcoming, prosperous and dynamic town centre through attractive, integrated refurbishment and development; and*
- *Support development in the town and commercial areas to ensure sustainable employment diversity”.*

3.4.20 The Neighbourhood Plan sets a number of policies for business and employment including the following:

- Policy BP1 ‘Provision of a business incubation centre’ – Supports the provision of a business incubation sector appropriate for the needs of small start-up type business activity;
- Policy BP4 ‘Mixed developments’ – Supports proposals which seek to enhance the employment opportunities in the town by providing a diverse mix of retail and commercial facilities; and
- BP5 ‘Edge of town development’ – Supports the development of new industrial and/or commercial business uses at the edge of the town and the (re)location of current industrial areas within the town to the edge of town with access from the key transport routes.

## Neighbourhood Plan for All Saints, Central, South and Part of Thorley 2021-2033

3.4.21 The Bishop's Stortford Town Council Neighbourhood Plan for All Saints, Central, South and part of Thorley 2021-2033<sup>13</sup> set out planning policies to provide a vision for the future of these areas.

3.4.22 The Neighbourhood Plan provides an overview of the current situation in the All Saints, Central, South wards and part of Thorley in Bishop's Stortford in terms of business and employment, consistent with the issues identified in paragraph 3.4.17. The Neighbourhood Plan sets out the following objectives relating to business and employment:

- *“Create new employment opportunities for local residents while protecting amenities for residents; and*
- *Support development in the town and commercial areas to ensure sustainable employment diversity”.*

3.4.23 The Neighbourhood Plan sets a number of policies for business and employment consistent with those outlined in paragraph 3.4.18.

## Hertfordshire Economic Strategy

3.4.24 The Hertfordshire Economic Strategy 2026-2036<sup>14</sup>, published by Hertfordshire Futures in March 2026, aims to focus on the residents and businesses of Hertfordshire to build a resilient, productive, inclusive and sustainable economy over the next 10 years. The strategy identifies six key sectors across Hertfordshire as central to driving growth across the county, including advanced manufacturing (defence and aerospace), life sciences, agritech, professional and business services, creative (film and TV production), and digital and technology.

<sup>13</sup> Bishop's Stortford Town Council (2021) Bishop's Stortford Town Council Neighbourhood Plan for All Saints, Central, South and part of Thorley (1<sup>st</sup> Revision) 2021-2033. Available at: <https://eastherts.fra1.digitaloceanspaces.com/s3fs-public/2022-07/All%20Saints%20Central%20South%20and%20Parts%20of%20Thorley%20Neighbourhood%20Plan-%201st%20Revision.pdf> [Accessed: 22/04/26].

<sup>14</sup> Hertfordshire Futures (2026) Hertfordshire Economic Strategy 2026-2036. Available at: <https://www.hertfordshirefutures.co.uk/media/bm1jncz4/hertfordshire-economic-strategy-2026-2036.pdf> [Accessed: 22/04/26].

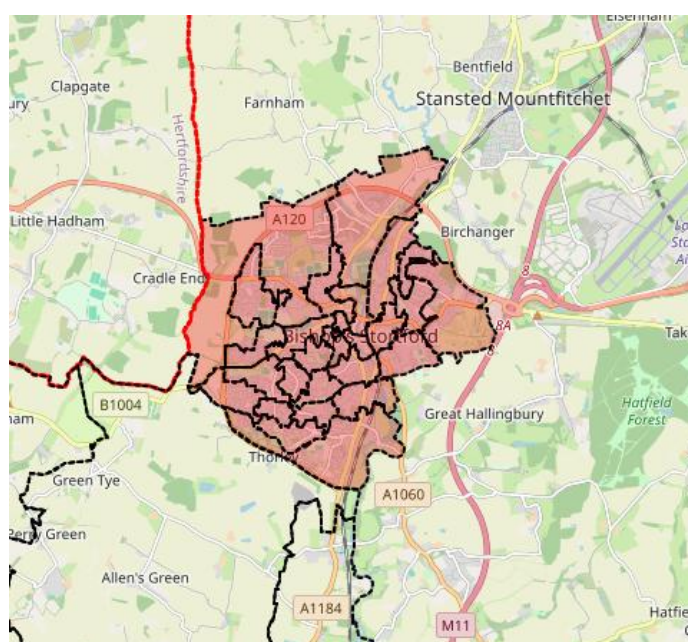
- 3.4.25 Five priorities are established, including, of most relevance, Priority 4 'Places and communities thrive', which seeks to ensure the provision of employment space that meets the need of Hertfordshire's key sectors. This emphasises the importance of an adequate and appropriate supply of land for both commercial and residential uses.
- 3.4.26 The strategy highlights the historic loss of employment floorspace between 2008/9 and 2017/8, alongside a continued post-pandemic decline in office space. However, it identifies growing demand for industrial and logistics floorspace despite current capacity constraints. Overall, these shifts in Hertfordshire's commercial property market are recognised as posing risks to future economic growth.

## 4. Socio-economic Profile

### 4.1 Introduction

- 4.1.1 This section of the report sets out an assessment of Bishop's Stortford's socio-economic profile, including an analysis of economic performance over time, in order to understand the impact of changes on likely employment space needs.
- 4.1.2 The geographical area of Bishop's Stortford has been defined by Office for National Statistics (ONS) Lower Super Output Areas<sup>15</sup> (LSOAs) and is set out in Figure 4-1. LSOAs are a statistical measure for small areas comprising between 400 and 1,200 households and have a usual resident population of between 1,000 and 3,000 persons. This study area will hereafter be referred to as 'Bishop's Stortford'.

**Figure 4-1 Map of LSOAs to define 'Bishop's Stortford'**

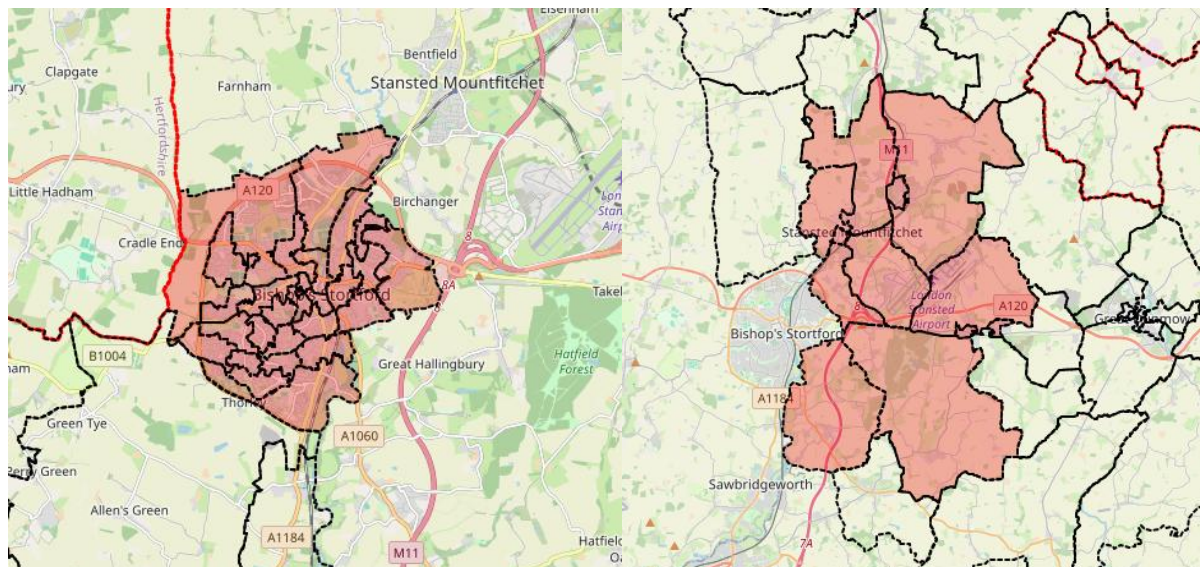


Source: NOMIS (2026).

- 4.1.3 Given the importance of Stansted Airport to Bishop's Stortford, both in terms of its ability to generate employment opportunities for local residents and influence demand for employment land in the town, a wider area comprising Bishop's Stortford and Stansted Airport is included in the analysis. The combined LSOAs<sup>16</sup> which define this area, referred to as 'Bishop's Stortford + Stansted', are set out in Figure 4-2.

<sup>15</sup> East Hertfordshire 003A, East Hertfordshire 003B, East Hertfordshire 003C, East Hertfordshire 003D, East Hertfordshire 004A, East Hertfordshire 004C, East Hertfordshire 004D, East Hertfordshire 004E, East Hertfordshire 005A, East Hertfordshire 005B, East Hertfordshire 005C, East Hertfordshire 005D, East Hertfordshire 005E, East Hertfordshire 007A, East Hertfordshire 007B, East Hertfordshire 007C, East Hertfordshire 007E, East Hertfordshire 007F, East Hertfordshire 007G, East Hertfordshire 007H, East Hertfordshire 008A, East Hertfordshire 008B, East Hertfordshire 008C, East Hertfordshire 008D, East Hertfordshire 008E, and East Hertfordshire 008F.

<sup>16</sup> East Hertfordshire 003A, East Hertfordshire 003B, East Hertfordshire 003C, East Hertfordshire 003D, East Hertfordshire 004A, East Hertfordshire 004C, East Hertfordshire 004D, East Hertfordshire 004E, East Hertfordshire 005A, East Hertfordshire 005B, East Hertfordshire 005C, East Hertfordshire 005D, East Hertfordshire 005E, East Hertfordshire 007A, East Hertfordshire 007B, East Hertfordshire 007C, East Hertfordshire 007E, East Hertfordshire 007F, East Hertfordshire 007G, East Hertfordshire 007H, East Hertfordshire 008A, East Hertfordshire 008B, East Hertfordshire 008C, East Hertfordshire 008D, East Hertfordshire 008E, East Hertfordshire 008F, Uttlesford 005A, Uttlesford 005B, Uttlesford 005C, Uttlesford 005D, Uttlesford 005E, Uttlesford 005F, Uttlesford 006A, Uttlesford 006E, Uttlesford 006F, Uttlesford 006G, Uttlesford 009A, and Uttlesford 009B.

**Figure 4-2 Map of LSOAs to define 'Bishop's Stortford + Stansted'**

Source: NOMIS (2026).

- 4.1.4 Comparison of these two areas' performance is provided with East Herts district, the East of England region, and England.

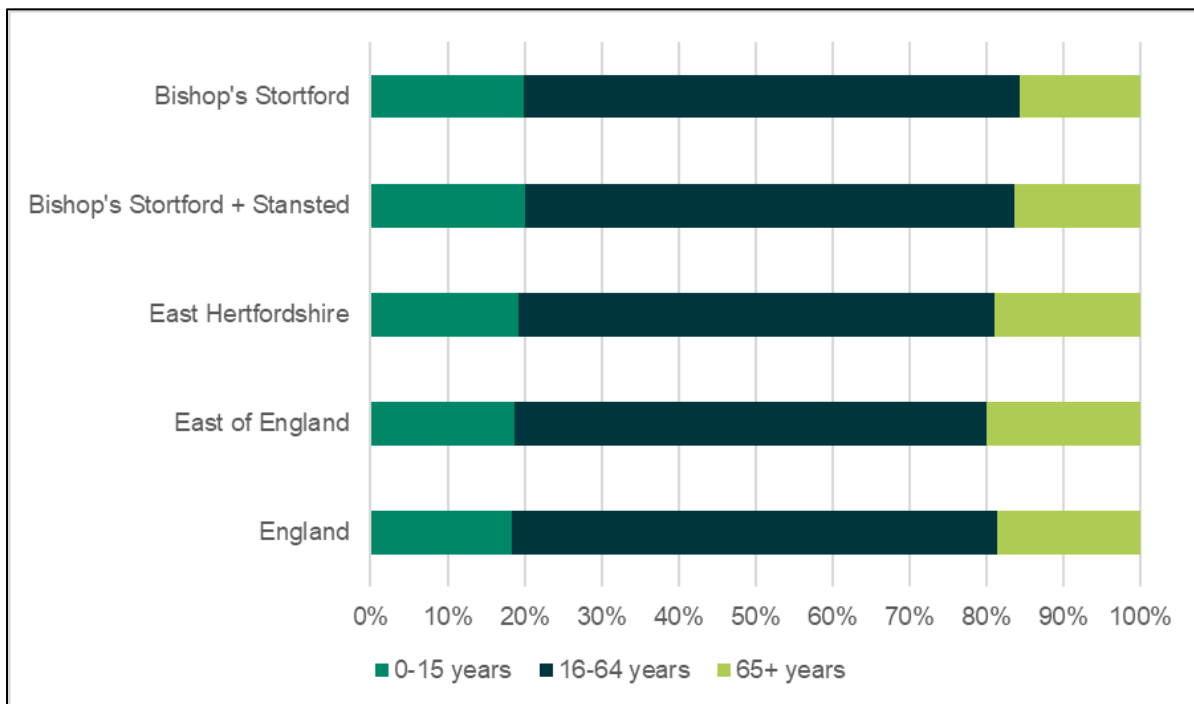
## 4.2 Population, labour force and skills

- 4.2.1 ONS Population Estimates<sup>17</sup> for 2024, the most recent year available, show that the resident population of Bishop's Stortford stood at 44,390 in 2024. The population has increased from 39,129 in 2015, representing an increase of 13.4%. The population of Bishop's Stortford + Stansted in 2024 stood at 68,627, increasing from 59,534 in 2015, representing an increase of 15.3%. The growth for both study areas is considerably higher than that recorded for East Herts (8.3%), the East of England (6.7%), and England (6.0%) over the same time period.
- 4.2.2 The increase in the population likely reflects the residential development that has taken place in Bishop's Stortford since the previous Employment Study. The East Herts District Plan<sup>18</sup> allocated a minimum of 4,426 residential dwellings development in Bishop's Stortford, primarily driven by developments at Bishop's Stortford North (2,529 dwellings), Bishop's Stortford South (750 dwellings), and The Goods Yard (600 dwellings), alongside several smaller allocations, all of which are at varying stages of completion. The Uttlesford Local Plan also outlines the residential development within Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, setting out the provision of a minimum of 15,211 dwellings across the district by 2041, with c.1,940 dwellings in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted.
- 4.2.3 Figure 4-3 shows the age breakdown of the population in Bishop's Stortford, Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, and the comparator areas.

<sup>17</sup> ONS (2026) Population Estimates 2024.

<sup>18</sup> East Herts District Council (2018) East Herts District Plan.

Figure 4-3 Population breakdown by age (2024)



Source: ONS Population Estimates 2024.

4.2.4 Figure 4-3 outlines that in 2024, 64.4% of Bishop's Stortford residents and 63.5% of Bishop's Stortford + Stansted residents were of working age (16 to 64 years), greater than the proportion of residents in East Herts (61.9%), the East of England (61.3%), and England (62.9%). The proportion of the working age population in Bishop's Stortford has decreased slightly over the period from 2015 to 2024, from 64.5% to 64.4%. Similarly, the proportion of the working age population in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted decreased over this period, albeit by a slightly greater amount, from 64.0% to 63.5%. The working age population in East Herts, the East of England, and England also fell across from 2015 to 2024, by 1.1%, 0.5%, 0.7% respectively.

4.2.5 In 2024, older residents (aged 65 and over) comprised 15.7% of the population in Bishop's Stortford and 16.4% in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, indicating a relatively younger population profile compared to East Herts (18.9%), the East of England (20.0%), and England (18.7%). Between 2015 and 2024, the proportion of residents aged 65 and over in Bishop's Stortford increased from 14.9% in 2015 to 15.7% in 2024, while in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted it rose from 15.6% to 16.4%, reflecting a percentage point increase across both areas. In contrast, there has been more noticeable growth in this age group in the comparator areas, with increases of 1.4% in East Herts and 0.9% in both the East of England and England.

4.2.6 The proportion of the population aged 0 to 15 years old in Bishop's Stortford declined from 20.7% in 2015 to 19.9% in 2024. A similar, although more modest, decrease was observed in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, from 20.5% to 20.1% over the same period. The younger population in East Herts, the East of England, and England also decreased across the period, by 0.3%, 0.1%, and 0.5% respectively. However, Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted continue to have a higher proportion of residents aged 0–15 (19.9% and 20.1% respectively) than East Herts (19.2%), the East of England (18.8%), and England (18.4%).

4.2.7 Population projections are not available at the Bishop's Stortford level. The current housing trajectory suggests the potential for 1,023 new homes associated with approved planning applications. With an average household size of 2.37 in East Herts<sup>19</sup>, this indicatively

<sup>19</sup> ONS (2022) Census (2021) Household size, local authorities in England and Wales,

suggests the potential for an additional 2,425 residents in Bishop's Stortford, of which 1,186 would be expected to be aged 16 and over and economically active.

- 4.2.8 Moreover, there are a number of planning applications for the allocated sites, yet to be determined, that could result in further increases in the resident population. Taking these into consideration would suggest the potential for 2,118 new homes, and an additional population of 5,020 residents, of which 2,456 would be expected to be aged 16 and over and economically active.
- 4.2.9 As shown in Table 4-1, the economic activity rate<sup>20</sup> for residents aged 16 and over (excluding students) in 2021 was 66.6% in both Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted. This is higher than East Herts (65.7%), the East of England (61.8%), and England (60.9%). The employment rate<sup>21</sup> in Bishop's Stortford (64.0%) and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (64.1%) also exceed that in East Herts (63.2%), the East of England (58.8%), and England (60.9%).
- 4.2.10 The unemployment rate in Bishop's Stortford was 2.6%, slightly greater than in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (2.5%), and in line with East Herts (2.5%). Both study areas perform more strongly than the East of England and England, with unemployment rates of 3.0% and 3.5% respectively.
- 4.2.11 Overall, Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted are characterised by high levels of economic activity and employment and low unemployment. Further detail regarding economic activity and inactivity can be found in Table 4-1.

**Table 4-1 Economic activity and inactivity (16+, excluding full-time students) (2021)**

	Bishop's Stortford		Bishop's Stortford + Stansted		East Herts (%)	East of England (%)	England (%)
	Number	%	Number	%			
Economically active	22,027	66.6	34,216	66.6	65.7	61.8	60.9
Employment	21,177	64.0	32,915	64.1	63.2	58.8	57.4
Unemployment	850	2.6	1,301	2.5	2.5	3.0	3.5
Economic inactivity	10,540	31.9	16,460	31.8	34.3	40.2	41.4

Source: ONS Census 2021.

- 4.2.12 Since the previous Census in 2011, the economic activity rate in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted has fallen to 66.6% in 2021, from 77.0% and 76.5% respectively. As shown in Table 4-2, this decline has been primarily driven by an increase in the retired population, growing by 3,353 in Bishop's Stortford and 4,985 in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted. All comparator geographies registered a similar decline in economic activity levels between the two censuses.
- 4.2.13 Despite the fall in the proportion of economically active residents between 2011 and 2021, the absolute number of economically active residents increased by 864 in Bishop's Stortford and by 1,913 in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, reflecting overall population growth over the past decade. Notably, the number of students in both Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted decreased by 233 and 316 respectively.

<sup>20</sup> The Census defines economic activity rate as the proportion of the population aged 16+ who, during the week before the 2021 Census, were either in employment or unemployed but actively seeking and available for work (or waiting to start a job already offered and accepted).

<sup>21</sup> The Census defines employment rate as the proportion of the population aged 16+ who were in paid work for at least one hour in the week before the 2021 Census, or were temporarily away from a job (e.g. on holiday, sick leave or maternity leave).

**Table 4-2 Change in economic activity between 2011 and 2021 in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted**

Economic activity status	Bishop's Stortford			Bishop's Stortford + Stansted		
	2011	2021	Change (2011 to 2021)	2011	2021	Change (2011 to 2021)
<b>Total economically active</b>	<b>21,163</b>	<b>22,027</b>	<b>864</b>	<b>32,303</b>	<b>34,216</b>	<b>1,913</b>
Full time	12,622	13,151	529	18,822	20,119	1,297
Part time	4,176	4,677	501	6,194	7,015	821
Self employed	2,824	3,349	525	4,956	5,781	825
Unemployed	801	850	49	1,231	1,301	70
Students	740	507	-233	1,100	784	-316
<b>Total economically inactive</b>	<b>6,245</b>	<b>10,540</b>	<b>4,295</b>	<b>9,853</b>	<b>16,460</b>	<b>6,607</b>
Retired	2,882	6,235	3,353	4,824	9,809	4,985
Student	1,339	1,480	141	1,861	2,197	336
Looking after family	1,209	1,440	231	1,899	2,275	376
Long-term sick or disabled	509	605	96	747	999	252
Other	306	780	474	522	1,180	658

Source: ONS Census 2021 and Census 2011.

4.2.14 According to the 2021 Census, the latest available data at the LSOA level, 87.3% and 87.2% of residents aged 16 and over in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted respectively held some form of qualification, above the rate in East Herts (86.2%), the East of England (81.9%), and England (81.9%). In addition, the proportion of the population holding a qualification in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted increased since 2011, from 85.6% and 84.6% respectively, demonstrating that the population was more skilled in 2021.

4.2.15 Among residents of Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, 40.8% and 38.8% respectively held a degree level or equivalent qualification (National Vocational Qualification (NVQ) Level 4+), which is greater than in East Herts (38.6%), and notably above the East of England (31.6%), and England (33.9%) averages. Table 4-3 sets out the qualification level of the study areas and comparator geographies.

**Table 4-3 Qualification level of residents aged 16 years and over**

	Bishop's Stortford (%)	Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (%)	East Herts (%)	East of England (%)	England (%)
% with NVQ4+	40.8	38.8	38.6	31.6	33.9
% with NVQ3+	16.4	17.2	16.8	16.8	16.9
% with NVQ2+	14.2	14.7	14.4	14.4	13.3
% with NVQ1+	9.0	9.4	9.4	10.8	9.7
% with other qualifications	2.6	2.5	7.0	8.3	8.1
% with no qualifications	12.7	12.8	13.8	18.1	18.1

Source: ONS Census 2021.

## 4.3 Local employment

- 4.3.1 Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted each have a distinct workplace employment profile, as shown in Table 4-4. This section focuses on the sectors that are likely to drive demand across the employment land use classes (E(g)/B).
- 4.3.2 In relation to the sectors driving office-based employment, Bishop's Stortford shows a moderate representation of employment in the professional, scientific and technical and business administration and support services, accounting for 9.8% and 9.9% of employment respectively. In Bishop's Stortford, employment in the professional, scientific and technical sector is greater than the East of England (7.9%) and England (9.4%) averages, but lower than in East Herts (10.8%). In terms of business administration and support services, employment in Bishop's Stortford is notably lower than in East Herts (15.8%) and lower than the East of England (10.8%), but greater than the national average (9.1%).
- 4.3.3 Bishop's Stortford + Stansted also shows a moderate representation of employment in these sectors driving office-based employment. The professional, scientific and technical sector in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted accounts for 6.7% of employment, notably lower than Bishop's Stortford and the comparator geographies of East Herts (10.8%), the East of England (7.9%), and England (9.4%). Employment in business administration and support services comprises 15.1% of employment in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, in line with East Herts (15.8%), and greater than the regional and national average (10.8% and 9.1% respectively).
- 4.3.4 In Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, the largest industry is transport and storage (including postal) at 21.7%, comprising a significantly larger share of jobs compared to Bishop's Stortford (2.6%) as well as East Herts (1.6%), the East of England (5.5%), and England (5.1%). This is particularly concentrated in Uttlesford 006E LSOA (comprising the south east of Stansted airport), with 7,000 employees in the LSOA employed in the sector.
- 4.3.5 Manufacturing in both Bishop's Stortford (4.5%) and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (4.6%) comprise a similar share of employment by industry, which is lower than East Herts (6.1%), the East of England (7.3%), and England (7.4%).
- 4.3.6 In Bishop's Stortford, employment in the education industry accounts for the largest share of jobs at 13.8%, greater than Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (7.0%) as well as East Herts (10.1%), the East of England (8.4%), and England (8.3%). This is linked to the presence of several schools in the town, including The Bishop's Stortford High School, The Hertfordshire and Essex High School, Birchwood High School, and St Mary's Catholic High School. However, this would be unlikely to drive demand for E(g)/B class employment space, with schools falling under Use Class F1.

**Table 4-4 Employment by industry (2024)**

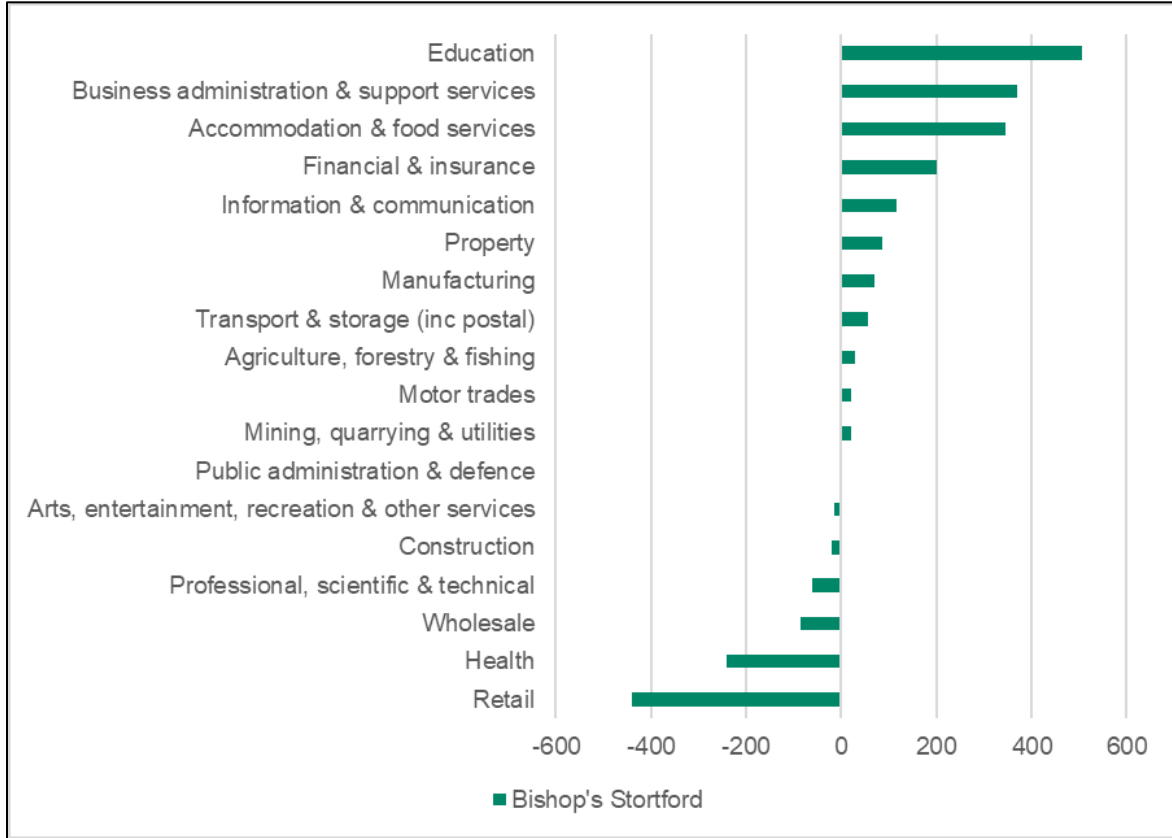
	Bishop's Stortford		Bishop's Stortford + Stansted		East Herts	East of England	England
	Number	%	Number	%	%	%	%
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	30	0.2	30	0.1	1.2	1.7	1.2
Mining, quarrying & utilities	50	0.3	190	0.5	0.9	1.0	1.1
Manufacturing	720	4.5	1,770	4.6	6.1	7.3	7.4
Construction	785	4.9	2,335	6.0	7.9	6.9	4.9
Motor trades	630	3.9	880	2.3	2.3	2.3	1.8
Wholesale	750	4.7	1,545	4.0	3.6	4.3	3.8
Retail	2,115	13.3	2,845	7.3	7.9	8.8	8.4
Transport & storage (including postal)	415	2.6	8,425	21.7	1.6	5.5	5.1
Accommodation & food services	1,415	8.9	3,615	9.3	8.6	7.9	7.9

	Bishop's Stortford		Bishop's Stortford + Stansted		East Herts	East of England	England
	Number	%	Number	%	%	%	%
Information & communication	685	4.3	975	2.5	3.4	3.5	4.7
Financial & insurance	620	3.9	670	1.7	1.4	2.0	3.3
Property	345	2.2	665	1.7	2.0	1.9	2.0
Professional, scientific & technical	1,565	9.8	2,595	6.7	10.8	7.9	9.4
Business administration & support services	1,580	9.9	5,860	15.1	15.8	10.8	9.1
Public administration & defence	110	0.7	740	1.9	2.2	3.4	4.2
Education	2,195	13.8	2,715	7.0	10.1	8.4	8.3
Health	1,160	7.3	1,855	4.8	9.4	12.1	12.9
Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services	785	4.9	1,045	2.7	4.7	4.0	4.4
<b>Total</b>	<b>15,955</b>		<b>38,756</b>				

Source: ONS BRES 2026.

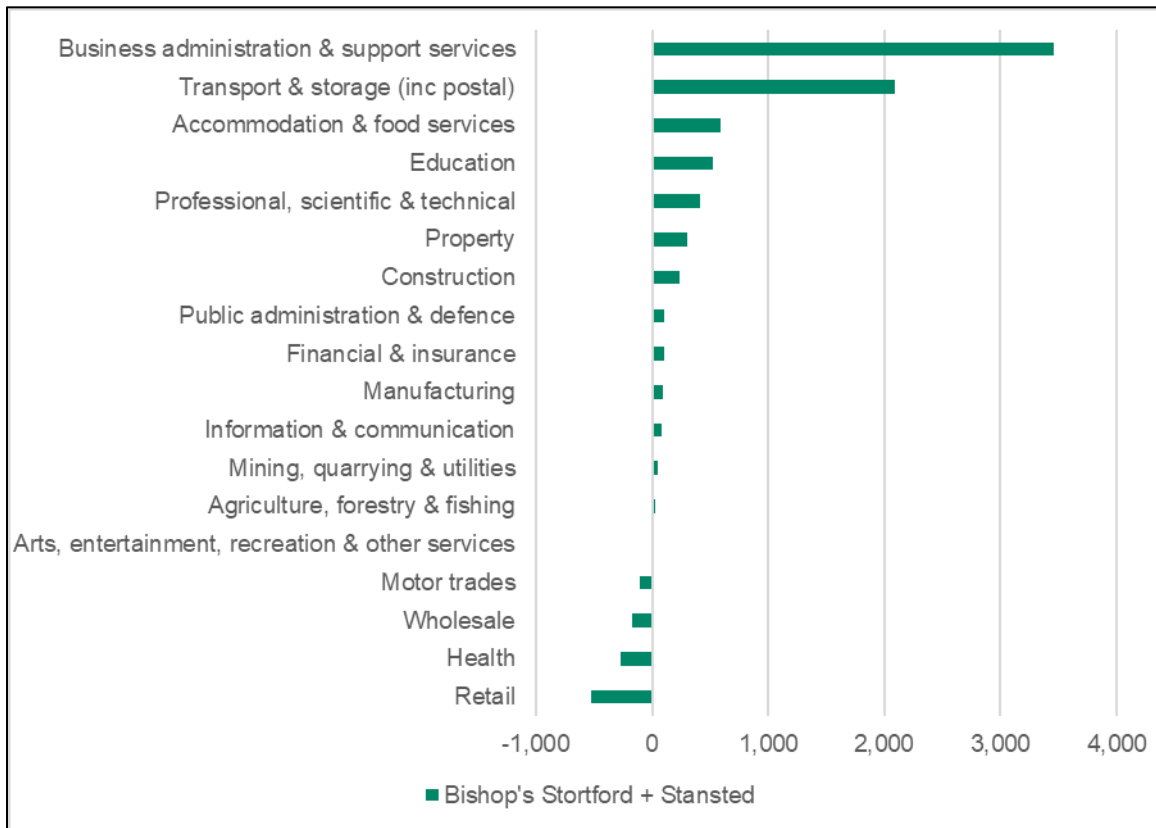
- 4.3.7 Over the period 2015 to 2024, workplace employment in Bishop's Stortford increased by 955 jobs, and by 6,961 jobs in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted. There has been a significant increase in employment in the education industry in Bishop's Stortford and in the business administration and support services industry in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, which registered an increase of 505 and 3,455 workers respectively over this period. This is reflected in the proportion of employment in the education sector rising from 11.3% in 2015 to 13.8% in 2024 in Bishop's Stortford, and from 7.6% to 15.1% in the business administration and support services sector in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted. Other notable increases in employment have been registered in the business administration and support services and accommodation and food services sectors in Bishop's Stortford, and in the transport and storage sector in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, the latter in particular reflecting the role of Stansted Airport in driving employment.
- 4.3.8 Conversely, there has been a notable fall in employment in the retail sector in both Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, which has fallen from 2,555 to 2,115 workers and from 3,370 to 2,845 workers in the respective areas. This is reflected in the proportion of employment in the sector, which fell from 17.0% in 2015 to 13.3% in 2024 in Bishop's Stortford and from 10.6% to 7.3% in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted. Other sectors to register a decline in employment over the period in both study areas include health and wholesale. The fall in employment in the retail sector in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted is consistent with regional and national trends over the same period, whilst in the wholesale and health sectors, employment has in contrast grown both regionally and nationally. The health and retail sectors would be unlikely to drive any significant demand for E(g) / B class employment space. The changes in employment over this period in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted are set out in Figure 4-4 and Figure 4-5 respectively.

**Figure 4-4 Change in employment in Bishop's Stortford 2015-2024**



Source: ONS (2025) BRES 2024, ONS (2012) BRES 2015.

**Figure 4-5 Change in employment in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted 2015-2024**



Source: ONS (2025) BRES 2024, ONS (2012) BRES 2015.

- 4.3.9 Employment by occupation in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted is broadly comparable to East Herts, as shown in Table 4-5. In general, Bishop's Stortford, Bishop's Stortford + Stansted and East Herts outperform the regional and national comparators in traditionally higher skilled occupations, while the proportions of employment in traditionally lower skilled occupations are lower than the regional and national average.
- 4.3.10 The largest occupation category in both Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted is professional occupations (22.7% and 21.6% respectively), higher than the regional (19.6%) and national (20.3%) average, albeit in line with the East Herts average (22.3%). This is followed by managers, directors and senior officials, with the proportion in both Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (16.0% and 17.1% respectively) being lower than East Herts (18.2%), but greater than the East of England (13.7%) and England (12.9%).
- 4.3.11 Conversely, Bishop's Stortford, Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, and East Herts have lower proportions of people working in elementary occupations – which consist mainly of simple and routine tasks often requiring the use of hand-held tools and some physical effort – accounting for 7.6%, 7.4%, and 6.8% respectively, than the East of England (9.9%) and England (10.5%).

**Table 4-5 Occupation of residents aged 16 years and over**

	Bishop's Stortford (%)	Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (%)	East Herts (%)	East of England (%)	England (%)
Managers, directors and senior officials	16.0	17.1	18.2	13.7	12.9
Professional occupations	22.7	21.6	22.3	19.6	20.3
Associate professional and technical occupations	15.5	15.4	15.8	13.3	13.3
Administrative and secretarial occupations	9.4	9.7	10.1	9.8	9.3
Skilled trades occupations	7.8	8.5	9.3	10.7	10.2
Caring, leisure and other service occupations	9.4	9.0	7.7	9.1	9.3
Sales and customer service occupations	6.8	6.4	5.4	7.0	7.5
Process plant and machine operatives	4.8	4.9	4.5	6.9	6.9
Elementary occupations	7.6	7.4	6.8	9.9	10.5

Source: ONS Census 2021.

- 4.3.12 According to Census data, since 2011 the proportion of the population in Bishop's Stortford working in traditionally higher skilled occupations has increased<sup>22</sup>. The proportion of the population working as managers, directors and senior officials has increased from 13.6% to 16.0% in Bishop's Stortford and from 14.1% to 17.1% in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted over the 2011-2021 period. The proportion of the population working in professional occupations has increased from 20.3% to 22.7% in Bishop's Stortford and 19.1% to 21.6% in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted. This notable increase in the proportion of higher skilled occupations has also occurred in East Herts, the East of England, and across England as a whole.

## 4.4 Business demography

- 4.4.1 ONS UK Business Counts data, as shown in Table 4-6, indicates that the vast majority of businesses in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted<sup>23</sup> are classed as micro

<sup>22</sup> ONS (2012) 2011 Census.

<sup>23</sup> Note: Data on business counts is only available at the medium level super output area, and therefore a broader definition of the study areas are adopted for this analysis. The MSOAs comprising the Bishop's Stortford area comprise: East Hertfordshire 003, East Hertfordshire 004, East Hertfordshire 005, East Hertfordshire 007, and East Hertfordshire 008. The MSOAs comprising the Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area comprise: East Hertfordshire 003, East Hertfordshire 004, East Hertfordshire 005, East Hertfordshire 007, East Hertfordshire 008, Uttlesford 005, Uttlesford 006, and Uttlesford 009.

(defined as companies employing up to nine employees), comprising 92.8% and 91.5% of local units respectively. This is higher than the rates in East Herts (87.7%), the East of England (85.3%) and England (84.6%). Conversely, both Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted have notably lower proportions of small and medium-sized businesses than the comparator areas. Bishop's Stortford has no large businesses, with these businesses comprising 0.1% of the total businesses in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted.

**Table 4-6 Business counts by employment size band**

	<b>Micro (0-9)</b>	<b>Small (10 to 49)</b>	<b>Medium (50 to 249)</b>	<b>Large (250+)</b>
Bishop's Stortford (%)	92.8	7.0	0.2	0.0
Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (%)	91.5	7.8	0.6	0.1
East Herts (%)	87.7	10.1	2.0	0.3
East of England (%)	85.3	11.9	2.5	0.3
England (%)	84.6	12.4	2.6	0.4

Source: ONS UK Business Counts 2025.

4.4.2 The change in business counts from 2016 to 2025 is presented in Table 4-7 and shows that construction has had the greatest increase in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, by 65 and 200 units respectively. Other sectors to record increases in business counts include arts, entertainment, recreation and other services, and property.

4.4.3 Conversely, the information and communication's sector registered the greatest fall in business counts over the period in both Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, by 70 and 95 units respectively. The professional, scientific and technical sector also registered a large fall in business counts in both study areas. This could reflect the increasing hybrid working patterns following Covid-19.

**Table 4-7 Change in business counts (2016 to 2025)**

<b>Economic activity status</b>	<b>Bishop's Stortford</b>			<b>Bishop's Stortford + Stansted</b>		
	<b>2016</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Change (2016 to 2025)</b>	<b>2016</b>	<b>2025</b>	<b>Change (2016 to 2025)</b>
Agriculture, forestry & fishing	25	30	5	150	150	0
Mining, quarrying & utilities	0	10	10	15	20	5
Manufacturing	80	80	0	195	185	-10
Construction	255	320	65	585	785	200
Motor trades	60	55	-5	145	130	-15
Wholesale	105	85	-20	210	180	-30
Retail	120	130	10	220	225	5
Transport & storage (inc postal)	65	55	-10	170	160	-10
Accommodation & food services	80	95	15	165	170	5
Information & communication	235	165	-70	380	285	-95
Financial & insurance	40	40	0	75	75	0
Property	95	110	15	175	225	50
Professional, scientific & technical	525	460	-65	900	850	-50
Business administration & support services	195	190	-5	365	390	25
Public administration & defence	5	0	-5	15	25	10
Education	45	40	-5	85	75	-10

Economic activity status	Bishop's Stortford			Bishop's Stortford + Stansted		
	2016	2025	Change (2016 to 2025)	2016	2025	Change (2016 to 2025)
Health	65	70	5	115	115	0
Arts, entertainment, recreation & other services	130	145	15	220	265	45
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,130</b>	<b>2,080</b>	<b>-50</b>	<b>4,165</b>	<b>4,310</b>	<b>145</b>

Source: ONS UK Business Counts 2025.

## 4.5 Commuter trends

- 4.5.1 Data from the 2011 Census<sup>24</sup> showing the location of usual residence and place of work by age is the most recently available data regarding commuter trends for small areas.
- 4.5.2 While the ONS 2021 Census Origin-Destination data has been released, Census 2021 took place during the Covid-19 pandemic, a period of unparalleled and rapid change; the national lockdown, associated guidance and furlough measures will have affected the origin-destination data. Therefore, using this data for planning and policy purposes is cautioned, with Census 2011 likely to be a truer reflection of travel to work patterns, albeit the frequency of journeys may have reduced following the pandemic and the resultant increase in hybrid working.
- 4.5.3 At the time of the Census 2011, there were 18,024 people in work who lived in Bishop's Stortford, and 5,037 individuals that both lived and worked within the town. This reflects a self-containment rate of 27.9%. As would be expected for a smaller settlement, this is below the self-containment rate of East Herts (49.3%). Commuter outflows from Bishop's Stortford totalled 12,987, with key destinations for work including Uttlesford (2,780), other areas in East Herts (1,610), the City of London (1,609), and Harlow (1,444).
- 4.5.4 Conversely, Bishop's Stortford registered 6,960 commuter inflows for work, with the highest inflows coming from Uttlesford (2,235), other areas in East Hertfordshire (1,078), Harlow (934), Braintree (453), and Epping Forest (341). Therefore, outward commuter movements from Bishop's Stortford (12,987) exceed inward commuter movements (6,960) by 6,027.
- 4.5.5 In 2011, there were 28,625 people in work who lived in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, and 11,243 individuals that both lived and worked within the area, reflecting a self-containment rate of 39.3%. This is above the self-containment rate of Bishop's Stortford but, as would be expected for a smaller area, below the self-containment rate of East Herts (49.3%). Commuter outflows from Bishop's Stortford + Stansted totalled 17,382, with key destinations for work including other areas in East Herts (3,475), the City of London (2,398), Harlow (2,312), and Epping Forest (884).
- 4.5.6 Bishop's Stortford + Stansted registered 15,591 commuter inflows for work, with the highest inflows coming from other areas in East Herts (3,955), Braintree (2,585), Harlow (1,807), and Epping Forest (720). Therefore, outward commuter movements from Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (17,382) exceed inward commuter movements (15,591) by 1,791.
- 4.5.7 It would be anticipated that, since the 2011 Census, the number of those living and working in Bishop's Stortford (5,037) and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (11,243) would have now increased, given the increase in hybrid working accelerated by trends associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

## 4.6 Summary

- 4.6.1 In summary, a number of trends and characteristics are apparent with respect to the socio-economic profile in Bishop's Stortford:

<sup>24</sup> ONS, (2012); Census 2011.

- Population growth was significantly higher in both Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted between 2015 and 2024 than in East Herts, the East of England, and England. Bishop's Stortford + Stansted had a greater growth in population than Bishop's Stortford over this period. Both Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted have a higher proportion of the population of younger and working age residents compared with the comparator areas.
- Population projections are not available at the Bishop's Stortford level. The current housing trajectory of allocated or permitted sites suggests the potential for between 1,023 – 2,118 new homes to be delivered in Bishop's Stortford. With an average household size of 2.37 in East Herts, this indicatively suggests the potential for 2,425 – 5,020 additional residents, of which 1,186 – 2,456 would be expected to be aged 16 and over and economically active.
- Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted both have a higher economic activity rate and employment rate than East Herts, the East of England, and England. The unemployment rate is broadly in line with East Herts, and lower than the East of England, and England as a whole. However, the economic activity rate in both study areas has fallen significantly since 2011, at 31.9% and 32.0% in 2021 in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted respectively, and 22.8% and 23.4% in 2011, primarily driven by an increase in retirement.
- A greater proportion of the population of both Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted is educated to degree-level of equivalent compared to East Herts, the East of England, and England as a whole. Both areas also have a lower proportion of residents with no qualifications compared to all other comparator areas.
- The employment profile of Bishop's Stortford is broadly comparable to East Herts and the regional and national picture. It registers sizable proportions of employment in the retail and education sectors, well above the comparator areas. In relation to the sectors driving office-based employment, the proportion of the professional, scientific and technical and business administration and support services sectors in Bishop's Stortford are lower than East Herts but greater than the regional and national average.
- The employment profile of Bishop's Stortford + Stansted differs from the comparator areas, with a significant proportion of the population employed in transport and storage (21.7%). For office-based employment, Bishop's Stortford + Stansted has a lower proportion of professional, scientific and technical sector employment compared to all comparator areas, but a more sizable business administration and support services sector, slightly lower than East Herts, but greater than the regional and national average.
- Since 2015, Bishop's Stortford has seen most notable growth in the education sector, with other increases in employment registered in business administration and support services, accommodation and food services, and financial and insurance sectors. In Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, there has been a notable growth in the business administration and support services and transport and storage sectors. Conversely, there has been a fall in employment in retail, health, and wholesale sectors for both study areas.
- The majority of businesses in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted are classed as micro. This is higher than the rates in East Herts, East of England, and England. Both study areas have a lower proportion of small, medium, and large-sized businesses than the comparator areas, with Bishop's Stortford having no large businesses.
- Outward commuter movements from both Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted exceed inward commuter movements by 6,027 and 1,791 respectively, showing that the rate of outward commuter movements in Bishop's Stortford is significantly greater than in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted. The local authorities of significance for both study areas include Uttlesford, East Herts, Harlow, and the City of London. At the time of the 2011 Census, Bishop's Stortford had a self-containment rate of 27.9% and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted 39.3%, though it would be anticipated that

this number would have now increased, given the increase in hybrid working accelerated by trends associated with the Covid-19 pandemic.

# 5. Property Market Assessment

## 5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1 This section provides a review of property market indicators in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted. Reference is also made to comparator geographies, including the wider local authority, regional, and national data. This reflects the fact that the commercial property market in Bishop's Stortford is not self-contained and forms part of a much wider market area encompassing the whole of East Herts and neighbouring authorities to some extent, varying somewhat by type of floorspace.
- 5.1.2 Data presented in this section is derived from the most recent available information on CoStar (2026)<sup>25</sup> which represents a comprehensive database of up-to-date property market data. Trends are presented where applicable.
- 5.1.3 Commercial properties considered include office (E(g)(i))<sup>26</sup>, industrial (light industrial (E(g)(iii)), general industrial (B2)), and warehousing and storage (B8) types. It is recognised that there are other property types which may contribute to employment, but these will not be analysed for the purposes of this evidence base.
- 5.1.4 The section is divided into two sub-sections covering the office market (E(g)(i)) and the industrial market (E(g)(iii); B2; B8); providing an assessment of local and sub-regional floorspace by analysing key property market indicators.

## 5.2 Office Market

- 5.2.1 This section presents the findings relating to the office property market in Bishop's Stortford, in comparison with Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, East Herts, the East of England, and England. Bishop's Stortford accounts for 32.7% of office properties within East Herts, with other notable office locations including Hertford and Ware. Within Bishop's Stortford, office properties are predominantly concentrated within and immediately adjacent to the town centre boundary, as defined in the East Herts District Plan. Additional clusters are located to the south of Hockerill in close proximity to London Road, and to the east of the town, in close proximity to Dunmow Road, Parsonage Lane, and Raynham Road. It should be noted that Charringtons House, the largest office premises in Bishop's Stortford has recently been vacated awaiting redevelopment and is not included in data in this section reflecting this.

### Buildings and Floorspace

- 5.2.2 According to CoStar and shown in Table 5-1, there are 130 office properties in Bishop's Stortford, comprising approximately 54,006 sqm of floorspace. There are 397 office properties in East Herts, comprising around 199,723 sqm of floorspace. Therefore, office properties in Bishop's Stortford comprise of 32.7% of the office properties in East Herts and 29.0% of the floorspace.
- 5.2.3 The larger Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area comprises 191 properties, providing 108,472 sqm of floorspace. This reflects an average property size of 568 sqm, compared with 415 sqm in Bishop's Stortford alone. This reflects the larger, purpose built office stock in proximity to Stansted Airport at sites such as Thremhall Park, Weston Business Centre and Endeavour House.

<sup>25</sup> CoStar (2026). Available at: <https://www.costar.com/news/gb> [Accessed: 16/02/26].

<sup>26</sup> Note that E(g)(ii) is not covered in this section as CoStar does not return any entries for this use class in Bishop's Stortford.

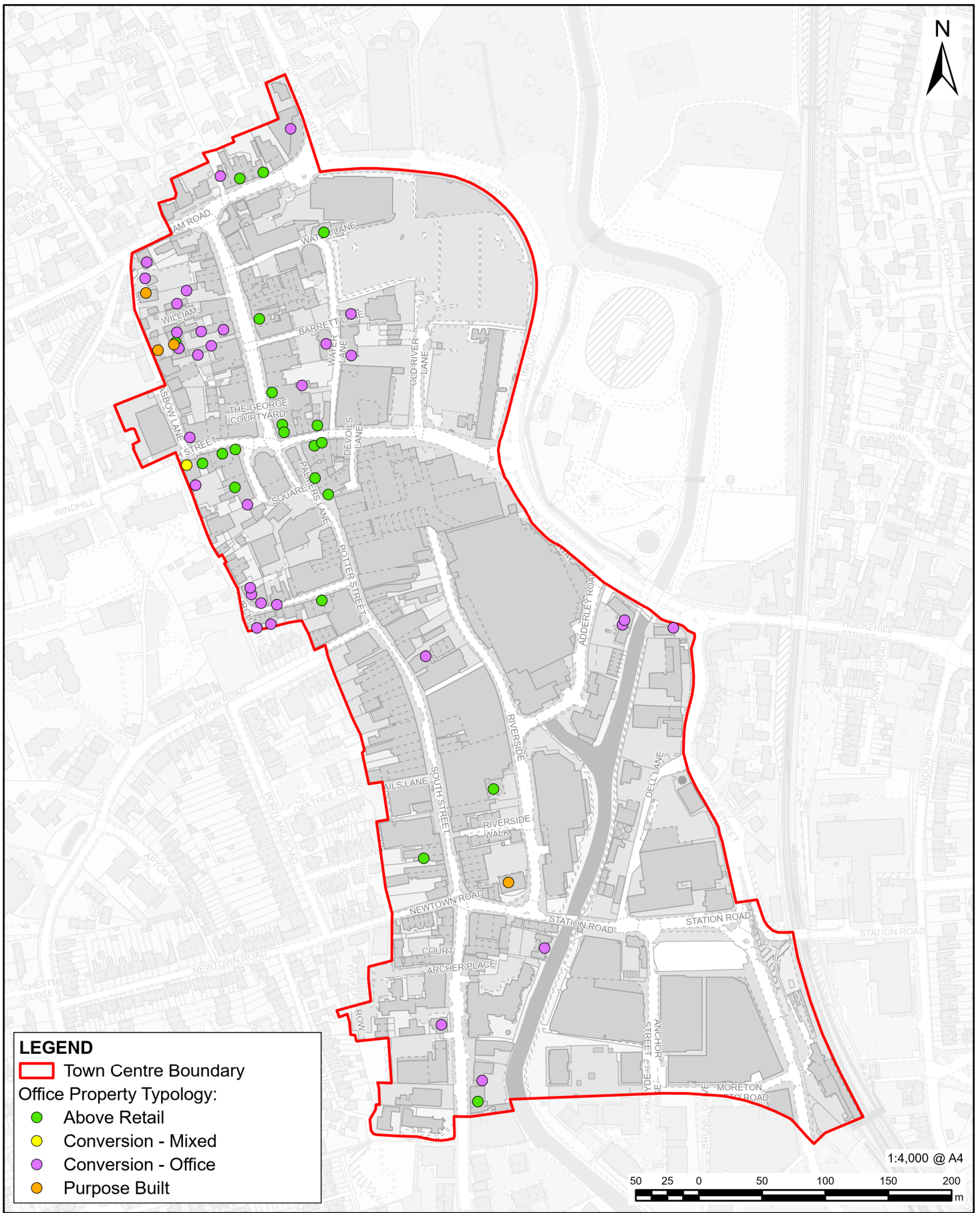
**Table 5-1 Office properties – buildings and floorspace**

	<b>Bishop's Stortford</b>	<b>Bishop's Stortford + Stansted</b>	<b>East Herts</b>	<b>East of England</b>	<b>England</b>
Number of properties	130	191	397	11,169	111,150
Floorspace (square metres)	54,006	108,472	199,723	10,000,000	117,000,000

Source: CoStar (2026).

- 5.2.4 Historically towns and cities have provided a wide range of business accommodation, facilitating different types of work and production. These places for work have evolved in line with economic requirements alongside wider infrastructure to support the needs of the community, such as housing, religious buildings, public houses and schools. The economic and cultural ecology of work and employment is constantly evolving. Today the availability of suitable space in many towns and cities to establish and grow businesses is diminishing and there is an ongoing need to build strategic plans that provide suitable spaces to support business retention and growth<sup>27</sup>.
- 5.2.5 Against this wider context, the following analysis narrows its focus to Bishop's Stortford town centre. This section of the analysis considers the breakdown of office building "typologies" in Bishop's Stortford that support employment in Bishop's Stortford and reflect the changing ecology of work and employment.
- 5.2.6 As shown in Figure 5-1, this analysis demonstrates that there is a limited supply of purpose built office stock in the town centre, including locations such as Basbow House and Ducketts Wharf. As such, much of the town centre stock is provided above retail units and through the conversion of existing buildings, which are often old (being built before 1960, shown in further detail in Figure 5-6) owing to the historic nature of the town centre.

<sup>27</sup> <https://www.avisonyoung.co.uk/how-can-accessible-workspace-be-designed>



This drawing has been prepared for the use of AECOM's client. It may not be used, modified, reproduced or relied upon by third parties, except as agreed by AECOM or as required by law. AECOM accepts no responsibility, and denies any liability whatsoever, to any party that uses or relies on this drawing without AECOM's express written consent. Do not scale this document. All measurements must be obtained from the stated dimensions.

**CLIENT**  
East Herts District Council

**ISSUE PURPOSE**  
For Issue

**NOTES**  
OS MasterMap Basemapping and Town Centre Boundary provided by East Herts District Council. Contains OS Data © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000805256. © 2026 CoStar Group. <https://www.costar.com/news/gb>

**CONSULTANT**  
AECOM Limited  
3 Rivergate  
Bristol, BS1 6EW  
[www.aecom.com](http://www.aecom.com)

**PROJECT**  
Bishop's Stortford Employment Study

**FIGURE TITLE**  
Office Properties in Bishop's Stortford Town Centre by Typology

**PROJECT NUMBER**  
60775924

**FIGURE NUMBER**  
Figure 1



## Vacancy

- 5.2.7 In 2025 Q4, the vacancy rate of office properties in Bishop's Stortford was lower than the Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area, East Herts, East of England, and England. As shown in Table 5-2, East Herts has the greatest vacancy rate of office properties at 13.1%, followed by England (8.8%), the East of England (6.4%), and Bishop's Stortford (3.1%). It is noted that the East Herts figure reflects a significant deviation from the previous quarter, when it stood at 3.1% however the recent vacating of County Hall largely accounts for the entirety of this uptick which should be borne in mind in any interpretation of this trend.
- 5.2.8 The office floorspace vacancy rate for Bishop's Stortford, is lower than the optimal frictional level of 5-8%, which indicates a balanced market in terms of supply and demand. This suggests potential supply constraints within the local market, whereas the regional and national market is broadly in balance. However, consultation with local agents highlighted that demand was relatively muted in Bishop's Stortford, and therefore low vacancy may reflect flexibility from landlords in agreeing short-term let arrangements and concessions to retain occupiers. Furthermore, it was reflected that one area of more robust demand was for co-working office spaces which afford businesses with flexible access to higher specification space without tying them down to relatively long-term leases for office space, with examples in and around Bishop's Stortford including Launchpad (Link Road), The Residency at Wickham Hall, and Ducketts Wharf.

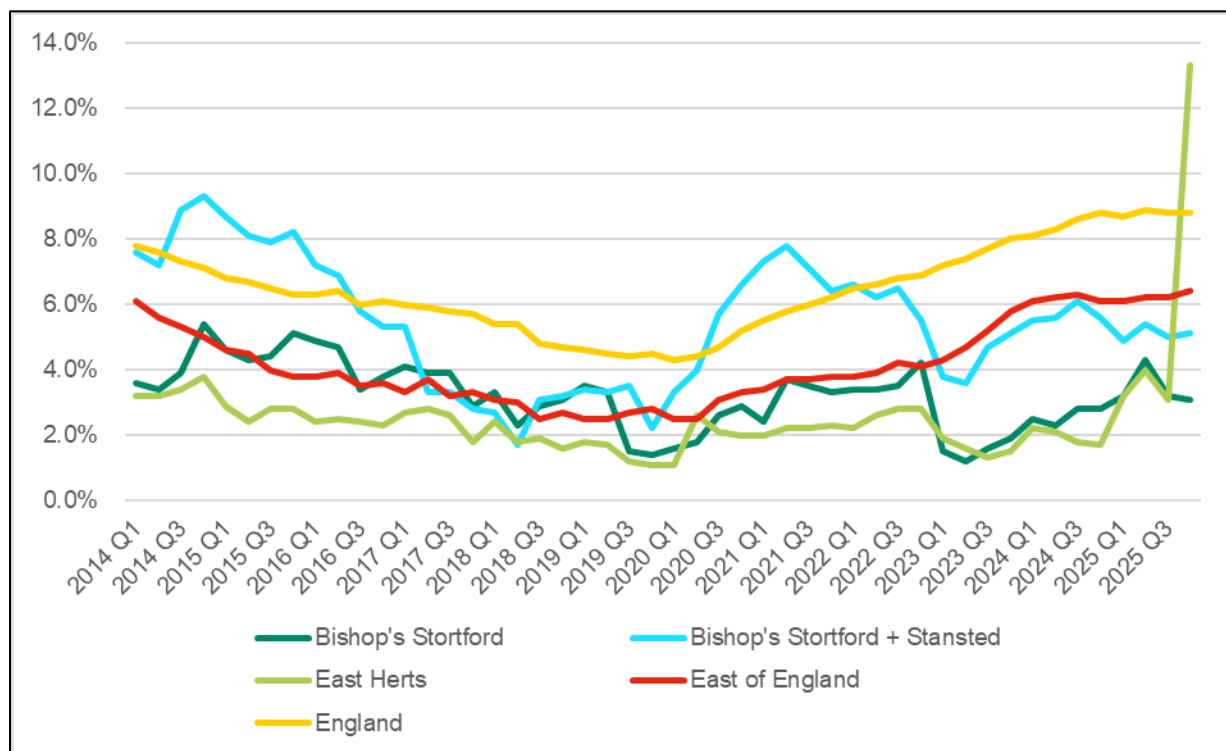
**Table 5-2 Office properties – vacancy (2025 Q4)**

	Bishop's Stortford	Bishop's Stortford + Stansted	East Herts	East of England	England
Vacancy rate (%)	3.1	5.1	13.1	6.4	8.8
Vacant floorspace (sqm)	1,813	5,713	25,390	632,776	10,254,308

Source: CoStar (2026).

- 5.2.9 Figure 5-2 compares office vacancy rates in Bishop's Stortford with Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, East Herts, the East of England, and England overall from 2009 Q1 to 2025 Q4.
- 5.2.10 Vacancy rates in Bishop's Stortford displayed a relatively volatile trend at the start of the last decade, peaking sharply in 2012 Q4. Bishop's Stortford + Stansted followed a broadly similar pattern, with both local areas temporarily exceeding regional and national averages at this time. However, from 2013 onward, vacancy rates broadly fell steadily across all geographies, and by 2020 Bishop's Stortford, Bishop's Stortford + Stansted and East Herts recorded lower vacancy levels than both the East of England and England. Some volatility has followed, likely driven by the Covid-19 pandemic, however vacancy rates in Bishop's Stortford have remained low over this period, averaging 2.4% since Q1 2020. In Bishop's Stortford town centre, vacancy levels were recorded at 5.0% in 2025 Q4, representing an increase from a low of 0.9% in 2015 Q1, but remaining well below peak levels observed in 2012 Q4 (13.9%).

**Figure 5-2 Office properties – vacancy rate (2014 Q1 to 2025 Q4)**

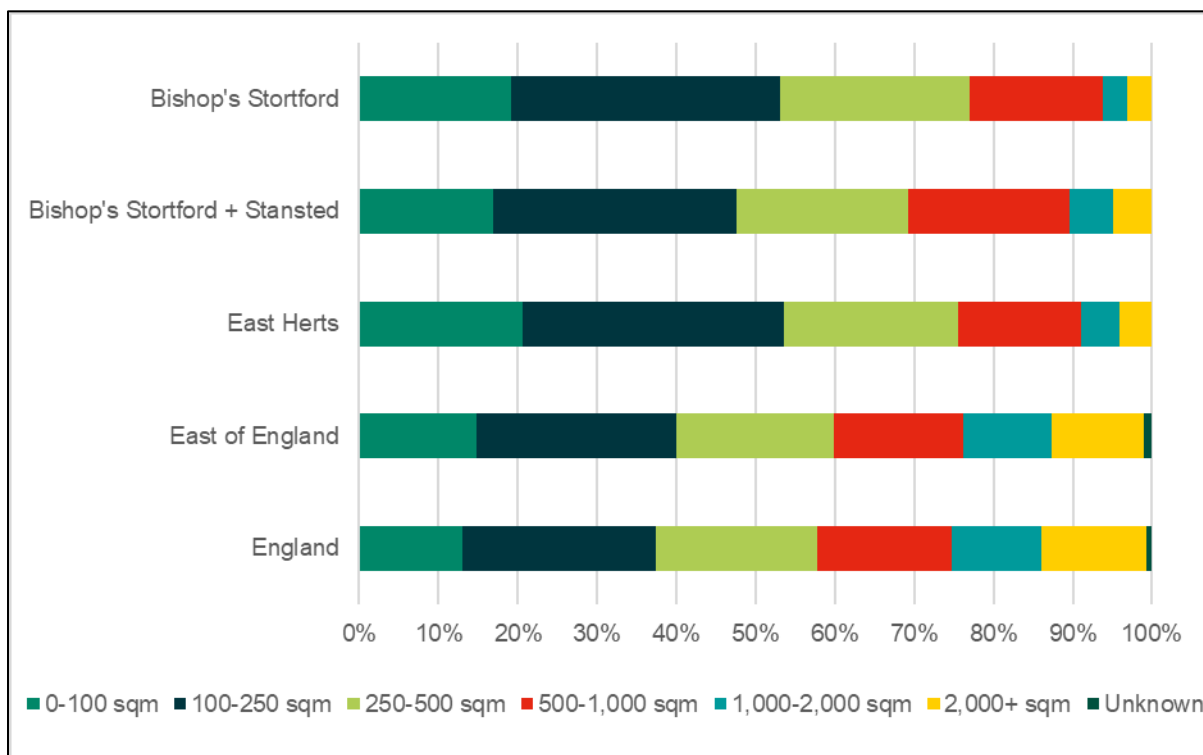


Source: CoStar (2026).

## Size

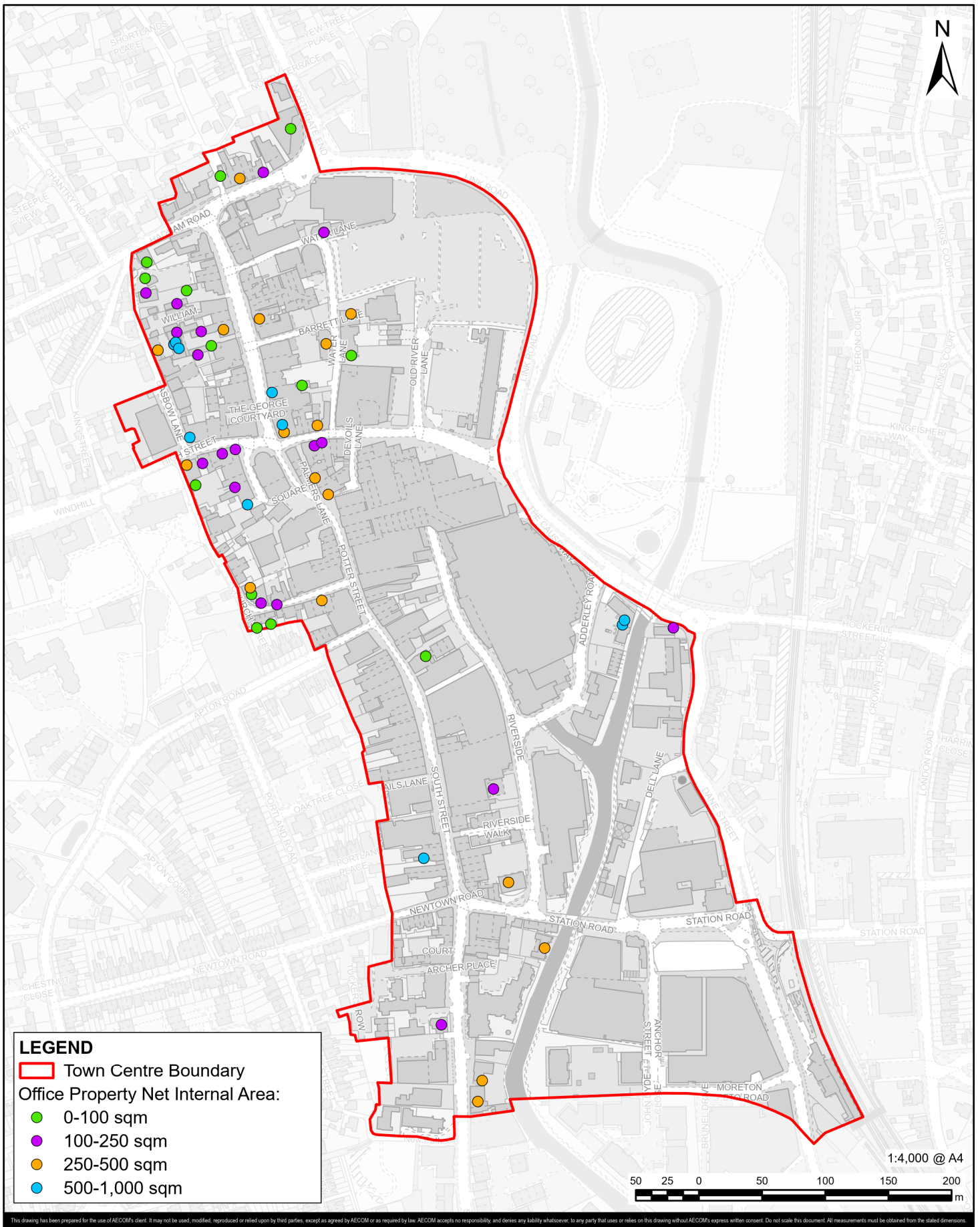
- 5.2.11 Office properties in Bishop's Stortford range in size from 13 sqm to 3,690 sqm. In general, office properties in both Bishop's Stortford and East Herts tend towards the smaller sizes, with the greatest proportion of properties being between 250 and 500 sqm in size, followed by 250-500 sqm, and 0-100 sqm. In Bishop's Stortford, 33.8% of office properties are 100-250 sqm, as shown in Figure 5-3 in line with East Herts (32.9%) and greater than the regional (25.1%) and national (24.4%) averages.
- 5.2.12 Conversely, the Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area comprises a greater proportion of larger properties, with 30.7% of properties offering 500 sqm or above, compared with 23.1% in Bishop's Stortford, owing to the greater amount of purpose built stock offering larger floorspace near the airport.
- 5.2.13 Larger office properties in Bishop's Stortford (1,000-2,000 sqm and 2,000+ sqm) comprise 6.9% of the total number of office properties, lower than Bishop's Stortford + Stansted and East Herts (9.9% and 9.3% respectively), and considerably lower than the East of England and England averages (22.6%, and 24.5% respectively).
- 5.2.14 Conversations with agents reflected the view that Bishop's Stortford tends to house smaller companies, and that demand for larger office space in the area would tend to be accommodated in London and Cambridge. While there is some evidence of larger suites in proximity to Stansted Airport, this was viewed to be aimed at businesses linked, and requiring immediate proximity to, the airport, with little prospect of this demand being met in Bishop's Stortford.

**Figure 5-3 Office properties – building stock size**



Source: CoStar (2026).

5.2.15 Figure 5-4 shows the spatial distribution of office properties by size in Bishop's Stortford town centre. This highlights that the vast majority of office properties are clustered in the north west of the town centre and, overall, properties tend to be less than 500 sqm in size. There are some notable outliers such as 95 London Road at 3,735 sqm.



**LEGEND**

- Town Centre Boundary
- Office Property Net Internal Area:
- 0-100 sqm
- 100-250 sqm
- 250-500 sqm
- 500-1,000 sqm

1:4,000 @ A4



This drawing has been prepared for the use of AECOM's client. It may not be used, modified, reproduced or relied upon by third parties, except as agreed by AECOM or as required by law. AECOM accepts no responsibility, and denies any liability whatsoever, to any party that uses or relies on this drawing without AECOM's express written consent. Do not scale this document. All measurements must be obtained from the stated dimensions.

**CLIENT**  
East Herts District Council

**ISSUE PURPOSE**  
For Issue

**NOTES**  
OS MasterMap Basemapping and Town Centre Boundary provided by East Herts District Council. Contains OS Data © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000805256. © 2026 CoStar Group. <https://www.costar.com/news/gb>

**CONSULTANT**  
AECOM Limited  
3 Rivergate  
Bristol, BS1 6EW  
[www.aecom.com](http://www.aecom.com)

**PROJECT**  
Bishop's Stortford Employment Study

**FIGURE TITLE**  
Office Properties in Bishop's Stortford Town Centre by Size

**PROJECT NUMBER**  
60775924

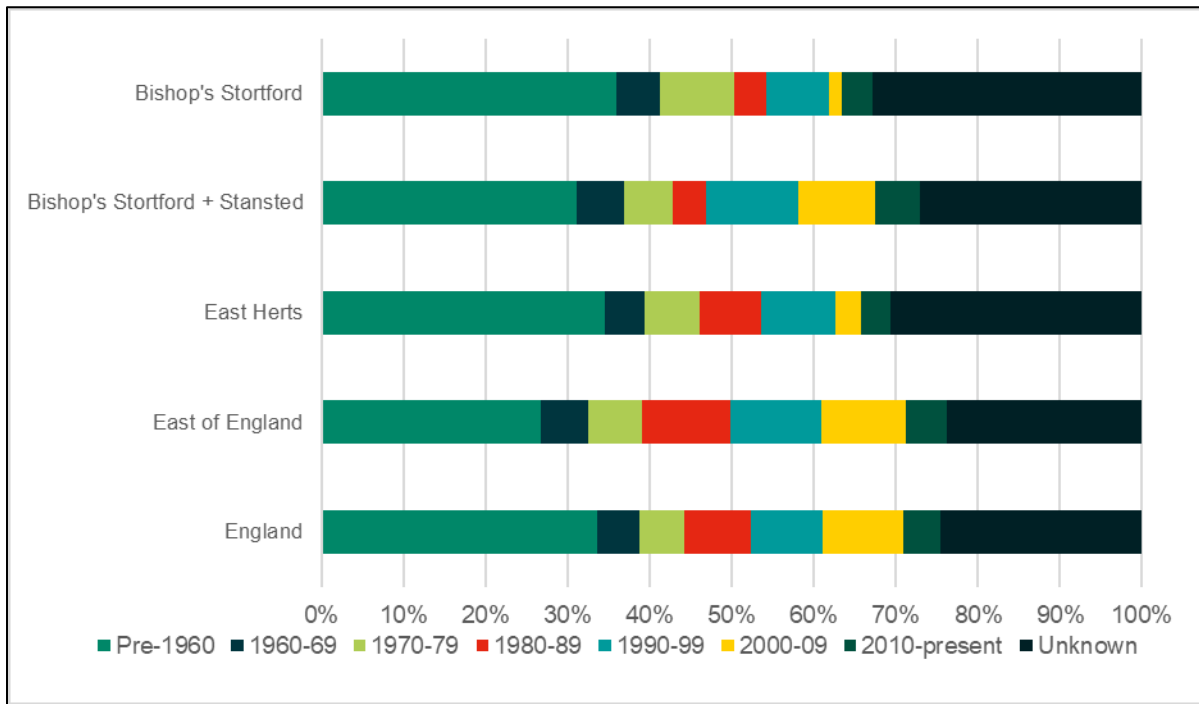
**FIGURE NUMBER**  
Figure 1



## Age

5.2.16 As shown in Figure 5-5, office properties in Bishop's Stortford tend to be old in nature, with 35.9% of offices being built before 1960, greater than in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (31.0%), East Herts (34.5%), East of England (26.8%) and England (33.6%). In comparison, modern office development is limited, with only seven properties in Bishop's Stortford being built since 2000, accounting for 5.3% of the total number of properties. This is below the average in East Herts (6.7%), and significantly lower than recorded for the Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area (14.8%), East of England (15.3%) and England (14.3%).

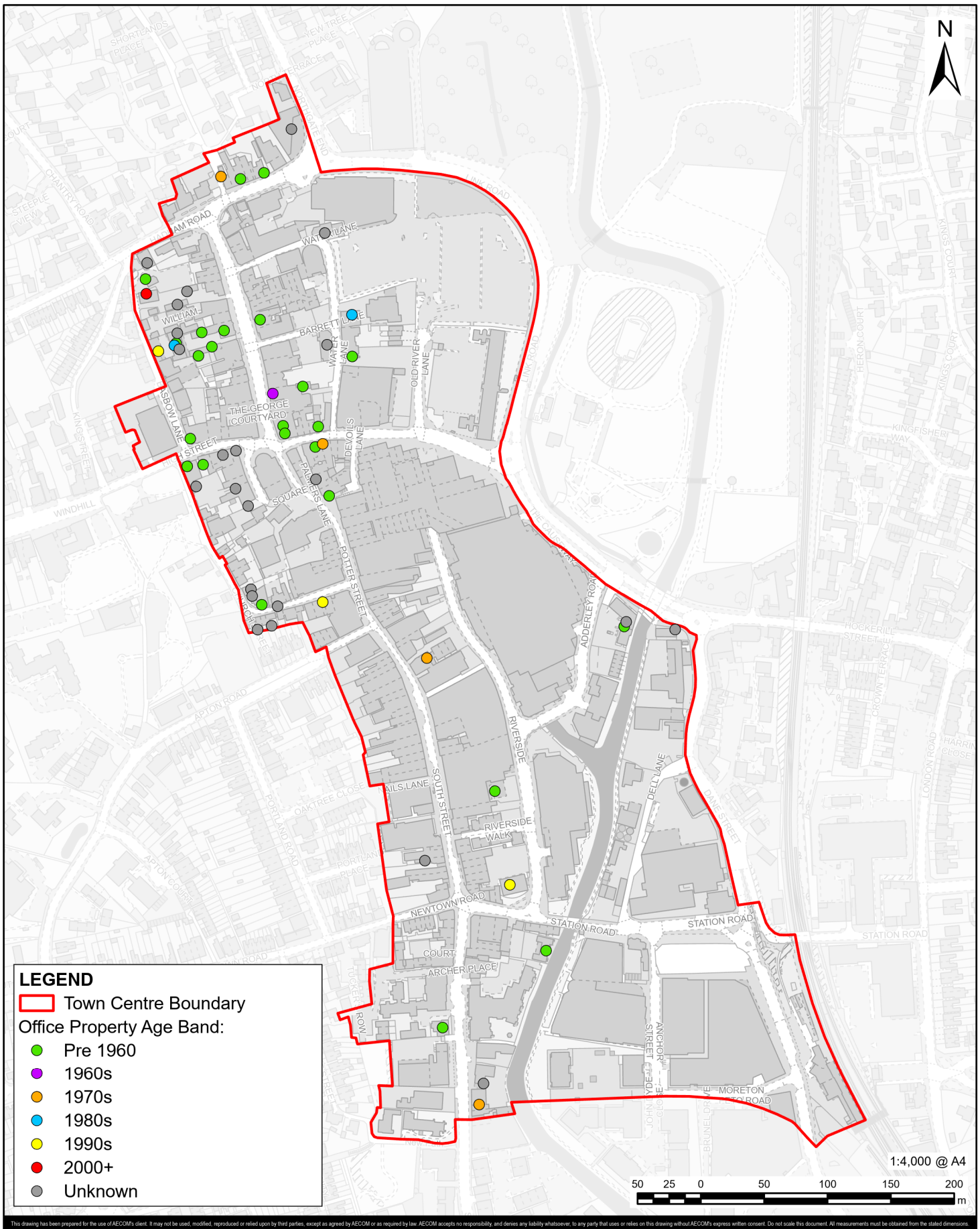
**Figure 5-5 Office properties – building stock age**



Source: CoStar (2026).

5.2.17 Floorspace patterns broadly mirror these trends, with 20.3% of floorspace in Bishop's Stortford being built before 1960, compared to 12.0% after 2010. However, Bishop's Stortford has a lower proportion of floorspace built before 1960, and a greater proportion of floorspace built after 2010, than East Herts (27.6% and 6.2% respectively). This suggests that in Bishop's Stortford, office properties built before 1960 tend to be smaller in size than more modern developments.

5.2.18 Figure 5-6 shows the spatial distribution of office properties by age in Bishop's Stortford town centre. While the age of some properties is unknown, the vast majority of properties were constructed before 1960, reflecting the historic nature of the town centre. Just 4 office properties have been delivered from 1990 onwards.



**LEGEND**

Town Centre Boundary

Office Property Age Band:

- Pre 1960
- 1960s
- 1970s
- 1980s
- 1990s
- 2000+
- Unknown

**CLIENT**  
East Herts District Council

**ISSUE PURPOSE**  
For Issue

**NOTES**  
OS MasterMap Basemapping and Town Centre Boundary provided by East Herts District Council. Contains OS Data © Crown copyright and database rights 2025 Ordnance Survey AC0000805256. © 2026 CoStar Group. <https://www.costar.com/news/gb>

**CONSULTANT**  
AECOM Limited  
3 Rivergate  
Bristol, BS1 6EW  
[www.aecom.com](http://www.aecom.com)

**PROJECT**  
Bishop's Stortford Employment Study

**FIGURE TITLE**  
Office Properties in Bishop's Stortford Town Centre by Age

**PROJECT NUMBER**  
60775924

**FIGURE NUMBER**  
Figure 1

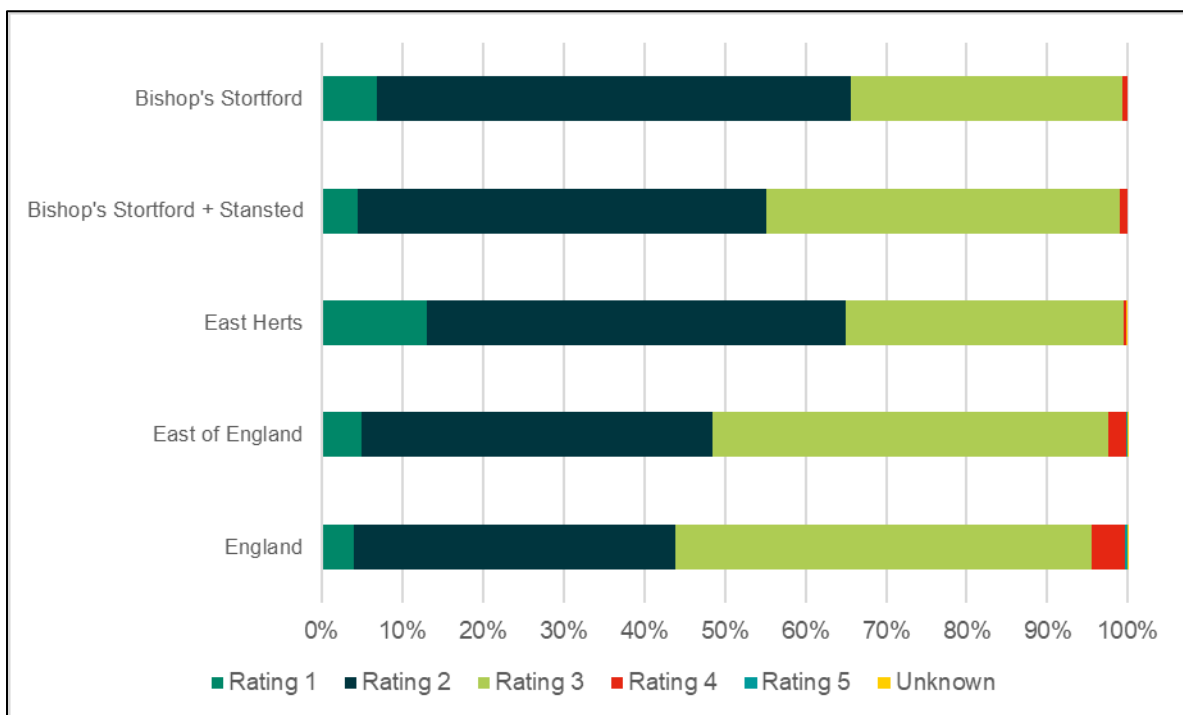


This drawing has been prepared for the use of AECOM's client. It may not be used, modified, reproduced or relied upon by third parties, except as agreed by AECOM or as required by law. AECOM accepts no responsibility, and denies any liability whatsoever, to any party that uses or relies on this drawing without AECOM's express written consent. Do not scale this document. All measurements must be obtained from the stated dimensions.

## Condition

- 5.2.19 As shown in Figure 5-7, the condition of office properties in Bishop's Stortford broadly aligns with that of East Herts, with ~65% of properties receiving a quality score of 1 or 2<sup>28</sup>. Conversely, the Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area performs more strongly, driven by a higher proportion of properties receiving a quality score of 3, which likely reflects the greater presence of more modern, purpose built stock in proximity to the airport.
- 5.2.20 The East of England and England perform more strongly in terms of the condition of office stock, with a greater proportion of office stock receiving a score of 3 or above – 51.5% and 56% respectively – compared with Bishop's Stortford (34.4%), Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (44.8%) and East Herts (34.7%).
- 5.2.21 In both Bishop's Stortford and East Herts, there is one building rated 4 – Innovation House, London Road – and none rated 5 (best), showing a lower proportion of office properties with a good condition rating compared to the East of England and England.

**Figure 5-7 Office properties – CoStar building quality score**



Source: CoStar (2026)

## Rental Values

- 5.2.22 As set out in Table 5-3, office rental values average £189.53/sqm in Bishop's Stortford. Rental values for office space are 15% lower than in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (£223.02/sqm), reflecting the age and condition of stock set out above. Rental values in Bishop's Stortford are also lower than recorded across East Herts (£210.39/sqm), East of England (£240.44/sqm) and England (£345.97/sqm).

<sup>28</sup> The CoStar Quality Score is a measure of the average condition of building stock according to the CoStar scoring system. The overall average score is according to the average of buildings for which data is available and weighted based on the floorspace of each property. Building stock is rated, based on a number of indicators of quality and amenity, on a scale between 1 (worst quality) and 5 (best quality).

**Table 5-3 Office Rental Values (£/sqm) (2025 Q4)**

Property Type	Bishop's Stortford	Bishop's Stortford + Stansted	East Herts	East of England	England
Office	189.53	223.02	210.39	240.44	345.87

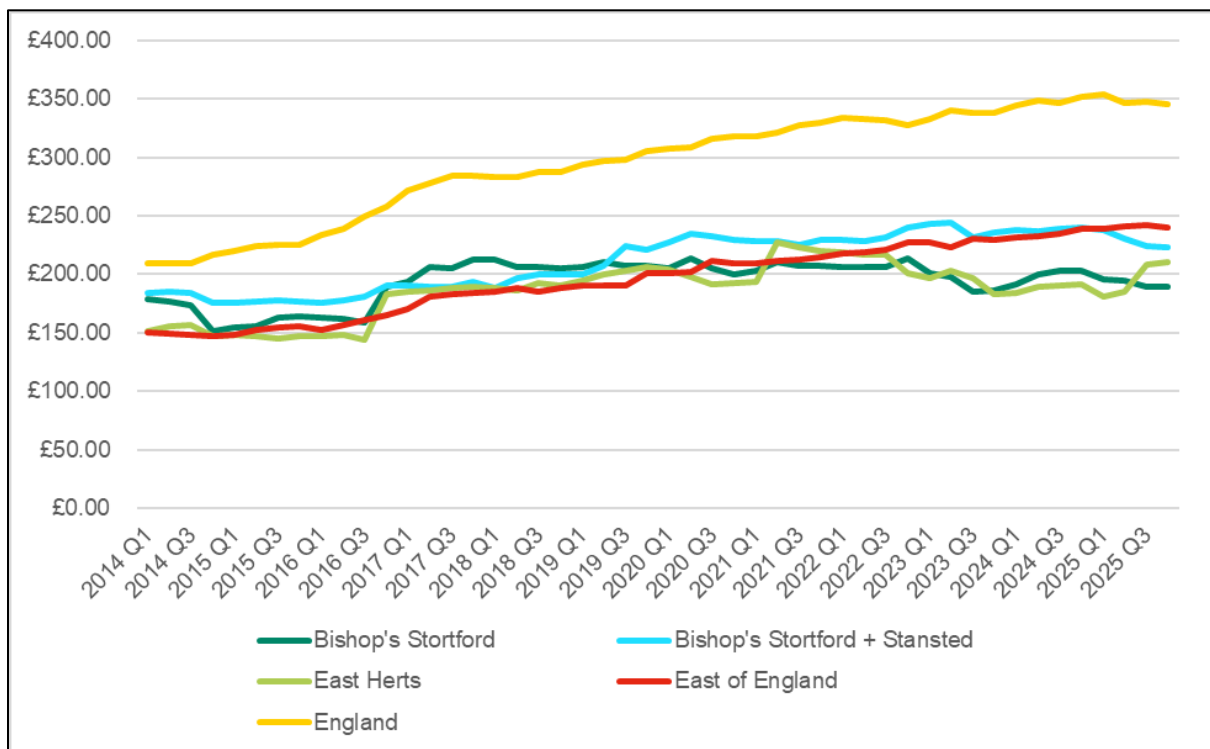
Source: CoStar (2026)

5.2.23 Figure 5-8 presents the change in rental values in Bishop's Stortford, Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, East Herts, East of England and England between 2014 and 2025.

5.2.24 Office rental values in Bishop's Stortford have broadly plateaued since 2017, a trend reflected in East Herts. The broader Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area has performed slightly more strongly; however rental values have been stagnant since the Covid-19 pandemic. Conversely, both the East of England and England as a whole have seen office rental values increase broadly linearly over the 2014-2025 period, albeit England has seen the higher growth.

5.2.25 Conversations with agents undertaken in support of this study highlighted the challenges in Bishop's Stortford associated with low rental values for office space. Agents reflected that the development of new office space is subject to significant viability challenges, as achievable rental values do not reflect the cost of developing new office floorspace. As such, it was viewed that the delivery of new office space in Bishop's Stortford could be challenging for the market to deliver, particularly at larger scales, without public sector intervention, such as through grant funding or conditions as part of Section 106 agreements. Furthermore, it was noted that there has been interest in the conversion of office stock to residential in Bishop's Stortford town centre owing to achievable values and the associated demand profiles for these uses.

**Figure 5-8 Market rent (£/sqm) in Bishop's Stortford**

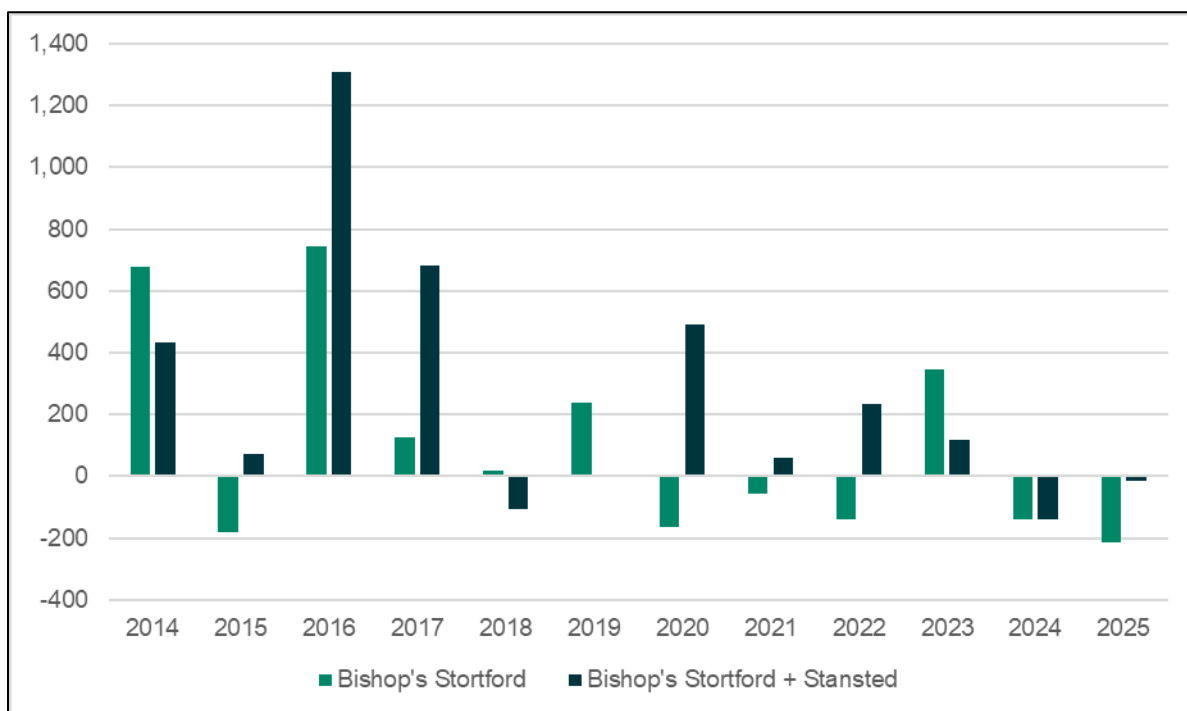


Source: CoStar (2026).

## Net Absorption

- 5.2.26 Net absorption provides another angle on demand. The measure expresses the change in the overall quantum of occupied floorspace, typically recorded year on year. Positive annual net absorption means that a greater amount of space has been occupied from a given year to the next. Net absorption is not the reverse of vacancy, as vacancy is an expression of the level of non-occupancy against total stock. In office markets where stock may be in decline, for example due to the conversion of offices to residential use, vacancy may reduce but net absorption would be negative.
- 5.2.27 Figure 5-9 presents the net absorption of office floorspace in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted.
- 5.2.28 Net absorption in Bishop's Stortford between 2014 and 2019 was generally positive, albeit with fluctuations, rising from 678 sqm in 2014 to a peak of 743 sqm in 2016, with 2015 exhibiting a negative net absorption (-179 sqm). From 2020 to 2025, all years have had a negative net absorption, apart from 2023 with 345 sqm. Net absorption in 2025 represented the lowest level across the period, at -212 sqm.
- 5.2.29 Similarly, net absorption across Bishop's Stortford + Stansted was generally positive, increasing from 434 sqm in 2014 to a peak of 1,308 sqm in 2016, while 2018 recorded a negative net absorption (-105 sqm). From 2020 to 2023, net absorption remained positive but fluctuated in scale, ranging from 60 sqm in 2021 to 491 sqm in 2020. In 2024 and 2025, net absorption turned negative, falling to its lowest of -137 sqm in 2024.
- 5.2.30 Trends in net absorption observed in both areas are indicative of a decline in demand for floorspace which is more prolonged in Bishop's Stortford than across Bishop's Stortford + Stansted. Changes in work models and increased economic uncertainty are likely key contributing factors in falling demand, or fluctuating demand in the case of the latter area. Sectors and occupiers in Bishop's Stortford can potentially be considered as being more influenced by these changes than across the wider area, but other indicators such as type and quality of space and fit with current market requirements will also play a part such that it is not possible to be definitive in assigning reasons behind the trends.

**Figure 5-9 Historic net absorption of office floorspace in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (2014-2025, sqm)**



Source: CoStar (2026). Note: Historic data on CoStar is subject to change.

## Summary

- 5.2.31 In summary, a number of trends and characteristics are apparent with respect to the office property in Bishop's Stortford:
- Bishop's Stortford represents a significant share of the East Herts office market, accounting for 32.7% of office properties. However, overall, the size of the market is relatively small, as evidenced by the wider Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area offering more than double the amount of floorspace (108,472 sqm) compared with Bishop's Stortford alone (54,006 sqm).
  - Vacancy levels have fluctuated over time, mirroring wider economic and structural changes in office demand. Vacancy peaked in 2012 at 13.4%, with the lowest vacancy rates reported in 2023. In 2025 Q4, vacancy in Bishop's Stortford (3.1%) remained below East Herts, the East of England and England, indicating comparatively strong occupancy. This is tempered by an enduring negative net absorption rate recorded since 2020 which indicates that reductions in supply due to falls in demand are likely occurring, little to no new stock is being developed, which may be suppressing levels of vacancy that might prevail in the absence of such conditions.
  - Bishop's Stortford's office market is dominated by smaller units, with the largest share of properties falling between 100–250 sqm (33.6%), broadly consistent with East Herts but higher than regional and national averages. Larger offices (1,000–2,000 sqm and 2,000+ sqm) represent only 6.9% of properties, below district, regional and national averages.
  - The office stock in Bishop's Stortford is relatively old, with 35.9% of offices being built before 1960, higher than East Herts, the East of England, and England. Modern office development is limited, accounting for 5.3% of stock, below regional and national averages. Floorspace trends reflect this, although Bishop's Stortford has a slightly higher proportion of post-2010 floorspace than East Herts, suggesting newer buildings tend to be larger.
  - While in line with East Herts, building condition is relatively worse in Bishop's Stortford compared with the wider Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area, East of England and England.
  - Bishop's Stortford attracts lower market rental values for office use classes than the wider Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area and regional and national averages. This is reflective of the small size of the market and the age, size and quality profile of office stock in the town.

## 5.3 Industrial Market

- 5.3.1 This section presents findings related to the industrial (E(g)(iii); B2 and B8 uses) property market in Bishop's Stortford, benchmarked against East Herts, the East of England, and England. Within Bishop's Stortford, industrial properties are primarily concentrated in key employment sites such as Raynham Road / Dunmow Road Industrial Estate, Woodside and Stansted Road.

### Buildings and Floorspace

- 5.3.2 According to CoStar and shown in Table 5-4, there are 24 industrial properties in Bishop's Stortford, comprising approximately 23,113 sqm of floorspace. There are 102 industrial properties in East Herts, comprising around 197,327 sqm of floorspace. Therefore, industrial properties in Bishop's Stortford comprise of 23.5% of the industrial properties in East Herts and 11.7% of the floorspace, suggesting that properties are, on average, smaller in Bishop's Stortford than found more generally across the local authority area.
- 5.3.3 Bishop's Stortford is home to 50 warehousing and storage properties, providing 11,126 sqm of floorspace – approximately 38.2% of warehousing and storage floorspace across East Herts, potentially reflecting Bishop's Stortford's strategic location near Junction 8 of the M11 and in proximity to Stansted Airport.

- 5.3.4 The larger Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area provides more than double the amount of industrial and warehousing and storage floorspace than Bishop's Stortford alone, reflecting the importance of the airport as a driver for industrial demand and development.

**Table 5-4 Industrial properties – buildings and floorspace**

	Bishop's Stortford	Bishop's Stortford + Stansted	East Herts	East of England	England
<b>Industrial [E(g)(iii) / B2]</b>					
Number of properties	24	59	102	6,464	61,477
Floorspace (sqm)	23,113	56,575	197,327	8,832,380	100,732,804
<b>Warehousing and Storage [B8]</b>					
Number of properties	50	86	121	6,224	57,595
Floorspace (sqm)	110,126	247,259	288,611	21,320,269	202,041,746

Source: CoStar (2026).

## Vacancy

- 5.3.5 The vacancy rate of industrial and warehousing and storage floorspace as of 2025 Q4 is shown in Table 5-5.
- 5.3.6 For industrial floorspace, vacancy rates are consistently low across all areas, particularly Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, which has a vacancy rate of 1.4%, in line with East Herts but lower than the East of England (3.5%) and England (2.8%). Industrial vacancy rates in Bishop's Stortford (2.9%) are also lower than the East of England and England, but greater than East Herts.
- 5.3.7 Bishop's Stortford shows a relatively high vacancy rate (8.7%) for warehousing and storage compared to other comparator geographies. In comparison, Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (6.8%) is broadly in line with the East of England (6.9%), greater than East Herts (6.5%), and lower than England (7.3%).
- 5.3.8 As reflected in the previous section, a frictional vacancy rate of 5-8% is generally viewed to represent a property market in balance, and with sufficient capacity to support move-ins and move-outs. The vacancy rate for industrial space in Bishop's Stortford falls below this level, which could indicate a lack of spare capacity in the market, while the higher vacancy rate recorded for warehousing and storage suggests a more balanced position. However, consultation with local agents reflected a perceived lack of spare capacity for both industrial and warehousing and storage floorspace, given Bishop's Stortford's strategic location and potential growth associated with the expansion of Stansted Airport (see Section 5.4 for further detail).

**Table 5-5 Industrial properties – Vacancy Rate (2025 Q4)**

Property Type	Bishop's Stortford (%)	Bishop's Stortford + Stansted (%)	East Herts (%)	East of England (%)	England (%)
Industrial	2.9	1.4	1.4	3.5	2.8
Warehousing and storage	8.7	6.8	6.5	6.9	7.3

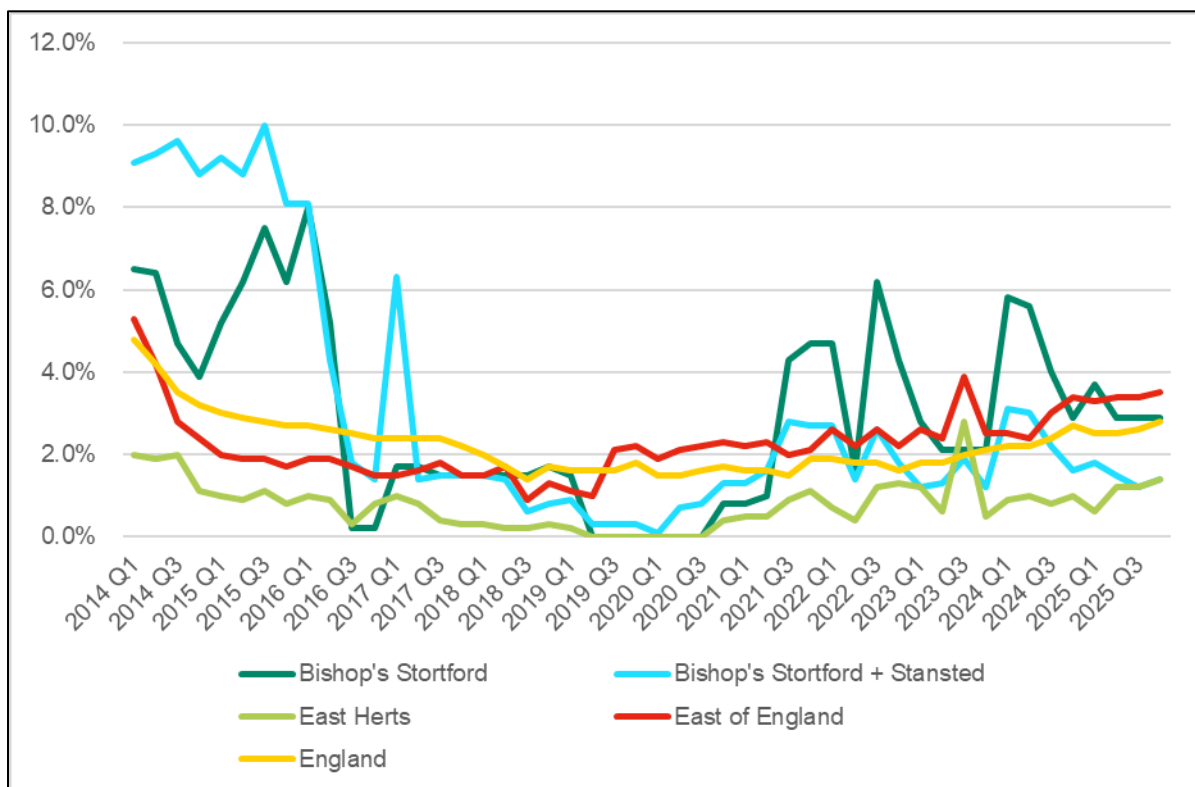
Source: CoStar (2026)

- 5.3.9 As shown in Figure 5-10, the trend in the industrial vacancy rate in Bishop's Stortford has demonstrated volatility over the period 2014 Q1 to 2025 Q4. Having been relatively elevated over the period 2014-2016 – peaking at 8.0% in 2016 Q1 – the vacancy rate fell markedly and remained below 2% until 2021, following which it has once again shown volatility over the past 4 years. However, it should be reflected that this volatility could reflect the relatively small amount of industrial stock, with just 24 properties of this use class. A similar picture is evident in the Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area, however vacancy levels have remained

-muted following the 2021, whereas in Bishop's Stortford alone there has been more volatility.

5.3.10 Conversely, in East Herts, East of England and England as a whole, vacancy rates have been consistently low over the past decade. However, it should be reflected that larger markets are generally less prone to significant fluctuations/volatility as observed in the smaller markets noted above.

**Figure 5-10 Industrial Vacancy Rate (2014 Q1 to 2025 Q4)**



Source: CoStar (2026).

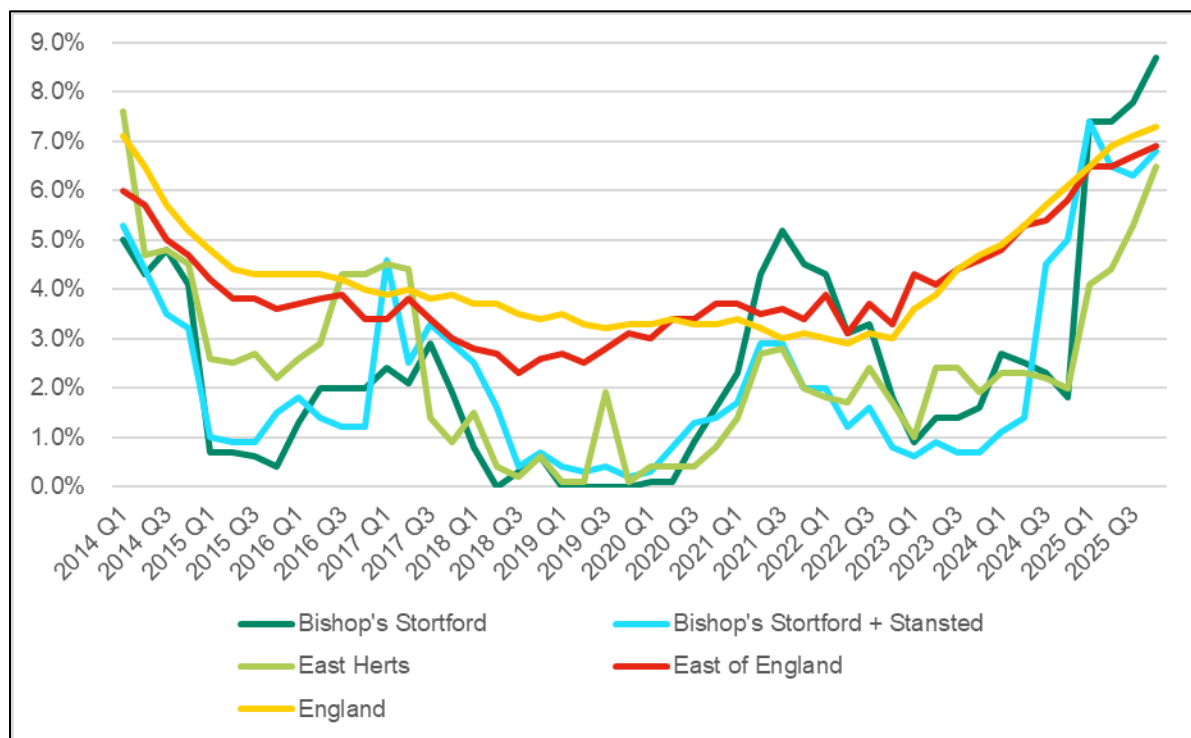
5.3.11 As shown in Figure 5-11, warehousing and storage vacancy rates have been more volatile than industrial vacancy rates over the past decade. In Bishop's Stortford, vacancy rates for warehousing and storage floorspace peaked at 8.7% in 2025 Q4, having previously stood at 0.0% from Q1 2019 to Q4 2019. However, this could be linked to the delivery of new warehousing and storage floorspace in Thorley Fields Business Park in 2024 Q3 and 2025 Q1, which is yet to be fully occupied. Up to 2025, overall warehousing and storage rates generally remained below 5%.

5.3.12 A similar picture is evident across the other comparator areas, with all areas seeing an uptick in vacancy rates over the past 2-3 years. This is consistent with the wider market, whereby the high level of logistics demand during the pandemic prompted a strong development response, with new floorspace completed subsequently as demand conditions normalised<sup>29</sup>. Wider economic uncertainty, including inflation and rising geopolitical tensions, have also been viewed as contributing factors to the increase in vacancy observed over recent years<sup>30</sup>.

<sup>29</sup> Lambert Smith Hampton (2022) Research: Industrial & Logistics Surpasses all Records in 2021. Available at: <https://www.lsh.co.uk/explore/research-and-views/research/2022/3/industrial-and-logistics-market-report-2022> [Accessed: 16/02/26].

<sup>30</sup> Savills (2024) Industrial & logistics take-up returns to normality, but remains 12% above pre-Covid average. Available at: <https://www.savills.co.uk/insight-and-opinion/savills-news/355936-0/industrial-and-logistics-take-up-returns-to-normality--but-remains-12--above-pre-covid-average> [Accessed: 16/02/26].

**Figure 5-11 Warehousing and Storage Vacancy Rate (2014 Q1 to 2025 Q4)**



Source: CoStar (2026).

## Rental values

- 5.3.13 The market rental values per square metre for industrial and warehousing and storage floorspace are set out in Table 5-6.
- 5.3.14 Industrial properties in Bishop’s Stortford (£137.73/sqm) and Bishop’s Stortford + Stansted (£131.67/sqm) had a higher market rental value than the East of England and England averages, at £116.85/sqm and £99.02/sqm respectively. East Herts has the greatest industrial rental value out of all comparator geographies at £145.54/sqm.
- 5.3.15 In terms of warehousing and storage, the Bishop’s Stortford (£99.63/sqm) rental value is in line with the national average of £100.94/sqm, but below that observed in Bishop’s Stortford + Stansted (£111.32/sqm) and the East of England (£115.68/sqm). East Herts had the highest rental value of all geographies at £146.88/sqm.
- 5.3.16 Feedback from the market noted that the development of industrial space faces fewer viability constraints in comparison to the development of office space, owing to more robust demand profile, rental levels and the lower cost of development for industrial and warehousing and storage space.

**Table 5-6 Market rental values – Industrial and Warehousing and Storage (£/sqm) (2025 Q4)**

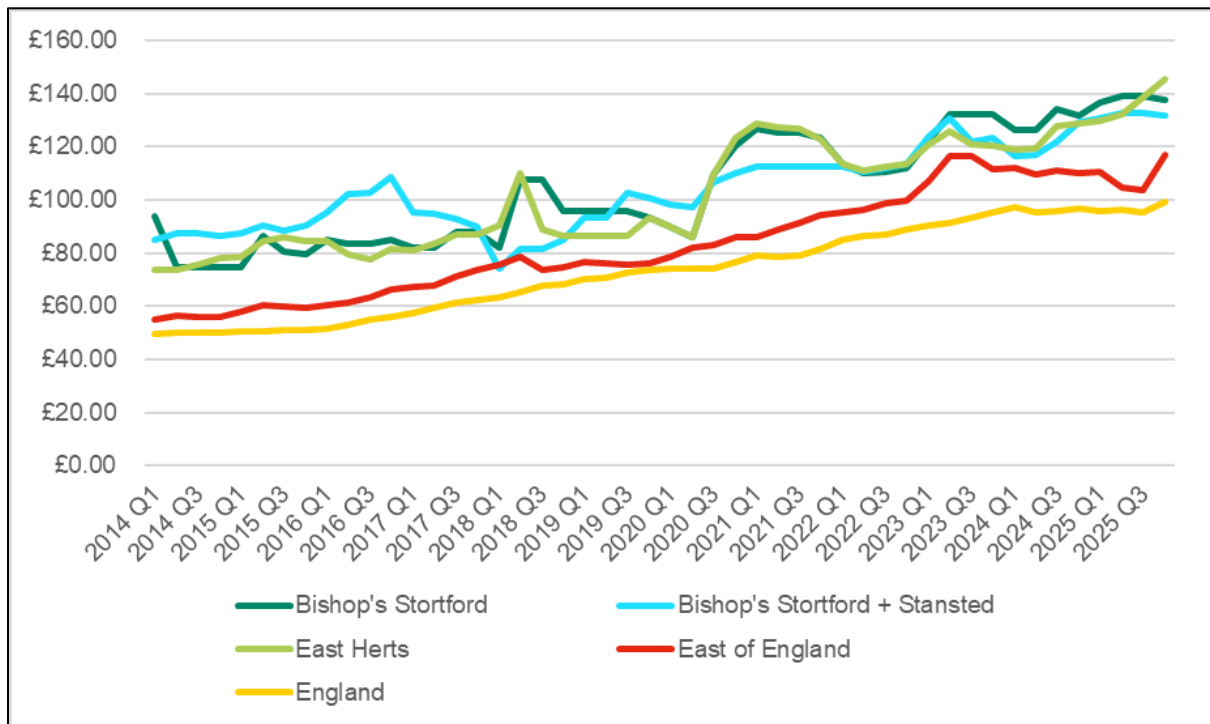
Property Type	Bishop’s Stortford	Bishop’s Stortford + Stansted	East Herts	East of England	England
Industrial	137.73	131.67	145.54	116.85	99.02
Warehousing and storage	99.63	111.32	146.88	115.68	100.94

Source: CoStar (2026).

- 5.3.17 As set out in Figure 5-12, industrial market rents in Bishop’s Stortford, while fluctuating, in general demonstrated a steady upward trend, increasing by £43.98/sqm (from £93.75/sqm in 2014 Q1 to £137.73/sqm in 2025 Q4). A similar picture was evident in the wider Bishop’s Stortford + Stansted area and across East Herts, with these areas sustaining higher rental values than the East of England and England as a whole over the past decade. That rental

values have remained a fairly consistent degree higher than in these wider geographies even when they have increased across the board is indicative of the underlying factors underpinning demand for space locally enduring over time and remaining strong.

**Figure 5-12 Industrial Market rent Q1 2014 to Q4 2025 (£/sqm)**

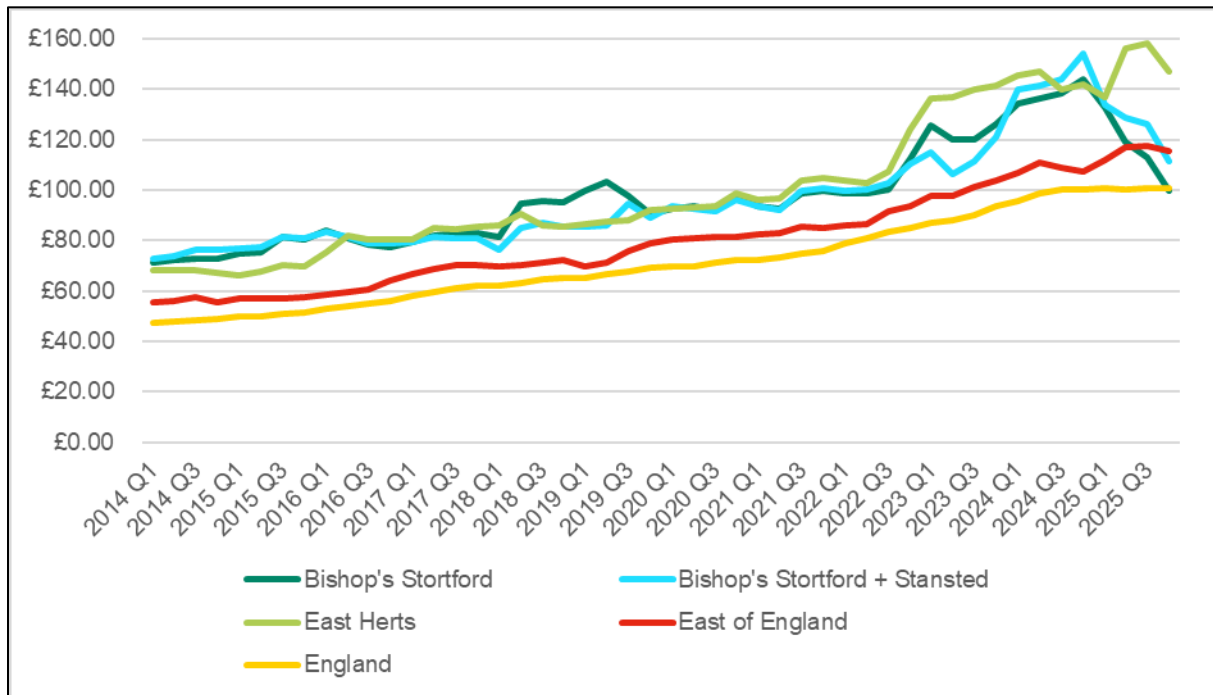


Source: CoStar (2026).

- 5.3.18 Between 2014 Q1 and 2025 Q4, warehousing and storage market rents in Bishop's Stortford registered growth, rising by £28.25/sqm (from £71.38/sqm in 2014 Q1 to £99.63/sqm in 2025 Q4), as shown in Figure 5-13. However, despite an uptick in the rate of growth between 2022 and 2024, market rents in this use class have exhibited a decline from 2025 Q1 onwards, having peaked at £144.05/sqm in 2024 Q4.
- 5.3.19 A similar trend has been observed in the wider Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area, whereas East Herts has managed to better sustain growth in rental values following the Covid-19 pandemic. Conversely, East of England and England have seen a more gradual trend over the past decade, with sustained growth and more limited volatility, albeit rental growth has levelled off from 2024 onwards.
- 5.3.20 The trends observed in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted broadly reflect overall market trends seen since the Covid-19 pandemic. The rise in warehousing and storage rents seen in 2022 to 2024 reflects the accelerated shift towards e-commerce linked to behavioural changes such as continued demand for rapid parcel deliveries<sup>31</sup>, with the levelling off observed in line with a slowdown in the market linked to returns to more modest market rent levels following the pandemic due to more 'normal' demand patterns, wider economic and geopolitical uncertainty. A similar picture was seen in relation to vacancy levels.

<sup>31</sup> Knight Frank (2025) European Logistics Outlook 2026. Available at: <https://www.knightfrank.co.uk/blog/2021/04/07/e-commerce-growth-driving-record-warehouse-development-in-2021> [Accessed: 16/02/26].

**Figure 5-13 Warehousing and Storage Market rent Q1 2014 to Q4 2025 (£/sqm)**

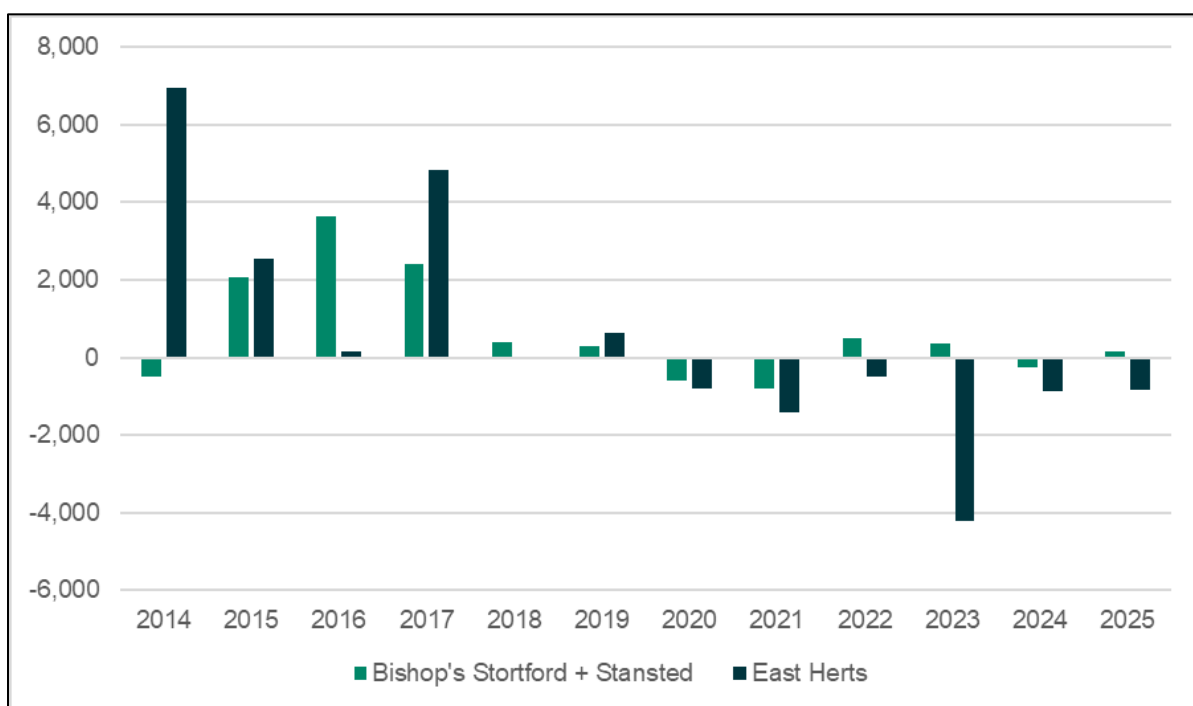


Source: CoStar (2026).

## Net absorption

- 5.3.21 In the absence of suitable data for Bishop's Stortford given the size of the market resulting in limited activity, Figure 5-14 presents the net absorption for industrial floorspace in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted and East Herts.
- 5.3.22 With regard to industrial floorspace, net absorption in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted between 2014 and 2019 was generally positive, with a peak of 3,616 sqm in 2016 and further strong levels recorded in 2017 (2,419 sqm). From 2020 onwards, net absorption varied more, with negative net absorption in 2020 and 2021 (-583 sqm and -803 sqm respectively), followed by a recovery in 2022 and 2023 (510 sqm and 363 sqm respectively). In the most recent years, net absorption declined again to -240 sqm in 2024, before returning to a modest positive level in 2025 (145 sqm),
- 5.3.23 Net absorption in East Herts shows a volatile pattern between 2014 and 2025. Net absorption was strongly positive between 2014 and 2017, peaking in 2014 at 6,957 sqm. This was followed by more modest and fluctuating performance in 2018 (-48 sqm) and 2019 (629 sqm). From 2020 onwards, net absorption turned consistently negative, with 2023 representing the lowest net absorption in the period at -4,223 sqm.

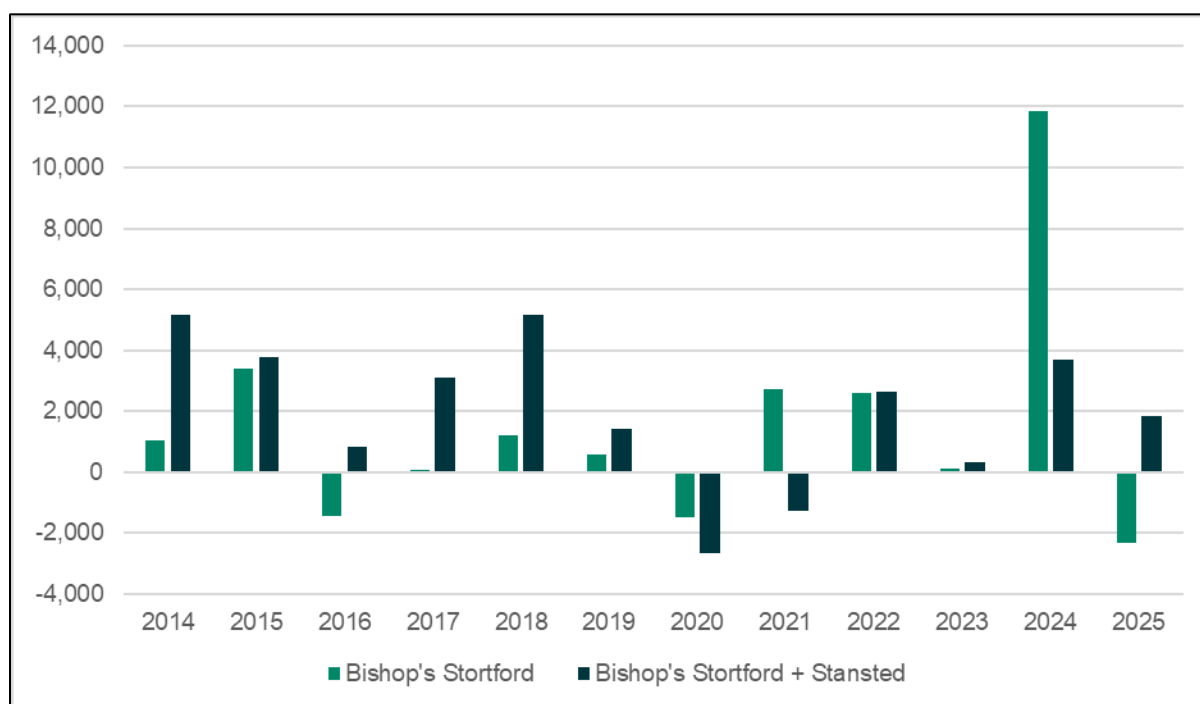
**Figure 5-14 Historic net absorption of industrial floorspace in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted and East Herts (2014-2025, sqm)**



Source: CoStar (2026).

- 5.3.24 Net absorption for warehousing and storage uses in Bishop's Stortford between 2014 and 2019 was generally positive as shown in Figure 5-15, increasing from 1,106 sqm in 2014 to 3,406 sqm in 2015, before falling to a negative position in 2016 (-1,467 sqm). This was followed by positive net absorption from 2017 to 2019. From 2020 onwards, performance became more variable, with a decline in 2020 (-1,505 sqm), followed by a peak in net absorption in 2024 at 11,854 sqm, before the lowest level over the period in 2025 at -2,321 sqm.
- 5.3.25 In Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, net absorption was positive from 2014 to 2019, peaking in 2018 at 5,163 sqm. From 2020, net absorption was more variable, reaching its lowest in 2020 at -2,658 sqm, before rising from 2022 to 2025.
- 5.3.26 While there has been some volatility, in general the trend points to positive net absorption in Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted over the past decade.

**Figure 5-15 Historic net absorption of warehousing and storage floorspace in Bishop's Stortford, Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, and East Herts (2014-2025, sqm)**



Source: CoStar (2026).

## Summary

5.3.27 In summary, a number of trends and characteristics are apparent with respect to the industrial market in Bishop's Stortford:

- The industrial market comprises 133,239 sqm of floorspace in Bishop's Stortford, ~80% of which is warehousing and storage.
- The vacancy rate for industrial floorspace in Bishop's Stortford is below the regional and national average, reflecting a lack of spare capacity. Warehousing and storage uses have the highest vacancy rate, across all comparator areas, albeit this is broadly in line with accepted frictional vacancy rates.
- Bishop's Stortford and Bishop's Stortford + Stansted attract higher market rental values for industrial property types than the East of England and England, however the highest industrial market rents are in East Herts. For warehousing and storage, the market rental values in Bishop's Stortford are in line with the national average but lower than observed in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, East of England and East Herts.
- Between 2014 and 2025, market rental values for all use classes exhibited an overall increase. However, the increase in market rental values is greater in Bishop's Stortford + Stansted than Bishop's Stortford, potentially reflecting the higher quality stock in proximity to the airport.
- Across Bishop's Stortford, Bishop's Stortford + Stansted, and East Herts, net absorption across use classes fluctuated between 2014 and 2025, with noticeable declines recorded around the Covid-19 pandemic period.

## 5.4 Influences on Demand

- 5.4.1 There are a number of external factors which could influence the demand for employment floorspace in Bishop's Stortford. Some key considerations are set out below.

### Stansted Airport Expansion

- 5.4.2 Stansted Airport is currently working on a £1.1bn expansion approved by the government in 2023 to increase capacity at the airport from up to 35 million passenger per annum to 43 million passenger per annum, with aircraft movements increasing from 264,000 per annum to 274,000 per annum. The centrepiece of the investment stimulus is a £600m extension of the terminal, with 5,000 new jobs forecast to be created.
- 5.4.3 The airport's owner, Manchester Airports Group, has subsequently received approval – subject to Section 106 agreement – to increase passenger capacity at the airport to between 48 and 51 million people per year by 2040. This increase is expected to be driven by the airport accommodating larger aeroplanes, rather than an increase in the number of flights, which will remain at a limit of 274,000 per annum.
- 5.4.4 This would further increase the number of on-site jobs by 900 on top of the forecast under the previous consent, resulting in a total of 17,200 (16,000 FTE).
- 5.4.5 Evidence supporting the planning application notes that:
- “The proposal is expected to deliver significant socio-economic benefits by boosting regional employment, skills, business growth, inward investment, tourism, connectivity and supply-chain opportunities, and strengthening long-term economic resilience across Essex, Hertfordshire, Suffolk, the wider East of England and the UK Innovation Corridor”*
- 5.4.6 Airports can act as the catalyst for the development of employment land. They can attract businesses that rely on "just-in-time" deliveries, such as high-tech manufacturing, pharmaceuticals, and perishable goods, fostering the development of surrounding logistics parks and industrial estates. Moreover, they can support the development of office and commercial space to attract firms seeking connectivity or the proximity to the airport (i.e. to serve the airport or to access sector-specific opportunities).
- 5.4.7 The role of Stansted Airport in supporting indirect employment is evident through a number of developments in proximity to the Airport which accommodate B/E(g) uses such as Thremhall Park, Stansted Distribution Centre, Weston Business Centre and Endeavour House.
- 5.4.8 Increasing passenger or freight capacity at Stansted Airport could make it easier for businesses to operate in the local economy or region – for example, giving them easier access to customers and clients, business partners, or workers. This might make it more appealing to set up or expand near the airport or might make investments more viable (for example, investing in more productive manufacturing equipment knowing that there will be expanded cargo capacity nearby for exporting goods)<sup>32</sup>. Furthermore, complementary investments as part of the expansion – such as the proposed improvement scheme relating to junction eight of the M11 at the A120, could also support the wider functioning of the local economy and transport network.
- 5.4.9 As such, the expansion could support the development of employment land. However, it would be anticipated that much of the demand could be met through sites in proximity to the airport, such as the Stansted Northside permission<sup>33</sup>, which will see the redevelopment of a 61.86 ha site to provide 195,100sqm commercial / employment development predominantly within Class B8 (95%) with Classes E(g), B2 (5%), with ancillary retail, food and beverage and nursery uses within Classes E (a), E(b) and E(f). Furthermore, the Uttlesford Local

<sup>32</sup> <https://whatworksgrowth.org/insights/can-expanding-airports-help-local-growth-take-off/>

<sup>33</sup> <https://uttlesford.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s37160/8.+UTT-24-0897-DFO+UTT-24-0902-DFO+UTT-24-0904-DFO+Northside+Land+North+of+Stansted+Airport+Revised.pdf>

Plan<sup>34</sup> includes further employment allocations in proximity to the airport such as Land North of Taylors Farm, Takeley Street (18 Ha of Employment Land) and Water Circle Estate, Gaunts End (5.5 Ha of Employment Land) which could also accommodate demand.

- 5.4.10 Conversations with property market agents in support of this study highlighted the view that the industrial market in Bishop's Stortford was viewed to be robust, and that additional supply of a suitable size and quality in well-connected locations (e.g. on the A120, providing access to Junction 8 of the M11) would be in demand, as evidenced by more recent industrial developments such as Thorley Fields Business Park, delivered as part of the development of Bishop's Stortford South. However, it was noted that, in relation to the airport, Bishop's Stortford is competing with other locations, with places such as Braintree - while further away from Stansted - able to offer faster journey times to Stansted, which is a key consideration for businesses in determining their preferred location.

## Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards

- 5.4.11 The contribution of buildings to greenhouse gas emissions is increasingly recognised. This understanding presents both challenges and opportunities, given the potential for emissions savings to be made. It is estimated that buildings are responsible for between 17% and 31%<sup>35,36</sup> of national emissions.
- 5.4.12 The energy performance of buildings in the UK is monitored through the Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) system. Non-domestic private rented properties are awarded a certificate rating between A+ (most efficient) and G (least efficient). Properties awarded an A+ rating are considered to achieve Net Zero carbon emissions.
- 5.4.13 In order to drive the decarbonisation of the UK's non-domestic building stock, commitments have been made to encourage the construction of more energy efficient buildings and upgrading/retrofitting existing buildings through the implementation of restrictions on private lettings based on energy performance. Non-domestic buildings must comply with Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES) in order to lawfully be leased. At the time of writing (March 2026), MEES regulations apply to those non-domestic buildings which have been awarded an EPC rating of F or G, whereby these properties cannot enter into new leases until improvements have been made. A number of exemptions apply<sup>37,38</sup>, including that improvements must be 'permissible', 'appropriate' and 'cost effective'<sup>39</sup>. As of 1st April 2023, MEES apply to existing leases, not solely new leases as had been the case previously<sup>40</sup>.
- 5.4.14 A breakdown of the EPC certificates awarded by use type<sup>41</sup> in Bishop's Stortford is shown in Figure 5-16. Only 11% of office properties in Bishop's Stortford have an EPC rating of A+ to B, lower than the stock of industrial (22%) and warehousing and storage properties (18%). One office property and seven warehousing and storage properties in Bishop's Stortford are considered to achieve Net Zero carbon emissions (A+ rating).

<sup>34</sup> [https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/13180/Local-Plan-Full-Doc-high-res-no-bleeds-2a/pdf/Local\\_Plan\\_Full\\_Doc\\_-\\_high\\_res\\_no\\_bleeds\\_2a.pdf?m=1722872902437](https://www.uttlesford.gov.uk/media/13180/Local-Plan-Full-Doc-high-res-no-bleeds-2a/pdf/Local_Plan_Full_Doc_-_high_res_no_bleeds_2a.pdf?m=1722872902437)

<sup>35</sup> This figure includes only emissions from direct energy use in buildings.

<https://www.gov.uk/energy-performance-certificate-commercial-property/exemptions>

<sup>36</sup> Additional exemptions to the new regulations are set out by RICS at <https://ww3.rics.org/uk/en/journals/property-journal/epc-requirements-commercial-property.html>. Exemptions apply to leases less than 6 months or greater than 99 years; to the need to perform upgrading works until a new EPC is triggered; where the costs of works would be greater than the energy saving over seven years; where third-party consent precludes works e.g. planning permission refusal where reasonably sought; where works would devalue property by over 5%; where the landlord has recently become one.

<sup>37</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/energy-performance-certificate-commercial-property/exemptions>

<sup>38</sup> Additional exemptions to the new regulations are set out by RICS at <https://ww3.rics.org/uk/en/journals/property-journal/epc-requirements-commercial-property.html>. Exemptions apply to leases less than 6 months or greater than 99 years; to the need to perform upgrading works until a new EPC is triggered; where the costs of works would be greater than the energy saving over seven years; where third-party consent precludes works e.g. planning permission refusal where reasonably sought; where works would devalue property by over 5%; where the landlord has recently become one.

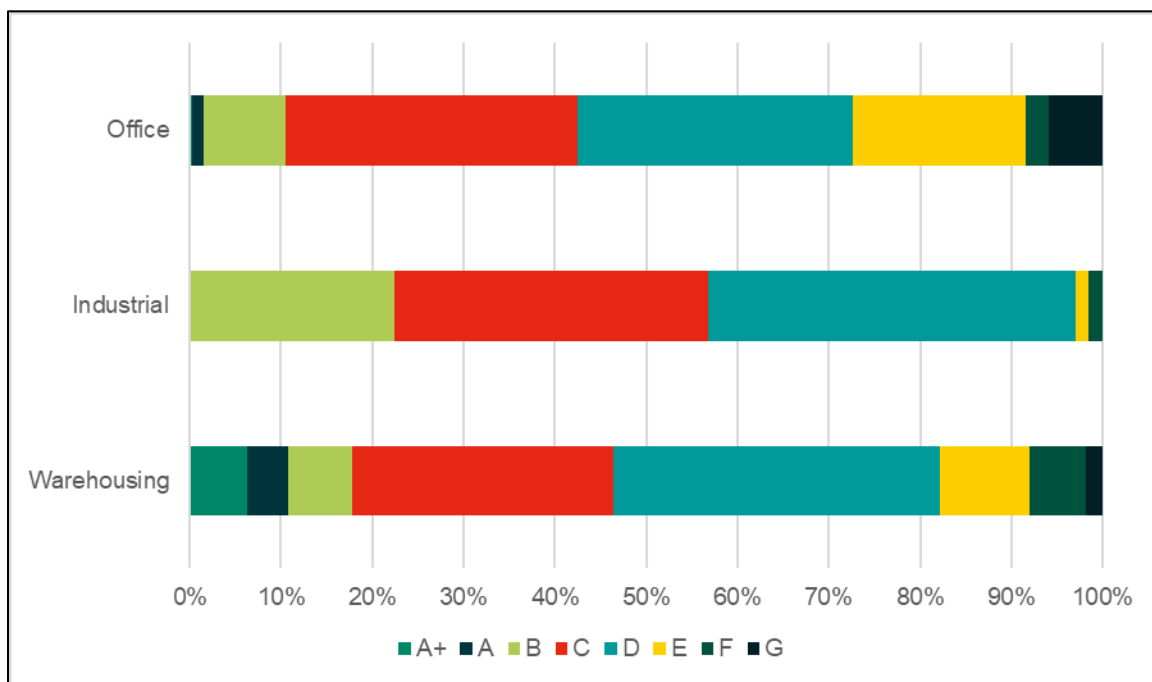
<sup>39</sup> RICS, (2018); Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards (MEES): Impact on UK property management and valuation.

<sup>40</sup> <https://ww3.rics.org/uk/en/journals/property-journal/epc-requirements-commercial-property.html>

<sup>41</sup> It should be noted that the use types employed by MHCLG to categorise buildings do not directly align with those categories applicable to CoStar data presented in the property market analysis section of the report. Data is therefore presented by considering the broad use types shown to comprise buildings categorised by MHCLG as follows:

- Office: 'B1 Office and Workshop Businesses' and 'Office';
- General industrial: 'B2 to B7 General Industrial and Special Industrial Groups'; and
- Storage and distribution: 'B8 Storage or distribution' and 'Warehouse and storage'.

**Figure 5-16 EPC Certificates in Bishop's Stortford by building use type**



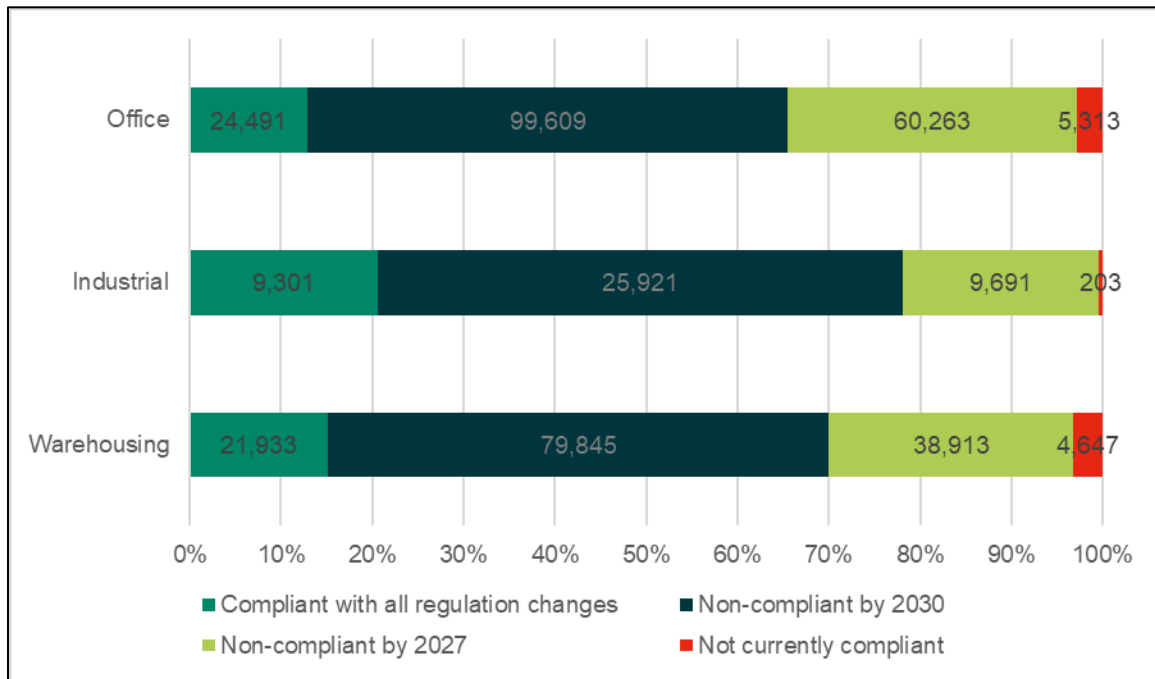
Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (2026) Energy Performance of Buildings Data England and Wales: Non-domestic EPC.

5.4.15 It is anticipated that the minimum standard will be sequentially increased such that building efficiency expectations are raised in line with Government ambitions to deliver against net zero commitments<sup>42</sup>, as the minimum EPC rating for non-domestic properties to be leased will be raised to C by 1st April 2027 and to B by April 2030. Figure 5-17 shows the current dates for the raising of the minimum EPC rating. The proportion has been applied to property market floorspace information to indicate the applicable floorspace in these scenarios. It is clearly evident that the scale of upgrading, retrofitting, and replacing building stock such that it will comply with anticipated MEES is considerable, particularly for office properties. As set out, current and potential future exemptions may apply, nonetheless the significant proportion of buildings which are likely to not meet the correct standard presents challenges, in terms of implementation, enforcement and compliance.

5.4.16 In 2021, the Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy engaged in consultation on implementation of the EPC B target by 2030 which highlighted the significant implementation issues that would need to be addressed. The building stock of Bishop's Stortford which falls within the scope of tightening regulations to 2030 is 489 buildings, reflecting 86% of properties and 85% of floorspace.

<sup>42</sup> HM Government, (2020); Energy White Paper: Powering our Net Zero Future.

**Figure 5-17 MEES compliance of present EPC certificates with anticipated regulation changes (sqm)**



Source: Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (2026) Energy Performance of Buildings Data England and Wales: Non-domestic EPC.

5.4.17 This potential regulatory shift presents both challenges and opportunities for the local property market. Retrofit costs may be significant, particularly for older office buildings which are typically more complex and costly to retrofit than industrial buildings, creating the potential for stranded assets. In this regard, compliance may present particular challenges for office stock in Bishop's Stortford, which includes a relatively high proportion of older buildings and conversions rather than purpose-built office space.

5.4.18 However, the regulatory changes provide a strong incentive for the modernisation and upgrading of business floorspace. Improvements in energy performance may also enhance the quality of the local building stock, while supporting lower operating costs and improved environmental performance. Over time, this may contribute to the renewal and upgrading of the town's employment floorspace.

5.4.19 It should be noted that the Government's work on related data reforms and responses to earlier MEES consultation has been ongoing for several years, and formal proposals remain under review. Consequently, the scale of current and future exemptions across the non-domestic sector is not currently understood<sup>4344</sup>.

## Changing Office Workspace Requirements

5.4.20 This sub-section delves into the recent evolution of changing space requirements for office and knowledge work.

5.4.21 The work-from-home shift is a key driver of the evolving landscape in the UK. The most recent data from the Office for National Statistics<sup>45</sup> highlighted that 45% of workers in the East of England embrace home (14%) or hybrid (30%) work, reshaping models, and foretelling a lasting change, with 75% anticipating transformed in-person work approaches. By way of comparison, Annual Population Survey data from before the Covid-19 pandemic

<sup>43</sup> Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy (2021). The Non-Domestic Private Rented Sector Minimum Energy Efficiency Standards: Implementation of the EPC B Future Target.

<sup>44</sup> Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (2024). Improving the Energy Performance of Privately Rented Homes: Consultation.

<sup>45</sup> ONS (2023) Characteristics of homeworkers, Great Britain: September 2022 to January 2023.

shows that around 17.6% of working adults reported working from home at some point in the week before the interview.

- 5.4.22 The future of office spaces is set to be shaped by intricate dynamics involving employee attendance rates and the broader economic landscape. Survey data from February 2026<sup>46</sup> indicated that office occupancy rates across the UK have stabilised above the 40% mark, with a weekly peak of 44.1% in late January 2026. This compares with pre-pandemic occupancy rates estimated between 60% and 80%. Further research from 2025<sup>47</sup> indicates that the rate of office utilisation has increased and stabilised at 66%. Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays are the busiest days of the week for staff to be at their desks, with Friday remaining the quietest day. Faced with this new reality, employers are confronted with challenges to entice employees back to the office environment, thus influencing decisions related to office expansion, right-sizing office spaces, and delaying real estate investments.
- 5.4.23 The context within the office market, characterised by extended leases held, suggests that a time lag will occur before a decrease in demand for office space is fully evident. This delay provides a window during which office job numbers might increase, employee attendance rates could experience a partial recovery, and a pursuit of high-quality office environments may persist, collectively contributing to a relatively gradual and controlled transition for office providers. This temporal overlap also affords occupiers, developers, landlords, and policymakers the opportunity to proactively adapt to these evolving trends. However, it is noteworthy that peripheral locations and areas with limited premium office offerings might experience a more pronounced impact due to the variable nature of the “flight to quality<sup>48</sup>”.
- 5.4.24 This trend of downsizing of requirements by office occupiers is already driving decisions by businesses to reduce their premises size with impacts on vacancy rates. In turn this may potentially result in new office floorspace being of lower average density than has been typical. The growth of use of artificial intelligence (AI) within sectors and occupations in offices could, on face-value, lead to further downsizing due to reductions in headcount at premises. However, there is considerable uncertainty as to the extent and at what pace such change would occur with limited evidence at present of firms seeking to do this for this reason on a noticeable level.

---

<sup>46</sup> Remit Consulting (2026) News Release: UK office occupancy stabilises above 40% as sector divide widens. Available at: <https://return.remitconsulting.com/resource-centre/57-uk-office-occupancy-stabilises-above-40-as-sector-divide-widens> [Accessed: 10/03/26].

<sup>47</sup> British Council for Office (BCO) Media (2024) BCO report calls for new approach to space planning as office use reaches critical shift. Available at: <https://www.bco.org.uk/bco-report-calls-for-new-approach-to-space-planning-as-office-use-reaches-critical-shift> [Accessed: 06/03/26].

<sup>48</sup> CBRE (2022) The Flight to Quality Quantified. Available at: <https://www.cbre.co.uk/insights/viewpoints/the-flight-to-quality-quantified> [Accessed: 06/03/26].

## 6. Existing Employment Sites

### 6.1 Introduction

6.1.1 As outlined in Section 3, the District Plan 2018 identified the following seven Employment Area allocations in Bishop's Stortford:

- Raynham Road / Dunmow Road Industrial Estate;
- Haslemere Estate;
- Twyford Road;
- Stansted Road;
- Woodside;
- Millside Industrial Estate;
- Southmill Trading Estate; and

6.1.2 In addition Thorley Fields Business Park is considered an employment area recently developed which is capable of being allocated.

6.1.3 In addition to these Employment Areas, a short profile on Bishop's Stortford town centre is also included, due to its role in accommodating office uses.

6.1.4 This section provides an assessment of the relative characteristics of these employment areas.

### 6.2 Employment areas

#### Raynham Road / Dunmow Road Industrial Estate

6.2.1 Raynham Road / Dunmow Road Industrial Estate is a large, 12.9ha industrial estate located to the east of Bishop's Stortford, in close proximity to the town centre and with the A120 to the north-east. It is the largest Employment Area allocation in Bishop's Stortford, comprising of 80 units across 41 buildings and 59,043 sqm in floorspace. The Raynham Road / Dunmow Road Industrial Estate allocation includes Stortford Hall Industrial Estate, The Links Business Centre, Raynham Road Industrial Estate, Raynham Close, Myson Way, and several large independent industrial and commercial units.

6.2.2 The site is bordered by residential developments, alongside a primary school and playing fields to the north-east.

6.2.3 Use Classes range from small Class E spaces to very large Class B2 industrial facilities and Class B8 warehouses. The site provides flexible employment floorspace suitable for a wide range of occupiers, including industrial units with ancillary offices, modern car dealerships, IT service offices, and large manufacturing buildings. Notable occupants include Gü Desserts, Land Rover, and Virgin Media.

6.2.4 Table 6-1 provides an overview of the Raynham Road / Dunmow Road Industrial Estate.

**Table 6-1 Overview of Raynham Road / Dunmow Road Industrial Estate (2025 Q4)**

Number of units	Property types	CoStar Quality Rating <sup>49</sup>	Office rent (£/sqm)	Industrial rent (£/sqm)	Uses
80	Office, Industrial, and Retail	2-3	224.01	138.12	Manufacturing, repair and parts stores, corporate offices, suppliers, warehouses, fitness centre, wholesalers, aviation consultants, car dealerships, retail.

Source: CoStar (2026); East Herts District Council (2026) Bishop's Stortford Employment Land Allocations.

- 6.2.5 Buildings in Raynham Road / Dunmow Road Industrial Estate date from 1950 to 2010, with two properties originally built in the 1990s refurbished in 2002 and 2017.
- 6.2.6 The estate is of average quality overall, as reflected by its CoStar ratings, with 56.8% of properties rated 2 and 43.2% rated 3. The environment is generally well maintained, and some units incorporate renewable energy technologies, however older units located in the north-west of the estate could benefit from refurbishment or redevelopment. Internal roads and footpaths are generally in good condition, and parking provision is adequate.
- 6.2.7 Raynham Road / Dunmow Road Industrial Estate is accessed via Raynham Road and Dunmow Road, with Stortford Hall Industrial Estate and the large manufacturing unit occupied by Gü Desserts accessed separately, off Dunmow Road. The estate is located in close proximity to the town centre and is accessible to pedestrians and cyclists. The A120 and M11 motorway provide strong road connectivity, with Bishop's Stortford Railway Station also located approximately 900m to the south-west. The estate is well-served by public transport, with bus stops within 150m of each site entrance providing links to surrounding towns and villages.
- 6.2.8 The vast majority of units are occupied, however, there are vacancies at The Links Business Centre and amongst the older units within Raynham Road Industrial Estate. In addition, Unit 9 of Stortford Hall Industrial Estate is vacant; a 5,520 sqm Use Class B8 storage and distribution facility, previously occupied by Pioneer Europe Ltd. The unit was built in 1998 and is owned by Essex County Council.
- 6.2.9 As shown in Table 6-1, office and industrial rents in 2025 Q4 were £224.01/sqm and £138.12/sqm respectively. Since 2023, office rents have remained broadly stable while industrial rents have increased from £121.16/sqm in 2023 Q1. Opportunities for further development are limited given the surrounding residential areas, schools, and playing fields.

## Haslemere Estate

- 6.2.10 Haslemere Estate is a small industrial estate (1.7 ha) located to the south of Hockerill, approximately 1 km south of Bishop's Stortford Railway Station. It comprises 14 units across three buildings, providing a total of 7,514 sqm of floorspace.
- 6.2.11 The site is bordered by residential developments to the west, Twyfords Industrial Estate to the north, and the West Anglia Main Line railway to the east.
- 6.2.12 Units are located to the west of the site, with parking provision to the east. Units graduate in size, with the smallest located nearest to the site entrance, and the largest towards the end of the internal road to the north. Use Classes include Class E(g)(ii), (iii), Class B2 and B8. The estate provides employment floorspace suitable for industrial uses and accommodates a range of local businesses.
- 6.2.13 Table 6-2 provides an overview of the Haslemere Estate.

<sup>49</sup> The CoStar Five Star Building Rating System is the industry's first nationally consistent building quality rating system that can be applied across all commercial real estate property types and across all markets. A five star rating represents best in class in terms of design and construction and very likely a certified sustainable and energy efficient building. Conversely, a 1 star rating represents a building that is uncompetitive with respects to the need of a typical industrial tenants, may require significant renovation.

**Table 6-2 Overview of Haslemere Estate (2025 Q4)**

Number of units	Property types	CoStar Quality Rating	Office rent (£/sqm)	Industrial rent (£/sqm)	Uses
14	Industrial	3	n/a	140.07	Manufacturing, repair and parts store, car dealership, suppliers.

Source: CoStar (2026); East Herts District Council (2026) Bishop's Stortford Employment Land Allocations.

- 6.2.14 Overall, Haslemere Estate is of average quality, reflected in its CoStar ratings, with all properties rated 3. The parking provision is considered sufficient for the site.
- 6.2.15 The estate is accessed via one main entrance from Pig Lane and is relatively poorly located in relation to the strategic road networks. The M11 motorway is located approximately 5 km away by road and is accessed via routes through the centre of Bishop's Stortford. A bridge adjacent to the site entrance, which provides an alternative route to the M11, is narrow and has signposted weight restrictions, limiting access for large vehicles. A bus stop is located approximately 200m from the site entrance on London Road, providing services to Sawbridgeworth, Harlow, and surrounding villages. The site is accessible to pedestrians and cyclists via London Road and Pig Lane, including pavements to the entrance, although there is no internal walking or cycling infrastructure.
- 6.2.16 In 2025 Q4, Haslemere Estate recorded a high vacancy rate of 11.6%, equivalent to 868 sqm. This represents a notable increase compared with recent periods, with vacancy rates at 0.0% since 2024 Q3, suggesting that a unit has recently become vacant. Data from 2015 suggests that the estate typically experiences periods of full occupancy punctuated by short-term vacancy, reflecting normal business turnover. The current vacancy comprises one unit of approximately 868 sqm within a property built in 1980, with rent ranging from £112.38/sqm to £137.35/sqm.
- 6.2.17 As shown in Table 6-2, industrial rents currently stand at £140.07/sqm. Industrial rents have increased steadily, from £69.72/sqm in 2015 Q1. Opportunities for expansion are limited, with residential development and an industrial estate surrounding the site to the north and west. Greenfield land is located to the south and east in the Green Belt.

## Twyford Road

- 6.2.18 Twyford Road is a large industrial estate (4.0 ha) located north of Haslemere Estate, to the south of Hockerill. The site comprises 55 units across 14 properties and 20,096 sqm in floorspace. Twyford Road comprises two interconnected estates, the newer Twyford Business Centre to the south, and the older Twyford Road Industrial Estate to the north. In total, there are two office properties and 12 industrial properties.
- 6.2.19 The site is bordered by residential development to the north and west, the West Anglia Main Line railway to the east, and Haslemere Estate to the south.
- 6.2.20 Use Classes include Class E(g)(i), (ii), (iii), Class B2 and Class B8. Twyford Business Centre, which comprises the larger southern portion of the site, provides flexible employment floorspace suitable for a wide range of local occupiers. In comparison, Bishop's Stortford Baptist Church is situated in the north of the site.
- 6.2.21 Table 6-3 provides an overview of Twyford Road.

**Table 6-3 Overview of Twyford Road (2025 Q4)**

Number of units	Property types	CoStar Quality Rating	Office rent (£/sqm)	Industrial rent (£/sqm)	Uses
55	Office, Industrial	2-3	222.50	127.48	Vehicle dealer, fitness centre, parts store, office, suppliers, retail, repair shop.

Source: CoStar (2026); East Herts District Council (2026) Bishop's Stortford Employment Land Allocations.

- 6.2.22 Buildings in Twyford Road date from 1990 to 1994, although most were built in the 1980s and 1990s. Properties at the north of site have been redeveloped in the last 10-15 years, including the construction of a Baptist Church and associated office uses.
- 6.2.23 The site is of average quality overall, as reflected in its CoStar ratings, with 57.1% of properties rated 2 and 42.9% rated 3. Twyford Business Centre is generally of higher quality than the older Twyford Road Industrial Estate, however the site overall would benefit from some redevelopment and enhancement. Multiple units in the business centre have been retrofitted with solar PV panels, with a public EV charger located within the site, although parking provision is limited.
- 6.2.24 Twyford Road is accessed via entrances on London Road or Twyford Road. London Road provides connections south to Sawbridgeworth and Harlow, however, the site is located poorly in relation to the strategic road network, with the requirement to pass through the centre of Bishop's Stortford in order to access to the M11 motorway and A120. In terms of public transport, a bus stop is located approximately 50m from the site entrance on London Road, offering services to Sawbridgeworth, Harlow, surrounding villages, and Bishop's Stortford town centre. In addition, Bishop's Stortford Railway Station is located approximately 800m to the north. London Road and Twyford Road facilitate pedestrian and cyclist access to the site.
- 6.2.25 In 2025 Q4, the vacancy rate at Twyford Road stood at 2.2%, increasing from 0.0% in 2025 Q2. The generally low vacancy rates recorded in the estate over recent years reflect the periodic turnover of occupiers described above. The vacant floorspace of 439 sqm sits within a property built in 1987, with a rent of £101.07/sqm.
- 6.2.26 As shown in Table 6-3, office and industrial rents in 2025 Q4 were £222.50/sqm and £127.48/sqm respectively. Since 2015 Q1, both office and industrial rents have increased steadily, from £144.95/sqm and £65.16/sqm respectively. Opportunities for development are limited, with residential development and industrial uses surrounding the site to the north, south and west, and a pond and the River Stort to the east.

## Stansted Road

- 6.2.27 Stansted Road is a large (7.8 ha) employment area comprised of three adjacent but independent estates: Goodliffe Park, Stort Valley Industrial Estate, and Birchanger Industrial Estate. Goodliffe Park primarily accommodates large retail businesses, while Stort Valley and Birchanger Industrial Estates provide smaller units, the majority of which are flexible for a range of uses, including accommodating car dealerships and servicing businesses. Stansted Road is located to the north of Bishop's Stortford, approximately 200m from the A120. The site comprises of 25 units across 13 properties, totalling 32,143 sqm in floorspace. Stansted Road (B1383) runs through the centre of the estate.
- 6.2.28 The site is bordered by residential dwellings to the north and south, the West Anglia Main Line railway and the River Stort to the west, and agricultural land to the east.
- 6.2.29 Use Classes include Class E(g)(i), (ii), (iii), Class B2 and Class B8. Stansted Road provides flexible employment floorspace suitable for a wide range of occupiers, with units ranging from smaller industrial properties to large retail units. Notable occupants include Mercedes-Benz, Wickes, and Pets at Home.
- 6.2.30 Table 6-4 provides an overview of Stansted Road.

**Table 6-4 Overview of Stansted Road (2025 Q4)**

Number of units	Property types	CoStar Quality Rating	Office rent (£/sqm)	Industrial rent (£/sqm)	Uses
25	Industrial, Retail	2-3	n/a	217.11	Supermarket, car dealer, retail, restaurant, postal service.

Source: CoStar (2026); East Herts District Council (2026) Bishop's Stortford Employment Land Allocations.

- 6.2.31 Buildings in Stansted Road date from 1970 to 2025, although most were constructed in the 2000s. Construction is now complete following permission granted in 2023 for the demolition of existing industrial units to the south of Stort Valley Industrial Estate and the erection of a Class E food store (Lidl) with associated parking, access, and landscaping.
- 6.2.32 Stansted Road is of average quality, reflected in its CoStar ratings, with 76.9% of properties rated 3 and 23.1% rated 2. Quality varies across the three estates, with the newer commercial units (car dealerships and retailers) of higher quality and appearing better maintained than the older, 1980s industrial units around Birchanger Industrial Estate. Birchanger Industrial Estate would benefit from enhancement or redevelopment to maximise the quality of floorspace provision. Customer parking is provided for retail stores as well as parking provision outside most industrial units, although overall parking spaces are limited overall.
- 6.2.33 The estates are accessed by independent entrances via Stansted Road, which runs south towards Bishop's Stortford's town centre and north towards the A120. The site is well-located in relation to the strategic road network, with the M11 motorway located approximately 2.7 km east along the A120. Bus stops are located along Stansted Road and Michaels Road, providing services to Sawbridgeworth, Harlow, and surrounding villages. Pedestrian and cycle access is available via Stansted Road.
- 6.2.34 In 2025 Q4, the vacancy rate was 3.6%, equivalent to 1,066 sqm, increasing from 0.0% in 2024 Q3 and Q4. While vacancy has generally remained low in recent years, indicating regular turnover of occupiers, vacancy levels since 2025 Q1 have been the highest recorded since monitoring began in 2009, at 3.6%. Of this, 289 sqm is currently being actively marketed (comprising Unit 5 of Stort Valley Industrial Estate), with rents ranging between £124.11/sqm and £151.66/sqm. It is also noted that the closure of the BMW / MINI sites at the end of 2025 is likely to have increased overall vacancy levels beyond those reported above, although the extent to which this is reflected in the current data is unclear.
- 6.2.35 As shown in Table 6-4, industrial rents in 2025 Q4 were £149.98/sqm. Since 2015, rents have increased steadily, from £80.10/sqm in 2015 Q1. There is greenfield land to the east of the site, within the Green Belt in Uttlesford.

## Woodside

- 6.2.36 Woodside is a large estate (5.3 ha) located to the east of Bishop's Stortford, with the A120 along its northern edge and the M11 motorway approximately 600m to the east. Woodside comprises approximately 58 units across 12 properties, providing a total of 30,582 sqm in floorspace.
- 6.2.37 The site is bordered by Birchwood High School playing field to the west, residential development and Bishop's Stortford's Golf Club to the south, and Bishop's Stortford Football Club to the east.
- 6.2.38 Use Classes include Class E(g)(i), (ii), (iii), Class B2 and Class B8. The site provides a mix of large industrial units occupied by established businesses alongside smaller terraced units within the more recently constructed Peek Business Centre development, which are generally more suitable for Class E uses. Notable occupants include Travis Perkins, Diageo, and Thermo Fisher Scientific.
- 6.2.39 Table 6-5 provides an overview of Woodside.

**Table 6-5 Overview of Woodside (2025 Q4)**

Number of units	Property types	CoStar Quality Rating	Office rent (£/sqm)	Industrial rent (£/sqm)	Uses
25	Office, Industrial, Specialty	3	218.94	150.08	Supplier, manufacturing, wholesaler, distribution, professional, fitness centre, business services, warehousing, retail, recycling centre.

Source: CoStar (2026); East Herts District Council (2026) Bishop's Stortford Employment Land Allocations.

- 6.2.40 Buildings in Woodside date from 1980 to 2017, with most properties built in the 1990s. There has been significant development in last 10 years, including the construction of the Peek Business Centre which provides over 5,000 sqm of Class E(g) business floorspace. Several new units have since been granted permission for use class changes to B2 and E(d).
- 6.2.41 The site is of average quality overall, as reflected in its CoStar ratings, with all properties rated 3. The site environment, including roads, footpaths and vegetation, is well maintained and parking provision is adequate. Evidence of retrofitting is present, including Solar PV installation on the roofs of larger industrial units alongside general building refurbishment.
- 6.2.42 Woodside is accessed via Dunmow Road (A1250), offering good connectivity to the west into Bishop's Stortford town centre and surrounding residential areas. The estate benefits from its location in close proximity to both the A120 and the M11 motorway Junction 8, which enhances its attractiveness to particularly large occupiers. The access road of sufficient width and quality to accommodate large commercial vehicles. In terms of public transport, there are multiple bus stops within 400m of the site, offering services to Essex, Harlow, Sawbridgeworth, and surrounding settlements. There are pavements along Dunmow Road into Woodside, enabling safe pedestrian access.
- 6.2.43 In 2025 Q4, the vacancy rate was very low at 0.2%, compared to a peak of 9.8% in 2021 Q3 and Q4. Vacancy rates over recent years indicate a periodic turnover of occupiers. Current availability comprises two small vacant spaces of 89 sqm and 55 sqm respectively, within properties constructed in 2000 and 2005, with rents of £169.21/sqm and £225.29 respectively.
- 6.2.44 As shown in Table 6-5, office and industrial rents in 2025 Q4 were £218.94/sqm and £150.08/sqm respectively. Since 2015, industrial rents have increased steadily, from £78.92/sqm in 2015 Q1. Office rents have fluctuated modestly over this period, peaking in 2025 Q2 at £222.56/sqm. Opportunities for further development are limited, with expansion constrained by the A120 to the north and surrounding development to the east, west, and south.

## Millside Industrial Estate

- 6.2.45 Millside Industrial Estate is a small industrial estate (0.2 ha) located south of Hockerill, in close proximity to Bishop's Stortford town centre. The estate comprises 10 small units across two properties, providing 895 sqm of floorspace.
- 6.2.46 The site is bordered by residential development to the north and east, Southmill Road to the west, and a medical centre and retail units to the south.
- 6.2.47 Use Classes include E(g)(i), (ii), and (iii). Millside Industrial Estate provides employment floorspace primarily for local businesses serving visiting customers, including a workshop for pottery classes, a music studio, a veterinary practice, and a gym.
- 6.2.48 Table 6-6 provides an overview of Millside Industrial Estate.

**Table 6-6 Overview of Millside Industrial Estate (2025 Q4)**

Number of units	Property types	CoStar Quality Rating	Office rent (£/sqm)	Industrial rent (£/sqm)	Uses
10	Industrial	3	n/a	146.71	Art studio, music school, fitness centre, vet.

Source: CoStar (2026); East Herts District Council (2026) Bishop's Stortford Employment Land Allocations.

- 6.2.49 Both buildings in Millside Industrial Estate were constructed in 1980. Planning applications have been granted for changes of Use Class from B1 to D1/D2 prior to 2020 Use Class updates; these now fall within Classes E/F.
- 6.2.50 The estate is of average quality, as reflected in its CoStar ratings, with both properties rated 3. The site is generally well maintained, including recent roofing renovations. However, the internal road and courtyard area are poorly paved and would benefit from enhancements. Limited parking is available on-site and along Southmill Road.
- 6.2.51 Millside Industrial Estate is accessed via Southmill Road. Its location within a residential area provides good proximity to the town centre, and the site is accessible for pedestrians and cyclists. However, connectivity to the strategic road network is limited, with access to the M11 motorway or A120 requiring passing through central Bishop's Stortford. In terms of public transport, there are multiple bus stops within walking distance of the estate providing services across Bishop's Stortford and nearby villages. Bishop's Stortford Railway Station is located approximately 500m to the north of the site.
- 6.2.52 The estate has maintained full occupancy since 2009, indicating robust demand for the employment space.
- 6.2.53 As shown in Table 6-6 industrial rent in 2025 Q4 was £146.71/sqm. Since 2015, industrial rents have increased steadily from £76.85/sqm. Opportunities for further development are limited, with residential areas, roads, and commercial development surrounding the site.

## Southmill Trading Estate

- 6.2.54 Southmill Trading Estate is a small estate (0.4 ha) located adjacent to Bishop's Stortford Railway Station and in close proximity to the town centre. The site comprises 15 small units across four properties, totalling 3,065 sqm of employment space.
- 6.2.55 The site is bordered by commercial development to the north-west, the railway station to the north-east, and residential and office development to the south-east. The River Stort separates the site from the railway station car park. The Grade II listed 'Millars' buildings, redeveloped as apartments and commercial spaces, are adjacent to the north-west of the site.
- 6.2.56 Use Classes include E(g)(i), (ii), (iii), and Class B8. Southmill Trading Estate primarily accommodates light industrial and service businesses, including financial, electrical, energy, and heating services. Other uses include retail and a fitness studio.
- 6.2.57 Table 6-7 provides an overview of Southmill Trading Estate.

**Table 6-7 Overview of Southmill Trading Estate**

Number of units	Property types	CoStar Quality Rating	Office rent (£/sqm)	Industrial rent (£/sqm)	Uses
15	Office, Industrial, Retail	2-3	215.08	154.32	Services, manufacturing, and fitness centre.

Source: CoStar (2026); East Herts District Council (2026) Bishop's Stortford Employment Land Allocations.

- 6.2.58 Buildings at Southmill Trading Estate were constructed between 1890 and the 1980s, with the 1890 property renovated in 2013. A planning application was granted to change the Use Class for a unit to Class D2 (now E(d)).

- 6.2.59 The estate is of average quality, as reflected by CoStar ratings, with 50% of properties rated 2 and 50% rated 3. The environment is generally well maintained, with good road quality, however a fenced storage/operational yard occupied by Cadent Gas is visually unappealing. Parking provision is considered sufficient.
- 6.2.60 Southmill Trading Estate is accessed via Southmill Road. The estate is located in close proximity to the town centre and adjacent to Bishop's Stortford Railway Station. Links to the station are very good, with pedestrian access via footbridge from the site and with access by road ~1km away. Connectivity to the strategic road network is limited, with the M11 motorway or A120 accessed via central Bishop's Stortford. In terms of public transport, there are multiple bus stops in walking distance of the estate, providing services across town and to nearby towns and villages. Pedestrians and cyclists can access the site via Southmill Road.
- 6.2.61 In 2025 Q4, the vacancy rate was 3.7%, increasing from 0.0% between 2021 Q3 and 2025 Q3. Therefore, current vacancy levels indicate a periodic turnover of occupiers. Current vacancy comprises 114 sqm within a building constructed in 1987, rented at £175/sqm.
- 6.2.62 As shown in Table 6-7, office and industrial rents in 2025 Q4 were £215.08/sqm and £154.32/sqm respectively. Since 2015, industrial rents have increased steadily from £84.98/sqm in 2015 Q1, while office rents have fluctuated slightly, particularly during the Covid-19 period. Opportunities for further development are limited due to the River Stort, and surrounding residential and commercial development.

## Thorley Fields Business Park

- 6.2.63 Thorley Fields Business Park is housed on a 3.7 ha site located at the southernmost edge of Bishop's Stortford, at the intersection of Thorley Street (A1184) and St James Way. Thorley Fields Business Park is a new private business park located at Bishop's Stortford South (BISH5), built in 2024/2025. The site is not formally allocated as an employment site in the 2018 District Plan, having been completed since the adoption of the Plan, but it is to be recommended for allocation in the forthcoming plan. Employment space at the site is predominantly industrial, however the largest units include ancillary office space. The site comprises 12 units across five properties, totalling 17,608 sqm in floorspace.
- 6.2.64 The site is bordered by St James Way and Thorley Street (A1184) to the south-east and west, with greenfield land beyond. A care home, delivered as part of the BISH5 masterplan, lies to the west, and a sustainable urban drainage system (SUDS) and green space are located to the north, beyond which is residential development. Notable occupants include Delta Group, MCP Engineering Plastics, and TPS Trade.
- 6.2.65 Use Classes include E(g)(ii), (iii), Class B2 and Class B8. Planning permission at BISH5 was granted in 2019 (Ref 3/18/2253/OUT), which included the provision of this employment area, residential dwellings, a care home, education, and local retail.
- 6.2.66 Table 6-8 provides an overview of Thorley Fields Business Park.

**Table 6-8 Overview of Thorley Fields Business Park**

Number of units	Property types	CoStar Quality Rating	Office rent (£/sqm)	Industrial rent (£/sqm)	Uses
12	Industrial	4	n/a	136.16	Supplier, professional, business services, manufacturing.

Source: CoStar (2026); East Herts District Council (2026) Bishop's Stortford Employment Land Allocations.

- 6.2.67 Three properties were constructed in 2024, with a further two completed in 2025. The site is of good quality, as reflected by CoStar ratings, with all properties rated 4. Modern industrial units with rooftop solar PV contribute to its appearance and parking provision is considered sufficient.
- 6.2.68 Thorley Fields Business Park is accessed via St James Way. The site is located at the edge of Bishop's Stortford and benefits from direct access to the A1184, connecting to

Sawbridgeworth, Harlow, and surrounding villages, however, strategic links to the M11 motorway and A120 are more limited. Bishop's Stortford Railway Station is over 2 km north of the site. In terms of public transport, the St James Park Beaumont Avenue High School bus stop is located within 100m of the site. However, only one service provides regular links to the town centre, while others operate once or twice daily to surrounding settlements. Pedestrians and cyclists can access the site.

- 6.2.69 In 2025 Q4, the vacancy rate was 39.9%, comprising 7,028 sqm, increasing from 13.3% in 2024 Q3 and Q4. This increase likely reflects the completion of 2025-built properties and the resultant growth in supply. Current vacancy is spread across three properties, comprising 1,624 sqm, 2,246 sqm, and 3,158 sqm, with rents ranging from of £121.42/sqm to £121.63/sqm. There is, agricultural land adjoining the site to the south of St James Way, within the Green Belt.

## Overview

- 6.2.70 The eight employment areas comprise some larger sites which incorporate multiple adjacent industrial estates, and some very small sites which accommodate smaller-scale businesses and services. All are generally considered to be performing well and meeting needs for employment space and premises. There is a good range of building and unit types including new industrial employment premises in locations such as Thorley Fields indicating the viability of new development locally. There is limited vacancy when considered overall and when newly developed premises awaiting occupants are accounted for which points to good market operation. Opportunities for intensification and expansion are limited on most sites due to levels of site occupancy, layout and proximity to surrounding uses, including sensitive uses in some instances. Whilst there is a presence of non-employment uses this is not considered untypical reflecting the flexibility of the E use class, however given low vacancy levels and the delivery of new floorspace, uptake of space by such users should be closely monitored to maintain a good supply of premises to the employment land uses.

## 6.3 Bishop's Stortford Town Centre

- 6.3.1 Bishop's Stortford town centre plays a vital role in providing office space in East Herts, linked to its strong connectivity, with Bishop's Stortford Railway Station providing direct connections to London Liverpool Street, Stratford, and Cambridge, and road connectivity offered by the M11 and A120, while the town centre also provides workers with access to a range of amenities which are key attractors for office occupiers.
- 6.3.2 The town centre provides access to a range of office spaces, ranging from 13 sqm to 3,690 sqm. In total there are 75 office properties in the Bishop's Stortford town centre area, the majority of which are of low to average quality.

**Table 6-9 Overview of Bishop's Stortford Town Centre**

Number of properties	Property types	CoStar Quality Rating	Office rent (£/sqm)	Vacancy rate (%)	Uses
75	Office	1-3	184.39	5.0	Professional, business services; financial services, IT; real estate.

Source: CoStar (2026).

- 6.3.3 Office properties in Bishop's Stortford town centre are generally old, with the majority of buildings having been constructed before 1960, with some dating as early as the 1600s. Conversely, few buildings are purpose built for office use, with a high proportion of office conversion and the provision of office space above retail units.
- 6.3.4 Office market rents in the town centre currently stand at £184.39/sqm. This represents a notable decrease on more recent years, with rents having stood at £216.63/sqm in Q2 2020. Similarly, vacancy rates stood at 2.2% prior to the pandemic before rising to stand at 5% currently, highlighting its impact on the local office market.

- 6.3.5 There has been no delivery of new office floorspace in Bishop's Stortford town centre since 2008, and some space lost following the demolition of 1 The Causeway. This is to be followed by the demolition of Charrington House as part of the Old River Lane development, though some office use is anticipated to be delivered as part of the new development.

# 7. Land for Employment Development

## 7.1 Introduction

7.1.1 This section of the report examines the employment land available for development in existing allocations and the pipeline of employment floorspace anticipated to be delivered in Bishop's Stortford. It then determines the potential amount of employment that could be generated across the employment land use classes.

## 7.2 Employment Development

7.2.1 The East Herts District Plan (2018) included the provision of 19-20 hectares of new employment land across a number of locations in the District. In all, 8-9 hectares of this supply was in Bishop's Stortford:

- 4 hectares within the development at Bishop's Stortford North (BISH3); and
- 4-5 hectares within the development at Bishop's Stortford South (BISH5).

7.2.2 Policy BISH1 details that new employment floorspace in Bishop's Stortford will be primarily delivered as follows:

- Through mixed-use development in the town centre at The Goods Yard (BISH7) and Old River Lane (BISH8).
- New employment land at Bishop's Stortford South.
- Through two mixed use local centres at Bishop's Stortford North providing 4.1ha of land comprising 21,000 sqm of commercial floorspace (B1a, b and c), up to 3,000sqm for D1 uses and up to 1,200 sqm retail provision. Further provision of up to 4,000 sqm of commercial floorspace may also be delivered.

7.2.3 Potential employment development at Bishop's Stortford North (BISH3) and in the two mixed-use District Plan site allocations in Bishop's Stortford, The Goods Yard (BISH7) and Old River Lane (BISH8), has been considered to identify potential employment growth. This is set out for each site in-turn below.

### Bishop's Stortford North

7.2.4 In the period following adoption of the District Plan, the 4-5 hectares of employment land at Bishop's Stortford South has been delivered through Thorley Fields Business Park, as profiled in the previous section. However, the 4 hectares within the development at Bishop's Stortford North has not yet been developed. This site received outline permission in 2015 for:

*"Development of 2 mixed use local centres on 4.1 hectares of land providing up to 21,000 sq.m. (gross) commercial floorspace (Use Class B1 a, b and c) inclusive of (if required) a maximum of 3,000 sq.m. (gross) for healthcare facilities (Use Class D1), together with retail floorspace (Use Classes A1, A2, A3, A4 & A5) up to a maximum of 1,200 sq.m. (gross), residential development (use Class C3), and the potential for other community/cultural/leisure (Use Class D1 & D2) if required (floorspace to be agreed)."*

The application also included the potential for *"an additional 0.5 hectares of land for up to 4,000 sq.m. (gross) commercial floorspace (Use Class B1 a, b and c) if required or for residential purposes (Use Class C3) if not."* This is hereafter referred to as the Business Park Extension.

7.2.5 The mixed use local centres are split across sites in the east and west of the developments. The western neighbourhood local centre comprises of 1.4ha of the land and has a partly implemented planning permission (3/19/2626/FUL) for a new doctor's surgery; a children's nursery; a 78-bed care home; 26 affordable apartments and space for shops and a community room, therefore accommodating no employment uses. In the eastern

neighbourhood, District Plan Policy BISH3 criterion II e and f outline the location should include a mixed use neighbourhood centre including local shops, facilities and business incubator units and a new employment allocation to provide modern business premises attractive to B1 employment uses.

7.2.6 However, the outline permission has lapsed and therefore the development of the eastern neighbourhood centre will require a new application, as opposed to a reserved matters application. Therefore, there is potential for the use classes or the quantum of land put forward for employment uses to change as part of this new application.

7.2.7 Given this context, it is relevant to the development of policy for Bishop's Stortford to know how many jobs could be created should this land be developed for employment uses. In order to make this calculation, a number of assumptions are required, as detailed below:

- **Use Class** – The proportion of the land likely to be developed and associated floorspace will depend on the use class that is likely to be accommodated on site. The lapsed planning permission assumed that employment development would relate to "Use Class B1 a, b and c", corresponding to use classes E(g)(i), E(g)(ii) and E(g)(iii). However, given the uncertainty relating to the fresh planning application in relation to the site, a range of scenarios are adopted to align with potential uses across the site:
  - **Scenario 1:** This scenario assumes that 25% of the eastern local centre comes forward for office use, alongside other non-employment uses. The 0.5ha Business Park Extension is assumed to come forward for an even split of office and light industrial uses.
  - **Scenario 2:** This scenario assumes an even split of office [E(g)(i)] and light industrial [E(g)(iii)] uses on 50% of the land associated with the eastern local centre. The 0.5ha Business Park Extension is assumed to come forward for an even split of office and light industrial uses.
  - **Scenario 3:** This scenario assumes an even split of general industrial (B2) and warehousing and storage (B8) uses on 50% of the land associated with the eastern local centre. Similarly, the 0.5ha Business Park Extension is assumed to come forward for an even split of general industrial (B2) and warehousing and storage (B8) uses.

It is important to note that the split of uses is ultimately indicative for the purpose of estimating the potential employment that could be supported. The employment land allocation could, in practice, accommodate any eventual split across the E(g)/B employment land use classes including all being within one use class.

- **Plot Ratio** – The capacity of land to accommodate floorspace is known as the plot ratio and is expressed as the ratio of total development floor area to site area. There is some available evidence from research studies and many planning authorities use their own ratios, derived from design studies and measurement. In general, for industrial uses a plot ratio of 0.35-0.45 is relevant for light and general industrial uses, with 0.4-0.6 for warehousing and storage uses and 0.75 to 2.00 for office uses depending on the location of development<sup>50</sup>. Having reviewed the employment land evidence in East Herts and neighbouring authorities, a plot ratio of 0.4 for E(g)(iii) and B2 uses is assumed; alongside a plot ratio of 0.5 for B8 uses and 0.75 E(g)(i) uses<sup>51</sup>.
- **Employment Densities** – Having applied plot ratios to calculate the total development floorspace associated with the available land, this can then be converted to employment through the application of employment densities. These are applied in line with HCA Employment Density Guide 3<sup>rd</sup> Edition (2015), as summarised below:

<sup>50</sup> OPDM Employment Land Reviews: Guidance Note 2004

<sup>51</sup> This is consistent with the approach to employment land studies in North Hertfordshire and Welwyn Hatfield as neighbouring authorities.

**Table 7-1 Employment density assumptions**

Use class	Employment Density	Employment density assumption used (sqm per job)
E(g)(i)	Office – 13 sqm NIA per FTE job	13
E(g)(iii)	Light industrial – 47 sqm NIA per FTE job	47
B2	Industrial & Manufacturing – 36 sqm GIA per FTE job	36
B8	Storage & Distribution – 70-95 sqm GEA per FTE job	70

Source: HCA Employment Density Guide (2015).

7.2.8 The ratio of external to internal areas – The application of plot ratios allows the gross external area (i.e. the whole area of a building taking each floor into account<sup>52</sup>) to be calculated. As shown in Table 7-1, the employment densities vary in their application, from net internal area (light industrial), gross internal area (general industrial) and gross external area (warehousing and storage). As such, for light industrial and office floorspace, adjustments are required to convert the floorspace to NIA, while general industrial floorspace is converted to GIA. A 1:0.95 conversion ratio is assumed for GEA to GIA is assumed; with a similar 1:0.8 conversion ratio for GIA to NIA<sup>53</sup>.

7.2.9 The application of the above assumptions is set out in Table 7-2. The analysis suggests that, if the vacant land at the eastern local centre and business park extension were to be developed, additional employment of 164 – 465 FTE jobs could be generated in Bishop's Stortford.

7.2.10 However, it should be noted that these figures are only measures of capacity based on potential scenarios, not the likelihood of delivery. The market appeal of the site can differ very substantially and this will have a major bearing on actual delivery of employment floorspace and the actual creation of jobs.

**Table 7-2 Estimate of FTE Jobs Generated by the Development of Vacant Land at Bishop's Stortford North**

Scenario	Use Classes	Total Floorspace (sqm)	Total FTE Employment
Scenario 1	E(g)(i) / E(g)(iii)	7,938	422
Scenario 2	E(g)(i) / E(g)(iii)	10,638	465
Scenario 3	B2/B8	8,325	164

## The Goods Yard

7.2.11 An application was submitted, with a resolution to grant permission, for mixed-use development (3/22/1613/OUT) on part of the allocation comprising 3,276 sqm of flexible Use Class E. A further application has been submitted for development elsewhere on the allocation (3/24/1707/FUL) comprising 522 sqm of flexible commercial space (Use Class E) at ground floor alongside within a four storey building accommodating a hotel.

7.2.12 Given the flexibility within the applications, which are each yet to be granted planning permission, there is the potential for some employment to come forward through E(g)(i) uses at The Good's Yard development, but limited certainty at this stage. The total floorspace with potential for employment use is 3,798 sqm. A number of potential scenarios are therefore set out against the total floorspace with potential for employment use i.e. 3,798 sqm (3,276 sqm + 522 sqm):

- Scenario 1: Of the 3,798 sqm of Use Class E space, 15% of this is assumed to come forward for office (E(g)(i)) use.

<sup>52</sup> VOA Code of measuring practice: definitions for rating purposes

<sup>53</sup> HCA Employment Density Guide (2015)

- Scenario 2: This scenario assumes 25% of space comes forward for office (E(g)(i)) uses.
- Scenario 3: This scenario assumes 50% of the space comes forward for office (E(g)(i)) uses..

7.2.13 Applying the assumptions set out in Table 7-1, the analysis suggests that between 44 and 146 FTE jobs could be generated by the employment land use classes on The Goods Yard site, depending on the scenario. This is set out in Table 7-3.

**Table 7-3 Estimate of FTE Jobs Generated by the Development of Vacant Land at The Goods Yard**

Scenario	Floorspace (sqm) <sup>54</sup>	Total FTE Employment
Scenario 1	570	44
Scenario 2	950	73
Scenario 3	1,899	146

## Old River Lane

7.2.14 An application has been submitted for the mixed use development on a 1.27 hectare parcel of land At Old River Lane (3/25/1949/FUL). The application comprises up to 171 residential units (including 48 affordable units) (use class C3), community use (use class E / F2), retail and commercial (use class E) and Public Square (sui generis), the creation of new and improvements to existing streets, footpaths and cycle lanes, and associated works (including car and cycle parking, landscaping, drainage works).

7.2.15 In relation to the Class E uses:

- 1,283 sqm of Use Class F2 / E is proposed for an NHS facility to the north of the site. However, while this remains the preferred scenario, there is uncertainty as to whether the NHS will take up the space, and the applicant has submitted this land as F2/E to provide flexibility to accommodate other uses under Class E.
- 1,313 sqm of Use Class E space is proposed, much of which is anticipated to be focused on food and drink provision, however there is the potential for some office (including co-working space) to be delivered within the site.

7.2.16 As with The Goods Yard, given the flexibility within the application, which is yet to be determined, there is the potential for some employment to come forward through E(g)(i) uses at the Old River Lane development, with limited certainty at this stage. A number of potential scenarios are therefore set out:

- Scenario 1: This scenario assumes the NHS facility is delivered to the north, with no E(g) employment space delivered on this part of the site. Of the remaining 1,313 sqm of Use Class E space, 15% of this is assumed to come forward for office (E(g)(i)) use.
- Scenario 2: This scenario assumes the NHS facility does not come forward and 25% of the floorspace across each of the 1,283 sqm and 1,313 sqm areas comes forward for office (E(g)(i)) uses.
- Scenario 3: This scenario assumes the NHS facility does not come forward and 1,283 sqm of office (E(g)(i)) space is developed, with 15% of the remaining 1,313 sqm of Use Class E space coming forward for office (E(g)(i)) use.

7.2.17 Applying the assumptions set out earlier in this section, the analysis suggests that between 15 and 114 FTE jobs could be generated by the employment land use classes on the Old River Lane site, depending on the scenario. This is set out in Table 7-4.

<sup>54</sup> Note: Given no measurement classification is provided in relation to the floorspace, the ratio of external to internal areas is unknown and no conversion has been made for the purpose of this analysis.

**Table 7-4 Estimate of FTE Jobs Generated by Land at Old River Lane (Ref 3/25/1949/FUL)**

Scenario	Floorspace (sqm) <sup>55</sup>	Total FTE Employment
Scenario 1	197	15
Scenario 2	649	50
Scenario 3	1,480	114

## 7.3 Summary

7.3.1 Taken together, the analysis suggests that the development of Bishop's Stortford North and Old River Lane could result in the generation of between 223 and 725 FTE jobs across the employment land use classes.

**Table 7-5 Summary of Potential Employment Generated by Vacant Land and Pipeline Supply**

Site	Floorspace (sqm)		FTE Jobs	
	Low	High	Low	High
Bishop's Stortford North	8,325	10,638	164	465
The Goods Yard	570	1,899	44	146
Old River Lane	197	1,480	15	114
Total	9,092	14,017	223	725

7.3.2 If delivered, these jobs would represent growth of 2-5% on current workplace employment in Bishop's Stortford. However, it should be recognised that additional jobs could also be delivered across non-employment uses such as retail, food and beverage and healthcare.

<sup>55</sup> Note: Given no measurement classification is provided in relation to the floorspace, the ratio of external to internal areas is unknown and no conversion has been made for the purpose of this analysis.

## 8. Conclusions and Recommendations

### 8.1 Introduction

8.1.1 This section of the report presents our conclusions and recommendations based on the analysis in the preceding sections and outlines a potential strategy for the development of employment land in Bishop's Stortford.

8.1.2 The conclusions and recommendations of the Study are framed around a series of questions. These are as follows:

- Is it desirable to increase the number of jobs in Bishop's Stortford?
- What sort of jobs could be attracted or developed in Bishop's Stortford?
- What actions need to be taken to achieve the desired Bishop's Stortford?

### 8.2 Is it desirable to increase the number of jobs in Bishop's Stortford?

8.2.1 As set out in the NPPF, the purpose of the planning system is to contribute to the achievement of sustainable development, including the provision of homes, commercial development and supporting infrastructure in a sustainable manner. In this regard, it is important to support an appropriate mix of uses across an area, and within larger scale sites, to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities.

8.2.2 The current housing trajectory, taking account of commitments dwellings with planning permission of allocated in the adopted District Plan, suggests the potential for between 1,023 – 2,118 new homes to be delivered in Bishop's Stortford to 2033. With an average household size of 2.37 in East Herts<sup>56</sup>, this indicatively suggests the potential for 2,425 – 5,020 additional residents, of which 1,186 – 2,456 would be expected to be aged 16 and over and economically active.

8.2.3 Given the scale of residential development, it will be important to ensure this is balanced with an appropriate quantum of employment land to support opportunities for local residents. This is a particular consideration given the lack of spare capacity in the local property market and the loss of employment floorspace, such as at Charringtons House through the Old River Lane development. The analysis suggests that the undeveloped employment land allocation at Bishop's Stortford North, potential development at The Goods Yard and land at Old River Lane could result in the generation of between 223 and 725 FTE jobs, representing growth of 2-5% on current workplace employment in Bishop's Stortford. However, there is ongoing uncertainty regarding the amount of E(g)/B class floorspace to be developed at Bishop's Stortford North, with the existing permission having expired, and the amount of employment generated through existing vacant land/pipeline supply could therefore be significantly lower.

8.2.4 As recognised in the Buntingford Employment Study, the specialist nature of many jobs means that it is worth people travelling some distance to work, since by so doing they can secure a much better paid job, than they could if they worked locally. People are willing to commute, both because the salary they can command in a job more than outweighs the cost of commuting, and because they have reasons why they wish to live where they are, be that family connections, children in local schools, a preference to live in a market town rather than a bigger settlement. This is particularly relevant in the Bishop's Stortford context, given the presence of the station which provides direct connections to London and Cambridge, and the range of high value opportunities these markets offer.

---

<sup>56</sup> ONS (2022) Census (2021) Household size, local authorities in England and Wales,

- 8.2.5 As such, there is no certainty that an increase in the number of jobs located in Bishop's Stortford will reduce the level of out-commuting set out in Section 4.5, with commuter outflows (12,987) nearly double the amount of inflows (6,960) at the time of the 2011 Census. Workers will be drawn from elsewhere in the District, and inward commuting locations such as Harlow, Braintree and Epping Forest, as set out in Section 4.5.
- 8.2.6 Moreover, it is important to recognise that wider commercial development in competing locations may satisfy some demand from the resident population in Bishop's Stortford. For instance, East Herts district accounts for the highest percentage share (18.4%) of the 12,200 employees at Stansted Airport and, owing to its proximity, it is likely many of these workers would reside in Bishop's Stortford. Given the significant expansion plans at Stansted Airport – with up to 5,000 new jobs forecast to be created as part of the £1.1bn expansion approved by the government in 2023, and an additional 900 jobs to be created through plans to further increase passenger capacity to between 48 and 51 million people per year by 2040 – it would be anticipated that many of these jobs would be accessible to residents of Bishop's Stortford.
- 8.2.7 However, should the provision of employment space fail to keep up with growth in the working age population in Bishop's Stortford, there will inevitably be an increase in outward-commuting, notwithstanding the increase in home working that has resulted from the Covid-19 pandemic, suggesting the need to increase the number of jobs available to residents in Bishop's Stortford.

## 8.3 What sort of jobs could be attracted or developed in Bishop's Stortford?

### Office

- 8.3.1 In relation to the office market in Bishop's Stortford the analysis has demonstrated that there is relatively limited spare capacity in the market with vacancy rates standing at 3.1%. This is below East Herts, the East of England and England, and below generally accepted "frictional" vacancy rate of between 5-8% which indicates a market in balance.
- 8.3.2 Yet the relatively low vacancy rates have not coincided with an increase in office rental values, which have broadly plateaued since 2017. Feedback from property market agents has indicated a lack of demand for office space, particularly for larger areas of floorspace following the Covid-19 pandemic, and therefore the low vacancy alongside stagnant rental values could reflect flexibility in landlords renegotiating leases to maintain occupancy against a backdrop of falling office attendance.
- 8.3.3 While there is limited evidence of additional demand in Bishop's Stortford, the profile of office stock in the town presents potential challenges. Office properties in Bishop's Stortford town centre are generally aged, lower quality converted stock rather than modern, purpose built stock that is generally demanded by occupiers. Furthermore, the age and quality profile stands to necessitate investment to upgrade/retrofit existing buildings to comply with minimum energy efficiency standards set to be implemented in the future. Should landlords feel disinclined to invest to upgrade office stock, given the demand and rental performance of the local office market over recent years, Bishop's Stortford could face a situation where it has offices which are 'stranded assets' that are both non-compliant and undesirable to retrofit or where pressure from other uses such as residential, leisure or food and beverage is sought to be accommodated through changes of use. However, given the supply of office space in Bishop's Stortford is predominantly small and in converted buildings, it would be anticipated that some properties could be retrofitted relatively easily or repurposed for other uses, whilst some purpose built office space may be owner-occupied which does not need to comply with the regulations; all of which is likely to reduce the risk of stranded assets.
- 8.3.4 As such, there could be the requirement to ensure the office stock is fit for purpose to meet the needs of current occupiers, and also to accommodate additional demand associated with the growth of key sectors, wider growth opportunities and typologies such as co-working spaces. Indeed, it is notable that the wider Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area

considered in this analysis houses office stock which is newer, higher quality and purpose built, which could limit the competitiveness of Bishop's Stortford's office market.

- 8.3.5 As set out in Section 5.2, office rental values are well below the regional average, and feedback from agents indicated that the delivery of new office floorspace in Bishop's Stortford is subject to viability challenges. It was viewed that the market would be unlikely to deliver new office floorspace unless this were to be as part of a wider mixed use development, whereby the viability challenge could be offset through the associated development of other more valuable uses such as residential. In this regard, the delivery of office space would need to be stipulated clearly as part of the permission or forming an element of a Section 106 agreement. Alternatively, it was viewed that grant funding would likely be required to offset viability gaps for purpose build standalone office development.
- 8.3.6 Overall, it was viewed that future office development would likely be of a smaller scale and be best suited in proximity to the town centre, where it is most in demand, but that key requirements such as the availability of sufficient parking would need to be met. As such, business park locations were also viewed to be suitable should this condition be met.
- 8.3.7 Given Bishop's Stortford's key role as a commercial centre in East Herts, with its connectivity to London and Cambridge and the amenities of the town centre a draw for office occupiers, it would be anticipated that jobs would continue to be generated by prominent knowledge-intensive sectors such as professional, scientific and technical, information & communication and financial and insurance, which are prominent in the town.

## Industrial

- 8.3.8 In relation to the industrial market, vacancy rates across industrial and warehousing and storage use classes are generally below the rate which is typical for all comparator areas. The vacancy rate for light and general industrial uses, at 2.9%, indicates a particular lack of spare capacity in the local market; while warehousing and storage vacancy was more in line with the frictional level.
- 8.3.9 Agents reflected that demand for industrial space is robust in Bishop's Stortford, with connectivity to the Strategic Road Network – in particular Junction 8 of the M11 – a key driver, particularly for B8 uses. However, speculative developments, which dominate the new supply, would still be designed for and have permission for light industrial, general industrial and warehousing and storage space to provide the requisite flexibility in an industrial estate setting, with this potentially having the ability to deliver higher quality ancillary office space than is currently available in Bishop's Stortford town centre.
- 8.3.10 The future expansion of Stansted Airport was viewed to strengthen demand for space; with agents reflecting that industrial space near the airport is fully occupied. However, it was noted that direct competition would be provided from future developments such as Stansted Northside and other competing locations such Braintree, from which businesses could access the airport readily. While Bishop's Stortford is geographically closer than many competing locations, there are challenges in terms of journey times which could deter investors.
- 8.3.11 Overall, it was viewed that Bishop's Stortford had the potential to support the development of additional industrial development, with one agent noting the potential for up to 500,000sqft (46,000 sqm) of new floorspace. However, this would need to meet a number of key criteria, such as being in proximity to the SRN/Junction 8 of the M11, being well segregated from sensitive uses (e.g. residential), offering suitable access and of an appropriate shape/topography.
- 8.3.12 Given Bishop's Stortford forms part of the UK Innovation Corridor, which is home to prominent employers in the health, life sciences and pharmaceuticals, advanced engineering and aerospace sectors, it is viewed that suitable employment land would present opportunities to attract high value employers across these sectors, owing to the town's connectivity, its relative affordability of business space compared with competing locations in the Corridor and quality of life factors.

- 8.3.13 Reflecting that digital and technology is identified as a key sector in the Hertfordshire Economic Strategy, and data centre development in other parts of the County, particularly in Hertsmere Borough, is progressing, jobs could be attracted to Bishop's Stortford in these sectors if land-use requirements allow. Critically sites require access to power. Where this is available, large flat sites with 24-hour access situated away from potential hazards such as flooding, chemical storage, or where heavy road traffic is present will typically meet requirements.
- 8.3.14 Furthermore, while the Transport and Storage sector is currently not prominent in Bishop's Stortford – accounting for 2.6% of employment, compared with 21.7% in the larger Bishop's Stortford + Stansted area – the future expansion of Stansted Airport and associated improvement to Junction 8 of the M11 could increase interest from B8 occupiers in the area and employment in similar sectors. The potential development at Stansted Northside would be anticipated to accommodate a significant amount of the larger scale and airport-specific demand. However, it is recognised that having access to sufficient industrial and warehousing capacity can be important for the effective operation of other sectors such as advanced manufacturing and life sciences, and therefore can contribute significantly to these sectors' success and long-term sustainability.

## 8.4 What actions need to be taken to achieve the desired outcomes?

- 8.4.1 Demand for employment land floorspace in Bishop's Stortford is likely to centre on the industrial use classes, with demand across light industrial (E(g)(iii)), general industrial (B2) and warehousing and storage (B8) use classes. There is a need to provide choice in order to accommodate a range of potential occupiers and unit sizes, given the relatively high proportion of microbusinesses (0-9 employees) in Bishop's Stortford and the presence of potentially larger opportunities linked to the expansion of Stansted Airport and wider growth in the industrial and logistics market.
- 8.4.2 Demand for office floorspace in Bishop's Stortford is more muted. However the age and quality profile of office space in the town centre – set against the backdrop of anticipated minimum energy efficiency standards for leased office properties and the “flight to quality” observed in the wider market – suggests the potential need for investment to ensure the office stock is fit for purpose to meet the needs of current and future occupiers.
- 8.4.3 However, no existing applications include the requirement for industrial space in Bishop's Stortford, following the delivery of Thorley Fields Business Park as part of the Bishop's Stortford South development. Furthermore, the delivery of E(g) floorspace at Bishop's Stortford North is uncertain, with the existing permission having expired, and though smaller amounts of office space could be delivered on both The Goods Yard and the Old River Lane sites, their applications have flexibility inbuilt and are yet to be granted planning permission.
- 8.4.4 Set against this backdrop, it is suggested that the Council should safeguard existing sites set out in Section 6 where possible, thereby maximising their contribution to local economic development. Employment uses at Bishop's Stortford North should be encouraged given the relative scale of potential opportunity at this location. The Council should continue to work proactively with the Old River Lane applicant to encourage the delivery of some small-scale office floorspace to boost the profile of the offer in the town centre, subject to viability. Given the identified viability challenges which limited the potential to bring forward office space in Bishop's Stortford without subsidy, the Council could also support more innovative/novel supply options where applications arise. For instance, self-storage developments often incorporate office workspace to allow businesses to have their office, inventory, and packing area in one location which can act as an affordable alternative to traditional commercial real estate. Appropriate locations for these would be in existing industrial areas ideally accessible by public transport. Also, co-working spaces remain popular as an office floorspace typology across the UK market, with existing examples in the town, and have potential for delivery within mixed-use developments.
- 8.4.5 Whereupon existing employment land is lost to residential or other uses (noting high demand from residential, leisure uses and nurseries identified through stakeholder

engagement), or permissions including employment space do not come forward, or are developed in whole or in part for different uses than have currently been consented, this land or floorspace should be re-provided to a similar or improved quantity and quality specification. This is particularly important in respect of industrial space where there is identified demand but the opportunities for meeting this may be limited such that if space is not delivered at allocations this could lead to requirements being unmet by the market. The Council could also consider the allocation of additional employment land in Bishop's Stortford to accommodate this demand.

8.4.6 It is recommended that the Council continues to regularly monitor changes to existing and newly delivered employment space to identify evolving occupier/developer patterns and inform any policy responses that will be required. This is important given that some newly delivered employment space may come forward within the E Use class where there is flexibility for space assigned to E(g) use to later switch to other, non-employment land, uses such as retail, albeit that this can still result in employment generation.

8.4.7 The Council should review the opportunities to work with landlords and occupiers to improve office properties in Bishop's Stortford town centre to reduce the potential risk of some properties becoming non-compliant with minimum energy efficiency standards. Otherwise, Bishop's Stortford could face a situation where it has some offices which are 'stranded assets' that are both non-compliant and undesirable to retrofit, though, as previously noted, this risk is tempered somewhat due to some owner-occupancy and potential for retrofit/repurpose in the converted premises. This could be through acting on its own stock and utilising local connections with landlords and occupiers. It is recognised that the Council faces funding constraints that can limit its resource and capacity to lead, however, there are several different roles Councils can play, including:

- Facilitation – acting as convenor to bring a 'coalition' of willing individuals and groups together;
- Marketing and communication – a key, relatively resource-light role, providing trusted information to landlords and occupiers;
- Coordination – acting as the 'lynchpin' in terms of coordinating action
- Being a trusted partner – local authorities are often more trusted than national government and other stakeholders;
- Supporting the growth of local skills and supply chain – working with the supply chain to promote accreditation and capacity-building; and
- Partnering with the private sector – to facilitate retrofit finance to all occupiers, regardless of tenure<sup>57</sup>.

8.4.8 It is important to recognise that this Study is part of a wider evidence base for the New Local Plan, and the strategy for supporting employment in Bishop's Stortford will be informed by wider employment market and land supply assessments at the East Herts level, which will determine the overall quantity of employment land that is required over the District Plan period, alongside consideration of housing, infrastructure and environmental needs and constraints in the town and wider district. Should this wider evidence base support the need for additional employment land at the district level, the evidence presented suggests the potential requirement for additional employment land in Bishop's Stortford to align with growth in the residential population of the town and employment allocations no longer supporting employment uses. In considering additional employment land, or whether the existing supply of employment land is fit for purpose, a number of criteria should be considered. These include:

- Accessibility and sustainable transport needs;
- The provision of essential infrastructure e.g. access to utilities;

<sup>57</sup> Ashden, (2021): Local authorities can drive a home retrofit revolution. Accessed here: <https://ashden.org/news/local-authorities-can-drive-a-home-retrofit-revolution/>. The bullets set out in the provided link were targeted more towards residential retrofitting, so the principles deemed relevant have been adapted to apply more broadly to how the Council can interact and collaborate with partners to retrofit commercial premises.

- Segregation from sensitive neighbouring uses (e.g. residential); and
- Site size, access, shape and topography.
- Deliverability and/or ownership.

8.4.9 The Conclusions and Recommendations of this Study are summarised in Table 8-1 below.

**Table 8-1 Conclusions and Recommendations**

Topic	Conclusion/Recommendation
Is it desirable to increase the number of jobs in Bishop's Stortford?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The analysis has demonstrated that additional employment land is required in Bishop's Stortford to meet identified demand for industrial needs and the lack of spare capacity in the market.</li> <li>• Demand is more muted for office space; however, the age and quality profile of stock presents potential future challenges in retaining occupants and safeguarding stock given future minimum energy efficiency standards.</li> <li>• Future population growth associated with the current commitments in the housing trajectory for Bishop's Stortford suggests the need to deliver jobs in order to support sustainable development.</li> </ul>
What sort of jobs could be attracted or developed in Bishop's Stortford? Why?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Bishop's Stortford has a high proportion of employment in knowledge intensive business services such as professional, scientific and technical, information &amp; communication, financial and insurance.</li> <li>• Its position as part of the UK Innovation Corridor Core Area could attract occupiers across the health, life sciences and pharmaceuticals, advanced engineering and aerospace sectors.</li> <li>• Conditions to harness opportunities related to AI and data centre development could be realised if appropriate sites exist.</li> <li>• Standed expansion could increase interest from transport and storage companies; with warehousing and storage also vital for other sectors across the economy including advanced manufacturing and life sciences.</li> </ul>
What actions need to be taken to achieve the desired outcomes?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• There is a need to provide choice in order to accommodate a range of potential occupiers across light industrial (E(g)(iii), general industrial (B2) and warehousing and storage (B8) uses.</li> <li>• Delivery of small and medium-sized premises (under 2,000 sqm) should be encouraged reflecting the current mix of provision in the town (and generally the District) across both office and industrial.</li> <li>• The Council should safeguard existing sites where possible.</li> <li>• The Council should continue to work proactively with the applicants at Old River Lane and The Goods Yard to encourage the delivery of some modern office floorspace on site, subject to viability.</li> <li>• The Council should continue to work proactively with the applicant at Bishop's Stortford North to encourage the delivery of employment floorspace on the site.</li> <li>• The Council should consider the role of more innovative office supply options should applications arise, for instance the colocation of office space alongside other more novel uses.</li> <li>• The Council should consider the potential for the allocation of additional employment land in Bishop's Stortford to accommodate identified industrial demand. In considering additional employment land, or whether the existing supply of employment land is fit for purpose, a number of criteria should be considered, including those set out in Section 8.4.8.</li> <li>• The Council should continue to regularly monitor changes to existing and newly delivered employment space to identify evolving occupier/developer patterns and inform any policy responses that will be required. This is important given that some newly delivered employment space may come forward within the E Use class where there is flexibility for space assigned to E(g) use to later switch to other, non-employment land, uses.</li> <li>• The Council should review the opportunities to work with landlords and occupiers improve office properties in Bishop's Stortford town centre</li> </ul>

**Topic****Conclusion/Recommendation**

---

before they become non-compliant with minimum energy efficiency standards.

- Should existing employment land be lost to other uses, or permissions including employment space do not come forward, or are developed for different uses than have been consented, this land or floorspace should be re-provided to a similar or improved quantity and quality specification.