

Halton Property Study

Halton Borough Council

Brief

Halton Borough Council commissioned BE Group to assess the supply and demand for employment land and premises in Runcorn and Widnes through to 2021. There was a concern that there is a shortage of land to accommodate local companies' expansion needs. Other requirements were to identify failures in the property market; assess the projected needs of future business growth; consider the viability of existing industrial estates; and make recommendations about the need for small business space in the Borough.

The research covered a number of sectors: industrial, warehousing, office, retail and science-related.

The Council also wanted the research to support a Local Enterprise Growth Initiative funding bid being made to expand the small business sector and residents' employment prospects.



Activities

- Analysis of employment forecast data through to 2021 to understand emerging premises needs in the future
- Survey of 200 businesses in the Borough
- Inspection and assessment of 61 sites
- Mapping and identification of over 1000 premises in the Borough to assess quality and type
- Assessment and grading of the Borough's 17 key employment areas
- Consultations with public sector agencies, property agents, investors and developers
- Appraisal of competition in neighbouring local authority areas
- Examination of the retail market and future trends.



Outcome

Due to the historically, strong chemical industry; port-related businesses and large science sector, the Borough's property market is unusually complex.

Research found that although there is a large amount of employment land in the Borough, much is strategic and geared towards NWDA target business sectors. Consequently there was a shortage of land for local businesses. This has worsened over the previous 18 months due to unusually high demand.

Halton needs another 60 hectares of employment land through to 2021 to provide suitable range and choice. Astmoor Industrial Estate, which suffers from an ageing stock of property, needs to be regenerated.

High occupancy rates at existing facilities and a lack of available space indicates a need for more small business centres.

