

# Lancashire Town Centre Offices Study

Lancashire County Council

## Brief

BE Group was commissioned to provide a quantitative and qualitative baseline of office stock in Lancashire's town centres.

The study has as its context PPS6 planning policy, which clearly directs office development towards town centres. Yet the Structure Plan Annual Monitoring Report identified that virtually all developments over 500 sqm took place outside town centres, with many not being served by adequate public transport.

The brief related to 35 centres identified in the North West Draft Regional Spatial Strategy. These were in Central Lancashire City Region, Lancaster and Morecambe, and relevant settlements in Liverpool City Region.



## Activities

For each town centre the following data was compiled:

- Existing stock (occupied and vacant)
- Recent completions
- Commitments (emerging stock)
- Allocations (potential stock).

Qualitative assessment concentrating on vacant stock and longstanding allocations, considering market attractiveness, sustainable development and strategic planning factors.

Consultation with all 14 local authorities in Lancashire and with key property market stakeholders to build an understanding of demand for each town centre.



## Outcome

Over 425,000 sqm of offices was identified in the 35 town centres, dominated by Preston. Past planning policy decisions to tightly define town centres (to address retail issues) have limited office development opportunities in most locations.

Issues of land assembly, and higher value retail, leisure and residential use, have also constrained investment.

With the exception of Preston, there is little evidence that PPS6 is pushing development into Lancashire's town centres.

The legacy of out-of-town land allocations and/or planning consents continues to influence office location decisions. Nearly every motorway junction in Lancashire (M6, M55, M58, M65) has an office site. These will continue to compete with, and constrain, town centre investment.

Whilst the lack of town centre supply is a factor, in most centres the main issue is that there is too much poor quality space.