

Visible Workspace Development Framework

Sunderland City Council

Brief

Sunderland City Council is looking to invest £4 million in the development of workspace. This is one strand of the Working Neighbourhoods Fund programme. It will focus on delivering micro-business and pre-start workspace in deprived neighbourhoods, rather than in traditional business locations.

The aim is to make business space readily available in visible locations in an attempt to address supply-side issues, but also to change local residents' perceptions.

This workspace project was complemented by a series of enterprise and business support initiatives to help stimulate demand. The research identified areas of market failure, identified and appraised potential projects and developed an action plan.



Activities

- Property market audit
- Identification of incubator/managed workspace/serviced office schemes
- Scheme occupancy rates research
- Stakeholder consultation
- Best practice review
- Projects identification and appraisal
- Project viability and deliverability assessment
- Cost:benefit analysis
- Options appraisal
- Action planning.



Outcome

The existing range of small business centres and workshop schemes in Sunderland all perform well and are popular.

There is a general lack of small workshop space throughout the City, even in Washington, but particularly Sunderland West and Coalfields. There is limited office space outside Sunderland East and North.

There was limited support for the concept of visible workspace, although three small potential projects are suggested for pilot trials.

The study recommends concentrating the funding on building a new business centre in Washington - the only area without one. Specialist schemes targeting the creative industries, music sector and social enterprises, also performed well in the cost:benefit analysis.



Comment from by Sunderland City Council:

'Excellent at building relationships with the client. Production of well researched quality information. Will tell you openly and honestly the issues and challenges with what you are wanting to do'.