

Washington Workspace Demand Study

Sunderland City Council

Brief

Sunderland City Council plans to deliver a 5,200 sqm (net) managed workspace scheme in Washington, using a mix of Working Neighbourhoods Funds and ERDF monies. The aim is to assist local micro-businesses and start-up, in addressing current supply-side issues (Washington presently lacks any such business centre accommodation).

To support the funding bid the City Council commissioned BE Group to undertake a market demand assessment, which included a review of the range of services and facilities required. The study builds on BE Group's Visible Workspace Development Framework undertaken for the whole of the borough in 2009/10 as part of the Working Neighbourhoods Strategy.



Activities

The research included interviews with stakeholders such as property managers, owners, developers, investors and their agents. Consultations included various arms of the public and voluntary sector agencies with responsibility for Washington including the managers of existing Sunderland business centres, education/training centres, business support agencies. A survey was conducted with 200 of the 1,200 micro businesses located in Washington.



Outcome

The market research established a current moderate level of support, with the greatest level being amongst business support organisation and those most closely associated with Washington's local property market. The research endorsed the concept of a mix of serviced and self-contained office and industrial workspace. BE Group identified a potential development site and private sector developer who wishes to have a role in delivery. A social enterprise was also identified as interested in supporting the facility's management.

The City Council has now commenced the tender process for selecting a developer to design and build a managed workspace facility within a £5 million budget, to be operational by April 2013.

