Employment Topic Paper

July 2025

Contents

1.   Introduction

Purpose

1.1   This Employment Topic Paper supports the emerging Castle Point Local Plan by providing a coordinated justification for proposed employment policies. It draws on national policy, local evidence, and employment land assessments to demonstrate that the Plan responds appropriately to Castle Point's economic context, employment needs, and opportunities.

1.2   It provides background information, including relevant national and local policies, summarises the key issues for this matter taking account of evidence and consultation feedback. It also sets out policy options we have considered and assessed to inform our draft policies or approach.

Scope

1.3   The Paper sets out the evidence used to determine the employment requirements for the Local Plan and sets out the sources of supply over the plan period 2023-2043. It addresses:

- National and local economic development policy

- Local employment trends and challenges

- The need for future economic development in the borough, and the proposed strategy and sites to help meet the identified need.

- Strategic Employment Areas (SEAs)

- Town centre employment provision

- Skills and productivity interventions

1.4   It aligns primarily with and provides the justifying evidence for Policies E1 to E4 of the Castle Point draft Plan supporting employment and tourism.

2.   Policy Context

2.1   The Castle Point Local Plan (2026–2043) must have regard to national policy. The NPPF (Dec 2024) emphasises supporting a "strong, responsive and competitive economy". Paragraph 8 requires planning to ensure "sufficient land of the right types… in the right places… to support growth, innovation and improved productivity". The county's economic ambitions are set out in Essex Sector Development Strategy: Targeting a stronger, more inclusive, and more sustainable future economy, 2023[1] calls for delivering new jobs in key sectors (construction, advanced manufacturing, low-carbon energy, digital/creative, logistics). Castle Point's plan-area lies in the Thames Gateway/Essex commuting belt with good road and rail links (A127, A13, C2C rail) to London, Basildon, Thurrock and Southend. These connections shape the local labour market and site access.

2.2   The Planning Practice Guidance – Economic Need (Employment Land) sets out in paragraphs 25-30[2] (Ref IDs 2a-025-20190220 to 2a-030-20190220) how strategic policy-making authorities should build and maintain a robust evidence base to assess the type and amount of employment land needed, taking into account local conditions, business needs, and market dynamics.

Key steps include:

- Functional Economic Market Area: Assessments should consider cross-boundary areas and involve bodies like Local Enterprise Partnerships.

- Engagement: Regular consultation with the business community and local stakeholders is essential.

- Evidence Gathering: Consider current employment land stock, past supply/loss trends, market demand, and potential market failures.

- Forecasting Need: Use sector forecasts, labour market data, property trends, and innovative business models to predict future requirements.

- Stock and Demand Analysis: Develop a typology of land by market segment, analyse take-up trends, and compare supply against business needs to identify gaps or surpluses.

- Deriving Land Requirements: Translate employment forecasts into land needs by mapping between sectors, use classes, property types, floorspace, and site area (using employment densities and plot ratios).

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[1] Sector development strategy | Essex County Council
[2] https://www.gov.uk/guidance/housing-and-economic-development-needs-assessments#economic-need.

3.   Local Economic Context and Evidence Base

Demographics & Labour Force

3.1   Castle Point's population is 89,600 people (as of Census 2021). In the year to March 2025, around 45,700 residents were in employment (78.6% of 16–64s), comprising 38,300 employees and 7,400 self-employed. A further 1,500 people were unemployed (3.1% of the economically active), and 8,400 people aged 16–64 were economically inactive (15.7%)[3]. Most of Castle Point's residents commute out for work (principally to Thurrock, Basildon, London, Southend) – reflecting that fewer jobs exist locally than resident workers. The borough has low unemployment and high economic activity, but the economy is dominated by micro- and small-sized businesses: 91.9% of enterprises have fewer than 10 employees higher than the East of England average. Only 0.3% of local businesses are large (≥250 employees. This small-scale business structure underpins the emphasis in the plan on "nurturing" indigenous firms and providing flexible workspace (E2, E4).

Economic Geography

3.2   Castle Point lies within an area of significant economic opportunity, within 30 miles of Central London, and sits in between one of the largest port clusters in the UK at Thurrock and Basildon's strong manufacturing/logistics base, with nearby Chelmsford and Southend-on-Sea largely service led. Its proximity to London and other major cities makes it an attractive location for those seeking a balance between suburban living and access to urban amenities the Borough is strategically located in the Thames Estuary corridor, well connected via the A127, A13, A130 trunk roads with rail links to London Fenchurch Street.

3.3   However, Castle Point exhibits:

- Lower than average skills and wages

- Limited local employment opportunities (jobs density 0.84): around 45,700 Castle Point residents are in employment (38,300 employees and 7,400 self-employed), but fewer jobs are located in the Borough, so many residents commute out (particularly to Basildon, London, Southend).

- High micro-business representation

- A "knowledge drain" due to lack of higher education infrastructure

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[3] Labour Market Profile - Nomis - Official Census and Labour Market Statistics

Occupations & Skills

3.4   Data from Nomis (nomisweb.co.uk) – the official database of labour market statistics provides data on Castle Point's occupational structure. It shows that the structure is skewed towards mid/low skill roles. Only about one-third of local jobs are in managerial or professional occupations (34.3% in SOC 1–3) vs 54.1% in East of England). By contrast, 18.6% of Castle Point jobs are in skilled trades (e.g. builders, electricians) – over twice the regional share (8.7%). Administrative and clerical jobs also form a larger share locally (15.0% vs 10.4% regionally). These patterns reflect the importance of construction and building trades in the local economy, and a relative paucity of highly skilled professional workers. The borough's qualifications profile is low: only 17.6% of residents hold degree-level (RQF4+) qualifications, compared to 43.8% regionally and 42.7% in neighbouring Southend. This skills gap underlines the plan's policies (e.g. E3) to improve training and skills in growth sectors.

Wages & Productivity

3.5   Average earnings for Castle Point residents are roughly on par with the East of England. Median full-time pay in 2024 was £769/week ([nomisweb.co.uk)](nomisweb.co.uk) (East: £763). Male workers earn slightly more than regional males   (£846 vs £813), while female workers earn slightly less (£681 vs £688). However, productivity (GVA per job) is notably low in Castle Point. National analyses have identified Castle Point as one of England's lowest-productivity councils (GVA per job ~£32k) – partly reflecting the prevalence of lower-paid industries and self-employment. This context reinforces the need for policies to attract higher-value, high-skill jobs (as in policies E1–E4 of the Plan)

Key Sectors

3.6   Castle Point's economy is concentrated in retail, education, health/social care and construction. According To the 2023 Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), the largest local   employment sectors are wholesale & retail trade (19.0% of jobs) and   education (14.3%)(nomisweb.co.uk) – both well above their regional averages (15.0% and 8.9% in the East. Health and social care also accounts for about 11.9% of local jobs (comparable to 12.6% regionally). Construction is another major sector (9.5% of jobs) – higher than the 6.1% East regional share. These figures echo the local growth outlook: the Sector development strategy | Essex County Council (2023) also identifies construction (including low-carbon retrofit) as a key growth area for Castle. The presence of national gas/oil terminals on Canvey Island also creates a local energy/logistics cluster: Canvey is a port location with gas and oil storage facilities that are nationally significant and tied into the wider Thames estuary energy economy.

Emerging Growth Sectors

3.7 Castle Point's future economic development is closely linked to a set of emerging growth sectors that reflect both local strengths and broader regional and national priorities

3.8 Emerging tech and service sectors have smaller footprints but are targeted for growth. The digital and creative industries are currently niche (often micro-businesses) but expanding. Policies E2 and E4 of the Castle Point Plan specifically support new high-quality, flexible office/workspace in or near town centres to nurture these knowledge-based enterprises (for example, above shops or as part of mixed-use developments). Likewise, there is scope to grow energy and advanced manufacturing firms (using the Port facilities), and opportunities to capitalize on green-energy supply chains (e.g. clean fuel storage). In the Construction (green retrofit potential) there is a high number of skilled tradespeople living locally. There is growing demand for upgrading homes and commercial buildings to meet energy efficiency standards. Energy and logistics is also a growth sector strategically important due to Castle Point's location on the Thames Estuary and the presence of nationally significant gas and oil storage facilities on Canvey Island.

Creative cultural economy and tourism

3.9 Policy E4 of the Castle Point Plan supports the sustainable growth of the cultural and tourism sectors within the Borough to increase visitor numbers and attractions. Tourism already contributes substantially to local output, anchored by assets such as Canvey Seafront, Hadleigh Castle and Country Park and a strong day-visitor market. By creating a stronger year-round cultural offer—festivals, heritage interpretation, public art, maker/producer markets, galleries and well-designed places—the Borough can both lengthen visitor stays and increase average spend.

3.10 Policy E4's support for culture and tourism, combined with Policy E2's emphasis on flexible, small-format workspace in and around centres, enables this alignment to be delivered spatially. This approach can lift GVA per job, retain younger talent, strengthen place identity, and ensure that the Borough's natural and historic assets drive a higher-productivity local economy.

Business Demography

3.11 The borough has a very high density of enterprises relative to population – 3,315 business enterprises in 2024 for approximately 28,000 workforce (nomisweb.co.uk) – underscoring the small-business base. Castle Point stands out even regionally: 91.9% of enterprises are micro (0–9 workers compared to 89.7% in the East region). Only 6.8% are small firms (10–49). This composition (and the prevalence of part-time work) underpins the local plan's emphasis on providing start-up and grow-on spaces (E2/E4).

Anecdotally, local agents report demand for modest workshops/offices, reflecting the resident self-employment people estimated to be around 3,800.

Labour Market

3.12   Economically, Castle Point has low official unemployment (annual APS unemployment 3.5%, pre-pandemic level) but unusually high out-commuting. Only about 0.84 jobs exist in Castle Point for every working-age resident (jobs density of 0.84 which is below 1.0 and similar to Basildon, Southend and Thurrock). This confirms that many local workers rely on jobs elsewhere. Meanwhile, labour force skills and productivity are relatively low (as noted above), and local wages slightly trail the national average. Castle Point also has the fourth lowest level of Level RQF4+ qualifications nationally, only 17.6% of people in Castle Point have a qualification at this level. Together, these factors highlight two issues: the need to retain workers locally and to upskill/shift the employment base towards higher-value industries. Policy E1/E4 explicitly aim to attract sectors with more skilled jobs.

Tourism Sector

3.13   The borough also has coastal and cultural assets, with seaside attractions (Canvey Island) and is home to the historic Hadleigh Castle and surrounding natural attractions, including the 2012 Olympic mountain bike venue, and is under-developed in terms of **tourism**. The tourism sector in Castle Point is worth £80.5m directly, and the industry supports 2,086 jobs, accounting for 6% of all employment in the borough. A Culture and Tourism Strategy for Castle Point has been commissioned.

Comparative Context

3.14   Castle Point's economic structure contrasts with neighbouring areas. Compared to Basildon, Southend-on-Sea and Thurrock, Castle Point has fewer knowledge-sector jobs and more manual/tech-skilled jobs. For example, Basildon (with its industrial heritage and distribution centres) had 10.0% of jobs in manufacturing in 2023 ([nomisweb.co.uk)](nomisweb.co.uk) – almost double Castle Point's 6.0%. Thurrock (dominated by Tilbury Port and logistics) had 25.0% of jobs in transportation and storage, whereas Castle Point has only 4.3% in that sector. Southend (a coastal city with tourism and services) had a large hospitality sector (9.5% in accommodation/food services, similar to Castle Point's 9.5% in that sector.

3.15   Castle Point has more jobs in construction and local services than its neighbours. The 9.5% construction share in Castle Point nomisweb.co.uk exceeds Basildon's 6.7%. These patterns reflect competitive positioning: Basildon and Thurrock are regional employment centres (pulling in workers), whereas Castle Point acts more as a bedroom community with a service-led local economy.

4. Strategic Employment Areas (Policy E1)

4.1 The Local Plan defines four Strategic Employment Areas (SEAs) (policy E1) encompassing the borough's main employment estates: Manor Trading Estate (Benfleet, SEL1), Stadium Way/Rayleigh Weir (Rayleigh, SEL2), Charfleets Industrial Estate (Canvey, SEL3), and South Canvey Port Facilities (Canvey, SEL4) [Employment Sites Review, 2024](#). These sites collectively concentrate the borough's heavy industry, distribution, and large employer floorspace.

Charfleets Industrial Estate (Canvey, SEL3)

4.2 This is a large, multi-occupier estate on western Canvey. It is well-connected (Mardyke Way link to Port and A13) and has room to intensify. However, much of the estate is surface parking and aging units. The 2024 Employment Sites Review found Charfleets is "an important part of the local economy" with "good transport links" making it attractive. The report recommends major infrastructure investment (new access roads, utilities) and measures to reduce surface parking (e.g. public transport or a multi-storey car park). Notably, a 7.5 ha site south of Northwick Road on Canvey already has planning permission for employment use. Overall, Charfleets offers "the most investable proposition" of the SEAs, since expansion could be privately led once access is upgraded.

Rayleigh Weir Industrial Estate (Stadium Way, SEL2)

4.3 A medium-sized estate south of the A127, home to many well-known firms. It is fully occupied, with limited spare land. The Employment Land Review notes that it provides significant employment opportunities and is a significant business hub. Expansion here is constrained by existing density. The only immediate opportunity is to increase floor area by redeveloping or building up, such as a new multi-level car park (a scheme is under consideration by the Sainsbury's store). In general, Rayleigh Weir should be preserved and enhanced (e.g. infill, unit expansions), but cannot accommodate large greenfield growth.

Manor Trading Estate (Benfleet, SEL1)

4.4 A long-established industrial area in Benfleet. It houses a variety of firms (including distribution and manufacturing). Like Charfleets, Manor has high occupancy but poor-quality infrastructure (narrow/aged access roads). The review found "high level occupancy" but "poor quality infrastructure, particularly highways" and little scope for densification. The local plan proposes preparing a masterplan for Manor (and West Canvey) to guide reinvestment, including partial residential redevelopment and environmental improvements to make it more attractive for modern businesses.

South Canvey Port (SEL4)

4.5 This covers the oil/gas terminals and chemical stores along the east of Canvey Island. It is a specialised B8 (storage) area, nationally significant. Although access is constrained by the island's road network, the port has major strategic importance. The plan safeguards SEL4 for such employment uses. The Estates Review notes the gas/oil facilities link into the broader Thames Port economy. There is limited scope (and need) to expand here, but maintaining this use is a priority (Policy E1 explicitly lists SEL4).

4.6 All four SEAs currently have sufficient land, and some analysts estimate the borough already has a small surplus of industrial land. However, each SEA requires investment to modernize. Rayleigh and the port will remain essentially as they are. The plan recognizes this: policy E1/E2 seek to encourage redevelopment and densification of these areas (e.g. by allowing multi-storey extensions, while protecting their core industrial uses. The SEAs form the backbone of local employment, and policy guidance is to focus on modernizing and intensifying these estates rather than permitting wholesale loss to housing.

5. Employment Land Needs

5.1 The determination of future employment land needs for Castle Point Borough forms a central component of the emerging Local Plan. This process involves a forward-looking assessment of the types and quantities of employment floorspace likely to be required over a 20-year period (2023–2043), with the intention of supporting sustainable economic growth, business investment, and job creation within the Borough. The analysis follows national guidance contained in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024) and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), which require that planning authorities make sufficient provision for commercial development, including for different types of employment use, based on objective and proportionate evidence (see paragraph 2.2).

5.2 The employment land need forecast (–2.02 ha net) indicates that Castle Point already has sufficient land—both designated and permitted—to meet future demand. Therefore, the Local Plan's strategy is to optimise and intensify existing employment land, rather than allocating new sites.

5.3 To support this assessment, the Council commissioned and adopted the Experian Economic Land Demand Forecast (September 2024). This modelled the future trajectory of employment across a range of land use classes, drawing on demographic trends, sectoral growth assumptions, local economic baselines, and commercial property market benchmarks. The study also incorporated consideration of historical trends in employment land take-up and the specific profile of businesses within Castle Point, which is dominated by micro- and small-sized firms. Experian's sector forecasts (jobs/GVA) are mapped to planning use classes and converted to floorspace and land using HCA densities and plot ratios; that translation underpins the B-class/E(g) figures reported in Table 1 and the net land position in Table 3 in the report (See Appendix B).

Methodology

5.4 The methodology used to determine the forecast employment change, floorspace demand, and associated land requirements over the plan period 2023–2043 are derived by:

- Using net FTE job changes from the Experian 2024 forecast
- Applying standard employment density and land-use assumptions derived from the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA) Employment Density Guide (3rd edition, 2015).
- Converting floorspace into land requirement using assumed site plot ratios

5.5 These methods are widely recognised and used in Employment Land Reviews and Local Plans across the country.

The calculations of land requirement as shown in Table 1 below.

Office Space

5.6   In contrast to industrial uses, new office space is expected to come forward primarily as part of mixed-use developments, particularly within or adjacent to town centres. As such, no specific land allocation (in hectares) is calculated for office uses. Instead, the focus is on the quantum and flexibility of floorspace delivered, rather than standalone site areas.

Limitations and Planning Response

5.7   While this methodology offers a robust evidence base, it is important to recognise that:

- Forecasts are indicative and do not capture economic shocks or speculative market behaviours.
- Quantitative changes may not fully reflect qualitative needs (e.g. modern floorspace, broadband-enabled units).
- Land demand is not evenly distributed; some areas may face acute shortages even with a net Borough-wide surplus.

5.8   Accordingly, the Castle Point Plan adopts a strategic approach that protects and intensifies existing employment areas, supports the provision of flexible new workspace, and enables town centre employment opportunities.

Table 1: Experian Forecast – Employment Change and Land Requirement (2023–2043)

Use Class	FTE Jobs 2023	FTE Jobs 2043	Net Change (FTE Jobs)	Floorspace Change (m²)	Estimated Land Change (Ha)
B1a/b (Offices)	2,641	2,982	+341	+4,090	N/A
B1c (Light Industrial)	1,830	1,679	−151	−7,094	−0.71
B2 (General Industry)	1,633	1,256	−377	−13,577	−1.36
B8 (Storage & Distribution)	2,044	2,052	+8	+537	+0.05
Non-B-Class (Retail, Health, Education etc.)	10,862	11,051	+190	+3,780	N/A
Total (B1–B8 only)	8,148	7,969	−179	−16,044	−2.02

5.9   The Town and Country Planning (Use Classes) (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2020 introduced changes which became effective from 1 September 2020. B1 (Business) was removed from Class B and moved into a new, broader category – Class E (Commercial, Business and Service). New Class E absorbed several former use classes, including B1. It includes:

- E(g)(i): Offices (not part of residential property)

- E(g)(ii): Research and development

- E(g)(iii): Industrial processes (light industrial)

5.10   The above were previously within B1(a), B1(b), and B1(c) respectively.

5.11   These projections indicate the expected future demand for employment land in Castle Point.

- The only significant positive demand is for office space (B1a/b), driven by modest growth in service-based sectors, including professional services, health, and creative industries. The projected demand for approximately 4,090m² of additional office floorspace reflects a need to create new, flexible business spaces suitable for micro and small enterprises.

- By contrast, demand for industrial land (B1c and B2) is forecast to contract significantly. This reflects wider regional trends, including shifts towards service-based employment and the relocation of manufacturing to larger regional hubs. In total, the forecast anticipates a reduction of over 20,000m² of industrial floorspace and a potential land release of approximately 2 hectares.

- Warehousing (B8) demand is essentially flat, with a negligible net increase. While this may underestimate demand driven by logistics and e-commerce trends, it suggests that large-scale allocations for B8 use are unlikely to be required unless linked to specific sub-regional or strategic initiatives.

- The forecast also includes moderate growth in non-B-class jobs (e.g., education, health, retail), but these are generally accommodated through mixed-use or town centre allocations and do not directly translate into traditional employment land needs.

Interpretation and Policy Response

5.12   The Experian projections point to a net decline in B-class employment land requirements leaving surplus of 2.02 hectares of land. When added to the 7.5 hectares of extant, undeveloped employment land at West Canvey, this yields a potential nominal surplus of around 9.5 hectares. This, however, must be interpreted cautiously. Quantitative assessments do not always capture qualitative needs or market imperfections. While there may be theoretical surplus in industrial land, this does not account for the age, adaptability, location, or environmental condition of existing stock.

5.13   Moreover, employment forecasts are inherently conservative and may not fully account for changes in working practices, new technologies, or emerging sectors, such as: logistic & distribution; digital industries and energy and storage and processing such as at Canvey Port.

5.14　To address this uncertainty, the Plan does not propose releasing land solely based on the forecast contraction in industrial space. Instead, it applies a "no net loss" principle, coupled with strategic opportunities to intensify and renew existing estates, creating modern, higher-density employment spaces that better reflect evolving business needs.

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6 Employment Land Supply and Strategic Approach

Existing Employment Land Provision

6.1 Castle Point's employment land supply is predominantly located within four designated Strategic Employment Areas (SEAs), which accommodate the majority of industrial, logistics and related employment activity in the Borough. The Plan's approach is to safeguard, modernise and intensify these estates rather than allocate substantial new land, recognising the Experian forecast of a net negative B-class land requirement (see Table 1) and the availability of committed/developable supply summarised in Table 3.

6.2 Table 2 provides a qualitative overview of the SEAs. It is not used in the demand–supply arithmetic in Section 8; that calculation relies only on developable/committed land (e.g. extant permissions and identified deliverable plots).

Table 2: Strategic Employment Areas (SEAs)

SEA Policy	Name	Main Uses	Notes
SEL1	Manor Trading Estate (Benfleet)	B2 / B8 / E(g)	High occupancy, poor infrastructure, scope for environmental uplift to be guided by a masterplan
SEL2	Stadium Way / Rayleigh Weir	B2 / B8	Fully occupied, limited expansion potential
SEL3	Charfleets & Roscommon Way (Canvey)	B2 / B8 / Sui Generis (Port)	Scope for intensification, proximity to permitted expansion land
SEL4	South Canvey Port Facilities	B8 / Energy / Storage	Nationally significant energy hub, retained for strategic storage/logistics

6.3. In addition to these designated areas, there is an extant planning permission for 7.5 hectares of employment land on land south of Northwick Road (West Canvey). This permission provides a critical source of new employment land to accommodate businesses relocating from town centre regeneration sites or seeking modern, purpose-built premises. It is closely linked spatially to SEL3 and SEL4, reinforcing a strategic concentration of employment activity on Canvey Island.

6.4 Given the net negative need of –2.02 ha identified by Experian and the 7.5 ha of extant, undeveloped employment land at West Canvey (see Table 3), which together produce a surplus of around 9.5 ha, the Council's strategy is to:

- Protect and intensify existing SEAs (Policy E1).

- Deliver new office and flexible workspace primarily in and around town centres (Policy E2), complemented by smaller, flexible units within regenerated estates.

- Use the West Canvey permission to ensure sufficient modern floorspace is available without allocating additional employment land.

7. Strategic Planning Approach

7.1 The Castle Point Local Plan adopts a supply-led regeneration strategy. Rather than propose large-scale greenfield allocations, the Plan seeks to consolidate and modernise the existing employment land portfolio, focusing on three key objectives:

Safeguarding and Intensifying Existing Employment Areas

7.2 The Council will continue to protect existing SEAs through Policy E1. While overall employment land demand may remain static or decline, these areas remain vital to the Borough's economic function. Many are home to high-density job clusters and essential services that cannot be easily relocated.

Efforts will be made to:

- Improve infrastructure and access (e.g., road layouts, utilities, broadband)

- Enhance environmental quality (e.g., landscaping, signage, permeability)

- Encourage redevelopment for higher-density or hybrid employment uses

- Introduce masterplans for Manor Trading Estate and West Canvey to guide long-term investment

Supporting Town Centre Employment and Mixed-Use Developments

7.3 Policy E2 promotes the delivery of flexible employment floorspace in and around town and local centres. This is particularly relevant in light of the Experian forecast for increased office-based employment and the Borough's under-representation of office floorspace (currently ~6% of total floorspace compared to 11% across Essex).

7.4 New office space will be encouraged as part of:

- Mixed-use allocations and developments within 400m of town centres

- Redevelopment of under-utilised or vacant plots

- Above-ground-floor accommodation in high street locations

7.5 This spatial approach supports the aim of reducing out-commuting, increasing workplace accessibility, and encouraging more sustainable patterns of travel.

Utilising Permitted Supply at West Canvey

7.6 The 7.5-hectare site at West Canvey (South of Northwick Road) plays a pivotal role in the Borough's employment land strategy. As a deliverable and accessible site with outline permission, it provides:

- Opportunities to accommodate businesses displaced by regeneration

- Capacity to deliver modern, high-quality logistics or light industrial floorspace

- Strategic alignment with the Canvey employment cluster (SEL3 and SEL4)

7.7   The Council will work with developers and stakeholders to bring this site forward within the first half of the plan period, ensuring that new space is available to meet evolving market demand.

Employment Policies (E1–E4) and regeneration areas West Canvey (C4) and Manor Trading Estate (B8)

7.8   In addition to protecting and intensifying the four Strategic Employment Areas (SEAs), the Castle Point Plan promotes comprehensive regeneration at two long-established industrial locations:

- West Canvey Regeneration Area – centred on the 7.5 ha site south of Northwick Road and adjacent plots within SEL3;

- Manor Trading Estate Regeneration Area (Benfleet – covering SEL1).

7.9   Both areas are characterised by fragmented plot patterns, aging units, poor public realm and constrained access—features that the Deyton Bell [Employment Sites Review, 2024](#) describes as *"preventing the estates from reaching their full economic potential and depressing rental values by 25–40 % against modern equivalents."*

7.10   Policy E1 aims to protect employment floorspace whereas policies C4 and B8 also support the regeneration of these areas and redevelopment for mixed uses and will prepare master plans for Manor Trading Estate and West Canvey to promote this investment, both in industrial and commercial floorspace, but also in public realm and residential development that will increase inward investment.

7.11   The regeneration of West Canvey and Manor Trading Estate is not intended to run counter to Policies E1–E4. Overall, the master plans would seek to increase the floor space available for industrial and commercial uses to support economic growth. The regeneration master plans can replace obsolete structures with higher-density workspace and introduce complementary uses such as cafés, small retail and housing that could finance improved infrastructure upgrades.

7.12   By replacing low-value, fragmented plots with higher-density, modern and better-connected employment environments, West Canvey and Manor Trading Estate regeneration master plans will safeguard industrial land,

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deliver the flexible office space that the Borough needs with skills and green-construction initiatives which will recycle surplus low-grade industrial plots into productive space. These schemes provide the physical platform that accommodates Castle Point's modest office demand in attractive settings, raises workforce skills and gross value added, strengthening the Borough's economy.

Economic benefits of regeneration

7.13   The regeneration at West Canvey and Manor Trading Estate is likely to support hundreds of net additional jobs, raise average productivity on those sites, and generate annual GVA gains running into the "tens of millions" over the plan period. The replacement of obsolete space plus intensification could deliver modern employment floorspace across both areas light industrial/warehousing and flexible office space.

7.14   This scale of benefit is consistent with the approach set out in *Valuing the Benefits of Regeneration – Economics Paper 7* (DCLG, 2010[4]). The programme would also be expected to deliver land value uplift to help fund infrastructure, higher job densities in modern premises, and skills and wage improvements. The exact quantum of benefits will be firmed up through the forthcoming estate master plans, viability appraisals and Section 106/Infrastructure Delivery Plan negotiations, and then monitored through the Castle Point Plan's implementation framework.

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[4] [Valuing the Benefits of Regeneration. Economics paper 7: Volume I - Final Report](#)

8.   Summary of Demand and Supply Position

8.1   The table below summarises the net forecast demand and available land supply across Castle Point:

Table 3: Employment Land Demand vs Supply Summary (2023–2043)

Category	Hectares
Net B-class requirement (Experian 2024)	–2.0 (i.e. a surplus of about 2 ha)
Committed, undeveloped employment land – West Canvey (extant permission)	+7.5
Surplus	+9.5

8.2   The Experian 2024 forecast indicates a Borough-wide surplus of approximately 2 hectares of B-class employment land over 2023–2043. In addition, 7.5 hectares of land at West Canvey already has extant planning consent for employment use, giving a combined nominal surplus of circa 9.5 hectares. On this basis, no further employment land allocations are required.

Future Employment Land and Opportunities

8.3   The Castle Point Plan takes an "urban-first" approach to development. As shown in Table 1, the Experian Employment Land Forecast (2024) projects only modest growth in demand: a net need for 4,090 m² of new office space by 2043, and negligible growth in industrial/warehousing. The borough currently has about 2 ha more industrial/employment land than needed, and an extant permission for 7.5 ha at West Canvey (Northwick Road). Consequently, the plan does not propose to allocate new employment allocations.

8.4   In line with national policy, the Plan encourages redeveloping under-used sites in and around the borough's town centres for employment (Policy SP3) The 2024 site review identified several "smaller urban sites" (often former factories, offices or car lots) that could be converted to offices, workshops or light industrial uses. These sites benefit from existing infrastructure and sustainable transport links. For example, infill above retail in Benfleet could provide start- up spaces. Policy E2 (and E4) support such developments (e.g. live-work units, small business hubs) as long as they do not undermine town centre vitality. This strategy helps absorb any "surplus" land identified by Experian, by relocating or intensifying local jobs.

8.5   As noted, the 7.5 ha employment site south of Northwick Road (West Canvey) already has outline permission. This will provide new B8 storage/distribution floorspace in the plan period, partly meeting demand for

warehousing (which Experian sees as static). The plan will safeguard this permission (anticipated under E1 as part of SEL3/4 area) and expects that the site's development will help in modernizing the supply of industrial units.

8.6   In summary, Castle Point's future employment land strategy is to protect and optimize the use of the SEAs, allow small-scale office/enterprise growth in urban areas. The existing economic footprint suggests no urgent shortage of land. The evidence (Experian, ONS) shows that as the plan progresses, freed-up surplus land in older estates may be repurposed (especially close to the town centres) for other uses. Any emerging demand (for example in tech or distribution) will be directed into improving the SEAs, then into these smaller urban locations.

9. Alignment with Policies E1–E4 of Castle Point Plan

9.1   The above analysis underpins the draft Plan's employment policies. In particular:

1. Policy E1 (Strategic Employment Land): The identification of SEL1–4 reflects where the evidence shows industrial and logistics should remain concentrated. The policy's criteria requiring Class E(g)/B uses, supporting high-skilled jobs, encouraging environmental improvements) respond directly to the conditions on these sites: most have low-quality stock and need upgrading [Castle Point Employment Land Review, 2024.](#) The evidence suggests intensification (vertical expansion, B1e/office elements) is desired on SEAs to raise job density, as long as core industrial activities are protected. For example, adding multi-storey floorspace at Manor or Charfleets would increase jobs without sacrificing their role.

2. Policy E2 (Town Centre and Local Employment): The labour market (high micro-business count, skill drain) indicates the need for local workspace. The small sites review showed real opportunities in town centres for flexible floorspace. E2's support for employment uses (including offices above shops or new units at town fringes) directly addresses this gap. It is consistent with NPPF's encouragement of urban regeneration and the Council's aim to reduce out-commuting by bringing jobs closer to people's homes.

3. Policy E3 (Skills Development): Castle Point's low productivity and qualification levels mean that linking planning with skills is vital. The economic profile (high trades employment, lower wages) means the borough needs training in higher-value construction, digital and energy fields. Policy E3's requirement for training plans on major developments is grounded in this evidence. It aligns with Essex wide strategic priority to upskill local workers for growth sectors.

4. Policy E4 (Tourism and Diversification): Although tourism is not the focus of this Topic Paper, the economic analysis (above) shows the base is predominantly industrial/service. Supporting a degree of tourism, care, or hospitality development (especially on Canvey's coastal areas) could diversify the economy. However, such uses must not displace valuable employment land. E4 carefully balances this by allowing tourism-related employment where it complements local centres and does not undermine industrial needs.

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10.   Monitoring and Delivery

10.1   The Council will monitor permissions, completions, and SEA occupancy rates through the [Annual Monitoring Reports](#) to establish that the targets are being met. In addition, the sites which have either been allocated for intensification, or new sites that have been identified. Should new demand arise, particularly in logistics, digital, or energy sectors, the Council may consider additional allocations through a future plan.

11.   Concluding Remarks

11.1   According to the Experian Economic Forecast (Sept 2024), Castle Point is forecast to need an additional 4,090 m² of office floorspace by 2043. However, demand for industrial (B2/B1c) land is expected to shrink, and warehousing (B8) demand is flat. In land terms, this results in a net "negative" need of about 2 hectares — meaning that, on paper, Castle Point already has more industrial land than it needs for the future.

11.2   The small increase in office space will mostly be met within existing town centres and mixed-use developments (not on new employment land). The Local Plan also protects and improves existing Strategic Employment Areas (SEAs) to ensure they remain fit for purpose and can absorb any local business churn or relocation.

11.3   The Plan does not therefore propose new employment land allocations because There is:

- An existing surplus of industrial land (about 2 ha),
- An additional 7.5 ha already permitted (West Canvey),
- And enough flexibility in town centres for office needs.

11.4   There is no requirement to allocate new land beyond what already exists or has permission. The plan focuses on intensifying and improving what's already there, not expanding it. Existing and already-permitted land is sufficient to meet the future need.

12. References & Evidence Sources

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Appendix A – NOMIS Labour Market Profile

Figure A1. Employment & unemployment

Labour Supply

Employment and unemployment (Apr 2024-Mar 2025)

	Castle Point (Numbers)	Castle Point (%)	East (%)	Great Britain (%)
All People				
Economically Active†	48,700	84.3	81.0	78.5
In Employment†	45,700	78.6	78.0	75.4
Employees†	38,300	68.5	68.0	65.7
Self Employed†	7,400	#	9.8	9.4
Unemployed (Model-Based)§	1,500	3.1	3.5	3.9
Males				
Economically Active†	22,800	81.1	85.5	82.1
In Employment†	22,100	78.3	82.0	78.7
Employees†	17,100	64.9	68.7	66.2
Self Employed†	#	#	12.8	12.2
Unemployed§	!	!	3.9	4.0
Females				
Economically Active†	25,900	87.4	76.5	75.0
In Employment†	23,700	78.9	74.1	72.2
Employees†	21,200	72.1	67.2	65.3
Self Employed†	#	#	6.7	6.7
Unemployed§	#	#	3.1	3.7

Source: ONS annual population survey
\#   Sample size too small for reliable estimate (see definitions)
!   Estimate is not available since sample size is disclosive (see definitions)
†   -   numbers are for those aged 16 and over, % are for those aged 16-64
§   -   numbers and % are for those aged 16 and over. % is a proportion of economically active

☐ view time-series   ⚊ compare other areas   ⚊ query dataset... ⊞

Source: NOMIS Labour Market Profile – Castle Point

Figure A2. Economic activity & inactivity (16–64) – APS (Apr 2024–Mar 2025)

Economic inactivity (Apr 2024-Mar 2025)

	Castle Point (Level)	Castle Point (%)	East (%)	Great Britain (%)
All People				
Total	8,400	15.7	19.0	21.5
Student	!	!	26.9	26.9
Looking After Family/Home	!	!	20.2	18.4
Temporary Sick	!	!	2.4	2.2
Long-Term Sick	#	#	24.6	28.2
Discouraged	!	!	!	0.3
Retired	#	#	14.2	12.8
Other	!	!	11.5	11.4
Wants A Job	!	!	14.8	19.0
Does Not Want A Job	7,300	87.2	85.2	81.0

Source: ONS annual population survey
\# Sample size too small for reliable estimate (see definitions)
! Estimate is not available since sample size is disclosive (see definitions)
Notes: numbers are for those aged 16-64.
% is a proportion of those economically inactive, except total, which is a proportion of those aged 16-64

Source: NOMIS Labour Market Profile

Figure A3. Jobs density & employee jobs (workplace)

Jobs density (2023)

	Castle Point (Jobs)	Castle Point (Density)	East (Density)	Great Britain (Density)
Jobs Density	-	-	0.84	0.86

Source: ONS jobs density
Notes: The density figures represent the ratio of total jobs to population aged 16-64.
  Total jobs includes employees, self-employed, government-supported trainees and HM Forces

☐ view time-series   🔍 query dataset...⊞

Employee jobs (2023)

	Castle Point (Employee Jobs)	Castle Point (%)	East (%)	Great Britain (%)
Total Employee Jobs	21,000	-	-	-
Full-Time	13,000	61.9	66.0	68.8
Part-Time	8,000	38.1	34.0	31.2
Employee Jobs By Industry				
B : Mining And Quarrying	0	0.0	0.1	0.1
C : Manufacturing	1,250	6.0	7.3	7.5
D : Electricity, Gas, Steam And Air Conditioning Supply	0	0.0	0.2	0.4
E : Water Supply; Sewerage, Waste Management And Remediation Activities	75	0.4	0.8	0.7
F : Construction	2,000	9.5	6.1	4.8
G : Wholesale And Retail Trade; Repair Of Motor Vehicles And Motorcycles	4,000	19.0	15.0	13.7
H : Transportation And Storage	900	4.3	6.0	5.0
I : Accommodation And Food Service Activities	2,000	9.5	7.4	8.0
J : Information And Communication	350	1.7	3.4	4.6
K : Financial And Insurance Activities	225	1.1	2.0	3.4
L : Real Estate Activities	400	1.9	2.1	1.9
M : Professional, Scientific And Technical Activities	1,500	7.1	8.7	9.3
N : Administrative And Support Service Activities	2,000	9.5	11.2	8.7
O : Public Administration And Defence; Compulsory Social Security	400	1.9	3.5	4.7
P : Education	3,000	14.3	8.9	8.6
Q : Human Health And Social Work Activities	2,500	11.9	12.6	13.9
R : Arts, Entertainment And Recreation	700	3.3	2.4	2.6
S : Other Service Activities	500	2.4	2.1	1.9

Source: ONS Business Register and Employment Survey : open access
· Data unavailable
Notes: % is a proportion of total employee jobs excluding farm-based agriculture
  Employee jobs excludes self-employed, government-supported trainees and HM Forces
  Data excludes farm-based agriculture

Source: NOMIS – Jobs density & Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES).

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Figure A4. Qualifications profile (NVQ levels, 16–64) – APS (Apr 2024–Mar 2025)

Qualifications (Jan 2024-Dec 2024)

	Castle Point (Level)	Castle Point (%)	East (%)	Great Britain (%)
RQF4 And Above	8,600	17.0	43.7	47.2
RQF3 And Above	25,400	50.4	65.2	67.6
RQF2 And Above	38,300	76.1	88.4	86.5
RQF1 And Above	43,900	87.1	90.9	88.9
Other Qualifications	#	#	4.0	4.3
No Qualifications	#	#	5.2	6.8

Source: ONS annual population survey
\# Sample size too small for reliable estimate (see definitions)
Notes: For an explanation of the qualification levels see the definitions section.
Numbers and % are for those of aged 16-64
% is a proportion of resident population of area aged 16-64

Qualifications:

The variables show the total number of people who are qualified at a particular level and above,

No qualifications - No formal qualifications held.

Other qualifications includes foreign qualifications and some professional qualifications.

RQF/NVQ 1 equivalent - e.g. fewer than 5 GCSEs at grades A-C, foundation GNVQ, NVQ 1, intermediate 1 national qualification (Scotland) or equivalent.

RQF/NVQ 2 equivalent - e.g. 5 or more GCSEs at grades A-C, intermediate GNVQ, NVQ 2, intermediate 2 national qualification (Scotland) or equivalent.

RQF/NVQ 3 equivalent - e.g. 2 or more A levels, advanced GNVQ, NVQ 3, 2 or more higher or advanced higher national qualifications (Scotland) or equivalent.

RQF/NVQ 4 equivalent and above - e.g. HND, Degree and Higher Degree level qualifications or equivalent.

Source: NOMIS Labour Market Profile – Castle Point.

Appendix B – Experian Economic Land Demand Forecast for Castle Point (Sept 2024)

This appendix reproduces high-level, aggregate results.

FTE employment by use class, annually 2023–2043

Year	Office (B1a/b)	B1c	B2	B8	Total (B1–B8)
2023	2641	1830	1633	2044	8148
2024	2641	1851	1663	2067	8222
2025	2671	1832	1632	2067	8202
2026	2674	1821	1612	2061	8168
2027	2705	1811	1601	2062	8179
2028	2715	1801	1581	2062	8159
2029	2737	1792	1551	2064	8144
2030	2749	1781	1520	2051	8101
2031	2759	1771	1500	2051	8081
2032	2772	1761	1470	2051	8054
2033	2783	1752	1449	2053	8037
2034	2803	1742	1419	2053	8017
2035	2813	1742	1409	2045	8009
2036	2842	1732	1388	2045	8007
2037	2852	1722	1358	2045	7977
2038	2865	1722	1338	2045	7970
2039	2896	1713	1327	2046	7982
2040	2926	1708	1297	2046	7977
2041	2938	1699	1287	2048	7972
2042	2960	1689	1256	2050	7955
2043	2982	1679	1256	2052	7969

Gross floorspace (m²) by use class, annually 2023–2043

Year	Office (B1a/b)	B1c	B2	B8	Total (B1– B8)
2023	31690	86027	58785	143095	319597
2024	31697	87013	59865	144718	323293
2025	32050	86098	58750	144718	321616
2026	32085	85569	58030	144241	319925
2027	32465	85118	57635	144368	319586
2028	32582	84661	56915	144368	318526
2029	32842	84210	55835	144495	317382
2030	32985	83688	54720	143572	314965
2031	33102	83230	54000	143572	313904
2032	33258	82772	52920	143572	312522
2033	33401	82321	52165	143698	311585
2034	33634	81864	51085	143698	310281
2035	33751	81864	50725	143125	309465
2036	34107	81406	49970	143125	308608
2037	34224	80949	48890	143125	307188
2038	34376	80949	48170	143125	306620
2039	34756	80498	47775	143252	306281
2040	35113	80286	46682	143252	305333
2041	35256	79835	46322	143378	304791
2042	35516	79384	45208	143505	303613
2043	35779	78933	45208	143632	303552