

# **Bingley Parish** **Neighbourhood Plan**

## **Local Economy and Employment**

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# Bingley Parish – Local Economy and Employment

## Introduction

Bingley has a relatively strong and buoyant economy due to its own attractive surroundings, accessibility to Leeds and Bradford and a good workforce.

It is home to over 700 businesses, employing in total 6,000 people. These businesses vary in size from large financial institutions to sole traders. The town's largest employer is Computershare with around 900 employees. It shares a building with another large financial employer, UK Asset Resolution (UKAR). Other significant employers include Damart and Emerald Publishing, which employ 500 and 350 people respectively.

There is good, mainly local demand, for vacant units, especially office related space, as they become available. A good example is the office park on Dowley Gap Lane, which is rarely unoccupied.

According to the 2011 Census, some 64.0% of the population area is of working age i.e. between the ages of 16 and 64. A further 17.8% are aged under 16 years of age, with the remainder being aged over 65. Of those in employment, some 49% are classed as either Technical/Professional or Senior Management. This figure is high in comparison to Bradford (34.8%) and England and Wales (40.9%). 45.8% of the population is qualified to Level 3 (2 A Levels and above), compared to Bradford (39.9%) and England and Wales (39.8%). Unemployment is relatively low.

Bingley Town Council in partnership between local business and other stakeholders is developing a co-ordinated approach to the economic development of the town (Town Council to add).

The Bradford Core Strategy plans to strengthen the economic role of Bingley both for the town and wider area. Sub Area Policy AD1: Airedale, states, *“Keighley and Bingley will be the principal focus for indigenous economic development including starter units for small and medium sized businesses, business park premises for larger digital, design and knowledge, financial and service sectors at Dalton Lane Business Innovation Zone and Royd Ings<sup>1</sup>”*.

## Employment Provision

Employment provision in the town is clustered in and around the town centre and along the Airedale Corridor. Reflecting this, five sites were allocated in the adopted Bradford Replacement Unitary Development Plan (2005) specifically for employment development.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bradford.gov.uk/planning-and-building-control/planning-policy/core-strategy-dpd/?Folder=10%20Adoption%5CAccepted+core+strategy#>

These are:

- S/E1.9 CASTLEFIELDS LANE, CROSSFLATTS
- S/E1.10 CASTLEFIELDS ROAD, CROSSFLATTS
- S/E1.14 LAND ADJACENT TO THE AIREDALE ROUTE, CROSSFLATTS
- S/E6.1 BINGLEY
- S/E6.2CROSSFLATTS

Further [information](#) about these five sites, including locations plans, is on BDMC's website.

The continued allocation (and safeguarding) of these five sites for employment purposes is advocated in the adopted Core Strategy and emerging Allocations DPD. This is a policy position that the Plan supports.

In addition to the five major employment areas identified above, there are several smaller employment sites and buildings to be found across the town. Many of these are situated in residential areas or in the countryside. They play an important, and growing, role in the economy of the town.

The existing employment provision of the town is under pressure. Recent years has seen the gradual loss of employment sites to housing and other uses, many close to where people live. A good example is the planning approval for the conversion of the former Bingley Auction Mart site to a retirement village.

Further, the Government's extension of Permitted Development Rights, allowing for a change of use from business premises to residential and other uses without the need to go through the planning process, place an element of uncertainty over current and future supply of employment sites.

This trend is of some concern to the community. There is limited space for new employment sites. Without action, it will undermine the economic role and success of the town and contribute to it becoming a dormitory settlement where people commute, often long distances, to work in nearby centres.

It is vital, therefore that, wherever possible, existing employment sites and buildings in the town are safeguarded for employment generating uses. It is recognised, however, that there may be some circumstances where it may not be appropriate or beneficial to safeguard an existing employment site or building. Where, for example, its design may not be suited, or easily adapted, to meet the needs of modern business. The Plan, therefore, seeks to retain suitable employment sites and buildings that meet modern business needs, a policy position that is supported by local and national planning policy.

## **POLICY E1: PROTECTING EXISTING EMPLOYMENT SITES AND BUILDINGS**

*The Plan supports the retention of suitable sites and buildings that provide employment (B1, B2 and B8) or future employment opportunities.*

### **Supporting Small and Start-up Businesses**

Within the Parish, there is a significant and growing number of small businesses. While precise figures on the number of small businesses locally and nationally are hard to come by, what evidence there is suggests that the proportionate of small businesses is relatively high. According to the 2011 Census, 10.1% of the economically active population stated that they were self-employed. This compares to 8.9% for Bradford and 9.8% for England.

As a location for small and start-up businesses, the town has considerable potential for further growth, especially office related, due to its attractive surroundings, availability of good quality sites and premises, workforce and accessibility, especially to the motorway network.

The Plan is keen to encourage their growth in appropriate locations. A flourishing small business sector is key to a sustainable, diverse and vibrant economy and community.

Often these can operate in residential areas from a home office, above a shop or a small workshop without causing nuisance or detriment to the environment.

Though such types of development often do not necessarily need planning permission, where it is required the Plan is generally supportive of their provision when it is in a suitable and appropriate location. In some circumstances, this could include the conversion of existing or redundant buildings such as barns, former mills and vacant spaces above shops.

There are examples of where the planning system has actively supported the development of new and small businesses such as through the provision of small business units specifically tailored to the needs of small businesses.

## **POLICY E2: SUPPORTING SMALL AND START-UP BUSINESSES**

*Development proposals for new or the expansion of existing small businesses, where in conformity with other provisions in the Plan and Local Development Plan, will be encouraged. The Plan encourages developments and initiatives, which support small and start-up businesses such as the provision of start-up units.*