

Policy BCAP7: Loss of employment space

- 4.7 Retaining valuable employment land and floorspace is an important part of the council's strategy and complements the Core Strategy's office growth targets to ensure a wide variety of business spaces of different types, sizes, quality and cost. The Core Strategy states that employment sites, premises and floorspace will be retained where they make a valuable contribution to the economy and employment opportunities.
- 4.8 New permitted development rights introduced by the Government include permitted development rights for the conversion of office floorspace to housing. However, these rights only exist until May 2016 and do not apply to office floorspace completed after May 2013. Changes to uses other than housing also still generally require planning permission. Policy BCAP7 sets out the criteria that will be used to assess the value of employment sites in Bristol City Centre when it is proposed to redevelop them for alternative uses and planning permission is required for their loss.

Employment sites in Old Market & The Dings, St. Paul's & Stokes Croft and other areas of inner east Bristol should be retained for employment use unless it can be demonstrated that:

- i. There is no demand for employment uses; or
- ii. Continued employment use would have an unacceptable impact on the environmental quality of the surrounding area; or
- iii. A net reduction in floorspace is necessary to improve the existing premises; or
- iv. It is to be used for industrial or commercial training purposes.

In Bristol City Centre, where there are existing office buildings that are vacant or underused by reason of their location or their ability to meet modern business needs (notably in and around the Nelson Street and Lewins Mead area), development involving the loss of existing office floorspace will be acceptable where it would contribute positively to the mix of uses in the area. Redevelopment or significant remodelling of the city centre's poorest quality office buildings will be encouraged in preference to conversion, potentially including some further intensification of use.

- 4.9 In Bristol City Centre has a number of core office areas that provide the city centre with a strong critical mass of high quality office floorspace. These include large-scale, modern office developments in the Temple Quay, Harbourside and north Redcliffe areas and also many smaller office sites scattered throughout successful mixed-use areas such as the West End. It is anticipated that these office sites will be naturally sustained by their market value. However, there are also smaller-scale, flexible workspaces that can also be found in city centre neighbourhoods such as St Paul's and Stokes Croft and Old Market that make a valuable contribution to the business offer of the city centre in their present use by providing accommodation for small independent / start-up businesses.
- 4.10 There are locations within the city centre where the existing office stock is underperforming either because of its location or because of its age, condition and general suitability to meet modern office needs, including the Nelson Street and Lewins Mead area. In these areas, a more flexible approach will be taken to the loss of employment floorspace where an alternative mix of uses would make a positive contribution to the vitality and economy of the area.