

Chamberhall Business Park

Economic Impact Assessment

1. Introduction

Bury Council is in advanced discussions in relation to the potential freehold disposal of a site in its ownership at Chamberhall Business Park for the development of a new office facility alongside proposed industrial accommodation. The prospective purchaser, Crown Gas & Power, is proposing to acquire the site for the development of a new management and sales facility.

It is understood that the Council has been passively marketing the site for industrial development over an extended period following the completion of enabling and access works in excess of ten years ago. The proposed scheme would bring a long-term vacant site on the northern edge of the town centre back into active and productive use.

The Council has commissioned this assessment of economic impact to provide a reasonable basis for evaluating the future direct and wider economic impacts arising from the proposed scheme compared to alternative scenarios.

2. Project Description

The site lies within Chamberhall Business Park, an established employment location within the Borough of Bury, immediately to the north of Bury town centre. It is understood that the subject site extends to an area of 3.16 hectares. However, allowing for a large pond and other site constraints, the total developable site area is 2.13 hectares. The site is around 600m to the north of Bury Interchange, providing good strategic access via Metrolink and bus services. Junction 2 of the M66 Motorway is around 3km to the east of the site. Following the allocation of the site for employment uses in 1997, enabling works were undertaken to support the creation of development plots. Following the completion of these works, the site has remained vacant and undeveloped and is now substantially overgrown.

Crown Gas & Power has approached the Council to negotiate the freehold acquisition of the site for the development of an office facility for owner occupation. The proposed facility would comprise of 3,716 sqm (net internal area) with appropriate car parking and employee amenities. It is understood that the office is proposed as a focus for management and sales focused activities. These elements will extend across a 1.49-hectare portion of the site. It is understood that the balance of the site will be developed for a multi-let light industrial development of around 2,320 sqm.

Due to viability constraints associated with commercial development in Bury, capital values are below the level required to support the cost of delivering the scheme.

3. Project context

Delivering the Council's vision

The proposed Chamberhall development will directly support Bury Council's corporate priority to drive economic growth, one of three headline objectives in the Corporate Plan 2024/25. It also contributes to the longer-term Let's Do It! vision of achieving faster-than-average economic growth and reducing deprivation across the borough.

By delivering high-quality employment space in a sustainable and accessible location, the scheme embodies the council's ambition to build a fairer, greener and more competitive economy, as set out in the Bury Economic Strategy (2024–2034).

Creating the Conditions for Business Growth

The scheme will deliver over 7,000m² of flexible employment space for offices and industrial uses. This investment will:

- Attract new businesses and inward investment into Bury.
- Provide modern, adaptable space to support the expansion of local firms.
- Diversify the borough's commercial offer, making it more resilient to future economic change.

These outcomes are consistent with the Economic Strategy's emphasis on developing resilient places and competitive businesses.

Supporting Jobs and Skills

The Chamberhall development will generate benefits at two levels:

- Short-term: construction activity will support local contractors and supply chains, stimulating immediate economic activity.
- Long-term: permanent business and office uses will create new employment opportunities, retain skilled workers locally, and expand the borough's labour market.

This reflects the council's goal of sustainable growth, ensuring that economic development translates into better jobs and skills opportunities for residents.

Strengthening Town Centre Vitality

Although located just outside Bury town centre, the Chamberhall scheme will play a complementary role by:

- Increasing the local workforce population and thereby boosting footfall and spend in shops, cafés, and services.
- Providing headquarters and office accommodation that strengthens Bury's overall offer to investors.
- Reinforcing connectivity with the town centre, given its proximity to Bury Interchange.

This approach aligns with the "Our Place" strand of the Economic Strategy, which highlights the need for vibrant, sustainable, and well-connected town centres.

Planning Policy

The development is fully aligned with relevant planning policy at all levels:

- National (NPPF, 2024): Promotes sustainable economic growth, efficient land use, and high-quality workplaces.
- Regional (PfE, 2024 & GM Industrial Strategy): Focuses on long-term growth, investment in employment sites, and improved connectivity.
- Local (Bury Local Plan & Town Centre Masterplan): Identifies Chamberhall as a strategic employment location, essential to supporting growth and regeneration.

Socio-economic conditions

This section reviews the socio-economic context for Bury within Greater Manchester, demonstrating a clear strategic rationale and economic justification for the delivery of the Proposed Development in terms of social and economic goals.

Population Growth - Bury's population was estimated at 198,000 in 2024¹, an increase of around 7.2% since 2011². This growth is broadly in line with Greater Manchester as a whole and slightly above the England average. Looking ahead, ONS projections indicate continued growth, with the population expected to exceed 200,000 by 2035. This places ongoing pressure on the local labour market and reinforces the need for new employment land to support economic opportunities.

Workforce and Employment Structure - Bury's employment base is diverse³, with the largest sectors including:

- Health (21.9%).
- Retail (11%).
- Education (9.6%).
- Manufacturing & Logistics (9.6%), higher than national averages, reflecting the Borough's industrial heritage and strategic motorway connectivity.

In comparison, Greater Manchester has a larger share of professional, scientific and technical services, concentrated in Manchester city centre and Salford Quays.

Productivity and Wages - GVA per job in Bury⁴ is below the national average, consistent with most of Greater Manchester outside of Manchester city centre. Resident earnings are close to the national median, but workplace earnings⁵ are lower, indicating that many residents commute to higher-value employment elsewhere.

Levels of Educational Attainment - Around 55% of Bury residents are qualified to RQF+, above the Greater Manchester and national averages⁶. The Borough also records a relatively low proportion of residents with no qualifications (6.4%). This reflects a reasonably strong skills profile, though still reliant on mid-level qualifications in trade and technical fields.

Unemployment and NEETs - Labour market challenges remain in Bury:

- The unemployment rate in July 2025 was around 4.4%, slightly above the national average but below the Greater Manchester average⁷.
- The share of 18–24 year olds who are NEET (Not in Education, Employment or Training) is around 13.6% at the national level⁸. Data is not available at the sub-regional or local levels.

These indicators highlight the importance of creating accessible employment pathways, particularly for young people.

¹ ONS (2024) - *Mid-Year Population Estimates, UK, 2024*.

² ONS (2022-based). *Subnational Population Projections for Local Authorities in England*.

³ ONS (2023). *Business Register and Employment Survey (BRES), 2023*.

⁴ ONS (2023). *Subregional Productivity: GVA per hour worked and GVA per job, UK, 2023*.

⁵ ONS (2024). *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings (ASHE), 2024*.

⁶ ONS (2024). *Annual Population Survey, December 2024*.

⁷ ONS (2023). *Annual Population Survey, 2023*

⁸ Department for Education (DfE) (2023). *NEET Statistics Quarterly Brief: 18–24 year olds not in education, employment or training (UK)*.

Deprivation and Inclusion - According to the *English Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2019⁹)*, around 17% of Bury's neighbourhoods fall within the 20% most deprived nationally. While this is lower than the Greater Manchester average, deprivation is concentrated in certain wards, underlining the importance of inclusive growth strategies.

4. Assessment Scope

To inform consideration of the justification for disposal of the site, this assessment outlines the projected additional economic impacts arising from the proposed scheme, benchmarked against alternative options. A summary of the alternative options is outlined as follows:

- **Scenario 1: Business as Usual** – under this scenario, the Council would not take any further action to facilitate the disposal and development of this site. The site would continue to be passively marketed, awaiting potential demand from a developer for an appropriate use. As the site has remained undeveloped over a period of more than 10 years and is subject to clear constraints, it is reasonable to assume that it would remain vacant for the foreseeable future under this option.
- **Scenario 2: Industrial Development** – the Council would opt to actively market the site for industrial development under this option. Based on an effective and resourced marketing strategy, the Council has advised that the site may be sold and developed within 2-3 years, supporting the delivery of 8,529 sqm of multi-let industrial space. Units would be in the order of 1,485 sqm to 2,320 sqm, which reflects market demand within the North Manchester area.
- **Scenario 3: Proposed development** – the disposal of the site to Crown Gas & Power for development as described in Section 2 of this paper. This proposal is being considered due to the potentially significant economic benefits associated with the construction and future operation of these sites. In particular, it reflects the expected rationale for supporting office-based uses in close proximity to amenities and infrastructure within the adjacent town centre.

The assessment of economic impact incorporates an assessment of the additionality of the projected activity under each option. Additionality refers to the extent to which activity takes place at all, on a larger scale, earlier or within a specific designated area or target group as a result of the interventions. The additional effect of a project is the difference between what would happen anyway, termed the reference case (the 'business as usual' option), and the forecast result if the project were implemented. Additionality has been assessed at the Bury Borough level and has considered the following adjustments:

- **Leakage** - proportion of outputs that benefit those outside of the project's target or reference area or group.
- **Displacement** - proportion of project outputs accounted for by reduced outputs elsewhere in the target area. Displacement may occur in both the factor and product markets.
- **Multiplier effects** - further economic activity associated with additional local income and local supplier purchases.
- **Deadweight** - outputs which would have occurred without the project – this is assessed through the reference case, i.e. the business as usual scenario.

The approach to the assessment is in general conformity with the principles for place-based analysis outlined within the HM Treasury Green Book (2022).

⁹ MHCLG *Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2019)*.

5. Economic Assessment

Construction Phase

The assessment of economic impacts in the construction phase focuses on the following indicators:

- **Temporary Construction Employment** - Cost estimates for the development under each scenario have been used as the basis for calculating the number of temporary construction jobs expected to be generated through the Chamberhall development scenarios. Construction cost estimates have been provided by the client. The number of person-years of construction employment has been estimated based on the construction sector average annual turnover per employee for Great Britain^{10,11}.
- **Gross Value Added** - GVA has been estimated based on turnover to GVA ratios for the construction sector at the national level, derived from the ONS Annual Business Survey (2022).

The following additionality assumptions have been applied to inform the assessment of net additional impact in the construction phase:

- **Leakage** – A ‘high’ leakage-ready reckoner of 50% has been applied¹², reflecting the contract-based nature of construction employment and the potential for labour to come from large population centres across the Greater Manchester area.
- **Displacement** - A low level of displacement (10%) has been assumed at the Bury level as the scheme is unlikely to directly displace existing or other pipeline capital projects. A limited level of displacement is provided for, guided by Census data, which shows approximately 90% of construction workers in Bury reside in Bury.
- **Multipliers** - A multiplier of 1.25 has been applied, taken from the What Works Centre for Local Economic Development Multiplier Toolkit.
- **Deadweight** - under the “do nothing” scenario, no development is expected to take place. On this basis, nil deadweight has been applied.

Table 1 sets out the results of the analysis under each scenario. The construction phase has the potential to support 52.5 gross FTE jobs under Scenario 3 over an assumed 2-year construction period, compared to 40.5 FTE under Option 2. The net additional employment impact under these scenarios is projected to be 30 FTE jobs and 23 FTE jobs, respectively.

Table 1: Construction Phase employment			
	Scenario 1: Business as Usual	Scenario 2: Industrial Development	Scenario 3: Proposed Development
Gross employment (person years)	-	81	105
Gross FTE Employment	-	40.5	52.5
Net Direct FTE Employment	--	18	24
Net additional FTE Employment	-	23	30

The estimated construction capital expenditure associated with the Proposed Development could deliver a net additional GVA contribution of £3.2 million under Scenario 3. By comparison,

¹⁰ ONS Construction Statistics for Great Britain, 2022.

¹¹ Inflated to 2025/26 prices using GDP Deflators, June 2025.

¹² BEIS Occasional Paper 9 (research to improve the assessment of additionality)

construction activity under Scenario 2 is projected to support a net additional GVA impact at the Bury level of £2.5 million. This is summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Construction Phase - GVA (£m)			
	Scenario 1: Business as Usual	Scenario 2: Industrial Development	Scenario 3: Proposed Development
Net local Direct GVA Impact	-	£1.9m	£2.4m
Indirect/induced GVA Impact	-	£0.59m	£0.77m
Net additional GVA Impact	-	£2.5m	£3.2m

Operational Phase

The number of direct operational jobs has been estimated using employment density benchmarks, sourced from the former HCA's employment densities guide (3rd edition), to calculate the jobs generated through the occupation of new commercial floorspace expected to be delivered through the development. Gross employment is estimated on a full-time equivalent (FTE) job basis, and the applied ratios are as follows:

- **Offices** – a density of 12 sqm (NIA) per FTE has been applied. This is a relatively low density of office-type activities, reflecting of head office and management functions. However, it is understood that the facility will also be a focus for sales-related activities, which typically involve higher densities (8 sqm per employee). The lower density is therefore considered to be reasonably prudent and accounts for alternative working arrangements (home working and flexible working arrangements).
- **Industrial** – a density of 45 sqm per employee (GIA) has been applied. With no end user identified, a blended ratio for industrial (36 sqm per FTE), light industrial (47sqm per FTE) and final mile logistics (70sqm per FTE) has been applied.

The number of actual jobs created will be higher once part-time workers are taken into account – for example, one FTE job may support, say, two part-time workers. To estimate the actual jobs, ratios of workforce jobs to FTE jobs have been applied, derived from Experian local market data for Bury.

The estimate of net additional employment effects takes the following adjustments into account:

- **Leakage** - a leakage figure of 45% has been applied at the Bury level based on Census 2011 commuting patterns for Bury (Census 2011 Table WU01UK).
- **Displacement** – a low to medium displacement rate has been assumed for both office and industrial uses. For office-based activities, the occupier has advised that there will be significant opportunities to create sales-related jobs benefiting from role-specific training that may be appropriate for younger people (aged 18-25) who are not currently in education, employment or training. There were 5,350 claimants of out-of-work benefits in Bury in July 2025, including 1,060 in the 18-24 age group. For industrial accommodation, market analysis indicates that there is constrained supply of modern stock around the town centre, with demand for new premises likely to be strong. The MHCLG Appraisal Guide states that a medium (25%) displacement rate is appropriate when interventions target broadly available sectors or skills, meaning local people benefit.
- **Multiplier** - A multiplier of 1.15 has been applied, taken from the What Works Centre for Local Economic Development Multiplier Toolkit. This accounts for both supply chain and employee purchases at the local authority level.

- **Deadweight** - under the “do nothing” scenario, there is no development, so construction jobs under the other options are considered additional.

As highlighted in Table 3, the Chamberhall development has the potential to support 90 net additional FTE jobs in Scenario 2 (industrial development) and 171 in Scenario 3.

Table 3: Operational Phase employment (FTE)			
	Scenario 1: Business as Usual	Scenario 2: Industrial Development	Scenario 3: Proposed Development
Gross FTE Employment	-	190	361
Net Direct FTE Employment	-	78	149
Net Indirect/Induced FTE Employment	--	12	23
Net Additional FTE Employment	-	90	171

The average annual GVA per FTE employee for the appropriate activities has been sourced from Experian¹³ and applied to the net additional operational phase jobs estimated to be generated by the Proposed Development. Indirect and induced GVA have been calculated based on the average GVA per FTE worker figures for Bury, in relevant sectors.

Table 4: Operational Phase - GVA (£m)			
	Scenario 1: Business as Usual	Scenario 2: Industrial Development	Scenario 3: Proposed Development
Gross GVA effect	-	£14.2	£17.5
Net local Direct GVA Impact	-	£5.9	£7.2
Indirect/induced GVA Impact	-	£0.53	£0.79
Net additional GVA Impact	-	£6.4	£8.0

Allowing for the persistence of employment benefits over ten years, the total cumulative net additional discounted GVA impact would amount to £38.6 million under Scenario 3 compared to £30.7 million under Scenario 2. This allows for discounting at 3.5% (the social time preference rate) and decay of benefits over the period.

Fiscal benefits

In addition to the above, there will be further benefits associated with the delivery of employment floorspace. Based on benchmarkable values, it is estimated that the development could generate a total business rates income of around £310,000 per annum under the proposed scheme (Scenario 3) compared to around £110,000 per annum under the industrial development scenario (Scenario 2).

Wider benefits

Given the nature of the proposed developments, it is envisaged that investment will give rise to a range of wider impacts that are of significant economic importance. These include:

- **Town centre linkages and employee expenditure** - Strengthens connectivity within the town centre, increasing footfall and boosting employee and visitor spending in local businesses. This is supported by research from the Centre for Cities and British Council for Offices, which states

¹³ Experian Regional Economic Forecasts, June 2024.

employees typically spend between £1,300 to £1,800 per annum in their town centre. Taking a mid-point of £1,550, employment supported under the proposed scenario (Scenario 3) could support gross expenditure of £560,000 within the town centre each year.

- **Supporting skills and training** - Provides opportunities for residents to develop new skills and access training, helping to raise employability and support inclusive growth. In particular, the proposed scheme (Scenario 3) proposes role-related training targeted at people accessing the labour market.
- **Image** - Enhances the profile and attractiveness of the town through high-quality regeneration, improving perceptions and encouraging further investment.
- **Bringing brownfield land back into economic use** - Development will unlock an underutilised site, repurposing brownfield land for productive use that supports sustainable development and long-term economic activity.

6. Conclusions

The Chamberhall site has remained vacant for more than a decade despite earlier enabling works and passive marketing. This assessment demonstrates that both industrial and mixed office/industrial development options would generate meaningful economic and fiscal benefits, though with different risk profiles and long-term impacts.

- An industrial-only scheme (Scenario 2) is low-risk, market-backed, and financially viable. It would deliver 90 net additional jobs, £6.4m net GVA annually, and £30.7m cumulative GVA over 10 years. However, it offers modest fiscal returns and mainly mid-value employment.
- The proposed mixed office and industrial scheme (Scenario 3), anchored by Crown Gas & Power, requires disposal at below market value but secures higher-value employment, stronger town centre linkages, greater fiscal benefits, and a cumulative £38.6m GVA over 10 years

Overall, Scenario 3 provides greater strategic and long-term value by supporting skills, inclusive growth, and regeneration.