



# Building the UK's Critical Infrastructure

The BPF manifesto for Logistics



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This manifesto is produced by the industrial and logistics members of the British Property Federation (BPF), the voice of the UK property sector. Our industry helps power the economy, adding more than £137.5 bn a year, or 7% of Gross Value Added (GVA). We support one out of 12 jobs across the country and pay more than £7bn in direct taxes each year, contributing another £7bn indirectly to local communities through the planning system.

This manifesto sits alongside the BPF's 2024 election manifesto, 'Building our Future' which sets out how the property and built environment industry is committed to working in partnership with the next Government to build a more productive economy, more homes, stronger town centres and greener buildings. Our offer to Government in these areas, and the recommendations we make, can be found at: [\*\*www.bpf.org.uk/our-work/general-election-2024\*\*](http://www.bpf.org.uk/our-work/general-election-2024)





# The UK industrial & logistics sector

The UK's industrial and logistics businesses build, own and manage the critical logistics space and infrastructure that keeps the country running.

Our modern, sustainable warehouses are vital elements of the resilient and efficient supply chains that manufacture, process, store and distribute essential products and services to millions of households and thousands of businesses and public services up and down the country.

The logistics property sector is highly productive and is, in many ways, a hidden jewel in the UK's crown. It is essential to the economic growth, productivity and resilience of the country.

The sector:

- ✔ Contributes **£232bn of GVA a year** to the economy;
- ✔ Amounts to **3.6 billion sq ft of warehousing space** across the country;
- ✔ Provides essential space to thousands of businesses, including **world class companies** such as Mars, Unilever, Nestle, Next, DHL, Amazon, Jaguar Land Rover, Tesco and FedEx;
- ✔ Supports **2.7 million high quality jobs** in England paying on average almost £5,000 a year above the national average;<sup>1</sup> and
- ✔ Delivers **41,100 apprenticeship starts** a year.<sup>2</sup>

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# Our offer to the next Government

The BPF's members represent the country's leading developers of, and investors in, logistics real estate: a sector which has invested around £170 billion into the economy since 2000.

Working with the sector to unlock its full potential will deliver:

- ✔ Significant long-term investment – with plans to increase investment by 50% over the next 5 years to meet demand, attracting both domestic and overseas capital;
- ✔ £5 billion in business rates over the next 3 years to assist with local authority resources;<sup>3</sup> and
- ✔ Over half a million apprenticeships over the next 10 years.<sup>4</sup>

The sector makes a valuable contribution to reducing carbon emissions by delivering green and energy efficient space that helps businesses to meet their own net zero targets. We have the potential to do much more, including using our facilities

to generate clean energy to power communities across the country and to support the transition to electric vehicle fleets.

We want to work with Government to create a policy environment that enables our sector to unlock that investment, create jobs, deliver growth, embrace innovation, and support the country's drive towards Net Zero. This manifesto sets out eight recommendations for achieving this across the three areas of:

- ✔ **Plan-making;**
- ✔ **Decision-taking; and**
- ✔ **Delivery**

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<sup>3</sup> Figure provided by Savills and relates to England & Wales only.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid. pg. 24.



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# Plan-Making



## 1. Create a National Supply Chain Infrastructure Framework to drive growth

The sector offers to develop a National Supply Chain Infrastructure Framework (NSCIF) in partnership with Government, placing logistics capacity at the heart of its economic strategy as part of the UK's critical national infrastructure. This would sit alongside the NPPF as a material consideration in planning decisions and would guide local authorities in their approach to the production of their evidence base across a defined market area. It should firmly commit the industry and Government to work together to deliver the growth of a multi-modal logistics sector that will provide decarbonised, reliable, and resilient supply chains across the UK.

## 2. Introduce strategic planning

The single most important change an incoming government could make to ensure that the right amount of logistics floorspace is provided in the right locations would be to introduce effective strategic planning. Since the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies in 2010, the current planning system has failed to adequately deal with strategic 'larger than local' employment sites. It relies on effective co-operation between neighbouring local authorities, which is rare, and has in turn led to an employment land crisis.

Re-introducing strategic planning would ensure that industrial and logistics development is more aligned with strategic infrastructure provision and housing growth.

### 3. Modernise Employment Land Reviews

Employment Land Reviews (ELRs) are the bedrock of planning for employment uses. However, due to the protracted nature of the plan making process (it takes an average of seven years for authorities to adopt a local plan)<sup>5</sup>, they are usually out of date by the time a Local Plan is adopted. We have identified a number of common failings with ELRs, and recommendations for how they could be improved.

Failing	Recommendation for improvement
They are too static – reflecting a fixed point in time	Utilise ‘real time information’ that captures changes in market conditions and deploy more agile/flexible policy mechanisms (see Recommendation (4))
They are undertaken across an inappropriate geographical area	Statutory requirement for plan-making authorities to assess economic need at the appropriate market geography identified within the NSCIF (see Recommendation (1))  Constituent authorities within that market geography to meet the identified need in full through a Statement of Common Ground and/or Memorandum of Understanding
They use flawed and/or inconsistent methodologies to calculate need	Strengthen national planning policy to obligate those preparing ELRs to use the ‘suppressed demand’ methodology advocated by the BPF that accounts for historic undersupply <sup>6</sup>
They fail to differentiate between strategic ‘larger than local’ needs and more localised needs (or ignore the former altogether)	Local planning authorities traversed by strategic transport networks should take a two-tiered approach to employment allocations: identifying strategic ‘larger-than-local’ employment sites alongside smaller sites to meet more localised needs

### 4. Deploy more agile/flexible planning policy mechanisms

The current plan-led system is failing to keep pace with the fast-changing nature of industrial and logistics demand; particularly unpredictable aspects of e-commerce trends. Existing policies are not agile or flexible enough, with Local Plans underpinned by out-of-date evidence bases that do not reflect present day market realities.

In response, we call for all Local Plans to incorporate more agile/flexible planning policy mechanisms. This will enable employment sites to come forward outside of the formal Local Plan cycle, but in line with the development plan, when it makes sense to do so. We believe this could be achieved via criteria-based policies, reserves of safeguarded sites or supplementary plans. Our recent ‘Freight, Logistics & the Planning System Call for Evidence’ [response](#) describes each of these options in greater detail.

<sup>5</sup> MHCLG (August 2020) ‘Planning for the Future White Paper’, pg 12

<sup>6</sup> BPF & Savills (January 2022) ‘Levelling Up: The Logic of Logistics’, pg. 21.



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# Decision-Taking

## 5. Standardise the approach to Pre-Application Advice/ Planning Performance Agreements

Early and continuing engagement with Local Planning Authorities and other key stakeholders is important. However, costs, resourcing, approach and the level of service vary considerably from local authority to local authority.

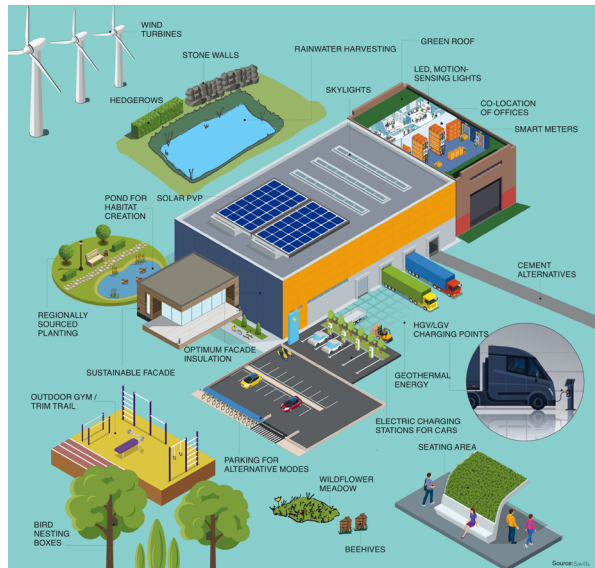
To remedy the above, we call for better guidance and a standardised approach to pre-application advice and Planning Performance Agreements (PPAs) to ensure a greater degree of certainty and enhanced planning performance that will be to the benefit of the planning system as a whole. Proposals for accelerated planning application determination periods for commercial development are welcomed, but this will require more local authority resources in planning departments across the country.

## 6. Ensure Decision-Makers better understand the role of Logistics

In many cases, the decision-making process is still based on a lack of understanding about how the logistics sector operates, as highlighted in the National Infrastructure Commission's (NIC's) work<sup>7</sup> and DfT's subsequent Future of Freight Report.<sup>8</sup> The social and environmental benefits that are set out in detail within the BPF's Levelling Up: The Logic of Logistics Report are not given enough weight in planning considerations.

Officers, members, design review panels and Planning Inspectors need to recognise the benefits and needs of the freight and logistics sector to ensure that 'significant weight' is attributed to logistics and supply chain infrastructure in decision-making. Government should commit to working with local government representative bodies, the Planning Advisory Service and the sector to ensure that decision-makers are able to properly assess and reflect the critical role of logistics and other critical national infrastructure in delivering for local communities.

# Delivery



## 7. Accelerate grid connectivity to enable green energy to be exported back to the grid

The logistics property sector is already leading the way on sustainability. With greater Government support for innovation in battery and other local energy storage solutions (for example by providing grants), we could have the ability to create energy self-sufficient logistics hubs, reducing the need to draw energy from the grid.

Our buildings have the roof space for up to 15GW of new solar: the equivalent of around 25% of the UK's power requirements. We urge the Government to capitalise on this untapped resource and to accelerate and enhance grid connectivity to large logistics sites by opening up the market for physical connection to the grid to competition; setting a higher feed in tariff to further incentivise export to the grid; and encouraging OFGEM to expedite proposed reforms to the grid connection queue. These measures would enable the export of green energy generated by solar panels on warehouse roofs back into the network to power our homes and businesses.

## 8. Formation of a cross-departmental Freight Planning Forum comprising public and private sector partners

We are supportive of industry calls for the status of freight and logistics to be significantly elevated across Whitehall departments and the decision-making process. Too often the needs of the sector are poorly understood by government decision-makers, with responsibility for the sector sitting across multiple departments.

The importance of the sector in providing the critical infrastructure to support the wider economy therefore necessitates a clear and coherent strategy from government. This should set out how effective cross-government coordination and collaboration can be achieved which fully maximises the ability of the freight and logistics sector to power our economy, including keeping the NSCIF (as set out in recommendation 1) under review. As part of this, we would welcome the formation of a national Freight Planning Forum that brings together public and private sector representatives to discuss policy development and other pertinent sector-specific matters.





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[bpf.org.uk/our-work/general-election-2024](https://bpf.org.uk/our-work/general-election-2024)



