

LEWISHAM AFFORDABLE WORKSPACE STRATEGY

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

Lewisham's Affordable Workspace Strategy sets out the council's approach and actions required for increasing affordable workspace in the borough. It is intended to align with the vision and policy of the Local Plan (currently in draft stage) and contains several actions to guide the Strategy for its first two years. The council will need to review the actions at least annually to update actions and wording in line with changing requirements and local economic circumstances.

The process for developing Strategy, commissioned and drafted in 2022, involved:

- Conversations with workspace operators and other organisations
- Conversations with other London local authorities who have developed Affordable Workspace Strategies to learn from their processes and outcomes
- Reviewing existing council policies relevant to workspace
- Mapping and attempting to quantify existing workspace provision across the borough, as well as planned commercial development that could host workspace in the future
- Reviewing underused council-owned assets that could host workspace
- A SWOT analysis on various factors linked to workspace in Lewisham

Evidence collected during the research phase of this project is available as a separate Appendix.

1.2 WORKSPACE IN LEWISHAM

Affordable workspace has a long history in Lewisham. Deptford's APT arose as a grassroots artist workspace in a warehouse in 1995; Art Hub Studios followed in 1999; and Cockpit Arts arrived in 2001.

From its artist-focused origins along Deptford Creek, workspace in Lewisham has increased over the last two decades to cater to a wide variety of sectors and neighbourhoods, including New Cross, Lewisham, Ladywell, Catford, and Forest Hill. As of 2022, the borough has around 35,000 m² of workspace across around 40 sites and 27 operators, with a substantial amount let at affordable rates. Among workspace operators engaged during the production of this strategy, all estimated that the majority of their tenants/members live in Lewisham.

Lewisham is home to the Deptford and New Cross Creative Enterprise Zone, a Mayor of London programme supporting creative business resilience and growth. Throughout 2022,



Lewisham's year as London Borough of Culture showcased creativity across the borough, delivered in partnership with one of the borough's affordable workspaces.

Recognising that the borough's affordable operators have a wealth of expertise on and drive for delivering great workspaces for Lewisham, the council has also convened an Affordable Workspace Forum which can help design solutions to workspace-related challenges. In addition, the council has established the Catford Regeneration Partnership, a council-owned venture charged with delivering development and finding ways to revive underused space and buildings in Catford, including for productive and community-oriented purposes.

Safeguarding and building on this history, activity and momentum will allow Lewisham to continue to be a place where workspace, entrepreneurialism and enterprise can thrive.

1.3 WHY HAVE AN AFFORDABLE WORKSPACE STRATEGY?

1.3.1 Affordable Workspace Strategy purpose

Lewisham's Draft Local Plan acknowledges the importance of affordable workspace for supporting new businesses, especially in cultural and creative sectors. The Draft Local Plan commits all major commercial development to ensuring that 10% of new employment floorspace is delivered as affordable commercial space.

In addition, the Mayor of Lewisham has set a target of 4000 new jobs for Lewisham, a borough with one of the country's lowest job densities (number of jobs per working age resident).^{*} Affordable workspace is an important tool for the council to safeguard existing jobs as well as bring new jobs to the borough by attracting businesses and creating conditions for residents to start their own enterprises.

About workspace

Workspace generally refers to employment spaces and spaces that deliver an economic output, with highly flexible lease terms compared to the conventional market. Examples are pay-per-use models, short-term occupancy contracts, or contracts with short-term notice requirements. Many workspaces provide access to shared facilities such as meeting rooms, exhibition space, and specialist equipment. Some workspaces, especially those aimed at new businesses or practitioners, also offer support such as training, networking events, and business advice.

As a result, within this strategy, the council's priority is to support affordable workspaces that help generate income for tenants and economic outputs, although many workspaces

^{*} Nomis Jobs Density, 2021 ([WEB](#))



will have wider impact in terms of social and community benefits (e.g. through public events, spaces for hire).

The council is especially interested in encouraging job and business growth in creative, digital, information technology, hospitality (notably F&B and night-time activities), and professional activities, as well as expanding opportunities for the borough's young people.

Affordable workspace can help serve this ambition, but effectively delivering quality affordable workspace at scale requires a clear and co-ordinated approach.

The purpose of the Affordable Workspace Strategy is to set out Lewisham Council's approach and actions required for increasing affordable workspace in the borough. The success of this strategy cannot and will not be achieved by the council working alone, but will be built upon active collaboration with workspace operators, communities, developers and others.

The Affordable Workspace Strategy affirms the council's commitment to safeguarding affordable workspace so that existing tenants and communities of practice can feel secure; to sourcing additional affordable workspace that meets the needs of Lewisham's businesses and prospective start-ups; and to providing clarity about what 'affordable' means in the Lewisham context.

1.3.2 Affordable Workspace Strategy objectives and actions

There are four headline objectives for Lewisham's Affordable Workspace Strategy:

- 1. Create and safeguard affordable workspace.** New development and active workspace buildings reaching the end of their useable lifespan puts pressure on workspace supply, which is already constrained. Where possible working within Planning policy to safeguard existing spaces and secure new ones will help maintain a baseline of supply across the borough.
- 2. Affordable from the bottom up.** For workspace and its benefits to be accessible to everyone, it needs to be priced so that early-stage and lower-income enterprises can afford space and services.
- 3. An affordable workspace in every neighbourhood.** While many of Lewisham's town centres have a wide selection of affordable workspace, others—particularly in the south and southeast—have limited provision. Expanding affordable workspace throughout the borough will provide business start-up and networking opportunities for more residents. This does not mean the same spaces are needed or viable in each neighbourhood, but that all neighbourhoods should have space that supports pathways to enterprise for Lewisham residents.
- 4. Evolving and fit-for-purpose approaches.** As the economic, local development, financing, and government funding landscapes evolve in coming years, the Affordable

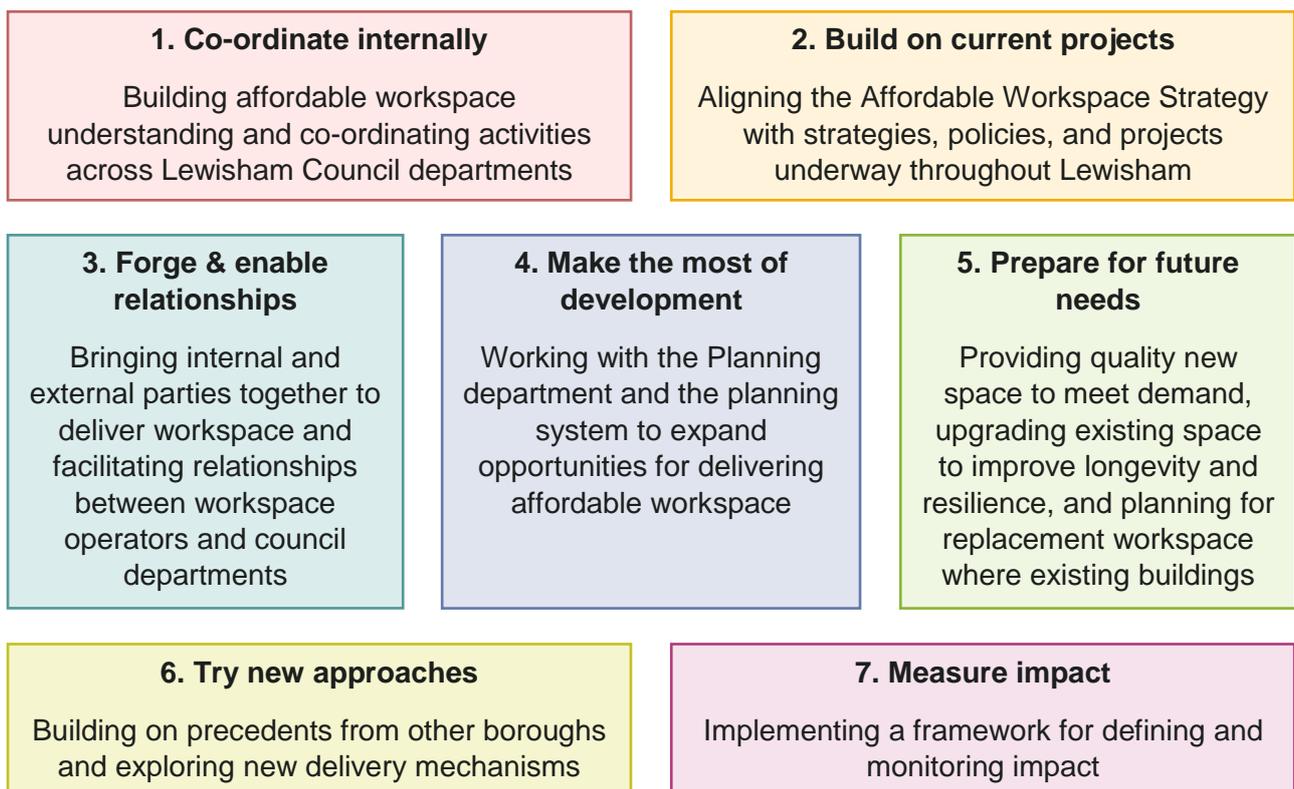


Workspace Strategy will need agile delivery so it can adapt to new circumstances and take advantage of new opportunities.

To achieve these objectives the council will:

- Make the most of its ability to lead and catalyse change, such as by using council assets and developments, and by influencing non-council development and asset uses
- Work collaboratively across council departments and with external bodies, especially the Affordable Workspace Forum, but also Lewisham education institutions, housing associations, developers, residents, and businesses
- Regularly review the council's evidence base of assets and forthcoming development across the borough to map opportunities to act, whether in terms of delivering new workspace, repurposing assets, or helping refurbish/future-proof existing workspaces
- Embrace measures of success that focus on social and economic outcomes that benefit residents and lead to an inclusive economy, which are embedded and actively monitored throughout planning and delivering affordable workspace.

The council has established a full, structured plan of actions to deliver against these objectives. The headline action themes are summarised below.



1.3.3 Affordable workspace beneficiaries



Affordable workspace provides opportunities to run or grow a business for residents and organisations that would struggle to secure premises on full market terms. This includes many early stage start-ups from all sectors, social enterprises and third sector organisations that contribute to the wellbeing of our communities, and many creative and cultural businesses. In Lewisham, a majority of affordable workspace tenants are also Lewisham residents, making affordable workspace an important resource for residents' livelihoods.

Aside from these core beneficiaries, affordable workspace can benefit:

- Other residents, by creating jobs either directly through workspace tenant growth or indirectly through attracting other businesses to an area
- Wider communities, by providing space for community events and training or education
- Local businesses, by bringing more footfall and spending into town centres

1.4 WHAT IS 'AFFORDABLE' WORKSPACE?

1.4.1 Affordability considerations

Lewisham Council recognises that 'affordable' is a relative concept. What is considered affordable for workspace tenants may differ significantly across the borough, across sectors, and across various stages of business growth. What is affordable for workspace operators may also differ across the borough, as well as across individual operators' organisational structures and portfolios. Affordability is also affected by service charges, business rates, utilities, and other mandatory fees.

In recognition of this, the emerging Local Plan does not explicitly define what 'affordable' is for Lewisham, but provides flexibility on how its affordable workspace policy is applied:

"We have tested emerging requirements on schemes which provide new or replacement B1 floorspace at 10% and 20% of floorspace with the discounts of 20%, 30%, 40% and 50% of market rent. The results of our analysis indicate that a requirement for 20% of floorspace discounted by up to 50% of market does not have a significant bearing on the viability of the schemes tested. However, the precise impact on individual schemes will depend on scheme-specific composition, including the extent of other floorspace which is not discounted. **The affordable workspace policy will therefore need to be applied with a degree of flexibility**, including having regard to site-specific viability issues that may emerge on individual schemes."

A top-down process of benchmarking and discounting against market rates risks creating workspaces that are still not affordable for some businesses, especially creative and social enterprises and those in their earliest stages. Rent offered at 50% discount of market rate may still not be affordable for these businesses, especially when accounting for business



rates, service charges, and utilities, where applicable. However, this will be a starting point for discussions as we look to retain and enhance Council owned assets, partners assets and new developments including allowing for the variety of fit-out levels.

1.4.2 Defining affordability

Instead, this Strategy defines 'affordable' from the bottom up, using evidence from operators on the rents, inclusive of service charges, that the borough's residents and businesses are able to afford. The Council will use 50% as a starting point as this will help us to make sure the offer is in-line with Planning policy.

This will depend on the circumstances of their operation: if tenants are early stage businesses or those whose activities are not scalable, they are likely to need lower-priced spaces than established, growing, or well-capitalised businesses. It may also depend on the type of space they are operating. Spaces that require exacting technical specifications and standards (e.g. kitchens, recording studios) may be more expensive to operate and rent than others (e.g. offices).

The council will take a different approach depending on ownership, including:

- **Existing buildings and council-owned assets.** Using existing buildings in the borough and those within the council's own portfolio in particular present important opportunities to deliver workspace, alongside spaces in new developments. Spaces in existing buildings can often be operated viably at a greater level of discount and as such, Lewisham Council will look to meet or exceed the Local Plan affordability thresholds set for affordable workspace in new development when planning affordable workspace in existing assets. The council will also look to exceed Local Plan affordability targets where it is able to provide space directly for end users who are Lewisham residents.
- **New development where affordable workspace is secured via the planning process.** The council will assess applications based on affordable operator viability, whilst acknowledging the restrictions of current planning policy and that developer viability is often used for decision making. The council will also consider whether off-site development contribution might be a better solution for achieving affordability.

1.4.3 Delivering affordability

To do this the council will require developers at application stage to set out:

- Value in pounds for the affordable workspace provision to be policy compliant based on the traditional approach of reduction against market rent. This will be used to meet development viability requirements and assessments.
- If provided on-site, that the affordable workspace at least meets minimum size requirements, further design guidance is available on the Council website, with design



conditions to ensure the space will be large enough to have a meaningful impact. Designs should be tested and refined with the Affordable Workspace Forum.

- Several tests to set rents, including submission of a business plan/model which must outline the operator rent to landlord, operator costs, and rents to end users. Benchmarking on operator costs will consider the impact of rates, service charges, management costs etc.

The Council's process will make sure rents from landlord to operators are agreed at application stage. Operators are then accountable for affordability to end users by definition of their type operation and target outcomes, along with other council oversight.

Arriving at a context-specific definition of 'affordable' will require ongoing conversations among the council, workspace operators, and developers, where they are delivering new workspace as part of a wider scheme.

For any approach, regular conversations among various stakeholders and deliver partners will be necessary for efficient delivery.



2 SPACES & APPROACHES

2.1 WHAT TYPES OF AFFORDABLE SPACES DOES LEWISHAM NEED?

Developing this Strategy involved speaking to several of Lewisham's affordable workspace operators and council officers about demand for space. It also involved reviewing sector growth, potential assets for reuse, and development pipeline with opportunities for workspace (see the separate evidence base/appendix for more information). Based on that research, the following spaces have the most pressing need in Lewisham.

2.1.1 Creative/artist studios

Lewisham's affordable workspace operators consistently report high demand for studio spaces.[†] The traditional commercial market is not providing enough of these spaces at a level affordable to creative enterprises.

Core users: Artists and creative enterprises in a variety of practices, e.g. fashion design, photography, ceramics, prop making, sculpture

Where it's needed: Borough-wide, but particularly in the Creative Enterprise Zone (Deptford & New Cross) and other major town centres (Forest Hill, Lewisham, Catford)

Priority: Very high; core focus for the Affordable Workspace Strategy

Opportunities: Highly flexible in the spaces it occupies; can be delivered through new development or existing asset portfolios; several skilled operators running such spaces in Lewisham already

Challenges: Meeting demand; some specialist studios (e.g. music recording, fabrication) require more intensive and costly fit-out

2.1.2 Private office space

As with creative/artist studios, there is high demand for private office space for desk-based practices, creative or otherwise. Start-ups, social enterprises, and creative businesses (there is some overlap between what might be classed as 'private office space' and 'creative/artist studios') are often unable to afford private office space on the open market.

Core users: Creative businesses (particularly more desk-based practices such as graphic design, architecture, film/tv editing) and social enterprises, early-stage businesses (e.g.

[†] This largely relates to 'clean' spaces (e.g. desk-based work, fabric/textiles work, sound recording), which tend to be the main type of space available in Lewisham, as opposed to 'messy' spaces that tend to generate dust or other by-products requiring specialised storage, filtration, or cleaning/disposal systems.



digital, tech) without access to start-up capital, practitioners whose activities/model does not easily scale up, community and wellbeing services

Where it's needed: Borough-wide; potentially higher demand in major town centres (Deptford, New Cross, Forest Hill, Lewisham, Catford) but testing would be beneficial

Priority: Very high; core focus for the Affordable Workspace Strategy

Opportunities: Highly flexible in the spaces it occupies; can be delivered through new development or existing asset portfolios; several skilled operators running such spaces in Lewisham already

Challenges: Meeting demand; determining priority against creative/artist studios

2.1.3 Move-on space

There is a severe shortage in Lewisham, and in London generally, of workspace suitable for organisations that are outgrowing existing units but cannot afford open market rents for larger spaces.

Core users: Businesses from all sectors that are scaling up or require more space for production

Where it's needed: Likely to be most successful/beneficial in proximity to existing main cluster around Deptford and New Cross

Priority: High

Challenges: Establishing a price level that is still suitable for growing businesses (which will often need to factor in business rates at this stage) but covers operational costs

2.1.4 Kitchen space

Professional kitchen space is in demand from both catering enterprises and tech companies who supply 'dark kitchens' for established eateries to produce takeaway meals. The council will support professional kitchen space for local catering start-ups and scale-ups if a suitable site and operator can be found.

Core users: Local catering start-ups and scale-ups

Where it's needed: Likely most suitable for major town centres with high potential client density nearby and good road network links e.g. Lewisham, Deptford/New Cross, Catford, but further review/testing is needed

Priority: Medium; Affordable Workspace Strategy will support if suitable opportunities arise

Challenges: Strict technical specification required; not easily adaptable from/to other uses

2.1.5 Rehearsal space



There is a shortage in Lewisham, and in London generally, of rehearsal space

Core users: Theatre, dance, and other performing artists/arts groups

Where it's needed: Near existing core cluster around Deptford and New Cross

Priority: Medium; Affordable Workspace Strategy will support if suitable opportunities arise

Opportunities: Potential to deliver in partnership with Lewisham institutions (e.g. Trinity Laban)

Challenges: Large size and technical specification required to meet need

2.1.6 Informal spaces

Not all new enterprises or business ideas are ready to move into, or can afford, formal workspace on conception. Informal spaces such as cafes and libraries provide critical early-stage space for people to start or plan a business before committing to ongoing workspace costs.

Core users: Very new enterprises or people with business ideas from all sectors who are not ready for formal workspace

Where it's needed: Borough-wide, but likely to be most beneficial where communities lack other workspace options (south and southeast)

Priority: Low; as Lewisham has spaces like these already, priority for delivering new ones should focus on parts of the borough not currently served by formal workspace, particularly the south and southeast. The council can also signpost residents to existing informal workspaces, and signpost informal workspace users to formal affordable spaces.

Opportunities: Potential to deliver in partnership with Lewisham organisations and businesses (e.g. Phoenix Community Housing, pubs, cafes)



2.2 WHAT IS THE ROLE OF MEANWHILE USE?

Although securing long-term, permanent affordable workspace is a core priority for the council, meanwhile use will be important on sites awaiting development or other uses. Aside from providing affordable workspace, Lewisham Council sees meanwhile space as having two core roles:

- To drive footfall and add vitality to the borough's town centres
- To assist with market-making, by attracting and supporting new types of economic activity within town centres through affordable rents

A by-product of meanwhile use within council assets is mitigating costs of keeping empty properties, especially related to business rates and security.

2.2.1 Meanwhile use requirements

Some operators whose core business is meanwhile use can run a space for a little as 18 months. However, even for an experienced operator, this requires a location with a known and buoyant tenant market and a building with minimal refurbishment and fit-out needs. This ultra-short-term meanwhile use might be suitable for driving footfall and adding vitality to one of the borough's major town centres with known workspace demand (Deptford/New Cross, Lewisham, Catford) but would not be effective for market-making.

Whenever possible, meanwhile use should be provided for at least five years (in terms of being open to tenants; not from when contracting and fit-out begins). This is because the operator will need sufficient time to recoup initial costs of getting a space user-ready and the payback will be affected by the overall level of rent received from their own tenants. Five years gives both the benefit of driving footfall and assisting with market-making, if needed, and allows tenants greater security.

Depending on the structure and integrity of a space, the landowner would be expected to pay for refurbishment and fit-out costs. As meanwhile uses are generally accepted to be providing a positive solution to the problem of underused space and a new offer for residents, it would also be expected that the operator receives a peppercorn rental agreement.

When assets become available for meanwhile use, Lewisham Council will work with operators to scope lease length options against factors such as local context, council ambitions for the area, future site plans and timelines, land ownership, and set-up costs.

2.2.2 Other meanwhile use considerations

The council and any delivery partners will need to be mindful of challenges such as:



- **Legacy and move-on space.** Even on shorter-term meanwhile leases, tenants can become embedded in local areas. Ensuring meanwhile tenants have local, permanent space lined up well ahead of the meanwhile term ending will help them retain local connections and resilience.
- **Communicating usage expectations.** It is important that the terms of meanwhile use (e.g. length of tenancy, plans for future redevelopment, opportunities for tenants to remain in any re-provided workspace) are communicated to operators, tenants, and wider communities. This is not just required at the start of a meanwhile project, but throughout its lifespan, as in many cases ‘meanwhile’ spaces end up remaining on site longer than expected due to delays with wider development or other circumstances.
- **Positioning operators as service providers:** Meanwhile use can deliver council objectives (as noted, increased footfall, cost savings, as well as changed perceptions of a place and new space for enterprise). Meanwhile operators should be recognised as service providers delivering against council aims, with rental agreements reflecting this role through peppercorn rent.
- **Communicating impact.** The council, operator, and any third-party asset owner must communicate and agree early in the process the desired social and economic impacts for occupying space at a discounted rate. These impacts must also be actively monitored for the duration of the lease. Clear and consistent planning and measurement of these benefits will be an important feature of all affordable workspace linked to the council, as it is necessary to support the council’s internal case for ‘under-valuing’ leases on its assets or committing resources.



2.3 HOW CAN WE DELIVER THE TYPES OF SPACES LEWISHAM NEEDS?

There are various methods for delivering workspace depending on the size and ownership of asset, target sectors or workspace typologies, resource available, and other factors. This section considers delivery approaches for four clusters of workspace:

1. Co-located space	2. Interim space	3. Long term space	4. Brokered space
Using available space in existing council assets (e.g. libraries, town hall, community centres) to house small-scale or informal workspaces (e.g. hotdesks, shared offices)	Using assets awaiting redevelopment or reuse—usually publicly-owned, sometimes privately-owned—to provide temporary workspace	Providing dedicated space in private or public assets through long-term leases	Matching private or third sector landlords with surplus space to businesses or operators who have approached the council looking for space
Short delivery timescale	Medium delivery timescale	Long delivery timescale	Ongoing delivery timescale
Medium priority: as opportunities arise	Higher priority: actively seek & prepare sites	Highest priority: actively seek & prepare sites	Lower priority: as opportunities arise and resourcing allows

The priority for the strategy will be to deliver affordable workspace that is available for the long-term (cluster 3). However, where affordable workspace delivery relies on future development or large-scale asset refurbishment, these spaces can take significant periods of time to be built. As such, the council will also need to act on other, more immediate opportunities, including meanwhile/interim provision (cluster 2), co-locating small-scale workspace with existing uses (cluster 1), and working with private- and third-sector partners to broker or create affordable workspace (cluster 4).

	Co-location	Interim space	Long term space	Brokerage
What?	Co-location of workspace in public sector assets where there might be spare capacity	Interim/meanwhile use of assets awaiting redevelopment	Dedicated long-term affordable workspace where there is a market failure in provision	Matching private or third sector landlords with surplus space to businesses or operators who have approached the council looking for space
Where?	Town centres in south/southeast of borough where formal workspace provision is lacking	Primarily Catford, but may be opportunities linked to development in Lewisham and other parts of borough	Most likely around existing Deptford/New Cross cluster, but seek opportunities in other areas, especially with good accessibility and demand (e.g. Lewisham, Forest Hill, Catford)	Borough-wide
In what buildings?	Public buildings: underused space on estates, underused community centres, The Bridge, non-V22 operated libraries with capacity	Mostly public, some private buildings: civic buildings, office space, vacant high street units	Mix of public and private buildings: civic and other council-owned buildings, space in new developments	Private buildings: underused space in offices, underused high street units, possible daytime use of restaurants and pubs
Workspace needs met (S2.1)	Informal spaces	Fixed office/studio spaces, rehearsal spaces	Fixed office/studio spaces, move-on space, kitchen spaces, rehearsal spaces	Informal spaces, fixed office/studio spaces
Space size	Small	Medium-large	Medium-large	Variable, likely small-medium

	Co-location	Interim space	Long term space	Brokerage
Via what route?	Asset register and service review, cross-council working	Meanwhile use strategy (as outlined in this document, but to be developed further); through the planning process	Through the planning process, whether on site or through off-site contributions. Potential through government funding, depending on future packages.	Partnerships with private or third sector organisations, e.g. Goldsmiths, Phoenix Community Housing, local businesses
Cost to council	Low. Operational costs, rates, staffing etc often covered through existing uses.	Medium-high. Site dependent, but would require investment for re-purposing to support specific sectors.	Low. Costs to sit with the operator if it's a long term lease/Full Repairing & Insuring (FRI) lease.	Cost of hiring/paying new staff, as likely to require additional staff to deliver this component
Investment options	Internal funding from council for co-location in their own buildings. Can justify the case through the revenue it could bring in.	Will require third-party funding (e.g. similar to Good Growth Fund, Levelling Up Fund) or borrowing. The council currently has around £1m of UK Shared Prosperity Fund for creative workspace.	In new schemes, require developers to fit the space to Cat B. For repurposing assets, options could include social investment (e.g. Big Issue Invest) or borrowing.	Potential to cover additional staff costs through new GLA or central government funding that may become available
Operational model	Delivered alongside other council services by the teams (e.g. Communities) who are already looking after those assets. Could develop a vehicle to do this, or capacity in council	Outcomes-based lease to a workspace operator, with achievable and measurable outcomes to be agreed with the operator.	Council could establish a Preferred Suppliers List (PSL) for established operators/those on the affordable workspace providers list, focusing on	Council would work with partners to promote the programme. Spaces could either be listed on a website (more resource intensive) or co-ordinated by an officer

	Co-location	Interim space	Long term space	Brokerage
	through a dedicated team member.		different sectors and council priorities It could also explore establishing a Socially Oriented Property Management Company (Soc-PMC).	who is aware of specific demand for space.
Sector supported	Very early stage enterprise of any sector, particularly those not ready for formal workspace	Creative, digital, IT, social enterprise, F&B consumption (depending on site)	Creative and social enterprises, F&B production/catering (depending on site)	Early stage businesses and freelancers. Also a route to support leaseholders who are struggling with trading conditions and costs.
Market making/failure	Market failure: there's no workspace in the south Market making: this will help develop a bottom-up approach to enterprise delivery and support in underserved areas	Market making: clustering around existing/nascent sectors above	Market failure: affordable provision needed to support creative and social enterprise as market rates unaffordable for many	Market making: helping to boost the supply of desk space for early stage businesses in the borough
Pros	Quick, low investment, low risk. Opportunity to serve the areas development doesn't/can't cater for and use the council's asset portfolio.	Market making, cost mitigation, retaining public assets	Safeguarding specific activity and communities of practice from displacement	Low level of capital investment required. Potential to deliver genuinely affordable space on flexible terms.

	Co-location	Interim space	Long term space	Brokerage
Cons/ challenges	Lack of specialist support and capacity	Can the investment required attract a high calibre operator response? How is the legacy of meanwhile use transitioned to long term use?	Can the developer and operator viability marry up?	Will require ongoing staff resource from the council to make it work
Next steps	Review asset register for vacancy or under use and options for co-location	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review asset registers of corporate and commercial portfolios and consider which vacancies would work as meanwhile opportunities. b. Implement affordable workspace provider list c. Develop a meanwhile use strategy that sits behind selection criteria and locks in assets for a particular use over a set time, ideally a minimum five year period 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a. Review development pipeline and identify opportunities for long-term affordable workspace b. Consider the role of CRPL in workspace c. Consider potential delivery partners/options 	<p>Liaise with major potential partners (e.g. Goldsmiths, Phoenix Community Housing) on opportunities within their portfolios.</p> <p>Longer term, review opportunities with individual businesses.</p>

3 ACTIONS

This section sets out actions required to begin delivering the Affordable Workspace Strategy, grouped into broad themes. The actions are informed by the strategy's objectives, the types of spaces Lewisham needs and how they can be delivered, and conversations with affordable workspace operators about what will enable more efficient operation and more effective delivery of workspace.

Abbreviation guide:

- AWS = Affordable Workspace Strategy
- LBLE = London Borough of Lewisham economy team
- LBL = London Borough of Lewisham
- AWF = Affordable Workspace Forum

Generally, the timescale for these actions is the short to medium term, but this action plan should be treated a live tool that is reviewed and updated regularly (as per 1.1 below).

3.1 SET INTERNAL COUNCIL COORDINATION AND STEWARDSHIP

The council’s current approach to affordable workspace is multifaceted and distributed, with different responsibilities and influence residing in different parts of the organisation. Moving forward, the council will need to clearly define and resource its internal coordination and stewardship arrangements in order to deliver on the ambitions and full potential of the Affordable Workspace Strategy.

#	Action	Who	When	Priority
1.1	Establish and commit the internal resources and relationships required within LBL to ‘own and coordinate’ the delivery of AWS actions as part of setting annual team budgets and workflows. These resources must effectively support actions under theme 2 and beyond. LBL’s commitment should be reviewed and re-committed annually.	LBL	Early 2023	High
1.2	Review AWS & actions together; adding or adapting actions as required.	LBL, AWF	At least annually	High

3.2 BUILD ON CURRENT PROJECTS

The Affordable Workspace Strategy affects and is affected by a wide range of activities, projects and strategies that are already underway in Lewisham. As such, it is important that the Strategy is actively considered within and is aligned with these (and vice-versa).

#	Action	Who	When	Priority
2.1	Determine remit/ambitions for the AWF in partnership with AWF members	LBLE, AWF	Early 2023, then reviewed annually	High
2.2	Review opportunities for CRPL to deliver workspace in Catford, particularly in sites that can likely be activated in the short term (e.g. Town Hall Chambers, Holbeach House)	LBLE, CRPL	2023/2024	High
2.3	Use £1m UKSPF to create and improve Lewisham workspaces	LBLE	Early 2023	High
2.4	Finalise requirements for the affordable provider list, collect applications, and promote providers on council website and other comms (see action 3.6)	LBLE	Early 2023	High
2.5	As part of the definition of the legacy of Lewisham's 'Borough of Culture', firm up the narrative and practical implications of legacy ambitions and commitments to the AWS.	LBLE, The Albany (delivery partner)	Early 2023	Medium
2.6	Continue working with STRIDE and the Creative Enterprise Zone to identify workspace threats and opportunities	LBLE, STRIDE	Ongoing	Medium

3.3 FORGE & ENABLE KEY RELATIONSHIPS

Having strong relationships within the council and with external parties is critical to delivering affordable workspace. An important task for the Strategy is to help build connections between workspace operators and a wider variety of council departments and other stakeholders. Essentially, the council needs to present a 'front desk' approach to managing relationships with external and internal parties, providing triage and coordination between various parties and activities (this links back to action 1.1).

#	Action	Who	When	Priority
3.1	Internal working: liaise with Business Rates to nominate a representative from that team to be an accessible and knowledgeable point of contact for workspace operators	LBLE, LBL Business Rates	2023	High
3.2	Internal working: present the AWS to colleagues from business rates, planning, property/assets, regeneration, and other relevant teams to ensure they are aware of its ambitions and their roles in supporting it	Various LBL departments	2023	High
3.3	Internal working: nominate representatives from planning, property/assets, regeneration, and other relevant teams to participate in internal meetings relating to workspace and be a point of contact for external workspace enquiries	Various LBL departments	2023	Medium
3.4	Internal working: work with Business Rates team to improve processes for handing workspace-related rates	LBLE, LBL Business Rates, AWF	2023	High
3.5	External working: connect with institutions and housing associations to review opportunities for workspace delivery	LBLE, Goldsmiths, Phoenix CH	Late 2023/early 2024	Medium
3.6	External working: promote affordable workspace to developers, such as by implementing the affordable provider list or inviting developers to attend all or part of AWF sessions	LBLE	Ongoing	Medium
3.7	External working: invite council workspace reps to attend AWF meetings and connect with operator representatives	Various LBL departments	Ongoing	Medium
3.8	External working: build a signposting/info database on council website with a directory of Lewisham workspaces and affordable providers, info for residents on pathways into workspace, and other options for business support	LBLE	2024	Low
3.9	External working: create 'business rates in brief' information sheet for workspace tenants on business rates triggers, relief application processes, and council contact info	LBLE, LBL Business Rates	2024	Low

#	Action	Who	When	Priority
3.10	External working: support projects from workspace operators that align with council aims regarding economic, social, and wellbeing outcomes	LBLE, AWF	Ongoing	Medium

3.4 MAKE THE MOST OF DEVELOPMENT

There is strong appetite for affordable workspace from many directions. The borough's affordable workspaces are facing high and consistent demand from prospective tenants; operators are keen to take on new spaces; the council wants to deliver new workspaces that can help achieve inclusive economic growth; and increasingly developers recognise the value of affordable workspace for placemaking and footfall for commercial schemes.

There are also several commercial developments in coming years that will trigger affordable workspace requirements and council-owned spaces that could be repurposed. These actions will help place the council in a stronger position to capitalise on development.

Through the planning system and in accordance with Lewisham's Local Plan, the council has a range of opportunities to explore, test and develop to deliver against the Strategy. These could include commitments secured within Section 106 agreements, approaches to the pre-application process, co-designing proposed workspace with the AWF, safeguarding land for workspace, or defining arrangements for space brokerage or meanwhile use. This exploration and development of new approaches will be an iterative process over time.

#	Action	Who	When	Priority
4.1	When needed invite developers building workspace to attend AWF and engage AWF members as expert advisors on aspects such as space/fit-out requirements	LBLE, AWF	Ongoing	High
4.2	Develop a separate meanwhile space strategy to guide interim uses on sites awaiting development	LBLE	Late 2023	Medium
4.3	Work with the planning team to review the Planning Obligations SPD to embed the principles/directions of the AWS	LBLE, LBL Planning	2023/2024	High
4.4	Explore and define the role of planning policy and approach in safeguarding or fully re-providing workspace at risk of redevelopment	LBLE, LBL Planning	2023/2024	High

#	Action	Who	When	Priority
4.5	Work with developers who have schemes underway to write affordable workspace into Section 106 agreements, whether for on-site delivery or as payment in lieu	LBLE, LBL Planning	2023/2024	High
4.6	Negotiate with developers who have schemes coming forward on expectations regarding affordable workspace delivery	LBLE, LBL Planning	2023/2024	High

3.5 PREPARE FOR FUTURE NEEDS

Demand for affordable workspace has not waned in recent years, despite a pandemic and a cost of living crisis, and can only be expected to continue into the future. The council needs to provide new space to meet this demand, but also be mindful of spaces at risk of being lost due to reaching the end of their usable lifecycle or redevelopment.

#	Action	Who	When	Priority
5.1	Review feasibility of repurposing council property for affordable workspace, particularly spaces identified in S2.1	LBLE, LBL Property	2023	High
5.2	Work with CRPL to repurpose sites in Catford (see action 2.2)	LBLE, CRPL	2023/2024	High
5.3	Review development pipeline for opportunities to accommodate the spaces identified in S2.1	LBLE, LBL Planning	Ongoing	High
5.4	Review the borough's workspace stock to understand: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improvements needed to make buildings sustainable/energy efficient, and which buildings are most in need Building ownership Buildings that are reaching the end of their useable lifecycle, and options for re-providing or safeguarding space With a view to helping operators and operator-landowners access funding or financing to undertake improvements	LBLE, AWF	2024	Medium

3.6 TRY NEW APPROACHES

A growing number of London boroughs are developing affordable workspace strategies and experimenting with new ways of delivering affordable space. The council can try approaches other boroughs have successfully implemented and consider setting a precedent with new methods of their own.

#	Action	Who	When	Priority
6.1	Review options to help operators access low-cost financing, e.g. council taking on low-cost loans and making available to trusted operators looking to purchase or refurbish space	LBLE, LBL Section 151 Officer	2023	Medium
6.2	Work with CRPL to reactivate privately-owned high street units, e.g. Rushey Green vacant former bank sites. An example from elsewhere is RB Kensington & Chelsea's move to secure a private unit on a high street for use by its Youth Parliament. It intends to use GLA Good Growth Funding to fit out the space for meanwhile use and to take on facilities management responsibilities in exchange for a peppercorn rental arrangement.	LBLE, CRPL	2023	Medium
6.3	Work with Planning to source precedents and establish parameters for off-site Section 106 contributions, re-directing support to other neighbourhoods where there is a clear case to do so. LB Camden is currently exploring this approach.	LBLE, LBL Planning	2023	High

3.7 IMPLEMENT A FRAMEWORK FOR IMPACT AND MEASUREMENT

In order to make bold and confident decisions about how assets in the borough can enable genuinely affordable workspace and associated local economic and social benefits, the council needs to be confident in both the case for intervention and the impacts that are attributable to intervention. This will require a more robust, consistent and pervasive approach to determining what impact any council-supported workspace is expected to deliver, as well as approaches to measuring and reporting impact and outcomes.

No two projects are identical and outcomes will vary among them, but having a consistent approach to the process of setting targets, monitoring performance and evaluation will be of benefit to Lewisham. Having information from these measuring and reporting exercises

will give the council clearer evidence about how providing space at affordable levels translates into wider social, economic, and financial outcomes.

#	Action	Who	When	Priority
7.1	Develop a cogent and consistent framework approach to measures of success across all of Lewisham’s diverse affordable workspace projects, which encompasses both target-setting and active monitoring and reporting	LBLE	2023	Medium
7.2	Develop and implement ‘Outcomes-Based Leasing’ (OBL) models to instil within lease arrangements or supporting schedules the principles and practices required for translating discounts against market terms into investments in local social and economic outcomes.	LBLE, LBL Property	2023	Medium

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Acme: Jack Fortescue

The Albany: Carolyn Ehman

Arbeit: Nimrod Vardi

Artistic Spaces: David Fox

Bow Arts: Joss Taylor & Marcel Baettig

Facework: Stephen Carrick-Davis

Goldsmiths, University of London: Sandra Marcantuono & Tom Steer

London Borough of Brent: Bruna Varante

London Borough of Hackney: Anne Malcolm, Andrew Scott, Caroline Westhart & Lucy Marie Ed-Johnson

London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham: Sarah Dixey

Meanwhile Space: Mitra Mohammadi & Pete Baldwin

Mother House Studios: Dyana Gravina

Phoenix Community Housing: David Westworth, Denise Fowler, Lesley Johnson

Second Floor Studios & Arts: Matthew Wood & Nichole Herbert Wood

SET Studios: Roland Fischer-Vousden

STRIDE: Brodie Turner & Nicola Whyte

V22: Simon Higgs



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