Unlocking Laboratory Space for the North East Life Sciences Sector

North East Combined Authority | Kim McGuinness North East Mayor

Executive Summary

The North East of England is home to a thriving and expanding life sciences cluster, supported by world-class research institutions, innovative businesses, and a strong culture of collaboration. However, a critical barrier to growth is the shortage of suitable laboratory space for companies at all stages, from spin-outs needing incubation to established firms expanding their operations.

With limited purpose-built laboratory space available and immediate demand from prospective occupiers, the North East Combined Authority (North East CA) has a unique opportunity to address this challenge by supporting the conversion and adaptation of underutilised or vacant property into high-quality, flexible lab space.

This report explores the market demand, technical considerations, and strategic interventions needed to unlock supply, drawing on stakeholder feedback and industry expertise. It also considers the UK Industrial Strategy's place-based growth principles, and the priorities set out in the UK Life Science Sector Plan, alongside the ambitions for innovation-led economic development North East Local Growth Plan's.

Key Recommendations

- **Accelerate conversion projects** by supporting the rapid adaptation of suitable vacant spaces into high-quality, flexible laboratory facilities that meet the needs of businesses at all growth stages.
- **Encourage flexible leasing models** that reduce upfront risk for early-stage and scaling companies, enabling them to access fit-for-purpose space without prohibitive long-term commitments.
- **Develop a shared infrastructure framework** including common utilities, equipment pools, and modular lab layouts to lower costs for occupiers and incentivise landlord participation.
- **Establish a single "front door" via the North East CA website** to help companies access support in finding suitable life sciences property or advice for their own conversion projects. This should provide access to the tools developed through this project and direct connections to the regional business support hub and local experts in design and developments; including Ryder Architecture and Naylors Gavin Black, who have committed to offering initial support free of charge.
- **Promote and share case studies, guidance, and success stories** to de-risk development for landlords, inform fit-out decisions for life sciences companies, and inspire further investment in the sector.
- **Launch a communications campaign** to publicise the findings of this report, raise awareness of available tools, and signal the North East's readiness for growth to potential investors and occupiers.

Background and Introduction

The North East Combined Authority's Local Growth Plan, alongside the recently published Life Science Sector Plan (2025), identifies life sciences as a priority sector with the potential to deliver high-value jobs, attract inward investment, and contribute to inclusive economic growth. The Sector Plan provides a shared regional vision for doubling the sector's economic output by 2035 and highlights the urgent need to expand laboratory capacity. This aligns with the UK Industrial Strategy, which emphasises the importance of 'Ideas' and 'Place', building regional strengths and ensuring every area contributes to national prosperity.

The UK is a global leader in healthcare and life sciences, second only to the USA in attracting inward investment. Historically concentrated in the 'Golden Triangle' (London, Oxford, Cambridge), investment is now flowing to emerging innovation ecosystems such as Newcastle, driven by the research excellence of institutions like local universities and NHS Trusts.

The North East's life sciences sector benefits from a mix of innovation centres, specialist facilities, and private-sector laboratories. However, there is a shortage of accessible, flexible, multi-tenant space for companies at different stages of growth.

In the Invest Newcastle and Invest North East England Laboratory Space Feasibility Study 2023, the viability of converting existing vacant premises was explored. The study included retail and office space conversions, into lab space to bridge this property gap.

This report builds on that study by:

- Presenting current property data and market demand insights.
- Identifying suitable vacant properties for conversion into lab spaces.
- Presenting findings from sector engagement, better understanding the needs of life sciences businesses and the requirements of landlords and property developers.
- Providing tools to assist life sciences companies to develop their own lab space.
- Giving recommendations for next steps.

To ensure that these recommendations are grounded in both evidence and practical feasibility, a structured methodology was adopted.

Methodology

The development of this report followed a multi-stage process designed to combine market intelligence, stakeholder insight, and technical feasibility:

1. **Desk-based research** – Review of regional property availability, past feasibility studies (including the 2023 Ryder Architecture report), and relevant policy documents such as the North East Local Growth Plan, UK Industrial Strategy, and Life Sciences Sector Plan (2025).
2. **Property market analysis** – Partnership with Naylors Gavin Black to identify and assess vacant properties across the region against key laboratory specification requirements, location factors, and potential for flexible adaptation.
3. **Stakeholder engagement** – One-to-one interviews and a dedicated engagement event with life sciences businesses, landlords, developers, construction professionals and local authorities to gather qualitative insights on current market challenges, opportunities, and barriers.
4. **Case study development** – Real-world examples where life sciences companies successfully repurposed existing buildings, capturing lessons learned and highlighting replicable approaches.
5. **Practical guidance creation** – Produce a Guide to Finding and Fitting Out Lab Space in collaboration with industry experts and experienced life sciences companies, outlining the typical fit-out journey and key professional services to engage.
6. **Synthesis and recommendations** – Integration of data, market analysis, and stakeholder feedback to form a targeted set of interventions and actions tailored to the North East's growth ambitions.

Current Laboratory Space Landscape in the North East

The Life Science Sector Plan recognises the lack of scalable laboratory facilities as a critical barrier to the region's ambition of doubling the sector's GVA by 2035. The current distribution of assets demonstrates strong innovation capability but also reveals a pressing need for adaptable, accessible, and well-connected laboratory environments to support the growth ambitions set out in both national and regional strategies.

Types of laboratory space currently available:

- Innovation and technology parks – Sites such as NETPark in Sedgefield, Newcastle Helix provide a range of sector-relevant spaces. However, many are tailored to specific industrial applications or anchor tenants, limiting general availability
- Commercial laboratory buildings – The Biosphere in Newcastle, provides high-specification lab space alongside offices and collaboration areas. It is well occupied and demand for labs in the facility is high, but the price point and contracting can be prohibitive for some companies.
- Private sector and specialist labs – A small number of privately run laboratories exist in the region, often within manufacturing or life sciences companies. These tend to be single-user spaces, with few operating as multi-tenant facilities and University facilities – There are spaces within both estates that are underutilised that have established infrastructure that could be adapted to meet varying needs.

Key gaps and challenges:

- Shortage of small-scale lab space for early-stage businesses graduating from incubators.
- Limited flexible/modular provision to support frictionless expansion within the same site.
- Low visibility of available lab space, making it difficult for potential occupiers to identify suitable premises.
- Incubator space – needed
- Landlords / developer concern on prospective tenants' company strength and fit out specification.

Vacant Properties in the North East with Potential for Conversion

Unlocking laboratory space in the short to medium term will rely heavily on making better use of the region's existing building stock. While new-build laboratories remain important for long-term growth, the immediate opportunity lies in identifying underused commercial space that can be adapted for life sciences use. This approach supports the Life Sciences Sector Plan's call for infrastructure investment that can deliver rapid capacity expansion.

Requirements and Specification

To support the analysis within this report, Ryder Architecture has developed the following set of laboratory specifications and requirements. These principles outline the core spatial, technical and servicing needs of modern laboratories. They form the basis for evaluating how well existing buildings can be adapted for life sciences activity.

Any facility supporting laboratories will need to cater for a range of tenants.

Laboratory space standards are derived from lab bench modules, circulation aisle spacing and specialist equipment such as fume cupboards. The typical arrangement provides clearly defined zones. The traditional model provides access to laboratories through writeup areas which act as anterooms improving security and privacy. The anteroom can be configured to include for gowning, eye wash and emergency showers. It is to be noted that writeup areas integrated into laboratories spaces are becoming more common.

Traditionally laboratories have been categorised as wet or dry. Dry labs being IT rich spaces where testing and analysis is performed using data, coding, and computer systems. Wet laboratories tend to test and analyse physical samples, chemicals, and liquids, requiring water supply and disposal systems for biohazards. With the rapid growth of AI, the space requirement boundaries between the two have become more blurred.

Both now generally demand the following considerations:

- IT rich with multiple data ports
- Power
- Humidity and temperature control
- Fire suppression system
- Acoustic control
- Vibration criteria
- Emergency power

More specialist demands include:

- Water supply and drainage systems
- Purified water supply
- Disposal of hazardous materials
- Dust Suppression
- Refrigeration
- Shower and eyewash
- Ventilation systems for fume cupboards

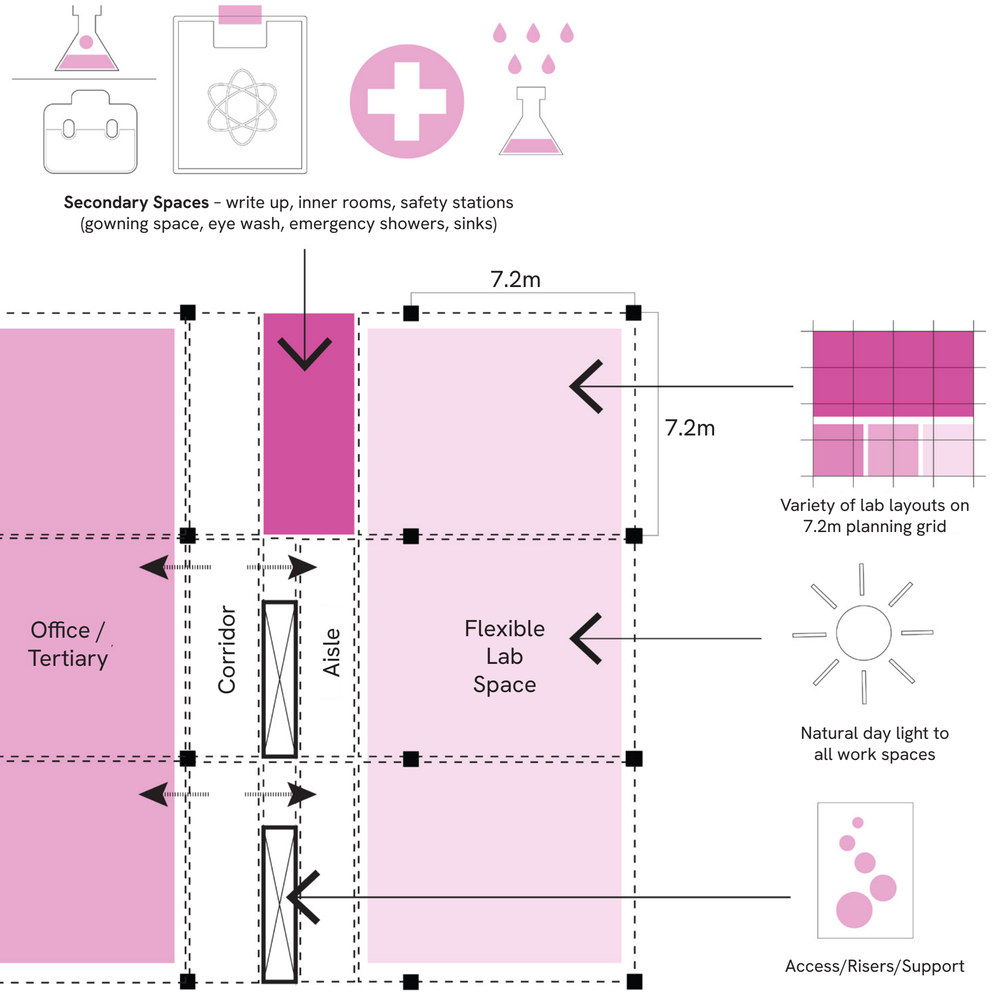
For any laboratory building for multiple tenants, infrastructure is ultimately determined by what is practicable for the spaces under consideration and their daily demands. Where feasible, specialist and highly serviced areas are centralised to meet ad hoc demands.

Chemistry

- Large, chemical resistant work benches that include gas, water, power, and data.
- Ventilation through fume hoods and ventilation systems.
- Emergency showers, eyewash station, fire extinguishers.
- Storage for chemicals and reagents.
- Storage cabinets designed to separate incompatible chemicals and prevent contamination.
- Chemical waste that needs to be handled and disposed of appropriately.
- Often require clear separation of workspaces to avoid cross contamination or accidental mixing of chemicals.

Biology

- Flexible workspaces to accommodate different types of experiments.
- Benches should have smooth surfaces to allow for easy cleaning and to avoid contamination.
- Ventilation generally less demanding than chemistry.
- Biosafety cabinets for handling infectious materials.
- Storage for biological samples, cell cultures and equipment like centrifuges and microscopes.
- Specialised refrigeration
- Biological waste disposal including autoclaving or incineration to be considered.
- Laboratory space more open layout to encourage shared projects and collaboration.



Co working

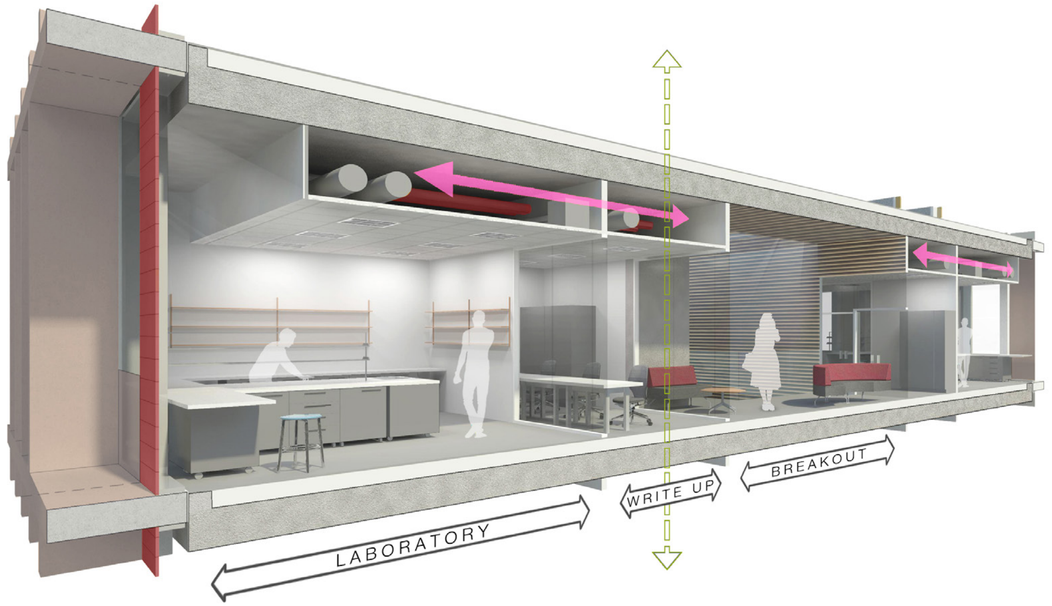
- Flexible space
- Dedicated laboratory workstations, write up desks, and communal access to lab kit and essential services.
- Dedicated coworking bench, tissue culture bench and fume cupboards.

Laboratory Grammar and language

If we are in control of the spaces we create, we would follow the rules below. When judging existing spaces and applying the same rules these metrics need to be balanced and not dismissed if the space does not meet all the criteria.

Structural grid

A repeatable 300mm modular grid between 6,600mm and 9,000mm enables an optimum laboratory layout and allows space for fume cupboards, 750mm deep perimeter and island benching with services trunking and shelving.



Floor to floor

A minimum of 4,000mm between floors is desirable and flat slabs construction is ideal to optimised service distribution however not essential. Raised access floors should be avoided to maintain vibration performance and cleanliness but can be facilitated if the best way to manage small power and data distribution.

Services

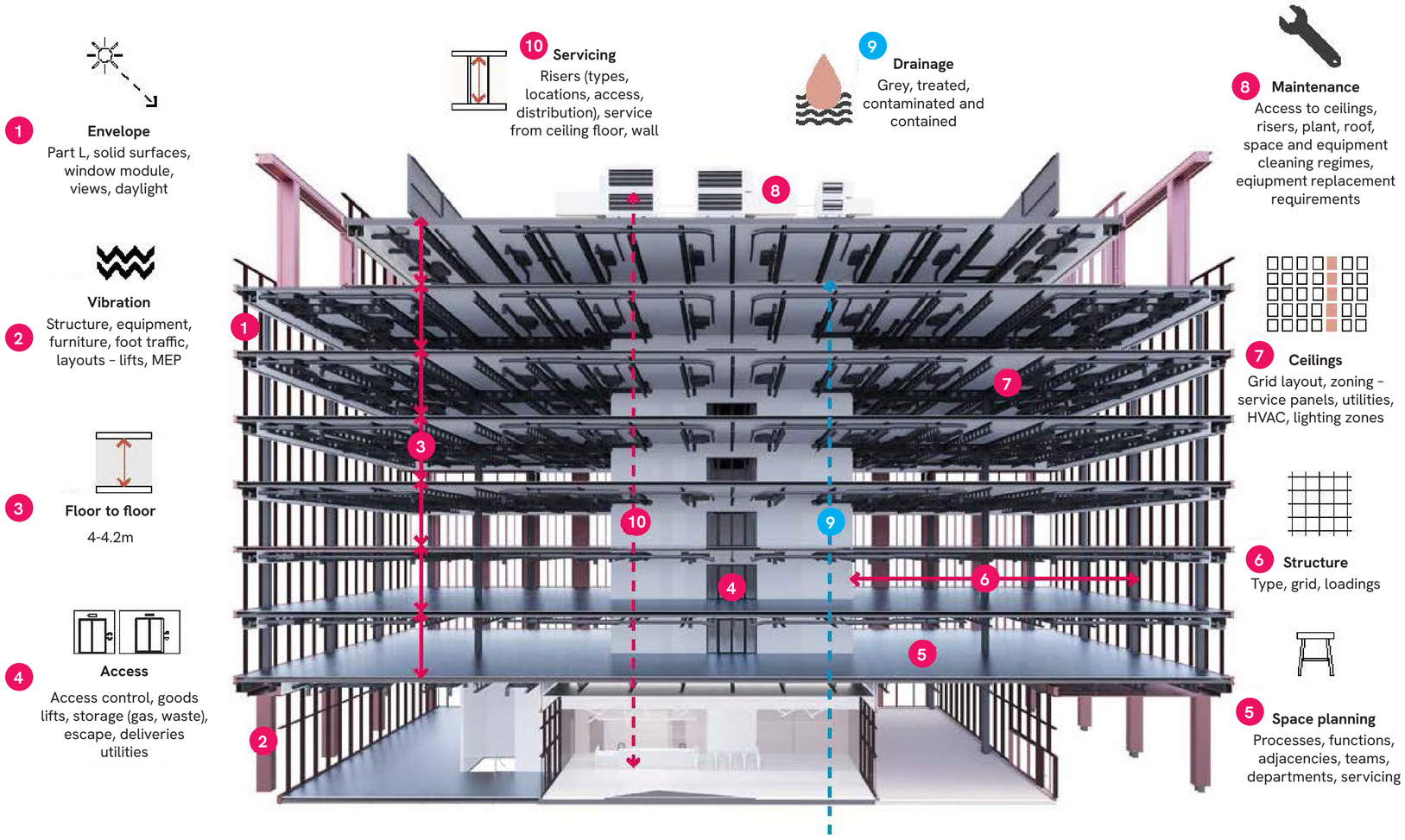
Modular services, adequately sized service risers to provide tenants with the flexibility to 'plug in' to suit their needs. Access to service risers should be outside the tenant demise. Ceiling zones generally demand a clear depth between 800 - 1000mm for MEP services with a nominal 100mm ceiling zone below. Chemistry focused laboratories may require a deeper ceiling void to accommodate large ventilation ductwork.

Structure

Floors will be required to meet the required dead and live loads. The building will need to adhere to appropriate vibration criteria. Options for upgrading the vibration performance in existing buildings include, adding columns to reduce spans, providing isolation for individual pieces of equipment, or increasing screed thickness.

Write up

Ideally each laboratory should be located alongside a write up area. As a guide, the ratio of write up space to laboratory space should be one third write up to two thirds lab space. The laboratory should be accessed directly from the write up area. An element of glazing should be incorporated between the two to aid supervision and safety. However, if space is at a premium, small laboratories with integrated write up areas are very effective.



Benching

Benching should consist of a mixture of fixed height units, or units with manual or motorised height adjustable working surfaces. A combination of 750mm and 900mm deep benching will accommodate larger benchtop equipment or additional aisle space as required.

Under bench storage should be on castors to maximise flexibility. Vibration isolating benching may also be required locally for certain operations.

Benching will typically be served from the ceilings via a service drops or from the wall via dado trunking.

Equipment

Laboratories need to be test fitted considering the amount of fixed laboratory benching, under bench storage cabinets, sinks, safety stations, coat hooks.

Fume cupboards and working spaces need to be considered which will depend upon us requirements. Typically, biology fume cupboards are 1200mm and chemistry 1800mm.

Finishes

Generally, finishes should be smooth, impervious, robust and durable, easy to maintain, and hygienic.

Flooring in laboratory areas should be seamless. The optimum solution is epoxy resin, with a 5mm bund provided at every laboratory door. Vinyl solutions are available but are less durable.

Ceilings are generally best to be suspended, hygienic or metal ceiling tiles to enable controlled access to services in ceiling voids. Ceiling systems to have concealed grids in a 1200 x 600mm module with integrated light fitting. Optimising floor to ceiling heights is desirable, 2,700mm and above provide excellent working environments.

All partitions should have a paint finish consisting of a polyurethane coating, preferably white RAL 9010. Dark colours are to be avoided.

Internal screens and glazed partition panels make for effective working environments, and promote visibility when required between laboratories, corridors, and offices. All sills should be set at 1,300mm to allow for benching and dado trunking, with easy access for cleaning.

Doors into laboratories should be a minimum of 2,100mm height, have large vision panels and a minimum clear width of 1,700mm. It is beneficial to have removable over panels providing 2,700mm clear height to accommodate movement of equipment including lifting and transporting devices.

Access

A goods lift will be required with suitable load capacity. The lift, car and door should be sized to accommodate typical laboratory furniture and have robust finishes. Controls should allow for unoccupied usage, when transporting cryogens or bottled gas for example.

All laboratory spaces should have access controls.

Ventilation strategy

All laboratories should be self-contained. It is essential that there is no cross contamination between spaces. Laboratories need a pressurisation regime and a tested fume exhaust strategy prior to use.

Drainage

Laboratory waste must be in separate drainage runs from the domestic foul drainage. Existing buildings can be retrofitted by coring holes through slabs and breaking out sections of the ground floor slab to install the new below ground networks.

Gas bottle storage

Gas bottles must be stored in a secure store area. Tenant companies are typically responsible for the management of their own needs, and gas bottles that are in use will be located within their demised.

Plant

A large plant area will be required. This is best located at roof level in an enclosure if feasible supplemented by an element of externally placed equipment. Depending on requirements, this level is a great place to locate a freezer farm, where tenants can securely locate -80 degree freezers and other powered equipment reducing demand for space within laboratories and energy for cooling if in occupied spaces.

Metering strategy

A metering infrastructure that breaks usage down per demise enables accurate recharging costs to tenants.

Standby power generator

The facility should have sufficient standby power generation capacity to ensure all essential laboratory equipment can be sustained during a power cut.

Assessment Criteria

Repurposing vacant or underused buildings offers one of the quickest and most cost-effective ways to increase laboratory capacity in the region.

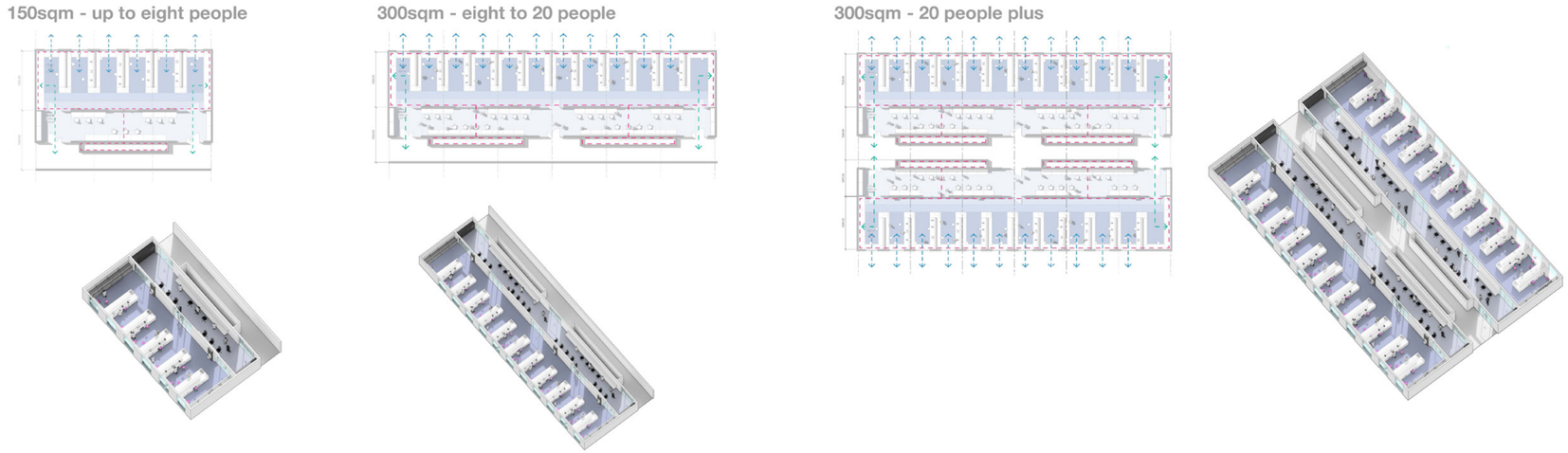
To simplify this process for companies and developers, it is essential to identify properties with strong potential for conversion. Naylors Gavin Black therefore conducted a structured assessment of the North East property market, evaluating available sites against a series of criteria:

Location

Priority was given to sites with an existing or emerging connection to the life sciences sector, ensuring that future laboratory space can benefit from, and contribute to, established regional ecosystems.

Specification

Using the laboratory guidelines developed by Ryder Architecture, each property was reviewed to determine how closely it aligns with core technical requirements.



Empty property with potential for repurposing

Size

Buildings were assessed for the scale of laboratory accommodation they could provide, including anticipated headcount and the footprint suitable for lab use.

Status

Each site was categorised based on its current position in the market - available, under development, or undergoing refurbishment.

Current Use

Existing uses were recorded to help prospective occupiers understand baseline building conditions and anticipate potential fit-out requirements.

This assessment produced a comprehensive shortlist of properties with strong potential for conversion, offering a valuable starting point for life sciences companies and developers seeking to create new laboratory space in the region. This information will be stored and regularly updated by the North East Business Support Hub at the North East Combined Authority.

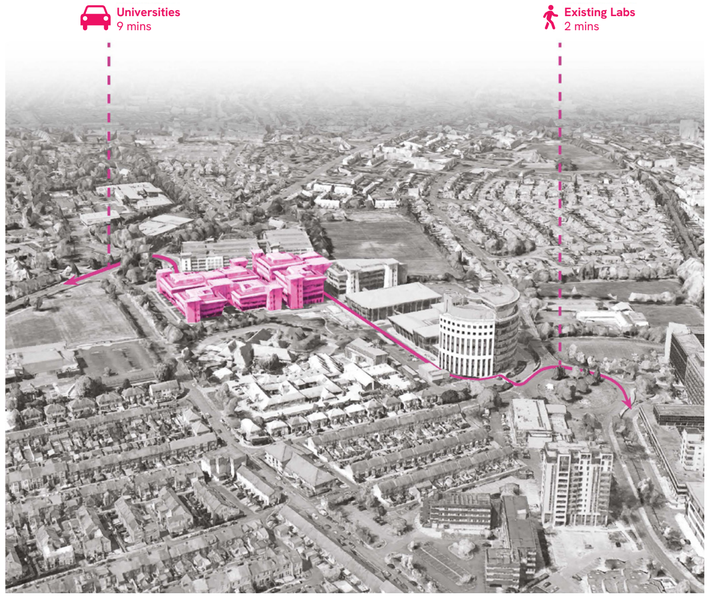
Property Case Studies

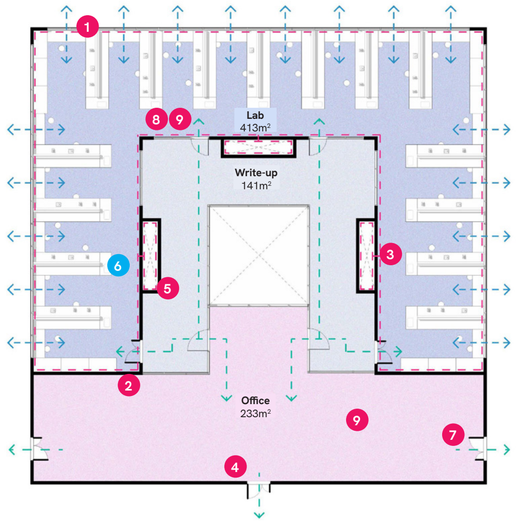
To help visualise how vacant or underused properties could be repurposed into modern laboratory facilities, Ryder Architecture has developed a series of illustrative property case studies. These examples are based on real buildings identified during the market assessment and demonstrate the design potential, layout possibilities, and infrastructure adaptations required. They are intended to inspire both developers and life sciences businesses to see the potential in existing assets.

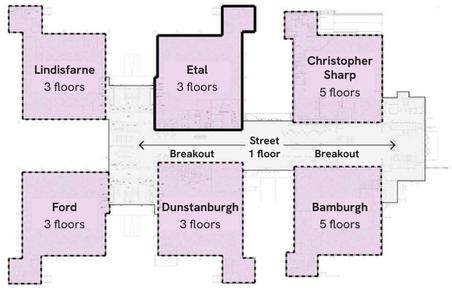
Virgin Money

There is an opportunity to repurpose a large proportion of the existing Virgin Money office suite in Gosforth. The total extent of the identified space for refurbishment is approximately 26,490sqm across five floors.

The space comprises of several interconnected buildings: Christopher Sharp, Bamburgh, Etal, Dunstanburgh, Lindisfarne, and Ford. The six buildings are attached to a central spine known as 'The Street', with dedicated circulation cores to each. The floorplates are large open plan spaces with perimeter glazing, and the floor to floor heights are sufficient to accommodate laboratories. The entire campus is surrounded by well landscaped gardens, with good access links to the surrounding area, Gosforth, and the wider city.







1 Envelope
Existing windows for natural daylight

2 Vibration
Existing structure will require improvements tor vibration performance

3 Ceiling Height TBC
Adequate ceiling heights for service routes

4 Access
Large lifts to access floorplates but no good lifts for transporting equipment

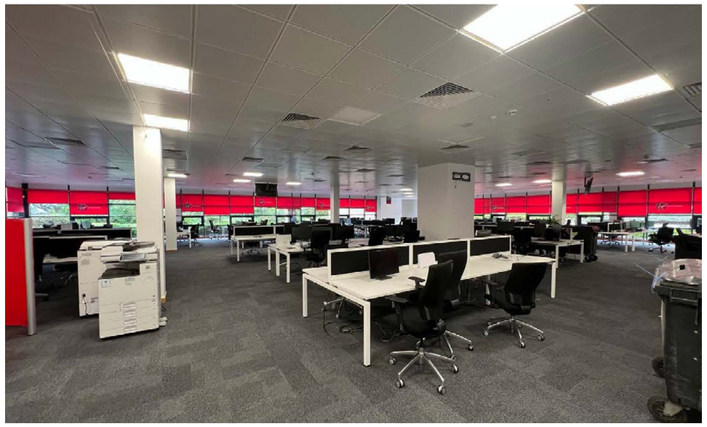
5 Servicing
Servicing route not clear –will require improvements and potential redistribution

6 Drainage
Drainage improvements required for contaminated waste

7 Maintenance
Maintenance access to be reviewed

8 Ceilings
Existing lay-in grid ceilings may need to be replaced

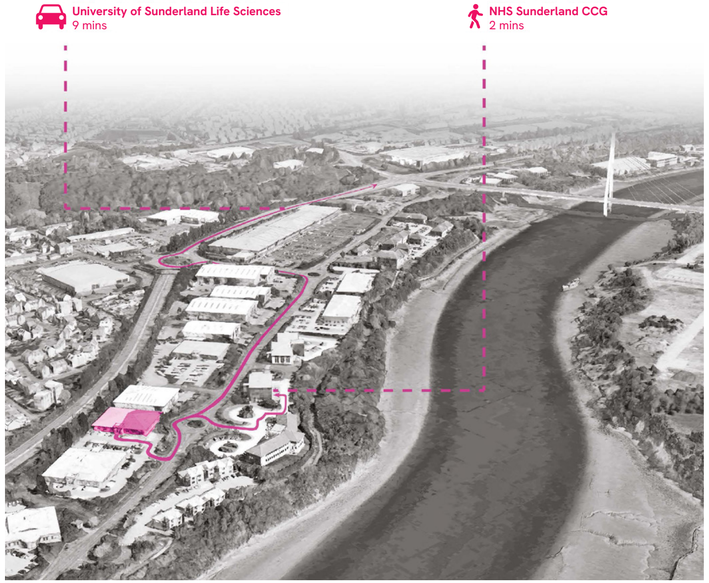
9 Space Planning
Open plan spaces, column spans not restrictive

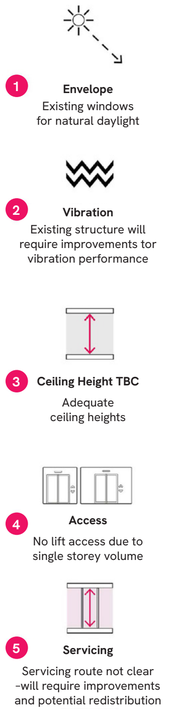


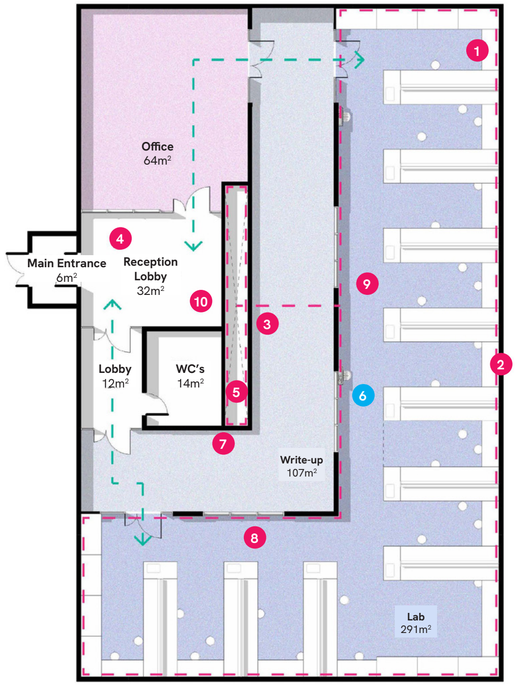
Colima Avenue

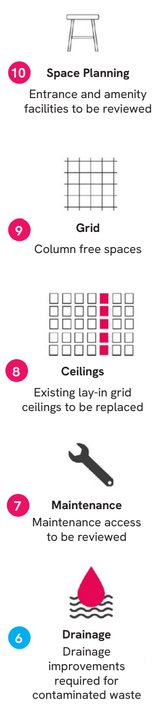
Vernon Holdings are the owner of Unit 2B Colima Avenue. They are a property investment group with a portfolio spanning the length of the UK. The possibility of lab space is of interest to the client, as the unit is open plan and could easily be converted to suit a potential occupier.

In addition to this, the Sunderland out of town office market has quietened down, so a new angle of lab space will hope to bring the business parks back to life.



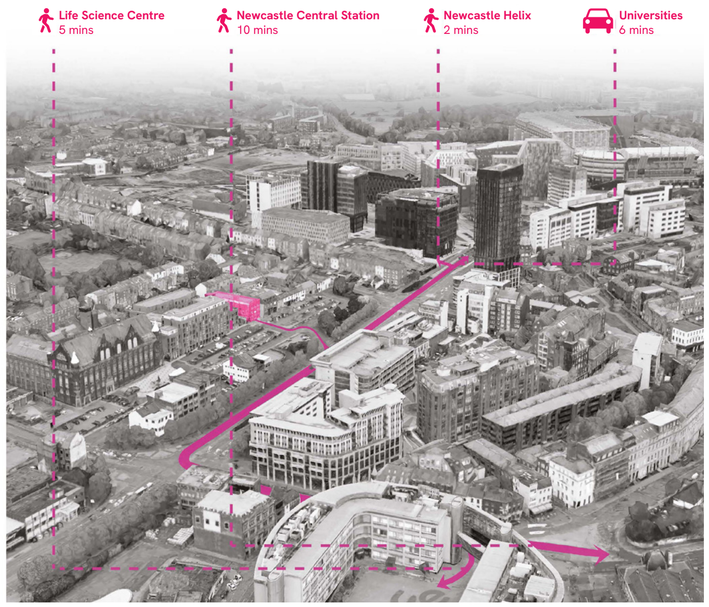


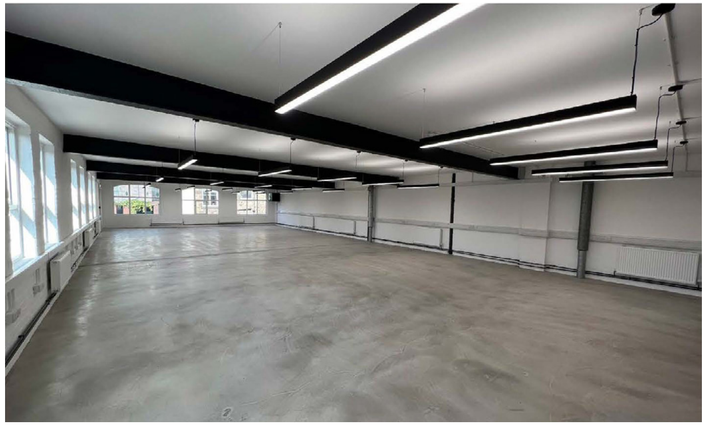




Blandford Studios

Blandford Studios are owned by local property development company Hanro. Following discussions around the topic of lab space they would be very keen to explore the possibilities with this. The close proximity to the Helix offers a great alternative for high quality lab space, and with the new refurbishment, Blandford Studios offer the same high-quality option at a lower rental cost.

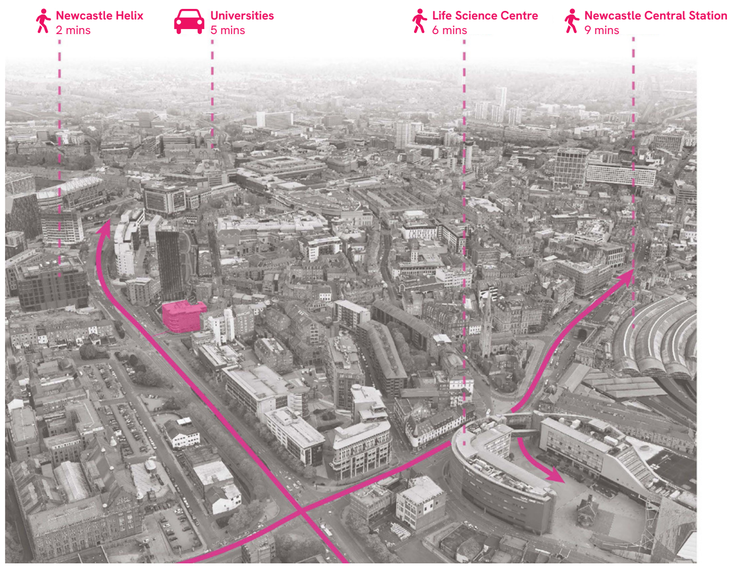




Nexus House

Nexus House is a five-storey, 29,000 sq. ft office building offered with vacant possession in the heart of Newcastle city centre. It benefits from excellent end of journey facilities, including onsite parking, secure cycle storage, and showers.

Located just west of the city centre, the property is a short walk from Newcastle Central Station, Monument Metro, and Haymarket Bus and Metro stations. The building's large open plan floorplates are well suited for lab space, with associated write-up areas and open plan office opportunities. Nexus House is also close to Newcastle University, Northumbria University, the Centre for Life, and the Royal Victoria Infirmary.



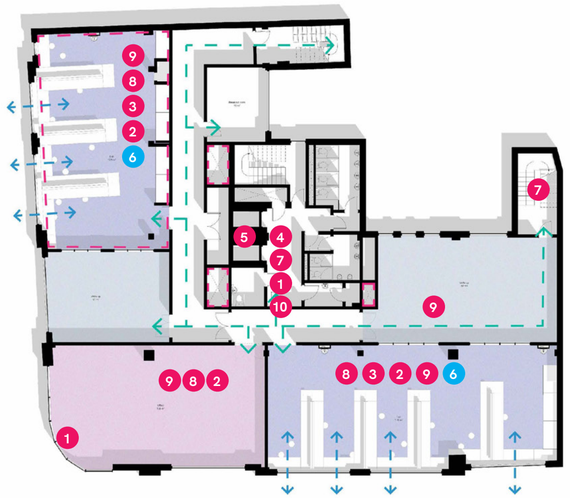
1 **Envelope**
Existing windows for natural daylight

2 **Vibration**
Existing structure will require improvements tor vibration performance

3 **Ceiling Height TBC**
Inadequate ceiling heights may compromise service routes

4 **Access**
Accessible via lifts

5 **Servicing**
Servicing route will require improvements and potential redistribution



6 **Drainage**
Drainage improvements required for contaminated waste

7 **Maintenance**
Maintenance access to be reviewed

8 **Ceilings**
Existing lay-in grid ceilings to be replaced

9 **Grid**
Column free spaces

10 **Space Planning**
Entrance and amenity facilities to be reviewed

Company Case Studies

Alongside the property examples, it is equally important to showcase the experiences of life sciences companies that have already taken the step to repurpose their own facilities. These case studies provide valuable insight into the decision-making process, the practical challenges encountered, and the benefits realised after conversion. They highlight the adaptability and resilience of North East businesses, as well as the role of supportive ecosystems in making such projects viable.

The following companies gave their experiences:

AELIUS™ BIOTECH

FibroFind

INVENIREX

LIGHTOX

QuantuMD

Across all five case studies, the following shared set of barriers and success factors emerge, illustrating the region's pressing need for adaptable lab space and the practical solutions companies are already adopting:

1. Unmet Demand for Flexible, Affordable Lab Space

All companies struggled to secure suitable laboratory facilities. Existing sites were often full, too costly, overspecified, or inflexible, particularly for SMEs and spin-outs.

2. Repurposing Existing Buildings Works Well and Delivers Value

Each company successfully converted non-traditional premises (industrial units, former offices, music venues, call centres) into effective labs. Typically, this was faster, cheaper, and more customisable than purpose-built options.

3. Better Understanding of Lab Requirements Is Needed Among Landlords and Contractors

Multiple companies highlighted that property owners and contractors tend to overspecify or overestimate regulatory complexity, creating avoidable barriers.

4. Location Matters: City Clusters Are Valuable but Non-City Sites Offer Space & Value

Most firms benefited from being close to universities and research infrastructure, but LightOx also showed that non-city sites can deliver better value, space and logistics without losing access to the regional ecosystem.

5. Specialist Support Greatly Reduces Risk, Cost and Delay

Companies that used experienced lab designers, H&S advisors, or sector-aware contractors benefited from smoother delivery and compliance.

6. DIY and Tailored Fit-Out Approaches Help Start-Ups Control Cost

Several companies benefitted from low-cost, customised, or DIY lab creation, enabling compliance on limited budgets and greater operational flexibility.

7. The North East Provides Strong Regional Advantages

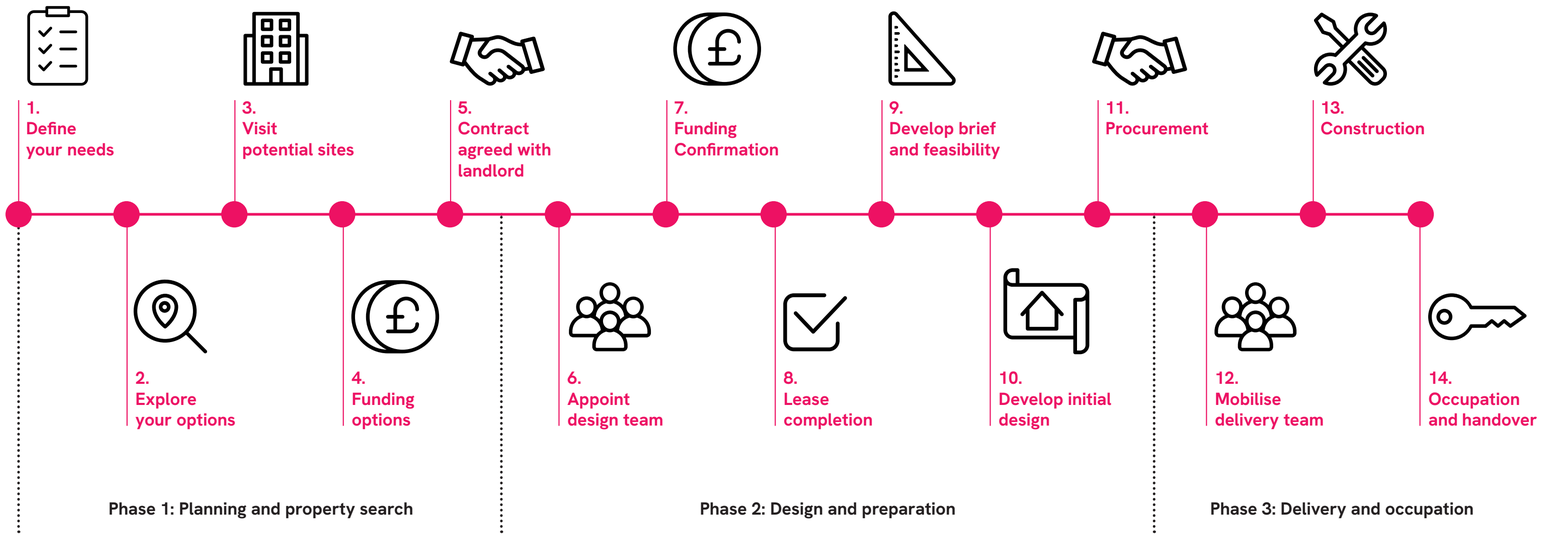
All companies highlighted the region's strengths:

- skilled talent pipeline from universities
- collaborative networks
- lower cost base compared to UK life sciences hotspots
- good transport connectivity

Full case studies can be found here.

Guide to finding and fitting out lab space

To support companies looking to develop their own lab space, a practical guide has been created – A Guide to Finding and Fitting Out Lab Space was developed through consultation with building industry professionals and life sciences companies experienced in laboratory fit-outs. The guide maps the typical journey a company might take when embarking on a fit-out project and signposts the professional services that should be engaged at each stage summarised here.



Engagement findings

As part of developing this report, market engagement was undertaken through a combination of one-to-one interviews and a well-attended stakeholder event. The insights gathered from these activities are summarised below.

Current Market Situation

Stakeholder engagement and market analysis reveal:

- Rising demand – Driven by spin-outs leaving incubators, SMEs scaling up, and inward investors seeking a North East base.
- Supply constraints – Limited city-centre lab space; existing commercial labs at too high a price point.
- Emerging opportunities – Vacant properties with potential for repurposing.
- Location priority – Accessibility, transport links, and proximity to research anchors such as the Universities and NHS are critical.
- Space requirements – Strong preference for flexible, modular, and subdivided facilities.

Challenges & Barriers

For developers and landlords:

- High capital costs and perceived risk of speculative developments
- Uncertainty over demand timelines and occupier commitment.
- Technical complexity (utilities, ventilation, compliance).
- Limited return on investment compared with other commercial uses.

For occupiers:

- High base rental costs and inflexible lease terms.
- Specialist equipment relocation difficulties.
- Lack of clear guidance or access to successful case studies.
- Reluctance to commit to long-term leases.

Opportunities for Repurposing Buildings

Repurposing existing buildings can address short-term supply gaps and create a pipeline of lab-ready space.

Benefits:

- Lower upfront costs and faster turnaround than new construction.
- Retention of historic or character properties in urban centres.
- Ability to integrate labs with co-working and collaborative spaces.

Constraints:

- Structural grid, floor to floor and ceiling height, and load-bearing limits may restrict lab types.
- Ventilation and servicing retrofits can be costly.
- Some spaces may only support low infrastructure demand labs without major upgrades.

Technical priorities:

- Flexible layouts to enable office-lab interchange.
- Shared infrastructure (gases, clean rooms) to reduce -tenant costs.
- Modular build systems to enable easy adaptation to meet changing occupier needs.

Strategic Role of Clusters & Shared Infrastructure

Clusters drive innovation, attract talent, and create efficiencies. The Industrial Strategy emphasises that "places" with strong collaborative ecosystems deliver higher productivity growth.

For the North East, priority cluster locations include:

- Newcastle city centre (proximity to research institutions and innovation hubs).
- NETPark
- Satellite hubs linked to regional hospitals and university research facilities.
- Collaborations can be leveraged with the North East's large pharmaceutical production cluster including companies like Leica, Accord and Arcinova.

Shared infrastructure priorities:

- Equipment pools for specialist kit.
- Co-working spaces with lab bench provision.
- On-site mentorship, business support, and training.

Recommendations

For North East Combined Authority

Establish a Life Sciences infrastructure Workstream to

- Lead a **regional approach for lab space development** aligned with Life Sciences Sector Plan's recommendation for a coordinated regional property strategy.
- Look a **cross-sector connections for innovation** and opportunity (for example with the space and defence cluster) and sharing resources .
- Reduce company and talent flight risk by developing **partnerships with universities and international pharmaceutical companies** that already exist in the region
- **Support enabling measures** such as infrastructure to ensure that that energy, data and water infrastructure in the region is not a barrier to growth.
- Investigate the creation or adoption of **financial mechanism**s (e.g. loan guarantees, lease wraps and other incentives) to reduce risk of capital conversion costs for landlords and to assist companies with little financial runway.
- Publicise existing **business growth funds** to finance concept design for companies look to fit out their own lab.
- Integrate lab space development targets into **local economic growth and inward investment strategies**, ensuring alignment with sector growth forecasts and the UK Industrial Strategy.
- Establish a **single 'front door'** for companies seeking life sciences property or support to undertake their own conversion projects. This central access point should host the tools developed through this project and connect businesses directly with the expertise of the regional business support hub. The hub should be fully briefed on the report's findings and equipped to signpost companies to local specialists — including Ryder Architecture and Naylors Gavin Black, who have committed to providing initial advisory support free of charge.
- Initiate a **communications campaign** to publicise the findings of the report and the tools available to business.

For Developers & Landlords

- **Explore flexible and modular design approaches** that enable phased investment and scalable fit-outs.
- **Consider multi-tenant layouts** with shared utilities to increase appeal to smaller occupiers and reduce individual tenant risk.
- Collaborate with the North East CA and industry bodies to **publicise available and potential sites** via a centralised regional database.
- Use **success stories and case studies** to build confidence in demand and highlight achievable returns.

For Life Sciences Companies

- **Engage early** with relevant construction professionals to shape fit-out requirements and avoid costly redesigns.
- **Consider co-location in cluster areas** to benefit from shared infrastructure and proximity to research institutions.
- Leverage available **guides and professional network**s to navigate technical and regulatory requirements for lab conversion.
- Actively participate in **regional advocacy** efforts to signal demand and influence infrastructure investment.

Conclusion

The North East's life sciences sector is poised for significant growth, but this potential is constrained by a shortage of fit-for-purpose laboratory space. By strategically repurposing underused properties, encouraging flexible leasing models, and fostering collaborative clusters, the region can create the conditions needed for high-value businesses to start, scale, and thrive.

Acting on the recommendations in this report will directly advance the objectives of the Life Sciences Sector Plan (2025), ensuring the region is equipped to capture forecasted growth in research-intensive industries. The examples and strategies presented here provide a practical blueprint for unlocking supply and ensuring that the North East's scientific excellence is matched by the infrastructure it deserves.

With timely investment and decisive leadership, the region can position itself as a leading UK hub for innovation-driven, inclusive economic growth.