

Bedford

# Bedford Borough Growth Plan

2018 - 2022



## Foreword

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Welcome to Bedford Borough Council's plan for Economic Growth.

This Growth Plan identifies and secures delivery of key actions in order to target and stimulate investment and secure the faster delivery of growth in jobs and the private sector over the next five years and beyond.

Bedford Borough must ensure that our communities have the best opportunity to access local jobs and that we make it a great place for business to prosper. Creating the right conditions for innovation and growth by raising the profile of the area to promote our business offer, bringing forward employment sites faster and encouraging growth in private sector jobs will be critical.

Improving our transport and digital infrastructure as well as our town centre is necessary to unlock growth potential. It is essential that the Council facilitates the best environment for helping its residents to be healthy, happy and safe with high quality housing and attractive places to live and work.

We have an above average rate of employment, a high proportion of 'top level' occupations and a skilled workforce. However, there are skills shortages and we must address both the supply and demand side of the labour market. We need to create employment in existing and future sectors and enable local people to access these jobs.

Bedford benefits from good strategic connections and our position at the centre of the Oxford-Cambridge Growth Corridor has the potential to transform our economy. With challenging targets to deliver 19,000 homes and 11,400 additional jobs by 2035, we must embrace this opportunity; utilising available land, encouraging growth sectors to locate here and capturing business investment. We must also ensure we capitalise on the opportunities afforded to the area by the One Public Estate programme, bringing public bodies together in the task of making the most of local public land and property on behalf of the community at large.

Funding pressures, Brexit, large scale housing growth and increased competition between regions are making the challenge of local growth more critical.

However, we're committed to continuing to encourage and champion business, investment and development to help grow and support Bedford Borough's economy.

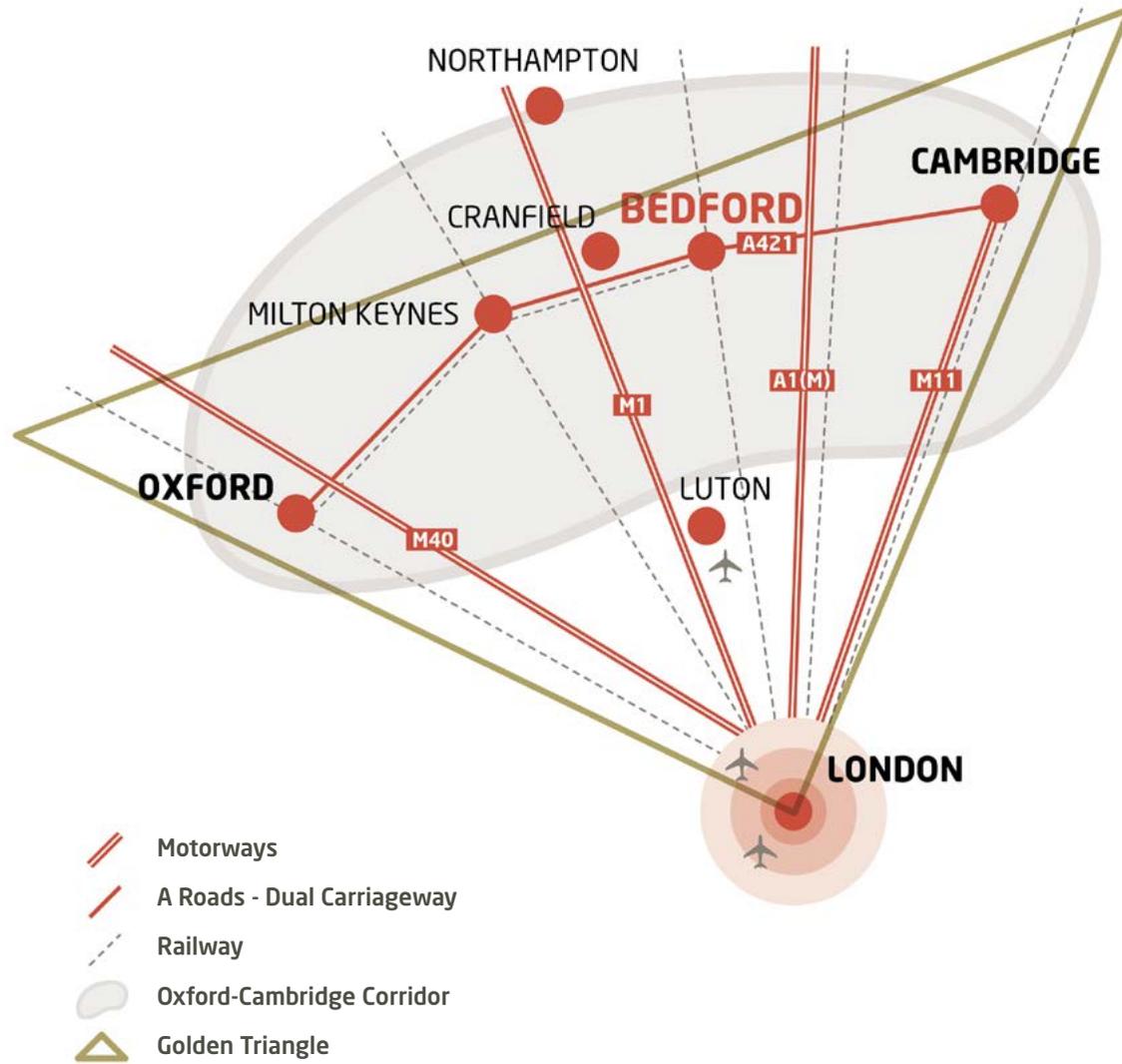


**Dave Hodgson**

*Mayor of Bedford Borough*



# Location





## Growing Business

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- We will build on our assets to create the right conditions to support and grow Bedford's existing businesses and attract new investment to the borough. Proactively marketing Bedford as a high value location within the Oxford to Cambridge Corridor, offering a solution to expanding businesses for whom competitive property costs and excellent transport and digital infrastructure are essential.
- We will also explore ways in which the Council's own property portfolio can be more effectively deployed to promote business growth, bringing forward employment sites faster. Similarly, we will explore how the Council's approach to planning and business rate relief can help to support, grow and attract businesses.

## Enhancing Place

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- We will deliver a modern integrated transport network, through the Transporting Bedford 2020 agenda and England's Economic Heartland programme<sup>1</sup>, to improve connectivity through local and strategic road and rail links. Robust, high speed broadband connectivity is now critical for all kinds of businesses as well as in our homes.
- We will drive the development and delivery of strategic housing sites as well as the continued regeneration of our town centre through the One Public Estate programme. We will nurture and build on the area's distinctive identity – making it a place of choice to live, work and visit.

## Developing People

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- We will have a direct role to play through schools, youth and adult services and the Bedford Jobs Hub in the provision of employment and skills related services, tailoring these more towards employability and demand-led skills. We will develop an all age Skills Strategy, taking a leadership role in the co-ordinating of projects with partners.
- We will ensure that partners have access to the most appropriate Labour Market Information to ensure their provision is relevant. We will increase skills levels so that the workforce meets the needs of our businesses, both now and in the future, where everyone who wants to work can and have a fulfilling and rewarding career.

1. [www.englandseconomicheartland.com](http://www.englandseconomicheartland.com)

*To achieve this ambitious Growth Plan, the Council has a One Team approach, led by the elected Mayor and Chief Executive, who ensure all Directorates contribute to the Borough's economic growth.*

*Accountability for delivering the Growth Plan will be to the Mayor, the Council's Executive and also to business stakeholders, in a Bedford Borough Growth and Skills Board.*



## Snapshot of Bedford Borough...



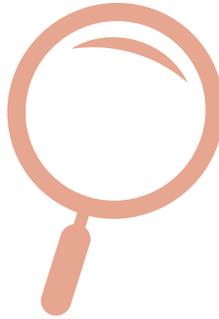
**62%** population is of working age

**78.9%** Economically Active

**4.4%** Unemployed

**9.7%** Self-Employed

Source: ONS Annual Population Survey Oct16-Sep17 & Population Estimates 2016



## Key Facts & Figures

Area	<b>476 sq km</b>
Population	<b>168,800</b>
Workforce	<b>87,600</b>
Businesses	<b>6,960</b>
Employees	<b>73,000</b>
Households	<b>72,900</b>

Source: ONS 16/17



**32 million people**  
(½ UK population)  
within a 2 hour drive

Source: Springboard

## Commercial Development

Current Land Supply **194 hectares**

Net additional jobs **11,400**

Source: Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035



**Town Centre footfall up**  
national town centre footfall down

(Source: Springboard)

## Commercial Property

**50%**  
cheaper than  
London

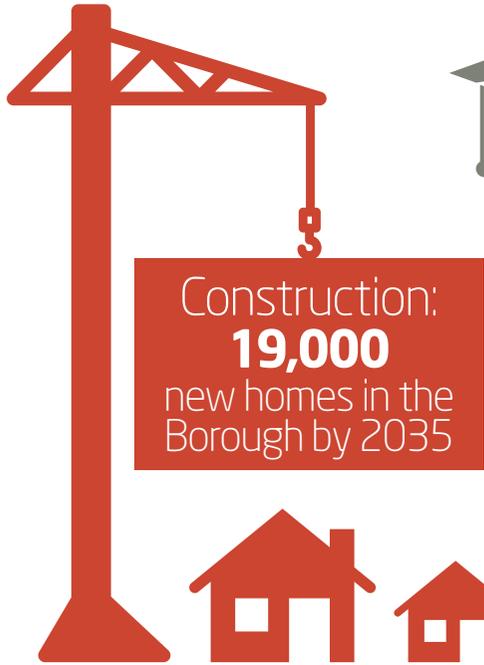


Source: Co-star

**37 minutes to London**



at least **30 miles** of water to walk beside & enjoy  
over **1100 acres** of green space  
nearly **1000 km** of public rights of way



Source: Bedford Borough Local Plan 2035



## Access to Centres of Excellence from Bedford

Cranfield: **20** minutes  
Colworth Park: **25** minutes  
Cambridge: **40** minutes

Higher than average number of residents qualified to **Level 4**

**1300** Apprenticeships in past year

Sources: gov.uk Aug 16-17 & ONS Annual Population Survey 2016

**30**  
minute  
drive



**93%** of children attend good or outstanding schools



Source: Ofsted Annual Report 16-17

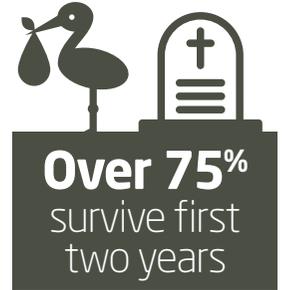
2016  
**£4032** million



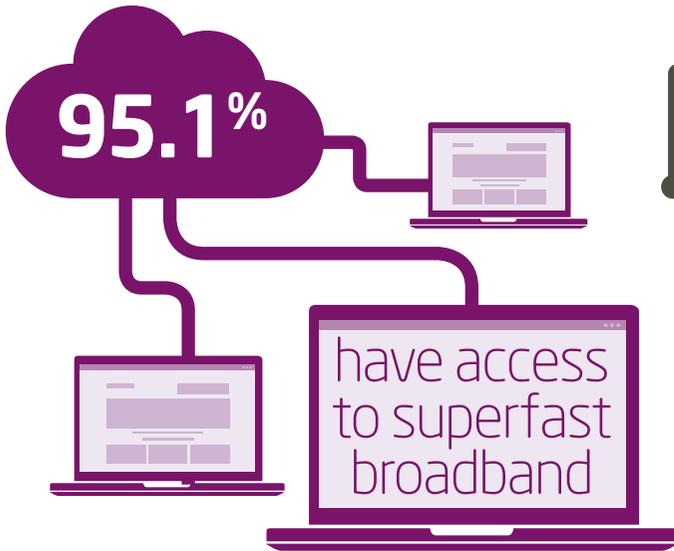
GVA rising each year

Source: ONS 16/17

Business Births > Business Deaths



Source: ONS 2016



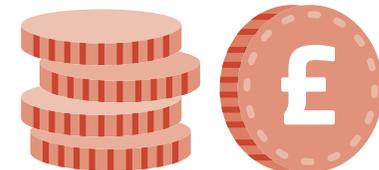
Source: thinkbroadband.com - 19/02/2018



Source: Census 2011

**over 100** languages spoken

Top 5: English, Italian, Polish, Punjabi & Bengali



**Average Weekly Workplace Wage** **£541.70**

Source: ONS ASHE 2017

## Strategic Context

**This Growth Plan is being produced during a time of considerable change, nationally and regionally.**

**Nationally**, the Government is negotiating our position with Europe, the outcome of which is still uncertain but provides opportunities as well as challenges. The Government has produced an Industrial Strategy<sup>2</sup> aimed at boosting productivity and earning power throughout the UK with a strong focus on the role of science, innovation and technology. The National Infrastructure Commission's Partnering for Prosperity report<sup>3</sup> also sets out proposals and options to maximise the potential of the Oxford to Cambridge Growth Corridor.

**Regionally**, the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) has published its Strategic Economic Plan<sup>4</sup>, influencing how government funding is spent on economic development activity. Having secured £265m of Local Growth Fund, it will support projects that unlock the growth potential of the area and increase jobs, learner numbers, employment floorspace and homes. From 2018 onwards, SEMLEP will lead local authorities and partners in the delivery of a Local Industrial Strategy, Regional Trade Plans and Sector Trade Deals.

**Locally**, the Council's Corporate Plan 2017-2021 and Local Plan 2035 set out the Council's ambition that Bedford Borough should be a place where people, communities and businesses can grow and realise their potential. Alongside this, the Council is engaged in its 2020 Transformation Programme to change how it works and engages with customers in this digital age and to focus resources where they are most needed. The One Public Estate and the Transporting Bedford 2020 programmes are underway, promising to deliver major investment and infrastructure in our town centre through additional housing, revitalised public spaces and improved road network.



2. [www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy-building-a-britain-fit-for-the-future](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/industrial-strategy-building-a-britain-fit-for-the-future)

3. [www.nic.org.uk/publications/partnering-prosperity-new-deal-cambridge-milton-keynes-oxford-arc](http://www.nic.org.uk/publications/partnering-prosperity-new-deal-cambridge-milton-keynes-oxford-arc)

4. [www.semlep.com/our-strategy/](http://www.semlep.com/our-strategy/)

## Enablers (what we will do to achieve our aims)

### Growing Business

#### Business Investment

To promote high value investment opportunities

#### Business Growth

To grow and enhance the competitiveness of our business base

#### Strategic Sites

To create the right conditions for business growth and investment

- Stimulate private sector investment in Council owned and commercial premises and land
- High level prioritisation and commitment for major planning applications delivering jobs growth
- Promote investment opportunities and secure jobs through strategic engagement
- Proactively focus on the Borough's Business Sectors & Clusters
- Ensure effective use of digital marketing to promote the Borough and the opportunities available
- Ensure clear signposting and encourage all businesses to access and engage with the business support offer that is available to them
- Deliver existing i-Brand initiatives and continue to grow the concept with new commercial employment space
- Secure end user occupiers on key strategic employment sites

### Enhancing Place

#### Infrastructure

To deliver a modern integrated transport and digital network

#### Town Centre

To create a high quality multi-functional centre, building on our distinctive identity

#### Housing

To support the development and delivery of strategic housing sites

- Improve Rail Infrastructure in the Borough to enable associated housing and employment growth
- Support Highways England to deliver key strategic highway schemes
- Work with sub-national transport bodies to bring forward necessary infrastructure (England's Economic Heartland)
- Deliver superfast broadband infrastructure in Bedford Borough
- Support the delivery of the One Public Estate programme to bring forward the regeneration of key town centre and edge of centre sites
- Improve accessibility into and around the town centre and create a more attractive environment
- Deliver the housing growth agenda for the Borough
- Support the delivery of the Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway Park

### Developing People

#### Jobs

To create a Borough where everyone who wants to work can

#### Skills

To enable our workforce to meet the needs of our current and future economy

#### Inclusive Growth

To help our residents and workers to be healthy, happy and safe

- Address key barriers to employment
- Increase awareness of employment opportunities within the borough
- Proactively promote apprenticeships to the Borough's private and public sector organisations, creating increased opportunities at all levels
- Develop school and college business partnerships, linking local employers with young people and school leadership teams
- Produce an all-age Skills Strategy with a partnership approach to addressing skills gaps
- Ensure skills levels meet employers needs
- Develop Healthy Workplace initiative for businesses
- Help people with disabilities gain and sustain employment

An extensive list of actions (detailing resources, timeframes and delivery) will be regularly monitored and is available on request.

## Measuring Success

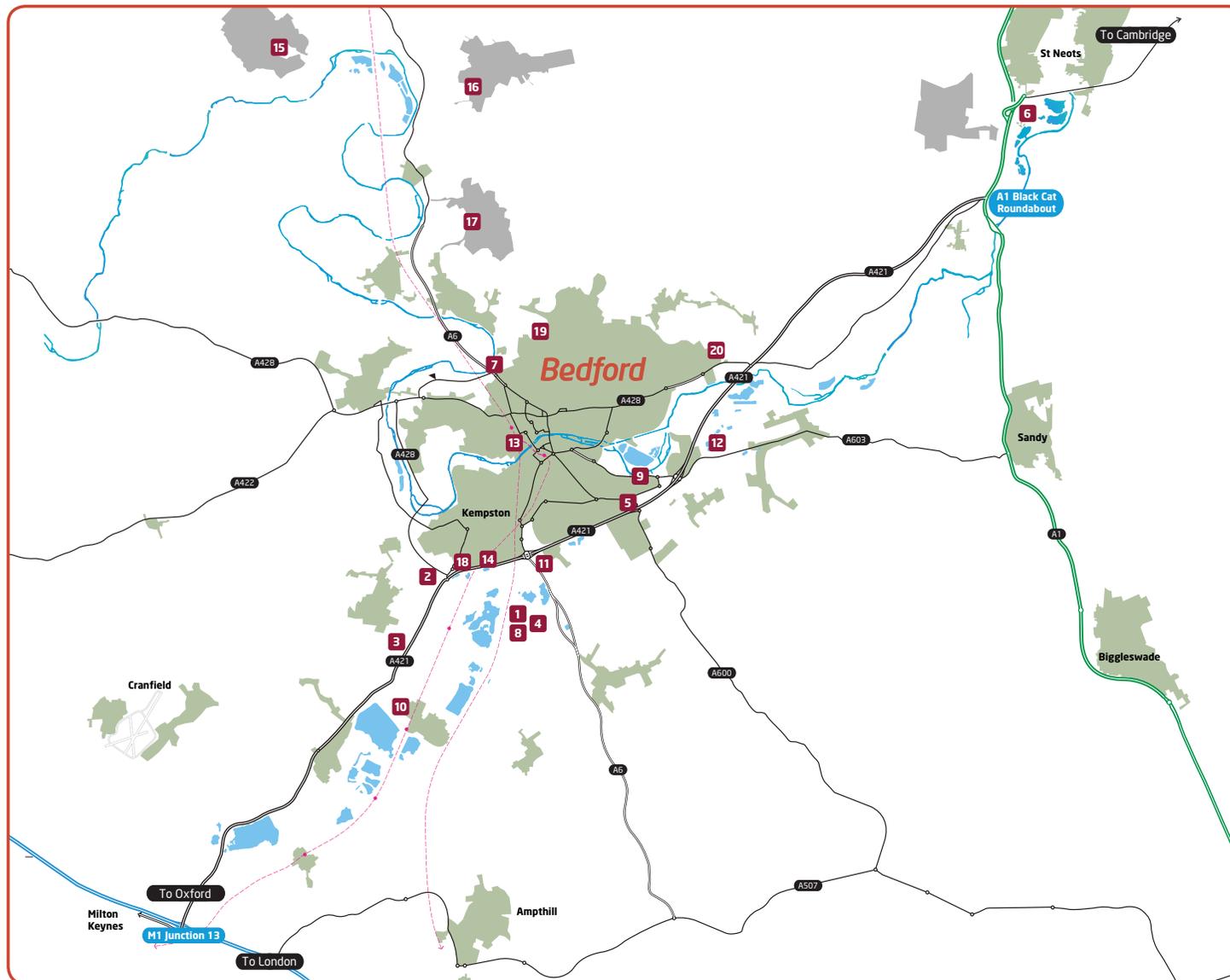
The success of this plan will be measured by the following primary indicators. The indicators reflect an overall picture of Bedford Borough's economy and will be monitored over time.

- *GVA per head of population*
- *Number of hectares of employment land developed*
- *Number of businesses in the Borough*
- *The total number of jobs*
- *Number of jobs created and safeguarded following business investment enquiries*
- *The median average weekly wage based on residence & workplace*
- *% of economically active people who are unemployed*
- *% of population qualified to Level 4*
- *Number of NEETS in Bedford Borough*
- *Number of new homes built*
- *% premises able to access superfast broadband*

**A fuller set of KPIs are collected by the Economic Growth & Development team**



# Strategic Employment Sites



1. Wixams Northern Expansion Area
2. Bedford Link
3. Bedford Commercial Park
4. M1/A1 Central, Wixams
5. Bedford Distribution Centre
6. Wyboston Business Site
7. Fairhill
8. Wilstead Industrial Estate
9. Cardington Point
10. Stewartby Brickworks Area
11. Medbury Park
12. Bedford River Valley Park
13. Station Quarter, Bedford
14. West of B530 Business Area
15. Colworth Park
16. Thurleigh Airfield Business Park
17. Twinwoods Business Park
18. Woburn Road Industrial Estate
19. Bedford Heights
20. Elms and Viking Industrial Estate

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Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford MK42 9AP

 [www.investinbedford.com](http://www.investinbedford.com)

 [www.bedford.gov.uk/business](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/business)

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