

# Bedford: in a class of its own

Location, regeneration and ambition – why Bedford has the momentum for continuing growth

In a world where everything claims to be ‘central’, Bedford’s location actually means something. Many people and families are drawn here by its reputation for education, good value houses and quality of life. It’s only 35 minutes from London and is close enough to attract an ever growing number of commuters.

Given this, Bedford is odds on to become the next growth hotspot. This drive is championed by Bedford borough’s elected mayor, Dave Hodgson. He has made town centre regeneration a top priority, saying that “even with huge budget pressures, we are driving forward our town centre renaissance through physical redevelopment and delivering an £18m programme of infrastructure, network and public realm improvements in and around the town centre. Bedford will have 26% growth in housing over the next 20 years, which will see the need for a revitalised town centre offer even more important.”

The town centre is faring very well. Footfall has increased year on year and 2017 is no different, with each month better than the last, an overall increase of 5%. The latest vacancy figures also reveal a positive picture.

Why is Bedford bucking national trends? Well, there is a clear vision of how the town centre should look and feel and it has attracted significant investment over recent years.

Riverside Bedford, a £36m major waterfront scheme, opened with huge success. A key aim for this mixed use space was to better link the town’s stunning River Great Ouse into the town centre and it has certainly delivered.

Nicolas Guérin, managing director at Linkcity, said: “We have worked in close partnership with Bedford Council and Coplan Estates to regenerate a spot once filled with office blocks and car parking. It is now an attractive riverside square that everyone in the town can enjoy and that acts as a catalyst for investment in the area.

“With a focus on dining and leisure including a Vue cinema and hotel, Riverside Bedford has attracted a range of well-known quality brands, offering new options for entertainment and going out, as well as new homes.”

Just opposite this waterfront development in the heart of the town centre is the Harpur



Centre, recently acquired by Telson Capital.

The group has submitted a planning application detailing plans to invest millions into the shopping centre including increasing the A3 footprint significantly and creating larger format units, whilst improving the surrounding public realm.

James Burchell, acting asset manager on behalf of Telson Capital, said “We saw a fast-growing town with major regeneration projects under way. Acquiring the Harpur Centre was an obvious choice and a fantastic opportunity for us to help realise the council’s vision for the town. We are continuing to progress our plans to transform the shopping experience, fully realising the centre’s potential. It’s an exciting time for the town”.

**We are driving forward  
... with physical  
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improvements**

So, what else does this bustling market town have to offer? Christina Rowe, director of Bedford BID, states that “Bedford’s appeal is really growing. We have a high number of independent retailers and these quality and niche boutiques blend really well with the bustling open air markets and national chains.

“There are beautiful arcades and hidden courtyards to explore, all set against the historic backdrop of the river.

“The blending of the old with the new, all in all, makes Bedford an excellent choice for shopping and visiting.

“The Times said “the phrase ‘a well kept secret’ is overused but it can be applied to Bedford. It seems to have it all’.”

However, with the housing growth and town centre renaissance, appetite is still high amongst consumers for more national retailers. Premium space is available in the core town centre and shopping mall.

For more information on the commercial property available in Bedford, visit [investinbedford.com](http://investinbedford.com) or call 01234 276255. For further details on the Harpur Centre proposals, call GCW on 0207 6474805 or visit [gcw.co.uk](http://gcw.co.uk)