



Local Plan 2032

Planning for the future

CONSULTATION PAPER 2015



Your Borough: Planning for the future

Local Plan 2032

'Planning for the future'

Consultation October 2015

1. Introduction – what is this consultation about?

Didn't I hear something about the Local Plan 2032 last year?

1.1 The purpose of this consultation is to remind you that we are working on a new local plan that looks beyond 2021, which is when the current development plans end. The new local plan will include development sites and planning policies that look ahead to 2032. Last year we carried out a first consultation which signalled the start of the plan making process and the results of that consultation have helped to further shape the content of the plan.

1.2 In 2014 we asked for your comments on

- the scope of the plan's policies
- the main themes and issues that the plan should address
- cross boundary and strategic issues that we should discuss with neighbouring authorities
- the level of growth that might be needed
- where that growth should go
- the future role of Bedford Town Centre

More detail about the 2014 consultation and a summary of the comments that were sent to us can be found on the [Local Plan 2032 page of the Council's website.](#)

1.3 As part of that consultation we also asked you to submit details of possible development sites so that we could see where land is available to develop. Details of around 350 sites were sent to us and these too are available on the website at the link above. Information is organised by parish so that you can find it more easily. Accompanying maps show the exact location of the sites in each part of the borough.

What is the purpose of this consultation?

1.4 We are inviting more comments from you before we start to write the plan itself. Since last year's consultation we have completed some important studies and this is an opportunity to share them with you and ask for your views on how we have interpreted their findings. This consultation invites you to comment on the following;

- (i) A vision for the plan and supporting objectives.
- (ii) Levels of housing, employment, and retail growth along with the future of the town centre in general.
- (iii) The plan's spatial strategy – in other words where development sites will be located.
- (iv) A development site selection methodology, explaining how we will choose development sites from those sent to us by land owners, developers and others with an interest in land.
- (v) A local green space selection methodology, explaining how we will choose local green spaces for inclusion in the local plan.

1.5 The five subjects above are covered in the following sections of this consultation paper. You will see that there are questions for each section and we are interested in your views. Please make your comments constructive so that we can make the best use of them and if you like what we have written, tell us that too so that we get a balanced view.

1.6 This paper contains hyperlinks to other documents. They are shown in blue text and if you click on that text it will take you to the document. If you are reading a paper copy of the consultation paper then the documents can be found on the Local Plan 2032 page of the Council's web site (www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2032). Paper consultation documents can be read at local libraries in the borough (including the mobile library) and at St. Neots, Rushden and Biggleswade libraries just outside the borough. They are also available at the Council's Customer Service Centre on Horne Lane in Bedford.

1.7 As well as inviting your comments, there is a section at the end of the paper that tells you how to send to us details of any additional proposals that you might want to put forward on land that is available for development and isn't already on our list.

How do I comment?

1.8 Questions are asked throughout the document on the key issues listed above. You do not have to answer every question.

1.9 The easiest way to make comments is via our [on-line consultation page](#). You will be able to save a copy of your response for your own records and you will receive an acknowledgement so that you know that we have received your submission.

1.10 Alternatively comments can be made using the [Word format questionnaire](#). If you prefer this method, please attach the completed Word document to an email (Word format makes the organisation and analysis of comments easier) and send it to planningpolicy@bedford.gov.uk.

1.11 We prefer to receive your submission electronically but if you would like to print and post your completed questionnaire or write a letter please attach a stamp and post to

Local Plan 2032 consultation
Planning Policy Team,
Borough Hall,
Bedford, MK42 9AP

PLEASE DO NOT SUBMIT COMMENTS IN MORE THAN ONE FORMAT OR SEND TO MORE THAN ONE EMAIL ADDRESS.

If you have submitted comments electronically you do not need to print and post them.

1.12 The consultation period runs from 19 October 2015 until 14 December 2015. All comments (paper and electronic) should be received by 5pm on 14 December 2015.

All responses may be published.

1.13 Drop-in and find out more

We will also be holding a series of drop-in sessions at various venues across the Borough. You will be able to see more information about the Local Plan 2032 and Planning Officers will be available to answer any questions you may have.

Location	Date and time
Bromham Village Hall	Monday 26 th October, 2pm to 9pm
Great Barford Village Hall	Wednesday 28 th October, 2pm to 9pm
Sharnbrook Village Hall	Thursday 29 th October, 12.30pm to 4.30pm
Sharnbrook Methodist Church	Thursday 29 th October, 5.30pm to 9pm
Wootton New Life Methodist Church Hall	Wednesday 4 th November, 2pm to 9pm
Riseley Village Hall	Friday 6 th November, 11am to 6.30pm
Wilstead Village Hall	Monday 9 th November, 2pm to 9pm
Clapham Village Hall	Friday 13 th November, 2pm to 9pm
Howard Centre (TK Maxx / New Look)	Wednesday 18 th November, 11am to 4pm
Keysoe Village Hall	Friday 27 th November, 6pm to 9pm
Bedford Market (near BHS)	Saturday 28 th November, 11am to 4pm

What will happen to my comments and what happens next?

1.14 The results of this consultation will help us to write the Local Plan 2032. Early next year we aim to finalise the development strategy and site selection methodology (see Section 4) and choose the most suitable development sites for inclusion in the plan. Following this we will carry out further work to look at the cumulative impact of the development of those sites on things such as roads, road junctions, schools and other infrastructure. We will also need to consider whether the plan as a whole is viable, in other words whether the sites that we have chosen are likely to be developed and deliver the necessary levels of growth.

1.15 When all this work is complete (we expect this to be Autumn 2016) the plan will be published so that you can comment on it. At this stage it will contain development sites and policies. The Council will consider the comments that are made on the plan before deciding whether to formally submit it to the Planning Inspectorate for 'examination' or to make changes to the plan before taking it any further. Details of the timetable are published in the Council's [Local Development Scheme](#).

1.16 Whilst this is happening we will continue to talk to other local authorities about some strategic issues that need to be sorted out jointly. Locally the biggest joint issue is where development sites to cater for Luton's growth will be found. Luton is already very built up so there isn't much space within Luton Borough Council's area to accommodate its future development needs. The Government has introduced a 'duty to co-operate' so that where this kind of situation arises, nearby Councils are required to look at ways they can help. If we don't take part in these conversations and work constructively to find a solution, our own plan may fail. By the time we need to write the Local Plan 2032 (early 2016) we hope that enough work will have been done to determine if Bedford Borough needs to make land available in this plan to cater for a proportion of Luton's growth.

2. A vision and plan objectives

2.1 Your earlier comments on the themes and draft objectives have helped to shape the following draft vision. It will appear at the start of the Local Plan 2032 to explain what it is that the policies and proposals are trying to achieve.

2.2 The Plan's Vision

Over the years to 2032:

- Quality of life will continue to improve. Residents and visitors alike will value Bedford borough for its unique qualities.
- Well planned growth avoiding areas of high flood risk will support the creation of strong, safe and sustainable local communities in environments that facilitate healthy and independent living for all. Conservation and sustainable use of natural resources will help us adapt to climate change.
- Good design will help to create safer and vibrant neighbourhoods, both in the urban area of Bedford and Kempston and in the surrounding village communities. The borough's built heritage will continue to be respected and valued.
- In Bedford's town centre the Riverside North development will provide a new focus of activity with restaurants and bars embracing the riverside environment. The new river bridge at Batt's Ford will afford easy access from Kings Quarter; focused on the area around the Kingsway this will be a new experience for those who favour urban living. Less congestion will turn the High Street into a place to enjoy, a place where niche retailers predominate and people choose to linger.
- Wixams and the new housing areas west and north of Bedford as well as at Shortstown will be complete, increasing Bedford Borough's attractiveness as a place to live and work.
- Bedford Borough will increasingly be a place of choice for new business. As a result the number and quality of jobs on offer will improve and the completion of infrastructure projects in and close to the borough will have a positive impact on the local economy.
- Whilst the Embankment and formal Victorian parks will continue to be seen as the jewels in Bedford's crown, sustainable growth will have delivered valued multifunctional green spaces to complement the existing network of paths and green corridors. Country parks north of Brickhill and west of Bedford will have matured, the Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway Park will be more than just a line on a map and the green wheel project will enhance sustainable travel opportunities within and beyond urban limits. Opportunities for active lifestyles will increase.
- The Forest of Marston Vale will continue to mature and the Bedford River Valley Park will provide new leisure opportunities. The leisure economy will benefit from increased visitor numbers drawing on the rich history of the area.

- The borough's countryside will be a tranquil retreat. Rural communities will embrace sensitive development that provides and supports much needed housing and employment, rural facilities and services including public transport. Locally important green spaces and valued local landscapes will be protected and enjoyed by all.

2.3 Objectives

The following Objectives have been updated so that they reflect the draft Vision and take account of your earlier comments:

1. Deliver growth that will facilitate the development of more sustainable places which are equipped to respond to the impacts of climate and economic change and offer the opportunity to live more healthy lifestyles. Where it is viable and sustainable to do so, encourage the re-use of land that has been previously developed.
2. Provide adequate housing which meets the needs of the borough's urban and rural communities over the lifetime of the plan.
3. Support a stronger local economy delivering growth and employment for the benefit of the borough's existing and future residents.
4. Create a distinctive, attractive and multi-functional town centre for the future.
5. Achieve a borough where everybody has appropriate access to high quality health and social care as well as everyday essential services and community facilities. Where social and cultural wellbeing is supported, enabling residents to lead healthy and independent lives.
6. Deliver existing and future infrastructure needs to support growth in both the urban and rural areas of the borough through the implementation of the Community Infrastructure Levy and other means.
7. Improve the borough's transport infrastructure in order to support growth in the local economy and to make the borough more attractive as a place to live and do business. Reduce congestion in the borough, particularly around the town centre and make journeys by public transport, walking and cycling more attractive to encourage an increase in more sustainable and healthy modes of transport.
8. Develop a strong and multifunctional urban and rural green infrastructure network through protecting, enhancing, extending and linking landscapes, biodiversity sites, heritage sites, green spaces and paths.

9. Support and create a high quality, inclusive and safe built environment which values local character and heritage and is enjoyed by all.
10. Protect and enhance our natural resources including air, soil and water to minimise the impacts of flooding, climate change and pollution.

Question1

Do you have any comments on the draft vision and or objectives? If you think they should be changed please tell us how.

3. Levels of growth

Who decides how much growth we should have?

3.1 As we explained in last year's paper, regional plans issued by Central Government used to set out levels of growth for local authority areas but they are no longer prepared. Now borough and district councils are responsible for setting their own local targets for new homes and jobs. As a result, the Local Plan 2032 must include details of the growth that is needed in Bedford Borough to 2032 and aim to provide the right amount of housing and employment land and associated infrastructure in the best locations to meet those needs. If it doesn't do that then it will not pass the formal 'examination' stage and the Council will not be able to adopt it and use its policies. Central Government has indicated that it will step-in to complete local plans if we fail to make satisfactory progress, so not making a plan is not an option.

So how much growth do we need in Bedford Borough in this plan?

3.2 As part of the last consultation we asked for your opinion on five possible growth options. The numbers were based on a report prepared by consultants who used data available at that time. More has been done since the last consultation to bring that work up to date; consultants have worked with us to look at up to date Census data, population forecasts and market conditions to

work out the number of dwellings and jobs we should include in the Local Plan 2032 to meet our own housing and employment needs. We have also looked at the retail and leisure facilities that would be required to support that level of growth. [You can read the documents here](#) but the main points are explained below.

Housing

3.3 Our future housing needs are explained in the document called [Objectively Assessed Need for Bedford: An Evidence Base for Establishing Overall Housing Need](#). It is quite a complex piece of work but in essence the modelling shows that between 2012 and 2032 (the start date and the end date of the plan) we need to have sites available to build 17,367 dwellings in the borough. This means that 868 dwellings need to be completed in Bedford Borough each year to meet the target. It is a challenging number but achievable, helped by the fact that we already have land with planning permission and land allocated in current plans that make a substantial contribution. The following table shows that we need to allocate land for at least an additional 4,521 dwellings in the Local Plan 2032.

Table 1: The number of new dwellings to be allocated based on a calculation of housing need.

Requirement for new dwellings 2012 -2032	17,367
Number of dwellings already completed (in the years 12/13;13/14 and 14/15)	2,479
Capacity of planning permissions already granted and likely to be delivered 2012-2032 (sites already in the pipeline)	10,053*
Capacity of sites allocated in existing plans but currently without planning permission	314**
The Local Plan 2032 needs to find sites for at least this number of dwellings.	4,521

*this includes sites where S106 obligations still need to be signed before the permission is issued.

**The numbers in the table exclude capacity from planning permissions that are unlikely to be developed for housing, for example where a use other than housing is being progressed.

3.4 Joint work with other local authorities has also taken place to confirm the boundaries of the [housing market areas](#) in this part of the country. This is important because it means that for Bedford Borough the housing market area and the administrative boundary fit well enough for us not to have to ask any of our neighbours to accommodate any of our housing need. Should we find in due course that we are called upon to find space for some of Luton's growth then the 4,521 will increase by whatever amount is agreed between the councils (see para 1.16). If you have any comments on the housing market area boundary please let us know.

Question 2

Do you have any comments on the study 'Objectively Assessed Need for Bedford: An Evidence Base for Establishing Overall Housing Need', the requirement for new dwellings 2012 – 2032 (17,367) or the way that the number of dwellings to be included in the plan to meet Bedford Borough's housing need has been established (shown in Table 1)?

Employment

3.5 The situation regarding employment market areas is more complex than for housing because different types of employment have different market areas. For example the market area for offices is much more compact than the market area for warehousing and distribution. The market area for offices is focused on local demand in the Bedford area whereas the market area for warehousing and distribution stretches from the M25 in the south along the M1 corridor as far as Harborough and Coventry to the north.

3.6 Consultants have prepared an [Economy and Employment Land Study](#) to inform the Local Plan 2032. In looking at whether additional employment land needs to be allocated their study takes into account the objectively assessed need work that shows that between 2012 and 2032 we will need to plan for an increase of 15,500 workers. This amounts to the creation of 775 new jobs each year which fits well with the 868 new dwellings that we will be planning for. Achieving a balance between the number of new homes and new jobs is important as it means that people will be able to live close to where they work.

3.7 In order to attract employers and bring new jobs to the borough the Council must make available good quality employment land. The consultants are looking at the employment sites that are currently available including those recently allocated in the Council's Allocations and Designations Local Plan and will make an assessment of their quality and their ability to accommodate the number and type of jobs that we need. If there is not enough land, or the land that we have is not of the right size or in the right location then we will allocate additional employment sites in the Local Plan 2032.

3.8 At the same time the consultants are providing advice on which existing employment sites should be protected so that they can continue to provide jobs in the office, manufacturing and warehouse/distribution sectors. Other employment sites maybe

suitable for a wider range of employment uses than at present and some poorer quality employment sites may be allocated for housing or other uses.

Question 3

Do you have any comments on the study 'Economy and Employment Land Study' or the requirement for new jobs 2012-2032 (15,500)?

Retail and Town Centre

3.9 The Council has employed consultants to work out how much additional retail floor space we will need up to 2032 taking account of the projected increase in population. In doing this the consultants have had regard to current and expected future trends in retailing, particularly the dramatic rise in online shopping, and increasing competition from Milton Keynes and other centres. Even taking account of these effects, the consultants estimate that by 2024 we need to make provision for 488 sqm convenience goods floor space (eg food and drink sales) and 25,485 sqm of comparison goods floor space (eg clothing, furniture, etc), while by 2032 we need to make provision for a total of 2,588 sqm convenience goods floor space (eg food and drink sales) and a total of 62,335 sqm of comparison goods floor space (eg clothing, furniture, etc). Further information can be found in the [Bedford Retail Study](#).

3.10 The retail consultants (together with specialist highways consultants) have also looked at the future of Bedford town centre. Out-of-centre retail parks and the growth in local convenience shopping and services (such as coffee shops, bars, restaurants and beauty salons) are all affecting the way town centres work. Town centres are becoming multifunctional areas where certain uses may need to contract and others (such as residential and leisure) expand. Recent and ongoing developments at Castle Quays, the bus station, High Street improvements and Riverside North are changing the face of Bedford. The consultants have made a number of recommendations to make the most of the opportunities available. Further information on the consultants' work is set out in a separate [Town Centre Topic Paper](#).

Question 4

Do you have any comments on the Bedford Retail Study or the Town Centre Topic Paper ?

Commercial Leisure

3.11 We have also looked at future needs for various built leisure facilities such as cinemas, gyms, cafés, restaurants, bars, nightclubs. Given our existing provision, we do not propose to make specific land allocations for further commercial leisure facilities in the Local Plan. Our reasons for reaching this conclusion are explained in a [Commercial Leisure Needs Study](#).

Question 5

Do you have any comments on the Commercial Leisure Needs Study?

4. Spatial Strategy – the location of development

KEY DIAGRAM



Where is growth happening at the moment?

4.1 Currently as far as planning policy is concerned the borough is divided into two; a Growth Area and the rest of the borough (known as the Rural Policy Area) as shown in the Key Diagram. Over recent years development has been focused on the Growth Area which includes Bedford, Kempston, Shortstown, Stewartby, Wixams and Wootton. By comparison a relatively small amount of development has taken place in the settlements in the rest of the borough. About 90% of housing development that has happened in the borough in the last ten years has been in the Growth Area. All available strategic employment sites are on or close to the A421 corridor within the Growth Area.

What did the 2014 consultation results tell us about where future growth should go?

4.2 Some people told us last year that they didn't want any growth at all or if we had to have growth, it should only be in the urban area and preferably on brownfield sites. Others told us that they would welcome some growth in their village as it would bring in new people and help to support pubs, shops, schools, post offices and other facilities that are in danger of being lost. In some cases growth can

bring with it completely new facilities to improve quality of life, this is true in our villages as well as in the urban area.

4.3 The reality is that we must find enough space to meet the borough's needs. If we don't write a robust plan to show where that level of growth can be provided, the Council will find it very difficult to resist development that might be proposed in unwelcome locations. The decision about whether or not planning permission is granted for development will be taken out of our hands and be made by the government's planning inspectors.

4.4 The Local Plan 2032 is an opportunity to make the most of the positive things that development can offer. And it's not just about housing. A plan that embraces growth gives a message that this is a good place to set up or relocate business which is good news for those of us with children. New housing means a growing workforce which is good for employers, as is a ready supply of high quality employment land on which to set up or relocate businesses to.

4.5 In 2014 we asked for comments on five possible ways that growth to 2032 could be distributed around the borough. We also invited you to suggest other alternatives.

4.6 Four of the five options that we offered for comment last year retained a growth area, either covering the same area as at present or enlarged so that other settlements were included to accommodate growth. The fifth option suggested spreading the growth more evenly around the borough so that villages in the rural part of the borough accommodated some development according to their size.

4.7 Of those who gave a view the most popular choice was the fifth option. It was the preference of more than twice as many people as the next most popular option.

How have things move on since last year's consultation?

4.8 As explained in section 3 we now have a much clearer idea of the number of homes and jobs that need to be provided and in response to the 'call for sites' back in 2014 we received details of around 350 potential development sites so we have a better

idea of the amount and location of land that is available. We have been able to look again at the original five spatial options in the light of this new information.

4.9 When deciding on a strategy it is important to know how many of the proposed development sites can actually be developed. To help us determine this we have been looking at borough-wide records on things such as flood risk, contamination and other technical matters that might make a site unsuitable in principle (for example sites in the flood plain) or because the cost of sorting out a technical problem is so high that development is not viable; there is unlikely to be any profit for a developer and therefore development will not take place.

4.10 From the work done so far it is clear that there are not enough suitable development sites in and around the urban area to provide the number of homes to meet the borough's needs. More detail about our assessment of options for the plan's strategy is set out in the [Development Strategy and Site Selection Methodology](#) background paper and is reflected in an [addendum to the 2014 sustainability appraisal](#). It can be seen that as well as sites in and around the urban area some development sites will be needed in the rural parts of the borough.

4.11 For that reason and taking account of the 2014 consultation responses we think that the most appropriate way of distributing growth in this plan should reflect

- the fact that the urban area of Bedford and Kempston is the most accessible part of the borough where most facilities are available – in other words it is the most sustainable location for growth, but opportunities for sustainable growth are limited
- the benefits of allowing large developments currently under construction to be finished and newly created communities to mature
- the need for a greater range of types and sizes of housing in some villages
- the support that new development can bring to vulnerable village services and facilities
- the lack at this time of a credible location and proposal for a new settlement (similar in scale to Wixams)

4.12 With the above in mind and with the help of Parish Councils we have looked in detail at the characteristics of all the rural settlements in the borough. We have mapped village facilities and have looked at various different ways of scoring them in order to group villages together in a sensible way. We have also looked at the availability of school places, capacity at doctors' surgeries

and the suitability of other infrastructure as these things affect the ability of each settlement to accommodate new development. More detail is given in the [Settlement Hierarchy](#) background paper. The results show that as things stand at the moment, based on the availability of services and facilities, villages can be divided into four groups.

Table 2: Initial Settlement Hierarchy

Group 1 – Key Service Centre	Group 2 – Rural Service Centre	Group 3 – Remaining villages with a SPA*	Group 4
Bromham	Carlton	Bletsoe	Remaining villages without a SPA
Clapham	Harrold	Cardington	
Great Barford	Oakley	Colmworth	
Sharnbrook	Riseley	Cople	
Wilstead	Roxton	Upper Dean	
Wootton	Shortstown	Cotton End	
	Stewartby	Felmersham	
	Turvey	Little Staughton	
	Willington	Milton Ernest	
	Wixams	Odell	
	Wyboston	Pavenham	
		Podington	
		Ravensden Church End	
		Renhold Green End	
		Renhold Salph End	
		Souldrop	
		Stagsden	
		Stevington	
		Swineshead	
		Thurleigh	
		Wilden	
		Wymington	
		Yelden	

*Settlement policy area (SPA).

However, quite a lot of development is already planned and under construction, for example in Wixams, Wootton, Stewartby and Shortstown. New facilities will be provided in due course and when these are taken into account the groupings change slightly. Wixams and Shortstown move from Group 2 to Group 1. This is reflected in Table 3 below.

What is the new strategy?

4.13 The strategy we are proposing focuses development first on the urban area of Bedford and Kempston. This will promote regeneration within the urban area as well as growth in housing, employment, retail and other facilities. The Group 1 villages will also provide growth, primarily in housing, as well as services for the local community. The Group 1 villages that offer or can offer the best infrastructure to support development and have the best links with the urban area are better placed to take more growth than those that are in less accessible locations. Some development will also take place in the borough's smaller Group 2 and Group 3 villages but not of the same scale.

4.14 The table below summarises the proposed strategy, the proposed role of each type of settlement and the implication for the broad scale and type of development which would be appropriate.

Table 3: Summary of Proposed Strategy

Location	Role	Implications
<p>Bedford / Kempston urban area</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Within urban area • Extensions to urban area 	<p>To provide the focus for regeneration within the urban area and growth in housing, employment, retail</p>	<p>The first choice location for sites for new housing, employment, retail and leisure development with preference being given to sites within the existing urban area of Bedford / Kempston. In particular the Kingsway area (Kings Quarter) provides an opportunity for significant regeneration.</p> <p>Main location for strategic facilities and for infrastructure investment, including improved transport choice.</p>
<p>Group 1 Villages – Key Service Centres</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bromham, Clapham, Great Barford, Sharnbrook, Wilstead, Wootton • (+ Eastcotts and Wixams following further committed growth) 	<p>To provide a focus for further growth, primarily in housing and to provide a strong service role for the local community and surrounding area.</p>	<p>The scale of development at individual villages will be related to development opportunities, the current and potential capacity of infrastructure and services, and the character of the village.</p> <p>Improved infrastructure and transport links where appropriate.</p>
<p>Group 2 Villages – Rural Service Centres</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carlton, Harrold, Oakley, Riseley, Roxton, Stewartby, Turvey, Willington, Wyboston, 	<p>To provide growth opportunities and a more localised convenience and service role to meet day to day needs of residents and businesses in the rural areas.</p>	<p>The scale of development at individual villages and its contribution to meeting the borough's development requirement will be related to development opportunities, the current and potential capacity of infrastructure and services, and the character of the village.</p>

<p>Group 3 Remaining villages with a defined SPA*</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bletsoe, Cardington, Colmworth, Cople, Felmersham, Little Staughton, Milton Ernest, Odell, Pavenham, Podington, Ravensden Church End, Renhold Salph End, Renhold Green End, Souldrop, Stagsden, Stevington, Swineshead, Thurleigh, Upper Dean, Wilden, Wymington, Yelden 	<p>Limited development.</p>	<p>The scale of development in individual villages and its contribution to meeting the borough's development requirement will be related to development opportunities. It will be dependent upon the form, character and setting of the village and its proximity to larger villages and their services.</p>
<p>Open countryside, including individual dwellings and small hamlets without a defined SPA* in the countryside</p>	<p>To provide a green setting for the network of villages and support the borough's self-reliance and resilience through food production, biodiversity resources, leisure and tourism. Very limited development to meet locally identified needs.</p>	<p>Development will be carefully managed to safeguard the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.</p> <p>Development is likely to be limited to 'rural exceptions' affordable housing schemes, replacement dwellings.</p> <p>Support for agricultural and forestry enterprises and other appropriate rural businesses. Opportunities for diversification including the re-use of buildings and new tourism and recreation activities. Opportunities will be taken to enhance the network of green infrastructure that provides an essential biodiversity and recreational resource.</p>

*Settlement Policy Area (SPA).

How much housing development will each settlement need to find space for?

4.15 Looking at the potential development sites that we are aware of we estimate that there should be capacity for around 1500 dwellings in and on the edge of the urban area. This takes account of the fact that some of the sites that have been put forward may not be suitable for allocation, for example because they may not be well connected to local facilities, will result in the loss of important green space or adversely impact on the local landscape character. The number won't be firmed up until more assessment work has been done. If the capacity in and around the urban area turns out to be greater than 1500 then fewer dwellings will be needed in other locations; numbers will be at the lower end of the ranges in the table below. If the number is less than 1500 then more development in settlements beyond the urban area will be needed. Some of the new homes will be built on brownfield sites, in particular we are looking at unused or underused employment land to see if it would be acceptable for housing. However, land that is currently undeveloped will also be needed to meet the target.

4.16 We know that all villages are different. Even though villages are in the same group in Table 3 they may not have the same opportunities, for example availability of suitable land and supporting infrastructure, to accommodate new development. We have looked at the Group 1 Villages in the most detail and have suggested a range for each one. The reason for the range for each village is explained in the [Development Strategy and Site Selection Methodology](#) background paper. At this stage the map below and Table 4 show the amount of development for Groups 2 and 3 as a range for the group as a whole. Some villages will be able to accommodate growth more easily whilst others will be more constrained.

Map Showing Apportionment of Growth

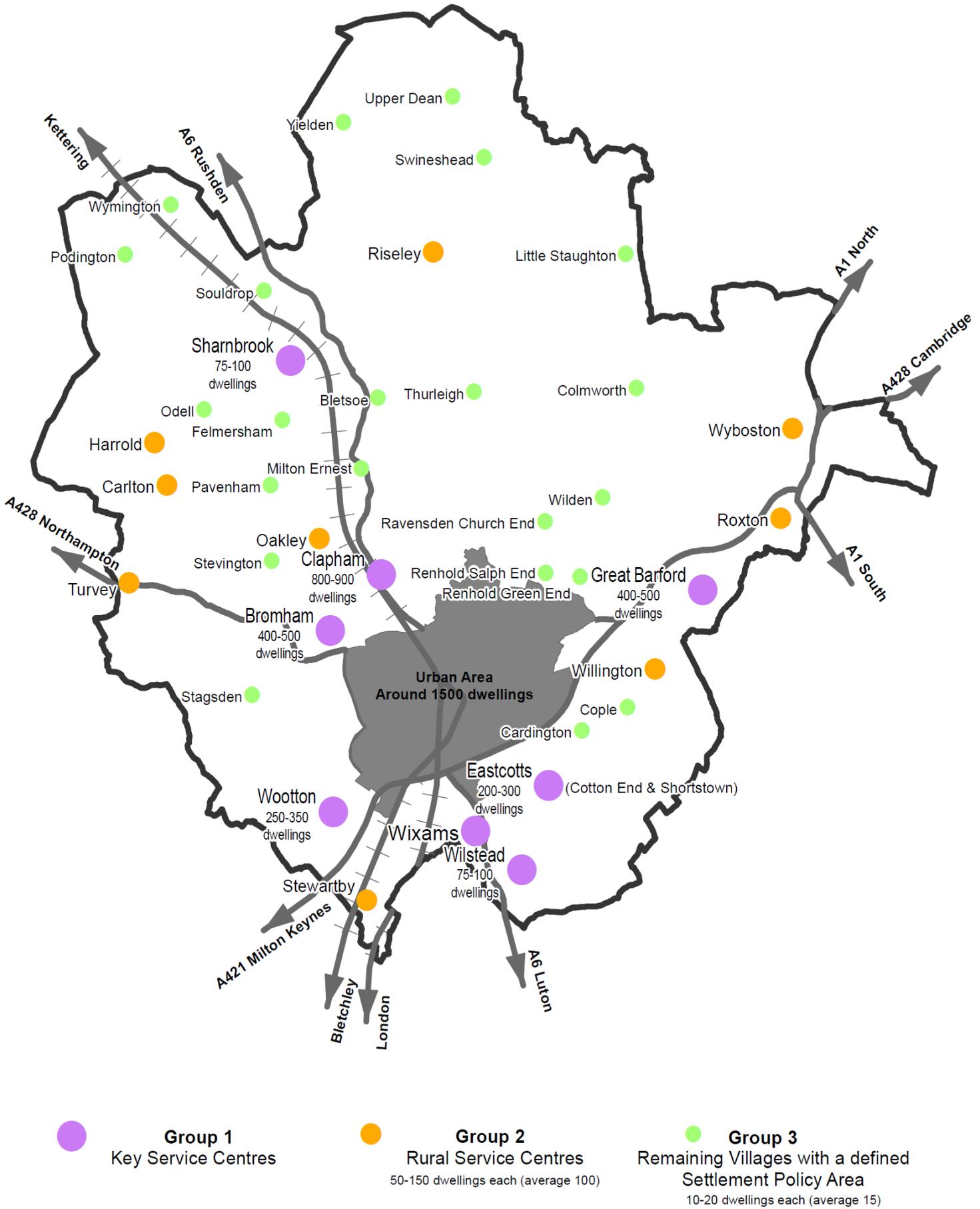


Table 4: Apportionment of Growth

Settlement	Number of new dwellings needed (over and above existing commitments)	Comments
In and around the urban area	Around 1500	
Group 1 – Key Service Centres		
Bromham	400-500	In relation to Key Service Centres, allocations will need to address anticipated infrastructure limitations Eastcotts, Wixams and Wootton already have significant development in the pipeline.
Clapham	800-900	
Eastcotts	200-300	
Gt Barford	400-500	
Sharnbrook*	75-100	
Wilstead*	75-100	
Wixams	0	
Wootton	250-350 (post 2025)	
TOTAL for Group 1 villages	2,200-2,750 (mid-point)	
Group 2 - Rural Service Centre (9 settlements) 50-150 each (average 100)		
TOTAL for Group 2 villages	450 – 1,350 (mid-point 900)	
Group 3 – Remaining SPA** villages (22 settlements) 10-20 each (average 15)		
TOTAL for Group 3 villages	220 – 440 (mid-point 330)	
GRAND TOTAL	4,370 – 6,040 (mid-point 5,205)	

* The potential development sites that have been submitted so far are not of a size or in a location suitable to accommodate a larger number of houses and a new school. See section 7 below.

**Villages that currently have a settlement policy area (SPA).

4.17 As is currently the case, new housing development in the settlements in Group 4 that do not have a Settlement Policy Area boundary will be supported where a specific local need can be shown such as for starter, affordable or retirement homes. This kind of site can be allocated in the Local Plan 2032 (or in a Neighbourhood Plan – see Section 5 below) if the need is known about now or a planning application can be made at a later stage when the need arises. The important thing is that local evidence is available to justify the development that is being proposed and that the site is suitable. This kind of site will add only a very small number to the total amount of housing and we can't predict where it will be or when it will be built so it is not shown in the table above.

Which sites will be developed?

4.18 We are still looking at the technical merits of the potential development sites in each area. When the strategy has been finalised (taking account of your comments in response to this consultation) we will pick the best sites to meet the growth that is needed. You will be able to comment on those sites when the plan has been drafted and is available for consultation (expected autumn 2016).

4.19 However, at this stage we would like your views on how we intend to choose the most appropriate sites. This is explained in the [Development Strategy and Site Selection Methodology](#) background paper. It is important that development sites are chosen in a fair and transparent way and the best way to do this is to have broad agreement from the start about the criteria that will be used. It is very likely that our selection of sites will be challenged at the formal examination of the plan so we are keen to get those criteria right before we move on to the next stage. Your comments on the draft selection methodology paper will help us to do that.

Question 6

Do you have any comments on the 'Settlement Hierarchy' background paper and the way that the settlements have been grouped together (Table 2)?

Question 7

Do you have any comments on the Development Strategy and Site Selection Methodology background paper or the summaries in Table 3?

Question 8

Do you have any comments on the Addendum to the Sustainability Appraisal?

Question 9

Do you have any comments about the way housing growth has been apportioned in Table 4?

5. Neighbourhood Planning

What about neighbourhood plans? Where do they fit in?

5.1 Whilst this consultation is happening we are also speaking to Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Plan Groups about the process of choosing development sites because under new government rules they can have a role to play in deciding which sites to earmark for development by including development sites in their own neighbourhood plan. Some Groups have already started to prepare a neighbourhood plan and we will be asking if their intention is to identify some or all of the required development land in their own plan. If it is then we need to know whether they intend to include sites to meet all of the need or whether we will split the task, with some sites in a neighbourhood plan and the rest in the Local Plan 2032. As well as having greater control over where development takes place, an advantage of including sites in a neighbourhood plan is that local communities can allocate small

development sites. For logistical reasons we have taken the view that the Local Plan 2032 will allocate only sites with a capacity of 5 dwellings or more, or for business sites 0.25ha or greater (this was explained in the [2014 consultation paper](#)).

5.2 We welcome joint working with Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Plan Groups to secure the best way forward for local communities. The most appropriate approach may differ from place to place depending on local circumstances but now is a very good opportunity to consider and agree how the Local Plan 2032 and individual neighbourhood plans can work together to deliver growth.

6. Local Green Spaces

What are Local Green Spaces?

6.1 The National Planning Policy Framework allows a new type of designation called Local Green Space to be included in Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans. These are areas that are of particular importance to local communities and once designated new development will be ruled out other than in very special circumstances. We have been talking to Town and Parish Councils about this new designation and have asked whether they intend to designate Local Green Spaces in their own neighbourhood plan or if they would like us to include any qualifying spaces in the Local Plan 2032.

6.2 The designation is different to our own local Village and Urban Open Space designations. The National Planning Policy Framework has very strict and clear guidance about what can and can't be designated as a Local Green Space, this is because the local policy for managing development within a Local Green Space will be consistent with policy for Green Belts. On that basis we are told by national policy that Local Green Space designation will not be appropriate for most green areas.

6.3 The national policy and guidance on what can be designated as a Local Green Space [can be read here](#). We have asked those Parish Councils who have told us that they would like the borough Council to include sites in the Local Plan 2032 to consider the strict criteria and tell us whether they feel that any spaces in their parish qualify and why. We have also asked rural and urban

Ward Councillors to suggest sites. For information purposes those sites that have been submitted for consideration so far can be found on the [Borough Council's web site](#).

6.4 No detailed national guidance is available for the Borough Council to use to assess the sites that have been sent to us so we have drafted a [Local Green Space Selection Methodology](#) to make the process fair and transparent. We would like your comments on that methodology before it is finalised. Appropriate sites will then be included in the Draft Local Plan 2032 and you will be able to comment on the selection next year when the plan is published for consultation.

Question 10

Do you have any comments on the draft Local Green Space Selection Methodology?

(At this stage please do not include your comments on the individual local green spaces that Parish Councils and Ward Councillors have put forward as many may not meet the criteria for designation. You will be able to comment on any included in the draft plan at a later stage).

Can I put a site forward for consideration as a Local Green Space?

6.5 Bearing in mind the national policy and guidance, are any potential Local Green Space sites missing from the list? If so you can put them forward now. You must show the site on a map and explain how it meets the criteria. [Click on this link for more information on how to submit a site](#).

7. Additional Development Sites

Is it too late to submit potential development sites for you to consider?

7.1 Now that the draft development strategy is available you may be aware of a site with development potential that is not currently [on our list](#) (scroll to the bottom of the page) that would help to deliver it. We are particularly interested in land in sustainable locations in and on the edge of the urban area and Group 1 villages as well as any proposals for new settlements of a size sufficient to enable the creation of a sustainable new community that if included in the plan would deliver growth later in the plan period and beyond.

You can bring sites to our attention by completing a site submission form (one for each site please).

If you have already sent details of a site to us please don't send them again.

At this stage we are only interested in hearing about new sites that may have become available since the last consultation in early 2014. If you submitted a site in 2014 and now wish to withdraw it from the process or amend what you previously submitted please let us know, quoting the site reference number. New sites MUST be submitted by the consultation deadline on 14 December 2015.

7.2 The site submission form can be downloaded from the Council's website www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2032. Please return completed forms to the planning policy team at planningpolicy@bedford.gov.uk. Please remember that potential housing sites should be capable of accommodating five or more dwellings and sites for business development should be a minimum of 0.25ha (or if smaller, capable of accommodating at least 500sqm of floorspace). Your site submission form must be accompanied by a detailed site plan at an appropriate scale identifying the precise site boundaries and highway access. Please make sure you give answers to all the relevant questions and provide the information requested otherwise we will be unable to carry out the necessary evaluation and therefore the site will not be taken forward to the next part of the site selection process. There is more background information about the 'call for sites' in [last year's consultation paper \(section 10\)](#).