

Shaping where you live 2035



Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2015-2035

Draft Plan - July 2017

Central Bedfordshire

A great place to live and work.

Central Bedfordshire Local Plan 2035

Draft Plan Consultation July 2017

Foreword



Central Bedfordshire has always been a great place to live and work.

We can boast a great location, with stunning countryside from the Chilterns to the Greensand Ridge; alongside attractive market towns, great transport links and plenty of spaces and places to enjoy your leisure time, including unique destinations like Woburn Safari Park, Rushmere Country Park, Shuttleworth and Whipsnade Zoo. These also contribute to our high-performing economy with successful established high-tech industries and innovative small and medium sized enterprises that operate globally but create jobs here.

Our prime location and excellent connectivity means that we have high growth pressures and this is the reason we need to plan for it. We need more homes and particularly homes that you and your families can afford to buy and to rent. It means that we need to continue to create more jobs to grow the local economy and that we need to keep improving our transport networks. It also means that we need to protect and enhance what you love about where you live.

All that means we need to plan positively and carefully for how that will happen, how that will look and how that will help shape Central Bedfordshire.

That is what we've been doing to prepare this first draft of the Local Plan. To do this, we've been listening to you and we'll continue to do so.

We've developed this draft plan with you – through Community Planning events and our Shaping Central Bedfordshire Consultation and we will continue this engagement with you because we want to make sure we get this right.

We want to ensure the growth that we need is in the right place, has the right character and is delivered with the supporting roads, schools and services such as health, as well as retail, leisure and community facilities.

We want homes to be part of communities that not only enhance the identity and character of Central Bedfordshire, but provide the opportunities for residents to achieve a good quality of life.

At this stage we need to be flexible and therefore are planning for a range of between 20,000-30,000 new homes. Further work will be undertaken to establish an exact amount when we produce the next version of the Plan.



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The options for growth put forward in this draft plan could be delivered in four ways.

This could be in the form of attractive new villages – some connected by lakes and waterways; a new market town; expanding existing towns; and some growth in existing villages where services can support it.

Some of this development will be dependant on improvements to our transport networks, plus the development of critical new infrastructure, like railway routes.

In addition to that, we are planning for between 24,000-30,000 new jobs and for more transport infrastructure, community facilities and open space, while lobbying central government to ensure it is delivered alongside development.

We know, from what you've already told us, that countryside and open spaces are valued, so where we can, we will build on brownfield land as well as enhancing accessibility by creating more country parks,

Of course, what we have set out in this draft Local Plan are options for growth and now we want you to have your say on the proposals.

And it's important to remember that the Local Plan will serve us for 20 years, so development won't happen overnight. It's a long-term vision to ensure that it happens in a way that brings maximum benefit to the area and the people who live here. This plan will help us achieve what we've always set out to deliver – maintaining Central Bedfordshire as a great place to live and work.

Cllr Nigel Young
Executive Member for Regeneration and Business



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Strategic Policies

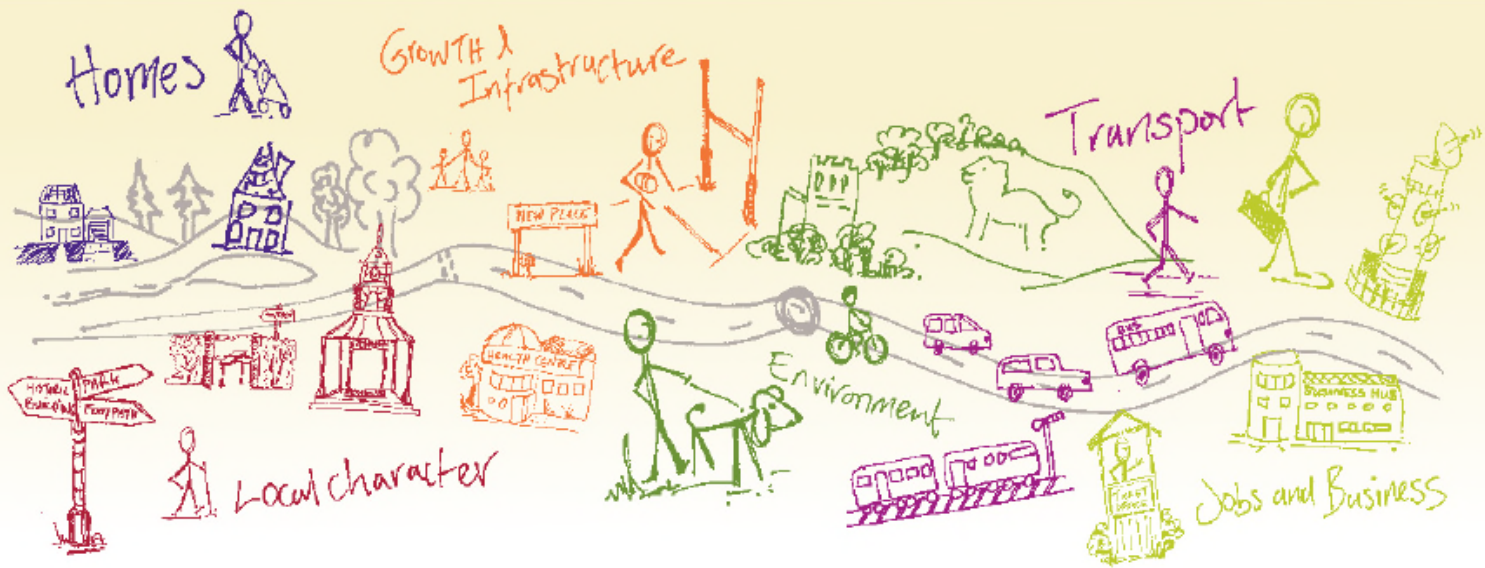


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Introduction

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1 Introduction

1.1 What is the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan?

- 1.1.1 The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan is the key strategic planning document for Central Bedfordshire and will guide and support the delivery of new infrastructure, homes and jobs. It sets out the long-term vision and objectives for the area, what is going to happen, where, and how this will be achieved and delivered over the next 20 years.
- 1.1.2 Local Planning has a crucial role to play in delivering the Council's vision of enhancing and maintaining Central Bedfordshire as 'a great place to live and work'. It is important to note that all policies within the local plan will apply to all development where appropriate.

1.2 National and Sub-regional Context

- 1.2.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development, and for Local Plans this means that opportunities to meet the development needs of an area for new homes, jobs and infrastructure must be positively planned for at a local level.
- 1.2.2 The government also requires that every local authority area has an up-to-date, sufficiently ambitious plan in place so that growth is truly plan-led. This is in everyone's interests, as it means that growth can be effectively managed and strategies for delivering it are developed with the benefit of input from the local community.
- 1.2.3 Local authorities are also required to work constructively with their neighbours and other bodies under the Duty to Co-operate, to ensure that cross-boundary issues like East West Rail, housing need and jobs are not planned for in isolation.
- 1.2.4 In addition, the government's most recent publication, the Housing White Paper (February 2017) urges local authorities to make more land available for homes in the right places by maximising the contribution from brownfield land, releasing more small and medium sized sites, and making it easier to build new settlements. This Plan has responded positively to these issues.
- 1.2.5 Central Bedfordshire is already one of the most highly connected areas but due to its unique location in the centre of the Oxford-Cambridge Corridor¹, there are a number of key opportunities that this plan is positioned to take full advantage of; including the proposed East West Rail Link (EWR), the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway and associated high tech employment led growth.
- 1.2.6 In order to complement the proposals for the Corridor arising from the NIC report, the Council is actively leading and driving forward a co-ordinated approach to enhanced growth within the central area of the NIC corridor and is leading on a

¹ National Infrastructure Commission Interim Report, November 2016



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joint response to the NIC Discussion paper as well as a initiating a Memorandum of Understanding outlining how the central corridor authorities will work together to identify a high-level joint spatial strategy for the delivery of comprehensive economic-led growth across the corridor through the local planning process.

- 1.2.7 In order to recognise the levels of growth envisaged, it is likely that a step-change in delivery mechanisms will be required. Central Bedfordshire Council is therefore also actively exploring alternative delivery mechanisms including:
- offsite manufacturing and other modern methods of construction;
 - support for small and medium-sized housebuilders, as well as the larger firms; and
 - self and custom-build development through provision of serviced plots.

1.3 Developing the Spatial Strategy

- 1.3.1 In response to these opportunities, an extensive new evidence base has been commissioned, which together with public consultation and engagement such as the Shaping Central Bedfordshire consultation and Community Planning work (outlined in sections 3, 4 and 5) has led to the development of a robust and balanced strategy. The strategy identified is considered to be the most appropriate for Central Bedfordshire given the complexity of the area and the variety of issues and factors that need to be taken in to consideration. It is fully expected that the strategy identified will deliver significant growth with clear economic, environmental and social benefits over the next 20 years as well as laying the foundations for future sustainable growth beyond the current plan period.

1.4 What is included at this stage of the Local Plan?

- 1.4.1 While this first draft of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan includes broad policies for steering and shaping development, and other more detailed policies for determining planning applications, it does not at this stage include allocation policies for specific sites. These will feature in the next draft of the plan in spring 2018 known as the pre-submission plan.
- 1.4.2 Instead this plan shows a number of 'growth locations'. These are wider areas either around existing settlements or that broadly follow new settlement scale proposals. The Plan proposes growth location options that could accommodate more homes than will be required at this stage; the next version of the plan will further narrow these down to a shortlist of preferred site allocations.
- 1.4.3 Small and medium scale sites have not been included in this version of the plan as the balance of those needed will be determined by the number and scale of strategic sites that are ultimately taken forward. Once the scale of small and medium sites is determined, further work will be undertaken to identify which sites will be taken forward as allocations in the next version of the plan.



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1.5 Plan Process



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1.6 Requirements of Plan making

- 1.6.1 This draft Plan has been prepared under the legislative provision of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and appropriate regulations including the Town and Country Planning (Local Planning) (England) Regulations 2012. The draft Plan has taken into account national planning policy, currently set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (Department for Communities and Local Government [DCLG], 2012), Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (DCLG, 2015) and the web based published Planning Practice Guidance.

Evidence base

- 1.6.2 The Council's policies must be backed up by credible, robust and proportionate evidence that supports the approach taken and justifies what is proposed. The evidence base for this Plan is extensive and is listed at Evidence base documents. It is the Council's job to balance all of the evidence and find the most suitable way forward. This evidence base includes research on housing, employment, retail, Green Belt and flooding as well as the views of local people, businesses, landowners, developers and public agencies involved in the area..

Duty to co-operate

- 1.6.3 In accordance with the 'Duty to Co-operate' set out in the Localism Act 2011 the draft Plan has been produced through close partnership working with the neighbouring authorities to ensure that sub-regional and cross boundary planning issues have been taken into account. This work under the 'Duty to Cooperate' replaces the role of regional planning.
- 1.6.4 In order to ensure the Duty to Cooperate (DtC) is fully discharged, the Council has held regular DtC meetings with all neighbouring authorities and will continue to do so throughout the plan-making process. So as to focus discussions on the relevant cross-boundary issues, in partnership with each neighbouring authority, Central Bedfordshire has initiated the production of 'Strategic Frameworks'. These documents set out the commitment from Central Bedfordshire to actively engage with our neighbours throughout the local plan process and identifies specific cross-boundary issues that need to be discussed. Whilst the Localism Act identifies that the DtC is not a duty to agree, it is the aspiration of the Council that any cross-boundary issues identified are resolved in an open and transparent manner.

1.7 Which Documents Does it Replace?

- 1.7.1 This Local Plan once adopted replaces the North Core Strategy and Development Management Policies Document (2009) and the majority of the remaining policies within the South Bedfordshire Local Plan (2004), the Mid Bedfordshire Local Plan (2005) and the remaining saved policies of the Bedfordshire and Luton Minerals and Waste Local Plan (2005) so far as they affect Central Bedfordshire. Those residual site allocations in the north Site Allocations Document (2011) that are not already built out will remain in addition to the Minerals and Waste Local Plan – Strategic Sites and Policies (2014) which will sit alongside this new Local Plan once adopted forming the Development Plan for Central Bedfordshire.



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1.8 Where to view Local Plan documents

1.8.1 The Local Plan documents are available for inspection at the following addresses:

- Council's website: www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/localplan
- Council Offices
 - Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, SG17 5TQ
 - Watling House, High Street North, Dunstable, LU6 1LF

1.9 How to make comments

1.9.1 This first draft version of the plan is a consultation document and so we welcome your comments which can be made online at the following link:

www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/localplan

1.9.2 Alternatively comments can be submitted by post for the attention of the Local Plans Team to Central Bedfordshire Council, Priory House, Monks Walk, Chicksands, Shefford, SG17 5TQ.

1.9.3 The consultation runs for eight weeks from Tuesday 4th July to Tuesday 29th August at 5pm.



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Key Themes

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2 Key Themes for the Local Plan

2.1 Central Bedfordshire: Issues, Challenges & Opportunities

- 2.1.1 Covering 716 square kilometres, Central Bedfordshire currently has a population of approximately 274,000² and is the 11th largest Unitary Authority in England by area and the 15th largest by population. Central Bedfordshire is one of the least densely populated Unitary Council areas and is classified as predominantly rural with just over half the population living in the rural area. Approximately 63% of the population are within the working age group, being between 16 and 65 years of age, although 81% of the population are considered to be economically active (aged 16-74).
- 2.1.2 The Luton and Central Bedfordshire SHMA (May 2017) identifies population growth of 19.5% over the plan period to 2035 for Central Bedfordshire compared to a 13.4% increase identified for England over the same period.
- 2.1.3 In line with national trends, Central Bedfordshire is also projected to have a rise in older age groups over the period (age ranges 70+), but also is projected to have rises in the 55-69 aged range. It is also likely that the delivery of new starter homes and family homes together with skilled jobs will also attract younger people and families which may have a significant effect on the age profile in Central Bedfordshire. This will put additional pressure on public services, but this will be addressed as part of the wider consideration in delivering sustainable growth.
- 2.1.4 Central Bedfordshire residents are generally healthy and the life expectancy for both men and women is longer than it is in England as a whole. However, residents of Central Bedfordshire do experience inequalities in health outcomes. Whilst overall levels of deprivation within Central Bedfordshire are low, there are three areas that are within the 10-20% most deprived area in England and a further 6 within the 20-40% most deprived areas. The majority of these wards are within the southern area of Central Bedfordshire, which is more densely populated, and urban in character.

2.2 Connectivity and achieving Sustainable Growth and Communities

- 2.2.1 Central Bedfordshire is one of the most accessible areas in the East of England and is particularly well connected on all of the main north-south routes, namely the M1, A1, A5, and A6. It is well served by existing rail stations on the East and West Coast and Midland Main rail lines and East West Rail will also deliver further connectivity with a committed upgrade to Ridgmont station and potential new stations at Wixams and north of Sandy. This excellent access brings potential for business and housing growth but also pressure on infrastructure and a high outflow of residents for employment and services.

² Central Bedfordshire Key Facts and Figures July 2016



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- 2.2.2 Travel patterns within Central Bedfordshire are less sustainable with a high reliance on car commuting with increasing pressure on interchanges and the rural road network. Connectivity east to west has improved with the duelling of the A421 in the northern part of Central Bedfordshire, and will continue with the opening of the A5-M1 link road in the south. However, further significant east west connections are required to deliver enhanced growth levels.
- 2.2.3 **The Key Challenge** driving more sustainable growth by improving and extending the range of economic opportunities and services available locally and securing additional infrastructure, including enhancing digital connectivity, to unlock the areas full potential and to achieve more sustainable travel.

Sub-Theme	Challenge	Opportunity
Employment Land	Providing sufficient land and premises that are of a high standard and quality and in the right place, to retain existing businesses and help them grow. Retaining employment land for other uses.	Ability to attract inward investment to the area and new business start ups through the provision of new floor space that better meets market demands.
Economic Growth	To attract more high-tech and office based businesses to the area by improving digital connectivity.	To attract businesses by ensuring the delivery of super fast broadband across all new developments.
Out-commuting	High levels of out commuting particularly to large towns on the edge of the area e.g. Stevenage and Milton Keynes and also London.	Consolidating existing businesses and providing new jobs could encourage more people to live and work in the authority area.
Deprivation	Reducing the disparity in deprivation between urban areas of southern Central Bedfordshire and the north and improving employment opportunities.	Strategic growth could bring new jobs and services
Connectivity	Poor east/west public transport/road links and some broadband blackspots particularly in rural areas. Some uncertainty over delivery of planned strategic transport improvements	East-West Rail, the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway proposals and new broadband infrastructure provide an opportunity to enable significant housing growth.



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Sustainable Transport	Slow and deficient public transport access between key centres resulting in high dependency on private vehicles and low proportion of trips made by cycling, walking and public transport.	More concentrated growth located close to key transport routes with 'walkable neighbourhoods' could make sustainable transport more viable.
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2.3 Cross boundary and neighbouring growth pressures and the role of the Green Belt

- 2.3.1 Major urban areas adjoin Central Bedfordshire with growth pressures that are intensifying. Central Bedfordshire is part of four Housing Market Areas and adjoins nine local authorities. Within the HMA's, urban areas are often constrained by tightly drawn boundaries and therefore due to housing pressures, may have to look beyond their administrative area to accommodate growth. Less expensive housing costs and the availability of employment space in the area is also attractive to those looking to move from areas further south. Accommodating growth pressures in the form of unmet housing need from neighbouring authorities, close to where the need arises, could be achieved in the south of the area by removing the most sustainable locations for development from the Green Belt, but overall the Green Belt continues to play a critical role in settlement separation and other approved purposes.
- 2.3.2 The Council will seek opportunities to maximise the use of available, previously developed or 'brownfield' land before looking to sites within the Green Belt or green field sites elsewhere in Central Bedfordshire to accommodate future growth requirements. An Urban Capacity Study for Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Luton identified opportunities to increase the capacity of current sites within the conurbation, which could contribute towards the unmet housing need within the Luton Housing Market Area. However much of the available previously developed land in the area is either now built out or already committed for redevelopment.
- 2.3.3 **The key challenge** is to establish how much these growth pressures can be provided for sustainably and where to accommodate them in a way which fits with Central Bedfordshire's own growth objectives. There is a need to strike an appropriate balance between removal of sites from the Green Belt to meet housing pressures from neighbouring authorities while maintaining local character and its role in preventing coalescence.



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Sub-Theme	Challenge	Opportunity
Green Belt	Balancing the role and function of the Green Belt while delivering some growth. Pressure for release of Green Belt land, and protected landscapes for other uses.	The Plan allows the Council to review strategic designations such as Green Belt and determine whether it is still meeting the five purposes as set out within the NPPF ³ . Also presents the opportunity to ensure any lost Green Belt land is replaced elsewhere by extending Green Belt Boundaries.
Meeting Unmet Housing Need	Delivering unmet housing need arising from neighbouring authorities within close proximity to where the need originates.	To contribute to delivering the wider requirements of the four Housing Market Areas across Central Bedfordshire in a sustainable manner.

2.4 Market Towns and Villages - local economy and services

- 2.4.1 Central Bedfordshire is primarily a place of market towns and a number of villages whose history and character are key to its identity and attractiveness. The two largest towns, Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable are located in the south of Central Bedfordshire whilst the north of Central Bedfordshire contains a series of smaller towns including Biggleswade, Sandy and Flitwick. Whilst some settlements have become successful, growing service centres with a good range of local employment, others find it increasingly difficult to maintain their services and economic strength with competition from the large urban centres on our boundaries.
- 2.4.2 **The key challenge** is to manage growth so that as far as practicable it can avoid damaging the role and special value of Central Bedfordshire's market towns and villages, for example through policies on coalescence, whilst at the same time directing growth to the larger towns and locations where it can make a real difference in improving local services and employment opportunity for example the A1 corridor towns where there are regeneration opportunities which would improve economic offer and enhance the town centres.

³ National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 80 <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/national-planning-policy-framework/9-protecting-green-belt-land>



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Sub-Theme	Challenge	Opportunity
Town centres	Threats to the viability and vitality of town and neighbourhood centres through increased competition from other major retail centres.	The potential to regenerate our town centres in order to improve their attractiveness and usability and to offer quality retailing experiences.
Rural Services	The lack of accessible key services in rural locations and an over reliance on car travel.	Some incremental growth in villages could sustain existing services and enable new ones; new public transport routes enabled by strategic development may also be used by existing communities.

2.5 New community scale growth

- 2.5.1 Given the small scale of existing urban development across most of Central Bedfordshire, there is a limit to how much new growth can be accommodated either as infill, re-use of redundant sites, or in village or urban extensions. In many of these locations services and infrastructure are unsuitable (or could not easily be upgraded) beyond small scale additions. There are however a number of sites in Central Bedfordshire where large scale new communities could be envisaged, taking a minimum of 1500 homes and providing a mix of housing types and tenures as well as a range of new services and facilities as part of the development, and several locations have already been proposed. Securing new physical, social and community infrastructure (and developer contributions) and higher standards of design and sustainable development is a benefit but these large projects take time and upfront funding to deliver.
- 2.5.2 **The key challenge** is to identify sustainable locations in Central Bedfordshire where large scale new communities have the best prospects of success based on viability, deliverability, access to services and improved economic potential and where planned, development enabling, strategic infrastructure can be delivered to support growth and unlock future potential.

Sub-Theme	Challenge	Opportunity
Housing Mix	Diverse needs from different age groups for different types of housing. Integrating new development with existing communities.	The potential with growth to provide sufficient housing in line with national policy, which is of the right size and type to meet the needs of all residents.
Housing Tenure	Overall housing needs and affordable housing in the area. Insufficient appropriate forms of affordable tenure, particularly intermediate housing.	The potential with growth to provide sufficient housing in line with national policy, which is of the right tenure to meet the needs of all residents.



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Sub-Theme	Challenge	Opportunity
Gypsies and Travellers	Needing to provide accommodation to meet the needs of all communities across Central Bedfordshire.	The ability to identify appropriate locations across the area and to ensure communities are well integrated and have access to services and facilities.
Aging Population	There is a significant increase in the older population and a lack of suitable housing.	The Plan provides the opportunity to plan holistically for older persons accommodation which can be integrated with new communities.
Education	The need to raise educational attainment to improve individual employment prospects and the attractiveness of Central Bedfordshire to future employers.	Growth will bring new schools and the potential to expand further and even higher education.
Community Infrastructure	Provision of sufficient community infrastructure to meet current and future demands.	New development can make community infrastructure more viable.
Wellbeing	Significant levels of obesity in adults and children (in line with the national average). A potential lack of leisure facilities to match a growing population.	Through the Local Plan, the area can be comprehensively planned to ensure that it does not detrimentally impact upon the quality of life, health and well-being of residents.

2.6 Environment, Heritage Assets and Sustainability

- 2.6.1 Much of Central Bedfordshire is of high landscape and biodiversity value. Key assets include the Greensand Ridge recently designated as a Nature Improvement Area, parts of the Chilterns AONB which is a national priority area for landscape conservation and the Forest of Marston Vale. We also have a number of water bodies as a result of former clay workings which offer significant potential for recreation and tourism and could be unified as the proposed Bedford to Milton Keynes Waterway. There are also approximately 11,000 recorded buildings, sites and records of historic interest. However maintaining and enhancing these assets has become more difficult in the light of development, activity pressures and reduced funding.
- 2.6.2 **The key challenge** is to find ways in which new development can be used to strengthen and enhance these assets, as well as creating new green infrastructure.



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Sub-Theme	Challenge	Opportunity
Biodiversity	Halting the overall decline in biodiversity by helping establish coherent and resilient ecological networks and a net gain in biodiversity in accordance with the biodiversity opportunity mapping for Central Bedfordshire.	The opportunity to enhance priority habitats in line with the Biodiversity Action Plan.
Landscape Assets	The need to protect our valuable natural environment including the Forest of Marston Vale, the Greensand Ridge and the Chilterns AONB.	Improving access to the local and wider countryside. The need to improve the quality of and access to open spaces.
Heritage Assets	The need to protect and enhance the area's rich historic environment The need to conserve and enhance the historic significance of the area's heritage assets and settings. The risk of loss of local characteristics through unsympathetic design.	The ability through the use of careful master planning and design codes to protect and enhance heritage assets when planning new development.
Climate Change	Threats to the biological and geological interests of the area from development pressures and climate change.	Reducing the carbon footprint of residents and businesses through measures relating to mitigation and adaptation to climate change. Ensuring measures put in place are fit for purpose and future proof.
Air and Water Quality	3 AQMAs ⁴ and being located in an area of water stress presents challenges for growth.	The ability to support measures to reduce water use/limit pollution through the Local Plan.

⁴ Air Quality Management Areas <https://uk-air.defra.gov.uk/aqma/>



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Consultation

Local Plan 2015-2035

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3 Consultation

3.1 Council Priorities

3.1.1 The Plan is consistent with the priorities set out in the Council's Five Year Plan 2015.

3.1.2 This Five Year Plan highlights our vision and priorities and sets out these six key priorities for the area.

- enhancing Central Bedfordshire
- great resident services
- improving education and skills
- protecting the vulnerable and improving wellbeing
- creating stronger communities
- a more efficient and responsive council

3.1.3 Whilst the plan aims to achieve all the priorities outlined above, the main priority that the plan aligns to is **Enhancing Central Bedfordshire**.

This aims to improve Central Bedfordshire as a place to live, by enhancing prosperity with more and better jobs; to improve infrastructure, and to provide the quantity and type of housing needed by our residents while maintaining and enhancing the character of the area. Development will be facilitated by great infrastructure, such as broadband, Wi-Fi and transport. Our Market Towns and villages will thrive and prosper, with improved town centres and facilities⁵.

3.1.4 It is considered that the 6 growth themes set out within Sections 4 & 6 are appropriate foundations for the local plan to contribute to achieving the vision and priorities of both the plan and the Council as a whole.

3.2 Shaping Central Bedfordshire Consultation

3.2.1 Rather than starting with a 'blank sheet', the Council undertook public consultation which was structured with the benefit of the known opportunities and constraints for Central Bedfordshire that are identified in Section 2. The purpose of this consultation was to help shape "big picture" options for growth which are set out in this first draft of the Local Plan.

3.2.2 Central Bedfordshire was divided into four areas which reflect the character of our towns, villages and countryside, existing and planned transport corridors, and the Green Belt designation. This was to help us to assess in broad terms growth potential for development of homes, economic opportunities and the scope to invest in local services and amenities. These four areas are shown on the map at Figure 3.1 and are used to group the growth location options in Section 7.

⁵ Central Bedfordshire Five Year Plan, 2015



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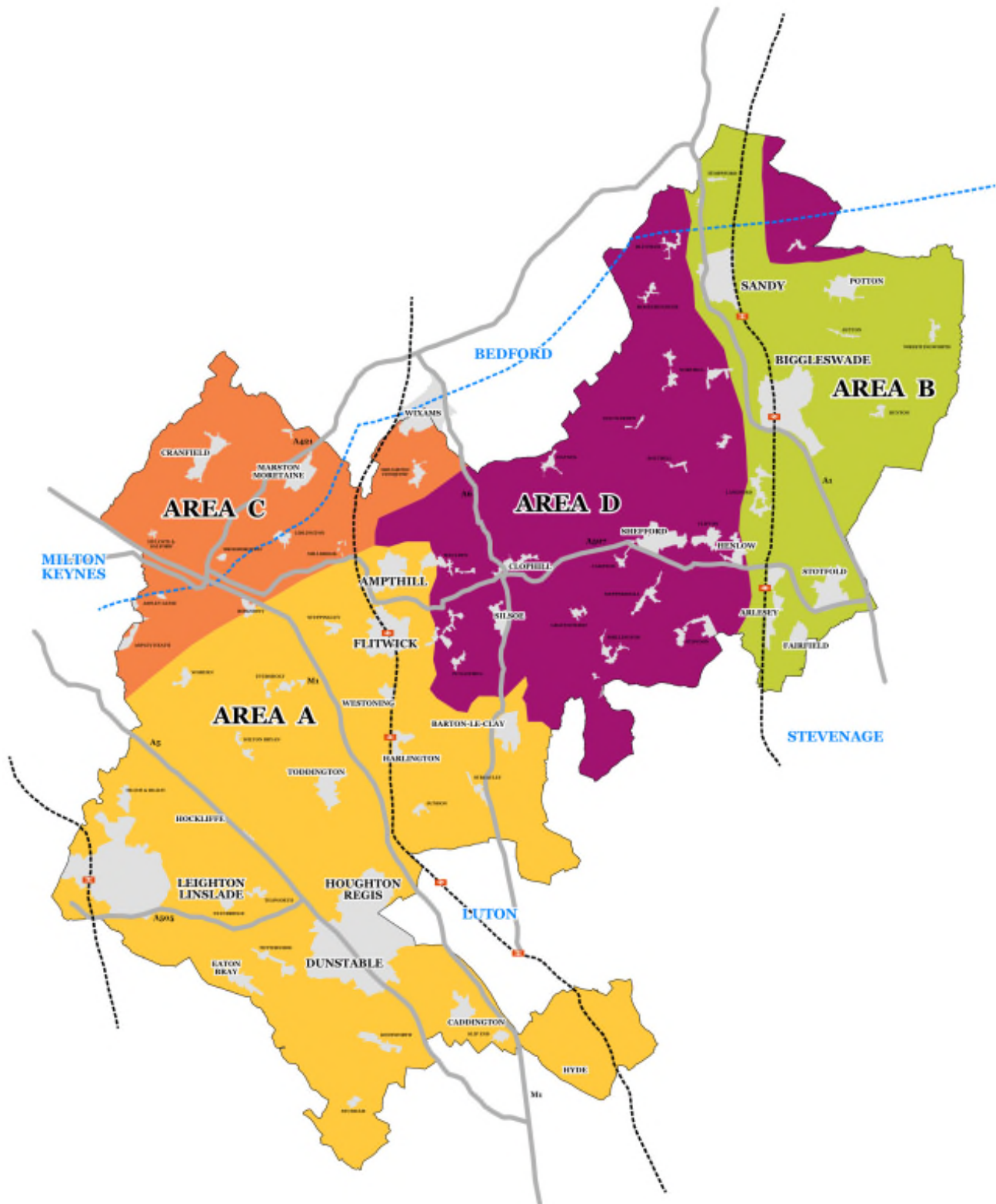
- 3.2.3 The consultation ran from 13th September to 1st November 2016 and achieved a reasonable level of engagement, with 785 stakeholders providing their views on the proposals. The majority of responses came from residents (679) with others representing a number of businesses, Town and Parish Council's, voluntary and community organisations. The majority of respondents agreed with the characterisation of the four areas as set out within the consultation material. The first draft of the Local Plan therefore evolved following this non-statutory consultation on the high level strategy for growth.
- 3.2.4 In response to a question which asked for suggestions for broad locations considered suitable for growth, those that responded indicated that growth should be located around existing infrastructure and settlements and suggested the brownfield sites should be used. The approach of looking at existing opportunities like rail stations and looking for the intensification of brownfield sites again has been integrated into the spatial strategy.
- 3.2.5 Analysis of the consultation responses showed that opinions on how growth should be apportioned broadly demonstrated no clear preference across Areas A, B and D. In Area C however, as an important economic area with advanced research and development at Cranfield Technology Park and Millbrook Proving Ground, a large proportion of respondents agreed that there is potential for medium to strategic scale growth including new settlements and also agreed that there is limited potential for growth at existing settlements. This shows a degree of support and recognition of the growth opportunities and new transport infrastructure in the East West Corridor; and this is reflected in the spatial strategy.



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Figure 3.1: Growth Areas



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Community Planning

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4 Community Planning

4.1 Community Plans and Growth Themes

- 4.1.1 Community planning is a new approach, unique to Central Bedfordshire Council, which goes above and beyond the legal consultation requirements of the Local Plan. Our engagement vision is to have a proactive, ongoing dialogue with the local community about local needs and opportunities. In the future we want to create communities with schools, jobs, health provision and good transport links. That means we need to plan for infrastructure and services to ensure that Central Bedfordshire continues to be a great place to live and work.
- 4.1.2 Additional growth which is going to be necessary in many parts of Central Bedfordshire brings with it pressures on infrastructure and services. Accordingly, building up a local picture of existing issues that people face is critical to understanding where new development can be accommodated and what measures need to be put in place to alleviate those pressures.
- 4.1.3 In order to capture this information at a local level (larger than parish, smaller than the whole of Central Bedfordshire) 15 community areas have been mapped, based on a number of factors
- Natural catchment or ward areas, connections and associations amongst communities e.g. for shopping, schools, work.
 - Access to services and facilities e.g. shops, post office, leisure services.
 - Town and rural hinterlands.
 - Shared characteristics, similar issues and opportunities.
- 4.1.4 Grouping the areas like this helps local residents to engage because they will be able to see the direct relevance to where they live and help us consider all of the local issues and opportunities.
- 4.1.5 The first stage (November 2016 to March 2017) has involved holding an event in each of the 15 Community Areas. Following these events, 15 Community Plans have been prepared and published as part of the evidence base for the Local Plan.
- 4.1.6 The Community Plan collates all the information gathered at an event held in each of the areas. There will be a series of suggestions arising from each Community Plan which can be used to influence or shape planning policy in the Local Plan, be fed into decisions on planning applications, decisions on where money arising from development should be spent. The six key themes shown below in figure 4.1 and referenced in Section 6 are used to group the issues and opportunities
- 4.1.7 Some of the issues arising were not land use based or within the control of the planning but will be used by the Council to inform other service areas.
- 4.1.8 Community planning is seen as a continuing process and the methodology and Community Areas will be used in the future to inform later stages of the Local Plan as well as other Council initiatives.



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- 4.1.9 Central Bedfordshire Council will seek to work in partnership with organisations including Town and Parish Councils, developers and other agencies to deliver on actions or priorities raised through community planning.

Figure 4.1: Six Key Themes



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Developing the Strategy

Local Plan 2015-2035

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5 Developing the Strategy

5.1 Evidence Base 1: Sustainability Appraisal

- 5.1.1 The Sustainability Appraisal (SA) has been used to support the strategy in this initial draft of the plan by undertaking the following:
- A high level appraisal of the patterns of distribution (new small & town scale settlements; village extensions; growth in transport corridors; urban extensions; urban intensifications around transport hubs; and higher densities);
 - A high level appraisal of Areas A-D (as set out in the Shaping Central Bedfordshire consultation);
 - An appraisal of five growth scenarios, using reasonable strategic growth locations; and
 - An appraisal of the draft plan policies
- 5.1.2 The five scenarios appraised are:
- Scenario 1: Higher levels of growth across all of Central Bedfordshire (the growth location options presented in this Plan);
 - Scenario 2: No growth to the west of Luton and east of Biggleswade;
 - Scenario 3: No strategic transport infrastructure delivered in the A1 corridor (Area B);
 - Scenario 4: No growth in the Green Belt (Area A); and
 - Scenario 5: A mixed approach with higher growth in villages.
- 5.1.3 The SA makes a comparison of each against the baseline conditions in Central Bedfordshire and the results of this have guided the strategy. This draft plan proposes a minimum of 20,000 new homes across Central Bedfordshire, using a range of distribution approaches across all four areas. This mixed approach, as per Scenario 1, aims to avoid or minimise significant negative effects and promote the likely positive effects of growth. The high level of growth offered in Scenario 1, including the provision of new settlements which have the scale and scope for exemplar design and higher densities, will deliver major positive effects for housing and employment. Large scale new development will be more contained, reducing the need to travel and will offer the opportunity for investment and improvement of social, green and modal infrastructure.
- 5.1.4 The SA supports growth in Areas A, B and C as having positive effects on housing delivery and employment. Area C is well-connected with the improved A421, the M1 and the planned section upgrade for East West Rail. Growth in Area B would support the East-West connections delivered by East West Rail and the Expressway; therefore Scenario 3 is not preferred. The Spatial Strategy contains options for new villages and urban extensions along the A1 corridor in Area B and near to the M1 in Area A and C. Across Areas A, B and C there is the potential for development to contribute to improvements of the road and public transport networks, to ensure continuing capacity.



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- 5.1.5 The SA found that restricting growth of housing and employment uses in Area A due to the Green Belt, as considered in Scenario 4 is likely to have negative effects for the needs and health of communities in that part of CBC as well as the cross-boundary needs of Luton Borough. Without growth in Area A, communities would not benefit from the potential revitalisation that new development can provide. Area A has areas of higher deprivation, which new growth could have the potential for major positive effects.
- 5.1.6 The Spatial Strategy in this Plan contains options for urban extensions around Luton in Area A. There will be some positive effects on accessibility to services and facilities across all areas. In Area A, principally the Green Belt, larger scale developments have potential due to major opportunities to promote sustainable transport, for example using the Busway. The Spatial Strategy includes options for concentrating moderate growth in the rail corridor between Luton & Flitwick, therefore promoting sustainable development in an area constrained by Green Belt.
- 5.1.7 Less significant positive effects relate to Area D which is characterised by market towns and villages linked by rural roads. In Area D the appraisal supports growth of small to medium scale, and focused around settlements with existing good services, to minimise negative effects from the need to travel by car. The spatial strategy therefore limits growth in Area D to village extensions, and the proposal for higher growth in villages as per Scenario 5 is not preferred.
- 5.1.8 Across Central Bedfordshire, providing higher levels of growth is likely to place more pressures on the capacity of infrastructure, but these pressures may be mitigated by the provision of new settlements and/or urban extensions, with the scale & scope for exemplar design, especially for sustainable energy and water; landscape and the potential enhancement of Green Infrastructure. Larger developments can be creative in scope and design offering enhancements to both existing and new communities with major positive effects.
- 5.1.9 Detailed transport improvement studies are required to identify appropriate mitigating schemes to any negative effects on highways. Higher growth can offer opportunities for supporting a modal shift in transport and new settlements of the scale and scope proposed could contribute to highways and sustainable transport improvements that could benefit wider areas of CBC and beyond. The potential negative effects of growth can be mitigated with the support of the development management policies, which protect the natural environment and promote sustainable, connected communities through requirements for appropriate provision of supporting infrastructure. Further mitigation measures will be developed and refined as specific site allocation options are evaluated.

5.2 Evidence Base 2: Transport

- 5.2.1 Central Bedfordshire undertook Transport Modelling to determine the transport impacts of growth on road network performance. The key findings of this study are:



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- All growth scenarios show stress on the road network across Central Bedfordshire. Points of stress vary according to the locations and amount of growth being considered.
- A “No Local Plan” scenario, which tested the impact of all non Local Plan related changes, including committed planned growth and infrastructure schemes to 2035, also shows stress on the road network and provides a useful starting point for understanding change in traffic conditions.
- In total twenty ‘hot spots’ are identified across Central Bedfordshire, following analysis of the Local Plan growth scenarios. Hotspots indicate roads or junctions where changes to traffic conditions would occur in addition to the “No Local Plan” scenario. Not all hotspots suffer from worsening conditions; in some places conditions are stable or improved.
- Certain hotspots reoccur, indicating a traffic condition that would require mitigation in any growth scenario. For example, the A507 shows worsening or neutral conditions having a high impact on road users. The Council’s Preferred Approach allocates small scale village extensions in Area D for this reason.
- On average, speeds across Central Bedfordshire and Luton are higher in the evening (PM) peak than in the morning (AM), indicating that traffic flows are travelling faster in the evening peak hour. Additional growth in the Local Plan scenarios causes some reduction to average speeds.

5.2.2 The modelling demonstrates that if certain key transport infrastructure schemes are delivered within the Plan period (i.e. the Expressway, Black Cat Improvements, A1 improvements and the Central Section of East West Rail) the average travel speed increases and therefore worsening hotspots are improved. This highlights the importance of road and rail investment in supporting the neutral or positive impacts of development and the importance of these particular schemes in supporting CBC in delivering their growth in Areas B and C.

5.3 Evidence Base 3: Strategic Options for Growth

5.3.1 Central Bedfordshire Council undertook two Growth Options Studies in order to identify appropriate locations across the area to deliver strategic level growth. The purpose of the two studies was to establish spatial patterns and inform the spatial strategy and distribution of development for the plan.

5.3.2 The Key findings of the studies are:

- Whilst Central Bedfordshire has a strong supply of land that has the potential to deliver growth, there are a number of constraints that exist, such as the Green Belt in the south and limited east/west connectivity and sustainable transport in the north, which can only be overcome through clear policy direction and significant infrastructure investment.
- There are a number of potential large strategic sites across the area that would require significant developer contributions in order to be delivered and to be considered sustainable i.e. a dedicated bus link to an existing rail station or in the case of the largest developments, new, large scale infrastructure such as new rail stations or highway/junction improvements may be required.



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- Transport investment will be required in order to develop a more balanced spatial strategy and to unlock and release land to accommodate growth. Such investment and infrastructure takes time to deliver and resulting growth may therefore not be possible until the second half of the plan period.
- It will be necessary to consider delivery trajectories such that development where existing infrastructure and employment exists is more likely to be delivered in the earlier part of the plan period.
- It will be necessary to release land from the Green Belt in order to ensure the delivery of sustainable development across Central Bedfordshire as a whole. However, it may be possible to replace Green Belt elsewhere within Central Bedfordshire in order to off-set that which is released.

5.3.3 As Central Bedfordshire has a relatively large quantity of available land to accommodate growth, the studies characterise potential development as to whether the location would be considered:

- a new settlement;
- a village extension;
- growth in a transport corridor;
- an urban extension; or
- an urban intensification or extension centred around a transport hub.

5.3.4 A combination of the above is considered to be required in order to ensure the optimum balance of growth and continuous delivery of sustainable development throughout the plan period.

5.3.5 Figure 5.1 below is based on the four areas defined by CBC for the purposes of consultation during the summer of 2016 (Areas A, B, C and D) and illustrates the five core components:

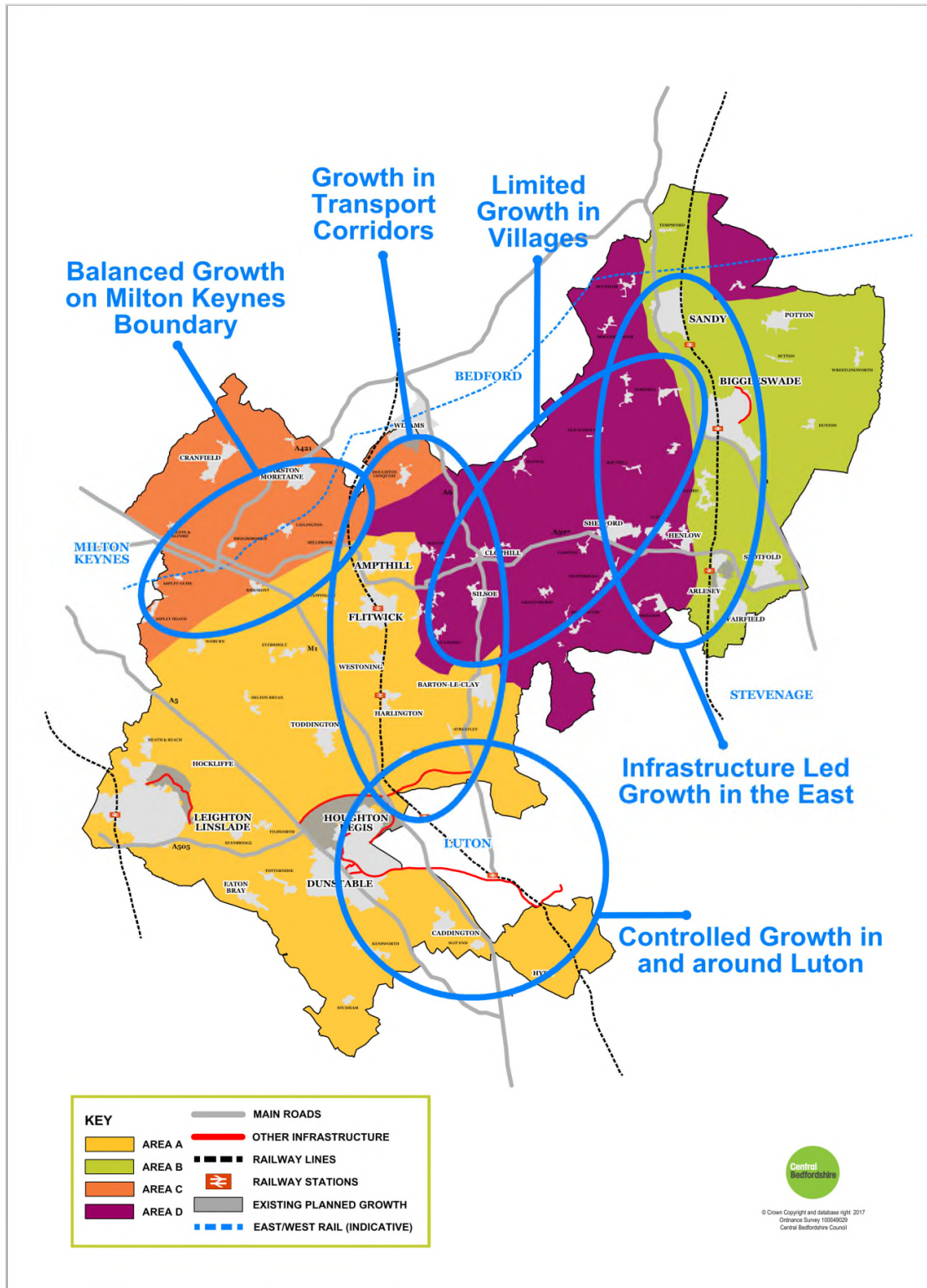
- The potential for urban extensions around Luton – these could contribute to meeting unmet need arising from Luton.
- Growth in the rail corridor between Luton and Flitwick – concentrating growth along key transport corridors, promoting sustainable development in an area that has seen little growth due to Green Belt restrictions.
- Growth in the western area of Central Bedfordshire – will require significant infrastructure provision and a balanced approach to growth so as not to concentrate development to the west of Central Bedfordshire.
- Minor village extensions within Area D – limited growth due to the very rural nature of the area and limited capacity for significant sustainable transportation infrastructure
- Growth along the A1 corridor – will require significant infrastructure provision to unlock the potential, provide balanced growth and help promote the eastern area of Central Bedfordshire.

Figure 5.1: Five Spatial Themes from the Growth Options Studies



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Shaping where you live 2035



Vision & Objectives

Local Plan 2015-2035

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6 Vision and Objectives

6.1 The Vision - Where we want to be in 2035

- 6.1.1 This chapter examines the Vision for Central Bedfordshire and provides further explanation of how the area will look in 2035, if the challenges and opportunities identified are successfully addressed. It goes on to identify a series of Strategic Objectives to deliver the Vision, which form the basis of the policies in this document.

A Vision for 2035

Central Bedfordshire has taken full advantage of its exceptional strategic position as the central hub of the East-West Oxford to Cambridge growth corridor and its existing strategic north-south routes (M1/A1/East Coast Mainline/Thameslink) to deliver new high tech employment supported by sustainable new homes in a number of new village clusters and market town extensions which are well integrated into the existing high quality landscape. The heritage and distinctiveness of the market towns and villages has been preserved and enhanced by moderate growth ensuring a high quality environment for all residents. The new businesses and population are served by excellent community, transport and communications infrastructure. Multi-service hubs have been delivered to support strong communities and new rail stations at Wixams and Tempsford New Market Town and the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway have ensured excellent connectivity.

6.2 The Strategic Objectives – How we will get there

- 6.2.1 The resulting Strategic Objectives are the stepping stones to deliver the Vision and form the basis of the plan policies. The Vision details how Central Bedfordshire will be in 2035.



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Theme	Where we will be in 2035	Strategic Objectives	Local Plan Policies
Growth & Infrastructure	Improved infrastructure including East West Rail supporting healthier living and helping the area to deliver strategic growth. Areas that were lacking the social, physical and green infrastructure required to support sustainable growth have been identified and measures are well under way to address these. Improved overall design for new strategic scale growth has meant less reliance on cars. Town and neighbourhood hubs are the focus for community activities and have a diverse range of uses including health clinics, cultural activities, local and business services, as well as retail and office uses.	<p>SO1 Ensuring sustainable growth and associated infrastructure including the continued regeneration of town and neighbourhood centres to deliver the annual target for new homes and the provision of diverse community hubs.</p> <p>SO2 Delivering enough homes and jobs to meet our needs. Promote and demand good urban design practices throughout all types and scale of development across Central Bedfordshire.</p>	SP1, SP2, SP6, SP7, R1, R2, R3, T1, T8, EE12, HQ1, HQ2, HQ5, HQ6, HQ9, HQ11
Local Character	Central Bedfordshire is taking full advantage of its distinctive strengths with regard to its places, communities and heritage assets. The built environment and the natural landscape and setting of our towns and villages has been protected and enhanced.	<p>SO3 Conserve and enhance the area's heritage and settings by ensuring new development, including changes to the public realm, are of high quality design, appropriate to the significance of the heritage asset, and seek to maintain and enhance the contribution of built, landscaped and buried heritage.</p> <p>SO4 Create high quality neighbourhoods that have regard for local character and use sustainability principles which are sensitive and responsive to the significance of the local environment, are distinctive, safe, functional and accessible and which reinforce the identity of the area's townscapes, landscape and public places.</p>	SP3, SP4, SP5, SP6, EE4, EE5, EE6, EE7, EE8, EE9, HQ6, HQ7, HQ8, HE1, HE2, HE3, DC1, DC2, DC3, DC5,



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Theme	Where we will be in 2035	Strategic Objectives	Local Plan Policies
Jobs & Business	Central Bedfordshire is part of the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford arc recognising that this key opportunity can deliver high levels of economic growth and investment within a sustainable growth location. Improved accessibility to high quality local jobs through increased transport connectivity and the provision of high quality modern office and warehouse space and the social and economic inequality gaps in Central Bedfordshire are being closed: The social and economic contrast between different parts of the area has been improved.	<p>SO5 Provide a minimum of 24,000 new jobs by 2035, accommodating new economic growth along strategic and sustainable transportation routes, new mixed use developments and existing established sites.</p> <p>SO6 Recognise the contribution of land for employment uses to meet the needs of different sectors of the economy and manage the release of surplus employment land for other uses where appropriate.</p> <p>SO7 Link deprived areas with employment benefits arising from the development of major sites and existing key locations.</p>	SP1, EMP1, EMP2, EMP3, EMP4, EMP5, EMP6
Homes	More residents are enjoying the benefits of an improved quality of life through a wider choice of high quality housing with a mix of types of housing and tenures which meet market demand.	SO8 Address housing needs in Central Bedfordshire using appropriate affordable housing targets and policies to encourage quality and choice.	H1, H2, H3, H4, H5, H6, H7, H8, H9, DC4
Transport	Central Bedfordshire has a reliable network of public transport routes. Previously poor east/west public transport access in the area has been addressed by East West Rail and the Expressway. New services link key centres and improved public transport interchanges have been created at Ridgmont, Wixams and Tempsford New Market Town. More people are using public transport, reducing the dependence on cars which has eased congestion throughout the area.	<p>SO9 Reduce the reliance on the use of the car by improving facilities at bus and train stations, delivering transport interchanges and by promoting safe and sustainable forms of transport, such as improved walking and cycling routes.</p> <p>SO10 Ensure a reliable network of east/west and north/south public transport routes to improve access to local services and facilities, especially for those without a car, through well planned routes and integrated public transport. Encouraging the shift from road to rail freight to reduce demands on the highway network.</p>	T1, T2, T3, T4, T5, T7, EE11, HQ6



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Theme	Where we will be in 2035	Strategic Objectives	Local Plan Policies
Environment	<p>The special character of the area's natural assets have been protected and enhanced, fewer wildlife habitats are at risk, and new higher standards of development, integrating renewable or low energy technology are being delivered. More residents are accessing the area's quality public open spaces and new areas have been provided to support recreation as part of new communities.</p>	<p>SO11 Promote healthier and more active lifestyles by improving the quality of, and accessibility to, the area's open spaces, as areas for sports, recreation, visual interest, biodiversity, education, health and well being.</p> <p>SO12 Encourage the development of wildlife corridors and networks and provide new open spaces in line with the requirements identified in Central Bedfordshire's Leisure Strategy</p> <p>SO13 Support the necessary changes to adapt to climate change by minimising emissions of carbon and local air quality pollutants, protecting and enhancing biodiversity. Improving and protecting air and water quality, reducing flood risk and adverse impacts from noise including the safeguarding of quiet areas and reducing the impacts of contaminated land.</p>	<p>SP3, EE1, EE2, EE3, EE4, EE5, EE6, EE7, EE8, EE9, EE10, EE11, EE12, T6, CC1, CC2, CC3, CC4, CC5, CC6, CC7, HQ6, HQ10, DC1, DC6</p>



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Shaping where you live 2035



The Spatial Strategy

Local Plan 2015-2035

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7 The Spatial Strategy

7.1 Overview

- 7.1.1 Central Bedfordshire is powerfully affected by its relationship with surrounding major centres; particularly London, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Luton; and also by its strategic position at the centre of the Oxford – Cambridge corridor. This presents significant opportunities not only for improved connectivity and growth within Central Bedfordshire, but for the Council to take a lead in continued strategic joint working with our neighbours to contribute to enhanced growth opportunities identified within the NIC Report⁶.
- 7.1.2 The challenge, which this strategy addresses, is to embrace the opportunities for sustainable economic led growth while safeguarding and enhancing the environmental, heritage and community features that make the area a great place to live and work.
- 7.1.3 Central Bedfordshire will deliver a minimum of 24,000 new jobs over the plan period by growing existing key employment locations and sectors and by taking full advantage of our transport infrastructure opportunities. In addition, around 6000 jobs will be delivered to meet 'footloose'⁷ strategic warehousing (B8 uses) on three major strategic employment sites.
- 7.1.4 To meet our statutory requirements and to serve the interests of our communities, the draft local plan proposes delivery of a minimum of 20,000 new homes in addition to our existing commitments. However the plan additionally allows for flexibility and identifies strategic growth locations that could accommodate a greater number of homes should they be necessary to allow for emerging strategies and to respond to the emerging opportunities outlined in this section.
- 7.1.5 New growth locations will require further detailed assessment to ensure that they are sustainable and deliverable and some locations may not meet these tests. These locations may therefore be reduced in the next draft of the plan which will be published next spring. The range of new homes to be delivered identified below also allows the necessary flexibility to take account of the awaited changes to the way in which housing need is calculated, which will be published by the government later this year.

7.2 Key Local and Strategic Drivers

- 7.2.1 The strategy seeks to grow existing communities so that they are more sustainable through improved services, facilities and employment opportunities,

⁶ National Infrastructure Commission Interim Report on Cambridge – Oxford Corridor, November 2016

⁷ Footloose employment is that which is not tied to a particular location but is often located along strategic transportation corridors.



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leading to reduced travelling and outflows. Growth will be delivered without over development which threatens the character of our existing communities.

- 7.2.2 It is recognised that some communities in the northern area of Central Bedfordshire outside of the Green Belt consider that they have already had to take unplanned growth in recent years due to speculative development while there was no five year housing land supply. Continuing unrestrained growth in these areas is unsustainable and so while Green Belt continues to be a constraint in the south; supported by evidence in the Sustainability Appraisal (paragraphs 5.1.5-5.1.6) the strategy proposes a more of a balance between growth in the north and south of the area. In terms of scale too, a balance between more moderate development around existing towns and villages and large new settlements is therefore proposed, recognising that an entirely new community takes longer to deliver and needs entirely new services.
- 7.2.3 The delivery of small and medium scale growth alongside the strategic locations will ensure the continuous delivery of homes in the short to medium term and enable the Council to maintain a rolling 5 year housing land supply.

7.3 Urban Intensification, Previously Developed Land & Transport Hubs

- 7.3.1 Transport infrastructure often has the biggest impact on the delivery of new development; both directly in terms of journeys to work and services, but also in terms of the environment and economic opportunity. A key part of the strategy is therefore to place as much of the growth as possible close to sustainable transport corridors and interchanges as this is considered to be one of the most effective ways of exploiting the positive opportunities and allowing for the intensification of brownfield sites.
- 7.3.2 Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis have a significant role to play in contributing towards growth within the Luton Housing Market Area. An Urban Capacity Study for the Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Luton conurbation identified opportunities to increase the capacity of sites identified within the conurbation by increasing their density.
- 7.3.3 Elsewhere within Central Bedfordshire established local planning policies, such as the Settlement Envelope policy (see Section 10), have been successful in directing development within settlements onto previously developed or vacant land. These sites within settlements have made a significant contribution towards meeting our growth requirements. The Council is also taking a proactive approach to strengthening our towns and villages and has a delivery programme in place (The Market Towns Regeneration Fund) to secure sustainable growth opportunities and stimulate regeneration.
- 7.3.4 Evidence gathering on previously developed land has demonstrated there is only a limited amount of 'brownfield' land in Central Bedfordshire that remains undeveloped. Therefore while the Council is committed to maximising the use of available land within settlements and seeking brownfield opportunities like former



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airfields (T Tempsford and RAF Henlow), there is not enough remaining to avoid seeking development on greenfield sites.

7.4 Strategic Opportunities

- 7.4.1 Central Bedfordshire has accommodated significant new housing in the past. The vision is for the area to maintain and enhance this momentum of growth in line with the ambitious growth agenda outlined within the Housing White Paper (February 2017) and the NIC Corridor Interim Report (November 2016) and subsequent discussion paper (March 2017). This will be achieved through well managed sustainable development delivered through growth in accordance with the spatial strategy outlined in section 7.5.
- 7.4.2 In addition to the objectively assessed housing needs for Central Bedfordshire and the delivery of unmet housing needs arising from outside the area, the Plan recognises the potential for strategic opportunities for additional growth which may ultimately extend growth beyond the current plan period and allow Central Bedfordshire to realise its full potential. The Plan provides the conditions for this strategic opportunity to be realised, including the consideration of locations along the A1 Corridor and in relation to the East West Rail proposals, supporting the early delivery of major new infrastructure and employment opportunities.



7.5 Spatial Strategy Approach

7.5.1 The approach to the spatial strategy for Central Bedfordshire is detailed below.

Spatial Strategy Approach

This Plan seeks to:

- Build on our existing and emerging economic strengths in key sectors and deliver a minimum of **24,000-30,000 new jobs**.
- Deliver between **20,000 and 30,000 homes**⁸ through new villages, moderate extensions to existing towns and villages and a new market town in line with the provision of new infrastructure and to meet identified housing need close to **key transport corridors** (East-west, A1/East Coast Mainline and M1/Thameslink)
- Balance the delivery of significant sustainable infrastructure and growth with the **enhancement and protection** of existing communities, landscape, heritage and countryside and actively **prevent the coalescence** of settlements across the area, including investigating opportunities for new Green Belt where appropriate.
- Maximise potential opportunities for the **intensification and redevelopment** e.g. Tempsford Airfield and RAF Henlow and the regeneration of urban areas (Biggleswade, Dunstable, Houghton Regis, Flitwick, Leighton Linlade & Sandy) through town centre frameworks or masterplans.
- Identify and deliver spatial options and strategic opportunities that could provide for **longer term economic and housing growth** at Tempsford, Biggleswade and in the Marston Vale. This growth will **support, and must be supported by, new strategic infrastructure** particularly the Oxford – Cambridge Expressway, A1 improvements and new rail stations/transport interchanges along the East West Rail route at Ridgmont, Wixams and north of Sandy.
- **Deliver housing need** identified for the **Luton HMA** and some unmet need from Luton **close to where it arises** where there is capacity to do so sustainably. This will either be through strategic extensions close to Luton's urban edge or through moderate extensions to existing villages and towns with good connectivity and access to services. This will mean **releasing some Green Belt land** where exceptional circumstances can be demonstrated.

⁸ Figures have been rounded for the purposes of providing a clearly defined range – see Table 7.2 for exact figures. Figures do not include existing commitments.



7.6 The Proposed Growth Locations

Area A – South

- 7.6.1 This plan identifies a requirement to accommodate 'unmet need' as Luton is a highly constrained urban area. Some of this need is being met by other neighbouring authorities; however through Duty to Co-operate discussions; the Council has agreed to provide for 7350 homes within Central Bedfordshire within the Luton Housing Market Area (HMA).
- 7.6.2 As the Luton HMA is largely comprised of Green Belt land, this will mean some release of land within the Green Belt where 'exceptional circumstances'⁹ can be demonstrated.
- 7.6.3 Consultation told us that growth in the south was supported because of the proximity to key services in the urban centres of Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Luton.
- 7.6.4 Significant pieces of new infrastructure in the south, including the A5-M1 link road, the Woodside Link, the Luton/Dunstable Busway and new Junction 11a, will also help to support this level of growth.
- 7.6.5 These new homes will either be in the form of strategic sites that are closely related to Luton's urban edge and deliver significant levels of growth to meet need where it is arising; or in the form of highly sustainable extensions of a more moderate scale to large towns and villages that are inset into the Green Belt; where there is a good level of services and connectivity and where sites are available that would not detrimentally impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
- 7.6.6 The Growth Locations being considered in this area are:
- North of Luton – around 4000 homes
 - Limited extensions to larger towns and villages within the Green Belt (around 2000 homes collectively)
 - West of Luton (around 2,000 homes)
 - M1 Junction 11a (around 40 hectares for employment)

⁹ The National Planning Policy Framework 2012, Paragraph 83



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Area	Overall	Growth Potential	Environment
AREA A - South and West/ M1 Corridor	<p>Potential for all levels of growth including strategic scale growth adjoining urban areas, where Green Belt release can be justified.</p> <p>This area is constrained by the Green Belt and Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). However, major sites to the north of Houghton Regis are already under development or have planning permission while significant growth is underway at Leighton Buzzard.</p>	<p>Small villages in the Green Belt generally have limited capacity to grow but there is some potential for medium scale growth along the major transport corridor following the M1, A5 and the railway (Midland Main Line), or large scale growth for sites in close proximity to Luton that could be linked to the Luton-Dunstable Busway and/or the strategic transportation network. The lack of new sites within the urban areas of Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis mean that significant further growth in Central Bedfordshire is likely to be required. However any further development in the Green Belt will need to be thoroughly justified to meet national planning policy.</p>	<p>The Chilterns AONB and Greensand Ridge Nature Improvement Area (NIA), with their valued habitats and landscapes are existing environmental assets. Opportunities for new environmental projects include creating a long distance cycleway along the Greensand Ridge, and new Country Parks for Ampthill and Flitwick, and the Barton-le-Clay area.</p>

Area B – A1 Corridor

- 7.6.7 Evidence studies and consultation told us that this is the best performing of the four areas to take large scale growth with potential urban extension or new settlement scale sites at Sandy, East of Biggleswade, Tempsford Airfield and other sustainable locations along the A1 Corridor.
- 7.6.8 It is recognised however that to take forward significant growth in this area, there has to be government support for further investment in strategic transportation including both the East Coast Mainline and the Central Section of East/West Rail which proposes a new station/interchange around Sandy. Investment from the developments themselves and from other funding sources in increasing the capacity of the stretch of the A1 through Central Bedfordshire will be absolutely critical in moving forward with multiple strategic scale growth proposals. Proposals for East of Biggleswade and a new settlement at Tempsford are indicative at this stage as there is potential scope in the longer term for greater levels of growth if the infrastructure required to deliver this is secured.
- 7.6.9 The Growth Locations being considered in this area are:
- Tempsford New Settlement (around 7000+ homes)
 - East of Biggleswade (around 3000 homes)
 - East of Arlesey (around 2000 homes)
 - Limited extensions to other settlements



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- A1 Corridor – Biggleswade South (around 40 hectares for employment)

Area	Overall	Growth Potential	Environment
AREA B - East/A1 Corridor	<p>Potential for all levels of growth, including new settlements, if appropriate supporting infrastructure is provided.</p> <p>The broad corridor running south-north from Arlesey to the north of Sandy is well served in transport terms with the A1 and East Coast railway, both of which have potential for significant upgrades.</p>	<p>New development will need to provide for jobs growth in order to try and reduce out commuting and to generate investment to benefit town centres and improve local services. At Sandy in particular, there is potential to benefit from the East West Rail proposals and to attract business and housing growth along the Oxford to Cambridge corridor. This area has the potential to accommodate major growth providing it can be planned sustainably and generates clear benefits for existing communities.</p>	<p>The Greensand Ridge Nature Improvement Area (NIA) and Ivel Valley and their valued habitats are existing environmental assets. There are also opportunities for new environmental projects, including a new Country Park for Arlesey and Stotfold, a long distance 'Great North Cycleway', and access and open space networks around Biggleswade, Sandy, and the Arlesey, Stotfold and Fairfield areas.</p>

Area C – East-West

- 7.6.10 The opportunities in this area are related to the proposed future strategic infrastructure investment including East-West Rail and the Expressway. This strategy supports the proposed East-West rail route and the Oxford-Cambridge Expressway and in turn the National Infrastructure Commission's central finding that the Oxford-Cambridge area which runs through Central Bedfordshire provides a 'once in a generation opportunity' to be the UK's Silicon Valley, delivering growth in science, technology and innovation¹⁰.
- 7.6.11 When delivered, these will strongly support the development potential of large sites in the Marston Vale and to the west, close to Milton Keynes.
- 7.6.12 The consultation and evidence told us that villages around Woburn including Aspley Guise must be protected due to their unique character, heritage assets and natural environment. There is however some potential north of the railway line in an area known as the Aspley Guise Triangle for mixed use development in the form of villages linking in with the planned development of Milton Keynes. This would however need to be extensively buffered with new Green Belt to avoid coalescence and harm to the character of the existing settlements and can not come forward until the route of the Expressway has been finalised.

¹⁰ National Infrastructure Commission Interim Report, November 2016



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- 7.6.13 There is also some potential in the Marston Vale for a series of linked villages and this had some support if existing communities were protected from coalescence by important countryside gaps or new Green Belt; and if in addition there were new facilities and significant new green infrastructure and leisure proposals that could also benefit existing communities like Brogborough and Marston Moretaine.
- 7.6.14 The Growth Locations being considered in this area are:
- Marston Vale New Villages (around 5000 homes) plus a business park
 - Aspley Guise New Villages (North of Railway Line) (around 3000 homes)
 - Wixams Southern Extension (around 500 homes)
 - Limited extensions to other settlements
 - M1 Junction 13 (around 40 hectares for employment)

Area	Overall	Growth Potential	Environment
AREA C - East/West Corridor	<p>Limited potential small scale growth for existing settlements. Potential for medium up to strategic scale growth including new settlements subject to investment in infrastructure and viability of sites at this scale.</p> <p>The north of Central Bedfordshire is an important economic area with advanced research and development at Cranfield Technology Park and Millbrook Proving Ground and close links with Milton Keynes. The area is well connected with the improved A421, and the M1 and the planned section upgrade for East West Rail between Oxford and Bedford.</p>	<p>With the right infrastructure investment, this area may be able to accommodate significant growth, potentially in the form of new settlements but the timing and commitment of further transport investment will be crucial. Many of the smaller settlements have already grown significantly over the past few years.</p>	<p>Much of the landscape has been restored and the Forest of Marston Vale is an important asset. Extending the Forest of Marston Vale and the potential Bedford to Milton Keynes canal are strategic scale environmental projects in this area.</p>

Area D – Central

- 7.6.15 The settlement pattern and constrained infrastructure severely limit the options for growth in area D. There is scope for some small and medium scale sites but these will not be presented as allocations until the pre-submission version of the plan is published in autumn 2017.
- 7.6.16 This area has had a large number of recent permissions as a result of speculative development. This has led to piecemeal development which does not allow an holistic approach to the delivery of new services and infrastructure.
- 7.6.17 The Sustainability Appraisal and the Transport modelling evidence tells us that there is limited scope for growth in this area due to limited capacity on the network, particularly along the A507 as result of incremental growth of existing settlements.



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- 7.6.18 Mixed use development is proposed at RAF Henlow and the growth in villages will be comprised of individual sites of less than 250 homes.
- 7.6.19 The Growth Locations being considered in this area are:
- Limited extensions to other settlements
 - RAF Henlow (Mixed employment Uses)

Area	Overall	Growth Potential	Environment
AREA D - Central Section	Potential for limited small to medium scale growth. The central part of Central Bedfordshire is characterised by market towns and villages linked by rural roads and the potential to upgrade infrastructure such as roads is likely to be limited.	Any growth is likely to be of a small to medium scale and will be focused around settlements which have good services and suitable sites.	The area includes parts of the Greensand Ridge Nature Improvement Area (NIA) with its valued habitat networks. There is the opportunity for creating new environmental projects, such as a long distance cycleway along the Greensand Ridge.

7.7 Growth Strategy

- 7.7.1 The options for employment, housing, and mixed use development at the growth locations set out in Policy SP1 below are **subject to the findings of more detailed assessment** and compliance with any site specific infrastructure requirements or mitigation identified. The options for strategic growth locations have been selected having regard to their overall sustainability based on the evidence presented in the Growth Options Studies for the Luton HMA and the North of Central Bedfordshire, technical site assessment work, the Sustainability Appraisal, transport modelling and other technical evidence studies.
- 7.7.2 In the next version of the plan, it is likely that a certain level of growth will be planned for as a contingency if sites allocated fail to come forward as scheduled in our phasing plans. This will ensure delivery throughout the plan period and in particular will ensure that the Council can maintain a rolling five year housing supply.
- 7.7.3 It is also clear that the full identified net capacity of growth locations is shown in the area summaries. For those strategic sites that require significant enabling infrastructure to come forward it is likely that it will not be achievable for them to be built out within the twenty year plan period. Therefore in some cases, only a proportion of the overall capacity figure will count towards the plan target for housing.

Policy SP1: Growth Strategy

A minimum of 20,000 additional new homes will be delivered and a minimum of 24,000 new jobs between 2015 and 2035 (c.23,000 homes are existing commitments). The Council will also continue to support the delivery of the existing committed sites.



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In addition to the existing committed sites, development will also be brought forward through Neighbourhood Plans, and through **medium and small scale sites** in Areas B, C & D that will be set out in the pre-submission version of the plan.

Subject to further assessment of sustainability and deliverability, new development will be planned for **at a selection of** the following locations:

Area A

- North of Luton (Town Extension)
- West of Luton (Town Extension)
- Inset Green Belt Villages (Village Extensions)
- M1 Junction 11a – Strategic Employment Area

Area B

- Tempsford New Settlement (New market town)
- East of Biggleswade (New Villages)
- East of Arlesey (Town Extension)
- A1 Corridor – Biggleswade South - Strategic Employment Area

Area C

- Marston Vale New Settlement (New Villages)
- Aspley Guise (North of Railway Line) (New Villages)
- Wixams Southern Extension (Town Extension)
- M1 Junction 13 – Strategic Employment Area

Area D

- RAF Henlow (Mixed Use Employment)

Planning applications for piecemeal development that prejudices the delivery of growth locations set out in this policy will be refused.

7.8 Small & Medium Sites

- 7.8.1 This version of the plan only looks at key growth location options. In the main these are of a strategic scale except for the collective growth that is proposed through limited extensions to large villages and towns inset into the Green Belt (Area A). This is highlighted in this version of the Plan as is integral to the Council's approach to development in the Green Belt as part of the overall spatial strategy.
- 7.8.2 Outside of Green Belt, small and medium sites have not been identified or given an indicative capacity in this version of the plan. The initial site assessment work that has been undertaken demonstrates that there is some capacity within the rural area for new homes in Areas C-D. This does not however factor in the cumulative impact of smaller scale sites in individual settlements, where there are multiple sites. The balance between small and medium sites will also depend on



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the number of strategic sites that are carried forward into the next version of the plan as draft allocations.

- 7.8.3 The locations of these sites will be directed by the overall spatial strategy outlined in this section and also with reference to public consultation and engagement, and technical evidence, including the Sustainability Appraisal and the Settlement Capacity Study.

7.9 Neighbourhood Planning

- 7.9.1 Neighbourhood Planning is a new way of allowing neighbourhoods to have a say in the statutory land use planning of their own areas. The Council is supportive of Neighbourhood Plans and support will be given to those communities who choose to produce a Neighbourhood Plan.
- 7.9.2 Neighbourhood Planning must arise from the community, with individuals and groups working in partnership with local businesses, developers and landowners in the area, to deliver sustainable development to meet the community's needs for the future.
- 7.9.3 There are two 'tools' for neighbourhood planning that may be produced;
- neighbourhood plans which may allocate land outside of Green Belt for development and/or include policies against which planning applications are judged,
 - neighbourhood development orders which can grant planning permission for a specific type of development.

Neighbourhood Plan Areas Outside of Green Belt

- 7.9.4 When proposing allocations, a robust assessment of all alternative sites available will be required to show that the most sustainable locations have been selected. The status of allocations made through the neighbourhood planning process is in effect, the same as if made by the Council through a site allocations development plan document because Neighbourhood Plans become part of the formal development plan for Central Bedfordshire, upon adoption.

Neighbourhood Plan Areas in Green Belt

- 7.9.5 Neighbourhood Plans cannot however allocate land for development in the Green Belt as changes to the Green Belt can only be made through a review of the Local Plan. Instead they can include aspirations for the future, which may include a recommendation that the Green Belt boundary is altered to allow for a specific development in a future Local Plan Review.

Delivering Homes through Neighbourhood Plans

- 7.9.6 In view of the fact that the progress of Neighbourhood Plans is outside of the control and jurisdiction of the Council, no specific target for the delivery of new homes has been attributed to Neighbourhood Plans. Therefore any new homes delivered through neighbourhood plans in addition to the small and medium sites proposed in the next draft of the Plan, will effectively be treated as 'windfall'.



7.10 Housing Target

Table 7.1: Commitments at 1st April 2017

Type of commitment	Number of dwellings expected during the plan period
Completions since April 2015	3,399
Existing allocations	8,195
Strategic sites (with planning permission)	7,130
Large windfall (with planning permission)	3,358
Small windfall (with planning permission)	681
Windfall allowance (five year supply period only)	375
Total	23,138

- 7.10.1 The table above sets out the amount of housing which is already allocated by a previous development plan or benefits from planning permission. These are called dwelling commitments and they are expected to deliver 23,138 dwellings during the 2015-2035 plan period. A breakdown of all these commitments can be found in the Housing Trajectory (April 2017).
- 7.10.2 In addition to the above commitments, evidence set out in the Windfall Topic Paper demonstrates that there is sufficient compelling evidence to justify the addition of an annual windfall allowance throughout the time period of the Plan. If the Council chooses to include an allowance for windfall it will be important to ensure that the figures are robust and achievable and take account of other identified housing delivery. If an allowance is not made then it is expected that windfall will provide a large annual contingency.



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7.11 Summary of Housing Growth in Central Bedfordshire 2015-2035

Table 7.2: Housing Need & Delivery

a) CBC Housing Need (SHMA Draft Update)	32,000
b) Unmet Need from Luton	7,400
c) Committed sites	23,138
d) Contingency (10% uplift) on (a)	3200
e) Contingency 20% uplift on (a)	6400
f) Contingency 20% uplift on (a + b + e)	9160
New Allocations 2015-2035 (Lower end of range) (a + b + d) – (c)	19,462
New Allocations 2015-2035 (Upper end of range) (a + b + e + f) – (c)	31,822
Lower end of Range Total planned housing delivery 2015-35	42,600
Upper end of Range Total planned housing delivery 2015-35	54,960

Table 7.3: New Jobs

Existing Sites and new Mixed Use Allocations	24,000
B8 Strategic Allocation – M1 Junction 11a	1,700
B8 Strategic Allocation – M1 Junction 13	2,300
B8 Strategic Allocation – A1 Junction 11	2,000
Total Planned Jobs delivery 2015-35	30,000

7.12 Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

National Planning Policy Framework

- 7.12.1 In March 2012, the Government published the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The NPPF sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these should be applied. The NPPF requires that Local Plans are prepared with the objective of contributing to the achievement of sustainable development. Local Plans must, therefore, be consistent with the principles and policies of the Framework, including the presumption in favour of sustainable development.



Policy SP2: National Planning Policy Framework - Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development

When considering development proposals the Council will take a positive approach that reflects the presumption in favour of sustainable development contained in the National Planning Policy Framework.

Planning applications that accord with the policies in this Local Plan (and, where relevant, with policies in neighbourhood plans) will be approved unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

Where relevant policies are out of date at the time of making the decision then the Council will grant permission unless material considerations indicate otherwise; taking into account whether any adverse impacts of granting permission would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the National Planning Policy Framework taken as a whole; or specific policies in that Framework indicate that development should be restricted.



Shaping where you live 2035



Implementation

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8 Implementation

8.1 Phasing

- 8.1.1 The phasing of existing housing commitments has already been determined and is set out within the Housing Trajectory. It is important that new allocations identified by the Local Plan contribute to delivering a continuous supply of housing throughout the plan period. It may also be appropriate for this council to phase the delivery of particular development sites so that construction is not negatively affected by competition in the market, unavailability of resources or deficiencies in infrastructure for example. This could be particularly important for those key strategic sites which are critical to the delivery of the housing strategy. The next draft of the Plan will therefore include a phasing plan to ensure that this is managed effectively. The impact of phasing for strategic scale sites may also be that some sites deliver only a proportion of their total capacity within the plan period.

8.2 Delivery

- 8.2.1 The draft site assessment technical work demonstrates that there are sufficient sites that meet our initial assessment to ensure that the Local Plan meets the full objectively assessed need of 32,000 dwellings and 30,000 new jobs over the 2015-2035 plan period. This represents an average need of 1,600 dwellings and 1,500 jobs per year.
- 8.2.2 Local Planning Authorities are also required to 'identify and update annually a supply of specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their requirements'. If this cannot be demonstrated a 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' is applied. It is therefore vital that the Local Plan allocates sufficient deliverable and developable land at range of scales and locations in order to ensure that a five year supply is maintained.
- 8.2.3 In order to demonstrate a five year supply of housing, significant and demonstrable site specific evidence must be produced. This council regularly contacts housebuilders to determine when their sites will be delivered and this information is added to the Housing Trajectory.

8.3 Housing Boost

- 8.3.1 While every endeavour will be made within the Local Plan to ensure that there is sufficient housing land to meet the dwelling requirements, the Council recognises that there may be times during the plan period when a five year housing supply cannot be demonstrated. During these times, and where an application is a 'departure' from the Local Plan, the Council requires developers to sign up to a delivery clause in the Section 106 agreement for the scheme that commits them to delivery of a specified number of homes within five years. Whilst it is hoped that this innovative approach is not needed, it provides useful flexibility to even out delivery in the event of a shortfall and ensuring that the planning permission is converted into houses being delivered.



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- 8.3.2 The Council is also considering a policy to be included within the Local Plan which can be activated in circumstances when the supply is low in order to boost housing supply so that the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development' is not applied. This would prevent housing being delivered that bypasses the plan led approach in any location that is considered to be suitable and sustainable, providing certainty to communities.

8.4 Monitoring

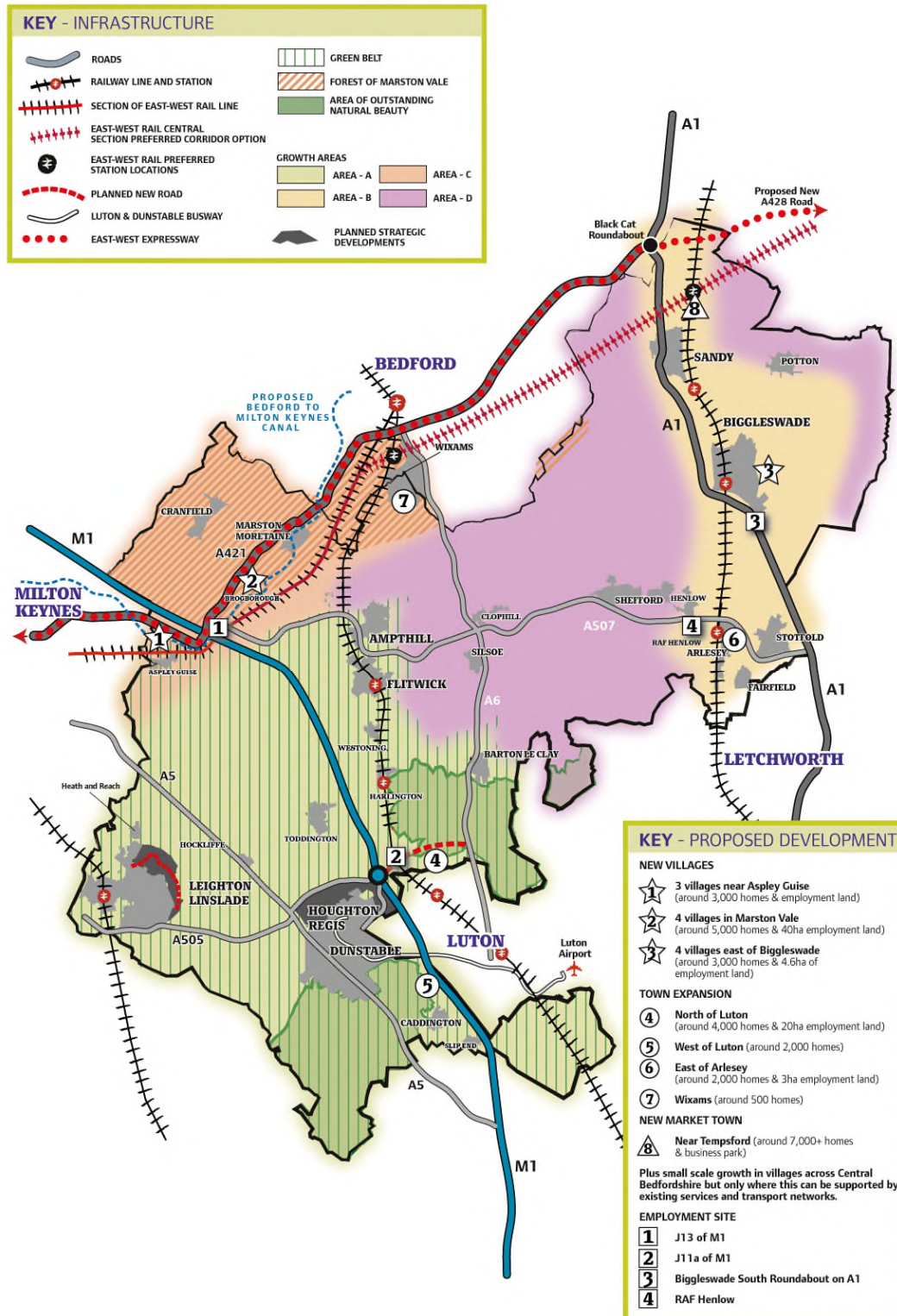
- 8.4.1 Annual housing completions and the supply of housing land will be rigorously monitored on at least an annual basis to determine if delivery requirements are being met and whether the five year supply of housing land is being maintained. The Housing Trajectory and statements on the five year housing land supply will be published within the annual Authority Monitoring Report (AMR) and on the Council's website.
- 8.4.2 In order to assess the application and effectiveness of all the policies in the Local Plan the Council will produce a monitoring framework. This will list all the policies and set out how they will be monitored. The results of this monitoring will be published each year in the AMR. This will provide valuable evidence of any policy areas where the council may need to take action.



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Figure 8.1: The key diagram shows all of the proposed options for strategic growth locations and key employment sites.



Strategic Growth Locations: General requirements for strategic sites



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- 8.4.3 Evidence has shown that the development of large scale new communities (of more than 1500 homes) which are well located for employment and services and have the potential to be well served by sustainable transport will be the most sustainable option for growth alongside development at different scales in proximity to existing settlements. Potential locations for growth are set out at in Policy SP1.
- 8.4.4 In order to inform the identification of the most appropriate and sustainable locations for growth within Central Bedfordshire, proposals for the delivery of these locations will be expected to demonstrate conformity with the strategic objectives, wider development principles and policies as set out within this plan. They should also meet the following generic requirements for strategic sites as set out below. In the next version of the plan these will be further refined and embedded within the site specific allocation policies.
- 8.4.5 It is expected that promoters of strategic sites will sign up to a Planning Performance Agreement with the Council. Development proposals brought forward as a result of a PPA at the identified strategic locations should be accompanied by a comprehensive masterplan for the whole site. The masterplan should include :
- An Indicative Masterplan;
 - Proposals should be based on the creation of a distinctive, well integrated new community which respects its local context, enhances the standards of sustainable design in the locality and relates well to neighbouring settlements.
 - A Phasing and Infrastructure plan,
 - Proposals should follow an organic sequence of development in accordance with a phasing plan previously agreed with the Council, with the timely provision of infrastructure and community facilities to benefit the new community at the earliest possible time; and
 - Details of how this will be delivered and achieved in a timely manner including detailed viability information.
 - A Sustainable Transport Strategy
 - This should be fully integrated into the overall masterplan and should demonstrate the linkages to existing transport nodes e.g. mainline rail stations and should demonstrate how modal shift will be achieved
- 8.4.6 Proposals should include the provision of new local community and health hubs. This should include, but is not limited to:
- retail facilities to meet locally-generated needs;
 - small-scale employment uses,
 - pre-school facilities, and
 - leisure uses and other social infrastructure, including provision of a Health and Social Care Hub or Healthcare facility, as required, for primary health care to serve the new community.



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- 8.4.7 It is expected that the Community Hubs and Health and Social Care Hubs will be centrally located in close proximity to schools and that it is provided early on in the development programme. Further guidance on these requirements will be provided in the next version of the plan.
- 8.4.8 Health and Social Care Hubs are a focal point for joining up health, social care and other council services and the delivery of care closer to where people live. The integrated Health and Social Care Hubs will be the main centres for providing proactive and preventative care, out of hospital services and care packages for people who are vulnerable or have complex care needs.
- 8.4.9 As a minimum these Health and Social Care Hubs are expected to serve as a base for the multi-disciplinary teams (adults and children's) being established as part of the community services redesign programme, including general medical services where possible.
- 8.4.10 Each Health and Social Care Hub will provide local access to a range of general medical and nursing, therapy, specialist and social care services with supporting information and advice systems.
- 8.4.11 The Health and Social Care Hubs may also develop a range of additional or enhanced services in line with the needs of the local community. Enhanced services might include:
- Extended GP services on a 7 day basis
 - Enhanced services delivered by and across practices, e.g. minor injury and minor illness services, clinics to support patients with long-term conditions
 - Face-to-face out of hours consultations
 - Community pharmacy
 - Rehabilitation and re-enablement facilities
 - Outreach services from local acute hospitals and specialist services, e.g. outpatient appointments and other specialist consultations
 - Less complex diagnostics
 - Public Health and prevention services, e.g. smoking cessation, NHS Health Checks, lifestyle hubs
 - Wellbeing Services and community mental health services
 - Voluntary and Carer support services.

8.5 Summary of Housing Growth Locations

- 8.5.1 This long list of growth locations will be refined to form a shortlist of preferred site allocations in the next version of the plan. Not all of these locations will progress to the next stage of the plan once more detailed technical work has been concluded and following the representations received from consultation on this draft of the plan and other engagement with Town and Parish Councils.
- 8.5.2 The profiles below identify a provisional capacity estimate for each growth location option. These are the number of homes that preliminary technical assessment has



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shown could be deliverable at a given growth location. These numbers may not however be deliverable in combination with other proposals and within the 20 year lifespan of the Plan. Therefore, Section 7.6 specifies the provisional numbers of homes that are being proposed in this first consultation draft of the Local Plan for each of the growth location options.



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North of Luton

(Provisional Capacity: 3,500- 4,000 homes; Up to 20 hectares of employment land)

Context

This Growth Location is located to the north of the built edge of Luton, between the M1 to the west and A6 to the East. The villages of Lower Sundon, Upper Sundon and Streatley lie to the north of the site. The area to the north is also designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the Chilterns AONB). This Growth Location is within the Green Belt, meaning exceptional circumstances would need to be demonstrated to alter Green Belt boundaries to allow development within this Growth Location.

The North Luton growth location is a Greenfield site forming part of the landscape character area known as "Houghton Regis – North Luton Rolling Chalk Farmland", but lies beyond the AONB to the west. This chalk dipslope landscape is defined by a gently rolling terrain, dominated by arable crop production, generally with large regular Parliamentary enclosure fields, but with some smaller enclosures adjacent to settlements. There are isolated areas of ancient woodland but the site is largely open in character. Soft landscaping will be essential to mitigating visual impacts within this landscape. Busy transport corridors interrupt the landscape including the M1, A6 and the Midland Mainline Railway.

Vision

The vision for North of Luton is an extension to Luton that will contribute to the regeneration and enhancement of the surrounding area through provision of a greater range of housing and employment opportunities to meet some of Luton's needs, and through contributions to improve transport links. A new strategic link road between the M1 and A6 will provide relief for surrounding villages and the wider urban area. New local centres with community facilities and public spaces will provide a focal point for community activity and social interaction. New green infrastructure will be provided, linking existing and new green spaces within the Luton urban area through the development and to the countryside to enable greater accessibility and enjoyment of the area's rich historic and natural environment. The development will be designed to respond to and respect its attractive setting and location adjoining, and partly within the Chilterns AONB.

Detail

Green Belt	This Growth Location is within the Green Belt; thereby exceptional circumstances would need to be demonstrated to alter Green Belt boundaries to allow development within this Growth Location.
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty	<p>A portion of this Growth Location is located within the Chilterns AONB and within its setting. Great weight is given to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of the Chilterns AONB, as well as its value for conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage. Development within this Growth Location including built development and new green infrastructure will be required to respond to and respect its attractive setting and location adjoining, and partly within the Chilterns AONB. Major built development should be located beyond the boundaries of the AONB.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national and local planning policy.</p>
Best and	Development within this Growth Location would result in the loss of land in



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Most Versatile Agricultural Land	<p>Grades 2 and 3 of the Agricultural Land Classification.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national policy.</p>
Biodiversity and Blue/Green Infrastructure	<p>Development would be required to protect endangered species, provide a net gain for biodiversity. The site contains a SSSI, ancient woodland and CWSs.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national and local policy.</p> <p>Development of this Growth Location provides an opportunity to provide Blue/Green Infrastructure to benefit future occupiers and existing communities.</p>
Flood Risk	<p>The site falls within Flood Zone 1.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national policy on flood risk.</p>
Heritage Assets	<p>This Growth Location contains and/or is within the setting of the following Designated Heritage Assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drays Ditches, Scheduled Monument; • St Mary's Vicarage, Lower Sundon, Grade II Listed Building; • Aubers Farmhouse, Lower Sundon, Grade II Listed Building; • Chestnut Cottage, Lower Sundon, Grade II Listed Building; and • Church of St Mary, Lower Sundon, Grade I Listed Building. <p>The site contains and/or is within the setting of the following Non Designated Heritage Assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theed Way (ancient Saxon route way); and • Historic landscape associated with Sundon Manor Park. <p>The Growth Location has the potential to contain multi-period archaeological remains which would not form an overriding constraint to development but will require investigation, recording and where necessary preservation in situ.</p> <p>Any harm to designated or non designated heritage assets will need to be considered in accordance with national and local planning policy.</p>
Coalescence	<p>Strategic development within this location could cause coalescence of Luton and Lower Sundon. Appropriate landscape buffers to ensure separation between the urban extension to Luton and existing neighbouring settlements will be required.</p>
Transport	<p>This Growth Location would benefit from direct connections to the M1 and the A6, providing a new link road between these two strategic roads. This Growth Location is also adjacent to Luton with access to Leagrave Train Station and an opportunity to connect to the Luton and Dunstable Guided Busway.</p> <p>The Government have approved a significant contribution through the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership, to help fund the proposed M1-A6 Link Road.</p>



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	<p>The M1-A6 link road would effectively form a northern bypass for Luton by connecting into the wider strategic road network at the new Junction 11a of the M1 and the new A5-M1 Link. The provision of the M1-A6 link road would relieve existing congestion within surrounding settlements, without which development in this area would cause additional pressure on the road network within Luton and surrounding villages. The delivery of the M1-A6 link road is therefore critical for development in this location and contributions from the development will be required to fully fund the delivery of the road together with a comprehensive scheme for highway and public transport improvements</p> <p>Development in this Growth Location would be required to provide public transport infrastructure within the development and provision of an efficient public transport route through the site that links to the Luton and Dunstable Guided Busway and contribute to improving public transport links to both Leagrave Station and Luton Town Centre.</p> <p>Development in this Growth Location would be required to improve connections (serving both the development and neighbouring settlements) including cycleway connections and footpaths (Rights of Way).</p>
Pollution	<p>This Growth Location is located near to the following sources of air and noise pollution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M1; • A6; • neighbouring business uses; and • The East Midlands Main Line. <p>There is potential for land contamination within the site due to historic uses within the landscape.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location will require appropriate mitigation in accordance with national and local planning policy.</p>
Utilities	<p>There are High Voltage Overhead cables and utility services that run through the Growth Location particularly along a north south route. These must be accommodated within the design and layout of the Growth Location to reduce the need for easements within the proposed development.</p>

Infrastructure requirements

It is essential that strategic scale development in this location is supported by:

- Highway improvements both to the local and strategic road network, including the delivery of an appropriately designed new strategic link road between the M1 Junction 11a and the A6;
- superfast next generation broadband infrastructure;
- community centres with a mixture of retail uses including A1 (shops), A3 (café/restaurants) and A4 (drinking establishments) whilst ensuring the viability of Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis Town Centres are not undermined;
- 20 hectares of employment land for a mix of employment uses located to maximise



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- access to the M1, providing local employment opportunities that would decreasing the reliance on the private motor vehicle to access work;
- community facilities including (village halls, sports pavilions);
 - employment uses providing opportunities for local employment, decreasing the reliance on the private motor vehicle;
 - leisure facilities (allotments, indoor sports facilities, outdoor sports facilities and areas of equipped play);
 - blue/green infrastructure (informal open space, landscape buffering visual impacts to the AONB and Heritage assets, improvements to the existing right of way network, integrated design for Sustainable Urban Drainage and habitat creation);
 - provision of public transport infrastructure within the development and provision of an efficient public transport route through the site that links to the Luton and Dunstable Guided Busway and contribute to improving public transport links to both Leagrave Station and Luton town Centre;
 - Integrated community hub with a “Health and Social Care Hub”, to serve both the development and the catchment area;
 - preschool/ nursery/ early years facilities;
 - enlargements to existing schools and the provision of new schools/ educational facilities as required to support the identified need of future residents including any existing unmet need, including a new secondary school.

The above local infrastructure and improvements are considered to be essential to support development of this scale but additional items may be identified as a result of more detailed site analysis.



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West of Luton

(Provisional Capacity: 2,000- 3,600 homes)

Context

This Growth Location is located to the west of the M1 and to the west built edge of Luton. The village of Caddington lies to the west of the site and the villages, Woodside and Slip End lie to the south. The area to the north is also designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (the Chilterns AONB). This Growth Location is within the Green Belt, meaning exceptional circumstances would need to be demonstrated to alter Green Belt boundaries to allow development within this Growth Location.

The West Luton growth location is a Greenfield site largely falling within the landscape character area known as Caddington- Slip End Chalk Dipslope but includes areas within the South Dunstable Chalk to the north and north east as well as Slip End Chalk Valley to the south east of this Growth Location. The Chalk Dipslope landscape which forms the large portion of the site is a large scale open landscape with a broad plateau landform undulating to form subtle valleys and providing a sense of elevation. This landscape is predominantly used for arable cultivation, with some horse grazing with fenced paddocks. However the northern part of this landscape is characterised by medium sized deciduous and mixed woodland blocks. Blocks of ancient semi-natural woodland e.g. Badgerdell Wood, Castlecroft Wood, Folly Wood, Stanner's Wood are a key remnant feature and are an important visual element in views.

The northern area of the site forms part of the South Dunstable Chalk Escarpment which limits views to the urban edge of Dunstable from within the Chalk Dipslope and provides a natural container to growth and restricts road access to the area. The steep rising topography towards Dunstable and falling topography towards the M1 motorway characterising this Chalk Escarpment on the transition between these landscapes does not feature gradients that lend the northern area of the site to development.

Further to the south and east of the site the transition between the Chalk Dipslope and the Slip End Chalk Valley results in a decline in site level, whereby the site falls from an elevated position in relation to the M1 and the landscape becomes dominated by the M1 motorway which is elevated in this landscape character area.

The site as a whole features a strong urban fringe character. Views to Luton and the M1 from eastern part of the area, with light pollution, traffic noise, aircraft noise and a major junction at Slip End.

Vision

The vision for West of Luton is to create a new settlement within the Slip End Chalk Dipslope, appropriately separated from existing settlements of Caddington, Slip End and Woodside as well as the Caddington Woods development to prevent coalescence, whilst avoiding developing in areas of unsuitable topography and in areas considered to be unsuitable for development. The development would provide a mix of homes, business uses and local infrastructure within the growth location to meet identified needs as well as providing a Secondary School that would have the capacity not only to meet the educational needs of the future occupiers of the development but would meet the existing shortfall of secondary school places within the west of Luton. The development would be required to deliver improved pedestrian and cycle connections between the development and surrounding settlements, including Luton as well as a scheme that would provide significant



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improvements to the local and strategic highway network (the details of which at this stage are unknown), as necessary to make development acceptable. The development would be connected to the Luton and Dunstable Guided Busway improving public transport connections for both the new settlement and surrounding settlements, to decrease the reliance on private motor vehicles.

Detail

Green Belt	This Growth Location is within the Green Belt; thereby exceptional circumstances would need to be demonstrated to alter Green Belt boundaries to allow development within this Growth Location.
Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty	<p>This Growth Location is located within the setting of the Chilterns AONB. Great weight is given to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of the Chilterns AONB, as well as its value for conservation of wildlife and cultural heritage. Development within this Growth Location including built development and new green infrastructure will be required to respond to and respect the attractive setting of the AONB.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national and local planning policy.</p>
Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land	<p>Development within this Growth Location would result in the loss of land in Grade 3 of the Agricultural Land Classification. However the split between Grade 3a and 3b is unknown.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national policy.</p>
Biodiversity and Blue/Green Infrastructure	<p>Development would be required to protect endangered species, provide a net gain for biodiversity. The site contains areas of ancient woodland and CWSs.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national and local policy.</p> <p>Development of this Growth Location provides an opportunity to provide Blue/Green Infrastructure to benefit future occupiers and existing communities.</p>
Flood Risk	<p>The site falls within Flood Zone 1.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national policy on flood risk.</p>
Heritage Assets	<p>This site contains and/or is within the setting of the following Designated Heritage Assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church of All Saints, Caddington, Grade II* Listed Building; • Chaul End Farnhouse, Caddington, Grade II Listed Building • Caddington War Memorial, Caddington, Grade II Listed Building; • Caddington Conservation Area • Stockwood House Stable Block, Luton, Grade II Listed Building; • Luton Hoo, Luton, Grade I Listed Building; • Luton Hoo, Luton, Grade II* Listed Registered Historic Park and Gardens; and • Church of St Andrew, Slip End, Grade II Listed Building.



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	<p>The site also has the potential to contain multi-period archaeological remains which would not form an overriding constraint to development but will require investigation, recording and where necessary preservation in situ.</p> <p>Any harm to designated or non designated heritage assets will need to be considered in accordance with national and local planning policy.</p>
Coalescence	<p>Strategic development within this location could cause coalescence of Luton, Caddington, Slip End, Woodside and Caddington Woods. Appropriate landscape buffers to ensure separation between the new settlement and existing neighbouring settlements will be required.</p>
Transport	<p>This Growth Location is located adjacent to the M1 and Luton beyond, however a new junction to the M1 motorway cannot be achieved due to the required junction separations along that Motorway. This Growth Location does benefit from relatively close proximity to Luton Town Centre and London Luton Airport and is relatively close to the route of the Luton and Dunstable Guided Busway. However the existing highway network serving the site is not designed to cope with the volume of traffic that would result from a strategic scale development in this location. A comprehensive scheme for highway improvements, public transport improvements will be required to mitigate such impacts.</p> <p>Development in this Growth Location would be required to provide public transport infrastructure within the development and provision of an efficient public transport route through the site that links to the Luton and Dunstable Guided Busway and serves both the new settlement and existing neighbouring settlements.</p> <p>Development in this Growth Location would be required to improve connections (serving both the development and neighbouring settlements) including cycleway connections and footpaths (Rights of Way).</p>
Pollution	<p>This Growth Location is located near to the following sources of air and noise pollution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • M1; and • London Luton Airport. <p>There is potential for land contamination within the site due to historic uses within the landscape.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location will require appropriate mitigation in accordance with national and local planning policy.</p>
Topography	<p>The gradients of the South Dunstable Chalk landscape to the far north of this Growth Location do not lend that area of the Growth Location readily to development and the topography forms a barrier to the creation of new and/or improved accesses/connections to the north (Hatters Way and Busway) and northeast (to Luton). Development in the latter area would require significant engineering interventions to achieve appropriate gradients for surface water drainage, vehicles, pedestrians, disabled users and cyclists as well as to form new or improved accesses/ connections. Such interventions may cause significant environmental impacts as a</p>



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	result and could be financially costly.
Utilities	There are High Voltage Overhead cables and utility services that run through the Growth Location particularly along a north south route. These must be accommodated within the design and layout of the Growth Location to reduce the need for easements within the proposed development. It may be require the relocation of overhead lines underground.

Infrastructure requirements

It is essential that strategic scale development in this location is supported by:

- Highway improvements both to the local and strategic road network, as necessary to make development acceptable;
- superfast next generation broadband infrastructure;
- community centres with a mixture of retail uses including A1 (shops), A3 (café/ restaurants) and A4 (drinking establishments) whilst ensuring the viability of Luton, Dunstable and Houghton Regis Town Centres are not undermined;
- community facilities including (village halls, sports pavilions);
- employment uses providing opportunities for local employment, decreasing the reliance on the private motor vehicle;
- leisure facilities (allotments, indoor sports facilities, outdoor sports facilities and areas of equipped play);
- blue/green infrastructure (informal open space, landscape buffering visual impacts to the AONB and Heritage assets, improvements to the existing right of way network, integrated design for Sustainable Urban Drainage and habitat creation);
- provision of public transport infrastructure within the development and provision of a efficient public transport route through the site that links to the Luton and Dunstable Guided Busway to serve the development and neighbouring settlements;
- Integrated community hub with a "Health and Social Care Hub", to serve both the development and the catchment area;
- preschool/ nursery/ early years facilities;
- enlargements to existing schools and the provision of new schools/ educational facilities as required to support the identified need of future residents including any existing unmet need, including a new secondary school.

The above local infrastructure and improvements are considered to be essential to support development of this scale but additional items may be identified as a result of more detailed site analysis.



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Tempsford South and Tempsford Airfield

(Provisional Capacity: 2,500 – 10,000 homes and a new Science and Technology/ Business Park)

Context

This Growth Location is located to the east of the A1 and to the north of the built edge of Sandy. The village of Tempsford lies to the north and west of the site and the village, of Everton lies to the east. The site is fragmented by the East Coast Main Line Railway, which is the railway connection between London Kings Cross and Edinburgh.

The Tempsford growth location includes the former Tempsford Airfield, part of which can be considered previously developed land, however the majority of the Growth Location is considered to be Greenfield. This Growth Location largely falls within the Landscape Character Area known as Baggin Wood Clay Vale; however the western edge of the site falls within the Great Ouse Clay Valley. The Clay Vale is an open and predominantly flat arable landscape underlain by Oxford Clay. Clear views across the vale are terminated by the backdrop of the Everton Heath Wooded Greensand Ridge to the east, which provides a sense of containment. The Location as a whole is scarred by the elevated railway which runs north to south through the Growth Location. To the west the more wooded landscape of the river valley is defined by willows and poplars.

Vision

The vision for the site is to create a new settlement or linked settlements that would provide a mix of homes, business uses and local infrastructure within the growth location to support new residents. This vision includes respecting the heritage assets within and neighbouring the site including referencing through design the historic importance of the airfield through layout and public art. The settlement(s) are envisaged to benefit from direct access to the A1, direct access to the upgraded A428 and would be required to include a new train station to form the new East-West Rail interchange with the East Coast Main Line. The settlement(s) would provide a public transport scheme to connect the development and existing neighbouring settlements to the new train station. The development would include a new Science and Technology/ Business Park seeking to maximise connections with the upgraded A428 and the A1.

This vision heavily relies on the delivery and detail of East-West Rail (central section) including the route and the location of a train station in relation to this Growth Location, as well as the delivery and route for the A428.

Detail

Previously developed land

It is considered that portions of the site form previously developed land, whereby the land is occupied by permanent structures, and their curtilages. National planning policy encourages the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed, provided that it is not of high environmental value.

Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national policy.

Best and Most Versatile Agricultural

Development within this Growth Location would result in the loss of land in Grade 1, 2 and 3 of the Agricultural Land Classification.

Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location



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Land	must be in conformity with national policy.
Biodiversity and Blue/Green Infrastructure	<p>Development would be required to protect endangered species, provide a net gain for biodiversity. The site contains areas of ancient woodland and CWSs.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national and local policy.</p> <p>Development of this Growth Location provides an opportunity to provide Blue/Green Infrastructure to benefit future occupiers and existing communities.</p>
Flood Risk	<p>The majority of the site falls within Flood Zone 1; however there are large portions of this site which fall within Flood Zones 2 and 3.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national policy on flood risk.</p>
Heritage Assets	<p>This site contains and/or is within the setting of the following Designated Heritage Assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dick Turpin Public House, Tempsford Road, Sandy, Grade II Listed Building; • Storey Moats, Everton Scheduled Monument; • Biggin Wood Moated Site, Tempsford Scheduled Monument; • Gibraltar Farm Barn, Tempsford Grade II Listed Building; • the Tempsford (Station End) Conservation Area and the Listed Buildings within Tempsford (Station End) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Mossbury Manor, Grade II Listed Building; – 62, 81, 88, 139, 160 Station Road (Langford End), Grade II Listed Buildings; – Biggin Farmhouse, Grade II Listed Building; – Dovecote at Biggin Farm, Grade II Listed Building; – Lambcourt Farmhouse, Grade II Listed Building; – Clematis Cottage, Grade II Listed Building; – The Old Bakery, Grade II Listed Building; and – Stonebridge Farmhouse, Grade II Listed Building. • Tempsford (Church End) Conservation Area including the Listed Buildings within Tempsford (Church End) including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – The Weatsheaf, Grade II Listed Building; – Nos. 30, 32 and 34, 36 and 38 Church Street (Church End), Grade II Listed Buildings; – Church Farmhouse, Grade II Listed Building; – Brewhouse and Outbuilding at Church Farm, Grade II Listed Building; and – Church of St Peter, Grade II* Listed Building. • Listed Buildings within Everton including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – 40 and 41 Church End, Everton, Grade II Listed Buildings; – 40 Sand Road, Everton, Grade II Listed Buildings; – Old Woodbury House, Adjoining Wall and Gateway, Everton Grade II Listed Building – Barn Attached to South West End of Old Woodury Farmhouse, Everton, Grade II Listed Building;



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Listed Buildings at Tetworth, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tetworth Hall at End of Lane from Bove Road to Tetworth Hall, Grade II* Listed Building; Coach House East of Tetworth Hall, Grade II Listed Building; Cottage 15 Yards North East of Tetworth Hall, Grade II Listed Building; and Valley Farmhouse 1/43 Miles North of Tetworth Hall, Grade II Listed Buildings. <p>In addition to the above it is considered that Tempsford Airfield (RAF Tempsford) is a non designated heritage asset due to the part it played in the Second World War.</p> <p>The site also has the potential to contain multi-period archaeological remains which would not form an overriding constraint to development but will require investigation, recording and where necessary preservation in situ.</p> <p>Any harm to designated or non designated heritage assets will need to be considered in accordance with national and local planning policy.</p>
Coalescence	<p>Strategic development within this location could cause coalescence of Tempsford and Sandy. Appropriate landscape buffers to ensure separation between the new settlement and existing neighbouring settlements will be required.</p>
Transport	<p>Sandy, located just to the south of this Growth Location has been indicated as the preferred route for the central section of East-West Rail, the actual route and location of an interchange has yet to be decided, whereby at this time the opportunities and negative affects of this strategic transport infrastructure upon potential development in this Growth Location is unknown. East-West rail has an estimated completion of the central section in the early 2030's (according to the illustrative program).</p> <p>To the North of this Growth Location a consultation has been issued to determine the preferred route for an upgraded A428, these routes would bring this strategic road through land within the control of the promoters for development in this location, whereby it has been indicated that future strategic development within this growth location could benefit from direct access onto the planned new A428.</p> <p>Development would likely cause additional pressure at the A1, increased vehicular movements within surrounding settlements as traffic heads towards Sandy, St Neots, the A1 and A421/A428, as well as increasing vehicular movements through neighbouring villages.</p> <p>Development within this Growth Location could benefit from direct access to the A1, a new A428 and could provide a new train station serving as an interchange between East-West Rail and the East Coast Main Line Railway, potentially making this location very well connected. However there is a lack of certainty as to whether these strategic infrastructure projects will be delivered, the detail of those projects and the timetable for delivery of those projects.</p> <p>Without the benefit of access to such strategic infrastructure it is</p>



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	<p>considered that development in accordance with the vision for this Growth Location could result in significant impacts upon the local and strategic highway network. The vision for this site heavily relies on the delivery and detail of East-West Rail and the A428, these infrastructure projects are crucial for the suitability of this vision in this location. Any development will require a comprehensive scheme for highway improvements and public transport.</p> <p>Development in this Growth Location would be required to provide public transport infrastructure within the development and provision of an efficient public transport route through the site that links to the new railway station serving both the new settlement and existing neighbouring settlements.</p> <p>Development in this Growth Location would be required to improve connections (serving both the development and neighbouring settlements) including cycleway connections and footpaths (Rights of Way).</p> <p>Flood Zones in combination with the elevated train lines and landownership issues, form barriers to connectivity.</p>
Pollution	<p>This Growth Location is located near to the following sources of pollution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A1; • East -Coast Mainline Railway; • Potential East-West Railway Line; • Potential rerouted A428; • Neighbouring business uses; and • Composting site. <p>There is potential for land contamination within the site due to historic uses within the landscape.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location will require appropriate mitigation in accordance with national and local planning policy.</p>
Utilities and pipelines	<p>There are a High Voltage Overhead cables and CPS Pipelines that run through the Growth Location particularly along a north south route. These must be accommodated within the design and layout of the Growth Location to reduce the need for easements within the proposed development. It may be require the relocation of overhead lines underground.</p>

Infrastructure requirements

It is essential that strategic scale development in this location is supported by:

- A new train station to form an interchange between East-West Rail and the East Coast Main Line;
- Connections to the A1 and A428;
- Highway improvements both to the local and strategic road network, as necessary to make the development acceptable;
- Pedestrian, cycle and vehicular crossings over railway lines and the removal of level crossings;
- superfast next generation broadband infrastructure;
- community centres with a mixture of retail uses including A1 (shops), A3 (café/restaurants) and A4 (drinking establishments) whilst ensuring the viability of St



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- Neots, Sandy and Biggleswade Town Centres are not undermined;
- community facilities including (village halls, sports pavilions);
 - employment uses providing opportunities for local employment, decreasing the reliance on the private motor vehicle;
 - leisure facilities (allotments, indoor sports facilities, outdoor sports facilities and areas of equipped play);
 - blue/green infrastructure (informal open space, landscape buffering visual impacts to heritage assets, improvements to the existing right of way network, integrated design for Sustainable Urban Drainage and habitat creation);
 - provision of public transport infrastructure within the development and provision of a efficient public transport route through the site that connects to the train station to serve the development and neighbouring settlements;
 - Integrated community hub with a “Health and Social Care Hub”, to serve both the development and the catchment area;
 - preschool/ nursery/ early years facilities;
 - enlargements to existing schools and the provision of new schools/ educational facilities as required to support the identified need of future residents including any existing unmet need, including secondary schools.

The above local infrastructure and improvements are considered to be essential to support development of this scale but additional items may be identified as a result of more detailed site analysis.



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New Villages to the East of Biggleswade

(Provisional Capacity: 3,000-6,600 homes; Up to 4.6 hectares of employment and retail)

Context

This Growth Location is located to the south of Sutton, to the west of Dunton and to the east of Biggleswade bound by Baden Powell Way, Dunton Lane, Biggleswade Road and Sutton Road.

The East of Biggleswade growth location is a Greenfield site within the Dunton Clay Vale which is an undulating vale and formed by a central elevated ridge bordered by broad valleys. The growth location is predominantly defined by intensive agricultural cropping (Grade 1, 2 and 3 agricultural land) contained within medium to large fields, with limited woodland cover creating a very open landscape, whereby soft landscaping will be essential to mitigating visual impacts within this landscape.

Vision

It is envisaged that strategic scale development at this growth location would form a new network of linked villages separated and screened from neighbouring settlements. Strategic scale development in this Growth Location would provide a significant number of homes and jobs to meet identified needs. Development would seek to maximise connectivity to Biggleswade Train Station by public transport and provide an appropriate connection between the growth location and the A1.

Detail

Biodiversity and Blue/Green Infrastructure	<p>Development would be required to protect endangered species, provide a net gain for biodiversity. The site contains a SSSI, ancient woodland and CWSSs.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national and local policy.</p> <p>Opportunities to create blue/green infrastructure including habitat creation in areas of high flood risk and to extend Biggleswade Common as part of the Biggleswade Green Wheel.</p> <p>Land ownership forms a barrier to a comprehensive scheme for Blue/Green Infrastructure within the Growth Location.</p>
Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land	<p>Development within this Growth Location would result in the loss of land in Grades 1, 2 and 3 of the Agricultural Land Classification.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national policy.</p>
Flood Risk	<p>The majority of the site falls within Flood Zone 1 however there are large portions of this site are within Flood Zone 2 and 3.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national policy on flood risk.</p>
Heritage Assets	<p>This site contains and/or is within the setting of the following Designated Heritage Assets:</p>



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Newton Bury Moated Enclosure, Scheduled Monument; • Stratton Park Moat, Scheduled Monument; • John O'Gaunts Hill, Scheduled Monument; • Sunderland Hall Farmhouse, Dunton Lane, Grade II Listed Building; • Turnpike Farmhouse, Biggleswade Road, Grade II Listed Building; • Portobellow Farmhouse, Biggleswade Road, Grade II Listed Building; and • The Sutton Conservation Area and the Listed Buildings/Monuments within Sutton including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Nos. 20, 29-35, 37 High Street, Sutton, Grade II Listed Buildings; – Manor Farmhouse Grade II Listed Building; – John O'Gaunt Public House, Grade II Listed Building; – Talland Cottage, Grade II Listed Building; – Village Farmhouse, Grade II Listed Building; – Brook House, Grade II Listed Building; – Sutton Packhorse Bridge Grade II* Listed Building and Scheduled Ancient Monument; – Church Farmhouse, Grade II Listed Building; – The Old Rectory, Grade II Listed Building; – Coach house and Stable Block belonging to the Old Rectory, Grade II Listed Building; and – Church of All Saints, Grade I Listed Building. <p>The site also has the potential to contain multi-period archaeological remains which would not form an overriding constraint to development but will require investigation, recording and where necessary preservation in situ.</p> <p>Any harm to designated or non designated heritage assets will need to be considered in accordance with national and local planning policy.</p>
Coalescence	Strategic development within this location could cause coalescence of Biggleswade, Dunton and Sutton. Appropriate landscape buffers to ensure separation between new villages and existing settlements will be required.
Transport	<p>Development within this site will benefit from proximity to Biggleswade Train Station Main Line service which could be reached by improved public transport in addition to relatively close proximity to the A1 which can be accessed via Biggleswade.</p> <p>Development would likely cause additional pressure at the A1, increased vehicular movements within Biggleswade as traffic heads towards the A1 and would increase vehicular movements through neighbouring villages. A comprehensive scheme for highway improvements and public transport improvements will be required.</p> <p>Development will be required to improve connectivity between new and existing settlements as well as connectivity to the A1 and Biggleswade Train Station including public transport connections (serving both the development and neighbouring settlements), cycleway connections and footpaths (including Rights of Way). Watercourses within the site and land</p>



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	ownership form a barrier to connectivity and permeability of future development within this Growth Location.
Pollution	<p>This Growth Location is located near to the following sources of air and noise pollution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Traffic; • Neighbouring business uses; and • Quarry. <p>There is potential for land contamination within the site due to historic uses. Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location will require appropriate mitigation in accordance with national and local planning policy.</p>
Utilities	There are a High Voltage Overhead cables and utility services that run through the Growth Location particularly along a north south route. These must be accommodated within the design and layout of the Growth Location to reduce the need for easements within the proposed development.

Infrastructure requirements

It is essential that strategic scale development in this location is supported by:

- Highway improvements both to the local and strategic road network (A1 junctions) as necessary to make development acceptable;
- superfast next generation broadband infrastructure;
- community centres with a mixture of retail uses including A1 (shops), A3 (café/ restaurants) and A4 (drinking establishments) whilst ensuring the viability of Biggleswade Town Centre is not undermined;
- community facilities including (village halls, sports pavilions);
- employment uses providing opportunities for local employment, decreasing the reliance on the private motor vehicle;
- leisure facilities (indoor sports facilities, outdoor sports facilities and areas of equipped play);
- blue/green infrastructure (informal open space including an extension to Biggleswade Common, improvements to the existing right of way network, integrated design for Sustainable Urban Drainage and habitat creation);
- provision of public transport infrastructure within the development and provision of a efficient public transport route through the site that links Biggleswade Train Station and contributes to improving public transport links to surrounding settlements;
- Integrated community hub with a "Health and Social Care Hub", to serve both the development and the catchment area;
- preschool/ nursery/ early years facilities;
- Enlargements to existing schools and the provision of new schools/ educational facilities as required to support the identified need of future residents including any existing unmet need, including upper schools.

The above local infrastructure and improvements are considered to be essential to support development of this scale but additional items may be identified as a result of more detailed site analysis.



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East of Arlesey

(Provisional Capacity: 2000 homes)

Context

The Growth Location is located between Arlesey in the east and Fairfield in the west. The site, approximately 296 ha in size, adjoins Arlesey Cross (Policy MA8 of the Central Bedfordshire (North) Site Allocations Development Plan Document) in the north and extends south of Arlesey beyond the Blue Lagoon. The site adjoins the A507 in the west and is located approximately 2.6km from Arlesey Train Station to the north west and Letchworth Train Station is located approximately 2,5km from the southern portion of the site.

Arlesey Cross, Policy MA8 area, is located to the north of the East of Arlesey Growth Location. A Master Plan for this site was approved by Central Bedfordshire Council for development management purposes in March 2014. This document establishes an indicative framework for Policy MA8 land. Although this Master Plan does not cover the area comprising the East of Arlesey Growth Location it will be essential for any future master planning of this Growth Location to take account of the principles and layout of Arlesey Cross and the detail of approved planning permissions associated with that allocated site. This will be essential for ensuring that the future growth of Arlesey is sustainable and integrated.

Vision

It is envisaged that strategic scale development at this site should appear as an extension to Arlesey whilst retaining an appropriate separation between Arlesey and Fairfield.

Development in this Growth Location as an extension to Arlesey could provide significant benefits in relation to the provision of a significant number of homes including older person's accommodation, a relief road and a country park to benefit both new and existing residents, whilst benefiting from relatively close proximity to the A1, the A507 and the East Coast Mainline Rail.

Detail

Biodiversity and Blue/Green Infrastructure	<p>Development would be required to protect endangered species and, provide a net gain for biodiversity. The site contains a SSSI and CWSs.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national and local policy.</p> <p>Development of this Growth Location provides an opportunity to provide significant Blue/Green Infrastructure including a country park between Arlesey and Fairfield to benefit future occupiers and existing communities. The Arlesey Parish Green Infrastructure Plan identifies a number of community aspirations, which should be carefully considered in the master planning for any development in this Growth Location including the provision of allotments and an extension to the existing recreation ground. This Growth Location has the potential to deliver a net Green Infrastructure benefit with additional enhancements on the western edge of the site.</p>
Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land	<p>Development within this Growth Location would result in the loss of land in Grades 2 and 3 of the Agricultural Land Classification.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national policy.</p>



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Flood Risk	<p>The site falls within Flood Zone 1. Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national policy on flood risk.</p>
Heritage Assets	<p>This site contains and/or is within the setting of the following Designated Heritage Assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Church Farmhouse, Arlesey, Grade II Listed Building; • Green Farmhouse, Arlesey, Grade II Listed Building; • The Three Tuns Public House, Arlesey, Grade II Listed Building; • Granary Approximately 20 metres south west of Moorlands Farmhouse, Arlesey, Grade II Listed Building; • Cluny Cottage, Arlesey, Grade II Listed Building; • Fairfield Hospital, Fairfield, Grade II Listed Building; • Isolation Hospital at Fairfield Hospital, Fairfield, Grade II Listed Building; and • Church at Fairfield Hospital, Fairfield, Grade II Listed Building. <p>The site also has the potential to contain multi-period archaeological remains which would not form an overriding constraint to development but will require investigation, recording and where necessary preservation in situ.</p> <p>Any harm to designated or non designated heritage assets will need to be considered in accordance with national and local planning policy.</p>
Coalescence	<p>Strategic development within this location could cause coalescence of Arlesey, Fairfield and Stotfold. Appropriate physical separation and visual buffering through extensive soft landscaping will be required to ensure separation between the envisaged extension to Arlesey and neighbouring settlements, as part of a new blue/green infrastructure.</p>
Transport and Connectivity	<p>The Growth Location will benefit from proximity to the strategic highway network, notably the A507 and A1, and East Coast Mainline Rail. To access the A507 and A1, a relief road through the Growth Location will be required as the primary access which will connect the area from south of Hitchin Road to the A507/High Street Link Road in the north being proposed as part of Arlesey Cross. This will allow for access directly onto the A507 and should help ease congestion along the High Street in Arlesey.</p> <p>Additional links from the Growth Location through to the existing High Street will be required to facilitate permeability and integration connectivity between the new and existing development in Arlesey.</p> <p>Development in the Growth Location will be required to maximise connectivity between new and existing settlements as well as connections to Arlesey Train Station through vehicular, public transport, cycleway connections and footpaths as well as through green infrastructure. Connectivity and integration between East of Arlesey Growth Location and Arlesey Cross is essential in ensuring the sustainability of Arlesey as a town as a whole. This should be achieved through the compatibility of the proposed layouts of both locations and connections between the two areas as well as connectivity with the existing built form in Arlesey.</p>



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Utilities	There are a number of utilities and pipeline corridors that run through the Growth Location particularly along a north south route. These must be accommodated within the design and layout of the Growth Location to reduce the need for easements within the proposed development.
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Infrastructure requirements

It is essential that strategic scale development in this location is supported by:

- Highway improvements both to the local and strategic road network, including the A507 and the provision of a new road connecting south of Hitchin Road to the new A507/High Street Link road in the north as necessary to make development acceptable;
- superfast next generation broadband infrastructure;
- community centres with a mixture of retail uses including A1 (shops), A3 (café/restaurants) and A4 (drinking establishments);
- community facilities including (village halls, sports pavilions);
- employment generating uses providing opportunities for local employment, decreasing the reliance on the private motor vehicle;
- leisure facilities (indoor sports facilities, outdoor sports facilities and areas of equipped play);
- blue/green infrastructure (informal open space including a new country park, improvements to the existing right of way network, integrated design for Sustainable Urban Drainage and habitat creation);
- provision of public transport infrastructure within the development and provision of a efficient public transport route through the site that links to Arlesey Train Station and contributes to improving public transport links to surrounding settlements;
- Integrated community hub with a “Health and Social Care Hub”, to serve both the development and the catchment area;
- preschool/ nursery/ early years facilities;
- enlargements to existing schools and the provision of new schools/ educational facilities, including a secondary school as required to support the identified need of future residents including any existing unmet need, including upper schools.

The above local infrastructure and improvements are considered to be essential to support development of this scale but additional items may be identified as a result of more detailed site analysis.



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Marston Vale New Villages

(Provisional Capacity: 5000 homes; 40ha employment R&D, office, distribution, manufacturing, service and tourism)

Context

The Growth Location is located to the west of Marston Moretaine, to the north of Lidlington and to the east of Brogborough. The site is bound to the north by the new A421 and to the south by the Marston Vale railway line which is to form part of the East-West Rail route. Ridgmont Train Station has been confirmed as an East-West Rail Interchange and this is relatively close to this Growth Location.

The Marston Vale Growth Location is a greenfield site within the North Marston Clay Vale which is a large scale, open vale, located between the elevated landscapes of the Wooded Greensand Ridge on its southern boundary and the Cranfield to Stagsden Clay Farmland to the west that provides a sense of containment. The landscape has a mix of agriculture and is fragmented by industrial activity including brick works, open cast clay pits, landfill, distribution centres and industrial estates. The legacy of clay extraction for brickmaking has resulted in a disturbed landscape with past and ongoing restoration. Flooded clay pits form a series of lakes throughout the vale such as Brogborough and Lidlington lakes within the Growth Location which have created recreational value and ecological interest.

Vision

It is envisaged that strategic scale development in this Growth location could include, a business park and a series of four new villages separated and screened from neighbouring settlements by appropriate landscape buffers. Strategic scale development in this Growth Location could provide a significant number of homes and jobs to meet identified needs and could provide a significant section of the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Park and waterway. Development would seek to maximise the environmental, leisure and community benefits from both the waterway and the existing lakes providing habitat creation, waterfront community hubs and leisure opportunities. Development within this location could also benefit from a heat network associated with any future Energy Recovery Facility at Rookery Pit South.

Detail

Biodiversity and Blue/Green Infrastructure

The site contains two CWSs and a Great Crested Newt recolonisation area. The site is located within the Forest of Marston Vale, contains a significant section of the planned route for the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Park and a portion of the site is also located within the Green Sand Ridge Nature Improvement Area.

Development would be required to protect endangered species, provide a net gain for biodiversity, contribute to the Forest of Marston Vale and would be expected to deliver the section of the Waterway Park as well as delivering that section of the waterway.

Development of this site provides the following site specific opportunities:

- There is the potential to provide a significant section of the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway (throughout the entire site) which could connect both Brogborough and Stewartby Lakes to create a usable section of the waterway providing an immediate gain for biodiversity and leisure;
- There is an opportunity to enhance and improve Brogborough and



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	<p>Lidlington Lakes, providing biodiversity, leisure and community benefits; and</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an opportunity to provide waterfront community hubs.
Flood Risk	<p>The majority of the site falls within Flood Zone 1, however there are portions of this site are within Flood Zone 2 and 3.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national policy on flood risk.</p>
Heritage Assets	<p>This Growth Location contains and/or is within the setting of the following Designated Heritage Assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Thrupp End Moated site, Lidlington, Scheduled Monument; Thrupp End Farmhouse, Lidlington, Grade II Listed Building. Brogborough Round House, Brogborough, Scheduled Monument; The Round House, Brogborough, Grade II Listed Building; Moat Farm moated enclosure and associated settlement and earthworks, Marston Moretaine, Scheduled Monument; Moat Farmhouse, Marston Moretaine, Grade II* Listed Building; Church of the Virgin Mary, Marston Moretaine, Grade I Listed Building; Tower Belonging to Church of St Mary the Virgin, Marston Moretaine, Grade I Listed Building; The Old Rectory, Marston Moretaine, Grade II Listed Building; Stone known as the Devil's Toenail, Marston Moretaine, Grade II Listed; Milbrook Station, Milbrook, Grade II Listed Building; and Two Kilns and Four Chimneys at the Stewartby Brickworks, Stewartby, Grade II Listed Buildings. <p>The site also has the potential to contain multi-period archaeological remains which would not form an overriding constraint to development but will require investigation, recording and where necessary preservation in situ.</p> <p>Any harm to designated or non designated heritage assets will need to be considered in accordance with national and local planning policy.</p>
Coalescence	<p>Strategic development within this location could cause coalescence of Lidlington and Marston Moretaine. Appropriate landscape buffers to ensure separation between new villages and existing settlements will be required.</p>
Transport	<p>Development within this site will benefit from proximity to the Millbrook and Lidlington Train Station on a Branch Line service in addition to relatively close proximity to the new East-West Rail Interchange planned to be at Ridgmont. This site is also adjacent to the A421 with an existing access at Marston Moretaine and Junction 13 of the M1 which can be accessed via Brogborough.</p> <p>Development would likely cause additional pressure at the M1 Junction 13, increased vehicular movements within Marston Moretaine as traffic heads towards the A421 and would increase vehicular movements through neighbouring villages towards the A507. A comprehensive scheme for</p>



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	<p>highway improvements, public transport improvements will be required.</p> <p>Development will be required to improve connectivity between new and existing settlements as well as connectivity to Ridgmont Train Station including public transport connections (serving both the development and neighbouring settlements), cycleway connections and footpaths (including Rights of Way).</p>
Pollution	<p>This Growth Location is located near to the following sources of air and noise pollution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A421; • Brogborough Power Station (to the north of the A421); • Planned future Energy Recovery Facility at Rookery Pit South • The Marston Vale Railway Line and planned route for East-West Rail; and • Millbrook Proving Ground. <p>There is potential for land contamination within the site due to historic uses within the landscape.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location will require appropriate mitigation in accordance with national and local planning policy.</p>
Energy	<p>There is an opportunity to connect development within this Growth Location to the heat network associated with the planned Energy Recovery Facility at Rookery Pit South (Combined Heat and Power Station).</p>
Utilities	<p>There are High Voltage Overhead cables and utility services that run through the Growth Location particularly along a north south route. These must be accommodated within the design and layout of the Growth Location to reduce the need for easements within the proposed development.</p>

Infrastructure requirements

It is essential that strategic scale development in this location is supported by:

- highway improvements both to the local and strategic road network required as necessary to make development acceptable;
- connections to the Heat Network associated with the Combined Heat and Power Facility to be Constructed at Rookery Pit South;
- superfast next generation broadband infrastructure;
- community centres with a mixture of retail uses including A1 (shops), A3 (café/ restaurants) and A4 (drinking establishments);
- a business park, providing opportunities for local employment, decreasing the reliance on the private motor vehicle;
- community facilities including (village halls, sports pavilions);
- leisure facilities (indoor sports facilities, outdoor sports facilities and areas of equipped play);
- blue/green infrastructure (provision informal open space including a waterway park, integrated Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, improvements to the existing right of way network and habitat creation);
- Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Park, engineering the waterway through the



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entire site, including creating a water filled link between Brogborough and Stewartby lakes;

- provision of public transport infrastructure within the development and provision of a efficient public transport route through the site that links to Ridgmont Train Station and contributes to improving public transport connections serving surrounding settlements;
- Integrated community hub with a “Health and Social Care Hub”, to serve both the development and the catchment area;
- preschool/ nursery/ early years facilities; and
- enlargements to existing schools and the provision of new schools/ education facilities as required to support the identified need, including any existing unmet need, including upper schools.

The above local infrastructure and improvements are considered to be essential to support development of this scale but additional items may be identified as a result of more detailed site analysis.



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Aspley Triangle

(Provisional Capacity: 3,000-3,500 homes)

Context

The Growth Location is situated in the parish of Aspley Guise, to the north of the main built-up area of Aspley Guise village, the north east of Woburn Sands and to the south west of Brogborough. The site's northern boundary is defined by the M1, with junction 13 to the east, and the A421 leading into Milton Keynes, the southern boundary of the Growth Location abuts the Marston Vale railway line which forms part of the East-West rail route. This Growth Location benefits from the proximity to Milton Keynes, the A421, M1, Aspley Train Station (branch line) and the planned East West Rail interchange at Ridgmont Train Station (although separated from this Growth Location by the M1).

This Growth Location consists of arable farmland predominantly lying within the Aspley Clay Vale, a significant open featured vale that stretches northwards, enveloping Hulcote and Salford. The site is contained by distinctive landscapes and is situated to the north of the elevated landscape that resembles the Greensand Ridge that covers both Husborne Crawley and Aspley Guise. It is also situated to the south of the Cranfield to Stagsden Farmland.

Vision

It is envisaged that strategic scale development in this Growth location could include, a series of linked village separated and screened from neighbouring settlements by appropriate landscape buffers, which would benefit from direct access to the A421 and benefiting from good access to Milton Keynes, the M1, East-West Rail and the planned Oxford to Cambridge Express Way. Strategic scale development in this Growth Location could provide a significant number of homes and jobs to meet identified needs and could provide a significant section of the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Park and waterway. Development would seek to maximise the environmental, leisure and community benefits from both the waterway providing habitat creation and leisure opportunities.

The proposed Oxford to Cambridge Expressway has a narrow corridor to connect to the A421 which would likely cross through this Growth Location, however the exact alignment of the expressway is yet to be determined. Due to the location of this site and the relatively narrow corridor to make this strategically important connection, it is considered that development within this Growth Location should not proceed until a route has been identified and safeguarded, which may potentially affect the deliverability of development in this Growth Location within the plan period.

Detail

Biodiversity and Blue/Green Infrastructure

The site contains a significant section of the planned route for the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Park and a portion of the site is also located within the Green Sand Ridge Nature Improvement Area.

Development would be required to protect endangered species, provide a net gain for biodiversity and would be required to deliver the section of the Waterway Park as well as delivering that section of the waterway.

Development of this site provides the following site specific opportunities:

- There is the potential to provide a significant section of the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway (throughout the entire site) providing an immediate gain for biodiversity and leisure;



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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is an opportunity to provide ecological gains and retention with enhancements to existing habitats as part of the wider green infrastructure.
Best and Most Versatile Agricultural Land	<p>Development within this Growth Location would result in the loss of land in Grade 3 of the Agricultural Land Classification. However the split between Grade 3a and 3b is unknown.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national policy.</p>
Flood Risk	<p>This Growth Location largely falls within Flood Zone 1; however there are portions of the Growth Location within Flood Zones 2 and 3.</p> <p>Potential allocation with future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national policy on flood risk.</p>
Heritage Assets	<p>There are a significant number of listed buildings within Aspley Guise and Husborne Crawley. Impacts on the setting of these will need to be considered as there are a number of listed buildings south of Aspley Guise Railway Station.</p> <p>The site contains and/or is within the setting of the following Designated Heritage Assets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Brogborough Ringwork Scheduled Monument; Crossing House, Aspley Guise, Grade II Listed Building; Chimney Cottage, Wavendon, Grade II Listed Building; Woburn Abbey Grade 1 Registered Park and Garden <p>The site also has the potential to contain multi-period archaeological remains which would not form an overriding constrain to development but will require investigation, recording and where necessary preservation in situ.</p> <p>Any harm to designated or non-designated heritage assets will need to be considered in accordance with national and local planning policy.</p>
Coalescence	<p>Strategic development within this location could cause coalescence between the new settlement and Aspley Guise, contributing to future coalescence of Milton Keynes and Aspley Guise. Appropriate landscape buffers to ensure separation between new village and existing settlements will be required.</p>
Transport	<p>The site is adjacent to and would be directly accessed from the A421 whereby there are concerns relating to traffic and queuing implications from the development as well as implications for the M1 Junction 13. Development will likely have traffic implications for the surrounding settlements and minor road networks, including the level crossings in Woburn Sands and Aspley Guise. With the introduction of East-West Rail, queuing times at level crossings will likely increase, whereby a scheme may be necessary to mitigate such impacts.</p> <p>The site currently benefits from its proximity to the Marston Railway Line and the site will experience further benefits with the introduction of East-West Rail which is planned to have an interchange at Ridgmont.</p> <p>The proposed Oxford to Cambridge Expressway has a narrow corridor to connect to the A421 which would likely cross through this Growth Location, however the exact alignment of the expressway is yet to be determined. Due</p>



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	<p>to the location of this site and the relatively narrow corridor to make this strategically important connection, it is considered that development within this Growth Location should not proceed until a route has been identified and safeguarded, which may potentially affect the deliverability of development in this Growth Location within the plan period. A comprehensive scheme for highway improvements will be required.</p> <p>Development will be required to improve connectivity between the development and existing settlements as well as connectivity to Milton Keynes and Ridgmont Train Station including public transport connections (serving both the development and neighbouring settlements), cycleway connections and footpaths (including Rights of Way).</p>
Pollution	<p>This Growth Location is located near to the following sources of air and noise pollution:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A421; • M1; • neighbouring business uses; and • The Marston Vale Railway Line and planned route for East-West Rail. <p>There is potential for land contamination within the site due to historic uses within the landscape.</p> <p>Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location will require appropriate mitigation in accordance with national and local planning policy.</p>
Energy	<p>There is an opportunity to connect development within this Growth Location to the heat network associated with the planned Energy Recovery Facility at Rookery Pit South (Combined Heat and Power Station).</p>

Infrastructure requirements

It is essential that strategic scale development in this location is supported by:

- highway improvements both to the local and strategic road network required as necessary to make development acceptable;
- connections to the Heat Network associated with the Combined Heat and Power Facility to be Constructed at Rookery Pit South;
- superfast next generation broadband infrastructure;
- community centres with a mixture of retail uses including A1 (shops), A3 (café/restaurants) and A4 (drinking establishments);
- providing employment generating uses to provide opportunities for local employment, decreasing the reliance on the private motor vehicle;
- community facilities including (village halls, sports pavilions);
- leisure facilities (indoor sports facilities, outdoor sports facilities and areas of equipped play);
- blue/green infrastructure (provision informal open space including a waterway park, integrated Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems, improvements to the existing right of way network and habitat creation);
- Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Park, engineering the waterway through the entire site;
- provision of public transport infrastructure within the development and provision of a efficient public transport route through the site that links to Ridgmont Train Station



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and contributes to improving public transport connections serving surrounding settlements including access to Milton Keynes;

- Integrated community hub with a “Health and Social Care Hub”, to serve both the development and the catchment area;
- preschool/ nursery/ early years facilities; and
- enlargements to existing schools and the provision of new schools/ education facilities as required to support the identified need, including any existing unmet need, including upper schools.

The above local infrastructure and improvements are considered to be essential to support development of this scale but additional items may be identified as a result of more detailed site analysis.



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Land South of Wixams

(Provisional Capacity: 500 homes and a Country Park)

Context

The Growth Location is located north of Houghton Conquest and south of the Wixams Main Settlement, a new settlement that lies within both Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council. The Growth Location is bounded by the B530/Amphill Road in the west and Bedford Road in the south. The Growth Location does not extend as far eastwards as the A6.

Immediately south of the Wixams Main Settlement is land currently allocated by Policy MA3 of the Central Bedfordshire (North): Site Allocations Development Plan Document for mixed-use development for up to 1,000 new homes. This allocation has not been built out but must be delivered before the proposed growth location.

Land to the South of Wixams Growth Location lies immediately south of Policy MA3 allocation. The Growth Location was formally known as Draft Policy 63 Allocation from the now withdrawn Central Bedfordshire Development Strategy.

A master plan was approved by Central Bedfordshire Council for development management purposes in April 2015. The Wixam Park Master Plan establishes an Indicative Framework Plan for Wixam Park, an area comprising Policy MA3 land together with the land to the south known now as Land South of Wixams Growth Location. Policy MA3 and the Land South of Wixams Growth Location are two separate policy areas but have been masterplanned together within the Wixam Park Master Plan Document.

Vision

Development in this Growth Location provides an extension to the Wixams Main Settlement and Policy MA3 land. The Growth Location could provide significant benefits with the provision of a significant number of homes and a countryside park whilst benefiting from relatively close proximity to the planned development at Wixams Main Settlement and associated facilities and services, a proposed Wixams Rail Station, East-West Rail, the A421 and A6.

Detail

Transport and Connectivity

The Growth Location would extend Wixams Main Settlement to the south through Policy MA3 land, therefore it is essential that the Growth Location and Policy MA3 land are comprehensively planned to ensure they are connected and integrated into a sustainable settlement for Wixams as a whole. This has been partly achieved through the adoption of the Wixam Park Master Plan Document, which outlines the land uses and connections between the two areas and with Wixam Main Settlement to achieve the interconnectedness and integration of development in this area.

Although the site benefits from close proximity to the strategic highway network, namely the A6, access to the Growth Location will be via the B530. Access connections should also be between the Growth Location and Policy MA3 land and Wixams Main Settlement to facilitate convenient access between the development areas and to promote more sustainable forms of travel.

The Growth Location's immediate location with the Wixams Main Settlement, particularly the proximity to the proposed new railway station



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	<p>also provides a significant opportunity for the Growth Location in terms of strategic sustainable connections.</p> <p>Development within this Growth Location, together with Policy MA3 land, would be required to maximise connectivity between the separate developments of Wixams Main Settlement, Policy MA3 land and the Growth Location by ensuring the proposed layouts and masterplans promotes connectivity by including vehicular, public transport, cycleway connections and footpaths.</p>
Coalescence	<p>Strategic development within this location could cause coalescence of Houghton Conquest and an extended Wixams.</p> <p>Appropriate landscape buffers to ensure separation between Houghton Conquest and land south of Wixams will be required. Indicative masterplans for the site, as well as the adopted Masterplan, indicate the inclusion of a countryside park along the southern boundary with Houghton Conquest. This will provide a separation between Houghton Conquest and the new development by providing a functional open space for the residents of Houghton Conquest and the new community.</p>
Biodiversity and Blue/Green Infrastructure	<p>In addition to preventing coalescence, the countryside park will be linked with green infrastructure provision in the Growth Location. This will present an opportunity to deliver new strategic areas of open space. As the Growth Location is located in the Marston Vale, tree cover throughout any new development should contribute to the Forest of Marston Vale</p>
Flood Risk	<p>The site falls within Flood Zone 1. Potential allocation and future development within this Growth Location must be in conformity with national policy on flood risk.</p>
Heritage Assets	<p>The site lies within a landscape that is known to contain multi-period archaeological remains, therefore it has archaeological potential. This does not prevent development providing that an appropriate mitigation strategy is implemented. Archaeological field evaluations must be undertaken and a contingency for archaeological works must be included in any proposal to prevent issues with viability.</p>
Energy	<p>There is an opportunity to connect development within this Growth Location to the heat network associated with the planned Energy Recovery Facility at Rookery Pit South (Combined Heat and Power Station).</p>

Infrastructure requirements

It is essential that strategic scale development in this location is supported by:

- Highway improvements both to the local and strategic road network;
- New pedestrian and cycle routes to connect with Wixams Main Settlement and Policy MA3 land to the north;
- Connections to the Heat Network associated with the Combined Heat and Power Facility to be Constructed at Rookery Pit South;
- Community facilities, such as a village hall and sports pavilion;
- Leisure facilities, such as indoor sports facilities, outdoor sports facilities and areas of equipped play;
- Green infrastructure including the provision of a countryside park in addition to informal and formal open space, improvements to the existing right of way network



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- and habitat creation;
- Integrated Sustainable Urban Drainage Systems;
- Preschool/ nursery/ early years faculties; and
- The provision of new lower/primary school as required supporting the identified need of future residents.

The above local infrastructure and improvements are considered to be essential to support development south of Wixams Main Settlement but additional items may be identified as a result of more detailed site analysis.



Shaping where you live 2035



Green Belt, Coalescence & Settlements

Local Plan 2015-2035

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9 Green Belt, Coalescence and Settlements

9.1 Introduction to Green Belt

- 9.1.1 Formally adopted in 1980, the Central Bedfordshire Green Belt extends across much of the south and covers approximately 40% of the total Plan area. It continues to serve its purposes very well, safeguarding the identity of Central Bedfordshire by maintaining the openness of the countryside, preventing the coalescence of Luton, Dunstable, Houghton Regis, Leighton Buzzard, Ampthill and Flitwick, and protecting the dispersed settlement pattern characteristic of the area. The Council is committed to ensuring that the Green Belt continues to perform well into the future, continuing to prevent the towns from coalescing and retaining its key characteristics of openness and permanence.



9.2 Green Belt and Sustainable Development – Exceptional Circumstances for small scale release of Green Belt Land

- 9.2.1 Nonetheless, Green Belt must be considered in the context of the wider objectives of the Local Plan and the pursuit of sustainable development. The overall purpose of this Local Plan is to meet Central Bedfordshire's objectively assessed development needs sustainably.
- 9.2.2 The evidence underlying the Local Plan highlights the clear need for a substantial growth in housing within the Plan area. As discussed elsewhere in this Plan the Council has also made an allowance for unmet need arising from the Luton Borough Council administrative area. In assessing spatial options to meet these development needs the Council has been guided by the principle of creating 'sustainable patterns of development' as set out in NPPF paragraph 84, and has considered a range of alternatives which do not impinge upon Green Belt. This has included consideration of whether development could be met in full beyond the Green Belt; within existing urban areas; and on brownfield sites or underused public sector land etc.



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- 9.2.3 However, evidence produced in support of this Plan, notably the Growth Options Studies, Urban Capacity Study, the Sustainability Appraisal, the Site Assessment Technical Document and brownfield register, suggests that whilst some development can take place beyond the Green Belt and within the existing urban areas, the total amount of land available is well below that needed to meet the requirements of the Plan.
- 9.2.4 Evidence produced in support of this Plan demonstrates that locating all growth beyond the Green Belt would have serious consequences for the sustainability of settlements both within and outside the Green Belt. For example overdevelopment in the north of Central Bedfordshire threatens the character and identity of existing communities, and risks putting excessive pressure on existing services and facilities, and harming habitats and landscape which surround them. In addition large areas of north Central Bedfordshire lack transport infrastructure and there is limited east/west connectivity and sustainable transport. Conversely our Green Belt settlements have seen very limited development in the past due to the presence of Green Belt, and it is considered that some growth is needed here in order to maintain their sustainability and ensure continued provision of services and facilities.
- 9.2.5 This Plan commits to delivering Luton's current identified 'unmet need' within Central Bedfordshire as close to the Luton conurbation as possible. Luton cannot accommodate all of its own housing need within its administrative area because its boundaries are tightly drawn and so there are limited opportunities for outward expansion. Urban capacity evidence has demonstrated that they have explored opportunities for growth within the built up area too. Consultation and evidence prepared to inform this Local Plan told us that growth in the south was supported because of the proximity to key services in the urban centres of Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Luton. Evidence also supports a more modest Green Belt release around Large Villages that are inset in the Green Belt, have a good level of local services and where sites are available that did not impact on the openness of the Green Belt.
- 9.2.6 Whilst we have considered ways in which we can maximise the sustainable development sites beyond the Green Belt, including through site layout and optimising densities, nevertheless, given the scale of growth it will be necessary for some limited release of land from the Green Belt in order to ensure the delivery of balanced sustainable growth across Central Bedfordshire as a whole. These are the 'exceptional circumstances' which the Council believe justify the limited release of some Green Belt land.

9.3 Green Belt release

- 9.3.1 In order to accommodate the growth required up to 2035 in a sustainable and controlled manner, sustainable growth location options in Green Belt have been identified as listed in Policy SP1. Green Belt release will be guided by the principle of creating 'sustainable patterns of development' as per NPPF paragraph 84. This means that we will identify the most sustainable locations for development, unless this is outweighed by effect on the overall integrity and performance of the wider



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Green Belt. This work will be guided by the Central Bedfordshire and Luton Green Belt Study (November 2016), and a future Stage 3 Green Belt Study for Central Bedfordshire to help us determine which Green Belt land could be released for development. This work will inform our identification of preferred sites in the next version of this Plan. Where sites are allocated, the Green Belt boundaries will be redrawn around them and other committed sites; Land North of Houghton Regis and Land East of Leighton Buzzard.

9.4 Improvements to Green Belt land

- 9.4.1 In addition to its role in preventing coalescence and urban sprawl etc, Green Belt land can also have a positive role to play in terms of environmental quality and access. It may, for example, provide access to open countryside and opportunities for quiet recreation and sport. Green Belt can also help retain valued landscapes and protect biodiversity and it provides many possibilities to protect and improve green infrastructure, especially in urban fringe locations. The Council is committed to improving the environmental quality and accessibility of its Green Belt, and will favourably consider development proposals that will actively improve the character and quality of our Green Belt. At the same time we are also considering whether there is any justification for extending the Central Bedfordshire Green Belt, and if so where. Again this will be informed by the identification of our preferred sites as well as the spatial strategies of surrounding Local Plans.

9.5 Development in the Green Belt

- 9.5.1 Where Green Belt is retained, there is a general presumption against inappropriate development within the Green Belt. Inappropriate development¹¹ is defined as any development harmful to the Green Belt and should not be granted consent except in very special circumstances. Within the Green Belt the need to protect the character and openness of the landscape is a primary consideration and any development will be expected to maintain the character of the Green Belt and not undermine the reasons for including land within it. High standards of design and careful siting will therefore be essential for any development proposals. Planning permission for inappropriate development will only be granted where demonstrable, very special circumstances which outweigh the harm to the Green Belt can be demonstrated.
- 9.5.2 Planning permission for inappropriate development will only be granted where demonstrable, very special circumstances which outweigh the harm to the Green Belt can be demonstrated. These will be determined by the Council on a case-by-case basis, but may include proposals which have clear community support as demonstrated via inclusion in an adopted Neighbourhood Plan. "Very special circumstances" will normally exclude in isolation both housing needs, including for gypsy and traveller sites, and personal circumstances as per the NPPG.

¹¹ Exceptions to the presumption are set out in NPPF paragraph 89 which includes the redevelopment of brownfield land.



9.6 Development within Green Belt Settlements

9.6.1 Green Belt settlements fall into three categories:

- 'inset';
- 'washed over'; and
- 'washed-over containing infill only boundaries'.

9.6.2 'Inset' Green Belt settlements are excluded from the Green Belt and are defined by a settlement envelope. This means that within these settlements normal planning policy applies. The remaining settlements are either completely 'washed over' by the Green Belt designation or have a defined 'infill only' boundary meaning that whilst some of the settlement is 'washed over', the remainder is considered suitable for appropriate infill development.



9.6.3 Infill development can generally be defined as small-scale development for up to two dwellings in a small gap in an otherwise built up frontage, utilising a plot in a manner which should continue to complement the surrounding pattern and grain of development. There should be no adverse impact on the setting of the site, the character of the area, and surrounding properties and uses. High quality design principles will be applied and further detail is given in the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide.

9.6.4 Infill development of more than 2 dwellings will rarely be acceptable and only in circumstances where the developer can clearly demonstrate that such a development would be wholly in accordance with the surrounding character, pattern and grain of development, having regard to plot size, frontage length and dwelling size; and that the development would have an acceptable impact on the open character of the site and its immediate surroundings and the village within which the site is located.

9.7 Affordable housing in the Green Belt

9.7.1 Within the Green Belt, as elsewhere in the area, there is a shortage of affordable housing. This can have a disproportionate effect on rural communities as many young people and families cannot afford to stay because decent homes are either too expensive or simply unavailable. This, in turn, can lead to a fall-off in demand for local services such as schools and public transport and the disappearance of local jobs, shops and public houses. Ultimately, some places risk becoming dormitory settlements with very little sense of community life. The supply of



affordable housing is therefore seen as important, not just in order to provide homes for those in greatest need, but to help keep balanced communities. There is a need for affordable housing in the Green Belt settlements and the Council will consider favourably the provision of affordable housing on rural exception sites in the Green Belt.

Policy SP3: Development in the Green Belt

The Council will work proactively with developers, and landowners to enhance the beneficial uses of the Green Belt.

Within the Green Belt there is a general presumption against inappropriate development. Inappropriate development proposals within the Green Belt will be assessed in accordance with government guidance contained in the NPPF and NPPG.

“Very special circumstances” justifying inappropriate development on a site within the Green Belt will be determined by the Council on a case-by-case basis.

Where “very special circumstances” exist, applicants will be required to contribute to improvements to the environmental quality and/or accessibility of surrounding Green Belt land commensurate to the size of the proposal (for example by improving damaged and derelict land, improving access, visual amenity and biodiversity), either directly or via financial contributions.

Replacement of buildings will be permitted provided that the building is in the same use, is not materially larger, and does not have a greater impact on the openness and rural character of the Green Belt than the existing development.

The Council will only consider infill development acceptable in principle within this Plan’s defined Green Belt infill only boundaries of settlements. Particular attention will be paid to assessing the quality of development proposed and the likely impact on the character of the settlement and its surroundings.

9.8 Coalescence

- 9.8.1 The Council seeks to preserve the separate identities of neighbouring settlements or communities. The Council will resist development that would compromise the open character of the countryside between settlements, especially where the gaps between them are already relatively limited. It is acknowledged that in some cases, whilst neighbouring communities may still have separate characters or identities, the built-up areas of those settlements are already linked as in the case of Clifton and Shefford. The Council will resist new development that would result in further growth in these areas that would harm the separate character or identity of the communities.



- 9.8.2 In addition to the general control of coalescence, there is a need for more specific protection in locations that are or will be experiencing the strongest pressures for development. These pressures will be evident in around certain of the strategic growth locations identified in this plan, particularly potential new settlement proposals on the A1 corridor and in the Marston Vale.

Policy SP4: Coalescence

Other than for specific proposals and land allocations in the Local Plan, new development in the countryside must avoid reducing open land that contributes to the form and character of existing settlements.

In considering applications for development the Council will have regard to maintaining the individual identity of towns and villages and will resist any extensions to built-up areas that might lead to coalescence between settlements.

9.9 Important Countryside Gaps & New Green Belt

- 9.9.1 In acknowledging increasing pressures for development appropriate to the countryside, the Council is conscious of the relatively sensitive and narrow gaps of undeveloped countryside lying between some of the authority area's settlements outside of Green Belt. It is considered essential that the open nature of countryside in these gaps is maintained in order to retain the character of these settlements and prevent the potential loss of their individual identity.
- 9.9.2 Whilst other policies in this Local Plan seek to prevent inappropriate development in the countryside generally and in Green Belt, it is considered that in some instances, the sensitivity of the countryside gaps identified outside of Green Belt is such that built development, which may otherwise be appropriate to a rural area, might also be damaging to the separate identity of those settlements.
- 9.9.3 Within the areas defined as 'Important Countryside Gaps' the Council will apply the following policy and may also in the pre-submission version of the plan, consider Green Belt extensions where there are proven exceptional circumstances which cannot adequately be addressed by other forms of protection e.g. development management policies. It is expected that it will be necessary to propose new Green Belt around Aspley Guise to prevent the coalescence of new settlement scale proposals with existing settlements.

Policy SP5: Important Countryside Gaps

Important Countryside Gaps will be defined on the proposals map that accompanies the pre-submission version of the Plan. The Council will not grant permission for unallocated development that would promote the visual or physical coalescence of nearby settlements.



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Shaping where you live 2035



Settlement Envelopes & Hierarchy

Local Plan 2015-2035

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10 Settlement Envelopes and Settlement Hierarchy

10.1 Settlement Hierarchy

- 10.1.1 To help inform where new development should take place, it is helpful to set out a hierarchy of settlements. The hierarchy takes account of local sustainability credentials such as access to a variety of services and facilities (including schools, shops and public transport links) and is based on existing provision.
- 10.1.2 The hierarchy, set out on the following page helps to provide a framework for considering the levels of new development to be directed through the Development Management process. It will also help to set the context for decisions on individual planning applications, and should be read in conjunction with Policy SP6: Development within Settlement Envelopes.
- 10.1.3 There are four tiers included in the Settlement Hierarchy - Major Service Centres, Minor Service Centres, Large Villages, and Small Villages. The requirements for these tiers are set out in Policy SP6. A number of settlements within the hierarchy lie within the South Bedfordshire Green Belt. Settlements that are categorised within the hierarchy as being Major and Minor Service Centres or Large Villages have all been inset from the Green Belt where appropriate. The exceptions to this are Woburn and Aspley Guise which are washed over by the Green Belt and have defined infill only boundaries. A number of settlements that are categorised as being Small Villages have infill boundaries wherein some very limited development maybe acceptable.



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Settlement Hierarchy

Major Service Centres

Major service centres provide a focus for employment, shopping and community facilities for the local community and surrounding rural communities.

Ampthill*
Biggleswade
Dunstable*
Flitwick*

Houghton Regis*
Leighton Linlade*
Sandy
Wixams

Minor Service Centres

Minor service centres are larger settlements with a good level of services, possibly including a school, doctor's surgery, a basic retail offer and frequent public transport links.

Arlesey
Barton le Clay*
Caddington*
Cranfield
Harlington*
Henlow

Potton
Shefford
Stotfold
Toddington*

Large Villages

Aspley Guise** (GB)
Blunham
Clifton
Clophill (including Hall End Maulden)
Eaton Bray* (GB)
Fairfield
Flitton, Greenfield and Wardhedges
Heath and Reach* (GB)
Hockliffe* (GB)
Houghton Conquest
Kensworth** (GB)

Langford
Lower Stondon
Marston Moretaine
Maulden
Shillington
Silsoe
Slip End* (GB)
Totternhoe (GB)
Upper Caldecote
Westoning* (GB)
Woburn** (GB)

Small Villages



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Aspley Heath** (GB)
 Billington (GB)
 Brogborough
 Broom
 Campton
 Chalton (nr.Toddington) ** (GB)
 Dunton
 East Hyde (GB)
 Eggington (GB)
 Eversholt (GB)
 Everton
 Haynes (main village)
 Husborne Crawley (GB)
 Ickwell
 Lidlington
 Meppershall
 Millbrook
 Milton Bryan (GB)
 Moggerhanger
 Northill

Old Warden
 Pulloxhill
 Ridgmont** (GB)
 Salford
 Southill
 Stanbridge** (GB)
 Stanford
 Steppingley (GB)
 Streatley (GB)
 Studham (GB)
 Sutton
 Tebworth (GB)
 Tempsford (Church End)
 Tilsworth (GB)
 Upper Gravenhurst
 Upper Sundon (GB)
 Wharley End, Cranfield
 Whipsnade (GB)
 Wingfield (GB)
 Wrestlingworth

Settlements not identified within the hierarchy are, due to their small size and rural character, considered to be part of the countryside.

- Settlements followed by (GB) are settlements which are washed over by the Green Belt
- * Settlements that are inset from the Green Belt
- ** Settlements that are washed over by the Green Belt and have infill only boundaries

10.2 Settlement Envelopes

- 10.2.1 To define the boundaries between settlements and surrounding countryside, where appropriate the Council will define Settlement Envelopes. Settlement Envelopes provide a distinction between the settlements and the open countryside, and in so doing enable the clear, unambiguous and consistent application of policies in the management of development within and outside settlements. It also encourages the efficient use of land within our towns and villages, including the re-use of previously developed land.
- 10.2.2 It is not the purpose of Settlement Envelopes to identify land for development, this will be achieved via the allocation of sites in this Local Plan, nor are they an attempt to define the extent of a particular town or village community. Thus the Envelopes are unrelated to the administrative boundaries of town and parish, which serve this particular function.



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- 10.2.3 To inform this work the Council is currently undertaking a review of its existing Settlement Envelopes to ensure that they reflect current uses on the ground. They were last updated for the Core Strategy and it is therefore recognized that a large number of changes will need to be made. The updated Settlement Envelopes will be illustrated on the Proposals Map that will accompany the pre-submission version of the Plan.
- 10.2.4 In some instances, where there is ambiguity in defining that boundary, the Envelope will be used to reflect the character of the predominant land use, using the most appropriate and clear physical features on the ground. That land use must be settlement related, for example residential development, domestic gardens, playing fields and community facilities; and not related to agriculture or considered to be part of the countryside.

Policy SP6: Development within Settlement Envelopes

Settlement Envelopes provide a distinction between settlements and the countryside.

Within the Settlement Envelopes of both Major and Minor Service Centres, the Council will support in principle housing, employment and other settlement related development proportionate to the scale of the settlement, taking account of its role as a local service centre.

Within Settlement Envelopes of Large Villages, small-scale housing and employment uses, together with new retail, service, and community facilities to serve the village and its catchment will be supported in principle.

Within Settlement Envelopes of Small Villages, development will be limited to infill development, small-scale employment uses, and community facilities.

Where an identified need exists for further community facilities (such as education, health, sports and recreation uses or mixed community.) and there is no land is available within the settlement, a site adjacent to the settlement may be granted planning permission. Such development should make the best use of available land and lead to more sustainable communities.



Shaping where you live 2035



Planning for Gypsies & Travellers

Local Plan 2015-2035

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11 Planning for Gypsies and Travellers

- 11.1.1 National Planning policy¹² requires all Local Planning Authorities to assess the accommodation needs of Gypsies and Travellers (G&T) alongside the settled population, and develop a strategy that addresses any unmet need that is identified.

11.2 The planning definition of Gypsy and Traveller

- 11.2.1 For the purposes of planning, the definition of gypsies and travellers was changed in the revised 2015 Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS). The key change to the definition was the removal of the term *persons....who have ceased to travel permanently* meaning that those who have stopped travelling no longer fall under the planning definition of a Traveller in terms of assessing the needs for accommodation.
- 11.2.2 The definition of travelling has been considered through case law and it is the understanding of the Central Bedfordshire study that the implication of these rulings in terms of applying the new definition is that it will only include those who travel (or have ceased to travel temporarily) for work purposes and in doing so stay away from their usual place of residence. As a result of the change in the definition, the need within Central Bedfordshire has reduced by 43% since the previous assessment was undertaken in 2014.
- 11.2.3 At the time of writing the PPTS is still relatively recent, has not been tested through the local plan process and only a small number of relevant appeal decisions have been issued by the Planning Inspectorate as to how the new definition should be applied. Whilst the latter support the view that households need to be able to demonstrate that they travel for work purposes to meet the new definition and stay away from their usual place of residence when doing so, once the new definition has been tested, there is the possibility that it could change, or further guidance issued as to how the new definition is implemented. The need identified for Central Bedfordshire is therefore potentially subject to change.

11.3 Gypsy & Traveller and Travelling Showpeople Accommodation Needs

- 11.3.1 Local Plans are required to set pitch¹³ targets for Gypsy and Travellers and plot¹⁴ targets for Travelling Showpeople which addresses the likely accommodation needs in the area, based on local evidence. The Plan is required to:

¹² The Housing and Planning Act, 2016; Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS), 2015; National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2012; and Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), 2014.

¹³ See glossary

¹⁴ See glossary



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- Identify a five year supply of specific deliverable sites and other, developable sites to accommodate growth for years 6-10 and where possible 11-15;
 - Ensure the number of pitches and plots reflect the size and location of a site, and the size of the surrounding population; and
 - Protect local amenity and the environment.
- 11.3.2 Accordingly the Council commissioned consultants ORS to prepare a Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment (GTAA) which forecasts Central Bedfordshire's G&T accommodation needs for the Plan period 2015 to 2035. The GTAA has identified the number of pitches needed to 2035 and outlined important observations on the specific needs of the Gypsy and Traveller community in Central Bedfordshire, which have been considered in preparing this Local Plan.
- 11.3.3 As a result of the needs assessment being undertaken, the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan will need to allocate a total of 23 pitches to 2035 to meet identified needs. 14 of these pitches need to be delivered by 2021 in order to ensure Central Bedfordshire has an up to date 5 year supply.
- 11.3.4 In addition to the above, there is a need to make provision within the plan for 'unknown' requirements. During the study there were a number of households that were unavailable to take part in the surveys for a variety of reasons, such as being out at work, currently travelling, not allowing access to their site or not wanting to answer the questions within the survey. As a result of this, the study identifies that there are 146 'unknown' households which have not been included within the needs assessment.
- 11.3.5 Using household formation rates, the 146 unknowns translate in to an additional need of 48 pitches. Therefore, in addition to allocating 23 pitches, the Local Plan will also require a criteria-based policy to consider future planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller Sites in order to deliver up to 48 additional pitches.
- 11.3.6 The total provision to be made within the local plan equates to up to 71 pitches.
- 11.3.7 With regard to Travelling Showpeople, it has been identified that there is a need for 21 additional plots across Central Bedfordshire to 2035. 16 of these plots need to be delivered by 2021 in order to ensure Central Bedfordshire has an up to date 5 year supply.
- 11.3.8 There is also an 'unknown' requirement for 10 plots in relation to Travelling Showpeople. The total provision to be made within the local plan equates to 31 plots.



Policy SP7: Gypsy and Traveller, and Travelling Showpeople Pitch Requirement

Gypsy and Travellers

The Council will facilitate the development of up to 71 pitches to meet the Gypsy and Traveller accommodation need in Central Bedfordshire over the period 2015 - 2035.

The Council will allocate 23 pitches over this period, with 14 of these to be delivered by 2021.

The remaining pitches will be delivered via a criteria-based policy to consider future planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller Sites (see Policy H8) in order to deliver up to 48 additional pitches.

Travelling Showpeople

With regards Travelling Showpeople, the Council will facilitate the development of up to 31 plots in Central Bedfordshire over the period 2015 - 2035.

The Council will allocate 21 plots over this period, with 16 of these to be delivered by 2021 to ensure that the Council has an up to date 5 year supply.

The remaining plots will be delivered via a criteria-based policy to consider future planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller / Travelling Showpeople Sites (see Policy H9) in order to deliver up to 10 additional plots.



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Core Policies

The following sections contain a series of Core Policies on economic growth, housing, historic and built environment, environmental management, transport and infrastructure. It is through the delivery and monitoring of these policies that the Vision and Strategic Objectives of this Central Bedfordshire Local Plan will be achieved.



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Shaping where you live 2035



Housing

Local Plan 2015-2035

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12 Housing

12.1 Housing Mix

- 12.1.1 An appropriate and inclusive housing mix contributes to well-designed places that produces strong community cohesion and caters for a diverse range of household needs. This just emphasises the importance of achieving a suitable housing mix as part of this Local Plan.
- 12.1.2 The main evidence base underpinning a good mix of housing will predominantly be based on the Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA), which Central Bedfordshire Council have undertaken in 2015 and is currently being refreshed. The SHMA 2016 explores the housing types, sizes, mix and tenure types needed in Central Bedfordshire, and forecasts the housing requirements for the period up to 2035. It takes into consideration population forecasts, births, deaths and migration to indicate the household need, and will highlight growth in particular groups such as the elderly and first time buyers. This information will form the basis of ensuring that an appropriate mix and volume of housing is achieved.
- 12.1.3 Within the mix of housing, we need to ensure that development provides good quality housing; a variety of homes including, flats, bungalows, and family housing for all parts of the community. It is also important to ensure that homes are built to a good standard with particular attention given to well insulated and ventilated homes with adequate room, space and light.
- 12.1.4 Before the Council can begin constructing a suitable housing mix, we must have regard for the amount of homes required to meet the Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for both market and affordable housing within the area. The Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) sets out the evidence base which supports the OAN. This assessment of need within the SHMA states that 32,000 dwellings are required in the new plan period 2015-2035, this amounts to 1,684 dwellings per annum. Finally the SHMA has emphasised that 30% of housing on all development sites should be affordable housing.
- 12.1.5 Affordable housing can be delivered in many forms, including affordable rented accommodation, shared ownership, and starter homes which the NPPF now considers to be part of the affordable housing requirement.
- 12.1.6 Aside from affordable housing, other alternatives are available to help individuals access homeownership such as Right to Buy or the Help to Buy; Equity Loan



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scheme which has been extremely popular in the last few years within Central Bedfordshire.

Housing requirements

- 12.1.7 The information from the SHMA supports a requirement for smaller homes for people to downsize into. This is particularly relevant as the implications of the Spare Room Subsidy means that many working age families have to downsize. There is still a need for family sized homes, for growing families, as demographic information from the SHMA identifies that as children grow they need their own room and space.
- 12.1.8 There is a need similarly for younger households, particularly first time buyers who find it difficult to access the housing market at open market values. Smaller properties at the entry-level end of the market are needed to meet this specific demand. Housing options for younger people will include purchasing an affordable unit such as starter homes or a shared ownership property at first. Smaller units are also required for older people to downsize into – freeing up larger family homes
- 12.1.9 An appropriate housing mix will need to have regard for people with specific care needs, e.g. learning disabilities and other vulnerable groups, such as gypsies and travellers¹⁵, care leavers and homeless families. Properties need to be well designed, in good locations and easily adapted to suit individual's care needs.

Empty Homes

- 12.1.10 Central Bedfordshire has approximately 1,200 empty homes which is only a small proportion of the housing stock, and is around 1.5% of the total number of houses. However some of these properties have been empty for many years, and through effective stock management, these empty homes could potentially provide much needed housing for several families.
- 12.1.11 The Council intends to continue to take a pro-active approach to bringing empty properties back into use in order to maximise housing delivery, which can be viewed in the Housing Strategy 2016-21.

¹⁵ Those that do not meet the new definition for “gypsy and traveller as set out in Annex 1 of the revised Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2015).



Policy H1: Housing Mix

All developments for new dwellings must include a mix of housing types and sizes in order to meet the needs of all sections of the community, to encourage sustainable, inclusive and mixed communities. The Council will support in principle those proposals that are accompanied by evidence which demonstrates the development meets these needs through the use of:-

- The most up to date SHMA
- Local Housing Market analysis
- Use of housing needs assessment
- Population projections
- Housing Market Gap Analysis
- Regard for the under-supply and loss of bungalows
- Current housing market conditions
- Existing housing mix in the locality.

12.2 Housing Standards Review

- 12.2.1 The Council will adhere to the most up to date Government Legislation and new planning guidance to determine the appropriate housing standards to be applied within Central Bedfordshire. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) is clear that local planning authorities should plan to create safe, accessible environments and promote inclusion and community cohesion. This includes buildings and their surrounding spaces. Local planning authorities should take account of evidence that demonstrates a clear need for housing for people with specific housing needs and it should plan to meet this need.

Space standards

- 12.2.2 Where a local planning authority wishes to apply an internal space standard, they should only do so by reference to the Nationally Described Space Standard within their Local Plan. The Nationally Described Space Standard (NDSS) is the published guidance recommended from the Government's Housing Standards review. Central Bedfordshire Council will endorse the use of the Nationally Described Space standards, as prescribed by Central Government.
- 12.2.3 The Housing Standards Review stated that all new properties should be built to Category 1 standards as Part M of Building Regulations. Whilst this is a good basic standard of building and offers good design, it does not promote flexible or adaptable design.
- 12.2.4 Local planning authorities have the option to set additional technical requirements exceeding the minimum standards required by Building Regulations in respect of access. Local planning authorities will need to gather evidence to determine whether there is a need for additional standards in their area, and justify setting appropriate policies in their Local Plans.
- 12.2.5 The Council spent £2.132m on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) in 2015/16. This was primarily for level access shower/wet room adaptations but also other minor



adaptations. It is inevitably more costly to retrospectively fit adaptations into existing properties rather than design them into new build properties; hence the £2.1m spend on DFG on existing housing stock. Other types of adaptations being financed by DFGs have included straight and curved stair lifts, toilet alterations, access ramps, and access alterations mainly to doors, kitchen alterations and major extensions.

- 12.2.6 The expenditure on DFG's would have been avoided if there was a good supply of flexible and adaptable homes within new delivery. As such, the Council will build an evidence base of DFG expenditure and also the backlog of need through the preceding years to demonstrate a requirement for category 2 homes in future. Planning conditions may be used to secure Category 2 M4 (2) dwellings on all applications.
- 12.2.7 Information from the Projecting Adult Needs and Service Information (PANSI) states that currently 13,159 people between the age of 16-64 years have a moderate physical disability and a further 3,930 people have a severe physical disability. This is set to increase to 14,518 people with a moderate disability and 4,433 people with a severe physical disability by 2030.
- 12.2.8 Category 3 M4 (3) is fully wheelchair accessible homes that specifically caters to the needs of occupants who have severe, physical mobility issues. These incorporate more extensive design requirements. The Council will analyse the need for both wheelchair accessible and wheelchair adaptable homes, bearing in mind the projected 4,433 people that will have a severe physical disability by 2030.
- 12.2.9 This analysis of need will form the basis for individual site negotiations as a direct response to need. In requiring wheelchair accessible homes from all future development; the Council will be targeted, strategic and opportunistic about how it negotiates for wheelchair accessible homes.
- 12.2.10 The emphasis will be on an evidence-led approach which uses internal knowledge of applicants on the housing register that have a physical disability to target delivery on future new build development.

Learning Disabilities

- 12.2.11 People with learning disabilities have the same aspirations as any other person's requirements for appropriate, accessible housing. Many people with learning disabilities do live at home until carers (parents) are deceased or the carers are no longer able to care for them. Some people come through the adult care system sooner for many different reasons and will often require help with basic life skills.
- 12.2.12 Whilst there may not be any specific physical design requirements, people with learning disabilities aspire to mainstream housing with floating support or semi-independent living arrangements.
- 12.2.13 However, people with specific higher needs which may include autism or Asperger's syndrome or dual diagnoses, such as mental health with drug and



alcohol dependencies; supported lodgings have and will prove to be more appropriate.

- 12.2.14 As there is a limited supply of settled accommodation options available. The council will encourage developers to come forward and bring innovative ideas in accommodating individuals with learning disabilities. All possibilities will be considered.

Policy H2: Housing Standards

Space standards will be applied in accordance with the Nationally Described Space Standards.

In requiring adaptable and accessible homes from all future developments; The Council will:

- Take an evidence-based approach to quantifying a specific percentage requirement for Category 2 Requirement M4 (2) adaptable homes (or such subsequent amendment to these building regulations)
- OR
- Manage the delivery of Category 2, Requirement M4 (2) adaptable dwellings (or such subsequent amendment to these building regulations) through all planning applications via planning conditions. In doing so, the Council will respond to evidence of need (and demonstrable backlog of need) for adaptable homes as demonstrated by Council expenditure on DFG's
 - Take a targeted, evidence-based approach to how it negotiates for Category 3, Requirement M4 (3) (or subsequent amendment to these building regulations) wheelchair accessible homes.

12.3 Supporting an Ageing Population

- 12.3.1 The demographics of Central Bedfordshire is no different from the current demographics of England, whereby there is an increase growth of people over 65+ and a further noticeable growth of the 85+. Besides the growth of the older population, residents of Central Bedfordshire have a longer life expectancy than the national average, ranging from 84 years for women and 81 years for men. (The UK Quality of Life Index – rates Central Bedfordshire 13th best place to live in the UK 2015). With ageing, there is an increase in disease, disability and frailty that can lead to complex and challenging care needs, and therefore requiring specialist care.
- 12.3.2 Central Bedfordshire is a relatively affluent area where the majority of older residents (76.9%) own their home. Of the remainder 17.0% rent from a social landlord, 3.6% privately rent and 2.5% live rent free. Research shows that older people prefer to retain the same tenure arrangement if they move. (ORS - Assessment of the Housing Needs of Older People in Central Bedfordshire March 2017)



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- 12.3.3 Central Bedfordshire has an ageing population with increasing levels of disability and frailty. The ageing population is more likely to increase to over half (56%) of the overall population growth (30,100) persons is projected to be aged 65 or over and almost a third is projected to be 75+ (18,600) person equivalent to 35%, during this period 2015-2035.
- 12.3.4 As there is a lack of suitable accommodation options for older people in Central Bedfordshire Council, and CBC would like to work with the market to deliver the following:
- Mainstream homes designed for older people.
 - Extra care schemes that combine care and housing services.
 - Care homes that meet modern standards and customer expectations, providing an attractive living environment as well as high quality care.
- 12.3.5 There is only 2% of housing which is aimed at older people and there is a need for appropriate housing for older people, and as the population grows older, there is a further demand for care and support needs. This is supported by evidence provided in the ORS report, whereby mainly older people are now relying on having support and care needs provided from external companies.
- 12.3.6 Providing suitable accommodation for older people is a key requirement because it provides an attractive option to encourage older people to downsize and free-up larger properties which are more suitable for families; therefore making an efficient use of current housing stock.
- 12.3.7 The need for smaller units is essential due to the particular growth of the over 65 population in Central Bedfordshire. There needs to be a mix of 1 and particularly 2 beds to cater for the older population, in the form of bungalows, mobility homes standards, possibly flatted maisonettes and other mainstream housing. As well as various house types, a good housing mix will also incorporate various housing tenure options such as outright purchased properties, shared ownership and other available options.
- 12.3.8 There is a particular need to retain bungalows for older people, as this is one of the preferred accommodation types for people who are aging yet want to retain a high level of independence. However, there has been a noticeable loss of these units due to existing bungalows being converted into two storey family homes. This places an additional requirement on future new supply to compensate for the backlog of chronic under-delivery and loss of existing bungalows.
- 12.3.9 Central Bedfordshire wants more bungalows and level access homes, such as ground floor apartments and apartments with appropriate lifts to cater for people with mobility issues. However, in the last few years a number of bungalows have been demolished and replaced with two storey family homes; therefore losing ideal homes for older people with specific needs. CBC has seen over 19 bungalows lost in the last 3 years (2013-16 financial years) but the broader housing development market has not looked at replacing them. The ORS report also states that the need for bungalows is greatly the preferred type of accommodation for older people however; this is causing issues with affordability.



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- 12.3.10 There is demand and many people do wish to downsize to these types of properties, but older people feel that the affordability of such a unit is too costly, and therefore do not move.
- 12.3.11 Caroline Abrahams, Charity Director at Age UK, said: “Part of the reason that many older people prefer bungalows is because of the inaccessibility of ordinary houses and flats. If more homes complied with the ‘lifetime homes’ accessibility standard it would reduce the demand for bungalows – which can be expensive to build. “Bungalows are popular with many older people and we should build more. But we would also like to see a much broader range of affordable housing designed for older people and located in age friendly places.”
- 12.3.12 Therefore to support our ageing population, suitable and appropriate accommodation for older persons should be part of the overall inclusive housing mix. We would want to see developers provide housing for older people as part of their development schemes, in the form of bungalows and low level maisonettes.



Policy H3: Supporting Older People

All new residential development will be required to respond to the challenges relating to older people as set out in this chapter. Specifically all applications will identify opportunities:

- To provide accommodation in suitable and sustainable locations, based on the latest evidence base, these are especially town centres, near transport links, services, and leisure and health facilities.
- To provide accommodation in various forms of tenure types, e.g. shared ownership, outright purchase, leasehold possibilities, affordable/private rented and other form of intermediate tenures.
- To ensure that properties are built to a good quality standard and meet the needs of older people as they progress through their life changes.
- To ensure that supported housing schemes provide the necessary care and support packages required.
- To consider the strategic aims of the Council, it is ensuring that mainstream housing, extra-care homes and nursing care homes are provided throughout the Council area.
- The Council will require the development of bungalows, level access accommodation or low density flats to be provided for older people on development of 100 dwellings or more.
- In order to protect all new bungalows in perpetuity, permitted development rights will be removed from new build bungalow supply to prevent conversion to two storey dwellings.
- On larger sites of 200 units or more, the provision of an extra care facility should be investigated taking into consideration site viability and need. Where an extra care facility is not provided applicants must present evidence to support its exclusion from their proposals.

12.4 Affordable Housing

- 12.4.1 The NPPF sets out the government's clear intention to provide good quality affordable housing for all. This forms part of a wider agenda to create sustainable, mixed and integrated communities.
- 12.4.2 The case for affordable housing is well documented both nationally and particularly within Central Bedfordshire. For example, Land Registry information highlights how the average house price within Central Bedfordshire has risen over the years rising to £270,546 as at April 2016. When this is coupled with the fact that the average household earnings have not risen in line with house prices, this



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gives a stark depiction of just how serious the problem is. Further evidence will be contained in the Housing topic paper.

- 12.4.3 Based on the results of the SHMA, this Local Plan requires that 30% of all units from qualifying sites will be for affordable housing. As part of the affordable housing requirement the SHMA outlines the Council's tenure requirements. Qualifying sites will be expected to provide 73% affordable rent and 27% intermediate tenure. This policy, together with the rural exceptions policy, should help to meet the affordable housing needs within Central Bedfordshire.

Viability Testing Framework (LP)

- 12.4.4 The viability of each site will continue to be considered on a case by case basis and will be discussed with the applicant. The emphasis of these discussions will be to enable a viable degree of affordable housing on site.
- 12.4.5 The applicant will be expected to provide comprehensive supporting information to enable the Council to make an informed decision on the financial viability of the proposed development scheme. This information will include, as a minimum, a detailed cost plan and specification together with properly analysed evidence justifying proposed sales values and a detailed valuation of existing use value. The information will be assessed by the Council advised by an independent assessor as and when required, and the applicant will be expected to pay the cost of this assessment.
- 12.4.6 If a scheme is approved on the basis of a robustly evidenced affordable housing offer which is below policy requirements, the section 106 agreement will include provision for a re-appraisal of viability. The purpose of this viability review will be to seek a future uplift in affordable housing provision.
- 12.4.7 Applicants should expect that a restriction on occupation of an appropriate number of market units to reflect the policy shortfall will be required to secure any further contribution from the assessment process. The applicant will be required to submit detailed evidence to the Council on an open book basis of the actual costs expended and values generated by the scheme and, where viability has improved, the applicant will be expected to make further affordable housing provision up to the maximum policy shortfall. This further affordable provision will be sought in accordance with the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan.
- 12.4.8 In order to secure delivery and provide mixed new communities, the Council has a preference for affordable housing delivery on-site. However, there may be specific circumstances relating to appropriateness of location, where a commuted sum towards off-site provision may be considered in lieu of part of the 30% requirement to complement the on-site affordable housing provision. The formal mechanisms required to secure off site contributions will be detailed in standard clauses in the Council's section 106 agreement.
- 12.4.9 Commuted sums are calculated on the basis of 50% of the open market value for each unit in question. If the policy compliant commuted sum can not be achieved a viability will determine the sum.



Policy H4: Affordable Housing

All qualifying sites of 11 or more units or sites of 10 or less units which have a combined gross internal floor space in excess of 1,000 square metres subject to NPPG future revisions and future relevant case law will provide 30% affordable housing. This proportion may change in accordance to the most up to date version of the SHMA, in which event the new revised proportions should be applied. The affordable housing from qualifying sites should be provided on-site.

The affordable homes should meet the following requirements:

- Provide 73% affordable rent and 27% intermediate tenure or regard to the most up-to-date SHMA
- An appropriate mix of tenures, including Social Rent, Affordable Rent and intermediate tenures including starter homes, having regard to housing needs and best available evidence and most up-to-date SHMA
- Affordable units dispersed throughout the site and integrated with the market housing to promote community cohesion & tenure blindness. Clusters of no more than 10 affordable units for houses and no more than 15 affordable units for flats
- Affordable units to meet all nationally prescribed space standards
- Quality and design of the affordable homes must be of an equally high standard to that of the private units on site.

12.5 Rural Exception Sites

- 12.5.1 Central Bedfordshire contains a number of small settlements which are rural in character. Typically, because of their attractive rural location and character, house prices in these villages are relatively high in comparison to the more urban areas. This often makes it difficult for some households to purchase or privately rent properties within the villages.
- 12.5.2 Historically there has been a shortfall in the delivery of affordable housing within these rural areas, partly due to the limited opportunity for in-fill developments within these villages. Rural exception sites – sites outside of the settlement boundary used for affordable housing have been the most efficient way of providing affordable housing for rural communities to date. With the implications of the NPPG restricting affordable contributions on sites of 10 or less dwellings, rural exception sites are becoming more critical for the delivery of affordable housing in the rural communities of Central Bedfordshire.
- 12.5.3 In addition, there is also a need for additional affordable housing provision around the larger settlements. While development opportunities are greater here, so is the level of affordable housing need. The policy below therefore enables exception sites to be brought forward around the larger settlements.
- 12.5.4 Whilst neighbourhood planning could potentially bring forward a degree of affordable housing, the continued delivery of exception sites will form a key part of



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affordable housing delivery. To help increase the delivery from exception sites, a limited number of open market dwellings can be provided if a rural exception scheme is not viable at reasonable, agricultural prices. The Council will allow for up to 20% market housing on exception schemes if viability issues are demonstrated.

- 12.5.5 A careful balance must be struck in terms of having regard for a settlement's character and settlement boundaries whilst being mindful of the need to meet an identified local housing need from that settlement. The use of sites which relate well to the settlement boundary go some way to achieving this balance.
- 12.5.6 The underlying purpose of an exception site is to meet the identified housing needs of local people. It is designed to accommodate households local to the settlement in accordance with the Council's adopted Local Lettings Policy. It is envisaged that the supply of exception sites will provide a means for people who would ordinarily not be able to afford to live within that settlement to remain within their local community.
- 12.5.7 A pre-requisite of any household being eligible for these properties will be that they have a demonstrable housing need and a strong local connection to the Parish in question. The housing need will be evidenced by the household being registered with the Council, Registered Provider or alternative affordable housing provider.
- 12.5.8 A local housing needs survey will be conducted within the settlement to evidence the level of demand for affordable housing. It will identify the number of affordable homes, the tenure and size of the property needed. The identified needs and requirements will form the evidence base upon which the Council, landowners, Registered Providers, house builders and the Town or Parish Council will work-up plans for the exception site.
- 12.5.9 The sites in rural areas will usually be limited to 10 dwellings in order to preserve the character of the settlement. However, if a housing needs survey supports, a demand for more than 10 dwellings and it can be demonstrated that a larger development will not have an adverse effect on the character of the settlement, larger sites may be considered.
- 12.5.10 The exception site will be subject to a Section 106 agreement which will set out that the affordable properties must remain as affordable housing in perpetuity. A householder for a shared ownership property will be able to buy additional equity shares of their property. This will be restricted to a maximum of 80% equity share of the property meaning the property is not completely owned outright by the householder and remains as affordable in perpetuity.
- 12.5.11 Any re-sale of shared ownership properties will go to a household in housing need as directed by the Council's Local Lettings Policy in regard to the procedure for shared ownership. The Section 106 agreement will also ensure the appropriate phasing of the affordable and open market dwellings.
- 12.5.12 The overall aim of the policy below is to provide high quality affordable homes for local people in housing need.



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Policy H5: Rural Exception Sites

Proposals for the development of Rural Exception Sites will be considered acceptable in principle where they meet the following criteria:

- Designed to meet identified affordable housing needs. The local needs will be identified and evidenced based through a housing needs survey.
- Subject to a Section 106 legal agreement or Unilateral Undertaking.
- Allocated in accordance with the Council's adopted Local Lettings Policy
- Small scale development – usually limited to 10 dwellings but, in exceptional circumstances when there is a substantial affordable housing need identified from the housing needs survey, larger developments may be considered.
- Provide affordable homes that will remain as affordable in perpetuity
- Provide only a limited number of market dwellings expressly for the sole purpose of making the scheme financially viable. This will be subject to site specific viability testing and be limited to up to 20% of the total dwellings.
- A mix of tenures to be made available to meet the identified need from the housing needs survey
- In the case of shared ownership, stair-casing or purchasing additional equity shares will be restricted to 80% of the properties open market value. This will ensure the property remains as affordable in perpetuity.
- Situated outside the existing settlement boundary but relates well to the existing settlement and is in-keeping with surrounding character.

12.6 Starter Homes

- 12.6.1 The Housing and Planning Act 2016 sets out the Governments agenda to support homeownership, particularly through the delivery of Starter Homes.
- 12.6.2 A starter home is a new build property which is offered at a minimum of 20% below market value. The discounted price should be no more than £250,000 outside London and £450,000 in London.
- 12.6.3 Starter Homes are specifically aimed at the first-time buyer market and will be offered to people who are under 40 years old at the time of purchase and have not previously owned a home. The Starter Home property cannot be sold or re-let for a period of 8 years after initial sale; after which, the property can be sold on the open market at full value.
- 12.6.4 The appropriate balance between compliance with the Housing & Planning Act and also the strength of local evidence must be struck. Previous chapters adequately explain the overwhelming demand for affordable rented properties (as



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demonstrated by the SHMA 2015). Central Bedfordshire Council is of the opinion that appropriate weight should be given to this factual evidence when determining planning applications in support of a suitable local housing mix.

- 12.6.5 The Housing and Planning Act requires that local planning authorities may only grant planning permission if applicants enter into a planning obligation to provide a certain number of starter Homes.
- 12.6.6 Starter homes are now considered to be an Affordable Housing tenure under the revised NPPF and the Government expects local planning authorities to deliver a proportion of starter homes as part of affordable housing delivery through S106 agreements. This will be confirmed following the consultation within the Housing White paper.
- 12.6.7 The provisions within the Housing & Planning Act and subsequent discussions with DCLG confirm that the starter homes will apply to each individual qualifying site so Central Bedfordshire Council must have regard for the duty.
- 12.6.8 Para 5 (2) of the Housing and Planning Act states that Local planning authorities can dispense with the planning condition relating to starter homes where:
- (a) An application is made for planning permission in respect of a rural Exception site, and
 - (b) The application falls to be determined wholly or partly on the basis of policy contained in a development plan for the provision of housing on rural exception sites.
- 12.6.9 Therefore the starter homes planning condition does not apply to rural exception sites or land allocated for the provision of rural exception sites.
- 12.6.10 Para (4) of the Housing and Planning Act states:
- “The starter homes requirement” means a requirement, specified in the regulations, relating to the provision of starter homes in England
- 12.6.11 We await the publication of the aforementioned regulations to specify the actual starter home requirement. However, the Housing White Paper has made its intention clear to specify a minimum 10% requirement which will encompass various homeownership options as well as starter homes. Until the consultation on the Housing White paper is concluded, and secondary legislation is enacted, CBC will work on this assumption.
- 12.6.12 This local plan policy seeks to provide interim guidance on the starter homes requirement in the absence of secondary legislation.



Policy H6: Starter Homes

All qualifying planning applications must have regard for Starter Homes delivery; except in respect of planning applications for rural exception sites or land allocated for rural exception sites.

Starter Homes will be delivered on qualifying sites in accordance with the Housing & Planning Act or the most up-to-date, published secondary legislation or Government Guidance.

The current intention communicated in the Housing White Paper is that Starter Homes will form part of the minimum 10% requirement for a range of home ownership products. Until the consultation on the Housing White paper is concluded, CBC will work on this assumption.

The Affordable Housing policy (policy H4) states that 27% of all qualifying sites will comprise intermediate tenures, these are predominantly home ownership products, and therefore starter homes will be incorporated within this 27%.

In the absence of detailed guidance, Central Bedfordshire Council will exercise local discretion in meeting the Starter Homes requirement. This includes the following:

- Local variation on the suitability on starter homes on a case-by-case basis. This will include demonstrable evidence on local Housing Need, Affordability and accessibility of starter homes as part of the wider housing mix.
- Consideration of a commuted sum payment to be used by the authority for providing starter homes. The proceeds of which are to be spent in any location within its boundary that the authority deems suitable.

12.7 Self and Custom Build Housing

12.7.1 The Self-build & Custom Housebuilding Act (2015) (as amended) places a duty on local authorities to:

- keep a register of people and groups interested in acquiring serviced plots to build their own homes, and;
- have a regard to their register as a material consideration in planning decisions.

12.7.2 Self and custom build housing is housing built or commissioned by individuals or groups of individuals for their own occupation. A serviced plot is defined by the Act as a plot of land that has access to a public highway and has connections for electricity, water and waste water, or can be provided with those things in specified circumstances or a specified period. This definition may be amended by future legislation and guidance from the Government.



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- 12.7.3 The Council operates its own Self & Custom Build Register (the register) which determines the local level of demand for serviced plots. To fulfil this demand, the Council will look to support applications for the delivery of serviced plots on suitable sites.
- 12.7.4 This policy sets out requirements for the delivery of serviced plots to support self and custom house building and does not set requirements for the building of dwellings by individuals on plots other than serviced plots.

Serviced Plots Delivery

- 12.7.5 The Council recognises that there is a growing interest from people to influence the design and specification and even to build their own home. The Council also recognises the potential of self and custom housebuilding to increase delivery of new build homes in the local area.
- 12.7.6 The national Ipsos Mori survey in 2015 showed that 53% of the adult population in the UK would like to build their own home at some stage of their lives and 14% were researching or planning building it in the next 12 months.
- 12.7.7 For the period 2011 to 2016, only around 40 new houses a year build as single house on single plots of land in Central Bedfordshire. The data from the Council's own register indicates that the demand is much higher, with 150 people registered in the first year of its operation alone. The National Custom and Self Build Association cite finding a suitable plot of land and the biggest barrier to self and custom housebuilding.
- 12.7.8 To address the issue of a shortage of land the Council will work with local partners, such as local agents and landowners, to grant suitable planning permissions in order to provide enough serviced plots to meet the local demand (as demonstrated by the register) and help self and custom builders realise their ambitions of building their own home. The Council will support delivery of serviced plots on sites suitable for residential development within settlement envelopes. Delivery of serviced plots outside settlement envelopes will only be supported where it enables delivery of affordable housing on rural exception sites (please see Rural Exception Sites Policy).
- 12.7.9 Sites allocated in the Local Plan will be expected to deliver up to 20% of the planned dwellings as serviced plots for self and custom builders. The number of plots to be delivered on each site will be determined on a case by case basis at the time of application, reflecting the demand demonstrated on the register at that time.

Legal agreement

- 12.7.10 To ensure the delivery of serviced plots to self and custom builders the Council will require developers to enter into section 106 agreement that states that:
- 12.7.11 All serviced plots will be offered to people on the Register first for a period of 6 months before being marketed on the open market.
- 12.7.12 All serviced plots will be required to have, or have been provided, within a specified period access to a public highway and connection to electricity, water



and waste water as minimum required by the legislation, and gas where the gas network present in the area and connection is viable.

Meeting housing needs

- 12.7.13 While the Council is supportive of proposals for self and custom build projects, it is important that these applications do not compromise the ability of the Council to meet housing needs. Therefore all applications for delivery of serviced plots must comply with all housing and other policies as set out in this Plan.

Policy H7: Self and Custom Build Housing

The Council will support applications for delivery of serviced plots in suitable locations where they help meet the demand as demonstrated by the Council's Self & Custom Build Register.

- The Council will require sites of 10 or more dwellings (excluding schemes for 100% flats or conversions) to provide up to 20% of the planned dwellings as serviced plots for self and custom builders to meet demand evidenced by the Council Register.
- The Council will require all serviced plots to have or provide within a specified period (agreed in s106 agreement) access to a public highway, connections for electricity, water and waste water, and gas where present in the area.
- The Council will require serviced plots to be offered to people on the Register first for a period of 6 months before being marketed on the open market as serviced plot for self and custom build.
- Developments meeting the Council's threshold for affordable housing will be expected to deliver affordable housing in line with the Council's adopted policy for on site provision or payment of commuted sums for off site delivery.

Delivery of serviced plots on rural exception sites will be permitted only if it enables delivery of affordable houses.

12.8 Planning for Gypsy and Traveller Sites

- 12.8.1 The pitch and plot requirements for Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople are set out in Strategic Policy SP7 at the head of this Plan. New sites should be planned sensitively to take account of the needs of both the travelling and settled communities. Specific considerations include:

- The promotion of peaceful and integrated co-existence between the site and the local community;
- The wider benefits of easier access to Health services;
- Access to local schools to enable Gypsy and Traveller children to attend school regularly;



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- A settled base that reduces the need for long distance travelling, and the possible environmental damage caused by unauthorised encampments;
- Consideration of the effect of local environmental quality, such as noise or air quality, on the health and well being of any Gypsy and Travellers or others as a result of the development;
- Access to local shops; and
- Access to local employment opportunities.

12.8.2 In order to benefit from access to facilities and services such as health and education, first preference should be given to sites that are located closer to existing settlements. However, traditionally some Gypsy and Traveller families prefer to live in the countryside, on privately owned and managed sites. Such locations will be considered where they are constraint free, or where any constraints could be satisfactorily mitigated.

12.8.3 Applications will be considered on their merits in the context of site size and location, and the characteristics of the surrounding area. Planning permissions might restrict the size of sites and where appropriate recommend a “cap” on the number of people allowed to live on the site on a permanent basis or the number of caravans being stationed on a site. Proposals for mixed residential and business uses should have regard to the safety and amenity of the occupants and neighbouring residents.



Policy H8: Assessing planning applications for Gypsy and Traveller sites

Sites for “Gypsies and Travellers”¹⁶, including extensions to existing sites will be subject to the following considerations in addition to other relevant policies within this Plan:

- Satisfactory evidence is submitted to justify local need for the scale and nature of the accommodation proposed;
- The scale of the site and the number of pitches would not dominate¹⁷ the nearest settled community and would not place undue pressure on local infrastructure;
- Site design demonstrates that the pitches are of a sufficient size to accommodate trailers/caravans, parking, and storage and amenity space for the needs of the occupants.
- Adequate schools, shops, healthcare and other community facilities are within reasonable travelling distance; and
- Suitable arrangements can be made for drainage, sanitation and access to utilities.

12.9 Planning for Travelling Showpeople Sites

12.9.1 Travelling Showpeople’s needs are distinct to the needs of the wider Gypsy and Traveller community:

- They do not share the same cultures or traditions as Gypsies and Travellers.
- Travelling Showpeople sites combine residential, storage and maintenance uses, and require secure permanent bases for the storage of their equipment.
- Applications for Travelling Showpeople sites will be assessed against the criteria in Policy H8, and the specific criteria in Policy H9 below.

¹⁶ As defined in Annex 1 of the revised 2015 Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS).

¹⁷ See para 14, Policy C of the revised 2015 Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS).



Policy H9: Assessing planning applications for Travelling Showpeople sites

Sites for Travelling Showpeople¹⁸, including extensions to existing sites will be subject to the following considerations in addition to other relevant policies within this Plan:

- The criteria in Policy H8 are satisfactorily met;
- Sufficient space is provided to accommodate the storage and maintenance of equipment; and
- Satisfactory and safe vehicular access to and from the public highway is provided both to allow manoeuvrability of living accommodation and equipment to the site and plot, and to ensure the safety of other road users with the use of traffic calming measures where appropriate

¹⁸ As defined in Annex 1 of the revised 2015 Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (PPTS).



Shaping where you live 2035



Employment & Economy

Local Plan 2015-2035

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13 Employment and Economy

- 13.1.1 Central Bedfordshire has a strong economy and has consistently delivered economic growth. Moving forward, it is expected that we will continue this strong economic performance reflecting national economic conditions.
- 13.1.2 Central Bedfordshire Economic Insight (CBEI) identifies that there are 11,570 active enterprises within Central Bedfordshire and that in 2014 our five year survival rate for new businesses was higher than national, regional and SEMLEP rates. We have a dynamic and diverse economy with key sector strengths in High Performance Technology, Research and Development; Transport and Logistics, the Visitor Economy and Agriculture and Food. Our strategic location and excellent transport links as well as our high quality natural and historic environment support a growing economy.
- 13.1.3 The area is home to world leading companies such as B/E Aerospace, Lockheed Martin, Nissan Technical Centre Europe, Amazon, Whitbread, Superdrug and The Jordan and Ryvita Company. The largest employer in the area is Central Bedfordshire Council, when taking into account all education/school based employment. Other large employers in the area include Cranfield University, Millbrook Proving Ground, Woburn Enterprises, Kier and the RSPB. There are also a number of smaller businesses within Central Bedfordshire which make a significant contribution to the local economy.
- 13.1.4 Tourism is an important, rapidly growing sector and job creator within Central Bedfordshire and attractions such as the Woburn Estate, ZSL Whipsnade Zoo, Centre Parcs, Wrest Park and the Shuttleworth Collection contribute significantly to the local economy.
- 13.1.5 The Council is fully supportive of the movement towards a low carbon economy and there are a number of businesses which have a vested interest or operate within the green economy. In our area the Green Economy is diverse, and the Council will continue to support the creation of opportunities for the development of new technologies, industries and services and will seek to support business growth in the low carbon economy.
- 13.1.6 Central Bedfordshire benefits significantly from good transportation access. The M1 and the A1 corridors run north to south through Central Bedfordshire, which provide businesses with direct access to London and the strategic road network whilst the A5, A6, A507 and the A421 create a robust internal transportation network providing local residents with access to employment opportunities across the whole area. Accessibility will be further enhanced following the delivery of major infrastructure projects including the A5-M1 link road, A421 improvements, M1-A6 link road, A1 Improvements and the Oxford to Cambridge Expressway.
- 13.1.7 In order for Central Bedfordshire to achieve its economic potential, the Council is taking a positive enabling approach to creating the right conditions for our existing businesses to flourish and to attract new inward investment that supports and enhances the existing employment offer within Central Bedfordshire. The overall



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aim being to create a place of national and international significance where people choose to live, work and visit, and where companies choose to invest.

- 13.1.8 The Council has identified a number of priority sectors. These are ,
- High Performance Technologies, Research & Development (R&D)
 - Agri-Food
 - Visitor Economy
 - Transport and Logistics
- 13.1.9 The Council will be supportive of growth proposals within these sectors and will monitor and review progress throughout the plan period through the Annual Monitoring Report.
- 13.1.10 The Central Bedfordshire Functional Economic Market Areas (FEMA) and Employment Land Review (ELR) (May 2016) identifies that, based on past trends; a minimum of 23,900 jobs might be expected within the area up to 2031. This is based upon the Experian economic forecast which estimates future trends based upon past information. However, there are a range of economic forecasts that could be considered, and the forecasts produced can be volatile. There are a number of local “real-world” factors that also need to be considered that suggests a higher jobs target is achievable than that suggested through economic modelling. These factors include our historic annual delivery of 2,180 jobs per annum (2010-2015) and our aspiration to realise fully the area’s economic potential.
- 13.1.11 As the FEMA for Central Bedfordshire is complex and overlaps with neighbouring authorities, we also need to consider any unmet economic needs arising from neighbouring authorities, and in line with the NPPF and the Duty to Cooperate, the Council has sought to ensure that economic growth within Central Bedfordshire is complementary to that in neighbouring areas. To this end, Central Bedfordshire has committed to helping meet the unmet economic needs arising from Stevenage.
- 13.1.12 Paragraph 160 of the NPPF also highlights the benefits of councils working closely with Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) particularly in relation to prioritising infrastructure investment, for example, through the Local Growth Fund. The South East Midlands Local Economic Partnership (SEMLEP) Strategic Economic Plan (2014) highlights the aspiration to support the delivery of 111,200 jobs within the region up to 2020 of which Central Bedfordshire would make a significant contribution.
- 13.1.13 Whilst the ELR identifies a minimum of 23,900 net new jobs up to 2035, wider economic conditions and historical performance indicates jobs growth could exceed this target. The Council will therefore support growth within our key sectors, ensuring that local and national business needs are catered for. This will be achieved through a series of enabling and positive policies, reflective of market demand balanced against sustainability. The ambition to deliver sustainable growth is essential, and without this minimal level of job creation the longer term economic future of the area could be significantly hindered.



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- 13.1.14 Our approach to greater economic growth across Central Bedfordshire is further supported by the National Infrastructure Commission report (November 2016) which stated that new east-west transport links present a once in a generation opportunity to secure the area's future success, and that to succeed in the global economy, the UK must build on its strengths. The corridor connecting Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford, which crosses through the north of Central Bedfordshire, could be Britain's Silicon Valley – a globally recognised centre for science, technology and innovation.

13.2 Portfolio of Employment Land

- 13.2.1 In order to ensure the delivery of sustainable development, jobs should be provided where market demand has been identified, with a specific consideration of meeting local business needs, supporting a diverse range of employment opportunities for Central Bedfordshire residents. Employment generating uses will therefore be delivered through the extensive portfolio of employment land across Central Bedfordshire, which consists of :

- existing permitted land;
- allocated employment land (as identified on the Policies Map);
- key employment sites (as identified on the Policies Map);
- established (non-key) sites in employment use;
- existing Significant Facilities as identified in Policy EMP6;
- allocations to meet national strategic warehousing and distribution needs; and
- mixed use allocations to meet identified local needs.

- 13.2.2 This approach will deliver sustainable patterns of development and will be attractive and responsive to market demand over the plan period, as well as seeking to balance labour supply and demand.

- 13.2.3 If market demand for B-uses exceeds supply, the Council will consider the potential benefits in terms of job creation and local need of bringing forward the delivery of further employment land. Additional locations for the delivery of employment generating uses will be considered where it is appropriate to do so.

13.3 B-Uses and Non B-Uses

- 13.3.1 Employment uses are classified as either B or non B-uses as set out within the Use Classes Order. When allocating land for the delivery of employment generating uses, local plans typically identify sufficient land to accommodate the B-Use element which includes offices, industrial and warehousing/distribution. Non B-Uses, such as retail, leisure and public services are much more subject to market demand and tend to grow in line with population growth. However, the Council recognises that B and non-B employment generating uses can also be complementary and that there may be opportunities to consider their co-location where appropriate.

- 13.3.2 Within Central Bedfordshire it is anticipated that a minimum of 11,200 (47%) new jobs will be from B-Uses and approximately 12,700 (53%) will be delivered through non B-Uses.



13.4 Supply of Sites

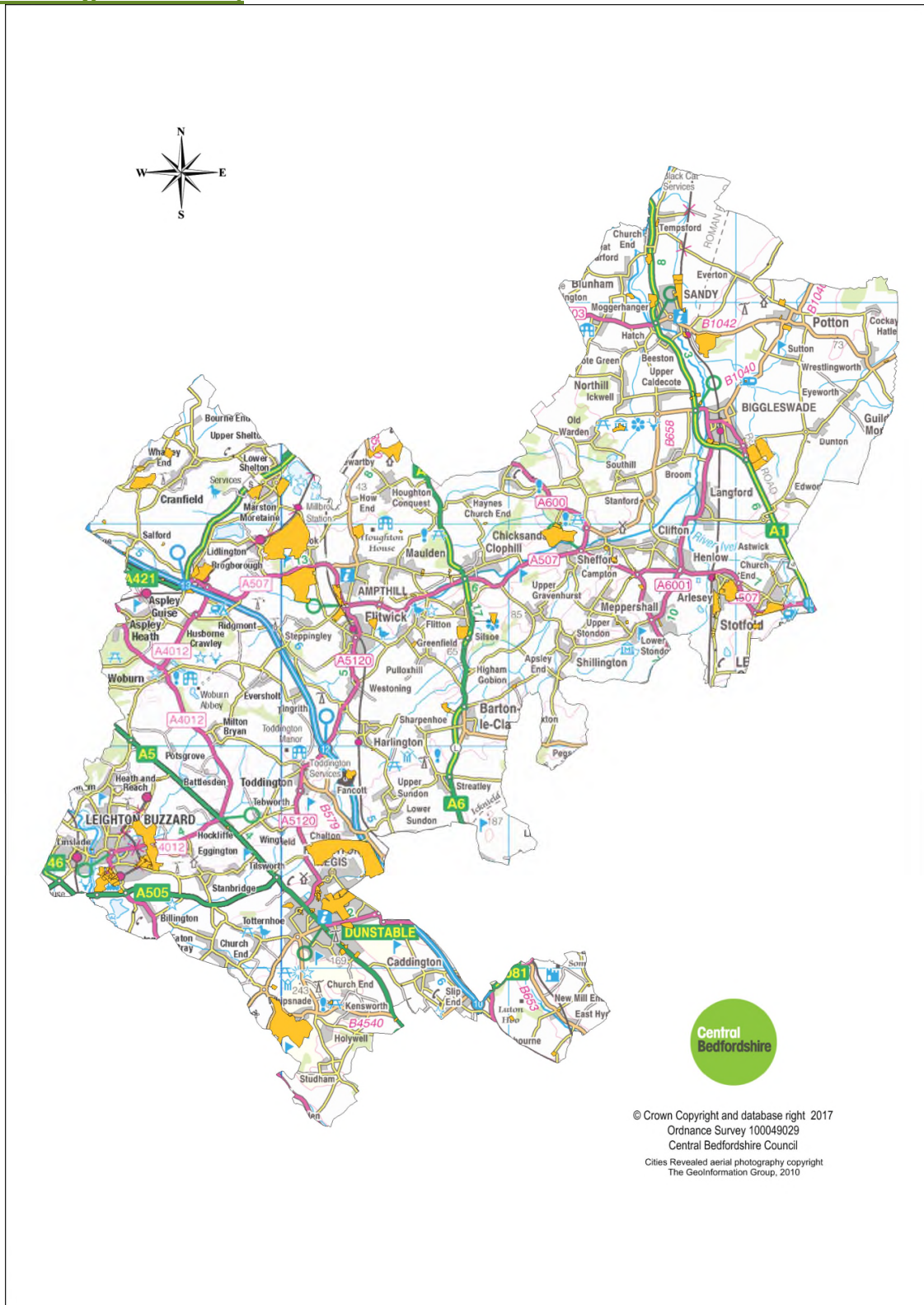
- 13.4.1 Central Bedfordshire has a broad range and quality of existing employment sites and premises supporting business in a wide range of activities. These sites in both urban and rural locations perform a crucial role in maintaining a steady level of employment land stock and contributing significantly to the local economy. The following map identifies the broad distribution of existing and established employment sites across Central Bedfordshire.
- 13.4.2 In order to continue to support the growth of the local economy, enable the growth of key employment sectors and create the right conditions for future investment, the employment land stock needs to be maintained and responsive to market demand. Availability and choice in the range and size of land and premises across Central Bedfordshire will be required to enable new business start-ups, to meet local demand for existing businesses to grow, and to encourage new inward investment from national and international businesses.
- 13.4.3 The 2016 Functional Economic Market Assessment and Employment Land Review (ELR) Study identifies that in quantitative terms there is sufficient existing supply of land in Central Bedfordshire to satisfy demand, but that there is a short term need to provide both sites and premises to meet local business growth. Furthermore, due to Central Bedfordshire's strategic location and excellent transport connections, there is also a strong case for contributing to meet national demand for warehousing logistics sector operations at major strategic transport locations, specifically along the M1 corridor.



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Figure 13.4 Distribution of Existing Key Employment Sites and allocations (including mixed-use)



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- 13.4.4 Central Bedfordshire already has a number of existing and established employment areas which will continue to contribute to the local economy and job creation. However, in order to maintain a sustainable approach to the delivery of employment land and premises, be responsive to local market conditions and ensure a continued range of choice and quality employment sites across Central Bedfordshire, there is a need to provide additional and alternative land to accommodate employment generating uses. In line with guidance set out within the NPPF, it is also important that the local plan is responsive to market demand. To meet objectives of the plan, new employment land allocations will be delivered as part of mixed-use developments as well as stand alone employment sites, meeting both local and national need.
- 13.4.5 The 2016 ELR identifies that in the short term, Central Bedfordshire is undersupplied, and that whilst the pipeline of employment land is large, supply of market ready sites is limited. Furthermore, the current identified oversupply, does not consider qualitative deficiency in the supply.

13.5 Strategic Warehousing and Logistics

- 13.5.1 Growth in the logistics and distribution sector (recognised as one of the key growth sectors by the Council) and an increased focus on larger strategic warehousing facilities now means that locations with good accessibility to the motorway network, airports and freight hubs, including rail, have become a key focus for operators and developers. Market analysis undertaken as part of the 2016 ELR shows that demand for space is likely to originate from outside Central Bedfordshire and the FEMA, and as strategic warehousing is highly footloose, it is attracted to the area due to the key strategic connectivity, particularly the M1 corridor. The provision of land for strategic uses within Central Bedfordshire is therefore likely to attract national footloose demand.
- 13.5.2 The ELR also identifies that should the strategic warehouse sector be constrained within Central Bedfordshire, by only providing sufficient land only to meet the job forecast, the evidence suggests that logistics will continue to displace local demand on other sites. Strategic logistics demand will still be attracted to the Central Bedfordshire portfolio and local demand will remain unsatisfied.
- 13.5.3 For market reasons there are therefore strong grounds to provide additional strategic B8 land within Central Bedfordshire. By providing additional land for logistics compared to the forecasts, and providing specific allocations for strategic distribution and warehousing, it will have the effect of enabling Central Bedfordshire to be responsive to market demands whilst also retaining existing sites for local industrial employment uses.
- 13.5.4 In order to allow for market friction, choice and the natural turn-over of premises (churn), as well as for windfall losses, the 2016 ELR identifies that within Central Bedfordshire, a surplus pipeline of 20% of the built stock should be maintained throughout the plan period.



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- 13.5.5 Further additional allocations will also be considered favourably to maximise the economic impact of key infrastructure proposals including East West Rail and A1 Corridor improvements.

Policy EMP1: Strategic Warehousing and Logistics

In order to ensure a continued supply of land appropriate for strategic warehousing and logistics, the Council will consider further employment proposals within Central Bedfordshire where:

- Development would not be in the Green Belt;
- The allocations identified within Policy SP1 are built and occupied;
- There is a demonstrable demand and need at the proposed location;
- Delivery of additional strategic warehousing and logistics facilities will not result in an over concentration in the market or the proposed location;
- The proposal is adjacent to the strategic transportation network by road or rail; and
- The proposed development is accessible by sustainable modes of transport.

Appropriate detailed evidence should accompany any future proposals across Central Bedfordshire in relation to the above criteria.

13.6 Employment Sites and Uses

- 13.6.1 Overall Central Bedfordshire has a broad employment offer. In order to maintain and expand this diversity, support existing business growth and to attract inward investment of both large and small businesses, the Council has adopted a flexible approach to employment provision.

So as to maintain a diverse portfolio of employment sites for B1 to B8 uses, in relation to the above identified portfolio of land, permission will generally be granted for B Class uses. Through the portfolio of employment sites, the Council will seek to ensure a mix of tenure, type and size of premises to support business and jobs growth, including the provision of freehold sites offered to occupiers addressing the findings of the ELR. The Council will also seek to ensure that appropriate steps are taken to enable the sites to come forward to attract appropriate interest from developers and occupiers. This may include, but is not limited to, servicing, provision of access, marketing and other such steps as required in order to bring forward or accelerate development.



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- 13.6.2 Whilst the Council would not wish to see substantial amounts of employment land lost to other uses, it is recognised that non B-uses can make a significant contribution to the local economy and job creation, and that some non B-uses can complement and enhance B-uses. Consideration will be given to non B-use employment generating proposals on allocated and key employment land against a series of criteria which seek to ascertain that such proposals are suitable for the proposed location and will not detrimentally impact upon the delivery of B-uses or the quantity of land available to deliver B-uses. Although the clear economic benefits of residential development are recognised, it does not qualify as an employment generating use for the purposes of Policy EMP2.
- 13.6.3 In instances where allocated or key employment land is no longer suitable for employment generating uses, detailed evidence must be provided to demonstrate that the site has been effectively marketed for these uses and that no suitable interest has subsequently materialised. For existing and non-key employment sites, evidence will be sought to ensure that redevelopment for B or non-B employment uses is not viable. In these cases the loss of employment land to a non-employment generating use may therefore be the only reasonable option.
- 13.6.4 Central Bedfordshire has a number of town centres which play a vital role in contributing to the local economy. In order to support the role and function of the town centres, the Council would not generally wish to see inappropriate retail uses located on key employment sites or on land allocated for employment generating activities. However, the Council acknowledges that some retail uses such as 'bulky goods' provision may be more suited to out of centre locations and will need to be assessed on a site by site basis to ensure that any such provision will not detrimentally impact upon the town centres. Section 15 provides greater detail in relation to the appropriate location of retail uses within Central Bedfordshire and specifically the town centres.
- 13.6.5 In line with the Council's growth and enabling aspirations, the Council will seek to consider emerging opportunities and mechanisms to stimulate and support sustainable development, where it can be evidenced that such activities are necessary and would bring forward jobs growth that would not otherwise have happened. The types of activity the Council will consider include, Local Development Orders (LDO), masterplans, planning and development briefs and innovative financing mechanisms to bring forward development.
- 13.6.6 LDO's have already been progressed for the Woodside Industrial Estate, Dunstable and for the Stratton Business Park, Biggleswade (as part of the food enterprise zone) and others will be put forward as appropriate. Their purpose is to make it easier for businesses to grow and expand by relaxing some planning restrictions so that specified works can be undertaken without the need to apply for planning permission. The overall aim is to help businesses to save time and money; thus placing them in a better position to respond quickly to opportunities and contribute towards the economic health of the area.



Policy EMP2: Employment Sites and Uses

Across the portfolio of employment land within Central Bedfordshire, planning permission will be granted for appropriate B1, B2 and B8 uses. In order to provide flexibility, choice and the delivery of a range of employment uses, changes of use for other employment generating uses will be supported in principle where all of the following criteria are met:

- The application provides sufficient evidence to demonstrate that there is no need for the premises to remain as a B1, B2 or B8 use;
- the proposal would not unacceptably reduce the supply, variety or quality of available industrial and commercial land and property within the surrounding area;
- the proposal would contribute towards meeting the employment needs of the district, or widening the range of employment opportunities;
- the proposal would be suitable in relation to the location and neighbouring land uses;
- the location is appropriately accessible and the proposal would not result in unacceptable levels of traffic generation

For the purposes of bullet point 1, evidence of active marketing must be provided.

Opportunities to strengthen existing clusters through the delivery of complementary employment generating uses will be encouraged.

To support the role and function of the town centres, A1 retail uses will not be considered appropriate on employment sites, except as an ancillary operation. Exceptions will be considered on a site by site basis for specialist retailing less suited to a town centre location and will be subject to the separate retail policies set out in this Plan.



Policy EMP3: Change of Use to Non-Employment Generating Uses

Other than where permitted development allows, proposals for non-employment generating uses on identified employment land will only be considered where suitable and detailed evidence is submitted demonstrating that the following criteria can be met:

In relation to non-key sites:

- the site is not currently utilised for employment generating uses;
- there is no reasonable or viable prospect of the site delivering an employment generating use;
- a change of use will not detrimentally impact upon the deliverability of B1, B2 and B8 uses within the locality; and
- the proposed use would not detrimentally impact upon existing or surrounding land uses.

In relation to allocated employment land and key sites, in addition to the above:

- the site has been comprehensively marketed for at least 12 months for the current employment generating uses as well as for alternative employment generating uses;
- there is a local need for the proposed intended use; and
- there are no strong economic reasons why the proposed intended use would be inappropriate.

13.7 Employment proposals outside of Settlement Envelopes

13.7.1 Central Bedfordshire has a diverse portfolio of employment land which offers a variety in size, type and location of land and premises. Whilst the Council has sought to ensure the range of employment land within Central Bedfordshire is significantly comprehensive to meet the needs of current and future employers, there may be instances where the portfolio of sites does not meet the needs of a specific proposed employment use.

13.7.2 In order to promote Central Bedfordshire as a great location for business and to ensure a variety of employment generating uses, the Council will, exceptionally, consider proposals for employment uses outside Settlement Envelopes to meet identified local need or to support growth in the Council's key employment sectors, where it is evidenced that there are no suitable alternative sites.

Expansion of Existing Businesses

13.7.3 The Council values existing businesses within Central Bedfordshire and supports proposals for expansion which will contribute positively to the local economy and provide new jobs within the area. The portfolio of employment sites within Central Bedfordshire provides a variety of options for existing businesses to relocate to in order to expand.



- 13.7.4 In some instances, existing businesses may wish to expand either within their existing curtilage or onto land adjacent to their current site rather than relocate to a new location. In some instances, this may necessitate expansion outside of settlement envelopes in to the countryside. In order to secure the retention and growth of existing businesses, the Council has adopted a flexible approach to business expansion within Central Bedfordshire. Policy EMP4 applies only to sites that are outside of the Green Belt.

Policy EMP4: Employment proposals adjacent to Settlement Envelopes

Development for employment generating uses will be supported in principle where they are beyond but adjacent to the Settlement Envelopes where;

- The site is not in the Green Belt;
- there are no existing or allocated sites, or existing buildings within the locality that are available, suitable, achievable or viable;
- For proposals to extend existing businesses onto adjoining land, evidence will need to be provided that intensification within the existing site is not possible;
- For proposals for new employment generating uses outside Settlement Envelopes, evidence will need to be provided of the significant economic benefits that would flow from the proposal taking account of the environmental and social aspects;
- The scale of the development proposed is appropriate to its location.

In all cases the criteria set out in Policy EMP2 will also be relevant considerations and proposals should be in accordance with other relevant policies set out within the plan.

13.8 Education and Skills

- 13.8.1 Central Bedfordshire is home to leading higher and further education institutions, including Cranfield University, Central Bedfordshire College and Shuttleworth College (part of Bedford College). We recognise that for Central Bedfordshire to fulfil its economic potential, the importance of skills cannot be over-stated. Skills are critical to all employees and employers in all sectors: public, private and the voluntary and community sectors. The Council will seek to support the continued delivery of high quality learning and education within Central Bedfordshire, and will seek to support the development of learning and higher education facilities.
- 13.8.2 The importance of training and apprenticeships and the contribution these can make not only to the local economy but also in relation to getting people into work



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and providing them with useable skills is also recognised. The Council actively encourages the provision of school engagement and training and apprenticeship opportunities at all levels on development sites throughout Central Bedfordshire, and will seek to work with developers, education institutions and others to ensure this aspiration is realised.

- 13.8.3 The Council will continue to support its residents to prosper, helping all to realise their potential and ensuring that our more vulnerable residents are supported on their pathway into employment. This approach is also in accordance with the Central Bedfordshire All Age Skills Strategy (2016-2020) to deliver a flexible and mobile workforce that meets the needs of employers, is able to respond rapidly to economic shifts and will enable Central Bedfordshire to achieve its full economic potential.

13.9 Rural and Visitor Economy

- 13.9.1 The 2011 Census has identified that 38.8% of all people employed in Central Bedfordshire are employed in rural areas. This compares to 17.5% nationally, showing the importance of the rural economy to Central Bedfordshire. In view of this, the Council supports in principle the diversification of agricultural and other land based rural businesses and the development of any related new or converted buildings, providing that they are appropriately designed.
- 13.9.2 Central Bedfordshire's attractive natural and historic environment is identified as one of the best aspects of the area by local businesses in the Central Bedfordshire Business Survey 2015.
- 13.9.3 The visitor economy has 730 businesses in Central Bedfordshire, employing just over 10,200 people in 2015. Tourist attractions range from major facilities such as Centre Parcs, ZSL Whipsnade Zoo and Woburn Safari Park to a raft of historic towns and villages, country houses, outdoor attractions and activities for people of all ages. The Council recognises that the visitor economy is a key growth sector and positive policies will help to ensure this opportunity can be taken further, although considerations such as the impact on landscape and the rural road network will continue to be taken into account.



- 13.9.4 The need to increase hotel provision, self-catering accommodation, conferencing facilities, the provision of low-cost accommodation and increasing the range and



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choice of food and drink establishments is supported in order to support the growth of this key sector. The Council is willing to be flexible where these can support local services and provide opportunities for rural diversification.

- 13.9.5 The re-use and adaptation of rural buildings can make a significant contribution to the local economy. Proposals for employment generating uses and tourism activities will therefore need to be mindful of the benefits that existing buildings can deliver.

Policy EMP5: Rural and Visitor Economy

The contribution of the rural area and tourism to the wider economy will be supported and proposals for employment generating uses within the rural area and those related to the visitor economy will be considered in relation to:

- the suitability and impact of the proposal in relation to the location and neighbouring land uses;
- an increase in the number of jobs that can be delivered; and
- the impact upon traffic generation, suitable accessibility and sustainable forms of transport.

The Council will seek to promote the rural area and visitor economy across the whole of Central Bedfordshire by supporting proposals for tourist and leisure developments, particularly those which will also provide opportunities for rural diversification and which are well located to support local services, businesses and other tourist and leisure attractions.

Proposals located within the Green Belt will only be considered where exceptional circumstances are identified and where the need for the proposal outweighs any demonstrable harm to the Green Belt.

Proposals for static holiday and touring caravan parks and holiday chalet developments will be considered against the need to protect valuable landscapes and environmentally sensitive sites as well as the potential impact on local residents.

The Council will seek to retain existing public houses in order to encourage diverse employment opportunities, provide tourist accommodation and in recognition of the contribution such uses make, particularly to the rural economy.



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13.10 Significant Facilities in the Countryside and Green Belt

- 13.10.1 Central Bedfordshire is notable for the presence of a number of significant employment facilities in the countryside and Green Belt. These sites have the potential to provide additional jobs, which would help to meet the employment objectives and aspirations of the Plan. These facilities have been identified as Cranfield University and Technology Park, Shuttleworth College, Millbrook Proving Ground, RSPB, DISC Chicksands, ZSL Whipsnade, Woburn Safari Park, Centre Parcs, Toddington Motorway Services Area, Faldo Road Industrial Estate in Barton-le-Clay, Kier at Tempsford and Lockheed Martin, Ampthill.
- 13.10.2 It is clear that these major sites can make a significant contribution to the local economy and that a number of these also have the potential to attract high technology orientated businesses, creating specialist markets and a cluster effect.
- 13.10.3 The NPPF is clear about the need to secure economic growth. It recognises that the challenges presented by a low carbon future can still be met while also delivering this core objective. In order to proactively plan for businesses in within the key growth sectors emerging sectors like the green economy, the Council supports the development of innovation, research and development industries, particularly around the existing cluster of high technology centres of excellence of Cranfield University and Technology Park and Millbrook Proving Ground.



- 13.10.4 In the future, major new sites may emerge in Central Bedfordshire which should also be included within the remit of this policy.



Policy EMP6: Significant facilities in the Countryside and Green Belt

Planning permission will be granted for infilling at, or redevelopment of, significant facilities provided that the infilling or redevelopment is within the boundaries of the existing use, relates to that use and enhances the contribution to the local or national economy.

Significant expansion of sites into the open countryside will be subject to the production of a management plan, development brief or masterplan prior to any application.

All proposals for significant development at these facilities will be assessed against their:

- impact on the open countryside and any heritage assets;
- provision of sustainable transport;
- justification;
- scale, layout and design – which must be appropriate to the establishment and its setting.
- compatibility with Green Belt policy

Planning applications that are considered acceptable against these criteria and all other relevant plan policies, will be considered favourably. Further major facilities that may be developed with a similar level of importance in terms of employment or research will be considered under this policy.



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Shaping where you live 2035



Retail & Town Centres

Local Plan 2015-2035

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14 Retail and Town Centres

14.1 Retail Hierarchy

- 14.1.1 Town Centres play an important role in supporting the local economy as they provide a wide range of services, facilities and employment and act as a focal point for surrounding communities. Competitive town centres should provide customer choice; with a range of main town centre uses including retail development, office accommodation, arts, cultural and tourism development and leisure and entertainment uses.
- 14.1.2 While it is recognised that towns in Central Bedfordshire suffer from a leakage of expenditure to larger centres like Milton Keynes, Luton and Bedford that are easily accessible to Central Bedfordshire residents; the towns still play an important function for local communities. In the main the town centres are characterised by high occupancy rates and attractive shop fronts. The role of the retail hierarchy set out in Table 15.1 below is to support the growth of new retail development in appropriate locations and at appropriate scales in order to further consolidate the existing centres.
- 14.1.3 The planned housing growth will lead to an increased population in Central Bedfordshire over the next twenty years with a large proportion of additional expenditure expected to come from the new population. In order to cater for the growing population and having regard to the recent and expected trends in the retail and leisure sectors, it is considered that an appropriate strategy for Central Bedfordshire would be to improve its retail offer by focussing on improving the vitality and viability of the existing town centres in the short and medium term and increasing the comparison retail need in Central Bedfordshire at the end of the plan period in line with the projected increases in population as identified in Table 15.2. This could be achieved by making the existing floorspace in the town centres work hard to attract visitors, the intensification of uses in the town centres and implementing the objectives of the town centre masterplans and frameworks.
- 14.1.4 Given the planned housing growth and resulting increase in population as well as the documented changes in the convenience goods sector, such as the change in store formats to smaller stores; Central Bedfordshire will plan for increasing the convenience retail need. Planning for an increase in convenience retail need will allow for the town centres, service centres and large villages to provide for the existing and future local need and ensure these places are more sustainable by reducing the need for residents to travel to the large adjoining centres.
- 14.1.5 Retail and leisure uses should also be working together to support the vitality and viability of the town centres through generating local employment opportunities and creating more attractive, diverse and healthy places catering for a range of specialist and brand retail that encourages footfall to these centres. There has been an increase in the leisure offers within the town centres, with a shift in some of the town centres towards more A3 uses (restaurant and cafes). This is considered positive as these uses increase dwell times in the town centres thus improving the vitality and viability of them. Accordingly it is considered that it is



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appropriate to plan for an increase in food and drink uses within the designated town centres and villages.

Table 15.1: Retail Hierarchy

Type of Centre	Location	Principal Function
Principal Town Centres	Dunstable Leighton Buzzard Biggleswade	Provides a range of shops including many national multiple retailers and independent shops. Provides an extensive range of services, facilities and leisure uses and is home to a large number of businesses
Secondary Town Centres	Amphill Flitwick Houghton Regis Sandy Wixams	Provides a range of shops including some national multiple retailers and many independent shops. Provides a range of services, facilities and leisure uses and is home to a number of businesses
Minor Service Centres	See Policy SP7	Provides a number of local shops and a small to medium sized supermarket
Large Villages	See Policy SP8	Provides a small number of local shops serving a small catchment

Table 15.2 : Quantitative Need to 2035

	2016	2021	2026	2031	2035
Comparison goods (sqm net)	0	0	0	3,127	11,927
Convenience goods (sqm net)	9,638	10,300	11,940	13,618	15,129
Food and drink uses (sqm net)	0	1,991	4,148	6,488	8,480

- 14.1.6 When planning for the retail provision in the planned urban extensions and large settlements, it is considered that retail provision should be of a scale to meet local convenience needs in order to complement existing centres.
- 14.1.7 With the exception of the new settlement of Wixams, each of the Major Service Centres (principal and secondary town centres) within the settlement hierarchy have designated town centre boundaries. An appropriate town centre boundary will be identified for Wixams in the future. The purpose of the boundaries is to maximise the vibrancy of town centres by ensuring that a high concentration of main town centre uses; particularly retail and leisure uses; are focused within the



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designated area. The town centre boundaries can be viewed on the Policies Maps.

14.2 The Sequential Approach and Town Centre Vitality

- 14.2.1 The approach of requiring new main town centre uses to be delivered in town centre locations first will be adhered to. Where this is not feasible, sites on the edge of town centres should then be considered, followed by out of centre locations. When considering out of centre sites, preference will be given to accessible sites that are well connected to the town centre.
- 14.2.2 It is recognised that certain types of retailing, whilst beneficial to the local economy, may not be appropriate within town centres; particularly 'bulky goods' retailing. In order to meet the needs of shoppers and ensure a varied retail offer within Central Bedfordshire, proposals for such uses will be considered on a case by case basis. They must also be supported by evidence that demonstrates that the sequential approach has been followed to ensure that new uses complement rather than adversely affect existing centres.
- 14.2.3 In order to maintain the vitality of town centres, A1 use classes should be retained where possible. Where there are proposals for changes of use to other A use classes, the potential impact on the town centre as a whole will be considered, including the issue of whether approval of the scheme would result in an over concentration of the proposed use.
- 14.2.4 To further support this 'town centre first' approach, the NPPF gives local authorities the option to set their own floorspace thresholds for impact assessments for out of town centre retail, leisure and office proposals; the default threshold being 2,500m². Although Central Bedfordshire does have existing food stores with a gross floorspace of more than 2,500 m², these tend to be edge or out of centre stores. In the town centres, convenience store to medium size supermarket provision together with a wide range of small independent outlets is the usual profile. In view of this, new or extended food stores in edge of centre, or out of centre locations, could have a significant impact on town centre provision especially given the scale of the rural centres. It is therefore considered that any proposals over 500m² gross, outside of town centre boundaries, should be subject to an impact assessment.



Policy R1: Ensuring Town Centre Vitality

All proposals will have regard to the Retail Hierarchy. The Council will support and encourage the retail and service provision in the Town Centres.

Within the identified town centre boundaries of the principal and secondary town centres, development proposals for main town centre uses such as retail, leisure, commercial, office, tourism, cultural, and community uses will be supported in principle.

Proposals for change of use, or re-development of properties, away from these uses will be supported in principle providing that they meet all of the following criteria:

- The proposed use would be appropriate within a town centre setting;
- There is not an existing over-concentration of such uses within the town centre boundary;
- The proposed use would positively enhance the vitality of the town centre by extending the range of facilities offered and/or stimulating activity outside normal shopping hours; and
- The proposed use would maintain an appropriate window display to avoid the creation of a 'dead' frontage.

Above ground floor level, proposals for residential (C3) and general office space (B1a) will be encouraged.

Outside designated town centres

The Sequential Test will be applied to proposals for main town centre uses that are not within a designated town centre boundary.

Retail Impact Assessments will be required for all retail, office and leisure proposals over 500sqm gross external floorspace that are outside a designated town centre boundary. Schemes that are found to have negative impact on the vitality of town centres will be refused.

Proposals for retailing in out-of-centre locations will be considered, in conjunction with Policy EMP2.



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14.3 Neighbourhood and Rural Retail and Services

14.3.1 The Council recognises the vital role that shops and public houses play in supporting local neighbourhoods and rural communities; particularly those that are relatively isolated from town centre facilities and services. Proposals for new retail services within minor service centres and villages are therefore encouraged where appropriate; while existing services should be maintained where they remain viable.

14.3.2 Many outlying neighbourhoods and much of the rural community are poorly served by public transport, therefore if existing rural facilities within walking distance are lost; it could contribute to social exclusion, particularly for the elderly and those without a car. It is certainly the case that many local public houses and shops have been saved by a strict planning policy in the past so it is increasingly vital to maintain this strong policy stance in the face of current economic pressures.



14.3.3 Retail premises such as farm shops, which are located outside of rural settlements, can also play an important role in supporting the rural economy and providing a sustainable source of locally produced food.



Policy R2: Retail for minor service centres, villages and the rural economy

In order to support vibrant, sustainable and diverse neighbourhoods and the rural economy, proposals for retail uses within existing minor service centres and villages will be supported in principle subject to the following criteria:

- The proposal is of a suitable scale to the service centre or village;
- The site is an appropriate location;
- The proposal would not result in unsustainable levels of traffic generation.

Proposals for the change of use or re-development of shops or public houses in existing minor service centres or villages which would result in the loss of such facilities, will not be permitted unless:

- There are other facilities performing the same function within easy walking distance of the community; and
- The applicant provides sufficient and demonstrable evidence that there is no realistic prospect of the use continuing, even if permission is refused.

Where the above tests are met, the site/building must firstly be considered for alternative community infrastructure uses. Only where these are demonstrated to be unviable or unsuitable will other uses be acceptable.

Proposals for the change of use or re-development of retail premises such as local farm shops, shops at garage sites and public houses which are located outside of settlement boundaries will also be considered against the above criteria.

14.4 Town Centre Development

- 14.4.1 Although many residents in Central Bedfordshire use the larger centres adjoining the area, the town centres in Central Bedfordshire still play a vital role in supporting the local surrounding communities by providing a range of services and facilities. It is therefore important that policies and initiatives are designed to support the town centres to withstand the ongoing economic challenges.
- 14.4.2 Town Centre identity plays a significant role in defining its sense of place and creating a destination that is unique to its offer in Central Bedfordshire and the surrounding region. Recognising that the town centres cannot compete with larger adjoining town centres, it is important that they provide retail, lifestyle and cultural experiences that create distinct destinations.
- 14.4.3 As well as the adopted (and emerging) masterplans and development briefs for the town centres to guide appropriate development, there are Strategic Delivery Frameworks (SDFs) for Central Bedfordshire's large market towns: Dunstable, Leighton-Linslade, Ampthill & Flitwick and Biggleswade. These SDFs provide a



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guide to the vision, growth and development in these towns. Central Bedfordshire plays a proactive role in enabling suitable development that benefits sustainable growth.

- 14.4.4 Central Bedfordshire Council will continue to support and create initiatives that increase our town centre's vitality and viability. The Market Town Regeneration Fund (MTRF) is one example of this approach. The MTRF has been developed to enhance market towns across Central Bedfordshire, supporting economic and cultural activities within town centres with the aim of making them more vibrant and better places to visit, live and do business in.

Dunstable Town Centre

- 14.4.5 Dunstable is an historic town located on the A5 which runs through the town and connects it to the M1 at J9 to the south and Milton Keynes to the north. The town as a whole has a relatively high percentage of convenience floorspace (27% compared to the national average of 18%), largely due to the presence of four supermarkets. However, the comparison offer is fairly low and consists of a range of middle to low market offer businesses. Whilst the "traditional" High Street is comparably well occupied, the number of vacant units in the town is marginally higher than the national average.
- 14.4.6 Significant repositioning and redevelopment is required to revitalise and reinvigorate Dunstable town centre to meet the needs of today's shoppers. There are plans for regenerating Dunstable Town Centre, including de-trunking the high street, increasing pedestrian access across the town and enabling new town centre development that benefits the local economy, including new leisure, employment and educational facilities. There are plans for refurbishing the Quadrant Shopping Centre and changes have been made to the configuration, which has seen an increase in occupancy.
- 14.4.7 In order to provide additional competitive and appropriate retail space in the town, it is recognised that attention might need to shift beyond the town centre to other nearby locations, such as the newly built Grove Theatre. Another location is the already well-established White Lion Retail Park which has both larger footprint stores accommodating big box retail, and also offers restaurants and leisure uses. The recent opening of the Luton-Dunstable Busway which has stops adjacent to the White Lion Retail Park also supports this change of focus and, by encouraging sustainable travel from the wider conurbation, will free up the local transport network thus reducing traffic congestion in the town centre. The construction of the A5-M1 Link Road and Woodside Connection will also alleviate traffic pressures in this location by diverting traffic, particularly heavy goods vehicles, away from the town centre and will encourage shopping in the traditional High Street shops.

Leighton Buzzard Town Centre

- 14.4.8 Leighton Buzzard is an attractive market town which grew significantly during the 1970s. The Town Council has a document entitled 'The Big Plan' which outlines the community's aspirations for the town. Central Bedfordshire Council is working



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closely with the Town Council to deliver many of the proposals, including new sports and community facilities and traffic management schemes.

- 14.4.9 The town has a good comparison retail offer, largely focused around the High Street, Market Square and Waterborne Walk. The percentage of convenience floorspace in the town centre (24%) is above the national average (18%). Notably, vacancy rates are significantly below the national average. The town centre is characterised by a good choice of independent shops alongside some national chains. Leighton Buzzard has a growing specialist economy and this will be encouraged and supported by Central Bedfordshire.
- 14.4.10 Development Briefs were adopted by the Council in 2012 as Interim Technical Guidance for Development Management purposes which will guide and attract development on two key sites: Land South of High Street and Bridge Meadow. Land South of High Street will create an extension to the High Street with a proposed new retail circuit, which will have the capacity to accommodate high quality complimentary uses and enhance Leighton Buzzard's sense of place. The Development Brief for Land South of High Street will be updated and will act as supplementary planning guidance to the Local Plan. Bridge Meadows is a proposed waterside development that could offer a new mixed-use quarter that will strengthen the links between the combined towns of Linslade and Leighton Buzzard.

Houghton Regis Town Centre

- 14.4.11 Houghton Regis town centre contains a significant higher proportion of convenience retail units than the national average (22% compared to 9%). The majority of the retail offer is at Bedford Square, although a new supermarket has recently opened on the High Street. The physical environment of the town centre has also recently undergone substantial public realm improvements along the complete length of the High Street. The public transport network has recently undergone improvements with the opening of the Luton-Dunstable Busway and the proposed A5-M1 Link Road and the Woodside Connection should further improve the general environment, local public transport and congestion throughout the town centre.
- 14.4.12 An adopted Masterplan outlines how the town centre could be improved and how it could contribute to meeting the needs of a significantly increased local population. It is important that regard is had to Houghton Regis town centre when considering the master planning of the nearby urban extensions, particularly the location and scale of new local centres.

Biggleswade Town Centre

- 14.4.13 Biggleswade town centre has an attractive market town feel. There are a number of historic buildings in the town centre which give it character and contribute positively to the townscape. The town centre is well served by supermarkets and convenience stores. While the comparison retail offer is below average, there is still a good range of premises. Vacancy rates in Biggleswade are on par with the national average of 18%.



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- 14.4.14 The provisions of the adopted town centre Masterplan will increase the retail offer of the town, whilst improving transport infrastructure and the public realm. A particular focus in improving the town centre offer will be initiatives designed to enhance the historical Market Square and heart of the town.

Flitwick Town Centre

- 14.4.15 Flitwick is characterised by a disjointed town centre and a lack of public space and amenities which impact of the attractiveness of the town centre. These issues are largely caused by the location of the main rail line going through Flitwick dividing the town centre into two distinct and poorly connected areas.
- 14.4.16 The proportion of convenience units in the centre is comparable to the national average, although there are only three units including a supermarket. The comparison offer in the town centre is extremely limited with no national retailers. There is a current need however for additional retail floorspace in Flitwick that has not been met to date due to the lack of appropriate sites and units capable of supporting this expansion. The redevelopment of the station area will mitigate this issue by providing up to 5,500 sqm (gross) additional floorspace within the station area.
- 14.4.17 The adopted Planning Framework and Indicative Masterplan for the town centre aims to guide the provision of a new focus for retailing and a significantly enhanced physical environment. A new transport interchange combining all forms of public transport will be provided at this end at Flitwick railway station which will also provide additional facilities for cyclists as well as improved public spaces and facilities for station and town centre uses. Further significant new retail floorspace will be provided within the station area as part of a redevelopment of this area and adjacent land thereby providing space for the expansion of both convenience and comparison retailers. This facility will form part of a larger mixed use development which will seek to create a clearer focal point and heart for the town centre in line with the principals of the town centre masterplan.



Policy R3: Town Centre Development

Dunstable Town Centre

The town centre is the preferred location for new retail development and other forms of development, such as leisure and entertainment, offices, arts, culture and tourism *and should be in accordance with the Strategic Delivery Framework and emerging Regeneration and Master Plans.*

Proposals should reflect the scale and characteristics of Dunstable Town Centre protect and enhance the town's heritage assets and should be subject to a Traffic Impact Assessment, where appropriate.

Consideration should also be given to the retail hierarchy and the sequential approach as outlined in Policy R1.

Other Town Centres

In addition to Policy R1 development proposals should be in accordance with the principle and objectives of:

- The two endorsed development briefs for Leighton Buzzard;
- The Houghton Regis Masterplan SPD;
- The Biggleswade Town Centre Masterplan SPD
- The Flitwick Framework Plan and Indicative Masterplan.

Development proposals elsewhere in these towns should complement and not prejudice development proposed. The Council will seek to secure financial contributions to mitigate any significant adverse impacts on existing town centres or planned investment.

Where town centres do not have adopted or endorsed masterplans or development briefs, the Council will seek to support sustainable development in town centres and retain existing retail uses in line with Policy R1.



A hand-drawn illustration depicting various aspects of community development. The scene includes several labeled areas: "Homes" with drawings of houses and a person pushing a stroller; "Growth & Infrastructure" featuring a construction worker, a crane, and a sign for "NEW PLACE"; "Transport" showing a person walking with a bag, a bus, cars, and a train; "Environment" with a person walking a dog and a cow; "Local character" with a church, a shop, and a directional sign for "HOTEL PARK", "BUS STOP", "FOOTPATH", and "BICYCLE ROUTE"; and "Jobs and Business" with a building labeled "BUSINESS HUB". The entire drawing is done in simple, colorful outlines on a light background.

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15 Transport

15.1 Overview of the Transport Network

- 15.1.1 Central Bedfordshire is well served by strategic north-south road links, notably the M1, A1, A6 and A5, and east-west links in the form of the A421, A505 and A507, which provide connections between the A1 in the east and the M1 in the west.
- 15.1.2 There have been significant improvements to east-west highway connectivity in Central Bedfordshire with the opening of the A5-M1 link road and the Woodside Link road (A5505).
- 15.1.3 The major rail links are north-south orientated with the Midland Mainline, East Coast Mainline and West Coast Mainlines all running through the authority. There are 11 rail stations in Central Bedfordshire with 6 providing key connections to London. All mainline stations are seeing steady growth in passenger numbers and this growth is projected to continue during the plan period.
- 15.1.4 The only east-west route in place is the Marston Vale branch line, which connects Bedford to Bletchley, and provides a link through to Milton Keynes. There are plans to upgrade this as part of East-West Rail with a stopping service at Ridgmont which will have direct services to Oxford.
- 15.1.5 Bus services operate between the main urban areas within the authority and to key service centres in neighbouring areas such as Bedford, Luton, Milton Keynes and the Hertfordshire towns of Hitchin and Stevenage.
- 15.1.6 The Luton-Dunstable Busway is a bus priority corridor between Luton and Dunstable town centres which also provides access to London Luton Airport and Houghton Regis town centre via a high frequency, high quality 6 mile link¹⁹.
- 15.1.7 In terms of cycling, Central Bedfordshire is connected to the National Cycle Network (NCN) via Routes 6, 12 and 51 which provide strategic cycle friendly links to the surrounding region and rest of the country²⁰.
- 15.1.8 All of the authority's main towns have cycle networks in place. Route coverage is generally good albeit further investment is required at a local level to ensure that cycling becomes a more attractive choice for local journeys.



¹⁹ www.travelchoices.co.uk

²⁰ <http://www.sustrans.org.uk/ncn/map/national-cycle-network>



15.2 Local Transport Plan

- 15.2.1 The Local Transport Plan, or LTP as it is often known, is the formal policy document for transport which also sets out the Council's long term framework for investment in transport across Central Bedfordshire.
- 15.2.2 The LTP currently covers the period up to 2026 and there is a statutory requirement on the authority to produce and maintain the Plan. It considers the needs of all forms of transport particularly walking, cycling, buses, rail and car use.
- 15.2.3 The LTP establishes a strategic approach through which to deal with key transport issues, a series of objectives, and broad areas of intervention through which schemes will be identified and improvements made to the transport network.

15.3 Overview of Transport Issues

- 15.3.1 A number of the issues associated with transport provision and travel choice are often long standing and complex, with many inter-related factors, often controlled by the transport operators and agencies such as Highways England. There have been improvements to transport in Central Bedfordshire particularly on the delivery of new road schemes and work on rail interchanges.
- 15.3.2 The main transport concerns affecting Central Bedfordshire however, can be categorised into three broad areas relating to:

Capacity:

- Increasing demand to travel associated with a growing population, new development and an up turn in the economy,
- Localised congestion, especially in the larger towns such as Dunstable, Houghton Regis and Leighton Buzzard,
- Junction capacity issues on the local and strategic road network, and
- Parking pressures in town centres, around schools / rail stations and at other key trip generators.

Connectivity

- The lack of self containment of many Central Bedfordshire communities resulting in residents travelling long distances to meet their needs,
- The limited access to sustainable transport provision particularly in rural areas, which results in reliance on the car for many journeys.
- Social exclusion and isolation for those without their own private transport or ability to fund more costly options, and
- Poor connectivity in terms of both services and infrastructure, and the ability to interchange between different modes of travel.

Communities

- Inappropriate routing of traffic, including HGVs, through some urban areas and villages which cause severance, poor air quality and safety concerns,
- Road safety, both in terms of actual accidents and perceived safety of vulnerable road users, and



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- Dominance of the car in residential areas as a consequence of the poor provision and management of parking,
- A natural discouragement of cycling and walking due to lack of appropriate routes.

More general issues are also apparent associated with:

- Public perceptions and overcoming ingrained transport behaviour, and
- High proportion of cross boundary movements including within the Luton-Dunstable conurbation over which the authority only has partial influence.

15.3.3 These issues all impact upon the ability of the transport network and services across Central Bedfordshire to contribute towards the wider aims and objectives of the authority and facilitate the growth envisaged within this Plan.

15.3.4 In view of this, all development sites will need to be designed to reduce the need for travel and to secure modal shifts towards more sustainable forms of transport while ensuring a well functioning and efficient network in terms such as connectivity and the provision and management of parking.

15.4 Sustainable Approach to Mitigate Impacts on the Network

15.4.1 New development needs to consider a range of measures, interventions and infrastructure improvements to demonstrate that the proposed development minimises the impact on the local transport network. A hierarchical approach should be adopted to ensure that sustainable transport measures are fully considered.

15.4.2 The hierarchy comprises:

- Reducing the need to travel by car.
- Embedding and promoting sustainable transport within new developments.
- Increasing connectivity and accessibility particularly through sustainable travel.
- Making best use of existing infrastructure and services.
- Providing additional capacity where required.

15.4.3 Developers will be expected to ensure that new schemes fully mitigate any adverse impact on the transport network through adhering to this hierarchy.



15.5 The Central Bedfordshire and Luton Strategic Transport Model

15.5.1 The Transport Model will test the impact of development on the transport network and determine what, if any, mitigation would be required to accommodate that level of development. It will also be used in the validation and bidding process for funding future transport schemes.



Policy T1: Identifying Connectivity, Accessibility and Impacts on the Transport Network

Development will be required to evidence that there is sufficient capacity in the transport network to accommodate the increase in demand to travel as a result of the development.

In accordance with the thresholds given in the 'Travel Plan and Transport Assessment Guidance' developments must demonstrate their connectivity by a range of means of travel and ensure sites are accessible by realistic alternatives to the car.

The Central Bedfordshire and Luton Transport Model (CBLTM) will form the basis to any assessment of transport capacity requirements. Further bespoke capacity assessments may also be required to test specific local impacts.

15.6 Transport Assessments and Travel Plans

- 15.6.1 Where a new development is likely to have significant transport implications (see relevant DfT guidance and the Local Transport Plan for thresholds), a Transport Assessment and Travel Plan should be prepared and submitted with a planning application for the development.
- 15.6.2 Transport Assessments should include (with additional information as required):
- the planning context of the development proposal;
 - appropriate study parameters (i.e. area, scope and duration of study);
 - assessment of public transport capacity, walking/ cycling capacity and road network capacity;
 - road trip generation and trip distribution methodologies and/ or assumptions about the development proposal;
 - measures to promote sustainable travel using in the form of an accompanying Travel Plan;
 - safety implications of development; and
 - mitigation measures (where applicable) – including scope and implementation strategy.
- 15.6.3 Travel Plans should include (with additional information as required):
- accurate benchmark travel data including trip generation databases such as TRICS and/ or the Central Bedfordshire and Luton Transport Model where appropriate;
 - Information concerning the nature of the proposed development and the forecast level of trips by all modes of transport likely to be associated with the development;
 - relevant information about existing travel habits in the surrounding area based on Census and other relevant evidence;
 - an action plan detailing how sustainable travel will be promoted to residents and/or employees;



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- information on the connectivity to the nearest transport interchange;
 - information on the provision of infrastructure to support low emissions vehicles;
 - a robust monitoring regime;
 - targets to reduce travel to and from the site by single occupancy car; and
 - promotion of public transport services.
- Further guidance on Travel Plan requirements is set out in the Guidance on Travel Plans and Transport Assessment) available on the Council's website.

15.7 Sustainable Transport Provision

- 15.7.1 The sustainability of new development hinges upon the ability of sites to be accessible by a choice of means of transport to existing services such as: employment provision, education, retail, healthcare, and leisure facilities.
- 15.7.2 Accessibility issues are particularly important for those without access to a car. At a local level this should include encouraging walking for trips under two miles, and increasing opportunity to cycle for services within a five mile radius.
- 15.7.3 To achieve this, dominance of the car should be reduced, as supported by both the Manual for Streets and the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide while not impeding access for emergency vehicles and public transport. Opportunities to reduce traffic speeds and introduce level surface street designs for example may help to encourage more walking and cycling and create safer streets.
- 15.7.4 National guidelines²¹ stipulate that upon completion developments should be within a 400 metre threshold of a bus stop or 800 metres of a railway station with at least a half-hourly peak hour service provision in order to ensure public transport use is a realistic alternative to the car. This is supported by the Local Transport Plan which seeks to encourage development along public transport corridors
- 15.7.5 At a more strategic level, due to the lack of self-containment of many settlements in Central Bedfordshire, developments will be required to facilitate links to public transport provision so that residents can access facilities further afield by means other than a car.

²¹ These thresholds were first identified in Keeping Buses Moving, Local Transport Note 1/97; Department for Transport, Local Government and the Regions, 1997, and Planning for Public Transport in Developments; CIHT, 1999



Policy T2: Mitigation of Transport Impacts on the Network

Development will be required to evidence that sufficient mitigation measures are in place to alleviate any pressures that are demonstrated to occur.

All major development will demonstrate through the submission of a Transport Assessment and a Travel Plan how the proposals have sought to reduce the need to travel and how they have secured modal shifts towards more sustainable forms of transport.

This should be through an approach which first considers the ability to cater for walking and cycling, provide suitable public transport services, and make better use of existing highway capacity before considering the provision of additional roads.

Evidence must be provided in Transport Assessments to demonstrate:

- The principles established to give priority to pedestrians and other vulnerable road users in new developments, together with links to local service provision²².
- Comprehensive and convenient pedestrian and cycle links to schools, local employment and service provision.
- Connectivity with existing walking and cycling networks

Suitable bus or rail service provision within 400 metres (bus) or 800 metres (rail) safe walking distance offering at least a half-hourly peak hour service to a variety of service centres and interchanges.

Where a Travel Plan is in place, the developer and/or user will provide an annual update on their action plan, reporting progress against agreed aims and targets for a minimum of 5 years post occupation.

The Council will also require, as appropriate, financial contributions towards sustainable travel infrastructure and/ or promotions where connectivity to existing infrastructure is not suitable.

²² See the principles established in the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide and other Council guidance.



15.8 Highway Safety and Design

- 15.8.1 The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires planning decisions to take account of whether safe and suitable access to a development site can be achieved for all people.
- 15.8.2 Developments should be located and designed, to create safe and secure layouts which minimise conflict between general traffic and; emergency service vehicles, public transport, cyclists and pedestrians. Suitable and safe highway measures must be provided to mitigate the impact of development and enhance the use of the local road network for all users.

Policy T3: Highway Safety & Design

Proposals for new development must not have a detrimental effect on highway safety, patterns of movement and the access needs of all people.

Development will be permitted where:

- The proposal is or will be well integrated with the existing transport network within and beyond the development itself; avoiding severance of communities as a result of measures to accommodate increased levels of traffic on the network;
- The proposal does not impede the free flow of traffic on the existing network or create hazards to that traffic and other road users;
- The proposal retains or enhances existing footpaths and cycleway links;
- The proposal promotes walking and cycling permeability and ensure that linkages and publicly-accessible through routes are created to successfully integrate the development into wider networks;
- The development provides safe and convenient access in accordance with appropriate standards, that promote accessibility for all users and all modes of transport and includes designs, where appropriate, that incorporate low speeds;
- The proposal must avoid locations where the cumulative impacts of congestion is likely to remain severe following mitigation;
- The proposal must make adequate provision for loading and unloading, circulation, servicing and vehicle turning; and
- The proposal fully funds where appropriate, or contributes towards the costs of any measures required to cost effectively mitigate the impacts arising from the development.



15.9 Parking

- 15.9.1 The provision of car parking associated with new developments should adhere to the guidelines established by the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide and the Parking Strategy which forms part of the Local Transport Plan.
- 15.9.2 The location, availability, cost and enforcement of parking provision can have a significant impact on the travel choices people make, the safety of the network, and even the look and feel of the urban environment.
- 15.9.3 Innovative approaches to parking such as the provision of electric charging points, dedicated priority spaces for car sharers and secure, covered cycle shelters all help imbed sustainable transport options within new development.
- 15.9.4 With respect to freight, the provision of rest and parking facilities is important to maximise highway safety, preserve local amenity, reduce opportunities for crime and address the general needs of HGV driver working conditions. Such facilities should provide adequate rest areas for drivers and allow for the safe parking of large vehicles whilst minimising impacts on other road users.

Policy T4: Parking

Developers will be required to provide appropriate car parking for new residential developments in line with the Central Bedfordshire Council's Design Guide and Parking Strategy.

Parking for commercial developments must be provided in accordance with the standards set out in the Central Bedfordshire Council's Car Parking Strategy.

Provision for cycle parking must be in line with the standards in the Central Bedfordshire's guidance for cycle parking in new developments,

Provision of lorry parking facilities for all new industrial and commercial units, including quarries and waste management facilities must be made on site.

Proposals for lorry rest facilities will be supported in principle where they meet the identified commercial demand.

15.10 Development and Public Transport Interchanges

- 15.10.1 The importance of public transport connectivity in forming an essential element to new development will help further support the viability of public transport services in Central Bedfordshire, together with the vitality of our market towns.



Policy T5: Development and Public Transport Interchanges

Developments within close proximity to bus and rail interchanges should provide enhanced access in order to encourage more public transport use, support the viability of services and enhance the vitality of the town centres in which they are located.

All major developments should promote connectivity to the transport interchange through Transport Assessments and Travel Plans. Typical measures may include current timetables, maps, equipment providing real time passenger information

Contributions to improve interchange infrastructure and to promote links to the end user will be sought.

Development will not be permitted should it compromise the ability of the authority to fully utilise and expand interchanges as required.

15.11 Strategic Transport Improvements to Increase Capacity

- 15.11.1 To cater for the increase in demand to travel which will arise from future development, economic and population growth, it is important that the capacity of the local transport network can cater for the additional trips which will be undertaken across the authority.
- 15.11.2 A lack of capacity can lead to congestion on the roads, overcrowding on public transport and an increase in conflict between different types of road users. Conversely spare capacity can encourage investment, increase the competitiveness of business and foster an environment more conducive to sustainable travel.
- 15.11.3 The Local Transport Plan identifies a number of strategic transport schemes which are either planned or currently under construction, to meet future capacity requirements.
- 15.11.4 Key strategic schemes include (but not an exhaustive list):
- East West Rail and supporting infrastructure
 - Oxford to Cambridge Expressway
 - A1 Route Enhancement
 - A6 to M1 link road
- 15.11.5 The successful delivery of the Woodside Link road by Central Bedfordshire Council and the A5-M1 link road by Highways England represents a significant milestone in the overall regeneration of Dunstable and Houghton Regis. These schemes demonstrate the how strategic transport schemes can facilitate growth in Central Bedfordshire.



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- 15.11.6 Ease of movement between and within settlements will be strengthened with these improvements. They have the potential to deliver significant reductions in congestion in urban areas and enable existing highway space to be used for improvements to public transport, cycling and walking networks. Without them, strategic scale development cannot be delivered sustainably.



Policy T6: Strategic Transport Improvements

The Central Bedfordshire and Luton Transport Model (CBLTM) will form the basis to any assessment of any strategic improvements.

The Council will seek to facilitate the delivery of the strategic transport schemes to provide increased capacity for growth or to mitigate the impact of development. Key strategic schemes include:

- East West Rail and supporting infrastructure
- Oxford to Cambridge Expressway
- A1 Route Enhancement
- A6 to M1 link road

Developments should support the delivery of strategic transport improvements including the safeguarding of routes where appropriate.

Contributions will be sought towards the provision of strategically important transport infrastructure projects and studies across Central Bedfordshire, including those delivered by delivery partners such as Network Rail and Highways England.

15.12 Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles (ULEV)

- 15.12.1 The use of electric vehicles is an important measure in reducing CO2 emissions and improving local air quality and therefore the provision of necessary



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infrastructure which promotes the use of such vehicles is essential. Reducing CO2 emissions and our impact on climate change is a priority for Central Bedfordshire particularly in the urban areas of Ampthill, Sandy and Dunstable which are identified as Air Quality Monitoring Areas (AQMAs).

15.12.2 ULEV and associated charging infrastructure is an area where technology, standards and best practice are rapidly evolving therefore it is important that new development seeks to encourage continued growth and respond to such change.

15.12.3 The increased uptake of ULEV will entail the provision of one or a combination of the following in new development:

- On-site charging points for residential dwellings with dedicated off street parking (an external charging point on a driveway or a wall mounted internal charging point in a garage). On site charging points in allocated EV parking spaces;
- On site passive provision of suitable electrical cabling for home owners to provide their own charging points more easily at later date;
- a financial contribution towards developing wider local ULEV infrastructure (for example, nearby but off-site in a more suitable/strategic location)



15.12.4 In the absence of prescribed standards, requirements will be based on case by case negotiation between planning authority and the developer. For commercial, retail and industrial developments the requirements for points may be set as a proportion of total parking spaces provided, ensuring adequate charging infrastructure and cabling for each marked bay.



Policy T7: Ultra Low Emission Vehicles

The following new developments will be required to provide charging points to support the provision of Ultra Low Emissions Vehicles:

- Residential developments
- Supermarkets or retail areas
- Employment sites
- University sites

The provision of charging points will be negotiated on a case by case basis until standards are set out in the Local Transport Plan which will then be applied to all qualifying developments

15.13 Freight

- 15.13.1 The routing of traffic and particularly the movement of freight is a key issue in the creation of safe and attractive communities. The volume of freight transported through an area is often a useful measure of prosperity of a local economy and it is vital that local authorities cater for this demand. However such movements can have considerable impacts, especially where vehicles move from the strategic network onto local roads.
- 15.13.2 There are a number of freight generators in Central Bedfordshire. These include:
- Large industrial parks located close to M1 Junctions 9 through to 13 and along the A421 linking Bedford to the M1.
 - Industrial parks and warehousing facilities in Ampthill, Flitwick, Sandy, Biggleswade, Houghton Regis, Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard.
 - The transportation of aggregates and waste by road from local quarries and waste management facilities throughout Central Bedfordshire.
 - The Local Transport Plan seeks to enable the efficient and reliable transportation of freight, and encourage the movement of freight by sustainable modes whilst minimising the negative impact of freight trips on local communities.
- 15.13.3 A Central Bedfordshire Designated Road Freight Network (DRFN), has been identified to provide links between key freight generators and attractors within the area whilst minimising impacts on local communities. It is comprised of primary routes which run through the authority providing access to major destinations of regional and national significance; and secondary routes which link identified freight generators and destinations to the primary route network and restrict lorries to roads where a minimum of environmental and infrastructure damage will occur.
- 15.13.4 It is intended that freight vehicles travel only on these roads, avoiding town centres as feasible, unless servicing local communities or destinations not on the designated network. The DRFN is supported by a series of signed weight, height



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and width restrictions zones across Central Bedfordshire that limit freight movements. The Council's LTP includes more information on this.

Policy T8: Management of Freight

Where a development will result in the movement of freight as part of its operations, Central Bedfordshire Council will:

- Require evidence that realistic alternatives to the movement of freight by road based haulage are not possible or practical.
- Ensure that developments forecast to generate significant freight movements are located where they deliver the greatest benefit for, businesses, and the least negative impact on the environment and local communities for example within industrial areas close to the Designated Road Freight Network.
- Ensure that sufficient land is provided for anticipated freight facilities associated with new developments including construction traffic.
- Ensure that proposals likely to generate freight sufficiently mitigate any forecast impacts on local communities and the environment through traffic management measures and developer contributions.



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Shaping where you live 2035



Environmental Enhancement

Local Plan 2015-2035

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16 Environmental Enhancement

- 16.1.1 Central Bedfordshire's environment is key to its identity and widely valued by our residents, visitors and businesses. The varied and contrasting landscape, ecology and settlement pattern contributes to the much valued character and nature of the area.
- 16.1.2 We also depend on the ecosystem services are services provided by the natural environment that benefit people. These include:
- The provision of food and fuel:
 - Cultural services that provide benefit to people through recreation and appreciation of nature.
 - Regulation of the climate, purification of air and water, flood protection.
 - Supporting services, underpinning the provision of the above ecosystems services, such as soil formation, and nutrient and water cycling.
- 16.1.3 This section sets out the planning policies that will be applied to ensure that development in Central Bedfordshire protects and enhances our environment, and supports the ecosystem services that it provides.
- 16.1.4 This section is underpinned by the Council's Environmental Framework, which summarises a range of local studies, assessments, strategies and guidance, and forms part of the technical evidence base for the Local Plan and is the supporting document for these policies. It covers natural environment enhancement and protection and the challenge of both mitigating the impact of climate change and adapting to the inevitable impacts. It provides an overview of national policy requirements, including those for Local Plans set out in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), and the accompanying guidance (NPPG). It also details and summarises the key elements of the environmental evidence base for Central Bedfordshire, as well as providing sign-posting to these more detailed documents.
- 16.1.5 The Environmental Framework was the subject of a public consultation in Spring 2016, the responses to which have helped shape the policies included in this section/chapter.
- 16.1.6 In addition, the Council has produced a Design Guide, which sets out the key principles and standards to ensure all new development is of the highest quality.
- 16.1.7 Chapter Two of the Guide shows how to embed green infrastructure, climate change, sustainability and the broader environmental principles covered in this chapter/section of the Local Plan into the design and development process in order to deliver well designed development. In addition to the policies set out in this chapter/section, developers should refer to the Design Guide for more detailed, practical advice on how these policy requirements can be included to improve the design quality of proposed developments.



16.2 Green Infrastructure

- 16.2.1 Green Infrastructure (GI) is the network of natural and semi-natural features, green spaces, rivers and lakes that intersperse and connect villages, towns and urban areas. Individually, these elements are GI assets, and the roles that these assets play are GI functions. 'Green infrastructure' covers biodiversity, landscape, the historic environment, access and accessible green space.
- 16.2.2 When well planned and provided for, GI has many wide ranging benefits. These include supporting mitigation and adaptation to the impacts of climate change (extreme weather, flooding, drought and heatwaves), improve health and well being, facilitate stronger and more cohesive communities, support economic growth and investment, regenerate land and soften the impact of development and provide protection for, as well as enhancing biodiversity and natural habitats.
- 16.2.3 The planned GI network is set out in the GI Plans that cover Central Bedfordshire on a number of scales. GI plans are based on the spatial analysis of existing assets for protection, and identification of opportunities to buffer, extend and create new resources across Central Bedfordshire, and linking across administrative boundaries.
- 16.2.4 With regards to Central Bedfordshire, GI plans exist on a number of scales. These include (ranging from large scale to smaller scale):
- The strategic level Green Infrastructure Plan, covering the whole of Bedfordshire,
 - District level green infrastructure plans, which cover the former district authority areas of Mid Bedfordshire and South Bedfordshire, as well as Luton.
 - Parish and community green infrastructure plans.
- 16.2.5 The approach to these plans is similar, but the difference is in the level of detail, and the level of community involvement which increases to the smaller scale plans, and the strategic overview, which decreases for the smaller scale plans.
- 16.2.6 There are also plans for Green Wheels and Greenways, showing opportunities for using existing and new paths to create off road, multi-user accessible corridors, encircling one or more communities, linking areas of wildlife, heritage and landscape value.
- 16.2.7 The Environmental Framework provides an overview of these green infrastructure plans and links to further information. The Council's Design Guide also includes information on how to link with, integrate and improve green infrastructure within developments.



Policy EE1 : Green Infrastructure

Developments of new buildings must demonstrate a net gain in green infrastructure; linking, enhancing and extending existing green infrastructure assets, and creating new ones. The Council will be supportive of applications that have regard for green infrastructure plans, identifying existing green infrastructure assets, and opportunities for enhancing the green infrastructure network.

High quality, multifunctional green infrastructure will be integrated within developments, incorporating sustainable urban drainage systems and enhancing biodiversity, landscape character, the rights of way network and design quality, and making provision for the ongoing and effective management of this green infrastructure.

Existing green infrastructure of strategic importance, as identified in the Bedfordshire, and Mid and South Bedfordshire GI plans will be protected from development.

Development proposals should also take account of Green Wheel and Greenway plans and Parish Green Infrastructure Plans, and consider how identified assets can be protected and enhanced, and for aspirations to be delivered by development.

Development that adversely affects identified strategic green infrastructure assets, or adversely affects the future implementation of identified strategic green infrastructure projects will not be permitted.

16.3 Enhancing biodiversity

16.3.1 The Council's existing biodiversity and geodiversity assets provide the building blocks for the natural environment. These features are integral parts of the high quality environment and surroundings that makes the area a desirable place to live and for businesses to operate.

16.3.2 National planning policy places great importance to the protection and enhancement of these features. One of its objectives is to strive for net gains in biodiversity and increased connectivity of ecological networks. This is further defined in Natural Environment White Paper, 'Making Space for Nature', which describes ecological networks, basing them on five components which are to be implemented at a landscape scale whilst working with existing land uses and economic activities.



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- 16.3.3 This is summarised in more detail, along with information about national biodiversity policy and the local evidence base in the Environmental Framework.
- 16.3.4 Development proposals should be designed around existing components of the ecological network. These include:
- Sites of strategic or local importance for nature conservation;
 - Rivers and other water courses, drains and all other water bodies, such as wetlands and ponds;
 - Individual trees, woodland and orchards;
 - Green/open space, including commons, parks and gardens, allotments, cemeteries, village greens, and any sites designated as Local Green Spaces;
 - Wildlife corridors, including hedgerows, ditches, disused railways, verges and identified networks of routes for pollinators (known as 'B-lines');
 - Post industrial land such as disused quarries and former landfill sites
- 16.3.5 Development should be designed to integrate these features into the development site, and extend the network through improving, buffering and extending these features, and including new features such as:
- Green features within the built environment, including street trees, green roofs and gardens;
 - Choice of landscaping design and species composition can enhance ecological networks, delivering net gains for biodiversity.
 - Integrated bat and bird boxes and hedgehog holes in fences;
 - Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS)
- 16.3.6 Developers should refer to the Design Guide in preparing development proposals as this includes information on how to link with, integrate and improve biodiversity within developments.



Policy EE2: Enhancing biodiversity

Development proposals should provide a net gain in biodiversity through enhancement and creation of ecological networks by:

- Incorporating existing and/or new biodiversity features within their design; and
- Maximising opportunities to enhance and/or create links between ecological networks. Links should be created both on-site and, where possible, with nearby features.
- Biodiversity features within a development need to be managed, monitored and maintained.

Development proposals within, or in close proximity to, an ecological corridor should enhance the functionality and connectivity of the corridor.

Development that would impact on the strategic ecological network causing fragmentation or otherwise prejudice its effectiveness will not be permitted.

16.4 Nature conservation – Designated Sites and Protected Species

- 16.4.1 Biodiversity and geodiversity assets are divided into statutory and non-statutory sites. Statutory sites are designated by Natural England and include, Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), National Nature Reserves and Local Nature Reserves. Non-statutory sites include County Wildlife Sites and Local Geological Sites.
- 16.4.2 The Council's Nature Conservation Strategy considers protected species and habitats across Central Bedfordshire. It seeks to ensure their appropriate management and explores opportunities for enhancing the wildlife resource of our area. Information about the Nature Conservation Strategy, as well as designated sites and protected species in Central Bedfordshire is set out in the Environmental Framework.
- 16.4.3 Planning applications may need to include details about biodiversity and geological conservation. The Council's Biodiversity Checklist shows what information needs to be provided with an application.
- 16.4.4 Developers must check for the presence of protected species on development sites and seek professional advice to ensure that their proposals safeguard any protected species identified. Where the presence of protected species on development sites is likely, professional advice must be sought to ensure that proposals safeguard any protected species identified
- 16.4.5 Other rare or endangered species should be taken into consideration with any development proposals. These include those species identified as of Principal Importance in the NERC Act.
- 16.4.6 Site and species specific ecological surveys are an important part of assessing a planning proposal. This information must therefore be provided when the



planning application is submitted and cannot be provided later in the process through a planning condition or other mechanism.

Policy EE3: Nature conservation

Important habitats and sites of geological and geomorphological interest will be protected, maintained and enhanced.

Up to date, comprehensive ecological information undertaken in accordance with industry guidelines will be required to support and inform development proposals that would affect sites for nature conservation, protected species, or species of habitats of principal importance demonstrating development will deliver a net gain.

The Council will ensure that:

- Development which will adversely affect SSSIs and NNRs would not be considered sustainable development and will be refused.
- Development would not be permitted that would adversely affect:
 - County Wildlife Sites,
 - Local Nature Reserves,
 - Local Geological or Geomorphological Sites,
 - Protected species, or;
 - Species and habitats of principal importance.

The assessment of adverse impacts will apply to potentially damaging development proposals both within and outside the designated area. It will include the consideration of adverse cumulative effects with other existing or proposed development. Indirect effects, such as disturbance through increased recreational pressure can result from new development and require mitigation to prevent detrimental impacts to the ecological resource.

16.5 Woodlands, trees and hedgerows

- 16.5.1 Woodlands, trees and hedgerows are key features within rural and urban environments. They provide a range of ecosystem services, including flood mitigation, carbon sequestration, provision of low carbon fuel and timber, as well as contributing to landscape character and amenity, and the rural economy. and helping to mitigate the effects of climate change. They provide they provide landmarks or 'stepping stones' between otherwise isolated habitats as well as being vital wildlife corridors and habitats in their own right. Central Bedfordshire has a relatively low level of woodland and tree cover. This limited resource is under threat from disease, development and climate change.
- 16.5.2 Central Bedfordshire has a number of important tree collections, historic parklands and trees planted to commemorate events which contribute to present day character. Individual trees make a significant contribution within settlements and the countryside; the challenge is to ensure new trees planted as part of new



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development are chosen appropriately and managed to ensure longevity and value.

- 16.5.3 The Council will develop a Tree Strategy to review the existing resource and identify threats and opportunities for enhancing and extending this.

Existing woodlands, trees and hedgerows, and their protection

- 16.5.4 Ancient woodland, and aged and veteran trees are irreplaceable resources that are protected from development in the NPPF. Construction close to, though not directly involving destruction of an ancient or semi ancient woodland, trees and hedgerows, can nevertheless still be damaging. A minimum buffer of 15 metres should be maintained between the development boundary and the woodland edge.
- 16.5.5 Some trees are protected through tree preservation orders (TPOs), and trees in conservation areas are also protected by law. However, these only cover only a tiny proportion of the valuable trees in Central Bedfordshire. This does not mean that other trees are not locally valued or significant.

- 16.5.6 The Council will use TPOs to protect threatened trees that make a valuable contribution to public amenity. We will also work proactively with developers to ensure that protected trees are safeguarded from development, managed in accordance with good arboricultural practice, with full regard to public amenity, ecological and historical interests.



- 16.5.7 The incorporation of existing hedgerows and individual trees, and their integration within the layout of new developments will be expected. This can bring benefits with regard to the immediate enhancement and contribution to the design and sense of place. Developers need to design the layout of sites at the earliest stage to allow sufficient space for these retained features to thrive; incorporating them into the public realm, and protecting them from root damage and changes to soil structure.
- 16.5.8 Rural hedgerows important for their historic and biodiversity value receive protection through the Hedgerow Regulations 1997. If removal is proposed as part of a planning application then the impact on local heritage will be taken into account. The retention of hedgerows within development will maintain ecological and landscape connection, although it is essential that sufficient space is allowed for its future growth for maintenance.
- 16.5.9 Where development may have an impact upon ancient woodland or veteran trees, applicants should refer to Natural England and the Forestry Commission's Standing Advice on Ancient Woodland and Veteran Trees and its associated Assessment Guide will be used where relevant.



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Designing trees into new developments

- 16.5.10 In addition to the benefits detailed above, trees and hedgerows within developments have a vital role to play in helping to offset the potential effects of climate change, through shading, carbon storage, and reduction of pollutants, interception and storage of water. They can also help integrate development and connect with the existing landscape framework. Opportunities should be taken to plant new large, long lived species of trees, which may be of exotic origin, to help build a diverse tree stock more able to withstand disease and climate change.
- 16.5.11 Trees in the urban environment also make a significant contribution to character of townscapes and setting of built form by engendering a sense of interest and quality of place. Avenue tree planting, feature trees at key points, groups and stands of beautiful trees in public open spaces, including car parks, can create remarkable and memorable spaces providing interest through the seasons. Trees and understorey shrubs in parks, neighbourhood copses, along boundaries and within private gardens create a green spatial structure within, and through, built development offering urban habitats for biodiversity and linking quiet tranquil green spaces benefitting health and wellbeing for all.
- 16.5.12 Urban planting schemes should include a higher mix of native species especially along boundaries, and include native and ornamental flowering mixes to support wildlife, including pollinators. Care should be taken to avoid the use of species which may lead to the spread of non-native plants into the countryside.
- 16.5.13 To assist developers, the Council has developed a Design Guide, which includes information on design considerations for trees that should be reflected in development proposals. The use of professional landscape architects to design and specify schemes is recommended.
- 16.5.14 The maintenance of new trees is critical for their long term success and all planting schemes need to be managed to ensure that they realise their design objective. Formative pruning, particularly of street trees, is an important aspect of achieving the high quality tree planting schemes expected within Central Bedfordshire.



Policy EE4: Trees, woodlands and hedgerows

Protection of existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows:

- Development that would adversely affect ancient woodland, and aged and veteran trees will not be permitted.
- Woodlands, including semi-natural woodlands, planted ancient woodland sites, orchards, hedgerows, and specimen trees found outside woodlands will be protected from development wherever possible, including buffering as appropriate.
- Existing hedgerows and trees should be integrated within developments, unless demonstrably inappropriate. The development should be designed to integrate them within the public realm, and within a suitable landscape setting to ensure longevity. Hedgerows and treed boundaries should be reinforced, safeguarded within green corridors and extended where possible to create linkage.
- Any removal of trees or hedgerows to accommodate development must be justified, and should be replaced within the development site with appropriate planting of suitable species of equivalent scale and character, and providing equivalent canopy cover and habitat connectivity.
- The Council will seek to safeguard protected trees from loss or detrimental major surgery. Any protected tree that is unavoidably destroyed must be replaced by a tree or trees suitable for the location.

Developers will be expected to include new planting in developments, and the Council expects that:

- New developments are designed to include significant tree features, as part of residential areas, commercial and employment sites, streets and car parks.
- The layout of developments (including residential areas, roads, parking areas, and open spaces) is designed to provide sufficient space to enable these tree features to thrive.
- Landscaping schemes will take account of local landscape character, and should consider climate change, ease of maintenance and ecological enhancement. They should include the use of ornamental species where appropriate. Care must be taken to avoid the introduction of Invasive Non Native Species into planting schemes.
- New tree planting is designed within a green corridor of appropriate scale, as part of the site's public realm, transport network and green infrastructure, to improve ecological connectivity, enhance local character and create a sense of place, and mitigate and adapt to climate change.
- Any development that forms a rural edge will include a designed landscape boundary consisting of native tree and hedgerow planting consistent with the local landscape character.



16.6 Landscape character and value

- 16.6.1 The landscapes of Central Bedfordshire are highly valued by the people who live and work within them or use them for recreation. The Council recognises the value of the landscape as a resource for local economies, for the ecosystem services that are provided by the land, for the biodiversity they support, the recreational opportunities they provide, and as the setting for cultural heritage.

Landscape Character

- 16.6.2 Central Bedfordshire has a varied and distinctive landscape which has been described and classified in the Central Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (LCA).
- 16.6.3 The LCA process is an accepted and recognised method for understanding how the landscape evolved, how it may change in the future and how that change may be managed. LCA describes and classifies the recognisable and consistent pattern of features that makes one landscape different from another rather than better or worse. This approach considers that all landscapes are valuable and seeks to protect their essential character.
- 16.6.4 The purpose of the LCA is to help ensure change and development is of the highest quality and does not undermine whatever defines and is valued about a place. It also advises on ways of improving character.
- 16.6.5 The Central Bedfordshire LCA is the primary evidence base for planning purposes. Further information about Landscape Character in Central Bedfordshire is set out in the Environmental Framework.
- 16.6.6 The Council will protect landscapes against inappropriate development and work to ensure new development is of a high quality that respects landscape character, including tranquillity. The LCA is critical in this process and particular note should be taken of the key sensitivities and the related development guidelines. Development proposals will be expected to include plans for landscape improvements in accordance with the findings of the LCA, and identify and respond to landscape character at the site level.
- 16.6.7 This will apply to all landscapes, but particularly those accommodating major developments, the existing urban fringe, the built edge of other settlements and those along prominent transport corridors. Depending on the nature and/or scale of the proposals, improvements may be required on or adjacent to the development site or to contribute towards wider, strategic landscape enhancement in the affected areas.



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- 16.6.8 The Central Bedfordshire Design Guide has been produced to enable high quality 'place making', a critical element in achieving sustainable development. It sets out advice to allow developers to come up with good design solutions which respond positively to their surroundings including landscapes. The Design Guide should be used in conjunction with the LCAs in order to produce the best development for a specific location. This should include how the proposals will address the landscape and how it will provide landscape (and biodiversity) improvements, for example by protecting views or softening an inappropriate hard urban edge.

Valued Landscapes

- 16.6.9 Whilst all landscapes are important, some will have particular value where they exhibit the specific attributes and characteristic landscape features of a specific landscape character area, meaning it is considered representative of the landscape type or has characteristics which create a strong sense of place. These landscapes will typically contain features of biodiversity or geological value, and / or be of historic or cultural interest. The Council will consider landscapes that exhibit these features below as valued landscapes, and will protect them from adverse impacts. Value is increased if the landscape;
- is particularly intact in terms of its character and the condition of individual landscape attributes and features;
 - is particularly valued for recreational use;
 - is a known viewpoint or forms part of a recognised vista/ local view;
 - is relatively rare or limited in its extent, in terms of including rare attributes or landscape features;
 - has perceptual qualities/significance such as tranquillity, remoteness or natural condition;
 - contains characteristic buildings and other built features;
 - shows a characteristic pattern of planting structures (e.g. woodlands and hedgerows) that contribute to the character of the wider landscape;
 - has historical or cultural associations.
- 16.6.10 Central Bedfordshire Council will explore working in partnership to identify landscapes of local value.



Policy EE5: Landscape Character and Value

In order to safeguard intrinsic character, scenic beauty and perceptual qualities of the landscape such as tranquillity, all development proposals will need to have regard to the key characteristics and sensitivities of the site and its setting, as set out in the Central Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment.

All major development proposals will be required demonstrate how they incorporate landscape enhancement, in accordance with the guidelines in the LCA, the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide and other relevant documents for specific areas e.g. the Chilterns AONB, Marston Vale Community Forest or the Greensand Ridge Nature Improvement Area. Landscape and Visual Impact Assessments will be expected as part of planning applications, including the assessment of local landscape character.

Development will respect, retain and enhance the character and distinctiveness of the local landscape, through (for example)

- Reflecting local character and distinctiveness in terms of the scale and pattern of the surrounding landscape and existing settlement form.
- Integrating on site mitigation sympathetic to local character in scale with the landscape setting as well as the scale of the development.

The Council recognises the importance of valued landscapes. Proposals that have an unacceptable adverse impact on valued landscapes will be refused.

16.7 Tranquillity

- 16.7.1 Tranquillity is associated with audible and visual peace and is a significant asset in urban and rural areas. Tranquillity is not necessarily limited to remote areas, and can be comparative to location, character of space and surrounds. It can be found in many areas, from large scale tracts of open landscapes to small urban parks, garden oases and informal urban open spaces with a hint of wildness.
- 16.7.2 Tranquillity can be significantly impacted on by intrusive movements, sights and sounds including those from transport, power lines and lighting. It is a quality that is hard to re-instate once lost. Undeveloped horizons are becoming increasingly scarce as are natural soundscapes and dark skies at night.
- 16.7.3 Tranquillity can support health and well being and be a key contributor to quality of life. Therefore ensuring tranquil spaces are available and accessible is vital. Tranquillity is also an important component in the enjoyment of other features, including biodiversity, landscapes, and heritage assets.
- 16.7.4 The NPPF states that planning policies and decisions should identify and protect areas of tranquillity which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason.



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- 16.7.5 The Campaign for the Protection of Rural England (CPRE) have commissioned a number of studies and produced maps showing tranquillity at a large, countrywide scale, including Central Bedfordshire. This highlights areas of tranquillity at a strategic scale. In addition to theses, there will also be more local areas of relative tranquillity in and around urban areas. Developments should consider how they would affect tranquillity, using existing tools such as Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment, Health Impact Assessment and ecological surveys to assess visual, noise and biodiversity impacts (e.g. on bats and invertebrates) respectively.
- 16.7.6 The Environmental Framework summarises the local evidence base relating to tranquillity, including mapped information. Developers should use this local information to assess the impacts of their development on tranquillity, and to demonstrate how tranquil areas have been designed into their developments, for example through layout, screening, materials and habitat or open space creation. Further guidance will be produced in due course.

Policy EE6: Tranquillity

The Council will:

- Ensure that areas of high tranquillity at both strategic and community scales are protected, and that development that harms their recreational and amenity value is not permitted.
- Require planning applications for both major residential developments and commercial developments to demonstrate how they have assessed the potential impact of their proposals on areas of high tranquillity, including visual intrusion, impact on biodiversity, lighting and noise. Such applications will be required to demonstrate how negative impacts have been avoided and any harmful impacts are adequately mitigated.
- Require planning applications for new residential development of 100 dwellings or more to provide new or enhanced areas of tranquillity as part of proposals.
- Seek opportunities to enhance tranquillity of landscapes and townscapes, including removal of, or appropriate mitigation of, visually intrusive features, sources of disruptive noise and lighting.

16.8 Chilterns AONB

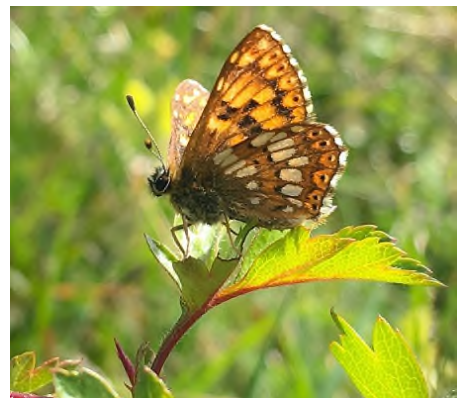
- 16.8.1 Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) are the highest national landscape designation and are therefore subject to very robust protection. The National Planning Policy Framework paragraph 115 states that “great weight should be given to conserving the landscape and scenic beauty of the AONB, which with National Parks, have the highest status of protection in relation to landscape and scenic beauty.” Further material about national policy and local information is set out in the Environmental Framework.



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- 16.8.2 The Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty was designated in 1965 to protect and conserve scenic beauty and to encourage the understanding and enjoyment of the area's special qualities.
- 16.8.3 The Chilterns Conservation Board has produced a management plan for the AONB which provides a framework within which local authorities, government and the Board itself operate. A Chilterns Building Design Guide has also been published and the Council expects any development proposals to take this fully into account. The Council will continue to support the management plan and provide protection against inappropriate development. This may, depending on the nature and scale of the proposals, include development outside of the AONB boundary which might threaten its unique qualities, for instance by harming views to and from the AONB and/or adding to noise and light pollution.
- 16.8.4 Development proposals in the Chilterns or their setting should demonstrate how they have considered;
- the Chilterns AONB's special qualities which include the steep chalk escarpment with areas of flower-rich down land, broadleaved woodlands (especially beech), commons, tranquil valleys, the network of ancient routes, villages with their brick and flint houses, chalk streams and a rich historic environment of hillforts and chalk figures;
 - the scope for enhancing and restoring those parts of the landscape which are degraded or subject to existing intrusive developments, utilities or infrastructure;
 - locally distinctive patterns and species composition of natural features such as chalk down land, trees, hedgerows, woodland, field boundaries, rivers and chalk streams;
 - the locally distinctive character of settlements and their landscape settings, including the transition between man-made and natural landscapes at the edge of settlements;
 - visually sensitive skylines, geological and topographical features;
 - landscapes of cultural, historic and heritage value;
 - important views and visual amenity, including key views from the steep north-west facing chalk escarpment overlooking the low clay vale, and foreground views back to the AONB; and
 - tranquillity and remoteness and the need to avoid intrusion from light pollution, noise, and motion.



Policy EE7: The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) is a nationally designated landscape and as such permission for major developments will be refused unless exceptional circumstances prevail as defined by national planning policy.

Planning permission for any proposal within the AONB, or affecting the setting or appreciation of the AONB, will be restricted to proposals that:

- conserve and enhance the Chiltern AONB's special qualities, distinctive character, tranquillity and remoteness in accordance with national planning policy and the overall purpose of the AONB designation;
- are appropriate to the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area or are desirable for its understanding and enjoyment;
- meet the aims of the statutory Chilterns AONB Management Plan, making practical and financial contributions towards management plan delivery as appropriate;
- comply with the Chilterns Building Design Guide and technical notes by being of high quality design which respects the natural beauty of the Chilterns, its traditional built character and reinforces the sense of place and local character;
- avoid adverse impacts from individual proposals (including their cumulative effects), unless these can be satisfactorily mitigated.

Developments in the Chilterns AONB and its setting should respond to the landscape character (having considered all the relevant landscape character assessments) and be informed by landscape and visual impact assessment to understand the impacts of the proposed development on landscape character, and what options for mitigating negative impacts are possible.

16.9 Greensand Ridge NIA

- 16.9.1 The Government introduced Nature Improvement Areas (NIAs) in its Natural Environment White Paper. These are large areas where there are opportunities to focus efforts and deliver significant improvements for wildlife and people.
- 16.9.2 Within Central Bedfordshire there is currently one NIA covering the Greensand Ridge. The Greensand Ridge is a narrow, elongated, elevated area which runs in a north-east/south-west direction covering a significant part of Central Bedfordshire. It covers just over 27,300ha and forms Natural England's National Character Area 90. More information about the Greensand Ridge, and the Nature Improvement Area designation is provided in the Environmental Framework.



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- 16.9.3 The Council acknowledges that this Greensand Ridge NIA meets the required DEFRA criteria for locally designated Nature Improvement Areas, and recognises it as a Nature Improvement Area.
- 16.9.4 It is not the intention to restrict development in the NIA by specifying types of development that may be appropriate, but rather to look for opportunities to enhance nature conservation through development. Growth and development in the NIA should make a lasting contribution to its valuable environment, supporting and benefiting the natural environment.
- 16.9.5 The Greensand Ridge Nature Improvement Area is designated because of the opportunity it provides to support a better, stronger and more robust natural environment at a landscape scale. There is the opportunity to make significant improvements to the existing ecological network in terms of enlarging and enhancing existing wildlife assets and increasing ecological connectivity between them.
- 16.9.6 The Greensand Ridge NIA contains a range of characteristic habitats, including;
- Heathland and acid grassland
 - Wood pasture and parkland, including veteran trees
 - Woodland, including wet woodland
 - Neutral grassland
 - Wetlands



Policy EE8 : Greensand Ridge Nature Improvement Area

Development within the NIA should:

- Demonstrate how a net gain in biodiversity will be delivered, specifically identifying how gains in the quality and connectivity of ecological networks within and linking to the development will be delivered.
- Enhance wildlife networks and increase ecological connectivity through buffering, extending and linking characteristic habitats (as listed above) both within and adjacent to developments.
- Demonstrate how provision is made for species recovery and resilience.
- Respect the topography and landscape of the NIA and be designed in such a way that it minimises visual impacts and protects local amenity.
- Provide opportunities for people to access and experience the NIA in a way that is sympathetic and sustainable towards existing habitats.



16.10 The Forest of Marston Vale

- 16.10.1 The Forest of Marston Vale is one of 12 nationally designated community forests created in the 1990s. It covers some 61 square miles and extends into Bedford Borough in the north and to the M1 in the south. It is a strategic and regionally important environmentally led regeneration initiative providing social, economic and environmental benefits. The aim of the Forest of Marston Vale is to achieve 30% tree coverage in the Marston Vale.
- 16.10.2 The purpose of community forests is to lead in the regeneration of a once degraded industrial landscapes, which, in the case of the Forest of Marston Vale means addressing the effects of the brick making industry. The creation of the Forest is guided by the Forest Plan which sets out aims and objectives as well as principles and proposals to 2031. More information about the Forest of Marston Vale can be found in the Environmental Framework.
- 16.10.3 The Council remains committed to the Forest of Marston Vale and its adopted Forest Plan. As set out in the NPPF, the Forest Plan will be a material consideration when evaluating planning applications. The Council therefore expects development proposals to demonstrate how they contribute to the delivery of the Forest Plan. This will ensure that development contributes to the environmentally led regeneration of the Forest of Marston Vale area by ensuring that development delivers a net gain in environmental quality, creates the 'forested' sense of place and character set out in the Forest Plan, and brings economic, social and environmental benefits to the area.
- 16.10.4 In line with the overall target of increasing tree cover to 30%, the Council expects that a range of opportunities for tree and woodland planting throughout development sites within the Forest area are explored through the design process. Development proposals should refer to more detailed guidance available from the Council on development and woodland creation in the Forest of Marston Vale.

Policy EE9: Forest of Marston Vale

Central Bedfordshire Council will continue to support the creation of the Forest of Marston Vale to deliver the environmentally led regeneration of the area. Developments for new buildings within the Forest of Marston Vale will need to;

- demonstrate how they will deliver 30% tree cover across their development site. This can be achieved by a combination of retaining and protecting existing trees, woodlands and hedgerows within development sites, and the planting of new trees, woodlands and hedgerows within development sites.
- Contribute to the environmentally led regeneration of the Forest of Marston Vale, in line with the aims of the Forest Plan.
- Demonstrate how their proposals are consistent with design guidance for development within the Forest of Marston Vale.



16.11 The Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Park

- 16.11.1 The Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Park is a strategic project to link the main UK waterway network with the Fens waterways of East Anglia. This will be done through linking Bedford to Milton Keynes with a new waterway that is set within a multifunctional parkland corridor. It will provide an attractive location for businesses and a potential setting for housing growth, as well as a major tourism destination, an ecologically rich corridor and a space for recreation and healthy living. More detail about the Bedford and Milton Keynes Waterway Park is set out in the Environmental Framework.
- 16.11.2 The Council is part of a consortium of eight organisations that have agreed to work together with the aim of delivering the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Park.
- 16.11.3 A guidance note (A Brief Guide to Space, Design and Other Technical Issues in providing for the Bedford Milton Keynes Waterway) should be referred to by developers, with development proposals demonstrating how the design of the Waterway Park to the standards and requirements referenced has been incorporated into the development proposals.

Policy EE10: The Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Park

Development on the route of the Bedford & Milton Keynes Waterway Park will be expected to deliver the section of the Waterway Park within the development boundary, incorporating a Waterway channel and 'towpath' for non-motorised users within a multifunctional green corridor.

Development should be designed to relate positively to the Waterway Park, and should be designed to complement adjacent areas and sites along the route of the Waterway Park.

Development that would adversely affect the implementation of the Waterway Park, or that does not provide accommodation for the Waterway and associated infrastructure will not be permitted.

16.12 Public Rights of Way

- 16.12.1 The public Rights of Way network offers people access to enjoy Central Bedfordshire's countryside and heritage and in the process improve their health and quality of life. It also forms an intrinsic part of our overall transport network, providing valuable and safe access on foot and increasingly by cycle, to the wider countryside, places of employment, schools, shops and other local services and amenities. More information about the access network, and the Council's plans for its improvement can be found in the Environmental Framework.



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- 16.12.2 The Rights of Way network provides a key alternative to car use on journeys of less than five miles. The Council will ensure that Rights of Way are protected, enhanced and promoted.
- 16.12.3 The Outdoor Access Improvement Plan details the routes for improvement and will provide the specific standards for how public rights of way affected by development are to be retained and enhanced. In addition, the Local Transport Plan, Leisure Strategy, Green Infrastructure Plans and other emerging policies, strategies and plans also provide information about access needs.
- 16.12.4 There will be a need for improvements to the rights of way network affected by development proposals in order to encourage more walking and cycling through improved accessibility, surfacing and connectivity. Where the scale and location of development will require connections and/or lead to increased use by new and existing residents the Council will secure appropriate contributions from the applicants. Particular consideration will be given to achieving off-site local pedestrian and cycleway routes which connect development sites with open spaces, leisure/community uses and strategic access routes.



- 16.12.5 At the earliest opportunity and as part of their planned development, applicants are required to record the route of any public rights of way affected by proposed development, and draw up then submit a Rights of Way Scheme for their improvement, accommodation or diversion in accordance with the Council's Rights of Way Standards and Guidance for Development. This Rights of Way scheme should detail what is proposed for existing routes, including whether the paths are to be incorporated into the design or diverted, landscape proposals for the paths, and details regarding new routes and connections to the Rights of Way and access network. It must include details regarding how any Rights of Way are to be dealt with during construction.
- 16.12.6 Details about standards and guidance for development are set out in CBC's 'Public Rights of Way: Standards and Guidance for Development' document, which provides detailed information on Rights of Way and the development process, what is expected from Rights of Way schemes, and design guidance. In addition to this guidance on Rights of Way on the Council's website, developers should refer to, in conjunction with the Design Guide, which provides information on design considerations for access routes that should be reflected in development proposals.



Policy EE11 : Public Rights of Way

Developments should protect, enhance and promote the public rights of way network.

Development proposals that affect any public right of way are considered to be any development proposal that includes a right of way within the site, or any major development proposal adjacent to an existing right of way. Such development proposals will need to submit a rights of way scheme that seeks to protect, enhance and promote the public rights of way network, with improvements where necessary to help restore and re-connect it, in line with the Council's 'Public Rights of Way – Standards and Guidance for Development' guidance.

Where developments would increase the pressure on the rights of way network, contributions may be sought through planning obligations for measures to protect and enhance the rights of way network including the delivery of additional routes and improvements to existing public paths both on-site and off-site.

16.13 Outdoor Recreation

- 16.13.1 The NPPF identifies how the planning system can support the creation of healthy, inclusive communities by the provision of social, recreational and cultural facilities such as shared spaces, community facilities and sports venues. It highlights the needs for local authorities to undertake robust needs assessments to support policy for the provision and protection of leisure, sporting and recreational facilities. It also highlights that existing open space, sports and recreational land and buildings, including playing fields, should not be built on, unless clear criteria are met.
- 16.13.2 Local authorities have a critical role in the delivery of sport, recreation and physical activity facilities and opportunities, and in ensuring more people from every background regularly take part in sport and physical activity. Central Bedfordshire Council will support the health of its residents by enabling them to be physically active through the provision of a range of leisure and sports facilities and green open spaces. A key part of this role is in protecting existing open spaces, and ensuring that new developments provide appropriate levels of open space for recreation and sport and the supporting facilities.
- 16.13.3 To ensure the appropriate delivery of leisure, sport and recreation facilities Central Bedfordshire Council worked with partner organisations to produce the three facility chapters which comprise the Leisure Strategy. The Strategy encompasses the provision of indoor and outdoor sport, recreation and open space facilities to support and promote physical activity, increase wellbeing and tackle the causes of ill health.
- 16.13.4 The Council recognises that sport and physical activities should be available to all, but that each person has different needs which may be addressed in different



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ways. The Leisure Strategy therefore incorporates a range of formal and informal sporting and open space facilities which aim to provide appropriate facilities and opportunities for the widest number of our residents

- 16.13.5 The Leisure Strategy supports national policy through the assessment and delivery of facilities which provide equality of provision, increase people's wellbeing and create a fitter and healthier population and enhance the local environment. Chapter 2: the Recreational Open Space Strategy defines local standards for the provision of various types of open spaces, Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy sets a space standard and facility requirements for outdoor sports pitches, courts and greens and Chapter 1: the Leisure Facilities Strategy covers indoor sports facilities such as leisure centres (refer to chapter x). More detail about the Leisure Strategy is provided in the Environmental Framework.
- 16.13.6 The Leisure Strategy is supported by a Leisure Strategy GIS layer (database of maps) which maps all recreation and open space sites, and by a parish schedule for each settlement which lists existing leisure sites and identifies local facility needs.

Recreational Open Space

- 16.13.7 The NPPF addresses the importance that access to open space has for the health and wellbeing of the local population. It advises local authorities to set local standards for the provision of open space and recreational facilities based on a robust assessment of existing provision and future requirements.
- 16.13.8 A range of high quality green spaces which are close to where people live are crucial in providing a setting for informal sport or physical activity. Such spaces provide opportunities for physical activity for those unlikely to participate in formal sport, they enhance the appearance of the local area, provide play opportunities for children and young people, and deliver ecological benefits particularly in an urban environment. The multiple benefits that can be derived from open spaces are being increasingly recognised. 'Being outdoors' itself is said to be more beneficial than playing a sport or doing an activity; as it is the environment which delivers physical and mental benefits.
- 16.13.9 Central Bedfordshire has a diverse range of open spaces which include formal parks, urban green corridors, informal green spaces, wildlife sites and links to the countryside, as well as local greenspaces and children's play areas. These green spaces form an essential part of the quality and character of Central Bedfordshire, and will be protected and enhanced to ensure that the area remains an attractive place to live.
- 16.13.10 The Council aims to ensure that open spaces are available within a short walking distance from peoples' homes and form 'stepping stones' on routes to key



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destinations such as schools and community facilities. Attractive open spaces complement development. They can be at a variety of scales and characters from civic parks and squares, village 'community' greens, sports and recreation open spaces, tranquil natural areas hosting habitats and wildlife, or offering adventure and natural play, to characterful pocket parks providing breathing spaces within higher density urban settings.

- 16.13.11 Providing a range of spaces and activity opportunities, both formal and informal which are accessible to all, can increase interest and participation in recreation, be it active or passive. Accommodating a range of activities within an open space encourages varieties of people to visit and share spaces providing vital community cohesion and enjoyment.
- 16.13.12 The Leisure Strategy Chapter 2: Recreational Open Space Strategy assesses the nine typologies of open space most commonly found in Central Bedfordshire and details the provision requirements to deliver both local and strategic open spaces. The space standards are summarised below, and details can be found in the Recreational Open Space Strategy.
- 16.13.13 The types of open spaces covered by the Leisure Strategy Chapter 2 include a range of sorts and scales of open space. Many of these open spaces, particularly Countryside Recreation Sites and Informal Recreation Sites are also important for biodiversity. Indeed for many sites, such as nature reserves, ecological benefits are the primary purpose of the site, with recreation a potential added benefit. The Leisure Strategy therefore considers at the level of recreational benefit in relation to the ecological sensitivity of the site, enabling the standards below to set out sufficient provision of open spaces, including natural areas, for people to use and enjoy, without putting undue pressure on open space sites with sensitive environmental interests.



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Type of Open Space	Quantity
Countryside Recreation Sites	3.19 ha per 1000 population
Urban Parks	0.22 ha per 1000 pop. Major Service Centres only 0.39ha per 1000 pop. (Minor towns where/if required)
Large Formal Recreation Areas	1.20 ha per 1000 population
Informal Recreation Areas	2.6 ha per 1000 population
Small Amenity Spaces	0.55 ha per 1000 population
Children's Play Spaces	0.11ha per 1000 (activity area only). Plus buffer zone of 10-20m from nearest dwelling.
Provision for Young People	0.05ha per 1000 (activity area only). Plus buffer zone of 20-30m from nearest dwelling.
Allotments	0.37 ha per 1000 population (15 plots)
Cemeteries and Churchyards	2.03 burial plots per 1000 population

16.13.14 To assist developers, the Council has developed a Design Guide, which includes information on how open spaces should be designed as part of development proposals. Developers should refer to this as they work up and submit their proposals.

Playing Pitches (Outdoor Sport)

16.13.15 The detailed facilities assessment of current and future needs for outdoor playing pitches, courts and greens contained in Chapter 3: the Playing Pitch Strategy supports the provision of accessible and locally appropriate sporting facilities and opportunities which also help tackle physical inactivity as one of the primary causes of ill health.

16.13.16 The Council will support the delivery of new, and the enhancement of existing outdoor sporting facilities to provide a varied range of sporting opportunities for its growing population. The standard for the provision of outdoor grass sports pitches is set out below, taken from the Leisure Strategy, Chapter 3: Playing Pitch Strategy.



Type of Open Space	Standard Per 1000 Population (Ha)	Standard Per Person (Standard per 1000 / 1000) (Ha)
Outdoor Sport	1.25	0.00125

Policy EE12: Outdoor sport, leisure and open space

Central Bedfordshire Council will protect open spaces and outdoor sports facilities from development. Redevelopment of these sites for other purposes will only be appropriate in exceptional situations, in line with NPPF requirements.

Where they are lost to development, equal or better replacement provision within a reasonable proximity of the original facility must be delivered by the developer, or a contribution provided to the council to re-provide the facility.

On new residential developments, the Council will;

- require the provision of open spaces and outdoor sports facilities in accordance with the Leisure Strategy standards and facility requirements.
- require developments to provide open spaces and outdoor sports facilities on site unless this is demonstrably inappropriate or impossible.
- Where the provision of open spaces and outdoor sports facilities is not on the development site, the developer will be required to provide, enhance and / or extend existing facilities in accordance with the Leisure Strategy requirements. Where the priority facility for improvement/extension is owned by Central Bedfordshire Council a contribution will be required from the developer to deliver the identified improvements

Outdoor sports facilities which are to be delivered by the developer must be designed and constructed in accordance with Sport England facility guidance, together with the facility guidance of the relevant National Governing Body for Sport (NGB).

Open spaces and outdoor sports facilities must provide a management scheme which details the future ownership, management and maintenance of the site. Where the asset is to be adopted by the local authority or town/parish council commuted sums will be paid for maintenance of the facility.

On-site open space facilities and outdoor sports facilities must be designed in at an early stage to be an integral part of the development.

On-site open spaces must be designed to complement proposals for green infrastructure, landscaping, ecological enhancement, and climate change adaptation. Potential recreational damage to Habitats of Principal importance and ecologically sensitive sites should be avoided through good design.



16.14 Local Green Space

- 16.14.1 The NPPF introduced the designation of 'Local Green Space'. These are areas where development is ruled out, apart from in very special circumstances. This designation will not be appropriate for most green areas or open spaces, and should only be applied where;
- the green space is in reasonably close proximity to the community it serves;
 - the green area is demonstrably special to a local community and holds a particular local significance, for example because of its beauty, historic significance, recreational value (including as a playing field), tranquillity or richness of its wildlife, and
 - the green area concerned is local in character and is not an extensive tract of land.
- 16.14.2 The Council supports the principle of designating Local Green Spaces through Neighbourhood Plans.

16.15 Applications for Minerals and Waste Development

- 16.15.1 The Council is fully committed to achieving higher standards of restoration of mineral extraction and landfill sites and changing public attitudes are also demanding these improving standards. Industry recognises the need for high quality restoration and safe and responsible management of minerals and waste management sites. Standards of restoration have generally improved in recent years although there remains scope for further improvement.
- 16.15.2 One way of minimising development impact is to ensure that land taken for mineral and waste uses is restored at the earliest opportunity and that it is left in a safe state capable of sustaining an acceptable after-use. 'Amenity' is the general term for being able to enjoy the countryside, for example through recreation (e.g. angling, walking, water sports etc.) and nature conservation. On larger sites restoration will be required to be progressive in nature and to take place within a reasonable timescale, so that only a portion of the whole site is disturbed by mineral extraction or waste disposal operations at any one time.
- 16.15.3 Applicants will normally be required to submit an aftercare scheme for a period of five years following restoration to ensure that the restoration scheme is maintained until it becomes naturally self-sustaining. In certain cases it may be appropriate to agree a shorter or longer period, depending on the nature of the restoration scheme.
- 16.15.4 In a country with such a high proportion of good quality agricultural land – 34% of the agricultural land is classified as Grade 1 or 2 and 42% is Grade 3 (a and b) – the loss of such land to mineral extraction has been a major planning issue. In the past it was national policy to retain agricultural land in full production and to ensure that a minimum was lost to development. At a time of surpluses in agricultural production the need now is to foster diversification of the rural economy and to balance this against the continuing need to protect the countryside for its own sake without the special priority hitherto afforded to agriculture production. The Council will therefore have regard to the balance of



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environmental impacts and local economic benefits in determination of planning applications on BMV agricultural land, but will only grant permission where any loss of BMV land is clearly justified.

- 16.15.5 Once land is lost to certain development it can be difficult to return it to agriculture. The best and most versatile land (Grades 1, 2, and 3a) is seen as a national resource to be protected from irreversible loss and the current agricultural surpluses are not accepted as an argument against restoring the best and most versatile land to its original quality. The NPPF (paras 112 and 143) indicates that where there is a choice between sites or different classifications, development should be diverted towards land of the lowest possible classification except where other sustainability considerations suggest otherwise. These might include biodiversity, landscape and amenity value, heritage interest or accessibility to infrastructure, local economic diversity, and the protection of natural resources.
- 16.15.6 Certain forms of mineral and waste developments may attract large number of birds either unintentionally for example with respect to non-hazardous landfill sites or intentionally when sites are restored to a nature conservation use. Proposals for sites which might have an impact on aviation safety will need to be rigorously assessed.
- 16.15.7 The NPPF (paras 120, 121 and 143) make it clear that all development should take account of ground conditions and land instability in order to ensure that sites are suitable for its new use and that any uses do not have any unacceptable adverse impacts on the natural and historic environment or human health.
- 16.15.8 Finally, the operation of a mineral facility or waste facility may require the construction or erection of associated temporary and permanent buildings, plant and equipment (e.g. the storage of minerals and waste, minerals and waste processing/treatment equipment, construction of a haul road etc.). Permission will normally be granted for such operations where the developer can demonstrate the benefit of the development. When the ancillary development is no longer required or temporary planning permission expires, the site must be restored to its former use or to an improved scheme approved by the Council. Environmental control facilities required in connection with landfill sites such as boreholes for landfill gas and groundwater monitoring and landfill gas utilisation plant will be required beyond the period of landfill operations.



Policy EE13: Applications for Minerals and Waste Development

The Council will require all proposals for non-permanent minerals or waste development to include the high quality restoration of the site within a reasonable timescale. Opportunities for habitat creation should be considered and, where practical and desirable, provided in all restoration proposals. The MPA / WPA will support after uses which accord with the policies of the development plan.

All proposals for minerals and waste development will, where relevant:

- Include the high quality progressive reclamation and aftercare of the site;
- Be limited to the duration of the main operation;
- Be carried out in a manner which will preserve the long term agricultural quality of the land at the same or higher Agricultural Land Classification Grade as that preceding the development; or
- Where it can be shown that no known suitable alternative site of lesser agricultural value is available, and that the loss of 'best and most versatile' agricultural land is reduced as far as practicable and is clearly outweighed by other planning benefits of the proposal;
- Include an assessment of ground stability conditions before and after completion of all site activities and demonstrate that there will not be any unacceptable adverse impacts;
- Include an assessment of the impact on aviation safety and demonstrate that there will not be an unacceptable adverse impact.



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17 Climate Change and Sustainability

- 17.1.1 This section sets out the planning policies that will be applied to ensure that development in Central Bedfordshire is delivered in a way that contributes to the mitigation of climate change and embeds adaptation to the impacts of climate change in order to limit negative impacts.
- 17.1.2 The NPPF stresses that responding to challenges of climate changes is central to the economic, social and environmental dimensions of sustainable development, placing an emphasis on Local Planning Authorities to adopt proactive strategies to mitigate and adapt to climate change in line with provisions and objectives of the Climate Change Act (2008).
- 17.1.3 As with the Environmental Enhancement Section, this section/chapter is underpinned by the Council's Environmental Framework. This document summarises a range of local studies, assessments, strategies and guidance, and forms part of the technical evidence base for the Local Plan and is the supporting document for these policies.

17.2 Planning for Climate Change

Climate change mitigation: Cutting the carbon footprint of new development

- 17.2.1 The Climate Change Act (2008) establishes a legally binding target to reduce the UK's greenhouse emissions by at least 80% in 2050 from 1990 levels.
- 17.2.2 The Government's expectation set through the NPPF is that each local authority contributes to meeting this target through setting local requirements for the sustainability of buildings that are consistent with the Government's zero carbon policy, adopt nationally described standards, and promote energy from renewable and low carbon sources.
- 17.2.3 As such, the Council will require all major developments to submit a Sustainability Statement that clearly demonstrates the steps taken to minimise energy demand, and implement renewable and low carbon technologies to reduce carbon emissions from the proposed development by at least 10%.
- 17.2.4 The Council recognises the benefits of using the energy hierarchy in reducing energy demand and a fabric first approach, along with use of passive solar design is recommended before deciding on appropriate renewable and low carbon technologies.
- 17.2.5 The Sustainability Statement will also set the strategy to address widely recognised issue of buildings not performing as designed (identified by Zero Carbon Hub as the performance gap), by confirming the proposed measures to ensure that new buildings achieve the energy performance intended at the design stage.

Climate change adaptation: Water efficiency; flood resilience, subsidence and overheating



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- 17.2.6 Climate change projections show that we will experience hotter drier summers, milder winters, and the associated extreme weather impacts of drought and flooding.
- 17.2.7 In 2017 the UK Climate Change Risk Assessment highlighted the need to take early action to mitigate the risks to the environment, the economy and to health, and to ensure that the UK can adapt to the changing climate.
- 17.2.8 The Central Bedfordshire Local Climate change Risk Assessment (LCCRA) identifies flooding, overheating, water resources shortages, subsidence and impacts on the natural environment as risks that need to be planned for and managed. These correspond with the 2017 National Climate Change Risk Assessment as priority areas for actions.
- 17.2.9 Adaptation to climate change is a dynamic and flexible process, with decisions that are made in the near term needing to have regard of the long lifespan of buildings and infrastructure. This includes exploiting opportunities to adapt existing built areas, for example through maximising green infrastructure or by increasing the amount of urban greenery to help absorb floodwater and make buildings and open spaces more comfortable in hot weather.

Making development resilient to the impacts of increased rainfall and drought

- 17.2.10 The design of new developments should reflect the increasing likelihood of periods of either drought or flooding, and consequently value water as a resource that can be stored in times of plenty for re-use in times of deficit. All new developments will therefore be expected to address the issue of water scarcity.
- 17.2.11 Consequently, all new development will be expected to achieve the higher water efficiency standard of 110 litres per person per day, as set by the Part G of the Building Regulations. All commercial development will be expected to demonstrate how water usage will be reduced and the equivalent of the BREEAM 'very good' standard for water efficiency achieved. Developments that will achieve high water efficiency standards going beyond the Building Regulations requirements and those that will include water harvesting and recycling will be looked at favourably. Measures that further promote water efficiency, such as grey water recycling and water butts, will be considered favourably.
- 17.2.12 Site scale adaptation measures, such as Sustainable Drainage systems are dealt with in Policy CC1, however on the individual building level, new developments are required to use simple rainwater harvesting (for example through provision of water butts, for external use wherever practicable).
- 17.2.13 Flood risk at a site level is dealt with in Policy CC3, but it is important that where appropriate, buildings are designed to be more resistant or resilient to flooding and the impacts of flooding both now and in the future.

Mitigating overheating and the urban heat island

- 17.2.14 Built up areas with minimal open green space may exacerbate the risks associated with the urban heat island effect, where heat absorbed by heavy man-made structures radiates at night increasing local temperatures. This risk can be



minimised by increasing green space, use of solar reflective materials and coatings as well as designing ventilation paths through which hot air can be replaced with cooler air from nearby green open spaces. Providing more natural drainage systems to enhance water surfaces in urban areas also has a greater cooling effect, whereas temperatures are higher in densely developed areas with little green space around them.

- 17.2.15 The orientation of a building together with a proportion and positioning of glazing areas determine the level of transmitted solar gain. This is particularly important where solar gain cannot be absorbed (for example by thermal mass) or extracted (through purge of mechanical ventilation) internal temperatures will increase.
- 17.2.16 If managed properly, solar gain can be beneficial in reducing energy demand for heating, but equally it needs to be controlled to avoid build up of unwanted heat leading to overheating. This can be controlled through careful orientation of the building and integration of effective solar control measures, such as brise soleil, external shutters, solar control glazing into a building and tree planting into landscape design.

Managing risks through good design

- 17.2.17 The Sustainability Statement, to be submitted with applications for all major developments, will also demonstrate how the above climate change risks will be addressed through design, and will set out the strategy to minimise and manage these risks through the lifetime of the development.
- 17.2.18 Good design can improve the quality of places and ensure they are adapted to a changing climate. Integrating green space and water within developments can provide many benefits for climate change adaptation including flood storage, localised climate cooling and habitat creation. Developers should make use of the Council's Design Guide, which includes information on how to consider resource efficiency and climate change adaptation in the design of developments.

Supporting the use of sustainability standards for development

- 17.2.19 There are a number of well recognised standards for built environment for both residential and non-residential developments, such as BREEAM, PassivHaus and the Home Quality Mark. The PassivHaus standard concentrates on energy efficiency, thermal comfort and indoor air quality while home Quality Mark and BREEAM covers much wider range of issues that affect sustainability of the development.
- 17.2.20 The Council will look favourably at proposals that use these standards to demonstrate their sustainability and achieve higher standards than those prescribed by the Building Regulations demonstrated by certification of relevant scheme.
- 17.2.21 All major developments will be required to submit a post construction verification report to confirm that the development has been delivered to the approved specification. The report should provide validation documents covering all aspects of the policy and provide as delivered evidence of compliance, for example as built energy calculations, BREEAM or PassivHaus certification,



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photographic evidence of implemented landscape or green infrastructure specification.



Policy CC1 : Climate Change and Sustainability

In order to ensure the delivery of high quality sustainable development that supports the mitigation of, and adaptation to, the impacts of climate change. The Council requires that any new development minimises the vulnerability of the development and its surroundings to climate change impacts through a range of climate resilience measures, such as;

- Minimising overheating through the use of green roofs and walls, shading, landscaping and planting.
- Integrating building level flood resilience measures as appropriate.

New development will be required to incorporate measures that minimise and mitigate its impacts on the environment and climate change by:

- Reducing carbon dioxide emissions
- Maximising energy efficiency and conservation through orientation, layout and design of buildings, landscaping and planting,
- Making use of natural lighting and beneficial solar gain,
- Taking advantage of opportunities to use renewable and low carbon energy sources,
- Minimising water usage and is delivered to the higher water efficiency standard (110 litres per person per day) for residential development and the BREEAM 'very good' standards for water efficiency for commercial development, and demonstrates a water sensitive approach to the design in all developments.
- Incorporating measures that further promote water efficiency, such as grey water recycling or water butts will be considered favourably.

All major developments must provide a Sustainability Statement. This will demonstrate:

- How the above requirements relating to all new developments will be met.
- That the development will provide for a minimum of 10% of its energy demand from renewable and low carbon sources.
- How the performance gap between built and designed energy use will be negated.
- How hard and soft landscaping (trees, vegetation, green walls and roofs) and amenity space will support adaptation to the impacts of climate change, and are also designed to achieve visual, acoustic, wildlife and other environmental benefits.

The Council will support developments that can demonstrate high quality sustainability standards going beyond the Building Regulations requirements and achieve certification to voluntary standards such as PassivHaus, BREEAM Excellent, or the Home Quality Mark.



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17.3 Large scale Renewable Energy

- 17.3.1 Increasing the amount of energy from renewable and low carbon technologies will help to make sure the UK has a secure energy supply, reduce greenhouse gas emissions to slow down climate change, and stimulate investment in new jobs and businesses.
- 17.3.2 The Renewables Capacity Study for Central Bedfordshire (March 2014) shows that a range of technologies may be suitable for this area and are effectively placed to deliver maximum local benefits, whilst at the same time contributing to the national need to increase low carbon energy generation. These include district heating schemes, photovoltaic energy, wind, locally sourced biomass and utilisation of landfill gas.
- 17.3.3 The strategic allocation of sites set out in this plan presents significant opportunities for the provision of large scale low carbon energy schemes due to the concentration of significant demand in a single location, and the fact that they can be integrated into the development at the initial design stage providing scope for on site renewable energy generation.
- 17.3.4 The Written Ministerial Statement (June 2015) states that the Local Plan should identify 'areas as suitable' for wind energy development. What constitutes a 'suitable area' (as opposed to a defined site) is based on a range of factors, including proximity to existing and future urban areas and infrastructure, grid capacity, radar and sensitive locations (such as historic buildings and sites and ecologically sensitive areas). How this is interpreted in Central Bedfordshire will be set out in the Council's existing technical guidance notes for renewable energy, which has greater scope to take into account the latest information.
- 17.3.5 In addition to this, the role of positive community engagement is key. It is a fundamental requirement that developers engage with affected communities and stakeholders at the earliest opportunity, listen to their concerns and are able to demonstrate how these issues will be addressed. Guidance on community engagement is also detailed in the Council's technical guidance for wind.



Policy CC2: Renewable energy development

The Council recognises the environmental, social and economic benefits of renewable or low-carbon energy. Renewable energy proposals will be evaluated against the Council's technical guidance on renewable energy. The Council will support renewable energy developments which are:

- Located in the most suitable areas where negative impacts can be most effectively mitigated. Any unavoidable adverse impacts, including cumulative impacts, such as noise, pollution and harm to visual amenity, should be mitigated through careful consideration of location, scale, design and other measures;
- Located and designed so as to have no unacceptable adverse impact on heritage assets, sensitive landscapes and townscapes.

All developers of renewables schemes are required to engage with all affected stakeholders, including local communities, at the earliest stage in order to understand and clarify issues of objection. The developer will demonstrate how they will proactively mitigate negative impacts and provide adequate enhancements in order to satisfy any concerns of the affected local community.

17.4 Flood Risk Management

- 17.4.1 Central Bedfordshire has been subject to flooding from several sources of flood risk, with the principal risk from fluvial sources, primarily located along the River Ivel corridor in the east, River Flit and River Hit in the centre and Clipstone Brook through Leighton Buzzard in the far west.



- 17.4.2 The area has experienced a number of historic surface water and drainage related flood events caused by factors such as insufficient storm and combined drainage capacity to poor surface water management. The Environment Agency maps and SFRA updated Flood Map for Surface Water (uFMfSW) mapping shows a number of prominent overland flow routes, following topographical flow paths of existing watercourses or dry valleys and local road infrastructure with some isolated ponding located in low-lying areas.



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- 17.4.3 Incidents of historic groundwater flooding in Central Bedfordshire are thought to mostly be caused by the underlying geology of chalk and Lower Greensand, which allows water to pass to and from groundwater aquifers.
- 17.4.4 To minimise the risk created to people and property from new development the NPPF instructs Local Planning Authorities to direct development towards areas at the lowest risk of flooding, develop policies to manage flood risk from all sources, and take opportunities offered by new development to reduce the causes and impacts of flooding.
- 17.4.5 The suitability of development will be assessed by applying the Sequential Test. If, having passed the sequential test, development is proposed in areas at risk of flooding then developers will be required to demonstrate through the Exception Test that suitable compensatory storage and mitigation can be provided, and that the development will result in an overall reduction of flood risk on site and elsewhere. Proposals for development in areas at high risk of flooding will be refused if other suitable sites are reasonably available in areas at lower risk.
- 17.4.6 A sequential approach to the layout of development should be taken at the site level and all development proposals must take account of existing and future flood risk (from all sources). They must demonstrate that the development will be appropriately flood resilient and resistant, safe for all of its users for the lifetime of the development, and that it will not increase flood risk overall. Opportunities to enhance green infrastructure and reduce flood risk by making space for water should be sought.
- 17.4.7 Any protection and flood risk management measures that are required must be satisfactorily implemented and maintained. Where a development benefits from an existing or proposed flood defence scheme, the development should contribute towards the capital and/or maintenance of these defences over its lifetime.
- 17.4.8 Any proposed development located within an area protected by flood defences in a 'fair' or 'poor' condition, or where the level of protection is not to the required standard should be identified.
- 17.4.9 In addition to the criteria set out in the NPPF, the Council will require a site specific Flood Risk Assessment for new development within 20m of any watercourse, including those not shown on the Environment Agency Flood Maps, the Council's Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA), or within an area where are significant surface water issues.
- 17.4.10 Information from the SFRA should be used to inform the master planning of proposed major development sites, and any sites where a site specific Flood Risk Assessment is required.
- 17.4.11 In areas identified at high risk by the SFRA, the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy (2014) or the Climate Change Adaptation Evidence Base Report (2012) the Council may specify requirements for mitigation measures such as controlling surface water run off to below the pre-developed rate.



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- 17.4.12 The Local Planning Authority (LPA), Environment Agency and Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) should be consulted to confirm the level of assessment required and to provide any information on any known local issues.
- 17.4.13 When assessing sites not identified in the Local Plan (windfall sites), developers should use the evidence provided in the SFRA to assess and mitigate flood risk. Information about the Council's SFRA, as well as further material on national policy and local information on flood risk is set out in the Environmental Framework.
- 17.4.14 To minimise the risk from surface water runoff all new development should minimise areas of hardstanding and maximise the use of porous or permeable surface for infiltration, treatment and storage; for example by using permeable paving. Sustainable drainage (SuDS) should be used on all new development as detailed through Policy CC5.
- 17.4.15 The likelihood and impact of flooding is expected to increase in the future due to the impacts of climate change and all new development must take this into account. This can be done through using the appropriate allowances for peak river flows and rainfall intensities when determining risk to the site and the design of flood mitigation and drainage. Likewise, new development will need to ensure people and property will remain safe from flooding for its lifetime Proposed flood mitigation and drainage infrastructure must be designed to handle intense or extreme storm events as well as residual risks associated with exceedance or system failure.
- 17.4.16 At the individual property level, measures to improve resistance and resilience of buildings to flood risk will be required if buildings are situated in any flood risk area. In these areas new buildings should be designed and constructed in a way to prevent floodwater entering the building and damaging its fabric. Where water may enter the building it must be constructed in such a way as to ensure the impact is limited with no permanent damage, the structural integrity maintained, and drying, cleaning, replacement and repair is facilitated. This includes setting of floor levels at an appropriate level for the current and future risk and the type and location of the development.
- 17.4.17 Wherever possible, opportunities should be taken to integrate the Council's objectives for flood risk management with the planning and delivery of new development to reduce the existing flood risk to developed areas and to achieve wider sustainability benefits of a site. This may include integrating or retrofitting surface water measures to replace and/or augment an existing drainage system in a developed catchment. The information provided in the SFRA should also be used as a basis for investigating potential strategic flood risk solutions, for example flood plain restoration, construction of new upstream storage schemes, and cross-boundary working.



Policy CC3: Flood Risk Management

Development will be supported where:

- It is located in areas at lowest risk of flooding (from all sources) and the Sequential and Exception Tests (where required) demonstrate that the site is appropriate for development and its intended use.
- A sequential approach to site layout is applied, directing the most vulnerable uses to the areas at lowest risk from all sources of flooding.
- It will be safe for the lifetime of the development, will not increase flood risk elsewhere or result in a loss of floodplain storage capacity, and reduces the overall flood risk within and beyond the site boundary where possible.
- A site-specific Flood Risk Assessment has been undertaken following the criteria within this policy and the NPPF, which sets out appropriate flood risk management measures.
- Climate change implications are taken into account and the site will be safe during events which exceed the normal design standard or from residual risks or failure of the drainage system.
- Surface water runoff is managed to pre-development rates and volumes, giving priority to the use of SuDS, and discharge locations have capacity to receive all foul and surface water flows from the development.
- The area of impermeable surface is minimised and porous and/or permeable surfaces are used wherever reasonably practicable.
- Mitigation measures maximise water efficiency and contribute to a net gain in water quality, biodiversity, landscape character and green infrastructure.
- Building level flood resilience measures are designed into the development as appropriate.

Where necessary, planning permission will be conditional upon flood protection and/or runoff control measures being operative before other site works.

Development that increases the risk of flooding on or off the development site, or would compromise the performance of flood defences will not be permitted.

Central Bedfordshire Council will safeguard land required for current and future flood management.



17.5 Development close to watercourses

- 17.5.1 Development adjacent to, or which encompasses any kind of watercourse will be considered “close to a watercourse” and should provide opportunities to improve or enhance the water environment. This could be through river restoration, backwater creation, de-silting, de-culverting, in-channel habitat enhancement and appropriate removal of structures.
- 17.5.2 When designed properly, such measures can have benefits such as reducing the costs of maintaining hard engineering structures, reducing flood risk, improving water quality and increasing biodiversity. Social benefits may also be gained by enhancing green space and access to watercourses.
- 17.5.3 To provide the required detail to support a site’s development hydraulic modelling may be required to inform more detailed Flood Risk Assessment studies, to follow Section 19 reports, or as part of the Level 2 SFRA. If a watercourse or drain is shown on OS mapping but is not covered by a Flood Zone, this does not mean there is no potential flood risk and hydraulic modelling would be required at detailed site-specific level to assess the level of flood risk to the site.
- 17.5.4 Building adjacent to the banks of a watercourse has the potential to cause problems to the structural integrity of the banks and the building itself and can make future maintenance of the watercourse more difficult. Development must therefore be set back from the watercourse and an undeveloped buffer strip of no less than 9m should be provided between the top of the bank and any proposed development.
- 17.5.5 Historically, many natural watercourses have been altered in some way, for example artificially straightened or culverted. The act of culverting a watercourse tends to have mainly negative effects for flood risk management, access, maintenance and on the amenity and biodiversity value of the watercourses. The Council therefore expects existing watercourses to remain open wherever possible for both flood defence and environmental purposes. This includes ensuring that existing natural drainage features will be retained wherever possible. In exceptional cases where culverting is unavoidable, the length involved should be restricted to a minimum, with the hydraulic and environmental design assessed, and appropriate mitigating enhancements to the surrounding environment included. It must also be demonstrated that other options have been thoroughly explored before culverting will be considered.
- 17.5.6 Inappropriate planting can lead to the erosion of banks and beds of a watercourse, increase maintenance costs, reduce ecological potential and may even lead to the spread of invasive alien species which are detrimental to the wider ecology of the area. New development is required to ensure that any landscaping and planting will:
- Enhance of the drainage characteristics of a scheme;
 - Stabilise areas that may be vulnerable to erosion;
 - Enhance the visual appearance of the development; and
 - Enhance the ecological potential of the local environment.



- 17.5.7 Through the above measures, development close to a watercourse should contribute to the achievement of good status and help avoid deterioration of water quality in line with the requirements of the Water Framework Directive (2000/60/EC). The Directive is considered in Policy CC6.

Policy CC4: Development close to watercourses

Development should maximise opportunities for watercourse restoration and enhancement as part of the development. New development will be supported where it can be demonstrated that it will:

- Conserve, and where possible, enhance the ecological and flood storage value of the water environment.
- Incorporate and retain existing open watercourses and, where possible, open up existing culverts and create new watercourses within their site design.
- Provide sufficient access to a watercourse, preferably a minimum 9m wide undeveloped buffer strip for maintenance and natural flood storage.
- Mimic features of natural river morphology and hydrology where alterations to the bank of an ordinary watercourse are proposed or which create a new watercourse as part of a sustainable drainage scheme. Where it is not practicable to do so compensatory measures will be provided.
- Maximise opportunities to refurbish and/or renew existing assets (e.g. bridges, culverts and river walls) to ensure their lifetime is commensurate with the lifetime of the development (an assessment of the condition of the assets will be required).
- Not involve any building on top of a culverted watercourse.

Development which would compromise access to watercourses, or compromise the performance of flood defence or navigation facilities will not be permitted.

17.6 Sustainable Drainage and Surface Water Management

- 17.6.1 The Council expects that all developments will use Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and all development is required to provide a drainage strategy. Development proposals will be required to demonstrate the proposed standards of operation, construction, structural integrity and ongoing maintenance of the proposed surface water drainage system.
- 17.6.2 SuDS should be designed to slow, reduce and treat surface water flow by natural means. Where appropriate, every effort should be made to link SuDS into wider initiatives to enhance green infrastructure, improve water quality, benefit wildlife and/or contribute to the provision of the ecosystem service. SuDS should enhance water quality and biodiversity in line with the Water Framework Directive (WFD), 'end-of-pipe solutions' where runoff is directly discharged into a wetland or pond



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should be avoided, and source controls should be incorporated to improve water quality.

17.6.3 The Council's adopted local requirements for the use of SuDS are:

- Plan in SuDS from the start
- Replicate natural drainage
- Water re-use first
- Enhance biodiversity
- Focus on multi-functional uses
- Minimise carbon and waste in SuDS
- Design for easy access and maintenance
- Linked design through every scale
- Place making through SuDS design
- Surface conveyance over pipes



17.6.4 The Council's adopted local requirements for SuDS are set out in full in the Supplementary Planning Document 'Central Bedfordshire Sustainable Drainage guidance: May 2015'. This provides technical guidance including how the Council will assess development proposals; the information required to accompany planning applications; the local requirements for SuDS; and guidance for how SuDS can be designed for the local environmental character.

17.6.5 The level of detail that must be provided at each stage of the planning process is also set out. This enables informed assessment of development proposals, in order to ensure appropriate and specific flood mitigation and sustainable drainage measures are in place. Information and links to the SPD can be found in the Environmental Framework, along with further information on national policy and standards.

17.6.6 In addition to the above, the design of surface water drainage must also comply with the '*Non-statutory technical standards for sustainable drainage systems*' (March 2015, Ref: PB14308); PPG paragraph 80, Building Regulations Approved Document H, the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide and other recognised best practice, including the Ciria SuDS Manual and BRE 365.

17.6.7 The design of surface water drainage must reflect site-specific circumstances such as topography, underlying geology and ground conditions, as these will inform the appropriate use of SuDS. The Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (SFRA) gives an indication of the constraints across Central Bedfordshire and is intended to be used at a preliminary planning stage. Detailed site investigations will therefore need to be carried out to assess the suitability of a site for different types of SuDS and their detailed design. Where site investigations indicate that infiltration SuDS are suitable, these must be designed to mimic natural infiltration as much as possible.



- 17.6.8 Infiltration SuDS will not be appropriate in areas where surface water may be subject to contamination or where assessment demonstrates that risks to groundwater are unacceptable.
- 17.6.9 Discharge methods for surface water runoff should comply with PPG paragraph 80 and Building Regulations Approved Document H and should ease pressure of the development downstream by reducing the impact of surface runoff entering a receiving waterbody or drainage network. Brownfield sites are expected to provide a betterment of at least 30% of the existing discharge.
- 17.6.10 To ensure SuDS continue to function as designed for the lifetime of the development which they serve, new development proposals should include a 'management and maintenance plan'. This should set out arrangements for adoption (if applicable), maintenance activities, access to and responsibilities for public and private components of the system.

Policy CC5: Sustainable Drainage

The Council expects all development to use SuDS as normal practice, giving priority to naturalistic solutions incorporated into the soft landscape of the development.

All development for new buildings must therefore:

- Demonstrate that the surface water drainage is compliant with local requirements and design guidance set out in the Council's Sustainable Drainage SPD, National Standards and industry best practice.
- Design SuDS to deliver multiple environmental benefits, including flood risk and water quality management, biodiversity and landscape enhancement, and improve amenity, access and open space.

All development must:

- Demonstrate that the discharge of surface water obeys the following priority order:
 - firstly, to ground via infiltration;
 - then to a water body at a rate no greater than Qbar greenfield runoff;
 - then to a surface water sewer at a rate no greater than Qbar greenfield runoff.
 - Discharge to a foul water or combined sewer is unacceptable, unless in exceptional circumstances where it can be demonstrated that there are no feasible alternatives and that it will not result in increased flood risk on or off site.
- Demonstrate that surface water runoff is managed as close to its source as possible and flow and quality of the runoff is managed in stages.
- Demonstrate that the run-off from all hard surfaces shall receive an



appropriate level of treatment to minimise the risk of pollution.

- Show that suitable testing has been carried out to demonstrate whether infiltration is possible and that ground water would not be polluted.
- Identify ownership and maintenance responsibilities for the entirety of surface water drainage system and include a 'management and maintenance plan', which shall include the arrangements for adoption by any public authority or statutory undertaker and any other arrangements to secure the operation of the drainage scheme throughout its lifetime.

In exceptional circumstances, where a sustainable drainage system cannot be provided, it must be demonstrated that it is not possible to incorporate sustainable drainage systems, and an acceptable means of surface water disposal is provided at source which does not increase the risk of flooding or give rise to environmental problems and improves on the current situation with a reduction in peak and total discharge.

17.7 Water quality and the Water Framework Directive

- 17.7.1 The Water Framework Directive (WFD) and the Groundwater Directive recognises that development near water bodies can affect their quality and ecology. It establishes a legal framework for the protection, improvement and sustainable use of the water environment. This includes lakes, streams, rivers, groundwater and dependent ecosystems. The Environment Agency's River Basin Management Plans (RBMP) for the Anglian and Thames Districts are the lead policy documents that cover WFD matters in Central Bedfordshire, and place further constraints on new development in terms of its influence on the quality status of receiving water bodies.
- 17.7.2 Many of the watercourses in Central Bedfordshire already meet the 'good' overall WFD status including the Clipstone Brook, the River Ivel (upstream of Henlow) and the Ickwell Brook. However, the majority only meet 'moderate' overall status or less. It is important that developments aim to take positive measures to conform to the WFD, which can be impacted as a result of development, for example in terms of 'deterioration' in ecological status or potential. More information on water quality in Central Bedfordshire is provided by the Environmental Framework.
- 17.7.3 Development in close proximity or which discharges to a waterbody must carry out a WFD assessment demonstrating that it will not lead to deterioration in the overall status of the waterbody, or prevent future attainment of good status. Where there are no apparent waterbodies nearby, consideration should still be given to WFD objectives given that all water eventually makes its way into the river system.
- 17.7.4 Development will identify opportunities to enhance the quality of the water environment, for example by:
- Integrating SuDS and green infrastructure into new development;



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- Managing and where possible reducing the risk of water pollution
- Reducing the effects of flooding and drought on water bodies, and the prioritisation of naturalistic flood defence over the provision of hard flood defences.
- Making modification to watercourses to restore 'natural' systems, including de-culverting, restoring or re-profiling rivers and naturalising river banks.
- Adopting water efficiency measures;
- Restoration of contaminated land.

- 17.7.5 Early consideration of the water environment will enable water quality aims and outcomes to be secured through the planning process. By integrating SuDS into new developments and redevelopments, and through using these in sequence, it is possible to minimise pollutants which may be generated by a development. This in turn will help conform to the water quality objectives of the Water Framework Directive, as well as reducing flood risk. The design of SuDS is considered in Policy CC5.

Policy CC6: Water Quality

A Water Framework Directive (WFD) assessment will be required for proposals involving works which would have a direct impact on a river (e.g. re-alignment of a river or work to bridges).

To ensure good water quality, all new development must demonstrate:

- That it has no adverse impact on the quality of waterbodies and groundwater, or will prevent future attainment of good status.
- That development contributes positively to the water environment and its ecology and does not adversely affect surface and ground water quality;
- How they have contributed to the protection and enhancement of waterbodies identified by the Anglian and Thames River Basin Management Plan objectives.

For any water body that is already in the lowest status class (including poor groundwater quantitative status) under the WFD, no further deterioration shall be permitted. The Council will support development that delivers enhancements where rivers and lakes are not achieving good ecological status or potential.

17.8 Safeguarding the Environment and Development from Pollution

- 17.8.1 An important aspect of providing sustainable development is maintaining a healthy environment and protecting public health, wellbeing and amenity, through the control of pollution. Pollution can cause adverse health risks, damage the environment and interfere with amenity. It can also adversely affect neighbouring land uses, cause long term contamination and hinder regeneration.
- 17.8.2 Some development has the potential to harm the environment and impact on public health in a variety of ways, including the emission of pollutants to the air



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(including odour), water courses and soils, and the generation of noise, vibration, light, litter and pests. The Council will consider the possible polluting effects of a development proposal on aspects such as amenity and surrounding land uses and other receptors such as the effect on biodiversity.

- 17.8.3 In addition to pollution, the NPPF makes it clear that all development should take account of ground conditions and land instability in order to ensure that sites are suitable for its new use and that any uses do not have any unacceptable adverse impacts on the natural and historic environment or human health.
- 17.8.4 The Council will seek to maintain sustainable and healthy environments through the careful consideration of development proposals which are likely to cause pollution or are likely to be exposed to potential sources of pollution. Proposals will be required to comply with the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide or any site specific Development Briefs or Masterplans. Where necessary the Council will use planning conditions and/or legal agreements to help limit the impact of pollution.

Policy CC7: Pollution

Development proposals which are likely to cause pollution or are likely to be exposed to potential unacceptable levels of pollution or land instability will only be permitted where it can be demonstrated that measures can be implemented to minimise impacts to a satisfactory level which protects health, environmental quality and amenity.



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Shaping where you live 2035



High Quality Places

Local Plan 2015-2035

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18 High Quality Places

18.1 Health Impact Assessment

- 18.1.1 A wide range of social and environmental factors can affect the health of communities and as planning plays a vital role in shaping where we live and work it can impact directly on health and wellbeing.
- 18.1.2 It is known that good health is related to good quality housing and development, well designed street scenes and neighbourhoods, quality and efficiency of transport systems, opportunities to experience leisure and cultural services, the availability of services and facilities and opportunities for social interaction. It is therefore important that this council ensures that health and wellbeing are properly considered from the very earliest stages of development proposals through the use of Health Impact Assessments.
- 18.1.3 Health Impact Assessments are a tool aimed at identifying all the effects on health in order to enhance the benefits and minimise any risks to health. They ensure that the effects of development on both health and health inequalities are considered and responded to during the planning process. The extent of the HIA undertaken will depend on the type and size of the project that is proposed. The Council will work to produce a Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) to provide detailed guidance on the provisions of Health Impact Assessments and their applications within Central Bedfordshire.

Policy HQ1: Health Impact Assessment

Planning applications that meet the thresholds set out in the Council's Health Impact Assessment SPD are required to be accompanied by a Health Impact Assessment (HIA) unless the screening process indicates otherwise. Where an impact is identified, actions must be recommended (to mitigate a negative impact or enhance or secure a positive one) and integrated into the proposal.

18.2 Social and Community Infrastructure

- 18.2.1 The Council recognises the importance of facilitating social interaction and creating strong, vibrant and inclusive communities. The delivery of sufficient community facilities and accessible services to meet local needs helps to improve the health, social and cultural wellbeing of all.
- 18.2.2 Community infrastructure is facilities that support a community's need for social engagement and participation, meets local needs and improves the well-being of those who live or work in the locality. For example this may include:
- Leisure, recreational or cultural facilities and community buildings;
 - Local shops and services, including those for social; educational and health use;
 - Libraries and health centres; and



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- Any other services or facilities supporting employment and housing growth which enhance the sustainability of communities.
- 18.2.3 Social infrastructure can include: opportunities for residents to be actively involved in their community through their participation in community activities, social networks, forums, groups and volunteering; opportunities for social action and community engagement; and support, advice, training and assistance with the formation of new community groups, including the provision of 'start up' grants.
- 18.2.4 New residential development often increases pressures on social and community infrastructure. In line with national guidance, the Council will aim to protect existing community facilities whilst also working towards enhancing provision across Central Bedfordshire. Where existing facilities are not adequate to support proposed residential development, developers will be required to contribute towards or provide new or enhanced facilities.
- 18.2.5 Access to high quality well designed community facilities and public spaces contribute to a strong sense of place, as well as a strong sense of community. Community facilities require a pattern of development that makes the fullest appropriate possible use of public transport, walking and cycling and provides ease of access to facilities and services.
- 18.2.6 A "community hub" approach is encouraged, where community facilities can be co-located and form part of wider service delivery role, meeting a range of community needs from a single location. The co-location of facilities and services, providing shared facilities and integrated service delivery, increases foot fall and helps to make services more sustainable; it also reduces unnecessary journeys and means that residents can access services to better and meet their every day needs with ease.
- 18.2.7 The need for social and community infrastructure generated by new development must be planned ahead, with interim or temporary provision provided ahead of full provision made at a later date to a standard that ensures future residents are well served and that any existing community does not suffer adverse impacts. This may require certain facilities and services to be provided before dwellings are occupied or at a very early stage to establish preferred trends and would be determined on a site by site basis. Temporary schemes must be accompanied by a clear exit strategy that provides for overlap with the onset and transfer to permanent provision. Schemes must include an agreed timescale for the delivery of all social and community infrastructure. Developers will be required to contribute to the long term management and maintenance of temporary and permanent community facilities to ensure future communities benefit from provision.
- 18.2.8 Social and community infrastructure requires strong working partnerships between the Council, Town and Parish Councils, developers, public sector agencies, the voluntary and community sector and the business sector. Providers will need to meet the health and social care; educational, cultural and learning; social and community development needs of residents in new and existing communities. Developers will be required to work closely with those affected by their proposals,



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in particular Town and Parish Councils, to develop designs and specifications and take account of the views of the community and have regard to the specific design requirements of those operating and using the facilities, at an early stage.

- 18.2.9 The Community Right to Bid provisions give local community groups such as parish councils, charities, voluntary organisations and social enterprises a right to nominate a building or other land for listing by Central Bedfordshire Council as an asset of community value. The legislation aims to help communities faced with losing local amenities and buildings which are of importance to them. The current use of the building or land being nominated (that is not an ancillary use) must further the social wellbeing or social interests of the local community. When a listed asset is to be sold, local community groups will have a chance to make a bid and buy it on the open market.

Community Infrastructure: Libraries

- 18.2.10 Central Bedfordshire libraries are safe, trusted spaces which act as gateways to public services and support initiatives to tackle disadvantage and exclusion. A number of recent national reports have highlighted the ability of new libraries to act as catalysts to economic regeneration within the wider community. The Central Bedfordshire Library Service has a pivotal role in both the urban and rural communities as a neutral community resource and meeting space which the whole community can use.
- 18.2.11 The library service in Central Bedfordshire has evolved into a flexible, multi-faceted service, which functions as an important enabler and provider of community activities and events. The Council's 12 libraries provide cultural hubs and also support other council and community agendas such as health and wellbeing, literacy and learning and education and skills.
- 18.2.12 The Council's *Five Year Plan 2015-20*, supports the creation of the emerging Library Strategy which will develop the Council's themes of 'creating stronger communities', 'great resident services' and 'market towns that will thrive and prosper'.
- 18.2.13 The emerging Library Strategy will set out the vision and priorities for the Council's Library Service for the next 5 years, building on the strong foundations established by the current Library Strategy (2012). The emerging Strategy sees the Council continuing to provide a comprehensive library service to all residents, whilst also ensuring that it is relevant, efficient and sustainable. Any enhancement of existing services or provision of new services will be required to support the priorities of the new Library Strategy.
- 18.2.14 The planned Dunstable Leisure Centre and Library project will see the Library Service at the heart of a multi-facility hub providing sport, leisure, library programmes and activities, Citizens Advice Bureau and adult social day care under one roof. This pilot project for CBC will help shape the future direction of CBC leisure and library services and will inform the continuous improvement of the library service including the requirements of increased opening hours and evolving technology.



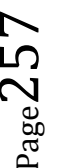
Infrastructure

To deliver new facilities and services, subject to viability, the Council will work with developers, service providers and partners to:

- New housing developments will be required to contribute towards the provision of social and community infrastructure to meet the need generated by the development. Where an application fails to provide adequate social and community infrastructure without reasoned justification, or fails to make appropriate planning obligation contributions, it will be refused.

Development which proposes the change of use or loss of land and buildings which are currently or were previously a community infrastructure use will be resisted. Permission will not be granted for change of use unless the applicant can prove that:

- Where a site or building is listed by the Council as an Asset of Community Value the Council will consider this to be a material consideration in any applications regarding its change of use.



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18.3 Indoor Sport and Leisure Facilities

- 18.3.1 Indoor sport and leisure facilities are not only important in contributing to improving the physical health of communities but they also perform a function as valued community hubs where people meet and socialise. Indoor sports facilities including swimming pools, gyms, sports courts and work-out studios are usually provided by public leisure centres. The Council has six multi-facility public leisure centres spread across its area. Access to these buildings is central to creating and maintaining healthy communities. It is therefore important that existing facilities are retained and that new development plays a role in delivering appropriate infrastructure to serve its residents.
- 18.3.2 The Council also has policies which address the protection and provision of outdoor sport facilities and open space in relation to new development. These are included within the Environmental Enhancement section of this Plan (Section 17).



Policy HQ3: Indoor Sport and Leisure Facilities

Central Bedfordshire Council will protect indoor sports and leisure facilities from development. Redevelopment of these sites for other purposes will only be appropriate in exceptional situations, in line with NPPF requirements.

Where they are lost to development, equal or better replacement provision within a reasonable proximity of the original facility must be delivered by the developer, or a contribution provided to the council to re-provide the facility where land has been identified which is suitable and available for that provision.

On new residential developments, the Council will require;

- the provision of indoor sports and leisure facilities in accordance with the Leisure Strategy standards and facility requirements.
- developments to provide indoor sports and leisure facilities on site unless this is demonstrably inappropriate or impossible.
- the enhancement and / or extension of existing facilities in accordance with the Leisure Strategy requirements, where the provision of indoor sports and leisure facilities is not on the development site. Where the priority facility for improvements is owned by Central Bedfordshire Council a contribution will be required from the developer to deliver the identified improvements.
- on-site indoor sports and leisure facilities which are to be delivered by the developer to be designed and constructed in accordance with Sport England facility guidance, together with the facility guidance of the relevant National Governing Body for Sport (NGB).
- proposals for on-site indoor sports and leisure facilities to provide a management scheme which details the future ownership, management and maintenance of the site, and where the site is to be adopted commuted sums are to be paid for the maintenance of the facility.

18.4 Communications Infrastructure

Broadband

- 18.4.1 National policy requires Local Plans to support the expansion of electronic communications networks. The expansion and development of these networks is critical to supporting and growing businesses and improving the area's productivity; in addition to attracting new investment in knowledge based and technology intensive sectors. Such provision enables people to access services and work from home and can have wider impacts on the need to travel, accessibility and the low carbon economy
- 18.4.2 The Council's approved Joint Local Broadband Plan 2012 sets out the Council's ambition to deliver improved broadband with Next Generation Access for all by



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2020. The Council has met its initial targets and further measures are planned to support existing premises to receive superfast broadband services.

- 18.4.3 A key part of delivering this vision for the area is ensuring that new developments put in place the provision of digital infrastructure to support the delivery of high speed broadband services.
- 18.4.4 Superfast broadband is considered to be internet access with connection speeds of greater than 30Mbps. However, technological advances means available speeds are constantly increasing, and the Council wishes to ensure a network that can be upgraded, so residents and businesses are able to benefit from increasing access speeds, for example Gigabit (1000Mbps) ultra fast services.
- 18.4.5 New build infrastructure can be designed to provide high rates of connectivity. The Government and the British Standards Institution have produced a Publicly Available Specification (PAS 2016) which aims to inform builders and developers about how to install digital infrastructure into all new build domestic dwellings. Likewise, builders and developers should also consider the Data Ducting Infrastructure for New Homes Guidance Note (2008) when planning digital infrastructure requirements for developments.
- 18.4.6 As such, the Council wishes to see the necessary on-site infrastructure put in place at the time of construction, to ensure future connectivity to superfast services. Developers should therefore consult with telecommunications providers at the earliest opportunity in the planning process in relation to the provision of appropriate infrastructure services and the co-location of utilities and broadband.
- 18.4.7 The Council will expect all new residential developments and all employment development to include provision for broadband infrastructure to support the delivery of superfast broadband services. It is recognised that the availability of high speed digital infrastructure is increasingly becoming essential for residential and commercial premises. High speed connectivity can increase the value of developments. In addition to the Council's investment in enhancing existing broadband infrastructure, it is recognised that new infrastructure enabling new communities to access superfast broadband services can also support improved access for nearby communities. The Council would support investment that improves wider superfast broadband connectivity where practicable.

Radio and Telecommunications

- 18.4.8 Voice and mobile telecommunications services are increasingly critical aspects for residents and businesses, and the Council supports enhancement of indoor and outdoor connectivity across Central Bedfordshire. Telecommunications technology is rapidly evolving, as highlighted in the Government's Next Generation Mobile Technologies: A Five Year Strategy for the UK which seeks to provide faster and more reliable communications, such as 5G, for applications from self driving cars to the "internet of things".
- 18.4.9 In line with the Government's policy, the Council supports the principle that there should be high quality access to communications technology where people live,



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work and travel. The Council would be supportive in principle for 5G pilot projects that can play a key part in achieving high levels of indoor and outdoor coverage.

- 18.4.10 Central Bedfordshire Council require that existing radio and telecommunications structures and sites should be used wherever feasible. Where new installation sites are proposed, justification should be provided to demonstrate that there are no feasible opportunities for mast or site sharing.
- 18.4.11 There is a clear need to balance the social and economic benefits of any particular telecommunications development against their potential environmental impact. The principal issues that are likely to arise are landscape and visual considerations because of the height and massing of masts and equipment.
- 18.4.12 Some smaller scale masts fall within 'permitted development' but require the 'prior approval' of the LPA. In such cases, the consideration of proposals will be limited to the acceptability of the proposal in relation to appearance and siting. Appearance of a mast includes its materials, colour and design, and consideration of siting will involve its impact on the ecological value of the site, the wider landscape and its proximity to buildings and housing and the availability of alternative infrastructure in the area.
- 18.4.13 The criteria at Policy HQ5 will be applied in these cases and for those more significant radio and telecommunications that do not constitute 'permitted development'.



Policy HQ5: Broadband and Telecommunications Infrastructure

Central Bedfordshire Council will expect all new residential development and all employment development to include provision for superfast next generation broadband infrastructure and where possible seek to capitalise on new investment to serve and enhance broadband coverage for nearby residents.

This should where possible facilitate a fibre to the premises solution, or the equivalent technology, capable of providing superfast broadband services with a minimum of 30Mbps (subject to Government policy).

Provision should be made with minimal disruption and minimal need for reconstruction, and allow for future growth/improvements in service infrastructure/broadband service.

The Council supports the provision of high quality communications technology offering access to places where people live, work and travel in Central Bedfordshire.

Existing radio and telecommunications structures and sites should be used wherever feasible. Where new installation sites are proposed, justification should be provided to demonstrate that there are no feasible opportunities for mast or site sharing.

Any new masts or telecommunications equipment must:

- enhance indoor and outdoor mobile telecommunications coverage and reliability for voice services and mobile broadband.
- be sited to minimise visual intrusion and to ensure that local amenity is not significantly adversely affected;
- be sympathetically designed;
- be sited so they are not overly prominent or visually dominating within the street scene;
- Would not cause an overbearing impact upon neighbouring dwellings due to height, proximity and/or design of structures;
- be sited so that there is no significant adverse impact on the Chilterns AONB, SSSIs, identified heritage assets and any important landscape features identified in the Landscape Character Assessment 2016.



18.5 Design and Local Character

- 18.5.1 Central Bedfordshire is a diverse area characterised by distinctive landscapes, important heritage and wildlife assets, and a variety of settlements of specific character. It is therefore important that new developments are designed to respect this diversity and enhance the unique characteristics of the area.
- 18.5.2 Good design creates distinctive, functional and sustainable places for residents to live, work and enjoy. The Council has adopted its own technical guidance document on design, the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide, to ensure that new developments at all scales are of the highest design quality and enhance the area. All new development is expected to comply with this guidance and all relevant policies contained within this Plan. Where appropriate, conditions will be attached to planning permissions to ensure that design considerations are addressed when the development is implemented.
- 18.5.3 The following general principles should be adhered to in designing new schemes:

Responding to local context

- 18.5.4 All development proposals will be expected to achieve a high standard of design and should be underpinned by a thorough analysis of the site and its surrounding area. The Council greatly values the distinctive areas of natural and historic character across Central Bedfordshire and new developments should be well integrated and positively related to their surroundings.



- 18.5.5 There should be no harm to local amenity and local character should be protected and where possible, enhanced. On larger strategic sites variety across the scheme will be fundamental to creating a place with its own character, and this should be achieved by varying layouts, street types and landscaping for example.

Movement and legibility

- 18.5.6 In designing new developments emphasis should be placed on creating a hierarchical network of well connected streets which meet the needs to all street users, and prioritise pedestrians, cyclists and public transport over private motor vehicles. The layout of the street network, supported by the positioning of key buildings, should also be used to enable people to navigate through new developments easily using safe and attractive routes.
- 18.5.7 All new developments will be expected to comply with the Council's parking standards as set out in this Local Plan.



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Sustainable design

- 18.5.8 All new developments should optimise the potential for sustainable design. They should be located and designed to maximise the opportunity to travel by sustainable modes and should ensure appropriate consideration is given to orientation, landscaping, SUDS, energy, water use, and potential for pollution. The sorting and segregating of waste materials by occupiers is essential to the success of recycling and reuse schemes, and new developments should provide adequate and convenient storage space for the appropriate in-house storage of recyclables.
- 18.5.9 The Council feels strongly that the needs of all residents should be accommodated within the built environment. This should be done as part of an integrated design process from the outset, rather than as an add-on at a later stage.

Materials and detailing

- 18.5.10 A coordinated approach should be taken to the use of materials and the design and siting of street furniture, boundary treatments, lighting, signage and public art, all of which contribute towards place making. Trees and other planting appropriate to the scale of development and space available should be incorporated in order to soften the streetscape and reduce the visual impact of car parking. It is important that the choice of landscaping and materials used within the public realm should be durable and functional in order to accommodate everyday and infrequent uses such as the movement of vehicles and people and gritting. Consideration must also be given to the cost, practicalities and responsibilities for the maintenance of landscaping and materials in the long term.

Community safety

- 18.5.11 The design of new developments should address community safety concerns by providing clear boundaries between public and private space and ensuring the fronts of buildings and their principal entrances front onto the street or public space to increase pedestrian activity. Buildings and layouts should also be designed to maximise opportunities for natural surveillance and provide good quality lighting and sensible landscaping.

Density

- 18.5.12 Careful consideration needs to be given to the density of new schemes to ensure they make the best and most efficient use of land available. The key to creating high quality places is not simply about achieving a certain density; it is about designing schemes that take into account the character of surrounding areas and the opportunities and constraints present in a particular locations. The Design Guide provides examples of where different densities might be appropriate in Central Bedfordshire but all schemes will be considered on a case by case basis and will be required to meet the design principles identified within this Local Plan and the Design Guide.
- 18.5.13 The Council will generally support higher densities within urban locations and along existing and potential new public transport corridors in order to secure the



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provision of commercially viable services and support retail, employment and community facilities. Changes in density across a larger scheme or in urban settings can often be appropriate and add variety in character, providing that they are well designed. For edge of urban sites and those within or adjoining smaller towns and villages within the rural area, the density of the scheme will be expected to reflect the existing character of the surrounding area, and appropriate landscaping and boundary treatments will be required to provide an appropriate edge and protect open countryside.

Policy HQ6: High Quality Development

The Council will ensure that all developments are of the highest possible quality and respond positively to their context. All development proposals, including extensions and change of use, should ensure that:

- Proposals take account of opportunities to enhance or reinforce the local distinctiveness of the area and create a sense of place;
- Size, scale, massing, orientation, materials and appearance relate well to the existing local surroundings and reinforce local distinctiveness, both built and natural;
- Careful consideration is given to the density of all new housing proposals to ensure they make the most efficient use of the land available whilst reflecting the existing character of the surrounding area and making provision for appropriate landscaping and boundary treatments.
- Proposals are well connected to surrounding areas, providing safe, attractive and convenient routes that encourage travel by sustainable modes and meet the needs of all street users.
- A clear distinction between public and private space using clear boundaries.
- Proposals are complimentary to the existing natural environment, taking account of the landscape setting, landscape character, Rights of Way, biodiversity, and Green Infrastructure. High quality hard and soft landscaping appropriate to the scale of development proposed should be used to integrate the proposal into the environment;
- Inclusive design is considered from the outset;
- Layouts are designed to maximise surveillance and increase pedestrian activity within the public realm to reduce opportunities for crime;
- There is not an unacceptable adverse impact upon nearby existing or permitted uses, including impacts on amenity, privacy, noise or air quality;
- Resources are used efficiently and energy and water efficiency is maximised;
- Any lighting associated with the development does not have a detrimental



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impact on the surrounding area;

- New development will support the sustainable management of waste through the appropriate layout and design of buildings, external spaces and roads in accordance with the Design Guide for Central Bedfordshire and Waste Strategic Policy WSP5 of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan (January 2014); and

All new development will be expected to comply with the requirements of the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide (and subsequent revisions).

18.6 Public Art

- 18.6.1 Public Art is recognised as a key mechanism to enhance public realm and promote local distinctiveness, Public Art is also a valuable tool in engaging local communities in the design and creative processes which assist in engendering a sense of involvement and ownership.



Policy HQ7: Public Art

The Council requires Public Art appropriate to the scale of development to be provided as part of development consisting of:

- Residential development of 50 or more units
- Any new development facing on to the public realm where floor area exceeds 1000m² including retail, leisure, public buildings and educational establishments.
- New public spaces associated with town centre development and enhancement.
- Transport interchanges and major highways and transport infrastructure projects especially within an urban context.

All development proposals should take account of the detailed guidance presented in the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide.

18.7 Back-land Development

- 18.7.1 Back-land development refers to the development of land which sits behind the existing building line with little or no frontage onto the public highway, for example residential gardens. Proposals on back-land sites are often for residential development, however in some cases smaller scale office or ancillary uses are proposed.
- 18.7.2 The Council does not object to all back-land development, but it must be ensured that it is well designed and suitable to the existing character and context. There will however be some cases where development of back-land is not suitable, for example if it would have a detrimental impact on the character of the area or if it would be depart significantly from the existing grain of development.

Policy HQ8: Back-land Development

Proposals for the development of back-land sites will be resisted where they are against the existing pattern of development or where there would be a detrimental impact on the landscape, historic environment, or character of the area and the existing pattern and grain of development.

They must integrate well with the existing character of the area and surrounding built and natural form.

18.8 Larger Sites

- 18.8.1 This plan allocates a number of housing sites to meet the identified need. All of these allocations which propose 300 dwellings or more, or which are on a sensitive site will be expected to work with the Council to produce a Development Brief. Any allocations which propose more than 400 homes, are on a sensitive



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site, or are to be phased will be expected to provide a Design Code for the site as a whole.

- 18.8.2 A Development Brief is intended to bridge the gap between the Local Plan and a planning application. It will focus on planning issues and must be consistent with the Local Plan. A Development Brief often details a site's constraints and opportunities, and outlines what type of development is expected by the Local Planning Authority. The guidance in Development Briefs will focus on planning issues.
- 18.8.3 A Design Code is a detailed technical guidance document which plans for high quality design across a site through the use of written text and supporting drawings. Design Codes clarify the quality and type of design which is expected for a site, setting out key design principles. This provides certainty for developers and the local community, whilst ensuring high quality development.
- 18.8.4 Whilst this Plan aims to make provision for enough housing to meet the Council's need as identified in Section 7, the Council recognises that circumstances may arise where larger windfall sites come forward. A mix of uses is expected to enable to creation of sustainable communities. All mixed-use development must ensure that the range of uses provided are properly integrated and respect neighbouring use, including those which are already existing.

Policy HQ9: Larger Sites

Larger sites are expected to provide a mix of uses to ensure an integrated approach towards delivery of residential, economic and community uses.

Where development exceeds 300 houses, where there are complex design or amenity issues, or the site is sensitive, a Development Brief must be agreed prior to submission of a Full or Outline planning application.

A Design Code will be required for proposals of 400 dwellings or more, or where the site is:

- Made up of multiple related sites that will be built out in phases over a long period of time;
- In multiple ownership and coordination between the parties is desirable;
- Likely to be developed by two or more different developers; or
- Requires a well considered approach to design due to its sensitivity or the sensitivity of a surrounding area.

18.9 Small open spaces

- 18.9.1 The Council recognises the importance of retaining green spaces within our towns and villages as they can contribute to the greening of the built environment, provide havens for wildlife, establish a sense of place and generally create attractive and enjoyable places in which to live and work.



- 18.9.2 Small open spaces can provide an attractive landscape setting, contribute to traffic calming and screen or soften views by creating buffers between different uses. These types of open spaces can also support habitat connectivity for wildlife and form a key component in sustainable drainage.
- 18.9.3 The Council's Leisure Strategy sets out the requirements for the creation of new open spaces in developments. It has identified Central Bedfordshire's stock of open spaces above a threshold of 200 sqm and in accordance with national guidance these are protected by this Plan from their inappropriate redevelopment. There is however a need to resist the loss of smaller amenity areas not identified in the Leisure Strategy, which while they may or may not have a recreational function, contribute to the visual amenity, character and environment of our settlements.

Policy HQ10: Small Open Spaces

Verges, landscape strips and other areas which provide opportunities for recreation or contribute positively to the visual amenity and/or the ecological networks of the area will be safeguarded from encroachment or loss unless social, environmental or economic benefits which outweigh the need to protect the land can be demonstrated.

18.10 Modern Methods of Construction

- 18.10.1 'Modern methods of construction' (MMC) is a collective term used to describe a number of construction methods. These differ significantly from conventional construction methods such as brick and block. They are fundamentally about better products and processes which improve efficiency, quality, customer satisfaction, environmental performance, sustainability and the predictability of delivery timescales.
- 18.10.2 There are many types of approaches that are encompassed within MMC. These include:
- Panellised units produced in a factory and assembled on-site to produce a three dimensional structure.
 - Volumetric construction to produce three-dimensional modular units in controlled factory conditions prior to transport to site.
 - Hybrid techniques that combine both panellised and volumetric approaches.
 - Floor or roof cassettes, pre-cast concrete foundation assemblies, pre-formed wiring looms, mechanical engineering composites and innovative techniques such as tunnel form or thin-joint block work.
- 18.10.3 This is an area of considerable innovation with new methods and products being developed on an on-going basis. To reflect this additional guidance will be provided in the Council's Design guide.



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- 18.10.4 The Council recognises the potential benefits in promoting and encouraging innovation in relation to modernising construction and will therefore consider applications that embrace these favourably.
- 18.10.5 The Council will maintain a 5-year land supply of housing delivery and in doing so will hold landowners, developers and housebuilders to account on timescales for on-site delivery. MMC could play an important role in accelerating the pace of this delivery on site. MMC is also seen as being a key approach that will be necessary to counter the increasing current and future implications in the shortage of skilled labour in the construction sector.
- 18.10.6 We would encourage partnerships between housebuilders, Registered Providers and MMC manufacturers with a view to achieving increased build rates and accelerated housebuilding. This will be monitored and recorded as part of the 5-year land supply calculations.
- 18.10.7 The Council will take an evidence-based approach to commissioning partners who can deliver quality homes at an accelerated pace. This may include manufactures that make effective use of modern building techniques and innovative methods of construction.

Policy HQ11: Modern Methods of Construction

The Council aims to encourage innovation and appropriate use of modern building techniques. Therefore, proposals that embrace modern methods of construction will be considered favourably. This will include being more flexible with regards to design and finishes.

Developers will be asked to demonstrate how they have considered use of MMC in their proposal to determine the relative benefit or appropriateness of MMC.

The Council aspires for 20% of all new development over the period of this plan to be delivered by utilising modern methods of construction.



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Historic Environment

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19 Historic Environment

19.1 Overview

- 19.1.1 The historic environment forms the basis of local character, plays an important role in the shaping of places and can help to create a sense of social, physical and mental wellbeing.
- 19.1.2 Heritage assets and their settings are a non-renewable resource and the Council is committed to their protection, enhancement and conservation so that they can be enjoyed by the whole community now and in the future. Heritage Assets include: Listed Buildings, Scheduled Monuments, Conservation Areas, Registered Parks and Gardens, Historic Landscapes, Archaeological Sites and Monuments, and other non-designated assets. It is an objective of Government policy to conserve and enhance all aspects of the historic environment. National advice on the identification and conservation of the historic environment, as well as development management decisions are set out in the NPPF and the Council will take full account of those requirements in the consideration of planning applications and allocations for development.
- 19.1.3 The Council is required to maintain or have access to a Historic Environment Record which contains details of all known heritage assets within the area. In Central Bedfordshire, the Historic Environment Record (HER) comprises nearly 11,000 records relating to buildings, landscapes and archaeological sites and monuments and includes designated and non-designated heritage assets. The Council will ensure that information gathered through plan making or development is made publicly accessible via the Historic Environment Record.
- 19.1.4 In addition the Council may require developers to make a record of any works to a heritage asset or an asset that will be lost, wholly or in part, as a result of any permitted development, and to make that information publicly accessible, through the Historic Environment Record. The Council also supports the distribution of information about the historic environment to the community through a variety of media; including public open days, displays, the internet and leaflets.
- 19.1.5 Understanding the value and significance of a place is essential to inform decisions about its future. The degree of significance will determine what, if any, protection, including statutory and local designation, is appropriate for heritage sites.

19.2 Archaeology

- 19.2.1 The Historic Environment Record (HER) contains information on around 5,000 archaeological sites and monuments. Prospective developers should contact the Council's Archaeology Team in order to establish whether there is potential archaeological interest at a



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proposed development site and to determine if there is a need for a field evaluation of this resource prior to the submission of a planning application.

- 19.2.2 Where it is deemed that there is archaeological potential developers will be required to submit an archaeological desk-based survey for the site. Appropriate expertise may be necessary to ensure that the work is carried out to the correct standard and all the relevant issues are appreciated and understood. In some cases, developers will be required to commission an archaeological field evaluation to define the character, extent and condition of any remains.
- 19.2.3 Central Bedfordshire also has 83 Scheduled Monuments, protected under the terms of the 1979 Ancient Monuments and Archaeological Areas Act. The Council will maintain a presumption against development that will result in harm to or loss of any Scheduled Monument or its setting. Any development that has the potential to impact upon a Scheduled Monument or its setting will have to demonstrate that the harm or loss is necessary to achieve public benefits which outweigh the harm or loss and will have to comply with paragraphs 132 to 134 of the NPPF.
- 19.2.4 Non-designated archaeological assets that are demonstrably of equivalent significance to Scheduled Monuments will be subject to the policy requirements applied to designated heritage assets.



Policy HE1: Archaeology

Development proposals that affect known archaeological heritage assets or areas which have the potential for archaeological heritage assets must be accompanied by an Archaeological Heritage Statement.

Archaeological Heritage Statements must:

- Describe the significance of the archaeological heritage assets that will be affected by the development; and
- Assess the level of impact that the development proposals will have on those assets including where necessary an assessment of the impact of the development proposals on their setting.

Exceptions will be made where pre-application or Archaeological Officer advice indicates that an Archaeological Heritage Statement is not necessary.

Where development proposals will impact upon archaeological heritage assets, where possible, the Council will seek the preservation of those remains *in situ*.

Where preservation *in situ* cannot be achieved, a scheme of archaeological investigation, recording, analysis and publication (i.e preservation by record) will be required prior to the completion of the development. This scheme will be approved in writing by the Council in advance of development and include provision for the long term curation of any resulting archive and appropriate publication. This is required in order to record and advance understanding of the significance of any archaeological heritage assets to be lost (wholly or in part) as a consequence of the development.

The Council will support proposals that include provision for the enhancement, conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment by the creation of appropriate management and interpretation schemes.

Development proposals that cause substantial harm to the significance of archaeological heritage assets or their settings, whether designated or non-designated, or which will not undergo investigation will be refused unless the application demonstrates that the public benefits which the development will bring substantially outweigh the loss of significance.



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19.3 Historic Landscapes and Development

19.3.1 A particular feature of Central Bedfordshire is the presence of a high number of historic parks and gardens. The 13 registered parks and gardens within the area include those of exceptional interest and international importance; namely Woburn Abbey, Wrest Park, Silsoe, Old Warden Park (including Swiss Garden), Luton Hoo Park and Southill Park. There are also a number of undesignated historic parks and gardens across Central Bedfordshire. All of the



parkland makes an important contribution to local distinctiveness both in the wider landscape and historic significance. Historic parks and gardens often contain other heritage assets such as Listed Buildings or Scheduled Monuments. Therefore, any development proposal that affects a park and garden will need to take a holistic approach to the impact on the landscape and collective of heritage assets as a whole.

19.3.2 Historic landscapes similarly add interest and variety to the generally farmed countryside. Over 168 historic landscapes and features are protected by other policies or legislation, for instance if they are a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). However, the complexity of the historic landscape means that there are many sites, features and areas which do not have such a designation but nevertheless should be retained because of their contribution to the wider landscape and our ability to read our heritage.



Policy HE2: Historic Parks and Gardens

Development proposals that affect Registered Parks and Gardens or their settings must be accompanied by a Historic Parks and Gardens Heritage Statement. The Historic Parks and Garden Heritage Statement must:

- Describe the significance of the designed landscape that will be affected by the development; and
- Assess the impact that the development proposals will have, including the loss or harm to of any historic features.

Exceptions will be made where pre-application advice from the Council indicates a Historic Parks and Gardens Heritage Statement is not necessary.

The Council will support development proposals that encourage the conservation, enhancement and restoration of the Historic Parks and Gardens (both designated and non-designated) identified as important in this plan [and on the proposals map].

Development proposals that would degrade the character, appearance and setting resulting in the loss of significance of Registered Parks and Gardens will be refused unless it can be demonstrated that the public benefits which development will bring substantially outweighs the loss to the historic environment.

19.4 Built Heritage

- 19.4.1 Central Bedfordshire has 61 Conservation Areas, 1,938 Listed Buildings, 290 historic rural settlements and 9 historic towns. These are a key indicator of local distinctiveness. The Council recognises the need to conserve and enhance all of these important features, which make up an essential component of the character of the area.



19.5 Listed Buildings

- 19.5.1 When considering applications for Listed Buildings (including for change of use), the repair, renovation, alteration and extension of should not be at the expense of



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its intrinsic special interest and significance. It is important to guard against unnecessary change or over-restoration. In any change, materials should be sympathetic and appropriate to those used in the original building. In particular the Council will resist applications that result in the loss of traditional local features such as long straw thatched roofs, locally manufactured clay tiles and bricks and local stone.

- 19.5.2 In cases where Listed Buildings may become vacant and derelict, there is a presumption in favour of their retention so consent to demolish will be wholly exceptional and only allowed if all other options to retain the building are demonstrated to have been thoroughly explored. In exceptional cases where there is no alternative to demolition, the Council will require an appropriate record to be made and the appropriate salvage of materials.

19.6 Conservation Areas

- 19.6.1 Conservation Areas are designated not on the basis of individual buildings but because of the overall quality of the area, its mix of uses, historic layout, characteristic materials, scale and detailing of buildings and open spaces.
- 19.6.2 Designation also takes into account the need to protect trees, hedges, walls, railings and other characteristic features. Once designated, special attention must be paid in all planning decisions to the desirability of preserving or enhancing the character or appearance of the Conservation Area. The boundaries are identified on the Policies Map.
- 19.6.3 The Council will require new development to provide a level of visual interest that is equivalent to the existing buildings in the Conservation Area. Choice of materials and detailed design are vital elements in achieving new buildings worthy of the local character and interest which typifies Central Bedfordshire's Conservation Areas.
- 19.6.4 Further detailed guidance on conservation and heritage issues are contained in the Central Bedfordshire Design Guide.



Policy HE3: Built Heritage

Development proposals that could affect Listed Buildings, Conservation Areas and non-designated heritage assets of local importance and their setting will be granted provided they:

- Uphold the key criteria of the NPPF (including having regard to “substantial harm” and “less than substantial harm”, para 132 – 136) and accord with the relevant sections of the Design Guide for Central Bedfordshire; and
- Preserve, sustain and enhance the special character, significance, appearance and locally distinctive features of the asset/s in terms of scale, form, proportion, design, materials and the retention of features; and
- Make a positive contribution to the setting of the asset/s and it’s historic significance, and include hard and soft landscape proposals, where appropriate, that respect it’s character and appearance of the heritage asset;
- Contribute to the viability of an asset consistent with it’s conservation; and
- Are accompanied by a Built Heritage Statement informed by appropriate expertise and describing all the heritage assets (designated and undesignated) that will be affected by the development and include an assessment of the level of impact that the development proposal will have on the asset/s, having regard to the relevant Conservation Area appraisal. Where development proposals have the potential to impact on the setting or significance of these assets then a consideration of the affect of the development on that setting must be included in the Built Heritage Statement.



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Development in the Countryside

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20 Development in the Countryside

20.1 Overview

- 20.1.1 Community planning across Central Bedfordshire has shown that preserving the countryside and landscape is an important issue to local people. Central Bedfordshire has a varied and contrasting landscape, ecology and settlement pattern, all of which contribute to the much valued countryside and rural nature of the area. Development in the countryside is sometimes necessary and it is therefore important that it is delivered in accordance with sustainability principles and is appropriate to the character and appearance of the local landscape.
- 20.1.2 This plan accommodates the needs of communities to grow and thrive through the allocation of appropriate and sustainable sites outside of the Settlement Envelope. The Council will provide positive support to the development of these sites and other appropriate development in the countryside which seeks to improve the vitality of rural villages and improve the rural economy. Where development is proposed, the Council will seek to encourage careful consideration to of the landscape character, the protection of important features in the landscape design and the existing accessibility and compatibility.

Policy DC1: Development in Countryside

Outside Settlement Envelopes the Council will work to maintain and enhance the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and only particular types of new development will be permitted. This includes the development of those sites allocated by this and previous development plans and residential development within exception schemes or dwellings for the essential needs of those employed in agriculture or forestry. Proposals which re-use existing buildings or replace an existing dwelling will be acceptable provided they conform to the specific criteria in this plan.

Proposals for employment, tourism, leisure and community uses will also be considered favourably subject to their conformity with the relevant policies in this plan.

Limited extensions to gardens beyond Settlement Envelopes may be permitted provided that they do not harm the character of the area.

20.2 Re-use and replacement of buildings in the countryside

- 20.2.1 The re-use and adaptation of rural buildings has an important role to play in ensuring the sustainability of rural areas. Making efficient use of land, including through re-use of previously developed land, is central to the approach to delivering sustainable development. It can assist in agricultural diversification, avoid dereliction, improve the visual appearance of the landscape, reduce



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demands for new building in the countryside, provide opportunities for tourism and recreation and produce local employment.

- 20.2.2 In the interests of promoting the rural economy, the re-use of existing building in the countryside to employment generating uses will be particularly encouraged by the Council. The Council, whilst recognising the benefits of the re-use of rural buildings, wishes to ensure that development in the countryside is properly managed. The original building or group of buildings to be converted should therefore be appropriate to the rural setting in terms of scale and appearance. Purely functional buildings such as glass houses and metal framed buildings will not be considered suitable candidates for conversion to residential use. Applicants for the re-use of agricultural buildings erected under permitted development rights will be carefully examined to ensure these rights are not abused and to avoid the proliferation of farm buildings.



Policy DC2: Re-use of Buildings in the Countryside

The Council will support the principle of re-use of existing buildings in the countryside subject to proposals complying with the following criteria;

- The existing building or group of buildings are of permanent and substantial construction that are capable of conversion;
- The re-use is sympathetic to the setting of the site within the countryside and would reinforce local distinctiveness.
- The re-use would be of a high quality and lead to an enhancement of the immediate setting; and
- The proposed use is suitable and would not be of detriment to the existing communities.

The conversion of functional metal framed buildings to residential use will not be permitted.



Policy DC3: Replacement Dwellings in the Countryside

The Council will support the principle of replacement dwellings in the countryside subject to proposals complying with the following criteria;

- There would be no net increase in the number of dwellings;
- The replacement dwelling is not disproportionately larger in height and scale than the original unless the proposed dwelling would result in an improvement to the character of the area,
- The replacement building is sympathetic to the setting of the site within the countryside and would reinforce local distinctiveness.

Other relevant national and local policies will apply for developments within the Green Belt.

20.3 Rural Workers Dwellings

- 20.3.1 To sustain and enhance the rural economy, the Council will seek to support the growth of the rural economy. Agriculture and forestry have a key role to play in the countryside, underpinning both the rural economy and the landscape character of those areas. Long term conservation objectives are also sometimes best served by environmentally friendly forms of farming and forestry.
- 20.3.2 The NPPF makes clear that isolated new houses in the countryside require special justification for planning permission to be granted. One of the few circumstances in which isolated residential development may be justified is when accommodation is required to enable agricultural, forestry and other full-time workers to live at, or in the immediate vicinity of, their place of work.
- 20.3.3 The Council's preference for rural worker dwellings is for such workers to reside in nearby towns or villages or in existing properties nearby their place of work, which would avoid the need for new dwellings in the countryside. The Council accepts however that there may be cases where the nature and demands of the workers role requires them to live at or very close to the work place. Such instances will be judged on the needs of the workplace and not the personal preferences of the specific individuals.
- 20.3.4 A functional need will have to be established. If a new dwelling is essential to support a new farming activity, whether on a newly-created agricultural unit or an established one, it should, for the first three years be provided by temporary accommodation such as a caravan. Any temporary or permanent dwelling permitted will be restricted to occupancy of the worker on the establishment.
- 20.3.5 The design and external appearance of agricultural and forestry residential development can be visually harming on the landscape and can result in the loss of important features including those of historic and nature conservation value. Accordingly, any proposal would be considered against design policies set out in the document.



Policy DC4: Rural Workers Dwellings

Permanent dwellings for the use of agricultural and forestry workers will be permitted in the countryside where;

- there is a clearly established, existing functional need for agricultural, forestry and other full-time workers to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside
- the unit and the agricultural activity concerned have been established for at least three years, have been profitable for at least one of them, are currently financially sound, and have a clear prospect of remaining so;
- the need could not be fulfilled by another existing dwelling on the unit, or any other existing accommodation in the area which is suitable and available or could be made suitable and available for occupation through conversion and change of use; and
- the scale of the proposed dwelling is no larger than that required to meet the requirements of the enterprise.

The council will consider favourably a temporary new dwelling if it is essential to support a new farming or forestry activity. The dwelling should meet the functional test above and should be;

- for the first three years
- be provided by a caravan, a wooden structure which can be easily dismantled, or other temporary accommodation.

Where agricultural, forestry and other full-time worker dwellings are proposed in the Green Belt, Chilterns AONB, Green Belt and AONB policies will be applied in addition to the above.

20.4 Equestrian Development

- 20.4.1 By its very nature, equestrian and livestock development requires a countryside location. These activities can make a considerable contribution to sustainable recreation, conservation grazing and the rural economy through diversification of agricultural holdings in the area. However, intensive private activity as well as commercial activities can be visually harmful in the countryside so it is important that environmental quality and landscape character is respected. As such the Landscape Character Assessment should be employed to inform development proposals.
- 20.4.2 Larger commercial livery yards may be restricted on the grounds of sustainability and accessibility as well as the impact on the landscape and surroundings and ideally should be based on an existing holding.



Policy DC5: Equestrian Development

Horse-related facilities and small scale extensions to existing equestrian enterprises in the countryside will be permitted subject to the following criteria;

- New freestanding stables and provision for vehicle parking must be well screened from the surrounding countryside, should avoid adverse impact on the public rights of way network and must not interfere with the amenity of adjoining residents.
- New buildings for indoor equestrian use will only be considered when located adjacent to existing buildings or where they are screened by existing mature landscaping
- Any proposals for equestrian development including jumps, schooling areas, floodlighting and new buildings/extensions will be considered in the context of the Landscape Character Assessment,
- The design, scale, siting and use of materials should respect the rural setting including biodiversity interests.

Proposals which are located within close proximity to the bridleway network will be considered more favourably.

Additionally, proposals for larger scale private or commercial enterprises (comprising ten horses or more) will only be considered where the applicants can demonstrate the sustainable nature of their location by means of a traffic impact assessment.

20.5 Protecting Agricultural Land

- 20.5.1 Soils are one of the most valuable and vital components of the environment yet their importance is often overlooked. The NPPF requires that local planning authorities should take into account the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land. It states that where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, local planning authorities should seek to use areas of poorer quality land in preference to that of higher quality.



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20.5.2 Farmland is important to Central Bedfordshire in a number of ways. Not only does it have value in terms of food production and as an industry but it also has important environmental value. In the past intensive agricultural practices have often harmed biodiversity but fortunately modern farming methods are increasingly geared to redress past damage and balance environmental needs with those of food production.



20.5.3 Central Bedfordshire has a valuable resource of good to excellent quality agricultural land. The most valuable and productive agricultural land is classified as Grade 1 and in Central Bedfordshire this is limited to areas along the River Ivel and Great Ouse corridors. In light of the pressures for development, the Council will seek to protect the best and most valuable agricultural land from development.

Policy DC6: Agricultural Land

Other than for land that has been allocated within this Local Plan or previous development plans, development that would result in the significant loss of Grades 1, 2 and 3a agricultural land will not be permitted unless;

- Significant sustainability considerations which override the need to protect the land can be demonstrated; and
- There are no suitable alternative sites which are available for the proposed development.

When considering the significance of the loss; the grade of the land, the size of the proposed site and the quantum of 'best and most versatile' land in the area will be taken into account.

