



# Local Plan 2040

Have Your Say on the Future of Your Borough

## Bedford Borough Council – Local Plan 2040 Draft Plan Consultation Response Form

**We would prefer to receive your comments via our online system [www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2040](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2040)  
In particular, if you are a planning consultant or agent please help us to speed up the production of local plans by using the online system. If you require assistance, please contact us on 01234 718070.**

Please only use this form if you cannot respond online and to make your comments on the Local Plan 2040 Draft Plan and its supporting documents. You will need to have the document you want to comment on to hand so that you can enter the appropriate references. Copies of the document are available to view on the Council's website [www.bedford.gov.uk/LocalPlan2040](http://www.bedford.gov.uk/LocalPlan2040) and in paper copy (**by 45 minute appointment**) at Bedford Central Library, Harpur Street, Bedford MK40 1PG (01234 718174). Subject to Covid restrictions being lifted on 19<sup>th</sup> July, paper copies will also be made available at all libraries in the borough, plus the key documents will be available at Rushden, St Neots, Biggleswade and Flitwick libraries during normal opening hours.

Please email this response form to us: [planningforthefuture@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:planningforthefuture@bedford.gov.uk)

Alternatively, responses can be sent by post. Please attach a stamp and send to:

Planning Policy Team  
Bedford Borough Council  
Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street  
Bedford, MK42 9AP

**PLEASE DO NOT SUBMIT COMMENTS IN MORE THAN ONE FORMAT OR SEND TO MORE THAN ONE EMAIL ADDRESS. If you have submitted comments electronically you do not need to print and post them. All responses (electronic and paper) must be received by 5pm on 3 September 2021.**

**Your contact information will be kept on the Planning Policy database so that we can keep you up to date about this and other planning policy documents. Personal data will be collected and processed in accordance with the Data Protection Act and the General Data Protection Regulations. Further information can be found on the council's Data Protection webpage and in the Privacy Notices for planning policy.**

**All responses will be made public.**

### CONTACT DETAILS

#### Personal details

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**AGENT DETAILS (if applicable)**

**If you are a planning consultant or agent, you can do this on-line. You will be able to save a draft to complete later, save the final version for your records, save paper and speed up plan making. If you require assistance, please call 01234 718070**

**Title:** [REDACTED]  
**Name:** [REDACTED]  
**Job title (if applicable):** Director  
**Organisation (if applicable):** Town Planning Services  
**Address:** The Exchange, Colworth Park, Sharnbrook, Bedfordshire  
**Postcode:** MK44 1LZ  
**Telephone Number:** [REDACTED]  
**Email:** [REDACTED]

**If you are using an agent, who would you prefer any correspondence to go to?**  
(Please mark X one box only)

Contact agent	Contact client	Contact both
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Your interest** (Please mark X one box only)

Land owner	Resident	Consultant	Agent	Other
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Please specify 'Other'** (please write in)

**Please use a separate form (this page) for each consultation document paragraph, policy or evidence base document you are commenting on.**

**Which paragraph number, policy number or evidence base document are you commenting on?**

Policy E1S 'Amount and Distribution of Employment Development' and Paragraph 6.12

**Please add your comments in the box below and continue on an additional sheet if necessary**

Colworth Park is identified as an existing 'Key Employment Site' within the development plan and is therefore afforded support under Policy 70 of the adopted 'Bedford Local Plan 2030'. It is currently considered to fall within the 'Protect and Maintain' category, based on the Bedford Borough Council 'Economy and Employment Land Study' 2015 (Table 24). Sites within the 'Protect and Maintain' category are those which are "broadly fit for purpose with a large proportion of floorspace ... likely to meet ongoing requirements" ('Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030' §11.10). The adopted development plan states that on such sites, the Council will support investment and improvement in stock provision over the plan period.

The Council's 'Employment Land Study Review' 2021 provides a more recent assessment of existing employment sites within the Borough, including Colworth Park. This now suggests the site now falls within the 'Protect and Enhance' category (§6.18).

In accordance with the adopted development plan, sites within the 'Protect and Enhance' category will "play the primary role in supporting economic development and growth by offering attractive and available opportunities for the development of additional land and sites to retain and support expansion of existing occupiers, as well as helping secure new inward investment" ('Bedford Local Plan 2030' §11.11). The local plan goes on to state that key growth sectors will include 'Research and Development' amongst others. It further remarks that:

*" ... Whilst in general the stock of employment space within the employment sites is fit for purpose and meets current occupier requirements there are some areas of weaker provision which are unfit for purpose and that could be redeveloped for employment uses to strengthen the offer that the key employment sites could provide ... "*

At the outset, we would endorse the site's elevated status that is now recognised within the updated Employment Land Study Review. Nevertheless, there are a number of corrections and clarifications to be made within the Council appraisal of Colworth Park, and we believe that the future scope for the Park's development is underestimated.

To assist, we attach an annotated version of the Council's site assessment. We will not repeat these annotations, but it is helpful to review the key points. In particular, the site's status as a high quality research and development centre should be recognised. Anchored by Unilver, Colworth Park provides a centre for collaboration and acts as a community specifically created to support innovation and business growth in the food and drink sector. It provides shared laboratory space together with offices, kitchens and production facilities. It is intended to create a hub of established businesses alongside start-ups, academic research and social enterprises. It has successfully attracted occupiers of international significance who wish to have representation in the UK.

The focus of the Park reflects the site's location, equidistant between Oxford and Cambridge and Trinity Investment Management is aware that there is considerable demand for high quality, affordable laboratory and research space.

The assessment of Colworth Park within the 'Employment Land Study Review' 2021 omits reference to the site's most recent planning history. In this regard, the Council granted planning permission for the erection of a new building of 3,360sqm gross floorspace. This will accommodate Unilever's Advanced Manufacturing functions, providing engineering facilities needed for rapid prototyping and the development of new products and manufacturing processes. Planning permission was granted at the beginning of 2021 (Planning Permission Reference 20/02360/MAF. In addition, it should be recognised that planning permission was granted for the development of a hydroponics facility of 8,446sqm gross floorspace Planning Permission Reference 20/02431/MAF granted 28 January 2021). The grant of these permissions demonstrates both the demand for additional space, and the site's capacity to accommodate further development.

In addition, it should be recognised that the site contains a considerable quantity of vacant floorspace. Although some redundant buildings have previously been developed, the site currently has some 5,500sqm of vacant floorspace. Once Unilever relocate to the new Advanced Manufacturing Facility a further 5,000sqm of floorspace will become vacant.

Although the site occupies a 'rural' location, it must be recognised that it adjoins the defined settlement boundary of Sharnbrook. Sharnbrook is identified as a 'Key Service Centre' and is expected to accommodate an additional 500 new dwellings within the adopted 'Bedford Local Plan 2030' (Policy 4S). Accordingly, it represents a sustainable location and it important to provide employment opportunities to accompany the anticipated housing growth within the settlement. It is anticipated that additional enhancement might be made to the accessibility of the park to accompany further floorspace.

Taking account of the above, it is considered that the new local plan should seek to maximise the potential of existing Key Employment Sites, alongside the allocation of new land. Colworth Park offers a considerable potential to provide a flagship research and development centre within Bedford, capitalising upon its already well-established focus on scientific research within the food and drink, flavouring, nutrition and fragrance sectors. The site provides significant scope to accommodate new development to support this existing function and to further consolidate its position in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.

The delivery of new floorspace can be considered alongside the potential demolition of existing floorspace; improvements to the Colworth House as a Grade II Listed Building; and appropriate enhancements to the site's accessibility. We therefore believe that Colworth Park should be identified within the 'Maintain and Develop' category, and that the site's capacity should be explored through the preparation of a masterplan.

Site Ref 8 Site Name Colworth Science Park

**SITE DESCRIPTION**Site Area: ~~33.93ha~~ 36.8Ha

Location: Rural Area

Site Status: Active employment site

Location (nearest town or cluster description):

The site is best described as a:

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Out of Town Office Campus                       | <input type="checkbox"/> Town Centre  |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> High Quality Business Park           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Incubator/SME Cluster Site                            |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Research and Technology/Science Park | <input type="checkbox"/> Specialised Freight Terminals                                    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Warehouse/Distribution Park                     | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Sites for Specific Occupiers                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> General Industry/Business Area                  | <input type="checkbox"/> Recycling/Environmental Industries Sites                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Heavy/Specialist Industrial Site                | <input type="checkbox"/> Other Storage [we suggest that the site is not a 'storage' site] |

**Location character**

- Well established commercial area
- Established commercial area
- Mixed commercial and residential area
- Mainly residential with few commercial uses
- Mainly residential or rural area with no other commercial uses

**Nature/significance of existing occupiers**

- |   |  |
|---|--|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> International | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Regional |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> National      | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Local    |

**Sectors present**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Distribution   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Engineering   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Storage (open)   | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Product manufacturing                                       |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Storage (warehouse)  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Food production   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Creative industries  | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Office activity (describe type) <u>Office, and ab space</u> |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (non B class) meeting space and ancillary uses (café, gym, crèche etc.) |   |

**General comments / description of site**

This site is centred around Unilever's R&D facility and provides a very good business/science park environment with good quality units, some on-site amenities and good landscaping and environment. ~~It accommodates B1 uses.~~ The Site accommodates activities generally falling within Use Class E(g), together with other ancillary uses. Centred around the anchor of Unilever, the site places emphasis on research and development in the food and drink sector, providing services laboratory and office space.

Current occupiers include; Cranfield University, Archimed, Unilever, Orchardia, Ekattera, Orchardia, Firmenich, Symrise, Kerry Ingredients, Cargill and alongside other financial and professional businesses.

**EXISTING CONDITIONS**

**Age of Buildings**

	0 25%	25 50%	50 75%	75 100%
Pre 1940	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1940 1969	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1970 1989	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
1990 1999	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
since 2000	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Quality of Buildings**

	0 25%	25 50%	50 75%	75 100%
Very good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Good	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Poor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Very poor	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Height of Buildings**

	0 25%	25 50%	50 75%	75 100%
Single storey	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
2 Storeys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
3 5 Storeys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
5 10 Storeys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
10+ Storeys	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**On-site amenities**

- Convenience retail
- Restaurant/cafe
- Gym/sports
- Bank
- None
- Comparison retail
- Hotel
- Creche
- Education
- Other

As part of the site's wider amenities, it also contains a golf course.

**Proportion of Floorspace in Non-B-class uses**

	0 25%	25 50%	50 75%	75 100%
Housing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Retail	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Community	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
A B C class	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Cafes, gym, creche etc.

**Neighbouring amenities**

- Close to a town centre with a wide range and quantity of services
- Close to local centre with a reasonable range and quantity of services
- Close to a limited range and quantity of basic services
- Close to one or two services
- No services in close proximity

The site is within walking distance from Sharnbrook, which is identified as a 'Key Service Centre'.

**Quality of environment for current use**

*(comment on issues)*

- Very good
- Good
- Poor
- Very poor

**Environment appropriate for current uses?**

- Yes
- No



**Neighbouring uses**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Residential      | <input type="checkbox"/> Leisure                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Retail           | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Town centre (Village) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Airport          | <input type="checkbox"/> Railway                          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Road             | <input type="checkbox"/> Office                           |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial       | <input type="checkbox"/> Warehousing                      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Higher Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Further Education                |

**Rural** The site is adjacent to the settlement boundary and within walking distance to Sharnbrook village centre.

**Evidence of pollutants**

- |   |                                   |
|---|-----------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Noise          | <input type="checkbox"/> Air      |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Traffic        | <input type="checkbox"/> Lighting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 24hr operation |                                   |

None evident

**Access & parking (comment on issues)**

Car

Close to the A6 trunk road but site access through village.

HGV

Close to the A6 trunk road but site access through village – narrow roads and junctions difficult for larger vehicles

Public transport

Bus stop outside site on village edge.

Servicing

NA

Internal circulation

Good

Parking

Good

**Access and parking is adequate for the uses within the site**  Yes  No  Don't know

**DEVELOPMENT CONTEXT**

**Planning Considerations:**

- |   |   |
|---|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Flood Risk (Zone__)                                | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Heritage & Conservation (Listed Building, SAM, Cons Area) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Environmental Designation (SPA, SAC, SSSI, Ramsar) | <input type="checkbox"/> Tree Preservation Order  |

**Physical Considerations:**

- |  |
|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Topography    |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Contamination |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other         |

None evident

**Opportunity for Intensification**  Yes  No

**Vacant Land**  Yes  No

**Vacant Buildings (re-use)**  Yes  No If Yes, number of vacant buildings  
(Can be reoccupied in current form)

**Vacant Buildings (refurb)**  Yes  No If Yes, number of vacant buildings **There s currently c. 5,500sqm of vacant floorspace and a further 5,000sqm s soon to become ava ab e.**  
(Likely to require refurbishment or redevelopment to be reoccupied)

Note: all vacant buildings/sites etc to be marked on accompanying site plan

**% of site developable**      **Estimated Quantity**

**Development activity**

- Evidence of recent development within the site  B c ass  Non B c ass
- Evidence of recent development in the immediate surrounding area  B c ass  Non B c ass \_\_\_\_\_
- No evidence of recent development
- Evidence of marketing & duration

**CONCLUSIONS**

**Other Comments / Observations**

This is a good quality science park, which attracts nationally significant occupiers and is suitable for its uses. There is some potential for intensification and expansion provided that access issues can be resolved.

Planning permission was granted in 2021 for a new 'Advanced Manufacturing' building for Unilever of 3,360sqm gross floorspace. In addition, permission was given for a Hydroponics facility with a total gross floorspace of 8,446sqm. It is considered that the site offers potential for additional development including demolition of some existing floorspace.

**Recommendations on future use / potential**

The site is considered to be of good overall quality, and considering this assessment, is recommended to be protected and enhanced for future employment use.

The site has an established focus in the research and development sector, and in particular for food and drink. Colworth Park offers potential to create a continued focus in this sector, especially considering its central location within the Oxford-Cambridge Arc. The site owners are aware of significant demand for additional floorspace that might be accommodated on the site.

It is suggested that the further scope for development on the site should be explored through the formation of a master plan.