

Draft Policy EMP6 - Business Park, Land at Water End and St Neots Road will be developed for a campus-style development (primarily research and development with elements of manufacturing, warehousing and distribution)

- The sites are not gateway locations into Bedford as they do not abut the urban boundary of Bedford. Instead, the northern site adjoins the settlement policy area of Renhold Green End (a small nucleus of residential units), and the southern site does not adjoin any settlement policy area.
- Significant engineering and modification works will be required to the A4280 St Neots Road, the A421 slip roads, Water End and the link road between the two roundabouts and relevant access points. This would result in the urbanisation of this part of the Parish, which is characterised by agricultural fields, waterways and lakes to the south; and limited built form – primarily in the form of modest houses and scattered agricultural buildings.
- The proposed associated roadside service and EV charging facilities would attract additional transiting traffic that is not associated with the proposed employment use of the land, resulting in an even greater level of pollution (noise, emission/air, light, water).
- The local highway network is already exhausted and at capacity – the proposed allocation would result in a significant increase in traffic movements and associated pollution, detrimental to the local area, in particular the Parish of Renhold and the adjoining rural road network.
- Water End road is restricted to access for cars and motorbikes between the peak hours of 7.00 to 9.30am and 3.30 to 6.30pm primarily to restrict the volume of traffic using the village as a “rat-run” to and from the A421 bypass. There is also major congestion at peak times around Renhold Primary School and the Church.
- There is no need for a science-campus proposal in this location. Bedford is not a science or research location like Cambridge or Oxford.
- Direct competition with the proposed new settlement and related employment provision at Little Barford, which is only 7 miles/11km to the north-east of the allocation sites.
- In November 2020, there were 68,916 sqm of office units and 90,760 sqm of industrial units available in the Borough. Instead of allocating more ‘strategic road network’ employment sites, the Council should focus on managing and encouraging the development of the 3 already allocated sites, land at Medbury Farm (AD11, land west of B530 (AD17) and Bedford River Valley Park (AD23), totalling 72 ha, where development has not yet started.
- The EHH (England’s Economic Heartlands, where Bedford is located within) strategy sets out to focus on decarbonisation of the transport system by harnessing innovation and supporting solutions which create green economic opportunities; and promote investment in digital

infrastructure as a means of improving connectivity, in order to reduce the need to travel. These proposals contradict this strategy and fail to:

- *Support the delivery of low carbon transport by working towards reduced congestion, digital connectivity, and a net zero carbon system by 20402*
 - *Promote connectivity and accessibility in new development, and link new and existing communities*
 - *Support opportunities for active travel and green infrastructure*
 - *Promote and support infrastructure development which reflects the ambitions of the three preceding principles.*
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- The sites are not in sustainable locations with lack of footway and cycleway provision and infrequent public transport connection with lack of bus stops. Alternative modes of transport, including walking, cycling and public transport, should be promoted, however, the sites' access would be clearly dominated by vehicles due to their proximity to the A421, therefore failing to meet the key, high-level objective of the NPPF of 'achieving sustainable development'.
 - Brownfield sites should be considered first before proposing development on greenfield sites. Previously developed land in or immediately adjoining the urban area of Bedford should be utilised in the first instance, with the opportunity to adapt against climate change, rather than encroaching into the open countryside.
 - Harmful impact on the setting of various listed buildings and Scheduled Monuments in proximity, in particular the setting of Howbury Hall and its surrounding parkland.
 - The landscape surrounding Howbury Hall has changed noticeably over time with the introduction of the A421 dual carriageway to the south. The proposed allocation would further change this landscape, resulting in an urbanised, infrastructure dominated environment that is totally out of context with the historic landscape surrounding Howbury Hall, failing to make a positive contribution to local character and distinctiveness. Furthermore, this radical, irreversible change in historic and rural landscape would not conserve or enhance the historic environment, as required by the NPPF 2021.
 - Furthermore, the sites have the potential to contain archaeological remains of importance/significance.
 - The sites are best and most versatile (BMV) agricultural land as defined in the NPPF and should be protected from significant, inappropriate or unsustainable development proposals.
 - Loss of wildlife, habitat, the wider ecological network, and valuable landscaping (trees and hedgerows), failing to conserve and enhance the natural environment, as required by the NPPF 2021.

- The land is elevated with its highest points located in the north and gradually falling towards the bypass and beyond to the south-east. Any development on the land would be prominent within the open and rural landscape context.
- Water End and Green End are predominantly linear with low density built form, primarily housing, surrounded by agricultural land. The proposals would be out of keeping, out of scale and clearly disproportionate to the size of the Parish. The allocation would result in an urban built environment of significant depth, which would neither complement nor be compatible with the linear character of this part of Renhold and would contribute to unacceptable urban sprawl.
- The village of Renhold comprises of 5 ends [Salph End, Church End, Top End, Green End, Water End] and three new estates. This is its distinctive character and the addition of a large business park at Water End would be totally alien and harmful to this character. The sites are rural locations, between the built form of Renhold Green End and Great Barford, and sparsely populated. As such, any development on these allocated sites would dominate the rural, open landscape and be out of keeping.
- Furthermore, the proposed allocation would effectively merge Green End and Water Ends, which is contrary to the aforementioned established character of Renhold and the locality..
- Any structures and associated infrastructure constructed on the proposed sites, particularly large distribution and warehouse units, would have an unacceptable height and scale, be imposing on nearby residential units and prominent within its rural landscape context, particularly given the elevated topography and openness of the land. The proposals would be visually intrusive on the local landscape, harmful to its character and qualities.