



# Local Plan 2040

Have Your Say on the Future of Your Borough

## DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY TOPIC PAPER

JUNE 2021





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# **1 Introduction and background**

- 1.1 The purpose of this paper is to set out the background to how the development strategy options in the consultation draft plan of the Bedford Borough Local Plan 2040 have emerged. The purpose of the development strategy is to determine where growth should be located in the Borough; to define the part which the urban area of Bedford / Kempston, the villages and other settlements, as well as potential new areas of rail-related growth and new settlements could play in creating a sustainable borough.
- 1.2 In January 2020 the Council adopted its Local Plan 2030. Whilst the Local Plan 2030 identifies a need for 970 dwelling completions a year, the Local Plan 2040 in order to comply with national planning guidance must be based on a minimum of 1,275 dwelling completions a year, which is a significant (33%) increase. This higher number will apply across the plan period (2020-2040) resulting in the need for a 'top up' for the period 2020 to 2030 (an additional 305 dwellings each year / 3,050 across the ten years), followed by the full 1,275 for each year between 2030 and 2040.
- 1.3 Over the plan period, in total, the Council will need to allocate land to enable a minimum of 25,500 dwellings to be delivered (20 x 1,275). Current commitments amount to around 13,000 dwellings which means that land to accommodate in the region of at least 12,500 dwellings (the national requirement) plus in addition a reasonable buffer must be allocated in the new local plan.
- 1.4 Taking account of planned population growth to 2040, the requirement for new employment land by that date is calculated to be 171 hectares (ha). Overall, the currently available supply of such land in the Borough amounts to 48 ha leaving a requirement for 123 ha to be allocated in the local plan.
- 1.5 In February 2021 government announced that it was taking forward a spatial strategy for the Oxford to Cambridge Arc on the basis of a timetable which would see the spatial strategy completed in 2023. The first public consultation by government on the Arc Spatial Framework is planned for summer 2021 which is two years later than initially anticipated. As a result, specific growth requirements and other impacts associated with the Arc are not yet known. In spite of this, councils such as Bedford are being pressed by MHCLG to continue the preparation of their local plans in parallel with the Arc work. The consequence

of this is that the Arc spatial strategy will not be finalised in time to inform the preparation of this plan and the Council must focus on meeting its own growth requirements as set out above.

## 2 Issues and options consultation: June 2020

- 2.1 In thinking about how the development strategy set out in the adopted plan should evolve in the period beyond 2020 the Council undertook an issues and options consultation in June 2020

### Issues and Options paper consultation June 2020

- 2.2 In 2020 the Council invited comments on the main issues facing the borough that need to be taken into account in a new local plan. This 2020 Issues and Options consultation looked at both the timescale of the plan and at what types of locations might be suitable for future growth.
- 2.3 As reported in the Issues and Options Consultation - summary and responses document, in respect of the plan period, having considered the consultation responses, the Council's view is that 2020 - 2040 is an appropriate time period for this plan. With a requirement now for five-yearly local plan reviews there will be sufficient opportunity to plan beyond 2040 once the regional planning context is clearer.
- 2.4 In relation to the potential locations for additional growth the 2020 Issues and Options paper considered 6 potential development locations which were described by colour. The paper made clear that it was likely that these potential development locations would then form the building blocks for potential development options for further consultation in the draft plan.

### Summary of 2020 Issues and Options Consultation potential locations for growth

	Development location
Brown	Urban based
Yellow	A421 based growth
Pink	Rail growth
Orange	East West Rail northern station growth
Grey	Dispersed growth
Red	New settlement based growth

- 2.5 As a result of the Issues and Options consultation, the Council received 279 comments in relation to the question about which potential locations for growth were supported and how they might be combined.
- 2.6 The results are reported in full in the Issues & Options Consultation - summary and responses document and the key point was that the (brown) urban, (yellow) A421 and (pink) rail-based growth development locations were the most strongly supported and were twice as likely to be selected as suitable locations for growth as dispersed and new settlement based growth.
- 2.7 The consultation question made clear that it was anticipated that the final strategy would combine a number of the development locations listed. The most common combination put forward by respondents was urban (brown) with A421 (yellow). Some respondents also added rail based (pink) growth as a development location which could be combined with urban and A421 corridor type growth. Other suggestions included combining the dispersed (grey) location with a number of the other locations.
- 2.8 The Issues and Options consultation did not define potential employment locations in the same way as for housing but asked where new employment sites should be located. By far the most common locations suggested were sites with good access to sustainable transport networks, sites close to the strategic road network and sites close to population centres. Other popular suggestions included on brownfield sites, away from the rural road network / the rural area / landscape sensitive areas, and in town centres, this last suggestion reflecting a desire to make use of vacant shops and offices. These suggestions have been noted and will be taken into consideration when determining specific employment site allocations.

### **3 Local Plan 2040 draft plan consultation June 2021**

- 3.1 Following on from the Issues and Options consultation the key task was to undertake further work on the development strategy and define specific strategy options for consultation. The Local Plan 2040 draft plan sets out four development strategy options for consultation and this section explains how they have been derived.
- 3.2 The four options for consultation have been derived on the basis of the following:
- Feedback from the Issues and Options consultation
  - Definition of the broad components of growth
  - Sustainability appraisal (SA) of the broad components of growth
  - Generation of a “long list” of potential strategy options
  - Identification of “reasonable alternatives” for the purpose of SA testing
  - SA testing of the reasonable alternatives
  - Assessment of the reasonable alternatives against the draft plan themes and deliverability considerations
  - High level transport assessment

#### Feedback from the Issues and Options consultation

- 3.3 The Council has reached the view following the consultation that the appropriate time frame for the local plan is 20 years (2020-2040). The consultation responses on the potential development locations and how they might be combined (set out in section 2 above) have been taken into account in developing the spatial strategy options described in this topic paper.

#### Definition of the broad components of growth

- 3.4 Plan-making requires an iterative process of development strategy evolution alongside sustainability testing. In line with the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 and to meet the requirements of the EU Strategic Environmental Assessment Directive, the Council is undertaking a sustainability appraisal of the plan. The results of the sustainability appraisal are documented separately in the Draft Sustainability Appraisal Report but should be read alongside this paper.
- 3.5 Having consulted on the six potential development locations, these were drawn together into five broad components of growth as follows:



- Within the urban area (sites within the urban area boundary).
- Adjoining the urban area (all or part of the site is within 0.5 miles of the urban area boundary).
- Village related (Key Service Centres and Rural Service Centres).
- New settlements (Wyboston, Little Barford, Twinwoods, Colworth).
- A421 transport corridor with rail based growth (stations at Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby, Wixams and at a location between St Neots and Tempsford).
  - Transport corridor –growth focused on Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams<sup>1</sup> (rail-based growth)
  - Transport corridor – south (the parishes of Wootton, Kempston Rural, Elstow, Wilstead, Shortstown, Cotton End)
  - Transport corridor – east (the parishes of Cardington, Cople, Willington, Great Barford, Roxton, Wyboston and Little Barford)
  - Transport corridor – growth focused on new settlements in the A421 corridor (Wyboston and/or Little Barford).

#### Sustainability appraisal of the broad components of growth

- 3.6 In relation to the broad components of growth, the sustainability appraisal found that the within the urban area component performed best. It was likely to have a more positive effect than the other components, particularly in relation to reducing carbon dioxide emissions, promoting town centres, encouraging physical activity, providing for residents' needs and access to community services, and reducing the need to travel and promoting sustainable modes of travel. It was likely to have fewer negative effects than any of the other components of growth, although the limited availability of land within the urban area could act as a constraint on business growth. The adjoining the urban area component performed almost as well as the within the urban area component and was better in relation to economic growth.
- 3.7 The worst performing component was the village related growth component. It was likely to have a more negative effect than the other components, particularly in relation to reducing carbon dioxide emissions, protecting water resources, and reducing the need to travel and promoting sustainable modes of travel. It was likely to have fewer positive effects than any of the other components of growth.
- 3.8 Of the remaining two components, the A421 transport corridor with rail based growth component performed better than the new settlements component in relation to carbon dioxide emissions, economic growth, and reducing the need to travel and promoting sustainable modes of travel. The new settlements component did not perform better than the transport corridor component in

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<sup>1</sup> East West Rail are currently consulting on two options for the Marston Vale Line; one which retains the current stations at Stewartby and Kempston Hardwick, and another that replaces them with a new station (tentatively named "Stewartby Hardwick") at Broadmead Road. This component of growth is based on development around the new or existing stations in conjunction with development around the new station at Wixams. These stations could provide a focal point for higher density growth supported by the sustainable travel options offered by new and enhanced rail services.

relation to any of the sustainability objectives, although in relation to encouraging physical activity, the new settlement component had an uncertain effect whereas the transport corridor component had a negative effect.

#### Generation of a “long list” of potential strategy options

- 3.9 Having assessed the broad components of growth more detailed work was undertaken to generate specific strategy options based on different combinations of the broad components. In addition, at this stage it was necessary for the options tested to be defined with reference to the housing and employment land requirements which are being consulted upon. The housing target for the plan period as a whole is 25,500 but when existing commitments are taken into account the number of additional dwellings to be allocated is 12,500. Further detail is set out in the evidence base document Local Housing Needs Assessment (LHNA), however it should be noted that the standard method number for the borough has been altered by recent affordability figures and the LHNA was produced in relation to the previous requirement of 1,305 dwellings p.a. Based on the Bedford Employment Land Study the employment target for the plan is 123 ha.
- 3.10 For the purpose of defining the options, assumptions need to be made about the potential capacity of each broad location for housing and employment growth. It is very important to note at this stage that these assumptions are for the purpose of testing only. They are informed by the quantum of development put forward through the call for sites process but they are not based on specific site appraisals (which will form the basis of further testing following this consultation).
- 3.11 Given that the sustainability appraisal identified that the urban component of growth performs most strongly, the assumption for the urban and adjoining areas is deliberately ambitious. Development at scale in some parts of the urban area will be challenging and will require comprehensively master planned proposals and may require land assembly powers and significant investment in the infrastructure necessary in order to deliver the development.

#### Summary of the development assumptions for options generation

- 3.12 The bullet points below describe the assumptions made for each of the “building blocks” used to generate the different strategy options and the quantum of development which is assumed.
- Sites within urban area – 1,500 dwellings
  - Sites adjoining urban area – 1,500 dwellings
  - A421 transport corridor with rail-based growth (stations at Wixams, Stewartby and Kempston Hardwick, and at a location between St Neots and Tempsford)
    - Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams. On the assumption that new rail stations will be delivered at Wixams and Stewartby / Kempston Hardwick, ambitious growth is

assumed at both Wixams and Stewartby / Kempston Hardwick in the range of 1,500-3,000 dwellings at Wixams and 2,500-5,000 dwellings at Stewartby / Kempston Hardwick by 2040. Within the options two levels of development are tested: a lower option total figure of 5,500 dwellings (2,000 at Wixams and 3,500 at Stewartby / Kempston Hardwick) and a higher option of 7,500 dwellings (3,000 at Wixams and 4,500 at Stewartby / Kempston Hardwick)

- Transport corridor – south. Parishes within the transport corridor south include: Wootton, Kempston Rural, Elstow, Wilstead, Shortstown, Cotton End. Development will not necessarily adjoin existing villages but could be at new locations within a parish.
- Transport corridor – east. Parishes within the transport corridor east include: Cardington, Cople, Willington, Great Barford, Roxton, Wyboston, Little Barford. Development will not necessarily adjoin existing villages but could be at new locations within a parish.
- New settlements. The dwelling assumptions are those which have been put forward by the site promoters to 2040 and are being tested in the transport model by AECOM:
  - Colworth 2,400
  - Twinwoods 3,495
  - Wyboston 2,500
  - Little Barford 3,085

Where two new settlements are included in an option the total figure is used. Where only one settlement is included the lower of the two figures is assumed.

- Key Service Centres (options 3, 4, 6 & 7). The assumption for testing is 500 dwellings. This is the figure in the adopted local plan and is used for testing only at this stage.
- Rural Service Centres (options 3, 4, 6 & 7). The assumption for testing is 35 dwellings. This is the figure in the adopted local plan (roughly midway in the range) and is used for testing only at this stage.

3.13 Employment amount to be allocated – 123 ha to 2040. This is the amount identified in the Employment Land Study evidence base document. Assumed site areas are based on employment site submissions:

- Sites within and adjoining the urban area. Up to 21 ha
- A421 transport corridor with rail based growth:
  - Transport corridor – south. Up to 110 ha
  - Transport corridor – east. Up to 18 ha
- New settlements. The assumptions are those put forward by the site promoters to 2040 (where stated). Where two settlements are assumed the total figure is used. Where only one settlement is assumed the higher of the two figures is assumed.
  - Colworth 7 ha
  - Twinwoods 20 ha
  - Wyboston no figure given

- Little Barford 7 ha area measured from submission plan
- Key Service Centres. 1 ha.
- Rural Service Centres. 17 ha in total.

3.14 On the basis of these assumptions the following “long list” of options has been identified

Option 1a: In and around the urban area only.

Option 1b: Sites within the urban area at enhanced density.

Option 2a: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth – south.

Option 2b: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth – south, plus one new settlement.

Option 2c: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth, plus two new settlements.

Option 2d: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth – south and east, plus one new settlement.

Option 3a: Development in and around the urban area, plus four new settlements.

Option 3b: Development in and around the urban area, plus two new settlements, plus key service centres.

Option 3c: Development in and around the urban area, plus two new settlements plus key service centres, plus rural service centres.

Option 4: A421 transport corridor with rail based growth, plus key service centres, plus rural service centres.

Option 5: A421 transport corridor with rail based growth, plus two new settlements.

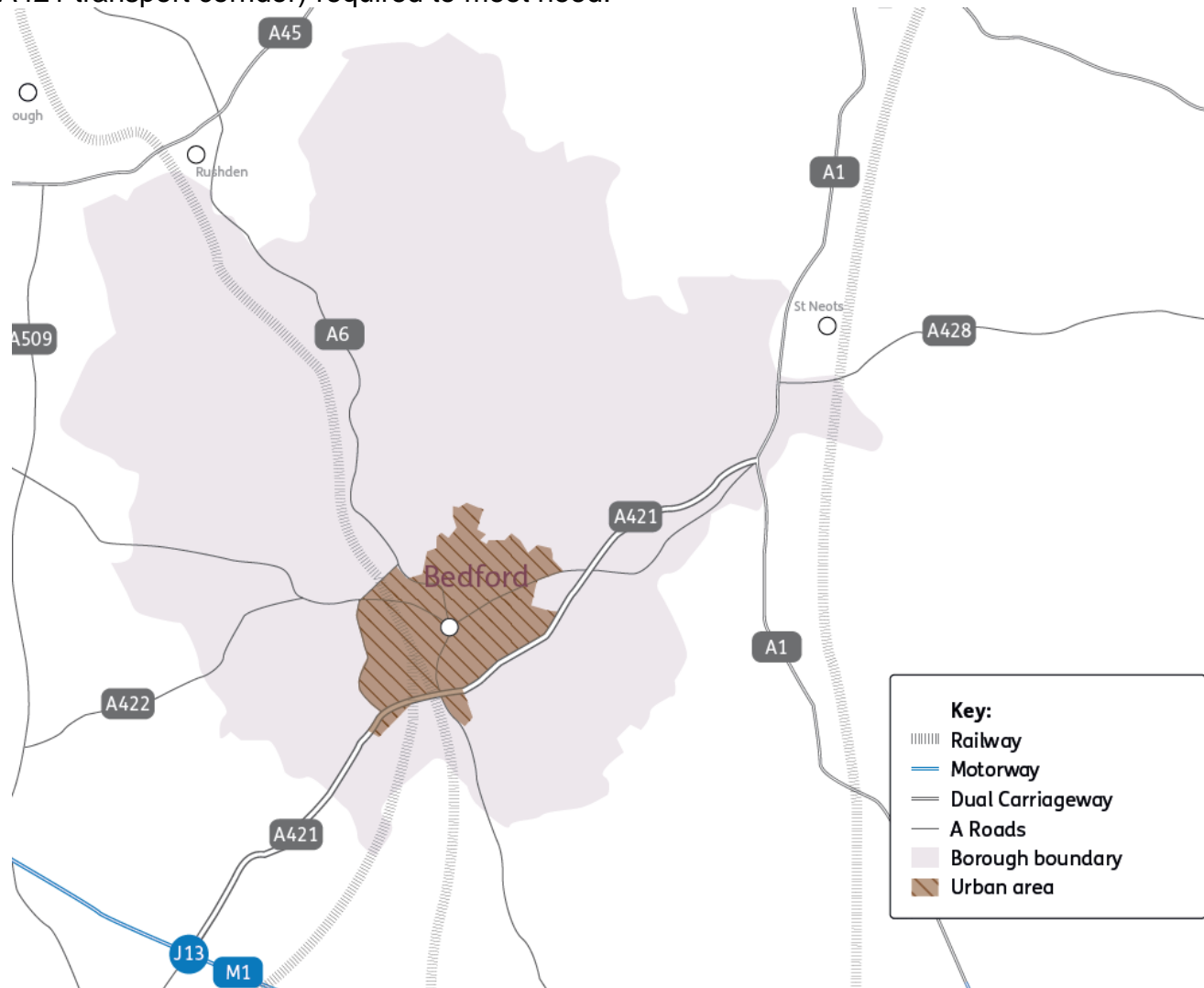
Option 6: A421 transport corridor with rail based growth, plus two new settlements, plus key service centres, plus rural service centres.

Option 7: Development in two new settlements, plus key service centres, plus rural service centres.

3.15 Each option is described in detail below and is accompanied by an illustrative diagram.

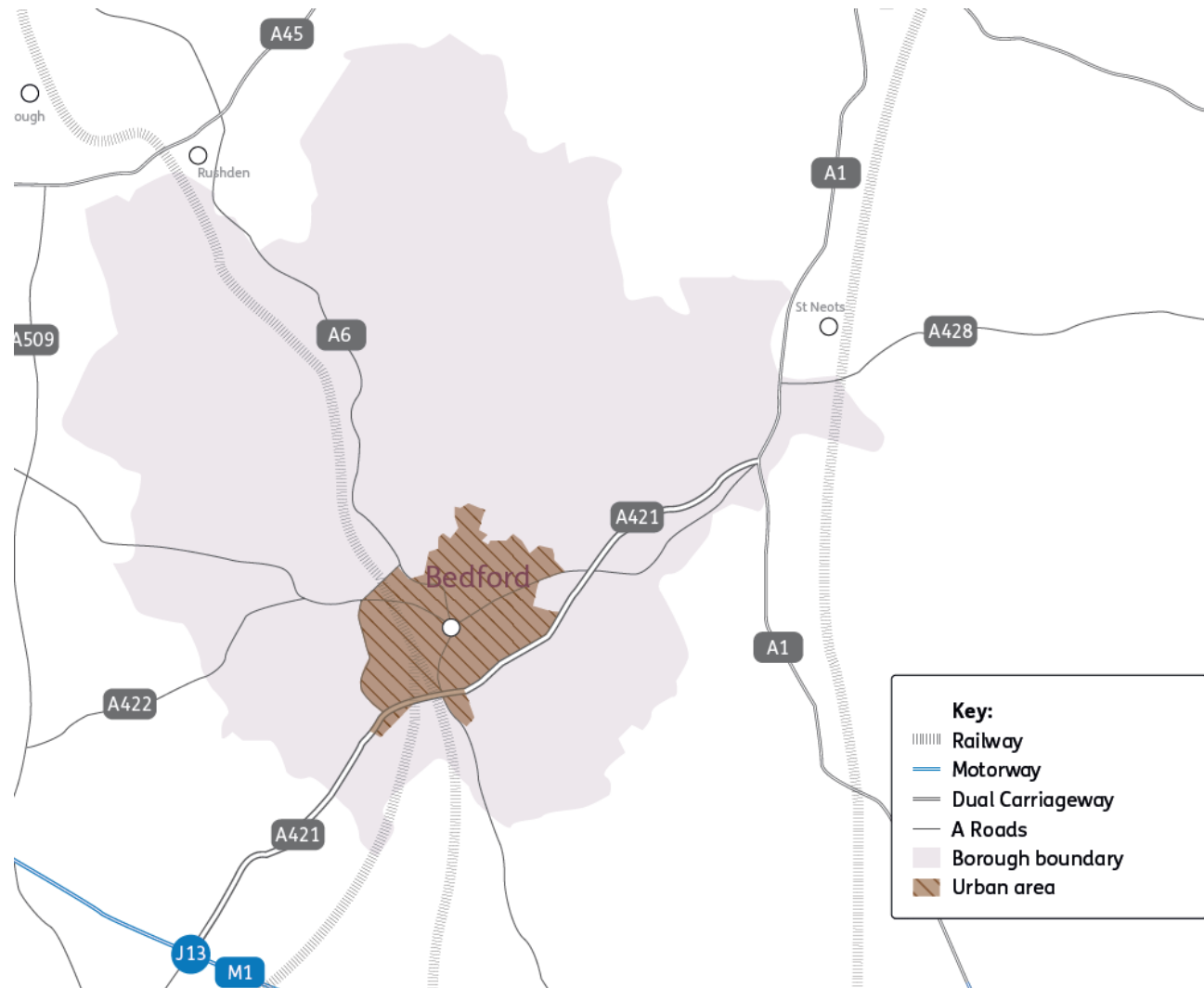
### Option 1a: In and around the urban area only.

- Within the urban area (1,500)
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500), up to 51 ha employment.
- Total 3,000 dwellings, up to 51 ha employment. Insufficient residential growth to meet need. Additional employment sites (located in the A421 transport corridor) required to meet need.



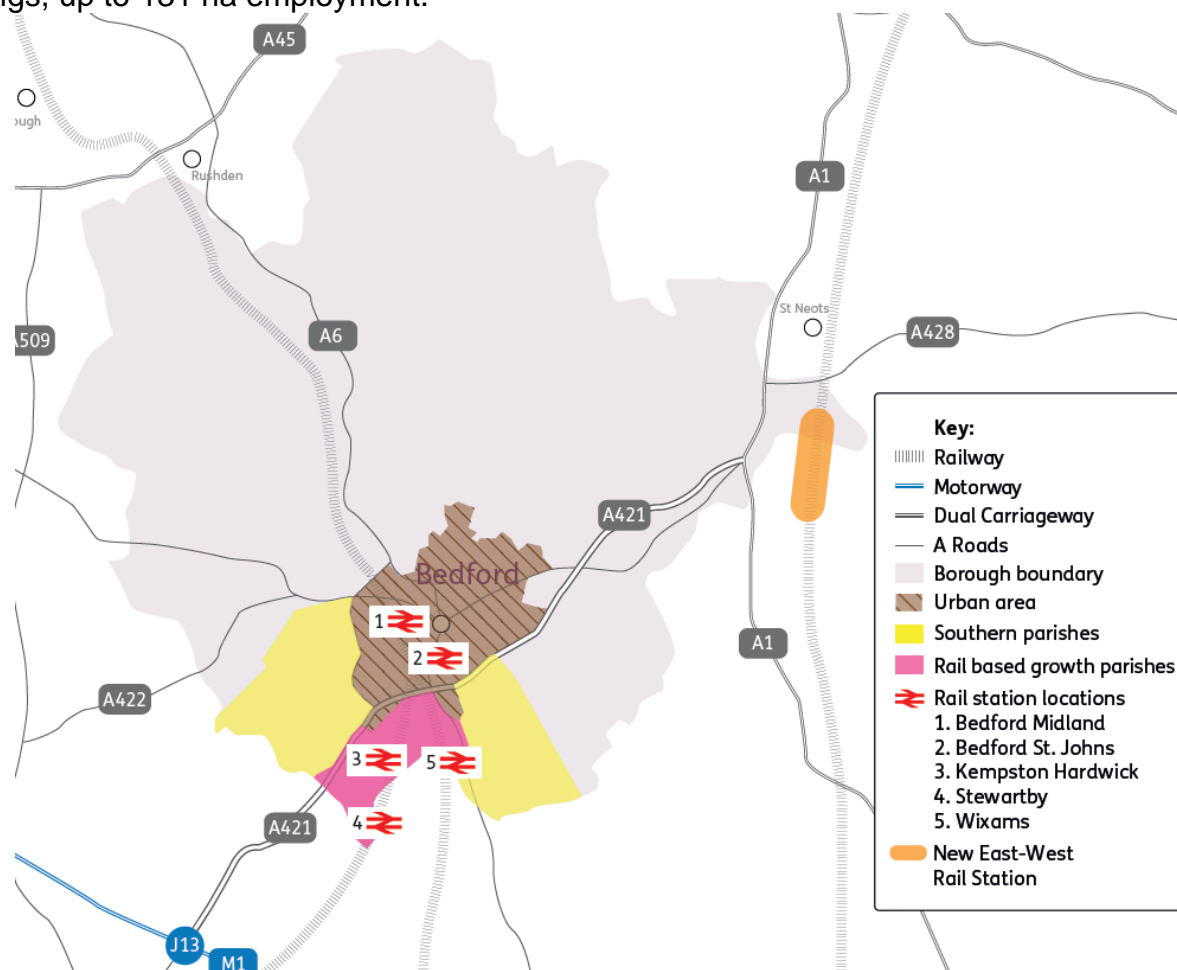
**Option 1b: Sites within the urban area at enhanced density.**

- Total 12,500 dwellings, up to 51 ha employment. Additional employment sites (located in the A421 transport corridor) required to meet need.



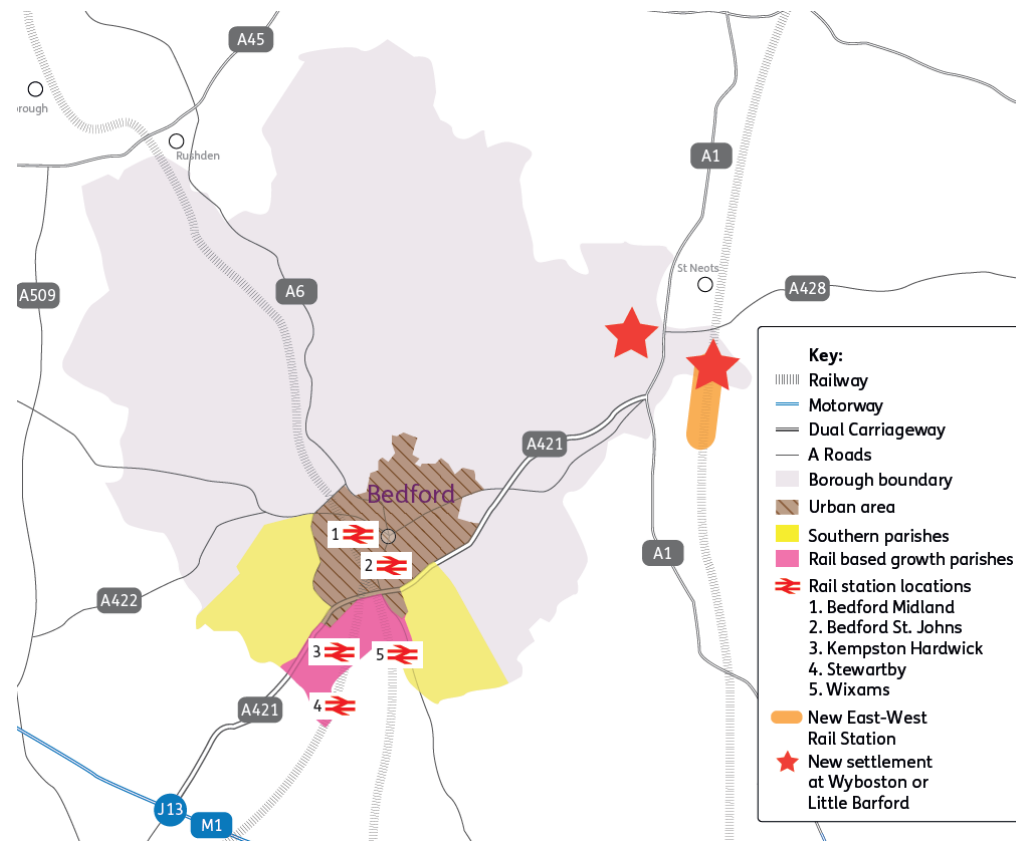
### Option 2a: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth – south.

- Within the urban area (1,500).
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500), up to 51 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams (high option) (7,500), up to 80 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – south: land within the parishes of Wootton, Kempston Rural, Elstow, Wilstead, Shortstown, Cotton End (2,000).
- Total 12,500 dwellings, up to 131 ha employment.



**Option 2b: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth – south, plus one new settlement.**

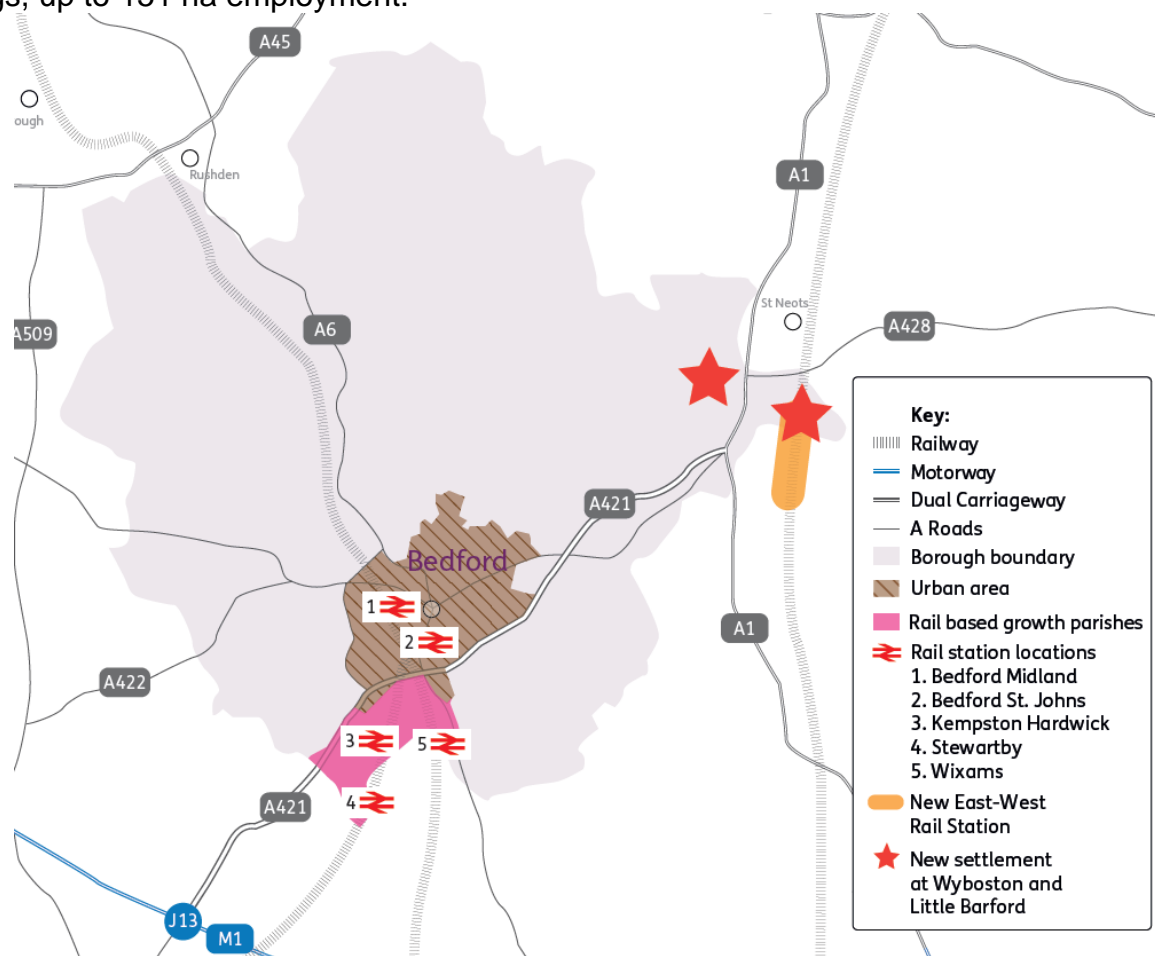
- Within the urban area (1,500).
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500), up to 51 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams (low option) (5,500), up to 80 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – south: land within the parishes of Wootton, Kempston Rural, Elstow, Wilstead, Shortstown, Cotton End (1,500).
- New settlement at Wyboston (2,500) or Little Barford (3,085), up to 20 ha employment.
- Total between 12,500 and 13,085 dwellings, up to 151 ha employment.





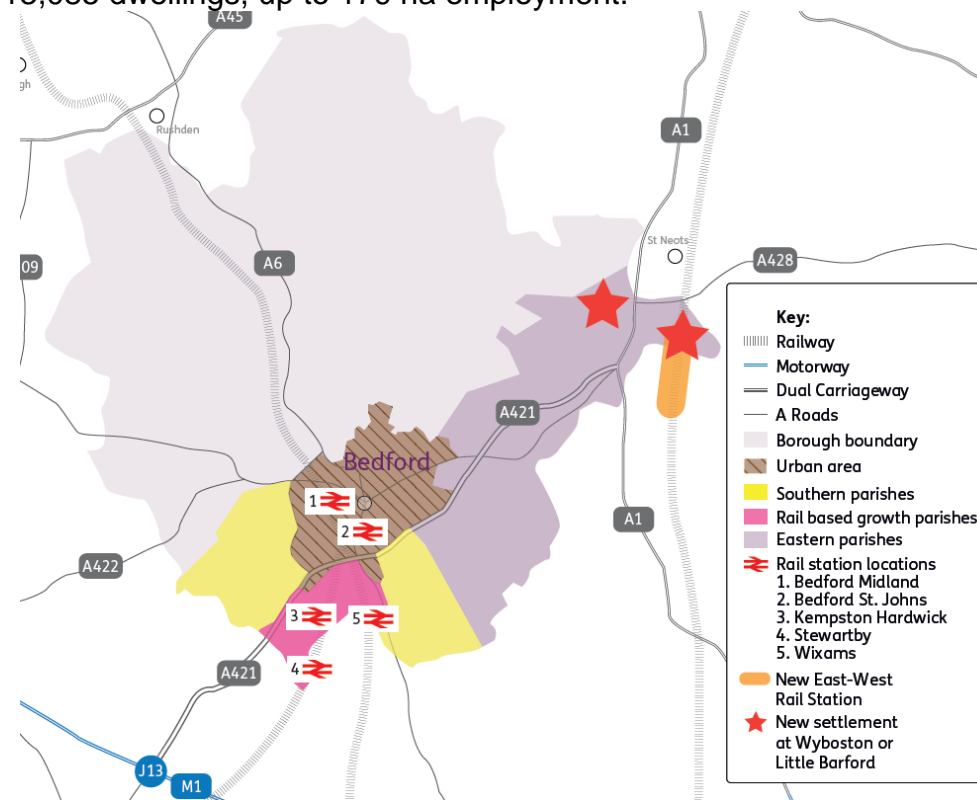
**Option 2c: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth, plus two new settlements.**

- Within the urban area (1,500).
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500), up to 51 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams (extra low option, this being the residual required to meet need) (3,915), up to 80 ha employment.
- New settlements at Wyboston (2,500) and Little Barford (3,085), up to 20 ha employment.
- Total 12,500 dwellings, up to 151 ha employment.



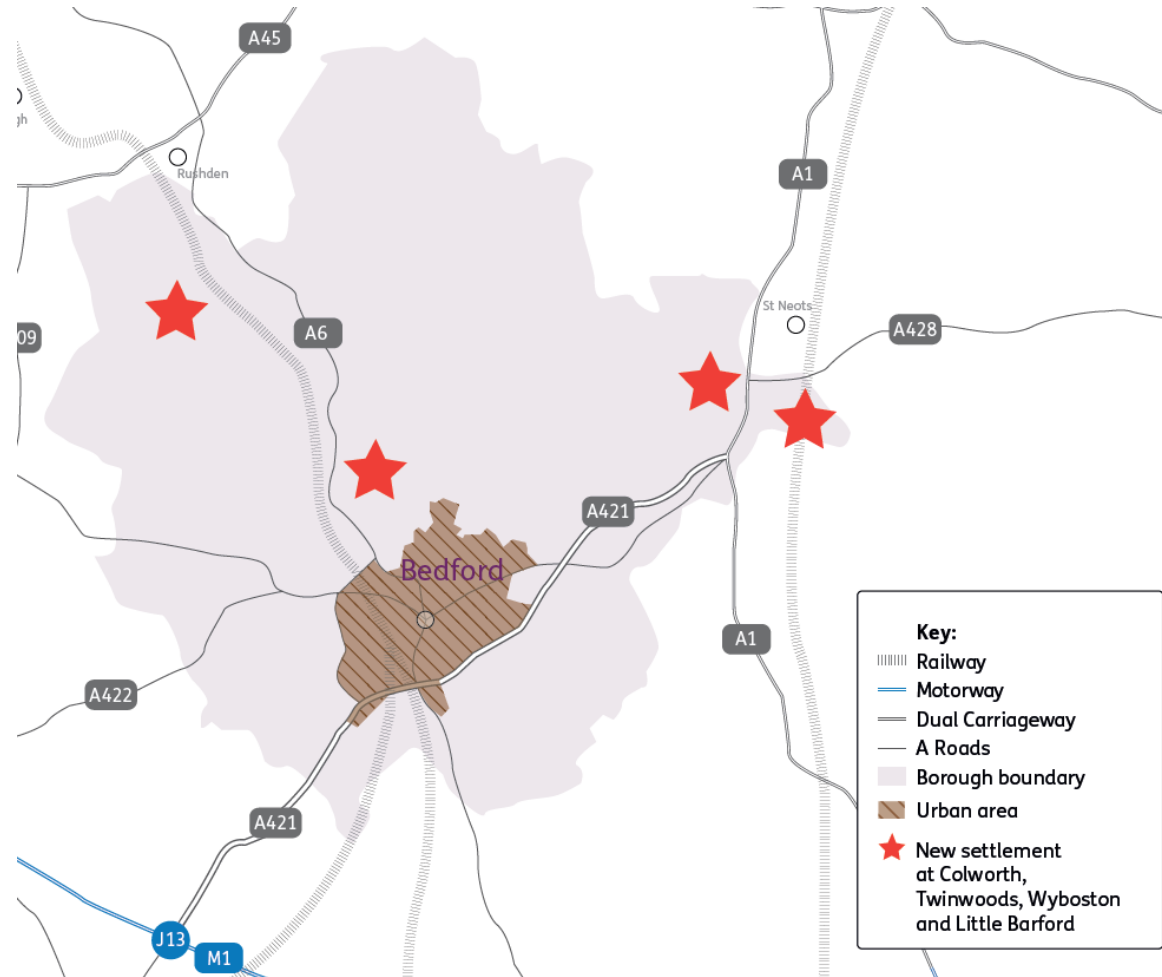
**Option 2d: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth – south and east, plus one new settlement.**

- Within the urban area (1,500).
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500), up to 51 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams (low option) (5,500), up to 80 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – south: land within the parishes of Wootton, Kempston Rural, Elstow, Wilstead, Shortstown, Cotton End (750).
- Transport corridor – east: land within the parishes of Cardington, Willington, Cople, Great Barford, Roxton, Wyboston and Little Barford (750), up to 28 ha employment.
- New settlement at Wyboston (2,500) or Little Barford (3,085), up to 20 ha employment.
- Total between 12,500 and 13,085 dwellings, up to 179 ha employment.



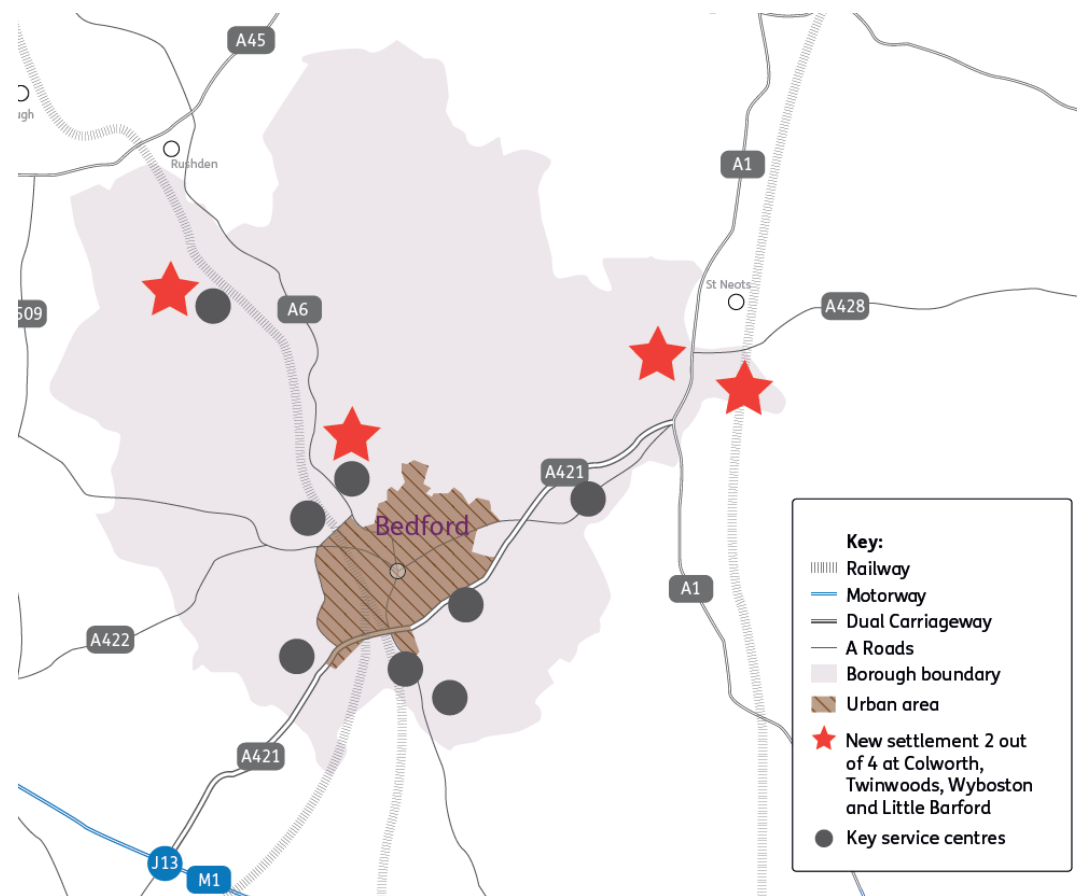
### Option 3a: Development in and around the urban area, plus four new settlements.

- Within the urban area (1,500).
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500), up to 51 ha employment.
- New settlements – Colworth (2,400), Twinwoods (3,495), Wyboston (2,500), Little Barford (3,085), up to 34 ha employment.
- Total 14,480 dwellings, up to 85 ha employment. Additional employment sites (located in the A421 transport corridor) required to meet need.



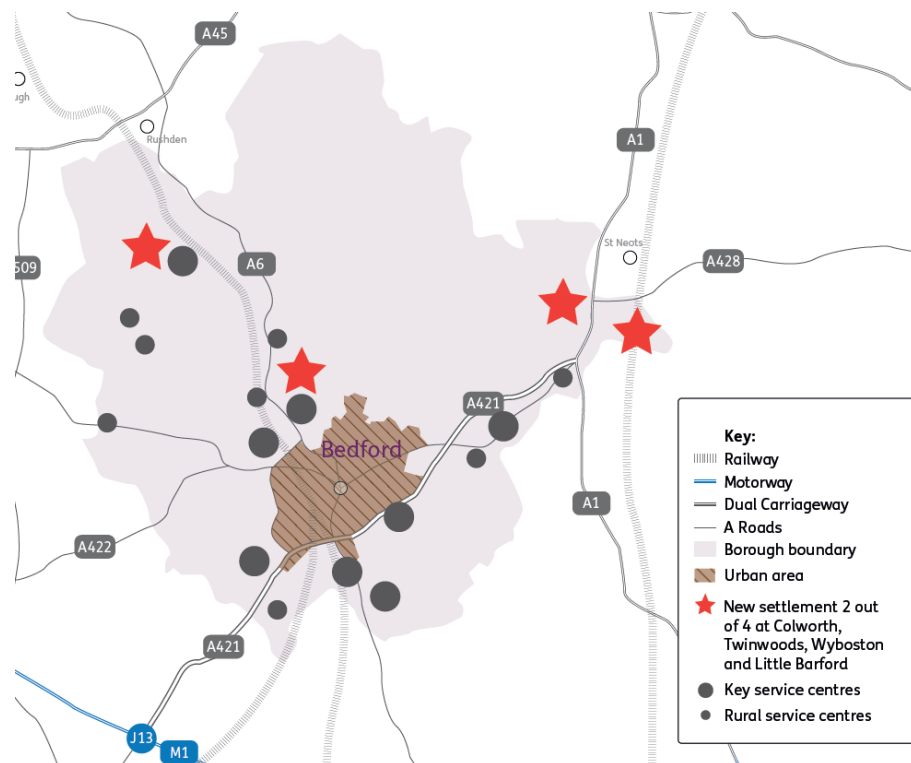
### Option 3b: Development in and around the urban area, plus two new settlements, plus key service centres.

- Within the urban area (1,500).
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500), up to 51 ha employment.
- New settlements – two out of Colworth (2,400) or Twinwoods (3,495) or Wyboston (2,500) or Little Barford (3,085), up to 20 ha employment.
- Key Service Centres – (4,000) Bromham (500), Clapham (500), Great Barford (500), Sharnbrook (500), Shortstown (500), Wilstead (500), Wixams (500), Wootton (500), up to 1 ha employment.
- Total 11,900 dwellings (assuming lower amount for new settlements) or 13,580 dwellings (assuming higher amount for new settlements), up to 72 ha employment. Additional employment sites (located in the A421 transport corridor) required to meet need.



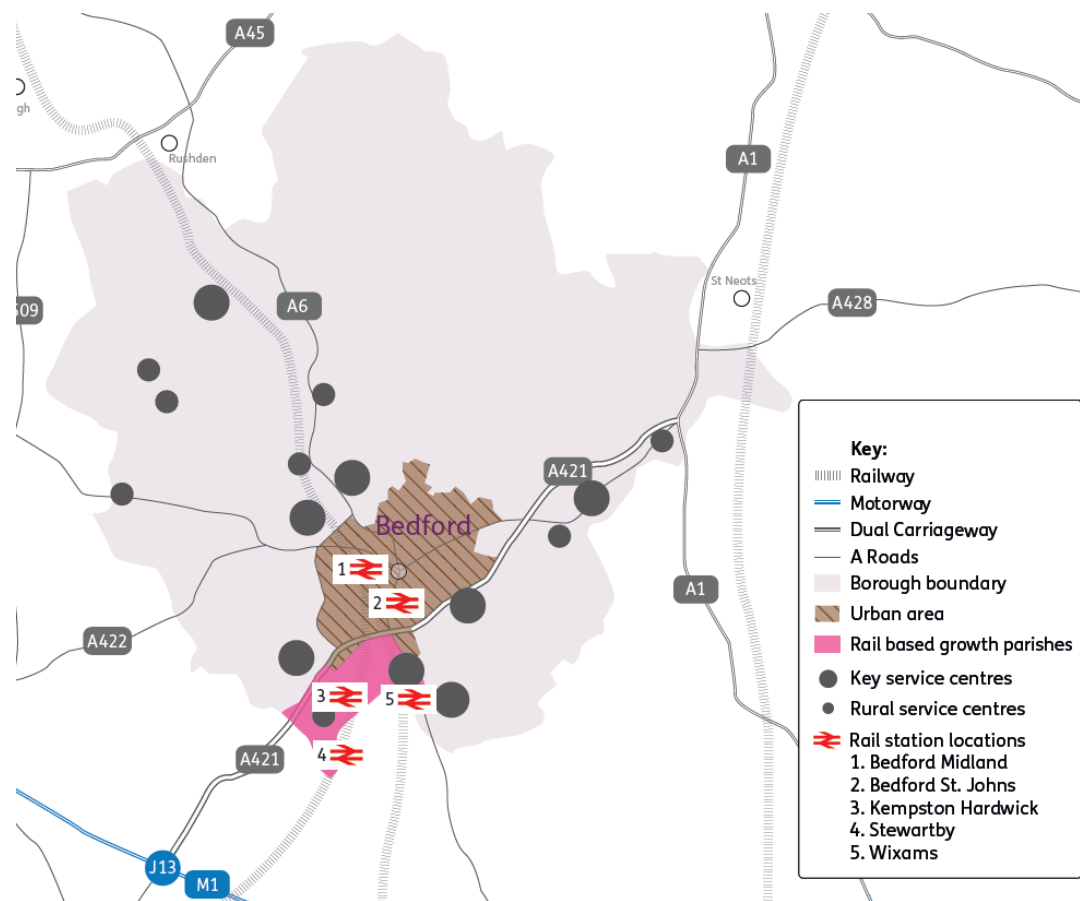
**Option 3c: Development in and around the urban area, plus two new settlements plus key service centres, plus rural service centres.**

- Within the urban area (1,500).
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500), up to 51 ha employment.
- New settlements – two out of Colworth (2,400) or Twinwoods (3,495) or Wyboston (2,500) or Little Barford (3,085), up to 20 ha employment.
- Key Service Centres – (4,000) Bromham (500), Clapham (500), Great Barford (500), Sharnbrook (500), Shortstown (500), Wilstead (500), Wixams (500), Wootton (500) up to 1 ha employment.
- Rural Service Centres – (280) Carlton (35), Harrold (35), Milton Ernest (35), Oakley (35), Roxton (35), Stewartby (35), Turvey (35), Willington (35), up to 14 ha employment.
- Total 12,180 dwellings (assuming lower amount for new settlements) or 13,860 dwellings (assuming higher amount for new settlements), up to 86 ha employment. Additional employment sites (located in the A421 transport corridor) (located in the A421 transport corridor) required to meet need.



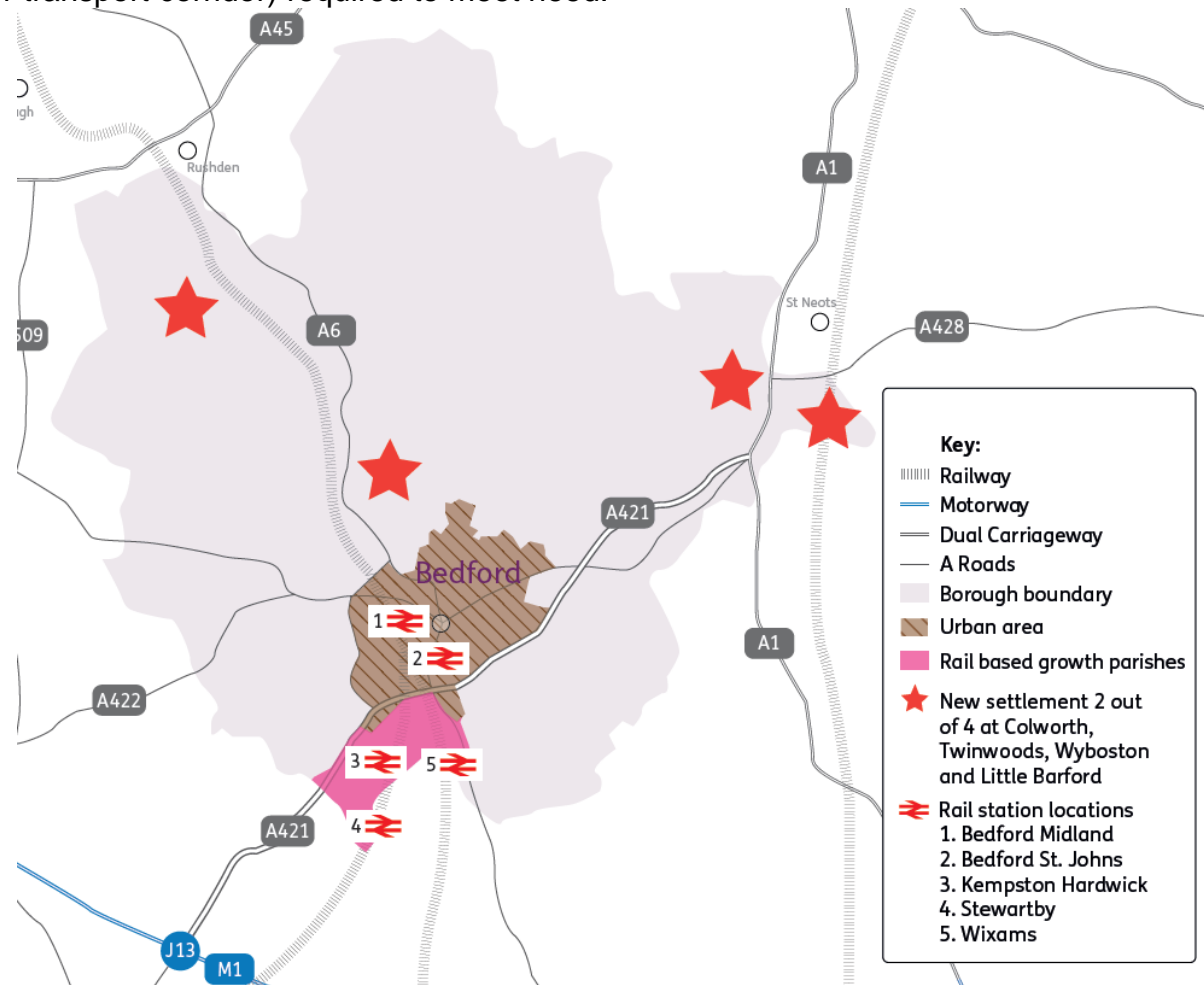
#### Option 4: A421 transport corridor with rail based growth, plus key service centres, plus rural service centres.

- Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams (high option) (7,500), up to 80 ha employment.
- Key Service Centres – (4,000) Bromham (500), Clapham (500), Great Barford (500), Sharnbrook (500), Shortstown (500), Wilstead (500), Wixams (500), Wootton (500) up to 1 ha employment.
- Rural Service Centres – (280) Carlton (35), Harrold (35), Milton Ernest (35), Oakley (35), Roxton (35), Stewartby (35), Turvey (35), Willington (35), up to 14 ha employment.
- Total 11,780 dwellings, up to 95 ha employment. Additional employment sites (located in the A421 transport corridor) required to meet need.



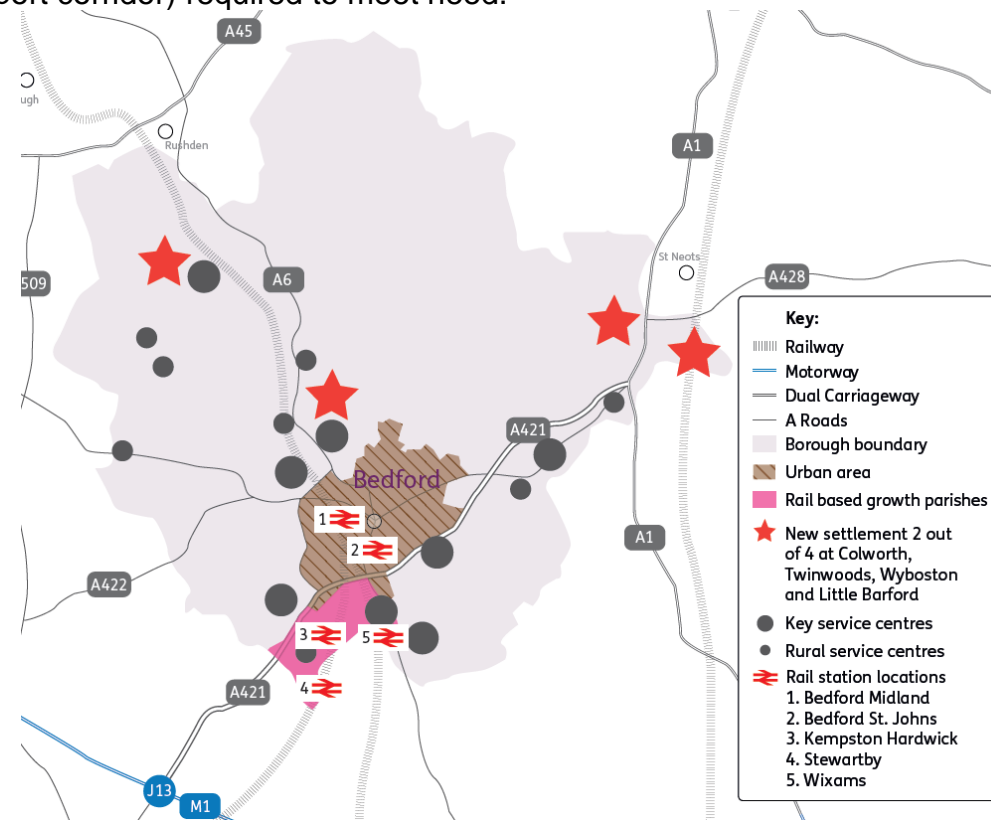
### Option 5: A421 transport corridor with rail based growth, plus two new settlements.

- Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams (high option) (7,500), up to 80 ha employment.
- New settlements – two out of Colworth (2,400) or Twinwoods (3,495) or Wyboston (2,500) or Little Barford (3,085), up to 20 ha employment.
- Total 12,400 dwellings (assuming lower amount for new settlements), up to 100 ha employment. Additional employment sites (located in the A421 transport corridor) required to meet need.



**Option 6: A421 transport corridor with rail based growth, plus two new settlements, plus key service centres, plus rural service centres.**

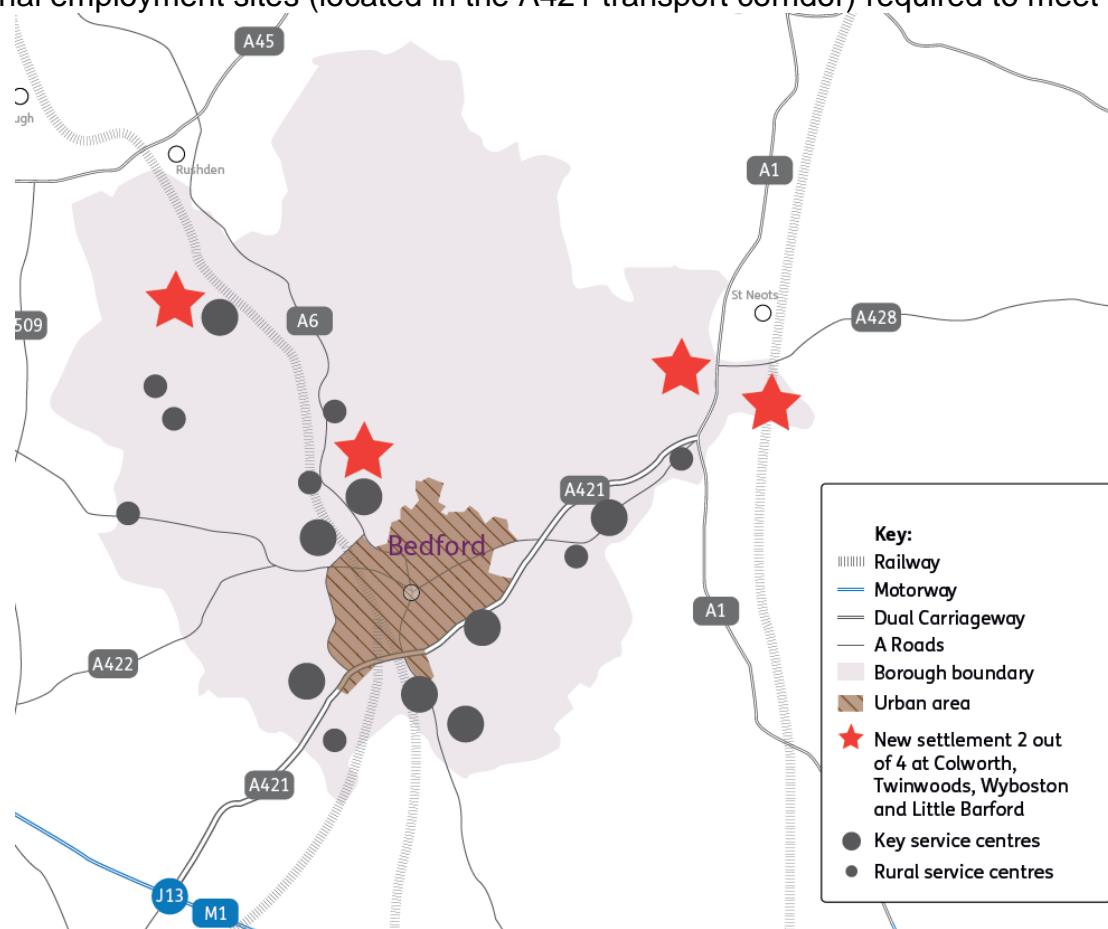
- Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams (low option) (5,500), up to 80 ha employment.
- New settlements – two out of Colworth (2,400) or Twinwoods (3,495) or Wyboston (2,500) or Little Barford (3,085), up to 20 ha employment.
- Key Service Centres – (4,000) Bromham (500), Clapham (500), Great Barford (500), Sharnbrook (500), Shortstown (500), Wilstead (500), Wixams (500), Wootton (500) up to 1 ha employment.
- Rural Service Centres – (280) Carlton (35), Harrold (35), Milton Ernest (35), Oakley (35), Roxton (35), Stewartby (35), Turvey (35), Willington (35), up to 14 ha employment.
- Total 14,680 dwellings (assuming lower amount for new settlements), up to 115 ha employment. Additional employment sites (located in the A421 transport corridor) required to meet need.





### Option 7: Development in two new settlements, plus key service centres, plus rural service centres.

- New settlements – two out of Colworth (2,400) or Twinwoods (3,495) or Wyboston (2,500) or Little Barford (3,085), up to 20 ha employment.
- Key Service Centres – (4,000) Bromham (500), Clapham (500), Great Barford (500), Sharnbrook (500), Shortstown (500), Wilstead (500), Wixams (500), Wootton (500) up to 1 ha employment.
- Rural Service Centres – (280) Carlton (35), Harrold (35), Milton Ernest (35), Oakley (35), Roxton (35), Stewartby (35), Turvey (35), Willington (35), up to 14 ha employment.
- Total 9,180 dwellings (assuming lower amount for new settlements), up to 35 ha employment. Insufficient residential growth to meet need. Additional employment sites (located in the A421 transport corridor) required to meet need.



The options are summarised in tabular form below

	Within urban area	Adjoining urban area	Village related	A421 transport corridor with rail based growth				New settlements (A6 corridor)	Total dwelling numbers	Total employment land (ha)
				Growth focused on Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby & Wixams (Rail based growth)	Transport corridor south	Transport corridor east	New settlements (A421 corridor)			
1a	1,500	1,500							3,000	51*
1b	12,500								12,500	51*
2a	1,500 (12%)	1,500 (12%)		7,500 (60%)	2,000 (16%)				12,500	131
2b	1,500 (12%)	1,500 (12%)		5,500 (44%)	1,500 (12%)		2,500** (20%)		12,500	151
2c	1,500 (12%)	1,500 (12%)		3,915 (31%)			5,585 (45%)		12,500	151
2d	1,500 (12%)	1,500 (12%)		5,500 (44%)	750 (6%)	750 (6%)	2,500** (20%)		12,500	179
3a	1,500 (10%)	1,500 (10%)					5,585 (39%)	5,895 (41%)	14,480	85*
3b	1,500 (13%)	1,500 (13%)	4,000 (34%)				11,480 (80%)		11,900	72*
3c	1,500 (12%)	1,500 (12%)	4,280 (35%)				4,900 (41%)		12,180	86*
4			4,280 (36%)	7,500 (64%)					11,780	95*
5				7,500 (61%)			4,900 (39%)		12,400	100*
6			4,280 (29%)	5,500 (38%)			4,900 (33%)		14,680	115*
7			4,280 (47%)				4,900 (53%)		9,180	35*

\* Additional employment sites (located in the A421 transport corridor) required to meet need.

\*\* Lower number used.

### Identification of “reasonable alternatives”

- 3.16 Having identified the long list of options the Council sought to identify reasonable alternatives, that is, the different realistic ways of meeting the required amount of growth to 2040. However, it should be noted that it was decided that the employment requirement would not be considered as an overriding constraint in generating options and that any shortfall should be capable of being met in other locations suitable for employment growth. Alternatives that were capable of providing dwelling growth within 10% of the required need were considered to be reasonable.
- 3.17 The table below summarises the options and the level of development which each option provides. It shows that all but options 1a, 1b and 7 could have the potential to meet the housing and employment targets of the plan.

Option	Dwellings	Employment (ha)	Reasonable alternative Yes / No	Reason
1a	3,000	51	No	Required level of growth cannot be achieved. The suitability of sites and coalescence issues mean that this option is unlikely to deliver sufficient development to meet growth needs.
1b	12,500	51	No	Theoretically possible to meet residential growth needs but the densities required would have unacceptable significant impacts.
2a	12,500	131	Yes	Required level of growth can be achieved.
2b	12,500 – 13,085	151	Yes	Required level of growth can be achieved.
2c	12,500	151	Yes	Required level of growth can be achieved.
2d	12,500 – 13,085	179	Yes	Required level of growth can be achieved.
3a	14,480	85	Yes	Required level of growth can be achieved
3b	11,900	72	Yes	Required level of growth can be achieved
3c	12,180	86	Yes	Required level of growth can be achieved
4	11,780	95	Yes	Required level of growth can be achieved
5	12,400	100	Yes	Required level of growth can be achieved
6	14,680	115	Yes	Required level of growth can be achieved
7	9,180	35	No	Required level of growth cannot be achieved even if the highest numbers are used for the new settlements.

### Sustainability appraisal testing of the reasonable alternatives

- 3.18 All of the identified reasonable alternatives have been assessed as part of the plan’s sustainability appraisal. The full results of the sustainability testing are set out in the Draft Sustainability Appraisal Report.

- 3.19 In summary the sustainability appraisal shows that options 2a, 2b, 2c and 2d collectively are the best performing options. All four sub-options have an urban focus in common. However, option 2a performs better than the others because it concentrates most growth at the rail based location at Stewartby / Kempston Hardwick (60% of total growth). This means that there is a high probability that public transport and cycling will be an attractive alternative to private car use for a significant proportion of total new growth.
- 3.20 Options 2b, 2c and 2d perform almost identically although option 2c is slightly the worst performing option of the three because of the higher proportion of growth that is dispersed to new settlements and also because it requires development at Wyboston, which is likely to involve the loss of high quality agricultural land.
- 3.21 Of the other options, 3a, 3b and 3c all have the same urban focus for growth as the sub-option 2s, however they collectively perform more poorly than the sub-option 2s because they additionally depend more heavily on village related growth and / or new settlements. There is little to distinguish between them however.
- 3.22 Options 4, 5 and 6 also perform more poorly than the sub-option 2s although with varying effects. None of these options includes an urban focus for growth but instead concentrate growth to varying degrees around the rail based location at Stewartby / Kempston Hardwick. As such, whilst there are benefits of a similar nature to those relating to the sub-option 2s, these scores are of a lesser magnitude. Of the three, option 6 performs worse than the other two because a high proportion of total growth is in new settlements and villages, which is likely to result in a substantial number of car trips to the urban area where most services, facilities and employment are located.

#### Assessment of the reasonable alternatives against the draft plan themes and deliverability considerations

- 3.23 Having identified the reasonable alternatives and identified how each performed in the sustainability appraisal further analysis of the options has been undertaken to identify how each option performs against the emerging plan themes. This analysis is essentially a reiteration of the findings of the sustainability appraisal organised to illustrate how the spatial options align with the overarching vision and themes of the draft plan.

Options	Thematic comments			
	1. Greener	2. More accessible	3. More prosperous	4. Better places
<b>Options 2a, 2b, and 2c 2d:</b> Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth	These options will maximise the use of previously developed land and lower quality agricultural land. They may also expect to increase the use of public transport, cycling and walking, resulting in lower CO <sub>2</sub> emissions, depending on the dispersal of growth in each option.	Although the need to travel is expected to rise, the high concentration of development near to rail stations and the use of bus facilities in the transport corridor are likely to encourage the use of public transport and cycling.	These options are likely to benefit businesses and support the creation of new business, although this effect may be lessened depending on the degree of dispersal of growth in each option. Access to wider economic markets is facilitated by good road and rail links along the transport corridor. The effect on town centres is uncertain however.	These options may affect landscape and townscape. Good quality housing that meets needs is likely to be provided. New settlements can be expected to create their own townscape character and sense of place.
<b>Options 3a, 3b and 3c:</b> Development in and around the urban area, plus village growth and/or new settlements	These options are expected to have a negative effect on air quality because of the greater need for travel, which is likely to be by private car, thus also increasing carbon dioxide emissions. These options include some development on previously developed land.	The dispersal of growth to villages and / or new settlements is likely to increase the need to travel and trip lengths significantly. This is unlikely to be by walking, cycling or public transport meaning that there is likely to be a significant increase in private car use.	Although these options are likely to benefit businesses and support the creation of new business, this effect is likely to be lessened because of the dispersal of some growth to new settlements and villages. The effect on town centres is uncertain.	These options may affect landscape. New settlements can be expected to create their own townscape character and sense of place. Good quality housing that meets needs is likely to be provided.

<b>Options 4, 5 and 6:</b> A421 transport corridor with rail based growth, plus village growth and/or new settlements.	These options are expected to have some negative effect on air quality because of the greater need for travel, which is likely to be by private car, thus increasing carbon dioxide emissions. These options include some development on previously developed and lower quality agricultural land.	The benefits of concentrating development near to rail stations in the transport corridor are likely to be outweighed by the dispersal of growth to villages and / or new settlements. This will increase the need to travel and trip lengths, which is likely to increase private car use.	As these options do not include any urban related growth but disperse growth to villages and / or new settlements, they are likely to have a negative effect on economic growth. Town centres will not benefit as the benefits of growth are dispersed away from the urban area.	These options may affect landscape and townscape. Good quality housing that meets needs is likely to be provided. There may be a negative effect on physical activity because of the dispersal of growth away from the urban area where most facilities remain located.
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3.24 The analysis was then taken one step further to begin to assess the deliverability of the options. It is a requirement of the plan making process that plans are tested to ensure their deliverability. Specific sites allocated in the plan must be suitable, available and achievable and the plan will need to be accompanied by an infrastructure delivery plan which identifies the social, physical and green infrastructure necessary to support the new development proposed and how and when it can be delivered. At this stage the analysis which can be undertaken is high level only it does not have the benefit of

- Full detailed site appraisals (work undertaken to date has been published and can be viewed [here](#))
- Strategic master planning of areas with potential for growth in the context of the EWR proposals in the urban area and wider rail corridor
- Strategic Natural Capital Assessment. A Natural Capital Assessment has been undertaken but this has yet to be translated into a tool to assess the strategic options. Work on Nature Recovery Strategies is also awaited.
- Detailed transport modelling. A high level transport assessment has been undertaken (outlined below)
- A full infrastructure delivery appraisal to include physical, social and green infrastructure required to support development of the scale envisaged.
- Plan wide or site specific viability appraisal

#### High level transport assessment

3.25 At the same time as the review of the Local Plan commenced the Council commissioned AECOM to develop a transport model for the Borough and following the Issues and Options consultation AECOM were further commissioned to test four development

scenarios based on combinations of the potential development locations which were consulted upon at the Issues and Options stage.

**Grey** (Dispersed growth): this scenario includes all sites identified as part of the Local Plan 'call for sites' consultation with the size of the proposed developments scaled uniformly to ensure that the overall growth in the borough is considered to be in the likely range of the new Local Plan housing and employment targets.

**Pink, Yellow and Brown** (Infrastructure-focused growth along the A421 and East West Rail corridors): this scenario concentrates growth along the A421 corridor and proposed East West Rail corridor within Bedford Borough (including the 'Central Section' between Bedford and Cambridge), within the urban area and in areas which could form extensions to the Bedford urban area.

**Red & Orange** (New settlement-focused growth): this scenario provides growth through the creation of one or more new settlements within the Borough.

**Brown** (Urban-focused growth): this scenario supports growth in locations which are primarily located within Bedford or in parishes which adjoin the current urban area boundary near existing urban areas, including urban extensions.

- 3.26 As a second stage a more detailed assessment of the transport impacts of the four new settlements which were put forward in the call for sites was undertaken with one report looking at the impacts of the Colworth and Twinwoods new settlements in the A6 corridor, and the other looking at the impact of the new settlements at Wyboston (known as Dennybrook) and Little Barford. Given that new settlements are generally delivered over timescales which can go beyond local plan end timeframes the impact of the new settlement proposals were tested at both 2040 and 2050. These studies looked at the forecast transport impacts of the new settlements and if further mitigation measures over and above those considered as part of the assessment of the four proposed development scenarios could be developed to mitigate their forecast impacts.
- 3.27 The findings of the three reports are summarised in a report entitled Bedford Borough Transport Model Local Plan Assessment Summary Report. The summary report assesses the four development scenarios against a number of transport metrics / criteria and draws on the added detail from the site specific work. The metrics were chosen to reflect different impacts on the transport network and together provide a rounded view of highway network performance through an analysis of the effect on the links and junctions which make up the network based on a Red, Amber, Green (RAG) rating. The RAG rating highlights the variation between the scenarios and is applied both without mitigation and with potential mitigation for each development scenario.
- 3.28 In summary the findings for the Borough as a whole and for the individual new settlements were as follows:
- Borough wide – Even with a number of proposed mitigations (ref to appendix of this document) and before the proposed development scenarios for the new local plan are added to the transport model there are forecast to be locations within the borough where traffic flows are approaching or exceeding the capacity of the road network. These include locations at some junctions on the A421 to the south of Bedford (between the junction at Renhold and the junction with the A6 near Elstow) and

along Clapham Road on the north side of Bedford, and at the junction between the Bedford Western Bypass and Bromham Road in the PM Peak hour.

- Wyboston (Dennybrook) – the forecast impacts of the proposed development at Dennybrook are not significant in terms of generating additional delays and congestion on the highway network. A number of mitigations would be required at 2040 and 2050.
- Little Barford – the forecast impacts of the proposed development at Dennybrook are not significant in terms of generating additional delays and congestion on the highway network. No further infrastructure mitigation would be required in addition to that identified in the Wyboston report.
- Twinwoods and Colworth – the assessment highlighted significant forecast delays and congestion at the Clapham Road / Manton Lane roundabout to the north of the Bedford urban area, particularly in the PM Peak hour (17:00 to 18:00), both with and without the proposed mitigations which is an issue for both developments as the modelling shows up to six minute delays at this junction.
- Based on the modelling work undertaken to date and this assessment of the transport model forecasts, the 'Pink, Yellow and Brown' and 'Brown' development scenarios are forecast to perform better against the defined metrics than the 'Grey' and 'Red & Orange' development scenarios. There are fewer red ratings within the assessment for these two development scenarios in both the AM Peak and PM Peak hours.
- The locations for growth in the 'Pink, Yellow and Brown' and 'Brown' development scenarios also provide greater opportunities for enhanced public transport provision and active mode measures to reduce the reliance on car for travel. Further mitigation measures (such as enhanced public transport, walking / cycling measures, and / or targeted highway improvements) could be assessed to understand if additional measures can be developed to address the forecast congestion for these development scenarios.

### 3.29 Implications for the development strategy assessment and local plan

- The transport assessment work shows that the development already planned for the borough up to 2030 can be accommodated (with the introduction of already agreed mitigation measures), although there are a small number of junctions which will be operating at capacity by that time.
- The modelling also shows that by 2040, traffic growth will have increased the number of junctions where delays are occurring, although additional mitigation could be introduced to alleviate this in a number of locations. Whilst the assessments of Colworth, Twinwoods, Wyboston (Dennybrook) and Little Barford have considered additional mitigation, the work has not yet considered possible further mitigation for the four proposed development scenarios. Appendix A of the Draft Local Plan Summary Report shows the mitigations which have either been included or proposed to date.
- The main area where additional mitigation is not identifiable is on the A6 approach to Bedford from the north.



- In the absence of currently deliverable railway stations at either location which might make an impact, the capacity issues here are too great to allow further development on the A6 (north) corridor such as the new settlements proposed at Twinwoods and / or Colworth.
- There are also capacity issues on the A421 south of Bedford which occur under all of the development scenarios, but in these locations further mitigation measures could be practicable.
- The chosen development strategy will also take account of the England's Economic Heartlands (EEH) Transport Strategy which provides an overall framework for transport policies and delivery across the region. The EEH Strategy includes a five-point plan of action which is supported by Bedford Borough Council. The five actions are:
  - Focus on decarbonisation of the transport system by harnessing innovation and supporting solutions which create green economic opportunities
  - Promote investment in digital infrastructure as a means of improving connectivity, in order to reduce the need to travel
  - Use delivery of East West Rail and mass rapid transit systems as the catalyst for the transformation of our strategic public transport networks
  - Champion increased investment in active travel and shared transport solutions to improve local connectivity to ensure that everyone has the opportunity to realise their potential
  - Ensure that our freight and logistics needs continue to be met whilst lowering the environmental impact of their delivery
- The commitment to these actions will also need to be reflected in the Local Plan. The development strategy will need to provide the context to deliver transport improvements for existing and new communities which reflect the EEH strategy ambitions.

#### Options assessment incorporating sustainability appraisal, local plan themes and high level deliverability assessment

- 3.30 The purpose of this section is to identify those options which, on the basis of the analysis to date through the sustainability appraisal, assessment against the local plan themes and the transport modelling work, perform the most strongly.
- 3.31 For each option (or group of options) the key strengths and weakness are identified as a basis for determining whether in sustainability and delivery terms there is a case for them to be selected as preferred options for consultation. In particular, whilst the options generation process looked at the capacity which would be needed in each location for the option to meet the housing and employment requirement, at this stage strategic delivery issues are also considered.

Option	Key strengths	Weaknesses and delivery challenges
<p>Option 2a: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth – south.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban focus - potential for active travel and access to core retail and service facilities, revitalised town centre and new employment, academic and provision around EWR stations at Bedford Midland and St John's stations</li> <li>• Potential for higher density development around rail hubs at Wixams (MML) and Stewartby and Kempston Hardwick (EWR) facilitating active travel modes and accessible neighbourhoods in proximity to new business park/science park development.</li> <li>• Proposed employment provision for the plan is well aligned with this option.</li> <li>• Focus on natural capital assets such as the Forest of Marston Vale, Route 51 and Bedford Waterway Park, existing rights of way and green and blue space to create a landscape led framework for the south of Bedford area. Opportunity for substantial landscape regeneration and enhancement to lead the development of a currently despoiled landscape in conjunction with the Forest of Marston Vale.</li> <li>• In the high level transport assessment the yellow pink and brown scenario which comprised an assessment of urban related and A421 and rail based corridor growth performed well.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The A421 is a key link and additional growth is a challenge to its capacity.</li> <li>• Viability and land assembly challenges for urban land and timing of delivery in some cases dependent on EWR delivery.</li> <li>• Substantial development has already taken place on the edge of Bedford. Further outward spread runs the risk of coalescence with nearby settlements.</li> <li>• Delivery of new rail stations is proposed, but not yet confirmed.</li> <li>• Further assessment of surface water management required.</li> <li>• Legacy of former land uses.</li> <li>• Lead in times for remediation of the Kempston Hardwick area and delivery of new rail stations mean that development in this part of the transport corridor will occur later in the plan period.</li> <li>• Detailed analysis of context and density / storey heights to establish appropriate place making for the rail based growth at Kempston Hardwick and Stewartby has yet to be undertaken.</li> <li>• The land at Kempston Hardwick is currently being promoted for employment development.</li> </ul>

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to create a viable inter urban bus service</li> <li>• Opportunities to create active travel routes to the urban area</li> </ul>	
Option 2b: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth – south, plus one new settlement	<p>In comparison to option 2a this option has slightly less development in the Rail based growth and transport corridor south but includes a new settlement.</p> <p>The additional strengths of this option are</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to establish a new planned community at Wyboston or Little Barford in proximity to the proposed EWR station at St Neots / Tempsford.</li> <li>• The initial highway assessment shows that both Wyboston and Little Barford are likely to be deliverable in highway terms</li> <li>• Little Barford has a stronger relationship and proximity to EWR (but there is a possibility that EWR may also constrain development capacity – see weaknesses)</li> <li>• Wyboston has potential to link to the National Cycle network and to create a settlement comprising a series of villages.</li> </ul>	<p>In comparison to 2a whilst</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• New settlement development at either Wyboston or Little Barford would also have a relatively long lead in time, development in this location would create a second focus for major development which could potentially impact positively on housing delivery rates.</li> <li>• Four of the five EWR routes being consulted upon pass through the Little Barford site and the deliverability of this proposal will require further assessment following the decision on the route alignment.</li> <li>• Development at Wyboston would lead to the loss of higher grade agricultural land.</li> </ul>
Option 2c: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based	<p>Option 2c includes growth around the railway stations only but significantly it assumes that new settlements will be developed at both Wyboston and Little Barford.</p> <p>The strengths are as described above for options 2a and 2b</p>	<p>In comparison to 2a and 2b, however;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The key challenge is the delivery of two new settlements in close proximity to one another and the ability of the housing market to deliver them simultaneously.</li> <li>• In relation to this option the need for clarity as to the land which will be available at Little Barford once the EWR route is determined is more critical</li> </ul>

growth, plus two new settlements.		given the greater reliance on new settlement development (45% of the total dwellings assigned to this option)
Option 2d: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth – south and east, plus one new settlement.	<p>Option 2d is similar to 2b, the only difference being that option 2d distributes development in both the transport corridor south and east.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• From a housing market perspective development in the wider parishes may enable housing delivery to be achievable earlier in the plan period.</li> <li>• Opportunity to enhance natural capital assets by broadening the green infrastructure network into a wider linked network.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In comparison to Option 2b development is slightly more dispersed and reduces the amount of development where rail stations could be accessed by active modes.</li> </ul>
Conclusion	<p>With the timely delivery of new rail stations and supporting highway mitigation works, and subject to full development appraisal including a remediation strategy, detailed master planning and capacity assessment and, where necessary, land assembly, there is an opportunity for growth in the urban area and western end of the corridor.</p> <p>At the eastern end of the corridor there is an opportunity to focus development around the increased connectivity offered by EWR.</p> <p>A contribution to the strategy from additional parish based development in the corridor would need to balance its potential to assist housing delivery in the early years of the plan and contribute to broadening the green infrastructure with the impact upon landscape and settlement character.</p> <p>Underpinning the assessment is the fact that options 2a- 2d are the best performing in the SA and they are well related to the best performing development scenarios tested in the high level transport work.</p>	

<p>Option 3a: Development in and around the urban area, plus four new settlements.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Urban focus - potential for active travel and access to core retail and service facilities, revitalised town centre and new employment, academic and provision around EWR stations at Bedford Midland and St John's stations</li> <li>• Opportunity to establish new planned communities at Wyboston, Little Barford, Colworth and Twinwoods.</li> <li>• The initial highway assessment shows that both Wyboston and Little Barford are likely to be deliverable in highway terms</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This option assumes that four new settlements can be delivered simultaneously two in the A6 (north) corridor and two in the A421 corridor.</li> <li>• A strategy focused almost entirely on new settlement development (80% of the requirement to 2040) would create a short term housing supply problem due to the long lead in times associated with new settlements.</li> <li>• The scenario which focuses on new settlements only performs poorly in the transport assessment.</li> <li>• Specific assessment of the A6 (north) corridor in relation to the Colworth and Twinwoods new settlements show that there are major highway constraints. Under this option, if no new settlement development takes place in the A6 (north) corridor the housing development target would not be met.</li> </ul>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>A strategy which is so heavily reliant on new settlement proposals would be very high risk. Whilst the scenario would include some urban related development, 80% of the dwellings would be in new settlement locations. In sustainability terms this reliance means that this option performs more poorly than the option 2s. Given the lead in times associated with new settlements there would be a very high risk of a housing shortfall in the early to middle years of the plan.</p> <p>In addition, there are specific delivery constraints in the A6 (north) corridor which mean that even if this strategy was acceptable in principle it would not meet the housing target of the plan.</p>	
<p>Option 3b: Development in and around the urban area, plus two new</p>	<p>Options 3b and 3c are very similar except that Option 3c includes growth in the Rural Service Centres as well as the Key Service centres.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunity to establish new planned communities</li> <li>• Development in villages could bring forward additional housing supply in the</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• With the exception of the urban area loss of the opportunity to focus development around the new EWR stations south of Bedford.</li> <li>• Greater dispersal of development in comparison to other options</li> <li>• Expansion of villages will have localised impacts such as potentially putting pressure on villages</li> </ul>

<p>settlements, plus KSCs.</p> <p><b>And</b> Option 3c: Development in and around the urban area, plus two new settlements plus KSCs, plus RSCs.</p>	<p>early years of the plan. Option 3c includes a wider range of village locations.</p>	<p>which have yet to commence or assimilate growth planned for the period up to 2030.</p>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>These options will create a more dispersed growth strategy which, as well as urban and new settlement growth, assigns growth to the KSCs (in option 3b) and to both KSCs and RSCs (option 3c). This would largely continue the existing Local Plan 2030 strategy which is built on development in the urban area, Key Service Centres and Rural Service Centres.</p> <p>The key issue for these options is the extent to which development related to the A6 north of Bedford would be deliverable and how far villages which have yet to assimilate development under the 2030 should be expected to deliver further growth.</p> <p>Given the highway constraints on the A6 north of Bedford (including both new settlements KSCs and RSCs), the need to allow villages already planning development to assimilate that growth, the more dispersed nature of the distribution of growth and the loss of focus on EWR, these options do not perform as strongly.</p>	

<p>Option 4: A421 transport corridor with rail based growth, plus key service centres, plus RSCs.</p> <p><b>And</b> Option 5: A421 transport corridor with rail based growth, plus two new settlements.</p> <p><b>And</b> Option 6: A421 transport corridor with rail based growth, plus two new settlements, plus KSCs, plus RSCs.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The strengths of developing in the transport corridor, new settlements and in the villages are described above</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The overriding weakness of options 4, 5 and 6 is that there is no development in the urban area which is the location identified in the Sustainability Appraisal to be the most sustainable. This is because it is where most services and facilities are located and there is the potential for brownfield land development.</li> <li>• Just as importantly, a strategy which does not focus on the urban area would fail to capture the potential for housing market stimulus in Bedford associated with the new EWR hub and opportunities for new distinctive urban neighbourhoods to play a key role in the revitalisation of the town centre.</li> <li>• AECOM work shows that scenarios without the urban focus or showing a more dispersed pattern perform more poorly</li> </ul>
<p>Conclusion</p>	<p>Overall these options perform poorly. The absence of urban related growth is an overriding weakness for these options.</p>	

### Conclusion and recommendations for the purpose of the draft plan consultation

- 3.32 On the basis of the assessment to date, as explained above, Options 2a-d perform most strongly. They are the best performing options in the Sustainability Appraisal and perform best against the Local Plan themes. They are well related to the best performing development scenarios tested in the high level transport work.
- 3.33 In terms of the alignment with the Local Plan themes (see table at 3.22) Options 2a-d have the potential to perform most positively against the greener, more accessible and more prosperous themes by maximising the use of previously developed land and lower quality agricultural land; increasing the use of public transport, cycling and walking resulting in lower CO<sub>2</sub> emissions ( depending on the degree of dispersal of growth in each option); and supporting the creation of new businesses with access to wider markets facilitated by good road and rail links along the corridor. In relation to the better places theme when assessing at this strategic level all of the options should be expected to deliver good quality housing and there could, with all options, be local landscape impacts. At this high level therefore it is not possible to draw definitive differences between the options.
- 3.34 The Option 2 sub options, which each have a different distribution of growth within the corridor, demonstrate collectively that:
- With the timely delivery of new rail stations and supporting highway mitigation works, and subject to full development appraisal including a surface water management strategy, detailed master planning and capacity assessment and, where necessary, land assembly, there is an opportunity for growth in the urban area and western end of the corridor.
  - At the eastern end of the corridor there is an opportunity to focus development around the increased connectivity offered by EWR.
  - A contribution to the strategy from additional parish-based development in the corridor would need to balance its potential to assist housing delivery in the early years of the plan, and contribute to broadening the green infrastructure, with the impact upon landscape and settlement character.
- 3.35 In sustainability terms the option 3s all have the same urban focus for growth as the sub-option 2s, however they collectively perform more poorly than the sub-option 2s because they additionally depend more heavily on village-related growth and / or new settlements.
- 3.36 In relation to the Local Plan themes the option 3s are likely to entail less development on previously developed and more on higher quality agricultural land (greener theme), create a more dispersed growth pattern potentially leading to higher car use (accessible theme) and support the creation of new businesses but with the proviso that this could lead in locational terms to a poorer relationship between where people live and work (prosperous theme).



- 3.37 Looking specifically at the three sub options, option 3a is heavily reliant on new settlement proposals. Whilst it would include some urban related development, 80% of the dwellings would be in new settlement locations. Given the lead in times associated with new settlements there would be a high risk of a housing shortfall in the early to middle years of the plan. In addition, there are specific delivery constraints in the A6 (north) corridor. Options 3b and 3c create a more dispersed growth strategy with growth in the urban area, new settlements and the Key Service Centres (in option 3b) and to both Key Service Centres and Rural Service Centres (option 3c). Given the highway constraints on the A6 north of Bedford, the need to allow villages already planning development to assimilate that growth, the more dispersed nature of the distribution of growth and the loss of focus on EWR, these options are less preferable than the options 2s.
- 3.38 In terms of the sustainability appraisal options 4, 5 and 6 also perform more poorly than the sub-option 2s. Of the three, option 6 performs worse than the other two because a high proportion of total growth is in new settlements and villages, which is likely to result in a substantial number of car trips to the urban area where most services, facilities and employment are located.
- 3.39 In relation to the Local Plan themes, whilst performance against the greener and accessible themes is not significantly different to the option 3s the key issue for these options is in relation to the more prosperous theme. They do not include any urban related growth but disperse growth to villages and / or new settlements and are likely to have a negative effect on economic growth. The town centre will not benefit as the benefits of growth are dispersed away from the urban area.
- 3.40 The overriding weakness of options 4, 5 and 6 are that there is no development in the urban area. A strategy which does not focus on the urban area would fail to capture the potential for housing market stimulus in Bedford associated with the new EWR hub and opportunities for new distinctive urban neighbourhoods to play a key role in the revitalisation of the town centre.
- 3.41 In conclusion, at this stage and pending more detailed appraisal in the coming months, Options 2a-d are the emerging preferred options for consultation. More work will be required over the coming months to further assess the strengths and weaknesses of each sub option in the light of more detailed appraisal to determine which of them is the best option.

## **4 Next steps: Preparing the Plan for Submission**

- 4.1 Following the consultation on the Draft Plan the next stage in the plan preparation process is consider the consultation comments and alongside the feedback from the consultation undertake further work to identify the final development strategy for the plan. The next steps in the technical work will include
- Full detailed site appraisals
  - Strategic master planning of areas with potential for growth in the context of the EWR proposals
  - Detailed transport modelling of specific options
  - A full infrastructure delivery appraisal and development of an Infrastructure Delivery Plan
  - Plan wide viability appraisal
- 4.2 It will also be necessary to assess the implications of decisions due to be made on the detailed alignment of the East West Rail route and the progress of the Arc Spatial Framework.