

Central
Bedfordshire

BeCentralBedfordshire



Central
Bedfordshire:
A great place
to live and work





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A place to live, work and enjoy

Beautiful Central Bedfordshire combines career opportunities within a thriving knowledge economy with affordable housing, a high standard of living, and an excellent quality of life.

Located to the north of London and between the cities of Oxford and Cambridge, Central Bedfordshire is at the heart of the UK's knowledge economy. The area is home to Cranfield University and a range of technology-focused businesses, presenting opportunities to live, build careers and grow companies in an attractive environment.

The area's offer to residents is all about quality of life. Central Bedfordshire combines beautiful countryside, towns and villages with new, sustainable communities and fast access to nearby cities. In surveys, it scores highly for factors including health, prosperity and community cohesion, and as a great place to live and raise a family.

A good standard of living is just one reason why; in Central Bedfordshire, average salaries are high while housing is more affordable than in nearby 'tech hub' locations - leaving more of the family budget for life's pleasures. And the area offers plenty to do with free time, from events and festivals to sports and some of the country's most famous visitor attractions.

Central Bedfordshire is growing, as an economy and as a wonderful place to live. We look forward to helping you make it home.



Centre Parcs



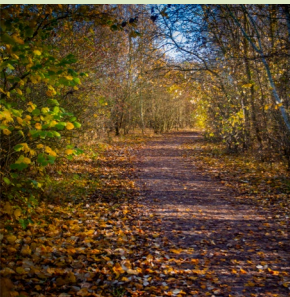
Millbrook Proving Ground



Cranfield University



Capability House, Wrest Park



Forest of Marston Vale



Mansion House, Wrest Park



Rushmere, Greensand Ridge



Dunstable Downs



ZSL Whipsnade Zoo



Space for start-ups

Technology parks

- 1 Cranfield Technology Park
- 2 Millbrook Technology Park

Flexible / incubation space

- 1 Cranfield Eagle Lab
- 2 Wrest Park Silsoe

Places to live

Key housing developments

- 1 Marston Valley
- 2 East of Biggleswade
- 3 East of Arlesey
- 4 North of Luton

Places to learn

Further and higher education institutions

- 1 Central Bedfordshire College
- 2 Cranfield University
- 3 University of Bedfordshire – Bedford campus
- 4 University of Bedfordshire – Milton Keynes campus
- 5 University of Bedfordshire – Luton campus
- 6 Shuttleworth College
- 7 Milton Keynes University

Places to enjoy

Visitor attractions

- 1 Center Parcs, Woburn Forest
- 2 Woburn Safari Park
- 3 ZSL Whipsnade Zoo

Areas of natural beauty

- 1 Forest of Marston Vale
- 2 Greensand Ridge
- 3 Dunstable Downs

A place to prosper

Central Bedfordshire's strategic location – to the north of London and at the heart of the Oxford-Cambridge knowledge economy – has attracted leading businesses while providing an ideal base for entrepreneurs.

The area is home to world-class companies of all sizes across sectors including high-performance technologies, advanced logistics, and digital technologies, typically characterised by high levels of R&D, skills and investment. They are supported by the innovation, technology and business expertise offered by Cranfield University – one of the UK's foremost research institutions.

For start-ups, Central Bedfordshire provides flexible accommodation, technology park environments such as Cranfield and Millbrook, and business scale-up support from organisations including Cranfield Eagle Lab, a partnership between Barclays and Cranfield University. Surveys including the Legatum Prosperity Index attest to the area's dynamic, innovation-focused economy and business environment.

For Central Bedfordshire's residents and entrepreneurs, this means lucrative career opportunities and an ideal ecosystem for the successful establishment and growth of technology-driven businesses.



A dynamic, growing economy



Top 6% for economic dynamism
of UK local authority areas (22nd of 379) ^[1]



Top 15% for economic quality
of UK local authority areas (47th of 379) ^[1]



5th for SME growth
of 379 UK local authority areas ^[1]

A hub for innovation



5th for R&D tax credit use
of 379 UK local authority areas ^[1]



Top 6% for innovation voucher use
of UK local authority areas (21st of 379) ^[1]



Top 10% new product investment
of UK local authority areas (21st of 379) ^[1]

Image credit: Samad Aerospace

^[1] Legatum Institute Prosperity Index (2020)

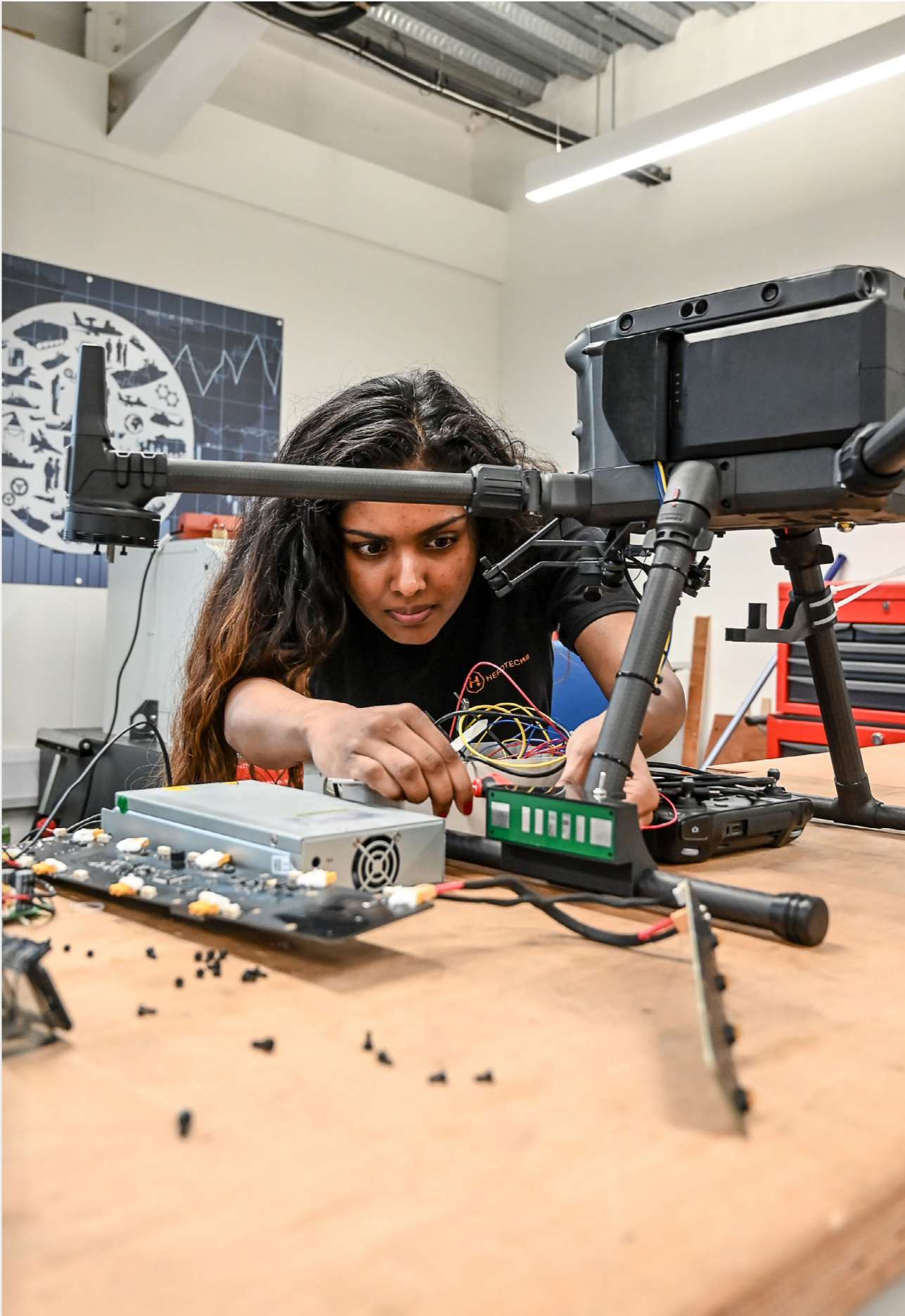
Leading businesses, innovators and research organisations



Space and support for growing businesses



Image credit: Herotech8



A place to make home

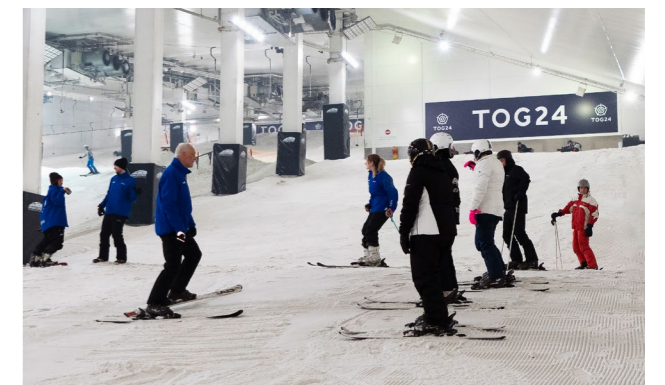
Central Bedfordshire is a diverse area of attractive market towns and villages, new sustainable communities and breath-taking countryside.

The area's historic towns are full of character, with charter markets dating back to the 13th century and thriving high streets lined with artisan shops, cafés and restaurants. In a 2019 Daily Telegraph ranking of 'Britain's best small and medium-sized towns to live in', Central Bedfordshire secured both first and second positions. The report found that Ampthill and Shefford had the highest proportions of independently-run businesses on their high streets (71%), a key indicator of quality and prosperity, in combination with more affordable house prices.^[2]

For lovers of walking and other outdoor activities, Central Bedfordshire offers attractive countryside including the Forest of Marston Vale and the Dunstable Downs, part of the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The area's wildlife-rich habitats and biodiversity hotspots, including Greensand Ridge stretching from Leighton Buzzard to Gamlingay, are home to a wide variety of rare species. Central Bedfordshire Council manages more than 1,000 acres of countryside for public access and wildlife such as Houghton Hall Park, all with modern visitor facilities. These areas are run in partnership with the National Trust, Wildlife Trust and Greensand Trust.

^[2] Hamptons International, Daily Telegraph, 28.5.19

For residents seeking 'big city' facilities, both Milton Keynes and the riverside county town of Bedford can be reached in around 20 minutes by rail or road. Milton Keynes' centre is one of the UK's top-10 shopping centres,^[2] with 270 shops, bars and restaurants. The city's wide range of attractions includes cinemas, theatres and experience venues including a skydiving centre, Big Rock – one of the country's best indoor climbing centres, and Snowzone – Europe's largest indoor real snow resort.



The county town of Bedford offers a traditional mix of chains and independent shops, as well as its own historical charter market. Flowing through the town centre, the beautiful River Great Ouse is lined with gardens known as the Embankment, a popular destination for residents and visitors alike, and the centre of festivities for the bi-annual Bedford River Festival.

Image credit top: Dunstable

Image credit above left: Bedford River Festival

Image credit above right: Snowzone, Milton Keynes

Image credit left: Dunstable Downs

Superbly connected

Central Bedfordshire is located to the north of London, where the South East of England and the Midlands meet – providing easy access to destinations throughout the country.



By Road

The M1 motorway, A1 and A421 (east-west route) pass through the area, enabling fast access to the Southeast, the Midlands and beyond. Nearby technology hubs including Oxford and Cambridge can be reached within 1 hour, making them commutable from a Central Bedfordshire base.



By Rail

With stations on three national mainlines, Central Bedfordshire enables fast rail connections to cities across the UK, including London within just 32 minutes. When completed, East West Rail will deliver speedy services across the Oxford to Cambridge geography; Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge. (Connection Stage 1 services will be completed by 2025).



By Air

Central Bedfordshire provides fast access to London’s airports, including Luton in less than 30 minutes, Heathrow in just over 1 hour, and Stansted in less than 1 ½ hours (car drive times).



Data Connectivity

Central Bedfordshire benefits from 97% super fast broadband coverage, enabling home and flexible working as well as productivity and security for businesses.





*Central Bedfordshire's
attractive countryside includes
the Forest of Marston Vale
and the Dunstable Downs,
part of the Chilterns Area of
Outstanding Natural Beauty*

Image credit: View from Barton Hills Nature Reserve

Towns in Central Bedfordshire



Leighton Buzzard

Population:
43,200

Located in the west of Central Bedfordshire, bordering Buckinghamshire, Leighton Buzzard lies 11 miles west of the M1 motorway at Junction 11A, 4.5 miles west of Hockcliffe on the A5 trunk road and 8 miles south of Bletchley, Milton Keynes. Leighton Buzzard's train station is situated on the West Coast Main Line with non-stop trains into London Euston in under 30mins. The Grand Union Canal and River Ouzel both run through the town.

It's believed that Leighton Buzzard dates back to 571 AD and has since developed into a thriving market town with the town's market charter granted in 1086 and still active today. The historic town centre boasts over 70 listed buildings, the now demolished site of a World War II codebreaking facility similar to nearby Bletchley Park and just outside the town is the Bridego Bridge made famous by the Great Train Robbery of 1963.

Schools:
Eight lower schools, four middle schools and two upper schools.

Central Bedfordshire presents a mix of vibrant market towns, offering residents a wealth of arts, sport, culture and history. The following pages feature some of it's prominent towns by population and connectivity, however the list is not exhaustive. To find out more about other town and ward profiles in Central Bedfordshire visit: centralbedfordshire.communityinsight.org



Dunstable

Population:
41,100

Located in the south of Central Bedfordshire, Dunstable borders Luton to its west and Houghton Regis to its north. Via the A5 and A505 trunk roads, the town has dual carriageway connections to the M1 motorway at Junctions 11 and 11A to its west, which can be reached in less than 10 mins.

The old Roman roads of Watling Street and Icknield Way are still used today as key thoroughfares in this old market town, dating back to pre-Roman times. To the southwest of the town, the Dunstable Downs and their chalk and grassland areas have been designated as a Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI). 2021 saw completion of the £20m new combined Leisure Centre and Library providing state of the art fitness facilities, a professionally staffed lending library, Citizens Advice Service and creche.

Schools:
Eight lower/primary schools, one middle school and three upper/secondary schools.



Biggleswade

Population:
22,100

Located to the north east of Central Bedfordshire, Biggleswade lies on the River Ivel, approximately 11 miles southeast of Bedford with the A1 trunk road running along its western boundary. The town has a railway station with regular Thameslink trains into London and Great Northern trains into Peterborough.

This historic market town dates back to Anglo Saxon times and can be found in the Domesday Book of 1086. The town centre is designated as a conservation area and is a lively hub of independent shops, cafes, and pubs whilst a large retail park just to the south of the town offers easy access to national retailers.

Schools:
Four lower schools, two middle schools, one upper school and a school for pupils with additional needs.



Houghton Regis

Population:
19,800

Located to the south of Central Bedfordshire, Houghton Regis neighbours Dunstable to its south. A dual carriageway links to the M1 motorway at Junction 11A to its east (approximately 2 miles) and the A5 trunk road to Milton Keynes (approximately 18 miles) to its west.

Houghton Regis is mentioned in the Domesday Book where it was called Houstone. By the 11th century, much of the surrounding area had become royal land hence the name Houghton Regis. Today, the town boasts the hidden gem, Houghton Hall Park with 42 acres of parkland, woodland and a modern, community focused visitors centre.

Schools:
Six primary schools, three secondary schools and a school for pupils with additional needs.



Image credit bottom left: Tye Architects



Flitwick

Population:
13,800

Centrally located within Central Bedfordshire, Flitwick lies approximately 4 miles north of the M1 motorway at Junction 12 and 5 miles east of the A6 trunk road. The town has the busiest train station on the Thameslink line in relation to the size of the town. Trains run regularly to St Pancras with journey times of approx 50 mins.

Flitwick is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086 as "a hamlet on the River Flitt". Today, it boasts a modern, state of the art sports centre, grass tennis courts, skateboard park, regular shuttle buses to nearby Centre Parcs, Woburn, and a busy town centre. The nearby River Flit runs through Flitwick Moor, a Site of Specific Scientific Interest (SSSI).

Schools:

Three lower schools and one middle school. Pupils use the upper school in neighbouring Ampthill.



Ampthill

Population:
8,800

Situated to the north of Central Bedfordshire, Ampthill is located along the A507, which links to the M1 motorway at Junction 13 to the west and the A1 trunk road to the east.

This historic Georgian market town has a weekly charter market that has run for over 800 years. The town hosts a variety of events throughout the year including an open-air music festival, a literary festival, Aragon Day and regular food and drink festivals/events.

Schools:

Two lower schools, one middle school and one upper school.



*Central Bedfordshire offers
breathtaking countryside
and beautiful, historic
markets towns and villages*

Image credit: Dunstable Downs

An excellent quality of life

For its residents, Central Bedfordshire provides an excellent quality of life.

In recent surveys, the area has achieved high rankings across key areas including economic prosperity, health, wellbeing, community (social cohesion) and overall resident satisfaction.

Overall satisfaction



3rd Best place to live
of 138 UK local authority areas^[4]



1st for families
of 138 UK local
authority areas^[4]



**86% resident
satisfaction**
vs 83% UK average^[5]

Economic prosperity



**Top 15% for
economic quality**
of UK local authority
areas (47th of 379)^[3]



**Top 20% for
overall prosperity**
of UK local authority
areas (76th of 379)^[3]



Image credit: Jordans Mill, Biggleswade

Health, wellbeing and community



Top 10% for health
of UK local authority
areas (36th of 379)^[3]



**Top 5% for
personal support**
of UK local authority
areas (12th of 379)^[3]



**1st for regular
volunteering**
of 379 UK local authority areas^[3]

Sources:

[3] Legatum Institute Prosperity Index (2020)

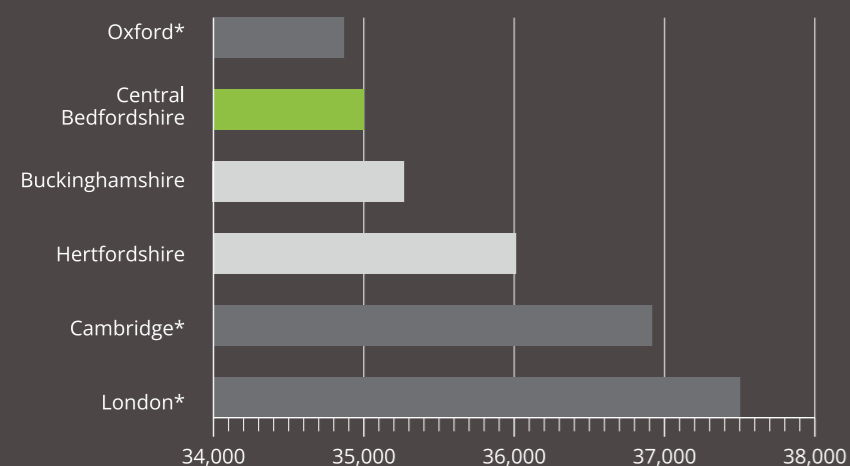
[4] U-Switch Place to Live Rankings (2016)

[5] Central Bedfordshire Council survey (2020)

A higher standard of living

In Central Bedfordshire, housing is more affordable than in neighbouring counties and tech hub locations.*

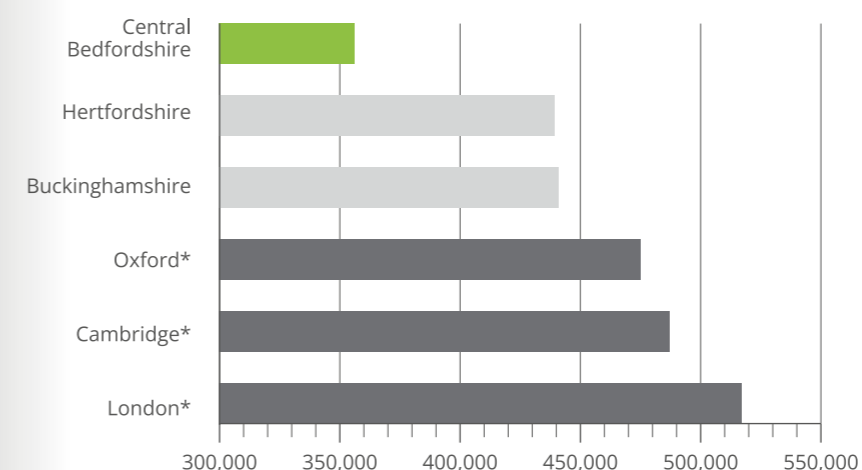
Gross annual pay (£) 2021 ^[6]



In Central Bedfordshire, the average salary is higher than in Oxford...

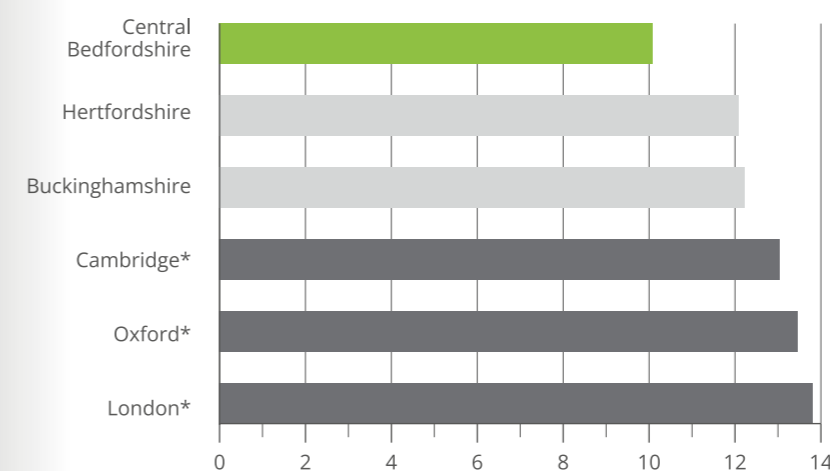


Average house prices (£) October 2021 ^[7]



...while the average house price is more than 25% lower than in Oxford or Cambridge...

House price to income ratios 2021 (Housing affordability) ^[7]



...which makes Central Bedfordshire one of the region's most affordable places to buy a home.

[6] ONS ASHE (2021)
[7] UK House Price Index (Oct. 2021)

Planning for sustainable growth

Central Bedfordshire seeks to ensure the creation of new, sustainable communities with attractive, affordable homes and high-quality local services.

Because Central Bedfordshire is at the heart of a thriving, knowledge-based economy, more people are choosing to live and work here than ever before. Between 2009 and 2019 the area's population and employment growth were twice the national average. To meet growing demand, up to 32,000 new homes are planned over the next two decades.

Central Bedfordshire Council is fully committed to balancing growth with quality of life and sustainability, to ensure the best possible environment for everyone living here. These principles guide our new community development projects, which are designed to provide high-specification, relatively low-density homes. Innovations including serviced plots for self and custom builders are contributing to design excellence, more diverse developments, and greater choice for residents.

At Marston Vale near Cranfield, four new villages are planned, providing a total of 5,000 new homes. Each village will be designed with its own individual character and a centre providing local shops and community facilities.



Image credit left: Housing development at Lidlington

Central Bedfordshire is planning
32,000 homes
by the year 2035



Image credit: Flitwick leisure centre

The area's new communities are being supported by multi-million pound council investments in modern, attractive and accessible leisure facilities – helping residents to lead healthy and active lives. All of the area's indoor leisure centres have either recently been upgraded or soon will be, and they are complemented by modern sporting facilities including tennis courts and all-weather pitches. The council's commitment to enabling strong, cohesive communities is also reflected in the area's twelve open and professionally staffed libraries, most of which are located in smaller rural towns or villages.

In 2019, Central Bedfordshire Council committed to move towards net zero carbon for the area of Central Bedfordshire by 2030. Sustainability initiatives and investments include extensive tree planting and on-street electric vehicle charging points in established neighbourhoods. Pioneering innovations include solar cycle paths, with embedded solar cells, and kinetic walkways, which generate energy for local services through footfall.

A place to learn

Central Bedfordshire offers high-quality education for all - through schools, colleges, universities and community-based learning. Improving educational achievement is the most powerful way of giving everyone the best chances in life, and for them to reach their full potential.

State Schools and Colleges

Central Bedfordshire provides families with access to high-performing state schools and colleges. Over 80% of these settings have achieved an Ofsted rating of either 'Outstanding' or 'Good'. Further education providers, such as Central Bedfordshire and Shuttleworth colleges (merged with the Bedford College Group), offer a diverse range of subjects including engineering, environmental education, animal welfare and equine studies.

Central Bedfordshire College
centralbeds.ac.uk

Shuttleworth College
bedfordcollegigroup.ac.uk

Independent schools

Eight independent schools are located within Central Bedfordshire and in neighbouring Bedford, offering both mixed and single-sex educations. The schools are characterised by innovative and creative teaching, high levels of investment in facilities and excellence in sports. Exam results are typically outstanding, with a high percentage of students attaining places in high-ranking universities.

Higher education

Central Bedfordshire is home to Cranfield University (postgraduate) – one of the UK's highest-ranking business, technology and research focused universities. MK:U and the University of Bedfordshire have campuses in the neighbouring areas of Milton Keynes, Bedford and Luton - offering a broad range of academic and vocational degree courses.

Cranfield University
cranfield.ac.uk

MK:U
cranfield.ac.uk

University of Bedfordshire
beds.ac.uk

Community-based learning

Organisations including Bedfordshire Employment & Skills Academy (BESA), the Greensand Trust and the Working Woodlands Centre (Maulden), offer 'lifelong learning' courses for people of all ages, focused on employment and vocational skills.

Greensand Trust
greensandtrust.org

Bedfordshire Employment & Skills Academy (BESA)
centralbedfordshire.gov.uk

Case Study

Redborne Upper School and Community College

Redborne is a highly successful state Upper School with more than 1,600 students, including 450 in the sixth form. More than 80% of the school's 16-18 (sixth form) students' progress to university studies, compared with an all-England average of 49% for this age range. In the last three years, 14 students have attained places at Oxford or Cambridge university.

Redborne Upper School and Community College
redbornecommunitycollege.com

Schools for the future

To keep pace with projected population growth and the development of new communities – existing schools are being expanded as well as new ones being built. There is currently a move in the area towards a two-tier school system, which will provide a great education system locally allowing our young people to achieve their full potential.



Image credit: St Andrew's Lower School, Biggleswade

A place to enjoy

Central Bedfordshire and the wider area offer a wealth of leisure activities for residents of all ages, including cultural events, outdoor experiences, visitor attractions and famous sporting venues.

The area's packed cultural calendar includes the Ampthill Festival – three days of music and entertainment with world renowned headline acts and the bi-annual Bedford River Festival.^[9] The Grove Theatre, in Dunstable, and Leighton Buzzard Library Theatre produce live shows as well as streaming National Theatre productions.

Central Bedfordshire's countryside provides the perfect venue for diverse outdoor activities and experiences. The adventurous can find BMX parks and mountain bike trails at Chicksands and Rushmere, and gliding, hang-gliding or paragliding in Dunstable. More leisurely pursuits include visiting the stately homes and gardens of Woburn Abbey and Wrest Park, or volunteering at Warden Abbey Community Vineyard.

Culinary aficionados will be impressed with the wide range of restaurants and pubs to cater for every taste from Michelin-starred chefs, world cuisine and family friendly country pubs.

[8] ampthillfestival.com
[9] riverfestival.bedford.gov.uk



Attractions for the family include Woburn Safari Park and Go Ape Treetop Adventure, ZSL Whipsnade Zoo, Center Parcs Woburn Forest, and The Shuttleworth Collection of vintage aircraft and veteran vehicles – all parts of Central Bedfordshire's highly successful visitor economy.

For sports fans, Ampthill is home to a championship rugby club and the area is home to numerous golf clubs and courses. Woburn Golf Club, set in the stunning estate of Woburn Abbey, is perhaps the most famous, having hosted the British Masters and European Seniors Tours.

Visit experiencebedfordshire.co.uk to find out more about things to do in Central Bedfordshire.

Image credit left: Luton Hoo
Image credit above: Ampthill Festival
Image credit top right: Go Ape, Woburn
Image credit right: Bike Park, Chicksands





BeCentral***Bedfordshire***

***Central
Bedfordshire:
A great place
to live and work***

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your relocation to Central Bedfordshire

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