Bedlington
Borderlands Place Plan
26th July 2022

Bedlington Borderlands Place Plan review

Today we will review:

- Place Plan context
- What the data tells us
- What the consultation told us
- What we know as a board
- Potential investment themes
- Next steps

Place Plan - Context

Key sections within the place plan include:

- Introduction, strategic objectives and place programme approach
- Context analysis
- Our strategy
- Our approach to engagement and Governance
- Identifying Projects and Investment Themes
- Acknowledgments
- Appendices

Introduction, strategic objectives and place programme approach (Section one of Place Plan)

As a reminder, The Borderlands Place Programme represents a fresh opportunity to invest in Bedlington to ensure its long-term sustainability and growth, underpinned by a 'whole town' approach

Bedlington was identified as experiencing a high level of need, while also offering opportunities for growth, and as a result has been prioritised for investment through an objective, evidence-based process, applying transparent socio-economic data

Place Plans that include Borderlands eligible projects will then go on to develop a 'Borderlands Town Investment Plan' (BTIP). The BTIP will be narrower in scope, focusing on a relatively small number of investments and projects that are eligible for Borderlands Inclusive Growth (BIG) Deal funding. This will be limited to economic regeneration-type capital projects that support inclusive economic growth objectives and contribute to addressing the three BIG challenges of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal:

- growing the working age population;
- boosting productivity; and
- delivering inclusive economic growth.

Capital interventions

The Place Programme will support a range of capital interventions targeted at enhancing the economic infrastructure needed to ensure the sustainability and growth of our towns. This includes:

- Purchase and assembly of land and buildings.
- Remediation of vacant and derelict sites.
- Property development and enhancement, including schemes to encourage private, public and third sector investment in improving buildings, re-modelling business premises, and conversion of buildings to new uses to support the repurposing of towns (e.g., residential, leisure, community uses).
- Development of arts and cultural, visitor economy, community, and skills and education facilities.
- Enhancement of shop, business and commercial public facing fronts.
- Development of the upper floors of buildings for affordable housing and other uses.

Context analysis (Section 2 of Place Plan)

- The preparation and development of the Plan has come about as a result of community participation and engagement and is intended to capture the energy and enthusiasm of the local community about their place.
- It articulates an ambitious vision for driving recovery improvements and prosperity and bring confidence that targeted investment interventions will result in meaningful change for the better.
- This Plan describes a Vision of Bedlington for the future, the creation of which is the result of collaboration of local and strategic organisations and structured input from the local community.
- This has been through engagement sessions both on-line, in groups and on a one-to-one basis seeking views, ideas and feedback to a series of questions.
- It also builds on the engagement undertaken as part of the other local strategic documents identified within the Place Plan.

We regularly walk through the park to get up to Bedlington town centre. It is a beautiful park with a large grass area which is surrounded by many mature trees. There are several different parts to the park offering, dog walking, football, children's play area, mountain biking etc.

Role of town (Section 2 of Place Plan)

- Bedlington is an ancient market town, with a rich history of industry and innovative residents. The town has evidence of habitation from the Bronze Age, with a burial site being located just behind what is now the main Front Street. A cluster of Bronze Age cist burials were discovered during excavation of the site in the 1930s. St Cuthbert's Church is the longest standing building in the town, with parts of this dating back to the 11th century and recently celebrated being 1000 years old. The church is in the heart of the original sandstone conservation town centre. Most of the medieval town has disappeared with many of the historic buildings and factories being demolished over the years, but there are still nods to medieval street layouts. The main Front Street is currently made up of Georgian and Victorian buildings.

- At key points in history, before and during the Industrial Revolution, goods made in Bedlington made it to all corners of the globe through the distribution of nails and trains that were made in Bedlington. With large industry first being attracted to Bedlington over 250 years ago, in the form of its world-renowned iron works, mining became an intrinsic part of Bedlington from 1838. The coal industry remained at the heart of the town until the closure of the mines in the 1980s.

- The planned arrival of the British Volt Giga plant to be sited 4 miles from the town centre and within the Sleekburn ward, will likely result in more residents choosing to live and work in close proximity to the town.

- The train station in Bedlington Station, which was active between 1850 and 1964, is set to re-open as one of the stations on the Northumberland Line which is planned to run between Ashington and Newcastle from December 2023.

Challenges facing the town – Section 2

In this section we identify the key issues that need to be addressed to improve the situation and affect positive change in the town. These include:

From data -

60% of households live in at least 1 of the 4 dimensions of deprivation

9.7% of 18-24 year olds claiming JSA/UC

27% of 16+ residents have no formal qualifications

Only 20% of residents qualified to Level 4 (43.5% nationally)

Median household income is £4k below the national average

From SWOT

- Connectivity within the town
- Public transport cuts
- Lack of leisure facilities for all ages
- Nowhere for young people to go
- Lack of youth leaders
- Business opportunities not maximised e.g. no refreshments in Gallagher Park
- Too many homes in Bedlington Central and West where there are no large employers
- Lack of vocational/STEM training
- Under usage of leisure facilities (Sporting Club)
- Traffic management

Population and economy (what the data tells us) – Section 2

In Northumberland, the population size has increased by 1.4%, from around 316,000 in 2011 to 320,600 in 2021. This is lower than the overall increase for England (6.6%), where the population grew by nearly 3.5 million to 56,489,800.

In Bedlington, the population rose steadily between 2001-2019 by 4.3%.

year		Population		Population	Total Population
mid_2001	East Bedlington	8203	West Bedlington	9636	17839
mid_2002	East Bedlington	8326	West Bedlington	9737	18063
mid_2003	East Bedlington	8448	West Bedlington	9841	18289
mid_2004	East Bedlington	8367	West Bedlington	9974	18341
mid_2005	East Bedlington	8458	West Bedlington	10066	18524
mid_2006	East Bedlington	8503	West Bedlington	10061	18564
mid_2007	East Bedlington	8533	West Bedlington	10027	18560
mid_2008	East Bedlington	8506	West Bedlington	9961	18467
mid_2009	East Bedlington	8476	West Bedlington	9988	18464
mid_2010	East Bedlington	8476	West Bedlington	9984	18460
mid_2011	East Bedlington	8501	West Bedlington	9935	18436
mid_2012	East Bedlington	8476	West Bedlington	10005	18481
mid_2013	East Bedlington	8491	West Bedlington	9950	18441
mid_2014	East Bedlington	8503	West Bedlington	9817	18320
mid_2015	East Bedlington	8482	West Bedlington	9804	18286
mid_2016	East Bedlington	8447	West Bedlington	9835	18282
mid_2017	East Bedlington	8457	West Bedlington	9918	18375
mid_2018	East Bedlington	8467	West Bedlington	9981	18448
mid_2019	East Bedlington	8520	West Bedlington	10089	18609
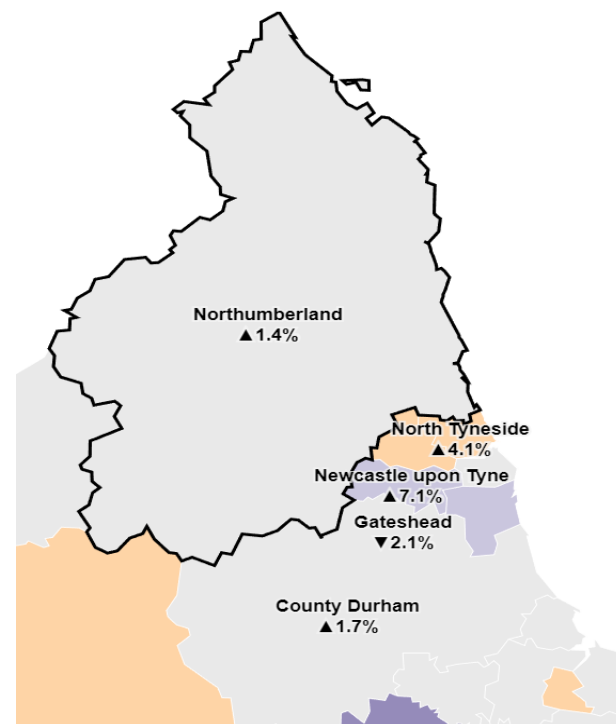
Population and economy (what the data tells us) – Section 2

In Northumberland, there has been an increase of 28.9% in people aged 65 years and over, a decrease of 5.9% in people aged 15 to 64 years, and a decrease of 3.4% in children aged under 15 years.

As we can see from the charts below, Bedlington's population (by age) is largely in line with the rest of the county, but has a slightly higher population of 65+ than the national average whilst being lower than the county average.
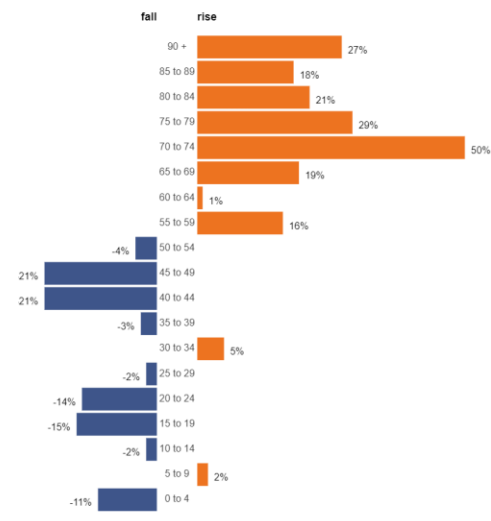
age group	head-count	% share of population	% for Eng & Wales
0-15	52.1k	16.1%	19.1%
16-64	190k	58.8%	62.2%
65+	81.4k	25.1%	18.6%

Population 2020	% aged 0-15	% Age 16-64	% aged 65+
	18%	61%	22%

Population and economy (what the data tells us) – Section 2

More than half of the households in Northumberland are affected by at least one of the four conditions of deprivation measured in the last Census.

The four conditions are:

- unemployment or long-term sickness;
- no person in the household having at least a level two qualification (eg, a GCSE at grade A to C);
- one person in the household having a bad/very bad health problem;
- or the household being overcrowded.

As we can see from the table below, 60% of Bedlington's households meet at least one condition of deprivation but only 22 (0.3%) are deprived in all 4 dimensions

% Households deprived in 4 dimensions	% of Households deprived in at least 1 dimension	% Households not deprived in any dimension
0.3%	60%	40%

Population and economy (what the data tells us) – Section 2

As of December 2021, there were 133,900 individuals of working age in Northumberland and 8,100 were classed as unemployed, an unemployment rate of 6.1%.

We can see from the latest figures (below) that the unemployment rate for 16-64-year-olds in Bedlington is lower than the county average at 4.7% with 69% aged between 16-74 economically active (this includes students and people claiming a pension).

JSA (and UC work related) claimants as proportion of 16-64 (Mar 22) -	Age 18-24 (2020)	JSA (and UC work related) claimants as number of 18-24 (Mar 22)	JSA (and UC work related) claimants as proportion of 18-24 (Mar 22)	Economically active residents as a proportion of all residents aged 16-74
4.7	1,182	115	9.7%	69%

Bedlington residents travel an average 18.2km to work, demonstrating that most employment opportunities lie outside the town.

Population and economy (what the data tells us) – Section 2

The recent census information has also demonstrated that:

- 27% of Bedlington's 16+ residents have no qualifications. Only 11.1% of England's 16-64 population have no qualifications (2011 Census data)

- 20% are qualified to level 4 or higher compared to 43.5% nationally (2011 Census data)

- The median household income is £27,256 in 2021, a growth of 9% from 2011. Nationally, the median household income is £31,400

- 64% of residences are home owned, 22% social rented and 14% privately rented

- The average house price in 2021 was £156,836. Nationally it is £278,000 and £211,000 in Northumberland.

- The average commuting distance is 18 km
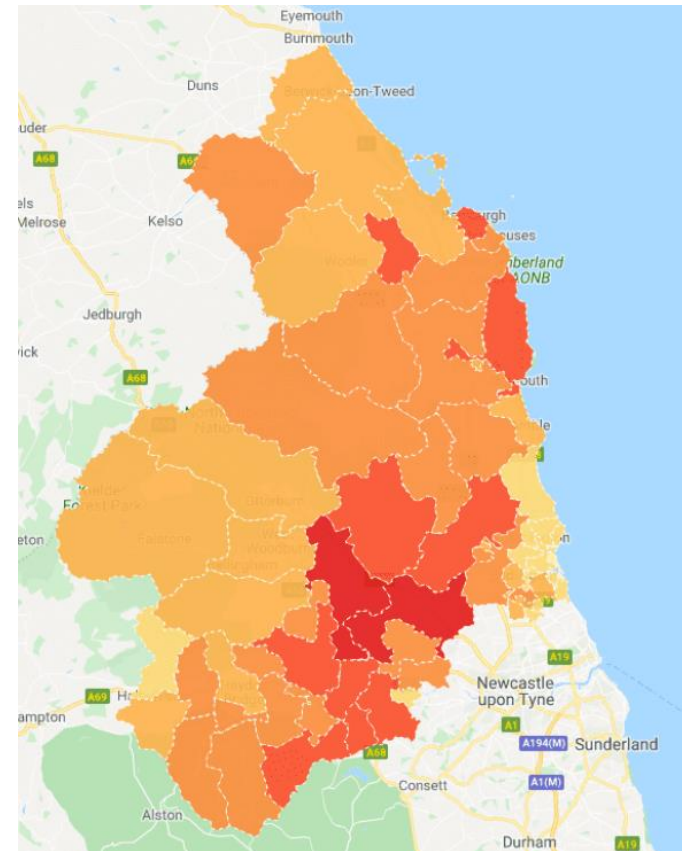
Average house prices (Northumberland) 2021

Consultation (what the data tells us) – Section 2

Our consultation ran from 14 Feb to 8 March 2022 and we received 381 responses. As well as demographic questions, we asked three questions; what are the best things about Bedlington, the worst things and the things you'd like to change. We also asked for feedback on our vision and strategic objectives.

- Only 30 people (8% of total respondents) were aged below 30.

- Nearly 32% of respondents were aged over 60 – only 22% of Bedlington's population is aged 64+

- 46% felt that Bedlington's greatest asset was its community spirit; 36% loved the natural environment with 20% commending the town's retail offer

- 47% felt that Bedlington's worst aspect was the lack of leisure facilities. 42% were disappointed with a general lack of investment whilst 39% cited the lack of retail available

- In economic terms, the changes most respondents would like to see are an enhanced culture, leisure and retail offer (87%), followed by **homes & quality of place improvements** (36%) and **town centre improvements** (33%)

Consultation (vision) – Section 2

Only 73% of respondents agreed with the Board's Vision presented to them:

This is the Borderlands Place Programme vision for Bedlington:

"Bedlington will continue to be a cohesive and thriving centre for residents, businesses and learners.

Providing quality jobs supported by outstanding skills and education opportunities for young people and adults alike, Bedlington will continue to be a growing town with services to meet the local need.

Bedlington will find innovative ways to celebrate the town's industrial heritage, whilst delivering a new and vibrant leisure, cultural and low carbon offer for all ages. Bedlington will attract residents and visitors alike, promoting itself as both a destination and an attractive town to live, work and learn in."

The Vision was therefore amended to:

Bedlington will be a cohesive and thriving centre for residents, business and learners. Providing quality jobs supported by outstanding skills and educational opportunities for young people and adults alike, Bedlington will be a vibrant town with services to meet the needs of residents and visitors.

Bedlington will find innovative ways to celebrate the town's industrial heritage, whilst delivering a new and vibrant leisure, cultural and low carbon offer for all ages. Bedlington will attract residents and visitors alike, promoting itself as both a destination and an attractive town to live, work and learn in.

Consultation (strategic objectives) – Section 2

91% of respondents agreed with the objectives and the board felt that this could be strengthened further by a slight change to SO1:

Create a retail, leisure and cultural environment which attracts visitors to Bedlington rather than *Increase the number of visitors to Bedlington accessing its retail, leisure and culture offers*

This resulted in revised strategic objectives as follows:
1. Create a retail, leisure and cultural environment which attracts visitors to Bedlington
2. Collaborate with local residents and the business community to imagine and then realise a long-term prosperous future for Bedlington
3. Safeguard existing employment and deliver new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation for residents of Bedlington
4. Raise the quality of the physical environment in Bedlington

Board feedback – SWOT analysis

Strengths of the town
- **Community Spirit**
- **Attendance at events**
- **Heritage (Power, rail, iron works)**
- **Innovation**
- **Natural environment**
- **Location (land and sea)**
- **Connectivity**
- **Attractive to relocators**
- **Public transport**
- **Picturesque High Street**
- **Local businesses**
- **Parks & countryside**
- **Town parks**
- **Free parking**
- **Cultural diversity**
- **Existing parish plan (East Bedlington)**
- **Range and diversity of retail offerings**

Opportunities for the town
- **British Volt & FutureGen**
- **Northumberland Line**
- **Community Empowerment**
- **Location**
- **Natural Environment**
- **Housing Developments**
- **New shops on Front Street**
- **Available Brown Field Sites**
- **Politics**
- **Build homes on the riverside or coast at Cambois where there is employment**
- **Renewal of Parish Plan**
- **Revitalising shopping area**
- **Better promotion of leisure facilities**
- **Emerging 'green' technologies**
- **Urban planting**

Weaknesses of the town
- Connectivity within the town
- Public transport cuts
- On street parking – blocked driveways, paths
- Lack of traffic enforcement
- Lack of leisure facilities for all ages
- Nowhere for young people to go
- Lack of youth leaders
- Business opportunities not maximised e.g. no refreshments in Gallagher Park
- Too many homes in Bedlington Central and West where there are no large employers
- Lack of vocational/STEM training
- Lack of engagement from Academies
- Under usage of leisure facilities (Sporting Club)
- Traffic management

Threats for the town
- Too reliant on others – NCC, Unions etc
- Residents not working locally
- Services not growing with the population
- Politics
- National/Local Government policy changes
- Technological Jump
- Insufficient funding
- Low community engagement
- Traffic management issues will increase when Northumberland Line opens

Current and Planned Investments

Current

- British Volt/JDR
- Northumberland Line
- BMX Track
- Sporting Club
- Town Centre Redevelopment
  - Phase 1 – Aldi
  - Phase 2 – (Dec 2022) 4 x retail units and 6 apartments
  - Phase 3 – delayed indefinitely due to change in retail demand

Pipeline

- Cycle route improvements
- Pedestrian/cycle bridge Nth Blyth to Blyth
- Heritage and Innovation Centre (East Beds)
- Solar farm – Blue House Farm (planning stage)
- Housing – Longridge phase 2 (500 homes)
- Neighbourhood Plan (West Bedlington) at final consultation stage
- Refurbishment and re-purposing of Bedlington Station Library

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Identifying investment themes – data, consultation, vision & strategic objectives

A number of themes have emerged as a result of the data & consultation. These themes would largely support the feedback received from stakeholders at each stage. They include:

Changes most requested in consultation

Enhanced culture, leisure and retail offer	332	87.1%
New homes, housing renewal, and quality of place improvements	136	35.7%
Town centre improvements	125	32.8%
Business Growth & Jobs	72	18.9%
Provision/Activities for young people	69	18.1%
Transport connectivity (within town and with wider region)	46	12.1%

Themes arising from data

60% of households deprived in at least 1 dimension of deprivation
9.7% of 18-24 year olds claiming JSA/UC
27% of Bedlington's 16+ residents have no qualifications. Only 11.1% of England's 16-64 population have no qualifications
Only 20% are qualified to level 4 or higher compared to 43.5% nationally

Can we identify 3 key themes?

These will be the strategic priorities to guide future activity for developing and promoting the town and should reference our vision and strategic objectives.

Example investment themes -

1

A Community to Cherish

This theme focusses on creating a heart for Dalton, through investing in a mix of renewed public space, and public realm which reflects the historic character of the town. It recognises Dalton as an enterprising town that can act as a draw for residents and visitors alike, as well as bringing back into use redundant and derelict sites. Interventions through this theme can build on the local heritage and assets of the town that will increase footfall and promote long term green and inclusive growth.

Theme 1, Concept 1:-

Highstreet Enhancements to repurpose town centre buildings

A package of activity that could support the repurposing of some town centre buildings to bring forward a more diverse offer and a better mix of facilities. The concept has the potential to reinvigorate the streetscape of the town centre through a shop front heritage improvement scheme and capital grant scheme that would bring forward private sector investment and support a wide range of end uses. Coupled with associated public realm and signage there is an opportunity to revitalise the Highstreet and fully embrace the community to cherish theme.

Example investment themes -

Concept 5a) Improved Physical Environment

Introduction	If Egremont is to become a destination of choice, it is vital that the local environment is safe, secure, clean and welcoming. In order to reduce the prevalence of anti-social behaviour, local residents need to be able to access leisure facilities that underpin positive and active social interactions.
Project Idea	Interventions could focus on making physical improvements to those locations in the town where people have caused vandalism. Some of these locations would be improved through the other Themes of our Plan such as creating a quality public realm and enhancing the Castle and its associated infrastructure. The pedestrian underpasses beneath the A595 main road could be made more inviting with improved lighting in order to deter anti-social behaviour.

Creating an integrated network of clean and well-lit footpaths connecting together the assets in our town would provide our town's residents with sustainable and safe access safe to those facilities.

Enhanced floodlit all weather sports facilities would increase participation in organised physical activities and help to keep kids off the street corners, particularly in the winter months. |
| Outcomes and Benefits | Improved physical conditions such as clean, inviting and well-lit footpaths and pedestrian underpasses would enable residents, workers and visitors to feel safe and secure which is a pre-requisite to enabling the footfall in and around the town to be increased. |

Strategic objectives - reminder

1. Create a retail, leisure and cultural environment which attracts visitors to Bedlington

2. Collaborate with local residents and the business community to imagine and then realise a long-term prosperous future for Bedlington

3. Safeguard existing employment and deliver new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation for residents of Bedlington

4. Raise the quality of the physical environment in Bedlington

Investment Themes

In groups:

Please indentify up to THREE investment themes for the Bedlington Borderlands Place Plan

We will then come back together as a board to decide on the investment themes to be taken forward.

Strategy – what will success look like?

The Place Plan aims to provide lasting benefits for all residents and supporting inclusive and sustainable growth for Bedlington's community.

The monitoring of the Place Plan will measure the impact of the activities and interventions brought forward against the baseline indicators for inclusive growth such as deprivation, workless households, access to services, qualifications and population/depopulation.

These will be the strategic priorities to guide future activity for developing and promoting the town and should reference our vision and strategic objectives.

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Strategy – what will success look like?

How can we quantify success?

- New Businesses Created
- Businesses Safeguarded
- New and Improved Floorspace
- Derelict and Vacant Land Remediated
- Private Sector Leverage
- Increased GVA
- Additional Visitors Attracted
- Increased Footfall
- New Jobs Created and Supported
- People into Training and Employment
- Increased Health Outcomes
- Create New Social Enterprises to support green jobs and green economy

Next Steps
Bedlington Borderlands Place Programme

- Develop call for projects

- Place Plan Development

  - Next Meeting TBC