

# BEDLINGTON PLACE PLAN

**2023-2033**



# Foreword

The Bedlington Place Plan sets out our 10-year vision for the town's future as a vibrant, growing, connected and inclusive place to live, learn, work, and invest in. It has been shaped with input from the local community and partners and sets out our priorities to deliver investment and sustainable economic growth in the town.

Bedlington's community appreciates the industrial legacy that underpinned Bedlington's growth and fully embraces the opportunity to shape the town's economy going forward.

One of Bedlington's earliest pioneers, John Birkenshaw, was a 19th-century railway engineer noted for his invention of wrought iron rails in 1820. Birkenshaw's wrought iron rails were used by George Stephenson in 1821 as part of the new Stockton and Darlington railway developed alongside the famous Stephenson's Rocket locomotive that effectively launched the golden age of rail.

There is a keen sense of place here, helped by the international recognition of the town's name through the much-loved Bedlington Terrier, but there is much more to celebrate about our town.

Bedlington is uniquely situated at the heart of south east Northumberland. We house a growing workforce to meet the needs of major employment sites, literally on the doorstep of the town.

Major growth is underway in the renewable energy sector at the Northumberland Energy Park complimenting existing specialisms in advanced manufacturing. With the delivery of strategic development sites in Blyth, Ashington and Cramlington the area is set to benefit from new investment and jobs.

The reintroduction of rail passenger services at Bedlington Station as a key part of the Northumberland Line project will connect the town by train to Ashington and Newcastle for the first time in more than 50 years. This will significantly improve the area's appeal providing short journey times for the community to access jobs, education and services across the region.

The catalytic potential of the Northumberland Line can only be fully realised if the Line's reopening is combined with interventions that support local communities and businesses.

This includes the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal. Bedlington is one of the seven towns in the county set to benefit from the Deal. Together with the Northumberland Line Economic Corridor programme through the North of Tyne Combined Authority, the Deal provides a fantastic opportunity to deliver real change in the town.

To capitalise on these opportunities, Bedlington's Place Plan has been developed by the local Place Partnership Group - the 'Bedlington Innovation Team' with the support of Northumberland County Council. The group was established in December 2021 bringing public, private and community stakeholders working in the town together.

Our plan establishes a new vision and strategy that takes account

of the economic opportunities based on a clear baseline of the town and its needs. It identifies the strengths and issues that are unique to Bedlington and prioritises the actions required to maximise investment and sustainable growth.

The Bedlington community has been involved and engaged throughout the process. The positive response from the community has resulted in a clear picture of residents' views including the strengths of the town – our community cohesion, our pride of place, our rich history and heritage as well as our challenges and issues. This includes increased demand on infrastructure, access to employment and access to leisure facilities, amongst others.

This engagement and consultation have informed the development of the Place Plan, and we understand the short, medium and long term outcomes that the community would like to see.

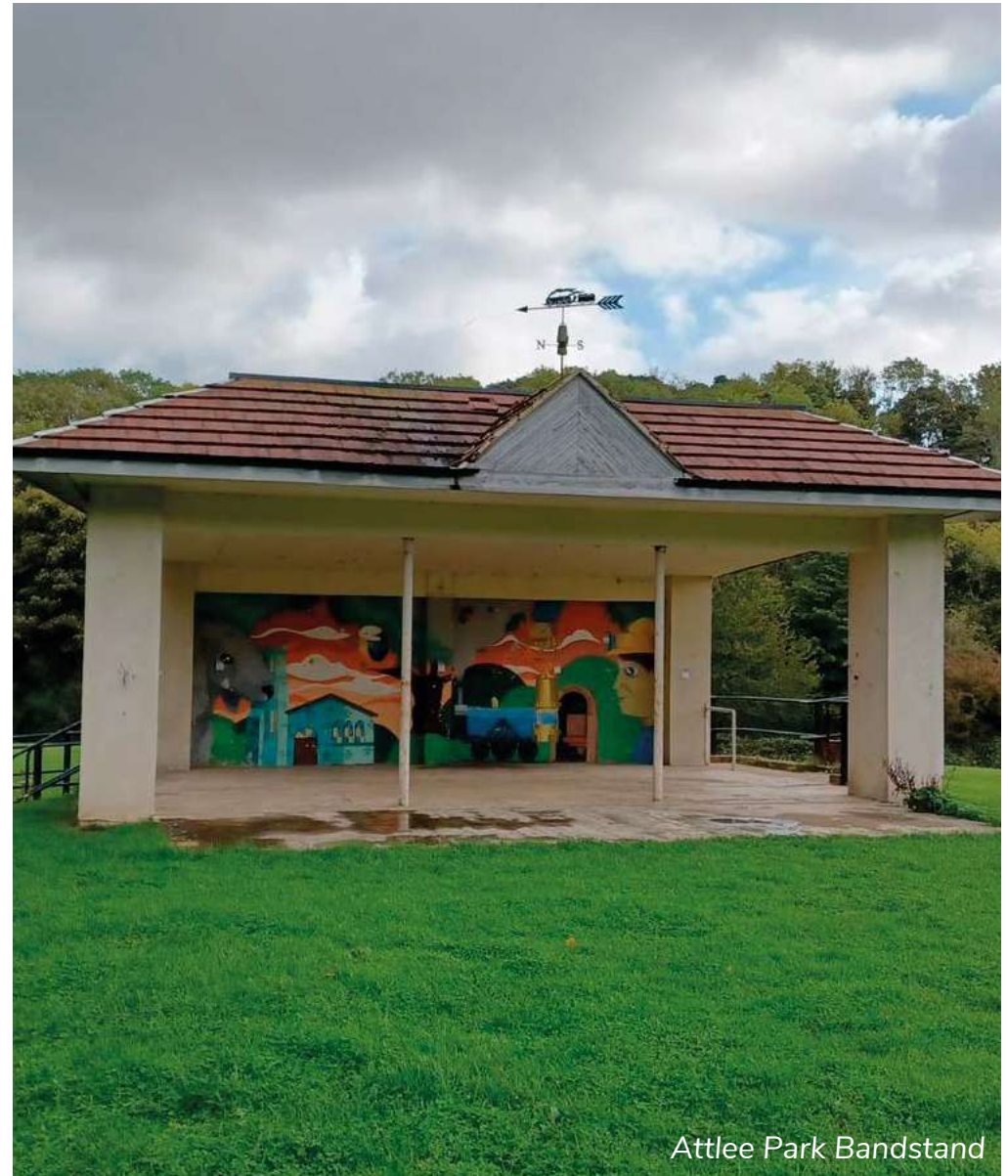
Our vision for Bedlington has been developed with our key stakeholders and through community consultation, a process we will continue regularly as this Plan is progressed.

Whilst the catalyst for the creation of the Bedlington Place Plan was the town's inclusion in the Borderlands Place Programme process, it sets the template for a range of funding routes and will have a life beyond the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

We look forward to working with the community, businesses and stakeholders to implement the Bedlington Place Plan.

**David Fellows**

*Chair of Bedlington Innovation Team*



Attlee Park Bandstand

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# Part 1: Our vision for change

## Introduction

The Bedlington Place Plan sets out a 10-year vision for the Built-up Area of Bedlington Parish. The area incorporates the town of Bedlington and the settlement of Bedlington Station and has a total population of 17,319. It has been developed in association with the local community, stakeholders and businesses and focuses upon four key investment themes. These themes will drive the 10-year plan forward, ensuring that Bedlington becomes a place of opportunity for residents, a place of inspiration for visitors and a place of prosperity for businesses.

A series of projects are identified within the plan with the aim of achieving Bedlington's vision through a combination of funding sources including the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal.

It has been prepared in the context of the **Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal** which commits fresh investment into our region and is being jointly funded by the UK Government and Scottish Government from 2021 to 2031. The Deal is focused on four strategic themes of improving places; enabling infrastructure; encouraging green growth and supporting business, innovation and skills. The Growth Deal includes the Borderlands Place Programme which identified seven towns in Northumberland to benefit from investment, including Bedlington.

The Place Plan for the historic Northumberland town of Bedlington has been prepared collaboratively by the local Place Partnership Group, the 'Bedlington Innovation Team (BIT)' working with the local community.

Engagement with the community has been key to developing the plan, and it is the community's engagement which captures the spirit

and energy of the town. It is vital to ensure that this enthusiasm and determination to drive improvement over the coming ten years is represented fully and appropriately.

This plan details the desire for change within the local community, aligning with, and contributing to, the Objectives of the Borderlands Growth Deal and its three BIG Challenges - inclusive growth; narrowing the productivity gap; and increasing the working age population.

We aim to demonstrate that the plan represents a vision of Bedlington both in the next ten years and beyond. The community has engaged throughout the process, through stakeholder mapping sessions, business focus groups, public consultations and showcase events. It is from these discussions that our ambitious Vision has been created, building upon the engagement so far to create a meaningful change for the better.

The plan is framed around five key development themes, which taken together, offer a balanced approach to a 10-year vision for the future area.

- **Place-based:** Assessing what assets are already in place and the investment needs and solutions for each place on its own terms: what the place wants to be in 20 years, what it needs, and what it offers. This should make the most of what makes the place distinctive using local heritage and culture.
- **Collective:** Looking at the contribution of each part to the whole: the added value to the place, the area, the region, and the country.

- **Systemic:** Bringing public, private, third sector, and community assets together as part of a single, integrated system supporting communities, services and the economy.
- **Community-led:** Putting communities at the heart of decisions about the solutions that the Place Programme brings to the challenges facing their towns.
- **Prevention and future proofing:** Investment and action directed towards preventing further deterioration in our towns and town centres, and ensuring they are equipped to respond to future change, including recovery from the impact of COVID-19 and Climate Change.

With inclusive growth at its heart the **Borderlands Place Programme**, forms a key component of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal. It aims to create and sustain economically vibrant towns and town centres where people and communities see the direct benefits of economic growth. This means investing in infrastructure in a way that supports the sustainability and growth of local businesses, stimulates business investment, attracts visitors and spending, safeguards and creates secure, well-paid jobs for local people, and provides opportunities for people from all backgrounds to engage in employment, skills development and beneficial cultural and social activities.

The plan considers Bedlington's economic context, its unique needs and challenges as well as identifying the town's assets, strengths and opportunities to embrace and build on. With significant community and stakeholder input a new vision has been established to set out the aspirations and objectives to deliver sustainable growth in our town. Potential interventions and project ideas have also been developed to create a pipeline of investments that will meet this ambition for growth and may be eligible, once developed, for Borderlands, UK Shared Prosperity Funding and a wide number of other funding streams.

Funding through Borderlands will be limited to economic growth capital projects that contribute to addressing the three challenges of the Borderlands Inclusive Growth Deal: growing the working age population; boosting productivity; and delivering inclusive economic growth.



A 'Proggy Mat' donated by Gladys Ainsley of the Wansbeck Matters on display in the East Bedlington Community Centre (Proggy is the colloquial term used in the North East of England for a rag rug)

## Our vision for the Bedlington area

We have worked with stakeholders and the community to develop a vision incorporating the key ingredients that will combine to secure economic growth for Bedlington. This reflects the current role of the town in terms of its geographic and strategic context, the performance of the town centre, the socio-economic opportunities and challenges and the wider strategic developments that will generate jobs, investment and improved connectivity in the County, across the North of Tyne and the North East region.



### Vision

“Bedlington will be a vibrant, growing, connected and inclusive place to live, learn, work, and invest in. The town’s community will have access to outstanding skills and educational opportunities and quality local jobs including the advanced manufacturing, clean energy and renewable energy industries. Bedlington will celebrate, innovate and invest in our key assets to deliver a new and vibrant culture and leisure offer capitalising on our community, workforce, industrial heritage, public spaces and environment.”

The vision, strategic objectives and priority investment themes presented in the Bedlington Place Plan are informed by discussion and debate at the place partnership group (BIT) meetings, socio/economic data and consultation with residents. A public consultation seeking residents' thoughts on the draft vision and objectives, aspects of living in the town and on priorities for change received 381 responses and the feedback led to a review of the vision.

Further public engagement in the form of drop-in 'Showcase' events introduced the developing priority investment themes to the public. A full consultation report and Northumberland Place Standard report from Bedlington's showcase events can be found in the appendices.

## Strategic objectives

Underpinning the vision and the identified themes, are the strategic objectives which for Bedlington have been identified as:

- **Vibrant town** - Enhance the physical environment and condition of the town centre, encouraging new uses of existing properties to attract investment, and increase footfall and spend from residents and visitors.
- **Growing town** - Safeguard existing employment and work collaboratively to create a skilled workforce able to access learning and training opportunities and jobs in growth sectors across south east Northumberland and the North East.

- **Inclusive town** - Prioritise improvements to services by working in partnership to provide residents with wider opportunities to get active, learn, participate and enjoy their local town.
- **Connected town** - Embrace the benefits of the Northumberland Line and future walking and cycling infrastructure improvements so that residents and businesses can access work, shopping, leisure and culture opportunities.

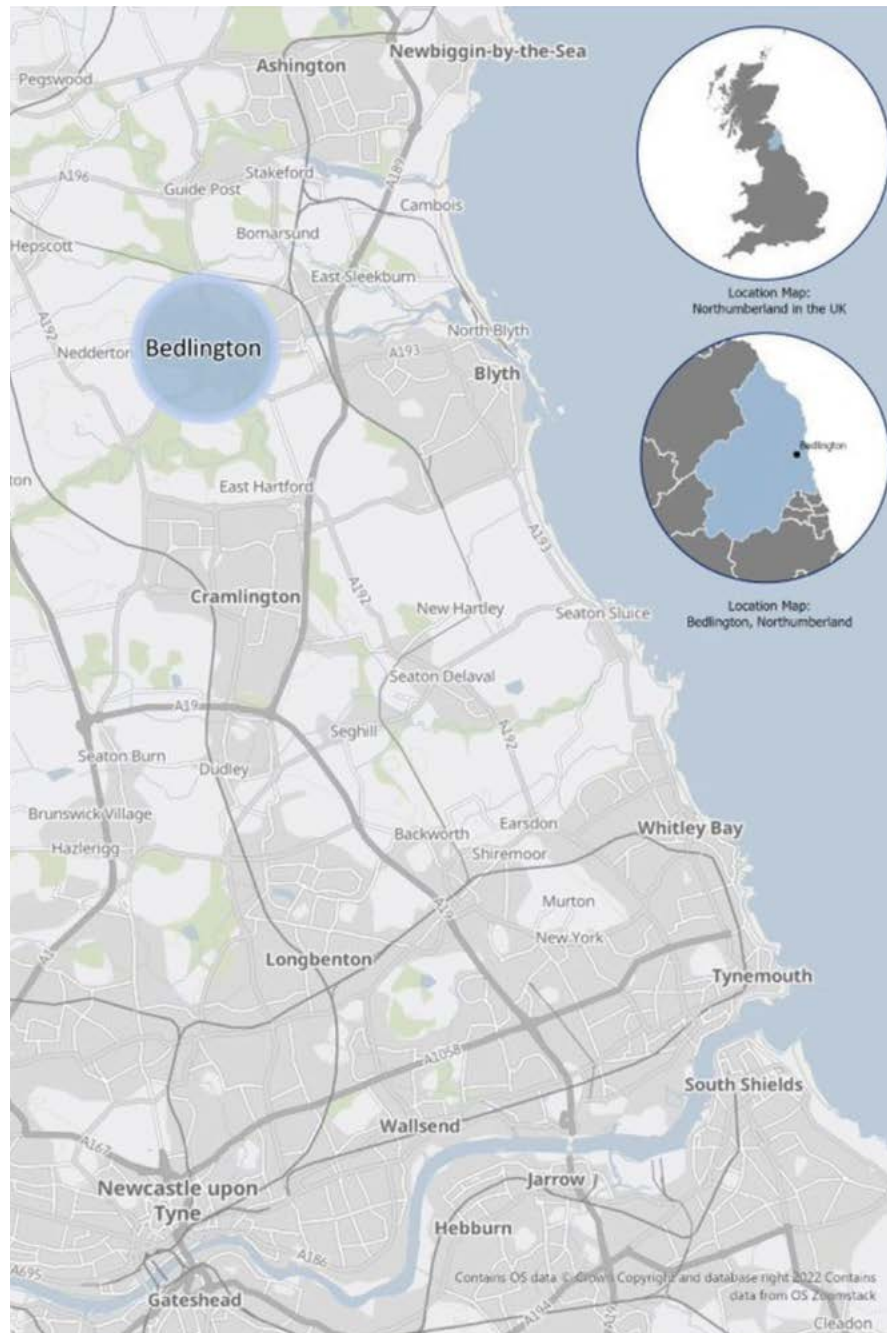
As highlighted throughout these discussions, Bedlington's rich railway heritage is celebrated widely within the town. It is our intention to capitalise on the opportunities presented by the Northumberland Line to make Bedlington a destination for visitors and develop links to exciting employment opportunities to all residents within the town.

The town is ideally situated to benefit from the reintroduction of the Northumberland Line, connecting people once more to key sites within south east Northumberland, North Tyneside and Newcastle upon Tyne. Development of a high profile gigafactory at Northumberland Energy Park is only a few miles away with the potential to bring thousands of jobs to the area, and retailers have been attracted to the town centre in recent years.

Our vision of a more inclusive, more connected and more prosperous Bedlington has been created with the collaboration of local business, third-sector organisations, public sector and the wider community. This collaboration will continue through the next ten years and beyond, ensuring that the resources and energy of local partners ensures a great future for the town.



## Introducing the Bedlington area



Bedlington and Bedlington Station have a combined population of 17,319 (Census 2021) and form the 4th largest settlement in the county. The town is well connected by road to the more densely populated service and employment centres of Cramlington to the south, Blyth to the east and Ashington to the north.

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 area 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.

The town's wealth was based on coal mining, with pits in both West Bedlington and East Bedlington, and on the Bedlington Iron Works, located on the River Blyth, down what is still called 'Furnace Bank'. The Works produced the world's first commercially available extruded wrought iron rails. These were laid in 1819 for the first time along the wagonway from the Willow Bridge to coal staiths on the River Blyth.

They were such a huge success, that George Stephenson used them in 1825 on the Stockton & Darlington Railway, an act which encouraged world-wide exports. The 'Glo-Bed-Rail sculpture' on the former works' site celebrates Bedlington's role in the birth of the railways.

Under the stewardship of Michael Longridge, who is buried in St. Cuthbert's churchyard, the Bedlington Iron Works manufactured the first locomotives to pull trains in Italy and in The Netherlands. Full scale replicas, made in 1939 to celebrate the centenary of the two countries' railways, grace their respective national railway museums.

Bedlington is served by a Town Council (West Bedlington Town Council) and a Parish Council (East Bedlington Parish Council). West Bedlington contains the recognised town centre, the shopping area on Front Street, as well as the three large supermarkets serving the town.



A Welcome to Bedlington sign depicting the town's rail heritage

East Bedlington is home to the town's train station, planned to reopen in 2024, and to the Bedlington Academy, the largest school in the town, and is close to the Northumberland Energy Park development site, which is attracting businesses operating in, or related to, the clean energy sector.

Bedlington has a distinctive geography; the populous and busy shopping street (Front Street West) is located in the west of the town, with Bedlington Station located in East Bedlington (specifically North-East Bedlington). Outlying villages include Bebside to the east, Choppington and Guide Post to the north, and Nedderton to the west.



## Bedlington town centre

The town has a shopping area made up of 63 units (in January 2022), which are mostly independent shops, cafes and restaurants. Front Street, in West Bedlington, offers an attractive main street. East Bedlington is served by a Co-op and a small number of independent shops and takeaways.



Footfall in Bedlington is one of the lowest of Northumberland's centres and has declined since 2013. The town serves a very local population and struggles to compete with Ashington, Cramlington and Blyth which host larger stores and offer wider ranges of goods. Manual footfall counts were conducted in Summer and Autumn 2022, with two count points in Bedlington's Marketplace.

In the busiest count point location, the Autumn figure dropped by 13% from the Spring/Early Summer average. Footfall in Bedlington has been markedly lower since the 2013 average of 82 persons per ten minutes. Footfall in the town centre is also noticeably lower than the National Small Towns average of 110 persons.

Over the last 5 years there has been limited change to the retail mix on the high street and the vacancy rate hovers around 14%. Void units are generally clustered towards the east of Front Street and are small in terms of floorspace. The former council building and the neighbouring vacant DWP Job Centre Plus building occupy prime sites on Front Street. There is an opportunity to look at potential uses on these sites.

There is also a very prominent 'gap' brownfield site on Front Street leading to the Aldi superstore and the Magistrates' Court, which Advance Northumberland, NCC's economic development company, aims to comprehensively redevelop. This scheme commenced with the construction of a new Aldi supermarket which opened in November 2021 and a further four retail units and six apartments are also under development with a key tenant already secured. A further three brownfield investment opportunity sites are currently being

### Weekday (market day) Thursday 7th July 2022

20 Market Place		8 Market Place	
			
10.50 - 11.00	18	10.50 - 11.00	20
11.10 - 11.20	24	11.10 - 11.20	29
12.00 - 12.10	39	12.00 - 12.10	44
<b>Total</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>93</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>31</b>

#### Other notes of interest:

Weather 16° - Cloudy with slight drizzle. Town quiet.

### Weekend Saturday 9th July 2022

20 Market Place		8 Market Place	
10.50 - 11.00	27	10.50 - 11.00	30
11.10 - 11.20	29	11.10 - 11.20	22
12.00 - 12.10	40	12.00 - 12.10	39
<b>Total</b>	<b>96</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>
<b>Average</b>	<b>32</b>	<b>Average</b>	<b>30</b>

#### Other notes of interest:

Weather 19° - Patchy cloud. Lovely day, traffic light. Most people heading to Greggs or Market Coffee.

marketed as part of this wider development. This development will improve Bedlington's ability to maximise spend and provide the local community with additional reasons to use the town centre.

**Footfall in Bedlington is one of the lowest of Northumberland's centres and has declined since 2013. The town serves a very local population and struggles to compete with Ashington, Cramlington and Blyth which host larger stores and offer wider ranges of goods.**



Images of Bedlington Station

## Bedlington Station

Bedlington Station is a settlement located by East Bedlington and just over a mile north east of the town centre of Bedlington. Its name originates from Bedlington Railway Station, which opened in 1850 and operated up to 1964. Its history is also linked with coal mining and the former Bedlington Colliery, which was located here.

At the time it was built, the railway station was considered to be in Sleekburn, but by 1961, Bedlington Station was recognised as an urban area in its own right on official OS maps. Bedlington Station Primary School and, serving the wider district, Bedlington Academy, are located here. Bedlington Station is part of the Civil Parish of East Bedlington.



## Our community

### Population

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 2001-2021 by 4.3%. This figure demonstrates the increased need for local services and strengthens the case for improved community facilities and employment opportunities for residents.



### Unemployment

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%. The unemployment rate for 16-64-year olds in Bedlington is lower than the county average at 4.7%.



### Education

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

Only 20% of Bedlington's working age population are qualified to level 4 or higher compared to 43.5% nationally (2011 Census data).

### Overall deprivation

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.

54% of Bedlington's households meet at least one condition of deprivation but only 7 (0.08%) are deprived in all 4 dimensions.



### Income deprivation

The median household income in Bedlington was £27,256 in 2022, a growth of 9% from 2011. Nationally, the median household income was £31,400 in 2022.

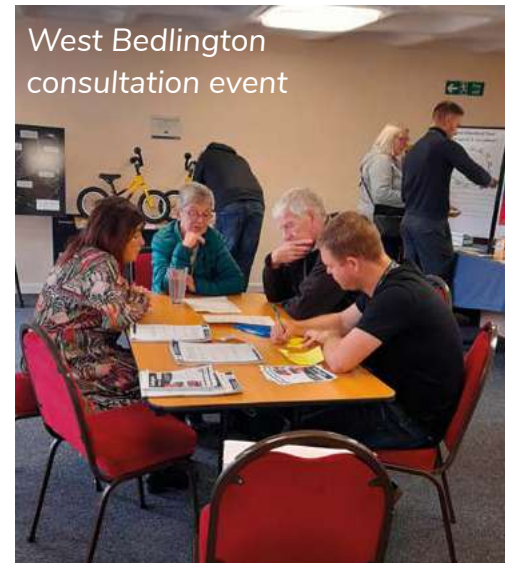


## Overview of the public consultation

The Public consultation was launched in March 2022 and received 381 responses. Engagement has continued throughout the place planning process, with four showcase events in the town, business focus groups, as well as facilitation of the Northumberland Place Standard tool with residents. The tool, originally developed by the Scottish Government is an engagement method undertaken in partnership with the councils Public Health Team that enables communities, public agencies, voluntary groups and others identify those aspects of a place that need to be targeted to improve health, wellbeing and quality of life. A full copy of the consultation report can be found in Appendix II. Through consultation we found that:

- 45% felt that Bedlington's greatest asset was its community spirit and friendliness; 36% loved the natural environment with 20% commending the local businesses and retail offer.
- 47% felt that Bedlington's worst aspect was the lack of leisure facilities. 42% were disappointed with the perceived lack of investment while 38% felt there was a lack of variety in retail and infrastructure/services.
- In economic terms, the majority of respondents would like to see an **enhanced culture, leisure and retail offer** (87%), followed by **homes & quality of place improvements** (36%) and **town centre improvements** (33%).
- The majority of additional comments were focused on three issues – creating leisure facilities for residents and visitors, ensuring infrastructure is in place for an increased population and making sure that the market place is developed and utilised.
- Businesses felt that parking could be improved but agreed with the general consensus that an **enhanced culture, leisure and retail offer** would be good for the town.

- 73% of respondents broadly agreed with the Vision but were doubtful that it would be achieved. Many queried the first line - will **continue** to be a **cohesive and thriving** centre for residents, businesses and learners. The vision was subsequently revised following community feedback.
- 91% of respondents agreed with the Strategic Objectives generally, but many queried SO 1 - Increase the number of visitors to Bedlington accessing its **retail, leisure and culture** offers.
- The main concern was that any future investment was unlikely to occur given a perceived lack of investment in the past.



West Bedlington consultation event



East Bedlington consultation event

## Assets, strengths and opportunities

### Industry and employment

The town's economy in the 19th and early 20th century was based on coal mining, with pits in both West Bedlington and East Bedlington, and on Bedlington Iron Works. The Iron Works produced the world's first commercially available extruded wrought iron rails.

As this industry declined the town became increasingly important as a housing base for those working in neighbouring towns and commuting to Tyneside. A large proportion of the area's residents travel to other urban centres for employment underlining its continuing role as a dormitory town and local service centre.

Today Bedlington sits at the heart of south east Northumberland and is well positioned geographically to benefit from the employment opportunities offered in south east Northumberland and the north east. This includes Blyth's growing clean energy sector including renewables, subsea and offshore engineering alongside the Advanced Manufacturing sector in the area. This includes major employment parks at Blyth, Cramlington and Ashington. Conversely, Bedlington is ideally situated to offer employment opportunities for the region's workforce.

TT Electronics is the town's major employer based locally. A large proportion of the town's workforce have the potential to benefit from investment on Northumberland Energy Park by JDR Cables and future investment in a gigafactory; with the potential to attract more residents to live and work in close proximity to the town.

### Transport connectivity and movement

Bedlington Station will benefit from investment in the Northumberland Line, which will re-introduce passenger train services between Ashington and Newcastle from 2024. This will significantly improve the town's appeal connecting residents with jobs, education and services across the region. Bedlington is included in the Northumberland Line Economic Corridor programme through the North of Tyne Combined Authority. This will support initiatives that capitalise on the regenerative impact of the new train service and encourage investment in business, employment and infrastructure that lead to economic growth.



Clayton Street, Bedlington Station

The Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) 2022 for Bedlington highlighted that there is a dependence on the private car as a mode of transport by residents of the town. Of those who regularly commute to work, two-thirds travel over 5km away, predominantly in private vehicles.

The LCWIP for Bedlington resulted in a draft cycle network for the town which was successful in receiving funding via Levelling Up Fund Round 2 and will feed into National Cycle Route 1 which runs from Dover to the Scottish Highlands and skirts around Bedlington.



The active cycle corridor running through the town is planned to be completed by 2026, This will be supported by behavioural change activities, which are already underway in the form of Cycle Libraries for all ages.

## Environment and public realm

Green space is an intrinsic and important feature in Bedlington and includes three country parks and a golf course. Gallagher Park, in the centre of the town, offers views over the surrounding area. The park is also home to woodlands, wildflower meadows, green spaces and playing fields.

Front Street in Bedlington West is a designated Conservation Area which benefitted from Townscape Heritage Initiative funding in 2012 including improvements to shop frontages and public realm. The high street is characterised by grassy banks and trees but in places is negatively impacted by highway infrastructure such as the roundabout at the west end.

In Bedlington Station, there are significant opportunities to improve the public realm throughout Station Road to blend newer developments with the existing streetscene, enhance pedestrian movement, enable wider footways for pavement cafes and add further trees and planting to increase dwell time.



War Memorial, Front Street, Bedlington

## Community, leisure and culture

The town hosts an international class BMX track and a highly regarded golf club. Bedlington Academy offers a Community Spaces scheme providing facilities for the public on evenings and the weekend including; 11 a-side grass pitches, 4G football pitch, 9 a-side grass pitches, sports hall, studio and the Multi Use Games Area (MUGA).

There are three commercial gyms currently operating in the town. Active Northumberland provide four leisure centres with swimming pools located between 3 to 7 miles of the town.

Plessey Woods Country Park, 2.5 miles from Bedlington town centre, is a popular tourist attraction offering 100 acres of woodland, meadow and riverside to explore. Both East and West Bedlington Community Centres offer live music, dance and theatre events and Gallagher Park's open-air music festival has attracted upwards of 40,000 visitors in the previous five years. West Bedlington hosts the 20 Acres 2-day Family Festival annually.

Dr Pit Park offers bowls, sports and play facilities and has a pavilion that provides a meeting room, bowling club room, kitchen and public toilets.

Bedlington has a number of services and facilities to meet the day to day needs of local residents, including schools, convenience stores, public houses and social clubs, cricket and golf clubs, community centres and churches. However, residents rely on neighbouring towns such as Cramlington and Morpeth to gain access to a wider range of services and facilities.





## Challenges and issues facing the Bedlington area

Despite its many assets, Bedlington faces numerous barriers to fulfil its potential. The challenges and issues have been identified by the community through stakeholder engagement and consultation and are outlined below:

### Low skill, low wage economy:

Bedlington is well served by schools with most deemed to be 'good' by Ofsted inspectors. However fewer residents continue in learning and education post 18 with a significantly lower number qualified to Level 4 than the county and national averages. Parts of East Bedlington have over 27% of their 16+ population holding no formal qualifications (three adjacent Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in this part of the settlement).

The majority of adult learners access facilities and learning opportunities located in Ashington, Blyth and Morpeth or further afield in Newcastle and North Tyneside.

### Declining town centre and sustainable transport connectivity:

Footfall on Bedlington high street between 2020 and 2022 on the Market Day during the week has remained stable, ranging from 28 to 31 persons per ten minutes. Footfall since 2020 has been markedly lower than the 2013 average of 82 persons per ten minutes. Footfall in Bedlington is also noticeably lower than the National Small Towns average of 110 persons.

The Borderlands Place Programme encourages a reduction in congestion and greenhouse gas emissions through the introduction of measures which promote a decrease in the number of journeys made by car. Whilst the preparation of transport policy at a local level is primarily a matter for the local planning authority, there are a wide range of areas where the place plan can have an influence on

accessibility including supporting the protection and enhancement of active travel routes and accessibility in new development.

The return of the Northumberland Line will provide new passenger services serving the town. The trains will be served by a newly redeveloped facilities at Bedlington Station. The general layout in the vicinity including public realm and connectivity around the new station would benefit from additional investment to become a more welcoming and accessible gateway to the town of Bedlington and the surrounding employment zones.

The station buildings have stood largely unused, and the southern building has been scheduled for demolition. The development of the remaining building and the public realm space would offer a more attractive destination point. Bedlington Station would benefit directly, and it is anticipated that an increase in footfall would benefit both West and East Bedlington. Retail units (as mentioned earlier) are held back from achieving their potential with low footfall among the concerns of business owners. An improvement to the station and the surrounding area would increase visitor numbers, footfall and dwell time as well as creating an attractive space for residents.

### Economic exclusion and deprivation:

Baseline statistics reinforce Bedlington's role as a commuter base for the wider area, evidenced by housing growth. Despite the town's role in housing many of south east Northumberland's workforce, a higher number of Job Seekers Allowance (JSA)/Universal Credit claimants live in Bedlington than both the national and regional average. 42% of the population have either no qualifications or only Level 1 and a low number achieved Level 4 or above. Household income is comparatively low and continues to fall further below national averages. The average cost of housing is below regional and national averages.

Bedlington has similar demographics to larger centres in south east Northumberland such as Ashington and Blyth.

The proportion of Bedlington residents employed as managers, directors and senior officials or in professional occupations is lower than county and national levels and higher than average in caring, leisure and other service occupations. Main employment sectors are Health (34%), Business administration (18%) and Professional, scientific and technical (11%). Due to a convenient location, Bedlington is different to many of Northumberland's other centres, with excellent proximity to public sector employers and healthcare facilities in nearby Morpeth, Cramlington and Ashington. However, Bedlington has the 3rd highest proportion of residents in Northumberland who have never worked (behind Ashington and Blyth).

The median household income is lower than Northumberland and almost £4k per annum lower than England with the disparity growing substantially between 2011 and 2022.

### Crime and anti-social behaviour

Instances of crime and disorder and anti-social behaviour in the town are a concern to residents and businesses. This includes East Bedlington where there is a recorded crime rate higher than the national rate.

To tackle anti-social behaviour, Northumbria Police have implemented a number of measures, including adopting new patrol plans to target key areas and increasing their presence.

Prior to COVID-19 restrictions, officers also reinstated the Bedlington Pub Watch Scheme which has been a positive contribution to reducing anti-social behaviour. Bedlington's officers have also worked with partners in schools and have a good education preventative programme. This includes various initiatives to work with children where there may be specific issues.



Improvements to public realm space and improved community facilities will help to address some of the issues in the area; through education, safe spaces and community initiatives, projects will closely align with recent initiatives from the police and other local services.

### Health and wellbeing

Bedlington is held back from reaching its full potential by pockets of income deprivation and child poverty, predominantly in the east of the town. Hospital admissions for heart disease, heart attacks and alcohol related conditions exceed the national average as do deaths from cancer. The average life expectancy, particularly of females, is significantly below the national average.

Healthcare providers have recognised the increased need for services in the town, and a number of investments have been made accordingly.

Bedlington Station Health Centre (with a patient list of over 7,000) has recently completed an £180,000 project to expand local primary care capacity to ensure the practice can cope with increased demand.

The investment came after £250,000 in recent improvements to make the site more modern and sustainable.

### High levels of residents with few or no qualifications and low numbers attaining an NVQ Level 4 (or equivalent) or higher

As a result of some of the issues above, a low skills/low wage equilibrium is evident in the town. It is important that all residents, not only young people, have access to resources that can support them in looking for employment or those looking to re-train and understand the transferable skills they have. This will be particularly important in the recovery from COVID-19 in supporting those new to employment into key sectors and to support those who have lost their job to consider other job roles in growth sectors to support them back into employment.

## Limited access to post 16 learning and skills

Post 16 learning provision is provided predominantly elsewhere in south east Northumberland and further afield meaning that ensuring access to learning and removing barriers that prevent access are important. 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%. The unemployment rate for 16-64-year-olds in Bedlington is lower than the county average at 4.7%. 27% of Bedlington's 16-64 residents have no qualifications. Only 11.1% of England's 16-64 population have no qualifications.

Only 20% of Bedlington's working age population are qualified to Level 4 or higher compared to 43.5% nationally (2011 Census data).

## Limited skilled employment opportunities in Bedlington

Bedlington is a town which contributes heavily to the south east Northumberland and wider regional workforce. Most residents travel elsewhere to access employment and as such providing effective access to opportunities in the wider economy is a key issue alongside measures to boost service centres in the area to improve their offer retaining and increasing employment opportunities locally. The internal economy of Bedlington is diverse but limited to a range of employment opportunities available locally including retail, farming and some industry. There is also employment in the local schools, police station and magistrates' court.

## Limited retail, leisure and cultural offer

The local retail economy is concentrated almost exclusively in the west of the town with smaller clusters of businesses located within half a mile of the main centre. Typically, businesses are family owned and employ less than 5 employees. The numbers employed



in the retail sector have remained steady for a number of years, however, the choice of shops has diminished.

A lack of leisure facilities was considered as the worst aspect of living in Bedlington by 47% of respondents to our consultation and delivering a new and vibrant culture and leisure offer is central to the vision for the town.

Boosting the leisure, retail, and culture offer particularly in and around Front St and Bedlington Station as the gateway to the area are therefore key issues to provide a pull factor to encourage visits, footfall and spend from the growing Bedlington population.

## Attracting residents to visit Bedlington town centre and Bedlington Station

A key challenge is attracting residents from across Bedlington, including new housing estates, to visit and retain spend in the town centre and Bedlington Station. The Local Plan for Bedlington and Bedlington Station identified a need for 840 new dwellings across the town between 2016 and 2036. Plans have been approved for a 500-dwelling estate on the north west outskirts of the town and the first stage of construction is completed. Bedlington saw 310 net additions completed in the first 6 years of the plan period 2016-2022 (include 44 on the above site). Together with a few smaller sites, as at end March 2022 there were outstanding permissions for 473 further dwellings across the 2 Bedlington parishes, ensuring that the 2016-36 targets to date have been met.

Median house prices are 5% below the median price for Northumberland and the proportion of homeowners to private and social tenants is consistent with county and national averages.

## Summary

Bedlington has a range of strengths and opportunities for sustainable economic growth including:

- Proximity to major employment sites including investments at Northumberland Energy Park, Cambois. This includes JDR Cables and the new gigafactory site. This is part of the Energy Central offer as a leader in clean energy alongside advanced manufacturing employment throughout the south east Northumberland area.
- Northumberland Line Economic Corridor – potential to attract investment, businesses, visitors and residents, improved access to employment, learning and leisure, reduced journey times – with the opportunity to create a welcoming gateway to the town in and around Bedlington Station.
- The Bedlington Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan identifies a significant opportunity to improve active travel. A successful bid submitted to the Levelling Up Fund will see £8m invested in improved walking and cycling infrastructure connecting Bedlington Station to the town centre and employment sites. There is the opportunity to compliment this investment with town centre public realm improvements linking new and existing positive uses to improved connectivity.
- Housing developers continue to see Bedlington as a viable growth area and there is land available on the riverside and coast in Cambois for housing close to the developing employment sites with the opportunity to provide a better offer in Bedlington for this growing customer base.
- A major town centre development scheme is underway, which will create new retail anchors and support additional footfall, spend and dwell time. The scheme includes a large brownfield site being actively marketed to bring forward further development.

- Linked to the town centres development, there is the potential future redevelopment of the former council offices and former Job Centre, redundant buildings at Bedlington Station, former library and adult education building at Bedlington Station.
- A strong sense of community spirit amongst residents, and sense of pride founded in the historic industrial legacy of the town and the natural green spaces in the area.

Areas where opportunities to improve the town are most pressing included enhancing the culture, leisure and retail offer, town centre and broader quality of place improvements, business growth and jobs and provision for young people.



*Ex-District Council building and Job Centre Plus,  
Front Street, Bedlington*

## Investment themes

The investment themes establish a focus in terms of how the vision and objectives of the Place Plan can be delivered in future. A strength of the Borderlands Place Plan process has been the ‘whole-town planning’ approach, which has informed our investment themes. The themes reflect the feedback given by community members and stakeholders throughout the process; including stakeholder mapping exercises, public consultation, a series of drop-in events including the use of the Northumberland Place Standard tool. This has informed the development of investment themes based on issues identified by the people and businesses of Bedlington.

There are four investment themes linked to the four objectives of the Place Plan to create a vibrant, growing, connected and inclusive town.

### Investment theme 1 – Vibrant town

Bedlington is the fourth largest town by population in Northumberland but struggles to attract visitors and to avoid leakage of residents’ spend to the surrounding towns. There are many services and facilities in Bedlington to meet the day to day needs of residents including schools, convenience stores, public houses and social clubs, cricket and golf clubs, community centres and churches. However, residents rely on neighbouring towns such as Cramlington and Morpeth to gain access to a wider range of services and facilities such as a leisure centre, adult education opportunities and health provision.

The town centre includes a large vacant brownfield site with redevelopment proposals now being taken forward to improve the retail offer of the town. Public consultation has demonstrated that residents want to ensure that new development contributes positively to the built, historic and natural environment of the area, as well as achieving a balance between development and protecting important green spaces.

The Northumberland Local Plan identifies Bedlington as a smaller centre and highlights that a positive approach is needed to facilitate modern retail floorspace on a modest scale. Specific reference is made to the need to consider new town centre development to the

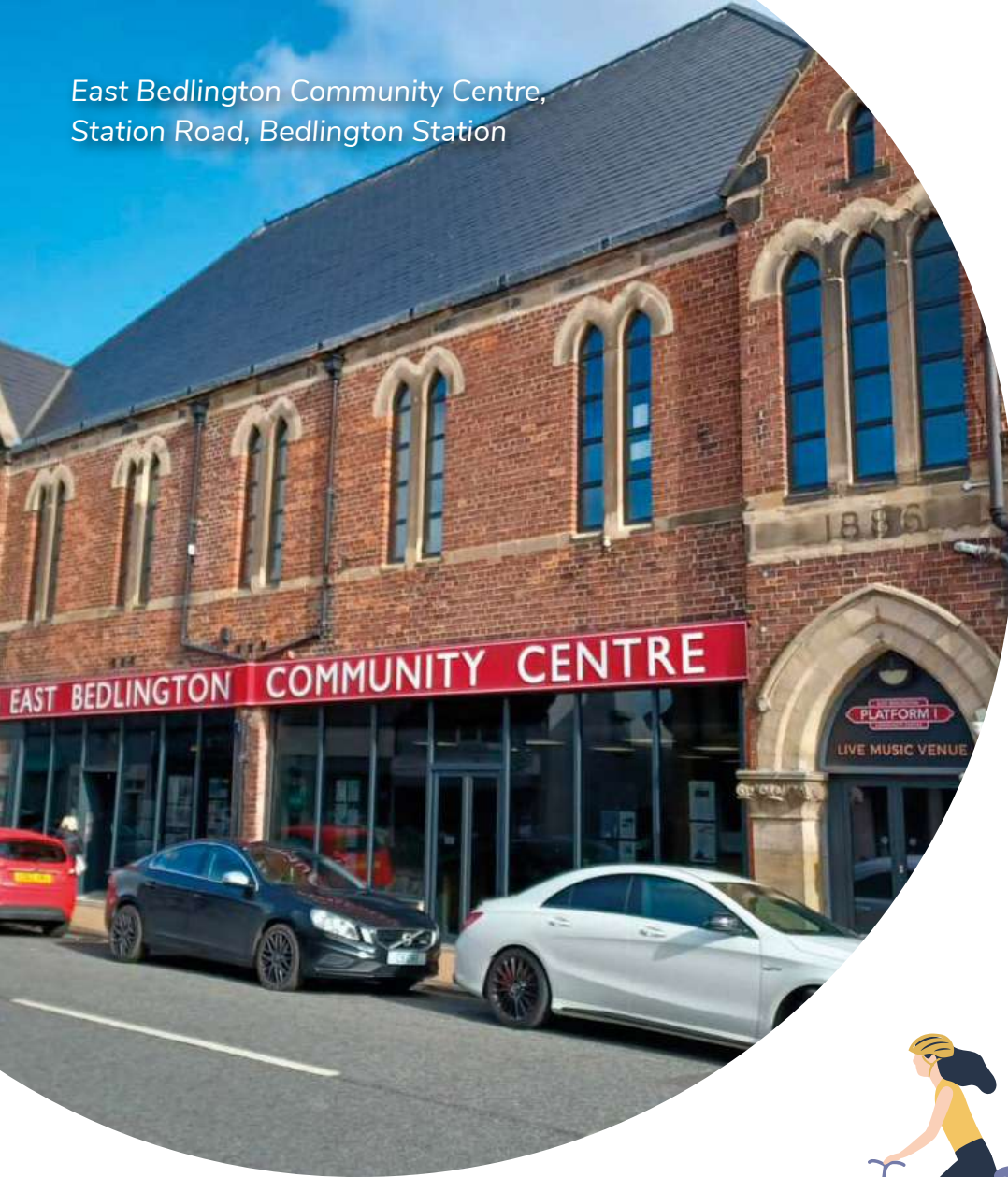
north of Front Street within the constraints of the conservation area designation. The town centre and other retail units across the area provide important employment to local people.

Bedlington Station will benefit from the completed development of the Northumberland Line, which will re-introduce passenger train services between Ashington and Newcastle from 2024. This is anticipated to significantly add to the town and wider Bedlington’s offer, connecting residents with jobs, education and services across the region.

Bedlington will be supported by the Northumberland Line Economic Corridor programme through the North of Tyne Combined Authority. This will support initiatives that capitalise on the regenerative impact of the new train service and encourage investment in business, employment and infrastructure that lead to economic growth.

Additionally, the visual appearance of the town is important, driving dwell time, spend and repeat visits. Investing in supporting collaboration between businesses, arts and culture organisations, and local authorities is vital to better develop the cultural and retail offer of the town and attract new audiences.





## Investment theme 2 – Growing town

Bedlington sits at the heart of south east Northumberland and is well positioned geographically to benefit from the employment opportunities offered at Blyth's growing clean energy, renewable energy, subsea and offshore engineering sector. The economy of Bedlington is diverse but does not provide opportunities at a large enough scale for the population of the town resulting in significant number of out commuting to work in the wider region, including retail, public service, farming and industry specialisms including advanced manufacturing. As such, ensuring access to jobs in the wider area and pathways to training to support this are key issues.

The town centre is located in West Bedlington. This includes the shopping area on Front Street, as well as the three large supermarkets serving the town. East Bedlington is home to the Bedlington Station including the town's train station, planned to reopen in 2024, and to the Bedlington Academy. The area is close to the Northumberland Energy Park development site which is attracting businesses operating in, or related to, the clean energy sector.

Development proposals that support the creation or protection of job opportunities and the sustainable development and economic growth of the town centre and area around the new gateway at Bedlington Station to the area will be considered as part of the Borderlands investment process.



### Investment theme 3 – Inclusive town

Residents of Bedlington benefit from easy access to a wealth of green spaces, including Humford Woods, Attlee Park, Plessey Woods, Gallagher Park and Doctor Pit Park. There are also important environmental designations within the plan area, including ancient woodland, local nature reserves and local wildlife sites. Bedlington Town Centre includes a conservation area and the wider area contains at least 33 listed buildings, three of which are Grade II\*.

Gallagher Park partly occupies a reclaimed slag heap which was the legacy of the former “Doctor” and “A” Pits. It also has some flatter areas that were previously farmers’ fields. The mixed terrain provides the natural contours for a downhill cycle track whilst a competition standard BMX track adds to the attraction from a cyclist enthusiast perspective. The woodland provides the habitat for wildlife including red squirrels, deer and rabbits whilst the fields on the periphery of the park provide 3 football pitches, a children’s play area and a Multi-Use Games Area (MUGA).

These green spaces are a vital part of Bedlington’s vibrant and healthy community and are of great importance to the character and identity of the town. They are valued for a wide range of reasons including visual amenity; historic significance; recreational value; tranquillity; and richness of wildlife. Uncontrolled changes to green spaces can irrevocably alter their special character or intrinsic value, it is therefore vital that any prospective projects acknowledge the value and history of the sites.



Outdoor sports and leisure facilities are available; the town hosts an international class BMX track and a highly regarded golf club. Active Northumberland provide four leisure centres with swimming pools between 3 and 7 miles of Bedlington. Bedlington Academy offers a Community Spaces scheme providing facilities for the public on evenings and the weekend including; 11 a-side grass pitches, 4G football pitch, 9 a-side grass pitches, sports hall, studio and MUGA. There are three commercial gyms currently operating in the town. Nevertheless, a recurring theme in the public consultation was the perceived lack of leisure facilities in Bedlington, particularly the lack of a swimming pool.

It is the aim of the place plan to encourage investment providing opportunities for active participation by the community in leisure, culture and other facilities and activities to complement the existing provision in the town. Our aim is to support the strong sense of community that exists across the town, recognising that collaboration is key to maximising their benefits.



An entrance to Gallagher Park, Bedlington

## Investment theme 4 – Connected town

West Bedlington is well connected to the strategic road network, with the A189 located to the east, this connects Bedlington to Ashington and Newbiggin-by-the-Sea in the north and Cramlington and the Tyneside conurbation to the south. The A1068 also connects Bedlington to Ashington, while the A193 provides a link to Blyth to the east. The B1331 links Bedlington to the A192, connecting the town to Morpeth. East Bedlington Parish is bordered by the A189 trunk road and has good road links to the A1 and the neighbouring towns of Ashington, Blyth, Morpeth and Cramlington. Main roads are generally maintained to a good standard.

Bedlington also has good rail links to the Port of Blyth and the east coast main line, however, there have been no passenger services running on the Ashington, Blyth and Tyne line for well over 50 years following the closures recommended in Dr Beeching's report in 1963. Re-opening the line to passenger services is now a key NCC transport priority with significant UK Government backing to re-open the line as early as 2024 as the new Northumberland Line and associated Economic Corridor programme through the North of Tyne Combined Authority.

Active travel routes are those routes that are used by pedestrians, cyclists and horse-riders. They provide commuting, recreation and leisure opportunities and also promote healthy living. Routes can include established pathways and cycle routes, public rights of way, bridle paths and paths of a more informal nature. It is not currently possible to cycle to the nearby towns of Morpeth, Cramlington and Blyth without cycling on main roads.

However, The Bedlington Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) identified a significant opportunity to improve walking and cycling infrastructure

connecting Bedlington Station to the town centre and employment sites which resulted in a successful bid the Levelling Up Fund Round 2. The resulting active corridor across the town is planned to be completed by 2026. Projects that support development complementing or adding to the LCWIP plans will be considered particularly where they add value to planned town centre and gateway development.



Bedlington South signal box, Bedlington Station



# Part 2: Development and implementation

## Development of the Place Plan

There are more than 100 towns across the Borderlands area with different and distinct characteristics. Bedlington's inclusion as one of Northumberland's seven towns on the Borderlands Place Programme was assessed using the Unified Borderlands Town Index, developed to facilitate the town prioritisation process. It was critical that the framework was:

- evidence based
- robust in its justification
- transparent for our stakeholders and communities



The index was based on a two-stage gateway process:

- A quantitative assessment of a generic range of published indicators that defined the relative “economic health” of the towns in scope
- The progressive application of a range of qualitative factors that correlated to the broader “levelling up” aims of the Programme



A Welcome to Bedlington sign depicting a Bedlington Terrier

The officer team then developed a framework to inform the process, as demonstrated in the diagram opposite:

<b>Stage 1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish the local Place Partnership Group – the ‘Bedlington Innovation Team’ (BIT)</li><li>• Develop the TORs</li><li>• Appoint Chair</li><li>• Agree Stakeholder List</li><li>• Invite representatives of key stakeholders to form BIT</li></ul>
<b>Stage 2</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Establish baseline of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and threats</li><li>• Draft vision and strategic objectives</li><li>• Consult residents on vision and strategic objectives</li><li>• Review vision and objectives</li></ul>
<b>Stage 3</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Identify priority investment themes</li><li>• Develop implementation plan</li><li>• Invite project proposals</li><li>• Assess project eligibility</li><li>• Eligible project proposals included in place plan</li><li>• Submit place plan to Borderlands Programme</li><li>• Assessment and endorsing of place plan</li><li>• Feedback from Place Programme Board on place plan</li></ul>
<b>Stage 4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Shortlist schemes for BTIP (including consideration of Place Programme Board recommendations)</li><li>• Strategic Outline Business Case development of Borderlands schemes with scheme sponsors</li><li>• BTIP completion and submission to Borderlands Programme</li><li>• Assessment and Approval of BTIP</li><li>• Accountable Body due diligence and contracting with Borderlands Programme</li></ul>

The local Place Partnership Group in Bedlington was created following a stakeholder mapping exercise (the full exercise is outlined in Appendix IV) with local councillors and consists of public, private and community sector representatives. This includes four county councillors, two town councillors, two parish councillors and four business and community sector representatives. The group is facilitated and managed by the County Council’s Economy and Regeneration Service. The purpose of the group in the first instance is to support and advise on the development of this document for the town, working with local community stakeholders in Bedlington and providing a ‘whole town approach’. Full terms of reference have been published on the town’s webpage together with a summary of declarations of interest.

Board Member (Organisation)	Board Member (Name)
TT Electronics	David Fellows (Chair)
Northumberland County Council	Cllr Alex Wallace
Northumberland County Council	Cllr Christine Taylor
Northumberland County Council	Cllr Rebecca Wilczek
Northumberland County Council	Cllr Malcolm Robinson
West Bedlington Town Council	Cllr Victoria Thompson
West Bedlington Town Council	Cllr Adam Hogg
East Bedlington Parish Council	Cllr Bill Crosby
East Bedlington Parish Council	Cllr Keith Grimes
Advance Northumberland	Michael Black
Leading Link	Chris Johnson
Senrug	Dennis Fancett

## Interventions and investments

Central to the development of the Place Plan are the five core principles underpinning the design and delivery of the wider Place Programme:

- **Place-based:** Assessing investment needs and solutions for each place on its own terms: what the place wants to be in the future, what it needs, and what it offers.
- **Collective:** Looking at the contribution of each part to the whole: the added value to the place, the area, the region, and the country.
- **Systemic:** Bringing public, private, third sector, and community assets together as part of a single, integrated system supporting communities, services and the economy.
- **Community-led:** Putting communities at the heart of decisions about the solutions that the Place Programme brings to the challenges facing their towns and town centres.
- **Prevention and future proofing:** Investment and action directed towards preventing further deterioration in our towns and town centres.



Our process in Bedlington, and subsequent call for project proposals, has been informed through collaboration and consultation with the community. We have developed a local Place Partnership Group comprising public, private and voluntary sector partners, driven by the stakeholder mapping sessions. Our consultation has helped to shape our investment themes, vision and strategic objectives and will also determine potential investment. Through every step of the process to date, we have attempted to involve and engage the wider community.

Through use of consultation software, business focus groups, in-person showcase events and implementation of the Place Standard Tool, the community has been pivotal in shaping the Place Plan. These thoughts and ideas have been central to our strategic objectives and ensure that they align accordingly with all seven Borderlands Place Programme strategic objectives:

Borderlands Place Programme investment objectives	Bedlington Place Plan strategic objectives
<p><b>SO 1: Empower local communities to imagine and then build a long-term future for the towns they live in.</b></p>	<p><b>Inclusive town</b> - Prioritise improvements to services by working in partnership to provide residents with wider opportunities to get active, learn, participate and enjoy their local town.</p> <p><b>Connected town</b> – Integrating Bedlington with regional economic prospects, public transport connectivity and ensuring a comprehensive and sustainable public transport network.</p>
<p><b>SO 2: Safeguard existing businesses and attract new businesses to our towns and town centres.</b></p>	<p><b>Vibrant town</b> - Enhance the physical environment and condition of the town centre, encouraging new uses of existing properties to attract investment, increase footfall and spend from residents and visitors.</p> <p><b>Growing town</b> - New retail enterprises, business growth.</p>
<p><b>SO 3: Maintain and increase the number of visitors spending money in our towns and town centres.</b></p>	<p><b>Vibrant town</b> - Rejuvenating the town centre.</p> <p><b>Inclusive town</b> – Delivering recreation initiatives.</p>
<p><b>SO 4: Safeguard existing employment and deliver new jobs and opportunities for economic and social participation.</b></p>	<p><b>Growing town</b> - New retail enterprises, business growth. Embrace the benefits of the Northumberland Line and future walking and cycling infrastructure improvements so that residents and businesses can access work, shopping, leisure and culture opportunities.</p>

Borderlands Place Programme investment objectives	Bedlington Place Plan strategic objectives
<b>SO5: Maintain and increase the number of people living in our towns and town centres.</b>	<b>Vibrant town</b> - Rejuvenating the town centre. <b>Growing town</b> – providing modern homes to attract a skilled workforce.
<b>SO6: Retain and increase the working age population in towns.</b>	<b>Growing town</b> - Safeguard existing employment and work collaboratively to create a skilled workforce able to access learning and training opportunities and jobs in growth sectors across south east Northumberland and the North East.
<b>SO7: Maintain and raise the quality of the physical environment in our towns and town centres.</b>	<b>Connected town</b> - Supporting decarbonisation measures. <b>Public Realm improvements</b> - Improving public spaces to attract more footfall.

The Bedlington Place Partnership Group agreed to prioritise four Borderlands Place Programme strategic objectives based upon their experience of the town and feedback from residents, visitors and businesses. The four strategic objectives chosen to develop are highlighted in bold. They were then adapted following public consultation to reflect the outcomes and change people wished to see:

- Vibrant town
- Growing town
- Inclusive town
- Connected town

These four strategic objectives, as applied to Bedlington, and the wider Borderlands Place Programme strategic objectives created the matrix and criteria required to appraise the expressions of interest received from project sponsors. A range of nine critical success factors (CSFs) were used to assess the EOIs.

- Priority investment themes
- Opportunities and challenges facing the town
- National and regional strategic/funding objectives
- Priorities of local people, communities, businesses
- Additionality to the town’s major strategic investments
- Need for funding and evidence of market failure
- New and innovative approaches
- Deliverability
- Value for money

[Summaries of the projects received can be found in section 8 – Building our Future.](#)

Our Place Plan delivers on the Government’s levelling up agenda, aimed at tackling geographical disparities across the UK. Aligned to the missions of the levelling up agenda, the Place Plan will help Bedlington to close the prosperity gap with other parts of the UK by creating new, skilled jobs, boosting household incomes, improving public transport connectivity and boosting pride in place, including improved satisfaction with the town centre.

Clean growth is at the heart of our plans, in line with Government net zero carbon reduction goals identified in the Ten Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution, the Energy White Paper, and Sixth Carbon Budget. These plans highlight significant clean energy investment

in the coming years (including wind, carbon capture, and hydrogen), quadrupling the UK’s offshore wind capacity by 2030, bringing jobs and growth to ports and coastal towns. Our Place Plan demonstrates how Bedlington will play a significant role in the clean growth agenda, attracting new jobs and investment, and supporting the UK’s net zero carbon goals.

COVID-19 economic recovery is at the forefront of our investment planning. We will deliver new jobs and education places, creating new opportunities to stimulate economic recovery.

## Complimentary initiatives - economic development

The following table illustrates several key investments already underway in Bedlington which are linked both directly and indirectly to the proposals received under the core investment themes. It is intended that the projects below will complement and align with the proposals received for both investment through the Place Programme and those developed with partner organisations and other funders. Complementary Projects – being developed and in delivery.

Project and lead sponsor	Description	How it supports the Place Plan investment themes
<b>Bedlington town centre regeneration</b> Advance Northumberland	Comprehensive redevelopment of a high profile, brownfield site located in the heart of Bedlington Town Centre. The scheme includes a new Aldi supermarket which opened in November 2021, four retail units and six apartments.	<b>Vibrant town</b> - Rejuvenating the town centre <b>Growing town</b> - New retail enterprises, business growth
<b>Northumberland Line</b> Northumberland County Council	Reopening of the train line for passenger service between Ashington and Newcastle including the reopening of Bedlington Station.	<b>Vibrant town</b> – Developing Bedlington Station <b>Growing town</b> – Attracting new business to the town <b>Connected town</b> – Integrating Bedlington with regional economic prospects, public transport connectivity and ensuring a comprehensive and sustainable public transport network.

Project and lead sponsor	Description	How it supports the Place Plan investment themes
<b>Northumberland Line Economic Corridor</b> North of Tyne Combined Authority	Developments to exploit the economic growth potential of the new Northumberland Line potentially drawing in significant investment from the North of Tyne Combined Authority (NTCA) and other funding partners. The County Council is creating a cultural plan for artwork at the train stations along the Northumberland Line, including Bedlington. As part of this NTCA committed £10m to support a wave of new investment in the area and a £500,000 project feasibility fund has been developed to support a pipeline of projects, capitalising on the line's development.	<b>Connected town</b> – Embracing the benefits of the Northumberland Line
<b>Northumberland Energy Park</b> Advance Northumberland	Preliminary work on the Northumberland Energy Park in Cambois (4 miles from Bedlington town centre) began in September 2021. The site is forecast to directly employ 3,000 staff with an expected further 5,000 jobs to be created in the supplier park.	<b>Growing town</b> – Jobs in growth sectors
<b>Bedlington Active Travel Corridor</b> Northumberland County Council	A successful bid has been submitted to Levelling Up Fund Round 2 to create an active travel corridor across Bedlington, linking it to employment sites.	<b>Connected town</b> – Improving cycling infrastructure, encouraging active travel
<b>Solar Farm – Bluefield</b> Renewable energy developments	Solar farm at Burnt House creating 49.9Mw, meeting the energy needs of approx. 15,000 homes per year.	<b>Connected town</b> - Supporting decarbonisation measures
<b>Residential development</b> Miller Homes, 500 houses	Phased development of 500 residence site at Longridge Farm. Phase one, 150 units completed in 2021 with phase two currently in construction.	<b>Growing town</b> – providing modern homes to attract a skilled workforce
<b>Playzone</b> The Football Foundation and Northumberland County Council	Bedlington is part of NCC's programme of Playzones, safe, inclusive and accessible outdoor facilities that bring communities together through recreational forms of football and a range of other sports. The playzones will increase access to high-quality facilities for local people.	<b>Inclusive town</b> – Delivering recreation initiatives

## Building our future

As described earlier in the Vision section, four key themes have been identified and agreed locally which have informed the consideration of potential projects, interventions and investments. As a result, the Place Plan will focus investment on where it is really needed in Bedlington, drawing upon on all of the feedback received at public consultation, throughout the showcase events and recognising the importance of the whole stakeholder engagement process.

Project ideas have been identified from the engagement work carried out throughout the place planning stage, and the place plan draws upon existing action plans from the County Council, Town Council and Parish Council together with wider community engagement.

### Proposal submission process

Project proposals were invited to identify potential projects that would help Bedlington achieve its vision, objectives and investment themes outlined within this Place Plan. It was emphasised that a small number of larger capital projects which would have significant impact on the town were being sought for Borderlands Place Programme funding.

The project value was advised to be between £300K and £1.5m.

### Bedlington's EOI timeline



Additionally, projects which were considered to have potential to have a large impact and meet the vision and objectives of the Place Plan, but which were not eligible for Borderlands funding, would be included in the town's place plan and developed separately to the Place Programme process. Whilst there was no minimum funding requirement on such projects, they needed to demonstrate significant impact.

Projects were assessed against the criteria on the Project Proposal Proforma, and eligible projects then formed a 'long-list' to be considered by the Bedlington Place Partnership Group for inclusion in the Bedlington Borderlands Place Plan.

The completed Place Plan would then be assessed by the accountable body before being submitted to the Borderlands Place Programme Board.

Project sponsors were reminded that this was a two-stage application process; If the Bedlington Place Plan was approved at this first stage by the Borderlands Place Programme Board, officers would work with the sponsor to develop the project further for inclusion in the Borderlands Town Investment Plan (BTIP) for the town. The final BTIP will form the basis of the final application to the Borderlands Programme Board and forms a second stage in the application process. The timeline for Bedlington's EOI process is detailed below.



## Proposal summary

The following section details the proposals received throughout the call-out process for expressions of interest to the Borderlands Place Plan. The ideas presented have the potential to support Bedlington in achieving its overall vision. Some projects may not ultimately fit strategically with the aims of the Borderlands Place Programme so are unlikely to meet that funders criteria although there may be other options to support project development and delivery from a range of sources. Borderlands funding eligibility will be determined as part of the next stage of the Borderlands Town Investment Planning process.

This Place Plan has taken a whole town approach to identifying the key priorities which are important to the creation of a thriving community over the next 10 years – these come in the form of the infrastructure, assets, economic activity, community services and connections needed to sustain and nourish the population, support their aspirations and ensure a cohesive community with a strong sense of civic pride and community spirit. The table on [page 35](#) sets out a monitoring framework for the Place Plan, identifying under each theme and strategic objective, the key activities which will be delivered (outputs) to initiate the positive changes and developments (outcomes) we want to bring about in the community, together with some of the key metrics which will be used to evidence the impact of the Plan.

These outputs and outcomes are consistent with those detailed within the Borderlands Place Plan Guidance.



However, the guidance recognises that this is not an exhaustive list, and that additional project specific outputs and outcomes may be agreed as appropriate. In addition, as some of the priority projects identified within the Place Plan will not be funded through the Borderlands Place Programme, we have included additional measures where appropriate to capture the potential contribution of projects of this nature. All of these are defined at Place Plan level – however, as part of the management and governance arrangements for the delivery of the Plan, each prioritised project will have its own project specific outputs and outcomes which demonstrate their intended and agreed contribution to these higher- level objectives and against which they will be required to measure and report progress on a regular basis.

Underpinning the vision and the identified themes, are the strategic objectives which for Bedlington have been identified as:

- 1. Vibrant town** - Enhance the physical environment and condition of the town centre, encouraging new uses of existing properties to attract investment, increase footfall and spend from residents and visitors.
- 2. Growing town** - Safeguard existing employment and work collaboratively to create a skilled workforce able to access learning and training opportunities and jobs in growth sectors across south east Northumberland and the North East.
- 3. Inclusive town** - Prioritise improvements to services by working in partnership to provide residents with wider opportunities to get active, learn, participate and enjoy their local town.
- 4. Connected town** - Embrace the benefits of the Northumberland Line and future walking and cycling infrastructure improvements so that residents and businesses can access work, shopping, leisure and culture opportunities.

# Bedlington Place Plan Projects Map

## Key

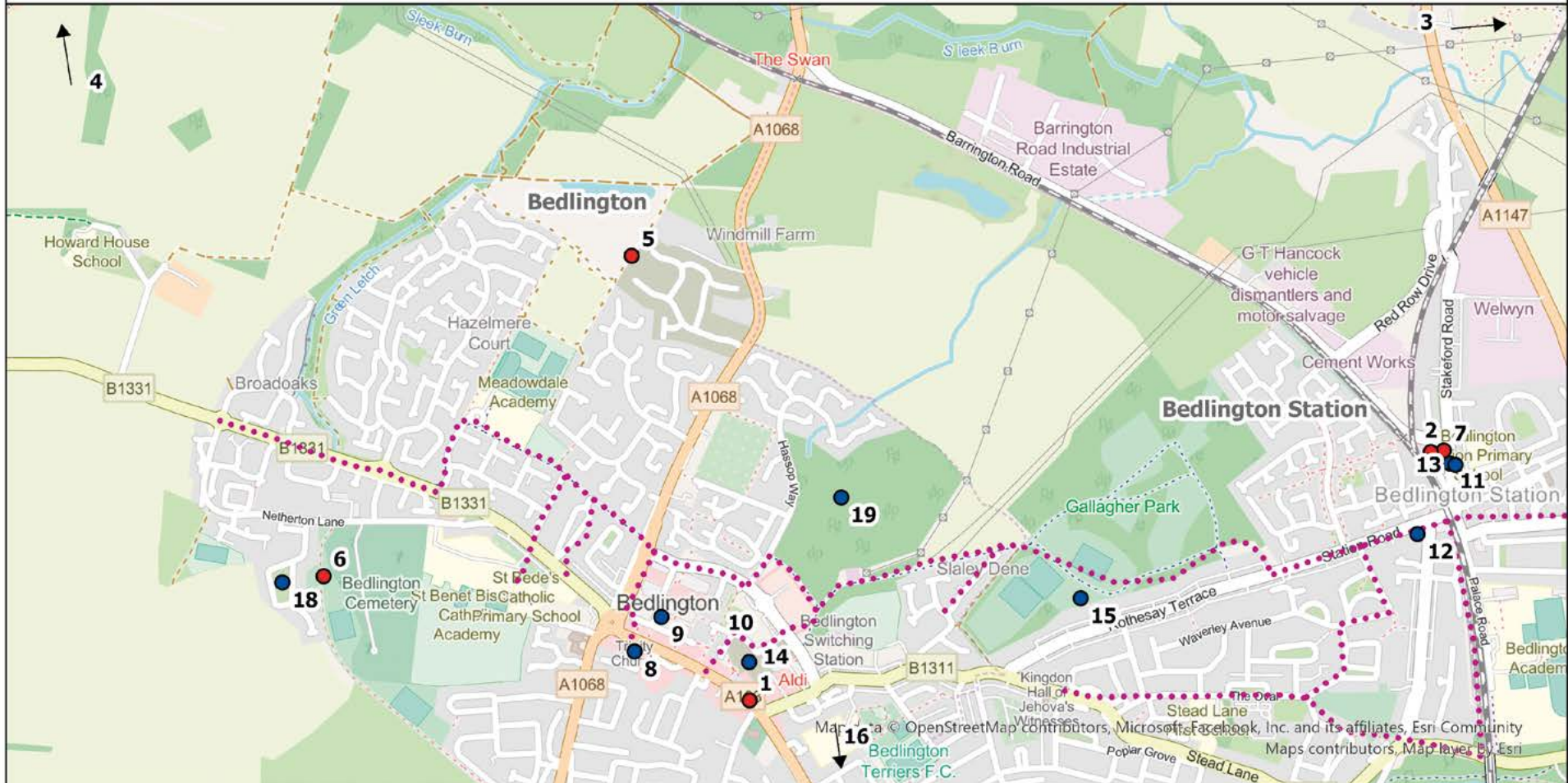
- Current Projects
- Project Proposals
- ⋯ Bedlington Active Travel Corridor

## Current Projects:

1. Bedlington Town Centre Regeneration – Advance Northumberland
2. Northumberland Line - NCC
3. Northumberland Energy Park
4. Solar Farm – Bluefield Renewable Energy Developments
5. Residential development - Miller Homes, 500 houses
6. Playzone – The Football Foundation and NCC
7. Northumberland Line Economic Corridor – North of Tyne Combined Authority

## Project Proposals:

8. Town Centre Strategic Sites/Public Sector - Wansbeck District Council Building
9. Town Centre Strategic Sites/Public Sector - Vacant public toilet behind Front Street
10. Town Centre Development Opportunity Sites,
11. Station Gateway/Public Sector
12. Library Hotel/Public Sector
13. Industrial Heritage Centre/Public Sector
14. Physiotherapy and Rehabilitation Centre / Private Sector
15. Sport for All / Public Sector
16. Bedlington Country Park Paths / 3rd Sector
17. Bedlington Enriched Environment (BEE) / 3rd Sector
18. West Lea Community Centre and Sports Facility / 3rd Sector
19. Activate Bedlington/Public Sector (town wide)



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## Project proposals

Investment theme one – Vibrant town - To achieve a vibrant, connected place to live, work, relax and visit.  
Improving the public realm, creating space for walking, cycling and socialising

Project Title Sector Sponsor	Initiative	Strategic objectives	Potential outputs/ Outcomes
<b>Town centre strategic sites</b> Public sector	<p>Optimising the use of NCC buildings and development sites in the town centre to meet user and market demand. Improving the Public Realm and connectivity in the town centre. Proposed uses of the assets include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Heritage Centre</li> <li>• NCC information</li> <li>• Library</li> <li>• Tourist information</li> <li>• Doctors' Surgery</li> <li>• Retail – Retail training – Retail incubator units – Retail Pods</li> <li>• Office space - Hot desks Office Pods</li> <li>• Residential (on 1st and 2nd floors)</li> <li>• Sport provision</li> <li>• Cultural provision</li> <li>• Children's Day Centre</li> <li>• Café</li> <li>• Adult Education</li> <li>• Transformable space for all-age day and night-time activities</li> <li>• New marketplace/community space with amphitheatre</li> <li>• Community Space</li> <li>• Arts Space</li> </ul>	Vibrant town Growing town Inclusive town Connected town	Remediation of vacant sites Job creation Creation of new business Increased visitor numbers

Project Title Sector Sponsor	Initiative	Strategic objectives	Potential outputs/ Outcomes
<b>Station gateway</b> Public sector	Improvements to the Public Realm on Station Road to provide an inviting Gateway to the town for rail users	Vibrant town Inclusive town	Enhanced public realm
<b>Hotel</b> Public sector	A new hotel with restaurant and bar to serve the new rail passengers and the growing workforce on the Energy Park	Vibrant town Growing town Inclusive town Connected town	Creation of new business Increased visitor numbers Remediation of vacant site Job creation
<b>Heritage and Innovation Centre</b> Public sector	A celebration of Bedlington's industrial heritage sitting alongside the newly reopened train station in an original train station building	Vibrant town Inclusive town Connected town	Remediation of vacant/ derelict building



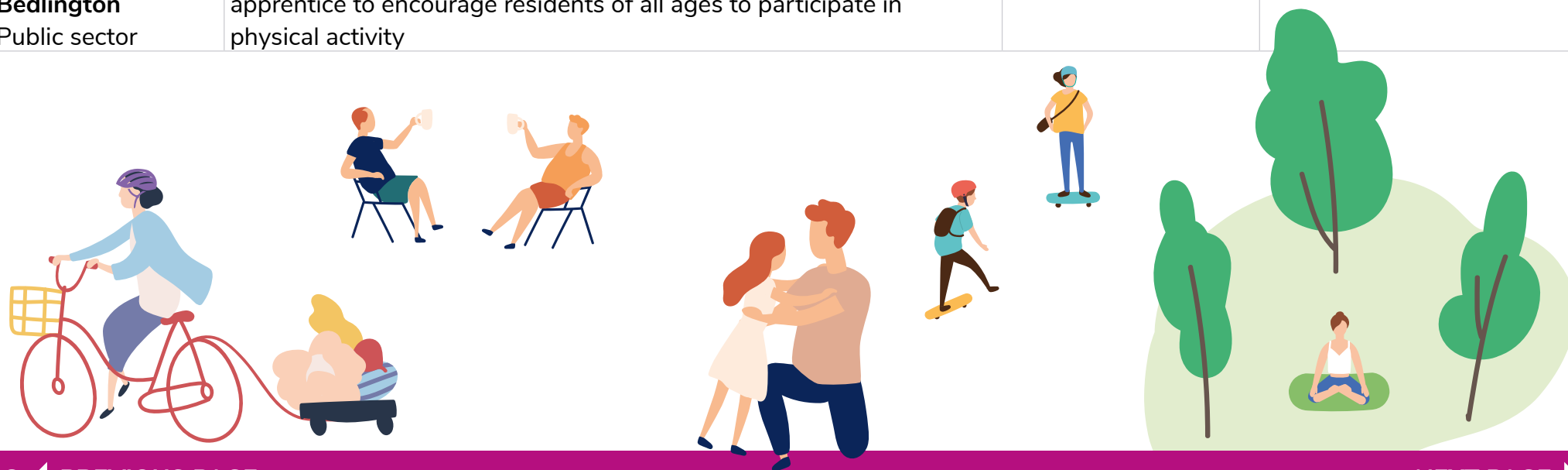
Investment theme two – Growing town - Maximising the benefit for Bedlington from wider strategic initiatives that will create jobs, encourage investment and drive productivity across the County and beyond

Project Title Sector Sponsor	Initiative	Strategic objectives	Potential outputs/ Outcomes
<b>Physiotherapy centre &amp; hydrotherapy pool</b> Private sector	Physiotherapy and rehabilitation centre	Vibrant town Inclusive town Connected town	Job creation



Investment theme three – Inclusive town - Improving the physical and mental health of residents through leisure, community, culture and heritage facilities

Project Title Sector Sponsor	Initiative	Strategic objectives	Potential outputs/ Outcomes
<b>Sport for All</b> Public sector	A multipurpose leisure facility in East Bedlington	Connected town	Job creation
<b>Bedlington Country Park paths</b> 3rd sector	Upgrading the pathways in Bedlington Country Park to improve accessibility and connectivity throughout the park	Inclusive town Connected town	
<b>Bedlington Enriched Environment (BEE)</b> 3rd sector	Creation of a team of environmental practitioners to address long standing and acute environmental issues	Connected town	Job creation
<b>Community Centre and Sports Facility</b> 3rd sector	A small community centre, sports facility and café in West Bedlington	Connected town	
<b>Activate Bedlington</b> Public sector	A programme of initiatives supported by a sports coach and an apprentice to encourage residents of all ages to participate in physical activity	Connected town	Job creation



Investment theme four – Connected town - Improving movement and connectivity between residential areas, the town centre and employment sites so that it is easier and safer to walk, cycle and use public transport

Project Title Sector Sponsor	Initiative	Strategic objectives	Potential outputs/ Outcomes
<b>Bedlington to Morpeth train line</b> 3rd sector	Extending the existing train service onto Bedlington, linking Bedlington Station to key sites and creating better access to job opportunities, retail, leisure and medical services	Inclusive town	Increased visitor numbers Increased footfall



## Interventions and investments

### Bedlington's themes and priorities - Monitoring and performance management

As described earlier in the Vision section, four themes have been identified and agreed, which have informed the consideration of potential projects, interventions and investments set out in the last section. It is critical for this Plan that these contribute to the achievement of the overall Vision and work together with each other to form a coherent Plan which knits together and drives the change needed.

Project ideas have been sought locally and from the broader engagement work undertaken with regard to existing Action Plans and Local Plans prepared by the Town Council, Parish Council, Northumberland County Council, North of Tyne Combined Authority and the North East Local Enterprise Partnership. The following tables set out the potential outputs, outcomes and measurements underpinning the Place Plan. This will form the basis for monitoring and performance management under each theme to support the effective delivery of the Place Plans vision and objectives.

### Investment theme 1 – Vibrant town - To achieve a vibrant, connected place to live, work, relax and visit. Improving the public realm, creating space for walking, cycling and socialising

Theme 1 will aim to invest in retaining and increasing both spend and activity in the town as a whole to drive the regeneration of Bedlington's town centre and improve resident and visitor experience, supporting the daytime and night-time economy and encouraging increased footfall and spend.

Outputs	Outcomes	Measurements
Improving public spaces and enhancing digital connectivity, smart signage, facilities and infrastructure to support a range of cultural events and activities. Supporting improvements to open spaces for community space and leisure use. Developing Bedlington Station – promoting the heritage value of Bedlington to visitors using the new Northumberland Line and promoting the heritage offer of the town as a whole. Building upon Bedlington's unique heritage and driving growth in the tourism economy.	Increasing the number of commercial buildings developed or improved. Increasing the amount of rehabilitated land. Increasing occupancy rates in the town centre. Creating and improving public realm to improve health and wellbeing and connectivity.	Census data on population, economic activity, education & Income. Footfall monitoring. Town Centre occupier surveys. Employment/ training statistics. Business records & support accessed. Government business data. Physical project data, plans and photographs.



Outputs	Outcomes	Measurements
<p>Building on Bedlington's rich heritage to rejuvenate the town centre so it appropriately represents the aspirations of its residents.</p> <p>Supporting the arts and cultural sector through stronger collaboration, joint marketing and providing a distinctive welcome.</p> <p>Investing in collaboration around events programmes and joint marketing to make the most of existing skills, bringing a level of professionalism and coherence to the promotion of Bedlington as a destination.</p> <p>Supporting multi-agency working with landowners and the local community to drive land management in support of nature recovery.</p> <p>Providing a distinctive town centre experience by investing in key cultural and leisure uses.</p> <p>Addressing deprivation and inequalities by investing in and supporting assets within the town centre to improve the vitality, health and wellbeing of the local community.</p> <p>Spreading the benefits of tourism to local people.</p> <p>Offering additionality to the daytime offer by developing the evening economy as a major economic activity to generate wealth for the town.</p> <p>Accommodating new investment into the historic streetscape utilising vacant and underused land and buildings within the town centre.</p>	<p>Increased quality of local events and cultural offer.</p> <p>Increased footfall (% increase).</p> <p>Increased day visitors (% increase).</p> <p>Completion of feasibility and demand studies to enable future investment.</p>	<p>£ Funding leveraged.</p> <p>Visitor/Resident survey work. Housing Needs and Demands Survey.</p>

## Investment theme 2 – Growing town - Maximising the benefit for Bedlington from wider strategic initiatives that will create jobs, encourage investment and drive productivity across the county and beyond

Theme 2 will aim to invest in people and connectivity between residents and employment.

Outputs	Outcomes	Measurements
<p>Helping young people, in particular, to achieve their potential, strengthen their progression and pathways through education, employment, self-enterprise and raise their aspirations and income levels.</p> <p>Developing innovative approaches to ensure young people starting new retail enterprises have access to low-cost retail outlets, through innovative access to market stalls and empty shops.</p> <p>Working with landowners and local communities to drive land management in support of nature recovery.</p> <p>Investing in flexible commercial space to encourage businesses back into all parts of the town and ensure that Bedlington is a compelling business environment.</p> <p>Encouraging businesses to develop their innovation potential – for example facilitating small businesses to grow and to develop new and improved products and services by promoting collaboration and knowledge sharing.</p> <p>Instilling pride and a strong sense of identity to create a cohesive and welcoming community where residents feel connected, involved and empowered.</p> <p>Supporting employment opportunities for disadvantaged groups such as ex-offenders, veterans and the homeless to move closer to the labour market by providing wrap around support to address the multiple barriers they face.</p>	<p>Number of people reporting increased employability through development of interpersonal skills.</p> <p>Number of people sustaining engagement with keyworker support and additional services.</p> <p>Number of people in employment, including self-employment, following intervention.</p> <p>Number of people in education/ training.</p> <p>Number of people with basic skills (English, maths, digital and ESOL).</p> <p>Number of people experiencing reduced structural barriers into employment and into skills provision.</p> <p>Number of people gaining qualifications, licences and skills.</p> <p>Completion of feasibility studies to enable future investment.</p> <p>Number of new businesses created.</p> <p>Number of organisations engaged in new knowledge transfer activity.</p>	<p>Census data on population, economic activity, education &amp; Income.</p> <p>Footfall monitoring.</p> <p>Town Centre occupier surveys.</p> <p>Employment/ training statistics.</p> <p>Business records &amp; support accessed.</p> <p>Government business data.</p> <p>Physical project data, plans and photographs.</p>

Outputs	Outcomes	Measurements
<p>Projects to support people with long-term health problems including mental health and those with additional needs such as care leavers into employment.</p> <p>Supporting people to engage with local services which support them on their journey towards employment – such as bringing together multi-agency teams to join up a variety of services around an individual to address the variety of barriers to employment they may face.</p> <p>Supporting people to gain the basic skills they need to develop their potential for sustainable work – such as English, Maths, Digital and English for Speakers of Other Languages skills and training courses.</p> <p>Exploring opportunities for promoting culture-led regeneration and community development – for example investing in culture focused feasibility studies and community facilities to attract people to places.</p> <p>Creating projects that foster knowledge transfer activity. This may include nurturing further join up between higher education institutions and small businesses, leading to new product development, commercialisation, diversification and productivity benefits.</p> <p>Creating projects which support the development of supply chains for businesses within the town.</p>	<p>Number of active or sustained participants in community groups as a result of support.</p> <p>Number of potential entrepreneurs provided assistance to be business ready.</p> <p>Number of socially excluded people accessing support.</p> <p>Number of people accessing mental and physical health support leading to employment.</p> <p>Number of people gaining a qualification or completing a course following support.</p>	

## Outcomes

### Investment theme 3 – Inclusive town - Improving the physical and mental health of residents through leisure, community, culture and heritage facilities

Theme 3 will aim to address deprivation and inequalities by investing in and supporting assets within the town centre to improve the vitality, health and wellbeing of the local community by:

Outputs	Outcomes	Measurements
<p>Working with the local community to compile a list of potential assets of community value.</p> <p>Encouraging and enhancing the use of all community facilities.</p> <p>Delivering recreation initiatives to offer greater access to healthy lifestyles for the community.</p> <p>Creating environmental improvements to the public realm within these areas to create a climate where further investment by private sector developer partners will be forthcoming.</p> <p>Developing open spaces that will enable our communities to grow and flourish to meet economic, health and wellbeing and environmental challenges.</p> <p>Providing a distinctive town centre experience by investing in cultural and leisure uses.</p> <p>Ensuring that the physical infrastructure of the Town evolves to better serve the access and movement needs of an ageing demographic.</p>	<p>This shift will strengthen Bedlington's vision of an empowered, prosperous, healthy, safe and inclusive local community where everyone benefits. Investment in our community will be spread across all community, sporting and other interest groups to ensure equality, inclusivity and diversity.</p>	<p>Community consultation/ survey data on satisfaction levels.</p> <p>Local social economy profile data.</p> <p>Funding levered in to develop assets and sustain activity.</p> <p>Northumberland Place Standard tool summary for audit (Year 5 and Year 10).</p>

## Outcomes

### Investment theme 4 – Connected town - Improving movement and connectivity between residential areas, the town centre and employment sites so that it is easier and safer to walk, cycle and use public transport

Theme 4 will aim to Invest in better connections for opportunities in Bedlington:

Outputs	Outcomes	Measurements
<p>Offering train station development, improving connectivity and integrating Bedlington with regional economic and county growth prospects.</p> <p>Improving cycling infrastructure with the creation of segregated tracks, priority crossing points and connections to existing cycling routes.</p> <p>Strengthening the links of cycling and walking paths to public transport and other transport hubs to encourage modal shift from private vehicles to active modes of travel.</p> <p>Providing a pedestrian and cycle friendly High Street and town centre shopping and visitor environment.</p> <p>Decarbonising the largest sources of carbon emissions on the road, focusing on research and development, building a robust supply chain for zero emission technologies, and delivering supporting infrastructure to build consumers' confidence in zero-emission vehicles.</p> <p>Supporting decarbonisation measures – for example encouraging local businesses and organisations to reduce greenhouse gases through investment in new technology or energy efficiency measures.</p> <p>Creating measures aimed at encouraging more active travel and reducing the volume of trips made by car to improve health and reduce environmental impacts.</p>	<p>Number of decarbonisation plans developed.</p> <p>Improved journey times to key strategic employment, learning sites.</p> <p>Cleaner ways to access employment, learning and leisure.</p> <p>Completion of feasibility studies to enable future investment.</p> <p>Smarter streetscapes with access to electric charging points.</p> <p>Reduced traffic in the town centre.</p> <p>Greater access to opportunities for residents.</p> <p>Increased visitor opportunities.</p> <p>Increased footfall.</p>	<p>Transport data on green space, travel patterns.</p> <p>Reports from employers in the region.</p> <p>Decarbonisation measurements.</p>

Outputs	Outcomes	Measurements
<p>Investing in public transport connectivity by boosting connections across Bedlington and Northumberland's key centres and corridors.</p> <p>Assessing options for the introduction of parking restrictions, including residents only parking schemes.</p> <p>Examining if there is a requirement to improve the town centre environment for visitors through further traffic restraint.</p> <p>Ensuring a comprehensive and sustainable public transport network.</p>		

## Next steps

### Performance monitoring

The Bedlington Place Plan has been developed to meet evidenced local needs and a clear baseline has been set to enable monitoring of progress and achievement of outputs, outcomes and other benefits. Any gaps in data or baselines will be progressed during the Borderlands Town Investment Plan (BTIP) development process to underpin the prioritised projects and the programme overall. Consideration will also be given to issues highlighted in the Place Plan where no potential projects have been identified at this stage.

The lead authority, Northumberland County Council, will undertake monitoring of the overall investment programme as outlined in the Place Plan and the subsequent BTIP in conjunction with the Bedlington Place Partnership Group (BIT) in line with the approach used for other place-based programmes as set out below:

- Demonstrate clearly how the scheme objectives will be achieved including intended changes and demonstrating the links between the interventions and benefits & outcomes within the community.

- Agree the baseline (current context and data both quantitative and qualitative) and progress stages to keep the Place Plan and the BTIP focused and resources aligned.
- Identify gaps in data, baselines, comparators and collection methodology and create solutions, this will lead to refinement of what will be monitored, why and how.
- Enable accurate reporting generating confidence with funders, setting out monitoring of KPIs and change milestones throughout, supporting dynamic risk management.
- Create clear messages about the outputs and outcomes for a range of audiences to widen understanding about the scope and ambitious impact of the Bedlington Place Plan.
- Assess the additionality of activities (and impacts) and demonstrate VFM.

Once the Borderlands Place Partnership Board and the Programme Board approve the Bedlington Place Plan, the Place Partnership Group and NCC will be invited to create a Bedlington Town Investment Plan. The monitoring and evaluation approach will be a key component of this as it will be fully incorporated into the overarching business case for the Bedlington interventions and the individual projects that will combine to deliver the vision and strategic objectives.

NCC as lead authority will be responsible for monitoring project and programme delivery and reporting to the Borderlands PMO. Grant funding agreements will be issued to individual project sponsors once the BTIP is approved by the Borderlands programme, which will incorporate all monitoring and reporting requirements and any special conditions that might apply such as compliance with subsidy control.

Appropriate systems, processes and records will be established to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements such as eligibility, record keeping, document retention, financial output and milestone monitoring and reporting requirements, publicity requirements, subsidy control, procurement and audit purposes.

The Place Partnership Group will receive regular updates on the progress of BTIP projects and provide ongoing community oversight of these and the wider package of interventions that are not Borderlands eligible but continue to meet the vision and investment priorities outlined in this Place Plan.

## Management and governance

The Bedlington Place Plan has been developed with the local community and it represents their vision and aspirations for the town. The BIT will continue to meet regularly to develop the Borderlands Town Investment Plan and the prioritised projects and will support the wider pipeline of interventions that may be eligible for a range of other funding.

The remit of the Place Partnership Group will be reviewed regularly to ensure that representation is diverse and inclusive to provide strategic oversight, influence and direction to implementation of the Place Plan. This group is vital as the interventions are shaped to ensure strong community engagement and consultation and to encourage maximum collaboration with project sponsors across the investment themes.

In terms of approvals and assurance, the role of the group is to guide, input to and agree the projects that are identified as priority for Borderlands funding during the BTIP process from a collective community perspective. The group will provide local endorsement for the final BTIP, which will then require approval from NCC prior to submitting to the Borderlands PMO and being subject to full appraisal.

With the support of NCC the group will fully consider any queries that result from this process and respond through regular meetings to ensuring that the final BTIP is ambitious and deliverable.

Subject to BTIP approval, it is anticipated that the Bedlington Place Partnership Group will become an active champion of the investment plan and support ongoing communication and engagement activities as projects develop using their local connections and collective voice.

There has been significant momentum gained and the group will continue to be supported by council officers with meeting co-ordination, progress reporting and advice for members and project sponsors on external funding opportunities. This will ensure that the Place Plan has the widest impact possible and will incorporate best practice through the network of Borderlands place programme officers and the Borderlands PMO.

The role of NCC as lead authority is established through guidance from the Borderlands Place Programme and includes formally approving the BTIP for submission to the Borderlands PMO. NCC will implement an internal assurance process prior to submission to ensure the plan is compliant with guidance and the business case for the Bedlington programme and the local package of projects are viable, deliverable and will lead to delivery of the vision, objectives and intended outputs and outcomes.

Once the BTIP is approved by the Borderlands Programme, NCC will be responsible as accountable body for issuing grant funding agreements to individual projects as well as monitoring spend, progress and performance. The council's Economy & Regeneration Service will support co-ordination of the Place Programme Group keeping them updated with progress.



Dr James Trotter Memorial Drinking Fountain,  
Front Street, Bedlington



# Appendices

**Appendix 1: Consultation Report**

**Appendix 2: NPS Report**

**Appendix 3: Stakeholder Mapping**

This document is also available in an accessible format.

## Contact us

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Front cover images, from left to right: *East Bedlington Community Centre, Station Road, Bedlington Station - Bedlington War Memorial, West End Front Street, Bedlington*

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