



UNIVERSAL DESTINATIONS & EXPERIENCES UK PROJECT

Former Kempston Hardwick Brickworks and adjoining land, Bedford Employment & Skills Plan

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Executive summary

The Site

South of Bedford town centre, near Kempston Hardwick, the site spans approximately 700 acres. It is not part of the Green Belt and boasts excellent transport links.

The Proposed Development

- The planning proposal is for the construction and operation of an Entertainment Resort Complex on the Site.
- The proposed Entertainment Resort Complex would include a theme park and related facilities such as retail, dining, entertainment, accommodation, sports and leisure amenities, conference venues, operational and utility services, parking and access infrastructure, landscaping, and land use to support construction.
- This Employment and Skills Plan presents opportunities associated with the **Primary Phase of construction and activity at the Theme Park during the operational phase** as defined in ES Chapter 2 – Description of the Proposed Development.



Universal Destination & Experiences (UDX)

UDX has six branded theme parks and resorts across the globe: Universal Orlando Resort, Universal Studios Hollywood, Universal Studios Japan, Universal Beijing Resort, Universal Studios Singapore, and Epic Universe. These world-class resorts feature thrilling, immersive attractions and exceptional hotel and resort options.

Vision and Objectives

The Proposed Development is expected to generate unique and significant opportunities for people to gain employment, upskill, and further their professional development. Universal will provide a variety of jobs across a range of sectors, required skill levels, the number of hours worked, and seasonality. Universal is committed to ensuring that local residents benefit from these opportunities.

Local Policy Goals

A review of local policy has identified **three employment and skills key goals**.

1

Improving educational outcomes locally



2

Enhancing employability



3

Promoting inclusivity and equity



Sources reviewed include:

**Central Bedfordshire
Education and All
Age Skills Strategy**

**Employment
and skills in
Bedford website**

**South East Midlands Local
Enterprise Partnership Local
Skills Improvement Plan**

Contribution of the Proposed Development

The Proposed Development, owing to its size and complexity, has the potential to have a large and positive impact on local employment and skills.

Construction Stage



Significant construction employment

The **peak onsite workforce is estimated to be 5,380** and is expected to occur in 2029.



Wide array of skills and roles

There are a wide array of specialised roles that would be required across the construction process. These would provide opportunities for specialised training to be provided to local residents.



High incomes

Construction wages are higher than average wages. The Proposed Development thus offers opportunities for local residents to access high paying employment and increase their social mobility.

Operational Stage



Large amount of local employment

The Theme Park is expected to employ **8,050 people in 2031 and 10,000 people in 2051**, two-thirds of which are expected to live in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire. In 2031, this is expected to lead to a 9.3% uplift to total employment in Bedford and a 3.9% uplift to total employment in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire.



Employment at a variety of qualification levels

81% of jobs generated at the proposed Theme Park would be in 'Vocational Skill' or 'Limited Skill' roles, meaning that there would be opportunities for residents of the local area with lower skill or qualification levels.

Frontline roles would typically require secondary education, while skilled roles may need vocational or further education qualifications. Corporate, professional, and creative roles may require degree-level qualifications.



Large amounts of induced and indirect economic benefits

The proposed Theme Park is expected to support wider employment in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire through worker expenditure, supply chain activity, and visitor expenditure from tourists.

Local Needs Assessment

The following key issues have been identified through a **data review and engagement**:

Educational attainment for young people

In Bedford (82%) and Central Bedfordshire (85%) **a lower proportion of schools are rated good or outstanding** by Ofsted than the national rate (90%).

A higher proportion of KS2 students in the area perform below expectations (25.1%) than in the East (21.8%) of England and nationally rate (21.0%).

The **gap in GCSE Maths and English attainment between students on free school meals and those who are not is higher** in Central Bedfordshire (34 and 30 percentage points) than the national gap (25 and 27 percentage points).

Facilitating the future workforce with required skills

Whilst Bedford and Central Bedfordshire have a low proportion of individuals who have achieved no qualifications, a relatively **high proportion do not progress beyond GCSE or A-level qualifications** relative to the national rate.

There is a **significantly lower proportion of the workforce receiving in-work training in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire** (5.2% and 7.4%) than all other geographical comparators (10%-14%).

Pathways for those in need

Bedford has as **apprenticeship start rate that has been consistently below** the national average.

The **proportion of economically active residents who are seeking a job is higher** in Central Bedfordshire (19.5%) than the national and regional averages (16.4%-18.5%).

Certain groups, such as residents belonging to the African & Caribbean **ethnic groups have disproportionately high unemployment rates**. Some ethnic groups such as Bangladeshi or Arab have unemployment rates **more than double the average**.

Issues identified during engagement

Need for **varied pathways** into job opportunities. Barriers to employment opportunities for certain groups were identified.

Enthusiasm across early years, primary, secondary school and further education institutions to work **collaboratively**.

Importance of **raising aspirations** from a young age. Desire to maximise opportunities to **ensure local residents benefit**.

Key employment and skills goals:

1

Improving educational outcomes locally

2

Enhancing employability

3

Promoting inclusivity and equity

UDX track record

Apprenticeships, internships and outreach

Relevant goals:

1

2

Universal Orlando Resort have 152 active **apprenticeships** in a variety of sectors. In China, Universal Beijing have 45 **university partnerships**, leading to a high provision of **internships**.

UDX has also engaged in **outreach programmes** with local schools, providing talks, career guidance, and hands on experience in creative departments.

As part of the **Club 52** initiative employees at Universal Orlando Resort are honoured if they volunteer 52 hours annually. This resulted in 64,000 volunteering hours by employees at Universal Orlando across 2023.

Annual internships at UDX locations

420 Orlando

25 Hollywood

800 Beijing

In-work training

Relevant goals:

2

UDX delivers on-the-job training at all of their resorts. This **training is designed to assist professional development**, which can drive internal promotions in turn. The graphic displays the career path of a worker at Universal Orlando Resort and illustrates how workers can grow and progress.



UDX provides **mandatory varied abilities training for all employees**. Training is specifically around how to sensitively deal with customers of varied abilities.

The **Education Assistance Programme** offers **financial support and discounted tuition** to employees with over 90 days of service, with **600 to 700 participants** yearly.

Equal opportunities schemes

Relevant goals:

3

At Universal Japan, UDX have gone **above and beyond** the legal requirement with a workforce where 3.04% of employees have disabilities. By matching each employee with a position that suits their abilities, an environment has been cultivated whereby **employees are empowered to thrive**.

UDX has experience offering **mentorship and educational support to under-resourced schools** located near their theme parks.

Key employment and skills goals:

1

Improving educational outcomes locally

2

Enhancing employability

3

Promoting inclusivity and equity

Proposed initiatives

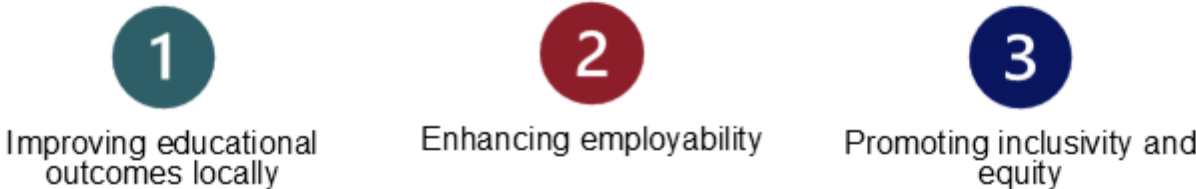
UDX has a track record of delivering initiatives targeted at alleviating local issues in areas near their theme parks that are aligned with the objectives of this Employment and Skills Plan. These initiatives range from school liaison programmes to scholarships.

UDX has developed several proposed initiatives for the Primary Phase of construction and the operations at its Theme Park, that aim to meet identified local employment and skills needs and opportunity. **The commitments outlined in this document are for approval.** Measures with specific metrics are summarised in the below table, other measures developed can be found in **Section 6**.

Employment and skills area	Commitment	Objectives supported
Internships	UDX will provide a minimum of 15 paid internships annually from the second full year of operation, rising to 35 from the fifth full year of operation. Internships will be delivered for at least five years from the opening year. This will run for at least 5 years after grand opening.	2
Apprenticeships	UDX will provide a minimum of 55 apprenticeships annually from the second full year of operation, rising to 70 by the fifth full year of operation. A portion will be offered to care leavers. UDX will sign the Care Leavers Covenant and develop a bespoke support programme. This will run for at least 5 years after grand opening.	2 3
Disadvantaged Student Support	UDX will support 40 high-risk or socio-economically disadvantaged students annually by the second full year of operation. This will run for at least 5 years after grand opening.	1 3
Earn and Learn Commitments	UDX will achieve 5% of employee headcount in earn-and-learn positions. This will be achieved in the construction phase by requiring the Principal Contractor(s) for construction to have 'The 5% Club' accreditation (or equivalent at the time of contracting services).	2
Education engagement	UDX will partner with schools, colleges, and universities to promote awareness of creative industry and visitor economy careers and assign a dedicated representative to deliver on these commitments.	1

For more details on the specifics of these initiatives, see the full report.

Key employment and skills goals:



Monitoring and governance

To be successful in achieving the maximisation of employment and skills outcomes locally, a combined approach involving actions taken by a variety of stakeholders is required.

Approach

A collaborative framework led by UDX, the Principal Contractor(s), local authorities and a range of education partners will drive the ongoing delivery of the Employment and Skills Plan. This framework will:

- Define clear roles and responsibilities for each stakeholder to maximise local employment and skills outcomes.
 - Operate on an iterative cycle of engagement, gathering new data and feedback from authorities and community groups every quarter to refine initiatives and priorities.
 - Conduct formal reviews of all commitments in Section 6 at set intervals to confirm that minimum durations have been met and to assess whether delivery mechanisms remain fit for purpose.
 - Ensure flexibility so that, if current approaches such as apprenticeships become outdated, alternative initiatives can be introduced without compromising overall outcomes.
-

The role of UDX

UDX will act as the central coordinator throughout construction and operations by:

- Appointing a dedicated representative to convene with local authorities, training institutions, charitable partners and working groups at least four times a year. These meetings will align on workforce needs, review progress and agree any necessary adjustments.
 - Embedding ESP commitments into all Principal Contractor agreements to guarantee that construction-phase targets cascade properly through subcontractors.
 - Overseeing operational-phase delivery by directly managing performance against skills and employment targets, and by maintaining ongoing dialogue with educational partners to tailor training programmes to evolving business requirements.
 - Providing timely reports on stakeholder engagement, lessons learned and recommended next steps to senior UDX leadership and the Socio-Economic Taskforce.
-

Ensuring compliance

To safeguard delivery and accountability, UDX will implement a structured compliance framework comprising:

- A live compliance tracker, updated continuously with the status of each commitment, supporting evidence and any emerging issues; this tracker will feed into every quarterly Taskforce meeting.
- Regular reporting protocols, including written progress summaries and risk registers shared with MHCLG and relevant authorities.
- A five-step escalation process for missed targets, beginning with a root cause analysis within four weeks and leading to a corrective action plan (with measures to start within three months) and MHCLG sign-off.
- Longer-term underperformance measures whereby failure to meet agreed outcomes for two successive years will trigger proportionate mitigation actions, such as enhanced future delivery obligations or financial contributions to alternative skills initiatives.
- Clear governance terms endorsed by all parties, ensuring transparency, swift decision making and the ability to adapt the framework as the plan evolves.

2. Introduction

- 2.1 This Employment and Skills Plan (“ESP”) has been prepared on behalf of Universal Destinations & Experiences (UDX) (“the Promoter”) which is seeking planning permission for the construction and operation of a Universal Entertainment Resort Complex and associated development, in Bedford. The proposal is sponsored by the Department for Culture Media and Sport (“DCMS”). The Department for Transport (“DfT”) has assisted in the development of the highways and rail related elements of the proposal with Bedford Borough Council (“Bedford BC”). The proposal intends to provide sufficient information to enable the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government (“MHCLG”) to consult on and consider making a planning decision.
- 2.2 The Site is located south-west of Bedford, Bedfordshire and is broadly to the east of the A421 and west of the Midland Main Line and is on the former Kempston Hardwick brickworks and agricultural land. The Site is divided into four main land areas referred to as the Core Zone, Lake Zone, West Gateway Zone, and East Gateway Zone. The proposed ERC lying within these zones would allow a theme park and associated uses including retail, dining, entertainment; visitor accommodation; sport, recreation, leisure and spa facilities; venues with conference and convention spaces; associated services and uses for any operational or administrative functions; utilities generation, storage, collection, treatment, and processing facilities associated with the ERC; vehicle and cycle parking, maintenance and servicing, and transportation hubs; access routes and circulation spaces; landscaping; utility infrastructure; and use of land necessary to support construction. Within this document, the term ‘Theme Park’ relates to the operational component of the development proposals directly within the control of UDX.
- 2.3 The planning proposal also includes a series of infrastructure improvements including:
- a new A421 junction;
 - a new railway station on the Thameslink/Midland Main Line at Wixams;
 - improvements to Manor Road; and
 - improvements to certain other local roads.
- 2.4 It also safeguards land for a potential new railway station on the proposed East West Rail (EWR) Bletchley to Bedford line, should this come forward in the future.
- 2.5 This ESP details employment and skills opportunities that will be provided at the Proposed Development. **The commitments outlined in this document are for approval and are included in the Proposed Operative and Controlling Documents (Document Reference 1.16.0). The two sections in this document that are for approval are Chapter 6: Proposed initiatives and Chapter 7: Monitoring and governance.** Local employment and skills needs and opportunities are explained, the contribution of the Proposed Development is discussed, and key commitments and performance indicators are defined. Commitments are stated for both the construction and operational phases of the Proposed Development. This document should be read alongside the **Environmental Statement (ES)**.
- 2.6 Specifically, this ESP assesses employment and skills related opportunities within the “Primary Phase” of construction (2026 – 2031) and at the Theme Park during operation, both as described in **ES Chapter 2: Description of the Proposed Development**. This ESP does not discuss opportunities for the provision of employment and skills contributions beyond the Primary Phase due to uncertainty surrounding what will be delivered and the timing of delivery.
- 2.7 The management of construction commitments presented in this ESP and passing them on to subconsultants will be the responsibility of the Principal Contractor(s) the contractor in overall control of the Primary Phase of construction. UDX will make sure that these occur by explicitly including these

requirements within the contracting process. The responsibility for achieving operational commitments related to the Theme Park will be a responsibility of UDX.

- 2.8 This ESP provides detail as to how UDX will make a positive contribution through the provision of employment and skills opportunities at the Proposed Development. Specifically, this ESP summarises local employment and skills needs and opportunities, explains the contribution of the Proposed Development, and provides key commitments and performance indicators in order to make sure opportunities are realised as laid out in this ESP.

Vision and objectives

- 2.9 UDX is a leader in operating the most innovative and immersive Entertainment Resort Complexes around the world. UDX has six branded Entertainment Resort Complexes across the globe: Universal Orlando Resort, Universal Studios Hollywood, Universal Studios Japan, Universal Beijing Resort, Universal Studios Singapore, and Epic Universe. Each of these world-class resorts features thrilling, immersive attractions, exceptional visitor accommodation and resort options, unique merchandise and culinary experiences as well as live and virtual entertainment.
- 2.10 Initiatives presented in this ESP are designed to maximise the jobs and training benefits in the Primary Phase of the Proposed Development, reflecting UDX's track record around the globe and identified local needs.
- 2.11 UDX's existing resorts employ thousands of people and generate significant positive economic impact, both locally and further afield. UDX's track record of training and community initiatives demonstrates their commitment to being a positive contributor to the local communities in which they are embedded. The Proposed Development in Bedford would have the same ethos, vision and objectives.
- 2.12 The construction and operation of the Entertainment Resort Complex is expected to generate unique and significant opportunities for people to gain employment, upskill, and further their professional development. UDX will provide a variety of jobs across a range of industry sectors, level of skills and experience required, the number of hours worked, and seasonality. UDX is committed to ensuring that local residents benefit from these opportunities, helping to address key socio-economic issues.
- 2.13 For the purposes of this Plan, 'local residents' are considered to be those from Bedford and Central Bedfordshire. Given the scale of the Proposed Development, jobs benefits would spread further afield than this, but the majority (around two-thirds) of workers are expected to be residents of these closest two local authorities.

Study areas

- 2.14 The following study areas are referred to in this ESP:
- Local Area** – This comprises lower layer super output areas (LSOAs) that intersect with a 500m boundary around the red line boundary. There are 33,755 LSOAs in England, which comprise of between 400 and 1,200 households and have a usually resident population between 1,000 and 3,000 persons. The Local Area is made up of 12 of these LSOAs. These LSOAs are: Bedford 018E, Bedford 018G, Bedford 018H, Bedford 020B, Bedford 020C, Bedford 020D, Bedford 020E, Bedford 020F, Bedford 022B, Bedford 022C, Central Bedfordshire 008F, and Central Bedfordshire 008G;
 - Bedford and Central Bedfordshire** – The site is located within the local authority of Bedford, but it is located at the south of the district boundary. The 500m radius around the site goes into the district south of Bedford – Central Bedfordshire. Employment and Skills initiatives have the potential to most directly benefit residents of these two local authorities;

- **East of England** – Bedford (and the Proposed Development) is located in the East of England, but it borders the East Midlands to the north and the South East to the west. At times, evidence is drawn from relevant sources which cover these regions for useful comparison; and
- **National** – The national area is defined as England (UK where possible).

2.15 These study areas align with the study areas used in ES Chapter 13: Socio-Economics.

Structure of this report

2.16 The structure of this report is as follows:

- Local needs assessment;
- Contribution of the Proposed Development;
- UDX track record;
- Building on previous success;
- Theme Park initiatives;
- Monitoring and governance; and
- Glossary

2.17 Given the decision to proceed with the Proposed Development has not yet been taken, this document is necessarily a Plan that is contingent upon planning permission being granted. It does however set out quantitative commitments and KPIs for the Theme Park, supported by a set of methods for monitoring these commitments. This is to ensure accountability and to provide credibility to the pledges made.

3. Local needs assessment

3.1 Three key objectives with regards to employment and skills have been identified based on a review of local policies and data:

- **Objective 1:** Improving educational outcomes locally;
- **Objective 2:** Enhancing employability; and
- **Objective 3:** Promoting inclusivity and equity.

3.2 The Primary Phase can have the most impactful outcomes with respect to employment and skills through designing interventions with the aim of positively influencing the above key objectives.

3.3 **Table 1** presents a summary of the review of local policy and data, and how findings correspond to each of the above objectives. Detailed accounts of the review of local policy and data are provided below.

Table 1 – Summary table of the local needs assessment

Issues and objectives identified by baseline and policy analysis		Relevant objective
Baseline finding	Relevant policy	
Bedford and Central Bedfordshire have a higher proportion of KS2 students that do not meet their expected level of attainment (25.1%) than is recorded regionally (21.8%).	<p>South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership Local Skills Improvement Plan (SEMLEP) – inadequate basic skills and low levels of literacy and numeracy.</p> <p>Central Bedfordshire Education and All Age Skills Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundational: enhancing early years provision. • Pathways to achievement: Ensuring successful structural changes in the education system, improving educational outcomes. <p>Employment and skills in Bedford: Improve the employability of school leavers.</p>	Objective 1
There is a large gap in GCSE attainment in Central Bedfordshire in both English and Maths between those that are eligible for FSMs and those that are not eligible for FSMs. The attainment gap in Bedford between these groups is also larger than the attainment gap nationally.	<p>Central Bedfordshire Education and All Age Skills Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pathways to achievement: Ensuring successful structural changes in the education system, improving educational outcomes. <p>Employment and skills in Bedford: Improve the employability of school leavers.</p>	Objective 1 Objective 3
Bedford (82%) and Central Bedfordshire (85%) both have a lower proportion of	Central Bedfordshire Education and All Age Skills Strategy:	Objective 1

Issues and objectives identified by baseline and policy analysis		Relevant objective
Baseline finding	Relevant policy	
good and outstanding schools than is recorded nationally (90%).	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Foundational: enhancing early years provision. • Pathways to achievement: Ensuring successful structural changes in the education system, improving educational outcomes. • Supporting schools: investing in educational infrastructure, including SEND support. 	
In Bedford and Central Bedfordshire, there is a significantly lower proportion of in-work training than is recorded across all other geographical comparators.	<p>SEMLEP: Challenges attracting candidates, developing careers, and retaining team members.</p> <p>Employment and skills in Bedford: Facilitate closer partnerships between the private sector and support providers to increase economic participation and promote demand led skills development.</p>	Objective 2
A high proportion of students in the Local Area of the Proposed Development leave school qualified to GCSE or A-Level standard and do not progress their education beyond this point.	<p>SEMLEP: Under 24's not being 'job-ready'.</p> <p>Central Bedfordshire Education and All Age Skills Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future workforce: make sure school leavers have access to skills and training required to succeed in a shifting labour market with new technologies. 	Objective 1 Objective 2
Whilst the apprenticeship start rate is very good in Central Bedfordshire, there is potential for Bedford to improve their provision to catch up in this regard.	<p>SEMLEP: Under 24's not being 'job-ready'.</p> <p>Central Bedfordshire Education and All Age Skills Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future workforce: facilitating access to education, employment or training beyond compulsory education. <p>Employment and skills in Bedford: Connect those most in need to jobs and support businesses to create additional jobs and apprenticeships.</p>	Objective 2
In Central Bedfordshire, there is a significant proportion of the economically active population that are seeking employment (19.5%), this is higher than the national rate (18.5%) and significantly higher than other geographical comparators.	<p>Central Bedfordshire Education and All Age Skills Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Future workforce: make sure school leavers have access to skills and training required to succeed in a shifting labour market with new technologies. <p>Employment and skills in Bedford:</p>	Objective 2

Issues and objectives identified by baseline and policy analysis		Relevant objective
Baseline finding	Relevant policy	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect those most in need to jobs and support businesses to create additional jobs and apprenticeships. Improve the employability of school leavers. 	
Whilst below the national rate, the proportion of residents aged 16 – 24 that are on the claimant count in Bedford (0.8%) is higher than all other geographical comparators, suggesting there is scope to target this group for employment opportunities.	<p>SEMLEP: Under 24's not being 'job-ready'.</p> <p>Central Bedfordshire Education and All Age Skills Strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Future workforce: facilitating access to education, employment or training beyond compulsory education. <p>Employment and skills in Bedford:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect those most in need to jobs and support businesses to create additional jobs and apprenticeships. Improve the employability of school leavers. 	<p>Objective 2</p> <p>Objective 3</p>
There are several ethnic groups across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire that have a disproportionately high unemployment rate relative to the overall population.	<p>Employment and skills in Bedford:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Connect those most in need to jobs and support businesses to create additional jobs and apprenticeships 	<p>Objective 2</p> <p>Objective 3</p>

Review of local policy

South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership Local Skills Improvement Plan

3.4

The Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) for the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) region includes Bedford and Central Bedfordshire.¹ The document identifies a number of links between deprivation and low skilled jobs in addition to a number of challenges specific to the local labour market. The key challenges for the local labour market include:

- A tight labour market, with low levels of unemployment;
- Inadequate basic skills, and low levels of literacy and numeracy;
- The lack of appropriate level, context and paced pathways to occupations with skills needs;
- Over-50s leaving the labour market creating skills shortages;
- Under-24s not being “job ready”; and

¹SEMLEP (2023) *Local Skills Improvement Plan (SEMLEP region)*. Available at: <https://semlep.com/south-east-midlands-skills-strategy/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

- Challenges attracting candidates, developing careers and retaining team members.
- 3.5 The LSIP also outlines sector-specific skills gaps which are relevant to the expected activity at the Theme Park, these include the following sectors:
- Business and administration, particularly in leadership, management, and project management;
 - Customer facing catering and hospitality; and
 - Creative industries.

Central Bedfordshire Education and All Age Skills Strategy

- 3.6 This document is Central Bedfordshire's comprehensive plan aimed at enhancing education and skills development for all age groups in Central Bedfordshire.²
- 3.7 This document highlights two significant challenges in Central Bedfordshire. The first significant challenge is an ageing population reducing the future workforce size. The second significant challenge is technological advancements creating jobs that the local population does not have the correct skill level to fulfil.
- 3.8 As a result of these challenges facing Central Bedfordshire, four 'strategic priorities' are outlined:
- **Foundational:** enhancing early years provision and supporting childcare providers to raise standards;
 - **Pathways to achievement:** Ensuring successful structural changes in the education system, improving educational outcomes;
 - **Future workforce:** Facilitating access to education, employment, or training beyond compulsory education, with a focus on vocational and technical routes. This aims to make sure school leavers have access to skills and training required to succeed in a shifting labour market of new technologies.
 - **Supporting schools:** Enhance the recruitment and retention of staff and investing in educational infrastructure, including special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) support.

Employment and skills in Bedford

- 3.9 Whilst there is no specific policy in Bedford related to employment and skills, there is an employment and skills overview page on their website.³ This website states that increasing economic participation is a priority for Bedford.
- 3.10 The website also states that as a local authority, Bedford aims to:
- Facilitate closer partnerships between the private sector and support providers to increase economic participation and promote demand led skills development.
 - Increase skill investment in growth sectors reinforcing their growth potential.
 - Connect those most in need to jobs and support businesses to create additional jobs and Apprenticeships.

² Central Bedfordshire, (2023). *Central Bedfordshire Education and All Age Skills Strategy*. Available at: <https://cms-centralbedfordshire-u.azeusconvene.com/data/7d1b44c4-9209-4eac-890d-db9363f144d3/parts/10.2%20Appendix%20A%20Draft%20Education%20%20All%20Age%20Skills%20strategy.pdf> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

³ Bedford Borough Council (2024). *Employment and skills – Overview*. Available at: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/business/invest-bedford/employment-and-skills/employment-and-skills-overview> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

- Improve the employability of school leavers.

Data review

3.11 Based on the review of local policies, a review of baseline findings and the stakeholder engagement process, the local issues identified have been grouped into the following three key overarching themes on which the Theme Park development can influence positive change.

- Educational attainment for younger people;
- Facilitating the future workforce with skills required in growth sectors; and
- Pathways for those in need.

3.12 Presented below is the supporting evidence and local factors which underpin these themes. The themes provide the base for the ESP commitments included in the next section of this document.

Educational attainment for younger people

3.13 Educational attainment is pivotal for the future prospects and well-being of younger people. Studies show a clear link between higher educational outcomes and better health, job prospects, and civic participation.⁴ Reducing disparities in educational outcomes tied to socio-economic status, race, and gender is crucial in ensuring prosperity for all local residents.⁵ There are 37,500 secondary school aged (11-16 years old) children living in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire.

3.14 Across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire there is an identified shortfall in KS2 educational attainment relative to geographical comparators. In Bedford and Central Bedfordshire 25.1% of KS2 students do not meet their expected level of attainment compared to 21.8% across the East of England and 21.0% nationally. There is a requirement for educational outcomes at KS2 level to improve across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire to catch up with regional and national levels to make sure that no generation is left behind.

Table 2 – KS2 educational outcomes are significantly worse across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire relative to regional and national rates

Percentage of students that do not meet expected KS2 attainment (%) (2023/24)

Area	Percentage of KS2 students that do not meet expected attainment (%)
Bedford and Central Bedfordshire	25.1
East of England	21.8
England	21.0

Source: DfE (2025) Explore education statistics. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

3.15 Moreover, across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire there is evidence that the level of income has influence on attainment. Students eligible for free school meals (FSMs) in both areas perform worse in GCSE English and Maths than students not eligible for FSMs, particularly in Central Bedfordshire. Children are eligible for

⁴ McMahon, (2009). *Higher Learning, Greater Good: The Private and Social Benefits of Higher Education*.

⁵ Darling-Hammond (2010). *The Flat World and Education: How America's Commitment to Equity Will Determine Our Future*.

FSMs if their parents are entitled to any of the following types of support which are typically associated with low income:⁶

- Income support;
- Income-based Jobseeker’s Allowance;
- Income-related Employment and support allowance;
- Support under Part VI of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999;
- The guaranteed element of Pension Credit;
- Child Tax Credit;
- Working Tax Credit; and
- Universal Credit.

3.16 The gap in the pass rate of those who are eligible for FSMs and those that are not is larger in both Bedford and Central Bedford than the national rate, as shown in **Table 3**. Across Central Bedfordshire this gap is particularly significant, with only 40% of children that are eligible for FSMs passing GCSE English and only 42% passing GCSE Maths, compared to pass rates of 74% and 76% for children that are not eligible for FSMs. This creates a 34 percentage point gap in GCSE attainment and a 34 percentage point gap in GCSE Maths attainment in Central Bedfordshire between children that are eligible for FSMs and children that are not eligible for FSMs. This compares poorly to a national attainment gap of 25 percentage points for GCSE English and a 27 percentage point gap for GCSE Maths.

Table 3 – There is a large disparity in GCSE English and Maths attainment between children that are eligible for FSMs and children that are not, particularly in Central Bedfordshire

GCSE standard pass attainment in English and Maths by FSM status (2023/24)

Area	English		Maths		Percentage point attainment gap : English	Percentage point attainment gap: Maths
	Eligible for FSM (%)	Not eligible for FSM (%)	Eligible for FSM (%)	Not eligible for FSM (%)		
Bedford	57	80	46	77	26	31
Central Bedfordshire	40	74	42	76	30	34
England	56	81	50	77	25	27

Source: DfE (2024) Explore education statistics. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].
Note: figures may not sum due to rounding

3.17 It is arguable that these poor statistics regarding educational attainment are a result of poor educational infrastructure. Across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire, there is a lower proportion of schools that are rated as good or outstanding by Ofsted than there is across geographical comparators. The proportion of schools in Bedford that are rated good or outstanding is 7 percentage points lower than the proportion across the East of England, and 8 percentage points lower than the national rate. Across Central Bedfordshire, this gap is 4 percentage points compared to the East of England and 5 percentage points compared to the national rate.

⁶ GOV (2025). *Apply for free school meals* Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/apply-free-school-meals> [Accessed 19 May 2025]

Table 4 – A lower proportion of schools in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire are rated good or outstanding by Ofsted than is recorded regionally or nationally

Percentage of schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted (2024)

Area	Percentage of schools good or outstanding (%)
Bedford	82
Central Bedfordshire	85
East	89
England	90

Source: ONS (2024) *Subnational indicators dataset*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/wellbeing/datasets/subnationalindicatorsdataset> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

- 3.18 The average travel distance to primary school⁷ is approximately 1.6 miles.⁸ Given the size of the Site and the nature of the data source which provides data from a specific geographic location, a further buffer of 1.6 miles has been added to this radius. This additional 1.6 miles represents the furthest distance within the Site from the centre point that data regarding schools is collected from. This approach ensures all schools that fall within appropriate average travel distances to any point within the Site are captured.
- 3.19 A list of the 19 primary schools that fall within this 3.2-mile radius of the Proposed Development can be found in **Table 5** below.⁹
- 3.20 The primary schools collectively have a total capacity of 8,440 pupils and a current roll of 7,980 pupils. This equates to these primary schools operating at 95% capacity.

Table 5 – There are 19 primary schools that fall within 3.2 miles of the Site

Primary schools within 3.2 miles of the Site

Primary school	Capacity	Number of pupils
Houghton Conquest Lower School	145	135
Camestone School	420	415
Kempston Rural Primary School	420	440
Balliol Primary School	440	390
Broadmead Lower School	210	230
Wilstead Primary School	210	195
King's Oak Primary School	935	850

⁷ Note: the primary stage covers three age ranges: nursery (under 5), infant (5 to 7 or 8) (Key Stage 1) and junior (up to 11 or 12) (Key Stage 2). Primary education year groups go up to 'Year 6'.

⁸ School Streets Initiative (no date given) *Independent Mobility*. Available at: <https://schoolstreets.org.uk/> [Accessed 15 August 2024].

⁹ Note: there are a total of 22 primary schools within the defined radius, however data is available for 19. Data is not available for Willow Grove Primary School, Wootton Primary School, and Shelton Lower School.

Primary school	Capacity	Number of pupils
Westfield Primary School	400	235
Lakeview School	420	440
Great Denham Primary School	650	645
Queen's Park Academy	375	450
St Joseph's and St Gregory's Catholic Primary School and Nursery	525	325
Wixams Tree Primary Academy	420	500
Elstow School	420	410
Cauldwell School	420	415
Shackleton Primary School	540	475
Springfield Primary School	420	390
Marston Moreteyne VC School	650	645
Bedford Road Primary Academy	420	390
Total	8,440	7,980

Source: DfE (2025) *Get Information about Schools*. Available at: <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

- 3.21 The average travel distance to secondary school¹⁰ is approximately 3.4 miles.¹¹ Again, a buffer of 1.6 miles (furthest distance from Site centre point) has been added to this radius. A list of the nine secondary schools that fall within this 5.0-mile radius of the Proposed Development can be found in **Table 6** below.¹²
- 3.22 The secondary schools collectively have a total capacity of 9,230 pupils and a current roll of 8,875 pupils. This equates to these secondary schools operating at 96% capacity.¹³

Table 6 – There are nine secondary schools that fall within 5.0 miles of the Site

Secondary schools within 5.0 miles of the Site

Secondary school	Capacity	Number of pupils
Biddenham International School and Sports College	1,500	1,355
Bedford Academy	1,440	1,330
Goldington Academy	750	930
Redborne Upper School and Community College	1,420	1,580

¹⁰ Note: Secondary education in the UK generally covers students from ages 11 to 18. This corresponds to Years 7 to 13 in England and Wales.

¹¹ Department for Transport (2014) *National Travel Survey 2014: Travel to School*. Available at: <https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/5a8040f240f0b623026926cd/travel-to-school.pdf> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

¹² Note: there are a total of 10 secondary schools within the defined radius, however data is available for nine. Data is not available for Castle Newnham School.

¹³ Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

Secondary school	Capacity	Number of pupils
Wootton Upper School	1,220	890
Daubeney Academy	600	505
Bedford Free School	500	530
Kempston Academy	980	835
Wixams Academy	825	925
Total	9,230	8,875

Source: DfE (2025) Get Information about Schools. Available at: <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].
Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

- 3.23 Special schools¹⁴ provide education for children aged 2-19 with a special educational need or disability. The average travel distance to special schools in urban areas is approximately 4.0 miles.¹⁵ Again, a buffer of 1.6 miles (furthest distance from Site centre point) has been added to this radius. A list of the three that fall within this 5.6-mile radius of the Proposed Development can be found in **Table 7** below.¹⁶
- 3.24 The special schools collectively have a total capacity of 455 pupils and a current roll of 435 pupils. This equates to these special schools operating at 96% capacity.

Table 7 – There are three special schools that fall within 5.6 miles of the Site

Special schools within 5.6 miles of the Site

Special school	Capacity	Number of pupils
Ridgeway School	125	105
St John's School	180	185
Grange Academy	150	150
Total	455	435

Source: DfE (2025) Get Information about Schools. Available at: <https://get-information-schools.service.gov.uk/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].
Note: Figures may not sum due to rounding.

- 3.25 Representatives from all local schools were invited to engagement events, which garnered strong attendance, by 35 primary and secondary schools, as well as academy representatives. As well as educators, engagement was also held with youth groups from primary and secondary schools, as well as representatives from the community and voluntary sector.
- 3.26 Key relevant themes relevant to employment and skills raised during this engagement were:
- Variety and scale of job opportunities;

¹⁴ Note: special schools provide education to children with special educational needs and disability. These schools can support children aged 2 – 19.

¹⁵ Education Policy Institute (2018) *Access to special schools in England*. Available at: <https://epi.org.uk/publications-and-research/access-special-schools-england/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

¹⁶ Note: there are a total of four special schools within the defined radius, however data is available for three. Data is not available for Rivertree Free School.

- Early years, primary and secondary school education needs;
- Bespoke needs of different groups in the community;
- The importance of varied pathways into work;
- The importance of raising aspirations from a young age; and
- Barriers to employment opportunities for certain groups – including for example travellers and care leavers.

Facilitating the future workforce with skills required in growth sectors

- 3.27 Facilitating the future workforce with the skills required in growth sectors is crucial as it makes sure that the labour market adapts effectively to technological advancements, ensuring the local population is not left behind due to lack of appropriate skills. Mismatches in local skill level and jobs has been shown to reduce productivity.¹⁷ It has been shown that technological advancements increase the demand for cognitive problem-solving skills, highlighting the need for education systems to adapt to these changes.¹⁸ Aligning skills with growth sectors can also bridge the economic gap for disadvantaged groups, offering sustainable employment and ensuring more equitable growth benefits.¹⁹
- 3.28 Assessing the proportion of the workforce that are receiving in-work training is important in determining whether a workforce is being equipped with the skills they need to develop for the changing needs of the

¹⁷ Bloom et al (2019) *A Toolkit of Policies to Promote Innovation*

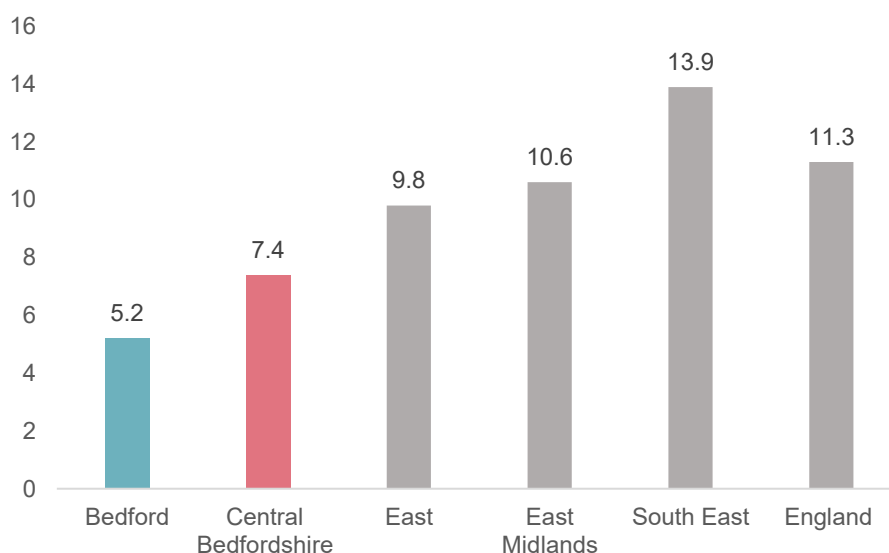
¹⁸ Autor et al (2001) *The Skill Content of Recent Technological Change: An Empirical Exploration*.

¹⁹ World Economic Forum (2018) *The Future of Jobs Report 2018*. Available at <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2018/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

workplace. There is a significantly lower proportion of workers receiving in-work training in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire relative to geographical comparators.

Figure 1 – There is a significantly lower proportion of the workforce receiving in-work training in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire than all other geographical comparators

Proportion of the workforce that has received in-work training in the last 4 weeks (2023/24)



Source: ONS (2025) Annual Population Survey. Available at:

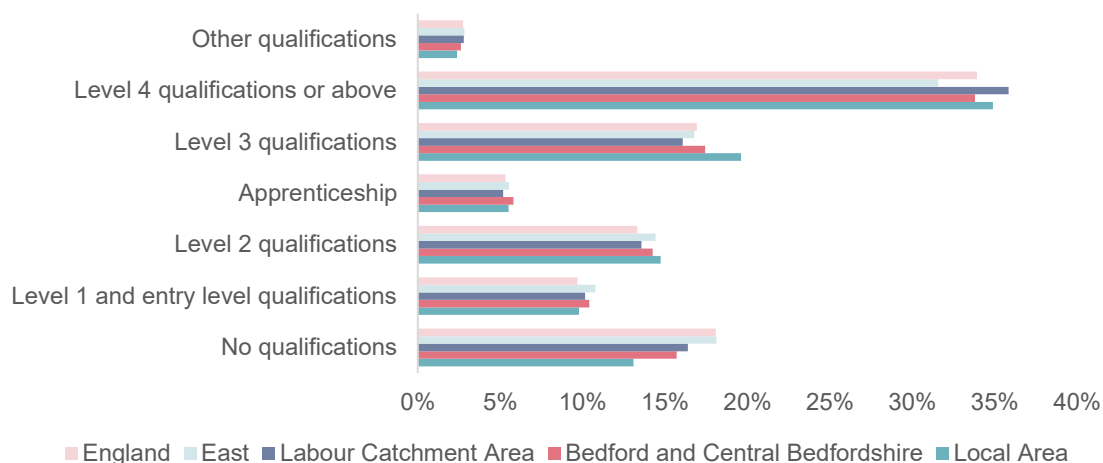
<https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/methodologies/annualpopulationsurveyapsqmi> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

3.29

The Local Area of the Proposed Development and Bedford and Central Bedfordshire perform well when it comes to level of qualification attainment compared to geographical comparators. Both the Local Area of the Proposed Development (13%) and Bedford and Central Bedfordshire (16%) have a lower proportion of the population that have no qualifications compared to regional (18%) and national rates (18%). Additionally, the proportion of residents in the Local Area of the Proposed Development that have level 4 qualifications (35%) (equivalent to the first year of a bachelor's degree) is higher than the national rate (34%).

Figure 2 – The Local Area of the Proposed Development has a lower proportion of residents with no qualifications and a higher proportion of residents with level 4 qualifications relative to national rates

Highest level of qualifications achieved across geographies (2021)



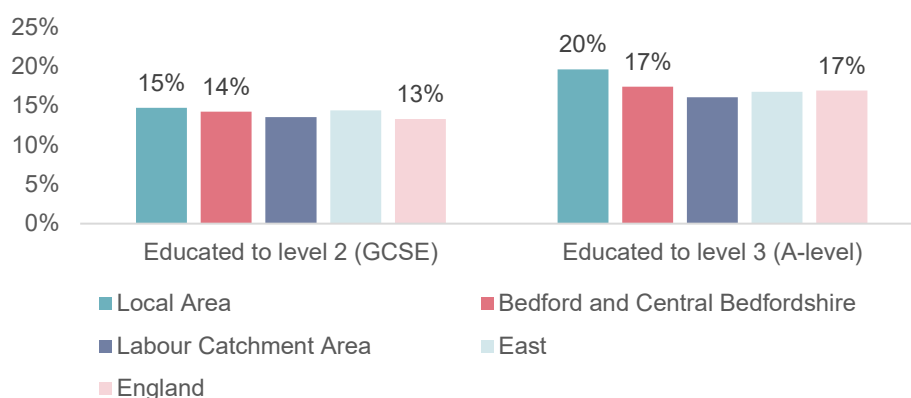
Source: ONS (2021) Census. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

3.30

However, across both the Local Area of the Proposed Development and Bedford and Central Bedfordshire there is a greater proportion that are educated to GCSE or A-Level standard as their highest level of education and do not progress further. In the Local Area of the Proposed Development 15% of residents are educated up to GCSE level only and across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire this figure is 14%, compared to 13% nationally. Additionally, in the Local Area of the Proposed Development 20% of residents are educated up to A-Level standard as their highest level of education, compared to 17% nationally. There is a clear requirement to develop pathways and awareness for students to pursue higher education in the Local Area of the Proposed Development and across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire.

Figure 3 – A significant proportion of the population in the Local Area of the Proposed Development are educated to GCSE or A-Level standard and then do not progress further

Highest level of qualification across geographies (2021)



Source: ONS (2021) Census. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

Pathways for those most in need

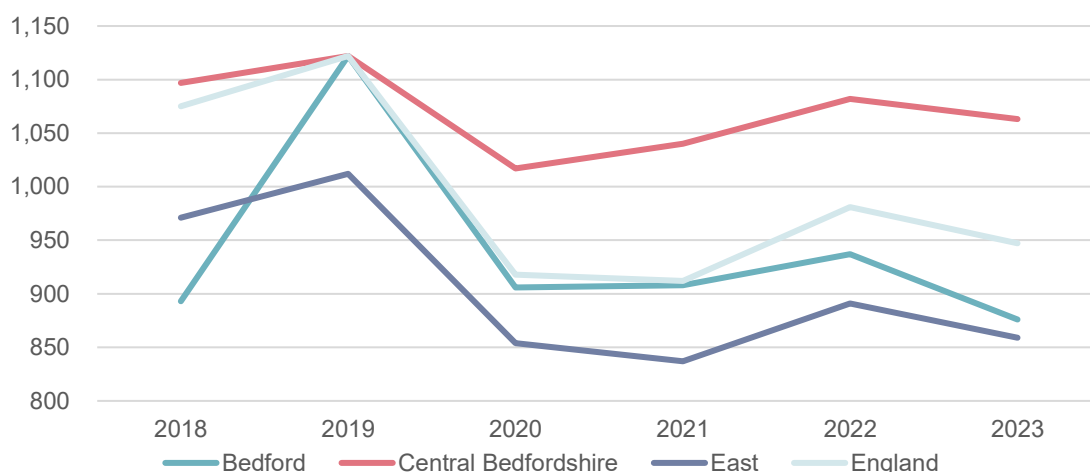
- 3.31 Providing pathways for those most in need is a vital strategy in enhancing employment opportunities, addressing skills mismatches, and promoting social inclusion. Residents with inadequate skills can face exclusion from the labour market. Vocational apprenticeships can provide residents with skills required by the labour market to enhance their employability.²⁰ There is a requirement to provide ongoing skill development opportunities to make sure those most in need have a path to further their careers.²¹
- 3.32 Across Bedford, there is a lack of alternative pathways into employment aside from the traditional academic route. The apprenticeship start and achievement rates in Bedford have not exceeded the national apprenticeship start rate since 2018. However, the apprenticeship start and achievement rates across Central Bedfordshire have consistently outperformed national rates. Therefore, there is an acute need to deliver greater apprenticeship provision in Bedford specifically.

²⁰ McMahon (2021) *A framework for ethical research in international and comparative education*.

²¹ World Economic Forum (2020) *The Future of Jobs Report 2020*. Available at: <https://www.weforum.org/publications/the-future-of-jobs-report-2020/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

Figure 4 – Whilst the apprenticeship start rate in Central Bedfordshire has been high, the apprenticeship start rate in Bedford has been slightly lower than the national rate but above the regional rate

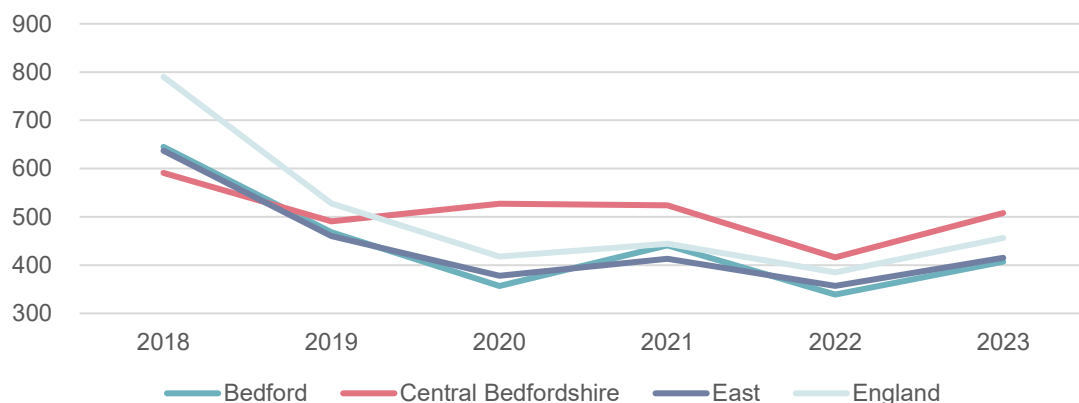
Indicative apprenticeship start rate per 100,000 population (2018 – 2023)



Source: DfE (2024) Explore education statistics. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

Figure 5 – A similar trend is observed for apprenticeship achievement rates, with Central Bedfordshire performing consistently and Bedford performing in line with regional and national rates

Indicative apprenticeship achievement rate per 100,000 population (2018 – 2023)



Source: DfE (2024) Explore education statistics. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

3.33

Bedford and Central Bedfordshire are particularly successful in delivering construction apprenticeships. Construction apprenticeships made up 24.6% of all apprenticeships across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire in 2021/22, comparing to 9.8% of apprenticeships across the East of England and 8.0% of apprenticeships across England. The provision of construction apprenticeships is particularly clear in the context of per 100,000 of the population, whereby across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire there are 57.3

construction apprenticeships per 100,000 population, compared to 22.2 across the East of England and 20.6 across the England. In 2021/22 there were 1,140 apprenticeship starts in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire, 280 (24.6%) of these were in Construction.

Table 8 – There is a significant provision of construction apprenticeships in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire relative to comparator geographies

Provision of construction apprenticeships across geographies and construction apprenticeships as a proportion of total apprenticeships (2021/22)

Study Area	Total apprenticeships	Construction apprenticeships	Construction apprenticeships % of total apprenticeships	Construction apprenticeships per 100,000 population
Bedford and Central Bedfordshire	1,140	280	24.6%	57.3
East of England, East Midlands and South East	4,600	4,600	9.8%	22.2
England	147,900	11,800	8.0%	20.6

Source: DfE (2024) Explore education statistics. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

3.34 Compared to national rates, Bedford and Central Bedfordshire perform well on apprenticeships start rates per 1,000 workers in leisure, travel and tourism and arts, media and publishing sectors. Across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire, the apprenticeship start rate in these sectors relative to overall employment in that respective sector is 7 apprenticeships per 1,000 workers, compared to a national rate of approximately 5 apprenticeships per 1,000 workers.

3.35 An issue for Central Bedfordshire is the percentage of the economically inactive population that are seeking employment. When a high proportion of residents are seeking employment, this can generate negative implications as a result of high competition for roles such as lower wages and residents not utilising their full set of skills and taking roles that are part-time and not highly skilled.

Table 9 – There is a particularly high proportion of economically inactive residents in Central Bedfordshire who are seeking employment

Proportion of economically inactive residents that want a job (2023)

Area	Economically inactive people who want a job	Percentage of economically inactive who want a job (%)
Bedford	1,300	8.0
Central Bedfordshire	6,200	19.5
East	129,400	16.4
England	1.4m	18.5

Source: ONS (2023) Annual Population Survey. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/methodologies/annualpopulationsurveyapsqm> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

3.36 Whilst below the national rate, the proportion of residents aged 16 to 24 that are on the claimant count in Bedford (0.8%) is slightly higher than all other geographical comparators. This suggests that younger people that are unemployed are a particular group in Bedford that are in need of alternative pathways into employment.

Table 10 – Younger people aged 16 to 24 on the claimant count represent a greater proportion of the economically active population in Bedford relative to the Local Area of the Proposed Development and Central Bedfordshire

Residents aged 16 to 24 on the claimant count as a proportion of the economically active population (2024)

Area	Number 16-24 year olds on the claimant count	Those aged 16-24 on the claimant count as a proportion of economically active population (%)
Bedford	750	0.8%
Central Bedfordshire	755	0.5%
East	21,800	0.7%
England	252,900	0.9%

Source: ONS (2024) Claimant count by sex and age. Available at: <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/datasets/ucjsa> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

3.37 It is also important to assess the groups that are facing the hardest challenges related to unemployment. Across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire at the time of the 2021 census the overall unemployment rate (excluding students) was approximately 4%. However, there are ethnic groups that have a much higher rate of employment than the average. **Table 11** illustrates that whilst the overall unemployment rate across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire was 4%, residents from Bangladeshi, African, Caribbean, and Roma backgrounds have a disproportionately high unemployment rate. This suggests that residents of Bedford and Central Bedfordshire that fall under these ethnic groups are most in need of pathways to employment that are generated by the Proposed Development.

Table 11 – Several ethnic groups across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire have a disproportionately high unemployment rate relative to the overall population

Unemployment rate of all residents in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire (excluding students) (2021)

Ethnic group	Overall unemployment rate (excluding students)
All residents	4%
Bangladeshi	10%
African	6%
Caribbean	7%
Roma	7%
Arab	10%

Source: ONS (2021) Census. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

4. Contribution of the Proposed Development

Introduction

- 4.1 The Proposed Development will create significant employment and skills opportunities during both the construction and operational phases. It is important to understand the overall proposition to better understand the opportunities which local residents may be able to take advantage of. This section should be read alongside **ES Chapter 13: Socio-Economics** which provides more information on the methodology underpinning the employment estimates.

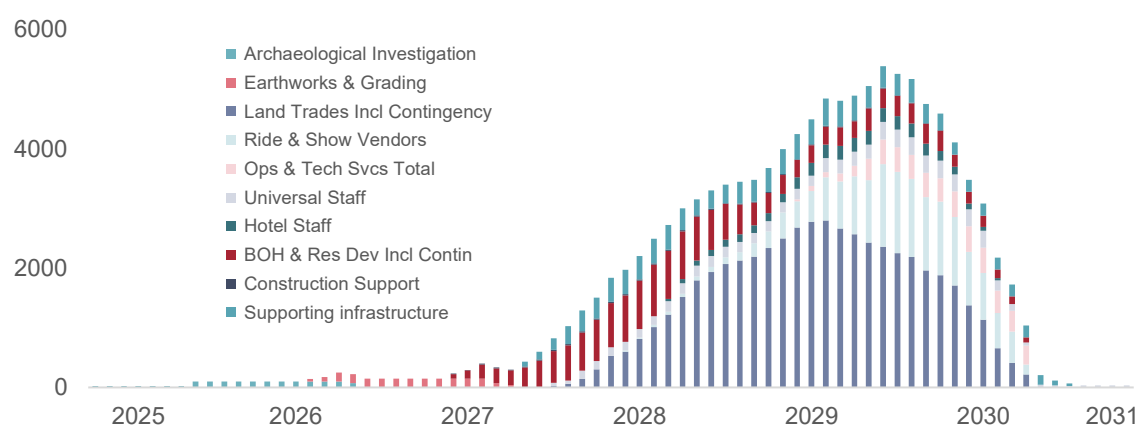
Construction

Employment

- 4.2 In the “Primary Phase” of construction, the demand for labour would provide valuable opportunities for a variety of construction workers directly, as well as indirectly through the supply chain.
- 4.3 The peak onsite workforce is estimated to be 5,380 and is expected to occur in winter 2029, with 5,020 focused on the Theme Park. The overall headcount curve projection is shown in **Figure 6**. This is provided by UDX, who are currently building a similarly sized facility in Orlando. UDX understand the construction requirements of the Theme Park. Volterra have substantiated these estimations based on experience of estimating construction employment, as well as benchmarking them against other publicly available reports for other major UK infrastructure projects.

Figure 6 – It is estimated that a maximum of approximately 5,380 construction workers would be on-site during the peak of the construction period in winter 2029

Construction workforce over the construction period



Source: Information provided by UDX

Skills

- 4.4

The Primary Phase provides a number of opportunities for meaningful employment and the development of local skills and training. The construction work is varied and includes a large number of specialised roles such as civil engineering, facility design, and specialised construction tasks. The variety of these roles presents an opportunity to provide a wide range of training for residents across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire.
- 4.5

The volume of employment that would be supported during the construction of the Primary Phase provides the opportunity to support high numbers of apprenticeships in general construction roles. Such roles generally have low barriers to entry, providing valuable opportunities for individuals with fewer qualifications or from disadvantaged backgrounds to access high quality training and employment.
- 4.6

These roles may be particularly valuable across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire, where individuals with no qualifications face higher rates of unemployment and economic inactivity.²² Bedford and Central Bedfordshire performs well with regard to construction apprenticeships, which make up 25% of apprenticeships in the area, as opposed to the East of England and National averages of 10% and 8% respectively.²³ The construction of the Theme Park could thus act to alleviate issues in the labour market and build on its strengths simultaneously.

Construction workers incomes

- 4.7

Construction workers across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire have an estimated average income that is 9% higher than the average income for all workers in the area.²⁴ The construction industry generates well-paid employment opportunities in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire and is thus a valuable path towards prosperity in the area, one which would be considerably boosted by the Entertainment Resort Complex development.

Table 12 – Construction workers across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire earn above average relative to the rest of the population

Industry	Average Wage (Resident Based)	Average Wage (Workplace Based)
Construction	£44,800	£38,400
All workers	£41,200	£35,300
Construction – uplift on average earnings	9%	9%

Source: ONS (2024) *Annual Survey of Hours and Earnings*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/surveys/informationforbusinesses/businesssurveys/annualsurveyofhoursandearningsashe> [Accessed 19 May 2025]

²² ONS (2021) *Census*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/census> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

²³ DfE (2024) *Explore education statistics*. Available at: <https://explore-education-statistics.service.gov.uk/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

²⁴ Construction income data is not available at the local authority district geographical level. For this reason, the average wages of construction workers across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire are estimated by finding the differential between construction and average wages at the Labour Catchment Area level, then applying this multiplier to the average wages at the local authority district level. Average wages at the local authority district level can be estimated for workers who live in the district, or who work in the district. These two approaches provide different estimates and so both are presented. For a definition of the Labour Catchment Area, please see the Temporary Workforce Accommodation Strategy (Document 6.13).

2025]. ONS (2023) *Business Register and Employment Survey*. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/surveys/informationforbusinesses/businesssurveys/businessregisterandemploymentsurvey> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

Operational phase

Employment

- 4.8 It is estimated that the development of the Theme Park would directly employ approximately 8,050 people (equivalent to 5,950 FTEs) in the year of opening (2031) and approximately 10,000 people (7,395 FTEs) by the year of maturity (2051).
- 4.9 These jobs would include full-time and part-time opportunities supporting different elements of the development in the Theme Park. **Table 13** and **Table 14** provide breakdowns of the expected jobs by type of job and working pattern in the two assessment years. Information regarding the split between full-time and part-time employment has been provided by UDX who operate theme parks worldwide, and are the market leaders and experts in this along with Disney. Volterra, who are experts in estimating the employment of leisure related developments have verified these figures with those estimated for other leisure development. This breakdown between full-time and part-time is based on estimations for the opening year (2031) and have also been applied to employment in the year of maturity to provide an estimation of future full-time and part-time employment figures. Some of the part time roles would also likely be seasonal opportunities – these are most likely to be within the categories of park & resort operations, revenue operations and entertainment, with some (but more limited) seasonal roles expected in the visitor accommodation.

Table 13 – The development in the Theme Park is expected to generate approximately 8,050 total jobs by 2031

Direct employment within the Theme Park in 2031

Area	Total jobs	Full time jobs	Part time jobs
Administration	75	65	10
Marketing & sales	60	55	5
Digital & technology	90	90	-
Finance	45	45	-
Entertainment	1,060	310	750
Park & resort operations	2,485	1,085	1,400
Technical services	720	720	-
Creative placemaking ²⁵	5	5	-
Revenue operations	2,795	1,390	1,400
Resort development & entertainment	335	165	170
Visitor accommodation	380	160	220
Total	8,050	4,090	3,960

Source: Information provided by UDX; sense checked by Volterra

Table 14 – The development in the Theme Park is expected to generate 10,000 jobs by 2051

Direct employment within the Theme Park in 2051

Area	Total jobs	Full time jobs	Part time jobs
Administration	95	80	10
Marketing & sales	75	70	5
Digital & technology	110	110	-
Finance	55	55	-
Entertainment	1,315	380	935
Park & resort operations	3,085	1,350	1,735
Technical services	895	895	-
Creative placemaking	5	5	-
Revenue operations	3,475	1,730	1,750
Resort development & entertainment	415	205	210

²⁵ Note: creative placemaking includes roles such as on-going creative, architecture, graphics and construction management.

Area	Total jobs	Full time jobs	Part time jobs
Visitor accommodation	470	195	275
Total	10,000	5,075	4,920

Source: Information provided by UDX; sense checked by Volterra

Residents based employment impacts

4.10

Table 15 presents local authorities that are expected to supply over 0.5% of the commuting in-flows for the Primary Phase development. The distribution is based on existing commuting patterns, with slight adjustments made to reflect improved connectivity via EWR to Oxford (assumed by 2031) and Cambridge (assumed by 2051).

Table 15 – The majority of staff at the Theme Park are expected to reside in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire

Operational staff distribution for employees working within the Theme Park

Residence of worker	2031 Distribution	2051 Distribution
Central Bedfordshire	35%	34%
Bedford	34%	33%
Luton	7%	7%
Milton Keynes	5%	5%
Huntingdonshire	3%	3%
Northampton	4%	3%
North Hertfordshire	2%	2%
Aylesbury Vale	0.5% - 1%	0.5% - 1%
South Cambridgeshire	0.5% - 1%	0.5% - 1%
Dacorum	0.5% - 1%	0.5% - 1%
St Albans	0.5% - 1%	0.5% - 1%
Stevenage	0.5% - 1%	0.5% - 1%
Oxford	5%	5%
Cambridge	2%	5%

Source: SLR, 2024. Distribution of Staff Trips

4.11

Based on this projected distribution of staff trips, it is expected that in the Theme Park opening year, approximately 5,530 jobs would go to residents of Bedford and Central Bedfordshire, rising to 6,650 jobs at maturity.

Table 16 – Where workers at the development within the Theme Park are expected to live

Total jobs by employee residence based on staff distribution of trips

	2031	2051
Theme Park jobs – total	8,050	10,000
Of which live in:		
Bedford and Central Bedfordshire	5,530	6,650

Employee based employment impacts

4.12

The direct employment impact generated by the Theme Park would all be primarily within the local authority boundary of Bedford. Future employment figures across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire are calculated by projecting forward annual employment targets outlined in both local authorities' respective local plans through the following steps:

- Current employment in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire is obtained from the ONS Business Register and Employment Survey, 82,500 and 109,000 respectively.
- Local Plan employment targets are obtained. Specifically, Bedford targets 6,900 new jobs from 2015-2030 equivalent to 460 jobs per year²⁶ and Central Bedfordshire targets 24,000 new jobs from 2015-2035 equivalent to 1,200 jobs per year in Central Bedfordshire from 2015-2035.²⁷
- These annual targets are assumed to hold true up until 2051, and it is assumed that the meeting of such targets reflects an accurate estimation of employment in the respective time period.
- The jobs provided at the Theme Park is then compared to the expected total employment counts in each period.

Table 17 – There will be workplace based employment uplifts generated by the Theme Park across Bedford and Bedford and Central Bedfordshire combined

Worker based employment uplifts generated by the Theme Park in both 2031 and 2051

	2031	2051
Theme Park jobs	8,050	10,000
Bedford employment	86,180	95,380
Theme Park % of Bedford employment	9.3%	10.5%
Bedford and Central Bedfordshire employment	204,780	237,980
Theme Park % of Bedford and Central Bedfordshire employment	3.9%	4.2%

Source: ONS (2023) Annual Population Survey. Available at: <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/> [Accessed 19 May 2025]; Volterra calculations

4.13

Employment generated by the Theme Park in 2031 and 2051 is approximately five to six times higher the annual employment growth targets expected by Bedford and Central Bedfordshire Local Plans combined.

²⁶ Bedford BC (2020) *Local Plan 2030*. Available at: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

²⁷ Central Bedfordshire Borough Council (2021). *Local Plan 2035*. Available at: <https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/> [Accessed 19 May 2025].

This is a significant level of employment generation, on top of jobs supported in the Construction Phase, and wider jobs induced throughout the supply chain.

Skills

4.14 The majority (81% approximately) of jobs generated at the Theme Park will be in 'Vocational Skill' or 'Limited Skill' roles. Only approximately 3% of employment generated at the Theme Park is expected to be in 'Mid – Career', 'Mid – Late Career', or 'Late Career' roles, as defined by UDX.

4.15 These trends suggest that there will be a wealth of employment opportunities for residents with lower skill or qualification levels across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire.

Table 18 – Approximately 81% of employment at the Theme Park will be in 'Vocational Skill' or 'Limited Skill' roles

Approximate employment at the Theme Park by Career Level (2031 and 2051)

Career level	2031 jobs	2051 jobs	% Of jobs
Late Career	5	5	<1%
Vocational Skill	1,935	2,405	24%
Mid - Late Career	75	90	1%
Mid - Career	145	180	2%
Limited Skill	4,585	5,700	57%
Early Career	600	745	7%
Early - Mid Career	710	880	9%
Total	8,050	10,000	100%

Source: information provided by UDX; Volterra calculations; Note: figures may not sum due to rounding

4.16 **Table 19** outlines some of the likely roles needed at the Theme Park, informed by UDX recent resort projects. The daily operations will span various industries and qualification levels. Frontline roles typically require secondary education, while skilled roles may need vocational or further education qualifications. Corporate, professional, and creative roles often require degree-level qualifications.

Table 19 – The Theme Park will host a wide variety of jobs with different qualification and soft skill requirements

Qualification levels, critical success factors and related industries for key operational roles at the Theme Park

	Frontline operation	Skilled	Corporate/professional	Creatives
Education level	Secondary education	Vocational/trade/FE college	FE college/degree-level	FE college/degree-level
Role	Retail, food services, custodial, attraction	Technical services,	Marketing, sales, IT, finance, legal,	Creative, creative entertainment,

	Frontline operation	Skilled	Corporate/professional	Creatives
	and entrance operations, security, entertainment	environmental health & safety, paramedic services	HR, corporate communications, diversity equality & inclusion (DEI)	design studio, advertising
Critical success factors	Guest service-oriented, operationally minded, focussed on optimisation	Certified expertise, safety minded, solutions-oriented	Strategic thinker, collaborator, growth driver	Innovation driver, visionary, instinctual nature
Related employment industries	Hospitality & tourism, call centre, logistics & supply chain, culinary, restaurant & retail management, parks & recreation, theatre	Auto, aviation, agricultural, manufacturing, healthcare, trades	General industry, corporate background	Advertising agencies, theatre/film, architecture, interior design, graphic design/artists

Source: information provided by UDX

5. UDX track record

5.1 UDX has a proven track record of promoting initiatives which positively impact local communities.

5.2 UDX is committed to working with Bedford and Central Bedfordshire to help roll out similar programmes designed to help target the specific employment and skills needs of the area. **Section 6** outlines proposed initiatives that UDX would commit to in relation to the Theme Park. This section provides detail of UDX existing and previously delivered initiatives from their existing theme park locations, which provides evidence of the track record of UDX in delivering similar successful programmes.

UDX existing and previously delivered initiatives

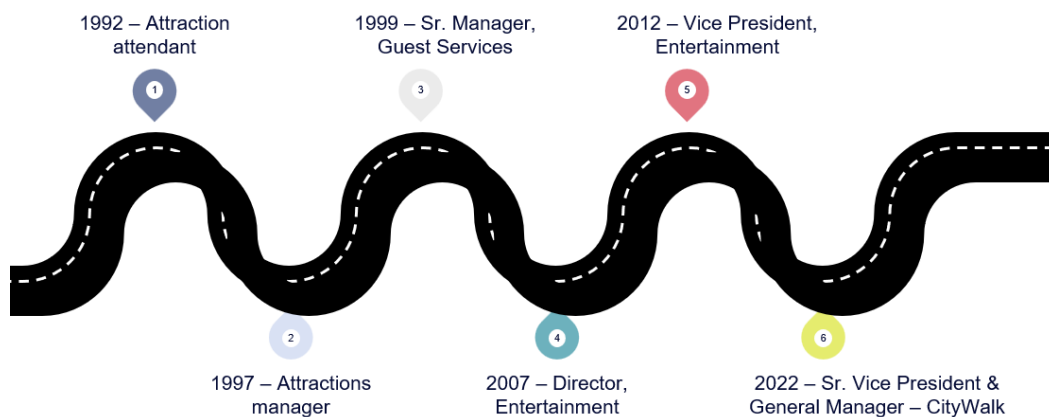
In-work training to enable career progression

5.3 UDX delivers on the job training at all of their resorts through an array of learning and development offerings. Training opportunities are uniquely designed to engage, educate and empower team members to share and deliver their future pathways. This applies to all roles in all skill levels for Theme Park employment. Examples of how in work training can help develop career paths are **Figure 7** and **Figure 8**.

“After graduating from University with a degree in Public Relations, I applied to work at UDX but there weren’t any openings in Public Relations at that time. Wanting to get my foot in the door, I took a position as an Attendant at the ET attraction. I was able to help open multiple attractions and worked my way in to a management role, ultimately being part of the opening crew for Universal Islands of Adventure. Through building partnerships with various groups within the Entertainment Division, I was able to take my experience and move into an Executive role. Here at UDX I believe there is any opportunity for everybody.”

Deb – Sr. Vice President & General Manager at CityWalk

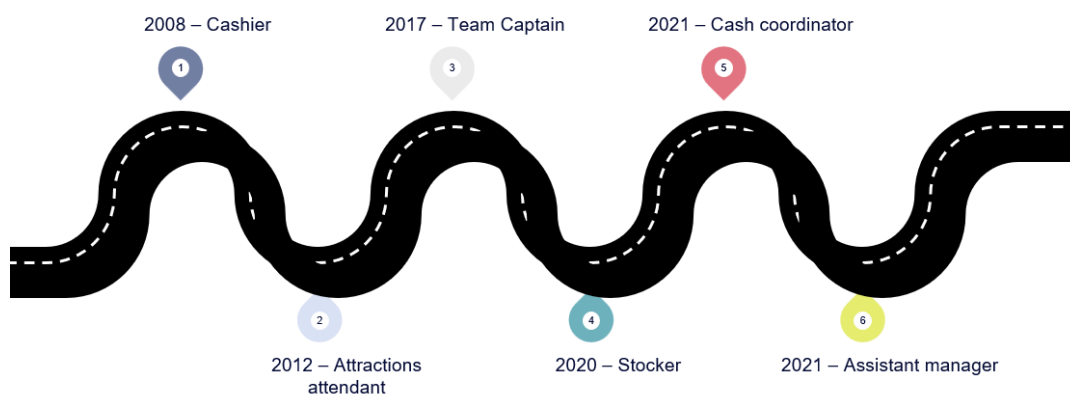
Figure 7 – Deb's career path at UDX



“I started working at UDX because of its values and community involvement. I remained with the company because they treated me as a person and invested in my talents. They have shown time and time again that they have my back. They remained flexible when I decided to attend school full-time and during the pandemic. UDX is considerate and has a diverse culture that allows its Team Members to express themselves. The merchandise team is creative, passionate, and full of developmental opportunities. I always had a mentor within the company who helped and guided me throughout my journey.”

Milan – Assistant Manager, Merchandise

Figure 8 – Milan's career path at UDX



Varied ability training

- 5.4 One example of specific training given to all employees is Varied Ability Training. UDX provides mandatory varied ability training for all employees across all locations (and make a point of using the term 'varied abilities' rather than 'disabilities'). Training is specifically around how to sensitively deal with customers of varied abilities.

Education Assistance Programme

- 5.5 The Education Assistance Programme currently provides Universal Orlando Resort full-time and part-time team members, that have at least 90 days of continuous service, with financial support for coursework, academic and financial advising services (at no cost), and discounted tuition and fees at more than 220 accredited schools within the United States. UDX have on average 600 to 700 annual participants enrolled in the program. Offering several options to help team members pursue their education goals for eligible tuition course/costs.

Apprenticeship programme

- 5.6 UDX's apprenticeship programme is a collaborative effort between the organisation, local colleges, and students, aimed at individuals aspiring for careers in technical and mechanical trades but needing support to enter these fields. This structured programme offers apprentices the opportunity to engage in classroom training, role rotations, and on-the-job learning. Tailored for candidates with limited experience, apprenticeships enable participants to qualify for various technical roles.
- 5.7 The pre-existing apprenticeship programme at Universal Orlando offers pathways for individuals seeking to develop skills and competencies across various technical disciplines. As of 2024, there are currently over 150 participants enrolled in UDX's apprenticeship programme. This is distributed across various specialisations, including:
- **Ride and show maintenance:** There are currently approximately 95 apprentices undergoing this 2-year intensive training programme focused on maintaining and operating attractions across UDX theme parks. The apprentices are trained under the guidance of experienced supervisors and technicians.
 - **Utilities (Electrical, Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC), Plumbing):** This programme offered by UDX spans 4-years and currently accommodates 45 apprentices. Those who enrol on this programme receive training in electrical systems, plumbing, and HVAC maintenance.
 - **Restaurant Equipment:** There are currently twelve apprentices enrolled in this 3-year programme aimed at developing skills in restaurant equipment maintenance.
- 5.8 All of these programmes emphasise self-discipline, initiative and on-the-job experience. Apprentices can attend custom-designed training courses at no extra cost to accelerate their development.

Internship programmes

- 5.9 UDX's internship programmes provide valuable real-world learning experiences and extensive networking opportunities for current university students. By collaborating with industry experts in themed entertainment, interns immerse themselves in the organisation's culture while forging their own career paths. These internships offer diverse opportunities to learn from exceptionally skilled professionals across all business practices. Similar internship programs could be implemented at the proposed Theme Park. This would be a great opportunity for recent graduates across Bedford, Central Bedfordshire, and regionally to gain valuable experience and make the most of exciting opportunities.

Universal Orlando Internship Programme

- 5.10 UDX's internship programme at Universal Orlando is committed to providing immersive and innovative internship experiences across operational and corporate divisions. These opportunities are intended to support early career development.
- 5.11 Approximately 420 internships are offered annually across various segments of UDX's Orlando-based business.

Universal Studios Hollywood Internship Programme

- 5.12 Universal Studios Hollywood hosts 25 interns annually. These interns engage in a 10-12 week project based internship, committing 40 hours per week. The focus of this internship primarily lies in corporate functions such as finance, digital technology, and marketing and sales.

Universal Studios Beijing Internship Programme

- 5.13 Universal Beijing Resort has over 45 partnerships with universities and offers over 800 internship opportunities annually, providing students with on-the-job training and a route into corporate roles that align with their long-term career goals.

UDX Education Centre (UEC)

- 5.14 For the past 29 years, Universal Orlando Resort has partnered with Orange County Public Schools to provide an alternative approach to traditional learning for high school students through its School-To-Work programme. The UEC is located on the grounds of Universal Orlando Resort and, in addition to attending classes, each student works as a part-time team member at the theme park. The programme welcomes up to 40 high school students to participate in this alternative approach to education each year.
- 5.15 One of the unique highlights of the program is that each student is paired with a mentor from UDX's management team. Mentors and mentees meet regularly to discuss school, work or sometimes to just talk and provide advice. The mentorship programme is a support system, building relationships that cultivate further learning beyond the classroom or workplace.
- 5.16 In addition to their mentors, a smaller class size allows the students to create long-lasting friendships with one another. They also receive more individualised attention with a 6-to-1 student-to-teacher ratio, allowing students to further elevate their potential and goals. In the last year this programme was very proud to achieve 100% graduation of its students.

The Act Two Programme

- 5.17 The Act Two Programme is a four month paid role for experienced professionals returning to the workforce after taking time off for personal reasons such as caregiving. The programme is open to individuals with at least 5+ years of professional experience and have been out of the paid workforce (in an office/corporate environment) for at least two years to focus on caring for a child or another dependent.

Art of Tomorrow Scholars Programme (Secondary education)

- 5.18 This programme run by UDX for high schools is a collaboration between Universal Orlando Resort, the Universal Orlando Foundation, Orange County Public Schools, and Valencia College. Students work closely with UDX's creative departments and community partners. All students who enrol are given a bespoke pathway, aimed to help them discover and achieve their full potential.

City Year-AmeriCorps (Secondary education)

- 5.19 UDX partners with local schools near their Theme Park's and provides unique learning resources and exciting opportunities for children. Partnering with organisations such as City Year AmeriCorps, members serve as student success coaches, supporting the development, growth and success of students in systematically under-resourced schools, while cultivating skills to be leaders in their communities and careers.
- 5.20 UDX invests both in its communities as well as the lives of its employees. By way of example, in Orlando a local elementary school, which a lot of employees had gone to themselves and/or they had children currently attending, got a bottom ranking (F score). UDX got directly involved with the school, assisting in providing resources and engagement. In one year, this school went from a bottom ranking to an A score (the top ranking).

Central Florida Public Schools – Teach IN (Primary and Secondary education)

- 5.21 Annually, UDX takes part in sending business leaders to classrooms across Florida. This day is dedicated to bringing students together with volunteers from the local business community. UDX invites its leadership team and supports them in their time away from the office to engage in this scheme. This event provides students across all grades with a brief overview of select roles and career options at Universal Orlando and acquaints them with the skills, responsibilities, and attitudes necessary for success.

Universal Studios Japan

- 5.22 Universal Studios Japan has set a remarkable precedent in fostering inclusivity and diversity in the workplace since its inception in 2001. With an unwavering commitment to providing opportunities for all individuals, the Theme Park has gone above and beyond legal requirements, boasting a workforce where more than 3% are employees with disabilities, a figure that surpasses both legal mandates and regional averages.
- 5.23 What sets Universal Studios Japan apart is their genuine dedication to integrating individuals with disabilities into various roles within the park. By matching each person with a position that suits that person's abilities, they have cultivated an environment where compassion and teamwork thrive. From administrative tasks to customer service and maintenance, employees with and without disabilities collaborate seamlessly, breaking down barriers and generating an inclusive workplace.

Club 52 (Volunteering)

- 5.24 Volunteering and being of service to the community is considered a core part of the Universal Orlando culture and all team members are encouraged to participate. Universal Orlando even has a programme to celebrate its most dedicated volunteers, Club 52 is a prestigious recognition initiative which bestows an honour on any team member who completes 52 hours or more of volunteer service in a calendar year. From distributing meals at local food banks to supporting children with critical illnesses, team members are encouraged to dedicate hours to volunteerism. In 2023, Universal Orlando team members completed 64,000 hours of volunteer service.

UDX Access Programme

- 5.25 The UDX Access programme at Universal Studios Hollywood represents a collaborative natural support effort organised by the Integrated Resources Institute, a non-profit corporation and Universal Studios, as corporate partner. The project, utilising an array of natural support approaches, resulted in the training, placement and support of 16 persons with severe disabilities in employment. Universal Studios committed their own employees as mentors for career opportunities in a wide variety of positions across multiple departments within their growing organisation. A full range of placement and support services was provided by the project, including: job development, on-the-job training, natural supports, job site modification, development of special aids and other work-related support services. The programme included placements for ethnically and culturally diverse individuals with severe disabilities in a variety of entertainment and recreation union occupations that reflect significant employment trends and opportunities in the US.

Your Classroom in Motion: STEAM App Series

- 5.26 The Universal Studios Hollywood STEAM App series combines national education standards with real-world critical thinking to transform its top attractions into creative learning environments, with extraordinary educational opportunities in science, technology, engineering, the arts and mathematics. Students begin their day with a two-hour educational experience, and through the use of provided tablets, they learn how attractions are brought to life while applying the concepts they are learning in school. All programmes include a teacher toolkit full of helpful lessons and differentiation. After the programme, the students get Express Access for the programme's respective ride and can spend the rest of the day enjoying the Park.

Discover a Start Foundation

- 5.27 Since 1995, Universal Studios Hollywood has raised more than \$11m, providing financial assistance to more than 65 non-profit organisations. In 2022, they awarded more than \$500,000 to 15 charitable organisations in the Los Angeles area.

Universal Orlando Foundation

- 5.28 Since 1998, the Foundation has awarded more than \$50m in grants to organisations in Central Florida that provide aid to local children and families. The Foundation makes a positive impact through innovation and partnership. For example, the Boys & Girls Club of Central Florida – Universal Orlando Foundation branch was created to serve the youth of Southwest Orlando. Since its founding, the Universal Orlando Foundation has supported youth programming as well as club renovations and repairs. Another example of the Foundation's partnerships is with City Year, an education-focused non-profit organisation that unites young people of all backgrounds for a year of full-time service to keep students in school and on track to graduate. Since 2011, the Universal Orlando Foundation has supported City Year teams at Eccleston Elementary, Memorial Middle and Catalina Elementary schools in Orlando.

Universal Studios Japan Scholarship Programme

- 5.29 Every year, Universal Studios Japan supports high school students in need of financial support for higher education through the Osaka Prefectural Scholarship Foundation. Since the programme's establishment in 2011, 150 students have received scholarships. A grant-in-aid scholarship is awarded to high school students in need of financial support to go to universities and colleges.

Housing for Tomorrow

- 5.30 Recognising affordable housing is one of its community's most significant challenges, UDX sought to be a part of the solution. It pledged 20 acres of land to be used exclusively for an affordable housing community, featuring approximately 1,000 high-quality apartments. The Housing for Tomorrow initiative promises to provide economically diverse housing options as part of the company's commitment to healthy communities. The initiative addresses the primary focus areas identified by the county leadership and provides innovative solutions to move the community forward – for everyone.

Joy is Universal

- 5.31 In collaboration with local organisations, Universal Beijing Resort hosts children with disabilities, along with their families, to experience the Theme Park through accessible services and facilities.

Relevance for the Theme Park

- 5.32 The tables below outline how employment and skills initiatives that have been delivered by UDX in other locations align to each of the identified employment and skills objectives for Bedford and Central Bedfordshire. It also summarises the overarching benefit that would result from delivering similar schemes in Bedford and Central Bedfordshire.

Table 20 – Summary of the employment and skills aims for Objective 1: Improving educational outcomes locally

Previously delivered initiative	How the delivery of similar schemes would contribute to local need across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire
<p>UEC – The UEC based in Universal Orlando offers children in Orange County an alternative education path. This combines class-room learning with part-time work at the Theme Park. The programme supports 40 students annually, who are mentored by one of UDX's management team.</p>	<p>Implementing similar educational programmes at the Theme Park would generate benefits through improved educational outcomes.</p> <p>Programmes such as the UEC in Orange County provide students with mentors from the business community which helps in fostering personal and academic growth.</p> <p>UDX has a history of specifically targeting under-resourced schools. This is of particular importance considering that Bedford and Central Bedfordshire does not meet national rates for the proportion of schools rated good or outstanding by Ofsted.</p>

Previously delivered initiative	How the delivery of similar schemes would contribute to local need across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire
<p>City Year AmeriCorps – UDX has experience offering mentorship and educational support to under-resourced schools located near their theme parks. This has enhanced students' academic attainment and leadership skills.</p>	<p>The Careers and Enterprise Company helps young people prepare for future employment by linking schools and businesses to foster career-based education.</p> <p>UDX could begin by speaking to the Councils and the Careers & Enterprise Company (CEC) to gain greater understanding of schools that are underperforming against the Gatsby Benchmarks. Specific schools with whom it would be worth initially considering forming direct partnerships are Wootton Lower School, Broadmead Lower School and Ridgeway School. UDX should engage with the CEC to make sure their initiatives are aligned with the South East Midlands hub priorities.</p>
<p>Teach IN – UDX's Teach IN programme sends business leaders who work for UDX to local schools to expose students to real-world business environments. This annual interaction day helps students understand various professional roles and the skills necessary for success.</p>	<p>It was raised during pre-engagement that UDX could roll out opportunities for local primary and secondary school pupils to partake in field trips at the site, during which they have the opportunity to learn about the variety of job roles at the Theme Park, as well as go on rides. This would be an effective way of positively targeting under-resourced areas of the community.</p> <p>In a similar way, Thorpe Park, for example, has sponsored the National Careers Challenge, the UK's largest careers and enterprise competition. Secondary school students are faced with a real-life business challenge set by real-life businesses. This year, students were tasked with designing an accessible new ride for Thorpe Park Resort, whilst ensuring the queue line was an integral part of the experience. The winning teams were welcomed to Thorpe Park Resort to present their ideas to a judging panel.</p> <p>The</p> <p>Local needs assessment found a disparity in educational attainment between students that qualify for FSMs and students that do not. If such programmes at the Theme Park could be targeted at schools which have a high proportion of children eligible for FSMs, this would significantly contribute to improving educational outcomes locally.</p> <p>UDX could align with Careers and Enterprise Company benchmarks in delivering Enterprise Advisors, employee encounters and workplace experiences for students of local schools. Enterprise Advisors are business professionals who volunteer their time to achieve positive change in local schools and colleges.²⁸ The City Year AmeriCorps and TeachIN programmes are similar to this. Based on estimated employment at the Theme Park it is estimated that it could deliver 5 Enterprise Advisors. The Enterprise Advisors would seek to make sure that local school curricula are aligned with the evolving needs of the labour market.</p>

²⁸ Careers and Enterprise Company, 2024. Your experience matters: Help schools and colleges shape futures

Table 21 – Summary of the employment and skills aims for Objective 2: Enhancing employability

Previously delivered initiative	How the delivery of similar schemes would contribute to local need across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire
<p>In-work training – UDX offers training opportunities to their staff that are designed to engage, educate, and empower team members. Figure 7 and Figure 8 illustrate how in-work training offered by UDX has furthered the careers of Deb and Milan. These skills can be applied to future roles if team members choose to work elsewhere, enhancing workers' employability.</p>	<p>The provision of in-work training is crucial to make sure the workforce is constantly developing and meeting the requirements of employers. The Local needs assessment found that Central Bedfordshire has an extremely low proportion of the workforce that is receiving in-work training. UDX's substantial in-work training programme would contribute to alleviating this.</p> <p>The apprenticeship start-up and completion rate across Bedford has consistently been below the national rate since 2018. Therefore, a large-scale employer such as UDX, with its track record of delivering apprenticeships, would be beneficial.</p> <p>The provision of alternative career pathways and internships offered by UDX would offer a greater array of employment opportunities, which is important, as Bedford holds a significant proportion of economically active residents that are seeking employment. Development of similar programmes would also offer more pathways into employment for those most in need, such as the younger unemployed population.</p>
<p>Art of tomorrow scholars programme – Universal Orlando partners with local schools and Valencia College to guide high-school students towards creative career paths. UDX provides the students with hands-on experience in creative departments.</p>	
<p>Internship programmes – UDX has a track record of delivering successful internship programmes at their Orlando, Hollywood, and Beijing resorts.</p>	
<p>Apprenticeship programmes – UDX has a track record of collaboration with local colleges and their students, delivering programmes that are catered towards individuals aspiring for careers in technical and mechanical trades but needing support to enter these fields.</p>	

Table 22 – Summary of the employment and skills aims for Objective 3: Promoting inclusivity and equity

Previously delivered initiative	How the delivery of similar schemes would contribute to local need across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire
<p>Inclusivity and diversity at Universal Studios Japan – At this theme park, UDX has gone above and beyond legal requirements with a workforce where more than 3% of employees have disabilities. By matching each employee with a position that suits their abilities, an environment has been cultivated whereby employees are empowered to thrive.</p>	<p>It is fundamental that in all areas of the Proposed Development, inclusivity and equity is practiced and promoted.</p> <p>UDX has a track record of identifying interventions for groups that have greater need for employment opportunities, making sure that the correct support is available for underrepresented groups in accessing employment.</p> <p>This would benefit residents across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire. The</p>

Previously delivered initiative	How the delivery of similar schemes would contribute to local need across Bedford and Central Bedfordshire
<p>Varied Ability Training – UDX provides mandatory varied ability training for all employees across all locations (and make a point of using the term 'varied abilities' rather than 'disabilities'). Training is specifically around how to sensitively deal with customers of varied abilities. A number of questions were raised at the pre-engagement events surrounding how training will take into consideration the needs of disabled customers, to which this mandatory training was cited. UDX already offers quiet rooms for autistic guests, and works in close partnership with Lighthouse, a visual impairment charity in Orlando.</p> <p>UEC – The UEC based in Universal Orlando offers children who have been ejected from mainstream education across Orange County an alternative education path. This combines class-room learning with part-time work at the Theme Park. The programme supports 40 students annually, who are mentored by one of UDX's management team. Providing these children with a new setting in which to learn has made education more accessible to those for whom the traditional learning setting has not worked.</p> <p>Club 52 – This scheme honours team members who volunteer 52 or more hours annually.</p>	<p>Local needs assessment identified the need for employment opportunities for younger people. It also identified higher rates of unemployment across several minority ethnic groups. An employment strategy by UDX that is targeted towards younger and ethnic minority residents, therefore, would serve to help alleviate this local need.</p> <p>Volunteering also helps to spread benefits across wider communities. UDX would aim for a staff volunteerism consistent with its other resorts. If UDX achieved the same volunteerism rate as Orlando, it would equate to 18,400 hours of volunteering in 2031 rising to 22,900 per year by 2051 by Theme Park staff.</p>

6. Proposed initiatives

- 6.1 If this scheme progresses, UDX would deliver an Employment and Skills framework, which centres on building on the success of employment and skills-related programmes that have been delivered at UDX's other destinations, but with a specific focus on the issues identified locally. This section outlines the commitments that UDX would make during the Primary Phase of construction and the operation of the Theme Park, and how this would contribute positively to addressing identified local issues. **The following commitments proposed are for approval and included in the Proposed Operative and Controlling Documents (Document Reference 1.16.0).**

The framework

- 6.2 The tables below outline employment and skills commitments that would be delivered as part of the framework. They have been developed collaboratively by UDX and Volterra based on UDX's experience of delivery in their resorts elsewhere and Volterra knowledge of UK commitments and benchmarks on other major projects in the UK. Any deviation or departure will require consent from MHCLG.

Table 23 – Proposed employment and skills commitments

Employment and skills area	Commitment	Objectives supported	Relevant policy
<i>National significance</i>			
National Living Wage	UDX will pay all employees at least the National Living Wage throughout construction and operation.	Objective 3: Promoting inclusivity and equity	N/A
<i>Regional significance</i>			
Apprenticeships	UDX will provide a minimum of 55 apprenticeships annually from the second full year of operation, rising to 70 by the fifth full year of operation. A portion will be offered to care leavers. ²⁹ UDX will sign the Care Leavers Covenant and develop a bespoke support programme. This will run for at least 5 years after grand opening.	Objective 2: Enhancing employability; Objective 3: Promoting inclusivity and equity	South East Midlands LSIP 2023
Internships	UDX will provide a minimum of 15 paid internships annually from the second full year of operation, rising to 35 from the fifth full year of operation. Internships will be delivered for at least five years from the opening year. This will run for at least 5 years after grand opening.	Objective 2: Enhancing employability	South East Midlands LSIP 2023

²⁹ Note: "care leaver" has the meaning given to it in The Children (Leaving Care) Act 2000, i.e. someone who has been in the care of the Local Authority for a period of thirteen (13) weeks or more spanning their sixteenth (16th) birthday.

Employment and skills area	Commitment	Objectives supported	Relevant policy
Earn-and-Learn Commitment	UDX will achieve 5% of employee headcount in earn-and-learn positions. This will be achieved in the construction phase by requiring the Principal Contractor(s) for construction to have 'The 5% Club' accreditation (or equivalent at the time of contracting services).	Objective 2: Enhancing employability	South East Midlands LSIP 2023
<i>Local significance</i>			
Construction skills	<p>During the Primary Phase of construction, UDX will make sure that Principal Contractors actively engage with local students within Bedford and Central Bedfordshire and give priority access to qualified local students in the hiring process. Measures that the Principal Contractor(s) will be required to commit to include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partnering with local schools, colleges, and/or universities to create awareness about career opportunities in construction; • Organise or participate in local careers fairs and workshops at these institutions; • Advertise job openings through local media, educational institutions, and community centres to make sure local students are aware of the opportunities; and • Arrange site visits for interested local students to provide them with a real-world understanding of construction processes and careers. <p>UDX will make sure that these occur by explicitly including these requirements within the contracting process.</p>	Objective 2: Enhancing employability	Central Bedfordshire Education and All Age Skills Strategy 2022
Job creation	<p>During the Primary Phase of construction, Universal will make sure that local skilled workers within Bedford and Central Bedfordshire receive access to employment opportunities.</p> <p>Principal Contractors will be required to actively promote these opportunities, emphasising the importance of hiring qualified people locally within Bedford and Central Bedfordshire. Mechanisms to make sure of this will include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Advertising job openings through local media and community centres to make sure local skilled workers are made aware of job opportunities; 	Objective 2: Enhancing employability	Bedford Borough Council – Employment and Skills Overview

Employment and skills area	Commitment	Objectives supported	Relevant policy
	<p>2. Providing job requirements and advertisements to the local authorities for them to disseminate through any of their local priority channels, or publicising directly to these groups as advised by the local authorities; and</p> <p>3. Collaborating with local job centres and employment agencies to identify and recruit skilled workers from the area.</p>		
Operational skills	<p>Universal will commit to providing employee encounters and workplace experiences annually to local students in line with agreed benchmarks. Based on the expected level of employment at the proposed development this would equate to one thousand four hundred and thirty (1,430) students receiving employee encounters and four hundred (400) students receiving workplace experiences at the Theme Park year of maturity (2051).</p> <p>UDX will assign a designated representative with responsibility to deliver this (and other related) commitments.</p>	Objective 2: Enhancing employability	Central Bedfordshire Education and All Age Skills Strategy 2022
Educational and Community Partnerships	Throughout the Primary Phase of construction and the ongoing operations, UDX will commit to forming partnerships with local educational institutions and community groups, such as University of Bedfordshire, Cranfield University and Bedford College.	<p>Objective 1: Improving educational outcomes locally;</p> <p>Objective 3: Promoting inclusivity and equity</p>	Central Bedfordshire Education and All Age Skills Strategy 2022
Education Engagement	UDX will partner with schools, colleges, and universities to promote awareness of creative industry and visitor economy careers and assign a dedicated representative to deliver on these commitments.	Objective 1: Improving educational outcomes locally	Central Bedfordshire Education and All Age Skills Strategy 2022
Disadvantaged Students Support	<p>UDX will support 40 high-risk or socio-economically disadvantaged students annually by the second full year of operation.</p> <p>This will run for at least 5 years after grand opening.</p>	Objective 3: Promoting inclusivity and equity	Bedford Borough Council – Employment and Skills Overview
Leadership Representation	<p>UDX will run executive mentorship programmes for 15 participants annually.</p> <p>This will run for at least 5 years after grand opening.</p>	Objective 3: Promoting inclusivity and equity	Equality Act 2010

Employment and skills area	Commitment	Objectives supported	Relevant policy
Accessibility and Disability Inclusion	UDX will make sure accessible job adverts, inclusive job descriptions, and interview accommodations are provided.	Objective 3: Promoting inclusivity and equity	Equality Act 2010
Employee DEI Programming	UDX will establish Employee Resource Groups and provide programming to foster an inclusive workforce and guest experience.	Objective 3: Promoting inclusivity and equity	Equality Act 2010
Equal Opportunities Compliance	UDX will act as an equal opportunities employer, adhere to the Equality Act 2010, and provide regular Respect in the Workplace training.	Objective 3: Promoting inclusivity and equity	Equality Act 2010

7. Monitoring and governance

- 7.1 In order to be successful in maximising employment and skills outcomes locally, a combined approach involving actions taken by a variety of stakeholders is required. These stakeholders include UDX, the Principal Contractor(s), the local authorities, as well as a wide variety of education partners.
- 7.2 UDX recognises the existing success of these stakeholders and seeks to build on the existing models to maximise employment and skills outcomes. This approach means that, rather than an independent approach which could risk conflicting with incumbent bodies, the Theme Park would be able to complement the delivery and implementation of their strategies.
- 7.3 The details of the implementation approach would be developed on an ongoing basis, as new information and advice is received from ongoing engagement with local authorities and other stakeholders. The iterative nature of the development of this Plan means that, as time goes on and more information is received, the priorities in the Plan might also evolve. Whilst the Plan would maintain its key goals, it aims to be flexible within these such that actions which would address the most significant issues at the time could be prioritised.
- 7.4 The commitments set forth in Section 6 are established for defined minimum durations and, in the long term, will be subject to periodic review. These periodic reviews are warranted because future mechanisms, for example apprenticeships, may fall out of favour and be supplanted by more advanced employment and skills initiatives that have yet to be conceived. While UDX remains committed to delivering an equivalent scale of employment and skills outcomes over the long term, the specific mechanisms by which these outcomes are achieved may be revised to reflect evolving best practices.
- 7.5 Given the developing nature of this Plan, this section provides an overview of the intended approach the framework will follow, whilst UDX seeks further engagement with all relevant stakeholders in order to develop and refine the Plan and maximise its effectiveness. **This section is also for approval.**

The role of UDX

- 7.6 Throughout construction and ongoing operations, UDX will provide a designated representative to engage with local authorities, community partners, working groups, and educational institutions quarterly, or as mutually designated. UDX will commit to engage with local authorities and community partners (such as training institutions or charitable partners as identified by UDX or through identification by and agreement with the local authorities) to understand essential workforce training and engagement to meet business needs.
- 7.7 The designated representative will be responsible for the monitoring and achievement of the commitments outlined in this document. The way this would take place is slightly different during the construction and operational phases:
- Construction – Managing construction commitments and passing them on to sub-contractors will be the responsibility of the Principal Contractor(s). UDX will make sure that these occur by explicitly including these requirements within the contracting process.
 - Operational – The responsibility for achieving operational commitments will be a responsibility of the designated representative assigned by UDX.

Ensuring compliance

- 7.8 To ensure the delivery of employment and skills commitments, UDX proposes a formalised compliance and governance framework. This framework has been developed following engagement with key stakeholders and reflects best practice from other major developments. It includes structured monitoring, regular reporting, escalation processes, and clearly defined measures to address any underperformance.

Quarterly oversight and monitoring

- 7.9 The Socio-Economic Taskforce will hold quarterly meetings, which will be the primary governance platform for reviewing progress. These meetings will be attended by a representative from UDX, MHCLG, Bedford and Central Bedfordshire local authorities, and other relevant stakeholders and will focus on delivery performance, risks, and corrective actions.
- 7.10 A designated representative from UDX will be responsible for coordinating and reporting on all employment and skills commitments.
- 7.11 UDX will maintain a live compliance tracker, updated regularly and reviewed at each taskforce meeting. This will log the status of each commitment, supporting evidence, and any identified issues.

Remedial measures for non-compliance

- 7.12 If adequate progress on one or more commitments are not met within a given year, the following steps will apply:
- **Root cause review** - Within four weeks of identifying a missed target, UDX will undertake a root cause analysis and submit a brief findings note to MHCLG.
 - **Corrective action plan** - UDX will develop a Corrective Action Plan in consultation with MHCLG. This plan will:
 - Identify short-term remedial actions (to be initiated within three months);
 - Propose a revised delivery timeline (if necessary);
 - Outline any required corporate or delivery partner support.
 - **Review and sign off** - The Plan will be reviewed at the next quarterly meeting and signed off by MHCLG or its delegated representatives.
 - **Potential escalation** - Where underperformance continues for two consecutive years on a commitment, UDX will agree proportionate mitigation measures with MHCLG, such as enhanced future delivery or a financial contribution to alternative initiatives.

This structure provides transparency, accountability, and assurance that UDX will proactively monitor, report on, and address any deviation from its approved commitments. It makes sure that MHCLG has a central role in overseeing compliance and supporting successful outcomes throughout the delivery of the Theme Park.

8. Glossary

- Employee encounter – is defined as career presentations, industry speakers, school programme sponsors, local job fairs, workforce readiness mentors, or similar programs.
- Apprenticeship – apprentices are aged sixteen (16) or over and combine working with studying to gain skills and knowledge in a specific job; apprentices can be new or current employees; apprenticeships must last at least a year. They can last up to five (5) years depending on the level the apprentice is studying.
- Internship – An internship is a period of work experience typically lasting between two weeks and twelve months, which may be full-time, part-time, or virtual. Most internships are paid, though some only cover expenses such as travel. The purpose is to help interns learn about an organisation's culture and values, explore career options, and begin building a professional network. Activities vary: short placements may involve shadowing staff to understand different roles, while longer internships might include contributing to team projects and developing key workplace skills. Universal's internships must run for a minimum of three months, be delivered in person, and pay at least the National Living Wage. They must offer a mix of training and on-the-job experience. While typically focused on corporate roles, internships can be created in any area that meets the required skill level, provided they do not replace roles better suited to apprenticeships (e.g. a 24-month Creative Industries Production Technician apprenticeship). Students are eligible for internships as long as these criteria are met.
- Priority Employment Opportunities – Commitment to post job through local channels (newspapers, local job boards and agencies). Commitment to organising and participating in career fairs to offer access to interview opportunities for qualified residents of Bedford and Central Bedfordshire.
- 'Earn and Learn' positions – Earn and Learn describes a group of routes into and within employment which combine study with practical experience, so enabling individuals to gain the knowledge and skills required to pursue their chosen occupation. This includes: formalised graduate training programmes, apprenticeships at all levels, and sponsored students. It does not include single or short-term instances of training, internships, or work experience.
- Socio-Economic Taskforce – A multi-stakeholder governance group that meets quarterly to review delivery performance, address risks, and agree corrective actions related to socio-economic commitments, comprising representatives from UDX, MHCLG, local authorities, and other key partners.

An aerial photograph of the London skyline, showing the River Thames, the Tower Bridge, and the Gherkin building in the foreground. The image is partially obscured by a white curved shape in the top right corner.

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