

Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes

Infrastructure Strategy

2025-
2028



Introduction

Why do we need an infrastructure Strategy?

Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes is at the heart of the Government's growth agenda, with major housing developments, transport and infrastructure projects planned for our area, along with the development of the first Universal Studios Theme Park to be built in Europe.

Whilst the growth in our area brings opportunities to improve the wider determinants of health, like housing and employment, our area is growing 2.5 times faster than the national average, and this means we need to plan for the future.

We are ambitious for our communities, and plans are in place to develop our healthcare infrastructure (estates, equipment and technology) to ensure we deliver high-quality healthcare services and improve the health of local people.

We spend more than £50m each year in estates and healthcare is delivered from 330 properties in our area. £49m of capital funding is allocated to our area every year to maintain and improve this estate and digital systems. Significant levels of additional capital investment are required to future-proof local services – in excess of £3bn.



An ageing legacy

The challenges facing our health service are stark. While our population is growing, demand for modern healthcare is accelerating, yet much of our estate is old and in need of significant investment.

The landmark [Denny Review](#), extensive engagement with residents, MPs, Councillors and the Infrastructure Assessment, which we completed in 2024, tells us that there are issues with capacity and accessibility which are impacting patient access and care. Financial constraints on the Integrated Care Board have made progress on addressing these concerns slower than we would like.

In line with the emerging NHS 10-Year Plan for Health, it is our ambition to deliver care closer to home, which may also require infrastructure solutions in the community.

This Strategy sets out our vision for the future, and explains how we plan to identify and secure additional funding to improve our infrastructure, maintain and grow our estate, and to work towards meeting our environmental responsibilities.

This is an organic strategy, which will continue to develop over time, as our transformation programmes and service models evolve.



Our direction of travel

Delivering great places and great care is at the centre of our Infrastructure Strategy.

We want to grow the capacity and improve the productivity of our estate, maintain and improve its condition, support the introduction of new models of care and technology, reduce inequalities, and manage our estate responsibly.

These intentions are set out in the **“We will”** statements:

1. Grow the capacity of our estate to address existing challenges and inequities, and to accommodate population growth.
2. Replace and improve estate in poor condition to improve the quality of care and staff working conditions, and to protect the sustainability of our services.
3. Use and develop our estate to enable and facilitate an effective neighbourhood health and care provision including a shift from healthcare intervention to the prevention of ill health.
4. Make investment decisions in relation to our estate which promote a narrowing in health inequalities.
5. Work with partners to plan infrastructure solutions which consider and enable delivery of our missions and strategies and take into account the changing needs of the people we serve.
6. Work to enhance social value and support local economic growth in the way we manage our estate.
7. Reduce the carbon footprint of our estate and take action to adapt our estate to mitigate the impact of climate change.
8. Ensure that our estate is used efficiently and delivers value for money, including maximising digital and technology developments, as appropriate.
9. Use and develop our estate to support the provision of care closer to the residents' homes, in line with agreed care pathways.

How will we deliver our strategy?

In summary, our strategy will be to...

Support coordinated lobbying of Government to position Bedfordshire, Luton and Milton Keynes as a priority for capital and revenue funding.

Maximise opportunities for BLMK to benefit from NHS capital funding opportunities.

Consider the potential for additional revenue investment into priority infrastructure projects, to enable partnership schemes with third party delivery partners (including our Local Authority partners).

Maximise opportunities for external capital funding (e.g. S106 funding), particularly through working with our Local Authority partners and housing developers.

Maximise the efficiency and productivity of our existing estate, with a particular focus on increasing capacity for seeing patients.

...to enable delivery of our strategic intentions and our priority workstreams:

What are our priority areas?



How our work will make a difference

1

Fit for purpose hospital estate

We will support Milton Keynes University Hospital Trust with their New Hospital Programme to deliver a new Women's and Children's and Elective Surgery facility by 2030.

We will support them to make a strong case to central Government for further capital funding towards a substantial upgrade to the existing Emergency department as part of a Phase 2 to their NHP development and to provide a new ward block to replace very cramped facilities.

We will support Bedfordshire Hospitals Trust to make a case to central Government around the criticality of capital investment for both the Luton & Dunstable Hospital site and the Bedford Hospital site to future-proof acute hospital services in Bedfordshire.

The Trust has developed an ambitious masterplan for each site to address the failing infrastructure of the older buildings to replace poor quality infrastructure with new, fit-for-purpose facilities, which will enable efficient and high-quality care delivery. We will also continue to support the Trust in discussions and negotiations with partners around the delivery of the East West Rail project and the potential impact on the Bedford Hospital site.

2

Protect planned care

We will develop and progress plans to establish one or more dedicated elective care hub/s in BLMK.

We will also develop existing and new community diagnostic centres (CDCs) to increase diagnostic capacity, reduce waits and provide services closer to home.

This will include work on progressing a community diagnostic centre (CDC) for Luton, as well as completing delivery of the Bedford CDC at the end of 2025, and maximising the utilisation of the two CDCs now operational in Milton Keynes.

3

Primary care and neighbourhood services

We will increase the capacity and improve the condition of the estate used to deliver services in the community, including primary medical care services, by continuing to deliver our existing work programme and prioritising the next three-year pipeline of primary care estates projects during Autumn 2025. The pipeline will be prioritised around increasing capacity for the most constrained services in BLMK, particularly those serving patient populations with higher clinical needs. The existing work programme in delivery includes:

- Thirteen projects across BLMK to repurpose space within existing GP practice buildings to enable more patient appointments (e.g. converting administrative space to clinical space) using funding from the first year of the national Utilisation & Modernisation Programme. Ten of the thirteen prioritised schemes are in Luton and three are in Bedford. We have a list of a further eight schemes we will seek to deliver in 2026/27 should the national funding programme continue.
- Multiple additional projects to repurpose space within existing GP practice buildings to create additional clinical space using Section 106 funding, including four schemes in Milton Keynes and three in Central Bedfordshire.
- Rationalisation of under-utilised office space for community health services to free up space and funding for clinical services, including reconfiguration of under-utilised space at Liverpool Road Health Centre (Luton), Queens Park Health Centre (Bedford), Biggleswade Health Centre and Newport Pagnell Medical Centre to increase capacity and provide better accommodation for a range of primary/community services.
- Development of the business case for a consolidated primary care centre in Kempston (Bedford Borough) and for the potential relocation of Wootton Vale Healthy Living Centre, to support future applications for capital funding.
- Using appropriate digital tools to support patient access, as per Modern General Practice.

Supporting growth

4

Based on the existing Council Local Plans (plans for housing growth), we have a work programme and set of ambitions for mitigating the impact of growth for primary medical care, which includes (but is not exhaustive):

- The opening of Elverby Community Health Hub in the Eastern MK expansion area and the opening of a new surgery in Cranfield (Central Bedfordshire), both due to open in 2025.
- The planned relocation of Great Barford Surgery (Bedford Borough) to a larger building.
- Reconfiguration of areas within Health Centres in Shefford, Leighton Buzzard, Ampthill and Flitwick to increase clinical capacity.
- Maximising utilisation of Houghton Regis Health Centre and at Grove View Integrated Hub.
- The expansion of Lower Stondon Surgery and Caddington Surgery (both Central Bedfordshire) and Westfield Road in Milton Keynes utilising Section 106 funding.
- The planned construction of a new primary care centre in Biddenham (Bedford Borough) to enable the relocation of the two small branch surgeries in Bromham into larger facilities better equipped to responding to the growth in and around these villages.

We have stated ambitions to deliver new facilities in some of the larger development sites, including Wixams, in the development on land East of Biggleswade, and in the new Marston Vale development area – all of which are expected to be facilitated through Section 106 funding. We will continue to work closely with partners in relation to the development sites to the North of Luton (in Central Bedfordshire), East of Luton (in North Hertfordshire), the Milton Keynes strategic expansion areas and Buckinghamshire developments which will also impact services in Milton Keynes to plan for accommodating the extra residents expected in these areas. We will continue to work with partners to explore affordable options for further expanding capacity as required.

5

Care closer to home

We will support the planning and development of a variety of infrastructure solutions to enable more care to be delivered closer to home, in line with agreed care pathways. A key early focus is around supporting more people with complex and/or specialist needs to be able to receive treatment within BLMK and closer to home.

Key programmes will include continuing to support the regional consultation around the future configuration of cancer services delivered by Mount Vernon Cancer Centre, progressing system ambitions to establish an adult mental health inpatient unit in Bedford and expanding the capacity of the Evergreen CAMHS inpatient unit. We will continue to explore and support a range of other opportunities to support the delivery of more complex and specialist care locally as part of our clinical transformation programmes.

Further ambitions may emerge relating to enabling more efficient step-up and step-down care to prevent avoidable admissions to hospital and to facilitate swifter discharge from acute hospital beds, as joint health and social care service strategies continue to develop in this area.

6

Roadmap to Net Zero and climate adaptation

As part of delivering the BLMK Green Plan, we will:

- Support our acute Trusts to implement their heat decarbonisation plans, including supporting them with efforts to access NHS and external funding. The decarbonisation scheme at MKUH is underway.
- Support providers and NHS landlords to upgrade their facilities including LED lighting, insulation and double-glazed windows across the primary care and community estate.
- Take action to prepare for severe weather events and improve the climate resilience of local sites and services.

7

Delivery of the digital strategy

We will continue delivery of the ambitions contained in the Digital Strategy to upgrade digital infrastructure and services across the system, to make further progress towards integrated and accessible electronic health and care records, and to further enable interoperability.

Next steps

- The BLMK Capital & Estates Oversight Group (Estates and Finance representatives across the system) will have oversight of the delivery of the priority work programmes set out in this Strategy and will provide an annual report on progress to the ICB Board.
- The development of a robust three-year prioritised project pipeline is critical to the delivery of this Strategy. We will work towards developing a system-wide prioritisation framework to ensure that capital allocations for the system are targeted towards where they can have greatest impact to support delivery of our system missions and strategies.
- The Primary Care Estates Prioritisation Process planned for Autumn 2025 will enable us to confirm future delivery projects and also schemes where we need to initiate scoping and business case development work, to ensure a robust rolling programme of projects for the long-term.
- This Strategy will achieve benefits across a wide range of areas. Each of the programmes of work will have their own detailed goals and at an ICB level we will use SMART metrics to monitor our success in delivering the expected benefits of this Strategy.