

Nuneaton & Bedworth Local Economic Strategy

Place and Economy

2021-2026



Contents

Contents	2
1. Introduction	3
2. Overview of the economy in Nuneaton and Bedworth	5
An introduction to the Borough	5
Global issues impacting on the local economy	5
Local issues	6
3. Our Vision	8
PRIORITY 1: Developing a more competitive economy	9
Introduction	9
Key issues	10
PRIORITY 2: Promoting Prosperity	15
Introduction	15
Key issues	15
PRIORITY 3: Promoting a strong sense of place	17
Introduction	17
Key issues	17
PRIORITY 4: Promoting a sustainable economy	21
Introduction	21
Key issues	21
Table 1: Key objectives: Priority 1: Developing a more competitive economy	12
Table 2: Key objectives: Priority 2: Promoting Prosperity	16
Table 3: Anti social behavior in Warwickshire districts	18
Table 4: Key objectives: Priority 3: Promoting a strong sense of place	19
Table 5: Key objectives: Priority 4: Promoting a sustainable economy	23

1. Introduction

The Nuneaton and Bedworth Local Economic Strategy aims to generate a new energy and focus on economic development to reinvigorate and transform the Borough of Nuneaton and Bedworth.

Context

With a history of inter-generational deprivation in many households resulting from decades of decline in traditional industries, the most recent Local Economic Assessment (2021) provides an uncompromising picture of comparative decline in the Borough compared to other areas in Warwickshire. Moreover, we are in a period of enormous economic upheaval. The global pandemic has been enormously challenging to many businesses from which a large number are still recovering. Many small businesses are experiencing a particularly fragile confidence due to tough trading conditions including increased costs and inflation. Further, the full impact of Brexit is requiring an additional layer of adjustment.

The scale of the challenge should not diminish our aspirations and expectations for the future. To move forward we need to understand the long-term trends that need to be embraced. The future brings a digital world with the automation of many roles as well as the development of new jobs that never existed. It is also a more globally competitive world with the rapid development of China and countries in the east. Alongside this is an urgent requirement for a more environmentally sustainable “circular”¹ economy that can mitigate climate change.

There is unlikely ever to be a single idea, or single activity that brings a transformative change to the whole Borough. We need to build on what we have at the same time as being outward facing and drawing lessons from elsewhere and applying them to our own local context. We need to pull together and work closely with our partners.

We have achieved considerable recent success. Whilst footfall in our town centres is declining due to the significant downturn in town centre retail, there is a growing interest in the resurgence of our urban spaces as multi-functional, mixed residential and entertainment places. Stakeholders and partners have come together under the “Transforming Nuneaton”² banner to re-imagine and revise the landscape of Nuneaton town centre. To facilitate this, the Borough gained £24 million from the Towns Fund and £13 million from the Future High Streets Fund to support transformative change to the urban landscape and public amenities.

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council was selected at the time by Department of Levelling up Housing and Communities (DLUHC), now Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government as part of Pathfinder status. Which is a simplified approach to

¹ A circular economy is "a model of production and consumption, which involves sharing, leasing, reusing, repairing, refurbishing and recycling existing materials and products as long as possible".

The three principles required for the transformation to a circular economy are: eliminating waste and pollution, circulating products and materials, and the regeneration of nature. A circular economy is defined in contradistinction to the traditional linear economy (Wikipedia)

² Warwickshire County Council (WCC) and Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC) are working to deliver the Transforming Nuneaton Programme (TNP) [Transforming Nuneaton – Warwickshire County Council](#)

funding delivery and includes funding from Future High Streets Fund, Towns Deal and Levelling up.

Bedworth was selected as part of the second wave as one of the 20 towns, eligible for £20 million endowment style funding via DLUHC Long Term Plan-for Towns. Transforming Bedworth Partnership is currently developing the relevant evidence base to support funding bids. Recently £14.95 million has been awarded from the Levelling Up Fund and £2.5 million from Sport England to develop the Bedworth Leisure Centre Activity Hub.

The priority to develop sustainable technologies brings with it new opportunities alongside significant challenges. Nuneaton and Bedworth is surrounded by an important group of technology and manufacturing companies already developing and building future electric transport technologies. We need to work with our partners to help them to do this well so creating jobs and building a skills base attractive to new investors.

Other significant opportunities include the location of the George Eliot hospital in Nuneaton and Bedworth as a focus for jobs, training and new opportunities in health and social care, an area which provides employment to 8000³ people in the borough. The pandemic has devastated the tourism industry in the Borough. However, new event spaces created by the transformation of the urban centre in Nuneaton, planned new town centre entertainments, and new investments celebrating our industrial heritage and famous historical figures, are likely to promote an increase in day visits as well as resident spend in the Borough.

Many residents are unemployed or working in low paid roles. Feedback from residents is that they long for action to revitalize their town so it can offer them a brighter future. Whilst we can identify real economic opportunities, the real test of our success is the extent to which we can provide a “step up” to some of our most vulnerable and excluded residents. This strategy presents the key themes and objectives that we will pursue to move towards a more prosperous future for all.

³ Business Register and Employment Survey 2022

2. Overview of the economy in Nuneaton and Bedworth

An introduction to the Borough

Nuneaton and Bedworth is a local government district in northern Warwickshire consisting of the towns of Nuneaton and Bedworth, the large village of Bulkington and the green belt land in between. With approximately 85,600 residents, Nuneaton is the largest town in the County. The author George Eliot was born here and lived in the town for much of her early life. In Nuneaton town centre, the Ropewalk Shopping Centre, and the older Abbeygate Shopping Centre are the main retail facilities although recently some key anchor stores have been lost due to the growth in online trade. The town has strong motorway transport links with good accessibility making it an important commuter town for nearby Coventry. The health industry is a major employer in the borough, providing employment to over 8000 people and has a presence on the high street.

Located to the southwest of Nuneaton is Bedworth. With a population of around 31000, it is composed mainly of large housing estates with a central park – the Miners Welfare Park. Now rather tired in appearance, the town centre contains national high street retail names as well as independent retailers, charity shops and banks. Bedworth is also home to the Bayton Road industrial estate. This offers a variety of industrial and commercial units of all sizes suitable for light industrial, trade and warehouse use.

Bulkington village is located to the east of the towns of Nuneaton and Bedworth. It is largely a commuter village for nearby urban centres such as Coventry, Nuneaton, Bedworth, Hinckley and Leicester.

A range of businesses involved in the automotive, aerospace and engineering supply chains are active in the area. The MIRA Technology Park Enterprise Zone, a park for automotive research and development is based to the north (just within the North Warwickshire district boundary). Most of the VAT and/or PAYE registered businesses (89%) in the Borough are small, employing less than 10 people⁴. Examples of larger firms include Brose, FedEx (Head Office), Dairy Crest, RS Components, and recently Rhenus. The Borough is well located for the logistics industry, being near major motorway transport links.

The socio-economic profile of the Borough of Nuneaton and Bedworth is less prosperous than the rest of Warwickshire. A key focus for the Borough Council and its partners is improving the social and economic prospects for the area particularly in the light of recent economic shocks and long-term technology and geo-political change.

Global issues impacting on the local economy

Post Covid -19 and effects from Ukraine war, inflation and increase in interest rates have led to the deepest recession in modern times which has been disproportionately felt by deprived communities with mortality rates in these localities being more than double the

⁴ Inter departmental Business Register (IDBR) (2024) NOMIS

rate of the least deprived areas^{5,6}. Whilst furlough has cushioned the impact of the economic shock, by May 2021, the Borough had the highest rate of unemployment in Warwickshire with the worst levels being experienced in deprived wards. By spring 2021, the economy had started to improve and by July 2021 job vacancy rates were nearly at pre-pandemic levels. However, the long-term outlook remains uncertain.

The effects of the pandemic have masked the impact of the UK's withdrawal from the EU ("Brexit"). The Trade Cooperation Agreement (TCA) between the UK and the EU has posed a significant challenge for many UK businesses with Make UK⁷, reporting early 2021 that nearly three quarters of its members had experienced delays exporting to or importing from the EU. Since the end of the Transition period (December 31st 2020), many businesses have adapted to the new trade arrangements, however, increased difficulties accessing workers, the potential for reduced R&D collaborations and reduced levels of foreign investment in the UK are all issues that are evolving.

Other longer-term issues include the growth in digitization across all sectors including, for example, automation, Industry 4.0 and the development of artificial intelligence. There will be new opportunities for jobs but there will also be widespread unemployment especially in low skilled roles.

The development of sustainable technologies is accelerating rapidly. Britain's manufacturing industry is well positioned to contribute but needs to be appropriately supported. In addition, geo-political change means that despite turbulent politics, China and the Pacific region is increasing in importance and providing a growing export and import market for the UK.

Local issues

The local economy is impacted by several significant challenges. The competitiveness of businesses is low in the Borough compared to other districts within the County. There is also a smaller number of businesses per capita. Skill levels of residents are lower than within other districts in the County. There are significant problems of traffic congestion, and currently limited 5G and no full fibre broadband.

In terms of the local population, the Borough has high levels of unemployment, especially in certain wards and this has been exacerbated post covid and inflation. The educational achievement of both young people and adults is low and the population experiences high levels of physical and mental ill health. Some areas of the Borough have disproportionately high levels of crime.

⁵ Covid-19 Health Impact Assessment (September 2020) – A paper to the WCC Health and Well Being Board

⁶ Coventry and Warwickshire Covid-19 Health Impact Assessment: Coventry and Warwickshire Joint Strategic Needs Assessment July 2020

⁷ Make UK is a national trade organisation that supports manufacturing industry

Findings from local community surveys and consultations highlight that Nuneaton and Bedworth town centres have a “tired” feel and footfall is falling. The retail offer in both towns is declining and there is a lack of suitable space for new businesses to replace the loss of retail activity particularly flexible grade A and B office accommodation and small manufacturing workspaces. This limits the potential for business diversification.

There are few leisure and entertainment options. Green spaces such as the local parks are not well connected with the town centres. There are poor facilities for cyclists and pedestrians, few quality cafes and restaurants and natural and heritage assets are underutilised. Vehicular access around the town centres is restricted by congestion and as a result parts of the centre of Nuneaton are covered by an Air Quality Management Area.

In terms of the sustainability of the economy, the level of CO₂ emitted in the Borough is lower per capita than for other districts in the County, however, a significant level of work needs to be undertaken to ready the Borough to follow central government policy on this. A large number of electric vehicle charging points and associated infrastructure still needs to be installed. In addition, all buildings will eventually need to be converted so that their heating appliances do not depend on gas. Whilst the level of CO₂ emissions for industrial activity is less than for transport and heating, work needs to continue to ensure that industry can respond to the net zero carbon challenge.

3. Our Vision



Promoting enterprise and prosperity to deliver a step change for Nuneaton and Bedworth allowing residents and businesses to regain pride in their Borough as a place to live, work and visit.



- Promote residents' health & wellbeing
- Enable appropriate housing development
- Sponsor a sustainable green approach
- Prioritise Community Safety & Empowerment



- Grow a strong & inclusive economy
- Champion education & skills
- Embrace new & emerging technology
- Support local businesses



- Create vibrant and diverse Town Centres
- Stimulate regeneration
- Celebrate and promote our heritage
- Improve the physical environment

To support the delivery of this vision, the Council supports 4 Priorities to promote economic development. These are:

- Developing a more competitive economy
- Promoting Prosperity
- Promoting a strong sense of place
- Promoting a sustainable economy

The remainder of this document highlights the main issues relevant to these four themes and introduces the key objectives for achieving the Vision.

PRIORITY 1: Developing a more competitive economy

Introduction

There were 3520 businesses headquartered in Nuneaton and Bedworth in 2024 and 4255 business units (or premises)⁸. This includes those registered for VAT and PAYE but does not include unregistered small independent traders. There are likely to be around 7489 businesses located in the Borough in total (including independent traders). The economy is dominated by small businesses. Around 53% of all businesses are not registered for VAT or PAYE and of those which are, 89% employ less than 10 people. The distribution of businesses by sector mirrors County and national trends. The Borough has the highest percentage of production, motor trades, retail and health businesses compared to the rest of Warwickshire although there is a higher proportion of construction, retail and storage firms within the Borough⁹.

The impact of Covid 19 on overall business numbers is unclear - business unit numbers increased by 11% between 2015 and 2020 (an increase which is the same as the County and England)¹⁰. The vast majority were sole traders or micro businesses. However, data is not yet available to assess the full impact of Covid 19 on business survivals.

In Nuneaton and Bedworth, as with the County and England, the majority of businesses employ less than 10 people so are micro businesses. Health and social care (15%), Manufacturing (14%) and retail (13%) are those most likely to employ more than 10 with manufacturing being the overwhelmingly most prominent industry group employing 10 or more (23%), where businesses have an HQ in the Borough.

There were around 64800 employees in in Nuneaton and Bedworth in 2024. The most significant industry groups for employment were wholesale and retail (16%), health (18%), manufacturing (11%) and education (10%)¹¹.

Certain sectors are particularly important for the future of the Borough. These have been identified based on displaying one or more of the following criteria:

- They currently employ or have the potential to employ large numbers of people.
- The sectors contribute a significant quantity of GVA to the Borough.
- There are local area strengths which could be further developed
- They are mentioned as priority sectors in the Warwickshire County Economic Strategy.
- They are key industry groups promoting “place making” and tourism.

⁸ Interdepartmental Business Register (IDBR) 2024 NOMIS

⁹ IDBR 2024 NOMIS

¹⁰ IDBR 2023 NOMIS

¹¹ Census 2021

Groups include:

Manufacturing – This sector employs large numbers of people in the Borough (circa 5,000) although there has been a significant negative Covid 19 impact on employment. It contributes a significant quantity of GVA to the Borough (£322 million per annum). There is a strong existing cluster of automotive manufacturing and major supply chain linkages within this sector with potential for further growth particularly in the context of the nearby MIRA Technology Park. Manufacturing is a priority industry group identified in Warwickshire County Economic Strategy.

Wholesale and retail - Currently employs large numbers of people (circa 7000) but traditional store-based employment is declining due to alternative trading models mainly online shopping. This has been exacerbated by the pandemic with regard to both non-essential and essential retail. The Borough Council is managing this decline via mixed use town centre regeneration whilst supporting digitization and innovation for remaining shops particularly with regard to the development of new retail marketing models such as the concept of “experiential” retail and “pop up” shops. Retail is an important placemaking industry so needs to be supported.

Transport and storage –. It has a strong local cluster employing circa 4000. There are good job growth prospects especially with the increase in online trading with the potential for 400+ new jobs by 2030.

Tourism – In 2023, this sector employed circa 2500. Strong employment growth is expected (most of these, 600+, in restaurants and food service). The industry is important for place making and supporting the visitor economy.

Health and social care – the largest employment sector with circa 8,000 staff. There is likely to be strong employment growth in the care sector (400+ employees by 2030) due to increasing size of elderly population cohorts. There are also strong opportunities in medical care.

Key issues

- The economy of Nuneaton and Bedworth is dominated by small firms but has some significant large employers.
- The economy of Nuneaton and Bedworth is less competitive than the economies in the other local authorities in Warwickshire. At a local authority level, Nuneaton and Bedworth generates the least GVA of all the Warwickshire districts (£2,282 million in 2022). GVA generated per head of population in Nuneaton and Bedworth (£17,652) is also the lowest in the County (£33,600) and England (£33,976). In addition, the UK Competitiveness Index ranks Local Authorities in the UK in order of their competitiveness from 1 (most competitive) to 379 (least competitive). At 305 Nuneaton

and Bedworth has the lowest competitiveness ranking of all the local authorities in Warwickshire¹².

- The number of business births per head of population remains lower in Nuneaton and Bedworth (4 per 1,000 population in 2021) compared to the other districts in the County. Business counts per person in the Borough are also the lowest in Warwickshire (31 per 1,000 population)¹³.
- The economy is impacted by a significant shortage of skills. The highest volumes of skills shortages are in business services and health and social work. However, the highest density of skill shortages are within construction and manufacturing. Skilled trades are the hardest vacancies to fill with nearly half of vacancies being within these roles. There is also a shortage of people with soft skills particularly “self-management skills” referring to poor time management or task prioritisation, a lack of ability to manage own feelings or the feelings of others and a lack of leadership skills^{14,15}.

Whilst not cited as the most significant cause of skill shortages, the need for digital skills is highlighted as significant by the available literature particularly in the light of the increasing use of IT across all sectors, the development of artificial intelligence, Industry 4.0 and data analytics. In parallel, there is increasing danger of automation of roles – particularly lower skilled roles¹⁶.

The West Midlands Local Skills Report 2021¹⁷ emphasises the region has particular skills challenges compared to other regions in the UK. It has a higher proportion of young people compared to the national average, which should be an asset for future skills development, however, young people in the region are more likely to be NEET (not in education, employment or training) and they are more likely to have no qualifications. In addition, the automation of industry, particularly manufacturing is likely to reduce job availability, particularly in manufacturing. A high proportion of staff is not proficient

- A number of infrastructure challenges impact on the ability of the economy to grow.

¹² UK Competitiveness Index by Robert Huggins, Daniel Prokop and Piers Thompson (2021) & The Local Growth Index, 2024, Beuhurst.

¹³ IDBR Business Birth Records 2024 NOMIS

¹⁴ Note: Skill shortage densities relate to the number of vacancies as a proportion of employees.

¹⁵ Employers Skill Survey by Mark Winterbottom, Genna Kik, Sam Selner, Rebecca Meays, Sam Stroud and Sam Whittaker (2022) (Department for Education)

¹⁶ “Disconnected” Exploring the Digital Skills Gap – commissioned by the Department for Education and produced by Worldskills, the Learning and Work Institute and Engenuity (2021)

¹⁷ The West Midlands Local Skills Report 2022 (West Midlands Combined Authority) & The Labour Market Profile 2021

- There is a significant level of congestion, particularly on and around the A444 ring road around Nuneaton¹⁸.
- The Borough has the highest 5G availability in Warwickshire – 98.7%.¹⁹.

Table 1: Key objectives: Priority 1: Developing a more competitive economy

OBJECTIVE	NATURE OF REQUIRED INTERVENTIONS
Promoting new business starts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing an awareness of enterprise opportunities amongst all groups, particularly young people, working in partnership with Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub. • Link potential entrepreneurs to existing business start programmes including, for example, that delivered by Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce and the flexible financial provision available through Coventry and Warwickshire Re-investment Trust. • Explore, in partnership with Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce, the Growth Hub and the Federation of Small Businesses (FSB) opportunities to tailor business support to all sectors of our community.
Promoting business growth and competitiveness including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Helping existing businesses to adapt and grow in a challenging economic environment • Promoting innovation • Specialised support to key sectors 	Work directly with businesses to understand their needs and link them to existing support available via partners such as the Coventry and Warwickshire Growth Hub, the FSB, and Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber. Work with key sectors to understand their needs and identify necessary support mechanisms.
Ensure a range of flexible industrial space is available balancing competing demands across industries.	The local authority to ensure suitable premises are maintained and expanded where possible to suit the needs of SME manufacturers and a range of other high value industries.
Tackle skill shortages	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work with Warwickshire County Council to fully understand skills-based issues in Nuneaton and Bedworth. • Work with external partners to provide appropriate skills based training and targeted interventions. • Raise the profile of job and training opportunities in key sectors which are likely to create jobs over the next 10 years. • Work with employers to determine skills audit and potential skills matching initiatives

¹⁸ Nuneaton Town Centre Strategy: Transport Strategy (commissioned by Warwickshire County Council and produced by Atkins 2020)

¹⁹ Office of National Statistics – Location Indicators 2024

Warwickshire Business Resilience and Growth Programme

Aimed at businesses over 24 months old. It helps improve their resilience and growth potential via a tailored package of support with access to appropriate advice, and services to support growth plans.

Delivered by Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce.

Business Ready - Warwickshire High Growth and Innovation Programme

This project will engage with businesses with ambitions for high growth and looking to innovate. It will target higher productivity that will contribute towards countywide growth targets and create new highly skilled jobs. This programme offers access to specialist mentors, bespoke support and specialist workshops.

Delivered by the University of Warwick Science Park.

Warwickshire Manufacturing Growth Programme

Directly supporting manufacturing businesses, across all sectors, to grow by identifying, understanding and removing their barriers to growth to support the creation of new jobs through improved productivity and competitiveness. A programme of funded one-to-one support from specialist manufacturing advisors that include digital diagnostic, strategic review, and specialist support including workshops.

Delivered by Oxford Innovation Advice.

Warwickshire Business Energy Advice Service

Helping to create a green, growing and sustainable economy across Warwickshire through promoting energy efficiency. An energy audit for each business will produce bespoke decarbonisation plans to identify greenhouse gas savings, leading to greater energy efficiency, lower energy bills and reduced carbon emissions. Grants are also available to support businesses with the costs of low carbon adoption.

Delivered by Coventry City Council.

Project Warwickshire

Visitor Economy & Hospitality Business Support Programme A package of support for businesses in the tourism, leisure and hospitality sectors, offering specialist one-to-one business coaching, workshops, and networking - including with larger businesses.

Delivered by Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber of Commerce

Warwickshire Skills Escalator Fund

This fund provides training support for businesses, which can access funding of up to £750 per person for up to 5 employees. The training supported by the escalator fund is led by the business and its needs. The Warwickshire Skills Hub team provides support in developing a training plan to reflect business needs and employees' aspirations.

Delivered by the Warwickshire Skills Hub

PRIORITY 2: Promoting Prosperity

Introduction

The Borough performs poorly against a range of comparative socio-economic measures that reflect the uneven levels of prosperity between wards and when compared to the County. Data from the New Earnings Survey showed that residents of Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough had the lowest average weekly income (£593 per week) compared to all the districts in Warwickshire²⁰. There was significant variation between wards with the lowest average annual family income being associated with Kingswood, Camphill, Wembrook²¹. In addition, the Index of Multiple Deprivation highlights high levels of deprivation in a number of Borough wards notably in the West of Nuneaton and East Bedworth.

Key issues

- High levels of unemployment, particularly within deprived wards. In May 2024, unemployment in the Borough was the second highest in Warwickshire at 3.5% (although broadly equivalent to the level for Great Britain as a whole.) At ward level, by May 2021, unemployment in half of the Borough's wards was higher than both the Borough and England average. Most of the unemployed are relatively young. The largest group are aged 16 to 24. Unemployment among the 50+ age group is low²².
- Education levels of the Borough's adult population is low. The proportion in Nuneaton and Bedworth holding a qualification at or equivalent to NVQ Level 4 (33%) is well below the average for the West Midlands (42.5%) and Great Britain (47.3%) The proportion with no qualifications (12.2%) is higher than the West Midlands average (7.3 %) and that for Great Britain (6.5%)²³.
- The educational performance of young people is also lower than the average standard for Warwickshire. Nuneaton and Bedworth pupils achieve the lowest standards in the County the end of early years foundation stage for literacy and maths. Nuneaton and Bedworth secondary school children, on average, are less likely than children in other districts in Warwickshire to achieve a strong pass (9-5) in English and Maths at GCSE.²⁴.

²⁰ Local Statistics Data – Office of National Statistics 2024

²¹ Income Estimates for Small Areas, England and Wales (Financial year ending 2020)(Office of National Statistics)

²² Warwickshire County Council

²³ Annual Census of Population 2021 & Labour Market Profile 2023 NOMIS

²⁴ Local Statistics Data – Office of National Statistics 2024

- The Borough also performs poorly on a range of other measures. There are lower levels of physical and mental wellbeing compared to county and national rates with this being particularly prevalent in just under half the wards in the Borough²⁵. Nuneaton and Bedworth Local Economic Assessment (2021) highlights:
 - A high proportion of the population self-identifying as being in poor health.
 - High rates of teenage pregnancies.
 - Obesity amongst children and adults.
 - Low levels of physical activity amongst adults.
 - High suicide rate

- The Borough also has the highest crime rates in the County. This is distorted by certain areas experiencing higher than average levels of crime²⁶.

Table 2: Key objectives: Priority 2: Promoting Prosperity

OBJECTIVE	NATURE OF REQUIRED INTERVENTIONS
Raising aspirations and educational achievement of young people and their families.	<p>Support the implementation of Warwickshire Education Strategy²⁷ in partnership with Warwickshire County Council.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Promoting early years education (0 – 5) ● Promoting educational inclusion particularly working with vulnerable families. ● Improving the quality of learning environments within schools. ● Promoting aspirations and employability of school students. ● Facilitate place based interventions e.g. Nuneaton Education Strategy with Warwickshire County Council.
Develop effective networks to link vulnerable families to employment opportunities via supportive and empathic pathways and focussing in particular on the most deprived wards	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Understanding the aspirations of the community including varying demographics/groups. ● Mapping and building the capacity of the third sector particularly grass roots community organisations. ● Developing bespoke job search and support for young people (e.g. job search, CV development, interview practice). ● Promoting the employability of vulnerable families and groups (e.g. considering confidence, aspirations, childcare, skills and information needs). ● Work closely with employers, the third sector and local FE providers to develop pathways to employment for particular vulnerable groups.

²⁵ Nuneaton and Bedworth Local Economic Assessment 2021

²⁶ Warwickshire County Council 2024

²⁷ Warwickshire Education Strategy 2018 – 2023 (Warwickshire County Council)

PRIORITY 3: Promoting a strong sense of place

Introduction

The term “Sense of place” is generally used to describe the distinctiveness or unique character of particular localities and regions. However, the exact ingredients that input into a sense of place are unclear. In general, the need for an attractive physical fabric along with a vibrant and distinctive social scene that leads to a positive emotional connection by residents and visitors is key. Opportunities for economic prosperity are strongly linked to the existence of a sense of place and an important function of the Economic Strategy includes “place making” measures.

Key issues

A number of community research programmes have been undertaken within the past 3 years to assess residents views and feelings towards the Borough and particularly the towns of Nuneaton and Bedworth²⁸. Key findings were that a number of physical and social issues impact on the sense of place within the Borough. For example, residents complain that Nuneaton and Bedworth town centres have a “tired” feel. The retail offer in both towns is declining due to the growth of online trade and a number of major stores have been lost e.g. Debenhams from Nuneaton. There are limited leisure and entertainment options in the town centres which encourages residents to seek alternative spaces for evenings out such as Coventry or Birmingham. Good quality green spaces such as the local parks are not well connected with the town centres and have limited events facilities. There are inadequate facilities for cyclists and pedestrians and natural assets such as the River Anker are underutilised. There is minimal residential accommodation in the town centres. The combined impact of these issues has been a decline in footfall. The regeneration project, “Grayson Place” will go some way to addressing these issues.

Vehicular access through and around the Nuneaton and Bedworth town centres is restricted by congestion. As a result of high levels of congestion, there is an Air Quality Management Area²⁹.

A sense of place is not only influenced by the physical appearance of a location but also the feeling it imbues in residents due to its social mood or ambience. This is a very subjective perception and is difficult to measure. However, the level of anti-social behaviour can provide an indicator of this. Nuneaton and Bedworth has slightly higher levels of anti-social behaviour per capita than other districts in Warwickshire.

²⁸ Community consultation to inform the NBBC Corporate Plan (2018), consultations with businesses at the NBBC Business Expo 2019, community consultation to inform the NBBC Future High Streets proposal (2020) and the MYTOWN community consultation to inform the development of the Town Investment Fund for the Towns Fund.

²⁹ Nuneaton Town Centre Strategy: Transport Strategy 2020 commissioned by Warwickshire County Council and produced by Atkins

Table 3: Anti-social behavior in Warwickshire districts 12 months up to June 2024

DISTRICT	REPORTS OF ANTI-SOCIAL BEHAVIOR PER 1,000 POPULATION
Nuneaton and Bedworth	29
North Warwickshire	22
Warwick	21
Stratford-on-Avon	18
Rugby	17

Source: Warwickshire County Council

An ambitious multi-agency plan to transform the Town Centre by 2030 – *The Transforming Nuneaton Programme* (TNP) – has gained rapid momentum. Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council (NBBC) and Warwickshire County Council (WCC) are working together to deliver the TNP, by boosting economic growth via mixed use regeneration, including housing, leisure and commerce. Partners including Coventry and Warwickshire LEP, now Coventry City Council (CCC) and the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), have invested £9.69 million for early interventions and enabling works.

The transformation has begun and there is growing business confidence., Co-Fresh has chosen Nuneaton as the location for their large-scale production centre, while Hello Fresh and Rhenus have moved into newly built premises. McCarthy and Stone have completed 50 residential units for the over 60's.

The newly constructed Hampton by Hilton Hotel on Abbey Street set to open September 2024 has created local jobs in hospitality. With Phase 2 of the Grayson Place development underway and set to deliver NWSL College, Really Local Group cinema, a food hall and surface level car park. E-Mobility hub as part at Grayson Place development will provide an uplift in the number of electric vehicle (EV) charging points will encourage the use of electric vehicles and provide much needed infrastructure to cut the levels of harmful emissions. Nuneaton town centre will benefit vastly from on-street EV charging points which will be installed on key town centre roads close to shops, businesses, and public buildings. The adoption of greener technologies will help to improve air quality in our town. With the right charging infrastructure locally, we will help stimulate demand for EVs and support active local advancements in technology, on which future jobs and growth depend.

Restoration works of a former Conservative Club in Nuneaton town centre known as The Saints, received Towns Fund grant and will deliver a new training and enterprise and new community space. Providing training for people to become work ready, increase confidence and aspirations and provide support to new start-ups, supporting the delivery of £8.6m social value.

Riversely Park revival project includes the creation of new and upgraded outdoor events spaces, along with the improvement and creation of new pedestrian and cycling links, will increase visitor numbers to the park for leisure and events, promoting improved health and wellbeing, and supporting the delivery of £3.075m social value.

The George Eliot Visitor Centre includes the re-purposing of an outbuilding from the childhood home of George Eliot will restore a local heritage asset and provide a new visitor attraction with exhibition, meeting and learning space. This will deliver an improved heritage offer, support the creation of new businesses linked to George Eliot and provide new community space.

New Employment sites have opened in the Borough recently, Rhenus in Nuneaton, a major sustainable warehouse development and Exhall Gate, a newly built estate of production and logistic units in Exhall.

Table 4: Key objectives: Priority 3: Promoting a strong sense of place

OBJECTIVE	NATURE OF REQUIRED INTERVENTIONS
Promote the diversification of the town centres of Nuneaton and Bedworth	Promote the re-use of vacant and under-utilised retail and commercial sites to enable the development of a diversified urban space enabling new independent retail, flexible commercial premises, residential, leisure and entertainment options.
Promote education	Enable town centre further and higher education options to boost both skills and town centre footfall
Increase access to health and wellbeing	Bring health onto our high street Local GP and health services available in town centre Also serve as education/skills for UHCW student placements
Enhance digital Connectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Facilitate the development of full fibre and mobile 5G broadband connectivity ● Provide digital training infrastructure to community facilities
Enhance transport links	Implement the Nuneaton Town Centre Transport Strategy ³⁰

³⁰ Nuneaton Town Centre Strategy: Transport Strategy by Warwickshire County Council (July 2020)

OBJECTIVE	NATURE OF REQUIRED INTERVENTIONS
<p>Promote the leisure and tourism offer within Nuneaton and Bedworth centres</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop themed events within Nuneaton and Bedworth town centres • Develop and promote tourism assets (e.g. George Eliot theme) • Develop cross country partnerships e.g. literary tourism/George Eliot theme • Increase the number of quality restaurants and cafes • Promote night-time entertainment businesses • Enhance retail especially independent and “experiential” traders.
<p>Improve the Town Centre Environments</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote the “greening” of the town centres and augment natural features e.g. the River Anker • Enhance the physical appearance of the towns (such as de-littering and enhancing the appearance of the streetscape) • Facilitate the delivery of the new Borough Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy³¹.

³¹ The existing Anti-Social Behaviour Strategy (2016 – 2019) is due to be updated shortly

PRIORITY 4: Promoting a sustainable economy

Introduction

The UK government has committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by the United Kingdom to net zero by 2050 and in May 2019, parliament declared a 'climate change emergency'. In December 2019, at a local level, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council also declared a climate change emergency and pledged to achieve net zero carbon emissions as a Council by 2030. A detailed Climate Change Strategy is currently being finalised and will help the Council take further steps towards achieving its target to see a reduction in the Council's carbon footprint by 2035.

Most carbon dioxide is emitted by vehicles and the heating systems of domestic properties. Industry is the third most significant emitter of carbon dioxide but to a far smaller extent. Between 2010 and 2019, CO₂ emissions reduced considerably. Across England the reduction across all activities was around 28%, which was broadly matched by Nuneaton and Bedworth. Reductions were least for transport and most apparent for commercial and public sector activities. In 2022, annual CO₂ emissions per capita for the Borough (3.8 kt CO₂) were lower than the levels for the County (8.4 kt CO₂) and England (5.6 kt CO₂)³².

Key issues

Vehicle emissions - The UK government has said that it is banning the sale of new petrol and diesel powered cars by 2035. Whilst this will reduce CO₂ emissions from this source, there is a significant challenge in producing the required infrastructure to support this change. Many households do not have a forecourt/drive on which to charge an electric car so the provision of charging facilities is crucial and local authorities will have a significant role to play in facilitating the provision of appropriate infrastructure. However, the current charging infrastructure is currently not fit for purpose to meet the increased demands for electricity. Increasing the Borough's electric infrastructure capacity will be a significant issue to address over the next decade.

Warwickshire County Council's Electric Vehicle Charging Infrastructure Strategy (2017 - 2026) has put forward a range of measures to promote the development of a network of electric charging points responding to the UK government policy.

Local opportunities to benefit from new investments in sustainable technologies

Warwickshire has received a large quantity of new investment to develop and manufacture low carbon vehicles. This builds on the County's historically strong transport manufacturing

³², LA & Regional Greenhouse Gas Emissions 2005 – 2022 - .GOV

cluster. Examples of companies that can be accessed by workers from the Borough include the new REE Automotive Engineering Centre, currently developing an e platform for use by electric vehicles and expected to create 200 jobs, Eskuta, which designs and builds electric bikes and scooters and the proposed Gigafactory in Coventry, which will manufacture batteries for electric cars and is likely to create several thousand new jobs. With a significant proportion of the workforce historically being employed within transport manufacturing industries, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council can work with the Coventry and Warwickshire LEP and Coventry and Warwickshire Chamber to understand the needs of investors and promote the area as an attractive location for similar initiatives.

Domestic CO2 emissions

Government support in the West Midlands has been made available via the Midlands Net Zero Hub. This has received a total of £138 million of Government funding as part of the Home Upgrade Scheme which will run until 31 March 2025, which targets households without main gas, an Energy Performance Certificate of E, F or G and a combined household income of under £36,000 (gross).

The Social Housing Decarbonisation Fund (SHDF) will upgrade a significant amount of the social housing stock currently below Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) band C up to that standard. It will support the installation of energy performance measures in social homes in England and facilitate the subsequent widespread adoption of decarbonised heating systems.

Around £1.2bn is available, the delivery window will run to 30 September 2028.

600,000 heat pumps to be installed in existing homes by 2028.

Eligible residents have access to a new phase of Energy Company Obligation (ECO) funding (ECO4) to help improve the warmth of their homes and save money on their energy bills. Low-income households who are in fuel poverty qualify for ECO.

The Great British Insulation scheme is also available for people with a council tax band of A-D with EPC ratings D-G this covers one off insulation measures such as loft or cavity wall.

There is also the government fund Boiler Replacement Scheme to cover part of the cost of replacing fossil fuel heating systems with a heat pump or biomass boiler.

Plumbers will need to be able to install new sustainable solutions, such as heat pumps, which are increasingly regarded as the new standard for heating systems within homes, whilst also being able to integrate new technologies into a house's smart ecosystem. Builders need to know how to fit insulation technologies, including retrofitting insulation technologies into existing homes and industrial buildings. Whilst this represents a significant opportunity for business diversification and growth, there is a serious shortage of skilled tradespeople able to undertake these tasks^{33,34}.

³³ Green Jobs Taskforce: Report to Government, Industry and the Skills Sector (July 2021)

³⁴ Skills for a Green Recovery: A call to action for the UK construction sector by Oscar Watkins and Dean Hochlaf from the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR) February 2021.

Industrial CO2 emissions

Part funded by the UK Shared Prosperity Fund, the Warwickshire County Council Green Business programme, run by Coventry City Council & Warwickshire Business Energy Advice Service is seeking to assist businesses to adopt technology that can tackle climate change by reducing CO2 emissions. A range of business grants are available that support SMEs to achieve energy efficiencies and/or utilise green technologies.

Air quality

There is currently an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) in the Borough located close to Nuneaton Town centre along Midland Road to Corporation Street and covering parts of the B4114 arterial route including Midland Road, Central Avenue, Corporation Street and the Manor Court Road. The air quality challenges are due to high levels of congestion and associated air pollution in the town centre³⁵.

Table 5: Key objectives: Priority 4: Promoting a sustainable economy

OBJECTIVE	NATURE OF REQUIRED INTERVENTIONS
<p>Assist local businesses to benefit from and adapt to central government policies regarding CO2 reduction.</p>	<p>Facilitate the objectives of the Nuneaton and Bedworth draft Climate Change Strategy, once adopted. Key themes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Working closely with economic development partners to ensure that Nuneaton and Bedworth is well placed to benefit from investment in manufacturing and technology companies developing sustainable technologies, particularly batteries and electric vehicles. Providing support to local tradesmen (plumbers/electricians and builders) to ensure they are suitably skilled and qualified to benefit from the increased demand from households and businesses to implement sustainable technologies in the Borough to meet government objectives regarding insulation and sustainable heating of homes. <p>Provide support for businesses to become more efficient by reducing their use of fossil fuels and utilizing energy efficient processes e.g. Warwickshire Business Energy Advice Service</p> <p>Helping to create a green, growing and sustainable economy across Warwickshire through promoting energy</p>

³⁵ Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

OBJECTIVE	NATURE OF REQUIRED INTERVENTIONS
	<p>efficiency. An energy audit for each business will produce bespoke decarbonisation plans to identify greenhouse gas savings, leading to greater energy efficiency, lower energy bills and reduced carbon emissions. Grants are also available to support businesses with the costs of low carbon adoption.</p> <p>Delivered by Coventry City Council.</p>
Infrastructure development	<p>Work closely with partners to ensure that Nuneaton and Bedworth businesses and residents are able to prosper in the post 2035 environment, after the phasing out of cars powered by fossil fuels, by ensuring provision of appropriate EV charging infrastructure.</p>
Corporate efficiencies	<p>Implement the Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council Corporate sustainability policies so acting as an exemplar to local businesses and organisations in efficiency savings.</p>