

# Economic Growth in Bedford



BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

Bulletin Number 15

Spring 2010



## New Premises for Showtrax International

Showtrax International, a cutting edge Bedford lighting company, has moved to new premises. The new building comprises workshops and storage, an 1800 sq ft fully equipped graphics department and offices with showroom. The new Showtrax building is the first of its kind in the UK to use, throughout, the latest in LED technology with computer controlled switches. One of the features allows the company to control lighting throughout the building from a remote destination. Osram, world leaders in LED lighting, will be highlighting the Showtrax building in some of their promotional literature to demonstrate the enormous savings that can be made in energy usage.



## Sainsbury's to Create 300 New Jobs for Bedford

In a significant boost to Bedford's economy, Sainsbury's is to take on a major distribution centre to be called 'Bedford Connect' at Marsh Leys Distribution Park in Kempston, creating approximately 300 jobs. Sainsbury's will be taking on the major warehouse vacated by Woolworths in 2009. It will be used by Sainsbury's to support its growing store network across the region.

On a national level, the take-up of warehouses fell in 2009 to its lowest level for nine years. As economic growth looks set to gradually return this year, this venture will further add to renewed occupier confidence. Sainsbury's has taken the unit on a 20-year lease. Other tenants at the park, which fronts the A421 on the western side of Bedford, include Asda and Argos. Craig Westmacott, Fund Manager of the Linked Life Property Fund at Legal & General Property, comments: "After intense competition from other leading occupiers, this deal clearly reflects the high quality, size and connectability of this unit in providing a strategically positioned South East distribution hub, as well as renewed occupier confidence in this market."

## Colworth Science Park

Colworth Science Park just north of Bedford, which is being developed by Unilever and global property group Goodman, is set to become a regional enterprise hub by bringing together academia, SMEs and other life science companies to drive technology transfer and support economic growth.

A new innovation and amenity centre, known as "The Exchange" and due for completion in January 2011 will enhance this culture further by providing modern laboratory and office suites, a café-restaurant, and state-of-the-art meeting and conference facilities for up to 200 people open to businesses both on and off site.

Support by the East of England Development Agency (EEDA) will enable Cranfield University and the University of Cambridge's Institute for Manufacturing (IfM) to establish a presence at Colworth Science Park in the 21,000 sq ft amenity centre. They will be based alongside



one of Unilever's global research facilities and 16 SME companies, which undertake cutting-edge research, prototyping and product development.

This will be complemented by the 35,000 sq ft Innovation Centre, which will provide a research facility for IFR Extra Ltd, part of the Institute for Food Research, and will offer flexible laboratory and office suites designed to accommodate, growing businesses and academics in a collaborative environment. Goodman and Unilever, who formed a 50:50 joint venture to develop the 1,200 acre site, hope the Innovation Centre will help address a shortage of scientific lab space in the region with an 'easy in / easy out' leasing policy, in addition to supporting the growth of knowledge firms in the food, health and wellness sector.



## Connectivity Improvements

Bedford has continued to see delivery of major connectivity improvements. The larger section of Bedford's western by-pass, from the A421 south of Bedford to the A428 west of Bedford, was completed in December 2009 – see opening photo. The final section of the by-pass, from the A428 to the A6 north of Bedford, has now achieved reserve list status in the Homes and Communities Agency's Kickstart 2 programme which bodes well for its early development.

The dualling of the A421 between Bedford and Junction 13 of the M1 remains on schedule for completion in December this year. Mirroring Bedford's excellent dual carriageway connection with the Black Cat roundabout on the A1, this first rate connection to the M1 will give spectacular views of the Marston Vale and its developing forest just south of Bedford. And major investment decisions are already reflecting this.

On the rail side too there has been significant progress with the design of a new main Bedford railway station well on the way and plans for a 2010 start on its construction. The works will also include provision of new and longer platforms as part of Network Rail's multi-billion pound investment in Thameslink delivering a 70% increase in capacity. Future proofing for East-West rail development is also a feature.



## Bedford Aldi Store Coming Forward

Coplan has commenced work on Phase One of a significant development on the eastern side of Bedford which will include a new Aldi food store and car park. This phase is due to complete in late March this year. The enabling works, which involved the demolition of the vacant supermarket and Century Pub, together with the refurbishment of the exiting retail parade, have now been completed. The highway works, which include two new pedestrian crossings into the centre, have also been completed. The overall scheme will include the 17,000 sq ft Aldi food store, the construction of 6,000 sq ft of new retail units, a 9,000 sq ft community centre, a 5,000 sq ft medical centre and 71 new residential units.



BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL

In this 15th issue of Economic Growth in Bedford it is encouraging to be able to continue to report on a range of solid economic progress. If you would like any further information about the bulletin and its contents in general (see above for item-specific contacts) please contact Patrick Lyons on +44 (1234) 227296 or [patrick.lyons@bedford.gov.uk](mailto:patrick.lyons@bedford.gov.uk). To receive copies of the publication electronically (and see back copies) visit [www.economicgrowth.org.uk](http://www.economicgrowth.org.uk)