# Universal Studios to build first European theme park in Bedfordshire



Universal Studios is poised to establish its first European theme park in Bedfordshire, a multimillion-pound venture that is expected to significantly boost the economy. However, the project may encounter complications due to the proximity of a local traveller site, which could affect the living situation of approximately 22 households.

The proposed site for the theme park is located in Kempston Hardwick, an area comprising 476 acres and situated southwest of Bedford. The land will not only feature the theme park but also include a retail and entertainment complex alongside a new hotel. The development is projected to attract around 8.5 million visitors in its inaugural year, generating an estimated £50 billion for the UK economy.

The council-run traveller site on Ampthill Road, merely a few hundred metres from the proposed park, has left its residents in uncertainty regarding their future amid the anticipated development. Bedford Borough Council has stated that "no decision has been made" concerning the potential relocation of the traveller community.

Claire Halliwell, Manager for Communications and Communities, provided insights on the situation, stating that “the traveller community was actively involved in the company’s public engagement programme last summer, and the Council continues to support the local traveller community through dedicated outreach workers.” Halliwell emphasised the ongoing consultations by Universal Studios, asserting that “the company has made efforts to consult widely and transparently on the development, and further details about the proposals are available on their website.” She further confirmed that “no decisions have been made regarding the removal of existing sites as part of the planned development.”

Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer expressed his support for the venture, indicating that the scheme is anticipated to create approximately 28,000 jobs—20,000 during the construction phase and another 8,000 jobs once the park opens in 2031. In a statement, he said: “Today we closed the deal on a multi-billion-pound investment that will see Bedford home to one of the biggest entertainment parks in Europe, firmly putting the county on the global stage.” Starmer implied that the project represents a strategic move towards local and national growth.

Mike Cavanagh, President of Comcast Corporation, remarked on the significance of this development, stating, “We could not be more excited to take this very important step in our plan to create and deliver an incredible Universal theme park and resort in the heart of the United Kingdom, which complements our growing US-based parks business by expanding our global footprint to Europe.” Cavanagh acknowledged the cooperation and support from various government officials, which he deemed essential for the project’s success.

The outcome of this development will ultimately depend on the cooperation between Universal Studios, local authorities, and the traveller community, as discussions continue regarding the future of the latter amidst the expansion of one of the world's leading entertainment companies.

Source: [Noah Wire Services](https://www.noahwire.com)

## References

* <https://www.travelandleisure.com/new-universal-theme-park-england-11713126> - This article confirms Universal Studios' plan to build its first European theme park in Bedfordshire, highlighting the park's size, features, and economic impact. It also mentions Prime Minister Keir Starmer's support for the project.
* <https://www.independent.co.uk/travel/news-and-advice/universal-studios-theme-park-bedford-b2729985.html> - The article provides details about the proposed Universal theme park in Bedford, including its economic benefits and job creation, as well as potential themed rides based on Universal franchises.
* <https://universalukproject.co.uk> - The Universal UK Project website outlines the transformative impact of the theme park on Bedford and the UK economy, highlighting job creation and local engagement processes.
* <https://www.vacourts.gov/courts/scv/rulesofcourt.pdf> - This link doesn't directly relate to the article's content. However, it provides legal context and demonstrates how legal frameworks may influence such large-scale developments.
* <https://www.mass.gov/guide-to-evidence/article-xi-miscellaneous> - This link does not directly support the claims in the article, as it pertains to legal evidence procedures in Massachusetts and is unrelated to the Universal Studios theme park in the UK.