

Borough Councillor's Update Carlton – April 2017

**Contact Borough Councillor Alison Foster by telephone on 07773371190
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Local Plan Consultation

As a reminder, the consultation is now open on the Borough's new Local Plan 2035. The consultation will last from 25th April to 9th June.

The report approved by the Mayor's Executive on 22nd February provides an updated housing need target of 19,000 to meet estimated population growth. Just over half of this figure is already catered for via existing planning permissions or is included in existing plans. There is a need, therefore, for the Council to find sites for just over 8,000 new dwellings.

The Council is pursuing an option to develop one or more new settlements in the north of the Borough to accommodate around a quarter of this target. The report confirms that sites in Wyboston (on the A1), Sharnbrook (Unilever), Twinwoods (Bedfordia land between Milton Ernest and Thurleigh) and Thurleigh Airfield are being considered as so called new 'Garden Village' settlements with around 4,000 – 6,000 dwellings each. The three sites proposed for our area could have a significant impact on traffic, particularly for those residents trying to get into Bedford during peak times and I would encourage all residents to respond to the consultation with their views.

Sites earmarked for development in the urban and edge of urban areas are set to accommodate just over 2,000 properties however only 700 of these are planned in the urban area with the remaining 1,300 being effectively in the rural area with allocations in Biddenham, Salph End Renhold and Gibraltar Corner, near Wootton, which the Borough calls "edge of urban area".

In addition, a number of villages have been designated as having 'Group 1' status, namely: Wilstead; Bromham; Sharnbrook; Clapham, and; Great Barford and are all set to increase substantially in size with between 500 – 600 new properties in each. An allocation of 1,000 homes has been earmarked for the brownfield site at the former Stewartby brick works.

This means that the rural areas are to bear the brunt of the Borough's requirement for new housing during the new local plan period up to 2035.

Group 2 villages across the Borough will see development of between 25 – 50 new homes. Included in Group 2 are: Carlton; Harrold; Milton Ernest; Oakley; Roxton, and; Turvey. Willington is also a Group 2 village but does not have a housing allocation.

The other villages are included in Groups 3 and 4. They do not have specific allocations but these communities may wish to bring forward sites for development through implementing Neighbourhood Plans. Odell, Wymington, Podington, Hinwick and Farndish come under this category.

I would encourage all residents to respond to the consultation either through the following link:

<https://bedford.firmstep.com/popup.aspx/RenderForm/?F.Name=VTvi9m82W6y>.

If you cannot do this you can print and post your completed questionnaire or write a letter. Please attach a stamp and post it to:

**Local Plan 2035 Consultation
Planning Policy Team
Borough Hall
Bedford**

MK42 9AP

Black Cat / A428

Highways England is holding a consultation between the 6th March – 23rd April 2017 on proposals to improve the Black Cat roundabout and provide a new dual carriageway to Caxton Gibbet.

The consultation document puts forward 3 options for consideration for the A428, as outlined below:

Orange route

- The route would run east of Black Cat roundabout across the River Great Ouse.
- It changes to a north direction after crossing the East Coast Mainline, past Cambridge Road where it crosses the existing A428 and runs east towards Caxton Gibbet.
- This route also includes additional improvements at Cambridge Road junction.

Purple route

- The route runs from Black Cat roundabout across the River Great Ouse and the East Coast Mainline towards Abbotsley.
- It bypasses Abbotsley in a north-east direction, continuing north-west of Great Gransden, south of Eltisley, and joins the current A428 at Caxton Gibbet.

Pink route

- The route runs from Black Cat roundabout across the River Great Ouse and the East Coast Mainline towards Little Gransden, moving north-east where it bypasses Abbotsley to the south.
- The route then continues in a north-east direction between Great Gransden and Eltisley where it changes to a north direction towards Caxton Gibbet.

There are also 3 options to upgrade the Black Cat roundabout, set out in the consultation document which can be seen in the consultation document at this link: <https://highwaysengland.citizenspace.com/he/a428-black-cat-to-caxton-gibbet/>

Infrastructure

Ampthill Road and Wixams Railway

The Government announced in March that a scheme to alleviate chronic congestion on Bedford's Ampthill Road will receive funding.

Last year the Government invited bids for new schemes to receive funding through its Local Growth Funds to boost regional economies. Bedford Borough Council subsequently put forward a bid, via the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP), a public / private group responsible for driving economic growth, to receive just under £5m to improve Ampthill Road's traffic flow.

The Southern Gateway project, as it is known, is set to use new technology to link traffic signals, thus enabling them to respond better to congestion. It also includes a planned revision of the road network that could see cycle lanes and footways moved to bridges adjacent to the road, which would allow an additional lane for traffic.

The Government subsequently announced that £59m will be allocated to the South East Midlands region to fund new schemes including the Bedford Southern Gateway. The estimated total cost of the project is £5.4m, including a £600k allocation from the Council. The Council has said its plans are flexible depending on the resources available.

SEMLEP will now undertake a 'due diligence' process to establish how much each of the schemes will receive.

Unfortunately, a bid to move forward long-awaited plans for a train station at Wixams was not included on the shortlist. Nevertheless, an additional bid has been made to the Government under a pot of funding for new railway stations.

Bedford Town Centre

A meeting of councillors in March heard that an £11m scheme to alleviate congestion in Bedford town centre has still not moved any further forward.

In 2014 the Council submitted a bid for Government funding to alleviate traffic congestion. This included plans for a new £30m river crossing at Batts Ford, connecting River Street on the northern side of the river with Kingsway on the southern side.

In 2015 the Government announced that the Council's bid had been successful and would receive £11m. The funds are currently being held by the Department for Transport.

Of relevance to the exact details of the scheme is Network Rail's plans to rebuild the bridges over the railway at Bromham Road and Ford End Road as part of the electrification of the Midland main line. The meeting heard that discussions between the Council and Network Rail to co-ordinate their respective schemes had not yet been fruitful.

Rural Policing

The Bedfordshire Police & Crime Commissioner, Kathryn Holloway, announced last month the establishment of a new rural crime unit.

Operation Sentinel Rural will see a team of an Inspector, Sergeant, 4 Police Constables and 4 Police Community Support Officers focus on rural policing issues. It was also announced that the unit will have use of a drone which will be used to acquire evidence. For more information see http://www.bedfordshire.pcc.police.uk/rural_crime_unit

Mobile Library

The Council has launched a public consultation on the future of its Mobile Library and Library Link services.

The Mobile Library currently visits 40 communities with 182 stops per month. The Library Link service has 20 routes and visits housebound individuals' homes, residential homes and sheltered accommodation units.

According to the consultation page on the Council's website, a proposed new timetable 'will mean some stops will be more frequent and some less frequent'. The timetable and further information can be viewed via www.bedford.gov.uk/mobileconsultation.

The consultation will end on the 9th June. You can respond to consultingbedford@bedford.gov.uk or by writing to the Council at: Consulting Bedford, Borough Hall, Cauldwell Street, Bedford, MK42 9AP

Homelessness Grant

The Council is to administer a £623k Government grant to provide assistance to rough sleepers.

The grant will fund in the next 2 years a Rough Sleeper Street Outreach Service across Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire, Luton Borough and Milton Keynes.

The Council will use the monies to commission organisations across these areas to provide increased support around accommodation, health and benefits. This includes the use of 'Crisis Intervention Workers' who will be tasked with providing intensive support in complex cases.

It is hoped that the grant will support around 700 people across the region. In November, the Council's annual Rough Sleeper Evaluation estimated that there were 59 people rough sleeping on any given night; up from 17 in 2011. The grant will, therefore, offer timely assistance.

Domestic Abuse

Last month the Council publicised its joint website, with Central Bedfordshire Council, to assist those requiring advice in relation to domestic violence issues.

The Bedfordshire Domestic Abuse Partnership website is now said to be more user friendly and interactive. The site, <https://bedsdv.org.uk/>, saw a 1296% increase in visits in the past 6 months after it was relaunched in September.