

Borough Councillor Update – June 2018

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Local Plan 2035

A meeting of the Mayor's Executive on the 16th May confirmed that the submission of the Council's Local Plan, setting out preferred sites for the development of around 8000 homes to the year 2035, will be delayed. This is because the proposed 'Garden Village' for Colworth (adjacent to Sharnbrook and Souldrop), to deliver 2500 homes in the Local Plan period and up to 4500 thereafter, will not now go ahead.

A key issue in relation to the viability of the Colworth Garden Village is the need for agreement between the site promoters and Santa Pod Raceway for the latter to put in place noise mitigations, given the close proximity of the proposed development. It is now clear that such an agreement is not in place, meaning the site is unviable in planning terms and its inclusion would have put the Local Plan at risk of not being considered 'sound' at examination by the Planning Inspectorate, as required by the National Planning Policy Framework.

Alternative options will now be considered, including the possibility of reducing the number of years covered by the Local Plan, which would decrease the number of homes requiring allocation.

Train Timetable Changes

You will probably have seen in the news that the introduction of new train timetables from the 20th May has caused widespread disruption around the country, including for commuters travelling to and from Bedford station.

The changes were implemented to accommodate the 'Thameslink Programme' which is designed to increase capacity on the lines travelling north and south through London, including the Bedford – Brighton Thameslink service.

If a delayed or cancelled journey has caused you to arrive at your destination 15 minutes or more behind schedule, you may be able to receive compensation. For more details see: <https://www.thameslinkrailway.com/delayrepay>

Urgent Treatment Centre

Bedford Hospital has announced more details of its Urgent Treatment Centre (UTC) which is scheduled to open at the beginning of October 2018.

The UTC will be situated at the Cauldwell Medical Centre on the Bedford Hospital site. It will provide same-day appointments for minor illnesses over a 12 hour period, 7 days a week, via referrals from A & E and 111 phone service, thus reducing pressure on the Hospital's A & E function.

Speed Cameras

In 2017/18, the Borough Council budgeted to deliver £7.8m of efficiencies. In February, Council finance officers estimated an overall underspend for the year of just under £1.8m. Of this sum, councillors chose to allocate £1m of for improvements to roads and pavements and £0.525m for new average speed cameras.

There are over 60 requests from local communities for average speed cameras on the waiting list. Following an audit of road safety, cameras will be placed at the following sites. The income from fines goes directly to central government:

Needwood Road, Bedford
Woburn Road, Kempston
Putnoe Lane, Bedford
Polhill Avenue, Bedford
High Street, Clapham
The Causeway, Carlton
High Street, Pavenham

Covanta

The campaign against the proposed 'Energy Recovery Facility' for Stewartby is to be taken to the High Court.

American waste processing business Covanta received a Development Consent Order from a joint committee of the Houses of Parliament in 2012 to develop the site. In January of this year, it was provided with an Environmental Permit from the Environment Agency to allow the development to proceed. The 'Bedfordshire Against Covanta Incinerator' (BACI) group has now requested a judicial review of the Environment Agency's decision.

Brewery Approved

A new £13m brewery is to be opened by Charles Wells at the Fairhill site, adjacent to the A6 Paula Radcliffe Way and the Great Ouse Way, following the grant of planning permission. The facility is expected to open in the summer of 2019.

Foster Carers Needed

The Borough Council marked 'Foster Care Fortnight' in May by highlighting the issue of children being placed with foster carers outside of the Borough as there are not enough local carers presently to meet demand.

The Council is in particular looking for new foster carers for older children, sibling groups, foster carers from black and minority ethnic groups and children with disabilities. All foster carers receive training and a weekly allowance. For more information see www.bedford.gov.uk/fostering or call the Council on 01234 718718.

River Festival 2018

The River Festival 2018 will be held on the 14th and 15 July on Bedford's Embankment. The event attracts around 300,000 people with attractions including live entertainment, river events, funfair and arts and crafts.