

Borough Councillor Update – April 2021

Contact Borough Councillor Alison Foster by telephone on 07773371190

or email at ajfieldfoster@gmail.com

Controversial route 'E' for East West Rail a source of increasing concern for Borough residents

The chosen route selected for the East West Rail project - route E - continues to prove controversial and Borough Councillors received a petition this month, signed by over 1600 Bedford residents, objecting to it. The petition was debated at a heated meeting of the Borough Council on 24th February, when a number of residents from parishes in and around the route, put a series of questions to Council Leaders, and calling for the Council to "hold a full public consultation to be followed by a debate at Full Council in respect of the Council's decision to support Route E".

Many residents felt that there had been a lack of transparency around how the Mayor and Borough had come to support route E and felt that not enough information had been put in the public domain. They also demanded to know how route E, previously identified as one of the most expensive of the 5 options A-E, had suddenly become the cheapest option, without any explanation.

The subject of freight also proved controversial, with residents, parishes and Borough Councillors expressing the view that freight had been underplayed in previous discussions, and more information was required, as it forms a key part of the business case for the EWR project.

In the Council debate that followed, the Mayor's and Council leadership put forward a resolution which reconfirmed the Borough's support for a route through the town centre but didn't really address the concerns of the petitioners. Councillors representing the rural wards in the north of the Borough, those most affected by route E, objected to the motion. They feel route E will do irreparable damage to the north Bedfordshire countryside. Equally, Councillors in the south of the Borough wanted to ensure the safe delivery of Wixams station and wanted an EWR route that would not jeopardise this. Ultimately, the Mayor's resolution was not unanimously supported.

The EWR Consultation has now opened. One point of particular controversy over their 'emerging preferred option' is that it affects up to 97 properties in the north of Bedford. The residents in the properties effected were informed the day before the consultation that their property may be subject to a CPO (Compulsory Purchase Order) in the future.

You can view all documents and respond on their website found below. There are also some dates for virtual events. We strongly urge you to respond before it closes on 9 June:

<https://eastwestrail.co.uk/consultation>

Mowsbury Golf Course now open, other Fusion run facilities to hopefully follow

In-line with the government roadmap, golf facilities at Mowsbury Golf and Squash Centre reopened on March 29.

The 18-hole course and driving range will give golf fans the opportunity to get back to the sport they love, in a safe and secure way.

The centre will be operating in line with the latest government guidelines and those planning to visit will be required to book and pay online, minimising contact required at the centre and allowing for the track and trace process to be implemented.

Centre users will be asked to arrive ready to play. These measures, combined with meticulous cleaning routines, are designed to keep customers safe and offer complete confidence to use the facilities.

Fusion is working with Bedford Borough Council to reopen other facilities in the area in a phased approach in line with the government roadmap.

Bookings can be made up to seven days in advance, via download of the Fusion Lifestyle app or visit www.fusion-lifestyle.com to register and use the booking facility.

For centre opening times and timetables please visit www.fusion-lifestyle.com/centres/mowsbury-golf-and-squash-centre

Boundary Commission update

The Boundary Commission has changed its timetable for its recommendations. There will now be more draft recommendations released on 11 May for 8 weeks of further consultation. The final recommendations will then be released on 31 August.

Register to Vote by 19 April

On Thursday 6 May, the Police and Crime Commissioner elections will take place across the country.

To have your say and vote, you must be registered. If you have recently moved or are not registered to vote, make sure you register by Monday 19 April.

It is quick and easy to register to vote, via the Council's website at www.bedford.gov.uk/elections

Measures including social distancing, face coverings and asking people to bring their own pen or pencil with them to polling stations will be in place to ensure the voting process is safe and COVID-secure.

There is also the option to register for a postal vote. You will then receive your ballot paper through the post, and you can post it back for your vote to be counted. You can register for a postal vote at www.bedford.gov.uk/elections by 5pm on Tuesday 20 April for this Election Day.

You can also apply to vote by proxy- for someone to vote on your behalf. Completed applications must be with the Council by 5pm on Tuesday 27 April, and you can apply online at www.bedford.gov.uk/elections

On-street electric vehicle charging points to be installed for residents without driveways

Bedford Borough Council, following a successful bid for over £96,000 to the Office for Zero Emission Vehicles (OZEV) and in partnership with electric vehicle (EV) charging specialist Connected Kerb, is installing 30 EV charging points in streets across Bedford.

These electric vehicle charging points are being installed in five different streets across Bedford. These are Russell Avenue near Russell Park, Oaklands Road off Kimbolton Road, Cutcliffe Grove off Bromham Road, Park Road West near Bedford Park, and Victoria Road off Amphill Road.

The charging points will all be on-street to cater for residents who do not have their own driveways and so are unable to charge at home.

These installations are part of the Council's ongoing efforts to support Bedford Borough's transition to greener transport while working to improve local air quality. These sites will help to shape the future of additional borough-wide charge point deployments.

These charging points are expected to be open and available for use by the end of March.

Find out more at www.bedford.gov.uk/electricvehicles

Kempston housing development given go-ahead despite being 200 parking spaces short

The Planning committee chairman used his casting vote to give the go-ahead to a development of 341 new homes on a derelict former factory site in Kempston.

Pointing out that the proposals would be 200 parking spaces short of Bedford Borough Council's accepted standards, objectors fear jam-packed residential roads would have to squeeze in more cars.

Planning Officer Alastair Wren said their recommendation to approve the plan was a "balanced" position, with issues both weighing in its favour, and against.

He added that the 326 car parking spaces proposed for the 2.74-hectare site falls 206 short of Bedford Borough Council's usual standards but they accepted that it was "appropriate" and would not cause a problem off-site.

More information is available at: [Kempston housing development given go-ahead despite being 200 parking spaces short - Bedford Independent](#)

COVID-19 Update

The Government has now set a roadmap out of lockdown, we are now in the second stage of step 1:

STEP 1
8 March 29 March

EDUCATION
8 MARCH

- Schools and colleges open for all students
- Practical Higher Education courses

SOCIAL CONTACT
8 MARCH 29 MARCH

- Exercise and recreation outdoors with household or one other person
- Household only indoors
- Rule of 6 or two households outdoors
- Household only indoors

BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES
8 MARCH 29 MARCH

- Wraparound care, including sport, for all children
- Organised outdoor sport (children and adults)
- Outdoor sport and leisure facilities
- All outdoor children's activities
- Outdoor parent & child group (max 15 people, excluding under 5s)

TRAVEL
8 MARCH 29 MARCH

- Stay at home
- No holidays
- Minimise travel
- No holidays

EVENTS

- Funerals (30)
- Weddings and wakes (6)

STEP 2
No earlier than 12 April

At least 5 weeks after Step 1

EDUCATION

- As previous step

SOCIAL CONTACT

- Rule of 6 or two households outdoors
- Household only indoors

BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES

- All retail
- Personal care
- Libraries & community centres
- Most outdoor attractions
- Indoor leisure inc. gyms (individual use only)
- Self-contained accommodation
- All children's activities
- Outdoor hospitality
- Indoor parent & child groups (max 15 people, excluding under 5s)

TRAVEL

- Domestic overnight stays (household only)
- No international holidays

EVENTS

- Funerals (30)
- Weddings, wakes, receptions (15)
- Event pilots

STEP 3
No earlier than 17 May

At least 5 weeks after Step 2

EDUCATION

- As previous step

SOCIAL CONTACT

- Maximum 30 people outdoors
- Rule of 6 or two households indoors (subject to review)

BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES

- Indoor hospitality
- Indoor entertainment and attractions
- Organised indoor sport (adult)
- Remaining accommodation
- Remaining outdoor entertainment (including performances)

TRAVEL

- Domestic overnight stays
- International travel (subject to review)

EVENTS

- Most significant life events (30)
- Indoor events: 1,000 or 50%
- Outdoor seated events: 10,000 or 25%
- Outdoor other events: 4,000 or 50%

STEP 4
No earlier than 21 June

At least 5 weeks after Step 3
All subject to review

EDUCATION

- As previous step

SOCIAL CONTACT

- No legal limit

BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES

- Remaining businesses, including nightclubs

TRAVEL

- Domestic overnight stays
- International travel

EVENTS

- No legal limit on life events
- Larger events

As of the 31st March in Bedford there have been 13,353 cases since the start of the Pandemic and there have been 61 registered cases in Bedford in the last 7 days.

If you would like the latest COVID snapshot (as of 31st March) please find it below:

<https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Social%20Care%20Health%20and%20Community/Covid19/covid19-weekly-statistics-31-march-2021.pdf>

More information available at: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/social-care-health-and-community/public-health/coronavirus/>

COVID test centres in Bedford

There is continued testing in Bedford at Borough Hall and Prebend Street car parks as well as University of Bedfordshire's Polhill Campus

Test results from these sites should come back with 24-72 hours.

The government has updated its advice on testing. If you have any of the symptoms of Coronavirus, you can ask for a test through the NHS website or phone 119.

There are two walk through testing centres in Bedford for residents showing symptoms of Coronavirus.

Drive-through testing is available 6 days/week at Gilbert Hitchcock House, Bedford Hospital and 5 days/week at Borough Hall. Both can be booked through the national testing website.

If you're an essential worker (see list [here](#)) you can apply for priority testing through GOV.UK by following the guidance for essential workers on the government website.

You can also get tested through this route if you have symptoms of coronavirus and live with an essential worker.

If you are unable to get to a testing centre, you can order a home testing kit through the national testing website.

You can find further details on testing on the government webpages.

More information is available here: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/social-care-health-and-community/public-health/coronavirus/covid-19-testing/>

Launch of free rapid Covid testing for workers without symptoms at the Bunyan Centre

Bedford residents who are in contact with other members of the public as part of their work are now able to access free, rapid Covid-19 (coronavirus) tests and are encouraged to take a test twice a week.

This includes retail workers, childminders, bus and taxi drivers, construction workers and tradespeople like plumbers or electricians. Testing is also available for pregnant women and their partners prior to attending key maternity appointments.

Bedford Borough Council, in partnership with the Department of Health and Social Care, has launched the free community testing initiative for workers without symptoms.

The self-administered test takes 10 minutes and the results are usually sent by text message within an hour. A negative rapid test does not completely rule out infection, so it is important that individuals and business continue to follow COVID-secure guidelines.

The new 'no symptom' rapid test site is located at the John Bunyan Sports & Fitness Centre, Mile Road, MK42 9TS.

COVID-19: Increased Support If You Need to Self-Isolate

Bedford Borough Council is making the Test and Trace Support Payment available to more people and has increased the Support Payment to £700. This means this payment will cover the earnings of someone working full time on the Living Wage.

In Bedford Borough, an individual is eligible for a Test and Trace Support Payment if:

- they have been told to self-isolate by NHS Test and Trace, and
- have responded to the Test and Trace messages about their contacts, and
- are unable to work from home, and

Either:

- are currently receiving Universal Credit, Working Tax Credit, income-based Employment and Support Allowance, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Pension Credit, or
- are on a low income (household earns less than £25,000 per year) and can show that self-isolation will result in financial hardship

If anyone has any symptoms of coronavirus: high temperature, new continuous cough, loss or change to your sense of smell or taste, it is really important that they self-isolate and book a test at www.nhs.uk/coronavirus

Also, anyone contacted by NHS Test and Trace and asked to self-isolate, must do so for the full amount of time they are told. Someone may not test positive or show symptoms straight away, but you could still be infectious and spread the virus to others, as it can take 10 days to develop the symptoms.

You can apply for this payment and find out more via our website by visiting www.bedford.gov.uk/TTSP adversely impacted- will receive this further grant automatically.