

Borough Councillor Update – July/August 2020

**Contact Borough Councillor Alison Foster by telephone on 07773371190
or email at ajfieldfoster@gmail.com**

Local News

The T-junction of Harold Road from Bozeat onto Dungee Road

Following a number of accidents at the Bozeat junction on the Dungee Road including some serious injuries a site meeting was arranged with Borough Highways officers on 21st July and attended by Parish Councillors from Podington, Harrold and Bozeat, myself and Richard Fuller MP . Whilst the junction itself is in Northamptonshire accidents occur in Bedford Borough when drivers from the Bozeat direction fail to stop at the junction. As a result of the meeting Borough officers have now placed 9 Flexi reflective bollards on the Dungee Road facing oncoming traffic from Bozeat and officers will liaise with their counterparts in Northamptonshire to request rumble strips before the junction.

Odell Road proposed development of 90 houses – Catesby Estates

Following a High Court challenge to the Inspector's decision on this appeal dated 9th January 2020 the Court has ordered that the appeal be re-determined. This does not necessarily mean that the Inspector will reach a different overall decision. The Planning Inspectorate will determine this on the basis of a local inquiry/re-opened local inquiry. The Inspector will also consider any relevant evidence previously submitted, unless it is expressly superseded by its originator during this 're-determination' process. Although we cannot be sure exactly when at this stage but it is likely there will be a public inquiry, towards the end of 2020 or early 2021. This is likely to be a virtual inquiry unless pandemic restrictions have been lifted by then. Residents will be able to contribute to a virtual inquiry either remotely or by telephone if they wish to address the Planning Inspector. I will keep you updated.

New Local Plan 2030 – 40

When the Planning Inspectorate approved the current Local Plan in January 2020 it required the Borough to have its new Local Plan in place by the end of 2023. In terms of Local Plan preparation this is an extremely short timescale.

The issues and Options Consultation and Call for Sites published by the Borough required sites for potential development to be submitted by August 14th 2020 and for the Issues and Options Consultation responses to be submitted by 4th September 2020. These are both now closed. If you wish to make comments on the consultation the Borough may accept late responses if submitted in Word format as the online consultation is now closed. If you do wish to do so it would be advisable to contact the Planning Department at Borough Hall to seek permission to submit late.

The consultation document is available here:

<https://edrms.bedford.gov.uk/OpenDocument.aspx?id=ajXyWpiQOSjbXJMPuCUZyw%3d%3d&name=Appendix%20A%20Issues%20and%20Options%20Paper.pdf>

This document contains suggestions for significant growth in our area along the A6 corridor which will have an impact on all of our residents and on the A6. Not only are the three very large so called 'garden villages' put forward in the last Local Plan included at Twinwoods, Thurleigh (now withdrawn) and Colworth, with their proposals for between 4,500 - 6,000 houses each along the A6 corridor north of Bedford there is an additional urban development site at Wymington which Borough officers believe may have the scope for a new station.

Any new station will require a development of between 3,000 to 5,000 houses to make it a viable proposition. These are only proposals at this stage and there will be further consultation once the Borough has completed its assessment of sites put forward.

(We have since been informed that the Thurleigh Airfield site will not be put forward by its owners).

Borough news

Bedford Borough is now off the Government 'area of concern' watchlist

In July there was a rise in the number of cases and the Borough was listed as 'an area of concern' by the Government. The Borough had previously seen the highest infection rate in the East of England. A Deep Dive report on behalf of the Council found that there was no singular cause of this high infection rate.

On 21 August the Government announced that the Borough was coming off the coronavirus 'area of concern' watchlist. While welcoming this and the reduction in coronavirus cases seen in recent weeks, Bedford Borough Council is urging the public not to get complacent.

Bedford Borough Council to support local Covid tracing

Local residents that have tested positive will either be phoned or visited by a team from the Council if national contact tracers are unable reach them in the first 24 hours.

Bedford Borough Council is running a Test and Trace service, working with the national NHS Test and Trace to help contact local residents who have tested positive for COVID-19. This will help ensure that details of their close contacts are captured quickly. Those people can then be contacted and told that they need to self-isolate, break the chain of infection, and help slow the spread in Bedford Borough further.

When an individual tests positive for COVID-19, the national NHS Test and Trace service will try to contact them. If NHS Test and Trace is unable to get in touch after 24 hours, Bedford Borough Council will follow up, by phone, by text or by coming to the door. Phone calls and text messages and will come from a local 01234 or private number and, if visited at home, it will be by a council officer with an ID badge.

If contacted by the NHS Test and Trace or by Bedford Borough Council to ask about contacts, it's important that people share information open and honestly. This information will be handled with strictest confidence. Sharing contacts will help to keep communities safe, save lives and avoid further restrictions on public life.

Please note the NHS Test and Trace service will not:

- ask for bank details or payments
- ask for details of any other accounts, such as social media
- ask you to set up a password or PIN number over the phone
- ask you to call a premium rate number, such as those starting 09 or 087

Bedford Borough Libraries Select and Collect Service

Bedford Borough Council has begun the phased reopening of library services on 18th August. With lockdown measures easing over the summer various shops and other facilities locally began to open. The Council decided it was safe to begin a cautious and phased reopening of leisure and culture services, with stringent infection prevention measures in place.

From Thursday 20 August, Bedford Central and Kempston libraries will be open for a new 'Select and Collect' service, as well as for customers to return books they have had on loan during lockdown. Select and Collect gives customers the opportunity to borrow library books again by making requests based on their favourite genres or subjects, online or via the phone. Library staff will then choose books based on these preferences and issue them to customers, who will be notified when they are ready to collect from library entrances during Select and Collect opening times. Customers will also be able to use the request service to choose specific titles through Arena, the online catalogue, and to pick them up from the library.

When books are returned they will be quarantined for 72 hours, and safety measures have been developed for the selection, issuing and packing of books for collection. Customers will also be able to return the items they have at home to Bedford Central and Kempston libraries during Select and Collect hours. Due dates will continue to be extended for any items already on loan, and charges will remain paused for any items that are already overdue.

Further Traffic Light Upgrades

The Borough has started work to upgrade the traffic lights at the junction of London Road and Elstow Road. Equipment and software will be put in place to improve the detection and control of traffic, along with new signal heads, re-wiring, and some pavement works at the crossing points. This is part of the wider Transporting Bedford project, which has seen major works carried out on congestion hotspots in the town including Britannia Road and Manton Lane. Part of this project is the upgrading of a number of traffic light junctions with the latest technology so that they operate more efficiently, reduce congestion, and improve journey times for motorists, cyclists and pedestrians. These upgrades will make our traffic light system better connected, better able to respond to demand and help manage traffic. Further traffic light upgrades will be taking place at Prebend Street, Kingsway and Cauldwell Street early next year.

Garden Waste Collections Return to Fortnightly

Garden waste collections returned to fortnightly collections from 17th August. These collections were suspended to ensure that the bin crews could continue an uninterrupted collection of household waste and recycling, whilst ensuring they could social distance.

You can check your bin collection dates at www.bedford.gov.uk/bins, and the schedule will be back to normal so if you have a printed calendar for your bin collections this year that will also be correct.

Council Tax - advice for residents

Help is available for local residents who are struggling financially because of the Coronavirus outbreak. Residents on the lowest income already do not pay any Council Tax due to the Council Tax Reduction Scheme.

The government has introduced a COVID-19 Council Tax Hardship Fund, and this means:

- if you already receive some Council Tax Support but still have part of the bill to pay, you will now get a bigger reduction – and in some cases will not have to pay any Council Tax at all. This discount will be automatically applied to your Council Tax bill if you are eligible, and we will send you an updated bill.
- if your circumstances have changed and you think you are now eligible for Council Tax Support, please contact the Borough Council by going to the **Council Tax Support page** on the Borough's website to claim online.
- if you are having immediate difficulty paying your Council Tax bill please get in touch with the Borough's advisors who will be able to help by calling 01234 718097 or email **LocalTaxation@bedford.gov.uk**

Please contact the Borough Council on 01234 718097 or by emailing **CustomerServices@bedford.gov.uk** if you are in immediate financial crisis.