

Borough Councillors Report to Turvey Parish Council July 2021

Bedford Borough awarded £22.6m by Government for Town Deal

It has been announced that Bedford Borough will receive £22.6 million from the Government, following a successful bid for a Town Deal.

In October 2020, Bedford Borough Council and Bedford Town Deal Board submitted their Town Investment Plan as part of their bid for up to £25million from Central Government.

This bid has now been accepted. Bedford Borough Council have been awarded £22.6m to rejuvenate the town with a number of projects that must be completed by March 2026.

The projects submitted in the plan include regeneration of the Station Quarter and Midland Road, public realm improvements to St. Paul's Square, improvements to town centre junctions and local pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, and investment in Health, Science and Digital Skills and Full Fibre broadband.

The regeneration of the Station Quarter and Midland Road will bring important investment to these spaces as key gateways to the town centre for visitors in Bedford. The regeneration projects will also see investment in walking and cycling infrastructure, which connects the two areas and creates a vibrant corridor to the town centre.

The suggested public realm improvements to St. Paul's Square will enhance the experience for both shoppers and visitors, increasing the vibrancy of the centre of Bedford and promoting the town as a place to meet friends and family and have fun.

The proposed investment in our roads, pedestrian and cycling network will promote greater accessibility and mobility for residents, while relieving pinch points across the town centre, reducing congestion and creating a safer environment for cyclists and pedestrians.

East West Rail Consultation now closed

The East West Rail Consultation is now closed. East West Rail will now have to go through all the responses they have received and produce a response. The Conservative Group submitted their response which insists that a re-consultation is needed and that either of the routes selected by East West Rail would cause major environmental impact.

Short notice Adjournment Debate obtained by Richard Fuller MP on East West Rail consultation.

North East Bedfordshire MP, Mr Richard Fuller, secured an adjournment debate on Monday 28 June to discuss the many problems with the current East West Rail (EWR) scheme and how they have conducted their consultations.

During the debate, Richard Fuller MP raised a number of wide-ranging issues that include:

- The costings given by EWR and how they changed after the original route consultation, without members of the public being able to comment further on this.
- The lack of a proper environmental impact assessment and how this could lead to the scheme not meeting net zero carbon targets, and its impact on the North East Bedfordshire countryside.
- The Mayor's decision to not bring Bedford Borough Council's response to the original consultation to Councillors for a proper debate.
- Failure to account for other factors, such as how much emphasis will be placed on freight, how Covid will affect this and the use of polluting fuel.

In response the Minister promised Richard Fuller a meeting with EWR where full costing documents would be made available to him prior to the meeting.

It is available to view here: <https://parliamentlive.tv/event/index/f3b98078-4c95-48ca-90b6-847f5e34738a?in=19:37:08>

And you can read the transcript here: <https://hansard.parliament.uk/commons/2021-06-28/debates/E6913A57-4EFE-4E06-BEDD-52E30167984B/EastWestRailRouteConsultationNorthEastBedfordshire>

Boundary Commission update

On May 11 the Boundary Commission released their latest draft recommendations. They are available to look at on the following website where you are also able to respond:

<https://consultation.lgbce.org.uk/have-your-say/20441>

The deadline for responding is 5th July.

They have also written a report explaining their decisions here: <https://s3-eu-west-2.amazonaws.com/lgbce/Reviews/Eastern/Bedfordshire/Bedford/New%20Draft%20Recs/Bedford%20new%20draft%20recommendations%20report.pdf>

Local Plan 2040 Update

The new Local Plan 2040 draft is now available, a consultation called The Draft Plan: Strategy options and draft policies consultation will run from Tuesday 29 June to 5pm on Friday 3 September 2021.

You can find the current draft here: [Item 08 Bedford Borough Local Plan 2040 Report and Appendices.pdf](#)

You can also find a summarising report from one of our group Councillors, Phillippa Martin-Moran-Bryant attached with this report [here](#).

Bedford Borough appoint Acting Chief Executive

The former Interim Chief Executive of Bedford Borough Council unfortunately had to stand down due to health issues.

Recruitment to the permanent post is ongoing with the intention of making an appointment at Full Council 14 July if there is a successful candidate from the selection process.

In the interim, the Council have appointed Mark Stephens as Acting Chief Executive. This was approved at an Extraordinary Full Council that was held on 11th June.

Works have started on the 'Northern Gateway'

Works started on Monday 28 June at the 'Northern Gateway' of Bedford, to ease congestion in this busy area and make the roads safer for all road users, as part of the Transporting Bedford project.

Clapham Road between Paula Radcliffe Way and Manton Lane will be widened to create an extra lane for traffic, and a specific left turn filter lane to allow traffic heading up Manton Lane to bypass the roundabout.

Improvements will also be made to allow people coming south on Clapham Road to turn right into Sainsbury's, which will also help to ease traffic on this busy roundabout.

The Clapham Road roundabout itself will be widened to create more space for traffic to flow, and traffic signals will be installed to help ease congestion during the morning and afternoon rush hours. Improved pedestrian and cyclist crossings will also be installed, to make it easier to cross this busy junction.

These works are expected to complete in Spring 2022. To minimise disruption on this busy route, the majority of these works will be carried out using temporary lane closures, ensuring that the route can still be used throughout.

Resurfacing works will also be carried out as part of this project, early next year, which will require phased overnight closures of the route. These will be carefully phased to ensure they are carried out with the minimum inconvenience to road users and the surrounding businesses and residents.

Originally, the scheme was intended to make journey times through the junction quicker at peak times, but the focus is now on providing consistent journey times.

New Bike Shelter Opens in Bedford Town Centre

A new bike storage shelter has now opened in Bedford town centre, near Harpur Square enhancing the bike racks that are currently there.

To access the shelter, cyclists just need to email Sustainable.Transport@bedford.gov.uk with their full name, address in Bedford Borough and phone number. They will then receive details on how to access the unit and will need to download the 'Okey Access' app on their smart phone.

The bike storage unit uses secure encrypted Bluetooth and 'Near Field Communications' to communicate between your phone and the shelter, you do not need internet access.

This is the UK's first ever cycle hub to feature an app-based locking and booking system that can be managed from your smart phone or tablet.

Borough COVID-19 Update

As of the 20th of June, in Bedford there have been 15,216 cases since the start of the pandemic and there have been 173 registered cases in Bedford in the last 7 days.

If you would like the latest COVID snapshot (as of 20th June) please find it below:

<https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Social%20Care%20Health%20and%20Community/Covid19/Covid19-weekly-statistics-23Jun21.pdf>

The Delta (Indian) variant is now the dominant strain in Bedford. Bedford Borough are asking residents to proceed with extreme caution.

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

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/covid-19-coronavirus-restrictions-what-you-can-and-cannot-do>

Vaccinations available for over 18s

Vaccinations are now being offered to all over 18s in the Borough. If you have yet to receive your first jab, or if it's been eight weeks since your first vaccine, you can book an appointment at one of the below seven pharmacies, or at Bedford Heights.

Bedford Pharmacy, 9 Greenhill Street

Kidman's Surgical Chemist, Castle Road

The Village Pharmacy, Meiklejohn Centre, Unit 3, Kingswood Way, Great Denham

Meiklejohn Pharmacy, Harrowden Road

Janssens Pharmacy, Ampthill Road

Bromham Pharmacy, Avoca House, Molivers Lane, Bromham

Smarta Healthcare, Stephenson Court, Fraser Road, Priory Business Park

Residents can either book direct at the pharmacy or go through the national booking centre to get their vaccine at Bedford Heights.

Local Plan 2040- Housing and Employment Land Focus

Meeting with Planning Officers and Conservative Councillors Monday 7th June 2021

Webpage: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy-its-purpose/local-plan-review/>

Executive papers: <https://councillorsupport.bedford.gov.uk/documents/s55106/Item 08 Local Plan 2040.pdf>

Why the rush?

Local Plan 2030 Policy 1 requires a new plan to be submitted by January 2023 if it is not then the Council's housing policies are treated as out of date which means 'speculative' applications start getting approval.

Where are we in the process?

The process is:

- Preparation of a local plan (Regulation 18) – consultees invited to make representations about what the local plan ought to contain
 - Issues and Options held Summer 2020
 - Strategy Options and Draft Policies Consultation- Summer **2021** ← we are here

BBC has allowed for one more consultation after this current one before the final text of the draft local plan is prepared

- Publication of a local plan (Regulation 19) - **Summer 2022**
- Representations relating to a local plan (Regulation 20) – **Summer 2022**
- Submission of documents to the Secretary of State for examination (Regulation 22) - **January 2023**
- Independent examination (Regulation 24)
- Adoption of a local plan (Regulation 26)

Important to respond robustly at Reg 18 (this stage) as this is when the broad strategy is being set- there will be little time for the council to dramatically revise this later on given the tight timetable to submit by January 2023.

Housing Numbers

Target set by Government is 1275 dwellings pa (970 in the Local Plan 2030). Expect this to change again Spring 2022. Council has looked at whether it could argue for a lower target but concluded that it is too risky.

Scope of the Local Plan 2040

This is a partial review of the Local Plan 2030. Most development management policies will stay the same. Updates are on:

- development strategy and delivery of growth
- town centre and retail policies,
- updated policies on self-build/custom build housing,
- quality of development and residential space standards,
- environmental net gain.

Development Strategy

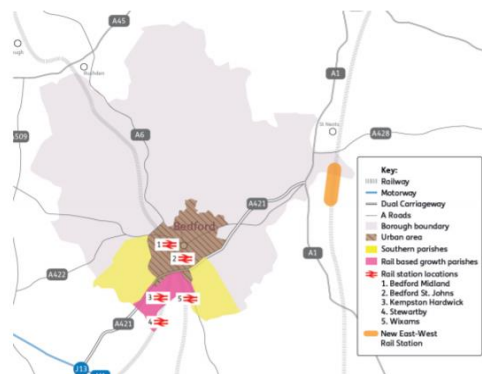
Took the six options in the Issues and Options paper 2020 and looked at ways of combining them. BBC created 4 options that it will be consulting on over Summer 2021 called Options 2a, 2b, 2c, and 2d.

Important note- they haven't entirely discounted the other options in the Issues and Options 2020 paper yet. Those responding to the consultation should also say if they are opposed to/supportive of any of the original 6 options or particular sites as they may come back on the table (developers will be working on their arguments for their preferred strategies).

All 4 options include development on brownfield in Bedford and development around existing railway stations in town centre and to the south of Bedford. Officers say that they have tried to avoid those settlements which have already taken significant growth in the Local Plan 2030 having to take much more growth, however in my view this doesn't seem to quite be borne out – particularly in Option 2d. No strategic preference between Options 2a, 2b, 2c and 2d yet.

Option 2a: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth parishes and southern parishes.

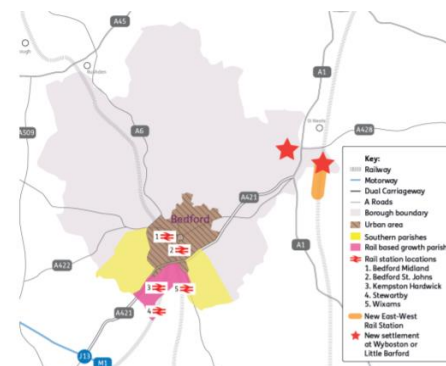
- Within the urban area (1,500 dwellings).
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500 dwellings), up to 51 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams (high option) (7,500 dwellings), up to 80 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – south: land within the parishes of Cotton End, Elstow, Kempston Rural, Shortstown, Wilstead and Wootton (2,000 dwellings).
- Total 12,500 dwellings and up to 131 ha employment



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Option 2b: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth parishes and southern parishes, plus one new settlement.

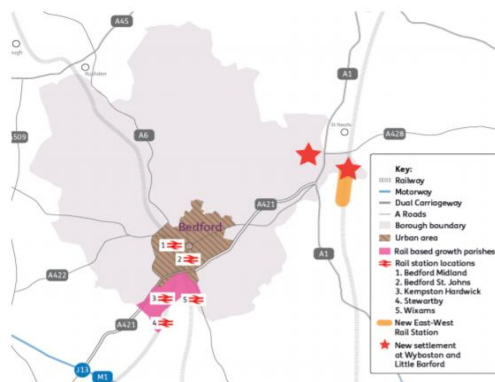
- Within the urban area (1,500 dwellings).
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500 dwellings), up to 51 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams (low option) (5,500 dwellings), up to 80 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – south: land within the parishes of Cotton End, Elstow, Kempston Rural, Shortstown, Wilstead and Wootton (1,500 dwellings).
- New settlement at Little Barford (3,085 dwellings) or Wyboston (2,500 dwellings), up to 20 ha employment.
- Total between 12,500 and 13,085 dwellings and up to 151 ha employment.



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Option 2c: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth parishes, plus two new settlements.

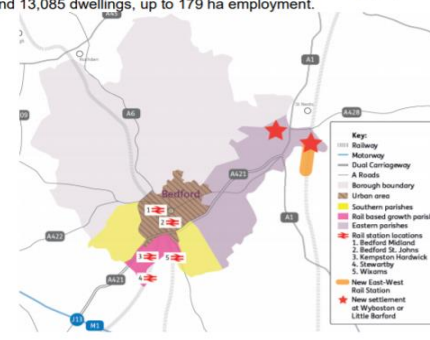
- Within the urban area (1,500 dwellings).
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500 dwellings), up to 51 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams (extra low option, this being the residual required to meet need) (3,915 dwellings), up to 80 ha employment.
- New settlements at Little Barford (3,085 dwellings) and Wyboston (2,500 dwellings), up to 20 ha employment.
- Total 12,500 dwellings, up to 151 ha employment.



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Option 2d: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth parishes, southern parishes and east parishes, plus one new settlement.

- Within the urban area (1,500 dwellings).
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500 dwellings), up to 51 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams (low option) (5,500 dwellings), up to 80 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – south: land within the parishes of Cotton End, Elstow, Kempston Rural, Shortstown, Wilstead and Wootton (750 dwellings).
- Transport corridor – east: land within the parishes of Cardington, Cople, Great Barford, Little Barford, Roxton, Willington and Wyboston (750 dwellings), up to 28 ha employment.
- New settlement at Little Barford (3,085 dwellings) or Wyboston (2,500 dwellings), up to 20 ha employment.
- Total between 12,500 and 13,085 dwellings, up to 179 ha employment.



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Which sites will be allocated?

We don't know yet, however, officers said that when looking at the 4 strategy options this should be read in conjunction with the call for sites submissions and the analysis done so far – this should give an indication of where housing and employment land is likely to go. Council hasn't done a full analysis of all sites yet- still work in progress. A few more sites may be submitted at this consultation.

Call for Site's information: <https://bluefoxtex.co.uk/demos/bedford-published-sites/#/center/-0.4399,52.1458>

If a key piece of information is missing from the call for sites analysis, please let the council know in your consultation response! Local knowledge is helpful.

Sites will be assessed based on suitability (which includes location and other limitations), availability and achievability. See here: [HELAA](#) #

They will be subject to a [Site selection assessment](#) (click link for info). The completed forms will be available before the start of the consultation but are not currently available.

Neighbourhood Plans

BBC working with PCs to see if they would like to make/update NDPs to allocate sites. Big strategic sites such as a new settlement would be made by the Borough. If PCs want some local incremental growth, they can plan for it through an NDP even if they are not allocated a specific number of houses.

Delivery of Housing/Infrastructure

BBC looking at infrastructure first approach so more of the housing might be delivered later in the plan period once infrastructure is in place.

What has informed this consultation?

Issues and Options Consultation responses- apparently there was a broad consensus of focussing on the existing urban areas and the A421 corridor
<https://www.bedford.gov.uk/planning-andbuilding/planning-policy-its-purpose/local-plan-review/>

They have also had traffic data and a new strategic flood assessment commissioned.

Strategic Flood Assessment: <https://www.bedford.gov.uk/planning-and-building/planning-policy-its-purpose/technical-reports/> (There is an interactive flooding map - *Works better in Explorer - some elements don't work well in Chrome*)

Density

No assumed densities yet- if you want to know about site densities then look at the call for sites information provided by site promoters

External Factors affecting the Local Plan

- East West Rail

A reconsultation wouldn't change this plan as there isn't time for it, given the need for this plan to be submitted by January 2023. The station-based growth is all based around existing stations in any case.

- Ox-Cam Arc

Government is developing an arc wide strategy – this has been slightly delayed but expecting a consultation in autumn 2021 on this. It will affect Bedford. This is expected to include significant growth (a figure of 1 million houses within the arc has been discussed) and there may be development corporations set up which could take away planning power from BBC.

- Changes to Planning System

These are expected following on from the consultation in Autumn 2020, but councils have been told to carry on with their plans anyway.

Consultation Dates:

28 June to Friday 3 September 2021

Other matters in this consultation

In particular there are draft town centre policies which we need to review but I suggest we should look at this separately.

Take away points

- This is a consultation on the broad locations for housing and employment growth up to 2040.
- It could impact rural areas along the A421/A603 and may include new settlements near St Neots.
- There is a very tight timetable for BBC to complete this plan. If it fails it will be very hard to reject 'speculative' planning applications.
- Important to engage at this stage to shape the strategy- allocations of sites will follow the strategy.
- Must read the strategy with the call for sites submitted to see what is likely to be allocated under each option.
- Previous ideas for growth are not full off the table so please also still comment on those (the 6 options in the Issues and Options paper) to avoid them coming back.