

Renhold Parish Council: Borough Councillors' Update – April 2017

Local Plan Consultation

As a reminder, a consultation will be held from the 24th April – 9th June on the Council's Local Plan 2035. This will give residents the opportunity to have their say on the proposed sites adjoining the village, as per our report last month and set out in the below table taken from the report agreed by the Mayor's Executive. We have registered our opposition to these plans given the effect they would have on the character of the village:

Site number	Address	Estimated capacity	Comments
Salph End			
205 / 209	Land at Ravensden Road	500	Accesses to the sites would need improvement. The Ravensden Road site is large enough to provide a site for a primary school.
581	27 Hookhams Lane		
198 / 610	Land east of Hookhams Lane		
Total Salph End			
Freemen's Common/Graze Hill			

For more information see www.bedford.gov.uk/localplan2035

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 changes relevant to Renhold can be seen below:

Place	Stop	Proposed Timetable				Current Mobile Timetable			
		Day	Arrive	Depart	Frequency	Day	Arrive	Depart	Frequency
Renhold	Abbey Close	Stop Deleted				Tuesday	12:00	12:15	Fortnightly
Renhold	Green End	Tuesday	10:00	10:20	Fortnightly	Tuesday	10:00	10:20	Fortnightly
Renhold	Home Close	Tuesday	10:50	11:10	Fortnightly	Tuesday	11:15	11:30	Fortnightly
Renhold	Lay-by Salph End	Tuesday	10:25	10:45	Fortnightly	Tuesday	10:45	11:10	Fortnightly
Renhold	Ravensden Road	Tuesday	11:15	11:35	Fortnightly	Tuesday	11:35	11:55	Fortnightly

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

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

Amphill Road and Wixams Railway

The Government announced in March that a scheme to alleviate chronic congestion on Bedford's Amphill 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 Amphill 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 are 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.

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.

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.

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