

Borough Councillor's Update – October/November 2017

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

I will be at The Chapel in Wymington High Street on Saturday 9th from 12.00 – 13.00 should residents have any issues they would like to raise.

Alternatively, earlier that day I will be Harrold Centre in the Charles Petit Room from 10.00 to 11.30

Bedford Hospital

A 'Strategic Outline Case' has been put forward for the proposed merger of Bedford Hospital and Luton & Dunstable Hospital.

The future of Bedford Hospital has been up in the air for a number of years through a succession of health reviews, raising concerns around the future of key services at Bedford Hospital such as maternity, A & E and paediatrics.

NHS and local authority social care services are now the subject of the Sustainability and Transformation Partnership (STP) review covering Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes. STP processes began last year at the behest of NHS England in 44 areas across the country with a view towards improving service quality and reducing costs. The decision now of Bedford Hospital and Luton & Dunstable to pursue a merger has been undertaken independently of the STP process.

Aside from saving an estimated £12m a year across both hospital sites, it has been noted explicitly by Bedford Hospital's Chief Executive, Stephen Conroy, that the merger will secure the future of maternity, A & E and paediatric services in Bedford. While we await the detail of how exactly services will be affected, we are cautiously optimistic that the arrangement will be positive for Bedford Hospital.

Town Centre Consultation

The Council undertook a 3 week consultation in October on proposals to regenerate Bedford town centre. The 'Bedford Masterplan' document set out draft plans to use in particular publically owned land in the urban area for redevelopment, including:

- The identification of sites for residential and employment development in locations such as those in and around the train station area and sites to the south of the river.
- The redevelopment of properties, particularly in the area connecting the train station, Midland Road and the town centre, as well as the creation of new public and green space in the urban area.
- The final Masterplan will 'set parameters for the scale, massing and materiality of new buildings within sensitive areas of the town centre. This is important so that new development is in keeping with the existing character of Bedford and responds to its context'.

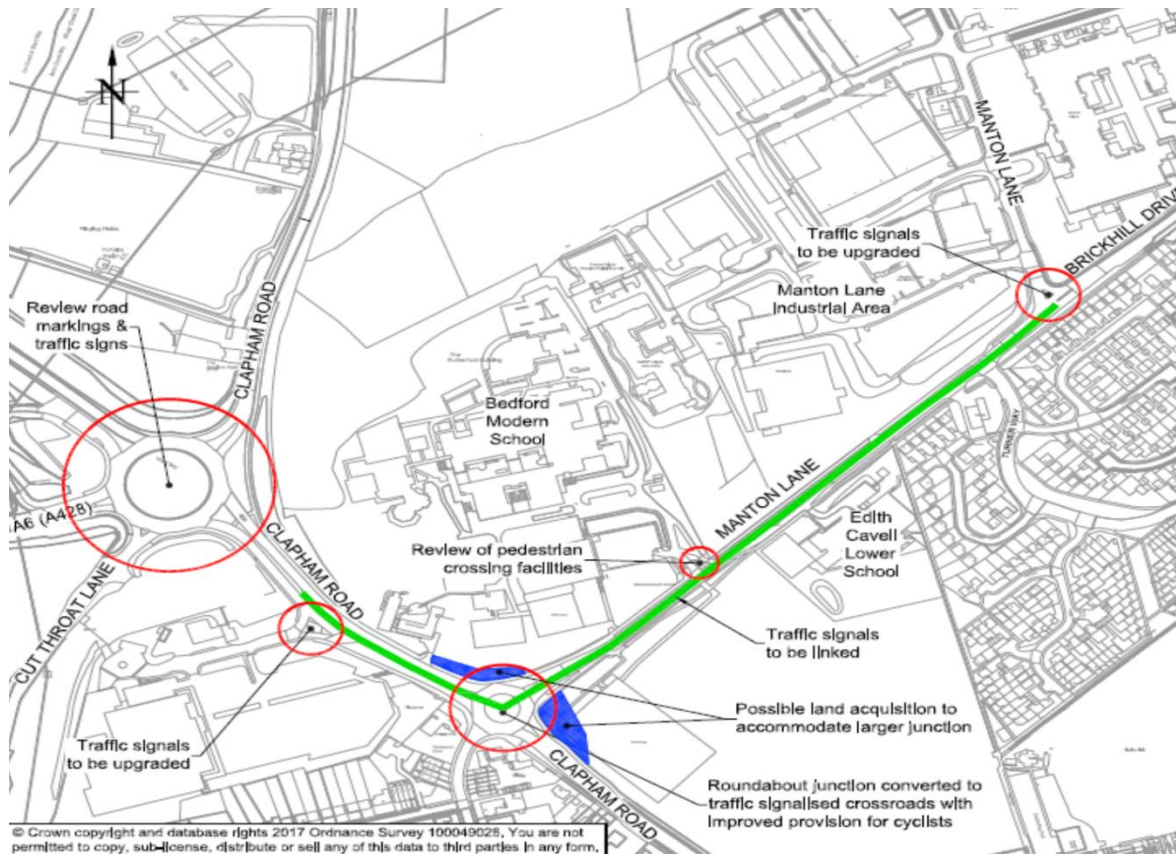
To see the consultation document and the plans in more detail search 'Bedford Live Regeneration Projects'.

Roads Grant

The Government has announced a £3.5m contribution to Bedford Borough Council's planned £4.8m road reconfiguration at what has been dubbed Bedford's 'Northern Gateway'.

The Council's plans include a review of road markings at the Paula Radcliffe Way roundabout, upgrades to traffic lights and the potential enlargement of the Manton Lane / Clapham Road junction. It is envisaged that the scheme will begin in the summer of 2018 and be completed by spring 2020.

The below map of the proposed works was provided at the October meeting of the Council's Environment & Sustainable Communities Committee:



Bedford Borough 2020 Project

The Borough Council is progressing with its plans to undertake a fundamental restructure of the organisation as part of its 'Bedford Borough 2020' (BB2020) project.

Following a review by auditors PricewaterhouseCoopers (PWC) last year, it was estimated that there was scope for savings of £10.4m a year could be realised should its recommendations be taken forward. The findings were agreed by the Mayor's Executive in February this year.

BB2020 is now being put into action. The key aspects of the project are a wholesale staff restructure as well as the 'digitalisation' of services. As far as residents are concerned, we are told that the investment of £13m in new technology will make it easier to interact with the Council. For instance, the plans will apparently improve the Council's website and make it easier for residents to use 'self-service' in registering issues and being assessed for eligibility to receive support (for adult social care, housing benefit etc., with eligibility assessed by one team instead of several across various service areas). We have received assurances from the Chief Executive that those who may have difficulty in using computers will receive assistance in accessing services if necessary.

Changes in the upper echelons of the staffing structure have now been carried out and a provider has been selected to implement the digital element of the project. BB2020 will be fully implemented by the end of the decade.

Network Rail

Representatives from Network Rail recently held an event at Borough Hall to inform councillors of their plans for railway improvement works.

Of particular note are plans around the electrification of the line from London to Kettering. As far as Bedford is concerned, this will require reconstruction works to be undertaken at the Ford End Road and Bromham Road bridges in the town centre to allow the necessary overhead line equipment to pass beneath. This will have an effect on motorists using these routes.

For Ford End Road, this work will take place in 2 phases from the 16th October – 30th November 2017 and from February 2018 possibly to July (for demolition and reconstruction). The first phase will still allow traffic

to use the bridge as 1 lane will be kept open (with a subsequent 1 way system). The second phase will be more disruptive as the bridge will be closed and a diversion put in place.

Bromham Road bridge will need to be entirely demolished and reconstructed. This will have the likely effect of causing congestion issues during the period of works but a start date is yet to be agreed.

NHS Transport

You may have seen in the local press in the past few months instances of patients being let down by the service commissioned to provide them with transport to and from medical appointments. The Private Ambulance Service (PAS), which was chosen by the Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group to provide the service earlier this year, repeatedly failed to pick patients up and there were also instances of delays.

PAS has now collapsed and the service for Bedfordshire has now returned to the East of England Ambulance Service Trust.

Mental Health

The Bedfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (BCCG), the body responsible for organising NHS services locally, recently undertook a public consultation on developing mental health crisis care services.

Reporting to the Council's Adult Services and Health Committee in October, BCCG representatives said they had put forward the following options for service amendments:

- Expansion of **Mental health professionals in Primary Care** (GP practices)
- Expansion of **Mental health professionals in Hospital** (A&E)
- Continuation & expansion of **Mental Health Street triage** - a 999 response with police, ambulance and mental professional in attendance).
- **Crisis Cafés** - a place where anyone experiencing a mental health problem diagnosed or not, can drop in for a cup of tea and a chat and can request more formal help if needed.
- **Crisis Sanctuaries** - offering intensive, short-term support so individuals can manage and resolve their crisis in a residential setting (rather than hospital).
- **Host Families** - families where individuals can get the help and support they need for a short period of time
- Expansion of current **out of hours telephone line** and **teams**

The responses to the consultation are now being considered. Service changes could be in place by early 2018.

Flu Vaccine

The Council has issued a reminder that pregnant women and children aged between 2 and 8 years old are eligible to receive a flu vaccination for protection over the winter months.

For more information speak to your GP, midwife or local pharmacy.

Council Tax Discounts

The Borough Council has issued a reminder to residents that they may be eligible to receive Council Tax discounts. There are a number of exemptions or discounts in place covering, for instance; disabled people; students, and; people in residential care.

For more information search 'Bedford Council Tax Discounts' or call 01234 267422.

Children's Centres

Members of the Council's Children's Services Committee received a report at its meeting in September on services provided by the Council's Children's Centres.

The Children's Centres are located at sites throughout the Borough and provide an array of services including; support from health visitors and midwives; support for children with special educational needs and disabilities, and; advice on adult training and employment. For information see <http://ecpbedford.org/contact-us/> or call the Early Child Partnership, which runs the service, on 01234 341977.

Adoption Appeal

During National Adoption Week in October, the Council issued a call for anyone who would like to discuss possibilities around adoption and fostering to get in touch. The appeal focussed in particular on the need to find homes for siblings who currently make up half of children in care in the Borough.

For more information call the Council's Adoption and Fostering Team on 01234 718718 or adoptionandfostering@bedford.gov.uk

'Mobility Hub'

The Borough Council has teamed up with the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity (BRCC) to provide a 'Mobility Hub' supporting those who are unable to use public transport.

Users of the 'Door to Door' service, which provides wheelchair accessible minibuses, will be able to rent electric scooters and wheelchairs from the Mobility Hub at Bedford Bus Station for a small charge. For more information see <http://bedsrcc.org.uk/mobilityhub/> or call 01234348000. For more details on the Door to Door service, see <http://bedsrcc.org.uk/door-to-door/> or call 01234838771.

Carers' Resource

The Council has teamed up with Carers UK to provide an online resource with advice and support to those caring for someone who is ill, disabled or elderly.

Upon registering, carers will be able to access information on matters such as understanding their rights and possible access to financial assistance, resources on products and services and finding out about support networks.

For more information visit carersdigital.org and create a new account by using code DGTL9072. Alternatively, you can contact Carers in Bedfordshire for advice and support by calling 0300 111 1919.

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