

Borough Council Report to Parish Councils April 2021

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, the Conservative Group have called for the deadline to be extended and for a number of changes to be made to the consultation.

There are controversies over their 'emerging preferred option' in that it puts up to 97 properties under threat in the north of Bedford, it involves laying 2 new tracks into Bedford Station and increasing traffic congestion in the Midland Road, Queens Park, Ashburnham Road area. The residents in the properties effected were informed the day before the consultation that there 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>

Fusion facilities now open

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

Other Fusion facilities also opened on 12 April.

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](#)

Bedford Borough libraries reopen

From Monday 12 April, Bedford Borough Libraries will begin to reopen on a phased basis in line with the "next step" of the Government's COVID-19 roadmap out of lockdown.

Bedford Central and Kempston libraries will open from 12th April 2021, with Putnoe Library opening from 19th April 2021. Bromham and Wootton libraries will open from 26th April 2021, with a Select and Collect service available at these two sites for some hours between 14th and 26th April 2021. You can check the website for opening hours and further service updates on the Virtual Library website.

Initially the libraries will be open for managed browsing, allowing you to select your own books. Essential computer use will also be available and people are encouraged to book a session in advance if they can, as fewer computers are available due to social distancing. You can book a 45 minute session at <https://bedford.imil.uk/>

Please wear a face covering when you visit the libraries, unless you have a legitimate reason not to, and remember to make space between yourself and other people and to regularly wash or sanitise your hands. Customers will also be asked to use the NHS Test and Trace app, or if you are not able to your contact details will be taken for the same purpose.

With libraries opening, the current Select and Collect service will reduce. Staff selected bundles will no longer be available, but you can request individual titles for free using the library app or by calling the library. The books will be issued to your card when they are ready, so all you need to do is pick them up from the collection shelves in the relevant library.

The exception to this is that the full Select and Collect service will be offered at Bromham and Wootton libraries only from 14th April 2021 up to the point these libraries open on 26th April 2021. Details about this service can be found via the Virtual Library.

During this initial period of reopening, please don't worry if you are unable to visit a library – loans have been extended for a further period plus you can renew your books online or by telephone.

The Mobile Library will also be returning from the week beginning 12th April 2021. Due to the small space, customers will not be able to browse the shelves on the vehicle, but will be able to request books using the Select and Collect service and collect them from a Mobile Library stop. A temporary change to routes will be in place and details will be available shortly via the Virtual Library.

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	STEP 2 No earlier than 12 April At least 5 weeks after Step 1
EDUCATION 8 MARCH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools and colleges open for all students Practical Higher Education courses 	EDUCATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As previous step
SOCIAL CONTACT 8 MARCH 29 MARCH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exercise and recreation outdoors with household or one other person Household only indoors 	SOCIAL CONTACT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Rule of 6 or two households outdoors Household only indoors
BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES 8 MARCH 29 MARCH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Wraparound care, including sport, for all children 	BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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 8 MARCH 29 MARCH <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Stay at home No holidays 	TRAVEL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic overnight stays (household only) No international holidays
EVENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funerals (30) Weddings and wakes (6) 	EVENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funerals (30) Weddings, wakes, receptions (15) Event pilots
STEP 3 No earlier than 17 May At least 5 weeks after Step 2	STEP 4 No earlier than 21 June At least 5 weeks after Step 3 All subject to review
EDUCATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As previous step 	EDUCATION <ul style="list-style-type: none"> As previous step
SOCIAL CONTACT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Maximum 30 people outdoors Rule of 6 or two households indoors (subject to review) 	SOCIAL CONTACT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No legal limit
BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Indoor hospitality Indoor entertainment and attractions Organised indoor sport (adult) Remaining accommodation Remaining outdoor entertainment (including performances) 	BUSINESS & ACTIVITIES <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remaining businesses, including nightclubs
TRAVEL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic overnight stays International travel (subject to review) 	TRAVEL <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Domestic overnight stays International travel
EVENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 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% 	EVENTS <ul style="list-style-type: none"> No legal limit on life events Larger events

Borough COVID Information

As of the 11th April in Bedford there have been 13,407 cases since the start of the Pandemic and there have been 40 registered cases in Bedford in the last 7 days.

If you would like the latest COVID snapshot (as of 11th April) please find it below:

<https://bbcdevwebfiles.blob.core.windows.net/webfiles/Social%20Care%20Health%20and%20Community/Covid19/Covid19-weekly-statistics-14April2021.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.