

Borough Councillor Monthly Report for GDPC December 2025

Green Space Strategy

- **Background:** The Borough owns land and green spaces in Great Denham (excluding the Country Park). These and other areas in the Borough have not been reviewed since 2013, and much has changed since then, with many new developments creating additional green spaces.
- **Proposal:** One suggestion is for Parish Councils (PCs) to take ownership of the land within their parishes. PCs would then be responsible for maintaining these spaces. They could either contract the Borough for maintenance or seek competitive offers from the market to get the best deal for their parish.
- **Purpose:** This review and potential transfer of ownership are also intended to help identify “special area charges.” These charges determine how much Bedford Urban, Brickhill, Kempston, and Rural Areas should contribute to the maintenance of “destination areas”—which include all public parks in the Borough. Still a work in progress.

Waste Collections Calendars Now Available

- Christmas and New Year collection calendars will be available to download via the Collection Day finder on our website from 29 November. This year’s calendar provides collection information up to the end of March, as there will be changes to collection days for some areas once the new food waste collection service launches in March 2026. New calendars will be made available alongside the information on the new service.

Kerbside Glass Collections

- The team has continued to make strong progress on the major waste collection service changes planned for the Borough. Work to introduce glass into the mixed recycling orange lidded bin is well underway, with around 83,000 information leaflets being sent to residents and 71,000 bin stickers ready to be placed on containers across the Borough. This represents one of the largest communication exercises undertaken by the service.

Food Waste Collection Preparations

- Preparations for the new weekly food waste collection service are also progressing well. The first batches of external and internal food waste caddies have now started arriving with the Council, ready for distribution to households between January and March 2026. Residents have already been made aware of the upcoming service through the recent kerbside glass leaflet. Further, dedicated leaflets and letters are planned to support the commencement of collections in March 2026.

Bedford River Valley Park Development

- Bedford Borough Council has entered into a Collaboration Agreement with neighbouring landowners and an Option Agreement with Bloor Homes Ltd to promote a major mixed-use scheme at Bedford River Valley Park, north of the A603 near Willington.
- The development includes:
 - Up to 1,000 new homes
 - A new two-form-entry primary school with early years provision
 - New water sports lakes with associated leisure facilities and public access
 - Extensive public open space, landscaping, and habitat creation
 - New walking and cycling routes linking the park to surrounding communities and existing paths
 - New highway access from the A603 and associated infrastructure
- Under the Option Agreement, all planning and promotion work for the scheme will be funded by Bloor Homes. The Council will only contribute towards those costs from future sale proceeds if a land sale goes ahead, and it has secured a minimum land value for its share, ensuring a significant capital receipt once the development is delivered.

EWR

- East West Rail (EWR) has published its You Said, We Did – Autumn Update (277 pages), setting out how feedback from more than 6,000 consultation responses received between November 2024 and January 2025 confirms their intention to proceed with the northern route.
- One of the most significant changes for Bedford is on Ashburnham Road, where EWR now proposes to acquire an additional 53 homes and business premises, including a GP surgery and the Dom Polski Club. EWR says this extra land is needed for a construction compound and to allow the Bedford Midland station upgrades to be built more efficiently, claiming it could shorten construction disruption in the town centre by up to three years – claims the Council disputes.
- EWR has also new proposals for what they call “more ambitious” design plans for Bedford Midland Station which include a relocated multi-storey car park accessed from Ford End Road (rather than Ashburnham Road), and a new public plaza in front of the station.
- The documents also confirm major changes on the Marston Vale Line between Bedford and Bletchley. EWR’s preferred option is to close most of the existing intermediate stations and replace them with four consolidated stations at Woburn Sands, Ridgmont, Lidlington and Stewartby, plus a relocated Bedford St Johns. This is despite consultation feedback showing many respondents wanted to retain all existing stations.
- For Bedford St Johns, EWR is working on a new station layout, including a multi-storey car park on railway land between the Ampthill Road and Cauldwell Street bridges.

- The Council and Mayor will meet as regularly as possible with EWR to protect residents and help those affected by the demolitions. A further round of consultation on the updated designs is expected in 2026

EWR Motion blocks the Council from objecting to the Northern Route

- A motion recently brought to Full Council places new restrictions on how Bedford Borough Council can respond to East West Rail's developing proposals.
- In simple terms, the motion:
 - Prevents the Council from formally opposing the current northern route for East West Rail, even though it involves knocking down homes and businesses north of the river.
 - Commits the Council to a more "hands-off" or neutral position on the route itself, focusing only on detailed mitigation (design, traffic, noise, etc.), not on whether this is the right route for Bedford.
- Because the motion attempts to forbid the Council from objecting to the northern route it significantly weakens the Council's negotiating position when it goes into future talks with EWR and Government.
- EWR can say: "Your own local authority has decided not to oppose this route," which makes it harder for the Council to push back on major changes like demolitions or the scale of the station works that threaten Poets and Ashburnham for example.
- The motion essentially shields EWR from formal objections by the Council on the choice of the northern route, but it does not give the same protection or certainty to residents whose homes and businesses may face demolition, or to communities worried about traffic, noise, or loss of amenities.
- The motion did not pass unanimously, you can view the recording here: https://bedford.public-i.tv/core/portal/webcast_interactive/1032992

New anti-social behaviour officers

- Bedford Borough Council is bringing in extra uniformed Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) officers to patrol the town centre until March 2026 at extra cost to the Council or taxpayers.
- The ASB officers will:
 - Patrol the town centre on foot, provide reassurance and talk with local people and businesses
 - Work alongside the police and council teams to tackle issues like street drinking, begging, dangerous cycling and littering
 - Be clearly marked as "ASB officers" and do not earn commission from Fixed Penalty Notices
- Existing borough-wide enforcement officers will continue to handle fines for littering, dog fouling and other offences.

Queens Bridge

- A detailed inspection in August 2025 found that the main timber arches and other structural elements have decayed to the point where repair is not viable, meaning the bridge has become extremely unsafe. The Council therefore closed the bridge immediately on safety grounds.
- The bridge opened in the mid-1980s with an expected life of 45–55 years, between 2011 and 2023 roughly £12,500 had been spent on maintaining the bridge which is significantly lower than industry standards for a bridge of this kind.
- For reference, £94,000 – £201,000, is the typical level of maintenance expenditure you would expect for a bridge of this kind if fully maintained to industry standards during 2011 to 2023.
- The bulk of maintenance spending took place after May 2023 (£42,000). A permanent replacement bridge is needed, and Council is undergoing its full design and planning process.

Christmas Events

- It is time for the festive season and there are a number of treats taking place across the borough to give everyone some Christmas cheer. Some of the events to look forward to are:
 - Thu 4 Dec – Aurie Styla Christmas Comedy at the Bedford Corn Exchange.
 - Fri 5 Dec - Puggle Club (Under 5s) – The Higgins Bedford and the ABBA Merry Christmas – Bedford Corn Exchange.
 - Sat 6 & Sun 7 Dec – Bedford Christmas Markets Weekend, 70+ stalls at Harpur Square & Harpur Suite.
 - Outdoor cinema (Sat 6) and food & drink available and Free Letters to Santa craft session at Central Library.
 - Sun 7 Dec – Step Into Christmas Show and the Corn Exchange festive music performance.
 - Thu 11 Dec – Ukrainian Christmas Folk Traditions Reminiscence session at The Higgins.
 - Sat 13 Dec - Bedford Choral Society Christmas Concert – 3pm and the Santa Storytime & Colouring – Central Library.
 - Sun 14 Dec - Family Crafternoon – Higgins Bedford and Bedford Santa Run – Embankment.
 - Sat 20 Dec - Christmas Sing-Along – Harpur Square (12pm & 3.30pm) and Christmas Card Crafting – Central Library.
 - Sat 20–Wed 31 Dec – Aladdin Pantomime at Bedford Corn Exchange