

Unlawful Encampments

This year has seen an unprecedented number of unlawful encampments in Brickhill, repeatedly these have been on the green on Brickhill Drive. These have seen the green left in a disgusting condition requiring cleansing to removed large amounts of litter, fly tipping and human waste. One encampment also coincided with a burglary which in which large amounts of equipment were stolen from the scouts.



We have sought to use legal means to prevent these encampments and since a High Court Injunction was placed on Waveney Green there has only been one brief episode and the encampment was quickly moved. We have also negotiated with the police who agreed a policy in which they would use their Section 61 powers to immediately remove encampments of six or more vehicles when they were located on public land which was classed as 'Primary Land.' This policy can be seen on our website www.puttingbrickhillfirst.com and includes recreation such as Brickhill Drive.

However there have been difficulties using these legal means of removal. Firstly the High Court Injunctions are being challenged in the court by travellers in London and it is still unclear what the outcome of that challenge by travellers will be. The council has not applied for any further High Court injunctions until the court has ruled on their validity. Moreover on repeated occasions the police have refused to use their Section 61 powers having deemed that the encampments were not disorderly. Subsequently the police have apologised when we have displayed photographic evidence of the criminal activity which has taken place.

These encampments are a criminal disturbance to our community and there is also considerable cost involved in dealing with them. Clearly residents want them removed as quickly as possible but the action the council is allowed by law to take involves taking protracted proceedings through the courts before eviction is allowed. We are extremely grateful to council officers who always respond immediately as soon as we report an encampment and action is taken through the courts as quickly as possible. Sadly it is extremely frustrating that the government appears to consider the human rights of those who engage in this activity to be more important than those of the law abiding settled community. There is also a considerable cost to the council in clearing up the green once these encampments have left behind. It is unacceptable that council officers should have to be engaged in the cleansing of sites contaminated by foul waste.

Given the difficulties outlined above and the ongoing uncertainty regarding High Court Injunctions we are now facing a situation in which we must consider what physical protection can also be put in place to deter further encampments. It must be stressed that protective measures such as barrier posts, ditches and bunding are not entirely effective at preventing encampments. Access points must be provided for maintenance and emergency vehicles and those who engage in unlawful encampments have shown a willingness to break locks and gates to gain access. This has frequently occurred across the Borough, even on sites which also have High Court Injunctions. Nevertheless they are clearly not an encouragement for travellers and together with CCTV they must now be considered on sites which are frequently attacked. We have therefore asked council officers to produce plans which provide protection for Brickhill Green and these will be presented for consultation to residents. Since whatever measures introduced cannot be guaranteed to prevent further encampments we will continue to pursue all legal means to reinforce the protection and allow the fastest removal of those who unlawfully access our community land. The Parish Council has already agreed to fund CCTV at Brickhill Drive and we will allocate our own ward funding to the protective measures if funding becomes an issue which prevents the work being completed.

Roadworks

There are many roadworks taking place across Bedford. We are in the midst of the Transporting Bedford project to tackle congestion at hotspots across the town. The council has £20 million of funding to allocate towards this transformation programme and the money must be spent or external funding would have to be returned and lost to Bedford. This means that work must continue even whilst Network Rail have decided to undertake reconstruction of Bromham Road Bridge at the same time. That work is expected to be completed in Spring 2020 and since the diversion involves the route at the bottom of Manton Lane that has caused this project to be delayed. Manton Lane improvements will be completed at the end of this year. We are aware of the inconvenience that ongoing roadworks projects can have and the council has used the school summer holidays, when traffic is lighter, to the maximum. Sign up to 'Transporting Bedford' email bulletins at www.bedford.gov.uk/stayconnected for updates on major roadworks and projects. You can also check out ongoing and upcoming roadworks in our area at www.bedford.ov.uk/roadworks

Manton Lane Details

On Manton Lane, improvements are being made to the operation of the existing traffic signals at the junction of Brickhill Drive-Manton Lane, installing three-way traffic lights at the junction with Bedford Modern School, and widening the road to ease the flow of traffic on Manton Lane. The work on Manton Lane involves widening the road to create more space for traffic. This means that utilities that are under the pavement have to be moved. A retaining wall also has to be built to support the new road, and new drainage systems need to be installed, alongside a new traffic signal junction.

Works are being carried out in stages to keep the road open while works are taking place, which means that the whole project will take longer. A lot of work took place over the summer holidays, but there was not enough time to complete all works during this period.

Preparation works were carried out last summer to ensure this year's works could hit the ground running. There is also some work being done overnight to complete the project more quickly. These works have been split into phases, with some preparation works carried out last year.

This phase of work is focusing Manton Lane only, with further works on Clapham Road delaying until Network Rail have re-opened Bromham Road Bridge. Most of this work is expected to be complete in late Autumn- depending on weather conditions- with final works early in the New Year.

This element of Transporting Bedford- including Manton Lane; upgrading the Clapham Round roundabout; the junction at Sainsburys; and improvements to the roundabout at the Bypass represents an investment of around £6million. This work will increase capacity for traffic at this bottleneck, improving journey times and road safety for all users.

School Crossing Kimbolton Road

We are disappointed that the school crossing has not been installed before the academic year but we are assured by the council highways officers that this will take place in the near future.

Mowsbury Park Car Park

We have alerted police to concerns by residents about drug taking in the car park as cannabis can be smelled in homes in Douglas Road. This car park was once locked in the evenings and we have asked the council to consider what security could be put in place.

Rooksmead Pond

We have had another extremely dry summer and the lack of rain has caused the pond to run dry once again. We have now asked for the pond fountain to be attended to and possibly switched off until we have more rainfall.

Local police engagement

We have been pleased to work with local police who have been much more visible and have conducted surgeries. This is extremely positive and provides us with the opportunity to share information.

Building Proposals for 200 homes off Cleat Hill

The building of 200 homes has been proposed on land known as Graze Hill which will be accessed from a new roundabout constructed at the top of Cleat Hill. This development was originally planned for 100 homes and we are awaiting the outcome of the planning process.

Parking Restrictions

Residents have requested additional yellow lines on the corner of Cherwell Road and we have worked with the Highways Department at Bedford Borough Council and these are now installed. We encourage residents to park with consideration for neighbours and also their neighbours. Cars should not be parked at or near junctions, on pavements or verges.

Dog Fouling

It is very distressing for residents, especially those with young children to see the amount of dog fouling in public areas, especially alongside footpaths. The Borough Council has responded to information relating to known offenders and fixed penalties have been issued to residents. Please always clear up after your dog and if you see somebody who fails to do so then please tell us giving as much information to help us identify the offender. This is not just a dirty mess left behind, it is a health issue especially for our children.

As your local Borough Councillors we will continue to work hard and keep you informed through regular deliveries of FOCUS, surgeries and our website where you can sign up for our newsletter

www.puttingbrickhillfirst.com

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