

Minutes of An Extraordinary Meeting of Staploe Parish Council Held Online at 8.30pm on Monday 7th June 2021 on Zoom

Present: Cllr. J. Ibbett, Cllr. G. Meola, Cllr. E. Meola, Cllr. R. Squire, Cllr. J. Thomson, Cllr. D. Smith, Lucy Crawford (Clerk), Stephen Ferguson (Mayor of St Neots) and 11 members of the public (8 from Honeydon).

Apologies for absence: Cllr. V. Zwetsloot and Borough Cllr. T. Wootton

The legislation allowing local councils to run virtual meetings during the COVID-19 pandemic came to an end on May 7th. Many local authorities are raising objections to returning to face-to-face meetings, such as the lack of suitable premises to conduct socially distanced meetings (Wyboston and Colmworth Village Halls remain closed as does the Eatons Centre), the difficulty in controlling the number of members of the public who attend and the recommendation that residents of Bedford Borough Council take extra precautions due to the high prevalence of the Indian variant. As a result many, including us, have decided to meet online and ratify our decisions when we are able to meet safely in person.

2021/068. Declarations of interest

Cllr. G. Meola declared an interest in the budget for the Neighbourhood Plan as she is a member of the steering group

Cllr. R. Squire declared an interest in the A428 as they will be taking some of his land to create a refuge area adjacent to the B645

Cllr. J. Ibbett declared an interest in developments affecting Honeydon as she is a resident. It was resolved that Councillors who are residents of Honeydon and Upper Staploe should be granted a dispensation to discuss and comment on developments there because all residents of these hamlets are affected and the Parish Council will not be able to make effective decisions if three councillors have to be excluded. Proposed by Cllr. R. Squire and seconded by Cllr. D. Smith.

2021/069. Approve Minutes of the Parish Council Meeting held on 20th May

Having been previously circulated the minutes were approved as an accurate record of the meeting. Proposed by Cllr. G. Meola and seconded by Cllr. J. Thomson.

2021/070. Public Open Forum

Comments made in the Open Forum are listed in the Appendix at the end of the minutes.

2021/071. Consider how to respond to the East West Rail consultation (deadline 9th June).

<https://staploe-pc.gov.uk/deadline-for-east-west-rail-consultation-9th-june/>

It was resolved to respond in the following way to East West Rail and copy our response to Richard Fuller MP and highlight to him that small parishes cannot be expected to understand 500 page technical documents and appreciate how they will affect our parishes and we should be given some financial or technical support with this and other similar consultations which have a dramatic effect on our parishes.

The Mayor of Bedford appears to be trying to create a transport hub to benefit Bedford's industry, jobs and tourism. While this is an understandable goal; in reality the most expensive northern route

will not achieve this any better than the more sensible southern route which is flatter, straighter and cheaper.

A Flawed Consultation

The 2019 consultation was flawed. Many residents were not informed and did not know they could take part in the consultation. Cost estimates were changed during the consultation period and the public not informed. The level of freight using the new line was not disclosed.

There should be a new consultation which should address these issues with the level of freight using the line, the fact that the trains are likely to be diesel fuelled, and with clear maps which can be easily read by parishioners showing existing landmarks, roads and elevations.

Other route options and existing transport corridors should be considered – particularly to the south of Bedford where it is likely to have less impact on residential areas.

The financial and economic analysis needs to be reassessed to confirm whether a Northern Route would make any more positive difference than a south of Bedford route and whether it would really lead to an increase in jobs to offset the extra costs. It seems inconceivable that it can really be cheaper to go north of Bedford when it is so much more hilly and a longer route. We would like a full justification for why the northern route E was chosen in 2019.

Having a station in Bedford with all the added noise and pollution from the extra freight trains that will be running through the night seems like a very high price to pay for a few extra tourists that will have a 25 minute walk along Midland road before they encounter the centre piece of Bedford being the embankment. (There really isn't much else to look at and there aren't any niche or bespoke shops just the usual chain stores you find everywhere). It seems unlikely that commuters will travel into a congested station in Bedford where they will have to pay to park their car than if they were to travel along the new A428 and use the Park and Ride to get into Cambridge. A station at the Wixams, for example, would be in a largely residential area and residents moved there because they were promised a railway station so it seems a much better solution.

It is also unclear who is going to fund a new station in Bedford. The funding was made available for a new station at the Wixams from the developer. Will Bedford Borough Council or East West rail be funding the new station at Bedford?

In reality, a tourist in Cambridge or Oxford is going to get on a train and go to the real tourist centre in either Cambridge or Oxford. They are unlikely to want to stop in Bedford.

Practicality

The norther route is 7 kilometres longer than the proposed southern routes. In the south the rise and fall of the track is one metre in height. To the North it is many metres and will need deep embankments and high viaducts which will have a terrible impact on local communities and there will be constant noise through the night from the high viaducts. In particular the dark blue, red and light blue routes will require a vast 3km (!) viaduct running from Roxton to the East Coast Main Line east of the A1 generally at 10m above ground level increasing to 19m above ground level at certain points. This is almost three times the height of the average house and will be visible and audible for miles around.

The red, dark blue and light blue options appear to go very close to the borrow pits and other works needed for the A428 and Black Cat improvements. We cannot see how there can be space for both to operate on the existing lines shown.

Diesel locomotives will be needed because of all the gradients and the use of freight along the line. This is just unacceptable in a time of climate crisis. It is very unlikely that future electrification will be possible due to the gradients involved. The rail minister stated in 2018 that all diesel trains will be phased out by 2040. We support this objective and feel that a route south of Bedford is much more likely to achieve this. A new railway line with diesel trains will contribute to the climate crisis rather than reducing it.

There is not enough information in the 2021 consultation and the maps are very poor. In particular we need clearer OS type maps with the routes clearly plotted on them.

The whole consultation needs to be re-run and all residents within 3 miles of potentially affected areas should receive a leaflet through their door

There should be full disclosure of line use eg. freight, night use, diesel or electric and clear vertical elevations.

There should be comparative costings on a fair basis between southern and northern routes made freely available for the consultation period.

We cannot support any of the proposed routes with the current data available to us from this poor consultation. The whole consultation process should be re-run with all routes South and North of Bedford considered again with the correct information about how the line will be used ie. numbers per day of commuter traffic, freight traffic and times that they will run. Financial, economic and environmental impact assessments need updating to provide accurate comparison data and there should be a commitment to electrification of the line.

2021/072. Consider how to respond to the A428 consultation (deadline 10th June). For further information see our website: <https://staploe-pc.gov.uk/deadline-for-black-cat-and-a428-consultation-thursday-10th-june/>

It was resolved to respond in the following way:

Staploe Parish Council support the proposals for the new Black Cat roundabout and the A428. We believe it will lead to improved traffic flow, less congestion and less use of local roads as “rat runs”. We have two concerns which are:

- 1. That there appears to be very little space for some of the proposed more northerly East West rail routes to run directly adjacent to the new roundabout at Black Cat*
- 2. How will you prevent people using local back roads to avoid congestion during construction?*

2021/073. Bedford Borough Local Plan Review

- Report on the draft plan for consultation

The draft consultation on Bedford Borough Council’s Local Plan for consultation has been published. The final consultation is due to open on approximately 28th June and close on 3rd September.

The draft consultation is available here:

<https://edrms.bedford.gov.uk/OpenDocument.aspx?id=UD8zSRxBPNPiWCWZhdO1TA%3d%3d&name=LOCAL%20PLAN%202040%20DRAFT%20PLAN.pdf>

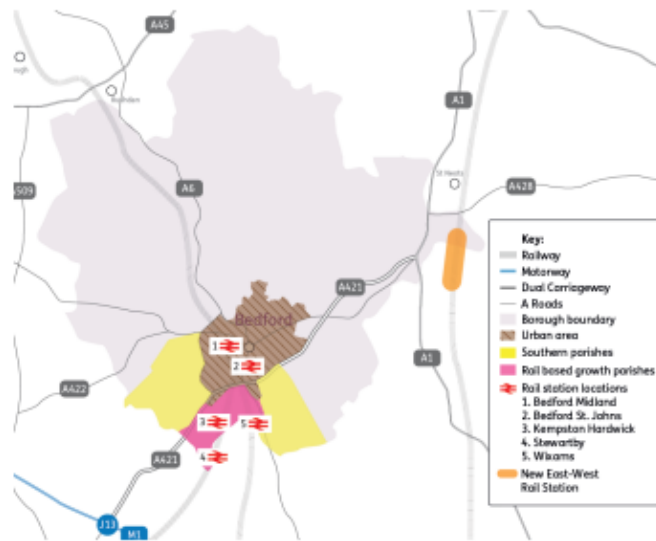
Respondents will be asked to choose from 4 options for development. Three of these include Denybrook (new settlement at Wyboston) with 2,500 houses in the Local Plan 2040 but the linked

transport model refers to the new settlement at Wyboston as Denybrook with a scenario of up to 10,150 new homes by 2050. The latest vision document for Denybrook shows it surrounding much more of Honeydon than had been proposed in the initial call for sites.

Here are the 4 options proposed:

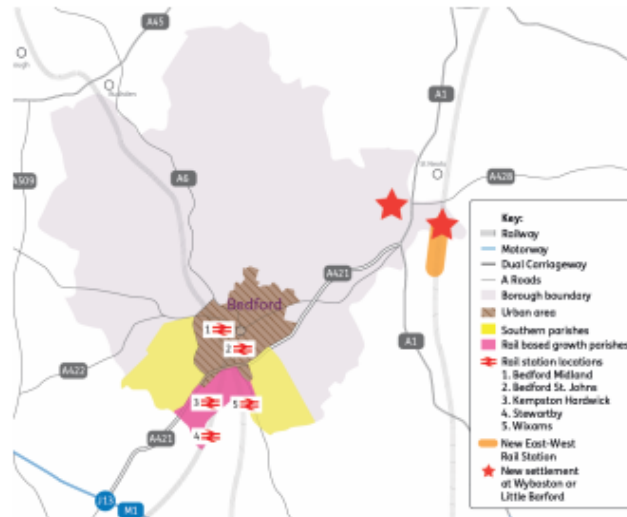
Option 2a: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth parishes and southern parishes.

- Within the urban area (1,500 dwellings).
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500 dwellings), up to 51 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams (high option) (7,500 dwellings), up to 80 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – south: land within the parishes of Cotton End, Elstow, Kempston Rural, Shortstown, Wilstead and Wootton (2,000 dwellings).
- Total 12,500 dwellings and up to 131 ha employment



Option 2b: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth parishes and southern parishes, plus one new settlement.

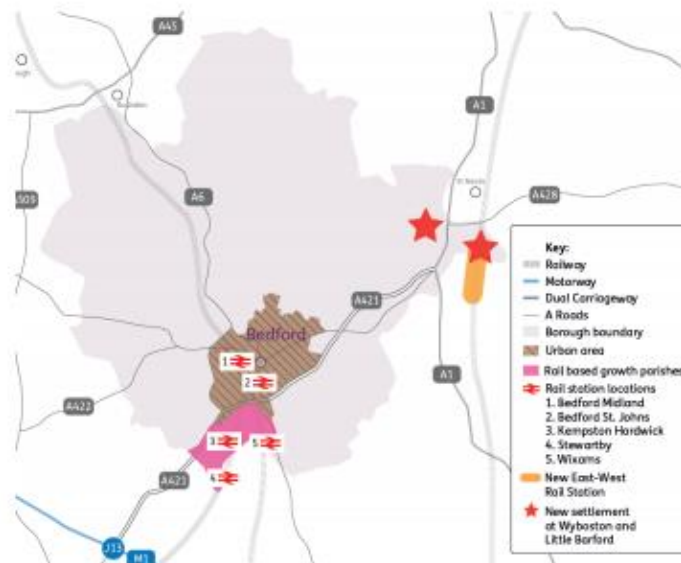
- Within the urban area (1,500 dwellings).
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500 dwellings), up to 51 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams (low option) (5,500 dwellings), up to 80 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – south: land within the parishes of Cotton End, Elstow, Kempston Rural, Shortstown, Wilstead and Wootton (1,500 dwellings).
- New settlement at Little Barford (3,085 dwellings) or Wyboston (2,500 dwellings), up to 20 ha employment.
- Total between 12,500 and 13,085 dwellings and up to 151 ha employment.



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Option 2c: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth parishes, plus two new settlements.

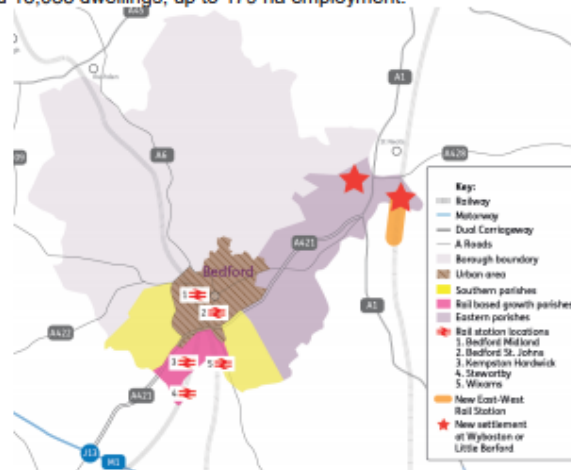
- Within the urban area (1,500 dwellings).
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500 dwellings), up to 51 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams (extra low option, this being the residual required to meet need) (3,915 dwellings), up to 80 ha employment.
- New settlements at Little Barford (3,085 dwellings) and Wyboston (2,500 dwellings), up to 20 ha employment.
- Total 12,500 dwellings, up to 151 ha employment.



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Option 2d: Development in and around the urban area, plus A421 transport corridor with rail based growth parishes, southern parishes and east parishes, plus one new settlement.

- Within the urban area (1,500 dwellings).
- Adjoining the urban area (1,500 dwellings), up to 51 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – rail based growth: land within the parishes of Kempston Hardwick, Stewartby and Wixams (low option) (5,500 dwellings), up to 80 ha employment.
- Transport corridor – south: land within the parishes of Cotton End, Elstow, Kempston Rural, Shortstown, Wilstead and Wootton (750 dwellings).
- Transport corridor – east: land within the parishes of Cardington, Cople, Great Barford, Little Barford, Roxton, Willington and Wyboston (750 dwellings), up to 28 ha employment.
- New settlement at Little Barford (3,085 dwellings) or Wyboston (2,500 dwellings), up to 20 ha employment.
- Total between 12,500 and 13,085 dwellings, up to 179 ha employment.



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- Cllr. J. Thomson reported the travel mitigation measures proposed by Bedford Borough Council to support Denybrook (in addition to the upgrades to the A428, Black Cat and East West Rail). She highlighted the A6-A1 link through Thurleigh and Bolnhurst to Eaton Socon which is likely to mean improvements to the Bushmead Road, St Neots Road at Bolnhurst, the road through Bolnhurst, Thurleigh Road at Bolnhurst, the road through Thurleigh and Mill Hill Road at Thurleigh.

Table 2.4: Mitigation Measures Defined by BBC

Mitigation Measure	Description
A421 Junction	New A421 Junction to the north of Great Barford
A421 / Renhold Junction	Realignment of eastbound off-slip at junction
Western Bypass	Dualling of western bypass between A421 and A6
A421 / Frank Branston Way	New segregated left-turn link from A421 eastbound off-slip to Frank Branston Way
Great Ouse Flyover	New free-flow link between the A6 southbound and the western bypass
Milton Ernest Bypass	New easterly bypass for the A6 of Milton Ernest
A6-A1 Link	Improvements to the route from the A6 to Eaton Socon through Thurleigh and Bolnhurst
Broadmead Station	New rail station at Broadmead to replace the existing stations at Kempston Hardwick and Stewartby
Bedford North Station	New rail station to the north of Bedford on the proposed East-West Rail route
Colworth Station	New rail station near the proposed development at Colworth
Bedford Town Active Measures ²	Measures to result in an increase in active travel (walking and cycling) within Bedford town
Cycle Superhighway (St Neots)	New, high-quality cycleway between St Neots and Bedford

- Cllr. E. Meola expressed surprise that the Denybrook Vision Document planned to build 10,800 houses but the Borough Council only needs 2,500 houses in Denybrook by 2040. He thought it was very unlikely that the developers would wait until 2050 to see the remaining 8,300 homes built.
- Consider need to raise funds. The Clerk explained that Neighbourhood Plan funds cannot be used to make representations to Bedford Borough Council about the Local Plan (eg. about Denybrook). We have been advised that we will need to use our own funds for this – eg. from a combination of local fund raising and / or from the Parish Council. We can only use Neighbourhood Plan grant funding (from the government) to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. Troy Planning have advised that we should prepare two Neighbourhood Plans. One to cover a situation where Bedford Borough Council allocate strategic housing growth in our parish eg at Denybrook and in which we propose mitigations and one to cover a situation where they don't and we use our neighbourhood plan to eg. allocate sites to meet the small number of houses needed in the parish. We need to treat our response to the Local Plan separately.
- The Clerk has obtained a quote from Troy Planning who are already working with Colmworth to make representations to the Borough Council about development in the area in the Local Plan (eg. Denybrook). They have quoted an estimate of £7,000 plus VAT and expenses so probably around £9,000 total. They are based in London so not directly involved with any of the local landowners or the Borough Council. They have experience of both the Local Plan making process and of the strategic site / new settlement planning process and will use this to assist with interrogating and analysing the proposed options set out in the emerging Local Plan, which would include reviewing and critiquing the technical evidence base prepared in support of the Plan: particularly those around growth options and supporting infrastructure. This review will also extend to any procedural matters, around the duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities for example.

They have set out the following key steps involved in the production of representations to the Local Plan which are set out below.

- Initial client inception meeting.
- Review of Local Plan.

- Review of supporting evidence base.
- Review of evidence submitted to Bedford BC by landowners and developers (such as masterplans and visioning documents).
- Review of strategic sites in neighbouring authorities under consideration.
- Prepare draft representations, with a focus on growth options in Staploe Parish, for client review and comment.
- Update representations following feedback from the Parish Council.
- Submission of Representations to Bedford BC.

It was resolved that:

- 1. The Parish Council need professional planning advice to support us in making representations to the Borough Council on the Local Plan 2040**
- 2. The Parish Council should consult with Wyboston, Colmworth and St Neots Councils to see if some of the costs could be shared eg. for the first 5 steps and see if there are other ways we can work together to make a bigger impact and ask whether any of the parishes include anyone with planning expertise that they could offer.**
- 3. The Clerk should prepare a flyer to all residents highlighting the developments proposed in the draft consultation on Bedford Borough's Local Plan 2040 and invite residents to donate funds towards employing a planning consultant and possibly set up crowd funding (and potentially use the St Neots Facebook Page with support from Stephen Ferguson for fund raising). Once we know what local residents can donate we can decide what financial support the Parish Council should offer. There is nothing currently in the budget as it was prepared in October / November last year. Others in the local area may then wish to pool their fund raising (eg. St Neots / Colmworth / Wyboston).**
- 4. The Clerk will highlight the upgraded A6 to A1 link road to Thurleigh and Bolnhurst Parish Councils.**
- 5. Cllr. J. Thomson will research campaigns run eg. by other parishes when similar strategic housing allocations were made and ask them for advice.**
- 6. The Clerk will object to the Borough that we were not informed that new land was being included in the call for sites and why landowners were able to submit sites after the deadline.**
- 7. The Clerk will ask Richard Fuller MP and the Borough Council for more information about Development Corporations**
- 8. Make use of local media eg. St. Neots and parish facebook groups, newsletters, Hunts Post and Black Cat radio to raise awareness and funds but it will be important for the parishes to speak with one voice so best to await next week's meeting.**
- 9. All those present were asked to try to source a new editor for the Hamlets Voice**
- 10. Attempt to source a volunteer with a drone who could prepare a video of the land likely to be affected (or a quote for some drone footage).**
- 11. The Parish Council were in support of signs being erected to raise awareness. A resident has already commissioned some.**
- 12. The Clerk will seek some clarity from Bedford Borough Council on the number of homes in the draft 2040 plan at Denybrook (2,500) vs Denybrook's vision document (10,800).**

Proposed by Cllr. J. Ibbett and seconded by Cllr. J. Thomson

2021/074 Neighbourhood Plan Revised Budget

- The following updated budget was proposed by Cllr. J. Thomson and seconded by Cllr. D. Smith

Item	Original budget (cost ex VAT)	Updated budget (cost ex VAT)	Comments
Green Infrastructure Plan Production Fee (BRCC)	3,824.00	3,824.00	
Green Space Designation Assessment	500	500	
Advice from planning consultant	£1,100	£2,000	Quote is for 3.5 days work on feasibility study for Neighbourhood Plan @£500 per day. We have included an extra half day in case needed.
Planning consultant expenses		£150	For site visits, phonecalls, postage, OS maps etc.
Printing	150	465	For printed flyers and newsletters etc.
Stationary and print cartridges	40	40	
Mileage for members / project manager eg. deliveries / publicity	60	60	Assumes 5 miles per month
Postage	150	150	For return of questionnaires and other correspondence
Hall hire (in case it is permitted before the end of March)	160	160	Assumes four x two hour public meetings in the main hall at Colmworth / Wyboston
Zoom account	172.68	172.68	Currently using Parish Council account. Likely to stop theirs soon as in person meetings resume.
Survey Monkey Account	350	350	Annual subscription to be renewed in Jan 2022
Total	6,506.68	7,871.68	
£423.58 already spent in previous grant application: NPG-11925 in Jan - March 2021. £9576.42 still available.			

The meeting closed at 10.40pm

The next meeting will be an extraordinary meeting held on 8th July and we will discuss our response to the Local Plan 2040 consultation (and Denybrook). The next ordinary Parish Council meeting will be on Thursday 15th July.

Appendix

Public Open Forum

East West Rail Comments

Tom Tagg (Staploe) expressed concern that the consultation documents for East West Rail (EWR) are overwhelming as they are 500 pages long and there is very little coordination. We also have to consider consultations on the A428 / Black Cat, and the Bedford Borough Council Local Plan 2040. There is a danger that we make a response to one consultation that then creates a problem for another consultation in the future. He expressed concern that our parish and Tom Wootton were not invited to the last EWR consultations during which route E was chosen; a decision that he does not agree with. The new consultation talks much more about housing development and the choice of the northern route will push housing further north into our parish. He is concerned that it is very difficult for ordinary individuals to assess the implications.

The Clerk clarified that we were included in the public consultation in 2019 but the consultation fell between meetings. The Parish Council published the public consultation in the newsletter in February 2019 but because all the routes were south of us and there was no talk of housing development at that stage people didn't realise the significance so the Parish Council did not respond.

Tom Tagg explained that other parishes to the south were invited to a consultation about it in 2020 and he feels that we should have been invited along with Tom Wootton. Initially the only housing development referred to was at Cambourne, south of St Neots and Tempsford, with none in Bedford Borough.

Cllr. R. Squire explained that everyone thought the railway would go south as that was the shortest, cheapest and least disruptive route.

Maggie Turner watched the video on Bedford Borough Council website last week. There were only 37 views at the time. Their comment was that they had approached all the parish councils that were affected by EWR but we weren't approached.

The Clerk suggested that this may be because the railway does not go directly through our parish.

Maggie – but the housing development is likely to be in our parish so it does affect us.

Tom suggested that the housing development will move to suit the route alignment.

Darren Edwards suggested that EWR was being used as an enabler to build houses. He felt that Staploe Parish Council is a small parish, close to A1 and A428 and likely to be thought of as an area of low resistance. The Mayor has not consulted us and made unilateral decisions. He suggested we should work as a team across parishes. He believes that EWR has been on the cards for a long time. The only way to fight it is across parishes with one committee.

Tom – listened to Bedford Borough Council's meeting about EWR on Wednesday and felt it was very unprofessional. Bedford Borough Council were only interested in getting a rail station in Bedford and they treated the concerns of northern villages with disdain.

Paul Giles said the East West Rail routes are on very unclear maps and so it was difficult to find out where the line was going and to choose a route.

Richard Squire suggested that the more northerly stations would make Denybrook more likely as people could cycle to the station. The Clerk suggested that a more northerly station might also make Little Barford more attractive than Denybrook as it would be even closer to a station than Denybrook.

Richard Squire suggested that the 2019 consultation was inadequate, insufficiently publicised and the data changed during the consultation so it needs to be re-run.

Stephen Ferguson said it was difficult to approve any of the routes because of the poor information available and in particular the lack of vertical elevations. They disagree with diesel trains and with viaducts and embankments. He said East West Rail had assumed that battery technology would improve sufficiently to make it possible to manage the gradients for freight but Stephen felt that this was very unlikely.

Jane Thomson expressed concern that the Black Cat and the northern (blue, red and light blue) routes might overlap and there was not space for both. The Clerk said that one of the justifications for the dark blue and purple routes was that they follow the A428 development corridor.

Denybrook Comments

Darren – Twinwoods is full of empty derelict buildings and yet this brownfield site appears to have been removed as an option. Government policy is to build on brownfield not green sites. He suggested we need to form a joint committee and get numbers behind it and get media involved.

Maggie – lived in Thurleigh when Yarlswood detention centre was being built. They were told by Bedford Borough Council that they didn't have a say but later they found out that it could have been challenged. Thurleigh, Milton Ernest and Bletsoe worked together to get as much information as possible. She agrees that parishes need to work together so that we have more impact.

Jo Ibbett – has made contact with Colmworth and they have been in contact with the chair of Wyboston, Colesden and Chawston. She will meet with both of them next Tuesday with Veronica Zwetsloot (Vice Chair) and the Clerk will be talking to the Chair of Wyboston tomorrow.

The Clerk mentioned that she thought that Little Barford came under Wyboston Parish Council. [She has since checked and this is not correct. Little Barford have their own Parish Meeting which is a step down from a Parish Council].

Darren thanked Stephen Ferguson for attending the meeting and asked if he could add some weight to our campaign. Stephen is happy to work together. The Town Council did not respond to the initial Issues and Options paper but are now formulating a response to the current draft proposals involving Denybrook. He has been talking to some Bedfordshire parish councils about the EWR campaign and is happy to do the same re Denybrook. He and the Town Council do not see any utility to their residents from Denybrook but a lot of extra disruption so he is happy to lend his support. The Town Council are formulating a response so he cannot prejudge it but he suspects they will be against it.

Darren asked who would lead a committee of several parishes campaigning on an issue such as this. The Clerk suggested that a group of interested residents across the parishes get together and nominate a chair etc. They could ask if a Parish Clerk was happy to donate their time or a volunteer could take minutes. She said someone had suggested a cross border Neighbourhood Plan and Neighbourhood Plans can go across borders but she explained that a strategic housing allocation such as Denybrook would not be managed through a Neighbourhood Plan. If for example Staploe, Wyboston and

Colmworth Parish Councils clubbed together to create a Neighbourhood Plan their only input would be to discuss what could be done to mitigate the impacts of the development for local residents.

Darren asked for clarity on what mitigations might mean and whether the Parish Council was planning to resist the development of Denybrook or just request mitigation eg. for a smaller size.

The Clerk explained that there were two separate issues.

1. Making representations about the Local Plan (objecting to Denybrook). Our options as Parish Councils are to employ a planning consultant to advise us how best to object and where we might suggest the houses go instead. This would not be part of the Neighbourhood Plan and would need to be funded separately.
2. Preparing a Neighbourhood Plan. A planning consultant has advised that we prepare two options for our Neighbourhood Plan. The first to be used if there is no strategic housing allocation in our parish and we just decide whether to allocate sites for the small number of houses needed by our residents. The second being if there is a strategic housing allocation such as Denybrook (and we do not succeed in our aim of objecting to it) then we would include some things that would help minimise the impact. But to be very clear the Parish Council have already passed a resolution to say that our Neighbourhood Plan questionnaires clearly show that there is no support for large scale development in our parish. We have communicated this to the Borough Council who just told us to communicate this during the consultation in the summer. However, I can tell you the Parish Council do not support Denybrook – or any extensive development in the parish and will therefore be campaigning against it but I'm just making it clear that this is separate from the Neighbourhood Plan.

Darren asked how we would fund the planning consultant.

The Clerk explained that this would be discussed in the Parish Council meeting. Darren said it is a lot of money particularly as there are only about 20 houses in Honeydon. He asked if there might be funds from the Borough or Parish Councils. The Clerk said the Borough wouldn't give us funds to campaign against their plan.

Richard Squire suggested that it would be best if parishes grouped together to fund it.

The Clerk explained that she has a quote from Troy Planning who are already working with Colmworth to make representations to the Borough Council about development in the area in the Local Plan (eg. Denybrook). They have quoted an estimate of £7,000 plus VAT and expenses so probably around £9,000 total. They are based in London so not directly involved with any of the local landowners or the Borough Council. They have experience of both the Local Plan making process and of the strategic site / new settlement planning process and will use this to assist with interrogating and analysing the proposed options set out in the emerging Local Plan, which would include reviewing and critiquing the technical evidence base prepared in support of the Plan: particularly those around growth options and supporting infrastructure. This review will also extend to any procedural matters, around the duty to cooperate with neighbouring authorities for example.

They have set out the following key steps involved in the production of representations to the Local Plan which are set out below.

- Initial client inception meeting.
- Review of Local Plan.
- Review of supporting evidence base.
- Review of evidence submitted to Bedford BC by landowners and developers (such as masterplans and visioning documents).

- Review of strategic sites in neighbouring authorities under consideration.
- Prepare draft representations, with a focus on growth options in Staploe Parish, for client review and comment.
- Update representations following feedback from the Parish Council.
- Submission of Representations to Bedford BC.

Tom Tagg suggested that more money would be needed and it could go on indefinitely. He pointed out that if the £7,000 cost was spread between all 140 households in the parish it would be about £50 per household.

Maggie suggested the parishes club together to spread the cost.

The Clerk suggested Jo might want to discuss this with the other parishes when she meets them next week. She said Colmworth have already raised £10,000 and they have already commissioned the same planning consultant to work on this (Troy Planning). Which is why she got a quote from them as they are already familiar with the Local Plan and Denybrook proposals. Some others she looked at were already involved with local landowners or the Borough Council so they are conflicted.

The Clerk did speak to Colmworth at the outset when they first commissioned Troy Planning and asked whether they were interested in teaming up and us contributing but at the time they didn't need us to make a contribution but they may do in the future – so Jo will probably discuss that when they meet next week. There is advantage in campaigning with one voice against the development but there is bound to be a desire from each parish to move any development away from their border.

Jane pointed out that on the Wyboston transport model

(<https://edrms.bedford.gov.uk/OpenDocument.aspx?id=iR6%2fQPvgRJk4VlSuTKQxWw%3d%3d&name=BBTM%20Assessment%20of%20New%20Settlement%20West%20of%20Wyboston%20FINAL%20for%20Exec.pdf>)

it mentions a link between the A6 and A1 via Thurleigh and Bolnhurst. She suggested we make Thurleigh and Bolnhurst parish councils aware of it and be aware that Bushmead Road may be widened.

A resident asked whether there was any possibility of a northern bypass to Bedford. He suggested the A6 A1 link might achieve this. The Clerk is not aware of anything.

Maggie explained that the poor road connections and impact on the A6 were major reasons why Twinwoods was not taken forward. Bletsoe, Thurleigh and Milton Ernest campaigned strongly against it and are quite well funded. If Bedford Borough Council will be improving the roads then she suggested this improves the case for Twinwoods.

Jane mentioned that the mitigation actions still lists a station at Colworth near Sharnbrook. A new development at Colworth was thrown out in Local Plan 2030 because there was no way to mitigate against the noise from Santa Pod.

The Clerk clarified that the only new settlements on the draft consultation for the Local Plan 2040 were Denybrook and Little Barford – none of the other settlements have been included in the draft (despite Twinwoods near Thurleigh and Colworth near Sharnbrook being resubmitted in the Call for Sites).

Paul Giles suggested that one of the main justifications for a northern route for the railway was to develop new houses to the north of Bedford so it didn't make sense for it go north as the houses

proposed are not north of Bedford – they are all north east of Bedford. The Clerk explained that the Mayor’s major justification was to have a station in Bedford rather than to the south at Wixams. Paul suggested most other towns wanted satellite stations, not town centre stations.

Darren – the mayor seems to be making unilateral decisions – how do we challenge him? He doesn’t seem to listen.

Clerk – I’m not a politician but he is a directly elected mayor so he can appoint people to his executive and make decisions without all the Borough Councillors voting on it. He has a large majority so this does give him significant power.

Richard Squire – he has a lot of power because he can appoint people to positions such as chair of a committee which comes with a “salary”.

Andrea Witham asked about development corporations. She has heard that these may be imposed on the Borough Council and if so all bets are off in terms of Local Plans.

The Clerk explained that the Mayor signed up to be part of the Oxford Cambridge arc and it is her understanding that he did this with little or no consultation and that it commits us to these major infrastructure projects and large scale housing development. Some say he probably didn’t have any choice – she doesn’t know enough about it. In Bedford Borough Council’s Housing Strategy 2021-2026 (6.3.3) adopted in February 2021 it states that “As detailed in para 3.30 the Government’s paper ‘The Oxford-Cambridge Arc: Government ambition and joint declaration between Government and local partners’ identifies the area between the two cities – including Bedford Borough - as an area of significant growth and economic potential. It includes an ambition for up to one million new homes - and the social and transport infrastructure necessary to support them - across the Arc by 2050. This includes the completion of East West Rail and the new road Expressway (Black Cat and A428 are part of this). In its Budget 2020, the Government announced its intention to examine and develop the case for up to four new Development Corporations in the Arc at Bedford, St Neots / Sandy, Cambourne and Cambridge to accelerate new housing and infrastructure development. Geographically located at the centre of the Arc, Bedford Borough Council will need to be a key partner in considering the potential for growth and ensure its best interests are represented - including in discussions regarding the potential formation of a new Development Corporation covering the Borough.”

The Clerk suggested that the Borough is unlikely to want control of development to be passed out of their hands into those of a Development Corporation but that there is very little information on how these corporations might operate at the moment.

The draft Local Plan 2040 suggests that one option may be to have fairly limited development between 2020 and 2030 and then much more rapid development from 2030 to 2040 by which time East West Rail, Black Cat and the A428 will be in place and there will be more clarity about the proposed Development Corporations.

Andrea said she was concerned that if the Development Corporations were in control we would have very little say in what happens.

The Clerk suggested that it might be wise to write to our MP about this as she thinks it is likely to be a government decision rather than a Bedford Borough Council decision.

Maggie said she had a very good response from Richard Fuller MP about development in the area and she suggested that the Parish Council might like to ask him about the role of development corporations.

Darren suggested that the parish councils move quickly and together to oppose Denybrook or it will be too late. A lot of work has gone into the Vision Document and the Draft Local Plan 2040 already.

Robert Tusting agreed that Taylor Wimpey have spent a lot of money and we will need to work together and spend a lot of money to challenge it.

Paul Giles – if the new town comes on the border of St Neots then St Neots stand to lose because they don't get Council Tax or infrastructure money but a lot of the inconvenience. The Mayor of St Neots agreed. Paul also suggested that the main access point to Denybrook will be past Bushmead primary school which will become dangerous.

Darren suggested that the design of Wixams was very poor and they got very little of the facilities promised.

Ged pointed out that we need to be mindful of the long term view stated in the Wyboston settlement transport model which included the scenario of up to 10,150 houses – even though the Local Plan 2040 only includes 2,500 homes at Denybrook.

Darren asked what the frequency of future meetings will be. The Clerk explained that in theory we meet every other month but because of the amount going on there has been a meeting every month for the past year and occasionally two per month. We just have to be careful that we don't have too many meetings and they don't become too long or all our hard working councillors (most of whom also have full time jobs) might find it is too much and we might start losing people.