

Bedfordshire Matters

Unnecessary new towns proposed for Bedford Borough

The Bedfordshire branch of Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE Bedfordshire) has learnt that as part of consultations on Bedford Borough Council's (BBC) new Local Plan 2032, developers have put forward last minute proposals to create two new towns in rural north Bedfordshire. One at Twinwoods near Milton Ernest and the other created through the development of Sharnbrook village. A further new town has been proposed in Wyboston near St Neots.



Twinwoods near Milton Ernest

Gerry Sansom, Chair of CPRE Bedfordshire: "These new settlements are being promoted by developers as new villages but they are in fact far bigger than that. The Twinwoods proposal is for between 4,000 and 6,000 new homes plus a retail centre and industrial units. This means that it is in fact a new town with a predicted population of between 6,000 and 14,000 people – bigger in size than Flitwick or Ampthill."

In our comments sent to the council we argued there is no proven need for this level of development, and that the 13,000 new homes already provided with outline or full planning permission by Bedford Borough Council are more than enough to satisfy the housing needs of local people till 2032.

Gerry continues: "A new town of this size and scale in rural North Bedfordshire will have a massive impact on the surrounding villages and on Bedford

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itself. There will be a huge increase in the number of cars and commercial vehicles using the rural road network. It would be naive to think that any community in North Bedfordshire would be immune from the impact of these appalling proposals.

"The main road systems in and around Bedford are also already at capacity levels during peak times so these proposals are simply unsustainable."

The Sharnbrook proposal is for 2,500 new homes on land surrounding the Colworth research site and science park. This will more than double the size of Sharnbrook and transform it into a town with in excess of 3,500 homes. At Wyboston a 256-hectare site is proposed for a new town of 4,000 homes.

See page 6 for more on BBC's local plan process.

You can read more about the proposals on Bedford Borough Council's website – go to: Planning Policy - Local Plan 2035 - "call for sites" And inform your local councillor/MP if you have concerns.

New website live!

After months of planning and development the new CPRE Bedfordshire website is finally live. The website will be easier for us to update with the latest news and campaigns. It really is a one-stop-shop for everything CPRE Bedfordshire. A big thank you goes to everyone involved in making it happen, with special thanks to Maureen Hall and Stuart McNee.

If you're active on social media come find us on Facebook and Twitter – share your thoughts, pictures and join the discussion.

Making sense of it all

Back in January I came across CPRE on social media – the business-orientated LinkedIn to be precise. The volunteer position that was being advertised was right up my street – a communications role to help raise the profile of the charity and with my background in marketing agencies I knew I could put my skillset to good use.

Like many people I had never heard of the Campaign to Protect Rural England before, but its title alone had me hooked.

Campaign – people getting passionately involved in what they believe in

Protect – wanting to preserve for future generations

Rural – the landscape that I find so captivating and stunning

England – the country I'm proud to call home

But whilst I was happy to get involved and get stuck into the many comms tasks that the branch needed, I was somewhat struggling to get my head around what CPRE Bedfordshire actually does for the cause. Unlike other campaigning charities I'm aware of such as Greenpeace, I haven't seen CPRE protests staged around the county, or any advertising highlighting the cause or an appeal for donations.



Me on the River Great Ouse at Great Barford

But now, six months in, as I edit this newsletter the heart of what CPRE Bedfordshire does is becoming much clearer. To be honest it's not been easy. I don't have any knowledge of town or rural planning, I don't have a long history in Bedfordshire (I've lived in both the South and North of the county for only 3 years), I can't comprehend the realities of politics and I don't understand how a small charity can influence such big decisions that are made at local and national level. Am I alone on this?

With all the policies, jargon and bureaucracy it is complicated, confusing and overwhelming. But what I believe makes CPRE Bedfordshire great is that it has a small team of dedicated volunteers who DO understand the policies, the jargon and the bureaucracy. They have the passion, knowledge and

commitment to make sense of it all and challenge the people in power to do better for US.

So in my role as Editor I want to break the issues down to what matters, to simplify if you will, so you as a member and/or resident can try to understand the work we do and where your kind donations are put to good use. We may not all know the ins and outs of local planning but we believe in the cause and can support the people who do.

Happy reading!

Pam Groom, Editor
pam.groom@cprebeds.org.uk



A favourite shot of mine near Pergsdon

The latest news to your inbox



CPRE Bedfordshire sends out a monthly e-bulletin with the latest news of our work, campaigns and events. At the moment we only have email addresses for about half of our members. To sign-up simply email info@cprebeds.org.uk.

Report from the Chair



The summer is with us and that signals our search for those individuals, businesses and communities that have done special things to enhance our environment. Not only in our villages and countryside but also, just as importantly, in our urban areas too.

We've been enjoying seeing the awards applications as they come in for our prestigious Living Countryside Awards

2016. Yet again, they highlights people's efforts around the county to enhance our local environment and the places we live and work. It may be too late to enter the awards this year, but please do let us know of any initiatives you feel deserve recognition, and we can contact them about the awards next time.

On the planning front, we are concerned to make sure that sufficient homes are built to ensure that the demands of the people of Bedfordshire are fulfilled. We are also happy to see a further reasonable increase beyond this to cater for those moving into our county for work. However, the number of homes currently being considered by Local Authorities across Bedfordshire at around 50% above "Local Need" is, in our view, far too high. It will cause irreparable damage to our countryside and put enormous strain on local

infrastructure and services. Put simply, their figures are unsustainable.

Developers have huge land banks across Bedfordshire but are just not building on them because they want to keep house prices high. An example is the Wixams new town south of Bedford where plans are already agreed for 4,500 new homes with a potential to increase this to 6,000. But land owners and developers who've already made millions, are building slowly and going back on their agreement to help fund the new Wixams railway station.

Providing even more greenfield sites with planning permission will not solve these problems.

*Gerry Sansom, Chair
CPRE Bedfordshire*

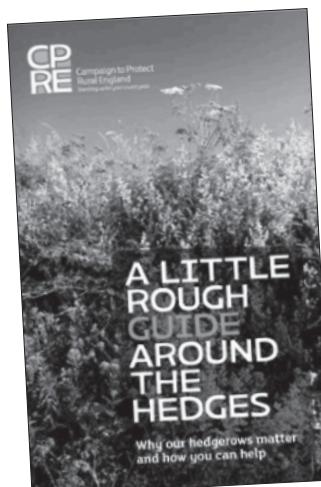


Do you know your hedgerows?

Hedgerows are a distinctive sight in Bedfordshire, playing a part in our history and an important role in the lives of our plants and animals.

Although hedgerow regulations were introduced in 1997 following campaigning by CPRE there is still more to be done to preserve this special countryside feature.

That's why the national CPRE have produced A Little Rough Guide Around the Hedges which you can download from their website www.cpre.org.uk. Learn to identify your Dogwood from your Dog Rose, or your Guelder Rose from your Hawthorn. Understand why hedgerows matter and what you can do to help.



Fundraising whilst you shop

Are you using easyfundraising.org.uk for your online shopping yet? If not, please do!

There are nearly 3,000 retailers including Amazon, John Lewis, Aviva, thetrainline and Sainsbury's, who will donate a percentage of the amount you spend to CPRE Bedfordshire to say thank you for shopping with them. It's really simple, and doesn't cost you anything.

All you need to do is go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk/causes/cprebeds and sign up for free, get shopping and your donation will be collected by easyfundraising and sent to CPRE Bedfordshire. It couldn't be easier. There are no catches or hidden charges and CPRE Bedfordshire will be really grateful for your donations.

Branch news

AGM and Ampthill Great Park walk

This year's Annual General Meeting took place on Saturday 23rd April at Parkside Hall Ampthill.

The afternoon concluded with a walk across the road in Ampthill Great Park, with fantastic views of Bedfordshire from the Greensands Ridge, with glimmers of the sun shining through. Lead by CPRE Bedfordshire member and volunteer Steve Halton, he was able to give us insightful details about the landscape and wildlife – his knowledge of bird call was delightful. We were also very grateful to be joined by the Great Park's Ranger, Gary Quilter and volunteer, Sheila Meekums who gave us further information into the upkeep of the park and its history, including its Capability Brown design.



Goodbye to long standing volunteers

At our AGM in April thanks were given to Steve Halton (pictured), Geoff Lambert and Suzanne Yates as they stepped down as members of the executive committee, and we welcomed Mary Walsh and new treasurer Chris Hall.

Special thanks were also given to Alan Apling who has stepped down as the long-standing treasurer of CPRE Bedfordshire but remains as a member of the executive committee – he was thanked with a copy of the recent Wild Orchids of Bedfordshire book and a bottle of Bedfordshire wine from Warden Abbey Vineyard

New volunteers

Since our last edition four new volunteers have come aboard: Pam Groom, Jeff Hunter, James Broadhurst and Lena Kingham. Jeff and Lena told Bedfordshire Matters why they got involved.

Lena Kingham

"I wanted to get into a structured volunteering role and co-ordinating the Living Countryside Awards 2016 appealed to me. It is a really interesting project to run with; from promoting the awards to a wide audience, managing the short listed projects and finally holding the awards ceremony in the autumn. I have a degree in environmental management and a career in marketing and communications so this project is fulfilling in lots of ways."



Jeff Hunter

"I retired from Unilever where I was a manager for 37 years. Although I spent some time abroad, most of this period was spent here in the UK. With time on my hands having retired, I was looking for something to do that was of value and at the same time interesting.

"I truly believe that the English countryside is something we should treasure and not take for granted. We also have the responsibility to pass it on to the next generation, in as good a state as possible.

"I have only been with the team a short time but have found it interesting to consider the merits and issues associated with some local planning requests. There are lots of things to consider in evaluating such applications and I look forward to learning more about the process."



Volunteer opportunities

Volunteers are the lifeblood of our branch. We rely enormously on their skills, commitment and enthusiasm to do the work we do. We have many exciting opportunities at the branch, working from our Bedford office or from home, either regularly or on an occasional basis.

At the moment we're on lookout for someone to fill one specific role:

Trustee – an excellent opportunity to join our executive committee and play a senior role in a respected local environmental organisation, applying your management skills and experience to make a real difference and to be part of a friendly and passionate group.

To find out more about this role and what it would involve, please contact Nicola Scholfield on nicola.scholfield@cprebeds.org.uk or 01234 353331.

County wide events

This year we're doing more work to raise the profile of what we do, with the overarching theme of asking people what they love about the Bedfordshire countryside – we expect visitors to be enthusiastic about where we live.

Come and see us at the following Bedfordshire events:

- June 25th – Meppershall Fair
- July 10th – Bromham Show
- August 14th – Summer Fair at Rushmere Park, Leighton Buzzard
- TBC September 10th – Riseley Village Show

£350 raised at quiz night

Thank you to everyone who joined us for an evening of fun and fundraising at The White Horse pub in Bedford on 27th April. We had a good turn out with 11 teams taking part. Funds were raised via entry tickets and also a raffle, with good food and drink provided by The White Horse pub.

Local Plans Forum

On Saturday 23rd April we hosted the Bedfordshire Local Plans Forum. Its aim was to inform people on why now is a key moment for Bedfordshire's countryside.

If you're a regular reader of Bedfordshire Matters you'll know that local plans are a big topic and a unique moment in time, for the plans for all Bedfordshire's local authorities – Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and Luton Borough Council, plus neighbouring Milton Keynes – are in progress. Plans that will set the level and shape of development in our towns and countryside for the next 15 years or so.

The event came about because we feel it is important that residents are aware of the facts and to find out how they can

underpin housing numbers proposed in local plans – contain highly inflated, unachievable housing numbers. The national office of CPRE has produced a report on this very important subject - Set up to Fail – you can download the report at www.cpre.org.uk

Gerry also painted the bigger picture by speaking about the impact of recent government initiatives influencing the direction of development in our county.



get involved. Held in Ampthill after our AGM we had an encouraging turn out with over forty people from across the county attending, including a number of representatives from parish and town councils.

The talk included an overview of the drivers that are impacting the high level housing need, the impact of the New Homes Bonus and the fear of not obtaining approval for a local plan.

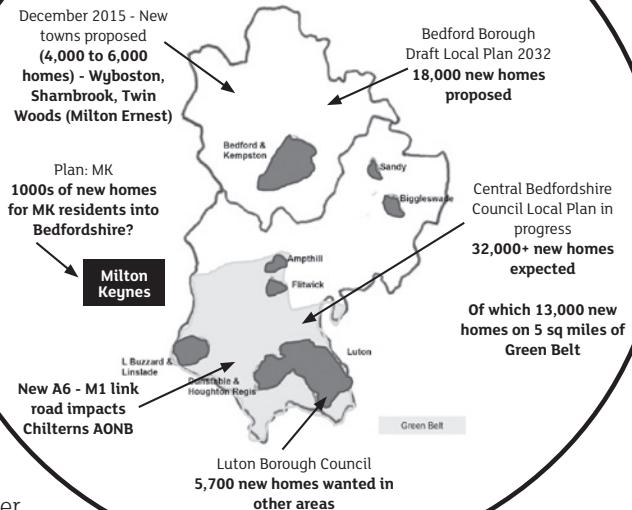
Gerry Sansom, our Chair, spoke of the lack of clarity in government guidance pushing local authorities to provide for aspiration rather than local need. The result is that Strategic Housing Market Assessments (SHMA) – which

For a copy of the presentation or to find out more please contact us.

For the final part of the Forum we opened up to the floor to invite anyone to share their concerns. Valid and interesting points were raised including lack of infrastructure and worries that healthcare is an after-thought. We also urged residents to speak to their local politicians about plans in their areas and to have their say in the consultations.

For more information about our Local Plans Forum or to receive our news and views on the local plan consultations, please email us on info@cprebeds.org.uk

Bedfordshire Local Plans The Big Picture



Help save the countryside from as little as £3 per month

Help protect the countryside by becoming a member of CPRE. We all need the countryside – whether it's for fresh air, delicious local produce, beautiful landscapes, or vibrant towns and villages – the countryside is invaluable. By joining CPRE, you are helping to ensure that a beautiful living countryside thrives for generations to come.

CPRE membership is from £3 per month, but giving at a higher level will help us do more to protect the countryside.

Becoming a member is easy –

- **Register** a direct debit or credit/debit card via our website www.cprebeds.org.uk, or
- **download** a form from our website and email it to info@cprebeds.org.uk, or
- **call** the office on 01234 353331 to request a postal application

Update on local plans

Central Bedfordshire

In our last edition (Winter 2015-16, available to download on our website) we informed readers that Central Bedfordshire Council's (CBC) Development Strategy had been withdrawn as the Planning Inspector appointed by the Secretary of State concluded that it did not meet its 'duty to cooperate' (cooperating with adjoining local authorities, particularly Luton and Milton Keynes).

CBC has now issued a timeline for production for a new local plan, which states the draft will be ready for public consultation by the end of 2016, with the resultant 'pre-submission' version published by the end of summer 2017. This version would then undergo its 'Examination in Public' by a Planning



Inspector during spring 2018, leading to formal adoption as the new local plan later that year.

So there is another two years to go before a new local plan for the CBC area is expected to be in place, throughout which time developers will be able to continue to exploit the planning policy 'vacuum' that currently exists. CPRE Bedfordshire have already responded

to several cases over the last 9 months (more details on pages 8 & 9), where developers are pushing out into open countryside beyond existing settlement boundaries. Whilst only one or two have been refused so far, we will continue to monitor the situation and raise our objections where we think the case for refusal is strong e.g. on sustainability and/or landscape impact grounds.



Luton Borough

Luton Borough Council (LBC) is now well ahead of CBC in getting a new local plan in place. Its pre-submission version went to the LBC's full council for approval in March and it has now been lodged with the Secretary of State with a view to its Examination in Public taking place later this summer.

Unlike CBC the plan refers extensively to the discussions it has had with adjoining local authorities on meeting unmet housing. Despite our suggestions to LBC on how they could do more to help themselves, it appears they will look to their neighbours. They admit the talks have not led to resolution but state meaningful talks are ongoing. At the end

of the day, LBC's Plan and CBC's Plan are going to have to be in harmony – it will be a challenging process for them to achieve that.

Final adoption is envisaged by the end of this year – though that is based on a smooth process here on in, which might prove optimistic.

Bedford Borough

Following the consultation on the draft Bedford Borough Local Plan 2032 back in November last year, the renewed 'call for sites' resulted in developers putting forward the last minute proposals for new towns described in our headline story.

These new proposals have resulted in the Council having to reconsider its housing strategy. We understand that the Mayor will now personally chair a committee to look into the feasibility and need for each of the proposed new towns and the implications on the overall housing strategy. We'll wait to see how this progresses.

This is not a simple exercise and so Bedford Borough Council have been obliged to change the timescales and the period of their plan. It will now be called 'Local Plan 2035' and the new timetable is for a draft plan to be available for consultation during 2017, with the final plan now due to be completed by 2018/19.

We don't believe there are any specific implications from the three-year delay – particularly since we understand that the Council have asked for governmental approval of the new schedule and received confirmation that it's okay. It



will of course mean that parish councils undertaking their neighbourhood plans may feel it's better to fit their timetable around the Borough Council's revised schedule.

The specific drivers behind the strategy are twofold:

1. In March 2016 The Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) issued a document called 'Locally-Led Garden Villages, Towns and Cities'. This offers Local Authorities substantial additional funding in order to support the development of new communities in their areas from 1,500 up to 10,000 new homes in size. We are aware that the Mayor has already had

discussions with the Government agency promoting the scheme.

2. As part of his recent budget, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, George Osborne has asked the National Infrastructure Commission to look at ways of maximising the potential of the Cambridge – Bedford - Milton Keynes - Oxford corridor with respect to increasing growth and enabling a substantial increase in new housing.

CPRE Bedfordshire will continue to monitor the situation, respond to any consultations that emerge from the Council's deliberations and continue to advise members and the general public of any changes.

Picture perfect

If you're out and about in Bedfordshire and capture a picture perfect scene we'd love to share them with our readers and on our website. Landscapes, family activities, wildlife, development in progress – be inspired.

Simply email your photos to our Editor at pam.groom@cprebeds.org.uk



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Planning applications from around the county

Gypsy & Traveller sites

Greenvale Nursery, south of Dunstable

In the current absence of any formal Local Plan for the provision of Gypsy & Traveller (G&T) accommodation it is almost inevitable that proposals in inappropriate locations will continue to come forward.

One such proposal is for a significant extension to an existing site at Greenvale Nursery on the A5 south of Dunstable. The location is not only in the green belt but in the Chilterns AONB as well. With two other existing G&T sites in the immediate vicinity, the effect of this latest proposal would be to create a stretch of virtual 'ribbon' G&T development along this stretch of the A5.

We have objected accordingly. At the time of writing, a decision is still awaited.

Dunton, south of Biggleswade

We have also objected to an application – by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) itself – for a CBC-managed G&T site in open countryside near the village of Dunton, south of Biggleswade. Although not in the green belt, the site would be visually very prominent, and involves the use of high-grade agricultural land. The fact that this site has been put forward at all is curious given that it is one that was discarded by CBC in 2013 on the grounds of its very poor performance against the sustainability criteria it had adopted for the G&T Plan then in formulation, but subsequently withdrawn.

Nothing has changed to make this site any more sustainable than it was before.



Warehouse developments

Leighton Buzzard

The site of the former egg production units at Dean's Farm on the A505 Leighton Buzzard southern bypass, which have been out of use for many years, now seems set to host a major distribution warehouse, rising 12 metres high.

The site is in the green belt, in which a building of this nature is thoroughly inappropriate and could only be justified by 'very special circumstances'. The circumstances concerned were argued to be the urgent need of a well-established local employer to expand his warehousing and distribution operation into a new state-of-the-art building, tailor-made to his specification, with the prospect of 70 additional jobs being created.

Both CPRE Bedfordshire and Stanbridge Parish Council strongly opposed the proposals, but a sufficient 'very special circumstances' case was judged by CBC to have been made, and permission was granted.

It has since transpired that the alleged urgent interest in the Dean's Farm site by the local employer concerned was no more than tentative, and may not actually materialise. So now we have

consent for a major warehouse building in the green belt, granted on an entirely false premise. We can only hope that a building of the nature consented will never actually be constructed.

Houghton Regis

At Thorn Turn, Houghton Regis where, as previously reported, CBC has obtained outline planning consent for 45,40 sq.m. of warehousing on land within the Houghton Regis North urban extension area for employment purposes, a fresh application has now been tabled which would increase this to around 62,000 sq.m. This proposal has been facilitated by the decision of the Environment Agency (EA) to relax the level of flood risk from the Ouzel Brook, which adjoins the site.

Though there are clearly increased landscape impact considerations associated with the proposal, we have concentrated our objections on challenging the changed assessment of the local flood risk, which appears to take inadequate account of the longer term issues associated with climate change. Ironically, the EA's decision came at the very time Cumbria was experiencing some of the most devastating floods ever seen. CBC did approve the enlarged warehousing development at its Development Management Committee meeting on 11th May.

Green belt applications re-submitted

Two green belt applications which we had hoped we might have seen the back of have made a return appearance.

Eaton Bray

The application for an estate of 'up to 150' homes on green belt land off Totternhoe Road, Eaton Bray which we reported last year as refused, has been re-submitted without any change other than a reduction in the number of houses to 'up to 145'. We have reiterated our objections, and at the time of writing CBC's decision is awaited.

Chiltern Green, near Luton

The Solar Farm application at Chiltern Green, which we reported in the last issue as having been withdrawn in the face of concerns by CBC's Landscape Officer, has been re-submitted with no change other than additional photo-montage evidence as to the visual impact of the proposal. In our view, this only serves to confirm how intrusive it would be.

The case against this scheme has been further strengthened by a recent Ministerial Written Statement to the effect that solar farm development on the 'best and most versatile agricultural land' can only be justified on the 'most compelling evidence'. The land at Chiltern Green is Agricultural Grade 3(a), which falls within the 'best and most versatile' category.

We have highlighted this highly relevant government guidance in our response, stressing our view that no such 'most compelling' evidence has been made. At the time of writing, CBC's decision is awaited.

Housing

Leighton Buzzard

Last summer we reported how the latest attempt by Paul Newman New Homes (PNNH) to secure permission for a major urban extension on the town's Buckinghamshire border at Linslade had been met with outraged opposition. After very lengthy consideration, Aylesbury Vale District Council decided earlier this year – unanimously – to reject the application.

This saga has now been running since 2009, and you would have thought that by now PNNH would have finally got the message. Not so, once again PNNH is seeking to overturn refusal of its proposals by taking the matter to Appeal.

This appears to be a classic instance of abuse of the planning system by a determined developer who is not interested in public opinion, only in getting its own way. We have notified the Planning Inspectorate of our continuing objections to the PNNH proposals.

Lidlington

CPRE Bedfordshire has responded to an application for 40 houses proposed for a site on the edge of the village of Lidlington and in open countryside. The Parish Council had also objected to the proposal. We were pleased that CBC had agreed that "The development would result in the urbanisation of the open countryside, would have a poor relationship with the built up area of Lidlington and would cause significant harm to the character and appearance of the site, the area and the wider landscape" and refused the application.

Other applications

We have responded to applications made for housing developments in Cranfield, Kempston, Meppershall, Fairfield and Clophill. We are awaiting decisions.

For future information contact us or check our website www.cprebeds.org.uk



2016 Living Countryside Awards

Now in their seventh year the Living Countryside Awards recognise the people and projects that are making special efforts to enhance Bedfordshire's rich and diverse environment. The awards reflect the enjoyment and benefits brought to local communities through inspiring projects.

It's a great chance to get recognition for the great work being done across Bedfordshire. Anyone involved in projects or businesses that are benefiting our local environment, rural economy or landscapes is encouraged to apply.



Nominations closed mid June and at the time of writing our panel are busy creating a short-list to visit. Details of the short-listed projects will be publicised at an awards ceremony in the autumn where the winners will be announced. Keep an eye on our website for details of the ceremony.

This year the four categories are:

- Biodiversity & Landscape Improvement
- Sustainable Enterprise
- Building Design & Restoration
- Living Countryside Youth Award – new this year to recognise schools, youth groups and young people that make a difference to our local environment.

For further information on the awards you can contact the LCA Co-ordinator, Lena Kingham via lena.kingham@cprebeds.org.uk

2014 CPRE MARK WINNERS

Building Design & Restoration

Bassmead Manor Barns,
Staploe
St Mary's Old Church
& Observation Tower,
Clophill

Biodiversity & Landscape Improvement

John O'Gaunt Golf Club,
Sandy
Jubilee Wood,
Biggleswade

Sustainable Enterprise

Chris Dodson, Master
Thatcher
Mrs Middleton Ltd,
Lilley
Golden Gardens,
Goldington

Past Winner

The team at Tiddenfoot Waterside Park, Linslade received a silver award within the Biodiversity & Landscape Improvement category in 2014 for their Forager's Way project. Bedfordshire Matters caught up with the team to see how things are getting on.

"We were delighted to get the award – it was a giddy-up to the team! Since then the project is very much on-going and there are always jobs to be done. We've also been awarded a Green Flag and a SSSI may be on the cards too, as we've identified that some of the soil is classed as 'lowland acid grassland', which is very rare in Bedfordshire. We have been given some gorse and broom, which thrive in this type of soil – they've been planted and fenced off for protection while they establish themselves.

"When we can show some results of all our latest efforts we will apply for the LCAs again – this time for the big one, the CPRE Mark. That is most likely in two years, 2018.

"More information about the project can be found on our website www.tiddenfoot.org.uk"

Tom Wise, Friend of Tiddenfoot Waterside Park



National Updates

New map shows extent of green belt threat

At the end of May CPRE London launched a new map to show the extent of the threat to London's green belt. It shows nearly 200 sites under threat from development and proposals for building over 110,000 houses on protected green belt land.

CPRE Bedfordshire is one of seven CPRE branches in partnership with CPRE London (alongside Bucks, Berks, Herts, Essex, Kent and Surrey) plus the London Green Belt Council made up of around 70 groups. Bedfordshire's green belt is on the northern most edge of the London Metropolitan green belt.

In Bedfordshire, five square miles of green belt land has been given over to development in the last couple of years, including land for 13,000 new houses and the new M1 – A5 link road (pictured).

Catherine Maguire, CPRE London's green belt campaigner, added: "The government's pre-election commitment to protect our green belt is not being

adhered to. The planning system has been weakened to the extent that even the 'strongest protection' afforded to green belt land is being ignored on a widespread basis.

"What's even more maddening is that there is categorically no need to release green belt for development: the Further Alterations to the London Plan states that brownfield 'opportunity areas' in the capital alone could provide 300,000 new homes.

"The developer lobby has been very successful in promulgating the myth



CPRE reflects on Queen's Speech

Several new bills of interest to us were announced in the Queen's Speech on 16th May. These included a Neighbourhood Planning and Infrastructure Bill, and a Digital Economy Bill. Paul Miner and Tom Fyans from the National Office of CPRE reflect on the announcements.

Tom Fyans, Director of Campaigns and Policy, comments on neighbourhood planning:

"After ministers pledged to ensure the 'primacy' of neighbourhood plans during debates on the Housing Bill, we are very pleased to see neighbourhood planning on the name of the new bill.

"The Government has clearly committed to empowering local communities in today's announcements. Along with supportive peers and MPs, we now keenly await further detail on how the Government will make the duty to consult neighbourhood planning groups more transparent, and how it intends to improve the process of reviewing and updating plans."

Paul Miner, Planning Campaign Manager, on government proposals to relax pre-commencement planning conditions:

"We are worried that this looks like another attempt to liberalise, rather than localise, the planning system.

"Of course, local authorities must ensure that conditions are reasonable – but

that we must release green belt if we want new homes. This is unsurprising given that houses in the green belt might make a tidy profit for developers being in such nice locations. But they are expensive – not the affordable ones we need.

"If anything we now need to strengthen, not weaken, green belt land protections: we need to focus on building new homes in the right places, not in the green belt, not in the wider countryside, not in AONBs - Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, but on appropriate sites in already built up areas."

To view the map head to www.cprebeds.org.uk

they have no incentive to slow down housing development once permission has been granted. But we are worried that the bill could lead to overstretched local authorities throwing in the towel and not insisting that important environmental surveys take place before development goes ahead.

"The Government must make sure that local authorities can always insist on conditions such as archaeological and tree surveys and proper mediation where there is a reason to believe they are needed. These are issues that deserve proper scrutiny from all sides, and especially from developers. Anything less and the support of the local community, and the beauty of the countryside, could be undermined and lost."

I ❤️ Bedfordshire!



"I moved to Harlington with my family over 20 years ago and we were amazed to find how accessible the local countryside was. Free to roam, we walked the seasons – sunshine or snow. A short drive would take us to many more vantage points, stunning views and endless walks through beautiful countryside."

Mary Walsh

"I love Bedfordshire's diversity, from country parks, to urban spaces, restored buildings and locally run business. My time as a volunteer has certainly opened my eyes to the amount of wonderful projects people are involved in, and the dedication they show to improving their local environment."

Lena Kingham

"The Barton Hills (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) have always been a life blood for the people of Luton. The hills and broad landscapes are glorious at all times of the year."

"A magical sunset across cultivated fields in the green belt near Harlington makes the perfect end to a summer's evening walk."

Ann Collett-White



"Unlike other home counties there are areas of Bedfordshire where you can get away from the hustle and bustle and get lost amongst hedgerows, woodlands and fields of crops or livestock."

Pam Groom

"We really relish the accessibility of picturesque local countryside, and the warm togetherness of Northill life, and that of our neighbours Ickwell. With no streetlamps in the village, we benefit from stunning views of clear night skies."

Chris Hall

About us

Campaign to Protect Rural England is a national charity that exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

We have 60,000 supporters, a branch in every county, eight regional groups, over 200 local groups and a national office in London. CPRE is a powerful combination of effective local action and strong national campaigning.

Our Patron is Her Majesty the Queen.

Bedfordshire Matters is the biannual magazine of Bedfordshire's CPRE branch. CPRE Bedfordshire is a local independent charity who works to protect and promote the countryside and green spaces of Bedfordshire.



Registered Charity No: 1023435

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