

# Bedfordshire Matters

## Living Countryside Awards 2016 celebrates those making a difference



*Pages Park Community Garden c/o Barry Halton*

It was a scene of celebration at John O'Gaunt Golf Club on the 4th of October as CPRE Bedfordshire recognised those who have made a real difference to the county's countryside.

The Living Countryside Awards is a flagship event during which the countryside charity awards local people, businesses and groups who have dedicated time to enhance the county's environment.

The highest award, the CPRE Mark, went to people and organisations all over the county: Warden Abbey Community Vineyard and The Swiss Garden (Old Warden), Galley & Warden Hills Grazing Project and Woodlands Secondary School (Luton), Clophill Eco Lodges, Mowsbury Hillfort (Bedford), Jordans Mill (Broom), Pages Park Community Garden (Leighton-Linslade) and Swallowfield Lower School (Woburn Sands).

Story continues on page 3.

### In this issue:

3-6

The Living Countryside Awards special: four pages dedicated to our winners

7

Could you be a trustee?

8

The secrecy over Freeman's Common

12

Locals choose their favourite places

## Pressure on Potton

In the absence of a Local Plan in Central Bedfordshire, applications for large unsustainable developments continue. Potton residents could easily be forgiven for thinking they are being targeted by developers. In recent months, this small town on the Greensands Ridge has seen four applications for land at sites on the edges of this small town. In total these propose a further 600 houses for Potton, a town of just 1,900 properties.

In October an application for 90 houses at Sandy Road on open countryside and a few hundred metres away from a RSPB nature reserve, was approved by Central Bedfordshire Council. This was despite widespread opposition from the town council, ward councillors, the RSPB, ourselves and hundreds of local residents.

More on planning applications on page 8.

Title photo: Mowsbury Hillfort c/o Barry Halton

## Bedfordshire volunteers shine

The Living Countryside Awards has somewhat taken over this edition of Bedfordshire Matters and I hope you'll enjoy reading about the fantastic work happening all over the county.

What really struck me at the awards ceremony was how people have gone above and beyond – the commitment and passion from everyone was clear. What was even more amazing was that out of the shortlist of 18, one third were supported by or made up of volunteers. People who gave their time and skills, for free, to enhance the community and environment we live in. People really do love our countryside!

As the CPRE Mark winners came to collect their awards the proud looks on their faces was fantastic. It clearly meant a lot that their vision, hard work and determination had been recognised and they would proudly display their CPRE Mark plaque for all to see. And as those who achieved highly commended and commended posed for pictures with HM Lord-Lieutenant, I could tell this would be an evening they'd be telling their friends and colleagues about, and there was hopeful chatter of entering the next awards to achieve the top prize.

I'm excited to find out what new spaces, organisations or buildings will shine in two years time!

**Pam Groom, Editor**

[pam.groom@cprebeds.org.uk](mailto:pam.groom@cprebeds.org.uk)



Representatives from Pages Park Community Garden & Mrs Helen Nellis, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire (centre)

## Report from Chair



For CPRE Bedfordshire, the highlight of the last few months has been without doubt, our prestigious Living Countryside Awards event which this year took place at John O' Gaunt Golf Club near Sandy. An unusual venue perhaps but a packed audience was surprised to learn of the amazing achievements made by the Club, which received one of our top awards two years ago, in their efforts to enhance biodiversity across their two golf courses. Through sensitive management they've even been able to attract otters to a stream passing across their land.

Meanwhile development pressures on Bedfordshire, one of the smallest counties in England, continues unabated. In a little publicised response to a recent consultation by the National Infrastructure Commission regarding development along the Oxford - Cambridge Corridor (which includes Bedford and Milton Keynes), the Mayor of Bedford and the Leaders of Central Bedfordshire and Luton Councils together with other Councils across the Corridor, have signed up to a paper calling for an additional 1 million new homes (37% increase) and, a population increase of 1.6 million people (25% increase) in the Corridor over the next 35 years.

These numbers are jaw-dropping and very little background data has been published to support them. The housing numbers in particular seem to be far in excess of that required for local people.

At a time when all of Bedfordshire's Local Authorities are at various stages

of preparation of their new Local Plans and two of them have yet to consult with their local residents, CPRE Bedfordshire wonders what happened to Local Democracy?

**1 million new homes is equivalent to:**

- 10 new mega towns the size of Northampton (approx. 100,000 dwellings)
- Or, 250 small towns the size of Ampthill (approx. 4,000 dwellings)
- Or, around 700 to 1,000 medium sized villages the size of Sharnbrook or Maulden (approx. 1,000/1,500 dwellings)

**1.6 million people is equivalent to:**

- A city 50% larger than Birmingham (pop: 1.1million).

Has the Mayor and the Leaders of Central Bedfordshire and Luton Councils already discussed and agreed these figures with their councillors? Is the Local Plan process now just a rubber stamping exercise? What has been the role of the Local Enterprise Partnerships and Developers in all of this?

Central Government continually talks about Local Democracy but if anything, the decision making processes seem to be moving even further away from local people.

For more information go to the news section of our website:  
[www.cprebeds.org.uk](http://www.cprebeds.org.uk)

**Gerry Sansom, Chair**

**NFU MUTUAL IN STAGSDEN IS PROUD TO SPONSOR CPRE BEDFORDSHIRE.**

Call our friendly team for an insurance quote on **01234 824901**



**NFU Mutual**  
INSURANCE | PENSIONS | INVESTMENTS

It's about time<sup>®</sup>

Agent of The National Farmers Union Mutual Insurance Society Limited.

# 2016 Living Countryside Awards

On Tuesday 4th October 2016 the seventh bi-annual Living Countryside Awards ceremony took place at John O'Gaunt Golf Club, Sandy. The awards are about recognising those who, in our opinion are getting it right – enhancing the rural and urban areas across Bedfordshire for people and wildlife today and for future generations.

Entries came in from across the county, by individuals, community groups, schools, businesses and landowners – and not least the many committed volunteers – all of whom have one thing in common and that is amazing commitment and enthusiasm for their project and to the local environment as a whole.

The team of judges whittled down the entries to a shortlist of 18 and they then visited each to find out more. All of shortlisted entries were invited to the ceremony for an evening of recognition and inspiration.

Mrs Helen Nellis, HM Lord-Lieutenant of Bedfordshire, presented award plaques in four categories:

1. **SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISE**
2. **BIODIVERSITY & LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENT**
3. **YOUTH AWARD**
4. **BUILDING DESIGN & RESTORATION**

## SUSTAINABLE ENTERPRISE

**Recognising enterprises that bring benefits to the local economy, environment and community.**

### CPRE Mark winners:

- Clophill Eco Lodges
- Warden Abbey Community Vineyard

### Shortlisted:

- Black Cat Farm Shop expansion, Roxton



### Clophill Eco Lodges

The Eco Lodges provide stunning facilities for visitors to the Greensand Ridge and to groups in the surrounding area. The complex is located next to St. Mary's Old Church, which was imaginatively restored from a derelict and vandalised building into a heritage attraction in 2014. The lodges opened a year later, designed by a local architect and built by local companies to a contemporary and unobtrusive design. The lodges are part of a strategic plan to make use of the site's wealth of natural resources - namely its heritage, landscape, views, ecology and trails. This highly successful project brings benefits both to the community and to guests who enjoy the tranquility of the area and very comfortable overnight rest stops.



### Warden Abbey Community Vineyard, Old Warden

This five acre field was first planted with vines in medieval times by the Cistercian monks of Warden Abbey. Centuries later, from the mid 1980s to 2008, it was again producing award-winning wines for the Whitbread family and now it is having a new lease of life as a project run by the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity. The vineyard is managed as a not-for-profit educational and community resource by a Friends group who tend the vines by hand and run tours and events. They also provide opportunities for volunteers looking for work experience and link with local historic gardens to offer experience of vine pruning to their apprentice gardeners. As well as producing award-winning wines, it recently launched a sparkling wine in time for Christmas.

# 2016 Living Countryside Awards

## BIODIVERSITY & LANDSCAPE IMPROVEMENT

**Recognising initiatives that have enhanced the landscape and biodiversity of an area.**



### Galley and Warden Hills Grazing Project, Luton

This stunning chalk downland site is home to several rare calcareous plant species, butterflies such as the Small Blue and Chalk Hill Blue and is a breeding area for the Skylark and Corn Bunting. It is located on the urban fringe of Luton and is popular with local residents and dog walkers. To maintain its open appearance it needs continuous scrub control and also livestock grazing. An impressive project to carefully introduce Red Poll cattle for this purpose has taken several years to achieve and as well as installing fencing and water supplies, it has needed to engage local residents about what it is trying to achieve. The animals have been brought in to graze in selected areas each year since 2014 and already the benefits to the local wildlife are visible on the hillside.



### CPRE Mark winners:

- Galley and Warden Hills Grazing Project
- Mowsbury Hillfort
- Pages Park Community Garden



### Mowsbury Hillfort, Bedford

This is an impressive four hectare county wildlife site and a scheduled monument containing an Iron Age hillfort and a medieval moated site overlooking the northern suburbs of Bedford. A highly motivated group of volunteers have been working in this sensitive location for several years, balancing the ambition to make it better known and appreciated against the need to protect its unspoilt environment. The site encompasses a wide variety of habitats, including grassland, traditional orchards, deciduous woodland and a series of ponds. The volunteers are turning back years of neglect without destroying the natural ambience of this little-known gem and provide nature walks and information for the benefit of residents and visiting schools as part of their Friends' vision plan.



### Highly commended:

- Heathland Restoration on Lord's Hill

### Commended:

- Harrold Odell Country Park
- Putnoe Wood



### Pages Park Community Garden, Leighton Linlade

This spectacularly colourful garden has been established in collaboration between local organisations including the Council, the Rotary Club, a ramblers group and a supermarket. Some 25 volunteers now tend and develop the amenity, which features wide winding paths accessible by wheelchair and numerous ingeniously designed and planted flower beds. Arches and benches are included in the layout, which mixes sensory and insect-friendly plants and grasses with vivid herbaceous beds to create a much appreciated space for local residents and visitors to the adjacent narrow gauge railway. The result is a beautiful garden, with great structure, variety and form, enjoyed by many local people as a place to walk and relax.



## YOUTH AWARD

Recognising the efforts of young people and schools in enhancing the local environment and encouraging the enjoyment of the natural world now and for the future.

### CPRE Mark winners:

- Swallowfield Lower School
- Woodlands Secondary School

### Highly commended:

- Toddington St George Church of England School

### Commended:

- Fulbrook Middle School
- Francesca Maza, Northill



### Swallowfield Lower School, Woburn Sands

This school's grounds have been thoughtfully enhanced to create diverse habitats for wildlife, and a well-used learning resource for the children. The grass boundaries of the school grounds have been left uncut and existing trees supplemented by new planting to create a sizeable wildlife area for learning and recreation. An active eco-committee of pupils plant saplings, maintain features such as the bug hotels and bird feeders and offers ideas for more initiatives. More ambitious features include the mature pond, polytunnel structure and an outdoor classroom. These are all actively used for learning across the school, bringing the classroom outside. There is a strong ethos to encourage all pupils to enjoy and engage in the outdoor environment through their learning and play, setting them off on the path to continuing interest and understanding of the natural world.

*I was particularly delighted with the success of this new category introduced this year. It was really inspiring to see and reward the amazing work some of our schools are doing introducing children to the natural world around them, as a place to play and learn. Recent research has reinforced how outdoor learning can benefit young people and of course the future of our countryside and urban green spaces rests with them.*

Gerry Sansom, CPRE Bedfordshire Chair



### Woodlands Secondary School, Luton

A large section of this school's grounds has been developed into a striking food growing and wildlife-friendly sensory garden, within and around raised beds that can be reached by learners with a wide range of special educational needs. Volunteers and grounds staff built the initial structures and the planting and ongoing maintenance is carried out by the learners with help from teaching staff working under the guidance of a specialist gardening assistant. The garden was designed on permaculture principles and operates all year round. It features fruit, vegetable and floral areas and work areas such as a potting shed, polytunnel and an outdoor classroom. A gazebo and seating areas are located in an apothecary garden planted with culinary and medicinal herbs, which provide a delightful experience for all.

# 2016 Living Countryside Awards

## BUILDING DESIGN AND RESTORATION

Recognising good quality new build or restoration of a site that enhances its surroundings.

### CPRE Mark winners

- Jordans Mill
- The Swiss Garden

### Commended:

- Heron View Visitors Centre
- Thatcher, Chris Dodson



### Jordans Mill, Broom

This elegant rural mill site with its historical buildings has been beautifully enhanced by an additional visitors centre and interpretation building, along with elegantly designed gardens. The mill produced flour and cereals for the Jordans brand for over 100 years and in 2012 the family started their project to turn it into an educational attraction which retains the character of the original site whilst also providing modern facilities for the local community and visiting tourists. Three striking new timber buildings, constructed to the highest environmental standards, show great character and warmth sitting harmoniously alongside the original watermill on the River Ivel. A Heritage Centre houses a cafe and shop, the Mill Barn contains educational and historical material and the eco-houses serve as office accommodation. This is truly a significant proposal in this rural setting, worthy of our highest award.



### The Swiss Garden, Old Warden

The work completed at The Swiss Gardens over two years is simply breathtaking and awe inspiring. Highlights include the idiosyncratic thatched Swiss cottage, a grotto and fernery topped by an impressive glazed dome, an intimate chapel, an oriental kiosk and a series of ornate cast iron bridges over beautiful waterways. The winding paths through manicured lawns and flower beds contrast with woodland sections studded with artworks. There is much surprise, intrigue and investigation to be done when exploring this site and the wonders never seem to end. The judges were greatly impressed by the historical research into the buildings and gardens which was carried out in preparation for this huge renewal project. The subsequent attention to the detail, design and quality of workmanship is at the pinnacle of restoration work in the UK and is now a great asset to Bedfordshire.

LCA photography c/o Barry Halton.

The next CPRE Living Countryside Awards will take place in 2018 and will be another chance to recognise those who make a real difference to the environment of the county.

## Branch News

### Could you be a trustee of our small charity?

Our trustees play a vital role. Volunteering their time, they work together to make the key decisions about what we do and the way we work.

As well as sitting on our Executive Committee, many of our trustees work with our branch staff member and volunteers on specific areas. At the moment we are looking for trustees with interests in one of these particular areas:

- arranging and taking minutes of our meetings
- raising our profile to boost membership and fundraising
- becoming more effective campaigners, and
- recruiting and managing our volunteers, without whom we could do very little.

If you're interested in joining our executive committee and could bring some experience and enthusiasm to one of these areas – or others - we'd love to hear from you.

To find out more, please contact Nicola or Gerry on 01234 353331 or email [nicola.scholfield@cprebeds.org.uk](mailto:nicola.scholfield@cprebeds.org.uk)

This is an important time for CPRE Bedfordshire. In 2017, the branch will be 30 years old, and in that time the branch has evolved into a respected local environmental organisation with a voice on local planning issues.

Over the next few years we would like to become better at taking opportunities to raise our profile, build membership and actively campaign. Can you help us do this?

## New volunteers

We're delighted to introduce three new volunteers who have recently joined our planning team.

### Kieran Devine

Hello everyone. Originally I come from the countryside of County Tyrone, where I was raised as the child of a farming family. With that inspiration, I have since gone on to specialise in geography, planning and education. I recently joined the CPRE team as I share their love for nature and society. I can't wait to get started!



### Sue Rowell

My name is Sue Rowell and I have lived in Bedfordshire on the Greensand Ridge for 25 years. I retired last year but my career involved in working with local farmers on Agri-Environment schemes, NGOs and for the Environment Agency. I recently decided to volunteer with CPRE as I thought I would like to use some of that experience for the benefit of Bedfordshire countryside and wildlife.



### Cordelia Prokefiev

I am really excited to join the Bedfordshire volunteer team! My background is in housing and public law and having recently completed an LLM in environmental law I am keen to apply my skills to protecting our beautiful countryside. Just this week I attended a very informative training meeting at CPRE Bedfordshire and I was so impressed by the commitment and experience of the other volunteers - I look forward to working together. It is clear that CPRE Bedfordshire is a strong and well established group, doing important work and I am really pleased to be involved.



## Save the date

Our next AGM will be held on Monday 15th May 2017 at Eversholt Village Hall. Date and location may change. More details will be confirmed closer to the time.

## Celebrating CPRE's 90th anniversary at Ridgmont Tea Rooms

Eighteen members and volunteers enjoyed a trip to award-winning Ridgmont station on the afternoon on 28th November, to celebrate CPRE's 90th anniversary.

The visit included a rail journey on the Marston Vale line from Bedford to Ridgmont station, a tour of the small heritage centre and exhibition, plus a tea party at the vintage tea rooms,

complete with a quiz to test our CPRE know-how!

The restoration of the station by the Bedfordshire Rural Communities Charity won an award at our 2014 Living Countryside Awards so it was fitting that our members were given the chance to visit.



# Planning applications from around the county

## Luton Town Football Club

The 25 year saga of Luton Town Football Club's (LTFC) relocation looks as if it might be coming to a head. LTFC has finally decided on the site it wishes to apply for, and it is not the site that that has long been earmarked for it in Luton's Local Plan at Newlands Road, close to M1 Junction 10, whose topography LTFC now says makes it unsuitable for a stadium anyway.

LTFC's application is for a stadium on Power Court, the largely vacant former electricity generating site right in the centre of the town, which is currently zoned in the Local Plan for a mix of housing, retail and leisure development. The Club's proposal would retain a housing element at Power Court, but envisages that the retail and leisure elements should be switched to the site at Newlands Road, which the Club already owns, and whose development for commercial purposes would enable it to fund the very high costs of developing Power Court, where ground contamination is a major issue and the culverted River Lea would need to be re-routed.

Because of the conflicts with the Local Plan – both the existing version and the new one which is currently undergoing its Public Examination – a decision is unlikely until well into 2017. But it is ironic that LTFC is now proposing something that CPRE proposed over 10 years ago – that a new stadium would be much better sited on one of the vacant industrial sites close to the town centre and rail stations than it would out on the town's southern fringe. Our view did not find favour with the Council at the time – might it do so now?



## Central Bedfordshire

In 2016 our small planning team of volunteers has commented on over 25 planning applications for significant housing developments on the edge of towns and villages in Central Bedfordshire.

These have included: Biggleswade, Blunham, Clophill, Cranfield, Eaton Bray, Fairfield, Flitton, Greenfield, Henlow, Houghton Conquest Langford, Lidlington, Lower Stondon, Meppershall, Northill, Pottton, Shefford, Shillington, Silsoe and Upper Caldecote.

Each of these housing proposals has been for housing on inappropriate and unsustainable open countryside sites outside of the settlement envelope. In almost every case the developers have argued that since Central Bedfordshire has no up-to-date Local Plan and no five year supply of housing land, there is little the council could do to refuse.

As we go to press, nine have been refused (and others have been approved, withdrawn or are awaiting decision).

Where the council has refused planning permission, some developers have taken their application to appeal.

Recent planning appeal decisions have yielded contradictory results. In September a Planning Inspector upheld CBC's decision to refuse 30 homes in Wrestlingworth, on grounds that included that there was no longer a significant shortfall of housing land supply in CBC.

Later in November at an appeal for a development in Flitton, a Planning Inspector took a different view of CBC's five year housing land supply, overturning the council's decision and granting planning permission to the developer.

So until we have a adopted Local Plan in Central Bedfordshire, the planning situation is still very much uncertain.

## Green Belt in Eaton Bray

We've previously reported on an application for a major housing development for 145 homes in the Green Belt at Totternhoe Road, Eaton Bray which was re-submitted following an earlier refusal. It is gratifying to report now that this re-submission has been refused.

## Gypsy & Traveller sites

In the last issue of Bedfordshire Matters, we reported on an application made by Central Bedfordshire Council for a CBC-managed Gypsy & Traveller site in open countryside near the village of Dunton, close to Biggleswade. The site would be visually very prominent and involves the use of high-grade agricultural land.

Alongside our own objections about the suitability of the site, the council received over 100 objections from local residents and others, however disappointingly the site was given approval. The case was then referred to the secretary of state, but this was not called-in for review, meaning that CBC's decision stood.

However, Biggleswade & Dunton Community Action Group, was determined to do all it could to challenge this decision. Through the efforts of local residents, over £16,000 was raised locally to challenge the decision of the council at Judicial Review. However, the group heard in November that despite its efforts, a judge had ruled against granting them permission to seek this judicial review of CBC's decision.

There is good news however, we can also report that an extension of an existing site at Greenvale Nursery into Green Belt south of Dunstable has been withdrawn, at least for the time being.

## News flash!

CPRE Bedfordshire has proposed a new 'Dutch-style' protected cycleway completely separated from the traffic, linking the village of Milton Ernest in the north, to the centre of Bedford, to the new town of Wixams in the south. This formed part of our response to Bedford Borough Council's Draft Local Plan 2032.

A dual use footpath-cycleway already exists from Milton Ernest to the northern edge of Clapham. Whilst in the south, a protected cycleway has already been constructed linking Wixams to the outskirts of Bedford town. So we have proposed that they be linked together to form a really good, safe, north-south Dutch-style cycleway completely separated from the traffic.



## You can 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 go to [www.cprebeds.org.uk](http://www.cprebeds.org.uk) to join online or download a membership form.

# Update on Local Plans

## Central Bedfordshire

Central Bedfordshire Council's (CBC) pre-submission draft Local Plan is now expected to be out this January, which will link with the next stage of Luton's Local Plan. We understand that about 30,000 new homes will be included – 10,000 for CBC and the rest for Luton, MK and London. We are now waiting for the plan to be released for public consultation so we can see the full details of housing numbers proposed and where these are likely to be allocated.

We understand that a Green Belt Review is part of this process, but cannot access this or see how it has been justified. We have heard that “underperforming” areas of Green Belt have been reviewed, but are unclear what this means in relation to the main purposes of Green Belt – to prevent urban sprawl and to encourage urban regeneration.

Usually Green Belt can only be built on in “exceptional circumstances” though large areas near Houghton Regis and Leighton Buzzard are already being built on and we are aware that Green Belt land North of Luton is likely to feature in the new Local Plan.

## Harlington Parish Council

In September, we were invited by Harlington Parish Council to co-run an exhibition on Central Bedfordshire's call for sites process and Local Plan. At the exhibition, the parish council discussed concerns with the residents and encouraged them to submit their own responses to the consultations, especially since its land is entirely designated as Green Belt and it adjoins the Chiltern Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Permission has already been granted for more than 50 homes within the village.

## Luton Borough

We attended the second stage of Luton's Local Plan's Examination by a Planning Inspector, which concluded at the end of September. The purpose of this Examination was to identify deficiencies in the plan and make recommendation to remedy these.

Earlier in the year, the Inspector had agreed that Luton Borough Council had fulfilled its statutory obligation to cooperate with Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC). Both councils have now signed a Statement of Common Ground in which Central Bedfordshire agreed to meet Luton's unmet need of around 9,300 houses.

During the second stage, the Inspector identified a number of significant deficiencies in the Luton Local Plan. These included the impact of new housing on the heritage assets and natural environment across Luton and Central Bedfordshire, including CBC's Green Belt and the Chilterns Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. As well as ourselves, Natural England and Heritage England were there to make representations.

The Inspector has recommended that Luton and CBC work together to identify areas for development, and that the next stage of Luton's Local Plan should be ready for examination during the first week of December, prior to consultation on CBC's draft Local Plan in the new year.

In planning documents we've seen, we note that Luton has indicated that it would like to see houses built for its residents in an area north of Luton encompassing the Green Belt parishes of Chalton, Sundon and Streatley, and an area west of Luton encompassing the Green Belt parishes of Caddington and Slip End.

Luton's Local Plan preserves around 136 hectares of Green Belt land within the boundary of Luton Borough. The Council has chosen not to build on its Green Belt to meet its housing need.



Great Ouse at Felmersham c/o Pam Groom

## The latest news to your inbox



CPRE Bedfordshire sends out a regular e-bulletin with the latest news of our work and invitations to events.

To sign-up simply email [info@cprebeds.org.uk](mailto:info@cprebeds.org.uk).



*Freemen's Common c/o Gerry Sansom*

## Bedford Borough

Bedford Borough Council's Local Plan is expected to be out for consultation in spring 2017. This has been delayed by developers at the last minute adding potential new towns during the call for sites stage.

It is also expected that an infrastructure plan will form part of the Local Plan, which has not been seen before.

## Freemen's Common

CPRE Bedfordshire is asking Bedford Borough Council to explain why it has decided to submit Freemen's Common as a site for the development of 390 houses in their Local Plan 2035.

The 12.5 hectare area of open countryside on the north-eastern edge of the Bedford town's urban fringe forms part of a green corridor extending from Clapham all along Bedford's northern perimeter. It's a hugely important open green space, with fantastic views over the town and beyond. Important to residents as places of quiet relaxation and they also provide essential refuges for wildlife.

The future of Freemen's Common has been veiled in secrecy. Our investigations have shown that the Trustees of the Freemen's Common Charity who are supposed to act in the best interest of the people of the Borough have done everything to ensure that the public are unaware of their actions.

We have discovered that for the last four years, at every single meeting of the Trustees of The Freemen's Common Charity – from August 2012 until March 2016, members of the public have been excluded from the meetings at the point when items relating to the management of Freemen's Common were discussed. This secrecy is completely unacceptable, totally indefensible and not at all in the public interest.

We believe that there are many other options for the future use of this land which would enable more public access and improve wildlife and biodiversity including the planting of trees, etc. These options need to be discussed in open public debate and should have been from the very outset.

Borough residents have been prevented from debating the future of a hugely important area of Common Land which they effectively own.

## Bedfordshire in the top ten of most light polluted

The most detailed ever satellite maps of England's light pollution and dark skies, released by the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) national office, have shown that Bedfordshire is in the bottom ten of counties with dark skies and have a high level of light pollution.

The maps, produced using satellite images captured at 1.30am throughout September 2015, show that Bedfordshire

comes in at 32 out of 41 – our skies are far from dark! The development around junction 13 of the M1 near the small village of Brogborough in Central Bedfordshire shows severe light leakage – comparable to that in the centre of Luton.

This research comes at a time of increasing awareness of the harmful effects light pollution can have on

the health of people and wildlife. CPRE Bedfordshire calls on Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough Council to develop policies to reduce light pollution in their emerging Local Plans.

View the interactive maps at [nightblight.cpre.org.uk](http://nightblight.cpre.org.uk)

# I ♥ Bedfordshire!

This summer we were out and about at summer fayres around the county – Meppershall, Bromham and Rushmere Park, Leighton Buzzard. It was great to meet and talk with locals who love where they live, hear about their concerns and advise on what they can do.

We asked visitors to identify their favourite places in Bedfordshire and we've compiled the 90 most loved places in Bedfordshire. In the year we were celebrating 90 years of CPRE it is fantastic to see so many places valued across the county.



Meppershall

## North Bedfordshire

Back Wood, Brickhill  
Bedford Castle  
Bedford Park  
Bromham Mill  
Browns Farm, Stagsden  
Browns Wood, Oakley  
Cardington Lock  
Clapham Park  
Danish Camp  
Spinoak Wood, Swineshead  
Harrold-Odell Country Park  
Golden Gardens, Goldington  
Great Denham Country Park  
Great Ouse at Bedford  
Great Ouse River  
Felmersham Nature Reserve  
Freemen's Common  
Mowsbury Hillfort & Park

Odell Great Wood  
Priory Country Park  
Putnoe Woods  
Ridge Wood, Wootton  
Sharnbrook Summit  
Stevington Windmill  
Turvey Abbey  
Turvey House  
Twinwoods, Clapham  
Upper Dean & Lower Dean  
Willington Dovecote

## Mid Bedfordshire

Amphill Great Park  
Cooper's Hill, Amphill  
Flitwick Moor  
Greensand Ridge  
Houghton House  
Haynes Wood  
Marston Thrift  
Marston Vale Forest Centre  
Maulden Wood  
Kings Arms Gardens  
Amphill

St Mary's Old Church & Observation Tower  
Clophill  
Upper Gravenhurst  
Wixams  
Wrest Park

## East Bedfordshire

Cockshoot Hill, Shefford  
Chicksands Wood  
Ickwell Green  
Moggerhanger Park  
Jordans Mill  
Jubilee Wood  
Biggleswade  
Lousy Bush  
Nature Reserve, Wrestlingworth  
Old Warden  
Potton Woods  
River Ivel  
Southill Park  
Shuttleworth Collection  
Stotfold Mill

Stotfold Meadows  
Swiss Gardens  
Tempsford Millennium Garden  
The Riddy  
The Lodge, RSPB Sandy

## West Bedfordshire

Aspley Woods  
Grand Union Canal  
Woburn Deer Park  
Rushmere Country Park  
Stockgrove Park  
Mead Open Farm, Leighton Buzzard  
Segenhoe Church  
Eversholt Green  
King's Wood  
Linslade Wood  
Pages Park, Leighton Buzzard  
Rammamere Heath  
Ridgmont Station  
Heritage Centre

Tiddenfoot Water Park  
Stanbridge Meadows, Leighton Linslade

## South Bedfordshire

Barton Hills Nature Reserve  
Barton Springs  
Blow's Downs  
Dunstable Downs  
Galley Hills  
Pegsdon Hills  
Sharpenhoe Clappers  
Stockwood Park  
Studham Common  
Sundon Hills Country Park  
Totternhoe Knolls  
Wardown Park  
Whipsnade Tree Cathedral

## 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. Our President is Emma Bridgewater.

**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

CPRE Bedfordshire  
5 Grove Place  
Bedford MK40 3JJ



01234 353331  
info@cprebeds.org.uk  
www.cprebeds.org.uk

