

News Release

A6 - M1 Link Road

Environmental Vandalism: Central Bedfordshire Council approve new road through AONB

CPRE Bedfordshire condemns the decision of Central Bedfordshire Council, to approve the construction of a new A6 - M1 Link Road which will be built entirely in the Green Belt. The road will slice through the southern part of the Chilterns AONB and seriously impact Ancient Woodlands and SSSI sites. This is one of the worst acts of environmental vandalism that CPRE Bedfordshire has encountered.

The planning application for the new road was agreed despite strong objections from The Chilterns AONB Board, Natural England, The Chilterns Society, Luton Borough Council, The Woodland Trust, and many others. Petitions were signed by over 2,000 local people.

Gerry Sansom, Chair of CPRE Bedfordshire said:

"We are appalled but not surprised by this decision. This new road will adversely impact wildlife, remove massive areas of open countryside, seriously impact two hugely important Ancient Woodlands and the significant Sundon SSSI site.

As we have been reporting over the last year, The Leader of CBC, James Jamieson has done everything in his power to push through this new road. His actions include:

- *Minimal public consultation of the route - it took place through 2018 summer holidays and at very short notice.*
- *Removing the actual route from the Local Plan 2035 so that it could not be reviewed by Inspectors at the Local Plan Examination currently underway."*

In July CBC agreed to prioritise action on climate change, recognising the need to reduce our carbon footprint and reverse catastrophic biodiversity loss and yet with this road they are doing the opposite.

Mr Sansom went on to say:

"It makes a complete mockery of Mr Jamieson's recent claim that his Council will take on board the issues of Climate Change and biodiversity loss that affect us all - it's now quite clear - for him, it's business as usual.

The true purpose of the road is to enable the development of a new Rail/Freight Interchange at J11a of the M1 - no more, no less. It will increase traffic in the area, particularly HGV traffic on the A6 (north and south bound).

It will take development to the very edge of the Chilterns AONB the "Green Lungs" for Luton."

CPRE Bedfordshire will be writing to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson to ask if James Jamieson, Leader of a Conservative majority Council, has acted with government support on this matter.

We will also be asking if it is Mr Johnson's new government policy to agree planning applications of this type which will severely impact Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and the Green Belt, particularly in light of Climate Change and catastrophic biodiversity loss.

We are urging all those who are concerned about this matter to take action and also write to the Prime Minister, Boris Johnson.

The Prime Minister's Office can be contacted by email here:
<https://email.number10.gov.uk/>

Letters can be sent to:

10 Downing Street, London SW1A 2AA

Note to Editors:

- Because the new road is entirely within the Green Belt and impacts the Chilterns AONB, The Secretary of State (SoS) at the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHC&LG) will now consider if the application should be "Called - In" for review by his office before it can go ahead - the SoS can refuse to support the CBC decision. The current SoS is Robert Jenrick MP.
- CPRE Bedfordshire has already written to the MHC&LG (in July 2019) requesting that the application be "Called-in" - we have been told that it will be considered once the application has been dealt with by CBC.
- The planning Application number is CB/19/00887/FULL and details can be found here:
https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/info/44/planning/478/view_and_comment_on_planning_applications
- CBC's press release prioritising climate change
https://www.centralbedfordshire.gov.uk/news/article/130/were_going_to_develop_a_climate_change_plan