



Bedfordshire Matters



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Chair's column

Gerry Sansom



We write this edition of Bedfordshire Matters as the impact of COVID 19 continues to dramatically impact our lives.

The importance of our countryside and biodiversity, our Natural Health Service, to our general wellbeing has been brought into sharp focus with more people accessing open green space to find quiet relaxation at these stressful times.

We would like to say a big thank you to those members who were able to attend our AGM on Zoom in September, it was lovely to see some new faces. It was quite a short event allowing us to complete the legal requirements that we're obliged to follow under Charity Commission regulations and those of our own Constitution.

During the AGM, I stated that this year will be my last as Chair having completed the maximum period of seven years as Trustee that our Constitution allows. I shall stand down from the role at the next AGM in April 2021 but will continue to support CPRE Bedfordshire as a planning volunteer.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my fellow Trustees and members for their support during my time as Chair.

As you will see later in this magazine, in our view there is a very serious crisis in local democracy in Bedfordshire which is becoming more and more apparent - adversely impacting the ability of local residents to gain access to information regarding hugely important strategic developments proposed for our county.

Not least of these are the massive housing developments proposed by government across the Oxford-Milton Keynes-Bedford-Cambridge Arc together with East/West Rail – its proposed route and the impact of it. We explore these threats in more detail on pages 8-10.

A survey of residents across the Arc completed last year by our colleagues from CPRE Oxfordshire, showed that 70% of those surveyed had never heard of the Oxford-Cambridge Arc or the government's development proposals - one million new homes, equivalent to 20 cities the size of Cambridge - over three times the number of homes as in the entire county of Oxfordshire (approx. 300,000 homes).

Government has refused a Public Consultation on their plans – fearing the sort of adverse reaction that met their Ox-Cam

proposals for a new motorway across open countryside from J13 on the M1 to Oxford where local politicians lost votes and seats in a public backlash.

Bedfordshire Local Authorities and government are now resorting to secret meetings of unelected officials to enable the formation of "Growth Boards" - you can read more about these in our feature on page 7.

CPRE Bedfordshire and our colleagues from local CPREs across the Arc will continue to encourage government and local authorities to correct this very serious democratic deficit as a matter of urgency and to engage with local people through proper public consultations and debate. Also, to subject their development plans for Ox-Cam to stringent Environmental Impact Assessments.

To this end, local CPREs have written an open letter to all Local Authority Leaders, Chief Executives and elected Mayors across the Arc (copied to MPs) requesting more openness and a fundamental change to their working practices.

Read the letter on our website www.cprebeds.org.uk/resources/cpre-challenges-arc-leaders-to-open-up-to-the-public-on-development-plans-for-the-oxford-cambridge-arc/



Connecting to nature in lockdown

Nicola Scholfield, Nature Connection Guide, explains how nature can help us in difficult times.

For as long as I remember, I've loved the natural world and enjoyed activities spent out and about in nature. Taking a walk in the woods and greenspaces around me and noticing what the seasons bring is a reliable way to lift my mood and help me feel energised. And in this extraordinary year, spending time in the surrounding countryside during lockdown became even more valuable.

And I'm not alone. A survey by Natural England undertaken during the lockdown in April found that the majority of adults (87%) agreed with the statement that "being in nature makes me happy".

This is no surprise given there's now plenty of evidence that spending time in nature can be good for our body and mind. As well as lifting our mood, being in nature is associated with many health benefits including reduced stress and blood pressure, boosted immune system and help for anxiety and depression.

One of the ways I've enjoyed spending time in nature this year is through forest bathing - a gentle walk in my local woodland during which I pay close attention to the beauty, feel, sights, sounds and scents of my natural surroundings. This immersion in nature brings me a sense of calm and helps me feel connected to and part of the natural world.

Last year Bedfordshire Matters reported on research that feeling a connection with nature not only boosts our wellbeing, but makes us more likely to care for and take action for nature too. So it seems connecting with nature not only helps ourselves, but the planet too.

In 2021, I'm running an introduction to forest bathing for CPRE Bedfordshire. This gentle walk will introduce ways to help us slow down, calm our minds and tune in the beautiful natural world we're part of. Look out for more details about this in the coming year.

Read more about forest bathing on our website - <https://www.cprebeds.org.uk/discover/just-a-walk-in-the-woods/>

The countryside next door

Our Digital Engagement Officer, Shelly Dennison, reflects on becoming more familiar with the countryside on her doorstep.



Like many people, during lockdown I got to know some local walks much better. One of our favourites, and the closest to home, was a walk through a small patch of woodland and along the surrounding bridlepaths. Over the course of the year we documented this walk in photographs and journal entries. They form a record of getting to know a small piece of the world more deeply and understanding how the seasons change it.

January

Solitary robins perch on fallen branches and a pair of magpies hop around on a blanket of fallen leaves. Every now and again a grey squirrel appears, as if by magic, half way up a tree.

Most striking is the abundance of mosses and lichens – and the sheer variety of colours, textures and details. Once we'd started to spot them they seemed to be everywhere.

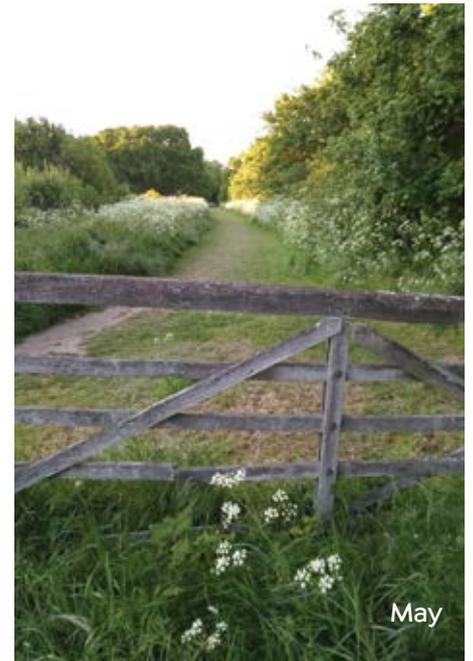
April

In the afternoon the wood is very green and full of bluebells, butterflies and birdsong. The vibrant light is dappled through the trees. The water in the brook is clear, flowing gently. Birds spotted include bluetit, woodpecker and wren. The wild flowers include celandines and wood sorrel in abundance.



May

A month of evening walks through thick clouds of cow parsley. Jackdaws teem above the canopy their jack-jack rasp competing with the sounds of wind in the trees and sweeter birdsong. In the evening light through the leaves the woodland feels aglow in the setting sun, the sound of a woodpecker adds to the dreamy atmosphere.



June

A treat – a thrush sitting on a fence post, content to let us stand quietly and watch for a bit. Wild roses in flower along the bridlepath.

October

The wood takes on an autumnal feel, leaves begin to turn to yellow and orange and form a carpet along the path. There are fungi everywhere, growing underneath trees, on rotten wood and along the edges of the paths.

Living Countryside Awards 2021 goes digital!

The Living Countryside Awards have always been a flagship event for CPRE Bedfordshire. They are a chance to celebrate and recognise the people and projects that are benefiting our county's rural environment and urban greenspaces. In 2021 the LCAs will be going digital! Due to Covid-19 and the uncertainty around social distancing and big gatherings we have decided to take the LCAs in a new direction to ensure we can reach as many people as possible.

There will be a strong focus on sharing knowledge and experiences and learning from each other and our aim is that the LCAs will:-

Promote rural businesses and organisations especially in light of the ongoing pandemic. We want to celebrate those organisations that are surviving and thriving despite the challenges, focusing on how they are doing this and what they can learn from each other.

Connect projects and people together to share their experience and knowledge and showcase their work with a wider audience. These will be a series of virtual events based on the needs of the nominees that will encourage collaborative working, knowledge sharing and learning

Inspire others to engage with local projects or develop their own ideas by establishing a resource on our website and follow up activities such as project updates on social media and features in Bedfordshire Matters magazine.

More details will be announced early in 2021 when we will be looking for volunteers, sponsors and nominations.



Wooden Hill Coffee



Incredible Edible



The Vale Academy



Queens Park Community Orchard

Success in Aspley Guise

The proposed site is located outside of Aspley Guise settlement envelope, in the Green Belt and formally used as allotments dating back to 1901.

The planning application was for the erection of seven affordable homes and one market priced home with nine allotments. The application was submitted as a Rural Exception Scheme.

Central Bedfordshire Council refused the application as the proposal did not relate well to the village setting and would result in

harm to local character. Therefore, the development did not meet the requirements of a rural exception site in this location. The proposed development would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, which is by definition harmful, and would cause harm to its openness and would conflict with one of the purposes of the Green Belt. There were no material considerations identified which clearly outweighed the harm caused to the Green Belt. Consequently, 'very special

circumstances' do not exist, and the development is contrary to the aims and objectives of section 13 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2019.

CPRE Bedfordshire supported Aspley Guise Parish Council with their campaign to ensure the inappropriate planning application on the Green Belt was refused once more following the two previous applications to build out on this Green Belt Land.

Local spotlight

We invited Edible High Town, a Luton based project, to tell us about their work.

In the Summer of 2016, a plan was hatched to fund a community gardener for a handful of hours each week. The gardener's role was to organise volunteer sessions and community gardening days to help transform some of our public green space. Initially, we were just tidying up and planting flowers and bulbs but after a few months we decided to focus our efforts on growing edibles and wildlife-friendly plants.

In the urban environment of a town like Luton, walking past a raised bed at the edge of a high street car park and helping yourself to a strawberry or two, picking some fennel or thyme or even digging up a handful of potatoes is a moment of delight at nature's ingenious provision. The produce has always been free to pick for anyone who so desires.

Now, Edible High Town is a small rabble of local residents who communicate mostly via WhatsApp and help maintain



seven sites across the ward (including a community orchard). Perhaps because of the dramatic circumstances, this year we have seen a real increase in the sense of ownership from the community. Children have been watering bean shoots on a site adjoining their house, an elderly couple, uninvited, have been growing some more exotic veg in a raised bed, and prize-size pumpkins have been disappearing into unknown local homes.

Luton Council have been supportive, picking up our waste and providing free mulch in winter. Noah, a local homeless charity,

have started running gardening and ESOL courses, using gardening as a way of teaching people English, whilst helping transform our high street with herbs and soft fruits.



As our signs invite, if ever you find yourself in High Town Luton, do stop at one of our plots (all mapped on the edibleluton.org website) and please help yourself. If you'd like to know more drop us an email at ediblehightown@gmail.com

Edible High Town received a Highly Commended award at the 2018 Living Countryside Awards in the Greening Urban Spaces category – go to p5 to find out about our plans for the 2021 awards...



Local Democracy in Crisis

Revealed! Secret meetings headed by Chief Executive of Bedford Borough Council to set up Ox – Cam Arc Growth Boards.

CPRE Bedfordshire has learnt that Philip Simpkins, Chief Executive of Bedford Borough Council (BBC), has been holding secret meetings with other local authority Chief Executives across the Arc to discuss development plans which will eat up huge areas of open countryside. Simpkins is Leader of this Arc Group of unelected officials.

We understand that four new Growth Boards have now been established by these officials in conjunction with government – Oxfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Central Area and the Cambridge & Peterborough Combined Authority.

Neither the Chiefs Executive's Group nor any of these Growth Boards have published their Terms of Reference. None has ever held meetings open to the public or published agendas or minutes – instead everything is being done with the utmost secrecy.

The leader of the CPRE Ox-Cam Working Group wrote to Philip Simpkins way back in June asking for details of the meetings and for the introduction of a more democratic process but to date no response has been received.

The Central Area Growth Board includes:

Bedford Borough Council, Central Bedfordshire Council, Milton Keynes Council, Luton Borough Council, Northamptonshire County Council, Northampton Borough

Council, Corby Borough Council, East Northamptonshire District Council, Kettering Borough Council, South Northamptonshire District Council, Borough of Wellingborough Council and SEMLEP.

For Bedfordshire Local Authorities to say that government plans for development across the Ox-Cam Arc are unclear is we believe, a complete sham and it would appear they are being developed in secret.

We are asking BBC to come clean and publish full details of all meetings held by Philip Simpkins in his role as Leader of the Arc's Chief Executive's Group on their website, including minutes of the meetings and the names of those attending. Details of all Central Growth Board meetings and who attends them should also be made public.

On 2 July last year, the Deputy Director of the Ox-Cam Unit of the Ministry of Homes, Communities & Local Government, wrote to Philip Simpkins updating him on their plans "to begin discussions with local partners across the Oxford – Cambridge Arc on how we can together realise shared ambitions for growth....."

Why didn't Mr Simpkins or Mayor Dave or James Jamieson or Hazel Simmons, tell the people of Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton about these "shared ambitions for growth"? Perhaps they were too concerned of the reaction from local people?

Why do we have to look at the

minutes of Oxfordshire County Council to find this information?

Councillors of all political persuasions know more about this than they are saying to local people and this is totally unacceptable! The residents of Bedfordshire should not be treated as second class citizens and kept in the dark.

Media coverage

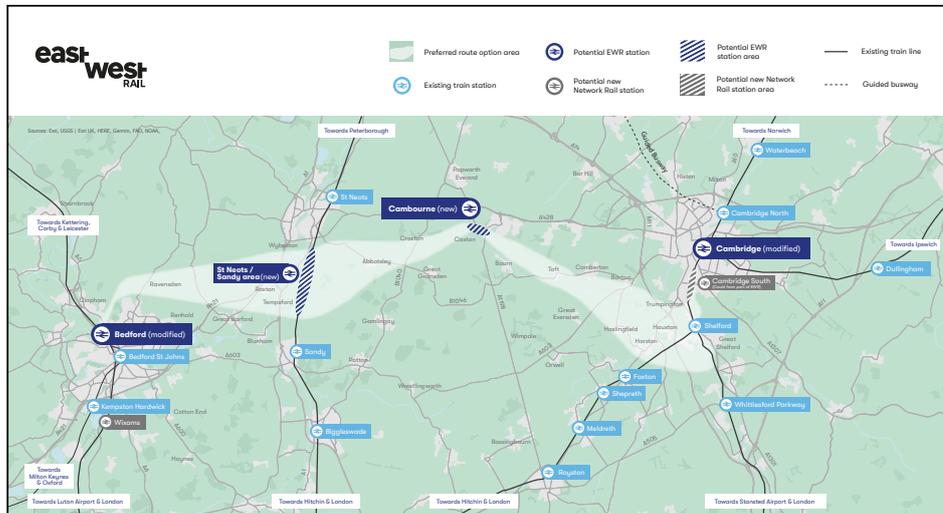
Perhaps even more disturbing is the total lack of comment on all of this in the media at local, regional and national level (the Ox-Cam developments are of national strategic importance) who appear to have turned a deaf ear.

It may not be coincidental that until recently, a member of the Board of SEMLEP was a regional director of Global Radio one of the largest news gathering organisations in the country and owner of local and national radio stations including Heart FM. We understand that he was also a past manager of Johnston Press (JPI Media) who own the majority of newspapers in Bedfordshire.

The massive US property, land investor and speculator, CBRE which is heavily involved in Ox-Cam developments (see the previous edition of Bedfordshire Matters), has strong connections to the media world through its association with Sir Michael Lyons (Ex Chair of the BBC) who made a presentation on their behalf at England's Economic Heartland recently, pushing the benefits of Ox-Cam to land owners, developers and speculators.

North Bedfordshire countryside under threat

The Mayor of Bedford lines up the North Bedfordshire countryside for massive development after signing up to Oxford - Milton Keynes - Bedford - Cambridge Arc proposals from government and northern route for East/West Rail. Here we look at the impact this will have on the countryside in North Bedfordshire...



A. Ox – Cam Arc Agreement

In March 2019 The Mayor of Bedford signed an agreement with government committing Bedford Borough Council to the government’s development proposals for a massive urbanisation of the Oxford – Cambridge Arc. This agreement which the council has never published and for which no mandate from residents has been obtained, is called “The Joint Declaration”.

The proposals include the addition of 1 million new homes across the Arc and a population increase of 1.9 million people.

To put this in context, the entire county of Oxfordshire has less than 300,000 homes!

B. East West Rail – Northern Route

In addition The Mayor (and he says the other political parties in the Council) pushed East West Rail to accept the northern route for the Bedford to Cambridge section of the new railway. See the route above.

This will take the railway through Bedford Station and across the countryside north between Clapham and Brickhill before turning east through tranquil countryside past Ravensden and Wilden to a yet to be decided new station somewhere around Sandy.

This route was promoted by The Mayor as the best option because, he said to East/West Rail, new towns proposed by developers in the countryside north of Bedford (Twinwoods, Sharnbrook, Colworth, Wyboston) would be “better served by a northern route”. By this he means that a

new northern “parkway” station would be built to serve these new communities and yet prior to his election he had told the people of the Borough that he did not wish to see new towns developed on open countryside in North Bedfordshire. The impact of these proposals on the countryside already would be immense and the additional traffic would impact across North Bedfordshire and the River Great Ouse Valley.

CPRE Bedfordshire recommended the southern route (Route B) using Wixams as a parkway station to limit traffic entering the Bedford Town, improving the quality of life of residents, and then following the already established A421 transport corridor to Sandy.

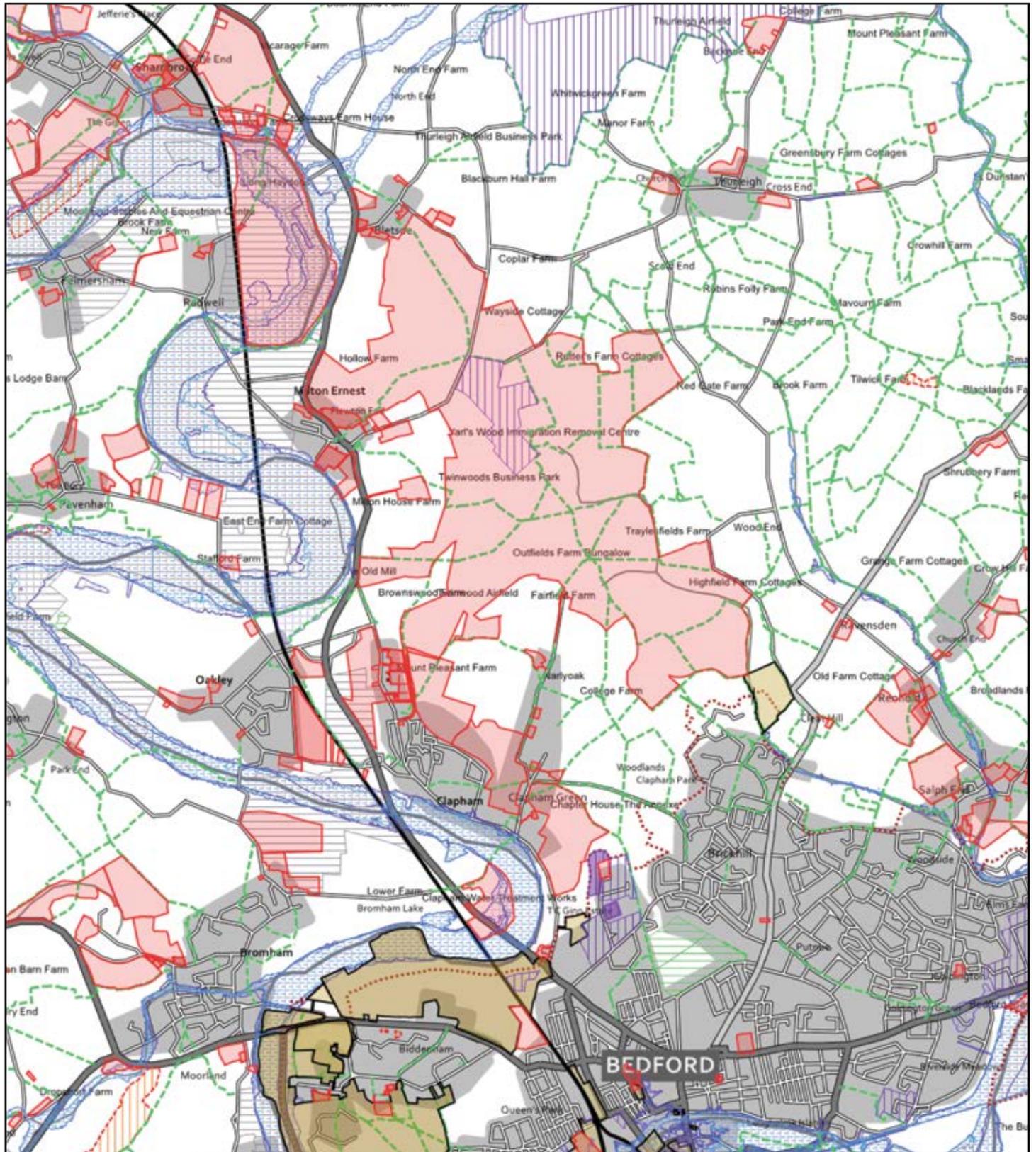
A + B = “Call for Sites” = A catastrophe for the countryside!

Now, following the recent “Issues and Options” Consultation as part of the Bedford Borough Council’s Local Plan 2030 Review, the council has published details of the sites put forward by developers for consideration in the “Call for sites”.

CPRE Bedfordshire’s worst fears have been confirmed with developers promoting massive development proposals for new towns around Twinwoods/Clapham and Sharnbrook/Colmworth/ Souldrop and taking advantage of the planned northern rail route.

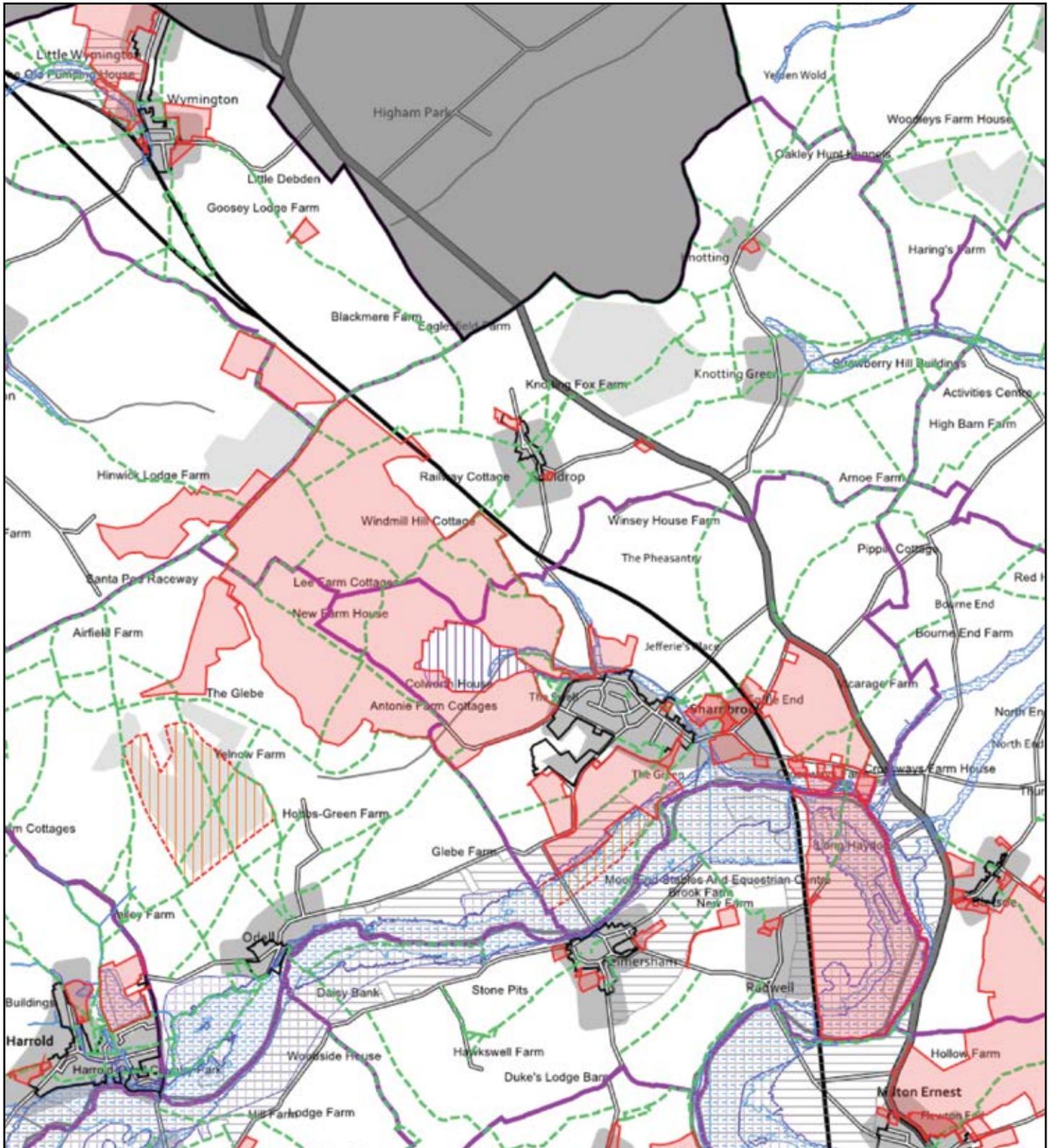
Call for sites maps

Map 1 (below) shows the sites (in pink) put forward for the Clapham, Twinwoods, Oakley, Milton Ernest areas. Around 6,000 new homes.



To put the scale of these proposed developments in context, Sharnbrook village has 1,000 homes and the town of Amphill has approx. 4,000 homes.

Map 2 below shows the sites put forward around the Sharnbrook, Colworth, Souldrop, Harrold area: Around 4,500 new homes at Sharnbrook/Colmworth/Souldrop



Concerned residents should make their views known to the Mayor, their local Borough Councillor, Parish Council and to their MP, Richard Fuller. CPRE Bedfordshire will be doing our best to ensure that as many people as possible are informed of the potential destruction of our countryside – our “Natural Health Service”. Keep an eye on our website for regular updates.

Success in Swineshead!

Earlier this year CPRE Bedfordshire joined Pertenhall & Swineshead Parish Council and a local Action Group in their effort to stop a local farmer from destroying around 800 metres of field hedgerow in Swineshead. In July Bedford Borough Council refused permission for the removal of all hedgerows specified in the application.

Hedgerows are important in the fight against climate change as they take carbon out of the air and store it in their trunks, roots and in the soil underground. There are lots of other benefits too, such as boosting biodiversity by making great habitats for wildlife and reducing soil erosion.

Hedgerows are also an important part of the landscape, they are a crucial part of the character of the Riseley Clay Farmland area. During this year we know that many of you have been enjoying watching the seasons change through the hedgerows – from the spring blossom to the autumn blackberries.

Find out more about CPRE's work on hedgerows - <https://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-care-about/nature-and-landscapes/hedgerows/>



Wixams Warehouse developments

In the last edition of Bedfordshire Matters we reported on the impact of massive warehouse developments, sited closely to residential homes and the Wixams Retirement village. A planning application for more warehousing at G-Park was given permission in December 2019 with no pre application consultation with local people. The three new warehouses will provide a total of 52,025 square metres of floorspace and stand nearly 20 metres high. We expressed particular concern about the lack of engagement with residents by Bedford Borough Council (BBC) about these developments.

BBC has now expressed a willingness to consider some mitigation measures, such as the provision of a pedestrian crossing, road resurfacing with low impact tarmac and introducing night-time parking restrictions in the vicinity of the Retirement Village. BBC have also commenced air quality monitoring by measuring nitrogen dioxide levels on Bedford Road near the Retirement Village.

However, residents still have serious concerns:

- **High visibility of warehouses, especially for those whose homes look directly onto the site.**
- **Heavy goods vehicles are accessing the distribution centre around the clock which has led to major concerns about the impact of the traffic on noise levels and air quality. Wixams Community Group, the Parish Council and ward councillor, Graeme Coombes, have been pressing BBC to investigate options for an alternative access route via a new link road.**

As Wixams continues to grow and as more new settlements are likely to be planned in the next Local Plan period, CPRE Bedfordshire would like to see more signs that BBC will be willing to be more proactive in their engagement strategies with new communities. It is only by working in positive partnerships with emerging communities that a successful approach to place making can be achieved.

Success in Clifton!

Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) has refused planning permission for 39 homes on land off Pedley Lane in Clifton for a third time.

CPRE Bedfordshire worked with the Clifton Action Group and local residents, who responded in significant numbers to the application, leading to a positive outcome for the community.

CBC outlined a number of reasons for their refusal which included:

Local character

The proposed development's open countryside location, scale and layout would result in significant harm to the character and appearance of the site, surroundings and landscape.

The proposal would also result in the merging of Shefford and Clifton.

Biodiversity

The development would not result in net gains for biodiversity and as such was contrary to both national and CBC planning policies.

Affordable housing

The proposed development would put pressure on existing local infrastructure and would fail to make an acceptable contribution towards the amount of local affordable housing.



Lockdown reads

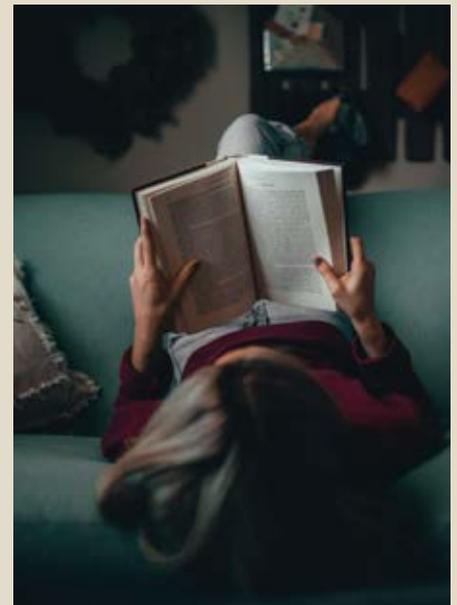
One of our top tips for staying connected to nature during a winter lockdown, or when the weather or the dark evenings mean you don't fancy stepping outside, is curling up with a book. There are lots of brilliant books about nature and the countryside but here are three recommendations of books published this year from our office team to start you off.

Vesper Flights – Helen Macdonald

Vesper Flights is a fantastically varied collection of essays from the author of the popular *H is for Hawk*. It's a mix of memoir, history, science and travel writing which takes the reader from rural Cambridgeshire to New York. All the essays explore our relationship with the natural world, mingling love and grief as Macdonald reflects on the climate and biodiversity emergencies.

English Pastoral – James Rebanks

English Pastoral is the long awaited follow up to *The Shepherd's Life*, the surprise publishing hit of 2015. Rebanks lives and farms in Matterdale in Cumbria. It examines the changes in farming over his lifetime, reflecting on the way Rebanks, his father and grandfather have farmed their land. In the final section of the book we follow his journey to creating a wilder farm, with plenty of places for nature.



The Accidental Countryside – Stephen Moss

Moss journeys across Britain in search of the hidden and unlikely places where nature thrives. Most of the sites are urban or man-made and include railway sidings, gravel pits, churchyards and skyscrapers. Bedfordshire Matters readers might find the sections where he explores new housing estates where the developers are finding ways to encourage and incorporate nature particularly interesting.

More books

A specially curated woodland themed reading list - <https://www.cprebeds.org.uk/discover/blossom-and-books/>

Our full length review of *English Pastoral* - <https://www.cprebeds.org.uk/discover/other-peoples-stories/>

The heart of CPRE Bedfordshire

Volunteers are very much at the heart of CPRE Bedfordshire and make a real difference to our work. Now more than ever people are appreciating the benefits of the countryside and are concerned about the increase in development and the loss of greenspace. Mike recently joined our team of Planning Volunteers and covers parts of Central Bedfordshire.

“When volunteering with CPRE Bedfordshire you feel that you are helping local people to protect the character of the countryside from over-development. It’s interesting to learn how to balance the desire for more homes in the countryside with the desire to maintain the historical character.

The team at CPRE Bedfordshire have been very welcoming and helpful, guiding me through all the rules and procedures that need to be considered. Time demands are flexible, which means juggling the work with other commitments is possible.”

Volunteers support us in many different ways and new opportunities are being developed all the time. By joining CPRE Bedfordshire you will become part of our friendly and supportive team and have the chance to learn new skills. You will also make a positive difference to the local Bedfordshire countryside.

For more information on current volunteering opportunities go to www.cprebeds.org.uk/get-involved/volunteering/

Could you or someone you know be our new Chair?

CPRE Bedfordshire, the countryside charity, needs a new Chair to lead our board of Trustees and develop our future work. If you love the Bedfordshire countryside and want to help us grow in capacity and influence, we would love to hear from you.

Our current Chair is due to retire in April 2021 so we are now looking for someone with a passion for environmental and countryside issues coupled with experience of the charity sector and board management. You’ll provide the vision and leadership to ensure that CPRE Bedfordshire has a strong and effective voice whilst ensuring the requirements of the constitution are met and that our governance complies with charity law and best practice.

This is an interesting and stimulating role that provides a chance to use your skills to really make a difference to the Bedfordshire countryside.

Apply online or for more information or an informal chat please contact Lois Wright at lois.wright@cprebeds.org.uk.

Full details can be found at volunteer.cpre.org.uk/opportunities/14013-chair-cpre-bedfordshire-2020-09-03



Campaign to save Open Green Space at Great Denham

Great Denham residents were shocked to learn of the plan to close the Bedford Golf Club. The land agent, Bidwells, had taken no steps to discuss the intentions of the owner with the communities affected or with Bedford Borough Council until July 2020, although it appears that the decision was taken in 2018.

The closure of the golf club not only represents the loss of a highly popular leisure and community facility enjoyed by golfers and non-golfers alike, but also raises fears about the future of an important green urban gap between the urban settlements of Great Denham and the Biddenham/Bedford urban edge. Construction of the golf club was an important

part of the original planning permission and the associated new housing was marketed as a 'golf village'.

Bidwells maintain that their main motivation is to ensure that the land is producing income for the Trustees and that the golf club directors were of the view that continuation of the golf club was



no longer financially viable. The current plan is to close the course and put sheep on the land to graze, repurpose the clubhouse as a nursery and the greenkeepers compound to be let to business. They maintain there is no plan for development ‘in the short term.’

However, the residents have been led to believe that golf club directors were keen to enter into a five year extension of the lease. They find it difficult to see how the currently proposed change of use could be more profitable than the significant income that would be achieved through keeping the golf club open.

Local residents acted quickly to form an action group - Save the Great Denham Golf course and Urban Gap Community Group – which aims to stop any potential development on this green space. They have raised over £4,000 to help fund legal advice and collected a petition with nearly 3,000 signatures. This petition was presented to a meeting of Full Council at Bedford Borough on Wednesday, October 14. The Council voted through a motion proposed by local Great Denham Cllr Jim Weir which states that the Council must uphold rulings that the Golf Course acts as an urban

gap and that any development in the area must be made in connection with a golf course.



Great Denham Golf course

Have your say – Luton Airport expansion plans

London Luton Airport ran a Consultation on their major expansion plans at the end of 2019. These plans covered the period from 2020 - 2050 and involved:-

- Doubling passenger movements to 36-38 million passengers per annum and
- Increasing aircraft movements from 135,000 to 240,000 per annum.

Jointly with CPRE Hertfordshire, we set out our concerns over these proposals which covered a range of issues relating to climate emergency, noise and air pollution, traffic, landscape, economic forecasts and the public consultation process.

The Airport were originally intending submit their formal application detailing their expansion plans (known as a

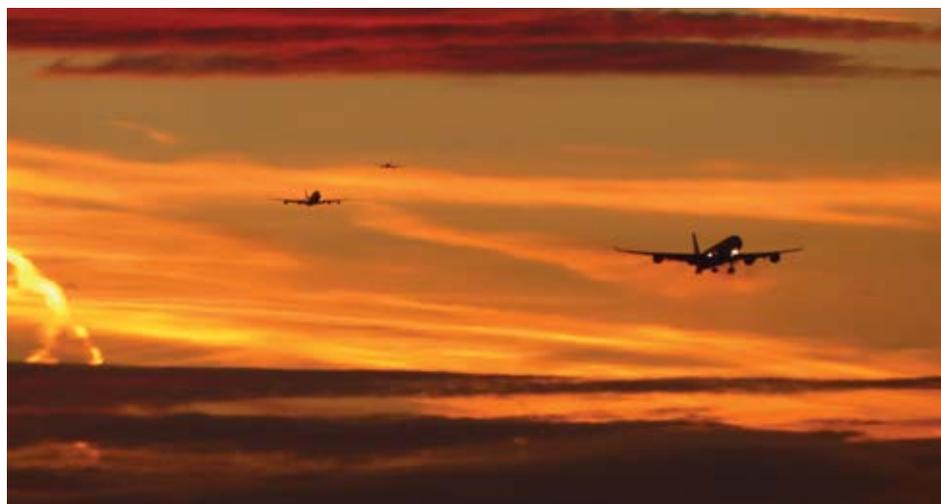
Development Consent Order DCO) to the Government in the Summer of this year. In June they announced that this was now being delayed until 2021.

They have however recently announced two new consultations on increasing the capacity of the airport by 1,000,000 passengers a year and changing the flightpaths for arriving planes.

It will be interesting to see how the Airport react to the many

concerns raised and also respond to the short and potentially longer term changes created by COVID 19. We will keep the website updated with the latest developments on this and our representations.

Find out how to take part in the consultations on our website www.cprebeds.org.uk/news/luton-airport-latest-proposals/



Let's get star counting!



There is something quite magical about looking up to a dark sky and seeing a canopy of stars twinkling in the night. These distant galaxies inspire a sense of awe and help us feel more connected to the natural world. The idea that someone hundred of miles away can look up and see the stars too is a comfort in a time when we are disconnected from our loved ones.

Sadly in urban areas light bleeds out from developments and limits the stars we can see. One of the important CPRE campaigns is to keep our skies as dark as possible. Our annual Star Count helps record where there is significant light pollution and areas

that have truly dark skies. This year 2,400 of you took part, raising your eyes to the skies and counting how many stars you could see within the constellation of Orion. You can see the results of the 2020 citizen science survey at www.cprebeds.org.uk/what-we-care-about/nature-and-landscapes/dark-skies/

In 2021 the Star Count is from Monday 8th – Sunday 14th February. Watch out for more information and join in and help build a picture of our dark skies.

Join us

Join us and be part of the movement for a countryside that benefits everyone!

Without CPRE our countryside wouldn't exist as we know it – and CPRE wouldn't exist without people like you to support us.

Becoming a member of CPRE is one of the best ways to celebrate and protect the countryside you love and membership starts at just £3 a month for individuals.

To join, go online at www.cprebeds.org.uk, email us at info@cprebeds.org.uk or call 01234 880624

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 urban green spaces of Bedfordshire.

CPRE Bedfordshire
43 Bromham Road, Bedford MK40 2AA
01234 880624
info@cprebeds.org.uk
www.cprebeds.org.uk



The countryside charity
Bedfordshire

Registered Charity No: 1023435