



The countryside charity
Hertfordshire

Spring Newsletter 2023

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Appeal Thank you

In our last newsletter I wrote to you with our Winter Appeal for funds, and you have delivered – thank you!

The appeal was to fund our direct participation and that of specialist legal counsel at three Public Inquiries:

- Fighting to stop the expansion of Luton Airport;
- Fighting to save Woodcock Hill Village Green from Taylor Wimpey's attempts to get it de-registered so they can build houses on it;
- Fighting to protect 320 acres of Green Belt land, including 14 Public Rights of Way, from Enso Energy's proposal to build an industrial-scale solar farm, rather than putting those panels on some of the 617,000 acres of suitable south-facing rooftops currently available in the UK.

You came through magnificently and we truly appreciate your generosity. We did our best at the Inquiry in each

of these cases and are now awaiting the decisions on all three.

If it sounds like we're doing a lot of "fighting" these days, that's because we are. The developers are relentless, submitting new, speculative large-scale planning applications on non-allocated sites all over the county. Most of the time, our hard-working local authorities are doing the right thing, upholding planning policy, and refusing permission.

But then the developers appeal to the Planning Inspectorate, and new Public Inquiries are scheduled, and we gear up again.

We are doing all we can to protect the Hertfordshire countryside and stop inappropriate and unwarranted development. There is enough brownfield (previously developed) land in Hertfordshire for more than



20,000 new homes, and another 4,000 long-term empty homes that could be brought back into occupancy. So building homes on greenfield sites is unnecessary.

We will keep fighting to protect the Hertfordshire countryside as long as we need to, and we hope you will continue to fight right alongside us, now and in the future.

Thank you again, and best wishes

Martin Varco
Chief Executive

Join the 100 Club and protect the countryside!

Since our 100 Club, a fully licensed prize draw, was launched it has raised thousands of pounds to fund our efforts protecting our beautiful Hertfordshire countryside. We want to carry on doing this important job, which is where you can help by considering joining the Club, you don't have to be a member of CPRE Hertfordshire to take part.

Here's how it works. Each month you pay a minimum of £1 and are entered in our monthly draw. One share in the 100 Club costs just £1 per month (£12 per year) and you

can hold up to five shares. 50% of the monthly contribution goes in prizes and 50% helps us do what we do best – standing up for Hertfordshire's countryside!

Join today! Go online to the CPRE Hertfordshire website, find the Get Involved section and go to 100 Club for more information. (Or just click [here](#) if you're reading this online).

Even if you do not win a prize, you have the satisfaction of knowing that half of your contribution will be used to help protect our local countryside.

AGM

**Please hold the date
– 7 October 2023**

We'd love to see as many members as possible at our 2023 Annual General Meeting, to be held on the afternoon of Saturday 7 October.

Full details in our Annual Review, due out in August.

Planning Update - The merry-go-round continues!

Two more planning ministers have gone since I last reported and it is now becoming ridiculous. Lee Rowley lasted no time at all and then Lucy Frazer occupied the chair briefly before being shuffled into the Treasury. Now we have Rachel Maclean, about whom we know very little. All this at a time when planning is actually quite big news, and likely to be a factor in the council elections in May.

The other big national news is the much awaited publication of the proposed amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) for public consultation. The Government has badged this as the 'NPPF Prospectus' for some unfathomable reason, and the national CPRE office has coordinated a response. The CPRE Hertfordshire contribution to the national effort has been to seek greater emphasis and clarity on the need to protect countryside, in particular Green Belt and other designated protected land.

Our other activities have revolved around planning inquiries. I mentioned the Aldenham solar proposal last time and still no decision yet, nor for Luton Airport; these are both ministerial decisions. More recently we have appeared at the public inquiry against proposals for 120 houses in the Green Belt at Brookmans Park, as part of a Combined Objectors Group with North Mymms District Green Belt Society and Brookmans Park Action Group.

We are also part of another Combined Objectors Group, with Grove Fields Residents Association and the Chiltern Society, at the public inquiry on the appeal by Redrow against Dacorum's refusal of 1400



Roestock Lane, this is one of seven permitted or proposed development sites in the Green Belt at Colney Heath, St Albans District. Photo: E Hermann

units east of Tring. Inquiries take a lot of time and resource but these are vital test cases, especially this one with impact on the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as well as Green Belt. It should be an open and shut case but it won't be. We are fundraising for legal representation and landscape advice against a huge team of lawyers and consultants marshalled by the developer Redrow.

On Local Plans, sadly our efforts to delay the North Herts Local Plan did not bear fruit and it was adopted before Christmas. With the Plan's adoption, thousands of houses have been allocated to former Green Belt sites across the district. The only gleam of light is that North Herts District Council should now be able to refuse applications on non-allocated sites, as has been the case in East Herts.

The never-ending saga of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan continues with consultations on the final modifications sought by the Inspector. Again, we are trying to persuade Councillors to pause the plan, like Hertsmere, Three Rivers and Dacorum have done, but there is deep division in the Council with the leadership apparently in favour of proceeding. Increasing numbers of councils are delaying their Local Plans pending the NPPF amendments and this would seem sensible, but it

remains to be seen if the results of the May elections affect outcomes.

Solar installations (I can't bring myself to call them farms) are being proposed throughout the County, eleven at the last count, and a couple have been consented. Our primary position is that they are inappropriate on designated protected areas, and Best and Most Versatile agricultural land. National office is campaigning for building-mounted provision and this seems to be a clear way forward, but the arguments appear more nuanced than for large speculative market residential developments on Green Belt land.

Certain areas continue to be deluged with speculative residential proposals. Special mention should go to the small village of Colney Heath which is under massive pressure, with 100 houses granted permission and another 500+ proposed, all on sites in the Green Belt.

We will continue to make representations on applications (we did a total of 83 responses in 2022 which was up on 2021) and our great planning volunteers scrutinised over 17,000 applications last year. We couldn't do any of this without them so sincere thanks as ever from Linda and me.

Chris Berry
Planning Manager

Local Plan Overview

District Plan	Comments & Key Milestones	Potential Adoption
Broxbourne Local Plan 2018-2033		Adopted June 2020 (due for review 2025)
Dacorum* Local Plan 2020 -2038	Following feedback from the Emerging Strategy for Growth Reg 18 consultation in Feb 2021, a further Reg 18 consultation is expected June 2023 - TBC.	Oct 2025 - TBC
East Herts District Plan 2011-2033		Adopted Oct 2018 (due for review 2023)
Hertsmere* Local Plan 2020-2038	Following feedback from the Reg 18 Draft Local Plan consultation in Dec 2021, the Council has 'set-aside' the Draft Plan. New draft expected late 2023	TBC
North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031		Adopted Nov 2022 (due for review 2023)
St Albans* Local Plan 2020-2038	Reg 18 consultation due July-Sept 2023	Dec 2025
Stevenage Local Plan 2011-2031		Adopted May 2019 (due for review 2024)
Three Rivers* Local Plan to 2038	Additional & deleted sites consultation completed March 2023. Preferred Local Plan and Housing Numbers consultation due Sept - Oct 2023.	2026
Watford* Local Plan 2018-2036		Adopted Oct 2022
Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan 2013-2032	Examination in final stages following March 2023 consultation on Main Modifications. As directed by the Inspector, the modifications included higher overall housing provision than the previous version proposed by the council.	2023
South West* Herts Joint Strategic Plan to 2050	Reg 18 consultation completed Nov 2022. See CPRE Hertfordshire response on our website.	2024
Hertfordshire Minerals & Waste Local Plan to 2040	Reg 18 consultation completed Oct 2022. See CPRE Hertfordshire response on our website.	Feb 2024

* Five district councils (Dacorum, Hertsmere, St Albans, Three Rivers & Watford) are working on the **South West Herts Joint Strategic Plan** supported by Hertfordshire County Council www.swhertsplan.com/

Reg 18 Public Consultation: Early stage consultation – may include Issues and Options, Preferred Options and first draft plan.

Reg 19 Public Consultation: Pre-submission draft plan – representations invited as to whether the plan is legally compliant and meets the test of soundness in the National Planning Policy Framework NPPF.

Examination: Public hearing held by independent Planning Inspector to assess merits of Submitted Local Plan Policies and their soundness.



Be a part of our Volunteer Team

We couldn't do what we do without the support of our amazing volunteers. If you have a little extra time, why not consider joining our volunteer team?

You'll meet colleagues with similar interests. You'll have access to training and be able to gain new skills.

You'll be part of a friendly and supportive team and you can join in with social events and workshops.

As a volunteer you can work flexibly, to suit your lifestyle. Many of our volunteers contribute around 2

or 3 hours per week, some more, some less.

There are lots of ways you could get involved, for example:

- Researching and writing about a local issue such as climate change, species loss, or water
- Creating maps or taking photographs of a threatened site
- Monitoring planning applications and development proposals in your area

- Doing in-depth research on a proposed development and helping draft our response
- Coordinating publicity and participant enrolment for a workshop or event
- Contributing your expertise as a pro bono consultant e.g. Legal, Finance, HR, IT
- Helping with general administrative tasks
- Assisting with marketing and fundraising
- Writing content, especially for digital / social media
- Organising and helping out at events like our AGM or at talks to community groups
- Helping with our Children's Art Competition or countryside Awards programme
- Becoming a Trustee

For an exploratory conversation or to find out more, please contact us at office@cpreherts.org.uk



Give as you Live®

You shop online and Hertfordshire's countryside benefits

'Give as you Live' is completely free for participants, and generates income for CPRE Hertfordshire when you shop online. Sign up for free at www.giveasyoulive.com/ and choose CPRE Hertfordshire as your designated charity.

The most important thing to remember is to start from the Give as you Live website every time

you shop. Once there you log on, then select the retailer you wish to shop with and do your shopping as normal. Find out more at www.giveasyoulive.com/how-it-works

There are over 6,000 leading stores to choose from including all the well-known general retailers like John Lewis and Tesco, and lots of specialised retailers like Boots,

Waterstones, Holland & Barrett, Hotel Chocolat, and Interflora. Once your shopping is complete CPRE Hertfordshire will receive a donation from Give as you Live.

A free and easy way to support the countryside you love and we are very appreciative of the help we receive.

Why is the Green Belt so important?

About two thirds of Hertfordshire is in the Green Belt and is legally protected from inappropriate development. But it's at risk.

There is immense pressure for building, and widespread proposals for damaging, large-scale development. In much of our campaign work we fight to uphold the protection of the Green Belt. But why is it so important?

Preventing urban sprawl

The Green Belt was established as a means of preventing uncontrolled development. Today, Sir Andrew Motion, former Poet Laureate and a past President of CPRE, is a passionate defender of the Green Belt. He talks about the hideous sprawl of Los Angeles and how, without the Green Belt, London would now be the same size sprawling from Cambridge to Brighton.

Providing recreational space

The countryside and woodlands of the Green Belt contain hundreds of Public Rights of Way including footpaths and bridleways, nature reserves, local green spaces, woodlands, sites of special scientific interest, and country parks. These are valued for picnicking, walking, running, cycling, dog-walking, horseback riding, photography and simply getting out to admire the view. Although much of the land may be in private ownership, access to the countryside within the Green Belt is widely available for everyone.

Boosting health and well-being

Mental and physical health and well-being are supported by spending time outdoors in green spaces. Spending time with nature can help clear the mind and improve our mood. A regular walking routine can help prevent heart disease and other chronic illnesses, reduce stress, and even boost the immune system.

Mitigating climate change and food security

Much of the Green Belt land comprises agricultural land and woodlands. These perform a vital function in our efforts to mitigate climate change, absorbing huge amounts of carbon from the atmosphere - over 10 million tonnes per annum across the UK. Agricultural land is used for growing food crops or grazing animals. According to government data, the UK imported 46% of the food we consumed in 2021. Government strategy is to reduce these imports to become more self-sufficient. Keeping agricultural land in food production is crucial to improving our domestic food security and reducing the carbon footprint associated with importing.

Providing a home for wildlife

One-sixth of the UK's wild species are at risk of extinction. The Green Belt provides habitats that are vital for their survival. This includes

woodlands and hedgerows which provide nesting, feeding and breeding places for a huge variety of species, and chalk streams and other wet areas which provide habitats for fish, water voles, otters, birds, dragonflies, frogs, toads, newts and important wildflowers. The Green Belt has huge potential to be managed even more with wildlife in mind, and so help stop biodiversity decline.

Space for children

The benefits of young children engaging with the countryside have never been more important. Their mental, physical and emotional health and well-being are supported by being in nature. The countryside, nature and the environment are important components of the science curriculum and the teaching of climate change awareness. The sheer joy on children's faces when running around and playing outdoors is evident for all to see.

The Green Belt is worth fighting for

For all the above reasons, it is vitally important that the Green Belt is protected and maintained for everyone's benefit. CPRE Hertfordshire thinks it is worth fighting for and will keep on campaigning for it.



The Green Belt at Boissy Park, St Albans District, is at risk of development.
Photo: Boissy Park Action Group

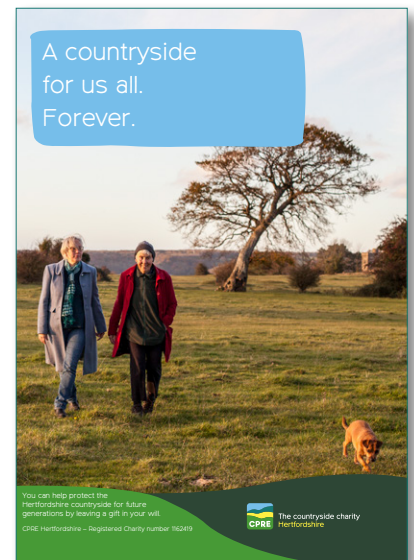
A countryside for us all. Forever.

Generous legacies to CPRE Hertfordshire over the years have enabled us to maintain our small team of part-time staff and larger team of volunteers, who work tirelessly to prevent countryside losses. With your help our organisation will be able to continue this work. Every legacy, of whatever size, makes a difference to how much we are able to achieve.

Please get in touch if you would like a copy of our legacy leaflet, explaining the ways that you could support us in your will. Please also get in touch if you know of somewhere locally, like a library or village hall, where a supply of the leaflet can be left out for others to take home.

To ensure that your generosity benefits Hertfordshire's countryside, please quote our registered charity number 1162419 in your will or codicil.

Thank you.



2021 Competition "The Colour of Nature" by Jack, Age 7

Children's Art Competition

Through our annual Children's Art Competition, we aim to encourage primary school aged children and their families to connect in a personal way with the Hertfordshire countryside. We are delighted to have received over 100 beautiful and creative pieces of artwork for our 2022 Children's Art Competition on the theme of Hedgerows Up Close and thank everyone who has contributed.

The judges are making their final decisions as we go to print and the results will soon be announced to the schools and individuals who are eagerly waiting to hear if their artwork has won a prize.

If you would like to see this years, or previous years, entries and the list of winners then in the near future please visit our website.

CPRE Hertfordshire Officers and Staff

President:

Sir Simon Bowes Lyon, KCVO

Honorary Life Vice Presidents:

Dorothy Abel Smith, MBE, Nicholas Halsey TD, DL, Dr Mervyn Miller, Anthony Eastwood, Stephen Pollock-Hill, David Irving, Elizabeth Hamilton, Kevin FitzGerald TD, DL

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Vice Chair: Alison Young,
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Staff:

Chief Executive: Martin Varco,
Planning Manager: Chris Berry,
Planning Assistant: Linda Brookes,
Office Manager: Gill Bryant

CPRE Hertfordshire is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

Registered charity number: 1162419.

Join us

If you are already a member, thank you! But if not, then please do join us. Becoming a member of CPRE is the best way to help protect, promote and enhance the Hertfordshire countryside for everyone to value and enjoy.

Details of how to join are on our CPRE Hertfordshire website at www.cpreherts.org.uk/get-involved/become-a-member/ or email the office and we will send you details:
office@cpreherts.org.uk.

New items! CPRE Hertfordshire Merchandise

You can see our full product range and order online at <https://www.cpreherts.org.uk/get-involved/merchandise/> and pay with your debit or credit card or use the order form enclosed with this newsletter to pay by cheque or BACS. £3 p&p per order.

Please support us by placing an order today. Each sale helps fund our work to protect, promote and enhance Hertfordshire's countryside.

Blank Greetings Cards — perfect for every occasion

Children's nature art - Pack of 5 with one each of 5 different images taken from our popular Children's Art Competition. Size: A6. £4.00 per pack



Four Seasons - Packs of eight, with four each of two exclusive Hertfordshire scenes per pack, either Spring Bluebells and Winter Sunset or Summer Meadows and Autumn Mists. Cards measure approximately 15 cm square. All images by local award-winning photographer and long-time CPRE Hertfordshire supporter Chris Howe. £8 per pack of 8 cards.



Books

We're delighted to offer the trilogy of beautiful full-colour wildlife guidebooks produced by the Heartwood Monitoring Group of volunteers at Heartwood Forest. Each book, at £5 each, is a high quality paperback packed with photographs and descriptive information to make species identification easy. We were so impressed with these books that we gave the volunteer group special recognition in our 2022 CPRE Hertfordshire Awards. The three titles are:



Heartwood Arboretum, covering all 60 species of trees and shrubs native to the British Isles, most of which can be found across Hertfordshire.

Heartwood Butterflies, featuring 30 species of butterflies to be found throughout the county.

Heartwood Wildflowers, covering 170 species of wildflower that grow in Hertfordshire.

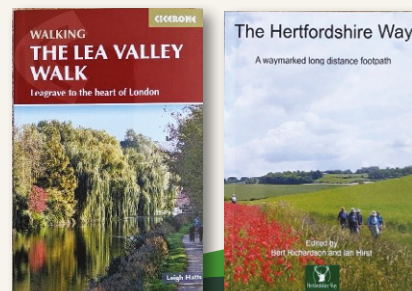


Old Oak & Little Acorn £12.99, and **The Happy Hedgerow** £10.99, two charming children's books by local author Elena Mannion, with detailed full colour illustrations by Erin Brown.

The new book, **Old Oak & Little Acorn**, carries on the important conservation themes begun earlier in **The Happy Hedgerow**. **Old Oak** tells the story of the majestic oak tree, his offspring the little acorn, and his wildlife friends and neighbours, many of whom featured in **The Happy Hedgerow**. Suitable for children aged from four.

We also continue to offer two outstanding walking guidebooks.

The Hertfordshire Way, the official guide to the 195 mile waymarked footpath around our county, for £10. And **Walking The Lea Valley Walk**, part of the widely-acclaimed Cicerone series of walking books, for £12.95.



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The countryside charity
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