



The countryside charity
Hertfordshire

Winter Newsletter 2023



Fundraising Appeal - help us fight for Hertfordshire's countryside

It's been another very busy year, with our beloved Hertfordshire countryside and green spaces coming under continued pressure for development.

We think the countryside is worth fighting for, and most people agree. An Ipsos poll commissioned by 'The Economist' in August 2023 found that 60% of respondents favoured protecting the countryside over providing new housing, an even higher percentage than a year ago.

As part of our fight to protect Hertfordshire's countryside, we've participated in seven Public Inquiries this year.

- In February in partnership with local groups we participated in the Bradmore Way Inquiry to prevent 125 dwellings being built in the Green Belt and I am pleased to report we won this appeal!
- In March we again partnered with local groups to participate in the Marshcroft Inquiry. This is to protect the Green Belt east of Tring from plans to build 1400 houses. We are awaiting the Inspectors Report and the decision by the Secretary of State. This is a huge test of the Government's commitment to protect the Green Belt.
- We have also participated in the second Luton Airport Inquiry, this one relates to the proposal to nearly double the size of the airport to handle 32 million passengers per year.

- We've also participated as an Interested Party in four other Inquiries regarding proposed development in the Green Belt at Chiswell Green in Hertsmere, at Sarratt in Three Rivers District, at Little Heath Lane in Dacorum, and near Great Wymondley in North Hertfordshire.

Each Public Inquiry entails a legalistic process including submission of evidence, and testimony and cross-examination of expert witnesses such as CPRE. We do much of our work in-house but of course we must rely on specialist legal counsel when needed. All of this costs money, both in staff time and external expertise.

In addition to the work on public inquiries we are also responding to a new wave of statutory consultations on draft Local Plans. In September we completed our representation on the St Albans draft Local Plan, and we're working right now on our responses to the latest draft Local Plans proposed in Three Rivers District and in Dacorum Borough.

Thus our appeal. We are hoping to raise £10,000 to cover our costs, and our heartfelt thanks goes to those who have already generously responded. If you are able to help, please find details of how to make a donation on the enclosed flyer or on our website at <https://www.cpreherts.org.uk/get-involved/make-a-donation/>

Thank you, your continued support is very much appreciated.

Martin Varco
Chief Executive



Could you be the next Chair of CPRE Hertfordshire?

As we have acknowledged by advertising for someone to chair CPRE Hertfordshire, I would like to retire as, in view of my age, I only accepted the appointment on a short term basis. I have set down some thoughts on the role:

- The main responsibility is to ensure that the Charity has a well motivated board of Trustees with the necessary skills to formulate strategy and oversee delivery of the charity's objectives.
- The Chair provides guidance and support to the staff and volunteers, helps advocate for our campaign priorities, and supports our fundraising, membership and engagement activities.
- The greatest satisfaction in the job is working with our brilliant trustees, staff and volunteers and in seeing where

we influence decision making by Local Authorities so that parts of the countryside especially Green Belt are spared from inappropriate development. It is also very inspiring to be involved in our programmes that encourage people in their enjoyment of the countryside.

There is [more information about the role](#) on our website.

If you feel that you have relevant experience to become our Chairman and an interest in our efforts to support Hertfordshire's countryside, we would be delighted to hear from you. Please get in touch with Eliza Hermann at Office@cpreherts.org.uk

Allan McNab
Chairman

Planning update



Anyone would think there was a General Election coming up with all the announcements from Government and Opposition regarding planning. I suppose the advantage of all this, in (Oscar) Wildean terms, is that we are not being ignored!

There are heaps of consultations taking place on things like Permitted Development Rights, assistance to Neighbourhood Plans, digitisation of planning departments, technical changes to Local Plans and much more, but still little movement on the more important amendments to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). However, as we go to print, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill has been given Royal Assent, rather swiftly in the end, and the intention was to publish further amendments to the NPPF simultaneously. So we may expect these imminently and clearly they will repay close attention as they will affect planning practice considerably.

Developers are taking advantage of the Government silence and almost immediately appealing Green Belt refusals of permission. During the last year, I have been involved in more planning appeals and inquiries (seven in all) than in many years of planning practice. For example, the major application by Redrow at Marshcroft, Tring duly went to appeal following Dacorum's refusal and at the inquiry we faced, in partnership with Grove Fields Residents Association and the Chiltern Society, sixteen 'expert' witnesses. We appeared as a Rule 6 party, legally assisted, and fielded four witnesses of our own. The Secretary of State decided to call-in this decision for his own determination, so the Inspector's report will be a recommendation.

Green Belt developments being politically sensitive, the Secretary of State has recently 'recovered' several big planning appeals in Herts. These are the application for 1,400 dwellings at Tring as noted above, two applications for 720 dwellings at Chiswell Green, and two large-scale commercial solar farm applications - one on 130 hectares of countryside at Aldenham and the other on 88 hectares of countryside at Great Wymondley. All of these decisions are pending.

We can mark up one appeal inquiry victory, however, at Bradmore Way in Brookmans Park. We again acted as part of a joint objectors' group and the Inspector dismissed the appeal for 125 units on Green Belt grounds. The developer then initiated a legal challenge of the dismissal, but permission to challenge was refused by the judge and the developer's claim was withdrawn.

In September we responded to the public consultation on the St Albans Draft Local Plan which was published in July. This is a hugely disappointing and damaging document that proposes the allocation of 790 hectares of Green Belt for development. We made a detailed representation (available on our [website](#)), as have many others.

The apparently never-ending saga of the Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan seems finally to have run out of steam, with its adoption on October 12th. We can claim credit for our lengthy campaigning on the longest-running Local Plan inquiry ever with the removal from the Plan of the large Symondshyde development proposal.

Coming up we have public consultations on the re-started Three Rivers and Dacorum Draft Local Plans. We will make representations on these amended plans and would encourage everyone to respond as it can make a big difference.

In other matters, we are maintaining our involvement in opposing the expansion of Luton Airport. Working with CPRE Bedfordshire, we have made a couple of Relevant Representations to the Development Consent Order application for the huge new expansion to 32 million passengers per annum. We were dismayed to see permission granted by the Secretaries of State for the earlier application for 19 million passengers per annum. That decision was published just three days after a massive fire at the airport multi story car park that caused significant damage to the car park structure and up to 1,500 cars.

Finally, we continue to make about two representations a week on planning applications throughout the County and these are posted on our website. As ever, we could not do this without the tremendous support of our dedicated planning volunteers, and we are always looking to [expand the team](#)!

Chris Berry
Planning Manager



Green Belt at Cockernhoe with Luton Airport in the distance Photo: Chris Howe

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 Nov-Dec 2023.	2025
East Herts District Plan 2011-2033		Adopted Oct 2018 (due for review 2023)
Hertsmere* Local Plan 2020 to 2038	Following feedback from the Reg 18 Draft Local Plan consultation in Dec 2021 and pending clarification on changes to Government policy for plan making, the Council has 'set-aside' the Draft Plan. Date TBC for further Reg 18 consultation.	TBC
North Herts Local Plan 2011-2031		Adopted Nov 2022 (due for review 2023)
St Albans* Local Plan 2024-2041	Reg 18 consultation completed Sept 2023. See CPRE Hertfordshire response on our website.	Dec 2025
Stevenage Local Plan 2011-2031		Adopted May 2019 (due for review 2024)
Three Rivers* Local Plan to 2038	Consultation for Reg 18 Part 4 'Preferred Local Plan Lower Housing Growth Option Protecting More Green Belt Land' due to commence 27th Oct 2023. https://www.threerivers.gov.uk/services/planning/planning-policy/new-local-plan	2026
Watford* Local Plan 2018-2036		Adopted Oct 2022
Welwyn Hatfield Local Plan 2016-2036	After a six year examination period, the Council finally adopted the Local Plan on 12th October 2023, subject to review after 3 years.	Adopted Oct 2023 (due for review 2026)
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 <https://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.

What the countryside means to me

I'm lucky to live in St Albans. It has most things that most people want, - it's a safe place to bring up a family, it has great pubs, varied and interesting shops, ancient buildings, open spaces and quite a bit of history on the side. But the best thing about St Albans is that the countryside is on the doorstep - 10 minutes by bike in any direction.

I cycle quite a lot. I prefer to cycle off-road, and on my own. It might be a Zen thing - at one with my bike and with nature. Until I get a puncture, or encounter a steep hill, at which point such dreamy thoughts quickly evaporate. But when the going is good, there's nothing quite like it. Here's what I mean by a Zen thing: the countryside is not just a location outside of town, it's where the natural world and the human soul connect. And if that connection is made at depth, then the experience can be both calming and inspirational.

I walk quite a lot too, and Hertfordshire is blessed with roughly three thousand miles of footpaths! Walking is another fine way to connect with nature, and with friends, and is such an easy way to share something beautiful. Time slows down, the senses sharpen, and the trees and the birds, the flowers and the fields come into focus, not as objects to photograph so much as something elemental to experience. Such moments are precious, but rare. A housing estate, a solar farm, road noise, jet planes overhead. These things intrude, but it seems we cannot live without them.



Cycling at Heartwood Forest

So is there a way to protect the natural world while at the same time demanding more and more from it to feed the machinery of our modern lives?

I think there is a way. Lots of ways in fact. We can support local and central government policies that prioritise the protection of the countryside, but we can also do stuff ourselves. There are dozens of charities in Hertfordshire working to protect a habitat here, clean up a river there, or in our case, resist egregious planning proposals! So I live in hope, if not in a Zen-like state of tranquillity. We need the countryside, and the countryside needs us.

Steve Wiltshire
Trustee/Hon Treasurer

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 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



AGM

Our AGM was held at Woolmer Green Village Hall on Saturday 7 October, it was lovely to see everyone and to socialise afterwards.

A welcome to our members

Following a welcome by our President, the Chairman and the Chief Executive gave their reports and despite so much going on in the county it was great to hear about all the positive things CPRE Hertfordshire is achieving

Our Trustees were all voted in for another year, and it was a pleasure to re-elect Sir Simon Bowes Lyon as President, Peter Waine as a Hon Life Vice President and to renew Ralph Abel Smith's term as a Hon Vice President for a further 5 years.

The CPRE Countryside Volunteer Awards 2023

It was a highlight of the afternoon to see one of our long-term volunteers presented with an Award by our Chairman, Allan McNab. Allan had great pleasure in presenting Elizabeth Hamilton with The CPRE Special Recognition Award for helping to protect the Hertfordshire countryside. Specifically, for her outstanding impact and influence as an interested party and expert witness on biodiversity matters at planning appeal inquiries.

Elizabeth was surprised, as she knew nothing about the nomination, however, she was delighted to receive the Award.



Join the 100 Club and protect the countryside!



Threatened Green Belt countryside east of St Albans
Photo: Steve Wiltshire

We want to carry on doing the important job of protecting the countryside, which is where you can help by 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!

Please 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 the local countryside.

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, Peter Waine

Honorary Vice President: Ralph Abel Smith

Officers: Hon. Chairman: Allan McNab, Vice Chair: Alison Young, Hon. Treasurer: Steve Wiltshire

Board of Trustees: Allan McNab, Alison Young, Terry Over, Elizabeth Hamilton, Claire Russell, Steve Wiltshire, Matt White, Claire Trbovic

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

CPRE Hertfordshire is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation.

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Chalk Stream Reflections, by Tim Hagyard

We are delighted to feature this excellent new book by our former CPRE Hertfordshire Planning Manager, Tim Hagyard. And Tim has kindly donated several copies of his book to help us with our fundraising, [available to buy from our website](#) or use the order form enclosed with this publication.

During the pandemic summer of 2020, Tim walked the entire length of each of Hertfordshire's chalk streams. These globally-rare and precious waterways, and the wildlife habitats that they support, are under tremendous pressure from increasing abstraction and pollution. Tim wanted to explore the health of these local rivers and enjoy their beauty, and this book is the result of his explorations.

Tim says 'The walk generated stories and opportunities, mapped in the book, to enhance our rivers as natural movement corridors. The experience added to my concerns, so I studied issues around water, rivers and governance and also took on a personal challenge to reduce my water use.'

Tim's observations reinforce our long-held concerns about water resources. We believe the planning system must take into account the relationship between new housing and impacts on chalk streams and on all water resources.



The weir on the River Mimram at Poplars Green
Photo: Tim Hagyard

This is not just with respect to water supply but waste water processing and sewage outflows as well.

There will be no new water supplies until the early 2030s at the earliest, and there is only a finite amount of water. We remain deeply concerned for the future of our chalk streams.

To my daughter, I leave
this beautiful
countryside to you

Leaving a gift in your will helps CPRE
Hertfordshire protect the places
you love

Email office@cpreherts.org.uk or call
01438 717587 for more information

CPRE Hertfordshire is Registered
Charity Number 1162419



Looking across the
upper Bulbourne
Valley from near Tring

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 publication to pay by cheque or BACS. £4 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 - four each of 2 exclusive Hertfordshire scenes per pack. Spring Bluebells and Winter Sunset or Summer Meadows and Autumn Mists. Cards measure approx. 15cm square. All images by award-winning photographer Chris Howe £8 per pack



Heavy Cotton Tote Bags

Eye catching and functional, they also make great little gifts. Approx. 36 x 41cm with long handles to fit comfortably over the shoulder. £4 each



Christmas Cards

A lovely selection of beautiful Hertfordshire scenes, cards are A6 landscape or 13cm square.

Pick'n'Mix, 70p each with a minimum order of 5 cards - you choose how many of each image.



Books

We have a lovely selection of books which make great Christmas Gifts:

Heartwood Arboretum, Heartwood Butterflies and Heartwood Wildflowers, Beautiful full-colour wildlife guidebooks packed with photographs and descriptive information. £5 each

Old Oak & Little Acorn £12.99, and The Happy Hedgerow £10.99, charming children's books by local author Elena Mannion, with detailed full colour illustrations by Erin Brown. They cover important conservation themes and are suitable for children aged from four.

Walking The Lea Valley Walk, £12.95, part of the widely-acclaimed Cicerone series of walking books.

