



# **Strategic Environmental Assessment Scoping Report**

## Central Bedfordshire Local Plan

### **Central Bedfordshire Council**

#### **Final report**

Prepared by LUC

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# Chapter 1

## Introduction

**1.1** Central Bedfordshire Council has commissioned LUC to carry out Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) of the new Central Bedfordshire Local Plan.

**1.2** SEA is an assessment process designed to consider and communicate the significant environmental effects of emerging plans and policies within them, including their alternatives. SEA iteratively informs the plan-making process by helping to refine the contents of plans, so that they maximise the benefits of sustainable development and avoid, or at least minimise, the potential for adverse effects.

**1.3** The purpose of this Scoping Report is to provide the context for and determine the scope of, the SEA of the new Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and to set out the framework for undertaking the later stages of the SEA.

**1.4** The Scoping stage of SEA involves:

- Reviewing other plans, policies and programmes;
- Considering the current state of the environment in the plan area (in this case Central Bedfordshire);
- Identifying any key environmental issues which may be affected by the Local Plan; and
- Setting out the 'SEA framework', which comprises specific sustainability objectives against which the likely effects of the Local Plan can be assessed.

## The plan area

**1.5** Central Bedfordshire is a unitary authority in the East of England which comprises the former districts of Mid Bedfordshire and South Bedfordshire and was created in 2009 as a result of the reorganisation of the former administrative county of Bedfordshire. Central Bedfordshire covers approximately 716km<sup>2</sup> and borders the unitary authority of Bedford to the north, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire Districts to the north east, North Hertfordshire, St Albans and Dacorum Districts to the south and south east, Buckinghamshire to the south west and Milton Keynes to the west. The unitary authority of Luton Borough is set within the southern part of Central Bedfordshire. The administrative centre for Central Bedfordshire Council is at Chicksands.

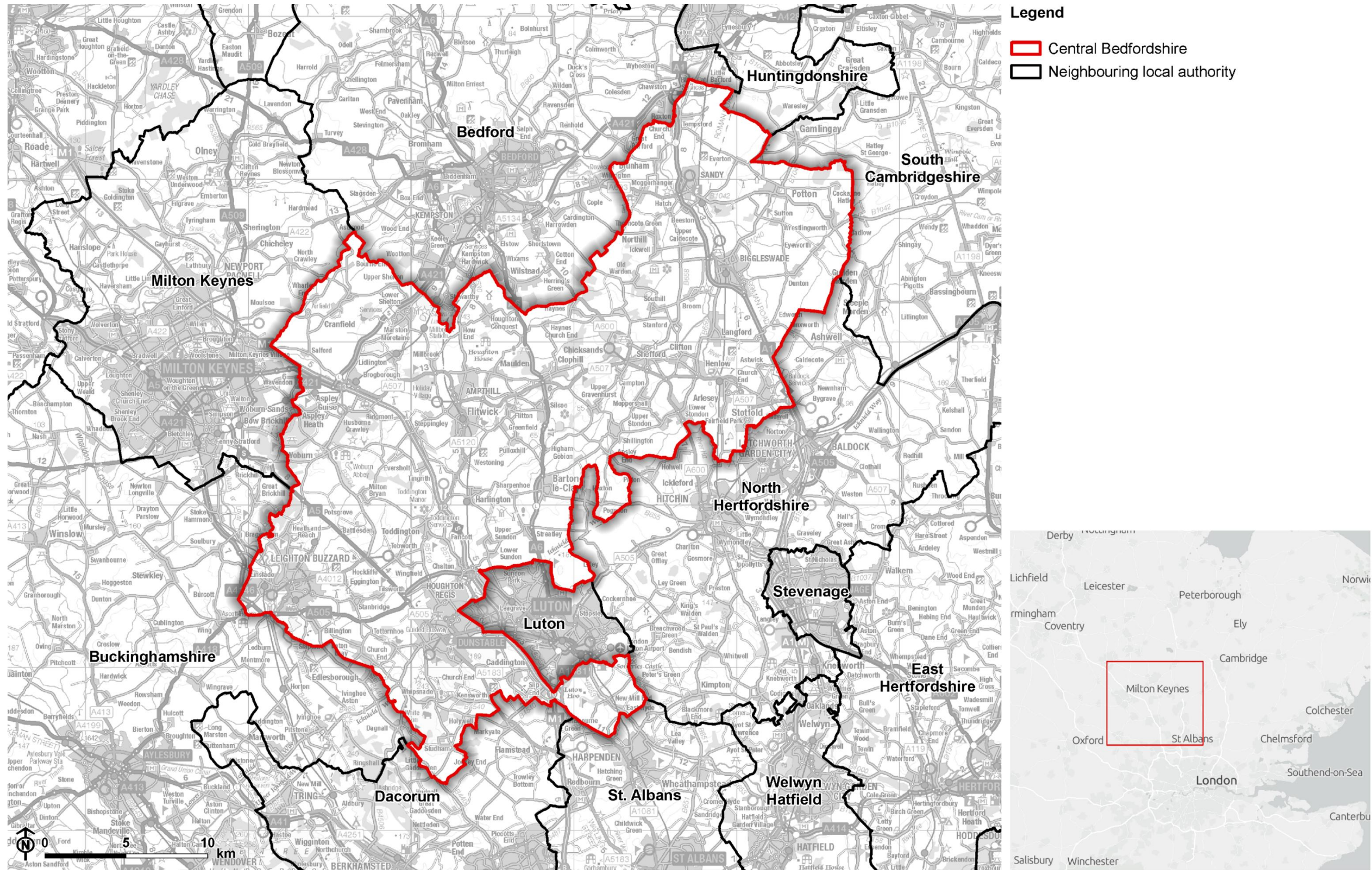
**1.6** The population of Central Bedfordshire has increased by 15.7% since 2011 from around 254,400 to 294,200 in 2021 [See reference 1]. The two largest towns, Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable, are located in the south of Central Bedfordshire while the north of Central Bedfordshire contains a series of smaller towns including Biggleswade, Sandy and Flitwick. While some settlements operate as successful, growing service centres with a good range of local employment opportunities, others are finding it difficult to maintain their services and economic strength in the face of competition from the large urban centres outside of Central Bedfordshire such as Milton Keynes, Bedford and Luton.

**1.7** Central Bedfordshire benefits from excellent transport links including the strategic road connections of the M1, A1, A5, A6 [See reference 2] and A421 and three strategically important railway lines: the East Coast Mainline, the Midland Mainline and the West Coast Mainline, which serve several of Central Bedfordshire's towns. Further transport improvements are proposed, including the East West Rail project [See reference 3] which will include a central corridor between Bedford and Cambridge that will run via Tempsford [See reference 4] in Central Bedfordshire. Central Bedfordshire also benefits from its proximity to Luton Airport.

**1.8** Much of Central Bedfordshire is of high landscape and biodiversity value. Key assets include the Greensand Ridge, recently designated as a Nature Improvement Area, parts of the Chilterns National Landscape and the Forest of Marston Vale community forest. Central Bedfordshire is also rich in cultural heritage, with nearly 2,000 listed buildings, 90 Scheduled Monuments, 15 Registered Historic Parks and Gardens and 61 Conservation Areas.

**1.9** The location of Central Bedfordshire is shown in Figure 1.1 overleaf.

Figure 1.1: Location of Central Bedfordshire



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## The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan

**1.10** Central Bedfordshire Council adopted the current Local Plan in July 2021. Policy SP1a 'Partial Review of the Local Plan' determined that the council would commence a partial review of the plan within six months of adoption. The review duly commenced in January 2022 and considered changes at a national level to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG), as well as changes that had been proposed to be brought forward through the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill in May 2022 (the Bill has since received royal assent). The review also considered policy changes at the local level and involved an internal review of the effectiveness of the adopted policies. The review concluded that significant changes had occurred to require a full, rather than a partial, update to the Local Plan. The council approved a Local Development Scheme for preparing the new Local Plan in November 2023 and work has commenced on initial engagement and commissioning key evidence studies including the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment, Gypsy and Traveller Accommodation Assessment, Landscape Character Assessment and Strategic Flood Risk Assessment. Further evidence studies to these will be commissioned and produced in the coming months to also inform the plan-making process.

## Strategic Environmental Assessment

**1.11** For new Local Plans it is necessary to conduct an environmental assessment in accordance with the requirements of the Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) Directive (European Directive 2001/42/EC), as transposed into law in England by the SEA Regulations [See reference 5] and which remains in force despite the UK exiting the European Union in January 2020.

**1.12** In October 2023, the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill received royal assent. The Levelling-up and Regeneration Act outlines a number of reforms to the planning system, including the replacement of the current SEA regime with a new requirement for an Environmental Outcomes Report (EOR). Consultation took place in 2023 on the proposals for EORs and the Government published its response in March 2026 along with a roadmap for the introduction of the new system, which is expected to be in place by the end of 2027. The specific requirements will be set out in forthcoming regulations, along with information about transition arrangements; however at present the requirement for SEA remains as set out in existing legislation. Any changes to the legal framework for carrying out SEA will be addressed as required as the Local Plan is prepared. At the time of writing, Government guidance on the new plan-making system continues to refer to the requirement for SEA, noting that 'your plan will need to carry out SEA if it meets criteria set out in regulation 5 of The

Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004. We expect that all local plans will need to carry out SEA'.

**1.13** Local Plans being prepared under the new system are no longer required to be subject to Sustainability Appraisal, as was previously required under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 for Local Plans prepared under the previous system.

**1.14** The SEA process comprises a number of stages, with Scoping being Stage A as shown below:

- Stage A: Setting the context and objectives, establishing the baseline and deciding on the scope.
- Stage B: Developing and refining options and assessing effects.
- Stage C: Preparing the Environmental Report.
- Stage D: Consulting on the Local Plan and the Environmental Report.
- Stage E: Monitoring the significant effects of implementing the Local Plan.

## Habitats Regulations Assessment

**1.15** The requirement to undertake Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) of development plans was confirmed by the amendments to the Habitats Regulations published for England and Wales in July 2007, updated in 2010 and again in 2012 and 2017 [See reference 6]. The Regulations translate Directive 92/43/EEC on the Conservation of Natural Habitats and of Wild Fauna and Flora (Habitats Directive) and 79/409/EEC (Birds Directive) into UK law and remain a legal requirement despite the UK exiting the European Union.

**1.16** The purpose of HRA is to assess the impacts of a land-use plan against the conservation objectives of a European site and to ascertain whether it would adversely affect the integrity of that site, either alone or in combination with other plans or projects.

**1.17** The HRA of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan will be undertaken separately but the findings will be taken into account in the SEA where relevant (for example to inform judgements about the likely effects of potential development locations on biodiversity).

## Health Impact Assessment

**1.18** Although not a statutory requirement, Health Impact Assessment (HIA) aims to ensure that health-related issues are integrated into the plan-making process. Sustainability objectives that address health issues will be included as part of the SEA process as health is one of the topics required by the SEA Regulations to be addressed in the assessment. In this way the HIA of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan will be carried out as part of the SEA. Recommendations will be made in relation to how the health-related impacts of the Local Plan can be optimised as options for the Local Plan are developed into detailed policies and site allocations.

## Equalities Impact Assessment

**1.19** The requirement to undertake formal Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) of development plans was introduced in the Equality Act 2010 but was abolished in 2012. Despite this, authorities are still required to have regard to the provisions of the Equality Act, namely the Public Sector Duty which requires public authorities to have due regard for equalities considerations when exercising their functions.

**1.20** In fulfilling this duty, many authorities still find it useful to produce a written record of equality issues having been specifically considered. Therefore, EqIA is also being incorporated into the SEA via a relevant SEA objective addressing how the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan is likely to be compatible or incompatible with the requirements of the Equalities Act 2010.

## Approach to Scoping

**1.21** There are five key tasks involved at the Scoping Stage:

- Stage A1: Setting out the policy context for the SEA of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan (i.e. key Government policies and strategies that influence what the Local Plan and the SEA need to consider).
- Stage A2: Setting out the baseline for the SEA of the Local Plan (i.e. the current and likely future environmental conditions in Central Bedfordshire).
- Stage A3: Drawing on A1 and A2, identify the particular sustainability problems and/or opportunities ('issues') that the Local Plan and the SEA should address.

- Stage A4: Drawing on A1, A2 and A3, develop a framework of SEA objectives and assessment criteria to appraise the constituent parts of the Local Plan in isolation and in combination.
- Stage A5: Consultation on the scope of the SEA.

**1.22** This Scoping Report fulfils the requirements set out above with a view to later establishing the likely significant effects of constituent parts of the Local Plan both in isolation and in combination. In accordance with national PPG, published online by the Government, the Scoping Report should be proportionate and relevant to the Local Plan, focussing on what is needed to identify and assess the likely significant effects.

## Meeting the requirements of the SEA Regulations

**1.23** The relevant sections of this Scoping Report that are considered to meet the SEA Regulations requirements are signposted in Table 1.1 below (the remainder will be met during subsequent stages of the SEA of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan). This table will be included in the SEA Report at each stage of plan making to show how the requirements of the SEA Regulations have been met.

### Environmental report

- Where an environmental assessment is required by any provision of Part 2 of these Regulations, the responsible Authority shall prepare, or secure the preparation of, an environmental report in accordance with paragraphs (2) and (3) of this regulation. The report shall identify, describe and evaluate the likely significant effects on the environment of:
  - e) Implementing the plan or programme; and
  - f) Reasonable alternatives taking into account the objectives and geographical scope of the plan or programme. (Regulation 12(1) and (2) and Schedule 2)

Covered in this Report? – The full SEA Report that will be produced to accompany consultation on the Local Plan will constitute the ‘environmental report’ and will be produced at a later stage in the SEA process but will include the relevant parts of the Scoping Report.

- An outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan or programme and of its relationship with other relevant plans and programmes.

Covered in this Report? – This is covered in Chapter 1, Chapter 2 and Appendix A.

- The relevant aspects of the current state of the environment and the likely evolution thereof without implementation of the plan or programme.

Covered in this Report? – This is covered in Chapter 3.

- The environmental characteristics of areas likely to be significantly affected.

Covered in this Report? – This is covered in Chapter 3.

- Any existing environmental problems which are relevant to the plan or programme including, in particular, those relating to any areas of a particular environmental importance, such as areas designated pursuant to Directives 79/409/EEC on the conservation of wild birds and the Habitats Directive.

Covered in this Report? – This is covered in Chapter 3.

- The environmental protection objectives, established at international, Community or national level, which are relevant to the plan or programme and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation.

Covered in this Report? – This is covered in Chapter 2 and Appendix A.

- The likely significant effects on the environment, including short, medium and long-term effects, permanent and temporary effects, positive effects and secondary, cumulative and synergistic effects, on issues such as:
  - a) Biodiversity;
  - b) Population;
  - c) Human health;
  - d) Fauna;

- e) Flora;
- f) Soil;
- g) Water;
- h) Air;
- i) Climatic factors;
- j) Material assets;
- k) Cultural heritage, including architectural and archaeological heritage;
- l) Landscape; and
- m) The interrelationship between the issues referred to in sub-paragraphs (a) to (l).

Covered in this Report? – Requirement will be met at a later stage in the SEA process.

- The measures envisaged to prevent, reduce and as fully as possible offset any significant adverse effects on the environment of implementing the plan or programme.

Covered in this Report? – Requirement will be met at a later stage in the SEA process.

- An outline of the reasons for selecting the alternatives dealt with and a description of how the assessment was undertaken including any difficulties (such as technical deficiencies or lack of know-how) encountered in compiling the required information.

Covered in this Report? – Requirement will be met at a later stage in the SEA process.

- A description of the measures envisaged concerning monitoring in accordance with Regulation 17.

Covered in this Report? – Requirement will be met at a later stage in the SEA process.

- A non-technical summary of the information is provided under paragraphs 1 to 9.

Covered in this Report? – Requirement will be met at a later stage in the SEA process.

- The report shall include such of the information referred to in Schedule 2 to these Regulations as may reasonably be required, taking account of:
  - Current knowledge and methods of assessment;
  - The contents and level of detail in the plan or programme;
  - The stage of the plan or programme in the decision-making process; and
  - The extent to which certain matters are more appropriately assessed at different levels in that process in order to avoid duplication of the assessment. (Regulation 12(3))

Covered in this Report? – The environmental report at each stage of the SEA will adhere to this requirement.

## Consultation

- When deciding on the scope and level of detail of the information that must be included in the environmental report, the responsible Authority shall consult the consultation bodies. (Regulation 12(5))

Covered in this Report? – This Scoping Report is being published for consultation with the three statutory bodies (the Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England).

- Authorities with environmental responsibility and the public, shall be given an early and effective opportunity within appropriate time frames to express their opinion on the draft plan or programme and the accompanying environmental report before the adoption of the plan or programme. (Regulation 13)

Covered in this Report? – Public consultation on the Local Plan and accompanying SEA Reports will take place as the Local Plan develops.

- Other EU Member States, where the implementation of the plan or programme is likely to have significant effects on the environment of that country. (Regulation 14)

Covered in this Report? – The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan is not expected to have significant effects on other EU Member States.

## Taking the environmental report and the results of the consultations into account in decision-making (relevant extracts of Regulation 16)

### Provision of information on the decision:

- When the plan or programme is adopted, the public and any countries consulted under Regulation 14 must be informed and the following made available to those so informed:
  - The plan or programme as adopted;
  - A statement summarising how environmental considerations have been integrated into the plan or programme and how the environmental report, the opinions expressed and the results of consultations entered into have been taken into account and the reasons for choosing the plan or programme as adopted, in the light of the other reasonable alternatives dealt with; and
  - The measures decided concerning monitoring.

Covered in this Report? – To be addressed after the Local Plan is adopted.

## Monitoring

- The responsible Authority shall monitor the significant effects of the implementation of each plan or programme with the purpose of identifying unforeseen adverse effects at an early stage and being able to undertake appropriate remedial actions. (Regulation 17(1))

Covered in this Report? – To be addressed after the Local Plan is adopted.

## Chapter 2

# Relevant plans and programmes

**2.1** Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations requires:

- a) “an outline of the contents and main objectives of the plan and its relationship with other relevant plans or programmes”; and
- b) “the environmental protection objectives established at International, Community or Member State level, which are relevant to the plan and the way those objectives and any environmental considerations have been taken into account during its preparation”.

**2.2** In order to establish a clear scope for the SEA, it is necessary to review and develop an understanding of the objectives contained within international and national policies, plans and strategies that are of relevance to the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan. Given the SEA Regulations requirements above, it is also necessary to consider the relationship between the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and other relevant plans, policies and programmes.

**2.3** This chapter summarises the relationship of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan to the relevant international and national policies, plans and programmes which should be taken into consideration during preparation of the plan and its SEA, as well as those plans and programmes which are of relevance at a sub-regional level. The objectives of these plans and programmes have been taken into account when drafting the SEA framework in Chapter 4. An outline of the content and main objectives of the Local Plan will be described in subsequent SEA reports, as this emerges through the plan-making process.

## The implications of Brexit

**2.4** As of the end of January 2020 the UK has left the EU. Principally, the UK’s environmental law is derived from EU law or was directly effective EU law. As a result of Brexit, the European Union (Withdrawal) Act 2018 converts existing EU law which applied directly in the UK’s legal system (such as EU Regulations and EU Decisions) into UK law and preserves laws made in the UK to implement EU obligations (e.g. the laws which implement EU Directive). This body of law is known as retained EU law and could be subject to future, post-Brexit amendments.

**2.5** As set out in the Explanatory Memorandum accompanying the Brexit amendments [See reference 7], the purpose of the Brexit amendments to the SEA Regulations is to ensure that the law functions correctly after the UK has left the EU. No substantive changes are made by this instrument to the way the SEA regime operates.

**2.6** Relevant international plans and policy (including those at the EU level) are transposed into national plans, policy and legislation and these have been considered in this chapter and in Appendix A.

## Relationship with other relevant plans or programmes

**2.7** The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan is not prepared in isolation and must be in conformity with a range of other plans and programmes. In addition, the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan comprises any ‘made’ (adopted) Neighbourhood Plans within the plan area (there are currently 22 in Central Bedfordshire [See reference 8]).

### International

**2.8** At the international level, there is a wide range of plans and programmes which act to inform and shape national level legislation. Planning policy in England at a national and local level (i.e. the NPPF and Local Plan) should be aware of and in conformity with the relevant legislation. Relevant international plans and policy are transposed into national plans, policy and legislation and these have been considered in the following section and in Appendix A.

### National

**2.9** There is an extensive range of national plans, policies, and programmes that are relevant to the Local Plan and the SEA process. A pragmatic and proportionate approach has been taken with regards to the identification of key national policies, plans and programmes, focusing on those that are of most relevance. A summary of the main objectives of the NPPF and PPG of relevance to the Local Plan and the SEA is provided below. In addition, the main sustainability objectives of other national plans and programmes which are of most relevance to the Local Plan and the SEA are provided in Appendix A.

## The National Planning Policy Framework and Planning Practice Guidance

**2.10** The NPPF [See reference 9] is the overarching planning framework which provides national planning policy and principles for the planning system in England. The NPPF was originally published in March 2012 and has since been updated and revised several times, with the most recent version published in December 2024 (and amended further in February 2025). At the time of writing, consultation has recently closed in relation to a further update to the NPPF; however until such time that an updated NPPF is formally published the December 2024 version remains current. That revised Framework revoked previous changes from its 2023 iterations and places a greater emphasis on ensuring up to date Local Plans are progressed using housing numbers defined by the Standard Method (removing alternative housing). The revisions also sought to change Green Belt policy changing the ‘exceptional circumstances’ test for plan-making and introducing the ‘Grey Belt’ and ‘Golden Rules’. The revised Framework also strengthened the Presumption in Favour of Sustainable Development, the presumption of the use of brownfield land, identified specific economic development that should be supported, and removed references to ‘beauty’.

**2.11** The three overarching objectives of the planning system are set out in paragraph 8 of the NPPF, which should be pursued in mutually supportive ways so that net gains are achieved across each of the different objectives:

- “an economic objective – to help build a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right types is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth, innovation and improved productivity; and by identifying and coordinating the provision of infrastructure;
- a social objective – to support strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by ensuring that a sufficient number and range of homes can be provided to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by fostering well-designed, beautiful and safe places, with accessible services and open spaces that reflect current and future needs and support communities’ health, social and cultural well-being; and
- an environmental objective – to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment; including making effective use of land, improving biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.”

**2.12** The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan must be consistent with the requirements of the NPPF, which states that:

“Succinct and up-to-date plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area; a framework for meeting housing needs and addressing other economic, social and environmental priorities; and a platform for local people to shape their surroundings”.

**2.13** A local planning authority is also required to have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State when preparing a Local Plan [\[See reference 10\]](#).

**2.14** Paragraph 20 of the NPPF states the need for strategic policies in plan-making, which set out the overall strategy for the pattern, scale and design quality of places, making sufficient provision for:

- “a) housing (including affordable housing), employment, retail, leisure and other commercial development;
- b) infrastructure for transport, telecommunications, security, waste management, water supply, wastewater, flood risk and coastal change management and the provision of minerals and energy (including heat);
- c) community facilities (such as health, education and cultural infrastructure); and
- d) conservation and enhancement of the natural, built and historic environment, including landscapes and green infrastructure and planning measures to address climate change mitigation and adaptation.”

**2.15** National Planning Practice Guidance [\[See reference 11\]](#) provides guidance on how the Government’s planning policies for England are expected to be applied. Sitting alongside the NPPF, it provides an online resource that is updated on a regular basis for the benefit of planning practitioners.

**2.16** The overarching nature of the NPPF means that its implications for the SEA relate to multiple topics which this report seeks to address. Considering the importance of the NPPF to the English planning system, the relevance of the Framework and its implications for the plan-making process and the SEA is explained in more detail below. Sustainability topics are addressed separately below, but many issues are cross-cutting. The summary provided below is not absolutely comprehensive and the NPPF is intended to be read and applied as a whole during plan-making.

## **Biodiversity (including flora and fauna)**

**2.17** The NPPF sets out the approach Local Plans should have in relation to biodiversity and states that plans should “identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation”. Plans should also promote conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats and species, ecological networks and measurable net gains for biodiversity. A strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure is to be supported through planning policies.

**2.18** The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan should seek to maximise any opportunities arising for local economies, communities and health as well as biodiversity. This should include approaches which support enhancing the connectivity of green infrastructure and promoting the achievement of biodiversity net gain. The SA process should support the identification and maximisation of potential benefits through the consideration of alternatives and assessment of significant effects, both negative and positive.

## **Population and human health**

**2.19** In relation to health and wellbeing, healthy, inclusive and safe places which promote social integration, are safe and accessible and enable and support healthy lifestyles are supported through the Framework. The Building for a Healthy Life design toolkit [\[See reference 12\]](#) can be used by local authorities to assist in the creation of places that are better for people and nature.

**2.20** One of the core planning principles is to “take into account and support the delivery of local strategies to improve health, social and cultural well-being for all sections of the community”. It is identified in the NPPF that “access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and recreation is important for the health and well-being of communities”. Furthermore, the retention and enhancement of local services and community facilities in villages, such as local shops, meeting places, sports, cultural venues and places of worship is supported. Importantly, Local Plans should “contain policies to optimise the use of land in their area and meet as much of the identified need for housing as possible”. Additionally, larger scale developments such as new settlements or significant extensions to existing villages and towns are required by the NPPF to be guided by policies set within a vision that looks at least 30 years ahead [\[See reference 13\]](#). The need for policies to reflect this longer time period is intended to take account of the likely

timescale for delivery. According to the NPPF, larger scale development offers an opportunity to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities. Further to this, there is a need to locate development in sustainable, accessible locations that limit the need to travel and offer a genuine choice of transport modes, as this can have positive effects on people's physical health and mental wellbeing. Safe cycling and walking routes also play an important role in encouraging active travel.

**2.21** The delivery of new housing is considered to support local communities by meeting housing needs and addressing shortages. The new Central Bedfordshire Local Plan can have a significant influence on addressing inequalities, including those relating to health, and will need to consider the appropriate siting of new development, particularly large development sites that are likely to include new service and facility provisions. The Local Plan can ensure that new development is located in areas which can improve accessibility for existing as well as new residents and ensure that future development does not exacerbate existing inequalities. The SEA process can support the identification and refinement of options that can contribute to reducing inequalities and support the development of policy approaches that cumulatively improve the wellbeing of local communities.

**2.22** Although Local Plans can no longer require developments to achieve certain levels of the Code for Sustainable Homes, they can promote the Home Quality Mark to support residents in understanding the quality and performance of new build homes and can also set targets for developers to provide for a given percentage of energy used by a new development to come from on-site renewable or low carbon technologies. There are regulations in place that seek to reduce emissions, namely the amended Building Regulations 2010 [See reference 14] and Future Homes and Building Standards from 2025 which require CO2 emissions from new build homes and other buildings, including offices and shops, to be 30% lower than current standards. Further to this, a recent court ruling [See reference 15] clarified that councils can set higher new home energy efficiency standards in Local Plans provided they convince a Planning Inspector that the policies are viable and that the homes can be delivered. Local Plan policies can support the development of renewable energy technologies where appropriate, in line with climate change mitigation strategies and targets. The UK Green Building Council has produced a resource pack which is designed to help local authorities improve the sustainability of new homes. The New Homes Policy Playbook [See reference 16] sets out minimum requirements for sustainability in new homes that local authorities should introduce, as well as proposed stretching requirements should local authorities wish to go further. For non-residential uses BREEAM assessments can be used by local authorities to ensure buildings meet sustainability objectives.

## **Air, water and soils**

**2.23** The NPPF states that new and existing development should be prevented from contributing to, being put at an unacceptable risk from, or being adversely affected by, pollutions including water pollution and air quality. Inappropriate development in areas at risk of flooding should be avoided. Plans should take a proactive approach to mitigating and adapting to climate change, taking into account implications for water supply. Furthermore, strategic policies should set out an overall strategy for the pattern, scale and quality of development and make sufficient provision infrastructure for water supply and wastewater.

**2.24** The new Central Bedfordshire Local Plan presents an opportunity to consider incorporating up-to-date targets for water efficiency and the level of water consumption and grey water recycling in any new development. The Local Plan also can ensure that development is sited away from areas of high flood probability and that appropriate water drainage is in place in line with flood risk strategies. The SEA process should seek to identify and address potential negative effects on water resources and water quality, including implications relating to wastewater.

**2.25** The NPPF states that the planning system should protect and enhance soils in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or quality, while also encouraging the reuse of previously developed land. The new Local Plan can seek to protect soil quality, including best and most versatile agricultural land. Further to this the Local Plan should ensure that new development does not conflict with current mineral operations as well as long-term mineral resource plans. The SEA process should inform the development of the new Local Plan by helping to identify alternatives which would avoid areas of highest soil quality and best and most versatile agricultural land, as well as those which would promote the use of brownfield land.

## **Climate change mitigation and adaptation**

**2.26** Climate change adaption and mitigation, energy efficiency and waste minimisation measures for new development, including through the promotion of renewable energy schemes, are supported through the NPPF. One of the core planning principles is to “support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change. It should help to: shape places in ways that contribute to radical reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, minimise vulnerability and improve resilience; encourage the reuse of existing resources, including the conversion of existing buildings; and support renewable and low carbon energy and associated infrastructure”. Furthermore, local planning authorities should adopt a proactive approach to mitigate and adapt to climate

change, taking full account of flood risk, coastal change, water supply, biodiversity and landscapes and the risk of overheating from rising temperatures.

**2.27** The NPPF requires plans to take a proactive approach in adapting to climate change, stating that “Policies should support appropriate measures to ensure the future resilience of communities and infrastructure to climate change impacts, such as providing space for physical protection measures, or making provision for the possible future relocation of vulnerable development and infrastructure”. As mentioned above, local planning authorities should take full account of overheating from rising temperatures. As temperatures increase, there will be more demand for energy used for cooling, and so policies in the Local Plan should include design measures that minimise overheating and energy demand for cooling.

**2.28** The NPPF requires transport issues to be considered from the earliest stages of plan-making so that opportunities to promote walking, cycling and public transport use are identified and pursued, which will help reduce reliance on the private car and associated emissions. According to the NPPF, “Significant development should be focused on locations which are or can be made sustainable, through limiting the need to travel and offering a genuine choice of transport modes. This can help to reduce congestion and emissions, and improve air quality and public health”. Further to this, the NPPF requires planning policies to “support an appropriate mix of uses across an area, and within larger scale sites to minimise the number and length of journeys needed for employment, shopping, leisure, education and other activities”.

**2.29** The SEA can consider the contribution that the alternatives make to climate change mitigation and adaptation, including through reducing transport-related emissions. Climate change adaptation is crucial to the health and wellbeing of residents, which is also considered through the SEA.

## **Material assets**

**2.30** The Framework sets out that in terms of economic growth the role of the planning system is to contribute towards building a “strong, responsive and competitive economy” by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places and at the right time to support growth and innovation. There is also a requirement for the planning system to identify and coordinate the provision of infrastructure. Furthermore, planning policies should address the specific locational requirements of different sectors.

**2.31** Local planning authorities should incorporate planning policies which “support the role that town centres play at the heart of local communities, by taking a positive approach to their growth, management and adaptation”. Local Plans are required to

“set out a clear economic vision and strategy which positively and proactively encourages sustainable economic growth, having regard to Local Industrial Strategies and other local policies for economic development and regeneration”.

**2.32** The new Local Plan should seek to maximise the potential benefits of nearby strategic growth, while at the same time ensuring the vitality and viability of smaller localised economies. Ensuring that services and facilities within Central Bedfordshire’s town and local centres are maintained and enhanced is also important and will also provide support for local communities. The SEA process can support the development of the new Local Plan to ensure that its policies consider impacts on the economy in Central Bedfordshire. The SEA can also be used to demonstrate that impacts on the viability of town and local centres have been considered.

**2.33** The NPPF encourages local planning authorities to consider transport issues from the earliest stages of plan-making so that opportunities to promote sustainable transport are identified and pursued; the environmental impacts of traffic and transport infrastructure can be identified and assessed; and opportunities from existing or proposed transport infrastructure and changing transport technology and usage are realised. The Framework also states that the planning system should actively manage growth patterns in support of these objectives.

**2.34** Growth will inevitably increase traffic on the roads which also has implications for air quality. The new Local Plan and the SEA can seek to minimise effects of this nature through appropriately siting new development, identifying where mitigation may be needed and requiring the necessary transport provisions and contributions from new development. The Local Plan, as supported by the SEA, should seek to identify opportunities to maximise the potential for alternative modes of transport to private motor vehicles which use internal combustion engines, as these contribute towards air pollution. This is particularly the case in Central Bedfordshire, much of which is rural in nature. It is noted, however, that air pollution levels are likely to be reduced by the previous Government's commitment to ban the sale of all new petrol and diesel cars by 2035, the increasing uptake of electric vehicles and the gradual rollout of electric vehicle charging networks. Electric vehicles do, however, contribute to non-exhaust emissions through particulates from tyres. It is therefore also important to reduce the need to travel, or the need to travel so far, as this will help reduce emissions, through the consideration of alternatives and assessment of significant effects. This includes potential opportunities that may arise as a result of the delivery of new infrastructure.

## Cultural heritage

**2.35** The NPPF states that in relation to the historic environment plans should “set out a positive strategy for the conservation and enjoyment of the historic environment, including heritage assets most at risk through neglect, decay or other threats”. Where appropriate, plans should seek to sustain and enhance the significance of heritage assets and local character and distinctiveness, while viable uses of assets should be considered. Plans should take into account the wider social, cultural, economic and environmental benefits that conservation of the historic environment can bring. They should also consider the contribution the historic environment can make to the character of a place. The Framework places a focus on making ‘beautiful’ and ‘sustainable’ places. The use of plans, design policy, guidance and codes are encouraged.

**2.36** The new Local Plan can offer enhanced protection for both designated and non-designated heritage assets and their settings, including any potential archaeological finds in line with heritage protection and enhancement plans. The SEA has a role to play by identifying which alternatives could offer opportunities to secure the protection and enhancement of assets as well as those which might have significant impacts in terms of their appropriate use and setting.

## Landscape

**2.37** In relation to landscape, the NPPF sets the planning principles of recognising the intrinsic beauty and character of the countryside as well as protecting and enhancing valued landscapes. Reference is included with regards to this purpose at National Parks, The Broads and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (now referred to as National Landscapes).

**2.38** The Local Plan should be supportive of an approach to development which would protect the landscape character of Central Bedfordshire and its surrounds. Where appropriate it should also seek to protect the identity of the built-up areas of Central Bedfordshire. The SEA should identify those alternatives which contribute positively to landscape and townscape character.

## Other national policies, plans and programmes

**2.39** Numerous other policies, plans and programmes (PPPs) at a national level are of relevance to the preparation of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan and the SEA. Unlike the NPPF, most of the documents are focussed on a specific topic area which the SEA will consider. There will be some overlap between the SEA topics covered

by these plans and programmes where those documents contain cross-cutting objectives. However, the plans and programmes considered of most relevance to the SEA have been grouped by the topics they most directly seek to address, and the sections below each topic heading summarise the implications of the national PPPs for the Local Plan and the SEA.

**2.40** These national plans, policies and programmes are detailed in Appendix A. The sections below summarise the implications of these national PPPs for the Local Plan and the SEA.

## Climate change mitigation and adaptation

**2.41** The key relevant national PPPs under this topic are:

- A Well-Adapted UK: The Fourth Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk (CCRA4-IA) (2026)
- Clean Energy Industries Sector Plan (2025)
- Hydrogen Update to the Market (2025)
- Onshore Wind Strategy (2025)
- Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan (2025)
- Environmental Improvement Plan (2025)
- Clean Power 2030 Action Plan: A New Era of Clean Electricity (2024)
- Carbon Budget Delivery Plan (2023)
- The Energy Security Plan (2023)
- The Net Zero Growth Plan (2023)
- The National Adaptation Programme and the Fourth Strategy for Climate Adaptation Reporting (2023)
- The Environment Act 2021
- The Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy (2021)
- The Heat and Buildings Strategy (2021)
- Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations (2021)
- The Waste (Circular Economy) (Amendment) Regulations 2020
- Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management: Policy Statement (2020)

- The National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England (2020)
- The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and The Flood and Water Regulations (2019)
- Our Waste, Our Resources: A strategy for England (2018)
- The Clean Growth Strategy (2017)
- National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW) (2014)
- Waste Management Plan for England (2021)
- The UK Renewable Energy Strategy (2009)
- Climate Change Act (2008)
- Planning and Energy Act (2008)
- Waste (England and Wales) Regulations (2011)

## Implications for the Local Plan and SEA

The Local Plan should set out policies to mitigate and adapt to climate change, while also encouraging development which would help to minimise carbon emissions. Climate change adaptation is closely linked to ensuring the health and wellbeing of residents.

The Local Plan should help to ensure that new development is energy efficient and promotes the use of sustainable construction methods and materials, as well as reduce their carbon emissions. In addition, the Local Plan should seek to allocate development sites in areas where sustainable and active transport patterns can be best achieved and should encourage development to make use of more sustainable sources of energy, potentially through the delivery of renewable energy development. The Local Plan should also ensure that risk from all sources of flooding as a result of climate change is managed effectively, protecting residents' wellbeing, and should ensure that development is resilient to future flooding. This could include the Local Plan setting out approaches to encourage the appropriate use of SuDS to minimise flood risk. The Local Plan should also consider the handling of waste in line with the waste hierarchy.

The SEA is able to respond to this through the inclusion of SEA objectives relating to the mitigation of climate change and adaptation to climate change,

sustainable construction and waste management, flooding and sustainable transport.

## Population and human health

**2.42** The key relevant national PPPs under this topic are:

- Health Bill (2026)
- The Future Homes and Buildings Standards: Building Circular 01/2026 (2026)
- Planning and Infrastructure Bill (2025)
- Renters' Rights Act (2025)
- Healthy Homes — a foundation for healthier and resilient communities (2025)
- Planning Policy for Traveller Sites (2024)
- Plan for Change (2024)
- Policy Statement on New Towns (2024)
- UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) strategic plan 2023 to 2026 (2023)
- Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023)
- Green Infrastructure Framework (2023)
- Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan (2023)
- Health and Care Act (2022)
- National Design Guide (2021)
- Build Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care (2021)
- Using the Planning System to Promote Healthy Weight Environments (2020) Addendum (2021)
- The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper (2020)
- Homes England Strategic Plan 2023-2028
- Technical Housing Standards – Nationally Described Space Standard (2015)
- Select Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change Report Ready for Ageing? (2013)
- Environmental Noise Regulations (2006) (as amended 2018)

## Implications for the Local Plan and SEA

The Local Plan needs to consider the requirements for infrastructure as this has the potential to have a significant impact on the environment and it should be prepared to ensure that the population has access to sustainable and low carbon infrastructure and services and facilities that are well adaptable to climate change, and that there is sufficient capacity within them to serve the increased population. This should include healthcare, education and open space.

Local Plans offer the opportunity to maximise the well-being benefits of well-designed local green spaces. The Local Plan should help to ensure that the provision of open space and green infrastructure is of sufficient quantity and quality to meet the needs of the plan area, encourage healthy and active lifestyles, creates fair, safe and inclusive communities and improves the sustainable transport network including active travel networks within the plan area.

The provision of an appropriate level of housing over the plan period will help address issues of disparity in terms of access to decent housing in the plan area. The provision of new housing should be considerate of local needs with regards to housing size, tenure and type, including the needs of Gypsies, Travellers and Travelling Showpeople.

The SEA is able to respond to this through the inclusion of SEA objectives relating to health and wellbeing, social inclusion and sustainable transport.

## Biodiversity (including flora and fauna), landscape and soils

**2.43** The key relevant national PPPs under this topic are:

- Environmental Outcomes Reports: Roadmap to reform (2026)
- Environmental Improvement Plan (2025)
- Green Infrastructure Framework and associated 15 GI Principles (2023)
- The Waste Prevention Programme for England: Maximising Resources, Minimising Waste (2023)
- Working with Nature (2022)
- Nature Recovery Network (2022)
- Establishing the Best Available Techniques for the UK (UK BAT) (2022)

- The Environment Act (2021)
- The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations (2019)
- Biodiversity Offsetting in England Green Paper (2013)
- Countryside and Rights of Way Act (2010)
- Safeguarding our Soils – A Strategy for England (2009)
- England Biodiversity Strategy Climate Change Adaptation Principles (2008)
- Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act (2006)

## Implications for the Local Plan and SEA

The Local Plan should be prepared to limit the potential for adverse impacts on biodiversity and geodiversity as well as important landscapes (including those that are designated) and higher value soils. The Local Plan should help to ensure that ecological features and biodiversity are managed, protected and enhanced and that opportunities for habitat restoration or creation are encouraged. The Local Plan should also help to ensure that environmental pollution is minimised in order to protect land and soils and ensure the efficient extraction of minerals. The Local Plan should help to protect and enhance designated and valued landscapes and to ensure that development is sympathetic to local character and history, including the surrounding built environment and landscape setting.

The Local Plan should take into account non-designated landscapes identified as particularly sensitive to development and non-designated habitats which form part of wider ecological network. The Local Plan also presents opportunities to promote the achievement of net gains in biodiversity, although it is noted that it is already a national requirement to achieve 10% biodiversity net gain.

In terms of the location of development, the Local Plan can encourage the re-use of brownfield land and protect more valuable agricultural soils from development. The allocation of new sites for development and updated planning policy can also be used to achieve better habitat connectivity through the provision of new green infrastructure and the requirement for biodiversity net gain.

The SEA is able to respond to this through the inclusion of SEA objectives relating to the protection and enhancement of biodiversity, character of landscapes and townscapes, green infrastructure and contaminated land.

## Air and water

**2.44** The key relevant national PPPs under this topic are:

- The National Framework for Water Resources 2025: Water for Growth, Nature and a Resilient Future (2025)
- Environmental Improvement Plan (2025)
- National Assessment of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk in England (2025) ('NaFRA 2')
- Drought Response: how it is managed in England (2025)
- Plan for Water: Our Integrated Plan for Delivering Clean and Plentiful Water (2023)
- Air Quality Strategy for England (2023)
- Establishing the Best Available Techniques for the UK (UK BAT) (2022)
- National Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Strategy for England (2022)
- Environment Act (2021)
- National Chalk Streams Strategy (2021)
- Managing Water Abstraction (2021)
- Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and Flood and Water Regulations 2019
- Clean Air Strategy (2019)
- Environmental Noise Regulations (2006) (as amended 2018)
- Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations (2018)
- Water Environment Regulations (2017)
- UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations (2017)
- Managing Water Abstraction (2016)
- Environmental Permitting Regulations (2016)
- Nitrate Pollution Prevention Regulations (2016)
- Air Quality Standards Regulations (2016)
- Urban Waste Water Treatment Regulations (2003)
- Environmental Protection Act (1990)

## Implications for the Local Plan and SEA

Local planning authorities should consider setting out approaches in their Local Plans to promote the efficient use of water and limit all types of pollution including water and air pollution. They should also seek to limit pressure on the wastewater treatment (WwT) infrastructure and water supply. The allocation of sites for development should take account of areas which are of highest sensitivity in relation to these issues, including Source Protection Zones (SPZs) and Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs). To limit the potential for air quality issues to be intensified as development is delivered over the plan period, local planning authorities should consider setting out approaches in their Local Plan to factor in the contribution that specific site options can make to achieving modal shift and limiting the need for residents to travel.

The SEA is able to respond to this through the inclusion of SEA objectives relating to air pollution, water quality and water management.

## Material assets

**2.45** The key relevant national PPPs under this topic are:

- Better Connected: A Strategy For Integrated Transport (2026)
- Planning and Infrastructure Bill (2025)
- UK Infrastructure: A 10 Year Strategy (2025)
- The UK's Modern Industrial Strategy (2025)
- UK Infrastructure Pipeline (2025)
- The Plan for Change (2024)
- Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024 (update 2024)
- The Levelling Up and Regeneration Act (2023)
- Future of Transport: Supporting Rural Transport Innovation (2023)
- The Future of Freight Plan (2022)
- National Highways Environmental Sustainability Strategy (2023)
- The second cycling and walking investment strategy (CWIS2) (2023)
- Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy Report to Parliament (2022)

- Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain (2021)
- Decarbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge (2020)
- Agriculture Act (2020)
- The LEP Network Response to the Industrial Strategy Green Paper Consultation (2017)

## Implications for the Local Plan and SEA

The Local Plan should allocate land to support the projected level of economic growth required over the plan period. Local planning authorities should consider setting out approaches in Local Plan policies to promote sustainable economic and employment growth to benefit all members of the community and to reduce disparity in the plan area. This should include support for the infrastructure required for the economy to function successfully. Employment sites should be located to enable local people to be able to access the new employment opportunities. Local planning authorities should consider setting out approaches in their Local Plan to promote the viability of town centres as well as local centres.

The potential for reducing congestion, limiting the need to travel and associated benefits for air quality and climate change as well as public health should inform the preparation of the policies for the Local Plan and selecting its site allocations. The Local Plan should also encourage walking, cycling and wheeling as alternative modes of transport by providing safe and attractive walking and cycling infrastructure, as well as recognise the multiple benefits they bring in terms of physical and mental health, reducing carbon emissions and reducing air pollution. The selection of site options for development should be informed by the 20-minute neighbourhood concept and the provision of essential services locally to encourage less reliance on cars and encourage walking and cycling, in addition to issues such as the potential for access to new and existing public transport nodes and active transport routes and specific highways capacity issues. The selection of individual site options should also be informed by their proximity to essential services and facilities, which is likely to reduce the need for residents to regularly travel long distances. There is potential for large site allocations to provide essential services and facilities, in addition to designing in routes for active travel and public transport provision where viable.

The SEA is able to respond to this through the inclusion of SEA objectives relating to green economic growth and employment and the provision of sustainable transport.

## Cultural heritage

**2.46** The key relevant national PPPs under this topic are:

- Historic England Corporate Plan 2023-26 (2023)
- Heritage Statement (2017)
- Sustainability Appraisal and Strategy Environmental Assessment: Historic England Advice Note 8 (2016)
- Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act (1990)
- Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act (1979)
- Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act (1953)

## Implications for the Local Plan and SEA

The potential impact of new development on the historic environment, including local character as well as designated and non-designated heritage assets and their respective settings, should inform the preparation of the Local Plan. The Local Plan should set out a positive strategy for conserving, enhancing and enjoying heritage assets and their settings, including wider historic townscapes and landscapes. The Local Plan can help to realise the wider benefits of historic environment enhancements which include contributions to well-being and addressing the climate and biodiversity emergencies. Particular regard may be given to protecting heritage assets which have been identified as being ‘at risk’ (both at the national and local levels). Local planning authorities should consider setting out approaches in their Local Plans to address these issues and site options should be considered with regard to the potential for related issues.

The SEA is able to respond to this through the inclusion of SEA objectives relating to the historic environment and the character of historic landscapes and townscapes.

## Chapter 3

# Baseline information and key sustainability issues

**3.1** The SEA Regulations require the collation of baseline information to provide a background to and evidence base for, identifying sustainability problems and opportunities in the plan area and providing the basis for predicting and monitoring effects of the plan. To make judgements about how the emerging content of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan will progress or hinder sustainable development, it is essential to understand the environmental circumstances in the plan area today and their likely evolution in the future. The aim is to collect only relevant and sufficient data on the present and future state of the plan area to allow the potential effects of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan to be adequately predicted.

**3.2** Guidance produced by Government [See reference 17] proposes a practical approach to data collection, recognising that information may not yet be available and that information gaps for future improvements should be reported as well as the need to consider uncertainties in data. Collection of baseline information should be continuous as the SEA process guides plan-making as new information becomes available. Many of the evidence studies currently being commissioned to inform the new Local Plan will be relevant to the SEA and will be taken into account when available, replacing more dated evidence studies which may have been prepared to inform the preparation of the current Local Plan.

**3.3** The baseline information presented within this chapter is structured around the following topics which are required to be addressed by the SEA Regulations:

- Biodiversity (including flora and fauna);
- Population and human health;
- Air, water and soils;
- Climate change mitigation and adaptation;
- Material assets;
- Cultural heritage; and
- Landscape.

## Biodiversity (including flora and fauna)

**3.4** This topic identifies designated biodiversity and geodiversity across the plan area as well as important habitats and species. It also seeks to identify key ecological corridors.

### Designated sites

**3.5** There are no European designated sites within Central Bedfordshire; however, Habitats Regulations Assessment work carried out for the adopted Local Plan in 2018 scoped into the assessment the following European sites within the influence of the plan [\[See reference 18\]](#):

**Table 3.1: European sites within proximity of Central Bedfordshire**

Site Name	Designation	Distance from Central Bedfordshire Boundary
Chiltern Beechwoods	SAC	5km
Eversden and Wimpole Woods	SAC	5km
Chippenham Fen	Ramsar site	35km
Wicken Fen	Ramsar site	30km
Woodwatton Fen	Ramsar site	30km
YepoOuse Washes	SAC/SPA/Ramsar site	30km
Fenland	SAC	35km
Upper Nene Gravel Pits	SPA/Ramsar site	35km

**3.6** There are a number of nationally designated sites, including 42 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSIs). The majority of the SSSIs within Central Bedfordshire are in 'favourable' condition. However, there are several that are considered 'unfavourable recovering' and a few SSSI units which are 'unfavourable no change' and 'unfavourable declining'. The pressures these SSSIs are facing largely relate to the need for appropriate grazing regimes and management practices. However, water abstraction and the presence of invasive plant species are also key pressures. Spatially, the SSSIs in the poorest condition are largely located within the centre, west and south west of Central Bedfordshire [\[See reference 19\]](#) [\[See reference 20\]](#).

**3.7** Table 3.2 below shows the total number of designations in Central Bedfordshire by type at March 2023 [\[See reference 21\]](#).

**Table 3.2: Number of designations by type**

Type	Designations	Number of Designations in Central Bedfordshire
Statutory	Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)	42
Statutory	National Nature Reserves (NNR)	10
Statutory	Local Nature Reserves (LNR)	19
Non-statutory sites	County Wildlife Sites (CWSs)	264
Non-statutory sites	Local Geological Sites (LGS)	15
Non-statutory sites	Roadside Nature Reserves (RNRs)	35

**3.8** In 2022/23, out of the 264 County Wildlife Sites, 151 (57%) were in positive Conservation Management. This has been in decline since 2013/14, where the number of sites was recorded at 171 (63%) [\[See reference 22\]](#).

**3.9** Many sites throughout the county are also managed as Nature Reserves – places where wildlife can thrive and from which they can expand into the surrounding countryside. The majority are open to visit. Similarly, Accessible Wildlife Sites (AWSs) are not a type of site designation, but rather a descriptive title for a collection of sites that have a management plan that takes the needs of wildlife into account, and have free public access. Many of these are managed as Nature Reserves where that is the primary purpose for the site, but others accommodate wildlife alongside other uses, often recreational. Both Nature Reserves and AWSs are recognised as managed sites [\[See reference 23\]](#).

**3.10** Recently, King’s Wood and Rushmere NNR has expanded by 43 hectares and now extends into Buckinghamshire. This extension means that an even greater, cross-county area of countryside and wildlife will benefit from legal protection and expert environmental management [\[See reference 24\]](#).

**3.11** The Forest of Marston Vale, within Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Borough is one of 12 nationally designated Community Forests, created in the 1990s as part of a program to regenerate degraded landscapes. In the monitoring year 2022/23, a further 119.28ha of new woodland area was created in the Forest of Marston Vale. Within Central Bedfordshire, this was centred around 22.64ha of new woodland on farmland (owned by Central Bedfordshire Council) at Beeston. In total 33,030 trees were planted. A further 13.75ha of new woodland was planted to complete the final phase of “Queens Wood”, north of Ampthill. Other sites planted within Central Bedfordshire totalled 25.90ha across 10 sites, bringing the total to 62.29ha for the

year with 79,463 trees planted. All these projects were supported under the 'Trees for Climate' programme, a Defra-sponsored programme to accelerate woodland creation activity within the Forest of Marston Vale and other Community Forests up until April 2025.

**3.12** Planting activity generally alternates between Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council administrative areas, within the 61 square mile designated Forest of Marston Vale area spanning the boundary. During this monitoring year, most activity marginally took place within Central Bedfordshire with 62.29ha planted compared to the 56.99ha planted within Bedford Borough.

**3.13** It is recognised that access to some designated sites may be detrimental if there are large numbers of people visiting them due to disturbance and that some sites are more sensitive to this disturbance at certain times of the year. It is important to ensure the protection and conservation of the species and habitats for which these sites are designated [See reference 25]. It is also vital that the connectivity of habitats is maintained to ensure ecological corridors that enable the movement of mobile species within Central Bedfordshire and surrounding local planning authorities [See reference 26]. Local Plans must therefore ensure that development seeks to avoid important biological networks and seeks opportunities to enhance them where possible.

**3.14** The Greensand Ridge is a narrow, elongated, elevated area which runs in a north east/south west direction covering a significant part of Central Bedfordshire [See reference 27]. It is recognised as a locally designated Nature Improvement Area (NIA) by Central Bedfordshire Council and the Bedfordshire Local Nature Partnership and is associated with grassland, heathland and woodland [See reference 28]. However, the distinctive mosaic of habitats that give the Greensand Ridge its character have been eroded over time by changes in land use and agricultural practices [See reference 29]. The habitats that remain within Greensand Ridge NIA support a rich variety of species, some of which are locally or nationally rare [See reference 30]. Although core biodiversity hotspots still exist, they have become increasingly smaller and more isolated. Small, isolated populations are more vulnerable to local extinction than larger, well-connected populations. Therefore, the designation of the Nature Improvement Area aims to protect the existing habitats and ensure that the necessary ecological corridors exist to maintain habitat connectivity and healthy populations of species.

## Habitats and species

**3.15** Central Bedfordshire contains a variety of habitats and species that are recognised in Section 41 of the Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act

2006 as of “principal importance for the purpose of conserving biodiversity”. However, compared to the national average, a relatively low percentage of Central Bedfordshire is covered by ecological designations. One of the most serious problems facing biodiversity is the continued fragmentation of habitats, including migration and feeding corridors for birds and bats. Many areas of habitat have become isolated islands surrounded by intensively farmed agricultural land, development and busy transport routes [See reference 31]. Around 107 species and 18 habitats of ‘principal importance’ have been recorded in Central Bedfordshire. Some of these habitats and species are set out below [See reference 32]:

## Species

- Great Crested Newt (*Triturus cristatus*);
- House Sparrow (*Passer domesticus*), Turtle Dove (*Streptopelia turtur*) and Spotted Flycatcher (*Muscicapa striata*) along with a range of other birds;
- White Helleborine (*Cephalanthera damasonium*) amongst a few other flowering plants including other orchids such as the Man Orchid (*Aceras anthropophorum*) and Musk Orchid (*Herminium monorchis*);
- Butterflies such as the Small Heath (*Coenonympha pamphilus*), Small Blue (*Cupido minimus*) and Dingy Skipper (*Erynnis tages*);
- Depressed river mussel (*Pseudanodonta complanata*);
- Large Garden Bumble Bee (*Bombus ruderatus*);
- Slow Worm (*Anguis fragilis*) and Common Lizard (*Zootoca vivipara*); and
- Water Vole (*Arvicola amphibius*), Hedgehog (*Erinaceus europaeus*) and Brown Hares (*Lepus europaeus*).

## Habitats

- Lowland dry acid grassland;
- Cereal field margins;
- Floodplain grazing marsh;
- Hedgerows;
- Lowland beech and yew woodland;
- Lowland calcareous grassland;
- Lowland fens;

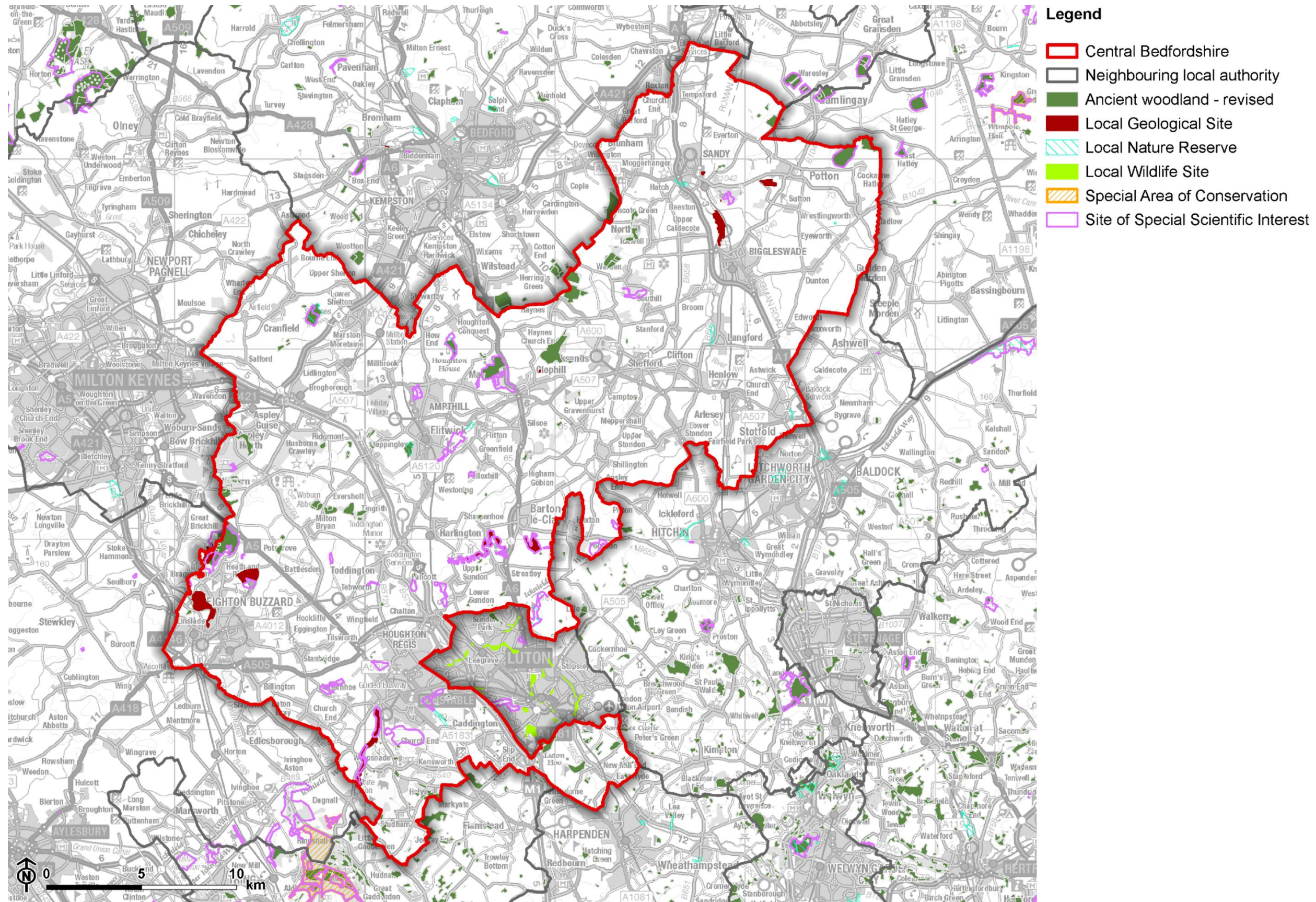
- Lowland heathland;
- Lowland meadows;
- Lowland mixed deciduous woodland;
- Open mosaic habitats on previously developed land;
- Ponds;
- Purple moor grass and rush pastures;
- Reedbeds;
- Rivers;
- Traditional orchards;
- Wet woodland; and
- Wood-pasture and parkland.

**3.16** Road verges also contain habitats of principal importance. There are 20 Road Verge Nature Reserves within Central Bedfordshire, of which nine are within or adjacent to a SSSI.

## Woodland

**3.17** In the monitoring year 2022/23, a further 119.28ha of new woodland area was created in the Forest of Marston Vale. Within Central Bedfordshire, this was centred around 22.64ha of new woodland on farmland (owned by Central Bedfordshire Council) at Beeston. In total 33,030 trees were planted. A further 13.75ha of new woodland was planted to complete the final phase of “Queens Wood”, north of Ampthill. Other sites planted within Central Bedfordshire totalled 25.90ha across 10 sites, bringing the total to 62.29ha for the year with 79,463 trees planted. All these projects were supported under the ‘Trees for Climate’ programme, a Defra-sponsored programme to accelerate woodland creation activity within the Forest of Marston Vale and other Community Forests up until April 2025 **[See reference 33]**.

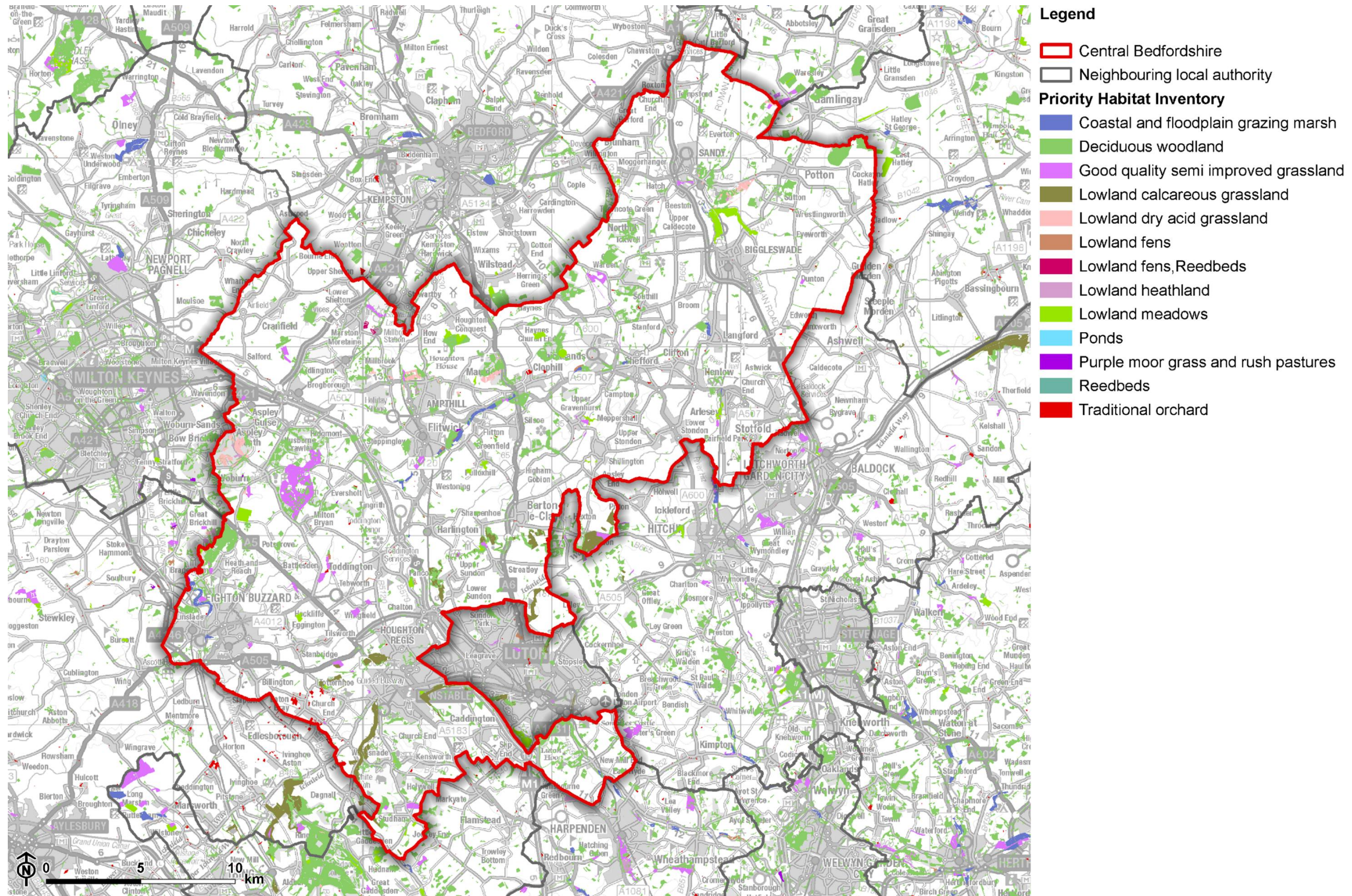
Figure 3.1: Designated biodiversity and geodiversity assets



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Figure 3.2: Priority Habitat Inventory



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 on behalf of Cumbria Wildlife Trust (CC-BY 4.0)

## Key issues

- The need to protect and enhance the nationally and locally designated sites for nature conservation and geodiversity that are present within Central Bedfordshire, as well as a range of important habitats and species.
- The need to protect and enhance important ecological corridors within Central Bedfordshire and the Greensand Ridge NIA, as well as into the surrounding LAs.
- Habitat fragmentation is an issue, with isolated areas surrounded by agricultural land, development and transport routes.
- Some SSSIs are in unfavourable condition.

## Evolution without the plan

**3.18** Development will still come forward without the new Local Plan and will need to be in line with current national and local policies and guidance in relation to the protection of biodiversity and geodiversity, including the national requirement for 10% biodiversity net gain. The new Local Plan gives the council the opportunity to more effectively coordinate development and direct it towards those areas that are potentially less vulnerable. It also provides an opportunity to consider and address potential strategic cumulative effects on biodiversity that may not be taken into account at a lower level of plan-making, although it is noted that policies in the adopted Local Plan would still apply. Development could be directed away from important ecological corridors or perhaps help to improve habitat connectivity, not only within Central Bedfordshire but also the surrounding areas.

## Population and human health

**3.19** This topic explores the demographics of Central Bedfordshire and the types of settlement that exist, including the levels of service provision and cultural assets. This topic also explores the health of residents within Central Bedfordshire, as well as existing inequalities and areas of deprivation. It also identifies the types of leisure and recreational facilities available and how the built environment currently contributes to encouraging healthy and active lifestyles.

## Population

**3.20** The population of Central Bedfordshire has increased by 15.7% since 2011, from 254,400 to 294,200 in 2021. This level of growth is higher than the overall

increase for England (6.6%) and the East of England (8.3%). Central Bedfordshire's population growth may be fuelled by a variety of factors. Central Bedfordshire 2050 [\[See reference 34\]](#) notes that Central Bedfordshire offers a combination of career opportunities within a thriving knowledge economy, with affordable housing, a high standard of living and an excellent quality of life. With lower costs and its proximity to London and major transport links, Central Bedfordshire makes for an appealing location for commuters. Nearby Bedford and Milton Keynes have seen their populations increase by 17.7% and 15.3% respectively, while other neighbouring areas such as St Albans and North Hertfordshire have seen smaller increases of 5.4% and 4.8% respectively [\[See reference 35\]](#).

**3.21** The population of Central Bedfordshire is predicted to increase by a further 15.5% from 2018 to 2043, to a total of 327,657 [\[See reference 36\]](#). This is greater than the predicted population growth nationally, which is predicted to increase by only 10.3% over the same period [\[See reference 37\]](#).

**3.22** Table 3.3 below shows how population increases in Central Bedfordshire since 2011 have compared to those for England as a whole, by age category.

**Table 3.3: Population increases between 2011 and 2021**

Age Group	Increase in Central Bedfordshire	Increase in England
0-15	16.7%	5.0%
15-64	11.5%	3.6%
65+	32.6%	20.1%

**3.23** There is predicted to be a further 56.6% increase between 2018 and 2043 in the number of people aged 65 and over in Central Bedfordshire, compared to a 0.04% decrease in people aged 0 to 14 and an increase of 8.2% in people aged 16 to 64 [\[See reference 38\]](#). This is again greater than the predicted growth nationally over the same time period for the age groups 16 to 64 and 65 and over (3.9% increase and 44.6% increase respectively); however it is expected that there will be a larger decrease in the age group 0 to 14 nationally (1.5%). Central Bedfordshire's population trajectory will determine both its supply and demand for labour in the future. The current data suggests that the well-reported trend of an ageing population is firmly applicable to Central Bedfordshire, despite its strong growth across age cohorts.

## Ethnicity

**3.24** According to the 2021 Census, the majority of the population in Central Bedfordshire (89%) was born in the UK with only a small proportion (1.1%) being a resident in the UK for 2-5 years [See reference 39]. This makes Central Bedfordshire less culturally diverse than England as a whole, as well as a number of surrounding local authorities. For example, in Luton Borough (which is particularly diverse), 45.1% of the population identify themselves as ‘White’ with the remaining 54.9% of the population identifying as ‘Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh’, ‘Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African’, ‘Mixed or multiple ethnic groups’ or from any other ethnic group [See reference 40]. It should be noted that the towns of Dunstable and Houghton Regis are more ethnically diverse when compared to Central Bedfordshire as a whole, perhaps reflecting their proximity to Luton. Table 3.4 below presents the ethnic group identities of the populations of Central Bedfordshire, Dunstable and Houghton Regis for comparison, based on data from the 2021 Census.

**Table 3.4: Ethnic group identity in Central Bedfordshire, Dunstable and Houghton Regis (2021)**

Ethnic Group Identity	Central Bedfordshire Population	Dunstable Population [See reference 41]	Houghton Regis Population [See reference 42]
White	90.2%	84.0%	80.8%
Asian, Asian British or Asian Welsh	3.5%	6.3%	5.4%
Black, Black British, Black Welsh, Caribbean or African	2.4%	4.7%	7.5%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	3%	3.5%	4.8%
Other ethnic group	0.8%	1.4%	1.6%

**3.25** In 2021, 0.1% of the population within Central Bedfordshire identified themselves as a Gypsy or Irish Traveller. This is slightly lower than the England and Wales average of 0.12% [See reference 43]. Despite this, there are currently up to 45 Gypsy and Traveller sites and around eight Travelling Showpeople sites within Central Bedfordshire – one of the highest concentrations in England. Four of these

are public sites while the remaining sites are privately owned. These sites are often family-run and a part of the community in which they are situated [See reference 44].

## Housing

**3.26** During the period from 1 April 2015 to 31 December 2023, a total of 19,024 (net) homes were completed and released within Central Bedfordshire. This is a surplus of 1,808 dwellings when assessed against what was needed to be provided during that period [See reference 45]. In the period 2022-2023, 2,314 (net) new dwellings were built [See reference 46].

**3.27** The Local Plan mandates that all new housing developments provide a mix of housing types, tenures, and sizes to meet the needs of all sections of the community. In 2022-2023, there was a relatively high number of one-bedroom completions, despite the demolition of 33 one-bedroom dwellings at Red House Court, which was an extra care supported housing facility located in the centre of Houghton Regis. This demolition made way for Phase 2 of All Saints View, which is an independent living scheme for people aged 55 and over which comprises 168 one and two-bedroom apartments for rent, shared ownership and outright purchase [See reference 47]. Developments at Sorrel Way, Biggleswade and Grove Park, Dunstable also accounted for many of the one-bedroom completions.

**3.28** In the period 2022-2023, a total of 1,430 homes with three or more bedrooms were completed (see Table 3.5), representing 62% of the total number of homes finished. This indicates that family homes remain in the highest demand [See reference 48].

**Table 3.5: Housing mix net completions 2022/23**

Tenure	1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4-bed	5-bed	6+ bed	Total
Affordable	183	288	191	18	1	0	681
Private	154	259	673	490	56	1	1,633
Total	337	547	864	508	57	1	2,314

**3.29** According to the council's Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) (2017), Central Bedfordshire requires 405 affordable housing units annually, amounting to a total of 8,100 units over the 2015-2035 period. As illustrated by Table 3.6, affordable housing delivery has surpassed the SHMA requirement every year since 2016/17. Central Bedfordshire Council has commissioned a Housing and Economic Development Needs Assessment (HEDNA), which will be published in the

near future to inform the new Local Plan. The baseline information in future iterations of the SEA will reflect the HEDNA when it is available.

**Table 3.6: Affordable housing completions (net)**

Year	Total Dwelling Completions	Eligible Completions	Total Affordable Completions	Average S106 Expected Completions*	Total Affordable
2015/16	1,626	1,465	362	22.9%	24.7%
2016/17	1,773	1,595	496	22.6%	31.1%
2017/18	2,103	1,843	429	28.2%	23.3%
2018/19	2,102	1,864	535	27.5%	28.7%
2019/20	2,622	2,394	693	28.4%	28.9%
2020/21	2,135	1,851	563	29.6%	30.4%
2021/22	2,422	2,257	555	27.1%	24.6%
2022/23	2,314	2,123	681	30.6%	32.1%

\* While the Local Plan Policy (H4) outlines that 30% of all eligible sites are required to be brought forward as affordable housing, S106 agreements sometimes stipulate a lower than 30% provision for affordable housing. This could be as a result of viability assessments (that have been independently verified) or if the S106 agreement was created prior to the current Local Plan requirements. Therefore, the expected percentage of affordable housing completions have been included as outlined in the S106 agreements, so that it is possible to identify any additionality or decrease in affordable housing completions when compared to S106 requirements. The expected percentage of completions has been calculated by taking an average of the S106 affordable housing requirements from each development that has delivered affordable housing completions during the relevant financial year.

**3.30** In 2022/23, there was a notable achievement in delivering 100% affordable housing schemes through various registered providers. This included two new schemes in Houghton Regis, and one each in Shefford, Biggleswade, and Dunstable. These 100% affordable housing provisions exceed the requirements of the Local Plan policy, addressing the identified needs of Central Bedfordshire [\[See reference 49\]](#).

**3.31** As of the 2021 census, there were around 120,760 households in Central Bedfordshire [\[See reference 50\]](#) and this is expected to rise to approximately 145,000 by 2041 (equating to an average increase of around 1,000 households per annum) [\[See reference 51\]](#). The predominant tenure is home ownership, accounting for 73% of the housing stock (including owned outright, owned with mortgage and shared ownership). Social housing and private renting are equally split, accounting for 13.3% and 13.7% of households respectively [\[See reference 52\]](#). Although the average wage in Central Bedfordshire (approximately £38,500 in 2023) is higher than the national average (approximately £30,000 in England) [\[See reference 53\]](#), when compared to the average house price in Central Bedfordshire (indicated by the UK House Price Index (HPI)) of £374,519 [\[See reference 54\]](#), the affordability of housing is becoming a critical issue in the area and access to the housing ladder may be unattainable for many. As of April 2024, the average house price in the UK is £281,373. Property prices have risen by 0.3% compared to the previous month and by 1.1% compared to the previous year [\[See reference 55\]](#).

## Access to services

**3.32** Services and facilities include hospitals and GPs, recreational resources, food retailers, employment and education centres and other aspects of social infrastructure, such as community centres and places of worship. Good and equitable accessibility and the provision of sufficient community facilities is a vital part of development's role in improving the health and well-being of a community.

**3.33** The most recent Department for Transport 'journey time statistics' [\[See reference 56\]](#) demonstrate the average journey time taken to reach the nearest key services (employment centres, primary and secondary schools, further education, GPs, hospitals, food stores and town centres) across local authorities. As shown in Table 3.7 below, the time taken to reach key services by public transport/walking, cycling and car is slightly faster in Central Bedfordshire than the regional average. However, compared to averages for England, access is less good across all modes of transport, particularly walking.

**Table 3.7: Average journey times to key services**

Mode of Travel	Central Bedfordshire	East of England	England
Public transport/ walking	19.6 minutes	20.7 minutes	17.9 minutes
Cycling	18.3 minutes	18.6 minutes	15.6 minutes
Car	11.1 minutes	11.3 minutes	10.3 minutes
Walking	35.7 minutes	34.0 minutes	28.0 minutes

## Access to green space

**3.34** There are over 2,000 hectares (4,938 acres) of greenspace in Central Bedfordshire managed or designated as country parks, woodlands, nature reserves, commons or village greens. Over half of these sites (1,091 hectares, 2,694 acres) are owned or managed by Central Bedfordshire Council. The remaining green space is owned and managed by a wide range of public bodies, Trusts and Town and Parish Council's [\[See reference 57\]](#).

**3.35** There are 58 sites owned or managed by the council including 'strategic' country parks such as Dunstable Downs and Rushmere Country Park; heritage sites such as Clophill Church, Segenhoe Church, Someries Castle and Swiss Garden, which is leased from the Shuttleworth Trust; large woodlands such as Marston Thrift and Linslade Wood; riverbanks; chalk grassland hills and community greenspaces [\[See reference 58\]](#).

**3.36** Six Parks and open spaces within Central Bedfordshire received awards in 2022. Houghton Hall Park and Rushmere Country Park were given the Green Flag Award. Flitton Moor, Linslade Wood, Studham Common and Tiddenfoot Waterside Park all received the Green Flag Community Award [\[See reference 59\]](#).

**3.37** Further to this, Central Bedfordshire has designated seven new open spaces as SANGs, to mitigate the impact of development in parts of southern Central Bedfordshire on the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC.

## Crime

**3.38** In the year ending December 2023, it was reported that the crime rate in Central Bedfordshire was lower than the average crime rate across neighbouring areas [\[See reference 60\]](#). The rate of police-recorded crimes per 1,000 population was 55.27 in

Central Bedfordshire, compared to 79.69 in Bedford and 88 in Luton [See reference 61]. The most common offence in Central Bedfordshire is violent crime, which has seen an increasing number of instances since April 2013 [See reference 62]. There have been no significant variations in the total number of crimes reported over the past nine years; however, there was a peak in crimes reported in 2018 [See reference 63]. The wards with the highest number of reports in November 2019 were Leighton Buzzard South, Dunstable-Ickniel, Biggleswade South and Dunstable-Northfields [See reference 64].

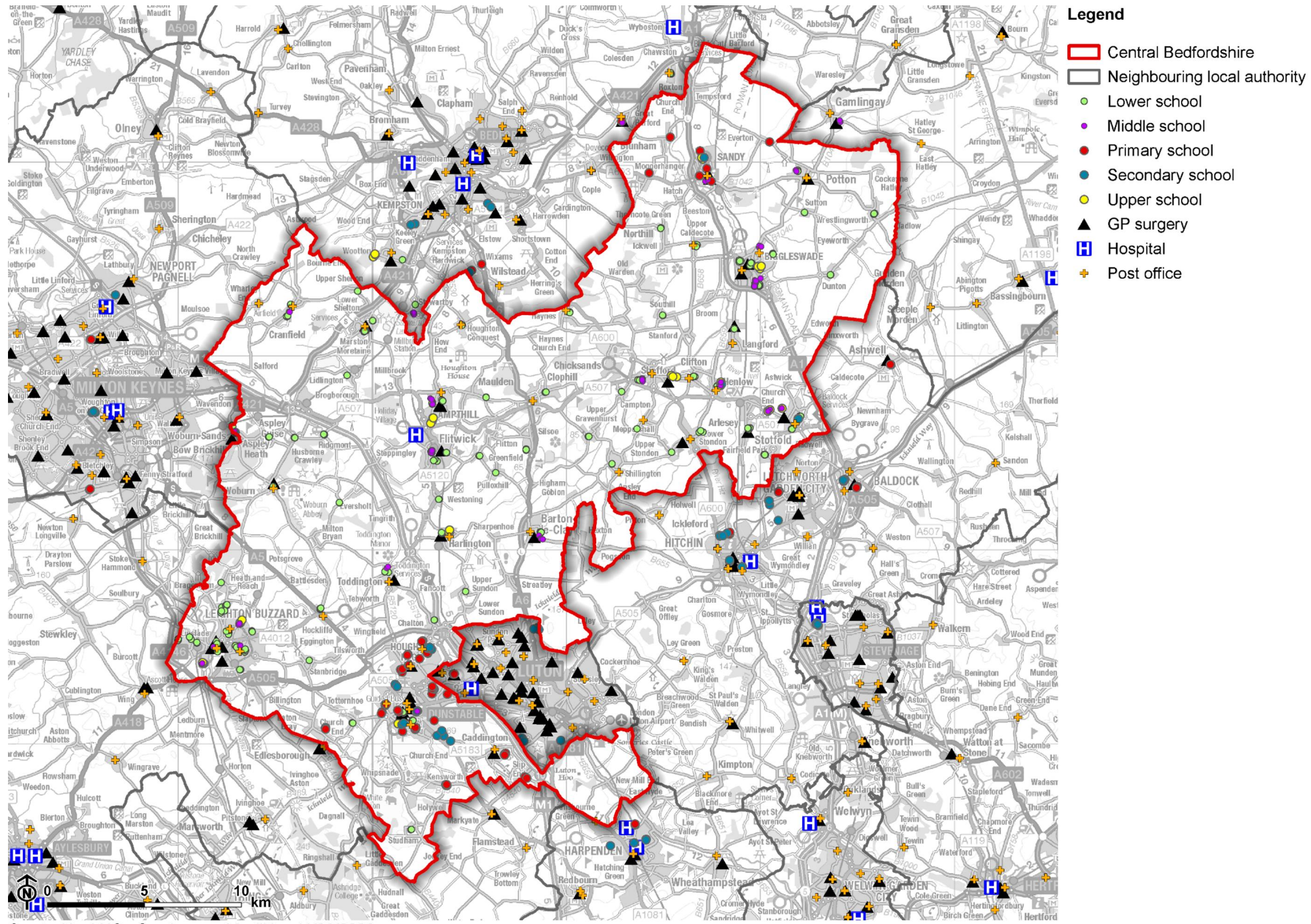
## Communities

**3.39** The largest towns in Central Bedfordshire are Leighton-Linslade (population of 42,573) and Dunstable (population of 40,364). These are followed by Biggleswade (21,673), Houghton Regis (19,597) [See reference 65], Flitwick (13,241) and Sandy (12,563) [See reference 66]. While recognised as towns and communities in their own right, Dunstable and Houghton Regis are connected to the existing settlement and infrastructure of each other as well as to Luton. There are also a number of smaller towns and many villages spread across Central Bedfordshire.

**3.40** There are 43 designated neighbourhood plan areas within Central Bedfordshire, of which 18 have been 'made' and form part of the development plan for Central Bedfordshire [See reference 67].

**3.41** The west and south of Central Bedfordshire between Milton Keynes and Luton is largely designated as Green Belt. The majority of the land surrounding Caddington, Slip End, Luton, Barton-le-Clay, Flitwick and Ampthill, Westoning, Harlington, Toddington, Leighton Buzzard and Heath and Reach is designated Green Belt [See reference 68]. Within the Green Belt, development will be expected to minimise the effects of urban sprawl while meeting the needs of local communities [See reference 69]. The Green Belt also has connotations for landscape character, considered separately within the landscape section below.

Figure 3.3: Services and facilities in Central Bedfordshire



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## Health and wellbeing

**3.42** The health of people in Central Bedfordshire is generally better than the national average in England, as shown in Table 3.8 below.

**Table 3.8: Perceptions of health in Central Bedfordshire (2021 Census)**

Perceived Levels of Health	Central Bedfordshire	England
Very good	49.3%	47.5%
Good	34.9%	34.2%
Fair	11.7%	13.0%
Bad	3.1%	4.1%
Very Bad	0.9%	1.2%

**3.43** Life expectancy for men in Central Bedfordshire is 80.2 years, compared to the England average of 79.3 years, while the life expectancy for women is 84.2 years, compared to the England average of 83.2 years [See reference 70]. However, male healthy life expectancy varies significantly across Central Bedfordshire, with a range of 8.4 years. The lowest male healthy life expectancy is in Houghton Hall ward at 64.5 years, and the highest is in Barton-le-Clay ward at 72.9 years, representing two of the most and least deprived areas in the region. On average, a male in Central Bedfordshire can expect to live 12.8 years in poor health. Similarly, female healthy life expectancy also shows wide variation, with a range of 8.9 years. The lowest female healthy life expectancy is also in Houghton Hall ward at 62 years, and the highest is in Aspley and Woburn ward at 70.9 years. Women in Central Bedfordshire can expect to live an average of 17.6 years in poor health [See reference 71].

**3.44** The rate of people killed and seriously injured on England's roads (49.9 people per 100,000) and the estimated dementia diagnosis rate (57% recorded diagnoses of dementia as a proportion of the estimated number with dementia) are the only health indicators measured within the Public Health England profile that are ranked significantly worse for Central Bedfordshire than the England average [See reference 72]. Rates of mortality for under 75s, mortality from cardiovascular diseases, self-harm, hospital admissions for alcohol-specific and related conditions, infant mortality, childhood obesity, smoking prevalence in adults in routine and manual occupations, homelessness, violent crime, new STI diagnosis and TB, the percentage of smoking during pregnancy, breastfeeding initiation, people in employment and early stage cancer diagnosis are all better in Central Bedfordshire than the national averages for England [See reference 73].

**3.45** Rates of mortality from cancer, suicide, hip fractures, diabetes diagnosis, smoking in all adults, teenage contraception and excess winter deaths, as well as the percentage of physically active adults and adults classed as overweight or obese do not differ significantly in Central Bedfordshire from the national averages for England [\[See reference 74\]](#).

## Deprivation

**3.46** In Central Bedfordshire, 22.5% of the population was income-deprived in 2025. Central Bedfordshire is ranked 134 out of 153 upper-tier local authorities in England for overall deprivation. The more deprived areas of Central Bedfordshire are generally in the south, near the boundary with Luton, including Houghton Regis, Dunstable and Northhill [\[See reference 75\]](#).

**3.47** There are also pockets of higher deprivation within Sandy, Flitwick and Leighton Buzzard. Four Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) within Central Bedfordshire are ranked within the 10-20% most deprived areas in England: Dunstable South, Sandy, Houghton Regis East and Flitwick. A further eight LSOAs fall within the 20-30% most deprived areas nationally: Eaton Bray/Heath and Reach, Leighton Buzzard North, Houghton Regis East, Dunstable Central/East/North, Dunstable North and Sandy [\[See reference 76\]](#).

**3.48** The council has investigated the domains (particular aspects) of deprivation and has identified particular localised issues as follows [\[See reference 77\]](#):

- Education, skills and training: A particular issue in five Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs) in parts of Dunstable, Houghton Regis, Heath and Reach, Northhill, and Sandy.
- Crime and disorder: A particular issue in three LSOAs in parts of Dunstable, Houghton Regis, and Heath and Reach.
- Barriers to housing and access to services: A particular issue in ten LSOAs in parts of Eaton Bray, Heath and Reach, Northhill, Potton, Arlesey and Fairfield, Houghton Conquest and Haynes, Meppershall and Shillington, Meppershall and Shillington, Caddington, and Cranfield & Marston Moretaine wards.
- Income: A particular issue in part of Dunstable, and Houghton Regis wards.
- Children: Two LSOAs, in parts of Dunstable and Houghton Regis, were among the worst 10% areas in Central Bedfordshire for deprivation affecting children.

- Older people: Three LSOAs, in parts of Biggleswade, Dunstable and Houghton Regis were among the 10% worst areas in Central Bedfordshire for deprivation affecting older people.

## Fuel poverty

**3.49** Fuel poverty in England is measured using the Low Income Low Energy Efficiency (LILEE) fuel poverty metric. The LILEE indicator considers a household to be fuel poor if:

- It is living in a property with an energy efficiency rating of band D, E, F or G; and
- Its disposable income (income after housing costs (AHC) and energy needs) would be below the poverty line.

**3.50** In Central Bedfordshire, there were 10,445 (8.5%) households in 2022 that were considered to be fuel poor [See reference 78]. This is lower than the overall level of fuel poverty in England (13.1%) and the East of England (10%). The lowest levels of fuel poverty were in the South East (9.7%), East (10.0%) and London (10.4%) [See reference 79].

## Access to open space and leisure facilities

**3.51** Recreational open spaces play a significant role in promoting and delivering health and wellbeing, supporting healthy living and preventing illness through exercise and easy access to the countryside. Central Bedfordshire's Recreation and Open Space Strategy notes that 13% of respondents visit urban parks at least once weekly and just a further 18% use facilities at least once a month [See reference 80]. The Strategy also highlights a number of barriers to the use of urban parks across Central Bedfordshire. In part these relate to a lack of time and interest, but also difficulties in accessing these spaces and a lack of local facilities. As a result of population growth, the importance of urban green space will increase, and provision of high-quality open space must keep pace with this growth.

**3.52** The Natural Capital Assessment Report for Central Bedfordshire [See reference 81] analyses how accessible nature sites are to local communities. It found that capacity is highest in areas including Aspley Heath, Cokayne Hatley, Mauldon Wood and Stewartby Lake/Millennium Country Park. Access is generally poorest in more rural areas, where public footpaths provide the only access in predominantly agricultural areas.

**3.53** There are six leisure centres within Central Bedfordshire, located at Dunstable, Flitwick, Houghton Regis, Sandy, Biggleswade and Leighton Buzzard. There is also a range of smaller private and community indoor sports facilities across Central Bedfordshire [See reference 82]. The council identifies over 1,000 hectares of countryside managed for public access, wildlife, biodiversity and habitat; including woodlands, meadows, wetlands, chalk grasslands and moors [See reference 83]. Notable countryside sites are relatively well distributed across the whole of Central Bedfordshire, with a cluster of larger sites located north of Leighton Buzzard [See reference 84]. The north east of Central Bedfordshire around Sandy and Biggleswade has the lowest concentration of countryside sites [See reference 85].

**3.54** In 2019, four national Green Flag Community Awards were awarded at Houghton Hall Park, Linslade Wood, Tiddenfoot Waterside Park and Flitton Moor [See reference 86]. Houghton Hall Park is a 17-hectare urban public park, located centrally within Houghton Regis, which has been awarded a funding bid from the Heritage and Big Lottery Funds 'Parks for People' grant scheme [See reference 87]. Notable countryside recreational sites include [See reference 88]:

- Amphill Park;
- Aspley Woods;
- Dunstable Downs;
- Rushmere Park;
- Sundon Hills Country Park;
- Tiddenfoot Waterside Park;
- The Lodge RSPB Reserve, Sandy; and
- Millennium Country Park – Marston Moretaine.

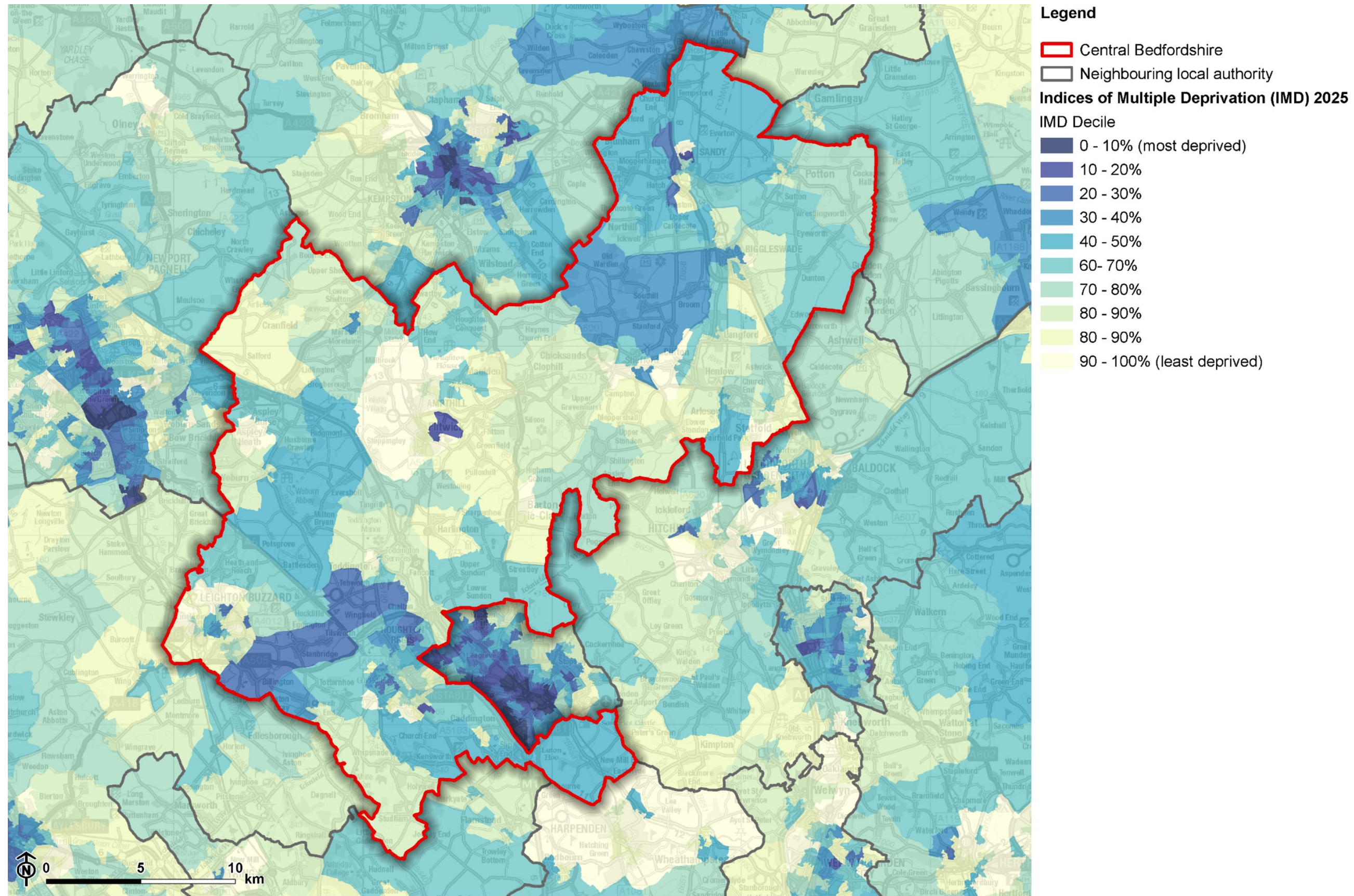
**3.55** In addition to these countryside sites, Central Bedfordshire has a range of amenity, play and recreational open space located through the urban and village areas [See reference 89]. These sites offer a variety of facilities and opportunities close to where people live and work. Central Bedfordshire has a diversity of outdoor sporting venues which offer pitches, courts and greens to facilitate and encourage more formal sporting activities [See reference 90]. In addition to formal clubs, community sports facilities offer both formal and informal sporting opportunities [See reference 91].

**3.56** Central Bedfordshire Council recently finalised the Chilterns Beechwoods Mitigation Strategy and designated seven open spaces as Strategic Alternative Green Spaces (SANGs), to mitigate the impact of development in parts of southern

Central Bedfordshire on the Chilterns Beechwoods Special Area of Conservation (SAC). The SANGs are listed below and each has its own management plan in place [See reference 92]. The SANGs will benefit from a range of improvements including tranquil and safe walking routes, new benches, areas for dogs to be walked off their leads and dedicated car parking. Central Bedfordshire Council intends to confirm a further two natural green spaces shortly [See reference 93].

- Sundon Hills Country Park;
- Linslade Wood;
- Cottage Bottom Fields;
- Studham Common;
- Tiddenfoot;
- South Meadows; and
- Grovebury Quarry.

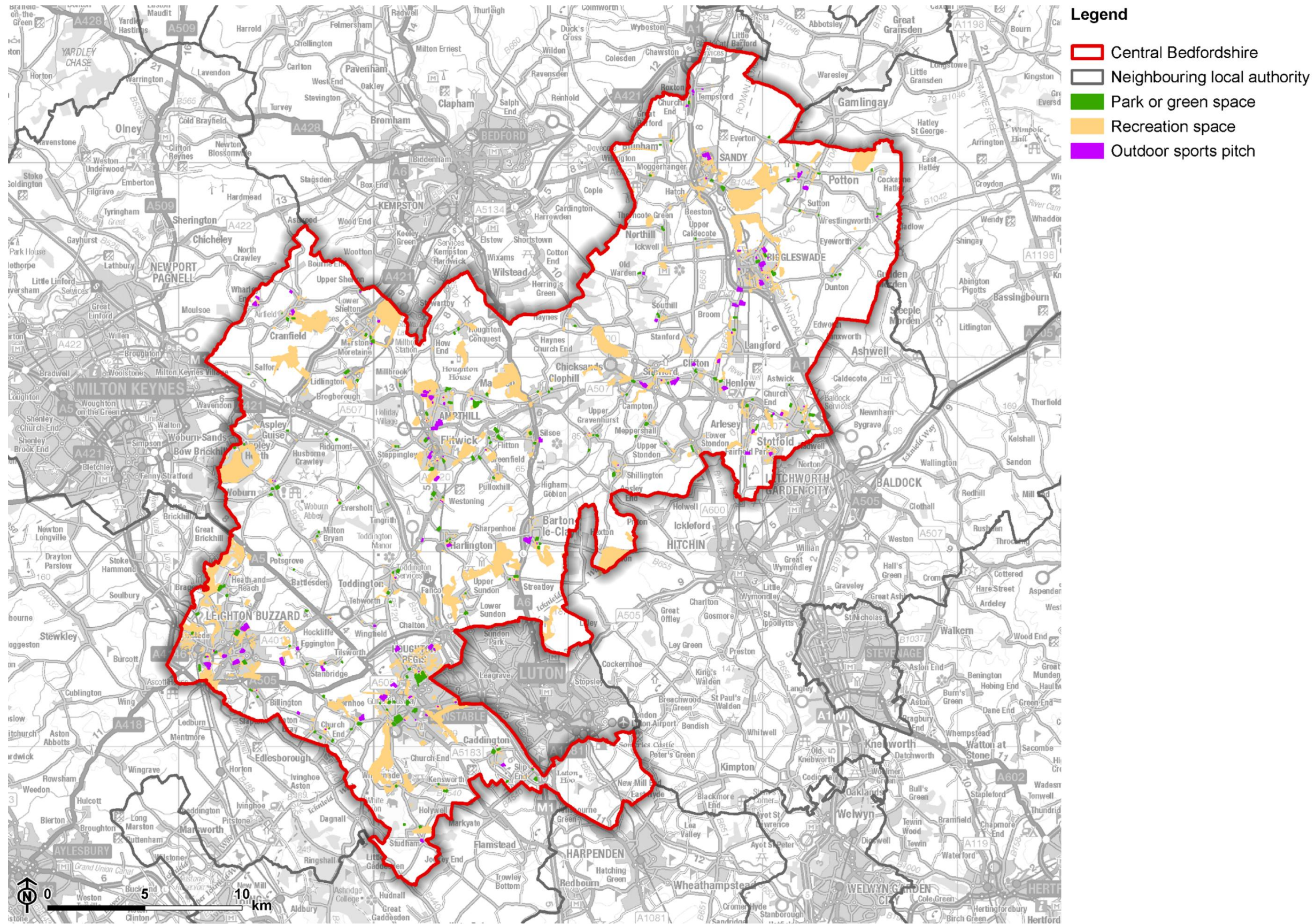
Figure 3.4: Indices of Multiple Deprivation



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Figure 3.5: Recreational space in Central Bedfordshire



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## Key issues

- The population is growing faster than the national average and is increasingly ageing.
- Travel time to services is longer than the national average.
- Despite overall crime levels not being particularly high, levels of violent crime are growing.
- There is a need to maintain the identities of settlements and communities in both rural and urban areas.
- Areas of higher deprivation in the south of the plan area, particularly around the boundary with Luton Borough.
- Relatively poor access to open space in some parts of Central Bedfordshire.
- Increasing rates of deprivation. Notable issues include poorer educational attainment, barriers to housing and services and higher crime rates, many of which affect Dunstable in particular.
- High rates of people killed and seriously injured on Central Bedfordshire's roads.
- High rates of dementia.

## Evolution without the plan

**3.57** Without the new Local Plan, there is likely to be a less co-ordinated approach to the delivery of new employment, housing and strategic infrastructure, as well as social and community infrastructure, and new development is less likely to be delivered in areas where it is needed most. New development without a coordinated approach to infrastructure would hinder sustainable development. It could also make it more difficult to provide for an ageing population and be more likely to result in the loss of identity and sense of place for some of the towns and villages within Central Bedfordshire. Additionally, it could make it more difficult to effectively meet the needs of Gypsies and Travellers and Travelling Showpeople. The new Local Plan provides an opportunity to set out specific and up-to-date policies for particularly sensitive communities that seek to address particular sustainability issues.

**3.58** The new Local Plan is able to provide enhanced protection for green infrastructure networks, ensure that existing spaces are not lost to new development and that new development contributes to the enhancement of assets, as well as seeking to achieve overall connectivity and equality of provision at a strategic scale.

With a wealth of existing green infrastructure and local sporting and recreational areas, new development in Central Bedfordshire can be planned to ensure accessibility and increase opportunities for healthy and active lifestyles. The new Local Plan can also strategically target planning gains at the most deprived areas and thus seek to reduce inequalities. The Local Plan can therefore ensure that the built environment contributes to delivering health benefits and supports healthy, inclusive and active communities. Without a new Local Plan, these outcomes are less likely to be achieved although it is noted that the policies in the adopted Local Plan would still apply.

## Air, water and soils

**3.59** This topic explores air quality within the plan area and the contributors to poor air quality, as well as noise pollution.

### Air quality

**3.60** Historically, the primary air pollution issue in both developed and rapidly industrialising countries has been the high levels of smoke and sulphur dioxide produced by the combustion of sulphur-containing fossil fuels, such as coal, used for domestic and industrial purposes. Today, however, the major threat to clean air comes from traffic emissions. Motor vehicles with petrol and diesel engines release a variety of pollutants, including carbon monoxide (CO), oxides of nitrogen (NO<sub>x</sub>), volatile organic compounds (VOCs) and particulate matter (PM<sub>10</sub>). These emissions increasingly affect urban air quality. Moreover, pollutants from these sources can travel long distances, causing problems far from their origin [\[See reference 94\]](#).

**3.61** Road traffic is very closely linked to air quality and concentrations of air pollutants are particularly high in Central Bedfordshire where the road network is congested [\[See reference 95\]](#). There is one Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) designated for exceedances of Nitrogen Dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) within Central Bedfordshire [\[See reference 96\]](#):

- Sandy – The designated area incorporates 10 metres from the kerbside of both sides of the A1 at the Georgetown exit, then south along the London Road A1 to the Bedford Road junction.

**3.62** Currently Central Bedfordshire uses passive diffusion tubes at 38 sites to monitor nitrogen dioxide [\[See reference 97\]](#).

**3.63** The most recent Central Bedfordshire Air Quality Annual Status Report (2025) highlights that no sites exceeded the Air Quality Objectives in 2024. The highest

annual mean concentration was recorded at Site N20 (32.3µg/m<sup>3</sup>), but since 2022, concentrations have fallen below the Air Quality Objective (AQO) limit of 40µg/m<sup>3</sup> at this site.

## Noise pollution

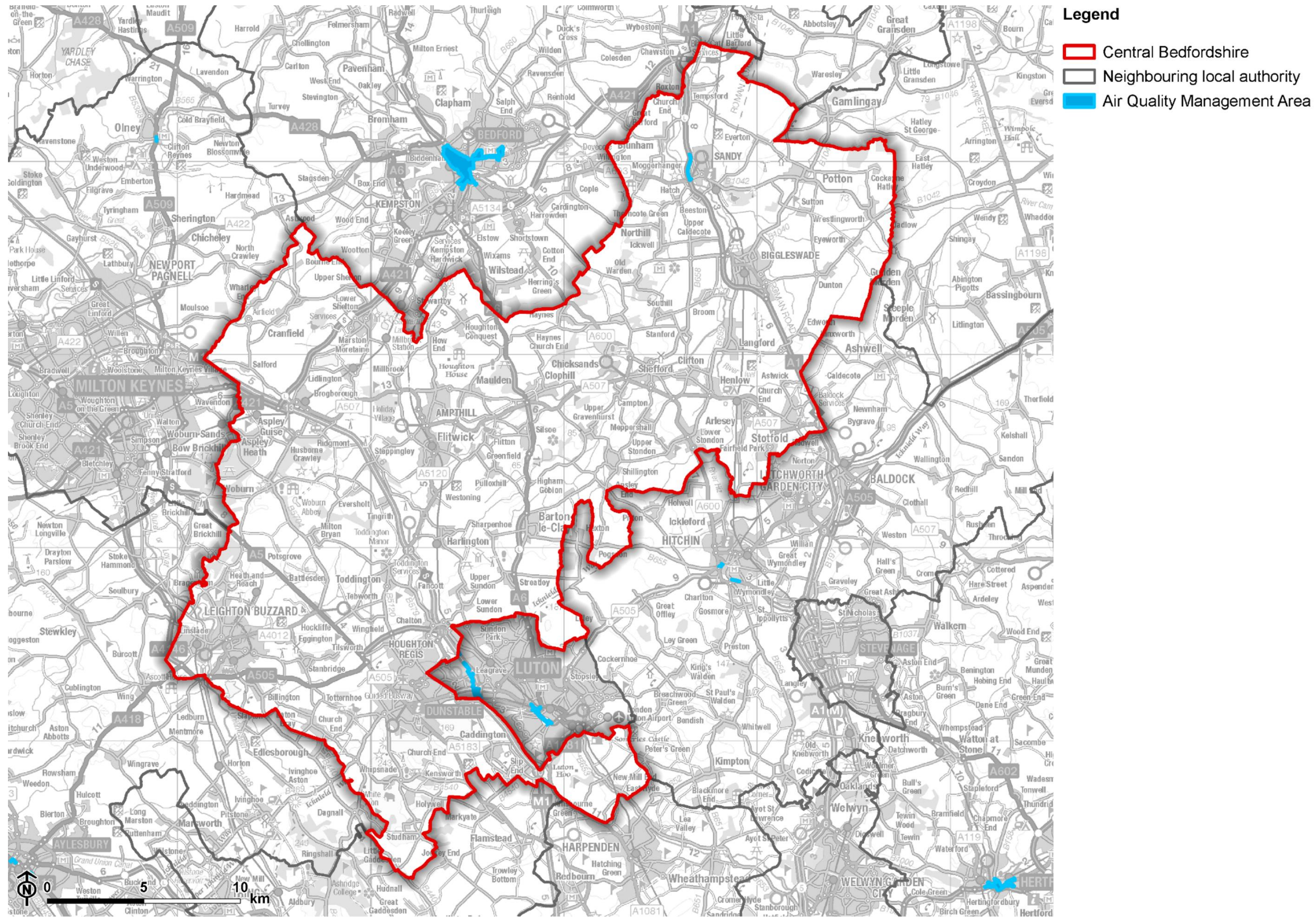
**3.64** Noise is a common problem arising from transport, and studies have shown it can have major negative direct and indirect effects on health and well-being, on quality of life and on wildlife. Exposure to noise can increase stress levels, disrupt communications and disturb sleep. There is scope for transport's noise emissions to be reduced, by cutting the number of cars on the road, low-noise road surfacing, noise barriers, and many other measures [\[See reference 98\]](#).

**3.65** Although the majority of Central Bedfordshire does not experience noise pollution, Dunstable falls within the Luton agglomeration of the government's monitoring regime. Within the Luton/Dunstable agglomeration, over 90,000 people are exposed to daytime road noise of over 55 decibels, and 53,000 to night-time road noise over 50 decibels [\[See reference 99\]](#). This exceeds international standards, according to which "The WHO guidelines... recommend less than 30 A-weighted decibels (dB(A)) in bedrooms during the night for a sleep of good quality" [\[See reference 100\]](#).

## Tranquillity

**3.66** Central Bedfordshire Council recognises the importance of visual and audible tranquillity as a significant asset in rural and urban areas. While there is no definition of tranquillity, the one most used in land use planning is that adopted by the Campaign to Protect Rural England, which defines tranquillity as "the quality of calm experienced in places with mainly natural features and activities, free from disturbance from manmade ones". As outlined in Central Bedfordshire's Tranquillity Strategy [\[See reference 101\]](#), there is a varied pattern of relative tranquillity in the countryside with some pockets of relative tranquillity in urban areas for some of the indicators for assessing relative tranquillity.

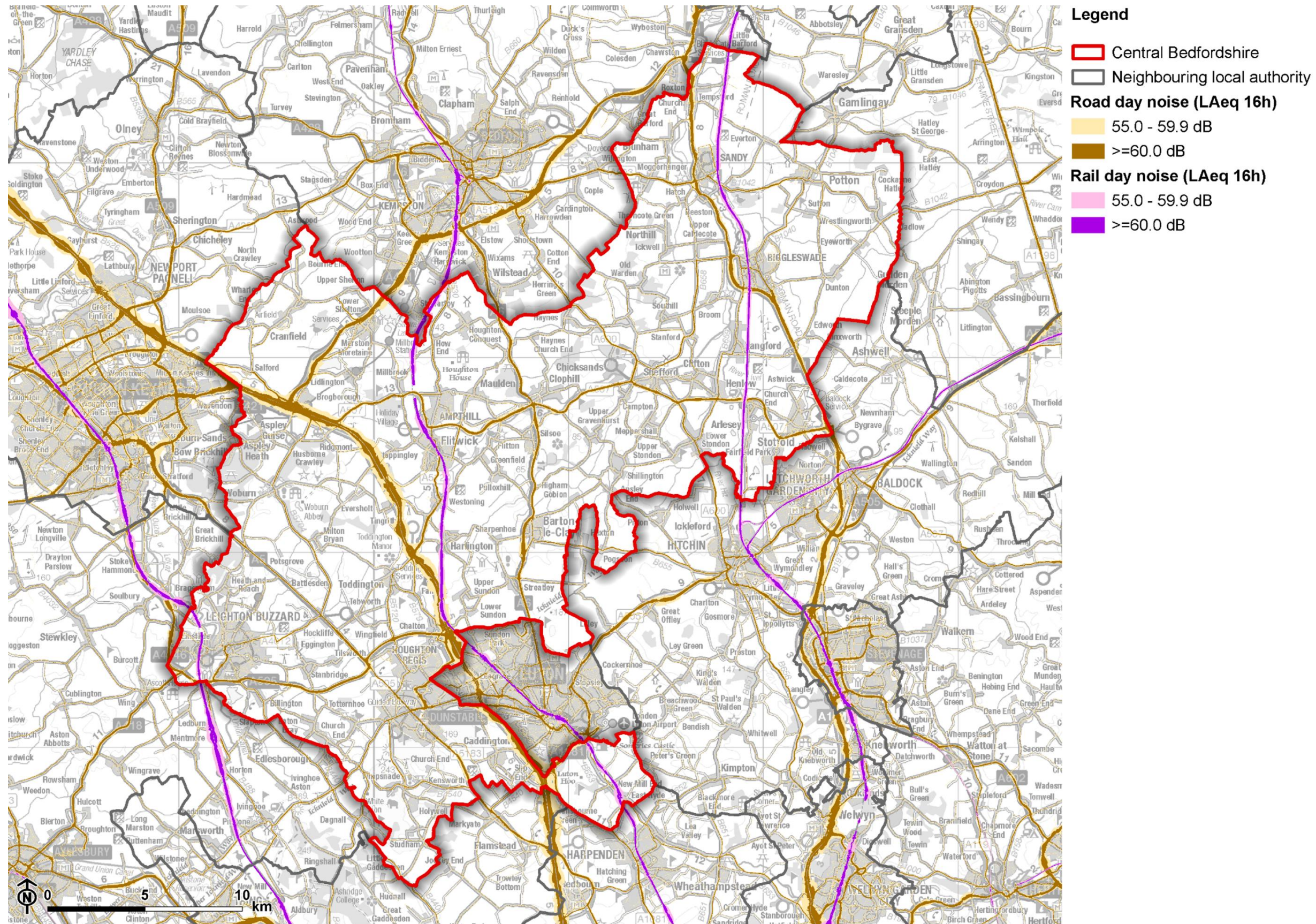
Figure 3.6: Air Quality Management Areas



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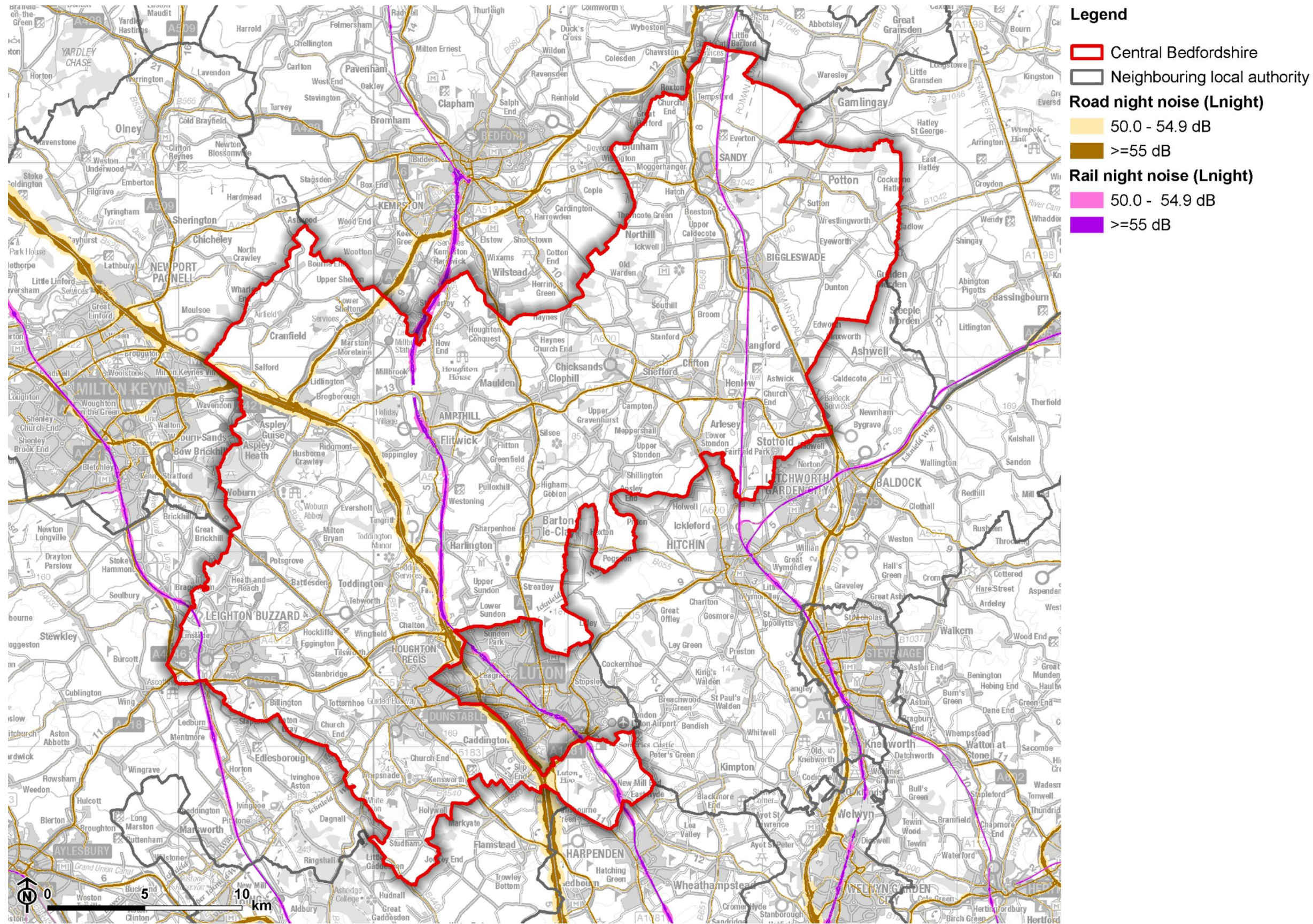
Figure 3.7: Day time noise pollution



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Figure 3.8: Night time noise pollution



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## Water supply

**3.67** The majority of Central Bedfordshire falls within the Ruthamford South Water Resource Zone (WRZ), which is supplied by Anglian Water. A small proportion of Central Bedfordshire to the south falls within the Lee WRZ, which is supplied by Affinity Water, while a very small proportion of Central Bedfordshire to the north falls within the CAM WRZ, which is supplied by Cambridge Water.

**3.68** The Anglian Water Resources Management Plan (WRMP) 2024 [See reference 102] forecasts that between 2025 and 2050, the East of England will face significant challenges, including:

- 38% less water to supply to customers. This stark reduction is driven by:
  - The implementation of further abstraction licence capping across the region.
  - Moving beyond Anglian Water's statutory licence cap obligations, further reducing the amount of water taken from sensitive environments. This long-term vision is known as Anglian Water's environmental destination.
  - Achieving enhanced resilience to drought, building on previous investments to become robust to an extreme 1 in 500 year drought.
  - Adapting to climate change and the impacts of the hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters on the region's water resources.
- An increased demand for water by 2050, with the Anglian region's population expecting to grow by 18% by 2050; that is an additional 911,000 people that will need water supplies. Non-household demand growth has also exceeded historical trends and if higher levels of non-household demand are sustained then further capacity will be required.

**3.69** Central Bedfordshire overlies areas of Secondary and Principal Aquifer as well as unproductive strata [See reference 103]. Principal Aquifers are geological strata that exhibit high permeability and provide a high level of water storage. They may support water supply and/or river base flow on a strategic scale [See reference 104]. Secondary aquifers are often capable of supporting water supplies at a local scale and normally provide an important source of flow to some rivers [See reference 105]. The use of groundwater in the area makes it vulnerable to pollution and a number of licensed abstractions are present across the plan area [See reference 106]. Central Bedfordshire exhibits all groundwater Source Protection Zones (SPZ) [See reference 107].

## Water quality

**3.70** It is also recognised within the Water Cycle Study [\[See reference 108\]](#) that one of the most likely effects of climate change to impact upon Central Bedfordshire will be a deterioration of water quality as a result of reduced river flows decreasing the dilution of effluent. Tighter Environment Agency environmental permits may be required to ensure that no deterioration in effluent quality results. The Water Cycle Study assessment also indicates that Bedford, Biggleswade, Clifton, Marston Moretaine, Shillington and Tempsford are all forecast to exceed their permitted dry weather flow as a result of planned growth during the existing Local Plan period. Continued liaison between Central Bedfordshire Council and the water companies, as well as between developers and the water companies, is essential to ensure that additional wastewater treatment capacity is in place in time to accommodate the planned growth and that there will be no detriment to service to customers or to the environment. The Water Cycle Study is due to be updated and once the new version is published, the SEA will be updated to reflect its findings.

**3.71** Central Bedfordshire predominantly falls within the Upper and Bedford Ouse catchment management area, within the Anglian River Basin District [\[See reference 109\]](#), which is itself comprised of five smaller operational catchments [\[See reference 110\]](#). Within Central Bedfordshire, the area to the north and north east of Luton falls within the Ivel catchment, the area to the west of Luton and south east of Milton Keynes falls within the Ouzel and Milton Keynes catchment and the north of Central Bedfordshire to the east of Milton Keynes falls within the Bedford Ouse catchment [\[See reference 111\]](#). A new waterway is proposed to run from the Grand Union Canal at Campbell Park, in Milton Keynes, which will cross the M1 between junctions 13 and 14, run near Brogborough Hill, through Marston Vale, and connect with the river Great Ouse at Kempston. As well as creating regeneration opportunities for local communities to boat, canoe, fish, cycle or walk along its route, it will also provide a strategic connection to the waterways of East Anglia.

**3.72** The overall water quality classification status for the water bodies within said catchments are predominantly moderate [\[See reference 112\]](#). Within these catchments, Harrowden Brook water body is identified to have an overall ecologically bad status and Chicheley Brook, Grafham Water, Leckhampstead Brook, Broughton Brook and Newton Longville Brook water bodies are identified to have an overall ecologically poor status [\[See reference 113\]](#). 11 water bodies are identified within Central Bedfordshire as having an overall good status; Brogborough Lake, Cople Brook, Diddington Brook, Fen Drayton Drain, Sulgrave Brook, Cat Ditch, Flit tributary, Hexton Brook, Ivel (US Henlow), Clipstone Brook Tributary and Eaton Bray Brook [\[See reference 114\]](#).

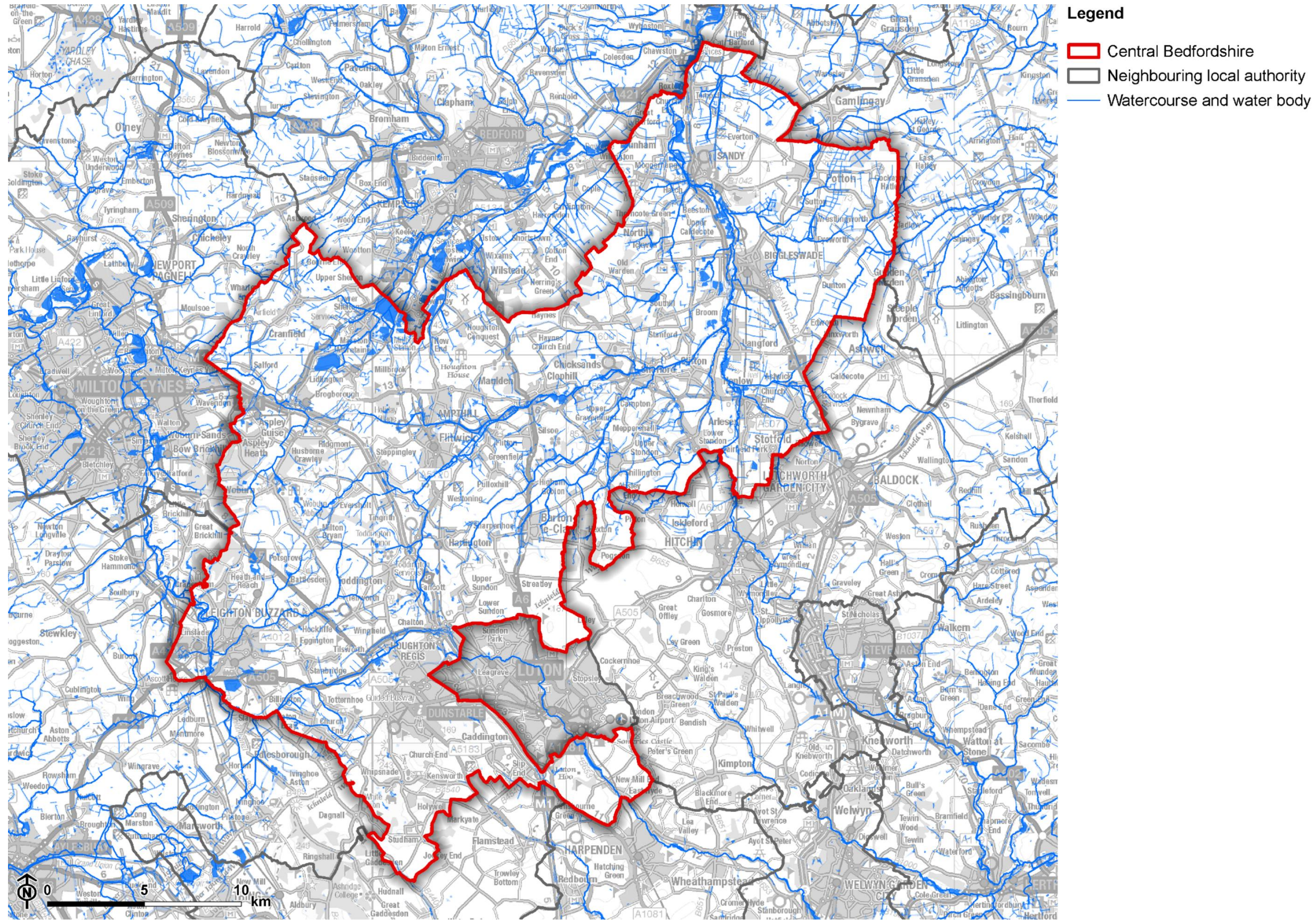
**3.73** The percentage of water bodies within the Great Ouse Bedford, Ivel and Ouzel and Milton Keynes catchments identified as having ‘good’ overall status has steadily decreased since 2013, however some waterbodies have seen improvements over recent years and others have seen a decline [See reference 115]. There are a variety of reasons as to why a waterbody does not achieve good status; however the majority of reasons identified for these catchments are due to the water industry (the reason for 23.9% of cases), including sewage discharge and agriculture; and rural land management activities (the reason for 33.8% of cases), including poor nutrient management, land drainage, poor livestock management and poor soil management [See reference 116]. The majority of Central Bedfordshire is also within surface water Safeguard Zones with associated issues of pesticides in drinking water sources, as well as some zones associated with issues of nitrate, boron and benzo-a-pyrene [See reference 117]. In line with the Water Environment (Water Framework Directive) (England & Wales) Regulations 2017, the Local Plan should seek to prevent deterioration of water quality and ultimately seek to improve water quality in the plan area [See reference 118].

## Flooding

**3.74** Records of historic flooding are spread throughout Central Bedfordshire, the Strategic Flood Risk Assessment (Level 1) sets out the risk across Central Bedfordshire from all sources of flood risk (fluvial, surface water, groundwater, reservoir and sewers). This Study has shown that the most significant sources of flood risk in the study area are fluvial and surface water. There is a greater intensity of reported events to the centre and north east of the area [See reference 119]. It should be noted that the parishes of Ampthill, Arlesey, Clifton, Harlington, Northill, Sandy and Shefford have the greatest density of historical flooding incidences [See reference 120]. Generally historic incidences within these parishes have been attributable to surface water flows, high water levels in land drainage or highway drainage networks (ditches) [See reference 121]. Tempsford and surrounding areas are affected by groundwater.

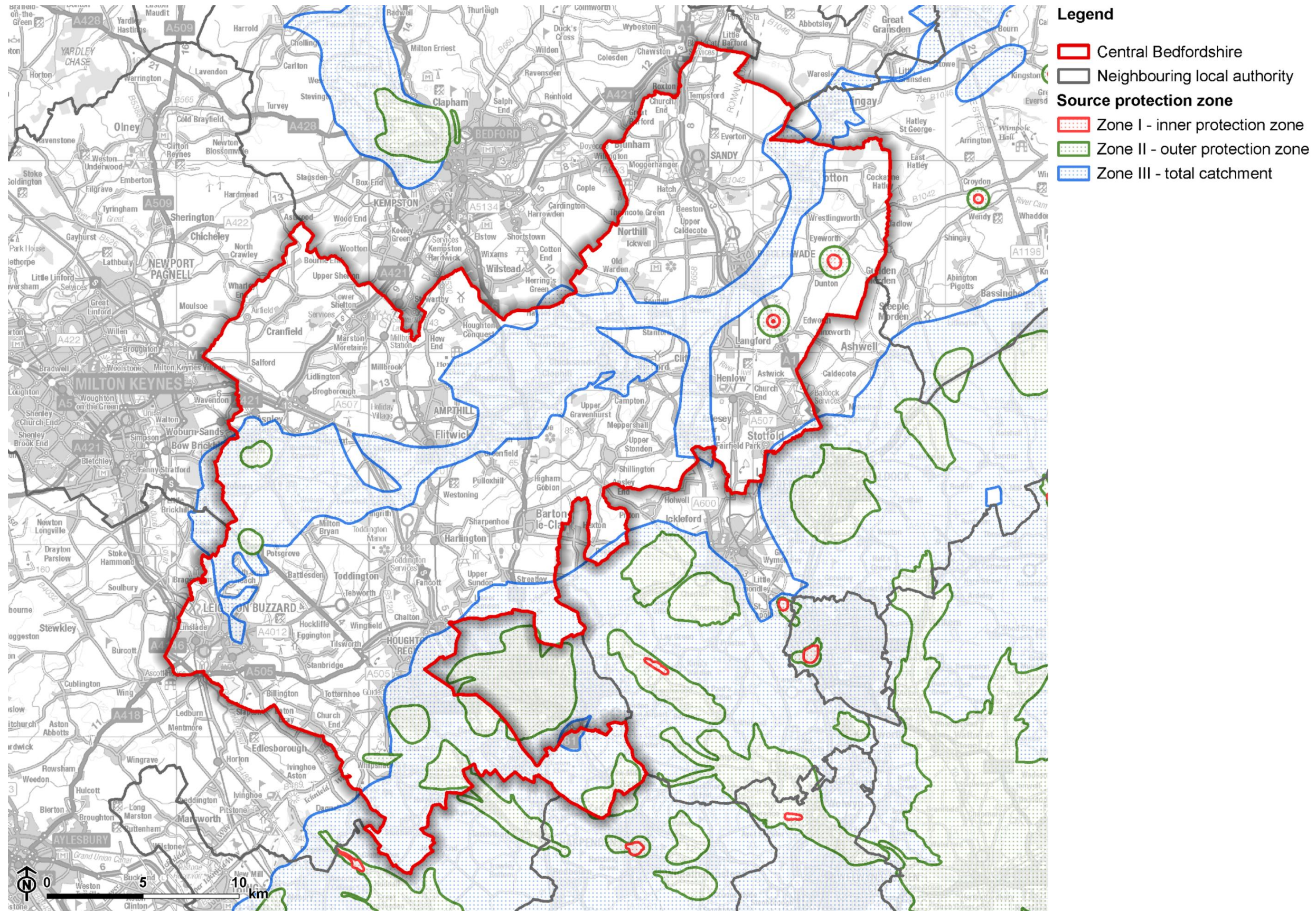
**3.75** The areas of Ampthill, Campton and Chicksands parish and Henlow, each sited close to watercourses which flow eastwards towards the River Ivel, as well as Eaton Bray, are reported to have higher numbers of properties at risk than elsewhere within Central Bedfordshire [See reference 122]. The parishes at greatest risk from surface water flooding are also identified in the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy as Biggleswade, Dunstable, Flitwick, Houghton Regis and Leighton Buzzard [See reference 123]. Central Bedfordshire Council has commissioned a new Strategic Flood Risk Assessment that once published, will inform the SEA.

Figure 3.9: Watercourses in Central Bedfordshire



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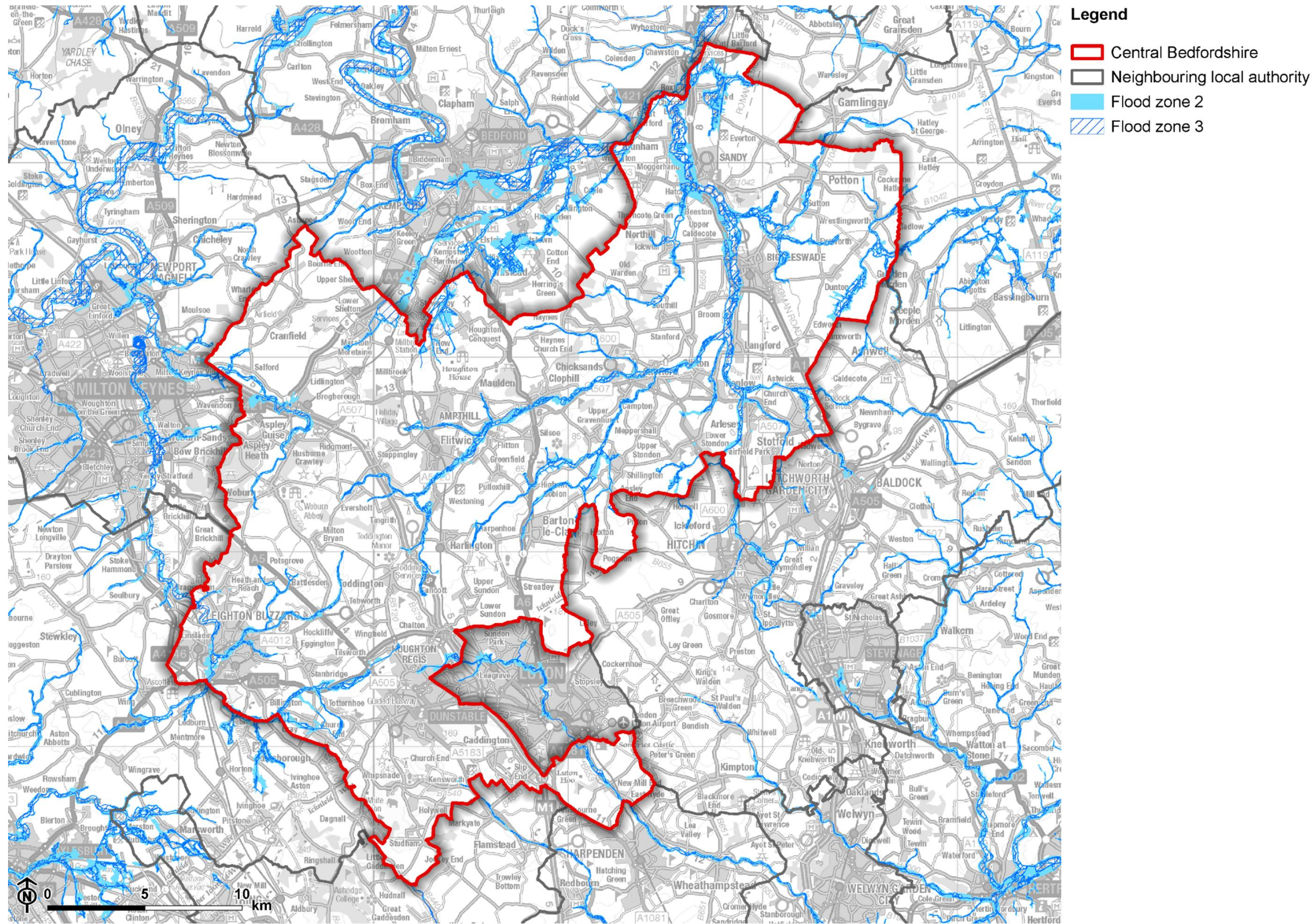
Figure 3.10: Source Protection Zones



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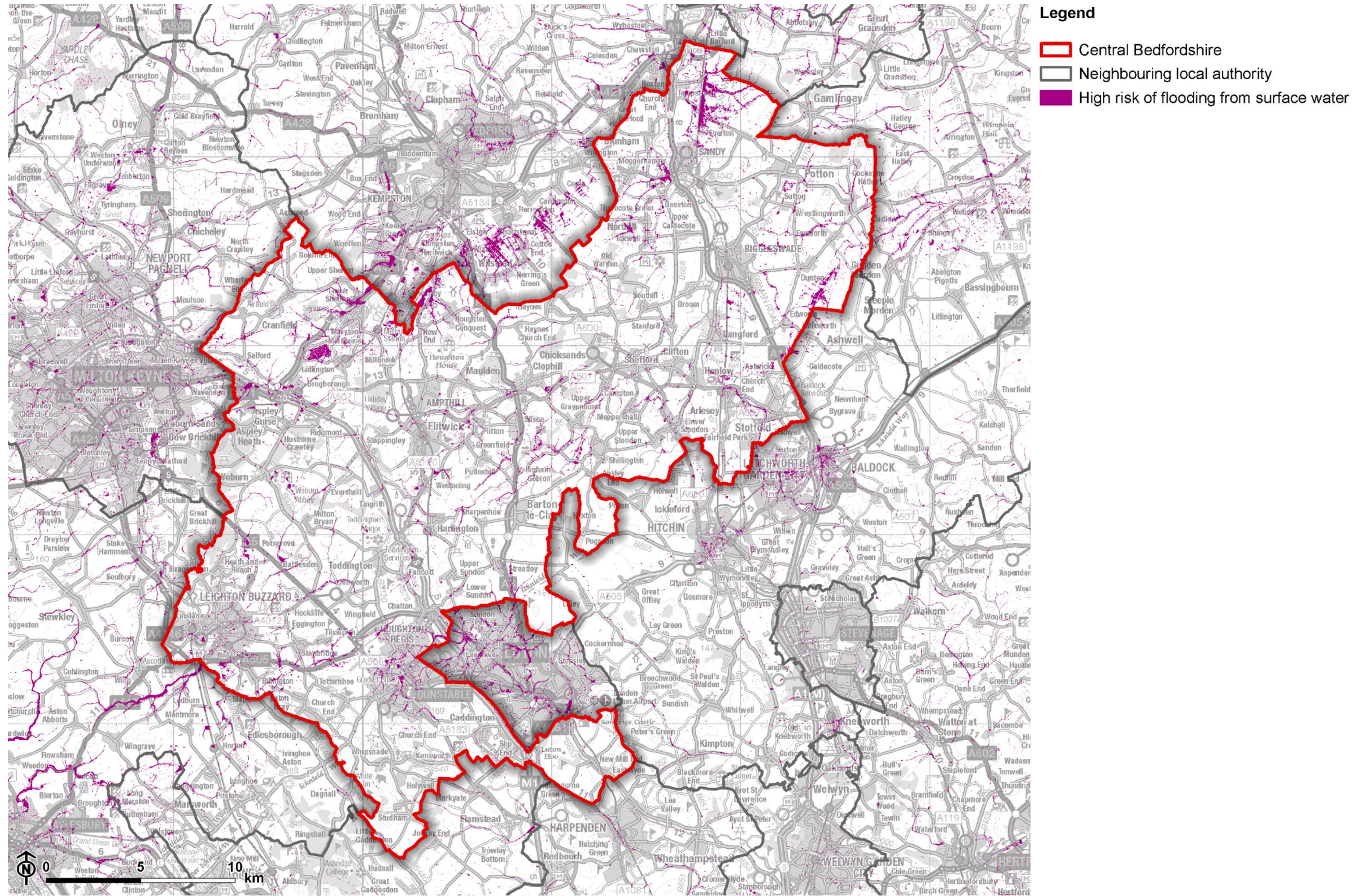
Figure 3.11: Flood risk



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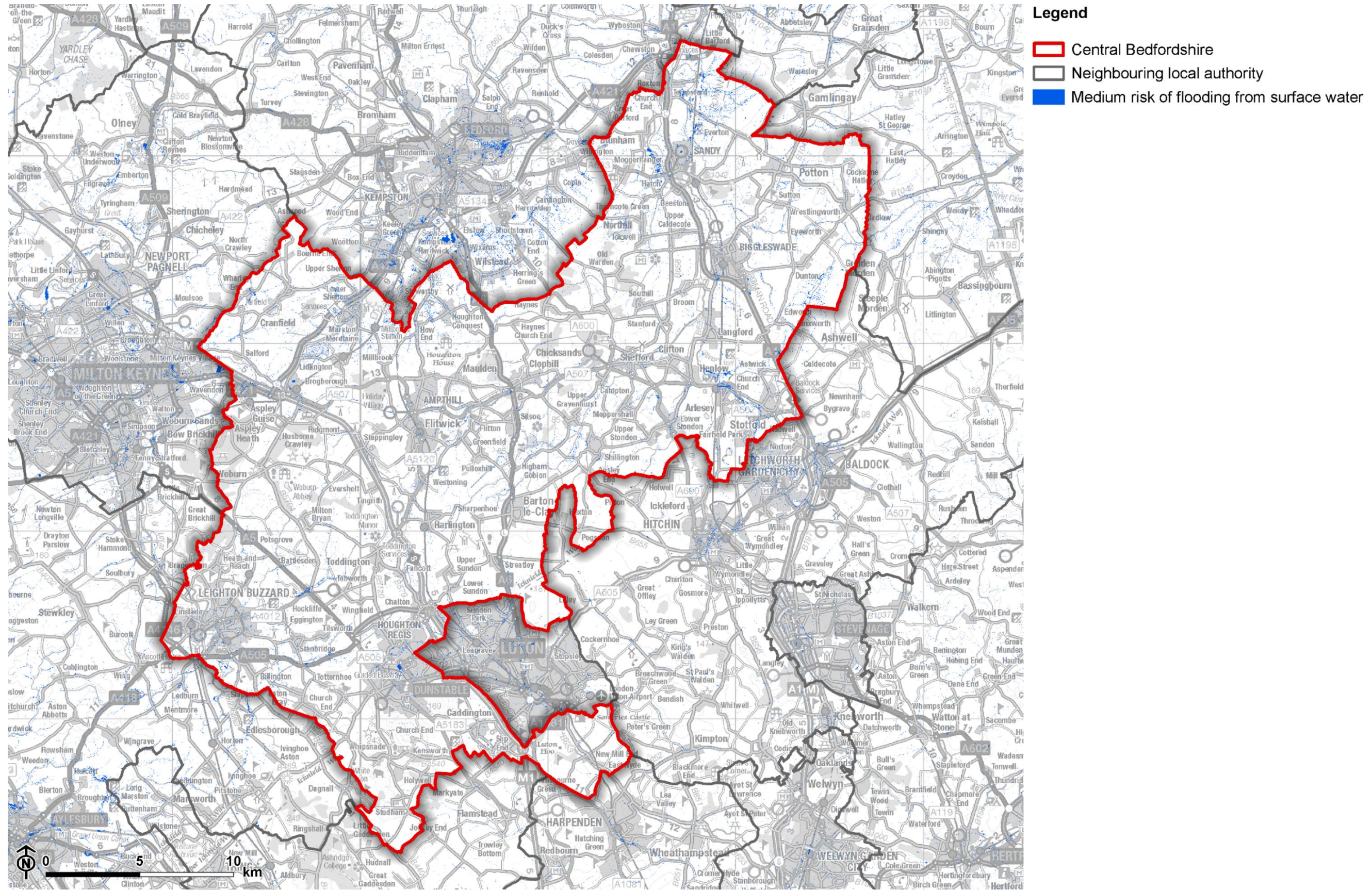
Figure 3.12: Surface water flood risk 1 in 30



Created by LUC - Surface water flood risk - high 11/06/2026

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Figure 3.13: Surface water flood risk 1 in 100



Created by LUC - Surface water flood risk - medium 11/06/2026

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## Agricultural land quality

**3.76** The plan area is identified as a predominantly rural landscape (see landscape baseline information below). Defra identifies areas of the best and most versatile agricultural land (Grades 1, 2 and 3) situated largely in the north east of the plan area **[See reference 124]**. It is important that the best agricultural land is protected for food security, particularly as a result of growing geopolitical tension.

## Land contamination

**3.77** The legal definition of contaminated land requires there to be a significant probability of significant harm to:

- Humans
- Water
- Protected ecology or crops/buildings

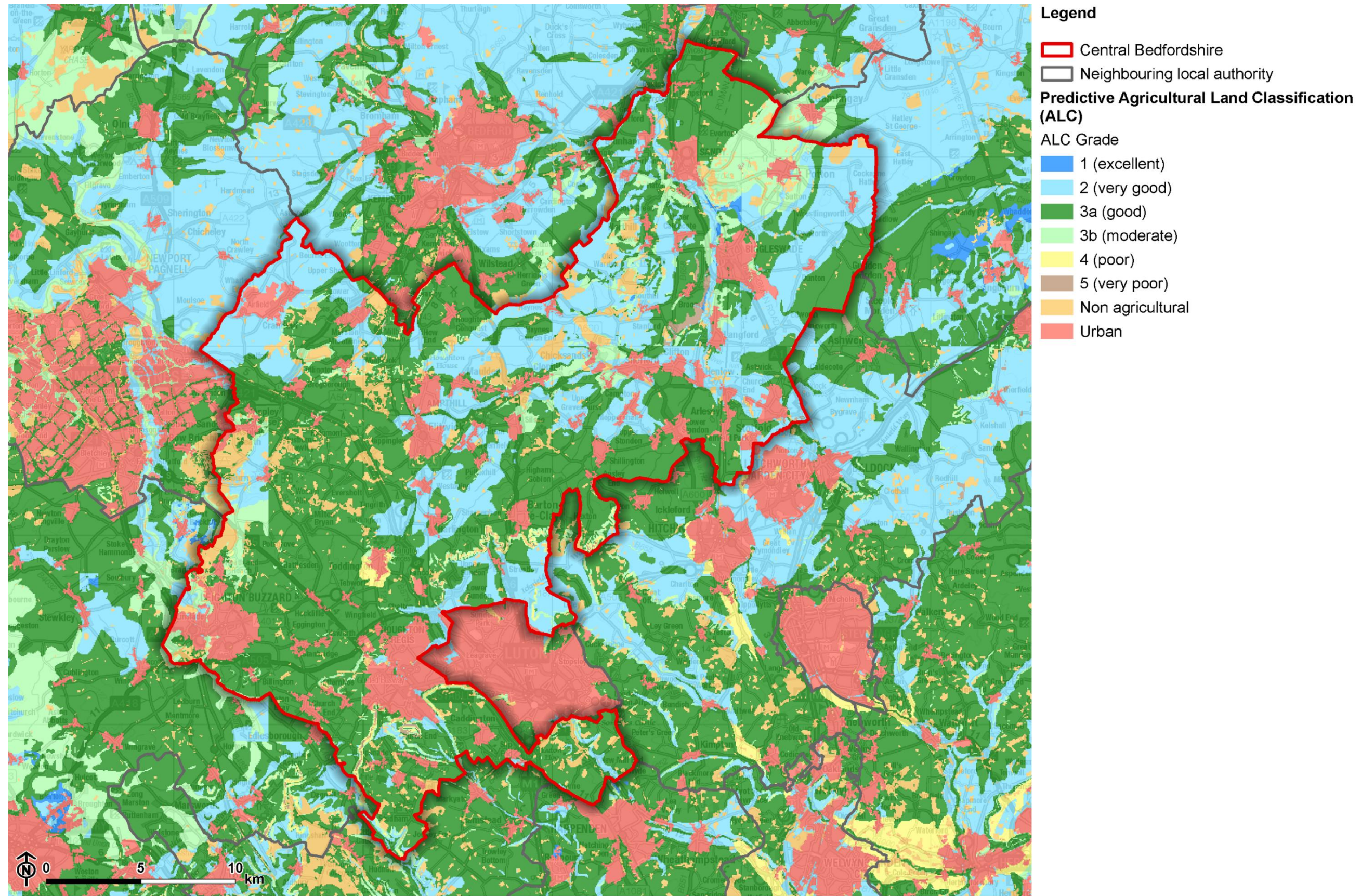
**3.78** This harm can come from substances either in, on, or under the land. They can include certain chemicals like metals and acids or oils, fuels and gases usually associated with industrial use of the land, although natural contamination also occurs.

**3.79** The Central Bedfordshire Contaminated Land Strategy 2023-28 **[See reference 125]** sets out how the council proposes to implement its inspection duties over the next period of five years and contribute towards the sustainable development of the plan area while protecting human health and property as well as the wider environment of controlled waters and ecosystems.

**3.80** According to the Strategy, Central Bedfordshire Council has inherited significant progress from its legacy authorities (South Beds & Mid Beds District and Bedfordshire County Councils) in gathering and evaluating historical data on past industrial activities in the area that may have led to land contamination. This has resulted in the identification of some 1,800 sites of potential concern due to their historical or current exposure to landfilling or various other types of industrial land use. Where available resources allow, these sites will require further investigation to establish whether they meet the statutory definition of contaminated land and need action to be taken by the appropriate agency. Further to this, some areas of Bedfordshire have been designated as lowest level radon affected areas and require case-by-case investigation.

**3.81** Most recently, Central Bedfordshire's Public Register of Contaminated Land **[See reference 126]** only notes one entry (200837458(34)) which faced contamination arising from a former gasworks. This has been remediated and is now fit for purpose.

Figure 3.14: Agricultural Land Classification



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## Key issues

- Pockets of poor air quality, including one AQMA designated for exceedances of Nitrogen Dioxide in Sandy. Traffic is the primary cause for exceedances in National Air Quality Objectives.
- Noise exceeds WHO guidelines in Dunstable, primarily due to exposure to the motorways and railways.
- Increasing pressure on water resources particularly in the Anglian region as a result of high population density and relatively low rainfall.
- Water quality is declining in some areas.
- There are areas of high flood risk (fluvial (main rivers and ordinary watercourses), surface water, groundwater, sewers, reservoir inundation and canal overtopping/breach) which may be exacerbated due to the effects of climate change.
- The need to retain and protect best and most versatile agricultural land.
- The need to remediate contaminated land.

## Evolution without the plan

**3.82** Without the new Local Plan there is likely to be a less coordinated approach to the delivery of new housing, employment and infrastructure in Central Bedfordshire. This could exacerbate congestion issues on the highway network and associated noise pollution, in addition to potentially affecting air quality including in the existing AQMA, although it is noted that policies in the adopted Local Plan would still apply. The new Local Plan provides an opportunity to consider the cumulative effect of new development on the existing road network and determine what additional infrastructure and wider mitigation is necessary to minimise impacts. New housing, employment and infrastructure can be delivered in built-up areas where services and facilities are readily available so as reduce the distance of travel and subsequent reliance on the private car, while also encouraging more walking and cycling. Development can also be delivered alongside improvements to public transport, potentially helping to address existing areas of congestion, such as within the existing AQMA.

**3.83** Development will still come forward without the new Local Plan and will need to be in line with current national and local policies and guidance in relation to the protection of water resources and quality; incorporation of efficiency measures; management of surface water run-off and avoidance of flood risk areas. However,

the new Local Plan gives the council the opportunity to coordinate development and direct it towards those areas that are potentially less sensitive and have lower risk of flooding more effectively. It also provides an opportunity for the council to set more aspirational requirements for future development in terms of water efficiency standards and the management of surface water run-off.

**3.84** Land and soils are key in the provision of new development and development can lead to significant effects on the quantity and quality of soil, which can in turn have adverse effects on the agricultural sector, in addition to local food growing and the security that offers. Development has the potential to result in the loss of best quality soils and to affect the quality of base and surrounding soils as a result of disturbance or contamination. The new Local Plan can act as a delivery mechanism for the protection of soil quality and appropriate direction of new growth, for example by directing development towards previously developed land where possible, or the appropriate minimisation of risks, for example requiring remediation of contaminated sites where necessary. Without the new Local Plan, there is likely to be a less coordinated approach to the delivery of development, although it is noted that policies in the adopted Local Plan would still apply. For example, development may not be directed to those areas of lower agricultural land quality.

## Climate change mitigation and adaptation

**3.85** This topic explores current energy consumption across the plan area, as well as renewable energy capacity and the predicted effects of climate change. Flooding is dealt with separately in the Air, Water and Soils section.

### Climatic changes

**3.86** UK CP18 projections for the East of England identify the following main changes to the climate by 2039 **[See reference 127]**:

- Increase in mean winter temperature by 0.8°C;
- Increase in mean summer temperature by 1.0°C;
- Decrease in mean winter precipitation by 5%; and
- Decrease in mean summer precipitation by 5%.

**3.87** The Central Bedfordshire Climate Change Adaptation Evidence Base Report **[See reference 128]** identifies the following impacts of climate change that are likely to affect Central Bedfordshire the most. Central Bedfordshire Council's Sustainability

Team are currently working on a Climate Change Risk Assessment and Adaptation Plan, which will inform future iterations of the SEA.

- Flooding;
- Water resources;
- Overheating;
- Subsidence; and
- Risks to the natural environment.

## Greenhouse gas emissions

**3.88** The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero produced the following emissions figures between 2005 and 2022 for sectors in Central Bedfordshire in 2024 [\[See reference 129\]](#):

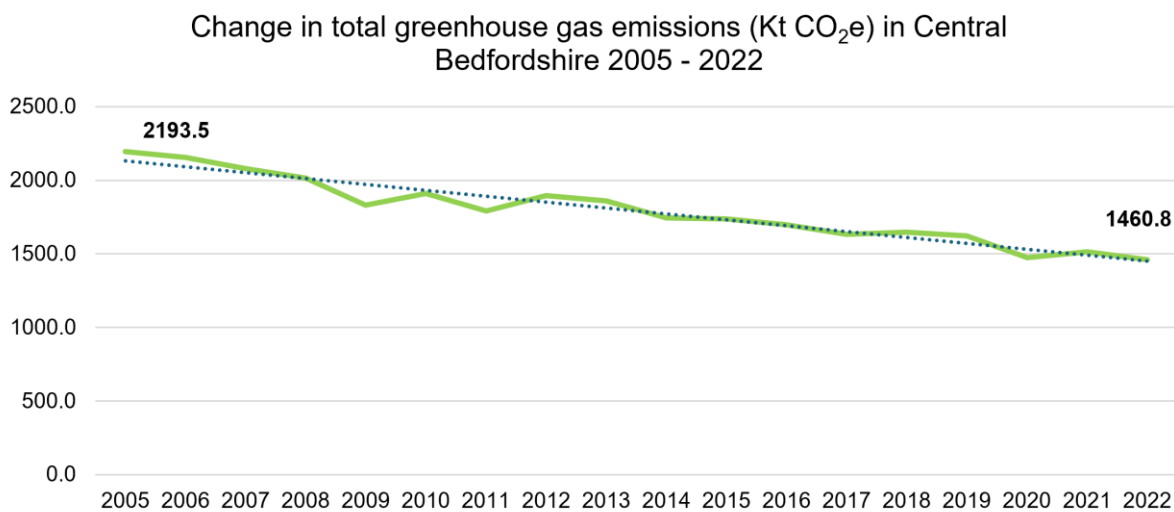
**Table 3.9: Greenhouse gas emissions in Central Bedfordshire**

Source of Emissions	Estimated Greenhouse Gas Emissions	Percentage
Industry	102.4Kt CO <sub>2</sub> e/year	7.0%
Commercial	126.8Kt CO <sub>2</sub> e/year	8.7%
Public Sector	29.6Kt CO <sub>2</sub> e/year	2.0%
Domestic	373.5Kt CO <sub>2</sub> e/year	25.6%
Transport	716.9Kt CO <sub>2</sub> e/year	49.1%
Agriculture	96.5Kt CO <sub>2</sub> e/year	6.6%
Waste	31.5Kt CO <sub>2</sub> e/year	2.2%
Net Emissions	-16.4Kt CO <sub>2</sub> e/year	-
Total	1,460.8Kt CO <sub>2</sub> e/year	-

**3.89** Evidence therefore suggests that road transport is the biggest contributor to greenhouse gas emissions within Central Bedfordshire at approximately 50% of the total emissions [\[See reference 130\]](#). However, it is also important to note that domestic use contributes approximately 25% and industry and commercial contributes approximately 25% to the total emissions in Central Bedfordshire [\[See reference 131\]](#).

**3.90** Greenhouse gas emissions have been steadily reducing in Central Bedfordshire between 2005 and 2022. This is demonstrated in Figure 3.8 below.

**Figure 3.15: Change in total greenhouse gas emissions in Central Bedfordshire 2005-2022**



## Fuel consumption

**3.91** The Department of Energy and Climate Change (DECC) produced the following consumption figures for Central Bedfordshire in 2021 [\[See reference 132\]](#):

- Coal – A total of 59.31GWh (gigawatt hours) predominantly through industrial and commercial use.
- Manufactured fuels – A total of 12.8GWh predominantly through domestic use.
- Petroleum – A total of 3,005.2GWh predominantly from road transport.
- Gas – A total of 1,939.8GWh predominantly through domestic use.
- Electricity – A total of 1,018.8GWh predominantly through industrial and commercial use.
- Bioenergy – A total of 304.7GWh.

**3.92** The total consumption of all fuels in Central Bedfordshire in 2021 was 2,073.6GWh, which has been steadily increasing since 2011 when 1,965.4GWh were consumed but remains below the 2006 level of 2,288.8GWh [\[See reference 133\]](#) [\[See reference 134\]](#). However, the Renewables Capacity Study [\[See reference 135\]](#) estimates that the total energy demand in Central Bedfordshire could rise over coming years, largely due to an increased electricity consumption. It will be important to implement measures to reverse the current trend of increased consumption each year and achieve overall reductions.

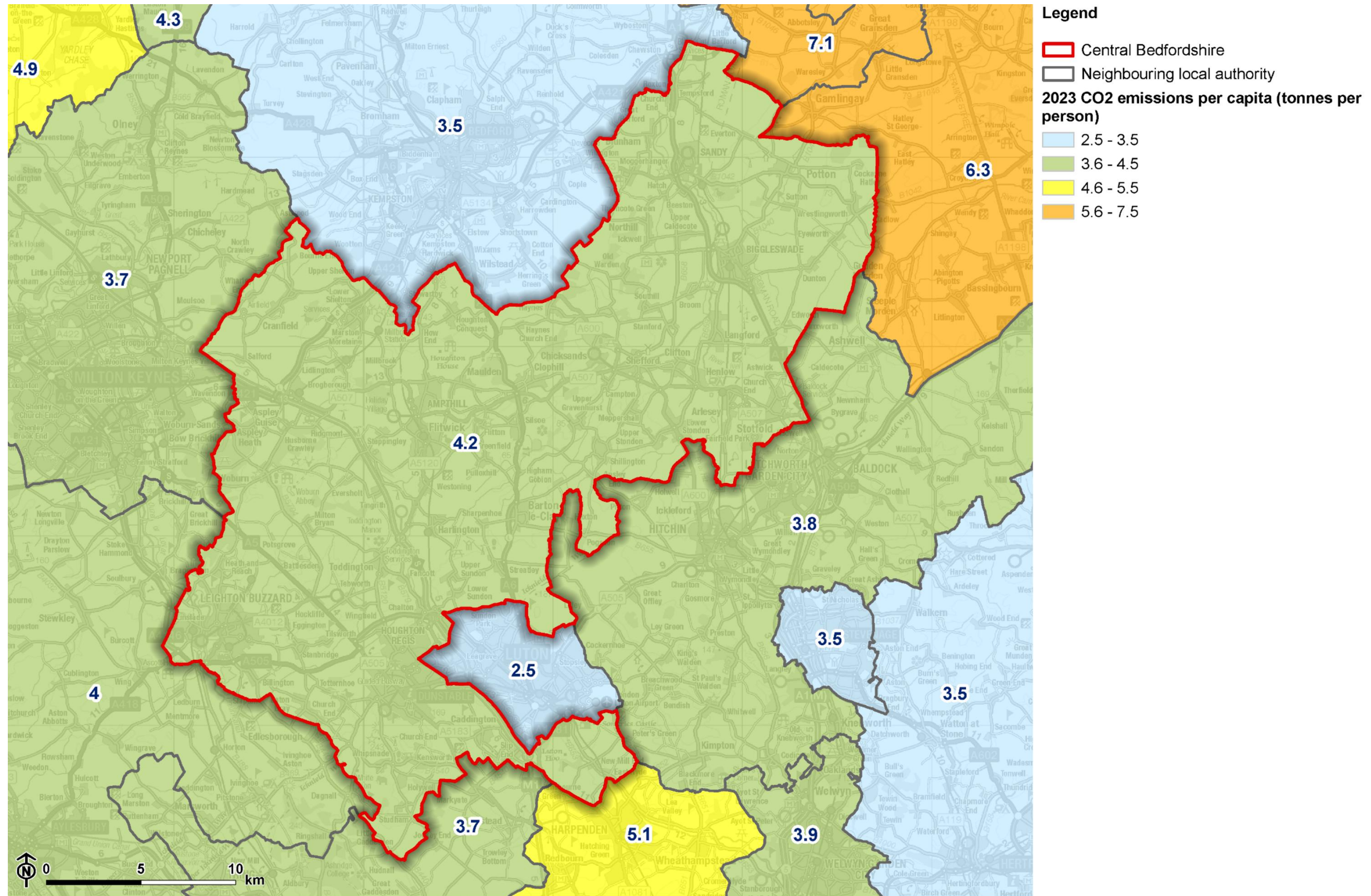
## Renewables capacity

**3.93** The Department for Energy Security and Net Zero Renewable Energy Planning Database quarterly extract highlights that as of April 2024 there are 10 operational solar farms with a combined generating capacity of 60.4MW, a 20MW windfarm, three individual wind turbines with a combined capacity of 7.1MW, a 1.1MW anaerobic digestion facility, a 16MW biomass facility and 28MW of energy produced from landfill gas [\[See reference 136\]](#). There is also 27MW of operational battery storage and a further 149.4MW awaiting construction [\[See reference 137\]](#). Two applications for large scale renewable energy generating developments were approved in 2022/23 [\[See reference 138\]](#).

**3.94** This demonstrates that renewable energy development is relatively active in Central Bedfordshire and the Capacity Study identifies that there is significant capacity for more renewable energy development [\[See reference 139\]](#). The council has also produced Renewable Energy Planning Technical Guidance Notes [\[See reference 140\]](#) which help to steer the most appropriate renewable technology to the most suitable areas and inform planning decisions.

**3.95** Additionally, the council delivered 88 7kW standard speed vehicle charging points in 2022/23. A further 58 7kW standard speed charge points and 28 rapid/ultra rapid charge points are planned to be delivered by Central Bedfordshire Council throughout 2023/24 and 2024/25 [\[See reference 141\]](#).

Figure 3.16: Per capita CO2 emissions compared to neighbouring Authorities



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## Key issues

- Climate change is resulting in hotter, drier summers and warmer, wetter winters, along with increased risk of extreme weather events such as flooding.
- Demand for energy is rising, particularly for electricity.

## Evolution without the plan

**3.96** Existing planning guidance provides a framework for the delivery of renewable energy technology. However, the new Local Plan can provide further support in the long-term approach to climate change mitigation and adaption, particularly through setting aspirational energy generation and storage targets for new development, identification of suitable areas for renewables infrastructure, the appropriate siting of new development and the delivery of mitigation measures like new green infrastructure, sustainable drainage systems in new development, and contributions to improved flood defences. It is noted that the amended Building Regulations 2010 and the Future Building Standard from 2025 require CO2 emissions from new build homes and other buildings, including offices and shops, to be 30% lower than current standards. In addition, policies in the adopted Local Plan would continue to apply. However, a new Local Plan would allow for the development of up-to-date policies and without the plan, development may therefore be less ambitious in its energy performance and planning gains are less likely to be delivered in a timely and coordinated manner.

## Material assets

**3.97** This section explores the availability and quality of land across the plan area, to include the underlying geology, and the use of previously developed land. This topic explores the distribution and types of economic activity and employment available within Central Bedfordshire, as well as the commuting patterns of residents, both within and outside of the plan area. Additionally, this topic explores existing and planned transport infrastructure, existing local transport constraints and patterns of movement across the plan area. This topic is closely linked with the topics of air quality, climate change and biodiversity, as potential effects on traffic are likely to lead to indirect effects on air quality, levels of greenhouse gas emissions, and biodiversity through habitat fragmentation and noise pollution.

## Geology

**3.98** The geology of Central Bedfordshire has shaped a number of the other topics discussed in the baseline information, including landscape, the historic environment, water resources, water quality, flooding and economic mineral excavation. The geology of Central Bedfordshire is largely comprised of clay and chalk [See reference 142]. The dominating soils include lime-rich loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, slightly acid loamy and clayey soils with impeded drainage, freely draining slightly acid loamy soils, freely draining slightly acid sandy soils and shallow lime-rich soils over chalk or limestone [See reference 143].

## Brownfield land

**3.99** While the number of dwellings delivered each year in Central Bedfordshire has risen steadily, the amount built on previously developed land remained relatively constant until 2022/23. During the last monitoring year, the number of new dwellings built on previously developed land significantly reduced. Reasons for this could include a lack of sites (due to Central Bedfordshire's predominantly rural nature with smaller market towns and settlements and no major towns), costs associated with developing on previously developed land, changes to the definition and more availability of greenfield sites made through the adopted Local Plan [See reference 144].

**3.100** The proportion of employment floorspace gains on previously developed land (PDL) in 2022/23 was 44%. This is higher than has been seen in recent years but lower than the levels seen at the beginning of the plan period. The proportion of completions on PDL continuing at a comparatively low level compared to the rate seen historically is largely due to the developments at Phase 6, Stratton Park, Biggleswade and north of Thorn Road, North of Houghton Regis. These two greenfield site developments combined account for 56% of the new floorspace completed. This is likely to be a trend that continues as the new strategic employment allocations in the current Local Plan for Central Bedfordshire are also predominantly greenfield sites [See reference 145].

## Minerals

**3.101** The underlying geology of the area yields the economic mineral resources which are subject to the Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Strategic Sites and Policies (MWLP: SSP) [See reference 146]. The major mineral resources in Central Bedfordshire are aggregate sands, gravel, chalk and silica sand [See reference 147]. Aggregate sand and gravel is located in the river valleys of the Ivel and Ouse

and in glacial deposits west of Biggleswade [See reference 148]. A range of medium to fine grained sands can be found at the Greensand Ridge [See reference 149]. These are of very high silica purity in the vicinity of Leighton Buzzard and have been worked extensively for industrial purposes [See reference 150]. There are currently two sites which extract chalk within the plan area – a large scale quarry near Dunstable, from where it is transported via a slurry pipeline to cement works in Rugby; and at Totternhoe quarry for building stone [See reference 151].

## Waste management

**3.102** In 2021, 156,423 tonnes more household/Industrial and Commercial waste was treated in the plan area than was exported out of the plan area. This suggests there are enough non-hazardous waste management facilities in the plan area to manage the tonnage of non-hazardous waste produced in the plan area [See reference 152].

**3.103** There are currently four household waste recycling centres within Central Bedfordshire, located within Ampthill, Biggleswade, Houghton Regis and Dunstable (Thorn Turn household waste recycling centre) and Leighton Buzzard [See reference 153]. The development and operation of minerals and waste facilities is influenced by a number of land constraints or designations, including South Bedfordshire Green Belt, the Chilterns National Landscape, the Forest of Marston Vale, the Greensand Trust Area and the Leighton Buzzard and Heath and Reach Sandpit Strategy Area.

**3.104** 126,131 tonnes of waste were collected and disposed by Central Bedfordshire Council in 2022/23. Of this, 56,833 tonnes were sent for reuse, recycling or composting. This means that Central Bedfordshire had a recycling rate of 45.1%. This is down from the previous year when 45.8% of household waste was sent for recycling. Across England, the recycling rate also fell from 42.5% in 2021/22 to 41.7% in 2022/23. All regions had decreases in their recycling rates, except for London which saw no change [See reference 154].

**3.105** In 2023, Central Bedfordshire disposed of approximately 50,000 tonnes of residual waste, which was then sent to the Covanta-run Energy-from-Waste (EfW) facility at Rookery South, Stewartby. This process generated enough electricity to power over 10,000 homes for the year [See reference 155]. In total, the Rookery Energy Recovery Facility (ERF) receives around 600,000 tonnes of waste per annum, from Central Bedfordshire, Bedford, Norfolk and Cambridgeshire. Around 57,000MWhr is generated.

## Minerals and waste planning

**3.106** Minerals and waste are both strategically planned across the three Local Authority areas of Central Bedfordshire Council, Luton Borough Council and Bedford Borough Council [See reference 156]. The 2014 Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Strategic Sites and Policies (SSP) sets out the strategic allocations for mineral extraction and for waste management development across these Local Authority areas, together with strategic policies which will guide the ongoing supply of minerals and development of waste management facilities [See reference 157]. The plan identifies that minerals and waste are substantial elements of the freight carried within the plan area [See reference 158]. Forecasts predict that the total tonnage of waste requiring management in the authority area is likely to increase from approximately 2,121,000 tonnes in 2013/14 to approximately 2,269,000 tonnes in 2028/29 [See reference 159]. This is likely to comprise of Local Authority Collected Waste, commercial and industrial, construction, demolition and excavation wastes, as well as a small and diminishing amount of residual waste from London [See reference 160].

**3.107** The councils have designated Minerals Safeguarding Areas (MSAs) which are identified on the Policies Map in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Strategic Sites and Policies (2014) for the following minerals [See reference 161]:

- River valley/glacial sand and gravel;
- Woburn sands;
- Chalk;
- Oxford clay;
- Cornbrash limestone; and
- Gault clay.

## Economy

**3.108** Central Bedfordshire is home to over 294,000 people and upwards of 12,000 enterprises. It generates output of around £5.7 billion annually. It is significant in economic terms, with a population higher than Milton Keynes and a similar number of enterprises. The main industries of employment in Central Bedfordshire are shown in Table 3.10 below.

**Table 3.10: Main industries of employment in Central Bedfordshire** [See reference 162]

Industry	Employment
Wholesale and retail trade (including repair of motor vehicles and motorcycles)	18.1%
Education	10.5%
Manufacturing	10.5%
Accommodation and food service activities	9.5%
Administrative and support service activities	8.6%

**3.109** The key sectors in terms of employment growth have been transport and storage (7.2%), information and communication (4.5%) and business admin and support (4.1%) which have grown at 2-3 times higher rates than the average growth in Central Bedfordshire across all sectors (2%) [See reference 163].

**3.110** Along with key sectors of employment there are also a number of specialisms, which reflect Central Bedfordshire's strengths in the engineering/manufacturing sector. Central Bedfordshire also has strengths in transport and storage, motor trades and wholesale sectors. The area's strengths in transport and wholesale are likely to reflect Central Bedfordshire's proximity to key road networks, which provides opportunities for growth in this sector [See reference 164]. However, it is noted that there is a mismatch between the skills of employees and the demands of businesses. Employers in Central Bedfordshire are more likely to report skills gaps than other locations in the South Midlands area. Despite a high proportion of highly skilled residents in Central Bedfordshire, some do not possess the skills required from employers [See reference 165].

**3.111** Some 12,375 businesses were operating in Central Bedfordshire in 2022, an increase of 2,030 since 2012. Over this period, the business base increased by 2%, below the national average of 3%. Compared to neighbouring areas, this growth is characterised by an increase in medium-to-large businesses (50+ employees). Since 2012, Central Bedfordshire's medium and large businesses have grown by 26% and 29% respectively, outpacing the national average (20%).

**3.112** The trend from 2011 has been a steady year on year decline in the number of business start-ups in Central Bedfordshire [See reference 166]. In 2019 there were 1,548 business start-ups compared to 1,566 in 2018 and 1,762 in 2017.

## Employment levels and pay

**3.113** Gross Value Added (GVA) per filled job, which is a key measure of productivity, was £54,800 in Central Bedfordshire in 2020. This is below the average for the UK, which was £58,800. This is likely to be due to the dominance of lower-paying sectors and commuting flows into higher-paying areas such as London. Nevertheless, levels of productivity, and therefore GVA, have been increasing over the last decade in Central Bedfordshire (35%) compared to nationally (22%) [\[See reference 167\]](#).

**3.114** The number of people in employment within Central Bedfordshire increased from 81.5% in September 2018 to 83.8% in December 2023 [\[See reference 168\]](#). The unemployment rate in December 2023 was lower in Central Bedfordshire (3.2%) when compared to Great Britain (3.7%), the East of England (3.6%) and South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) [\[See reference 169\]](#) (3.7%) comparators [\[See reference 170\]](#) and the employment rate in Central Bedfordshire is higher than all comparator areas – Great Britain (75.8%), East of England (77.5%) and SEMLEP (78.4%) [\[See reference 171\]](#). The rate of economic activity (85.6%) is also higher in Central Bedfordshire when compared to Great Britain (78.8%). It should be noted that economic activity includes both people in employment and those who are unemployed but actively looking for work [\[See reference 172\]](#). Central Bedfordshire has a very low rate of Universal Credit claimants – in October 2022, this group accounted for only 2% of the working age population, which is approximately half of the UK's rate (4%) [\[See reference 173\]](#).

**3.115** Of those who are economically active in Central Bedfordshire, 7.9% are self-employed. This is lower than the figures for Great Britain and the East of England (9.3% and 9.7% respectively).

**3.116** According to the 2021 Census, Central Bedfordshire performed above the national average of 4% in terms of the proportion of 16-17 year old residents in apprenticeships. Central Bedfordshire had a higher percentage of 16-17 year residents entering into apprenticeships (5%) than Luton (1%) and Milton Keynes (2%).

**3.117** Central Bedfordshire residents earn on average a weekly gross pay of £691.10, which is more than the regional and national averages (£671.50 and £682.00 respectively) [\[See reference 174\]](#). At the time of the 2021 Census, 134,392 people worked in Central Bedfordshire, including 75,134 people who worked from home or had no fixed place of work and 31,454 who travelled within the area. The largest movement into Central Bedfordshire was 9,986 people from Luton, followed by Bedford (5,076 people) and Milton Keynes (3,215 people). The largest movement

of people out of Central Bedfordshire was 8,966 people to Luton, followed by Milton Keynes (5,122 people) and Bedford (4,596 people). Within Central Bedfordshire, the statistical neighbourhood (MSOA) that had the largest workday population was Dunstable East, where 6,683 people travelled for work from other areas. One contributor to this may be Luton and Dunstable Hospital which is a major employer [See reference 175]. In addition, 299 people travelled within Dunstable East and 1,565 people worked from home or had no fixed place of work. The largest movement of people to Dunstable East was 512 people from Dunstable Central, followed by Houghton Regis North (333 people) and High Town (331 people) [See reference 176].

## Town centres

**3.118** The overall vacancy rate across Central Bedfordshire's town centres in May 2024 was 8.09%. There was a total of 977 retail units counted in the town centres and of these, 79 were vacant. The closure of banks, online shopping and the popularity of out-of-centre retail parks continues to have an impact on footfall in town centres. Dunstable has a consistently higher proportion of retail vacancies when compared to other towns in Central Bedfordshire, at 14.3% in May 2024. Arlesey has historically also had high vacancy rates but the latest data shows this has fallen, from 18.8% in May 2023 to 6.3% in May 2024. In contrast, the most recent data shows an increase in vacancy rates in Pottton, from 8% in May 2023 to 12% in May 2024 [See reference 177]. Evidence suggests that Leighton Buzzard and Biggleswade appear to be viable town centres that are performing well and fulfilling their roles. Dunstable, with its high level of vacancies and poor environment, is facing a challenging future without any intervention. The smaller centres are fulfilling their roles as convenience and service centres serving local catchments – they have a range of provision and low vacancy rates [See reference 178].

## Employment land

**3.119** The Functional Economic Market Areas and Employment Land Review (2017) [See reference 179] identified through site assessments that there is over 2,000,000sqm of employment floorspace within Central Bedfordshire and concluded that, while there is some degree of vacancy within that existing stock, the council should continue to protect sites for employment use. The same study identified that there will be a potential need for an additional 240,000sqm of employment floorspace up to 2031 and that there may be scope for further floorspace provision due to the demand from the strategic warehousing and distribution sector. Once the HEDNA has been published, this information will be updated in future iterations of the SEA.

**3.120** Former B-class (employment) use, B1 Business, saw the most development between 2015 and 2022. Over 80,000 square metres was completed in 2022 alone. Former D-class uses (D1 Non-residential institutions and D2 Assembly and leisure) have accounted for the second highest amount of non-residential space. This use class includes health/medical services, creche/daycare, sport and recreation uses and community halls. In 2022, this accounted for 25,346sqm of space, which was an increase on 2021 levels (10,599sqm) [\[See reference 180\]](#).

**3.121** As of April 2023, there is a total of 242,202.84sqm (net) of employment floorspace on sites with planning permission. The net position for the year 2022/23 shows an increase in employment floorspace of 66,255sqm overall from the end of 2021/22 position. There were net increases in floorspace across all use classes except Eg(i) (office) where there was a decrease and Eg(ii) (Research and Development) where there was no change [\[See reference 181\]](#).

## Home working and broadband connectivity

**3.122** In 2011 approximately 4.3% of residents in Central Bedfordshire aged between 16 and 74 years identified themselves as working mainly at, or from, home compared to approximately 3.5% in England [\[See reference 182\]](#). According to the 2021 Census, this figure had increased to 34.5% for Central Bedfordshire and 31.2% for England, reflecting the fundamental change in working practices brought about by the Covid-19 pandemic.

**3.123** Digital connectivity in Central Bedfordshire has been improving, with around 95% coverage of superfast broadband speeds compared to 97% for England. The area performs well on 4G outdoor coverage at 96% coverage compared to 89% nationally [\[See reference 183\]](#).

**3.124** The Government's 2010 strategy, 'Britain's Superfast Broadband Future', allocated significant funding towards a Joint Local Broadband Plan [\[See reference 184\]](#) between Central Bedfordshire Council, Milton Keynes Council, Bedford Borough Council and BT to improve broadband provisions across the area which can further support home-working. The project has now ended, delivering:

- A Gigabit Broadband Voucher Scheme – Help for homes and businesses to cover the costs of installing gigabit broadband.
- GigaHubs – To connect public sector buildings such as GP surgeries, libraries and schools in hard-to-reach parts of the UK.
- Superfast Programme – Reaching the remaining premises that have broadband speeds of less than 30 megabits per second (Mbps) [\[See reference 185\]](#).

## Transport

### Transport links

**3.125** Central Bedfordshire has important road connections, including the strategic road connections of the M1, A1, A5 and A421. This makes it one of the most accessible areas in the East of England. The plan area has good existing north-south links including via the A6 and A600, while other routes including the A505 and A507 provide essential east-west connectivity. These routes are recognised for their economic importance and high traffic volumes.

**3.126** It is recognised, however, that there are strategic gaps in movement east to west. While the A1 and M1 corridors, along with routes like the A5/A5183, A6, and A600, strengthen north-south movement, east-west options are limited. The A507 is the only central route, with alternatives like the A421 and A505 requiring detours through other regions [See reference 186]. The A421 upgrade in December 2020 partially addressed this issue by improving 3km of the road, enhancing the connection between Junction 13 of the M1 in Central Bedfordshire and Milton Keynes, thereby strengthening east-west links [See reference 187].

**3.127** Regarding strategic routes, the M1 motorway extends north from Central Bedfordshire, linking it to major cities and regions in the Midlands and the North of England. There are numerous points along the M1 in Central Bedfordshire where vehicle counts have been taken and in 2023, an average of 53,174 motor vehicles including 35,542 cars and taxis travelled northbound along the M1 motorway in Central Bedfordshire each day [See reference 188]. This traffic volume is consistent with previous years, with a daily average of 53,567 motor vehicles including 35,899 cars and taxis having been recorded travelling northbound on the M1 in Central Bedfordshire in 2022.

**3.128** The M1 also connects Central Bedfordshire to Greater London, with a daily average of 34,778 cars and taxis and 51,054 motor vehicles travelling southbound in Central Bedfordshire in 2023. The locations where the highest number of vehicles passed were Junction 10 of the M1, closely followed by the Junction 11a slip roads and Junction 12 (Table 3.11). On the A5, which connects Central Bedfordshire to towns in Staffordshire such as Cannock and Tamworth, there was a daily average of 8,106 cars and taxis and 10,565 motor vehicles travelling westbound in Central Bedfordshire in 2023.

**Table 3.11: Number of vehicles that travelled past the count points on the M1 in Central Bedfordshire on an average day of 2023, by direction of travel**

Count Point	Northbound Cars/Taxis	Northbound Motor Vehicles	Southbound Cars/Taxis	Southbound Motor Vehicles
J10 to CBC boundary (ID 46002)	55,448	83,755	55,746	83,042
J12 to J13 off ramp (ID 81549)	45,434	69,706	44,728	67,539
J11a slip road to J12 (ID 90067)	47,377	69,318	41,965	63,167
M1 to A5 (ID 90068)	4,746	7,136	-	-
M1 to A5 (ID 90069)	-	-	3,506	5,416
M1 slip road north end to south end (ID 90070)	37,440	56,137	38,972	55,142
A5 to M1 (ID 90071)	10,038	14,545	-	-
A5 to M1 (ID 90072)	-	-	10,020	14,521
J11a slip road to CBC boundary (ID 90074)	48,314	71,622	48,512	68,557

**3.129** More minor roads also handle significant traffic. For instance, the B489, which links Central Bedfordshire to towns and villages such as Tring and Cheddington, recorded an average of 4,728 cars and taxis at the count point travelling westbound and 3,909 cars and taxis travelling eastbound in 2023 [\[See reference 189\]](#). This reflects the importance of both major and minor roads in facilitating regional connectivity and supporting local travel.

**3.130** However, localised congestion is a significant issue in the authority area, particularly in relation to the larger towns, including Dunstable, Houghton Regis, and Leighton Buzzard. Additionally, there are junction issues on the local and strategic road network, including parts of the M1 and A roads such as the A5, frequently leading to delays and traffic congestion [\[See reference 190\]](#).

**3.131** The Road Investment Strategy 2: 2020-2025, a long-term approach to transporting England's strategic road network, seeks to make £27 billion available over five years [\[See reference 191\]](#). For Central Bedfordshire, this includes significant improvements such as the reconfiguration of the Black Cat roundabout at its border and the expansion of the A428 to a dual carriageway between the roundabout and Caxton Gibbet. These enhancements aim to facilitate better traffic flow on the A1 and A421/A428 corridors, thereby improving safety at junctions, side roads, and private accesses by reducing congestion on the current A428 route.

**3.132** Permission was granted in September 2019 for a new strategic road to create a northern Luton bypass running from the A6 to Junction 11A of the M1, connecting with the A5-M1 link road. The new M1-A6 link road will be 2.75 miles long with a dual carriageway to the proposed rail freight interchange at Sundon Park and then single carriageway connecting to the A6 [\[See reference 192\]](#).

**3.133** There are also three strategically important rail lines in Central Bedfordshire: the East Coast Mainline, the Midland Mainline and the West Coast Mainline serving the towns of Sandy, Biggleswade, Arlesey, Flitwick, Harlington and Leighton Buzzard. Another line, the Marston Vale line, serves the villages of Aspley Guise, Ridgmont, Lidlington, Millbrook and Stewartby. A new station at Wixams is proposed, which once delivered, will be an addition to the Midland Main Line, located just north of Houghton Conquest, outside of the plan area [\[See reference 193\]](#). Construction of the station is anticipated to begin in Autumn 2024. Bedford Borough Council is working with Network Rail to develop a construction programme with first trains anticipated to enter service in the second half of 2026 [\[See reference 194\]](#).

**3.134** Further to this, the preferred route for the East West Rail project has been announced. The preferred route links Oxford and Cambridge via a new track that will run through Bedford to the north. The route will pass through Tempsford in Central Bedfordshire, connecting Oxford, Milton Keynes, Bedford and Cambridge [\[See](#)

**reference 195].** Additionally, the East West Rail project seeks to refurbish the Marston Vale Line which runs between Bletchley and Bedford and forms the central section of the project. In Central Bedfordshire, the line will provide communities with access to innovation and economic hubs in Oxford, Bedford and Milton Keynes. Key updates will involve improving level crossings, track, and signalling, with £240m in funding supporting a new one-train-per-hour service between Oxford and Bedford, which will provide better access to key economic hubs.

**3.135** Bus services operate between the main urban areas in Central Bedfordshire and connect to neighbouring urban areas such as Bedford, Luton and Milton Keynes **[See reference 196].** The rural areas of Central Bedfordshire are predominantly served by bus services supported by the local authority **[See reference 197].**

**3.136** The core bus network comprises 108 bus services, which include ten busway services and two commuter coach services from Leighton Buzzard to London. Thirty-one of these services are fully commercial, while 36 are run by commercial operators but with financial support from Central Bedfordshire Council. The Luton-Dunstable Busway provides rapid transit between Dunstable and Luton, featuring ten bus routes with up to 23 buses per hour during daytime. This busway runs along a 6.1 mile segregated bus-only road, which includes a 4.8 mile guided track section. Additionally, lower frequency secondary routes connect smaller settlements to local towns, providing access to shopping facilities and acting as feeders to the core network **[See reference 198].**

**3.137** Access to public transport can differ significantly between rural areas and urban areas, and in the rural areas of Central Bedfordshire, tertiary bus services are designed to meet needs in areas of low passenger demand where access is crucial for social inclusion and connectivity to local centres. These infrequent services are typically operated by Community Transport rather than commercial bus operators. Forty-one of the bus services are run by three community operators (Flittabus, Ivel Sprinter and Wanderbus) to meet social transportation needs. While these community-run services fulfil important social transportation needs, they operate at a lower frequency and often on specific days compared to regular commercial bus services **[See reference 199].** For example, some of them vary from one return journey per day to one return journey per month **[See reference 200].** As outlined in Central Bedfordshire Council's Bus Service Improvement Plan (2022) **[See reference 201],** residents expressed the need for more bus routes and greater service frequency to and from rural areas as this would encourage them to use the bus more.

**3.138** In 2023, bus services in Central Bedfordshire served 3 million passengers, marking an 87.5% and 36.4% increase from the first (1.6 million passengers in 2020)

and second (2.2 million passengers in 2021) years of the COVID-19 pandemic, respectively. Despite this significant rebound, overall passenger numbers are still below pre-pandemic levels. Some services, such as those between Dunstable, Luton, Leighton Buzzard and Milton Keynes reached and exceeded pre-pandemic patronage levels. However, other parts of the network struggled, such as town networks in Biggleswade and Leighton Buzzard, resulting in a need for increased council investment to support them in order for the services to continue. Among the 3 million passengers, 0.8 million used an older person's or disabled person's bus pass, accounting for 28% of local bus journeys [\[See reference 202\]](#).

**3.139** Central Bedfordshire Council also has a Passenger Transport Service that helps to furnish further demand responsive services together with specialist routine travel capability. With a fleet of 50 adapted buses, it provides transport for children with special educational needs from home to school and back, for older people to attend daycare centres, and for people with disabilities.

**3.140** Central Bedfordshire Council developed a series of Local Area Transport Plans (LATPs) covering 11 areas across Central Bedfordshire [\[See reference 203\]](#). Since their introduction in 2011, these plans have led to significant upgrades in public transport facilities throughout the region. Enhancements have included new bus stop flags, timetable cases, shelters and real-time information screens. Specifically, in Biggleswade and Sandy, all 50 bus stop flags have been replaced [\[See reference 204\]](#).

**3.141** Central Bedfordshire Council sought funding through the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP) process promoted by the national Bus Back Better strategy in 2022. The council successfully secured an indicative award totalling £3,724,719 (comprising £2,180,000 for capital and £1,544,719 for revenue) to implement the BSIP measures covering the period 2022/23 to 2024/25, although this sum represents 40% of the initial capital request and 10% of the revenue request [\[See reference 205\]](#). Since the receipt of DfT funding in early 2023, the council has implemented initiatives that include:

- Improvements to services on certain key corridors;
- Centralisation of production of all timetables and roadside bus stop publicity, support to operators to deliver better publicity, along with CBC produced timetable booklets in various areas;
- Significant improvements to bus shelters and real-time information; and
- A comprehensive review of highway 'hot spots' to identify locations which slow the progress of buses down.

**3.142** The BSIP seeks to establish rural interchange hubs and to provide zero emission buses on the Luton-Dunstable busway network in the long-term.

**3.143** Central Bedfordshire has also seen the opening of two transport interchanges, in Biggleswade and Flitwick. The Biggleswade transport interchange, which opened in late 2023, is one of four important projects in Biggleswade to benefit from £70 million from the Government's Housing Infrastructure Fund, secured by CBC in August 2019. The interchange enhances bus connectivity to and from Biggleswade railway station, improves pedestrian access, and provides real-time bus and rail arrival and departure information [\[See reference 206\]](#). However, as of May 2024, some services may be revised or withdrawn [\[See reference 207\]](#). The Flitwick transport interchange hub which opened in March 2023, received nearly £2.2 million from SEMLEP's Getting Building Fund, complemented by £2.5 million from Central Bedfordshire Council investment and £167,000 in developer contributions. The interchange hub provides three new bus stops, passenger waiting areas and a new station forecourt with pedestrian, cycle and vehicle access outside Flitwick railway station [\[See reference 208\]](#).

## Active travel

**3.144** The Walking Strategy [\[See reference 209\]](#) identifies Central Bedfordshire as conducive to encouraging walking due to the relatively flat topography and presence of a number of small towns, all of which provide services accessible within a short walk. The Central Bedfordshire Travel Survey 2022 found that that 63% of residents walk three or more days a week, compared to 65% nationally (in 2018) [\[See reference 210\]](#).

**3.145** Similarly, the Cycling Strategy [\[See reference 211\]](#) identifies Central Bedfordshire as conducive to encouraging cycle use for the same reasons and identifies almost 60% of residents having access to a bicycle [\[See reference 212\]](#). The proportion of residents of Central Bedfordshire who said they use a bicycle most days was particularly low between 2012 and 2018, with an uptick in 2022. National Travel Survey information [\[See reference 213\]](#) on how frequently people cycle suggests broad stability, with an increase in 2020 which then faded in 2021, which suggests that pandemic-induced changes have lasted better in Central Bedfordshire than elsewhere.

**3.146** According to the Central Bedfordshire Travel Survey [\[See reference 214\]](#), 35% of respondents cited distance as the primary reason they or their child did not walk or cycle to school or college, with this figure increasing to 42% in rural areas. In rural locations, over a quarter of respondents indicated that road safety concerns

prevented them from walking or cycling to school. Additionally, 5% of respondents across the entire authority mentioned a lack of safe cycle routes as a deterrent.

**3.147** It is recognised that within Central Bedfordshire, encouraging walking and cycling is challenging due to the relatively long distances travelled, as well as the quality of networks and perceptual barriers (e.g. estimations of time and distance) [See reference 215]. The longer journey times to access services and facilities also has implications for communities and it is recognised that poor accessibility can exacerbate social exclusion, particularly for residents of rural areas and lower income groups and the elderly [See reference 216].

**3.148** Away from the main towns, the Public Rights of Way network stretches over 1,300km and opens up the countryside for rambling, commuting routes and leisure recreation [See reference 217].

**3.149** Central Bedfordshire Council has developed five Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) [See reference 218] which cover the main towns of Central Bedfordshire [See reference 219], and is currently in the process of developing a LCWIP covering rural routes [See reference 220]. The LCWIPs, published in 2023, identify key areas and routes for cycling and walking within the main towns, providing interventions to improve the walking and cycling network. Broadly, the five LCWIPs state that cycle routes in all the main towns significantly failed to meet government standards, based on the 2015 Travel Choice maps, with over half of the network rated as poor quality. Further to this, 80% of the promoted routes require cyclists to share road space with other traffic without adequate protection, a situation that is often seen as unsafe by cyclists. All five LCWIPs outline interventions and improvements to be delivered as both individual improvement schemes and as part of wider, scheduled programmes of maintenance work. This includes:

- Introduction of traffic restraints and pedestrian-priority areas;
- Providing new or revising existing carriageway crossings to improve safety;
- Junction entry treatments to control traffic speeds, with the added benefit of reducing pedestrian crossing distances;
- Provision of 20mph speed limits, as standard;
- Widening paths and upgrade the surface in line with standards; and
- Installation of regulatory and directional signage.

## Transport planning

**3.150** There have been a number of changes since the adoption of Local Transport Plan 3 (LTP3) in 2011 and as it covers the period 2011-2026, Central Bedfordshire Council is currently working on drafting a new Local Transport Plan (LTP4) with adoption anticipated in 2026 [See reference 221]. A number of projects have been completed under LTP3, which include the completion of the Woodside Link and A5-M1 Link (Dunstable northern bypass) (Spring 2017) and completion of the upgrading of the A421 by installing a dual carriageway from the Eagle Farm roundabout down to Junction 13 of the M1 (Winter 2020). Additionally, the authority has produced a new Passenger Transport Strategy [See reference 222].

**3.151** LTP3 comprises six strategy documents, as listed in Appendix A. Central Bedfordshire Council recently produced an On-Street Parking Management Strategy (2022) [See reference 223], which will also form part of LTP4 [See reference 224] and replace the existing Car Parking Strategy (2011) [See reference 225] and Interim Parking Management Strategy (2019) [See reference 226].

**3.152** There have also been a number of developments including changes in Government policy and local priorities, in addition to new opportunities for funding. At the time of writing, LTP3 is the council's current adopted Local Transport Plan.

**3.153** It is important to note that road traffic is very closely linked to air quality and concentrations of air pollutants are particularly high where the road network is congested. LTP3 addresses this by reducing the demand for travel and encouraging the use of non-car modes of transport (through appropriate promotion and investment), as well as investment in low carbon forms of motorised transport [See reference 227]. LTP3 identifies ten key objectives over the period 2011-2026, as follows:

- Increase the ease of access to employment by sustainable modes;
- Reduce the impact commuting trips on local communities;
- Increase the number of children travelling to school by sustainable modes of transport;
- Improve access to healthcare provision by the core health service (hospitals and GPs);
- Ensure access to food stores and other local services particularly in local and district centres;
- Enable access to a range of leisure, cultural, and tourism facilities for residents and visitors alike by a range of modes of transport;

- Enable the efficient and reliable transportation of freight;
- Encourage the movement of freight by sustainable modes;
- Minimise the negative impacts of freight trips on local communities; and
- Reduce the risk of people being killed or seriously injured.

**3.154** The Executive Report [\[See reference 228\]](#) for the new Local Transport Plan (LTP4) outlines a set of draft objectives [\[See reference 229\]](#), building upon those from LTP3 but now structured around the following themes:

- Connectivity;
- Communities;
- Capacity; and
- Carbon.

**3.155** While carbon reduction was not a focus of the previous LTP3, decarbonising transport is now a key priority for central government and aligns with Central Bedfordshire Council's goal of achieving carbon neutrality. LTP4 is expected to specifically target this objective, emphasising improvements in active travel infrastructure and solutions, such as walking and cycling.

**3.156** Local Area Transport Plans (LATPs) were put together as part of LTP3. There were 11 LATPs, which covered the whole of the plan area and identified a number of localised transport and accessibility issues [\[See reference 230\]](#). The LATPs identified issues including: poor access to services and facilities for the smaller settlements surrounding the main towns, a need to improve the quality of public transport infrastructure (e.g. waiting areas), maintaining and improving the frequency and routes of rural bus services, and also tackling built environment features that restrict pedestrian movement (e.g. excessive guard railing in Flitwick and Biggleswade Market Place). The LATP3 Review [\[See reference 231\]](#), published in March 2022, indicates that many of the issues identified in the 11 LATPs have been delivered across Central Bedfordshire. This includes:

- Addition of timetable cases, shelters, and real-time information screens;
- Speed reduction measures, throughout Central Bedfordshire, which includes a 20mph speed limit in Flitwick town centre and on the A5120 through Westoning, and 20mph speed limit west of the A5;
- Removal of guard railing and other unnecessary street clutter and provision of new crossing point on The Avenue, Flitwick;

- Securing of right of way and provision of a multi-user path between the northern approach to the A1 Beeston Bridge and The Baulk, following the desire link path across the open space, Sandy;
- Provision of school safety zones across the authority;
- Development of village cycle networks, particularly in relation to Health and Reach, Toddington, and Barton-le-Clay; and
- Addition of cycle lanes across the authority.

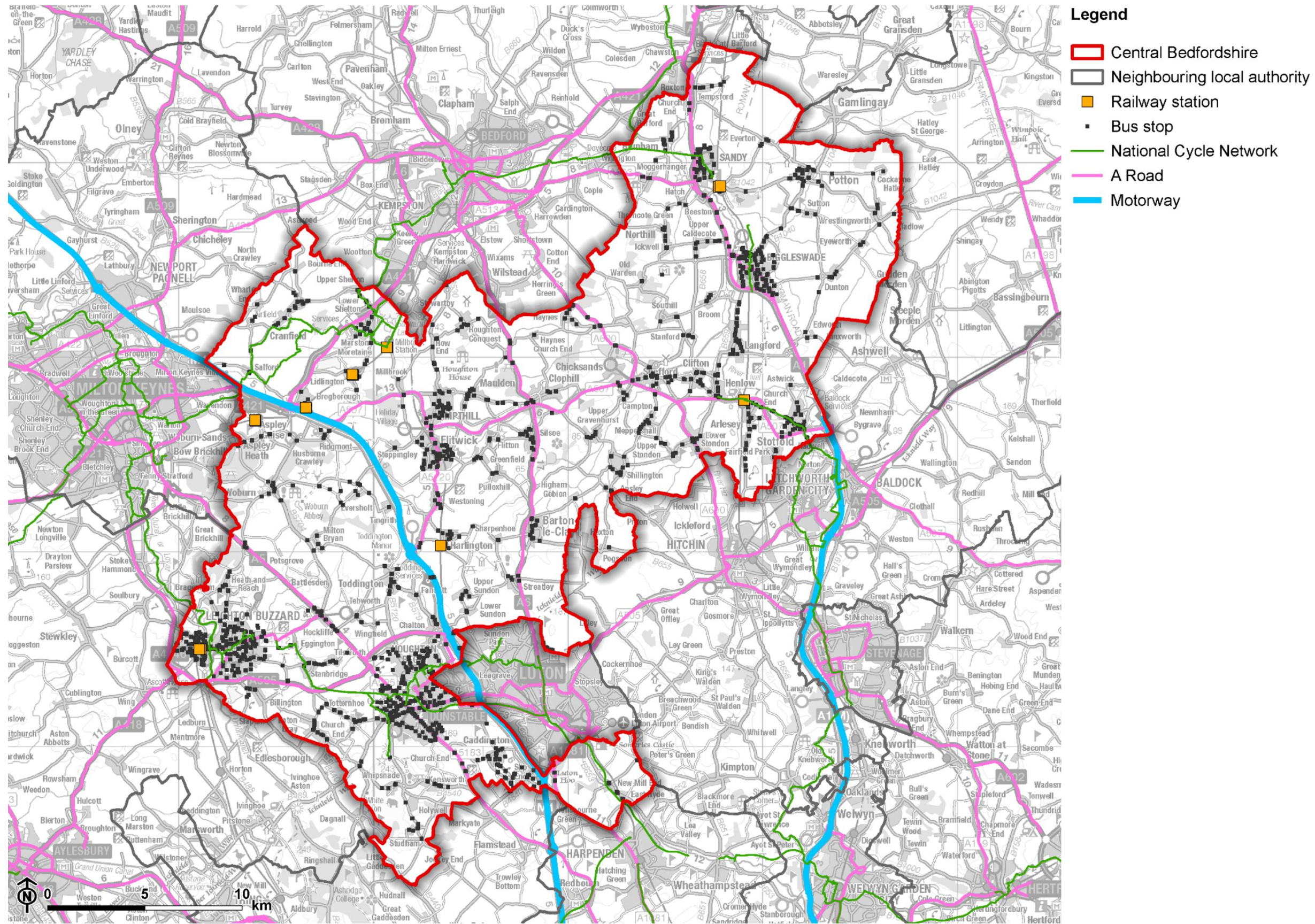
## Transport and the economy

**3.157** The Freight Strategy [See reference 232] identifies that the M1 corridor running through Central Bedfordshire is a strategic location for the warehousing and transportation industry, providing good and fast access to the major strategic/national network. A number of large industrial parks, many home to national and regional distribution centres of large corporations are located close to M1 Junctions 9 through to 13 and along the A421 linking the M1 to the A1. Improvements to M1 Junctions 10 to 13 and dualling of the A421 to the west of the motorway are partly in response to the impacts upon freight flows attributed to these large facilities. Other sites generating freight movements are located throughout Central Bedfordshire with industrial parks, warehousing facilities and quarries, clustered around trunk roads by Ampthill/Flitwick, Sandy/Biggleswade, Houghton Regis/Dunstable and Leighton Buzzard/Linslade [See reference 233].

**3.158** Significant employment areas are largely based in the surrounding major urban areas, as well as a wider range of services and facilities. While these urban areas are reasonably accessible by public transport from other urban parts of the authority, reaching them from rural areas is much more difficult due to limited and infrequent public transport options. As such, the distances to these centres result in journeys (particularly to work) which are much longer than average, with high levels of out-commuting placing additional pressure on the strategic transport routes [See reference 234]. Based on 2021 census data [See reference 235], 106,588 Central Bedfordshire residents work within the authority area. This includes 75,134 who work from home, and 31,454 who commute locally. Additionally, 27,804 people travel into Central Bedfordshire for employment, the largest number – 9,986 – coming from Luton. In terms of outflow, 5,122 residents commute to Milton Keynes 4,596 to Bedford, and 2,078 to Buckinghamshire [See reference 236]. This is reflected in travel patterns within Central Bedfordshire, which are less sustainable with a high reliance on car commuting, together with increasing pressure on interchanges and the rural road network. 53.3% of all residents (aged between 16-74 years) reported driving in a car or van to work in a private vehicle (as a driver or passenger) in 2021,

compared to the England average of 48.4% [See reference 237]. 13.7% of all households also reported owning three or more cars in 2021 [See reference 238], compared to the England average of 9.1% [See reference 239]. The Householder Travel Survey, completed in 2022, reflects the findings of the 2021 census, indicating that 67% of residents drive to work alone, and 13% car share as a driver or passenger. According to responses to the Central Bedfordshire Travel Survey, 49% of working residents commuted outside of Central Bedfordshire for work, with 30% travelling more than 20 miles to get to work. As there are many employment areas within Central Bedfordshire as well as within the neighbouring authority areas, it is difficult to provide public transport which meets residents' needs for commuting trips when there are multiple destinations and origins [See reference 240]. Further to this, based on the Householder Travel Survey, 25% of car commuters travel fewer than five miles to work, which accounts for about 22.1% of all commutes. This equates to approximately 124,000 return journeys (or 248,000 one-way trips) each week that could potentially be made on foot or by bicycle instead of by car [See reference 241].

Figure 3.17: Transport network



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## Key issues

- The need to ensure that new development does not conflict with the strategic allocations and plans outlined within the Minerals and Waste Local Plan.
- Falling recycling rates.
- A large proportion of residents commute outside of Central Bedfordshire for work including to Luton, Milton Keynes and Bedford.
- High retail vacancy rates in some areas, particularly Dunstable and Arlesey.
- Reduced town centre footfall as a result of bank closures, online shopping and out-of-centre retail parks.
- Low business start-up rates and a declining trend in new business formations.
- Recent decline in the proportion of developments on brownfield land.
- Strategic gaps in east-west road connectivity.
- High levels of car ownership and use including for commuting.
- Low levels of walking and cycling to work.
- Pockets of congestion at peak times, predominantly in the main urban areas and on the strategic road network.
- Public transport is less accessible and frequent in rural areas compared to some of the larger settlements.

## Evolution without the plan

**3.159** The strategic directions for the ongoing management and future development of waste and minerals facilities and operations are planned for in the Minerals and Waste Local Plan and as such already have a guiding framework in place. Although the new Local Plan will have less bearing on this aspect, it will be planning for the future growth of housing and communities. Minerals and waste can affect human health through noise pollution, dust and odour and as such, the Local Plan provides the opportunity to plan for development that minimises the impacts of these effects. The Local Plan can also ensure that new housing and employment development considers the implications of its waste production and management, to plan for sustainable waste management and support the aims of the Minerals and Waste Local Plan. The Local Plan can also act as a means of highlighting sensitive receptors (e.g. landscapes that are sensitive to bunding) that could potentially affect future minerals and waste planning. While the adopted Local Plan is already in place, the new Local Plan will be based on more up-to-date evidence.

**3.160** Without the new Local Plan there is likely to be a less co-ordinated approach to the delivery of new employment and infrastructure, although policies in the adopted Local Plan would still apply. New employment and infrastructure are less likely to be delivered where it is needed most. This could affect the current trends of reduced unemployment. It could also reduce opportunities to address existing issues, such as the high numbers of people commuting out of Central Bedfordshire for employment and the high retail vacancy rate in Dunstable.

**3.161** Without the new Local Plan, development may be less likely to deliver the necessary alternative sustainable transport options and highway improvements to accommodate the cumulative impact of new development, with car use likely to remain high. The Local Plan can strategically plan for development in areas where the existing transport networks can accommodate growth, or where the necessary improvements can be more easily provided and in locations which improve accessibility for local communities. The new Local Plan provides the opportunity to support the transition to electric vehicles (EVs) through necessitating charging infrastructure and incentives to facilitate consumer adoption. The Local Plan provides an opportunity to co-ordinate the delivery of new housing, employment and infrastructure which will be more effective in helping to improve accessibility, limit the distance to travel and reduce reliance on the private car. The Local Plan can also provide rural development that supports key services and facilities that contribute to improving accessibility within the countryside. A key issue within the plan area relates to the levels of out-commuting. The Local Plan can direct new strategic employment development to combat out-commuting. However, in the absence of the new Local Plan, policies in the adopted Local Plan would still apply, and the forthcoming LTP4 will go some way towards addressing transport-related issues. Additionally, the UK's commitment to banning the sale of new petrol and diesel cars by 2035 together with other national government policy would still apply, including the UK Government's broader strategy to decarbonise the transport sector.

## Cultural heritage

**3.162** This topic explores the designated and non-designated heritage assets within the plan area, including potential and existing archaeological sites and heritage 'at risk'.

### Heritage assets

**3.163** Within Central Bedfordshire there are:

- 90 Scheduled Monuments;

- 15 Registered Historic Parks and Gardens;
- 1,917 Listed Buildings;
- 61 Conservation Areas; and
- Several thousand non-designated archaeological sites and non-designated locally listed buildings.

**3.164** Of these 2,022 heritage assets, 16 are identified as being at risk of being lost through neglect, decay or deterioration [[See reference 242](#)]:

- Scheduled Monuments:
  - Totternhoe Castle – Totternhoe;
  - A ringwork and bailey castle, ring ditch and enclosures east of Brookland Farm – Biggleswade;
  - Ringwork at The Round House, Brogborough Park Farm – Brogborough; and
  - All Saints Church, Segenhoe, Ridgmont.
- Registered Parks & Gardens:
  - Ickwell Bury – Northill/Old Warden; and
  - Moggerhanger Park, Willington/Moggerhanger.
- Listed Buildings:
  - Parish Church of St Margaret, Higham Gobion – Shillington;
  - Church of All Saints, The Grove – Houghton Conquest;
  - Parish Church of St Leonard, Church End – Old Warden;
  - Church of St Peter and All Saints – Battlesden;
  - Church of St Mary the Virgin, Church Road – Meppershall;
  - Church of St Peter, Church Lane, Wrestlingworth – Wrestlingworth and Cockayne Hatley;
  - Moggerhanger House, Moggerhanger;
  - Parish Church of St Edmund or St James, Park Lane – Blunham;
  - Priory House (Council Offices), High Street south – Dunstable; and
  - Old Church of All Saints, Ridgmont.

## Archaeology

**3.165** Central Bedfordshire has a rich and varied archaeological heritage with a number of nationally and internationally significant sites and monuments dating from the prehistoric through to the post medieval periods [See reference 243]. The earliest archaeological remains relate to the Palaeolithic period over 125,000 years ago discovered at Caddington and are internationally recognised.

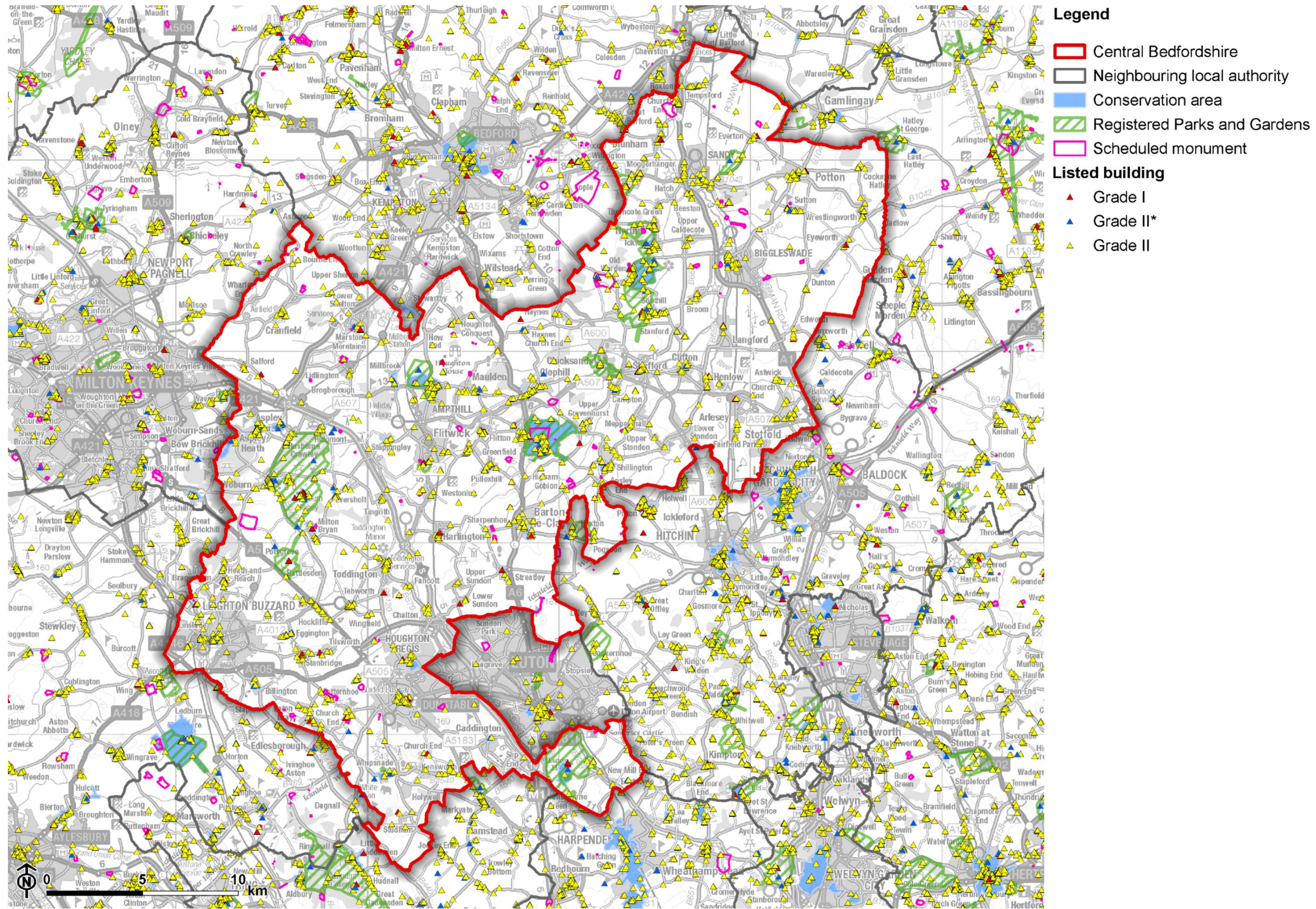
**3.166** Central Bedfordshire is a largely rural area and the agricultural fields, pits, ditches and structures can be traced to prehistoric settlements and monuments survive below the surface of the ground [See reference 244]. Two major Roman roads pass through Central Bedfordshire; Watling Street (A5) and the road linking Godmanchester and Baldock via Sandy (partly on the line of the A1) [See reference 245].

**3.167** Recent archaeological work in Ampthill, Marston Moretaine, Stratton (in Biggleswade) and Henlow have confirmed that these settlements originate in the Saxon period. Leighton Buzzard is also thought to have Saxon foundations. The major towns of Leighton Buzzard, Ampthill, Biggleswade and Dunstable were certainly established by the medieval period and archaeological evidence for the everyday lives of their inhabitants can be readily found in the towns and villages. Central Bedfordshire was once home to at least seven religious houses, including the Gilbertine monks and nuns at Chicksands, the only English monastic order.

**3.168** Furthermore, common land such as the Dunstable Downs and the north of Biggleswade contain relics of the First and Second World Wars, including practice trenches and search lights, all of which are considered archaeological sites [See reference 246].

**3.169** It is evident that Central Bedfordshire has a large number and a range of heritage assets that are widespread across the plan area. It is also recognised that there is potential for the presence of unknown and unidentified heritage assets. It is important that the design of future development is of a high quality in order to protect and enhance historic environments in the plan area, including designated and non-designated heritage assets and their setting.

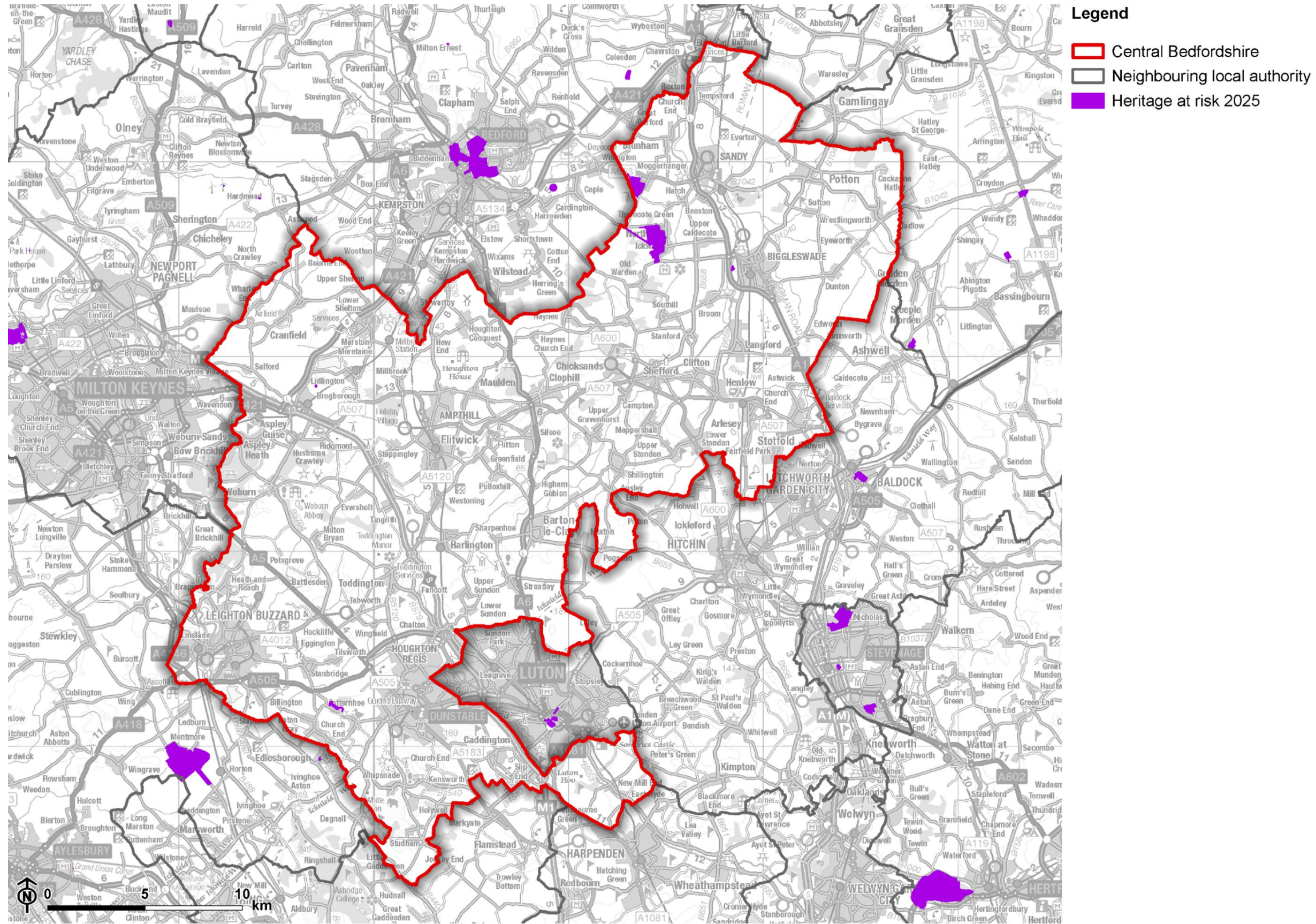
Figure 3.18: Heritage assets



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Figure 3.19: Heritage assets at risk



## Key issues

- The need to protect and enhance the large number of designated heritage assets in Central Bedfordshire.
- The need to conserve and enhance both designated and non-designated heritage assets and the contribution made by their settings.
- The need to protect and where possible enhance the condition of heritage assets that are deemed 'at risk' of neglect, decay, or deterioration.

## Evolution without the plan

**3.170** Without the new Local Plan, designated heritage assets would be protected through National and Local policy including the policies within the adopted Local Plan. However, as identified above, there are a number of undesignated heritage assets, heritage settings and potential archaeology that could be vulnerable to the impacts of development. Importantly, the new Local Plan and SEA can involve an up to date assessment of the cumulative effects of proposed development on both designated and non-designated heritage assets and their setting. The new Local Plan can provide a delivery mechanism for enhanced protection for undesignated assets, settings and features that contribute to the historic environment. It can also secure enhancements for the historic environment, for example in promoting new development that regenerates derelict buildings, or through appropriate investment and contributions. With such an abundance of heritage assets in the plan area, the Local Plan can ensure that development is well designed and located appropriately.

## Landscape

**3.171** This topic explores both designated and non-designated landscapes, their special qualities and overall character and the potential threats to both designated land and landscape character areas.

**3.172** Central Bedfordshire stretches across the centre and south of Bedfordshire, over an area of 716km<sup>2</sup> [See reference 247]. The area is predominantly rural, comprising countryside, villages and small to medium sized towns, including Leighton Buzzard and Dunstable. The area has a varied and distinct landscape, informed by the underlying geology of clay, chalk and greensand.

## Chilterns National Landscape

**3.173** National Landscapes were previously referred to as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, or AONBs. However, in November 2023, following a 2022 Landscapes Review policy paper, AONBs in England and Wales adopted a new name, National Landscapes [See reference 248]. South east of Dunstable and north of Luton lies the distinctive chalk escarpment of the Chilterns National Landscape [See reference 249]. The National Landscape was originally designated in 1965 and then extended in 1990 to encompass a total area of 833km<sup>2</sup> [See reference 250]. It aims to protect several special qualities of the area, including the steep chalk escarpment, flower-rich downland, woodlands, commons, tranquil valleys, a network of ancient routes, villages with brick and flint houses, chalk streams and a rich historic environment of hillforts and chalk figures [See reference 251]. The Chilterns is one of the most densely wooded parts of the UK with nearly 23% woodland cover, of which 56% is ancient woodland [See reference 252]. Some of the Chilterns' most distinctive natural features are its chalk streams, fed by groundwater from the chalk aquifer. Chalk streams are a globally scarce habitat and support a range of specialised wildlife. In the Chilterns, these habitats provide a home for the threatened water vole [See reference 253]. The Chilterns is also a significant tourism attraction in the UK, being relatively accessible to a large population – 1.6 million people live within 8km of the National Landscape [See reference 254].

## Community forests

**3.174** In the north of the plan area lies the southern half of the Marston Vale Community Forest. As one of only 12 Community Forests across England, the area was designated in the 1990s to regenerate land around the towns and cities, scarred by industrialisation [See reference 255]. The Forest of Marston Vale is being created to address the effects of the brick making industry and with over 2 million trees already planted, the woodland cover has increased from around 3.6% in 1995 to around 15.4% in 2015. The target is to get to 30% cover by planting over 5 million more trees by 2030 [See reference 256]. The forest offers several benefits to the landscape and local community, including habitats for wildlife, atmospheric CO<sub>2</sub> removal, a revitalised economy through a future timber supply and physical and mental health benefits through recreational opportunities and local community engagement [See reference 257].

## National Character Areas

**3.175** Central Bedfordshire contains four different National Character Areas (NCAs) (87, 88, 90 and 110), and the characteristics of each are summarised below.

### **NCA87: East Anglian Chalk [See reference 258]**

**3.176** A small area of this NCA lies in the east of Central Bedfordshire and north of Letchworth Garden City. It includes Stotfold and Arlesey. The NCA is characterised by the narrow continuation of the chalk ridge; a visually simple and uninterrupted landscape of smooth, rolling chalkland hills with large regular fields enclosed by low hawthorn hedges, with few trees, straight roads and expansive views to the north. Rain is largely absorbed through the porous underlying Chalk geology which replenishes the strategically important chalk aquifer below. Historic use of the land has led to botanically rich grasslands, which are now often fragmented and care must be taken to maintain soil quality. There is pressure for more development which can increase the demand for water and is likely to reduce the tranquillity of the NCA. There is great opportunity to work with the horse-racing industry to improve the quality of the grassland and shelterbelts for the benefit of biodiversity. The area contains ancient trackways, including Icknield Way and strategic road and railway transport links.

### **NCA88: Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands [See reference 259]**

**3.177** This NCA surrounds NCA90 (Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge below) to encompass the remaining areas of Central Bedfordshire including Biggleswade, Cranfield, Shefford, Toddington and Wrestlingworth. The NCA is a broad, undulating, lowland plateau, dissected by shallow river valleys that gradually widen in the east. The NCA contains the Forest of Marston Vale and a small proportion of the Chilterns NL. Restored clay, sand and gravel extraction areas provide opportunities for recreation and biodiversity. Tranquillity within the NCA has declined and is impacted by; visual intrusion; noise and light pollution from agriculture; settlement expansion; improvements in road infrastructure; mineral extraction; and landfill activities. Many areas, however, retain a rural feel with numerous opportunities for local, quiet and informal recreation. The area provides unique genetic diversity found in local varieties of fruit and the rivers and wetlands provide water resources and regulate water quality. The NCA faces significant challenges with accommodating future growth, increased demand for leisure and recreation and the management of water resources, including potential impacts further downstream in other NCAs, while at the same time protecting and enhancing its character.

### **NCA90: Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge [See reference 260]**

**3.178** This NCA runs in a north east to south west band through the plan area to include Potton, Sandy, Chicksands, Ampthill, Eversholt, Woburn and Leighton Buzzard. The NCA is a narrow ridge rising out of the Bedfordshire and Cambridgeshire Claylands (NCA88 above). The historic landscape of this area, combined with small settlements, greenbelt and woodlands give parts of the NCA a more timeless feel than the surrounding claylands. There is a patchwork of semi-natural habitats throughout the Greensand Ridge area, including flood plain grazing marshes, lowland heathland, meadows and mixed deciduous woodland. The north west facing scarp slope overlooks Milton Keynes and Marston Vale forming a significant landscape feature from a distance. Food, timber and biomass provision on the Ridge are regionally important and the Ridge is nationally important for recreation. The main pressures on the NCA would result from development, use of bland, non-local materials, increased congestion and increased traffic noise and light pollution.

### **NCA110: Chilterns [See reference 261]**

**3.179** This NCA lies in the south of Central Bedfordshire and includes Houghton Regis, Streatley, Barton-le-Clay, Dunstable and south Luton. The area is an extensively wooded and farmed landscape, underlain by chalk bedrock and breached by the River Thames. Approximately half of the NCA is located within the designated Chilterns NL and a small area south of the River Thames is within the designated North Wessex Downs NL (though this is not within the plan area). Motorways and railways make the area very accessible to visitors and connect the Chilterns to nearby London. The area includes a wealth of opportunities for recreational activity, including extensive rights of way and National Trails; open access commons; woods and downland; Registered Parks and Gardens; golf courses; shooting estates; and urban green spaces. The River Thames and Grand Union Canal are also major water-based recreation corridors. Farming continues to be a major land use today. Chalk streams are found only in the main valleys and can be dry in the upper reaches. The NCA is renowned for its native beechwoods, a number of which are designated as European Special Areas of Conservation.

## Local landscape character

**3.180** The Central Bedfordshire Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) characterises the rural landscapes of the plan area and identifies key features and attributes which contribute to character and sense of place and which could be vulnerable to change [See reference 262]. The LCA identified key villages which are

vulnerable to the impacts of development, including; Cockayne Hatley, Biggleswade, Astwick, Sandy, Barton, Charlton, Salford, Stewartby, Woburn, Aspley Guise, Heath and Reach, Husborne Crawley, Flitwick, Ampthill, Whipsnade, Studham, Caddington and Toddington, as well as the landscapes at Wrest Park, Woburn Safari Park, East Hyde and Tempsford Airfield [\[See reference 263\]](#).

**3.181** A historic pattern of linear development is also a concern for future development, particularly at Cranfield, Marston Moretaine, Lower Shelton, Moggerhanger, Charlton, Blunham, Stanbridge, Tilsforth, Billington and Little Billington, Totternhoe, Streatley, Kensworth, Dunstable, Pulloxhill and Greenfield. Linear development along river corridors and transport corridors, particularly roads, is generally discouraged to prevent coalescence of settlements, which can erode local sense of place and the identity of individual villages [\[See reference 264\]](#).

**3.182** A key aspect identified as contributing to landscape character is the presence of significant and far-reaching views particularly due to areas of flat topography. As such, there are concerns over the potential disruption of significant views, including through the alteration or cluttering of skylines and common development concealment techniques like bunding. This indicates a need to monitor the height of new development throughout the rural area and protect significant views where appropriate. Key guidelines therefore refer to retaining the open, level qualities of the landscape, avoiding incongruous bunding [\[See reference 265\]](#). Local building materials and locally appropriate plant species are also noted as a key contributor to landscape character.

**3.183** A number of Green Infrastructure (GI) assets are also identified as contributing to the landscape character and sense of identity, in particular hedgerows, woodland and wooded shelter belts. Further opportunities to enhance GI assets that contribute to landscape character are identified, including [\[See reference 266\]](#):

- Appropriate woodland and hedgerow creation and orchard restoration;
- New wetland habitats, particularly as an opportunity to strengthen the connections of Sandy and Biggleswade with the river level and its floodplain;
- Landscape enhancement along the A1 corridor and prominent road or rail corridors;
- Opportunities to restore derelict sites such as disused market gardens and former quarries and pits;
- Boundary enhancements around exposed urban edges;
- Village entrance enhancements; and
- Country Park enhancements.

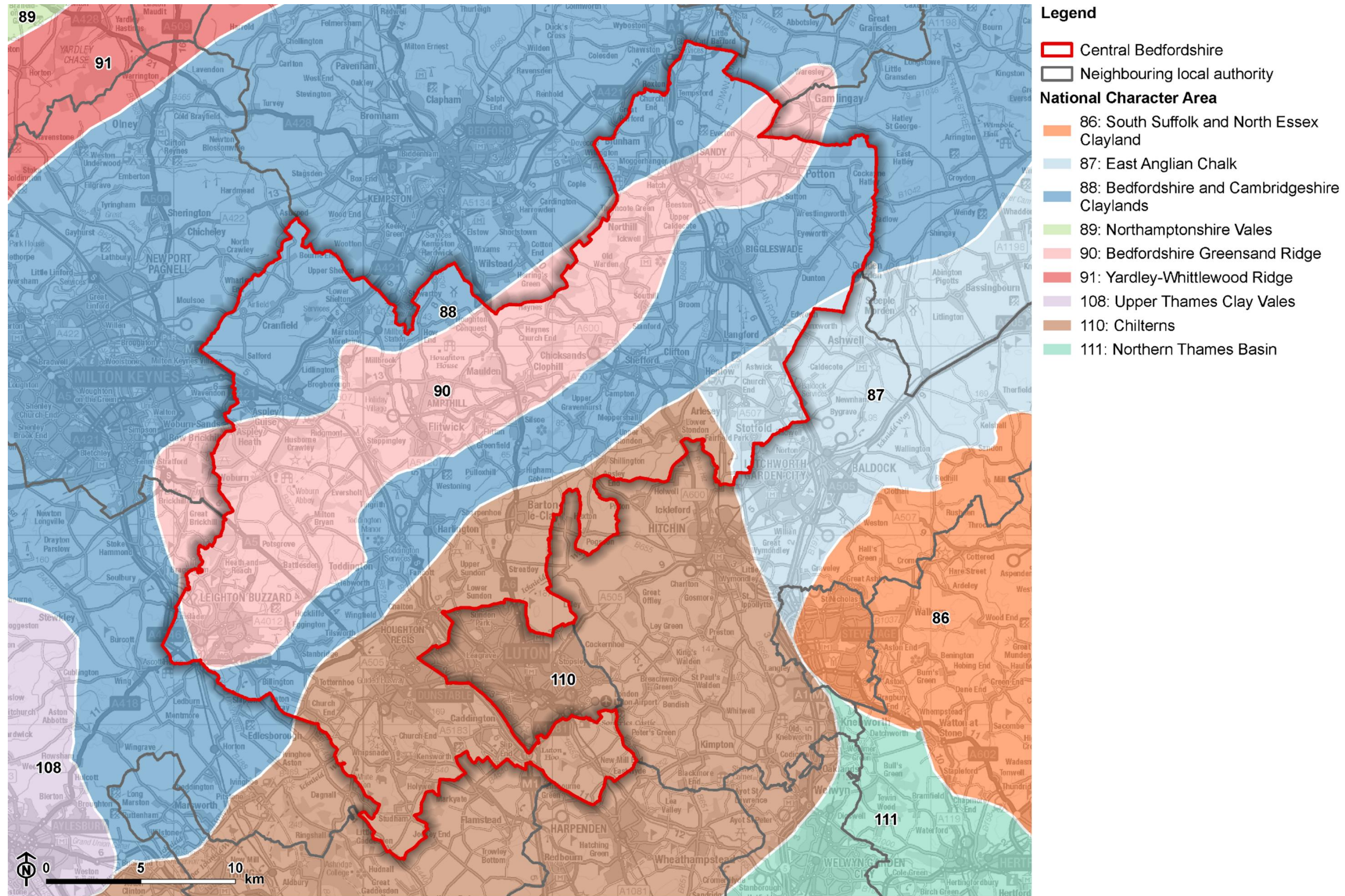
**3.184** Similarly, a number of historic assets (both designated and undesignated) contribute to the landscape character and sense of identity and particular concerns are expressed in regards to Biggleswade Common, surviving areas of ancient enclosure, unscheduled medieval earthworks and moated sites, pockets of ridge and furrow which are unprotected from conversion to arable uses and pockets of parkland, ponds and surviving areas of meadow that are vulnerable to new development [\[See reference 267\]](#).

**3.185** Ultimately new development will have an urbanising effect, however the LCA identifies particular concerns over the potential loss of tranquillity and the appropriate protection of the predominantly rural character [\[See reference 268\]](#). This also applies to the infrastructure that accompanies new development with expressed concerns over minor/secondary roads and bridges that contribute to landscape character.

**3.186** Water resources and quality are explored in the relevant water section of the baseline information, however in landscape terms it is recognised; that river corridors often provide far reaching and tranquil views that the floodplain around river corridors contributes to the character; and that there are opportunities to improve the recreational links to rivers in many cases [\[See reference 269\]](#).

**3.187** The LCA further identifies that the farming industry plays a role in maintaining significant landscape features and characteristics, including grazing of grasslands and field boundary and associated habitat management [\[See reference 270\]](#). Agricultural reorganisation is also identified as a sensitivity for a number of landscape types and it will be important to monitor the effects of changing practices [\[See reference 271\]](#). Central Bedfordshire Council has commissioned a new Landscape Character Assessment that once published, will inform the SEA.

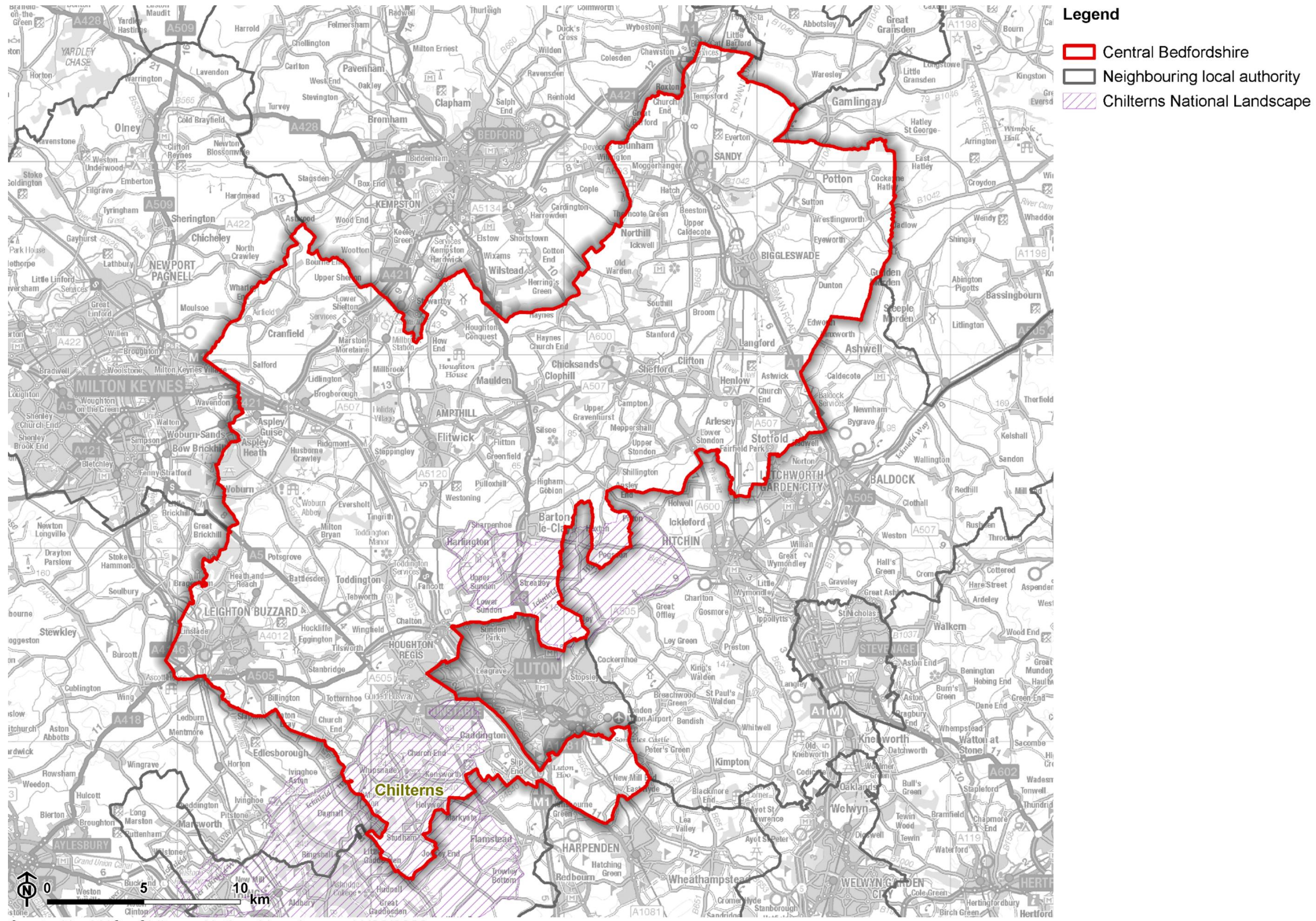
Figure 3.20: National Character Areas



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Figure 3.21: Chilterns National Landscape



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## Key issues

- The need to balance demand for new development with the retention of a predominantly rural landscape character with important ridges, large areas of flat land, far-reaching views and high levels of tranquillity.
- The need to maintain traditional field boundaries, habitats and building materials that contribute to landscape character.
- The need to protect the setting of the Chilterns National Landscape.
- There are a number of settlements that are vulnerable or sensitive to changes in the landscape/ townscape, as identified within the Landscape Character Assessment.

## Evolution without the plan

**3.188** Without the new Local Plan, designated landscapes will retain a level of protection in accommodating new development, however as identified in the baseline information above, a number of non-designated features, assets and characteristics significantly contribute to the overall landscape character and sense of place. The Local Plan offers a delivery mechanism for extended protection of these key assets, for example policy protection for non-designated assets, or protection against coalescence; thus, reducing the risk of loss, or detriment to, factors affecting landscape character. The new Local Plan can also coordinate opportunity and investment across the whole of the plan area to ensure that development delivers the best possible, high quality and multifunctional benefits, for example in delivering development that can support the targets of the Marston Vale Community Forest. Therefore, without the new Local Plan, future development has an increased likelihood of resulting in negative effects on landscape character and a decreased likelihood of delivering coordinated and prioritised improvements, although the policies in the adopted Local Plan are reasonably up to date and would still apply. With changing agricultural practices, the Local Plan can also provide a flexible policy approach to agricultural land management and appropriately monitor the effects of the changes in the industry and its implications for the landscape.

## Chapter 4

### SEA framework

**4.1** The development of a set of SEA objectives (known as the SEA framework) is a recognised way in which the likely environmental and sustainability effects of a plan can be described, analysed and compared.

**4.2** The proposed SEA framework for the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan is presented in Table 4.1 below. The previous SA/SEA framework for the adopted Central Bedfordshire Local Plan was used as a starting point to inform the preparation of this SEA framework although it has been amended and updated to take into account the up-to-date analysis of international, national and local policy objectives, baseline information and the current key sustainability issues identified for Central Bedfordshire.

**4.3** The SEA framework comprises a series of SEA objectives against which the sustainability of the Local Plan will be appraised. The appraisal of the Local Plan options, policies and site allocations against these SEA objectives will be guided in part by the appraisal questions accompanying each objective. The questions included in the framework are not exhaustive and some may be more relevant to certain elements of the Local Plan than others.

**4.4** All of the topics specifically required by the SEA Regulations (set out in Schedule 2 of the SEA Regulations) are clearly addressed by the headline SEA objectives, as shown in the final column of the table.

### SEA objective 1: To protect and enhance biodiversity and geodiversity

#### Decision aiding questions

- Is the option likely to provide opportunities to enhance biodiversity and geodiversity, or provide a net gain?
- Is the option likely to have an effect on any nationally or locally designated sites?
- Could the option result in the loss or fragmentation of important green and blue infrastructure for biodiversity or ecological corridors?

- Will the option maximise green and blue infrastructure, including maintenance of green and blue assets?
- Will the option protect sensitive habitats and species from the impacts of air pollution?
- Does the option give consideration to the nature recovery network?
- Will the option ensure growth areas do not undermine ecological resilience?
- Will the option encourage use of SANGs so as to discourage residents from travelling to the Chilterns Beechwoods SAC?

## SEA topics

- Biodiversity;
- Fauna; and
- Flora.

## **SEA objective 2: To improve the health and wellbeing of communities**

### Decision aiding questions

- Will the option improve access to health and social care services and facilities?
- Will the option promote healthy lifestyles?
- Will the option ensure there is access to greenspace, countryside, public spaces, rights of way, play areas for people to enjoy?
- Will the option support local and sustainable food production through community gardens and garden community models, in addition to farmers' markets?
- Will the option help prevent the urban heat island effect and its impact on people's health and wellbeing?

## SEA topics

- Population;
- Human health; and

- Climatic factors.

## **SEA objective 3: To ensure that the housing needs of all residents and communities are met**

### Decision aiding questions

- Will the option provide sufficient housing to meet the identified needs of all communities within the plan area?
- Will the option provide an appropriate mix of types of housing to meet the identified needs of all communities within the plan area, including older people?
- Will the option promote the delivery of affordable housing?
- Will the option help provide sites for Gypsies and Travellers, and Travelling Showpeople?

### SEA topics

- Population; and
- Material assets.

## **SEA objective 4: To reduce inequalities**

### Decision aiding questions

- Will the option ensure there are cultural/social/community facilities and activities for people to enjoy/participate in?
- Will the option reduce health and other inequalities amongst different groups in the community?
- Will the option encourage the development of strong and cohesive communities?
- Will the option address fuel poverty?
- Will the option prevent development that results in, or reduce, community severance?

## SEA topics

- Population; and
- Human health.

## **SEA objective 5: To maintain and improve air quality, and prevent noise pollution**

### Decision aiding questions

- Is the option likely to prevent significant increases in levels of traffic, particularly in areas already experiencing congestion issues?
- Will the option help mitigate any increase in traffic within the AQMA?
- Will the option help minimise any increases in air pollution from transport and other sources?
- Will the option limit noise pollution, particularly during the night?
- Will the option conserve areas of tranquillity and contribute to visual and audible peace?

## SEA topics

- Air.

## **SEA objective 6: To encourage modal shift and reduce the need to travel by private cars**

### Decision aiding questions

- Will the option improve access to good quality sustainable transport links for all communities?
- Does the option support the delivery of sustainable transport infrastructure, such as East West Rail or local cycling, walking or public transport schemes?
- Will the option encourage the use of more sustainable modes of transport and reduce dependence on the private car?

- Will the option tackle rural mobility issues by improving connectivity and accessibility?

## SEA topics

- Air;
- Human health; and
- Climatic factors.

## **SEA objective 7: To minimise the demand for water and maintain or improve water quality**

### Decision aiding questions

- Is the option likely to protect and make efficient use of water resources?
- Is the option likely to protect and improve water quality?
- Will the option ensure growth areas do not undermine water resilience?
- Will the option optimise site water management with greywater harvesting/reuse, low-flow toilets, dual flush operations, etc.?

## SEA topics

- Population; and
- Water.

## **SEA objective 8: To protect and conserve soils**

### Decision aiding questions

- Is the option likely to result in the loss of greenfield land?
- Will the option limit development on best and most versatile agricultural land?
- Will the option minimise the effects of development on local food production?

## SEA topics

- Soil.

## SEA objective 9: To mitigate and adapt to the effects of climate change

### Decision aiding questions

- Will the option encourage energy efficiency in existing buildings?
- Will the option ensure the inclusion of flood mitigation measures such as sustainable drainage systems?
- Will the option ensure new developments are able to withstand extreme weather events (e.g. heatwaves, storms, flooding and wildfires)?
- Will the option reduce greenhouse gas emissions?
- Will the option result in an increase in renewable energy or low carbon generation (e.g. heat pumps and PVs) and storage?
- Will the option ensure new development is low carbon/carbon neutral, including through its design?
- Will the option help the council achieve carbon neutrality by 2030?
- Will the option encourage the use of low/zero carbon transport modes including increasing EV uptake through the provision of EV charging points?
- Will the option ensure climate resilience?
- Will the option support the transition from gas to electricity and consider alternative sustainable fuel sources (e.g. hydrogen)?
- Will the option reduce embodied carbon?
- Will the option support the creation of a smart energy grid in Central Bedfordshire?

## SEA topics

- Climatic factors.

## **SEA objective 10: To reduce the risk of flooding from all sources**

### Decision aiding questions

- Will the option direct development towards low flood risk areas or areas that are not at risk of flooding?
- Will the option safeguard land to manage flood risk?
- Will the option promote the use of sustainable drainage systems?

### SEA topics

- Water.

## **SEA objective 11: To improve accessibility to services and facilities**

### Decision aiding questions

- Will the option ensure that a sufficient level of services/facilities will be delivered to meet the identified needs of all communities?
- Will the option improve levels of access to services for specific groups, including those who are less likely to have access to a car?
- Will the option improve access to education opportunities?
- Will the option improve access to cultural facilities?

### SEA topics

- Population;
- Human health; and
- Material assets.

## **SEA objective 12: To support the economy and ensure that there are suitable opportunities for employment**

### Decision aiding questions

- Will the option provide sufficient high quality employment land to meet the identified needs of all communities within the plan area?
- Will the option contribute to the provision of a range of types of employment land?
- Will the option provide sufficient safeguarding for existing employment land in the plan area?
- Will the option offer the opportunity to support and enhance the vitality and viability of town and service centres, in particular Dunstable?
- Will the option result in the loss of any existing strategic employment opportunities?
- Will the option regenerate or provide employment opportunities in areas that are currently experiencing high rates of unemployment?
- Will the option provide employment opportunities that are accessible without using a car?
- Will the option provide opportunities to enhance training and skills development?
- Will the option help facilitate a green economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and its associated economic recession?
- Will the option support a low-carbon economy, local supply chains and job creation?

### SEA topics

- Population; and
- Material assets.

## **SEA objective 13: To support the efficient use of resources and management of waste**

### Decision aiding questions

- Will the option encourage the prudent use of mineral resources?
- Is the option likely to reduce the amount of waste produced?
- Is the option likely to reduce the amount of waste sent to landfill?
- Is the option likely to maximise the recovery, re-use and recycling of waste?
- Will the option support the circular economy?
- Will the option reduce waste produced throughout the entire lifecycle of buildings?

### SEA topics

- Material assets.

## **SEA objective 14: To protect and enhance the historic environment**

### Decision aiding questions

- Is the option likely to have an effect on a nationally or locally designated heritage asset and/or their settings?
- Is the option likely to have an effect on any important or protected non-designated heritage assets and/or their setting or any potential archaeology?
- Will the option provide opportunities for enhancement of the historic environment and its setting?

### SEA topics

- Cultural heritage.

## **SEA objective 15: To protect and enhance the landscape and townscape**

### Decision aiding questions

- Is the option likely to have an effect on the Chilterns National Landscape or its setting?
- Is the option likely to have an effect on the wider rural landscape character?
- Is the option likely to maintain and enhance community and settlement identities?
- Is the option likely to enhance townscapes?
- Will the option provide an opportunity to regenerate previously developed land or restore derelict sites?

### SEA topics

- Landscape.

## Chapter 5

### Next steps

**5.1** In order to meet the requirements of the SEA Regulations, the views of the three statutory consultees (Environment Agency, Historic England and Natural England) are being sought in relation to the scope and level of detail to be included in the SEA Report. Neighbouring authorities will also be given the opportunity to comment on the scope.

**5.2** Consultees are in particular requested to consider the following:

- Whether the scope of the SEA is appropriate as set out considering the role of the Central Bedfordshire Local Plan to help meet and manage Central Bedfordshire's needs;
- Whether there are any additional plans, policies or programmes that are relevant to the SEA that should be included;
- Whether the baseline information provided is robust and comprehensive and provides a suitable baseline for the SEA of the Local Plan;
- Whether there are any additional key sustainability issues relevant to the Local Plan that should be included; and
- Whether the SEA framework (Chapter 4) is appropriate and includes a suitable set of SEA objectives for assessing the effects of the options included within the Local Plan as well as reasonable alternatives.

**5.3** Responses from consultees will be reviewed and appropriate amendments made to the information contained in the Scoping Report, including the baseline information, policy context and SEA framework where necessary.

**5.4** As the Local Plan is drafted, it will be subject to SEA using the SEA framework presented in Chapter 4. A full SEA Report (incorporating the next stages of the SEA process) will then be produced and made available to other stakeholders and the general public for wider consultation alongside the emerging Local Plan. This will include any amendments to the Scoping work arising from the consultation with statutory bodies on this report.

LUC

June 2026

# Appendix A

## Review of plans, policies and programmes

### Key policies, plans and programmes

#### International

**A.1** European Directives have shaped SEA, planning and environmental, social and economic regulation, including Directive 2001/42/EC on the assessment of the effects of certain plan and programmes on the environment (the ‘SEA Directive’). Following its departure from the European Union on 31 January 2020, the UK entered a transition period which ended on 31 December 2020. After that date directly applicable EU law no longer applies to the UK and the UK is free to repeal EU law that has been transposed into UK law. As set out in the Explanatory Memorandum accompanying the Brexit amendments, the purpose of the Brexit amendments to the SEA Regulations is to ensure that the law functions correctly now that the UK has left the EU. No substantive changes are being made by this instrument to the way the SEA regime operates.

**A.2** Relevant international plans and policy are transposed into national plans, policy and legislation and these have been considered in the following sections.

#### National

**A.3** There is an extensive range of national policies, plans and programmes that are of relevance to the SEA process. A pragmatic and proportionate approach has been taken with regards to the identification of key national policies, plans and programmes, focusing on those that are of most relevance, which are set out below:

- Climate Change Committee, A Well-Adapted UK: The Fourth Independent Assessment of UK Climate Risk (CCRA4-IA), 2026 – sets out climate risks, actions, and enablers across 14 key systems including health, land, and the economy. This includes targets in 2050 for excess heat-related mortality to be no greater, and ideally lower, than today’s annual average.
- Department of Health and Social Care, Health Bill, 2026 – was introduced to the House of Common in May 2026 and seeks to improve patient care. The bill will:
  - Improve patient safety and experience through a new single patient record, enabling joined-up, proactive care and empowering patients;

- Put power and resources in the hands of frontline NHS organisations by abolishing NHS England and stripping back national bureaucracy; and
- Clarify the role of local health bodies, giving them real flexibility to design and deliver health services to best meet the needs of their local populations.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The Future Homes and Buildings Standards: Building Circular 01/2026, 2026 – sets out amendments to Building Regulations in England aimed at delivering highly energy-efficient, low-carbon new homes and buildings.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, Environmental Outcomes Reports: Roadmap to reform, 2026 – sets out that the Government plans to replace Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) and Strategic Environmental Assessments (SEA) with Environmental Outcomes Reports (EORs) by 2027, creating a simpler, outcomes-focused system that assesses how development contributes to environmental objectives rather than merely documenting impacts. The reforms aim to:
  - Allow communities to better understand the environmental effects of development;
  - Give developers the certainty and clarity they need to embed environmental considerations from the outset; and
  - Provide decision-makers with the information they need to give the environment sufficient weight and support robust, informed decisions.
- Department for Transport, Better Connected: a strategy for integrated transport, 2026 – Sets out UK government’s vision for domestic transport in England under eight priorities. The following objectives are of particular relevance to spatial planning:
  - Transport will help create healthier communities, where making healthy travel choices will be easy and convenient, supporting cleaner, quieter and more liveable places.
  - Pavements and cycle paths must be planned, maintained, and managed with the same priority as road infrastructure.
  - In urban areas: Spatial planning should consider proximity to public transport links and building at high and ambitious densities to support its use, creating developments where people do not need to rely on private cars to access shops, jobs and education opportunities.
  - In suburban area: Spatial planning should consider proximity to public transport links and building at higher densities to support public transport

viability, considering proximity to shops, services and other facilities to encourage walking, wheeling and cycling for shorter trips.

- In rural areas: Spatial planning should consider how to minimise transport-related social exclusion and ensure that solutions align with local housing, environmental priorities and the Land Use Framework.
- Department for Business and Trade and Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, 2025 – UK government’s strategic initiative, under the Modern Industrial Strategy, to position the nation as a global leader in frontier clean energy technologies by 2035. The plan sets out an ambition to double investment across key clean energy industries, such as wind (onshore, offshore, floating), nuclear fission, fusion, hydrogen, carbon capture, usage and storage (CCUS), greenhouse gas removals, and heat pumps, to over £30 billion per year, while continuing to support other vital technologies like solar, long-duration energy storage and bioenergy.
- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Hydrogen update to the market, 2025 – provides a detailed overview of the UK’s hydrogen policy progress UK’s and outlines forthcoming opportunities as part of the government’s Clean Energy Superpower and Growth Missions. Significant investment commitments include over £500 million allocated toward developing the first regional hydrogen transport and storage network, aiming for operation by 2031, supported by a forthcoming Hydrogen to Power Business Model in 2026.
- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Hydrogen Update to the Market, 2025 – provides a detailed overview of the UK’s hydrogen policy progress UK’s and outlines forthcoming opportunities as part of the government’s Clean Energy Superpower and Growth Missions. Significant investment commitments include over £500 million allocated toward developing the first regional hydrogen transport and storage network, aiming for operation by 2031, supported by a forthcoming Hydrogen to Power Business Model in 2026.
- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Onshore Wind Strategy, 2025 – presents the country’s first dedicated strategy to accelerate onshore wind deployment as a key component of its Clean Power 2030 mission. The strategy sets a target of deploying 27-29GW of onshore wind capacity across Great Britain by 2030, significantly increasing from existing capacity of over 16GW, and backed by over 40 actions to tackle barriers such as planning delays, aviation and defence conflicts, grid access, and community engagement.
- UK Government, Carbon Budget and Growth Delivery Plan, 2025 – sets out how the government will meet its statutory carbon budgets and secure the benefits of this transition for people and businesses. The plan sets out a package of quantified and unquantified proposals and policies and associated

timescales and delivery risks. This includes actions around energy security and lower bills, such as incentivising new clean electricity generating projects in Great Britain.

- Defra, Environmental Improvement Plan, 2025 – Long-term delivery plan setting out 10 goals, commitments and actions in relation to the natural environment. The plan sets out how the government will work with landowners, communities and businesses to deliver each goal for improving the environment, matched with interim targets to measure progress. Taking these actions will help to restore nature, reduce environmental pollution, and increase the prosperity of the country. The overarching goal of the plan is achieving “restored nature”, including progress towards the commitment to protect 30% of UK land and sea for nature by 2030, alongside improving the condition and resilience of nature assets.
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities, 2025 Future Homes and Building Standards, 2024 – these standards set ambitious requirements for energy efficiency and heating for new homes and non-domestic buildings. The standards are in line with the Government’s 2050 net zero target and will mean that no further work will be needed for new buildings to produce zero carbon emissions as the electricity grid decarbonises. The key requirements are:
  - Fabric efficiency;
  - Low-carbon heating and hot water systems;
  - Renewable energy readiness;
  - EV charging infrastructure; and
  - Ventilation.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, Guide to the Planning and Infrastructure Bill, 2025 – Sets out the Government’s plan to support housing and economic growth. The Bill aims to speed up and streamline the delivery of new homes and critical infrastructure, supporting delivery of the government’s Plan for Change milestones of building 1.5 million safe and decent homes in England and fast-tracking 150 planning decisions on major economic infrastructure projects by the end of the current Parliament. It will also support delivery of the government’s Clean Power 2030 target by ensuring that key clean energy projects are built as quickly as possible.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Renters’ Rights Act, 2025 – Aims to improve renters’ security and rights. The Act delivers the government’s manifesto commitment to transform the experience of private renting, including by ending Section 21 ‘no fault’ evictions. The Act will improve the current system for both the 11 million private renters and 2.3 million

landlords in England. It will give renters much greater security and stability so they can stay in their homes for longer, build lives in their communities, and avoid the risk of homelessness.

- Homes England, *Healthy Homes — a foundation for healthier and resilient communities, 2025* – Sets out core specification and good practice guidance to help support the delivery of healthier living environments. The guidance also covers neurodiversity, and the adoption of an ‘age-friendly’ design approach that supports residents and households to live independently throughout the different stages of their life. Beyond individual wellbeing, Healthy Homes support sustainability and affordability, helping to lower energy costs and reduce carbon emissions.
- Environment Agency, *National Framework for Water Resources 2025: Water for Growth, Nature and a Resilient Future, 2025* – provides a strategic blueprint for managing England’s long term water needs. It emphasises the twin imperatives of securing resilient water supplies to support housing, energy, food production, economic growth, and a thriving natural environment, while safeguarding ecosystems through sustainable abstraction and nature based solutions. The Framework projects significant pressures on water resources driven by climate change, population growth, and emerging industrial demands, forecasting a shortfall of up to 5 billion litres per day by 2055. It calls for integrated, multi sector planning across national, regional, and local levels, combining demand management (such as leakage reduction and efficiency improvements) with development of new infrastructure and environmental enhancements.
- Environment Agency, *National Assessment of Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk in England (‘NaFRA 2’), 2025* – provides an assessment of flood and coastal risk in England. The assessment provides detailed maps and data for current and future risks from rivers, the sea, and surface water, incorporating climate change projections and confirms that approximately 6.3 million properties are in areas at risk of flooding from one or a combination of sources (rivers, the sea, and surface water). The total number of properties in areas at risk from surface water is around 4.6 million, representing a 43% increase compared with the previous assessment in 2018. NaFRA 2 also highlights significant increases in properties located in high-risk zones, especially for surface water flooding.
- Environment Agency, *Drought: how it is managed in England, 2025* – details how drought affects England and how the Environment Agency works with government, water companies and others to manage the effects on people, business and the environment. It aims to ensure consistency in the way we co-ordinate drought management across England. It sets out:
  - The impacts of drought in England;

- Who is involved in planning, managing and responding and how we work together;
  - The actions we and others take to effectively manage droughts;
  - How we report on drought and communicate with others; and
  - Our role in recovery and learning from drought events.
- HM Treasury and National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority, UK Infrastructure: A 10 Year Strategy, 2025 – Sets out an integrated plan to transform economic, housing and social infrastructure over the next decade. It commits to at least £725 billion in public investment, supplemented by private financing via carefully targeted public-private partnership models and a new National Wealth Fund. The strategy introduces multiyear capital budgets (initially five-year, reviewed biennially) and establishes the National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority (NISTA) to unify planning, improve project delivery, assure major schemes, and coordinate a transparent Infrastructure Pipeline launched in July 2025.
  - Department for Business and Trade, The UK’s Modern Industrial Strategy, 2025 – Outlines a 10-year plan to boost business investment and elevate the UK’s performance in eight designated growth driving sectors: advanced manufacturing; clean energy industries; creative industries; defence; digital and technologies; financial services; life sciences; and professional & business services.
  - National Infrastructure and Service Transformation Authority and James Murray MP, UK Infrastructure Pipeline, 2025 – The Pipeline provides industry and investors with up-to-date information on public and privately delivered infrastructure projects in construction, under development or in pre-project stages where a clear strategic need has been prioritised by the UK Government or in business plans.
  - Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Clean Power 2030 Action Plan: A New Era of Clean Electricity, 2024 – Sets out a pathway to a clean power system by 2030, outlining what the Government will do to support and accelerate delivery of the new infrastructure. It seeks to address the following challenges:
    - To maintain a secure and affordable energy supply in an increasingly unstable world;
    - To create new industries and investments around the country; and
    - To protect the environment, we live in from the most damaging effects of climate change.

- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, 2024 – Sets out the Government’s planning policy for traveller sites. The Government’s overarching aim is to ensure fair and equal treatment for travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community.
- Defra, Agricultural Transition Plan 2021 to 2024, 2024 – aims to drive competitiveness, increase productivity, reduce carbon emissions and generate fairer returns across the agricultural industry. The plan introduces several new schemes to improve the environment, animal health and welfare and farm resilience and productivity (e.g. grants will be available for sustainable farming practices, creating habitats for nature recovery and making landscape-scale changes such as establishing new woodland and other ecosystem services).
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), 2023 [See reference 272] – the NPPF is the overarching planning framework which provides national planning policy and principles for the planning system in England. The new Labour Government is currently undertaking consultation on a new version of the NPPF which will close on 24 September 2024. As the NPPF updates are currently only at consultation stage and there may be further amendments in the final version (due to be published in late 2024), this SEA Scoping Report refers to the current NPPF. Later stages of the SEA will take into account any new versions of the NPPF at the relevant times.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) – sets out the Government’s planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied and is an online resource that is updated on a regular basis.
- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, The Clean Power 2030 Action Plan, 2024 – sets out a pathway to a clean power system by 2030, outlining what the Government will do to support and accelerate delivery of the new infrastructure. It seeks to address the following challenges:
  - To maintain a secure and affordable energy supply in an increasingly unstable world;
  - To create new industries and investments around the country; and
  - To protect the environment, we live in from the most damaging effects of climate change.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Planning Policy for Traveller Sites, 2024 – sets out the Government’s planning policy for traveller sites. The Government’s overarching aim is to ensure fair and equal treatment

for travellers, in a way that facilitates the traditional and nomadic way of life of travellers while respecting the interests of the settled community.

- Prime Minister's Office, Plan for Change, 2024 – sets out the Government's milestones for growing the economy as well as delivering an improved NHS, safer streets, opportunities for all, and infrastructure for clean energy.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, Policy Statement on New Towns, 2024 – outlines a strategic vision to stimulate economic growth and enhance living standards by constructing 1.5 million new homes during the current parliamentary term. Central to this initiative is the development of large-scale communities, each comprising at least 10,000 homes, through both standalone new towns on greenfield sites and significant urban extensions or regeneration projects. These developments aim to address housing demand, alleviate constraints in existing urban areas, and align with national infrastructure plans.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 – sets out the direction for planning and makes provisions to support the levelling-up agenda. It seeks to streamline the planning process while attaching greater weight to development plans. It also aims to improve infrastructure delivery with a new levy system, improve alignment between plans to address cross-boundary issues, and will introduce added protection for heritage assets. The Act also states that existing EU-generated systems of SEA, HRA and EIA will eventually be replaced by a simpler process known as 'Environmental Outcomes Reports'.
- HM Government, The Building Regulations etc. (Amendment) (England) Regulations 2023 – the Building Regulations, including recent amendments, seek to protect people's safety, health and welfare, in addition to setting standards for accessibility, water use, energy use and security in construction amongst other things.
- Homes England, Homes England Strategic Plan 2023-2028, 2023 – this 5-year plan spans financial year 2023 to 2024 to financial year 2027 to 2028. It outlines Homes England's mission, their strategic objectives and what they are aiming to deliver and how they will measure performance.
- UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) strategic plan 2023 to 2026, 2023 – Outlines UKHSA's goals and strategic priorities for the 3-year period to protect the nation's health from current and future threats.
- The Plan for Drivers, 2023 – published under the 2022 to 2024 Sunak Conservative Government, this document sets out how the Government will improve the experience of driving and services provided for motorists. It focuses

on five key issues and includes a list of actions that the Government will pursue with local authorities and others to ensure drivers get a fair deal alongside other road users. The key issues are:

- Smoother journeys;
  - Stopping unfair enforcement;
  - Easier parking;
  - Cracking down on inconsiderate driving; and
  - Helping the transition to zero emission driving.
- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, The Carbon Budget Delivery Plan, 2023 – details the government’s approach to meeting its legally-binding climate goals with a mix of quantified and unquantified proposals and policies, along with their timelines and delivery risks. It addresses wider issues related to carbon budgets, the contribution to sustainable development and the impact on various economic sectors.
  - Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, The Energy Security Plan, 2023 – outlines government steps to enhance the UK’s energy system resilience amid current geopolitical challenges. Key commitments include improving gas security through storage and flexibility, delivering energy efficiency upgrades via the Great British Insulation Scheme, extending the Boiler Upgrade Scheme to 2028 and establishing Great British Nuclear for new nuclear projects. The plan also includes selecting Small Modular Reactor technologies, investing £160 million in Floating Offshore Wind Manufacturing, reducing transmission network development times, accelerating electricity network connections, expanding carbon capture projects, advancing hydrogen production and revising energy policy statements to expedite planning processes.
  - Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, The Net Zero Growth Plan, 2023 – outlines the UK Government’s strategy to achieve net zero and capitalise on financial benefits. Key commitments include publishing an addendum to the Resources and Waste Strategy to reduce biodegradable waste in landfills, responding to a revised Waste Prevention Programme, providing up to £20 billion for early CCUS deployment and consulting on a Zero Emission Vehicle mandate. Other measures include introducing heat network regulations, funding decarbonisation skills, integrating greenhouse gas removals into the Emissions Trading Scheme and publishing the Biomass Strategy to support BECCS. The plan also focuses on supporting high integrity voluntary markets and preventing greenwashing.
  - Homes England, Strategic Plan 2023 to 2028, 2023 – provides five interconnected strategic objectives to level up communities across England.

These strategic objectives together seek the creation of sustainable high-quality homes in well-designed places that reflect community priorities by taking an inclusive and long-term approach.

- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, Anti-Social Behaviour Action Plan, 2023 – sets out a new approach to working with local agencies to tackle anti-social behaviour across England and Wales. The plan intends to change laws and systems to take a zero-tolerance approach and give the police and other agencies the tools they need to discourage anti-social behaviour.
- Natural England, Green Infrastructure Framework, 2023 – helps local planning authorities and developers meet requirements in the National Planning Policy Framework to consider GI in local plans and in new development. It can support better planning for good quality GI and help to target the creation or improvement of GI, particularly where existing provision is poorest.
- Defra, The Woodland Access Implementation Plan, 2023 – extends the goals of the England Trees Action Plan (ETAP) by enhancing connections between people and woodland. It focuses on increasing and sustaining access to woodlands by funding through current land management schemes, providing guidance to encourage best practices among landowners and managers, improving public access information, promoting the Countryside Code and safeguarding and enhancing existing access rights.
- Department for Transport, Future of Transport: supporting rural transport innovation, 2023 – shows how innovative and emerging transport technologies could address some of the major challenges in rural communities. It highlights the importance of transport to everyday life rural life and provides guiding principles for the introduction of new technologies and services.
- Defra, Air quality strategy for England, 2023 – sets out local authorities' powers and responsibilities as well as the actions that Defra expects local authorities to take in support of the governments long-term air quality goals, including new PM2.5 targets.
- Defra, Plan for Water: Our Integrated Plan for Delivering Clean and Plentiful Water, 2023 – sets out actions to transform the management of the water system, deliver cleaner water for nature and people and secure a plentiful water supply. The plan also sets out measures to address sources of pollution and boost water supplies through more investment, tighter regulation and more effective enforcement.
- HM Government, The National Adaptation Programme and the Fourth Strategy for Climate Adaptation Reporting, 2023 – details a set of actions spanning five years across key sectors. These include enhancing infrastructure resilience with

new standards and transport strategies, integrating climate adaptation into environmental schemes and nature recovery projects, investing in flood and coastal erosion schemes and updating planning policies for local climate projections. Additionally, it focuses on developing green finance strategies, enhancing supply chain resilience and assessing business readiness for climate impacts. Internationally, it aims to bolster resilience in vulnerable communities and drive global consensus on climate adaptation efforts.

- Defra, The Waste Prevention Programme for England: Maximising Resources, Minimising Waste, 2023 – outlines the government’s strategy to manage resources and waste in alignment with the England Resources and Waste Strategy. It focuses on transitioning to a circular economy by maximising the longevity and value of goods through increased reuse, repair and remanufacturing efforts.
- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Biomass Strategy, 2023 – builds on previous policies, highlighting biomass’s role in achieving a fully decarbonised UK power system by 2035. It outlines government plans to enhance biomass sustainability and expand its use across various sectors to support the UK’s net zero target. The strategy includes implementing a cross-sectoral sustainability framework, monitoring biomass supply levels and ensuring an uninterrupted supply despite increasing demand. Prioritising sustainable use, it promotes bioenergy with carbon capture and storage (BECCS) to produce low-carbon energy and capture CO<sub>2</sub>.
- Historic England, Corporate Plan 2022-2026, 2023 – contains the action plan which sets out how the aims of the Corporate Plan will be delivered. The plan includes priorities to demonstrate how Historic England will continue to work towards delivering the heritage sector’s priorities for the historic environment.
- Ministry of Defence, The Defence Operational Energy Strategy, 2023 – outlines the Ministry of Defence’s response to the global energy transition, aiming to revolutionise its approach to operational energy management. The strategy focuses on achieving operational advantage by optimising energy decisions, promoting coherence across operations and enhancing organisational agility. It seeks to foster a cultural shift towards more efficient and effective energy use within the MOD.
- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero, Net zero government emissions: UK roadmap, 2023 – as part of the Net Zero Government Initiative outlines the journey to central government net zero emissions. It covers the policies and interim targets around government buildings and transport, procurement and skills.

- Department for Transport, Future of Transport: supporting rural transport innovation, 2023 – shows how innovative and emerging transport technologies could address some of the major challenges in rural communities. It highlights the importance of transport to everyday life rural life and provides guiding carbonising Transport: Setting the Challenge principles for the introduction of new technologies and services.
- National Highways, Environmental Sustainability Strategy, 2023 – sets out National Highways' vision for the organisation in terms of the role it can play in national prosperity and helping to protect and enhance the environment. It sets out that the organisation will deliver net zero corporate emissions by 2030, maintenance and construction emissions by 2040 and road user emissions by 2050.
- Department for Transport and Active Travel England, The second cycling and walking investment strategy (CWIS2), 2023 – sets out National Highways' vision for the organisation in terms of the role it can play in national prosperity and helping to protect and enhance the environment. It sets out that the organisation will deliver net zero corporate emissions by 2030, maintenance and construction emissions by 2040 and road user emissions by 2050.
- Department for Education, Sustainability and Climate Change Strategy, 2022 – outlines the Department for Education's vision for the UK to lead globally in education sector sustainability and climate action by 2030. It focuses on four strategic aims for England: achieving excellence in education and skills for a changing world, transitioning to net zero emissions, building resilience to climate change impacts and creating a healthier environment for future generations.
- Defra, Establishing the Best Available Techniques for the UK (UK BAT), 2022 – introduces a framework to improve industrial emissions and environmental protection. It includes a new governance structure with an independent Standards Council, a Regulators Group from all UK nations and a UK Air Quality Governance Group.
- Environment Agency, Working with Nature, 2022 – discusses the importance of nature in providing ecosystem services and presents recent and historical trends in biodiversity.
- Defra, The Nature Recovery Network, 2022 – a commitment in the government's Environmental Improvement Plan. Defra and Natural England are bringing together partners, policies and funding to strengthen and grow a national Nature Recovery Network in England.
- Secretary for Transport, The Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy Report to Parliament, 2022 – sets out the objectives and financial resources for cycling

and walking infrastructure. It states the Government's long-term ambition is to make walking and cycling the natural choices for shorter journeys. It aims to double cycling by 2025, increase walking activity, increase the percentage of children that usually walk to school and reduce the number of cyclists killed or seriously injured on England's roads.

- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities, A fairer private rented sector White Paper, 2022 – aims to build on the Levelling Up White Paper's vision by reforming the Private Rented Sector to improve housing quality. It emphasises that everyone deserves a secure and decent home and outlines measures to enhance the renting experience in this sector.
- Department for Transport, The Future of Freight Plan, 2022 – aims to develop a freight and logistics sector that is cost-efficient, reliable, resilient, environmentally sustainable and socially valued. It addresses challenges and outlines objectives and actions across five priority areas: the National Freight Network (NFN), transitioning to net zero emissions, planning strategies, developing skills and workforce and enhancing data and technology utilisation.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Design Guide, 2021 – sets out the Government's priorities for well-designed places in the form of ten characteristics: context, identity, built form, movement, nature, public spaces, uses, homes and buildings, resources and lifespan.
- Department of Health and Social Care, Build Back Better: Our Plan for Health and Social Care, 2021 – outlines the government's strategy to address the NHS electives backlog and ensure its sustainability. It details adult social care reforms in England, including a cap on care costs and financial assistance for those without substantial assets. The plan also covers broader support for the social care system, improvements in health and social care integration and the introduction of a new Health and Social Care Levy.
- Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, The Industrial Decarbonisation Strategy, 2021 – supports decarbonising existing industries and fostering new low-carbon sectors to protect and create skilled jobs in the UK, aligning with the Prime Minister's 10 Point Plan for a Green Industrial Revolution. It aims to reduce emissions by two-thirds in 15 years, support 80,000 jobs over 30 years and produce 20 terawatt hours of low-carbon energy for industry by 2030. Key commitments include using carbon pricing, establishing a policy framework for low-carbon alternatives, implementing new product standards and ensuring the planning regime supports low-carbon infrastructure. Additionally, it aims for 3 megatons of CO<sub>2</sub> capture annually by 2030, zero avoidable waste in heavy industries by 2050 and significant energy cost savings and emission reductions for businesses.

- Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, The Heat and Buildings Strategy, 2021 – outlines the UK Government’s plan to drastically cut carbon emissions from homes and workplaces. It sets clear goals for the 2020s, including reducing public sector building emissions by 75% and phasing out new natural gas boilers after 2035. The strategy aims to expand the heat pump market, reduce installation costs and ensure affordability by 2030. It also focuses on making new buildings net zero ready from 2025, trialling hydrogen for heating, improving energy efficiency in fuel poor homes and supporting low-income households with grants for home upgrades.
- HM Government, The Energy Performance of Buildings Regulations, 2021 – seeks to improve the energy efficiency of buildings, reducing their carbon emissions and lessening the impact of climate change. The Regulations require the adoption of a standard methodology for calculating energy performance and minimum requirements for energy performance, reported through Energy Performance Certificates and Display Energy Certificates.
- Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Flood risk and coastal change, 2021 – provides guidance on how the planning process can assess, avoid, manage and mitigate the risks associated with flooding and coastal change.
- Bus Back Better, 2021 – published under the 2019 to 2022 Conservative government, this is a national strategy that sets out the vision and opportunity to deliver better bus services for passengers across England, through ambitious and far-reaching reform of how services are planned and delivered. The strategy seeks to increase bus use by ensuring they are an attractive alternative to the car by increasing their service frequency, making them faster and more reliable, ensuring they are affordable and that they are comfortable and easy to use, in addition to being greener. In the strategy, the Government states that they will support the introduction of at least 4,000 more zero emission buses.
- HM Government, Build Back Better: Our Plan for Growth, 2021 – sets out a plan to ‘build back better’ tackling long-term problems to deliver growth that delivers high-quality jobs across the UK while supporting the transition to net zero. This will build on three core pillars of growth: infrastructure, skills and innovation.
- Defra, England Trees Action Plan 2021 to 2024, 2021 – sets out the Government’s long-term vision for trees, woodlands and forests in England. The plan provides a strategic framework for implementing the Nature for Climate Fund for trees and woodland surrounding expanding and connecting, trees and woodlands, including as part of the green economy, protecting and improving, connecting people and knowledge and science. It outlines over 80 policy actions the government is taking over this Parliament to help deliver this vision.

- HM Government, The Environment Act 2021 – sets statutory targets for the recovery of the natural world in four priority areas: air quality, biodiversity, water and resource efficiency and waste reduction.
- Environment Agency, National Chalk Streams Strategy, 2021 – sets the future direction needed to protect and enhance England’s chalk streams.
- Defra, Waste Management Plan for England, 2021 – sets out the measures for England to work towards a zero waste economy.
- Department for Transport, Decarbonising Transport: A Better, Greener Britain, 2021 – outlines the UK Government’s plan to achieve carbon neutrality across the transport sector. Building on the 2020 report, the Decarbonisation Transport Plan (DTP) commits to phasing out new diesel and petrol heavy goods vehicles by 2040, alongside ending sales of polluting cars and vans by 2035 pending consultation. The plan emphasises enhancing public transport, supporting active travel, achieving a net zero rail network by 2050, zero domestic aviation emissions by 2040 and transitioning to green shipping.
- Public Health England, Using the planning system to promote healthy weight environments 2020, Addendum 2021 – provide a framework for local authorities to develop planning guidance that fosters healthy weight environments based on local needs. The Addendum updates the guidance on planning for healthier food environments, particularly regarding hot food takeaways and recommends actions following changes to the Use Class Order in England from 1 September 2020.
- HM Government, The Waste (Circular Economy) (Amendment) Regulations 2020 – amend legislation to enhance waste prevention and management. They require justification for not separating waste for reuse or recycling, limit incineration and landfilling to cases of best environmental outcome and specify requirements for waste management plans. Emphasising the circular economy, the regulations aim to maximise the value of waste and its treatment efficiency for businesses.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, The Charter for Social Housing Residents: Social Housing White Paper, 2020 – outlines the Government’s actions to ensure social housing residents are safe, heard, live in good quality homes and have access to redress when issues arise.
- The Flood and Coastal Erosion Risk Management Policy Statement, 2020 – outlines the government’s goal to enhance national resilience against flood and coastal erosion risks, aiming to minimise harm to people, the environment and the economy. It focuses on five key policy areas: upgrading and expanding flood defences, improving water flow management, utilising natural systems to

mitigate risks and provide additional benefits, enhancing community preparedness and promoting resilient environments through a catchment-based approach.

- The Heritage Alliance, Heritage, 2020 – sets out the historic environment sector’s plan for its priorities between 2015 and 2020.
- UK Parliament, Agriculture Act 2020 – transforms how farmers and land managers in England will receive public funding, prioritising “public goods” like improved air and water quality, biodiversity, soil health, flood reduction and climate change resilience through the Environmental Land Management Scheme. This initiative aligns with the government’s 25 Year Environment Plan and aims to achieve net zero emissions by 2050. The Act supports farmers by enhancing competitiveness, boosting productivity, fostering technology adoption and ensuring fairer returns from the market.
- Department for Transport, Gear Change: A Bold Vision for Cycling and Walking, 2020 – sets out the Government’s vision and actions to transform the UK’s transport system. The vision is “England will be a great walking and cycling nation: Places will be truly walkable. A travel revolution in our streets, towns and communities will have made cycling a mass form of transit. Cycling and walking will be the natural first choice for many journeys with half of all journeys in towns and cities being cycled or walked by 2030”. This vision is supported by four main themes:
  - Better streets for cycling and people;
  - Putting cycling and walking at the heart of transport, place-making, and health policy;
  - Empowering and encouraging local authorities; and
  - Enabling people to cycle and be protected when they cycle.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Historic environment, 2019 – advises on enhancing and conserving the historic environment through planning, decision-making, designation, listed building consent processes and consultation.
- Green Belt, 2019 – provides advice on the role of the Green Belt in the planning system, removal of land from the Green Belt and compensatory improvements.
- HM Government, The Conservation of Habitats and Species (Amendment) (EU Exit) Regulations 2019 – aims to safeguard biodiversity by preserving natural habitats and wild fauna and flora, including birds. These regulations establish guidelines for their protection, management and sustainable use, emphasising

the avoidance, minimisation and reporting of adverse impacts on these habitats and species.

- Defra, Clean Air Strategy, 2019 – sets out the comprehensive action that is required from across all parts of government and society to meet goals relating to ensuring cleaner air. This is to be underpinned by new England-wide powers to control major sources of air pollution, in line with the risk they pose to public health and the environment, plus new local powers to take action in areas with an air pollution problem. The UK has set stringent targets to cut emissions by 2020 and 2030.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Air quality, 2019 – provides guidance on air quality considerations planning needs to take into account.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Effective use of land, 2019 – provides guidance on making effective use of land, including planning for higher density development.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Land affected by contamination, 2019 – outlines guiding principles on how planning can deal with land affected by contamination.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Land stability, 2019 – sets out advice on how to ensure that development is suitable to its ground condition and how to avoid risks caused by unstable land or subsidence.
- HM Government, The Flood and Water Management Act 2010 and HM Government, Flood and Water Regulations 2019 – sets out measures to ensure that risk from all sources of flooding is managed more effectively. This includes incorporating greater resilience measures into the design of new buildings; utilising the environment in order to reduce flooding; identifying areas suitable for inundation and water storage to reduce the risk of flooding elsewhere; rolling back development in coastal areas to avoid damage from flooding or coastal erosion; and creating sustainable drainage systems (SuDS).
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Water supply, wastewater and water quality, 2019 – advises on how planning can ensure water quality and the delivery of adequate water and wastewater infrastructure.
- HM Government, The Environmental Noise Regulations, 2006 (as amended 2018) – addresses noise primarily from transport, requiring regular noise mapping and action planning for road, rail, aviation noise and noise in large urban areas. Noise Action Plans, based on these maps, identify areas with the highest noise levels and suggest reduction measures. Major airports must also

produce their own Noise Action Plans. These regulations do not cover noise from domestic activities, workplaces, inside means of transport, or military activities in military areas.

- HM Government, UK Industrial Strategy: Building a Britain fit for the future, 2018 – lays down a vision and foundations for a transformed economy. Areas including artificial intelligence and big data; clean growth; the future of mobility; and meeting the needs of an ageing society are identified as the four ‘Grand Challenges’ of the future.
- HM Government, Our Waste, Our Resources: A strategy for England, 2018 – aims to increase resource productivity and eliminate avoidable waste by 2050. The Strategy sets out key targets which include: a 50% recycling rate for household waste by 2020, a 75% recycling rate for packaging by 2030, 65% recycling rate for municipal solid waste by 2035 and municipal waste to landfill 10% or less by 2035.
- HM Government, The Water Supply (Water Quality) Regulations 2018 – focuses on the quality of water for drinking, washing, cooking and food preparation and for food production. Their purpose is to protect human health from the adverse effects of any contamination of water intended for human consumption by ensuring it is wholesome and clean.
- HM Government, The Road to Zero, 2018 – sets out new measures towards cleaner road transport, aiming to put the UK at the forefront of the design and manufacturing of zero emission vehicles. It explains how cleaner air, a better environment, zero emission vehicles and a strong, clean economy will be achieved. One of the main aims of the document is for all new cars and vans to be effectively zero emission by 2040.
- LP Network, The LEP Network Response to the Industrial Strategy Green Paper Consultation, 2017 – seeks to ensure that all relevant local action and investment is used in a way that maximises the impact it has across the Government’s strategy. Consultation responses set out how the 38 Local Enterprise Partnerships will work with Government using existing and additional resources to develop and implement a long-term Industrial Strategy.
- Department for Digital, Culture Media and Sport, The Heritage Statement, 2017 – describes out how the Government will support the heritage sector and help it to protect and care for our heritage and historic environment, in order to maximise the economic and social impact of heritage and to ensure that everyone can enjoy and benefit from it.

- HM Government, The Water Environment Regulations, 2017 – protects inland surface waters, transitional waters, coastal waters and groundwater and outlines the associated river basin management process.
- Defra, The UK Plan for Tackling Roadside Nitrogen Dioxide Concentrations, 2017 – provides the Government’s ambition and actions for delivering a better environment and cleaner air, including £1 billion investment in ultra-low emission vehicles (ULEVs), a £290 million National Productivity Investment Fund, a £11 million Air Quality Grant Fund and £255 million Implementation Fund to help local authorities to prepare Air Quality Action Plans and improve air quality, an £89 million Green Bus Fund, £1.2 billion Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy and £100 million to help improve air quality on the National road network.
- Department for Transport, The Transport Investment Strategy, 2017 – outlines four objectives aimed at improving the transport network: creating a reliable and less congested system that meets user needs, boosting economic productivity and addressing local growth priorities, enhancing global competitiveness to attract trade and investment and facilitating new housing development.
- Highways England (now National Highways), Sustainable Development Strategy and Action Plan, 2017 – outlines the company’s approach and priorities for sustainable development, aimed at communicating with key stakeholders. It emphasises reducing the environmental impact of operations and fostering long-term benefits for communities. The Action Plan details how Highways England/National Highways will advance its Sustainable Development and Environment Strategies, implementing actions to achieve sustainable development goals and enhance environmental protection and improvement efforts.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Brownfield land registers, 2017 – provides guidance on the purpose, preparation, publication and reviewing of brownfield land registers.
- Department for Energy Security and Net Zero and Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy, The Clean Growth Strategy, 2017 – sets out proposals for decarbonising all sectors of the UK economy through the 2020s. It explains how the whole country can benefit from low carbon opportunities, while meeting national and international commitments to tackle climate change.
- Infrastructure and Projects Authority, National Infrastructure Delivery Plan 2016-2021, 2016 – brings together the government’s plans for economic infrastructure over the next 5 years with those to support delivery of housing and social infrastructure.

- Environment Agency, Managing Water Abstraction, 2016 – is the overarching document for managing water resources in England and Wales and links together the abstraction licensing strategies.
- HM Government, The Nitrate Pollution Prevention Regulations 2016 – designate nitrate vulnerable zones and enforce limits on nitrogen application from organic manure annually. They detail nitrogen application on crops, methods, locations, timing of nitrogen fertiliser spreading and storage requirements. The regulations also set closed periods for prohibiting nitrogen fertiliser spreading.
- HM Government, The Environmental Permitting Regulations 2016 – streamline the legislative system for industrial and waste installations into a single permitting structure for those activities which have the potential to cause harm to human health or the environment. They set out how to prevent or, where that is not practicable, to reduce emissions into air, water and land and to prevent the generation of waste, in order to achieve a high level of protection of the environment and human health.
- HM Government, The Air Quality Standards Regulations 2016 – set out limits on concentrations of outdoor air pollutants that impact public health, most notably particulate matter (PM10 and PM2.5) and nitrogen dioxide (NO2). It also sets out the procedure and requirements for the designation of Air Quality Management Areas (AQMAs).
- Historic England, Sustainability Appraisal and Strategy Environmental Assessment: Historic England Advice Note 8, 2016 – sets out requirements for the consideration and appraisal of effects on the historic environment as part of the Sustainability Appraisal/Strategic Environmental Assessment process.
- Department for Communities and Local Government, Technical Housing Standards: Nationally Described Space Standard, 2015 – sets out the Government's new nationally described space standard. The standard deals with internal space within new dwellings and sets out requirements for the Gross Internal (floor) Area of new dwellings at a defined level of occupancy, as well as floor areas and dimensions for key parts of the home.
- Ministry for Housing, Communities and Local Government, Renewable and low carbon energy, 2015 – outlines guidance for developing a strategy for renewable and low carbon energy and particular planning considerations for hydropower, solar technology, solar farms and wind turbines.
- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, National Planning Policy for Waste (NPPW), 2014 – sets out a number of key planning objectives. It also requires that local planning authorities help deliver sustainable

development through measures including driving waste management up the waste hierarchy; ensuring that waste management is considered alongside other spatial planning concerns; and providing a framework in which communities can take more responsibility for their own waste.

- Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, Minerals, 2014 – outlines guidance for planning for mineral extraction in the plan-making and application process.
- Defra, Biodiversity offsetting in England Green Paper, 2013 – sets out a framework for biodiversity offsetting. Offsets are conservation activities designed to compensate for residual losses.
- Department for Transport, Door to Door: A strategy for improving sustainable transport integration, 2013 – outlines key areas crucial for promoting greener transport choices. It emphasises the importance of accurate, accessible and reliable information on transport options, affordable ticketing, seamless connections between different modes and safe, comfortable transport facilities. The strategy integrates behavioural change approaches to overcome barriers to sustainable transport use and collaborates with stakeholders to enhance transport connectivity nationwide.
- The Select Committee on Public Service and Demographic Change, “Ready for Ageing?”, 2013 – warns that society is unprepared for the ageing population. It states that while longer lives can be beneficial, failure to address the implications could lead to serious crises. The report highlights the shortage of specialist housing for older people and emphasises the need to plan for the housing needs of both older and younger populations.
- UK Government, The Waste (England and Wales) Regulations 2011 – require businesses to confirm that they have applied the waste management hierarchy when transferring waste and include a declaration to this effect on their waste transfer note or consignment note.
- HM Government, The national flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy for England, 2011 – provides a framework to mitigate flood and coastal erosion risks, outlining responsibilities for authorities and communities. Its strategic goals include safeguarding people and property, promoting decision-making at various levels (individual, community, local authority, river catchment, coastal area, national) and delivering environmental, social and economic benefits aligned with sustainable development principles.
- HM Government, Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2010 – an Act of Parliament to make new provision for public access to the countryside.

- HM Government, The Government's Statement on the Historic Environment for England, 2010 – sets out the Government's vision for the historic environment. It calls for those who have the power to shape the historic environment to recognise its value and to manage it in an intelligent manner in light of the contribution that it can make to social, economic and cultural life. It includes reference to promoting the role of the historic environment within the Government's response to climate change and the wider sustainable development agenda.
- HM Government, The UK Renewable Energy Strategy, 2009 – describes out the ways in which we will tackle climate change by reducing our CO2 emissions through the generation of a renewable electricity, heat and transport technologies.
- Defra, Safeguarding our Soils: A Strategy for England, 2009 – sets out how England's soils will be managed sustainably. It highlights those areas which Defra will prioritise and focus attention in tackling degradation threats, including: better protection for agricultural soils; protecting and enhancing stores of soil carbon; building the resilience of soils to a changing climate; preventing soil pollution; effective soil protection during construction and dealing with contaminated land.
- HM Government, The Climate Change Act 2008 – sets targets for UK greenhouse gas emission reductions of at least 80% by 2050 and CO2 emission reductions of at least 26% by 2015, against a 1990 baseline.
- HM Government, Planning and Energy Act 2008 – enables local planning authorities to set requirements for carbon reduction and renewable energy provision. It should be noted that while the Housing Standards Review proposed to repeal some of these provisions, at the time of writing there have been no amendments to the Planning and Energy Act.
- Defra, England Biodiversity Strategy Climate Change Adaptation Principles, 2008 – sets out principles to guide adaptation to climate change. The principles are: take practical action now, maintain and increase ecological resilience, accommodate change, integrate action across all sectors and develop knowledge and plan strategically. The precautionary principle underpins all of these.
- Defra, The Natural Environment and Rural Communities Act 2006 – places a duty on public bodies to conserve biodiversity.
- HM Government, The Urban Waste Water Treatment Regulations 2003 – protects the environment from the adverse effects of urban waste water discharges and certain industrial sectors, notably domestic and industrial waste

water. The regulations require the collection of waste water and specifies how different types of waste water should be treated, disposed and reused.

- HM Government, Environmental Protection Act 1990 – makes provision for the improved control of pollution to the air, water and land by regulating the management of waste and the control of emissions. Seeks to ensure that decisions pertaining to the environment are made in an integrated manner, in collaboration with appropriate authorities, non-governmental organisations and other persons.
- National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949 – an Act of Parliament to make provision for National Parks and the establishment of a National Parks Commission; to confer on the Nature Conservancy and local authorities' powers for the establishment and maintenance of nature reserves; to make further provision for the recording, creation, maintenance and improvement of public paths and for securing access to open country.
- HM Government, Planning (Listed Buildings & Conservation Areas) Act 1990 – an Act of Parliament that changed the laws for granting of planning permission for building works, with a particular focus on listed buildings and conservation areas.
- HM Government, Ancient Monuments & Archaeological Areas Act 1979 – a law passed by the UK government to protect the archaeological heritage of England & Wales and Scotland. Under this Act, the Secretary of State has a duty to compile and maintain a schedule of ancient monuments of national importance, in order to help preserve them. It also creates criminal offences for unauthorised works to, or damage of, these monuments.
- HM Government, Historic Buildings and Ancient Monuments Act 1953 – an Act of Parliament that makes provision for the compilation of a register of gardens and other land (parks and gardens and battlefields).

## Regional

- Defra and Environment Agency, Anglian River Basin District River Basin Management Plan, updated 2022 – provides a framework for protecting and enhancing the benefits provided by the water environment. Key information like baseline classification of water bodies, statutory objectives for protected areas, statutory objectives for water bodies and a summary programme of measures to achieve statutory objectives is used to inform land-use planning.
- England's Economic Heartland, Regional Transport Strategy, 2021 – the strategy sets out a policy framework designed to harness the region's inherent

strengths in order to deliver the vision “To support sustainable growth and improve quality of life and wellbeing through a world-class decarbonised transport system which harnesses the region’s global expertise in technology and innovation to unlock new opportunities for residents and businesses, in a way that benefits the UK as a whole”. The overarching aim of the strategy is to support sustainable economic growth with an ambition to achieve net zero carbon emissions from transport by 2040, ten years ahead of the legal requirement of 2050. The strategy sets out a five point plan of action:

- “Focus on decarbonising our transport system by harnessing innovation and supporting solutions which in themselves create green economic opportunities.
  - Promote investment in digital infrastructure as a means of improving connectivity.
  - Use the delivery of strategic public transport schemes – such as East West Rail, the Cambridgeshire autonomous Metro and Milton Keynes Mass Rapid Transit – as the catalyst for a shift towards lower carbon modes of travel.
  - Champion increased investment in active travel and shared transport to improve local connectivity to ensure that everyone can realise their potential.
  - Continue to ensure the needs of the freight and logistics sector are met while lowering its environmental impact.”
- Affinity Water, Final Water Resources Management Plan 2020-2080, 2020 – sets out the plan to provide a reliable, resilient, efficient and affordable water supply to customers from 2020 to 2080, while protecting the environment. The plan recognises the need to balance the amount of water available for supply with the demand for water.
  - Thames Water, Water Resource Management Plan 2020-2100, 2020 – sets out a strategy for how a secure and sustainable supply of water is to be provided for customers for the 80 years from 2020 to 2100.
  - Anglian Water, Water Resources Management Plan 2019, 2019 – identifies the water supply area and forecasts water demand and supply over a 25-year period. The Plan further identifies preferred strategy to demand management.

## Local

- Central Bedfordshire Council, Our Strategic Plan 2024-2027, 2024 – sets the direction of the Council; influencing decisions, how council resources are allocated and the council’s attitude to public finances. It will be monitored

through regular reports to the Corporate Resources Overview and Scrutiny Committee. The Strategic Plan has identified seven core aims:

- “Get the right homes in the right places and ensure housing growth and infrastructure are carefully considered.
  - Be ambitious in our plan towards improving and maintaining the roads and travel network.
  - Ensure that environmental, sustainability and climate resilience impact will be at the heart of all council decision-making.
  - Create opportunities for all children and young people to reach their full potential.
  - Enable people to live active, healthy, and independent lives.
  - Enable the right care, at the right time, in the right place for those in need of support.
  - Provide the environment for economic prosperity in which existing businesses can grow and new ones will move to the area.”
- Central Bedfordshire, Bus Service Improvement Plan, 2024 – sets out the measures Central Bedfordshire Council in partnership with local bus operators, referred to as the Enhanced Partnership, need to deliver. Some of these measures include a zero emission Luton-Dunstable busway, service enhancements on the core busway network (e.g. 60 minute daytime service frequency and Sunday bus services on selected core routes), adoption of a “public-transport-first” policy for travel to schools, improved passenger infrastructure (e.g. raised kerbs and enhanced shelters), designing buses into new developments, improving awareness of community transport services and developing close links with the NHS Trusts, amongst other things.
  - Chilterns NL Management Plan, 2019-2024, 2024 – identifies the key issues facing the NL and the management policies and actions that seek to conserve the special qualities of the area.
  - Central Bedfordshire Council, Planning obligations SPD, 2024 – sets out the type and scale of planning obligations, or Section 106, required to support sustainable development.
  - Central Bedfordshire Council, Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs), 2023 – a total of five individual plans covering the main towns of Central Bedfordshire that prioritise cycling and walking infrastructure. Specifically, the plans set out the strategic approach to identifying cycling and walking network and infrastructure improvements required at the local level, supporting the Government’s target that by 2030 over half of all local journeys in

larger towns and cities will be walked, wheeled or cycled. The LCWIP network sets out how cyclists and pedestrians can safely and conveniently access important and popular local destinations.

- Department for Transport, Future of Transport Programme, 2023 – the main aims of the Future of Transport Programme are outlined below. The Future of Transport Programme comprises the following: (1) Future of Mobility: Urban Strategy; (2) Future of Transport Regulatory Review; (3) Future of Transport: Supporting Rural Transport Innovation; and (4) Future of Transport: International Strategy.
  - Stimulate innovation in the transport sector;
  - Create new transport markets;
  - Secure a 21st-century transport system; and
  - Secure the UK's position as a world-leading innovator, decarbonising the transport system for the benefit of all society.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Parking standards for new developments SPD, 2023 – provides detailed guidance on parking for cycles, cars (including disabled parking) and powered two-wheeler parking for both residential and non-residential developments. This SPD includes layouts and dimensions for parking spaces for various contexts.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Housing policy technical guidance SPD, 2023 – includes a range of housing-related policies which seek to ensure the type, quality and quantity of housing being delivered through the planning process aligns with the identified demands.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Design Guide SPD, 2023 – sets out the key principles and standards of design for all new developments in Central Bedfordshire.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Electric vehicle charging: guidance for new developments SPD, 2022 – sets out the requirements for electric vehicle charging points to be provided for all new developments in Central Bedfordshire and provides guidance on the types, design, layout and standards of electric vehicle charging, as well as the information that developers are required to provide at the planning application stage.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Forest of Marston Vale: Design Guidance SPD, 2022 – sets out how the planning policies for the Forest of Marston Vale in the Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council Local Plans will be implemented. The document provides design guidance on the scale and type of green infrastructure and built design principles that are required in the Forest of

Marston Vale area. Its purpose is to demonstrate how development can contribute positively to the creation of the forest – both in creating attractive wooded settings and in its built form, to strongly tie new development with the Forest ethos and its developing ‘sense of place’.

- Central Bedfordshire Council, On-Street Parking Management Strategy 2022 – the aim of Central Bedfordshire Council’s On-Street Parking Management Strategy is “To effectively manage on-street parking, to stimulate regeneration and local economic activity, whilst meeting the sustainability objectives by promoting sustainable travel choices”.
- LUC, Green and Blue Infrastructure Strategy, 2022 – builds on existing work to understand both the strengths and weaknesses of Central Bedfordshire’s GBI network and to identify priorities for enhancement. It also presents an overarching Vision for the network, which provides the framework for a mutually supportive set of projects. These projects work toward the common goal of a wilder, more resilient and healthier Central Bedfordshire.
- LUC, Central Bedfordshire Tranquillity Strategy, 2022 – the strategy develops a methodology to assess and map relative tranquillity across Central Bedfordshire and provides design guidance on mitigation measures to reduce the impact of future developments on tranquillity.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Leisure Strategy, 2021 – a suite of three facility-based strategies which look at the current and future provision of indoor sports and leisure centres, recreational open spaces and outdoor sport. It also provides the evidence base and policy standards/facility requirements to secure new or improved leisure facilities as a result of new housing development and to support improved health and wellbeing of residents.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Economic strategy: Building Local Prosperity, 2021 – sets out a strategy to achieve economic prosperity in Central Bedfordshire. It is structured around six key themes covering skills, businesses, places, infrastructure, partnerships and the council itself. This document replaces the 2011 Economic Development Plan.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Central Bedfordshire 2050, 2020 – this document sets out Central Bedfordshire Council’s vision for 2050, specifically how healthy and sustainable communities can be built in the context of future opportunities and challenges such as emerging technologies, digitisation, climate change, recovering from the COVID-19 pandemic, water resilience and changing demographic and economic trends. The vision is to ensure that Central Bedfordshire is a great place to live and work, which will be achieved through the four outcomes listed below and their respective ambitions:

- “We live in a unique and special environment”
  - Climate responsive and resilient;
  - Healthy and well;
  - Rich in wildlife; and
  - Local resource, local produce.
- “We have the best quality of life”
  - Inclusive for all;
  - Flexible homes that meet local needs;
  - Strong and happy communities; and
  - Safe and secure.
- “We live in thriving communities”
  - A great place to play;
  - Easy to get around;
  - Beneficial growth; and
  - Thriving market towns and villages.
- “We have a prosperous and innovative economy”
  - Skilled for the future;
  - A culture of innovation;
  - Diverse and flourishing local businesses; and
  - Digital working for us.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Sustainability Plan 2020-2030, 2020 – the Sustainability Plan explores how Central Bedfordshire Council can improve its own operations and processes, lead by example in buildings they are responsible for, facilitate investments in infrastructure-led projects, and influence, support and enable residents and local businesses to adopt sustainable behaviours and practices. The plan presents 13 overall objectives, as listed below. The Sustainability Plan is currently in the process of being updated with a new version expected to be published in Autumn this year. Future iterations of the SEA will refer to the updated Sustainability Plan.
- “Enhance our capacity to deliver sustainable actions through training and appointing a Sustainability Lead. Create an organisational shift within the Council where sustainable approaches are fully embedded in our culture.”

- “Embed CO2 emissions reduction and sustainability within all our operations and decision-making processes. Work towards being carbon neutral in our own operations by 2030.”
- “Use strategic planning and the Local Plan to optimise sustainability and ensure resilient, sustainable communities are established across the area. Aim to be the Green Heart within the Oxford-Cambridge Arc.”
- “Ensure the Council’s existing building stock (including buildings we occupy, own, manage and rent) are as energy-efficient, water-efficient, low carbon and sustainable as possible.”
- “Ensure Council-led and commissioned capital building projects embrace sustainability, are energy efficient, water-efficient, low carbon, and economically viable, based on a sound business case and robust Whole-Life Costing. In doing so, the Council will lead by example for developers in the area.”
- “Facilitate investments in renewable energy infrastructure and enable the creation of a smart energy grid in Central Bedfordshire.”
- “Enable a network of electric vehicle charging points working with partners and energy providers, as well as investing in charging points across its own assets and highways.”
- “Facilitate investments and invest in a strategic active travel and public transport network, improving countryside access and connectivity between towns. Create compact walkable networks within town centres to maximise pedestrian comfort, and encourage micro-mobility and healthier modes of transport.”
- “Support the delivery of joined-up green and blue infrastructure that support water resilience, radically increase biodiversity and integrate nature into urban environments. Water stress and flooding are addressed and the natural environment is protected.”
- “Enable low-carbon innovations starting with decarbonising Highways’ infrastructure, building a responsive street lighting network, investing in a Central Bedfordshire Innovation Hub, as well as the Council’s own innovation programme, and maximising opportunities provided by the internet of things and digital connectivity.”
- “Establish mechanisms to support and enable residents to live more sustainable lifestyles and reduce their carbon footprints.”
- “Support local businesses, landowners and farmers to transition to the low-carbon economy. Support the creation of circular economy in Central Bedfordshire.”

- “Cultivate youth climate leadership in Central Bedfordshire. Work with schools and existing youth groups to ensure young people are prepared for the future and that their voice and ideas are embedded in sustainability initiatives.”
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Local Area Transport Plans, various dates – a total of ten individual localised plans cover Central Bedfordshire and these establish localised issues and set priority actions and a programme to achieve them.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Central Bedfordshire Interim Parking Management Strategy, 2019 – this strategy explains and sets out how Central Bedfordshire Council will operate to deliver their policies. The strategy has nine objectives:
  - Make Central Bedfordshire and its town centres as accessible to residents, businesses and visitors as possible to ensure growth and prosperity;
  - Ensure that parking schemes for residents, businesses and visitors are well managed;
  - Promote the safety of all road users;
  - Ensure that there is sufficient and appropriate parking for new developments;
  - Fulfil our statutory requirements for the parking we provide;
  - Help ensure that our roads are well managed;
  - Provide alternative travel choices that are sustainable;
  - Provide effective enforcement or parking restrictions; and
  - Work in partnership with other parking providers (such as railway stations, retail parks, etc.) so we can provide the best service possible.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Air Quality Action Plan, 2018 – outlines the action the council will take to improve air quality in Central Bedfordshire between 2019 and 2024.
- Central Bedfordshire School Organisation Plan, 2018-2023, 2018 – presents the current level of mainstream and special school provision, to outline planned changes and identify where further action may be necessary.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Minerals and Waste Local Plan: Strategic Sites and Policies, 2014 – sets out the strategic allocations for mineral extraction and for waste management development in Central Bedfordshire together with strategic policies to guide the ongoing supply of minerals and development of waste management facilities.

- Your Countryside, The Outdoor Access Improvement Plan for Central Bedfordshire, 2013-2031, 2013 – provides direction for the current and future management of countryside access, demonstrating how it will support economic potential, provide access to high quality greenspace, improve quality of life, health and wellbeing and reduce impact on the environment.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Local Transport Plan 3, 2011-2026, 2011 – sets out a long-term framework for investment in transport across Central Bedfordshire. It establishes a strategic approach through which to deal with key transport issues, a series of objectives and broad areas of intervention through which schemes will be identified and improvements made to the transport network.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Sustainable Modes of Travel to Schools and Colleges Strategy, 2011 – forms the strategy for accessing schools and colleges in Central Bedfordshire, and sits within a framework of documents which comprise the third Local Transport Plan. The strategy assesses the travel and transport needs of all pupils and promotes sustainable travel. The vision of the strategy seeks to increase the number of pupils and students travelling to school by sustainable modes, and a series of objectives has been developed to represent the range of areas through which it will be achieved.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Freight Strategy, 2011 – the strategy provides the policy framework to support the management of freight transport in Central Bedfordshire, and sits within the framework of documents which comprise the third Local Transport Plan. It addresses the carriage of goods by roads, rail and pipeline within Central Bedfordshire, including the provision of services and utilities and the movement of waste and aggregates from mining activity. The strategy examines the key issues regarding freight in Central Bedfordshire under the following five themes: (1) managing freight on roads; (2) freight facilities for road based transport; (3) servicing and deliveries; (4) information and working with stakeholders; and (5) non-road freight modes. For each theme, a series of policies and supporting schemes have been developed to set out the authority's approach to managing freight in Central Bedfordshire.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, The Walking Strategy for Central Bedfordshire, 2011 – also sitting within the framework of documents which comprise the third Local Transport Plan, the vision of this document is to “Encourage people to walk, to walk safely, and to walk more often”. To achieve this, the authority will implement a programme of infrastructure, safety and promotional measures which will build upon best practice established elsewhere within the authority and across the country. As series of objectives have been devised to represent the range of areas through which the vision will be achieved.

- Central Bedfordshire Council, The Central Bedfordshire Cycling Strategy, 2011 – also sitting within the framework of documents which comprise the third Local Transport Plan, the vision of this document is to “Encourage more people to cycle, to cycle safely, and to cycle more often”. As with the other documents, a series of objectives have been devised to represent the range of areas through which the vision will be achieved.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Parking Strategy, 2011 – this document sits within the framework of documents which comprise the third Local Transport Plan. The strategy aims to support the local economy and facilitate sustainable development growth. The document will help to contribute towards the delivery of the objectives of Local Transport Plan 3 and aims to strike a balance between supporting economic growth by not discouraging shoppers from visiting the town centres, and encouraging and supporting the use of more sustainable transport alternatives.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Climate Change Strategy, 2010 – seeks to deliver a robust, cohesive and actionable response to mitigating and adapting to climate change and provides a framework for more detailed delivery plans to be put in place that will lead to a reduction in carbon emissions across the area. In July 2019, the council unanimously supported a proposal to prioritise responding to climate change. This resulted in the production of the Council’s Sustainability Plan which supports a carbon neutral Central Bedfordshire for 2030 and beyond.
- Central Bedfordshire Council, Carbon Management Plan, 2010 – details how the commitments made in the Climate Change Strategy (see above) will be delivered.
- Greensand Trust, Luton and Southern Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan, 2009 – supplements the Strategic GI Plan (above), providing an assessment of the GI assets and opportunities and identifying a GI network of multifunctional spaces and connections that should be protected and enhanced in the future development of the area.
- Greensand Trust, Mid Bedfordshire Green Infrastructure Plan, 2008 – supplements the Strategic GI Plan (above), providing an assessment of the GI assets and opportunities and identifying a GI network of multifunctional spaces and connections that should be protected and enhanced in the future development of the area.
- Bedfordshire and Luton Green Infrastructure Consortium, Bedfordshire and Luton Strategic Green Infrastructure Plan, 2007 – sets a spatial vision for establishing a strategic green infrastructure framework for Bedfordshire and

Luton which can be used to guide the development of more detailed Green Infrastructure (GI) plans.

- Central Bedfordshire Together Local Strategic Partnership, Sustainable Community Strategy, 2010-2031, no publication date – seeks to improve the economic, social and environmental wellbeing of the area and the people who live there. Its sets priorities for the area underpinned by the themes of creating the conditions for economic success and community prosperity and raising standards and tackling inequalities.

## Other proposals

- M1-A6 Link Road – Central Bedfordshire Council gave consent in September 2019 for the construction of a new strategic road to create a northern Luton bypass running from the A6 to junction 11a of the M1, connecting with the A5-M1 link road. The new M1-A6 link road will be 4.4km long with a dual carriageway to the proposed rail freight interchange at Sundon Park and then single carriageway connecting to the A6. Luton Council sought permission at the High Court for a review of the decision, but this has been refused.
- Oxford-Cambridge Arc – The Arc is a globally significant area between Oxford, Milton Keynes and Cambridge. It is formed of five ceremonial counties: Oxfordshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Northamptonshire and Cambridgeshire. It supports over two million jobs, adds over £110bn to the economy and every year houses one of the fastest growing economies in England [See reference 273].
- East-West Rail Project – Originally adopted within the Chancellor’s 2011 Autumn Statement, the East-West Rail project supports the creation of a new rail link between Oxford, Bicester, Aylesbury, Milton Keynes and Bedford. The Western Section Phase 1 was completed in December 2016. This involved a double-track upgrade between Oxford and Bicester Village. The Western Section Phase 2 will connect Oxford, Milton Keynes, Aylesbury and Bedford bringing faster journey times and potentially lower transport costs while easing pressure on local roads. According to the Route Update Report (2023) [See reference 274], the revised route will pass through three new East West railway stations: Bedford St Johns, Tempsford and Cambourne. Additionally, improvements will be made to services along the Marston Vale Line so as to reduce disruption.
- Universal Studios theme park near Bedford – the Government has granted permission for Universal Destinations and Experiences to open a theme park near on a 193ha site at Kempston Hardwick. Its construction is expected to

create 20,000 jobs with a further 20,000 generated directly and in the supply chain when it opens. When operational, the resort is expected to generate nearly £50bn for the UK during construction and the first 20 years of operation [See reference 275].

## Surrounding development plans

**A.4** Development in Central Bedfordshire will not be delivered in isolation from those areas around it. Given the interconnection between Central Bedfordshire and the surrounding areas there is potential for cross-boundary and in-combination effects where development is proposed through development plans in neighbouring authorities. As such, consideration is given to the following plans for local authority areas which surround Central Bedfordshire. The London Plan is included in this list given the strong relationship between Central Bedfordshire and London in terms of commuting patterns:

- The Luton Local Plan [See reference 276] was adopted in 2017 and covers the period 2011-2031. It makes provision for 8,500 net additional dwellings to be delivered over the plan period. A total net additional 18,000 jobs are proposed as the objectively assessed employment need for the Borough. Work on a Local Plan Review has started. Evidence base collection for the new Local Plan is underway and public consultation for the new Local Plan is planned for later this year.
- The North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031 [See reference 277] was adopted in November 2022 and replaces the saved policies of the District Plan Second Review with Alterations. The Local Plan makes provision for 13,000 new homes over the plan period. Additional employment provision in the plan area is to be achieved through new designations at the former Power Station in Letchworth Garden City, east of Baldock and west of Royston.
- The South Cambridgeshire Local Plan [See reference 278] was adopted in September 2018. It covers the period 2011-2031 over which 19,500 new homes are to be delivered. Over this same period 22,000 additional jobs are to be created to support the Cambridge Cluster and provide access to a diverse range of opportunities. Work on a new joint Greater Cambridge Local Plan is currently underway with public consultations taking place in 2020 and late 2021. The new Local Plan will now be submitted under the new plan-making system and it is anticipated that the process will begin no later than Autumn/Winter 2025.
- The Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 [See reference 279], was adopted in January 2020 and identifies a need to allocate land to provide a minimum of

3,169 new dwellings in order to ensure that the objectively assessed need for housing of 14,550 homes is met for the period 2015-30. A minimum of 6,900 net additional jobs are to be provided up to 2030 with a focus on the urban area of Bedford and Kempston and existing employment sites. Bedford Borough Council is preparing Local Plan 2040 [See reference 280] which builds on the Local Plan 2030 strategy and rolls the planning of the Borough on a further 10 years to 2040 and is currently at Examination stage. The Local Plan 2040 makes provision for 27,100 new homes over the plan period and between 118 and 142 hectares of employment land.

- The Local Plan for Milton Keynes (Plan: MK 2016-2031) [See reference 281], was adopted in March 2019. Within the plan period 2016-2031, the council is to provide land for a minimum of 30,900 new homes and around 28,000-32,000 additional new jobs are forecast. A total of 132ha of employment land is required over the plan period and the strategy for Milton Keynes is to capitalise on its position within the Cambridge – Milton Keynes – Oxford corridor as well as continuing to promote development at Central Milton Keynes. New employment land is also to be allocated for employment at South Caldecotte and Milton Keynes East. Milton Keynes Council is currently in the process of developing the MK City Plan 2050 [See reference 282], which will replace the currently adopted Local Plan. Milton Keynes Council is currently consulting on the Regulation 18 version of the new Local Plan.
- The Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2013-2033 [See reference 283] was adopted in 2021. The plan makes provision for the delivery of 20,600 new homes over the plan period and 27 hectares of employment land.
- Dacorum Borough Council is currently work on producing a new Local Plan [See reference 284]. Consultation on the Revised Strategy for Growth (2024-2040) ran until the end from October 2023 to December 2023. Once adopted, the Local Plan will replace the saved Local Plan (adopted 2004) and Core Strategy (Adopted 2013) and will cover the period up to 2040.
- St Albans City and District Council (SADC) is in the process of producing a new Local Plan [See reference 285]. The plan underwent Regulation 18 Consultation between July and September in 2023. The Regulation 18 version of the new Local Plan makes provision for the delivery of 15,096 net additional new homes to 2041 and a significant amount of employment floorspace.
- Huntingdonshire District Council adopted its existing Local Plan in May 2019, which covers the period up to 2036 [See reference 286]. This replaced the previous Core Strategy which was adopted in 2009. The plan sets out the provision of 20,100 new homes in the District and directs much of the new development to two strategic expansion locations in Alconbury (4,225 homes)

and St Neots East (3,265 homes). In January 2023, Huntingdonshire District Council's Cabinet agreed to the preparation of a full update to the adopted Local Plan which the council is currently at an early stage of progressing [See reference 287].

## Implications for the SEA

**A.5** The duty to co-operate places a legal duty on local planning authorities to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis to maximise the effectiveness of Local Plan preparation in the context of strategic cross boundary matters. In relation to the need for housing and existing growth restraints within some of the surrounding areas (e.g. Luton), there is the potential that Central Bedfordshire may need to accommodate growth from outside the plan area in the future, to meet the needs of the wider housing market area.

**A.6** For communities, the potential effects largely relate to effective integration, particularly considering the cultural diversity and density of the surrounding towns in comparison to Central Bedfordshire and its predominantly rural landscape and character. Accommodating growth on behalf of neighbouring authorities may also increase densities along the administrative boundary (if the extra growth is delivered in close proximity to the neighbouring authority) and lead to coalescence and loss of individual settlement identities.

**A.7** Increased growth may also deliver more opportunities for development gains, such as job opportunities, improvements to service and facility provisions, improvements to green infrastructure networks and enhancements of townscape character through regeneration, with the potential for indirect positive effects on communities, health and equalities.

**A.8** Conversely, additional growth may increase pressures on the highways network and air quality, service and facilities provisions, waste facilities, energy consumption and natural resources, including water, agricultural land, Green Belt land and greenfield land. Increased growth also has the potential for greater negative effects on landscape and townscape character, the settings of heritage assets, habitats and ecological corridors (through an increased potential for fragmentation).

**A.9** The SEA should seek to ensure that all significant cross boundary issues are identified and addressed. It should also seek to maximise any potential opportunities that could arise through the duty to cooperate. This includes potential enhancements to those designated and non-designated natural environment (watercourses, landscape, biodiversity and heritage) assets and networks that cross local authority

boundaries as well as potential opportunities for the provision of infrastructure that could have benefits for local communities.

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  - 167 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2023\) Economic Insight 2023](#)
  - 168 [nomis \(undated\) Labour Market Profile – 2011 Based Local Authorities](#)
  - 169 The South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership has now formally closed.
  - 170 [nomis \(undated\) Labour Market Profile – 2011 Based Local Authorities](#)
  - 171 [nomis \(undated\) Labour Market Profile – South East Midlands](#)
  - 172 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2020\) Quarterly Economic Monitoring Report](#)
  - 173 [nomis \(undated\) Labour Market Profile – South East Midlands](#)
  - 174 [nomis \(undated\) Labour Market Profile – 2011 Based Local Authorities](#)
  - 175 Office for National Statistics (2022) Major employers in Luton
  - 176 [Office for National Statistics \(2023\) Visualising people flows – An interactive introduction to Census 2021 origin-destination data](#)

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- 177** Central Bedfordshire Council (2024) Town Centre Monitoring Data
- 178** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2020\) Quarterly Economic Monitoring Report](#)
- 179** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2017\) Functional Economic Market Assessment and Employment Land Review](#)
- 180** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2023\) Economic Insight 2023](#)
- 181** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2023\) Monitoring – Authority Monitoring Report 2022/23](#)
- 182** [nomis \(2011\) Method of travel to work](#)
- 183** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2023\) Economic Insight 2023](#)
- 184** [Milton Keynes Council, Central Bedfordshire Council and Bedford Borough Council \(2012\) Milton Keynes, Central Bedfordshire and Bedford Joint Local Broadband Plan \(JLBP\)](#)
- 185** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(undated\) Broadband](#)
- 186** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2024, updated 2025\) Evidence Base For Central Bedfordshire's Fourth Local Transport Plan](#)
- 187** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2020\) Central Bedfordshire Council news and press releases – A421 dualling upgrade into Milton Keynes complete](#)
- 188** [Department for Transport \(undated\) Road traffic statistics – Central Bedfordshire](#)
- 189** [Department for Transport \(undated\) Road traffic statistics – Central Bedfordshire](#)
- 190** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2024, updated 2025\) Evidence Base For Central Bedfordshire's Fourth Local Transport Plan](#)
- 191** [Department for Transport \(2020\) Road Investment Strategy 2: 2020-2025](#)
- 192** Luton Borough Council has sought a judicial review into the consent which has been refused and at the time of writing no further application has been made.
- 193** [Bedford Borough Council \(undated\) Strategies and major projects](#)
- 194** [Bedford Borough Council \(undated\) Wixams Station – Overview](#)
- 195** [East West Rail \(2023\) Route update 2023](#)
- 196** Central Bedfordshire Council (2019) Public transport – bus timetables, routes, operators and rail services

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- 197 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2011\) Local Transport Plan 3 – The Central Bedfordshire Council Transport Strategy](#)
  - 198 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(undated\) How we're improving bus services](#)
  - 199 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2022\) LATP 3 Review](#)
  - 200 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2021, updated 2024\) National Bus Strategy: Bus Service Improvement Plan](#)
  - 201 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2021, updated 2024\) National Bus Strategy: Bus Service Improvement Plan](#)
  - 202 [Department for Transport \(2023, updated 2026\) Bus statistics data tables](#)
  - 203 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2022\) LATP 3 Review](#)
  - 204 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2022\) LATP 3 Review](#)
  - 205 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(undated\) How we're improving bus services](#)
  - 206 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(undated\) Biggleswade transport interchange](#)
  - 207 [Biggleswade Today \(2024\) Buses start to use Biggleswade's new £2.3m transport interchange – but some services already set or be rerouted](#)
  - 208 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(undated\) Flitwick Transport Interchange](#)
  - 209 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2011\) Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan: Appendix E – More People Walking – The Walking Strategy for Central Bedfordshire](#)
  - 210 [Public Perspectives \(2022\) Central Bedfordshire Council: Travel Survey 2022 – Report of findings \(taken from \[Central Bedfordshire Council \\(2024, updated 2025\\) Evidence Base For Central Bedfordshire's Fourth Local Transport Plan\]\(#\)\)](#)
  - 211 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2011\) Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan: Appendix F – More People Cycling – The Central Bedfordshire Cycling Strategy](#)
  - 212 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2011\) Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan: Appendix F – More People Cycling – The Central Bedfordshire Cycling Strategy](#)
  - 213 [Department for Transport \(2025\) National Travel Survey – NTS0313: Frequency of use of different transport modes: England, 2003 onwards](#)
  - 214 [Department for Transport \(2025\) National Travel Survey – NTS0313: Frequency of use of different transport modes: England, 2003 onwards](#)
  - 215 [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2011\) Local Transport Plan 3 – The Central Bedfordshire Council Transport Strategy](#)

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- 216** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2011\) Local Transport Plan 3 – The Central Bedfordshire Council Transport Strategy](#)
- 217** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(undated\) Rights of way](#)
- 218** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(undated\) LCWIPS \(Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans\)](#)
- 219** The plans are: (1) Ampthill & Flitwick; (2) Biggleswade, Potton & Sandy; (3) Arlesey, Fairfield, Henlow & Stotfold; (4) Dunstable & Houghton Regis; and (5) Leighton Linlade.
- 220** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2024\) Central Bedfordshire Council news and press releases – Share your thoughts on improving walking, wheeling and cycling in rural areas](#)
- 221** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2016\) Executive Report for the new Local Transport Plan 4](#)
- 222** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2016\) Executive Report for the new Passenger Transport Strategy](#)
- 223** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2022, updated 2024\) On-Street Parking Management Strategy](#)
- 224** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2022\) Executive Report for the new CBC Local Transport Plan 4](#)
- 225** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2011\) Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan: Appendix F – Parking Strategy](#)
- 226** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2019\) Central Bedfordshire Interim Parking Management Strategy](#)
- 227** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2011\) Local Transport Plan 3 – The Central Bedfordshire Council Transport Strategy](#)
- 228** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2022\) Executive Report for the new CBC Local Transport Plan 4](#)
- 229** The draft objectives are subject to change as LTP4 is developed.
- 230** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(undated\) Major transport schemes](#)
- 231** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2022\) LAMP 3 Review](#)
- 232** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2011\) Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan: Appendix D – Freight Strategy](#)

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- 233** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2011\) Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan: Appendix D – Freight Strategy](#)
- 234** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2011\) Central Bedfordshire Local Transport Plan: Appendix D – Freight Strategy](#)
- 235** The 2021 Census took place during the COVID-19 pandemic and so may not be representative of the behaviours outside of this time period, particularly those relating to transport and movement.
- 236** [Office for National Statistics \(2023\) Visualising people flows – An interactive introduction to Census 2021 origin-destination data](#)
- 237** [nomis \(2011\) Method of travel to work](#)
- 238** [Office for National Statistics \(2021\) Census maps – Central Bedfordshire – Housing – Number of cars or vans – 3 or more cars or vans in household](#)
- 239** [Office for National Statistics \(2023\) Car or van availability](#)
- 240** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2022, updated 2024\) On-Street Parking Management Strategy](#)
- 241** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2024, updated 2025\) Evidence Base For Central Bedfordshire's Fourth Local Transport Plan](#)
- 242** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2023\) Monitoring – Authority Monitoring Report 2022/23](#)
- 243** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(undated\) Archaeology, Heritage and Conservation](#)
- 244** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(2024\) Landscape Character Assessment](#)
- 245** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(undated\) Archaeology, Heritage and Conservation](#)
- 246** [Central Bedfordshire Council \(undated\) Archaeology, Heritage and Conservation](#)
- 247** [Office for National Statistics \(2017, updated 2025\) Standard Area Measurements for Administrative Areas \(December 2016\) in the UK](#)
- 248** [Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs \(2022\) Landscapes review \(National Parks and AONBs\): government response](#)
- 249** [Chilterns National Landscape \(2025\) Chilterns National Landscape: An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2025-2030](#)

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- [250 Chilterns National Landscape \(2025\) Chilterns National Landscape: An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2025-2030](#)
  - [251 Chilterns National Landscape \(2025\) Chilterns National Landscape: An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2025-2030](#)
  - [252 Chilterns National Landscape \(2025\) Chilterns National Landscape: An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2025-2030](#)
  - [253 Chilterns National Landscape \(2025\) Chilterns National Landscape: An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2025-2030](#)
  - [254 Chilterns National Landscape \(2025\) Chilterns National Landscape: An Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plan 2025-2030](#)
  - [255 Forest of Marston Vale website](#)
  - [256 Forest of Marston Vale website](#)
  - [257 Forest of Marston Vale website](#)
  - [258 Natural England \(2014\) NCA Profile: 87 East Anglian Chalk \(NE529\)](#)
  - [259 Natural England \(2014\) NCA Profile: 88 Bedfordshire and Cambridge Claylands \(NE555\)](#)
  - [260 Natural England \(2013\) NCA Profile: 90 Bedfordshire Greensand Ridge \(NE481\)](#)
  - [261 Natural England \(2013\) NCA Profile: 110 Chilterns \(NE406\)](#)
  - [262 Central Bedfordshire Council \(2024\) Landscape Character Assessment](#)
  - [263 Central Bedfordshire Council \(2024\) Landscape Character Assessment](#)
  - [264 Central Bedfordshire Council \(2024\) Landscape Character Assessment](#)
  - [265 Central Bedfordshire Council \(2024\) Landscape Character Assessment](#)
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  - [271 Central Bedfordshire Council \(2024\) Landscape Character Assessment](#)

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- 272** The Central Bedfordshire Local Plan was submitted to government on 30 April 2018. The NPPF has subsequently been revised in July 2018 and was updated further in February 2019. However, the Local Plan is being examined under the version of the Framework (NPPF March 2012) that was in place at the time of the submission of the Local Plan.
- 273** [Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities \(2021\) Oxford-Cambridge Arc](#)
- 274** [East West Rail \(2023\) Route Update Report](#)
- 275** [Bedford Borough Council \(2024\) Local government leaders unit in support of Universal's transformative theme park and resort project](#)
- 276** [Luton Borough Council \(2017\) Luton Local Plan 2011-2031](#)
- 277** [North Herts Council \(2022\) North Hertfordshire Local Plan 2011-2031](#)
- 278** [South Cambridgeshire District Council \(2018\) South Cambridgeshire Local Plan](#)
- 279** [Bedford Borough Council \(2020\) Bedford Borough Local Plan 2030 – Planning for the future](#)
- 280** [Bedford Borough Council \(2022\) Local Plan 2040 – Plan for Submission](#)
- 281** [Milton Keynes City Council \(2019\) Plan:MK 2016-2031](#)
- 282** [Milton Keynes City Council \(undated\) MK City Plan2050: Previous stages](#)
- 283** [Aylesbury Vale District Council \(2017\) Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan 2013-2033](#)
- 284** [Dacorum Borough Council \(2017\) Issues and Options Consultation Local Plan to 2036](#)
- 285** [St Albans City and District Council \(undated\) New Local Plan](#)
- 286** [Huntingdonshire District Council \(2019\) Huntingdonshire's Local Plan to 2036](#)
- 287** [Huntingdonshire District Council \(undated\) Local Plan Update](#)

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