

Press Release

Now a new challenge to local democracy!

The “Central Growth Board”

The Government and Local Authorities have acted together to create yet another QUANGO - “The Central Growth Board”.

It will enable them to push through massive developments along the Oxford - Milton Keynes - Bedford - Cambridge Corridor without the consent of local people, crushing local democracy.

The Mayor of Bedford, Dave Hodgson and the Leader of Central Bedfordshire Council, James Jamieson, both committed to the NIC plans, have joined the Central Growth Board.

The Central Growth Board has been formed to ensure that controversial Oxford - Cambridge developments across the local authority areas covered by the South East Midlands Local Enterprise Partnership (SEMLEP) - Bedfordshire, Milton Keynes, Luton, Aylesbury Vale and Northamptonshire plus the rest of Buckinghamshire - are pushed through without debate.

Similar “Growth Boards” are being created in Oxfordshire and Cambridgeshire.

A spokesperson for CPRE Bedfordshire said:

“CPRE Bedfordshire believe that the work of the new “Central Growth Board” is already underway with controversial planning applications and projects being pushed through with minimal consultation with the people of Bedfordshire.

Examples are:

- 1. The Expansion of Cranfield Airport to become a major airport for private jets - some very large. To be called London Cranfield. New runway & ground facilities incl. 300 bed hotel - doubling the number of aircraft movements from 20,000 to 40,000 per year - increasing passenger numbers to 70,000 per year.**

This planning application was quietly approved by Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) in June 2018 without consulting the many Town & Parish Councils in Bedford Borough which will be directly under the flight path or otherwise impacted e.g. by air pollution, increased traffic etc.

Villages like Wootton (Bedford Borough) to the north and west of Bedford town which will be heavily impacted by the very large increase in car and HGV traffic due to the airport expansion.

Several north Bedfordshire villages are directly under the flight path.

Strangely, for a strategic application of this type, it appears that Bedford Borough Council itself was also not consulted even though Cranfield Airport is on the border between the two LA's.

This despite the fact that The Mayor of Bedford, Dave Hodgson knew all about plans to expand Cranfield airport.

We have written to The Mayor of Bedford and the Leader of CBC, James Jamieson asking for the reason behind their undermining of the local democratic process and what they will do to put it right.

2. Proposed new A6 - M1 Link Road which will slice through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and impact historic woodlands.

Details of the controversial route of the A6-M1 link road was mysteriously absent from CBC's Local Plan 2035 which was presented to Government for approval a few months ago.

Then "out of the blue" on July 10th, Central Bedfordshire Council (CBC) put the route of the new road forward for "pre-application consultation" with local people at a number of drop-in sessions across the area.

These sessions were held during the summer holidays (the first starting on the 17 July and the last on the 30th July) when many residents were away on holiday. Those residents who were available were given just 7 days' notice of the first drop-in event!

So much for local democracy!

We have written to CBC voicing our very serious concerns about the way in which local democracy is being undermined by their actions."

All documents can be found on our website www.cpre.org.uk.

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