

Neighbourhood Plan Consultation. Nov 30th 2025

Response from South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth; [REDACTED]

The vision: “A 21st century market town that thrives on the strength of its heritage, community, environment and entrepreneurs/creatives.”

South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth is disappointed that all mention of low carbon and green economy are left out of this vision. This leaves the plan far behind the aspirations of the town, what the community has achieved, and the UK's legal targets on Climate Change. LLTC passed a Climate Emergency in 2021. There have been many public meetings organised by the Low Carbon Leighton Linslade since 2016. Leighton Buzzard has two wind turbines one of which was granted permission in 2017 when no other wind turbines were being given permission. LB was a leader in battery technology in 2014 with the Super Battery on South Street. Marigold House Care Home is one of the very few Care Homes in the UK to be Passive Haus. The town was a bee friendly town in 2013, was a case study for the National Pollinator Strategy in 2014 and Keep the Buzz in Leighton Buzzard was awarded a “Bees Needs Award” from DEFRA in 2017. Dash Direct Bus service was an award-winning bus service in 2011 that cut traffic on southern Leighton Buzzard by 17% above the TRICS assessment. The town was part of a special project of Cycle Town 2009-2011. The town has always been a market town for food and has a farmers market, and market supplying local vegetables and farm produce which is low carbon. Local Food shops such as the Refill Shop provide good quality very affordable local food without waste. Several shops in the town provide refill facilities.

Objectives

Following on from the comments on the vision the Neighbourhood Plan's Objectives are very disappointing in that they do not reflect some of the town's strengths and also in that they only ask for a very small amount of change when a step change in a range of areas is crucial.

- 1. To promote Leighton Buzzard Town Centre as a modern market town, with a vibrant daytime and evening economy; developing creative and cultural experiential opportunities along a strong retail offer.**

It is good that it mentions creative but it does not mention local food. Leighton Buzzard has been the hub for local farms and had a market for a 100 years and especially with shops like the health food shops and the Refill Store is a place to get good quality food. Nor does it mention low carbon or green skills. Following the comments above, with two wind turbines, and shops like the Refill Shop which is bigger than the Refill Shop in Totnes, the Repair Café, library of things, an unusually high amount of cycle shops per capita, this objective really misses the future of the town. Nor does it mention building on our heritage such as Q Central and Alice Chaucer.

- 2. To expand the range of social infrastructure to promote good health, reduce social isolation and encourage community cohesion.**

There needs to be a Step Change in the provision of social infrastructure not just expand as that could be very little and it needs to include all ages. A health facility is crucial. Considering both the need in the town for hospital services which can be outsourced and the proven record of social and cultural activities in reducing demand on the NHS, the objectives need to include a health facility to Community and Arts. This is also crucial to reduce emissions for the travelling for health appointments outside the town.

3. **To ensure new development promotes high standard in design, including maximising energy efficiency measures.** This is not nearly strong enough and will be less than the legislation. The government announced in June that the Future Homes Standard will include solar panels as well as heat pumps and high insulation levels. There are huge opportunities with the locally owned wind turbines in the town and recent location of the National Energy Efficiency Centre.
4. **To promote active travel opportunities, improving connectivity between the town centre and the wider community, reducing congestion and encouraging reduced use of the private car for short journeys.** Again this is alarmingly weak. It is very worrying that buses have not even been mentioned. Buses from new estates need to be every half hour with clear publicity. Congestion in the town is very bad and carbon emissions from Transport make up nearly 50% of Central Bedfordshire's carbon emissions. Nationally Committee on Climate Change have stated that "UK transport emissions must fall significantly to meet net-zero targets, with projections calling for an 86% reduction in surface transport emissions from 2023 levels by 2040" Just promoting active travel and improving connectivity will not be enough. Key walking and cycling links for Eastern Leighton Linlade have not been delivered despite four years of proactive lobbying. It has been shown from the reports done by Lyn Sloman of Transport for Quality of Life and the DFT work on Sustainable Travel Towns that with proactive sustainable transport measures traffic can be cut by up to 21% in urban areas.
5. **To strengthen green and blue infrastructure, ensuring all residents have access to high quality places and spaces to support physical and mental wellbeing together with the provision of enhanced habitats to enable flora and fauna to thrive in harmony with the community.** There is no mention of Biodiversity targets, carbon storage, urban heat and reducing flooding and water storage in light of drought. This is very worrying.

Policies

Policy LL8 Green and Blue Infrastructure.

This is a very disappointing policy considering all the work on green infrastructure including the Blue Lens study and the challenges of flooding and drought with Climate Change. It also fails to record some of the real biodiversity highlights within the town and huge amount of work from the community especially Friends of Leighton Linlade in Bloom and South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth and the work done by LLTC

There is no mention of biodiversity targets and urban heat and very little or no mention on flood reduction, carbon storage, water quality and including biodiversity within housebuilding and the immediate streets.

South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth have created and managed 17 bee friendly areas around the town including a community orchard, hedges including apple trees and wildflower/bee friendly habitats.

Leighton Linlade in Bloom have created wonderful areas of flowers that support pollinators.

There is no mapping of these areas and so the opportunity to link in these areas to each other and build on this is lost. The area on Soulbury Road Bank between Knaves Hill and St Mary's Way have a unusually high number grasshoppers as well as a range of butterflies and solitary bees and Vandyke Curve beside the Narrow Gauge railway has an unusually high and diverse mix of wildflowers according to one of the Bedfordshire Natural History Recorders yet neither of these are recorded. The Leighton Linlade in Bloom gardens which are rich in Pollinators are not recorded and the area of Linlade Memorial Playing Fields with hedges and wildflowers and the Gardens of Remembrance are not recorded, even though they play a major role in helping pollinators.

The policy does not mention urban heat and planting within developments. TCPA Biodiversity by Design 2006 explains how creepers on houses and planting within streets can mitigate urban heat and cold and flooding. Yet there is no mention of biodiversity within the dense areas of housing.

The policy does not mention biodiversity targets. The UK is one of the most nature depleted countries in the world. In England, the Government has set a world-leading, legally binding target to halt the decline in species abundance by 2030 and to tackle some of the biggest pressures on our environment and to effectively conserve and manage at least 30% of land and 30% of ocean ('30 by 30') https://uk.chm-cbd.net/sites/gb/files/2025-04/31.03.2025_UK_National_Biodiversity_Strategy_and_Action_Plan.pdf

A report in the House of Commons Library explains this very clearly <https://commonslibrary.parliament.uk/biodiversity-loss-uk-international-obligations/>

In England the [Environment Act 2021](#), and [subsequent regulations](#), set legally binding biodiversity targets, which will contribute to meeting international obligations. The targets are:

- *to reduce the risk of species going extinct in 2042, compared with 2022*
- *to create or restore 500,000 hectares of wildlife-rich habitats by 2042*
- *to ensure overall species abundance is increasing rather than decreasing by 2030, and increases by 10% by 2042, compared with 2030*

This is an addition to the commitment the government has made to meet the CBD's 30 by 30 target. In December 2023, Natural England summarised the [measures the UK is taking to meet 30 by 30](#), which

include creating a [Nature Recovery Network](#) and strengthening the remit of National Parks and National Landscapes to support nature recovery.

The Environment Act 2021 targets are supported by a series of interim targets (to 2028), as set out in the government's 2023 [Environment Improvement Plan](#).

The water quality in the river and brook is very poor. With planting and reeds on the small streams and outflows to reduce pollution as the water flows towards the watercourses, increased planting of appropriate species across the town and reduction in non permeable areas to reduce the speed of the flow of water, there could be significant improvements in water quality in our watercourses with resulting ecological benefits, and in reducing flooding. Working with landowners, both urban and agricultural building on the work done by community groups such as the joint South Beds Friends of the Earth and the Greensand Trust Volunteers, there could be much more accurate mapping of drainage and following on from accurate mapping a reduction in pollution hot spots and following on from the water quality could be significantly improved. There could be an increase in ephemeral ponds across the town and urban area to hold back water flow and also increase biodiversity.

Local Greenspaces policy LL9 Comments by South Beds Friends of the Earth.

We support all the areas listed here although we are concerned that Mill Road greenspace is not listed for Appraisal nor is the area opposite Leighton Middle School nor the bank on Soulbury Road and Knaves and St Marys Way.

We are especially concerned that in the appendix D that wildlife summarised as (e) in the table is not mentioned for these following areas.

1. No 61 Amenity space between Regent Street and Miles Avenue which has been managed by a community group who have created pollinator friendly wildflower areas has not mention of wildlife. .
2. It is even more worrying that Linslade Gardens of Remembrance no21 are not mentioned for wildlife considering that the garden maintained by South Beds FoE is managed for pollinators and wildlife. Linslade Memorial Playing Fields have a wildflower area where surveys have taken place and The National Tree Council planted a hedge beside the wharf in order to support wildlife but wildlife is not listed as a criteria.
3. Adam's Bottom no 74 does not mention wildlife in the criteria but has three wildlife friendly areas; along the stream, by the wall and an area of native shrubs with long grass which is excellent for hibernating insects. These are managed by South Beds Friends of the Earth for wildlife.
4. Vandyke loop meadow no 75 is a wildflower meadow managed by South Beds Friends of the Earth. There is not space for recreation as listed in the criteria It is not safe being adjacent to the railway and also it would destroy the wildflower area.
5. Stanbridge Meadows, no 44 does not mention the Astral Park Community Orchard, which although it is part of the Country Wildlife Site for Stanbridge Meadows is owned by the town

council unlike Stanbridge meadows and is managed by South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth and has a rich abundance of Butterflies due to the long grass, agrimony, knapweed and wild carrot and a rich abundance of birds due to the hawthorn scattered throughout the site.

Mill Road greenspace is not mentioned. It should be one of the local greenspaces. It is a really important greenspace for local people and has a wildflower area beside the play area and is great for bees and butterflies.

We are presuming that the area opposite Leighton Middle school on the bank of the River Ouzel which now has a rich collection of wildflowers including marshwoundwort, flag irises, hemp agrimony Marsh Margiold and shrubs such as Spindle and Guelder Rose and is managed by South Beds Friends of the Earth is protected. We are presuming that Riverside Walk is protected.

Neighbourhood plan part 3 and final. Response by South Bedfordshire Friends of the Earth

Energy efficiency and climate change.

It is very good that there is a policy on energy efficiency, however with LLTC having declared a climate emergency it seems very odd that there is not a policy on renewable energy which is both encouraging microgeneration and storage as well as taking advantage of the renewable energy in the area so that this town can be a leader in renewables. Solar panels and battery storage can significantly reduce pressure on the grid and reduce energy costs and reduce carbon emissions.

There is a need to look at overall electricity supply in the area. The changes in the grid with decarbonisation of the grid by 2030 should be considered as well as the opportunities created by the wind turbines adjacent to the parish which are already feeding into Clarence Road. This town has two wind turbines and has planning permission for a third. It also has a superbattery which was the first of its kind in 2014 and a significant amount of solar farms in the vicinity. There is the opportunity for all new developments to be leaders in renewable energy technology and low bills for customers.

There also should be a motion about working with Buzz Community Energy and local organisations like Grundfos and The National Energy Efficiency Centre which is based in Leighton Buzzard on the wider agenda of retrofitting existing housing stock with both insulation and renewables. There should be a policy that new development should contribute to support green skills and retrofitting of existing housing stock.

There should be a policy for an ambition for work on Local Area Energy Plan for Leighton Buzzard so that the town can significantly reduce its demand for electricity, the price of local electricity and its carbon emissions.

There should be a policy for new commercial premises to work with renewable energy providers so that new industry is powered directly from local renewable energy.

There should be active support for a renewable energy charging station of HGVs in light of all the logistics in the area.

LL14 ; Energy Efficiency. This is a good policy on energy efficiency and covers a range of areas but it will need to relate to the Future Homes Strategy with the emphasis on solar panels which is not

mentioned in the policy. This policy might conflict with the new Future Homes Strategy. The policy should also refer to the UK's national and legally binding carbon targets.

The policy on layout and landscaping should include creepers and shrubs etc. Creepers on houses or living walls can reduce temperatures by 2degrees according to the research done by TCPA "Biodiversity by Design" TCPA

<https://urbed.coop/sites/default/files/Biodiversity%2520by%2520design.pdf>

Cycling and Buses;

Policy LL11; Active Travel. This is a very weak policy. The words "encouraging and promoting" are very weak and will provide no change. . There needs to be a step change in active travel and bus use both in light of meeting carbon emission reduction targets, and the significant congestion in Leighton Buzzard. There are also significant social and health benefits to both active travel and buses which need to be mentioned.

Policy A and D are very weak. They should state that new development should be designed to give significant priority to active travel and buses over cars. New development should create links that can easily access the wider network and are not held up by private landowners. A new development would not have a road that is not linked to the wider road network so if a developer can link the roads in the wider highway network, they should be able to do the same with walking and cycling routes. Lessons needs to be learnt and stated in this document as to why the cycling and walking links have not been delivered.

Can a contribution to the wider network of cycling and walking to enable access to schools and health facilities and community facilities and the town centre be requested in section 106? The scholars way route along Clipstone Brook has been discussed since 2005 and is crucial to get children safely into their schools and the town centre. This route needs to be completed with some urgency.

There needs to be a Step Change in Buses. Policy D should require buses running at half hour frequency, with reliability and with significant publicity so that it is extremely easy to discover the routes of the buses and the times. The Lessons Learnt Report about Dash Direct which highlights these issues should be referenced.

Buses and cycling should be seen in the light of cutting congestion in the town. The Dash Direct bus service cut car trips by 17% over what was predicted in the TRICs assessment for Southern Leighton Buzzard. Lynn Sloman and the Department for Transport have both shown in reports that traffic can be cut by up to 21% in urban areas through smart measures.

The policies need to state the "socially necessary" role of bus routes that suit more elderly people and cover a wider area as opposed to the swift direct buses to the town centre and station.

Buses and active travel to Milton Keynes need to be considered as well as buses to the town centre and station.