



BEDFORD BOROUGH COUNCIL



ENVIRONMENT QUALITY AND OPEN SPACE REPORT 2014-15

Indicator E1: Number of planning permissions granted contrary to Environment Agency advice on flooding and water quality grounds*Local Plan 2002 Target: Number and scale of planning permissions gained against advice of utilities companies and other agencies*

	Flooding	Water Quality	Total
E1	0	0	0

The Environment Agency was consulted on 59 applications in the monitoring period. Applications where potential objections were raised were the subject of conditions that addressed those concerns.

Core Indicator E2: Change in areas of biodiversity importance (NI197)*Local Target: Biodiversity Action Plan targets*

Progress:

No new County Wildlife Sites were recognised and no modifications were made to existing County Wildlife Sites in the monitoring period.

Bedford Borough has 125 Local Sites (local wildlife sites and local geological sites) in the borough. These are non-statutory sites that are locally designated for their significant nature conservation value. 66 of these sites are in positive management, which equates to 52.8%, a decrease on last year.

Year	Number of Local Sites	% in positive management
2009/10	124	51
2010/11	122	57
2011/12	123	57

2012/13	124	58.06
2013/14	125	56.8
2014/15	125	53.2

Source: Beds and Luton Biodiversity Recording and Monitoring Centre on behalf of the County Wildlife Site Panel.

Indicator E3: Percentage of land in nationally important wildlife sites (Sites of Special Scientific Interest) which are in favourable condition

Progress:

Land designated SSSI – 166.73 hectares

SSSI in:

- Favourable condition – 51.64ha (30.97%)
- Unfavourable recovering – 115.09ha (69.03%)

All SSSI designated land in the borough assessed as being in unfavourable condition, is considered to be recovering. According to the Natural England website, assessments of SSSIs are conducted on a 6 year cycle. The latest assessment was conducted at Yelden Meadows in May 2014 (outside the monitoring period). Information on the other SSSIs in the borough dates from 2008 to 2012.

SSSI site	Main habitat	Size (hectares)	Condition
Biddenham Pit	Earth heritage	0.13 + 0.30	100% favourable (last checked 08/09)
Felmersham Gravel Pits	Standing open water and canals	21.52	100% unfavourable recovering (last checked 08/09)
Hanger Wood	Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland-lowland	21.31 + 2.63	100% favourable (last checked 2012)
Odell Great Wood	Broadleaved, mixed	18.72 + 13.68 +	100% unfavourable

	and yew woodland-lowland	31.49 + 22.06	recovering (last checked 09/10)
Stevington Marsh	Neutral grassland-lowland	4.68 + 2.94	100% unfavourable recovering (last checked 2011)
Swineshead Wood	Broadleaved, mixed and yew woodland-lowland	9.01 + 12.85	100% favourable (last checked 2011)
Tilwick Meadow	Neutral grassland-lowland	2.57	100% favourable (last checked 2011)
Yelden Meadows	Neutral grassland-lowland	2.84	100% favourable (last checked 2014)

(Source: Natural England website <https://designatedsites.naturalengland.org.uk>, 2015)

Indicator E4: Increase in areas of woodland in the Growth Area

Forest Plan Target: Increase woodland cover in Forest of the Marston Vale Community Forest to 30% by 2030

Progress:

In the monitoring period (2014/15), a further 11ha of new community woodland was created in the Forest of Marston Vale. This saw the planting of a new site at Wood End, Marston Moretaine, which buffers and protects the adjacent ancient woodland of Marston Thrift, a site designated as a SSSI due to its ecological importance. A total of around 13,000 native trees and shrubs were planted, with around 750 people involved in a series of public, school and corporate tree planting events which planted over 3,500 trees between them.

Planting activity generally alternates between Bedford Borough Council and Central Bedfordshire Council administrative areas, with the designated Forest of Marston Vale area spanning the boundary lines. During this monitoring period, most activity took place in Central Bedfordshire, as indicated by the statement above.

(Source: Forest of Marston Vale)

Indicator E5: Securing local standards for open space provision

National Target: Local Authorities must set robust local space standards

Progress:

The local standards are now part of the adopted Allocations and Designations Local Plan Policy AD28. An Open Space supplementary planning document (adopted in September 2013) provides guidance on how Policy AD28 will be applied, the thresholds for on-site provision and assists applicants and developers on calculating the requirements of open space in any new development.

The Borough of Bedford Green Space Strategy was adopted in February 2013. This document includes appendices which outline the green space deficiencies for the rural area and recommendations supported by the 2007 Open Space, Sport and Recreation Study. One of the actions of the Green Space Strategy is to update the village profiles. To achieve this, the council asked Parish Councils to provide updates on open spaces in their parishes. This information was then used to update the geographic information system (GIS) used by the Parks team.

(Source: Bedford Borough Council)

Indicator E6: Designated air quality management areas

National Target: Meet national air quality targets for 13 different pollutants

Local Target: Monitor air quality against national targets for NO₂ and SO₂ in the relevant AQMAs

Progress:

Under the provisions of the Environment Act 1995 Part IV Section 83(1) an Air Quality Management Area (AQMA) for nitrogen dioxide (NO₂) was declared in Bedford town's centre on 6th November 2009. The order also revoked AQMA 1 for sulphur dioxide (SO₂) following the closure of Stewartby brickworks in February 2008.

The AQMA (known as AQMA 5) covers most of the town centre where the annual mean Objective for NO₂ is widely exceeded. In April 2015 the council fulfilled its part in the Local Air Quality Management Process (LAQM) by submitting an Updating Screening Assessment Report. The Report indicated that there may be areas along Ampthill road where in the fullness of time the Government's annual mean objective for NO₂ may not be met.

To date the proposed development is only part completed, and monitoring indicates that at present the levels of NO₂ do not exceed the permitted annual mean. The council will continue to collect data to establish the levels of NO₂ along Ampthill Road, then the council can identify potential action if required as the development continues. The council will also revise its Air Quality Action Plan which will link closely with Local Transport Plan 3 and other council policies to detail the measures the council and its stakeholders are taking to improve air quality within the town centre AQMA.

The air quality monitoring stations continue to run and provide continuous accurate data on levels of NO₂ within the town centre. This data is used to inform modelling and future work carried out within the borough.

There is one other area outside the AQMA that was found to exceed Governmental objectives, the location is on the A1 northbound at Wyboston however, there is no relevant exposure at this location. Therefore the council will produce a further Progress Report in April 2016.

(Source: Bedford Borough Council)

Indicator E7: Household and commercial waste recycling

Draft Target: Recover 70% Municipal Solid Waste by 2015

Bedford Borough Council Minerals and Waste Service is run jointly with, and hosted by Central Bedford Council. The Minerals and Waste Team produce their own reports to monitor the Minerals and Waste Local Plan and other documents.

Information on Minerals and Waste can be found in the Minerals and Waste Monitoring Report.

