

Hundreds sign up to save wildlife meadows

More than 1,200 people are campaigning to save a wildlife site from being bulldozed by developers.

Gavray Wildlife Meadows, on the south-east edge of Bicester, is home to animals including lizards, grass-snakes, dragon flies and deer as well as many birds and wild flowers.

But the meadows, grazed on by cattle and sheep from Launton farms for centuries, may soon be filled with 300 houses which could increase risk of flooding.

Gallagher Estates is hoping to develop the land between Gavray Drive and the London to Birmingham rail line with a scheme that includes housing, some of it affordable, a primary school, community buildings and land set aside for wildlife.

Campaigner Patricia Clissold has been photographing the rare species of animals and has helped collect signatures against the proposal since the end of last year.

She said: "Once it is gone, it's gone. You can't put it back again. All the poor creatures that are there. I think it will be a disaster. And it's a damp sponge you see, to stop us from being flooded with the brook. Sometimes it overflows and floods the football pitch but it would be worse if they put concrete on there."

The meadows are only one of four sites in the UK that support four different species of the rare Hairstreak butterfly and many of the bats, hares and newts are becoming endangered.

Bicester Town Council has told the district council it does not want houses on the Gavray site but the campaign group will continue to collect signatures up until the planning committee meeting in June.

For more information about the campaign visit
www.facebook.com/savegavraywildlifemeadows