



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Standing up for your countryside

FIELD WORK

Summer 2017

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Green Belt under siege

CPRE's latest research, compiled with the help of our branches, reveals 425,000 houses are now planned for Green Belt, of which more than 70% will be unaffordable.

Based on local and city-regional planning policies and new data from planning consultants Glenigan, CPRE's annual *Green Belt Under Siege* report showed that just 16% of houses built on Green Belt land since 2009, outside local plans, were classed as 'affordable'. The projected figure of 425,000 is an increase of 54% on March 2016, and the biggest year-on-year increase in building proposed in the Green Belt for two decades. The research found that Green Belt in the North West, West Midlands and South East is under particular pressure.

CPRE estimates suggest that the Government's New Homes Bonus initiative will reward councils with £2.4 billion for the proposed 425,000 new homes. The scheme was established by the Coalition Government in 2011 as an incentive for local authorities to allow more housebuilding. But against a backdrop of more far-reaching cuts to local authorities, it has meant that permitting new housing development is one of few ways in which councils can fund essential local services.

We have called on the Government to reform the New Homes Bonus to invest billions in regenerating suitable brownfield sites that could provide 1.1 million homes, instead of effectively

subsidising Green Belt development. We are now specifically recommending that New Homes Bonus funding should be removed from development in the Green Belt, and nationally protected landscapes, unless it meets local need (as distinct from market demand) or involves the regeneration of suitable brownfield land.

Mounting pressures

Meanwhile, recent proposals in the Government's Housing White Paper could prompt further Green Belt loss, despite the Conservative manifesto pledging to "maintain the existing strong protections on designated land like the Green Belt". Under the plans, local authorities could be expected to review Green Belt boundaries every five years, and allocate more land for housing if developers fail to build at the required speed. We are calling for reviews of Green Belt boundaries to take place no more than every 15 years – the recommended life of a typical local plan.

We also want the Government to make it clearer that unnecessary or major losses of Green Belt should be avoided. Councils are currently expected to consider environmental and planning designations, such as Green Belt, when planning how to meet an 'Objectively Assessed Need' (OAN) for housing in their area, yet many have chosen to ignore this requirement.

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FIELDWORK

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Green Belt under siege

Continued from p.1

CPRE research shows that, since 2012, 24 councils out of the 62 local authorities for which there is clear data have heeded national policy and established housing targets in approved local plans lower than their OAN, with the majority reducing their targets due to environmental or countryside constraints. Other councils, however, have pursued the full OAN despite a high proportion of their land being protected countryside.

In Mid Sussex, the planning inspector has been reported as forcing the council to accept a number even higher than their OAN of 876 houses per year to help Crawley meet their 'unmet need'. Mid Sussex has significant areas of precious countryside, particularly the High Weald AONB. Neighbouring authorities, particularly Wealden which has a similar proportion of protected land, have been able to reduce their housing targets. Campaigners and local MPs have long fought a consortium of developers who have argued for a still higher housing target. Even the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, part of which is covered by the Prime Minister's constituency, is pursuing their full OAN target of 14,000 houses over 20 years despite 84% of the land being Green Belt.

Exceptional circumstances?

The release of Green Belt is most often justified by 'exceptional circumstances', but the Government must reaffirm that high levels of housing demand or housing targets do not in themselves amount to the exceptional circumstances required to justify changing Green Belt boundaries. The Housing White Paper proposes to provide, for the first time, a definition of the 'exceptional circumstances' test, along with a number of other changes to Green Belt policy.

"We must not sell off our precious Green Belt in the mistaken belief it will help improve the affordability of housing"

In our response to the White Paper, CPRE agreed with the Government's aims of bringing more transparency and clarity to the process of reviewing Green Belt boundaries. But we have particular concerns about the lack of clarity in the White Paper on the need for the permanence of Green Belt boundaries if they are to play a strategic, city-regional role, rather than be nibbled at by individual district councils or neighbourhood plans. To reduce the pressure that housing targets inevitably place on the Green Belt, we are also calling for

"The Government must reduce the power of viability studies and stop developers gaming the system"

a method of calculating housing need that better reflects local need, protected countryside and current building rates.

Where there is a particularly acute need for affordable housing in Green Belt areas to meet local needs, we're calling on the Government to give more support to small scale, locally led "rural exception site" schemes that are well designed to minimise Green Belt harm.

Tom Fyans, CPRE's director of campaigns and policy said: "Green Belt is being lost at an ever faster rate, yet the type of housing being built now or in the future will do very little to address the affordable housing crisis faced by many families and young people. We must not be the generation that sells off our precious Green Belt in the mistaken belief it will help improve the affordability of housing. The only ones set to benefit from future Green Belt development will be landowners and the big housebuilders, not communities in need of decent, affordable housing."

A growing affordability crisis

Other recent CPRE research has shown a growing crisis of affordable housing provision in the wider countryside. Using Government data, we found that the proportion of affordable homes being provided by non-metropolitan local authorities has halved in five years. In 2011-12, 35% of new dwellings in shire districts and unitary authorities were affordable; in 2015-16, this had decreased to just 16%. Other than a small recovery in 2014-15, those years showed continued decline.

As councils no longer receive direct funding for affordable housing, and, until recently, very few councils have been building homes (just 1,890 across the entire country in 2015-16), the main way affordable homes are currently provided is through conditions on developers being granted planning permission. A pattern has emerged, however, where developers claim through a viability assessment that it is not or no longer possible to build the requisite proportion of affordable homes as part of a development.

In a recent survey by the Town and Country Planning Association, over 60% of councils agreed that the viability test set out in the National Planning Policy Framework has hindered their ability to secure sufficient social and affordable housing to meet local needs. CPRE's planning campaign manager, Paul Miner, said "the Government must reduce the power of these viability studies, stop highly profitable developers gaming the system and give councils the hard cash to start building houses again."

Find out more: Read *Green Belt Under Siege 2017* at www.cpre.org.uk/resources

BREAKthrough

How our work is making a difference

Bathampton Meadows saved from car park

CPRE Avonside has welcomed Bath and North East Somerset Council's intention to drop a scheme to add a further park-and-ride to the East of Bath.

The council said it had listened to the views of local people when making its decision to look at a range of "joined up transport improvements" instead of the 800-space park. CPRE Avonside had been at the forefront of vocal opposition to the scheme, with branch director Sophie Spencer appearing in *The Guardian* in December 2015 calling for greener alternatives, including strategic investment in public and active transport. In January 2016, North East Somerset MP, Jacob Rees-Mogg, submitted a petition to

the House of Commons signed by over 8,000 opponents of the scheme.

Explaining July's decision, Council leader Tim Warren said that alternative measures would now be examined, including: improving access to existing park and ride sites; exploring the potential for a tram system in Bath; and relieving 'school run' traffic. Sophie Spencer commented: "CPRE Avonside have long been opposed to a further park-and-ride facility being introduced to the East of Bath. We are delighted to hear of the Council's intention to drop this scheme, which would have caused serious damage to the Avon Green Belt, as well as intruding on the Cotswold AONB. Park and rides of this scale and location are, for good

reason, an outdated principle that can cause harm to existing public transport and increase vehicle miles travelled."

The branch argues that all measures to improve air quality and access must be designed to benefit all residents, not just those who already have access to cars. They point out that Bath is also an internationally acclaimed World Heritage City, partly because it is surrounded by protected, designated landscape. CPRE Avonside believes that any genuine solution to the traffic problems will have to be part of a planned Bath City and West of England transport strategy, and look forward to a constructive and urgent dialogue with the Council on the alternative options.

Recognition for Bodmin Moor's dark skies

July saw the announcement that Bodmin Moor, part of the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), has been awarded Dark Sky Landscape status by the International Dark-Sky Association.

This prestigious designation is only granted to areas that meet exacting standards for night sky quality and natural darkness in a core area, with a peripheral area that supports preserving the dark sky at the core. The 80 square miles of Bodmin Moor is the first area of an AONB landscape to be recognised in this way, following earlier designations for the South Downs, Exmoor and Northumberland National Parks.

Emma Marrington, CPRE's senior rural policy campaigner commented: "This is a huge achievement, led by

Cornwall Council and Caradon Observatory, to achieve lasting protection for the stunning night skies above Bodmin Moor. We are particularly pleased that the bid was enhanced by CPRE's Night Blight mapping, which is the first time a Dark Sky bid has used the maps as complementary evidence. The maps, created by LUC, were launched last year and showed that Cornwall is the 4th darkest county, with the Cornwall AONB having 63% pristine night skies, free from light pollution, compared with 22% of England overall. The maps showed that the skies above Bodmin Moor are exceptionally dark."

Anita Grice-Goldsmith, director of CPRE Cornwall, hoped the designation would "act as a catalyst for education and good lighting across Cornwall."

Cornwall Council are providing local residents and businesses with advice on reducing light pollution, which they expect to bring health benefits for both people and wildlife. Dark Sky status is also expected to boost tourism and the local economy, especially in the darker, autumn and winter months when star gazing opportunities are at their best. CPRE hopes other AONBs will pursue Dark Sky status - and use our Night Blight maps, given that our mapping found that 40% of England's pristine night skies are above England's 34 AONBs. Detailed maps are available for all English counties, districts, AONBs, National Parks and National Character Areas, along with an interactive map for Britain at nightblight.cpre.org.uk

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Current issues

Agriculture Bill

June's Queen's Speech saw the Government outline plans for an Agriculture Bill that could have a major impact on the countryside. Belinda Gordon, head of rural affairs at CPRE, said: "We welcome the inclusion of an Agriculture Bill, and the emphasis on creating a thriving farming sector and improving the environment. Before and during the forthcoming consultation on the bill, we will be pushing for a fairer agricultural policy that provides funds to those who need it and to those who produce the environmental and public benefits that we all value so much. We must encourage farmers to enhance the famed variety and distinctiveness of our landscapes and the resources that support them."

Reviewing planning

CPRE is one of the main sponsors of the Town and Country Planning Association's Raynsford review of planning. The project has issued a call for evidence as part of its aim to identify how the Government can reform the planning system to make it fairer, better resourced and capable of tackling the major challenges which confront the nation.

The task force is keen to hear from a broad range of professionals, public agencies, interest groups and members of the general public. You can respond in the following ways: submit evidence as text to the Call for evidence (maximum 1,500 words per theme); complete a short survey of public attitudes to planning here; send a three-minute 'soapbox' video on your experiences and insight.

Find out more: <https://www.tcpa.org.uk/raynsford-review>

NEWSroundup

Keeping you on top of countryside developments

Rural proofing government policy

The Rural Coalition – a group of 12 national organisations including CPRE – recently called for Brexit to be 'rural-proofed', highlighting that "rural England is not just about farming and the environment".

The Coalition's July statement warned that rural areas risk becoming "enclaves of the affluent" unless the Government acts on pressing issues including the lack of affordable housing and the impact of austerity on local services. They identified the key principles, policies and actions which the Government must apply to secure a "living, working countryside" and give rural communities a sustainable future. The demands included a meaningful increase in the number of affordable homes outside of towns and cities; fair distribution of funding between urban and rural areas for all

services including healthcare and transport; and an industrial strategy that realises the potential of rural areas.

With the Brexit negotiations underway, the statement highlighted that the lack of replacements for key EU grant funds for rural businesses and projects could have potentially severe consequences for the rural economy. In response to the austerity agenda, the Coalition argued that many rural dwellers feel left behind or ignored, with key services cut back because of public sector austerity and private sector cost-cutting and efficiency savings, including, most notably, adult social care and buses. Members of the Coalition also want to see business support and infrastructure reach rural areas, so the rural economy can grow, and say any industrial strategy must put in place support to release the potential of rural areas and to

address market failures.

The Rural Coalition made specific calls for the Government to take positive action to: introduce dedicated funding and an ambitious annual target for the number of new affordable homes built in rural areas; deliver a support programme for rural businesses and community entrepreneurs; ensure that the extra costs of delivering services in rural areas are properly reflected in any funding formula; and provide a comprehensive community infrastructure support programme. Margaret Clark CBE, Chair of the Rural Coalition, and a CPRE trustee, said: "For too long, rural people and businesses have been left behind and sidelined in the national political debate. From now on, all policies and their implementation must be properly assessed to ensure they meet the needs of the millions of people who call the countryside home."

A Green Belt blueprint for Sheffield

As the charity responsible for mapping and advocating a Green Belt for Sheffield in 1937, CPRE South Yorkshire have now published a radical vision, aimed at ensuring Sheffield gets the right developments in the right places while maintaining its green spaces.

Sheffield's reputation as one of the greenest cities in Europe depends on the protection of its countryside assets, but the report highlights three critical tests that will apply to most towns and cities in England. Firstly, it argues that Sheffield should only grow outwards if it is already making the best use of urban opportunities, including denser development and use of brownfield sites. Secondly, any proposed changes to the Green Belt must deliver truly special and sustainable development that meets real housing need, especially in respect of

affordable and social housing. And lastly, great care must be taken when re-developing brownfield sites in the Green Belt, such as the Hepworth's site in the Loxley Valley.

The report calls for Green Belt boundaries to remain unchanged unless there has been a comprehensive review for the whole Sheffield City Region to confirm the most sustainable locations for urban expansion. It also recommends that any changes are accompanied by binding masterplans to give communities confidence that Green Belt land will not be lost to generic suburban developments. The report highlights a number of positive examples of what can be done, including Little Kelham – where the regeneration of a challenging brownfield site has seen the restoration of a historic building and new homes built to Passivhaus standards of energy

performance. The scheme is set to become a huge enhancement to the neighbourhood and an exemplar of good, high-density urban development.

"Sheffield's Green Belt has never been more valuable to us, nor has it been under greater threat since we first fought for its protection in the 1930s" commented planning officer and co-author of the report, Andrew Wood. "A crazy numbers game, imposed by central Government, and uninspiring 'Lego-land' developments by big house-builders risk losing all that is special about our local countryside. Something has to change and change quickly and we look to the City Council and its planners to take up the challenge. We hope this report will spur everyone to understand there are win-win solutions possible."

Find out more: Read the *Green Belt Blueprint* for Sheffield at www.cpresouthyorkshire.org.uk

dates of note

UNESCO status for the Lake District

The Lake District National Park has been listed as a world heritage site, becoming the UK's first National Park to be granted the status.

As members of National Park Partnership, Friends of the Lake District were delighted that the bid for World Heritage Site inscription has been successful, recognising the culmination of a great deal of effort by the partnership over many years. The Friends are especially pleased that the bid has helped to increase attention on the cultural heritage of the area.

In awarding the status, UNESCO's committee praised the area's beauty, farming and the inspiration it had provided to artists and writers, including children's author Beatrix Potter and poet William Wordsworth. It also noted that the area has been shaped by good development, with 'grand

houses, gardens and parks purposely created to enhance the beauty of this landscape'. The citation also recognised the area's role in building national support for the idea of recording and protecting beautiful countryside: "This landscape was greatly appreciated from the 18th century onwards by the Picturesque and later Romantic movements, which celebrated it in paintings, drawings and words. It also inspired an awareness of the importance of beautiful landscapes and triggered early efforts to preserve them." UNESCO also suggested that the impact of tourism be monitored and requested improvements be made in the conservation of the area, which is visited by around 18 million people a year.

Douglas Chalmers, Chief Executive of Friends of the Lake District, said: "Our cultural

heritage has evolved over many generations and we want to see this continue with no harm to the landscape in the future. We should take this opportunity to develop and adopt more sustainable tourism practices and transport solutions that reduce the risk of harm to our landscape while contributing to economic benefits. We would like to see the status used as a focus to grow the value of sustainable tourism by giving people more reasons to visit whilst ensuring the landscapes they come to enjoy are managed appropriately. Achieving World Heritage Site status provides a further level of accountability for us all. We can enjoy the moment, but winning World Heritage Status marks the beginning of a new adventure and the Partnership still has much to do in ensuring the threats and opportunities are balanced appropriately."

Launching a new Vision for Norfolk

National President Emma Bridgewater launched CPRE Norfolk's new Vision for the county in a memorable event at Norwich Cathedral in June. Emma was supported by branch President Professor Tim O'Riordan, and guests enjoyed an inspiring presentation by branch chairman Chris Dady.

The *Vision for Norfolk* has been launched amidst concern that many acres of green fields will be sacrificed to chase government targets for housing. It calls for the rejection of a centrally imposed, 'one size fits all' approach to planning for homes in favour of policies which will preserve Norfolk's character, at the same time as providing the economic growth the county needs. The Vision celebrates Norfolk's environment as a unique and precious asset, supporting farming, tourism industry and an incredibly diverse range of flora and fauna. It recognises

that the county is facing many challenges, including population growth, climate change and the ending of the partnership with the European Union.

The Vision is intended to encourage people to join in the debate about how we manage these pressures, while protecting this precious and fragile environment. The document has been supported by Norfolk Wildlife Trust's Chief Executive, Brendan Joyce, whose foreword called for "sympathetic management of land and where people are connected with, inspired by, value and care for Norfolk's wildlife and wild spaces." He concluded: "It is not enough to protect what is there from growing threats. Taking a more landscape scale approach to its conservation means creating more space for wildlife and repairing broken ecological networks. We have much in common with CPRE's Vision and

look forward to working together for the benefit of Norfolk's wildlife, countryside, people and prosperity, within the context of a sustainable environment."

The key points of the Vision are set out by asking readers whether they agree with a number of statements, including a call for greenfield sites to not be allocated for housing until the plentiful supply of existing sites has been utilised. The Vision also calls for "direct government investment in affordable housing", and the strengthening of neighbourhood planning "so that local communities can have a real say about the level and location of development". CPRE Norfolk is urging people to get involved the campaign by tweeting support with the 'hashtag' #V4N; visiting the website at www.V4N.org.uk; or following the twitter feed @Vision4Norfolk.

CPRE Norfolk Summer Fair

A showcase for the best of Norfolk's food, drink and music. Plus local art and crafts, archery, birds of prey and much more.

Sun 20th August, 10am to 4pm, Wolterton Hall and Park, NR11 7LY

Free for CPRE members. Find out more at www.cprenorfolk.org.uk/summer-fair

CPRE Bedfordshire's 30th anniversary Barn Dance

Help raise funds for the branch with a fun evening of dancing, a fish & chip supper and a raffle with fantastic prizes.

Sat 30th September, 8pm, Harlington Village Hall, Sundon Road, Harlington
Tickets are £15. For more information and to book, call 01234 353331 or email info@cprebeds.org.uk

Planning our future - what are the best options for local communities?

CPRE Hampshire's conference will encourage local communities to engage with Neighbourhood Planning and other planning tools to shape their futures. Followed by lunch and networking
Thu 5th October 2017, 9.30am - 1.00pm, Wessex Conference Centre, Sparsholt College, Winchester
For more details, see www.cprehampshire.org.uk/events

Buckinghamshire Rural Affairs Group Annual Conference - Responding to Rural Change

Speakers include Lord Chancellor and Secretary of State for Justice, David Lidington MP, who will give the Government perspective on rural change post-Brexit.
Fri 24th November 2017, 9.30am - 2.00pm, Great Kingshill Village Hall, HP15 6DW
Find out more at <http://www.cprebucks.org.uk/events>

Current issues

Village victory in Lancashire

CPRE Lancashire campaigner Audrey Dawson recently helped residents of Coupe Green near Preston successfully overturn a planning recommendation for 78 houses on the outskirts of their village. Residents challenged South Ribble Borough Council to reject the application on the basis that it included poorly-designed development; failed to comply with parking provision requirements; and had restricted site access.

In a clamorous planning meeting, villagers expressed outrage over a lack of consultation and non-compliance with Local Plan standards. Although the planning officer had recommended the scheme for approval, the application was refused on a majority verdict. Audrey told the *Lancashire Evening Post*: "I was very happy to support the residents of Coupe Green in their justified fight to oppose bad development proposals that went against the planning principles contained in the Local Plan. I deplored the total lack of democratic consultation with the residents by the developer." The refusal decision was reached after councillors queried the impact on residential amenity. Local resident Paul Wignall said: "It's great news, I'm pleased the committee listened to the concerns of residents. It was David versus Goliath, and David won."

A Beds birthday

CPRE Bedfordshire is marking 30 years of standing up for the county's countryside and green spaces with a special photography competition: *Bedfordshire - A Changing Landscape*. Entrants are encouraged to consider the ways that Bedfordshire's landscape can be seen to change, through natural or human factors. With a first prize of £100, and a runner-up receiving £50 in M&S vouchers, visit www.cprebeds.org.uk to enter before the deadline of 16th October 2017.

letter from the field



Words from local campaigners

CPRE Wiltshire Vice Chairman, Charmian Spickernell, asks which form of local government is best for local democracy.

Dear reader,

Which system is best for local government, Cabinet or government by Committees? Which system ensures that all Councillors can be fully representative of those who elect them?

The Cabinet system may be perceived to be an efficient and more speedy way to reach decisions but it means councillors who are not in the Cabinet can find themselves left out in the cold with little to do and not always up-to-date with what is being planned. Concern about this in Wiltshire was shown in a debate in October 2016 when an independent Councillor brought motions about democratic accountability to Wiltshire's Full Council Meeting. Those on the floor of the chamber were concerned that the cabinet system means the rest have little to do and it then becomes difficult to get new people to stand. The Cabinet members on the other hand were keen to show a strong defence of their position.

In planning matters there is the need for effective consultation and discussion in order to achieve the best solutions. Decisions about new roads and developments have a lasting effect on the areas and the people who live in them or travel through them.

Consultation processes are built in through the planning process but in recent years there have been changes to some of the processes.

Whereas before in Wiltshire, decisions went to Full Council for final approval, with an adjusted constitution, the Cabinet has the power to make final decisions on some matters. With a clear majority, a party in power need only make minimal reference to Full Council. Moreover, Cabinet members who hold portfolios or are lead members, can take unilateral decisions on major issues, based on discussions with officers. A few Cabinet Members hold multiple portfolios. This may make use of the multiple skills or expertise of individual members but it raises the possibility of conflicts of interest between the different portfolios held. Power is in the hands of a few.

Another change in the way new development is planned has been the introduction of Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) which are made up of representatives from business, education, and in the case of Wiltshire, the Army, and the Leader and one other cabinet member from each of the Councils. Instead of funding for infrastructure coming from the Department of Transport through the Local

Councils, it comes through the LEPs. The Swindon and Wiltshire Local Enterprise Partnership (SWELP) and the Joint Economic and Strategic Committee (JSEC) have web-sites that record their activities but it is not known how much of all this is made known or discussed with non-Cabinet members. In the complex world of contracts, agreements and financial justification surely a less closed system would be more democratic and accountable?

A third change is the apparent lack of independent checks and scrutiny internally. One committee that little is known about is the Joint Task Force for the SWELP and for JSEC which can scrutinise processes and decisions. It has been referred to for some time, but it is not clear where the public can find the details of its activities. How can people know where the checks and balances lie and use them effectively if the details are not available?

Voices are becoming louder and clearer about a perceived democratic deficit resulting from a system in Local Government that allows decisions to be taken by the few, with very little known by Councillors who are not in the Cabinet, or by the public, before these decisions become a fait accompli.

GOODideas

Learning from each other

Finding space to build

CPRE London has published evidence showing we don't need to build on countryside and green spaces to solve the housing crisis. The report argues that delivering new homes in London has been hampered by slow build rates and a lack of funding for affordable homes, not, as often suggested, a lack of suitable land.

Space to Build details a range of opportunities to use suitable wasted space in London, from redeveloping existing single storey buildings into 'mid-rise' developments, to reclaiming road space and disused garages, which it says offer enormous potential for new housing. It shows that sites for 560,000 homes have already been identified by planners while space above existing buildings could provide another 500,000. Housing estate regeneration could deliver a further 360,000 homes, with car parks offering space for 75,000 more.

Alice Roberts of CPRE London said: "It is commonly argued that 'to solve the housing crisis we must build on Green Belt and other green spaces'. But evidence shows there are suitable alternative sites available in London for well over a million new homes. Londoners may be surprised to know that permissions have in fact already been granted for 260,000 homes in the capital. At the current build rate of 25,000 new homes per year, that alone will keep us going for 10 years. With all the other opportunities identified in this report, which don't involve a return to high rise development, we have enough space to be building for 40 years."

CPRE London is calling for the enforcement of a 'brownfield first' approach – with a clear requirement for all suitable brownfield sites and other wasted spaces outlined in the report to be built out before any greenfield site is considered

for development. In a similar initiative, CPRE Somerset is asking the public to nominate brownfield sites near them that they feel should be used for housing. The branch has created an interactive *Waste Of Space* map at www.cpresomerset.org.uk showing examples ranging from large areas of derelict industrial land to single houses that are boarded up and unused.

Since April 2017, all local authorities must develop and publish brownfield registers, yet there is little guidance on how they should do this accurately and consistently. CPRE Somerset believe your help in adding sites to the map will allow them to ensure that no site is overlooked in future. If you know of a potential brownfield site in Somerset, send a grid reference and a brief description - and ideally a photo - to admin@cpresomerset.org.uk so that it can be added to the map.

Sponsored walk helps fund the fight for green space

The Liverpool District group of CPRE joined forces with the Save Allerton Priory campaign group to hold a 'Beating the Bounds Walk' in June. The walk was organised to raise funds to continue the fight against the building of 160 executive homes on privately owned land fronting the Grade II* listed Allerton Priory, part of a designated Green Wedge.

Beating the bounds is an ancient custom still observed in some English and Welsh parishes, dating from before the Norman Conquests. Usually led

by the parish priest and church officials, it involves a group of old and young members of the community walking the boundaries of the parish, to share the knowledge of where they lie, and to seek protection and blessings for these lands (in this case, the Calderstones to Woolton Green Wedge). Approximately 35 people came along on the walks, including children and councillors.

The group had great fun beating the boundary walls with willow sticks and some walkers went on through to the Woolton area, a favourite childhood haunt of John

Lennon, for a picnic at the top of Camphill. The walk – which volunteers hope will become an annual event - helped raise funds for legal representation ahead of a forthcoming public inquiry into the future of the land on 3 October 2017.

Find out more: For more information about the Allerton Priory planning application contact Pam Leadbeater (pamcpreliverpool@btinternet.com) or visit <https://www.gofundme.com/saveallertonpriory> to donate to the campaign.

Recognition for branches

Congratulations to CPRE Sussex which has been recognised at the 2017 Planning Awards for its work on community engagement. The branch won the Community-Led Placemaking award for its innovative *Making Places* project, which aims to help local people express what matters to them about the character of their local area. Kia Trainor, Director of CPRE Sussex, commented: "We are delighted that this project has been so well received and we hope to develop it further in the future."

CPRE Yorkshire & Humber regional group has been awarded a certificate of appreciation for their support of the *Every Mile Counts* project, launched this year by the Canal & River Trust to mark the bicentenary of the Leeds and Liverpool canal. The project aims to repair or replace each of the 127 historic mile markers along the canal. CPRE Yorkshire & Humber were happy to help and very much enjoyed working on this project. Credit goes to CPRE's Ron Healy for his assistance and dedication.

Praise for council conservation

CPRE Dorset has praised the very visible results of Dorset County Council's conservation verge trials, which started in 2015. Earlier in the summer, the branch highlighted the display of wildflowers – including poppies, cornflowers, yellow rattle and daisies – along the B3075 Morden road, near Wareham. The project aims to improve the biodiversity in our verges and reduce the costly need for seasonal cutting. The yellow rattle in particular reduces grass growth, which is important for improving visibility near road junctions. Six other sites are being trialled in the county, with expected benefits for bees, butterflies and other pollinating insects.

Dark skies support in Surrey

The Neighbourhood Planning group of West Horsley in Surrey has included their local CPRE Night Blight maps as evidence for a dark sky policy in their pre-submission plan. With the policy supported by 96% of the village at the first public consultation, it is likely to feature in the final adopted Neighbourhood Plan. The relevant policy states that: "All development proposals and significant planning applications should be designed to minimise the occurrence of light pollution. The Parish Council will expect such schemes to employ energy-efficient forms of lighting that also reduce light scatter and comply with the current guidelines established for rural areas by the Institute of Lighting Engineers (IoLE)."

Delamere Forest defended

CPRE Cheshire recently helped convince the Cheshire West and Chester planning committee to refuse planning permission for the construction of 67 holiday cabins with associated infrastructure and two car parking spaces. The branch's objection noted that the development would restrict public access to the forest, and constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Manley parish councillor Nigel Gilding, from campaign group Communities Against Delamere's Destruction, had said the plan represented "the start of the erosion of Delamere Forest" and questioned whether local benefits would be "commensurate with this massive impact on the forest and the environment."

Waitrose for Wiltshire

Customers at Waitrose in Melksham were recently invited to support CPRE Wiltshire using the store's Community Matters green disk preference system. As a result, the store's Lucy Allsworth presented Mike Napper of CPRE Wiltshire with a cheque for £250.

stepbystep

Guide to good campaigning

Protecting landscapes in Neighbourhood Plans

Understanding and communicating what makes your local landscape special, and reflecting that understanding in a Neighbourhood Plan, can help ensure that future change is in harmony with landscape character. For that reason, CPRE has produced guidance intended to help community groups develop strong landscape policies in their Neighbourhood Plans, to influence future development decisions that would affect their local area.

Producing a Neighbourhood Plan can help protect and enhance valued local landscapes for future uses and promote landscape related policies and environmental initiatives. Including landscape in Neighbourhood Plans provides an opportunity to identify what makes the place where you live unique, and to ensure that its special qualities and distinctive characteristics are retained.

1 Assess landscape character

The stronger the evidence base behind your Neighbourhood Plan, the more influence it will have. That's why understanding landscape character matters; it's a recognised and objective way of describing an area's sense of place, and of protecting it for the future. National Character Areas (NCA), produced by Natural England, divide the country into 159 geographically specific and unique NCAs. Each of these areas have a detailed NCA descriptive profile, which forms a useful starting point for understanding landscape in your area.

The Parish Council of Cuckfield in Sussex commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) to inform the development of their Neighbourhood Plan, which was adopted in 2014. The LCA report divides the landscape into 33 areas of specific landscape character and considers them against a range of criteria that makes each area unique. The landscape value, sensitivity and capacity of each area are then summarised.

2 Retain strategic gaps

Some Neighbourhood Plan policies focus on the retention of strategic gaps to maintain local landscape character. For example, Cringleford's Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2014), has a policy stating that:

"A defined, continuous green landscaped corridor of 145m depth from the edge of the carriageway of the A47 will be provided to maintain the landscape setting of the village, maintain the existing wildlife corridor, mitigate traffic noise (Landscaped Protection Zone) and retain a key strategic gap at the edge of new development. In most cases it is envisaged that this will be a protected strip planted with trees but with pedestrian access. No new built development will be allowed within the zone unless the proposers can demonstrate that it will enhance the landscape and not have an adverse impact on the Strategic Gap between Cringleford and Hethersett, wildlife and buffering traffic noise. The visual impact of new development when viewed from approaching main roads and the surrounding countryside should be minimised by the use of site appropriate landscape bunding, screening

and mature tree planting. New and existing protected areas will require an effective management regime to enhance biodiversity."

3 Maintain the setting of designated landscapes

Many Neighbourhood Plans include policies to continue the current protection provided by national landscape policies, such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as well as conservation designations. Part of the area of the parish of Kidford's Neighbourhood Plan is adjacent to the South Downs National Park, and because light pollution, noise and development could have a harmful impact on the National Park, their plan includes a policy stating that:

"Development (including rural exception sites) within land adjoining the South Downs National Park that contributes to the setting of the Park will only be permitted where it enhances and does not detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the National Park, and in particular should not adversely affect the views into and out of the Park by virtue of its location or design."

4 Protect landscape features

If you have particular countryside features such as hedgerows or dry stone walls in your area then you may want to include a specific policy in your Neighbourhood Plan. For example, Wigginton Hopwas & Comberford Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2016) includes a policy which states:

"Existing trees and hedges are an integral part of the



Neighbourhood Plans can help maintain the distinctive character and valued local landscapes of your village.

character of the Neighbourhood Plan area and shall be retained wherever possible. Where removal is proposed due consideration shall be made of the Hedgerows Regulations, and in particular the hedges historic potential, and the Central Rivers Initiative, and where removal is justified the impact of removal shall be mitigated against by the provision of additional appropriate planting.”

5 Defend dark skies

You can also include a policy to protect any dark skies in your Neighbourhood Plan area from new sources of light pollution. CPRE has created an interactive map of Britain’s night skies, including detailed maps for English counties, districts, National Parks, AONBs and National Character Areas. The maps are based on satellite data captured throughout September 2015 and can be accessed at nightblight.cpre.org.uk. Brighstone Parish Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2016) included a specific policy on light pollution:

“There will be a presumption against proposals that detrimentally affect the tranquillity of the area including through unnecessary lighting that results in the loss of night time dark skies or through the

generation of unnecessary noise. The plan refers to the fact that CPRE tranquillity mapping shows Brighstone Parish as being in one of the most tranquil areas on the Isle of Wight particularly in relation to a lack of light pollution and the ability to see dark night skies. This is a valuable asset that is important for wildlife, benefits the health and wellbeing of residents and tourists and in turn is of benefit to the Island’s rural economy. In the Residents Survey 718 people responded to a question about having more street lighting and 71.2% of people disagreed or strongly disagreed with this.”

6 Designate a Local Green Space

In 2012, the Government introduced a Local Green Space (LGS) designation in the NPPF. This enables local communities, through Local and Neighbourhood Plans, to be able to identify for special protection areas of particular importance to them. Paragraph 76 of the NPPF states that: “By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Identifying land as LGS should therefore be consistent with the local planning

of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.” In other words, the best way to protect a locally important piece of open land through the designation is to ensure that local development needs may be met through the identification of appropriate alternative development sites in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Tatenhill and Rangemore Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2016) includes a policy which designates several Local Green Spaces, including the Rangemore Recreation Ground and Bowling Green and land to the south of the church and the school. The policy states that “In considering the designation of the Local Green Spaces the community has been mindful of protecting key pieces of land that are either used for recreation or have been identified as being important to the setting and character of the conservation area.” The Open Spaces Society has also produced detailed guidance on how to designate Local Green Space in a Neighbourhood Plan. You can view the guidance at <http://www.oss.org.uk/>

Find out more: Read *What’s Special to You: Landscape Issues in Your Neighbourhood Plan* at www.cpre.org.uk/resources

Current issues

Fighting for South Somerset

Earlier in 2017, CPRE South Somerset volunteers attended several days of the public inquiry into a proposal to build 220 houses, outside the preferred direction of the Local Plan, in the Shudrick Valley, near Ilminster. In the meantime, an outline application for 450 houses at Canal Way, on the other side of Ilminster, was also submitted. If both had gone ahead, Ilminster would have been swamped by new housing - far in excess of that required by the Local Plan. The Inspector has now dismissed the Shudrick Valley Appeal, but if the Canal Way scheme is allowed, it would still deliver more houses than were specified for Ilminster in the Local Plan.

The district group also added their voice to the groundswell of protest objecting to a proposal for “recontouring” of agricultural land at Maperton Ridge. This would have had a devastating impact on local lanes and on tranquillity as plans involved 36 HGV movements a day, six days a week for 18 months. The lorries would be bringing in hardcore, rubble and subsoil waste to improve the slope gradient of an agricultural field. Thankfully, Somerset County Council refused permission as the proposal was contrary to their Waste Core Strategy and there was not enough evidence that the waste could not be used in a more sustainable way, or that there were significant benefits to agriculture. In CPRE South Somerset’s opinion, this proposal could have effectively amounted to a new landfill site in the countryside and campaigners are pleased that good planning and local campaigning have prevented it becoming a reality.

Supporting street trees

The spring issue of CPRE *Surrey Voice* magazine reported on an impressive initiative by Tadworth & Walton Residents' Association which has helped plant over 60 street trees in Tadworth in the past two years. The scheme has been made possible by grants from the Surrey County Council's Members Allocation fund together with sponsorship from Pfizer, which has its administrative centre nearby, plus smaller contributions from residents.

There had been increasing local concern that, with the trend of paving over front gardens for parking purposes, and with the County Council being unable to fund replacement street trees, Tadworth was losing its green and pleasant environment. So, with the agreement of the Council and encouragement from the local ward councillor, the Residents' Association approached outside contractors to source a variety of tree species and plant them in the grass verges. Local residents were able to choose the type of tree they would like outside their properties, and they have agreed to water them in times of drought.

It is hoped that money can be raised in future years to continue filling the gaps, as many of the remaining trees are dying of old age. Apart from improving the street scene visually, the trees will give more shade, reduce air pollution, introduce more bird and insect wildlife and contribute to residents' pride, well-being and enjoyment of their environment. The Residents' Association is very grateful to both the County Council and Pfizer for providing most of the finance for this very successful initiative.

Find out more: Read the latest news from CPRE Surrey at www.cpresurrey.org.uk

PARISHbeat

Effective solutions for your parish

Developer withdraws plans for Winchester development

A Hampshire parish was celebrating after Winchester City Council was notified that an appeal over land at Vale Farm, Pitt, on the edge of Winchester, had been withdrawn by Boyer Planning Wokingham (for Linden Homes). CPRE Hampshire member and Oliver's Battery Parish Councillor, Connie Leach said: "Sincere thanks to Christopher Napier and all at CPRE for your unstinting support and outstanding professional expertise."

The scheme involved 350 homes on the south-western edge of the city and had been turned down by Winchester City Council planning committee in July 2016. Linden Homes' decision

to withdraw the appeal has been welcomed by leading councillors and Winchester MP Steve Brine, who said: "I am really pleased and know that sentiment will be shared across the area by thousands of my constituents. As I have said many times before, Winchester has a fully signed-off Local Plan, and speculative developers should remain aware of that." The Vale Farm scheme attracted objections from 468 people, and 98 letters of support. The city councillor for Badger Farm and Oliver's Battery, Jan Warwick said the proposal "was opposed at every stage by residents, parish and ward councillors", and that "applications to develop areas such as Pitt Vale put unnecessary pressure on

services such as transport, healthcare and education."

CPRE Hampshire's case against the development had explained that there could be no planning justification for permitting development on a large site outside the settlement policy boundary, and which is not allocated for housing in the Local Plan, when there is a five-year supply of land for housing both for the city and Winchester District as a whole. The branch also argued that the site sits within a valued landscape (closely associated with the popular Millennium Way trail), the protection of which needs to be given additional weight. Campaigners will continue to monitor the situation with Winchester City Council's Local Plan Review due to start in 2018.

Praise for Warwickshire parishes

CPRE Warwickshire's Nicholas Butler has written in praise of Long Compton Parish Council in the latest issue of their *Outlook magazine*. The Long Compton Neighbourhood Plan, adopted on 25th April, faced two applications to build on the green fingers of land that are a defining characteristic of the village. Nine houses were proposed for one site, access into a field for the other. The Council refused both applications, with the first going to appeal by written representations.

Nicholas wrote: "The Parish Council wrote the most vigorous, intelligent and detailed rebuttal of a Statement of Claim that I have ever read, supported

by a long and lawyerly letter from the erstwhile chairman of the Neighbourhood Plan Committee. The applicant, who had suggested that the Neighbourhood Plan, since it had been adopted before the Core Strategy, was now out of date, and altered the plans in order to turn the application into a new one and therefore invalidate all the comments that had been submitted, was trounced on both these points and the appeal conclusively dismissed."

Nicholas also offered the following helpful suggestion: "If you are thinking of writing a neighbourhood plan, but feel there is not enough enthusiasm in your community for the task, then you will be well

advised to combine forces with a neighbouring parish. Two years ago, five small settlements, Armscote, Blackwell, Darlingscott, Newbold-on-Stour and Tredington produced a charming and comprehensive joint Parish Plan. They have now decided to produce a joint neighbourhood plan."

CPRE Warwickshire is currently supporting the Stratford Residents Action Group in their opposition to a damaging road proposal that could run across a Local Wildlife Site and within metres of a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

Find out more: Read the latest news from CPRE Warwickshire at www.cprewarwickshire.org.uk

CAMPAIGNER

Campaigning for the future of Norfolk



CPRE Norfolk's new Planning Campaigns Consultant, Michael Rayner

Following an incredibly generous bequest from Miss Rosemary Bloomfield, CPRE Norfolk has been able to recruit a new Planning Campaigns Consultant in Michael Rayner.

Formerly a deputy head teacher, Michael is also a long-time member of the Battlefields Trust, taking particular responsibility for planning issues and representing the Trust at public enquiries. Since January, Michael has been getting stuck into the day-to-day planning workload at the branch. Here, he gives an overview of his first six months, and his ambitions for the role.

"Since joining the CPRE Norfolk team at the end of January I've been busy keeping an eye on monitoring planning applications across the county, with the help of our Planning Committee. This has led to submitting a number of objections to a variety of planning applications, mainly for new housing estates, but also for an anaerobic waste digester on open farmland at Morley St Botolph that would have had a negative impact on open agricultural

greenfield land, local heritage and traffic. I also requested an environmental impact assessment for another waste plant at Lenwade - which was subsequently refused permission by Norfolk County Council, and took part in the consultation for upgrading the A47.

We currently have Committee members checking the weekly planning lists for most of our Local Authorities, although we are in need of help to monitor those for Breckland and West Norfolk & King's Lynn. If *Fieldwork* readers in Norfolk are able to give up about an hour of their time each week to look at one of these on-line and then notify me of any issues, please get in touch with me at michaelr@cprenorfolk.org.uk

As well as reacting to planning applications, I've been very keen to work on promoting the CPRE Norfolk Alliance for parish councils, which is being widened to include all like-minded organisations and individuals with an interest in Norfolk. In September we wrote to all 524 parish and town councils

across the county, asking them to consider and sign a pledge against the extension of housing allocation targets to 2029 or 2036. Renewed contact has been made with many of the parish council chairs and clerks, with the result that to date we have well over 120 signed pledges with more coming in all the time.

To extend the message of our Alliance we are organising a series of roadshows, which began with one for the Greater Norfolk Local Plan area in mid July. We were pleased to see a good turnout of over 50 people including parish councillors and reps from interested organisations such as the Wildlife Trust. We will be holding meetings for the other Local Authority areas before 2018.

Part of my role involves working with the media, and I've already appeared on local television channels to raise awareness of rural planning issues. I also had a letter published in the influential *Eastern Daily Press* on 17 April, which raised our concerns over the lack of coordination between a number of major development proposals in the area: the Easton Food Hub, A47 dualling, Norwich Distributor Road link and planned and likely housing in the area.

Many of the development threats we are seeing will affect areas which we feel should be included in a Green Belt for Norwich, which is another major campaign we continue to promote. The General Election and the launch of our *Vision for Norfolk* both provided a great opportunity to raise the profile of a range of CPRE Norfolk issues, such as the Green Belt – our petition for which has now reached over 1,200 signatures. These are certainly interesting and crucial times for Norfolk and its future!"

CPRE Award winners

Congratulations to the latest batch of CPRE Award winners from the East Midlands region. Isabella Stone received an Outstanding Contribution Award for her work for the region, along with her sterling work as a trustee of CPRE Derbyshire. As a former chair of Friends of the Peak District, she helped revitalise the branch, leading its volunteer speaker service and running highly successful Open Garden fundraising events.

Dr Peter Holland received a Long Service Award for his contribution to the region and many years as a Chair and trustee of CPRE Nottinghamshire. His work at the branch now includes running the Best Kept Village Award and sitting on the Management Council of the Nottinghamshire Building Preservation Society. Also recognised for her long service, was Fiona Cowan, who has contributed to the region for 15 years, leading on public relations, website and social media matters.

CPRE Hampshire nominated Lorraine Taylor for an Outstanding Contribution Award in recognition of her many years of dedicated service, including in coordinating Christmas card sales, resulting in thousands being raised for the charity. Lorraine also developed and judged the Young People's category in the branch's Countryside Awards. In Berkshire, the prestigious CPRE Countryside Medal was awarded to Penny Desmond by Catherine Stevenson, the High Sheriff of the Royal County of Berkshire. The Medal was to show appreciation for her many years of voluntary support to the Berkshire Branch Office. Penny provides the administrative support behind the countryside campaigning throughout Berkshire as well as raising funds to protect the county's rural beauty.

Current issues

Our tests for housing targets

With the Government poised to release its consultation on Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for housing as we went to press, CPRE set out its priorities for putting communities in control of delivering the homes they actually need, where they want them to be built. CPRE recognises that a new, simpler method for calculating housing need can help councils get local plans in place faster, and thereby protect communities from speculative development, but is concerned that the Government is missing an opportunity to help solve the housing crisis.

CPRE believes that the priorities should be delivering affordable homes and realising the potential of urban brownfield land. We also want to see developers forced to build out existing planning permissions, local plan allocations and other locally agreed opportunities before any new greenfield sites can be released, even where local plans are not up-to-date. Without these priorities we fear that countryside will be wasted on creating houses that will leave young people and families without suitable places to live.

CPRE will be looking very carefully at the Government's consultation to ensure that the methodology for developing OAN and other related measures helps to make the best use of existing resources by rebalancing the economy away from the overheating south-east, while guaranteeing that new housing meets locally identified needs. The new system must also produce development targets that are achievable, allow communities to agree appropriate locations for development, and hold house-builders to account - rather than communities - when they fail to deliver the homes that they have committed to providing.

Find out more: Look out for our full response to the consultation at www.cpre.org.uk

INreview

Our perspective on countryside issues

What could devolution mean for rural England?

This spring, as in every year for generations, voters across England went to the polls to elect their local councillors. This year, however, some had an additional ballot paper to complete.

Six city-regions – Greater Manchester, Liverpool City Region, the Tees Valley, the West Midlands, the West of England and Cambridgeshire and Peterborough – elected their first ever 'metro-mayors' to govern with a range of powers devolved from Westminster. The new mayors are now putting their manifestos into action to drive improvements in their city-regions. But what does devolution mean for rural England?

Until now, English devolution has very much been an urban phenomenon. London was the first through the door; the Greater London Authority was established in 2000, and successive reforms have handed the mayor further powers to run the capital. Since then, devolution deals have been struck with urban districts across the country, with the city-mayors elected in Bristol, Leicester and Liverpool acting as precursors to the new metro-mayors. There are already encouraging signs that devolution is boosting economic activity and civic identity in these areas.

Forming a coherent strategy

However, the question of how devolution relates to rural parts of England is still an open one. Rural populations are more widely dispersed than their urban counterparts and reliant on different sorts of employment, services and infrastructure. Is the 'one size fits all' model of urban devolution suitable for rural

areas as well? Perhaps the metro-mayor with the most challenging job is James Palmer, whose Cambridgeshire and Peterborough city-region covers everything from the knowledge economy around Cambridge University to the historic farmland of the Fens. Forming a coherent strategy for diverse urban and rural areas will not be easy.

Cornwall, meanwhile, has taken a different approach, striking a devolution deal while foregoing an elected mayor. Back in 2009 the Cornish dissolved their districts and established the county as a unitary authority, but retained their strong network of town and parish councils. In its latest deal with central government, Cornwall County Council has taken on further control of health and social care, transport, energy, flood defences and other important areas. In parallel, it has been pursuing a programme of 'double devolution' to pass down the management of local amenities like libraries and parks to town and parish councils and community groups.

Competing solutions

The Cornish model may be one for rural areas to follow, especially in other unitary counties like Herefordshire and Northumberland. In Yorkshire, meanwhile, two proposals are competing as solutions to the question of rural devolution. One is to establish mayoralities for the old metropolitan counties of West and South Yorkshire, centred on the economic hubs of Leeds and Sheffield respectively. The other is to create a single 'white rose' authority with one mayor governing the entire Yorkshire and Humberside region.

This would be a radical step.

Taken together, Yorkshire is geographically half as big as Wales and as populous as Scotland. A single deal for the region would encompass some of England's biggest cities, most remote rural areas and everything in between. Yorkshire would effectively be established as the fifth UK nation, with all the constitutional and practical challenges that would bring. This is perhaps why the former devolution minister Andrew Percy, despite representing a Humberside constituency, was so strongly opposed to the idea.

“Further devolution will have to take account of the differences between urban and rural areas, as well as appreciating that different rural areas may want different things”

The lesson is that further devolution will have to take account of the differences between urban and rural areas, as well as appreciating that different rural areas may want different things. After all, like our countryside, English communities make up a varied tapestry of local and regional threads. If devolution really is about handing down power from the centre, it should respect that wonderful diversity.

James Bartholomeusz
CPRE Campaigns and Policy Assistant

QandA

The answers you need

A landmark Supreme Court judgement

Q In the Summer 2016 issue of *Fieldwork*, it was noted that a Court of Appeal case involving Cheshire East and Suffolk Coastal Councils had been widely interpreted as meaning that protection for Green Belts and designated landscapes was now weakened where there is not an up-to-date five year supply. What are the implications of the recent Supreme Court judgement on the case, in terms of deterring developers from protected land, and preventing local authorities from giving up on protective policies as 'out-of-date'?

A Suffolk Coastal District Council and Cheshire East Borough Council jointly brought a case to the Supreme Court, challenging a Court of Appeal decision in March 2016. This was because both Councils had lost appeals and were unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply. But in Cheshire East, the appeal Inspector found that the countryside and green gap policies governed the supply of housing, and were therefore out of date in relation to paras 14 and 49 of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF); whilst in Suffolk similar policies were not interpreted in the same way, and the settlement boundaries were therefore deemed up to date. The two Councils agreed that a consistent interpretation was needed and brought the legal case.

The Supreme Court's finding is potentially important, because it supported a narrow definition

of "relevant policies for the supply of housing" as those policies that identify acceptable housing sites – but not Local Plan policies seeking to prevent development outside town or village boundaries, and/or protect areas of important countryside. The Court also ruled that "in neither case is there any reason to treat the shortfall in the particular policies as rendering out of date other parts of the plan which serve a different purpose". What this means in practice is that if there isn't a five-year land supply, then NPPF's "presumption in favour of sustainable development" is triggered, and an application must be judged on whether "adverse impacts would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits when assessed against the NPPF's policies taken as a whole".

The good news is that countryside or heritage policies are not "relevant policies for the supply of housing" and therefore they cannot be automatically ignored – or deemed 'out-of-date' – when making decisions. This judgement confirms that where a local authority area is falling short on its housing supply, then decisions should be made that involve drawing a balance between the benefits of continuing to protect cherished areas and the need to provide more houses. This gives decision makers a better opportunity to ensure that individual speculative planning applications are considered in a broader context, including the availability of other less damaging opportunities, rather than being pressured

to grant consent on a first come, first served basis. The judgement could therefore help to reduce the impact of unscrupulous speculative development on our countryside and rural communities.

The ruling also highlighted a range of other important issues including the primacy of local development documents, such as the local plan, in the making of decisions: local development plans must be followed unless there is good reason to depart from them. For CPRE this is significant in that it confirms that where a plan is up to date the public should expect the policies and proposals of that plan to be upheld against speculative development.

Despite the good news contained in the judgement, it continues to emphasise the NPPF's 'tilted balance' of a "presumption in favour of sustainable development" – which CPRE would like to see clarified so that the presumption doesn't override Green Belt and environmental and landscape designations.

Find out more: Read the judgement at <https://www.supremecourt.uk/cases/docs/uksc-2016-0076-judgment.pdf>

See also APP/ J3530/W/16/3165730, where an Inspector judged that, despite the lack of a 5 year housing land supply, the harm to an AONB from 140 dwellings meant the proposals did not "fall within the definition of sustainable development and the enhanced weight of NPPF paragraph 14 cannot apply."

Current issues

Protecting heritage

CPRE Kent has produced a new guide to protecting the county's rich, natural heritage - currently under severe threat from development of housing, roads and other infrastructure. *Looking after heritage through the planning system* deals in turn with listed and unlisted historic buildings, conservation areas, scheduled monuments and archaeological sites, parks, gardens and battlefields, and heritage landscapes. It sets out the relevant legal protections as simply and briefly as possible, along with the procedures to be followed by developers and local planning authorities. The branch hopes people will find it both of interest and of practical use in engaging with the planning process. The guide is available to download from <https://cprekent.org.uk/> or contact info@cprekent.org.uk to request a printed copy in return for a donation to cover costs.

England's 'Silicon Valley'?

CPRE's East of England regional group has raised fears that proposals to create a 'Silicon Valley' spanning Cambridge, Milton Keynes and Oxford will swallow up villages, destroy countryside and lead to massive ribbon development along the 80 mile stretch, without being subject to either democratic or independent scrutiny. A consultation on the project has been undertaken by the National Infrastructure Commission, and campaigners have warned that the project is likely to be driven by unelected Local Enterprise Partnerships in collusion with developers.

CPRE East of England chairman, Michael Monk, said: "CPRE supports strategic planning which can deliver regeneration, development and new infrastructure, especially in deprived areas, but there is a real danger here of swamping the already over-heated south-east and east of England. Instead the process should begin with local communities identifying their growth needs."

Current issues

Support for affordable housing

CPRE Nottinghamshire has joined forces with local residents to support a proposal for nine affordable eco-homes south of Bilsthorpe Road, Eakring. Having inspected the site, the branch was satisfied that it should not have any concerns about ribbon development or urban sprawl. The development would be barely visible from the road, partly due to its grass roofs and the earth bunds that are proposed to be sited between the road and dwellings. The branch hopes that, over time, the bunds could even enhance the present appearance of the site, and enhance biodiversity. Although Newark and Sherwood Council rejected the plans last autumn as an "inappropriate form of development in the open countryside", an appeal has been lodged and CPRE Nottinghamshire hopes the overall benefits of the development will be considered.

Saving Gavray Meadows

CPRE Oxfordshire recently congratulated their friends at the Save Gavray Meadows campaign group in Bicester. Supported by the branch, the group persuaded Cherwell District Council to turn down a planning application next to the beautiful and flower-rich site, much loved by local residents. The decision rested on the fact that the developer refused to put in place an environmental management plan for the Local Wildlife Site, as required in the Local Plan. Cherwell district councillor for the area Dan Sames said: "The Local Plan gives details about the important aspects of the site: the central eastern section contains a lowland meadow and priority habitat ... it is an area rich in biodiversity and it really does warrant protection." The branch expects the application will re-surface, but hopes this time with more appropriate proposals.

Our response to the Housing White Paper

Following the February publication of the Housing White Paper, *Fixing our Broken Housing Market*, CPRE compiled a consultation submission following extensive consultation with our network of 43 branches and 8 regional groups around England, making full use of their first-hand experience of how the planning system operates at a local level.

When the White Paper was published, it was assumed that most of the changes would be implemented later in the year, mostly through alterations to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). Few, if any, of those involved with preparing it were expecting a general election on 8 June. But the White Paper contains plenty of valuable analysis, and we particularly welcomed its acknowledgement that housing problems are multi-faceted - not simply a matter of perceived restrictions in the availability of land, despite the arguments to the contrary from some developers and think-tanks. However, the White Paper

is much more tentative when it comes to real solutions to both the problems in housebuilding, as well as the challenge of integration with the Government's environmental commitments.

Sustainable development

More needs to be done to make sure that the environment is given equal footing in discussions about sustainable development. There is still confusion over the interpretation of 'sustainable development', and in planning it has become a much devalued and almost worthless term. The 2005 UK Sustainable Development Strategy had flaws, but it also had useful elements in terms of policies and indicators seeking effective protection of the environment and a more efficient, long term approach to land use for new development.

Our response recommends that, over the medium term (within the next three years), the Department for Communities

and Local Government should work with other relevant Government departments to prepare a national strategy for land use, including consideration of development patterns but also their interaction with agricultural and forestry uses of land that lie outside the planning system. In the short term, we recommended that decision makers should put greater emphasis on seeking gains and positive impacts from new development, as well as taking local circumstances into account. Major developments that are clearly contraventions of adopted development plan policies should generally be

"Local plan housing requirements should be related to environmental and policy constraints."



The review of Green Belt boundaries should be done less regularly, and only in exceptional circumstances.

refused unless there is clear evidence of local support for the scheme in question.

“It is critical that local authorities have the resources to fully scrutinise planning applications and rates of development”

We are particularly concerned about the proposal on Green Belt boundaries. The requirement to regularly review forces local authorities to neglect these protective policies and is detrimental to a defining feature of Green Belt which makes it such an essential policy: its permanence. These protections should be reviewed less regularly, for example every 15 years. The NPPF should make a clear distinction between the need to regularly review local plan policies, and update where necessary, and the review of Green Belt boundaries which should only be done in exceptional circumstances.

Up-to-date plans

CPRE strongly supports the White Paper emphasis on full coverage of up-to-date plans. But this has become harder to achieve in practice in recent years, due to successive budget cuts, as well as a wider policy climate that gives advantage to developers and land speculators. Our branches work closely with local authority planning departments across England, and they note a worrying, and increasing, level of weakness in local authority staffing and wider financial resources.

There are also a number of ambiguities and inconsistencies in the proposals to achieve full local plan coverage in the Housing White Paper. There continues to be insufficient

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Decision makers should put greater emphasis on seeking gains and positive impacts from new development.

clarity with regard to how Objectively Assessed Need (OAN) for housing should be translated into a local plan housing requirement - in particular how this should be related to environmental and policy constraints, and to the capacity of the housebuilding industry. The efficacy of the plan-led system could be threatened as a result of a vacuum between the statutory strategic level of plans and the patchwork of optional neighbourhood plans. The meaning of an ‘up-to-date’ plan continues to be unclear, especially with regard to policies that, reasonably, have a long shelf-life (including development management policies, and especially those related to conservation of heritage, landscape and nature).

Housing delivery

Overall, CPRE is positive about proposed moves to do more to get planning permissions implemented, such as greater use of completion notices and information about building rates. But it is critical that local authorities have the resources to fully scrutinise planning applications and rates of development, and to challenge the claims made by developers. In addition, local authorities should also set housebuilding levels that can be serviced in a sustainable fashion, in particular by a good choice

of transport options. Current, vague approaches to objectively assessed housing need and housebuilding requirements tend to lead to more expensive plan-making processes as more sites have to be identified, assessed, consulted on and then examined. Therefore a clearer method of assessing housing need, which enables more realistic and less resource-intensive housing requirements than under current practice, is also critical.

Worse still, the proposed housing delivery test appears to be based on the belief that releasing more land for development will automatically result in more homes being built, and that this in turn will lead to more affordable average house prices. Such an approach has never proved workable in England, despite sustained high levels of land release for development since the 1950s. CPRE has called for an opportunity for interested parties to scrutinise the final proposed wording of the NPPF (and other instruments for the implementation of the measures proposed in the Housing White Paper) before final publication - to help ensure that measures will work as intended and policies are internally consistent.

Find out more: Read our full response to the Housing White Paper at www.cpre.org.uk/resources

Current issues

Landscapes saved from solar arrays

Two large solar farms proposed in the Forest of Dean will no longer go ahead after campaigning from CPRE Gloucestershire. Plans for a 20-acre, 24,000 panel solar array with 5MW installed capacity at Cowles Farm, Elton, have been dismissed on appeal. CPRE Forest of Dean District argued that the benefits of the development did not warrant its impact on the landscape, heritage assets and consequent enjoyment of the area. The Inspector agreed that renewable energy provided would be outweighed by the “substantial harm” to the landscape and effects on people living nearby. The Inspector added that “having regard to the policies within the NPPF it would not be a sustainable development.” The locality is used by Lesser and Greater Horseshoe Bats, and the Inspector stated that a further ground for refusing the appeal was insufficient evidence that the development would not affect the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean Bat Sites Special Area of Conservation.

In further good news, it appears that plans for one of the biggest solar farms in the country, overlooking the River Severn at Awre, will not proceed as the deadline for an appeal against refusal has now passed. The plan was to install around 185,000 solar panels and associated equipment, with an installed capacity of 49.9 MW. Although CPRE supports the use of sustainable energy generation, including solar PV, this proposal would have covered almost all of the Awre peninsula and threatened to blight this beautiful area and harm the Forest of Dean tourism industry.

Find out more: See the latest news from CPRE Gloucestershire at www.cpreglos.org.uk

MATTER of fact

Support for your case

Greener city regions

A coalition of environmental organisations, including CPRE, the National Trust and the Wildlife Trusts, published a joint-report in May on *Greening the city regions: opportunities for new metro mayors*.

The report called on incoming metro mayors to take urgent action to enhance the environment of their cities and surrounding countryside, using strategic plans and budgets as key tools. Metro mayors were elected in six city regions on Thursday 4 May, creating a new tier of political leadership in England. The report included the first comprehensive Green City Regions Index to indicate each region's strengths and weaknesses on a range of issues, and highlight areas where the new metro mayors should use their powers to drive ambitious progress on the environment.

Transport and air quality

The report highlights the opportunity to tackle air pollution and congestion by investing in green public transport, walking, cycling and electric vehicle infrastructure. Metro mayors can also make public transport easier to use via smart ticketing and use their new powers to improve bus provision. Poor air quality has significant health impacts, particularly on respiratory health, and accounts for 40,000 premature deaths per year in the UK. Local authorities will need to

establish clean air zones by 2020 to bring emissions down to acceptable levels. Metro mayors can demonstrate their commitment to improved air quality by championing the earlier introduction of clean air zones in the most polluted parts of their city regions, calling on national government to ensure they are well funded and effective.

The report highlights varying city region progress on transport and air quality. Despite high cycling rates, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough city region has the highest car use and lowest bus use of the six city regions. West Midlands, in contrast is doing well on sustainable transport, coming out best for high bus use and low car use. Two northern city regions have a contrasting level of provision for electric vehicles: Tees Valley has 19 times more charging points than Liverpool City Region. All the regions have a problem with air quality and fail to comply with EU limits for nitrogen oxide and nitrogen dioxide pollution. Liverpool City Region performs the worst with 58 deaths per 100,000 people attributable to man-made particulate pollution.

High quality green space is important in tackling health problems, contributing to better air quality and building resilience to climate change, as well as enhancing wildlife and biodiversity. But local authority park budgets are under threat, with 92 per cent making cuts in the past three years and more expected. The report suggests city regions prioritise

investment in open spaces for recreation for health and well-being. It also proposes the development of new green infrastructure strategies to provide detailed information about the city region's green spaces and nature, identifying where they need protection and where they can be enhanced in future development. Liverpool City Region currently spends the most per person on open spaces at £28 per head per year, while Cambridgeshire and Peterborough spends only £10.

Housing

The report calls for metro mayors to prioritise development on brownfield land and use sensitive density increases to make the most of existing services and transport and to protect the natural environment. As Shaun Spiers, the outgoing chief executive of CPRE, said when introducing the report: "In this way we can both save countryside and make our towns and cities exciting and sustainable places to live." City regions will also be particularly important for our Green Belts, and CPRE's Chair Su Sayer used her AGM speech to applaud CPRE Lancashire's involvement in the Greater Manchester mayoral election. Their lobbying led to a commitment from the new Mayor, Andy Burnham, to minimise the loss of Green Belt with a "focus on brownfield land to revitalise town centres and deliver affordable flats for younger people".

Cambridgeshire and Peterborough has the most acute housing shortage but

"Metro mayors must prioritise development on brownfield land to protect the natural environment"

a low level of development on brownfield sites to date at only 44 per cent, compared to Greater Manchester's 65 per cent. Tees Valley currently has the joint lowest percentage of building on brownfield sites out of the six city regions, at only 44 per cent. As an area of heavy industry, it recognises that many of its brownfield sites will not be developed by the market and that intervention is necessary if they are to be made available for commercial or housing development. The devolution deal has instigated tools to achieve this; for example, creating the first Mayoral Development Corporation outside London. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough's devolution deal acknowledged the city region's "exceptional housing market conditions" and secured an additional £170 million for affordable housing. It is also the only region to specify a housing target in its deal, of 72,000 new homes over 15 years. The region will be a test of the degree to which a metro mayor, and their new powers, can unblock barriers to high quality, sustainable housing.