



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
Standing up for your countryside

FIELD WORK

Spring 2016

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Earle Street, Newton le Willows by Peter Astles

Why brownfield comes first

Research published by CPRE in March shows that brownfield sites are being developed significantly faster than greenfield sites. The new research reveals that the time between planning permission being granted and construction work starting is generally the same for brownfield and greenfield sites, but that work on brownfield sites is completed more than six months quicker.

Thanks to local and national CPRE campaigning, the Government has pledged to invest more than £2 billion in brownfield regeneration and establish a brownfield register, but many of its proposed changes to planning policy are aimed at making it easier to build on greenfield land. These proposals include developing small sites in the Green Belt and a 'housing delivery test' that would force councils to release more land for development if housebuilders do not meet high housing targets.

Busting the myths on brownfield

This new research illustrates that prioritising investment in brownfield sites is a highly effective way of building the homes we need, undermining claims that brownfield is either too slow or inconvenient to develop in comparison to greenfield. CPRE Chief Executive, Shaun Spiers, said the research disproved 'the idea that developing a brownfield site must be difficult or unprofitable' and

called on the Government to 'drop the idea that the way to get houses built is to make more countryside available'.

To investigate the extent to which brownfield is a viable option for development, CPRE commissioned construction analysts Glenigan to compare the speed of residential development on brownfield sites with development on greenfield, once these sites have been granted planning permission. Glenigan analysed 1,040 development projects that had active planning consent during three years up to March 2015 within a sample of 15 urban and urban-rural fringe local authorities across England.

Of the 580 completed projects by December 2015, it was found that both brownfield and greenfield sites took an average of 29 weeks to start after receiving planning permission. However, brownfield sites were then much quicker to develop once work had started: brownfield sites took an average of 63 weeks to be completed in comparison with 92 weeks for greenfield sites. Looking at the overall average timescales for both types of site from the granting of permission to completion, brownfield sites were developed more than half a year quicker (92 weeks against 121 weeks for greenfield). The finding that brownfield sites were faster from permission to completion was consistent for all site sizes.

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FIELDWORK

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CPRE works locally and nationally to stand up for the countryside: to protect it from the threats it faces, and to shape its future for the better.

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Standing up for your countryside

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Why brownfield comes first

Continued from p.1

Projects of 50 or more units on brownfield land started on site 14 weeks earlier than on greenfield sites, and were completed 47 weeks earlier. So when the two are combined, larger brownfield sites are being developed, from start to finish, more than a year faster than greenfield sites. For smaller sites of fewer than 50 houses, brownfield projects took 32 weeks to start on site. This was marginally slower than greenfield sites, which took 23 weeks to see work begin. However, brownfield sites were then built more quickly, taking 80 weeks from approval to completion, in comparison with 91 weeks for smaller greenfield sites. This would suggest that smaller brownfield sites are developed quicker, but there are some issues to overcome in trying to begin work. Across the 15 local authorities studied, more than 7% of brownfield sites have stalled in comparison with 5% of greenfield. The number of units represented by stalled or cancelled sites is roughly the same proportion for both (around 4%).

Why brownfield must be prioritised

CPRE is pleased that ministers are seeking to strengthen planning policy on brownfield because, at present, the National Planning Policy Framework is often not working in the way that Ministers say they intend. Some of the local authorities surveyed in our research - Cheshire East, Durham, and Salford - have tried to prioritise the redevelopment of brownfield sites in their local area by attempting to prevent the development of greenfield sites in areas close to brownfield sites that have planning permission but where building has not yet started. Yet during the period surveyed by Glenigan, planning inspectors have allowed appeals by developers to build on greenfield sites on the basis that there is no evidence that releasing additional greenfield sites undermines the development of brownfield that has already received planning permission. In that time, just over 2,000 houses have been built on greenfield sites in these areas, while uncompleted developments on brownfield land could have provided just over 5,000 new houses, in addition to the 6,797 houses that did get built on brownfield.

“The new research gives the lie to the idea that developing a brownfield site must be difficult or unprofitable”

The picture is starker still in Swindon, where far more greenfield land with planning

“Councils must be empowered to refuse greenfield applications that would compete with suitable brownfield sites”

permission was being developed for housing than brownfield. In Swindon, 77% (or 1,328 houses) of the houses developed were on greenfield land compared with 339 (just under 23%) on brownfield, despite 52% (or 1,837 houses) of all houses with planning permission being on brownfield. The local authorities that saw a particular emphasis on brownfield included Stoke-on-Trent, where 98% of new residential units were built on brownfield sites. Coventry, the Southampton area and York also saw more than 80% of new residential development on brownfield. In both Coventry and York, major releases of Green Belt are now being planned that could serve to make the remaining brownfield sites less economically attractive to develop in future.

CPRE’s conclusions

The research suggests that once a commitment is made to build on a brownfield site, it is often significantly quicker to develop than a greenfield site. It is also clear that much of the greenfield development that has taken place was arguably unnecessary when there was more than enough brownfield land with planning permission to provide for what has been built. The research also reinforces the idea that investing in unlocking brownfield sites will provide worthwhile returns, and that the Government’s pledge to invest £2.2billion on brownfield regeneration in two new housing development funds is a necessary investment. Other proposed Government initiatives, however, such as forcing local authorities to release more sites for development if housing targets are not met, are unlikely to have a direct impact on the overall numbers of new homes provided but will instead lead to developers cherry-picking increased amounts of greenfield land.

CPRE is calling on the Government to amend the NPPF to prioritise the use of suitable brownfield sites in urban areas over greenfield, including by empowering councils to refuse planning permission on greenfield sites where these would compete with suitable brownfield sites, and by not forcing them to allocate greenfield land in the first place. We want a firm commitment to getting development started – rather than just getting planning permission – on 90% of suitable brownfield sites by 2020, and brownfield sites should be the first priority for public funding like the New Homes Bonus. The Government should also make it clear that policies promoting brownfield development are focused on existing towns and cities and exclude brownfield sites of high environmental and heritage value.

BREAKthrough

How our work is making a difference

Saving North Yorkshire's character

A planning inspector's decision to throw out plans to build 50 new homes in Sutton-in-Craven has been welcomed by objectors including CPRE Craven. CPRE campaigners submitted a comprehensive twenty page objection pointing out that the application site formed a natural and important break between the villages of Sutton-in-Craven in North Yorkshire and Eastburn in West Yorkshire.

Their objection argued the importance of maintaining the character of the individual settlements affected by the proposal for the three agricultural fields, which also provided a physical gap between two distinctly different counties.

Citing the core planning principle of the National Planning Policy Framework (paragraph 17) to take into account the different roles and character of different areas, CPRE Craven submitted that development of the site would degrade the natural gateway to the village of Sutton-in-Craven, which

enhances the individuality of the village and contributes positively to the feeling of leaving or entering a place. They concluded that the proposal would create unacceptable and irreversible harm to the character of the landscape in the area and should be refused.

Planning inspector Mark Caine agreed in January that the building of 50 houses off Main Street would 'significantly reduce' the separation between Sutton and Eastburn and cause 'substantial harm' to the 'attractive landscape character' and setting of the area. His decision to uphold Craven District Council's refusal of the outline application for the site confirmed that the adverse impact of the development outweighed any benefits created by the provision of affordable homes, cycle paths and a field offered to the village for sports use.

CPRE Craven had another major success in February, when a greenfield housing application within a Conservation Area in the village of Cononley near Skipton

was refused after a hard-fought campaign supported by CPRE North Yorkshire, the Parish Council and the local district councillor. CPRE Craven's comprehensive objection had made innovative use of photographic evidence to illustrate the adverse impact the development would have had on the amenity of the village. Planning inspector Roger Catchpole ruled against the developer's appeal on the grounds the houses would detract from the character and appearance of the area, described by local people as the 'most important undeveloped field in Cononley', to the detriment of the heritage significance of the Conservation Area. Parish council chair Lois Brown commented: 'That piece of land means a lot to the community - it's a triumph for people power'.

Find out more: Follow the latest from CPRE Craven at www.facebook.com/cprecraven and download both successful objections via www.cprenorthyorkshire.co.uk/news

Unsustainable plans defeated in Essex

Excellent work from CPRE Essex volunteer John Drake and local member Rosalind Oakley helped ensure that a developers' appeal for 340 homes and a discount supermarket, on farmland on the outskirts of Maldon, was refused by the district council in December. The council's refusal cited issues that John had included in his objection, referring to the threat to tranquillity of the Maldon Hall Farm site praised by CPRE President Sir Andrew Motion in his General Election Q&A with party leaders.

The decision notice stated that the development would

have 'an unacceptably intrusive urbanising effect on the site, its setting and the wider character, adversely affecting the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside which is noted for its distinctive tranquillity and remoteness.' John had also pointed out the lack of affordable housing in the development, which the decision gave as a reason why it would not 'contribute to a strong vibrant community' and could not therefore represent "sustainable development".

Another reason given for refusal heeded longstanding

CPRE arguments on the damaging impact of out-of-town supermarkets, with the council arguing that the scale of retail development proposed could 'prejudice the vitality and viability of the Maldon and Heybridge town centres'. Above all, the decision noted that 'the site is in a sensitive rural location outside of the defined settlement boundary for Maldon where policies of restraint apply', and that 'the Council can demonstrate a five year housing land supply to accord with the requirements of the National Planning Policy Framework'.

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Cutting red tape?

Responding to the *Cutting Red Tape* review of house building, a government review led by the Cabinet Office, CPRE argued that rather than seeking further deregulation of planning, if Government is serious about solving the housing crisis, steps need to be taken to address the failures of the housing and property markets outside of the planning system. We recommended the implementation of “use it or lose it” measures and reform of compulsory purchase provisions to allow local authorities to acquire suitable land for housing – especially on small brownfield sites in urban areas which have so much potential to accelerate housing build-out rates.

We argued that promoting small-scale sites through their obligatory identification and allocation in housing supply plans would encourage the smaller builders who are needed to help diversify the housebuilding sector. We also called on the Government to facilitate access to finance for small and medium sized house builders, and reduce the cost of obtaining planning permission for residential development of under ten units on brownfield land. Providing Design Codes could also facilitate the planning process of custom/self-build housing delivered by smaller builders.

CPRE's response also called for the taxation of uncompleted housing for which planning permission has been granted, charging council tax on the completed value of housing for which planning permission has been granted after two years on brownfield sites. We'd also like to see improved funding and assistance for brownfield remediation and special planning measures and state intervention to aid in delivering brownfield sites, including better clarity and improved use of local development orders and compulsory purchase orders.

NEWSroundup

Keeping you on top of countryside developments

Support for a Yeovil Green Belt

The Yeovil area of South Somerset facing unprecedented development pressures, particularly from new housing. The District Council's Local Plan provides for over 1,500 houses in two urban extensions on top of the hundreds of houses already built or for which permission has been granted. That is why CPRE Somerset is calling for the creation of a Yeovil Green Belt to ensure that the town continues to enjoy the “green lung” on its doorstep, and to prevent unrestricted urban sprawl resulting in the merger of the town and its surrounding villages - villages that currently add very much to the character of this part of South Somerset.

The branch has been talking to local communities and Parish Councils to gather their support and will be meeting with Councillors and Officers from South Somerset District Council this spring. Campaigners have also set up a petition at the

Change.org website (gathering 300 signatures as we went to press in March), where the public can also view their letter to South Somerset District Council, which concludes: ‘Unrestricted growth impacting on the surrounding countryside will benefit no-one. Local residents need green space for leisure and amenity activities and to promote a sense of well-being. A properly designed Green Belt can fulfil all these objectives. The Local Plan review needs to factor in a Green Belt for Yeovil. Please make this happen.’

Nicholas Whitsun-Jones, planning volunteer at CPRE South Somerset District Group, emphasised the impact of Yeovil's sprawl: ‘You can see the effect if you look at somewhere like Preston Plucknett which used to be a village in its own right but is now a part of Yeovil.’ Tony Cavelier, Vice-Chairman of Mudford Parish Council, expressed fears that Mudford would be the next village to be swallowed up by Yeovil's housing developments, saying ‘I wish someone came

up with the idea ten years ago. We moved to Mudford to be in a village and not in the town of Yeovil. I'll do everything in my power to stop Yeovil reaching Mudford. Someone needs to wake the council up, the easy option for them is to build on green. They should be regenerating within the town as it's dying on its feet what with all the empty shops.’

Yeovil MP Marcus Fysh expressed his support for the Yeovil Green Belt after signing the CPRE Somerset petition: ‘I am supportive of a Yeovil Green Belt review, having asked for this through the local plan process, and regret that the District Council has not seen fit yet to try to protect our very sensitive and important environment in this way. We should be looking at regenerating our towns with high quality housing before we look elsewhere.’

Find out more: Sign the petition and keep up with the latest on the campaign at www.cpresomerset.org.uk

Building better places

CPRE welcomed the first report from a new cross-party House of Lords select committee on the built environment in February. The *Building Better Places* report, from the National Policy for the Built Environment Committee criticises the Government's housing policy and argues that it is unlikely to provide either the quantity or quality of homes we need.

The report calls for local authorities and housing associations to play a more significant role in delivering new homes, advocating financial penalties for developers who fail to build quickly - the equivalent to paying council tax on unbuilt homes. The report also reflects CPRE's Parliamentary influence

(our planning campaign manager Paul Miner's evidence to the committee was referenced in their report) by calling for a brownfield first policy and a community right of appeal, and arguing that Green Belt protection needs to be tightened.

Commenting on the report, Paul Miner said: ‘The Government is constantly focusing on speeding up the planning process, but there is no evidence that cheaper and quicker planning means better decisions for local people. This cross-party committee sees that we need a different course to build the genuinely affordable homes we need and support local people in creating thriving communities. We should be encouraging builders to build on the sites

they already have permission for, pursuing a brownfield first policy’. On Green Belt, Paul argued that the Government ‘has been waving through too many changes to the Green Belt via local plans. The committee is right to identify the need for rules around “exceptional circumstances” to be tightened, so that we can prevent urban sprawl and focus on redeveloping the suitable brownfield land within our cities.’ CPRE strongly welcomes the cross-party support for a community right of appeal, and although the Government has continually declined to introduce the measure, Paul commented that ‘a community right of appeal would reassure communities that their aims and aspirations are not being ignored.’

dates of note

An evening with Michael Eavis

CPRE Somerset hosts a special event with dairy farmer and founder of the Glastonbury Festival. Find out more from www.cpresomerset.org.uk 14th April, Pilton Village Hall, Somerset

Black Combe Walk

Walk along the route of the proposed pylon line in the west of the Lake District over Black Combe taking in the stunning views towards the sea and Lake District peaks. A chance to discuss the landscape impact of pylons and how to campaign against them. (More information at www.friendsofthelakedistrict.org.uk or contact kate-willshaw@fld.org.uk 01539 720 788) 23rd April

CPRE Northamptonshire Planning Roadshow

Campaigners will be concentrating on the current state of planning within the county and how it will affect your community or Parish Council. Guest speakers include Andrew Longley, Head of Planning at the North Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit and Colin Staves, Principal Spatial Planner for the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Unit. 12 May, Great Houghton Village Hall, 6pm

CPRE Archive workshop

CPRE volunteers and members - including representatives of Parish Councils and other community groups - are encouraged to register for this Museum of English Rural Life (MERL) event, where they will be able to explore historic local and national documents relating to CPRE's campaigning. Contact Oliver Hilliam at oliverh@cpre.org.uk for more information or to register. 26 May, MERL, University of Reading

Lower Thames Crossing needs 'serious re-think'

Highways England announced its recommendation for a crossing east of Gravesend for the Lower Thames Crossing in January, believing the Gravesend crossing, or "Option C" provides 'double the economic benefit' compared to an additional crossing at Dartford. However, CPRE Kent strongly disputes that any new crossing will solve the congestion problem because it has been proven that building new roads leads to increased traffic. They are calling for a sustainable transport strategy, including investment in ports north of the Thames to disperse the cross channel movement of freight. A huge new bridge in either Gravesham or Dartford would be an environmental burden which would not solve the problem it sets out to.

Most worryingly, the approach road and the new transport corridor "Option C" would create could mean the loss of all the open land between Gravesham

and Medway, changing the character of Gravesham for ever. The proposed option would see a bored tunnel built to the east of Gravesend, with a new road being built from junction 1 of the M2, joining the M25 between junctions 29 and 30. CPRE Kent has highlighted the likely effects of this work on Gravesham, where it could destroy ancient woodland, important wildlife habitats and productive farmland. Campaigners have also highlighted the impact on the beautiful and panoramic views of the local landscape, where the road is set to devastate Shorne Woods Country Park, one of the area's most important educational, environmental and recreational assets, used by horse riders, walkers, cyclists, runners and families.

CPRE Kent director, Hilary Newport, put the branch's case for a more sustainable transport strategy at a public meeting attended by hundreds of people in Gravesend in early March. Rather than focusing on

ever-more roads, which will be as full as ever before long, she called for 'a serious re-think and for a genuinely sustainable integrated transport strategy that doesn't foster and encourage the growth of road-based freight through Kent'. The branch has also raised concerns about the implications for pollution of the proposed new crossing. Alex Hills, Chairman of the Dartford and Gravesham branch of CPRE Kent, said: 'We all know that pollution is a killer with the young most at risk and yet the route being promoted passes many schools. We find it baffling that Highways England is not going to do a full modelling of the impact on air quality until after the route has been chosen. The increasing evidence on the effects of air pollution on people's health makes the government's insistence on a new road crossing indefensible.'

Rural proofing the Housing and Planning Bill

Shortly before Christmas the Government declared its commitment to 'rural proof' all its policies, but CPRE is dismayed that housing policies in the Housing and Planning Bill could damage the fabric of rural life. Housing association tenants are being given the right to buy their properties. At the same time, public subsidy is shifting from social homes for rent, affordable in perpetuity, to discounted 'starter homes' for first-time buyers that can be sold on the open market at full price after five years.

When the bill was debated in the House of Lords in January, peers generally made it clear they felt it would cause harm, particularly in rural England, with several speaking against the forced sale and

non-replacement of council houses to pay for the right-to-buy. CPRE's briefing had urged peers to call for a full exemption from the extended right to buy in rural areas (and especially on rural exception site developments). We also proposed an amendment to create a limited 'Neighbourhood Right of Appeal' for neighbourhood planning bodies to appeal against the granting of permission that conflicts with the policies of a made or well-advanced neighbourhood plan, winning cross-party support at the House of Commons report stage.

In February, the Communities and Local Government select committee's second report of evidence on housing associations and the right to buy expressed concerns

about the policy's impact on rural areas, but stopped short of endorsing CPRE's calls for a full rural exemption in its recommendations. The committee argues that landowners who sell land cheaply for affordable housing in perpetuity should be protected, and that a 'formal rural exemption' would help to reassure them that any new homes will not be subject to right to buy. Exempting land with restrictive covenants from right to buy could help with some sites, but CPRE responded that 'without a full rural exemption genuinely affordable homes in rural areas will be lost through the voluntary agreement', arguing that the Bill must be rural proofed if we are to see thriving rural communities.

Current issues

Anniversary conference

CPRE East Midlands and East of England are holding a special conference, *90 Years of CPRE: Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow*, between 10am and 4pm on Wednesday 6 July 2016, at The Fleet, Peterborough. Members and volunteers of branches in the East of England and East Midlands regions are invited to join them to celebrate 90 years of CPRE and our historic achievements, and think about how we go forward. The event will enable us to share information, learn from each other and get to know each other, while finding out more about CPRE, how we work and our priorities. The day will include a keynote speech from former CPRE and National Trust head, Dame Fiona Reynolds DBE, and a presentation from Oliver Hilliam, CPRE's Senior Communications and Information Officer and co-author of *22 ideas that saved the English Countryside*. There will also be a choice of workshops: Raising your branch's profile; Balanced Communications: Strategic Techniques to Improve Your Organisation and its Reputation; Planning in the Future; and Effective Campaigning – what makes a successful campaign?

There will be plenty of opportunities to meet members and volunteers from other CPRE branches and staff from CPRE National office, as well as representatives from other organisations. There is no charge for attending and lunch and refreshments are included. There is ample, free on-site parking and transport will be provided from Peterborough station to the venue free of charge. To register your interest or to book a place, please contact Tracey Hipson at office@cprecams; tel: 01480 396698. Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis.

letter from the field



Words from local campaigners

Julia Marley, Chair of CPRE's Yorkshire and Humber regional group, asks 'what is the impact of unsustainable targets on sustainable development?'

Dear reader,

More and more local councils are increasing their housing targets to what could be described as unsustainable levels. Is this a waste of resources? Do approvals match delivery? Whilst numerous housing applications are approved, the actual number of houses delivered in many authorities, historically and frequently falls far, far below the approvals granted. This means the much needed homes we need are not built.

One local authority we have been looking at with an historic 250 target shows that from 2005 to 2012 the average delivery was 179. Whilst the proposed target in the new draft local plan was originally recommended at a more sustainable, deliverable figure of 180, it has recently been increased by almost 50%. Is this sustainable? If unsustainable targets are set by local authorities, those parts of the local plan dealing with housing and allocations become void - meaning areas where housing was not planned become vulnerable to development. Development becomes unsustainable. Our environment and the local people pay a hefty price for this.

Sustainable is a much used word - interpreted in many ways! Let's take a look at sustainable in terms of development: In

1987 *The Brundtland Report* was published by Oxford University. The report deals with sustainability on planet earth not just one area. Why? Because someone needed to examine global concerns about 'the accelerating deterioration of the human environment and natural resources and the consequences of that deterioration for economic and social development'. Mr Brundtland's definition of sustainable development - "development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs" - seems logical and fair, which is what planning should be all about. Development is necessary, we all accept that, but Brundtland takes it further and states it is about balancing human needs with the protection of the natural environment for ever. They key word here is balancing!

Hilary Benn's speech to the Oxford Farming Conference in 2010 added to the debate on sustainability, arguing that Britain needs to grow more food whilst using less water and reducing greenhouse gas emissions to respond to growing world population. The government of the time produced the Food 2030 report which stated that food and farming play a key role fighting climate

changes and a maintaining the nation's health. Intensive farming systems are reliant on high oil and chemical inputs, which are neither sustainable nor resilient to likely future shocks, such as global price rises. The solution lies in sustainable mixed and agro-ecological farming, and encouraging citizens to eat locally, seasonally and organically.

We need to sustainably develop the country in a way that looks after this and future generations. Before we develop agricultural land in any way we must examine the need and ensure that housing numbers in local plans are SUSTAINABLE themselves, in order to achieve our sustainable development for this generation and the next and the next. Too many people use the word 'aspirational' in terms of local planning. The Oxford Dictionary defines this word as follows: 'Having or characterised by aspirations to achieve social prestige and material success'. We would prefer to see more use of 'realistic': defined as having or showing a sensible and practical idea of what can be achieved or expected. Housing must reflect a 'plan, monitor and manage' approach. Realistic housing targets means achievable housing targets which mean we get the right homes, in the right place, for the right reasons at the right time!

GOODideas

Learning from each other

Getting Devon's children outdoors

CPRE Devon is aiming to encourage children to engage with the countryside, and support local teacher's outdoor learning projects, with their new *My Outdoors* competition. The competition will run until 17th June 2016, and is open to all children of primary school age and their schools in Devon.

Branch Chairman, Penny Mills, said: 'We love our countryside, and hope to encourage children to appreciate *their* local countryside by asking them to draw, paint or create a visual representation of their local environment or favourite outdoor space. There is no reason why the project couldn't link with existing outdoor learning plans and visits already

in the school diary. Or it could be an opportunity to discover somewhere entirely new.'

CPRE Devon is hoping that the competition will help engage pupils with the green spaces they might take for granted in their school grounds, their local town or village, or even their own garden. They believe *My Outdoors* has the potential to complement many areas of the curriculum, including Geography, Maths, English, Science and History, and the initiative is part of their broader support for the concept of Outdoor Learning in Devon promoted by the *Naturally Healthy Devon Schools* scheme. The project aims to build confidence and encourage

school aged children to regularly interact with Devon's natural environment in order to improve their health and wellbeing, while making outdoor learning an integral part of the curriculum.

The competition is free to enter, and Penny says 'there has already been a really encouraging response from local schools - we look forward to seeing what *My Outdoors* means to Devon's children!' All entrants will receive a special competition wristband; Prize winners will receive a framed certificate and winning schools will receive a plaque and £200 to spend on further outdoor learning. For more details of how to enter the competition please CPRE Devon on 01392 966737 or email secretary@cpredevon.org.uk

An independent assessment of housing need

Towards the end of 2015 CPRE Warwickshire and other interested parties commissioned a *Critique of the Assessment of Housing Needs in Birmingham, Coventry and Warwickshire* from Alan Wenban-Smith, a well-qualified and experienced town and country planner. He has criticised the latest reports because, for several reasons, they over-estimate the numbers of homes which will be required in the next 20 years or so.

Some of the main grounds for criticism Professor Wenban-Smith found were an insufficient evidence base, relying on 5 year projections of need extrapolated over a 20 year period; the disregarding of population mobility; optimistic projections of both the growth

in jobs and the number of purchasers who will have sufficient funds to pay for the purchase or rent of homes; and optimistic assumptions of rates of housebuilding, where the proposed annual rate of building is 64% higher than the average annual rate over the past 14 years.

CPRE Warwickshire were able to use the report to confirm their doubts on the reliability of the economic modelling and the relationship between the models and projected household formation. The findings allow them to continue to support the provision of the homes needed for the people legitimately living in each area, both now and in the future, but will assist their work to make sure it is the right quantity in the right place. The branch

can now confidently say that 'a lower projection of housing need should be adopted with the option of revisiting the need at some time in the lifetime of each Local Plan.'

With the present rigid adherence to forecasts giving only the illusion of certainty, inhibiting necessary adaptations to new problems and unforeseen opportunities, CPRE Warwickshire is highlighting that 'the present system for setting "Objectively Assessed Needs" is the worst of all worlds: volatile projections within a rigid and unresponsive framework that threatens our Green Belt and agricultural land unnecessarily.'

To find out more or download a copy of Professor Wenban-Smith's report visit: www.cprewarwickshire.org.uk

A Charter for Tees

CPRE is supporting the Woodland Trust's new 'Charter for Trees, Woods and People'. The charter's ambition is to place trees at the centre of national decision making and back at the heart of our lives and communities. We're supporting the campaign in the knowledge that many trees are lost to development, such as new housing or road expansion, and we cannot afford to be complacent. A recent Natural England survey found that there were 417 million visits to woodlands and forests between March 2014 and February 2015. But the value of trees and woods goes beyond just the aesthetics and our attachments to them. They provide us with cleaner air and water, act as natural flood defences and provide a home to much of our wildlife.

Investing in the future of our trees and woods is vital – the Natural Capital Committee calculate that planting up to an extra 250,000 hectares of woodland near towns and cities can generate net societal benefits of more than £500 million per year. We know the Government made a manifesto commitment to plant 11 million trees in the next few years and that it is developing a 25 year plan for our natural environment. There are also Government plans to increase England's woodland cover from 10% to 12% by 2060, as long as there is 'private investment in woodland creation'.

Developing a new charter for our trees, woods and people is a great opportunity to show how important trees and woodlands are, now and in the future. If you'd like to get involved visit www.treearcher.uk

Current issues

Landscape in neighbourhood planning guidance

CPRE will shortly publish guidance to help community groups integrate local landscapes into their Neighbourhood Plans. We hope this will allow people to capture the essence of what makes their local landscapes special, and ensure that any future changes in a place should happen in harmony with local landscape character.

It is often assumed that Neighbourhood Plans are designed to shape new building and identify sites for new development, but they can also protect and safeguard valued local landscapes for future uses (open spaces) or features (trees) and define development or settlement limits. If one of your objectives is to conserve and enhance the character of the village, a Neighbourhood Plan is the best place to set out what unique characteristics the village has, and create a specific policy – to retain important views, for example. Policy should relate to the Neighbourhood Plan area but not be restricted to it if there is potential for change outside of the area which may adversely affect the special qualities of the area i.e. wind farm development.

For the first time in national planning policy, the National Planning Policy Framework supports the use of Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) as part of the Local Plan evidence base, and for identifying and protecting areas for their tranquillity. LCAs fit within the broader National Character Areas (NCA) produced by Natural England, which divides the country into 159 geographically specific and unique NCAs. Each of these areas have a detailed NCA profile which sets out a strong evidence base to underpin local planning policy and a summary of opportunities for the future management of an area. Both LCAs and NCAs will be a useful [continued over P.9 panel]

stepbystep

Guide to good campaigning

Learning from the pioneers of Neighbourhood Planning

CPRE is working with Action for Communities in Rural England (ACRE) to promote the benefits of neighbourhood planning to communities that haven't engaged with it yet and help overcome some of the myths about it. Ten areas of rural England have been identified where take-up of the opportunities provided by neighbourhood planning has been relatively slow.

Rural Community Councils and CPRE branches, working in partnership with other local organisations, held roadshows in each of these areas during March 2016. Each event included presentations from local groups who have been involved in neighbourhood planning, representatives from local planning authorities, and an official from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) who are funding the programme of promoting neighbourhood planning. Here, we present some of the best tips and advice that came out of the case studies examined at the events.

1 Get local authority help

Morpeth was assisted by its local planning authority who shared evidence from the emerging core strategy process, alerted the group to funding and support opportunities that the neighbourhood plan group could access. They also commissioned and funded the Strategic Environmental Assessment

for the neighbourhood plan and provided active support in drafting policies, preparing the consultation draft plan and creating and producing plan proposals maps.

Nuthurst in West Sussex was also helped by its district council, who assisted with the sustainability appraisal and Strategic Environmental Assessment, and provided advice on the pre-submission and submission plan, independent examiner's report and in conducting the referendum.

The parish of West Dean was helped by its local planning authority, the Forest of Dean District Council, who paid Gloucestershire Rural Community Council to deliver a package of support to guide the neighbourhood planning group through the process. The council also provided free resources in the form of printed maps and planning documents, and built the emerging policies for developing an HCA-owned site into their allocations document and strategies.

2 Engage a range of stakeholders

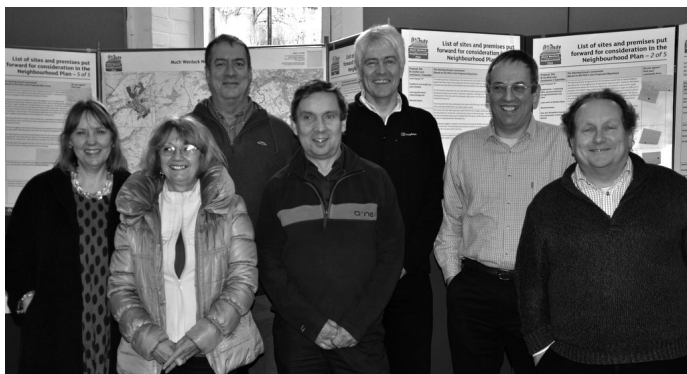
Morpeth engaged consultant Colin Haylock – through the Chartered Association of Building Engineers' support scheme for neighbourhood plans – to run workshops on 'visioning' and town centre strategy. Planning Aid volunteers helped engagement with 'difficult to reach' residents in Stobhill and the development of a 'village vision' for Pegswood. The Environment Agency, Historic

England and Northumberland Wildlife Trust took part in Strategic Environmental Assessment workshops, while Northumbrian Water and Environment Agency contributed to the redrafting of policy on flooding.

In Lincolnshire, Saxilby with Ingleby parish were supported by the charity Community Lincs during the community consultation process. They helped design a questionnaire to gather the views and opinions of members of the community, which achieved a 35% response rate. They also undertook a housing needs survey to find out how much affordable and supported housing was needed. East Dean were helped by the Forestry Commission, which gave advice on environment and habitat, and a community orchard project.

3 Identify needs

For Morpeth, the process identified the need for facilities – education and health care provision, traffic management, sewerage capacity, flood risk and so on – required by significant levels of housing development. It also allowed the community to address the need for a strategy for the local economy, both in terms of employment sites and town centre development. The Neighbourhood Plan was also a way to register the local enthusiasm for a designated Green Belt around Morpeth, with implementation through a local plan delayed by both local government reorganisation and planning reform. Pegswood



Members of the pioneering Much Wenlock Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group - successful early adopters of neighbourhood planning in Shropshire

Parish Council got involved with the Morpeth Neighbourhood Plan in an effort to make their village more sustainable by improving the variety of shops and availability of local employment.

In Nuthurst, the community used their plan to promote small developments spread across the parish to sustain and rejuvenate the settlements, rather than large developments. They also saw the plan as an opportunity to promote traffic safety and address localised flooding. With no housing target set by their district council (which preferred a bottom-up approach), the community was able to decide on a sustainable rate of development based on local need rather than aspirational projections. Tattenhall in Lancashire wanted their plan to provide affordable housing for local people; create jobs and workspace; improve broadband connectivity and protect local green space.

West Dean was motivated by the loss of employment, leisure and culture facilities. There was also uncertainty around a site occupied by a tertiary college, theatre, and sports facilities, which was owned by the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA). Another factor was evidence from a Housing Needs Survey which showed the community wanted to make a “living promise” that mirrored the community’s overwhelming desire to make the area an even better place

to live and work, both now and for future generations’.

4 Overcome challenges

Nuthurst benefitted from diverse and transparent community involvement which overcame initial disagreements and complaints. A steering group consisting of three parish councillors and nine representatives from each settlement was created, with meetings held in public and open days used to gather community opinion and allow for questions to be asked. Updates were published on the neighbourhood plan website.

In Tattenhall in Cheshire, a total of 905 voted ‘yes’ to the neighbourhood plan, a 95.97% vote in favour.

But despite local residents’ overwhelming support, two of the nation’s largest volume house builders launched a Judicial Review against the decision by Cheshire West and Chester Borough Council to allow the Tattenhall Neighbourhood Plan to proceed to referendum without a Local Plan in place. The Judicial Review was dismissed, with the judge agreeing that that one of the significant benefits of neighbourhood plans is the relative speed at which they can come forward, with a ‘made’ neighbourhood plan providing certainty in areas where there may otherwise be an absence of up-to-date local plan policy.

The development of a dedicated neighbourhood planning website and facebook page helped Saxilby keep the community informed, publicising activities, updating on consultations, and sharing minutes of meetings. They developed a logo for the group and made good use of images, photographs and full colour in all publicity materials across all media.

5 Enjoy the benefits

The Morpeth plan area covers 50 square miles and 20,000 people, leading to greater recognition of how local issues are inter-related and the need for integrated solutions; the plan achieved a 93.6% ‘yes’ vote in the referendum on the plan, with a 29.5% turnout, and has helped create more belief in the planning system.

Nuthurst was able to create a plan with enough sensitively-sited development to help to rejuvenate the settlements and maintain and protect services. The plan has also created eight local green spaces on which development is not permitted. Conditions attached to the development proposals seek to protect the environment by maintaining and enhancing screens of trees and bushes and requiring mitigation of flooding. At two of the development sites, ponds and surrounding areas are accorded protection by making them nature reserves for the benefit of the local community.

For East Dean, the process has helped create a community-run theatre on the HCA-owned site, gaining patronage from Dame Joan Bakewell and Melvyn Bragg. The future theatre will be called The Dennis Potter Theatre after the playwright, who grew up in the area, in Berry Hill. A Community Orchard project has been created that is planting local varieties of fruit trees and shrubs, bringing a wide range of the community together, and over £5,000 in funding for the project.

Find out more: Get more information about CPRE’s Neighbourhood Planning work and read all ten case studies in full at www.cpre.org.uk

[continued from page 8 panel]

part of the evidence base for your Neighbourhood Plan, e.g. by helping you prepare policies that require any new development to complement its surrounding countryside as far as possible.

An almost infinite number of landscape elements can be conserved and enhanced through Neighbourhood Plans, including: views and accessibility; natural (rivers) and historic (churches) features and their setting; the farmed landscape (field boundaries such as hedgerows and dry stone walls); and locally-distinctive green space (woodlands, orchards and common land). Tattenhall in Cheshire featured some good examples of landscape character policies in their Neighbourhood Plan, specifying that new development will be supported where it: respects local character and natural assets, ensures that views and vistas are maintained, and does not erode strategic gaps between Tattenhall and surrounding settlements, to name just three of their criteria.

Broughton Astley used its plan to outline areas of ‘Local Green Space’, which are protected from new development unless very special circumstances can be demonstrated. Areas chosen included a recreation ground, war memorial, and disused railway. Cringleford’s plan proposes that the parish has a designated ‘Landscape Protection Zone’ to ensure the landscape setting of the village and a wildlife corridor is maintained, also acting as a buffer against traffic noise. Boxted’s plan specifies that all development exceeding 500 square meters or comprising more than three dwellings, must be accompanied by a landscape assessment. Specific policies can also be included in Neighbourhood Plans to help encourage developments to promote initiatives like habitat creation, new footpaths or use of vernacular, which can all help reinforce local character.

Find out more: Look out for the launch of the guidance at www.cpre.org.uk

PARISHbeat

Effective solutions for your parish

Staffordshire footpaths

CPRE Staffordshire is helping Eccleshall Parish Council resurrect their footpath scheme by promoting their call for volunteers to adopt footpaths to walk along just a couple of times a year. As a guardian of a footpath you would be expected to report any problems, such as litter, broken gates/styles and overgrown vegetation, so that these could be dealt with promptly and the area kept beautiful for all to enjoy. Walk details can be accessed at Eccleshall library or online at <http://www.eccleshallparishcouncil.org>. If you enjoy walking, walk regularly with your dog or family and would like to help out, please contact <http://eccleshallpc@btinternet.com>

Parish votes against village expansion

Belsay Parish council has voted to oppose plans for a new development in the village, and is now being supported by CPRE Northumberland in its campaign. The application, for 28 new houses and a 67 space car park is for farmland designated as Green Belt in the Northumberland Local Plan, which is shortly to be submitted to the Government for approval. The parish council's chief concern is that this development would double the number of homes in the village. Apart from the matter of Green Belt protection for the land, some councillors felt that a large number of modern houses would not sit comfortably within the neo-classical arcade design of the present conservation village. CPRE Northumberland supports the desire to protect the open natural setting and character of the village, and backs the principles outlined in the Local Plan Core Strategy which were applied to Belsay in deciding the settlement boundary for the village within the Green Belt.

Parish referendum helps win planning battle

CPRE Bedfordshire joined together with a local campaign group last year to fight off a planning application for a solar farm in the parish of Harrold. The proposed site was on elevated land that would have been almost impossible to screen in a very sensitive landscape close to Odell Great Wood, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

The site was also in an area with long uninterrupted views across a largely unsettled landscape. The land chosen for the solar farm was classed as Grade 3a. This is "the best and most versatile agricultural land" and the Government has recently changed their advice on the siting of solar farms – following campaigning from CPRE and others - requiring that this sort of land can only be used for solar farms if "justified by the most compelling evidence".

Interestingly, Harrold Parish Council held a referendum to determine the views of their residents. The result was that a narrow majority of residents were also against the construction of the solar farm – a result which was taken into account by Bedford Borough Council's decision to refuse the application. This is the first time that such a referendum has been held in Bedford Borough that CPRE Bedfordshire is aware of. The branch recognises the need for renewable energy in the right places and has supported the development of solar farms on low grade agricultural land or on brownfield sites during the course of 2015, for example near Chelveston in the north of Bedford Borough.

CPRE Bedfordshire is also bringing together a partnership of parishes impacted by the

now approved North of Luton Framework Plan. The Plan includes a new major road - A6 to M1 link - and a Rail Freight Interchange and warehousing site at Sundon Quarry (J11A), which threaten the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty at Sundon, the SSSI at Sundon Quarry and the ancient woodland of George Wood. The branch has brought local parishes together to form a Green Belt Parishes Group, to better co-ordinate our responses to these and other threats posed by the Plan. The parishes of Sundon, Harlington, Chalton, Chalgrave, Toddington and Streatley have had an initial meeting, and it is hoped that the residents of these villages will feel able to become more involved in actions to defend their communities and the broader countryside. Find out more and get in touch with the branch via www.cprebeds.plus.com

Intensive farming threat to Green Belt

Plans for a £1.2 million egg-laying unit on the outskirts of York have met fierce objections, with more than 1,600 people signing an online petition against the 32,000-hen laying building. Wheldrake Parish Council

chairman David Randon is also chairman of CPRE's York and Selby branch, and has raised objections from both parties, pointing out the scheme threatens Green Belt land and would have a negative visual impact on the

ancient woodland of nearby Hagg Wood: 'We are objecting because of the size and massing of the structure. It's a very large building - over 100 metres long and 23 metres wide.' A decision is expected towards the end of April.

Beauty in your back yard

CPRE is supporting the BIMBY (Beauty in my back yard) initiative from the Prince's Foundation. CPRE's Chief Executive, Shaun Spiers, says: 'We need to see more homes built, but we also need to create beautiful places that promote community and are socially and environmentally

sustainable. Not only will the BIMBY approach enhance people's lives; it will make it much easier to get consent to the developments in the first place. The way to create places that people will want to live in, or which they will welcome as neighbours, is to involve the community at every step of

the development. I very much welcome the BIMBY toolkit and we'll be encouraging people to make good use of it.' To access this new resource to help communities directly influence the quality and beauty of new building developments in their local areas, go to <https://www.bimby.org.uk/>

CAMPAIGNER

An outstanding friend of the Lake District



Jean in the landscape she works so hard to protect, during her 2014 fundraising walk

The latest recipient of CPRE's new Outstanding Contribution Award is Jean Savage of the Friends of the Lake District (FLD), who describe her as 'the backbone of our organisation'.

As well as supporting their campaigns by writing and lobbying (most recently on the 'Say No to Pylons in the Lake District' campaign), Jean takes part in the weekly hard graft of FLD's work parties (which can involve dry stone walling, hedge laying and bracken bashing) and is the 'hubmeister' who puts in at least 5 days' worth of unpaid work to ensure their mass-volunteering Fell Care Days run smoothly.

The Fell Care Days were recently Highly Commended in the final of the UK National Parks Volunteer Awards 2015, project category, and it is no exaggeration to say that Jean's input is integral to their success: 11 Fell Care Days have taken place in five years in 11 locations, involving 1833 volunteers (1085 adults, 748 children

and students) completing 116 separate conservation tasks, totalling the equivalent of 1229 days' work in the fells. To underline her importance to the Friends, Jean even came along to their office to put a sandbag at the back door when the beck threatened to flood their premises on Saturday 5th December and no staff were in!

When Friends of the Lake District celebrated its 80th anniversary in 2014, Jean walked 80 miles across Cumbria through all the Friends' land, to raise money for their work. Walking the distance in 6 days without a support group, Jean carried what she needed each day and used public transport to get home each night, and return to the point she ended at the day before. Luckily, she was no stranger to long walks, having previously walked Offa's Dyke, the Southern Upland Way, the Coast to Coast Cumbria Way, the Dales Way, the West Highland Way, Chamonix to Zermatt, and various routes in Nepal. Jean

explained her motivation for the walk, saying 'I've volunteered with Friends of the Lake District for the last seven years, doing lots of conservation work on their land and helping with events.' For Jean, the anniversary was the 'perfect opportunity' to raise some funds for the great work the Friends do – 'from tree planting, engaging young people to volunteer in the outdoors, or making sure new developments don't trash the Lake District.'

Back in 2011, Jean was one of only five nominees for the Campaign for National Parks' first ever Park Protector Award, gaining a special mention as a 'single volunteers who has worked with enormous dedication and skill to restore and protect precious features of National Park landscapes'. Judges found it very difficult choosing just five for their shortlist as all were worthy winners; they said the five chosen were 'outstanding examples of the amazing work that is taking place in our National Parks, and the amazing people who care about them.' Broadcaster and former CPRE Vice-President, Nicholas Crane, added that 'the nominees are terrific. Really inspiring and valuable.' Jean's nomination noted that 'she epitomises the word 'volunteer'; her commitment and passion for volunteering are infectious and she seeks no reward for this, other than the chance to get stuck in and to encourage others to join her.'

Congratulations to Jean on a richly-deserved Outstanding Contribution Award. Why not make sure the volunteers in your area are recognised by nominating them at www.cpre.org.uk/awards

Campaigner set for the Palace

The lucky CPRE volunteer who will be attending the Queen's Garden Party on Tuesday 24 May, is Tim Whittingham, Chair of CPRE Sedgemoor District Group, Somerset Branch. Tim went to his first meeting of the newly reformed CPRE Sedgemoor District Group in 2012 and has been Chair of the Group and a CPRE Somerset Trustee since 2013. He lives in a village just outside the Quantock Hills AONB which is in idyllic countryside but also close to the site of Hinkley C nuclear power station, soon to become the largest construction site in Europe.

Tim has spoken out on behalf of CPRE Somerset against inappropriate (and sometimes illegal) developments and industrialisation of the countryside, including speaking at planning committee meetings. He is currently working with his local community to try to tackle the increasing problems caused by a large, industrial scale, anaerobic digester plant which is causing noise, smell, traffic congestion and physical damage to small lanes due to a large numbers of tractors and trailers. In particular, Tim is trying to highlight the absurd situation where a series of giant slurry lagoons have been built, without the need for planning permission, as they are considered, by law, to be permitted agricultural developments.

Action on litter

If you were inspired by the Clean for the Queen campaign this spring, join your local clean-up group at www.litteraction.org.uk

Current issues

Affordable housing

CPRE Leicestershire vice chairman Richard Windley recently praised the judgement of Harborough District Council in approving an affordable development on the edge of Thorpe Langton near Market Harborough. The site, a derelict farmyard outside the village boundary, was the subject of an application for a seven unit housing development. Although the site was not included in the Local Plan, CPRE Leicestershire was asked for support by a villager in favour of the development.

The owners of the farmyard sought the support of the local community, and a positive consultation process confirmed that some 2 and 3 bed homes were needed to give local families the chance to remain – or return - to this otherwise expensive village. CPRE Leicestershire argued that smaller homes are needed to maintain thriving communities in villages throughout the county, and the council agreed that the development – which could help fund future affordable housing elsewhere in the district - was appropriate.

Another benefit of the site was that several of the homes were to be constructed to "Lifetime Homes" standards meaning the accommodation is suited to young or old. As one supporter explained at the meeting, the comparatively low initial price would enable him and his young family to return to their community. CPRE Leicestershire believes that the case is a good example of a local authority acting thoughtfully and weighing the balance of the decision in favour of good planning sense.

Find out more: Catch up with the latest branch news at www.cpreleicestershire.org.uk

INreview

Our perspective on countryside issues

New Homes Bonus

At present, the New Homes Bonus scheme is the most significant financial incentive used by Government to encourage housebuilding. When consultation took place on its introduction in 2010/11, CPRE raised profound concerns that the supporting legislation for the scheme in the Localism Act posed a serious risk of distorting the planning process, by introducing financial benefits as a relevant or 'material' consideration in decision making by local planning authorities.

In our view the current Planning Practice Guidance has done much to address this concern by making clear that a financial consideration is only material if it helps make a development acceptable in planning terms. We would urge the Government to maintain this principle and we will respond to the Government's separate Technical Consultation on Planning proposals on financial benefits in planning, in these terms. However, CPRE remains of the firm belief that the New Homes Bonus should be substantially reformed, because in its present form it has the damaging outcome of encouraging local authorities to permit or accept poor quality new development, without having had a chance to plan strategically for it.

Undermining the Northern Powerhouse

The scheme has been widely criticised, including by both the National Audit Office

in March 2013 and the House of Commons Public Accounts Committee in October 2013. In July 2014, an investigation by the Financial Times highlighted that the scheme had served in effect to redistribute public funding away from areas in the Midlands and the North in need of regeneration, to areas of London and southern England. These areas already have buoyant property markets and little need of further development incentives. According to the investigation London, the South East, the South West and East Anglia have reaped £177 million more than they would have done without the bonus – to the detriment of authorities in the Midlands and the North; and the 50 most deprived councils have lost out on £111m while the 50 least deprived have gained £96m.

Such an outcome is in direct contradiction to the Government's stated aims of creating a Northern Powerhouse and to prioritise the re-use of brownfield sites. Many of these sites are in the northern regions and need investment in remediation in order to make development economically viable. Indeed, the scheme should be used to encourage the granting of planning permissions on brownfield sites in clear preference to greenfield, and should not support greenfield schemes that are not in accordance with an agreed local or neighbourhood plan. When brownfield sites have not attracted funding under other Government schemes, local authorities could do more to work towards the Government's target of 90%

of suitable brownfield sites having planning permission by 2020.

Creating the right incentives

The New Homes Bonus scheme should discourage local planning authorities from promoting large scale development on sites in areas where the Government has committed to maintain protection; policies in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) indicate that development should be restricted in Green Belts, National Parks, and other protected areas. CPRE recommends that Bonus payments should be focused on the delivery of schemes which deliver additional policy objectives in the NPPF alongside merely boosting housing supply, but which are less likely to take place without some further form of incentive. These would include (i) schemes identified in local and neighbourhood plans; (ii) the regeneration of brownfield sites or re-use of empty homes where some form of public investment has been required, but which have not attracted funding under other central Government schemes such as the promised long term Housing Development Fund; or (iii) delivery of affordable social rented housing over and above the recent rates of delivery within the local authority area.

Find out more: Read CPRE's full response to the New Homes Bonus consultation at www.cpre.org.uk/resources

QandA

The answers you need

Tree Preservation Orders

Local planning authorities can make a Tree Preservation Order (TPO) if it appears to them to be 'expedient in the interests of amenity to make provision for the preservation of trees or woodlands in their area'. Authorities can either initiate this process themselves or in response to a request made by any other party.

TPO's have long been an important consideration for CPRE campaigners and parish councils. The Financial Times recently reported that there have been several cases in recent years where the courts have imposed heavy fines for cutting down or damaging trees without permission. In one case, a property developer in Cheshire was ordered to pay more than £28,000 after he destroyed a yew tree to make way for parking spaces. Elsewhere, a house was built in Beaminster, Dorset, where the architect designed the home around five mature oaks which were protected by TPOs. Here, CPRE member and chartered arboriculturist Mark Chester gives his answers to some of the common questions regularly received by CPRE.

Tree Preservation Orders: The Facts and the Fiction

Tree Preservation Orders have been used to protect trees within the planning system since the Town and Country Planning Act of 1947. They can be a useful tool if used properly. However, some myths have developed over the years which can result in poor decision making and lost opportunities to protect trees of value and

merit. I have been working with TPOs over the past two decades and it seems that a few myths have become confused with the facts, to the detriment of the trees

- TPOs can be made on trees of any species.
- Trees are not protected because of their species (for example, oak trees are not covered by a TPO simply because they are oaks).
- Unless a tree is subject to a Tree Preservation Order or situated within a Conservation Area, it has no protection from being felled or damaged by poor pruning.
- Being in a National Park or the grounds of a listed property does not convey any protection on trees growing there.
- Trees within the grounds of parish churches, including Yew trees, which may pre-date the church, lack any formal protection beyond the procedures any parish adheres to when deciding on management.
- A new TPO must be formally confirmed within 6 months of being made otherwise any possible breach cannot be enforced.
- Changes to the regulations were made in England in 2012. These strengthen the protection afforded to trees. They have not been applied within Wales. An alleged breach which could be defended in Wales may not be defensible in England.
- Some believe that one cannot touch a tree subject to a TPO. This isn't strictly true, but any work needs to be defensible and it is wise to keep records.

- TPOs only exist to protect trees as features of amenity. They should not be used to hinder the planning process if the trees involved do not have amenity value.
- When a new TPO is made, there is a small window of 28 days during which any concerns and observations need to be raised. In my experience, it is so important to use this opportunity to ensure that a new TPO is accurate and relevant. Errors not resolved at this stage can cause problems later.
- TPOs are a valuable tool for protecting the trees we value. They are made and administered by the local planning authority, but can be requested by anyone. I used to fulfil this role for a local authority in the Midlands, and can still drive around the area and see trees retained through my efforts as the tree officer.

Mark is a former tree officer and now provides tree advice as a Registered Consultant with the Institute of Chartered Foresters. One of only a handful of consultants in the country offering the Tree Preservation Orders service, Mark also provides tree condition surveys and tree reports to BS5837:2012 for planning applications. Contact mark@cedarwoodtreecare.co.uk

Current issues

Countryside survey

A survey CPRE Hampshire ran during their 2015 roadshow programme has revealed that litter and dumping of rubbish are of greatest concern amongst the public. The branch surveyed 550 members of the public at Hampshire Farmers' Markets and county shows about the threats that they think have the biggest impact on the local countryside and landscape. The results show that litter and dumping of rubbish (28%), closely followed by new housing on greenfield sites (27%), are of greatest concern to the public. The dysfunctional planning system (24%) and wind turbines and solar farms (13%) were also seen as threats to countryside and landscape.

Park and ride

CPRE Avonside director, Sophie Spencer, has been leading opposition to a proposed park and ride scheme which would involve a 1,400 space car park on Green Belt land at Bathampton Meadows. Sophie was quoted by The Guardian newspaper before Christmas, saying the scheme 'would cause serious damage to the Avon Green Belt, and be a negative visual intrusion on the Cotswolds AONB and the Bath World Heritage City.' The branch feels that park and rides can cause harm to existing public transport and increase vehicle miles travelled without necessarily reducing the demand for car parking in the centre. They argue that Bath should be designing public and active transport that will be accessible to those who do not have cars, enabling those who do to leave them at home. In January, North East Somerset MP, Jacob Rees-Mogg, submitted a petition against the scheme signed by more than 8,000 people to the House of Commons.

Current issues

Making Places Charter

CPRE Sussex has joined forces with Action in Rural Sussex to tackle poor design in the countryside by creating a Making Places Charter to protect the distinctive character of rural Sussex. The initiative was launched in Barnham in January with the first of two workshops for rural communities. The workshop was very well attended with representatives from Tangmere, Boxgrove, Aldingbourne and Angmering. The session used a mixture of techniques to establish what 'good design' means in these communities. Those who attended found the workshop 'very informative' and commented that 'it has really helped us see what is good about the village and what perhaps needs improving.'

'CPRE Sussex wants to see the right development in the right places and a big part of this is good design,' says Chairman of CPRE Sussex, David Johnson. 'We feel that local communities should be able to help identify what they feel good design is all about locally and that is why we are holding these workshops - to establish locally led principles of good design for Sussex.' A second workshop will be held in early spring in East Sussex. 'The aim is to enable the participating parishes to use the results to challenge developer mediocrity through the Neighbourhood Planning process, with a strong Village Design Statement, ensuring local distinctiveness is preserved, influencing future development and improving the physical qualities of the area' says one of the organisers, Will Anderson. For more information please email justin.french-brooks@cpresussex.org.uk or phone 07931 247234

Reforming the NPPF

The Government is making changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The consultation's strong emphasis on building more homes on brownfield land is very welcome, as is the attention given to residential density. More worryingly, proposed new policies on affordable housing have not been 'rural proofed'; and precious countryside will continue to put at risk by proposed relaxations to Green Belt policy.

CPRE believes the NPPF should be changed to state that housebuilding targets should be based on a realistic assessment of what developers and local authorities are likely to be able to deliver over the plan period. Local planning authorities should work with central government, developers and delivery agencies positively to bring forward sites, with an emphasis on previously developed sites, that have been allocated for development in local and neighbourhood plans. Developers should be expected

to work with local authorities to build out sites within three years once they get planning permission, or face losing the permission or having to pay financial penalties on uncompleted houses. As well as these fundamental changes, our response to the consultation addresses the following core campaign areas for CPRE.

Affordable Housing

We fear that proposals to widen the definition of affordable housing to include models which are not subject to 'in perpetuity' or subsidy recycling restrictions will have the effect of crowding out the delivery of social rented housing or other housing designed to promote a wider social mix within rural communities. "Starter Homes" should be seen as strictly separate from providing subsidised affordable housing for people whose needs are not met by the market. Confusing the two, in the fashion proposed by the consultation paper, would fail to meet the needs of many communities,

but will be felt most acutely in rural communities.

Local communities are best placed to determine what types of housing are needed, and should continue to have that power. There will be some instances where Starter Homes are appropriate but the proposals are likely to force local authorities into planning for them even when they are not. We also recommend that rural exception sites should continue to be used primarily for social housing. The NPPF should also state that the new duty to promote Starter Homes should not have the effect of prejudicing the delivery of any type of affordable housing to meet identified local needs.

“Rural exception sites are a very important source of affordable housing to meet locally determined need”



The NPPF must promote more realistic housing targets to avoid urban sprawl in our towns and villages

Small sites

CPRE strongly objects to the proposals put forward in this consultation to “strengthen” policy on small housing sites, as they fail to draw a critical distinction between greenfield and brownfield sites. Paragraph 24 of the consultation document proposes, in effect, a presumption in favour of development on small greenfield sites immediately adjacent to settlement boundaries. Settlement boundaries and the adjacent countryside often contribute very significantly to the setting of towns and villages. They help to define the character and distinctiveness of settlements and should only be altered through local and neighbourhood plans. Conversely, rural exception sites are a very important source of affordable housing to meet locally determined need. They typically come forward within or adjacent to existing settlements on sites which, because of settlement boundary policies, would not usually get planning permission for market housing. The proposal would remove the incentive for rural exception sites to come forward as landowners would be able to sell land for a much higher price.

“CPRE believes that policies for protection of Green Belts and nationally designated landscapes need strengthening”

CPRE recommends that the NPPF should be amended to state that rural communities should have the ability to decide whether small sites within on the edge of settlements are developed for starter homes or other types of housing, depending on the needs of the area. Speculative development proposals (that is, those not included within a local



The relaxation of Green Belt protection could undermine the viability of brownfield sites

or neighbourhood plan) that would lead to significant or cumulative unplanned growth of a village should be resisted. Any new policy on small sites should also not apply to areas excluded from the NPPF presumption in favour of sustainable development.

Green Belt

The consultation proposes to give local communities the opportunity to allocate sites for small scale Starter Home developments in the Green Belt through their neighbourhood plans. It also proposes that planning policy be amended to allow redevelopment of brownfield sites in the Green Belt for starter homes through a more flexible approach to assessing the impact on openness. CPRE believes that policies for protection of both Green Belts and nationally designated landscapes need strengthening to deliver on the Government’s commitments to their protection. The proposals in the consultation paper in their current form will result in additional development in these areas, reducing the attractiveness of brownfield regeneration and undermining the potential of Green Belts as a valuable environmental resource for people and wildlife.

CPRE believes that we need both a Ministerial Statement and more rigorous testing of development proposals affecting Green Belts and other nationally designated areas. The Government needs to be clearer that ‘exceptional circumstances’ is a tough test. In

particular, the clear statements of Government policy that local planning authorities do not need to meet in full identified needs for housing development where constraints such as Green Belt apply are being overlooked. The PPG should provide more detail about how the ‘exceptional circumstances’ test works, making clear it is a tough test so that unnecessary or major losses of Green Belt are avoided. The NPPF should retain a test of classing development on areas of brownfield land as ‘inappropriate’ where this would damage the openness of Green Belts, as is suggested in paragraph 53 of the consultation paper, or land of high environmental value.

The NPPF or PPG should clarify that neighbourhood plans should only allow development in the Green Belt when this consists of the provision of small-scale, well designed affordable housing for local needs, and where the site in question is shown to be the least harmful option in Green Belt terms; ‘small’ should only apply to sites capable of holding 10 dwellings or less. It should also be reiterated that development in the Green Belt should be restricted and neighbourhood planning bodies should not be expected to plan for the full Local Plan ‘objectively assessed need’ in relation to the neighbourhood or a wider area.

Find out more: Read CPRE’s full consultation response and our evidence to the Communities and Local Government Select Committee inquiry at www.cpre.org.uk/resources

Current issues

Slad Valley saved again

Stroud District Council refused planning permission for an application to build 20 houses on Baxter’s Field in January. CPRE Gloucestershire is delighted with this decision on the controversial development off Summer Street in Stroud. The application was turned down because the site is outside the settlement boundary, the district council is able to demonstrate a 5 year supply of land for housing, the site is not supported in the Stroud Local Plan that was adopted in November last year and due to the impact of the scheme on the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. There was also a lack of information from the developers about the effects on the ecology of the area and flooding.

The scheme would have had a significant impact on the Slad Valley, particularly as the proposal included an element of 3 storey houses as well as the effect of the associated infrastructure like access roads and lighting. The good news on this site comes after recent decisions to withdraw an appeal for 100 houses at Rodborough Field and the withdrawal of an application to build 150 houses at Glebe Farm in Minchinhampton. The branch hopes that the adoption of the Stroud Local Plan, which provides much needed certainty on the future development of this area, continues to help protect this beautiful part of the County.

Find out more: Visit www.cpreglos.org.uk to read more about their work, including their 2016 Awards programme.

MATTER of fact

Support for your case

A rural fair share?

The Rural Fair Share Campaign is a cross-party group of MPs, who support an impartial, objective, needs-based approach to local government funding. The campaign aims to reduce the rural penalty, which sees urban councils receive approximately 45% more funding per head than rural councils.

Rural residents pay, on average, £81 more in council tax than their urban counterparts – despite receiving £130.99 less funding from central Government. Overall, therefore, rural residents pay more in tax, receive fewer services and, on average, earn less than those in urban areas. There is also evidence that services are more expensive to deliver in rural areas because of the additional costs associated with the sparse geography. Rural areas often make great use of the limited public funds received. This has sometimes been used as an excuse to provide them with less funding. In times of reducing public expenditure, it is more – rather than less – important to distribute available resources fairly. It is essential that the Government gives rural areas the resources they need. The Rural Fair Share campaign is calling for the Government to increase the Rural Services Delivery Grant by £130 million this year.

The Rural Services Delivery Grant

The Government agreed in 2012 to give greater weighting to sparsity in the local government funding

formula. When the new formula was applied, rural areas stood to gain £250m. But some three-quarters of these gains were lost due to “damping” – a method used by the Government to minimise big swings in funding grants. The campaign is calling for rural local authorities to receive the money outstanding from the change to the formula in 2012. Following sustained lobbying from the Rural Fair Share Campaign in 2012, a one-off “Efficiency Support for Services in SPARSE areas grant” was awarded to rural local authorities, worth £8.5m that year. This grant has subsequently been renamed the “Rural Services Delivery Grant” and been made a permanent component of the Local Government Finance Settlement. It has increased in value every year and is now worth £15.5m.

In February, a statement to the House of Commons by Greg Clark MP, Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, set out new measures to support rural councils during the transition to full business rates retention. The Rural Services Delivery Grant will increase from £15.5 million this year to £80.5 million next year. Ministers will also provide a £150 million a year transitional fund for the areas suffering the biggest cuts over the next two years, of which £32.7 million will go to rural areas. In the meantime, the Government will carry out a Fair Funding Review, which will inform the move to 100% business rates retention

scheme. The new assessment will be an opportunity to highlight the particular needs of rural areas.

Winning the argument

Under the new proposals, the East Riding of Yorkshire will receive additional funding from central government of £2.15 million in 2016/17 and an extra £1.45 million in 2017/18 compared with the provisional settlement announced in December, which would have reduced the overall amount of central government funding for rural councils by over 31% over the four year period, whereas urban councils would only have received a 22% average cut. Graham Stuart, Member of Parliament for Beverley and Holderness and chair of the Rural Fair Share Campaign, said: “The Government’s proposals which came out before Christmas were unacceptable. I’ve led the Rural Fair Share Campaign for years now to get the Government to close the urban-rural funding gap. In the last Parliament, ministers accepted our arguments and gradually began to reduce the deficit. The provisional settlement would have not only failed to narrow the gap any further, but would have actually taken us backwards and redistributed more money to urban councils.

Mr Stuart continued: “I cautiously welcome the Government’s new proposals, and the clear recognition of the challenges of delivering services in rural areas. We will be making submissions

“The needs of an older, poorer and sparser population in rural areas must be properly taken into account”

to the funding review to ensure that the needs of an older, poorer and sparser population in rural areas are properly taken into account. This is only a small step on the journey to fairer funding, but I am pleased that ministers have listened to our concerns. This is about basic fairness. Our rural constituents have the right to expect to be taxed fairly and to receive a fair amount of support for their local services.” The Rural Fair Share Campaign is part of the Rural Services Network (RSN), which is calling on the Government to protect rural schools from closure, and provide sufficient extra funding for local authorities to enable them to provide home-to-school transport for 16 to 19 year olds still in education. The RSN are campaigning for the protection of the value of Bus Service Operators Grant (BSOG) under any future payment regime, as further erosion of this grant could have a significant impact on marginal rural services. Find out more about the work of the RSN at www.rsonline.org.uk