



## Campaign to Protect Rural England North East Newsletter

Summer 2015



River Wear at Chester Le Street



CPRE fights for a better future for the English countryside.

We work locally and nationally to protect, shape and enhance a beautiful, thriving, countryside for everyone to value and enjoy.



Bamburgh Castle, Northumberland

**Campaign to Protect Rural England** - the countryside campaigners

## North East NEwsletter Summer 2015 Issue 27

(Issues 1-16 titled *Overview*)

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Newcastle  
North Tyneside

#### Durham Branch

Covering  
Gateshead  
South Tyneside  
Co Durham  
Darlington  
Stockton  
Hartlepool  
Middlesbrough

#### CPRE Meetings

17th February	Darlington
19th February	Northumberland
17th March	Darlington
31st March	NE Region
6th April	Durham
21st April	Darlington
19th May	Darlington
1st June	Durham
7th July	NE Region

Please confirm meeting details before travelling

## Campaign to Protect Rural England

CPRE fights for a better future for England's unique, essential and precious countryside. From giving parish councils expert advice on planning issues to influencing national and European policies, we work to protect and enhance the countryside.

We believe a beautiful, thriving countryside is important for everyone, no matter where they live. Nationally, we don't own land or represent any special interests. This differentiates us from organisations like the National Trust and the Countryside Alliance. Our members are united in their love for England's landscapes and rural communities, and stand up for the countryside, so it can continue to sustain, enchant and inspire future generations. We'll be stronger by being inclusive - CPRE is for everyone.

### Contents

Chair's desk	4
Durham Plan Judicial Review	7
Newcastle/Gateshead One Core Strategy	8
Abbreviations	9
Gosforth...Air pollution	10
Opencast	11
Springwell Village, Sunderland	12
Landscapes of Northumberland	14
CPRE AGM's	15
Planning Aid	16
Green Belt...the NPPF 3 years on	19
Tranquility	20
Cotswold Outdoor	23

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Disclaimer: The views expressed within this *NEwsletter* are those of the authors.

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Items for the next issue should be with the Editor by 1st August 2015.

## Chair's Desk

There may have been some merit in waiting until after the election to write this but both Gillan and I will be away then. And then I think there may in fact be merit in writing it before we know the result. It could impact on so much.

As no doubt readers are aware, Inspector Martin Pike ultimately found the Newcastle Gateshead Joint Core Strategy sound subject to a number of modifications. Both councils have now adopted the Strategy. I will not deal with it further here as Howard is writing about it.

The situation with the Durham Plan however is quite different. Inspector Harold Stephens found nine of the proposed policies to be

unsound. Although that means the vast majority of the Plan was found to be sound (subject to modification where required), these nine policies were the important ones from the Council's point of view for encouraging growth in the county. They were also the most controversial, relating to the number of jobs to be created, the number of houses required, the two new roads to the north and west of Durham city and to the proposed deletions from the Green Belt. Then there was the highly controversial proposed policy relating to student accommodation in Durham City.

Inspector Stephens has sided with many of the arguments of CPRE and other environmental groups

which attended the Examination in Public (EiP). In effect these arguments were that the council was proposing an unrealistic number of new jobs in the County, consequently had planned for too many houses, should not be making deletions from the Green Belt either around Durham City or Chester le Street and finally that the proposed new roads were unnecessary and a further incursion into the Green Belt. It was also felt that the student accommodation proposed policy was causing major problems in Durham City Centre. In addition, (from a CPRE point of view) it meant that potential sites for housing in the City Centre are being used for "part time" student accommodation and so placing further pressure on greenfield sites outside Durham.

The Inspector's findings have meant that it is impossible to adopt the Plan as it stands and there are three options for the council to consider (adopt as it stands in the knowledge that it is likely to be declared "unsound", seek time to amend but the amendments are very significant and likely to take some considerable time, or start again)

Many of the groups including CPRE have directly told the Council they are willing to co-operate to resolve these issues. However, the county has approached a number of developers (but not the environmental groups) to seek their views and has met with the Planning Inspectorate to discuss the situation. The general feeling before the EiP was that the Council was keen to

consult with local groups but not keen to listen to their representations. That appears to be continuing after the EiP. At present there does not appear to be any decision as to how to proceed with the Plan.

In my opinion all parties had a fair crack of the whip at the EiP. On this occasion, perhaps unusually, many of the arguments of the environmental groups prevailed. There is an impression at the moment that the findings of Inspectors in this type of case are fine provided they support the developers. When a finding, however, says "slow down and think again" then there is all manner of criticism and indeed, in the Durham case, Parliamentary debate. Campaigners felt just as strongly about the Newcastle Gateshead finding that the Strategy was sound, but none of this sort of thing was allowed to happen in that case.

What will happen after the election is perhaps anyone's guess. The Inspectorate is an independent body and the findings of their inspectors should be treated as such but one does wonder whether there will be any government interference after the election.

As I mentioned in my last report, we have sent letters referring to our manifesto to all the parliamentary candidates of the leading parties at the election. We have had a number of responses (but not from a majority of the candidates). All responses received have generally been supportive of



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## Chair's Desk (cont.)

the CPRE manifesto. It will be interesting to see how this fares after the election.

I also wrote last time about English devolution. Howard has already attended the inaugural meeting of the CPRE group to consider this and I will be going to the next one in June. I also attended a "Devolution Breakfast" in Newcastle in April organised by the North East Combined Authority (NECA). There are clearly numerous issues about this topic and the chair of NECA, Simon Henig (leader of Durham CC) was clearly supportive of

the idea. I believe this has to be considered but we do need to think carefully about all the issues - and must remember that in 2004 the North East rejected the idea of a Regional Assembly. I believe things are different in many ways now but we must tread carefully. At present, however, there is nothing concrete to report on other than discussions are taking place with a number of bodies, including CPRE, considering the options. Again, it will be interesting to see how this proceeds after the election.

*Richard Cowen*

## CPRE NE Facebook page

We are now on Facebook!

Please help us spread the word by going onto the Facebook page and liking us. You do not have to be a member of Facebook to do this. Pass it on to your friends and family too!

Keep checking in to see what is in the news in the region and/or nationally.

Let us know what the issues are in your area.

Here is the link:

<https://www.facebook.com/cprenortheastregion>

## Durham Plan: Judicial Review

Following newspaper reports campaign groups were not surprised when Durham County Council, at an update meeting it held on 19th May 2015, announced it was applying for a Judicial Review after publication of the Inspector's Interim Report. What was not expected was that three of the campaign groups would be cited in the application as "interested parties". It was only when CPRE was served with a bundle of papers three and a quarter inches thick it found they, the City of Durham Trust and the Friends of Durham Green Belt were cited.

The various campaign groups met on 1st June and needless to say discussion centered on what being an "interested party" meant and its liabilities, especially financial, plus what the process was.

A Judicial Review is a two stage process. The first stage is when a judge views the bundle of papers and decides whether the

*Statement of case* presented deals with points relevant in the High Court. This is because a Judicial Review deals with the process, not the content, of the Examination in Public, Interim Report, etc. If it is considered there are grounds to proceed the applicant is given "leave" to go to the High Court, if not the application fails and should that happen Durham County Council will have to consider its options. It is understood this first stage brings no major financial liabilities, unless it is decided to instruct and pay for a barrister, only the costs in time and effort if it is decided to put a document into the court. The three campaign groups listed as "interested parties" are compiling documents with the first stage in mind, but will be continually reviewing their situation as more information about Judicial Reviews is found out.

*Gillan Gibson*

*Secretary, CPRE Durham*



We are grateful to NFU Mutual for generously supporting this newsletter

# The Newcastle/Gateshead One Core Strategy Victory, Defeat, or What?

Newcastle and Gateshead Councils published the first draft of their One Core Strategy in September 2011. It fell largely to me to draft our initial response, helped greatly by Dr Nic Best. It quickly became apparent that the two councils were developing a massive housing programme involving building over 30,000 new houses, including many houses on Green Belt sites at the edges of the two urban areas. We also doubted the need for new office spaces in view of the number of vacant offices in the City. There was much otherwise to welcome, including the protection of open spaces and the development of an already good public transport system to reduce car use.

From the beginning, CPRE was concerned about the Green Belt invasions and a developing view that the estimates of housing need were too high because Newcastle and Gateshead were planning to expand their populations after years of incremental decline, while Northumberland and County Durham were planning on the basis that their housing need would be increased by continuing migration from the City and Borough. Our initial submission, submitted in November 2011, stated these and other concerns while congratulating the councils on good policies as appropriate.

During the months following the publication of the first Core Strategy draft, I discovered that there were a large number of protest groups active around both Newcastle and Gateshead, especially in Green Belt areas in the areas to the North-west of Newcastle and the rural areas West of Gateshead. It seemed to me that these groups needed to co-ordinate their activities, especially during the coming Examination in Public (EiP). We called a meeting of these various groups in August 2012 which agreed to establish a joint body which in due course entitled itself "Cities4People" and was ably led by a group of activists, notably John Urquart of Save Gosforth Wildlife, Jill Burrell and Sandy Irvine of the Newcastle Green Party.

A revised Core Strategy draft was opened for consultation in May 2012 which made significant concessions to protests about Green Belt invasion, including reducing the number of new houses proposed for the Callerton villages from 6,500 to 3,000 - still a lot and threatening to swamp the existing villagers, but less than half the initial demand. We were also concerned, along with Save Gosforth Wildlife and Cities4People, about the threat posed to the Gosforth Nature reserve, a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), by

proposed housing developments close to it. Another issue that aroused particular concern was a proposal to build a new bypass road to link the A1 North of Newcastle to the A69 trunk road to Hexham and ultimately Carlisle - a proposal initially discovered through diligent research by Jim Cousins, the former MP for Newcastle Central.

In 2014 the revised plan was examined by a Planning Inspector, Mr Marin Pike, who conducted a four week Examination in Public in the Summer of 2014. Thanks to the co-ordinating efforts of Cities4People our concerns were repeatedly expressed at the EiP. In particular, an impressive attack on the housing figures was mounted by Dr Roger Snoden, Nic Best and others. The Inspector's report found the Core Strategy sound but he deleted further Green Belt housing proposals,

together with a large part of the road proposal. The Strategy was finally adopted by both councils in February 2015.

So, victory, defeat or what? We did not get everything we wanted and there is still a substantial threat to Newcastle's and Gateshead's Green Belts. However, the demand for Green Belt sites has been significantly reduced and Newcastle City Council now intends to develop 70 per cent of its new housing on brownfield sites. Furthermore it has committed several million pounds to the restoration and rehabilitation of such sites to render them suitable for housing development. So we got half a loaf, maybe a bit more but by no means all the loaf. CPRE Durham Branch and its allies seem to have been considerably more successful in dealing with Durham's Local Plan.  
*Howard Elcock*

## Abbreviations

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty	NFU	National Farmers Union
CPRE	Campaign to Protect Rural England	NHS	National Health Service
EiP	Examination in Public	NPPF	National Planning Policy Framework
MP	Member of Parliament	PM	particulate matter
NE	North East	RTPI	Royal Town Planning Institute
NECA	North East Combined Authority	SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest

# Gosforth and its Challenges: Air Pollution

According to Public Health England, the number of deaths attributable to air pollution each year is over 500 in both Tyne and Wear and County Durham. In Gosforth, Newcastle upon Tyne, there is a particular problem, as both the High Street and South Gosforth are above the legal limit. The British Supreme Court has now ruled that by the end of this year the British government has to draw up plans to tackle this lethal problem of air pollution, mainly caused by the volume of traffic, and associated congestion.

One particular problem is the increase in the use of diesel engines, which release more nitrogen dioxide than petrol engines, and particulate matter known as PM 2.5. It has been shown that nitrogen dioxide is heavily associated with increasing respiratory problems which can be fatal, and cancer, strokes, and heart attacks, while PM 2.5 is linked to cancer, strokes, and heart attacks.

Premature deaths from air pollution on average a loss of ten years of active life, and even if victims do not die, they are an increased burden on the National Health Service (NHS).

During the Examination in Public of Durham County Council's future plans, CPRE produced a paper that addressed how savings could be made in both health costs and oil consumption by the reduction of vehicle journeys. It is possible that this paper played a part in the

Durham inspector's rejection of Durham County Council's plans to increase road building and destruction of the Green Belt near Durham City.

Unfortunately, Newcastle City Council's plans to build 6,000 new houses in green belt were approved, with the inevitable consequence of an increase in the number of journeys by private cars into the city. Already, developers want to build at Hazelrigg, which will increase vehicle traffic through Gosforth High Street.

It is now impossible to reverse Newcastle's Core Strategy, but we can press for an improvement in public transport, which will reduce vehicle journeys. One obvious target is the reinstatement of passenger trains on the Ashington-Newcastle line, connecting to the Metro at Palmersville, where a platform is already available.

In response to the air pollution problem caused by cars, Newcastle City has increased the number of cycle lanes, but in the case of Gosforth, these are along busy roads, and university studies have shown that in such circumstances, the cyclist breathes in the most pollution.

Such cyclists are probably unaware of the possible long-term problem that this may cause. For example, it has been shown that motorway toll attendants suffered a drop in sperm count, and had

mutated sperm, which suggests long-term genetic damage. It is not known yet whether such damage will persist from one generation to the next.

Air pollution is an invisible killer so this may explain the lack of urgency by local authorities. Nevertheless, tackling its causes must be a priority. During the forthcoming year, the Tyne and Wear

Passenger Transport Users' Group (<http://www.twptug.org.uk>) sub-committee on air pollution will be drawing up a road map to improve air quality, which will involve reducing pollution from diesel buses, the increased use of public transport, and measures to increase car occupancy. It is very much hoped that other bodies will get involved in this vital area.

## Opencast

The General Election created a situation where planning decisions which may be politically sensitive were put on hold until the new government is installed and operating. Consequently the decision on the Bradley Opencast mining application in the Derwent Valley was delayed but it is now understood the appeal has been upheld so effectively permission has been granted.

The other decision pending in the Derwent Valley, is that regarding the proposed housing development at Hamsterley Hall which was dealt with by written representation. We have had no news regarding the decision but presume this may also have been put in abeyance due to the election.

The only opencast mining application in County Durham is that

at Pittington known as Field House. This application was due to go to public inquiry starting 29th September 2015, lasting for 12 days. There was a pre-inquiry meeting at County Hall, Durham on 29th April 2015 which the chairman attended along with Pittington and Rainton Action Group. This is a formality conducted by the Inspector who will chair the inquiry. The purpose of the meeting was to ascertain who would be giving evidence and to discuss the programme.

The Inquiry is scheduled to last 12 days, that is from each Tuesday to Friday from approximately 10.00 am until 5.00 pm, except Fridays which close at lunchtime. There will be one evening meeting. The venue is Pittington Village Hall."

*Pitch Wilson, Chair, CPRE Durham*

# Springwell Village, Sunderland Fights to save Green Belt

Having discovered that sites in the Green Belt around Springwell Village had been identified for potential housing development residents became angry and active! The 40 years old residents association was reinvigorated when attendance at meetings rocketed to more than 200, a new chairman was elected and the committee was joined by three new members.

Eleven sites are at risk - and although designated by Sunderland Council as “not currently developable”, about 30 acres of land have been purchased by development company Hellens who are now in the pre application stage of formulating plans. Hellens has suggested that the village school, more than 100 years in the heart of the village, should be relocated and so they have also considered a new development there.



Angela Templeman, Chair of the Springwell Village Residents Association said, “it is fair to say people here are infuriated by the prospect of losing the Green Belt that so clearly gives Springwell Village its identity. And even more infuriated that Hellens has tried to implicate the school.”

Sunderland Council has given assurances that they have no plans to relocate the school but the concerns remain that the developer will attempt to claim the provision of a new school as the “very special circumstances” needed to achieve a planning approval in the Green Belt.

The Council has been very supportive of the residents, local councillors usually attend meetings and £1000 has been awarded from the “Community Chest” to help the village’s campaign.

Meanwhile the planners are developing the Local Plan for Sunderland. Informed by the Green Belt Review and the estimates of housing need, the next version of the Core Strategy expected to be consulted upon in early 2016. Consultation on Growth Options is due over the summer. So consideration of any



planning application will rely heavily on National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

Angela continued “we are trying to influence the Council to retain the Green Belt as it is now and residents are constantly sending letters and emails to that end. We are organised to quickly respond when they consult. We have embraced development here with over 80 new houses having been built recently. We love to see new people

joining our community but that same community is strongly against development on the greenbelt.”

CPRE is advising Springwell Village Residents Association on potential objections, possible issues related to the Local Plan and keeping them informed of decisions that may help their case.

But for now its “watch this space” whilst the village awaits Hellens’ next step.



# Landscapes of Northumberland

Northumberland is an immensely varied county. In the north west you can lose yourself (and find yourself again) in quiet rolling hills. To the south east, the scene becomes more urbanised the closer you get to the Tyneside conurbation.

In between are miles of lush farmland watered by sparkling rivers, towns that offer an award-winning quality of life and villages with an enviable community spirit. Meanwhile to the east the North Sea rolls in on to a stunning coastline of sandy beaches, lively harbours, castle-girt headlands and islands that have become important havens for endangered wildlife.

## Guarding the legacy

But this wonderful legacy has not come about by chance. Much of our

hill country is in a National Park, a designation that CPRE campaigned to bring about years ago. Our coastline is similarly protected as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (as are the North Pennines), while Hadrian's Wall is now a World Heritage site. We have much to be grateful for in Northumberland, but we must also accept a responsibility to preserve the character of our county for future generations of Northumbrians and for others who come here seeking our unique blend of unspoilt scenery and historic monuments.

## Facing up to the threats

The sad fact is that in England today there are many pressures within our consumer society that can all too easily pose threats to our green heritage. There is pressure to build

more housing and industrial estates, generate ever more power, exploit more underground resources, travel further and faster, light every street and building at night and dispose of the ever-growing mountains of waste we all produce. In responding to these pressures, too many developers and planners are thinking only of the quick profit or the easy solution to their problems. Rules and procedures designed to protect our countryside are being dismissed as "red tape", an inconvenience to be swept aside.

## Fighting our corner

CPRE Northumberland mounts

campaigns on a broad front against these pressures. We take up each issue that threatens the beauty or tranquillity of the countryside and look for solutions in alternative approaches. Open cast mining in unspoilt areas, the covering of hillsides in wind turbines, building on Green Belt land, polluting our roadsides by fly-tipping, our night skies by excessive lighting - on these and many other issues we will go on taking a stand, and hope to see you alongside us on the barricades!

*Colin Adsley*

*CPRE Northumberland*



**CPRE  
Northumberland**

**AGM**

**Saturday  
25th July 2015**  
Goldon Lion  
Corbridge  
12.30 pm

**Meal, Goldon Lion, 1.15 pm**

**Visit to Pele Tower and Low Hall  
Corbridge, 3.00 pm**

Further information and booking: email  
[ian.cpre@hotmail.co.uk](mailto:ian.cpre@hotmail.co.uk)

**CPRE North East**

**AGM  
&  
Quarterly Meeting**

**Tuesday  
7th July 2015**

**Holy Jesus Hospital  
Newcastle**  
12.30 for 1.00 pm

**Followed by the CPRE NE  
Quarterly Meeting**

For further information email  
[cpre.northeast@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:cpre.northeast@yahoo.co.uk)

Since its inception Planning Aid England has supported local communities and individuals throughout the country, helping them get to grips with the planning system and giving them the confidence to engage in the planning process and influence decisions that affect their local area. We do this by providing free, independent and professional planning advice. This support is delivered in three ways:

**Planning Aid Direct** - This online resource, which can be found at <http://planningaid.custhelp.com/>, provides answers to those questions people most often ask about planning. It deals with a range of topics including enforcement, how to comment on a planning application, and an explanation of how decisions are made on planning applications. With more 1,600 hits a month, Planning Aid Direct is a very popular resource, giving people clear and concise answers to the most common planning queries.

**Advice line** - We have a team of planning advisors who can be contacted on 0330 123 9244 or emailed at [advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk](mailto:advice@planningaid.rtpi.org.uk). Our advisors can provide a limited amount of free, general planning advice (as a guide, "limited" means up to 15 minutes of advice). In recent months we have experienced

an increase in demand for this service, with the team responding to at least 60 queries a week. The advice line attracts all sorts of planning-related queries, something which John Harrison, one of our Planning Advisors, particularly enjoys, stating that *"We get a wide variety of questions to answer and with some you have to think quickly. It is very interesting work and certainly keeps the advisors on their toes"*.

**Further support** - In some circumstances it may be that additional support is required beyond what can be offered through Planning Aid Direct or our advice line service. In such cases, we may be able to offer the community group or individual further support. This is subject to them meeting our eligibility criteria, which is designed to ensure our support is directed towards those faced with the most acute planning issues and those who are the least well-equipped to deal with such issues.

**We do not offer support to those who can afford professional fees or would stand to gain financially from our assistance (say, someone who is progressing a housing development for profit), but could help someone who is on a limited income and requires planning assistance to address a personal matter, such as getting**

## Organisation spotlight

planning permission to alter their home to better accommodate a disabled family member. The full eligibility criteria can be viewed at [http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1072124/pae\\_eligibility\\_criteria\\_-\\_august\\_2014.pdf](http://www.rtpi.org.uk/media/1072124/pae_eligibility_criteria_-_august_2014.pdf).

**Our volunteers and outreach work**  
Our further support function is delivered through a network of more than 1,130 Planning Aid England volunteers, which include a large proportion of Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) chartered town planners. Individuals and communities alike have benefitted from the support and assistance of these volunteers.

As with the advice line, our further support offer has seen us get involved with a huge variety of cases both in terms of the planning issues involved, the types of groups and individuals supported, and the geographical location. Some of our most recent cases include:

- empowering a community group in

Newcastle to resist a planning appeal for a fast-food outlet;

- providing a not-for-profit organisation in Staffordshire who specialise in ethical farming and horticulture education with advice on the planning considerations relevant to a proposed new teaching facility they wish to build;
- assisting a disabled couple in Devon who have created a vehicular access to their property apply for retrospective planning permission;
- helping a rabbit sanctuary outside Birmingham seek retrospective planning permission for hutches they had constructed;
- advising a lady in Cumbria on the planning implications of erecting a canopy structure in her garden for use by her disabled son, and whether this could be designed in a matter which would allow it to be progressed under permitted development; and
- helping residents of a gypsy and



## Planning Aid England (cont.)

traveller site in London submit comments on an application for a proposed industrial building on a neighbouring site.

For each of our further support cases we seek to appoint a volunteer that lives within travelling distance of the case and whose planning experience, skills and knowledge match the needs of the case.

In recent months we are seeing an increased demand for our further support offer, with more and more eligible cases coming our way - since the start of 2015 we have provided further support on 15 cases from across the country.

### Planning Aid England and Neighbourhood Planning

Planning Aid England has over 40 years of experience in working with communities to help them define their areas and have a meaningful say in the planning system.

Over the past few years Planning Aid England have used this expertise to help over 270 groups prepare Neighbourhood Plans for their local area. These communities are based all over England and are very varied, ranging from small rural parishes to inner-city urban forums.

### Planning Aid England have been at the fore of neighbourhood planning across England

This support has been delivered under the Supporting Communities in Neighbourhood Planning programme which will come to a close at the end of September 2015. With our

## Organisation spotlight

volunteers we have helped groups progress their Neighbourhood Plan, explaining the process and what can be achieved. This assistance is appreciated and as one group commented: *"It was invaluable to have someone with community experience to be able to guide on consultation exercise(s).... The help we have received...from Planning Aid England volunteers could make all the difference to a successful outcome of our Plan"*.

In addition to this direct support, Planning Aid England has produced a suite of resources to assist those who are developing a Neighbourhood Plan. The resources are designed for use by community groups and provide practical tips and advice on various stages of the Neighbourhood Plan process from designating the neighbourhood area to submitting the plan for examination. These resources can be found at <http://www.ourneighbourhoodplanning.org.uk/resources/documents>.

### The future of Planning Aid England

With the Supporting Communities in Neighbourhood Planning programme soon coming to a close, Planning Aid England are actively exploring new opportunities and ways in which they can help communities across England positively engage in the planning system.

## Green Belt under siege: the NPPF three years on

Green Belt is one of our most valued planning tools, and yet it is under a level of threat unprecedented in recent times. Over 200,000 houses are proposed to be built on Green Belt land. Recent reports by think tanks and developers have called for releases to accommodate many more. Ministers have taken action to address some of the most unnecessary proposals, but further changes in policy are needed by the next Government to direct development to suitable brownfield sites and avoid unnecessary releases of Green Belt land.

CPRE local groups have analysed draft and adopted Local Plans covering areas of Green Belt in England. We have compared the results with previous CPRE analyses in August 2013 and in August 2012. Despite cross-party political support for the Green Belt, CPRE's analysis has found growing pressure across the country to use it for housing:

March 2015 - 219,535 houses proposed plus 1,205 ha industrial development.

August 2013 - 158,424 houses proposed plus 1,448 ha industrial development.

August 2012 - 81,275 houses proposed plus 1,000 ha industrial development.

The figures show that three city or county regions - London, Oxfordshire and Nottinghamshire - as well as the wider South West region, are facing an increasingly large number of houses on Green Belt land. There is particularly serious pressure in the Metropolitan Green Belt around London: houses planned in this area have nearly tripled

since August 2013. At least three local authorities - Bradford, Durham and Northumberland - have claimed that economic growth justifies an 'exceptional' change to the Green Belt, exploiting a loophole in Government policy. Planning inspectors have signed off major releases of Green Belt for development around cities such as Leeds and Newcastle/ Gateshead where there is ample brownfield land available within the urban areas.

It was concluded:

- Houses planned on Green Belt land are at the highest point since the advent of the Government's flagship planning policy;
- Recent calls for Green Belt deregulation rest on flawed propositions;
- National planning and land use policy needs strengthening.

### Recommendations

CPRE calls on all the major political parties to take action to protect and improve the Green Belt, and not just profess support while allowing it to be steadily eroded by piecemeal development. We need to build many more homes in England but in a way that sustains our Green Belts for future generations. CPRE is calling for the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to be urgently reviewed by the next Government, and strengthened.

To read the full report go to <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/green-belts/item/3894-green-belt-under-siege-the-nppf-three-years-on>

# Tranquillity

Countryside campaigners are urging Government to translate positive rhetoric into decisive action on rural tranquillity. CPRE argues national data and mapping are needed to protect most tranquil parts of England.

New research from the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), published 27th May 2015, shows that better data collection and a new indicator of tranquillity are needed to increase protection for England's most peaceful areas. In surveying a range of authorities, from National Parks to borough councils, CPRE's *Give peace a chance* report shows that 90 per cent of authorities would like better guidance and new data to develop tranquillity policies. More than 90 per cent of respondents support the case for new national tranquillity maps, which CPRE believes could greatly help local authorities when new infrastructure projects are planned.

Numerous studies show that immersion in nature is good for health and wellbeing. Tranquillity is, therefore, a vital resource for people to relieve stress and recharge their batteries. Yet, in 2007, CPRE's 'intrusion' mapping showed that such areas are getting rarer: the tranquillity of England is being increasingly fragmented by urban development and new infrastructure.

CPRE's report finds that some planning authorities have successfully developed policies to protect tranquillity since 2012, when the

Government's flagship planning reform, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), encouraged them to do so. Yet the report indicates that few authorities outside of those set up to manage protected areas like National Parks have implemented policies protecting tranquillity - and 75 per cent of authorities without a current policy do not plan to introduce one.

Following recent speeches from senior Conservatives advocating the importance of sensitive infrastructure design, and related manifesto commitments, CPRE is calling for Government to invest in planning guidance, an agreed definition of tranquillity, and a new "indicator" of tranquillity - including maps and supporting data.

Alongside investment from Government, CPRE would like to see infrastructure providers and regulators set up design panels, as demonstrated by HS2 and Highways England. The panels would develop good design principles aimed at mitigating the impacts of new infrastructure on rural tranquillity through methods such as putting power lines underground, tunnelling and tree planting.

To help people find their nearest tranquil spaces, and to see the most disrupted areas, CPRE is also now releasing its 2007 tranquillity maps in an interactive format. These maps are the best resource for councils to identify tranquillity in their area - yet date back nearly a decade. This highlights



the urgent need for a new Government-backed indicator with data to support it.

Graeme Willis, rural campaigner at the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE), comments: "It's encouraging that Government has looked afresh at how good design can reduce the impact of new infrastructure, and pledged to provide new maps of open-access green space. But our research shows that councils are unlikely to drive forward the policies we need to protect some of our most tranquil

areas without better open data and guidance. The Coalition Government introduced a landmark national policy to protect areas of tranquillity. We're therefore calling on the new Government to build on their manifesto commitments and invest a modest amount to enable councils to improve quality of life in their communities." <http://www.cpre.org.uk/media-centre/latest-news-releases/item/3962-countryside-campaigners-urge-government-to-translate-positive-rhetoric-into-decisive-action-on-rural-tranquillity>

## Cotswold outdoor

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Linda Allen, Director of Fundraising and Supporter Services at CPRE National Office, together with her team, have been working hard with Cotswold Outdoor to launch and promote a scheme offering a discount to CPRE members. The benefit entitles members to a 10% discount in stores and online.

The scheme is on trial until November and it is hoped that it'll

have proven so popular that CPRE National Office can organise an extension beyond that date. But it's up to everyone to use it as much as possible - so get down to your local store today!

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