



The government has issued the first of its new planning guidance for renewables, fracking and waste management. Numbers in square brackets below refer to paragraphs in the guidance.

Planning Guidance: Renewables

Guidance. The document, “published in advance of other planning practice guidance” because of the urgent need, replaces PPS22 on renewable energy [1]. Eric Pickles said: “The views of local people must be listened to when making planning decisions. Meeting Britain’s energy needs should not be used to justify the wrong development in the wrong location” [2]. Before the guidance was issued, energy minister Greg Barker accused town halls of being in fear of costly legal battles and prepared to “roll over rather than looking at the balance of community interest and visual impact” [3]. The guidelines are not subject to consultation.

Planning for renewables. Although the NPPF (paragraph 97) says all communities have a responsibility for green energy, the new guidance makes clear that “this does not mean that the need for renewable energy automatically overrides environmental protections and the planning concerns of local communities” [5]. The onus is on planning authorities to plan positively and identify suitable areas for renewable energy, including windfarms and large scale solar farms. Where councils have done this they can reject “speculative applications outside those areas... when they judge the impact to be unacceptable” [10]. “Landscape character areas could form the basis for considering which technologies at which scale may be appropriate in different types of location” [9]. The guidance strongly encourages community and decentralised energy initiatives [17-21].

Siting. Local topography is important in assessing whether wind turbines and large scale solar farms will have a damaging effect on landscape. The impact can be as great in predominately flat landscapes as in hilly or mountainous areas. Protecting local amenity is an important consideration. Cumulative impacts on landscape and local amenity require particular attention [15].

Buffer zones are discouraged: “Other than... for safety, distance of itself does not necessarily determine whether the impact of a proposal is unacceptable” [16].

Designated landscapes. The guidance does not rule out turbines in National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, but says that proposals “will need careful consideration”, including in areas nearby [15].

Heritage. Great care should be taken to ensure heritage assets “are conserved in a manner appropriate to their significance”, including the impact on their setting – a phrasing intended to avoid a repeat of the [Lyveden New Bield decision](#). “Depending on their scale, design and prominence, a large scale solar farm within the setting of a heritage asset may cause substantial harm” [15, 27].

Decommissioning. Planning authorities should consider planning conditions to ensure that unused installations are removed. In the case of redundant turbines, land should be restored to an appropriate use [45] and for solar farms, its previous use [27].

Solar farms. Admitting that “large-scale solar farms can have a negative impact on the rural environment, particularly in very undulating landscapes”, the guidance directs planners towards brownfield sites. Any greenfield installations should allow for continued agricultural use or boost biodiversity improvements around arrays. Planners should also take into account the energy generating potential, glint and glare, and the impact of security measures such as lights and fencing. There is “potential to mitigate landscape and visual impacts through, for example, screening with native hedges.” For “ground-mounted solar panels... with effective screening and appropriate land topography the... visual influence could be zero” [26-28].

Reaction. The TCPA argued the rules: “underplay both the global environmental imperative of low carbon technology and the local economic and social benefits of community-led renewable energy projects” [10]. Council leaders in Milton Keynes and Lincolnshire said the ruling against separation distances was regrettable and “hugely disappointing” [11].

Planning Guidance: Onshore Oil and Gas

Guidance. The government published its planning guidance for fracking [12]. The guidance, in a question and answer format, is clear but largely descriptive. Do we really need to be told what shale gas is and that: “a valid application for planning permission requires a completed application form”? The guidelines are not subject to consultation.

Fracking risks. In considering whether to grant planning permission, mineral planning authorities (county councils or unitary) must not investigate issues such as seismic activity, flaring and venting, potential impact on ground water, or alternative energy supplies. These assessments should be left to the regulatory bodies, including the Environment Agency, Health & Safety Executive and DECC [31-32].

Planning considerations. The guidance instructs planning authorities to give great weight to the benefits of minerals extraction, including to the economy [66]. Impacts on the local community and local wildlife should be dealt with “as far as is practicable” [67]. A financial guarantee for restoration “will normally only be justified in exceptional cases” [79-80]. Planners should take account of “visual intrusion into the local setting and the wider landscape caused by any the placement of any building or structure within the application site area” and of landscape character, archaeological, heritage and wildlife designations [30]. Discovery of oil or gas during exploration is only one material consideration and should not automatically override other material considerations in assessing planning permission for extraction [59].

Buffer zones. A blanket separation distance between operations and housing is ruled out. Site specific buffers might be fitting, but planners should note that extraction is a temporary process, and take account of mitigation and the need not to sterilise mineral resources [69-70].

Environmental impact. Applications for exploration must be judged on their own merits, not “hypothetical future activities for which consent has not yet been sought” [58]. Environmental impact assessments are unlikely to be required for exploratory drilling but are likely to be obligatory for sites producing more than 500 tonnes of oil or 500,000 cubic metres of gas daily [52-55].

Mitigation. Planners should mitigate against any adverse environmental impact, but only in relation to ground and surface water, visual intrusion and landscaping and noise control and monitoring [68, Annex D]. The guidance does not mention biodiversity mitigation or offsetting.

Cumulative impacts. Planners should have regard to cumulative effects but each application must be assessed on its own merits. It is “unlikely that cumulative impact will be an issue at the exploration phase... regardless of how close individual well pads are to each other” [56-57].

Reaction. Green MP Caroline Lucas told MPs: “It is pretty appalling that the new planning guidelines are set to come into force without public consultation, denying communities that stand to be affected by fracking any say in the new process” . John Hobson of Defend Lytham in Lancashire said: “this is a recipe for disaster.” Friends of the Earth complained: “Clean energy schemes such as wind turbines could be rejected on visual grounds, while fracking operations that threaten local communities and pollute our atmosphere could be given a virtual green light”  . *Planning* quoted a planning expert who observed the document “could be seized upon by anti-frackers as unduly biased towards granting permission.” Another said the guidance is akin to a presumption in favour of shale gas .

Planning Guidance: Waste Management

Guidance. The communities department published a draft of its waste planning guidance. Consultation closes 23 September . The very brief guidance replaces PPS10 – the NPPF omitted waste policies – and is published alongside the draft Waste Management Plan for England (below, page 8). Eric Pickles said the new rules will prevent many waste facilities being built in the green belt: “I hope this will prevent speculative applications that threaten to harm our countryside, and give more power and discretion for local councils and local people... I believe the green belt plays a vital role in stopping urban sprawl and providing a green lung around our towns and cities” .

Need and location. Planners must work with neighbouring councils and identify need for additional waste management capacity beyond the local area, including nationally. “Planning policies should drive waste management up the waste hierarchy” [3]. The draft encourages local authorities to site incinerators alongside existing waste sewage treatment works and other places that would use the heat they generate as an energy source. Priority should be given to the re-use of previously-developed land, and redundant agricultural and forestry buildings and their curtilages [4].

Green belt. The draft removes the former direction that councils should give significant weight towards locational requirements and wider environmental and economic benefits when determining waste planning applications in the green belt. “These planning considerations should not be given more significant weight when compared to others when planning applications are decided for waste facilities in the green belt.” Applications for waste facilities located in the green belt will still need to be considered on their individual planning merits [5].

Location criteria. Planners must take account of protection of water resources; land instability; visual intrusion including into designated landscapes such as National Parks and AONBs; nationally and internationally designated wildlife sites; heritage assets and their settings; and traffic, noise, odours, etc. [Annex B].

Reaction. “Waste disposal: if not brownfield sites and the green belt, then where?” .

Countryside Charter

The charter. CPRE published its *Save Our Countryside Charter* . The charter calls on developers to build on brownfield sites before greenfield areas, and to give local people a stronger voice in the planning system. It says the country urgently needs more affordable homes for our rising population, but they must be sensitively located, with excellent environmental standards. All parliamentary candidates for the 2015 national election will be asked to sign the charter . Sir Andrew Motion told the Telegraph: “The countryside is not something that we can afford to take or leave. It is irreplaceable. It is a necessity. It defines us. It heals us. It inspires us. It belongs to us.” Shaun Spiers added: “There is a real crisis and the Prime Minister is in denial about what is happening on the ground and about the rising anger across rural England and in some towns and cities where people are seeing poor quality and inappropriate developments as a result of imposition from central government” . Writing in the *Yorkshire Post*, Spiers said: “Why are CPRE activists and other conservationists gloomier now than I have ever known them? The answer, I am afraid, is because the odds really are stacked against them” .

Comment. David Orr from CPRE Somerset lamented that “we had all given up a day and travelled up to London from far and wide, it was discourteous and disrespectful that no minister or any civil servant from the communities department had made the five-minute walk to the event from Westminster” . Civic Voice welcomed the charter saying, “The day may come when we have [build housing] into existing green belt and AONBs but we’re a long way from that at the moment” . Nick Herbert MP wrote in the *Guardian*: “We are told not to worry, that only a few percentage points of countryside will be lost. The reality is that, outside of protected landscapes like national parks, the effective ruination of countryside and tranquillity is far greater” .

Planning and the Environment

Economic planning. Natural England, the Environment Agency, the Forestry Commission and some of the local enterprise partnerships have produced a Local Environment and Economic Development toolkit. It aims to encourage the LEPs to develop strategic economic plans in ways that will draw growth benefits from the environment and avoid future costs to growth from a damaged environment .

Planning principles. *Planning Naturally – Spatial planning with nature in mind* is a new report by the RSPB, the Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) and the Chartered Institute of Ecology and Environmental Management. Arguing that nature is integral to every part of the planning process, the report outlines 12 principles of good spatial planning. It says that: “Plans should contribute to sustainable development by enhancing the natural environment and ensuring that social and economic development takes place within environmental limits.” The report argues that alternative development options should be considered, particularly those that are less damaging to the environment. The reasons for rejecting any alternative options should be made public. Among the case studies are enforcement action at Thameside Terminal, Medway and ecological assessments by Aylesbury Vale District Council  .

Trees. The Woodland Trust published a report *Healthy trees, healthy places*. It extolls the benefits of trees in developed communities: “Towns and cities of the future will be characterised by a vibrant and thriving natural environment with well-maintained tree cover helping to create adapted and resilient places in which we live and work” .

Balcombe Fracking Blockade

Permissions. The Environment Agency gave Cuadrilla permission to proceed with drilling an oil well at Balcombe in Sussex just three working days after its public consultation ended [f](#) [g](#). The company has applied to extend planning permission for its exploration phase [LG](#).

Blockade. Hundreds of protestors gathered at in an attempt to prevent Cuadrilla beginning work [G](#) [M](#) [BBC](#) [BBC](#) [BBC](#) [MST](#) [HP](#). They managed to turn back Cuadrilla lorries and block delivery of equipment for a while. Arrests followed, with the Telegraph claiming that these were of “professional activists” [T](#) [M](#) [MST](#) [TA](#). Who’s who at Balcombe [g](#) [T](#) [T](#). NoFIBS (No Fracking in Balcombe Society) said it was “deeply disappointed in the police role in facilitating the drilling for Cuadrilla when they have an obligation to facilitate protest.” It thanked those “who have come from outside the village to help defend our countryside... and our right to a peaceful existence” [f](#). As the protest continued, for the most part in a party atmosphere, Cuadrilla’s chief executive said his firm has “no intention of ruining the countryside and won’t ruin the countryside” [HP](#). Drilling has now commenced and the protests continue [T](#) [M](#).



The Balcombe blockade (courtesy frack-off).

Other comment. Reviewing growing protest over fracking, high speed rail and roads, Geoffrey Lean said: “the rural people of Britain are concluding, like hobbit Robin Smallburrow in The Lord of the Rings, “If we all got angry together, something might be done”” [T](#). Lib Dem president Tim Farron said: “I am afraid the Government has seen flashing pound signs, and has not considered the long-term threats fracking poses to the countryside” [T](#) [M](#). Andrew Ogden of CPRE Protect Kent joined protest groups around the country in telling the Telegraph that villagers and environmentalists will rise in protest against fracking [T](#).

South East: Energy

Hampshire. Energy firm TCI has applied to Basingstoke and Deane council for permission to put six 130-metre tall turbines at Woodmancott, near Micheldever in the Hampshire Downs. Peter Bedford, chairman of CPRE Hampshire said: “With this and another major wind farm application already pending at neighbouring Bullington Cross, we are witnessing the potential proliferation of industrial scale development in beautiful, unspoilt Hampshire countryside” [HC](#) [BBC](#) [M](#).

Oxfordshire. CPRE Oxon said a proposed 30 acre solar farm at Charlbury would be an unacceptable blight on the Cotswolds AONB and a waste of valuable agricultural land. Gareth Hammond said: “However much it is dressed up with rural imagery, it is essentially an industrial unit, which would represent a totally alien intrusion on a green field site” [CPRE](#).

Surrey. A judge has overturned a planning inspector’s decision to reject planning permission for exploratory drilling at Bury Hill Wood, Holmwood within the Surrey Hills AONB. The judge said the proposal was mineral extraction and therefore appropriate development within the green belt [P](#) [BBC](#) [GS](#).

Navitus Bay has published a detailed study of the potential impact of the offshore windfarm on tourism. The report shows that 40% of tourism businesses think it will have an adverse impact – 77% of businesses in Purbeck. Some 89% of visitors surveyed believe the windfarm would not enhance the appeal of the area, and 14% think it would put them off visiting in future [T](#) [T](#).

South East: Planning

Berkshire. Campaigners battling to save Elms Field in Wokingham town centre from development have launched a Facebook protest attracting more than 1,300 objectors [Gr](#) [Gr](#) [f](#). Maidenhead & Cox Green are getting their neighbourhood plan underway [C](#).

Buckinghamshire. Developers are bidding to build 7,700 homes around Aylesbury in defiance of the emerging Vale of Aylesbury Plan. Three of the schemes are currently at a conjoined planning inquiry, where developers are challenging Aylesbury Vale council’s assertion it has a five year land supply for housing. See the *CPRE Buckinghamshire eBulletin* for details [RE](#).

Hampshire. The planning inspector examining Hart’s core strategy has said that the council has neither fulfilled the duty to cooperate nor objectively assessed housing need. The council responded that it had cooperated and that housing numbers are constrained by the European protected Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area [GH](#) [LG](#). Rushmoor council has approved the Aldershot Urban Extension, to be known as Wellesley, which will build nearly 4,000 homes on former military land [LG](#) [M](#) [L](#) [P](#). A planning inspector has approved 131 greenfield homes at Mengham on Hayling Island against the local plan [C](#) [C](#) [L](#).

Kent. Eric Pickles has approved plans for Hermitage Quarry, near East Malling, to be extended into 79 acres of nearby Oaken Wood. Sue Holden, chief executive of the Woodland Trust said that the decision suggests that “no green space is completely safe” under the NPPF. Natural England opposed the application due to the “exceptional scale of ancient woodland loss.” Pickles however gave greatest weight to employment and economic benefits [i](#) [T](#) [g](#) [BBC](#) [M](#) [P](#) [KO](#) [KN](#). Decision: [C](#). Residents are accusing Maidstone council of ignoring concerns that planned development would damage the Bluebell Wood ancient woodland [KN](#). A waterfront free from housing, with a maritime enterprise zone, museum, community boatyard, and cultural centre are ideas being put forward for the Creek Neighbourhood Plan [TK](#). Shepway’s core strategy has been found sound and will be adopted by the council in the autumn [LG](#). Eric Pickles rejected a call from CPRE Protect Kent to call in a decision to approve a major housing, hotel and conference centre scheme in the Kent Downs AONB [KN](#). Maidstone’s town centre managers are asking Eric Pickles to call in an application for an out of town Next store, while councillors haggle on how much the chain must pay in S106 costs to mitigate its impact on the town centre [KO](#) [KO](#).

Oxfordshire. A planning inspector gave the go ahead for 160 homes in south Abingdon, outside the development boundary. The inspector said a lack of five year housing land supply was a major factor in his decision [OM](#) [C](#). Thame neighbourhood plan received an Award for Excellence from the Royal Town Planning Institute and a commendation in the Action for Market Towns awards. [LG](#) [L](#).

South Downs National Park. The park authority is consulting on its Partnership Management Plan. Closes 16 September [NP](#) [FG](#). It has obtained lottery funding for an **airborne lidar survey** of archaeological remains between the river Arun and the A3 [NP](#) [L](#). Water voles are being released into the River Meon [BBC](#).

Surrey Heath. Developers have withdrawn plans for housing on the former Chobham Lane defence site adjacent to Chobham Common. They will submit new plans which will include more green space between the common and housing. CPRE Surrey is objecting: "The land will have a formal 'laid out' feel to it, wholly unlike the wild common. Whatever is proposed, CPRE maintains the view that no land should be removed from the green belt." [GS](#) [C](#). The Ottershaw Society is among those protesting over plans to build a 6,000 square metre hanger on green belt land at Fair Oaks Airport near Chobham [GS](#). Surrey Heath council is consulting on designating Chobham as a Neighbourhood Plan Area [LG](#). Surrey Heath council approved plans for a 1,200-home development on the 114-hectare Deepcut Barracks [P](#) [LG](#). Deepcut Neighbourhood Forum has withdrawn its application to help shape plans for the military village in the face of Surrey Heath council's "wilful obstinance" [GS](#).

Surrey. Waverley councillors agreed to ask a planning inspector to suspend examination of its core strategy to allow it to carry out additional work on housing. The inspector wants the plan scrapped [GS](#) [GS](#) [LG](#). Reigate and Banstead council is consulting on its revised core strategy. It says that "green belt boundaries will only be altered in exceptional circumstances" but "limited areas of land may be removed from the green belt" for sustainable urban extensions. Closes 19 August [LG](#). Eric Pickles upheld a planning inspector's decision to allow a gypsy and traveller site in the green belt near Chertsey to expand from 20 pitches to 28 [GS](#). Contentious proposals for four gypsy and traveller pitches in the green belt at Byfleet have been recommended for refusal by Woking council officers [GS](#). Dunsfold Park lost a high court case in which it sought to increase the number of flights above the current annual cap of 5,000. The cap expires in 2018 [GS](#) [C](#). Villagers in Brockham are distributing posters as they step up their campaign against developments in the green belt [L](#) [f](#) [C](#).

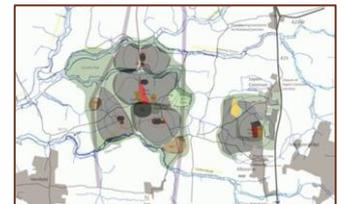
Save Brockham's green belt from the developers



Sussex. Villagers are opposing plans for 500 houses which would effectively merge Copthorne with Crawley. A neighbourhood plan is being prepared [TIS](#) [C](#). Twenty-two parish and neighbourhood councils in the Horsham council area have said they will produce a neighbourhood plan [WST](#). Horsham District Council is to consult on its draft housing plan, which aims for 11,500 new homes for the district over the next 20 years. Roger Smith of CPRE Sussex said the plan was threadbare and asked why there was no explanation of how the proposed strategic sites had been chosen [WST](#) [LG](#). A planning inspector granted an appeal for 100 greenfield houses at Westhampnett. The inspector said there is a lack of five year land supply and disagreed with Chichester council that the gap between the villages of Maudlin and Westhampnett is significant [C](#) [L](#) [C](#). Developers have launched plans for more than 300 homes on 21 hectares of farmland and woods, including ancient woodland, at Penland Farm near Haywards Heath [MST](#) [MST](#) [MST](#) [C](#) [C](#).



Penland Farm proposals



Options for Mayfield, Sussex

Mid Sussex. Mayfield Market Towns is asking for views on three options for 10,000 homes in Mid Sussex: one compact settlement in-between Henfield and Sayers Common; expansion of Sayers Common and in addition to the compact settlement; and a 'market centre' together with a cluster of villages [C](#). Controversy arose over Lord Taylor's role in the **Mayfield new town project** as he is leading reform of planning guidance [WST](#) [C](#) [TA](#) [C](#). Mid Sussex council has submitted its draft local plan to the planning inspectorate. It contains policies to protect the countryside and prevent settlements coalescing. It proposes 10,600 homes between 2011 and 2031, well under the 17,100 allocated in the South East Plan. Of the 10,600, 4,200 are already allocated, 3,800 will be at Burgess Hill, and sites need to be found for the remaining 2,000 through neighbourhood plans. Mayfield is not mentioned [LG](#). Residents of Hassocks staged a protest over rising air pollution which they say is caused by unending pressure for more housing [MST](#). Mid Sussex council threw out plans for 157 homes at Hurstpierpoint. Ancient woodland has already been destroyed on the site. Councillors approved another scheme for 80 homes outside the village boundary. The council lacks a five year land supply [MST](#).

South East: Transport

Combe Haven. Hundreds of protesters walked the proposed route of the contentious £100m Bexhill-to-Hastings Link Road through Combe Haven valley in East Sussex [i](#). The cost of the road has risen by more than £13 million [BBC](#). English Heritage is examining a historian's claim that the Battle of Hastings took place in the valley [L](#) [L](#).



Thames Crossing Options

Thames Crossing. The government set out on three options for a lower Thames Crossing: a) at the site of the existing A282 Dartford-Thurrock crossing; b) connecting the A2 with the A1089; and c) connecting the M2 with the A13 and the M25 between junctions 29 and 30 [P](#) [C](#). Dartford council leader Jeremy Kite called on David Cameron to rule out Option B which would cut through the proposed Paramount theme park. Gravesham council urged the government to wait and see what happens with free flow tolls [KO](#). Dartford MP Gareth Johnson said it would be premature to consider a second crossing before the impact of removing toll booths on the Dartford Crossing was assessed [L](#). David Brazier, Kent's cabinet member for highways disagreed: "To delay proceeding until we see what happens with the tolls is a pointless waste of time" [KO](#). Boris Johnson angered Essex councillors by favouring Option C. Residents are raising a petition to oppose that route [L](#) [TLL](#) [L](#). Option C would rip through Green Flag winning Shorne Wood in Kent [KO](#).

National: Planning

Localism in gestation. Nick Herbert, MP for Arundel and South Downs, secured a Westminster Hall debate in which he denounced the implementation of the NPPF. He told MPs we are not moving to "the brownfield-first site policy that we should have but to a greenfield-first policy." Warning that the Tories have reneged on their manifesto pledge to give local people a say over new building, he declared: "Localism is dead." Herbert complained that inspectors approve speculative developments that slip "under the wire before the democratically approved joint core strategy can be implemented." Such decisions drain away "faith in the neighbourhood planning process, which could be so powerful and will deliver the local and affordable housing that we need." Cheltenham MP Martin Horwood argued: "Green space is good for local food production, physical and mental health, and for people's access to recreation, including free access to recreation for poor communities, which reduces health inequalities. Those are needs as well." Responding for the government, Nick Boles said: "Localism is not dead. It is in gestation." He argued that localism is about delivering society's needs, not determining those needs: "Localism means control over how the fundamental needs of the people who elect the authorities and reside in their communities are met; it is not about deciding whether the needs will be met." He promised new guidance on prematurity – a developer trying to get approval before a local plan is adopted – before the end of July [T](#) [A](#) [C](#).

National Planning Policy Framework. CPRE joined Friends of the Earth, architects and town planners to call on the government to issue guidance on interpreting the viability test in the NPPF (paragraph 173). The test is intended to ensure that developments proposed in local plans and planning applications are both economically feasible and sustainable. CPRE and its allies argue that town hall planners are concentrating on the short term interests of developers and landowners at the expense of long term economic, social and environmental interests of communities, including building sufficient affordable housing [24](#) [topol](#).

Special measures. Planning statistics suggest that 27 planning authorities will be caught in the government's special measures regime [C](#). When councils are under special measures, developers will be able to take major applications directly to the planning inspectorate (special measures criteria [C](#)). Ten district councils will be designated for deciding fewer than 30% of major applications within 13 weeks, unless they have improved from April to July 2013. They are: Barnet, Blaby, Cherwell, Daventry, Fylde, Horsham, Lambeth, Tandridge and North East Derbyshire. Four districts are automatically designated because they have seven quarters of missing data: Adur, Hammersmith and Fulham, Lewisham, and Worthing. Thirteen top tier authorities face special measures, largely over mineral applications: Barnsley, Bath and North East Somerset, Bury, Cheshire East, Doncaster, East Riding of Yorkshire, Hartlepool, Hertfordshire, Kirklees, Northumberland, Peak District National Park, Telford and Wrekin, and Wigan. Mike Jones for the LGA said: "Councils... have been focusing on working with developers to iron out problems, improve development and make the right decision rather than turning down an application to meet a deadline" [P](#).

Judicial review. The appeal court has ruled that judicial review litigants can introduce new grounds for the challenge beyond the six weeks limit for filing a claim. This will aid claimants unable to get a full case together immediately after a planning decision [C](#). The high court rejected a claim by Stratford on Avon council that Eric Pickles' approval of 800 houses at Shotton breached the Aarhus convention on access to environmental justice. Saying the inspector's report is to be "commended as model", the judge dismissed the council's arguments that the decision was premature and ignored its emerging local plan [O](#) [C](#) [T](#).

Enforcement. A man who developed a 'business park' in Doncaster without planning permission has been threatened with gaol unless he clears it within a month [LG](#) [L](#).

Presumption petition. More than 2,000 people have signed a petition calling on the government to amend the NPPF by removing the over-riding presumption in favour of alleged sustainable development, by giving local plans over-riding priority and, if needed, allowing local authorities a further period of grace to revise their local plans [C](#).

Housing land supply. The list of developments approved by Eric Pickles and planning inspectors in part or entirely because a council cannot demonstrate a five year land supply grows daily. In Northamptonshire, Pickles approved 220 homes at Silverstone, describing impacts on a special landscape area as insignificant [P](#); Decision [C](#). In Cheshire: 270 greenfield houses in Nantwich; publication of the council's Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment was given no significant weight [L](#) [P](#); Decision [C](#). Warwickshire: 112 homes and employment space on a brownfield site at Shipston on Stour [L](#); Decision [C](#). Yorkshire: Housing rejected by Sheffield council because of poor design was approved by Pickles [O](#) [P](#); Decision: [C](#).

Local plans. North West Leicestershire is the latest council to be warned by a planning inspector that its local plan is unsound due to an “absence of provision for an adequate future supply of housing” [P](#). South Somerset has requested suspension of its core strategy after adverse comment from an inspector [D](#). The Planning Advisory Service has produced a guide to assessing housing needs under the NPPF [PAS](#).

Neighbourhood plans. The Centre for Sustainable Energy is encouraging neighbourhood planners to promote low carbon infrastructure [E](#). Winslow council in Bucks has retained planning experts to fight an application for more than 200 homes in an area not identified for housing in its emerging neighbourhood plan [BA](#). English Heritage has commissioned research into the use of heritage information in the preparation of community-led planning projects. Locus Consultants are conducting a survey of groups developing a neighbourhood plan [E](#).

Permitted development rights. The communities department said that 165 councils applied for 1,387 areas to be exempt from new rules that allow conversion of offices to homes without planning permission. It approved just 24 areas in 17 authorities. Canterbury and Worthing missed out by a single point [P](#) [E](#). Islington has issued an [Article 4 direction](#) in a bid to overturn some of the new rights. It is also seeking a judicial review of the way the government decided on exemptions [LGI](#). Occupied offices in Brighton are set to be converted to homes under the new rights [P](#).

National: Housing

Affordable housing. Hastoe Housing launched a report looking at best practice and innovation in affordable rural housing provision [E](#) [E](#). A study by Cambridge University said that one million affordable homes needed to be built by 2021 [E](#). In a review of second homes which focuses on Cornwall, Savills UK concludes “the case for further taxation and regulation of second homes is far from clear cut” [E](#).

Zero carbon. Communities minister Baroness Hanham confirmed a 6% carbon reduction target for new build homes and a 9% cut for non-domestic buildings, compared to 2010 levels from April 2014 [BG](#) [IH](#).

National: Green Belt

Green belt revisions. The Telegraph claimed large areas are to be removed from the green belt to provide space for more than 95,000 homes under councils’ local plans [E](#). An EU report opines that green belt restrictions continue to be an important constraint on the supply of housing and recommends further liberalisation of planning laws [E](#).

Eric Pickles told the RTPI: “You can plan for growth but not at any price, so we have been very clear that we must have secure safeguards to protect the green belt, that vital green lung which prevents urban sprawl” [E](#). Campaigners in Hertfordshire labelled Pickles the “Minister for Forked Tongues” after the speech because he is minded to approve the Radlett freight terminal in the green belt [L](#). Pickles has called in a scheme for 450 houses near Stapleford, which was approved by Broxtowe council in April [BBC](#) [E](#).

Green belt MPs. Around 50 MPs have joined an All Party Parliamentary Group on the green belt, chaired by Chris Skidmore, MP for Kingswood in South Gloucestershire [P](#). The group is supported by CPRE and Civic Voice. Skidmore said that there had been concerns following recent rulings by planning inspectors that councils without a five-year housing land supply should release green belt land for development. He said the group might explore a community right of appeal against granting of permission for green belt development.

National: Landscapes

Town greens. The Church Commissioners have failed in the high court to overturn an application to register a disused military camp at Bushfield Camp in Hampshire as a village green [E](#) [E](#) [E](#).

New AONB. East Riding council has asked Natural England to designate the Yorkshire Wolds as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty [L](#) [L](#).

Woodland. Defra has published the terms of reference for the new Public Forest Estate Management Organisation, the public corporation which will take over the functions of Forest England. The body will have to generate enough income to covers its costs, currently the public forest is subsidised by around £20 million a year. It will also “enable widespread and equitable access to woodlands” and “maintain and enhance the natural and historic assets [and] protect, manage and conserve the wildlife, associated habitats and ecosystems.” Martin Harper of the RSPB said that the government is putting too great an emphasis on economic objectives [E](#) [RSPB](#). Imports of sweet chestnut trees from areas of Europe affected by a fungal blight will be banned by the end of September [E](#) [E](#). An outbreak of Dutch Elm disease is threatening the national collection of Elms in Brighton which escaped the 1970s outbreak [E](#) [TA](#). Acute Oak Decline, which causes weeping patches on the stems of mature trees, is on the rise in England, particularly in the South East and Midlands [BBC](#).

Heritage. The appeal court clarified NPPF paragraph 133. When deciding on demolition of a heritage asset, a council must now ask the question: what is the public benefit to be had from the non-demolition options versus the demolition option? [SAVE](#) [bd](#).

Rights of way. Natural England published the final proposal for the route of the Coastal Path in North Norfolk for consultation. Closes 16 September [E](#). The 870 mile Wales Coast Path was the overall winner of the RTPI Awards for Planning Excellence [E](#).

Air pollution. Defra is consulting on monitoring local air pollution and suggests that local councils should concentrate less on reporting and more on meeting EU targets [E](#) [E](#). Closes 30 August [E](#). The Chartered Institution of Water and Environmental Management published a report on “Britain’s forgotten public health crisis” which leads to around 29,000 deaths a year in the UK [E](#).

Light pollution. Northumberland National Park looks set to become Europe’s largest Dark Sky Park [L](#) [itv](#) [E](#).

Noise pollution. Defra is seeking views on three draft Noise Action Plans for roads, railways and large urban areas. It is proposing that “quiet areas” in conurbations must first be “designated in the relevant Local or Neighbourhood Plan, either as a Local Green Space or as Metropolitan Open Land.” Closes 29 October [E](#).

Flooding. The commons select committee Efra said that the government is not doing enough to minimise flood risk. It has recommended that farmers take over the maintenance of water courses to minimise the risks of flooding in rural areas [E](#). The Environment Agency and NFU are drawing up a six month pilot which would allow farmers to carry out maintenance to reduce the threat of flooding [TTC](#) [YP](#).

Marine. The Marine Management Organisation is consulting on draft marine plans for the seas from Flamborough Head to Felixstowe [E](#). The government has published a consultation response on its proposals to designate just 31 marine conservation zones (MCZs), despite experts recommending that 127 sites should be protected [E](#).

National: Food and Farming

Grow your own. The communities department admitted it had made a legal error after allotment holders in Watford launched a judicial review against Eric Pickles' decision to allow housing and a car park to be built on their site. The case will be re-determined [i](#) [L](#) [L](#) [i](#). The Labour party says Britain should be more sufficient and recommends expanding "grow your own" schemes, pointing out that Britain has almost doubled the amount of food grown in gardens and allotments since 2008 [g](#) [C](#) [i](#).

Smallholding. Three smallholders in South Devon gained planning permission on appeal for temporary onsite housing citing NPPF55: "the essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work in the countryside." The ruling may have implications for smallholders elsewhere [i](#) [L](#). Decision [C](#).

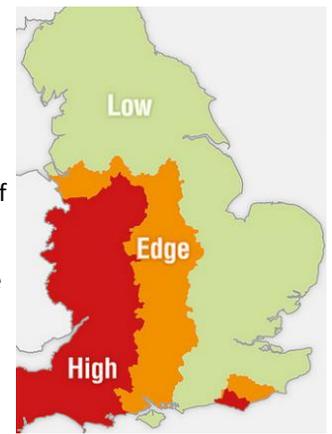
Sustainable food. A poll commissioned by the Prince's Countryside Fund reveals that a majority of British consumers would be prepared to pay more for food if they knew the extra was going to farmers rather than to supermarket shareholders. The poll also showed that the public overestimate how much farmers earn and underestimate their age [g](#) [C](#). A report for Defra on sustainable food said environmental impacts can be reduced if people adopt healthier diets based on reduced meat consumption, greater recycling of food waste, and eating fish from sustainable stocks [B](#) [C](#). A parallel report said the growing "no cook" culture damaged the environment as well as health [i](#) [C](#). A survey for the Independent suggested that 42% of people agree with growing GM crops here in the UK and 49% would buy and eat GM food [T](#) [L](#). CPRE is calling on people to eat more British berries [P](#) [L](#).

Climate threat to farming. The Committee on Climate Change said that without immediate action, future food production will be put at risk, coastal habitats that provide vital flood defences will be jeopardised, wildlife habitats squeezed, and carbon stored in our peatlands lost. There could be a significant shortfall between water demand and supply for farming by the 2020s, especially in the south and east. The CCC is calling for greater [coastal realignment](#) and for farmers to pay more for abstracted water. It wants a market price on nature to encourage greater restoration of peatlands and wildlife habitats [C](#) [C](#).

Agricultural technology. The government launched its £160 million Agri-Tech Strategy. It aims to make the UK a world leader in agricultural science and technology and deliver sustainable, healthy and affordable food for future generations through research [C](#) [F](#) [W](#). CPRE warned that the government's new Agri-Tech Strategy needs to avoid the mistakes of the past. Ian Woodhurst said: "We've found out bigger is not always better, and so we need to avoid new technology driving us into a mega-farm cul-de-sac." Pete Riley of GM Freeze said: "Modern intensive farming systems have failed to produce a balanced diet for everyone but have polluted our air and water, degraded soils and produced huge losses of biodiversity." [F](#) [R](#) [U](#) [K](#) [R](#).

Common Agricultural Policy. Owen Paterson has angered some farmers by proposing that 15% of CAP funds should be allocated for environmental improvements. He told the commons: "In parts of the UK, such as upland areas, it is tough to make a living purely from food production [and] there is a significant role for taxpayers' money to be spent on environmental schemes" [C](#) [F](#) [G](#) [C](#). The RSPB said that many farmers backed the move. Defra minister David Heath is backing the RSPB's approach [F](#) [G](#) [F](#) [W](#). Natural England is preparing a New Environmental Land Management Scheme (NELMS) to replace environmental stewardship [C](#).

Badgers. Owen Paterson launched a consultation on the government's Bovine TB strategy with the aim of making England disease free within 25 years. The strategy aims to maintain the low risk of TB in the north and east; stop and reverse the spread of bovine TB at the frontier of the disease, known as the 'edge area'; and reduce the level of infection in high risk areas, mainly in the south west. Closes 26 September [C](#) [g](#).



National: Rural Communities

Ageing. Elderly people who retire to the countryside face spending their final years in isolation as villages suffer cuts to bus services and post office closures, Age UK said. Owen Paterson promised to rural proof government policies [C](#).

Rural proofing. Defra has unveiled much delayed national guidelines to encourage government departments to rural-proof their policies. "Rural proofing helps achieve good economic, environmental and social solutions, to contribute to growth," says the guide. Decision-makers must ensure "rural areas get a fair deal from all government policy." The guidelines call for policymakers to examine alternative means of delivery for services, including through volunteers and mutualisation [C](#) [C](#). Earlier guidelines for local level rural proofing are here: [C](#).

Rural services. The commons environment, food and rural affairs committee (Efra) published a scathing report on financing and access to services in rural communities [C](#). It said that rural communities unfairly pay higher council tax bills per dwelling, receive 52% less government grant and have access to fewer public services than their urban counterparts. Efra reveals that Defra has failed to ensure that other departments have rural proofed policies.

Pubs. Residents in Burpham, Sussex have purchased and reopened their local [L](#).

National: Town Centres and Supermarkets

Regeneration. A report from English Heritage said that high streets can thrive in towns that revitalise their historic centres and buildings. Horsham in Sussex and Whitstable in Kent are identified as "positive examples of attracting investment, retaining character and stimulating the retail market" [C](#) [C](#) [P](#) [L](#). If you want to regenerate a town centre, set up a local market says the [National Association for British Market Authorities](#) [g](#). In its review of the Portas Pilots, the communities department said that although the pilots are not the "complete solution to the problems faced by the high streets", they have provided "a valuable testing ground for ideas and actions which others can learn from" [C](#) [C](#). A consultation paper on permitted development rights for converting retail to housing is due this week [C](#).

Bags and bottles. In England, carrier bag use is up 4%, in Wales its down 75%. Yet, says CPRE-backed *Break the Bag Habit*, the government has done nothing more than say it will 'monitor' the scheme in Wales [R](#). CPRE launched the UK Deposit Alliance to "provide the latest thinking on how a deposit scheme could work in the UK" [R](#) [R](#). The Lords gave a reading to Lord Marlesford's private member's bill, which will close a loophole that allows people who litter from cars to dodge penalties [R](#) [C](#).

Action for Roads

White paper. The DfT has set out its plans to spend the £28 billion assigned for roads in the comprehensive spending review [\[UK\]](#) [\[BBC\]](#) [\[T\]](#) [\[O\]](#). See also *Transport: an engine for growth* [\[\]](#).

Highways Agency. The DfT will spin out the agency to become a Network Rail-style public company, with long-term £28 billion road-building fund [\[\]](#). The department also promised a “motorists champion to provide a strong voice for all road users, hold the new company to account and deliver the best performance and value for road users.”

Environment. The paper portrays roads as environmentally friendly. “The scale of investment which we intend to deliver means that we can afford to invest in proper environmental safeguards,” including better landscaping, tunnelling, green bridges and noise barriers. It says the “process of mitigation starts at the very beginning of design, finding a route that matches the local topography and tries to hide any new development behind existing features such as established woodland.” The report acknowledges that “the verges of strategic roads have become useful patches of wilderness for many different species, particularly in areas with large amounts of mechanised farming.” It urges careful planning of roads: “opportunities to bypass affected villages, redirect traffic away from protected sites or improve the general environment should be seized as a part of any new investment.”

Feasibility studies will go ahead for two of the most environmentally controversial projects, the dualling of the A303 to the southwest and the A27 in Sussex.

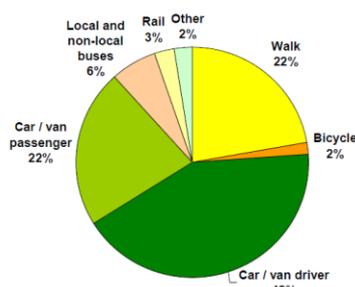
Cycling. The DfT promises to ‘cycleproof’ the major road network: “We must start work to seek and correct historic problems, and retrofit the latest solutions and make sure that it is easy and safe for cyclists to use junctions.” British Cycling and the CTC welcomed the commitment but other cyclists were less impressed: “there is there is much hand-waving and talk of ‘ensuring’ and ‘encouraging’ but almost no detailed direct action to improve cycling” [\[\]](#) [\[\]](#).

Reaction. The CBI was also unimpressed: “This is a small step in the right direction” [\[\]](#). Stephen Joseph of the Campaign for Better Transport warned: “Smothering tarmac across our best loved and most visited countryside will not solve traffic problems or create jobs.” Shaun Spiers of CPRE agreed: “To consider road building in five of our most cherished landscapes suggests an alarming lack of concern for our beautiful countryside and that something is very wrong indeed with the government’s roads vision” [\[g\]](#).

National: Transport Statistics

DfT statistics show that people are travelling less on all forms of transport and the number of trips has fallen to 1970s levels. Between 2002 and 2012, the proportion of households in rural areas that were within 13 minutes’ walk of an hourly or better bus service increased from 48% to 61%. Nearly one in ten of rural households do not own a car (9%) [\[UK\]](#).

Average number of trips



National: High Speed 2

Phase 1. Transport minister Patrick McLoughlin issued safeguarding directions to protect the route of HS2 from conflicting development. He has also triggered blight procedures for homeowners living within the safeguarded zone – 60 metres either side of the track – which means they can sell to the government [\[UK\]](#) [\[UK\]](#) [\[H2\]](#). The government has convened a growth task force under Lord Deighton charged with “maxing out the benefits” of HS2 [\[FT\]](#) [\[i\]](#).

Phase 2. HS2 Ltd has launched a public consultation on Phase 2 of the line from Birmingham to Manchester and Leeds. Closes 31 January 2014 [\[H2\]](#). Leicestershire council said it was disappointed that line had not avoided the county altogether [\[L\]](#). Patrick McLoughlin said he will examine an alternative route put forward by Derby council, which would replace the proposed Toton parkway station with one in Derby [\[L\]](#). Cheshire East council has called for natural screening and structure restrictions to mitigate the visual impact [\[L\]](#). The Telegraph reported that sustainability assessment for Phase 2 shows it will destroy more than 600 homes, 250 acres of green belt, along with several sites of special scientific interest, more than 30 ancient woodlands and a number of listed buildings [\[T\]](#).

Woodlands. Rail minister Simon Burns pledged that tons of soil from ancient woodlands destroyed by HS2 will be “transplanted” to new sites [\[T\]](#). The Woodland Trust has produced a toolkit aiming to equip communities with the “information they need to hold informed conversations about why ancient woodland is irreplaceable” [\[\]](#) [\[\]](#).

Legal action. All seven grounds of the latest legal challenge to HS2 were rejected by the appeal court, which declined to refer the case to Europe. Councillor Martin Tett, chairman of the 51m Alliance of councils said he was “disappointed” with the court’s decision but encouraged that one of the three judges disagreed with the others on whether a Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) was required. HS2 Action Alliance was given leave to appeal to the supreme court on the SEA issue [\[BBC\]](#) [\[\]](#).

National: Recycling and Waste

Waste. Defra opened a short consultation on a Waste Management Plan for England. The plan does not contain any new waste management measures or policies, but brings together the findings of government’s 2011 review on waste policy and current policies under the umbrella of the one national plan. Closes 9 August [\[UK\]](#) [\[R\]](#). Eric Pickles approved a controversial radioactive waste dump at Kings Cliffe in Northamptonshire [\[\]](#) [\[UK\]](#) [\[L\]](#) [\[BBC\]](#).

Food waste. The EC has launched a consultation on reducing food waste and creating a more sustainable food supply system in Europe. Closes 1 October [\[R\]](#) [\[\]](#) [\[\]](#). The Lords European Union committee is also calling for evidence on food waste prevention. Closes 27 September [\[\]](#).

Recycling. The improvement in recycling rates is slowing down and hovering around 43% nationally [\[\]](#). In Brighton, the rate has fallen to below 30% [\[TA\]](#). East Sussex, Brighton and the South Downs National Park are seeking recycling and recovery facility sites. Closes 15 September [\[\]](#) [\[LG\]](#).

Campaigners. West Oxfordshire CPRE won the 2013 Marsh Award for Countryside Champion of the Year after the 25-year battle against the Cogges Link Road in Witney [\[OM\]](#). George Mitchell, the father of fracking and – remarkably – a sustainability pioneer, has died [\[\]](#) [\[T\]](#) [\[\]](#).

National: Energy

Fracking. The Treasury is consulting on a shale gas allowance – the “most generous for shale in the world” – which sets the tax rate on some production income at 30% instead of 62% [👑](#) [g](#) [i](#) [T](#). The government distanced itself from Lord Howell who called for fracking to be concentrated in the North because it has “large, desolate and uninhabited areas” [🇬🇧](#). Energy minister Michael Fallon responded: “It cannot be right to confine it to areas of the industrial North... Developers need to engage with the local communities likely to be affected in the South East” [🇬🇧](#). Energy secretary Ed Davey is reported to have said: “I love shale gas” [uw](#). MP Nick Herbert was less happy: “There is a lot of concern about the impact of new housing in West Sussex. This [fracking] is seen as a second threat to the countryside” [🇬🇧](#). Water companies warned the shale gas industry that extraction could damage water supplies and will inevitably put a strain on supplies in areas around extraction sites [🇬🇧](#). The House of Commons Library issued a briefing paper on fracking [👑](#).

Wirescapes. National Grid is to spend £500 million on reducing the impact of existing power lines. Options include undergrounding cables; screening substations or overhead lines from public viewpoints; landscaping and tree planting; use of alternative pylon designs; and re-routeing or reducing the number of existing lines. CPRE, CPRW and the Campaign for National Parks have joined the national stakeholder group to advise on the options. Consultation closes 24 September 2013 [🇬🇧](#) [CPRE](#) [P](#). National Grid announced that the new T-pylon is being considered for a power line in Somerset [👑](#). Comment: “That’s the thing with Kent – wherever you are, there’s a load of pylons in the way” [KO](#).

Wind. Nick Boles was stripped of any role in windfarm decisions last April because his brother works in the industry [🇬🇧](#) [🇬🇧](#). Energy Secretary Ed Davey gave consent for the world’s largest offshore wind farm. The Triton Knoll off Lincolnshire and Norfolk will have 288 turbines. He also approved 77 turbines off the South Wales coast [👑](#) [👑](#). Nick Clegg opened a 175-turbine windfarm off the coast of Lincolnshire, declaring: “The race is now on to lead the world in clean, green energy” [TIL](#) [BBC](#). The government published its long term strategy for offshore wind [👑](#) [O](#). The Institute for Public Policy Research said that the government has done too little to attract wind turbine manufacturers to set up in the UK: “The current policy trajectory could achieve a worst of all worlds outcome – low volume [of energy], low jobs and high costs” [g](#) [E](#) [🇬🇧](#). The European Wind Energy Association claimed that floating turbines in the North Sea could meet European power demand four times over [BG](#).

Nuclear. Local authorities that host new nuclear power plants will receive payments from central government from 2030 to spend on community benefits. The package will be based on £1,000/MW per annum for up to forty years. For Hinkley, this could amount to £128 million. Greenpeace protested: “Wind farms and even shale gas developers have to pay community benefits, only nuclear stations will get a fat taxpayer subsidy to fund them” [🇬🇧](#) [g](#) [A](#).

Coal. The government is to offer capacity payments to coal fired power stations to encourage them to remain open beyond 2020 [i](#) [🇬🇧](#) [🇬🇧](#).

Fuel poverty. The Department for Energy and Climate Change cut the official number of ‘fuel poor’ families from 3.5m to 2.5m. The new measure classes fuel poverty as a home where “the total income is below the poverty line, and energy costs are higher than typical” [🇬🇧](#) [👑](#).

The CPRE eBulletins

CPRE South East eBulletin is independently written and edited by Andy Boddington: cprenews@andyboddington.co.uk. Views expressed in the eBulletin and its editorial approach are those of its editor and not any part of CPRE.

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