



Cherkley Court Setback

Campaigners are to fight back after the appeal court overturned a high court decision on an interpretation of planning law. The high court judge had made a clear distinction between public “need” – what is in the public planning interest – and private “demand” – what is in the developer interest. The appeal court sided with the developer interest.

Judgement. The appeal court has reinstated planning permission to turn Cherkley Court in Leatherhead into a luxury hotel and golf course. The previous high court case had centred on the question of need – see CPRE South East eBulletin for September 2013 [CPRE]. In the appeal court, Lord Justice Richards said the high court’s reasoning “appears to have been that because planning control is exercised in the public interest, ‘need’ must relate to the interests of the public and/or the community as a whole.” Richards did not agree and said: “I see no reason in principle why a planning policy should not lay down a requirement of need which is capable of being met by a private demand for the facility in question.” He concluded that very special circumstances at Cherkley Court – including economic benefits, jobs and facilities for visitors – clearly outweighed the harm to the green belt [FB].

Reaction. Andy Smith director of CPRE Surrey called the decision “an appalling judgment” which will set a dangerous precedent. He added: “The Cherkley Campaign, with CPRE’s support, will be seeking to overturn this decision as soon as possible. The Supreme Court must rule on this as it is of national significance.” Kristina Kenworthy of the Cherkley Campaign said: “The Cherkley area will not [now] be eligible for inclusion in the Surrey Hills AONB when the boundary is reviewed... It is appalling that private interests should trump a national designation in this way” [L] [BBC] [P] [VILG].

Oxfordshire Housing Challenged

SHMA’s are usually taken as sacrosanct by planning inspectors. CPRE Oxfordshire has begun a seminal battle over the county’s Strategic Housing Market Assessment which it claims is in parts cobbled together and overestimates housing need two-fold.

SHMA. The Oxfordshire Strategic Housing Market Assessment suggests that the county needs 100,060 houses by 2031, up from a previous estimate of 54,700 [LG]. This would increase Oxfordshire’s housing by 37%, from 272,000 to 372,060.

Numbers challenged. CPRE Oxon’s housing consultant Alan Wenban-Smith said the assessed need to build 100,000 homes in 15 years was cobbled together. It grossly overstated Oxfordshire’s housing need by more than double. CPRE Oxon is calling on all local authorities to reject the SHMA and not to use it as a basis for future planning decisions. The Vale of White Horse council is already looking to challenge the SHMA [OM] [OM].

Greater Oxford? CPRE Oxfordshire Director Helen Marshall said: “We think the figures are unsound, unachievable and unwanted. We urge district councils to consider all the evidence very carefully before taking any steps to adopt these figures as targets.” She added: “We fear that behind the scenes the plans are to seek a Greater Oxford that would swamp many of the city’s nearby towns and villages... It would effectively mean the end of a functioning green belt.” Ian Hudspeth, chairman of the Oxfordshire Spatial Planning and Infrastructure Partnership said there is “no hidden agenda” to force districts around Oxford to take more housing [OM] [FB]. In the Oxford Mail, Helen debated the future of the Oxford green belt with city councillor Ed Turner [OM].

Garden city? As the row over the SHMA continued, Nick Boles has suggested that Oxfordshire should build a garden city, picking up on an earlier proposal that an area near Steventon in the Vale of White Horse could be a suitable site. A CPRE-backed campaign prevented this location being swamped by a reservoir [OM].

Accommodating London

Over the next few years, London will begin to dominate discussions of housing in the South East. The capital is planning for a shortfall of housing against projected needs. Although Boris Johnson has said there is enough brownfield to accommodate housing demand, his planners suggest otherwise. They clearly want councils in the home counties to up their housing targets to accommodate a new age of overspill from the capital.

London overspill. Bedford borough is among the first councils to be reminded by London planners that the duty to cooperate means that the council should consider whether it can help meet London’s housing needs. The Greater London Authority said: “London and the South East are experiencing unprecedented demand for housing so it is common sense for coordinated regional planning to take place in this way” [P] [P]. The head of planning in Guildford has written to the GLA suggesting that it reviews Metropolitan green belt boundaries to accommodate more housing [GS]. John Lett, strategic planning manager at the GLA said that the Mayor’s upcoming 2050 Infrastructure Plan would be “asking unmentionable questions.” He said it will be asking: “Where is London going to grow? What’s the infrastructure needed to support that growth? It will be looking at green belt, new towns, expanded towns” [P].

Regenerating urban estates. The communities department is supporting a study by Savills to consider the best way to redevelop areas in inner London “while involving local communities.” Although this will be a London study, the department says its results could have wider implications for the commuter belt and areas with high housing demand such as Brighton, Cambridge and Oxford [FB] [ES] [P].

Planning: South East

High court action to block an extension of the runway at Lydd airport has failed. Developers have delayed but failed to block the Winslow neighbourhood plan but are threatening court action. Runnymede is the latest council to fall foul of the planning inspectorate over its local plan.

Paramount Park. The 70-acre brownfield site on the Swanscombe peninsular in Kent is to become the first non-infrastructure project to be considered under the Planning Act regime. The communities department has decided the theme park is of national importance. The plans will now be examined by the planning inspectorate and a decision will be taken by the secretary of state. The planning application is expected next year [L](#) [BBC](#) [P](#) [KO](#).



Lydd airport action fails. The high court has dismissed appeals by the RSPB and Lydd Airport Action Group (LAAG) to block the expansion of the airport. Andre Farrar for RSPB said: “We are disappointed. This airport has been very much a long-running issue for us for decades and this is clearly a setback... We are going to assess the judgement in full with an eye to proceeding the next stage.” LAAG warned the development would raise the probability of an aircraft accident involving the Dungeness nuclear power station to unacceptably high levels. The RSPB said the site is of exceptional importance to birds and the expansion will damage unique habitats on Romney Marsh. Folkestone and Hythe MP Damian Collins disagreed and said: “It is excellent news.” [KO](#) [BBC](#) [i](#) [P](#) [L](#). LAAG said it is “ludicrous” for the Manston airport to shut when it has a longer runway and no flying height restrictions like Lydd. Manston also does not have the complications of a nearby nuclear power station, nature reserve and two firing ranges [KO](#).

Winslow squares up to developers. The examination of the Winslow neighbourhood plan was halted in February after legal objections from Gladman Developments. The housebuilder had argued that a neighbourhood plan could not proceed in the absence of an up-to-date local plan (the troubled Vale of Aylesbury Plan). The examination went ahead after new government planning guidance made it clear that that neighbourhood plans can proceed even when a local plan is not in place or out-of-date [P](#). More than 100 people attended the public hearing. Councillor Llew Monger said: “Barristers speaking for Gladman have made it clear that, should the plan proceed to referendum, they will challenge it at judicial review” [BA](#).

Runnymede council has been advised to withdraw its Local Plan Core Strategy because the council has failed in its duty to cooperate. A planning inspector said the plan also fails to deliver enough housing – the borough needs 595 houses a year, not the 220 planned. He said the council had made too little effort, too late to cooperate with neighbouring authorities on the shortfall. A review of green belt boundaries is underway and the council will decide on its response in June [LG](#) [P](#) [GS](#).

Guildford. More than 20,000 people responded to a council consultation on issues and options for the Guildford local plan, with nearly 9,000 comments calling for protection of the green belt [GS](#) [BBC](#). Susan Parker of the **Guildford Greenbelt Group** said: “Too many houses and too much building could damage the green belt and our countryside” [C](#).

Berkshire roundup. A high court judge rejected claims that West Berkshire council showed bias in granting planning permission for a new livestock building at the Royal Berkshire County Show ground near Newbury [P](#). Plans to build 700 homes in the eastern area of Newbury Racecourse have been unveiled [BBC](#).

Buckinghamshire roundup. Aylesbury Vale council is consulting on the content and scope of its new Vale of Aylesbury Local Plan (VALP). The council was forced to withdraw its previous plan in February after it was found unsound by the planning inspectorate. Closes 28 May [LG](#) [L](#) [BA](#). More planning news in the CPRE Bucks eBulletin [CPRE](#).

Hampshire roundup. A planning inspector has approved 150 houses on Hamble Lane, Bursledon citing an out-of-date local plan and lack of land supply. He set aside the presumption against building in the countryside gap which separates Bursledon and Southampton [C](#). Plans for 40 houses outside the settlement boundary at Arreton on the Isle of Wight have been rejected against officers’ advice [L](#) [L](#). English Heritage has refused a call from the Twentieth Century Society to spot list Horder House. The Cullinan designed building is threatened with demolition [CW](#) [L](#).

Kent roundup. Eric Pickles has approved the demolition of listed buildings at Burgess Hill Farm in the green belt to allow the dualling of the A21. He said national interests took precedence over harm to the character and appearance of the landscape in the High Weald AONB and over the close proximity to the Grade II Somerhill Estate Registered Historic Park and Garden [C](#) [KO](#) [BBC](#).

Oxfordshire roundup. The county has more than 5,600 empty homes, including 1,749 unoccupied for six months or longer, against a waiting list of 3,896 people [OM](#). Gareth Hammond, chairman of the CPRE West Oxfordshire said it would be “a travesty” if an extra 1,000 homes were given approval at Carterton [L](#) [f](#) [L](#). Eric Pickles has declined a request from the Wantage and Grove Campaign Group to call in a planning application for 1,500 homes in Grove [OM](#). A villager lost her high court bid to stop two houses in the green belt at Waterstock [OM](#). Ambrosden parish council is considering a judicial review over approval of 45 homes on appeal due to lack of five year land supply [OT](#). Part of Didcot A Power Station has been sold to a developer [BBC](#).

Surrey roundup. Residents have condemned plans for a two-storey building on green belt land at the Oxted and Edenbridge Agricultural Show site [L]. Reigate and Banstead council has decided not to change its core strategy, despite a row over developments proposed for the green belt and the intervention of Nick Boles [L]. The headquarters of Ready Mix Concrete International in Runnymede is threatened with demolition to make way for housing. The award-winning 1990 building designed by Ted Cullinan features grass roofs and sunken courtyards [AJ]. Residents are opposing a planning application for a 25-acre burial ground, car park and buildings on arable land in Banstead [L]. Plans have been unveiled for a proposed new town on Wisley Airfield, a Site of Nature Conservation Importance. Between 2,000 and 2,250 new homes could be built on 116 hectares of green belt land next to the A3 [GS]. **Wisley Action Group** is encouraging opponents of the scheme to sign a petition calling on Guildford council to limit housing and employment growth [LG].



Plans for Wisley Airfield

Sussex. Cycling charity Sustrans and the Ouse Valley Cycle Network have applied for planning permission to construct the Egret's Way cycleway alongside the River Ouse from Newhaven to Lewes [SE]. Newly formed action group Save Houghton Forest is objecting to plans for 75 holiday homes which they say will obliterate part of the Arundel forest [WST]. Horsham council will shortly consult on the Horsham District Planning Framework, which includes 2,500 new homes and a major business park in North Horsham. Closes 27 June [LG] [L]. Nearly 500 people rallied to protest against to build hundreds of houses between Ovingdean and Woodingdean on the edge of the national park. Stuart Derwent of CPRE Sussex said that Brighton and Hove's urban fringes are under extreme pressure and "putting brownfield first is crucial" [TA] [TA] [CPRE] [C]. In a letter to the Mid Sussex Times, Michael Brown of CPRE Sussex said Mayfield Market Towns, the promoter of a 10,000 home new town, perpetuates two myths: "Firstly, that there is an accepted local need for a new town on the southern borders of Horsham and Mid Sussex, and secondly that its proposed location is suitable and sustainable" [MST]. Eric Pickles approved two developments at Handcross in the High Weald AONB ruling that there is "not a substantial environmental reason" to refuse the applications for 75 and 90 homes. Mid Sussex council does not have a five year land supply [C] [P]. MP Nick Herbert clashed with Arun council over housing sites identified in the local plan [L].

LEPs. Last month, the local enterprise partnerships around the country submitted their plans for local growth. The Local Government Chronicle reported that Whitehall officials have told the LEPs to rewrite the growth plans to prioritise "shovel-ready" projects. The LEPs are complaining that they have to prioritise short term infrastructure over long term economic gain. Alex Pratt, chair of Bucks & Thames Valley LEP, said: "We're now wondering what the process is going to be for judging this" [C]. The Strategic Economic Plans: Bucks Thames Valley [LEP]; Coast to Capital [LEP]; Enterprise M3 [LEP]; Oxfordshire [LEP]; SELEP [LEP]; Solent [LEP] [L].

Planning: NPPF

NPPF Community Involvement Bill. Lib Dem MP Greg Mulholland has introduced a ten-minute rule bill to change the planning system and the NPPF, and to boost localism. The bill, which has no chance of becoming law, would abolish developers' rights of appeal and close down the planning inspectorate. Housebuilders would still need to meet local policy objectives even where a council lacks a five year land supply. The 20% buffer for authorities with a shortfall in housing delivery would be axed. Brownfield would be a priority and planning for housing numbers would be across areas or regions. Permitted development rights would be rolled back. The bill has the support of CPRE, the Campaign for Real Ale, Civic Voice, the Local Government Association and others [P].

NPPF inquiry. The Commons communities and local government select committee is to investigate how well the NPPF is working. Chairman Clive Betts said that the inquiry would also look at the impact of the government's relaxation of permitted development rights [P].

NPPF impact. Consultancy Glenigan said a rise in approval rates for housing schemes indicates that the NPPF has begun to release more sites for development. However new housing supply continues to run below the potential growth in new households [C].

Planning: National

Garden cities. Nick Clegg launched the long awaited garden city prospectus, originally due to be published two years ago [C] [P] [P] [C]. Newspapers reported: "Three new garden cities will be built in the 'arc of prosperity' on countryside between Oxford and Cambridge" [C] [G]. Planning minister Nick Boles said the government would "not impose a particular level of affordable housing for housing schemes" in garden cities [G]. In Regen, David Marlow said: "It is pretty certain that Clegg's garden cities will stay firmly in the political surrealist's box at least this side of the general election" [P]. Paul Finch, writing the Architects Journal is equally sceptical: "The abandoned eco-town programme has done nothing to shake the confidence of politicians in the belief that 'doing something new' is the answer to all our built environment problems" [AJ].

Greenfield ruling. The appeal court ruled an inspector was right to reject 58 greenfield houses in Wincanton, Somerset, despite a lack of five year land supply. The inspector had thrown out the appeal on sustainability grounds and because the plans would unacceptably detract from the tranquil and rural character of the area [P].

Green belt. Shelter called for local councils to be given “stronger set of tools” to manage their own green belts, making it easier to swap small sites of green belt land for agricultural land, if there was a strong case for new homes . Eric Pickles confirmed he will continue to call in gypsy and traveller sites in the green belt . Chester councillors threw out plans for tennis courts in the city’s green belt . Paul Cheshire, professor emeritus of economic geography at the LSE, attacked green belt policy as “discriminatory zoning, keeping the urban unwashed out of the home counties”   .

Countryside comment. CPRE president Sir Andrew Motion said William Wordsworth would be “having a series of fits” about the scale of development for the countryside being allowed by “philistine” Whitehall officials . Author Michael Morpurgo told CPRE Devon: “Most politicians live in towns – that’s where the votes are. A lot of these people are intelligent, but they don’t have any connection with the countryside”  . The director general of the National Trust, Helen Ghosh warned that pressure from the government is pushing councils into proposing greenfield land for development rather than brownfield sites  . Lord Wolfson said the government should aim to increase the proportion of Britain which is developed from 8% to 9% – that’s around 2,000 sq km or the equivalent area of West Sussex. He said: “There are lots of parts of the countryside where no one walks in – that are just big, open, flat fields of no agricultural merit” .

Local plans. Harrogate looks set to withdraw its local plan after an inspector criticised it for proposing 390 dwellings a year compared to a market assessment of at least 862 dwellings   . The Christchurch and East Dorset local plan has been found sound . South Worcestershire councils have been told by a planning inspector to plan for an extra 5,000 homes  . A high court judge ruled that a planning inspector was wrong to allow reclassification of two greenfield sites in Solihull as green belt. The judge also condemned the council’s approach to housing, which had relied on numbers in the former regional strategy. Planners said the case clarified that councils need to establish objectively assessed development housing needs and not rely on the abolished regional plans   .

Five year land supply. Shropshire councillors waved through several applications they described as awful, horrendous and dangerous due to a lack of five year land supply  . Eric Pickles approved 190 homes in Ribbles Valley citing a lack of land supply . Cheshire East council condemned an inspector for “poor decision-making”, when he ruled in an appeal that the area does not have a five year land supply .

Permitted development rights. The government is to consult on plans to create a new class order for betting shops, which will mean that plans to convert banks, building societies or estate agents into betting shops would require a planning application. Currently conversions are subject to permitted development rights    .

EIA. The EU has tightened rules on environmental impact assessments. Only projects with the potential to generate a significant environmental impact will require screening. Planning authorities will also have to be more formal about the way they dealing with screening applications and assessments .

Housing. Nick Boles announced that the government will introduce a Right to Build, under which councils will have a legal duty to provide self-builders with land: “It has got to be a legal right to get a plot of land to build your house. We need lots of people out there saying it’s my land, give it to me and I will sue you if you don’t”  . The number of vacant properties in England has hit a 10-year low. In October 2013 there were 635,127 empty homes, down by around a fifth since 2009 and the lowest level since 2004  . Consultancy Glenigan said average house prices in England could quadruple to more than £900,000 in 20 years if the nation does not build 250,000 new homes a year. It suggested the next government should consult on plans for five new garden cities .

Affordable housing. Action with Communities in Rural England (ACRE) is objecting to government plans to introduce a 10-unit threshold for S106 affordable housing agreements. In 2012/13, 66% (1,905) of homes in settlements under 3,000 people were delivered through S106 agreements . The Independent reported that housebuilders are appealing to the planning inspectorate to get affordable housing quotas reduced . After affordable housing dropped from 30% of new developments in 2010, to 23% in a year, Milton Keynes council wrote to Nick Boles criticised the government’s affordable housing policy  . A developer with permission for 1,082 homes on sites at Lydney, Gloucestershire is appealing to get the S106 obligation removed. It is one of eleven schemes currently appealing affordable housing quotas .

Landscapes and Environment

Coastal. The National Trust said a national strategy is needed to adapt coastlines to rising sea levels and extreme weather occurring as a result of climate change .

Biodiversity. A national inventory of wildlife rich brownfield habitat has been launched by Natural England, Buglife and the Invertebrate Conservation Trust  . The Wildlife Trusts called on the government to save remaining wildlife-rich grasslands from catastrophic decline. The Trusts want stronger environmental impact assessments, better rewards for farmers, more SSSIs and a national grassland inventory . CPRE joined protestors against plans to build a motorway service station in the 800-year-old Smithy Wood in South Yorkshire   .

Farming. Farmers are protesting against changes to common agricultural policy diversification rules that will force larger farms to grow at least three crops . Defra published a guide to the new CAP schemes . Moorland farmers will receive higher funding under CAP from January 2015 . Owen Paterson confirmed that the badger cull will be rolled out to new areas .

Rubbish. There were 711,000 fly-tipping incidents in England in 2012/13 . The European Parliament voted in favour of reducing the use of thin plastic bags within the EU by 50% by 2017 and by at least 80% by 2019  .

Rights of Way. Natural England has approved 41km of the coastal path in Norfolk .

Heritage. The government is to commission a feasibility study into a tunnel at Stonehenge as part of its plans to ease congestion on the A303 route to the south west. CPRE’s Ralph Smyth said that a tunnel was not justified but admitted that a surface dual carriageway could cause the monument to lose its World Heritage status  .

Solar Energy

Solar energy was just beginning to boom and now large scale installations seem to have had their day. Huge solar farms can be unsightly but they seem to be less divisive than windfarms and actually rather good for biodiversity. Now the government plans to cut the subsidy for the biggest solar farms. And Eric Pickles says that 25 years is too long to be considered “temporary” development.

Solar biodiversity. The Building Research Establishment National Solar Centre said that most solar farms only utilise about 5% of the land they occupy. This allows the remainder to support wildlife, some of which benefits from the mix of light and shade arrays provide. BRE has published guidance that encourages solar farms to produce a biodiversity management plan, including for the decommissioning of the site  .

Subsidies. The economics of solar schemes are to change. Solar installations larger than 5MW will in future have to compete for subsidies under the ‘contracts for difference’ scheme, which guarantees prices for clean energy generators. The government wants to see more solar installations on roofs, industrial buildings and supermarkets   . The consultation on the changes closes 7 July . Climate minister Greg Barker said: “I do not want solar farms to become the new onshore wind. I do not want to see unrestricted growth of solar farms in the British countryside”  . CPRE Protect Kent welcomed the move .

Oxfordshire. CPRE Oxfordshire has written to Eric Pickles asking him to call in an inspector’s decision to grant permission for a solar farm at Bletchingdon in Oxford’s green belt. Inspector Paul Griffiths granted approval because of the “significant scale in terms of the production of renewable energy” and because it will “assist the ongoing viability and stability of a rural business.” Griffiths said needs for renewable energy overrode concerns about inappropriate development in the green belt and the limited damage to the landscape  . West Oxfordshire council threw out an 18-hectare community solar farm at Charlbury because of the harm it would cause to the Cotswolds AONB  .

Heritage wins. Eric Pickles backed a decision by Suffolk Coastal council to refuse a 25Mw solar farm on 127 acres of farmland near Framlingham, citing harm to an “area of countryside that is of special quality” and harm to heritage. On heritage, he cited the Barnwell Manor (Lyveden New Field) appeal court decision (see high court decision: ; appeal court: ). He also said that only limited weight should be given to potential for the land to return to agricultural use after 25 years. In doing so, he undermined the frequently used argument that windfarms and solar farms are temporary and reversible  .

Solar roundup. Horsham district councillors rejected plans for three solar farms at Steyning, Ashurst and Partridge Green . A developer is to appeal after its plans to install 170,000 panels on 197 acres of land at Snarlton Farm, near Melksham were rejected. John Kirkman of Kennet CPRE said there were 14 solar arrays either permitted or proposed within six miles of Melksham: “That’s beginning to make those arrays very substantial features in the countryside”  .

Windfarms

The prevailing wind seems to be turning against turbines. The Conservatives say they will remove subsidies if they are in power after the next election. Eric Pickles is becoming an anti-windfarm champion, overruling amongst others Paul Griffiths – “Inspector Blight”. The Navitus windfarm could be dead in the water if Unesco’s hard hitting judgement that it will industrialise the Jurassic Coast world heritage site is heeded.

Politics. The Conservatives are planning to drop onshore windfarm subsidies after the 2015 election, saying they are not justified for a now mature technology    . Ed Miliband said the UK must embrace onshore windfarms because they can produce significant amounts of clean energy .

Navitus windfarm. The planning inspectorate has accepted the offshore scheme for examination. Interested parties must register by 23 June  . Friends of the Earth said the examination “will shed light on some of the alarmist and unfounded information that has been spread” . Unesco has objected to the windfarm, saying it will undermine the heritage of the Jurassic Coast, which “will change from being located in a natural setting that is largely free from man-made structures to one where its setting is dominated by man-made structures”   .

Eric Pickles announced that he was extending his six-month trial of recovering windfarm appeal cases from the planning inspectorate by a further 12 months. So far he has refused seven of eight schemes  . Friends of the Earth said: “It’s ironic that someone who describes himself as the champion of localism is taking control away from communities, and blocking a popular and cheap form of clean power” .

Call-ins. Pickles overruled a planning inspector to block a 71-metre turbine in Cumbria because of its impact on a Grade I-listed church. Pickles partly relied on the Barnwell Manor judgement in his refusal. He also gave significant weight to impact on the landscape  . In a similar judgement, Pickles rejected a six turbine windfarm because of the impact it would have on a complex of designated heritage assets at Burton Agnes Hall, East Riding. Inspector Paul Griffiths had said that the scheme would cause a “limited degree of harm to the landscape” and “less than substantial harm to the significance of designated heritage assets.” Pickles, disagreed, rejecting the scheme “by reason of visual impact, impact on residential amenity and the harm that could be caused to tourism, coupled with the failure of the scheme to preserve the setting of Burton Agnes Hall and other heritage assets”    . In North Yorkshire, Pickles rejected a turbine because of its impact on landscape and rather vague concerns about noise impact. He also said: “25 years is a long time so that the fact that the development may be removed at a later time carries limited weight”  .

Wind roundup. A planning inspector has told Wiltshire council to drop its local plan proposals for a buffer zone between turbines and houses  . CPRE Devon said that wind turbines are putting off potential house buyers. Penny Mills said: “The greed of the few – by imposing these industrial renewable energy eyesores on all of us – divides communities and causes a great deal of distress” . Lawyers Thirty Nine Essex Street examined the Barnwell Manor decision in detail .

High Speed 2

We feature three reports on HS2. The Wildlife Trusts concentrate on mitigation, seeing opportunities from the line while still formally opposing it. English Heritage has blasted HS2 Ltd for an inadequate assessment of impact on the historic environment. Opponents of the line have produced a credible plan for a tunnel under most of the Chilterns AONB.

HS2: Politics

Commons win as ministers threaten to quit. The HS2 bill passed its second reading in the Commons with a majority of 411    . Thirty-five Tories rebelled against the government, while 47 Tories missed the vote or abstained. Aylesbury MP David Lidington said he would resign as a minister at the third reading of the HS2 bill if mitigation is inadequate and a longer Chilterns tunnel is not built. Kenilworth and Southam MP Jeremy Wright, a justice minister, has also threatened to quit to allow him to vote against the line. MPs also threw out a proposal by Chesham and Amersham MP Cheryl Gillan for the plans for the line to be halted by a majority of 401  .

Legal challenges. HS2 Action Alliance and Hillingdon council have begun two new legal actions against HS2. A complaint has been lodged claiming the government's plans for HS2 breach its obligations under the United Nations Aarhus Convention, which guarantees access to environmental justice. The high court has also agreed to hear a fresh judicial challenge on HS2 over Patrick McLoughlin's decision to issue safeguarding directions without undertaking a strategic environmental assessment  .

HS2: Wildlife

Restoration proposals. The Wildlife Trusts published a report setting out a vision for large-scale nature restoration along the proposed high speed route . The Trusts say that the impacts and mitigation measures for line have not been properly assessed and there will be a net loss of biodiversity from Phase 1. They argue that there is an environmental, social and economic case for the government to properly address the impact on wildlife and ecosystems. Mitigation would cost £420 million, less than 1% of the current HS2 budget and the benefits of new areas for wildlife and people would outweigh the costs.

Wild green ribbon. The Trusts still oppose the line and support the proposals (right) for a bored tunnel through all of the AONB. However, if the line was to go ahead, they say it could create "a wild green ribbon from London to the north" providing there is effective mitigation. Opportunities for habitat recreation and enhancement could be linked to wider efforts by environmental partners to "build ecological connectivity at a larger scale beyond the tracks."

More details on wildlife and heritage impacts in the CPRE London eBulletin  and CPRE Bucks eBulletin .

HS2: Tunnel



Longer tunnel. Chiltern district council, in association with the Chilterns Conservation Board and Aylesbury Vale and Buckinghamshire councils commissioned Peter Brett Associates to examine options for a longer tunnel beneath the Chilterns AONB. The consultants propose a "Green Route", which will be almost entirely in a tunnel through the AONB, underground for 24.7km compared to the government's 13.2km. The new route will cost £1.68 billion, just £396 million more than HS2's route through the Chilterns. It will significantly reduce the impact on the environment and communities in the Chilterns AONB. The new route offers an improved operational alignment and passes through better and more consistent ground conditions. It will have a gradient of less than 1%, reducing energy requirements and wear on the tracks compared to the government's proposed route, which has a gradient of 3%      .

HS2: Heritage

Inadequate heritage assessment. In its response to the HS2 environmental statement, English Heritage slammed HS2 Ltd for its lack of fieldwork and its inadequate assessment of the impact on historic landscapes, especially in the Chilterns  . The response says:

With regard to the Chilterns AONB in particular, given the contribution of historical processes to that particular landscape, a reasonably detailed assessment of historic landscape character and the impact of the Proposed Scheme upon it might have been expected for this area. However, discussion of it is limited to two paragraphs, the impacts upon it are limited to three, and the conclusion is simply that the impact upon the historic settlement and environment will be limited.

English Heritage says that a fuller assessment of the impact of the scheme on historic character – ideally on the whole scheme but at least in the Chilterns AONB – should be undertaken to meet environment statement regulations. Mike Heyworth, director of the Council for British Archaeology took a more positive view. He said HS2 will create: "A huge trench across the country where we can learn an awful lot about new sites" .

Light Pollution

CPRE is calling for councils to do more to control lighting in their areas. Its report, *Shedding Light*, makes nine recommendations including: a presumption against new lighting in existing dark areas; lighting zones to help determine where streetlights should and should not go; and preventing inappropriate and badly designed lighting in developments. CPRE's survey found that more than nine in ten councils have switched off street lights to save money or energy, but just 43% have done so to reduce light pollution. Many councils are dimming lights rather than turning them off [RE](#) [C](#) [T](#) [M](#). The AA said the switch off has made roads more dangerous [S](#). Bodmin Moor is to bid to be a dark sky park [L](#).

Transport

Lower Thames crossing. More than three hundred residents attended a protest meeting against a third Thames crossing [L](#). Thurrock MP Jackie Doyle-Price caused controversy by saying the M2 in Kent should be linked to the A130 on Canvey. The option is opposed by Canvey islanders and has been rejected by ministers [TG](#).

Rail. The Western Rail Access to Heathrow project could deliver benefits of up to £183 million a year from an improved link between Reading and Heathrow [GR](#). Rail journeys increased last year by 3.3% to 1.27 billion [S](#).

Bypasses. English Heritage has intervened in the decision on whether to build the controversial Ely bypass. It said: "We believe that all the other options would be less harmful to Ely Cathedral and our research has shown that one of the options, of lowering and widening the existing underpass, could resolve Ely's transport problems and allow regeneration of the station area without additional harm to the cathedral and other parts of Ely." Local leaders are asking Eric Pickles to call in and approve the scheme [L](#) [S](#) [L](#). Work is to begin on the A5 and M1 link Dunstable northern bypass, which will link the A505 to the motorway east of Wing [C](#) [L](#).

Signs and lines. Roads minister Robert Goodwill announced a consultation on sweeping changes to road signs, claiming they could cut clutter on the roads. Closes 12 June [C](#) [C](#). The Valuation Office aims to levy business rates on roundabout advertisements in Shrewsbury [L](#).

Buses. Labour said some local authorities are cutting bus subsidies by up to 55% [S](#). Only fifteen MPs turned up to a parliamentary debate on rural buses



Airports

Gatwick protests build. Villagers under the airport's flightpath have formed Communities Against Gatwick Noise Emissions (Cagne) [L](#) [MST](#). Cagne's petition against new flightpaths has reached nearly 800 signatures [38](#). Cagne, Gatwick Area Conservation Campaign (GACC) and CPRE Sussex marched through Horsham to protest against a new runway at Gatwick Airport and new flight paths [L](#). GACC has launched a 'Gatwick's Big Enough' campaign against a second runway [C](#) [X](#). Lord Bradshaw said a second runway should be built if the airport pays for an upgrade of the Brighton to London rail line to give residents of Sussex "real improvements" on the rail journey to London [ES](#). The MP for Mole Valley, Paul Beresford released a statement saying that "a second runway has no place in Surrey" [GS](#). A Facebook group, Gatwick Runway 2, has been launched to support a second runway and has gained 200 supporters [f](#).

Heathrow is reported to be shifting its third runway further south to reduce disruption to the M25. The move could save the Grade I listed Barn in Harmondsworth. The airport is also considering charging passengers to drive into the airport. Zac Goldsmith said: "It is a disgrace that none of this has been mentioned in Heathrow's recent third runway public consultations. The company simply has not been straight with residents" [ES](#).

Luton. Eric Pickles has cleared the way for Luton Airport to expand the site with a remodelled terminal building and new aircraft taxiway that would enable it to handle up to 18 million passengers per year [P](#) [L](#) [L](#).

Communities and Campaigning

CPRE. Former Royal Town Planning Institute head of policy and practice Matt Thomson is to join CPRE as head of planning in July [P](#). CPRE Sussex has a new social media noticeboard, built over rebelmouse. Tweets with the hashtag #protectsussex automatically post to the board [RE](#). Dame Janet Trotter is the new president of CPRE Gloucestershire [L](#) [RE](#).

Broadband. Rural broadband speeds still remain lower than in urban areas, though the average speed did increase from 9.9Mbps to 11.3Mbps between May and November 2013 [L](#). But in Oxfordshire some rural areas get only 2Mbps [OM](#). Vodafone has promised to reach 98% of the UK population with high-speed mobile broadband by the end of 2015. Earlier, Vodafone announced the launch of 4G in the Berkshire village of Great Shefford [L](#).

Rural economy. Tourists are to be asked to contribute to a fund to sponsor rural schemes including apprenticeships and community transport [FG](#).

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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