



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
SOUTH EAST

CPRE South East eBulletin

10 March 2007

Coverage: 6 February to 9 March

1. South East Plan Examination in Public

The **Hampshire and Isle of Wight Wildlife Trust** spoke about the need to safeguard the environment and plan for sustainable development when considering future economic and social needs, saying "locally, nationally and globally the environment is almost at breaking point". (This is Hampshire: <http://tinyurl.com/yppclk>).

Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. The strategy drawn up by Natural England to protect key wildlife sites from housing pressure in the Thames Basin Heaths SPA has been criticised by an EiP assessor who has proposed a modified version. However, the inspector has agreed that a strategic approach is needed to mitigate the potential impacts of large scale housing on the SPA (Planning Portal: <http://tinyurl.com/2g3w4f>; RSPB: <http://tinyurl.com/2fqes3>).

Oxfordshire. The surprise of the Oxfordshire sessions of the EiP was an admission by Oxford City that it can meet the South East Plan target for 7,000 dwellings with comfort and can provide 3,000 more without expanding into the green belt. But city planners are still pressing ahead with their hopes for an urban extension into the green belt. The planning consultant for the extension told the inquiry that this would need to accommodate between 4,000 and 8,000 homes to be viable. More in two Briefings from CPRE Oxfordshire (<http://tinyurl.com/2o28me>).

Coming up at the EiP. On 15 March, the EiP continues its consideration of Milton Keynes and the Aylesbury Vale. On 20 March, it begins to look at the London Fringe and on 22 March moves on to the Western Corridor and Blackwater Valley before wrapping up by the end of the month (timetable: <http://tinyurl.com/2gkwtl>).

2. Planning in the South East

Ashford's Master Plan with its "Green Grid" featured in the report on the Urban Environment from the Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution (<http://tinyurl.com/2ra2mp>).

Falmer. Ruth Kelly will deliver her verdict on the site for new stadium for Brighton Football Club on or before 9 July (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/34ynds>).

Green fields in the South East are in danger from housebuilders thanks to new Government rules, the South East England Regional Assembly's Planning Committee said (<http://tinyurl.com/34v4r3>).

Kennet Canal. A planning inspector has decided that boats moored on the Kennet and Avon Canal do not require planning permission, a decision cheered by The Times (<http://tinyurl.com/2bq5k8>).

Kent Science Park. CPRE Kent is supporting a countryside-protection group which is trying to stop the greenfield expansion of the Kent Science Park (to include a new road and 4,500 enabling-development homes). A 200-strong march through Sittingbourne town centre took place on 3 March (CPRE Kent: <http://tinyurl.com/yvt52k>; <http://tinyurl.com/2dvusw>). A 3,200 signature petition was presented to Downing Street last week (FPOG: <http://tinyurl.com/2donga>; CPRE Kent: <http://tinyurl.com/yuns9t>).

Mole bungalow. A farmer in the Mole Valley in Surrey built a bungalow inside his barn to cheat green belt planning rules and then lived in it for nine years (LSE: <http://tinyurl.com/yt583a>).

Thames Gateway. A report on the Thames Gateway has identified the key steps that government must take if it is to deliver homes, jobs and infrastructure to the area over the next decades (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/3cz4lu>).

The Battle of Farnham. The Guardian looks at the "fears that the march of the clones will now cover a quarter of the town centre" of Farnham, "a town once praised for its local-led regeneration" amid accusations of secret deals and councillors not listening to residents (<http://tinyurl.com/3acwey>).

Uckfield. A 750-home development may be approved on appeal due to a flaw in the local plan, despite it being rejected by councillors (Argus: <http://tinyurl.com/36f4qz>).

Wrotham. CPRE Kent reacted with disbelief to the news that Kent County Council will be allowed to grant itself permission to build a highways services super depot on green belt land at Wrotham, near West Malling. It said that the government's decision not to call the proposal ignores "every policy designed to hold back the degradation of rural Kent" (CPRE Kent: <http://tinyurl.com/2wu5lu>).

3. Planning Nationwide

Kate Barker defended her planning reports to the Treasury in the Sunday Times. She said that her views on the green belt and town-centre first policies had been misunderstood (<http://tinyurl.com/2jzomj>). In The Ecologist, Simon Fairlie says the Barker Review replaces democracy with economic growth (Ecologist: <http://tinyurl.com/23bage>). The Tory Shadow Environment Secretary criticised the Barker Report: "The problem with the Kate Barker approach is that if you treat homes as instruments of economic policy rather than as places where people and their families will live you inevitably get a distorted outcome." (<http://tinyurl.com/26c4rl>).

Untapped Potential. CPRE is calling on the Government to increase its target for the proportion of new homes built on brownfield land from 60% to 85%, as research reveals the huge scale of wasted and neglected land. It says that many councils are failing to identify sites that could be developed (<http://tinyurl.com/2vnkgs>).

Land banking. 49 MPs have signed CPRE's Early Day Motion on land banking, the practice of subdividing land into small plots then marketing these plots on the basis that permission for development will be granted (<http://tinyurl.com/yp9aed>).

Brownfield questioned, greenfield supported. The Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution said the government should do more to tackle pollution in urban areas (Report: <http://tinyurl.com/2ra2mp>). It also:

- ◆ questions the government target 60% of new dwellings on brownfield, saying that this might result in a loss of biodiversity (paragraph 4.31)
- ◆ calls for a wider green space strategy in towns, not just that in public ownership (4.34)
- ◆ strongly defends the green belt (4.41).

CPRE said the commission was right to support green spaces in urban areas but the "brownfield first" policy must not be weakened (Guardian: <http://tinyurl.com/2lv194>; CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/2kxbup>).

"It's Our Space." The Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment has issued a guide and toolkit to help ensure that parks, streets and squares in towns and cities across the UK are well designed (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/2y6qfm>; CABE: <http://tinyurl.com/2h4xa7>).

Gardens. Thirty thousand gardens a year are being torn up by housing developers. MPs were urged to back a private members bill to reclassify gardens from brownfield to greenfield land. CPRE said it favoured more research into the issue, and stronger powers for local authorities to draw up their own policies to protect gardens from development (Standard: <http://tinyurl.com/3d8sx4>; Ecologist: <http://tinyurl.com/yrv44l>; Save Our Gardens: <http://tinyurl.com/yqbjcj>; Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/2zslg3>). Front gardens are under threat as more are turned into concrete parking spaces. CPRE Oxfordshire President Lord Bradshaw told the House of Lords that city gardens were being targeted by developers but Baroness Andrews said that there was "no evidence that any more building is taking place on city gardens than there ever has been." (Hansard: <http://tinyurl.com/2k82go>). The Royal Horticultural Society has launched a campaign to save them (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/2hblf6>).

Airfields, gardens and PPS3. The House of Lords debated whether airfields were threatened by PPS3. Baroness Andrews said PPS3 "makes it clear that there is no presumption that previously developed land is necessarily suitable for housing development or that the whole of the curtilage should be developed... That protects airfields in exactly the same way as it protects other sites." Yvette Cooper confirmed the statement on airfields in the House of Commons (Hansard: <http://tinyurl.com/24jl5l>).

Town centres threat. A survey of local authority planning officers, published by Friends of the Earth, raises fears that proposals to change the planning system may result in a new wave of out-of-town developments that damage town centres and increase car-use (FoE: <http://tinyurl.com/325xyt>).

Eco-towns built on brownfield land could lead the way in cutting carbon emissions and building affordable homes, Housing Minister Yvette Cooper, when she announced £2 million of funding for their design under the New Growth Points scheme (DCLG: <http://tinyurl.com/2dxqye>).

Planning Gain Supplement. The rural economy, its communities and environment will be disproportionately hit by the introduction of the PGS said the Country Land and Business Association (<http://tinyurl.com/24azj3>).

Gypsy sites. DCLG has issued guidance on preparing Regional Spatial Strategy reviews on Gypsies and Travellers sites (DCLG: <http://tinyurl.com/2xnzrz>).

4. Housing

Affordable rural housing. Future generations will be priced out of the countryside unless the Government acts over the chronic shortage of affordable rural homes, the National Housing Federation and CPRE said. They called for the recommendations of the Affordable Rural Housing Commission to be implemented (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/24uulh>; CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/354ur3>). **West Kent** Housing Association has warned that villages face being "mothballed" if more is not done to meet the needs of the county's rural communities (Kent News: <http://tinyurl.com/32ltd4>).

Social housing. The number of new social rented homes built in England fell by 50% over 7 years. Yvette Cooper revealed that councils and housing associations built 21,086 new social rented homes in 2003/04 compared with 42,465 in 1996/97 (Inside Housing: <http://tinyurl.com/2esrlc>).

Hills review. A review for DCLG, by Professor John Hills, is calling for a radical look at social housing. Hills says: "If social housing is to fulfil its potential, new approaches are needed. We need to move [to asking] 'How can we help you to afford decent housing?' and 'Here are your options'". (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/3yvpby>; report: <http://tinyurl.com/29z245>; Ruth Kelly speech <http://tinyurl.com/2alhny>). The Commission for Rural Communities welcomed the report (<http://tinyurl.com/yoa8o5>).

UK house-building hits highest levels since 1980s. According to NHBC, 185,000 new homes were built during 2006, a figure reminiscent of the housing boom of the late 1980s (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/2xjt9d>).

SE housing. Consultation on how £1.3 billion of housing investment should be spent over the next three years has been launched by the South East England Regional Housing Board (GOSE: <http://tinyurl.com/2a8sau>).

House design poor. 82% of new housing built over the last five years fails to measure up on design quality, the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment said. 29% of developments are so poor they should not have got planning permission, (CABE: <http://tinyurl.com/2kny5l>; Times: <http://tinyurl.com/2xoekc>).

Green housing. Britain's first entirely green housing estate, complete with wind turbines and rainwater harvesting facilities, is to be built in London's Docklands (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/35og8g>).

5. Transport

Lydd (Ashford) Airport. CPRE has linked its objections to proposed expansion of the airport with the national tranquillity campaign. Dr Hilary Newport said "the map illustrates perfectly what is at stake there: one of the South East's few havens of relative tranquillity is threatened by a calamitous proposed development." (CPRE Kent: <http://tinyurl.com/32mblt>). The expansion is threatening the oldest reserve under the management of the RSPB (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/2c88hp>). The Keep The Marsh Special Alliance said "we're talking millions of passengers and cars, huge congestion, and this area is the biggest centre for bird migration and bird conservation in south-east England." (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/3dfm4f>). SEERA told the Examination

in Public into the South East Plan that it did not see a regional role for Lydd. Trials with Boeing 737s at the airport have begun (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/2xe5e5>) but plans to run transatlantic flights between Manston in Kent and America have been scrapped due to lack of customers (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/3ce5u8>).

Redhill. Plans to develop Redhill Aerodrome for a year-round airfield or a 2,000-home village-style estate are also causing controversy (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/yvhv9f>). Yvette Cooper has confirmed that site is green belt land, reducing the threat of the village being built there (icSurrey: <http://tinyurl.com/yuksg9>).

Air space reshuffle. National Air Traffic Services wants to restructure Britain's air corridors and add new ones in preparation for a doubling of the number of flights over the UK from 2.4m a year today to almost 5m by 2030. It proposes new stacking areas, each covering up to 50 square miles. Nats also wants a new flight paths and heavier use of existing flight paths over Oxfordshire and Buckinghamshire (Sunday Times: <http://tinyurl.com/2cyehq>; Free Press: <http://tinyurl.com/2vwdqw>).

Thames crossing. Campaigners against the proposed Thames Gateway Bridge have called for the public inquiry to be reopened (<http://tinyurl.com/2gzarv>).

Clutter. The RAC and CPRE are working together to clear countryside clutter and improve safety (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/36wgcj>).

Quiet Lanes. A scheme in Gloucestershire has been declared a success (24dash: <http://tinyurl.com/25qqvu>).

6. Energy and Water

Waste water controversy. Singapore-based company Newater plans to keep water flowing along the Itchen, Dun and Test rivers even during drought periods by pumping thousands of cubic yards of treated sewage a day into their headwaters. Anglers are objecting. (The Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/2p3ua2>; This is Hampshire: <http://tinyurl.com/2s7ycm>; Argus: <http://tinyurl.com/3yd9ht>)

Thames Water. Ofwat is consulting on any regulatory issues arising from the new ownership by Kemble Water Ltd, a consortium led by Macquarie's European Infrastructure Funds (Ofwat: <http://tinyurl.com/2z8a8q>).

Upper Thames Reservoir. Oxfordshire County Council has said that the case for a reservoir has not been made and that fundamental questions had not been answered. It criticised Thames Water for going ahead with the Stage 2 consultation on design before the questions asked about need in Stage 1 had been answered (OCC: <http://tinyurl.com/2mjnqs>).

Wind power. Britain has is the seventh largest generator of wind power (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/2yf5hw>) and the fourth best country in which to invest in renewables (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/yqrx4e>). But the Observer said that wind farm projects have been stuck in planning "red tape" (<http://tinyurl.com/2kb9ge>). RWE npower is investing £100m investment in new wind farm developments, including at **Little Cheyne Court** in Kent (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/yqxfr3>). CPRE Kent is giving evidence at the **London Array** wind farm substation enquiry in Sittingbourne (CPRE Kent: <http://tinyurl.com/yov9g7>). 160 letters of objection were received by Lewes District Council against a 70m wind turbine in the South Downs AONB at **Glyndebourne**. CPRE Sussex, working with the Ramblers, South Downs Society and local residents have campaigned for the proposal to be refused. CPRE Sussex believe a less damaging and more sustainable option would be to locate the turbine offshore (<http://tinyurl.com/2xlanw>). The go-ahead has been given for a unique hybrid project in the Irish Sea which will generate electricity from wind and then gas from **Morecambe Bay** when wind dies down (Reuters: <http://tinyurl.com/38ej7l>). The debate over a wind turbine near Sheffield goes on, with CPRE in favour, councillors split and residents against (Sheffield Today: <http://tinyurl.com/3chcsx>).

7. Environment and Heritage

Green political standard. Nine of the UK's leading environmental groups, including CPRE, have joined forces to establish a set of environmental tests against which they intend to judge the three main parties in the lead-up to the General Election (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/3a9gp9>).

Light pollution. Bucks County Council has announced a trial scheme to turn off street light in a bid to save energy costs and reduce light pollution. Bucks CPRE chairman Peter Cleasby, said the move is a small but welcome step (Aylesbury Today: <http://tinyurl.com/2j2qda>; CPRE Bucks: <http://tinyurl.com/2zdkbo>).

Radley Lakes. When Mr and Mrs Coot settled to nest at Thrupp Lake in South Oxfordshire a few days ago, they were blissfully unaware of the injunctions served on residents and protesters, as well as the media. The innocuous coots spied security staff disguised in balaclavas and witnessed a protest march of 550 people but they had no clue that they themselves were local heroes. Part of the work to clear and drain Thrupp Lake has been halted until the coots leave their nest at the end of the summer. RWE npower still hope to fill the lake with fly ash but a public hearing into Town Green status is due in April and that may yet halt their work. In The Guardian George Monbiot said that "the harassment law now being used against anti-dumping protesters in Oxfordshire is turning into the riot act of our day" and the editor of the Oxford Times said that "every protest group should be worried about this, as should every newspaper." More on this, and the extensive local and national coverage at CPRE Oxfordshire (<http://tinyurl.com/yztntc>).

Polluted lakes. Nearly 400 of Britain's most wildlife-rich lakes are being stifled by pollution the Environment Agency said. They are being devastated by sewage and farming (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/2f6bkz>).

In praise of... tranquillity. The Government has often recognised the value of rural tranquillity, yet it has done too little so far to protect it, CPRE complained (PA: <http://tinyurl.com/3ch9p6>). Responding to CPRE's tranquillity campaign, the Guardian Leader asked where Wordsworth would find today "emotion recollected in tranquillity" (<http://tinyurl.com/yrtfv>). On 7 March, MP John Penrose presented a ten minute rule bill to Parliament. The Bill seeks to establish an indicator for rural tranquillity and to provide for protection of rural tranquillity in the planning process (CPRE: <http://tinyurl.com/253te3>; Hansard: <http://tinyurl.com/2m2s4u>).

Incinerator. East Sussex County Council has approved plans for an incinerator on North Quay, Newhaven (Seaford Today: <http://tinyurl.com/25hds7>). Protesters against the incinerator fought a long-running campaign that led to nearly 15,000 written objections, and 44 conditions were in place to tackle issues of construction, dust and noise (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/2r6k7a>; Argus <http://tinyurl.com/276qla>).

EU Liability Directive "fails to protect". Genewatch and other groups, including Sussex Wildlife Trust, are alarmed about the UK's implementation of the Environment Liability Directive. Although intended to protect biodiversity, land and water from environmental harm, it currently excludes 3,000 SSSIs and 375 BAP species (Genewatch: <http://tinyurl.com/yvrp7>; Argus: <http://tinyurl.com/2j95bq>). Defra says that its policy is minimal implementation of EU Directives (Defra: <http://tinyurl.com/yw9x6o>).

Heritage protection. Developers seeking to build skyscrapers in Britain's world heritage sites will be banned under proposals in the Government's White Paper on heritage protection. Britain's 27 world heritage sites will get the same protection as national parks and AONBs (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/2lmtxe>). CPRE welcomed the proposals but called for more heritage resources (<http://tinyurl.com/3yxz4u>).

South Downs National Park. CPRE Sussex say they are delighted with the decision not to push the Meyrick Appeal any further and now look forward to some moves to restart the designation process for the South Downs National Park.

8. Rural Matters

Coastal access. Natural England is seeking a new right of access to the coast. It wants to create a clear and well managed public access along the entire 4000 km length of England's coast (Natural England: <http://tinyurl.com/2mllgm>; Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/yqtxvh>). The RSPB is worried that havens for rare wild birds could be harmed by disturbance from visitors (Times: <http://tinyurl.com/2j8w92>; Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/3757xz>). The Country Land and Business Association said the proposals were draconian, while the NFU warned they would lead to confrontation and controversy (Farmers Weekly: <http://tinyurl.com/2gssyt>; Farming UK: <http://tinyurl.com/3bqxjd>).

Rowing rights row. A Private Member's Bill proposing a 'right-to-row' on all rivers in England and Wales would destroy riparian owners' rights, according to the Country Land Association (Farmers Weekly: <http://tinyurl.com/2z6qb9>). Canoeists and anglers are at odds (Telegraph: <http://tinyurl.com/2s8q7y>).

Off road ban. Campaigners who have been battling for ten years to save part of the South Downs Way from off-road bikers and 4x4 drivers have won another round to keep them off the track which runs along the Downs from Cocking through Heyshott to Graffham (Chichester Observer: <http://tinyurl.com/3xose3>).

Rural contentment. A survey of 4,000 people in rural areas has revealed high levels of contentment with their life in the country, but concern over the loss of rural services and environmental issues such as fly-tipping. Space is the best thing about living in the countryside (49%), followed by quietness (23%) and community (18%). 90% had a positive or very positive view of farmers (NFU: <http://tinyurl.com/39zw5l>; full survey: <http://tinyurl.com/2epn7>).

Local food and farming. The environmental benefits of organic and local food production are not clear-cut, according to a report by Manchester Business School for DEFRA (Farmers Weekly: <http://tinyurl.com/36kqp2>). Another study has warned that many of Britain's fells and pastures are in danger of disappearing unless consumers buy more home-grown farm produce (BBC: <http://tinyurl.com/2jz3ak>). The rural economy is no longer dominated by farming (Independent: <http://tinyurl.com/2jv5d2>). The NFU has launched a campaign to highlight the contribution British farming makes to the nation (Farmers Weekly: <http://tinyurl.com/32wkwf>).

Environmental stewardship. Natural England suggested that it would like to "raise the bar" on access into the Entry Level Stewardship Scheme, so public money secured real environmental benefits. The original thinking behind the scheme was that it should be a 'broad and shallow' scheme open to all producers (Farmers Weekly: <http://tinyurl.com/2qalmn>). It also announced streamlining of the applications for Higher Level Stewardship (Natural England: <http://tinyurl.com/3dcloud>). A deal on "voluntary modulation", the bureaucratic EU mechanism that allows the UK to fund environmental stewardship schemes, seems set to be signed in Brussels shortly (Farmers Weekly: <http://tinyurl.com/3bxx55>).

Rural Buildings Award Scheme. The Country Landowners Association has launched a scheme to find the best rural buildings across England and Wales (<http://tinyurl.com/2upjm6>).

Rural bloggers. In Kent, Deputy Director Sean Furey has launched a blog "to keep folk up to date and involved with what is going on with our campaigns around the county" (<http://tinyurl.com/2v2wgl>). CPRE Chief Executive **Sean Spears** has launched a national blog following David Miliband's speech to CPRE last Friday (<http://tinyurl.com/2z5dpp>).

9. And Finally...

Housing numbers shock. A page that appeared on the GOSE website a few days ago says that we need 28,000 houses per year in the South East (<http://tinyurl.com/3aq34a>). The South East Plan of course argues for 28,900 houses a year, so it a relief to that see GOSE now thinks that this is too a high a figure. In the next South East eBulletin: "Pigs seen flying over Guildford"...

10. EiP Diary

30 March. EiP examination sessions end.

End of July: EiP inspectors report recommends any changes they think may be needed for the South East Plan.

21 September: The government publishes any proposed changes it wants to make to the South East Plan.

21 September to 14 December: Government consultation on any proposed changes to the South East Plan.

December to February 2008: Government considers consultation responses

29 February 2008: Final South East Plan is published by Government and becomes a legal document.

11. Abbreviations and Links

DCLG: [Department of Communities and Local Government](#). EiP: [Examination in Public](#). GOSE: [Government Office of the South East](#). SEEDA: [South East England Development Agency](#). SEERA: [South East England Regional Assembly](#). SPA: [Special Protection Area](#). TBHSPA: [Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area](#).

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