

KENTVOICE

Protecting Kent's Heritage
Spring/Summer 2013

**A bitter anniversary:
The NPPF one year on.**

www.protectkent.org.uk



KENTVOICE



Editor's Report



Jamie Weir

Dear Reader,

Now that the days are getting warmer (admittedly very slowly!) and the nights are brighter for longer with summer fast approaching, we are bringing you a fully packed edition of Kent Voice to keep you going until autumn!

Since our last edition we have been fighting many new proposed developments in our campaign to 'Keep Kent Beautiful' and many of these have been related to energy. Both our Chairman and our Director are concerned with energy in this edition and whilst Richard Knox-Johnston gives an outline of the various options available to explore, Director Hilary Newport takes a closer look at the costs and benefits of solar energy.

The beginning of 2013 brought us the anniversary of the NPPF and Senior Planner Brian Lloyd explores the issues that this has brought with it on pages 4, 5 and 6.

Andrew Ogden, our Campaigns manager poses the question, 'can we put a value on our countryside'? Turn to page 26 to find out what he decides.

One of the lesser known aspects of our work is that of our Historic Buildings Committee, and the secretary, Graham Horner updates us on one of their more recent successes.

Vicki Ellis, our Office Manager and resident ecology enthusiast has penned an excellent article on one of our countryside's more misunderstood residents and argues that the reality is far from the perception - find out which on pages 10 and 11.

Our countryside is one of the most precious gifts that we can preserve for our future generations. It really is only with your help as members that we are as strong as we can be; we are always looking for new and enthusiastic volunteers to help us with the work we do at CPRE Protect Kent so if you feel you could help, please get in touch with the office at info@protectkent.org.uk You don't need to be an expert in planning to help us as we have committees which work on a diverse range of topics such as transport issues in Kent or marketing and fundraising for the charity so if you feel you have the time, get in touch with the office for a chat!

Jamie Weir

Editor

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Chairman's Welcome

Energy Crisis!

Richard Knox-Johnston

If no action is taken soon we could be facing an energy crisis. This may sound dramatic but for the last twenty years governments have failed to plan for the situation.

Governments appear to believe that by erecting wind turbines on and off-shore, they will be able to provide all the energy we need. However power is only generated when there is a wind. There is as yet no solution to the storage of the power generated and although research is taking place, no-one has yet been able to solve the problem.

When the weather is very cold, this often coincides with high pressure and little wind. So the question needs to be asked whether they can make a serious contribution to our energy concerns. There is also the problem of the effect of turbines on landscape, especially since they are now twice as large as the original turbines and therefore have greater impact.

Solar panels are able to generate power but again only when there is light. The greatest energy need is at night when they will provide little support. Again what about the landscape? There are some sights where the land is not of the highest agricultural value. However the value to agriculture appears to be ignored, as some of the recent planning decisions do not appear to take it into account. This is at a time when we have been through a meat



scandal and shoppers are beginning to value home grown products. We are likely to need all the quality agricultural land available in the future as imported food becomes more expensive. There appears to be no national policy about where solar panels should be erected.

Then there is nuclear energy. This too has its challenges, such as the safe disposal of atomic waste. A major advantage is that it does not produce carbon dioxide and can produce energy 24/7. However governments have dallied for long enough and have not given sufficiently clear guidelines and support to the energy companies for any of them to commit to building a nuclear power station. There is unlikely to be any new nuclear power station for at least ten years. Will it be in time?

Then there is the latest idea which is fracking. Fracking is where a pipe is drilled into the ground and a water / sand mixture is forced into the cracks in the shale layer to release the gas held there. This could be a short or long term solution but as yet no-one, least of all the mining companies, can say with certainty what reserves there are. There is also the concern of further Carbon Dioxide, although it will be less than is produced by the present power stations.

The questions that need to be asked on fracking are:

What are the risks? How can these risks be reduced or eliminated? What regulation will need to be in place? How will this regulation be monitored and policed? Most important – what will be the effect on the landscape?

Is fracking the answer? At the time of the Kingsnorth Power Station dispute, the energy companies told us that Carbon Capture and Storage (CCS) would solve the problem of Carbon Dioxide getting into the atmosphere. However no-one has appeared to have mastered the science and power companies have ceased to invest in it.

Are there alternatives to coal, nuclear, wind turbines, and fracking? It is unlikely that there is a replacement for all four of them. We could, however, consider reducing the overall energy need by ensuring that all properties, new and old, are properly insulated. What is needed is the changing and tightening of building regulations.

Whatever happens we need a clear vision for the future and in the meantime we are likely to see more desperate measures in order to fill the energy gap.



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What's become of the Plan-led Planning System?

Now that the National Planning Policy Framework is a year old, Brian Lloyd, Protect Kent's Senior Planner, considers what the implications are for the Plan-led planning system.



Brian Lloyd

A year ago, on the 27th March 2012, the Government issued the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) setting out its new planning policies for England. Recasting and condensing over 1,000 pages of previous national policy into just 59 pages, the NPPF is designed to achieve sustainable development and positive growth.

When it was issued as a draft in 2011, the NPPF caused wide-spread consternation because of its near unrestrained support for development and its consequential threat to our precious countryside. But a high profile campaign by CPRE and the National Trust, supported by the Daily Telegraph, ensured that the final version was significantly reined-in, though it is far from perfect.

Reflecting the Government's localism policy, the NPPF advocates and supports a Plan-led approach to planning. This means that planning decisions should be made in accordance with locally prepared plans; i.e. Local Plans prepared by the local planning authorities and Neighbourhood Plans prepared by local communities. This, of course, is a matter of planning law in any event, as Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 states:

"If regard is to be had to the development plan for the purpose of any determination to be made under the planning Acts, the determination is to be made in accordance with the plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise."

However, the NPPF contains a twist on this, and on the stroke of midnight on the 27th March 2013 the principle of Plan-led decision making took a giant step backwards. From then planning decisions will be made in accordance with the NPPF and any locally agreed plans will only be taken into account if they are deemed to be consistent with it.



The Plan-led approach to planning has been enshrined in planning legislation for the last 20 years or so, and because Local Plans are prepared locally, in consultation with local people, they tick all the localism boxes. Local Plans may not be perfect, and they may not please everyone, but at least they are local plans.

Quite rightly the NPPF is a material consideration in making planning decisions, and national planning policy has always been so. But paragraphs 214 and 215 of the NPPF fundamentally change the relationship between the regard to be given to national policy and that to be given to local plans.

They state:

“214. For 12 months from the day of publication [of the NPPF], decision-takers may continue to give full weight to relevant policies adopted since 2004 even if there is a limited degree of conflict with this Framework.”

“215. In other cases and following this 12-month period, due weight should be given to relevant policies in existing plans according to their degree of consistency with this framework (the closer the policies in the plan to the policies in the Framework, the greater the weight that may be given).”

In short, after 27th March 2013 any plan adopted since 2004 will only have the full force of Section 38(6) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act if it is deemed to be consistent with the NPPF. If it isn't, then the provisions of the NPPF will prevail.

This is an important change to the Plan-led approach for two reasons.

Firstly, the NPPF requires local planning authorities in their plans to demonstrate that they have “specific deliverable sites sufficient to provide five years worth of housing against their housing requirements with an additional buffer of 5%”. This requirement was not included in earlier national planning policy, so plans adopted prior to March 2012 will not include this provision, and thus will not be consistent with the NPPF.

Secondly, the NPPF contains a “**presumption in favour of sustainable development**”.

This, as explained in the NPPF, means that where the plan is absent, silent or relevant policies are out-of-date, planning permission should be granted unless:

there are any adverse impacts of doing so that would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in the NPPF taken as a whole; or specific policies in the NPPF indicate development should be restricted.



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The up-shot of this is that all the while local plans are not in place that provide sufficient housing sites to satisfy the requirements of the NPPF, developers are likely to submit speculative planning applications which they will argue will meet a local housing shortfall. Local authorities will then be obliged to permit these applications under the 'presumption in favour of sustainable development', unless other policies in the NPPF can be used to refuse them.

If the local authority itself does not approve them, there is every chance that they will be granted on appeal by a planning inspector.

The question that local authorities must now ask themselves is not so much 'is this development good enough to be permitted' but rather 'is there a good reason why this development should not be permitted'. The whole emphasis has changed.

It will inevitably be the case, and it is already happening, that house builders will use this 'loop-hole' to make speculative planning applications for greenfield development involving sites not identified for development in local plans, whilst local authorities seek to up-date their plans to accord with the NPPF. One such proposal is in Dover District where a planning application for around 500 dwellings at the Western Heights and Farthingloe has been submitted by China Gateway International Limited. We wait to see how the District Council deal with this proposal, which involves land entirely in the countryside and partly within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

So much for the Plan-led system and localism in planning decision making.

Kent is very vulnerable to this change. None of the local authorities in Kent, or Medway Council, have an adopted Local Plan that it can be said with confidence is entirely consistent with the NPPF. Only one Plan in Kent, the Ashford Urban Sites and

Infrastructure DPD, has been adopted since the NPPF was issued in March 2012, so that may be sufficient to protect Ashford Borough. But elsewhere, some local authorities – especially Canterbury, Gravesham, Maidstone, Medway, Shepway, Swale and Thanet - still do not even have an adopted plan under the new plan making regime set up by the 2004 Act and rely on old style Local Plans. In one case the current Local Plan dates back 1994.

These areas will all be very vulnerable, and there can be little doubt that developers, encouraged by their lawyers, will be testing the robustness of these old plans by making speculative planning applications. The developer has nothing to lose and everything to gain.

It is very likely that the coming months, probably years, will be very challenging for Protect Kent and large swathes of our countryside will be under threat of unplanned and speculative development proposals. We will do what we can to fight them, but the strongest line of defence is to have up-to-date local plans in place as soon as possible so that the Plan-led planning system is restored.

“The developer has nothing to lose and everything to gain.”





Email addresses

We will shortly be sending out a small survey electronically to members whose email addresses we have. We would really appreciate you filling it in and returning it to the charity as it will help us understand what we are doing well, and the areas which we need to work on to make the charity better for you. For those Kent Voice readers who are not sure whether we have your email address, please let us know it by emailing us at

info@protectkent.org.uk

Easy-fundraising

If you shop online, please consider joining 'Easyfundraising' to help support CPRE Protect Kent. By shopping via this site with your favourite online retailers, you can help the charity raise funds and the best thing about it is that it doesn't cost you anything. Just go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk to find out more about how you can help.

Specialist groups

*We encourage all of our members to take up an active role within the Branch. We are particularly keen to hear from professional people who have an expertise in **planning, environmental, rural, or transport matters**. The positions ideally suits retired or semi-retired experts who have a desire to serve their communities. No need for a formal application ! Just contact the Branch Office (Contact details available on page 35) and you will be put in touch with the relevant Chairman.*

*Let us know your email address.
Please send it to info@protectkent.org.uk at the earliest opportunity, so we can update our records.*



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“Can a price be put on our countryside?”



Andrew Ogden

Our name is Protect Kent, so it should appear obvious what we do. As the Kent branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England, the focus of our aims is evident too – Kent’s wonderful countryside. However, when it comes to describing why we protect Kent’s countryside we have to rely on subjective and sometimes intangible terms such as landscape, open-ness and tranquillity. We also use adjectives such as glorious and beautiful, which as ever is in the eye of the beholder.

None of these terms chimes with the ‘bean counters’ of our modern world, who strive to reduce everything to something more quantifiable, in most cases pounds and pence. The latest target of their efforts, steered by the new science of environmental economics, is nature itself.

Recent studies for the Treasury suggest that Green Belt land can be valued at

nearly £2.5 million per hectare per annum, to put a price on its amenity value. Similar metrics have been applied to other features, with even single trees being valued at an average of £360 each.

So should everything be reduced to a monetary value? The immediate answer is usually a very definite NO, preceded by exclamations of horror and alarm. This comes from the immediate perception that the countryside could be carved up into parcels or collections of items, and sold off to businesses as an investment. However, there can be certain advantages in adopting this approach, particularly if independent and accurate analyses are applied.

But first, let’s take stock of the current situation. Every square metre of land is owned by someone, including The Crown, and therefore can already be given a monetary value. Due to the compact nature of our country, much of the undeveloped land is given over to farming; this will have a separate value based on its productivity. Even the subjective terms such as tranquillity can be quantified in fiscal terms by relating it to tourism and the local financial gains. To an extent, much of the work of valuing our countryside has already been completed, and has been with us for a number of years.





The benefit of putting a price on nature comes out of the science of environmental economics itself. This requires a complex and holistic approach to the valuation of any item in the countryside, at a level akin to a full environmental impact assessment (EIA). Many factors in a sometimes lengthy 'shopping list' are used to build up the overall estimate – and this is the key. Such detailed investigation exposes hitherto unknown links between natural features, and more especially between them and human activity, showing-up the inter-dependence of the various systems and mechanisms. The results can be monetary values far in excess of those expected or previously used. This can obviously work to our advantage when arguing against development on green-field sites.

The additional bonus of being able to see this spider's web of links, is that new, more sustainable ways of managing the countryside can be developed. This often comes out of relationships forged between the users and custodians of the environment.

In time (and with some investment and effort) CPRE could work this to our advantage. We may be able to realistically demand a full 'environmental economic assessment' for any major development, in a similar way that we ask for an EIA. This would then leave us to chase two other as-yet 'difficult to accurately quantify' elements of any development: its total carbon footprint, and the biggest intangible of all, its sustainability.

This is a discussion item and does not necessarily reflect the views or policies of CPRE in general.



British Wasps

British Wasps – A Gardeners Friend! Our British wasps are much misunderstood and regarded by some as pests and of no real use. This is not the case.



Vicky Ellis



Contrary to common belief wasps are in fact a great asset to have in the garden. They hunt down garden pests and are masters of architecture, building the most amazing nests from wood pulp. Wasps are not as aggressive as you might think and will only generally sting as a very last resort, with our only British Hornet being the gentle giant of the wasp world. So read on and find out a little more about our great British wasps.

There are eight species of wasp in Britain, nine if you include the one species of hornet. The two main types include the Common wasp - *Vespa Vulgaris* and the German Wasp – *Vespula Germanica*.

The Common wasp is a social insect which lives in colonies in beautiful papery nests constructed from wood pulp. The queen emerges from hibernation usually around April or May depending on weather conditions. She then needs to find a suitable place in which to begin her nest building, occupying hollows of trees, underground burrows, bushes (see fig. 1), or cavities and loft spaces. She collects wood fibres by chewing the wood and mixing with her saliva and then carrying the pulp to her chosen nest site.

She begins to create a comb to house eggs consisting initially of around 30 cells. She feeds the larvae until they pupate. All these female drones then continue where the queen has left of. They continue to build and can create a nest with cells which number in the thousands. The temperature of the nest is maintained at around 30°C no matter what the temperature is outside. As the adults feed the grubs' insects the grubs in turn exude a sweet liquid which feed the adults. When the grubs are ready they spin a silk cap over the top of their cell and emerge as adults. From laying of egg to hatching of adult takes on average 3 – 4 weeks.

As the cells are re-used more wasps are bred than there are cells. When the nest has reached capacity, towards the end of the summer months, the rest of the larvae are then fed extra portions and develop into fertile males and females, who mate with the males and will eventually go on to be queens themselves. Once the new queens have hatched the life cycle of the nest is effectively over. The queen ceases to lay any more eggs and there are no grubs left to feed the workers so they go in search of other



Fig. 1 Typical Wasps nest.

sources of sugar which is when wasps may become pests as they seek out food. Eventually the new queens leave the nest to hibernate over winter and the nest activity dies down. Eventually all the workers left die off by around late October depending on the weather. The nest is not reused.

Our British Hornet (see fig.2) is unique in several ways, they hunt both day and night, are totally unaggressive choosing to try and chase you away rather than sting and the larvae produce a sweet tasting nectar which feeds the adults, the young feed on the prey which the adults bring them. Hornets used to be common but their numbers declined rapidly in the 50s and 60s and are only now stabilising. The size of our hornet starts at around up to 25 mm for workers, 28 mm for males and queens can reach an impressive length of up to 36 mm.

The hornet is the gentle giant of the wasp family and very rarely stings unless it feels its nest is under imminent danger.

They are agile flyers being able to fly up, down, forwards and reverse with 250 wing beats per second and have a speed of 2.5 metres per second (5.5 miles per hour). Contrary to common belief they actually do not randomly attack, they only really sting if they feel themselves or their nest is under imminent danger with one of the eight species being extremely placid and almost never stinging. So next time you see a wasps nest, admire the skill of the wasp to create something so wondrous and sit back and relax, comfortable in the knowledge that your garden pests will be taken care of and that the wasps nest will be gone by the time October/November arrives.



Why wasps are useful and other wasp facts.

- They hunt flies, aphids, caterpillars etc; so are brilliant bio-controls in the garden.
- Only the female has a stinger.
- They build the most beautiful nests, a real wonder and true architects of the natural world.
- Wasp nests also provide a home for pollinating hoverflies.
- They eat up rotten fruit.
- Olfactory sensors located in their antennae, are able to detect chemicals in the air in concentrations of only a few parts per billion. Because of this talent they may be used in the fight against drugs and terrorists explosives.

Innovative Rennie building



Brian Graham Homer



Photos: two external showing the north elevation and the north-east corner (the only window frames still visible – cast iron frames, tilting sashes at 1/F), one internal showing the modular cast iron beams and joists.

retrieved at Sheerness

The CPRE Protect Kent Historic Buildings Committee (PKHBC) is always on the lookout for threats to the County's unmatched stock of listed and other valuable buildings. It speaks on these issues on behalf of the Council for British Archaeology (CBA) who recently described the Committee as one of its most active agents. Secretary Graham Horner reports on a recent success.

Early last year, the Committee joined with a number of other heritage conservation organisations to oppose the demolition of the Grade II* listed Working Mast House at Sheerness Docks to make way for a wind turbine manufacturing plant. The developer (Vestas) touted the environmental benefits of wind power and job creation as reasons why the demolition should be considered "wholly exceptional" under the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). This argument was accepted by Swale Borough Council who voted to approve. We could not accept, though, that the demolition was absolutely necessary to obtain these benefits. We had submitted three alternative layouts for the facility, clearly demonstrating that there were solutions which did not involve loss of the heritage assets.

Before the approval was issued Vestas withdrew but the port itself (supported by the Borough and County Councils) was keen to get planning consent so as to attract alternative investors. Swale now accepted our argument that any new developer might have very different ideas about how to lay out the site. The demolition applications for the Mast House and the Pumphouse for the dry-docks were withdrawn and outline planning permission for the rest has now been granted. Probably, the case for demolition will be made again should a new developer emerge.

The Working Mast House (1826) is one of the few remaining buildings from the time of the re-building of the Royal Naval Dockyard which John Rennie Snr designed. It is a brick-walled

two-storey building with a cast iron internal structure and roof. The modular scheme developed by architect Edward Holl, and perhaps Rennie himself, was innovative and must have made for very economic and quick construction. Although parts of the structure are missing, as are many windows, the building still says a lot about the early days of metal-framed structures and the latter days of wooden shipbuilding.

The case raised a number of issues about the balance between public benefits and harm to an important heritage asset. In particular, the CBA's specialist

conservation team questioned the legitimacy of using the environmental benefits of wind power to outweigh any heritage arguments. There was also much debate about the value of reconstructing the building on a remote site, divorced from its associated structures, all of which are now hidden from view. The developer convinced the Council and English Heritage that it was better to spend

money on smartening up the remaining heritage assets in the Dockyard (including the Grade I Boat Store) and providing for some public access to them. In our opinion however, what was proposed barely exceeded the port's existing obligation to protect and preserve the heritage in the Docks.

We had submitted three alternative layouts for the facility, clearly demonstrating that there were solutions which did not involve loss of the heritage assets.

Local Plan Round-up



The following provides the latest round-up of Local Plans (including Core Strategies and Development Plan Documents (DPDs)) currently under preparation across Kent. This reflects the situation as we understand it as we went to press. For completeness, the up-date now also notes the plans that have already been adopted.



In addition to the plans listed below, each local authority will have an old style local plan which, to varying degrees, will have 'saved' policies that are still relevant in considering planning applications. These policies will gradually be replaced as new plans are adopted and details of currently 'saved' policies are provided on the local authority web-sites.

Ashford

- Core Strategy adopted July 2008.
- Town Centre DPD adopted February 2010
- Tenterden and Rural Sites DPD adopted October 2010
- Urban Sites and Infrastructure DPD adopted October 2012
- The examination of the Chilmington Green Area Action Plan DPD was held in January 2013, but the Inspector's report had not been submitted by the time we went to press. Ashford Borough Council has already indicated that it will be consulting further on a number of modifications that arose during the examination.
- In August 2012 the Borough Council started a consultation on future employment and housing growth in the Borough as the first step in preparing its new Local Plan to 2030. This will replace the currently adopted Core Strategy. The consultation ran to the end of October. Further consultation on the Local Plan is expected during 2013, though dates have not been specified by the Council.

Canterbury

- Herne Bay Area Action Plan DPD adopted April 2010
- Following further delay it is now expected that the City Council will consult on a single draft Local Plan in the early summer of 2013

Dartford

- Core Strategy adopted September 2011
- The Borough Council is proposing to undertake initial scoping consultation on a Site Allocations and Development Management Plan in the summer of 2013

Dover

- Core Strategy adopted February 2010
- Formal consultation on the pre-submission Site Allocations DPD closed in February 2013, and the Plan was expected to be submitted for examination around the time we went to press. The examination is expected to be held in the summer.

Gravesham

- Following some delay, the formal pre-submission consultation on the Core Strategy was undertaken between December 2012 and February 2013. It is expected that the Plan will be submitted for examination in the spring with the examination likely in the summer.

Maidstone

- Affordable Housing DPD adopted December 2006
- Open Space DPD adopted December 2006
- Following consultation on proposed strategic allocations last summer, the Borough Council has now decided to produce a single revised Local Plan incorporating the Core Strategy (including strategic sites) and the proposed Development Delivery Local Plan. Further consultation is now scheduled for October 2013. However, the Council has formally agreed a revised 'working' housing target of 14,800 dwellings and strategic site allocations for development management purposes, which will be subject to further consultation in 2014.

Sevenoaks

- Core Strategy adopted February 2011
- Formal pre-submission consultation on the Site Allocations and Development Management Policies DPD Commenced in March with representations invited by 2nd May. Following this the plan will be submitted for examination, which is likely to be held in the autumn.
- We understand that the District Council is working towards undertaking initial consultation on a Gypsy and Traveller DPD in the spring of 2013.

Shepway

- The examination of the Core Strategy was re-opened in early March 2013 and the Inspector's final report is awaited. It is anticipated that the Plan will be adopted in the autumn.
- The District Council intends to undertake initial consultation on an Allocations and Development Management Plan in the autumn.

Swale

- The Borough Council is now intending to prepare a single new Local Plan rather than just a Core Strategy and is reviewing its plan preparation programme. No dates for further consultations have been made public.

Thanet

- Cliftonville DPD adopted February 2010
- The District Council decided in January 2013 to prepare a single new Local Plan rather than just a Core Strategy, and intends to consult on 'high level' options in June and then on more detailed matters in January 2014.

Tonbridge and Malling

- Core Strategy adopted September 2007
- Development Land Allocations DPD adopted April 2008
- Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan DPD adopted April 2008
- Managing Development and the Environment DPD adopted April 2010
- The Borough Council has decided to start a review of the adopted plans, however details of the review have not yet been announced.

Tunbridge Wells

- Core Strategy adopted June 2010
- The Borough Council has decided that its proposed Allocations DPD and Town Centres Area Action Plan DPD will be combined into a single Site Allocations Plan. Consultation on a draft plan commenced in March and will run through to the 24th May.
- A Development Management Policies Plan is also proposed, but no timing details for this are currently available.

Medway

- The examination of the Medway Core Strategy formally re-opened in January 2013 to enable the Inspector to further consider issues relating to the proposed Lodge Hill development site in the light of further background work on environmental compensation and mitigation. The Inspector's final report is awaited.

KCC

- In February 2013 a consultation on proposed mineral safeguarding areas was undertaken. Consultation of the pre-submission Waste and Minerals Core Strategy is expected in June.
- There will be no further consultation on the Mineral and Waste Sites Plans until after the Core Strategy is adopted.



Airfield of Dreams

By Andrew Ogden and Jamie Weir

The Public Inquiry into the expansion of London Ashford Airport (LAA) at Lydd finished on 22nd September 2011 and after months of waiting, we finally have a decision. Disappointingly, the two Secretaries of State responsible have given their consent to development at the airport.

This is not the decision that CPRE Protect Kent had hoped for given the strength of the case against such development. Robust opposition was presented at the Inquiry, relating to the impacts of LAA's proposals on designated conservation sites, nuclear safety, local communities, and in particular Greatstone Primary School. Protect Kent highlighted the detrimental impacts that increased airline activity would have on the Romney Marsh, significantly its landscape and tranquillity, with possible repercussions on the tourist trade in this unique corner of England.

However, the Secretaries of State have concluded that LAA's plans "would not have any significant effect" on any of these special features

of the Marsh or its people. Protect Kent find this quite remarkable and believe there has been little or no consideration of the facts presented in opposition, but instead an over-riding pursuit of speculative regeneration for the area.

This is clearly evidenced in the 365-page report from the Department for Communities and Local Government and the Department for Transport, where it states (paragraph 42) "they attach significant weight to the need to support economic growth through the planning system." Yet at the Inquiry it was shown that the promise of jobs and economic regeneration, so often used as 'bargaining currency' to support planning applications, was wildly exaggerated, notional and conditional. In reality, the accurate levels of employment that are likely to be created are less than 10% of the number of jobs that LAA originally claimed would be generated." It has been suggested that to raise such false expectations amongst the local communities who are desperate for jobs, is un-ethical.

However, Protect Kent believes an important question remains unanswered: "will it ever happen?" After all, it is not the airport operators who dictate the activities of the industry, but the airline operators, who in turn respond to the demands of their customers. Forecasts for the future suggest that the growth in demand is decreasing and the Government's own research is likely to recommend expansion at existing international airports. So for London Ashford Airport the story could read 'if they build it, nobody will come'.





At CPRE Protect Kent we are lucky enough to have a very talented and creative President who never misses an opportunity to help stand up for our beautiful Kentish countryside. At our 2012 AGM, we were treated to a new poem which Graham had written that encapsulates his feelings on why we should be defending our landscapes and his fears for the future.

“Don’t Look Behind You Grandpa”

Graham Clarke

I had a marvellous notion to do an Andrew Motion
Poet, President of CPRE
But as your Kentish President
I’m your poet resident
Sorry, but you must make do with me
With slightly dodgy timing
And less than perfect rhyming
Like Shakespeare said “Now lend your ears to me”

My grandsons and I stood on a hill
Admiring the farmlands below
Green as green as green can be
Except in the winter snow

“You really love it Grandpa” they said
“Indeed I do” says I
The farms, the churches, the castle, the woods
All ‘neath our Kentish sky

“Then don’t look behind you Grandpa” they said
“There’s a sight to make you cry
Ugly red houses row upon row, all concrete and hardly a tree
Villages lost beneath tarmac and transport
And you said you were CPRE”
How guilty felt I to lose the green belt
And for grandsons to blame it on me?

©Graham Clarke 2012

The costs and benefits of Solar

Clean, green and quiet: is solar energy the solution to our power needs?



Dr Hilary Newport

The Chairman's article on p3 highlights the confusion surrounding our national energy policy but while debate rages around energy efficiency and the supply of clean energy, a new trend for large scale solar farms on greenfield land appears to be emerging across Kent. Some have been built, others have received permission, and still others are in pre-application consultation. They are incentivised by the feed-in tariffs which will guarantee the price for each unit of energy generated, offering a premium rate over normal wholesale electricity prices.

Kent's examples range in size up to 100 or more acres, often on good-quality agricultural land, and herein lies the root of a potential conundrum which sits at the heart of good planning; where should we focus our priorities for constructive and productive use of our land, to maximise the benefits for all?

Britain's green spaces deliver a host of private and public benefits, some mutually compatible and some inherently not. We need our countryside for food and fuel production; for the protection and enhancement of our diverse and precious flora and fauna; for flood mitigation and the natural attenuation of



rainfall to feed our water resources; for 'green lungs', and for recreation, leisure and for our physical and psychological health.

Central to the arguments around energy policy is the issue of climate instability and the need to lower the fossil CO₂



emissions of 21st century life. This places one more pressure on our hard-working countryside; to what extent should we divert the use of productive agricultural land from food and other uses to the reduction of carbon emissions? Solar farms, like on-shore wind turbines or the use of agricultural land for growing energy crops, will have their part to play in addressing these balances.

The principle of providing clean energy as part of a sustainable solution to Britain's future energy needs is of course worthy of support. However, just as is the case with any other built infrastructure, the issue is whether its negative ecological and landscape impacts can be considered acceptable in the face of the benefits it will deliver.

Photovoltaic panels embedded in the glass balcony fronts (top floor) offer a degree of privacy as well as generating clean energy at BedZED (Beddington Zero Energy Development, Sutton).



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So what are the alternative options?

For household installations and large-scale solar farm applications alike, the subsidies which incentivise solar energy are available only for a range of pre-approved types of solar panel; these tend towards the standard black-glass, metal-framed panels which are now such a familiar sight on household roofs across the country. They do the job that they were designed for, but it's hard to argue that they are inherently attractive.

Meanwhile, technology moves on; photovoltaic cells embedded within toughened glass panels are already in use and technologies are emerging which can print a photoelectric film between layers of sheet glass which can be used in a wide variety of architectural applications

Rather than arguing over the relative merits of agricultural production vs solar energy production for our countryside, perhaps we should redirect our attention to urban areas. Acres of roof space exist in the warehouses, industrial facilities and the edge-of-town tin sheds which make up so much of the modern retail and commercial experience. Indeed, many farms will boast significant areas of roof space on modern barns and other buildings. Where the locations are appropriate, should we not be focusing the installation of solar photovoltaics on these, rather than on the best and most versatile agricultural land? Meanwhile, support for technology improvements for solar panels that are increasingly indistinguishable from ordinary domestic roof tiles or other architectural materials could dramatically change our energy output from solar without requiring additional land-take over that already allocated for housing or commercial development - and would look just as visually appealing as any other well-designed scheme. Perhaps more importantly, it would open the market for retrofitting unobtrusive solar roofs on any property in need of re-roofing, even in sensitive areas or on heritage buildings.



Solar Energy: 'Goods vs Bads'

<i>Goods</i>	<i>Bads</i>
Clean energy, with limited noise or traffic disturbance once construction is complete.	Energy output is dependent on solar intensity, so during hours of darkness or those times when the strength of the sun or its angle of incidence on the solar panel are reduced, the output will be diminished. Often these are the very times when domestic energy needs are greatest – i.e. at night-time and in winter – so 'back up' sources of energy generation are still needed. In the UK, the sun typically shines for 34% of daylight hours.
Subsidies on the electricity generated guarantee a long-term income stream, underwriting the investment in the technology...	...but this is at the cost of increased energy bills for all
In the right location, screening with hedgerows and native trees/shrubs can be effective at limiting visual impacts and enhancing the provision of wildlife corridors, and the land between the solar arrays can be managed to enhance biodiversity. Security fences can be designed to allow free access to wildlife, even larger animals such as badgers...	...but the need to protect against theft of materials can require intrusive security fencing, lighting and CCTV installations which are harder to screen effectively. The visual impacts at sensitive sites some distance from the installation may also be significant; in Kent, this is particularly relevant to sites visible from the AONBs or national trails. The screening hedges themselves can create an unwelcome intrusion into open landscapes with sweeping views
	There can be wildlife conflicts when migrating water fowl mistake the reflection of solar panels for stretches of open water. Solar arrays will also limit the ability of bird species such as raptors to hunt in arable land.
	There can be a conflict with aviation safety, where glint and glare can be a danger.

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Sandra Dunn

Sandra Dunn retired from CPRE Protect Kent at the end of 2012 after 21 years of service.

Recruited as Office Manager by Hugh Finn CBE as Kent Branch Chairman in 1991, Sandra subsequently worked with succeeding Branch Chairmen Charles Oliver, Hilary Moorby, Gary Thomas and Richard Knox-Johnston, taking on the role of company secretary when the legacy from Arthur Ivor Read was being

realised. Many of our trustees, members and active volunteers will have fond memories of Sandra, and her enthusiastic participation in a host of activities. Sandra remains involved with the Ashford District Committee and we are glad that she will continue to be a regular visitor to the Charing offices as well as a regular participant in the many social outings that Margaret organises. We wish Sandra and her husband John every happiness in their retirement.



South East eBulletin

The South East Region may no longer be the administrative force it once was, and the South East Plan has finally been revoked, but the recent and proposed reforms to the planning regime will continue to have a profound impact on those counties that make up the south east of England.

A highly useful monthly round-up of planning issues around the south east is regularly prepared by campaigner Andy Boddington, and is a highly recommended read.

You can subscribe to receive a free copy by email by simply visiting this site: www.cprese.org.uk





What are the Benefits of a Neighbourhood Plan?

Protect Kent's Senior Planner, Brian Lloyd, explores the pros and cons of preparing a Neighbourhood Plan from his experience of working with local communities over the last two years since they were introduced.

The Government's flagship reform of the planning system was the introduction of Neighbourhood Development Plans in the 2011 Localism Act. Under the Act, town and parish councils (or a locally constituted Neighbourhood Forum where there is no local council) can prepare a Neighbourhood Plan. This is an initiative that has been embraced with enthusiasm up and down the Country, with hundreds of communities deciding to prepare a plan. In Kent over 30 local communities are actively engaged in preparing a plan or are considering doing so.

For its part, the Government has provided significant support to the Neighbourhood Planning initiative. It has put aside £50m until 2015 to support it. Out of this it has already provided £20,000 to each of over 200 designated 'frontrunner' plans and will be providing £30,000 for each new Neighbourhood Plan from now on. Admittedly this money has been provided to local planning authorities to cover the costs that they will incur in the plan making process, but communities themselves have also benefitted as a result of the Supporting Communities and Neighbourhoods in Planning (SCNP) project.



The SCNP project was established in April 2011 when four organisations, including CPRE working with NALC (the National Association of Local Councils), were awarded a share of £5m over two years to provide help and assistance direct to local communities on neighbourhood planning. One of the first things that CPRE/NALC did was to produce a guide to neighbourhood planning, which was distributed to all town and parish councils in England and has become established as the model for preparing a Neighbourhood Plan – see: [HYPERLINK "http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/planning/item/download/1629"](http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/planning/item/download/1629) <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/planning/item/download/1629>.

Under the SCNP project, over the last 18 months Protect Kent has held five planning seminars which were attended by 350 local councillors and local people; three Neighbourhood Planning workshops attended by 70 delegates from 15 local councils that were just starting to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan; and we have provided specific tailored help to three local councils. The next phase of the project, from April 2013 to March 2015, will see a further £9m of funding to support Neighbourhood Planning, but disappointingly CPRE and NALC will no longer be involved in delivering it. However, the project will see further direct help being made available to local



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communities and the provision of some grant assistance - up to £7,000 per Neighbourhood Plan. The precise details of the support available were still being finalised as we went to press.

So, why would a local community benefit from having a Neighbourhood Plan? I think that there are four good reasons:

A Neighbourhood Plan will provide the opportunity for the local community to find its own solutions to the issues that it faces rather than rely on the district council to do it for them (or not as the case may be). The whole point of a Neighbourhood Plan is that it is prepared by the local community for the local community. The only caveat is that a Neighbourhood Plan can only deal with land use planning matters, but this can still make it quite wide ranging. At one level it can identify sites for development, but on another it could simply focus on ensuring that any new development is of a high quality of design and in keeping with the local area.

A Neighbourhood Plan is a plan that will have real teeth in the planning system. Together with the district council's own Local Plan it will comprise part of the statutory development plan for the area. This means that under planning law, planning decisions should be made in

accordance with the development plan unless there are good reasons not to do so. So any planning application that falls in the Neighbourhood Plan area will need to accord with the policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. This means that by having a plan the local community will have greater control over planning decisions that affect it.

As a result of development that is proposed in a Neighbourhood Plan area, the local community will benefit from any community gains that come with the development. This may be a direct provision of a community facility, or it could be in the form of a cash payment to be spent as the community chooses. The Government has recently announced that for communities that have a Neighbourhood Plan, 25% of the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) for any development in the plan area will go direct to the local community. If there is no Neighbourhood Plan in place then the community will only receive 15% of the CIL. This is potentially a significant amount of money that will become available to the local community to spend on improvements.

As a plan that is prepared by the local community for the local community, the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan provides the opportunity to bring the local community together. It will provide a focus for community involvement, for the benefit of the local community. This can only help to improve community spirit and wellbeing – though, of course, there will always be those who do not want to get involved or who will oppose what's proposed; that's the nature of planning.

But before embarking on a Neighbourhood Plan, it is equally important to consider the practicalities, and the potential disadvantages. In particular it will be important to bear in mind the following:

The preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan will be a long-term project, and it is likely to take at least two years from start to finish. It is not something that should be entered into lightly or that can be rushed.

You will need to be organised, and it will be essential to establish a steering group to oversee and manage the plan making process and to make sure that there is a robust project plan put in place. Crucially, the steering group should not just be councillors and it should be representative of the community at large.





It will demand long-term commitment from people. Much of the work will inevitably fall to those that make up the steering group, but the whole community needs to be engaged and supportive. The preparation of the plan cannot just fall to a handful of people, and it certainly should not be a plan prepared to reflect the views of a minority. It always needs to be remembered that for a plan to be adopted it will have to secure a 'yes' vote in a referendum, so it is vital to make sure that the local community is fully aware and engaged.

The preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan will demand resources, both money and skills. Full consideration will need to be given as to how these resources will be secured, and maximum opportunity will need to be taken of the support available from the local planning authority and from other sources, such as from the SCNP project. In particular local planning authorities have an obligation to provide help and assistance to local communities, and early discussion with them about what this might be will be essential. Protect Kent is able to provide training on how to go about preparing a Neighbourhood Plan - see details in the separate box next to this article.

Preparing a Neighbourhood Plan will be challenging, but ultimately when all the hard work has been done it will be a plan that will provide a long-term vision for the local community, and could bring big rewards. A Neighbourhood Plan, though, will not be appropriate or necessary for all communities. Not all communities will want to see further growth, and they will be happy with the planning policies in the Local Plan. That's fine, but for many communities it provides an exciting new tool that will empower them to shape their own future.

Planning Training

Protect Kent continues to develop the planning training that it is able to offer to Parish and Town Councils and other community groups. We are now able to offer the following four training sessions:

An introduction to Planning

- this will provide a general overview of the UK Planning system, and would be well suited for new parish and town councillors or people interested in better understanding the planning system

How to be most effective in shaping the Local Plan

- this will provide a detailed explanation of local plans; how they are prepared and how people can be most effective in getting their voice heard.

Development Management

- this will explain in detail the development management system and how decisions are made on planning applications. Amongst other things it will look at material and non-material considerations, permitted development rights and the use classes order.

Neighbourhood Planning

- this will help people to understand the new Neighbourhood Planning opportunities, and what's involved in preparing a Neighbourhood Plan.

Each session runs for about 3 hours making them suitable for an evening or half a day. They would be best suited for groups of up to 20 people to enable more informal discussion of issues and group working. They would be led by Brian Lloyd, Protect Kent's Senior Planner, who is a chartered town planner with over 27 years' experience in the profession.

For more information and details of cost please contact Brian on 01233 714543 or e-mail him at brian.lloyd@protectkent.org.uk



“For the attention of non-members...”



Andrew Ogden
Campaigns Manager

If you are not a member of the Campaign to Protect Rural England

but are reading this publication, then the chances are that you have either been given it by one of our existing members, or have found it in one of the many public locations where it is distributed. This initiative is part of our on-going campaign “**It’s Time to Talk**”, the purpose being to inform people about CPRE – who we are and what we do.

We hope you find our magazine both interesting and informative – so much so that you will want to find out more about our organisation. Obviously this magazine will give you a ‘feel’ for our aims and an overview of our activities, but there is just so much more to be said. The best place to start exploring will be our websites: the national one, at www.cpre.org.uk, and our county branch website at www.protectkent.org.uk.

However, if you are not ‘web-enabled’ then we will welcome direct contact, by mail or phone: our details are given on page 35. We will be happy to provide information on almost any issue that affects our countryside.

We will not hide the fact that we are always on the lookout for new members; but it’s not particularly your membership fees that we are after. **Of particular interest to us are professional people who have expertise in planning, environmental, rural, or transport matters, or anyone who has an enthusiastic desire to protect the beautiful countryside of Kent.** We always hope that such people will become ‘active’ members and get involved in the running of our Branch and Districts.

Please do find out more ... please do get in touch ... please become a member! Active membership can be very rewarding, providing support to Kent’s communities alongside a team of like-minded individuals. Even passive support will ensure that we can continue to safeguard Kent’s countryside for present and future generations.

And finally ... you are most welcome to keep this magazine for future reference. But if you decide not to, do please pass it on to your friends and acquaintances, or leave it for others to enjoy.





“And for our existing members...”

Thank you for your efforts so far in helping to raise public awareness of CPRE and in particular Protect Kent. Please continue to do so, following the suggestions in our previous edition of Kent Voice under the heading **“It’s Time to Talk”**.

Don’t forget to pass on this magazine if you have no further use for it, or leave it in a prominent public place for others to pick up: additional copies can be provided if required!

For contact details and to learn more about the organisation, please see page 35.



District Reports



Hilary Moorby

Ashford District Committee

Members in our Ashford District may already know that Ashford Rural Trust merged with us several months ago. We welcome these new members; ART as it was known, was a powerful voice in the Ashford Area for many years. But eventually it became impossible to persuade anyone to stand as Chairman, and reluctantly they applied to merge with CPRE Protect Kent. We now have two ex-ART committee members on our Ashford Committee who are proving to be active and committed and great members of the Team.

Two very large and difficult planning applications have now reared their ugly heads. First, the planning application for Chilmington Green has at last appeared. The documents are exceedingly large and heavy, and very difficult to get your head round. Nevertheless we managed to formulate our position, and spoke at the Public Inquiry into the Area Action Plan (AAP) on 22nd January. Subsequently, the Inspector has recommended some amendments to the AAP, which we will be examining in detail.

The second application is for a very large, 25-acre solar farm. This is on open farmland in Warehorne. The site is alongside the main road connecting Hamstreet and Tenterden, where it would be very visible and damaging to the landscape, to say nothing of the loss of good agricultural land. There has been a very good local campaign against this and when the full planning application does appear we will be campaigning vigorously against it. These solar farms are being proposed all over Kent, and our Branch Office is busy forming a policy to help us fight these very large applications. Solar energy is great on our roofs and similar locations, but on good farmland, which is needed for food production, we are not so sure.



Barrie Gore

Canterbury District Committee

The planning applications have slowed a little, and we are grateful for the relief. There are, however, an increasing number of applications to vary planning conditions, particularly relating to the Code for Sustainable Homes; we believe the Council has granted most of these variations. Reductions in carbon foot-printing and energy loss is conveniently being forgotten, and we are sorry that the Council is not taking a more robust approach. Also, is it not time that the Code should be applied to all residential accommodation, including that to house students?

We are currently investigating why, months after a development by Churchill Homes commenced, Kent County Council Highways are supporting an application by Churchill to vary the consent granted for the development. Churchill preferred not to plant two trees on the pavement adjoining the development, even though this was an important part of the planning consent for this area of Canterbury, which suffers particularly bad traffic pollution. The letter advised Canterbury City Council that if the trees were planted, there would be less than 1.1 metres from the bole of the trees to the wall of the development, contrary to Highways' requirements. Despite a request to KCC to reconsider they would not, and the Council felt obliged to grant the application, even though nothing from KCC mentioned the statutory regulations involved. I certainly am unaware of rules relating to trees on footways, and although I am in correspondence with KCC Highways, they have failed to tell us the date when the measurement was obtained, whether the wall of the development was in place at that time, how this ruling would affect other tree planting in Canterbury, and details of the statutory position. The bottom line is that surely all Councils should adopt a much more robust approach to KCC Highways measures which have an adverse effect upon historic Conservation Areas.

On other matters, the University has since been given planning consent for the new student blocks - Keynes III – on the Chaucer Slopes. But the decision notice is still being drafted, as there are many conditions to be included.

Despite a very strong and well organised body of objectors, the Canterbury Council Executive over-ruled the objections of the Canterbury Area Members' Panel and the Scrutiny and Overview Committee, and re-affirmed its decision to appropriate the public playing field at Kingsmead for residential development. The Save Kingsmead Field Group has been advised that there are good grounds for an application for a Judicial Review of the Council's decision. The Council has asked for further time to respond to the letter that the Group has written, before action is taken.

If Chaucer Slopes and Kingsmead Field are developed, Canterbury will have lost two large and valuable open spaces, having previously also lost Broadoak Nature Reserve (owned by a national company) because KCC stated it was no longer able to finance the facility, which was much used and loved by primary schools in Canterbury. Although we have asked the company concerned to let us know what is to happen to the land, and have suggested a possible volunteer group to manage it, we have had no reply save a formal acknowledgement, so I assume the future for the site must be gloomy.

The draft Residents' Vision for Canterbury was presented to the Canterbury Area Members' Panel in November. It appeared to meet with universal acclaim by the councillors and the Chief Executive, and we were told that a further such meeting, dedicated only to discussion of the Vision, would be arranged. Since the Vision is an accurate view of what City residents would like to happen in the future, it is Localism writ large, and ought to influence the next draft Local Plan, especially as the Council has been discussing it since at least June when the Vision's objectives and wishes were notified to them.

Dover District Committee

Since our AGM in October, several Planning Applications have been commented on, with the Planning Committee supporting the views of those against (this includes ourselves). However, at present 2 applicants are appealing. It will be very interesting to see the results of the Inspectors' decisions.

Dover District Council have asked for views over a consultation period for 3 documents within the Local Development Framework. As usual DDC are carrying this out over the holiday period, which at this time of the year causes difficulties as Agencies and Organisations do not hold meetings. Due to the problem of some members of our committee not being 'on-line', it makes it difficult to respond incorporating their views.

One wonders what is happening at the Eastry Hospital Site, as a second fire has recently taken place. Could this be a precursor to demolition and new development?

As to Dover DC's Site Allocation Document, Western Heights and Farthingloe are now included, this being quite a contentious issue.

May I add that the information going around has been most informative and enlightening regarding Fracking and shale gas extraction.



Derek Wanstall

Maidstone District Committee

Maidstone Borough Council's draft Core Strategy, which was due to be finalised by 21st November, has been withdrawn. The Director of Planning has decided that, following the findings of the Planning Inspectors that other councils' strategies have been found "unsound", then Maidstone's would also not stand up to examination. The next step now is for a progress report to be given to the Cabinet by March. We have no further timetable after that. Many of the issues involved were raised by us in our response to the draft Strategy in September 2012. Unfortunately in this situation the NPPF now seems to allow developers more likelihood of getting planning approvals on sites which were not in the draft Core Strategy and numerous proposals have come forward. The largest is for 700 houses around Barming Station together with considerable infrastructure. An outline scheme for 5,000 houses east of Maidstone near Langley has also been put forward, but not yet progressed beyond the initial publicity. A number of applications for building housing estates and shops in the villages have been submitted. Staplehurst and Marden in particular seem to be targets.

We do have a worry that, when the required "Strategic Housing Market Assessment" is carried out, the result may well be an increase in the amount of housing said to be needed. However there is also a requirement to assess needs across the boundaries of neighbouring authorities, particularly with Tonbridge and Malling, who appear to be in an easier position to meet much of the need.

We think it likely that a revised draft Core Strategy will still include the employment sites at M20 junctions 7 and 8, which we will very strongly oppose.

Messrs. Gallaghers have recently put in two planning applications. One is for a major retail development, in conjunction with Next, on Eclipse Park at M20 junction 7. This park has a B1/B2 designation only, and is intended to provide for industrial and commercial growth in the borough. Part of the planning statement makes the claim that there is unlikely to be any need for this type of activity in the near future, and retail should be acceptable. However the other application is for a scoping requirement for a speculative development at M20 junction 8, based on a need for B1, B2 and B8 developments in the near future. These two applications contradict each other. Both will be strongly opposed.

We are constantly getting applications for travellers' sites. An area around Yalding/Laddingford is becoming a widely spread traveller community. This is a Maidstone BC policy which desperately needs revising. Inspectorate. This has been further delayed while the issue of nuclear safety is re-considered.



Gary Thomas

Sevenoaks District Committee

What happens when you take land out of the Green Belt has recently come very much into focus. Back in the mid-1990s the part of Broom Hill in Swanley which is closest to the M25 was allocated for employment purposes. Following the inquiry where the plan was confirmed it was decided that the rest of Broom Hill, as far as the gardens of the houses on Beechenlea Lane, should no longer be in the Green Belt. The proposal was to use the land for a generous landscaped park but nothing has come of that.

The process of creating the new Local Plan requires sites to be identified for new housing, and it was proposed that part of the Broom Hill site should be allocated for housing with the remainder left as open space. We, together with Swanley Town Council and the residents of Beechenlea Lane, strongly objected to the housing element. The good news is that this response has persuaded the Council not to allocate the site for housing but to keep it as protected open space. However, at the time of writing it is two cheers rather than three because the owners of the site have put in outline planning applications for various amounts of housing on Broom Hill. This will test the Council's resolve: ultimately it is the Green Belt which determines where houses should not go.

Another site – a very big one – where housing has not been allocated as part of the Plan is Fort Halstead. There will certainly be redevelopment with a focus on employment and no doubt new housing, but nothing like the figure of 1500 houses suggested initially by the over-excited developer. The impact of new traffic on local roads will be a particular



Nigel Britten

KENTVOICE

concern for Knockholt, Halstead and Dunton Green, but there are also major landscape issues at stake and we therefore welcome the involvement of the Kent Downs AONB Unit in consultations.

This is an opportunity to mention that the Sevenoaks District AGM will be held this year at Bore Place on Saturday 8 June. There will be a talk on the work of the Historic Buildings Committee which is a part of CPRE Protect Kent. Full details of the AGM will be circulated later.



Paul Smallwood

Shepway District Committee

Shepway District Council's Planning Committee voted 12 for to 1 against in support of an application for a solar farm of 115 acres to be constructed at Sycamore Farm, Old Romney. This is probably the largest to be approved in the UK. Brian Lloyd sent in a really excellent case for rejection, particularly as it is on Grade 1 farmland. The application comprises solar arrays, inverters, transformers, equipment housing, and security fencing. Each of the solar panels measure 9.0 x 1.7 metres.

One of our committee members has written to Prince Charles regarding the solar farm. He has replied, promising never to develop prime farmland on his duchy holdings on Romney Marsh.

We are still awaiting the announcements of decisions on Lydd Airport and the Sellindge turbines.

Andrew Ogden and Val Loseby attended the Examination in Public (EiP) of Shepway's Core Strategy on 5th March, which focussed on the Modifications required by the Inspector following the first part of the EiP in May 2012. We had the opportunity to speak, and made a few comments that centred around the lack of clarity and definition in the documents (something that was echoed by others). Notably, the owners of Folkestone Racecourse also spoke, arguing for the site to be reinstated within the Core Strategy and the housing allocation. We will be keeping a close eye on the Inspector's response to this!



Peter Blandon

Swale District Committee

By the time you read this, the meeting of the Swale Local Development Framework Panel will have taken place. If the public are allowed in this time, we will find out if the rumours are correct that Swale is planning to allow the building of even more houses than previously thought. The documents for the meeting recommend the adoption of a building target of 14,820 houses over the period 2011 to 2031, almost a 30% increase in the housing stock of the Borough. This is 3,723 more than previously suggested: the previous numbers, in the so-called Bearing Fruits consultation had run from 2006 to 2031. More of this, no doubt, in the next edition of Kent Voice.

On a different note, over the quiet Christmas period it was possible to review the overall pattern of planning applications during 2012. So here I will present an overview of this more mundane side of planning. During 2012, 1,060 planning applications appeared in the weekly lists published on Swale Borough Council's website. Decisions were reached in 897 of these. Decisions took 54 days on average to determine.

On Swale's website the location of each application is shown. Taking Sittingbourne, Faversham, Queenborough and Sheerness to be urban and everywhere else to be rural, gives the following results:

Area	Applications	Approved	Refused	Withdrawn	Approval rate
Urban	400	310	53	37	78%
Rural	497	371	83	43	75%
TOTAL	897	681	136	80	76%

The approval rate in rural areas is slightly lower than the urban rate, but is not significantly so. Planning approval seems, therefore, to be no more difficult to obtain in rural areas than in urban ones.

One type of application that causes consternation to many CPRE Branch Committees is for the stationing of caravans for travellers, often in unsuitable locations. Last year in Swale, there were 29 applications with descriptions that contained at least one of the words "mobile", "gypsy" and "caravan". These showed a refusal rate of 41%, compared to 23% for applications without any of those words.

From CPRE's point of view, it is interesting to see if objecting to contentious planning applications has any impact on the outcome. To investigate this, it was decided to use the number of on-line objections as an indication of public concern over a particular development. "Controversial applications" were defined as those applications attracting at least one on-line objection. In 2012, only 121 applications generated on-line objections and rural applications did not seem to be any more controversial than urban ones. Each rural application attracted an average of 0.63 objections compared to 0.6 for urban ones.

Three outcomes were found for “controversial applications”. They were either granted, refused or withdrawn. These outcomes are shown in the table below.

Controversial applications	On-line objections	Objections per app.	Withdrawn
granted	62	177	2.85
refused	37	147	3.97
withdrawn	22	227	10.32
refused or withdrawn	59	74	6.34
TOTAL	121	551	4.55

The overall refusal rate for controversial applications was 49% (grouping withdrawn applications with those refused). This is significantly higher than the 20% figure for “non-controversial” applications. Furthermore, there is a large difference in the number of objections per application for the three categories shown in the table. And the difference seems intuitively logical.

It is conceivable that many applications that are withdrawn were “testing the water” and were not serious applications. If the “withdrawn” category is removed from consideration, there were, in total, 817 applications last year of which 136 were refused – a refusal rate of about 17%. Dividing these applications into controversial and non-controversial, the refusal rates become 37% and 14% respectively. So applications with on-line objections are far more likely to be refused. For those of you with a statistical disposition, the probability that this difference in refusal rates emerged at random is less than one-hundredth of one percent !

Of course, it may be that objecting had no actual influence on the planning process and the controversial applications would have been granted or refused regardless of the on-line objections. However, it is possible to interpret these results as showing that even “low level campaigning” against undesirable developments by objecting to them on-line and by letter to Swale Borough Council can be effective.

Thanet District Committee

Andrew Ogden, Brian Lloyd and Bernard Clayson met with Simon Thomas and Ashley Hills, who are the officers charged with the production of Thanet DC’s Core Strategy. This has been somewhat delayed, partly due to a change in the Council Cabinet, with the new incumbents virtually tearing up what had been drafted before and asking for a fresh start. The schedule they are currently working to, is to have the draft issued for public consultation in the summer of this year, followed by their Stage 2 public consultation in January 2014, and publication in July of 2014. This is quite tight and allows very little room for ‘unforeseen events’; let us hope there are no further Cabinet Changes over this period !

In recognition of the delay, Thanet DC’s plans will now have a ‘design horizon’ of 2031 – an additional 6 years on the original date – to provide a full 25 year forecast. However, apart from this it appears that, at this stage, there is no clear strategy for the production of the Core Strategy. There is no plan to concentrate development in the towns and safeguard the villages, or vice versa. Certain categories of housing, e.g. affordable, are not being singled out; nor are derelict buildings being targeted to provide new homes. Thanet DC will be reviewing their Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, but again appear to be accepting development wherever a reasonable bid is made.

While Simon did appear to be a little non-committal on the details of the Strategy, he did qualify this by stating that a paper was to be presented to the Cabinet ‘next Tuesday’ (22nd January), proposing changes to the work programme, milestone dates, and final content of the Core Strategy; (a copy of this paper is now available).

At the meeting we were able to put across our concerns for the countryside of Thanet, with particular emphasis on avoiding the use of high grade agricultural land for development wherever possible. We mentioned Thanet Earth as an unsightly blot on the skyline, and obviously our dismay over continued development at Westwood Cross without the current traffic problems being resolved.

Simon and Ashley were particularly interested in the concept of Thanet’s beaches being considered ‘countryside’, and also in the work that CPRE has commissioned on tranquillity. We have since forwarded them further information on the subject and put them in touch with Graeme Willis at National Office, who will be able to provide some detail specific to Thanet.

All other issues in Thanet have ‘gone quiet’. Manston is still up for sale, but there are no prospective buyers on the horizon; in fact no interest has been shown at all. Night flights have started, but are so few as to be virtually un-noticeable.



Andrew Ogden

KENTVOICE

The household waste recycling centre at Richborough is still scheduled for closure this August, and local people are still campaigning against this (with some input from us). Development (within the current planning permissions) continues at Westwood Cross and Thanet Earth.

Without there being any serious new threats to the countryside in Thanet, we believe that we should focus our efforts on Thanet DC's Core Strategy, having made a good start on 14th.



Harry Rayner

Tonbridge and Malling District Committee

Tonbridge and Malling district are working closely with Borough Green and surrounding parish councils as regards a complex planning application by Crest Nicholson to build 171 houses and associated infrastructure at Isles Quarry, Quarry Hill Road Borough Green. The site is a former quarry where there were also a number of industrial manufacturing businesses. An independent survey has raised significant environmental concerns relating to chemical and hydrocarbon contamination and the risks to both construction workers and future residents. As an AQMA (Air Quality Management Area) is about to be declared in central Borough Green, air quality is also a serious concern as is physical access to the site.

The Hop Farm between East Peckham and Paddock Wood has recently ceased trading. Part of the site is within Tonbridge and Malling so we will be working closely with neighbouring districts and with Branch Office to scrutinise any plans for the potential redevelopment of the site.

Through the consultation process the District Committee has made representations to KCC on landowners' proposals for future proposed quarries and various sites for processing waste and are pleased to report that the majority of our comments were taken up when the Preferred Options were published as part of the Mineral and Waste Site Plans. Developing the Mineral Plan is ongoing and we will continue to monitor the situation.

Our Committee is also keen to support examples of good development and have positively supported the renovation of a listed building in the centre of Wrotham and the redevelopment of a former Nursing Home near Stansted.



Liz Akenhead

Tunbridge Wells Committee

As usual we have commented on or objected to a few planning applications where development would be damaging, or where improvements to the proposals were needed. However, owing to lack of volunteer time, in some cases our small committee has undoubtedly failed to comment when we should have done. We urgently need more committee members. If you can spare a little time to help our small, friendly committee to protect your neighbourhood, please contact me or the office at Charing. Training and support will be available.

A recent planning application that we objected to for 27 affordable dwellings on an "exceptions site" at Pembury, in the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and the Green Belt, included a worrying legal opinion that, following recent legislation, affordable housing for local needs must be subject to the Tenants' Right to Buy. Hence it could not be kept for local needs in perpetuity, but would become market housing once a tenant had exercised his right to buy. If this is indeed the case, it undermines the justification for providing affordable village housing for local needs on greenfield sites where development would not otherwise be acceptable.

By the time this magazine is published, your committee will have commented on the Borough and County Councils' joint Draft Transport Strategy for Tunbridge Wells, for which the consultation period ends on 8th March.

Also by the time this magazine is published, the Borough Council's consultation on its Site Allocations Development Plan Document will have started. Do please look carefully at this very important document and all its various appendices, which will decide exactly where major development is to take place in the Borough up to 2026. Please send in your own comments and also flag up any concerns you have to me or our Charing office, but bear in mind that under the adopted Core Strategy, in addition to any new houses recently completed the Borough Council must allocate sufficient land for 2445 new dwellings in Tunbridge Wells and Southborough, 510 new dwellings at Paddock Wood, 257 new dwellings at Cranbrook, 110 new dwellings at Hawkhurst and 49 new dwellings in the villages and rural areas (a total of 3371). The consultation closes on 24th May.

The Public Inquiry into the proposed dualling of the A21 Tonbridge to Pembury will take place in May. We shall attend the pre-inquiry meeting and if necessary the public inquiry to counter any proposals to water down the environmental mitigation measures and the provision for non-motorised users.

SPECIALIST GROUP REPORTS

Environment Group Report

As usual, much of the Environment Group's activity has been focussed on the un-ending problem of water resources for Kent, and the Group's Chairman, Graham Warren, has been heavily involved in a number of separate meetings on the issue.

This year's briefing on Water Resources in the South East, held at Church House, Westminster on 15th February and hosted by the constituent water companies in partnership with the Environment Agency (EA), was an opportunity for the 100 or so delegates to discuss the scope and content of the new Regional Strategy for managing the increasingly fragile balance of water supply and demand-growth over the next 30 years. This would in turn determine the composition of the next 5-year Water Resource Management Plans due to come into effect in 2014. The consultation drafts will be released in April / May and address the principal challenges of climate-change, demand-growth and the need to restore sustainable abstraction from our rivers and aquifers.

Many of those present came with some knowledge of the process, having sat as members of Focus Groups or Challenge Groups working in partnership with water company management and, in some cases, having had the opportunity to contribute to the formulation of the draft plans, including the assessment of the feasibility of capital schemes. We were therefore at least well aware of the wide range of uncertainty with respect to any forecasts of demand growth or climate change impact, and the likely scale and timing of the sustainability programmes. In the latter case the EA seemed reluctant to define the scope and timing of the required measures now focused on 2026/27, and which for some companies could involve substantial capital investment in the relocation and / or replacement of public supply boreholes and river pumping stations. OFWAT will certainly question the programme content if it involves levels of investment incurring what they would regard as 'unreasonable' increases in charges to customers.

Unfortunately, Kent has very few remaining opportunities for relocation or further development of existing river or groundwater resources. The locally-based companies recognise that, if they are to put together a genuinely flexible regional strategy, their only recourse is to work in close partnership with other members of WRSE; exploiting the advantages of scale, with regional schemes generally less costly in terms of "£/Ml/day" than equivalent single company initiatives. The EA seems to be of the same mind and sees a mix of options comprising continuation of the active promotion of demand management and water efficiency measures, combined with effluent re-use and inter-company raw-water transfers. In the latter case the companies have identified examples of fairly ambitious inter-regional (i.e. NW to SE) examples, and in this regard their draft plans may diverge from those envisaged by the EA. One senior representative expressed doubts concerning their cost-effectiveness and went on to declare that the "age of heroic solutions was past". And here were we thinking that its time might have come again !

One argument against NW-SE transfers rests on the global warming forecasts, which indicate a relatively high impact on NW regions with a decrease in the effective annual rainfall. But we need to keep in mind that Wales for example has 8-times the rainfall per head of population experienced in the SE; and is not forecast to have the same high levels of population growth, or likely to face the same degree of sustainability reductions. It was also acknowledged that drought resilience was an important criterion in the assessment of supply options, and this is where effluent re-use could prove its worth. Model runs undertaken by WRSE now include drought scenarios with two dry winters, and also incorporate long-term reductions in effective rainfall and consequent decrease in the reliable output of water company boreholes and river intakes.

The issue of drought resilience came up at Protect Kent's Water Conference convened at Detling in November under the heading "Is Kent in Crisis?" Opinions seem to have been divided as to whether we could be said to have faced a supply crisis, a reasonable question in light of the near-record annual rainfall total for 2012. But the point was taken that Kent is increasingly vulnerable to development pressures and the impact on our balance of resources, as evidenced by the continuing deterioration in the environmental quality of our rivers and wetlands. It serves also to emphasise the importance of Protect Kent holding to its policy of challenging any new housing or commercial development of whatever scale, unless it can be demonstrated that the requisite infrastructure and resources are in place to meet the anticipated increase in daily and peak demand.

On to other matters: encompassed within the other topics covered by our Environment Group, the Land Use Sub-Group is pursuing further sources of statistics on land use in Kent – possibly including KCC material, and reported on progress at the Jan 17th meeting.

A National Policy on large scale solar farms is expected to address the conflicting issues of sustainable energy and landscape / land-take.

There is increasing concern that recent changes in the categories of waste that can be accepted at recycling centres could lead to a substantial increase in fly-tipping. It would also be helpful to have some idea of the proportion of material formerly destined for recycling that is now diverted to the Allington incinerator.

In October 2012 we responded to two separate consultations on aviation. The first was to the Transport Select Committee, who issued a 'call for evidence' on aviation capacity; the closing date for this was 19th October. The second consultation was on the Government's draft Aviation Policy Framework, with a closing date of 31st October.

In the meanwhile, alternative proposals for a new hub airport in the South East regularly appear, the latest being a scheme to build on the Goodwin Sands. While this site has a lot of advantages, it is probably too far from London to be financially successful.



Graham Warren



Bob Baxter

Historic Buildings Committee (HBC)

Our team of District-based volunteers continues to monitor historic building issues of interest. Notable recent cases include Pett Dane, near Eastling. This remote, dilapidated timber-framed house, tucked away behind trees, was threatened with demolition and replacement with an 'eco-home' a few years ago. The HBC pressed successfully for it to be listed, and thus saved. A fresh application has now been made to integrate the ancient structure within a restoration scheme that HBC felt able to formally support. A second case involved a sound proposal to repair and restore an apparently neglected run-of-the-mill vegetable storage shed in a farm complex at HM prison on the Isle of Sheppey. Closer examination of the proposal revealed this to be a Grade II aircraft hangar – a rare survivor from the early days of aviation in this country. This was an example of a heritage asset with more historic meaning than grand structure and great age !

Changes in government planning guidance continue to require careful attention. The 2012 Localism Act encourages local authorities to look after all of their historic buildings, not just the currently Listed ones. This is clearly a move in the right direction. The HBC plans to challenge all Kent and Medway authorities as to what plans they have, in the first instance, to draw up appropriate lists of these assets. Sadly, such activity may prove difficult due to continued austerity and staff cutbacks. Indeed we now worry that planning staff, trained and experienced in historic building conservation in general, may be being lost without replacement. The situation in Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council is of particular concern at the moment, and is being investigated. On a brighter note, we have established that listed buildings should not be exposed to the potentially damaging effect of the recent loosening of restrictions on building extensions.

The handy A5-size Kent Historic Buildings Index series of catalogues lists buildings by location within the Kent and Medway districts. The hard-copy booklets continue to be of interest to Kent Archaeological Society members and conservation officers, as well as our own volunteers. So our Honorary Secretary, with aid from our members Peter Lambert and Michael Peters, continues to issue updated versions and consider ways of promoting their distribution and use.

Our volunteer 'coverage' has recently been strengthened by the welcome arrival of Bernard Davern to look after Sevenoaks. We wish him good luck ! We are also hoping that the appointment of Dick Bate to the Board will allow us to access his considerable expertise in planning and historic buildings.

We encourage all of our members to take up an active role within the Branch. We are particularly keen to hear from professional people who have an expertise in planning, environmental, rural, or transport matters. 'The position ideally suits retired or semi-retired experts who have a desire to serve their communities'. No need for a formal application ! Just contact the Branch Office (info@protectkent.org.uk) and you will be put in touch with the relevant Chairman.



Office Contacts

We always love to hear from our members, so please feel free to drop us a line and tell us what's happening in your part of the County!



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400 CLUB



Here are the winners since the Autumn/winter edition of Kent Voice:



November 2012:

Mrs B Heffer £40 (357),
Mr D Thornhill £30 (152),
Mr J J Bunton £25 (283),
Mr S E Jones £25 (160),
Mrs A M Hone £20 (167).

December 2012:

Mrs ME Price £200 (285),
Mr RG Whitelegg £50 (202),
Mr SE Jones £30 (160),
Mr N Loveday £25 (262),
Mrs J Clabburn £25 (129),
Mr RD Hale £20 (354).

January 2012:

Mr & Mrs J Mercy £40 (29),
Mrs L Dowding £30 (269),
Mrs S B Redden £25 (240),
M Loveday £15 (220),
Mr & Mrs J Mercy £15 (32),
RG Whitelegg £15 (78).

February 2012:

Mr White £40 (192),
Miss Fenton £30 (181),
Mr & Mrs Mercy £25 (31),
Mr & Mrs Eve £15 (191),
Mr Daniel £15 (297),
Mrs Clabburn £15 (125).

The aim of the club is to raise money for our general fund. It returns 50% of the takings to members as prize money.

A new Club starts in January and welcomes new members. Each share costs £12, and there is no limit to the number of shares you may purchase. The initial share allocation is 400. We will write to existing members nearer the time but if you don't already subscribe and you would like to join please contact the office and we will send you an application form.

KENT VOICE

What's in a name?



Jamie Weir

Whilst something like a rose, or indeed a chocolate bar, wouldn't be any less sweet with a name change, our name is actually remarkably descriptive. As Protect Kent, the county's branch of CPRE, we do actually live up to our name by protecting Kent. We aren't simply concerned with one facet of Kent's landscapes or wildlife; we look at the county in a holistic manner, ensuring that every aspect is protected for future generations to enjoy.

So what does Protect Kent actually protect?

Obviously the protection of our landscapes is the charity's primary function. We have had a number of high profile campaigns that have resulted in some of our beautiful landscapes protected for future generations to enjoy. One of our more recent large campaigns was fought against Gravesham Borough Councils draft core strategy. This document would have allowed the authority to take chunks out of the Green Belt and build housing on them as well as many other significant issues. The land that the council was proposing to use was highly valued by local people and our campaign, as well as their excellent public events brought so much pressure to bear on the council that they were compelled to scrap the draft and start again afresh!

When we protect the landscapes, we are also protecting the wildlife that inhabits them. Badgers, dormice, wasps and a whole host of both cuddly and fluffy creatures as well as creepy crawlies are protected as a result of the work we do. This is incredibly important as there is such a synergy between the landscapes of our county and the wildlife that live within them.

Whilst the landscape and the wildlife that lives within are of incredible importance, we also care about the heritage of our landscapes and wish to preserve them for future generations. Protect Kent makes sure that landscapes are preserved for future generations, so that they may know the beauty of Kent. Our Historic Buildings Committee scrutinises every planning application made that could affect one of the county's many listed buildings, ensuring that these historic, heritage assets remain in perpetuity.

We really do 'protect Kent' at Protect Kent. Our focus is on ensuring that the county which you love remains as beautiful, enchanting and inspiring as it has always been for every member of the public to enjoy.

So, what is in a name? At CPRE Protect Kent, we believe there's quite a lot of importance attached to ours!

Jamie Weir
Editor



Protect Kent (the Kent Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England, number 04335730, registered charity number 1092012. CPRE Protect Kent, Queens Head House, Ashford Rd., Charing, Ashford, Kent TN27 0AD. T: 01233 714540 F: 01233 714549 E: info@protectkent.org.uk

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