

OUTLOOK

Summer 2024

The newsletter of
CPRE Northamptonshire
www.cprenorthants.org.uk



The countryside charity
Northamptonshire

Photograph of River Nene at Wadenhoe Mill courtesy of Martin Fletcher

CPRE Response to Local Plan for West Northamptonshire Consultation

- Alan Mayes

At the end of May CPRE Northamptonshire submitted its comments as part of the Consultation for the new Local Plan for West Northamptonshire, which will eventually supersede the Joint Core Strategy for West Northamptonshire. It is hoped that parish councils across West Northamptonshire will engage in this process as the final document will establish planning policies for at least the next ten years. There were a number of aspects of the consultation document which CPRE felt were either unresolved or premature and upon which it expressed its concerns.

We pointed out that settlement hierarchies have not yet been defined, although we understand that WNC has been in consultation with villages individually. This still leaves settlements vulnerable during the period of emerging policies for the new Plan. Settlement boundaries have not been defined - the former districts making up WNC had differing approaches - and this again leaves settlements vulnerable and begs the question as to whether the

Consultation was premature.

We highlighted conflicts in farm diversification policies impacting on food security and the safeguarding of landscape from wind and solar farms.

We were also concerned that the design-related policies and rural exception sites did not give scope for local design guides and Neighbourhood Plan policies. We suggested that the new CPRE Landscape Design Guide should become a Supplementary Planning Document.

We expressed our unhappiness at the way in which the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment had been updated. Account had not been taken of existing vacant industrial and commercial premises in the area, which could result in significant oversupply, particularly of warehouse premises.

We felt that too little weight had been given to policies relating to hedgerows and green wedges and their capacity to protect the countryside.

We await the outcome of the Consultation.

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Thank you, Trisha!

Chairman's Update

- Geoff Carverhill

The votes are all in and the count, following the General Election on 4 July, has revealed a new government under Prime Minister Sir Keir Starmer. The nation has given a clear mandate for change and, under Starmer's re-organised Labour Party, we at CPRE are aware that, although the new government is broadly supportive of CPRE's policies and objectives, the need to continue influencing local and national government to ensure those objectives are delivered has not gone away.

On 2 July, I attended the CPRE national AGM in London,

Dominic Goble JP DL



We are delighted to report that Dominic Goble has agreed to stand for election as president at our forthcoming AGM in succession to the late and much missed David Laing. Dominic is a Deputy Lieutenant of the county and, if elected, will continue a long tradition of presidents with associations with the Lord-Lieutenancy.

A Justice of the Peace and Presiding Justice, Dominic sits as a magistrate in the jurisdictions of adult and youth crime and is a life member of The Magistrates' Association.

Dominic is actively involved in a number of Northamptonshire charities. He is ambassador for the Northamptonshire Community Foundation, patron of Standout Northamptonshire, vice patron of the Oakfield Community, and trustee and deputy chair of The Chrysalis Foundation. He is also honorary president of Northampton District Scouts.

We are very fortunate that someone who plays such an active role in the community is prepared to add CPRE Northamptonshire to the list of organisations with which he is involved. We are sure that he would make a splendid president and commend him to members.

In May the government issued a written statement to clarify how decisions on solar farms should be made. The key provision was to require more weight to be given to protecting food security but it also wanted more consideration of the cumulative impact when multiple solar farms are present in an area. This is in recognition of the fact that solar farms had seemed to have acquired almost a free pass through the planning system and that vast tracts of our productive farmland were being taken out of food production to be converted into solar farms. It also recognised that parts of our green and pleasant land were becoming covered in huge arrays of solar panels which have drastically changed the character of the wider landscape.

Written Statement on Solar Farms

- Brian Skittrall

Although the UK has halved its carbon emissions since 1990, globally emissions are not falling. This means that, although continuing to reduce our carbon emissions is important, being able to adapt to the inevitable impacts of climate change is becoming even more important because unless there is a step-change in global action to reduce carbon emissions, the impacts that we are already seeing can only increase.

The government's cross-party Climate Change Committee has long highlighted that one of the greatest threats to the UK from climate change is that it will further weaken our already poor food security

and so it is right that we should seek to



protect our productive farmland from being lost from food production, especially when solar panels can be installed almost anywhere including within the built environment.

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Chairman's Update

and benefited from being able to meet staff from CPRE National Office, as well as representatives from other CPRE branches. In his address to AGM delegates, Roger Mortlock, Chief Executive Officer of CPRE, gave an overview of the highlights of his first year in office. One of those highlights included "visiting CPRE Northamptonshire for the launch of their Landscape Design Guide". The guide has clearly made a positive impact in many areas and has been welcomed by parish councils and individual members alike, as a template for the future of rural Northamptonshire. Our job in the coming months is to make sure its contents are implemented.

To help us in our endeavours, we have taken on two new volunteers, Francesca Hughes and Pranev Kumar, who will assist with website development, social media and planning issues respectively. Sadly, we will soon be saying goodbye to Robin Jones and Carol Sigley. Robin, who is retiring from CPRE Northamptonshire, has been a volunteer for 13 years,

as well as a trustee. He and Carol will continue as volunteers for the next few months to ensure a smooth changeover. Robin has brought a wealth of knowledge and experience to CPRE and has helped successfully steer the organisation through some extremely difficult periods over the last few years. Knowledge and experience is always difficult to replace, but I am optimistic that the occasional phone call or a pint of bitter in a local village pub will continue after he steps down from his treasurer, secretarial and Outlook newsletter editor duties. Carol has been our web developer, having created the vibrant CPRE Northamptonshire website from scratch.

Another volunteer leaving us is Trisha White, who has been layout and design editor for Outlook. Trisha is a talented textile sculptor and I'm sure will be focusing more on her own work in the coming months.

Our thanks to them for all of their past contributions – just don't leave the county!

Wellingborough Walks Action Group (WWAG) deserves a big pat on the back for its efforts to save the lime trees threatened by the developer's axe at The Walks in Wellingborough. In May Deputy High Court Judge Dan Kolinsky KC ruled in the case brought by WWAG that North Northamptonshire Council's approach that the felling of the trees was authorised by much earlier applications was incorrect, sadly too late to save the sixteen trees already cut down.

Second Chance for Wellingborough Lime Trees

- Robin Jones

Judge Kolinsky said in his judgement that he rejected the developer's "contentions that no further approval was needed for the felling of protected trees". He said that the developer should have submitted a fresh application for the felling of the trees and that it would then have been up to NNC to decide which trees should be cut down.

Judge Kolinsky's common sense decision does not reflect well on NNC whose leader, Jason Smithers, said the authority accepted the findings of the court and the judgement. It beggars belief that NNC sleepwalked into allowing this arboreal

vandalism to happen. While we may have some sympathy with Councillor Smithers when he talks of the difficult balancing act between protecting the local environment and building new houses, it surely comes with the territory. That NNC did not feel it necessary to engage with local people before allowing the felling to start suggests that it is out of touch with modern day attitudes to the world about us.

Despite its justified euphoria at the High Court judgement, WWAG still has much work to do. The developer submitted new applications in April and it will now be for NNC to



determine the extent of tree loss. Let's hope it treads more circumspectly this time around. CPRE's response to the new applications suggested that the road be realigned to save more trees and that the resultant new landscaping should better reflect the historic and environmental value of the lime trees by repeating the feature.

CPRE Community Awards 2024

- Alan Mayes

This year CPRE Northamptonshire will again be running the Community Awards, which were first launched in 2018. These awards aim to celebrate volunteer-led community projects that enhance the quality of life and environment for those living in Northamptonshire's villages, towns and countryside. Make sure your community's achievements are recognised by nominating them.

The entry process is as follows:

Applications can be made by or on behalf of any community group working within Northamptonshire (the award is not a single person award).

Applications should demonstrate that one or more of the following criteria have been achieved:

- an enhancement to the countryside in Northamptonshire
- an enhancement to the environment of villages or towns in Northamptonshire
- an enhancement to the urban areas of Northamptonshire
- an enhancement to the quality of life for those living in, working in or visiting Northamptonshire

All projects must have been completed in the past 5 years.

Applications should be sent as a short statement about the project with photographs.

All projects should be volunteer-based or managed by volunteers.

The winners in 2022 were Creaton Village Shop and Post Office, The Yardley Arts Centre and Northamptonshire Walks, all of which featured in a previous Outlook article.



Northamptonshire Walks

We hope to celebrate community involvement at our Autumn Roadshow.

Please send applications to alanmayes123@gmail.com to arrive no later than 30 September 2024.

CPRE Town and Country Awards 2023

- Alan Mayes

Judging took place in May for the Town and Country Awards 2023. This year there were eleven entries ranging from new build housing to restoration projects and farm diversification. The judges were Madeleine Adams and Yvonne Dean, both practising architects, and CPRE trustee Brian Skittrall. Having considered carefully the merits of the wide variety of entries, the judges choose the following winners.

In first place:

Forceleap Farm, Newbottle

The farm is run by Alice Townsend and incorporates various wilding and diversification measures and has visitor facilities for school parties etc. CPRE Northamptonshire paid it a visit in 2023. The judges felt that it constituted an outstanding contribution to the landscape with an understated yet practical conversion of the existing buildings, giving accommodation to local businesses and facilities for visiting groups and workshops.



Hind Hotel, Wellingborough

In second place:

The Former Drill Hall, Wellingborough, now St Heliers Care Home

This is the conversion of a derelict nineteenth century building in a town centre location into a care home. It

represents a worthwhile conversion of a locally valued building within close proximity of other listed buildings and within the conservation area. The conversion saved the building from demolition. It also provides valuable accommodation, given the demographics, to people right in the centre of the town.

In joint third place:

The Hind Hotel, Wellingborough

A restoration of a seventeenth century Grade II* listed building and town centre hotel that had closed and was in danger of falling into disrepair. The restoration followed the intervention of the local authority, which helped arrange grant funding towards the restoration costs through English Heritage. The restoration of this building is sensitive and has kept it as a valuable resource in the heart of the town centre, where it provides a meeting place with function rooms at a time when many pubs are under threat of closure.

Boughton Hill Gardens, Harborough Road, Northampton

This is a development of 15 houses on a narrow site fronting a main road, with interwar housing opposite. Accessed off a series of cul-de-sacs, it has a distinctive architectural style in a prominent suburban location. It was thought this brought a new valuable vernacular to this end of Northampton. The design reflects the character of the local pub and other rendered buildings and improves this end of the town. The landscaping is also noteworthy.

And a commendation:

Mercedes at Brixworth

This further extension to previous award-winning buildings is located adjacent to open countryside and set within landscaped surroundings. The extension to the right of the existing building uses the same architectural style. It is commended for its siting in the landscape and the positioning of solar panels on its roof, much advocated by CPRE, which avoids solar installations taking up valuable agricultural land.

The winners have been notified and presentation of the awards will be made in due course.

Thank you, Trisha!

- Robin Jones



Trisha White has been designing the layout of Outlook since 2013, so it came as a bit of a shock when she told us earlier this year that the July issue of Outlook would be her last one. The technical expertise she has brought to the newsletter might have led you to believe that she is a graphic designer by profession, but it turns out she is self-taught. Working in the family business meant that she had to acquire computer and graphic design skills on the hoof, and what a splendid job she made of it!

Although I have worked closely with Trisha for a number of years, face to face meetings have been rare. As a result, in writing this article I have discovered things about her that I never knew before. As a young woman fresh from university and looking for a bit of adventure, she volunteered for VSO and ended up working as a teacher in northern Nigeria.

Back in the UK, she had a spell in air traffic control before returning to teaching at her old secondary school. A family followed – three daughters and now six grandchildren – and subsequently she became a special needs co-ordinator in a primary school.

Trisha says that she will now have more time to spend creating artworks in textiles and bobbin lace and exploring the countryside with her dog Lizzie.

She goes with our thanks and best wishes.