



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
South East

CPRE South East eBulletin May 2012

A Presumption in Favour of Sprawling Development

A planning decision in my part of the world caught my eye and it provides us with a salutary tale. The approval by Telford & Wrekin council of an out of town supermarket on the edge of Newport is nothing remarkable in itself (<http://bbc.in/JHGtRt>). After all, retailers and planners have been abusing policies to protect town centres for years. What is remarkable in this case is the extent to which officers have admitted that relevant plans and policies are out of date, and the way they have invented ad hoc policy to replace them.

In the absence of a spatial plan and in contradiction to core strategy policies restricting rural development, they declared that "urban fringe greenfield sites within the area contained by the [Newport] by-pass would represent logical development locations." Local residents might well have something to say about this policy making on the hoof. They might also be angry that the officers' words have given an open invite for developers to come forward with predator proposals under the NPPF's presumption in favour of sustainable development. The council will find it almost impossible to reject such proposals because its officers have already declared that its plans and policies are silent, out of date or simply malleable if the need arises. The officers may be correct in their assumption that infill within the bypass is the most sustainable option for this town, but their actions betray both localism and planned development. The only hope Newport now has is to rush forward its neighbourhood plan.

The Newport case demonstrates how laissez-faire development could become widespread under the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It demonstrates how far some councils have yet to go to adapt to the new world of localism. It provides just one example of the dangers local communities will face in the new world of the NPPF unless they are quick off the mark with neighbourhood plans.

We will be covering other NPPF cases as they emerge. Please let me know of any applications, abuses, appeals and advances that catch your eye.

Andy Boddington

About the CPRE South East eBulletin

The CPRE South East eBulletin is issued monthly. We cover planning and environmental news with a relevance to the remit of CPRE. Any views expressed are those of the editor, not of any part of CPRE. Our audience is CPRE and its friends. Please feel free to circulate this eBulletin.

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National Planning Policy Framework

The meaning of the NPPF. Planning minister Greg Clark said it is up to councils and not the government to define the meaning of the NPPF. (Planning £: <http://bit.ly/JHKPFp>). In an article on the NPPF, Francis Maude, MP for Horsham suggested there is a conflict between affordable housing and preserving communities: "The NPPF is no panacea. It can't make planning and housing development less polarising or controversial and it's unable to simply square the circle of many people's desire to preserve our communities with society's very real need for more housing - especially affordable accommodation" (County Times: <http://bit.ly/JJvmoq>).

Agricultural workers. The NPPF permits agricultural dwellings where there is an "essential need for a rural worker to live permanently at or near their place of work." Legal blogger Martin Goodall examines the framework for assessing "essential need" (<http://bit.ly/liQuiZ>; see also PAS: <http://bit.ly/liQDD8>).

Design and wind. Andrew Lainton picked up on Andy Boddington's point that Part 7 of the NPPF on design applies as much to wind farms as it does to housing. "So the message to wind farm developers is simple. Energy at the cost of design is not sustainable. You must stop ignoring landscape aesthetics" (<http://bit.ly/llhlxF>).

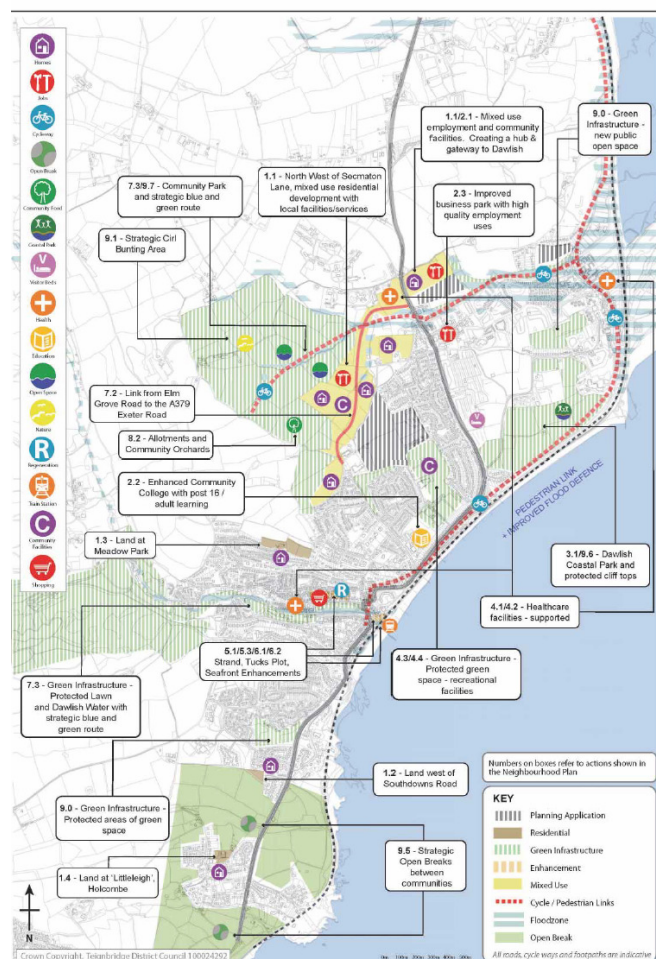
Existing planning guidance. There is confusion on the status of pre-NPPF planning guidance (as distinct from pre-NPPF policy which has been deleted). The communities department is currently "looking at how to rationalise the 6000+ pages of planning guidance that still exists and will issue some further NPPF guidance" (Plan-it Law: <http://bit.ly/JMrHUM>; Planning £: <http://bit.ly/lz9szi>). The Planning Advisory Service (PAS) says that guidance notes that accompanied the now deleted planning policy statements and guidance, remain extant. These include *PPS4 Practice Guidance* on town centres and *PPS5 Historic Environment Planning Practice Guide*, but where the guidance "refers you to a PPS or PPG which has been replaced, then that part can't be considered relevant" (PAS: <http://bit.ly/lecrRd>).

Local plans. PAS has issued a checklist for testing the compatibility of existing core strategies with the NPPF (<http://bit.ly/lulpAS>; Out-Law: <http://bit.ly/lumaAd>). The communities department said that conflicts between the NPPF and local plans adopted after 2004 will be resolved by planning inspectors on a "case-by-case basis" (Planning £: <http://bit.ly/JHKPFp>). PAS has also produced guidance on councils' duty to cooperate on strategic planning issues (<http://bit.ly/luleMO>). The Planning Inspectorate has produced a 'model' wording to incorporate the presumption in favour of sustainable development in local plans (<http://bit.ly/luleMO>).

Climate change. The Planning and Climate Change Coalition (which includes CPRE) has published planning guidance to accompany the NPPF (<http://bit.ly/pccnppf>). The guide identifies key principles for policies that support the development of a low-carbon future and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. "While communities can benefit from decentralised energy directly, they can also build a resilient economic future by anticipating and responding to climate change that is now inevitable." The guide singles out neighbourhood plans as a useful tool for community action on climate change, and points to the importance of the duty to co-operate in cross-boundary adaptation and mitigation activities.

Neighbourhood plans. The Dawlish Parish Neighbourhood Plan has become the first to be examined by a planning inspector. The plan (below) conforms to housing targets in the emerging core strategy but offers different locations for development (Out-Law: <http://bit.ly/ldkb7X>; TI Devon: <http://bit.ly/llqvnd>; Dawlish Plan: <http://bit.ly/lvyd3R>).

Dawlish Parish Neighbourhood Plan - Revised Draft for Examination (March 2012)
Vision Map - Opportunities for Positive Change



House of Commons. MPs debated the NPPF over two short sessions (photo below). Greg Clark revealed that he spoken to the Planning Inspectorate: “I made it crystal clear that [the NPPF] provided for a localist approach and provided a framework for local decisions, and that I expected decisions to be taken in that vein. I will also expect to see a sample of the decisions that are being taken, including after the examination of plans, to ensure that that is happening.” He promised an annual Commons debate on the framework (Hansard: <http://bit.ly/IVVgStl>; <http://bit.ly/IVVEAw>; Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/luZUW>; NT: <http://bit.ly/ld42fl>).



MPs debate the NPPF

NPPF in action. Councillors in Castle Donington are angry at an unexpected increase in housing numbers after North West Leicestershire rushed approval of its core strategy in the face of the NPPF. In explaining their reluctant decision to vote for the core strategy the councillors claim incorrectly: “The new national planning policy framework states that local plans should be developer led” (AMA: <http://bit.ly/JKnPXk>). Residents of Haverhill, Suffolk, have made one of the first applications for a LGS under the NPPF to preserve greenfield and a wildlife corridor from an access road (Echo: <http://bit.ly/ljh5NG>). Campaigners battling to save the Blue Mountain Golf Course in Bracknell Forest are hoping the NPPF will come to their aid, but councillors believe it strengthens the case for the development (Get Bracknell: <http://bit.ly/KjiPOD>).

New NPPF Briefings. Planning Officers Society: <http://bit.ly/li4lYy>. CPRE: <http://bit.ly/llhscr>. House of Commons Library: <http://bit.ly/JAzymm>. Planning consultancy Quod has published an index to the NPPF: <http://bit.ly/JRDgwZ>.

Planning

Predetermination. The High Court upheld a decision by Eric Pickles to reject a 1,300 home urban extension to St Austell, agreeing that the development would “pre-empt decisions that should properly be taken locally” (TI Cornwall: <http://bit.ly/lebyYU>).

Town centres. The Town Centre Masterplan for Guildford will be delayed and renamed to take into account public concern and the NPPF (Get Surrey: <http://bit.ly/JSnwxD>). Local authorities are campaigning for changes to the Article 4 regime to gain more control over the clustering of particular uses in town centres, such as strip clubs and bookmakers (Planning Portal: <http://bit.ly/JSO0ll>). See also page 8.

Core strategies and local plans. Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council has been ordered by the high court to reconsider its “irrational and unlawful” decision not to include land that it had purchased for housing as a site its core strategy (LGL: <http://bit.ly/lhasNL>; Gazette letters: <http://bit.ly/liVbvS>). Ptolemy Dean has urged Tunbridge Wells Borough Council to use its local plan to defend the special views which gave the town its distinct character (TI Kent: <http://bit.ly/luZ5SQ>; Courier: <http://bit.ly/luZsgj>). Friends of the Earth has applied to the High Court for a judicial review of the Forest of Dean core strategy claiming that the council had failed to carry out its duties in relation to the EU site and protected species legislation (BBC: <http://bbc.in/KicM1u>; Out-Law: <http://bit.ly/KicLdY>). Huntingdonshire’s Core Strategy is also set for judicial review over plans for housing west of St Ives (Out-Law: <http://bit.ly/lgwjVj>).

Garden Cities and Suburbs. In the Huffington Post, Alan Moore updates the garden city concept for the 21st century (<http://huff.to/lvsCp5>). The TCPA has republished Raymond Unwin’s classic, *Nothing Gained by Overcrowding!* It is accompanied an exploration of how Unwin’s garden suburb ideas can be applied today. It includes an analysis on how modest reductions in housing density can reduce costs and increase dwelling areas (<http://bit.ly/JPiDP8>).

Flooding. New guidance for local authorities on planning in flood risk areas has been published by the Association of British Insurers and the National Flood Forum (Planning Portal: <http://bit.ly/J01zE1>).

Enterprise. Dr Susan Priest has taken up her post as director of the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (TI Kent: <http://bit.ly/liUvXr>; SELEP: <http://bit.ly/liUym1>). Enterprise Zones can now offer tax breaks to new businesses providing up to 100% relief for five years. The zones are also adopting local development orders to simplify planning consents (CLG: <http://bit.ly/KiXqi9>; BBC: <http://bbc.in/KiXTkB>; <http://bbc.in/KiXUFg>).

Housing

Design. Housing minister Grant Shapps is planning a design summit to overcome local objections to new housing schemes. He told the Home Builders Federation: "If we want great neighbourhoods as well as great buildings we need great designs in order to take our communities with them" (Inside Housing: <http://bit.ly/lvwEhb>; CLG: <http://bit.ly/JPfILM>).

Affordable housing. Public housing starts are predicted to reduce by 22% in 2012 and by a further 5% in 2013 (Inside Housing: <http://bit.ly/lvwHWb>). Developers are complaining that councils are setting the community infrastructure levy too high to allow affordable housing to be funded through S106 agreements (Inside Housing: <http://bit.ly/JhzV3q>).

Eco housing. Linden Homes wants the government to scrap the requirement for developers to meet the 'zero carbon' level 6 of the code for sustainable homes. Instead it proposes a charge of between £3,000 and £5,000 on new homes to improve the energy efficiency of existing homes (Inside Housing: <http://bit.ly/lvwlmv>). Cherwell Council is considering whether houses in Eco Bicester could utilise waste heat from the Ardley incinerator (Buckingham Today: <http://bit.ly/J5n7EI>).

Around the South East. Campaigners welcomed a report commissioned by CPRE Horsham that suggests a target of 480 new houses a year, compared to the lowest option of 590 put forward by Mid Sussex council. Housing campaign groups in the district have met to rally opposition to over-development (County Times: <http://bit.ly/lrkn2o>; <http://bit.ly/J5nKOV>). CPRE Protect Kent said council officials are being "disingenuous" and hiding the truth about the number of houses they plan to build in Faversham and Swale. A leaflet outlines plans for 4,000 new homes, whereas the council is planning 13,500. Swale council said the criticism was unfounded (TI Kent: <http://bit.ly/lc5Bru>). Developers have signed a section 106 agreement to provide two new primary schools, a community centre, and a river restoration project for the 2,500-home Berewood Village urban extension to Waterlooville in Hampshire (Planning £: <http://bit.ly/lgwCwc>). Hook in Hampshire is coming under siege with developers bidding to build up to 740 homes on greenfields surrounding the village (Get Hants: <http://bit.ly/ljuKnZ>). Heathfield community leaders have pledged to continue to fight for affordable housing in the town after a planning inspector axed plans for 160 homes from Wealden District Council's core strategy because the town lies in an AONB (TI Sussex: <http://bit.ly/ljuXHJ>). Wealden District Council's planning committee threw out a plan for 74 homes at Crowborough on traffic grounds (TI Sussex: <http://bit.ly/ljtZZo>). Residents in North Weald are raising concerns about garden grabbing (Forest Guardian: <http://bit.ly/JR9g4j>). Plans for up to 5,750 homes in Chilmington Green, Ashford have gone out for public consultation (Kent Online: <http://bit.ly/luYbG3>).

Around the country. CPRE Norfolk has been coordinating community groups to protest against the Greater Norwich Development Partnership (NEN24: <http://bit.ly/J5nTSa>; <http://bit.ly/J5ofYP>). Residents in Suffolk are continuing their campaign against a 2,000 home brownfield development in the AONB at Martlesham (BBC: <http://bbc.in/liVnLE>).

Landscapes and Biodiversity

Green belt in the South East. A controversial university link road across Oxford's green belt has been opened (Oxford Mail: <http://bit.ly/I2266U>). A farrier who illegally felled hundreds of trees in the green belt has applied to Runnymede Borough Council to develop the site as stables (Get Surrey: <http://bit.ly/Je8AyX>). Basildon Council is coming under pressure from residents to designate more green belt land as 'plotlands' to allow infill housing to be built (Recorder: <http://bit.ly/IZZsJF>). A showman has been granted permission to continue storing fairground rides on green belt land in Runnymede (Get Surrey: <http://bit.ly/IZZ4Bz>).

Cherkley Court. After almost three hours of debate, Mole Valley District Council overturned their officers' recommendation to reject an application for a golf course and luxury hotel in the green belt at Cherkley Court, Surrey. Tim Harrold for CPRE Surrey argued a golf course could prevent the proposed addition of the land to the AONB, denying it extra protection, and cause harm to the chalk grassland and woodland. Planning permission is set to be granted around now (Get Surrey: <http://bit.ly/IlgRHU>; TI Surrey: <http://bit.ly/IlgT2o0>).

Green belt around the country. Townspeople are protesting against building in the green belt at Wilmslow (<http://bit.ly/liUS4l>; see also Andrew Lainton: <http://bit.ly/lxW1Cm>). Plans for a 2,500 student village in the green belt at Chester have been withdrawn but are expected to be resubmitted (icCheshire: <http://bit.ly/liV0ki>). Rochdale has withdrawn from its core strategy to re-examine planned intrusions into the green belt (Out-Law: <http://bit.ly/KiYrH9>; Rochdale: <http://bit.ly/KiYuCM>). Central Bedfordshire Council has prevented gypsies and travellers moving onto the green belt near Heath and Reach (LBO: <http://bit.ly/liUH92>). Campaigners against an illegal gypsies and travellers site in the green belt at Meriden say they will not move from their protest camp (BBC: <http://bbc.in/liULFV>).

Green space. Villagers in Hampshire are campaigning to preserve the green gap between Fleet and Crookham Village from being closed with housing. "Its network of footpaths, cherished green and ancient woodland and country setting would be a tragic loss to everyone if the plans went ahead" (Get Hants: <http://bit.ly/JOn7s7>). Residents are trying to block the sell-off of four open spaces in Runnymede by submitting town green applications (Get Surrey: <http://bit.ly/J010dh>). CPRE Surrey Heath District is opposing electric fencing on Chobham Common (Get Surrey: <http://bit.ly/JHxkFE>).

South Downs National Park. The Rivers Arun and Rother in West Sussex are set for major improvements to their landscape and wildlife following initial funding from the Heritage Lottery Fund (Gazette: <http://bit.ly/Ju3xyN>).

Woodland. Austin Brady of Woodland Trust said the fate of an ancient woodland, Oaken Wood, near Maidstone in Kent, could become an early and significant test of the NPPF (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/IliH28>).

Wildlife. In June, the High Court will hear a judicial review brought by the Badger Trust against the badger cull (FWI: <http://bit.ly/lyeWgt>). Friends of the Earth said it would cost £1.8 billion a year to hand-pollinate crops without bees, 20% more expensive than previously thought (<http://bit.ly/KiWKJU>). The native black honeybee, feared to have died out in southern Britain, has been found as far south as West Sussex. Natural England is to reintroduce the extinct short-haired bumblebee at the RSPB's Dungeness reserve in Kent (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/JSobbx>; NE: <http://bit.ly/li46ho>).

Light pollution. The annual survey of light pollution by CPRE and the British Astronomical Association found that 53% of those responding could see less than ten stars in Orion (Daily Mail: <http://bit.ly/JR8X9z>; CBBC Newsround: <http://bbc.in/Kjl2gD>; Independent: <http://ind.pn/Kjl34h>; Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/Kjl7Rn>). A London designer has produced his own solution for light pollution - artificial stars (Cnet: <http://cnet.co/HXrhNC>).

Quarrying. Richard Benyon, MP for Newbury and Minister for the Natural Environment and Fisheries, is proposing a quarry adjacent to his home at Englefield House, near Reading. In the Guardian, George Monbiot carped: "The minister appears to have a powerful commercial interest in resisting stricter protections for the animals and plants he is charged with protecting" (<http://bit.ly/JoyXcc>). Oxfordshire County Council turned down plans for extraction of 800,000 tons of gravel at Longworth in Oxfordshire, but Hanson may appeal. The council however approved additional sand and gravel processing off a narrow lane adjacent to the nature reserve at Radley Lakes (Herald: <http://bit.ly/ljggVd>).

Tranquillity. The European Environment Agency and the Noise Abatement Society are calling for submissions for their annual European Soundscape Award 2012, which aims to encourage more tranquil landscapes, townscape and workplaces (<http://bit.ly/KhYjm8>).

Heritage. English Heritage is consulting on whether historic railway buildings, bridges and tunnels along the 116 miles of GWR track from London Paddington to Bristol Temple Meads might be listed (Oxford Mail: <http://bit.ly/lflqCL>; TI Wilts: <http://bit.ly/lbnE2f>; EH deadline 9 May: <http://bit.ly/lbnyl5>). CPRE Protect Kent is campaigning to get a historic magistrates court in Sittingbourne listed (Kent Online: <http://bit.ly/JPg0wz>). English Heritage has purchased Harmondsworth Great Barn which stands in the shadow of Heathrow (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/lh1JdK>; FT £: <http://on.ft.com/lh1LT4>). After a survey by historians and residents, 78 historic sites in Wivenhoe, Essex have been given protected status in planning decisions by Colchester Council. None are listed by English Heritage (Standard: <http://bit.ly/JBl8m8>). English Heritage is funding a database of war memorials (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/JloPFG>). Clementine Cecil has been appointed as the new Director of Save Britain's Heritage (<http://bit.ly/ltWVgF>). The row over George Osborne's imposition of 20% VAT on renovations to listed buildings is growing (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/JloCIM>).

Rights of way. Sussex Area Ramblers Association is angry that £285,000 has been removed from the East Sussex rights of way budget for 2012/13 (Sussex Express: <http://bit.ly/JRWzWP>). Ramblers commemorated the 80th anniversary of the mass trespass at Kinder Scout (BBC: <http://bbc.in/JRWT81>; Grough: <http://bit.ly/JRX57m>; Yorks Post: <http://bit.ly/JRXfeR>).

Windscares: CPRE on Impacts

Generating light. CPRE has published a new report on the impact of wind farms on the rural landscape (*Generating light on landscape impacts: How to accommodate onshore wind while protecting the countryside*: <http://bit.ly/J9qoLJ>). It says: "Climate change is one of the most pressing and complex issues we face today. Alongside measures to address energy conservation and demand, CPRE believes we must choose an appropriate mix of renewable energy technologies and deploy them in a way which safeguards the countryside and protects valued landscapes. Onshore wind will undoubtedly play a role in any mix but questions remain over how much capacity we need from this source and where it should be located." It suggests that one way of increasing community engagement in renewable energy would be community ownership.

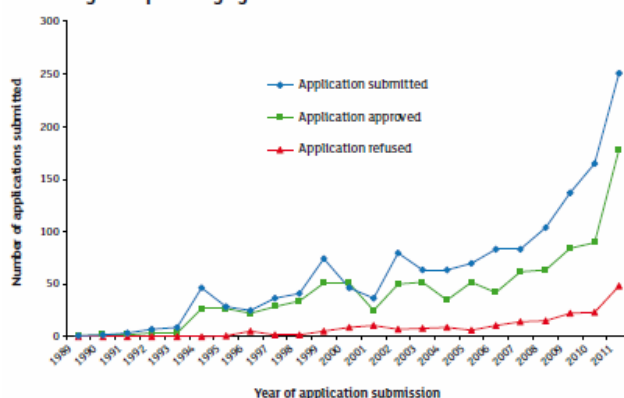
Local level strategic planning. Praising the nearly-abolished regional spatial strategies for helping to "outline a landscape-sensitive distribution of onshore wind across a region", it is calling for a strategic, planned approach which recognises the importance of landscape capacity, including the cumulative impacts of onshore wind turbines. Without "local level strategic planning, CPRE fears more decisions will be made on the judgement of Planning Inspectors at the appeal stage, rather than at the local level." It cites several case studies where the Planning Inspectorate has approved wind farms that clearly damage local landscapes or heritage settings.

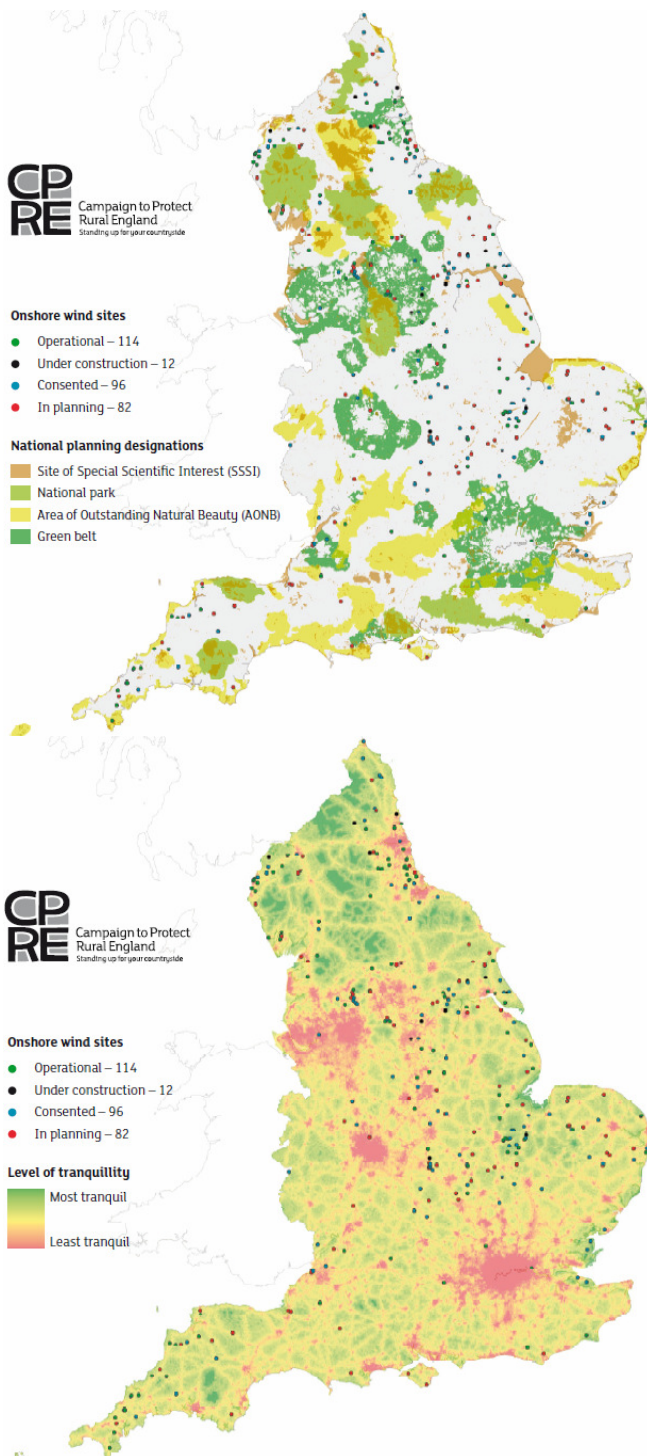
Other proposals. CPRE also calls on the government to:

- ◆ be clear about the total number of onshore wind turbines it expects to see built and where these might be located
- ◆ ensure local planning authorities seek to protect landscape character through their local plans and in planning decisions
- ◆ instruct the Planning Inspectorate to give significant weight when making decisions to local plans which have identified appropriate and inappropriate areas for onshore wind development
- ◆ oblige the onshore wind industry to take legal and financial responsibility for decommissioning onshore wind turbines and restoring the landscape.

Comment. Shaun Spiers said: "The English countryside is one of this country's great glories. It will always change, of course, and it is right that the countryside should play its part in supplying the renewable energy the country needs. But we must find a way of reconciling climate change mitigation and landscape protection."

Graph 1 – progress of renewable technologies, including wind, through the planning system





Windscares: Round Up

Lyveden. East Northamptonshire Council, the National Trust and English Heritage are to make a joint high court challenge to a planning inspector's approval of four wind turbines within the setting of Lyveden New Bield. Fiona Reynolds for National Trust said: "The decision... is both damaging to Lyveden New Bield and could have serious implications for other heritage sites across the UK." Simon Thurley of English Heritage argued: The inspector "failed to have 'special regard' for the desirability of preserving the special interest of the listed building and its setting which the law requires of him... This decision... must not be allowed to become the benchmark for future wind-energy developments" (LGL: <http://bit.ly/lh86OY>; PA: <http://bit.ly/lt2Bgq>; Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/JPedHY>).

Public opinion. IPSOS Mori conducted a survey of 1,009 adults aged 16 to 64 on behalf of Renewable UK (Mori: <http://bit.ly/lzHxzn>; the survey did not include the 17% of the population aged 65 and over - this curiosity seems to have passed unnoticed). Less than a third of respondents (28%) are strongly in favour wind power in the UK; 38% tend to favour wind power. Just 3% are strongly opposed and 5% tended to oppose wind power. RenewableUK said the research provides evidence of the "overwhelming public support which isn't always recognised in media coverage" but a problem the sector faces is the fact that the anti-wind contingency though small is extremely vocal in its media coverage (Edie: <http://bit.ly/lazrxY>; REF: <http://bit.ly/KicO9v>; Guardian: <http://bit.ly/JBcrYT>). CPRE Magazine hosted an online debate and vote on wind farms, which attracted 72 contributions. Two-thirds of the 1,561 voters thought the government putting undue emphasis on wind power to solve the UK's energy problems (<http://bit.ly/lIgYTN>). A poll commissioned by Scottish Renewables revealed that 71% of people back the use of wind power in Scotland, with just 7% saying they strongly disagree (Edie: <http://bit.ly/Kdk7V5>). In a survey commissioned by tourism agency VisitScotland, 80% said a wind farm would not affect their decision about where to take a holiday but most neither agreed nor disagreed that wind farms spoil the look of the Scottish countryside (BBC: <http://bbc.in/lfHFU>).

NOW It's time to say
National Opposition to Windfarms
www.nowind.org.uk

National Opposition to Windfarms (NOW). Liberal Democrat peer Lord Carlile launched a new national campaign to oppose wind power (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/KkSjcx>; <http://www.nowind.org.uk>). Maria McCaffery of RenewableUK accused the group of making "rather bizarre claims about the cost of wind" and of "confusion, inconsistency, and quite amateurish use of references" in the charter (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/lfBN2e>). NOW has launched a charter setting out the six main themes of its opposition:

- 1 Windfarms reduce landscape value, kill birds and compromise wildlife habitats.
- 2 Electricity from windfarms is unreliable and cannot be stored.
- 3 There is no evidence that increasing the number of windfarms is reducing national CO2 emissions.
- 4 Additional grid connection is needed, increasing the cost to the consumer and impact on landscape value.
- 5 No developer will build windfarms without subsidies. We are now paying £1 billion a year.
- 6 There is no evidence that windfarms bring significant local employment.

Wind Energy Charter. Energy companies and turbine manufacturers joined forces with trade body RenewableUK to launch of the UK Wind Energy Charter (Edie: <http://bit.ly/Ju3MKr>; Charter: <http://bit.ly/Jt6tf8>). It sets out three principles to ensure that the UK remains a world leader in renewable energy:

- ♦ to invest in the energy security & prosperity of the UK
- ♦ to create tens of thousands of jobs
- ♦ to provide clean affordable energy.

Around the country. Councillors in Cumbria, Northumberland and Durham are concerned about the number and cumulative of wind farms in their counties, often built in opposition to local opinion. Applicants are planning another 194 turbines in the North East. Cumbria is angry that the communities department has predetermined that a wind turbine “is unlikely to have a significant visual impact” in cumulative terms, even before the planning application was submitted. Councillors say the intervention is symptomatic of “Big Brother, not localism and big society” (Times & Star: <http://bit.ly/HVwWOU>; NWEM: <http://bit.ly/lyeEWS>; Berwick Advertiser: <http://bit.ly/KjIBXK>; Journal: <http://bit.ly/JScEsJ>; <http://bit.ly/JJr5Bp>). Villagers and the Brontë Society are battling plans for four 328ft high turbines on Thornton Moor near Haworth (Daily Mail: <http://bit.ly/lh1aRo>; Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/lh1fof>).

Onshore: South East. CPRE Protect Kent is objecting to the demolition of a listed building at Sheerness docks to accommodate Vestas’ wind turbine factory (Kent Online: <http://bit.ly/JVmHyN>).

Onshore: National. A study by conservation groups including the RSPB said onshore windfarms are not causing long-term damage to bird populations, but some species are harmed when windfarms are built (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/luxGvG>; BBC: <http://bbc.in/luxRqG>). The RSPB is planning a wind turbine at its head offices near Sandy in Bedfordshire (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/JBAOur>). Plans for two windfarms at Huntspill in Somerset have been rejected by councillors on grounds of unacceptable visual intrusion of the landscape and impact on ecology (BBC: <http://bbc.in/JPeavI>; TIWC: <http://bit.ly/JPe7JA>). Cornwall Council’s decision to reject plans for a single turbine at Longdowns have been overturned by a planning inspector (TI Cornwall: <http://bit.ly/JhzohP>; Decision: <http://bit.ly/lrzAR6>). A North Yorkshire County Council scrutiny group has recommended a minimum separation distance of two kilometres between large-scale groups of turbines and the nearest residential properties. It also said turbines are inappropriate in national parks and AONBs (York Press: <http://bit.ly/liup1>). CPRE Dorset has criticised the latest draft renewable energy strategy for the county. It says the policy could still pave the way for hundreds of wind turbines and takes little account of Dorset’s beautiful landscape (View: <http://bit.ly/IZY05F>).

Offshore: Navitus Bay. Energy giants Eneco and EDF Energy have announced a partnership to develop the world’s largest wind farm in Navitus Bay off the coast of the Isle of Wight and Dorset. It will have around 200 turbines. The plan is being fiercely opposed for its impact on the Jurassic Coast world heritage site. The Royal Yacht Squadron fears the Fastnet Race could be threatened. The Daily Mail said it will “blight England’s only World Heritage site” (there are of course 26 World Heritage sites in England). Bournemouth’s planning board has rejected permission for a temporary measurement mast for the wind farm (Click Green: <http://bit.ly/lvn5lK>; Daily Mail: <http://bit.ly/JPeX9x>; <http://bit.ly/KjHlTt>; Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/JJqNdx>; BBC: <http://bbc.in/J01XT4>; Business Green: <http://bit.ly/lvnu7Q>; Echo: <http://bit.ly/JSoVhd>; Navitus project: <http://bit.ly/lvnAMC>; Challenge Navitus: <http://bit.ly/JPeLh3>).

Offshore: Rampion. More than 4,500 visitors attended twelve exhibitions to give views on the proposed Rampion offshore wind farm (Argus: <http://bit.ly/JJqJdK>). The South Downs Society has called for a “substantial package of environmental improvements” in the South Downs National Park as the price for allowing the wind farm to go ahead (MST: <http://bit.ly/JzZD51>).

Offshore: National. Donald Trump hit the headlines when he appeared before the energy and tourism committee of the Scottish parliament to condemn Scotland’s rush for windpower. He failed to confirm reports that he is putting up £10 million to support the Scottish Communities Against Turbines planning and legal battles (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/Je9L1q>; Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/Je9OKt>; <http://tgr.ph/l4euA>; Independent: <http://ind.pn/Je9WtF>; CAT: <http://bit.ly/Je9OdB>). Scottish ministers are considering plans for a 277 turbine wind farm off the coast of Caithness (John O’Groat Journal: <http://bit.ly/l5w93>). The Viking wind farm of 103 turbines on Shetland has been granted permission (Record: <http://bit.ly/lIiq8J>; Daily Mail: <http://bit.ly/lIiqWf>). Shell says that it will not be investing in offshore wind farms as the current economics of wind power do not stack up (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/IL42D5>).

Transport

Policy. Angus Walker writes that the National Networks National Policy Statement, which covers highways, railways and strategic rail freight interchanges, continues to be delayed (<http://bit.ly/lg9sJV>).

Airports. Aviation minister, Teresa Villiers said that the government would not drop its objection to a third runway because “there is no technological solution in sight to ensure planes become quiet enough quickly enough to make this burden in any way tolerable.” Colin Matthews of BAA disagreed, saying the noise problems were not insurmountable. Villiers also promised that the government will consider the case for a Thames Estuary airport in its forthcoming aviation review (FT £: <http://on.ft.com/HXATrW>). Britain’s air traffic control service, NATS, said an airport in the Thames estuary would be in the “very worst spot” for the South East’s crowded airspace (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/JSmKKh>). CPRE Protect Kent was among environmental groups that met MPs to discuss the case against an airport in the Thames Estuary (TI Kent: <http://bit.ly/lz0gdr>).

Roads. Dorset CPRE revealed that the county has missed its road safety targets for eleven years and called for money to be spent on safety measures rather than adding to road infrastructure (View: <http://bit.ly/l5t3DM>).

Rail passenger journeys across Great Britain have reached record levels – in 2010-11 passengers made 1.16 billion rail journeys – up 8.9% from 2009-10 (Rail News: <http://bit.ly/luyHno>).

High Speed 2. The Department for Transport admitted that it got the sums wrong on the cost benefits on HS2. Originally expected to generate £1.60 for every pound spent, new calculations say it will be just £1.20 and officially ranks as poor value for money. The DfT said: “We have always been clear that... its benefits reach well beyond narrow transport economics” (Rail News: <http://bit.ly/J007l7>; FT £: <http://on.ft.com/IJPEVC>). A proposal by Transport Secretary Justine Greening to move ancient woodland in the line of HS2 to a new site has been met with derision (BBC: <http://bbc.in/KhYvSn>).

Energy and Climate Change

Population and consumption. An expert group convened by the Royal Society said that over-consumption in rich countries and rapid population growth in the poorest both need to be tackled to put society on a sustainable path. The report, which will feed into preparations for the Rio+20 summit in June, said that population and the environment should not be considered as two separate issues and called for moving beyond GDP as the yardstick of economic health (Royal Society: <http://bit.ly/ItWvH1>; BBC: <http://bbc.in/ItWwux>; Guardian: <http://bit.ly/ItWy5D>).

Clean Energy Ministerial. David Cameron was accused of “betrayal” as he downgraded a planned keynote speech, originally trailed as a major policy intervention on the environment, to just five minutes of introductory remarks (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/IlkVHZ>; Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/IlkWMg>). He told the summit of energy ministers, that more renewables must be built to keep the lights on: “I passionately believe the rapid growth of renewables is vital to our future. Renewable energy is not just good for our environment but we believe it’s very good business too.” Friends of the Earth responded: “This falls a long way short of the green speech David Cameron should have given - tipping his hat to the need for a cleaner future and recycling a few announcements just won’t measure up.” The energy ministers agreed to promote improve energy efficiency and renewable energy technologies, and to increase energy access (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/lvnm86>; Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/ItXQ0w>; <http://tgr.ph/IL4h14>; FoE: <http://bit.ly/ItXdEh>; DECC: <http://bit.ly/liUcuf>; <http://bit.ly/liUpz2>).

Green Economy. In a speech on the green economy, Nick Clegg attacked purveyors of “ludicrous scare stories” over the cost of green measures, warning they could derail the UK’s potential role as the “number one destination for clean, green investment” (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/KiXe2w>). While the proposed Green Bank waits for European approval, the business department is to invest £80 million in small scale waste infrastructure sector (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/KhYLRw>). The Guardian reported that David Cameron plans scrap measures to compel householders to make their homes more energy efficient when they undertake home improvements. Green businesses promised to fight to save the scheme (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/Kf89dE>; Business Green: <http://bit.ly/Kf8eht>; <http://bit.ly/Kf76uf>).

Carbon. The Energy and Climate Change Committee said the 20% decline in UK carbon emissions is the result of pollution ‘outsourcing’ overseas - rather than the consequence of the government’s climate change policy. The UK’s CO2 emissions actually grew 20% to 2009 if imports of goods and energy are taken into account (Edie: <http://bit.ly/ljcrRI>; see also Grist: <http://bit.ly/IH00Af>).

Bioenergy. Biofuels made up just 3.3% of road transport fuel in 2010/11 and only 53% of this complied with sustainability rules, well short of the 80% target set to protect rainforests and biodiversity. Friends of the Earth said: “Biofuels are not the answer to our energy woes - the UK should scrap its biofuels targets” (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/KhZ4f9>). Furniture manufacturers say the biomass subsidy for major energy suppliers is having a “detrimental” effect as it forces up the price of wood (Edie: <http://bit.ly/ljtFFu>).

Incinerators. The Times headlined that a “national revolt” was brewing against incinerators and claimed that one hundred incinerators are in the pipeline, a figure the industry denies (Edie: <http://bit.ly/Ju3HXa>). A report from SITA UK claimed that energy-from-waste incineration can meet 15% of the UK’s electricity from renewable sources and a third of the country’s residential gas demand (Edie: <http://bit.ly/Kdj79>). Buckinghamshire County Council approved a controversial energy-from-waste incinerator at Calvert near Aylesbury after a two day planning meeting. Local MP John Bercow has asked Eric Pickles to call in the decision (BBC: <http://bbc.in/l8sTmN>; Herald: <http://bit.ly/K1hvEL>; BA&R: <http://bit.ly/lt50ld>). West Berkshire Council has rejected a proposal to build an incinerator in the AONB at Chieveley (BBC: <http://bbc.in/K1hkcu>; Reading Chronicle: <http://bit.ly/IEOmQg>). Eric Pickles has delayed a decision on the Hartlebury incinerator in Worcestershire to take into account the NPPF (WN: <http://bit.ly/JlpDKO>; Shuttle: <http://bit.ly/l8ta9m>; Post: <http://bit.ly/Ilkldi>). Officers at Stroud District Council have raised objections to an application to build a £500 million incinerator (TI Gloucs: <http://bit.ly/Kf4AE5>; Glosvain: <http://bit.ly/Kf539m>). Councillors are growing concerned about emissions from an incinerator at planned at Beddington on the border of Croydon and Sutton (TI Croydon: <http://bit.ly/Ju3V0m>; Croydon Guardian: <http://bit.ly/JdZhlr>). Campaigners against an incinerator in Plymouth have lodged an application for a judicial review (TI Plymouth: <http://bit.ly/lBdBbT>).

Fracking: Research. DECC has published research reports on the fracking operations by Cuadrilla near Blackpool, which led to two minor earth tremors last year. The government says there is no need for any moratorium on shale gas, but it is planning increased monitoring of the operations. DECC is asking for comments by 25 May 2012. Green groups condemned the report (Engineer: <http://bit.ly/IYLMVZ>; DECC: <http://bit.ly/lJggMy>; Cuadrilla: <http://bit.ly/KgWl0>; Guardian: <http://bit.ly/Kid8oN>; <http://bit.ly/Kid7Bh>; <http://bit.ly/JSnVJM>; Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/ljuxkE>). Wells MP Tessa Munt, who is concerned about drilling in the Mendips, said: “this study does not consider the effects of over 500 chemicals pumped deeply underground during this controversial process. The potential damage to our water supply, or land and air contamination needs detailed investigation” (Wells People: <http://bit.ly/KgWdTS>). Durham University research found that fracking should take place at a minimum of 0.6km from sensitive rock formations to eliminate the risk of direct water contamination (Engineer: <http://bit.ly/IYLSd>; Independent: <http://ind.pn/JPdDKf>). A sharp rise in the number of earthquakes in the mid-US is almost certainly caused by human activity and could be linked to a boom in shale gas drilling (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/J00pIJ>).

Fracking: Debate. In the Guardian, Zoe Williams said: “the anti-winds and the anti-frackers are guilty of such overstatement as to collapse their arguments” and Patrick Barkham asked: “What’s the truth about fracking?” (<http://bit.ly/Kf5zUO>; <http://bit.ly/ljuo0H>; Guardian Guide to Fracking: <http://bit.ly/J00gF4>). Matt Damon will star in “The Promised Land,” an anti-fracking movie (Politico: <http://politi.co/lh1wHN>). Lord Browne, a financial backer of Cuadrilla, claimed that fracking would only impact “tiny bits” of countryside (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/JS4B1>).

Fracking South East. After lobbying from the campaign group 'No Fracking in Sussex', East Sussex County Council unanimously passed a motion expressing concern over fracking but West Sussex County Council limited its actions to a technical briefing for members. The campaigners had hoped both counties would unite to create the first frack-free zone (County Times: <http://bit.ly/JJqzDc>). Residents in Balcombe in Sussex and at Woodnesborough and Cowden in Kent remain concerned about earth tremors and water pollution (TI Sussex: <http://bit.ly/JPdxlQ>; TI Kent: <http://bit.ly/ljgCv4>; Kent News: <http://bit.ly/JSORh9>).

Food and Farming

Local food. CPRE's latest food webs report on Norwich said 150 small scale suppliers within 30 miles of the city account for £3.5m of sales of locally-produced food (NEN24: <http://bit.ly/lvt8Dv>). Cardiff has launched charter to promote a diverse and sustainable food culture in the city and to get more people buying local produce (Wales Online: <http://bit.ly/ly7a6e>; Charter: <http://bit.ly/ljsgYw>).

Farming. The government's progress towards making UK livestock farming more sustainable has been 'inadequate' and 'significant opportunities' have been missed during the past year according to Friends of the Earth, which launched a report on progress towards sustainable livestock farming (Defra: <http://bit.ly/lyuPDq>; Farmers Guardian: <http://bit.ly/lyuP6z>; FoE: <http://bit.ly/lyuUHT>). Defra announced three more Rural and Farming Networks with 'direct lines' to the government. They are in Wessex; Cumbria & North Lancashire; and Cheshire, South and West Lancashire, Merseyside & Manchester (<http://bit.ly/JJEGsd>). Natural England has withdrawn its three year old 50-year vision for England's uplands. It envisaged an increasing role for hill farmers as environmental managers rather than focusing on food production but met strong opposition from farmers (FWI: <http://bit.ly/J00EUa>; Gazette: <http://bit.ly/IKDumY>).

High streets. Speaking in Telford, Mary Portas said that high streets should no longer rely on large anchor tenants to underpin new developments. Towns should instead look for new types of tenants to provide each town with a unique heart and to boost independent retailers (Shropshire Star: <http://bit.ly/lyvhv7>). Planning minister Greg Clark told a meeting that the NPPF is "unambiguous about the importance of town centres", but a planning consultant warned that: "On paper the NPPF had restricted opportunities for out-of-town development, but a room full of developers will find a way round it" (Store: <http://bit.ly/KdYofD>).

Supermarkets. Shop floorspace on retail parks grew to 10 million sq metres in 2011, up from 9.9 million sq metres in 2010. Comparison stores increasingly dominate the out of town market (Planning £: <http://bit.ly/lyuqko>; Shopping Centre: <http://bit.ly/lyujFv>). Across Britain, hundreds of pubs are being converted into Tesco Express or Sainsbury's Local stores as supermarkets pursue a "street corner" growth strategy in the face of restrictions on out-of-town developments (Guardian: <http://bit.ly/lulBf>). Tesco is cutting the number of new store openings by more than a third compared to last year (Grocer: <http://bit.ly/JHxywD>). Three of the four UK big supermarkets have refused to reveal how much food they discard each year. Sainsbury's admitted to about 44,000 tonnes in 2011 (Edie: <http://bit.ly/KdjQkQ>).

Water and Drought

Water: South East. The Report on Radio 4 examined water scarcity and housing in the South East. Richard Knox-Johnstone from CPRE Protect Kent said Shepway District Council have behaved irresponsibly in granting planning permission for 1,000 homes at Martello Lakes: "This is a water scarcity area and the council knew that before they gave planning permission" (BBC: <http://bbc.in/luXqN2>). Thames Water intends to install smart meters in most homes by 2015 (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/IlkJbW>).

Water: National. The Environment Agency confirmed that the Midlands and South West are in environmental drought status, but there are no plans for water restrictions (Edie: <http://bit.ly/lju16c>). There are calls for increased use of grey water harvesting, including water butts (Telegraph: <http://tgr.ph/IL3WeG>; Times £: <http://thetim.es/lai0xo>). Water companies are considering water trading options (Edie: <http://bit.ly/Ju3vXO>).

Campaigning

London mayor. An analysis by Friends of the Earth claimed that Ken Livingstone is the greenest of the candidates for London mayor (<http://bit.ly/lg9f9u>). Independent Siobhan Benita is the only candidate to support a third runway at Heathrow (Business Green: <http://bit.ly/liTQFm>).

CPRE. The national team has moved offices (<http://bit.ly/IlknC9>). CPRE has redesigned its *Planning Help* website, which now includes a step by step guide to neighbourhood plans (<http://bit.ly/lhaFQY>). CPRE Bedfordshire has celebrated its 25th birthday (AMA: <http://bit.ly/lzVCiQ>).

Planning Aid England looks set to get a temporary extension of funding until July (<http://bit.ly/Hf7wyC>).

Parliamentary planning briefings. In the last four months, the House of Commons Library and the Parliamentary Office of Science and Technology have published a series of short and informative briefings on the planning regime. They include:

Consents for wind farms - onshore: <http://bit.ly/JAzvXM>
Councillors and planning applications: <http://bit.ly/lxTulG>
Enforcement of planning law: <http://bit.ly/JAzraH>
Farm diversification, countryside and planning: <http://bit.ly/lxTZ5e>

Green belt: <http://bit.ly/KdteF9>

Housing density and gardens: <http://bit.ly/KdsxvH>

Listed buildings in England: <http://bit.ly/lxTCHM>

Major infrastructure planning: <http://bit.ly/JAzNxX>

National Planning Policy Framework: <http://bit.ly/JAzymm>

Planning and flooding: <http://bit.ly/JAzGT1>

Planning and parking: <http://bit.ly/lxTPus>

Planning appeals: procedure: <http://bit.ly/JAzQcZ>

Planning obligations: planning gain or planning contribution: <http://bit.ly/KdsMGU>

Playing fields and public open spaces: <http://bit.ly/Kdt54z>

Publicity for planning applications: <http://bit.ly/JAzvqE>

Seeking sustainability: <http://bit.ly/postsus>

Town centres, planning and supermarkets: <http://bit.ly/KdsPCJ>

Wind farms - distance from housing: <http://bit.ly/lxTlej>