



Goodbye Mr Nice Guy...

If we really want to save the countryside then it's time to talk tough

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Could it be that in our very British way we have just been too nice? Have we stood by for too long allowing ourselves to be called NIMBYs and believing all those hollow promises about affordable housing?

CPRE Sussex's John Kay believes we have... and he is not alone.

“We have always been too polite,” he says. “We listen patiently while barristers make lengthy appeals assuring us of their client's heartfelt wish to meet the pressing need for affordable housing.

Then, only a few weeks after permission has been given, the same barristers declare with equal sincerity that, sadly, the house builder who has bought the site has paid so much that unfortunately the affordable housing will have to be abandoned.”

Many people, John included, believe that the Government's redrafted National Planning Policy Framework, (NPPF), consulted on this spring, has been unduly influenced by Strategic Land industry lobbying. The term ‘Strategic Land Industry’ (SLI) does not incorporate house builders. This industry functions by buying land which usually does not have planning permission, getting permission and then selling the site on.

“SLIs are motivated by selfish business interests,” John says. “Their sole aim is to harvest the windfall profits from planning permissions granted for housing on new green-field sites. Their only output is the planning permission: actual house building is of no consequence”.

“There are very few windfall profits from brownfield re-development, and landowners can get their own permissions for allocations in Local and Neighbourhood Plans, so SLIs focus on unsustainable countryside sites”.

A growing body of people now believe that these profit driven lobbyists were responsible for tilting the balance of the original 2012 NPPF, which has already done irreparable damage to the countryside.

“Buoyed up by their 2012 successes, the SLIs now aim to tilt the balance still further,” warns John. “These are powerful and influential lobbyists and their fingerprints are all over the draft revisions of the NPPF. Many of the changes proposed are about increasing their profits and nothing to do with building the houses England needs. They make a significant contribution to ‘Rip-Off Britain’”.

CPRE Sussex has made a strong consultation response to the redraft of the NPPF but there is still time to add your voice.

Please act now before it is too late!

What Can I do to help?

The public consultation about changes to the NPPF has now closed and the new draft expected by the end of July. **There is now a small window of time in which we can act at a political level to make sure that the new NPPF supports local communities and does not work in the interests of the SLI.**

If you want to make a difference then please ACT NOW!

Write to

the new Secretary of State for Housing,
Communities and Local Government:

The Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP
Ministry of Housing,
Communities and Local Government
2nd floor NW,
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London, SW1P 4DF

Email: contact@jamesbrokenshire.com

and to your local MP. (To find your local MP go to:
<https://www.theyworkforyou.com>)

Points you may like to raise include the following:

Please prevent changes to the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which put ‘profit’ before ‘people.’

1 Local Plans are to be declared ‘out of date’ if developers fail to deliver in line with housing targets, even if the Plan itself has provided enough new housing.

The new legislation fails to give Councils the power to force reneging builders to build out sites with permission or allocated sites.

The new NPPF must not hold local councils responsible for the failings of the development industry

2 Under the ‘Housing Delivery Test’ more sites must be allocated if councils (really the local developers) fall behind housing targets. The focus of planning should be on getting those sites which already have permission built, not on constantly allocating more green fields for development.

3 The five year life imposed on Local Plans will result in many becoming ‘out of date’. This means that many of their policies, including local environmental protections, will be given less weight. The new NPPF should make it clear that any plan review cycle should not involve a complete re-write of the plan every five years.

4 The new NPPF contains loopholes so that the protection for Neighbourhood Plans is only for a short window (two years from the referendum) and after that is dependent on the council maintaining a housing supply of over three years.

This protection is not long enough for the (often voluntary) groups of local people who want to shape the future of their community, leaving them vulnerable to developer-imposed development when their plans are deemed to be out-of-date.

5 The new NPPF abandons the requirement that: “Planning policies and decisions should be based on up-to-date information about the natural environment and other characteristics of the area”.

It is hard to see how the Government’s ambition to ‘leave the environment in a better state than we found it’ and deliver a ‘net gain in environmental capital’ without this information. This requirement must be reinstated.