



SAVE OUR COUNTRYSIDE **CAMPAIGN PACK**

**Guidance and materials for CPRE branches
and district groups**



**Campaign to Protect
Rural England**
Standing up for your countryside

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Save our Countryside campaign. We know that many of you have heard about the campaign and seen the Charter, we also know that some of you have even started work on it already - which is great!

In this pack we tell you a bit more about it, fill in some information gaps and of course provide some activity ideas and materials to help you promote the campaign locally.

We believe this campaign allows us to get across CPRE's messages on housing and planning to audiences in a new way, to gather public support for our work, and to recruit more volunteers and members. The role of branches and district groups is going to be crucial - your ability to reach people, organisations and politicians locally will bring the campaign to life and make it a success.

So what are we trying to do?

The Charter is the framework for our new Save our Countryside campaign. We envisage the campaign running up to the next General Election. With your help we want to get tens of thousands of people to sign up as supporters of the Charter and use this support to influence the 2015 General Election manifestos of the main parties.

The campaign aims are:

1. to gather public support for CPRE's views on planning, housing and the countryside
2. to influence MPs and the 2015 General Election manifestos
3. to provide a platform for future research, policy and media work
4. to reach new audiences who may subsequently become members and volunteers.

Why a Charter?

A charter is an ancient way of letting ordinary people set out a list of demands as a way of petitioning rulers or Governments. It's a simple way to distil the crucial elements of a campaign and highlight the most important issues.

CPRE has used charters successfully before to set out reform agendas, make a strong public statement of core values or to outline standards that the public should be able to count on.

How was this Charter developed?

The Charter and the policy briefings that underpin it are based on the concerns we raised in the report we published around the anniversary of the National Planning Policy Framework, *Countryside Promises; Planning realities*. It aims to simplify our concerns about how the planning system is currently operating and make them more understandable for a wider audience.

So as well as political aims, is this campaign about getting new members?

The main purpose of the campaign is to raise awareness and public support for our work as well as to influence local and national decision making for the better. However, because we believe the Charter demands will resonate with people far and wide, we want to use this to encourage people new to CPRE to support us further - either financially or through giving some time.

We will share any new membership income that is generated through the follow up of names clearly supplied by a branch. We hope that the campaign gives you an opportunity to engage new supporters in our work in an easily accessible way. As part of signing the Charter, people will be asked to indicate if they are happy to receive further communication from us. We will stay in touch with those that don't opt out and at an appropriate point ask them to become members or support us in some other way.

What is national office doing?

We launched the Charter in July with our President, Sir Andrew Motion and held a local campaign group event in Westminster.

We have promoted the Charter demands to MPs via our parliamentary newsletter and will use the Charter to frame meetings with relevant MPs and Peers in the months to come.

We are developing ideas for research we might commission to help address the concerns highlighted by the Charter and will be undertaking media work on a number of its themes.

A number of celebrities have already signed up and we are going to ask more to give us their support. To date, nearly 11,000 people have signed the Charter, but we need this number to keep growing. With your help we can.

Does this mean other campaign topics are no longer a priority for national office?

Not at all. We will continue to work on the wide range of issues we always have, including Stop the Drop, transport, light pollution and food and farming. But this campaign will help to set the framework for our planning and housing work.

So what can we do, and when?

There are a number of things you can do, some of which may be easy to integrate into activities your group already has planned - such as upcoming events, stalls, talks and meetings - and some of which may be new. There will be different phases during the campaign when we can focus our efforts on influencing different audiences and decision makers. Take a look at the *Ideas for local action* page in this pack for more about the activities we'd like you to consider. You are bound to think of other ideas as well, and we'd love to hear them!

What should we be asking people to do?

Please ask them to:

- ✓ sign the Charter
- ✓ spread the word - ask friends, family, colleagues to sign the Charter
- ✓ contact their MPs asking them to support the Charter and its demands
- ✓ tell us about case studies from their local area that will inform our campaigning work (they can send them to charter@cpre.org.uk).

You could also encourage keen people to lend a hand with other activities. See if they will comment on local planning applications or help try to influence the policies in your Local Plan (point them to www.planninghelp.org.uk for advice and tips for this).

How can we find out about campaign progress?

To help us keep in touch each branch has a nominated 'Charter campaign contact'. We have sent this pack to this person and we will write to them with updates for the campaign as it progresses. We hope this person will pass on

information they receive to others in the branch and to district groups.

If your branch campaign contact or their details change at any point please let us know.

Whilst detailed information will be sent directly to the Charter campaign contacts, we will also continue to share updates through our usual *e-circular* so that everyone can hear main campaign news and highlights as they happen.

Who should we contact at national office about the campaign?

Staff from across departments are part of the Save Our Countryside campaign team. If you wish to get in touch with us please do, you can email charter@cpre.org.uk or call 020 7981 2800.

We would love to hear about the activity you have planned, your experience of getting people involved on the ground and anything you find you need that we might be able to help with.

What if we need more or other materials?

A copy of this pack and all the materials is available in the Local Group Area of our website. Anyone can access it: www.cpre.org.uk/local-group-resources/campaigning/charter-to-save-our-countryside

All future materials will be stored here so that there is one central place to find the campaign resources. If your branch needs more copies of any materials, or if your district groups want copies then look here.

Unfortunately we are only able to provide a limited amount of printed posters (which accompany this pack). We have a few more in stock, so contact Supporter Services if you need some (supporterservices@cpre.org.uk, 020 7981 2870) or print your own copies using our *Princk* website: <http://cpre.princk.com> - each branch has a login but contact us if you have problems.

Do let us know what you think of these materials and how they work in practice. If you find something needs changing or that something is missing then we'll see what we can do.

The **General Frequently Asked Questions** sheet in this pack gives further information about the campaign. If you have any other questions then get in touch.

CAMPAIGN MATERIALS LIST

Here we explain the materials included in this pack and some others which you can access through our website.

All campaign materials are stored in a dedicated section in the Local Group Area of our website:

www.cpre.org.uk/local-group-resources/campaigning/charter-to-save-our-countryside

Contact our Supporter Services team if you need more posters, sign up cards or stickers.

Email supporterservices@cpre.org.uk or call 020 7981 2870.

Petition sheet

Designed with the correct data protection wording we need. Please use our *Prinkk* website to print a version with your group name:

<http://cpre.prinkk.com>

Send completed petitions to the address on the sheet ASAP so that we can add their names to the Charter.

500 x Sign up cards

The card is part petition and part information leaflet. One half asks people to sign up to the Charter and the other half is something for them to keep.

Please prioritise these cards for use with new audiences. Ask existing members to sign up online or to call us on 020 7981 2870 (so we can avoid unnecessary processing costs).

Collect the cards there and then, few people will actually post it if they take it away to do. Tell them you'll post it for them and save a stamp!

You could have a collection box on stalls for people to put them in.

When you have collected a bunch please send them to the address on the cards so we can add their names to the Charter ASAP.

10 x A4 Display Posters

5 x A3 Display Posters

For noticeboards, walls, community centres and any public locations where people will read them (and sign up!)

If you need more contact us (we have a few) or print some from *Prinkk*: <http://cpre.prinkk.com>

4 x A3 Stall Posters

For use on stalls and at events, these have large text to entice people over. Contact us if you need more. Also available on *Prinkk*.

1 x A3 Prop sign

Take photos of local MPs, celebs, groups or individuals holding the 'I signed CPRE's Charter!' sign. Use photos in your newsletter, website and send to local media with a press release - newspapers love a photo! Also available on *Prinkk*.

Logos

Available to download from the campaign materials web page (use link at the top).

1000 x Charter stickers

Everybody loves a sticker! Put them on your newsletters, membership forms, letters and envelopes to persuade existing members to sign up.

We will send each branch a set of stickers along with the sign up cards in October.

Campaign film

Inspire people with our call to arms. Available directly from YouTube. Due to slow buffering you should play the film through at least once before each showing.

www.tinyurl.com/youtube-cprecharterfilm

If you want to show the film at an important talk or event we can provide a copy on CD. Contact charter@cpre.org.uk and give us 10 days' notice.

PowerPoint presentation

Available to download from the campaign materials web page (use link at the top). Includes accompanying notes. Edit it to fit your needs.

Template local press release

Use local media to spread the word. If you don't have a press contact list for your area and want one contact our Press Officer, Claire Norman charter@cpre.org.uk.

General FAQ sheet

Use this to help answer questions your members, the public, the media or local politicians may ask. You could take copies to events for quick reference.

Campaign policy briefings

Giving more detail about each of the Charter demands. Useful when meeting your local MP, local authority representatives or talking to local journalists.

Involving your MPs & Peers - campaign guide

Practical ways to involve your MPs and Peers. Their support is going to be crucial to our campaign success!

Charter wording

A copy of the long (full) and short versions of the Charter wording. Use either in your communications.

Using the campaign to recruit supporters

The Charter's simple message will help us engage new supporters.

Using the campaign to recruit volunteers

Take the opportunity to bring in new faces.

Other links

Specific links for branches to the online petition

Nationally we have used the address www.saveourcountryside.org.uk. However, it is best for branches to use the address www.cpre.org.uk/charter in all your communications to direct people to our online petition. We can then track this to know who has come via a branch and thus allocate any future income appropriately.

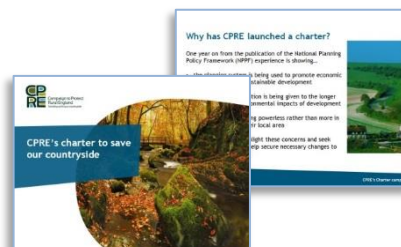
The one exception is on your website. We have another special link for your branch web pages. We will email this link to every branch Charter Campaign Contact to pass on (it's quite long!)

Charter text

Save yourself work and use text from our President's launch speech or our Annual Review article. Links to these are on the campaign materials web page (use link at the top).

Facebook & Twitter

Feel free to 'share' posts from the national CPRE Facebook page on your own page. Likewise for twitter if you have a branch account.



IDEAS FOR LOCAL ACTION

We want to harness public, political and member support for the Charter. Below are some local activity ideas you could consider which will help us to focus on our main audiences for this part of the campaign.

- ☐ Use sign up cards and petition sheets to collect signatures from the public at events, stalls, walks or talks you have planned.
- ☐ Make it the subject of your next AGM and invite a political speaker or local celebrity along.
- ☐ Ask your membership to give their support. Get them to sign up online and to help spread the word.
- ☐ Write about it on your website, in e-bulletins and newsletters.
- ☐ Share campaign updates on Facebook or Twitter.
- ☐ Send petition sheets and other Charter material to local organisations, community groups, action groups and your established networks. Ask if they can share it with their members and gather signatures.
- ☐ Send a press release or letter to local papers and encourage readers to sign up.
- ☐ Mention the Charter in any media quotes you give. Ask them to include the link to the online petition page.
- ☐ Add a Charter sticker to all your letters and envelopes.
- ☐ Put a footer on emails giving the petition link.
- ☐ Use the PowerPoint presentation to give talks to community groups and local organisations (e.g. the WI or University of the Third Age) and collect sign up cards from the audience.
- ☐ Send the petition link to everyone who has come to your group for assistance in the past.
- ☐ Ask members to ask their friends to sign up.
- ☐ Send the campaign film to those on email.
- ☐ Put up Charter posters in village halls, on parish noticeboards and in libraries.
- ☐ MP support is crucial. Write to your local MPs and ask them to support the Charter. Request a meeting with them to get our policy aims firmly on their agenda. Please let us know how you get on!
- ☐ Write to local Peers and celebrities to ask if they will sign up to the Charter.
- ☐ Use connections with parish councillors to promote the Charter. Ask if they will give sign up cards to their members. Ask if they will put up a poster. Ask if you can give a talk.
- ☐ Help us gather evidence. We need good and bad case studies which illustrate the problems (and solutions) we are raising in the three Charter demands. Please send cases from your area: charter@cpre.org.uk

What are we planning later?

We are working on ideas for how we can reach more of our target audiences in 2014 and we will be in touch later with more detail about ways we'd appreciate your help. Here are some possible 2014 activity thoughts so far:

- Summer shows & seasonal events
- Street stalls in areas under threat
- Public meetings
- Hustings events
- Lobbying county/district council candidates and new councillors.
- Lobbying Prospective Parliamentary Candidates (leading up to the 2015 General Election)

MATERIALS CONTENTS

Materials included in this pack:

- Petition sheet
- General FAQ sheet
- Campaign policy briefings for the three Charter demands
- Charter Wording
- Involving your MPs & Peers - campaign guide
- Template local Press Release
- Using the campaign to recruit supporters
- Using the campaign to recruit volunteers
- Designed materials:
 - 10 x A4 display posters
 - 5 x A3 display posters
 - 4 x A3 Stall posters
 - 1 X A3 Prop sign

Materials available online only:

www.cpre.org.uk/local-group-resources/campaigning/charter-to-save-our-countryside

- Campaign PowerPoint presentation
- Campaign film
- Logos
- Special petition links for branch use
- Useful Charter text



Support CPRE's charter

England's countryside is beautiful, irreplaceable and finite. Yet increasingly it is being destroyed by badly planned developments, while local communities are left powerless to protect the places they love.

Please support CPRE's charter by adding your details below.

CPRE would like to keep you up to date with news of our campaigns and other activities, including membership and fundraising. If you do **NOT** wish to be contacted by post, please tick the box.

CPRE's charter to save our countryside

We must stand together to stop the destruction of England's countryside. Support our three demands.

Don't sacrifice our countryside

Our open spaces are being destroyed unnecessarily. Previously developed brownfield sites should be re-used first.

A fair say for communities

The cards are stacked in favour of developers. We want a democratic planning system that gives local people a stronger voice.

More housing – in the right places

The country needs affordable homes. They must be sensitively located, with excellent environmental standards and high quality design.

Name _____ Signature _____ No post ☐
Address _____ Postcode _____
Email _____ Phone _____
(By providing this, I am happy for CPRE to email me) (By providing this, I am happy for CPRE to phone me)

Name _____ Signature _____ No post ☐
Address _____ Postcode _____
Email _____ Phone _____
(By providing this, I am happy for CPRE to email me) (By providing this, I am happy for CPRE to phone me)

Name _____ Signature _____ No post ☐
Address _____ Postcode _____
Email _____ Phone _____
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Name _____ Signature _____ No post ☐
Address _____ Postcode _____
Email _____ Phone _____
(By providing this, I am happy for CPRE to email me) (By providing this, I am happy for CPRE to phone me)

Please return completed forms to: CPRE Charter, Sheffield, S95 1AZ

CPRE would like to keep you up to date with news of our campaigns and other activities, including membership and fundraising. If you do **NOT** wish to be contacted by post, please tick the box.

Name _____	Signature _____	No post
Address _____	Postcode _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email _____ (By providing this, I am happy for CPRE to email me)	Phone _____ (By providing this, I am happy for CPRE to phone me)	

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Name _____	Signature _____	No post
Address _____	Postcode _____	<input type="checkbox"/>
Email _____ (By providing this, I am happy for CPRE to email me)	Phone _____ (By providing this, I am happy for CPRE to phone me)	

Please return completed forms to: CPRE Charter, Sheffield, S95 1AZ



GENERAL FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Our rationale for launching CPRE's charter to save our countryside

What is the aim of the Charter?

The aim of the Charter is to win wider support for CPRE's concerns about how the planning system is currently working and to promote our solutions. The three high level principles set the framework for our Save Our Countryside campaign. We envisage it running for 18-24 months up to the next General Election and beyond. We intend to gather thousands of names in support of the Charter to win support for our aims.

Why is CPRE making these demands now? What's the problem?

The Government implemented significant planning reforms through the Localism Act 2011 and the National Planning Policy Framework, which was published in March 2012. While it was claimed these reforms would seek to promote sustainable development, a year's experience on the ground highlights that the three strands of sustainable development, economic, social and environmental, are not being pursued in an integrated way. Rather it seems that the planning system is being used mainly to promote economic growth, with insufficient regard for the longer term social and environmental impacts. While CPRE recognises the need for economic prosperity, we do not believe it should be pursued at any cost.

Why is CPRE best placed to call for these changes?

CPRE is the leading charity involved in planning and countryside protection and we have a long history of working for a planning system that delivers genuinely sustainable development. Our network of 43 county branches, 200 district groups and 2,000 parish council members also enables us to understand the impacts of the reforms on the ground.

We are concerned about impact of the Government's reform both on community involvement and the countryside, and we want to help the public stand up for the countryside. Our wealth of experience at both the local and national level means that we are able to propose practical solutions. We want to work constructively with decision makers to solve these problems.

Our detailed concerns and proposed solutions

What is the National Planning Policy Framework and why is it important?

The National Planning Policy Framework, or NPPF, sets out the Government's planning policies for England and how these are expected to be applied. The NPPF must be taken into account in the preparation of local and neighbourhood plans.

A Local Plan identifies where future development should take place to meet local needs for homes, businesses, shops and other services, plus the infrastructure to support them. It also sets out which areas should be protected from development because they are important to local people or have environmental or heritage qualities that should be conserved.

Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the development plan (Local Plan), unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF is a material consideration and carries more weight in the decision making process if the Local Plan is deemed to be out of date.

What are brownfield sites?

CPRE uses the term 'brownfield' to refer to land that has previously been built on. The Government's National Planning Policy Framework defines 'previously developed land' as:

Land which is or was occupied by a permanent structure, including the curtilage of the developed land (although it should not be assumed that the whole of the curtilage should be developed) and any associated fixed surface infrastructure. This excludes: land that is or has been occupied by agricultural or forestry buildings; land that has been developed for minerals extraction or waste disposal by landfill purposes where provision for restoration has been made through development control procedures; land in built-up areas such as private residential gardens, parks, recreation grounds and allotments; and land that was previously-developed but where the remains of the permanent structure or fixed surface structure have blended into the landscape in the process of time.

Why should we build on brownfield sites first and is there enough previously developed land for the housing we need?

Since 1989, on average, 67 square kilometres of undeveloped land, or an area larger than the city of Southampton, has been lost every year to development¹. Since 2003 the trend of countryside loss has slowed, but the improvement is in danger of being lost due to a weakening of planning policies that were in place from the late 1990s until 2012. These required brownfield sites to be used before greenfield. The emphasis on 'brownfield first' is important not only for protecting the countryside but also for promoting urban renaissance and renewal and promoting more sustainable ways of living. This is because well planned, attractive urban areas can reduce the need to travel to get to local shops and services.

Local authorities and planning inspectors are now increasingly allowing large scale development on greenfield sites when enough brownfield land is available for over 1.5 million new homes, and much more still for new business and commercial development such as offices, according to the most recent (2009) Government figures.

A more detailed policy briefing on land use and the need to promote a 'brownfield first' approach can be found at: www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/planning/item/3359-charter-to-save-our-countryside

¹ See Government land use change statistics at www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-land-use-change-statistics. The area of Southampton is 51 square kilometres or 19 square miles

Are you saying we should build on all brownfield sites? What about the ones that are important for wildlife and biodiversity?

We believe that a brownfield first approach is important but we recognise that not all sites will be suitable for redevelopment. This might be because they are in unsustainable locations, because they are rich in biodiversity, or because they are of great amenity value.

People can already feed into the planning system - what more does CPRE want?

The Government committed to reforming the planning system radically to give local communities greater ability to shape the places in which they live. CPRE welcomed this commitment as we believe public engagement in the planning system is vitally important. Several Government initiatives however, have left communities and campaigners feeling disempowered and frustrated. These include powers in the Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 that centralise power and the increasing emphasis being placed on business-led, undemocratic, Local Enterprise Partnerships.

A more detailed briefing on these changes can be found at:

www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/planning/item/3360-charter-to-save-our-countryside

Is this simply a 'Charter for NIMBYs'?

No, we recognise there is a need for more housing but we do not believe that the current planning system is delivering the housing we need, in the right locations.

Do we really need more housing?

Yes. While we do not agree with some people's simplistic claims that we need to build more houses so that prices will fall, we recognise that there is severe housing need in many parts of the country. However, before looking at building new houses the Government and local authorities should prioritise the refurbishment of the existing housing stock and seek to get empty homes back into use.

Why does the Charter not mention population and why isn't CPRE campaigning on that issue?

The full version of the Charter does mention population. It states that we need more housing to meet the needs of our rising population.

CPRE is often asked why we do not campaign around population and it is something that our trustees have discussed at length. We recognise that population should not be a taboo subject and a rising population clearly makes it harder for us to protect the countryside. However, CPRE is unlikely to be able to influence the size of the UK population, whereas we can and do influence how the country uses its finite natural resources, particularly the land. We have no remit to talk about issues such as immigration and family planning. We focus our campaigns - and the Charter - where we have expertise and a clear charitable remit.

What do you mean by more housing 'in the right places'?

We believe that with the right approach it is possible to avoid sporadic development in the countryside and the unsustainable sprawl of our towns and cities. With the wrong approach housing will lead to massive loss of our countryside and irreparable damage to our landscapes. Local authorities should work with their community, through the planning system, to identify which locations are the 'right place' for development in their area.

A more detailed briefing on how we believe the planning system can deliver the right housing in the right locations can be found at: www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/planning/item/3361-charter-to-save-our-countryside

Why we need your support

How will the Charter be used?

The Charter sets out the concerns we have with how the Government's reformed planning system is being applied at the local level. The more detailed policy briefings, which underpin the three principles in the Charter, also set out some of our proposed solutions.

The Charter will set the framework for our planning and housing campaigning work in the run up to the General Election. Over the next 18 - 24 months we will work to get our solutions adopted by the current Government and in party manifestos.

We also recognise the importance of influencing local decision-makers. The Charter will also seek to encourage more people to get involved in using the planning system to shape their local area.

What impact will the Charter have?

If we can get our solutions adopted at the national and local levels we believe that they will ensure that the planning system delivers necessary development without unnecessary loss of the countryside. The more support we get for the Charter the more likely we are to be able to achieve that aim.

How will adding my name to the Charter help?

Adding your name to the Charter will help us ensure that the Government realises our concerns are shared by people across the country who care about the English countryside, whether they live in rural or urban areas. The more support we get the greater likelihood of success in securing the changes we believe are necessary to save our countryside.

What can I do, at the local level, to support the Charter?

There are a number of ways local people can support the Charter and there will be different phases during the campaign when we will focus our efforts on influencing different audiences and decision makers. At the moment some simple ways to get involved include:

- Supporting our Charter - www.saveourcountryside.org.uk
- Contacting your MP by letter or email to encourage them to support our Charter
- Feeding in relevant case studies from your local area that can help inform our national campaigning work. Please send them to charter@cpre.org.uk

We would also encourage people to try to influence the policies in your Local Plan and comment on local planning applications. If you would like to get involved please contact your local CPRE branch (see www.cpre.org.uk/how-you-can-help/local-and-regional-groups for contact details) or visit www.cpre.org.uk/local-group-resources/campaigning/planning and www.planninghelp.org.uk for advice and tips.



CAMPAIGN POLICY BRIEFINGS FOR THE THREE CHARTER DEMANDS

The campaign policy briefings set out more details of each of the three Charter demands. They set out information on what we believe the problems are and what changes we think need to be made to resolve them. You might find them useful if you are meeting with your local MP, representatives from your local authority or talking to local journalists.

Our three briefings will be updated approximately every 3 months. Copies of the latest briefings can be found at the links below.

1. **Don't sacrifice our countryside policy briefing**
www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/planning/item/3359-charter-to-save-our-countryside
2. **A fair say for local communities policy briefing**
www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/planning/item/3360-charter-to-save-our-countryside
3. **More housing - in the right places policy briefing**
www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/planning/item/3361-charter-to-save-our-countryside



DON'T SACRIFICE OUR COUNTRYSIDE

A campaign briefing from the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)
July 2013

'Our open spaces are being destroyed unnecessarily. Previously developed brownfield land should be re-used first to protect the beauty and tranquillity of our countryside and breathe new life into our towns and cities.'

Why is the countryside important?

The English countryside is central to our national identity. Despite being one of the most densely populated countries in the world, England has successfully protected most of its land area (all but 8.9%) from built development. The countryside is precious, irreplaceable and finite - a beautiful national asset for us all. How we use land is largely determined by the planning system which can ensure we protect the countryside while at the same time providing for the economic development and new housing that the country needs. With growing global concerns about climate change, food security, the depletion of nature, and population growth, we need to manage our countryside sustainably and protect it from inappropriate and unnecessary development - for the food and raw materials it provides, for nature, and for its beauty and the freedom it offers.

What's the problem?

Despite being one of the most densely populated countries in the world, England has successfully protected most of its land area (all but 8.9%) from built development. But there is growing evidence that more and more of our countryside is being destroyed by haphazard and badly planned developments.

Weakened national planning policy - Recent changes in national policy have resulted in greenfield sites being used when suitable brownfield sites are available. Since 1989, on average, 67 square kilometres of undeveloped land, or an area larger than the city of Southampton, has been lost every year to development¹. Since 2003 the trend of countryside loss has slowed but a weakening of planning policies requiring brownfield sites to be used before greenfields that were in place until 2012 looks likely to increase the rate of loss. Local authorities and planning inspectors are now increasingly allowing large scale greenfield development when enough suitable brownfield land is available for over 1.5 million new homes according to the most recent (2009) Government figures. On top of this, local plans across England propose at least 500,000 new dwellings on greenfield sites, with over 80,000 of these planned on Green Belt land², despite this land having special planning protection.

Lack of recognition for undesignated countryside - There are special controls over development in nationally protected landscapes (National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and wildlife sites (eg. Sites of Special Scientific Interest), and in Green Belts. But between them these areas cover less than half (or 45%) of England's countryside. Much valuable countryside is undesignated, for example the landscape of Charnwood in Leicestershire (see Case Study). More than a third (around 40%) of England's countryside is high quality (Grades 1-3a) agricultural land,

¹ See Government land use change statistics at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-land-use-change-statistics>. The area of Southampton is 51 square kilometres or 19 square miles

² CPRE, *Countryside Promises Planning Realities* March 2013.

much of it outside designated areas. Only a small proportion of this land has been mapped in detail³, and there are currently no special planning protections affecting the use of this land. This makes it vulnerable to development proposals such as those recently seen in Taunton Deane (see Case Study).

CASE STUDY - Charnwood

Charnwood Borough in Leicestershire has no Green Belt or nationally protected landscapes. The National Character Area profile for 'Charnwood', covering much of the Borough, describes 'a unique landscape, marked out by its geology and upland qualities, which contrast with the surrounding gentle lowlands'. The area is under continued pressure for new housing development. The Borough Council has particularly struggled to get a new Local Plan in place. The East Midlands Regional Plan, which focused most new development on brownfield sites in and around Derby, Leicester and Nottingham (alongside some losses of Green Belt land), has now been revoked. The lack of an up to date plan has made the Borough increasingly vulnerable to applications for large scale housing development, with Planning Inspectors allowing three recent appeals. The most recent of these, in May 2013, involved up to 300 dwellings on a greenfield site on the edge of Barrow Upon Soar.

CASE STUDY - Taunton, Somerset

In April 2013, Taunton Deane Borough Council voted to grant planning permission for 315 houses to the south east of the town, despite calls from local campaigners and over 800 objections. The land is countryside with no national policy protection. It contains both Grade 2 agricultural land (the second highest category in terms of quality) and part of a 'green wedge', a local planning designation protecting the countryside setting of Taunton. Development on the site had previously been rejected for the above reasons, and because most of the residents were likely to rely on cars to get to local schools or shops. Council officers noted issues about the loss of high quality agricultural land, but argued that 'national planning policy does not attribute significant weight to this matter'. The Government refused in July 2013 to call in the application as it was not considered to be of national importance.

England's countryside is increasingly disturbed by noise and visual intrusion - Findings from 2007 CPRE research show that nearly half (49.90%) of England's countryside is disturbed by noise or visual intrusion, an increase of nearly a fifth since the 1990s⁴. Light pollution levels across England increased by 26% between 1993 and 2000.⁵ This gloomy picture has been reinforced by the 2007 findings of the Countryside Survey, which noted significant decline in the condition of ponds and a 6.1% reduction in the length of managed hedgerows⁶, and by the 2013 State of Nature report which found that 60% of the species assessed 'have declined over the last 50 years and 31% have declined strongly'⁷.

³ Defra Soil Research Programme, Review of the weight that should be given to the protection of best and most versatile (BMV) land, Technical Report SP1501/TR, p.12/13, 2010,

<http://randd.defra.gov.uk/Default.aspx?Menu=Menu&Module=More&Location=None&Completed=2&ProjectID=17207>.

⁴ www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/tranquil-places/item/1760-england-fragmented-countryside-england-and-the-regions-intrusion-statistics

⁵ <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/countryside/dark-skies/item/1986>.

⁶ See www.countryside-survey.org.uk/sites/default/files/pdfs/reports2007/england2007/CS-England-Results2007-ExecSumm.pdf.

⁷ www.rspb.org.uk/stateofnature, p6.

How can we fix the problem?

- **More encouragement needs to be given to local authorities and developers to use brownfield sites before greenfield.** A 'smart growth' approach is the best way of accommodating necessary development while protecting the vital asset that is our countryside. This ensures that we use suitable brownfield sites in urban areas, well linked to public services and infrastructure such as transport, before allowing greenfield sites to be built on. To achieve this, the NPPF needs to be reinforced by new Government planning guidance which prioritises brownfield regeneration.
- **Regeneration focus for Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs)** - LEPs should be specifically guided to prioritise the regeneration of brownfield sites that are primarily suitable for business or commercial use in line with democratically agreed planning policies.
- **Use of financial incentives** -Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) should be used to prioritise the redevelopment of brownfield sites and new measures, such as Tax Increment Financing, used to cover the upfront costs of regenerating brownfield sites.
- **Action at the local level to improve the beauty and tranquillity of the countryside.** Local authorities should set planning policies to reduce light pollution, identify and protect areas of tranquillity and make use of the new Local Green Space designation.

What CPRE is doing and how people can help

At the national level CPRE seeks to influence planning legislation, policy and guidance to ensure a more sustainable approach to planning. Ministers have continued to state their commitment to protecting the Green Belt and reusing brownfield land but more needs to be done, particularly to protect ordinary, undesignated countryside. CPRE has produced tranquillity maps which can be used as the supporting evidence local authorities need to introduce planning policies to identify and protect areas of tranquillity. We can supply data to be used on request.

Local pressure is also vitally important. If you would like to take action please consider:

- Supporting CPRE's Charter - www.saveourcountryside.org.uk
- Writing to or emailing your local MP to ask them to support our Charter
- Feeding in relevant case studies from your local area that can help inform our national campaigning work. Please send them to charter@cpre.org.uk
- Seeking to influence the policies in your local plan and commenting on local planning applications. Visit www.planninghelp.org.uk and <http://www.cpre.org.uk/local-group-resources/campaigning/planning> for advice and tips.

CPRE
July 2013



A FAIR SAY FOR LOCAL COMMUNITIES

A campaign briefing by the Campaign to Protect Rural England
July 2013

'Local people are increasingly unable to stop the destruction of their towns and countryside. The cards are stacked in favour of powerful developers. We want a democratic planning system that gives communities a much stronger say in the future of their area.'

Why is this an important issue for CPRE?

The planning system at its best enables decisions about the future of areas to be democratic, accountable and made in the long term public interest. It secures public consent on necessary development. It helps deliver outcomes the market alone cannot deliver, such as affordable housing, urban regeneration, open space, biodiversity, open landscapes and community facilities. Planning gains its legitimacy as a decision-making process through being trusted by local communities and voluntary groups who should be involved at all stages in a process which must be transparent, accountable and accessible. Planning is also a key tool for meeting environmental objectives, including by promoting sustainable development. It helps to deliver high quality environments, by ensuring the long term protection and enhancement of our wildlife, landscapes and historic environment in both town and country.

What is the problem?

The coalition agreement produced in May 2010 states that the Government will “radically reform the planning system to give neighbourhoods far more ability to determine the shape of the places in which their inhabitants live”¹. This appeared to demonstrate an understanding and commitment to greater local involvement in planning decisions. In line with this commitment the Localism Act 2011 heralded a welcome shift of power to communities through creating a neighbourhood planning system, and abolishing Regional Strategies, through which top-down housing targets had been imposed on local communities.

Since then, numerous planning reforms proposed by Government have left local communities feeling disempowered and less able to influence decisions affecting their local areas. The overriding view is that recent changes to the planning system have led to less local control and more centralised decision-making.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) - The Government made a number of improvements on the draft NPPF with the aim of ensuring environmental protection and local democracy in planning. Yet, just over a year since the NPPF came into force, the sort of planning decisions that are being made every day across the country give a disturbing picture. They show that the NPPF is being interpreted in practice primarily as a means to justify releasing more land for development and more market housing in particular. Development is increasingly being allowed in precious countryside, in the face of opposition from local communities, and with little provision of affordable housing. Localism is being undermined because elected local councils have not had enough time to get local plans in place which are in line with the NPPF. As a result there is a return to planning ‘by appeal’, with local council decisions being overturned by Planning Inspectors.

¹ HM Government (2010) [The Coalition: our programme for government](#)

CASE STUDY - Stratford-on-Avon

In October 2012 the Secretary of State granted planning permission for up to 800 houses on largely greenfield land on the edge of Stratford-on-Avon, reversing the District Council's decision to refuse. The local MP, Nadhim Zahawi, commented: 'the decision destroys in a single stroke belief in the government's localism agenda'. The decision came despite Eric Pickles noting that 'considerable work has been undertaken on the neighbourhood plan process in Stratford-on-Avon.' The land affected adjoins Shottery Conservation Area including the Grade 1 Listed Anne Hathaway's cottage.

Growth and Infrastructure Act 2013 - This new Act is a disappointingly centralising measure, and undermines the ability of the planning system to act effectively as a tool for democratic decision-making. It includes measures that, in certain circumstances, allow developers to bypass elected local councils on planning decisions for major development and certain business and commercial projects², and to renegotiate section 106 requirements for affordable homes; it restricts communities' ability to protect town and village greens³; and leaves neighbours and parish councils with less of a say on home extensions and other building through a widening of the definition of 'permitted development' - ie. development that does not require express planning consent.⁴

Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs) - Following the removal of the regional tier of planning, the Government appears to be promoting informal, business-led, sub-regional planning as a way to fill this strategic vacuum. The approach being adopted appears to be following the line that any economic development is good development, regardless of the environmental consequences. The approach is based on a growing role for LEPs supported by the Government. LEPs are dominated by business interests, are not locally accountable, and have a single issue focus on economic growth. The areas they cover often have little coherence in terms of functional geography and so are difficult for communities to relate to. There is growing concern about their undemocratic influence over planning policy and decisions.⁵

Bullying tactics by developers - Too often at present, controversy over local planning is typified by large, powerful developers railroading unpopular proposals through the planning process. This can often involve using the threat of their right of appeal against refusal of planning permission to wear down local opposition. Undeveloped land can always be subject to a planning application for development, and applicants can keep on submitting variants of the same proposal at intervals indefinitely. As soon as any one application succeeds, there is no provision for development to be stopped provided it complies with relevant conditions. In other words, developers can keep on playing the system, and only have to get lucky once to achieve their goal. In stark contrast, local communities and other 'third parties' to planning applications have no right of appeal against planning approval, even if a development would go against a locally-agreed plan.

CASE STUDY - Mayfield 'New Market Town' proposal

Mayfield Market Towns is promoting a new town of up to 10,000 houses near Sayers Common in Sussex. Mid Sussex District Council does not support the application and its proposed plan outlines development of 10,600 homes between 2011 and 2031 to be delivered through strategic sites and neighbourhood plans, which do not include the site in question. On 4 March 2013 Mayfield wrote to the Local Authority warning them that the 'writing is on the wall' and suggesting that the local plan will founder because the Council has not demonstrated the Duty to Cooperate. Local MPs Nick Herbert and Nicholas Soames have written to the company stating that it is 'entirely unacceptable' for them to 'pressurise local councils in this way'. The MPs also state that the company is 'setting out to undermine' the process of local plan-making.

² DCLG (June 2013) [Planning performance and the planning guarantee: Government response to consultation](#)

³ DCLG (July 2013) [Consultation on registration of new town or village greens](#)

⁴ CPRE (May 2013) [Growth and Infrastructure Act briefing](#)

⁵ CPRE (Nov 2011) [Local Enterprise Partnerships - Are they serving the local community?](#)

How can we fix the problem?

- **Urgent clarification of planning guidance:** Ministers say that the NPPF's twin goals are to protect our countryside and to encourage sustainable development⁶. The evidence shows, however, that the NPPF is currently being interpreted primarily as a means to promote more development regardless of the environmental consequences. Government must address this disconnect urgently by providing new planning guidance.
- **Keep planning powers with locally-elected councils:** Repeal the ill-advised and bureaucratic powers in the Growth and Infrastructure Act to allow developers to bypass certain councils on planning decisions, and instead give democratically-elected councils adequate advice and support to make planning decisions on behalf of local people.
- **Reform LEs:** Ensure LEs don't assume planning powers and adopt measures to make them more transparent and accountable.
- **Planning appeals:** End the right of appeal against refusal of 'departure' applications, and create a limited community right of appeal against approval of departure applications⁷.
- **Access to information:** Make key public documents widely available on the internet and in hard copy in libraries and council offices. Set reasonable price limits for hard copies of key documents.

What is CPRE doing and how you can help?

At the national level CPRE seeks to influence planning legislation, policy and guidance to ensure a more democratic and transparent system where decisions are taken at the most appropriate level. Local pressure is also vitally important. If you would like to take action please consider:

- Supporting CPRE's Charter - www.saveourcountryside.org.uk
- Visiting CPRE's Planning Help website for advice and how to engage with the planning system - www.planninghelp.org.uk
- Supporting our efforts to change Government policy by feeding in relevant case studies from your local area to help inform our national campaigning work. Please send them to charter@cpre.org.uk
- Contacting your MP by letter or email to raise concerns

CPRE, July 2013

⁶ Stated in correspondence from Ministers to CPRE on the National Planning Policy Framework

⁷ CPRE (January 2002) [Third Party Rights of Appeal in Planning](#); CPRE (October 1999) [Planning for People](#)



MORE HOUSING - IN THE RIGHT PLACES

A campaign briefing by the Campaign to Protect Rural England
July 2013

'The country urgently needs more affordable homes for our rising population, including in villages and market towns. But they must be sensitively located, with excellent environmental standards and high quality design that enhances local character.'

Why is housing an important issue for CPRE?

CPRE believes that a healthy, thriving countryside is important for everyone, no matter where they live. We also recognise that everyone is entitled to live in a decent home that they can afford. Good planning should seek to deliver that housing, while minimising the negative impact of development on our countryside. Meeting the housing needs of rural communities is particularly important if they are to thrive.

We believe that with the right approach it is possible to avoid sporadic development in the countryside and the unsustainable sprawl of our towns and cities. With the wrong approach housing will lead to massive, unnecessary loss of our countryside and irreparable damage to our landscapes.

What is the problem?

The building of new homes is at its lowest peace-time rate since 1924¹ and the number of affordable houses completed in 2012/13 had dropped by more than a quarter compared with the previous year². While we need more sustainably located and well-designed homes, CPRE believes that the Government and many local authorities are taking the wrong approach to planning for housing. Successive Governments have simplistically argued that if high housing targets are set in local plans, more homes will be built and prices will become more affordable. Unsurprisingly, this approach has not delivered the houses we need, let alone in the right places.

National housing policy - The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out a 'predict and provide' approach to developing housing targets. This approach uses population and household projections as a basis for determining future need. While these projections are an important part of the evidence for planning housing, they only extrapolate past trends, and therefore should be treated with caution. A crude application of 'predict and provide' is likely to increase pressure for higher levels of land allocation and, potentially, greenfield development.

The NPPF also requires Local Plans to demonstrate a 15 year supply of sites for housing. While this is not new the NPPF uses the terms 'deliverable' and 'viable' in relation to available housing land. The definitions of deliverable and developable included in the NPPF are particularly important. Local planning authorities are pressed to demonstrate that allocated and permitted sites are immediately deliverable and that they viable in the short term. In practice this results in sites with planning permission that are well located, but remain undeveloped or have lapsed permissions, being side lined. It also means that levels of affordable housing being provided by the private sector are being reduced. Meanwhile 'off plan' sites that have a greater environmental impact are being successfully promoted, because they are more profitable, and therefore deliverable, in the short term. This is the antithesis of good land use planning.

¹ Holmans, A. (2005) *Historical Statistics of Housing in Britain*, University of Cambridge

² <http://www.insidehousing.co.uk/development/home-completions-plunge-by-a-quarter/6527509.article>

CASE STUDY - Erewash Affordable Housing Targets

Following the examination of Erewash's Core Strategy the independent examiner has described the proposed target for affordable housing as too 'prescriptive'. The Draft Core Strategy allocates a site which needs regeneration and states that a target of 25% should be set for affordable housing delivery. In contrast, a letter from the Inspector states that the 'viability assessment submitted with the current planning application, however, indicates that a significantly lower figure of 10%, with half of that off site, is the best that can be achieved.' This assessment, developed and submitted by the landowner who is presumably seeking to maximise their profits, leads the Inspector to conclude that the target proposed by the District Council is 'too onerous' and should be modified.

Inflated housing targets in local plans - The 'predict and provide' approach to planning for housing set out in the NPPF is resulting in unrealistically high housing targets in Local Plans. We are seeing, for example, the housing targets set in now revoked Regional Spatial Strategies being used at some Local Plan examinations by the Planning Inspectorate as a backstop justifying numerical housing requirements higher than the levels local planning authorities are proposing or willing to accept.

The Government has also put in place incentives, such as the New Homes Bonus, which puts pressure on local planning authorities to open up opportunities for housing growth. Combined with recent cuts to local authority budgets the result is that local plans and individual application decisions could be unduly influenced by the prospect of financial gains.

The discrepancies between theoretical predictions of demand, which are converted into housing targets, and the lack availability of mortgage finance to convert this to effective demand are leading to an oversupply of land allocated for housing. In a recent analysis of emerging and adopted local plans CPRE found that over 500,000 new houses are planned on greenfield sites. If these houses were built at an average density of 30 dwellings per hectare this would result in the loss of nearly 16,700 hectares of countryside. This is at a time when it is estimated that there are brownfield sites currently available for over 1.5 million homes³.

Landbanking - In the current economic climate 'landbanking' has become a significant issue. Essentially, this means that while planning permissions are being granted for new housing, they are not being built. Last month the Local Government Association found that there were approximately 400,000 planning permissions⁴ that had not yet been built.

Poor quality housing - Local opposition to house building can prevent the development of much needed new homes. Opposition can be for a number of reasons and, despite unfair accusations of nimbyism, often these concerns are entirely legitimate. The design of new homes, both inside and out, and of new neighbourhoods is critical to the public acceptability of new housing. Research shows that people would support housing development if homes were better designed: 73 per cent of people would support more homes being built locally if they were well-designed and in keeping with the local area⁵. Local authorities should be able to demand better quality new housing.

Out of date local plans - As of March 2013 52% of local planning authorities⁶ didn't have up to date local plans in place. This is leaving those local authorities open to a significantly increased threat of speculative development. In reality it is likely that an even higher proportion of authorities are at risk because they do not have an up to date five year land supply. Where a plan is deemed out of date, the NPPF carries greater weight in the decision making process and the assumption in favour of sustainable development applies. Multiple cases highlight that where this is the case the overriding issue in determining planning applications is housing need.

³ CPRE (2011) *Building on a Small Island* - <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/planning/item/2605-building-in-a-small-island>

⁴ Report for LGA by Glenigan (2012) *An analysis of unimplemented planning permissions for residential dwellings* - http://www.local.gov.uk/web/guest/research-housing/-/journal_content/56/10171/3700057/ARTICLE-TEMPLATE

⁵ http://england.shelter.org.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0011/652736/Shelter_Little_Boxes_v4.pdf

⁶ http://www.planningportal.gov.uk/uploads/pins/local_plans/LPA_Core_Strategy_Progress.xls

CASE STUDY - Housing in the Kent Downs AONB

In June Dover District Council Planning Committee approved outline planning permission for an application that includes 521 dwellings and a 90 dwelling retirement village in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. They approved it on the basis that a £5m contribution offered by the applicant towards heritage improvements at the Western Heights would act as a catalyst for substantial (but undefined) inward investment and a boost to tourism, but also because at the time their Plan did not meet the national requirement to allocate a five year land supply. This was despite the requirement in the NPPF that planning permission should be refused for major developments in designated areas 'except in exceptional circumstances'.

How can we fix the problem?

CPRE believes that the plan-led system can deliver the homes we need. But local plans need to include policies which ensure planning permission is granted for the most sustainable development proposals. National planning policy and guidance should enable local authorities to take the best approach taking account of local considerations.

- **Calculating housing need:** National planning policy should require local authorities to take a 'plan, monitor and manage' approach to providing new homes. They should not be provided simply on the basis of a crude 'predict and provide' policy, which uses past trends to determine future needs. Planning for housing should not be a simple numbers game.
- **Make best use of existing stock:** Local authorities should place more emphasis on making the best use of their existing housing stock and previously developed land. This will minimise the need to allocate greenfield sites for development. Across London only 8 empty homes were refurbished last year despite there being 73,000 empty properties.
- **Identifying land for housing and making the best use of previously developed land:** Local plans should seek to promote the most efficient and sustainable use of land through a 'Smart Growth' approach and the use of phasing policies in local plans. Plans should also include well justified assumptions on future 'windfall' development.
- **Planning for housing that meets local needs:** Rather than simply setting a general target for housing, local plans need to set targets for a range of types, tenures and sizes. National policy should also allow local plans to include separate targets for market and affordable housing, and the delivery of affordable housing should be prioritised at the local level.
- **High quality, well designed housing:** Well-designed housing can help create vibrant and pleasant places to live and can minimise the impact of development on its surrounding landscape. Local authorities should plan, and only grant planning permission for, development that respects and enhances local character and that is 'future proofed'.

What is CPRE doing and how can people help?

At the national level CPRE seeks to influence planning legislation, policy and guidance to ensure a more sustainable and appropriate approach to planning for housing. Local pressure is also vitally important. If you would like to take action please consider:

- Supporting CPRE's Charter - www.saveourcountryside.org.uk
- Writing to or emailing your local MP to ask them to support our Charter
- Feeding in relevant case studies from your local area that can help inform our national campaigning work. Please send them to charter@cpre.org.uk
- Seeking to influence the policies in your local plan and commenting on local planning applications. Visit www.planninghelp.org.uk and <http://www.cpre.org.uk/local-group-resources/campaigning/planning> for advice and tips.



CHARTER WORDING

There are both long and short versions of the Charter wording. You can use either in your communications.

Long (full) version:

CPRE'S CHARTER TO SAVE OUR COUNTRYSIDE

England's countryside is precious, irreplaceable and finite - a beautiful national asset for us all. Yet more and more of our green fields are being destroyed by haphazard and badly planned developments. Too often these are imposed on local communities who are increasingly powerless to stand up for the places they love.

We must stand together to safeguard our countryside: for nature, for the food it provides, and for its beauty and the freedom it offers. We want a robust and fair planning system that can secure this, while providing the development our country needs.

Stop the destruction of England's countryside. Support our three demands for better development:

Don't sacrifice our countryside

Our open spaces are being destroyed unnecessarily. Previously developed brownfield land should be re-used first to protect the beauty and tranquillity of our countryside and breathe new life into our towns and cities.

A fair say for local communities

Local people are increasingly unable to stop the destruction of their towns and countryside. The cards are stacked in favour of powerful developers. We want a democratic planning system that gives communities a much stronger say in the future of their area.

More housing - in the right places

The country urgently needs more affordable homes for our rising population, including in villages and market towns. But they must be sensitively located; with excellent environmental standards and high quality design that enhances local character.

Sign our Charter at www.saveourcountryside.org.uk

Short version:

CPRE'S CHARTER TO SAVE OUR COUNTRYSIDE

England's countryside is beautiful, irreplaceable and finite. Yet increasingly it is being destroyed by badly planned developments, while local communities are left powerless to protect the places they love.

We must stand together to stop the destruction of England's countryside. Support our three demands.

Don't sacrifice our countryside

Our open spaces are being destroyed unnecessarily. Previously developed brownfield sites should be re-used first.

A fair say for communities

The cards are stacked in favour of developers. We want a democratic planning system that gives local people a stronger voice.

More housing - in the right places

The country needs affordable homes. They must be sensitively located, with excellent environmental standards and high quality design.

Sign our Charter at www.saveourcountryside.org.uk



INVOLVING YOUR MPS AND PEERS - CAMPAIGN GUIDE

We hope that this short guide will be useful in suggesting some practical ways the charter can be promoted to MPs and Peers.

The best way to get the most out of a politician is to understand who they are and what interests them, and ensure that you are fully aware of what you want them to do - be specific and succinct. It is important to remember that any advice (especially in this guide) is not prescriptive and that every MP has his or her preferred means of operating - you may discover that different methods of communication/relationship building work better with different MPs.

The key things to ask your MPs to do are:

- Sign our charter
- Encourage the Government to take the actions set out in our campaign policy briefings.

If your MPs sign the charter please let National Office know. It is important that we keep a central record to track all politicians that sign up.

FIVE KEY STEPS

1. **Start with a letter or email:** In the first instance, you can send your MP a letter or email with a simple outline of the charter and a specific request to support the campaign (this is important - MPs get huge amounts of correspondence, so it should be clear to them why you are writing to them, and what you would like them to do). If possible, you should include local examples that illustrate some or all of the three key demands in the charter.
2. **Meet your MP:** You may also want to include in your letter a request to meet the MP - see below for more guidance on this. Face-to-face contact is often the best way to establish a good working relationship with a politician.
3. **Work with your MP in local media:** You can ask your MP to support the campaign publically. Use them in your media activities - get them to attend a photo opportunity or provide a quote in a press release. In any photo opportunities, consider using the prop sign provided in this pack to get a visual representation of the politician's support.
4. **Involve your MP in an event:** Invite an MP to attend your group's AGM or other campaigning event (local Peers could also be asked). Promote them as the key speaker and request that they speak on the themes identified by the charter.
5. **Press your MP to take action at Westminster:** Request that the MP presses the Government on the campaign - they can table a Parliamentary Question to seek information for you, table a debate to push for an official government line, or write to a Minister to seek clarification (they are guaranteed a response from the Minister, whereas your letter is more likely to be replied to by a civil servant).

Read on for more detail on each of these steps...

1. Start with a letter or email

Make sure you cover the essential issues within an introductory letter to an MP (or local Peer), and try to keep your letter to two sides or less.

Top tips

- Don't be too familiar. If you've never met your MP (or Peer) before ensure that you address them formally. If you're unsure how to address Peers, please contact National Office.
- Introduce yourself and your CPRE branch (i.e. who you represent).
- Set out the issue you are writing about and why it is important.
- Clearly state the action you would like them to take.
- Try to avoid sending letters for information and don't be afraid to direct them to an action.
- Don't be despondent if you get a standard reply. MPs receive vast quantities of correspondence. To receive a standard response does not necessarily mean they are not interested in the issue.

You can amend this example letter to send to an MP

Dear Mr/Ms Smith,

[I would like to introduce myself to you as the Chair of CPRE X]. I am writing to ask you to support CPRE's charter to save our countryside and join me and thousands of others to ensure England's countryside gets the protection it deserves.

The Government's National Planning Policy Framework is supposed to protect our countryside and to encourage sustainable development. I am concerned that, in reality, it is being used to allow damaging development in the wrong locations, while local communities are left powerless to protect the places they love.

The charter has three key demands [which relates to real and pressing threats in your area]

- Don't sacrifice our countryside - our open spaces are being destroyed unnecessarily. Previously developed brownfield sites should be reused first. [Include local example]
- A fair say for communities - the cards are stacked in favour of developers. We want a democratic planning system that gives local people a stronger voice.
- More housing - in the right places - The country needs affordable homes. They must be sensitively located, with excellent environmental standards and high quality design.

I hope you are able to sign CPRE's charter. You can do so now at www.saveourcountryside.org.uk. Please also raise my concerns with the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, [name].

[I would welcome a meeting to discuss the charter further at a convenient time.]

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

2. Meet your MP

Why meet an MP?

Meeting an MP is a valuable opportunity to engage with them and illustrate our Charter campaign. Many politicians consistently say that they value face-to-face contact above all other communication and it is an effective way to build a rapport. You don't have to meet them in Parliament; many will hold surgeries in their constituency on Fridays. See the MP's website for details or contact their office.

Before the meeting

- Write to your MP (or local Peer) detailing CPRE's Charter campaign and its importance. You can use the example letter on the previous page to help you.
- If you hear nothing from the politician's office after approximately two weeks, follow up your letter with a phone call.
- Keep your main objectives for the meeting in mind - what is your simple, top line message?
- Think about what you want to achieve from the meeting. What would be your ideal outcome?
- What do you want the MP (or Peer) to do? Make sure you have a specific request for action ahead of the meeting, but don't go in with a menu of asks - one or two will do. Be solution-driven.
- If the issue is quite complex you could prepare a short briefing paper covering the main points. You can use the three policy briefings on the charter demands for this purpose - or better still, adapt them to include local examples. Give this to them at the end of the meeting.

At the meeting

- Be confident.
- Make your point quickly. You may get very limited time with a politician, so try not to stray too far from your message while in the meeting.
- Give them time to speak and generally be courteous in your approach.
- Be flexible and listen to suggestions/alternatives, but keep in mind your objectives for the meeting.
- If you don't know something, it's fine to say so and to tell them you'll get back to them.
- If there is more than one of you, allocate roles; for example, one takes notes while the other leads on policy issues. It may be helpful to take one of the MP's constituents to the meeting so they can push home the local importance of the campaign.

After the meeting

- It is useful to send brief notes of the meeting and the agreed actions to the MP. Email may be preferable as it will be easier to update and follow up as necessary.
- Follow up with a thank you letter - it's surprising how rarely people thank MPs for the things they do for them. Re-state your understanding of the agreed points and any actions they, or you, agreed to undertake.

3. Work with your MP in the local media

Some groups have concerns about using the media as a way to build relations with politicians. They worry that it could be construed as promotion of a particular politician, and therefore compromise their political neutrality. However, this does not have to be the case, and you can successfully use the local media to promote your causes and use politicians wisely within the press to aid your messages.

What can you do?

If you have already secured support from an MP for the charter you can ask whether they would be happy to provide a quote for a press release. Obviously, seeking to construct a press release that allows all of the main political parties to put their views forward will be the preferred option, but this is not always possible. Therefore, ensure your press release does not support the politician, you remain non-partisan in your comments and the theme of the press release is clearly about the campaign.

Don't be afraid to draft a quote for the MP to sign off. They often tweak draft quotes (and you should reserve the right to say that it can't go in your press release if their tweaks make it too party political), but it does save them time whilst also providing you with the opportunity to direct the message and tone of the press release. You could ask the MP to finish the sentence: *'I am supporting CPRE's charter to save our countryside because...'* There is also an example press release provided in this pack that you could adapt.

If you're organising a publicity stunt consider asking an MP to attend a photoshoot. MPs rarely turn down the opportunity of good publicity and this can be used to the group's advantage. Consider using the prop sign provided in this pack and get a visual representation of the politician's support for the charter. You could send a photo of your MP holding the prop sign to local media with a press release and include it in your newsletter, website or other communications.

4. Involve your MP in an event

Invite an MP to attend your group's AGM or other campaigning events (local Peers could also be asked). Promote them as the key speaker and request that they speak on the themes identified by the charter.

Most CPRE groups will hold an AGM or public meeting at some stage in the year. Inviting the local MP to speak about the charter will give them an opportunity to listen to constituent's concerns and to respond to them. They will need to take time to prepare their speech and for questions, and this should help to reinforce that the concerns in the charter are a key local issue and should serve to raise them up their list of priorities.

Before the event you should provide the MP with a background briefing. If the meeting relates to a particular development you should let him know your position in advance of the meeting.

Plan your event date and invite politicians well in advance. You may need to be flexible with the timings of your meeting in order to make the most of the MP's presence. Politicians tend to have busy diaries and if they can only attend a meeting for half an hour that will still be useful if you manage their time effectively. For instance you could request that they speak for a shorter amount of time and take questions straight away, moving to a debate with a broader panel when they leave.

5. Press your MP to take action at Westminster

You can work effectively with your MP (or local Peer) and gain support for the charter and for campaigns on local developments. As well as being able to secure answers from Government Ministers, politicians debating the pros and cons of an issue can generate wider political support for the campaign. Getting parliamentarians to work with you in this way - as many CPRE branches are already doing - is a great way to build relations and get your issue aired.

Below are some ways in which you can do just this, but be aware that you will probably need to commit more time to provide suggested questions (staff at National Office can help you). You may also be asked whether you can provide a written briefing for debates. Ensure that you have considered this before committing resources to the task.

Ask your MP to table a Parliamentary Question (PQ)

PQs are put to Government Ministers as a question for a written or oral answer. Most MPs are happy to put forward questions on your behalf, especially those for a written answer, since there is no limit on the number of written PQs an MP can table. In contrast, MPs are only permitted to ask one substantive and one open question for each departmental question time (there is only one oral question session for each Government department per month). Unless it is an open question (known as a topical question) the PQ must seek information or action, and should not provide information or an opinion from the questioner.

Written PQs

Written questions are best used to extract specific information and are normally answered within seven days. The question is given a unique number for that session which can be used to trace the answer (this will normally appear after the question). The question must be directed to the senior figure in the Department, usually a Secretary of State and must begin 'To ask...'.

Example of written PQ

Dr Wollaston: To ask the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government if he will produce further planning guidance on protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land from development. [162454]

Nick Boles: The Government's policy on protecting the best and most versatile agricultural land is laid out in the National Planning Policy Framework. Additionally, the framework underlines that planning decisions should recognise the character and beauty of the countryside.

We have been clear that councils should use their Local Plans to help shape where development should and should not take place and to help prevent unsustainable development. In this context, it is for local planning authorities to take the lead, rather than waiting for further Whitehall guidance.

Oral PQs

Departments take it in turns to answer oral PQs approximately once a month. MPs need to table an oral PQ at least three days prior to the department's 'slot'. The questions tabled are put into 'the shuffle' (the term used for the ballot to decide which questions will be asked) and the first 15-20 drawn will go forward for an answer (although time restrictions will probably mean the last five or so questions might not be answered - however, they will usually then be answered as written questions).

Be warned that a large amount of oral questions go into 'the shuffle' and it could therefore take a while for your questions to be answered. So, if your question is time dependent an oral PQ is not the best method.

Oral questions can, however, be useful to call the Government to account, and can be followed up with a further supplementary question (on the same subject).

Ask your MP to table a debate

Adjournment debates provide an opportunity to get Government Ministers to speak on a specific issue. The debates can take place every day and last 30 minutes, with the MP who sought the debate opening it with a short speech. Adjournment debates also take place in Westminster Hall (on Tuesdays and Wednesdays). In Westminster Hall MPs can seek a 30 minute or a one and a half hour debate.

Other backbench MPs rarely participate in the shorter debates as time is quite limited and the debate mainly focuses on local issues. Longer debates can involve more backbenchers, and are an opportunity to focus on more general topics. A debate typically begins with the MP stressing his or her concerns, followed by a response from the Minister.

Debates are a useful way to get Ministers to set out a position or express sympathy for a particular concern, but they cannot be used to change the law (although they can be used to argue for changes in the law!).

If you'd like your MP to hold an adjournment debate, prepare a short briefing paper for him or her on the issue. A briefing need not be terribly long; MPs do not get very long to speak during a debate, and many have researchers who can add more to a speech if necessary. As a guide, National Office attempts to deliver briefing papers to MPs which are no more than two sides in length - try to ensure that any briefing includes good local case studies and well-researched arguments to back up your points.

MPs apply for an adjournment debate by Tuesday evening for the following week. Which debates go ahead is decided by ballot, although the Speaker gets to pick one debate.

Example of a Westminster Hall debate

On Wednesday 17 July 2013 Nick Herbert MP led an hour and a half debate on *Localism in Planning* in Westminster Hall. He secured the debate by being successful in a ballot.

In total, 11 backbenchers from the Government and opposition sides of the house took part in the debate. Nine of these speeches were supportive of CPRE's position. The Shadow Planning Minister Roberta Blackman-Woods summated the debate for Labour, before Nick Boles MP (Planning Minister) responded for the Government.

CPRE in Sussex and nationally briefed Nick Herbert before the debate, and National Office briefed MPs widely with our campaign charter and supporting briefings. The work of CPRE Sussex and district groups in particular has been vital in supporting Nick Herbert with information and arguments to deploy at a national level.

Other steps you could take

Ask an MP to write in your next newsletter

Having a politician contribute to your newsletter is a unique opportunity to get an insight into the way they feel about the Save our Countryside campaign and the charter, about CPRE generally, environment and planning issues, and the ongoing matters that affect us as a campaigning organisation. The readership of the newsletters is one to which the MP can articulate what actions they are undertaking on a particular issue, and this in itself could add momentum to the campaign.

Take an MP on a site visit

If you are concerned about the impact of a particular development, why not invite the local MP to come out with you to the site concerned, so that you can explain what the impact of that development would be?

Target Peers as well as MPs

You may have identified your local MPs, but have you identified the 'Members of Parliament' who sit in the House of Lords? The House of Lords does virtually everything that the Commons does, and a Lord is able to raise matters of public concern with Ministers and initiate or participate in debates just as much as members of the Commons. All peers live somewhere, even though they do not represent that place at Westminster and seek to avoid trespassing on the political territory of their local constituency Member, they are likely to be open to representations from local groups about matters of public concern.

Recruit your MP as a member; give them a formal role

If an MP supports our charter, why not see if they are prepared to join CPRE, and/or suggest that they take up a role, for instance as a Vice-President? Many MPs are members of CPRE and several branches have already recruited politicians to these roles. Getting your MP to join CPRE or giving them a role in the branch or organisation could help to solidify their support.

Keep in touch

We are very happy to offer further assistance and advice on promoting the campaign to politicians. We are also really keen to hear about any involvement you get from your MPs and Peers. Please do get in touch.

Contact either:

- Neil Sinden, Director of Policy and Campaigns: neils@cpre.org.uk, 020 7981 2831
- Erica Popplewell, Head of Government and Rural Affairs: ericap@cpre.org.uk, 020 7981 2837.

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September 2013



TEMPLATE LOCAL PRESS RELEASE

Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) *[insert branch name]*: Media Release

Contact name and number: *[XXXX]*

For Immediate Release

CALL TO ARMS FOR A NEW CHARTER TO STOP DESTRUCTION OF THE ENGLISH COUNTRYSIDE

'Precisely at the moment when we should be defending the countryside, and making it more accessible because it gives us all what we need more freely than anything else under the sun - we are at grave risk of losing it. It is time to stand up for the countryside, to replace the developers' charter with a people's charter' - CPRE President Sir Andrew Motion.

As the evidence mounts that Government planning reforms are not working the Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) have launched a three point charter to 'Save our Countryside'. The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was intended to simplify planning and get houses built but the reforms have not delivered the housing people need, and are instead causing harm to communities and landscapes.

CPRE *[insert branch name]* believes that unsustainable and increasing pressure is being placed on the countryside, and sensible planning is undermined by short-sighted pursuit of economic growth at any cost.

[If you have a good local example of this you could put it here]

CPRE's charter demands are:

- **Don't sacrifice our countryside**
Our open spaces are being destroyed unnecessarily. Previously developed brownfield land should be re-used first to protect the beauty and tranquillity of our countryside and breathe new life into our towns and cities.
- **A fair say for local communities**
Local people are increasingly unable to stop the destruction of their towns and countryside. The cards are stacked in favour of powerful developers. We want a democratic planning system that gives communities a much stronger say in the future of their area.
- **More housing - in the right places**
The country urgently needs more affordable homes for our rising population, including in villages and market towns. But they must be sensitively located; with excellent environmental standards and high quality design that enhances local character.

Successive governments have failed to protect the countryside. Since 1989, on average, 67 square kilometres of undeveloped land, or an area larger than the city of Southampton, has been lost every year to development. [1]

In a recent analysis of emerging and adopted Local Plans CPRE has found that at least 500,000 new houses are planned on greenfield sites. If these houses were built at the average densities of recent years it would result in the further loss of over 150 square kilometres of green fields. This is at a time when it is estimated that there are brownfield sites available for over 1.5 million homes [2].

CPRE recognises that we need more houses, including affordable housing in rural areas, but to be sustainable they must be in the right places, rather than granted planning permission regardless of the environmental consequences.

[Here is where you could put a quote from someone in your own branch. This quote gives an idea of the sort of thing you could say:] ‘A beautiful countryside, better places to live and economic prosperity all rely on good planning, which in turn depends on giving people a proper say in what development should go where.

‘Ministers must listen to the anger of communities who currently feel ignored, and so we will be asking our local MP *[insert name]* to support to our charter and show that they understand the very real concerns of the electorate.’

Sir Andrew Motion concluded: ‘I hope everyone who loves England’s beautiful, unique countryside - our great inheritance - will support CPRE’s charter to Save our Countryside.

Support CPRE’s Charter at www.saveourcountryside.org.uk

See our short film at <http://bit.ly/12ZpATB>

End

Notes to Editors

[1] See Government land use change statistics (Live Table P261) at <https://www.gov.uk/government/statistical-data-sets/live-tables-on-land-use-change-statistics>

[2] CPRE (2011) *Building on a Small Island* - <http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources/housing-and-planning/planning/item/2605-building-in-a-small-island> The 500,000 figure is based on survey work carried out over a four month period to June 2013 by CPRE volunteers of emerging and currently adopted Local Plans across England. It is a guideline figure and not comprehensive as it does not, for example, include all greenfield sites which have planning permission to be developed, nor does the 150 km² figure include greenfield sites allocated in local plans for retail or warehouse development. According to 2010 Government figures (Land Use Change Statistics Live Table P231) the average density of new housing schemes built on greenfield sites was 32 dwellings per hectare (there are 100 hectares in a square kilometre).

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) fights for a better future for the English countryside. We work locally and nationally to protect, shape and enhance a beautiful, thriving countryside for everyone to value and enjoy. Our members are united in their love for England’s landscapes and rural communities, and stand up for the countryside, so it can continue to sustain, enchant and inspire future generations. Founded in 1926, President: Sir Andrew Motion, Patron: Her Majesty The Queen. www.cpre.org.uk



USING THE CAMPAIGN TO RECRUIT NEW SUPPORTERS - TOP TIPS

Use the Charter as a conversation opener

The Charter's message makes an excellent starting point for talking with new people. This might be at local events, community meetings, county shows, campaign meetings or anywhere you interact with new people (i.e. not current members). Mention that CPRE is entirely funded by voluntary donations, tell them about the things we do and ask if they'd be interested in supporting us in some way - a range of options is listed below.

1. Becoming a volunteer

This is appropriate for those people who seem really keen to get involved and can dedicate some time to engage with our work. See our separate tips on recruiting volunteers.

2. Becoming a member

Mention that CPRE is only able to continue standing up for the countryside thanks to our members but we urgently need more. Talk about the successes we have had and the current threats to national and local countryside. Try to find out what their interests are so you can talk specifically about our work in that area - we know people are often most motivated by local threats.

Membership only costs £3 per month and as well as helping us to protect the countryside they will receive some lovely benefits - show them Voice magazine for example.

All membership income generated by a branch recruiting members is given to the branch for the first 3 years before being shared with National Office.

3. Sign our Charter

Many people won't want to become a member or volunteer straight away so the charter gives them an easy way to support us at no cost. The more sign ups we get, the more we can hope to influence politicians in the run up to the General Election in 2015.

Once people are signed up (as long as they don't opt out of future communication) we will keep in touch and engage them more with our work.

There are three ways people can sign up.

- **Petition sheets.** Read more about these in the *Campaign Materials List* in this pack. Note that we have to adhere to data protection rules when gathering names so please don't alter this or we may not be able to follow them up.
- **Sign up cards.** Read more about these in the *Campaign Materials List* in this pack.
- **Sign up online.** In order to recognise where a branch has generated this support (and ensure that any membership income is shared appropriately) your branch needs to promote this link: www.cpre.org.uk/charter. We have another (long) link to use on your branch website. This has been emailed to the nominated Charter campaign contact at each branch but contact us if you need it.

We hope the material provided will help inspire ideas about how to gather sign ups. You could use the posters to decorate a stall at a show and arm a volunteer with the petition sheet to engage passers-by. Display some sign up cards on your stall in case you are busy talking to other people or if someone wants to read something rather than chat. It is better to collect their details there and then as people may not send them back, despite best intentions.

Any future membership income from contacts that we know have been generated by your branch will be shared from the start of the new membership. The intention is to share income evenly but this may need to be adjusted to take into account any costs incurred by National Office for the printed items or the conversion process. This will be confirmed once this new method has been trialled for a few months and we have an idea about how many people will go on to support us financially.

Please note that the petition sheets and sign up cards are aimed at new audiences due to the cost involved in processing them. Please encourage existing members to sign up online or call Supporter Services on 020 7981 2870 if they don't have internet access.

For more about recruiting new members see the guide in the *Membership and Fundraising* chapter of the **Branch Handbook**: www.cpre.org.uk/local-group-resources

September 2013



USING THE CAMPAIGN TO RECRUIT VOLUNTEERS - FIVE TIPS

1. Remember to ask!

The Charter's message and simple action makes an excellent starting point for dialogue with new people. Mention that CPRE is volunteer-led, tell them about the range of things we do and ask if they'd be interested in helping out. Few people will offer their time and talents unasked but a surprising number are open to the idea if approached.

2. What can people do?

They will want to know. Start small, if you can get people involved with the Charter campaign then they could become more permanent group volunteers later. Put together a short list of options (from simple to more involved) and take it with you whenever you speak about the Charter. Could they put up posters? Help arrange a meeting? Write a case study? Or collect signatures at events or in their neighbourhood? Show them our video to get them inspired www.tinyurl.com/youtube-cprecharterfilm.

3. Attend other groups' events

Community meetings about contentious developments provide a perfect audience. Ask if you can talk for a few minutes about the Charter and mention that you need volunteers to help. The people there are already actively interested in protecting their local area so ask if they'd like to do it in CPRE's name and with your guidance.

4. Advertise for Charter campaigners

The campaign is due to run until May 2015, so why not use it to attract new people to take on specific Charter campaign roles? You could even set up a Charter campaign sub-team for new people to join.

5. Mention it in your communications

Whether in newsletters or invitations to fundraisers, always mention that you are run by volunteers and that you'd welcome more people. You could place a 'how I got involved' story from one of your volunteers on your website or in your newsletter alongside information about the Charter. Personal stories help people to visualise doing things themselves.

For more about recruiting volunteers see the '*Finding and Keeping Volunteers*' guide in chapter 4 of the **Branch Handbook** and our **Volunteer Toolkit**: www.cpre.org.uk/local-group-resources