

Going, going, gone? England's disappearing landscapes.

NATIONAL PARKS, AONBS AND LOCALLY VALUED LANDSCAPES - UNDER THREAT AROUND THE COUNTRY

BERKSHIRE

Threat to locally valued landscape: Winter Wonderland Theme Park

Status: Temporary permission

Details: In August 2013, Lapland UK was given the go-ahead by the planning committee at Bracknell Forest Council to turn a beautiful area of Swinley Forest into a 'winter wonderland' theme park, for a temporary three-year period. The development was granted permission despite unanimous local opposition and without the completion of an environmental impact assessment. Although the park will only be open for two months a year, its construction would have severe and irreversible consequences for the unspoilt beauty and tranquillity of the forest and nearby countryside.

Furthermore, Swinley Forest is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and is known to be home to many rare species of animal and bird life, and its biodiversity, as well as its beauty and biodiversity will be placed at risk by this unnecessary commercial development. CPRE Berkshire and local residents are worried fear that the temporary use of this heavily wooded area could become a permanent fixture exacerbating concerns of its disastrous impact on the environment.

BUCKINGHAMSHIRE

Threat to Chilterns AONB: High Speed 2

Status: Ongoing

Details: High Speed 2 is a new north-south railway that would link London to Birmingham and then split before continuing to Leeds and Manchester, forming a y-shape. Although it would be narrower and have less impact than a new major road, it would still pass through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) and a number of other cherished landscapes.

CPRE developed striking interactive mapping to show how HS2 would impact on the countryside, which is at www.hs2maps.com. We have been using the maps to highlight the need to reduce the impact on sensitive parts of the countryside that the route would pass through, such as the Chilterns AONB, the site of the Battle of Edgecote in Northamptonshire and the Meriden gap in Birmingham's Green Belt. While in some cases better design or mitigation may be enough to reduce impacts, in other places more significant changes may be needed, such as lowering the line in the landscape or even encasing it in tunnel.

CORNWALL

Threat to Cornwall AONB: Housing development in Mevagissey

Status: Planning permission granted but subject to Judicial Review.

Details: Permission was granted in October 2012 for 31 houses (21 affordable) on a prominent coastal greenfield site, adjacent to the coastal path, outside the Mevagissey development envelope and within the AONB against the advice of the Planning Officer and against the wishes of Mevagissey Parish Council, the Ward Councillor and some 200 letters of objection. Also expressing opposition were CPRE, Cornwall AONB, Natural England, the Ramblers Association etc.

After the Parish Council instigated a Judicial Review, Cornwall Council decided to quash the original permission and sought approval from the High Court who agreed to three of the five grounds submitted. The developer appealed against this judgement; as a result the final decision will go to a full Judicial Review hearing in November 2013.

In the meantime the developer has submitted a new application for virtually the same scheme on the same site. The Parish Council also now has planning permission for its own extension to an affordable housing site geared to meeting local needs rather than the elevated figures used by the developer.

COUNTY DURHAM

Threat to North Pennines AONB and locally valued landscape: Opencast mining

Status: Second Public Inquiry ordered by High Court

Details: CPRE Durham has a long history of fighting to protect the county's stunning landscapes from opencast mining, including a current case in the Derwent Valley, close to the North Pennines Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The branch has opposed the proposal and a Planning Inspector has recommended its refusal but this has been challenged by UK Coal. The High Court has recently quashed the Inspector's refusal and a Public Inquiry will be held again. CPRE Durham will once more have to give evidence on the damage open casting would cause to the landscape. Opencast mining is considered to be the most environmentally destructive activity in the countryside today. CPRE will continue to campaign against particularly damaging proposals such as this.

CUMBRIA

Threat to Lake District National Park: Wind Farm Cumulative Impact

Status: Ongoing

Details: Numerous wind farms have been permitted mainly through the appeals process surrounding the Lake District National Park. A strategic overview is missing as each separate local planning authority bordering the national park consider their individual proposals without reference to cumulative impact upon the Lake District as a whole. See [map](#).

This trend is now particularly acute in two areas:

- **Allerdale between the Lake District National Park and the Solway Coast AONB** - since the beginning of 2013 over 70 applications and/or screening requests for wind turbines in Allerdale. Two current major damaging wind farms lie near Wigton between the Lake District and Solway Coast AONB. The wind farm on land at Carwath, Rosley comprising of three wind turbines up to 115m tip height, with associated crane pads, substation building, anemometer mast, new tracks, new entrance plus temporary construction compound (Planning Application [2/2013/0227](#)), and High Pow 2 wind farm on land at Bolton New Houses comprising eight wind turbines with a maximum height to blade tip of 100m with associated ancillary infrastructure, control building, internal access tracks, crane pads and temporary site compound/storage area (Planning Application [2/2013/0519](#)).
- **Lune Valley between the Lake District and Yorkshire Dales National Parks** - The five turbine Lambrigg wind farm near junction 36 of the M6 motorway allowed on appeal, opened in 2000. More recently the Armistead six turbine wind farm just to the south at Old Hutton, also allowed on appeal, became operational in 2013. A decision on an application for three 132m turbines north of Killington Reservoir is pending (reference [SL/2012/0845](#)). This threatens the

landscape of the Yorkshire Dales National Park extension, and Natural England have recently objected to it on landscape grounds

DERBYSHIRE

Threat to Peak District National Park: Road scheme

Status: Pending

Details: The Treasury and the Department for Transport will shortly commission a feasibility study for trans-Pennine road routes between Sheffield and Manchester. This could result in the dualling of the A57 between the M67 on the edge of Manchester through the National Park to the M1 at Sheffield. CPRE Peak District and South Yorkshire have seen off a motorway, a dual carriageway and a bypass in this area in recent years, but economic pressures mean that the Government has resurrected the idea and appears determined to advance the scheme this time around. The branch continues to call for policies that provide alternatives to car use rather than increasing traffic by building more roads. Local congestion from a mix of local cars and freight within the villages, safety on the Longdendale section through the National Park and air quality impacts in the east could all be addressed by a package of sustainable measures:

- Smarter choices small scale schemes to use train & bus and to walk & cycle (30% is local traffic)
- Weight restriction of 7.5t or greater on the route to force lorries onto the motorway network around the Peak District. Alternatively a low emissions zone over the Peak District
- Demand management measures - route restraint measures such as traffic signals, slower speeds, and average speed control; coupled with vehicle testing.

DEVON

Threat to locally valued landscape in Dawlish: Housing

Status: Recently approved

Details: CPRE Devon was shocked when, despite their best efforts, Teignbridge District Council approved 20 houses to be built on a hillside treasured by the local community for its sweeping coastal views in July this year. The land between Dawlish and Holcombe is designated as a Coastal Preservation Area (CPA) and should therefore remain 'substantially unaffected by development' according to county plans. However, developers have been given permission to build in spite of this protection - interrupting the panoramic views, its distinctive coastal features, and footpaths loved by local people and tourists visiting the region. CPRE Devon believes that the reformed planning system has played a key role in this poorly sited development gaining approval.

The Local Government Ombudsman is investigating CPRE Devon's complaints about the manner in which Teignbridge District Council made their decision. They are particularly concerned about the lack of transparency in the Planning Committee voting. They use an electronic voting system and do not record and declare the way in which individual Committee members vote. This leads to a lack of local accountability for their actions. A meeting has also been held with the local MP. There are also concerns that the landowners and tenant farmer are impoverishing the environment in three fields. This is to avoid mitigation conditions being applied due to the presence of Cirl Buntings and dormice. The hedges have been cut back hard and early and dormice traps have been placed in the hedgerows.

In addition, Communities Secretary, Eric Pickles, has recently approved a major development of 350 homes in a designated Area of Great Landscape Value near Dawlish.

DORSET

Threat to Area of Great Landscape Value: Solar Farm

Status: Public consultation

Details: An application has been submitted to East Dorset District Council for a 28MW solar farm, covering 174 acres in a designated Area of Great Landscape Value. CPRE Dorset is supportive in principle of renewable energy, but examines solar installations on their merits and strongly objects to this damaging proposal. The main concern is that this huge 28MW solar farm, which would be the biggest in Dorset, should not be located in the middle of this Area of Great Landscape Value.

- It is 174 acres in total, equivalent to 110 soccer pitches, and would represent a large, artificial intrusion into this beautiful and sensitive countryside and the virtual industrialization of it.
- Its scale and the contours of the site's south-facing slope ensures it will be visible from miles away, as well as close by.
- It may not affect the views from many houses but it will be clearly seen from the footpaths and bridleways surrounding the site, as well as those two miles south at Morden and Bloxworth.
- It will also take many years for mitigation in terms of extra hedge planting to take effect. A current solar farm application at Stickland quotes 5-7 years.
- Walkers, riders and tourists will be affected, and especially those from Mapperton and Zelston, which is only 700m away.
- The development would have little economic benefit to the community and part of the scheme would be on Best and Most Versatile land.

GLOUCESTERSHIRE

Threat to Berkeley Vale and the Cotswolds AONB: Energy from Waste facility

Status: Planning Appeal pending

Details: As a long term solution to waste disposal in Gloucestershire the County Council signed an agreement with Urbaser Balfour Beatty to develop and operate a major Energy from Waste incinerator at Javelin Park in the Berkeley Vale to the south of Gloucester, close to the scarp edge of the Cotswolds AONB. The proposal has been vigorously opposed not least by District Councils in Gloucestershire and by CPRE and an energetic local campaign group GlosVain. The facility is simply too big for Gloucestershire needs in terms of the volume of waste to be processed which would mean importing waste. The proposed plant is also huge and would totally dominate the landscape over a wide area. In a surprise decision the County Council's planning committee unanimously rejected the planning application but the developer has appealed against the decision. The appeal inquiry will commence on 19th November and last till 29th January.

HAMPSHIRE

Threat to North Wessex Downs AONB and locally valued landscapes: wind farm

Status: Planning application

Details: Planning application by EDF to install 14 wind turbines, each over 400 feet high, at Bullington Cross near Andover. This covers such a wide area that it falls into three separate planning districts, Winchester, Test Valley and Basingstoke. And a part comes within North Wessex Downs AONB, who have objected strongly as have many others including CPRE. The three planning authorities involved have agreed with EDF an extension of the determination period until April 2014. This will

allow EDF to provide further information to support their application. Among the submissions are significant objections from the Ministry of Defence (relating to radar interference and helicopter exercises), Popham Airfield (serious safety issues), the South Downs National Park and the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (concerns about impact on landscape). Another application has been submitted on a site adjacent to Bullington Cross, at Woodmancott. Winchester City Council has objected to the proposal due to landscape impact and aviation risk, notably from nearby Popham airfield.

HEREFORDSHIRE

Threat to Wye Valley AONB: Two caravan sites for agricultural workers

Status: In situ without planning permission

Details: In 2001, two caravan sites and affiliated structures were placed without planning permission at Homme Farm, to accommodate 450 temporary agricultural staff who work in the polytunnels on site. Site 1 includes 44 static caravans, 7 porta-cabins, a clubhouse building, two shower blocks, two toilet blocks, a laundry room, a computer room and a covered recreation area made from a polytunnel with wooden floors. This site is 1.05hectares including the earth bund that surrounds it on three sides. Site 2, 1km from the main farmhouse site, includes 47 static caravans, several portacabin units, recreation rooms, shower and toilet blocks and a laundry room.

In February 2013, the Secretary of State for the Department for Communities and Local Government issued a Screening Direction to Herefordshire County Council requiring an Environmental Impact Assessment under the Town and Country Planning Regulations (2011). So far, the Council have not complied with this Direction stating their legal team believe they have discretion about whether or not to comply with the Screening Direction.

The site owner has recently applied for a Certificate of Lawfulness which is effectively retrospective planning permission. The Council have asked for proof from the landowner that the site has been in place for at least ten years as this may mean that planning permission is no longer required by the Council. CPRE Herefordshire is concerned about the cumulative impact of the caravan sites, associated structures and the extensive use of polytunnels on the Wye Valley AONB.

HERTFORDSHIRE

Threat to Chilterns AONB and locally valued landscape: housing

Status: Ongoing

Details: In East Hertfordshire District, housing schemes are threatening two areas of land east of Buntingford, where developers have both sought the allocation of the sites for housing in the District Plan (draft awaited), then submitted applications for parts of those sites, and now appealed against the refusals. (A joint Public Inquiry starts in December, but the Council may give permission to new applications on the largest of the developments). The two areas together would accommodate about 700 houses, and the current proposals are for 260 in total.

Buntingford town council have publicly opposed the developments in an extraordinary meeting held in September. The town council state that the application is premature without a district housing strategy being in place. Two housing planning applications proposing a total of more than 230 homes are premature of a district housing strategy, the town council says. While the town council only has advisory status, and it continues to implore East Herts Council to dismiss major developments until its delayed District Plan is finally published.

KENT

Threat to Kent Downs AONB: Housing development of 521 houses

Status: Recently approved

Details: The plan for this large development is especially damaging as part of the site, at Farthingloe, sits within the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). The other half of this coupled application is at the Western Heights, a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and near to a number of other historic buildings. Despite local opposition, Dover's Planning Committee decided to approve the proposals on the grounds that it may help regenerate the economy.

CPRE Protect Kent does not believe that the applicant, China Gateway International Ltd, has proven this development is an exceptional case which is in the public interest and therefore would meet the requirements in the NPPF. The site is not even in the Council's own Core Strategy, approved in 2010, which determines where development should be allowed to occur within the District. In fact, the Council themselves ruled the site inappropriate in their Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment. If it was an inappropriate site in 2010, what exactly has changed now? Why should the Council allow development on an area of nationally important land which has both heritage and landscape designations protected under national policy?

LANCASHIRE

Threat to locally valued landscape: Fracking

Status: Ongoing

Details: In December 2012 the Department of Energy and Climate Change authorised the resumption of shale gas exploration following two earth tremors linked to the exploration activity. The hydraulic fracturing process, or 'fracking', uses huge volumes of water and a mix of chemicals at high pressure to form fissures in shale rock to release trapped gas. Cuadrilla the drilling company estimates that it would require at least 800 wells to be developed over 80 well pads.

CPRE Lancashire is concerned that such large scale activity would result in unacceptable sprawling low density industrialisation of the Fylde rural area in the midst of best and most versatile agricultural land. We appreciate economic development and job creation is important for rural Fylde and support a living countryside but we argue it should not be at the expense of devaluing its landscape. Issues such as water supply, storage and treatment need to be adequately resolved. We want the reassurance of proper regulation, transparent planning and community engagement to prevent adverse impacts to the countryside.

NORFOLK

Threat to the Broads and locally valued landscape: Road scheme and associated development

Status: Application due to be submitted after public consultation

Details: In Norfolk, a major new 20km dual carriageway is proposed on locally valued open countryside to the north of Norwich. The county council see the 'Norfolk Distributor Road' as a route to growth, both in the economy and development. CPRE Norfolk is concerned that building the new road would destroy miles of countryside and that, in the long term, associated development including 325 acres of business parks and a minimum of 10,000 houses would add to the destruction and urbanise land that is currently open countryside. Already pressure is mounting to dual the A47 as well, which would plough through the Norfolk

Broads.

NORTH YORKSHIRE

Threat to Yorkshire Dales National Park and locally valued landscapes: Static caravans and park homes

Status: Ongoing

Details: In Yorkshire, there is an influx of static caravan and park home sites both on the edge of the National Park and within the park itself. Many of these sites have become permanent homes despite planning permission being given for temporary use. The developments have caused increased pressure on local services and are visually damaging in the landscape. In some cases, applications are being submitted to the National Park Authority for permission for permanent use of some of the holiday homes. A recent example is at Swaleview Caravan Park, near Richmond, where the National Park Authority planning committee refused permission to alter planning conditions to allow 20 static caravans to become permanent residences. Planning officials said the scheme would result in residential development in open countryside and in a flood zone.

Another site is Gallaber Park which has permission for 250 static homes. The population of the nearest village, Hellifield is approximately 1600. Were an application to be lodged to build 250 homes in the open countryside there would be huge public concern. The village sits next to the boundary of the Yorkshire Dales National Park, part of the site is within a Conservation Area; the entire area was once a Special Landscape designation and is within approximately 500m of a Site of Special Scientific Interest.

The sites are usually granted permission for tourism but all too frequently, the number of touring sites are quickly reduced and replaced by increased numbers of static homes occupied for 46 weeks of the year or in some cases, 52 weeks of the year under something called a twelve month season.

CPRE Craven is concerned that static caravan and park home sites are being extended or becoming permanent homes without adequate consideration of landscape impact and resources. CPRE Craven also has grave concerns that this is a form of back door housing slipping under the radar.

OXFORDSHIRE

Threat to valued local landscape: New housing development

Status: Applications submitted, waiting to go to committee

Details: The ancient village of Great Coxwell in Oxfordshire is a small hamlet of about 280 residents in 100 households. It is most famous for its monastic Great Barn, built in 1310 and now owned by the National Trust. The surrounding landscape is mostly open farmland of high visual merit, affording important vistas over the barn and village, to the Iron Age hill fort of Badbury Clump, over the Vale of White Horse area and across to the white horse itself.

The Vale of White Horse District Council has no Local Plan in place (first draft has been consulted on, second draft awaiting results of an Oxfordshire-wide Strategic Housing Market Assessment due later this autumn) and an inadequate Five Year Housing Supply (they have a five year supply + 5% buffer, but due to historic underperformance are required to demonstrate a 20% buffer). This means that even the restrictions of the NPPF do not apply and there is a current planning free-

for-all in the area, with developers quick to seize the opportunity to put forward applications that would not normally be considered.

Against this backdrop, local residents are now faced with not one but two applications for large-scale housing developments. 'Fernham Fields' is an application from SGR (Faringdon) Ltd for 200 high density houses, and 'The Steeds' being promoted by Welbeck is for a further 150 houses.

The effect of these applications would be to join Great Coxwell to the neighbouring town of Faringdon, destroying at a stroke a fine landscape and the independence of this unique and historic settlement and its close-knit community.

SHROPSHIRE

Threat to Shropshire Hills AONB: Wind turbines

Status: Applications submitted

Details: Applications are with the Shropshire Council for eight wind turbines on five sites on the Brown Clee with heights of up to 85m. The Shropshire Hills AONB will be affected if the applications for the turbines on the lower slopes of the Brown Clee are granted. Although these applications are outside the AONB they are close enough to be seen in the foreground of the AONB. The site of these turbines is a landmark at the easterly approach to the Shropshire Hills. The Brown Clee along with the Titterstone Clee is part of the Shropshire Hills referred to by Houseman as "Those Blue Remembered Hills." They also form a major part of the Shropshire Hills AONB and these sites are only excluded from the AONB by a few contour lines on the OS map. CPRE Shropshire has opposed all five sites.

SOMERSET

Threat to Mendip Hills AONB: Proposal to build a cable car in Cheddar Gorge

Status: Planning application expected in autumn 2013

Details: This is in the Mendip Hills AONB & is widely recognised to be one of Britain's most iconic landmarks. Longleat Estates own half the Gorge and claim that the cable car is the only way to reinvigorate visitor numbers to the Gorge, which are falling steadily year on year. Local people would argue that Longleat has done little to invest in the Gorge in recent years and has deliberately allowed facilities to degrade so that the case for a cable car looks stronger. The other side of the Gorge is owned by National Trust who have said that they would oppose any application for a cable car. The Mendip Hills AONB Unit also opposes the current plan and there is strong local opposition from a group called Keep Cheddar Gorgeous www.keepcheddargorgeous.co.uk

CPRE Somerset is concerned that a cable car would lead to a loss of tranquillity in the Upper Gorge and we remain unconvinced that the proposal will help to boost the fortunes of flagging businesses in the Lower Gorge.

SUFFOLK

Threat to Suffolk Coast and Heaths AONB: Solar Farm

Status: Planning approval granted

Details: 4.39MW Solar Farm, to include ancillary buildings, comprising 10.7 hectares wholly within the AONB. CPRE Suffolk Preservation Society argued that development of the site with 18,000 PV panels would, in conjunction with the nearby Adnams Distribution Centre, change the character of the AONB by introducing an industrialised nature to the landscape. In addition it was argued that the visual amenity of the AONB would be harmed. Furthermore, as it had not been demonstrated that the development needed to be sited in this location nor that it

was of overriding national interest, the protection afforded by the nationally designated AONB status should override other considerations.

This view was in line with that of the planning officers at Waveney District Council; however the application was approved against their advice. This is a concern particularly as a new application has just been registered for a further 8 MW solar farm on a site very close to the AONB.

SUSSEX

Threat to South Downs National Park: Solar Farm

Status: Ongoing

Details: CPRE Sussex recently opposed an application for a 50 acre solar farm in the South Downs National Park, due to the impact on high quality agricultural land and the visual blight on the damage it was cause to the landscape. The development is planned on agricultural land which would be regarded as 'Best and Most Versatile' under the National Planning Policy Framework, and would have a major impact on the stunning, open views from the Lewes Downs Special Area of Conservation. The South Downs National Park Authority requested an Environmental Impact Assessment from the developers and after two public meetings (with representation from CPRE Sussex) and the developers stated that the application would not progress in its 'current form'. CPRE Sussex awaits the revised plans. The South Downs is England's newest National Park, becoming fully operational in April 2011. It represent one of the richest and most stunningly complex landscapes in England.

WARWICKSHIRE

Threat to locally valued landscapes: Wind turbines

Status: Planning application expected

Details: An application to site nine wind turbines some miles to the east of this site, at Wormleighton, a particularly lovely place because there are no roads and few buildings on this pristine ten square miles of countryside, is likely to go to the Planning Committee either at the end of this year or the beginning of the next. The wind farm would consist of nine three-bladed turbines with a maximum tip height of 125m. A new access track would link the site to the A423. The site is also in close proximity to the proposed route of the HS2 rail network which runs adjacent to the site.

WILTSHIRE

Threat to locally valued landscape: Cumulative development in historic town

Status: Ongoing

Details: CPRE Wiltshire is concerned about the cumulative impact of development surrounding Malmesbury. The historic market town of Malmesbury, which is home to a 7th century Abbey, is set in open rolling countryside in North Wiltshire. Despite having a protective, phased policy for the Community Area within the draft Wiltshire Core Strategy (WCS) and having a Neighbourhood Plan (NP) finished up to the level of a Referendum, the town has seen a series of speculative urban edge greenfield development applications which run counter to the WCS and intent of the NP. These run around the edge of the town and start to create a necklace effect.

The views from outside the town looking back at the ancient built environment with its hilltop Abbey are indivisible from the character of the town. Despite being the headquarters of the engineering firm, Dyson, it does not offer sufficient increased employment to meet the rise in need for local employment from new

housing. The applications already made have been opposed by the Town Council, Neighbourhood Plan team, CPRE, local parishes and local people. However at appeal two out of three have been granted.

The town centre is fairly vibrant but needs reinforcing. Instead two supermarket applications were received. One for an out of town site, formerly a small plant nursery, by Sainsbury and one on the edge of town, but in a small nature conservation area, by Waitrose. Sainsbury refused...yet to appeal...and Waitrose granted despite a requested call-in by MP.