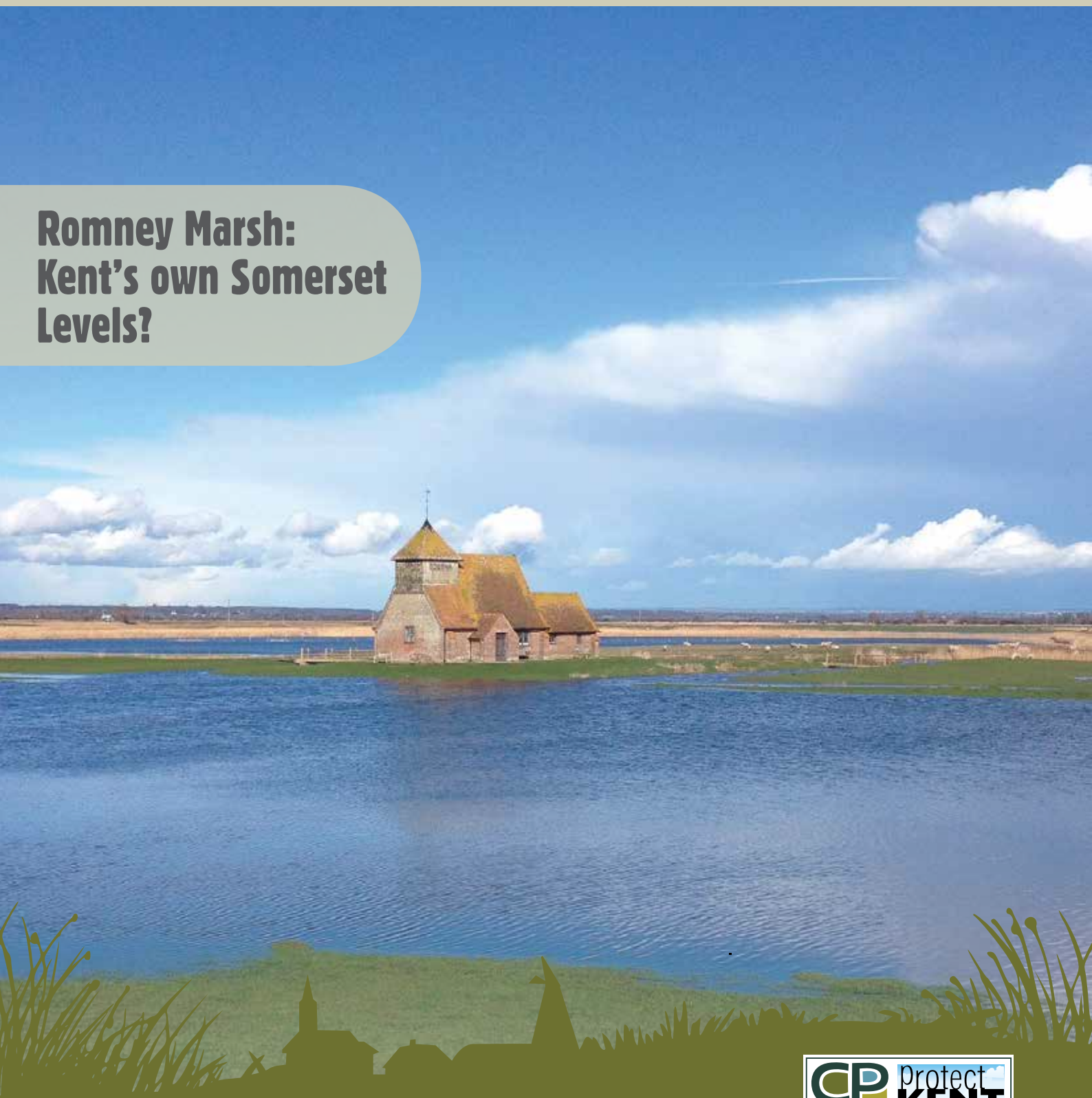


# KENT VOICE

Protecting Kent's Countryside  
SPRING / SUMMER 2014

**Romney Marsh:  
Kent's own Somerset  
Levels?**



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# Editor's Introduction



When I first arrived at CPRE Protect Kent back in November 2010, I had very little understanding or comprehension of just what planning was, or how it affected people's lives. I had always taken a keen interest in current affairs, politics and economics, but I had barely heard of a Local Plan, and didn't have any idea of what was in one. When I look back on the last three and a half years, I have learnt an incredible amount; I can now appreciate the importance of planning, and understand just why we need everyone who cares to involve themselves in it. I can see the big picture of local government, and have a much improved understanding of what District Councillors do. I can grasp the importance to local economies and have gained a valuable insight into the various nuances of planning—it's no surprise to me that whenever I type 'Brian' (our Senior Planner), my PC tries to auto-correct it to 'brain'!

As I now set sail for pastures new, I will take this knowledge and understanding with me. When I see all of those chunks of our beautiful Kent countryside, which CPRE Protect Kent have so diligently defended using the planning system, I will appreciate them all the more because of all of the time, effort and work which goes into looking after them.

I would urge you to all get in touch with the charity, and spend some time finding out exactly what planning is impacting in your area of Kent—maybe you'll be interested enough to help out and preserve some of your beautiful countryside!

  
**Jamie Weir**

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- Page 10** Brian Lloyd gives his usual roundup of development plans in the districts and highlights the big changes.
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- Page 20** Too many trucks on tight country lanes? Vicky Ellis examines the issues of shared space on our country roads.
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# Reflections on my Chairmanship



by **Richard Knox-Johnston**

**The last five years have been eventful ones, with some notable successes to look back on...**

My five-year period as Chairman of CPRE Protect Kent ended at the AGM. The chairmanship of the largest branch of CPRE has been both fascinating and rewarding. We have tackled many challenges and although not all our battles have been won, I believe that we have contributed much to protect Kent's environment. We have also raised our profile both with the media and government at national, county and district level, strengthening our ability to influence at all tiers.

We have met with MPs on many issues, notably over the consultation document for the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). We have also met many times with Kent MPs on a wide range of issues. These meetings have been welcomed and have helped to cement relationships.

We regularly meet with the Leader of Kent County Council and whilst we are not always in complete agreement, we have a better understanding between the two organisations. We have held useful joint open meetings about some of the planning threats in Kent.

We have also engaged with District Councils, and some leaders have

come to Charing to meet our team and discuss some of the challenges they face; indeed at a meeting of Dover District Council we were invited to address the members on fracking.

We have enjoyed many campaign successes. The freight interchange at Bearsted has disappeared, at least for the moment. We spent eight weeks at the public inquiry and made the case against it on behalf of both the landscape and countryside pursuits such as walking and riding. The Inspector specifically mentioned these items when refusing permission.

Another major success was the campaign led by our local representative, Alex Hills, against Gravesham District Council's plan to build in their Green Belt which resulted in Gravesham withdrawing their plan.

One of the key initiatives we undertook was the formation of the Climate Change Forum in Kent which included the National Trust, The Wildlife Trust, Natural England, the universities and RSPB.

As a result of the forum we became involved with a further campaign against the extended use of the

coal-fired Kingsnorth Power Station. Rochester is already one of the most polluted areas in the country with high incidence of respiratory illnesses, and we believed this was not acceptable. During the climate change camp we engaged with a young and level headed audience, and it was a privilege to listen to their views.

There are, however, still some major threats to our county. Apart from the suggested airport in North Kent, there is also the possibility of extensive fracking, not only in East Kent but also the Weald.

Probably the greatest threat to our beautiful countryside in Kent is the way in which the NPPF is being interpreted. One example is in Dover, where the District Council has permitted a major development at Western Heights and Farthingloe which is part of the Kent Downs AONB. It is normal for the Secretary of State to call in such applications but this has not happened. Dover already has ambitious housing targets and this site was not in its local plan. Our concern is that this is another example of a large company buying land, getting planning permission and then storing it on its balance sheet without any intention to carry out the development in the short term. We believe the government is being hoodwinked into allowing this situation and even the banks are now rumoured to be taking similar action in order to strengthen their balance sheets. This could become a very dangerous precedent, threatening important areas of countryside such as AONBs and Green Belt.

Finally I would like to express my appreciation to all our active members and the team at Charing. They work tirelessly for the countryside in Kent and we are lucky to have such a dedicated team.



**Christine Drury**

# A new hand at the helm

*Being elected as Chairman of CPRE Kent at the AGM last November was an honour but also a daunting prospect. Not only was our outgoing Chairman, Richard Knox-Johnston a hard act to follow but I also know what an important and demanding role CPRE plays in Kent. We are privileged to have around us some of the most beautiful countryside in England but also some of the greatest threats.*

Reassuringly, CPRE Kent has a wonderful team: in the office at Charing, in the Board of Trustees with a wide range of skills and able to contribute to and challenge what we do; in District committees who know their areas better than anyone and in policy specialists who understand the technicalities of our countryside above and below ground. In any resilient team, people change: new volunteers arrive, retirees ready for a new challenge replace those who move away, and sadly we lose some who pass away. Amongst those we have lost recently are Peter Pellereaux, Dave Murr, Peter Marsh, Jim Hudson, and Simon Evans; their contributions have all been greatly appreciated. New people bring new skills and therefore new

campaigning opportunities to enable us all to work for a better Kent.

In the office, we have Dr Hilary Newport, who, as Director, has a PhD in environmental biology and a wealth of expertise and experience, Brian Lloyd who is a Member of the Royal Town Planning Institute and an authority on all matters of strategic planning. Jamie Weir, currently our PR and Events Manager and Vicky Ellis our dynamic Office Manager and Membership Co-ordinator. (By the time you read this, Jamie will have moved on to be a reporter at Kent on Sunday. Our thanks to Jamie for this and previous editions of Kent Voice. Check our website soon for news of his successor.)

Our work is grounded by the scrutineering that is done by CPRE's District committees who comment on local planning applications: supporting where we can, and robustly opposing inappropriate development. "Around the Districts" in the following pages paints a vivid picture of the wide range of topics each District considers. Tackling the often impenetrable detail of Local Plans is a long hard task, but rewarding when there is finally an approved Local Plan in place. Brian Lloyd's partnership with District committees in analysing these plans is one of CPRE's great assets. Some local plans contain policies that are on CPRE's campaigning list: we now see "tranquillity" and "brownfield first" appearing. Recent CPRE Kent successes include a landscape policy in the Sevenoaks Local Plan and a policy on solar parks in the draft Maidstone local plan. This is good news not only for these Districts, but as precedents elsewhere.

As this edition of Kent Voice goes to press, the Commons Select Committee for Communities and

Local Government is calling for submissions for its review of the working of the National Planning Policy Framework that came into operation in April 2012. We will of course be commenting on behalf of our members in Kent. We previously did so jointly with the Kent Federation of Amenity Societies (KFAS)

Meanwhile there is a lot more to do: we will shortly be meeting with the Environment Agency to discuss how the lessons of the winter floods on the Somerset Levels apply to Romney Marsh, and continue our work, already begun, with the farmers there. We are also working closely with a number of parish councils in Kent, often jointly with KALC (Kent Association of Local Councils): a partnership that started with neighbourhood planning.

The challenges of protecting our glorious Kent countryside and the bio-diversity it supports make it increasingly important to work together with like-minded organisations, such as KFAS, National Trust, RSPB, Kent Wildlife Trust, and NFU etc. wherever it is practical to do so. I have lived in Kent for 30 years and the last 10 working with CPRE have been full of rewarding challenges. As Chairman of CPRE Kent, I look forward to serving our members and campaigning on their behalf. I invite any of you who feel as strongly as I do about the importance of protecting the Kent countryside to get in touch to become a volunteer and help us with our work. We live in interesting times.

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# Romney Marsh: managing the flood risk

by Christine Drury

**Romney Marsh** – It was described by the historian William Dugdale in 1662 as the first large English marshland to be secured from the sea. Jill Eddison's account of the 15 years of research by geographers, geologists, archaeologists and historians in her book: Romney Marsh "Survival on a Frontier".

This title is an apt description of the potential fragility of the Marsh, but it underestimates the determination and skill of farmers and drainage experts that manage this iconic part of Kent. Its full expanse is 100 square miles of land below sea level sheltering uneasily behind the shingle bank that moves constantly with the ebb and flow of the tides, and is only stabilised by significant sea wall defences, and regular programmes of moving the shingle back from east to west.

The Marsh has been an area of high potential for agriculture ever since Thomas à Becket started "sewing" the land together with drainage ditches when he lived at Fairfield nearly 900 years ago. This "sewing" of the land gave us the word sewer.

Today the pattern of medieval churches across the Marsh is both a remarkable part of its landscape and history. The churches may often be surrounded by water – as is the church dedicated to Thomas à

Becket pictured on the cover of this edition – but all occupy the slightly higher ground. The fabric of land connected by drainage channels known as "wet fences" are highly fertile farmland, worked by farmers who understand how to manage the water and make their land productive. They are a significant part of Kent's agricultural economy and England's food supply.

*Its full expanse is  
100 square miles of  
land below sea level  
sheltering uneasily  
behind the shingle  
bank that moves  
constantly with the ebb  
and flow of the tides*

This winter was a wake up call for the management of the Marsh. CPRE was asked to help. Romney Marsh is part of Shepway District, and with an eminent Romney farmer, Beatrice Paine on the CPRE Shepway Committee, its Chairman, Paul Smallwood was asked to chair a meeting at which many marsh farmers and land managers expressed their alarm that the serious long term flooding taking place on the Somerset levels was

a dire warning for Romney Marsh. There was talk of some parts the other great area of recovered marsh, the East Anglian Fenlands, being allowed to "return to the sea". The language of water and flood management is to refer to this as "managed retreat" or as the Dutch describe it: "making space for water". If you are a farmer providing food and livelihoods this is an uncomfortable discourse, and we need to be mindful that this is some of the most productive agricultural land in the country.

Farmers see a very clear problem: the local inland drainage board team is doing its job of keeping the smaller drainage channels free flowing and at a planned level to manage the drainage and the provision of wet fences. The problem is at the sluice gates connecting them to in the larger channels. These are the responsibility of the Environment Agency (EA), and have a dual function. They carry away the water accumulating in the Marsh and they carry the river water that flows across the Marsh and out to sea through the sea wall. As in Somerset these river channels were dredged either less or not at all in recent years. As a result their water carrying capacity is reduced. Recent investment means that the Marsh sea defences are strong – and it probably helps to have a nuclear power station at Dungeness – but dredging and pump maintenance by EA are way behind.

# Wraight's

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Others, including some farmers who have moved out of arable and mixed farming into entirely pasture and high level environmental stewardship, argue that farming methods need to be better for the environment and wildlife. But there has been alarm in many quarters that the job cuts and reorganisation of the Environment Agency (EA) has taken away much of its local knowledge and local capability.

When we helped raise the profile of the flood risk issue we were not surprised to be accused of scaremongering and “jumping on the bandwagon” of the Somerset levels flood disaster on behalf of Romney Marsh. We are unrepentant. As the floods subside and spring appears recent memories are pushed away. We all need the Marsh to be flood resilient and there to be more effective partnership between the EA and farmers, the Drainage Board and Shepway District Council. CPRE's campaigning is protecting some of the most precious countryside in Kent, and an important area of food production.

**The Marsh is at serious risk of becoming Kent's own Somerset Levels**



Edward Denne



Ady Kerry

# headlines

*from the campaigns frontline*

Hilary Newport



*We have learnt some harsh lessons this winter about what this extreme weather can do to lives and livelihoods across the country. Meanwhile, while rain-soaked communities are counting the costs and beginning the heartbreaking work of clearing up after the floods, there is talk that Yalding could become the site of a new garden city. You couldn't make this up.*

*But it is worrying that our new National Planning Policy Framework still makes it clear, where a Local Plan is absent or silent or does not conform to the NPPF, which requires a local authority to demonstrate that it has an adequate supply of land available for 5 years' worth of housing, the presumption should be in favour of permitting development. Where is the space for planning for flood protection, or flood prevention, in such a blunt policy?*

## Solar farms

a rash of applications for renewable energy on productive agricultural land is sweeping across the country. We actively support the development of clean renewable energy, want to see solar PV generation confined to brownfield sites and roofs, and productive agricultural land safeguarded for food security for the future. See page 18 to find out more.

## Fracking

applications for 3 test boreholes withdrawn pending further information, but it's all too likely that the applications will be resubmitted. Meanwhile DECC is consulting on the environmental impacts of shale gas extraction and we will be sharing our concerns in our consultation response.

## Onshore wind

another clean, renewable energy resource, but one that needs careful planning if it is not to blight landscapes. We believe that Kent's offshore wind resource is a better option for energy generation.





# Western Heights & Farthingloe

a huge housing development in the AONB in an unsustainable location 2km from Dover. We are looking at ways that we can challenge this devastating proposal – the result, we believe, of over-ambitious and highly damaging housing targets.

## Housing Numbers:

as the NPPF continues to exert its influence, more and more local planning authorities are setting highly elevated targets for delivery of new homes, in the fear that a local plan with too few homes will be deemed non-compliant with the NPPF and found ‘unsound’ – risking unconstrained growth as major speculative developments in inappropriate places come forward.

## Romney Marsh



we are working alongside local people to safeguard this iconic landscape which provides so much in terms of food, tourism and wildlife. Its future is fragile if investment in coastal flood defences is not paired with ongoing maintenance and management of its inshore drainage systems. See page 6 to read about our campaign.

## Lower Thames Crossing

only two options remain on the table (Dartford or east of Gravesham). We believe the effects of free-flow-tolling should be assessed before any new, damaging road schemes are promoted.

## Gravesham

Green Belt land under threat as the local authority is required to undertake a review of Green Belt boundaries. We believe that the focus must be on brownfield land, and if the developers say these sites are ‘undeliverable’ we must find ways to **make** them deliverable.

## CPRE charter :

this is a constant theme for the coming year. CPRE is asking for 3 simple things:



Support CPRE's charter

- 1** don't sacrifice our countryside
- 2** a fair say for communities
- 3** more housing – in the right places.

Please help us by encouraging everyone you know who cares for their countryside to sign the charter at [www.cpre.org.uk/chartercard](http://www.cpre.org.uk/chartercard).

# Local Plan

*round-up*



**Protect Kent's senior planner, Brian Lloyd, reviews the latest situation with local plans in Kent and what has happened since the last issue of Kent Voice.**

In November 2013 Medway Council formally withdrew the **Medway Core Strategy**. This was because, following public consultation, Natural England confirmed it would be extending the Chattenden Woods Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) to include much of the controversial Lodge Hill site. The Lodge Hill site (the former Chattenden Barracks) was proposed in the Core Strategy for major mixed-use development including 5,000 new homes, and as such was the major site for new development proposed in the Plan. However, a new survey found that it was a site of national significance for breeding nightingales. The withdrawal of the Core Strategy means that the Council will now have to start again to prepare a new local plan. However, an outline planning application for the development of Lodge Hill, submitted in 2011, remains before the Council and in February we received notification that a new Environmental Statement had been submitted to the Council by the site promoter. This seeks to continue to justify the site for development and puts forward proposals for mitigation.

In December Gravesham Borough Council published for consultation a series of Modifications to the **Gravesham Core Strategy**. These were in response to the preliminary findings of the Inspector appointed to hold the public examination of the plan, who considered that he could not approve the Plan as it stood. Some significant changes are proposed in the Modifications, including:

- an increase in the housing target for the plan period (2011 – 2028) from 4,600 to 6,170 new homes;
- the allocation of greenfield land at Coldharbour Road, Gravesend, as a key site for mixed employment and residential development (550 homes); and
- the identification of the Green Belt as a general location for some future growth and a proposal to undertake a strategic review of the Green Belt boundary to identify sites suitable for development both during the plan period and beyond.

In January the examination of the **Dover Land Allocations Plan** was held. We took the opportunity to once again challenge the very high housing target that the Council is seeking to deliver by 2026, i.e. up to 14,000 new homes. This target was justified in the Core Strategy (adopted in 2010) on the basis that new housing was needed to support employment growth. However the Land Allocations Plan explains that those employment growth aspirations will not now be achieved during the Plan period and reduces the amount of land needed for employment development. Consequently, we argued at the examination that the housing target should be correspondingly reduced. Furthermore, we explained that by maintaining a high housing target that cannot be delivered the Council runs the high risk that it will not be able to demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing sites as required by national planning policy. This would only result in the Council having to grant planning permission for more new homes on sites not appropriate or identified as





### North Downs, Maidstone

suitable for development in the local plan, in addition to the 521 homes they have already allowed in the Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) at Farthingloe. At the end of March the Inspector wrote to the Council with a schedule of proposed main modifications, but this did not include any change to the housing target. The main modifications will be subject to public consultation in May or June before the Inspector submits his final report.

In March the examination of the **Sevenoaks Allocations and Development Management Plan (ADMP)** commenced. The major concern we pursued at the examination was the Council's change of approach in regard to the Fort Halstead site. In the Core Strategy (adopted in 2011) the Council saw the site as continuing in employment use, but in the ADMP they accepted that some residential development would be acceptable. The site promoters consider that 450 dwellings would be appropriate on the site, and is needed to make any employment development viable. The site, located within both the Kent Downs AONB and the Green Belt, is unrelated to any existing settlement and has poor access. We argued that it is an inappropriate location for housing development and such development would be contrary to national and local policies that seek to restrict development in the AONB and in the Green Belt. It is also not needed to meet the housing target set in the Core Strategy, as other sites proposed in the ADMP will do this. We await the Inspector's report and his findings on this.

On 21 March the draft **Maidstone Local Plan** was published for consultation. The Plan now promotes an increased housing target of 17,100 dwellings (up from 10,080 in previous consultations), though an assessment of housing needs suggests that the target could be even higher at 19,600 dwellings and the Borough Council has invited landowners to put forward further sites to meet this higher target. We will be reviewing the Plan in detail and responding accordingly, including challenging the increased housing target. The deadline for comments is the 7 May.

Finally, after a considerable delay Kent County Council published in January the pre-submission draft of the **Minerals and Waste Local Plan (MWLP)**. This Plan sets out the overall strategy for dealing with mineral and waste developments over the period to 2030, including targets for new provisions. It also includes the detailed development management policies that will be used to consider planning applications. Following the consultation, which closed on 16 March, the Council will submit the Plan for examination. We anticipate that the examination will be held in the autumn. We are generally content with the proposed strategy, but have made a number of detailed representations. Further plans dealing with proposed sites for mineral and waste developments will be progressed once the MWLP has been adopted.



The list below sets out the current situation with plan making for each local authority, including all the plans that are currently adopted. In addition to these, each local authority will have an old style local plan which, to varying degrees, will have 'saved' policies that are still relevant in considering planning applications. These policies will gradually be replaced as new plans are adopted and details of currently 'saved' policies are provided on the local authority websites.



#### **Ashford**

- Core Strategy adopted July 2008
- Town Centre Plan adopted February 2010
- Tenterden and Rural Sites Plan adopted October 2010
- Urban Sites and Infrastructure Plan adopted October 2012
- Chilmington Green Area Action Plan adopted July 2013
- The Council is at an early stage of reviewing the Core Strategy which will be presented as a Local Plan covering the period to 2030. No details are currently available on the timing of any proposed consultations.

#### **Canterbury**

- Herne Bay Area Action Plan adopted April 2010
- Consultation on a draft Local Plan was undertaken last summer, and formal consultation on a pre-submission plan is expected in April/May 2014. The Examination in Public is likely to follow before the end of the year.

#### **Dartford**

- Core Strategy adopted September 2011
- Consultation on the scope of the Site Allocations and Development Management Plan was undertaken in May 2013 and consultation on a draft Plan is expected in the summer 2014.

#### **Dover**

- Core Strategy adopted February 2010
- The Site Allocations Plan was submitted for examination in August 2013 and the Examination was held in January 2014. The Inspector has indicated to the Council that Modifications to the plan will be required and it is anticipated that consultation on these will be undertaken in May/June.

#### **Gravesham**

- The Core Strategy was formally submitted for examination in May 2013 and the examination opened in September. In response to the Inspector's preliminary report the Council published for consultation a series of Modifications to the Core Strategy in December. Reconvened examination hearings were held on 8 and 9 April to consider the Modifications. The Inspector's report is expected by the end of July.

#### **Maidstone**

- Affordable Housing Plan adopted December 2006
- Open Space Plan adopted December 2006
- A draft Local Plan is was published for consultation in March with comments invited by 7 May.



## Sevenoaks

- Core Strategy adopted February 2011
- The Allocations and Development Management Policies Plan was submitted for examination in November 2013 and the examination commenced in March.
- Initial consultation on a Gypsy and Traveller Plan is expected during the summer.

## Shepway

- Core Strategy adopted September 2013
- **Initial consultation on an Allocations and Development Management Plan is expected in the autumn 2014.**

## Swale

- Consultation on a draft Local Plan was undertaken in September 2013 and formal consultation on the pre-submission Plan is expected in the autumn 2014.
- Consultation on issues and options for a Gypsy and Traveller Site Plan commenced in February with comments invited by 25 April.

## Thanet

- Cliftonville Plan adopted February 2010
- Consultation on strategy options for the Thanet Local Plan was undertaken in the summer of 2013, and consultation on a draft Local Plan is expected during the summer 2014.

## Tonbridge and Malling

- Core Strategy adopted September 2007
- Development Land Allocations Plan adopted April 2008
- Tonbridge Central Area Action Plan adopted April 2008
- Managing Development and the Environment Plan adopted April 2010
- The Borough Council has decided to start a review of the adopted plans, and initial consultation on issues and options is expected in the autumn 2014.

## Tunbridge Wells

- Core Strategy adopted June 2010
- Consultation on the pre-submission draft of the Site Allocations Plan, which will also include town centre proposals, is expected towards the end of 2014.
- A Development Management Policies Plan and a Gypsies and Travellers Plan are also proposed, but no timing details for these are currently available.

## Medway

- The proposed Medway Core Strategy was formally withdrawn by the Council in November 2013. Proposals to prepare a new Plan have not yet been agreed by the Council.

## KCC

- Consultation on the pre-submission Waste and Minerals Core Strategy was undertaken between January and March 2014. It is likely that the Plan will be submitted for examination in the spring/summer with the examination following in the autumn.
- There will be no further consultation on the Mineral and Waste Sites Plans until after the Core Strategy is adopted.



# JUST HOW MANY HOUSES DO WE NEED?

Gary Thomas



**It seems that every commentator on the subject of housing talks about a shortage, or even a crisis, but rarely if ever give any idea of how many are “needed” now or in the near future. The Planning Minister did say recently that “we need to build at a rate of 250,000 houses a year”. That number at average occupancy rates would house 600,000 people, and therefore 3 million over five years.**

The population of the UK is forecast by the Office of National Statistics to increase at a rate of about 6% per year, from 63.7 million in 2012 to 65.8 million in 2017, an increase of 2.1 million. If we built at that 250,000 rate per year we would provide homes for almost one million more people than are needed to match the population increase. Quite what that would do to the housing market is debatable, and could create a slump in prices.



*Will the population actually keep on growing?*

**'Maidstone District is under attack from high housing numbers and significant greenfield development proposals. Countryside like this is at threat'.**

In fact the average number of persons per dwelling has been steadily dropping, from 2.47 in 1991 to 2.41 in 2007, so more houses were being built than the population increase required and was clearly contributing to meeting a social need. However it has remained roughly constant since 2007, with even a small increase to 2.43 in 2010 and 2011 following significantly lower rates of building in the economic downturn. The question is how low can it go before it bottoms out, which appears to be a social situation rather than a "need". It depends on the future balance between families with children, couples and people who live alone.

Will the population actually keep on growing? The figures are only projections from recent past figures. They result from increased life expectancy, the birth rate and net immigration. Life expectancy may now increase at a slower rate, mainly due to social factors such as obesity, lack of exercise and binge drinking, and the Government clearly has a policy to reduce net immigration. The birth-rate has been below the level of 2.075 children per woman needed to keep the population steady for

more than a decade now. There are significantly fewer children aged 5 to 10 than required to maintain the population and even with the recent increase in the birth-rate the numbers of 0 to 5 year olds are still too low. This should mean a drop in the need for housing in fifteen to twenty years

These figures are highly relevant to the south east and Kent in particular. There appears to be pressure from the Planning Inspectorate, and interpretation of the National Planning Policy Framework which appear to be causing very high housing numbers to be put forward. Maidstone in particular has extraordinarily high numbers being considered, up to 30% increase

over the current total housing stock of the whole borough in the next 17 years, increasing the average building rate from the high recent annual average of 650 houses per annum up to around 1000. We can not find any justification for this, or evaluation of the effects. Kent as a whole looks to having 20% more houses, also without justification or comparison with the UK population increase, projected at just 12% for this period.

It would appear that many councils, including Maidstone, are trying harder to appease the Government via the Planning Inspectorate rather than representing the interests of those who elected them.



# The Hadlow College Betteshanger sustainable parks scheme



**Pat Crawford, press officer Hadlow College  
and CPRE committee member**

**Way back in 1989 when the last colliery in Kent–Betteshanger near Deal – was abruptly closed, hundreds of miners and their families were left without employment – and with little hope of obtaining any. The closure wasn’t a long drawn out negotiated process – it was rapid and brutal.**



That was getting on for 25 years ago since when successive governments have promised regeneration and various plans were drawn up - but almost none came to fruition. The miners and their families felt isolated, let down and forgotten.

This changed in November last year with the launch of the Betteshanger Sustainable Parks Scheme. Many of the miners who had been affected by the closures are beyond retirement age but now they can witness their families and their communities being given new hope. And this has been brought about not by a giant multi-national, nor by big business but a specialist land-based college – Hadlow!

Hadlow wasn’t expecting – didn’t intend - to be involved in a massive regeneration project. In fact, it was something that came about by chance. Recognising the importance of raising skill levels in an area of high unemployment, Dover District Council asked Hadlow to investigate the provision of education and training in the area. Betteshanger was suggested as a suitable site for a centre but it was almost immediately apparent that the community deserved a more comprehensive, coordinated project.

The college’s principal Paul Hannan and Mark Lumsdon-Taylor, the director of finance and resources, led the investigations and perceived the opportunity to develop something very new and different. Something that would not only benefit the ex-miners but would also result in new and exciting opportunities for the wider community.

The phrases ‘landmark development’, ‘groundbreaking’ and ‘pioneering’ are applied to projects that, in reality, are mundane – even stagnant. Hadlow’s Betteshanger Scheme really is a landmark development that combines sustainable business with sustainable commerce backed up by sustainably delivered education, training, research and green energy. In addition – and very importantly in relation to the heritage of which the miners are so proud – the plan includes a centre designed to give visitors a real ‘mining experience’ contrasted with eco-friendly green energy provision.

The scheme also includes business incubator space that will provide the right facilities and support to encourage entrepreneurs to set up new businesses and develop existing ones. The primary targets are food and drink industries which sit very well in a county that is well established in







horticulture and agriculture. The development of green technologies will also play an important part. In addition, Hadlow College will be providing education from entry level through to post-graduate research - all specifically designed to fulfill employers' needs.

The scheme throughout has been led on Hadlow's behalf by Mark Lumsdon-Taylor with the backing of the board of governors and the senior management team plus the aid of a professional team including Kent-based Brachers. Dover District Council and the Homes and Communities Agency give their full support to the scheme which will make a very substantial contribution to communities that have waited a very long time for a composite sustainable regeneration plan. Mark believes that the Betteshanger Sustainable Parks really will fulfill the definition of sustainable development.



The definition of sustainable development:

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*'meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs'*

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FOOTNOTE: Hadlow College is one of the UK's leading land-based institutions – fitting that it is located in the centre of the Garden of England where agriculture and horticulture play such important parts - both in relation to the economy and also to the management and diversity of our landscape.

# Solar Farms

*what to do if a proposal comes up in your area!*

CPRE Protect Kent believe that solar is part of the renewable energy mix which we will need to ensure sustainability and security in the future.

However, recently there has been a spate of large scale solar farm proposals emerging in the various planning lists we receive from around the county.



Jamie Weir

There are a variety of stages at which you can object to the development.

- Pre-Application Consultation
- Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) Screening
- EIA Scoping
- Environmental Statement
- And finally, the planning application!

Senior Planners guidance in the 'Local Policy and Guidance' section of our website at [www.protectkent.org.uk](http://www.protectkent.org.uk)

When fighting an application, regardless of which stage it has reached, make sure you are using relevant planning or environmental arguments. Although the number of objections is not a material consideration, it is certainly worthwhile to get as many people to object as possible, whilst lobbying your local councillor can also help. If you're struggling to put together a strong response, have a look at our guide to responding to solar farms available online, and contact us at the office; we can put you in touch with the relevant district committee.

Solar farms have become big business and as a result, Kent is likely to see more inappropriate developments being proposed. If you want to take action, then hopefully this article and the guide on our website will arm you with the necessary tools to fight this blight on our countryside.

Hectare after hectare of our 'best and most versatile' (BMV) agricultural land is being put forward for this type of development. This not only industrialises our countryside, but diminishes our ability to use the land for food production—and food security has been highlighted by many as a very important issue for the UK in the future.

As one of our main concerns for the future of Kent's countryside and one of our campaign priorities, we have built up an expertise in fighting inappropriate solar farms through the county. Recently, our Director Dr Hilary Newport has been running training modules for people concerned by the proliferation of this type of development. I was lucky enough to attend one, and wanted to share some of the lessons I learned so that you can start to understand how to fight solar applications which concern you!

With all of these stages, it is important you are making the most relevant comments. If you'd like to know what to say in depth, you can find our

## Case Study:

### Application No. 13/01022 solar farm on land at Oaklands Farm, Hothfield, Ashford, Kent

When a proposal to build an extremely large solar farm in a very tranquil and rural area came forward, our district committee sprang into action. The proposal was for the construction of a solar park to include the installation of solar panels, transformer housings, security fencing and cameras, landscaping and other associated works. It would have taken a total area of 20.1 hectares.

Our Ashford District Committee was unable to comment at the EIA screening and scoping stage, so only had the opportunity to make their representations when the planning application was submitted. They targeted their comments on the following issues:

**Effect on the Landscape** - the visual blight of the proposed solar farm, including its visibility from both near the site and far away. The potential impact on the setting of the Pilgrims Way and the North Downs ANOB.

**The efficiency of the scheme** - we questioned exactly how much power the scheme may provide, balanced against the impact on our countryside.

**The use of food producing agricultural land** - the solar farm had been proposed on grades 2 and 3a farmland (some of the best in our country).

**Future management of the site** - questions over how the site would be managed to ensure the stated biodiversity aims.

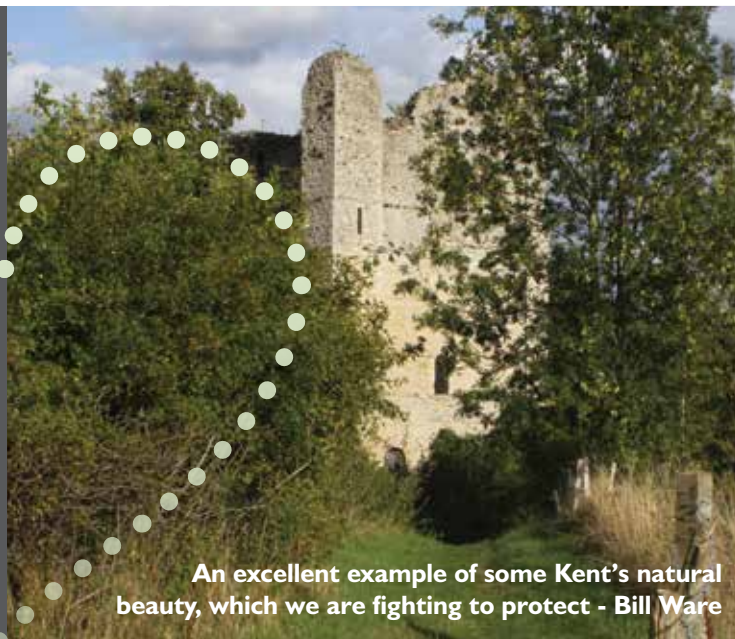
**Traffic management** - large numbers of HGVs are required during the construction of solar farms. When proposed in rural areas, traffic can be a serious issue.

**The right of local residents to have a say in the location of solar farms** - this was announced in a press release by DCLG and DECC on 29th July 2013, with the statement being brought to the attention of Ashford Borough Council's planning department.

*As a result of the work which our Ashford District Committee, alongside engaged local people carried out, the planning application was refused. ABC stated that the reasons for refusal were the loss of visual amenity and impact on the landscape, and the large-scale loss of 'best and most versatile' agricultural land, which they felt the developer had not justified.*

## CPRE "Love Kent" Campaign

At CPRE Protect Kent, many of our campaigns can be quite negative by their nature—a major part of our work, after all, is objecting to inappropriate development that could spoil the beautiful Kent countryside that we all love.



An excellent example of some Kent's natural beauty, which we are fighting to protect - Bill Ware

However, we want to do more to celebrate the glorious countryside of Kent. We are fortunate to live in such a beautiful county with such a wide variety of landscapes, from the rolling Kent Downs and the ancient coppiced woodland, to a wide range of fruit orchards, iconic Kentish villages and our rugged White Cliffs and golden beaches. Our county encompasses the best of Britain,

with some of the most perfect and unspoilt countryside and highest quality agricultural land in the UK.

We intend to celebrate this countryside, your countryside, and encourage everyone to get out and about and enjoy it that little bit more! That is why we are launching our "Love Kent" campaign in the hope that you will get out into some lesser

known areas of our county. We want you to let us know what are your favourite parts of Kent and why.

In our next issue, some of our volunteers will be writing about their favourite places and hopefully give you some ideas for fun days out! If any of you would like to write about one of your special places, please just let us know.

Vicky Ellis



# Shared Space *on Country Roads*

CPRE has long campaigned for shared space on England's country roads.

Roads are a means of getting from one place to another by whichever means. This can be by horse, farm vehicle, bicycle, motorcycle, walking, jogging, carriages and car. Some lanes are able to support lorries of varying sizes and others are strictly one car width, some roads are A roads and others B, C & D. Whatever the rural road it is there for the use of all road users, all of whom should be aware of the potential for accidents. I myself walk, jog, cycle, drive and ride on

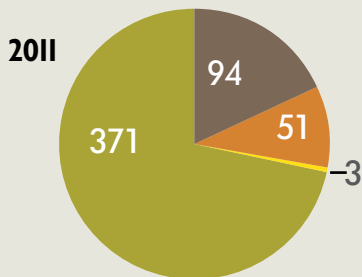
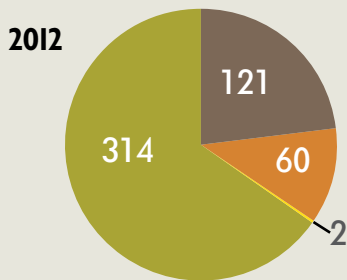
country roads and this makes me hugely aware of other road users from varying perspectives. For instance wearing my driver's hat I know how invisible dog walkers and cyclists can be on an unlit country road around the time of dusk if they have no lights or high viz clothing on. Because of this I always make sure when I go jogging and it's starting to get dark, I wear high viz clothing. When I am riding I am aware that my horse may move out into the road at any time due to something odd in the hedge he doesn't like; that's fine when the car driver slows down and passes wide (with a big thank you from me), but

when a car rushes past and I can feel the air between the car and my horse move I just dread to think what might have happened had my horse shied. I also know how a silent bicycle approaching from behind can startle my horse.

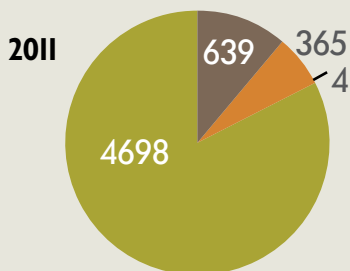
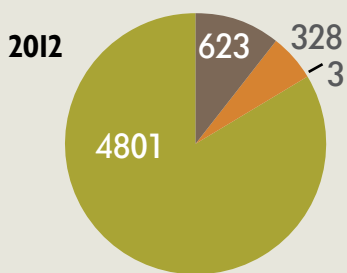
A minority of vehicle drivers have adopted the perspective that the road is there primarily for their use and every other user is secondary. All users have equal rights in the eyes of the law, to the use of all country roads and green lanes (unless marked otherwise). There are shared road schemes or naked roads being adopted in some town centres, such as Ashford with its shared space where everyone from pedestrian to car driver has equal rights on all parts of the space. There are no verges, bollards or pedestrian crossings and everyone



**The number of killed or seriously injured (KSI) casualties in Kent by vulnerable road user**



**The number of killed or slight injury casualties in Kent by vulnerable road user**



takes responsibility for themselves and considers other road users.

In 2009 CPRE was invited to comment on the DfT Road Safety Compliance document. In this document it stated that almost two thirds of road fatalities happened on rural roads and CPRE suggested that the current 60mph speed limit be reduced to 50mph. This shocking figure does not take into account any non-fatal but life changing incidences, for instance losing a limb or becoming mentally handicapped as a result of a RTA. The pie charts compiled by Lee Burchill, Transport Intelligence Manager for KCC for the purposes of this article, tell the story of these accidents.

He commented that it's worth noting that incidences involving pedestrians, cyclists and ridden horses have all increased. The data

for ridden horses are a little vague due to the data having only been recently collected but the data for pedestrians and cyclists show an increase of 18% - 23% and 10% - 12% respectively for either killed or seriously injured when making a comparison of 2011 and 2012 figures.

Shared space means consideration, awareness and respect for other road users whoever they may be and requires drivers to think

about what might be round the next bend in the road – a horse, a mother with her push chair? It also needs the foresight to think 'can I stop in time?' It's being aware of the damage your mode of transport could inflict on other

*All users have equal rights in the eyes of the law*

country road users and taking the necessary precautions to mitigate as much as possible against the likelihood of an incident occurring.

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# Reports *from the districts*

## Ashford

At present the committee is dealing with the many applications for solar farms. To date objections have been to three applications. There is also an increase in applications for dwellings in gardens and at present we are not sure what the local council's current policy is towards this.

The major preoccupation for the District in 2014 will be the review of the Local Plan. Over 160 sites have been put forward for possible development, including the controversial development at Chilmington Green which is proposed to include 5,750 homes, a high street and market square. We are also liaising with a local group in Mersham about a large employment site by the M20.

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## Canterbury

The Committee is increasingly concerned by Canterbury City Council's permitted development of the historic City centre, including the World Heritage sites of the Cathedral and St. Augustine's Abbey complex. Regardless of architectural merit, it is arguable that the recently completed Premier Inn on New Dover Road, the location of the new Marlowe Theatre in The Friars (right in front of the West end of the Cathedral), the rear extension to the Beaney Library in the High Street, and the proposed extension to Tower House in the Westgate Gardens, diminish the historic area and the Conservation Areas and Listed buildings nearby. We also regret the continued expansion of the "retail shopping experience" into the City, which adversely affects the City's character.

On a more optimistic front, we have supported strongly two objectors' groups in trying to save the Chaucer Slopes off St Thomas's Hill (owned by the University of Kent) and Kingsmead Field, Kingsmead Road (owned by the City Council) from development. As a result, no development has yet taken place on Chaucer Slopes, and the City Council has reversed its decision to allow residential development on Kingsmead Field. We hope the position will remain this way, and that both these valuable open spaces will be retained for the benefit of the public.

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## Dover

Hadlow College will be taking over at Betteshanger and Fowlmead Country Park, which is excellent news, and will be working in conjunction with the Discovery Park at Sandwich. See page 16 for more details.

Another solar farm application has been presented, which will be in the countryside on Grade 3 agricultural land.

Representatives from the committee met with DDC. Unfortunately, although people are encouraged to become involved in their local community, their views and suggestions are often ignored. This is also an issue for countryside developments, where there is a lack of speed in dealing with concerns.

On January 28th, Dover's Site Allocations Plan went to examination. CPRE spoke on 3 issues, including the Western Heights and Farthingloe application, approved by Dover's Planning Committee, even though it is within the AONB.



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## Maidstone

Maidstone Borough Council has now issued its Draft Local Plan for consultation. This follows the "rescheduling" in November 2012 of its original draft. It now includes a housing target of 17,100 new dwellings by 2031. The 17,100 number comes as a result of a Strategic Housing Market Assessment which we see as almost meaningless in this respect. This represents a very large increase on the current number of actual current dwellings in the whole of the Borough including the town – a ridiculous number. There is no explanation on the background to this, or why Maidstone should have a requirement for 60% more than the current build rate. We have proposed alternatives. In the meantime Maidstone Borough has come under ferocious attack from developers. Applications for at least 2000 dwellings have been put forward in the last few months. The village of Marden has already had over 270 houses approved with several hundred more in the pipeline effectively destroying a long-settled community.



We have a real problem at the M20 junction 7. It is already the site of a new hospital development, and approval has now been given for an extended medical campus around its area. Land Securities have now put in an application for a major out-of-town shopping centre on the current Notcutts site, with very large buildings claimed to be for Waitrose and Debenhams, plus an array of somewhat smaller shops, together with large car parking areas.

We are pleased that the application at M20 junction 8 for a very large sand extraction operation to be followed by erecting two major factory and warehouse buildings has been refused. However, there is to be an appeal.

There are now seven solar farms proposed in the borough, although only one has been approved and the other six are screening applications.

There are also still a flow of applications for new or enlarged gypsy sites.

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## Sevenoaks

Oil and gas extraction by fracking is in the news and we are very concerned about the implications if the Sevenoaks area is targeted. Geological surveys published by DECC have identified suitable sites in the district, but Michael Fallon, our MP and coincidentally Energy Minister, has said it is 'unlikely' that fracking will take place in his constituency.



The fracking process requires very large amounts of water and – present conditions apart – we have barely enough to meet ordinary household needs. Then there is the huge impact of lorry movements in the countryside and the risk that our high-quality groundwater aquifers could be contaminated.

Another matter of concern is the increasing number of applications for solar farms. Of course we are not opposed to renewables but the scale of some potential sites poses a serious threat to our exceptional landscape. One such site under consideration covers 145 hectares - about 360 acres!

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## Shepway

The hearing for Lydd Airport has now taken place; the RSPB was jointly involved. We now await the result.

Very unusually the wind mast (rather than turbine) at Snave was rejected by SDC but an appeal has already been lodged. A decision on the Sellindge (Harring Lane) six wind turbine application is also awaited. A meeting has taken place in February with Roger Helmer (Freedom Assoc. etc.) about the ineffectual Wind Turbines on Romney Marsh.

Flooding on Romney Marsh has called into question the Environment Agency's decision to stop dredging of waterways in 1999. Silting has definitely impeded the drainage system. Pumping stations and equipment are up to 50 years old. CPRE will take an active role in trying to obtain some worthwhile improvement and a series of meetings with interested parties are taking place.

A possible conveyor belt system has been proposed for shifting shingle from Jury's Gap to build up the bund round Dungeness Power Station. This will replace a substantial number of lorry loads from October to May.

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## Swale

Swale Borough Council's Draft Local Plan has been returned after yet another consultation period. CPRE Protect Kent had responded to the previous round by arguing that lower housing and employment targets would not only be more deliverable but also less damaging to the environment. These lowered targets were justified by the results of a statistical model developed by the Swale Branch.

However, at the December meeting of the Local Development Framework Panel, Swale Borough Council decided to retain the original housing target of 540 houses a year, or 10,800 over the twenty year period.

There was one success. The old policy of countryside settlement gaps had been dropped from the draft Plan. CPRE (along with other parties) argued for its reinstatement as a means to prevent the unplanned spread of development into rural areas. The Planning Officers at the December meeting recommended that it should not be reinstated as the NPPF did not encourage it. However, the members did not follow this recommendation and resolved to reinstate this policy.

Swale is about to embark on another round of consultations about Gypsy and Traveller sites. Planning Officers at present seem to be recommending planning permission for all gypsy sites, many of which are unsuitable.



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## Tonbridge and Malling

Thriftwood Holiday park in Stansted has applied to increase the number of static holiday caravans from 30 to 66 at the expense of mobile or touring pitches. The site is within the Green Belt and the committee will be opposing the application as inappropriate.

The Tonbridge and Malling committee are working closely with Tunbridge Wells

as regards a large solar farm application on Green Belt at Five Oak Green, which may adversely impact and aggravate existing flooding problems in the T&MBC area.

At the request of the Kent Downs AONB Unit, the committee has considered suitable sites for the under-grounding of electricity cables and is proposing a row of poles along the Kemsing Road, in parallel with The Pilgrim's Way.

The problem of overnight HGV parking and lack of facilities in the District with its attendant mess and litter problem is worsening and will be escalated to Branch for possible campaign action.

## Tunbridge Wells

The Tunbridge Wells Core Strategy requires affordable housing on "exceptions sites" in the rural area to be permitted only if it will remain so in perpetuity. The committee is therefore concerned that the Secretary of State has recently allowed, on appeal, an affordable housing scheme in the AONB and the Green Belt in Pembury parish where the tenants will have a right to buy. CPRE had objected.

In addition, two applications to vary the S106 agreements on affordable housing in Goudhurst so as to allow a mortgagee exemption clause have been approved by the Borough Council, enabling the Housing Association to use the housing as collateral for borrowing without the encumbrance of having to remain affordable and for local needs in perpetuity in the event of the Housing Association failing financially. CPRE had objected.

Solar – there are a myriad of applications being submitted for substantial solar farms on agricultural land around Paddock Wood, Capel and Five Oak Green.

Borough Councillors have approved an outline application for 550 dwellings and a primary school at Knights Park off the North Farm estate. CPRE had argued that this development on "rural fringe" greenfield land was premature and that planned improvements to the Longfield Road and the proposed dualling of the A21 needed to be implemented first if traffic chaos was not to ensue.

However, the permission granted for this site should help the Borough Council to demonstrate a sufficient 5 year housing site supply as required by the Government, making it easier for the Council to resist pressure for unplanned development elsewhere in the Borough.

Blue Boys, Kippings Cross – the committee has objected to the proposed demolition of the old coaching inn at this prominent site beside the A21 in the AONB and its replacement by a drive-through McDonald's restaurant whose design would be more appropriate to an industrial estate.

The Tunbridge Wells Committee urgently needs volunteers to help cover the Paddock Wood, Hawkhurst and Pembury areas. If you can help, please contact the office at Charing.



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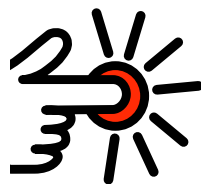
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## Ebbsfleet Announcement and the growth of Garden Cities

George Osborne announced that Ebbsfleet is to become the first 'garden city' to be built under the new planning regime. Development at Ebbsfleet has been a long time coming, with planning permission for over 6,000 houses given in 2007. Since that time, just over 100 houses have been built, so we welcome the fact that this announcement should kick-start development and get houses built in the Eastern Quarry.

It's excellent that Government is committed to getting houses built in this area. However, we do still want to see greater detail about exactly where the houses will go, and what type of development it will be. We will be working within the planning system to ensure that when development takes place it is as sustainable as possible and built to a high standard.

Hot on the heels of the Ebbsfleet announcement, Nick Clegg announced that Government would be looking for a further three garden cities to be built in the UK. They are asking for councils to submit plans for 'locally-led' developments which the public are supportive of. I can't imagine they'll find many sites where that's the case in Kent—although there may be a large airfield up for sale in the not too distant future!

## Manston on its knees

The airport seems to have finally fallen to its economic inevitability. It was losing around £10,000 per day, and had been for quite some time. Even with the introduction of KLM running regular flights to Schiphol, it simply did not manage to attract the users it required to make it a viable business proposition. We are now waiting for the result of the staff consultation to be published; Manston may be finished as an airport. We will be extremely interested to see what proposals emerge for using the land in the future!



## Boles makes Green Belt pledge

In March Nick Boles, the UK's Planning Minister, wrote to the head of the Planning Inspectorate, Sir Michael Pitt, to clarify the Government's Green Belt policy and Local Plan examinations as a result of the Reigate Local Plan examination in Surrey. He explained that it must always be transparently clear that any decision to change Green Belt boundaries must be made by the local authority rather than imposed on them by a planning Inspector. Our Senior Planner, Brian Lloyd, used this letter during the recent reconvened Gravesham Local Plan examination arguing that because the Inspector had told the Council that they needed to increase their housing target, the decision to instigate a Green Belt review had been forced upon them and should, therefore, not be included in the final Plan. We await the outcome of the examination.

by Jamie Weir



Leeds Castle, one of Kent's most important heritage buildings

**AT CPRE Protect Kent's most recent AGM, we were lucky enough to hear a new poem written by our President Graham Clarke.**

**We are proud to present two extracts from his poem, 'Deeds of Leeds', for your pleasure and would like to thank Graham for his entertaining performance of the poem.**

# Deeds of Leeds

*A gloriously brief history of Leeds Castle in Kent.*

Presented in poetic form by a green and pleasant Englishman of considerable gorm.

## 856 AD

He was a Saxon King of Kent, you may already know  
A fairly good one too 'tis said as such fellows go  
He was the fourth king of that name, our Kentish Kingdom had  
The first of them was pretty good, the others not too bad  
Below the Downs near Lenham, the King had pitched his camp  
A number of his men complained "this ground is bloomin' damp"  
One chap bashed a tent peg in, heard a splash and then  
Suddenly discovered he'd found the River Len  
"Crikey Boss" said he, "Look at what I've found  
Lots and lots of water springing out the ground"  
This welcome little rivulet grew before their eyes  
By (the) time it got to Harrietsham, was quite a decent size  
Flowing on then westward by a village on a hill  
There were hollows in the land which the stream did fill  
The undulations of the place, so did thereby make  
Two handy little islands amid a handsome lake  
Ethelbert was a clever King a really kingly chap  
'Twas he and Leed his minister put Leeds upon the map

## 1086 AD

Hearing of such great reports, no wonder William sent  
His Doomsday chaps and tax inspectors down to look at Kent  
William chopped up Kent in parcels, told his barons "Build some castles"  
There was this Bishop Odo made the Earl of Kent  
And more than thirty busy years in charge of Kent he spent  
And with his high authority and quite within his rights  
Dished out bits of countryside, to Barons, Lords and Knights  
Bishop of Bayeux he'd been and had the self same mother  
As William One the Conqueror so was the King's half brother  
Recall that Bayeux Tapestry with all those curious creatures?  
No big surprise amongst the crowds Odo also features  
Odo, and we don't know why, fell out with the King  
Was shoved off into exile with hardly anything  
There was a chap de Crevecour, a Frenchman as you've guessed  
And amongst that dodgy bunch he may have been the best

© Graham Clarke 2013

From the forthcoming book "Poetic Droppings of the White Horse"



## contact us

We always love to hear from our members, so please feel free to drop us a line and tell us what's happening in your part of the County! We are especially eager to hear from anyone who would like to volunteer as a district committee member. If you want to help us to keep Kent beautiful, then get in touch with us at [info@protectkent.org.uk](mailto:info@protectkent.org.uk) or give the office a call on 01233 714540

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## 400 CLUB



Here are the winners since the Autumn/Winter edition of Kent Voice:

### October 13

Mr P Harvey	£40.00	(178)
Mrs G Collins	£30.00	(109)
Mr N Britten	£25.00	(5)
Mrs D Waite	£15.00	(252)
Mr P Stevens	£15.00	(142)
Mrs J Drew	£15.00	(189)

### November 13

Mr A Thorpe	£40.00	(100)
Mr J Osborne	£30.00	(50)
Mrs J Clabburn	£25.00	(25)
Rev'd P Fenton	£15.00	(20)
Mrs P Polloc	£15.00	(15)

### December 13

Mr M Longmore	£200.00	(253)
Mr P Mattocks	£50.00	(113)
Mr C Daniel	£30.00	(297)
Mrs M Russ	£25.00	(285)

### January 14

Mr O'Neil	£40.00	(198)
Mr E Sweeney	£30.00	(251)
Mr L Wallace	£25.00	(267)
Mr C Daniel	£15.00	(64)
Mrs P Pollock	£15.00	(215)
Mr C Daniel	£15.00	(66)

### Feb 14

Mr M Loveday	£40.00	(169)
Mr & Mrs Mercy	£30.00	(184)
Mrs P Pollock	£25.00	(220)
Mr R Champion	£15.00	(41)
Miss M Butcher	£15.00	(31)
Mr L Holt	£15.00	(123)

### March 14

Mrs S Dunn	£40.00	(79)
Mr N Pearson	£30.00	(217)
Ms J Barton	£25.00	(5)
Mr N Britten	£15.00	(22)
Mr & Mrs Mercy	£15.00	(186)
Mr M Loveday	£15.00	(163)

The aim of the club is to raise money for our general fund. It returns 50% of the takings to members as prize money.

A new Club starts in January and welcomes new members. Each share costs £12, and there is no limit to the number of shares you may purchase. The initial share allocation is 400. We will write to existing members nearer the time but if you don't already subscribe and you would like to join please contact the office and we will send you an application form.

# Do you care about our countryside? Well, do you?

*Let's imagine for a moment...*

*what would the world be like without people like us, who care about our beautiful, tranquil natural environments?*



Jamie Weir

**What do you think it would be like?** Would we still have any, or would our desire to constantly expand mean that we were down to the last few remaining green spaces; small clumps of greenery to break up the urban jungle? Would every landscape have turned into a sea of concrete, replete with a variety of different houses, factories, office blocks, roads and general development? What would become of all the natural flora and fauna, of all of the wildlife that used to inhabit these areas?

It's quite a scary vision, but sadly, that is slowly what our nation is being reduced to. The demand that we "build, build, build" to shore up economic growth and "provide jobs" seems to be the only driver for many of our decision makers. The problem is that it is all patently unsustainable. There really is only a finite amount of land, and there really are only a finite amount of natural resources. Kent has been afflicted more than most; we have a population density which is double the national average. Currently we have 'sufficient' water resources as long as we get enough rain each year, but the constant pressure to develop is making it more and more difficult for water companies to guarantee supply during dry spells. Of course, these water companies have a statutory obligation to supply water, so they are never heard complaining about development, but the reality is that if building continues at the same rate it has, we will eventually reach a tipping point where they physically do not have the water available.

These issues will only get worse in the coming years unless action is taken to protect our countryside from this rampant development. The NPPF, after two years, seems to have made all of these development troubles worse. It was written with an emphasis on economic growth, but has had far bigger consequences for the countryside. It seems that housing numbers are on the rise in Maidstone, Canterbury and elsewhere, AONBs are now fair game for housing at Western Heights and Farthingloe, and even the Green Belt may be revised in Gravesham under the new planning regime.

If you do care about our countryside, and if you don't want to see the barren wasteland which I asked you to imagine, then CPRE Protect Kent needs you to take action. **We need you to sign our countryside charter, email your MP and become one of our members.** If you care (and I know you will), then make sure you're helping CPRE Protect Kent to ensure that our precious and unique county stays as beautiful and productive as it has always been...



**Edited by Jamie Weir.** Protect Kent (the Kent Branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England) is a company limited by guarantee registered in England, number 04335730, registered charity number 1092012. CPRE Protect Kent, Queens Head House, Ashford Rd., Charing, Ashford, Kent TN27 0AD.  
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