

**Dark skies support in Surrey**

The Neighbourhood Planning group of West Horsley in Surrey has included their local CPRE Night Blight maps as evidence for a dark sky policy in their pre-submission plan. With the policy supported by 96% of the village at the first public consultation, it is likely to feature in the final adopted Neighbourhood Plan. The relevant policy states that: "All development proposals and significant planning applications should be designed to minimise the occurrence of light pollution. The Parish Council will expect such schemes to employ energy-efficient forms of lighting that also reduce light scatter and comply with the current guidelines established for rural areas by the Institute of Lighting Engineers (IOLE)."

**Delamere Forest defended**

CPRE Cheshire recently helped convince the Cheshire West and Chester planning committee to refuse planning permission for the construction of 67 holiday cabins with associated infrastructure and two car parking spaces. The branch's objection noted that the development would restrict public access to the forest, and constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

Manley parish councillor Nigel Gilding, from campaign group Communities Against Delamere's Destruction, had said the plan represented "the start of the erosion of Delamere Forest" and questioned whether local benefits would be "commensurate with this massive impact on the forest and the environment."

**Waitrose for Wiltshire**

Customers at Waitrose in Melksham were recently invited to support CPRE Wiltshire using the store's Community Matters green disk preference system. As a result, the store's Lucy Allsworth presented Mike Napper of CPRE Wiltshire with a cheque for £250.

# stepbystep

## Guide to good campaigning

### Protecting landscapes in Neighbourhood Plans

**Understanding and communicating what makes your local landscape special, and reflecting that understanding in a Neighbourhood Plan, can help ensure that future change is in harmony with landscape character. For that reason, CPRE has produced guidance intended to help community groups develop strong landscape policies in their Neighbourhood Plans, to influence future development decisions that would affect their local area.**

Producing a Neighbourhood Plan can help protect and enhance valued local landscapes for future uses and promote landscape related policies and environmental initiatives. Including landscape in Neighbourhood Plans provides an opportunity to identify what makes the place where you live unique, and to ensure that its special qualities and distinctive characteristics are retained.

#### **1 Assess landscape character**

The stronger the evidence base behind your Neighbourhood Plan, the more influence it will have. That's why understanding landscape character matters; it's a recognised and objective way of describing an area's sense of place, and of protecting it for the future. National Character Areas (NCA), produced by Natural England, divide the country into 159 geographically specific and unique NCAs. Each of these areas have a detailed NCA descriptive profile, which forms a useful starting point for understanding landscape in your area.

The Parish Council of Cuckfield in Sussex commissioned a Landscape Character Assessment (LCA) to inform the development of their Neighbourhood Plan, which was adopted in 2014. The LCA report divides the landscape into 33 areas of specific landscape character and considers them against a range of criteria that makes each area unique. The landscape value, sensitivity and capacity of each area are then summarised.

#### **2 Retain strategic gaps**

Some Neighbourhood Plan policies focus on the retention of strategic gaps to maintain local landscape character. For example, Cringleford's Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2014), has a policy stating that:

"A defined, continuous green landscaped corridor of 145m depth from the edge of the carrieway of the A47 will be provided to maintain the landscape setting of the village, maintain the existing wildlife corridor, mitigate traffic noise (Landscaped Protection Zone) and retain a key strategic gap at the edge of new development. In most cases it is envisaged that this will be a protected strip planted with trees but with pedestrian access. No new built development will be allowed within the zone unless the proposers can demonstrate that it will enhance the landscape and not have an adverse impact on the Strategic Gap between Cringleford and Hethersett, wildlife and buffering traffic noise. The visual impact of new development when viewed from approaching main roads and the surrounding countryside should be minimised by the use of site appropriate landscape bunding, screening

and mature tree planting. New and existing protected areas will require an effective management regime to enhance biodiversity."

#### **3 Maintain the setting of designated landscapes**

Many Neighbourhood Plans include policies to continue the current protection provided by national landscape policies, such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty, as well as conservation designations. Part of the area of the parish of Kidford's Neighbourhood Plan is adjacent to the South Downs National Park, and because light pollution, noise and development could have a harmful impact on the National Park, their plan includes a policy stating that:

"Development (including rural exception sites) within land adjoining the South Downs National Park that contributes to the setting of the Park will only be permitted where it enhances and does not detract from the visual qualities and essential characteristics of the National Park, and in particular should not adversely affect the views into and out of the Park by virtue of its location or design."

#### **4 Protect landscape features**

If you have particular countryside features such as hedgerows or dry stone walls in your area then you may want to include a specific policy in your Neighbourhood Plan. For example, Wigginton Hopwas & Comberford Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2016) includes a policy which states:

"Existing trees and hedges are an integral part of the



Neighbourhood Plans can help maintain the distinctive character and valued local landscapes of your village.

character of the Neighbourhood Plan area and shall be retained wherever possible. Where removal is proposed due consideration shall be made of the Hedgerows Regulations, and in particular the hedges historic potential, and the Central Rivers Initiative, and where removal is justified the impact of removal shall be mitigated against by the provision of additional appropriate planting.”

## 5 Defend dark skies

You can also include a policy to protect any dark skies in your Neighbourhood Plan area from new sources of light pollution. CPRE has created an interactive map of Britain's night skies, including detailed maps for English counties, districts, National Parks, AONBs and National Character Areas. The maps are based on satellite data captured throughout September 2015 and can be accessed at [nightblight.cpre.org.uk](http://nightblight.cpre.org.uk). Brighstone Parish Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2016) included a specific policy on light pollution: “There will be a presumption against proposals that detrimentally affect the tranquillity of the area including through unnecessary lighting that results in the loss of night time dark skies or through the

generation of unnecessary noise. The plan refers to the fact that CPRE tranquillity mapping shows Brighstone Parish as being in one of the most tranquil areas on the Isle of Wight particularly in relation to a lack of light pollution and the ability to see dark night skies. This is a valuable asset that is important for wildlife, benefits the health and wellbeing of residents and tourists and in turn is of benefit to the Island's rural economy. In the Residents Survey 718 people responded to a question about having more street lighting and 71.2% of people disagreed or strongly disagreed with this.”

## 6 Designate a Local Green Space

In 2012, the Government introduced a Local Green Space (LGS) designation in the NPPF. This enables local communities, through Local and Neighbourhood Plans, to be able to identify for special protection areas of particular importance to them. Paragraph 76 of the NPPF states that: “By designating land as Local Green Space local communities will be able to rule out new development other than in very special circumstances. Identifying land as LGS should therefore be consistent with the local planning

of sustainable development and complement investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services.” In other words, the best way to protect a locally important piece of open land through the designation is to ensure that local development needs may be met through the identification of appropriate alternative development sites in the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Tatenhill and Rangemore Neighbourhood Plan (adopted 2016) includes a policy which designates several Local Green Spaces, including the Rangemore Recreation Ground and Bowling Green and land to the south of the church and the school. The policy states that “In considering the designation of the Local Green Spaces the community has been mindful of protecting key pieces of land that are either used for recreation or have been identified as being important to the setting and character of the conservation area.” The Open Spaces Society has also produced detailed guidance on how to designate Local Green Space in a Neighbourhood Plan. You can view the guidance at <http://www.oss.org.uk/>

**Find out more:** Read *What's Special to You: Landscape Issues in Your Neighbourhood Plan* at [www.cpre.org.uk/resources](http://www.cpre.org.uk/resources)

## Current issues

### Fighting for South Somerset

Earlier in 2017, CPRE South Somerset volunteers attended several days of the public inquiry into a proposal to build 220 houses, outside the preferred direction of the Local Plan, in the Shudrick Valley, near Ilminster. In the meantime, an outline application for 450 houses at Canal Way, on the other side of Ilminster, was also submitted. If both had gone ahead, Ilminster would have been swamped by new housing - far in excess of that required by the Local Plan. The Inspector has now dismissed the Shudrick Valley Appeal, but if the Canal Way scheme is allowed, it would still deliver more houses than were specified for Ilminster in the Local Plan.

The district group also added their voice to the groundswell of protest objecting to a proposal for “recontouring” of agricultural land at Maperton Ridge. This would have had a devastating impact on local lanes and on tranquillity as plans involved 36 HGV movements a day, six days a week for 18 months. The lorries would be bringing in hardcore, rubble and subsoil waste to improve the slope gradient of an agricultural field. Thankfully, Somerset County Council refused permission as the proposal was contrary to their Waste Core Strategy and there was not enough evidence that the waste could not be used in a more sustainable way, or that there were significant benefits to agriculture. In CPRE South Somerset's opinion, this proposal could have effectively amounted to a new landfill site in the countryside and campaigners are pleased that good planning and local campaigning have prevented it becoming a reality.