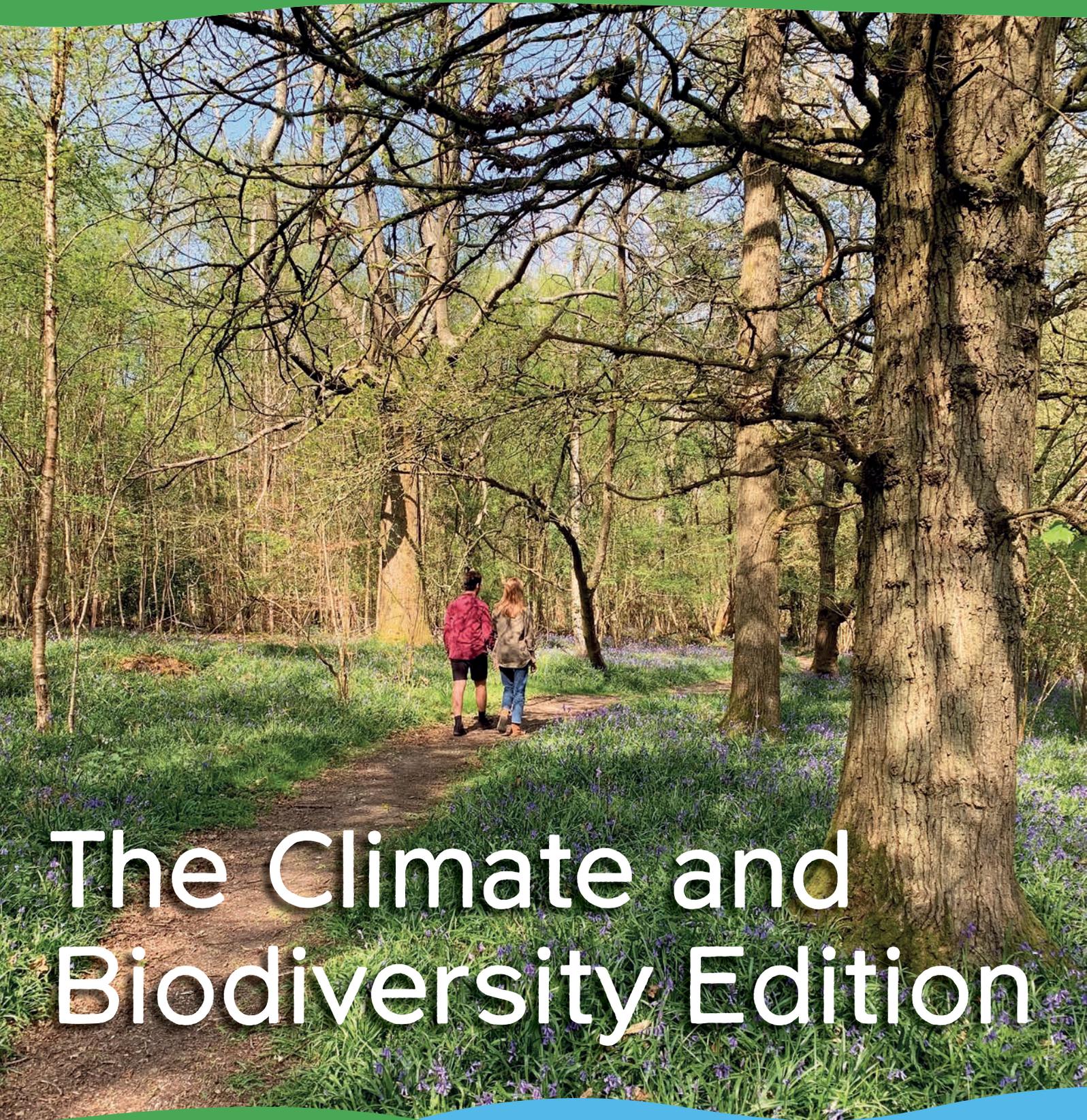


SURREY VOICE

Magazine of the Surrey Campaign to Protect Rural England | Spring 2022



The Climate and Biodiversity Edition



The countryside charity
Surrey

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FROM THE CHAIR

The theme of this edition of Surrey Voice is Climate Change and reaching Net Zero by 2050. My daughter made the documentary ‘Rebellion’ and every time I watch the film (now on Netflix) I am reminded of the extraordinary events it records leading to Parliament declaring a Climate Emergency in 2019. That summer councils across the country fell over themselves to similarly declare an emergency. Followed in November by the Government’s moratorium on fracking – another watershed moment for this populous and splendid small island.

As I write, Crispin Truman, CEO of CPRE, is tweeting: “We’re not going to hit net zero by accident. We need to plan for it.” CPRE’s research reveals that while the great majority of councils have declared a Climate Emergency they lack the strategy to do anything about it. I attended the launch of Surrey’s Greener Future Climate Change Delivery Plan at Surrey University last autumn. Surrey intends to play its part in reducing our dependency on fossil fuels and drastically cutting emissions of greenhouse gases, which is commendable. However, the National Planning Policy Framework should require local planning authorities to meet legally binding targets in their Local Plans. We need to be more ambitious in our development plans that will effect what, where and how we build over the next twenty five years, if we are to address the climate and ecological emergency.

CPRE Surrey has supported the climate hub – Zero Carbon in Guildford, and we are talking to Surrey’s Climate Commission headed up by Richard Essex and have joined the outreach working group. Having beefed up our social media capability we are reaching beyond our traditional audience. If we are going to make the necessary lifestyle changes, respect nature and create a sustainable future, we need to work together and keep the pressure on those in positions of power.

In replying to the Issues and Options Stage of the Surrey Waste and Minerals Plan I left the detail to experienced planner Gillian Hein. I found myself asking why the legally binding targets to reach Net Zero by 2050 weren’t at the heart of the consultation. How does extracting sand and gravel to make concrete (responsible globally for 8% of all carbon dioxide emissions) from Whitehall Farm and Milton Park Farm in Virginia Water and Egham make sense? These sites should be abandoned not safeguarded. Equally to allow further oil extraction at Horse Hill is perverse for a council that says it is committed to finding alternatives to fossil fuels. The Court of Appeal, in Sarah Finch’s case, may have held that Surrey was not bound to consider the subsequent emissions of burning the refined oil when granting permission, but that merely proves that the policy is out of date. Unless and until we make the necessary changes, starting with the Government’s National Planning Policy, we are going to continue to fail to meet the momentous challenges that await us.

DEFRA’s consultation on the government’s response to the National Parks and AONBs review closed earlier this month. I supported the recommendations to make AONBs statutory consultees on planning, to increase their budgets and ability to manage our nationally protected landscapes in the interests of Nature Recovery and delivering the new Environmental Land Management Schemes (ELMS). I hope to continue to represent CPRE Surrey on the Surrey Hills Board after I step down as CPRE Surrey’s chair later this year. I will have completed six years, so time to hand on to someone who can inspire and attract new members and volunteers. I will, of course, always remain an active member of CPRE the countryside charity.

Kristina Kenworthy, Chair CPRE Surrey

Clandon Wood Nature Reserve

CPRE Surrey has made a donation of £800 in memory of Max Rosenberg who was a trustee of CPRE Surrey, Chair of the Mole Valley District Committee and leading light in the Leith Hill Action Group (LHAG). When the Forestry Commission decided not to renew the lease of the land at Leith Hill to Europa Oil the long battle was finally over. On closing down LHAG Alan Hustings kindly gave the residual funds to CPRE Surrey. So it seems fitting and right for us to have raised money in Max’s memory and to be handing it over to Simon Ferrar, founder of Clandon Wood Natural Burial Ground, who thanked us for the donation and said “We will be purchasing woodland-edge trees and shrubs towards the end of 2022 which will be planted along the existing treeline close to Max’s grave”.

Kristina Kenworthy with Simon Ferrar (photo taken by Cherry He, Volunteer at Clandon Wood)



MESSAGE FROM OUR EDITOR

When Kristina asked me to edit the 2022 edition of Surrey Voice my excitement was touched with a sense of trepidation – that we could produce a magazine worthy of our knowledgeable and socially and environmentally conscious members and supporters. I hope we have succeeded and you find this edition both informs and inspires you in equal measure.

The focus for this edition is on climate change and biodiversity and preserving it for future generations. Kristina, our Chair, leads the way with her article ‘Net Zero by 2050?’. Councils such as our own made a very promising start with Surrey County Council declaring a Climate Emergency in July 2019 but as Kristina points out in her article, the lack of action that has followed at a local level (and more critically nationally) to map out a clear sustainable path to hitting this 2050 target has been woefully inadequate. My own article builds upon this, calling for the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to require all Local Plans to set out how councils will reach net zero and meet their UK Climate Change Act targets for emissions reductions.

The shift to greater renewable energy will not come without significant trade-offs. Charlotte Huguet, new to CPRE Surrey, eloquently presents in her article a balanced case for solar farms, acknowledging the impact on rural communities.

It’s easy to feel powerless when faced with the enormity of climate change and biodiversity decline but as Philip Partridge sets out in his highly personal piece on hedgerows, there is plenty that we can do to contribute in our own small way to make our local communities greener and more environmentally resilient.

This issue also champions CPRE Surrey’s core commitment, as set out in our manifesto to ‘protect all of our precious countryside and open spaces, our Green Belt, Local Green Spaces and Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty from inappropriate development, urban sprawl and noise pollution, so that our county remains attractive and tranquil for future generations’. As seen in our ‘Surrey



Planning Spotlight’ our charity has had a successful year on that front – working to secure the rejection of many inappropriate and environmentally damaging Green Belt development proposals in our county. We also take the opportunity in this edition to highlight some worrying developments such as the damage being done by ‘Byways Open to All Traffic’ and the ongoing saga of Dunsfold Park Aerodrome Site. Updates on the different borough council Local Plans under consideration and the latest on the very welcome Surrey AONB boundary extension review are also provided.

I hope you enjoy reading this magazine as much as I have enjoyed working with our contributors on it. All being well, by the time you read this edition I will have become a parent to my first child. CPRE Surrey’s commitment to doing all it can to ensure our beautiful county remains attractive and tranquil for future generations, has never been more important to me as it is now.

Alivia Kratke, CPRE Surrey Trustee

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Net Zero by 2050?

By Kristina Kenworthy

The Government has pledged that this country will reach Net Zero by 2050. This was in order to deliver on the UK's commitments made when signing up to the Paris Agreement in 2015. Net Zero basically means that the volume of harmful emissions that we release will equal those that we remove from the atmosphere. The release of greenhouse gases through human activity, and combustion of fossil fuels in particular, has led to global warming and climate change with increasingly devastating consequences for life on the planet.

We were the first country in the world to enact legally binding carbon budgets in the Climate Change Act 2008, and in 2019 we upped our commitment from 80% reductions to 100% or Net Zero by 2050. The Climate Change Commission (CCC) is the statutory body that advises the government on how to tackle climate change and has warned that we are not on track to meet our carbon budget targets by 2050. The sense of urgency has been ramped up by the war in Ukraine, the energy crisis, soaring costs of living and by news of the catastrophic collapse in biodiversity. The Natural History Museum revealed in 2021 that almost half of Britain's biodiversity had been lost since the beginning of the industrial revolution, making us the worst country of any in Western Europe.

In May 2019, Parliament declared a Climate Emergency and in doing so accepted one of Extinction Rebellion's key demands, following mass civil disobedience, which had brought central London to a complete standstill over that Easter weekend. Remember the pink boat 'moored' in Oxford Circus and a car-free Waterloo Bridge populated by people and plants? Police cells were filled with over 1,000 people from all walks of life arrested for peacefully protesting against the Government's inaction following the latest UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Report. Dozens of cities and councils across the country quickly followed suit by declaring a **Climate Emergency** including Surrey County Council, an early adopter, in July of 2019.

Surrey's Climate Change Strategy 'A Greener Future for Surrey' states: *The public declaration of a net zero carbon target commits all local authorities in Surrey*



to tackling climate change across every aspect of our service provision and estate, in conjunction with action by Surrey residents, businesses and partners. This is not only the right thing to tackle the climate emergency for future generations, but also a significant opportunity to increase our energy efficiency, improve our resilience and deliver a greener, healthier society.

County Councillor Marisa Heath is the Cabinet Member for Environment and Climate Change Decisions with responsibility for the delivery plan setting out the necessary actions to achieve Net Zero in Surrey by 2050.

While our national and local politicians are making all the right noises, it may already be too little too late. In January Baroness Brown, Chair of the CCCs Adaption Committee said about the Government's Climate Change Risk Assessment that: *"...agreeing on the risks is one thing – taking action to address them is another. Building resilience to a cocktail of climate impacts facing our country, including flooding, drought, heat exposure and extreme weather events, is a mammoth task and we're falling well behind. We look forward to seeing the Government's action plan to shift the dial and deliver a well-adapted UK."*

And just as the Government was challenged in the Courts over its failure to tackle air pollution and exceeding EU legal limits, Client Earth and the Good Law Project have a hearing date for a new judicial review. This time for breaching our own legal obligations under the Climate Change Act to reduce emissions enough to meet our carbon budgets or Net Zero by 2050.

The protests over the lack of action will continue so long as the goal of achieving net zero slips further from our grasp. At the time of writing this article, António Guterres Secretary General of the UN tweeted: *"Climate activists are sometimes depicted as dangerous radicals. But the truly dangerous radicals are the countries that are increasing the production of fossil fuels. Investing in new fossil fuels infrastructure is moral and economic madness."*

LEFT and ABOVE: Extinction Rebellion Protests April 2019



Surrey Hills review to expand its Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty protections

By Jeremy Saunders, CPRE volunteer coordinator

A review is underway by Natural England to extend the Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). This review will consider the case for adding more land to be covered by this special designation.

The Surrey Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is one of 46 protected landscapes across the UK and was first designated in 1958. It currently covers an area of just over 42,000 hectares and adjoins the Kent Downs AONB in the North, and the South Downs National Park in the South. It includes rare habitat such as heathland, chalk grassland and ancient woodland, as well as several areas designated as SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest). An extension to the AONB would help preserve the natural beauty of the area and protect the environment and rural heritage.

At the same time, other areas being considered for designation under this national review include a new Yorkshire Wolds AONB, a new Cheshire Sandstone Ridge AONB and an extension to the Chilterns AONB.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are designated and protected under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000. Their purpose is to conserve and enhance the natural beauty of the areas they cover. All such Areas must prepare and publish a Management Plan, which is reviewed every five years. Surrey CPRE's chair, Kristina Kenworthy, is a member of the Surrey Hills AONB Board.

The 2000 Act also places additional responsibilities on local authorities and the planning system. Government planning rules – the National Planning Policy Framework – determines that these Areas and their Management Plans must be a material consideration in the planning system and all public bodies down to parish council level must consider the nationally protected status given to Areas in any land use related decisions.

In practice, this means that planning permission for major development within an Area should be generally refused and where it is allowed, the presumption in favour of sustainable development does not override the importance to conserve and enhance the scenic beauty of the area.

By the deadline of 31st January 2022, more than 2,100 submissions were received from individuals and groups across Surrey, including a large number of Surrey CPRE members. This far exceeded expectations by ten-fold, and illustrates how engaged



Picture of Newlands Corner, already Surrey AONB

the public are with the process and passionate about the cherished Surrey Hills.

Some of the areas with the most responses included Betchingley, Godstone, Oxted and Limpsfield (405 responses); Chelsham, Biggin Hill & Woldingham (260); Mickleham, Gatton Park (237); Shalford and Godalming (222); Dunsfold (210); Chaldon & Kenley (146); Tongham & Wood Street (142) and Clandon (135).

The next phase, is currently being conducted by Natural England's Landscape Consultants, and involves evaluating all the evidence submitted, as well as site assessments to gather more information out in the field, in the various evaluation areas. This includes scenic quality, condition of landscape and the tranquillity of the area.

Just because an area is already designated as an Area of Great Landscape Value in a Local Plan does not mean that it will necessarily be included in the boundary review. Some sites might be valued by local people and indeed provide fine views, special habitats and areas of tranquillity and natural beauty but they may be fragmented, in transition or simply lack sufficient distinction and scale to meet the high standard set for an outstanding and nationally important landscape. Natural England must also deem it to be 'desirable to designate'.

The next step is then to identify possible suitable detailed boundaries. This will lead to a formal statutory and public consultation on the proposed extension, which we expect to begin early next year.

This is a rare opportunity to add to and protect some of Surrey's most beautiful countryside and we would like to thank CPRE members and supporters for their constructive engagement in the process thus far.

Find out more at: <https://www.surrey-hills-aonb-boundary-review.org/>.

Are solar farms the solution to the climate emergency or a blight on our countryside?

By Charlotte Huguet, CPRE Surrey member

On our crowded island, difficult choices need to be made if we are going to achieve Net Zero by 2050. Should we be looking to use more solar energy (one of the safest sources of renewable energy) to meet this vital climate action pledge?

There are around 500 solar panel farms currently in operation in the UK with the construction of the largest farms – known as arrays – coming under increasing local opposition. A proposal to build the UK's largest solar farm (around 2,800 acres in size) with the potential to power over 172,000 homes on the Cambridgeshire-Suffolk border has faced strong criticism from Suffolk County Council, with Treasury Minister Lucy Frazer MP and former Health Secretary Matt Hancock MP coming out publicly to oppose the plans. The application is currently with the planning inspectorate for examination with the Secretary of State for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy expected to make a decision in Spring 2023.

Should we be changing the character of our rural landscapes irreversibly by relinquishing thousands of acres of arable land, used for food production and farming, to industrialised solar arrays when there are alternatives?

This is a complex question. Yes, there are downsides to constructing more solar farms – particularly the resulting local habitat disruption that comes from reducing farmland; but in light of the climate emergency, soaring energy costs contributing to the 'cost of living crisis', and the war in Ukraine, we clearly need to invest in more renewable energy fast.

Over the last decade, the price of solar electricity has fallen by 89% and with new innovations, energy output has increased by a third. Yet the government scheme to subsidise domestic solar panel installation has

almost entirely come to a halt, hence why it has become more financially viable to build large scale solar farms. They are often developed by international companies, meaning local economies don't financially benefit with profits going overseas. Notably the Norwegian Government is backing the proposed development by Norwegian energy giant Statkraft of two huge solar farms in Cornwall. CPRE Cornwall is campaigning against it, on a platform of Cornish farmland being kept for food and carbon capture not industrial-sized solar arrays blighting open countryside.

Unlike other renewable energy infrastructure, once the operational lifespan of a solar farms is up, they can be easily dismantled and the land returned to its former use. However, there is a fear that the land, after 25 years of accommodating solar panels will be classified as brownfield and could be developed further. Some recent guidance published by the BRE National Solar Centre has suggested that biodiversity gains from solar farms can be significant with only 25-40 percent of the surface covered by panels and over 95 percent of the site still accessible for plant growth and wildlife enhancements, such as allowing for the restoration of wild flower meadows, grasslands or hedgerows. Installing solar farms enables there to be a break in the normal cycle of intensive farming that otherwise can result in the long term degradation of soil and biodiversity.

Having said all of this and set out above a very mixed picture – whether solar energy is a good thing is not in question. CPRE Surrey's focus is on appropriate implementation.

As government policy clearly states, we should be turning to industrial and residential roofing; or condemned sites and other contaminated land for solar power, not productive farmland. According to the BRE

National Solar Centre, if the 250,000 hectares of south facing commercial roof space in the UK was used for solar energy, approximately 50 percent of the UK's electricity demand could be met. Currently less than 6 percent of UK solar power comes from commercial roof units compared with over half in Germany. The UK's many hundreds of capped landfill sites are also ideal, especially those with a grid connection for electricity generation from landfill gas. These sites could produce electricity during the day and gas at night. Surrey County Council recently shared plans to build a solar array on a closed landfill site to offset its own energy consumption. Other examples of optimal sites in the UK include a disused airfield in Wymeswold and contaminated mines in Cornwall.

Yet the site selection process remains a cause of real concern. There is a proposal for a solar farm at Gaywood in the Surrey Hills in an Area of Great Landscape Value (AGLV) that goes completely against government policy, as explained above. Next to the beautiful Staffhurst bluebell wood, developers hope to build a massive facility with 48,000 large black solar panels up to 3m off the ground, surrounded by high security fences. This wood is much loved by the local community and is an extremely popular beauty spot that not only is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, but is being considered as part of the upcoming Surrey Hills AONB boundary review.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Charlotte is currently working as a primary school teacher in London and loves escaping to the Surrey Hills on weekends.



"I am really interested in rural sustainable development and am planning to do a masters in sustainable development in Cornwall in September. Joining CPRE has given me a chance to learn about and contribute towards protecting the countryside. In my spare time I enjoy tending my garden and walking in the mountains."

If you have a friend or family member interested in learning more about the work of CPRE Surrey with a view to joining us as a member please ask them to contact our volunteer coordination lead Jeremy Saunders on jsaunders@cpresurrey.org.uk.

Despite repeated attempts to protect the Gaywood site by planting more trees, its hillside location still puts it at risk. This development would also seriously harm the surrounding environment. Construction traffic would create busy polluted roads, and there could be an uptick in flooding in an already high-risk area. This has caused a huge level of upset in the local community, with very few local residents consulted about the plans.

Local resident Penny Gibson explains: *"thousands of people come to walk around here and never more so than over the last 2 years with Covid, which I think clearly demonstrates the importance of natural beauty for the wellbeing of the community."*

Residents also believe the developers to be ignorant of the fact that the area has been classified as AGLV and seem to lack understanding of the complexities of creating a meadow there. The local community, who are strongly pro-renewables, are worried that there is a greater interest in profit and convenience than care for the local environment and community in the choice of this site.

Investing in solar energy to tackle climate change is extremely important, and so the government, planners, and developers must be careful to make sure it's done in the right way and in the right place to ensure they maintain public support for renewable energy. The Devon countryside serves as a painful reminder of where this can all go wrong; with many solar farms, some as big as 163 acres, destroying the rural landscape.

Hopefully here in Surrey we can work to strike the right balance between helping to prevent the climate crisis through championing greater use of solar energy while avoiding the irreversible industrialisation of our precious countryside.

Byways Open to All Traffic

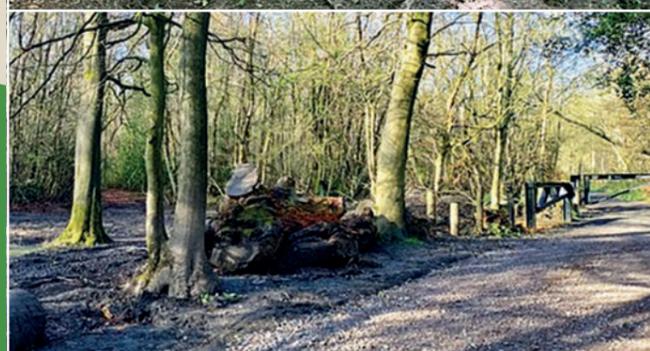
By Kristina Kenworthy

For some time now Sarah Billingham and others up on Ranmore Common have been attracting the attention of Surrey County Council, Mole Valley and the Surrey Hills AONB team in efforts to stop the damage and nuisance caused by 4x4 vehicles and convoys of trial bikes along Sheepwalk Lane – a Byway Open to All Traffic or BOAT. The deep ruts and potholes formed great wallows in the winter months making this ancient drovers' lane impassable for walkers, cyclists and horses and a misery for all those who care about conservation and peaceful enjoyment of the Surrey Hills.

It is not just the surface of the lane that is damaged but with it comes noise nuisance, fumes and antisocial behaviour in the adjacent woodland, including fly tipping and burning cars. In July last year, members of the Surrey Hills AONB Board were invited up to see for themselves the damage caused by these illegal activities. Heather Kerswell, Chair of the AONB Board, expressed on behalf of all, our shock at the damage to these ancient byways, with their historic landscape features and surrounding habitats.

The good news is that Surrey County Council after ten lean years have had their budget restored and are able to get back to maintaining Surrey's public rights of way. Over the last two years they have resurfaced 19 and have a further 4 BOATS to restore this year.

Sarah Billingham reported on the very recent resurfacing of Sheepwalk Lane saying: "During the time it was being repaired, approximately a month, all users apart from motorised vehicles still used it and I must say it was absolutely delightful. Horse riders came back, walkers, cyclists and even one young family on a tandem pulling



The Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme in the Surrey Hills is intended to fund Nature Recovery and was announced by DEFRA last summer to help landowners across England's National Parks and AONBs. Grants are made to farmers and land managers for one-off projects to improve the natural environment, cultural heritage and public access on their land.

Co-ordinated by the Surrey Hills AONB Board, of which CPRE Surrey is a member, the Farming in Protected Landscapes scheme is open to all farmers and land managers (including from the private, public and charity sector) within the AONB. Applications are open now and the scheme runs until March 2024. See Surrey Hills FiPL Fund: <https://www.surreyhills.org/surrey-hills-fi-pl-fund/>.

along a small child behind in a cart. There was no risk of fast vehicles coming along and so people were relaxed and enjoying this quieter end of Ranmore Common."

Following the reopening of the BOAT a minority of people continue to drive off road and wreak havoc in the woods. As Sarah says: "This is heart breaking as the Shere Estate has worked hard to protect its woodlands and it was Christine Meadows who manages this estate who organised for John Baker (from SCC) to do a site visit and see first-hand the problems."

While Surrey Police are aware of the anti-social behaviour policing a remote area in the dark and at weekends is well-nigh impossible. It is the landowner's responsibility to maintain its boundaries to stop illegal access. Shere Estates have shored up their defences along the lane with huge log piles and banks to deter even the heftiest of vehicles from entering the woods. But it is useless so long as Wotton Estate's woodland, a little further along, remains so accessible. The Surrey Countryside Estate team have an access agreement with the Wotton Estate and are aware that without sufficient fortifications the 4x4s will inevitably continue to enter and damage these bluebell woods. CPRE Surrey have been in discussion with Surrey County Council because this situation is, as Sarah says, madness and cannot be allowed to continue.

It is possible that an application for funding under a DEFRA scheme – Farming in a Protected Landscape (see box above) – by the landowner or the County Council might enable works to be carried out that will put a stop to these illegal incursions into the Wotton Estate once and for all.

Wolvens Lane, Coldharbour

This is a narrow single-track lane between ancient boundary banks and unsuitable for cars or wide carriages given the bends and few passing spaces. The road was closed while its surface was expensively repaired following misuse by some irresponsible motorised users, who also present a danger to walkers, cyclists and horse riders.

In September last year, the Local Committee Mole Valley approved publishing a Notice of Intention to make a Traffic Regulation Order for Byway Open to All Traffic (BOAT) No.526 Capel (D287) Wolvens Lane following a strong officer recommendation and after extensive public consultation, with nearly 500 responses. It remains to be seen if there will be a call for a public inquiry before making the closure to motorised vehicles permanent.

Under the current County Council policy, Traffic Regulation Orders (TROs) can only be made as a last resort in one of two circumstances: either where the BOAT is in poor condition and it is considered necessary to restrict traffic, coupled with a programme of repair (as was the case with Sheepwalk Lane); or where the BOAT is in reasonable condition but there is significant danger to users or to prevent significant damage to the route (Wolvens Lane). CPRE Surrey have corresponded with Surrey County Council and understand that they are currently reviewing their 2009 policy with regard to all of Surrey's BOATS. They expect to present a paper to Cabinet in the autumn.

Rob Fairbanks, Director of the Surrey Hills AONB said: "The damage to these historic routes and the surrounding environment is appalling and unacceptable. It is a problem that now affects visitors and residents across large areas of the Surrey Hills and so we applaud CPRE Surrey for taking this up with Surrey County Council."

In the government response published this year, to the 2019 'Landscapes Review: (National Parks and AONBs)' led by Julian Glover, the Rt. Hon Lord Benyon acknowledges that while most people use green lanes responsibly they are considering available options for protecting green lanes while maintaining most public and private access rights. Parliament would do well to consider a change in current legislation given the move towards healthier, greener transport choices and the importance of greater public access, awareness and enjoyment of the countryside.

Greenway – proposals for the provision of a high-quality walking, cycling and horse-riding network, spanning Surrey were put forward in June 2020 by the Surrey Hills AONB and Cycling UK. It has identified routes to run parallel to existing road corridors and integrate with rights of way. The Leith Hill Greenway running from Westhumble to Leith Hill includes the route of Wolvens Lane. The formation of Greenways seeks to upgrade existing routes to create a significant benefit to local networks and ensure traffic free connections between significant local landmarks.

Daniel Williams (Countryside Access Officer) quoted from Report to Local Committee, 29th September 2021.

Surrey Planning Spotlight

Planning application decisions

The last year has seen a number of significant planning decisions, with CPRE Surrey welcoming the step change we have seen with Planning Committees in Surrey becoming increasingly emboldened to refuse Green Belt development proposals where there are genuine and significant planning concerns and no planning merit to counterbalance them. We hope this coming year, Councillors continue to feel empowered to take the necessary steps to maintain protection of Green Belt sites, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and other areas of much valued countryside in our beautiful county.

Highlights from the year include...

Urnfield Recreational Ground, Guildford

On 1 December 2021, Guildford Borough Council Planning Committee unanimously rejected a controversial application (despite being recommended by planning officers) to build a plastic hockey pitch and install eight floodlights (each over three times the height of a double decker bus!) on Green Belt land that lies within the Surrey Hills AONB and in an Area of High Archaeological Importance.

The floodlights would have been visible during the day from Merrow Downs and would have emitted light pollution long into the autumn and winter evenings.

CPRE Surrey worked with local residents to campaign against this unacceptable development. To create an all-weather facility, lit by energy consuming floodlights, disrupting wildlife and adding to the loss of natural habitat in this sensitive landscape, in a time of a climate emergency would have simply been wrong and poor planning practice. There was also no proven need or demonstrable public interest in permitting this private facility to be expanded in this harmful way.

The Committee agreed with us that this development would cause harm to the Green Belt and AONB and was contrary to local and national planning policy.

Guildfordians were reassured as the Committee overwhelmingly said no to light pollution and no to artificial surfaces in areas of AONB, and yes to nature conservation. The applicants' may still appeal this decision – CPRE Surrey stands ready if this application returns!

New Pond Farm, Woodhatch, Reigate

Back in 2020, Reigate and Banstead Borough Council put in a planning application to build a crematorium on New Pond Farm. Situated in the Surrey Hills, New Pond Farm already serves the community as a site for informal

recreation and offers access to allotments for residents to grow produce. As a Biodiversity Opportunity Area (BOA) and a Site of Nature Conservation Importance (SNCI), the residents felt strongly that this application should not go ahead and the loss of New Pond Farm would be detrimental to the local area and environment.

The proposal requested permission for development on approximately 4.98ha of Green Belt land. This would include a single-storey building, housing two cremators and up to three chimneys. It was also proposed to include a 120-capacity crematorium and chapel with a memorial garden. This could host up to 8 services a day which would result in up to 500 vehicles accessing the site per day.

Some of the residents felt so strongly against the proposal that in November 2020 they formed the Woodhatch Green Spaces Preservation Group. The group's aim is to protect and preserve the physical and natural environment of Woodhatch open spaces, oppose inappropriate developments, and promote the use of the area by the public.

Our Trustee Gillian Hein also led efforts to oppose this planning application on behalf of CPRE Surrey. Thanks to the work of both organisations and many local residents and several councillors who objected to the proposal, the Reigate and Banstead BC Planning Committee voted in September 2021 to refuse the planning application and deemed it inappropriate for this location within the Green Belt. They acknowledged the damage that building on New Pond Farm would do and the impact it would have on the local wildlife, habitat, and biodiversity.

The Committee also acknowledged the health impacts. Over a year, crematoriums can release up to 150 tonnes of carbon, as well as other harmful chemicals. The development would also result in increased traffic and impact on the allotments that are currently part of the development.

"We were pleased, and also hugely relieved, the Planning Committee reached the same conclusion as our group and experts, that the proposal to construct



Urnfield Recreational Ground, Guildford
(picture courtesy of Alivia Kratke)



Local residents protesting the New Pond Farm development
(picture courtesy of Woodhatch Green Spaces Preservation Group)

a crematorium at New Pond Farm south of Reigate constitutes inappropriate development within the green belt, and the applicant had failed to establish very special circumstances", says Amie Vaccaro, founder of the Woodhatch Green Spaces Preservation Group.

"From the outset, we were perplexed as to why such a highly valued site to both the local community and for nature conservation had been considered as a potential site for a crematorium. The Alternative Site Assessment raised many questions, as did the Needs Assessment, lack of protected species surveys, and uncertainty regarding replacement allotment provision and playing fields. As one of our members said to the planning committee "the degradation of such valued recreational and wildlife resources would have been too high a price to pay."

Councillor James King was instrumental in helping to secure the refusal: *"New Pond Farm is valued Green Belt land, both as a public recreation area and as a wildlife habitat. As a lifelong resident, it was obvious to me that it was a poor choice of location, and it was inspiring to hear residents' well-reasoned and like-minded comments and objections to the application. At the planning committee, two robust reasons for refusal were put forward, and (save 2 or 3 abstentions) unanimously agreed by the whole committee. I've been particularly pleased to see the formation of Woodhatch Green Spaces Preservation Group and look forward to working with them in future to protect and improve our green spaces for everyone to enjoy."*

The refusal of this application is a huge achievement and goes to show the positive impact of the work that CPRE Surrey does and the importance of working with partner organisations like Woodhatch Green Spaces Preservation Group.

If you would like to hear more about the new Woodhatch Green Spaces Preservation Group and the work they do, look out for the latest in our blog series, Surrey Countryside Champions at cpresurrey.org.uk/about-us/news, where we will be speaking to their founder Amie Vaccaro.

Langley Bottom Farm – Epsom

Langley Bottom Farm was, until recently, the only working farm in the Borough of Epsom and Ewell. Early last year, the Council's Planning Committee considered a planning application to build twenty houses on the site of the old farm buildings. The site, within the London Metropolitan Green Belt, adjoins the Woodland Trust's Centenary Wood and constitutes part of the wider Epsom and Walton Downs.

There was considerable local opposition to the proposals. The racehorse industry was concerned that the new housing estate would disrupt existing routes to access training facilities on the Downs. There were also concerns about the poor access to Langley Vale Road and the inevitable reliance of those who would live at this relatively remote site on the private car. CPRE Surrey objected on the grounds that the site is in the Green Belt and serves the purposes prescribed for such sites.

Tim Murphy, who chairs CPRE Surrey's local group in Epsom and Ewell, spoke against the proposals at the Planning Committee, which unanimously rejected the application. They concluded that the proposals constituted inappropriate encroachment into the Green Belt and that there were no special circumstances to outweigh this. However, the applicants have appealed the decision.

Nutfield Green Park – Tandridge

An application was submitted last year for a substantial development to the North of Nutfield village on a site that has extensive views across the North Downs.

The proposed site was to include an outdoor activity park and a wellbeing centre. The wellbeing centre would include a GP surgery, pharmacy, community diagnostic hub, community shop, restaurant/café, creche, office

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hub, event space, and indoor and outdoor gyms. The ambitious proposal also included over 200 residential units and a respite care facility. Gillian Hein on behalf of CPRE Surrey, together with the Nutfield Conservation Society and many local residents, submitted a strong objection to the proposals.

The grounds for objection included harm to the Green Belt, particularly its impact on openness, the effect on Nutfield, its unsustainable location with regard to public transport and local services, traffic, and impact on the landscape and biodiversity.

The application was refused in September 2021, citing 20 reasons for the decision which is an unusually high number. The reasons for refusal included:

- The site is a Tier 4 settlement and therefore not suited for this level of development;
- The land is within the Green Belt and it would be an inappropriate development that would harm the openness, character, and appearance of the area;
- The development could also cause harm to adjoining occupiers with additional noise, dust, and air pollution.

Unfortunately, during the application process, the developers caused damage to the area (see picture below) removing the hedgerows, which forced wildlife to relocate. CPRE Surrey is very hopeful that the area will be included in the proposed AONB extension that is currently under review, ensuring far greater protection for its preservation for the future.

Sandown Park Racecourse – Esher

Last May, Robert Jenrick MP, the then Housing Secretary of State, rejected this controversial planning application for extensive development at the Green Belt location of Sandown Park Racecourse, adjacent to the town centre of Esher.

The application was to improve facilities at the racecourse, but to do this the owners proposed selling off 6 parcels of Green Belt land, around the course perimeter, to build a 150-bedroom, 6 storey hotel and 318 apartments. The applicant argued that the openness of the single parcel of land covering the complete racecourse would not



Nutfield Green Park, Tandridge
(picture courtesy of Karen McCarthy)

be extensively reduced as they sought to show that the individual housing and hotel sites were just part of one large site. They also argued that this development should be considered based on the relevant special circumstances to the Green Belt, among them being that without major improvements the racecourse would be at risk of closure.

Officers at Elmbridge considered that there were very special circumstances that enabled such development in the Green Belt to be allowed. However, Councillors unanimously rejected this advice. CPRE Surrey's Keith Tothill worked with the Esher Residents Association and others who were strongly opposed to the application. CPRE Surrey wrote a comprehensive objection, arguing against all the aspects of the applicant's case, which along with the objection by ERA may well have influenced the Councillors to reject the application.

The applicants appealed against the refusal. The Inspector in his recommendation to the Secretary of State put substantial weight on the harm from inappropriate development in the Green Belt and also found harm to the character and appearance of the area. Balanced against this he found the hotel and housing were significant, along with the affordable housing and economic benefits. However, the amount of affordable housing, at only 20%, was insufficient. Thus, the Inspector recommended to the Secretary of State to reject the appeal. The Secretary of State agreed with his Inspector and rejected the appeal.

This is a major Green Belt victory in Surrey against inappropriate Green Belt development.

Effingham Lodge Farm, Effingham

The saga continues in Effingham with the enabling development of a new Howard of Effingham school to be built in the Green Belt opposite its existing site in the village. Berkeley Homes was granted outline planning permission by the Secretary of State back in 2018 for 295 homes and the enlarged secondary school for 2,000 pupils.

In 2021 the developers came back to Guildford Borough planners with a hybrid application for a further 110 houses to be built on Effingham Lodge Farm, acquired by Berkeley Homes in 2020, on the basis that they could not deliver the high spec new school without the sale of more houses. As a further extension to the village and encroachment into the Green Belt, CPRE Surrey wrote in the strongest terms and in support of both Effingham Parish Council and the Residents Association, asking for this application to be refused. On 4th April 2022 despite a recommendation by the officers to approve – subject to numerous conditions and a S106 agreement – the application was refused by councillors. The decision notice states that: *The case for very special circumstances has been considered, however, the benefits of this proposal are not considered to clearly outweigh the inherent harm to the Green Belt (and any other harm). It was contrary*

to policies in the Guildford Local Plan, the Effingham Neighbourhood Plan and the NPPF chapter 13 – Protecting the Green Belt.

Previously on 30 March 2022 a reserved matters application came before the Council for the design and layout of 99 of the houses which the planning committee also refused. The design and density are more akin to

an urban estate rather than a rural village and represent harm to two Conservation Areas, All Saints Church and the George V playing fields. Given that Berkeley Homes are appealing this decision it is reasonable to assume they will be appealing the hybrid application for the additional 110 dwellings on Effingham Lodge Farm as well. CPRE Surrey will continue to monitor this.

Surrey Planning Spotlight – Local Plans

By Keith Tothill, Vice President of CPRE Surrey

Several Local Authorities in Surrey in 2022 are well advanced in producing a new Local Plan, including Elmbridge, Mole Valley, Spelthorne, Tandridge and Surrey Heath. But they face a major decision: how much Green Belt they intend to lose and whether to set their housing targets using the Government methodology for assessing local housing needs.

Elmbridge Borough Council, in March 2022, approved their latest Draft Local Plan for public consultation in the summer and then submission to the Inspectorate for Examination. Of particular relevance is the fact that the Plan does not propose any Green Belt losses in order to provide for new housing sites.

Elmbridge is 57% Green Belt and the Council has taken a gamble in making a radical change from their previous Draft, Regulation 18, Plan of 2019, that proposed 5 options, but with a likely loss of over 350 hectares of Green Belt, on at least 30 Green Belt sites, in order to provide for some 4760 dwellings out of a total of over 9600 dwellings.

The present Local Plan, however, has decided not to follow the Government's published standard methodology for Councils to work out its local housing need (known as the "Objectively Assessed Need", which would have required 641 new homes to be built every year from 2021 to 2037 and 9615 homes in all. The Council has decided to only build 73% of the housing need which amounts to 466 per year, or at least 6,985 (of which 30% is to be affordable), thus opting to protect in full the Green Belt. So, all the new

housing sites are within the existing urban site, with the most, 28%, in Walton, 17% in Weybridge, 14% in Esher and 12% in both Molesey and Cobham & Oxshott, 10% in Long Ditton, Thames Ditton and Hinchley Wood. The lowest amounts of housing will be in Hersham at 5.5% and Claygate at 1.5%.

To reflect housing needs, emphasis on new developments is placed on the provision of one, two and three-bedroom houses, suitable for newly formed households, young couples, families and older people looking to downsize. This approach is a brave and radical one. Elsewhere in Surrey, Mole Valley is also not proposing to meet the Government's standard methodology housing target, but unlike Elmbridge, with some Green Belt housing sites.

Will Elmbridge be successful in protecting its Green Belt in full and still producing a sound Plan to satisfy the Inspector overseeing the Plan? At this stage, we cannot tell. However, the Council should be congratulated on their brave approach to a situation that has for many years now been at the heart of the planning debate in Surrey, much of the South East and also elsewhere in the Country. How does one balance Green Belt protection and the need for more housing?

Mole Valley District Council submitted their Draft Plan to the Secretary of State on 14 February 2022. CPRE Surrey, in general, strongly supported the Council's approach. However, we object to the proposed Green Belt housing allocation, for at least 200 dwellings, at Preston Farm, Little Bookham, as we believe there are no very special circumstances to warrant release from the Green Belt. The site strongly fulfilled Green Belt purposes and the substantial detrimental effects from extra traffic generated by the many hundreds of additional people and the increased strain on the village's already overburdened physical and community infrastructure, (in addition to the cumulative effect of hundreds of dwellings being built at the Howard of Effingham school site in the adjacent village of Effingham) must be taken into account. We also objected to a number of the density assumptions made by the Council for larger Green Belt sites. The Planning Inspectorate has appointed two Inspectors to consider whether the Plan is "sound". We expect the hearing dates for the Examination of the Plan to be made public soon, with the actual Examination taking place later this year.

Tandridge District Council, although they submitted their Plan to the Inspectorate several years ago now and there has been an ongoing Examination before 2020, the process is still ongoing, although largely stalled. The Inspector is obviously not convinced the Plan can be made sound, being most concerned with several aspects, including the housing numbers and some housing sites proposed. Of special concern is the validity of the proposed South Godstone Garden Community (for some 5000 dwellings and at present in the Green Belt) and its proposed access to the M25. The Inspector has proposed that the Plan be withdrawn or modified, which entails much additional work and new evidence by the Council. The Council has already undertaken additional work on the M25 Junction 6 and its capacity to take additional traffic generated by the Garden Community, which itself has many uncertainties and problems.

The latest (in March 2022) is a request by the Council, to the Inspector, to clarify a number of matters concerning a new detailed work plan requested by the Inspector, including the aspects of resourcing the necessary work asked for. These matters include (i) additional work on the Objectively Assessed Needs (OAN) for new housing, economic needs, updated travellers requirements, plus other related evidence. (ii) The deliverability and developability of the Garden Community with the associated Action Plan, including access to the M25 and A22. (iii) Calculation of the OAN and use of the 2016 based household figures. (iv) An update on possible exceptional circumstances, with reference to various proposed housing sites within the Green Belt.

CPRE Surrey supports the Council in their attempts not to withdraw the Plan as commencing a new Plan, almost from scratch would be both very expensive (and which the Council said recently they simply can't afford) and is likely to require even more housing to be identified in the District, which would put additional pressure on the District's Green Belt.

Spelthorne District Council is currently working on an emerging Local Plan which will contain the framework for future development up to 2035. Spelthorne Borough Council consulted on its Preferred Options and Site Allocations Local Plan Reg. 18 in January 2020. They have now published a document that sets out the Council's responses to the many topics raised by the public, which gives a clear "steer" on how the Council intends to proceed to the next stage (likely in the summer, which will be submitted to the Secretary of State later in the year). Adoption is proposed for 2023.

The Reg. 18 consultation proposed meeting the Borough's SM Government housing target of 603 d.p.a. (some 9,720 dwellings in total). Nineteen Green Belt sites were identified for release, amounting to 53 hectares (or 1.6% of the total Green Belt) and providing 1,650 dwellings. This received a negative public reaction; including a strong objection from CPRE Surrey, written by Tim Murphy.

In July 2021 the Environment and Sustainability Committee agreed on a new strategy for the release of a much smaller amount of Green Belt (12, so called weakly performing sites, totalling 740 dwellings), to meet all of the Borough's housing need; whilst placing further emphasis on additional urban sites and limiting the height of new developments in Staines town centre.

Thus, again, in a Surrey Local Plan process, the debate revolves around meeting housing needs (or not) and releasing, (or not) valuable Green Belt. It appears that, unlike Elmbridge, but like Mole Valley, Spelthorne has chosen to release a limited amount of Green Belt.

Epsom & Ewell Borough Council have yet to produce their Reg 18 Local Plan. Consultation is planned for October/November of this year with several options considered. The Reg 19 Plan will likely follow next year. There are indications that the Borough will not be meeting its housing need figure, although this has not been confirmed.

Surrey Heath District Council – the Options / Preferred Options Draft Local Plan (known as the Regulation 18 stage) is currently open for consultation (closing 9 May 2022) and sets out the Council's vision for future development up to 2038. Given nearly half of Surrey Heath Borough is designated as Green Belt, we welcome the commitment that new development on the Green Belt will be 'strictly limited and only permitted where it is in line with the NPPF' and significant weight given to preserving the openness and character of the Green Belt.

The draft Plan is unique in Surrey as it uses the Duty to Cooperate guidance to enable a neighbouring Local Authority, in this case, Hart District Council in Hampshire, to take some of Surrey Heath's unmet housing needs. Hart will take 553 dwellings over the Plan period, that being 43 dwellings a year, leaving Surrey Heath to accommodate the remainder of their standard methodology housing figure of 5,680 dwellings, none of which will be located on Green Belt land.

This is an interesting response to the question of the use, or not, of Green Belt land to meet the standard methodology housing figure. CPRE Surrey supports this approach and we await, with interest, what will happen in the later stages of the Surrey Heath Local Plan. The only Green Belt land which is proposed to be lost is the village of Chobham, which will be removed from the Green Belt, where it is at present "washed over". Government guidance encourages Local Authorities to, where applicable, remove such settlements from the Green Belt if there is little impact on the loss of openness, which is the case at Chobham.

CPRE Surrey's call to reform national planning rules

By Alivia Kratke, CPRE Surrey Trustee

Effective planning law is crucial to empowering local communities and making sustainable, liveable places. CPRE has long campaigned for decent homes that people can afford. Equally, it is vital that new development is planned intelligently; our countryside is precious and fragile and urgently needs better management in the face of the threats to climate and biodiversity.

As the Government started to build back from the pandemic, CPRE nationally launched its 'Greener, better, faster' campaign – laying out the ways that the countryside can help tackle climate change, while being good for people, nature and the economy.

Following the publication of a Levelling Up White Paper in February 2022 (which was decidedly concise on the detail of planning reform), the CPRE is working with the Better Planning Coalition to put forward amendments to the expected Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill later this year. In turn, that legislation is likely to follow with changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (often referred to as the 'NPPF'). The Framework spells out national planning policy – the 'rules' and guidance which shape how local councils should draw up their own Local Plans, and the rules that should be read alongside Local Plans when councils consider individual planning applications.

So, what does CPRE Surrey want to see from an amended NPPF? First, we would like to see the Framework requiring all Local Plans to set out how they will reach net zero, meeting the UK's Climate Change Act targets for emissions reductions.

In March 2022, CPRE nationally published research that of the 24 local authority local plans adopted outside London since 2019, only the Plymouth and South-West Devon Joint Plan sets out a quantified strategy to reduce carbon output alongside building new housing stock.

Look at Hart Borough's Local Plan reviewed in that research. The response to climate change is identified as a key issue for the plan, and is included as a design consideration for new development. But it does not appear in high-level strategic policies. The strategy includes a new 'sustainable settlement' of 1,500 homes, but there is no indication of how its location or infrastructure will be configured to ensure it contributes to the council's net zero target. During the draft Plan's consideration, the Planning Inspector removed from the plan a much larger new settlement of 5,000 homes, and he referred to climate change as one of several considerations where the proposal had not been adequately tested.

Runnymede Council's strategy is heavily influenced by a new settlement at Longcross Garden Village which is already partially under construction. Although the policies for this contain a number of positive messages about active travel, sustainable construction and green infrastructure, there is no explicit requirement for it to deliver on a carbon budget, and the plan as a whole does not have a strategic carbon reduction objective.

The Surrey Heath Local Plan (the home patch of Michael Gove MP – the Secretary of

State for planning) is currently out for consultation. It says development proposals will need to demonstrate how they are maximising reductions in carbon emissions and contributing to the decarbonisation trajectory for net zero by 2050. Unless otherwise required through site allocation policies, proposals for over 500 dwellings will be required to deliver zero carbon development, either through on-site measures or, if it is demonstrated that is not feasible, through carbon offsetting. It is a good start that development proposals will be required to demonstrate contribution to net zero. But the 500 dwelling threshold looks to be counter-productive. Developers may just carve big sites up into smaller parcels to stay under the threshold. The 'if not feasible' loophole looks to be a gaping one. This Local Plan could do far more to demonstrate that the site allocations are capable (individually and cumulatively) of delivering zero carbon development.

Secondly, over and above tackling climate change, Surrey CPRE would like to see stronger protection to Green Belt, Local Green Spaces, and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), alongside other environmental protections. We believe that the concept of the Green Belt's permanence needs to be strengthened, so its boundaries are not in a constant state of review, and for other alternatives to be pursued before Green Belt releases can be justified. This is essential for the preservation of good quality agricultural land and of the landscape, and CPRE research has previously shown that subdivision of farmland is a particular concern in Surrey. For example, the cynical auctioning off of small plots of Green Belt agricultural land in Wanborough Fields, was an egregious failure of development control and enforcement. Local authorities in areas constrained by the Green Belt should not set housing targets for levels of growth beyond that which can be accommodated without harm to the Green Belt. The extent of release of land from the Green Belt in Local Plans must be kept to an absolute minimum and shown to be in 'exceptional circumstances' only.

National CPRE research has found that over several years we have consistently had sufficient land for over one million homes on brownfield land throughout England. With much of this resource being in the Midlands and the North, true prioritisation of this land will play an important part of rebalancing the economy and levelling up. A 'brownfield first' approach would prevent further unnecessary loss of countryside around towns and cities, especially those of the Home Counties. But this requires a national strategic policy to level up and deliver homes on previously developed land in parts of the country urgently in need of regeneration. Taken together, such reforms would help to deliver homes where people really need them; closer to services, workplaces, public transport and shops. This would help us to protect and enhance the green spaces that are crucial for tackling climate change, and would help safeguard the green land around our towns that's so essential for our mental and physical wellbeing, and which makes Surrey such a special place to live.

Lack of Housing Land in Waverley

May 2021, when Trinity College Cambridge announced their intention to sell the Dunsfold Park Aerodrome site, Julia Potts, the Conservative Counsellor for Frensham, Dockenfield and Tilford worried that the change of ownership may delay the development of the site and have huge ramifications for the rest of the borough. We are starting to see those fears come true.

Dunsfold Park is a controversial, but important part of Waverley Borough Council's planning strategy. With a proposed 1,800 homes it is a huge piece in the jigsaw and in December 2021 Waverley calculated that it has a 5.2 year housing land supply. But without Dunsfold, then the supply drops to only 4.25 years or less. That makes a big difference and here's why.

Recently, an application for 99 homes on land near Loxwood was granted permission on appeal. The decision was based on a lack of clear evidence that the Dunsfold site could be included in assessing the Borough's housing land supply. Given the lack of a deliverable 5 year land supply the appeal was allowed.

Inspector Harold Stephens said: *"The implications of not having a five-year housing land supply are significant. Not only is there a shortfall of some 885 dwellings, but it also means the policies which are the most important for determining the application are automatically out-of-date and the tilted balance applies. I conclude on the third issue that the Council cannot demonstrate a five year housing land supply and that paragraph 11 d) of the NPPF is engaged."*

Paragraph 11 d) says that permission for a development should be granted unless there is a clear reason why the development should be refused, or if adverse impacts significantly outweigh the benefits. In other words, the onus is on the council not the developer to show why the development should not go ahead. This is a real game changer – making it much harder for the Council to defend appeals and stop developers building in the countryside.

The long fought application for a housing development on AGLV land at Red Court, outside the settlement boundary in Haslemere, was recently granted permission on appeal. Helen Hockenhill was also unconvinced that the Dunsfold development would come through in time for the Council to meet the Government's Housing Delivery Test. While the Inspector acknowledged the "major adverse impact" the development would have on the site she concluded that without a 5-year supply of deliverable housing land the 'tilted balance' in favour of sustainable development was engaged.

In Ewhurst an application to develop a field behind a property also outside the settlement boundary quoted the Loxwood decision in their submission, no doubt to persuade the council that they have no choice but to grant permission or lose on appeal. The danger facing Waverley Borough and the rest of Surrey where a council cannot demonstrate a 5 year land supply, is that it is open season for the developers.

The root cause of the problem is the National Planning Policy Framework, in force for 10 years now. It has been a fillip for builders across the country. Waverley Council has worked hard to put a Local Plan in place and to meet Government's onerous housing targets. House prices encourage builders to develop high end homes for sale. We need much more affordable housing to encourage our young people to stay in the area. The NPPF should align the developer's motivations with the needs of residents.

Paul Follows, the leader of the Council said *"We are doing all we can to meet our housing need, including developing our own housing sites and submitting Local Plan Part 2 for examination. Furthermore, there are existing permissions for more than 5,000 new homes, however, we rely on the development industry to deliver the vast majority of these new homes but, as yet, more than 50 per cent have not yet been commenced."*

Councils are trying to reach these ludicrously high housing targets and allocate sufficient sites for new homes. But they have no control over when the developers will actually deliver on any of these projects. The NPPF urgently needs redrafting to offer a more sympathetic approach to councils trying to plan for and develop housing in the right places for local people in need of homes.

I will be meeting my local MP Jeremy Hunt to discuss this issue in the coming weeks.

John Goodridge, Treasurer, Surrey CPRE and Chair of Waverley District Committee

Borough	Housing Land Supply Position (in yrs)	Published HLS Position (Council's view)
Elmbridge	3.96	3.96
Epsom and Ewell	1.10	1.10
Guildford	7.00	7.00
Mole Valley	2.90	2.90
Reigate and Banstead	8.92	8.92
Runnymede	5.82	5.82
Spelthorne	4.50	4.50
Surrey Heath	7.02	7.02
Tandridge	1.71	5.95
Waverley	4.25	5.20
Woking	7.90	9.00

The situation in Surrey: Anything under 5 years triggers the NPPF 11 d) clause.

CPRE Local Green Spaces Report

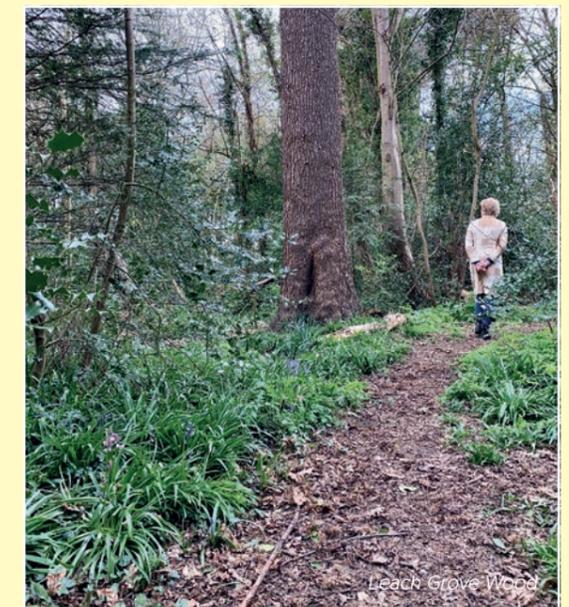
National CPRE carried out research on just how many Local Green Spaces had been designated in Local or Neighbourhood Plans since their introduction in the National Planning Policy Framework in 2012. It turns out that 6,515 or an area larger than Manchester have been recognised as important areas of green space scattered throughout England, although with a heavier concentration on the South-East. Interestingly 83% of these Local Green Spaces were designated within Neighbourhood Plans as opposed to Local Plans. This reinforces the importance of neighbourhood planning, where local communities can have a say in protecting green spaces of local significance that add to the quality of life. 80% of these areas tend to provide recreational opportunities and are in or close to built-up areas as opposed to open countryside.



In Surrey, the Mole Valley Draft Local Plan proposes designating 29 new Local Green Spaces, amounting to over 60 hectares located in communities dotted across the district's towns and villages. Perhaps the most notable is Leach Grove Wood in Leatherhead because following the Supreme Court decision in 2019 this woodland, owned by the NHS Property Services, could not be registered as a town or village green, much to the disappointment of Leatherhead's residents. However, there was no problem in demonstrating its special value and significance to the local community, who had fought so hard to save it from potential development. As a Local Green Space it will be afforded the same level of protection as if it is in the Green Belt. The Report took Hambledon Park Estate in Caterham in Tandridge as a good example of the designation being used to create a string or network of open space in and around the estate and significantly adding to the character of the area.



St Lawrence Way, Hambledon Park Estate (picture courtesy of Martin Black)



Leach Grove Wood

100 Club

The Spring draw for the 100 Club was for £396 (main prize), which was won by Lady Elizabeth Toulson, while the £99 second prize went to Mr TB Carty. There will be another draw in July. Half the subscriptions to the draw go back to the charity and half go to the prize pot, so please consider becoming a stakeholder. We would like to encourage you to buy as many stakes in the draw as you feel you can (the price remains at £12 per stake per year). If we get 500 stakes, our target, then there will be one prize of £1,200 and one runner up prize of £300, drawn twice each year. If you want to join please email me and we will keep you in touch with the size of the club, and of course, the size of the prizes!

John Goodridge, Treasurer
jgoodridge@cpresurrey.org.uk

Hedging Our Bets

By Philip Partridge, CPRE Surrey Member and Administrator

In 2013 I semi-retired, stopped commuting to London and wanted to start down a more 'local and green' path. I had time to spend on growing fruit and vegetables, going to Surrey Wildlife Trust information events, joining the Woodland Trust, our local Eco-Church, and creating various contacts with local people and projects. I even spent 5 seasons as a gardener in a private 4.5 acre garden!

The more I did such things, the more I came to believe that mankind is now strangling nature. Since the start of the Industrial Revolution to now we have moved so far away from a sustainable balance, that we now face a climate and biodiversity crisis.

There is hope, and action under way, to restore this balance – and much of it comes from volunteer efforts in quiet local settings – like hedge-planting working parties with Surrey Wildlife Trust.

I was blown away by the CPRE National and the Organic Research Centre's report last year on **Hedge Fund: Investing in hedgerows for climate, nature and the economy (September 2021)** which compactly explains the value of hedgerows to wildlife, climate, farming and the important role they play within the UK countryside. Plus, with Surrey laying claim to around 30% of the population of rapidly declining species in the UK (according to a 2017 Surrey Nature Partnership report, 'The State of Surrey's Nature') it's more important than ever to protect the hedgerows in Surrey and the many species of plants and animals



Examples of recently laid hedgerows in North Downs

they home. We are discovering the hard way now, the interconnectedness of all those insects, birds, mammals and even reptiles that depend on hedges for survival – and eco-systems and food-chains; and what they mean for stability for the natural world, but also stability for our climate – and our food-growing systems. It is therefore vital we regain our hedgerows fast!

As a result, I wanted to do all I could to protect and promote trees and hedges in my local area (Dorking,



Picture courtesy of Surrey Wildlife Trust

SOME IDEAS ON WHAT YOU CAN DO

Existing hedgerow-related organisations/activities:

- **Surrey Wildlife Trust:** Working parties, learning sessions, activities and outings
- **The Woodland Trust:** Possibility to buy (or participate as joint venture) woodland, maintain and enhance it
- **Trees For Life Dorking** – linked to Transition Dorking and Dorking Climate Emergency

Funding and Grants, a few ideas:

- Petition your MP and local councillors for small grants to prioritise hedgerow planting. For example, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council are looking to undertake a hedgerow mapping exercise to quantify hedgerows and pinpoint gaps to be filled.
- Farming in Protected Landscapes (FIPL) Fund for Surrey Hills AONB. Defra government funding is available for landowners to bid for funds for one off projects for landscape improvements to aid biodiversity. This has included 7.5kms of hedgerows planted this year. See here for more details: <https://www.surreyhills.org/fipl-projects/facilitation-fund-collaborative-projects-planting-hedgerows/>
- Businesses could offer access to their land for hedgerow planting and for community activities
- The Woodland Trust's 'MORE Hedges' – potential Woodland Trust grants available to planting projects

Housing Issues:

- Instead of destroying them, campaign for developers to keep existing hedgerows within new housing developments (AND most importantly add new hedgerows!)

IF YOU HAVE LAND AND WOULD LIKE HELP planting trees, hedges, maintaining woodland, please email me on ppartridge@cpresurrey.org.uk or call me on 07813 829 326.

Mole Valley). I started hedge-laying with the Surrey Wildlife Trust, alongside helping on habitat, access and ground maintenance. Over a working day, a team of twelve (of varying fitness levels) can plant up to 150 metres of hedgerow – maybe 1,000 saplings – and it's invigorating, uplifting, social and most importantly fun!

The Surrey Wildlife Trust is aiming to plant – and maintain – 4 miles (6 kilometres) of new hedgerows in Surrey. They have identified a small number of sites at which to create these, and they have a steady stream of volunteers up for the physical work. Many are retired

with the time to participate, but there are also more and more younger people taking part; some leading the sessions equipped with college- and land-based experience of all the issues and practicalities. Often engaging young people can be difficult – not here!!

If you would like to get involved in one of the many Surrey projects already underway or currently being developed, please contact me at ppartridge@cpresurrey.org.uk. CPRE Surrey is looking to work with local groups to run some hedge planting sessions later this year so we hope you can get involved.

Hedgerows – a short history

By Jeremy Saunders, CPRE Surrey Volunteer Coordinator

Hedgerows may at first glance appear to be little more than strips of narrow woodland or shrubs, planted to form a barrier between fields or areas, but next time you are exploring Surrey's countryside, stop and look closer; and you will see the very many species of plants and animals they home.

Hedgerows through their rich and intricate patterns also tell the story of farming traditions dating back as far as the Bronze and Iron Age (2,000-4,000 years ago), and planting them was commonplace up to World War 2.

Whilst difficult to accurately age hedgerows, English naturalist Dr Max Hooper, came up with a method of ageing, that has become known as "Hooper's rule". This involves counting the number of species in a 30-metre stretch of hedge, and then multiplying by 110. You will be surprised at how old some hedges in your area may be!

The UK currently has 500,000 miles of hedgerows, but 50% of UK hedgerows have sadly been lost since World War 2 and 60% of what is left is now (as reported at National Hedgerow Week 2021) classified as being poorly managed. There are a number of reasons for this loss –

- Changes in farming practices with bigger mixed farms
- Development
- Spray drift from weed killers
- Neglect and poor management
- Damage from stubble burning

However, in recent years the tide may be beginning to turn, as we face biodiversity decline at unprecedented rates due to the creeping urbanisation and development of the countryside – people are starting to realise the critical lifeline hedgerows provide for nature and wildlife. They are an essential habitat for a huge array of flora and fauna and act as wildlife corridors, linking different areas of habitat. The plants and shrubs that hedgerows accommodate, support communities of bugs and insects, which in turn provide food for protected bird populations. 21 species of our most threatened birds (listed under the internationally recognised – Biodiversity Action Plan (BAP)) use hedges

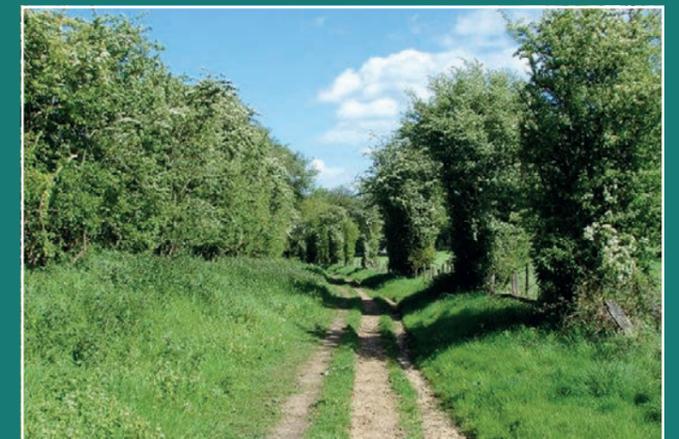
as their homes, and they are used by bats and small mammals like hedgehogs as safe spaces to commute between and forage in. In an agricultural sense, in addition to providing shelter for livestock there are also benefits for soils and protecting our climate. Hedgerows:

- Regulate water supply to fields and improve drainage reducing the impacts of droughts and flooding
- Create a warmer soil which can increase the growing season
- Reduce the need for pesticides by hosting populations of predator species
- Sustain pollinator communities – essential to lots of crops
- Aid climate change by storing carbon
- Reduce pollution – by lowering the need for use of fertilisers and pesticides and prevent sediment reaching the watercourse.

Although a man-made habitat, hedgerows have become a vital part of our countryside landscape providing essential habitat for our plants and wildlife. CPRE have launched a national campaign **#40by50** to extend the hedgerow network by 40% by 2050 as well as continuing to protect our current network. This will mean adding over 4,000 miles of new and restored hedgerows per year – a considerable task! Nearly 40,000 people have signed the petition calling on the government to champion hedgerows.

See here for more information and do take the time to read (and hopefully sign) the petition.

<https://www.cpre.org.uk/what-we-care-about/nature-and-landscapes/hedgerows/our-hedgerow-campaign/>.



RIGHT: 12th Century hedgerow, White Lane, Guildford



The countryside charity
Surrey

OUR MANIFESTO

1. Protect our countryside, our Green Belt, our Local Green Spaces and AONB from inappropriate development, urban sprawl and noise pollution, so that our county remains attractive and tranquil for future generations;
2. Preserve the special character of Surrey's towns and villages, our conservation areas and historic buildings, and safeguard their historic setting from intrusive development;
3. Put pressure on relevant authorities to meet local housing needs in our towns and villages by ensuring the provision of well-designed, appropriately-sized, high quality homes that local people can afford;
4. Counter the threats to Surrey's countryside from the climate and ecological emergency through our collaborative work with new and existing partners;
5. Enable everyone to enjoy our environment and reconnect with nature in safe, accessible, local countryside, with well-maintained walking and cycling routes in every Surrey district;
6. Promote public health and wellbeing by properly maintaining parks and open spaces so that all communities have opportunities for outdoor recreation in their own neighbourhoods;
7. Improve environmental quality by reducing traffic congestion by promoting sustainable transport, boosting investment in local bus services, and striving to meet and exceed current targets for waste reduction and recycling;
8. Ensure dark night skies – an essential part of our rural landscape and vital for our wildlife – through measures to reduce light pollution and 'night blight';
9. Promote nature conservation, wildlife protection and increased biodiversity through policies that encourage sustainable farming and land use, and better land management by public bodies, businesses and private individuals;
10. Support sustainable local food production by encouraging farm shops and farmers' markets and by supporting community allotments.