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The Housing Market Scandal

If ever there was a misguided, malfunctioning, unfair, and in my view immoral system, then the way in which the UK housing market operates qualifies on all of these counts. It is a system based on greed which only addresses need as an afterthought.

Political parties, aware of the importance and sensitivity of the housing issue, try to outdo each other by promising to deliver huge amounts of new housing of which only a proportion is ever built. Therefore at its origin the system is based on deception. For several years the government has set itself the target of delivering 300,000 new houses in England each year. It has never met this target.

The numbers involved are huge and the impact on the countryside is considerable as previously undeveloped Greenfield land in England is being lost to new housing at an increasing rate. Only about a third of new housing is built on Brownfield sites. If government plans for one million additional dwellings between Oxford and Cambridge proceed then, according to CPRE, 27,000 hectares of

Greenfield farmland and woodland would be lost to development by 2050, an area the size of Birmingham.

The loss of green space will persist as long as central government continues to insist on local authorities setting excessive housing targets which involve allocating ever more Greenfield sites for new housing while at the same time failing to ensure the delivery of housing on existing allocated sites.

For South Norfolk, Broadland and Norwich the housing target for the new local plan (GNLP) is for 49,492 additional dwellings by 2038. If all these houses are built the population in the Greater Norwich area could grow by 118,780 (average UK household size is 2.4 people). Historically developers have failed to meet housing targets as evidenced by the fact that over 60% (30,000 plus) of the GNLP target is composed of un-built existing housing commitments from the current local plan (The Joint Core Strategy). Clearly targets are set at too high a level. Developers can cherry pick attractive Greenfield sites while leaving other sites undeveloped. Similar un-necessarily excessive housing targets apply throughout Norfolk.

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A Spring Foreward

A difficult housing market, cost of living crisis, strikes, devolution, river pollution, climate change, a health service in crisis, teacher shortages, childcare costs, no plan for elderly care, dying eco systems - there is bound to be something that makes us all feel just a little bit pessimistic. My own issue is about the weight of so many things needing attention all at once, and of course these all impact in some way or another on the priorities for the campaigning work we undertake and the resources we have available.

But that is one area where I can feel optimistic. The small team and volunteers within CPRE (Norfolk) have again been achieving much, from strong representations on local planning consultations working with parish councils, through to providing support to local groups seeking having their voices heard to improve local projects. Another is the opportunities that Norfolk still offers, from rural tranquility to green energy innovation, and much in between. You will find more about what we are up to in this Spring newsletter.

On a personal level I want to see a shift away from simply seeing economic growth as the only driving force for new schemes. Making sure our economy allows us all enough money to pay the bills is vital, but so too are the opportunities to improve our happiness, health and mental wellbeing in at least an equal measure. Some of that comes free as long as we protect green spaces and our countryside, dark skies, tranquility, our coastal resources and our wildlife. None of these things are hard to do, but they must be built into the thinking for every project and scheme undertaken.

Ultimately, this requires a different approach from everyone - that includes us, as well as our political parties and private enterprises. Not everything that needs to be done will meet with universal approval, but we must keep a system that ensures that we can all have our say and be listened to. This democratic right is under pressure, with local groups being cited as being in the way of progress and not seeing the bigger picture. If, however projects are well conceived and consider local communities, they will get consent to proceed. Sadly, many proposals do not tick either of those boxes, and rather than project leaders improving the proposals, local communities are blamed. Where appropriate, that is where we can often help.

'I want to see a shift away from simply seeing economic growth as the only driving force for new schemes'

We have another packed year ahead, and you can keep up to date with what we are doing by reading these newsletters, watching the press, looking at our website, following our social media, and as some of our members do (I am pleased to say) contacting us with ideas and queries - your telephone calls and messages are vitally important and will help us focus on the things that are really important to you.



Chris Dady
Chair, CPRE Norfolk

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So what is the solution? Housing targets should be reduced to a level that is deliverable and CPRE Norfolk's proposal that existing sites must be built out before any new allocations can be developed has to be adopted as national policy. Crucially the building of social rented properties needs to become the number one priority to help those most in need. Linking the provision of "affordable housing" to the building of market housing is a failed policy as developers

consistently manipulate the system and fail to build anywhere near the number of affordable properties initially promised.

CPRE Norfolk is not anti housing. We want to see the right kind of houses built in the right places. The scandalous housing market as it currently operates does not deliver these outcomes.

By David Hook, Chair of CPRE Norfolk - Vision for Norfolk Committee

I like driving in my car...Madness?

By Chris Dady

We live in a rural community, and for many of us the only option is to take our car. This is exacerbated by our lifestyles that include large weekly shops at a remote supermarket, and the appalling lack of alternatives. Road building to cope with the hordes of us travelling by car, and the reliance on roads as the way of moving goods, is horrendous for the environment.

What are our options?

It is really a Catch 22. If a super public transport system is not available, then we will use the car to get about. But it is a very long-term project to build that public transport system, wean us away from the car and even change our 'ability to travel' expectations. But this is probably the only way we will meet the climate change 'net zero' targets which we absolutely accept as necessary. Having said that, the electric car is held up by many to be the best approach, albeit this still drives road building demands, which wipes out much of the advantage.

But electric cars are not perfect - range anxiety, concerns about finding a suitable charging point (or the feasibility of having one at home), concerns about the way the materials required are mined, recycling of the battery in the future, the fact we do not get all our electricity from renewable sources, the potential that there are probably not enough mineral resources anyway, the cost, the expectation there is something better around the corner and a simple lack of availability. These, and the campaigning by oil companies to continue to keep these issues in our minds, are understandably impacting on the number of people making the switch. The International Energy Agency reckoned that to make a difference we need to see 2 billion electric cars on our roads, but the environmental cost of building this number is a huge issue, even if it was possible.

Many commentators hence see the way forward as a combination of electric vehicles, more public transport use and less travel. This seems sensible bearing in mind all the above, but it needs us to shift our own expectations. The important question is, what would a future Norfolk transport system look like? The first issue is getting it into our rural areas. A great way to do this would be to have more bus ways which combine the advantages of rail, with the flexibility of a road going vehicle (powered by hydrogen). Potentially these can also be used by vehicles moving goods. More shared vehicles - with parish councils having their own car club schemes. 'Dial-a-ride' is vital for flexibility where a car is not available or possible. We must look at the needs of key workers, such as community nurses and carers. The network of charging points needs extending, powered by green energy - how about every village having an option for their own community, small wind turbine and photovoltaic panels on roof tops to power, not only people's homes, but also communal charging points? Safe cycle and walking routes, making sure houses are built near to public transport hubs (or with it integrated in the scheme), and working from home with first rate internet availability all add up. Norwich Airport must close, or become genuinely carbon neutral - and not through any dodgy 'carbon offsetting' scheme either. These all add up to a more, not less, connected Norfolk.

So, our best future lies in not having all our eggs in the electric car basket. We need investment now in a combined approach, redirecting money from new roads into a new transport network. We need to make sure all vehicles are fully utilised to ensure the environmental costs of their construction are offset, through sharing. There may be other options waiting just around the corner, and there are some mooted, but we must remember the first electric car was built in 1832 and it has not developed very far from there. So, for now, we have to go with what we have got and plan and invest for the future, but make sure these plans are flexible enough to develop over time, as our travel will certainly need to.



Photo - Nicholas Picard, Unsplash

Norwich Western Link

By Michael Rayner

At the time of writing (28 March) it is still unclear whether central Government will agree to fund 85% of the Norwich Western Link's (NWL) costs, which are currently estimated at £251 million, and no doubt increasing all the time.

Even if this is not forthcoming it is possible that Norfolk County Council will still go ahead with submission of a planning application for the new road, to hope for funding at a later date. CPRE Norfolk has been opposed to the proposed road for many environmental, landscape, cost and pollution reasons. It also warned from before construction of the Northern Distributor Road (NDR or Broadland Northway) that that would lead to problems for residents in the Wensum Valley and Ringland Hills areas, as motorists sought "rat-runs" between the end of the NDR and the A47. Therefore, this problem was largely one of Norfolk County Council's making. These problems should now be at least partially addressed by appropriate traffic management strategies, as well as through a much stronger emphasis on provision of better public transport, such as the long-proposed Bus Rapid Transit routes, rather than by building the NWL.

Unfortunately, detailed environmental survey work of the proposed route accelerated only following the route selection decision was made. It is clear that the chosen route will not only cause massive problems due to it crossing the SSSI-designated River Wensum, but also because of harms to County Wildlife Sites and established woodland. Recent research has also evidenced the presence of a super-colony of protected barbastelle bats, which has been submitted for consideration for designation as a SSSI. At the time when permission was granted for the NDR Norfolk County Council didn't promote construction of the NWL "because of the environmental impact on the Wensum valley" (NCC website accessed 03.01.18) but that commitment has apparently been put aside now. The flawed concept of 'biodiversity net gain' (BNG) is quoted as a way to ensure the road will be built in "an environmentally responsible way", but there are hugely concerning problems with the BNG approach. Clearly, the damage caused by constructing a major road through established, sensitive and supposedly protected habitats cannot be offset by creation of new habitats and other mitigations.

CPRE Norfolk is working with other concerned partners to oppose the current project. This work is being coordinated by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust and includes ourselves, the Woodland Trust, Stop the Wensum Link, the Norfolk Rivers Trust, Friends of the Earth and the Norfolk and Norwich Naturalists' Society.

Chair of CPRE Norfolk receives national award

Chris Dady, Chair of CPRE Norfolk, has received a special award from CPRE's national office. The award was in recognition of the positive impact CPRE Norfolk has had under his stewardship.

Chris has been Chair of the Norfolk branch for a number of years and during this time, through his drive and enthusiasm he has increased the profile of CPRE in the county through interviews on local radio, tv and the press, writing articles for local papers and magazines, and building links with other charities and organisations in the region.

Chris (left in photo) was nominated by and presented with his award by Kevin Jones, Vice-Chair of CPRE Norfolk. The presentation took place at the Trustee's strategy meeting in November as part of Volunteer's Week.



You're invited!

To CPRE Norfolk's AGM and Annual Lecture

Join us on Thursday 25th May 2023 when our annual lecture will be given by Wild Ken Hill's Estate Director, Nick Padwick.

Nick will be discussing the current state of soils around the UK and at Wild Ken Hill, where improved soil health has enhanced the health of crops grown there, but what are the lessons to be learned?

Nick was originally a farmer's son from Hampshire. In 23 years, Nick has managed several farming estates, as well as the flagship Stoughton Estate in Leicestershire, where he and his wife developed the Farm to Fork project. In 2010, he moved to the South Pickenham Estate where he managed 7,500 acres with a variety of farm systems. Since 2018, Nick has managed the Ken Hill Estate, which hosts the nationally acclaimed Wild Ken Hill nature restoration and regenerative farming project, as well as leading the Peddar Farming business, which manages over 5,000 acres in West Norfolk. Nick is passionate about soil and is a graduate of the Soil Food Web and Soil Laboratory Technician.

Nick's illuminating lecture will be held in The Green Room, at Easton College at 6.45pm and will follow CPRE Norfolk's AGM at 6.15pm.

Doors will be open from 6pm and the event is anticipated to finish by 7.30pm. There will be time after the talk for questions from the audience.

To book your tickets visit - <https://www.cprenorfolk.org.uk/get-involved/events/cpre-norfolk-annual-lecture-agm-2023/>



Attendees at the Norfolk Nature Day, Great Massingham

Nature Day brings experts together

CPRE Norfolk held its first-ever Norfolk Nature Day on 15 October 2022. Over 30 people attended the event celebrating community-led nature recovery projects in and around the village of Great Massingham and further afield. The effectiveness of nature-based collaborations between landowner and parish received special attention too. Speakers at the event included organiser Laura Hampton, from CPRE Norfolk, Oliver Birkbeck, host and owner of the Little Massingham Estate and founding member of WildEast, local naturalist Julian Moulton, Tim Baldwin from the Great Massingham Biodiversity Project, and Andy Millar from Natural England.

Those attending the event were treated to a tour of some of the 500-acre, resorted acid heathland, Little Massingham Estate as well as a tour of the Great Massingham Biodiversity Project, followed by refreshments in the Dabbling Duck pub.

Our sincere thanks to everyone involved in making the event such a success.



The importance of soil

CPRE Norfolk Trustee, Dr Pallavi Devulapalli gave a talk on the topic of soil at Necton Village Hall on Wednesday, 1 March at the invitation of the Dereham and District Tangent Club.



Dr Pallavi Devulapalli with Yvonne Wilson, Group Chair, Dereham & District Tangent Club

Contact us if you're looking for a speaker for your event - we may be able to help!

Dr Devulapalli spoke about the importance of soil as a source of life on earth and of our food, as the single largest ecosystem, and as a significant carbon and water store. She highlighted disastrous soil losses, which occurs at a such high rates due to the loss of soil organic matter (SOM), which is in turn leading to desertification and erosion.

Soil which is rich in SOM can act as a water reservoir for dry seasons and as a flood defence in wet periods, whereas soil devoid of SOM has very little ability to retain/absorb or store water. Dr Devulapalli demonstrated the properties of soil for the club by means of a simple experiment using items from the kitchen.

Stimulating questions followed the talk, with several people wanting to know what more they could do to help. The advice was to lobby and be a voice for our soil, to buy peat free compost, compost your own garden and kitchen waste, avoid spraying pesticides, plant for wildlife, garden using no-dig methods, and to support efforts to make government policy reward farmers and landowners for 'doing the right thing' for soil health.

The audience of about 22 members listened with rapt attention as they were informed about the vital work CPRE members and volunteers do in protecting the soil and the countryside.

Julie Rowlett, a member of the group, said "It was an interesting and thought-provoking talk, that ensured further discussion within our group. The members were happy to donate to the cause - hoping to help the future." Dr Devulapalli was thanked by the Group Chair Yvonne Wilson, who presented her with a cheque for CPRE Norfolk.

Rewilding schools

CPRE Norfolk trustees Sandra Walmsley and Pallavi Devulapalli visited Marham Village Pre-school in January 2023 to present the school with a cheque for £2,000. The grant was made to CPRE Norfolk from The Talent Fund, on behalf of the JJM Fund, to revitalise the school's outside space which will enhance the children's learning of the world around them, as well as encourage local wildlife and biodiversity.

Can you help?

If you can donate plants, time or expertise to this project please contact the Pre-school manager, Mrs Julie Walkey on 07950 753877 or marhamvillagepreschool@hotmail.com



CPRE Norfolk Trustees Sandra Walmsley and Dr Pallavi Devulapalli with staff from Marham Pre-school

Memorial Tree planted for Trustee

On the 15th November, 2022 an elm tree was planted in memory of former CPRE Norfolk Vice-President and Norfolk County Councillor, Rosalie Monbiot.

The tree was planted in the chapel gardens of Mannington Hall with the kind permission of Lady Walpole, who also attended the ceremony. Paying their respects were representatives of CPRE Norfolk, and Diana Cooke, wife of Rosalie's late brother Hereward Cooke. Diana and Chris Dady, Chair of CPRE Norfolk both spoke about the great contribution Rosalie had made to the county. A plaque generously donated by Ducker's Funeralcare, Aylsham was placed next to the tree.

The beautiful gardens of Mannington Hall will be open once again in Spring 2023 and your CPRE Norfolk membership allows adults half price entrance.

A map of the memorial tree's planted in Mannington Hall's chapel gardens can be found on the 'Resources' page of the CPRE Norfolk website.



CPRE Norfolk Trustees & Staff with Diana Cooke

Did you know?

CPRE Norfolk plant's a memorial tree at Mannington Hall for every bequest that we receive? The trees are a beautiful, growing testimony of our supporter's generosity and support.

Find out how you can help us continue to promote, enhance and protect the countryside you know and love for years to come by leaving a gift to CPRE Norfolk in your will by visiting our website or contacting info@cprenorfolk.org.uk

Final 100 club winners

Our final 100 club draw took place in December 2022 and the last lucky winners were:

£65	Professor T O'Riordan
£40	Mr P Warnes
£20	Miss B Yates
£15	Mr T Cook
£10	Mrs G Ching

We would to thank all our members who have supported the 100 club.



People

Ian Francis

We welcomed Ian as the new Honorary Secretary for CPRE Norfolk in 2022. Originally from Australia, Ian has lived in Norfolk for almost 20 years. With a strong background in Risk Management and technology, Ian has worked for IBM globally and now focuses on Environmental, Social, Governance systems to help drive sustainability change to the corporate world. In his spare time Ian loves spending time in the Norfolk countryside and coast with his wife and two teenage children.

Tony Kendall

We were saddened to learn of the passing of Tony Kendall (Brigadier RE) in November 2022. Tony was Hon Secretary and Chair of the CPRE West Norfolk group. Our thoughts and condolences are with his family.

Heather Tyrrell

CPRE Norfolk would like to give special thanks to Heather Tyrrell who served as a trustee from January 2021 until January 2023, as she steps down to spend more time with her family. Despite joining the charity in the midst of the covid pandemic, Heather made such a positive impact, from joining the judging panel for our 2021 CPRE awards, to launching our Christmas card fundraising scheme. Heather will be missed by all of us at CPRE Norfolk.

Jia Rohilla

We would also like to give thanks to volunteer Jia Rohilla, who you may remember from our autumn newsletter where she spoke about her role as CPRE Norfolk's social media volunteer. Jia is about to undertake her final exams in her Bachelor's degree in Environmental Sciences at the University of East Anglia. We wish Jia all the best in her exams and her future career.

If you are interested in becoming a trustee or volunteering with CPRE Norfolk, do please get in touch: info@cprenorfolk.org.uk



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