



Campaign to Protect
Rural England

**NORTH SOMERSET DISTRICT
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Housing proposals will lead to loss of Green Belt for North Somerset

A new settlement the size of Clevedon is to be built in Green Belt as an urban extension South West of Bristol according to a report from a Panel of Government Inspectors on the Regional Spatial Strategy for the South West of England 2006-2026. The proposals are part of the Government's agenda to build 3 million new homes by 2020 with 106,350 being in the Avon area. The latest figures are:

Bath & North East Somerset 18,800

Bristol 30,000

South Gloucestershire 30,800

North Somerset 26,750

The North Somerset numbers include 9,000 homes to the South West of Bristol, 12,000 within and as an urban extension of Weston-super-Mare and 5,750 in the remainder of North Somerset. The precise location of these developments is still to be decided. Green Belt is also to be lost at both the Port and Airport.

Bristol Green Belt has served us well preventing urban sprawl into North Somerset and helping Bristol retain its identity. It has recognised Bristol's unique location and brings the countryside close to the city - this will be lost. It should be remembered that Green Belt policy does not prevent development but requires it to be sensitive to the landscape and show 'exceptional circumstances'. CPRE feel that this should continue to protect the our valuable countryside.

One of the most worrying aspects of the Panels Report is the proposal for no phasing of brownfield land. This will allow developers to build in North Somerset on Green Belt and green field before reusing previously developed land (brownfield) in Bristol. We believe this will do nothing to regenerate South Bristol.

CPRE are deeply concerned at the pace and scale of the development. North Somerset already has much catching up to do as a result of recent new housing adding to out commuting and putting pressure on the present infrastructure leading to a shortage of local school places, the closure of Post Offices and local shops. The lack of convenient, affordable and reliable public transport across North Somerset means increased car use with more congestion, noise and air pollution.

The Panel Report is currently with the Secretary of State for Communities, Hazel Blears who is expected to issue her proposed changes to the Panel Report over the next few months.

Further information can be found on our local website and the Panel Report can be found on the website of the South West Regional Assembly at

http://www.southwest-ra.gov.uk/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=3627

Georgie Bigg

Bristol International Airport

Airports, including Bristol International Airport (BIA) have certain special development rights called 'permitted development'. The purpose of this is to enable them to make relatively small development changes within their own operational boundary without the need for local authority permission. Just days before Christmas, Bristol International Airport submitted what seemed quite an ordinary 'permitted development' application for a 'walkway'.

This application though was not what it appeared! The 'walkway' proposed is 455m long and up to 10m high. It will be highly visible from the south including the Mendip Hills AONB. CPRE believe it is outside the scope of 'permitted development' and should be subject to a full planning application and an environmental impact assessment. Full details of the proposals for application number 07/P/3214/PAI can be found on North Somerset Council website

<http://www.n-somerset.gov.uk/> and go to Environment - Planning & Development Control - Search & Submit - 07/P/3214/PAI

Responses from Parish Councils, local groups and individuals would be helpful to ensure this major application goes properly through the democratic process. Please ask for this application to be considered through formal full planning procedures and not as 'permitted development'. As 'permitted development' there will be no scope for any planning obligations (Section 106 agreements) - so nothing back to the local community as part of this major development.

Since lodging the above, BIA have submitted a report concluding that an Environmental Impact Assessment will not be required. We disagree. To ensure the environmental issues are addressed please respond to application number 08/P/0789/EIA via the same method as above.

Georgie Bigg

Management of HGV's in the South Area of North Somerset

The work of CPRE, together with TMTV (Traffic management for the Villages) has continued throughout the last year. After several years of campaigning by CPRE and TMTV, North Somerset Council has made the important decision to implement the weight restriction on the A368 and B3134 and to manage HGV's to use the recommended freight routes. The restriction has not yet been put in place because of several difficulties, which have had to be overcome concerning the details of the scheme. These difficulties have mainly arisen because both the A368 and the B3134 cross over County borders neighbouring BaNES and Somerset County Council (SCC) are therefore affected. CPRE and TMTV held consultations with the relevant BaNES Councillors last September and they are now working up appropriate signage proposals. However SCC have not, to date, been so cooperative regarding the signage and the alternative ways of dealing with this have had to be sought. CPRE and TMTV have also had meeting with Avon and Somerset Police. It now looks as though workable solutions are on the table and that in the not too distant future the weight restrictions will be put in place. The villages of Blagdon, Upper Langford, Churchill, Compton Martin, Ubley and West Harptree will benefit directly from the scheme and of course Burrington Combe one of the gems of the Mendip Hills AONB will be become more rural again. Indirectly, Congresbury, Lower Langford, Stock, Churchill, Sanford and Banwell will see an easing of HGV traffic too. Hopefully in the next newsletter we shall be able to report that the implementation is imminent.

Stephen Edwards, CPRE and TMTV

Severn Barrage - Good Idea or Bad?

Concerns about global warming have revived interest in a Severn Barrage to generate renewable electricity. The Government has published the terms of reference for a two year study to determine what to build and is seeking the views of anyone who feels they have an interest for or against the various options.

CPRE's Southwest region energy group met in Taunton last month to consider its Response to the consultation. Representatives from a number of interested organisations had been invited including the wildlife trusts, the National Trust and the Mendip Society. There were presentations on two of the proposed barrages and tidal lagoons. This was followed by a presentation from the Government's Department for Business Enterprise and Regulatory Reform (BERR), which is to run the consultation and study. There followed a most interesting discussion. The afternoon was a CPRE only session to decide what to do and a draft position paper is now in preparation. Concern was expressed that a barrage will destroy the natural habitat in the Severn Estuary that has national and European wildlife protection designations. On the other hand there is the view that global warming makes protection of the estuary's wildlife habitat a luxury that we can't afford and it will destroy the estuary's wildlife habitat anyway. In between is the idea that the immense power of the estuary can be harnessed without destroying the wildlife habitats using lagoons and/or submerged water turbines. However it was pointed out that the terms of reference specifically excluded the study of submerged turbines without good reason.

What CPRE's position should be is an interesting question. Whatever we may feel as individuals about the need to develop renewable energy sources should CPRE argue for the least environmentally damaging options?

The Severn Tidal Power Group's barrage proposal is being promoted most strongly. It would run from Brean Down, between Steep Holm and Flat Holm to Lavernock Point. In addition to destruction of wildlife habitat it would increase the industrial content of the landscape over a wide area, including the Mendip Hills. It would be the largest civil engineering project that the UK has ever seen and would generate 5% of the UK's electricity, the equivalent of three very large conventional power stations. The Government's preference appears to be for the project to be lead and funded from private capital. However, the project is so large that there may be difficulty finding private funding as the barrier is intended to last for 120 years and private funders require a payback in a much shorter period.

BERR plans to publish its scoping study in the autumn. Then there will be the first phase, which, amongst other things, will determine if there are any issues that would prevent the project proceeding. If there are no "stop" issues the second study phase will proceed and build on the first phase and enable a selection of preferred option.

More information about the Government's consultation is to be found on www.berr.gov.uk/energy/sources/renewables/explained/severntidalpower/page41473.html.

Dave Gray

Growing in the Countryside

My roots are in the Town but my heart is in the Country. Born in Fulham London pre world W.W II. The only green I knew was Kensington Gardens, The Bishops Park and Wimbledon Common. The Victorian Terraced Houses tended to have a YARD rather than a garden and sunlight, in many cases, was a stranger to the yard as the streets in were close together and houses three stories high with an attic and a basement.

Imagine my bewilderment and delight When in 1944, at the height of the devastation caused by the V2 rockets from Hitler's Germany, my father decided to send my mother, brother, sister and I to a small village near Newmarket, where my paternal grandmother was born.

The village has the strange name of Upend and consisted of about a dozen or so thatched cottages in groups of two or four, a timber built cottage, two farms a pub, and a chapel. There was of course the Squires House where my brother worked on upper farm.

The Cottage had no facilities at all, drinking water came from a well in the centre of the village about a quarter of a mile away from our cottage and water for other purposes came from water butts collecting from the roofs of out houses or from a spring in a neighbour's garden. To the front of the cottage was a small plot of land for general use also a small orchard that contained fruit trees:- an eating apple, Bramley apple, Pear, Plumb crab apple, damson, also currant bushes and rhubarb with leaves big enough for me to hide under. To the rear of the cottage was $\frac{1}{4}$ acre of land containing a whole variety of vegetables; most cottages did not have much land attached to the cottage so they were allocated an allotment by the landowner.

I could go on and on about my passion for the countryside and how that episode in my life awakened my awareness to nature and its beauty that is our heritage. Part of that heritage are fields and small parcels of land divided into strips for the use of individuals who wish to grow fruit, vegetables and flowers, that is of course ALLOTMENTS. Most people believe that allotments began in the mid 1800s. But consider! Our history, in Saxon times, the Lords, noblemen and landed knights Allotted land to the peasants to cultivate and provide for their masters as well as themselves. In later times the poor had access to common land to graze their cattle and in summer to grow food. So allotments have been part of our heritage for well over 1000 years. Britain being an island during two world wars could have starved had it not been for the fact that every piece of suitable land was made into allotments or allocated for growing food.

Today allotments are in danger in spite of a growing demand for them and the present trend towards healthy eating. Land is at a premium with demands for housing and commercial development. Local authorities it seems rarely consider the heritage and social value of the land they own when it comes to the potential value for housing and commercial development.

However there is way to include allotments in all new developments there is provision by using a 106 agreement to provide allotments. MP Tony Baldry is seeking support for a cross party bill to provide allotments under this agreement. So please contact your local MP and ask him to support Tony Baldry see <http://www.tonybaldry.org.uk/record.jsp?type=news&ID=302>

Gerry Smart, CPRE North Somerset, Weston Super Mare Horticultural Soc, SWCAA, CIC