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Rural Services Network Rural Planning Seminar 5 November 2025

Navigating the new planning framework:
issues for rural communities

Paul Miner MA MRTPI FRGS
Head of Policy & Planning



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Our planning system
is changing.
Here's how we want
to shape it.

1

Prioritise genuinely affordable homes.

Affordable homes are the foundation of a healthy life, yet our countryside is facing a hidden housing crisis. Homelessness is rising, wages are stagnating, and social housing waitlists are decades long. We need more genuinely affordable homes.

2

Give 'brownfield-first' some teeth.

Recycling brownfield sites is the most sustainable use of land. Despite there being enough brownfield land for 1.2 million homes, we're seeing fewer homes delivered on these sites.





3

Protect – and enhance – the Green Belt.

The Green Belt offers us space to grow food, connect with nature, and supports villages and towns from being chipped away at to make room for housing away from services, jobs, and harming the environment.

4

Protect our landscapes as we transition to renewables.

Climate change threatens our countryside, food security, and rural communities. We need a rapid shift to domestic clean energy, with rooftop solar being a key solution. There's enough roof space in the UK to meet 60% of our solar targets, preserving our countryside for farming and nature.

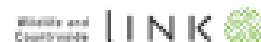
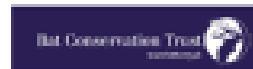
5

Support nature recovery and strategic land use.

We're asking our countryside to work harder than ever before, and we need to think strategically about how we best use our land. We are one of the most nature-depleted countries in the world, and the countryside should – and can – be a source of clean air and water, rich in diverse habitats to support nature restoration.



Better Planning Coalition



Planning And Infrastructure Bill

Key points – planning committees

- We support mandatory training of committee members and have no issue with setting size limits
- Arguments that committees stifle necessary development ignore the reality that most planning applications are approved and in line with government performance indicators
- A national scheme of delegation should not set arbitrary thresholds but could usefully require agreement between committee chairs and the Head of Planning as to what items should be referred. These should include consideration of schemes raised by parish and town councils
- Other proposals – we welcome Spatial Development Strategies but have concerns about a number of aspects of the proposed Nature Restoration Fund, shared across the environmental NGO community



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Revised National Planning Policy Framework

- Housing, housing, housing!
- Proposed changes to help bring forward new towns as well as new national development management policies (NDMPs)
- Consultation expected later this year



New updated planning applications guide

Published in April 2025. Update to our popular, long-established joint guide with NALC. Available on CPRE and NALC websites.

STEP 1 | Engage in the pre-application consultation process

STEP 2 | Review and assess the planning application

STEP 3 | Understand the planning context

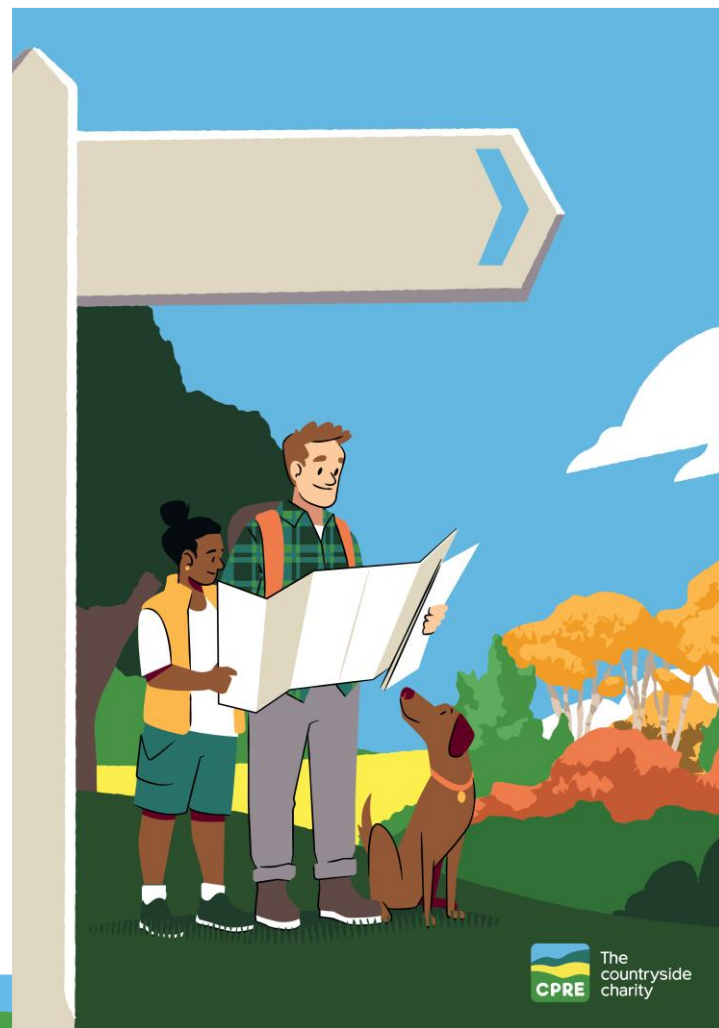
STEP 4 | Choose whether to respond

STEP 5 | Put your comments in writing

STEP 6 | Gather support

STEP 7 | Register to speak at planning committee

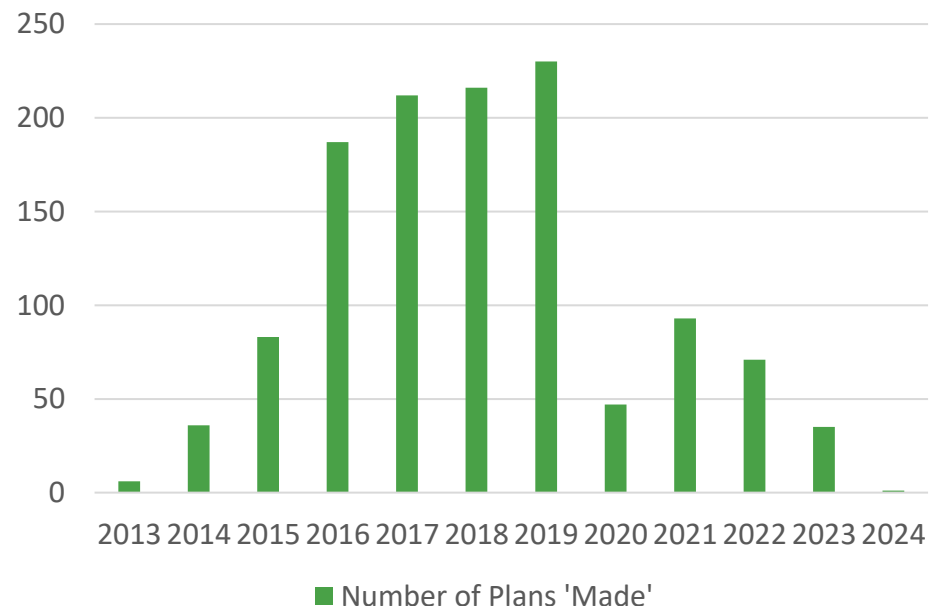
STEP 8 | Review and understand the decision



Key Issues in rural areas – parish planning

- Neighbourhood plans are key to setting what people in a village or town want from a development
- But many neighbourhood plans could wither on the vine as no longer supported
- Parish councils are statutory consultees – scope to work with them on ‘neighbourhood priority statements’
- We’ll update neighbourhood planning guidance later this year

Number of 'Made' Plans since 2011



Key Issues in rural areas – land use strategy

- Land use framework: scope for community organisations to work with farmers more to influence how farmland is used
- Renewed emphasis on brownfield regeneration: enough land for 1.4 million new homes
- Large solar farms arouse significant opposition in some rural areas and we prefer rooftop solar as an alternative
- But solar farms may be more acceptable where landscape impact mitigated and either (i) community owned or (ii) a community fund with climate positive actions



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Key Issues for CPRE – transport

- Large housing developments in rural areas mis-sold in terms of transport impacts (Transport for New Homes)
- NPPF sets a high bar on transport grounds for refusal – in our view too high
- But scope for new developments to help contribute to better rural bus services



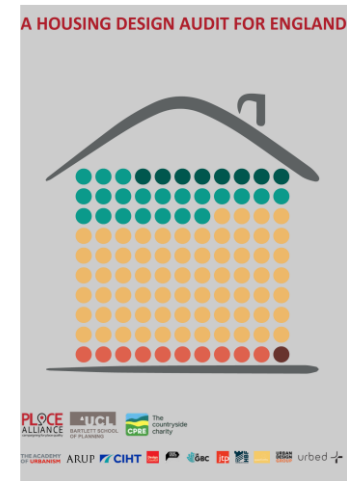
Key Issues in rural areas – Affordable Housing

- Most new housing built in rural areas currently is not 'affordable', whatever definition you choose to use
- There should be a greater focus on 'mixed tenure' including social rent in all new developments
- Several CPRE groups have supported development on 'rural exception sites', they are likely to be easier in areas where the local authority has done a robust needs assessment



Key Issues in rural areas – housing design

- A Housing Design Audit for England (CPRE/UCL January 2020) found a small national overall improvement compared to 2004-7
- Audit based on industry standard Building for Life 12
- But three quarters of the audited projects were mediocre or poor; one in five should've been refused outright
- Design quality gets worse the further you get from London, but economics shouldn't be an excuse
- Main issues were car dependency, lack of response to local character, poor environmental performance
- Scope to influence through either NPs or local design codes



Science & Environment

New UK housing 'dominated by roads'

By Roger Harrabin
BBC environment analyst

21 January 2020

Climate change



Planners and engineers have been rapped for allowing new housing developments to be dominated by roads.

A report says too many highways engineers are still approving roads that do not fully account for pedestrians and cyclists.

It follows a government survey suggesting an increase in public concern over the impact of cars on people's health and the environment.



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Key Issues for CPRE – Light and noise pollution

- Dark skies are increasingly valued in rural areas
- Upward light pollution may be getting better, but still concerns as to downward
- Developers should show how they are addressing it in individual schemes
- CPRE's tranquillity maps can help show the most valued areas



Parish and town councils and CPRE membership

- Parish councils join CPRE for a variety of reasons. The main one is that our local groups can provide a source of sensible and objective information on a full range of planning matters as well as issues such as light pollution, tranquillity, litter and water.
- Often parishes turn to local CPRE's when faced by a major, or unpopular planning application.
- To join go to <https://www.cpre.org.uk/get-involved/donations-and-membership/become-a-member/>.
- For more information, please visit our website via <https://www.cpre.org.uk/about-us/who-we-are/local-groups/>
- Our membership fees for Parish Councils are now £60, but your ongoing membership and support will greatly increase what we are able to achieve. Thank you. If you have any questions, feel free to pop us an email to supportercare@cpre.org.uk or call us on 020 7981 2870. We are open from 9am – 5pm Monday – Friday.



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Thank you



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