

Warwickshire Outlook

Views And News From
The Campaign To Protect Rural England

Winter 2023

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The countryside charity
Warwickshire



Office News

By Myles Thornton



A busy few months for the office, with events to arrange, visits to schedule and meetings to organise.

Most importantly, a team from the Branch consisting of our Chairman, Judith Cobham Lowe, President, Sir Andrew Watson, Technical Secretary, Mark Sullivan, Planning Consultant extraordinaire, Gerald Kells and me met with both Councils preparing the South Warwickshire Local Plan, Warwick and Stratford on Avon DCs. Armed with Gerald's report, we met first with SDC's leader Susan Juned and George Cowcher, Planning and Economic Development portfolio head at the offices in Elizabeth House. We were well received and much of what we were saying about housing numbers- that 35,000 was too many and the actual need might be achieved through 'windfalls' alone – seem to align with Liberal Democrat thinking. There was though the small matter of getting the professional staff on board, thinking along the same lines as the new administration.



Our meeting with Warwick District Council, though not 'face to face' but via Zoom was equally productive. The same team met with Council Leader, Ian Davison, Kyn Aizlewood, Matt Collins and Chris King, all represented on the advisory group dealing with the SWLP. Again we were pleasantly surprised by the response to our presentation of Gerald Kells' report.

We offered to be available at any time the Councils wished to discuss matters further and hope the silence to date does not mean they are changing their minds or having them changed for them by the 'professionals'. More later as it develops, particularly with regard to the setting of the policies of the Plan.

You will read later in the magazine that we held successful visits to Madresfield House and Stanway House (thank you Liz for organising!). Both were well attended and as far as I can ascertain enjoyed!

We also had our Annual General Meeting in August. Held at a new venue for us, Guys Cliffe House, due to a diary mix up, but it worked very well. We welcomed the new National CPRE Chief Executive, Roger Mortlock, as our guest speaker and again more later in this issue.

I am very pleased to tell you that we have a new planning representative for Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council area, John Irving. John is in the process of winding down from a successful career as a solicitor mainly dealing with commercial contracts and corporate deals – so Nuneaton and Bedworth's planning matters should be child's play for him!

Happily, our new Chairman, Judith Cobham Lowe has agreed to write a short piece for Outlook, introducing herself and explaining how she came to CPRE Warwickshire and a bit about her background. It's our page three.

The annual Fun Ride will have taken place by the time you read this and here's hoping that it went off without a hitch. Looking at the weather forecast for a week hence I see lightning and rain so I'm presently looking a little like someone playing the old game "Twister", tying myself up in knots trying to cross fingers and toes!

Huge thanks to all for your continuing support for the Branch: it is so appreciated.

Meet the Chairman

It all began with a Park and Ride. Or rather a proposed one, for Leamington Spa: 1,000 vehicle spaces, bus interchange and garage, plus 24-hr floodlighting. And all that on the wheatfields next to the family home since 1995. We challenged the need for 40% more parking than tourist magnet Stratford. But we'd never have won, if someone hadn't introduced us to CPRE Warwickshire and their incredible Planning Team. After that, it seemed right to say 'yes' when they asked a few years later if I'd become a Trustee.

1995 was the year when, as a London street-rat, I married a countryman and acquired a young stepson, a derelict C17th Tithe Barn and a 188-mile commute to my job as MD of a London corporate strategy practice. Alongside the rebuilding, we immediately set about creating a 70-foot duckpond, a wild meadow, and native woodland. Today, while drafting this, I've watched the deer family tentatively coming out of the woods to drink, an ever-optimistic young heron playing 'statues' between the bulrushes in the duckpond, and more than 20 late-brood swallows gathering on the telegraph wires.

But back to that 188-mile commute. Running a London-based strategy consultancy, working in 19 countries, can sound glamorous and often was. (Even if it does kill forever the idea of travelling for pleasure, as you step off a Far East flight, realising that to satisfy a client you've just done Bangkok as a day trip). I needed something that would keep me with family and the countryside more. So a year after we moved in, I went for an interview with the IoD Non-Executive Board Appointments service. The interviewer was obviously ex-military. (Good, my husband's old world). It was going well, when he suddenly emoted: "I was SO in love with your husband's late wife!" I was still trying to work out the right response when he grinned and went on, "But we were both aged 5. We used to walk hand-in-hand to Rheindalen Garrison School". (I got the job!)

Since that interview in 1996, 14 different NED roles have included being appointed by the Chancellor as the first woman NED in HM Treasury, then five years in the Department for Business. And I'm still a member of an All-Party Parliamentary Group. That may at least be of some use if we need to make CPRE Warwickshire's voice heard in SW1.

The most unusual role, which I still hold, is as Director - then for a year the first woman Master in 700 years - of the Worshipful Company of Goldsmiths, one of the City's ancient trade guilds.



Goldsmiths is still close to its trade, training apprentices, giving away £4mn in charitable grants and hallmarking 2mn articles, annually. The photo was taken at Goldsmiths' Hall on the morning of the Lord Mayor's Show, as I prepared to ride in our 200-year-old coach. (The unicorn, from Goldsmiths' Coat of Arms, was recommended to entertain the children during the inevitable bottlenecks along the 3-mile route. (It worked well, except when they tried to feed it biscuits.)

So what of the future as your new Chairman? I've learned so much from my amazingly knowledgeable colleagues, particularly my predecessor, Sir Andrew Watson, and will build on that with them. I'm passionate about the relevance of the countryside, for food production, for wildlife, native trees and hedges, and as a green lung for towns and cities, where people can come to restore their wellbeing (provided they have a passing acquaintance with the Countryside Code). Yes of course, there will be change. But - right development, right place, right infrastructure. You'll tell us when it's not, whether it's 35,000 more houses in South Warwickshire, a 220-acre solar 'farm', or polluted local rivers. Or another 1,000-space Park and Ride.

Judith Cobham Lowe

Planning Report

By Jean Walters

The Solihull Local Plan Review

The Solihull Local Plan has been on hold since the middle of March to enable changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to be published. However, following the Government's announcement that the outcome of the consultation process has been further delayed until at least September 2023, Solihull Council has just published a Local Plan Review Update which confirms that the Local Plan remains on hold.

As a consequence of the above delays, it is not surprising that some developers have decided not to wait any longer for the Local Plan site allocations to be confirmed but to immediately proceed with the submission of planning applications. They are entitled to make an application at any time even though it would normally be expected that they await the outcome of the Local Plan Review process. The developers, Persimmon for site BL1 north at Dickens Heath for 120 dwellings are also about to submit a planning application ahead of the adoption of the Local Plan and are seeking public comment and so are Taylor Wimpey on the Dog Kennel Lane site BL2 south Shirley for 850 dwellings.

Our view is that, until the outcome of the changes to the planning system are known, which may not be until late Autumn, and given that the Local Plan has been suspended, the Council should not approve any of these applications until the Local Plan has been adopted, as they are all in the Green Belt at present. As an interim measure, the Council has approved a report which sets out how it will deal with any planning applications that are made on draft Local Plan site allocations ahead of the new Local Plan being adopted. The main thrust of this report is to require such applications to be made in the context of a comprehensive masterplan which will show how key infrastructure requirements for the whole of each site will be delivered. The Council has also stated it is expected that such masterplans will have been the subject of consultation with local residents.

Planning applications

2023/01520 A planning application has been submitted for the Barratts Farm site BC1 at Balsall Common (Ref. 2023/01520) for 970 dwellings, a school and a new road which is a proposed allocation BC1 in the Local Plan review. Decision awaiting.

2023/01091 Land Rear Of 39 To 43 Birchy Close Dickens Heath Solihull
Erect 6 No. dormer bungalows with 3 No. garages access road. This proposal does not accord with the Council's Backland Development Policy and there are highway access and drainage difficulties. Decision awaiting.

2023/01172 (Associated to 2022/01866 123, Dickens Heath Road 8 detached houses).

Two storey extension to dwelling and associated works including new vehicular access from Dickens Heath Road. This is an over-intensive and unsympathetic design to the Locally Listed farm building. Decision awaited.

2023/00909/TPO Priorsgate 100 Birchy Close Dickens Heath Solihull B90 1QL Applicant sought permission to fell 12 mature trees. Refused.

2022/01898 Lowbrook Lane, Tidbury Green Solihull B90 1QS9 No. dwellings. Approved.

2022/02283 for the demolition of existing farm buildings and the erection of 5 dwellings, formation of new access and associated landscaping at Lugtrout Lane. This is part of the housing allocation site SO1. Decision awaited.

2022/02282 Development land at Maxstoke Lane, Meriden of 75 affordable dwellings and associated works on land at Meriden Site ME1 in the Local Plan. A revised site plan has been submitted. Awaiting decision.

2022/02581 Land East of Hodgetts Lane Berkswell Solihull. Installation of a flexible electricity storage facility to supplement the local electricity grid. This is obviously a very intrusive structure in the Green Belt. Awaiting decision.

2023/00222 Stripes Hill House, Warwick Road, Knowle, Solihull B93 0DT A retirement community of up to 170 extra care units and green space. The Site is proposed to be released from the Green Belt as forming part of allocation KN2 through the emerging Local Plan Review. The Plan is currently at examination and so for the purposes of this application, the Site remains within the Green Belt. Decision Awaited.

2023/00013. Land North East of Berkswell Railway Station, Balsall Common. Submission under Schedule 17 of the High-Speed Rail Act 2017 for works comprising a 425m viaduct structure has been approved.

HS2 haul route through Balsall Common along Waste Lane and Kenilworth Road was "called in" for determination by the SoS and approved.



By Linda Brown

ENVIRONMENT AGENCY APPLICATION: NPS/WR/038146
CEMEX UK Materials Limited applied to vary licence to increase the abstraction of water from underground strata at Berkswell Quarry, Warwickshire.

Objected on grounds too near HS2 site traffic, Severn Trent Water Company already working on how new railway will affect water and sewer network. Many wildlife sites in area would be affected.

PL/2023/01455/VAR – Removal of agricultural occupancy condition on The Orchards, Walsal End Lane. Hampton in Arden, Solihull B92 OHU. Been used for last few years as toffee apple producer for 2 months of the year and manufacturing rest of year. Parish Council has no objections to condition being removed.

PL/2023/01438/VAR – Removal of agricultural occupancy condition on Grimshaw Lodge, Hampton Road, Knowle, Solihull, B93 ONX. Not been used for agricultural purposes since given in 1980s. Used to rent out but to no one with agricultural employment. Legal action taken in 1980s by Solihull Council but papers have been lost so no reference to what happened can be found.

OBJECTED to both applications: Neither has been used for the true implication of the occupancy condition given full time if at all. CPRE needs to give firm guidance on the issue of agricultural occupancies as people get money off purchase prices for this condition and it must not be abused.

PL/2023/01595/PPFL – Installation of battery storage system (30 battery storage containers) at Beechwood Farm, Hodgetts Lane, Berkswell.

OBJECTED: In Green Belt on agriculture land of Grade 3b which can be used all year round for grass and cereal production. Right of way around west and north of the site on field boundaries. Utilitarian building which does not fit in with landscape in rural area. Water and soil contamination from fires or seepage of lithium into ground.

Goods Vehicle Operators' Licence application from resident at 368 Tilehouse Lane, Tidbury Green, Shirley, B90 1PX, to run drive business from 74 Dickens Heath Road, Shirley, Solihull, B90 1QE, as an operating centre for 2 goods vehicles and 1 trailer. Both properties are in a residential area of the Ward.

ACTION: Sent to relevant two Parish Councils to take action if they so desired.

PL/2023/01503/PPFL – Erection of substation of 8 ultra-rapid electric vehicle charge points and associated

electrical equipment. Notcutts Garden Centre, Stratford Road, Shirley, SOLIHULL, B90 4EN.

ACTION: Whereas the application is well placed and has been approved after 21 day period, Public Protection have raised no objections nor have Highways who see it as having no severe impact on public highway safety. I disagree as electric fires are very hard to extinguish and this application site is very near to a newly built office block, next to the petrol/diesel site and the exit road from the TESCO store and Notcutts Garden Centre as well as being alongside the main Stratford Road which leads to the M42 motorway. If there was a fire and the application was originally for 6 chargers but has been increased to 8 this would be catastrophic and safety measures need to be put into place. There is also an issue with water and soil contamination if there was a fire and it was left to run itself out, as has happened in certain cases. The lithium from the chargers would poison the land and water killing wildlife and being dangerous to humans. No reference is made to catering for caravan, motorhome or trailer cars being serviced which would undoubtedly be needed for people coming off the motorway to charge up to continue to south west/Welsh and M40 destinations.

CANAL funding is on the agenda at present with Government issuing information on future funding for the waterways system which has been run on charitable lines since 2012. The funding to 2037, with conditions, is not considered enough and I have written to my MP for clarification on what the plans are for supporting the waterways. I have had two replies, same information in both, which are not satisfactory. There has been another petition for more funding from Canals and Waterways which I have signed and we will see what reply that gives.

There are various housing applications I am dealing with at present. I am waiting for Parish Council replies to see how they view them before writing to SBC Planners.



BBC Photo credit

PYLON INVASION

By Dr Phil Bratby BSc PhD ARCS MNucl, a Devon CPRE Trustee

In 1938 the Council for the Preservation of Rural England, as CPRE was then known, made a short promotional film which was shown in cinemas throughout the UK. Not only was it advertising the charity, but the film was highlighting the need for this country to designate national parks and urging public support. One of the key aims was to protect the unspoilt countryside from pylons. To quote from the film:

Let us have the great open country. For country like this the CPRE has been fighting a battle for many years, fighting to preserve such unspoilt beauty as this, from unsightly pylons.

CPRE had indeed been battling to protect the countryside from unsightly pylons since its inception in 1926, with many eminent people joining the cause. The Times letters page from the 1920s and 30s would regularly feature the issue. The matter was of great importance to CPRE.

But now, nearly 100 years later, and as we approach the centenary of CPRE itself, it appears that the countryside will be faced with more unsightly pylons, not because of the basic aim of enabling everybody in the country to have electricity, but this time because of the need to expand the grid as a result of the government's pledge to reach Net Zero.

Today, new solid T-pylons are being introduced rather than continuing to use the existing lattice pylons, the ones with which we are all familiar. These T-pylons are very controversial, with local residents saying that they are noisier than their predecessors, interfere with WiFi, damage the value of their homes and have also resulted in the closure of some local tourist businesses. It is also claimed that being solid structures, the T-Pylons are more of an eyesore than the traditional lattice pylons.

In the early days of the use of electricity (the 1900s) there were no common standards, and the supply of electricity was fragmented, with towns and cities having their own power stations and no standard voltages or frequencies. Construction of the national grid started in the 1920s, the aim being to link the power stations together and to ensure that electricity could be delivered across the whole country with common standards. It ultimately enabled the transfer of electricity from the big power stations in the Midlands and North of England (where there



was plenty of coal and cooling water) to the London area where demand for electricity was highest. It used the design of lattice pylons that we are familiar with today. The national grid was a very efficient system and in the 1950s the maximum voltage grid lines were

upgraded from 132kV (132,000 volts), firstly to 275kV and then to 400kV. The national grid worked very well and reliably for decades, with bigger and more efficient power stations being built closer to the demand centres, keeping transmission costs and electricity costs low.

However, the introduction of intermittent renewable energy generators, such as wind turbines, meant that a lot of electricity was generated remotely from the major demand locations. This resulted in the need for new grid lines, such as the sub-sea cables between Scotland and Wales or Scotland and Yorkshire. In addition, the intermittent nature of these renewables means that they have low capacity factors. In other words the average power output is much less than the installed capacity (the peak power). For example the average power of solar farms is about 10% of the peak power, the average power of onshore wind farms is about 20 to 25% of the peak power and the average power of offshore wind farms is about 30 to 40% of the peak power. A grid line connection to a solar farm has to have the capacity to deliver the peak power on a sunny day, but on average it only delivers 10% of the capacity. Thus in order to accommodate that short period when it is really sunny, the grid connection is 10 times bigger than necessary.



Similarly, in order to accommodate the short periods when the wind is blowing strongly the grid connection to an onshore wind farm is about 4 to 5 times bigger and that to an offshore wind farm is about 3 times bigger than necessary. This results in more, bigger grid lines, which is damaging to the landscape, is wasteful and is very costly to electricity consumers.

We now learn that the Department for Energy Security and Net Zero (DESNZ) is devising sweeping planning reforms because the government is increasingly concerned that the growing demand for electricity (as households are forced to switch to electric cars and heat pumps) could outpace the capacity of the national grid. Simultaneously the government is also forcing a massive national expansion in both wind and solar power.

The planning reforms would reduce the time to gain planning consent for new grid lines (consisting of overhead cables and pylons) and mandate government-appointed Planning Inspectors to approve projects regardless of local opposition. Of course as we in Devon are all aware, the grid lines are all built in the countryside, not in cities, so just like with wind farms and solar farms, it is the countryside and people living in the countryside who are affected, whereas city-dwellers remain unaffected (except for bigger electricity bills).

National Grid is very keen on planning reforms which will enable them to build new grid lines wherever they choose. This is because National Grid's profits are tied to the amount of investment it makes in new infrastructure. National Grid has claimed that

it will need to build about seven times as much infrastructure in the next seven or eight years as was built in the last 30 years. Big profits for National Grid then; what a surprise! The government is also very keen on planning reforms because without the new grid lines its plans for Net Zero by 2050 will fail miserably. But it would appear that the government does not care about the impact on the countryside and its landscape or on the people who live in the countryside. Local democracy is being cast aside in pursuit of its NetZero policy, which will inevitably fail as it is unaffordable and depends on technologies which currently do not exist.

So what can we do about the unfolding disaster for the countryside? We know that the main opposition parties are hell-bent on bringing forward even more drastic NetZero plans. So things will not improve after next year's general election, whatever the result. All parties are keen on closing reliable power stations and building more unreliable wind and solar farms. We know that building expensive battery storage facilities will not help - they are akin to putting a sticking plaster on an amputated limb. There are only two possible solutions. One is to convince a majority of MPs of the disaster that their policies will result in. The second is to see what happens if the coming winter is cold with a prolonged wind lull, resulting in widespread power rationing (rolling power cuts) or blackouts - something that we associate with third-world countries. This situation would be a disaster, resulting in many deaths of the vulnerable, but it might bring politicians to their senses. At Devon CPRE we will be trying to educate our Devon MPs.

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FOR THE LOVE OF LATTICE WORK PYLONS!

By Michael Bird, Branch Trustee

I have a confession to make. Probably alone among all my rambling and countryside colleagues I have always regarded the open lattice-work 1960s supergrid pylons to be among the most elegant structures ever to grace the British skyline. As an engineer they positively sing to me. A stress diagram writ large, like a musical score – and not a single redundant note (member) in them!

As for the new T-pylons, I nearly ran my car off the M5 when I caught my first glimpse of these impostors this year. A hideous line of solid gallows-like structures defiling the Somerset levels. Judge Jeffries could certainly have found a use for them on his Bloody Assizes in that treeless landscape. They could only have been conceived by an architect, I thought – never by an engineer!

Existing supergrid pylons have three arms on each side of the lattice tower, each carrying a double line of conductor cables. The new tee-bar pylons have the same number of cables each side but now all

carried in a single diamond-shaped insulating cradle hanging from the ends of the T-bar by a single pin joint! To reduce the load carried by this joint the span between the T-pylons is shortened to about half the average span of lattice towers, therefore requiring twice as many T-pylons per mile – and thus massively increasing their doleful impact upon the landscape



IT'S NOT TOO LATE

By Myles Thornton

I and many Branch members have always opposed HS2 from its inception. I've had blazing rows with my step father about how Luddite-like I am and if the Victorian's thought like me we'd have a steam train running between Stockton and Darlington and that would be the sum total of the UK's rail network.

I guess initially our opposition was as a result of the horror of seeing yet another major transport route going slap bang through the middle of the county. But on reflection we all soon realised the projects worth to travellers was going to be pitifully small. The number of people actually moving between Birmingham city centre and London and vice versa daily was likewise small and would be accommodated on four or five of the trains running between the two cities (HS2 were talking about trains carrying between 500 and 1000 passengers

per train and running four or five trains per hour in each direction). So who exactly was going to use all this additional capacity? Some car users for sure (no plane passengers as there were no scheduled flights between London and Birmingham), but was I, for instance, going to drive to Birmingham central or the National Exhibition Centre to then go on a train to London that saved me all of twenty minutes or was I going to continue to go on Chiltern's trains from Warwick or Parkway and arrive in Marylebone (London's finest station surely?) an hour and a bit later?

Yes, there were one or two die hard rail men in the Branch who kept on proposing an alternative route north to add capacity to the network, opening up and adding to the Great Central Railway, but the idea did not really float.



If you factor in what Covid 19 and the lockdowns have done to people's work patterns, all this extra capacity is simply no longer needed. Just take a look at the car parks at Warwick Parkway. Extended over the years now into two adjacent fields over the road from the station's entrance and a multi storey car park, these, though not empty are woefully underused. It is always possible to park now, whereas pre-covid one was a little anxious about doing so. There was also the absurdity of attaching any importance to gaining twenty minutes of the day travelling (and being at your desk working) and calling it a productivity improvement. Both train companies that run trains between Birmingham and London, Virgin and Chiltern, provide excellent Wi-Fi connectivity and people have always worked at their train desks before they arrive at their work desks. And now of course they do neither but work from their home desks!

My reason for bringing the old HS2 chestnut up once more (it has been a perennial of mine) is that we now have senior Government ministers refusing to say whether the second phase of HS2, Birmingham to Manchester (Birmingham to Leeds was cancelled back in 2021) will actually go ahead. Added to which the Labour party are saying they will need to see full costings for phase 2 before committing to the project. This somewhat contradicts the shadow Labour minister, Nick Thomas-Symonds, saying, "we will build HS2 in full and we will build northern powerhouse rail in full".

So all a bit of a mess then, but good that costs might be known, made public and have someone accountable for. It's worth pointing out that the project has already been rated "unachievable" by the infrastructure watchdog, IPA. Borrowing from the sketch writer, Tim Stanley, its rumoured also to be stopping at Old Oak Common (rather than Euston), "a far flung station close to Wormwood Scrubs". So if you live in Birmingham and pay regular visits to a loved one in prison, the project is potentially going rather well. For the rest of us it is simply an

enormous white elephant. So isn't it time we simply scrapped the whole thing, phases 1 and 2. But if the link to Manchester is scrapped it might lead to the rest of the line being put on hold and I think that we could guess that that will be the end of HS2. Oh, if only.....!

Back in 2020 the costs for doing so - write offs, compensation, support for construction companies etc - were thought to be in the region of £4 billion! I imagine today that would be double or even treble the amount. And we would look pretty stupid. But how much more foolish is it to pour good money after bad, with the project's costs seemingly out of control and likely to be north of £200bn by the time it's complete. And sadly for my step father, who says he'll be buying a ticket for the first running of HS2's trains, he probably won't be around in 2031. Although there is no comparable infrastructure project to switch our attention and resources to, cumulatively the hundreds of stations that need improving, the signalling throughout the network that needs updating to provide an efficient and safe railway, the number of pinch points that need relieving might go some way to alleviating the construction companies pain.

Add to that, and it somewhat grieves me to be suggesting this, use some of the land compulsorily purchased for the line and now blighted by construction work as a source of development land for imaginative housing, green and high-tech industries and other community projects. It will mean burying the odd tunnel drilling machine and moving the landscape once more. But that must be a better way of spending the tens if not hundreds of billions of taxpayers money that's going on HS2. Most of the land for the line was green field and, in some cases, greenbelt, and the damage has now been done to it but better use can surely be found for it than producing an underutilised railway line for the privileged few, speeding them to London.

Stop the whole thing now!





Planning Report

By Nicholas Butler

Two decades of writing comments on planning applications yield one particularly striking and pleasant reflection. I am aware of a growing interest by the public in the planning system. The opinions of individuals and communities increasingly influence the decisions reached by the Stratford-on-Avon District Council.

Why should they not? The policies in local plans are not laws, but guides. The policies in our Local Plan, the Core Strategy, insist firmly on conserving our rural and urban heritage and one theme is hammered home: the importance of preserving the essential characters of particular places. These policies can be applied strictly or leniently. The general and growing feeling is for the former.

An obvious threat to the beauty and tranquillity of a countryside area rouses the hostility of the whole District. The inexplicable proposal to take traffic off the main road from **Long Marston** to **Stratford**, send it on ugly stilts over the beautiful fields that fringe the town and then put it back on to the same road, (18/01803/FUL), unleashed a mighty tide of wrath. So did the Standby Gas Powered Generation Facility, (18/01214/FUL), at a side midway between **Haselor** and **Temple Grafton**. So has the proposed Anaerobic Digester Plant that would ruin the unspoilt openness of Tysoe. (22/02935/FUL) So has the Wildlife Park at **Clifford Chambers** that would join the village to Stratford and cause impossible traffic jams. (22/00114/FUL)

To all these proposals the reaction was predictable, but the enormous strength of public feeling was remarkable.

More remarkably, the residents of small towns and villages are now standing up for their immediate surroundings, which they are determined shall not be spoiled or ruined.

At **Lighthorne**, it was proposed to extend a car park, which sounds reasonable. (23/00896/FUL) However, the Applicant, which happened to be the Parish Council, had evidently forgotten that nineteen years earlier it had helped to fund a wildlife area that it was now proposing to sacrifice for this extension. The village rose in revolt, the Parish Council capitulated and the application was withdrawn.

Kitebrook School applied for a Multi-Use Games Area, another apparently reasonable request, but the intention, denied in an earlier application, was evidently to create a full-sized pitch, presumably for football, and invite outsiders to use it. (22/03590/FUL) A wolf in sheep's clothing, with the predator only nominally concealed. To make matters worse artificial lights were being used at the site, which is a dark skies area, and a number of trees were cut down. Shocked residents pointed these things out to the District Council and though the application was granted it was a Pyrrhic victory, for there were many conditions. Trees must be replanted and artificial light at the site is forbidden.

The village of **Gaydon** is dangerously near an industrial zone and one day it might be swallowed up into it. As it happens there is now proposal to do that very thing, by putting three vast warehouses, one of them twice the size of a three storey house, on rising ground at the edge of it. The village would be dwarfed by these buildings, clogged with vehicles and its rurality completely ruined. (23/01054/FUL) Happily, this proposal has met with a very stout resistance.

As it happens there is now a proposal, supported by the Warwickshire Rural Community Council, to build eight local needs houses on a field of ridge and furrow at **Cherington** has divided this small community into two warring camps. (23/00597/FUL). Our opinion is that Cherington should have its local needs houses, provided they are locally needed, but not on this particular site. There are better sites available in the village.

The Fox and Hounds public house at **Great Wolford** has closed after four hundred years because the owner wants to convert it into housing. He has failed three times, for this tiny community insists that it shall be reopened as a public house and to that end they have raised money to brief a consultant. So it looks as if the fourth attempt, (23/01922/FUL) will also fail.

At **Newbold-on-Stour** the locals have also clubbed together to pay for a consultant, because land specifically designated as a public open space in the Neighbourhood Plan is the subject of an application for residential development. (23/01480/FUL)

The Little Dragons Nursery would like to create a Forest Learning centre on a hectare-and-a-half at **Snitterfield**, against the wishes of just over eighty furibund objectors, the Snitterfield Residents Association, the Parish Council and the ward member, but is backed by well over eighty supporters. (20/02044/FUL) The objectors, almost to a man, live in Snitterfield and cite planning reasons, including harm to the Green Belt and flooding, but the vast majority of the supporters live elsewhere and their comparatively brief letters say how nice it would be for the children. I think the noes will have it.

Two applications for travellers that never travel at **Temple Grafton**, (22/00036/FUL) and (23/00873/FUL), have been refused and one of them in such round terms that the District Council is evidently ready to take up the cudgels when the inevitable appeals are made. Suppose one or both of the appeals is dismissed, has the Council the courage and the muscle to remove these static travellers? If public feeling is strong enough it might happen.

The small settlement of **Pillerton Hersey** is 1,500 kilometres to the north west of **Pillerton Priors** and both are surrounded by unspoilt open countryside, but an application to put eight pitches for travelling – wait for it! – showpeople between the two would impact unfavourably on both and diminish the distance between them. (23/01312/FUL) What exactly are travelling showpeople? Why do they travel? What shows do they perform? If they were given eight pitches would they travel no more? What equipment would they bring? Would there be noise and light pollution? The application does not tell us. The Pillertonians, however, are incensed and united.

A scoping report, (SCOPE/00038), for the redevelopment of **Wellesbourne Airfield** promises a new runway, hangarage, a control tower and a terminal building. However, the new runway would be much shorter than the present one and at least 225,000 square metres of open space, a necessary lung for this overdeveloped village, would be occupied by industrial and academic development. Meanwhile, an application has been made for twenty-five houses on a site directly beneath the flight path of helicopters that use the airfield. (23/01477/OUT) Were it passed the helicopters would disappear and the task of diminishing the airfield would be a good deal easier. Happily, the locals have opposed both the report and the application. When a full application for the redevelopment of the airfield appears we can expect a grand engagement.

Over the past few years residents in the Stratford District have made themselves an integral part of the planning machine. They are also more prone to ask CPRE Warwickshire for assistance, which we are very willing to give. We, too, of course comment on planning applications, though our comments are, we are pleased to see, increasingly one among many.

In the light of all this activity let me raise the subject of the impending South Warwickshire Local Plan. Is the public aware that work on producing it has already begun? However, as far as I know, the new policies, policies for two very different districts – we are essentially rural and Warwick is far more urban – have not yet been drafted. When they are we, CPRE Warwickshire and you who protest so vigorously at every threat to the Stratford District, should ensure they are as plain-spoken and effective as the ones we presently have.

There must be full public consultation before these new policies are put before a public examiner. Approach your ward members, I beg you and insist on becoming an effective part of what happens.

MORE PLANNING!

By M. P. Robbins

As CPRE members will be aware these are exciting times in planning, though not necessarily in a good way!

My role for Warwickshire branch is to try to offer advice regarding applications in the delightful part of the county entitled Arden as well as considering an avalanche of applications relating to renewable energy ie. solar farms, bioreactors, anaerobic digesters and in the future wind-powered electricity production. Perhaps, in this article I could outline some technical reviews of recent applications in my geographical area and then move onto exciting issues relating to renewables.

Readers of this column may remember 23/00437/FUL (a resubmission of 22/02243/FUL) which we questioned however it has been permitted with conditions. Our other on-going query relates to 23/00971/VARY and this variation in conditions has now been allowed despite an objection from this branch.

We have four on-going applications one of which relates to a retrospective application (23/01519/FUL) and some unusual and expansive domestic developments in this area. We have reservations about the following:

23/01360/FUL at Greymill, Grey Mill Lane, Aston Cantlow. This application is not only retrospective, which as well as asking for home office outbuildings also requests a carport for 5 vehicles which seems extraordinary for a domestic development in such a small and charming village.

23/01792/FUL. Church Barn, Church Lane Wixford. This request relates to the construction of a new building to provide a residential annexe. The application cites extant permissions (08/00084/FUL / 08/00085/LBC) yet appears to be for a new build not covered by pre-existing permissions.

23/01932/OUT. The Park Alcester Road Studley. This is an outline application for up to 2 self and custom build dwellings and associated infrastructure, with all matters reserved except for access. Objection. Our concern is that this seems to be an inappropriate development in one of the few remaining green areas in Studley.

Of course, we do not know the response of the new council to these planning applications, so we shall soon see whether these decisions may influence future judgements of building in this, and other areas in the county.

So... now renewables, which together with agricultural land use are my main areas of interest and expertise. Government advice on solar farms and other initiatives seem to be in flux. This feeds down to a local level and an example of current views on this issue was recently

outlined in an editorial Stratford Herald entitled 'When it comes to planning policy for solar farms there isn't one...' and I could not express it better myself.



Some solar farms are progressing in the county, an example being a 13.16 hectare site in green belt on grassland near Alderman's Green in the North of the county. This development at Tolldish Hall Farms was objected to on a range of planning regulations yet this 25MW array was given the go ahead. Similarly an application at Middle Road Farm, Harbury appears to have been agreed despite vociferous objection from CPRE and others. I will close this article with an official description of what will be permitted- Installation and operation of ground-mounted solar photovoltaic panels and associated energy storage, inverter stations, substation compound, customer station, fencing and gates, spare parts containers, meteo stations, CCTV (with associated masts), hard and soft landscaping and all associated works, including site access and internal access tracks.

This office will continue to try to protect the greenbelt in Warwickshire and with current and future members will continue with these efforts. Summarising, we are doing our best but in the words of the Saw Doctors it would be nice 'to win sometime' or at least on occasion...



And Robert Davies continues

23/01886/FUL.

This application relates to the conversion of an agricultural building and land to form a nursery for up to 86 children with external play area including alterations to the existing building and provision of associated parking at The Farm Snitterfield near Stratford on Avon.

The Farm had already been developed following a consent in 2017 for change of use of land and buildings to mixed-use purposes, including restaurant route A3, retail A1 and craft and artisan production studios, B1 together with ancillary offices, car parking and other associated works. The development has become a very popular retail destination. The current application has met with little support, but strong opposition, particularly from neighbours and the Snitterfield Parish Council. I supported this view particularly in view of the Inspector's reasons dismissing the 2013 appeal. The main thrust of the objections were overdevelopment of the site which is within the Green Belt.

The planning history revealed that in 2013 there had been a failed appeal for conversion of an agricultural building into 6 x 2 bed roomed holiday units in 2013. The main reason given by the Inspector was that the benefits were outweighed by the potential damage to the Green Belt.

The 2017 consent did receive some support locally, and the committee must felt that the benefits outweighed the potential damage to the greenbelt.

The local opposition to this application is bound to have a further negative impact upon the green belt, particularly as it would significantly increase the traffic flow and cause other environmental damage in what is otherwise a rural location.

The application has only recently been withdrawn.

23/00936/VARY

This application is to vary a condition imposed in a consent under reference 09/001497/FUL where permission was granted for a new dwelling subject to a condition. The dwelling was occupied by a manager of the Welford Chase Caravan site, which at that time was used by occupiers for short rentals. The Applicant now wishes to delete the condition

The only recent consent was given in 2008 for proper management of the site. This site is now occupied by permanent residents.

It is outside the village boundary, on flood plain and there is no acceptable justification for the condition to be deleted as some residents have expressed the view that a site manager is still required. Decision pending.

23/01577/FUL.

This was a speculative application to demolish a dwelling and build 4 new dwellings on a site in Welford on Avon. The site is in a sensitive location opposite the school in Welford on Avon and would have a serious and detrimental effect on the area.

A similar application was made for a backland development in Welford and was refused and a dismissed an appeal.

The application has been refused.

23/01792/FUL and 23/01793/LBC.

This application relates to the building of a new dwelling described as an annex to an existing listed barn that has been converted.

This site is in a sensitive location near the village church, which is again listed.

A consent has been granted for a substantial building being for stables and storage in 2008. However this consent has not been implemented. In addition, there was no listed building consent which would have meant that the consent could not have been implemented anyway. Decision pending.

Thank you to all our Planning officers, Jean Walters, Nicholas Butler, Michael Bird, Mark Robbins, Linda Brown, Robert Davies and John Irving.

It should be noted that John wrote an excellent letter of objection against an inappropriately sited solar farm at Tolldish Hall Farm near Coventry only for the Planning Authority to fail to list it properly on their website, and then approved it even though it was on green belt land and failed the 'special circumstances' test, fails several of the Council's own policies contained in the Local Plan and removes 200 acres of 'best and most versatile' land from food production. Unbelievable but sadly true!

AGM – Report

By Myles Thornton



Forty members of the Branch attended and got to have a quick wander around the site before the meeting started and see first hand some of the features, like ‘Lady Felice’s leap’, the promontory at the top of the cliff that Felice was reputed to have thrown herself off in the tenth century and the charred ruin that remains of the Georgian building and its Victorian extensions, following the fire that Granada Studios and its film crew (filming an adaptation of Sherlock Holmes’ the Last Vampire) created turning simulated pyrotechnics into a raging real fire.

Sir Andrew Watson formally welcomed all and then Judith Cobham Lowe, after thanking attendees for coming and particularly our volunteer planning officers for the tireless work they do in protecting the Warwickshire countryside. Judith pointed out that they had worked on in excess of 200 planning applications during 2022, from the small to the barmy – a quarry 400 yards from a primary school or an anaerobic digester blighting the view from Edgehill and Sunrising hill in the south of the county. She then gave a review of 2022/23. We had seen a glut of applications for solar farms on good agricultural land during 2022 and this had continued into this year. It seemed incomprehensible why they were not sited on roof tops, car parks, by motorways and brownfield land. The Government should legislate to ensure that all new houses were equipped with solar panels at the very least.

On going issues were the battle being waged in Solihull over its defective Local Plan. Progress was slow, but Jean Walters was to be congratulated for her persistence and for gathering support from the local MP, Saqib Bhatti and the mayor of the West Midlands, Andy Street. The South Warwickshire Local Plan, that called for 35,000 houses to be built in the Districts of Warwick and Stratford upon Avon also caught our attention – unsurprisingly, and we had held successful meetings with both Councils and their heads, but more about this next year.

We were reminded of the trips to Sezincote and Rousham and last year’s Fun Ride, attracting a good number of riders.

The business side of the meeting was completed with the re-election of our Hon. Treasurer, Justin Whitehorn, and Executive Committee members.

Questions were taken and covered subjects such as river water quality, solar panels on listed buildings, renewable sources of energy and a pertinent one about why there was never any mention of Rugby BC in our reports (we have no Planning Officer for the Borough, but try to answer members queries as and when they are brought to our attention: and subsequent to the meeting we have ‘advertised’ for help with the local U3A organisation and might have better news to report soon). It was then time for our guest speaker. Roger Mortlock, Chief Executive of National CPRE was introduced.

He spoke amusingly about his past with GWR radio, the RSC and SDC planning when the theatre went through its changes. He most recently worked at Gloucestershire Wildlife Trust where he first got involved with farming, planning and the countryside so moving to CPRE seemed a natural progression, with its history of the greenbelt development and National Parks.

Roger spoke of four key themes for our future work: the upcoming centenary of the Charity and the need to inject the voice of youngsters into CPRE which would give us more legitimacy, the greenbelt and the need to re-imagine the concept (stopping urban sprawl was not enough and we might use the ‘countryside next door’ as a concept, ‘Countryside pollution’ and by that he meant we are good at calling out the bad, whether place or design, but we needed to find solutions as to what ‘good’ looks like, and finally the need to build up our movement.

Roger kindly took questions on subjects as diverse as HS2, the importance of urban development, whether Warwickshire was similar to other Branches in what concerned them, Wildlife Trust membership numbers compared with CPRE’s, a pledge to increase our income (politely declined!), CPRE’s view on factory versus traditional house building methods and support for Local Government, Planning departments, Local and Neighbourhood Plans.

The meeting concluded and refreshments were then taken.



Members Visits

Madresfield Court and Stanway House

The two visits we arranged proved very popular with nearly fifty members visiting with their friends and family.

Madresfield Court has been the home of the Lygon family for nearly 900 years. The current owner, Mrs Chenevix-Trench, along with her husband and four children are the twenty ninth generation of the same family to live there and it remains very much a family home. Noted for the many examples of the Arts and Crafts movement, the house acted in part as the inspiration for Evelyn Waugh’s novel, “Brideshead Revisited”.



The magnificent Jacobean manor house that is Stanway, with the UK’s highest gravity fed fountain, is home to the 13th Earl of Wemyss and his family. With its jewel like gatehouse, church and tithe barn complementing the house, our tour took in several rooms full of fine furniture and paintings.

The weather might have been kinder but several of us had picnics within the grounds and here are some photos to give you a taster of the two days.



CPRE Membership

As a member you will receive: The CPRE membership magazine Warwickshire 'Outlook' three times a year.

Your chance to find out about planning developments and influence decisions in Warwickshire. News about the local branch and half-price entry to a number of England's finest historic houses and gardens. If your membership has lapsed, please make sure you renew in 2023/4. We need new and existing members to support our work to protect the Warwickshire countryside.

Subscription: Recommended minimum is £36 per year. The more that you can pay, the more we can do!

To become a member of CPRE Warwickshire, please phone the office on 01926 494597 for an application form or visit www.cprewarwickshire.org.uk. Thank you.

Website Our new website is up and running we will be adding items of interest to it over the forthcoming months. www.cprewarwickshire.org.uk

Facebook Why not visit our facebook page and 'like' us, keeping up to date with weekly posts www.facebook.com/cpre.warwickshire

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E mail If you would like to receive our occasional news or event announcement emails but currently do not get them, please send an email to Alan Palmer at membership_cpre_warwickshire@outlook.com.

Sponsorship CPRE Warwickshire is looking for funding to maintain this publication and to help preserve the Warwickshire landscape. If you would like to donate or advertise in this publication, please contact the office in Warwick 01926 494597

Introduce a new member!

Do you know anybody in Warwickshire or the West Midlands – a friend, relative or a neighbour - who might be interested in joining the CPRE? If you introduce them to us and they sign up, we'll send you a £20.00 Marks and Spencer voucher as a thank-you gift.

Just contact the Warwickshire office for full details and an application form.

