

Newsletter**Summer 2012****Issue 8****Another set of initials to enjoy**

There must be a department somewhere in the depths of Whitehall that exists to research the use of initials. In fact I think I will apply for a task that with its conclusion will grant me a PhD. Now there is an interesting set of initials that I would be quite happy to have after my name. No organisation is safe from this onward march of initialisation, ours included. At least we did not change our initials of CPRE when we changed from "The Council for..." to "Campaign for....." Look what has happened in planning terms. When I first became involved it took me a while to get used to Unitary Development Plans (UDP) tripping off my tongue. Then a while ago I had to get used to Local Development Framework (LDF). I could go on. Remember SHLAA and RSS. No, stop! I must deal with the subject I want to write about.

We now have a new document. The latest in line of the many others making up the history of planning. It is called National Planning Policy Framework or NPPF for short. It does not exactly roll off the tongue. It is not immediately memorable. But for better or worse it is now a policy that will affect us all over the coming years, and replaces some 44 planning documents and letters that have defined our planning policies upto now. The new document is now law.

It is 49 pages long with 10 pages of appendices and was published in late April by the Minister for Planning, Greg Clark MP. It is there to "help achieve sustainable planning." It then defines 'sustainable' as a "means ensuring that better lives for ourselves don't mean worse lives for future generations."

This document is a lot better than many of us feared. Obviously the work that many organisations put in to object to the initial ideas that were trailed, including ours and our own branch, has been heeded. In fact it includes many of the planning objectives that we have been seeking. Let me outline a few of them:-

- It gives a definition of "sustainable development" including economic, social and environmental roles which is helpful;
- It puts the onus on local authorities to develop their plans without regional or national interference (though there are some exclusions);
- It encourages the reuse of existing resources;
- It promotes the vitality of town centres;
- It insists on a sequential test to planning applications with brownfield coming first if there are no town plans;
- It supports a prosperous rural economy;
- Its approach to house building is the need to boost significantly the supply of housing but does not give targets other than a five year supply of land and possible areas beyond that, including windfalls;
- Empty houses should be included with powers of compulsory purchase;
- Local Authorities should continue with the LDF for their areas.
- It details transport planning requirements;

- It comments on the need to take into account climate change but warns against the use of wind turbines in rural areas that would be detrimental to visual aspect of the landscape.

It has a full chapter on the green belt, attaching government importance to its protection. It defines its purpose and demands local authorities “should plan positively to enhance its use”. However there are worrying let outs which may have an effect on our area in Leeds, Bradford and Kirklees by giving them authority to define greenbelt boundaries in the LDF. The safeguards against this we will have to test over the coming months.

This can only be a quick run through. I have a copy of the document and if anyone needs further information please do give me a ring or drop me an email. I do not pretend to be an expert. In fact I am sure that planners throughout the country are pouring over the details as I write and attempting to interpretate the policies against the existing and in-preparation LDF's as I have been doing.

Implementation of the NPPF has an annex all to itself. The policies in the plan apply now. However there are get-out clauses that affect our Councils. It quotes:-

- Para 211. “policies in the local plan should not be considered out of date simply because they were adopted prior to the publication of this Framework.
- Para 212. However the policies contained in this Framework are material considerations which local planning authorities should take into account from the day of its publication. The framework must also be taken into account in the preparation of plans.
- Para 213. Plans may, therefore need to be revised to take into account the policies in the framework. This should be progressed as quickly as possible, either by a partial review or by preparing a new plan.
- Para 214. For 12 months from the day of publication decision-takers may continue to give full weight to relevant policies adopted since 2004 even if there is a limited conflict with this framework.”

The document goes on to define scenarios to help local authorities take decisions depending where they are in the development of their plans. All plans will have to be agreed by an Inspector.

I have tried to find out what my local authority, Kirklees, will be doing with their version of the LDF which was agreed by the Council just before publication of this new document. Without the NPPF, there should have been a six weeks pause for objections to be made before the Council sent it to the Inspectorate for perusal. That has changed but there is a deafening silence from our planners. As we want to object to parts of the LDF relating to Dewsbury, we are anxious to know the line they are taking. Are they busy examining the document to see if they can make their LDF fit the changes? If they are then they are a long way apart on greenbelt policy. We do need to know what their thinking is. Also we need to know what is happening in the other four metropolitan boroughs that make up CPRE West Yorkshire. So we are in a new ball game. If you want an interesting read go on line!

Like the “Curate’s Egg”, the new guidance is good in parts. It’s the bad parts we have to watch. Happy Planning!

John Denham

Localism and Neighbourhood Planning.

The Localism Act, passed at the end of last year, allows communities to have a larger input into their future, than has been possible hitherto. Communities can produce a “Neighbourhood Plan”. This sets out where and what types of development should occur in the area, for example, where houses should be built and the desired mix of standard, sheltered and affordable accommodation. It also allows an input into design, for example limiting building height in some areas, to blend in with older properties. Coupled with this, the plan can identify future infra-structure needs arising from new development, including needs for schools, libraries and transport links. The plan can also identify areas for commercial development, especially if these provide employment for local residents. The Neighbourhood Plan must however be in line with the Local Plan (which is produced by e.g. the Leeds City Council), so it is not possible to have a plan that, for example, blocks development in the area.

So who will draw up a Neighbourhood Plan and how will the identification of a “Neighbourhood” be made? Where a Town or Parish Council already exists, these bodies may draw up the plan for their area. In communities where no such council exists, the plan may be drawn up by a Neighbourhood Forum. The Localism Act states that a Neighbourhood Forum must meet four criteria:

- It must have a written constitution.
- It must consist of at least 21 people who either live or work in the area, or are elected representatives.
- It must be open to all such people.
- Its aim should either be to further the social, economic and environmental well-being of those in the area or to promote the carrying-on of trades, professions or other businesses in the area. (And in fact should strive to achieve both of these).

Although guidance on drafting the Neighbourhood plan is available, few details have emerged on how a Neighbourhood Forum should be set up. It seems that a Neighbourhood must take the initiative, and recruit members. Formal discussion on setting up a Neighbourhood Forum must be open to all who live or work in the proposed Neighbourhood, and widely advertised. It is necessary to draft a constitution and decide on the area the Neighbourhood covers, and these must be agreed at the inaugural open meeting. An application for recognition must then be submitted to the local authority.. There appears to be no time limit on the authority making this decision. Once accepted, the hard work of drafting the Neighbourhood Plan can begin.

David Cove

Around the Districts

Southern District

Unfortunately the weather put paid to both Honley Show, where we were mounting a display, and our visit to Brecks Farm, Swillington to see Mr Hirst's wonderful wildflower meadows. We had been looking forward to both events but there is always next year, one supposes.

We keep an eye on the planning applications, which, at the moment, seem mostly to be for single wind turbines on prominent hillsides, which nearly always get approval, to the detriment of surrounding views.

We hear rumours that the cemetery at Stirley Hill, refused in the spring, may be re-applied for, also that the Thandi's may re-apply for the pub on Castle Hill. We keep careful watch over these and other contentious issues.

We continue to support Stirley Farm. Stuart Roebuck attended a meeting organised by Kirklees Environment Partnership, at Edibles Farm, Slaithwaite, which concentrates on sustainable growing of food, which has to be the way forward. Sue Mortimer attended a very large meeting at Chidswell against a proposed threat to green belt and green fields of hundreds of houses being built there.

We plan a trip to Stirley Farm on 10th October at 10-00. All welcome.

Sue Carter

Dates for your diary

Branch Events

8th September 2:00pm – Yorkshire Sculpture Park, Guided Tour by Cyril Pearce, Cyril was a Lecturer at the College and has published on the subject. Meet outside the Information Point by the Learning Centre

10th October 10:00am – Stirley Farm, meet in Car Park

If you are interested in joining us on both or one of these two visits please contact Sue Carter on 01484 847439 or email her on susanmcarter@aol.com

Executive Meeting

12th July 7:00pm - Christchurch, The Grove, Ilkley, LS29 9LW

13th September 8:00pm – Leeds Methodist Mission Oxford Place Leeds

8th November 1:00pm – Three Nuns Pub, Mirfield

Stirley Farm

Yorkshire Wildlife Trust are redeveloping Stirley as an open access community farm providing facilities for a great day out as well as an opportunity to learn all about a working farm.

Stirley Community Farm will be run as a beef social enterprise based on a low input traditional farming model, rearing slow maturing hardy breeds fed on grass and hay grown on the farm. The farm will be open to all, with a visitor centre and self-guided trails.

As an example of sustainable farming, Stirley Community Farm will explore and provide a demonstration of concepts such as low carbon farming and land management that will improve the wildlife of the Pennine Fringe. Tree planting is planned to increase woodland cover and provide wood-fuel, whilst pond and wetland areas will be established.

The farm is also a base for a wider community vision which looks at local food production and growing as a way of uniting local people and helping to bridge gaps in the community. The vegetable training area has been hugely successful in the first year of the project thanks to the help of all the people who have volunteered their time to maintain it.

The development of the farm and its food operation will include;

- Renovating existing farm buildings
- Establishing a herd of Beef Shorthorn cattle
- Food growing training area
- Formal orchards and Forest Garden
- Food events and festivals
- Education provision and training programmes