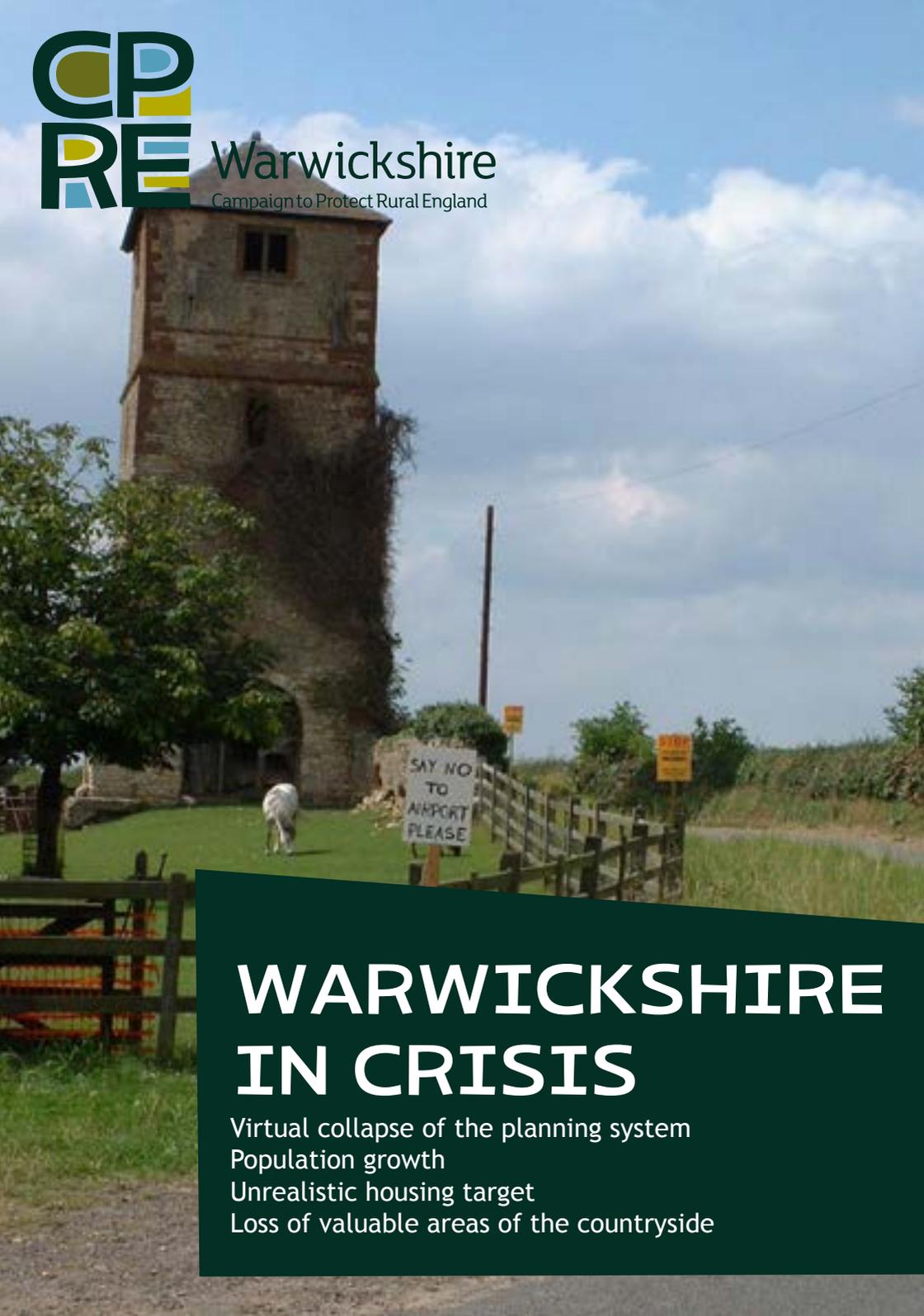




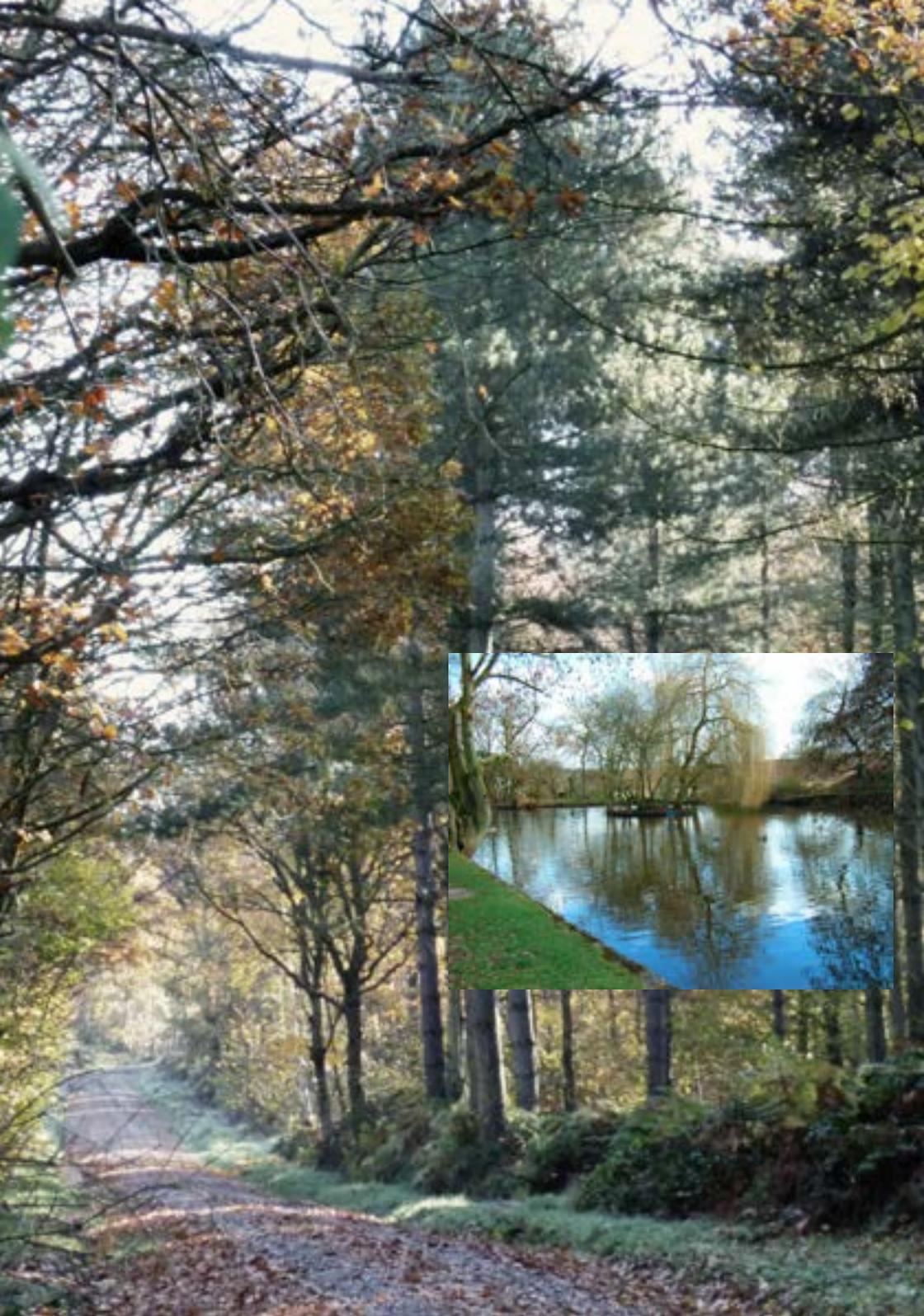
Warwickshire

Campaign to Protect Rural England



# WARWICKSHIRE IN CRISIS

Virtual collapse of the planning system  
Population growth  
Unrealistic housing target  
Loss of valuable areas of the countryside



Our countryside is an essential ingredient of England. It is indelibly part our heritage. It is a national asset that should be prized. So why are we so criminally casual about its loss?

The Warwickshire branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England acts on behalf of everyone concerned about the loss of our countryside and we have had some notable David v Goliath successes, such as stopping the Coventry Gateway project.

However, we remain deeply concerned that our historic county is vulnerable to change on a scale that has never been seen before.

It's not just beauty that is sacrificed for careless construction. Villages expand, yet their shops and pubs disappear. As the heart of towns slowly stops beating, our familiar communities are turned inside out.



# SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT?

Sustainable Development. We agree with Government and many commentators that Sustainable Development is the Key to unlock our future. It means that development meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

There are three major dimensions to sustainable development: economic, social and environmental. The planning system must therefore perform a number of roles:

- an economic role - contributing to building a strong, responsive and competitive economy, by ensuring that sufficient land of the right type is available in the right places.
- a social role - supporting strong, vibrant and healthy communities, by providing the supply of housing required to meet the needs of present and future generations; and by creating a high quality built environment.
- an environmental role - to protect and enhance our natural, built and historic environment and improve biodiversity, use natural resources prudently, minimise waste and pollution and adapt to climate change.

Yet how many of us have experienced the following precisely because of unsustainable development:

- Gridlocked traffic
- Stretched medical facilities and resources
- Schools lacking resources and places
- Greater air pollution due to increased traffic
- Inadequate public transport
- Lack of affordable housing
- Flooding
- Roads not maintained due to increased traffic

In a few pages we will see that the government's National Planning Policy Framework is predicated on Sustainable Development as defined by the United Nations. We also strongly emphasise that any growth must be sustainable in relation to ALL three factors: the Economic needs, the Social needs AND the Environment.

On the next few pages we will first describe what is happening or is likely to happen in different parts of the county.



## WARWICK DISTRICT

A draft Local Plan foresees around 12,000 extra houses in the next 13 years. Much of this will be in open countryside to the south of Leamington/Warwick as planning consent has already been given. Some building is envisaged in the Green Belt in the north of the District. In addition it is likely that space will have to be found for 4,000 houses which cannot be fitted into Coventry. Many of these are likely to be in the Green Belt. It is envisaged that many Villages will also be enlarged and the draft Plan shows a lack of Planning of Infrastructure to serve the new residents and this will have a major impact on existing residents in town and country.

## STRATFORD DISTRICT

This District also faces growth as the new Local Plan emerges and major housing estates are suggested at Long Marston, Lighthorne Heath and Gaydon and areas adjoining Stratford town. More houses will be built in some villages and we fear that inappropriate designs may also ruin their ambience and appearance in Stratford as in other Districts.

## NUNEATON and BEDWORTH

The demand for housing in the Borough is less than in Stratford and Warwick and the Council is currently refusing to accept houses to meet the unmet needs of Coventry. Nuneaton's Labour leader told neighbouring councils during a Coventry and Warwickshire Joint Committee for Economic Growth (CWJCEG) meeting that he could not sign off plans to build up to 14,000 new homes in the area without properly consulting the public.

## NORTH WARWICKSHIRE

A developer is planning to regenerate the former Daw Mill colliery in Warwickshire and has vowed to appeal against the decision to reject plans to create a rail hub there.

They had proposed to build more than 260,000 sq. ft. of commercial space which would create around 685 jobs. The planning committee rejected the proposal over fears it would have caused "substantial" harm to the local Green Belt. We support the council's decision.

Are there other planning issues here ??



North Leamington closing in on Green Belt



Building site in progress at Whitnash



Development at Blackdown, allowed on Green Belt despite many objections

## RUGBY DISTRICT

The draft local plan sets out how Rugby will grow between now and 2031 - and includes a commitment to deliver a total of 12,400 new homes. Rugby Borough Council plans to build 1,500 homes on green belt land in Ansty, by the A46 on the edge of Walsgrave. It proposes to take almost 70-acres of land out of the green belt and build housing on the area which sits by junction two of the M6 and is also bordered by the M69 and the A46. The plans would complement Coventry City Council's desire to provide 500 new houses in the area on its side of the border.

## SOLIHULL DISTRICT

There is great uncertainty in Solihull. The council adopted a new Local Plan in 2013. However, Communities' Secretary, Greg Clark, has approved building of 190 homes at Tidbury Green on farmland against the wishes of Solihull Borough Council. The council's attempt to designate the site as green belt was frustrated when the High Court in October 2015 quashed the relevant parts of the local plan. Court challenges continue

## BIRMINGHAM

In their local plan submission Birmingham City Council have decided that they have a shortfall of housing supply of 33,000 after using all its brownfield supply and the 6,000 houses in the Langley Extension in Birmingham's Green Belt at Sutton Coldfield. CPRE have challenged Birmingham's figures on several grounds, most notably the under-assumptions in relation to windfalls and the need for overspill into adjoining areas. Other relevant local authorities have agreed in principle to accept some of this likely overspill.

Another consideration is that there is a potential for nearly 18,000 homes on the rest of Birmingham's Green Belt around Sutton Coldfield. By tacitly accepting the Langley Extension it gives us more weight in arguing that 'Birmingham has done its bit' and

should not lose more Green Field land. We continue to oppose development in the Green Belt around Sutton Coldfield. Unfortunately withdrawal of such a large amount of housing from the plan would be likely to mean the plan would not be agreed and this would have implications for all the plans in surrounding areas and could lead to more unplanned development coming forward.



Daw Mill colliery, plans for business park will congest the narrow country roads



Building site at Radford Semele



Radford Semele church, fields in front threatened by housing



# KEY THREATS

**There are four main Threats with a National dimension -**

Virtual Collapse of Planning System. The countryside is in a state of warfare because of a 'virtual collapse' of the planning system that means local people are having to constantly fight housing and wind farms on their doorsteps. Everywhere you go in Warwickshire people are fighting random developments and this we believe can only be tackled by proper planning and community involvement.

Population growth is currently an unavoidable fact but the county should only take its fair share. The special characteristics of the county must not be dismissed and ignored. People will find that allowing too many people to settle here will destroy what attracted them here in the first place.

Housing Targets. Our countryside is being approved for development unnecessarily because our councils set house building targets that are

based on made up numbers. We have commissioned an independent report that shows Warwickshire councils are proposing their targets on the wrong basis. We agree that Warwickshire should take its fair share of housing but no more than that.

Unrealistic and inflated targets threaten to cause enormous damage to the rural beauty of England. We believe they will only succeed in more countryside being cherry-picked for housing by developers while failing to get more houses built.



# KEY THREATS

## Looking Locally - To our minds the Key Threats to Warwickshire are:

Major planning decisions being taken out of the hands of local authorities by developers lodging appeals and even Ministers over-riding the recommendations of their Inspectors.

Localism is being undermined because the initial transitional period of 12 months following the publication of the National Planning Policy Framework [NPPF] did not allow sufficient time to get up to date plans in place. In Warwickshire local planning authorities still do not have up to date local plans in place.

Sadly, despite encouraging words from Government, Neighbourhood Plans have been given less weight in planning decisions than the need to supply sites for housing. The views of local people about development are not taken into account by our District Councils.



Valuable areas of countryside, including nationally designated areas, are being lost to development despite policies in the NPPF calling for their protection.

The requirement to supply five years' worth of 'deliverable' land for new housing is constantly being used to justify development on Greenfield land, and to dismiss the idea of developing brownfield sites first. It is known that housebuilders are already sitting on land in the UK to be able to build more than 600,000 houses, without brownfield sites being taken into consideration.

It often appears that policies about the viability and deliverability of land for development are being interpreted primarily on the grounds of economic returns for the developer.



## Government Policy Documents and Statements

The National Planning Policy Framework needs urgent revision and we believe that 'Smart Growth' principles should be applied such as prioritising the reuse of brownfield land and providing high quality public transport links to new development.

The NPPF must give clearer guidance on the need to protect the countryside as part of the commitment to sustainable development.

We accept that there are some very good points set out in the National Planning Policy Framework. The NPPF has a set of core land-use planning principles which should underpin both plan-making and decision-taking.

## These 12 Principles are that Planning should:

- Be genuinely plan-led and empower local people to shape their surroundings. The plans should be kept up-to-date and should provide a high degree of predictability and efficiency;
- Not be simply about scrutiny, but instead be a creative exercise in finding ways to enhance and improve the places in which people live their lives;
- Proactively drive and support sustainable economic development. Every effort should be made to meet the housing, business and other development needs of an area, and respond effectively;
- Always seek to secure high quality design and a good standard of amenity

- for occupants of land and buildings;
- Take account of the different roles and character of different areas, protecting the Green Belts around towns, recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside and supporting thriving rural communities;
- Support the transition to a low carbon future in a changing climate, taking full account of flood risk and coastal change;
- Contribute to conserving and enhancing the natural environment and reducing pollution. Allocations of land for development should prefer land of lesser environmental value;
- Encourage the effective use of land by reusing land that has been previously developed, provided that it is not of high environmental value;
- Promote mixed use developments, and encourage multiple benefits from the use of land in urban and rural areas, recognising that some open land can perform many functions;
- Conserve heritage assets;
- Actively manage patterns of growth and
- Take account of the need to improve health, social and cultural wellbeing for all.





## WHAT CAN CPRE DO?

We will redouble our work to influence policy and decision-makers and their constituents who can also influence them. We will continue to contact MPs, councils and councillors on general policy matters and particular issues to ensure that the countryside has a fair consideration when making decisions.

Planning is one of the most important ways in which we control and protect our environment. Planning decisions affect us all, yet we often have very little input. We want planning to be fairer, engage communities positively and effectively and protect the countryside as well as regenerate our towns and villages

As we said earlier it is essential to ensure that policies at national and local level have regard to the sustainability of the countryside, landscapes and rural life. We encourage CPRE National and Regional offices to develop strategies to campaign for better policies.

Everyone needs a place to live, but the way in which this is being done means that urban sprawl is nibbling away voraciously at the green spaces across Warwickshire and England. Housebuilding covers more countryside than any other kind of development.

We do not need to sacrifice the countryside when we have brownfield land in our towns and cities that could be regenerated to provide the housing we need.

We will recruit members and encourage them and members of the general public to press for a fair deal for Warwickshire.

### What Can YOU Do?

We know that we all belong to different groups.

If you are a Member of the Public - please join us and/or contact your local MP and councillor and tell them what you think.

If you are a Local Councillor - please take the time to consider your policies in the light of the present situation and what we have said about Warwickshire in Crisis in this booklet

If you are Planning Officer - please use your powers of analysis to give fair consideration to the environmental aspects of the decisions and recommendations that you have to make.

If you are a Member of Parliament - please listen to your constituents as well as party policies to ensure that you give fair attention to the sustainability of the countryside and country life.

## About CPRE Warwickshire

CPRE Warwickshire fights for a better future for England's unique, essential and precious countryside. From giving parish council's expert advice on planning issues to influencing local, national and European policies, we work to protect and enhance the countryside.

We believe a beautiful, thriving countryside is important for everyone, no matter where they live.

Nationally, we don't own land or represent any special interests. We are independent and do not receive cash from any government organisation. Our members are united in their love for England's landscapes and rural communities, and stand up for the countryside, so it can continue to sustain, enchant and inspire future generations.

## Contact Details

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