

# OUTLOOK

November 2021

The newsletter of CPRE Northamptonshire



The countryside charity  
Northamptonshire

[www.cprenorthants.org.uk](http://www.cprenorthants.org.uk)

## INSIDE THIS ISSUE

The Oxford–Cambridge Arc – CPRE’s Support for Parish Councils 1: Whose tune are we dancing to in the new normal? 2: What goes on behind the scenes 3: 50/50 3rd Quarter Draw 3: Northamptonshire Village Awards 2022 3: The Queen’s Green Canopy 4: West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan – Spatial Options Consultation 4

Barnwell Country Park, Oundle  
Photograph by kind permission of June Middleton

## The Oxford-Cambridge Arc - CPRE’s Support for Parish Councils

- Alan Mayes

This area, known as the Oxford-Cambridge Arc, refers primarily to a broad swathe of largely undeveloped countryside across Buckinghamshire, Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire, Northamptonshire and Oxfordshire. For the most part, the area is already economically buoyant with levels of job creation, employment and housing growth well above the national average. This is in no small part due to the area’s proximity to London.

In November 2017 the Government’s National Infrastructure Commission (NIC) recommended that a million new homes and over a million new jobs should be created in this area by 2050. To achieve this, a considerable loss of open countryside was envisaged.

Although not directly impacting on Northamptonshire, as much as on the counties to the south, transport links throughout our area will become upgraded and additional development will inevitably follow, which may swallow up our

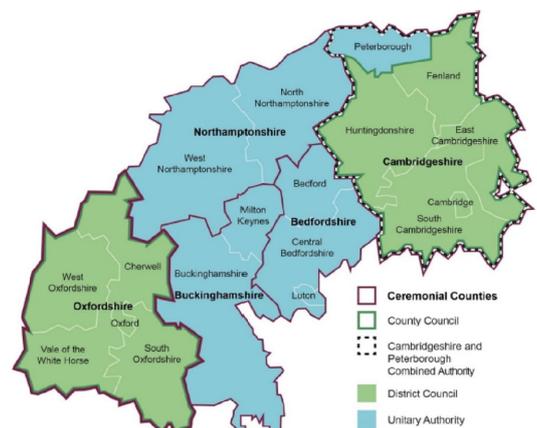
countryside. It is important to recognise that, once approved, the Spatial Strategy for the Arc will stand alongside the Core Spatial Strategies for North and West Northamptonshire and the policies will therefore impact on the decision-making processes.

The democratic deficit in the whole process to date has been a major concern to CPRE, both nationally and locally. In August the Government launched a Place Building document in the form of a Spatial Strategy for the whole Arc area, accompanied by a public consultation document. As this was the first major element of public consultation in the whole process, we felt it most important to help communities engage. CPRE Northamptonshire therefore emailed a series of model questionnaire answers to all parish and town councils in both North and West Northants, as an aid to

taking part in this important consultation.

In CPRE’s opinion, the questionnaire was not well-designed. Many of the questions asked whether a particular topic was *Not important/ Less important/ Neutral/ Important/ Very Important* - to which most people would answer *Important*. However, each subject section included a free-form question “*Is there anything else that you would like to add*” and it is there that we gave guidance on meaningful comments, particularly bearing in mind that Northamptonshire’s landscapes are not protected.

We hope that your community was able to respond to the consultation.





As Northamptonshire emerges from a state of lockdown to varying levels of 'new normal', how many times have you heard the comment, or said to yourself, "When did that get built?" or "That wasn't there a year ago!". The fact is that while we were all locked away in our homes watching re-runs of Foyle's War or The Durrells, the

member to CPRE and a technical secretary for the South Northants area, I am constantly asking myself who is the beneficiary of all this development?

The simple answer is: developers, operators, shareholders and landowners. What about the people of Northamptonshire? In an area where we are witnessing more and more

planning application for a similar warehouse and fuel station complex adjacent to it. If granted they will cause significant environmental impact and visual intrusion to the adjacent village of Caldecote. CPRE Northamptonshire has stated in its response that it should be recommended for refusal. A vast proposed solar farm at Halse and one at Greatworth have also been recommended for refusal. These sites, which, as well as ruining areas of valuable farmland, would not be needed if warehouse developers were obliged, through planning legislation, to place solar panels on the roofs of warehouses. Other proposed developments that are under scrutiny are several large housing applications around villages in South Northants, all of which are outside village confines ... the list goes on.

We need to act quickly, by reinforcing both CPRE Northamptonshire and CPRE's national campaigns, to get Boris Johnson to keep his

## Whose tune are we dancing to in the new normal?

- Geoff Carverhill

construction industry was very busy indeed.

Boris Johnson's Build Back Better campaign has already opened the door to rapid and unchecked development in Northamptonshire, such as the vast M1 junction 15 warehouse developments and new housing estates where the developers have reneged on affordable housing, resulting in the loss of farmland, woodland, hedgerows and grassland. We are in a part of the country that relies solely on trees and hedgerows for carbon sequestration. Unlike the Highlands of Scotland, we don't have peat bogs!

I came to live and work in Northamptonshire forty-two years ago, to escape the dull suburban backdrop of West London. Fortunately, my father had instilled in me an appreciation and respect for the countryside and, being a keen cyclist, I was immediately taken with Northamptonshire's abundant and balanced rural character. Four decades on, however, the rural profile of the county is in crisis and under threat. As a new

development of warehouse and distribution sites, due to the logistically advantageous central position of Northampton and the M1, are we in danger of becoming 'Shed County'. Have we gone a shed too far? According to the 2011 NOMIS census figures, only four per cent of the working population of South Northants actually work in the logistics industry.

All of these developments are in addition to that other, to quote a journalist colleague, "monument to greed and corruption" – HS2. This project, hastened by Boris Johnson and his ministerial cohorts, while we were in lockdown, will ruin parts of Northamptonshire, if the experience of farmers, landowners and villagers of Buckinghamshire is anything to go by.

Currently, CPRE Northamptonshire is monitoring several planning applications and consultations: a one million square foot warehouse complex for the logistics company DHL in Towcester and a hybrid

## A personal look at the changing rural face of Northamptonshire

promise to build back better on *brownfield sites*, whether it be housing or warehousing.

A small light at the end of the tunnel for Northamptonshire is the Joint Core Strategy that was approved in 2014. It is now being reviewed under West Northamptonshire Council, with an options consultation that started in October 2021, for the period 2021 to 2050. As CPRE is a principal consultee, this is an opportunity for us to make sure that any new local plan will meet the housing and economic needs of the people of Northamptonshire, rather than the needs of developers. It's a tall order, but now more than ever, we have to get right that delicate balance between urban and rural life.

*It's not going to be easy, but it's not impossible either*



## What goes on behind the scenes

- Peter Hopkins

In September we decided to email a Planning Update to all our members - a summary of the development proposals and significant planning applications currently on the desks of our volunteer planning specialists. This was in response to an oft-repeated suggestion - "why don't you tell people of all the work that you do behind the scenes?"

The summary went out to all CPRE Northamptonshire members for whom we have an email address. If you didn't receive a copy, please let us know by emailing [info@cprenorthants.org.uk](mailto:info@cprenorthants.org.uk), and we will update the membership records we hold for you.

The summary required quite a bit of volunteer effort to coordinate and produce, so we asked for feedback from you, our members, on whether this idea is worth pursuing. Here is a brief selection of what we were told:

*"This information is helpful"* - Household member in Towcester

*"Why is there no mention of..."* - councillor from member parish council in North Northants

*"Very helpful information. I notice that the [named] proposal ... is not listed"* - councillor from non-member parish council in North Northants, who received a forwarded copy of the email

*"Thank you very much for this email - a really useful list and please continue to send"* - clerk of a member parish council in West Northants

*"Look forward to future communications from you"* - clerk of a member parish council in North Northants



### Planning Update

September 2021

We are often asked by our members for information about our work with Northamptonshire's two planning authorities, North and West. This email summarises what our volunteers are working on at the moment.

If you feel this is helpful to you, or have other feedback or questions, let us know by replying to this email. If you prefer not to receive these planning updates, but still wish to receive other CPRE Northants emails, please don't unsubscribe - just reply and tell us so.

And remember, we are always delighted to welcome anyone interested in helping us with this work.

Thank you

CPRE Northamptonshire Technical team

As you see, it is well worthwhile continuing this work. If you would like to add your comments, please do. And we would especially like to hear from anyone with the time and skills to assist our volunteers in collating and communicating this information.



### 3rd Quarter Draw

Prize 1 £70 Jane Kimbell, Grimscote

Prize 2 £60 Anne Usher, Aynho

Prize 3 £45 Ann Craske, Gretton

## Northamptonshire Village Awards 2022

The 2022 Northamptonshire Village Awards will again be sponsored by CPRE Northamptonshire. As previously, they are open to all villages in the county with a population under 6,000.

These awards are a wonderful way for residents to showcase their rural community, as well as a chance to audit village life and build for the future, just as Glapthorn did. They were the 2019 overall winners, who commented: "We knew that our village was special, so we decided to go for it! We simply could not believe our success when the results were announced ... We are all so proud to see our trophies and certificates on display

- fitting tributes to our amazing community spirit".

Why not approach your parish council to enter your village, or else form a group of enthusiastic residents to make an entry. Applications do not have to come from a parish council.

Full details on how to enter the competition, along with the application form, can be found at [www.northantsacre.org.uk/northamptonshire-village-awards-2022](http://www.northantsacre.org.uk/northamptonshire-village-awards-2022).

The closing date for applications is Monday 31<sup>st</sup> January 2022.

- Alan Mayes

This time, **Outlook** concentrates on **planning** matters, mainly because there's a lot going on at the moment.

Keep up to date with planning developments at [www.cprenorthants.org.uk](http://www.cprenorthants.org.uk) and follow the link to planning.

**We always welcome articles, or suggestions for articles, from our readers - on any aspect of life in our countryside.**

I hope that most of you will have heard of The Queen's Green Canopy initiative by now. For those who have not, the intent is to thank Her Majesty for her exceptional service, celebrate her Platinum Jubilee and promote the importance of trees to the environment through the encouragement of tree planting across the nation where

convert aspiration into reality!

The Northamptonshire launch took place on Wednesday, 13<sup>th</sup> October at Wicksteed Park, when the Lord Lieutenant, enthusiastically assisted by a group of children from St Edward's Catholic Primary School in Kettering, planted a sapling grown from an acorn produced by a 300-

year-old Wicksteed Park oak. The launch was extensively covered both by BBC Radio Northampton and BBC TV Look East.



## The Queen's Green Canopy

*- Paul Parsons, chairman of CPRE Northants and leader of this initiative on behalf of the Lord Lieutenant*

people will be invited to "Plant a Tree for the Jubilee". The campaign will see communities, charities, schools, youth groups, councils, businesses and landowners planting trees. It will create a lasting legacy in honour of the Queen's leadership that will enhance our environment and the landscape for generations to come. In the months since The Queen's Green Canopy initiative was announced in May, with the significant help of both North and West Northamptonshire Councils, real progress has been made. Now that the tree planting season is upon us, we need to begin to

The invitation is for all of us to plant a tree. If you can, please do so and spread the word and encourage others, whether it be schools (who will already know about the QGC), landowners known to you, the business community, parish and town councils. Trees are available from the Woodland Trust for community groups, whose involvement, as well as that of the Scouts and similar organisations, is really encouraged.

***Let's all plant a tree for the Jubilee!***

## West Northamptonshire Strategic Plan – Spatial Options Consultation

West Northamptonshire Council is in the process of preparing a new Strategic Plan for the area. This will replace the West Northamptonshire Joint Core Strategy approved over 10 years ago and will cover the period up to 2050. All planning decisions will ultimately take into consideration the policies adopted in the new Joint Core Strategy.

A Spatial Options Consultation document, which includes a series of questions on which the public's views are sought, was launched on 11th October, with a consultation period concluding on 6th December. There is also an additional opportunity for landowners and developers to put forward ideas for potential development sites through a further "call for sites" exercise.

The Spatial Options Consultation and background documents

are available on the Strategic Plan consultation website: <https://westnorthantsplan.inconsult.uk/>. If you live in West Northamptonshire, we encourage you to visit the website and use the online forms to respond to the consultation.

You can inspect a hard copy of the Options Consultation document in West Northamptonshire Council's Offices at Lodge Road, Daventry, The Guildhall, Northampton and The Forum, Towcester and all public libraries in West Northamptonshire, during normal opening hours. In addition, there will be half-day exhibitions in the area. It is important for parish and town councils and individuals to engage at this stage.

A similar consultation process will take place shortly in North Northamptonshire.

*- Alan Mayes*