

CPRE Worcestershire Branch Newsletter & Annual Report 2018/2019



CHAIRMAN'S REPORT

This has been another year when we have done no more than keep up with the Planning agenda and I am not sure that we have really even managed that. It would be nice if we could address other issues, but we are not managing to monitor planning in most of Wychavon properly, let alone campaign on other issues within the remit of CPRE nationally. The problem remains not having enough volunteers.

A major item this year will be campaigning landscape issues. We have commissioned a report on the Clent and Lickey Hills, which will be launched at the AGM. We are also pushing for protection of the Teme valley above Knightwick.

Much more of this will appear in more detailed reports that follow.

Peter King

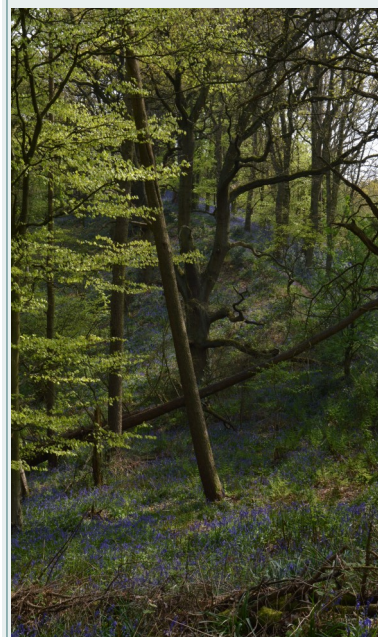


Photo by Dani Browne
@dbphotography247

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BEST KEPT CHURCHYARD COMPETITION 2019

This biennial competition is in the process of being held again this year.

At the time of writing (late April) entries are rolling in, and I am hopeful that we will have at least as many as the 33 in 2017. The prizes have been held at the same value as in 2017 (£100 for the winner of churchyards of one acre or more, and £75 for the winner of smaller churchyards, plus prizes for the runners-up) but £50 will be given towards the cost of purchasing a tree as they have become more expensive in recent years.

The categories of the churchyards were reduced from three to two in 2005. The winners since then have been:

Year	< one acre	> one acre
2005	Areley Kings	Cleeve Prior
2007	Abbots Morton	Powick
2009	Bengeworth	Alvechurch
2011	Badsey & Offenham	Hagley
2013	Overbury	Harvington & Norton Juxta Kempsey
2015	Bengeworth	Astley
2017	Bengeworth	Bredon

We have excluded Bengeworth from this year's competition as it has won in consecutive years. This should give encouragement to several churches that have come close to winning.

Apart from having a plentiful number of churchyards, the competition also relies on having an adequate number of judges. They comprise volunteers from CPRE and the WFWI. The latter organization now provides the majority of judges. The competition rules state that each churchyard should be marked by two judges, one from each organization, but I have not always been able to arrange this in recent years, mainly due to a decline in CPRE volunteers.

It will therefore be very helpful if a few more CPRE members would volunteer to become judges. A judge will usually be asked to visit two or three churchyards, which may incur driving a few miles, and completing a marking sheet. Most judges find this to be a pleasant experience, as they can visit the churchyards on a fine day of their own choosing, perhaps accompanied by a friend or colleague. Please let me know by letter, phone or email if you are interested.

Frank Hill

This photo shows St. Mary's Church, Doverdale, being judged on a fine day in July 2013.



STRATEGIC PLANNING

Last summer, the government brought out a new version of the *National Planning Policy Framework* (NPPF). This differed in detail from its predecessor. Some changes are good; some perhaps less so. A new standard methodology has been applied to house numbers, bringing in for the first time a factor on affordability. Overall this change is good, because it provides greater certainty. However it remains the case that several of the Worcestershire district councils are struggling to show that they have a 5-year housing land supply. The following table contains figures published by the government with the preceding White Paper.

	Proposed target	Previous plan target	Numerical change	% change	New 20 year target
Bromsgrove	364	349	15	4%	7,280
Malvern Hills	329	274	55	20%	6,580
Redditch	183	337	-154	-46%	3,660
Worcester	396	410	-14	-3%	7,920
Wychavon	509	415	94	23%	10,180
Wyre Forest	246	310	-64	-21%	4,920

The publication of the new NPPF was followed by every district in the county (except Redditch) conducting a consultation last autumn on a new plan. In the case of Wyre Forest, this was a final opportunity to object before the new plan is formally examined as to whether it is legally sound. In the other cases, it was an Issues and Options Consultation, a stage at which the councils are much more likely to be in listening mode, giving an opportunity for the views of CPRE and others to be into account. At the same time, the boundaries of the West Midlands Green Belt are under review, which creates additional uncertainty.

Some common themes emerge from our responses. Housing was always a major issue, but at this stage no council except Wyre Forest was proposing where additional housing should go. In each case we employed a consultant to deal with this issue. Our responses also supported the role of Neighbourhood Planning, calling for plans not to be so restrictive as to give little scope for Neighbourhood Plans to play a meaningful role in determining how their towns and villages develop.

In each case we emphasised the issue of the protection of “Valued Landscapes”. There used to be a level of landscape protection below Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. In some areas, this was Areas of Great Landscape Value, a designation under the former *Worcestershire County Structure Plans*, but some districts instead designated Landscape Protection Areas. In the north of the county, these did not have much effect on planning because the areas were also designated as Green Belt, which provided greater protection, but with Green Belt under review, Landscape Protection becomes more important.

REDDITCH AND BROMSGROVE

Redditch and Bromsgrove share officers. Redditch’s housing target is now much lower than in their 2016 Plan. To find land for this target, they had to ask Bromsgrove to cooperate by allocating land just beyond the Redditch boundary for this, taking this out of the Green Belt. We unsuccessfully opposed part of this site at Foxlydiate, but Planning Consent for that site has now been approved. Bromsgrove’s plan was adopted at the same time, but provided for an early review of the Green Belt to find land for another 2200 houses. In the event they are undertaking a wider-ranging review of their whole plan to take it forward well into the 2030s.

REDDITCH AND BROMSGROVE CONT....

We have argued that, with Redditch having a much lower target, it does not need land allocated for it in Bromsgrove District, so that the land released in 2016 should count towards Bromsgrove's target.

There is however a wider issue. The Birmingham and the Black Country are also short of housing land. In the case of Birmingham, their plan states they need 38,000 houses beyond their boundary over 20 years, which the new NPPF methodology reduced to 21,500. The situation in the Black Country is less clear, but they also appear to have a land deficit; as does Solihull. A *Strategic Growth Report* was published last year, suggesting options as to how the deficit might be met by urban extensions or new settlements. This included:

- A new settlement between Birmingham, Bromsgrove, and Redditch, which was apparently proposed without noticing that the large villages of Alvechurch and Barnt Green are already there.
- An urban extension in the countryside just north of the county boundary between Stourbridge and Halesowen, a green wedge of countryside known as Foxcote and Lutley.

WYRE FOREST

The plan consulted on was the "Deposit Draft", which will then go to Public Examination. The previous plan (in 2009) concentrated on urban brownfield sites and they have delivered more than they planned on average. Our fundamental problem with it is that their new plan is that it provides for development in excess of need. The evidence seems to have been distorted to provide a subjectively assessed need, not an objectively assessed one (as required by NPPF). We consider that their target should be about 250 dwellings per year, in line with a report they had a few years ago and actual delivery, not 3000 houses per year.

We also do not believe that the local economy will provide jobs for the additional people, leading to more people commuting into Birmingham and the Black Country. This is liable to generate more traffic on A456 through Hagley, which is already overburdened. One solution to this would be to develop Blakedown Station as a major Park and Ride hub, but that is not in their Plan or explicitly in the Worcestershire Transport Plan. Furthermore, this would only deal with some Birmingham-bound traffic, not that bound for the Black Country towns, as the rail line north of Stourbridge Junction carries no passenger traffic.

The Plan provides for a Kidderminster East urban extension which we do not like, but could live with. It also provides for an enlarged site at Lea Castle. This involves a large brownfield site, a former hospital. While we would have liked less intensive development there, we could not oppose the principle of its redevelopment. The hospital was developed in the 1940s to 1960s, but it became redundant with the move to a policy of Care in the Community for the disabled. The hospital stands on the inclosed Wolverley Heath. It was cleverly sited so that it was partly hidden by a series of coppices, and these have been joined up by planting belts of conifers between them. The result is that the status of the hospital site as developed land is not apparent from the adjacent A449 and A451. However the plan adds the land between these belts of trees and the main roads, which will have a severe impact on the landscape. The justification for this is that it will be a new settlement of a sufficient size to support local services. However the effect will be sprawl almost joining the edge of Kidderminster to the village of Cookley. The need to expand the new settlement beyond the woods is ultimately due to the adoption of an excessive (and unsound) housing target.

Peter King

SOUTH WORCESTERSHIRE

There is a joint strategic plan for the three south Worcestershire Districts. This is made necessary because common policies are needed covering the expansion of Worcester beyond its boundaries. Our response to the consultation included:

- A call for new (or reinstated) Areas of Great Landscape Value to be protected as Valued Landscapes, particularly in the Teme Valley.
- For specific provision to be made to protect the setting of Bredon Hill, as part of the Cotswolds Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- New Green Belts to separate Powick and Malvern and to prevent Worcester spilling further east beyond M5.
- An explicit policy to develop Brownfield land first.
- Protection for the Best and Most Versatile agricultural land, for example from having solar panels sited on them. In a world with growing population, farm land should be used for growing food.
- A call for new railway stations at Fernhill Heath and Rushwick with Park and Ride car parks.
- Increased rail capacity on the Cotswold line and between Worcester and Droitwich.



PLANNING APPLICATIONS ETC..

BROMSGROVE

Apart from strategic planning there has been little of note. We have objected to a number of small applications. A recent unwelcome trend has been for applications to be made for new housing adjoining but outside village envelopes. Within village envelopes, infill is allowed, but beyond the land is unqualified Green Belt. With a Green Belt Review in progress, there may be a case for envelopes to be enlarged, which might bring such sites within the envelope, but until that happens development needs to be resisted.

Another threat involves people who buy a field and build a barn from which to farm it, usually much bigger than is justified by the size of the agricultural holding. Their real objective is to gain planning consent for a house by stealth: after a few years, they decide that the barn is in fact not needed to store farm machinery etc., and seek planning consent to convert it into a house. We see no objection in the conversion of robustly built historic farm buildings, but post-war steel framed buildings are generally not suitable for this.

REDDITCH

As in Bromsgrove, little of note has taken place. We have opposed a few planning applications. With hindsight our opposition in one case was too weak. The applicant wanted a new house in the Green Belt, pleading very special circumstances relating to disabled adult children. The evidence in support of this was not published with the application and we merely suggested that the Planning Committee should look very carefully as to whether a special case was made out. The Committee concluded that it was not and refused consent.

WORCESTER

We do not have a volunteer able to monitor planning in Worcester, so that our input tends to be limited. We do however know that planning is monitored by Worcester Civic Society, though their agenda is not necessarily the same as ours. We supported an unsuccessful local campaign to have a green space at Middle Battenhall declared an Asset of Community Value.

The areas of countryside under threat from new housing are largely on the edge of Worcester and actually or partly in Malvern Hills or Wychavon.

WYCHAVON

We lack a local campaigner in Wychavon and are thus only able to deal with a few of the most serious cases. The three most recent cases remain pending:

- An extension of Tewkesbury (which has a housing land shortage) into Bredon parish;
- A large site at Fernhill Heath, a large area of sprawl. If it were the other side of the railway, it would be Green Belt.
- A somewhat smaller site at Wychbold. This is within a rather large village envelope, but development is taking place considerably faster than anticipated by the present Plan.

WYRE FOREST

We have opposed a number of modest applications in what we considered to be unsuitable locations. We supported a local campaign group at Bewdley opposing development proposed by a speculator in the area between the town and Wyre Forest. This was refused by Wyre Forest District Council, who then employed the objectors' expert to support that refusal on appeal. Our role in that was little more than cheering on the side-lines.



The defunct Lea Castle Hospital has been carefully hidden behind the woods. Should the land in front of the trees be built upon with high density housing?

Peter King

MALVERN HILLS AND WYCHAVON

By way of a postscript to last year's report, most members living near Malvern will know that the Three Counties' Agricultural Society was successful when it applied for 40 holiday chalets (instead of 50) to be constructed in Langdale Wood, close by one of the entrances to the Showground. We were sufficiently annoyed by the Society putting the prospect of commercial benefit higher than the risk of causing damage to the woodland environment and disturbance to birds and other wildlife, both during construction and occupation, that we immediately withdrew our financial support (amounting to £400 per year) for the Schools' Garden Competition, which is organized by the Society as part of the annual Spring Garden Festival.



Most of the housing applications over the past 12 months have been on a small scale, such as for infill or on rear gardens, to which we might have objected if requested to do so by neighbours, or for large mixed-use developments, typically comprising 500 or more dwellings, such as in Lower Broadheath, Kempsey/Norton and Newland. These major developments had all been approved in principle by the SWDP as adopted in 2016 (which I shall refer to as SWDP(1), in spite of strong opposition by Parish Councils and other organizations including CPRE. Consequently we did not comment on the outline applications unless they were deficient in some respects from what had been expected, such as in the housing mix, proportion of affordable homes, provision of a junior school, provision of open spaces, access to retail facilities, and traffic problems near the proposed access. Some of these deficiencies were evident in the outline application at Newland, NE of Malvern, which caused it to be deferred.

If the impact of the housing proposals in SWDP(1) has not seemed as great as feared, this is because some of the major developments have not yet been started. It is therefore worrying that a review of it, which I shall call SWDP(2), is already underway. The intention is to establish whether or not the current plan is still on target to meet the development needs up to 2031 and to consider how to meet anticipated housing and employment needs up to 2041. An Issues and Options consultation ended in mid-December, for which Peter King and I produced a 10-page response. Among the comments made were:

Many attractive views have been lost to development during the last 50 years, so there is a need for an assessment to be made of valued landscapes within the whole area from the Teme Valley to the Cotswolds; 'strategic gaps' should be designated between urban areas to avoid merging of settlements; 'brownfield' land should always be allocated for new development in preference to 'greenfield' land; there should be stronger protection for Green Belts; more account should be taken of the cumulative impact of new and recently-constructed housing estates on the quality of life of long-term residents of towns such as Evesham, Pershore and Malvern which are losing their rural character and are subjected to increasing traffic congestion; solar farms should not be allowed on 'good' or 'versatile' farm land, AONBs, SSSIs, or where they would intrude on valued landscapes.

MALVERN HILLS AND WYCHAVON CONTINUED

We rejected building a new town on the grounds that it would need more land to upgrade roads to connect it to existing towns and to provide facilities that are already available in existing towns, and because it would take a long time to build.

The three Councils are now reviewing the 900 or so sites that have been offered by land-owners for possible housing or employment development. These will be whittled down to around 200 sites prior to public consultation in November 2019. We have no doubt that some of these sites will be unpopular. As our Warwickshire colleague, Peter Langley, has discovered, the government will prescribe a national housing requirement based on the highest of recent ONS population forecasts, which will force counties and districts to plan for more houses than they might otherwise have thought necessary.

Frank Hill

POWICK MILL

Powick Mill stands immediately above Powick Bridge beside the Worcester-Malvern road. The bridge was probably built before 1447, as an indulgence was granted to those assisting in its repair and was subsequently the responsibility of the lords of Powick and of Wick Episcopi. Strictly it is at the mouth of the Laughern Brook, but Powick Weir turns part of the river Teme down a



leat to the mill, so that the mill had the full power of that river available to it. The mill was given by the bishop to Great Malvern Priory in 1300, and the leat was made by the Prior of Great Malvern in 1475. They came to the Crown at the Dissolution and Queen Elizabeth sold it as two mills at Wick to Sir Thomas Bromley, her Lord Chancellor in 1586 with Wick Episcopi. The manor passed down the Bromley family until the 18th century, but the detailed history of mill is obscure. The manor was sold to Lord Foley in 1741.

A little after 1717, one of the mills seems to have been converted to an iron forge (for making pig iron into bar iron). By 1725 John Wheeler of Powick was buying pig iron for it. The mill was offered for sale in 1737, the forge having a 'chaffery and 2 fineries', while the corn mill had five pairs of stones. The river Teme was navigable up to the mill, a right probably granted when the forge was built. A deed of 1825 mentions a towing path on the north side of the river, presumably established when the forge was.

POWICK MILL CONTINUED

By 1790, there was also a coal wharf adjoining the bridge. The forge may have been bought in 1737 by Thomas Maybery (d.1758), who was followed by his widow Mary (d.1761) and their son Thomas, who was bankrupt in 1766. Maybery also had Brecon Furnace, but this passed to another son. The next occupier was Mary Croft, widow of Richard Croft, of Cradley Ironworks near Stourbridge.

Both the Mayburys and Mary Croft used pig iron brought down the river Severn from Horsehay Furnace in Shropshire. In 1771, the forge was sold to Sampson Lloyd & Son of Birmingham, who also had a slitting mill in Birmingham and a forge at Burton-upon-Trent and a furnace at Melbourne in south Derbyshire. These works later passed to Samson Lloyd junior and his brothers Nehemiah and Charles, Nehemiah running Powick.

At some stage a third finery and a slitting mill were added. Following Nehemiah's death in 1801, the family gradually withdrew from ironmaking, with one branch of the family concentrating on banking, for they were founders of Lloyds Bank.

The forge passed to William Ellwell, who operated it for a few years with a partner, and it then passed through a number of hands until about 1820, when it came into the hands of Grainger & Co, china manufacturers, who used it for grinding pottery materials. It continued in their hands until 1888, when their business was bought by the Worcester Royal Porcelain Works. In the meantime, the corn mill continued in operation, being run by successive members of the Hadley family until at least 1867. Worcester Corporation obtained lighting powers in 1890. They considered using Diglis Weir in the river Severn to power hydro-electric generation, but this was opposed by the Severn Navigation Commission. Accordingly in 1893, the corporation bought Powick Mill, but the porcelain lease had been renewed in 1889, so that the corporation did not obtain full control of the available power until 1907. The present mill building (now converted to residences) began life as the corporation's hydro-electric station.

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED

As always CPRE Worcestershire is short on the ground where we need it most. We could do so much more if we had more Members who could give up a small amount of time here and there.

Please contact our Secretary, Terra Newman on secretary@cpreworcestershire.org.uk or at 07947 634545 if you would like to help. We especially need volunteers in Wychavon to inform us of any new developments that we would object to or any issues that need raising.





ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING 2019

Thursday 4th July 2019

Buffet dinner with tea & coffee at 6:00pm

AGM starts promptly at 6:30pm

to be held at:

Belbroughton Church Hall

86 Hartle Lane, Belbroughton DY9 9TN

“Those blue remembered hills: landscape value in a time of change”

By Carly Tinkler, Chartered Member of the Landscape Institute (CMLI), and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Arts (FRSA)

Please confirm your attendance by email or phone to

Terra Newman (secretary@cpreworcestershire.org.uk or 07947 634545)

BRANCH CONTACTS

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