



Can you help?

Over the past 12 months, CPRE Leicestershire continued working on developing its Vision for the future of Leicestershire's countryside. Following on from a first draft document in 2021, Trustees have now produced a new more streamlined Vision Statement, entitled: [A Greener Alternative: Our Vision for the Future](#).

The Vision seeks to ensure that the Leicestershire countryside is not only protected but enhanced for both current and future generations but also plays a part in tackling the two biggest challenges that we face, Climate Change and the degradation of nature.

The document sets out six building blocks to help to achieve the Vision and six things that we want to see happen to promote a 'Greener Alternative' future. More details are on page two and also on our web site, www.cpreleicestershire.org.uk.

The release of this revised draft is part of a wider process. The plan is to engage now with a range of organisations to discuss the content over the next few months, then to finalise it in the light of those conversations and to launch it to a wider audience in late September. At the same time, we will produce a discussion document to explain and support the views set out in the Vision Statement.

[We are looking for your help:](#)

- Send your views on the Vision statement to info@cpreleicestershire.org.uk
- Send us "My Vision for Leicestershire is....." for possible inclusion as a quote from a member in the final Vision document. However, not more than 100 words (2-3 sentences).
- Have you an interest and/or expertise in logistics, or farming and agriculture? Would you be willing to help us with these topics?

A Greener Alternative: Our Vision for the Future

CPRE has a mission to see the Leicestershire countryside protected, enhanced, valued and enjoyed and to contribute to tackling climate change and the degradation of nature.

It is a countryside that is both diverse and beautiful and 'something to shout about' with a beauty and uniqueness that cannot be allowed to disappear. It is the source of natural resources, natural capital, 'ecological services' from which we all benefit as well having the potential to help reduce Climate Change. But it is too easily viewed simply as empty space for new houses and warehouses, just empty land to build on.



To achieve our Vision, we have set out six building blocks

1. Getting Development Right

Planning future development must involve a system which supports the right balance between town and countryside. It delivers well-designed developments and the 'Right Housing in the Right Places' for people. It also provides for nature and places greater weight on the protection of our valuable countryside assets.

2. Creating a Transport System that Serves the Community

Everyone should have access to good public transport and new developments should be directed to those places with it. Investment in enhanced bus, rail, sustainable and active transport should be at the top of the list for transport investment.

3. Ensuring the Countryside is inviting to Visitors

Leicestershire countryside should be more accessible to all people in the county and beyond. The physical and mental wellbeing benefits of access to countryside and green spaces should be recognised and promoted.

4. Helping Nature to Win

Protecting and improving our biodiversity should be at the heart of planning and development.

5. Keeping the Countryside Working

It is imperative that the countryside continues to provide employment, remains productive and supports a vibrant rural economy and the needs of rural communities.

6. Answering the Climate Change Challenge

This building block takes forward the steps of the other five towards the effective management of the implications of Climate Change. This involves overarching actions to create a green economy, green business sectors, green homes and to reach net zero carbon emissions. It also involves answering the Climate Change challenge posed by the ever-expanding logistics industry in the county.

All these building blocks need to knit together to deliver our Vision of a greener, cleaner, more beautiful Leicestershire.

This is a very brief summary of the main elements of the Vision document. To read the full document, please go to www.cpreleicestershire.org.uk

CPRE Leicestershire holds its first virtual AGM

On Wednesday 5th January 2022 the AGM was held, via Zoom, with the attendance of 16 members. The AGM business was conducted at the start of the meeting with Tony Stott, Branch Chair, welcoming members to the first ever virtual AGM meeting for the Branch. He provided a brief overview of the activities that the Branch had carried out since the last AGM which included information on the Vision Project, responses on 3 consultations that had been received for Charnwood, Hinckley and Bosworth and Leicester Transport Plan during the year and the recruitment of a number of new volunteers to help with the Vision Project.

Tony Simpson, the Branch Treasurer, gave an overview of the financial performance for the year ending 31st March 2021 as well as the Annual Accounts that were filed with the Charity Commission.

We are pleased to report that all current Branch Trustees stood for re-election and were all duly appointed with no objections. The Committee structure is

- Tony Stott, Trustee and Branch Chair;
- Rick Hoyland, Trustee and Chair of Charnwood District;
- Tony Simpson, Trustee and Honorary Treasurer for the Branch and for Charnwood District;
- John Marriott, Trustee;
- Helena Edwards, Trustee;
- Rita Bullivant, Trustee (appointed in April 2021).

Jill Prior remains as the Branch Committee Administrator.

At the end of the AGM business the Trustees' Annual Report and Annual Accounts were unanimously approved.

(These documents are available on the Branch website - www.cpreleicestershire.org.uk).

Following the AGM business Tony Stott gave a short PowerPoint presentation on the Vision Project. More information on the Vision Project is available within this Newsletter on pages 1 and 2.



The countryside charity
CPRE

WE HEREBY GIVE FORMAL NOTICE OF THE VIRTUAL ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING OF CPRE LEICESTERSHIRE BRANCH WEDNESDAY 5 JANUARY 2022 @ 6.30 p.m.

VIA ZOOM

AGENDA

Time	Title	Lead
6.30	Welcome from Tony Stott, Branch Chair	Tony Stott
6.35	AGM Business • Minutes of the meeting held on 9 October 2021 • Trustees' Annual Report • Financial Report and Annual Accounts • Election / Re-election of Committee Members Chair: Tony Stott Treasurer: Tony Simpson Trustees: Rick Hoyland, John Marriott, Helena Edwards and Rita Bullivant • Comments and questions from members	Tony Stott Tony Stott Tony Simpson Tony Stott
7.00	Presentation on CPRE Leicestershire Vision Project	Tony Stott
7.30	Any Other Business Close of meeting	

[Join CPRE Leicestershire \(looking for you to participate\) Zoom meeting](#)
Topic: CPRE Leicestershire AGM
Start: Jan 5, 2022 06:30 PM (GMT)

Join Zoom Meeting
<https://cpreleicestershire2022.zoom.us/j/9247569091>

Meeting ID: 924 7569 091
Passcode: 881112

Would you like to receive future communications electronically?

With ever increasing costs of postage the Branch is looking at ways to economise. If you would like to receive the newsletter or future communications electronically please send your name and contact email to the Branch's email info@cpreleicestershire.org.uk with your name and email address. We will then add you to the electronic communication list. Thank you.

CPRE Leicestershire welcomes Rita Bullivant as a new Trustee

Hello Everyone!

Having recently joined CPRE, I wanted to introduce myself.....

I was born in Leicester and grew up in the city centre. My primary school teacher to whom I shall be eternally grateful introduced all of us to the countryside and I have been passionate about the countryside around us and how precious it is ever since.

I recently became a trustee for CPRE Leicestershire as a way to become more involved with the charity so I could do more to help the cause. I am a full time working mum with 2 young girls, a dog, a cat and plenty of fish – in the pond...

My career in technology has taken me around the world where I have been able to enjoy the countryside in all sorts of environments including The Falkland Islands where I saw how the local community embrace it despite the harsh climate - I was also a magistrate for over 20 years.

The countryside is very important for both us and the younger generation as there is a need for everyone to have space to walk, run, explore and look at nature.

Becoming part of the CPRE team is an honour and a role I take seriously, it helps me feel that I am helping to protect our ever decreasing countryside, which is so beautiful and enjoyable, be it on a lovely warm sunny day or when there is thick snow over the fields making them a playground for our children.

We are always looking for more people to join us, so please encourage your friends, relatives and work colleagues to join CPRE Leicestershire so we can ensure there will be some countryside for our children's children.

If any of our members wish to be considered for a Trustee role please see advert on our website

www.cpreleicestershire.org.uk

or email

info@cpreleicestershire.org.uk

with your name and contact details and one of the Trustees will be more than happy to contact you and discuss this.



Planning and Transport matters –

We have been busy ...

Besides working on our Vision, CPRE Leicestershire has been responding to a seemingly continuous stream of consultations on planning and transport matters.

Since 2020, our small team has responded to consultations on the Leicester Local Plan, and on Charnwood, Blaby, Hinckley and Bosworth (twice) and North West Leicestershire Local Plans. In addition, we have also responded to various transport-related consultations, including on the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Priorities, the draft Leicester Transport Plan, Leicester Workplace Parking Levy, and most recently in April 2022, the Hinckley Rail Freight Terminal proposal.

All this is an important part of our efforts to promote and protect the Leicestershire countryside. It would be great if more individuals joined the team to help us. Can you help?

Our overall concerns

In our responses, we have addressed a number of recurring concerns. Overall, we have argued it is vital that future developments must be considered in the context of climate change and their impact on the environment, nature and the countryside. In our view, while Local Councils have declared a Climate Emergency, climate change-related issues are still not being adequately addressed in Local Plan and transport consultations.

For CPRE, a major concern has been the lack of any coherent link between planning and transport. Most development proposals, especially those on green field sites in the countryside, are very dependent on car use. Concerns have been expressed about the failure to consider how the heavy reliance on car use can be reduced, how development can be planned and located to reduce traffic growth and how alternative modes of active and sustainable travel can be delivered.



Strategic Growth Plan (SGP)

All Councils support the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan (SGP) which looks forward to 2050. It is driven by a vision of growth that takes no account of the need to tackle climate change or its impact on the countryside. It stated we need nearly 200,000 more homes by 2050 and a new 'motorway-like' expressway to the south and east of Leicester to support a new development corridor that included around 38,000 houses. Despite the idea of the expressway being dropped for lack of funding, the pressure for development has not. Despite Council resistance, we have regularly criticised the SGP and continue to call for it to be reviewed.

Planning and Transport matters –

We have been busy ...

Local Plans

The aspirations of the SGP are being promoted through Local Plan processes. CPRE has been active in criticising Local Plans for failing to prioritise tackling climate change, for promoting developments that will add to traffic congestion and for relying on creating additional road capacity to tackle increased congestion. Instead, we want development that takes place where there are good local facilities, and where effective safe walking, cycling and public transport alternatives are provided.

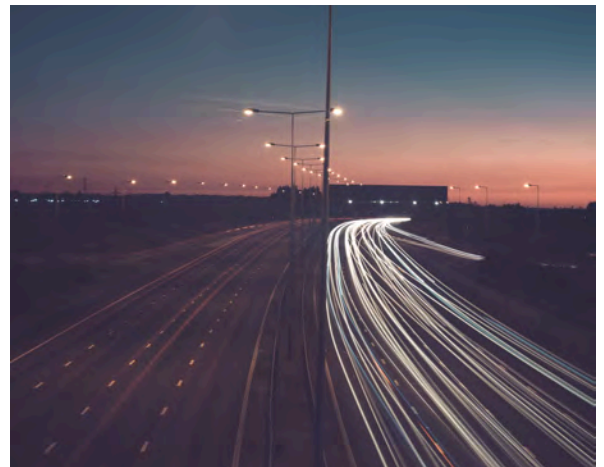
However, ideas for large new settlements in the countryside, distant from existing ones, such as Blaby Council's suggestion for two different sites of up to 5,000 dwellings close to Stoney Stanton and to Whetstone, and that of North West Leicestershire for a 4,500 dwellings development near Diseworth and East Midlands Airport, raise important concerns.

Proponents of large developments suggest that they are able to provide more local facilities, better public transport and will be more sustainable and climate friendly. Experience, so far, of the large development at Lubbethorpe and other evidence from across England does not support this view. Instead, we want more done to redevelop underused and brownfield land especially in places where alternatives to the dependency on car use could be achieved.

Equally, we expect allocated major sites, such as the Earl Shilton and the Barwell Sustainable Urban Extension (SUE) sites in the Hinckley and Bosworth Local Plan, to be built out in a reasonable time scale so that other green field sites are not unnecessarily allocated for development and yet more countryside lost.

Transport Related Plans

In 2020, CPRE has also made comments on the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Transport Strategies, expressing concern that its funding priorities were directed mainly at increasing road capacity. In our view, Highway Authorities, in response to Local Plan consultations, continue to be weak in pressing for changes in the way sites are evaluated and designed, preferring instead to look for ways to increase road capacity.



Logistics and Hinckley Rail Freight Terminal (HNRFI)

Our most recent consultation response, submitted in April 2022, relates to a proposal for a new Rail Freight Interchange near Hinckley, north-west of the M69 Junction 2. CPRE is very concerned about the proliferation of huge logistics facilities across Leicestershire and is opposed to this proposal. The need for it had not been justified as Leicestershire is already well served by such facilities.

While it is presented as a rail terminal, most of the traffic generated would be road-based HGVs. We are concerned about the increase of road traffic arising from this development and the traffic generated by resultant changes to the road network. We have doubts about the capacity of the rail network to accommodate the number of trains required. But, above all, no evidence was produced to show that the proposal is consistent with a reduction in CO2 emissions to reach the Government's commitment to achieve net zero.

Daring to challenge the Planning Authority

How people in the small parishes of Hungarton, Beeby and Keyham got a County Council Development Control and Regulatory Board (DCRB) decision quashed in the High Court.

An application for an intensive poultry farm and anaerobic digester was submitted in 2015 and agreed by a narrow majority of Leicestershire County Council's (LCC) DCRB, despite many local objections. But the development was not progressed and in 2020 a new, if very similar, application was submitted. Despite 97 letters of objection the DCRB approved the application again.

Local people who read the officer's report and/or watched the video of the meeting on LCC's YouTube channel felt that an injustice had been done. In particular, it was the opinion of those who had followed the progress of the planning application that there had been misleading advice from officers given in response to councillor questions, misrepresentation of the objections received and a significant lack of transparency. Some local people felt so strongly about this that they started to seek advice on what possible actions could be taken. We asked Tony Stott, Chair of CPRE Leicestershire and he said there were four possible courses of action:

- write to the Authority explaining why we think the decision is unlawful;
- write to the Secretary of State and ask for the decision to be called in, (both of these would need to be done before the "decision" is published);
- Judicial Review (must be lodged within 6 weeks of the published decision);
- A complaint to the Ombudsman (must be made within 12 months).

We also spoke to a trustee of CPRE Herefordshire, which has developed considerable expertise in fighting the proliferation of poultry "farms". They gave good advice and suggested that we approach Richard Buxton Solicitors, who have environmental expertise and experience in fighting these kinds of cases. CPRE's National Office was able to provide examples of relevant dismissed appeals from their Compass database. Two local solicitors expressed the view that we might have a case. Less than a week after the DCRB meeting, the eventual chair of the Action Group and appellant for Judicial Review was musing: "...on possible legal action. This will take leadership, time and stamina, if it is to proceed. Do we have sufficient of these?!" Recognising that we would need a full legal opinion as a first step, a small group of seven individuals, two each from Beeby and Keyham and three from the larger parish of Hungarton, came together to discuss options and take actions forward. We met with Richard Buxton Solicitors one month after the DCRB meeting. They told us we could fundraise through CrowdJustice and with some trepidation we started the ball rolling. It was nerve-wracking asking people to fund the effort to find out, in the first instance, whether we might actually have a case. Nevertheless, thanks to a network of local activists and generous contributions, we reached the first funding target of £5,000 within two days and the solicitors began work and identified a barrister. We sent them a lot of documents from which they created a "bundle" for the barrister. The barrister identified 4 "grounds of challenge". We now had to wait for the council to publish its Decision Notice to see if these would remain valid. The Decision Notice was published a little over four months after the DCRB meeting and then we had less than six weeks: to send the Letter Before Action to LCC setting out our legal basis for a challenge; to provide the Council with an opportunity to respond; and to prepare the Judicial Review paperwork. The Letter Before Action was sent to LCC. They asked for more time and then responded accepting that there were errors in the environmental impact assessment accompanying the planning application and that issues should have been addressed in the conditions! The Council agreed that the decision should be quashed in court. Of course the risk here is that having got the decision quashed the DCRB would approve the application again.

The High Court was surprisingly speedy in quashing the decision and we recently heard the very good news that the farm has been sold to a local landowner, who intends to farm it traditionally. The DCRB will not now reconsider the quashed decision. It took a great deal of time, resilience and stamina, but in the end it was well worth all the effort!

Charnwood District Group

Throughout the pandemic, the District Group has continued to respond to significant Charnwood planning applications, focusing particularly on questioning and challenging applications for developments on sites which are not allocated within the current or draft Local Plans.

Regrettably, the impact of our responses has been weakened by the fact that since March 2021 Charnwood Borough Council has been unable to demonstrate a five year supply of land for housing. The March 2021 figure was recorded as 3.43 years. As a result, the Council are again facing difficulties with defending their Local Plans against speculative developments on unallocated sites due to the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), which takes precedence. In the absence of a five year supply of housing land, the NPPF supports developments outside Local Plans provided they can be shown to be 'sustainable'.

The pandemic has slowed down the volume of applications but as restrictions ease we must expect a significant increase in speculative proposals. Our concern regarding the likely outcome is illustrated by the recent approval for 36 new homes on Maplewell Road, Woodhouse Eaves. The site was unallocated, outside the Limits to Development for Woodhouse Eaves, and the village was identified as an 'other settlement' within which only modest developments to satisfy local social and economic need would be approved.

An earlier application for 50 homes was refused consent by Charnwood Borough Council and also refused consent by the Planning Inspectorate following an appeal. The subsequent application for 36 homes was refused again by Charnwood but approved by the Planning Inspectorate after a second appeal. In the meantime Charnwood had 'lost' its five year housing land supply and notwithstanding sympathy for the arguments of objectors, the Planning Inspector upheld the appeal on the grounds of a lack of a five year supply of housing land in accordance with the provisions of the NPPF.

We are concerned that the five year supply ruling makes a nonsense of Local Plans and are supporting CPRE Leicestershire in seeking changes to this policy through discussions with national politicians and local councillors. Charnwood and Leicestershire face many contentious development issues in the immediate future including Climate Change, Travel and Transport issues and the Leicester and Leicestershire Strategic Growth Plan. Please contact us to discuss ways in which you may be able to help.



WWW.CPRELEICESTERSHIRE.ORG.UK



The countryside charity
Leicestershire

WE NEED YOUR HELP NOW.....

- DONATE TO THE BRANCH
- VOLUNTEER FOR US
- RAISE YOUR CONCERNS WITH YOUR LOCAL M.P. OR LOCAL COUNCILLORS

WE MUST ACT NOW OR WE RISK LOSING THE LEICESTERSHIRE COUNTRYSIDE