



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
NORTHAMPTONSHIRE

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COMMONS DEBATE

Philip Hollobone, MP for Kettering, led an adjournment debate in the House of Commons on June 23rd on the subject of the North Northants Core Spatial Strategy, a dry-sounding name for a document that is likely to have a major impact on the north of the county over many years to come. CPRE Northants volunteers David Edsall, Bill Driver and others worked extensively to influence the development of the CSS, including considerable time spent at the recent Examination in Public.

If you love the countryside in the north of the county, the debate is worth reading; you will find it in Hansard (go to www.parliament.uk then follow links to Hansard, House of Commons, selecting the MP and date of debate – note that the debate covers several Sections of Hansard). In the debate Mr Hollobone, supported by Peter Bone, MP for Wellingborough, questions many aspects of the CSS. On the floor of the House he directly quoted the information that Sir Paul Hayter had provided for him, based on work by Keith Allsop, on Policy 7, attributing it to CPRE Northants:

“We consider it vital that infrastructure should be in place before development takes place, but this requirement which was in the first draft of the Strategy has now been deleted by the government inspector following the Examination in Public. Policy 7 of the Strategy now permits all development regardless of the provision of infrastructure. In its desire to get development under way, the Government is building up trouble for the communities and local authorities who will have to deal with what the developers leave behind.”

He continued: Further alarm will be caused in my constituency and neighbouring constituencies by the fact that, as the strategy states, there is no way that it can meet the Government’s target for the percentage of new homes that are built on brownfield land. It says: “High priority will be given to the reuse of suitable brownfield sites”. Great. However, it continues:

“North Northamptonshire has a limited supply of such sites and, with the substantial levels of development proposed, cannot achieve the national and regional targets of building 60% of new homes on brownfield land. A more realistic, but still challenging, target is for at least 30% of new housing to be provided on previously developed land and buildings.”..... So there we have it in black and white: the housing expansion policy in north Northamptonshire will not be able to meet the Government’s stated aim of 60% of new build taking place on brownfield sites.

The Government reply was made by the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government, Parmjit Dhanda. The debate continued for an hour in all, during which considerable time was spent on the infrastructure issue.

LOCAL FOODS

Northants is playing its part in the national CPRE Local Foods campaign. Using funding from Awards for All, we are piloting an education pack in some primary schools during the summer term. The pack is designed to improve children’s awareness of where their food comes from, and to introduce the concept of food miles to them.



Once all the feedback from the pilot has been assessed, we plan to introduce it to many more primary schools during the autumn term. If this is successful, we will extend the project to secondary schools next year. If your school is likely to be interested, please let us know by emailing us at info@CPRENorthants.org.

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PERMACULTURE

Dawn Houghton, of the PermOrganics Organic Food & Sustainability Centre near Northampton, writes:

Permaculture is about creating sustainable human habitats by following nature's patterns. It uses the diversity, stability and resilience of natural ecosystems to provide a framework and guidance for people to develop their own sustainable solutions to the problems facing their world, on a local, national or global scale. It is based on the philosophy of co-operation with nature and caring for the earth and its people.

Permaculture is not a set of rules; it is a process of design based around principles found in the natural world, of co-operation and mutually beneficial relationships, and translating these principles into actions. These actions can range from choosing what you eat, how you travel, the type of work you do, and where you live, to working with others to create a community food-growing project. It's about making decisions that relate to all your other decisions; so one area of your life is not working against another. It means thinking about your life or project as a whole system - working out the most effective way to do things that involves the least effort and the least damage to others, and looking for ways to make relationships more beneficial.

It is essential to observe your surroundings before making choices. Taking stock at the beginning of a project (whether it be building a house or planting a window box) of the available resources in terms of time, materials, skills, money, opportunities, land etc, and thinking about how these resources can relate to each other is a useful basis for designing a sustainable and effective system. To take the example of a garden - careful observation over the course of a few months can give information about the sunniest spots, the path of a neighbourhood fox, and which areas are sheltered from the wind. Such information is not always immediately available, but can ultimately be very important.

A key feature of the design process in permaculture is "zoning". This is about placing things appropriately in relation to each other, and works on the principle that those things which require frequent attention are placed closest to the home. It is about using time, energy and resources wisely, which can be as simple as planting your most used herbs nearest to your kitchen, or as complex as planning a community.

Ethics and Principles: "If we want to move on and create sustainability and a more fulfilling quality of life, the best way to do this is to understand the nature of the world and to live harmoniously and creatively with it." Permaculture embodies a system of ethics and principles that we aim to put into practice. These focus around sustainability and fairness, and are generally divided into three main categories:

Earth Care: Permaculture as a design system is based on natural systems. It is about working with nature, not against it - not using natural resources unnecessarily or at a rate at which they cannot be replaced. It also means using outputs from one system as inputs for another (vegetable peelings as compost, for example), and so minimising wastage.

People care: is about looking after us as people, not just the world we live in. It works on both an individual and a community level. Self-reliance, co-operation and support of each other should be encouraged. It is, however, important to look after ourselves on an individual level too. Our skills are of no use to anyone if we are too tired to do anything useful! People care is also about our legacy to future generations.

The **fair shares** part of the permaculture ethic brings earth care and people care together. We only have one earth, and we have to share it - with each other, with other living things, and with future generations. This means limiting our consumption, especially of natural resources, and working for everyone to have access to the fundamental needs of life - clean water, clean air, food, shelter, meaningful employment, and social contact.

Permaculture does not provide prescriptive solutions to the problems facing the world. It is about allowing you the freedom to observe your surroundings, and make decisions that will work for you, in your situation, using the resources you have. Permaculture seeks to foster the skills, confidence and imagination to enable people to become self-reliant, and to seek creative solutions to problems on a global or local scale. While the individual has a part to play, in most places it is not realistic for an individual household to provide for all of their own needs in terms of food, clothing, work etc, and the emphasis is more on self-reliance and increased sufficiency within the community, rather than individual self-sufficiency.

Working together is the key - it takes a lot of strain off the individual. It also is important to be well informed and if you can help others, spread your knowledge in return.