



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
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CPRE calls for greener towns, and more brownfield development

CPRE[1], Cheshire's countryside campaigners, turned their attention to the urban environment this week to welcome a new Royal Commission report [2] highlighting the crucial role green spaces play in protecting the environment of our towns and cities.

In addition to its work protecting the county's countryside, the charity, which includes urban groups in Trafford, Stockport and Warrington, has long campaigned to retain green spaces in towns, and has recently been standing up against the growing trend for building on suburban gardens.

CPRE supports the Royal Commission's recognition of the huge potential environmental benefits of compact city living and its recommendations for healthier, more attractive towns and cities that contribute to solving global environmental problems while giving residents a better quality of life.

However, they are concerned that these well-intended aims could weaken the Government's 'brownfield first' policy of building on previously developed land as a priority.

'The Royal Commission recommends a review of the Government target for 60% of all new homes to be built on previously developed sites, yet this 'brownfield first' policy has helped boost urban regeneration,' said Cheshire CPRE Vice President, Jean Stainthorpe.

'We agree that urban brownfield sites which have become green havens, rich in wildlife and highly valued by local people should not be built on, and that wholesale 'garden-grabbing' destroys local character, but in many of our urban areas, there is untapped potential to build the new homes we need on abandoned or under-used sites that are currently just eyesores in our towns.'

CPRE has recently produced a national report highlighting the fact that there are still many more opportunities to build on previously developed urban sites without destroying valuable open space, and is calling for the brownfield target to be revised upwards, to encourage redevelopment of such sites[3].

'We were also pleased to note that Royal Commission's report supports two other issues Cheshire CPRE has been campaigning for - reducing car traffic and reducing VAT on building renovations – a long overdue tax change which would give urban regeneration a significant boost'. Ms Stainthorpe concluded.

For more information on Cheshire CPRE's work in town and countryside, call 01606 835046, or visit their website at www.cprecheshire.org.uk

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NOTES FOR EDITORS

[1.] CPRE, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, is a charity which promotes the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England. We advocate positive solutions for the long-term future of the countryside. Founded in 1926, we have 60,000 supporters and a branch in every county. President: Sir Max Hastings. Patron: Her Majesty The Queen.

[2.] Royal Commission on Environmental Pollution 26th Report, *The Urban Environment*, published 6 March 2007.

[3.] In 2005, 77 per cent of new homes in England were provided by building on previously developed land or by conversions. *Land Use Change in England: Residential Development to 2005, Update – January 2007*, DCLG, January 2007. □ □ 4. *Untapped Potential*, published by CPRE in March 2007, and the accompanying news release available from our national office website www.cpre.org.uk. Hard copies available from our national press office (020 7981 2880). CPRE has proposed an 85% target.

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