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CH/03/08

21st February 2008

PRESS RELEASE

[Embargo: For immediate publication](#)

CPRE welcomes withdrawal of 'Need Green' Eco-Town bid

The surprise news that Pochins have withdrawn the controversial 'Need Green' Eco-Town bid has been welcomed by countryside campaigners in Crewe and Nantwich.

The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)[1] had spoken out against the proposal for over 5000 homes to be built on green fields, saying there are better options for siting an Eco-Town in the North West, using 'brownfield' land close to existing transport and amenities.

Greville Watts, of CPRE's Crewe and Nantwich group said, 'It's a great relief that this bid has been withdrawn, and the fact that local opinion was heeded proves the point that CPRE so often makes – it is possible for people to make a difference to decisions about their environment.'

CPRE supports the Eco-Town concept[2], but insists that such developments should be models of environmentally sustainable development, not just a smokescreen for making house-building in greenfield areas appear more palatable.

Mr Watts continued, 'CPRE believes Eco-Towns can only work if they are supported by local communities, not imposed on them. If planners, developers and communities can work together to select the right sites and take the proper approach, Eco-Towns could offer an exciting opportunity to create models of truly sustainable living.'

The environmental charity says it is keen to support another Eco-town bid at Carrington, in Trafford, if it meets CPRE's '10 tests for Eco-Towns'[3], a set of criteria including local consultation, proper consideration of environmental effects and good connection to public transport and local food networks.

The government's shortlist of potential Eco-Towns will be announced in the next few weeks.

For more information on CPRE's criteria for Eco-Towns, see the charity's national website at www.cpre.org.uk, or call the Cheshire Branch Office on 01606 835046.

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Notes for editors:

[1] The Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE) exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country. For more information and archive of press releases see the CPRE Cheshire website at www.cprecheshire.org.uk and the national CPRE website at www.cpre.org.uk

[2] Last May, Gordon Brown pledged to build up to 100,000 houses in five eco-towns. Each eco-town would contain between 5,000 and 20,000 homes. Developments would be zero carbon, contain a range of facilities, including schools, shops and leisure facilities and be an exemplar in at least one environmental technology. At the Labour Party conference in September, Gordon Brown as Prime Minister announced a further five eco-towns would be built, at least one in each region, making a total of 10 altogether. **Over 50 bids are now being considered nationally.** Ministers have so far declined to disclose information about bids received or the location of proposed schemes, on the grounds of commercial confidentiality. However, CPRE research has enabled us to create a map of possible Eco-Towns, available at <http://www.cpre.org.uk/news/view/471>
The Government's criteria for eco-towns are set out in Eco-Towns Prospectus (CLG, July 2007) available from <http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/housing/ecotownsprospec>

[3] CPRE's 10 Tests for Eco-Towns

1. The public and affected communities should be fully consulted on schemes, including the principle of whether or not to have an eco-town in their area.
2. Schemes should be tested through regional spatial strategies and local development framework reviews. These should ensure that decisions on eco-towns take full account of evidence on environmental effects, housing need and alternatives for meeting this.
3. Decisions on eco-towns should be accompanied by evidence that demonstrates a new settlement to be the most sustainable option for accommodating housing growth compared with other options, such as redeveloping an existing urban brownfield site or an urban extension.
4. Schemes should demonstrate efficient use of land, with densities capable of supporting public transport and a high priority given to recycling brownfield land and buildings.
5. They should be genuinely carbon neutral, taking into account potential emissions from transport (domestic, public and commercial) and buildings (in construction and use).
6. They should foster a strong sense of place and community, achieve CABE gold Building for Life Standards, with high quality public spaces, architecture and street layouts that give priority to pedestrians and non-motorised transport, including substantial car free areas.
7. They should be subject to an independent landscape character appraisal, be sympathetic to their setting and clearly enhance the local landscape, built and natural heritage, including through the designation of new Green Belt where appropriate.
8. They should include measures designed to conserve water and other natural resources, minimise soil, air, noise and light pollution and achieve zero-waste.
9. They should be complete communities with homes (with at least 50% affordable), schools,

workplaces, shops, recreation, community and health facilities and open space within walking distance and foster active, sustainable lifestyles and civic participation.

10. They should be well connected to surroundings with high quality public transport providing good access to nearby settlements and local supply networks, with sourcing of local produce, such as food, fuel and replenishable building materials.

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