



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
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PRESS RELEASE

Embargo: Not for publication before Wednesday, 3rd August 2005

Green Belt's 50th anniversary marred by Scholar Green proposal

The Congleton District of Cheshire's Campaign to Protect Rural England[1] was all set to mark the 50th anniversary of the Green Belt[2] with a campaign to urge the government to strengthen the protection this much-loved planning control offers, when news broke of a proposal to build on Green Belt land at Scholar Green.

The countryside campaigners, whose organisation was instrumental in bringing about the Green Belt concept half a century ago, were dismayed to learn that a plan is to be put forward to build a medical centre on an open field site in protected Green Belt at Scholar Green.[3]

"The fact that this proposal has surfaced just as we are marking this significant anniversary proves how much our Green Belt is still at risk and in need of our support," said Richard Bass, Cheshire CPRE Chairman, "There seems to be no exceptional reason why a Green Belt site should be considered for this development. Of course, most of us will feel that a medical centre will benefit the community, but this can easily obscure the fact that allowing any development in this location would set a precedent which would almost inevitably lead to the loss of further Green Belt land in this area. There are other, less damaging locations for this development."

The Government's planning policy on Green Belts clearly states that Green Belt land should be kept permanently open[4]. But the Campaign to Protect Rural England points out that, despite this, about 1,000 hectares a year are disappearing under tarmac and concrete.

"Losing open Green Belt land is more than just losing a view or a pleasant space for enjoyment and recreation; it means losing a sense of place - changing the character of an area. We are seeing this happen in too many parts of Cheshire[5], and are calling on the public to support our campaign to ensure that Green Belt designation is respected," continued Mr Bass.

"We are actively seeking new members who will help us in our campaigning work to protect the Cheshire countryside, either as active volunteers in the Congleton District or other parts of the county, or just by supporting our work through their membership subscriptions, or donations," he concluded.

CPRE is also urging people to let the Government know what the Green Belt means to them. The charity has produced postcards to be completed and sent to the government. To obtain a card, contact the Cheshire Branch Office on 01606 835046, or email your comments to info@cprecheshire.org.uk. To enquire about joining or to offer your services as a volunteer, contact the Branch Office or look at their website at www.cprecheshire.org.uk.

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] The official Green Belt 50th anniversary is Wednesday, 3rd August.

[3] The Scholar Green proposal has not yet been registered as a planning application.

[4] Extract from Government Planning Policy Guidance on Green Belts (PPG2):

“The fundamental aim of Green Belt policy is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open; the most important attribute of Green Belts is their openness. Green Belts can shape patterns of urban development at sub-regional and regional scale, and help to ensure that development occurs in locations allocated in development plans. They help to protect the countryside, be it in agricultural, forestry or other use.

“ There are five purposes of including land in Green Belts:

- to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
- to prevent neighbouring towns from merging into one another;
- to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
- to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
- to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.”

[5] CPRE is already fighting attacks on Green Belt elsewhere in the county, and expects pressure to build for the release of land from the North Cheshire Green Belt under the “Northern Way” project, which will effectively place much of Cheshire into either the Liverpool or the Manchester “City Region”. These city regions are designed to be areas to accommodate a very high level of economic growth, so significantly more land would be allocated for housing and employment. Congleton is designated as part of the Manchester city region. Info on this from Clare Mumford, CPRE North West Regional Policy Officer, 01524 849055, Email: rpo@cprenorthwest.org.uk

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