

Suffolk View

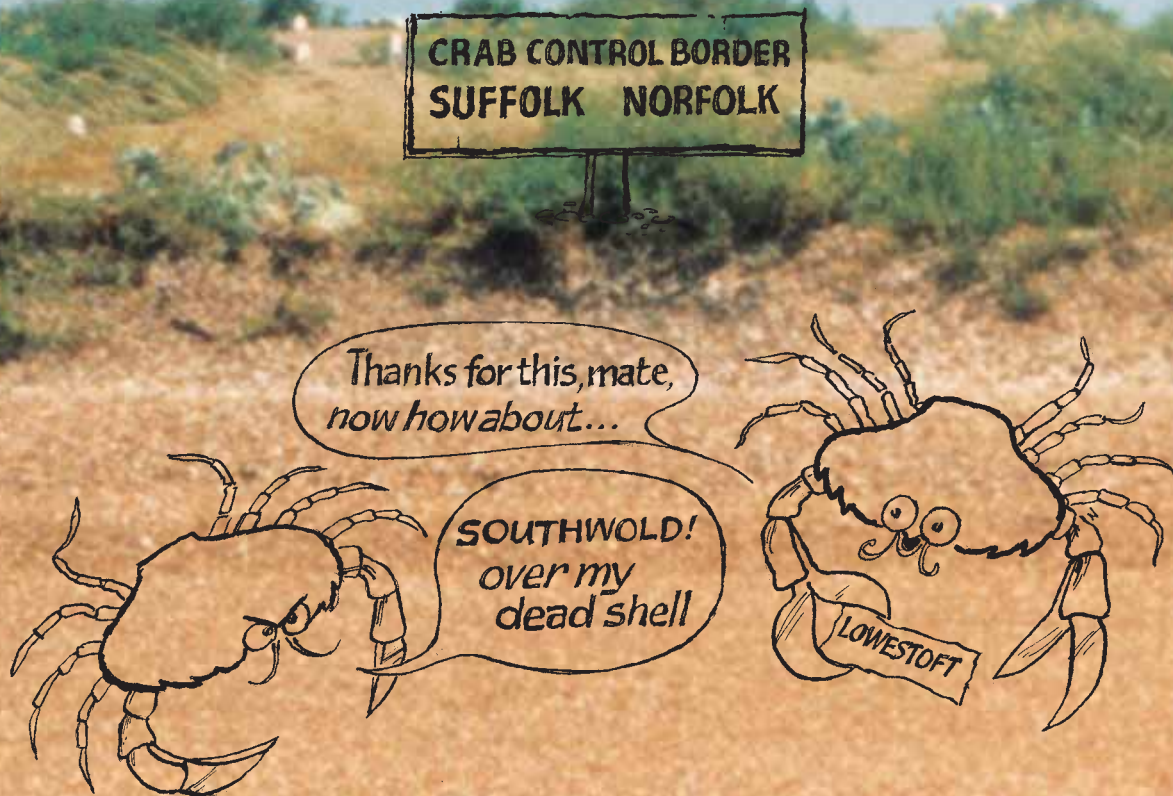
A PUBLICATION OF THE SUFFOLK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Issue No: 108

Summer 2008

Summer's Lease

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Suffolk Preservation Society



Campaign to Protect
Rural England

The County Branch of CPRE
Founded in 1929, the SPS, a registered charity, (registered charity number 249981), is working to safeguard the buildings and landscape of Suffolk.

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Sailing near Shingle Street, Suffolk

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Snippets from the Cutting Room



SPS Director, Richard Ward, writes -

Saviours of our cherished countryside come sometimes from unpredictable sources. The credit crunch appears, at least in the short term, to have delivered a knockout blow to the Government's unsustainable house building plans, despite its relentless attempts to press ahead with them against ever-mounting opposition. But we should not rest on our laurels. It is critical that as time passes and the extent of the problem becomes clearer, we harness the opportunity to ensure when recovery arrives we have a more sustainable approach to house building. *CPRE* and *SPS* need to drive home that message. **Thank goodness that the protection of our countryside can rely on the fluctuations of the global economy!**

The *Boundary Committee's* view about the future form of local government in *Suffolk* (and the neighbouring *County of Norfolk*) had no surprises. The question to be asked now is will what is proposed deliver improvement for local communities or will it just move decision-making and accountability further away from those it is meant to serve. Time will tell, but it is essential that the *Committee* knows our views before it makes its final recommendations to government.

This leads me on to the recent consultation by the *National Aerospace Technology Strategy (NATS)* on stacking of aircraft

over parts of the county as they wait to land, which has highlighted how all too easy it is for the Government, and its agencies, to get consultations wrong. They do need to think more about the processes and procedures and understand that the people they consult often have limited aviation knowledge, at the outset, yet are expected to comment on matters involving highly technical and complicated issues. To their credit *NATS* did respond quickly and comprehensively to the Society's submission, something few others do. You can view it at www.suffolksociety.org

We are lucky in *Suffolk* not to have one of the Government's proposed eco-towns imposed on us as more and more it appears they will be delivered by circumnavigating the normal planning system and regardless of the host community's views. *CPRE* has been, quite rightly, very critical of Government on its handling (or should that be mishandling) of the issue and was consequently lambasted in late June by *Government's Housing Minister, Caroline Flint*, who accused the organisation of **"reverting to type"** and attacked its credentials and commitment to affordable housing in the countryside. Her suggestion is that **eco-towns equal rural affordable housing, which of course they do not!** *CPRE* is reverting to type – doing its hardest to protect the countryside and I, for one, on this issue fully support their handling of the matter. Its support for affordable housing is unquestionable – one has only to look at the *Elmswell Project* here in *Suffolk* which was initiated by this County Branch.

Now, importantly, I cannot end *Snippets* without expressing the Society's and my personal thanks to *Mike Coleman* for his past three years' service as Chairman. His hard-working, conscientious and right-thinking approach on so many different matters has been an enormous source of benefit to me and to the Society. I am grateful that he has consented to continue on the *SPS Executive Committee*, as a working and voting member, and he is to be congratulated on being appointed one of the two *Vice Chairmen* to the *CPRE East of England Regional Board*. "Thank you" *Mike* for your unfailing support through the many challenges we face, and "thank you" *Marion* for your patience and understanding, while we stole your husband for endless duties and diversions.

Comment



The new Chairman, Alfreda Thistlethwaite, signs in

Newly elected SPS Chairman, Alfreda Thistlethwaite

Like most people I have great concerns about the challenges facing us, in particular the major issues of population growth, global warming and climate change. We experience already their impact on the global and local environment.

Our basic needs of food, fuel and shelter are under pressure, creating severe problems of supply. These needs compete for the use of land. Land, like fossil fuel, is not an infinite resource and when decisions are taken to earmark it for development purposes it is lost to other uses. The government has dictated that we must build three million homes by 2020. It is important that we continue to question the basis on which such figures are arrived at and how we are to accommodate such extensive development. In other words we must try to get a **shift in thinking from a “predict and provide” philosophy** to that of an ongoing examination and refinement of those elements that make up housing requirements.

In the last few weeks we have witnessed the housing market shrink, but, I suspect **there will be no change in government “predictions”**. Now could be an opportune time to concentrate efforts to improve the supply and quality of affordable housing.

The cost of fuel has escalated and seems set to continue rising. We are faced with a dilemma on how to meet increasing demand to satisfy our various and competing energy requirements. **Suffolk is being asked to accommodate another nuclear power station on its Heritage Coast.** Alternative energy sources have, in some instances, equally difficult environmental

impacts. Production of bio-fuels will compete with our need to grow crops to feed an increasing population. We are faced with the **difficult decision whether to use land for fuel, food or development**. We need to think carefully about these choices and safeguard our environment.

The Planning Bill currently going through parliament will make a fundamental difference to how decisions of national importance about development are made. Government is determined to speed up the process by which such decisions are taken. It proposes setting up an Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC), in effect an independent body of unelected experts. The IPC will authorise major schemes for the delivery of such services as water, energy and waste disposal. There is an **understandable fear that democratic decision-making will be squeezed out of the process** and there will be a consequent loss of countryside without those living in and using it having a say or an opportunity to properly question those putting forward such schemes. I think we would all welcome speedier decision-taking, but not at the expense of losing the right to participate.

The Society and CPRE must work to ensure that its voice is heard both locally and nationally. If and when we have a change of government it is incumbent on all of us to endeavour to have the environment high, if not at the top of, the new government’s agenda. One of my priorities over the next three years will be to consolidate the reputation of the Society as an organisation that has the well-being of the Suffolk environment as its prime objective. We can’t do this on our own and must continue to work in partnership with like-minded organisations.

There are times when we object strongly to a proposal and we must be prepared to challenge what we perceive to be wrong decisions. I also believe the Society should engage in more exemplar sustainable building projects – leading by example and sharing what is learnt from such projects.

If I only achieve one thing in my term of office it should be to persuade others that the distinctive character of Suffolk is well worth fighting to maintain.

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Infinite life – infinite housing?

SPS member, Richard Toft, writes

A short while ago someone declared that, in all probability, the first member of the human race who might reach the age of one thousand years had already been born. I do not know on what basis this assertion was made nor do I know whether its author expected the pronouncement to be greeted with joy or dismay but I know what my reaction was.

Most people learn quite early in life to understand and accept the idea of mortality. Young children may pull a face and say “Yuk!” when they encounter their first squashed blackbird by the roadside but, barring the odd budding philosopher, they rarely seem to go on to question the simple fact of the ending of life. Some move on fairly swiftly to the question “What happens to me after I am dead?” but the finite nature of life itself seems to be broadly accepted.

When the poet exhorts us to “rage, rage against the dying of the light” do we see nobility in his struggle or merely futility or even, perhaps, selfishness? It is not possible for us to argue the case for sustainability on this planet without accepting, even welcoming, the thought of our own mortality.

It is laudable to improve the quality of life of everyone, provided it does not entail the plundering of the earth’s resources to our detriment or that of future generations, but merely extending life is far more questionable. As medical science advances, we face increasingly difficult moral and practical questions. A one thousand year life span should not, however, be a priority now or possibly ever and I would venture to say should never be anyone’s personal ambition.



Across the developed world, there is a growing recognition of the problem posed by increasingly ageing populations but in other parts of the world the foremost problems are combating disease and famine and striving to sustain life beyond a meagre expectation of thirty or forty years. Closing that gap is a priority.

The problems South East England may currently face in coping with the apparent sudden demand for three hundred thousand more homes would pale into insignificance if each one of us starts grasping for a life of one thousand years.

20:26 Vision

What future for the Countryside?

CPRE's Annual Lecture 2008 given by the Rt. Hon. David Cameron, MP, Leader of the Conservative Party

The Society is inevitably drawn into politics when working with a planning system which dictates land use. Government thinking alters with a change of government, and the Society has to meet the challenges that this poses. Many policies have a marked effect on what we, as a country, can and cannot achieve through the planning system. They bring about physical changes to our landscape and to what we see around us, and affect our way of life. They either support or undermine what we consider important for our neighbourhood and beyond.

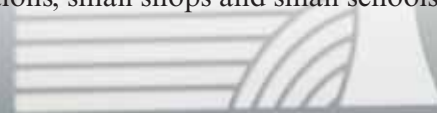
It was, therefore, not surprising that the Society was represented at the *CPRE Annual Lecture '20:26 Vision: What future for the countryside?'*, given in May. *David Cameron MP, Leader of the Opposition*, had been invited to speak and the Society wanted to hear what might be in store under a possible future *Conservative Government* planning system. As it turned out, many others had the same thought, from the journalistic press and the *BBC* to representatives from nearly every imaginable organization with an interest in planning, financing, housing, marketing, public amenity, social well-being and the environment. This cross-section of people gathered at the *Royal United Services Institute* in *Whitehall* to hear a panel of people, consisting of *Elinor Goodman*, Journalist, Commission for Rural

Communities, *Michael Coupe*, CPRE Policy Committee, formerly at English Heritage, the *Rt. Hon. Oliver Letwin MP*, Chairman of the Conservative Party Policy Review and *Shaun Spiers*, Chief Executive, CPRE address the issues raised in *Mr. Cameron's* talk and in questions from the audience. *Oliver Letwin* detailed the policy proposals behind the points raised.

This talk was the second in a series looking at the future of the countryside from a political perspective. Last year *David Miliband* gave a vision statement based on present government thinking, and it is on this that *CPRE* has partly based its strategic plan for the coming years.

In his lecture, '*20:26 Vision – What future for the countryside*', *David Cameron* sought to redress the balance between dynamic economic expansionism and social and environmental values. He said "*It's not about this policy or that policy. It's about an attitude – a philosophy of government if you like – that has taken hold of our country and which is causing great damage, not just in the countryside, but throughout Britain. Today I want to explain what that attitude is, why I think it's so damaging, and how we plan to change it.*"

Mr. Cameron considered that **social value** had not been given its due weight and that **economic value** was all that seemed to count. He considered the effect of this was the closure of many Post Offices, libraries, police stations, small shops and small schools and the



Campaign
to Protect
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recent threat to GP surgeries. The controlling top-down approach of government had its flaws: the effect of social value breakdown was uneconomic. He believed that this policy had spawned a whole culture which knew the price of everything and the value of nothing. This, he said, was not just socially destructive but economically inefficient and was undermining the institutions that were the foundation of society. And because there were costs to social failure, **social value** had to be recognised. He gave **four** ways in which **social value** has been undermined – top-down policy making: unthinking adoption of the latest fad or fashion: endless new and unnecessary regulation: and failure to formulate necessary regulation correctly. He then took each topic in turn, giving further explanation and citing examples of what he meant.

Top-down reorganisation: over the past decade public services had suffered an almost permanent assault through wave after wave of top-down reorganisations. This kind of bureaucratic restructuring had been most noticeable in the *NHS*, but could be seen in education, in policing and in many other areas, supposedly to give taxpayers value for money. However, these top-down reorganisations reduced costs only in the short term. They did not deliver taxpayer value, because they destroyed **social value**. What the politicians and management consultants lacked was any awareness of the social impact the decisions had, and the **cost** to society of that impact.

Fads and fashions: the tendency to jump on to fashionable bandwagons without thinking through the consequences was the second way in which **social value** had been undermined in recent years - for example the 'regionalisation agenda' had proved unpopular, with *Regional Government for England* falling at the first hurdle when the *North East* threw out the idea; the merging of police forces into regional super-forces similarly had to be abandoned.

Over-regulation: this was the third way that the present government had undermined social value. Small businesses in particular had suffered a huge increase in impractical rules and regulations which imposed impossibly expensive high standards. In the case of Britain's abattoirs, health and safety standards

became so onerous that only a few large-scale operators could meet them, and many were forced to close. As a result live animals were transported even greater distances, damaging their welfare, and causing higher carbon emissions, wear and tear on roads and the loss of local jobs.

Failing to get regulation right: this plethora of new legislation still failed to protect many of the things that needed protection – those things that enhance social value. Take food and farming. Many consumers want to back British farmers by buying their produce but often find it difficult to identify because of inadequate labelling. Food needs to be labelled to show its origin and any processes it has undergone. It is the job of government to ensure that labelling is accurate and clear. But government is not only failing to impose sensible new regulations, they are getting rid of useful existing ones. *The Planning Bill* currently going through Parliament would give planning powers to remote regional authorities instead of giving them back to local people. This would remove the input of local communities from planning applications and make it easier for insensitive and inappropriate development to occur. The *Bill* would also further undermine local shops if the Government wins the fight to remove of the 'needs test' that *John Gummer* put into planning law specifically to protect the small shops on the high street from being destroyed by out-of-town shopping. Inadequate regulation also occurs with the relationship between the big supermarkets and the farmers, where market power squeezes the margins of those they buy from. Low food prices are good especially when the cost of living is going up, but not at the expense of hitting suppliers with in-year retrospective discounts. Supermarkets are now addressing some of these concerns but there is no room for complacency when the countryside and local communities are threatened with big government or big business.

Conservative philosophy: *Mr. Cameron* explained that a conservative philosophy valued community. "*Our philosophical tradition places huge emphasis on civil society, on the families and communities out of which a society is built. That is why I have described*

the family as the best welfare system of all. It's why we think that active citizenship and local community organisation are the most effective means of providing social support, and it's why the focus for our reforms in government will be school reform, welfare reform and strengthening families. If we get those things right, we will not just create a stronger society, we will create a more dynamic economy, as we will avoid colossal and unsustainable demands being placed upon our public services."

The practical steps that would be taken: to establish that his party's philosophy was one that understood social value and sought to enhance it, he proceeded to translate it into practical terms. Reforms would make it easier to set up more small, independently-run schools that were sensitive to community needs. Police reforms would create a more accountable force through elected commissioners, crime maps and beat meetings to act upon crime and anti-social behaviour. Top-down reorganisations in the NHS and pointless damaging structural upheavals would stop. A renewed local GP service would give a single point of contact for health needs. There would be help to set up co-operatives to make it easier for voluntary collective action to serve local needs. A shift towards more decentralised energy would be encouraged by the introduction of a **national grid** plan for feed-in tariffs – farmers and others could become producers as well as consumers of energy. **Small shops and post offices**, which tend to be more involved with local communities, would be helped because of their social value. **Rural Post Offices** would continue to provide a place for elderly people to have daily social interaction outside the home and allow them to maintain social networks. *"If we care about our communities, and the local, independent retailers that give them their character, then it's our responsibility to support them – not just by signing petitions and joining campaigns, but with our cash."*

These were some of the ideas coming forward from Mr. Cameron's future vision for town and countryside. *"If Britain is serious about strengthening society then we need a government that understands and values it. We need a government that will always take account of social value, alongside economic and environmental value, in everything it does."*

It would have been good to hear from David Cameron a little more about **environmental value** which is so undermined. In particular we would have welcomed a reference to the misguided and unchallenged Barker demand-led housing policy Review, and his encouragement of sensible discussion on a sustainable housing supply distributed country-wide, that will not blight a future Britain by producing spreading conurbations of poorly designed unsustainable housing, or homes built on flood plains, planted in the crowded, infrastructure-starved, south east. We need to know how to provide more rented homes in perpetuity through the **main stream planning system**, and **not** on exception sites. The small number pepper-potted through large market housing estates are not going to solve the homes-for-rent crisis. However, David Cameron did attack the top-down approach in setting UK-wide housing targets and said there would be incentives, such as community land trusts, to build homes only where they were wanted.

There is also a need to protect historic/traditional small market town centres from the impact of out-of-scale supermarket buildings, not only through the **'needs test'**, but by re-examining the damaging **'sequential test'** which physically places them most centrally, impacting on the towns' fabric and creating even more traffic congestion. Importantly, we need to know that our countryside landscape can be protected for its own sake and that **environmental value** is given the same weight in the equation, as well as the social and economic – in short we need a **balanced** set of scales to assess true cost and value, and above all we need to return to an urban and a rural planning system. A system that does not impose a one size fits all solution, but one that understands that some urban policies can be extremely damaging in a rural context. What we need is a return to town and **country** planning.

The Conservative Party will publish a *Planning Green Paper* this summer.

DC's full speech is on the CPRE web-page, debates blog www.cpre.org.uk/debates

The Society's response to the speech and 20:26 Vision is also on the blog.

Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

Suffolk Coast and Heaths

John Paton, SPS's representative on the Partnership of Suffolk Coast & Heaths AONB, gives a further up-date.

Under the guidance of *Natural England* each AONB has to complete, every five years, a *Management Plan* setting out its vision for the next twenty years. There is also a section with details of action required which is updated each year. The making of this *Plan* was delegated by the two county councils and four district councils to the operational unit of the AONB based at *Melton*.

The team there, led by *Simon Hooton*, produced a *Plan* which was approved by the 26 members of *The Partnership* at its May meeting. The *Management Plan* was launched at *Thorpness* on 30th June under the *Chairmanship* of *David Wood*. The keynote speaker was *Melinda Appleby*, a member of *Natural England Board* with special responsibility for the *Eastern Region*. There were also perspectives on *Sustainable Tourism* by *Tim Roawn Robinson*, *Community* by *Christopher Lucas* and *Landscape & Biodiversity* by *Paul Cook*. *Bill Parker*, Acting Manager of the AONB, then outlined the key features of the *Management Plan*. The new document was signed by a representative of each member of the Partnership. *Alfreda Thistlethwaite*, the Society's new *Chairman*, signed on behalf of the *Suffolk Preservation Society*.

After lunch there was a walking tour to consider key local issues such as the dynamic coast, visitor management, biodiversity and sustainable tourism. **Details of the new Management Plan are available from the office of the AONB Unit at Dock lane, Melton, Woodbridge, IP12 1PE.**

Editor's note: See SV, Issue 105, page 23 - *Strengthening the AONB*.

The Dedham Vale

Stop Press: the *National Heritage Memorial Fund* has awarded the 'Managing a Masterpiece Scheme' £925,000, and a development grant of £67,000.

This historic and important landscape, which straddles the *Essex/Suffolk* border, has long inspired artists and writers. However, the area is under threat from major planning and over-flying issues and its future protection is vital.

The £1.1 million Scheme has been developed by the *Dedham Vale AONB* and the *Stour Valley Project* in partnership with the archaeological departments at *Essex* and *Suffolk County Councils*, overseen by a board of twenty organizations representing a range of interests in the Valley. There are fifteen projects, covering archaeology, biodiversity and the conservation of historic features. Implementation will be over three years from November 2009.

It is important to remember that AONBs are living and working places as well as picturesque parts of the country. One farmer of a small tenant farm in the Vale has worked hard to carve out a future in a changing farming climate. "My dream was to bring up two boys on the farm, said Tracey Hayter. But running a farm is a huge drain on our resources, and we lived in a mobile home for five years while trying to convert one barn into a home. We had to sit down and think long and hard what we could do with the farm to make it pay. We just didn't want to go on borrowing from the bank." The Hayters decided to cut back on arable and concentrate on home-produced, traditionally reared lamb and pork, which they sell from their farm in *Stoke by Nayland*. A grant from the *Dedham Vale AONB's Sustainable Development Fund* contributed towards a trailer in which to transport visitors on farm open days, and these have been very popular and have also raised money for charity. **Editor**

Have you heard this one?

A twist of the arm? House of Lords members have signalled the link between **climate change** and the necessity to **take it into account in policy-making** by pushing for *Planning Bill* amendments to ensure that climate change is taken into account. *Conservative* and *Liberal Democrat* peers have agreed to a proposal whereby decisions on **major infrastructure projects** would look at climate change. As the *Planning and Climate Change Bills* stand, local authorities would need to factor in climate change when examining a house extension, but the newly proposed and undemocratic, unaccountable and anti-public *Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC)* would **not** when examining major development like new nuclear plant, expansion of docks or assessing another airport runway. Well done those peers!

Pocket-money boost? Those with long memories will remember, as children, carting back to the local store bags of empty Corona bottles, but it was not all 'down hill'. Oh the joy of 3d. returned on each bottle and being then being in a position to choose the biggest and brightest 'gob-stopper', or the longest length of 'bootlace' liquorice in the shop! It seems that the average household buys 500 **plastic** bottles a year but only recycles 130. *CPRE* is calling for a 10p deposit scheme on plastic bottles, so what will we buy now for 10p, perhaps something more healthy?
www.cpre.org.uk

A twist of fate and an opportunity!

You don't have to leak company profit figures to know that the credit crunch has had a profound impact on the house building industry. Reservations for new market housing are down by nearly two-thirds compared with last year, and this affects the provision of 'affordable homes' through Section 106 Agreements with developers – the current planning trend to get homes for

rent built by scattering them through private housing estates paid for by the developer. Demand for rented homes is reaching an all-time high, also high is the demand for environmental standards. Now would be a good time to take stock and re-examine the basis of the government's 'predict and provide' house building figures to ensure that we **only build what we can holistically absorb** and put them where they are most needed.

Loony loophole opt-out for new build. Planning is no longer concerned just with land-use but covers climate change and the sustainability agenda, with implications for new concepts in energy generation and construction materials. Under new building regulations, all new houses must be rated against the *Code for Sustainable Homes* to ensure they reduce carbon emissions. (Almost no house builder believes the required *rating code* can be achieved by the government's 2016 target date.) Although 92 per cent of houses built by housing associations currently achieve very good ratings, only 2 per cent of privately-built homes are up to the same standard, and of course, this is the majority of housing. Because of a loop-hole in the regulations, private developers can build homes that emit just as much carbon as before by opting for a 'nil rating' which avoids a physical assessment of the property.

This loop-hole will not be closed until 2010, so homes until then may not even meet basic eco-standards.

The new *building standards code* placed on the industry by government for energy efficient, sustainable new housing will also inevitably push up the cost of housing. New technology, skills training and new materials cost money. Also, the *Construction Products Association* has warned that unless housing levels are maintained it cannot guarantee the necessary investment in the new materials required. Catch 22?



Flight of fancy? A fall in passenger numbers at *BAA's Stansted Airport* is being cited by campaigners opposing expansion plans. The number of passengers fell by 4.4 per cent between January and May compared with the same period last year. The airport is expected to handle about 22.7 million passengers this year. *BAA* is awaiting a decision from

government on applications to increase annual passenger capacity from 25 million to 35 million and to build a second runway. Will sustainability policies fly out of the window?

Atmospheric English sounds too much for some?

Noise nuisance issues are subject to planning control and in some cases are very necessary. However, it comes as a surprise to learn that *East Northamptonshire Council* has requested a noise survey to prove that there will be no nuisance to local residents

from 'willow on leather', in respect of new cricket practice nets! Nearer to home in *Suffolk*, one *Aldeburgh* resident has lodged a formal complaint about the once a month 3 hour 'change' bell-ringing peels.

Her home near the church absorbs the dulcet tones which are associated with quintessential English life, and the call



"It has been...er... suggested that...er... you just stand here and whisper 'ding' and 'dong' to each other!"

to prayer. Let's hope the ringing of church bells does not become the subject of planning permission.

Is it all hot air? Government plans to invest £100 billion in renewable energy could see *Suffolk* and *Essex* come under more pressure to develop wind farms. Let's hope that landscape assessment will inform their location. Work is already under way to develop the world's biggest off-shore wind farm off the *Suffolk* coast – the 140-turbine *Greater Gabbard Scheme* – and there are proposals for on-shore turbines at *Parham* in *Suffolk* and *Earls Hall Farm* near *Clacton* in *Essex*. The *British Wind Energy Association's Chairman* is reported to have caused more than one wry smile when, in a speech on the future of the UK off-shore wind industry, he referred to projects in the 'pipeline'. He is reported as saying "There is a lot of wind in the planning system." I think we knew that already but is it the right sort of wind?

Heritage risk to battlefield sites.

Lest we should forget –

1066 *Battle of Stamford Bridge, East Yorks*
1322 *Battle of Boroughbridge, North Yorks*
1460 *Battle of Northampton, Northants*
1461 *Battle of Towton, North Yorks*
1640 *Battle of Langport, Somerset*
1643 *Battle of Adwalton Moor, West Yorks*
1643 *First Battle of Newbury, Berks*
1651 *Battle of Worcester, Worcs*

No prizes awarded for knowing that these are the sites of the *Battle of Hastings*, *War of the Roses*, and the *English Civil Wars* but these battlefields are under threat from housing estates, so warns *English Heritage*. Because of the perceived housing crisis local authorities are being tempted to identify spaces like these for additional housing to meet their targets. It seems that although these are *sites of special archaeological interest* and *scheduled monuments* they are at much greater risk than listed buildings because local authorities view them as a loss-making burden. Parts of the 1643 site have already been designated as an area for potential housing development. May the ghosts of the past rise up and haunt the city and town halls, and officialdom!

Cooked-up appeal? Quote from a planning appeal decision in *Suffolk* – "The appeal site is already serviced, already has planning consent, and is suitable, available and oven-ready."

Latest in Nuclear news! The Government has announced that eight new power stations are to be built across England over the next ten years. These will be fast-tracked via the new planning laws and constructed alongside existing power stations, one being *Sizewell* in *Suffolk*. They will be funded by the industry, mainly from abroad. Public consultation procedures and nuclear waste issues are still not unknown.

Quote of the Issue

"The country wants a better transport system that does not continue to damage our environment and people's health. Doing nothing is not an option. People want radical change and I am going to deliver it." John Prescott 1998

NO to 'Eco-towns'

Question: *What have Tim Henman's father and Dame Judi Dench's brother got in common?*

Answer: *They are both opposed to eco-towns, and are saying so loud and clear.*

At last it has been realised, except by government, that this idea is a very bad one. These are not real towns, they are a new wave of 'dormitory suburbs', and they are certainly not 'green', 'sustainable' or 'affordable', and most of them couldn't be more in the wrong place. Pursuing its agenda of building some 3 million new homes in the next 20 years, the government has identified 10 sites for completely new settlements of 5–20,000 dwellings each. Some locations are green field sites or working farmland, others are in or close to beautiful and protected landscapes which should continue to be cherished and enjoyed. Even the ex-MOD sites, now classed as 'brown field' are in the middle of nowhere and should have long ago reverted to the landscape from whence they came after the *Second World War*. However, in their case, they are potentially worth £275 million to the *Treasury*!

The need for eco-towns would be greatly lessened if thoughtful planning over time was allowed to happen. Intelligent thinking dictates that if you added to the number of well-designed homes that could be built holistically in urban areas, country towns and in some villages where appropriate, 'eco-towns' would not be required. These homes would automatically be sustainable as the services and amenities would already be there. The *Campaign to Protect Rural England (CPRE)* has pointed out that there is a sufficient stock of brown field land already available as well as 600,000 or more empty homes in England not being utilised, and nine per cent of commercial property in Britain is empty. Quick-fix housing estates will not do, they will not offer sustainable living, and hark back to the 1960s bad boom builds. Homes built now should be ones that are good to look at and to live in and will last, and are in the right place. They

should be served by appropriate amenities and supported by proper services.

In Suffolk we may be more concerned about coastal erosion, nuclear power plant and dock expansion, but we understand the futility of hare-brained schemes which will only serve to detrimentally erode our countryside, impact on beautiful market towns and damage communities. As for being sustainable, these proposed eco-towns are not. How can they be? Even if self-consciously self-contained and self-reliant they do not respond to local needs or the landscape, or places of work, and they will not be cheap! Many are sites of previously failed planning applications, and six are on ex-MOD sites already referred to. This is more of a ruse to bulldoze through what cannot be attained democratically through the conventional planning route. In fact, there is a view that these new towns could be fast-tracked through without the opportunity for the public to have their say, so it is important that for us in Suffolk, without a proposed eco-town yet looming on the horizon, to support democracy and demand some intelligent thinking.

CPRE hit the front page of one national newspaper at the end of June by coming out and saying why the eco-towns plan fails to pass the green test. They also struck a government raw nerve at the same time, well done. *Caroline Flint, MP*, of the *Department for Communities and Local Government* said: **"This is the CPRE reverting to type, opposing the housing that young families and first-time buyers need."** Ouch, but *CPRE* ain't hurt, because they know, as do we, that the project is fundamentally flawed. It will not be environmentally sound or tackle the housing shortage in the right way. The citizens of this country do not want to be left with scarred housing estates in the middle of the countryside for the sake of a headline-grabbing government quick-non-fix. The *Treasury* must do without its extra millions this time. Let's build good housing in the right place, and only build what we really can sustain – that is what 'eco' means. **Editor**

Planning Overview

National Planning Issues

Government proposals to establish a new *Infrastructure Planning Commission (IPC)* to deal with major infrastructure proposals such as new nuclear stations, have run into problems with *members of parliament* who have expressed concern over its ability to take into account the opinions of local people. Their intervention is to be welcomed as there is a danger the *IPC's* primary aim will be to deliver *Government* objectives. At the request of *Government* the *Killian Pretty Review* are charged with finding a faster and more responsive system for processing major planning applications, so will an *IPC* be needed at all? The opposition party has already stated that it will abolish an *IPC* if implemented. If a newly appointed *IPC* does deal with major infrastructure proposals, and other major applications are subject to a new system of faster planning, one wonders how communities will have the opportunity to participate and democratically influence local decisions which will affect their daily lives. The dice appears to be loading against the public's wish to be heard.

"Eco-towns" are discussed on the previous page, but the apparent *Government* commitment to make them carbon-neutral ignores the carbon generated by the residents' car-borne journeys to and from work and elsewhere, due in many cases to the isolation of the proposed sites. More importantly, there appears total confusion on who will make the final planning decisions on new eco-towns. Having selected the site, many on former *Ministry of Defence* land, the *Government* states that it will be for local councils to determine eco-town planning applications, through the normal planning system. But what happens if they are refused locally and there is an Appeal? Will the *Government's Planning Inspectorate*, who normally determine them, take no part in the Appeal process?

CPRE has been asked to take part in and contribute to the newly launched *Killian Pretty Review* on "*Planning Applications: a faster and more responsive system - A call for*

Solutions" to which I referred earlier. Its focus is on planning applications, (including pre-application discussions and post-approval work on legal agreements and conditions attached to permissions), and how long they take to be processed. While it accepts that most local authorities are processing applications more quickly, it states that for a small proportion of large, more complex, developments the delays in the system can be severe – in 2006 one thousand major housing developments and one hundred retail developments had taken longer than one year to process. It goes on to say that these major applications are ones with the greatest potential to deliver **economic** benefit. The *Barker Review*, it quotes, estimated that planning delays cost the overall economy between £700 million and £2.7 billion.

This Review asks for solutions in relation to four areas.

Proportionality – matching skills and resources to planning application demand, accepting a likely continuing skills shortage and a need, therefore, to match capacity with demand.

Complexity – is the system over-complex?

Culture – recent reforms have aimed to move planning authorities towards steering and shaping development, and away from controlling it. Yet targets and threat of legal challenge lead to a mechanised and legalistic approach.

Engagement – the need to ensure more effective engagement of the community, statutory and non-statutory consultees, and elected members.

It does not appear to deal with the quality of decisions and development issues. When will there be a study which correlates speed of processing with the quality of development outcomes and the resources available? The now constant examination of the planning system in micro detail is pointless because there has been no holistic overview established with

a clear overall vision which is then adhered to and implemented in stages over time. Instead we have a constant tinkering with the system with ad hoc changes unlinked, ill thought-out and with a lack of understanding on how they inter-react and impact on other changes and the system overall. Put another way – planning is fast becoming a mess and not a system!

Regional Planning

The final version of the *Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS14)* is now available. Not a read I recommend other than to those who have to engage and work in the planning system. It will not be a tome for the *SV Book Review*!

It is now being used by the local authority councils in *Suffolk* when they prepare and shape the content of the plans for the future of your area – *Local Development Frameworks*. The minimum housing targets it sets for each planning district area are being incorporated. However, *LDFs* are planning for housing provision up to 2025 and beyond, while the *RSS* only plans to 2021. The Society had hoped that in this four-year period local councils would start to plan for reduced house building rates commensurate with local need, delivery of affordable housing, and reflecting both the environmental capacity and character of their areas. This will not now happen and the high building rates are being “rolled forward” into the next planning period. There is a growing danger that the *RSS Review* will then reflect building rates in the *LDFs* and we will end up building at the current rates indefinitely. Not what the County needs or the Society wants to see.

Local Planning

Mid Suffolk District Council

Elmside Farm House, Walsham-le-Willows – erection of 21 dwellings

The site is part of a larger development proposal. The application included a proportion of affordable houses. The Society asked that given the acute shortage, in this case, of affordable homes (amounting to over 362 per annum), the percentage of affordable homes be increased to fifty percent. The main concern, however, was the design, which incorporated pastiche house plans, and the impact of addressing the highway authority’s requirements on layout: the two failed to marry.



Plan for Elmside Farm House
indicating material variances

The Society’s letter also stated “*The plan in the Design and Access Statement showing the various finishes to the roof, walls and plinth of the houses is highly colourful. It demonstrates quite clearly and vividly the total lack of harmony in the design of the individual houses. Not every aspect of the houses has to be different. Without some harmony the scheme will appear disjointed.*” See above, and decision awaited.

Land south of Rose Villa, Shop Street, Worlingworth – erection of 4 dwellings

A previous application was reported in *SV, Issue105, page 12*. The new application differed from the one previously refused in only two minor aspects – the introduction of some landscaping in one corner and design changes

one detailed suggestion in relation to the appraisal for Coddendam under the section headed “Losses and Possible Gains” saying that the following text replace that proposed. “The B1078, a designated lorry route, passes through the village and brings about considerable congestion which, in turn, impacts on the general appearance and character of the Conservation Area. Securing an alternative route for lorries would, therefore, bring about considerable benefits to it and this should be seen as a priority.”

Mid Suffolk District Council’s Core Strategy Examination into the Local Development Framework

I was able to attend a number of the sessions into the examination of soundness of the District Council’s submitted *Core Strategy*, overseen by an independent Inspector. This enabled the Society’s concerns on **the number of houses to be built; the amount of greenfield land to be allocated for employment; the amount of affordable housing to be secured, and the percentage of housing to be provided on previously developed land (brownfield)** to be expanded upon. In some instances our role was to support the District Council’s position against others who sought to secure changes that were not in the long-term best interests of the County.

Babergh District Council – Brett Works Site, Hadleigh – erection of a new 2,618 sq m supermarket including the demolition of Bridge House

This is fast becoming *Suffolk’s* version of the *Norfolk* battle against a proposed *Tesco Supermarket* in *Sheringham* which has, quite rightly, received much recent publicity. In *Hadleigh*, *Tesco* are trying for the second time to secure *full* permission for a large supermarket on the River Brett and abutting the Conservation Area, to the rear of the historic High Street. The whole area is very sensitive and difficult to access. A previous application was refused on Appeal because of the poor design of the building and the impact of the access. The current application involves the creation of a new large access by demolishing an attractive small red brick building, Bridge House, in the Conservation Area on Bridge Street, and alterations to a Listed iron road bridge. The Society is assessing the application with the *Hadleigh Society* and the *Hadleigh Town Council*, and has written to the District Council asking the applicant to properly justify the demolition part of the application, in accordance with *Government guidelines* set out in *PPG15*. It is interesting to note that the applicant, with all the knowledge and resources available to them, have failed to submit the

Plan of proposed Tesco store on the Hadleigh riverside



proper information necessary for their *full* proposal to be properly assessed. There will, however, be no delay while the additional information required is submitted and then sent out to consultees for comment. It is unlikely the application will be determined before the autumn, meanwhile the uncertainty over the issue in the town continues. It is interesting to note that delays in the processing of this application are not the fault of the planning system but the applicant – *see comments on the Killian Pretty Review mentioned above under National Planning Issues*. I will keep you informed on the matter.

Suffolk Coastal District Council – ‘Shollond Hill’, Nacton – demolition of existing house and erection of dwelling.

Shollond Hill is mentioned in Nikolaus Pevsner’s book of Suffolk in the following terms: “*good one-storey modern house, 1955 by D. E. Harding. A specially nice colour scheme; brick painted grey, the gables purple, the eaves and soffits lime-green, may the colours last.*” In a letter dated the 19th May, 2008 the Society requested that the Council check with English Heritage to see if the building is Listable. If it is then the application to demolish should be refused. The District Council should seek the retention of the building and encourage its proper and sympathetic repair. The Society would not be averse to a well-designed modern extension, appropriately located and to scale, with good detail, to facilitate the repairs, if that was necessary, or the application should be refused. Permission refused.

Forest Heath District Council – Barton Mills, Hingham and Moulton – Conservation Area Appraisals

The Society welcomed the draft appraisals. In relation to the one for *Moulton* it suggested that important views in and out of the Conservation Area needed to be analysed and conclusions recorded.

St. Edmundsbury Borough Council, Core Strategy Examination in to the Local Development Framework – Issues and Options

The draft document included a proposed *Spatial Vision* which the Society considered needed refining to deliver what local people needed and wanted. Therefore, the Society put forward the alternative wording:

“St Edmundsbury will be an area where the needs of local communities and local people will be at the heart of decision making and shaping the future of the area. The focus will be to help maintain and deliver sustainable local communities by encouraging development that delivers this, within the environmental limits of the area.”

A copy of the Society’s full response to the 40 questions asked in the consultation is on the SPS website, see below.

See Letters on page 30.

Norse Avenue, Stanningfield – demolition of 10 existing Swedish style houses and erection of 24 affordable houses

The SPS Mid Suffolk District Committee initially tried to explore if the existing houses, which have a charm of their own and add to the character of the village could be retained and refurbished. These homes are part of the former local authority housing stock sold off quite cheaply by the District Council to *Havebury Housing Association* some year ago, but with no specific provision or requirement for long term repair and retention. The village preferred the houses to be retained, and any redevelopment to be a lower density, more appropriate to the village. There has now been a meeting with *Havebury Housing Association*, the District Council’s planners and representatives of the village, and it is hoped that a much improved amended scheme will come forward soon. The housing association are to be congratulated for responding positively to initial expressions of concern about their proposals.

SPS Website - Planning

Do visit the Society’s website where some of its current planning letters can be viewed.

www.suffolksociety.org/planning

The Society's 2008 AGM – at Haughley Park Barn

On a lovely evening in early June nearly 80 members of the Society's AGM celebrated with good food and wine and an informed, illustrated talk by *Cathy Hawley, Architect* from *RHM Architects*, the competition winner of the successful affordable housing design and build project at Elmswell.

But first the business of the evening was addressed with *Dr. Mike Coleman* giving his report for the year before completing his term of office as *Chairman* of the Society, see *Snippets on page 3*. He spoke of the current uncertain financial market and the difficulties this caused to the **Society's financial situation**, and the need to strengthen its legacy position. He said the Society would, nevertheless, continue with its firm control and look to reduce the deficit in the coming years. The **Elmswell project** was now seeing completion having been favourably reviewed in the architectural press, which had raised the profile of the Society. It was now time to look at a major initiative to seek improvements in the **quality of new build in Suffolk**. He touched upon the **Snoasis development problems**, the controversial **affordable housing exception sites problem** in *Suffolk Coastal District* to fund coastal defence works, and the debt the Society owed to *SPS District Committees* for their work in the planning field. The **government's housing targets** for the county were of grave concern, as was the lack of infrastructure, and he assured the company that the Society would continue to challenge the level, extent and impact of these targets. The Society's new **Award for a better environment** was explained and thanks extended to the prize benefactors. As for internal matters, he spoke of the Society's **streamlined committee structures**, the proposed new **working relationship with sister organisations**, the **relationship with CPRE National Office** and the setting up of the **County Branch Forum** through which grass root branch supporters can channel matters of relevance or concern. He finally **thanked** the dedicated and loyal efforts of the **Director and his team** and all those involved with the Society's work, and hoped that their efforts

would show through in **increased membership and improved cash flow**.

Having completed the three-year term of office, *Dr. Coleman* was heartily thanked by *Lord Marlesford* for all his hard work and endeavours on behalf of the Society. Much had been achieved during his Chairmanship as a whole, not least the effective reorganisation of the structure of its committees, to ensure efficient and sound governance going forward. Stepping down also were Vice Presidents *Sir Reginald Harland* and *Mr. Dan Pillar*, both ex-Chairmen and Executive Committee members of long standing and unfailing service to the Society, and this was acknowledged by all.

Mrs. Alfreda Thistlethwaite was duly elected the new *Chairman* for the coming three years and was warmly welcomed by *Lord Marlesford* and the company, see *page 3*.) *Mrs. Thistlethwaite*, in her acceptance speech, gave thanks for the warm welcome, then paid tribute to *Dr. Coleman's* Chairmanship over the last three years, his personal attributes and his contribution to the future success of the Society. Moving to Society matters of significant relevance or concern, she talked of the proposed new **local government boundary changes**, the new initiative on **housing design**, the difficulties and precedent of **major planning approvals** like the *Snoasis* and *Parham* developments. The importance of working



Mrs. Alfreda Thistlethwaite takes up the reigns of office

with others, external or sister organizations, on matters of mutual benefit was emphasized as was the need to increase membership, both through the Society's publication, *Suffolk View*, and through appropriate pro-active work for the benefit of *Suffolk*. Mrs. *Thistlethwaite* ended by adding that she was approachable and available for all the Society's concerns.

Among the guests this year the Society was very pleased to welcome *Sir Nigel Thompson*, from *CPRE National Office*, and *Lady Thompson*. On introducing *Sir Nigel*, *Lord Marlesford* spoke of his hard work to successfully rebuild trust between the Branches and National Office. *Sir Nigel* advised that he would shortly be handing over the reins to a successor as his period of office was coming to a close, *see page 20*. He spoke briefly of national issues which would influence CPRE going forward: the unpopularity of the **unelected regional governments** which focused on economic development: **the Planning Bill** which was before the Lords shortly and would be modified in a number of areas: **eco-towns** which appeared great in theory but which took valuable green space and created unsustainable communities: **affordable housing** saying that the Government should not get involved with home ownership, and social housing should be for rent and not sale.

Sir Nigel considered that the *Suffolk Branch (SPS)* was well placed to tackle the problems of **coastal defence** and Government should not direct new housing and infrastructure towards **flood plains**: the science of **climate change** was still controversial but the economic question remained as to whether Government spent money on trying to prevent or mitigate climate change effects, or on adapting to it: **food security** was a continuing concern and he acknowledged the part *SPS* had taken in this important issue, and in particular *Lady Caroline Cranbrook's* research work and help towards producing *The Real Choice*, the report for CPRE on how local foods can survive the supermarket onslaught: and the **Common Agriculture Policy (CAP)** reform which could switch single farm payments to environmental payments.

Sir Nigel closed his remarks by saying how much he had enjoyed working with CPRE and that as an organization it was now financially sound and on a good footing with increasing income. Whilst there were many topics which it needed to address like transport, housing, airports, farming and flooding it had to be recognized that it had limited resources but was actively looking 20 years ahead to consider where best to place its resources and effective campaigning.



Sir Nigel Thompson, Chairman of CPRE National Office, addressing the company at the Society's AGM

The newly elected *SPS* Chairman, Mrs. *Thistlethwaite*, thanked *Sir Nigel* for his appraisal adding that *CPRE Suffolk and Norfolk Branches*, working together, would be well placed to consider the coastal defence dilemma. She then introduced *Cathy Hawley* who gave an overview of the innovative affordable housing project at *Elmswell* for 28 new homes for rent and shared equity, and the new technology which made it a virtually carbon-free build, one of the first schemes in the country to be completed to such high sustainable standards. (*See Suffolk View, Issues 101, 102 & 107.*)

With the business of the evening completed, members, friends and guests withdrew to enjoy an excellent supper and social evening.

CPRE in Focus

Sir Nigel Thompson, Chairman, CPRE

stepped down at the *CPRE AGM* in London on 3rd July, 2008, having completed his five year term of office.

Sir Nigel, in the foreword to *Countryside Voice*, recalled the various campaigns during his term of office and paid tribute to, and thanked, *CPRE's* talented and committed volunteers who battled against the odds to save important countryside from inappropriate development. *Sir Nigel* said he had enjoyed his time as Chairman, in particular travelling the countryside meeting its members. He hoped more people would join *CPRE* at this crucial time and felt the organisation was in good shape with a profile which was listened to by others across the spectrum.

Of his successor, Peter Waine, he said "Peter is devoted to our cause and brings a wide range of business and environmental experience to the job. We are fortunate indeed that he has agreed to take on this Chairmanship."

We wish *Sir Nigel* well for the future.



Peter Waine, the newly elected *CPRE Chairman*, is a former Chairman of both the *Tree Council* and *Brogdale Horticultural Trust*. He also co-founded the *London Ecology Centre*, an organisation that brought together a number of smaller

conservation groups to share good practice. Peter said, on his election, that he would press for *CPRE* to be bold in championing the value of the English countryside with national and local government, regional decision-makers and the wider public; and to recruit more members and active volunteers, with an emphasis on recruiting younger members.

Also elected were five Vice Presidents, all prominent personalities to add support and

gravitas to *CPRE's* campaigning. They are former Chair of *English Heritage*, *Sir Neil Cossons*, food campaigner, *Lady Caroline Cranbrook*, writer and TV presenter *Nicholas Crane*, broadcaster *Jonathan Dimbleby* and environmentalist *Ben Goldsmith*.

CPRE's skills & knowledge directory

Do you have skills, knowledge and experience you can share? *CPRE* is working on creating a directory which is open to all active members of *CPRE Branch* and *Regional Groups*. If you have a skill, area of knowledge or experience which could help others in the organisation, and would like to be included complete the form at www.cpre.org.uk/members/resources/skills-and-knowledge-directory

No internet access?

CPRE does not wish to exclude members without the internet from their range of materials and lobbying tools, so if you would like copies of any information or access to their services please call:

Supporter Services on 020 7981 2870.

However, *CPRE* saves money by making information and publications available via their website.

New Members of the Society

(From 4th April – 24th July, 2008)

(CPRE)

Mrs. P. Sandell, Denton Parish Council
Mr. J.D. Read, Eye
Mr. A.D. Horne, Rattlesden
Lt. Col. & Mrs. N. Winship, Waldringfield
Mr. M. Brown & Miss S. Hall, Southwold

(SPS Friends)

Mrs. P. Harber, Lawshall
Miss S. Goldman, Hockwold
Mr. & Mrs. R. Dixon, Trimley St. Mary
Mrs. B. Saile, Homersfield
Mrs. G. Hicks, Herringswell Parish Council
Mr. B Adams, Great Livermere Parish Council

News from the Districts

SPS St. Edmundsbury District Report

District Chairman, David Rees, writes

The SPS committee continues to be most concerned by the standard of design in new housing developments, especially the larger ones in the villages. We have met *Havebury*, the housing association that bought *Bury St. Edmunds* council housing stocks 20 or so years ago. Despite their inability or unwillingness to realise that south facing dwellings are pleasanter to live in and cheaper to heat, we have made some progress in joint pre-planning discussions with them and the community. *Richard Ward*, SPS Director, has already had such a meeting at *Stanningfield*. Hopefully, dull pedestrian plans may be improved and the local and potential residents satisfied!

More and more building is planned for village settings in order to provide the government decreed increase in the housing stock. This may well be preferable to further expansion of the larger towns but it is not appropriate to just build suburban estates on the village edge. There should be designs that reflect and respect the vernacular style and tradition of the Suffolk village. No longer should we be building poorly designed housing that is sadly common to every county. Recent plans for thirty to fifty dwellings at *Stanningfield* and at *Stanton* to the north, and *Chedburgh* to the south of *Bury St. Edmunds* should be reconsidered and the Society has made representations to this end.

Site visits are frequently arranged for members of the *Borough's Development Control Committee* to see on the ground the problems and suggest solutions. Such a visit was arranged in April to see the numerous plans for *Hengrave Hall* – recently sold by a religious charity. This is a Suffolk jewel and is pictured on the cover of *Pevsner's* Suffolk volume. But members of the public or the Society were expressly forbidden to join councillors at the Hall although they were welcome to listen to their subsequent deliberations in the council chamber. Does the council

really want to identify with its taxpayers and demonstrate transparency in its decisions?

The Government wants to establish more unitary local authorities to increase the efficiency of local government – in reality to save money, though past re-organisations found this difficult to achieve. In *St. Edmundsbury* we are urged that “west is best” and to choose a larger authority of *St. Edmundsbury* joined with *Forest Heath*. Some cynics feel that a council that has achieved so little should not be given the opportunity of spoiling a bigger patch. We are unhappy that plans that may divide Suffolk once again should be considered. It is important that planning issues are dealt with as near to site of the plans as possible although with a dearth of experienced planners it could be argued that it is wise to centralise their skills for optimum performance. It is hard to see that another shake-up of education will be anything but disastrous – of course there can be no question of splitting the police authority.

In April, *Neil Collings* the *Dean of St. Edmundsbury Cathedral* gave an amusing and fascinating talk on his enjoyment of Suffolk Churches. How refreshing and enjoyable was his new-found enthusiasm for a familiar subject.

Yesterday, I met *James Bettley* who is revising *Pevsner's* marvellous Suffolk volume on the *Buildings of England*. He has already, after five years, completed *Essex* and was excited to see *Bury St. Edmunds' buildings*, in particular the *Unitarian Meeting House*.

Modern buildings of quality are rare in this county but are so common now in *Cambridge*, unlike the case fifty years ago. A visit by coach to see the new developments in the rapidly expanding west of the city, with lunch at *Emmanuel College*, a tour of the award-winning *Queen's Building* and a walking tour of central new buildings has been arranged for Tuesday, September 16th. *Please do join us*. For further details please contact David Rees.

The District Chairman can be contacted at 44 College Street, Bury St. Edmunds, IP33 1NL, telephone number 01284 754618, email address david.rees@talktalk.net

SPS Forest Heath District Report

District Chairman, Warwick Hirst, writes

It is my sad duty to commence with the obituary for Forest Heath's previous Chairman, *John Howell*, a firm defender of the principles of the SPS, and we are all saddened by his passing.

The Late John Howell

John was a man of stature and, indeed, affability. He had a generous nature and threw himself into local matters with gusto and enthusiasm. His all-round knowledge was the envy of most of the people he came into contact with, and he was an asset to any organisations who had the privilege of his support. He was always well supported by his wife, Wendy, in everything he did.

John served on the Newmarket Town Council with great distinction. He was the founding Chairman of the Newmarket Hospital Forum and this led to the saving of this Hospital.

On a personal note John was a very good friend, indeed, it was a privilege to have known him: he was always very supportive in everything we did. We shall all miss him a great deal, and send our deepest sympathy to this wife and family on this very sad occasion.

Warwick Hirst, SPS Forest Heath District Chairman

John Howell was the former Chairman of SPS Forest Heath District Committee, and an SPS Vice Chairman, who stepped down because of ill health. He will be sadly missed by us all, not only for his tremendous goodwill and support for the Society's work, but for his great good character and sense of fun. We are grateful for all he did and pass on our condolences to his wife, Wendy, and their family.

Richard Ward, SPS Director

In Newmarket we have had a real fight to maintain our horse-racing policy against the usual crop of developers. *Balaton Lodge* is owned by a horse related charity: they planned to build 36 retirement homes on this site. This planning departure clashed with its history as a horse training base, and also affected the Conservation Area. After a three day public hearing, the Inspector agreed with the case presented by the opponents. We lost a less important appeal nearby at *Kremlin Stables*, where a developer is building a new stabling block, but separating off a quantity of paddock land. With the help of the residents of *Bury Road* we have at last helped to modify the design of an approved new block of flats. It is unfortunate that we did not get that support at the 2006 Appeal hearing.

The *Red Lodge* area is highlighted again. There is the threat of an HGV Truck Stop, next to a housing development and on the A11. This would mean that the village roads connecting the A11 and the A14 would become a traffic nightmare scenario.

The *Local Development Framework* is now moving forward. I sit on the *Forest Heath District Council Working Group* and we have sent the data back to clarify what are the precise proposals for more houses at *Red Lodge*. A figure of 700 keeps appearing.

Whilst the *SPS District Committee* has a *Newmarket* and a *Red Lodge* focus, we keep a watch across the whole of *Forest Heath* and there is nothing else to report here of real SPS significance.

The District Chairman can be contacted at 1 Malcolm Way, Newmarket, Suffolk, CB8 7DX, telephone number 01638 664252, email address hirstjwh45@aol.com

SPS Babergh District Report

District Chairman, Douglas Chivers, writes

On Saturday, 26th April, a healthy number of members and guests enjoyed a rewarding day exploring projects in and around *Hartest*.

In the morning, the group gathered at the *Green Light Trust* in *Lawshall*. The Trust is a

registered charity committed to promoting the principles of conservation in the broadest sense and these are fully reflected in their premises. A refurbished historic building with extensions, it incorporates a wide range of state of the art technology, including the use of building materials, the approach to energy generation and sewage treatment, and the management of adjoining woodland. The tour was led by *Ralph Carpenter*, who was closely involved in the development of the project.

The group then adjourned to the *Crown Inn* in *Hartest* for an excellent lunch. Afterwards, *John Bloomfield* gave a brief presentation on this important timber-framed building at the heart of the village, pointing out some of the clues as to how it has been altered and adapted over the centuries. To end the day's proceedings, the group made their way up *Hartest Hill* to inspect *Ralph Carpenter's* recently opened architects' office. As at *Lawshall*, this takes the form of a refurbished older building, again employing a range of techniques designed to maximise the conservation of resources.



Ralph Carpenter inspects the water level

Our thanks are due to the *Green Light Trust*, everyone at the *Crown Inn* and to *Ralph* for contributing to an excellent day, which many found a truly educative experience.

On major planning issues affecting *Babergh*, the proposed *Tesco* development in *Hadleigh* continues to exercise minds, as does the proposal for reorganising flight patterns to and from *Stansted Airport*, which threatens to affect this district in particular. Both matters, of course, have implications which range far beyond *Babergh*.

The *SPS District Committee* is currently considering how the monitoring of planning applications within the district may be handled most effectively. We are anxious to recruit additional members to this process and if you feel that you may be able to help, please get in touch with me.

The District Chairman, Douglas Chivers, can be contacted at Bridge Cottage, Hartest, Bury St. Edmunds, IP29 4ES, telephone number 01284 830339, email address douglaschivers@yahoo.co.uk

SPS Mid Suffolk District Report

District Chairman, Douglas Evans, writes

In looking at the various Planning Applications the issue of 'design' inevitably figures prominently when evaluating individual planning cases, and it is helpful to pause for a moment to clarify its actual meaning. There are 3 main aspects of design – *performance, use* and *appearance*.

Performance means efficiency, how well a solution works – ie in harmony with climate, energy saving etc:

Use refers to its relation with human activity – the diverse needs of modern living.

These first two use technical/logical thinking and a scientific approach in practical and functional planning and problem solving.

Appearance however is a wholly more complex matter – psychological, art-based, emotionally propelled and frequently elusive.

It is often said that 'taste' is a matter of opinion, but it is really a matter of informed opinion, the problem being that usually the only people who get any visual training at

school or college are those who intend to enter an art/design based profession.

So we are dealing with aesthetic values and the question is: with architecture, design and landscape are there any basic rules or guidelines which might assist aesthetic evaluation?

There appear to be two components of this problem - the first is looking at a building (or buildings and site) in terms of their abstract form, the second is recognising and assessing the appropriateness of any symbolic associations. The first actually demands that we momentarily adopt a different way of 'seeing'. Instead of 'seeing' windows, roofs, walls etc, we see forms, masses, directional axes, proportion, colour/texture, curves versus straights – looking at the building as abstract sculpture. This is a new and unfamiliar experience to many and demands intellectual rigour. The second component is easier to engage with, because it involves recognition of familiar symbolic expressions. The most common examples are stuck-on neo-classical details to declare 'status' or tradition. Converted farm barns frequently acquire the trappings of modern suburbia. New agricultural and storage structures follow 'streamlined' mass production principles in bright reflective metal jarring with cornfields and woodland. Oversize house-building brings affluent suburbia into tiny villages etc.

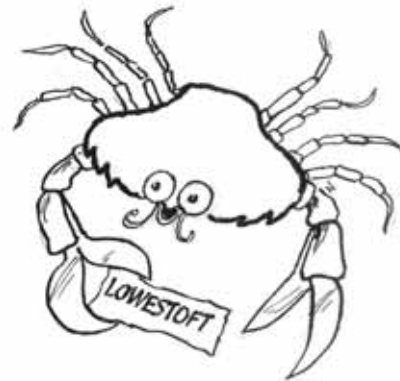
If presenters used computer-aided design for perspective viewpoints more frequently, some of the points mentioned above would become more apparent at pre-build stage. It is scandalous that so much work is presented in a manner which obscures the true finished visual effect.

The District Chairman can be contacted at Oak Cottage, Daisy Green, Great Ashfield, Bury St. Edmunds, Suffolk IP31 3HS, telephone number 01359 242643 at weekends, or 01869 336257 Thursday and Friday

Boundary Committee for England (BCE)

It is becoming increasingly clear that the proposed re-organization for *Suffolk* and *Norfolk* is not going to please anyone, and has been branded as "inherently flawed". The *BCE* was tasked with finding a unitary solution for local government reform in the counties after the Government rejected bids from *Ipswich* and *Norwich* to break free from the existing two-tier structure and to run all their own local government services. However, the plan to split *Suffolk* into two council areas, one serving *Ipswich*, *Felixstowe* and the surrounding areas, and another covering the remainder of *Suffolk*, except *Lowestoft*, which would be governed from *Norfolk*, has gone down like a lead balloon. One wonders if the *BCE* has understood its brief, or whether it has put out something so bizarre that anything that follows it will seem more sane, even if equally unpalatable?

*Watch the website for breaking news on this issue.
www.suffolksociety.org*



Suffolk Building Preservation Trust Limited

Sue Tamlyn, SBPT Chairman, writes

As we have just held our *Annual General Meeting* and we come to the end of **Phase I** of our building and restoration works at *Pakenham Water Mill House*, and of the repairs and redecoration of *Little Hall*, I set out below extracts from our *2007 Annual Review and Forward Plan*, and updates.

During the year we were delighted to welcome to the *Board Mrs. Eve Ranzetta* and *Mr. David Eddershaw*, Chairmen of *Little Hall* and *Pakenham Water Mill Management Committees* respectively. *Mr. Colin Clapham* and *Dr. Michael Coleman* resigned during the year. *Mr. Jeremy Wagener* resigned too, as Company Secretary, but continues to benefit us with his expertise. We are extremely grateful for all their contributions and to all our Directors for their involvement and unwavering support.

There was much discussion during the year about the future relationship of the *Suffolk Building Preservation Trust (SBPT)* and the *Suffolk Preservation Society (SPS)*, some officers of the latter being minded that they should be integrated. The Board was opposed to this believing that their respective objectives and activities were fundamentally different. Moreover, the Trustee/Directors considered that the two Management Committees, each with its large group of volunteers, would not be best served by such an arrangement. Finally, *SPS* agreed that *SBPT* should continue as a separate body and a *Steering Group*, with equal representation from the three bodies (including the *Suffolk Architectural Heritage Trust Ltd.*), is being set up to ensure that their activities complement each other.

Thanks to the generous support of our many *SPS* members and to our fundraiser's efforts, over £100,000 was raised in 2007 for the development of the buildings and facilities at *Pakenham Water Mill House* from over thirty local and national trusts and foundations in addition to a number of individual donations. Trust donors included the *Lesley Mary Carter Charitable Trust*, the *Alan Evans Memorial*

Trust, the *Michael Marks Trust*, the *Dulverton Trust*, the *Haberdashers' Company*, the *Idlewild Trust*, the *Esme Fairbairn Trust*, the *John S. Cohen Foundation*, the *Alfred Williams Charitable Foundation*, the *Rayne Foundation*, the *29th May 1961 Charitable Foundation*, the *Worshipful Company of Grocers*, the *Dr. Mortimer and Theresa Sackler Foundation*, the *Band Trust*, the *Charles Littlewood Hill Trust*, more recently the *Mercers' Company*, the *Batty Charitable Trust*, the *Garfield Weston Foundation*, the *Paul Getty Jnr. Trust* and most recently, the *H.B. Allen Trust*.

Plans for the Mill House's development were divided into three phases. **Phase I** focused on work to restore the 17th century fireplace and kitchen and to renovate the upper floor of the house to provide a two bedroom flat with appropriate facilities, together with re-roofing the Mill and the front room, with servery, for multi-purpose use for visiting schools and adult groups. In spite of preparations for and the execution of these structural repairs the Mill had a successful season including several very well attended special activities including half term events. At the same time flour sales increased and have increased even further in 2008.

Thanks to their dedicated efforts the volunteers have not only kept the Mill operational but they have also carried out significant work to the improvement and development of both buildings and the grounds, and thanks to one of their number a group of 'local friends' has now been recruited. The Curator is currently carrying out baking trials with the brick bread oven in the old kitchen so that the process can be demonstrated for visitors on selected occasions.

Our fundraiser continues her valuable work towards embarking on **Phase II** of the scheme - this to include restoring the former miller's kitchen to its appearance circa 1900, and as an exhibition area with information panels and objects illustrating aspects of the Water

Mill and its history, to providing new toilets, improving disabled access and landscaping the *Mill House* garden.

Little Hall Management Committee continued its preparations for Museum accreditation by September 2008. Several special events were held here, too, and the *Deputy Director of Christie's* was welcomed on a visit. A consultant conservation architect was commissioned to oversee the external repairs and decoration work which started in April, a grant having been made towards the work.

Among visitors so far, this season, have been friends of the Spenders, who knew the *Gayer Andersons* very well and lived in the *Great House*. *Little Hall* also had a visit from two conservators at the *British Museum* who had been working on the *Gayer Anderson* bronze cat and had come to see our replica made by the Colonel. The curator took the cat from its stand and discovered an Arabic inscription (which is not on the original) and various indications that the copy had been made by taking a cast directly from the original.

The dedication and hard work of volunteers in both *Little Hall* and the *Mill* ensure that both locations are welcoming and highly regarded. The *SBPT*, as always, acknowledges the considerable work undertaken on its behalf both by the *SPS* staff and the many volunteers. Without their commitment and enthusiasm the *Trust's* objects could not be met.

Both Pakenham Water Mill and Little Hall are open to the public. See pages 27 and 29 respectively for details.



The well appointed flat in the Miller's house showing newly refurbished kitchen.



The old kitchen comes to life - and with restored bread oven.



The future tea room looking ready for action.



From left to right: Sir Clive Rose, Vice Patron of SPS, Sue Tamlyn, Chairman of SBPT and Eve Ranzetta, Chairman of Little Hall Management Committee show delight in progress

Plenty of water in the millpond, but not many visitors

Pakenham Water Mill Curator, David Eddershaw, writes

Snow at *Easter* followed by gales and heavy rain at the *Spring Bank Holiday* meant few people braved the elements to visit *Pakenham Water Mill* in the early part of the season. However, among those who did we were particularly pleased to welcome members of the *Society for the Protection of Ancient Buildings (SPAB), Mills Section*, who were making a tour of important *Suffolk* mills. At *Pakenham* they were able to see flour milling in progress, talk to *Chris Irwin* about the restoration of our hundred year-old *Blackstone* oil engine and enjoy lunch in the garden by the mill pond. They were probably the first visitors to see the *Old Kitchen* in the *Miller's House*, newly restored as part of the programme of work carried out during the winter and spring by *R. & J. Hogg Limited*.

Since then we have been able to fire up the brick oven in this eighteenth-century kitchen and brew house and, after several trial runs to get the temperature right, successfully demonstrated baking bread in it for another group who made an evening visit to the mill in June. This will be one of the attractions we will offer from time to time on **Special Event** weekends or for some group visits. It takes about three hours of firing to heat the oven to the required temperature and so is not something that can be done very often.

The unseasonable rain has at least kept the pond well filled, and we have milled and sold more flour than in the same period last year. Interest in traditional stone-ground wholemeal is growing as people become more conscious of its superior flavour and nutritional qualities. It is sold in twelve shops and two farmers' markets as well as the mill shop, and is regularly used by two bakers and the chef in the restaurant of the Six Bells at Felsham.



Old kitchen fireplace showing the brick bread oven

We hope readers of the *Telegraph* spotted the feature on *National Mills Weekend* in May which placed *Pakenham Water Mill* second in their list of **'five of the best'** mills to visit.



Tranquil scene by the mill river bank

Special Events

13th/14th September **Heritage Weekend**
Free admission: Milling

28th September, Sunday **Harvest Festival**
Norton Salvation Army Band

25th – 31st October **Half Term**
Hallowe'en activities 1.30 – 4.00 pm

7th December, Sunday
Father Christmas at the Mill

For all other opening times see
www.pakenhamwatermill.co.uk

Technical Tack

Technical advice on aspects of the care and repair of traditional buildings

Home insulation is a topical subject at the moment with everyone wanting to save fuel and reduce their energy bills, but it is also an interesting one. It's a part of our home which is often overlooked or taken for granted. We have been looking at natural wool as an insulator in buildings, old and new, and are impressed with its credentials. Here are a few facts.

Wool is perfect with timber, and timber-frame constructions. In existing buildings it is faster to fit and can be used as a replacement for man-made products. When used between joists against an existing brick or stone wall, wool is an effective insulator and is better able to regulate and manage the movement of moisture. It is good at insulating areas such as kitchens and shower rooms as well as *National Trust* properties. Its scope is wide – it is suited to brick, timber and steel constructions and offers improved thermal and acoustic ratings over many man-made materials. Wool insulation is not only breathable but also able to absorb, retain, and release moisture without affecting its thermal properties or performance.

After the foot and mouth crises which devastated many small farm incomes, hill farmers were looking to diversify. One of their loss-leaders was sheep's wool. Even today a hill farmer pays £1.00 for every sheep to be shorn but is only able to get 60p for its fleece. Now, hill farmers in *Wales, Ireland, Scotland* and *England* have an outlet for the growing demand for high quality natural wool insulation through a newly established company, *Black Mountain Insulation*, formed in 2007.

This insulation requires only 15 per cent of the energy required to manufacture mineral wool insulation. In use, the durability and moisture control properties of wool allow for a higher level of performance and longevity, retaining its insulating properties for the life of the building. Wool is also a naturally fire retardant material and is treated with boron

salts so as to heighten its vermin resistance. When exposed to fire, wool only chars since there is insufficient oxygen in the atmosphere to support combustion. In the event of a fire, wool will not add to the fire risk and produces no toxic gasses.

We are advised that natural wool insulation is the safest insulator on the market today. By its nature it doesn't harbour dangerous chemicals, dust or mould that can lead to allergic or other reactions. In fact, it has the unique ability to absorb *formaldehyde*, a carcinogenic nasty, locking it permanently into the fibre. That is why it is used in sensitive locations like hospitals, nursing homes and nurseries.

This appears to be a win-win product: it keeps the sheep on the pasture, which is good for the landscape; it hopefully assists hill farms to better economically survive and, once again, provides new technical solutions using traditional materials. What goes round comes round, and in Suffolk we know all about the wealth made from the mediaeval cloth industry, and the importance of sheep's wool. So let's now hope the 'golden fleece' is, again, on the up.

For a technical data sheet contact:
sales@blackmountaininsulation.com
or write to *Black Mountain Insulation Ltd.*, Expressway 3,
Tir Llwyd Industrial Estate, Rhyl, Denbighshire, LL18 5JA
Telephone number: 01745 361911
www.blackmountaininsulation.com





Through the Portal – A light-hearted look at Little Hall – office, house and garden

The Office

Comings and goings!

Since we last communicated the office has seen a staff change. Holly Green, who joined the office support team at the Society's Little Hall office in Lavenham, left us at the end of May to take up a full-time appointment with the Sue Ryder Foundation. However, we are pleased to welcome her successor, Linda Cockburn, to the team.



We say 'good-bye and thank you' to Holly Green, and

'hello and welcome' to Linda Cockburn



wide. The timbers, which are of a lesser quality than the adjacent Guildhall, were never intended to be exposed, and in fact were covered with plaster (*pebbledash*, see *SV, Issue 29*) until bought by the Gayer Anderson Brothers in 1924, who introduced a different style of cross bracing creating the chevron timbered design to the front wing elevation. Although picturesque this style is not local building vernacular. They also exposed the whole timber frame at that time. (*See Suffolk View, Issue 106, page 30.*)

Plastering over the beams, to protect the building from further erosion and decay, was suggested before the renovations began but was met with opposition by *Lavenham Parish Council, Babergh District Council* and *English Heritage* who have all been involved with the project. This is one of the iconic buildings of Lavenham and it is a difficult conundrum to know how to proceed – to re-cover the building with lime plaster and limewash would give it a different but pleasing appearance which would preserve it, but it would no longer give an immediate 'mediaeval period' impression which so many people love, both locally and by those who visit Little Hall from all over the world. The building will need to be carefully monitored in the coming years to assess the type of future work that will be required to conserve this important building in perpetuity.

The Garden

Although at the time of writing the back of Little Hall is still covered with scaffolding because of the repair work to the outside of the building, this did not deter visitors to its lovely garden on 22nd June for the annual Lavenham gardens open day. It looked stunning as ever – how do they get their delphiniums to grow so tall?

Little Hall is open from Easter to the end of October, Wednesday, Thursday, Saturday and Sunday afternoons from 2.00 – 5.30 pm and Bank Holiday Mondays, 11.00 am to 5.30 am. For information ring 01787 247019, group bookings 01473 827365 (between 6-7 pm) www.littlehall.org.uk

The House

A warning has been given by the Director that the repair work to the framing, and lime wash finish to the medieval timbered headquarters of the *Suffolk Preservation Society* may not last long term. The building, owned by the sister organization, the *Suffolk Building Preservation Trust*, has more decay in it than originally thought, and the repair and maintenance programme will be lengthier and costlier than originally thought. Some of the gaps in the timber are a metre long and about five inches

Views, News, and Reviews – *letters – book reviews – stop press news*

Letters

‘Demand’ building in the Bury area

Sir – Cllr. David Chappell’s letter in last week’s Bury Free Press highlighted many of the difficulties faced by those looking to get on the property ladder or people considering downsizing their home.

However, his suggestion that Suffolk Preservation Society shows a greater regard for the character and environment of our county than for the needs of our community is simply incorrect.

Cllr. Chappell’s comments spring from the Society’s criticism of St. Edmundsbury Borough Council’s proposals to build 530 new homes every year. Like Cllr. Chappell, the Society is also concerned about a lack of affordable housing – but we don’t feel that building thousands of new homes with little thought for the people who are going to live in them is necessarily the best solution.

The build rate proposed by the Council has been based on central government demands and fails to take into consideration the diversity of the borough or the differing needs of its rural and urban communities. We feel the build rate should be reduced to a sustainable level which truly reflects local requirements and places the needs of the community above fulfilling a government edict.

Further statements made by Cllr. Chappell are quite correct – it is perfectly possible to build low cost housing which is well designed, truly sustainable and blends into existing developments. Unfortunately, the likelihood that the homes the council is proposing will fulfil these criteria is slim. It is much more realistic that, should these plans go ahead, we will simply be left with more of the cramped and unimaginative estate housing which is already eating up the county’s green space with alarming speed.

The Society is all too aware that Suffolk should not be mothballed. All we ask is that the way we shape the county in the future takes more into account than just numbers, meeting the needs of our community rather than the demands of the government.

Richard Ward, Director, Suffolk Preservation Society

Writing to the Bury Free Press in June, 2008. See also page 16.

SnOasis, local communities versus government decision making.

I appreciated your article on SnOasis and local communities versus government decision making. All too often it seems that any time a local community attempts to make entirely rational decisions regarding planning proposals they are overruled by the Government.

The Scottish Government’s response to the decision to reject Donald Trump’s golf course is a recent albeit more distant example of this. Quite how the government can see fit to ‘allow’ the SnOasis proposals to go ahead (accepting some hurdles still need to be jumped) is beyond me, given we are on the precipice as regards climate change. As they have repeatedly shown, the Government only talks about issues such as sustainability. Whenever there is money involved the answer is go ahead. SnOasis is a scandal in an age when we should be doing everything to shift our ways of living to something that is sustainable in the long term. SnOasis is about nothing but money. Sadly we know there is no local democracy when money is involved.

Letter to the Society from Leigh Hunter in June, 2008

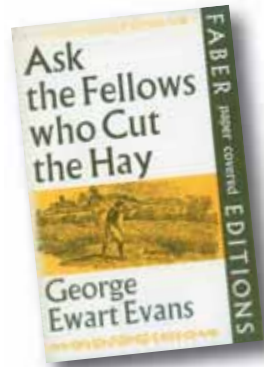
Book Reviews

SPS member, Jane Allen, writes

The appearance of a new book about the East Suffolk village of Blaxhall gives me the opportunity to write a twin review featuring the latest title, *Blaxhall's Living Past*, and a classic published over 50 years earlier, *Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay*.

Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay

By George Ewart Evans
Second edition published in 1965 by Faber and Faber
Price £12.99
(available second hand)



Suffolk is essentially a rural county. For many hundreds of years the majority of its inhabitants lived on and worked the land. The towns existed to service the rural communities and any industry, be it the weaving of wool in the Middle Ages or the manufacture of agricultural machinery in the nineteenth century, was derived from farming. An understanding of Suffolk farming is an understanding of everything that has shaped our county.

George Ewart Evans, a Welsh teacher, historian and writer, came to *Blaxhall*, a small village on the *Suffolk Sandlings*, in 1948 when his wife was appointed head teacher of the village school. Evans realised that rapid changes in farming practice in the first half of the twentieth century, meaning that far fewer workers were needed on the land, were bringing to an end a way of life that had lasted since the Middle Ages. The older inhabitants of the village had been born into and followed that ancient tradition. If their memories were not captured, that tradition would soon be forgotten. He interviewed and recorded some of the villagers, asking them about their lives and work, and turned his research into an enchanting but unsentimental book – *Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay*, first published in 1956.

Evans was a pioneer in the study of oral history as an academic subject. His work meant that Suffolk voices were broadcast by

the *BBC* and are now preserved in the *National Sound Archive* at the *British Library*. His book had captured the spirit of the county. The 50 years that have passed since *Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay* was first published prove how right *George Ewart Evans* was to act when he did. The challenges and changes we now face, particularly in the villages, all stem from the dramatic change in the size of the agricultural workforce. The book is essential reading for SPS members.

Editor: second-hand copy available from the *Idler Bookshop* in *Hadleigh* priced £6.00.

Blaxhall's Living Past

Snapshots of Village Life
By the Blaxhall Archive Group
Published by the Blaxhall Archive Group
Priced at £20.00



This new book is a community initiative, partly funded by a grant from the *Heritage Lottery Fund*. It is an irresistible read for admirers of *Ask the Fellows who Cut the Hay* and of course it refers back to that classic. There is a most interesting text telling us, for example, that using data on occupations of heads of households from the census returns, the percentage of farm labourers in the village has declined from 60.7% in 1841 to 1.7% in 2006, whereas over the same period farmers have remained constant at around 5%.

The book is primarily a collection of photographs spanning the last 100 years. A particularly beautiful and evocative set of pictures was taken between 1902 and 1917 by *Ada Mannall*, the daughter of one of the Blaxhall shopkeepers. They show a number of the people, places and farming scenes described in *George Ewart Evans's* book.

The many other pictures range from formal school, team and wedding photographs to a gallery of snapshots of the present-day villagers, many of them incomers, and many of them retired. They live alongside the descendants of the fellows who cut the hay, clearly forming a resourceful and active community in spite of having no shop and no school. Blaxhall seems successfully to have risen to the challenge facing Suffolk's villages in the twenty-first century.

Diary Dates

Of interest to architects and planners

Wednesday, 22nd October – Joint Conference at Blackbourne Hall, Elmswell

“Delivering the Elmswell Exemplar Affordable Housing Project”

From 9.30 am to 3.30 pm

Cost: including coffee and lunch £75

Tel: 01787 247179 for details

Of interest to town & parish councils

Wednesday, 5th November – Planning Training Day *“Your involvement in the Planning System”* given by SPS Director, Richard Ward, Dip. TP MRTPI at Elmswell from 9.30 am to 3.30 pm.

Cost: £40 for Members:
£65 for non-members

Wednesday, 19th November – Planning Training Day *“Local Development Framework – getting the best for your community”* given by SPS Director, Richard Ward, Dip. TP MRTPI at Elmswell from 9.30 am to 3.30 pm.

Cost: £40 for Members:
£65 for non-members

Full details of the above are available from the SPS Office at Little Hall, Lavenham CO10 9QZ

Tel: 01787 247179

Email: sps@suffolksociety.org

For all of the above early booking is advisable as places are likely to be limited.

Stop Press News

13th July, Pakenham Water Mill: in the heart of the Suffolk countryside, on a pleasant Sunday afternoon, over 100 people gathered to celebrate the completion of Phase I of the repairs and refurbishment of the Mill House. All those who had responded to the Appeal to help to raise the funds, including Vice Patrons, Trusts and donors, including PWM volunteers and SPS members, were represented. Visitors were able to see the completed work to date and hear from *Mrs. Sue Tamlyn, Chairman of the Suffolk Building Preservation Trust*, what improvements were proposed for Phase II of the works. The afternoon was completed with a lovely afternoon tea in the garden beside the river. The improvements at the Mill have been a real achievement in all respects, and everyone was delighted with the results.

See pages 26 & 27 for more information



Second from left Sarah Grieveson, PWM Fundraiser

Market Place – Directory



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A PUBLICATION OF THE SUFFOLK PRESERVATION SOCIETY

Little Hall, Market Place, Lavenham, Sudbury, Suffolk CO10 9QZ

Tel: 01787 247179

Website: www.suffolksociety.org

**Suffolk View is a publication of the Suffolk Preservation Society
and is published three times a year.**

The Society works to protect and enhance the countryside, towns and villages of Suffolk. Its volunteers in the Districts, with a Chartered Planner at Little Hall in Lavenham, combine effective local action through the planning system with the promotion of building conservation projects, encouragement for sustainable planning, and campaigns and awards which support this ethos.

Help us to protect the rich diversity of the County – its countryside and coastline beauty; its tranquil places; its rich complexity of buildings and architecture; its historic market towns, country villages and farm hamlets – its special character.

If you are not already a Member consider joining us today and become part of the campaign to protect Suffolk and ensure changes value its natural and built heritage and promote sustainable planning for a better future.