



Neighbourhood Development Plan

What is the countryside?

For thousands of years the countryside has been shaped by human activities. Every aspect of the rural landscape tells the story of making a living, growing food, creating shelter ... and just sometimes beautifying a small part here and there. Our roads and footpaths were created by the people who worked the land. They are the routes between villages, to mills and farmsteads, to work and to market, used by people whose only means of transport was horses and oxen, or their own feet. In the 21st century there is no part of the British countryside that has not been shaped by man.

The countryside is, first and foremost, an industrial area. Agriculture, horticulture, fruit growing, forestry, inland fisheries and digging for minerals are all rural industries.

For centuries, the only people who lived in the countryside were the owners or renters of the land from which they made a living, and the people who worked for them. The countryside was also a sporting area for the rich men's sport of hunting.

Until the mechanisation of transport from the middle of the 19th century, no one lived in the countryside unless their life was associated in some way with countryside work.

Today, those who choose to live in the countryside but have no connection to countryside work have chosen to live in the midst of an industrial area, with all its machinery, noises and smells.

The countryside is maintained at the expense of those who work the land or make a living from it. When we find beauty in the countryside and its landscapes, this is due to the work of past and present generations who kept or keep the land.

When supermarkets are constantly driving down the prices they pay to their producers, the agricultural sector looks elsewhere to make a living. Farmers have to diversify in order to make a living. But what does diversification mean?

It means such things as finding new uses for existing buildings, turning over a part of their land to uses other than food production, or making their land available for special events.

Existing buildings could be turned into business units or self-storage units, hired out to contractors to store their equipment, or converted into living accommodation. An area of land could be turned over to sporting activity of some kind.

A farmer may decide to create a campsite for tent and caravan camping on part of his land. Any landscape impact can be avoided or reduced by sensitive siting and by hedge and tree planting to screen the site from public view.

Another option for diversification, and one that can benefit the community by providing a source of clean energy, is solar fields. Once again, sensitive siting and appropriate natural screening with hedge and tree planting to hide the site from public view will avoid any negative landscape impact.

Special events offer landowners another means for earning an income from their land. Depending on their size and nature, events can be a temporary source of local inconvenience. They can also be something for the local community to join in and enjoy.

If we value the countryside we need to allow those who maintain it to make a living by the means that they consider most suitable to their circumstances. Otherwise, as a last resort, a landowner can always sell his land to a developer for housing.

Visit the website: www.cmaw-neighbourhoodplan.org.uk

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