

Land Use Submission

**by Barnaby Lawrence
acting as an individual.**

**I am a member of the National Trust,
English Heritage and
Historic Houses.**

1 Pressures and challenges

1.1 England has recently become the most populous country in Europe (people per SqKm) which creates the single greatest pressure on Land use though there are others (commercialisation, leisure etc.).

1.2 England is also a 'Green and Pleasant Land'. We English should strive to keep it so by keeping the rural feel to the country both in the urban environment and and the country environment no matter what the pressures are to minimise that Englishness of the Country as a whole. That is the thrust of this reply to the 'call for evidence'

1.3 The Green Belt was an attempt to stop complete and rampant urbanisation, but I suggest the addition of an additional tier. There should be designated 'Rural Protected Areas', to surround the already designated protected parks like Dartmoor or the Yorkshire Dales and all AONBs. Also a 'Rural Protected Area' will be declared for existing biodiverse areas and existing rare species habitat areas. Only very small development (like one or two houses) should be carried out in this rural area and the architecture should strictly be in keeping with the local 'street scene'. This would then stop the development right up to the edge of those protected parks and biodiverse areas. This would have a byproduct that sight lines (views) to and more importantly from the designated parks and AONBs will be protected thereby entrenching in effect our 'Green And Pleasant Land' producing that elusive wellbeing feeling in the population who will be proud of their land.

As an example of what should not happen - the Pyramids in Egypt used to be a bus ride into the barren desert looming larger the closer one got. Now Cairo has been developed right up to their base so the site is becoming surrounded by houses and commercial buildings destroying the Pyramids remoteness and ruining their context in the landscape. We should not let that happen in England.

1.4 The present mantra is that more housing is required as the population expands and that is right, but the birth rate in England is shrinking so the old models of what is required are now 'not fit for purpose'. That should be addressed bearing in mind 1.2.

1.5 It appears that working from home is becoming part of the work environment, but not as great a part as was once thought. This would seem to mean that less office space will be required (many companies are already shrinking their offices) as the whole workforce will not be in the office at the same time. This will allow cities and towns to create more living space within the area which will, as a byproduct, enliven those very same urban areas.

1.6 The Government needs to create the policy (1.2) and local bodies need to carry out that policy which should be policed by the government.

2. Farming and Land Management.

2.1 As a race we are all the time creating more food from smaller and smaller plots of land through genetic engineering and new methods of growing crops in tiered warehouses. These advances will continue and it is possible that much food producing land could become enormous warehouse style food production centres. Where these food production centres are located needs to be controlled. They might locate in urban environments and compete with housing needs. They might become planted on agricultural land and as farm buildings escape planning permission. By creating large rural areas (1.2) in combination with the Sustainable Farming Incentive the quintessentially British 'Green and Pleasant Land' will be preserved inculcating a feeling of well being in the general population while at the same time creating areas of natural diversity and species regeneration.

3 Nature Landscape and biodiversity.

3.1 One of the major threats to nature, landscape and biodiversity, possibly the major threat, is the imposition of massive housing estates on green field land with no improvement in the local infrastructure.

3.2 There are several instances of this. One that comes to mind is a development near Colchester (I met someone who lives there) where a massive housing estate was plonked onto the land requiring a car to get anywhere as there is only an occasional bus service, no train link, and the roads are pretty much as they were before the arrival of the housing estate. It now takes residents there between 30 and 40 minutes in the rush hour and half just to queue their way out of the massive estate. To use a journalist's phrase the fields were just 'concreted over'.

3.3 In my opinion, carbon markets are just a way for polluting businesses to appear green as they announce they are carbon neutral - in other words they have bought carbon neutrality not done anything concrete to reduce carbon.

3.4 The best nature based solution and probably the cheapest is to delineate 'Rural Protected Areas' that cannot be developed except in an extremely limited way. Those areas will, on their own, become biodiverse because they will be largely undisturbed by human interference and included in 'Rural Protected Areas' should be rare species habitats and biodiverse habitats. With the introduction of 'Rural Protected Areas' there will therefore be no need for a governmental committee to oversee biodiversity. There will be no need for a governmental committee to oversee nature recovery strategies, there will be no need for any governmental interference once the rural areas have been delineated. It will be up to the existing nature charities and champions to bring to the attention of government the need for an addition to the rural areas delineation as it will not be possible to shrink the 'Rural Protected Areas' thereby guaranteeing the continued diversification and habitat.

4 Environment, climate change, energy and infrastructure.

4.1 It is to me self evident that we need clean water, clean air, thriving plants and wildlife along with minimal waste production. I am guessing that we are already doing that.

4.2 A foolproof way of enhancing biosecurity having thriving plants and wildlife is to delineate 'Rural Protected Area' zones, so that nature itself will be able to thrive with minimal interference from humans.

4.3 Flood protection (environmental hazard) should only be instituted for already existing homes. Any protection for new build estates that flood should be the responsibility of the builder who should not have built there in the first place and probably in the building of those estate will have interfered with the natural eco system. If a 'Rural Protected Areas' delineation included areas likely to flood then there would be no building on flood plains and nature could get to work and thrive on its own.

4.4 The existing planning framework is not as bad as it is made out to be, even though it is open to personal interpretation and via that interpretation unethical decisions can easily creep in. it was ever thus.

4.5 The problem with the planning system is that Councils want to build as many houses as they can as that will increase their income stream through the Council tax. It is easier for them to grant (push through) planning for a large estate dealing with one developer (like in Colchester - 3.2) than it is to redevelop and

improve sometimes scattered existing structures. Do Councils get more money from commercial offices than residential flats?

5 Built environment.

5.1 Any trip through an English town or English village or just through the countryside will show a multitude of different designs for houses, factories and the like. This is one of the unique features of English Architecture. The Victorians started the rot with their housing expansion in major cities.

5.2 Any housing estate that is built today is made up of very few different designs (the song 'little boxes' comes to mind) so they of themselves are diluting (destroying) the quintessentially Englishness of our built environment.

5.3 To this end any development should have at least five different designs for each row of ten houses. The developers will fight this tooth and nail as their profits will be squeezed, the very same profits that have created the one design fits all approach to housing as that is the cheapest way of building large quantities of housing.

6 Conclusion

5.1 A system to protect land around AONBs, national parks and the like; to include flood plains, areas of natural diversity, areas with rare species should, in my opinion be set up. Let's call them 'Rural Protected Areas' and refer to them as RPAs

5.2 RPAs would be delineated by National Government in consultation with nature charities, environmental 'experts', and only Parish Councils who gain nothing from house building projects unlike Borough and County Councils.

5.3 LPAs would, like rateable values, be reassessed every now and again.

5.4 The LPAs would not be allowed to be shrunk, only added to.

5.5 Once delineated these areas would be monitored by local Borough Councils and included in any planning decisions that they made.

5.6 for new housing developments, in order to keep the massive diversity in English Architecture the minimum quantity of different designs should be increased from its pitiful level of today.