



## **STAND UP FOR YOUR LOCAL COUNTRYSIDE**

### **A manifesto for the May 2024 local elections in Hertfordshire**

We are CPRE Hertfordshire, the countryside charity. We campaign to protect and promote the countryside throughout the County, for everyone. We work within the planning system to stand up for the countryside, so that it can continue to sustain, inspire and improve life for future generations.

#### **A planning system that works for local people, nature and the environment**

We know that huge numbers of local Hertfordshire people value the countryside, nature and the environment and want these to be protected.

This is evidenced by the record-breaking number of comments over the past few years in Local Plan consultations in Dacorum, Three Rivers and Hertsmere – around 15,000 to 20,000 in each instance. We've also seen the proliferation of new community groups all across the County who are campaigning to save their local countryside from inappropriate development; this shows the strength of feeling that local residents have for the countryside and how vitally important they view its ongoing protection.

This is mirrored nationally, where a recent Ipsos poll found that 60% of respondents across England would retain the current Green Belt 'even if it restricts the country's ability to meet housing needs'.<sup>1</sup>

#### **We therefore call on all candidates to commit to:**

1. **Make the countryside a top priority** – protect the Green Belt, the Chilterns National Landscape (Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) and its setting, and all other designated protected areas and wildlife habitats including Hertfordshire's rare chalk streams; also recognise the vital role of the countryside in climate change mitigation and adaptation – for carbon sequestration, food production, health and well-being, and water retention.

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<sup>1</sup> See Ipsos poll July 2023, at <https://www.ipsos.com/en-uk/six-in-ten-people-in-england-would-keep-green-belt-as-it-is>

2. **Hold colleagues and Council Officers to account in applying National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) provisions** that provide for the ongoing protection of these areas and the wider countryside – you should use the most recent available data in making projections of housing need (i.e. 2018-based projections not 2014), you should take into account local circumstances and constraints in determining how much of that need can actually be met, and you do not have to remove land from the Green Belt when formulating new Local Plans
3. **Uphold a truly ‘brownfield first’ development approach** – there is enough brownfield (previously developed) land available in Hertfordshire for at least 20,680 dwellings<sup>2</sup>, plus 3,885 long term empty<sup>3</sup> dwellings – these should be the priority for redevelopment and occupancy, before permitting development on greenfield sites
4. **Ensure the identification and designation of specific Local Green Spaces** in all Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans – Hertfordshire currently has fewer designated Local Green Spaces than two thirds of other local authorities across England, so we know there is considerable scope for greater take-up<sup>4</sup>
5. **Promote ‘rooftop renewables’** – generating renewable energy on buildings, car park canopies and similar structures – and opposing the use of agricultural land and valued landscapes for ground-mounted solar energy installations
6. **Oppose the expansion of airports** which cause increased carbon emissions and air and noise pollution over much of Hertfordshire, and destroy local residents’ enjoyment of the countryside
7. **Prioritise the provision of truly affordable housing that meets local needs** and hold developers to their promises in this regard, ensuring that all developments are in sustainable locations – which means locations that are not car-dependent – and that provision is made for footpaths, cycleways and bus lanes

Here at CPRE Hertfordshire, we want to see all local candidates and Councillors take up these commitments.

If you have any questions or would like to find out more about how you and your Council can stand up for the countryside, please email us at [office@cpreherts.org.uk](mailto:office@cpreherts.org.uk) or ring us at 01438 717587.

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<sup>2</sup> See CPRE’s latest data on brownfield, including data for each district in Hertfordshire, at <https://www.cpreherts.org.uk/news/brownfield-update-space-for-20680-homes-on-recycled-land-in-hertfordshire/>

<sup>3</sup> See the data for each district in Hertfordshire, at <https://www.cpreherts.org.uk/news/3885-long-term-empty-homes-could-help-meet-local-housing-need/>

<sup>4</sup> Read CPREs research on Local Green Spaces and how local communities can protect their valued green spaces, at <https://www.cpreherts.org.uk/news/how-local-communities-can-protect-their-valued-green-spaces/>