



The countryside charity  
Cornwall

### Cornwall Matters December 2023

CPRE Cornwall newsletter  
Issue 8, December 2023

In this issue, we explore two important opinion pieces – one about the pressing issue of road development in Cornwall and the other looking at inequalities in the provision of garden space and access to the open countryside. We also present two outstanding schemes that have re-purposed important 19th century buildings in Camborne and Redruth. Both are really excellent examples of brown-field development for the benefit of local urban communities, as well as for attracting people from a wider rural catchment area into the towns and revitalising their centres.

Our Annual General Meeting will be held in February 2024. More details will follow in January. We hope very much to see you there and to hear your views and ideas.

This month's planning update features a planning application submitted by the Meudon Hotel, Maenporth, Falmouth for 10 holiday units, demolition of two units, a swimming pool, restaurant, gym, and fitness suite, all within an AONB.

♥ And a big THANK YOU for your support – we very much appreciate our members' ongoing commitment as we seek to protect rural Cornwall and support sustainable development to meet local needs.



**All of us on the CPRE Cornwall committee would like to wish  
you a very Happy Christmas and all the best for 2024**



### **Some thoughts on continuous road development in Cornwall**

Richard Cogar

Anyone concerned about what appears to be the ever-increasing congestion on Cornish roads might want to take a brief look at Cornwall Council's Local Transport Plan to 2030. This was first published in 2011 and has now been amended. It is available online. One amendment proposes a change in policy from the previous "Predict and Provide" strategy to one based on "Decide and Provide". The earlier policy involved forecasting future demand for road transport and then ensuring that there was enough capacity to meet that demand, i.e. building more roads. The Council admits that this has resulted in a "vicious circle of providing more capacity for cars, [then] more cars on the road and then more capacity being built". There is a term for this unfortunate process - "induced demand" - which has been noted elsewhere in Britain, Europe and even as far away as the United States. There was actually a study conducted by national CPRE, reaching the same

conclusion. In fact, Cornwall Council's current "Decide and Provide"-style policy acknowledges the need to counter the effects of the climate emergency, adopt new technologies and accommodate changing lifestyles in the aftermath of Covid 19. It advocates an approach, whereby "we agree with local communities the future we want, and then plan to achieve this".

There is a related concept called "Fifteen Minute Cities", endorsed by enlightened planners elsewhere in Britain and in Europe, whereby car dependency is reduced or eliminated by having all local infrastructure located within walking, cycling or short public transport distance. This may be more than slightly utopian and, in any event, not completely relevant to protecting a place like Cornwall.

No doubt, "Decide and Provide" will have its detractors, referring with justification to the inadequacy of public transport, the cost of electric vehicles and the paucity of places to recharge them, the absence of continuous cycle lanes and even our notorious Cornish weather. Some studies also suggest that induced demand occurs most noticeably on multi-lane highways, begging the question whether the widened A30 will in fact reduce Cornwall's Easter and mid-summer madness, or simply move congestion onto adjacent minor roads. The traffic on the present A30 has been estimated to increase by approximately 19% during the summer months each year. Only 19%? If this is accurate, one wonders why it has been thought necessary to spend so much money ripping up vast tracts of countryside and causing so much disruption in the process.

Road traffic has been estimated by the RAC Foundation to contribute 27% of Cornwall's CO2 emissions (nationally, the figure is 24%, possibly reflecting Cornwall's rural character and the limited opportunities to travel by public transport). Also available online is a document entitled "A38 Case for Action", published in 2018 by AECOM, "the world's trusted infrastructure consulting firm" whose headquarters are in Dallas, USA. Their document sets out "The wider economic case for investment in the A38 from Bodmin to Exeter". Estimating that A38 traffic will increase by around 30% up to 2041, the document lays out a detailed economic case for improvements to the A38, asserting that "If nothing is done, the economy served by the A38 will struggle to achieve its potential". The document quotes a forecast by Highways England that, without improvements, vehicle delays on the majority of the A38 will increase by over 100 vehicle hours per mile by 2041. The recommendations in this document are endorsed by a number of local chambers of commerce leaders, a former head of Cornwall Council and several local Members of Parliament.

Oddly, there is no description of what “improvements” are envisaged. There is a picture of a (lightly trafficked) section of dual carriageway just to the west of the Devonport B3396 slip, so perhaps that is what is contemplated. Also pictured is a road sign just before the slip road, warning drivers: “delays likely on slip road”, which seems rather unfortunate, given the remarks above. Nor is there any detail about what is envisaged for the Glyn Valley, given the inevitable amount of environmental damage any road widening there would cause. The environmental consequences are not mentioned at all, which is surprising, even given the publication date five years ago.

Generally, media coverage of emissions associated with road transport is often seen purely in the context of CO emissions, whereas the total pollution from road transport is overlooked. It has been estimated that less than 1% of Britain is covered by roads (a figure for Cornwall has proved elusive). This might suggest that there is scope for much more construction. However, anyone who has stood within sight of any A30 intersection at night might find it hard to ignore the pollution from the road lighting extending as an unnatural glow high into the sky and for vast distances each side. Other people might shrug and suggest that only a few amateur astronomers might be concerned, but many might mourn the loss of our dark skies. The naturalist Chris Packham recently bemoaned the increasing light pollution in Britain, pointing out the harmful effects on insects that are active at night and small mammals that rely on darkness to feed. This is one of the important issues raised in national CPRE’s Dark Skies campaign.

Very few people could stand near to a busy road, let alone a dual carriageway, and not be aware of the traffic noise. Perhaps this is a small price to pay for living or working in a convenient location, and the noise can soon be tolerated or mitigated by double glazing, but there is a hidden price to pay. The run-off of toxic substances, particularly from major roads, into adjacent watercourses has been noted by environmental charities such as the Wildlife Trusts. Particle pollution from tyre and brake pad wear are obvious threats, but there is also contamination from heavy metals, hydrocarbons, microplastics and a large number of other substances. A national map, based on research by the *Guardian* newspaper and Watershed Investigations, showed that even much of the present A30 in Cornwall is already at a contamination risk ranging from “moderate” to “very high”. Monitoring of this pollution by the Environment Agency and National Highways is currently rudimentary,

Despite all of this, national politicians repeatedly insist that increased travel is vital to facilitate economic growth. (So much, then, for the post-pandemic enlightened value ascribed to the natural world, and the prediction that many of us would abandon our

workplaces and adopt hybrid working).

Promoting car dependency has sometimes been presented by the government as an ideological crusade. When he was Transport Secretary in 2021, Grant Shapps overrode official advice to review, on environmental grounds, the planned £27bn expansion of the national road network. The current Transport Secretary, Mark Harper, opined at the recent party conference that “too often, the private car has been vilified when it has been one of the most powerful forces for personal freedom and economic growth.” Rishi Sunak, at the same conference, criticised “an attack on motorists”. Not to be outdone, Sir Keir Starmer promised, amongst his other party conference pledges, to build more roads and “bulldoze any local opposition to construction projects generally.

The political consensus then, seems to be for more concrete and tarmac. This would be fine, provided that the case for ever more development was established beyond doubt - which is questionable. Most of us depend on the private car as a means of personal mobility, particularly in rural areas, but for politicians and other policy makers to assert that limitless personal mobility can be maintained and enhanced by endless development, and that somehow it is inextricably linked with economic growth and well-being, and divorced from environmental degradation and declining biodiversity, is at least simplistic and at worst deeply cynical, dishonest and unsustainable.

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## Two important projects that re-purpose historic buildings:



### **The Basset Community Hub, Camborne**

PBWC architects: Poynton, Bradbury, Wynter, Cole of St Ives

The Basset Community Hub project is located on Basset Road in the heart of Camborne Town Centre. Led by Camborne Town Council, the project has secured funding from the UK Government's Towns Fund and matched funding from Cornwall Council.

The proposals aim to secure the long term future of two Grade II Listed Buildings across two adjacent brownfield sites: the current Basset Centre, formerly a Victorian Board School dating from the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, and the neighbouring White House, a mid-19<sup>th</sup> century villa. Both buildings were previously occupied by Cornwall Council but are now largely vacant, except for the ground floor of the Basset Centre which today provides a temporary home for Camborne Town Library.

Restoring and re-purposing the Basset Centre will provide an expanded and permanent new home for the Town Library, together with youth facilities, education spaces and exhibition areas. A range of multi-use bookable rooms, including meeting spaces, will be available for hire by local groups alongside opportunities for co-working. The White House will contain a café, as well as music facilities and further co-working spaces. In addition to the restoration and re-purposing of the two listed buildings, the project has the potential to create a new

multi-purpose performance space with more than 200 seats on land at the rear of the site. This part of the site is currently occupied by dilapidated Portacabins and other temporary structures that will be removed to make way for the new performance space.

The performance space auditorium and both listed buildings will be brought together by a shared atrium foyer. This exciting new space will serve as the main Community Hub entrance from where all the new facilities can be reached, including fully accessible routes throughout for people using wheelchairs. Serving as the audience foyer for performances, the atrium will also house the main heritage exhibition areas. This provides a key orientation point to inform and entertain visitors across a range of digital and physical exhibits illustrating Camborne's proud industrial heritage. It is hoped that the centrepiece of the heritage exhibition will be the Trevithick Society's full size working replica of the Puffing Devil, Richard Trevithick's famous high pressure steam engine.

Bringing together and revitalising these two brownfield sites within Camborne Town Centre, together with the wide range of facilities on offer, supports sustainable and collaborative development, employment, and education opportunities in a central local setting. Co-working spaces will encourage local businesses to participate alongside the community and other creative partners in a modern forum, centred within the historic town, helping to bring skills, culture and learning together. Owned and managed by Camborne Town Council, the Community Hub will serve the Town and its wider community, becoming a new civic home for **One and All** for many years to come.





### **The Buttermarket and Mining Exchange in Redruth**

Thread: collaborative design-led architects, Taunton, Somerset.

Redruth's market was built in 1825-26 at the instigation of local landowner Sir Francis Basset (1757-1835). The name 'Buttermarket' was first used in 1884, with its focus being on fish, meat and shoes. The meat market was destroyed by fire in 1982 and rebuilt as a shopping arcade in 2001. In 2017 the Buttermarket buildings and Mining Exchange were bought by the Redruth Revival Community Interest Company (CIC).

Thread is a team of specialist conservation architects, who through robust questioning, distinct skill sets and detailed consideration, tackle the projects which sit at the most challenging areas of our specialisms. Often using and honouring historic techniques, Thread works to bring lost buildings back from the brink.

At the Buttermarket the project brief was to 'complete the transformation of Redruth into a 21st century market town, broadening its function to attract a wider range of users and investors'. In essence, the market needed to return, in a 21st-century context, as the beating heart of West Cornwall's principal market town, enhancing community cohesion and pride.

Thread's approach recognises the importance of the specific character of local back-land areas and rear lanes as well as existing town-centre use allocations. They take into account existing



town trails and guides, along with other promotional initiatives and partnerships that are spread across the town.

In approaching these historic buildings of the Buttermarket, Thread examined their historic layout, materials, and design and also researched what the complex of buildings provided to the people of Redruth - in both its recent use and distant past. They sought to understand where the complex has special and sometimes personal significance to the local community - and how this can be maintained and enhanced. This was done through research and discussions with the Redruth Revival CIC, local community groups and current market users and occupiers.

As a result, their design proposal is derived from each project's context - its unique story, architectural heritage, material palette and significance to the community. What they learnt at the Buttermarket was the culture of reuse of materials and the pallet of materials being specific to Cornwall.

While the design of this project will create a space for gathering and sharing food and will continue the marketplace culture, a key principle in the design development was to reduce, reuse and recycle building materials and elements throughout. Where Thread needed new columns, as a team they managed to source them through reclamation yards. New windows use existing joinery where possible - for example in the window arches to Station Road. Lighting in key areas will be reclaimed, and materials sourced locally and will work with the materials and colours already established as part of the Market's character.

As part of the works, there is a new space formed by a newly inserted façade in the courtyard, enabling the spaces below the buildings to be connected by a new Hall. In pursuing the ethos of recycled materials this new façade to the centre of the courtyard will be constructed using a recycled glass product, formed in slate-sized shingles. This is inspired by the characteristic slate shingle profiles on the local buildings in the area. The design was developed first in paper form, testing the form and scale of each shingle. Thus, the main façade of the new works is provided by a recycled product. As such, while you will see a difference in the project on completion - Thread aims, at all times, to maintain the building's spirit and history.

Keeping and reusing materials is an essential part of that process and retains the unique identity of the Buttermarket, while also providing a distinctive response to its history and memorable identity, retaining the values of the Redruth community on into the building's future. Furthermore, by using recycled products the carbon footprint of the building is reduced and the work to conserve it will enable it to be enjoyed by all for many years to come.

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### **Garden space inequalities in Cornwall and issues of access to biodiverse space.**

Peter Wills and Stephen Horscroft

Gardens are an integral and essential element of the house and its environment - space to play in and grow food: a place where plants can thrive. The Covid pandemic lockdowns highlighted the benefits of garden space but the area of space available for households is unevenly distributed. Some people have spacious gardens, others little or none at all. We can measure this by producing a ratio between the land occupied by a dwelling and the amount of garden space in each plot. If, say, the dwelling on an acre plot takes up 10% of an acre and the garden space takes up 50%, then this results in a ratio of 5:1. Data from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC), is available at local neighbourhood level (known as Lower Super Output Areas – LSOAs).

On average the ratio is 5:2, but in 'Wadebridge, Whitecross, Burlawn and Sladesbridge' LSOA, the ratio is 5:10, while at the other end of the scale, the figure in 'Penzance Wharfside and Town' LSOA it is 5:0.5. It's quite a difference. Looking at the areas with the lowest ratios indicate they are urban and generally in town centres. Conversely, those with the highest are in rural areas, including small settlements.

There is a link between the share of owner-occupied properties and the ratio between built residential and garden residential land. The implication is that people who rent - either social housing or private - have less garden space than owner-occupiers. This could be a 'double whammy' on the quality of life for renters: less space for private leisure, growing food etc but also (coupled with increasing rents and benefit changes) impacting not just physical but also mental health.

Research by the Universities of Exeter and Adelaide has recently looked at private rental factors such as the length of tenancy, building type, costs and rent arrears; and then examined these against a marker of DNA change. Academics concluded that 'the impact of living in private rental accommodation is related to faster biological ageing – but this could be reversed by measures such as limiting rental rises.'

Another way of looking at the data is to estimate the amount of garden space per dwelling. We find that the *average* per dwelling is a tenth of an acre (0.04 of a hectare). It ranges from 0.32 acres in 'Rock, St Minver, Polzeath and Trebetherick' to 0.1 acres in 'Penzance Wharfside and Town'. Reducing the density of new developments could make already expensive housing (because of the prevailing perception of Cornwall as a highly desirable environment) even more expensive and certainly prohibitive to many local buyers.

What policy solution is there to this problem? Options could include creating green spaces in or near existing estates or built up town centres and reducing the density of new developments. Certainly, some settlements (such as Carbis Bay) have seen large gardens and even single dwellings disappear in recent years with flats or higher density housing replacing them. Reduced private green space could be used as a justification for planners in view of the beach, woodland and wider countryside (the Penwith Moors) 'on the doorstep.' Justification for development over gardens such as in Carbis Bay is also on the basis that the village has shops, a school and good public transport services; even though (for example) most (new) residents may not use public transport. The impact on biodiversity within and between gardens, especially when replaced with hardstanding areas for parking is serious, as is additional footfall for any existing green space - with the environmental damage that can do.

Without additional provision for biodiversity, the remaining parts of Cornwall that have not, as yet, been 'developed' (sic) face the challenges of increased footfall (due to population growth and increased tourism). Natural England has alluded to this with particular reference to the Penwith Moors. Despite the additional house building in the Camborne and Redruth areas over the last 10 to 20 years, there has been no provision for a new country park (leaving heavy additional footfall pressure on Tehidy). Existing green space in Cornish 'urban' areas needs to

be made more accessible and biodiverse to justify the acceptability of less garden space, though of course, private green space is the most accessible for people, even if small.

While Cornwall Council's initiative of a Forest for Cornwall is to be welcomed, one issue arises when this includes encouraging people to plant trees in their own gardens. As welcome as this would be, it is not future-proofed against the actions of future owners - which is why large and connected biodiversity is so important. Private garden space is still important though, as not everyone can easily access the beaches or the moors. The important question of how much of Cornwall can remain 'undeveloped' has to be carefully and responsibly considered.

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## Planning Update

### **PA22/11402 Meudon Hotel, Maenporth**

On 13 November Cornwall Council's West Sub-Area Planning Committee voted unanimously to refuse planning application PA22/11402 submitted by the Kingfisher Group which owns the hotel, despite the planning officer's recommendation to approve it. A similar planning application PA21/11384 was refused on 26 September 2022.

The Kingfisher Group applied for approval to build ten individual holiday units, an infinity pool, a gym and fitness suite, a restaurant, and a spa at the Meudon Hotel which is in an AONB. 184 members of the public submitted objections to the Cornwall Council Planning Portal. The Decision Notice included the following:

*The proposed development fails to conserve and enhance the landscape character and natural beauty of the Cornwall Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), which is a highly sensitive location; specifically, the element of the proposal that seeks to introduce holiday units into this wooded valley garden to the detriment of the natural qualities of this tranquil setting, due to their siting, scale, design and their associated residential paraphernalia, and increased light pollution.*

CPRE Cornwall objected to both planning applications and will continue to oppose inappropriate development in our countryside.

## Recent Decisions

Cherry Mason's Fruit Farm, Breage

Change of use for campsite

Planning application PA23/03831

**REFUSED**

Meudon Hotel, Maenporth Falmouth

10 holiday units, pool, restaurant, gym

Planning application PA22/11402

**REFUSED**

Carbis Beach Apartments, Carbis Bay

Six new Aparthotel apartments

Planning application PA22/04841

**WITHDRAWN**

Carbis Bay Hotel, Carbis Bay

Habitat enhancement with viewing area

Planning application PA23/01527

**WITHDRAWN**

Polurrian Hotel, Mullion

15 suites, spa & function room

Planning application PA23/04388

**APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS**

## Objections submitted - Awaiting Decision

Bosavern, St Just Retrospective construction of a lake Planning application PA23/05034	Gillyflower Golf Club 19 holiday lodges & classroom Planning application PA23/02502
Trewidden Road St Ives Erection of a Premier Inn hotel Planning application PA22/11311	Carland Cross, Trispen Solar farm & battery storage Planning application PA23/02629
Penhale Camp, Camp Road, Holywell Bay Holiday and leisure facilities. Planning application PA22/02896	Prow Park Business Village, Newquay Change of use of land for containers Planning application PA22/05334

<p>Penhale Camp, Camp Road, Holywell Bay 9 new dwellings 3 refurbished dwellings Planning application PA22/02794</p> <p>Hotel Bristol, Narrowcliff, Newquay 180 apartments, 44 bed aparthotel Planning application PA22/10572</p> <p>Trelissick Gardens, Feock New 250 space carpark, crossing, access Planning application PA22/10184</p> <p>The Garrack Hotel, St Ives Variations to condition 16 Planning application PA21/09237</p>	<p>Barn Hill, Cadgwith, Ruan Minor, Helston Construction of a detached dwelling Planning application PA21/12133</p> <p>Trefresa Farm Rock Wadebridge Hotel, restaurant, cinema, spa, 22 lodges Planning application PA20/10041</p> <p>Halgavor Moor Development of up to 540 dwellings. Planning application PA20/10618 Paused by Natural England 05/22</p>
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#### **Appeals to the Planning Inspectorate - Awaiting Decision**

PA22/06771 APP/3320137

Mount Hope Carnon Downs

Appeal against refusal. Up to 3 dwellings

PA23/00924 APP/3320596

Land North West of Ramehead Cottages, Rame Head

Appeal against Prior Approval refusal for new agricultural building.