



The countryside charity
Cornwall

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**Merlin Hanbury-Tenison,
Patron, CPRE Cornwall**

We are delighted to announce that as of July 2024, the conservationist and author **MERLIN HANBURY-TENISON** has become our new **Patron**.

Our Chair, Rowena Swallow, says: "CPRE Cornwall has always punched above its weight for a small charity. However, to continue supporting and protecting all aspects of rural life, we need more publicity, funds, and members. We are very much looking forward to having Merlin's highly respected and authoritative voice to get our message across."

Merlin says: It is a huge honour for me to become the patron of this brilliant charity. I hope that I can be a suitable standard-bearer as we press for eco-friendly development, sustainable agriculture, better infrastructure for local needs and genuinely affordable homes. As a proud Cornishman who has grown up seeing many of the challenges that Cornwall faces, I am passionate about the need for sensible, sustainable and restrained development where it is needed for local people. I hope to advocate for CPRE Cornwall on the vital importance of action to mitigate climate change and the importance of engaging with nature to promote mental health and well-being.”

A Cornish conservationist and veteran environmentalist, Merlin founded and now runs The Thousand Year Trust, Britain’s leading rainforest charity. The charity’s mission is to catalyse the movement to triple Britain’s rainforest cover to one million acres in the next thirty years. His work has been featured in *National Geographic*, the *Guardian* and on the BBC. He lives in a rainforest on Bodmin Moor with his wife Lizzie, an entrepreneur and business leader, and their two young daughters. We look forward very much to working with him to increase our profile and encourage new members to join us.

This issue includes an update from John Killick on the shocking results of our research into the real numbers of houses being built in Cornwall, as against the previous versions of Cornwall Council’s Local Plan and featured in the June issue. It is to be hoped that this research will be a cogent argument for strengthening the new Plan currently in preparation – especially in the light of the new Government’s stated aims for house-building targets.

John also reports on what we know so far, as of July 8th - the date of the most recent announcement available to us while writing this - of the new Government’s revisions to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), especially in relation to Cornwall as a rural area with a rural economy. We will inform you of the actual proposed detailed changes in a future Newsletter - when they have come through - and what they may mean for Cornwall.

There is an update from Stephen Horscroft on the designation by Natural England of Penwith Moors as an SSSI. We are keeping a close eye on the progress of consultations with farmers and other stakeholders.

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



Photo credit: <https://unsplash.com/@tama66>

PROGRESS OF THE CORNWALL LOCAL PLAN: UPDATE 2024.

John Killick

This June, our Newsletter included a paper in which I explained how housing delivery in Cornwall was deviating away from the Local Plan agreed in 2016. This analysis was based on Cornwall Council's Housing Monitor expectation in June 2023, for completions by 2030. Overall, the huge total target of 52,530 houses was then being more than met – see Rows 1 and 2 in Table A below – but with some serious concerns. Now a new 2024 Housing Monitor has been published which intensifies these concerns, and this note explains the revisions.

In detail, the 2023 Monitor showed that the spatial delivery of housing over Cornwall appeared to be drifting away from the 71 to 29 urban to rural balance that the inspector had agreed with the Council in 2016. Fewer houses were being built in some towns like Bodmin and Penzance than planned - and far more in the countryside. Overall, rural areas appeared to be bearing far more than their planned or fair share – but without actually relieving the current serious housing crisis. For details see Table A below and the June 2024 Newsletter.

PLAN - TARGET - 2016: FORECAST RESULTS - 2030	Houses	%
1: URBAN + RURAL - ORIGINAL PLAN	52530	100
2: URBAN + RURAL - FINAL RESULT	59325	100
3: URBAN TARGET IN 2016, and as % total target	37455	71
4: URBAN RESULT LIKELY BY 2030	37510	63
5: RURAL TARGET IN 2016, and as % total target	15075	29
6: RURAL RESULT LIKELY BY 2030	21815	37
7: URBAN SURPLUS, and as % urban target	55	0
8: RURAL SURPLUS, and as % rural target	6740	45
9: EST. TOTAL SURPLUS, and as % total target	6795	13

Source: Cornwall Local Plan Housing Implementation Strategy 2023 Published: 01/06/2023.

Note: The Housing Monitor continues to report progress consistently by Cornwall's 19 CNAs or Community Network Areas. For administrative purposes however Cornwall Council has recently redivided the county into broadly similar Community Area Partnerships or CAPs

Things have now moved on. Cornwall is still in line to more than meet its overall housing targets and is building far more houses than almost all other Local Authorities in proportion to its population. However, in addition the new June 2024 CC Housing Monitor also shows the deviations have developed even further than before. See Table B below. We now have a new Labour Government determined to build more houses. We must make it aware of these underlying trends – or the officials will just impose new targets wherever they can. Evidence shows that building more large new houses in the countryside will not solve the urban problems. Most locals will not be able to afford them, and they will be snapped up by incomers from the rest of the country.

TABLE B: Housing Monitor Report, 2024

PLAN - TARGET - 2016: FORECAST RESULTS - 2030	Houses	%
1: URBAN + RURAL - ORIGINAL PLAN	52530	100
2: URBAN + RURAL - FINAL RESULT	58582	100
3: URBAN TARGET IN 2016, and as % total target	37455	71
4: URBAN RESULT LIKELY BY 2030	36225	62
5: RURAL TARGET IN 2016, and as % total target	15075	29
6: RURAL RESULT LIKELY BY 2030	22357	38
7: URBAN SURPLUS, and as % urban target	-1220	-3
8: RURAL SURPLUS, and as % rural target	7282	48
9: EST. TOTAL SURPLUS, and as % total target	6052	12

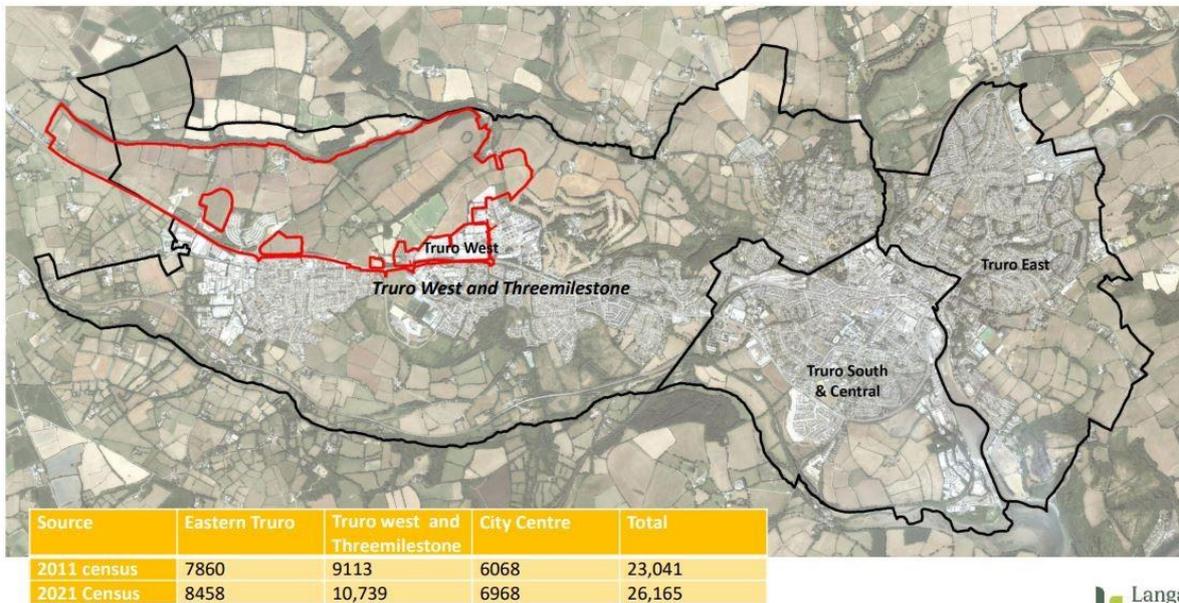
Source: Cornwall Local Plan Housing Implementation Strategy 2024 Published: 01/06/2024

The Main Differences between the 2023 and 2024 Housing Monitors

- 1: The estimated prospective 2030 urban to rural ratio, planned by the Inspector in 2016 to be 71 to 29, had changed by 2023 to 63 to 37. It is now 62 to 38: see Rows 3 and 6 above.
- 2: The likely urban surplus in 2030 over the urban target of 37,455 for 2016, which had been 55 houses in 2023, is now a deficit of 1,220 houses, or 3% below target – see Row 7.
- 3: The likely rural surplus over the 15,075 rural target of 2016, which in 2023, was 6,740 houses, or 45% over target, has now become in 7,282 houses - or 48% over target. This surely cannot have been the planned intention.

The conclusion reached in the June Newsletter piece was that while Cornwall Council, like other responsible authorities, must do all that it reasonably can to address our housing crisis, the solution now is not to build more houses in the Cornish countryside. That precious rural land is now becoming increasingly overburdened. Instead, now, perhaps after a decade of rural overbuilding an urban to rural ratio of 75 to 25 with a maximum target of say 30 to 40,000 new houses would perhaps be appropriate for the next Local Plan. Of course, there are cost, and taxation implications involved – but these numbers are in line with much of the new government's thinking which favours rather more social housing in urban areas, as well as building on the 'grey belt', and rather less in fresh green areas or the most valued National Landscapes.

Population changes in Truro: Growth on the Western Corridor



Langarth Garden Village – in red - in relation to main Truro districts. By 2050 add say 7,500 to existing Truro + 10000 in Langarth. Ten more of these are planned. See below.

Source: Cornwall Council

The NPPF under Labour: Great Expectations?

John Killick

The National Policy Planning Framework - NPPF - was introduced by the Coalition Government in 2011 as part of the Localism Act to direct and inform a regulated market approach to land-use planning. It replaced the more top-down previous Labour government's Policy Planning Statements. It was revised in 2018, 2019, 2021 and twice in 2023 as the Tory government struggled to produce more houses and to meet national needs.*

Now, on 8th July 2024 the Chancellor, Rachel Reeves has promised that the government will produce a revised draft by the end of July, which will then go out to consultation for a year before submission to Parliament and publication. The questions now are: How will the new Labour Government change the NPPF? and how will this affect Cornwall? Obviously, once a draft NPPF has appeared - then we can discuss the detailed changes suggested. In the interim, all we can do is to look at the broad political background and planning ideas likely to be built into the new document.

It is significant that Rachel Reeves, as Chancellor – rather than Angela Rayner, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Housing, announced this important revision as a necessary – indeed central – requirement to reinvigorate the economy quickly and effectively... 'Nowhere is decisive reform needed more' she said 'than in the case of our planning system... we have no time to waste'.

In detail her speech at the Treasury on July 8th listed six needs:

1. Restore the mandatory targets. Get 1.5m houses built.

2. Give priority to energy and associated infrastructure.
3. Unlock stalled large housing sites.
4. Support Local Authority Planning Depts with 300 more planners.
5. Call in critical decisions for government review.
6. Use the planning system to deliver critical infrastructure.

Her emphasis is on identifying locations where boosting accommodation, infrastructure and even new towns would unlock economic growth. This suggests a cautious British version of a general international change - from neoliberalism – ‘let the market decide’ – to a much more directed industrial and locational strategy.

Many countries including China have been successfully targeting specific industries and locations for years. Even the United States now has daring infrastructure and recovery programmes. However, since the failure of attempts to support declining industries and supposed national champions (such as Concorde in the 1970s and 1980s), British policy has avoided detailed industrial and structural planning. Now however the tide seems to be turning. Boris Johnson introduced his Levelling Up programme to address regional differences that had existed since the 1930’s, Liz Truss hazarded a broader dash for growth – but her overambitious and uncostered programme was no sooner revealed to the bond markets than it was scuttled. Reeves, an economist with Treasury experience, appears more cautious financially – she has to be - but maybe more ambitious structurally.

In detail, around London and elsewhere, her aim is apparently to finance new building by squeezing landowners’ excessive ‘hope value’. This could reduce land prices, and thus encourage the private sector to build more houses. However, her main aim is to meet the all-too-evident needs of our vital financial and creative industries for office space and housing. Similarly, around and between Oxford and Cambridge, new scientific and pharmaceutical industries are crying out for office, laboratory and housing space for their new products and new workers, but they face severe infrastructure problems, as well as a powerful green lobby. These two vital industrial sectors could enable the new industries of the future that are vital for our survival and therefore, in these areas, the countryside may have to yield to the national interest. Planners should obviously exploit brownfield and ‘grey belt’ first, while preserving as much green as possible - if only to attract the kind of highly educated workforce that is often sensitive to environmental issues.

For Cornwall, the implications of Reeve’s points are:

1. Restore the targets: Cornwall is already more than likely to substantially overshoot its mandatory target of 52,530 houses by 2030. However, this is not solving our housing crisis – or boosting critical areas of growth. See our June Newsletter and the revision above for comment.

2. Give priority to energy: Cornwall could increase its wind, and solar, and maybe add wave and tide. However, CPRE research suggests it is absolutely critical just how much, how many, how positioned and where such large structures are placed. Currently too many huge solar farms are being proposed and accepted even though large photo voltaic returns could be produced in other ways for instance on roof tops – without perhaps some of the power line infrastructure problems associated with large solar and wind farms. The aesthetics of huge solar farms and wind turbines need to be planned just as much as London’s tall offices.

3. Review stalled projects: Certainly – but Cornwall’s difficult geology and geography may not allow easy solutions. The Cornwall Local Plan Implementation Strategy 2024 mentions

problems in the River Camel estuary due to phosphates which may be hard to solve, and also lists urban CNAs like Bodmin that are falling behind – in 2023 by 509 houses, in 2024 by 901 houses.

4. Appoint extra planners. More and better planners would help - but 300 extra for the whole country will not go far.

5. Build new towns. New towns were not listed in Reeves' speech, but they are an essential feature of Labour's programme to meet housing needs. This is well known to be also high on Cornwall Council's agenda. Much less clear in this case is the overall strategy for economic growth and prosperity that should be associated with such extensive housing development. Recently, in visiting Langarth, Cornwall's new town near Truro planned for 10,000 people, Olly Monk, Cornwall Council's portfolio holder for housing, commented:

"... this is a really good scheme, but we need more (new towns) across Cornwall. I would say by 2050 we would need another ten of these at least.... Cornwall Council has (just) put out a 'call for sites' where we ask landowners, local developers and land agents to suggest sites that could be available for future development. Tying in with our Local Plan which identifies the population of Cornwall will be somewhere in the region of 630,000 by 2050, you will need to build more of these sort of projects or the inequality in the housing market... will just grow and grow..... If we don't do more of this, we're going to look like a National Park where no one can afford to live. I don't think that's acceptable for Cornwall..." *Falmouth Packet, July 14th*

What Langarth seems to lack is an additional critical strategic purpose similar to those proposed around London and Cambridge. Otherwise, new towns are just building in the countryside to provide accommodation - which the thrust of the existing NPPF, the existing Local Plan – and the Inspector's 2016 Report opposed. See June Newsletter for details.

6. Add critical infrastructure. Britain has been building too little critical infrastructure for years, and it shows. Now Reeves and the new northern mayors plan to build roads, trams, hospitals, prisons etc in places where they will really make a difference i.e. the TransPennine route, the relics of the abandoned HS2 routes, and trams in west Yorkshire. Reeves is a Londoner but represents Leeds West: she will understand London and northern problems without any need to overstate them.

The difficulty is how to pay for new infrastructure. The Chancellor has an un-enviable job - taxation, national debt and foreign borrowing are all at 50-year highs. Besides infrastructure there are huge additional needs for social services and defence. Resources will therefore have to be raised for the most vital projects – but otherwise rationed. How will this affect us? Cornwall in the last 50 years has had important support from the EU, as well as from our governments, but the former has now gone, the latter is cash-strapped - and our local economy is not critical for national recovery.

Consequently, although we have had some successful major projects – accidentally from history – the airport - or initiated by EU resources – the continuous dualling of the A30 – new projects are unlikely to be pushed through to their logical conclusion. So, the A30 will continue to feed into minor roads, and new housing developments will not be given the necessary supporting infrastructure and sewage. Langarth may well be a case in point – there is huge criticism in the local press - but this is not the place to discuss it in detail.

Additionally, to encourage further and faster development locally to unlock national gains, Reeves has reinstated the existing housing targets – but (probably) not the underlying methods of determining them. The old NPPF set housing targets and growth by projecting

existing population and development trends into the future – and then largely letting the market decide location, subject of course to normal planning regulations. Necessity now will probably replace these automatic rules with more calculated objectives - based on careful study, comparative advantage and national usefulness.

But what are Cornwall's best and most useful specialisations, not only for itself but also in the national interest? CPRE, the Countryside Charity, thinks that we should concentrate on our traditional strengths – that is tourism, heritage and 'mining' – i.e. resource extraction - including solar and wind. Then there is agriculture and maritime industries – but all in a modern, restrained, technically advanced and high return manner. Similarly, Cornwall's notable innovative and creative arts specialisations – themselves a direct response to our environment, e.g. in St Ives and Newlyn – may have some modern relevance.

Contrary to Olly Monk's comments it is arguable that we should be somewhat of a 'national park' – fitting in with our special history and regional brand - but a modernised and economically effective one. Some of the most successful regional economies in the world have national park characteristics. Providing more homes for locals who want to live and work here is vital – but it should not be part of our role to provide much additional housing for well-off retired rentiers or work-at-homers from up-country. The risks posed by that to the Cornish brand – which depends very much on our actual and perceived environmental qualities - is far too great. One or several additional Langarths could be a good thing, ten sounds too many. Our new Local Plan needs to take that into account.

* For the most recent NPPF (Dec 2023) type **NPPF 2024** into Google

Penwith Moors: SSSI designation up-date

Stephen Horscroft

It was in November last year that Rowena Swallow and I had an initial follow up meeting with Natural England (NE) after they had decided to designate much of the west Penwith moors as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Readers may recall the controversial public meeting about this designation the previous Spring. Not least, there was concern about the economic impact on farmers even though legislation on SSSI consideration does not include this as part of its remit.

Natural England officers admitted that the organisation had '*lessons to learn*' about the way that it had communicated with farmers and other land owners in the area. They implicitly recognised that West Penwith is a farmed landscape but that '*intensity*' of method had not changed in the last couple of decades.

How this is done and the incentives offered (as well as the economic consequences to producers and consumers) is of course a key issue. NE claimed in the meeting that farmers were reluctant to engage in an understanding of their practices in the run-up to designation but that this may now change. How this changes over the next five years will have implications for the SSSI although crop intensity will not be part of this fit.

So, there are potential issues about Cornish food access and resilience as well as those of wider economic sustainability for the farmers. However (as of last autumn) many farmers were still not ready to have those conversations. Other environmental organisations may have a better relationship with the farming community in the area and NE are conscious that they need to find alternative ways to reach them. The employment of 'farm business consultants' is one approach that NE were looking at and there is of course the fantastic legacy of the Penwith Landscape Project.

Watch this space for occasional updates.....

PLANNING UPDATE

Recent Decisions	
<p>Bosavern, St Just Retrospective construction of a lake Planning application PA23/05034 <i>REFUSED</i></p>	<p>Rezare, Launceston Outline permission. 1 dwelling Planning application PA24/02315 <i>WITHDRAWN</i></p>
<p>WAAF site Cambrose 22 dwellings Planning application PA23/08436 <i>REFUSED</i></p>	<p>Trefresa Farm Rock Wadebridge Hotel, restaurant, cinema, spa, 22 lodges Planning application PA20/10041 <i>WITHDRAWN</i></p>
<p>Prow Park Business Village, Newquay Change of use of land for containers Planning application PA22/05334 <i>REFUSED</i></p>	<p>The Garrack Hotel, St Ives Variations to condition 16 Planning application PA21/09237 <i>APPROVED WITH CONDITIONS</i></p>
<p>APP/3337060 (PA23/02221) Gwithian Towans Appeal against refusal. 1 dwelling. <i>DISMISSED</i></p>	<p>APP/3334658 (PA22/06139) Penhale Moor, Carnhell Green. Appeal against refusal. Solar farm. <i>ALLOWED</i></p>
<p>APP/3335610 (PA23/05560) Sandgate, Lowertown Appeal against refusal. Up to 2 dwellings. <i>DISMISSED</i></p>	<p>APP/3320596 (PA23/00924) NW of Ramehead Cottages, Rame Head Prior Approval. New agricultural building. <i>DISMISSED</i></p>

Objections submitted to Cornwall Council - Awaiting Decision

Shute Hill, Breage Residential development Planning Application PA23/09456	Pendower Beach Hotel Aparthotel and 3 dwellings Planning application PA24/00042
Gwinear Lane Solar farm Planning application PA23/09696	Cold Northcott Wind Farm Repowering & extension of windfarm Planning application PA23/02727
Pandarosa Farm, Bodmin Erection of 58 Dwellings Planning application PA23/07573	Quintrell Downs 400 holiday units Planning application PA23/09752
Penhale Camp, Camp Road, Holywell Bay Holiday and leisure facilities. Planning application PA22/02896	Carland Cross, Trispen Solar farm & battery storage Planning application PA23/02629
Penhale Camp, Camp Road, Holywell Bay 9 new dwellings 3 refurbished dwellings Planning application PA22/02794	Halgavor Moor Development of up to 540 dwellings. Planning application PA20/10618
Canworthy Water, Launceston Solar farm and substation Planning application PA23/04306	

Appeals to the Planning Inspectorate - Awaiting Decision

APP/3332576 (PA22/02389)
Goran Churchtown
Appeal against refusal. 18 dwellings.

APP/3337474 (PA22/07887)
Higher Lane, Mawgan
Appeal against refusal. Up to 20 dwellings.

The next issue of Cornwall Matters will be published in October 2024