



Campaign to Protect
Rural England
AVONSIDE

PRESS RELEASE

The loss of high grade farmland for development is inconsistent with ambitions for food security

Local authorities must be alerted to the dangers of building on grade one and two agricultural land if the UK is to have any chance of improving its food security.

Grade one and two farmland is the most productive in Britain and its disappearance under concrete is inconsistent with the increasing desire to produce more food from Britain.

This message came from two speakers at the AGM of the CPRE (Campaign to Protect Rural England) Avonside Branch (Sat, 14 November), where campaigners were urged to make local authorities aware that such farmland was strategically important to food security and should be an important part of any assessment when they considered planning development.

Chartered surveyor Bob Brown, formerly specialising in land use planning with Defra, warned that only about 17 per cent of the UK's land was categorised grade one or two, that it was a finite resource and that once it had been used for development, there was no turning back and it was unrecoverable for agricultural purposes.

But high grade land was not evenly distributed throughout Britain, said Mr Brown, and the South West region had particularly limited quantities of this resource.

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The Campaign to Protect Rural England exists to promote the beauty, tranquillity and diversity of rural England by encouraging the sustainable use of land and other natural resources in town and country.

Registered charity number 1078047

Describing a possible Park and Ride development on grade one farmland adjoining the M32 north of Bristol as 'criminal', he said that campaigners should do everything they could to prevent development on this type of highly productive land.

Also speaking at the AGM, Richard Spalding, a senior lecturer at the University of the West of England, said it was essential that the UK moved towards greater food security in the post peak oil world.

Suggesting a 're-localisation' of food production and a role for the city as well as the countryside in feeding the region, he said that the first step was to precisely identify the most productive land.

Derelict grade one farmland should be returned to its former agricultural use, he said, and the M32 land assigned for potential Park and Ride use fell into this category.

But with a final word of warning and with a reference to the controversial polytunnels used for strawberry production in the West Country and West Midlands, he said: "The landscape you get in a re-localised food system might not be the one you want."

Ends

NOTES FOR EDITORS

CPRE, the Campaign to Protect Rural England, is a charity which promotes the beauty, tranquility and diversity of rural England. It advocates positive solutions for the long-term future of the countryside. Founded in 1926, it has 60,000 supporters and a branch in every county. President: Bill Bryson. Patron: Her Majesty The Queen.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION on this or other matters discussed at the AGM, please contact Avonside CPRE chairman, Georgie Bigg on 01934 863070 or georgie.bigg.t21@btinternet.com. For the Avonside website, visit cpreavonside.org.uk.

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