



The
countryside
charity

Worcestershire
From the chairman

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Brad Thomas M.P.
(by e-mail)

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Dear Mr Thomas,

Planning agenda

May I take this opportunity of welcoming you as my new member of Parliament. Cllr May introduced you to me when you were canvassing together a couple of months ago. CPRE The Countryside Charity is a national campaigning charity, with branches in each county, most of which are independent charities. One of the things on which we campaign is for good planning.

It is a regret to me that CPRE has not managed to be more active in campaigning in Wychavon, which you have led. This is for want of local activists who know the area and have relevant practical experience of the issues in their locality.

I am sending with this a copy of a letter that I am sending to Angela Rayner as the new Communities Secretary. I hope that you will pass this on to her department for her to reply in the usual way.

Green Belt

In Wychavon, Green Belt was an issue only on the northern fringes of the district. In contrast, substantially the whole of Bromsgrove is Green Belt. Pressure on this in the west of the district (where I live) is limited as Dudley MBC consider that they can accommodate most of their own housing need. In the east of the district the pressure is from Birmingham, which produces plans showing that it cannot meet its own housing needs. This is partly because it fails properly to take account of its own record in windfall sites coming forward. This in turn puts pressure on Solihull, which similarly has difficulty in meeting its housing needs.

Metro Mayor

As things stand, the Metro Mayor of the West Midlands is elected by the people of the seven metropolitan boroughs of the West Midlands County. However, the Housing Market Area (HMA) is larger than this. I have found Travel-to-work areas to provide an objective means of defining them. However, the most recent evidence that I have seen on this (which I can no longer find) was based on data from the 2001 census, as compiled about 2005 with a view to it being evidence for the West Midlands Regional Planning Guidance, though it was not explicitly used. While there is a small amount of relatively random travel, that evidence seemed to show a sort of watershed that happens to approximate to the southern boundary of Bromsgrove District.

CPRE Worcs: from the Chairman Dr P.W. King

This places Bromsgrove (also Redditch, part of Stratford, South Staffordshire and various places north of the conurbation) in the Birmingham and Black Country HMA. As I understand it only the leaders of the seven metropolitan boroughs are voting member of the West Midlands Combined Authority (WMCA), with the leaders of adjacent shire districts (including those just listed) as non-voting members. It is thoroughly undemocratic for the Metro Mayor and the voting members of WMCA to exercise authority over shire districts beyond the boundary of West Midlands County. It will need an effort to persuade the government that that a one-size-fits-all approach will not work in this subregion. Nevertheless, I have no doubt there are ways of fixing this.

Eight Hills

National Trust has set up an initiative to have the hills in the north of Bromsgrove District designated as a Regional Park. This is to stretch from Wychbury Hill (in Hagley) to Weatheroak Hill (in the eastern part of Alvechurch). The existence of this park is likely to be significant in limiting the southern expansion of the West Midlands conurbation. I hope you will find means of supporting and promoting this initiative.

Yours Sincerely,

P.W. King

Chairman, CPRE Worcestershire