

[Planning has given us the ugly environments it was intended to prevent](#) [1]

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I heartily recommend this [intelligent piece](#) [3] on rural planning and development by Charles Moore in the Daily Telegraph. His paper have been running a campaign against the British government's proposals to ease the planning system, on which countless South East of England NIMBYs ('Not in my back yard') and BANANAs ('Build absolutely nothing anywhere near anybody') have vented their spleen in its letters columns, complaining that the whole of the Cotswolds are going to be covered by factories and wind turbines.

Moore points out that the government aims merely to devolve, imply and liberalise the planning system ? which, he believes, is essential for the rural life that the 'Disgusted, Tunbridge Wells' campaigners want to preserve. After all, the charming rural farmsteads and mills, like that at Flatford painted by John Constable, were, paradoxically, the industrial development of the time that gave us our rural environment. The mineral wells around Tunbridge are what caused the prosperous and pretty town to ? I can't think of a better word ? spring up. The people who built these commercial enterprises had to live in them or near them, and generally speaking they built wisely, practically and beautifully. That is the origin of the countryside that people love.

Now, of course, we have instead the socialist principle of planning. As Moore points out, modern planners would probably reject the idyllic Flatford Mill as an unwarranted industrial intrusion into the landscape. People complain about ugly, squashed-in housing developments around towns and villages, but these are brought about because of the planning system. Large companies buy up vast acreages because they know the planning system is slow, bureaucratic and fickle, which means that land prices are driven up, and the price of land that is approved for development rises even more spectacularly. Planning has in fact given us the ugly environments that it was intended to prevent. We need instead for our development to grow organically, as they did in the past when they created the rural environment that campaigners want to preserve.

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[1] <http://www.adamsmith.org/blog/environment/planning-has-given-us-the-ugly-environments-it-was-intended-to-prevent>

[2] <http://www.adamsmith.org/authors/dr-eamonn-butler>

[3] <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/earth/greenpolitics/planning/8737657/For-the-good-of-rural-life-we-must-build-houses-in-the-English-countryside.html>

[4] http://disqus.com/?ref_noscript

[5] <http://disqus.com>