

CPRE Hampshire submission for Commission of Inquiry into Hampshire 2050 Environment

In looking at what Hampshire might be like in 2050, we need to think about **what we want it to be like** in 2050. The decisions we make between now and then will affect this in no more crucial area than in the environment that supports us, determines our quality of life and makes Hampshire the county it is.

We will live through a period of significant change as technology continues to affect the way we will live and work. The need for more and better homes which meet the needs of the population will continue as will the debate on how many and where. By embracing change positively and by planning it well, making sure it serves all our residents, we should be able to shape a great future for Hampshire. Planning is the operative word here; failing to plan is planning to fail.

Town and city centres can and should be reshaped and repurposed to better serve the lifestyle of the time but once a landscape is lost, it is rarely reclaimed.

At present, we are presiding over the biggest boom in house-building for a generation - are we rolling out this building in the right way or will we look back in 2050 to see poor quality, land hungry housing estates which contribute to urban sprawl? Will we find that the landscapes on our doorsteps have disappeared leaving only the National Parks as museums to what used to be? Will our roads be even more congested?

The aim should be to foster and build communities rather than just provide houses. This could be achieved using a variety of development concepts from private developer-led building to self-build. Good planning would encourage locally distinctive architecture and urban design. To encourage a stronger local connection, new development should be located close to employment opportunities, facilities and public transport, be well connected to the internet and be flexible in order to meet the changing needs of residents. Infrastructure is of vital importance. More schools, doctor's surgeries and sustainable public transport will be needed to cater for the needs of growing towns and cities.



Hampshire contains a great variety of landscapes, habitats, historic features, villages and small towns. It has two national parks, three AONBs and chalk steams of international renown, which are only found in a handful of places in the world. Hampshire has areas designated for nature conservation, and stretches of protected coastline. These areas are not

well connected in terms of biodiversity and the issue of fragmentation needs to be addressed along with improving access to natural spaces for the public. There are also many 'valued' landscapes, often of downland and heathland, which are undesignated and their importance needs to be recognised.

This rich variety needs to be celebrated and acknowledged, and Hampshire's essentially rural character should be protected and enhanced for everyone to enjoy.

The countryside provides extensive ecosystem services, including food, water and raw materials, water purification, air quality, flood prevention, soil formation, nutrient recycling, and health, well-being, recreation and inspiration. Beautiful



landscapes, dark skies and tranquillity are essential elements of well-being. **It is vital that these ecosystem services are recognised for the benefits they provide to the population of Hampshire, and that the land is held in trust for future generations.**

Protection and enhancement of rural character will involve difficult decisions about where development should or should not take place. The old approach was one of supporting the countryside for its own sake but the approach now should be one of recognising the contribution it makes in terms of its wider ecosystem benefits, providing the setting for villages, towns and cities and recognition of the benefit of the countryside on our doorsteps.

The countryside is one of Hampshire's most important assets and its future is closely linked to the rural economy and in particular agriculture. Farming's contribution to the county should be better supported whilst at the same time its environmental impacts need to be carefully managed.

So, the impact of new development on Hampshire's natural environment and cultural heritage needs to be better understood, and carefully evaluated. Hampshire's cities, towns and villages need to be revived, improving the quality of life for those who live and work in urban centres and breathing life into the economy of those places. The connection of urban residents with the natural environment also needs to be improved and urban sprawl prevented - for example by the introduction of a Green Belt in the South to replace the failing 'strategic gaps'.

We would like to see the Hampshire of 2050 a place that has thriving cities and towns with easy access to the countryside for urban dwellers, an environment in good health that can support the needs of the population with a diversity of plants and wildlife and landscapes of diversity and beauty, managed for everyone to enjoy.

But it is not what we would want to see in 2050, more importantly it is what we as a community **need** to create in order to support a healthy and happy population.

For further information please refer to the CPRE Hampshire 'Strategic Vision for Hampshire' and 'Case for new Green Belt in South Hampshire' attached.