

Commission of Inquiry into Hampshire 2050 Rural Hampshire Theme

We all value the Hampshire countryside for its beauty, diversity and tranquillity. We want our countryside to be valued by everyone, and for people to be in tune with the environment and aware of their impact on it. For rural communities, though, the cost of homes, the changing way that farms are managed, the lack of affordable public transport and mobile and broadband connectivity, an aging population and absence of affordable heating fuel create additional pressures. If rural life is to continue to thrive and be enriching and diverse, steps need to be taken to ensure that the connections are not broken for thousands of people bound to the land for generations. Furthermore, our rural communities and the surrounding countryside provide access to green space that we know is



so important for everyone, including urban populations, to support health and wellbeing and provide crucial ecosystem services.

1. Farming, Forestry and Food

Agriculture shapes our landscape. How we collectively care for and farm our land will influence water, air and food quality now and in the future and have an effect on climate change. Farming uses around 70% of all land in England, and this is reflected in the land use found across Hampshire. Unless urban populations understand the value of our countryside, as the provider of local food and the caretaker of our environment, we will continue to lose large swathes to development.

We can expect agricultural practice to change significantly over the period to 2050. It will need to become sustainable, becoming more efficient in its use of resources, finding ways to replace unsustainable inputs with renewable resources and, ultimately move to a new low carbon model. This will require greater diversity in farming enterprises, with crops, livestock and nature in better balance. Brexit will give opportunity to facilitate this change with a move away from payments for production to payment for providing public goods, with greater public accountability.

Soil will increasingly take its place as a public good, with a focus not only on its protection and enhancement as the foundation of productive farming and forestry, but also the pivotal role it plays in supporting natural ecosystems and multiple

environmental services, such as retaining and releasing excess water, cleaning and filtering it to recharge underground stocks, a primary food source for wildlife, a resource for industry and medicinal products, and a continuing store of carbon.

Our landscape is defined by the underlying soils, along with the habitats and ecosystems the landscape supports. Years of degradation from intensive use will need to be reversed. Solutions may well involve farms working together as clusters, with management plans at holding or landscape scale, and measures such as no tilling, cover crops in winter to prevent bare soils, mob grazing (grazing for short periods with long rests), alley cropping, fallow periods, and herbal leys grazed by livestock, with accompanying targeted agri-environment payments. We see use of these techniques as very much part of the sustainable model of farming which we need to move towards.

Read CPRE papers *New Model Farming* [here](#) and *Back to the Land; rethinking our approach to soil* [here](#).

Such change could mean fewer tractors and other agricultural machinery, reduced income but also reduced costs. Less staff would be required but, on the other hand, income from farm diversification could become yet more crucial to overall profit of the farm enterprise, bringing opportunities for more employment in rural areas. Farm diversification however brings risks to the scenic beauty of the landscape, which underpins the lure of the countryside for the general population and its contribution to health and well-being, and so care is needed, with the planning system playing an important role in protecting the landscape and tranquillity of our countryside.

At the same time, we want farming to become more connected to communities and selling locally to them, as otherwise our connection to nature will be further extinguished. Much has been done in Hampshire to foster local food distribution. Read our research '*From Field to Fork*' [here](#). In his introduction, Monty Don says "Local food is a powerful way to form our own connections to the land, landscape and nature. It is a chance to enjoy seasonal produce, to discover the best, most wholesome and freshest food around and the most distinctive varieties and tastes".

Much of our woodland has not been managed for some decades. We see increasing pressure to bring back proper management of woodland for timber production but with much increased focus on enhancement of woodland wildlife, notably woodland birds, and accompanying flora. This could result in more home produced timber products and an increase in jobs in woodland management and the timber industry.

2. Rural Transport

The elderly, the poor and the young are hit more than any other section of society by the lack of public transport in rural areas. If we are to connect the often-vulnerable residents of rural communities with shops, post offices, hospitals and doctor's surgeries, we need a radically different approach to public transport. This may involve thinking creatively about connecting people to mini busses, taxis or with car owners for lift sharing,

We need better connections between rail and bus and between cycle ways and communities for safer travel without increasing the reliance on fossil fuels.

3. Housing

CPRE Hampshire has a vision of rural communities in the future which are stronger and more diverse, and where more people live and work in the countryside. Yet this will only be achieved if people in lower paid jobs are able to find a decent, affordable home close to work, and in a town or village where they have a clear connection.

Unfortunately, housing in many rural areas of Hampshire has become increasingly unaffordable to people on low and average incomes, and the failure to create affordable homes is fuelling some of the main issues facing rural communities. The closure of rural services (such as post offices, pubs and public transport) and the skewed population structure, due to falling numbers of young people, is linked strongly to the inability of people to be able to afford a home. To read more about the provision of affordable housing in rural Hampshire, please download our two-page briefing and policy, available on [this page](#).



West Dean, SDNP. Credit: Hastoe

We work with rural affordable housing enablers like HARA and Hastoe Housing Association (see Appendix A) to campaign to improve the provision of affordable homes in rural communities.

4. Economy

There is a balance to be achieved in rural environments when considering workplaces, business and employment. Small scale low cost workspace, rural crafts and start up manufacturing should have a firm place in rural communities, often housed in redundant farm buildings as agricultural machinery outgrows the traditional barns and sheds. Working from home is becoming more prevalent but is

very dependant on the provision of decent broadband and the mobile network. We should encourage working from home as this keeps people present in their community in daylight hours, creating opportunities for voluntary work and caring for neighbours and keeps cars off the roads at peak times. Read our Rural Economy in Hampshire Policy document [here](#).

The role of LEPs could be explored in supporting small-scale rural businesses, financing start up premises and the conversion of redundant farm buildings.

5. Connectivity

There are still improvements to be made in the mobile phone networks throughout rural Hampshire - as in developing countries, mobile connectivity could assist vulnerable people in giving access to healthcare, affordable transport and a way to make an income. Similarly high speed or good quality Broadband enables people to work from home, access information and join the conversation across the county. However, very low-income residents in rural areas are at a disadvantage because they cannot afford to subscribe or buy a computer or smart phone.

By 2050, there could be schemes in place to help low income residents to get connected.

CPRE Hampshire's vision for 2050

We have a vision for a more beautiful and tranquil countryside, but not for one held 'in aspic'. The countryside has always been subject to change. We see a living and thriving countryside with a diverse population, truly affordable homes and sustainable communities as essential to its wellbeing. We believe that protection of natural beauty, landscape character, local distinctiveness and sense of place can go hand in hand with an active and successful rural economy and flourishing local communities.



Appendix A

Note by Hastoe Housing Association on Rural Affordable Housing for Hampshire 2050

Specifically, we would like to understand your thoughts and views on the future for Rural Hampshire by considering the following points, in relation to Hampshire as far as possible.

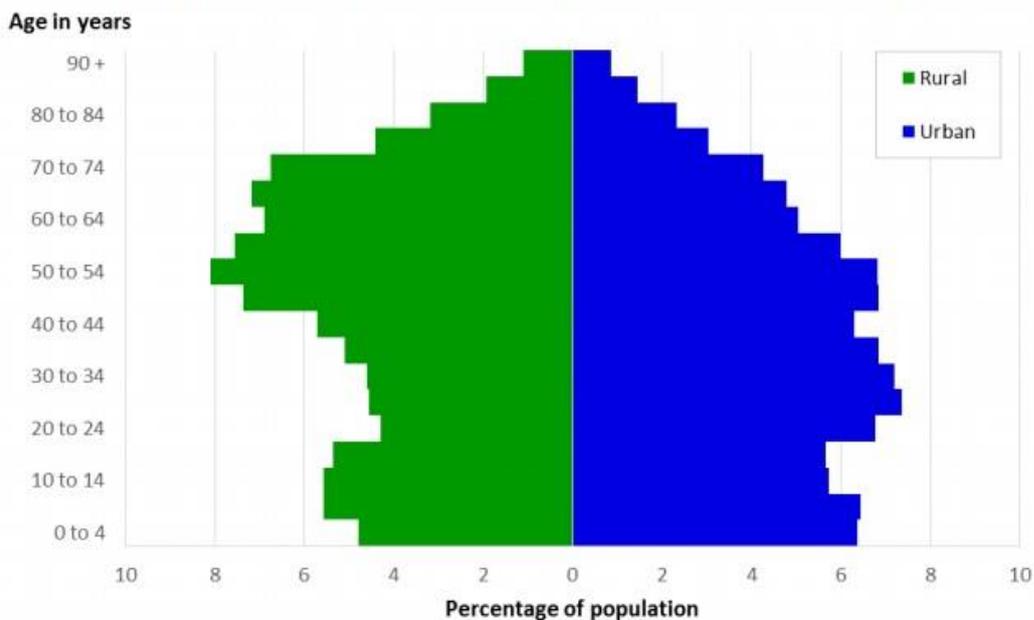
1. Evidence on future trends/changes

Housing in rural local authorities in Hampshire is becoming increasingly expensive. The below [table](#) shows the ratio of affordability (house prices to average earnings) from 1997 to 2017 in certain largely rural Hampshire authorities. The national average ratio in 2017 was 7.8.

Local Authority	1997	2007	2017
East Hampshire	5.0	10.5	12.4
Winchester	5.6	10.1	12.0
New Forest	4.8	10.6	11.9
Test Valley	4.9	9.5	10.2

This increase in price is having a dramatic impact in Rural England - and particularly in areas such as Hampshire. Young households cannot afford to live in rural areas. As such, the population of rural areas is ageing rapidly. Below is a population [pyramid](#) comparing Rural England and Urban England.

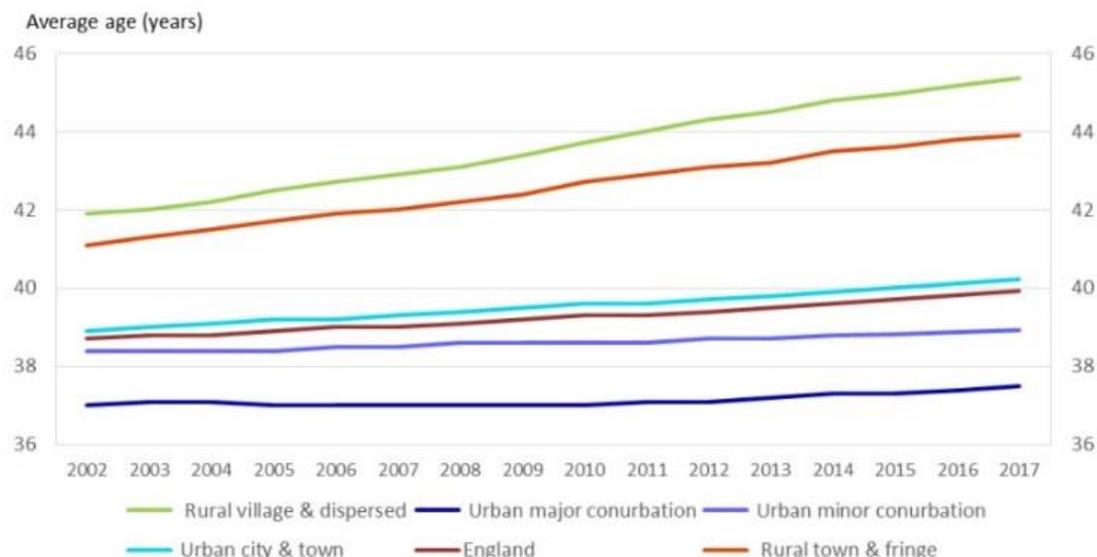
Percentage of population within age bands by rural-urban classification (LSOA) in England, 2017



Moreover, the more rural the location, the older the population.

Average age of the population

Average age in rural and urban areas in England, 2002 to 2017



This ageing population will be a particular problem in rural Hampshire. The table [below](#) shows the old dependency ratios in the same local authorities, with forecasts for the next two decades. These show the number of people aged over 65 per 1000 (aged 16-64). The UK average in 2016 was 285.

Local Authority	1996	2006	2016	2026	2036
East Hampshire	237	272	383	494	626
Winchester	266	273	342	415	503
New Forest	367	391	502	597	727
Test Valley	226	250	353	451	568

So this represents a doubling of the old age dependency ratio across Hampshire in 40 years. It is a particular problem in the New Forest and higher across these local authorities than the national average.

2. Hampshire specific opportunities & gaps

Hampshire needs more housing in rural areas - and particularly affordable housing for local people. This will help to keep communities viable, with a good mix of ages and incomes. The Government is committed to building 300,000 new homes every year. The Prime Minister has called housing her top domestic priority. So the opportunity for Hampshire is to build the affordable homes the county needs and take advantage of current push to build more homes.

Rural Exception Sites

One means of building affordable homes for local people is through the Rural Exception Site policy. It's a model where small sites, on the edges of villages, can be released for development on the condition that the homes are kept affordable in perpetuity, are prioritised for local people and meet a local need. This criteria keeps the land value very low - around £10,000 per plot - as the focus is on social homes, not homes for open market sale. Moreover, the fact the sites would not be released for housing on any other condition reduces 'hope value' for the land.

In effect, rural exception sites are a form of zoning for affordable housing. It links the land price to the type of housing needed by the local, rural community.

Hampshire could do better on building more homes on rural exception sites. In 2016-17, only 10 affordable homes were built on rural exception sites in Hampshire ([link](#) - tab I)

This is compared to 400 in Cornwall in the same year.

Local Planning Authorities should look to promote rural exception sites - both in their local plan and in supporting Parish Councils and landowners to bring the process forward. Used well, the policy can help provide a stream of affordable rural homes. They are often very popular as the community is in control and the homes are reserved for local people first.

Neighbourhood Planning

Local authorities in Hampshire should encourage as many communities as possible to look to create a Neighbourhood plan. This helps communities to plan development in their area and provide the homes that local people need.

Individual communities can apply for grant funding to complete a local plan. Local authorities should encourage Parish Councils and rural Neighbourhood forums in Hampshire to establish neighbourhood plans in their areas.

There is grant funding to establish Neighbourhood Plans. More information can be found [at this link](#).

Energy Efficiency

In England, 11.1% of households are in fuel poverty. In Hampshire, it is just 7.9%.

However, fuel poverty is a problem in some specific rural areas in Hampshire. Below are some 'Lower Super Output areas' (small areas of around 1500 people) in rural Hampshire with higher fuel poverty than the national average.

East Hampshire 011B - 11.3%

New Forest 001A - 11.7%

New Forest 001B - 14.3%

New Forest 005D - 12.1%

New Forest 007B - 12.3%

New Forest 017B - 12.7%

Winchester 004A - 11.8%

Winchester 014A - 12.5%

Test Valley 008C - 11.9%

It is important local authorities understand where the pockets of fuel poverty are in rural parts of Hampshire - particularly in areas with an older housing stock or which are off gas. Targeting funding for retrofits and insulation at the least efficient stock will cut fuel bills and reduce carbon emissions from residences.

Local Plans are still [permitted](#) to mandate higher energy efficiency standards than Building Regulations for new homes. When creating and revising Local Plans, Hampshire local authorities should seek to mandate high energy efficiency standards for new built homes - cutting fuel bills for residents and carbon emissions from Hampshire homes.

Cross cutting elements (impacts on multiple service areas) and potential benefits/outcomes. Housing feeds into many other service areas. Good affordable housing reduces health problems, boosts the economy, cuts welfare bills and sustains local rural services. Below are some recommendations relating to rural, affordable housing.

1. Ageing Population:

As we have seen above, the population in Hampshire is ageing rapidly. We have to ensure that the homes we build are fit for an ageing population. Nationally, half of households in rural areas are expected to be aged 65 or over by 2039.

New homes should be built to the Lifetime Homes [Criteria](#) - a series of inexpensive design measures to ensure homes are accessible to most and suitable for people at all stages of their life. This will help ensure new homes are fit for a rapidly ageing population in rural Hampshire. In 2015, the Government [created](#) National Minimum Space Standards for new homes. But these are only optional for Local Plans and are subject to viability assessments. To ensure all new homes are of a decent size and can be easily adapted, Hampshire local authorities should consider incorporating minimum space standards for new homes into their Local Plan.

2. Highest Possible Energy Efficiency:

Hampshire has the opportunity to be a leader in building energy efficient homes. Local authorities in Hampshire should look to follow the example of Exeter City Council, which has a commitment to build all its council houses to Passivhaus standard (cutting fuel bills to £2-3 per week). [More information here.](#)

This cuts energy bills, decreases household energy consumption and helps to mitigate climate change.

3. Second Homes and Empty Homes:

Second homes and empty homes can be a big problem in some rural areas. Local people are priced out as homes are left empty or used as holiday homes.

Local authorities in Hampshire should be wary of giving a council tax discount of up to 50% on second homes. They have the choice to charge the full amount.

Moreover, local authorities should use the powers they have at their disposal to double the rate of Council tax on properties that had been empty for 2 years or more (as well as triple the council tax on homes left empty for five to 10 years and quadruple it on those empty for more than a decade).

This would help to bring more empty homes back into use and raise more cash for local authorities.

4. Targets for Rural Housing:

When creating a local plan, understandably the focus is often first on building in urban areas and large towns. However, planners should not forget the power of building in rural areas to breathe new life into a village, sustain local services and maintain a good mix of ages and incomes in the area.

If possible, local planners should set a target for the number of homes they want to build in settlements of less than 3,000 people (the current definition of rural) in the local authority area.

5. Sustainability Assessment for Rural Areas:

The CLA [recently published](#) a report on housing in rural areas, stating that many rural areas are overlooked in the planning process because they are judged to be ‘unsustainable’ - ie: not containing services like a Post Office.

This criteria, which can often be outdated, is holding back building badly-needed affordable homes in rural areas. The report recommended:

- Local Plans updating their criteria for a village’s sustainability (and therefore suitability for new homes) by including services like access to broadband.
- Local Planning Authorities conducting housing needs assessments in those communities not allocated housing in their Local Plan. This would help to identify badly-needed housing need in rural communities and kick-start the process for building homes - such as rural exception site developments.

The report identifies Winchester as a good example of a council working with rural communities to understand their socio-economic needs. It would be fantastic if Winchester could help to spread best practice with other local authorities in Hampshire.