

Councillor Adrian Vinson
LEADER OF THE COUNCIL

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5 January 2006

Dear Paul

Partnership for Urban South Hampshire: Final Advice on Sub Regional Strategy

This letter sets out some additional comments from Southampton City Council on the final PUSH submissions, which were despatched by Councillor Woodward on Christmas Eve.

Southampton City Council endorsed the PUSH Sub Regional Strategy at their Cabinet Meeting of December 5th, 2005, subject to any necessary minor amendments to deal with points raised at the PUSH meeting of December 1st.

The City Council strongly supports the PUSH vision of conditional managed growth and the emerging spatial strategy to improve the economic performance of the sub-region, including the delivery of 80,000 new homes over the plan period. The 'cities first' approach is also strongly endorsed: in south-west Hampshire there is both the potential and the capacity to deliver a substantial proportion of the required development on previously developed land, in Southampton and Eastleigh in particular. Our vision for the continued regeneration of Southampton city centre is consistent with the PUSH approach and will make a significant contribution to the delivery of the South Hampshire spatial strategy.

Southampton is expected to provide up to 16,300 new homes, over the period to 2026. During the early years of plan implementation we are aiming to deliver around 1,000 new homes a year within the city; this is more than double our current Structure Plan target. We are committed to using our best endeavours to deliver the overall total of 16,300, but are also aware of the risks of non-delivery. Our recent experience with the Royal Pier scheme, which was expected to deliver up to 3,500 homes over the plan period, has been a setback. However, we have retained the same overall housing target to 2026 on the basis that other brownfield sites are likely to come forward during the plan period, which will compensate for the anticipated reduction in scale of this project.

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5 January 2005

Our annual monitoring of site development and urban capacity, with PUSH partners in south-west Hampshire, will enable us to review this target during the early phases of plan implementation. If it becomes clear that previously developed land is coming forward at a slower rate than we currently anticipate, proposals will be put in place with our PUSH partners to compensate for any shortfall within south west Hampshire.

The city council has some reservations about the current form of the employment and office policies, which were indicated at the PUSH meeting on December 1st. We are currently working with PUSH partners to agree appropriate amendments to these draft policies, particularly in the light of the recently completed PUSH study of South Hampshire's main town centres (undertaken by DTZ). The main issues are that:

- The employment policy provides a valuable quantitative framework for further employment land allocations, but needs some further refinement to distinguish between office employment and other business types. We consider that the current 'one size fits all' approach could be improved, since the locational requirements and planning policy frameworks differ significantly between offices and lower density business operations.
- The current draft of the office development policy does not refer to the sequential test or to the principle of locating office-based employment in locations which are accessible by all means of transport. It makes provision for further office allocations outside town and city centres and 'on the edge of' cities. We are not convinced that this is appropriate at this stage, given the current development pipeline for out-of-centre office sites and the availability of sequentially preferable sites within the city and town centres.

We are confident that these issues can be resolved promptly, since all PUSH partners are agreed on the principles involved. The DTZ work on the capacity and potential of our town and city centres has only just been completed and there has not been sufficient time to consider this evidence alongside the wider PUSH work undertaken on employment land requirements. The draft policy on town centre uses is now at an advanced stage and will be delivered as soon as possible, following PUSH approval, together with any associated advice on changes to the draft employment and office development policies and supporting material.

In closing, I would also wish to emphasise that the City Council shares fully the PUSH commitment to ensure that the supporting physical and community infrastructure is provided to address the requirements of the planned growth within South Hampshire. We look forward to working with the relevant parties to ensure that the necessary investment and funding can be secured to achieve real enhancement of the quality of life in South Hampshire.

Yours sincerely

Councillor Adrian Vinson
Leader of the Council