

The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE MP

Secretary of State for Housing, Communities
and Local Government

Enquiries to: Cllr Philip Munday

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Date: 7th January 2025

Dear Secretary of State

RE: LOCAL PLAN - 'BUILDING A BETTER FUTURE'

We are writing on behalf of residents in Havant to ask for your support as Havant Borough Council (HBC) continues to develop its Local Plan, 'Building a Better Future'.

The council has drafted a plan, outlining how we will boost the supply of housing for our community, as required by government, while providing infrastructure, education and employment development and preserving our environment.

HBC carried out a public consultation on the draft plan in summer 2025, and would like to share with you some common themes that residents fed back to us:

- Consistently across most questions, infrastructure was seen as the key concern.
- The main type referenced was road infrastructure, with many others referring to health, education or general (i.e. non-specific in their comments) infrastructure.
- For those who oppose proposals or sites, it was felt that infrastructure would not cope with the proposed level of development and therefore should not go ahead.
- For those who were in support, this was dependent on infrastructure improvements as an important or essential element of the Plan.

The consultation received almost a thousand responses (almost double the number from our last such consultation in 2022). There was a strong desire to protect the natural environment, open spaces and greenfield sites, as well as significant concern about the housebuilding target that has been set by government.

For Havant borough, the government has calculated the housing need to be 892 new homes each year, equivalent to 17,840 homes between 2023 and 2043. In the draft plan, officers have identified potential sites that could deliver sustainable development, but even if all these sites were to be utilised, there is still not enough land to meet the borough's housing and economic needs, and HBC will likely fall around 9,000 homes short of its target.

For this reason, it is vital that all possible sites are developed to their fullest potential, both in terms of the quality housing they could provide but also accompanying infrastructure so that new communities have all they need to thrive.

One such site in the borough, Southleigh, has been identified as suitable for around 2,100 homes. As you would expect, a proposed development of this scale attracts significant public interest and it was the most commented upon section of our consultation, with 35% of all respondents choosing to comment.

Interestingly, the numbers of those for and against the development at Southleigh were not vastly different, but infrastructure – or the lack of it – underpinned opinion on both sides. Those who were in favour of Southleigh accepted that housing development was needed, but were adamant that roads, public transport, health, education and community facilities would have to be put in place to support the new residents.

Those that were against the development, were largely against it on the basis that existing infrastructure and facilities would not be able to cope with an influx of around 2,100 new households.

HBC's Overview and Scrutiny Committee met on 19 November 2025 to scrutinise the quality of the Local Plan consultation exercise. The cross-party feedback from members was that they wanted the consultation to have been a meaningful exercise and for the residents' concerns around supporting infrastructure to properly factored into any permitting of development.

Before HBC consulted on the draft Local Plan, members had already been contacted by many residents concerned that the Southleigh development would have a detrimental impact on the surrounding community unless significant infrastructure improvements were made to mitigate the impact of the inevitable increase in traffic on the A27 and residential roads. This was also a key concern of residents when we undertook design workshops (charettes) with local communities to create a masterplan for the Southleigh site in 2017. They have legitimate concerns that our already congested road network and existing routes through residential areas will not be able to cope with the additional volume of traffic that a development like Southleigh will bring.

HBC is one of the Hampshire and the Solent region local authorities taking part in the Devolution Priority Programme and fast-track Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). We recognise that the proposed Mayoral Combined County Authority (MCCA) for our region will likely have devolved powers to deliver much of the infrastructure that our residents so desperately need to go hand in hand with increased housing. Equally, we recognise that Havant Borough Council will likely cease to exist as a standalone local authority and will instead become part of a larger, unitary authority.

Under the current two-tier system, Hampshire County Council (HCC) is responsible for the local highway network and transport in Havant. HCC has recently adopted Local Transport Plan 4, which sets out the vision for a carbon neutral and resilient transport system, designed around people. In particular, the plan looks to reduce reliance on private car travel, critically through shifting away from planning for vehicles to planning for people and places. Delivering the transport and connectivity infrastructure which will make Southleigh a thriving community

rather than a cul-de-sac urban extension is considered critical to delivering the aims of the new Local Transport Plan as well as our emerging Local Plan.

As Leader of HBC, and as HCC's Executive Member for Highways and Passenger Transport, we want to ensure that appropriate upgrades to the road network are properly considered and implemented through the planning process. Developments such as Southleigh can only be successfully absorbed by the existing community if the transport infrastructure – including roads – is improved accordingly.

We would like your assurance that when a mayor is elected to our region in 2028, s/he will be obligated to fully and fairly listen to community concerns, to carry out comprehensive, transparent, data-driven assessments of infrastructure requirements. Ultimately, we are looking to ensure that when preparing the Spatial Development Strategy, s/he will need to ensure that all local housing development is supported by the roads, public transport links and other infrastructure needed by the additional population.

As HBC progresses its Local Plan and MHCLG continues to design how devolution and LGR will work, this seemed a pertinent time to raise this issue with you and seek assurances that a new Mayor for Hampshire and the Solent will have both the responsibility and the power to act in the best interests of the communities they will serve on critical matters of infrastructure and planning.

Crucially, given the postponement of mayoral elections in our region until 2028, it is vital that the transition of responsibility for the local highways network and transport planning and delivery is managed carefully to ensure that local need is consistently at the forefront of decision making and does not get lost in the process.

We are happy to provide any further information you need, in the meantime, we look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Phil Munday
Leader of Havant Borough Council

Yours sincerely



Councillor Lulu Bowerman (Con) Executive Member for Highways and Passenger Transport, Hampshire County Council