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The Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP  
Minister for Housing and Local Government  
Department for Housing and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

27 July 2010

Dear Grant

### **A New Approach to Housing Growth**

Thank you for your letter of 2 July 2010 to Leaders of Growth Area local authorities. I am replying in my capacity as Chairman of the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire (PUSH).

The Partnership welcomes your confirmation that 2010/11 growth funding has been safeguarded and we strongly endorse the Government's early action to scrap the South East Plan. We recognise that before funding is released you will want to hear from PUSH how our vision for South Hampshire reflects the approach of the new Government. We share the Government's wish to put locally-elected leaders, working with business and local communities in the driving seat and this letter sets out a summary of how we believe that your policies will enable us to take greater local ownership of our growth vision and reward local communities in terms of jobs, improving affordability of new homes and investment.

Your letter invites PUSH to consider three questions - about local ownership of growth policies, sharing in the benefits of growth, and what is achievable. This

**Together shaping the future of South Hampshire**



statement shows how each of these is fundamental to the PUSH approach.

### **Is the local community in the driving seat?**

PUSH's vision is to create a more prosperous future for the residents of South Hampshire with everyone sharing in the benefits. At the heart of our policies is the recognition that we can deliver more for our local community by working across the boundaries of the public and private sectors and by sharing a common set of objectives and delivery frameworks. South Hampshire communities drive the agenda in a number of ways:

- PUSH's Board, the Joint Committee, includes representatives of 11 local authorities, the chair of the Employment and Skills Board, the Business Group and agencies like the HCA. All meetings are open to the press and the public and all policy papers, including our business plan are openly available and posted on our website;
- the Employment and Skills Board is independently chaired (by the pro-Vice Chancellor of Southampton University) and comprises 7 private sector members drawn from some of the biggest employers in South Hampshire and representatives of the wider public sector;
- major housing and regeneration projects closely involve local residents, such as the Rowner estate regeneration in Gosport, a project to demolish and rebuild 700 homes, which has extensively used community workshops and has a dedicated community engagement team; Somerstown regeneration (Portsmouth) which commenced with an event attended by over 500 local businesses and uses a web-based networking system; the proposed new settlement in Fareham which will have a programme of events over the summer to consult on a new masterplan, including one for young people, exhibitions, drop-in sessions and a targeted business event in October; 'Planning for Real' events led by the Prince of Wales' Architecture Foundation in respect of a proposed urban extension of Romsey; and Hinkler regeneration, where the developer has appointed a Community Liaison Manager to train and employ local construction labour. Short profiles of these and other key projects are included in the annex to this statement;
- consultation on our new economic development strategy for South Hampshire commences with a business event on 30 July organised with 'Business Southampton'. A questionnaire is being sent to around 300 local businesses and business groupings, and will be available on line. The consultation will continue until the end of September;
- a consultation event was held with key housing associations about the Local Investment Plan prepared recently by PUSH and submitted to the



HCA. A further event on funding is to be organised for the late summer;

- a Green Infrastructure Strategy has recently been agreed by PUSH in the light of extensive consultation with interested parties. Engagement with local people will follow once delivery of individual projects is a more immediate prospect.

### **Do local people share in the benefits of growth?**

The primary motivation of PUSH is to help local communities benefit from economic growth. Up until the recession, PUSH was achieving progress in strengthening the economy of South Hampshire and was closing the productivity and GVA gap with the average for the South East region. PUSH is now finalising a revised economic strategy reflecting the changed economic climate, which includes targets to achieve a higher level of employment in the area and greater levels of participation in our workforce, so that the benefits of growth are open to all our residents. We are now engaged in publicising our proposed strategy to create *'More local jobs and better jobs for local people'* that will:

- create over 50,000 new jobs in urban South Hampshire;
- target the *local* workforce to achieve a major improvement in their skills and qualification – without this, local employees will find themselves unable to provide the skills needed to support growth by businesses in the future;
- promote key sectors (like marine and advanced manufacture) and assets (such as the ports and airport) that are a strength of our area;
- maintain a supply of homes that will support the housing needs of local people and promote our quality of life.

PUSH has a 'cities first' policy reflecting the role of Portsmouth and Southampton as the main centres of population and drivers of the South Hampshire economy. In consequence, we seek first to re-develop urban brownfield land. Our spending priorities are shaped by – and regularly tested against – these policies. Both cities (and other urban areas in PUSH) have a significant regeneration challenge. There is a critical need to tackle areas of deprivation, to renew poor quality housing and to address worklessness and unequal levels of opportunity. Most of the projects listed at the end of this statement have a regeneration component and this is largely where PUSH/Growth Fund capital resources are currently targeted. PUSH is therefore confident that the benefit of growth area funding is reaching people in tangible ways on the ground.



## **What is achievable?**

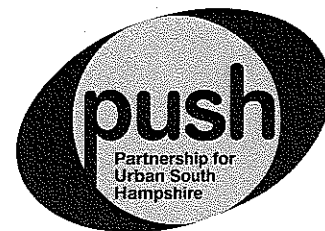
PUSH's concept is of balanced and sustainable growth, meaning that economic growth and new housing provision need to move in step with investment in infrastructure and improvement in the quality of life. We have consistently used an evidence-based approach to inform our policies:

- we have a clear and realistic view of our economic growth potential deriving from new work on our economic strategy. It is challenging but achievable with buy-in from the business community;
- we know the overall amount of additional housing needed to support economic growth and which is locally sustainable;
- the PUSH Local Investment Plan recently submitted to the HCA reviews housing needs, provides a detailed housing delivery programme to 2015 and sets out our delivery priorities in the longer term;
- housing needs assessments provide information on local housing need, especially the demand for affordable housing;
- we do not prepare a single sub-regional development plan but have an agreed set of economic and spatial policies that are implemented through local development documents by individual PUSH local authorities.

PUSH will be focusing resources on particular employment sites in order to ensure that the right land is available to businesses to support our economic growth objectives. The prioritisation process is underway and we are discussing with SEEDA how to utilise their portfolio of development assets in order to return value from the regional level to the local community.

PUSH will be bidding to become a Local Enterprise Partnership because we believe that, as a natural economic unit and as a strong existing Partnership bridging the public and private sectors, we can deliver more as a LEP in terms of growth, innovation and skills than simply as a growth area initiative.

In relation to homes, PUSH's housing delivery record has been good in recent years (around 4,000 dwellings a year) but dipped last year during the recession. The pace of recovery is uncertain but over the next five years, there is an identified supply of existing housing projects in the pipeline based largely on existing Plan allocations. In the longer term, the ability to fund major urban



regeneration projects will be important to housing delivery and to supporting our more deprived communities. PUSH has been developing a joint venture

approach to these projects and we see scope for greater private institution investment in the future if Government provides the right incentives.

Planning for major greenfield urban extensions, which are essential to meeting local housing requirements in urban South Hampshire, is well-advanced including the new community near Fareham. One of our concerns is to ensure that we provide the right type and quality of homes to meet local housing needs and both Portsmouth and Southampton have set themselves the difficult objective of seeking to deliver fewer small flats and a larger proportion of family accommodation within the cities.

PUSH has achieved significant progress since it was set up as a local partnership in 2003 and I hope that this statement demonstrates just how much existing residents have gained from the growth initiative to date and, more importantly, how they will continue to benefit in the future. PUSH's approach is to have strong, economic and spatial strategies, firmly based in the locality and underpinned by a robust evidence base. We believe this is fully in line with the policies of the Government.

PUSH has tried hard to avoid a hiatus in the pace of growth while consideration was given to resumption of this year's growth funding. Inevitably, there have been some delays but we have strong momentum arising from work that has been underway to refresh our economic strategy and we already taken the decision to proceed with our priority projects as soon as growth funding for this year has been confirmed.

Finally, may I invite you to come and visit us in PUSH? We should be delighted to welcome you to South Hampshire so that you can see at first hand the work that we have underway.

Yours sincerely

**Councillor Seán Woodward**  
**Chairman of the Partnership for Urban South Hampshire**