

LETTER to the EDITOR

From Stephen Petter

While I agree with the Civic Society's policy that housing should be built on brown-field sites, increasing urban density, I am beginning to wonder whether we should be so very opposed to all green-field development. For instance, just from looking at the OS map I would have thought housing could be built south of Nailsea, within a kilometre of the railway station. And if the airport is to be expanded (though I hope not) a railway or fast tram line could be built to it, also serving a new village which might be created on the slopes overlooking the reservoirs

southwest of Barrow Compton. But where-ever the new development south of Bristol is to be, the transport infrastructure should be in place and in operation from the start, emulating much of London's expansion which followed the construction of train and tube lines.

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A Response from John Payne

Dear Stephen,

Thank you for your letter which touches on some key issues that will need serious thought and discussion in the coming years. In response to the draft planning policies for the South West Region, the Society has taken the view that, where the capacity exists, development should be steered to sites within the built up area where it can be used to improve the transport and a range of services and employment opportunities in suburban centres.

The real difficulty will come if population and household growth continues and capacity for expansion within the City becomes exhausted. There will then need to be a debate on new development patterns. It seems to me that this debate needs to address at least the following:

National planning priorities.

There was little or no debate at the recent Examination in Public into the Draft Regional Planning policies on the scale of population growth in the south west, only how to accommodate it. Surely, there needs to be some hard thinking at Government level to consider whether we continue to collaborate with rapid population growth in southern England while other parts of the country still need to re-vitalise themselves.

New Patterns of Development.

If it is still necessary to accommodate high levels of growth in this area, then new patterns of development should be considered. I feel that releasing another ring of Green Belt land around existing built up areas would probably encourage residential and commercial development that was not best related to public transport facilities and other services. Furthermore, it would gradually allow built up areas to coalesce. Rather, I think that opportunities for development in settlements along public transport corridors should be sought that would enable public transport and service facilities to be improved. This approach would inevitably lead to the loss of some Green Belt land in the future. However, it would provide a basis for an appraisal of the Green Belt to be undertaken which allowed it to continue to fulfil its functions of separating built up areas and providing open space close to towns and cities.

These are difficult issues which need much more consideration than given above and it would be interesting to hear other readers' views but, in the meantime, I do think it is appropriate to maximise the use of the existing built up area while there is still capacity to do so.

John Payne,
Chairman.



EVERY ACTION COUNTS, doesn't it?

Emma Montlake is managing the Civic Trust's Every Action Counts campaign. This campaign envisages utilising the vast network of local community groups to spread the word on climate change; how small everyday actions taken by enough people can lead to large scale change. She has been much encouraged and impressed by the amount of coverage given to climate change issues in the numerous Civic Society newsletters that she has read thus far.

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