

Gentlemen,

I would first like to welcome you to our city in the hundredth anniversary year of its being granted city status by King George Vth. Although your visit is a professional one, I hope that you will be able to find a little time to explore parts of this rapidly changing city. It has been home to the Royal Navy since the twelfth century and hosts the University of Portsmouth, which is recognised as one of the top five young universities in the UK. I would especially recommend seeing the way in which this very low lying island is addressing the challenge of rising sea levels and global warming and also recommend seeing the developments in the City owned International Port which has become a leader in providing 'on shore' power for berthed ships, including the cruise liners which now form an increasing part of its traffic. Neither of these were more than speculative ideas when the last City Plan was inspected. It is also worth noting that in the years since the last plan was produced the City has maintained and invested in a strong cultural life which has not only made the City a great place to live but has also led to our being a strong contender to be chosen as the UK City of Culture for 2029.

In developing a plan for the future development of the City, we have faced a number of constraints. Not only do we contend with Luton for being the most densely settled authority outside of London, but we face a very distinct and significant range of geographical restrictions. The most obvious is that the greatest part of the city's land area, and consequently of the space available for housing, industry and recreation, is an island to which there are only three points of road access, all to the north. The commercial hub and city centre are, however, well towards the south of the island and thus not easily accessible from what would otherwise be the city's hinterland. Indeed, for the residents of some parts of the city's mainland area, the urban centres of the neighbouring boroughs of Havant and Fareham are more easily accessible than the centre of their own city. This fact has major implications for planning the growth of the city.

As a consequence of the density of the city's development, we also have to contend with a lack of space for future growth. If one looks at the Ordnance Survey map of the city there would appear to be a considerable amount of open space and also areas within the two harbours which could be reclaimed to provide more land for development. The reality is however different from the appearance since much of the open land has been designated as being of scientific significance to nature and especially as the preferred British habitat for a variety of rare and protected bird species. Other areas are highly

polluted or are listed open spaces. Our planners' room for manoeuvre is thus severely constrained.

Nowhere has the problem proved more intractable than in planning for the area of Tipner west of the M275 motorway together with the reclaimed area to the north of Horsea Island between the motorway and Port Solent. An innovative but realistic plan was developed for this area which would have involved advanced marine engineering and a substantial housing development at Tipner West linked by a bridge and new road to a proposed revitalisation and expansion of the Port Solent complex; developments which would have been substantial enough to finance the necessary sea defence works against rising sea levels in the harbour. Because of the scientific sensitivity of the area in regards to biodiversity, this could only be effected with a favourable IROPI opinion. We requested an opinion and after many months received one which was found to be unlawful and was withdrawn. Another opinion was sought and after many months this too, upon receipt, was found to be unlawful and was withdrawn. We are still awaiting a lawful IROPI opinion.

In order to produce a City Plan within a reasonable timescale we therefore produced a more modest plan for Tipner which we consulted on and have submitted as an addendum to our original plan. This has not been a simple exercise since the changes had ramifications which required changes to the plan for other areas of the city. We believe however that the plan before you today is both coherent and deliverable.

As a whole the Plan which we have submitted is ambitious but, in the light of the way in which the city has developed over recent decades, it is deliverable. We have planned for new homes, including affordable homes and social housing. The pressure for homes in this city is great and we intend to ensure that together with good quality housing we provide open spaces for community use so that the living environment will be of a good quality. This can be seen in the plans for the regeneration of the northern part of the City centre, of the Somers Orchard area of Somerstown and at the former Fraser Range.

The provision of housing must also be balanced with the provision of employment opportunities. This, in a very rapidly changing world, will be a section of the plan which will require flexibility in its delivery. None the less it is the overall intention of the plan that the City of Portsmouth should remain a major industrial and manufacturing city with a continuing emphasis towards both the marine and the defence industries. In this, as in housing, it is essential that we plan for a good working environment

and the intention is to provide places which implement the City Council's policies and ambitions for a greener, more carbon neutral, urban environment. In these ambitions we work closely with major employers in the City including our flourishing university and, of course, the Royal Navy.

The Plan is ambitious but I believe it to be achievable. I commend it to you and look forward to your examination and consideration of our detailed proposals.