

FROM DR LIAM FOX MP by email 25th September 2008

Thank you for your letter about the Regional Spatial Strategy (RSS) for the South West.

I believe Regional Spatial Strategies are a classic example of how top-down housing targets are imposed onto local communities in the Government's arbitrary 'regions' - targets that are set by distant and unaccountable Whitehall and regional bureaucrats. This centralised approach to housing provision is certain to arouse hostility and obstruction in local communities, as well as lead to the wrong homes being built in the wrong places.

Conservatives are clear about the need to build more homes. However, we should not have the Prescott-style micro-management of local targets, nor the setting of targets by unaccountable regional bureaucrats. The number of new houses to be built in any locality should be decided by local communities with clear incentives needed to welcome development. We will, therefore, scrap the whole tier of regional planning and return these powers to local communities. In addition, we are clear that environmental national Green Belt protection should be maintained; and infrastructure like roads, water, public transport, flood defence, schools and hospitals needs to be provided.

Like you, I remain concerned that Gordon Brown's housing plans will actually involve Green Belt destruction and will not be accompanied by local support or the necessary infrastructure. Conservatives will continue to campaign hard on this important issue.

Yours sincerely

LIAM FOX

Ione Douglas (Mrs)
P/A to Dr Liam Fox MP
Shadow Defence Secretary