

A greener UK

One of the best strands of conservatism is the urge to protect and conserve the flora and fauna in our landscape, to preserve the best of our built inheritance and to undertake new development in a way that is sympathetic to what has gone before and to the natural contours of our world.

This is not to say we want a fossil country. Sometimes the best way to conserve and keep an old building is to allow adaptation and renovation for a new purpose. Sometimes we need to build on green fields as well as on regeneration sites. Some modern buildings are fabulous and add to our traditions. Some changes to the way we farm or garden can enhance the natural world around us. Some old buildings are best recorded for history then demolished for a better replacement.

In recent years large scale migration has meant a much faster new build rate, which has upset some local communities and given rise to a wish to adjust the pace of change. It is difficult to follow a convincing green policy if we expand the population too rapidly and have to build on too many fields or fell too many woods. If we want to limit the national carbon dioxide output we need to limit the number of people we invite in.

There are good economic and social arguments for allowing reasonable numbers of new people to come and settle with us. We may need their skill or they may be family members to people already living here who would like to be reunited with their kith and kin. We will want to take our share of people fleeing war and terror. In the last century we typically invited in around 50,000 additional people every year. This century it has been five times that amount, which has been far too rapid.

I welcome initiatives to use less energy to cut our bills through insulation, modern controls and more fuel efficient systems. I like the idea that we will clean up our landscape and our seas by being better at limiting the use of plastic and ensuring it is properly handled once it is waste. I am all in favour of recycling and of passing on and re using products that an individual no longer needs or likes. I have found limiting food miles works well, with little need for imported temperate foods in my meal planning. There is good UK food available, and more can be grown if more people want to buy it. I continue to encourage more tree planting as we green our landscape.