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*Kevin*

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Thank you for your letter of 10 August about our planning reforms.

**23 AUG 2011**

Our National Planning Policy Framework streamlines the existing reams of complex and unwieldy national planning policy into a consolidated and clearer set of priorities to consider when planning for, and deciding on, new development. It will help ensure that planning decisions reflect local communities' vision of their future, while making sure that genuine larger-than-local objectives – such as the need to safeguard the natural environment, combat climate change, and to support sustainable local growth – are met.

In the draft, the Coalition Government is totally committed to protecting our natural and historic environment. Planning decisions should not only protect, but, wherever possible, enhance biodiversity and improve people's access to our natural heritage. The Framework explicitly attaches great importance to Green Belts in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment and checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas. It also directly states that local plans should minimise adverse effects on the local or natural environment. Further, it safeguards national protection such as Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Special Scientific Interest, as well as ensuring measures which protect wildlife, biodiversity, cultural heritage and which tackle light pollution. It also proposes a new designation for communities to protect local green areas of particular importance to them.

The presumption in favour of sustainable development means that where a local plan or proposed development does not give rise to problems – it should be approved without delay. But this does not show a green light to development everywhere. Local plans will continue to set out what would be unacceptable, and neither plans nor developments may compromise national requirements for sustainability. The draft Framework proposes no change in the approach to sustainability that has been used by previous Governments.

Please convey my thanks to your constituents for writing. We would welcome any specific comments on our proposals as part of a consultation on the draft Framework which runs until 17 October. I hope that your constituents will take the opportunity to read the full document – I think they will find paragraphs 130-147 and 163-175 to be of particular interest. The draft Framework is available from the DCLG website at:  
[www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/draftframework](http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/draftframework)

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A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Greg Clark".

**GREG CLARK MP**