

9th April 2007

XXX MP  
House of Commons  
SW1A OAA

Dear XXXXX,

An ageing population and an increasing preference for smaller-sized households mean local young families in your constituency as well as across South-East England now face a major shortage of homes. Unless local councils and the Regional Assembly adapt their existing plans, which provide for over 100,000 too few homes in the region over the next twenty years, the current housing problem can only get worse.

The situation is particularly bleak in those areas of Surrey, Berkshire and Hampshire close to the Thames Basin Heaths Special Protection Area. The moratorium on homebuilding resulting from Natural England's advice over the past 18 months in 13 local authority areas in these counties has meant that there have been hardly any planning permissions granted for any new homes (affordable or otherwise) across a large swathe of the region. The lack of any compensatory increase in home building in other local authority areas will further exacerbate the affordability crisis across the region.

Against this background, the provisions of the DCLG's recent Planning Policy Statement 3 (PPS3) for new housing development are important positive steps in requiring local authorities to develop comprehensive strategies to identify sufficient land to deliver the new homes and infrastructure that are needed.

The Barker Reviews of Housing Supply and Land-use Planning have shown that to prevent inadequate supply and ever-spiralling prices blighting a generation of young families, forward planning by local authorities must reflect the hard facts of housing need. The new PPS3 therefore requires Development Plan Documents to set out in detail not only specific deliverable sites for the first five years from the adoption of the plan, where land will be made available to accommodate new homes in line with the South East plan, but also target areas of developable land for 6-10 and, if realistically possible, 11-15 years timescales.

PPS3 does not, however, require development on greenfield land. Rather it is for local authorities to identify suitable, available and deliverable land for development whether that is greenfield or brownfield. What PPS3 does do is require local authorities to plan positively to bring suitable land forward and so to do more than simply await the availability of unspecified "windfall sites".

Too many South-East councils have in practice relied excessively on unidentified "windfall" sites.

It has in turn been the over-reliance on windfall sites and a lack of proactivity on many

local authorities' part that has led to what many believe to be over-development in the region's towns, villages and cities and building on the urban "green wedges" made

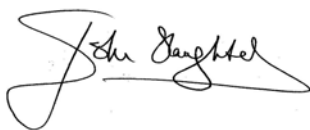
up of playing fields and gardens.

Relying on windfall sites also by its nature introduces uncertainty. The availability of sites cannot be guaranteed and if sites arise at short notice this can risk misalignment with the provision of infrastructure. Over time, the risks of this approach for communities are therefore on the downside – including for those seeking their own home.

SEERA's view that further amendment to PPS3 to allow local authorities to continue relying on unidentified windfall sites rather than identifying and allocating suitable land for development risks communities across the region losing out. Ultimately, to fail to plan positively is to plan to fail.

We would urge you and your colleagues to encourage your local councils to make the most of the opportunity afforded by PPS3. PPS3 and the requirement that local authorities identify sufficient land for development actually puts local authorities and hence local communities in the driving seat to shape the future of their communities. Developers for their part are very willing to engage with councils in discussing the delivery of their plans. We believe it is important to grasp the positive opportunities offered by PPS3 and so offer local young families a better future rather than a deepening affordability crisis.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "John Slaughter". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

John Slaughter,

Director of External Affairs, HBF