Dear Stuart,

I am writing in response your letter of 28 November about UK sovereign capabilities, sent to the Rt Hon. John Spellar MP and other Members who had taken part in the Westminster Hall debate on 20 November.

You rightly identify the requirement to retain the ability to design, build and integrate frigates, destroyers and aircraft carriers. You go on to say that the National Shipbuilding Strategy’s ‘definition [of a warship] allows the MoD to consider global suppliers when there is not a national security justification’. But it clearly does not mandate such a course of action.

Yet this now seems to be the MoD default position—even dogma— but does not appear to take into account the desirability of retaining a substantial shipyard skill base, training programme and indeed a vibrant components sector. I would add that if we look at the geographical location of the yards and their suppliers, it is clear that MoD policy does not give proper consideration to the local value provided, or indeed the contribution to regional balance.

I should be grateful for your response to these points.

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]