



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Clive Betts MP
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Housing, Communities and Local Government
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House of Commons
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Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP
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Dear Clive,

Thank you for your continued work as Chair for the Housing, Communities and Local Government Select Committee. I am writing to update you on my Department's measures announced at Spring Statement, particularly in relation to progress on our ambitious commitments regarding planning and high streets.

Firstly, the Spring Statement sets out a series of planning reforms aimed at quickening the build out of housing sites and supporting our high streets, including a new commitment to publish an Accelerated Planning Green Paper later this year.

We are taking forward further measures to support our high streets, enabling them to diversify and adapt to current and future business models. New and amended national permitted development rights will allow the further change of use to office, residential and temporary community uses, without the need for a full planning application. Changes to the Use Classes Order will provide more flexibility on the high street, and include clarification on the ability of (A) use classes to diversify and incorporate ancillary uses without undermining the amenity of the area.

We also intend to remove the permitted development right and associated advertising deemed consent in respect of new telephone kiosks and amend the existing right to install off-street electric vehicle charging points to allow for taller charging upstands to address advances in rapid charging technology. We will take forward a permitted development right to extend upwards certain existing buildings in commercial and residential use to deliver additional homes, engaging with interested parties on design and technical details. We will continue to consider the design of a permitted development right to allow commercial buildings to be demolished and replaced with homes. I also intend to review permitted development rights for conversion of buildings to residential use in respect of the quality standard of homes delivered.

We will also be setting out our practical plans shortly to support local planning authorities in reshaping their high streets to create prosperous communities, particularly through the use of compulsory purchase, local development orders and other innovative tools. This will respond to one of the key recommendations from your Committee's recent 'High street and town centre in 2030' report.

Supporting local growth for all parts of the United Kingdom is another key priority for the Government. That is why I am pleased to support the Spring Statement announcement of up to £260 million UK Government investment in the Borderlands Growth Deal. The deal will boost economic growth and local productivity in the Northern Powerhouse and across the Borderlands region.

We have also announced a package of measures which set out our ambition for the Oxford-Cambridge-Arc. Today, we have published a joint declaration between the Government and local partners across the Arc, that sets out our shared ambition for the area to deliver against its full economic potential. This also announces that government and local partners have committed to ensuring that through this ambition we ensure the environment is left in a better state for future generations, something you asked the Housing Minister about in previous correspondence.

Both in the Oxford-Cambridge Arc and around the country, we are also investing more widely in infrastructure to meet the housing needs of local communities. The Government has allocated £717 million from the £5.5 billion Housing Infrastructure Fund to unlock up to 37,000 homes. This includes £445m of Housing Infrastructure Fund investment for Cambridge Northern Fringe East and Didcot Garden Town, to unlock up to 22,036 much needed new homes. The remaining £272 million will unlock up to 15,000 much needed new homes in London and Cheshire.

Finally, the Government remains committed to increasing the supply of affordable homes and helping diversify the housing market. That's why we have also announced a new scheme of £3 billion for Affordable Homes Guarantees, which will support low-cost long-term lending to the sector. In April, we will also be open applications from banks for up to £1 billion of guarantee support for SME housebuilders, announced by the Chancellor at Budget 2018. ENABLE Build will help them raise funds and build the homes the country needs.

Taken together, Spring Statement 2019 provides a significant boost for the development of strong local economies, thriving communities and for government's commitment to deliver the homes people need. I am proud of all that we have achieved so far, and I look forward to working with you to deliver further on our commitments in these areas.

I am copying this to Select Committee members.



RT HON JAMES BROKESHIRE MP