

Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

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Rt Hon James Brokenshire MP
Secretary of State
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government

18 March 2019

Dear James,

Thank you for your letter of 13 March updating the Committee on planning announcement made alongside the Spring Statement 2019. In particular you make reference to new and amended permitted development rights which were recently consulted on in the Department's consultation *Planning reform: supporting the high street and increasing the delivery of new homes*. I note that you are yet to formally respond to that consultation, however the Written Ministerial Statement (WMS) which you published on the day of the Spring Statement, would seem to indicate that the majority of those proposals in the consultation will now be implemented. **I would be grateful if you could confirm whether this is the case and when you plan to (a) formally publish your response to that consultation and (b) bring forward the changes to permitted development rights that you propose.** In this context, I would remind you of the Committee's relevant conclusion and recommendation in its recent report, *High streets and Town Centres in 2030*, which stated:

- **We believe that permitted development rights (PDRs) risk undermining the strategic vision that a community has developed for its high street or town centre. While we understand that PDRs provide much needed housing—which we see as a key aspect of high street and town centre sustainability—a planned approach, with Local Plans identifying where housing should be situated, is far preferable.**
- ***The Government should suspend any further extension of PDRs, pending an evaluation of their impact on the high street. Policies should reflect the wide variety of local circumstances. Councils should be actively encouraged to develop town centre masterplans and use their powers positively to renew their town centres. Where PDRs conflict with particular designations in the Local Plan or other established planning documents, councils should be given greater freedom to suspend PDRs in the affected area. As they currently operate, Article 4 Directions do not give councils adequate ability to remove PDRs quickly and without liability to pay developers compensation.***

It is highly concerning that your proposed changes to permitted development rights outlined in your letter and the related WMS would seem to completely disregard the Committee's recommendation. **Could you explain why you have decided to proceed with the proposed extensions, despite our very clear recommendation to the contrary.**

Notwithstanding the above, and subject to seeing the practical plans that you mention in your letter, it is welcome that you plan to support local planning authorities in reshaping their high streets through the use of compulsory purchase, local development orders and other innovative tools. As you note, such steps are consistent with one of the key recommendations in our report. It is also welcome that you intend to review permitted development rights for conversion of buildings to residential use in respect of the quality standard of homes delivered. Committee

members have been concerned about the effect such conversions has on the quality of homes, and it is important that this aspect of the PDR regime is looked at carefully.

Finally, I note that the aforementioned WMS states that "The Government is committed to improving the effectiveness of the existing mechanisms of land value capture, making them more certain and transparent for all developments. My focus is on evolving the existing system of developer contributions to make them more transparent, efficient and accountable and my department is gathering evidence to explore the case for further reform." It is very welcome that you are exploring the case for further reform in this area which, as you will recall, we so clearly advocated the need for in our September 2018 report on Land Value Capture.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clive Betts', with a stylized flourish above the first name.

Clive Betts MP
Chair, Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee