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Green Belt and Local Plans

At our meeting on 28 April, I said that I would write to reflect our conversation with Councillor Carver on Green Belt policy and the East Herts plan.

We established at the meeting that my recent correspondence with the Planning Inspectorate on the reporting of the Reigate and Banstead Plan does not represent a change in planning policy. For plan making, the National Planning Policy Framework allows Green Belt boundaries to be altered only in exceptional circumstances, through the preparation or review of the Local Plan. We discussed that there are a number of local authorities across the country that are looking to meet their development needs and have chosen to undertake reviews of their Green Belt boundaries as part of the plan making process. National policy supports the need to promote sustainable patterns of development in such reviews.

Also we discussed Green Belt policy in relation to decision taking on development proposals that come forward on designated Green Belt land. I was clear that our policy safeguards against inappropriate development in the Green Belt – it safeguards against sites in the Green Belt being picked off for such development at will. To support this position, our guidance states that unmet housing need is unlikely to outweigh harm to the Green Belt to constitute the “very special circumstances” required in the National Planning Policy Framework to justify development on Green Belt land. Therefore, it confirms protection of designated Green Belt in decision taking.

We also agreed that I would be happy for the Council to receive further advice from Peter Burley on this particular policy issue.

NICK BOLES MP