



HOUSE OF COMMONS

To: Coalition MPs

6 July 2010

Dear Colleague,

ABOLITION OF REGIONAL PLANNING

I am today abolishing the bureaucracy of regional planning, revoking the red tape of Regional Strategies that envelop councils across England outside London.

John Prescott's legacy of Regional Strategies added unnecessary bureaucracy to the planning system. They were a failure. They were expensive and time-consuming. They alienated people, pitting them against development instead of encouraging people to build in their local area. It is no surprise that house building is now at its lowest peacetime rate since 1924.

Our new planning system will be clear, efficient and will put greater power in the hands of local people, rather than unelected regional bodies. Scrapping these targets was a pledge in both Coalition parties' general election manifestos. Labour's central and regional targets will be replaced with powerful incentives so that people see the benefits of building. This will ensure that those councils which take action now to back and support the construction of new homes will receive direct and substantial benefit from their actions.

Because we are committed to building more homes, introducing these incentives will be a priority and we aim to do so early in the Spending Review period. We will consult on the detail later this year. These incentives will encourage councils and communities to increase their aspirations for housing and economic growth, and to deliver sustainable development in keeping with the wishes of local villages, towns and cities.

A technical guidance note (available at www.communities.gov.uk this afternoon) is being sent to councils and gives practical advice on the development and revision of their Local Development Frameworks. Moving forward, we will make it easier for local councils, working with their communities, to agree and amend local plans in a way that maximises the involvement of neighbourhoods.

The final nail in the coffin of Regional Strategies will require legislation in the Localism Bill which we are introducing later this year. However, given the clear Coalition commitment to abolish Regional Strategies, it is important to avoid a period of uncertainty over planning policy, until the final legislation is enacted. So I am revoking Regional Strategies today in order to give clarity to local residents, developers and planners.

In London, which has a different constitutional settlement, reform of housing and planning will be part of a broader agenda of decentralisation, from Whitehall progressively down to the Mayor and Assembly, down to London Boroughs and down to local communities.

I hope this is helpful.

Yours truly,

Rt Hon Eric Pickles MP

Secretary of State for Communities & Local Government