



**The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP**  
*Minister for Decentralisation and Planning*

**Department for Communities and Local  
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27 March 2012

Mr Nigel Mills MP  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Nigel

I would like to thank you for writing to me on behalf of your constituents conveying their views during the consultation on the new National Planning Policy Framework.

We have read and considered seriously every contribution and I hope that you and they will agree that the revised Framework, which we published today, has been strengthened by the views which you conveyed.

Our reforms to planning policy have three fundamental objectives: to put power in the hands of communities to shape the places in which they live; to help create the homes and jobs the country needs; and to protect and enhance our natural and historic environment.

We have listened to, and taken on board, a number of sensible and practical suggestions made during the consultation including:

- Making it clear that the Local Plan is the basis for decisions in the planning system, and that the presumption in favour of sustainable development works through, and not against, the Local Plan;
- Emphasising that the definition of sustainable development embraces social, environmental and economic objectives, and that none can be pursued in isolation of the others;
- Clarifying that the relevant policies – such as those protecting the Green Belt, National Parks, Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Sites of Special Scientific Interest – cannot be overridden by the presumption in favour of sustainable development;
- Being explicit that councils' policies should encourage brownfield sites to be brought back into use, provided they are not of high environmental value;
- Recognising the intrinsic value and beauty of the countryside, whether or not it is specifically designated;
- Reinforcing the vital importance of town centres to thriving communities while recognising that businesses in rural communities should be able to expand;
- Allowing councils to give greater protection to back gardens;
- Ensuring that playing fields cannot be built on unless they are replaced;
- Strengthening the requirement for new buildings to be well designed.

In addition, we have agreed transitional arrangements with the Local Government Association which ensure that a council which has adopted, or has made good progress in preparing, a local plan will not be disadvantaged by the new approach, but that where no local plan exists allows a sensitive and well-balanced decision to be made which reflects the continuing requirements of the planning system to balance economic, social and environmental objections.

Once again, I am grateful to you and to your constituents for the time and trouble you have taken to help ensure that the planning system helps build the homes and provide the jobs we need while protecting what we hold dear in our matchless countryside and in the fabric of our history.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Greg Clark', enclosed within a faint, light-colored rectangular border.

**RT HON GREG CLARK MP**