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Dear Catriona,

THE USE OF 'MINIMUMS'.

I am glad that you, Sue and Alison had a useful meeting with John and Paul from here at which you discussed the issues of minimums and PPS3. I understand that we agreed to write to clarify one or two points.

The draft South East Plan, as proposed to be changed, is one of a number of Regional Strategies that sets out housing figures as minimums and you will understand that we cannot comment specifically on the emerging plan, as it is subject to public consultation at present. We will of course consider all representations from the Assembly and others on this and other matters in due course. As promised, I can, however, summarise the background to the use of minimum figures:

- The Government is committed to a plan led system which sets out a 'plan, monitor and manage' approach to ensure that development is sustainable
- The 2007 Housing Green Paper - "Homes for the Future: More Sustainable, More Affordable" - set new long term national housing targets and Government is committed to increasing housing delivery
- The Green Paper made clear that sustainable development was at the heart of this and that infrastructure was needed to deliver housing
- Reflecting this, the Government wants to ensure that housing numbers set in RSSs do not act as a ceiling, or brake, on sustainable development within the strategic approach established by the RSS

- Therefore, in successive Proposed Changes to RSSs, the Government has proposed that RSS housing numbers are starting points
- This will allow those local authorities, who wish or need to, to test higher numbers against the background of the plan led approach to sustainable development and within the strategic approach established by the RSS
- The Government regards this as a prudent way forward against a long term background of increasing demand for housing, higher housing targets, and the need for local authorities to adopt a flexible approach to deal with changing circumstances
- PPS3 is clear that in determining local housing provision, local planning authorities need to consider a range of factors including need, demand, land availability, sustainability and, specifically, the impact on infrastructure
- With these safeguards in place Government is confident that this approach will not lead to unsustainable development, nor will it undermine RSSs.

I hope this letter is helpful to you. If you need any further explanation of the Government's approach to housing supply, please let us know.

Yours sincerely



H A L EWING