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Alex Plant
Cambridgeshire Horizons

21 January 2010

Dear Alex,

ECO-TOWNS PLANNING POLICY STATEMENT – FURTHER PROPOSALS BY LOCAL AUTHORITIES

1. Following the Minister's announcement on 1 December and our subsequent contacts with you, I am writing to set out our process going forward including arrangements for applying for the £5m fund for studies (revenue) and the £5m fund for demonstrator projects (capital). These funds are part of the CLG growth fund and are open to the expressions of interest and locations listed in the Minister's announcement of 1 December. We will be aiming to make awards as soon as possible, and at the latest early in the 2010/11 financial year and the work funded is expected to be substantially completed in 2010/11.

2. As indicated in the Minister's statement the main objective of this programme is to support the work of local authorities in taking forward through the local planning process proposals for eco-development which meet the concepts and standards set out in the PPS. In most cases this will mean through support for preparing a preferred option in the local Core Strategy, but in a few cases where timing does not fit with this we will be happy to discuss alternative approaches.

3. **Funding for studies and supporting assessments** Before making a funding award Ministers will want to be assured on how the proposed programme of work will contribute towards preparation of a sustainable and viable development option in the core strategy and its testing in public examination, and that the work addresses any key strategic or showstopper issues raised by cross-Government Departmental and Agency partners most concerned – in particular DEFRA, EA, NE, DfT and HA - as well as any other key issues which GO colleagues may identify. It would therefore be useful if LA partners could liaise locally and regionally with the Agencies, as they would expect to do in any event in preparatory work on the Core Strategy. In addition we will be liaising at national level (on similar lines to the showstopper reviews carried out for new growth points) and pass back from that discussion advice on any particular issues which need to be addressed.

Department for Communities and Local Government
Housing & Growth Programmes Team
Housing Delivery and Homelessness Directorate
Zone 1/G9, Eland House
Bressenden Place
London SW1E 5DU

Tel: 030 344 41248
E-mail: henry.cleary@communities.gsi.gov.uk

4. We appreciate that planning work is at different stages but where a preferred option is in prospect it will be important that the locational references are sufficient for the Agencies to give an informed view. Local area workshops with EA/NE and HA colleagues can be very useful on this. Where flood risk is an issue the proposed location of development is particularly important for the EA to be properly engaged.

5. It is important that funding for assessments is prioritised. At this stage no commitment can be made for further funding for studies in future years so the best possible use needs to be made of the potential award available in 2010/11 in the light of outstanding issues.

6. It is also important, in addition to work to demonstrate that the proposed development is sustainable, and alternative options have been considered, that there is adequate demonstration of deliverability – that there will be evidence as part of the Core Strategy work that the eco-town standards could be achieved by developers in that location. Engagement with the private sector is therefore likely to be an important element of this preparatory work and may be useful to include developers who have shown their engagement with high sustainability standards.

7. **Demonstrator Projects** In addition to revenue funding for studies, Ministers have made available £5m capital funding for early win demonstrator projects which can provide advance exemplars of the Eco-towns PPS standards and concepts – innovative low/zero carbon and more sustainable development, behaviour change in relation to innovation in services and public education on the PPS concepts. Novel, exhibition style approaches which will help engage the existing community in this agenda are being sought but it is also important that projects can be shown to be readily deliverable (eg. sites or buildings in public ownership). This concept is also being developed in the 4 first wave eco-town programmes and I will circulate shortly for illustration details of the type of project they are taking forward.

8. **Local Authority support** In submitting a bid it will be important to confirm that the authority is committed to developing and testing an eco-development option which will meet the concepts and standards set out in the PPS for potential inclusion in the core strategy. It is accepted that in many cases the current work predates the Authority's formal decision on submission of a core strategy but its support for the overall concept at this stage is an important consideration.

9. **Timetable** In order to be able to make funding awards as early as possible in 2010/11 it will be necessary to accelerate the timetable for submission of funding proposals. We propose:

- (i) 19 February – submission of bids for the £5m studies/preparatory work fund;
- (ii) 26 February – Bids for demonstrator projects.

The attached Annex sets out a short checklist of each bid (it would be helpful to have drafts in advance). If your authority or partnership would have difficulty with this timetable please get in touch so that we can discuss.

10. Can I please ask you to circulate this letter to the other members of your partnership or authority as appropriate, and to liaise with your usual Government Office contact as we go forward.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H Cleary', written in a cursive style.

**HENRY CLEARY
DEPUTY DIRECTOR**