

Rt Hon Nick Boles MP  
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State  
Department for Communities and Local Government  
Eland House  
Bressenden Place  
London  
SW1E 5DU

14 October 2013

Dear Nick

The LGA has been supportive of the recommendations from the Taylor review of practice planning guidance and have long argued that we would like to see a much stronger risk based approach with national guidance focused on issues where the absence of guidance might lead to duplication, uncertainty or additional costs. The aim should be for guidance to support local decision making based on balancing local priorities and risks.

We are therefore encouraged to see the progress that has been made in consolidating the extensive raft of existing guidance into a more coherent and focused body of guidance available as a web-based resource on the government's website (currently in Beta mode).

In addition, we are pleased that government has taken on board much of our earlier feedback including the importance of a document control system so that practitioners can be confident that guidance is up to date and refer back to previous versions where necessary, as well as providing easy access to the guidance and related updates and bulletins.

Ultimately the test of whether the objectives for rationalising the guidance to increase stability and certainty have been met will be in whether it results in fewer challenges to the planning system. That will only be seen once the guidance is formally in place and in use. We would therefore recommend that government evaluate the impact of the new guidance in a years' time to assess its effectiveness in meeting the objectives of the review.

There also needs to be a clear and simple mechanism for councils and others to highlight any issues or unintended consequences of the new guidance if and when they arise over time and to put forward ideas for revised or new guidance. The government should continue to work closely with councils and applicants to ensure that any updated or new guidance is consistent with the principles of the new guidance resource and is light touch and encourages local decision making. This needs to be supported by a clear and transparent protocol for managing change to the site.

There is currently a large amount of guidance owned by other Whitehall departments and agencies which directly impacts on planning but which may not be aligned to the NPPF or the new DCLG guidance suite. The next stage for government should be to subject all of this guidance to a similar process of rationalisation and consolidation to ensure it is coherent, up to date and in line with national planning policy. .

I look forward to working with you further on this and other issues in future.

Yours

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'C. Loakes', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Cllr Clyde Loakes  
Vice-Chairman of the LGA Environment and Housing Board