



Department for
Communities and
Local Government



Stephen Williams MP
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Dr Nina Skorupska
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Dear Dr Skorupska

Thank you for your letter of 12 March to the Rt Hon Eric Pickles setting out your and your colleagues' concerns about potential changes to the Planning & Energy Act. Your letter has been passed to me for reply as the matters you raise fall within my Ministerial responsibilities.

The Government is committed to delivering zero carbon new homes from 2016 and has taken significant steps towards this aim. I made a Written Ministerial Statement on 13th March stating that: *"This will be achieved through a strengthening of the energy performance requirements in Part L of the Building Regulations (incorporating carbon compliance, energy efficient fabric and services), and the delivery of allowable solutions."*

The announcement package is available from GOV.UK at:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/policies/providing-effective-building-regulations-so-that-new-and-altered-buildings-are-safe-accessible-and-efficient/supporting-pages/technical-housing-standards-review>.

When it comes to Energy efficiency, I am clear that a national level playing field is now required. Energy efficiency standards set locally, often using the Code for Sustainable Homes, have introduced disproportionate costs to the development industry. The Act has been useful in driving up the performance of new homes locally, but as the Building Regulations catch up and we move towards zero carbon homes from 2016, there is a legitimate question about its future role and purpose.

The amendment which has now been tabled is, we believe, a suitable and balanced response, and does not remove the ability of authorities to support planning policies for district heating schemes and other low carbon infrastructure. The Government will set out its revised planning policy later this year, including transitional arrangements.

We do not believe that this undermines our commitment; the uplift in the regulations represents a further, meaningful and cost effective improvement step, with a particular focus on fabric energy efficiency. The Review has been about securing a sensible rationalisation of planning technical standards for new housing, so that authorities and developers can get on with delivering quality sustainable housing, to high environmental standards. I welcome the

opportunity to work with all partners constructively as we develop the policy statement later this year.

Best wishes

Greg Williams

STEPHEN WILLIAMS MP