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For Ms Leadsom

04 AUG 2010

**PLANNING IN WEST NORTHAMPTONSHIRE AND THE FUTURE OF MILTON KEYNES
AND SOUTH MIDLANDS GROWTH AREA**

Thank you for your letter of 5 July 2010 with regard to planning in West Northamptonshire and the future of the Milton Keynes and South Midlands Growth Area.

You raised the question of what might happen if the West Northamptonshire Joint Planning Committee was dissolved and whether such action could result in an increase in planning appeals. I cannot of course predict whether in such circumstance there would be an increase in planning appeals. However if the Joint Committee was dissolved then it is likely that there would be a further delay in the production of core strategies covering the three districts and it is our view that it is very important that the local planning authorities should continue to develop LDF core strategies and other DPDs to reflect the aspirations of their local communities on issues such as climate change, housing and economic development. Having robust core strategies in place as quickly as possible would be the best way for the local authorities to resist opportunist planning appeals.

On the question of the Growth Area we are currently reviewing how growth will be funded in future. Local authorities were informed by letter on 2 July that we have been able to safeguard the level of Growth Funding for 2010/11. However for future years we will be developing powerful financial incentives to encourage local authorities to plan for the growth that they consider necessary for their communities. We will consult upon this later in the year.

Yours sincerely
Bob Neill
BOB NEILL MP

SIGNED ON BEHALF
OF THE MINISTER
AS DUTY MINISTER