

12 February 2008

Gayle Campling

Dear Mrs Campling

Thank you for your letter of 25<sup>th</sup> January 2008 to Caroline Flint, Minister for Housing and Planning, as Secretary of the Grovewood Opposition Group, and also for your earlier letters sent to the Prime Minister, Yvette Cooper (then Housing Minister) and Julie Bishop regarding the proposed eco-town at Grovewood. I have been asked to respond on their behalf. Please accept my apologies for the delay in replying.

I thought it would be useful to outline the process for taking eco-towns forward. As you may know the Planning Green Paper and the Eco-towns Prospectus were published last July and the Government invited bids for eco-town schemes from both local authorities and the private sector. Over 50 bids have been received and we are currently taking forward eco-towns proposals in a strategic review across Government and its agencies. As part of this review, we are also consulting with local authorities in the relevant areas covered by the schemes and also regional agencies. We expect to announce a shortlist of schemes that have been selected for further consultation shortly. There will be considerable opportunity for consultation and engagement involving local authorities, wider stakeholders and the public before the process is completed

At this stage we are not therefore disclosing or commenting on individual eco-town proposals or any information that has been submitted. To do so would have the potential to be detrimental to the Department's interests in the award of funding and obtaining best value, as well as to the commercial interests of those applicants not selected.

I would like to assure you and your supporters that as part of the process for taking forward eco-towns that the issues and concerns they have raised will be taken into account. I can also confirm that we have received the document setting out the Group's objections to the proposal and also the petition submitted to the Prime Minister.

As you and supporters will have seen from the Eco-towns Prospectus, the criteria that proposals need to meet are demanding, and only schemes that have the potential to meet the criteria, which include a high degree of sustainability in terms of transport, land use, carbon saving and good infrastructure will be considered. Any eco-town schemes which are selected will need further development and planning, and that will require full public consultation and input.

I hope that this clarifies the current position and would be grateful if you could share this letter with members of the Grovewood Opposition Group. I am copying this letter to Mrs Hill, Chairman of the Group who has also written to ministers raising concerns about the process for taking eco-towns forward.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'JHCleary'.

**HENRY CLEARY**  
**DEPUTY DIRECTOR**  
**Housing & Growth Programmes**