



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

Members of the House of Lords

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Dear Colleagues,

I am writing in advance of the final day of Report of the Housing and Planning Bill where we will discuss the remainder of the planning clauses, before moving on to how we can make the best use of public sector land.

When we debated planning fees last Wednesday, I was glad to be able to clarify we do not intend, in any way, to introduce a two-tier planning system through the piloting of alternative providers processing planning applications. I know this put some minds at ease, and I hope to be able to provide further reassurance later today. I know many Noble Lords have raised concerns about unintended consequences of the pilots, so I will be also moving a number of further Government amendments as a result. These amendments, amongst other things, will clarify the temporary nature of the pilots and limit them to a maximum of five years. They will require the Secretary of State to report to Parliament within a year of the pilots ending and clarify a number of terms which could be misinterpreted. We will also place beyond doubt that regulations may not allow decisions on planning applications to be determined by anyone other than the responsible planning authority. I hope this helps the debate.

As with other changes I have made in light of the DPRRC's comments, I will ensure Parliament has a further chance to debate the planning competition regulations before they come into force, by making them subject to the affirmative procedure. I am doing the same for our reforms relating to the establishment of urban development corporations, and the power to direct public bodies to dispose of land.

I have found our discussions at Report exceptionally useful. I have welcomed the opportunity to put on record some further definitive statements on how we intend to implement the clauses in the Bill. Where we have disagreed on measures, it has been an opportunity for the Government to reflect on Noble Lords' expertise and experience. I hope we will be able to continue our positive progress on a number of these issues as we move towards Royal Assent.

I am placing a copy of this letter in the House Library.

BARONESS WILLIAMS OF TRAFFORD