

Alok Sharma MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning
House of Commons,
London
SW1A 0AA

Dear Minister,

Many congratulations on your appointment as the Minister of State for Housing and Planning. We enjoyed a productive relationship with both your department and predecessor, Gavin Barwell, which we hope to continue with you.

Here in North Essex, our four local authorities have been working on ambitious and costed proposals to deliver three Garden Communities creating up to 45,000 homes, and 45,000 new jobs.

A partnership of different political hues, the North Essex Garden Communities project is a unique opportunity to deliver a continuous supply of homes and jobs where people actually want to be, driving economic growth across Stansted, Colchester and Harwich as well as creating significant employment opportunities within the communities themselves.

By directly investing in land acquisition and infrastructure provision, the councils involved will be able to exert greater control and extract greater value, ensuring quality design and sustainability, and full community facilities and infrastructure contemporaneous with, rather than subsequent to, the housing.

One of the key enablers will be to establish Locally Accountable New Town Development Corporations in England, and our four constituent councils have now given their full support to this approach

Establishing a Locally Accountable New Town Development Corporation would speed up delivery by several years and increase viability and housing throughput.

The legislation for this has already been passed in the Neighbourhood Planning Act earlier this year, but the secondary legislation still needs to be settled and the supporting guidance prepared. We are very keen that the Government continues its support for locally led NTDCs by bringing the regulations forward as soon as possible.

We are very conscious that the parliamentary timetable is busy, but having the regulations in place by March 2018, and the designation of the areas for new towns and establishment of New Town Development Corporations as soon as Local Plans are adopted will allow us to start delivering the new communities much sooner and with far greater control over the timing and quality of the development than the traditional planning routes..

We would welcome the opportunity to come to Westminster to brief you on this significant opportunity, and as your diary permits, would like to invite you to see our proposals in North Essex.

Yours faithfully,

John Spence CBE, Chairman of NEGC, Cabinet Member at Essex County Council

Graham Butland, Leader, Braintree District Council

Paul Smith, Leader, Colchester Borough Council

Neil Stock OBE, Leader, Tendring District Council