



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

**Department for Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities**

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Dear Owen,

Thank you for your email of 5 October concerning planning reforms. With apologies for the delay, I have been asked to reply on behalf of the Secretary of State.

In your email you raised concerns regarding Investment Zones and what these would mean for our built and natural environments. I appreciate your concerns and hope that I can offer some reassurance on this.

The Investment Zones programme previously had the aim of accelerating the housing and commercial development that the UK needs to drive economic growth. I can confirm that the Investment Zones policy is now going to be refocused on catalysing a limited number of clusters with high growth potential to boost productivity, growth, and job creation in areas that economically underperform. The department will work closely with mayors, the devolved administrations, local authorities, businesses, and other local partners to consider how best to identify and support these clusters.

Further details on the programme will be announced shortly, but whilst we are still considering next steps, the Government has been very clear that we will not weaken environmental protections.

Indeed, there are numerous measures we are bringing forward as part of the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill (and future supporting policy and legislation) which will help to ensure a more user-friendly and locally democratic planning system. The system will benefit nature, the climate, heritage assets and provide for affordable housing.

Additionally, we intend to review the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) to ensure it contributes to climate change mitigation and adaptation as fully as possible, and supplements important legislative measures on the environment with strengthened policies. The NPPF prospectus is currently open for consultation until 2 March 2023.

Thank you again for taking the time to write to the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. We appreciate how important the planning system, and the measures to improve it, are for people across the country.

Yours sincerely,

Planning Reform Team