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**The Rt Hon Greg Clark MP**  
*Minister for Decentralisation*

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*Dr Sirs*

Thank you for your letter of 26 August to the Rt Hon Grant Shapps MP about housing targets and the five year land supply. I am responding as this matter falls within my Ministerial responsibilities and I apologise for the delay.

The Government is taking action through the Localism Bill to abolish the Regional Spatial Strategies that imposed top-down housing targets on local authorities. However, the effect of this legislation will be to place the responsibility on the Local Authority itself to make a rigorous assessment of its current and future housing need, and to show that it has realistic plans to meet that need. So councils will still need to show that they have an adequate supply of land for the foreseeable future, but this will, in future, be based on their own needs assessment, providing it is a realistic one.

In the light of the judgment in the Cala Homes case, Regional Strategies remain part of the statutory development plan for the purpose of determining planning applications. However, on 10 November, the Chief Planner wrote to all local planning authorities advising that they should still have regard to our intention to abolish Regional Strategies in the Localism Bill and that this is a material consideration in planning decisions. However, I should point out that this itself is the subject of a legal challenge. A copy of the Chief Planner's letter and a comment on its status is available on the Department's website:

<http://www.communities.gov.uk/publications/planningandbuilding/letterabolitionregional>

Local planning authorities should continue to collect and use reliable information to justify their housing supply policies and defend them during the local plan examination process. They should do this in line with current policy in Planning Policy Statement 3: *Housing*, which requires local authorities to establish what the long term need for housing in their areas is and to make provision for it in their plans.

I would assure you that we remain committed to decentralising control over housing and planning matters and passing decisions back to local authorities and communities. The Localism Bill will enable the abolition of Regional Strategies and we will also introduce radical reforms that will allow local people to shape the character of where they live through neighbourhood plans.

*Yours sincerely*

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized 'G' followed by a smaller 'C' and a horizontal stroke.

**GREG CLARK MP**