

David Cameron's letter of 19<sup>th</sup> September 2011 to the National Trust:

Thank you for your letters of 15 August and 6 September about the Government's planning reforms and the role of planning in addressing concerns about social disruption.

Let me say at the outset that I absolutely share and admire your commitment to the countryside, and wholeheartedly agree that policymakers have an enormous responsibility to our environment. Both as Prime Minister, as a rural constituency MP, and as an individual. I have always believed that our beautiful British landscape is a national treasure. We should cherish and protect it for everyone's benefit.

Our reform proposals are intended to simplify the system, strengthen local participation and secure sustainable development. I believe that sustainable development has environmental and social dimensions as well as an economic dimension, and we fully recognise the need for a balance between the three. Indeed, the purpose of the planning system as a whole, and of our proposals for it, is to achieve such a balance.

I am sure you will agree that the current system is far from perfect. It is highly complex, with over 3,000 pages of new guidance being issued between 2005 and 2010, and it is clunky to operate. Our reforms will streamline this system making it easier for communities to influence the decisions that make a difference in their lives. They will increase local discretion by giving residents greater choice than ever before, through local and neighbourhood plans, to decide the look and feel of the places that they love.

We must ensure that the planning system supports our objectives for growth and employment, as well as building environmental and social capital. That is why we believe the presumption is an important part of the new planning guidance.. Where businesses are seeking to relocate or expand they should be able to do so. And many of our young people find it increasingly difficult to take their first steps to home ownership. This situation is unacceptable.

Of course, we must ensure the appropriate protections for our magnificent countryside. This is why our reforms will maintain protections for the green belt, for National Parks and Areas of

Outstanding National Beauty. It will introduce a new local green space designation which local communities can use to protect open places they value. And as you know, the framework insists on high environmental standards and good design. Poorly-designed and poorly-located development is in no-one's interest. Our aim is to secure a planning system that supports growth and prosperity and protects the interests both of today's communities and of generations to come.

Finally, let me address the concerns you have raised about our response to representations from shopkeepers and businesses seeking to install shutters to help them protect their livelihood. We must ensure that people can feel safe in being able to protect their property. It is absolutely right that we have taken swift action to ensure these applications are given priority in the planning system, while recognising the importance of good design to protect the look and character of our high streets.

I am a big supporter of the National Trust and very happy to have a meeting. My diary is extremely packed in the immediate period ahead, but I will try and sort something out. In the meantime, I understand that you have met with the Planning Minister, Greg Clark, recently, and that since you wrote to me, he has offered further discussions to discuss specific concerns. I would encourage you to continue that dialogue.