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Dear Kevin

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Thank you for attending my tearoom surgery recently. I was pleased to have the opportunity to continue our discussion about the Government's plans for exploring the potential of shale reserves. I hope our discussion was helpful and thank you for raising these matters with me.

During our discussion you raised a number of points and, following discussions with DECC officials, I will respond to each of the points in turn:

1. Does planning guidance based on the cumulative impact exist? Is there any work underway to develop it?

We have in place a comprehensive approach to planning for shale gas extraction in the National Planning Policy Framework and supporting planning guidance to ensure that development takes place in appropriate locations. Planning law requires that applications for planning permission must be determined in accordance with the Local Development Plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. This is why national planning guidance encourages local mineral plans where appropriate to give clear guidance and criteria for the location and assessment of possible hydrocarbon extraction within any Petroleum Licence Areas.

The Framework also makes clear that both in plan making and in determining planning applications, mineral planning authorities should take into account the cumulative effect of multiple impacts from individual sites and/or from a number of sites in a locality, alongside environmental and other considerations.

2. Do developers publish a bird's eye view of what a fracking site should look like? Is this something we can encourage?

Planning law prescribes how a planning application for development should be made and the information that needs to be provided as part of that application. As a minimum, applicants need to submit a 'location plan' that shows the application site in relation to the surrounding area. This plan should identify sufficient roads and/or buildings on land

adjoining the application site to ensure that the exact location of the application site is clear. Additional plans and drawings will in most cases be necessary to describe the proposed development, as required by the legislation.

Applications would also need to be supported by a Design and Access Statement, which must explain the design principles and concepts that have been applied to the proposed development; and demonstrate the steps taken to appraise the context of the proposed development, and how the design of the development takes that context into account.

A 'bird's eye' view of a fracking site has not been provided by any operators to date. However, this is something that we will suggest to operators as something they may wish to consider.

3. Is it possible for a site to have one frack pad with many wells going in lots of different directions rather than many pads with just a few wells? Any thoughts on the feasibility of this?

It is possible for frack pads to have multiple wells. The benefit of shale is that through new lateral drilling techniques, the surface footprint should be relatively small as the wells can be drilled from a pad and then deviate horizontally deep underground.

In terms of feasibility, as the UK shale is thick, there may be opportunities to exploit multiple levels from the same pad. Any expanded plan would, however, likely only be proposed after pilot development proved commerciality.

Whilst there are currently no proposals, any such application would be considered on its individual merits in line with the standard planning and regulatory regimes, with cumulative impact and visual impact being material consideration.

I am grateful for the opportunity to discuss this matter with you and hope that this information is helpful. I look forward to continuing our discussions in the future.

With best wishes



ANDREA LEADSOM