



Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee

House of Commons, London SW1A 0AA

Tel 020 7219 1353 Email hclgcom@parliament.uk Website www.parliament.uk

The Rt Hon Robert Jenrick MP
Secretary of State
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

16 June 2020

Dear Robert,

WESTFERRY PRINTWORKS

You will be aware of the concerns that have been raised regarding your decision to grant planning permission for a development on the Westferry Printworks site in the London Borough of Tower Hamlets.

While the Committee acknowledges that your decision has now been quashed, there nevertheless remain important questions about how and why planning permission was granted in the first place.

The Select Committee has an important role in scrutinising Ministers. I am concerned that, without transparency, this matter could lead to an erosion of trust in the integrity of the planning system and in our wider democratic process. I hope that you will agree with me, therefore, that it is right for the Select Committee to consider this matter further.

During the Urgent Question on 11 June, I asked the Housing Minister whether, were the Committee to request it, you would be willing to provide us with all relevant documentation so that the Committee could give proper, careful consideration to these matters. He told me:

We always take seriously, and consider weightily, requests from the Committee, and I am sure that we will happily consider this one.

I am grateful for this commitment. I am therefore writing to request that all relevant information, including, but not limited to, that already sent to the Cabinet Secretary, is sent to the Committee or otherwise put into the public domain. This should include, but not be limited to:

- Any correspondence or submissions received by the Planning Inspectorate or the MHCLG in relation to, or having a potential bearing on, the appeal made by Westferry Developments Limited for land at the Former Westferry Printworks Site, 235 Westferry Road London E14 3QS Ref. APP/E5900/W/19/3225474 (Application Ref: PA/18/01877/A1):
between the date of the closure of the inquiry on 9 September 2019 and the date of submission of the Inspector's report to the Secretary of State on 20 November 2019 and not listed in Annex A to the Secretary of State's decision letter; and between 20

November 2019 and the date of the Secretary of State's decision on 14 January 2020 and responses to that correspondence;

- Any other correspondence or submissions received by MHCLG from the Appellant, Westferry Developments Limited, or its related companies, including the Northern & Shell group of companies and Westferry Housing Limited, or its advisers since July 2018 and responses to that correspondence;
- Any other correspondence or submissions received by MHCLG from Mr Richard Desmond or companies of which he is an active Director since July 2018 and responses to that correspondence;
- All written advice from officials or Special Advisers in relation to the publication, or the potential impact, of the London Borough of Tower Hamlets updated CIL 'Charging Schedule';
- Any notes of the meeting between yourself and Mr Richard Desmond in November 2019, or at any other relevant time, as required by paragraph 15 of the [Guidance on Planning and Propriety Issues](#);
- Any written Ministerial Direction you gave to your civil servants regarding this decision.

Where the permanent secretary advises that documents should not currently be published bearing in mind the legitimate interests of the parties in this case, we seek a commitment to future publication as soon as is achievable. The judgement on immediate publication will no doubt balance those legitimate interests against the requirement for transparency, including in the 'Guidance on planning and propriety issues' that states in paragraph 12 that "*where representations are made by whatever means, including letters, telephone and email, whether direct to a Planning Minister or to the relevant official, it should be made clear that they can only be taken into account if they can also be made available to all interested parties for comment.*"

Additionally, during questions in the House on Monday 15 June, you said that "as is usual in cases when planning applications are re-determined, a different Minister in the Department will be chosen and will make the decision". Can you confirm the process for making that choice? If the choice has already been made please confirm which Minister will be making the decision.

Finally, during the Urgent Question, the Minister for Housing raised the planning application you refused in January 2020 relating to the Whitechapel Bell Foundry. I would be grateful if you could send the relevant decision letter to the Committee.

Given the importance of these matters, the Committee expects a response by Friday 19 June.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Clive Betts', with a large, stylized initial 'C' at the start.

Clive Betts MP
Chair, Housing, Communities and Local Government Committee