Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to you in connection with Colchester Borough’s current regeneration initiative at East Colchester and the continued delivery of the development in this location following publication of Planning Policy Statement 25 concerning flood risk in 2006.

Following discussion with representatives of the Environment Agency it is clear that clarification is required on the issue of development within the flood plain in order that the Borough’s regeneration plans may continue as commenced.

This clarification is sought from the background that the Environment Agency are unlikely to give support to development where there is a flood issue when alternative development options are available thereby requiring a sequential test based approach to housing location. The Environment Agency have recommended that DCLG’s opinion is sought given the extent of redevelopment that is underway and proposed in this location, further that this feedback is in place prior to the Environment Agency being able to support any application submitted now that PPS25 is in operation.

Regeneration in Colchester is focused on four areas of the Borough, North Colchester, The St. Botolph’s Quarter, The Garrison and East Colchester. The four areas are materially different in character and form; though they share the same strategic priorities East Colchester is the only one where flooding must be considered.

The East Colchester regeneration area was formally established by the Borough in 2000, subsequently reconfirmed within the Adopted Review Colchester Borough Local Plan March 2004 and further reinforced within the Draft East Colchester Masterplan (2006/7) that is currently in production.

Development in the location commenced in the mid 1990’s following closure of the former port with the provision of new bridges and highway infrastructure connecting the areas north and south of the river and railway line. Since this time in the region of 1000 new dwellings have been constructed incorporating a mix of affordable housing and commercial units.

In the past two years with the completion of the University Quays, Hythe Quay and substantial construction of Moler Works, and Albany Gardens it is reasonable to state that a new community has been formed and is starting to mature. With the Community Centre operating near capacity and new commercial units establishing themselves the Borough seeks to continue this success with the King Edward Quay and Hawkins Road sectors of the regeneration area; both of which are within the flood zone.

Clarification is sought that development can continue in line with adopted objectives and that the Environment Agency’s comments regarding sequential development of housing provision, effectively completion of all other non-flood
zone locations prior to East Colchester development continuing are incorrect when alternative mitigation, design and management measures are available. To do so would leave a community part built with residential developments existing alongside low grade commercial uses and vacant sites. In addition the successful bid for growth point funding to achieve more housing in East Colchester would be severely undermined if development here were to be halted.

The importance of regenerating East Colchester in terms of fulfilling the Borough’s aspirations for future growth and development over the next 10 – 15 year period cannot be over stated.

To provide the background on development progress, enclosed is a plan showing the areas of development that have been completed, those yet to be done and the area covered by the flood plain.

Thank you in advance for your support in this matter.