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For the attention of Heads of
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Dear Colleague,

REVIEW OF PLANNING POLICY GUIDANCE NOTE 25: DEVELOPMENT AND FLOOD RISK

You may recall the commitment made when publishing Planning Policy Guidance Note 25 *Development and Flood Risk* in July 2001 to review it 3 years after publication in the light of any further evidence then available on climate change and emerging experience of its implementation and effectiveness (PPG25, para 5). Keith Hill (Minister of State for Housing and Planning, ODPM) also announced on 17 June that PPG 25 was one of the priorities for the review of PPGs as part of the planning reform agenda.

Keith Hill subsequently announced today that this review is now starting. It will take account of scientific and other developments in the last 3 years, and the views of stakeholders. It will operate in parallel with the consultation by the Department for Environment Food and Rural Affairs on the Government's flood and coastal erosion risk management strategy for England, also launched by Elliot Morley (Minister of State, Defra) today in the document *Making Space for Water*. This deals with flood-risk management as a whole, while the PPG 25 review deals with the specifics of flood risk in planning.

Making Space for Water deals in Chapter 7 with the Government's general approach to planning and flood risk and, in particular, whether the Government should consider issuing a standing flooding Direction if there is evidence that the Environment Agency's advice against allowing development to proceed in flood-risk areas is being over-ruled by local planning authorities to an unacceptable degree. It also asks about the adequacy of the arrangements for flood-risk assessments, and whether legislation might be needed to ensure they are carried out.

The PPG 25 review is looking at the specifics of planning policy for the management of flood risk, and whether there is any need to change policies as a result of new scientific information or on the basis of experience in the 3 years since it was published. It will also consider the Environment Agency and Local Government Association's annual reports to date on the Agency's high-level target 12 *Development and flood risk*. These deal with the Agency's responses to consultations. The extent to which planning decisions have been in line with or contrary to the Agency's advice will form an important element in the review, as will the evidence from land use change statistics on development in the flood zones identified in PPG25.

It is also important that the views of all relevant stakeholders are taken into account. At this stage we want to know whether there are points in the present PPG that need clarification, and whether you think its policies should be changed in any way. We want to know how effectively you think PPG 25 has been implemented, what its effect on overall flood risk has been or is likely to be, and whether it should be made more effective in balancing the need for development with the avoidance and reduction of unacceptable degrees of risk.

Before deciding whether to revise the PPG as a new-style Planning Policy Statement (PPS), we are therefore inviting stakeholders to let us have their views on these issues and others they consider relevant to this subject. We are also placing this invitation on the ODPM website and the Planning Portal. For convenience you may wish to deal with both the consultation on *Making Space for Water* and this initial canvassing of stakeholders' views at the same time, either by copying comments on the whole package to us (to note as far as they concern planning) or just sending us the planning elements of a broader response.

ODPM Ministers will review your responses on PPG 25 alongside those on *Making Space for Water* and the scientific and other evidence in deciding whether to consult during 2005 on any revision of PPG 25.

At this stage this is a general request for views. Should we proceed to revise PPG25 in the light of responses and our own analysis we would of course put a draft "PPS25" out to formal consultation.

Could you please send your views to the PPG 25 Review Team, 4/B2 Eland House, Bressenden Place, London SW1E 5DU by Friday 29 October.

E-mail submissions should be addressed to minerals.waste@odpm.gsi.gov.uk, but with a reference to the review of PPS25 in the title bar.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Leo Hicks". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a horizontal line.

L B HICKS