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13th August 2020

Dear [REDACTED]

Development Sites South of Bedford

Thank you very much for your email of 10th August. I am very interested to hear about the progress that you and Cloud Wing are making with the potential developments south of Bedford.

The South East Midlands is a £50bn economy that occupies a key strategic position at the nexus of Oxford, Cambridge, London and Birmingham. It has undergone rapid growth in recent years alongside the establishment of a significant cluster of high-performance technology innovation assets and expertise. This area plays an important role in England's housing growth, providing over 6% of the country's new homes in 2016, relative to 3.6% of the country's population.

Bedford sits at the heart of the Oxford to Cambridge Arc, which, as recognised by the National Infrastructure Commission, has the potential to transform this area of England into a hub of knowledge-intensive industry that can compete on the world stage.

Last year SEMLEP published its Local Industrial Strategy (LIS), which was part of a suite of four LIS documents for the Oxford to Cambridge Arc. The LIS emphasised the opportunities in this area to fuse productivity-led growth with sustainability, by enhancing renewable energy use, connected transport solutions and greener vehicles, buildings and design principles. It also noted the need to develop a pipeline of quality employment land and premises.

The last few months have presented many challenges and some of our key sectors, such as retail and leisure and aviation have been hit hard. However, the work that SEMLEP is currently undertaking to develop an Economic Recovery Plan, which you noted, demonstrates that this area, with its focus on innovation and a 'Green Recovery', has the ability to 'bounce back' in economic terms more quickly than other parts of the country.

The plans that you have for the sites around Bedford fit well with this strategic vision for the area. I would welcome the opportunity for a site visit and please do keep us informed of progress so that we can continue to offer our support.

Yours sincerely,

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