



· INSTITUTE · OF · HISTORIC ·
BUILDING · CONSERVATION

Making Heritage Work

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Dear Sirs

ECO-TOWNS: LIVING A GREENER FUTURE

The Institute of Historic Building Conservation (IHBC) is the professional body of the United Kingdom representing conservation specialists and historic environment practitioners in the public and private sectors. The Institute exists to establish the highest standards of conservation practice, to support the effective protection and enhancement of the historic environment, and to promote heritage-led regeneration and access to the historic environment for all.

The Institute welcomes the opportunity to comment on the consultation.

The Institute supports the development of Eco-Towns in principle. We feel that, if the objectives can properly be met, they will provide modern development in a context that will provide a high and rewarding quality of life whilst reducing environmental and transportation impacts.

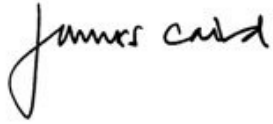
We support the range of benefits that Eco-Towns are expected to provide, although these are all general in nature and convey the impression that all Eco-Towns are to be built in totally greenfield locations. In fact, some or more of the sites have existing developments on them which will, or ought to, affect the way in which they are developed.

We have concerns about the process being followed to introduce Eco-Towns. It seems to us that the suitability of any particular proposal will hinge heavily on the results of a comprehensive and detailed Sustainability Appraisal (as SEA) which will include heritage interests. Until this process has been carried out, the Institute believes it to be premature to be considering potential sites as the Consultation Document does. We welcome the commitment to issue a Planning Policy Statement on Eco-Towns but are uncertain, on the basis of what is said in the Consultation, whether the Sustainability Appraisal currently being undertaken will be sufficiently focused.

Ultimately the success of Eco-Towns will depend on their development as places with their own clear identity and community. This can only be achieved with a bottom-up approach which so far has been absent from the process. Indeed the concerns of many local communities have been widely reported.

We know that some of the proposed sites have heritage assets either at the Eco-Town location or nearby. We advocate the use of these as a focus for contextual analysis in the development of a strategy for each candidate Eco-Town, a focus for the community proposing the Eco-Town and as a physical focus for the developments themselves.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James Caird". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'J'.

James Caird
Consultant Consultations Co-ordinator