



HM Treasury, 1 Horse Guards Road, London, SW1A 2HQ

Rebecca Pow MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

November 2020

Dear Rebecca

Thank you for your correspondence of 12 August about The Crown Estate's sale to Taylor Wimpey of Orchard Portman Estate, Somerset in 2018.

It might be helpful if I first explain that The Crown Estate acts independently of Government under the mandate set out in the Crown Estate Act 1961. Under the Act, the estate is managed by a Board of Commissioners who have a duty to maintain and enhance the value of the estate and the return obtained from it, but with due regard to the requirements of good management. HM Treasury cannot seek to influence how the Board of Commissioners execute their responsibilities – this means that they take all decisions on sales and purchases without reference to Ministers.

Officials have sought advice from The Crown Estate on the sale, who have provided the following useful information. In 2018, The Crown Estate agreed the sale following an open market process, accepting the highest bid from developers Taylor Wimpey. At the point of sale, and to this day, the land in question was not included in the local development plan and did not have planning permission. Its prospects for successful planning consent and subsequent development were, and remain, speculative and long-term.

The Crown Estate is committed to high standards in all its work, doing things the right way and for the long term. With this in mind and in light of ongoing questions from the public and stakeholders such as yourself, The Crown Estate's new Chief Executive, Dan Labbad, is looking into this matter further. I have asked The Crown Estate to ensure that you are apprised of their conclusions in due course.

As you are aware, there is also an ongoing investigation by The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) on the role of The Crown Estate's agent on the sale and their subsequent role with the purchaser. The Crown Estate are supporting this process as appropriate.

I am sure that you understand that it is important that The Crown Estate can take decisions like those involving a commercial sale without perception of Ministerial interference, in line with its obligations under The Crown Estate Management Act 1961.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Kemi Badenoch". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

KEMI BADENOCH MP