



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

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Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
*Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and
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28th July 2022

Dear Sarah,

Local Planmaking during the Summer

The Government accords great importance to councils getting up-to-date Local Plans in place and supporting authorities to achieve this is a policy priority. Recent years have seen significant plan progress with 95% of councils now having a Local Plan in place under the 2004 Act. This compares with just 16% five years after the 2004 Act came into force, and 78% at the end of 2016, illustrating significant progress towards the Government's objective of full plan coverage.

The Planning Inspectorate has played a critical and decisive role in getting us to this position, via the public examination of plans to ensure that they are legally compliant and sound.

In 2015 during my previous tenure as Secretary of State I wrote to the Planning Inspectorate asking them to be pragmatic when dealing with Local Plan examinations. Following my letter, I was pleased to see Inspectors working with councils during examination to fix deficiencies on plans that might otherwise have been found unsound or be recommended for withdrawal from examination.

You will appreciate that at present we are considering changes to the planning system. In addition to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Bill, which has partly passed the Commons Committee stage in Parliament, it is also our intention to update and consult upon the NPPF and of course the Autumn will see a new Prime Minister and Cabinet take office.

It is critical during this time to advance Local Plans through to adoption. PINS should continue to show the pragmatism and flexibility at examination that it has to date to enable councils to get plans in place. Councils engage with their local communities and invest significant resources into submitting plans that they consider sound with the aim of delivering the housing, employment and infrastructure that are needed.

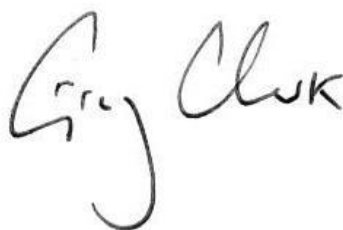
Where Inspectors identify possible shortcomings in a local plan, I would urge Inspectors to continue to address these in correspondence with councils in a constructive and positive way.

However, during this short period of transition before a new Prime Minister takes Office, and until the Department advises you otherwise, Inspectors should not send letters or reports which conclude that local plans are unsound and incapable of being made so and/or which advise councils that local plans should be withdrawn.

It is, of course, important that examinations continue, and plans are put in place and adopted so that councils and the communities they serve can benefit from having an up-to-date plan; ensuring development is plan-led rather than speculative and unplanned. Therefore, I expect to see Examinations and Hearings continue.

Please can you ensure your Inspectors are aware of the above and that they and the wider organisation act accordingly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Greg Clark". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, sweeping initial "G".

Rt Hon Greg Clark MP
Secretary of State for Levelling up, Housing and Communities