



Department for Levelling Up,  
Housing & Communities

**Rt Hon Michael Gove MP**

*Secretary of State for Levelling up Housing &  
Communities*

*Minister for Intergovernmental Relations*

2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

Mark Stone  
Chief Executive  
The Vale of White Horse District Council  
Abbey House, Abbey Close  
Abingdon  
OX14 3JE

12 April 2023

Dear Mark,

**Performance of Local Planning Authorities: Section 62A of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990**

The Government is clear that having an efficient and effective planning service at local authority level is essential to delivering the homes, building and investment the country needs. The planning performance regime was introduced to ensure that all local planning authorities contribute to this objective.

I have significant concerns about the performance of a handful of local authorities including your Council. A performance of 66.6% for non-major applications and 59.2% for major applications between October 2020 and September 2022 is below the expected threshold of 70% and 60% respectively. That is indicative of a very poor quality service to local residents and a significant deterrent to investment in your local housing market and wider economy. That is not good enough, and despite some more encouraging recent data, I am therefore minded to designate the Vale of White Horse District Council.

As you know, the consequences of formal designation are that applicants could submit relevant planning applications directly to the Planning Inspectorate until I am satisfied that acceptable performance can be, or has been, achieved. I have asked the Planning Inspectorate to prepare for designations over the summer period.

Before formally designating your authority, I am prepared to give you the opportunity to demonstrate improved performance by June 2023, and I do recognise that recent data has shown improvement. I want to be clear, however, that I expect the performance of your planning service to exceed our performance thresholds and stay above it consistently. I will monitor your performance closely and, if during this period your performance falls below the required threshold, I will not hesitate to use my powers to designate your council later this year.

Should you have any queries about the subject of this letter, please contact my officials.

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