



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Councillor Robert W. Bayford
Leader, Thanet District Council

The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP

*Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and
Local Government*

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
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Dear Councillor Bayford

LOCAL PLAN INTERVENTION

Congratulations on becoming Leader of Thanet District Council earlier this month, I was pleased to see your statement that you will prioritise work on the Local Plan. However, I am writing today as a result of the Council's persistent failure over many years and under different administrations, to get a Local Plan in place, following on from the concerns I set out on 16 November 2017 about the lack of progress that had been made in plan-making. The housing White Paper set out that intervention in Local Plans will be prioritised where:

- the least progress in plan-making has been made
- policies in plans had not been kept up to date
- there was higher housing pressure; and
- intervention would have the greatest impact in accelerating Local Plan production

We also made clear that decisions on intervention will be informed by the wider planning context in each area (specifically, the extent to which authorities are working cooperatively to put strategic plans in place, and the potential impact that not having a plan has on neighbourhood planning activity). I gave the District Council the opportunity to put forward any exceptional circumstances by 31 January 2018, which, in the Council's view, justifies the failure to produce a Local Plan under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 regime.

I have considered carefully the Council's letter of 31 January 2018. In summary, in January 2018, the District Council resolved to reject the recommendation of officers to publish the draft Local Plan and is therefore failing to meet its deadline for publication of a Plan, in accordance with your published Local Development Scheme. The Council

has failed to meet milestones in published Local Development Schemes at least five times since 2004.

The District Council's argument to justify this failure sets out two inter-related circumstances – the local debate over the future of Manston Airport and the need to undertake further work to identify alternative sites after the Plan failed to proceed. I consider that these are not exceptional circumstances – other authorities have dealt with uncertainty about the future of large sites.

In terms of the intervention criteria, Thanet have failed to make progress on plan-making, the policies do not appear to be up to date and there is high housing pressure. At the current time this is an authority where intervention would have the greatest impact by accelerating Local Plan production. The Council does not have an up to date Local Development Scheme, whilst I note the suggestion from your officers that your Council intends to update the scheme.

Having considered the Council's representations and the Government's policy set out in the November 2017 Written Ministerial Statement and the housing White Paper, I have decided to continue with the intervention process. As discussed at our meeting on 6 February 2018 this will involve a team of experts, led by the Chief Planner, providing me with further advice on next steps. My officials will be in contact with your officers to discuss the next steps.

My officials will also begin formal discussions on the options of inviting Kent County Council to prepare a Local Plan for Thanet and with the neighbouring authorities on the possibility of directing a Joint Plan, as part of considering whether to use my statutory powers and if so which ones.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Javid', with a small comma at the end.

RT HON SAJID JAVID MP