



# The Planning Inspectorate

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Matthew Pennycook MP, Minister of State  
2 Marsham Street,  
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Date: 1 August 2024

Sent by email to:  
[PSMatthewPennycook@communities.gov.uk](mailto:PSMatthewPennycook@communities.gov.uk)

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Dear Matthew,

Thank you for your letter of 30 July 2024.

You are right to note that implementing pragmatism in the way expected by the Government since 2015 has led to delays in local plan examinations. In many cases, the extent of delay has been significant, running into years, and in some exceptional cases examinations have consequently taken five or six years to complete. Notwithstanding the intention of pragmatism, its operation has not infrequently led local communities to be poorly served by the system. This has been a source of frustration for me and my Inspectors. I therefore welcome the new expectations that your letter sets out. I am making all examining Inspectors aware of this change. They will be briefed, and our procedure guide and other relevant material will be updated accordingly.

It is inescapable that this fresh approach will lead to an increase in local plans being recommended for withdrawal from examination or being found unsound. But that should not be seen as any sort of failure of pragmatism or of the system more generally. On the contrary, withdrawing from examination opens up the space for local authorities to genuinely work with their local communities, local businesses and others to rectify problems with their local plan in an open-minded way that is almost impossible in the context of an ongoing examination. Moreover, it can be quicker to local authorities to resolve soundness problems outside the formalities of the examination process. To that end, we will continue to support those authorities that wish us to undertake an Advisory Visit, whether they are preparing a wholly new plan or re-visiting a plan that has failed to progress through the examination to adoption.

Yours sincerely,

Paul Morrison CBE  
Chief Executive