



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

**Matthew Pennycook MP**  
Minister of State for Housing and  
Planning

**Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government**  
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2 Marsham Street  
London SW1P 4DF

Cllr Tracey Dixon  
Town Hall and Civic Offices  
Westoe Road  
South Shields  
Tyne and Wear  
NE33 2RL

**By email only**

4 March 2025

Dear Cllr Dixon,

In light of the repeated failure of South Tyneside Council ('the Council') to vote to submit your Regulation 19 Local Plan to the Secretary of State for examination, I am writing to confirm that the Secretary of State is now directing it be submitted for examination.

As you know, the government was elected on a manifesto to deliver 1.5 million homes in this Parliament. England is in the grip of an acute and entrenched housing crisis and all areas of the country must play their part in building the homes we need.

This government is committed to making progress toward universal coverage of local plans. Local plans are the best way for communities to shape decisions about how to deliver the housing and wider development that their area needs. In the absence of an up-to-date plan, development may come forward on a piecemeal and speculative basis, with reduced public engagement and fewer guarantees that it will make the most of an area's potential. This government has been clear that local planning authorities should make every effort to get plans in place as soon as possible.

The current South Tyneside Local Plan is one of the oldest in the country having been adopted in June 2007, meaning the policies it contains are significantly out of date. Having failed to submit its emerging plan for examination, the local authority faces the prospect of having to prepare a replacement plan, which will further extend the period in which it does not have an up-to-date plan in place.

In light of these circumstances, I have considered the options available to me under the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act ('the Act'), including exercising the Secretary of State's powers of intervention.

Section 27 of the Act provides the Secretary of State with broad default intervention powers where she believes a local planning authority is failing or omitting to do anything it is necessary for them to do in connection with the preparation, revision or adoption of its Local Plan.

I consider that the Council's repeated votes not to submit the emerging plan for examination are clear evidence of failure to do something necessary in connection with preparing the Local Plan, and this meets the statutory test for intervention.

I have also considered the criteria laid out in current Planning Practice Guidance, which states that intervention "*should have regard to plan progress and local development needs*".

### **Plan Progress:**

- The current South Tyneside Local Plan is one of the oldest adopted plans in the country and is over 17 years old, meaning the policies it contains are significantly out of date.
- The Council is already behind schedule against its most recent Local Development Scheme (LDS), with members' repeated failure to vote to submit their Regulation 19 plan causing significant slippage to the programme.
- Without intervention from the Secretary of State, this plan will not progress any further, and the LPA will not be able to submit a plan in the near future. The LPA will subsequently have to begin the process of preparing a new plan, which will further delay submission until at least December 2026.

### **Development Needs:**

- Despite the area's relatively low Local Housing Need (LHN) (309 dpa under the previous standard method), South Tyneside has consistently fallen below its annual housing delivery target in recent years.
- The area's latest Housing Delivery Test (HDT) score was 60%, putting the LPA within the presumption in favour of sustainable development. This is unlikely to change without the adoption of an up-to-date Local Plan.
- The area's most recent Strategic Housing Market Assessment (SHMA) suggests there is significant need for additional affordable housing delivery in the area, which is unlikely to be met whilst the LPA is in the presumption.

Taking all of the above into account, I consider that the intervention criteria are met, and that intervention is justified in this case to ensure an up-to-date plan is in place as soon as possible.

**Accordingly, the Secretary of State is exercising her powers under section 27 of the 2004 Act and directs the Council as follows:**

- 1. Per Section 27(3)(b): Submit the document for independent examination.** This direction must be actioned by 12 March 2025, and no action must be taken to withdraw the plan;
- 2. Per Section 27(2)(b): Progress preparation of the plan up to the end of the examination process.** In accordance with Section 27(8) of the Act, the Secretary of State's reason for making this direction is to ensure that an examination in public takes place, so that the soundness of the emerging plan can be tested by an independent Planning Inspector;
- 3. Per Section 27(4)(b): On conclusion of the examination, to publish the Planning Inspector's recommendations and reasons; and**
- 4. Per Section 27(5)(b): On conclusion of the examination, to consider adopting the plan, including any main modifications recommended by the Planning Inspector deemed necessary to make the plan sound.** In accordance with Section 27(8) of the Act, the Secretary of State's reason for making this direction is to provide the best possible chance for an up-to-date plan to be adopted, protecting the South Tyneside area from speculative development.

The above directions will remain in force until withdrawn by the Secretary of State. Should you fail to comply with the directions in this letter, I will consider taking further action to ensure that an up-to-date local plan is put in place.

Notwithstanding this direction, I would like to request that you set out by 18 March 2025 any exceptional circumstances that should be taken into account when the Secretary of State considers the next steps to take in relation to the direction and the emerging plan. To be clear, this neither alters nor removes the direction set out in this letter.

In the meantime, departmental officials will continue to engage with your officers.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Pennycook', is centered on the page. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'M'.

**MATTHEW PENNYCOOK MP**  
Minister of State for Housing and Planning