



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

**Matthew Pennycook MP**  
*Minister of State for Housing and Planning*  
2 Marsham Street  
London  
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Paul Morrison  
Chief Executive  
The Planning Inspectorate

9 October 2025

Dear Paul,

As you know, this government is determined to make rapid progress toward universal local plan coverage. The plan-led approach is, and must remain, the cornerstone of our planning system. It is through local plans that communities can best shape decisions about how to deliver the housing and wider development their areas need. They also provide the necessary certainty and confidence for the sector to bring forward the development required across the country.

As you will know better than most, the current system of local plan making is too slow and cumbersome. That is why we are committed to introducing a new model of local plan development that enables better, shorter plans to be produced faster. We intend to publish the regulations and guidance that will underpin that model later this year and I know that you share my determination that the Planning Inspectorate work alongside and support local planning authorities to ensure good plans are put in place as efficiently as possible.

We have also been clear about the importance of effective strategic planning across local planning authority boundaries, both to support the effective distribution of housing across appropriate geographies and also provide high-level frameworks for infrastructure investment. I look forward to welcoming the development of Spatial Development Strategies across England following the passage of the Planning and Infrastructure Bill.

In advance of the new plan-making system and mechanisms for cross-boundary cooperation coming into force, the final set of local plans being delivered within the current system remain essential to facilitating the effective delivery of housing, jobs and infrastructure. It is therefore critical that Inspectors approach examinations of current system plans with the appropriate degree of flexibility. The evidencing of expectations to establish whether the legal and soundness tests have been met – including with respect to the Duty to Cooperate – should be proportionate to the context in which plans in the existing system are being prepared.

I very much welcome that in some cases Inspectors are already exercising a degree of flexibility to expedite adoption of local plans. For example, I note recent pragmatic decisions to proceed toward adoption in instances where a five-year housing land supply cannot be evidenced at the point of adoption but where the plan significantly boosts supply and still meets housing needs over the plan period or by providing additional opportunities to clarify compliance with the Duty to Cooperate. Relevant Planning Practice Guidance provides advice in respect of both of these

matters, and will no doubt be of ongoing assistance in assessing whether proportionate evidence has been provided or considering whether stepped housing requirements may be justified.

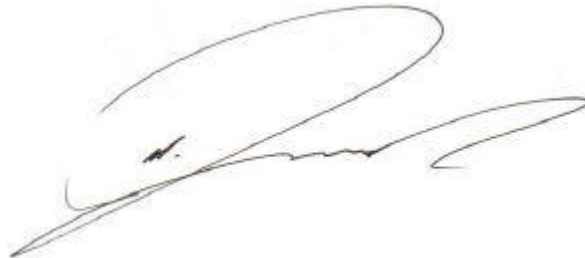
It remains important that we do not see the adoption of poor-quality plans, or accept overly long examinations (I am grateful for the action that Inspectors have taken following my letter of 30 July 2024 in that regard). However, within those bounds, where plans are capable of being made adoptable, I want Inspectors to seek to do so in the examination process.

Whilst it is the role of strategic policy-making authorities to decide to review Green Belt boundaries where they are unable to meet development needs, I am revoking the letter issued in March 2014 by the then Minister Nick Boles. This is to ensure PINS can fully play their part in helping to give local plans the best chance of being found sound. This provides PINS, where necessary, with the option to recommend as part of the examination that a Green Belt review is undertaken to consider whether additional sites could be identified, in line with national policy, to meet development needs.

I was also pleased to learn that from October, the Planning Inspectorate is introducing a new pre-examination checklist process, including in relation to the Duty to Cooperate. This new approach, coupled with ongoing engagement with local planning authorities through Advisory Visits, should ensure that local plan examinations progress as smoothly as possible.

As ever, my sincere thanks to you and all the staff at the Inspectorate for all the work you are doing to support the government's ambitious programme of reform.

Best wishes,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Pennycook', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

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