



Planning Inspectorate

3rd Floor
Temple Quay House
2 The Square
Bristol, BS1 6PN

Direct Line: 0303 444 ****
Customer services: 0303 444 5000
Email:

Matthew Pennycook MP
Minister of State Housing
and Planning
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Date: 30th October 2025

Sent via email to:
*****@communities.gov.uk

Dear Minister,

Thank you for your letter dated 9 October 2025.

I recognise the importance of local plans and their role at the heart of the plan-led system. It is clear to me and all of my Inspectors that for the plan-led system to operate effectively, local plans must be up to date. The remaining plans to come forward under the current system are vital in this regard, and to securing full plan coverage across England. Inspectors will continue to play their part by expediting where possible the examination of local plans that can be found legally compliant and sound and applying the approach you set out in your letter of 30 July 2024 where the local authority has more work to do.

Thank you for your appreciation of Inspectors who are progressing plans through examination with flexibility. It is reassuring for me and my Inspectors to know that you welcome a pragmatic approach to applying national policy where doing so will result in plan adoption, particularly where this would boost housing land supply.

You will be aware that the Duty to Cooperate has caused difficulties in several examinations recently. In some instances, the issue relates to the production of evidence to demonstrate compliance, and in those cases my Inspectors will continue to take a proportionate approach. With these instances in mind, I welcome the emphasis given in your letter to the advice in the Planning Practice Guidance relating to the Duty to Cooperate and the evidence that local authorities should produce to demonstrate compliance.

In other instances, however, the issue has been that the authority simply has not engaged in the constructive, active and ongoing way required in legislation. As you appreciate, where that is so, the Inspector's hands are tied. In my view, the fact that Inspectors are unable to remedy such shortcomings can be a blocker in the current system, and for operational reasons I welcome the absence of this feature in the new system. I would note that replicating that arrangement for the current system would increase the degree to which Inspectors are able to exercise flexibility and bring plans through examination to adoption.

Your revocation of the letter of March 2014 by the then Minister will also benefit us operationally. As you rightly suggest, this will provide Inspectors with the necessary latitude to ensure that local plans do all they can to meet the development needs of their communities by considering a fuller range of options.

We have now launched our new pre-examination checklist. In addition to being a discreet process, we are deploying it to local authorities through our Advisory Visits to aid the focus on soundness and legal compliance. Take-up so far has been healthy, and feedback has been positive. I will keep you updated on progress once this new process has had time to roll out more widely.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Paul Morrison', with a stylized, flowing script.

Paul Morrison CBE
Chief Executive