



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Matthew Pennycook MP

Minister of State for Housing and Planning
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Graham Stallwood
Interim Chief Executive
The Planning Inspectorate

15 July 2026

Dear Graham,

Local Plan examinations: deliverability and viability

The plan-led approach is, and must remain, the cornerstone of our planning system. This government remains determined to drive local plans to adoption as quickly as possible in order to achieve our ambition of universal plan coverage and to ensure that plans contribute positively to increasing rates of housebuilding and infrastructure delivery.

In light of the December 2026 submission deadline for legacy system local plans, you will be acutely aware that we are approaching a period of higher demand for local plan examination services. That forthcoming rise in demand obviously takes place against a backdrop of volatile economic conditions, largely owing to current geopolitical tensions, which is likely to impact on local plan preparation.

My letters to your predecessor of 8 October and 27 November 2025 concerning examination flexibilities, green belt reviews and the duty to co-operate, focussed on ensuring that the Planning Inspectorate could better support the government's objective of achieving universal plan coverage. I am writing further to those letters to emphasise the importance of taking an appropriately pragmatic and proportionate approach in respect of deliverability and viability when examining local plans.

As you know, the benefits of an up-to-date local plan are significant. Local plans are the best way for communities to shape decisions about how to deliver the housing and wider development their areas need. They enable local areas to set their strategy for future growth and their approach to protecting and enhancing the environment, and they provide the certainty and confidence required to bring development forward across the country. In the absence of an up-to-date plan, there is a high likelihood that development will 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.

While deliverability and viability must remain important considerations in plan making, substantial economic volatility can generate uncertainty which may not reflect the longer-term prospects for delivery over the life of plan. With the benefits of up-to-date local plans firmly in mind, it is important that local plan deliverability and viability challenges be considered in a broad context, especially

when economic conditions are volatile and are causing fluctuations to market conditions and heightening development risk and associated costs. As such, allocations should generally be assessed against their prospects of delivery over the plan period as a whole, rather than solely against current market conditions.

For these reasons, where a robust evidence base exists and there is a reasonable basis for concluding that allocations are capable of delivery over the plan period as a whole, I expect concerns regarding deliverability and viability to be approached pragmatically.

In considering the significance of any individual deliverability or viability concern, Inspectors may have regard to the wider consequences for communities and decision-making of delaying or preventing the adoption of an otherwise sound plan. In other words, Inspectors should carefully consider whether identified deliverability and viability issues are of such significance that they genuinely undermine the soundness of the plan, or whether they represent matters that could reasonably be expected to evolve over time as market conditions change. In doing so, Inspectors should distinguish between uncertainty arising from prevailing market conditions and evidence indicating a fundamental obstacle to delivery. Assessing the viability of plans does not require individual testing of every site or assurance that individual sites are viable. Plan makers can use site typologies to determine viability at the plan making stage.

Nothing in this letter alters the statutory local plan preparation or examination requirements, nor does it diminish the importance of proportionate evidence supporting plan allocations and policies.

I would be grateful if you would share this letter with Inspectors examining local plans. I respect the Planning Inspectorate's independent role in conducting examinations and reaching conclusions on the evidence before it, and I know that the Planning Inspectorate shares the government's determination to ensure that every area is covered by an up-to-date local plan. I look forward to continuing to work with you to achieve that objective.

Best wishes,

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

MATTHEW PENNYCOOK MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning