



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

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

Cllr Adi Malviya
Leader of Rochford District Council
Civic Suite
2 Hockley Road
Rayleigh
SS6 8EB

30 September 2026

Dear Cllr Malviya,

I am writing to inform you of my decision to place a holding direction on Rochford District Council with regards to emerging Rochford Local Plan ('the Plan') under section 21A of the 2004 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act ('the 2004 Act').

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.

I was therefore disappointed to learn that, although the Council has decided to progress the Plan to Regulation 19 stage, it has done so having removed a substantial number of sites, resulting in a significant shortfall against its identified local housing need. I am concerned that this approach risks advancing a plan that is unlikely to be found sound or legally compliant at examination, potentially undermining the Council's efforts to secure an up-to-date local plan.

In light of this, I have decided to exercise the Secretary of State's powers under section 21A of the 2004 Act (inserted by section 145(5) of the Housing and Planning Act 2016), to direct the Council not to take any step in connection with the Plan, while I consider whether to give a further direction under section 21 of the 2004 Act. This direction will remain in force until I withdraw it or give a direction under section 21 of the 2004 Act in relation to the Plan. I will also be considering directions under section 27 of the 2004 Act should this be necessary to drive the delivery of a sound plan.

To support me in deciding whether to withdraw the holding direction or take further action, I request that the Council provide me with the justification for the decision taken at the Full Council meeting on 23 September 2026 to remove a number of sites from the emerging Local Plan alongside the evidence produced in support of the emerging local plan. I would be grateful if you could provide this documentation by 7 October 2026.

I hope that you will engage constructively with my officials who will be in touch with your officers to take this work forward.

Yours sincerely,

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

RT HON MATTHEW PENNYCOOK MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning