



# 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 Andy Barnes  
Leader of Basildon Borough Council  
The Basildon Centre  
St. Martin's Square  
Basildon  
SS14 1DL

26 October 2026

Dear Cllr Barnes,

I write in response to your letter of 23 October regarding the emerging Basildon Borough Council Local Plan ('the Plan').

I acknowledge the steps the Council has taken to comply with my direction of 21 July 2026, including commencing consultation under Regulation 19. I also note the Council's request for an extension to the timetable for submission of the Plan for examination. This request will be considered carefully in light of the matters raised in your letter and a further response will be issued in due course.

However, I must take this opportunity to raise serious concerns in respect of the proposed motion for consideration at your Full Council meeting this evening which, as you know, seeks to reduce the housing requirement for Basildon Borough and withdraw the emerging Local Plan from further progression.

I want to ensure absolute clarity and eliminate any potential ambiguity in relation to the proposal to halt the progression of the Plan. My direction of 21 July expressly requires the Council to take no steps to withdraw the Plan. That direction remains in force, and the Council is required to comply with it. Any decision to take steps to withdraw the Plan in defiance of the direction would be unlawful. Should the Council nevertheless seek to do so, I would be forced to consider all appropriate steps available to me, including taking over the plan and potential legal action.

I have consistently sought to work constructively with the Council to deliver an up-to-date Local Plan that meets the needs of the Borough and gives its communities greater certainty over where development should take place.

I would strongly urge all members of the Council to have full regard to my 21 July direction before considering the motion this evening and to be mindful of the need to ensure that the Council continues to discharge its obligations under it.

I must also remind the Council that it remains subject to a Best Value Notice. Against that wider background, I expect the Council to demonstrate that it is acting responsibly, lawfully and in accordance with its statutory obligations.

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