



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Baroness Taylor of Stevenage
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Our reference: MC2024/15258

Cllr Richard Millard
Leader of East Hampshire District Council
Penns Place
Petersfield
GU31 4EX

12th August 2024

Dear *Richard*

Thank you for your letter of 11 July to the Deputy Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP, and for your kind words upon her appointment. I am replying as this matter falls within my ministerial responsibilities.

I appreciate your concerns about housing targets in East Hampshire, and I note your uncertainties about how the district can meet them.

Due to the quasi-judicial role that ministers play in the planning system, I am unable to comment on any individual Local Plan, however, I can provide the following general comments.

This Government is committed to the plan-making system; it is the right way to plan for the growth and environmental enhancement our country needs by bringing local councils and their communities together to agree the future of their areas. You will know that each plan is subject to a public examination in front of an independent inspector, who plays an important role in examining plans impartially to ensure that they are legally compliant and sound. As part of this examination, the inspector is able to consider whether constraints exist for an authority, to justify not meeting their housing need.

We have always been clear that Councils should continue to plan at pace and that plan-making should not be paused in anticipation of the intended new system or policy changes. We want to see universal coverage of ambitious plans as soon as possible. On 30 July, we launched a consultation on proposed reform to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other planning policy reforms. As part of this consultation, we propose for local authorities with emerging plans that have reached regulation 18 will need to continue plan-making, apply the policies of the revised NPPF and progress these plans as quickly as possible.

The proposals in the consultation are not, at this time, Government policy. Current national policy as set out in the NPPF remains in force, and local plans should continue to be prepared in line with the NPPF. The consultation closes at 11:45pm on Tuesday 24 September, and I would encourage the council to respond before then. The full consultation and details on how to respond are available here: <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/proposed-reforms-to-the-national-planning-policy-framework-and-other-changes-to-the-planning-system>.

It is our view that by strengthening housing targets and allowing development on poor-quality 'grey belt' land, we will get Britain building again and kickstart our mission to deliver 1.5 million homes in

the next five years. This will improve security for millions of people and unlock essential economic growth.

As you may be aware, we are in the middle of one of the most acute housing crises in living memory. Home ownership is out of reach for too many - too few homes are built and even fewer are genuinely affordable. Our housing shortage drives high rents and leaves some of the most vulnerable without access to a safe and secure home.

We have begun this work through our consultation on proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and other changes to the planning system, which we launched on 30 July. This is the first step in correcting the housing crisis that is leaving home ownership out of reach for too many, driving high rents and leaving some of the most vulnerable without access to a safe and secure home.

You raise concerns over the proportion of East Hampshire that can be developed given part of the area falls into the South Downs National Park, which is under the responsibility of a separate local planning authority. I note your points over how the standard method for assessing housing needs works in practise in areas where more than one local planning authority operates. As with the current standard method, the data proposed to be used in the new method would be available at local authority level, not local planning authority level. For these reasons it is recognised that for some local planning authorities, where the data used in the method is not available, it may be more appropriate to use an alternative method. This would include those that are National Park planning authorities and local planning authorities that contain areas of National Park. Paragraph 7 of chapter 3 of the above consultation refers to this and explains that we intend to provide further planning practice guidance on this matter alongside the introduction of any new standard method.

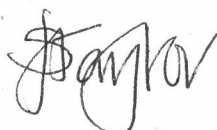
It should be noted that there is already existing planning practice guidance on this matter in relation to the current standard method (Paragraph: 014 Reference ID: 2a-014-20190220). This states, 'Where strategic policy-making authorities do not align with local authority boundaries, or the data required for the model are not available such as in National Parks and the Broads Authority... an alternative approach will have to be used. Such authorities may continue to identify a housing need figure using a method determined locally, but in doing so will need to consider the best available information on anticipated changes in households as well as local affordability levels.'

Paragraph 11 of the current NPPF (the presumption in favour of sustainable development) sets out that local plans should, as a minimum, plan to meet needs in full unless specific policies in the NPPF that relate to areas or assets of particular importance provide a strong reason for restricting the overall scale, type or distribution of development. Footnote 7 to paragraph 11 sets out these specific policy areas, which includes National Parks. We are not proposing any changes to this in our consultation. It will continue to be for the local planning authority to evidence and justify their final housing requirement figure.

You may be aware that local plan support is available through the Planning Advisory Service (PAS) and will be prioritised on a case-by-case basis to ensure the most effective and efficient use of this resource.

Thank you again for taking the time to write in.

Yours sincerely,



BARONESS TAYLOR OF STEVENAGE
Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State