



Elmbridge

Borough Council

Matthew Pennycook (MP)
Ministry of Housing, Communities
and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
LONDON
SW1P 4DF

Elmbridge Borough Council
Civic Centre
High Street
Esher
Surrey KT10 9SD

Date: 23 October 2024

Dear Mr Pennycook (MP),

Elmbridge Local Plan

On Friday 18 October 2024 we received a letter from our Planning Inspector refusing a 12-month extension to our Local Plan examination. Whilst we understand why the Planning Inspector felt she had no choice, following your letter of 30 July 2024 and the proposed six-month limit on extensions, the unintended consequence is that this decision will ultimately delay the delivery of a significant number of new homes.

We are requesting that you, in consultation with the Inspector exercise discretion with the six-month extension limit and permit a 12-month extension in accordance with the timetable that we have provided. We recognise that both the Department and the Inspectorate would need to be satisfied that we can achieve it and we would be happy to be monitored through this period.

As part of the examination the Inspector asked the council to rebase the housing trajectory to take account of two years of under delivery following the submission of the plan. This reduced our housing delivery figures considerably and as such the Planning Inspector wrote to us on 11 September 2024 setting out the need to allocate more sites to meet housing need and in particular affordable housing need. The Planning Inspector also set out that in her view, there were exceptional circumstances to amend the Green Belt boundary to meet need.

We do understand that historically councils have asked for pauses at examination to delay decision making or difficult decisions.

However, we have asked for time to put in additional sites to meet our housing need not, to slow down the adoption of an up-to-date Local Plan. The 12-month timeframe is a deliverable yet compact timetable to identify and assess new sites, a process which we have already commenced with a 'call for sites' exercise going live on 9 October. In addition, the 12-month timetable allows us to ensure that future development is properly supported by infrastructure which, requires time to talk to our infrastructure and delivery partners.

We support the Government's ambition to have universal coverage of ambitious local plans as quickly as possible. The quickest way for Elmbridge to adopt a plan for the borough is to amend the plan already at examination. Requiring the council to start the process again will result in a significant delay. In addition to the potential delay in the provision of housing numbers, it also delays the adoption of updated and more relevant policies on climate change, sustainability, viability and biodiversity.

We wrote to the Planning Inspector giving comfort that we are committed to doing the work and making the hard decisions within 12 months. This is within the Administration's gift. However, as I am sure you are aware, a new plan will require a significantly longer timetable, which for Elmbridge will span at least three local elections and potentially different administrations.

We would be grateful if you would look again at this decision and, if in conjunction with the Inspector you are assured of our commitment, we hope you would be minded to permit us to take the necessary steps to continue with our examination.

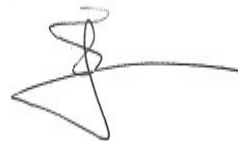
We would be available, if required, to meet with you at your convenience to discuss our Local Plan.

We look forward to hearing from you.


Yours sincerely



**Councillor Mike Rollings
Leader of the Council**



**Councillor Simon Waugh
Deputy Leader of the Council**



**Councillor Janet Turner
Hinchley Wood Residents Association
Group**

cc C Masters, Planning Inspector