



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Matthew Pennycook MP

Minister of State for Housing and Planning

2 Marsham Street

London

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Our reference: MC2024/26342

Councillor Mike Rollings
Leader, Elmbridge Borough Council

Councillor Simon Waugh
Deputy Leader, Elmbridge Borough Council

Councillor Janet Turner
Hinchley Wood Residents Association Group

By email:

sparkes@elmbridge.gov.uk

25 November 2024

Dear all,

Thank you for your letter of 23 October regarding the Elmbridge Local Plan.

I regret that due to the Secretary of State's quasi-judicial role in the planning system, I am unable to comment on details relating to the Plan. As you will be aware, Local Planning Authorities submit a plan when they consider it is ready for examination. We encourage Councils to have Planning Inspectorate Advisory visits in advance of submission, as these visits will often raise concerns that can be addressed prior to a plan being submitted.

You have requested that I review the decision of the Planning Inspector in relation to whether the plan can be paused for a 12-month period. The Secretary of State appoints an independent person, the Inspector, to carry out plan examinations to determine whether plans are sound and legally compliant.

In September, the Inspector issued her interim findings, concluding that there were a number of very significant issues with the Elmbridge Local Plan that needed to be addressed. The Council was asked to indicate how long the necessary work would take.

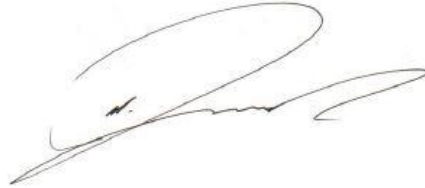
The Inspector's letter also referenced my letter to the Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate in July, which set out the government's position on how examination of local plans should be conducted in relation to the operation of pragmatism. My letter made clear that pragmatism should not be used to address fundamental issues with the soundness of a plan which would require a delay of more than six months overall. The letter also set out that Inspectors have discretion to extend the six-month pause where it will deliver an adopted plan in the current system, and they are confident the local authority can deliver outstanding work to an agreed timeframe. The Inspector has concluded that it would be inappropriate to apply her discretion in this case.

I can appreciate that you are very disappointed that this is the conclusion the Inspector reached, but the Secretary of State has appointed the independent Inspector to conduct the examination, and I

consider it is for the Inspector to make a decision regarding the soundness of the Elmbridge Local Plan, having regard to the evidence base and informed by the initial hearings.

I note that you have requested a meeting to discuss the issues you have raised. Unfortunately, for the reasons set out above, I will be unable to meet with you. However, departmental officials could meet with your officers regarding the local plan, and they will contact Elmbridge officers to make arrangements.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Pennycook', with a large, stylized initial 'M'.

MATTHEW PENNYCOOK MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning