

Joanna Averley
Chief Planner
MHCLG

By email only

15 October 2025

Dear Joanna,

We are writing collectively as a group of local authorities in response to the Chief Planner's newsletter dated 19 August 2025, to express our growing concern regarding the continued delays to the implementation of the new Local Plan system, including that authorities will not be able to carry over work between the current and new plan-making systems.

Originally scheduled for introduction in June 2025, the new plan-making system was postponed last year, with still no clear indication of when the necessary legislation, regulations, or accompanying guidance will be brought forward. While we appreciate the complexities involved in delivering such reforms, the prolonged uncertainty is significantly impeding our ability to plan effectively and allocate resources appropriately—particularly in the context of the already challenging environment faced by local authorities.

The newsletter encourages authorities to continue developing their evidence base, while cautioning against undertaking abortive work. This suggests the potential for a standardised list of required studies, which would be welcomed. However, the absence of timely guidance makes it difficult to avoid duplication or misalignment, especially given the ambitious 30-month timeframe and the limited resources currently available to many authorities. The 'guillotine' provisions between the current and new system prevent any meaningful progress, engagement or consultation.

Beyond the operational challenges of preparing new Local Plans, we are particularly concerned by the lack of recognition of the serious implications these delays pose for authorities struggling to maintain a five-year housing land supply. The absence of any proposed transitional protections increases the risk of speculative and potentially unsuitable development, and may hinder the ability to secure infrastructure funding—further exacerbating issues of unsustainable growth.

Those signatory authorities currently affected by Local Government Re-organisation also wish to highlight the intersection of these delays with the Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) process. In cases where plans have not yet reached examination prior to reorganisation, successor authorities may face considerable

difficulties in continuing this work. While we understand MHCLG has indicated that future authorities should allow existing plan-making efforts to proceed, the reality of finalising legacy plans while simultaneously preparing new ones for restructured areas will place significant strain on resources and risk confusion among stakeholders and the wider public.

In light of these concerns, we strongly urge MHCLG to publish detailed guidance on the new Local Plan system as a matter of urgency, including any arrangements for authorities adversely impacted in their plan-making and / or decision-making by the delays. Doing so would enable authorities to plan with greater confidence, allocate resources more effectively, and minimise the risk of abortive work during this transitional period.

Yours sincerely,



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Nigel Smith, Director of Place
North Hertfordshire Council



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Ellen Higginson, Place Shaping Lead
Watford Borough Council



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Sara Saunders, Director for Place &
Deputy Chief Executive
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Flo Churchill

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Flo Churchill, Interim Director
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Andrew Davie, Service Director –
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