



Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government

**Matthew Pennycook MP**  
*Minister of State for Housing  
and Planning*

**Ministry of Housing,  
Communities &  
Local Government**  
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London SW1P 4DF

Cllr Karen Grinsell  
Leader of the Council  
Council House  
Manor Square  
Solihull  
B91 3QB

Cllr Andy Mackiewicz  
Cabinet Portfolio Holder- Climate Change & Planning  
Council House  
Manor Square  
Solihull  
B91 3QB

11 December 2025

Dear Cllr Grinsell and Cllr Mackiewicz,

I am writing to you regarding Solihull Metropolitan Borough Council's ('SMBC') recent decision to approve an update to the Local Development Scheme (LDS). The new timetable would see you producing a plan in the new system, in order to align with the preparation of the West Midlands Spatial Development Strategy (SDS).

As you know, the government was elected on a manifesto that included a clear commitment to build 1.5 million homes in this Parliament. Local plans play an essential role in the delivery of new homes, and it is the government's aim to achieve universal plan coverage.

We have been clear that the strategic planning reforms should not be used as an excuse to delay local plan progress in the current system and that local authorities are expected to work towards the adoption of an up-to-date local plan by December 2026.

This government is not blind to the challenges that local authorities are facing in meeting the current system deadline. This is why, in my letter to the Planning Inspectorate of 9 October, I have outlined an expectation that local plans submitted in the current system should be examined with an appropriate degree of flexibility. This is to ensure that plans which are capable of being found sound can be swiftly adopted to facilitate the effective delivery of housing, jobs and infrastructure. We have also decided not to 'save' the Duty to Cooperate when the Regulations for the new system come into force early next year, thereby removing this legal requirement for plans in the current system.

In addition, the government has provided £29m in new funding to support local authorities with Local Plan delivery and Green Belt reviews. As you will know, SMBC itself has been awarded £70k to support with the costs of undertaking a Green Belt review. I also understand that my

officials have continued to engage closely with your officers to help the Council navigate any challenges it is experiencing with plan preparation, as has the Planning Advisory Service (PAS). We are willing to further support authorities aiming to deliver a plan in this system.

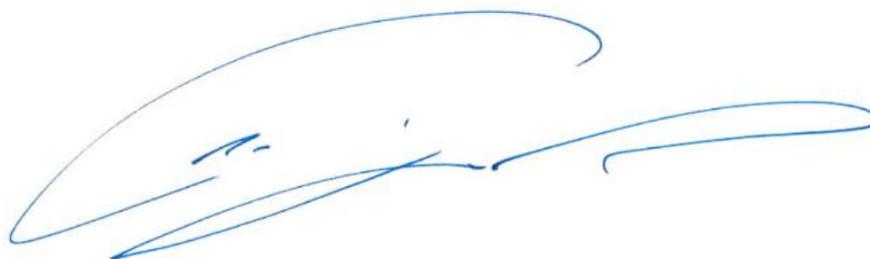
In light of what I have outlined above, it is disappointing that SMBC are no longer committed to submission of the plan by December 2026. Getting a plan in place as soon as possible provides the most effective protection against speculative development coming forward, with reduced public engagement and fewer guarantees that it will make the most of an area's potential.

I understand that your new LDS proposes an 'Issues and Options' consultation ahead of the formal processes of the new system. I think it would be prudent to ensure this consultation satisfies the requirements of Regulation 18, and this approach should be tested with an Inspector through an Advisory Visit. To ensure this is carried out swiftly; to avoid any delay to your plan making, I have asked the Planning Inspectorate to undertake the Advisory Visit before Christmas.

I also note that your previous emerging Local Plan was withdrawn from examination in October 2024. The Council should be able to build on the work undertaken at that time and apply the lessons learned to bring forward a new local plan quickly and effectively. This, too, should be tested with a Planning Inspector during the Advisory Visit.

If following your consultation you remain of the view that your Local Plan should be brought forward under the new system, I would welcome a detailed explanation of your reasoning and why this is the quickest way to deliver an up-to-date plan that provides for the housing and wider development needs of Solihull.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Pennycook', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

**MATTHEW PENNYCOOK MP**  
Minister of State for Housing and Planning