



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Rt Hon Matthew Pennycook MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Our reference: PO2026/19510

Alex Brewer MP
House of Commons
London
SW1A 0AA

24 August 2026

Dear Alex,

Thank you for your correspondence of 13 July and 20 July about the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan.

I appreciate how important this matter is and I am grateful to you for taking the time to write. My officials are happy to meet with the officers at Basingstoke and Deane Council to discuss how the Local Plan can be progressed.

Please be assured that I am conscious of the other matters you have raised, and I appreciate the insight your correspondence provides.

I hope the attached response suitably addresses the rest of your enquiry. If that is not the case, please don't hesitate to let me know.

Best wishes,

RT HON MATTHEW PENNYCOOK MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning



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Dear Alex Brewer MP,

Thank you for your correspondence, to which the Housing Minister has asked me to reply.

The Department understands that the Basingstoke and Deane Local Plan is due to go to Regulation 19 Consultation this summer. However, we appreciate the issues that you have raised. While the Department cannot comment on the status of a local plan or planning proposals due to Ministers' role within the planning system, I can provide the following information, which I hope provides reassurance that the Government is acting on these issues.

Regarding planning appeals, planning inspectors are required to determine an appeal in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The planning inspector has to balance national policy, wider Government objectives and safeguarding local interests. In coming to a decision the inspector will give careful consideration to the planning merits of the case, having regard to the local plan and other material considerations. While a planning inspector may come to a different view from the local planning authority and allow the appeal, this does not mean that they have disregarded the views of the local authority or local residents; rather that they have attributed different weight to the issues in coming to their decision. Currently some two-thirds of appeals are refused, so the decision of the local authority is upheld in the majority of cases.

We fully recognise the strength of feeling about the need to secure a reliable drinking water supply. The Government is aware of wider concerns with South East Water's performance and the challenges this presents to the Basingstoke and Deane draft local plan and housing delivery. The Government have been clear that South East Water's current performance is unacceptable and that the company must demonstrate rapid and sustained improvement. There are strong statutory requirements on water companies to provide a secure supply for current and future customers, and regulators will take action where these obligations are not met.

Defra's Water Delivery Taskforce, is undertaking urgent work to support planning for development with South East Water and local authorities. This includes a dedicated subgroup involving Basingstoke and Deane Borough Council officers, focused on resolving planning issues across South East Water's operational region. Government officials and those involved in the subgroup will continue to work closely with all relevant parties to resolve the challenges faced in South East Water's operational regions.

We understand your concern that housing growth should not get ahead of water infrastructure. The Government is strengthening the way local plans, infrastructure providers and regulators work together, so water supply, wastewater and environmental capacity are considered early and transparently through plan-making, rather than becoming a late-stage barrier to development or a source of uncertainty for residents. The Government's Water White Paper sets out a wider programme of reform to create a more efficient, integrated and accountable water system. It is clear that the current system has too often been fragmented, with water company planning, local plan-making, environmental regulation and infrastructure funding operating on different cycles. The Clean Water Bill will help address this by supporting faster and more efficient delivery of water infrastructure, tackling bottlenecks such as limited treatment capacity and water supply constraints, and strengthening the links between water planning, environmental protection and growth.

To go further in addressing the misalignment between local plans and water company planning, the Department has implemented a new plan-making system which will ensure better join-up between water and development planning processes. This includes prescribing water and sewerage companies in 'Requirement to Assist' regulations so they will be obliged to assist with plan making where reasonably requested, and listing water and sewerage companies as consultation bodies so they will be made aware of key plan-making consultations where they have an interest.

Infrastructure constraints can be a material consideration, and where there is clear evidence that a regulatory regime is not operating effectively in a particular area, decision-makers may need to depart from the general assumption. However, such departures must be based on substantive evidence, not a precautionary approach. The planning system should not become a proxy regulator for the water industry. The Government's position is that water and wastewater infrastructure should support, not prevent, the delivery of sustainable housing and economic growth. Where infrastructure constraints arise, the focus should be on enabling development in practice, including through phased solutions and early engagement between local authorities, infrastructure providers and developers.

Finally, the Department recognises that local planning authorities, developers and others rightly expect the Housing Delivery Test to be published according to a regular timetable. To support a return to a regular publication timetable, data collection for the 2024 and 2025 Housing Delivery Test measurements was combined. The Department is working towards publication of the 2024 and 2025 Housing Delivery Test results and remains committed to publishing both sets of results as soon as possible. Unfortunately, the Department is unable to provide a specific publication date at this stage. Until updated results are published, the 2023 Housing Delivery Test should continue to be used for decision-making purposes.

The Government will continue to work with local planning authorities, South East Water, regulators and other partners to support resilient water supplies and ensure that new homes are planned and delivered sustainably, with the infrastructure communities need.

Thank you again for writing on this important matter.

Yours sincerely,

ALEX BADRICK
Deputy Principal Private Secretary