

Lee Rowley MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning
Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London



Please reply to: Councillor Joanne Sexton
Leader of the Council
Direct Line: 01784 446350
Email: clr.sexton@spelthorne.gov.uk

Date: 11 December 2023

Dear Lee Rowley MP

S.27 Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 Local Plan Intervention

As Leader and on behalf of Spelthorne Borough Council, I wish to welcome you to your new post as Housing Minister at the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. You will no doubt be aware of the previous correspondence I have entered into with your predecessor, Rachael Maclean MP, and I am responding to her latest letter dated 31 October 2023 in respect of the Secretary of State's intervention in Spelthorne's Local Plan.

We have read Ms Maclean's response to our exceptional circumstances case on the justification for intervention. Whilst we continue to strongly disagree that the intervention was either necessary or proportionate, after careful consideration the Council has decided not to formally challenge the ministerial decision to 'intervene' in our Local Plan. In our earlier letter we requested a meeting with your predecessor which was declined whilst we considered our legal position. Now this has been concluded we hope that you will respond positively. We therefore request an early meeting with you to set out our particular circumstances and context for the Council considering the option to withdraw the Local Plan from examination, together with the other options that were available to us. This would allow us to explain the concerns we have around the submission version of the Plan and the residual risks that may result in our appointed inspector being unable to find it sound.

It is this Council's firm aspiration to have an up-to-date Local Plan in place at the earliest opportunity. We agree that a plan-led approach is best for our communities and those wishing to develop in Spelthorne so that we can ensure we have a clear strategy and policy framework for the next 15 years, supported by the infrastructure required to deliver benefits to our existing and future residents. We remain concerned that there are outstanding issues affecting the current strategy that could result in changes to the Plan that won't be capable of addressing through modification of the submission version. We recognise that this will be a matter for the Inspector to consider when the hearings are resumed next year and we are maintaining contact with him on our progress. Officers are working hard to address some of these concerns, which he has already identified, particularly in relation to flood risk. Alongside this work, we are progressing with design codes that will deliver a high-quality framework for managing design of new development, which is of great importance to our communities.

As a result of the intervention, officers have regular meetings with your officials at DLUHC to keep them informed of our progress towards resumption of the Local Plan examination. Last week we issued your officials with an indicative timeline that sets out the work programme and milestones to achieve this, which we have also shared with the Inspector and residents' groups. We trust this demonstrates our commitment towards the adoption of a sound Local Plan at the earliest opportunity that crucially also addresses the justified concerns of those we represent. We

have also made it clear that this timeline is dependent on the date for publication of the revised National Planning Policy Framework, already long overdue, and timely engagement with the Environment Agency, both of which are outside our control.

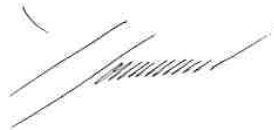
I'm sure we can all agree that preparing a local plan is complex and both technically and politically challenging and in places like Spelthorne with significant environmental constraints, this is proving to be even harder. We both have the common goal to get Spelthorne's Local Plan in place as soon as possible so we can ensure development is of the right type and quality and in the right place.

I look forward to hearing from you and receiving some suitable dates for the suggested meeting with you, together with our Deputy Leader and Chair of Environment and Sustainability Committee.

Yours sincerely



Cllr Joanne Sexton, Leader of the Council



Daniel C Mouawad, Chief Executive

Cc: Jameson Bridgwater – Planning Inspector

Cc: Kwasi Kwarteng MP