



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

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

**Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government**
4th Floor, Fry Building
2 Marsham Street
London SW1P 4DF

Cllr Glenn Haffenden
Leader of Hastings Borough Council
Muriel Matters House
Breeds Place
Hastings
East Sussex
TN34 3UY

Cllr Mark Etherington
Strategic Planning and Climate Adaptation Portfolio Holder
Muriel Matters House
Breeds Place
Hastings
East Sussex
TN34 3UY

13 February 2026

Dear Cllr Haffenden and Cllr Etherington,

As you know, this government is a firm advocate of a plan-led system. It is through local development plans that communities best shape decisions about how to deliver the housing and wider development that their area needs, and those plans must remain the cornerstone of our planning system. Without an up-to-date plan in place, there is a high likelihood that development will come forward on a piecemeal and speculative basis, with reduced public engagement and fewer guarantees that it will make the most of an area's potential.

In this context, I am concerned that your Regulation 18 draft plan, scheduled for consultation later this month, contains a minimum housing requirement of 175-187 dwellings per annum (dpa), a figure which represents less than 27% of the area's current Local Housing Need (LHN) of 697 dpa.

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets a clear expectation that plans should be positively prepared – providing a strategy which, as a minimum, seeks to meet a Council's development need. This will be a key consideration for the independent Inspector in evaluating whether Hastings' local plan can be found 'sound'.

National planning guidance sets out the steps authorities should take if they cannot identify enough sites to meet needs. They should first revisit their assessments and assumptions about development potential of specific sites. If evidence shows that needs still cannot be met within

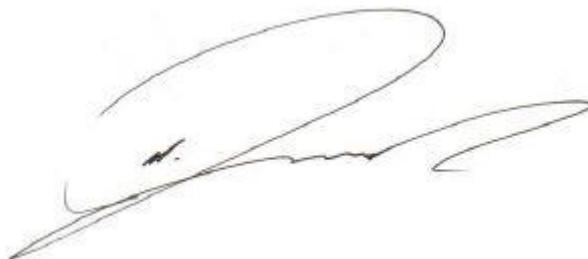
the area, authorities must work with neighbouring areas through statements of common ground to explore whether unmet needs can be accommodated elsewhere. If, after this process, needs remain unmet, the authority must clearly and robustly explain the reasons during the plan examination.

To ensure that Hastings Council has left no stone unturned in its efforts to identify land that is suitable for development, I have asked the Planning Inspectorate to hold an Advisory Visit with the Council over the coming weeks. The primary purpose of this meeting should be to examine whether the approach that the Council has taken to meeting its development needs is robust and capable of being found sound at examination.

Planning Advisory Service (PAS) is also able to offer support and advice on local plan progress. I understand that your officers are already engaging with PAS and I urge you to continue to do so should further support be beneficial in facilitating delivery of a sound plan.

I hope the Council will engage constructively with both further Advisory Visits and PAS support and I have instructed my officials to monitor the outcomes of these sessions and update me accordingly.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Matthew Pennycook', with a large, sweeping flourish above the name.

MATTHEW PENNYCOOK MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning