



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

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

All Council Leaders

23 October 2026

Dear Leaders,

As you know, this government places great importance on the role of local development plans. Plans set out a vision and a framework for the future development of an area, addressing needs and opportunities in relation to housing, the economy, community facilities and infrastructure – as well as a basis for conserving and enhancing the natural and historic environment, mitigating and adapting to climate change, and achieving well designed places.

The plan-led approach is, and must remain, the cornerstone of our planning system, but a plan-led approach will only be successful if plans are in place and kept up to date. It is for that reason that the government remains determined to drive local plans to adoption as quickly as possible in order to achieve our ambition of universal plan coverage and to ensure that plans contribute positively to increasing rates of housebuilding and infrastructure delivery.

With that objective in mind, and in order to facilitate a timely transition to the new local plan-making system without penalising local planning authorities whose plans were at an advanced stage, we determined that the last date for local plan submissions under the legacy regulations would be 31 December 2026. I have no doubt that the existence of that clear deadline, alongside appropriate intervention when required, has driven a significant acceleration in plan progress, with 56 plans reaching pre-submission consultation so far this year.

I recognise that many local planning authorities have worked hard, and in good faith, to meet the 31 December 2026 deadline and are close to completing their Regulation 19 consultation. I thank them for their efforts to date. I also appreciate fully that many will still need to carry out a range of administrative and governance tasks prior to submission, and that some are at risk of missing that deadline by a fine margin, often for reasons beyond their control.

Forcing local planning authorities that have done the right thing, but who are at risk of missing the 31 December 2026 deadline by small margins, to begin anew in the new plan-making system would not be fair and it runs counter to our shared aims of a plan-led approach to development and universal plan coverage.

Having reflected on the matter, and in recognition of the genuine effort that many local planning authorities have made to meet the end of year deadline we imposed, I consider that there is a

compelling case for a short extension to be given to those authorities who have not yet completed their Regulation 19 consultation but will have done so by 31 December 2026.

In the light of this and given the advanced stage of plan making reached by many authorities, I have decided to exercise the Secretary of State's powers under paragraphs 4(5) and 5(5) of Schedule 1 to the Levelling-up and Regeneration Act 2023 (Commencement No. 11 and Saving and Transitional Provisions) Regulations 2026 which allow me to direct that a later date than 31 December can be applied to specified local planning and minerals and waste development plan documents.

I direct that any local planning or minerals and waste development plan document being prepared in the legacy system which has concluded its final Regulation 19 consultation period by 31 December 2026 will be given a three-month extension. For these plans, the deadline for submission will now be 31 March 2027. This direction does not apply to any plans in relation to which I have already made a specific direction regarding the date of submission of a plan. In such cases an individual request will need to be made to me for consideration of an amendment to the current direction.

Irrespective of the direction set out above, authorities should make every effort to submit their plans as soon as possible. For areas who have already completed their Regulation 19 pre-submission consultation, progress to submission should be made as planned. There should be no expectation of further extensions beyond the end of March. This is the last opportunity for areas seeking to progress plans to submission in the legacy system.

I would request that all authorities who will no longer be submitting by 31 December 2026 provide an updated Local Development Scheme to LocalPlans@communities.gov.uk by no later than the end of November, setting out their revised submission date.

I will continue to monitor progress and exercise powers of intervention where plans are not progressed as required.

Yours sincerely,

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

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