



16 August 2024

Mr William Fieldhouse
C/O Ian Kemp
Programme Officer
ian@localplanservices.co.uk
(by email only)

West Berkshire Council
Market Street,
Newbury
Berkshire,
RG14 5LD



Dear Mr Fieldhouse,

West Berkshire Local Plan Review – Inspectors Post Hearings Letter IN30

I write regarding the Council's response to the interim findings and recent action points set out in your Post Hearings Letter IN30, published 31st July 2024.

Thank you for your dutiful consideration of the Local Plan Review and expert chairmanship of the examination hearings to date, which have been a challenging process for all involved particularly the Council, given the exceptional circumstances surrounding the development of this Plan.

As we expressed to the previous Housing, Planning and Building Safety Minister, Lee Rowley earlier this year in our letter dated 12 January 2024, the Council has been put in the most difficult position of progressing with a plan which the Liberal Democrat Administration has declared to be significantly flawed and not representative of community aspirations.

In this context, we are once again extremely disappointed at being instructed to follow a course of action that we know will result in even more dissatisfaction within our communities.

Recent Government announcements have made it very clear that the Council has no reasonable alternative option other than to comply with your requirements or risk direct intervention, further eroding any influence over the Plan and breaking this Liberal Democrat Administration's commitment to listen to its residents and secure the very best for the communities it serves.

We believe firmly that decisions should be taken by Local Councils but recognise that direct Government intervention could result should we not comply with the Inspector's instructions. This would be a further blow to local democracy which we are unwilling to accept.

The attached main modifications are, therefore, suggested to you for consideration and inclusion in your final report, in the knowledge that they will place a heavy burden on our communities, but will enable some level of local influence to continue.

We trust that throughout your consideration, you will remain committed, as we do, to ensuring that this Local Plan also provides for the necessary local amenities and infrastructure to support our communities, and the protection necessary for our valued landscapes and places.

Yours sincerely



Jeff Brooks
Council Leader