



THAME Town Council

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Graham Hunt, Town Clerk & RFO

Dominic Raab MP
Minister of State for Housing
Housing, Communities and Local Government
House of Commons
Westminster
London
SW1A 0AA

6 July 2018

Dear Minister

Protection for – and the lifetime of - Neighbourhood Plans

As you probably know, Thame was a front-runner in terms of Neighbourhood Planning, was one of the first areas to have a Neighbourhood Plan adopted and is a strong advocate for the continued success of Neighbourhood Plans. We enjoy specific support from our MP, John Howell.

We wrote to one of your predecessors, Alok Sharma MP (as enclosed), in relation to the Written Ministerial Statement from one of your other predecessors, Gavin Barwell MP, that provided temporary protection to Neighbourhood Plans, in the event of the Planning Authority being unable to demonstrate a 5 year land supply.

That statement was welcomed by Thame as Thame had already delivered a significant number of new dwellings, way ahead of the national build rate, in conformance with its publicly adopted and supported Neighbourhood Plan. But given a shortfall in the district-wide housing supply, developers were circulating at the opportunity to dismiss the Neighbourhood Plan, and the community's significant efforts, through the failings of the other developers and the Planning Authority.

We were assured that the time limit of the temporary protection in the WMS was only there because planning law was due to be changed, to include permanent protection in line with the Ministerial Statement. There was then a General Election which has delayed that law change, but we were again assured that provided the Judicial Review of the Ministerial Statement went the way of the Government then the permanent protection would be established via a revised NPPF.

We were then flabbergasted to see that the revised NPPF has a different 2 year time limit within it. It isn't fully clear, but our understanding is that through the combination of paragraphs 11d, 14, 75 and 212 that a Neighbourhood Plan brought into force after December 2018 will be deemed out-of-date after 2 years if there isn't an adequate planning authority wide housing supply. If that time limit remains, it will effectively kill Neighbourhood Plans.

The policies of linked Local and Neighbourhood Plans serve to form the development plan for an area. This proposed revision to the NPPF would serve to introduce a hierarchy in terms of policy that should not exist, through the introduction of a time-limit for town and parish-led development plan policies.

Can you please assure us that the good works of local communities, in fulfilling Government's wishes to provide massive volunteer contributions in the production of a Neighbourhood Plan aren't going to have to do it every 2 years? It just won't happen, and will be the end of Neighbourhood Plans. It seems that the NPPF is penalising the local community for the failings of the wider District. How can that be justified?

Yours faithfully

Graham Hunt
Town Clerk