



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Councillor Phil Davies
Leader of Wirral Council

The Rt Hon Sajid Javid MP

*Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and
Local Government*

**Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local
Government**

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Dear Councillor Davies

LOCAL PLAN INTERVENTION

Following your Council's persistent failure over many years to get a Local Plan in place, on 16 November 2017, I expressed concerns about the lack of progress your authority has made on plan-making. The housing White Paper set out that intervention in Local Plans will be prioritised where:

- the least progress in plan-making has been made
- policies in plans had not been kept up to date
- there was higher housing pressure; and
- intervention would have the greatest impact in accelerating Local Plan production

We also made clear that decisions on intervention will be informed by the wider planning context in each area (specifically, the extent to which authorities are working cooperatively to put strategic plans in place, and the potential impact that not having a plan has on neighbourhood planning activity). I gave you the opportunity to put forward any exceptional circumstances by 31 January 2018, which, in your view, justifies the failure to produce a Local Plan under the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 regime.

I have considered carefully the submission accompanying your letter of 29 January 2018. There has been a consistent failure to produce a Local Plan since the last Plan was adopted in 2000. The Council has failed to meet milestones in published Local Development Schemes at least six times since 2004.

Your Council's argument to justify this failure is that you are enabling development, your plan-making was delayed by the abolition of Regional Spatial Strategies, that you will form part of the Single Spatial Plan for the Liverpool City Region and that Government's withdrawal of certain funding delayed your plan. These do not appear to

be exceptional circumstances. These circumstances are not unique to Wirral. Other Councils are members of Combined Authorities and are producing Local Plans alongside strategic plans, and all areas were affected by changes to regional planning. Enabling development in the short-term without a plan is not a justification for failure to produce a plan as this undermines the plan-led system and many other councils have prepared a Local Plan from their existing budgets.

In terms of our intervention criteria your Council has failed to make progress on plan-making, the policies for the area are therefore not up to date. This is not an area of high housing pressure. The Council has recently proposed a revised publication date of September 2019 a delay of some further 18 months. There are no exceptional circumstances to justify why your Council has made such little progress over the years so I consider plan production can be accelerated, as there is currently no justification for the length of time your Council are proposing to take on further evidence gathering.

Having considered your representations and the Government's policy set out in the November 2017 Written Ministerial Statement and housing White Paper I have decided to continue with the intervention process. This will involve a team of experts, led by the Chief Planner, providing me with further advice on next steps. My officials will be in contact with your officers to discuss the next steps.

My officials will also begin formal discussions on the options of inviting the Combined Authority for the Liverpool City Region to prepare a Local Plan for Wirral and on the possibility of directing an accelerated Joint Plan, as part of considering whether to use my statutory powers and if so which ones.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'S. Javid', with a small comma at the end.

RT HON SAJID JAVID MP