



Councillor Rue Grewal
Carpenders Park Ward

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6 February 2026

Matthew Pennycook MP

Minister of State for Housing and Planning
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Dear Minister,

Re: Three Rivers Regulation 19 Local Plan. Holding direction and request for evidence-based reconsideration and ministerial engagement

I write as the Independent District Councillor for Carpenders Park and Independent Group Leader on Three Rivers District Council regarding your department's intervention in the Three Rivers Regulation 19 Local Plan process.

I am extremely disappointed that you have intervened at this stage before fully reviewing the substantial body of work and evidence already produced by Three Rivers District Council. Your letter has caused significant frustration and anxiety among residents, as it conveys the impression that conclusions may have been reached before the full evidence base underpinning the Plan has been properly considered. Given the scale, depth and complexity of the work produced over several years, the issuing of a holding direction at this point is deeply concerning.

This Local Plan has not been rushed, nor has it been driven by ideology. It has been developed carefully, transparently and across party lines, with Council officers, councillors from all political groups (no party voted against), and residents working together to reach a balanced, deliverable and evidence led position. What is particularly frustrating is that this work has followed repeated public consultations, detailed site assessments, and extensive evidence gathering, including clear and reasoned explanations for why some sites were included and others excluded.

Crucially, this has been a highly collaborative process with residents. Councillors and officers have worked closely with residents' associations across Three Rivers, under the banner of the Three Rivers Joint Residents Association, as well as with local community groups and other charities such as Campaign to Protect Rural England and the London Green Belt Council throughout the Local Plan process. This is a plan shaped by extensive local engagement and community input, not imposed from above, and not an attempt to avoid meeting housing need.

I speak from a position of long-standing local accountability and community involvement. I co-founded the Can't Replace Green Space group in Carpenders Park almost five years ago, the ward I have lived in for over twenty years and have had the privilege to represent for the past four years. It was this work, alongside residents, that led me to stand for election. I therefore understand firsthand the scale of local participation, the depth of resident concern, and why your intervention has caused such widespread frustration.

The Council has accepted that new housing is needed and has already significantly increased the number of homes planned for, moving well beyond the original low growth position. The proposed figure of 7,027 homes represents a serious attempt to meet housing need while recognising the unique constraints of Three Rivers, where approximately 75 percent of the district is designated Green Belt. This is not a council refusing to build. It is a council seeking to do the right thing, delivering homes responsibly while protecting communities and irreplaceable green spaces.

It is therefore essential that engagement from central government properly reflects these constraints. A simple comparison against headline targets, without full consideration of deliverability, infrastructure capacity, Green Belt designation, and the evidence led site selection process, risks encouraging speculative development and planning appeals, precisely the outcome that a sound Local Plan is designed to prevent.

The Council will, of course, provide the further justification and documentation requested. However, I urge you to ensure that the complete evidence base, including site assessment work, sustainability appraisal, consultation responses, infrastructure evidence, and the rationale for site selection and exclusion, is reviewed in full before any further steps are taken or public conclusions are communicated.

Finally, I strongly encourage you to come to Three Rivers at the earliest opportunity. It is essential that you meet cross party councillors, Council officers, and representatives of residents' associations to hear directly from those who have worked collaboratively and in good faith to develop this Plan. We are not seeking confrontation; we are seeking dialogue. We want to speak with you, explain our constraints, and work together to find a way forward that delivers sustainable housing while properly protecting our communities and Green Belt.

Residents across Three Rivers want to see housing delivered where it is sustainable and supported by infrastructure, but they also expect the Green Belt to be treated as a real constraint, not a convenient boundary to be overridden.

I look forward to a prompt reply, which I will be able to share openly with the community, in the interests of transparency and public confidence in this process.

Yours sincerely,

Cllr Rue Grewal

Independent District Councillor for Carpenders Park

Independent Group Leader

(co-founder & co-chair Can't Replace Green Space)

cc

Member of Parliament, Gagan Mohindra MP,

Chief Executive of Three Rivers District Council, Jo Wagstaffe,

Leader of Three Rivers District Council, Councillor Stephen Giles-Medhurst, and

Head of Planning Policy and Conservation at Three Rivers District Council, Marko Kalik