

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

**Enquiries to:** Richard Millard  
**Direct line:** 01730 234108  
**Email:** [Richard.Millard@easthants.gov.uk](mailto:Richard.Millard@easthants.gov.uk)  
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Via Email: [psmatthewpennycook@communities.gov.uk](mailto:psmatthewpennycook@communities.gov.uk)

Dear Matthew,

**Re: Strengthening powers and legislation to tackle intentional unauthorised developments.**

I am writing on behalf of East Hampshire District Council to urge the Government to take decisive legislative action and empower local authorities to tackle intentional unauthorised developments.

Across the country, councils are increasingly facing cases where development is carried out without the necessary planning permissions, creating disruption and distress for local communities and placing considerable strain on enforcement teams.

While such development can take place within a matter of days, enforcement action is frequently subject to lengthy legal and procedural processes that can take months or even years to resolve.

During this time, those responsible for breaches of planning control are often able to exploit delays and pursue multiple avenues of appeal, placing additional pressure on already stretched council resources.

The planning system is fundamentally failing residents. They expect us to be able to respond quickly and decisively to serious planning breaches. But in reality, council powers are lightweight and unwieldy.

Residents look to us to protect their countryside but we can only work within the limits of the law. Like a treadmill stuck on slow, the current legal processes frustrate our efforts to move at pace.

It is time the government took responsibility for this failing system and implemented legislation to address the mess that's making life miserable for residents across the country.

We welcome the Government's draft national planning policy, published in December, which states intentional unauthorised development would be given substantial weight in decisions on retrospective planning permission or enforcement appeals. This is an important principle that reflects the need for fairness and consistency within the planning system.

However, we are concerned that, without firm legislative backing and clear direction, this policy risks being diluted or outweighed by competing considerations. There is a real danger of creating a two-tier planning system, where those who deliberately circumvent the rules are not held fully to account, while those who follow the proper process are disadvantaged.

In light of these challenges, the council is calling on the Government to take the following action:

- Ensure that the policy on intentional unauthorised development is retained in the final National Planning Policy Framework and remains robust and effective
- Strengthen planning enforcement powers available to local authorities, including measures to enable faster and more decisive action
- Accelerate legal processes relating to unlawful development, reducing delays that allow harm to persist
- Provide additional and sustained funding for planning enforcement teams to ensure councils have the capacity to respond effectively
- Engage directly with East Hampshire District Council to better understand the operational challenges faced on the ground

Local communities rightly expect that development will take place lawfully, transparently, and with appropriate oversight. Councils must be equipped with the tools they need to uphold these expectations and to act swiftly where serious breaches occur.

The Government has been clear in its intention to take a tougher approach to intentional unauthorised development. Now is the time to ensure that this commitment is translated into meaningful legislation and practical support for local authorities.

I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you, alongside our Portfolio Holder for Regulation and Enforcement and relevant officers, to discuss these issues in more detail and to share our experience.

Yours sincerely,



Councillor Richard Millard  
**Leader, East Hampshire District Council**