

The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

My Ref: MM/TK 246

Date: 9 October 2026

Dear Secretary of State

Planning Regulations and Local Democratic Accountability

I am writing to express my serious concern about the new regulations governing how councils make planning decisions, which are due to come into force on 31 October.

Staffordshire County Council has, of course, complied with the law. We will be making the changes required to our Constitution. However, complying with these regulations does not mean that we agree with them.

The principle at stake is simple. Residents elect councillors to represent their communities and make decisions on their behalf. These regulations reduce the circumstances in which elected councillors can make planning decisions and place greater responsibility in the hands of unelected officers.

I believe that weakens local democratic accountability.

Planning decisions can have profound consequences for communities. Development can put additional pressure on roads, schools, public transport, waste services and other essential infrastructure. Residents understandably expect their elected representatives to be able to scrutinise proposals, challenge them where necessary and ensure local concerns are heard.

At a time when government is talking about devolution and giving communities greater control over the decisions that affect them, it is difficult to understand why powers are instead being taken away from locally elected representatives.

I am therefore asking the Government to reconsider these changes and work with councils to ensure that the planning system can operate efficiently without weakening local democratic oversight.

Decisions affecting Staffordshire should, wherever possible, be made in Staffordshire and be accountable to the people who live here.

I urge you to meet with me to discuss this further, as the implications for local democracy are significant. We will be reviewing the options we have to ensure that the views of local people on planning matters continue to be heard.

Yours sincerely



Martin Murray
Leader of Staffordshire County Council

cc Staffordshire MPs