

**Leader of the Council**

Cllr Jill Cleary

Telephone: 023 8028 5456

My Ref: JC/MS/07

Your Ref:

Date: 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2025

**The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP**  
Deputy Prime Minister & Secretary of State  
for Housing, Communities & Local  
Government  
House of Commons  
London  
SW1A 0AA

Dear Deputy Prime Minister

**Consultation on Planning Committee Reforms**

I am writing on behalf of New Forest District Council in response to the Government's current consultation on proposed reforms to planning committees, as published in the Technical Consultation paper on 28 May 2025.

The Council notes the Government's wider intention to accelerate the delivery of critical infrastructure and housing through changes to planning procedures, including the removal of certain statutory consultation requirements and the streamlining of decision-making processes.

While we recognise the importance of ensuring we continue to have an efficient planning system, we share the concerns previously expressed by the Local Government Association regarding the implications of these reforms for local democratic accountability.

The Council is particularly concerned about the proposed changes to the role and remit of local planning committees. These changes, if implemented, would significantly reduce the ability of elected Councillors to scrutinise, debate, and vote on planning applications that directly affect their communities. We believe this would represent an unacceptable erosion of democratic oversight and risk undermining public trust in both the planning system and local government more broadly.

Local Councillors are elected to represent the interests of their constituents, and their involvement in planning decisions is a vital part of ensuring that development is appropriate, sustainable, and reflective of local needs. Removing or diminishing this role would not only weaken local accountability but could also lead to poorer planning outcomes and increased community opposition to development.

Accordingly, the Council has unanimously resolved to oppose the proposed changes to the role and remit of planning committees. In addition to submitting a detailed response to the consultation—developed through engagement with our Members, Planning Committee, Place and Sustainability Overview and Scrutiny Panel, and Agents Panel—we are writing directly to you, the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government, and our Members of Parliament for New Forest East and West to reiterate our position.

We urge the Government to reconsider these proposals and to work collaboratively with Local Authorities to ensure that planning reforms enhance, rather than diminish, democratic engagement and community trust.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jill Cleary'. The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping 'y' at the end.

Cllr Jill Cleary  
Leader of the Council

cc: Sir Julian Lewis MP New Forest East  
Sir Desmond Swayne MP New Forest West