



**Zöe Franklin MP**

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The Rt Hon Steve Reed OBE  
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government  
Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government  
Fry Building  
2 Marsham Street  
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20<sup>th</sup> April 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

I am writing to raise concerns regarding the operation of current planning policy following the decision by Berkeley Homes to withdraw from its long-standing commitment to deliver a new secondary school building for The Howard of Effingham School.

While this case is rooted in a specific local context, it highlights what appears to be a wider and unintended consequence of the current policy framework. It has generated significant concern and outrage within the local community and raises broader questions about how infrastructure commitments are protected within the planning system.

To be clear, neither I nor the community are opposed to development in principle. There is a clear and shared recognition of the need for new housing. What residents find difficult to accept, however, is a situation in which development proceeds after the removal of the very infrastructure that made it acceptable in the first place. This has led to a deep sense of frustration locally and a perception that the community has been treated unfairly.

For over a decade, the proposed development was advanced on the basis that it would deliver essential community infrastructure – most notably a full rebuild of the local secondary school – alongside other funding to support local amenity, including the village's playing fields. The provision of this infrastructure was central to the scheme's acceptability and to its approval on a green belt site.

The subsequent withdrawal of the school commitment, on viability grounds, has left a significant gap in provision. Despite this, the developer has indicated that it intends to bring forward a revised application under the Government's grey belt policy, with the site's proximity to a railway station likely to further strengthen the presumption in favour of development.

The result is a scheme which no longer delivers the infrastructure that originally justified it yet may nonetheless proceed under a revised policy context. This raises a significant concern about the integrity of the planning system.

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In particular, it appears that the current framework allows for a sequence in which:

- infrastructure commitments are used to support the acceptability of development proposals;
- those commitments are later reduced or removed through viability arguments; and
- the scheme is then progressed under a revised policy context which increases the likelihood of approval.

Taken together, this risks eroding public confidence in the planning system. Locally, residents are understandably deeply upset that development may proceed despite the loss of crucial infrastructure that underpinned its original approval.

I would therefore be grateful for clarification on the following points:

- How the Government expects local planning authorities to assess applications under grey belt policy where previously associated infrastructure commitments have been withdrawn?
- Does the Department consider that the current approach to viability assessments sufficiently safeguards agreed community benefits?
- What steps are being taken to ensure that infrastructure delivery remains integral to development proposals, particularly where policy changes alter the planning balance?
- What analysis has been undertaken on the loss of community infrastructure resulting from changes to planning applications driven by developer viability assessments?
- Is consideration being given to strengthening policy or guidance to prevent the erosion of infrastructure commitments in circumstances such as this?

More broadly, this case raises important questions about whether the current framework strikes the right balance between enabling development and ensuring that communities receive the infrastructure necessary to support it.

I would welcome your response on these points.

Your sincerely,

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