



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

18 February 2025

Dear Deputy Prime Minister,

I am writing to you concerning a constituency planning enforcement issue that has recently been raised with me, which highlights the importance of improving the performance of the Planning Inspectorate as part of the government's planning reforms.

In 2022, three planning enforcement notices were issued by North Hertfordshire District Council in relation to the Cabinet at Reed, a 400-year-old Grade II listed pub, which has been subject to damaging changes without the appropriate permissions.

These planning enforcement notices were appealed, and the appeals were given a start date by the Planning Inspectorate of 1 February 2023. By the end of 2024 not only was there no determination, but no date has even been fixed for consideration of the case.

Members of the local Parish Council and community group campaigning to save the Cabinet, have sought updates from the Planning Inspectorate and have been told that these unacceptable delays are due to a shortage of suitably qualified planning inspectors who can deal with listed buildings and heritage matters.

The pending appeals, and the delays to determine the cases are preventing more impactful enforcement action by North Hertfordshire District Council.

It is wholly inadequate that cases before the Planning Inspectorate should take two years to process. It provides a clear motivation for unscrupulous developers to submit unmeritorious appeals in order to buy time and undermines confidence in the planning system. As in the case of the Cabinet in Reed, this situation is also undermining the ability of the planning system to properly protect assets of very important community and heritage value.

As the Government seeks to accelerate planning decision-making, it is essential that the relevant institutions which provide the safeguards to the system are also adequately resourced to promptly and effectively discharge their duties.

Therefore, I am asking that you:

- Take urgent actions to clear the backlog of HM Planning Inspectorate cases as an essential prerequisite to the Government's proposed planning reforms
- Provide clear confirmation that the Labour Government is committed to the effective protection of heritage assets within the planning system, including demonstrably viable rural pubs, having regard to the important role they play within rural village communities.

Although the specific case in this letter is very localised, the issues it raises are of profound importance for the performance of the planning system across our country and I look forward to your response to the above points at the earliest possible opportunity.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Hinchliff', written in a cursive style.

Chris Hinchliff MP
Member of Parliament for North East Hertfordshire