

RTPI Friday Briefing

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Friday Briefing 14 March 2014

Boles: letter on local plan Green Belt reviews

Planning minister **Nick Boles** has made it clear that communities secretary Eric Pickles may step in and prevent the adoption of a local plan involving a planning inspector recommending a Green Belt review that is not supported by the local planning authority.

Boles has written to **Planning Inspectorate** chief executive **Sir Michael Pitt** voicing concern over the inspector's report on the recent examination of the **Reigate and Banstead Local Plan**. The inspector in question has recommended that the Surrey district council should undertake a review of its Green Belt boundaries.

Boles said he was "disturbed" by the inspector's use of language which, he claimed "invited misinterpretation of [UK] government policy and misunderstanding about the local authority's role in drawing up all of the policies in the draft plan".

The minister wrote: "Fundamental to the **National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)** and to this Government's planning reforms is the idea that local authorities, and the communities who elect them, are in charge of planning for their own areas. That is why we abolished the top down regional strategies, why we have emphasised the primacy of the **Local Plan** and why we gave communities the powers to create neighbourhood plans".

Boles insisted that the government had always been clear that the Coalition would maintain "key protections for the countryside and, in particular, for the Green Belt".

He added: "It has always been the case that a local authority could adjust a Green Belt boundary through a review of the Local Plan. It must however always be transparently clear that it is the local authority itself which has chosen that path - and it is important that this is reflected in the drafting of Inspectors' reports".

- [Correspondence: Inspectors' reports on local plans](#)