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Sue Thomas
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North Devon Council
Barnstaple

Appeal Ref: APP/X1118/W/22/3307462

Ticket Ref: #40037

Date: 07/11/2023

Sent via e-mail

Dear Sue Thomas

APPEAL site: Land at Back Lane, Chulmeigh

Thank you for your correspondence from 18th August, further to the Inspector's decision letter, related to the APP/X1118/W/22/3307462. Your correspondence has been passed to me, as part of the Customer Team at the Planning Inspectorate, whose role is to consider and respond to post decision issues and correspondence. I am sorry for the time taken to respond.

Careful consideration has been given to your feedback, regarding paragraph 10 of the decision letter which states that '*The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a 5-year supply of deliverable housing sites*'. Having now completed my review of this matter, I regret to say that there was a procedural error which resulted in the email you sent to the case officer on the 3rd May 2023, with a copy of the 5 year housing land supply, being missed by the Inspector when reviewing the evidence in this case.

On review, it has been made apparent our administrative case team did receive your e-mail with the 5YHLS but this was not reviewed by the inspector due to an administrative oversight. Your email was in the evidence available to the inspector however, because of an issue with the way it was added to the case record this piece of representation was not brought to the direct attention of the inspector.

I note, your correspondence from the 3rd May 2023 was sent following the close of the final comment stage in this appeal. As per the start letter sent to yourself on the 14th March the final comments deadline on this case was 2nd May 2023. Our administrative staff made a decision to accept this further evidence as a material consideration, a judgement that ought to have been at the discretion of the Inspector to decide and unfortunately contributed to this piece of evidence being missed.

It was only after your correspondence and the opening of this investigation that the Inspector was made aware of this representation. Despite our administrative team making the mistake of accepting such evidence, it is our inspectors' responsibility to



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review all evidence on the case record in their consideration of the appeal. We accordingly consider this a procedural error.

The Planning Inspectorate is committed to ensuring that high standards are maintained in all aspects of the processing of appeals. That said, we have clearly fallen short in our handling of this particular aspect of the case. I can advise you a significant upheld complaint has been recorded.

We note the comment in your e-mail: '*the Inspector's decision might not have been influenced by the existence of a 5YHLS*'. However, this is not something we can comment on within the remit of our complaint process as this would be adding to the decision.

We pride ourselves on the level of customer service we offer and the fact that such an error occurred is extremely regrettable. I also recognise that such mistakes create a very poor impression in terms of efficiency and customer service. Please accept our sincere apologies.

I can assure you that such matters are taken seriously. My findings in this case have been brought to the attention of the inspector professional manager and our operations team, who have advised me that they will be reviewing their procedure and firming up good practice between our administrative teams and inspector colleagues.

Yours sincerely

Hanan Hassan

Customer Quality