



Department for
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Thank you for your letter of 14 April, enclosing one from Gary Williams, Head of Planning, Economy and Housing, to Steve Quartermain, regarding local planning authority performance.

Decisions on any planning authorities that might be designated as under-performing will only be made in the autumn, once the data on performance in the period to June this year is available. If Malvern Hills District Council were to find itself at risk of being designated at this point, it would be given a formal opportunity to set out any exceptional circumstances that should be considered before any decisions on designation are confirmed.

While we are consulting on raising the threshold for the speed of decisions on major applications from 30% to 40% made on time, there are no plans at present to change the designation threshold for the quality of decisions. The consultation document can be viewed here: <http://tinyurl.com/ouun9zm>.

I would also like to reassure you that councils will not be penalised for refusing applications for good planning reasons – in other words, where the balance of considerations, including relevant local plan policies, provide strong grounds for saying that the development should not proceed. We have been clear that councils would only be designated on the basis of poor quality decisions where there has been a consistent pattern of their decisions being overturned at appeal. We recognise that individual appeals can be finely balanced, which is why the designation criteria relating to the quality of decisions exempt local planning authorities that have dealt with ten or fewer major applications over the two year assessment period.

A copy of this letter has also been sent to Harriet Baldwin MP and Gary Williams.

NICK BOLES MP