



The Rt Hon Angela Rayner MP
Secretary of State for Housing, Communities
and Local Government
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF
United Kingdom

21 July 2026

Dear Secretary of State,

Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council

I write to inform you that at the meeting of the Council held on 20 July 2026 following a debate on a Motion: **Protecting Wirral's Green Belt and Securing Fair Housing Targets**

The Council resolved the following:

Resolved (unanimously) – That

Council notes that:

- *England faces a deep and worsening housing crisis, with too few genuinely affordable homes, rising rents and home ownership increasingly out of reach for many working people and young families in Wirral.*
- *This crisis has developed over decades through the loss of social housing, the failure to replace homes sold through Right to Buy, and the long-term failure of successive governments to build enough of the right homes in the right places.*
- *The Labour Government's revised Standard Method for assessing housing need has increased Wirral's annual housing requirement from approximately 800 homes to around 1,622 homes per year in the December 2024 National Planning Policy Framework.*
- *Wirral faces significant challenges which must be properly reflected in any assessment of housing need, including its peninsula geography, extensive environmental designations, the viability of brownfield development, pressures on public services, the need to regenerate the borough and the importance of protecting the borough's Green Belt and unique character.*

- *Liverpool City Region has identified 310 sites capable of yielding 64,000 homes, and that a mayoral development corporation is to be established at North Liverpool/Bootle docks with the potential for 17,000 homes.*
- *Work currently taking place across LCR in developing a Spatial Development Strategy (SDS).*

Council believes that:

- *Wirral should continue to play its part in meeting housing need, particularly through the delivery of social rent, affordable housing, supported housing and homes for local families.*
- *The housing crisis will not be solved by requiring councils to pursue headline housing numbers that are divorced from local realities and unsupported by the evidence of need for such levels of housing growth.*
- *A fair and effective planning system must allow councils facing exceptional constraints the flexibility to plan for housing in a way that is realistic, sustainable, evidence based and democratically accountable.*
- *A brownfield only approach remains the right strategy for Wirral, supporting regeneration whilst protecting the Green Belt.*
- *Wirral should not be forced into unsound or damaging planning outcomes simply to satisfy a rigid national formula.*
- *Continued local emphasis on Wirral's 11 Regeneration areas as identified within the Local Plan and housing trajectory must remain this council's main priority for housing delivery, with over 10,000 new homes possible within these areas.*
- *Green belt release would only serve to undermine regeneration ambitions for Wirral, and across the city region, and result in an increase in the affordability gap used in the standard formulae for assessing housing need.*

Council resolves to:

1. *Reaffirm its commitment to protecting Wirral's Green Belt whilst continuing to support the delivery of genuinely affordable and sustainable homes.*
2. *Call on the Labour Government to provide greater flexibility within national planning and housing policy for councils facing exceptional constraints, so that housing requirements properly reflect local evidence, infrastructure capacity, environmental limits, brownfield availability and deliverability.*
3. *Requests the Labour Leader of the Council write to the Labour Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government setting out Wirral's case for greater flexibility and opposing any approach that imposes excessive or unrealistic housing figures without proper regard to local circumstances, environmental constraints, regeneration priorities and sustainability.*
4. *Continue to prioritise the delivery of genuinely affordable, social and sustainable homes on previously developed land at pace.*
5. *Work with Wirral's Labour Members of Parliament, the Liverpool City Region Combined Authority, housing providers and neighbouring authorities to press for a more locally responsive, evidence based approach to assessing housing need.*
6. *To work to ensure that the emerging SDS takes full account of the effective and on-going joint working as set out in National Planning Policy Framework Section 3 paragraphs 25-27, and that Mayor Rotherham seeks devolved powers to strategically*

support regeneration and housing delivery across the city region by pooling housing targets to achieve the best outcomes for all.

- 7. To ask the Council's Chief Executive to produce an action plan aimed at accelerating housing delivery, particularly for Birkenhead Waterfront, St Werburgh's, Hamilton Park and Central Birkenhead, to consider and assess different delivery models, including utilising the local and regional Small and Medium Enterprise building community to rebuild Birkenhead Town Centre and considering the building of council houses. The Plan should then be submitted to the Economy Regeneration and Housing Committee for consideration.*

As per the resolution, I am writing to formally request greater flexibility within national planning and housing policy for councils such as Wirral facing exceptional constraints, so that housing requirements properly reflect local evidence, infrastructure capacity, environmental limits, brownfield availability and deliverability.

Please could you give full consideration to the Council's resolution and provide a written response that can be circulated to all Members of the Council.

Yours sincerely

Paula Basnett

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P Basnett', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Councillor Paula Basnett

Leader of the Council