



Ministry of Housing,
Communities &
Local Government

Matthew Pennycook MP

Minister of State for Housing and Planning

2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

Our reference: PO2026/03810

Cllr Joanne Sexton
Leader of Spelthorne Borough Council
Knowle Green, Staines-upon-Thames
TW18 1XB

4 March 2026

Dear Joanne,

Thank you for your letter of 29 January regarding the licensing and inspection of Houses in Multiple Occupation (HMOs).

I appreciate how important this matter is and I am grateful to you for taking the time to write. I have asked my officials to address your concerns in the letter appended, and apologise for the delay in replying.

Please be assured that I am conscious of the matters you have raised, and I appreciate the insight your correspondence provides.

I hope the attached response suitably addresses your enquiry. If that is not the case, please don't hesitate to let me know.

Best wishes,

MATTHEW PENNYCOOK MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning



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Dear Cllr Joanne Sexton,

Thank you for your correspondence to which the Housing Minister has asked me to reply. I would like to apologise for the delay in doing so.

We welcome Spelthorne Borough Council's commitment to driving up standards in private rented sector housing and to maintaining robust regulatory oversight of HMOs. It is important that HMOs are safe, well maintained and properly managed. Mandatory HMO licensing and additional licensing schemes are critical ways of achieving this.

As you note, the Government is strengthening local authorities' enforcement powers through the Renters' Rights Act. The Act will provide new burdens funding for the additional responsibilities being placed on local authorities, and we expect to see growth in income from civil penalties alongside the fees that local authorities may charge to cover the costs of operating licensing schemes.

The Government encourages local councils to consider carefully their HMO licensing fee structures, taking account of factors such as set-up costs, the cost of assessing applications and issuing licences, and the cost of inspecting properties where necessary. However, the Government recognises that funding alone is not sufficient if local authorities are unable to recruit staff with the necessary skills, and I recognise the challenge you highlight. The team of private rented sector housing experts we are funding, 'Operation Jigsaw', has a workstream focused on developing competence, expanding apprenticeships and promoting housing as a career. This work, undertaken with a number of key partners in the sector, has, for example, supported the creation of a cohort of Level 4 Regulatory Compliance Officer apprentices across the South East. If your officers would like to find out more about this work, I would suggest in the first instance that they get in touch with Operation Jigsaw on their shared mailbox, opjigsaw@powys.gov.uk.

Thank you again for your engagement with this important matter, and for taking the time to write.

Yours sincerely,

ALEX BADRICK
Deputy Principal Private Secretary