

Mr Luke Fleming BSc (Hons) MRTPI IHBC

By email to: [programmeofficer@horsham.gov.uk](mailto:programmeofficer@horsham.gov.uk)

18 August 2025

Dear Mr Fleming,

**Re: Local Plan – Inspector’s Initial Findings Letter and next steps**

Following the receipt of your Initial Findings Letter dated 4 April 2025, Horsham District Council (the Council) has naturally taken some time to digest the findings and implications of its content. This has included discussion of the findings with our neighbouring authorities, including Crawley Borough Council and Mid Sussex District Council, in order to share our learning from our examination outcome and maintain a collaborative approach to strategic planning going forwards.

You will recall that you previously suggested the Council may have failed in its Duty to Co-operate. However, during our engagement with partner authorities - particularly in the context of shared learning around the Local Plan process - officers have confirmed that their draft notes, while informal and personal, contain clear references to alternative sites and discussions concerning omission sites. These notes span the period from January to July 2024.

Importantly, these documented references serve to corroborate the officers' recollection and understanding that meaningful discussions around unmet needs did in fact take place during this timeframe.

Given the outcome of our conversations, the Council therefore respectfully requests that a hearing session is re-opened to further examine the Council's compliance with the Duty to Co-operate. Officers of both Crawley Borough Council and Mid Sussex District Council have confirmed that they would be content to provide evidence in an open hearing session. Given your findings regarding the Duty to Cooperate and the Council's position that there is evidence to deal with your findings, it would be fair to allow such a hearing.

The Council notes from your Initial Findings Letter that you identified other soundness concerns related to the plan. Whilst the nature of your concerns are not set out in your letter, the Council has nevertheless provided informal feedback to you outside the formal examination process in an open letter dated 16 December 2024. This letter explains how any potential soundness issues could be addressed in a pragmatic and timely way and could again form part of any further hearings or formal re-opening of the examination.

In light of the forthcoming changes to the new system for local plans, which include the removal of the Duty to Cooperate, together with the very significant uncertainties of completing a local plan review prior to local government reorganisation, which for Horsham District Council takes effect on 1 April 2028, the Council is of the view that there is particular value in revisiting your conclusions to assist with meeting the government's growth aspirations.

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As such, I would be grateful if you would consider this request favourably, in light of our belief that the additional discussions held with partner authorities demonstrate a clear and constructive approach to fulfilling the Duty to Cooperate and we would be willing to provide you with further information in this connection.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B Childs', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Barbara Childs**  
Director of Place