

Transcript – Andrew Griffith MP

Horsham Local Plan

Planning Inspectorate Hearing – Horsham District Council Chambers

Jonathan Bore

Thursday 15th October 2026, 10am

For the records, I have no financial interests to declare.

I am grateful to be invited to make representations to you again today. I was last here on 24th April speaking about then matters of concerns about the Local Plan preparation process in my capacity as the Member of Parliament for Arundel and South Downs.

I spoke then about the responsibilities of planning authorities to make a sound and sustainable plan, and I regret the fact that I believe the quality of the plan making process has gone from bad to worse.

I also brought to your attention the rate of building in West Sussex as a whole, as a piece of context, in comparison to London's record, and local communities are facing a rate of house building, dwelling construction, at 6 to 8 times that of houses in Greater London. That is why the rural communities, that you'll hear from many as part of the process, feel so aggrieved and so under siege. I acknowledge that's not a direct plan consideration, but I hope that is useful context to this enquiry.

I speak today, particularly on behalf of villages such as Ashington which is now facing a cumulative total of more than 600 more homes, that is 60% of the village size being added again, and a similar order of magnitude in Henfield with an additional 450 homes without any of the infrastructure or ability to cope.

But today, Mr Bore, I am challenging the main plan preparation and soundness and would like to do so particularly through Main Modification MM227 and which has added a strategic allocation – a 'new town' - of 3,200 homes at Adversane.

I should point out that this site has been assessed many times before by this authority, and at every stage has been rejected because it has been deemed to not be capable of delivering a sustainable community, in a place that is a greenfield site without supporting infrastructure.

It is worth making clear that I am not opposed to this district having a Local Plan, nor am I opposed to local housing growth. I am opposed to making a plan

unsound by including a fundamentally unsustainable and undeliverable strategic allocation, that serves nobody's objectives and will simply lead to us being here once again.

Adversane is not the answer – it is a poor response and rushed plan-making, pushed through as a Main Modification without sufficient consultation and evaluation. And there has been no substantive assessments of other similar sites which had been submitted to the council for consideration.

I will say this very slowly, in the absence of an objective reason why this site is superior to Buck Barn on the A24 corridor, people will draw their own conclusion as to why that decision has been made.



[Jonathan Bore made comment]

10,000 more people on that site will put a substantial new demand on roads, schools, healthcare, water, drainage, sewage treatment and already diminished public transport.

The question for this examination is therefore what evidence has been presented that justifies that as an effective and sustainable location for that scale of development.

I – and the 1,000 residents from the local area who responded to my survey – know that is not the case.

Firstly, transport. This is an area where existing roads are already under considerable pressure. Unlike the A24 corridor, the main A29 road to the south, is restricted at Church Hil and is for the whole of its duration a single carriageway road that already suffers from congestion. Onward routes on narrow roads through rural villages with low speed limits such as Coldwaltham which already suffer terribly from heavy and fast moving vehicles. Traffic regularly diverts through surrounding villages when the A27 is congested. Adding a settlement of this scale inevitably increases dependence on the road network and there are no genuinely viable alternatives.

Employment is mainly clustered on the south coast and around Horsham and Crawley, the main employment sites within the borough. The A24 road, a dual carriageway, is the main strategic north south route in this district, not the A29. It is the coastal towns and Crawley with an unmet need of housing that the Horsham plan is expected to compensate for. Therefore, it should be the case that the Local Plan delivers houses in places that are better connected to the employment opportunities in Crawley and the coast. There is no employment opportunities on the Adversane site.

Commuting by train from either Pulborough or Billingshurst, would mean additional car journeys to the station and attempting to park in car parks which are already full by 8am. The idea of a new railway station being built at

Adversane is 'for the birds'. I have obtained information from Network Rail**, under Freedom of Information Act requests, which reveal no conversations about the prospect of an additional rail station, and similarly you will be aware from other evidence that has been proffered about the un-feasibility of a bridge at anything like the cost that has been mooted.

Second, **water, drainage and sewage**. The communities of this part of Horsham District are already experiencing serious infrastructure pressures. That's both the availability of water, sewage and surface water flooding. There are a number of recent development sites I have spoken about previously which are reliant entirely on sewage having to be pumped and tankered away.

These are not theoretical planning constraints. They are an existing reality for many communities. It will not be possible to deliver a sound plan without answers to these important issues.

In regard to utilities, there is no evidence shared of any assessment into power supply. The plan we all seek is a plan that is deliverable, but in the absence of a plan to meet the power needs at an appropriate cost this site is not deliverable. It would take years of planning and a great deal of expense and it is a well known fact that the length of lead time to obtain connectivity to the National Grid. If it cannot be done credibly, in the time presented to you, this is a key consideration as to whether this plan ever be sound on the basis of this site being deliverable.

Finally, I question whether the Council has demonstrated that Adversane is genuinely the most appropriate and sustainable way of meeting its housing requirement, when other options, including brownfield opportunities, and other potential strategic sites deserve much greater scrutiny. The choice should not simply be between building on this particular piece of greenfield land or failing to produce a plan entirely.

My conclusion is straightforward, if the evidence cannot demonstrate that the necessary infrastructure, transport, water, drainage, environmental mitigation, train access and sustainable connectivity can be delivered then this allocation is not sound I ask you to apply that test to the Local Plan.

ENDS

*** Correction notified to Programme Officer to advise the FOI request was made to Horsham District Council not to Network Rail. A Copy of the FOI response has been provided.*