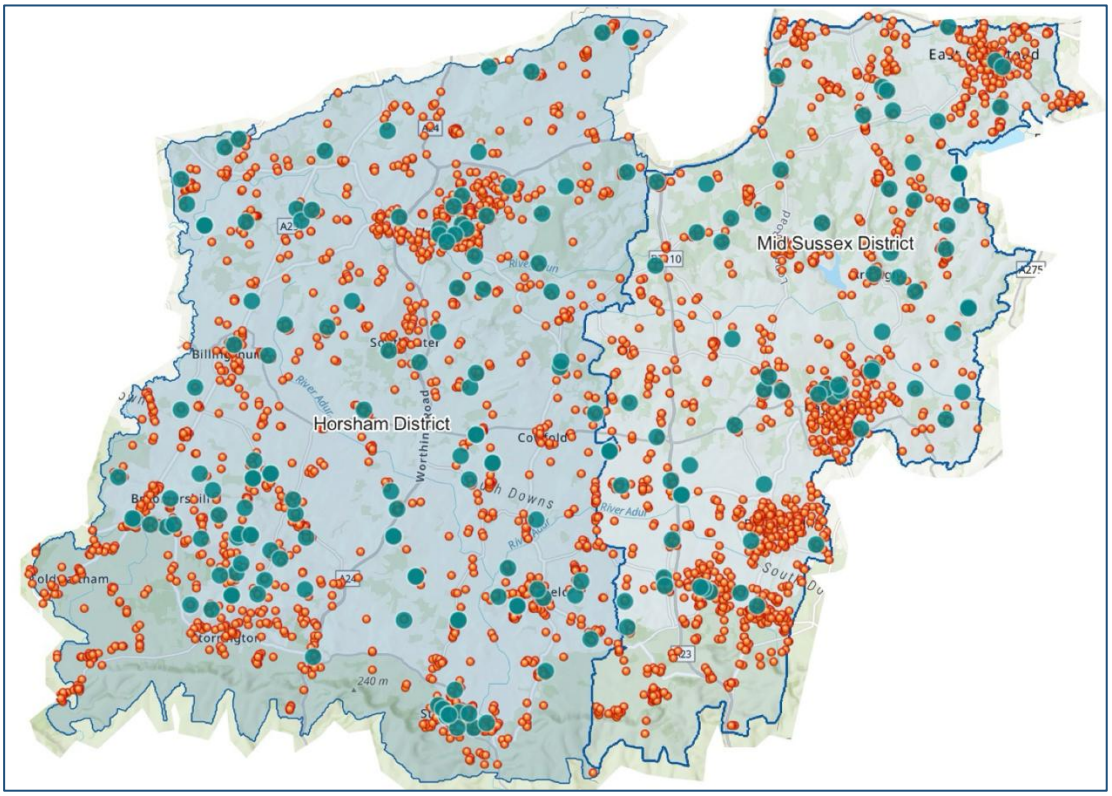


Visitor Accommodation Audit and Market Review – Horsham District



Final Report
June2026

tomorrow's TOURISM

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Cover image

Shows tourism economy accommodation in teal (Professional sector) and sharing economy accommodation in red (Airbnb & similar) across Horsham and Mid-Sussex council areas

1. Introduction

1.1 This document is the Final Report for Horsham relating to a study commissioned by Horsham District Council and Mid Sussex District Council in December 2025. The purpose of the study is to provide a robust evidence base on the current supply, demand and future potential for visitor accommodation in both Districts.

1.2 The combined total study area totals 865 km^2, Horsham being 531 km^2 with Mid Sussex at 334 km^2. Population of the whole area is 313,276, with Horsham and Mid Sussex having similar populations of 151,521 and 147,847 respectively. There are a total of 66,392 dwellings in Horsham, an increase of 19% in the period since 2009. [1]

1.3 Horsham District is predominantly rural in character, containing a number of smaller villages and towns. The largest urban area is the market town of Horsham, situated in the north-east of the District. 95km^2 (36.49 square miles) of the District falls within the South Downs National Park planning boundary.

1.4 The majority of Horsham District is also located within the Gatwick Diamond economic area, which extends from Croydon in the north, around Gatwick Airport and down the A23 corridor to the south coast. The Council Plan sets out clear priorities to 2027 with key goals including: Supporting people and communities where the District is a great place to live and everyone deserves to benefit; Inspiring greener futures with the aim to be a net zero Council by 2030 and a net zero District by 2050; and Building a thriving local economy where the District will be known as an easy place to do business and have thriving high streets across the District.

1.5 Both Horsham and Mid Sussex economies provide a wide range of accommodation, including hotels and guest houses, holiday lets, self-catering apartments and caravan and camping sites. There has been a structural shift in the last decade away from serviced accommodation, towards non-serviced, typically self-catered. Previous reviews of accommodation in 2016 have been used as baselines to provide context.

1.6 The objectives of the study were to assess:

a. All visitor accommodation in the Districts, covering:
    - The Tourism Economy (professionally run businesses, e.g., hotels, B&Bs, inns, self-catering, camping, holiday parks).
    - The Sharing Economy (e.g., Airbnb, Vrbo, and other short-term rental platforms).

[1] DELUHC (2025) Figure for 2024 drawn from Live table 100 No. of Dwellings by Tenure & District

- Mapping these assets by location, type, size, and key clusters and analysing quality grading, affordability, accessibility, and sustainability performance.

b. Market Trends
   - National, regional, and local market context and performance trends. Visitor demand, volumes, and values (using STEAM/Cambridge reports or other recognised datasets).

c. Gap Analysis and Strategic Issues
   - Identification of current over/under supply by accommodation type.
   - Identification of hotspots/honeypots and pressure points.
   - Assessment of affordable, sustainable, and accessible provision.
   - Opportunities for diversification, e.g., farm stays, glamping, or heritage property reuse.

d. Consultation
   - Stakeholder interviews and/or survey of local accommodation providers.
   - Engagement with DMOs, business groups, and planning officers.

e. Recommendations
   - Evidence-based conclusions and policy recommendations.
   - Guidance on how the District can best support sustainable visitor accommodation development.
   - Implications for planning policy and decision-making.

1.7 The outputs will directly inform the Horsham District Local Plan, related planning and economic development strategies and responses to planning applications that affect the visitor economy.

1.8 This report has ten sections covering current UK tourism and accommodation trends; the visitor economy in Horsham and Mid Sussex; the nature and extent of visitor accommodation supply in the area; and its current performance. The document then provides an overview of current planning policy, impacts and current relevance including the national planning context. It then provides a perspective from accommodation operators before conclusions and recommendations are set out. A range of Appendices present extra detail, quantifying the scale and nature of the supply side, for further consideration.

1.9 The report is supported by an Asset Audit which provides more details of the assessment of market demand and accommodation supply. An online survey of accommodation businesses and a small number of in-depth interviews were

conducted in early 2026 with senior representatives of accommodation establishments and other interests, such as property agents.

1.10 The last decade has seen a major structural shift in the type of accommodation that is offered to the market with a decline in the typical serviced hotel and B&B offer and a substantial rise in the self-catered offer, often facilitated by platforms such as Airbnb. Accordingly, the report distinguishes between visitor accommodation offered by the professional sector (typically with registered businesses that may employ staff or pay VAT) and visitor accommodation that is offered by properties that use sales channels, such as Airbnb (who are more likely to be operated by individuals and from domestic dwellings). The former group of professional operators is defined as the *Tourism Economy* while the latter category is defined as the *Sharing Economy*. Table 1 below shows the detail of the categories.

Table 1 – Categorisation of Visitor Accommodation

Tourism Economy	Hotel
Serviced	B&B / Guest House
	Branded Budget Hotel
	Pub / Inn
	Residential Accommodation
Tourism Economy	Self Catering Apartment
Non-Serviced	Self Catering House / Cottage
	Camping / Caravan Site
	Glamping Site
	Holiday Park / Lodge
	Hostel / Bunkhouse
	Other non-serviced
Sharing Economy	
Normally non-serviced	Apartment
via Airbnb / vrbo /	House / Cottage
Booking.com	Other

2. UK Tourism & Accommodation Trends

2.1. This section provides an overview of recent and current tourism trends in the United Kingdom and provides information on accommodation performance focussing on serviced and non-serviced formats.

UK Tourism Trends

The Challenge and Opportunity for Domestic Tourism

2.2. The cost-of-living crisis has radically affected domestic tourism and hospitality, with consumers becoming ever more cautious in their spending. As a result, many are choosing to prioritise a main overseas summer holiday, often at the expense of shorter domestic getaways. [2] People are spending less during domestic trips, often by staying fewer nights, undertaking a greater number of day trips or switching while on a trip, for example from a meal in a restaurant to snacks in a café. The volume of domestic tourism in the UK declined from Q2 2024 to Q2 2025 for both overnights and day visits. Weaker consumer confidence continues to be a brake on growth. Despite this backdrop, spend per overnight trip increased by 7% in nominal terms. [3]

2.3. Significant impacts are also arising from the current situation in the Middle East where there has been a rapid switch from the Gulf states in favour of western European destinations as well as parts of the UK, such as Devon, Cornwall and Cumbria in terms of immediate bookings across the Easter period. The Sussex region, however, has seen a decline in year on year bookings for this period.

2.4. The growing interest in sustainable and locally focused travel presents an opportunity for both Districts. Travellers are increasingly drawn to authentic experiences and eco-conscious holidays that support local communities and the environment. Brands are tapping into this demand through staycation packages that showcase local heritage sites, outdoor activities and regional cuisine. Quirky camping and glamping provision is the accommodation format that has particularly benefitted from this trend. The theme of *Wellness* is growing in importance and has a wider application but one that is also significant in the tourism context.

Inbound Tourism

[2] Domestic Tourism UK, 2024, Mintel

[3] Domestic overnight and day trips in June and Q2 2025, Great Britain Tourism Survey – figure not adjusted for inflation which was 3.4% over the stated period.

2.5. VisitBritain modelled estimates suggest that inbound visits to the UK in 2024 were just (1%) below pre-COVID levels and were up 6% vs 2023. Visitor spending was up compared to 2023 and 2019 in nominal terms, while real-terms spend remained below 2019 but above 2023. [4]

- Visits to friends and relatives (VFR) saw record numbers of visits in 2024 whilst spend declined year on year (YoY);
- Holiday visits grew YoY whilst spend was on par, and
- Business visits were still down vs 2019 but saw moderate growth vs 2023 (with related spend above both 2019 and 2023).

2.6. European visits were just short of pre-COVID levels but saw growth vs 2023 with record spend. North America-led recovery saw both record visits and spend in 2024, whilst Rest of World saw YoY declines in visits and spend although there is much variation by market.

The Importance of Accessible Tourism

2.7. Some 24% of domestic overnight trips and 20% of tourism day visits in the UK are taken by those with an impairment and/or their travelling companions (2% for international visitors). Average spend per overnight trip is higher for this market than the norm. When considering accessibility, it is important to note that only 7% of disabled people in the UK are wheelchair users – the other 93% have a wide range of accessibility requirements, including physical, sensory and cognitive impairments. It is therefore important to consider the other issues of accessibility and not just wheelchair access. [5]

2.8. Those seeking disabled-friendly accommodation or visitor attractions are found across all demographics, but this priority rises amongst those aged 55 and over. The older and affluent 'purple pound' will become increasingly influential as an ageing population looks for ways to continue lifelong holiday habits alongside managing accessibility requirements – especially as the travel-hungry 'Baby Boomer' cohort advances into an elderly life stage. According to Mintel, there are opportunities for specialist brands offering fully serviced and supported holiday accommodation. [6,7]

[4] 2024 IPS UK Total Inbound Update (Published 26 August 2025)
[5] Accessible and inclusive tourism, Visit England – "*The list of accessibility features requirements is complex and often needs to cover a wide range of requirements. Travel groups are typically looking to meet the accessibility needs of multiple people with multiple impairments, each with very specific requirements.*"
[6] Discover the value of the Purple Pound, Visit Britain
[7] Hotels UK, 2024, Mintel

UK Accommodation – Current Scale

Serviced Accommodation – Hotels

2.9. Market Growth - The UK hotel market in 2025 was valued at £28.3 billion, up 3% from 2024, although hotel stays have slowed after the post-pandemic tourism boom, volume is forecast to return to growth, in line with growing domestic tourism volume. While long-term market value is expected to increase by 16% by 2030, short breaks continue to be vulnerable to cost-of-living challenges, especially in the mid-market segment. [8]

2.10. Consumer Preferences - 55% of UK adults stayed in hotels in the past year up five percentage points year-on-year and marking a rebound from slower post-pandemic demand. Hotels are seeing growing interest in apartment-style accommodation (74% interest), glamping (53%, especially among younger and affluent demographics), and all-inclusive deals (popular with families). Room facilities are the most decisive factor in booking, with strong interest in advanced room selection, late check-out and cancellation protection.

2.11. Supply-Side Developments - Major operators like Premier Inn and Hilton are expanding their room offerings and innovating through AI, lifestyle branding and flexible accommodation formats. Hotel pipeline growth is concentrated in cities and accessible locations but rising concerns about over-tourism are encouraging a shift towards lesser-visited regions.

2.12. Marketing & Booking Channels - 64% of hotel bookings are now made online, mainly via hotel websites and third-party platforms. Direct booking strategies increasingly target younger travellers, with perks like wellness facilities and app-based engagement.

2.13. Demographic Opportunities - Older adults (65+) are a growing population segment with a strong preference for comfort and convenience. However, 44% did not take an overnight stay in the past year, indicating further potential if economic confidence and accessibility are improved.

Holiday Rentals

2.14. Following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, holiday rental properties proved more resilient than most other forms of accommodation and as a result, the pandemic

[8] Mintel – Hotels 2025

increased the segment's client base. The UK holiday rental market, particularly for domestic properties, has shown robust growth and resilience following the pandemic. Holiday rentals retained their expanded market share in 2025. [9]

2.15. The number of domestic holiday rental stays reached an estimated 6.6 million in 2025, a 4% increase on the previous year. Associated spending rose 12% to £3.2 billion. Forecasts suggest growth to 7.3 million stays and £3.7 billion in spending by 2030. [9]

2.16. 29% of all UK adults have stayed in a holiday rental in the last three years, while 52% expressed interest in doing so in the future—indicating strong growth potential. Holiday rentals are valued for privacy, affordability and self-catering facilities, which are especially attractive during periods of high inflation. "Things to do nearby" is the top factor for renters in choosing a holiday. Private and personalised experiences are increasingly popular and guests are seeking "curated, one-on-one experiences" like guided hikes or natural wine tastings. [9]

2.17. Booking Behaviour - Airbnb remains the leading booking channel (27%), with many bookings made last-minute and cost being a significant factor in decision-making. [9]

2.18. Demographics - Younger adults (16–44) are the primary users, but the ageing population presents a significant opportunity. Over-65s prefer rural locations but are deterred by lack of hotel-like services. [9]

Camping and Caravanning

2.19. Consumer trends in the camping market and caravanning market in the UK highlight a preference for affordable, unique experiences, with younger generations and families leading the demand. Wellness holidays, nature-based experiences, and premium options like glamping are gaining traction. There is also a growing interest in off-peak camping, with an emphasis on social interaction and eco-friendly accommodation. [10,11]

2.20. Performance - The UK camping and caravanning sector faced a decline in value in 2024 due to weather and economic pressures, though interest remains high, especially among younger generations and families. [10]

[9] Mintel – Holiday Rental Property 2025
[10] Mintel UK Camping and Caravanning Market Report 2025
[11] Statista 2025

2.21. Market Growth - It is projected that the UK camping market will generate a revenue of £718m in 2025 and is estimated to grow annually at a rate of 3.64% resulting in a projected market volume of £811m by 2029, with 6.53 million users. The expected average revenue per user (ARPU) for the Camping market is £127.27. [10]

2.22. Customer preferences - Customers in the UK are increasingly seeking outdoor experiences and activities, driving demand for camping equipment and accessories. The trend towards sustainable and eco-friendly products has also influenced consumer preferences with a growing interest in environmentally conscious camping gear. The UK's camping market has seen a rise in demand for glamping accommodation, reflecting a growing interest in luxury outdoor experiences. [10]

UK Accommodation - Performance & Forecasts

Serviced Accommodation – Hotels

Performance

2.23. Overall hotel room occupancy for July 2025 was 86%, 1% higher than July 2024. Year to date occupancy for 2025 was 77%, on par with the same period for 2024. Occupancy excluding London was 84% for July 2025, 2% higher than last year. Regionally, the South East saw a decline, with occupancy falling by 1% to 87%.[12] This occupancy rate reflects a sample of larger corporate hotels with many in urban centres where general occupancy rates for both Horsham and Mid Sussex are more likely to be within the 55% – 65% range. [13]

2.24. Average Daily Rates (ADR) increased by 1% in July 2025 to £191, with Revenue per Available Room (RevPAR) also increasing compared to July 2024 (+4% to £165). ADR excluding London was £113 (+3%), and RevPAR was £95 (+5%). The South East region saw a decline of 2% in both ADR and RevPAR, to £125 and £109 respectively. [13]

Trends

2.25. The UK hotel market is experiencing a mixed recovery, with varying impacts on different segments. [14]

- Inbound tourism is recovering strongly, although overall hotel stays are still below 2019 levels.

[12] Mintel Hotels – UK – 2024 & Mintel Holiday Rental Property – UK – 2023. Includes mostly hotels, with a very small proportion of serviced apartments and larger B&Bs/guesthouses.
[13] England Occupancy Survey Report - July 2025 Results, 2025, VisitEngland
[14] Hotels UK, 2024, Mintel

- Short breaks are under pressure due to rising costs and competition from holiday rentals.
- The mid-market segment faces challenges as consumers gravitate towards either budget or luxury options.

2.26. Economic factors are influencing consumer behaviour and hotel demand in the UK. The cost-of-living crisis is leading to cautious spending, while the fluctuating value of the Pound against the Dollar and Euro has influenced travel patterns to and from the UK. The growth in hotel rates is slowing, reflecting market conditions. Adjusted for inflation, the average daily rate for UK hotels shows a year-on-year decline due to new hotel supply and weaker demand.

2.27. Long-term, the UK hotel market is expected to grow by 17% to 2029 (from 2024), reaching £30 billion, driven by evolving consumer preferences and increased operational efficiency. UK hotel supply is expected to increase, with major brands like Premier Inn and Travelodge expanding their presence. The UK leads in terms of the number of hotel construction projects in Europe, with 306 projects and 43,515 rooms in the pipeline.

2.28. Consumer preferences are shifting, impacting how hotels attract and retain guests:

- 64% of guests booked their last hotel stay online, with direct bookings on hotel websites being the most common method (24%).
- Room facilities are the top factor influencing hotel choice (48%).
- There is a growing interest in apartment-style hotels (74%) and 'unique' accommodation formats.

2.29. Mintel identifies key opportunities for UK hotels to enhance their offerings, attract diverse customer segments and increase revenue, including:

- Expanding room selection and amenities in booking systems can boost guest satisfaction and revenue.
- Unique experiences, such as glamping and all-inclusive deals.
- Catering to larger groups with family suites and interconnected rooms to enhance competitiveness against holiday rentals.

2.30. The growing over-65 demographic presents new opportunities for the hotel market. Older adults prefer budget and mid-market hotels, with only 2% opting for luxury accommodation. Hotels can attract this group by enhancing services and focusing on comfort and convenience.

- Hotels are increasingly leveraging technology and innovative marketing strategies to enhance guest experiences and operational efficiency:

- Brands are increasingly using AI for personalised services and operational improvements.
- Sustainability and wellness initiatives are becoming a priority.
- Loyalty programmes are being enriched to attract and retain customers, with ethical rewards gaining traction.

Holiday Rental Market

Performance

2.31. In July 2025, the supply of short-term rental properties across the UK continued to increase month on month and exceed 2024 levels. However, the volume of nights reserved remained lower than what was seen in 2024, leading to lower occupancy rates. Growth in supply was seen across all regions in July, whereas reserved nights were down year on year, with the greatest declines seen in South East England.[15]

2.32. In England, the average number of arrivals per holiday rental property increased from 30.4 in 2023 to 31.1 in 2024. The average length of stay per property decreased from 5.0 to 4.9. Holiday lets are hugely popular with domestic tourists, with 93% of visitors to English properties coming from England, Scotland and Wales.[16]

2.33. The South East recorded an average 5% growth in short term rental supply in 2025 compared to 2024, with an estimated 51,125 properties. Reserved nights decreased by 3% to 562,900 in the same period. Average occupancy for 2025 was 35%, ranging from 37% in March, to 51% in August, down 2.5% from August 2024. Occupancy of Airbnb properties in Horsham and Mid Sussex in the same period outperformed this norm by 4 percentage points at 39%, peaking at 52.3% in August. [16]

Trends

2.34. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the trend towards self-catering rentals, favoured for their affordability and personal space. Holiday rental properties showed the highest resilience and growth potential among accommodation types, with rental houses leading the way. Looking forward, the affordable image and self-catering facilities of holiday rental properties will continue to work to the sector's advantage, as consumers are affected by the cost-of-living crisis. Visitors are increasingly interested in quieter alternatives to tourist hotspots. [17]

[15] Short Term Rentals trends from Lighthouse, July 2025, VisitBritain/VisitEngland Research
[16] The size, growth and economic importance of dedicated holiday lets in England and Wales, August 2025, PASC UK
[17] Holiday Rental Property UK, 2025, Mintel

2.35. The expanding holiday rental market in the UK is increasingly impacted by stricter regulations, especially in regions struggling with over-tourism and sustainability issues such as Cornwall. From April 2025 a Council Tax premium of 100% has been applied to all second homes on the councils' databases in both Horsham and Mid Sussex.

Camping and Caravanning

Performance

2.36. The English holiday park and campsite sector makes a substantial contribution to the English tourism economy, generating £9.2bn in visitor expenditure, which is equivalent to £5.45bn GVA and supports 170,429 FTE jobs. Visitors to England's holiday parks and campsites stayed 82% longer and spent 8% more than the English tourism averages. Mintel reports looking at the UK camping and caravanning sector, found that total volumes returned to pre-Pandemic levels in 2022. [18,19]

Trends

2.37. During COVID-19 there was an initial surge in bookings at campsites due to travel restrictions, including new people taking up camping or glamping, and an increase in motorhome/caravan ownership. Since then, there has been an increase in purchase or renting of self-contained accommodation (e.g. motorhomes, caravans and lodges). Since overseas travel became possible again, operators have seen a reduction in bookings, reverting back to pre-COVID-19 levels but an increase in competition from farm-based sites and other pop-up sites that have become more permanent.

[18] Mintel UK Camping and Caravanning Market Report 2023
[19] Mintel UK Camping and Caravanning Market Report 2025

3. The Visitor Economy in Horsham

Introduction

Domestic Overnight Visitors - LVEP Area (East Sussex, Brighton & Hove, and West Sussex)

3.1. VisitBritain data shows a clear and sustained decline in overnight tourism performance from 2022 to 2025 across the LVEP area, as well as the South East region and nationally. While national and regional trends provide important context, the LVEP area consistently mirrors — and in some cases slightly underperforms — wider market movements, particularly in bed nights and value.[20]

3.2. Volume - In absolute terms, overnight trip volumes have declined steadily since 2022 across all geographies. England shows a gradual but pronounced reduction over the period, while the South East follows a similar trajectory at a lower scale.

3.3. For the LVEP area, volumes remain relatively small but follow the same downward pattern. Year-on-year data highlights a brief uplift in 2023, when the LVEP area recorded modest growth against declines nationally and regionally. However, this improvement was short-lived. Volumes fell sharply in 2024 and declined further in 2025, broadly in line with, but not outperforming, comparator areas. At County level there was an increase (of 17%) recorded in domestic overnight volume from 2022 to 2023, reaching 2.1 million trips.

3.4. Bed nights exhibit a steeper rate of decline than trip volumes, indicating that shorter stays are a key driver of overall underperformance. England and the South East both show consistent reductions in total bed nights from 2022 onwards, with a marked fall into 2025.

3.5. The LVEP area reflects this pattern closely. Year-on-year changes show declines in every year, intensifying in 2024 and 2025. Notably, the scale of decline in bednights exceeds that seen in trips, reinforcing evidence of reduced length of stay rather than demand loss alone. The County recorded 6.1 million domestic nights in 2023, an increase of 17% from 2022.

[20] VisitBritain - Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS). Data for West Sussex beyond 2023 is below the recommended sample size for reliable analysis so has not been used here.

3.6. Value - In value terms, England experienced relative resilience through 2023 and 2024, with values peaking in 2024 before falling sharply in 2025. This suggests that price increases and higher per-trip spend partially offset falling volumes at the national level.

3.7. The LVEP area recorded value growth in 2023, outperforming both the South East and England on a year-on-year basis. However, this was followed by a significant value correction in 2024, with declines continuing into 2025. The South East experienced the deepest value losses by 2025, but the LVEP area continued to perform below national averages, indicating limited ability to sustain yield growth in a weakening market.

3.8. The data points to a tourism market that has moved from post-pandemic stabilisation into sustained contraction. The wider Sussex LVEP area benefited briefly from increased demand and higher spend in 2023, but this was not maintained. This is largely due to the cost-of-living crisis.

3.9. The disproportionate fall in bed nights, combined with declining value after 2023, suggests that challenges are increasingly structural — linked to shorter stays, reduced visitor confidence and heightened price sensitivity — rather than purely cyclical. Performance broadly tracks regional and national trends, but without much evidence of greater resilience or recovery momentum.

3.10. This reinforces the importance of focusing future interventions to support accommodation development, extending length of stay, strengthening off-peak demand and diversifying the overnight offer, rather than relying on volume recovery alone.

Domestic Day Visits - LVEP Area (East Sussex, Brighton & Hove, and West Sussex)

3.11. The VisitBritain data indicates a marked softening in day visit activity from 2023 onwards, following an initial period of growth. While trends are broadly consistent across the LVEP area, the South East, and England, the LVEP area shows greater volatility, particularly in value. [21]

3.12. Volume - In absolute terms, day visit volumes increased between 2022 and 2023 across all geographies, with England and the South East recording modest growth

[21] VisitBritain - Great Britain Tourism Survey (GBTS) 2022-2024

and the LVEP area remaining relatively stable. This suggests a continuation of post-pandemic recovery and strong domestic demand for short leisure trips.

3.13. However, this momentum reversed in 2024, with day visit volumes declining across all areas. The year-on-year data shows that the LVEP area experienced a larger proportional fall than both the South East and England. The downturn deepened further in 2025, when all geographies recorded significant declines, with the LVEP area again seeing the sharpest contraction.

3.14. Value - Despite relatively flat volumes in 2023, the value of day visits increased substantially in nominal terms, particularly in the LVEP area, which recorded strong double-digit growth year on year. This indicates a notable rise in spend per visit, likely reflecting higher prices, increased on-site spending, or a shift towards higher-value activities.

3.15. In 2024, value growth slowed markedly. The LVEP area recorded a small decline, while the South East and England maintained marginal growth, suggesting early signs of price resistance among visitors.

3.16. By 2025, value fell sharply across the country. The LVEP area experienced the largest reduction, exceeding national and regional declines. This suggests that the earlier gains in per-visit spend were not sustained as cost-of-living pressures and reduced discretionary spending took hold.

3.17. The data shows that day visits provided a short-term buffer for elements of the visitor economy in 2023, driven by strong value growth despite only modest volume increases. However, this resilience proved temporary.

3.18. From 2024 onwards, declines in both volume and value indicate weakening demand and heightened price sensitivity, with the LVEP area particularly exposed. The sharper value correction suggests limited capacity to offset falling volumes through higher spend, reinforcing the need to focus on experience-led value, repeat visitation, and shoulder-season demand.

International Visitors - South East Region

3.19. Overseas travel to South East England continued to strengthen in 2024 (the most recent data), with growth evident across visits, nights, and spend, although the pace and profile of growth varied by purpose of travel.[22]

[22] Office for National Statistics, International Passenger Survey. The data is for the South East region as international arrivals data is not available at County or LVEP level.

3.20. Year-on-year growth shows a clear post-pandemic recovery pattern, with particularly strong momentum between 2022 and 2023. Visits increased by 18% during this period, before moderating to 6% growth in 2023–2024. This slowdown suggests a shift from rapid rebound to more sustainable, long-term growth.

3.21. In contrast, nights stayed grew more strongly in 2024 (an increase of 13% from 2023, compared with a 5% increase the year before), indicating that overseas visitors are staying longer even as visit growth moderates. Spend growth has remained robust across both periods, rising by 8% and then 10%, pointing to improving value rather than just higher volumes.

3.22. Visiting friends and relatives (VFR) remains the dominant driver of inbound tourism, accounting for nearly half of all visits (48%) and an even greater share of nights (61%), highlighting the importance of longer stays associated with personal and family connections. Despite this dominance in volume and nights, VFR contributes a smaller proportion of spend (41%), reflecting lower daily expenditure compared with other segments.

3.23. Holiday travel represents just over a quarter of visits (27%) but delivers a disproportionately high share of spend (28%). This indicates that leisure visitors tend to spend more per trip, reinforcing the economic importance of the holiday market to the region. Business travel, while smaller in overall share (17% of visits), also delivers more in spend (19%), underlining its value despite shorter stays. Study and other travel remain a relatively small but stable component across all measures.

3.24. In comparison with England, the South East receives a lower percentage of holiday visits but a higher percentage of VFR visits. Business and Study/Other visits are comparable with the national average.

Volume and Value of Tourism to Horsham District

3.25. Current data from Visit England/Britain and the ONS doesn't drill deeper than county level but Destination Research Economic Impact Reports for Horsham and Mid Sussex results from 2024 are shown in Horsham's visitor economy in 2024 and was characterised by modest growth in value, strong reliance on day visitors, and steady overnight performance, delivering meaningful economic and employment benefits to the District. See Table 2 below.[23]

[23] Destination Research, Economic Impact of Tourism Horsham District – 2024; Destination Research, Economic Impact of Tourism Mid Sussex District – 2024

3.26. Tourism remains a significant part of Horsham's economy in 2024, generating a total value of £253.7m, up 2% year on year. This growth is driven primarily by high volumes of day visitors, alongside modest increases in overnight activity.

3.27. The District welcomed 3.97 million trips, of which day trips dominate (3.76m). Day visitors generated £120.8m, accounting for nearly half of total trip spend and reinforcing Horsham's role as a strong short-stay and leisure destination for nearby catchments. Day trip volumes and value both rose by 2%, indicating resilient demand despite wider cost-of-living pressures.

3.28. Overnight tourism continues to play a smaller but higher-value role. 210,000 staying trips generated 1.2 million nights and £57.1m in direct spend, up 3% on the previous year. UK visitors remain the backbone of the staying market, contributing around three-quarters of staying trips, nights and spend, while overseas visitors provide an important secondary contribution.

3.29. When associated spend and indirect/induced impacts are included, tourism supports 3,426 FTE jobs and 4,527 tourism-related jobs in total, representing 8% of all employment in the District. This underlines tourism's importance not just to visitor-facing businesses, but across the wider local supply chain.

Table 2 – Tourism in Horsham and Mid Sussex 2024 (Destination Research Results)

	Horsham	**Annual Variation**	**Mid Sussex**	**Annual Variation**
Day Trips				
Trips	3.8m	2%	2.9m	2%
Value	£120.8m	2%	£97.8m	2%
Overnight Trips				
Trips	210,000	1%	346,000	0%
Nights	1.2m	2%	£1.8m	3%
Value	£57.1m	3%	£118.4m	2%
Total Value	£253.7m	2%	£299.6m	2%
Actual Jobs	4,527	2%	5,410	2%

3.30. Data for Horsham from 2024 shows a visitor economy increasingly supported by overseas growth and longer stays, with strong reliance on the VFR market alongside a resilient serviced and holiday park sector. [24]

[24] Destination Research, Economic Impact of Tourism Horsham District – 2024

3.31. In 2024, staying trips were stable overall, with total trips up slightly (+1%) compared with 2023. Growth was driven by overseas visitors (+5%), while UK trips were flat. Friends and relatives remained the dominant accommodation type, accounting for 44% of trips, reflecting the area's strong visiting friends and relatives (VFR) market.

3.32. Serviced accommodation was the largest commercial sector (21% of trips), while static caravans and camping together represented a further 11%, underlining the continued importance of the holiday park and outdoor tourism offer.

3.33. Total nights increased by 2%, again driven by overseas visitors (+11%) against a small decline in UK nights (-1%). Friends and relatives dominated nights stayed (60%), particularly among overseas visitors (85%), indicating longer average stays in this segment.

3.34. Serviced accommodation and static caravans each accounted for around 11–12% of nights, while camping generated a relatively high share of nights (9%) compared with its share of trips, suggesting longer stays.

3.35. Visitor spend rose by 3% year on year to £57.1m. Growth was again stronger from overseas visitors (+6%) than the UK (+2%). Friends and relatives generated over half of total spend (56%), despite being largely non-commercial accommodation, highlighting the wider economic value of this market through spending on food, drink and activities.

3.36. Serviced accommodation remained the highest-spending commercial category (£12.6m, 22% of spend), while static caravans (£5.4m), camping (£2.2m), and self-catering (£2m) also made significant contributions.

The Legacy of COVID-19 and Brexit, and the Impact of the Cost of Living Crisis on the Visitor Economy, the Accommodation Market and Changes to Visitor Behaviour

3.37. The economic impact results shown in Table 2 above show that tourism remains a significant employer and contributor to local spend, but much of that is day-visitor dominated rather than higher-spend overnight stays. The value of the sector can be increased by supporting new accommodation provision through both economic strategies and planning policy.

3.38. Brexit reduced the pool of many seasonal and hospitality workers and has, together with increased NI costs for businesses and reduced relief on business rates from this

April, increased costs for many visitor economy businesses, pressuring staffing for cafés, B&Bs and attractions amongst others. This has led some operators to become more cautious about opening hours and capacity reducing the productivity of assets. In many cases procurement and staffing has become costlier and more complex, increasing pressure on margins.

3.39. Domestic consumers are tending to book closer to travel dates and prefer short breaks or day trips rather than longer overnight holidays. This increases volatility and makes revenue forecasting harder for small operators especially outside peak months. [25]

The Impact of the Growth of Short-term Holiday Lets and Sharing Economy Platforms

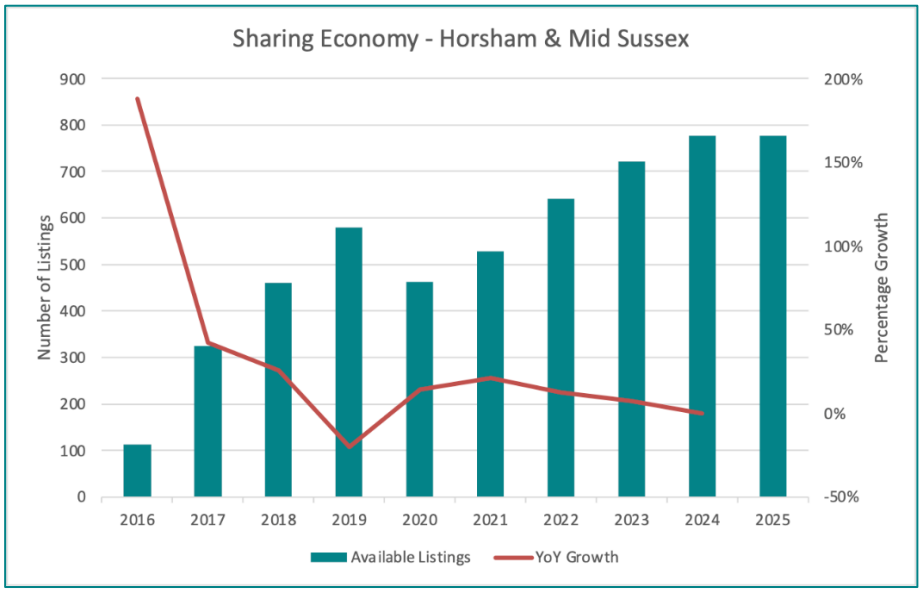
Summary of Current Context

3.40. Following the easing of COVID-19 restrictions, holiday rental properties proved more resilient than most other forms of accommodation and as a result, the pandemic increased the segment's client base. The UK holiday rental market, particularly for domestic properties, has shown robust growth and resilience following the COVID-19 pandemic.

3.41. Figure 1 below shows growth in sharing economy listings over the last decade for both Horsham and Mid-Sussex combined. This reflects the national trend with rapid growth from 2016 to 2019, dropping during the pandemic and growing at a steady pace since. In 2025, supply did not show any growth for the first time in the decade, indicating further pressures on investment into the Sharing Economy and reticence by consumers with discretionary spending.[26] 2024 is likely to represent 'Peak Airbnb', at least for this economic cycle.

Figure 1 – Sharing Economy Growth Rate 2016 to 2025 (# units & % Rate)

[25] Visit Britain GBTS 2025 (Domestic Overnight and Day Trips)
[26] Figure 2 shows different volumes of Sharing Economy properties than the audit reported later due to a different calculation based on listings.



The Impact of the Growth of Online Travel Agencies on the Tourist Accommodation Market

The Landscape for OTAs

3.42. The tourism industry has gone from strength to strength since digitalisation with booking platforms transforming the route to market for many thousands of small British businesses in every part of the country. New product innovations, such as virtual tours, are delivered by major distributors and individual businesses, combining powerfully to offer the best deal to the consumer. The majority of holiday homes are privately owned but often use booking platforms, Online Travel Agents like Booking.com or other agents to find their customers.

3.43. Large UK brands including Awaze (Hoseasons & Cottages.com) and Sykes Holidays offer thousands of properties working alongside more specialist companies that have a long-standing regional expertise. Digital guidebooks have transformed the way in which guests understand how things work, the facilities on offer and what there is to see and enjoy. Digital dashboards have also transformed the way in which owners understand how their business is performing.

Impact of OTAs

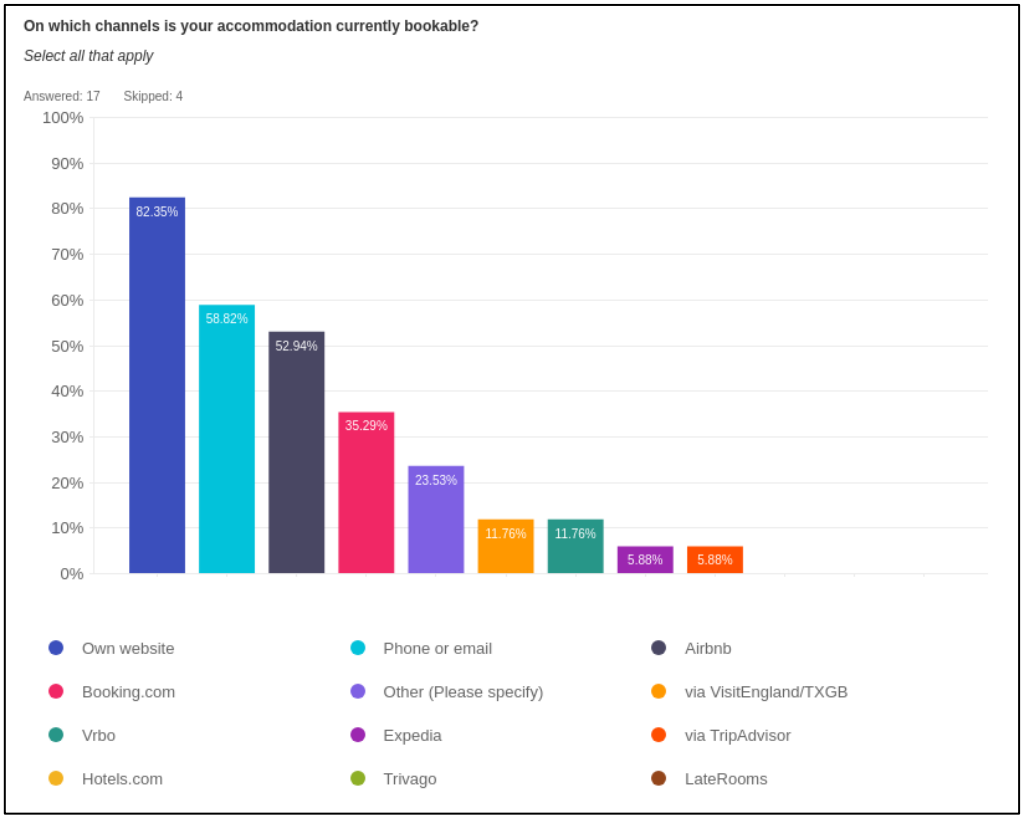
3.44. The rise of OTAs has significantly influenced the tourist accommodation market. These platforms offer greater accessibility and convenience for consumers, allowing

easy comparison and booking of various accommodation options. In 2024, 46% of hotel guests made their most recent booking via an OTA. [27]

3.45. In general, Airbnb is the largest booking channel for holiday rental properties, accounting for 53% of consumers' most recent holiday rental property booking made in the three years ending April 2023. Generalist OTAs, such as Booking.com and Expedia, accounted for 23% of consumers' most recent holiday rental property bookings. [28]

3.46. Figure 1 below, part of the survey of accommodation providers, reports which channels are favoured by a sample of those operating in Horsham and Mid Sussex. [29]

Figure 2 – On which channels is your property currently bookable? [30]



3.47. These platforms have intensified competition among accommodation providers by highlighting price and availability, pushing hotels and rental properties to offer

[27] Source: Hotels UK, 2024, Mintel
[28] Source: Holiday Rental Properties UK, 2023, Mintel
[29] Tomorrow's Tourism – Survey of accommodation providers in Horsham and Mid Sussex undertaken in early 2026
[30] "Other" channels were: Sykes Cottages, Love Camping, National trails, walking companies organising walks on South Downs Way, Group Accommodation

competitive rates and added value. This transparency benefits consumers but pressures providers to maintain high standards and competitive pricing.

3.48. Accommodation providers are adapting by enhancing their direct booking capabilities and offering exclusive perks for direct bookings. Additionally, hotels and rental properties are leveraging OTAs for marketing and broader reach while developing loyalty programs to retain customers.

4. Tourist Accommodation Supply in Horsham

Current supply of Visitor Accommodation

4.1. A total of 213 establishments were recorded in the 2026 Tourism Economy audit across both Districts, of which 31% are serviced accommodation and 61% non-serviced. Of these establishments, 136, (64%) are in Horsham District. The Tourism Economy is defined as establishments that are professionally run, usually have a website, may employ people and usually pay VAT.

Table 3 – Tourism Economy Accommodation Supply – Establishments [31]

Category	Horsham	%	Sub-Category	Horsham	%
Serviced	35	26%	Hotel	13	9%
			Hotel - Branded Budget	4	3%
			B&B / Guest House	8	5%
			Pub / Inn	9	6%
			Residential Accommodation	3	2%
			Other Serviced	1	1%
Non-Serviced	98	72%	Self Catering Apartment	15	10%
			Self Catering House / Cottage	71	47%
			Holiday Park / Lodges	3	2%
			Glamping Site	13	9%
			Camping / Caravan	12	8%
Mixed Serviced / Non-Serviced	3	2%			
Total	**136**			**152**	

4.2. The left-hand category column of Table 3 records the number of businesses while the right-hand column shows sub-categories recording the type of accommodation found within these businesses – which may be more than one type. The total by sub-category adds up to more than the overall number of establishments as it captures businesses which operate across more than one sub-category. Self-catering covers the self-catering units not listed on Airbnb. Appendices IA to IC show greater detail in terms of number of rooms / beds; comparison with the previous 2016 benchmark and comparison with Mid-Sussex.

[31] The total by sub-category may up to more than the overall number of establishments as it captures businesses which operate across more than one sub-category.

Overview

4.3. As of January 2026, there are 136 accommodation establishments operating in the tourism economy in Horsham District. The maps in the associated Asset Audit Report show the distribution of these properties across the District.

4.4. 26% of the offer is serviced with 72% non-serviced. Rooms offered by serviced establishments total 733, followed closely by the non-serviced offer of 622. The number of rooms per property average 21 in serviced accommodation and six in non-serviced. These figures do not include camping, caravan sites and holiday park sites, which account for 34% of the District's bed spaces and remains a key element of the District's visitor economy.

2016 – 2026 Comparison

4.5. Between 2016 and 2026, Horsham's traditional visitor accommodation stock has reduced noticeably. The total number of establishments has fallen by 14% (from 177 to 152), driven primarily by sharp declines in inns and guest houses/B&Bs. This reflects ongoing pressures on small, serviced operators and likely includes some displacement into the Sharing Economy, which was not captured in the 2016 audit, but is covered in the Sharing Economy section below. [32]

4.6. Despite the reduction in businesses, total bed spaces have increased. This suggests consolidation within the sector, with losses concentrated among smaller serviced properties rather than large-scale capacity closures. The market appears to be restructuring rather than seeing major reductions in capacity.

4.7. There has been clear growth in alternative accommodation formats. Glamping, caravan and camping provision, together with residential conference and outdoor education centres have all expanded significantly in terms of capacity.

4.8. The exclusion of short-term lets from this part of the audit means the decline in visible stock likely overstates the reduction in overall visitor accommodation stock. This reflects the national trend and is not so much a 'reduction' as the result of a switch to the Sharing Economy by many operators, as can be seen in Appendix IB. In many there has been a switch in sub-category as previous B&B and guest house owners turn to newer distribution channels like Airbnb, which provides a greater

[32] Hotel Solutions (2016) Horsham District Hotel & Visitor Accommodation Study. Figures exclude establishments within the South Downs National Park.

incentive to run on a self-catering basis. This is also evident in the significant increase in Airbnb properties recorded. [33]

Serviced Accommodation

4.9. The number of hotels has remained similar, increasing by just two, while the number of rooms has increased by 112. Inns have seen significant drop of 36%, while B&B's and guesthouses have seen an even more marked decline of 80% in the number of establishments. The serviced stock is varied with 17 hotels of different standards, eight B&Bs and nine pubs with rooms.

Non-Serviced Accommodation – Self Catering

4.10. The 2016 audit recorded 78 self-catering establishments. In the current audit this figure is 86, representing a 10% increase. However, there are also now over 600 sharing economy establishments (i.e. those listed on Airbnb/Vrbo). Although not all properties listed on Airbnb are self-catering, this still highlights the large number of establishments which have moved to using these sales platforms.

Non-Serviced Accommodation – Camping and Caravan Sites

4.11. The area has 12 camping and caravan sites, three fewer than the 2018 audit, although the number of glamping sites has increased from eight to 13. The number of holiday parks has remained at three. Camping, caravan sites and holiday parks are relatively small in Horsham compared to many other parts of the UK providing an average of 38 pitches per site (England average is 68). [34]

Current supply of Sharing Economy Accommodation

4.12. The Sharing Economy is to some extent simpler to report as it is largely self-catering stock usually in residential dwellings that are registered for council tax rather than business rates. Some of the professional tourism economy businesses will use websites like Airbnb to help convert sales but in such cases, they will typically use the platform as one sales channel, or for certain units, within the business.

4.13. Table 5 below shows the complete landscape as regards the numbers of establishments across both economies within the two Districts. This shows a

[33] Properties sold through Airbnb have been removed from the Tourism Economy master list to avoid duplication as these are reported in detail in the later section. Significant numbers of Airbnb properties may be sold through other channels. Some Tourism Economy businesses may also use Airbnb as a sales channel.
[34] UK Caravan and Camping Alliance (2024) Pitching the Value 2024 Economic Benefit Report: Holiday Parks and Campsites England

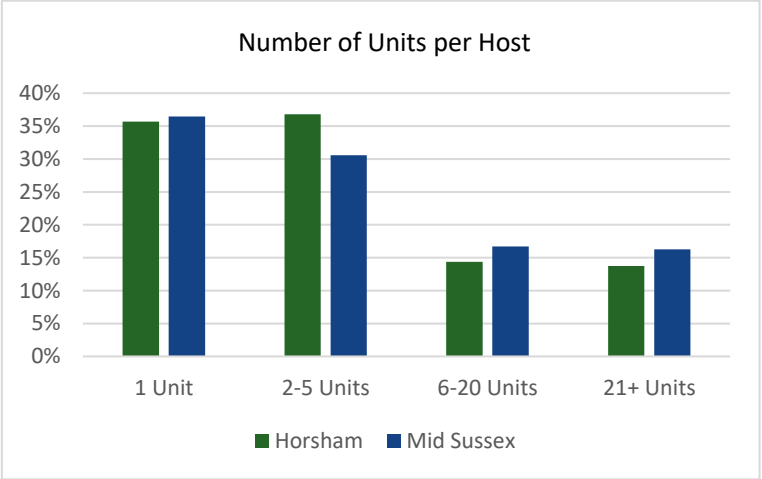
proportionally higher percentage within the Sharing Economy than the normal distribution of around 20% : 80% Tourism : Sharing Economies. Bedroom numbers are typically low, averaging 1.6 rooms per property.

Table 4 – Total Visitor Accommodation in Horsham and Mid Sussex

	Horsham	%	Mid Sussex	%	Total
Tourism Economy	136	18%	77	14%	213
Sharing Economy	633	82%	491	86%	1,124
Total	**769**		**568**		**1,337**

4.14. Many hosts have more than one unit available for rent, reflecting the scale of the sector as a business and source of income. In Horsham 65% of hosts are operating more than one property. This could either mean that the beneficial owners have asked an agent to market the property on their behalf, (more likely) or that they are the actual owners, operating a range of properties across the Districts (less likely). In such cases it is likely that this will be a business.

Figure 3 – Sharing Economy – Unit Management



4.15. 14% of active units in Horsham use a property manager, the most prominent companies across the two Districts being Cottages.com (36), My Property Host (16), Henry Adams Holiday Lets (12), Huluki Sussex Stays (12), Sykes Holiday Cottages (12) and Beehive Properties Serviced Accommodation (10). As can be expected, there are higher densities of units around Horsham, and close to the South Downs National Park – see the separate Asset Audit for more detail.

4.16. Average annual revenue per unit in Rother District is £16,209, with an average length of stay of 3.2 nights. Overall occupancy rates are typically 52%, similar to Rother but lower than Eastbourne at 57% and broadly similar to the South Downs National Park.

Weekly occupancy demonstrates a standard profile, typically increasing on Friday / Saturday and being lowest during the first 3 working weekdays. See Appendix 1D for further detail. Generally, Horsham and Mid Sussex have less developed sharing economies than Rother with around one third of the capacity of its near neighbour in each District.

4.17. 515 entire properties that have been active in the last year. It should be noted there are likely to be properties using other channels, often in combination with Airbnb, so this figure under-estimates the extent of Short Term Lets (STL) but is accurate in terms of the quantum.

4.18. The national statutory registration scheme, likely to come into force in 2027, will potentially give the opportunity to identify the exact number of properties. The impact of the scheme is likely to reduce overall STL numbers by an estimated 12%.

5. Tourist Accommodation in Horsham – Current Performance

The Implications of National trends for Horsham

5.1. Horsham is well positioned for a higher-value, experience-led visitor market, but success depends on managing seasonality, costs and competition through increased quality, supplier flexibility and strong digital presence rather than increasing visitor volumes per se. Expansion plans for Gatwick also bring an opportunity for additional business related focussed tourism.

5.2. A range of national trends can inform the visitor economy strategies in Horsham. There is rising demand for rural holiday rentals and a well-resourced Baby Boomer related market that is now growing older. Glamping and unique stays are growing in popularity as shown by the success of establishments like The Hazel Hide at Heath Flower Farm. Appealing to older visitors, making a greater connection to local communities and ensuring businesses are operating across the digital space will all help both Districts to grow the market.

Glamping and Unique Stays

5.3. Horsham is well-placed to tap into the growing appetite for glamping and experiential stays in nature, especially among younger, higher-spending travellers.

Rising Demand for Rural Holiday Rentals

5.4. Horsham, as a largely rural destination, aligns with the rising preference for countryside stays. The appeal of natural beauty, outdoor activities, and tranquil settings fits the profile of holiday rental guests—especially older adults seeking quiet, well-serviced locations.

Quality-led growth

5.5. Growth is more likely to come from higher spend per stay rather than higher visitor numbers. Well-designed, distinctive and comfortable accommodation will outperform basic or price-led offer.

Later booking and shorter stays

5.6. Visitors increasingly book closer to arrival and stay for 1–3 nights. This suits smaller hotels and short-term lets but requires flexible pricing, strong online visibility and the ability to accommodate short breaks and last-minute demand.

Seasonality

5.7. Demand will continue to peak in summer and school holidays, with weaker off-peak performance in inland and rural locations. Providers can stimulate shoulder-season demand through wellbeing, walking, food and midweek offers.

Experience-led and nature-based tourism

5.8. Sussex's countryside, access to the South Downs, food and vineyards, culture and heritage align well with growing demand for experiences, wellbeing and sustainability rather than accommodation alone.

Hotels must differentiate rather than compete on price

5.9. Hotels remain important for older, higher-spending visitors and business or event travel, but face sustained competition from short-term rentals. Apartment-style rooms, wellness facilities, longer stays and flexible packages are increasingly important to re-invigorate the offer.

Short-term rentals will remain significant

5.10. Holiday lets appeal strongly to younger adults and families seeking flexibility, space and self-catering. This supports demand across Sussex towns and villages but increases competition and sensitivity around regulation and community balance.

Rising costs and regulation shape supply

5.11. Labour, energy and compliance costs, alongside potential short-term let regulation and/or visitor levies, may constrain new supply and disproportionately affect smaller operators—favouring professional, higher-quality businesses.

Ageing demographics

5.12. Growth in the over-65 market supports demand for accessible, comfortable accommodation with good food, parking and quieter locations—an opportunity for Horsham's market towns.

Key trends and issues in the local market

5.13. Interviews with businesses across both Districts indicated a number of strengths and weaknesses of which the most prevalent were:

Table 5 – Summary Survey Findings

Business model	Providers relied most on their own website, phone/email and Airbnb-type channels. The offer is diverse and increasingly experience-led rather than purely room-led.
Performance	Average reported occupancy was 56.3% in 2024 and 57.4% in 2025, with pricing edging upward and a clear weekend bias in both summer and winter. Partnership marketing can help boost this relatively low occupancy level.
Investment	Over half of respondents reporting on investment had made capital improvements in the last five years, and most recorded investment was substantial rather than minor maintenance.
Constraints	Rising running costs and weaker consumer spending were the dominant business pressures, with additional concerns around over-regulation, taxation and planning delays in particular cases.
Sustainability	Many providers are already adopting practical sustainability measures, although formal accreditation and accessibility adaptation remain limited.
Visitor Levy	Most respondents opposed any new visitor levy that may be possible via new Mayoral / Combined Authorities.

5.14. The survey is reported in greater detail in Section 8 below and provided as a separate document.

6. Overview of Local Planning Policy

Horsham

6.1 This section provides an overview of existing visitor and tourism related planning policy and is drawn largely from the Asset Audit.

6.2 Following an overview of policy an analysis is made of recent planning history relating to visitor accommodation to understand the general patterns of approval/refusal over time, the distribution of applications as regards to the areas prioritised for visitor accommodation and how decision-makers have been applying the relevant policies in practice.

6.3 The Horsham Local Plan 2023-2040 is currently at examination. The current local plan is the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) November 2015. Taken as a whole, the HDPF promotes tourism as a key component of the District's economy, with Horsham identified as the primary focus for visitor and cultural activity, supported by appropriately scaled provision in surrounding towns and villages. It recognises the value of the District's landscape and proximity to the South Downs in attracting visitors, while emphasising that tourism development should respect rural character and make use of existing buildings wherever possible.

6.4 The HDPF also acknowledges a shortage of hotel accommodation within the District, indicating support for additional visitor facilities — including through the conversion of suitable buildings in the first instance — where they are well located and consistent with the wider spatial strategy.

Key policies in the Assessment of Visitor Accommodation

6.5 Economic Growth: Policy 7 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) states that sustainable employment development within Horsham District will be achieved through the promotion of the District as an attractive place to stay and visit, thereby increasing the value of the tourism economy.

6.6 Rural Economic Development: Policy 10 of the HDPF supports sustainable rural economic development and enterprise within the District that maintains the quality and character of the area, whilst sustaining its varied and productive social and economic activity.

6.7 The policy requires development to contribute to diverse and sustainable farming enterprises within the District or, in the case of other countryside-based enterprises and activities, to contribute to the wider rural economy and/or promote recreation in, and the enjoyment of, the countryside.

6.8 Amongst other matters, Policy 10 indicates that such development should, wherever possible, be contained within suitably located buildings appropriate for conversion. The policy concludes that proposals for the conversion of rural buildings to business and commercial uses will be considered favourably over residential uses in the first instance.

6.9 Tourism and Cultural Facilities: Policy 11 of the HDPF states that measures which promote tourism and enhance local cultural facilities, including recreation-based rural diversification, will be encouraged. Development should be of a scale and type appropriate to its location and should increase the range or improve the quality of accommodation, attractions or experiences for tourists, day visitors, business visitors and residents within the District.

6.10 Particular support will be given to proposals which reinforce local distinctiveness and improve existing facilities; focus major tourism and cultural facilities within Horsham Town Centre; ensure facilities are available within towns and villages in the District and are appropriate to their relationship with the surrounding urban area and countryside; develop opportunities associated with rural diversification and rural development initiatives, particularly where they assist farm diversification projects, benefit the local economy, or enable the retention of buildings that contribute to the character of the countryside; and do not result in the loss of a cultural resource.

6.11 In addition, proposals for tourist related / visitor accommodation are typically considered against the following adopted policies of the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF):

- Policy 1 – Strategic Policy: Sustainable Development
- Policy 2 – Strategic Policy: Strategic Development
- Policy 24 – Strategic Policy: Environmental Protection
- Policy 25 – Strategic Policy: The Natural Environment and Landscape Character
- Policy 31 – Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity
- Policy 32 – Strategic Policy: The Quality of New Development
- Policy 33 – Development Principles
- Policy 34 – Cultural and Heritage Assets
- Policy 40 – Sustainable Transport
- Policy 41 – Parking

- Policy 43 – Community Facilities, Leisure and Recreation

6.12 The HDPF will be superseded by the Horsham Local Plan 2023-2040, subject to it being found sound at examination and adopted. The emerging Local Plan's policies are not identical, but the Plan does identify a need for more visitor accommodation and overnight trips. It's general approach for achieving this remains similar to the HDPF.

6.13 A positive approach to visitor accommodation is evident from a review of a sample of recent applications, particularly those involving the conversion of existing buildings.[35] This ranges from smaller-scale schemes, such as DC/20/1026 (conversion of an office building to a holiday let), through to more substantial conversion proposals including DC/22/1553 (internal alterations to convert existing meeting rooms, stores and office spaces to form 9 guest bedrooms with en-suites, together with associated external alterations) and DC/20/0267 (internal alterations to the first floor to convert unused office space into 10 hotel bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms and associated drainage works).

6.14 Support for new-build visitor accommodation is also demonstrated through approvals such as DC/20/0281 (Erection of 2 holiday lodge cabins) and DC/19/2498, Demolition of stable block and construction of single-story hotel accommodation). The policy is supportive for proposals that include camping / glamping sites, such as DC/21/0911 - change of use of land to a wellness glamping / campsite, with formation of new access, parking area, and toilet / shower block.

6.15 Aside from prior approval cases, there is no clear evidence of visitor accommodation planning application proposal being refused on principle grounds. Overall, the application data indicates a consistent pattern of delivery and support for visitor accommodation.

[35] It should be noted that this represents a limited and illustrative sample only. The applications referred to were not reviewed exhaustively, but were selected to provide an indication of how relevant planning policy has been operating in practice, rather than to constitute a comprehensive audit of all visitor accommodation proposals.

7. National Planning Context

7.1 This section provides a review of proposed legislative (planning) changes in relation to visitor / tourist accommodation. The relevant potential changes are:

- Potential introduction of use class C5;
- Statutory Registration Scheme for Short-term lets;
- Potential introduction of Permitted Development Right to allow C1 (hotels) to change to C3 (dwellinghouses).

Potential introduction of use class C5 (and associated permitted development right)

7.2 The Planning and Infrastructure Act became law in December 2025 with a focus on housing delivery. The NPPF was amended / updated with further updates expected. The previous Government consulted on a number of changes to legislation - these included the introduction of a new 'C5' use class.

7.3 There is currently no formal 'use-class' categorisation for short-term lets within the planning system, unlike for other forms of visitor accommodation. In the current absence of a dedicated use class, ambiguity exists as to where short-term lets 'should' belong – currently they can be classed as C1 (hotels), as 'sui generis' (i.e. 'in a class by itself') or, in some cases, C3 (residential dwellinghouses). The previous government sought to create a formal use class categorisation for short term lets so that such developments could be brought properly within the planning system.

7.4 A response to the Consultation was due in 'summer 2024', however, in both 2024 and 2025 the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government (MHC&LG) stated they were unable to provide any further updates with regards to the legislation.

7.5 In addition to the introduction of a C5 use class, the Consultation further proposed an associated permitted development right (PDR) for the change of use from a C3 dwellinghouse to a C5 short term let and vice versa. In a situation where a local authority recognises a local issue regarding the occurrence of C5 properties, the consultation stated:

> *'Local planning authorities may remove a permitted development right by making an Article 4 direction in line with national policy set out in paragraph 53 of the National Planning Policy Framework'. (Nb, Para 53 is now Para 54 of the 2024 NPPF) Paragraph 54b) of the NPPF states:*

'a) where they relate to change from non-residential use to residential use, be limited to situations where an Article 4 direction is necessary to avoid wholly unacceptable adverse impacts (this could include the loss of the essential core of a primary shopping area which would seriously undermine its vitality and viability, but would be very unlikely to extend to the whole of a town centre)

b) in other cases, be limited to situations where an Article 4 direction is necessary to protect local amenity or the well-being of the area (this could include the use of Article 4 directions to require planning permission for the demolition of local facilities)

c) in all cases, be based on robust evidence, and apply to the smallest geographical area possible.'

7.6 Article 4 directions may be made as 'immediate' or 'non-immediate', with differing advantages and disadvantages for both approaches. An 'immediate' Article 4 direction benefits from its immediacy but can result in subsequent issues such as compensation payments. A 'non-immediate' Article 4 might avoid such consequences but, by being non-immediate, allows for the rushed enactment of the PDR prior to the Article 4 coming into force – thus, property owners / developers might be prompted to enact the PD right (C3 to C5 or vice versa) with the awareness that the window of opportunity is limited. It should be noted that an Article 4 merely removes the PDR (it does not preclude a planning application).

7.7 The introduction of the use class C5 with the associated permitted development right would mean that C3 stock could be lost to C5 use without the need for a planning application. An Article 4 Direction could be used to resist the loss of any further C3 housing stock to the potentially forthcoming C5. The introduction of the C5 Use Class would enable local authorities to exercise greater control over short-term accommodation developments. If appropriately managed, this control would:

- 1 Protect the residential amenity of neighbourhoods;
- 2 Safeguard valuable housing stock;
- 3 Direct C5 developments to suitable areas.

7.8 The introduction of the C5 Use Class would provide local authorities with a valuable tool to manage short-term accommodation developments, mitigating their impact on residential communities and ensuring that they are situated in suitable locations. Whether or not a PDR is introduced (and therefore whether or not an Article 4 is necessary), the need for appropriate policies to control applications for C5 use remains important to maintain the balance between housing needs and supporting appropriate tourism development.

Statutory Registration Scheme for Short-term lets

7.9 At the time of writing there is no 'register of short-term lets' but further to the Levelling Up and Regeneration Action 2023 and a related consultation, DCMS is understood to have procured IT specialists and developed a system that is now at beta testing stage. The scheme will potentially be overseen by VisitEngland and some areas may be subject to a pilot scheme. Implementation is likely to be in late 2026 or 2027.

7.10 The latest update on 26th February, further to a question of Rachel Blake MP Cities of London and Westminster, confirmed that the new scheme has entered user testing at the end of October 2025 to prepare for a planned launch later in 2026, with a note that secondary legislation will be required to enact the scheme. [36] It is not yet fully clear how data will be used, whether local authorities will have access to 'their' dataset or how compliance will be monitored.

Potential introduction of permitted development right for C1 (hotels) to C3 (dwellings)

7.11 The previous Government also considered the establishment of a PDR for the conversion of 'C1' sites (hotels, boarding houses, guesthouses) to 'C3' use (dwellinghouses). This move was considered in order to contribute towards meeting local housing demands. There has been no action yet on the PDR for C1 to C3.

7.12 A comparable PDR termed 'Class MA' has already been established for the Change of use of commercial ('Class E') sites to dwellinghouses (C3). Note, a 'prior approval' application is required for this right. According to the consultation, the proposed C1 to C3 right could be achieved by an expansion of Class MA, to include C1, or through the creation of a separate new PDR. This would be via 'prior approval' and, as such, an application would be required.

7.13 An undesirable outcome of the existing Class MA right is noted – this is the loss of commercial units in town centres and high streets without the need for a planning application. An unintended loss of key hotels and guesthouses could similarly result from the introduction of a C1 to C3 PDR. It is noted, however, that the consultation has sought views on whether the approval process for the C1 to C3 PD right should include an assessment of '*the impacts the change of use could have on the local tourism economy'*.

[36] Hansard 26th February 2026, Volume 781 Short Term Lets available at this link

7.14 Considering that any new PDR could allow for a Change of Use from C1 to C3 without a planning application, it is strongly indicated that an Article 4 direction should at least be considered – in particular for those areas with the most valuable visitor stock / stock worthy of retention. The introduction of the PDR could result in hotel stock being lost to housing in a very short period of time and this could only be stemmed when an Article 4 direction came into force.

7.15 In the circumstance where the PDR exists and there is no Article 4 direction in force, C1 stock could remain relatively exposed to loss through a change of use without the need for planning permission. An additional factor which may exacerbate this threat is the potential determination timeframe requirements. Considering the current Class MA Prior Approval Process, for instance, there is a requirement for the LPA to determine the application within 56 days - if this does not happen then there is deemed to be approval. This turnaround would be relatively fast, in particular when considered against the time it would take to bring a non-immediate Article 4 direction into force.

8. Views from Accommodation Providers

Survey of Accommodation Providers

8.1 A survey of accommodation providers was undertaken in support of the accommodation audit. The survey received 21 responses making the results indicative and is available as a separate document. In-depth interviews were held with a further five businesses including three accommodation providers, a property agent and ExperienceSussex. It was rather more difficult to find interviewees and encourage survey respondents than in other areas, which may indicate the less developed nature of the visitor economy in the two Districts.

8.2 The survey returns underline the mixed nature of the accommodation market in Horsham and Mid Sussex. Among the 21 businesses that identified an accommodation type, the largest group was self-catering houses and cottages (9), followed by glamping businesses (5), hotels (3), bed and breakfasts/guest houses (2), camping or caravan sites (2) and one residential accommodation provider. Some businesses selected more than one type: a number of operators now combine hotel rooms, self-catering units, camping and glamping within a single enterprise.

8.3 The supply represented in the returns is therefore not dominated by conventional hotels. Instead, it is characterised by small and medium-scale businesses, estate-based accommodation offers and niche rural products. Across respondents who supplied capacity information, the survey captured approximately 148 rooms or pitches and around 318 bedspaces, illustrating that the market is dispersed across many comparatively small units rather than concentrated in a few large establishments.

8.4 Booking behaviour also points to a mixed-channel market. Fourteen of the 17 providers answering this question said their accommodation was bookable through their own website, 10 accepted bookings by phone or email, 9 used Airbnb and 6 were on Booking.com. Only two reported use of Vrbo, while smaller numbers mentioned channels such as Sykes Cottages, National Trails-linked promotions, group accommodation websites and Love Camping. The picture is one of operators balancing direct sales with selected platform distribution, rather than relying on a single route to market.

8.5 The accommodation offer extends beyond basic overnight provision. In addition to breakfast, food and drink, and conference space, respondents described distinctive selling points such as after-hours access to Sheffield Park National Trust property,

access to Knepp's rewilding project, walking and cycling directly from the door, summer swimming pool and tennis court access, wedding business, wellness and "nature connection" experiences. These responses suggest that the local market is increasingly experience-rich and place-based, with providers seeking to differentiate themselves through the wider setting and visitor experience.

Performance, demand and seasonality

8.6 The survey evidence suggests a market that is broadly stable, but not buoyant. On the headline sentiment question, the average score for how local demand is faring was 3.0 out of 5, equivalent to a neutral assessment overall. The dominant message is not one of sharp decline, but neither is it one of strong growth. Five of the 12 respondents answering this question chose "don't know", which may reflect how fragmented the market has become and how difficult it is for small businesses to judge wider trends beyond their own operation.

8.7 Reported occupancy levels support this reading of cautious stability. For the 15 businesses providing figures, the average annual occupancy rate was 56.3% in 2024 and 57.4% in 2025. Individual results ranged from around 20% to the high 80s, showing a wide spread between stronger and weaker operators. Several comments indicate that the market has become more difficult to read because bookings are coming in later and lead times are shortening. One respondent referred explicitly to a "later booking horizon and greater marketing effort", while another commented that demand appears to be "returning to a shorter lead time".

8.8 The market also remains strongly leisure-led. On average, respondents estimated that 59% of their 2025 business came from leisure and holiday stays, with events and festivals accounting for a further 21% and visiting friends and relatives 17%. By contrast, business/conference/corporate demand averaged only 12%. Open comments reinforce that pattern: one hotel respondent reported that corporate guests are reducing while leisure demand is increasing, although not quickly enough to offset price competition from chain operators. Another noted a shortage of accommodation in Steyning linked to the closure of the Old Tollgate hotel, indicating that localised gaps in supply can still arise within what is overall a dispersed market.

8.9 Pricing appears to have edged upwards. Of the 15 respondents who supplied average daily rate bands, 12 were already charging £91 or above in 2024, including 6 over £120. By 2025, the proportion charging more than £120 had risen to 8, while only one remained in the £51 to £70 band and none were below £50. This suggests a degree of rate resilience, although comments elsewhere in the survey make clear

that higher prices do not necessarily translate into stronger profitability because operators are also facing significant cost inflation.

8.10 Seasonality remains a clear feature of the market. Ten of the 15 respondents answering the question said they were open year-round, while the remainder were concentrated primarily between April and September. Occupancy is skewed to weekends in both peak and off-peak periods: on average, 63.4% of summer occupancy is generated at weekends, compared with 36.6% midweek, while the winter split is 58.3% weekend and 41.8% midweek. This pattern is consistent with a visitor economy driven predominantly by short leisure breaks rather than long-stay or corporate demand.

Investment, product quality, sustainability and accessibility

8.11 In summary, over the last five years.:

- Around 20% of properties have changed ownership;
- Planning permission has been sought for over a third of the properties (i.e. 5) with all being successful – with investment ranging from below £20,000 to up to £0.5m;
- Some type of capital investment has been undertaken by over half of accommodation providers.
- Around a third plan investment over the next five years.

8.12 The survey points to a market that is investing selectively rather than expanding rapidly. Most respondents appear to be working within an established stock base, focusing more on refurbishment, repositioning and gradual improvement than on substantial new build growth.

8.13 Within that existing stock, however, capital investment has been significant. Around half of respondents answering the question said they had invested in their accommodation during the last five years. Of these, four reported expenditure in the £101,000 to £500,000 range, one invested £21,000 to £50,000 and two invested up to £20,000. The examples given are substantial and varied including bedroom, restaurant and kitchen refurbishments and wider investment in décor, gardens, infrastructure and guest experience; new kitchens, bathrooms and the reconfiguration of two cottages into one; internet upgrades and multiple fire and safety compliance works. Looking ahead, the 13 businesses responding were evenly split between those planning investment and those not planning it (5 each), with 3 unsure. The schemes mentioned included extra bedrooms, bathroom and kitchen

upgrades, solar and battery power, EV charging, larger event space and further room growth.

8.14 Planning has not, in general, prevented providers from making changes, but where it is an issue, it can be a serious one. Five of the 13 respondents answering the planning question had applied for permission in the last five years and all had been successful. Even so, qualitative comments show that delays can matter; one business noting that planning for a winery, seen as a major tourist attraction, had been ongoing for seven years. This suggests that while routine accommodation changes may be achievable, larger visitor-economy diversification proposals are more complex to plan and deliver.

8.15 Sustainability measures are now mainstream in operational terms, even if formal certification remains limited. Sixteen businesses answered the sustainability question and none said they had no measures in place. The most common actions were energy-efficient lighting, appliances or heating systems (13), waste reduction and recycling for guests (11), promoting local food and drink (11), towel and linen reuse policies (10), eco-friendly toiletries or cleaning products (10), access to public transport nearby (10) and reduction of single-use plastics (9). Several operators also cited distinctive practices, including off-grid operation, upcycled or eco-construction approaches, compost toilets, solar power and asking guests to bring their own bedding and towels to reduce environmental impact. However, 12 of the 16 respondents reported holding no recognised sustainability certification, indicating that practice on the ground is more developed than formal accreditation.

8.16 Accessibility is noticeably less advanced. Eleven of the 15 businesses answering this question said no specific adaptations had been made. Where adaptations do exist they are generally practical and partial rather than comprehensive: ramps, lifts, level thresholds, accessible toilets, a purpose-built disabled bathroom serving lodges and larger-print menus were among the examples given. However, several providers also acknowledged limits, especially around accessible bedrooms. The overall message is that accessibility has improved in places but remains inconsistent across the survey sample.

Business constraints, growth opportunities and views of policy

8.17 When asked to select their top business constraints over the last three years, respondents most frequently cited increased running costs such as energy (9 of 12) and the cost-of-living crisis/reduced disposable income (7 of 12). Only one cited reduced visitor numbers directly but other comments indicate that profitability is under pressure from cost inflation, regulation and labour-related policy changes even

where demand has broadly held up. Specific comments referred to the challenge of keeping up with changing government regulations, labour and employment rule changes, and the way national minimum wage rises are affecting hospitality costs and margins. Taxation and wider government policy also feature as concerns, albeit for a smaller number of respondents. The most detailed examples came from businesses pointing to the compliance burden of safety requirements and the administrative impact of changing regulations. These comments are consistent with the evidence gathered as part of the interviews.

8.18 Despite these pressures, respondents can still see clear growth opportunities. The strongest single opportunity identified was access to the South Downs National Park, the High Weald National Landscape and the wider countryside (8 of 12), followed by local leisure market opportunities (7), local corporate opportunities including events (5) and national leisure markets (4). More specialist opportunities included dog-friendly facilities, family-friendly offers and themed breaks. Open comments reinforce this direction of travel. One operator highlighted its appeal to Dutch and other international markets because of its location on the Downs; another stressed the South Downs Way walking market; and another called for stronger promotion of the South Downs National Park in surrounding towns and in south and central London. Together these comments suggest that the area's competitive strength lies in outdoor, experiential and place-based leisure rather than volume hotel demand alone.

8.19 Views on a potential visitor levy were markedly negative. Of the 12 respondents answering this question, 8 strongly opposed such a levy, 1 was broadly supportive, 2 strongly supported it and 1 was unsure, producing an average score of 2.0 out of 5. The weight of opinion is therefore clearly against introducing a tourist tax in Sussex. This reflects a concern that, in an already cost-sensitive market, additional charges could weaken competitiveness or further squeeze operators who are already contending with rising input costs.

In Depth Interviews

8.20 In depth interviews to support the survey were undertaken in February 2026, including accommodation providers, a commercial agent and Experience Sussex. The interviews explored market changes since 2016, current challenges, future trends, planning policy, sustainability, and the impact of short-term lets.

8.21 The visitor accommodation market has undergone rapid change. Amongst the interviewees, a key shift noted was the move away from corporate demand towards leisure-led stays, particularly weddings, family visits and short breaks. This reflects

broader structural changes such as remote working, reduced corporate travel and new corporate requirements which smaller businesses may find difficult to meet. At the same time, there has been substantial growth in accommodation supply, including short-term lets, holiday cottages and glamping. The number of smaller self-catering units has increased markedly, intensifying competition, particularly in rural locations.

8.22 Hotel performance has been mixed, with budget operators offering very low pricing, placing pressure on smaller providers who struggle to absorb rising costs. Meanwhile, several traditional hotels are either closed, for sale, or repurposed, indicating structural challenges in the sector.

Key Challenges

8.23 Across all interviewees, rising costs emerged as the most significant challenge. Increases in minimum wage, national insurance, energy, and business rates are squeezing profitability, particularly where operators cannot raise prices due to competition. Staffing shortages and limited labour availability further exacerbate operational pressures although these have lessened somewhat over the last year from a high post-COVID.

8.24 Financial viability is also affected by increased reliance on third-party booking platforms, which charge commissions and influence pricing strategies. For self-catering operators, cleaning and maintenance costs have risen sharply, while changes to tax policy have reduced profitability and investment incentives. Additionally, reduced forward booking patterns and greater consumer price sensitivity reflect ongoing impacts of the cost-of-living crisis.

Short-Term Lets and Market Dynamics

8.25 Short-term lets represent a major and growing segment of the accommodation market, generating significant economic value. However, their impact varies by provider type. Traditional guesthouses report limited direct competition, while self-catering operators experience increased competition and changing booking behaviours.

8.26 The growth of platforms such as Airbnb has shifted booking channels dramatically, reducing direct bookings and increasing dependence on online intermediaries. At the same time, the market has diversified, with new formats such as glamping and niche accommodation gaining popularity.

8.27 The proposed national registration scheme for short-term lets is broadly seen as a positive step towards improving standards and creating a more level playing field, although concerns remain about whether it will be sufficiently robust.

8.28 Looking ahead, demand is expected to continue shifting towards experiential and niche accommodation. Key growth areas for both Districts include wine tourism, wellness tourism and unique stays at e.g. off-grid cabins. These offer opportunities to extend visitor stays and increase spend.

8.29 There is also a continued trend towards shorter breaks, typically around three nights, requiring operators to adapt pricing and operational models. Demand for specific amenities, such as dog-friendly accommodation and hot tubs, is also shaping consumer expectations. Despite these opportunities, there is limited appetite for new hotel development, due to funding constraints and the perceived risk of the hospitality sector amongst traditional lenders.

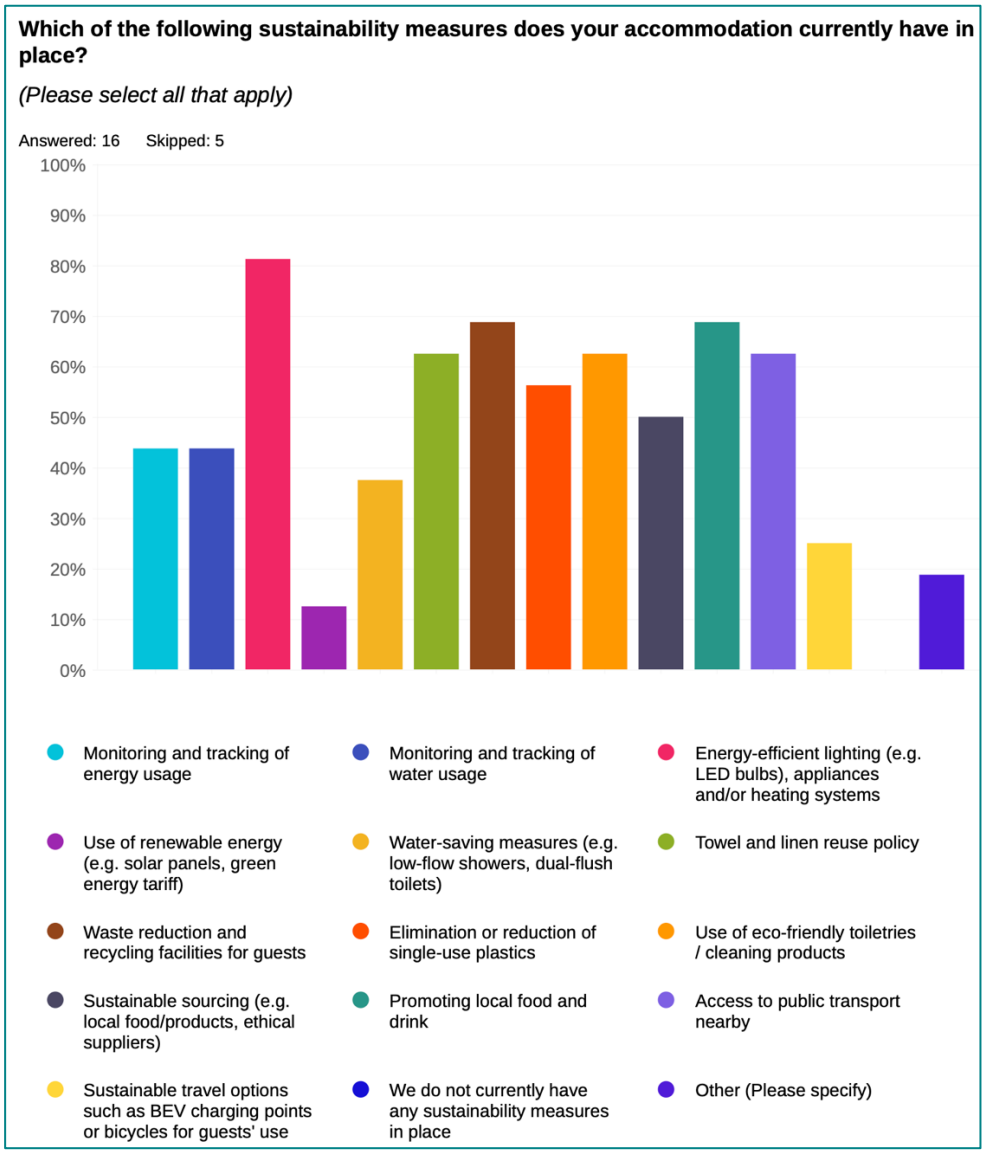
8.30 Planning policy is generally not seen as a major barrier for smaller-scale developments, particularly in Mid Sussex, where authorities are considered supportive. However, there is concern about a lack of strategic direction and limited engagement with existing operators.

8.31 A key issue identified is the lack of high-quality hotel accommodation in Horsham town centre, which limits its potential as a visitor base. At the same time, investment in new hotel development is constrained by lack of financing and suitable sites. More broadly, stakeholders highlighted the need for better communication between councils and accommodation providers, particularly regarding upcoming regulatory changes.

Sustainability and Accessibility

8.32 Many providers have made incremental improvements to sustainability, with a wide variety of measures shown in Figure 4 below. However, progress is often constrained by financial costs and may be influenced by planning restrictions, particularly in conservation areas. Generally, accommodation businesses in both Districts are taking measures but there is likely to be greater potential given further support via a dedicated programme.

Figure 4 – Sustainability Measures taken by Visitor Accommodation Businesses



8.33 Accessibility improvements are also limited, often due to the physical constraints of older buildings or a perceived lack of demand. While some providers have introduced accessible rooms or improved access routes, widespread upgrades are not prevalent with the significant investment needed often not possible in the current climate.

Implications from the Survey and Interviews

8.34 The survey findings point to an accommodation market that is diverse, entrepreneurial and increasingly experience-led, but also under financial pressure. Currently the trading context is poor given consumer confidence is low. The balance of evidence suggests that demand is holding rather than accelerating, with later booking patterns, strong weekend reliance and an ongoing pivot towards leisure, events and countryside-based short breaks. The sector is not dominated by major

hotels; instead, the market is sustained by a broad mix of self-catering, glamping, estate-based and small serviced offers.

8.35 A second clear implication is that quality matters. Businesses are investing in refurbishments, upgrading rooms, improving guest experience and ensuring compliance. The prevalence of capital spending in the £101,000 to £500,000 band demonstrates that a meaningful part of the sector is willing to reinvest when there is confidence in the business case. However, future investment is not universal, and uncertainty about costs, planning timescales and profitability is tempering appetite for expansion.

8.36 A third finding from the survey suggests that policy support should focus on enabling quality, resilience and differentiation. The strongest opportunities identified by providers align with the area's environmental and experiential assets, particularly the national park and national landscape, walking, dog-friendly and wellness-style products. There is patchy adaptations to accessible provision and limited formal sustainability accreditation. These two areas are where policy, advice and business support could make a practical difference to future market performance. There is strong opposition to any visitor levy.

8.37 The interviews largely supported these findings - while there are clear opportunities linked to experiential tourism and niche leisure markets, the sector faces significant structural challenges, including rising costs, increased competition and limited investment. Changing consumer behaviour continues to drive demand for flexibility and unique experiences. Proportionate policy interventions, particularly around regulation and proactive business support, can play a key role in shaping the future of the sector in both Districts.

8.38 Overall, a more coordinated approach involving local authorities, industry stakeholders and destination organisations will help to support sustainable growth and ensure the sector remains competitive.

Visitor Accommodation across the wider Region

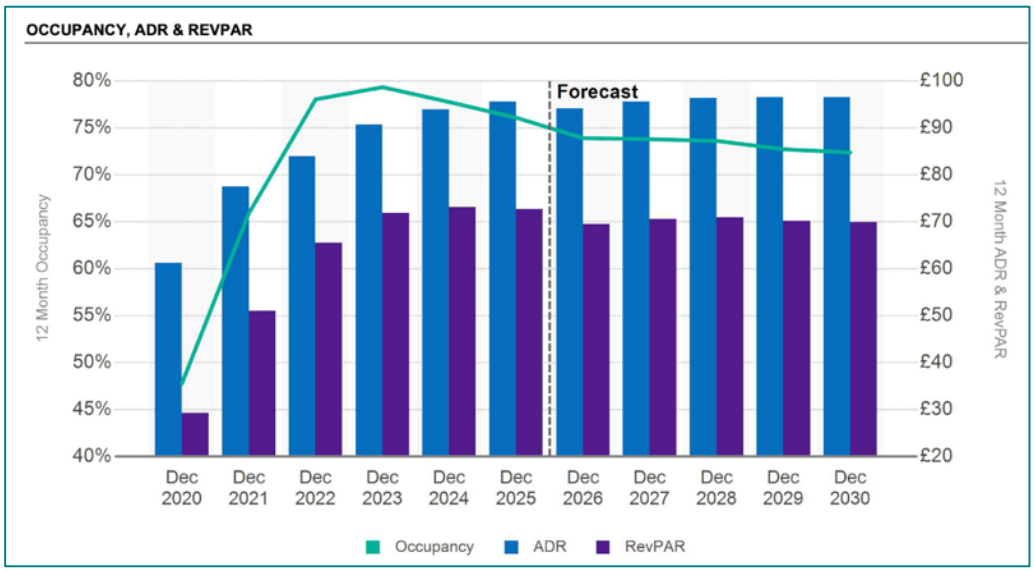
8.39 Across the Sussex Region (incorporating East Sussex, Surrey and West Sussex) there are 230 branded hotel properties, which contain around 6,000 rooms. As of February, 12-month occupancy was 75.8%, 12-month ADR is £97, and 12-month RevPAR is £73. Year over year, 12-month occupancy has declined by -2.2%, 12-month ADR has changed 3.1%, and 12-month RevPAR has risen by 0.8%. In contrast, in nearby Crawley / Gatwick there are 7,380 branded rooms with occupancy of 85.5%, 12-

month ADR is £86, and 12-month RevPAR is £74, down -2.6% year on year, indicating the impact of increasing price sensitivity by outbound leisure consumers.

8.40 Approximately 120 rooms are under construction in the Sussex Region, accounting for 1.9% of existing inventory. Over the past 12 months, some 96 rooms have opened across 2 buildings, the larger hotel being the Premier Inn in central Hastings which was facilitated by the Council and built on the site of a municipal car park. There were just two developments underway in November 2025 adding 127 rooms to the construction pipeline, including a new 116 room Premier Inn in Bognor Regis and a pub refurbishment near Arundel adding 11 rooms.

8.41 This level of development and churn is indicative of a limited regional market where transaction volumes are currently low, not helped by the unhelpful economic backdrop and traditional lenders who are often averse to supporting hotel development. The site requirements of different brands and accommodation investors are likely to be specific and not necessarily geographically bound. Figure 5 shows a slowly softening of occupancy from the current 75% over the next 4 years.

Figure 5 – Sussex Regional Occupancy, Average Day rate and Revenue per Available Room



8.42 Appendix VI gives the full view of the branded sector with a view that includes both Districts but also the region including other parts of Sussex and Surrey.

9. Gatwick Airport Second Runway

9.1 The second runway at Gatwick is an important long-term economic opportunity for both Horsham and Mid-Sussex councils. The project proposes alterations to the existing northern runway which, along with lifting the current restrictions on its use, would enable dual runway operations. The Project also includes the development of a range of infrastructure and facilities to allow increased airport passenger numbers and aircraft operations. This includes the development of four hotels with some 1,250 additional bedrooms across the site. [37]

9.2 The prevailing accommodation type is characterised by budget and mid-market, highly functional hotel provision, focused on short stays, convenience and price. This limits the opportunity for direct competition on a like-for-like basis within Horsham and Mid Sussex.

9.3 A preliminary assessment has shown that there may be a modest opportunity for additional hotel space over and above what is planned within the Gatwick footprint that could both serve Gatwick passengers and other markets. Appendix IIIA provides a summary of the analysis using data from VisitBritain's Great Britain Tourism Survey – specifically tracking the incidence of where an overnight stay in the UK is part of an overseas trip. This was added to the GBTS from 2021 and provides a useful dataset given the significant numbers of visitors that use hotels as part of an outbound trip.

9.4 The assessment in Appendix IIIA is sequential, showing the following:

1. Overall English trips by region and the proportion relating to overseas trips
2. The % share of trips relating to an overseas trip in three south-east regions
3. The share of UK stay as part of overseas trips – out of all trips
4. Air traffic movements in 2025 and forecast 2035 from all London airports
5. Likely actual and forecast passenger numbers and planned Gatwick supply

9.5 The conclusions contained in Part 4 of the Appendix is that Gatwick represents a key medium term opportunity where there will be a high propensity for leisure-based outbound trips from the airport over the decade from when the runway opens. The airport will handle at least 21% of all London airports' traffic and possibly much more, given that the forecast numbers at Heathrow are likely to take more time to materialise given the complexities of the third runway development. A sizeable proportion of those travellers will stay in hotels nearby prior to their flights.

[37] London Gatwick (2023) Gatwick Airport Northern Runway Project Book 5 Version 1.0 July

9.6 Part 5 of the assessment shows how the existing and planned room capacity in Gatwick will soak up much of the new demand. However, this assessment only considers outbound travellers staying in hotels as part of their trip and ignores inbound travellers who may also seek accommodation as part of a trip. This will vary by airport and journey purpose, is likely to be modest and would need additional modelling to accurately assess.

9.7 However, there may be scope for a complementary and differentiated offer, particularly in the northern parts of both Horsham and Mid-Sussex in or around Horsham, East Grinstead and Copthorne. These places could potentially support one or two alternative airport-related accommodation concepts that tap into the demand but also provide for other markets. Appendix IIIB shows the geography via a 10 mile radius around the airport.

9.8 Such provision would need to be clearly distinct from the standard airport hotel model, potentially focusing on:

1. Higher quality or boutique accommodation;
2. Longer-stay or pre-/post-flight packages;
3. Experience-led or leisure-oriented stays linked to the countryside setting; or
4. Hybrid business/leisure (“Bleisure”) offers.

9.9 The scale of opportunity is likely to be limited, with demand potentially sufficient for one or two developments of this type. Any such proposals would therefore need to be carefully positioned and market-tested, rather than assumed as a broad growth segment.

9.10 Given these findings, it may be appropriate for the Councils to explore the feasibility in more detail. This could assess market demand, site options, operator interest and delivery models and determine whether a viable and differentiated product might interest investors or existing accommodation brands.

10. Conclusions & Recommendations

Overview

10.1 Visitor accommodation in Horsham District makes an important economic contribution. The market is stable overall, with modest growth in value, but remains heavily reliant on day visitors and relatively low levels of overnight stay. Around 210,000 staying trips generating £57m of spend is a comparatively limited base given the District's assets and location.

10.2 The East Sussex, Brighton & Hove and West Sussex LVEP targets include growing the visitor economy by 4% a year, adding 50% to visitor income over the next decade. This is a stretching target but possible providing that there is a focussed and well-resourced programme of support and development put in place.

10.3 Current delivery plans (see Appendix IV) has helped support recovery from Covid-19 via a range of activity including networking and skills workshops, destination management planning, identification of hotel sites and the potential of pub accommodation together with promotions and events.

10.4 The sector has undergone significant structural change over the last decade. There has been a clear shift away from traditional serviced accommodation towards self-catering, short-term lets and more dispersed, small-scale provision. This reflects national trends but also means that growth is now more fragmented and less visible in conventional terms.

10.5 At the same time, the trading environment is challenging. Rising costs, weaker consumer confidence and shorter booking patterns are constraining performance. The overall picture is therefore one of a sector that is resilient but under pressure, with demand holding rather than accelerating.

10.6 Notwithstanding this, the District has a number of clear strengths. Its rural character, proximity to the South Downs and alignment with consumer trends around nature-based, wellness and experiential tourism position it well for future growth. However, these trends tend to favour smaller-scale, niche and experience-led accommodation, rather than large, hotel-led development.

10.7 Delivery against existing economic development and tourism activity has been positive in terms of engagement, marketing and partnership working. However, the scale of impact remains incremental rather than transformational, particularly in

relation to new accommodation development and the expansion of the overnight offer.

10.8 The evidence indicates that future growth will depend less on increasing visitor numbers and more on enhancing the value of the visitor economy, particularly through increasing overnight stays, extending the length of stay and raising spend per trip. This reflects wider national and regional trends, including shorter stays, later booking patterns and increased price sensitivity, alongside growing demand for experience-led, rural and sustainable tourism.

Issues & Opportunities

10.9 The main issues arising from the analysis, relevant for both Horsham and Mid Sussex Districts can be summarised as follows:

- The visitor economy remains day-visit dominated, limiting overall value.
- Overnight provision is dispersed and relatively small-scale, with a limited pipeline of new development.
- The market is increasingly experience-led, but support structures have not fully adapted to this shift.
- Stimulating new accommodation supply would help move the balance away from day visits and generate greater impact per visitor.
- Planning policy has been generally supportive, but this has not translated into a significant increase in development activity.
- There is real pressure on small serviced accommodation providers, with continued long-term decline in B&Bs and guesthouses in favour of non-serviced and hybrid formats.
- The growing dominance of the sharing economy now represents a significant proportion of overall supply, but this needs better integration into the tourism system, with membership packages and business support.
- Rising operating costs, labour constraints and regulatory pressures increasingly affecting business viability, particular for marginal and smaller businesses.

10.10 Emerging opportunities include:

- Quality-led growth: Future accommodation growth is just as likely to come from improved quality and distinctiveness not only increases in overall capacity.
- Rural and experience-led tourism: There is strong alignment with demand for nature-based, wellness and experiential stays.

- Diversification of accommodation types: Growth potential exists in emerging formats, including high-specification self-catering, glamping and hybrid / aparthotel models.
- Extending length of stay: Addressing the decline in bed nights relative to trips is critical to improving overall performance.
- Shoulder and off-peak demand: Opportunities exist to strengthen midweek and off-season performance through targeted products and offers.

Strategic Options

10.11 While there is a specific accommodation opportunity around Gatwick airport, future growth is generally going to come from smaller developments that:

- Increase value per visitor, rather than volume and increasing length of stay;
- Support smaller, high-quality and distinctive accommodation; and
- Take a more proactive role in supporting and enabling development, rather than relying on market-led delivery.

10.12 In this context, there is an option to shift emphasis from broad promotional activity towards targeted interventions and delivery, particularly in relation to the development of new accommodation. Existing accommodation providers should be encouraged to upgrade and reposition their offer, particularly in relation to quality, sustainability and accessibility. The focus should be on enhancing the overall visitor experience, rather than accommodation provision in isolation.

Rural and Experience-Led Tourism

10.13 The Council should continue to build on Horsham's strengths as a rural destination, continuing to help differentiate Horsham and support higher-value tourism, by:

- Supporting farm diversification and rural enterprise, including farm stays and vineyard accommodation
- Encouraging accommodation linked to activities and experiences, such as walking, cycling, food and wellness
- Promoting the District as a destination for short breaks and experiential stays.

Seasonality and Demand Management

10.14 The Council should continue to work with the sector to address seasonality by:

- Supporting the development of shoulder-season and off-peak products, including wellbeing, food and outdoor experiences
- Encouraging midweek and short-break offers

- Promoting Horsham as a year-round destination.

Gatwick Airport Second Runway

10.15 Section 9 above and the related analysis presented in Appendix IIIA & B indicates that there is an opportunity associated with the development of Gatwick's second runway. Although planned increases in demand will largely be met through on-site provision, the second runway presents a potential development opportunity for new accommodation in the north of Horsham District.

Other Tourism Options

Building on Firm Foundations

10.16 The Local Government Reorganisation presents the opportunity to restate the strategic priorities for tourism across the participating Districts. Drawing on existing Council activity, the LVEP strategy and this document, may allow the publication of a draft strategy that sets out the key tourism priorities for discussion at an annual industry conference for visitor economy businesses across all the Districts involved in the new Unitary authority.

10.17 Continue to build the short-term lettings evidence base, identify the key operators in the sharing economy and using the roll out of the new statutory registration scheme to develop new membership schemes and a tailored business support offer.

10.18 Review the level of accommodation expertise within existing investment and promotional services, to help drive support for accommodation-related business start-ups. Given LGR, consider an approach shared across Horsham and Mid-Sussex that could be delivered by one team.

Product Development and Market Position

10.19 There is an opportunity to strengthen the overall offer by focusing on experience-led accommodation and longer stays, including:

- Supporting accommodation that can operate year-round and help extend the season;
- Encouraging packages and products linked to walking, cycling, wellness and local food; and
- Improving the quality and distinctiveness of the existing stock, rather than increasing volume alone.

10.20 Prioritise accommodation concepts which are proven to extend the season, such as high specification self-catering facilities in rural areas. Support new accommodation formats by examining the potential of niche themes such as wellness concepts in rural areas and other market driven formats such as aparthotels.

10.21 Build in-house expertise relating to finance and related funding models to assist the development of both new accommodation and the conversion of period buildings to formats sought by the market.

10.22 Boost people skills by auditing local training provision in hospitality and tourism and engaging with the FE and HE sectors to encourage young people to take up a career path in the industry.

10.23 Consider a small accommodation businesses support programme to upgrade skills in AI and digital marketing, best practice in sustainability, and product development routes to change from serviced provision to hybrid models.

10.24 Accessibility also represents an area for improvement. The current offer is inconsistent, and there is scope to better capture the growing market associated with older visitors and those with accessibility needs.

Attracting inward accommodation investment

10.25 Investors are big believers in having good local tourist information, inward investment department and/or economic regeneration service that is active and positively promotes the area, attracts investment and works closely with the investors across the wider area.

10.26 Councils should make it as easy possible to invest and reduce the barriers to entry, often in the context of regeneration schemes. Good examples of public / private sector accommodation development include Brighton, Margate and Folkestone who have had significant investment from Cornerstone. Torquay and Plymouth are also good examples.

Supporting Day-to-Day Delivery

10.27 There is a clear case for strengthening the day-to-day economic development approach to the sector. Current activity around networking, promotion and partnership working is valuable, but could be more directly focused on generating development outcomes.

10.28 In particular, the Council could:

- Place greater emphasis on development support within existing programmes, including practical advice on funding, feasibility and delivery;
- Work more closely with individual businesses and landowners to bring forward schemes, rather than relying on generalised support; and
- Build a clearer pipeline of accommodation projects, with active monitoring and intervention where required.

10.29 There is also merit in incentivising development activity, particularly for smaller-scale schemes. This could include targeted grant support, feasibility funding or business advisory services aimed at encouraging new entrants and supporting existing operators to expand or diversify. Increased engagement with the sector (e.g. through Q&A sessions, forums, or planning drop-in events) could help strengthen understanding and foster a positive relationship between planners and businesses.

Encouraging Small-Scale and Niche Development

10.30 The evidence suggests that the District's strengths lie in smaller, distinctive forms of accommodation, rather than large hotel developments. Policy and support could therefore focus on:

- Farm diversification and rural enterprise, including glamping and cabin-based accommodation;
- Conversion of existing buildings to visitor accommodation;
- Estate-based and mixed-use accommodation offers; and
- Niche products linked to wellness, food and drink, and outdoor activity.

10.31 These forms of development are more aligned with market demand and with the character of the District and are likely to be more deliverable in the current economic climate.

Planning Options

10.32 The planning recommendations set out below are intended to support clarity, consistency and decision-making within an accommodation sector undergoing structural change, set against an evolving planning and regulatory framework.

10.33 The Planning Applications Review reported in the Asset Audit shows that policy is generally supportive and has enabled a range of developments, particularly conversions and small-scale schemes. This approach should be maintained. However, there is scope to:

- Provide clearer guidance to applicants and investors on suitable locations and types of development;
- Align planning more closely with visitor economy growth priorities;
- Continue to support flexible and innovative accommodation models;
- Support new visitor accommodation in sustainable and accessible locations, and development that enhances the quality and diversity of the accommodation offer;
- Support the conversion and reuse of existing buildings, particularly in rural areas.

10.34 At the same time, the growth of the sharing economy will need to be managed carefully to ensure an appropriate balance between visitor accommodation and residential use. The Council needs a clear policy approach to short-term lets, potentially including:

- Monitoring their scale and distribution across the District, identifying and improving the 10% that are currently reporting the lowest quality scores.
- Assessing impacts on housing supply and local communities
- Preparing for the national registration scheme by using the scheme as a springboard for better connection with STL providers.

10.35 Partnerships across the public sector are well advanced but it may be of benefit to now encourage:

- Stronger engagement with accommodation providers, including regular forums and communications;
- A clearer, shared vision for the role of the visitor economy within the District and support available for small accommodation businesses

Monitoring and Evidence Base

10.36 The Council should continue to strengthen its evidence base by improving data collection on accommodation supply and performance, monitoring trends in short-term lets and the wider market and using national datasets to inform future policy and decision-making.

10.37 The accommodation sector in Horsham has clear potential but remains relatively under-developed in terms of overnight provision. Like neighbouring Mid Sussex, the key opportunity is to support incremental, well-aligned development that builds on the District's strengths to increase the value of the visitor economy.

10.38 A more proactive and targeted approach—particularly one that supports and incentivises smaller-scale development and product innovation— is likely to be important to translate existing strategic intent into tangible outcomes.

Appendices

Appendix IA – Tourism Economy: Accommodation Stock by Serviced / Non-Serviced & Sub-category - Horsham

				Serviced						Non Serviced						Camping / Caravan	
Category	Establishments	%	Sub-Category	Establishments	%	Rooms	%	Beds	%	Units	%	Rooms	%	Beds	%	nits/Pitche	Beds
Serviced	35	26%	Hotel	13	9%	312	42.6%	624	39.6%								
			Hotel - Branded Budget	4	3%	237	32.3%	474	30.1%								
			B&B / Guest House	8	5%	43	5.9%	86	5.5%								
			Pub / Inn	9	6%	43	5.9%	86	5.5%								
			Residential Accommodation	3	2%	91	12.4%	292	18.5%								
			Other Serviced	1	1%	7	1.0%	14	0.9%								
Non-Serviced	98	72%	Self Catering Apartment	15	10%					15	3.6%	26	4.2%	52	2.4%		
			Self Catering House / Cottage	71	47%					93	22.6%	196	31.5%	417	19.6%		
			Holiday Park / Lodge	3	2%					244	59.2%	340	54.7%	1,464	68.7%		
			Hostel / Bunkhouse	0	0%					0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%		
			Other non-serviced	0	0%					0	0.0%	0	0.0%	0	0.0%		
			Glamping Site	13	9%					60	14.6%	60	9.6%	198	9.3%		
			Camping / Caravan	12	8%											458	1,896
Mixed Serviced / Non-Serviced	**3**	2%				**13**		**26**				**17**		**35**			
Total	**136**			**152**		**733**		**1,576**		**412**		**622**		**2,131**		**458**	**1,896**

Appendix IB – Horsham Accommodation Stock - Comparative Assessment against previous benchmarks

Hotel Solutions Classification	2016	2026	Difference	% Change	Tomorrow's Tourism Classification
Hotels	15	17	2	13%	Hotel + Branded Budget Hotel
Inns	14	9	-5	-36%	Pub / Inn
Guest Houses/ B&Bs	40	8	-32	-80%	B&B / Guest House
Self-Catering	78	86	8	10%	Self Catering Apartment + Self Catering House / Cottage
Holiday Lodge Parks + Holiday Parks	3	3	0	0%	Holiday Park / Lodges
Caravan & Camping Sites	15	12	-3	-20%	Camping / Caravan
Glamping Sites	8	13	5	63%	Glamping Site
Residential Conference Centres	1	3	2	200%	Residential Accommodation (includes outdoor centres)
Residential/ Outdoor Education Centres	2	3	1	50%	(included in Residential Accommodation)
Wedding Venues with Accommodation	1	1	0	0%	Other Serviced
Total	177	152	-25	-14%	

Hotel Solutions Classification	2016	2026	Difference	% Change	Tomorrow's Tourism Classification
Hotels	986	1,098	112	11%	Hotel + Branded Budget Hotel
Inns	174	86	-88	-51%	Pub / Inn
Guest Houses/ B&Bs	242	86	-156	-64%	B&B / Guest House
Self-Catering	483	469	-14	-3%	Self Catering Apartment + Self Catering House / Cottage
Holiday Lodge Parks + Holiday Parks	1557	1,464	-93	-6%	Holiday Park / Lodges
Caravan & Camping Sites	1648	1,896	248	15%	Camping / Caravan
Glamping Sites	107	198	91	85%	Glamping Site
Residential Conference Centres	120	292	172	143%	Residential Accommodation (includes outdoor centres)
Residential/ Outdoor Education Centres	129	172	43	33%	(included in Residential Accommodation)
Wedding Venues with Accommodation	14	14	0	0%	Other Serviced
Total	5460	5,603	143	3%	

Appendix IC – Horsham & Mid-Sussex Visitor Accommodation Stock – Comparison across both Districts

Establishments

Category	Establishments	%	Horsham	%	Mid Sussex	%	Sub-Category	Total	%	Horsham	%	Mid Sussex	%
Serviced	66	31%	35	26%	31	40%	Hotel	20	7%	13	9%	7	9%
							Hotel - Branded Budget	10	4%	4	3%	6	8%
							B&B / Guest House	17	7%	8	5%	9	11%
							Pub / Inn	16	7%	9	6%	7	9%
							Residential Accommodation	4	2%	3	2%	1	1.3%
							Other Serviced	4	9%	1	1%	3	3.8%
Non-Serviced	142	67%	98	72%	44	57%	Self Catering Apartment	21	9%	15	10%	6	8%
							Self Catering House / Cottage	102	44%	71	47%	31	39%
							Holiday Park / Lodges	3	1%	3	2%	0	0%
							Glamping Site	18	8%	13	9%	5	6%
							Camping / Caravan	17	7%	12	8%	5	6%
Mixed Serviced / Non-Serviced	5	2%	**3**	2%	**2**	**3%**							
Total	**213**		**136**	**64%**	**77**	**36%**		**232**		**152**		**80**	

NB – The left-hand category column is counting the number of businesses while the right-hand column showing sub-categories is counting the type of accommodation found within businesses – which may be more than one type.

Bed Spaces

Category	Bed Spaces	%	Horsham	%	Mid Sussex	%	Sub-Category	Total	%	Horsham	%	Mid Sussex	%
Serviced	6,913	59%	1576	28%	5337	88%	Hotel	1,398	12%	624	11%	774	13%
							Hotel - Branded Budget	1,364	12%	474	8%	890	15%
							B&B / Guest House	152	1%	86	2%	66	1%
							Pub / Inn	168	1%	86	2%	82	1%
							Residential Accommodation	3,685	32%	292	5%	3393	56%
							Other Serviced	146	1%	14	0%	132	2%
Non-Serviced	4,744	41%	4027	72%	717	12%	Self Catering Apartment	73	1%	52	1%	21	0%
							Self Catering House / Cottage	591	5%	417	7%	174	3%
							Holiday Park / Lodges	1,464	13%	1464	26%	0	0%
							Glamping Site	380	3%	198	4%	182	3%
							Camping / Caravan	2,236	19%	1896	34%	340	6%
Total	**11,657**		**5603**	**48%**	**6054**	**52%**		**11,657**		**5603**		**6054**	

Appendix ID – Sharing Economy – Comparison with other neighbouring Districts

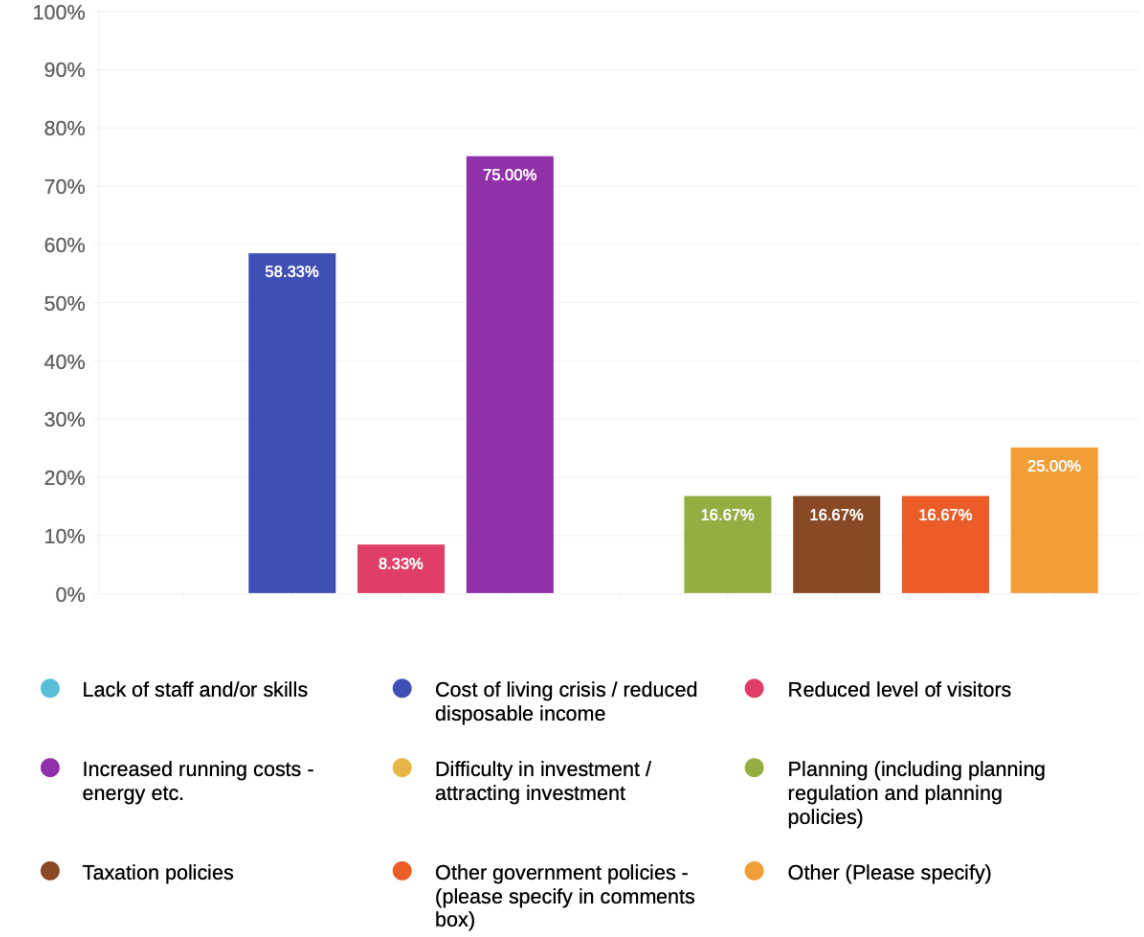
Period	Market	Available Listing Nights (Supply)	Booked Listing Nights (Demand)	Room Nights Available	Room Nights Booked	Revenue	ADR	RevPAR	Occupancy Rate	Length of Stay
Dec 2025	Horsham and Mid-Sussex	17,614	9,842	28,259	15,686	1,792,384	182	102	56%	4.2
Nov 2025	Horsham and Mid-Sussex	18,563	8,268	28,750	12,724	1,363,950	165	73	45%	3.8
Oct 2025	Horsham and Mid-Sussex	20,453	10,510	31,334	15,993	1,775,222	169	87	51%	3.6
Sep 2025	Horsham and Mid-Sussex	22,225	11,878	36,062	18,123	2,108,088	177	95	53%	3.7
Aug 2025	Horsham and Mid-Sussex	24,600	16,210	41,089	26,441	3,366,762	208	137	66%	3.3
Jul 2025	Horsham and Mid-Sussex	23,900	15,966	39,755	26,155	3,225,741	202	135	67%	3.6
Jun 2025	Horsham and Mid-Sussex	21,145	12,515	34,649	19,692	2,327,690	186	110	59%	3.6
May 2025	Horsham and Mid-Sussex	20,634	12,156	32,199	18,844	2,292,910	189	111	59%	3.5
Apr 2025	Horsham and Mid-Sussex	18,788	11,250	29,075	17,209	2,012,141	179	107	60%	3.8
Mar 2025	Horsham and Mid-Sussex	15,896	8,192	23,916	11,927	1,224,688	149	77	52%	4.0
Feb 2025	Horsham and Mid-Sussex	12,559	6,516	19,405	9,709	970,740	149	77	52%	3.9
Jan 2025	Horsham and Mid-Sussex	17,507	7,086	28,955	11,083	1,083,931	153	62	40%	4.3
Dec 2025	Eastbourne	7,860	4,297	13,929	7,501	614,724	143	78	55%	4.3
Nov 2025	Eastbourne	8,824	3,648	15,565	6,166	479,273	131	54	41%	4.6
Oct 2025	Eastbourne	10,011	5,212	17,766	9,076	798,800	153	80	52%	4.2
Sep 2025	Eastbourne	10,843	5,667	18,865	9,621	916,075	162	84	52%	4.1
Aug 2025	Eastbourne	11,968	8,310	20,827	14,655	1,507,735	181	126	69%	4.0
Jul 2025	Eastbourne	11,759	7,876	20,890	13,816	1,373,009	174	117	67%	3.9
Jun 2025	Eastbourne	10,316	6,855	17,989	12,001	1,221,415	178	118	66%	4.1
May 2025	Eastbourne	9,897	6,150	17,159	10,389	947,913	154	96	62%	3.9
Apr 2025	Eastbourne	8,723	5,328	14,998	9,191	751,341	141	86	61%	3.8
Mar 2025	Eastbourne	7,091	3,446	11,830	5,375	412,763	120	58	49%	4.5
Feb 2025	Eastbourne	5,653	2,913	9,896	4,797	353,398	121	63	52%	3.9
Jan 2025	Eastbourne	8,133	3,228	14,717	5,534	396,382	123	49	40%	5.4
Dec 2025	Hastings	14,431	7,108	25,572	12,300	1,009,162	142	70	49%	4.0
Nov 2025	Hastings	15,987	6,247	28,235	10,490	830,699	133	52	39%	3.9
Oct 2025	Hastings	17,617	8,786	31,199	15,159	1,286,617	146	73	50%	3.4
Sep 2025	Hastings	18,956	9,889	34,150	16,987	1,452,334	147	77	52%	3.8
Aug 2025	Hastings	20,846	15,506	37,282	27,716	2,669,201	172	128	74%	3.6
Jul 2025	Hastings	20,668	13,895	36,407	24,523	2,345,181	169	113	67%	3.5
Jun 2025	Hastings	20,885	11,807	35,385	19,356	1,774,115	150	85	57%	3.6
May 2025	Hastings	20,977	11,754	35,262	19,330	1,764,348	150	84	56%	3.4
Apr 2025	Hastings	18,239	10,845	30,543	17,897	1,497,064	138	82	59%	3.7
Mar 2025	Hastings	16,604	8,670	27,276	12,994	967,554	112	58	52%	4.2
Feb 2025	Hastings	13,339	7,713	21,524	11,909	872,047	113	65	58%	4.1
Jan 2025	Hastings	17,096	7,464	28,665	11,959	863,388	116	51	44%	5.0
Dec 2025	Rother	39,881	19,093	80,734	37,421	3,898,622	204	98	48%	3.8
Nov 2025	Rother	44,667	16,799	90,231	31,300	3,264,443	194	73	38%	3.6
Oct 2025	Rother	49,126	23,721	98,138	45,416	4,821,626	203	98	48%	3.3
Sep 2025	Rother	53,452	27,146	108,342	51,363	5,779,152	213	108	51%	3.6
Aug 2025	Rother	58,084	43,341	116,219	87,014	10,262,234	237	177	75%	3.6
Jul 2025	Rother	56,899	37,759	113,016	74,137	8,596,874	228	151	66%	3.4
Jun 2025	Rother	54,656	31,035	107,812	59,140	6,734,481	217	123	57%	3.6
May 2025	Rother	53,834	30,316	106,169	58,188	6,313,939	208	117	56%	3.3
Apr 2025	Rother	46,948	27,143	92,269	52,879	5,359,214	197	114	58%	3.5
Mar 2025	Rother	40,641	18,628	77,982	32,094	2,971,266	160	73	46%	3.6
Feb 2025	Rother	32,147	17,053	61,632	30,486	2,689,941	158	84	53%	3.6
Jan 2025	Rother	41,934	16,778	82,765	31,122	2,588,157	154	62	40%	4.6
Dec 2025	South Downs National Park	46,303	24,017	79,700	40,493	4,722,528	197	102	52%	3.6
Nov 2025	South Downs National Park	49,784	21,559	84,694	35,416	3,964,917	184	80	43%	3.7
Oct 2025	South Downs National Park	57,633	27,660	98,921	45,937	5,257,300	190	91	48%	3.4
Sep 2025	South Downs National Park	64,427	34,524	112,585	56,353	6,855,460	199	106	54%	3.5
Aug 2025	South Downs National Park	70,867	44,816	127,261	77,859	10,250,192	229	145	63%	3.2
Jul 2025	South Downs National Park	68,929	45,127	120,757	77,963	10,360,435	230	150	65%	3.3
Jun 2025	South Downs National Park	59,697	33,914	103,316	56,561	7,003,790	207	117	57%	3.4
May 2025	South Downs National Park	58,217	32,911	100,692	54,950	6,617,436	201	114	57%	3.3
Apr 2025	South Downs National Park	53,778	29,168	91,436	48,744	5,663,761	194	105	54%	3.4
Mar 2025	South Downs National Park	44,305	20,670	74,653	33,595	3,566,284	173	80	47%	3.6
Feb 2025	South Downs National Park	35,810	18,298	59,800	29,386	3,129,191	171	87	51%	3.7
Jan 2025	South Downs National Park	45,882	17,378	79,113	28,025	2,893,725	167	63	38%	4.4

Appendix II – Constraints to Business Performance

Which of the following issues have constrained your accommodation / business over the last 3 years?

Select up to three options

Answered: 12 Skipped: 9



- Other (Please specify)
    a. Pent up demand for holidays abroad post Covid 19, now recovering. Weather in early months of the year - if raining will reduce demand for UK holidays.
    b. Relatively new business so still growing

NB - Result Indicative only given sample size

Appendix IIIA – Gatwick - Potential for Additional Accommodation Development

1 — Trip Volumes

	All Trips			Overnight stay in the UK as part of an overseas trip (e.g. staying at an airport hotel prior to flying abroad)		
	Year			Year		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
Volume: England	104,545,076	99,440,324	89,588,994	6,237,342	7,660,528	8,090,831
Volume: East Midlands	9,063,573	8,447,769	7,517,392	460,471	633,964	607,860
Volume: East of England	11,000,359	9,823,438	9,719,099	896,615	844,183	1,122,398
Volume: London	15,710,303	15,891,272	15,076,332	1,408,774	1,849,639	2,134,885
Volume: North East	4,306,269	4,043,130	3,107,562	239,642	257,677	312,598
Volume: North West	16,202,265	15,380,023	14,493,721	1,227,133	1,406,012	1,216,735
Volume: South East	16,972,533	16,346,719	14,317,564	1,042,683	1,719,268	1,847,881
Volume: South West	18,660,623	17,918,403	15,436,253	915,194	982,754	1,065,574
Volume: Yorkshire and The Humber	11,248,571	9,779,438	9,267,794	685,703	883,977	816,168
Volume: West Midlands {1}	9,547,038	9,258,241	7,958,050	619,269	729,706	649,456
Visit Britain (2025) Great Britain Tourism Survey						

2 — Share of England trips

	All Trips			Overnight stay in the UK as part of an overseas trip (e.g. staying at an airport hotel prior to flying abroad)		
	Year			Year		
	2022	2023	2024	2022	2023	2024
Volume: England	104,545,076	99,440,324	89,588,994	6,237,342	7,660,528	8,090,831
Volume: East of England	11%	10%	11%	14%	11%	14%
Volume: London	15%	16%	17%	23%	24%	26%
Volume: South East	16%	16%	16%	17%	22%	23%

3 — Share of UK stay as part of overseas, out of all trips

	2022	2023	2024	Note
Volume: England	6%	8%	9%	
Volume: East Midlands	5%	8%	8%	
Volume: East of England	8%	9%	12%	Likely use of London Airports
Volume: London	9%	12%	14%	Significant use of London Airports
Volume: North East	6%	6%	10%	
Volume: North West	8%	9%	8%	
Volume: South East	6%	11%	13%	Significant use of London Airports
Volume: South West	5%	5%	7%	
Volume: Yorkshire and The Humber	6%	9%	9%	
Volume: West Midlands {1}	6%	8%	8%	

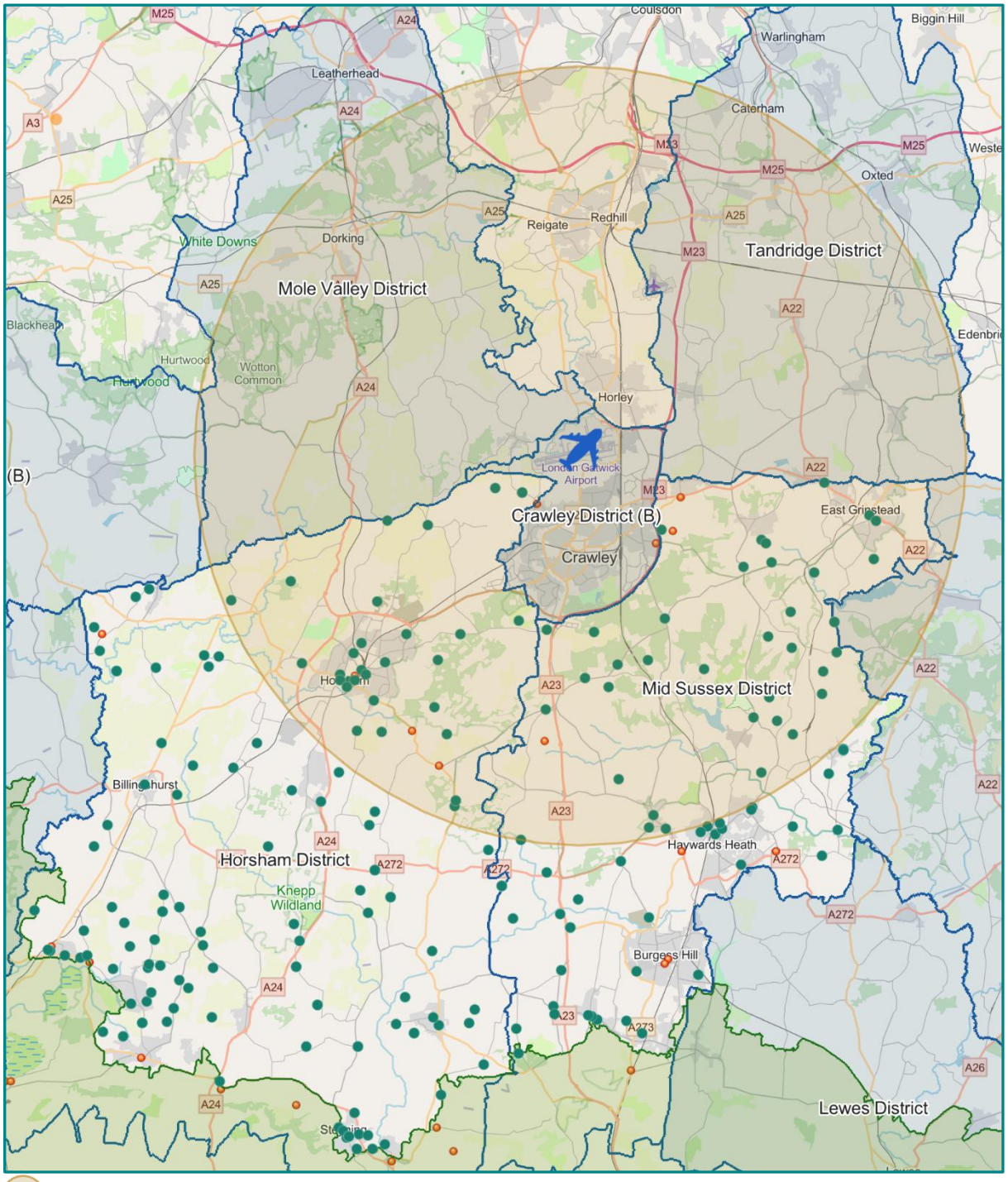
4 — Air Traffic Movements and Pax from SE Airports

	ATM Actual 2025	ATM Forecast 2035	% Total 2035	Oubound Leisure propensity	
London Heathrow	475,000	756,000	41.0%	4	Hub - transfer, business & leisure
London Gatwick	260,000	389,000	21.1%	1	Highest propensity for leisure with greatest potential over decade
London Stanstead	200,000	275,000	14.9%	2	Leisure led
London Luton	140,000	218,000	11.8%	3	Lesiure - budget / package
London City	70,000	151,000	8.2%	6	Business
London Southend	10,000	53,000	2.9%	5	Minor
Total	1,155,000	1,842,000			

5 — Actual & Forecast Trips and Gatwick Accommodation Supply

	Pax. Actual	Pax Forecast	Upllit 25/35	
Trips out - Gatwick 2025 / 2035	21,060,000	31,509,000	49.6%	Ignores inbound staying visitors / staying propensity
Staying visitor nights - Gatwick	1,078,126	1,612,877	49.6%	Using trip volumes reported in green in Sec. 1 and
Existing Gatwick room nights capacity	1,086,970			multipying by % share for Gatwick of 21.1%
New planned capacity - room nights per yr	456,250			Planned: 4 hotels on site 1,250 rooms
Total Room Nights Capacity 2035		1,543,220		
Potential under-supply - nights		69,657		
Potential under-supply - rooms		191		

Appendix IIIB – Distribution of hotels in Horsham and Mid Sussex



Circular boundary - ten miles from Gatwick Airport

Appendix IV – Current Support to Horsham's Visitor Economy

Horsham District Economic Strategy 2017 – 2027 Priority 5: Promoting the District Offer	
Action	**Progress & Issues**
Provide additional support, networking and skills workshops for tourism businesses	• Sussex Six Networking workshops (2 planned for 2026) • Supporting Experience Sussex Workshops (newsletter promotion) • With Exp Sx - support Amberely/Arundle cluster networking • Support Local Sussex Wineland Cluster to drive visitors • Support PR and Mktng of Beyond the Rails podcast series to drive sustainable visitor travel
Work with tourism partners to develop a new destination management plan for the District	• Attendance at LVEP meetings • Understand HD's role in the Sussex whole
Work with the Council's Planning Department to bring forward site allocations for new hotel and larger scale visitor accommodation development	• Understand what allocations are in our local plan • Work with partners to bring them forward • Support businesses in developing their capacity
Engage with pub landlords and tenants and restaurant owners to make them aware of the potential for them to provide accommodation	• Work with Exp Sx and Mid Sx on this?
Promote accommodation to service active tourism	? Target sites associated with active tourism – i.e. along the Arun.
Develop a programme of campaigns to promote the District offer	• Experience Sussex – Horsham District itinerary on web pages • Visitor Experience Grants (Diversification projects) • Arun Valley Line Podcast Series promotes District attractions accessible by train • Drinks Producers leaflet • Buy Local Gift Happy – all year (push at Xmas)
Develop a year round programme of events that supports a year round visitor offer	All of the above plus • Markets • Summer 'lates' events • Museum events • Park & Countryside events

Work with partners to increase their confidence and capacity to put on quality events	• Support the recreation of a Horsham Events Partnership • Continue to work with 'Your Horsham' (BID) • Community Partnership Xmas grants
Position Horsham District as a convenient and desirable business tourism destination	• Continue to work with Experience Sussex
Encourage the development of major visitor attractions through engagement and support for their strategic plans.	• As proposals are shared with HDC
Build on and support our local arts, culture and heritage sectors to maximise their positive cultural, social and economic contribution Raise the profile of Arts and Heritage in the District and put the District on the regional map, securing long term benefits from an economic, cultural and community perspective.	

Appendix V – Properties within the South Downs National Park Planning Area

Business Name	Address 1	Address 3	District	Postcode	Category (Serviced/Non-Serviced/Mixed)	Sub Category	TOTAL NO. ROOMS	TOTAL NO. BEDS
Barkywood	Lower Street,	Pulborough	Horsham	RH20 1EL	Serviced	B&B / Guest House	2	5
Beacon Lodge	London Road, Watersfield,	Pulborough	Horsham	RH20 1NH	Serviced	B&B / Guest House	1	3
Black Horse	High Street	Amberley	Horsham	BN18 9NL	Serviced	Pub / Inn	11	22
Broomy Cottage	Barns Farm Lane	Pulborough	Horsham	RH20 4AH	Non-Serviced	Self-Catering House / Cottage	5	10
Courtyard Cottage	Hardham	Pulborough	Horsham	RH20 1LB	Non-Serviced	Self-Catering House / Cottage	3	6
Holt House	The Holt	Pulborough	Horsham	RH20 4AW	Serviced	B&B / Guest House	3	6
Lodge Hill Centre	Near Pulborough	Watersfield	Horsham	RH20 1LZ	Serviced	Residential Accommodation	27	135
Newtimber Holiday Cottages	Newtimber Place	Newtimber	Horsham	BN6 9BU	Non-Serviced	Self Catering House / Cottage	4	10
Owl Cottage	Amberley	Amberley	Horsham	BN18 9NQ	Non-Serviced	Self-Catering House / Cottage	1	2
Pepperscombe Farm Holiday Cottages & Glamping	Newham Lane	Steyning	Horsham	BN44 3LR	Non-Serviced	Self-Catering House / Cottage; Glamping	4	14
Pepperscombe Farm Ltd	Pepperscombe Farm	Steyning	Horsham	BN44 3LR	Non-Serviced	Self Catering House / Cottage; Glamping	4	5
Pulborough Estate	Pulborough	Pulborough	Horsham	RH20 1LA	Non-Serviced	Self-Catering House / Cottage	11	53
Springwells	9 High Street	Steyning	Horsham	BN44 3GG	Serviced	B&B / Guest House	11	22
Springwells House	9 High Street	Steyning	Horsham	BN44 3GG	Serviced	B&B / Guest House	6	12
Sullington Manor Farm	Sullington Lane	Storrington	Horsham	RH20 4AE	Non-Serviced	Self-Catering House / Cottage	11	19
Swan Inn	Lower Street	Pulborough	Horsham	RH20 1EL	Serviced	Pub / Inn	12	24
The Barn	Tripp Hill	Coldwaltham	Horsham	RH20 1EY	Non-Serviced	Self-Catering House / Cottage	2	4
The Barn at Banks Cottage	Wiggonholt	Pulborough	Horsham	RH20 2EL	Non-Serviced	Self-Catering House / Cottage	2	4
The Barton	Maudlin Lane, Bramber	Steyning	Horsham	BN44 3WX	Non-Serviced	Self-Catering House / Cottage	5	10
The Castle Inn Hotel	The Street, Bramber	Steyning	Horsham	BN44 3WE	Serviced	Pub / Inn	21	42
The Labouring Man	Old London Road	Coldwaltham	Horsham	RH20 1LF	Serviced	Pub / Inn	0	0
The Mill House on the Brooks aka House on the Brooks	Mill Lane	Hardham	Horsham	RH20 1LA	Non-Serviced	Self-Catering House / Cottage	4	15
The Old Tollgate	The Street, Bramber	Steyning	Horsham	BN44 3WE	Serviced	Pub / Inn	30	60
The Pump House	Wiston Estate, Chanctonbury Ring Road	Wiston, Steyning	Horsham	BN44 3DN	Non-Serviced	Self-Catering House / Cottage	4	8
The Sportsman	Crossgates	Amberley	Horsham	BN18 9NR	Serviced	Pub / Inn	5	10
The Sportsman Inn	Rackham Road	Arundel	Horsham	BN18 9NR	Serviced	Pub / Inn	5	10
The Timber Barn aka The Timber Store	Mill Lane	Hardham	Horsham	RH20 1LA	Non-Serviced	Self-Catering House / Cottage	4	18
The White Horse Inn	The Street	Pulborough	Horsham	RH20 1PS	Serviced	Pub / Inn	8	16
Tottington Manor Hotel	Edburton Road	Henfield	Horsham	BN5 9LJ	Serviced	Hotel	24	0
Washington Caravan & Camping Park	London Road, Washington	Pulborough	Horsham	RH20 4AJ	Non-Serviced	Camping / Caravan	140	560
Woodybanks Cottage	Crossgates	Arundel	Horsham	BN18 9NR	Serviced	B&B / Guest House	2	4
Yew Tree Granary	Hardham Church Farm	Pulborough	Horsham	RH20 1LB	Non-Serviced	Self-Catering House / Cottage	1	2

Appendix VI – Sussex Regional Hospitality Submarket 2026



Hospitality Submarket Report

Sussex Regional

East Sussex/Surrey/West Sussex GBR

PREPARED BY

tomorrow's TOURISM

Corinne Tupling

Researcher, Cartographer

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