

Horsham District Local Plan 2023-2040

Examination Inspector: L Fleming BSc (Hons) MRTPI IHBC

Programme Officer: K Trueman

programmeofficer@horsham.gov.uk

Examination Webpage:

<https://www.horsham.gov.uk/planning/local-plan/local-plan-examination>

28 November 2025

Examination of the Horsham Local Plan 2023-2040

Dear Ms Childs,

1. I write in response to your letters dated 18 August 2025 and 11 November 2025 (HDC43, HDC44, HDC44a and HDC44b). Those letters reply to my letter dated 4 April 2025 (ID08) within which, in summary, I recommended the Council withdraw the Horsham Local Plan 2023-2040 (Local Plan) from the Examination, because I found it was not legally compliant because the Duty to Cooperate had not been met.
2. However, you will no doubt be aware of the Written Ministerial Statement on Reforming Plan Making¹ and the Minister of State's letter to the Planning Inspectorate of 27 November 2025². The letter, among other things makes clear that it is the Government's intention to "shortly" lay new regulations which will have the effect of "abolishing the Duty to Cooperate for the existing plan-making system". The contents of this letter and the withdrawal of the Natural England Position Statement on 31 October 2025 (HDC44a) are clearly significant changes in circumstances relevant to the Examination.

¹ [Written statements - Written questions, answers and statements - UK Parliament](#)

² [Local Plan examinations: letter to the Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate \(November 2025\) - GOV.UK](#)

3. From your letters, I have noted the Council's willingness to explore main modifications for soundness reasons to facilitate the delivery of a higher level of growth. These are welcomed, positive statements. However, I do not deal with these matters in any detail in this letter, other than to say, such main modifications will need to be considered in the context of the tests of soundness, as well as other considerations, including but not limited to, other relevant correspondences from the Minister of State, particularly those issued on 9 October 2025³ and 20 July 2024⁴.
4. As you know the Local Plan falls some way short of its minimum housing need when assessed using the standard method. However, as the Council indicate in its letters, in light of changes in circumstances, there may now be a need to identify new sites to meet that need which are not allocated in the Plan. The scope of the work necessary to make the Local Plan sound could therefore be significant. For example, it could require consultation, new evidence and significant updates to the existing evidence base.
5. Therefore, if the Council wish to resume the hearings and continue the Examination, in my view, it will be necessary and useful to hold a procedural/exploratory meeting with the Council (other participants would not be required) to explore the implications for the Examination of the Government's intent to abolish the Duty to Cooperate. Furthermore, such a meeting would also give the Council the opportunity to set out its understanding of the scope of any necessary main modifications to address matters of soundness already discussed and how long any associated work may take to complete.
6. The recordings of the hearing sessions already undertaken, which are all helpfully available through the Examination Webpages, give a strong indication of the issues of soundness that would need to be addressed. However, as soon as possible, I would also write to the Council setting out my initial soundness concerns in advance of any procedural/exploratory meeting to give the Council the opportunity to fully respond.
7. In the interim, to avoid abortive work, I would welcome a brief response to this letter, confirming whether or not the Council is agreeable to the approach set out in paragraph 5. Subject to that response, due to my other work commitments, it seems the earliest opportunity to hold such an exploratory/procedural meeting would be February 2026.

³ [Local Plan examinations: letter to the Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate \(October 2025\) - GOV.UK](#)

⁴ [Local Plan examinations: letter to the Chief Executive of the Planning Inspectorate \(July 2024\) - GOV.UK](#)

8. If you require any clarification with regard to the content of this letter, please do not hesitate to ask via the Programme Officer. I also ask that this letter is placed on the Examination Webpages as soon as possible. I do not require a response to this letter from representors at this time.

L Fleming

INSPECTOR