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Report on Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2036

An Examination undertaken for Horsham District Council with the support of Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Forum on the June 2020 Submission version of the Plan.

Independent Examiner: Derek Stebbing BA (Hons) DipEP MRTPI

Date of Report: 18 February 2021

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Main Findings - Executive Summary

From my examination of the Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan (the Plan) and its supporting documentation including the representations made, I have concluded that subject to the modifications set out in this report, the Plan meets the Basic Conditions.

I have also concluded that:

- the Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body – the Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Forum (the Neighbourhood Forum);
- the Plan has been prepared for an area properly designated – the Business Neighbourhood Area, as identified on the Map at Page 5 of the Plan;
- the Plan specifies the period to which it is to take effect – from 2019 to 2036; and,
- the policies relate to the development and use of land for a designated neighbourhood plan area.

I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to the referendums on the basis that it has met all the relevant legal requirements.

I have considered whether the referendums' area should extend beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates and have concluded that it should not.

1. Introduction and Background

Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan

1.1 Horsham District Council (HDC) first designated the area of Horsham co-terminus with the boundaries of the Denne, Forest and Trafalgar Neighbourhood Councils in June 2015 as a Business Neighbourhood Forum Area, comprising both residential and business interests. The Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Forum (HBBNF) was also designated in June 2015 and, following a renewal application in June 2020 (upon expiry of the initial 5 year statutory period), was redesignated in August 2020. The designated area covers a large part of the Horsham urban area largely in the southern and western parts of the town but does not include the area covered by North Horsham Parish Council. North Horsham was designated as a Neighbourhood Plan area in June 2017 but the Parish Council formally withdrew from the neighbourhood planning process in July 2018, and the Parish is no longer a designated neighbourhood plan area.

1.2 Horsham is a market town on the upper reaches of the River Arun on the fringe of The Weald in West Sussex. The town is some 30 miles south-west of London, 18 miles to the north-west of Brighton and 26 miles

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north-east of Chichester. Crawley and Gatwick Airport are to the north-east of Horsham and the towns of Haywards Heath and Burgess Hill are to the south-east. Horsham is the principal administrative centre for Horsham district.

- 1.3 The designated Neighbourhood Plan Area has a population in the region of 25,000-30,000 people. Since the 2011 Census, the Ward boundaries in this part of Horsham have been amended, with the former Horsham Park Ward being removed and part of the Holbrook West Ward no longer being within the neighbourhood. It is therefore difficult to calculate the current population of the neighbourhood until the 2021 Census takes place.
- 1.4 Horsham is a vibrant town which has grown considerably, particularly since 1945. It is an important business centre, with a number of large companies being based in the town along with many smaller businesses. It is an important retail centre, and has important leisure and cultural facilities, including the Pavilions in the Park leisure centre and The Capitol arts centre.
- 1.5 Horsham continues to experience significant pressure for additional development, particularly for new housing, to meet the district's needs. The Business Neighbourhood Plan has been prepared to provide planning guidance for the period up to 2036, which is expected to be a further period of growth for Horsham, particularly to ensure that the needs of the existing communities within the area can be met over that period.

The Independent Examiner

- 1.6 As the Plan has now reached the examination stage, I have been appointed as the examiner of the Plan by Horsham District Council (the District Council/HDC), with the agreement of HBBNF.
- 1.7 I am a chartered town planner, with over 45 years of experience in planning. I have worked in both the public and private sectors and have experience of examining both local plans and neighbourhood plans. I have also served on a Government working group considering measures to improve the local plan system and undertaken peer reviews on behalf of the Planning Advisory Service. I therefore have the appropriate qualifications and experience to carry out this independent examination.
- 1.8 I am independent of the qualifying body and the local authority and do not have an interest in any of the land that may be affected by the Plan.

The Scope of the Examination

- 1.9 As the independent examiner, I am required to produce this report and recommend either:

(a) that the neighbourhood plan is submitted to referendums¹ without changes; or

(b) that modifications are made and that the modified neighbourhood plan is submitted to referendums; or

(c) that the neighbourhood plan does not proceed to referendums on the basis that it does not meet the necessary legal requirements.

1.10 The scope of the examination is set out in Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended) ('the 1990 Act'). The examiner must consider:

- Whether the plan meets the Basic Conditions.
- Whether the plan complies with provisions under s.38A and s.38B of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004 (as amended) ('the 2004 Act'). These are:
 - it has been prepared and submitted for examination by a qualifying body, for an area that has been properly designated by the local planning authority;
 - it sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land;
 - it specifies the period during which it has effect;
 - it does not include provisions and policies for 'excluded development'; and
 - it is the only neighbourhood plan for the area and does not relate to land outside the designated neighbourhood area.
- Whether the referendums' boundary should be extended beyond the designated area, should the plan proceed to referendums.
- Such matters as prescribed in the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012 (as amended) ('the 2012 Regulations').

1.11 I have considered only matters that fall within Paragraph 8(1) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act, with one exception. That is the requirement that the Plan is compatible with the Human Rights Convention.

¹ In accordance with paragraphs 12(4) and 15 of Schedule 4B to the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (as amended), the draft Plan relates to a neighbourhood area that has been designated as a business area under section 61H of the 1990 Act. The combined effect of these provisions is that an additional business referendum is required.

The Basic Conditions

1.12 The 'Basic Conditions' are set out in Paragraph 8(2) of Schedule 4B to the 1990 Act. In order to meet the Basic Conditions, the neighbourhood plan must:

- have regard to national policies and advice contained in guidance issued by the Secretary of State;
- contribute to the achievement of sustainable development;
- be in general conformity with the strategic policies of the development plan for the area;
- be compatible with and not breach European Union (EU) obligations (under retained EU law)²; and
- meet prescribed conditions and comply with prescribed matters.

1.13 Regulation 32 of the 2012 Regulations prescribes a further Basic Condition for a neighbourhood plan. This requires that the making of the Neighbourhood Plan does not breach the requirements of Chapter 8 of Part 6 of the Conservation of Habitats and Species Regulations 2017 ('the Habitats Regulations').³

2. Approach to the Examination

Planning Policy Context

2.1 The Development Plan for this part of Horsham District Council, not including documents relating to excluded minerals and waste development, is the Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) adopted in November 2015. The Plan period of the HDPF runs until 2031, although the end date of the draft Neighbourhood Plan is 2036. Horsham District Council are currently preparing a new Local Plan for the district to cover the period from 2019 to 2037, which in due course will supersede the HDPF. The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) provides advice on the relationship between a draft neighbourhood plan and an emerging local plan.⁴ However, the emerging Local Plan has only reached its Regulation 18 public consultation stage during early 2020. The District Council is aiming to publish its Regulation 19 Submission Draft Plan for consultation in Spring 2021, with formal Submission later in 2021.

² The existing body of environmental regulation is retained in UK law.

³ This revised Basic Condition came into force on 28 December 2018 through the Conservation of Habitats and Species and Planning (Various Amendments) (England and Wales) Regulations 2018.

⁴ PPG Reference ID: 41-009-20190509.

- 2.2 The Basic Conditions Statement (at pages 15-19) seeks to provide a full assessment of how each of the policies proposed in the draft Plan are in general conformity with the relevant strategic policies in the adopted HDPF. Having been adopted in November 2015, the HDPF provides a reasonably up to date strategic planning context for the Neighbourhood Plan covering the period up to 2031.
- 2.3 The planning policy for England is set out principally in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF). The Planning Practice Guidance (PPG) offers guidance on how this policy should be implemented. A revised NPPF was published on 19 February 2019 (and updated on 19 June 2019). All references in this report are to the 2019 NPPF and its accompanying PPG.

Submitted Documents

- 2.4 I have considered all policy, guidance and other reference documents I consider relevant to the examination, including those submitted which comprise:
- the draft Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2036 (Submission Version) (June 2020);
 - the Sustainability Statement (June 2020);
 - the Basic Conditions Statement (June 2020);
 - the Consultation Statement and Appendices A-F (June 2020);
 - the Habitats Regulations Assessment (HRA) Screening Report (June 2020);
 - the uniform Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA) screening for all neighbourhood plans in Horsham district prepared by HDC;
 - Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan - Local Green Spaces Review (November 2019, and amended June 2020)
 - Good by Design (May 2018) - Horsham Society; and
 - all the representations that have been made in accordance with the Regulation 16 consultation.
- 2.5 I have also considered the many supporting evidence documents that have informed the preparation of the Plan, including the following key documents:
- Brownfield Sites Register, Horsham District Council, 2018
 - Green Space Strategy, 2013 to 2033;
 - Horsham District Economic Development Strategy 2017-2027;
 - Horsham District Planning Framework, 2015;
 - Horsham Heritage and Character Assessment, AECOM, 2017;
 - Horsham Town Centre Vision, 2017;
 - Horsham Town Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document, 2008;
 - Horsham Blueprint Site Assessment Final Report, AECOM, 2016;
 - Horsham Town Local List, HDC, 2011;
 - Horsham Town Plan Supplementary Planning Document, 2012
 - Management Plan, Chesworth Farm, 2019;
 - Play Strategy, Horsham District Council, 2017-2027;

- Revised Horsham Local List of Buildings and Conservation Areas Draft Proposals for inclusion (2019); and
- The Horsham District Sport, Open Space and Recreation Assessment, 2014.⁵

Preliminary Questions

2.6 Following my appointment as the independent examiner and my initial review of the draft Plan, its supporting documents and representations made at the Regulation 16 stage, I wrote to the District Council and the HBBNF on 9 December 2020⁶ seeking further clarification and information on three matters contained in the submission Plan, as follows:

- firstly, I invited the HBBNF to explain why the first sentence of paragraph 7.30 in the Plan (concerning AIM3) purports to be framed as a policy rather than as an aspiration;
- secondly, I invited the District Council to provide confirmation regarding the current position and status of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) being prepared by West Sussex County Council, and to confirm whether or not there are any committed infrastructure proposals within the Plan area designed to encourage sustainable movement that ought properly to be identified within Section 9 of the Plan; and,
- thirdly, I invited the District Council to provide me with a Note indicating the latest position regarding the possible allocation of 68 hectares of land at Rookwood for residential development as part of the Local Plan Review, including the implications for the leisure facilities provided at the site and also for the green infrastructure network in that part of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area, noting that it adjoins a Local Nature Reserve.

2.7 In response to my letter of 9 December 2020, the HBBNF provided me with a note concerning paragraph 7.30 on 9 January 2021 (see paragraph 4.42 below) and the District Council provided a response on the LCWIP and the Rookwood site on 15 January 2021 (see paragraphs 4.55 and 4.61 below). I have taken account of the additional information contained in these responses as part of my full assessment of the draft Plan, alongside the documents listed at paragraphs 2.4 and 2.5 above.

Site Visit

2.8 I made an unaccompanied site visit to the Neighbourhood Plan Area on 30 December 2020 to familiarise myself with it and visit relevant sites and areas referenced in the Plan, evidential documents and representations.

⁵ View the documents in paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6 here:

<https://strategicplanning.horsham.gov.uk/consult.ti/HorshamBlueprint/consultationHome> <https://www.horshamblueprint.org/evidence/>

⁶ https://www.horsham.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0010/93376/Examiner-Procedural-Matters-and-Questions-Horsham-Blueprint-BNP-091220.pdf

Written Representations with or without Public Hearing

- 2.9 This examination has been dealt with by written representations. I considered hearing sessions to be unnecessary as the consultation responses clearly articulated the objections and comments regarding the Plan and presented arguments for and against the Plan's suitability to proceed to referendums. I am satisfied that the material supplied is sufficiently comprehensive for me to be able to deal with the matters raised under the written representations procedure, and that there was not a requirement to convene a public hearing as part of this examination. In all cases the information provided has enabled me to reach a conclusion on the matters concerned.

Modifications

- 2.10 Where necessary, I have recommended modifications to the Plan (**PMs**) in this report in order that it meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. For ease of reference, I have listed these modifications in full in the Appendix.

3. Procedural Compliance and Human Rights

Qualifying Body and Neighbourhood Plan Area

- 3.1 The Plan has been prepared and submitted for examination by the HBBNF. An application to the District Council for the Horsham Town unparished area to be designated a neighbourhood planning area was first made in June 2014 and was approved by the District Council on 5 June 2015 following public consultation. The HBBNF was also designated on 5 June 2015 and applied for redesignation on 5 June 2020. Following public consultation between 17 June 2020 and 29 July 2020, the District Council approved the application for redesignation of the HBBNF on 24 August 2020.
- 3.2 The Plan area comprises the unparished part of Horsham Town, namely the Denne, Forest and Trafalgar Neighbourhood Council areas. The Neighbourhood Councils were established in 1974 when Horsham Urban District Council amalgamated with Chanctonbury and Horsham Rural District Councils to form Horsham District Council.
- 3.3 The HBBNF is the designated body for the preparation of the Plan and comprises representatives from the three Neighbourhood Councils, individuals who are residents living in the Plan area, individuals working in the Plan area and representatives of local groups, organisations and societies such as the Horsham Society. The HBBNF had an inaugural membership of 160, with 46 persons having signed the Constitution.
- 3.4 The Denne Neighbourhood spans the area from the A264 in the north to the Southwater Parish boundary in the south with the A24 road forming

the western boundary. This Neighbourhood Council area encircles Trafalgar Neighbourhood and also covers Horsham Town Centre and Horsham Park. It covers the south-western and north-western parts of the Horsham urban area.

- 3.5 The Forest Neighbourhood covers approximately half of the designated area to the east of the railway line and includes the south-eastern parts of the Horsham urban area.
- 3.6 The Trafalgar Neighbourhood covers the western part of the urban area, with its western boundary being the A24 road.
- 3.7 The designated Neighbourhood Plan Area borders the Parishes of North Horsham, Warnham, Southwater, Broadbridge Heath, Nuthurst and Colgate. It has a population in the region of 25,000 to 30,000 people and summary profiles for each of the Neighbourhood Council areas are contained at Appendix A in the draft Plan.
- 3.8 At an early stage in the preparation of the Plan, consideration was given to a joint Plan with North Horsham Parish Council, which covers the northern and north-eastern parts of the Horsham urban area. After due consideration, the Parish Council declined to participate in the preparation of a joint Plan. As noted above, the Parish Council formally withdrew from the neighbourhood planning process in July 2018.

Plan Period

- 3.9 The draft Plan specifies (on the front cover and on page 6) the period to which it is to take effect, which is for the period 2019 to 2036. This encompasses the remaining part of the plan period for the adopted HDPF (up to 2031) and the greater part of the proposed plan period for the emerging Local Plan Review.

Neighbourhood Plan Preparation and Consultation

- 3.10 The Consultation Statement and its Appendices sets out a comprehensive record of the Plan's preparation and its associated engagement and consultation activity. The decision to seek the designation of the Neighbourhood Plan Area was taken in early-2014, following earlier discussions between the Neighbourhood Councils and local civic societies. Initial community engagement during 2014 focused on identifying and establishing community aspirations for the area. During 2015-2016 further community engagement work, such as attendance at local events, took place together with the collection of relevant evidence on specific topics. A leaflet was distributed to every business address within the area, together with meetings with businesses individually.
- 3.11 In Summer 2016 an Interim Findings Summary Report was delivered to every residential and business property in the Plan area with an invitation to complete a survey. Over 300 responses were received. Between 2016

and 2019, work focused on the development of draft policy options, and again feedback was sought from the community and local businesses. A key decision was taken to exclude development site allocations from the Plan.

- 3.12 The Regulation 14 draft Plan was published for public consultation between 10 February and 24 March 2020. A total of 147 questionnaires and 23 written responses were received during this period, amounting to over 500 specific comments, following which the draft Plan was amended, where necessary, to take account of the responses.
- 3.13 The Consultation Statement (June 2020), notably at Appendix E, sets out a comprehensive record of the responses received to the Regulation 14 consultation and the subsequent actions that were taken to amend or modify the draft Plan following those responses.
- 3.14 The District Council issued a 'standard' screening for all neighbourhood plans in the district and has confirmed that a SEA is not required for the Plan as it contains no site allocations for development. A HRA Screening Report was prepared in June 2020, and other supporting documents including the Basic Conditions Statement and the Consultation Statement were concluded during 2019 and early-2020.
- 3.15 At its Annual General Meeting held on 19 May 2020, the HBBNF resolved to formally submit the Plan to the District Council for Examination under Regulation 15, and the Plan was duly submitted in early-June 2020. Regulation 16 consultation was then held for a period of seven weeks from 14 September to 2 November 2020. I have taken account of the 16 responses then received, as well as the Consultation Statement. I am satisfied that a transparent, fair and inclusive consultation process has been followed for the Plan, that has had regard to advice in the PPG on plan preparation and is procedurally compliant in accordance with the legal requirements.

Development and Use of Land

- 3.16 The draft Plan sets out policies in relation to the development and use of land in accordance with s.38A of the 2004 Act.

Excluded Development

- 3.17 From my review of all the documents before me, the draft Plan does not include policies or proposals that relate to any of the categories of excluded development.⁷

⁷ The meaning of 'excluded development' is set out in s.61K of the 1990 Act.
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Human Rights

3.18 Neither the District Council nor any other party has raised any issues concerning a breach of, or incompatibility with Convention rights (within the meaning of the Human Rights Act 1998). From my assessment of the Plan, its accompanying supporting documents and the consultation responses made to the Plan at the Regulations 14 and 16 stages, I am satisfied that the Plan has had regard to the fundamental rights and freedoms guaranteed under the European Convention on Human Rights and complies with the Human Rights Act 1998. I consider that none of the objectives and policies in the Plan will have a negative impact on groups with protected characteristics. Many will have a positive impact.

4. Compliance with the Basic Conditions

EU Obligations

- 4.1 The District Council has issued a standard SEA Screening Opinion for all neighbourhood plans being prepared in the district, in accordance with the Environmental Assessment of Plans and Programmes Regulations 2004 ('the SEA Regulations'). This states that if a neighbourhood plan is allocating sites for development then it could have a significant environmental impact, and therefore a SEA is required. This Plan does not allocate any sites for development, and the District Council confirmed that a SEA is not required.
- 4.2 Nevertheless, a Sustainability Statement has been prepared to accompany the submission Plan and was the subject of consultation with the Environment Agency, Natural England and Historic England at the Pre-Submission (Regulation 14) stage. None of these bodies raised any concerns such that a SEA would be required for the Plan.
- 4.3 I have considered the process by which the Plan was assessed to determine whether the Plan is likely to have significant environmental effects, bearing in mind also that the policies in the adopted Horsham District Planning Framework (HDPF) (2015) were subject to Sustainability Appraisal and SEA. Overall, I am satisfied that a proportionate approach has been taken and that the Plan will not lead to significant environmental impacts such that a SEA would be required. However, the District Council is progressing a Local Plan Review for the period 2019-2037, with an intention to consult on the final Submission Draft of the Local Plan Review (Regulation 19) in Spring 2021. It is therefore possible that any review of the Neighbourhood Plan will require a SEA to be undertaken, and that an early review may be necessary.
- 4.4 The Plan was also screened in June 2020 in order to establish whether the Plan required HRA under the Habitats Regulations. There are two sites of European importance within the 15 kilometre zone of influence of the adopted HDPF, the Arun Valley Special Area of Conservation (SAC),

Special Protection Area (SPA) and Ramsar site and The Mens SAC. These sites are shown on Figure 1 of the HRA Screening Report. The HRA Screening Report concluded that there would be no likely significant effects in respect of those European sites as a result of the implementation of the Plan's policies and proposals. I have noted that Natural England has not raised any concerns regarding the necessity for an HRA.

- 4.5 Therefore, I consider that on the basis of the information provided and my independent consideration of the Sustainability Statement, the standard SEA Screening Opinion prepared by the District Council, the HRA Screening Report and the Plan itself, I am satisfied that the Plan is compatible with EU obligations under retained EU law.

Main Assessment

- 4.6 The NPPF states (at paragraph 29) that "*Neighbourhood planning gives communities the power to develop a shared vision for their area. Neighbourhood plans can shape, direct and help to deliver sustainable development, by influencing local planning decisions as part of the statutory development plan*" and also that "*Neighbourhood plans should not promote less development than set out in the strategic policies for the area, or undermine those strategic policies*". The NPPF (at paragraph 11) also sets out the presumption in favour of sustainable development. It goes on to state (at paragraph 13) that neighbourhood plans should support the delivery of strategic policies contained in local plans; and should shape and direct development that is outside of these strategic policies.
- 4.7 Having considered above whether the Plan complies with various legal and procedural requirements, it is now necessary to deal with the question of whether it complies with the remaining Basic Conditions (see paragraph 1.12 of this report), particularly the regard it pays to national policy and guidance, the contribution it makes to sustainable development and whether it is in general conformity with strategic development plan policies.
- 4.8 I test the Plan against the Basic Conditions by considering specific issues of compliance of the Plan's 15 policies, which address the following themes: Spatial Strategy; Housing; Character, Heritage and Design; Horsham Town Centre and the Wider Local Economy; Environment and Green Space; Transport and Movement; and, Community Facilities. As part of that assessment, I consider whether the policies in the Plan are sufficiently clear and unambiguous, having regard to advice in the PPG. A policy should be drafted with sufficient clarity that a decision maker can apply it consistently and with confidence when determining planning applications. It should be concise, precise and supported by appropriate evidence.⁸ I recommend some modifications as a result.

⁸ PPG Reference ID: 41-041-20140306.

Overview

- 4.9 The Plan is addressing a period up to 2036 and seeks to provide a clear planning framework to guide residents, businesses, the District Council and developers as to how the community wish to shape future development in the Plan area during that period. Sections 4-10 of the Plan contains specific policies in respect of each of the themes listed above.
- 4.10 The wider planning policy context for the Plan is set out within Section 1. It notes (at paragraph 1.13) that the Plan is guided by the contents of the existing adopted HDPF. On housing, HDPF Policy 15 requires the provision of at least 16,000 new homes between 2011 and 2031, including around 2,500 homes on land to the north of Horsham. This policy also anticipates a minimum of 1,500 homes to be delivered through neighbourhood plans. On the local economy, HDPF Policy 5 recognises the need to promote the prosperity of Horsham town and maintain and strengthen its role as the primary economic and cultural centre in the district.
- 4.11 I also note that the Basic Conditions Statement (at Sections 2 and 3) describes how the Plan has regard to national policies contained in the NPPF and contributes to the achievement of sustainable development. Section 4, and notably Table 4.1, of the Basic Conditions Statement sets out how each of the Plan's 15 policies are in general conformity with the strategic policies in the adopted HDPF 2011-2031.
- 4.12 The Vision for Horsham Blueprint towards 2036 is set out in Section 3 of the Plan and states that *"In the years up to 2036, the people of Horsham will live in a friendly, and sustainable thriving market town – a recognised destination set between the High Weald and the South Downs. It will be an inclusive, resilient community that recognises the contributions that are made by the different social groups and people of all ages"*, and that *"The area will have retained its market town character together with its heritage assets, both designated and non-designated, further enhanced by the quality of its built and natural environment"*. This leads to the Plan's nine objectives, also contained in Section 3. Those objectives concern safeguarding the historic character of the area, safeguarding green space, protecting and improving community, recreational and leisure facilities, ensuring that development is well designed, encouraging new housing that addresses local need, having a network of attractive streets and public spaces to encourage walking and cycling, supporting Horsham Town as a distinctive market town, promoting a sustainable local economy and supporting initiatives that offset the impacts of climate change.
- 4.13 The relationship between the Plan's objectives and policies is set out at paragraph 3.3 in the Plan and each Policy also sets out a conformity reference with relevant HDPF and NPPF policies. Overall, I am satisfied that the key issues arising from the NPPF and the strategic policies in the adopted HDPF covering the period up to 2036, as they affect the Plan

area, are appropriately identified within the Plan and more fully in the Basic Conditions Statement.

- 4.14 I consider that overall, subject to the detailed modifications I recommend to specific policies below, that individually and collectively the Plan's policies will contribute to the achievement of sustainable patterns of development. There are also a number of detailed matters which require amendment to ensure that the policies have the necessary regard to national policy and are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the District Council. Accordingly, I recommend modifications in this report in order to address these matters.

Specific Issues of Compliance

- 4.15 I turn now to consider each of the proposed policies in the draft Plan, and I take into account, where appropriate, the representations that have been made concerning the policies.

Spatial Strategy

- 4.16 Section 4 of the draft Plan sets out the Plan's approach to the location of development within the Neighbourhood Plan Area. It states that it is important that new development takes place in the most sustainable locations, near to local services and amenities, while protecting the valued green corridors in the area, avoiding sprawl and coalescence with nearby settlements. It further notes that, in the adopted HDPF, Horsham Town (which incorporates both the designated Plan area and the Parish of North Horsham) is classified as the 'Main Town' in Horsham district. HDPF Policy 3 (Development Hierarchy) establishes a built-up area boundary (BUAB) which incorporates the Plan area and the Parish of North Horsham.
- 4.17 HDPF Policy 5 (Horsham Town) seeks to retain the attractive characteristics of the town, whilst enabling it to grow positively. In terms of housing, the HPDF makes provision for at least 16,000 new homes within the period 2011-2031. Within the Plan area, the District Council's Strategic Housing and Economic Land Availability Assessment (SHELAA) (2018) identifies 26 sites as being deliverable during the Plan period, with a potential yield of 1,525 new dwellings. It further identifies two potential sites totalling 4.10 hectares for new employment development. Finally, the Council's Brownfield Land Register (2018) identifies a further six potential housing sites, with capacity for 167 new dwellings. Development has progressed at a significant number of these identified sites, and the Plan assesses that sufficient potential deliverable housing and employment sites exist within the Plan area such that there is no requirement for the Plan to allocate additional sites for development, although it notes that the emerging Local Plan Review "*could bring about a need for additional housing and employment sites to be delivered*".
- 4.18 Policy HB1 (Location of Development) has three clauses, firstly stating that development in the Plan area shall be focused within the built-up

area boundary, secondly, that development proposals outside the proposed built-up area boundary will not be permitted except in specified circumstances and thirdly, that development proposals should make the best use of suitable brownfield land before greenfield land is released. These policy principles have regard to national policy and advice and are in general conformity with the relevant strategic policies in the adopted HDPF. However, I do consider that, for the purpose of improving the clarity of the spatial extent of this policy, a reference to Figure 4.4 (on page 17) should be included within the text of the policy. I therefore recommend modification **PM1** to address this point.

- 4.19 With recommended modification PM1, I consider that the draft Plan's Spatial Strategy is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the HDPF, has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Housing

- 4.20 Section 5 of the draft Plan addresses Housing, and contains one policy, Policy HB2 (Meeting Local Housing Needs), which addresses the housing requirements of the communities within the Plan area. In this respect, it draws upon data and evidence underpinning the relevant adopted HDPF policies, notably Policy 16, supported by local evidence gathered during the Plan's preparation.
- 4.21 Policy HB2 contains three clauses, firstly stating that all residential development proposals in the Plan area shall provide a mix of housing as required by HDPF Policy 16, secondly, that housing development must contribute to meeting the existing and future needs of the Neighbourhood Plan Area and thirdly, that affordable homes should be well integrated with market housing and that the type and size of affordable homes should meet the specific needs identified for the area. I am satisfied that the policy reflects national policy and advice and is in general conformity with the strategic policies in the adopted HDPF.
- 4.22 Overall, I consider that the draft Plan's Housing section and accompanying policy (HB2) is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the HDPF, has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Character, Heritage and Design

- 4.23 Section 6 of the draft Plan addresses the character of development, the conservation of heritage assets and the design of new development within the Plan area. It contains three policies (Policies HB3-HB5) which cover this theme. This part of the Plan is supported by a significant body of evidence which has been produced either specifically as part of the Plan's preparation, such as the Horsham Heritage and Character Assessment

(2017) produced by AECOM, or by other parties to promote good planning and design in Horsham, such as 'Good By Design' published by the Horsham Society in 2018. A number of these documents are listed at paragraph 2.6 above. It is very clear that the HBBNF has sought to work with key stakeholders, including the District Council and the Horsham Society, in developing the policies for this part of the Plan.

- 4.24 Policy HB3 (Character of Development) has two principal clauses, firstly that development is expected to preserve and enhance the Character Area in which it is located, taking account of the local context and vernacular, and secondly that, where relevant, development proposals are expected to make a positive contribution to the visual impact of the main road approaches into the Plan area, through streetscape improvements, and also be guided by the conservation principles set out in key supporting documents, which are identified in the policy.
- 4.25 The various Character Areas are shown and mapped on Figure 6.1 which accompanies Policy HB3, together with the designated Conservation Areas and the location of Listed Buildings. Whilst Figure 6.1 is produced at a relatively small scale, the Inset Policies Map for Horsham Town Centre at page 83 is at a larger scale and provides better definition.
- 4.26 I note that Historic England strongly support this policy. However, the District Council has commented that this section of the Plan has missed the opportunity to promote and strengthen the importance of green infrastructure and urban tree planting to enhance the character and liveability of the Plan area. I concur with this view, particularly in the context of national policy and design advice, and I recommend a minor amendment to the text of Policy HB3 accordingly. Recommended modification **PM2** addresses this matter.
- 4.27 Policy HB4 (Design of Development) states that development is expected to demonstrate a high quality of design, which responds and integrates well with its surroundings, meets the changing needs of residents and minimises the impact on the natural environment. It sets out eleven design matters which development proposals will be expected to address. These include the National Design Guide and the principles of 'Building for Life', the guidance contained in the Horsham Town Design Statement Supplementary Planning Document (SPD) and 'Good By Design' (Horsham Society, 2018), the space and accessibility requirements of the Lifetime Homes standards, the requirements of 'Secured by Design' for safe and secure dwellings, the height of new buildings in Conservation Areas, superfast broadband connectivity, adequate off-street parking and the provision of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) where required. These matters are more fully explained in the supporting justification for the policy. Since the Policy was drafted, the reference to the 'Building for Life' document should now be revised to refer to the 'Building for a Healthy Life – Design for Homes' guidance published in 2020, with a similar amendment to the reference in paragraph 6.13 of the supporting text in the Plan.

- 4.28 I am satisfied that Policy HB4 sets out, in a single policy, the fundamental design requirements for proposed new developments in the Plan area and takes account of the relevant national guidance such as the National Design Guide, local guidance such as the Horsham Town Design Statement SPD and specific local factors such as the use and re-use of Horsham Stone. I note that Historic England support the policy. However, I do recommend a minor amendment to design criterion ix) in the policy, to take account of a representation made by West Sussex County Council and to ensure accuracy. This is addressed by recommended modification **PM3**.
- 4.29 Policy HB5 (Energy Efficiency and Design) reflects the Plan's objectives to secure energy efficient and sustainable developments within the Plan area. The policy contains three clauses relating to new developments, alterations to existing buildings and community-owned energy projects. Clause A sets out nine design criteria for new developments in order to achieve the highest level of sustainable design, including factors relating to building materials, on-site energy generation, water consumption, lighting and electric vehicle charging points. Clause B concerns alterations to existing buildings and seeks to ensure that such alterations should be designed with energy reduction in mind. Clause C provides support and encouragement for community-owned energy projects as a contribution towards achieving a low-carbon neighbourhood.
- 4.30 Policy HB5 reflects national policy and guidance in seeking to achieve reductions in greenhouse gas emissions and is in general conformity with HDPF Policy 35. I am satisfied that the policy provides a clear set of requirements and support for developments to incorporate measures that will secure energy efficiency and sustainability in line with national and local objectives.
- 4.31 With recommended modifications PM2 and PM3, I consider that the draft Plan's policies for character, heritage and design are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the HDPF, have regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Horsham Town Centre and the Wider Local Economy

- 4.32 Section 7 of the draft Plan concerns Horsham Town Centre, which is located within the Plan area, and wider economic issues across the neighbourhood, including supporting and encouraging new and existing businesses. This section contains four policies (Policies HB6-HB9) to address the key planning issues on this theme. As with other parts of the Plan, this section is supported by a considerable amount of evidence, and the various documents are listed at Section 16 in the Plan. Key documents for my assessment have been the Horsham Town Centre Vision (HDC, 2017), the Horsham District Economic Strategy 2017-2027 (HDC, 2017), the Horsham Town Plan SPD (HDC, 2012) and the Horsham Blueprint Site Assessment Final Report (AECOM, 2016).

- 4.33 The Plan largely supports and embraces the Vision and Strategic Directions set out in the Horsham Town Centre Vision document. It further extends this, following community engagement, to also support technological innovation, creativity and the digital industries, including a vision for the 'Horsham Digital Hub'.
- 4.34 Policy HB6 (Retaining and Enhancing the Vitality and Viability of Horsham Town Centre) contains three clauses, addressing the need to maintain the economic health, vitality and viability of the Town Centre, the temporary change of use of vacant premises to pop-up shops in the shopping areas and support for development proposals that foster small, local business activity in the secondary shopping areas. I am satisfied that, as drafted, the policy responds well to the rapidly changing retail and business climate now affecting Town Centres, and in particular by its support for mixed-use development proposals. There is a clear focus within the policy to support and encourage proposals which will maintain the vitality and viability of Horsham Town Centre.
- 4.35 Policy HB7 (A Welcoming Public Realm) contains four clauses relating to development proposals in the Town Centre which have the potential to secure public realm improvements as part of their scheme, public realm improvements at the principal gateways to the Plan area, the provision of public art on major development sites in the Town Centre and elsewhere across the Plan area and a policy statement on advertisements/signage.
- 4.36 Historic England has made a representation which seeks to make public realm improvements a requirement for development proposals, rather than as potential opportunities to secure public realm improvements. I have given careful consideration to that representation, but consider that the balance of the policy's approach regarding public realm improvements is correct, as it allows some flexibility to identify those development proposals which can offer the most effective contribution towards securing such improvements.
- 4.37 I am satisfied that the policy provides comprehensive guidance on measures and initiatives which are intended to secure public realm improvements in Horsham Town Centre and elsewhere in the Plan area and that it is supported by relevant evidence. The policy is in general conformity with the strategic policies and other more detailed guidance in the adopted HDPF. One minor amendment is necessary to Clause D of the policy for accuracy, and recommended modification **PM4** addresses that point.
- 4.38 Policy HB8 (Horsham as a Sustainable Visitor Destination) seeks to promote and support the development and expansion of tourism facilities, accommodation, attractions and activities in the Plan area. The policy sets out five criteria which must all be met by development proposals. I consider that the policy provides clear and appropriate guidance for proposals which support the local visitor economy, and I do not recommend any modifications.

- 4.39 Policy HB9 (Protecting Existing and Encouraging New Commercial Premises and Land) seeks to protect existing employment land while also encouraging new businesses within the Plan area. The supporting justification notes that much employment space has been lost to permitted residential developments. The Plan is therefore seeking to maintain a balanced economy, with a broad range of employment opportunities for local people. An emphasis is on providing more space for start-up and early-stage businesses. The policy objectives are in general conformity with the adopted HDPF, notably Policies 7, 13 and 43.
- 4.40 The policy contains three clauses. Firstly it is to protect existing employment premises and sites and, subject to Permitted Development rights, sets out a general presumption to resist the loss of employment premises and land to non-employment uses. Secondly, it supports proposals which provide start-up business space and, thirdly, it supports proposals which will enable existing businesses to grow in sustainable locations. Although the policy and its supporting justification does not define such sustainable locations, I consider that this can be assessed by consideration of proposals in light of the Plan's policies as a whole, including Policy HB9. I consider that the policy is appropriately drafted to meet its planning objectives.
- 4.41 Section 7 also contains a section addressing Aspirational Development Sites. As the Plan does not allocate any sites for development, it therefore sets out a list of 22 sites under the title of AIM3 (Aspirational Development Sites) which might become available for development during the Plan period. Paragraph 7.30 explicitly states that *"If the sites, described briefly below, were to become available, development will be resisted unless it accords with the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan and aspirations for the sites ..."*. As part of my initial assessment of the draft Plan, I was concerned that, in combination, this statement together with the listing of sites in AIM3 could be interpreted as a planning policy.
- 4.42 I therefore raised a preliminary question with the HBBNF on 9 December 2020, as noted at paragraph 2.7 above, seeking an explanation why the first sentence of paragraph 7.30 purports to be framed as a policy rather than as an aspiration. The HBBNF responded to me on 9 January 2021⁹, and suggested some revised wording for paragraph 7.30, should I be minded to recommend a modification to this part of the Plan. I have carefully considered the suggested revised wording and consider that it removes any possibility of it being misinterpreted as a policy. I do therefore recommend the incorporation of this revised wording in full, and this is addressed by recommended modification **PM5**.
- 4.43 I have also given consideration to a representation that sought the inclusion of land at Hornbrook Farm, Brighton Road as a further Aspirational Development Site, with a potential development capacity of

⁹ https://www.horsham.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/94572/HDC-response-to-Examiners-Clarification-Note-15-January-2021-HBBNP-.pdf

100 dwellings, along with a modification to the BUAB to include the site. This is clearly in conflict with Policy HB1 (c.f. paragraph 4.18 above), and I do not recommend any modifications to either the BUAB or to AIM3 to include the site. However, should the land be brought forward as a future housing allocation site in the emerging Local Plan Review, the matter can be re-considered as part of a review of the Neighbourhood Plan.

- 4.44 With the recommended modifications PM4 and PM5, I consider that the draft Plan's policies for Horsham Town Centre and the wider local economy are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the HDPF, have regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Environment and Green Space

- 4.45 Section 8 of the draft Plan addresses the green and blue infrastructure assets of the Plan area, including their importance in combatting pressure on wildlife, habitats, biodiversity and geodiversity and in offsetting the effects of air pollution. The section contains two policies (Policies HB10 and HB11) to cover this theme.
- 4.46 Policy HB10 (Green and Blue Infrastructure and Delivering Biodiversity Net Gain) contains eight clauses, of which five (clauses A-E) concern green infrastructure, biodiversity net gain, green space connectivity and tree and hedgerow planting across the Plan area; one clause (clause F) concerns land at Chesworth Farm, owned by the District Council, at the south of the Plan area; a further clause (clause G) concerns the Horsham Riverside Walk, a large section of which is within the Plan area; and the final clause (clause H) concerns the Warnham Local Nature Reserve, also owned by the District Council, to the north-west of the Plan area. All important areas of green and blue infrastructure within the Plan area are shown on Figure 8.1 in the draft Plan.
- 4.47 I have given careful consideration to all elements of the policy, together with the representations that have been made concerning certain parts of the Policy. I consider that the policy reflects national policy and guidance by seeking to safeguard and enhance the green spaces within the Plan area, and to achieve biodiversity net gain, habitat creation and mitigation through development proposals. I do not recommend any modifications to the policy.
- 4.48 Policy HB11 (Local Green Spaces) designates 24 proposed Local Green Spaces across the Plan area. The principal supporting evidence for this policy is the Local Green Spaces Review document, prepared in November 2019 and amended in June 2020. This document sets out the three stage methodology that was used to identify, evaluate and assess the proposed designation of Local Green Spaces, which commenced with the identification of 77 potential sites at Stage 1. This resulted in 26 sites being short-listed for detailed evaluation at Stage 2 in the context of the criteria set out at paragraphs 99-101 of the NPPF. The Stage 2 evaluation led to one site at

Chesworth Farm being removed from the short-list. The remaining 25 sites were included as proposed Local Green Spaces at the Regulation 14 consultation stage. However, at that stage, the owners of four sites could not be identified initially. Subsequently, the owners of three of those sites were identified and advised of the Regulation 14 consultation. However, the owner of the one remaining site (site reference F1 – Stanley Walk Green) continues to remain unidentified. The Regulation 14 consultation led to one site at April Close being removed from the final short-list.

- 4.49 Stage 3 of the methodology involved the preparation of detailed descriptions, including their assessment in the context of the NPPF criteria, for each of the 24 short-listed sites that have been included in the Regulation 15 submission Plan. These descriptions are contained at Appendix B to the Local Green Spaces document.
- 4.50 I have visited each of the 24 proposed Local Green Spaces during the course of my site visit to the Plan area. I have also considered the representations that have been made concerning this policy, and in particular those seeking the designation of land at Muggeridge Field as a Local Green Space, as part of my assessment.
- 4.51 I consider that the evidence that supports Policy HB11 has been rigorously and comprehensively prepared, fully in line with the requirements which are set out in the NPPF to support and justify the designation of Local Green Spaces. However, the difficulties encountered in identifying and notifying the owner of the site at Stanley Walk Green (site No. 8) regarding the proposed designation is of concern. The PPG states that "*... the local planning authority (in the case of local plan making) or the qualifying body (in the case of neighbourhood plan making) should contact landowners at an early stage about proposals to designate any part of their land as Local Green Space. Landowners will have opportunities to make representations in respect of proposals in a draft plan*".¹⁰ Whilst I recognise the practical difficulties of establishing contact with the relevant landowner in this instance, designation as Local Green Space would impose a significant planning constraint on the site given the management of any future development would be subject to the policies applied to Green Belt. Overall, I consider that Site No. 8 – Stanley Walk Green does not have sufficient regard to the advice in the PPG and should therefore be removed from the policy.
- 4.52 As noted above, I have given consideration to the representations seeking the designation of Muggeridge Field as a Local Green Space. This site was considered at the Stage 1 identification of potential sites (site ref. F24), but was not short listed for Stage 2 assessment. I understand the desire of the local community to see the field designated as a Local Green Space, but in my assessment, it does not meet in full the criteria set out in the NPPF for designation and I agree with the site evaluation undertaken by the HBBNF.

¹⁰ PPG Reference ID: 37-019-20140306.

- 4.53 I have also considered the text of the proposed policy, and in particular its final paragraph. This makes direct reference to paragraph 145 in the NPPF. In my assessment, the correct overarching policy reference should be to paragraph 101 and the content of that paragraph (albeit paragraph 145 is clearly also relevant). I also consider that an amendment is necessary to properly reflect national policy on Local Green Spaces. Therefore, having regard to NPPF paragraphs 99-101 and the guidance in the PPG, I recommend that (with the exception of Site No. 8 – Stanley Walk Green) the 23 sites identified within the policy should be designated as a Local Green Spaces and that the policy (as modified) meets the Basic Conditions. I recommend modification **PM6** to address the necessary amendments to the policy text and its supporting justification.
- 4.54 With the recommended modifications PM6, I consider that the draft Plan’s policies for Environment and Green Space are in general conformity with the strategic policies of the HDPF, have regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Transport and Movement

- 4.55 Section 9 of the draft Plan addresses transport and movement within the Plan area. The section contains one policy (Policy HB12) to cover this theme. There is a strong emphasis to promote safe and sustainable movement by walking and cycling throughout the Plan area and the draft Plan takes account of the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (LCWIP) being prepared by West Sussex County Council.
- 4.56 Upon my initial assessment of the draft Plan, I considered that the Plan should set out, with greater certainty, the cycling and walking proposals that are contained in the LCWIP, as the Plan had been prepared on the basis of draft proposals. As noted at paragraph 2.6 above, I therefore invited the District Council to provide confirmation regarding the current position and status of the LCWIP, and to confirm whether or not there are any committed infrastructure proposals within the Plan area designed to encourage sustainable movement that ought properly to be identified within Section 9 of the Plan. The District Council responded to me on 15 January 2021¹¹ and confirmed that the District Council had adopted its first LCWIP on 9 December 2020.
- 4.57 The adopted LCWIP focuses on walking and cycling routes along six Corridors all of which pass through parts of the Plan area. The six Corridors are North-Horsham to Horsham Town Centre, Roffey to Horsham Town Centre, Forest School to Horsham Town Centre, Southwater to Horsham Town Centre, Broadbridge Heath to Horsham Town Centre and Warnham Mill to Horsham Town Centre (for walking only). Figure 2 in the District Council’s response document illustrates

¹¹ https://www.horsham.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0005/94568/Horsham-Blueprint-Response-to-Examiners-Question-15-Jan-2021.pdf

the routes of these six Corridors.

4.58 Policy HB12 (Encouraging Sustainable Movement) contains six clauses concerning the objective of promoting and safeguarding sustainable patterns of movement throughout the Plan area. Where new development is being proposed, it seeks to ensure that development proposals maximise the opportunities for permeability through the area for pedestrians, cyclists and mobility vehicles. This is in line with the Government's Cycling and Walking Investment Strategy (2017) and accompanying technical guidance. I am satisfied that the policy is soundly based with a clear set of criteria for the consideration of development proposals. However, as drafted, the policy and its accompanying justification and supporting maps does require various amendments to reflect the District Council's response to my preliminary question on this issue. Accordingly, I recommend modification **PM7** to address these necessary amendments.

4.59 Overall, I consider that the draft Plan's section on Transport and Movement and accompanying policy (HB12) is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the HDPF, has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions.

Community Facilities

4.60 Section 10 of the draft Plan is concerned with community facilities in the Plan area and contains three policies (Policies HB13-HB15). This section of the Plan addresses sport, leisure and recreation facilities, community and cultural facilities within the Plan area. Many of these facilities serve a much wider catchment area than the Plan area itself, by virtue of their location within the Horsham urban area and the good accessibility from other settlements.

4.61 Policy HB13 (Provision of Sport, Leisure and Recreation Facilities) contains two clauses, the first addressing the increased need for leisure provision in the Plan area and the facilities and enhancements that could be secured through development proposals, and the second specifically addressing Horsham Park, encouraging proposals that would support social inclusion at that Park. I am satisfied that the policy reflects the objectives of the Plan, and specifically Objective 3 (to protect and improve community, recreational, sporting and leisure facilities and be an integrated, balanced and resilient community, catering for diverse and changing needs across all age and social groups). I note that Sport England have not made any representations concerning this policy, or indeed to any specific element of the Plan. I consider that the policy is appropriately drafted to meet its objectives.

4.62 A number of representations raised specific concerns regarding the future of the open space and leisure facilities at Rookwood, which is a site of approximately 68 hectares owned by the District Council at the north-west

of the Plan area. The site is described at paragraphs 10.4-10.7 in the draft Plan. Paragraph 10.5 states, inter alia, that the site is being considered as a potential strategic allocation for major housing development by the District Council as part of the Local Plan Review. Upon sight of the representations, I considered that I needed additional information from the District Council regarding the future of the Rookwood site. As noted at paragraph 2.6 above, I therefore invited the District Council to provide me with a note indicating the latest position regarding the possible allocation of the Rookwood site for residential development as part of the Local Plan Review, including the implications for the leisure facilities provided at the site and the green infrastructure network in that part of the designated Neighbourhood Plan Area, noting that it adjoins a Local Nature Reserve. The District Council responded to me on 15 January 2021, and the response included the following additional information:

"Horsham District Council identified Rookwood Golf course as a possible location for an urban extension as part of the Local Plan Regulation 18 Consultation that was held in February and March 2020. Given the Government's desire to significantly boost the supply of housing and the NPPF requirement (para 11b) to provide for our own objectively assessed needs for housing and other uses, as well as any needs that cannot be met within neighbouring areas, it was considered that it was important to consider this location as a possible location for housing growth. This takes account of the location of the site in Horsham town within 20 mins walking distance to shops and a full range of other facilities; Horsham being ...the most sustainable settlement in Horsham District."

and,

"In response to the public consultation, updated proposals for the Rookwood site have also been put forward for consideration by the Strategic Planning team. The revised proposal is a scheme which locates all residential development on the southern portion of the site with provision for a primary school immediately north of Warnham Road. The remainder of the northern parcel of the site from the Walnut Tree Plantation northward is now proposed for the creation of a public park, including an extension to Warnham Local Nature Reserve. These proposals state that Green Infrastructure provision is retained throughout the development and inks beyond, with 70% of the entire site remaining undeveloped. It is stated that a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain will be achieved."

and also,

"The Council will continue with its preparations on the Regulation 19 document until due process has been completed. Consequently, it is considered the site area of Rookwood Golf Course as delineated as 'Associated Green Infrastructure' as set out in Figure 10.1 and on the Policies Map (pages 81 and 82) be excluded from the Horsham

Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan to allow officers and Members the opportunity in full to consider the Rookwood site as a potential strategic allocation.”

- 4.63 I have given very careful consideration to the District Council’s response, which makes it clear that the Rookwood site is being considered as a potential strategic allocation for residential development in the emerging Local Plan Review including a new primary school, together with green infrastructure, nature conservation and open space proposals. In particular, the District Council has now sought the deletion of the Rookwood Golf Course site area from Figure 10.1 and the Policies Maps in the draft Plan, although this did not form part of the Council’s comments at the Regulation 16 consultation stage.
- 4.64 In my assessment, the draft Plan has been prepared correctly to reflect the current planning position and takes account (at paragraph 10.5) of the potential strategic allocation for residential development at the Rookwood site, as part of the emerging Local Plan Review. However, that Review has only reached its Regulation 18 consultation stage (in early-2020), and the Regulation 19 Submission Draft Plan is yet to be published, and which will be the subject of formal public consultation in due course. It is premature to consider the deletion of the Rookwood Golf Course site area from Figure 10.1 and the Policies Maps in the Plan, and I consider that this will need to be a matter for possible further consideration as part of any future review of this Neighbourhood Plan, being clearly dependent upon the progress of the Local Plan Review through its next stages, including its examination. Accordingly, I do not recommend any modifications to the Plan in respect of the Rookwood site.
- 4.65 Policy HB14 (Community and Cultural Facilities) contains three clauses, firstly to retain the existing community and leisure facilities, except where appropriate replacement and equivalent facilities will be provided as a result of development proposals, secondly to support and encourage the provision of new facilities subject to meeting relevant development management criteria and thirdly, to support proposals that enable the diversification and flexible use of buildings to support the provision of additional community facilities. Again, I am satisfied that the policy is appropriately drafted and meets the Plan’s objectives.
- 4.66 The Arun Business Consortium Ltd. and its associated Trusts made wide-ranging representations that the Plan fails to recognise the need for additional places of worship, independent schools, care homes for older persons and employment generators within the Plan area. I do not recommend any modifications specifically to take account of these representations, but I do recognise that, where possible, it is important for development plans to take account of the need for facilities for groups such as the faith-based Trusts who are represented by these representations. As a general comment, I note that the Plan does not address places of worship and related facilities within the Plan area as part

of the Community Facilities theme, and this is a matter which the HBBNF may wish to consider as part of a future review of the Plan.

- 4.67 Policy HB15 (Allotments and Community Growing Spaces) has two clauses, firstly to resist the loss of all or part of existing allotment spaces (which are identified on Figure 10.2) and secondly, to support and encourage the provision of new community growing spaces of a size appropriate to developments, which could, for example, provide screening to adjoining urban uses.
- 4.68 I consider that the draft Plan's section on Community Facilities and accompanying Policies HB13-HB15 is in general conformity with the strategic policies of the HDPF, has regard to national guidance, would contribute to the achievement of sustainable development and so would meet the Basic Conditions. I do not recommend any modifications to this section of the Plan.

Implementation and Plan Review

- 4.69 Section 11 of the draft Plan is concerned with its implementation and future review. Paragraph 11.2 acknowledges that there is the likelihood that there will be a need to review formally the Plan during the Plan period, particularly following the prospective adoption of the emerging Horsham Local Plan Review, which is presently timetabled to occur in Autumn 2022. This section of the Plan also lists the specific actions, including the non-policy actions (as listed in Section 13) which will be undertaken to implement the Plan. A minor amendment is necessary to paragraph 11.3, and I recommend modification **PM8** to address that point.

Concluding Remarks

- 4.70 I consider that, with the recommended modifications to the Plan as summarised above and set out in full in the accompanying Appendix, the Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2036 meets the Basic Conditions for neighbourhood plans. As an advisory comment, when the Plan is being redrafted to take account of the recommended modifications in this report, it should be re-checked for any typographical errors and any other consequential changes, etc.

5. Conclusions

Summary

- 5.1 The Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2036 has been duly prepared in compliance with the procedural requirements. My examination has investigated whether the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements for neighbourhood plans. I have had regard

to all the responses made following consultation on the Plan, and the supporting documents submitted with the Plan.

- 5.2 I have made recommendations to modify certain policies and other matters to ensure that the Plan meets the Basic Conditions and other legal requirements. I recommend that the Plan, once modified, proceeds to referendums.

The Referendums and their Area

- 5.3 I have considered whether or not the area for the purposes of the two referendums should be extended beyond the designated area to which the Plan relates. The Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2036, as modified, has no policies or proposals which I consider significant enough to have an impact beyond the designated Business Neighbourhood boundary, requiring the referendums to extend to areas beyond the Plan boundary. I recommend that the boundary for the purposes of any future referendums on the Plan should be the boundary of the designated Business Neighbourhood Area.

Overview

- 5.4 It is clear that the Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan is the product of much hard work undertaken since 2012 by the Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Forum, its Steering Group and Working Groups, the Neighbourhood Councils and by the many individuals and stakeholders who have contributed to the preparation and development of the Plan. In my assessment, the Plan reflects the land use aspirations and objectives of the Horsham community for the future planning of their town up to 2036. The output is a Plan which should help guide the area's development over that period, making a positive contribution to informing decision-making on planning applications by Horsham District Council.

Derek Stebbing

Examiner

Appendix: Modifications

Proposed modification number (PM)	Page no./ other reference	Modification
PM1	Page 18	<p><u>Policy HB1 – Location of Development</u></p> <p>Clause A – add the words “Figure 4.4 and” after “as shown on” in the 2nd line of this clause.</p>
PM2	Page 24	<p><u>Policy HB3 – Character of Development</u></p> <p>Clause B – sub-clause i) - amend 2nd sentence to read as follows:</p> <p>“Improvements and enhancements should include, where appropriate, additional tree planting, the enhancement of roadside green spaces, the reduction/consolidation of road signs and other street furniture and wider green infrastructure improvements that are identified as being necessary.”</p>
PM3	Page 27	<p><u>Policy HB4 – Design of Development</u></p> <p>Criterion ix) – delete the words “West Sussex Parking Standards” and replace with “West Sussex Parking Guidance”.</p> <p>Replace the reference to the “Building for Life” document in clause i of the policy with “Building for a Healthy Life – Design for Homes”¹² and make a similar amendment to the reference in paragraph 6.13.</p>
PM4	Page 37	<p><u>Policy HB7 – A Welcoming Public Realm</u></p> <p>Clause D - 1st line of policy text – delete the word “permitted” and replace with “supported”.</p>
PM5	Page 40	<p><u>Paragraph 7.30</u></p> <p>Delete the existing text of this paragraph in full, and replace with:</p>

¹² [Building For Life | Design For Homes](#)

		<p>“If the sites, described briefly below in AIM3, were to become available, the consultation on the Neighbourhood Plan has shown support for their development in line with the aspirations as set out below and this should form the basis for discussions with developers and the planning authority. Development will be resisted unless it accords with the policies of this Neighbourhood Plan and aspirations for the sites, as set out below.”</p>
PM6	Pages 48 and 49	<p><u>Policy HB11 – Local Green Spaces</u></p> <p>Amend “24” in the first line of the policy text to read “23”.</p> <p>Delete site no. 8 – Stanley Walk Green from the list of sites in the Policy (on page 49), and re-number sites 9-24 to site nos. 8-23.</p> <p>Delete references to Stanley Walk Green (F1) from the list of sites in paragraph 8.20, from Figures 8.2, 8.3 and 8.4 and from Appendix C (page 97), and re-number sites 9-24 to site nos. 8-23.</p> <p>Amend the final paragraph of the policy text to read as follows:</p> <p>“Local policy for managing development on a Local Green Space should be consistent with policy for Green Belts (NPPF 101); proposals for development on Local Green Spaces will not be supported unless they conform with national policy guidelines.”</p>
PM7	Pages 54-58	<p><u>Policy HB12 – Encouraging Sustainable Movement</u></p> <p>Clause A – 4th and 5th lines of text – amend “the Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan for West Sussex” to read “the adopted Horsham Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan.”</p> <p>Paragraphs 9.5-9.10 – delete existing text in full and replace with:</p>

		<p>“9.5 Horsham District Council adopted its LCWIP in December 2020. This will form part of the overall West Sussex cycling and walking network that is being co-ordinated by West Sussex County Council. The Horsham LCWIP is focused on cycling and walking corridors within Horsham town and routes into the town from surrounding settlements.</p> <p>9.6 West Sussex County Council has focused its County-wide LCWIP on six long-distance inter-community routes which include the Horsham to Crawley A264 corridor.</p> <p>9.7 Figure 9.1 shows the walking and cycling corridors in the Horsham LCWIP.”</p> <p>Delete Figure 9.1 on page 55 and replace with Figure 2 (to be re-numbered as Figure 9.1) as contained in the District Council’s response dated 15th January 2021.</p> <p>Delete Figure 9.2 on page 56.</p> <p>Re-number paragraphs 9.11-9.13 as paragraphs 9.8-9.10.</p> <p>Re-number Figure 9.3 as Figure 9.2 and amend the cross-reference in paragraph 9.12 (to be re-numbered 9.9) accordingly.</p>
PM8	Page 70	<p><u>Paragraph 11.3</u></p> <p>Amend “Section 16” in the first bullet point to read “Section 13”.</p>