



Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan  
Examination

Statement by Horsham District Council in response to  
the Independent Examiner's Request for points of  
Clarification

15 January 2021

## **1.0 Introduction**

- 1.1 This statement is in response to the Examiner's Clarification note issued on the 9 December 2020. The first part of this statement provides clarification in relation to the Examiner's second question regarding the position of Horsham District Council on the status of Rookwood as a potential strategic allocation in the emerging Local Plan Review. The second part of this statement addresses the examiner's third question where he has sought clarification on the position 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 Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan.

## **2.0 Context**

- 2.1 Horsham Blueprint was re-designated as a Neighbourhood Plan Business Forum for the non-parished areas of Horsham Town area on the 24 August 2020. A plan delineating the boundaries of the Neighbourhood Plan Business Forum Area is highlighted in Figure 1. below. Horsham Blueprint has been leading the preparation of the Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan (HBBNP) and has undertaken extensive engagement on a range of evidence gathering activities and consultation events.

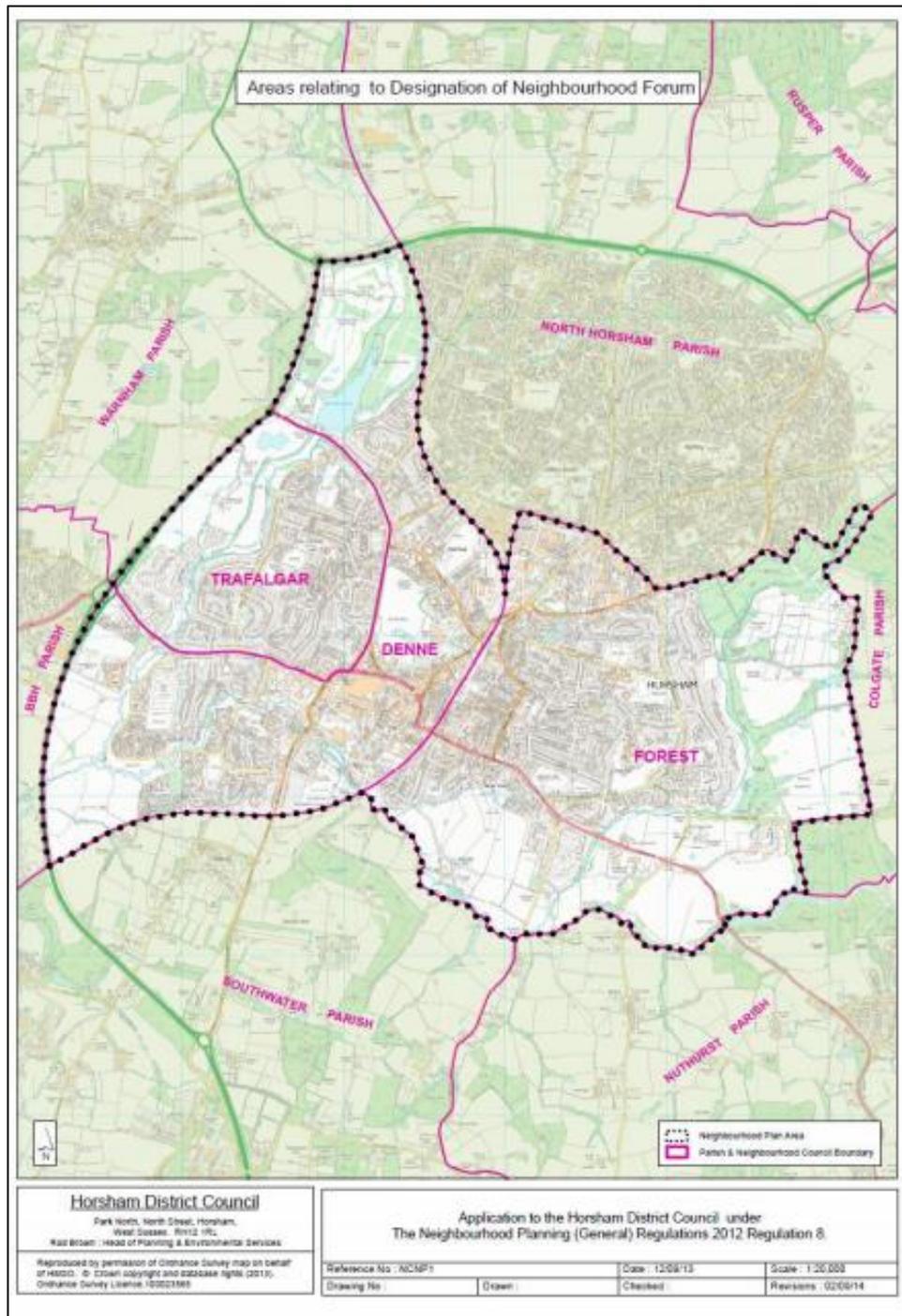


Figure 1: Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Area

2.2 The Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Forum published a Pre-submission plan for consultation under Regulation 14 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012. The Reg 14 consultation was held from 1 August to 29 September 2019. Comments were considered and the Pre-Submission Plan was amended accordingly. A revised “Submission Plan” was

then formally submitted to Horsham District Council on the 4 June 2020. The Council, in accordance with Regulation 16 of the Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, held a consultation on the Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan Submission Draft Neighbourhood Plan. Representations were invited for 7 weeks between 14 September and 8 November 2020.

**3.0 Question 2: Re. Chapter 9 and Policy HB12 (Encouraging Sustainable Movement) (Pages 53-58)**

*'I invite the District Council to confirm the current position and status of the Local Cycling 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.'*

3.1 Horsham District Council adopted its first LCWIP at the [Council](#) meeting on the 9 December 2020. The adoption of the LCWIP will feed into the overall West Sussex cycling and walking network that is being co-ordinated by WSCC. This will include input from LCWIPs being prepared for other West Sussex Planning authority areas and will also identify wider strategic priorities.

3.2 In accordance with Department for Transport (DfT) Technical Guidance for Local Authorities (2017) the Horsham LCWIP is focused on cycling and walking routes within Horsham town and routes into the town from surrounding settlements. These are listed below and delineated on a plan as shown in Figure 2 on page 6:

1. Corridor 1a and 1b - North Horsham to Horsham town centre,
2. Corridor 2 - Roffey to town centre
3. Corridor 3 - Forest School,
4. Corridor 4 – Southwater,
5. Corridor 5 - Broadbridge Heath and
6. Corridor 6 - Warnham Mill into the Town Centre (walking only).

- 3.3 It should also be noted that West Sussex County Council have focused its LCWIP on six long-distance intercommunity routes one of which is the Crawley to Horsham A264 corridor.
- 3.4 While the preparation of LCWIPs is non-mandatory, the DfT has explicitly said that Authorities with LCWIPs will be better placed to secure future funding which is why this Plan has been produced. WSCC intends to create a combined prioritised list of routes by the end of 2021 to be progressed as funding becomes available. As many of the routes are likely to require external funding contributions, it is envisaged that the prioritised list will serve to support future funding bids, as well as directing CIL, s106 contributions, and other local funding.
- 3.5 As a matter of prudence and synergy, support is given to the emerging Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan to identify and include the walking and cycling infrastructure initiatives as advocated in the adopted Horsham LCWIP within the NDP. This will provide reassurance and clarity on focussing local resources to secure the implementation of the walking and cycling initiatives as outlined in the LCWIP. Furthermore, the HBBNP when made will form part of the Council's development plan and will carry full weight in the decision making process and will assist the Qualifying Body and Horsham District Council to implement the provision of key sustainable cycling and walking infrastructure within the district's main settlement.

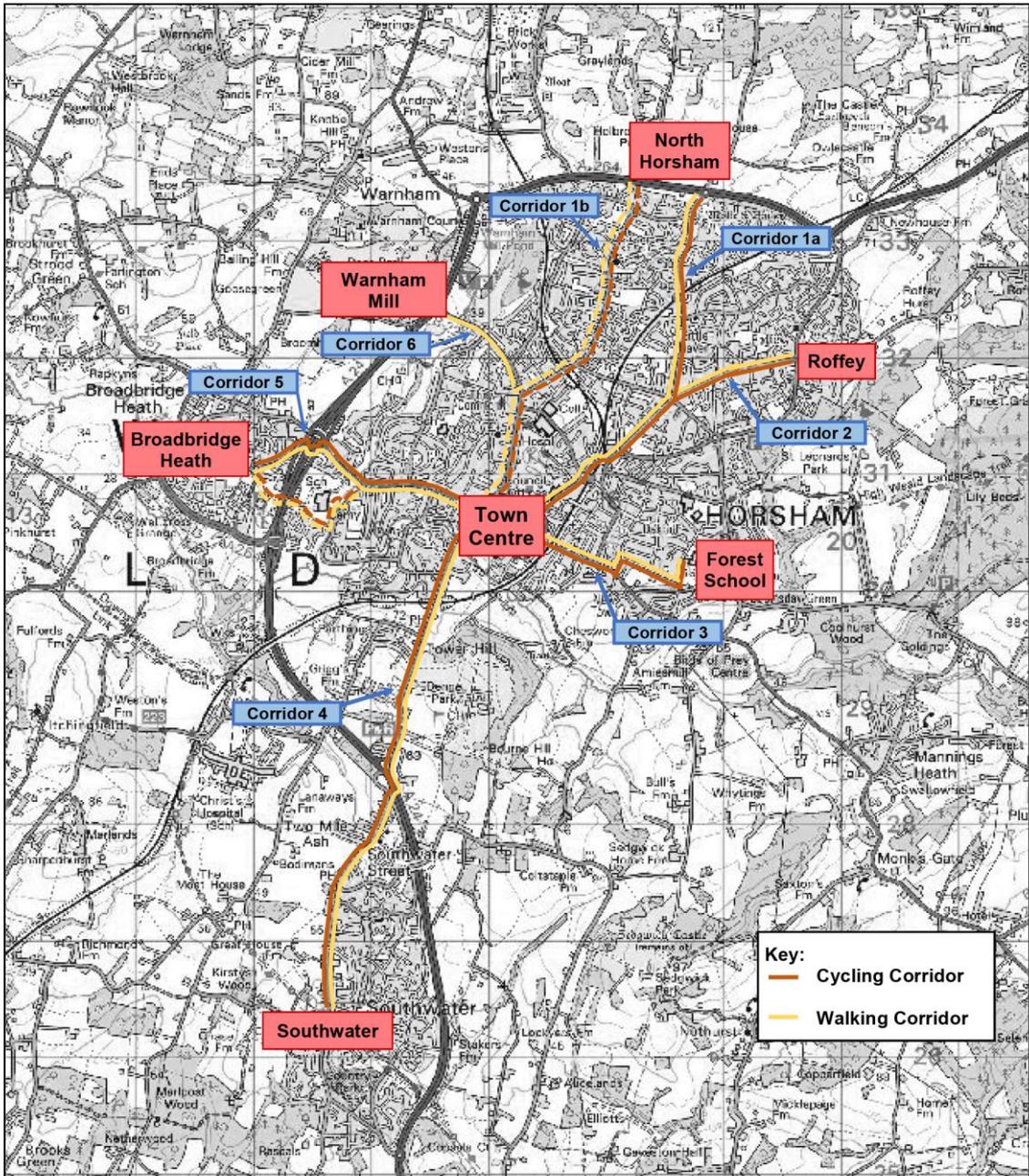


Figure 2. Proposed Walking and Cycling Initiatives Outlined in the Horsham LCWP

4.0 Question 3: Re. Paragraphs 10.4-10.7 – Rookwood (Page 62) I note the content of these paragraphs regarding the 68 hectares of land at Rookwood. In view of the statement at paragraph 10.5 that “The site is, however, being considered as a potential strategic allocation for major housing development by Horsham District Council as part of its Local Plan Review ..”, I invite the District Council to provide me with a Note indicating the latest position regarding this possible allocation. This

**should include its implications for the leisure facilities provided at the site and the also for the green infrastructure network in that part of the designated neighbourhood area, noting that it adjoins a Local Nature Reserve. I further note that this may have implications for the content of Policy HB10, particularly clauses G and H of that policy.**

- 4.1 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, which is the most sustainable settlement in Horsham District.
- 4.2 Since the conclusion of the Regulation 18 consultation, further assessment of the development proposals at the Rookwood site has been undertaken by the Strategic Planning team. This has taken account of the consultation feedback, together with additional evidence that has been prepared to support the Local Plan review. In response to the public consultation, updated proposals for the Rookwood site have also been put forward for consideration by the Strategic Planning team.
- 4.3 The revised proposal is a scheme 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 links beyond, with 70% of the entire site remaining

undeveloped. It is stated that a minimum of 10% biodiversity net gain will be achieved.

- 4.4 No decisions on whether to allocate this site have yet been made by the Council, and work on the preparation of the Local Plan Regulation 19 document is still ongoing. The Council is therefore not in a position to provide detailed commentary on the relative merits or otherwise of the scheme in advance of this work being completed.
- 4.5 It should be noted that 'A cared for environment' is one of the priorities in the Council's [Corporate Plan](#). This includes "Embedding biodiversity into our planning policies for a sustainable built environment which delivers net biodiversity gains and protects the natural environment."
- 4.6 The work on the preparation of the Local Plan has sought to ensure that land that is allocated for development in the emerging plan contributes to green infrastructure provision and biodiversity net gain. All development proposals submitted to this Council are being assessed on this basis. Policy 31 set out on page 141 of the Council's [Horsham District Local Plan Regulation 18](#) consultation document (Green Infrastructure and Biodiversity) clearly identifies the direction of travel and initial expectations in this respect.
- 4.7 Taking into account the above, In the event that it is concluded that Rookwood Golf course is suitable for allocation as a location for housing development in the Local Plan, it is considered that any proposal it would be expected to accord in general terms with the provisions set out in wording of clauses G and H of policy HB10. Policies within the Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan should be consistent with the strategic planning of the Local Planning Authority with regards to sustainable development and great weight given to investment in sufficient homes, jobs and other essential services. With particular regards to Policy HB10 (criterion g) should only be designated when a plan is prepared or updated, and be capable of enduring beyond the end of the plan period. Strategic matters are still being considered by officers and

Members. 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 (page 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.

- 4.8 Upon conclusion of the Local Plan review, the Horsham Blueprint Business Neighbourhood Plan will be in a position to review the policies within the plan to ensure it is up to date with the development plan.