

Examination of the Horsham District Local Plan 2023-2040

Hearings: week 1 - April 2026

Written statement from Fenella Maitland-Smith¹, Save West of Ifield

Matter 4: Business and industrial needs

a. Whether the plan makes sufficient provision for business, industrial and logistics needs

A review of HDC's *Employment Topic Paper* (Matter 4) raises several questions about the planning for sufficient employment space of the right type.

There is a heavy reliance on the *Northern West Sussex Economic Growth Assessment* (January 2020) (EC02) and its Horsham focused update (November 2020) (EC01) as the key evidence base documents. But **these assessments are out of date**, particularly given the pandemic. Para 11 of HDC's Topic Paper states that "*These figures were then revisited in EC01 to reflect any revised macroeconomic assumptions and the impact of the Covid-19 pandemic*" but this seems rather premature given the effects of the pandemic persisted long after November 2020 and Gatwick airport was seriously impacted.

More generally the Plan's **reliance on Gatwick and Crawley to drive employment** is likely to be misplaced, both in terms of the numbers and quality of jobs. The shortage of employment space in Crawley, the general shift towards warehousing and distribution and away from office space in Crawley, and the increasing automation at Gatwick are not acknowledged.

It's not clear there has been adequate consideration of the **availability of employment space in Crawley**, and in particular the fact that Crawley is space-constrained. The statement in para 4, without any qualifying text, is misleading: "*Crawley represents the dominant commercial centre in NWS and drives demand for employment space, attracting the most activity and commands the highest rents*". This implies that Crawley can absorb all demand for employment space, which is far from the case.

Para 18 does however explain that ECO2 includes a scenario where Crawley's business land requirements could not be located within Crawley, but continues by saying that this would not necessarily translate into a commensurate increase in land requirements for adjoining authorities, reflecting that some businesses, if unable to locate in Crawley, **may locate outside the sub-region entirely**. It's hard to see how this benefits the growing populations of Crawley and Horsham who need employment.

Para 19 discusses the allocation of employment land at Gatwick Green in Crawley's Local Plan, which satisfies Crawley's need in the current Plan period. But what is not made clear is that this land is within Gatwick airport's safe-guarded zone, and that GAL has objected to its development. It's also not clear whether Crawley has further or future options for employment land besides Gatwick Green.

More generally, **HDC doesn't adequately acknowledge the need to plan for the high rates of population growth in the future and the resulting employment needs. Reliance on Gatwick and Crawley to provide jobs is simply not sustainable.**

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