

The Big Conversation 2022

Questions and Answers



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Topic 1. Local Plan

Ref	Question	Response
1	With regard to the local plan, how important is it that it is accurate and robust?	The requirements that a Local Plan must take account of are set out in national Planning policy – known as the National Planning Policy Framework or NPPF. This requires the plan to be supported by a detailed evidence base to demonstrate why each policy is needed. This must be accurate in order for the Local Plan to be successful when it is tested by an independent Inspector at a Local Plan examination.
2	What is the current allocation for Housing for Horsham District Council's housing target is set by the government by the Standard Housing methodology calculation. The data feeding in to this calculation is updated by government periodically which means the target can change over time. As of March 2022, the current requirement for Horsham District given by the Government's Standard Housing Needs formula is 948 dwellings per annum.	

3	<p>Does the 'emerging local plan' mean that HDC will be challenging the 'standard method' for calculating housing numbers, studying the impact water neutrality for large scale development and then returning to regulation 18 stage; or will the emerging local plan be essentially the same as the draft that was on the table before the water neutrality constraint? If the latter then the next stage for consultation will presumably be regulation 19.</p>	<p>The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that the Council's starting point for considering housing numbers that set in the government's standard methodology. This starting point does not change with or without water neutrality. However, the Council has been challenging the high housing targets placed upon us for a number of years, although we have had limited success with this to date.</p> <p>However, Water Neutrality may show that it is not possible that the numbers set through the standard housing methodology can be achieved. If this is the case the Council will seek to progress lower housing targets. This will be tested by an Independent Examiner at a Local Plan inspector before it can be agreed.</p> <p>None of these changes require the Council to return to Regulation 18, but revision to the draft Regulation 19 document considered at the Cabinet meeting in July 2021 would need to be updated.</p>
4	<p>How is HDC expecting to reconcile the housing numbers that match the real local need against those that are derived using the Standard method with the affordability uplift? This assumes that the actual Local Need number will be lower than the Standard Method number as indicated in paragraph 5.34 of the HDC SHMA.</p>	<p>The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that the Council's starting point for considering housing numbers that set in the government's standard methodology. It is based on population changes and house prices.</p> <p>The Council has been challenging the high housing targets placed upon us for a number of years, although we have had limited success with this to date. However, the standard housing methodology remains the starting point for consideration of our housing targets – if we do not start with the figure (even if it cannot be achieved as a result of Water Neutrality), our plan will not be found 'sound' when tested at the Local Plan Examination and will not be able to progress.</p>
5	<p>Will Horsham Council follow the Prime Ministers wishes regarding housing development when he says, and I quote, "Not on green fields, not just jammed in the South East but beautiful homes on brownfield sites in places where homes make sense." and reject Homes England's aggressive tactics to destroy the Beautiful Countryside West of Ifield.</p>	<p>Although the PM made this statement it is not legislation. HDC is bound by law to follow the house building targets set by national planning policy. Until this policy is updated it remains the case that the Government still has a national annual housebuilding target of providing 300,000 new homes per year, and our share of that, as of March 2022, is 948 dwellings per annum.</p> <p>The Council has been challenging the high housing targets placed upon us for a number of years, although we have had limited success with this to date.</p>

		<p>The Council is working with partners to identify a strategic solution to the issue of water neutrality. Once that solution has been agreed with Natural England, the Council can then address what District-wide housing target is realistic, and where those homes might best go in terms of sustainable development.</p>
6	<p>The Leader's desire to reduce the housebuilding target/requirement is very welcome, and 100% justified. Can he please reassure us that HDC's planners will also move away from a site allocation which is developer-led, rather than led by a proper strategic plan based on actual local need and community benefit? A focus on huge 'strategic sites' such as West of Ifield isn't sustainable, reasonable or positive. And encourages unhelpful north vs south politics.</p>	<p>The requirements that a Local Plan must take account of are set out in National Planning policy – known as the National Planning Policy Framework or NPPF.</p> <p>In terms of housing numbers, the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) requires that the Council's starting point for considering housing numbers that set in the government's standard methodology.</p> <p>The Council has been challenging the high housing targets placed upon us for a number of years, although we have had limited success with this to date. It is important to note that if we do not start with the figure (even if it cannot be achieved as a result of Water Neutrality), our plan will not be found 'sound' when tested at the Local Plan Examination and will not be able to progress.</p> <p>The Council is working with partners to identify a strategic solution to the issue of water neutrality. Once that solution has been agreed with Natural England, the Council can then address what District-wide housing target is realistic, and where those homes might best go in terms of sustainable development. This is a Council and not a developer led process, and will take account the feedback and views from the community.</p>
7	<p>Ashington PC took a positive approach to development and its adopted Neighbourhood Plan will deliver the appropriate number of homes for a settlement of Ashington's size. Most other Parishes have not done this. Will HDC ensure that it delivers a Local Plan with new homes across all Parishes in a reasonably fair and equitable manner, according to the settlement hierarchy?</p>	<p>We are very supportive of the approach which Ashington Parish took as part of the preparation of their neighbourhood plan. The emerging Local Plan will seek to ensure that the settlement pattern and the rural landscape character of the District and our settlements are retained and enhanced, but still enables settlements to develop for them to continue to grow and thrive. The distribution of development will be in a manner that ensures that. It follows, the priority for growth will be to those settlements who can provide a good range of services and employment opportunities.</p>
8	<p>What is the likelihood of houses being built in the Cootham area in the future?</p>	<p>Due to the uncertainties arising from the need for Water Neutrality, no decisions have yet been taken on site allocations. It is however, noted that the published Site Assessment Report</p>

		does not include any reference to sites at Cootham and certainly there are none found to have potential for development in the current evidence base.
9	How can we believe the policies to protect green spaces, when the Conservative government have plans to create one of the biggest cities in the South East on our doorstep?	<p>There are no specific proposals for a new city in or around Horsham District.</p> <p>The Government still has a national annual housebuilding target of providing 300,000 new homes per year, and our share of that, as of March 2022, is 948 dwellings per annum. The Council has been challenging the high housing targets placed upon us for a number of years, although we have had limited success with this to date.</p> <p>This means the Council must consider what land should come forward for new development to provide housing, including affordable housing. However, the Local Plan also includes other policies which ensure that the environment is protected – this includes delivering net biodiversity gain and policies which seek to minimise the impact of climate change. We are seeking to ensure these policies are ambitious as possible.</p>
10	We have an urgent need to reduce carbon emissions. We know that road transport is a major contributor to carbon emissions, and that using bikes and walking for journeys instead of driving is part of the answer. One way to push change would be to have stronger council policies in favour of active travel. The recent Sustainable Travel Task & Finish Group proposed changes to Policy 41 of the Local Plan. Would you commit to supporting this recommendation and seeing it put in place?	<p>The emerging Local Plan has policies seek to ensure that the need for car-based travel is reduced in the first place and to encourage walking and cycling before other means of travel.</p> <p>Alongside the Councils support for active travel it is also working with most of the Councils across West Sussex and a private sector organisation to develop an extensive network of electric vehicle charge points across the County.</p> <p>Officers are considering the recommendations of the Task and Finish Group and will seek to enhance the draft policies in accordance with their recommendations where this is in accordance with other requirements placed upon us – such as National Planning Policy.</p>
11	Does the Leader and HDC support Community Led Housing? We understand that in 2016/17 HDC received Government grants for community housing. Pulborough Community Land Trust was unable to access this, could you explain where and how these funds were distributed and if HDC will provide financial support for CLH in the future?	<p>Horsham District Council supports the provision of Community Led housing and the emerging Local Plan policies refers to this type of housing.</p> <p>The historic provision of funding from government in 2016/17 was used to work in partnership with other stakeholders and Action in Rural Sussex to fund a post which sought to support the formation, structuring and progression of CLT's. The government has not provided further funding to HDC to support the delivery of this type of housing, but the Council will continue to provide advice and support to community groups proposing these schemes.</p>

12	<p>Crawley, Horsham, Broadbridge Heath and Southwater are coalescing as new developments such as North Horsham and Kilnwood Vale erode settlement gaps. The delay to the local plan has provided HDC with time to develop and strengthen its current gap policy. Will Councillor Chowen commit to following the lead of Hart District Council in strengthening its gap planning policy and providing stronger protection for remaining settlement gaps.</p>	<p>The Council recognises that a number of the proposed allocations for housing growth are in locations which have been identified as being in locations which are sensitive to settlement coalescence. Further urbanisation can be resisted through the emerging Local Plan with strategic policies which seek to retain the unique identities of each settlement and safeguard the undeveloped nature of the landscape between the towns and villages of our District.</p> <p>Officers have reviewed Hart District Council's Local Plan, adopted in April 2020. It is considered that policies within Horsham District's emerging Local Plan are just as robust, if not more so than those in the Hart Local Plan.</p>
13	<p>With reference to the Governments NPPF Clause 97/99, Homes England's proposal is to close Ifield Golf Course despite them being unable to prove that Ifield Golf Club is surplus to requirements does not comply with this law. What is the councils view on this?</p>	<p>The site has not been allocated and there has been no planning application. Decisions to be made on the Local Plan which will now be greatly influenced by the water neutrality constraint.</p> <p>The Council will require any development to comply with the NPPF. Hence, it would need to demonstrate that an assessment has taken place that shows the recreational open space is surplus to requirements, or that its loss would be replaced with equivalent or better provision.</p> <p>An assessment of golf supply and demand has been undertaken and published, which shows that Horsham District would have an above-average provision of golf course even if Ifield Golf Club were to be lost. Nevertheless, the Council has been clear with Homes England that more evidence is needed to demonstrate full compliance with the NPPF. This work is ongoing and will be published as soon as possible when complete.</p>
14	<p>Can the council confirm that they have or at least will re-commission the error-filled report on Ifield golf course, which is now no longer seems to be available on the council site</p> <p>https://www.horsham.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/104248/HDC-Golf-Report-FNL-Feb2021.pdf</p> <p>This report is crucial as the incorrect assumptions made form an huge part of Homes England justification for concreting it over.</p>	<p>The Council's golf report has not been removed from the Council's website and remains accessible from the link in the question.</p> <p>https://www.horsham.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0019/104248/HDC-Golf-Report-FNL-Feb2021-1.pdf</p> <p>This assessment has been undertaken by qualified consultants and the Council is of the view that the evidence is robust. Should the site be progressed in the local plan, there will be an opportunity to comment on the content of the document at Regulation 19.</p>

15	<p>The local plan attempts to put additional gypsy pitches on land at lane top that has been rejected for many reasons including dominating the local residents, adding additional burden where you have water issues and safety concerns from visibility splays. Can you answer how that seemed like it was acceptable to include that in the local plan in any capacity, even if you are desperate to meet government requirements?</p>	<p>It is a requirement that Local Plans meet the identified needs for Gypsies and Travellers. Our evidence shows that over the next 10 years, that identified need is 65 new pitches in the District as a whole.</p> <p>There is potential for some of this need to be allocated at strategic development locations, but not all need can be met in this way. Officers therefore had to consider whether other sites could accommodate Gypsy and Traveller requirements. Whilst issues have been identified at the Lane Top site, officers did not receive evidence from statutory consultees that these sites could not be mitigated. This led to the recommendation to include the site in the plan.</p> <p>The emerging Local Plan is not council policy and ultimately any decision to allocate sites will be a matter for Council Members. Once the outcome from water neutrality is clearer, the strategy for Gypsy and Traveller provision will need to be revisited in light of the outcomes of this work.</p>
16	<p>Why has Lanetop been suggested for expansion to an additional 5 Gipsy/Traveller pitches, when an additional 2 were unanimously rejected by Planning committee on 27/04/2021.</p> <p>And why are misleading and incorrect statements included in the overview, when the true positions are easy to verify?</p>	<p>It is a requirement that Local Plans meet the identified needs for Gypsies and Travellers. Our evidence shows that over the next 10 years, that identified need is 65 new pitches in the District as a whole.</p> <p>There is potential for some of this need to be allocated at strategic development locations, but not all need can be met in this way. Officers therefore had to consider whether other sites could accommodate Gypsy and Traveller requirements. Whilst issues have been identified at the Lane Top site as part of previous planning applications, officers did not receive evidence from statutory consultees that these sites could not be mitigated. This led to the recommendation to include the site in the plan.</p> <p>The emerging Local Plan is not council policy and ultimately any decision to allocate sites will be a matter for Council Members. Once the outcome from water neutrality is clearer, the strategy for Gypsy and Traveller provision will need to be revisited in light of the outcomes of this work.</p>

The Big Conversation

Topic 2. Water Neutrality and Housing Numbers/Sites



Ref	Question	Response
18	How does the water neutrality issue impact on current and future applications for housing development and does it include any number of potential houses?	The Natural England Position Statement makes it clear that any development which increases demand for drinking water in the Sussex North Resource Zone must be water neutral. This position has applied since we received the Position Statement (in September 2021) and affects both current and future planning applications and the preparation of the Local Plan. It affects any development which increases the demand for drinking water – this could be one home or thousands of homes.
19	What will be the impact of water neutrality on over-development of land surrounding Horsham?	<p>The issue of water neutrality is having a large impact on proposed development in the district as there is no strategic solution currently in place. This means that no development can be permitted unless it is water neutral. The Council is working with partners on a strategic solution, to unlock the pause on development caused by this issue. Development that already has full planning permission is not affected.</p> <p>The Council is working with partners to identify a strategic solution to the issue of water neutrality. Once that solution has been agreed with Natural England, the Council can then address what District-wide housing target is realistic, and where those homes might best go in terms of sustainable development.</p>
20	With no water neutrality guidelines and differing opinions of approving bodies (Planners and Natural England), do you not think that the Local Plan will be seriously impacted?	HDC are working on a holistic strategic solution with our partners Natural England, Southern Water and our neighbouring authorities in the Sussex North Water Resource Zone, Chichester and Crawley, which will allow our Local Plans to progress. The Local Authorities must take account of the views of Natural England to ensure that we can meet our obligations, however we are not disputing the

		evidence that the Arun Valley habitats are being harmed.
21	Given the requirement for water neutrality, how can Homes England's plans for West of Ifield be permitted to go ahead?	No application for development to the West of Ifield has been submitted, nor granted. The Council has not permitted any scheme in this area but is considering this site and other large sites as part of the Local Plan. Water neutrality is a requirement, and the Council is working with partners to introduce solutions that will enable development to come forward. The Council is working with partners to identify a strategic solution to the issue of water neutrality. Once that solution has been agreed with Natural England, the Council can then address what District-wide housing target is realistic, and where those homes might best go in terms of sustainable development.
22	In the context of water neutrality, what is the status of the proposed large-scale housing developments at Adversane and West Grinstead?	The Council is working with partners to identify a strategic solution to the issue of water neutrality. Once that solution has been agreed with Natural England, the Council can then address what District-wide housing target is realistic, and where those homes might best go in terms of sustainable development.
23	Why have the council not announced a review of the draft local plan work thereby using the delay afforded by the water moratorium to achieve an updated plan. Surely the future of the District demands this?	<p>The Council commenced a review of the current Local Plan in 2018. This process is ongoing. A draft Regulation 19 Local Plan that was considered by Cabinet on 15 July 2021. This is under review in the light of water neutrality, and other changes in circumstance.</p> <p>The Council is working with partners to identify a strategic solution to the issue of water neutrality. Once that solution has been agreed with Natural England, the Council can then address what District-wide housing target is realistic, and where those homes might best go in terms of sustainable development. The timetable for a revised Regulation 19 Plan will be published on the Council's website as soon as we are able.</p>
24	How does the building of a new town at Adversane fit in with the concept of water neutrality and has the developer offered any suggestions to mitigate the impact?	It is however a requirement that the new Local Plan is Water Neutral. The Council is working with partners to identify a strategic solution to the issue of water neutrality. Once that solution has been agreed with Natural England, the Council can then address what District-wide housing target is realistic, and where those homes might best go in terms of sustainable development.

		<p>All landowners promoting land to the Council are aware of these issues and it is for them to consider how they may wish to take account of these issues as part of their proposals. This will be considered by the Council in due course.</p>
25	<p>Regarding the water neutrality issue how will it be possible to solve the problem of sourcing additional water supplies. All the proposed solutions will take much longer than the projected planned housing numbers.</p>	<p>There are three main ways that water neutrality can be achieved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ensuring new development is as water efficient as possible 2) Reducing demand for water (eg water companies fixing leaks) 3) Offsetting schemes – such a retrofitting existing properties to be more water efficient. <p>Some of these solutions are shorter term, some (such as a new reservoir / water supply) is much longer term.</p> <p>HDC are working on a holistic strategic solution with our partners Natural England, Southern Water and our neighbouring authorities in the Sussex North Water Resource Zone, Chichester and Crawley. This work is ongoing and will help unlock development over a local plan period – not all development can come forward in one go.</p> <p>Once that solution has been agreed with Natural England, the Council can then address what District-wide housing target is realistic, and where those homes might best go in terms of sustainable development.</p>

Big Conversation

Topic 3. Water Neutrality – The Specifics



Ref	Question	Response
26	2) The local river authority-built embankments on the river Arun to seek to make more of the brooks available for agricultural use in the late 1960's. This policy has worked, and the brooks are drying. Can you explain why this has not been drawn to the attention of the relevant authorities in the debate on Water Neutrality?	<p>Natural England are aware of a range of factors that are impacting the habitats of the Arun Valley. They are however clear that their evidence demonstrates that abstraction at Hardham is contributing to the declines in species, and by ensuring that new development does not increase levels of abstraction above existing rates is a means of ensuring this particular problem does not worsen the situation. More information about the perspective of Natural England is available in their FAQs:</p> <p>https://www.horsham.gov.uk/planning/water-neutrality-in-horsham-district/position-statement</p>
27	Having attended the recent online seminar with the Water companies on behalf of Ruser Parish Council, how do you consider that water neutrality can actually be achieved (if this is not fully covered in their discussion)	<p>There are three main ways that water neutrality can be achieved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ensuring new development is as water efficient as possible 2) Reducing demand for water (eg water companies fixing leaks) 3) Offsetting schemes – such a retrofitting existing properties to be more water efficient. <p>These principles are well understood but require a detailed scheme of delivery. HDC are working on a holistic strategic solution with our partners Natural England, Southern Water and our neighbouring authorities in the Sussex North Water Resource Zone, Chichester and Crawley. This work is ongoing.</p>
28	"Water Neutrality" does the Council have confidence in DEFRA's "Environment Agency" an executive non-departmental public body	As the Environment Agency is the organisation that provides Southern Water their abstraction licence, the Council is required to work with them

	<p>(which sounds like an afterthought) to support Local Authorities with limited resources and facing other growing demands upon their budgets, seeking commercial support to make up the shortfall and resisting those interests which could compromise or risk stifling any environmental ambitions they may have?"</p>	<p>and other parties on the issue of water neutrality. The Council to unable comment on how the Environment Agency is resourced.</p>
<p>29</p>	<p>In what way does HDC intend to mitigate the water neutrality question & if so how does HDC intend to cover the extra cost of water neutrality and the systems that will be used</p>	<p>There are three main ways that water neutrality can be achieved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ensuring new development is as water efficient as possible 2) Reducing demand for water (eg water companies fixing leaks) 3) Offsetting schemes – such a retrofitting existing properties to be more water efficient. <p>These principles are well understood but require a detailed scheme of delivery. HDC are working on a holistic strategic solution with our partners Natural England, Southern Water and our neighbouring authorities in the Sussex North Water Resource Zone, Chichester and Crawley. This work is ongoing. Some of the mitigation measures will be funded through the work already programmed by Southern Water (such as fixing leaks). Additional retrofitting will need to be funded by developers. The mechanisms as to how this might be delivered have not yet been established.</p>
<p>30</p>	<p>What would be the solution proposed by council for Water Neutrality i.e. would it be a levy on new developments for a pool of funds to be used specifically in Horsham to tackle the problem?</p>	<p>There are three main ways that water neutrality can be achieved:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Ensuring new development is as water efficient as possible 2) Reducing demand for water (eg water companies fixing leaks) 3) Offsetting schemes – such a retrofitting existing properties to be more water efficient. <p>These principles are well understood but require a detailed scheme of delivery. HDC are working on a holistic strategic solution with our partners Natural England, Southern Water and our neighbouring authorities in the Sussex North Water Resource Zone, Chichester and Crawley. This work is ongoing. Some of the mitigation measures will be funded through the</p>

		work already programmed by Southern Water (such as fixing leaks). Additional retrofitting will need to be funded by developers. The mechanisms as to how this might be delivered have not yet been established.
31	What consistency is there in the application of water neutrality in new development in Horsham District Council and the South Downs National Park?	Water neutrality is required across the entire Sussex North Water Resource Zone. This includes all of Horsham District and parts of South Downs National Park, Crawley Borough and Chichester District. All authorities are working together to help overcome the issue and to ensure consistency across the authorities in our approach.
32	The question relates to the North of Horsham development, which is just commencing. The question is as follows. "Does the question of water neutrality apply to this and other developments, which may already have received planning permission"?	The requirement for water neutrality applies to new development proposals. It cannot be applied retrospectively and therefore it does not apply to development that has already received planning permission. The exception is where an outline planning permission has been granted (as is the case at North of Horsham) but further reserved matters applications are needed to achieve full planning permission. So at North of Horsham, water neutrality will apply to phases of development yet to receive reserved matters consent.
33	Water neutrality - Why are commercial premises treated in the same way as residential when there is no comparison in water consumption?	The Natural England Position Statement makes it clear that any development which increases demand for drinking water in the Sussex North Water Resource Zone must be water neutral. This applies to both commercial and residential development. Advice as to how applicants can provide water neutrality information for different types of development is available on the Council's website: https://www.horsham.gov.uk/planning/water-neutrality-in-horsham-district/water-neutrality-and-planning-applications
34	"How will HDC assess whether water neutrality statements made by applicants are accurate and will actually deliver water neutrality? How will any agreed water neutrality offsetting proposals be monitored and enforced by HDC?"	Advice as to how applicants can provide water neutrality information for different types of development is available on the Council's website: https://www.horsham.gov.uk/planning/water-neutrality-in-horsham-district/water-neutrality-and-planning-applications .

		<p>This is based on feedback from Natural England. To meet with the legal obligations placed on the authority we must be able to clearly demonstrate that water neutrality can be achieved.</p> <p>When any permission is granted, strict conditions are being applied to ensure that evidence of the installation of the agreed efficiency measures has been submitted to us before first occupation / use enabling officers to enforce in future should the need arise.</p>
35	<p>Given that we appear to be unable to compel developers to abide by the number of 'affordable' homes they promise to build- what mechanism exists to force developers to come good with their water neutral plans.</p>	<p>The requirement to have water neutral development is a legal requirement.</p> <p>Advice as to how applicants can provide water neutrality information for different types of development is available on the Council's website https://www.horsham.gov.uk/planning/water-neutrality-in-horsham-district/water-neutrality-and-planning-applications.</p> <p>This is based on feedback from Natural England. To meet with the legal obligations placed on the authority we must be able to clearly demonstrate that water neutrality can be achieved.</p> <p>When any permission is granted, strict conditions are being applied to ensure that evidence of the installation of the agreed efficiency measures has been submitted to us before first occupation / use enabling officers to enforce in future should the need arise.</p>

Big Conversation

Topic 4. Neighbourhood Planning



Ref	Question	Response
36	How will HDC view adopted Neighbourhood Plans when forming their Local Plan?	<p>All current neighbourhood plans have been prepared to be in 'general conformity' with the current Local Plan – the HDPF. In our revised Local Plan, if policies remain in general conformity they will continue to have full weight. However, policies in a neighbourhood plan may become out of date, for example if they conflict with policies in a local plan. The most likely area for this to arise is with regard to housing numbers (as HDC has challenging targets placed upon us). In such cases, the more recent plan policy takes precedence. However we have worked with neighbourhood planning groups to minimise this risk as far as possible, and many groups recognise the potential need to review their own plans in due course.</p>
37	Now that Natural England have proposed a strategy for developers to follow in providing a water neutrality policy, when is HDC going to follow up by introducing a policy that Steering Groups can introduce to their Neighbourhood Plans?	<p>Natural England has not proposed a strategy for developers to follow. It is the role of the affected Local Authorities (legally known as the 'competent authority') who must consider and demonstrate how plans or development proposals are water neutral. Natural England are key consultees as part of this process.</p> <p>An approach for developers to follow for planning applications has now been set out on our website. This is the approach to be used in advance of the completion of the work that HDC are carrying out with our partners to deliver a strategic solution which is a complex process.</p>

		<p>By law, Neighbourhood Plans must also show that they are Water Neutral. HDC has committed to providing additional assistance on the updated habitat regulation assessments as part of this process. This is a complex matter and we have taken legal advice on this matter and are feeding back to the affected parishes. It is theoretically possible for individual parishes to prepare a parish level mitigation strategy, but there are likely to be a number of challenges in meeting the strict legal tests placed upon us.</p>
38	When will there be sufficient clarity on water neutrality for our Neighbourhood Plan to go to referendum?	<p>By law, Neighbourhood Plans must also show that they are Water Neutral. HDC has committed to providing additional assistance on the updated habitat regulation assessments as part of this process. This is a complex matter and we have taken legal advice on this matter and are feeding back to the affected parishes.</p> <p>It is theoretically possible for individual parishes to prepare a parish level mitigation strategy, but there are likely to be a number of challenges in meeting the strict legal tests placed upon us and unfortunately the timescales remain uncertain.</p>
39	Can HDC please allow Pulborough neighbourhood plan to be taken forward to a public vote as soon as possible? Can HDC commit now to us being given a date for this vote?	<p>By law, Neighbourhood Plans must also show that they are Water Neutral. HDC has committed to providing additional assistance on the updated habitat regulation assessments as part of this process. This is a complex matter and we have taken legal advice on this matter and are feeding back to the affected parishes.</p> <p>It is theoretically possible for individual parishes to prepare a parish level mitigation strategy, but there are likely to be a number of challenges in meeting the strict legal tests placed upon us and unfortunately the timescales remain uncertain.</p>
40	When will the Blueprint Neighbourhood Plan referendum take place?	<p>To meet the legal requirements placed upon us Horsham District Council has submitted further Habitat Regulations work to Natural England which we consider demonstrates no adverse impact on the Arun Valley. We are awaiting feedback from Natural England and are chasing them regularly.</p>

		<p>If Natural England agree with our assessment, we can proceed quickly with the issue of the decision statement and then onto referendum. However, we are unable to provide a firm date at the current time.</p>
41	<p>After just one month of signing, why after 8 years in the writing and winning approval of locals in a democratic vote, the Storrington, Sullington and Washington Neighbourhood Plan was thrown in the 'bin'?? This is not only a huge waste of tax payers money, it also means all NP's are rendered worthless. It's also hugely anti democratic, at a time when we are seeing a country blown apart for the sake of democracy, it's disgraceful. Hence, we voted in a Green councillor on Thursday.</p>	<p>No 'made' Neighbourhood Plan has been thrown in the bin. The policies in Neighbourhood Plans form part of the Council's 'development plan' and are therefore used to help determine planning applications.</p> <p>What no plan can do is to stop developers submitting 'speculative' applications which are not contained within a plan, but NP policies are still used to consider such applications.</p> <p>It is also worth remembering that Parishes with Made Neighbourhood Plans will benefit from 25% of the revenues from Community Infrastructure Levy payments which can be spent on local community infrastructure projects within their area.</p>
42	<p>The people of Southwater and HDC accepted the Southwater Neighbourhood Plan (SNP) in 2021. This made provision for housing as required and set out the vision for how the people of Southwater wanted the place they live in, to look.</p> <p>Subsequently, HDC in their draft Local Plan 2021, allocated 1200 homes, which completely ignored what was set out within the SNP. Berkeley Homes, have now proposed an additional 300, totalling 1500, again, completely ignoring the SNP.</p> <p>Given that the people of Southwater not only voted to accept their neighbourhood plan, but paid about £100K to create it, what value does the Government and Local Planning authorities, place on correctly adopted Neighbourhood Plans?</p>	<p>The Southwater plan has been prepared positively and now forms part of the development plan for the district. The plan has full weight and must be considered as part of the decision making process as part of any planning application that is put forward to the Council.</p> <p>The Council's housing target is set by the government by the Standard Housing methodology calculation. The housing target has increased above the 800 homes a year target in the Horsham District Local Plan which was the target against which the Southwater Neighbourhood Plan was prepared. The Council has been challenging the high housing targets placed upon us for a number of years, although we have had limited success with this to date. This meant that the Council had to consider how this increased target might be met. However no Plan has been agreed as Council policy.</p> <p>The Council is working with partners to identify a strategic solution to the issue of water neutrality. Once that solution has been agreed with Natural England, the Council can then address what District-wide housing target is realistic, and where those homes might best go in terms of sustainable development</p>

Big Conversation

Topic 5. Planning and Environment (Gatwick)



Ref	Question	Response
43	Gatwick airport new flight paths over our parish. What is HDC doing to protect Warnham parish?	The Council is proactively engaged in responding to Gatwick Airport on its expansion proposals as part of the airport's Development Consent Order application and the work being undertaken on its future airspace change proposals. At this stage, the outcomes of these processes are unknown and there are no firm proposals for new flight paths over Warnham. Officers will continue to work collaboratively with other local authorities to secure expert scrutiny. Independent experts have already supported local authorities to respond to consultations and the Council is continuing to engage experts in noise policy, health impacts and aviation noise.

Big Conversation

Additional questions raised at the Big Conversation sessions



Ref	Question	Response
44	Is a Neighbourhood Plan worth the paper it is written on? Will HDC heed the wishes of local residents and parish Councils to limit unsustainable house building?	<p>Horsham District Council strongly disagree that Neighbourhood Plans are ineffective. Once made they a Neighbourhood Plan forms part of the development plan for the District must be considered as part of the decision making process as part of any planning application that is put forward to the Council.</p> <p>The Council's housing target is set by the government by the Standard Housing methodology calculation. The housing target has increased above the 800 homes a year target in the Horsham District Local Plan and Neighbourhood Plans have been prepared against. This means that future Local Plans or Neighbourhood Plans may need to consider whether they need to provide additional housing sites – although water neutrality may mean that we can't reach the Government targets.</p> <p>What no plan can do is to stop developers submitting 'speculative' applications which are not contained within a plan, but NP policies are still used to consider such applications.</p>
45	When the time comes to progress the local plan and select sites for large scale developments (assuming the get around water neutrality) will the	Views expressed at the Regulation 18 consultation, including from Parish Councils, will influence decisions that the Council will make on strategic-level development in the new Local Plan. Such views will be considered alongside

	views of our parish councils be given weight in any decision making process	the suite of evidence base documents that the Council will publish in due course. Parish Councils and other interested bodies may also make representations during the Regulation 19 period that an independent planning inspector must consider during the public examination of the Local Plan.
46	I would like to better understand the relationship better Natural England and Southern Water. If nobody is holding Southern Water to account for the sewage how can be confident that water neutrality will be achieved ethically when the demand for housing is so high. How do we influence this and hold them to account	<p>Southern Water is the statutory water provider for North West Sussex. They are required to supply water to homes and businesses in this area.</p> <p>Natural England is the Government Agency with statutory responsibility for the protection of the environment. They therefore oversee the actions of a range of organisations including water companies and local authorities. Where actions are deemed to cross legal environmental thresholds they can take action to prevent environmental harm. They have done so in the case of Water Neutrality by requiring that Southern Water do not increase water abstraction rates above existing levels and ensure that Local Plans do not add to the problem.</p> <p>All organisations affected by the issue are working together to deliver a solution which unlocks development to meet our needs and ensure that the environment is protected. relationships between these organisations are somewhat complex.</p> <p>Any individual with specific concerns about environmental standards being breached will need to report this to the relevant regulator (Natural England, Environment Agency or OFWAT)</p>
47	Is there a danger that a developer will present a proposal which suggest and acceptable solution to water neutrality that is then not delivered?	The requirement to demonstrate water neutrality is a legal test – it has to be conclusively demonstrated that it can be delivered to ensure that water neutrality will be delivered in order to meet this test. The Council will require that water neutrality measures, including offsetting, are physically in place and working at the point when the first occupant moves in. This will also be a condition in any planning application.

48	When a solution to water neutrality is found will HDC prioritise allocations/outline permissions needing Reserved Matters first? Will this solution affect CIL?	The strategic solution to water neutrality will allow us to plan for a certain amount of development across the next plan period, which will first be delivered by way of existing consents and allocations and then any new allocations required to help us make up the difference to meet our new housing target for the plan. CIL will be collected on any qualifying development as normal.
49	If an interim solution to water neutrality is expected 'Summer 2022' when do you expect to start issuing Decision Notices?	Applications can only be approved if they are proven to be water neutral. This is a difficult challenge for applicants but a handful of applications have satisfied Natural England and received planning permission since Natural England's Position Statement was received. We expect to permit a greater volume of applications once a strategic solution is in place. We do not have a precise date for this and continue to work with partners to progress the strategic solution.
50	If HDC adopted a lower housing number due to Water Neutrality mitigation, will this shortfall be made up later in the Plan period? If not, will MSDC/Waverley take this need?	It is unknown as to the effect that water neutrality will have on housing targets for emerging Local Plans in the Sussex North Water Resource Zone. It may be that evidence shows that the ability of the area to accommodate additional housing, either temporarily or permanently, is environmentally constrained due to water issues but such evidence is not complete. Should we be unable to meet our own needs within our local authority area then we would engage with other authorities under the duty to cooperate to understand whether housing needs could be accommodated in neighbouring Councils.
51	With the District Plan on hold, how are planning decisions being made in the interim specifically in relation to climate ambitions? Are planning committees able to take on board the new recognition? That we are facing a climate emergency and need to act now and act decisively? Or are they looking back to outdated policies and regulations that need to be overhauled?	The starting point for any decisions on planning applications in Horsham District is the adopted Horsham District Planning Framework and any Neighbourhood Plan. There is a comprehensive suite of policies (Policies 35 to 38) setting out requirements for climate change mitigation and adaptation, and these will continue to apply until such a time that the new Local Plan reaches an advanced stage towards adoption. A further material consideration is the NPPF (last revised in 2021) which has a section dedicated to meeting the challenge of climate change, flooding and coastal change.

		<p>HDC is strongly committed to taking forward measures to tackle climate change, as demonstrated by HDC’s recent adoption of a new Carbon Reduction Action Plan 2022 to 2025 (supported by £1million of Council funding), which represents a major milestone in the Council becoming carbon neutral by 2030.</p>
52	<p>Why has Lane Top been included in the new local plan document for expansion with 5 pitches in addition to the existing 3 – a previous planning application was rejected.</p>	<p>It is a requirement that Local Plans meet the identified needs for Gypsies and Travellers. Our evidence shows that over the next 10 years, that identified need is 65 new pitches in the District as a whole.</p> <p>There is potential for some of this need to be allocated at strategic development locations, but not all need can be met in this way. Officers therefore had to consider whether other sites could accommodate Gypsy and Traveller requirements. Whilst issues have been identified at the Lane Top site as part of previous planning applications, officers did not receive evidence from statutory consultees that these sites could not be mitigated. This led to the recommendation to include the site in the plan.</p> <p>The emerging Local Plan is not council policy and ultimately any decision to allocate sites will be a matter for Council Members. Once the outcome from water neutrality is clearer, the strategy for Gypsy and Traveller provision will need to be revisited in light of the outcomes of this work.</p>

The Big Conversation

Topic 6. Climate Change and the Environment



Ref	Question	Response
1	<p>Will the Wilder Horsham District initiative be able to include and encourage wildlife throughout the more urban areas of Horsham, as well as supporting the big landowners? For example, might we look forward to swift boxes, bee hotels, pollinator-friendly planting in and around the town?</p>	<p>The project engages with community groups and Parish Councils and Neighbourhood Council's in urban areas which has resulted in some of these initiatives. For example, funding has been given to a group in Warnham to install swift boxes and a group in Billingshurst.</p> <p>Over the next three years these are the types of examples that the project will encourage in urban areas. Council land in urban areas will be used to encourage pollinator friendly.</p> <p>Horsham Park just won an award for a bee friendly planting scheme and work is underway to identify other areas.</p>
2	<p>How is or will the council promote climate education within the council, homeowners and businesses and signpost to local solutions?</p>	<p>The Council is increasing its investment in promoting climate education with additional officer resource. The Council already produces a monthly newsletter with information and advice on climate change. This is available for members of the public who sign up to receive it. A newsletter produced by the Economic Development team includes information and advice on this issue for businesses.</p> <p>The Council's Climate and Environment webpages also contains much useful information and regular press releases, and social media posts promote actions that residents and businesses can take.</p> <p>In terms of climate education within the Council, climate change training has been offered to all staff and a Climate Change Week was held to coincide with the UN Conference on Climate Change in November 2021 which explained the issues and the solutions via talks, a film, and other activities.</p> <p>A climate change strategy and action plan is due to be produced for the District and this will include the need to increase education and engagement on climate change.</p>

3	<p>Will HDC be open to promoting the purchase or lease of area's of farmland adjoining parishes to offer allotments for the local communities.</p> <p>It has been shown that done properly 35 tons of food can be produced annually per hectare, and that allotments are the richest areas for biodiversity, help integrate community, keep older adults more healthy easing strain on NHS, excess food in local shops working towards a more sustainable future. I can talk about it if asked.</p>	<p>We accept that allotments and community supported agriculture can be both productive and has many benefits for society and wildlife.</p> <p>Developers are required to provide community facilities such as allotments through HDC's planning process.</p> <p>In parished areas the Parish Council has a duty to provide allotments, but the District Council would be able to support initiatives to develop new sites.</p>
4	<p>How is the council assisting residents reduce our dependency on oil and gas? This includes home insulation and better public transport, but also encouraging local business and shorter supply chains which are less carbon intensive</p>	<p>The main areas where we all directly use oil and gas is for transport and heating and powering our homes. The good news is that the UK has installed a lot of renewable energy, such as solar panels and off shore wind farms over the last 10 years which has reduced the use of fossil fuels to produce electricity.</p> <p>The Council uses its website, press releases, social media and talks to promote the take up of home insulation and renewable energy, as well as where residents can get advice on installing renewable energy. It promotes national grant schemes when these are available. It has also been part of Sussex Solar that supports residents to install solar panels.</p> <p>It is not responsible for public transport, but it does encourage more walking and cycling and is part of a partnership of most of the councils in West Sussex that is installing a network of electric vehicle charge points, powered by renewable energy.</p> <p>The Economic Development team work closely with and run many initiatives that support local businesses. There are also marketing campaigns which encourage residents to buy local produce and products, sold by local businesses.</p>
5	<p>Would the Council consider supporting Horsham Makerspace and Library of</p>	<p>The Council is already in discussion with someone who wants to establish these initiatives in Horsham town. It is helping to identify a suitable premises.</p>

	Things to expand our services to the District, helping to drive down waste and improve people's ability to fix, reuse and upcycle?	This is the type of initiative that the Council is keen to support, as it is a practical way for residents to reduce waste and encourage reuse.
6	Is the Council divesting their funds from fossil fuels and other industries that do not fit with the UN Sustainable Development Goals? If so, what is the timeline for this divestment to be complete? Will the Council help promote clear guidelines as to what can be recycled in local shops/supermarkets?	The Council basis its investment decisions on the UN Principles for Responsible Investment. This balances the need to be financially responsible, as well as environmentally responsible. The Council's website includes a wealth of information on recycling, including a link to the location of supermarkets that collect soft plastics and which types of plastics can and cannot be accepted via these recycling points. It also produces regular climate change and waste minimisation e-newsletters which includes this type of information.
7	Please can the Bridge Leisure Centre be retrofitted with a bank of Solar Panels on the roof? Users do not understand why this was not done when it was originally constructed, also enabling electricity to be fed to the adjacent Indoor Bowls Centre.	Some good news on this one: The Council is currently exploring the potential of working with Community Energy Horsham to install solar panels on some Council buildings. One of the buildings that is being considered for this approach is The Bridge leisure centre. This will also pick up the Bowl Centre issue.
8	How can we encourage large landowners to get involved? Are there grants available? Not only for farmers but households. What happened to the Green Homes Grant?	Wilder Horsham District is a partnership between the Council and the Sussex Wildlife Trust which seeks to help wildlife thrive across the District by establishing a nature recovery network. This is either corridors of land, or stepping stones, which can help wildlife to move the landscape and not be confined to isolated protected sites. The Council is paying for a landowner advisor, who is based at the Trust, to provide advice to landowners on how they can change their management practices to encourage wildlife. There are also small grants (of up to £5000) to help support these changes. These grants are also available to Parish and Neighbourhood Councils, as well as voluntary and community groups. The project and the funding is publicised by the Council and the Sussex Wildlife Trust; for example, in Our District magazine. Articles and talks also explain how individuals to get involved, with advice on wildlife friendly gardening.

	<p>What happened to the Green Homes Grant?</p>	<p>The Council has managed much of its land for the benefit of wildlife for a long time, such as Chesworth Farm and Warnham Local Nature Reserve. We are building on this to incorporate the principles of Wilder Horsham District throughout the estate, such as reviewing mowing regimes to benefit wildlife. Not only will this help wildlife but will be used to show what others can do and encourage more people to make changes that can help wildlife thrive.</p> <p>Green Homes Grant This grant is run by Government. At one time funding was available for all households to install energy saving measures. In March 2021 this part of the grant was withdrawn.</p> <p>The Local Authority Delivery Green Homes Grant is still available under the banner 'Warmer Homes' and is focused on homes that are not energy efficient and to help residents that are on low incomes or are in receipt of certain benefits. The latest round of funding opened on 4th May 2022 and will pay for energy related measures, such as insulation, solar panels, and air source heat pumps.</p> <p>Another scheme known as the Homes Upgrade Grant is also targeted at the same types of homes and households but is focused on properties that are not connected to the gas grid.</p>
<p>9</p>	<p>What are your plans for protecting and enhancing green spaces in Horsham town?</p>	<p>The Council already manages important sites including Warnham Local Nature Reserve and Chesworth Farm which is a designated Local Wildlife Site. Under the Wilder Horsham District initiative we are reviewing our mowing regime to identify open spaces that would be suitable to develop into meadow areas. Future planting in and around the town will incorporate plants for pollinators.</p> <p>One option that the Council is considering is the potential to work the Fields in Trust charity to legally protect key sites in perpetuity.</p>
<p>10</p>	<p>"Why has the consultation promised by Cllr Hogben in July 2021 on the future of Rookwood golf course not taken place?"</p>	<p>I think the first point to make here is that the Council has no plans to consider Rookwood Golf Course for development. I also want to reconfirm that the golf club is not included for consideration in the Local Plan.</p> <p>The Council has a new Leader, Cabinet and Cabinet Member for the Town who all recognise the importance and value of Rookwood and the Warnham Local Nature Reserve. The administration has also committed to putting climate change, protecting wildlife and enhancing biodiversity at the heart of its agenda.</p> <p>We are still emerging from one of the most significant events in my lifetime, in the form of the pandemic and I think it helped demonstrate to us all the importance of public open space. I'm also sure that we've all seen the reports of upswings in the participation of some sports like golf and I think this is another line of inquiry that will</p>

		<p>need to be considered fully in the near future. Indeed, it is a new piece of work that I will be asking officers to complete at the appropriate point.</p> <p>Cllr Hogben made his original statement in July 2021 and committed to undertaking this within two years. We therefore have more than enough time to meet this deadline. We also have a lease in place with the existing operator of the golf club that does not run out until 2026 and I can confirm there is absolutely no intention to trigger any break clause prior to 2026.</p> <p>I want to use this opportunity to dispel any conspiracy theory here. As I've already said there are no plans for development of the golf club, and we are committed to undertaking the consultation but there are limited resources and a number of competing priorities. In my portfolio alone, priorities include such issues as completing the work on skate park in Horsham Park, undertaking a review of SWCP and looking at the future of the Capitol Theatre and our decarbonisation programme. Given the circumstances and the commitments I have given publicly tonight, I feel we have more than enough time to bring forward a consultation at some point in 2023.</p> <p>I am of course open to informal discussions with groups like Keep Rookwood Green and would be more than happy to discuss the proposed format nearer the time.</p>
11	<p>“When do you plan to engage with the residents and users of Rookwood, as part of your stated in-depth consultation, and what is the intended format?”</p>	<p>As above.</p> <p>I think the first point to make here is that the Council has no plans to consider Rookwood Golf Course for development. I also want to reconfirm that the golf club is not included for consideration in the Local Plan.</p> <p>The Council has a new Leader, Cabinet and Cabinet Member for the Town that all recognise the importance and value of Rookwood and the Warnham Local Nature Reserve. The administration has also committed to putting climate change, protecting wildlife and enhancing biodiversity at the heart of its agenda.</p> <p>We are still emerging from one of the most significant events in my lifetime, in the form of the pandemic and I think it helped demonstrate to us all the importance of public open space. I'm also sure that we've all seen the reports of upswings in the participation of some sports like golf and I think this is another line of inquiry that will need to be considered fully in the near future. Indeed, it is a new piece of work that I will be asking officers to complete at the appropriate point.</p> <p>Cllr Hogben made his original statement in July 2021 and committed to undertaking this within two years. We therefore have more than enough time to meet this deadline. We also have a lease in place with the existing</p>

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12	<p>Would the Council consider making one of the river/sections of the river a specific bathing site, to ensure consistent monitoring of the water quality and to ensure businesses/polluters upstream are taking action to improve the quantified river quality</p>	<p>Horsham District Council doesn't designate if a water course is appropriate for open water swimming - any organisation or any individual could apply. Any waters would need to attract a significant number of bathers for it to be approved and would need the support of the landowner to be successful. Once designated, the Environment Agency would become responsible for monitoring the quality of the water.</p> <p>In short anyone can apply; they have to consult with the landowner, Environment Agency and the local council and provide data as to the usage, facilities and that local consultation has occurred.</p>
13	<p>Would the council be able to expedite the process of introducing food waste bins in the district?</p>	<p>The Environment Act 2021 became law in November 2021, introducing changes to waste collection so that recyclable household waste (which includes food waste) must be collected separately from other household waste and that food waste itself must be collected at least once a week. However, we had not had any further clarification from Government on how this should be delivered.</p> <p>We are waiting for final confirmation on how recycling including food waste should be collected (i.e. separate out all recycling or keep co-mingled). Any changes which are made to formal legislation will impact on how we collect so we need to wait to ensure we are resourcing our collection structures correctly. It is expected that confirmation on this from the government will come in late summer/autumn 2022.</p> <p>We need to take time to plan and implement a service change of this scale to ensure our collection model is efficient for residents in terms of use, cost and the climate. We also have to consider the current infrastructure in</p>

		<p>place managed by WSCC and how that will need to be adapted to allow them to accept food waste separately for anaerobic digestion.</p> <p>We would like to introduce separate food waste collections as soon as we can and will be working with WSCC on this project as a priority in the next couple of years.</p> <p>In the meantime, we promote composting to Horsham residents to help reduce their food waste. We are also running trials on hot bins which can be used to digest food waste and therefore reduce what is disposed of in the normal refuse. Further details will be provided on the Council's website in due course.</p>
14	Please could the Council make it easier to find information on their investments on their website?	<p>We generally invest in mixed investment funds, which in turn invest in a diverse range of bonds and shares. Those investments are changing all the time and keeping this up to date and published would be impracticable.</p> <p>At a higher level, information on investments can already be found on our website in the following places:</p> <p>Investment strategy: https://horsham.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s18769/Final%202223%20Capiital%20Investment%20Treasury%20Management%20Strategy.pdf</p> <p>Mid-year and outturn performance reports. Example is most recent report from mid-year https://horsham.moderngov.co.uk/documents/s18768/Final%20mid%20year%20TM%20PI%20activity%20report%202122.pdf</p> <p>Financial Statements: https://www.horsham.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0004/107563/Audited-Statement-of-Accounts-2020-21-.pdf</p>
15	What are the benefits to residents of the current work on Storrington Mill car park?	<p>Following the Council's introduction of an annual parking disc/permit scheme in April 2017 it was agreed that a proportion of income received via this scheme would be reinvested back into the District's car parks to improve the overall customer experience.</p> <p>The proposed improvements will also see increased parking bay sizes, an improved parking surface, improved drainage, better sight lines, new low-cost LED lighting.</p>