



<b>Project</b>	Eastlands Farm (SA052, SA747 and SA791)
<b>Document</b>	Horsham District Council Local Plan 2023-2040 <b>Matter 2 Hearing Statement</b> obo Hunter Group

## Matter 2 – Plan Period, Vision, Objectives and the Spatial Strategy

**Matter 2, Issue 2 – Whether the Spatial Vision and Objectives are justified, effective, consistent with national policy and positively prepared?**

*Q1. Is the vision clearly articulated? Is the relationship between the vision and objectives clear? Are the Plan's vision and objectives soundly based? How do they relate to the longer term context set out in paragraph 1.2 of the Plan?*

The Spatial Objective (SO) 6 seeks to protect and enhance the character and built heritage of the settlements in the district whilst SO 8 seeks to protect and promote the economic viability and vitality of rural centres and promote development which is appropriate within the existing hierarchy. SO10 recognises the role of smaller market towns as secondary hubs to meet local needs for a range of facilities including employment.

It is not clear what the council are defining as 'smaller market towns' as this does not tie up with the settlement descriptions in Policy 2: Development Hierarchy. However, assuming they are only referring to a handful of the towns in the tier above Cowfold, the objectives fail to adequately promote the importance of smaller centres for their community and that of the surrounding area. Smaller centres, individually and collectively provide a range of key services and facilities to their communities, promoting a thriving rural economy and reducing the need to travel. In order to maintain the vitality and viability of these centres however, a proportionate level of housing growth is necessary.

The spatial objectives are not therefore considered to be soundly based, effective or positively prepared. The meagre combined allocation for 70 houses at Cowfold is considered to risk the vitality of the settlement's existing facilities in failing to provide for sufficient growth based on the level of services available. Particularly, as one of the allocations (CW2: Fields West of Cowfold) is within the neighbourhood plan and has a live planning application on the site and the only other allocation in the neighbourhood plan (DNP01 - already has permission, meaning the contribution within the plan at Cowfold is mere 35 dwellings. The plan is therefore failing to apportion appropriate growth to the settlement over the plan period.

Cowfold offers an excellent opportunity for greater levels of growth and the sites at Eastlands Farm provide the opportunity to meet housing growth as a sustainable and organic extension to the settlement.

*Q2. Objective 9 refers to "smaller market towns" – how does this relate to the settlement hierarchy set out in Strategic Policy 2?*

As noted above, if this objective only relates to a small selection of towns in the tier above Cowfold, the plan is failing to realise the importance of the role that smaller rural settlements play in supporting their communities and the role the local plan should be making in ensuring they remain vital and can maintain the viability of their services and facilities with sufficient population growth.

Falling within the settlement type below Horsham, there can be little doubt that Storrington is one of the most sustainable settlements in the district which needs greater investment and growth to support its ability to thrive as a settlement.



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***Q3. Do the objectives recognise the need for and role of services and facilities outside of the main town, smaller towns and villages (Tier 1 and 2)? If not, should they?***

The range of services and facilities in Cowfold are very good, hosting key services including a primary school and community swimming pool, doctor's surgery, co-op convenience store and an array of restaurants and cafés. The village therefore not only supports its own community within settlement includes that of the wider more rural community which surrounds the settlement. It is however crucial that sufficient sustainable growth of the village is facilitated to ensure the viability and vitality of this village. With a mere 35 dwelling allocation proposed over and above that which has planning permission is not sufficient or proportionate.

**Matter 2, Issue 3 – Whether the Spatial Strategy and overarching policies for growth and change are justified, effective, consistent with national policy and positively prepared?**

***Q1. What is the proposed distribution of development (housing and employment) for each settlement and type identified in the settlement hierarchy (in total and for each year of the plan period)? Is this distribution justified and effective?***

In our view, the plan relies too heavily on delivery of larger strategic sites and fails to allocated sufficient housing within 'Small Towns and Larger Villages/ Medium Villages'. The spatial strategy fails to support proportionate growth at these key settlements for which the constraint of water neutrality could be addressed in the shorter term on bespoke basis without the need to rely on SNOWS, addressing the under delivery in the early period of the plan.

***Q5. Should Strategic Policies 2 and 3 be more specific in terms of the amount of housing and employment land to be provided within each settlement or settlement type over the Plan period in the interests of effectiveness?***

In our view, setting out a specific quantum of development in terms of policies 2 and 3 would further highlight the failure to direct sufficient proportionate growth to appropriate size settlements, such as Storrington. Setting out clear development goals based on the scale of the settlement and associated services and facilities would inevitably lead to greater certainty and ultimately increased delivery of suitable sites at the most sustainable settlements. It would also provide greater certainty in respect of assessing windfall development.