

Examination of the Horsham District Local Plan 2023-2040

Hearings: week 1 - April 2026

Rusper Parish Council Hearing Statement

Rusper Parish Council stands by all of its previous submissions submitted at all consultation phases of the Horsham Local Plan process.

This statement provides an important overview of the Rusper Parish Council position and goes on to respond to some of the questions raised by the Inspector. Also, to clarify the position, Rusper Parish Council has worked closely with the Save West of Ifield community group in areas where our objectives clearly overlap. This has helped to significantly reduce the costs in obtaining the necessary professional advice and in understanding all of the issues in relation to Rusper Parish. In the light of that Rusper Parish Council also endorses all of the formal submissions made by the Save West of Ifield group. Despite this close collaboration in obtaining information the parish council as an elected body remains broadly neutral on individual matters and makes its own independent decisions at full council meetings based on the evidence obtained in relation to any planning matters.

Overview

It is the opinion of Rusper Parish Council that the current planning process is deeply flawed and we would hope that the Inspector can take account of some of those flaws when deciding on the validity of the currently submitted Horsham Local Plan.

Our major concern is not one that anyone present can resolve directly, but it has to be born in mind. The current planning system fails to consider any overall national strategy for the use of land in general over the whole country. It is obvious that England has a finite land supply and the planning system should start by identifying how much of that is currently used by all of the key areas of national concern and then project forward to establish what the desired allocation of that land would need to be to best balance all of the needs being placed on it.

Instead of that we have a system that focuses all the planning guidance on housing and specifying housing numbers based on algorithms that take little notice of the actual local issues and no notice of government policies to encourage development in more deprived areas of the country. As a result we have housing numbers in the more affluent south east that do not match the real need.

More detail of this is provided in our specific matter statements below.

Matter 1: The housing requirement

a. The identification of the appropriate basic local housing need figure for the purposes of the plan

See overview statement. It was the case that housing need was calculated locally based on all of the local conditions that both identified real local needs and recognised the constraints of the local environment.

It is difficult to reconcile the fact that the local housing register has grown little over the past five years (“The number of households waiting to be rehoused has stayed relatively consistent over the last five years at an average of 730.” Source HDC Tenancy Strategy) and house prices when measured against inflation have fallen (“Since 2022 there has been a steady decline in real house prices when adjusted for inflation in West Sussex.” Source HouseMetric), with the government target for the area increasing by more than 100% on current build rates.

b. The relationship of this figure to the base date of the plan

It seems sensible to base any plan for the future on where we are now. Clearly though the flawed algorithms will only increase what it perceives as need if it includes the houses already built to meet that need in recent years since the plan was started and this is a part of the problem with the current methods used.

c. The amount of unmet housing need from nearby districts to be accommodated

RPC accepts that where there is a unmet need in one area with real constraints, that other areas need to help with that where possible. However, current calculations seem to be double counting the distribution of Crawley's unmet need. Previous years development have been added into Horsham and other districts requirements and now they have been met, those increased numbers are being used to further increase those areas in addition to still being recounted for Crawley.

d. Whether any other factor should influence the housing requirement

It is clear from the overall plan that other critical factors have been neglected or woefully reflected both in the proposed Horsham Local Plan and in the governments planning guidance.

The government declared a Climate Emergency back in 2019, but has since predominantly introduced planning policy changes that make this worse. The housing number algorithm takes no account of environmental impact and policies that free up more green field development add to the crisis. All this despite all of the good words on behalf of the government (<https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/adaptation-and-net-zero-beating-the-climate-emergency-and-building-a-better-world>).

The government identifies the need to increase food self sufficiency, but the proposals of this Horsham Local Plan site the largest strategic development predominantly on farm land. This is an important part of our overview argument, where the plan has no indication of what the land use distribution is currently or how they plan for it to evolve in the future. The [UK government food strategy for England](#) vision clearly states:

A healthier, more affordable, sustainable and resilient 21st century food system will deliver:

- *a thriving UK food sector that feeds a healthier and more productive UK population and enables economic growth*
- *a healthier population with reduced diet related ill-health, especially for children and vulnerable people*
- *better environmental outcomes on land and sea, enhancing nature and ecosystem services while reducing pollution, waste and greenhouse gas emissions*
- *improved resilience of the supply chain, with reduced impact of shocks and chronic risks on access to healthy and sustainable food*

Yet the proposed plan makes no acknowledgement of this.

The high cost of farm land in the Horsham District, relative to the rest of the country, is a good indicator of the need to maintain and improve on the farming land supply that exists, rather than re-allocating it for housing and commercial use.

The government has policies to improve development and investment in the more deprived areas of the country, yet the housing allocation algorithms favour development in the more lucrative areas. The focus of housing development in the south east exacerbates the north south divide that will only lead to further imbalance.

The government commits to improving biodiversity (see [The Economics of Biodiversity: The Dasgupta Review](#)), but the largest strategic development in this plan is located on the most biodiverse area of Horsham District (see RPC submission *BiodiversityMyth.pdf*).

e. The appropriate housing requirement arising from a. to d.

The key requirement for housing in this area, especially when considering offsetting Crawley's need, is for social housing. However, the plan makes little or no provision for social housing. Even its steps to achieve 40% affordable housing are thwarted by its largest strategic development, which is only proposing 35%.