

4 Alternatives and Design Evolution

Introduction

4.1 Regulation 18 and Schedule 4 of the EIA Regulations require an applicant to provide:

“...a description of the reasonable alternatives studied by the developer, which are relevant to the Proposed Development and its specific characteristics, and an indication of the main reasons for the option chosen, taking into account the effects of the development on the environment”.

4.2 Alternative options typically comprise:

- The ‘do nothing’ alternative where the Proposed Development is not progressed;
- Consideration of Alternative Locations or Uses; and
- Consideration of Alternative Designs.

The Alternative Options

The ‘do nothing’ Alternative

4.3 Under the ‘do nothing’ scenario, the Site would remain as greenfield land primarily in agricultural use.

4.4 The Site, and wider consented development (DC/16/1677) is allocated under Strategic Policy SD1 of the Horsham District Planning Framework 2015 as ‘Land North of Horsham’, now referred to as Mowbray, for a mixed-use strategic development to accommodate at least 2,500 homes and associated infrastructure within the identified area. The principles of the development established by the policy are as follows:

- 1. The development should form a high quality, sustainable, mixed-use community which reflects the communities’ needs. Through the planning, design, phasing and infrastructure provided the development should ensure that the future community has its own identity and character, but have strong, sustainable connections to Horsham;*
- 2. The development shall be locally distinctive and unique through its architecture, urban and landscape design, where residents can become involved in their community and share the benefits of a high quality of life;*
- 3. The development shall have a legible layout that facilitates all modes of sustainable travel, both within the development area and to provide linkages to the existing urban area of Horsham, thus reducing the dependency on the car by providing suitable access to local facilities and services;*
- 4. The impact of the new development on the existing transport network shall be minimised – development will require new pedestrian and cycle crossing points of the A264; bus links and an internal network of bus routes; closure of Langhurstwood Road left in / left out junction onto the A264 and re-alignment of Langhurstwood Road to the east with a new roundabout junction on the A264; improvements to the Rusper Road roundabout; a new secondary junction into the development east of Rusper Road; improvements to the Great Daux roundabout; and improvements to the Moorhead roundabout. Old Holbrook is to be retained as a country lane and not as a vehicular access into the new mixed use community;*

5. *A business park shall be provided in order to enable the opportunity of working locally, to reflect the needs of the economy;*
6. *Land to be safeguarded for a parkway railway station and associated uses, adjacent to the business park, to provide a sustainable form of travel to the wider area;*
7. *A Local Centre will be provided which comprises a mix of uses to reflect the needs of the land at North Horsham allocation area; including shops, health care and community facilities;*
8. *Homes with a mix of housing sizes, types and tenures to meet local needs shall be provided;*
9. *Two primary schools and a site for a secondary school shall be provided together with provision for Special Education Needs places for 2-19 year olds;*
10. *Open space and sport and recreation facilities shall be provided to meet the needs of the new community and the wider area and to provide for a balance of development and landscaped open space;*
11. *A strong 'Landscape Buffer' shall be provided to the open countryside to provide a robust and long term, defensible boundary to the development and to avoid perception of coalescence and to maintain separation between Horsham and Crawley;*
12. *The development shall take a sequential approach across the site to ensure the most vulnerable uses are placed in the lowest flood risk zone. This approach will ensure the most effective risk management measure is applied to the site as a whole. The development will also make the most of opportunities to manage and reduce flood risk overall; and*
13. *The development shall be delivered and laid out in accordance with the concept Masterplan Map.*

- 4.5 Should the Proposed Development not come forwards, the remainder of the outline application would continue to be built out. At the end of October 2025, 249 dwellings had been completed across RM1 and RM2 of the consented development. As set out above, the allocation is for a '*high quality, sustainable, mixed-use community which reflects the communities*' and a '*legible layout that facilitates all modes of sustainable travel.*' The policy requires that the development is programmed to enable completion by 2031.
- 4.6 The Proposed Development has been designed to accord with the general layout and principles of the consented development, including with respect to the access strategy, and introduces elements such as provision for Class E(e) Medical or Health Services, and E(d) indoor sport, recreation, or fitness the which were originally included elsewhere within the consented development. The Proposed Development also delivers the Strategic Green Buffer and landscaping in line with Policy SD1 part 11. The 2016 ES reported major beneficial effects on job creation through B class development and in local private retail and leisure services. Without these elements, some of the anticipated benefits of the consented development previously reported by the 2016 ES / 2017 ES Addendum - such as improved community services and job creation - may not be realised, and the consented development may fall short of fully meeting the objectives of Strategic Policy SD1. If the Proposed Development was not completed, the health, leisure, and employment uses would still need to be delivered within the Site to meet the requirements of Policy SD1, but may be unlikely to be brought forwards to a timescale where they can serve the dwellings that would begin to be occupied across the wider consented development.

Consideration of Alternative Locations and Uses

- 4.7 Given the location of the Site as part of a wider allocation to increase housing provision in the administrative boundary of HDC, and the planning context of the Site, no alternative locations have been considered by the Applicant.
- 4.8 The planning context, set out in **ES Chapter 1** explains that planning permission was previously applied for at the Site for a Business Park. The parameters approved within the OPP proposed the Site for primarily commercial office development. The time limit for the submission of Reserved Matters (pursuant to the OPP) has passed, which has informed the need for this application for the Proposed Development.
- 4.9 Strategic Policy SD1, quoted above, describes the need for a ‘*Business park. . . to enable the opportunity of working locally, to reflect the needs of the economy.*’ Criterion 1 of that policy provides the principle that ‘*the development should form a high-quality, sustainable, mixed-use community which reflects the communities needs*’.
- 4.10 Since the time lapsed on the Reserved Matters (pursuant to the OPP) expired, demand for office space has significantly decreased following COVID-19, posing key challenges to marketing and the viability of a predominantly office park development. Discussions between the Applicant and HDC in March and April 2025 highlighted the potential scope to diversify the uses within the Employment Land area to introduce logistics and light industrial uses. Given the changing demand for offices and industrial space since the outline application for the consented development was submitted and approved, the Proposed Development now considers a flexible mix of commercial, industrial, and office space. The proposed logistics and light industrial uses better reflect community needs and the demand for such spaces, which will also support HDC’s Economic Growth aims for Mowbray, as set out in Policy 7 of the HDPF.
- 4.11 The health centre and leisure facilities were initially proposed in alternative locations within the consented development, and are now proposed within the Site for the Proposed Development in the Employment Land. The environmental effects of the relocation of these facilities and the net change in terms of the total floorspace have been considered as appropriate within the Chapter 6 – Socioeconomics, which states:

‘However, as stated in the limitations and assumptions section of this chapter, the Proposed Development incorporates the relocation of the health centre and commercial leisure uses that were both located outside of the Business Park for the consented scheme (as assessed in the 2016 ES). Therefore, whilst both of these uses will contribute to the employment supported by the Proposed Development, in terms of the net change to the consented scheme it is considered appropriate to only assess employment from the Proposed Development’s net increase in the proposed floorspace for commercial leisure uses (+164 sqm) and health centre (-98 sqm) when considering the change in total employment reported in the 2016 ES.

The Proposed Development’s commercial leisure uses will provide an uplift of +10 FTE jobs from that reported in the 2016 ES for the commercial leisure uses. Given the very minor change in floorspace for the health centre and that there is no change in the S106 with regards to the components of the health centre, a neutral position is taken with regards to employment from the health centre.

Based on the net change only to the consented scheme, the Proposed Development will support a total of 864 FTE jobs.’

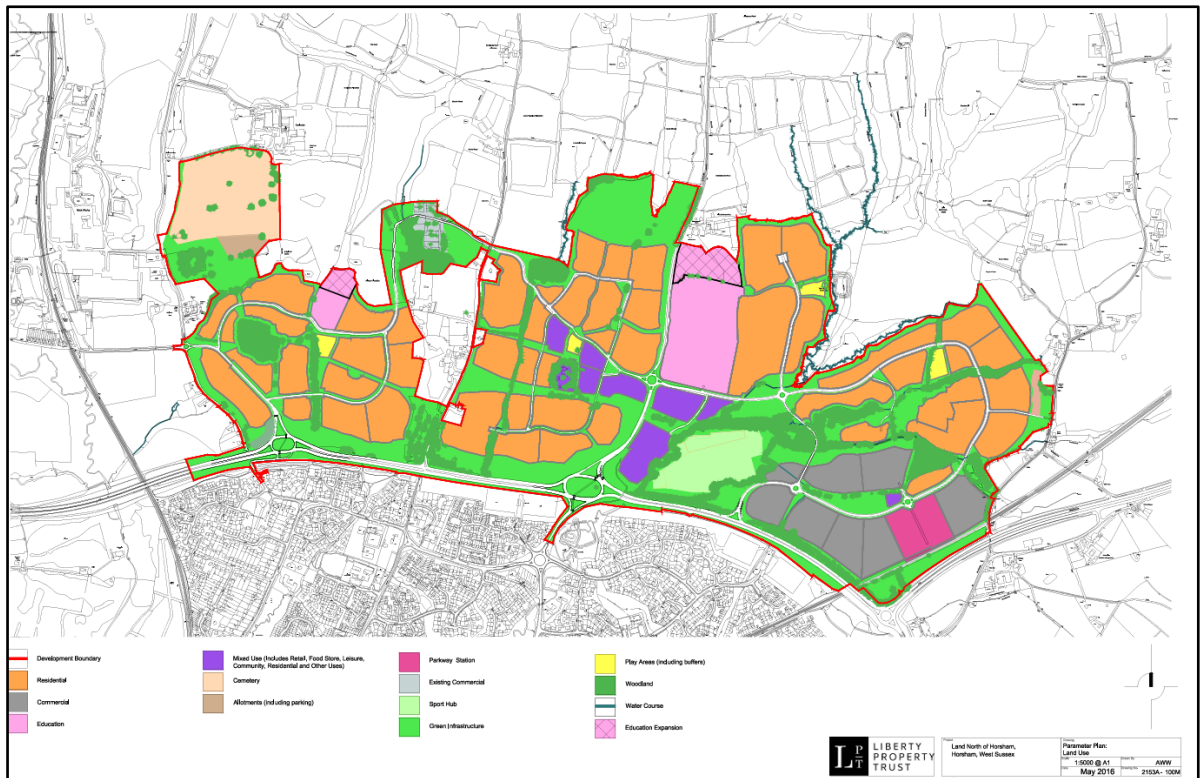
- 4.12 This ES has considered whether the three proposed land use options would lead to any changes to the likely significant environmental effects reported within the 2016 ES and 2017 ES Addendum for the wider consented development.

Design Evolution and Environmental Considerations

4.13 The design evolution of the Proposed Development has been informed by the parameters previously proposed within the Employment Land within the consented development. The parameter plans for the consented development included the following uses, as shown in **Inset Figure 4.1**:

- Commercial;
- Mixed use (including retail, food store, leisure, community, and other uses);
- Parkway Station

Inset Figure 4.1: Extract from OPP Parameter Plan (Appendix 5.4 Drawing 153A-100J)



4.14 The Proposed Development now includes a range of uses which were not previously proposed within the Site, which has created opportunities to evolve the design in a positive way from the previously consented development. These include:

- A new location for a leisure facility;
- Establishment of a secondary road network;
- A new plot of land for a health facility; and
- New opportunities for a landscaping strategy, with a focus on the greening of the estate road, with 'green fingers' extending into the development plots linking with the PRow and the new cycleway, promoting pedestrian friendly connections and permeability with the existing movement network and natural setting.

4.15 Therefore, the alternative design that has been considered is the previous proposals for the Employment Land under the OPP for the consented development. The design for the Proposed Development has evolved iteratively from the consented development, and this has been driven by the need to maximise the flexibility of land uses to address the volatility of changing market trends locally

within the Site, which is reflected within the parameter plans (**Figures 3.1-3.3**) and the masterplan options presented within the Design and Access Statement.

- 4.16 The larger land parcels in the centre of the Land Use Parameter Plan (**Figure 3.1**) are submitted for uses B8 Storage and Distribution, B2 General Industrial and E(g) Commercial Business and Service which creates the opportunity to deliver a variety of employment uses. A parcel has also been developed as a buffer between the land uses described above and the land safeguarded for a future train station.
- 4.17 **ES Figure 3.3 – Building Heights Parameter Plan** has been designed to achieve flexibility to respond to local demand for employment use and accommodate a range of building types and typologies.
- 4.18 The design has also needed to consider the environmental constraints and opportunities within the Site to ensure that the Proposed Development would not lead to worse environmental effects than those reported within the 2016 ES and 2017 ES Addendum.
- 4.19 The environmental constraints considered in the design of the parameter plans include:
- Consideration of the flood risk zone associated with the Channells Brook to the north of the Site, and avoiding locating development in this location, and developing a drainage strategy in line with the principles established by the outline which limits development run-off rates and volumes to existing greenfield rates and volumes;
 - Consideration of the surrounding habitats and ecological interest in consideration of lighting and proximity to human activities;
 - Consideration of the proximity of the railway and dual carriageway A264 as a source of noise and designing appropriate mitigation;
 - Consideration of the surrounding planning applications for the realignment of the PRow, alignment of the estate road within the consented development within the access and movement strategy for the Site, including the proposal of a new cycleway along the southern edge of the Site to promote enhanced connectivity with the local network of cycle routes and pedestrian paths;
 - Maintaining the Strategic Green Buffer to the south of the railway line.
- 4.20 As set out within **Table 2.1** of **ES Chapter 2**, for the topics scoped out of the ES, the net change for the Proposed Development would not significantly worsen the effects reported within the 2016 ES and 2017 ES Addendum. For landscape, for example, the maximum height is the same as the consented outline scheme for the employment land (a maximum height of 16m) and therefore it is expected that the same or lesser effects would arise from the Proposed Development than the previously proposed Business Park.
- 4.21 For socio-economics, **Chapter 6** reports moderate beneficial effects to jobs and economic output and a minor beneficial effect in relation to employment for the Proposed Development in isolation. These effects increase to Major beneficial for jobs and economic output and Moderate beneficial for employment when considering the completed development and other committed development which also provides employment uses. Therefore, the Proposed Development would not lead to any worse environmental effects with respect to socio-economics than the alternative design considered within the outline application.
- 4.22 For transport, the Proposed Development includes a commercial leisure facility and health centre that are similar in size to that permitted by the consented development, and any changes in trip generation would be minor. The primary road network through the employment land has been designed to accommodate HGVs, including full size articulated lorries, and public buses. The secondary road network and service yards will also be designed to accommodate HGVs. The proposals for access to the Site by pedestrians and cyclists that will be delivered through the extension of the primary road through the employment land comply with the approved site-wide cycling strategy and appropriate

provision for public transport has been made, as agreed with the bus operator, Metrobus, and West Sussex County Council.

- 4.23 The net change in vehicle movements has been estimated within the Transport Assessment. The previously agreed trip rates for the business park have been applied to the office element whilst appropriate trip rates for warehousing and light industrial uses have been extracted from the TRICS database and agreed in pre-application discussions with West Sussex County Council. Parcel distribution has been assumed for the warehousing element as the worst case in traffic generation terms.
- Masterplan Option 1 includes the same quantum of office floorspace as the previously consented business park that formed part of the original outline planning permission. As such, there would be no change in the traffic generation of this option compared with the consented development.
 - Masterplan Option 2 is expected to generate 270 fewer vehicle movements in the AM peak hour and 104 fewer vehicle movements in the PM peak hour when compared with the consented development.
 - Masterplan Option 3 is expected to generate 129 fewer vehicle movements in the AM peak hour and 40 fewer vehicle movements in the PM peak hour when compared with the consented development.
- 4.24 Therefore, the Proposed Development will not increase the number of external vehicle or PCU movements to / from the consented development at peak times above those expected as a result of the original outline planning permission. The estimated daily increases in traffic movements will have no effect on the operational capacity of the key junctions on the local road as overall flows will be lower at peak times. The estimated daily increases have been used for the air quality and acoustic modelling that has informed **Chapter 8 – Air Quality** and **Chapter 9 – Noise and Vibration**. The air quality assessment has informed the assessment of potential off-site impacts to ecological receptors within **Chapter 7 – Ecology**. The conclusions of these assessments are reported in Chapter 10 – Summary and Residual Effects to determine whether the Proposed Development would not lead to any environmentally worse effects than those reported in the 2016 ES / 2017 ES Addendum for the consented development.

Community Consultation

- 4.25 Consultation with members of the public on the change of land use from the consented development has been a key influence in the design evolution of the Proposed Development. A summary of the consultation process undertaken can be found in the Statement of Community Involvement (SCI) (Cratus Group, 2026)ⁱ. The engagement process included stakeholder engagement meetings with district and parish councillors, a public webinar, and a dedicated project inbox. Key feedback from the public webinar, which took place on the 12 November 2025, as summarised within the SCI, was as follows:
- ***‘Employment land use: . . . no opposition to incorporating more flexibility into the employment areas of the site, including proposals to add light industrial and logistics uses . . .***
 - ***Park and ride facility: One question asked whether a park and ride was planned for The Site***
 - ***Healthcare Provision: Responses were supportive of including a GP practice within the plans.’***
- 4.26 The SCI sets out the Applicant's response to the feedback received, highlighting that the parameter plans and masterplans ensure that the Employment Land has been designed to be flexible to be able to respond to market needs, improving viability, maximising efficiency of layout, and exploring an adaptable, mixed employment offer.
- 4.27 With respect to the park and ride facility, this will be explored further by the Applicant as part of the future station land. The separate application for the Employment Road has been prepared to provide access to the Proposed Development.

- 4.28 A further concern was regarding the withdrawal of a supermarket operator in another phase of the consented development. Discussions are ongoing with an alternative retailer to ensure provision within the wider masterplan, and a supermarket is not included as part of this Proposed Development.

Conclusion

- 4.29 This chapter considers the alternative options for the Proposed Development, including a 'do nothing scenario', alternative locations or uses, and alternative layouts. The do-nothing scenario was not considered given the planning context of the Site and its allocation within the Local Plan. The Proposed Development land use options have been proposed to respond to changing market demand for office space and allow the Proposed Development to maximise the flexibility of land uses to address the volatility of changing market trends locally. This outline application is considered to represent an improvement to the alternative Business Park previously consented and now provides a more flexible mix of uses in line with the principles established by the outline.
- 4.30 The design of the Proposed Development has therefore evolved from the land use previously proposed in this location of the consented development to better respond to local demand and has been designed to avoid any significantly worse environmental effects from the previous proposals as reported within the 2016 ES / 2017 ES Addendum, as set out within the technical chapters of this ES.

References

ⁱ Cratus Group (2026). Statement of Community Involvement. Mowbray Employment Land, L&G November 2025.