
Examination of the Horsham District Council Local Plan 2023 - 2040

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Dear Mrs Howe,

Thank you for your letter of 11th February 2026. It is a pleasure to be appointed to examine the Horsham District Local Plan and I look forward to working with the Council and stakeholders during the course of the examination.

A considerable time has passed since the plan was submitted for examination but the removal of the water neutrality and duty to co-operate issues now provide the opportunity to move forward with the examination expeditiously. It is in everyone's interest to have an adopted plan in place

I am going to approach the examination afresh. The organisation of the website needs to reflect this, with the older material clearly separated.

The Council's approach as set out in your letter, including the timescale set out in the Appendix, appears feasible and realistic. The new work will involve updating the evidence base, establishing the housing requirement and finding additional opportunities for development to meet identified needs, including unmet need from elsewhere in the primary housing market area. It is very helpful that the Council is already reviewing previously identified sites and updating delivery timescales, and is intending to test high level growth options, update sustainability appraisal, and update evidence on transport and infrastructure, market delivery, viability and employment needs.

As regards the examination hearings, I should like to hold hearings around late April which will cover the topics of:

- housing need
- unmet need in the housing market area
- affordable housing
- possibly the housing needs of particular groups
- housing supply as at present
- the housing requirement and its trajectory.

This will set the context for decisions on additional site selection. It will be necessary to return to housing supply, resilience and headroom in a later hearing.

A later set of hearings will cover:

- the spatial strategy, including plan-level transport and other infrastructure matters
- the ability to maintain an adequate rolling housing land supply, headroom and plan resilience

- the site selection process having regard to the spatial strategy, site level constraints (eg transport and flooding) and potential mitigation measures
- the strategic site allocations
- other large or controversial site allocations.
- the plan's approach to industrial and business development

Your suggestion of September for these hearings sounds realistic.

At this stage I do not envisage holding hearings into other matters. From my reading of the evidence, I do not envisage the need to hold hearings on legal compliance issues. The Council should provide a topic paper which sets out how it has met the plan's procedural and legal requirements. Subjects such as sustainability appraisal, habitat regulations assessment, transport, social infrastructure, landscape and flood risk will be picked up if necessary under the headings of the spatial strategy and the site allocations, rather than being separate hearing topics.

I will deal with a lot of topics in writing. These will include development management policies. I note from your letter you are proposing to review these in the light of the draft Framework. Once this has been done I shall provide you with my comments and this can form the basis of an early draft of the schedule of main modifications. It would be very helpful if you could produce your review as early as possible so that wording can be agreed a little in advance of the first set of hearings in April. Be aware that you are likely to need to make substantial changes to some of the policies to make them sound, effective and in accordance with national policy.

The Council has already proposed modifications as a result of the Regulation 19 consultation process. I shall go through these and indicate which of them are required for soundness.

I find topic papers on the key subjects very helpful as a way of highlighting (and finding the way round) the evidence on important subjects such as housing supply, the housing trajectory and unmet need, affordable housing need, employment land need, the spatial strategy and the site selection process and (if necessary) HRA. I am reasonably flexible as to their length – they need to have enough information in them to be meaningful.

The contents of your letter establish a positive way forward for the examination and I am happy to agree the timetable set out in the Appendix to your letter, with the proviso that your review of development management policies should be undertaken as soon as possible. We also need to agree specific dates for the hearings. As we have agreed the way forward, it is no longer necessary to hold the exploratory meeting which was scheduled for 26 February, and this meeting has now been cancelled. I look forward very much to working with you and your team during my examination of your plan.

Yours sincerely

Jonathan Bore

INSPECTOR

11 February 2026