

DRAFT HORSHAM DISTRICT LOCAL PLAN 2023-2040

A. BACKGROUND

A1. Horsham District Planning Framework 2015

This is the current Plan. Under it, the annual target was 800 new homes a year. 600 were attributable to Horsham District's own needs; the other 200 was to meet Crawley's unmet need under the duty to cooperate. There were 3 major Strategic Sites. The largest was land north of Horsham; 2,500 new homes. 1,500 new homes were to come from the parishes in accordance with the settlement hierarchy, allocated through neighbourhood planning. Under that settlement hierarchy, Partridge Green was classified a medium size village.

A2. Review

All local plans required to be reviewed every 5 years. HDC started in 2018.

A3. Regulation 18 draft Local Plan

As part of the review, HDC issued the Regulation 18 draft Local Plan in February 2020. It went out for consultation mid February to end March just at the beginning of COVID. The Government had made clear that there would need to be a significant increase in housing numbers. HDC sought views on 3 options, 1,000, 1,200 and 1,400 new homes a year. There were some major proposals relating to West Grinstead Parish:

- Buck Barn was one of the major Strategic Sites, 3,500 homes
- PG was to be re-classified as a large village/small town in the settlement hierarchy
- In the same hierarchy, Dial Post and Littleworth were to be upgraded from unclassified settlements to secondary settlements
- Smaller sites were identified with potential for allocation. In PG they identified land north of The Rosary, land north of The Rise, land at Dunstans Farm and Dunstans with the potential between them for 200 new homes.
- 3.9 ha of land south of Star Road was identified as a standalone extension to Star Road Industrial Estate.

A4. Water Neutrality

On 14 September 2021 Natural England issued a Policy Statement. Their researches showed that water abstraction for drinking water supplies was having a negative impact on wildlife sites in the Arun Valley. Their advice therefore was that no new development should take place that would add to that negative impact. This affected all areas within the Sussex North Water Resource Zone i.e. all of Horsham District, most of Crawley and the northern half of Chichester District. It remains the only area in the country subject to water neutrality.

A5. West Grinstead Neighbourhood Plan

In 2013, the Parish embarked on the preparation of a neighbourhood plan. It was a product of localism. In theory, it gave local communities the ability to decide how to shape their growth; in particular, the number of new houses they took and where they went. In addition, parishes that had a made NP, would be entitled to 25% of any Community Infrastructure Levy

paid on a development. The WGNP was based on brownfield development of the Huffwood Estate. That was subject to its tenants being offered the opportunity to relocate to new units to be built on land to the south of Star Road. That was likely to provide 60-70 residential units. The whole process was long and tortuous. The WGNP was eventually passed by referendum in 2021. It was subject though to a condition that a review be commenced within 12 months of the adoption of the Local Plan or by early 2023, whichever was the sooner.

B REGULATION 19 DRAFT LOCAL PLAN

This is the latest stage in the very drawn-out review of the current local plan. It was published at the beginning of December and was approved by HDC on 11 December to go out for consultation 19 January to 1 March. Its key provisions are:

- B1. Numbers – Due to water neutrality, the overall figures are down significantly. The new housing target for the period 2023-2040 is at least 13,212, an average of 777 new homes a year. This would be delivered on a stepped basis at a rate of:
- Years 1-5 (2023/24 – 2027/28) 480 dwellings p.a.
 - Years 6-17 (2028/29 – 2039/40) 901 dwellings p.a.
- B2. West Grinstead – the good news is that Buck Barn is no longer a Strategic Site. There is no guarantee that it will not come back in the future, but for now it is dead.
- B3. Partridge Green –
- HDC has dropped its proposal to upgrade PG to a large village/small town in the settlement hierarchy. It will remain as a medium village.
 - There are 3 smaller settlement site allocations in PG, which between them are identified to provide at least 255 new homes. They are land north of The Rise (55), land north of The Rosary (80) and land at Dunstons Farm (120).
 - Land south of Star Road has been allocated as an employment site for about 9,000 sq.m. of B2 (general industrial), B8 (storage/distribution) and ancillary office/E(g) uses.
- B4. Dial Post – would be affected slightly in that it would be upgraded in the settlement hierarchy to a secondary settlement. There would be a secondary settlement boundary and there could be an element of infilling within that boundary. Also, there is a proposal to add one additional travelling showpeople plot to the existing 4 plots in Honeybridge Lane.
- B5. Littleworth – Like DP, Littleworth would be upgraded to a secondary settlement, with a secondary settlement boundary and there could therefore be scope for a modest amount of infilling within that boundary. The Littleworth map also includes Jolesfield.

C. Potential Review of the Neighbourhood Plan

Neighbourhood Plans are about more than housing - how many and where - but realistically, that is what most people are interested in. We also have to bear in mind that:

- Any neighbourhood plan has to be consistent with the Local Plan. That is probably almost 18 months away from being adopted. However, the Plan does, to a large extent, pre-empt any NP review, because it not only identifies the sites, but also specifies the numbers.
- Land north of The Rise has been the subject of a planning appeal. A decision should be announced about the end of February, around the time the Regulation 19 consultation ends
- An outline planning application is being processed at the moment for 81 houses on land north of The Rosary. It is probably not going to be determined before we know the outcome of the appeal on The Rise.
- At the time the NP was being finalised, we anticipated HDC giving us a figure to work to for new houses. We did not though anticipate them telling us where they should go. That would have been the main item any review would have considered.
- We have committed to considering a review of the Neighbourhood Plan at our meeting in April.

D. Where now?

We have now embarked on a consultation on the Regulation 19 draft Local Plan. That opened on 19 January. It closes the 1st March.

It is critical though that we understand what the consultation is on and what the questions are that we will be invited to answer. They are all to do with whether the draft Plan is 'sound'.

There is a fourfold test of soundness.

1. Has it been positively prepared? Does it provide a strategy which meets the area's objectively assessed needs and is it informed by discussions with other local authorities so that their unmet need is met, where practical.
2. Is it justified taking into account other alternatives and based on proportionate evidence.
3. Is it effective; essentially is it deliverable over the plan period?
4. Is it consistent with National Policy, enabling the delivery of sustainable development in accordance with the National Planning Policy Framework?

What it isn't about is altogether more parochial matters such as is it reasonable to require Partridge Green to take 255 new homes?

Can you nevertheless register your views on specific matters such as that. The short answer to that is you can say what you want. Whether it will have any effect is another matter; almost certainly not.

After the consultation closes, there would be a Public Inquiry about October 2024. The big question would be, is the draft Plan sound. The Inspector's Report should then be published about March 2025, with a view to the Plan being adopted about May 2025.

The reality is that like it or not, Partridge Green is almost certainly going to end up with 255 new homes in the 3 locations mentioned, plus an extension to Star Road. They will not necessarily happen straightaway. It will probably happen over a number of years, perhaps as many as 5 or 6, because of water neutrality.

David Green

24 January 2024