



Homes
England

Crawley Local Plan 2024 -2040 Examination in Public

Matter 1: Legal Compliance and General Plan
Making
Hearing Statement
Date: November 2023



Issue 2: Duty to Co-operate

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This statement has been prepared by Homes England in its capacity as landowner and promoter of West of Ifield, Horsham identified as part of the emerging Horsham Local Plan review.
- 1.2 This statement supplements Homes England's previous representations to the Crawley Borough Council Local Plan Regulation 19 consultation (dated 16 June 2023). Where relevant separate submissions will be made in relation to Homes England's other interests.

2. **The evidence before this examination includes initial stages of plan-making in Horsham and Mid Sussex that are considering strategic growth proposals 'At Crawley' in respect of West of Ifield and Crabtree Park respectively. Has the duty to co-operate process explored the potential of such growth to have strategic implications for infrastructure within Crawley Borough, for example on the strategic road network, secondary education and wastewater capacity? Is there a risk that the submitted Plan for Crawley to 2040 could impede future sustainable patterns of growth 'At Crawley' or does the submitted Plan sufficiently countenance for this?**

- 2.1 At the Reg19 stage, the Plan and supporting evidence recognised infrastructure constraints, the potential need for cross-boundary considerations, and in some instance pro-actively supported the delivery of such infrastructure (i.e. Crawley Western Link) needed to support sustainable patterns of development both within Crawley and the surrounding area. Homes England raised concerns about how joint working between the Council and neighbouring authorities in the North West Sussex Housing Market Area had been documented and whether there was an appropriate and sufficient level of agreement between them on future working, and consequently whether the Plan was sufficiently effective or legally compliant on this basis.
- 2.2 With the publication of a SoCG between the Council, Horsham District Council (SoCG/07), Mid Sussex District Council (SoCG/08) and West Sussex County Council (SoCG/16), additional evidence now exists, making clear that the Council has been working with authorities to consider cross boundary implications, identification of key issues and is clear about the shared aims of the authorities and how they will work on an ongoing basis in relation to any future strategic allocations on the boundary.
- 2.3 Specifically, in relation to the West of Ifield, Homes England has been actively engaged with the Council and the other relevant authorities as part of an ongoing pre-application process since 2020 which is subject to a joint Planning Performance Agreement. This will ensure that any potential future allocation is planned positively, responds to cross-boundary requirements and takes account of existing infrastructure constraints. Where necessary

Homes England has been working with delivery partners to ensure that identified needs can be incorporated into the emerging proposals or secured through appropriate financial contributions so that necessary infrastructure capacity is available. This includes, but is not limited to the Department for Education, who Homes England have contracted with to deliver a 6FE Secondary School (with expansion capacity to 8FE), West Sussex CC to deliver a 3FE Primary School and the first phase of the Crawley Western Link and ongoing discussions with Thames Water to ensure there is sufficient capacity for West of Ifield. Homes England have also been engaging with NHS Sussex Integrated Care Board to agree how West of Ifield can meet Primary Health Care needs locally.

- 2.4 For these reasons, it is now considered that the Plan has appropriate regard to infrastructure constraints and cross-boundary issues and therefore the previous concerns regarding the sufficiency of consideration of cross-boundary issues and infrastructure delivery have been addressed.
- 2.5 Notwithstanding this, we remain concerned about how the now clarified duty-cooperate position and agreed aims for joint working between the authorities is currently reflected in the Plan and whether as drafted, the Plan provides effective mechanisms for achieving what is expected of the authority.
- 2.6 As detailed in our response to Matter 2, it is Homes England's view that changes to the Plan are required to reflect the positive joint working position, support the effective delivery of the chosen spatial strategy. This will ensure that the Plan does not impede the delivery of strategic urban extensions that provide the most sustainable option to meet Crawley's identified development needs¹ and bring forward essential infrastructure – supporting development both within and outside of Crawley – over the Plan period. It is, therefore, crucial, CBC positively engages with the Duty to facilitate and not hinder such development.

¹ Pages 193 -195 of the Sustainability Appraisal – Spatial Strategy Options Appraisal set out the preferred strategy to sustainably meets development needs for Crawley over the Plan period, confirming that the strategy requires effective joint working with neighbouring authorities to *“continue to work with others to encourage allocations of land outside the borough boundary to accommodate all of Crawley's emerging housing and employment needs, as well as potentially those of the wider area.”*