



Homes  
England

# Crawley Local Plan 2024 -2040 Examination in Public

Matter 2: Spatial Strategy

Hearing Statement

Date: November 2023



# Issue 2: Whether the Plan is justified and effective in relation to the prospect of development adjacent to Crawley

## 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 a strategic site in 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 land interests.

## 2. **Is the plan sufficiently flexible and sensitive to potential options for growth 'At Crawley' that may occur in Horsham and Mid Sussex districts? Would plan review be an appropriate mechanism if strategic growth around Crawley was determined to be a sound spatial strategy for neighbouring authorities?**

- 2.1 The draft Local Plan is clear that a number of identified development needs cannot be met over the Plan period. Para 4.1 of the Unmet Needs Topic Paper (DS/TP/01) and relevant sections within it are clear that while opportunities will continue to be explored to meeting these needs within the Crawley boundary, it is expected that these needs would be best met outside of the borough in adjacent developments. This approach is supported by the Sustainability Appraisal<sup>1</sup> which identifies the need for effective working with neighbouring authorities as the most sustainable and deliverable strategy over the Plan period.
- 2.2 Para 4.5 of the Topic Paper sets out the work that has already been ongoing in relation to exploring opportunities to the West of Ifield, a position re-enforced by the agreed objectives for the scheme set out in the Statement of Common Ground (SoCG) with Horsham District Council (SG07).
- 2.3 For the reasons set out in previous representations and explored further in response to Question 3 below, the plan requires a strong commitment and positive approach to facilitating development on or close to the boundary and therefore in its current form, the Council's proposed approach is considered prematurely prejudicial to potential allocation / schemes coming forward on or close to the boundary and therefore a more positively

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<sup>1</sup> Pages 193 -195 of the Sustainability Appraisal – Spatial Strategy Options Appraisal set out the preferred strategy to sustainably meet 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.*”

worded, flexible approach is required to ensure that the plan can deliver the chosen spatial strategy and to ensure the consideration of any future proposals are assessed on the most up to date evidence and at the appropriate time.

2.4 Given there is sufficient justification for considering urban extensions and the preferred spatial strategy supports this and it has been adequately tested as part of the Plan preparation, Homes England do not consider that any future allocation / delivery of a scheme would trigger the need for a Plan review,, but the ultimate decision would be for the Council. As set out in the Council's evidence, they are already co-operating with neighbouring authorities on strategic cross-boundary issues and unmet needs and therefore it is expected that they will be appropriately considered as part of any allocation process in the relevant authority and would therefore be unlikely to significantly change the overall approach of the Local Plan up to 2040.

2.5 It is therefore considered that the need to review the Plan is unlikely, however, if a review was considered necessary, the proposed monitoring and review mechanisms set out in Para 1.34 – 1.37 of the Local Plan is sufficient to address any change in circumstance resulting from decisions on strategic allocations outside of the Borough.

**3. Is the proposed content in the Plan at paragraph 12.23 on the circumstances where development proposals adjacent to Crawley will be supported justified? Will it be effective in influencing spatial strategies or adjoining development proposals at either the plan preparation or decision-making stages in neighbouring authorities?**

3.1 The NPPF is clear that authorities should maintain effective co-operation and ongoing joint working between strategic policy making authorities to help meet development needs where these cannot be met wholly within the plan area. This is particularly relevant to the Crawley area, where closely drawn boundaries and other constraints significantly limits the ability for Crawley to meet its development needs (housing and other key infrastructure) over the lifetime of the plan.

3.2 As set out in our previous representations, the need for ongoing co-operation in relation to housing, other unmet needs and delivery of cross boundary infrastructure is set out in the Council's 'Duty to Co-operate Statement' (KD/DtC/02). This position has since been further clarified in the recently published publication of the Statement of Common Ground with Horsham District Council (SG/07) and further duty to cooperate correspondence with Horsham District Council set out in Appendix K of the Duty to Cooperate Statement (KD/DtC/01c).

3.3 While these acknowledge the need for the authorities to consider cross boundary issues and sets out a commitment to joint working on any scheme to the West of Crawley and agree a number of high level principles to inform it, the SoCG remains absent of any commitment and there is a clear expectation around the need to continue to explore meeting unmet needs across the North West Sussex Strategic Housing Market Area (NWSHMA) and the importance of these being kept under review over the life of the Plan.

3.4 Homes England's view therefore remains that unless modified, the approach set out in Para 12.23 is not justified nor effective, as it would restrict the ability for Crawley to have meaningful discussions with neighbouring authorities on meeting unmet needs in as much as:

- i) the current wording, while supporting urban extensions, places a number of restrictive criteria, that are not worded positively which could frustrate rather than actively facilitate opportunities, in the most sustainable locations that have the ability to meet unmet needs adjacent or close to the Crawley boundary. This would limit the ability for the authority to engage constructively, positively and with an open mind, with a view to meaningfully address cross boundary issues;
- ii) does not provide a sufficiently flexible framework within which the authority can consider how best to meet unmet needs in the most sustainable way and could prejudice the ability to cooperate effectively as part of the preparation of adjoining Local Plans or the authorities own Local Plan reviews in the future;
- iii) pre-determines the authority's position on adjacent development and/or the need of supporting infrastructure, without due consideration of relevant up to date evidence or full understanding of issues that may need to be addressed at a particular time a scheme is allocated or application brought forward;
- iv) sets a number of expectations about what should be secured without providing an appropriate level of definition or without having the necessary control over any site delivery, meaning that the requirements are ambiguous and overly subjective which is likely to limit the ability to engage constructively with neighbouring authorities or scheme promoters in relation to future development proposals.;

3.5 While concern remains overall about the inclusion and current intent of Para 12.23, we have previously set out the minimum required changes to a number of the criterion considered necessary to make the approach in Para 12.23 more flexible, ensuring it is meaningful and effective in meeting development needs identified in the Plan.

**4. Is paragraph 12.23 justified at point (ii) in seeking/requiring the completion of a Western Link prior to the (first) completion of dwellings? Is that supported by the available evidence base?**

4.1 Homes England support the delivery of the Crawley Western Multi-Modal Transport Link ("Crawley Western Link") and welcome the ambition to support its delivery at the earliest opportunity. Homes England are pro-actively working with the relevant local authorities to bring forward the first phase of the multi-modal link as part of our West of Ifield proposals.

4.2 In our earlier representations, we set out how the supporting transport evidence ES/ST/01a (Scenario 3) does not support the need to fully deliver the Crawley Western Link over the

plan period. Even when taking account of a robust and overly optimistic growth potential to the West of Crawley over the Plan period (3,750 rather than 3,000 – 25% more than is currently being promoted as part of the Horsham Local Plan) and an overall higher housing figure within Crawley than is currently being planned for [+33%], there is no demonstrable case to deliver the link before 2040.

- 4.3 While further sensitivity testing has been undertaken since the Reg19 consultation, which has not changed the overall conclusion of the need and timing of the Crawley Western Link. It remains that previous testing for potential triggers for the delivery of the Crawley Western Link has significant headroom when compared to realistic housing and employment delivery both inside and outside of the Borough over the Plan period – even when extending the Plan timeframe to 2040. As part of the emerging Transport modelling work for a future planning application at West of Ifield, a cumulative transport impact assessment has been undertaken that considers the impact arising from future growth associated with the Crawley Borough Council (CBC) Local Plan, Gatwick Airport Ltd (GAL) Development Control Order (DCO) application and the delivery of 3,000 new homes and associated uses. Consistent with the CBC sensitivity testing (Scenario 2 plus GAL DCO), the modelling concludes that all but the Ifield Avenue / Warren Drive and Ifield Avenue / Stagelands junctions work within capacity. Any future planning application at West of Ifield would include mitigation for these junctions, which has already been discussed with the relevant authorities during pre-application discussions.
- 4.4 Therefore, even with further sensitivity, the assessment set out in the transport evidence supporting the Plan and conclusions remains sufficiently robust and does not justify the delivery of the full Crawley Western Link ahead of any development to the West of Crawley.
- 4.5 Indeed, if there was sufficient evidence to justify the delivery of the full link, it would be expected that the requirements of Para 12.23 (ii) would be set out in the Transport – Road section in the Crawley Infrastructure Delivery Plan (KD/IP/01) and subsequently identified in the Infrastructure Delivery Schedule (KD/IP/07). However, that does not conclude the need for the Western Link, instead confirming that many of the highway impacts are “*capable of being addressed through sustainable mitigation measures, rather than physical changes to the highway network*”, the identified physical highway improvements do not include the delivery of the multi-modal link and that only a route for its future delivery should be “*safeguarded*”.
- 4.6 Furthermore, in considering whether the requirement for full delivery of the link is required or agreed to with neighbouring authorities, it is noted that while the SoCG with Horsham District Council acknowledges the need for the delivery of infrastructure to support the scheme, Para 7(d) makes clear that this should be “*either on commencement or with delivery targets set out in a legal agreement*”. Furthermore, specifically in relation to the Western Link, Para 7(f) it states that while a new route is required to mitigate the impacts of the development, the “*new route must not be an obstacle to the delivery of a comprehensive new corridor link to the west of Crawley...*”, again indicating the full link is not required prior to occupation. The absence of any specific reference to the need to deliver the multi-modal

link in full, ahead of any new development west of Crawley, in the recent SoCG with West Sussex Council (SoCG/16) is also noted, inconsistent with para.12.23 (ii).

- 4.7 Therefore, at this stage it is clear that there is no agreement between the authorities about the need to deliver the Crawley Western Link in full at the outset, but to ensure future delivery is not prejudiced, contrary to the Council's stated position.
- 4.8 Without the necessary evidence, the conditional requirement Para 12.23 (ii) places on future development proposals and /or other delivery partners cannot be justified and as set out above is unlikely to be effective as it could restrict the ability for authorities to work collaboratively and constructively on cross-boundary issues. While any future development to the West of Crawley (either in isolation or in-combination) above that currently tested may trigger the need for an extended multi-modal link at a future point in time, Policy ST4 provides sufficient safeguarding to enable its delivery, and it is more appropriate for relevant triggers / delivery timescales to be considered either as part of the relevant plan making process of neighbouring authorities or through the determination of specific scheme proposals.
- 4.9 In order to be sound, it is suggested that Para 12.23 (ii) is amended as below to allow for a scheme that is based on detailed design and evidence at the time any proposal is being considered:

*ii) If development is proposed to the western side of Crawley, the scoping, design and delivery of the ~~comprehensive~~ Western Multi-modal Transport Link (connecting from the A264 to the A23, north of County Oak, Policy ST4) should be informed by transport evidence and support wider objectives, including enabling high quality sustainable transport opportunities for both existing and new communities. The appropriate phasing of any link, in part or full, should be informed by a further transport assessment either as part of any site allocation and/or future planning application. ~~agreed and provided prior to the completion of properties unless otherwise agreed by the three local authorities: Horsham District, Crawley Borough and West Sussex County Council.~~*

**5. Does criterion xi) at paragraph 12.23 need to be amended to ensure consistency with national planning policy at NPPF paragraph 180c) which caveats the loss or deterioration of irreplaceable habitats with “unless there are wholly exceptional reasons, and a suitable compensation strategy exists”?**

- 5.1 As set out in our previous representations, we consider additional wording should be included to ensure it is consistent with national policy. The criterion should be updated to be clear that development that results in the loss of ancient woodland / veteran trees should be refused “unless there are wholly exceptional reasons and a suitable compensation strategy exists” in line with NPPF Para 180 (c).