

IN THE MATTER OF THE HORSHAM DISTRICT PLAN

Submission by Itchingfield Parish Council

Re: Matter 1, Issue 1

1. Itchingfield Parish is a parish within the Horsham District.
2. The parish does not yet have a “made” Neighbourhood Plan; preparation of this is in its final stages and a referendum is expected to be held on 30th January 2025.
3. In the draft Plan, Itchingfield Parish allocates two sites for possible development. These sites were chosen after extensive research, planning advice, public consultation and application of basic planning principles.
4. The draft Horsham District Plan allocates two further sites in the Parish for possible development.
5. The imposition of development sites in a Parish by the District is, for the residents of the parish, a matter of considerable concern.
6. Under the National Planning Policy Framework, there is a duty on the District to co-operate with bodies, such as its constituent parishes, in the preparation of the Plan.
7. Horsham District Council has failed to do this.
8. Co-operation means more than passing information and giving regular updates. It implies a duty to work openly and constructively with the Parish to ensure that the developing Plan is the product of joint working and collaborative working.
9. Horsham did hold workshops for its constituent parishes to talk through the process of the preparation of the Plan. At those workshops mention was made about the need to seek further development sites, in order to deliver a proper housing supply until the end of the Plan period, which was 10 years beyond the scope of the Neighbourhood plans.

10. However, at no stage was there any consultation with this Parish about the selection of additional sites. Such a conversation would have been essential if arbitrary site selection was to be avoided.
11. The imposition of additional sites without seeking co-operation and advice from the Parish is frankly astonishing. Such conduct smacks of totalitarian government and rides roughshod over the wishes of the residents of this parish.
12. We shall be making separate representations about the selection of the two sites involved and do not deal with that issue here. However it might be of interest that one of the selected sites was overwhelmingly rejected by parish residents when a consultation exercise was carried out in 2018, on the basis that development of that site would destroy the rural aspect of the village.
13. There is no good reason why HDC could not have held discussions with this Parish to consider additional sites and to benefit from the local knowledge of the Parish Council. There is no good reason why sites that were being considered could not have been shared with this Parish for advice and feedback. Confidentiality is not an excuse; HDC will have contacted the owners of the sites in question to ascertain the availability of the sites for development. There is no good reason why HDC chose to behave in such an arbitrary and high-handed manner over this issue.
14. For the above reasons we submit that HDC has failed in its duty to co-operate and therefore the progress of the Plan should fail.