

## **Matter 4 – Conserving and Enhancing the Natural Environment**

Matter 4, Issue 2 – Whether the approach to the natural environment, biodiversity, landscape, coalescence, countryside, green and blue infrastructure and local green space is justified, effective, consistent with national policy and positively prepared?

Q3. *Is Strategic Policy 15: Settlement Coalescence sound?*

*c) Is there any conflict between this policy and others in the Plan which allocate sites for development?*

- 4.2.1 As set out in its formal representation to the Horsham District Local Plan (HDLP) Regulation 19 consultation, Crawley Borough Council (CBC) supports the importance of ensuring against the coalescence of Crawley and Horsham in Policy 15 and paragraph 6.27. CBC strongly advises that incremental and ribbon development between the two towns must be avoided and any approved strategic development would clearly define the urban edge with fixed natural features and/or permanent rural/natural land uses.
- 4.2.2 This is confirmed in the recently adopted Crawley Borough Local Plan 2023 to 2040 (CBLP), October 2024, paragraph 12.23iii and 12.23x: [Crawley Borough Local Plan 2023 to 2040.pdf](#). This confirms that housing development through urban extensions on or close to Crawley’s administrative borough boundaries will be supported by CBC where it can be shown that... *“iii. Crawley’s character as a compact town within a countryside setting, developed on a neighbourhood principle which maximises the use of sustainable transport is maintained...”* and *“x. Development has been designed and planned to carefully address both its connections to existing Crawley neighbourhoods as well as the wider countryside beyond, providing defensible boundaries which both prevents inappropriate merging of settlements or the effects of urban sprawl and ensures the careful stitching together of existing and new built form where appropriate...”*.
- 4.2.3 In considering the soundness of the CBLP, the Inspectors concluded in their Final Report, paragraphs 58 and 59, pages 18 to 19: [Crawley Borough Local Plan Inspectors' final report September 2024.pdf](#) that they *“consider the Plan is justified in setting out the position of Crawley Borough Council, as a local planning authority, with regards to development ‘At Crawley’. Prudently, the Council recognises that it cannot set policy in its Plan to materially affect what would be a decision for another local planning authority. However, given any strategic growth on the edge of Crawley would give rise to impacts on Crawley it is justified that the submitted Plan sets out content on “Urban Extensions at Crawley” including Crawley-centric considerations”* and *“These considerations are set out at paragraph 12.23 of the submitted Plan. As submitted the Plan articulates what would be required for Crawley to support adjacent growth proposals, that is not the same as setting policy requirements. Nonetheless, they comprise reasonable expectations for sustainable development given the immediate impact of wider growth ‘At Crawley’, particularly on matters such as character and infrastructure, would be keenly experienced by communities in Crawley. On this issue, we find the Plan’s approach to likely peripheral growth in neighbouring authorities to be sound”*.
- 4.2.4 CBC believes the only way to fully achieve this is to establish a 30-year vision, clearly defining the land between Crawley and the settlements in Horsham, including Horsham town, in order to understand the long-term intentions, beyond the Plan period, for

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locations “at Crawley”. This position is set out in more detail in CBC’s Written Statement to Matter 2, Issue 1.