

Matter 9 – Sites Allocated for Development in the Plan

Matter 9, Issue 1 – Whether the strategic sites allocated in the Plan and associated policies are justified, effective, consistent with national policy and positively prepared?

My name is Denise Campbell. I have been a resident of Billingshurst since 1985, and I am Chair for the Billingshurst Community Partnership (BCP) and also Chair of the Billingshurst Surgery Patient Participation Group (PPG)

The BCP is an organisation that is an umbrella group for a number of local voluntary sector groups, including the Lions, Billigreen, Local History Society, Choral Society, Sing for Pleasure, Weald School, Scouts & Guides, Station Road Gardens, St Mary's church and several pre-schools, the Community Larder as well as having individual members. Therefore, it represents a wide cross section of the community.

The Partnership has a good reputation locally through its consistent community engagement and activity over the past 20 years. We have been instrumental in delivering most of the community infrastructure facilities of the last 25 years. Namely, Jubilee Fields, Fishing lake, Sports Pavilion, WAKOO's child care facility. Our ability to support our community is being severely curtailed and hampered by the lack of infrastructure provision by developers and HDC over the past 25 years. We need more facilities from which we can deliver activity and offer services to our community.

I am not a Town Planner but I have 40 years of knowledge of Billingshurst as a resident, and 20 years as a community leader. My qualification and knowledge in these areas are undisputable. My comments relate to HA4 only:

1. The views of the community have not been given enough weight or consideration and HDC has repeatedly ignored the views of not only residents but the Parish Council, the Sports Association, the Community Partnership, Surgery and Weald School.
2. HDC have failed to prove the suitability of site SA111 (East; Bellway Crest) as being superior or of being able to offer more to this community than site SA744 (West; Highwood).
3. The assessment by HDC of the 2 sites is not balanced or objective. They have not considered both sites in a proportionate manner. It seems to me, (as a layperson), that this has been a lazy, rushed, tick box exercise rather than scrutinising the details of both proposals when viewed side by side.
4. There are inconsistencies in the approach in several major areas of the Draft Plan especially with regards to education, transport, health, leisure & recreation and community facilities. For example: Both sites are pretty much of equal distance from the High Street shopping area and schools; Both are close to the A272 roads (albeit in different directions) and yet SA118 is considered to be more favourable than SA744 with regards to transport. This is despite the fact that SA118 has the added disadvantage of the main railway line adjacent to its boundary which residents will have to cross in order to access the main parts of Billingshurst.
5. Is it even possible to get agreements with Network Rail within the timescales of the Draft Plan? A new foot bridge or underpass will need to be built; the current crossing is unmanned and open track. Is the cost of doing this viable for Bellway Crest? Not my concern or expertise I know, but it is for Planners to consider I would hope.

6. SA118 does not meet HDC Affordable Housing quota requirements

Q5. Should Policies HA2-HA4 explicitly state whether or not a masterplan will be required as part of any planning application and whether such masterplans should include details of the phasing of development based on the development constraints and infrastructure provision?

As indicated previously, I am not a Town Planner but I do have a view on this and the answer should be YES. Bellway Crest does not have a good reputation or track record on delivering infrastructure in Billingshurst despite claiming that they do in the Draft Plan. This needs to be challenged and rectified or, at the very least, demonstrated with evidence to support this claim. We were promised a new Primary School and Dental Surgery on the Amblehurst Development; neither of which has been built and the allocated plots have now been built on with additional housing, increasing the number of houses beyond the original planning application considerably.

Q11 Is Strategic Policy HA4 Land East of Billingshurst sound?

f) Are the infrastructure requirement identified reflective of the latest evidence, justified and effective

1. The evidence that HDC and the developer are using is to justify the Draft Plan is too old to be relevant in 2024/25. It is the same data that was presented in 2020 for the Regulations 18 document. The Regs 18 is 6 years old. The figures used for that document are from the 2011 census, (13 years old) which records the population of Billingshurst as being 8,232. Since that time, the population of Billingshurst increased to 10,641 (census 2021) and to circa 2,241 now. The increase between 2021 and 2023 is largely due to the additional 550 houses built at Amblehurst Green (Bellway) where no additional or enhancement to health or educational or community infrastructure has been provided by the developer.
2. The Draft LP had relied too heavily on old information and data from 2018 in order to get the Draft LP through quickly. The provision of healthcare needs must be based on projections taking into consideration any proposed new housing development. This has not been done. In 2018 there were 11,028 registered patients at the surgery. By the end of December 2023 there were 13906 patients. There are currently 13954 registered patients (October 2024). The surgery believes that the full impact of the new Amblehurst Green development has yet to be felt. (ie many patients haven't applied to register yet). These figures represent a **26% increase in registered patients in a 5 year period** with no additional or enhanced healthcare provision during that time. Any additional development will increase this percentage even more unless more healthcare infrastructure is factored into the Draft Plan.
3. There needs to be up to date and relevant data provided by both HDC and the developer to substantiate their claim that the existing healthcare facilities are capable of meeting the demands of Billingshurst population when an additional circa 2000 people will be living here.
4. There is no mention in the report of the additional residents who will be living in a new housing development planned in Barnes Green who will also want to use the Billingshurst

surgery. There is no evidence that any forward planning, due diligence has been done for the Draft Plan. If there has, no residents or community groups have been involved in this process. HDC has not sought the views of the PPG, surgery management, PCN, ICB or NHS Sussex

5. Billingshurst surgery provides healthcare service for many satellite villages as well as a significant proportion of houses in Broadbridge Heath (5 miles away). This is because HDC planners failed to ensure that adequate healthcare provisions were provided as part of the overall development plan there (in Broadbridge Heath). This must not be allowed to happen again.

6. Billingshurst residents are aware of the national housing crisis and would not object (so much) to having more housing forced upon us if we get something back in return. Development over the past 20 years has failed to do this with our current infrastructure at breaking point. The BCP is unable to increase and improve its service offer and engagement with our community precisely because the infrastructure has not kept pace with the growth in our community. As an example, we run a weekly Community Larder. The only space that was available to us was a room in the School house at the Weald School. This happened only because the Weald School is a Partnership organisation. We are fortunate to have been offered this space for one morning a week. If we had more space we would be able to open the Community Larder more days of the week and thereby help more people; The Sports Association if full to capacity, (their available capacity not having increased for 20 years), as are most of the other community buildings; WAKOO's our charity based child care organisation has a waiting list of 500 families because of a lack of space; their after school club for 8 – 11 year olds has to be in an old and unsuitable building which is not designed to accommodate young people; Our breast feeding group were meeting in an unused warehouse on one of the industrial estates because there is no capacity at the surgery to accommodate them. Is this really what anyone moving into Billingshurst and buying a new house would want for their families!

Communities should be more than just a place for people to sleep. If communities are to thrive and survive they must also be places where people want to work, shop, go to school and enjoy the leisure and recreational offer as well as being supported with additional services from outside where necessary. Billingshurst, as the biggest community in the district outside of Horsham Town Centre, has a long way to go to achieve this.

We used to be a rural village with a lack of services, (1985 circa 4,500 people), we are now a deprived urban town with a lack of services and facilities. Getting this plan right for our community is vital and the views of community leaders and the people who live and care about Billingshurst should not be ignored.

HDC's refusal to listen to and engage adequately with the community puts them in direct contradiction to their own policies. It must be concluded therefore that the Draft Plan is neither justified, effective nor consistent with National Policy, nor has it been positively prepared given that the data used is too old to be relevant or useful.