

Horsham District Local Plan (2023-2040)

Hearing Statement Relating to Matter 2
On Behalf of Vistry Group PLC
Relating to Bridgewater Farm, Billingshurst

November 2024

Vistry Group

Gillings
Planning

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Client

Vistry Group PLC

Date of Issue

22nd November 2024

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This Hearing Statement has been prepared on behalf of our client Vistry Group PLC ('Vistry') in response to the publication of the Horsham District Local Plan 2023-2040 (the 'Plan').
- 1.2 Our client previously made representations at Regulation 18 and Regulation 19 stages of the Local Plan preparation.
- 1.3 Vistry have land interests within the Plan area at a site known as Bridgewater Farm, Billingshurst.

Billingshurst

- 1.4 The Billingshurst site is identified in the image below, located to the south of Newbridge Road. The site measures approximately 10.44ha and is currently pastoral fields that adjoin the settlement boundary of Billingshurst to the east. The site forms a logical and sustainable extension to the village and could provide approximately 200 dwellings, including much needed affordable housing.



Aerial photograph showing the Billingshurst site outlined in red (by courtesy of Google ©)

- 1.5 The site was submitted as part of the call for sites in 2018 as part of a Broad Location within the Northern West Sussex Housing Market area (SHLAA reference SA642)

This Statement

- 1.6 This brief Hearing Statement has been prepared in accordance with the prevailing planning policy and guidance, in particular the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), September 2023 and the Planning Practice Guidance (PPG).
- 1.7 We do not seek to unnecessarily repeat points raised in our comprehensive representations, but we have answered the questions posed by the Planning Inspector in the Matters, Issues and Questions (14th October 2024) where we feel it would be helpful to do so.
- 1.8 Gillings Planning, on behalf of the Vistry Group PLC wish to take a full and active part in the relevant Hearing sessions relating to their interests in the site.

2.0 Our Responses to the Matters, Issues and Questions

Matter 2 – Plan Period, Vision, Objectives and the Spatial Strategy

Matter 2, Issue 1 – Is the context and Plan period clear and would the strategic policies of the Plan look ahead over a minimum of 15 years from adoption?

Q2. Paragraph 1.2 of the Plan says the Plan considers a longer term context up to 30 years for strategic scale development. Which specific parts or policies of the Plan specifically considers this longer term context e.g. the “Strategic Site Allocations” and is the Plan effective in this regard?

2.1 We would support the Council and support modifications to the Plan if it adequately considered a longer term context for strategic scale development. At present, we consider that the Plan does not address the housing needs of the District for the next 15 years. Some future gazing, and acknowledgement that the next local plan will need to focus more development around settlements would help set the scene for the next local plan review and would help site promoters and communities to prepare.

2.2 Matter 2, Issue 3 – Whether the Spatial Strategy and overarching policies for growth and change are justified, effective, consistent with national policy and positively prepared?

Q4. Is Strategic Policy 3: Settlement Expansion sound?

b) Is it justified and effective in terms of the approach to development outside of built-up area boundaries, secondary settlement boundaries or sites allocated in the Plan?

2.3 As set out in our representations, and not repeated here, we consider that SP3 is flawed and must be reconsidered to be found sound. We have suggested modifications in our representations that would increase flexibility that might assist the Council to meet its housing needs as they will inevitably evolve over the years ahead.