



Appraisal of Potential Strategic Development Site Option 8: Adversane/North Heath Background Document to the Core Strategy Review Consultation Document

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1 General Introduction

- 1.1 The Horsham District Core Strategy sets out a framework for planning the future of the District, including how the District Council intends to meet the Government's requirements for development. The existing Core Strategy covers the period to 2018, but the Council now needs to review the Core Strategy and look even further ahead in light of the South East Plan being approved.
- 1.2 The first stage of the review process is the consultation document 'Leading Change in Partnership to 2026 and Beyond', which sets out some of the key issues in planning the future of the District and options for how they can be addressed and how the Council's development requirements can be met. A number of potential strategic development sites are identified and this Background Document is an appraisal of one of those sites.
- 1.3 This Background Document has been prepared to inform the Core Strategy Review Consultation Document and to identify and articulate the background information and issues associated with the potential strategic development site. It reflects the site assessment work undertaken to date by the Council and incorporates responses from key delivery stakeholders, where appropriate.
- 1.4 This Background Document forms part of the evidence base that informs the consultation on the Core Strategy Review Consultation Document 'Leading change in partnership to 2026 and beyond'.



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2 Site Specific Background Information

- 2.1 The South East Plan identifies nine sub-regions. Part of Horsham District, the northern and eastern part, lies within the Gatwick Sub-Region, with the rest of the District being part of the 'Rest of West Sussex' area. This site is within the **Rest of West Sussex** area and would therefore contribute to the requirement for 3,800 new homes in the Rest of the District.
- 2.2 The potential strategic development site is situated between Billingshurst and North Heath and Adversane and Pulborough. It is bounded by the A29 to the west, Adversane Lane to the North, Broadford Bridge Road to the east and Gay Street to the south.
- 2.3 The site is next to the A29 trunk road and the Pulborough to London Railway line runs through it from south to north. It is also relatively close to the settlements of Pulborough and Billingshurst, two of the larger settlements in the District classified as Category 1 in Policy CP5 of the current Core Strategy DPD. However, there is very little development currently present at the site other than that primarily associated with agricultural use.
- 2.4 The land is relatively flat with a mixed landscape of small scale, intricate patterns of pasture which contrast with some fairly large scale open agricultural land. Although there is the presence of the busy A29 the landscape beyond quickly becomes rural and peaceful. Long views are generally restricted by the skyline of hedgerow trees and woodland.
- 2.4 Important features that are prominent at the site include the intricate pattern of hedgerows, which are characteristic of the area. Beeding Copse is a large area of designated ancient woodland which lies equidistant from North Heath and Adversane. There is also a much smaller area of designated ancient woodland at Steepwood Copse which lies immediately south of Adversane Lane.
- 2.5 The site has been assessed previously for its development potential in the Housing Development - Preliminary Evaluation Document (2000) which was written as part of the evidence base to inform the first review of the Horsham District Local Plan. It was considered as part of that assessment that development would destroy the tranquil rural character of the area and it would be costly to achieve the necessary highway improvements to allow for substantial development in the location. The site was not therefore pursued for development at that time. However, in light of the need to meet housing targets set out in the South East Plan the Council is re-evaluating and proposing previously assessed sites that have development potential of which this is one.



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3 Constraints and Opportunities

- 3.1 This section considers a range of issues relating to the potential strategic development site. They have been identified following consultations with key delivery stakeholders, as recommended by national planning policy guidance.

Landscape

- 3.2 The Horsham District Council Landscape Character Assessment (2003) shows that the site is situated in two distinct character areas F1 Pulborough, Chiltington and Thakeham Farmlands, and J1 Billingshurst and North Heath Farmlands.
- 3.3 F1 touches a small swathe of land to the south of the site and is characterised as an undulating mixed farmland landscape of arable and horticulture, with small areas of pasture. It has a varied hedgerow pattern, fragmented in parts with a few small woodlands. The character area is considered moderately sensitive to change particularly from large scale housing developments and road improvements.
- 3.4 The majority of the site is within character area J1 which is characterised by mostly gently undulating landform on Weald Clay and many small to medium sized pasture fields, enclosed by a strong network of hedgerows, and by small to medium sized woodlands, and mature hedgerow oaks. As a result it is semi-enclosed landscape, only occasionally allowing longer views. The character area is considered moderately sensitive to change particularly from any large scale housing or commercial development.
- 3.5 Beeding Copse is a designated ancient woodland present at the site. It is noted through the planning system that there is an obligation to protect ancient woodland from damage or loss by development. It is further noted that **Natural England** has recently issued advice on ancient woodland which aims to help local authorities meet these obligations and assist in the assessment of the possible effects of development.

Biodiversity and Ecology

- 3.6 Environmental work that has been undertaken at the site has shown that mature hedgerow networks and groups of trees present at the site, particularly at Beeding's Copse and Steepwood Copse, are likely to be species rich. The mature hedgerow networks which link with groups of trees are also considered important wildlife corridors in the area, but it is not considered that this site is part of a prime biodiverse area. There is however potential for habitat restoration or enhancement. There are no habitats of protected species present at the site although it has the potential to accommodate barn owls, bats and badgers.

Water Resource and Quality

- 3.7 The **EA** highlights that there is volumetric capacity available at Pulborough Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW) under the terms of the current consent. However, there is limited capacity available at Billingshurst Waste Water Treatment Works (WWTW). Major development would require enlarging and/or upgrading the works and the consent to discharge into the Par Brook and River Arun would need to be reassessed. Any new development must not add to the number of discharges.

Air Quality and Noise

- 3.8 Due to its rural location assessments have shown that the site's air quality is generally good, however it does deteriorate to the west alongside the A29 and railway line. The site is quiet and tranquil for the most part although becomes noisy to the west in the vicinity of the A29 and railway line.



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Physical Infrastructure

- 3.9 **Scotia Gas Networks** advises that in general it can provide gas to any location that is required, be it through reinforcing an existing network or creating a new network by extending medium/intermediate pressure pipelines.
- 3.10 **Southern Water** supplies water and wastewater services to this area and considers that there is no fundamental reason why this area would not be suitable for development, from a water infrastructure perspective. Major off site mains reinforcements will be required and the development may contribute to the need for additional water infrastructure resources.
- 3.12 The Council has been informed by **Southern Water** that there is no sewer capacity to accommodate development in this location and therefore the developer will need to make adequate provision for a connection to the nearest point of capacity.
- 3.13 **Southern Water** advises that the Pulborough WWTW has the ability to provide for up to 500 additional dwellings, subject to the extension of the existing treatment capacity and that the Billingshurst WWTW has the ability to provide for up to 400 additional dwellings, subject to the extension of the existing treatment capacity.

Highways and Transport

- 3.14 The **Highways Agency (HA)** is concerned over the cumulative impact of the potential strategic development site on the trunk road network. The **HA** would wish to consider this cumulative impact as part of a review of the transport modelling for the area. If it is determined that development at any of the potential strategic development sites has a material impact on the trunk road network, then the **HA** would expect the developer to make a proportionate contribution to any necessary improvements. Irrespective of any material impact on the trunk road network that may be identified, the **HA** would, in line with Government policy, look for significant sustainable travel initiatives with any strategic development location that could also address the level of car-based travel from existing development.
- 3.15 **West Sussex County Council (WSSC)** highlights the need for comprehensive Transport Assessments in accordance with national guidance. Extensive transport modelling work or financial contributions to access existing transport models is also likely to be required.

Education

- 3.19 The development of 4,000 homes in this location would not be a sufficient size to support the provision of a new secondary school. Therefore the development would be relying on the existing schools in Pulborough and Billingshurst. **WSSC** advice is that secondary pupil provision could meet an increase of 300-400 new dwellings in the Pulborough location. In the Billingshurst catchment area the capability of The Weald School to expand on its current site is severely limited and the need for new pupil places, given that the school is currently at capacity and trends indicate that this will continue, will have to be met elsewhere.
- 3.20 However, **WSSC** go on to state that at present much of this is at best draft strategic approach and would need to be considered in the context of a wider Places Strategy and the necessary consultation with schools and their partners.

Library Service

- 3.22 **WSSC** general approach to future library provision is that any new large scale community that has a distinctive community focus such as a community centre should have library provision as part of that community building rather than stand alone



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buildings. As regards further information on library provision it would be necessary to see the nature of the community and then plan accordingly.

Wastes Management Services

- 3.23 The potential location is within the catchment of the Household Waste Recycling Site (HWRS) at Billingshurst. **WSCC** believe that at this time the Billingshurst HWRS would have the capacity to cope with additional development, although this would need to be kept under review.
- 3.24 The Council is undertaking ongoing consultations with a wide number of key stakeholders, as is required by Government guidance. This consultation forms part of the Core Strategy Review process and will inform the preparation of the next stage of the Review, the Preferred Strategy.



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4. Details of the Proposal

- 4.1 The Council is required to consider all the potential sites for strategic development and has identified a number that have not been put forward for consideration by developers of which the Adversane/North Heath site is one.
- 4.2 The following sets out the Council's conclusions and reasons for putting this site forward as a potential strategic development site.
- 4.3 This site is being proposed by the Council as a potential strategic development site of approximately 4,000 dwellings. The potential for a substantial development in this area has been identified on the basis that it is served by a railway line and has direct access onto the A29 trunk road. A new settlement in this location could provide a new railway station with rail services to Horsham, Crawley, Gatwick and London and a high quality bus service to Billingshurst and Pulborough. The site is also adjacent to the Brinsbury College that has aspirations to grow into a Centre of Rural Excellence that has been supported by a recently adopted Supplementary Planning Document (SPD). This would provide employment and education opportunities for the site.
- 4.4 Development would have to be of the large scale proposed in order to be sustainable enough to provide a range of local services and facilities, including employment areas, primary schools, shops, medical services and open space. Development of a small part of the site would be difficult to contain because the land is generally flat, crossed by an intricate pattern of hedgerows and contains no major roads other than the A29 to the west. Access would therefore have to be taken from the A29, which would necessitate a crossing over the railway. This would be costly and would make any small scale development unviable.
- 4.5 In order to facilitate a development in this location there are a number of issues that would need to be addressed. These are highlighted below.
- Development of 4,000 dwellings in this location would still not be sufficient in size to provide more than local facilities which may encourage the increased use of the private car, despite the public transport opportunities. The public transport opportunities would have to be carefully considered and promoted in order to truly supplement private car use
 - Secondary school provision in the local area as a whole would have to be assessed as the development would not be sufficiently large enough on its own to sustain a new school. Therefore a joined up area wide strategy for this would have to be undertaken with a review of the current catchment areas.
 - Development in this location would require significant improvements to the local and wider road network, primarily along the A29 to the north and south and the B2133, Adversane Lane. A full strategic highways study would have to be undertaken before development could take place.
 - Despite its proximity to the A29 and railway line the site is set within a rural and tranquil countryside location. With a large scale development there will be a significant impact on the landscape, however measures could be taken to mitigate this impact such as landscaping and planting and the provision of a network of green spaces and corridors through the development.

Indicative Land Budget

- 4.7 Following the preliminary consultations with the key delivery stakeholders set out in Section 3, and the initial technical work undertaken by the Council, the table overleaf sets out the indicative land budget that is likely to be required if the potential strategic development site was allocated for development.



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Adversane/North Heath potential strategic development site: Indicative Population and Land Budget	
Potential Number of Homes	4000 homes
Estimated Population	9520 people
Developable Residential Area	101.5 hectares
Commercial/Employment Area	7 hectares
Primary School	1.5 hectares
Community Facilities	2 hectares
Recreation Areas and Open Space	40 hectares



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5. Sustainability Appraisal (SA) Considerations

- 5.1 The potential strategic development site broadly complies with the majority of the SA Objectives presented in the SA Scoping Report, which has been published alongside the Core Strategy Review Consultation Document.
- 5.2 The SA process will identify whether a potential strategic development site is suitable for development from a sustainability point of view. The outcome of this process will then feed into the overall process of allocating strategic development locations.
- 5.3 Once the appropriate strategic development locations have been identified, following consultation each strategic site will be subject to a formal SA (incorporating an Equalities Impact Assessment and Health Impact Assessment). This will be used to highlight the full range of impacts that the development of the potential strategic site would have on the natural environment, the economy and the local population and any possible mitigation measures.