

Horsmonden Neighbourhood Plan 2022-2038

Initial Comments of the Independent Examiner

Prepared by

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17th October 2022

Introductory Remarks

1. As you will be aware, I have been appointed to carry out the examination of the Horsmonden Neighbourhood Plan. I have carried out my initial review of the Plan and the accompanying documents which I have been sent. I visited Horsmonden and the surrounding countryside on Wednesday 5th October 2022.
2. My preliminary view is that I should be able to deal with the examination of this Plan by the consideration of the written material only. I do have to reserve the right to call for a public hearing, if I consider that it will assist my examination, but that may only be necessary, if there are issues that emerge from the responses to this note which I feel warrant further exploration.
3. Set out in the following paragraphs are a number of matters that I wish to receive, either clarification or further comments / information from the Parish Council or in some cases from Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. Such requests are quite normal during the examination process and the replies will help me prepare my report and come to my conclusions.

Regulation 16 Comments

4. I would firstly like to offer the Parish Council the opportunity to comment on the representations that were submitted as part of the Regulation 16 consultation. I am not expecting a response in respect of every point, just those that the Parish Council feels it wishes to respond to.

Strategic Policies

5. Can the Borough Council confirm which of the existed adopted Local Plan policies are, for the purpose of the basic condition, the strategic policies that the neighbourhood plan has to be in general conformity with?
6. It would also be helpful to have an update on the draft Local Plan and if possible, the likely timeframe for the adoption of the Local Plan.

Policy 2.1 Walkable Village

7. Would the Parish Council agree that any site within the Limit to Development is likely to be within safe walkable distance of the village centre?

Policy 2.2 Minimising Traffic Speeds

8. Can the Parish Council give me some examples of what measures will be expected to be incorporated so that proposals are designed to minimise traffic speeds. Is it expected to be through the geometry of new housing layouts or are other design measures envisaged?

Policy 2.4 Adequate Pavements

9. Can TWBC advise whether Kent County Council has a highway design guide and is it considered to be at variance with Manual for Streets?

10. Is the expectation of the Parish Council, that pavements will just have to be incorporated within the development or is the expectation that deficiencies in pavement provision within the wider village should be addressed by new development. Manual for Streets acknowledges the role of shared surfaced streets within the new residential areas. Is the intention of the Parish Council that such shared spaces and Home Zones, which do not have separate pavements, should not be permitted in Horsmonden.

Policy 2.5 School Access Crossing

11. Is it premature to seek to collect funding for a new crossing until it is demonstrated that a suitable crossing point can be delivered?
12. Does TWBC consider that the crossing would meet the tests set out in Reg 122 of the CIL Regulations?
13. Can the area to be subject to Section 106 funding be shown on a map and does the Parish Council consider that children in the south west quadrant of the village, south of Brenchley Road will travel on the west side of Maidstone Road before crossing to the school or will they cross the B2162 on the east side, say by the Village Green?

Policy 2.6 Public Parking

14. Can the Borough Council confirm whether the need to have regard to the car parking standards already forms part of the Development Plan?

Policy 4.2 Allotments

15. Is it the Parish Council's aspiration that there should only be one new allotment site provided and that this should be on the allocation site AL/HO3 or could there be another site? Does the Parish Council expect that the developers should only make the land available for the allotments or does it expect that the associated infrastructure should be provided such as the car parking and water supplies?

Policy 5.1 Design of New Development

16. Is the intention of the Parish Council that the Character Analysis and Design Guidelines should form part of the neighbourhood plan? Has that document been the subject of public consultation?
17. How should that document be read in conjunction with the High Weald AONB Housing Design Guide. I assume the latter document only applies within the part of the parish within the AONB.

Policy 6.3 Provision of Sheltered Housing

18. Is the support for sheltered housing limited to sites with the limits of development or does it apply anywhere within the parish?

Policy 7.1 Local Green Space

19. Can the Parish Council provide me with the full assessment of all the proposed LGS sites?

Policy 7.2 Protecting Important Views

20. Is the protection of the views solely to and from the views shown in Figure 35 or does the policy seek to protect views into and out of settlements from *any* publicly accessible area?

Policy 7.6 Retaining the best, most versatile and characteristic agricultural land

21. Can the Parish Council explain why is Grade 3A agricultural land not included in the policy, when it is within the definition of best and most versatile agricultural land set out in the glossary to the NPPF?

Concluding Remarks

22. I am sending this note direct to Horsmonden Parish Council, as well as Tunbridge Wells Borough Council. I would request that the two parties' response to my questions should be sent to me by 5 pm on **7th November 2022** and also copied to the other party.

23. I would also request that copies of this note and the respective responses are placed on the Neighbourhood Plan's and also Tunbridge Wells Borough Council's website.

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Independent Examiner to the Horsmonden Neighbourhood Plan.

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