

Mid Sussex District Plan Examination: Inspector's Matters and Issues

Crawley Borough Council Hearing Statement

February 2026

Matter 1: The Housing Requirement

b) Unmet need from neighbouring authorities and its effect on the plan's housing requirement.

- 1.1 Crawley Borough Council (CBC) submitted formal representations to the submission draft Mid Sussex District Plan (MSDP) Regulation 19 consultation on 23 February 2024. The comments made at that point remain standing. This Hearing Statement seeks only to provide factual updates on progress since then.
- 1.2 The [Crawley borough Local Plan 2023 to 2040](#) (the 'CBLP') was adopted by Full Council on 16 October 2024.
- 1.3 On this issue of alignment with, and unmet need from, neighbouring authorities the [Crawley Borough Local Plan Inspectors' final report September 2024](#) confirmed that:
"The NWSHMA SoCG, to which West Sussex County Council (WSCC) is also a signatory, is significant on this matter of unmet need. This clearly establishes an agreed hierarchical approach that should capacity arise then unmet needs within the Housing Market Area (HMA) would take priority over any other anticipated requests to accommodate unmet need. We are satisfied that at the time of the preparation of Crawley's Local Plan this is as far as the authorities can practicably go in establishing a strategy in respect of Crawley's unmet housing needs. This reflects the combination of significantly increased housing need and further environmental constraints, including water neutrality" (paragraph 23) and
"...the plan preparation process for Crawley has generated a very significant unmet housing need. At the time of Plan submission there was no clear mechanism or agreement as to how the unmet need could be accommodated. We are satisfied that Crawley has made appropriate efforts to engage with others on the issue. It is evident, however, in an area where housing need figures are significantly increasing and the capacity to accommodate growth is subject to various policy and environmental considerations that a resolution to meeting Crawley's unmet needs was not going to be straightforward. The NWSHMA SoCG provides a constructive approach but ultimately the DtC does not extend as far as a duty to agree that some or all of Crawley's unmet housing need must be accommodated" (paragraph 30).
- 1.4 Furthermore, the Inspectors' final report found that the CBLP sought to accommodate as much of the housing need as reasonably practicable and that no stone was left unturned. It found that *"the Plan takes a positively prepared approach to town centre redevelopment and to windfall capacity such that we are satisfied that it is justified and effective that the housing requirement in the Plan reflects the likely supply"* (paragraph 109). On this basis, it confirmed that the supply-based housing requirement was justified and positively prepared (paragraph 110).
- 1.5 Policy H1 of the CBLP confirms the total housing need identified for the borough over the period 2023 to 2040 is 12,835 dwellings.
- 1.6 The CBLP makes provision for the development of a minimum of 5,330 net dwellings in the borough over the same Plan period. This minimum requirement is broken down in Policy H1 as the following stepped requirement:
 - Years 1 to 10 (2023 to 2033): 386 dwellings per annum (dpa)
 - Years 11 to 17 (2033 to 2040): 210dpa

- 1.7 The Policy confirms the remaining unmet housing need arising from Crawley over the Plan period is approximately 7,505 dwellings, arising as follows:
- Years 1 to 10 (2023 to 2033): 369dpa
 - Years 11 to 17 (2033 to 2040): 545dpa
- 1.8 The council has published its first Authority's Monitoring Report since the adoption of the CBLP, which sets out the most recent Housing Trajectory. The [Crawley Borough Council Authority Monitoring Report 2023 to 2024](#) (Table 3.10 and paragraph 3.2.51, page 42) confirms that delivery for the first year of the Plan period (2023/2024) fell significantly short of the 386 dwelling annual requirement, delivering 139 net dwellings, and below the 212 dwelling projection set out in the 2023 Housing Trajectory within the CBLP. In 2024/25, net delivery fell further to 65, as detailed in the MHCLG Live tables on dwelling stock (including vacants) - Table 122. This is considered to be mainly a result of the impact of water neutrality requirements in delaying delivery of development within the Sussex North Water Resource Zone at that time. The temporary nature of this impact is indicated by a recovery in net consents, which increased from virtually nil in 2022/23 to 93 in 2023/24 and 365 in 2024/25.
- 1.9 In October 2025, Natural England withdrew its Water Neutrality Position Statement, lifting the requirement for new development to be water neutral. As a consequence, CBC has set up additional Planning Committees and is progressing to determination a number of long-standing applications that had previously been held up by water neutrality. Critically, due to the supply-based nature of the CBLP figure, it is strongly anticipated that the housing requirement set out within the CBLP will be met over the Plan period.