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Subject:

WEST OF IFIELD/PARISH IMPLICATIONS OF THE PROPOSED NEW NPPF - New proposed NPPF

Attachments:

December_2025_NPPF_Consultation_document.pdf

Categories: Comments Received

Below is a clear, parish-focused analysis of the likely implications for West of Ifield and the Ancient Parish, grounded directly in the December 2025 proposed reforms to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).

WEST OF IFIELD

A DIRECT THREAT TO IFIELD PARISH

WHAT THE NEW PLANNING REFORMS REALLY MEAN

A NATIONAL POWER GRAB IS UNDERWAY

New planning reforms override local plans, sideline parish voices, and impose a permanent presumption in favour of development.

“SHOULD WE?” ➔ “WHY NOT?”

- **LOCAL DEMOCRACY IS WEAKENED:**

Local and neighbourhood plans will be overruled.

- **WEST OF IFIELD - SACRIFICIAL ZONE:**

Large developments forced through despite risks.

- **ANCIENT PARISH IDENTITY IGNORED:**

Historic parish boundaries dismissed.

- **NATURE “PROTECTED” IN WORDS, NOT ACTION:**

Meadows and wetlands expendable.

- **WATER SYSTEMS IRREVERSIBLY DAMAGED:**

Ifield Brook Meadows at risk.

IFIELD BROOK MEADOWS IS NOT OPTIONAL

THIS IS CRITICAL NATURAL INFRASTRUCTURE.

More Flooding - More Pollution - Higher Costs.

ONCE PERMISSION IS GRANTED – CONTROL IS LOST

Empty promises do not fix destroyed ecosystems.

WHAT MUST HAPPEN NOW

**THE IFIELD SOCIETY
WATER ECOLOGY TEAM (WET)**

Monitoring • Evidence • Stewardship • Accountability



Implications for

West of Ifield

and

Ifield Parish

In light of the proposed NPPF reforms (Dec 2025)

1.

A structural power-shift away from local discretion

The reforms introduce stronger, more rules-based national decision-making policies, with local plans required not to repeat or modify them. Where local policies conflict, they are to be given “very limited weight” immediately.

Implication for Ifield:

- Crawley and Horsham councils’ ability to resist development through local nuance is weakened.
- Parish-specific arguments (ancient landscape, hydrology, cumulative harm) must now be explicitly anchored in national policy wording, not just local plan policies.

2.

Permanent presumption in favour of “suitably located” development

The proposed Framework replaces the traditional “tilted balance” with a permanent presumption in favour of development in locations deemed acceptable in principle.

Implication for West of Ifield:

- Once land is framed as “suitably located”, the starting position becomes approval, not balance.
- Objectors must now show that adverse effects substantially outweigh benefits, a much higher bar than previously.

This is particularly significant for strategic edge-of-settlement land such as West of Ifield.

3.

Reduced protection from the absence of an up-to-date Local Plan

The reforms explicitly state that, where plans are absent, delayed, or inconsistent with national policy, national decision-making policies dominate.

Implication:

- Any weakness, delay, or inspector-mandated revision in the Horsham or Crawley Local Plans strengthens the developer’s hand.
- Speculative applications become harder to resist, even where community opposition is overwhelming.

This materially increases risk for West of Ifield during Local Plan uncertainty.

4.

Spatial Development Strategies (SDS) may override parish boundaries

The new system gives greater weight to cross-boundary Spatial Development Strategies, designed to meet housing need at scale.

Implication for Ifield Parish:

- Parish identity and historic coherence risk being subordinated to regional housing maths.
- West of Ifield could be framed as a “strategic solution” for wider unmet housing need, regardless of parish impacts.
- Ifield risks becoming a sacrificial edge between authorities.

5.

Nature protection is rhetorically strengthened — but procedurally constrained

The reforms include improved wording on:

- Nature recovery
- Flood risk

- Water systems
- Landscape character

However, these sit within a more pro-development decision framework.

Critical implication:

- Environmental protections must now be shown to trigger clear national policy conflicts.
- Soft designations, informal green buffers, or locally valued landscapes carry less defensive weight unless formally designated (e.g. LGS, SSSI, Flood Zone, protected habitats).

For Ifield Brook Meadows, this reinforces the urgency of:

- Formal designation
- Evidence-led water and flood arguments
- Clear linkage to national flood-risk and water policies

6.

Infrastructure and mitigation promises gain prominence — but enforcement risk remains

The reforms promote:

- Earlier clarity on developer contributions
- Streamlined Section 106 processes

- Review mechanisms where obligations are reduced

Implication:

- Developers will increasingly promise future mitigation (schools, health, water management).
- But pressure to approve “in principle” development means delivery risk shifts onto the community.
- Once permission is granted, leverage diminishes.

This is especially concerning for water-sensitive landscapes like Ifield Brook Meadows.

7.

Neighbourhood and Parish voices are narrowed, not removed

Neighbourhood plans must now:

- Meet identified housing numbers
- Avoid diverging from national decision-making policy

Implication:

- Parish-level plans cannot simply say “no”.
- Their strength lies in:
 - Precise spatial evidence
 - Environmental data

- Clear alignment with national climate, flood, and water policies

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This strengthens the strategic importance of the Water Ecology Team (WET) as an evidence-gathering body.

8.

West of Ifield becomes a national test case

Taken together, the reforms mean West of Ifield is no longer just a local planning dispute. It becomes:

A test of whether ancient parishes, freshwater ecosystems, and community-led stewardship can still meaningfully influence planning decisions in a centralised, growth-first system.

Strategic Conclusions for the Ifield Society & WET

**The reforms
increase risk**

, but also
clarify the battlefield

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To respond effectively, Ifield must:

1. Frame objections in national policy language, not sentiment
2. Elevate water, flood risk, and ecosystem function as material planning harms
3. Push urgently for formal designations (LGS, LNR, floodplain recognition)
4. Position WET as a credible monitoring and early-warning authority
5. Argue that Ifield Brook Meadows is critical infrastructure, not leftover green space

ACTION?

- Draft a formal parish response to the NPPF consultation
- Produce a West of Ifield risk briefing for councillors and MPs
- Map which NPPF policies most strongly protect Ifield Brook Meadows
- Create a one-page public explainer: “What these reforms mean for Ifield”