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Subject:

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HOMES ENGLAND CALLED OUT ON ITS 'WEASEL' WORDS ON IFIELD GOLF CLUB,
WEST OF IFIELD

Attachments:

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Categories:

Comments Received

[HOMES ENGLAND CALLED OUT ON ITS 'WEASEL' WORDS ON IFIELD GOLF CLUB, WEST OF IFIELD](#)

Dear BBC Team

The BBC recently reported that “Homes England said the site currently had a draft allocation of 3,000 homes as part of the area’s local plan, but that if the application failed its current use for outdoor sports would remain in place” [‘Golf club protest over closure and housing plans’, BBC South East, Jan 5].

This statement may sound reassuring at first, but a closer look reveals how carefully crafted wording can mislead the public about what would actually happen if the West of Ifield planning application were refused.

First, it’s important to recognise that a draft allocation in a local plan is not the same as a final allocation. The local plan itself has yet to be fully adopted and examined, and allocations marked as “draft” can — and often do — change significantly before approval. An outline allocation in a draft document simply indicates that Homes England hopes the land will be earmarked for 3,000 homes, not that this is guaranteed.

Second, the language that “if the application failed its current use for outdoor sports would remain in place” is extremely non-committal. It does not promise that the golf club would continue forever, nor does it meaningfully bind Homes England to that outcome. It suggests that as long as the current planning application is rejected, the land will stay as it is — but that says nothing about any future proposals or reapplications. Developers routinely return with revised schemes after a refusal; a single rejection is no safeguard in itself.

Moreover, this wording fails to acknowledge that even if the golf club remains temporarily, they could be subject to future redevelopment once Homes England reworks its proposal or seeks a new allocation in the next version of the local plan.

Many residents are rightly concerned that what is described as “current use” could be lost in subsequent planning cycles if the draft allocation remains on the table. In planning terms, the 'offer' of preserving sports use is not the same as a formal legal guarantee. Without explicit, enforceable planning conditions or section 106 obligations, such assurances are easily withdrawn or replaced with alternative proposals. This is not unique to this application — it is a common issue in contested planning cases across the country.

Local residents, parishioners, community groups, campaigners and players - especially at Ifield Golf Club - deserve clarity about what actually happens if the application is refused: will the land truly be protected, or will Homes England simply return with another masterplan?

The BBC quote as presented implies a promise that simply isn't there in planning practice.

If we are to have a meaningful debate about the future of West of Ifield, we need straight talk rather than weasel words — and decision-makers should be pressed to provide binding guarantees for the open spaces that matter most to our community.

Homes England's weasel words West of Ifield doth not a legitimate planning application make.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]

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