

BALANCE HAS BEEN LOST

I THANK CRAWLEY MP PETER LAMB FOR HIS DETAILED LETTER EXPLAINING HIS POSITION ON WEST OF IFIELD AND HOMES ENGLAND.

HOWEVER, COMPARING THIS SPECULATIVE SCHEME TO CRAWLEY'S POST-WAR NEW TOWN IS MISTAKEN. THE NEW TOWN WAS A DEMOCRATIC, PUBLICLY FUNDED HOUSING PROGRAMME. WEST OF IFIELD IS A GOVERNMENT-BACKED LAND DEAL SEEKING TO BYPASS LOCAL PLANNING LAW AND DESTROY THE ANCIENT PARISH OF IFIELD'S GREEN HEART – IFIELD BROOK MEADOWS.

THE PLANNING SYSTEM SHOULD BE A MATTER OF BALANCE, BUT THAT BALANCE HAS BEEN LOST. HOMES ENGLAND CANNOT BE ALLOWED TO ACT AS BOTH DEVELOPER AND PLANNING AUTHORITY. LOCAL PEOPLE MUST HAVE THE FINAL SAY OVER LOCAL LAND.

THE REAL SOLUTION TO OUR HOUSING CRISIS LIES IN AFFORDABLE HOMES ON BROWNFIELD LAND – NOT IN BULLDOZING OUR REMAINING MEADOWS, HERITAGE AND COMMUNITY SPIRIT.

RICHARD W. SYMONDS THE IFIELD SOCIETY

On Friday, October 10, 2025, 9:49 AM, [REDACTED]

Dear Peter,

Thank you for your detailed reply. I appreciate the time you've taken to set out your views on the planning system and its historical context. However, I must respectfully disagree with a number of the assumptions underlying your argument — particularly as they relate to democratic accountability, local consent, and the misuse of national housing policy to justify speculative overdevelopment at West of Ifield.

You rightly point out that planning is a “matter of balance.” But the problem in West of Ifield is that the balance has already been tilted — away from the local community, away from ecological responsibility, and away from due democratic process. The Homes England proposal is not a “New Towns Act” scenario of national significance designed to resolve a post-war housing emergency. It is a speculative, piecemeal extension driven by a government-owned developer seeking to maximise land value on publicly owned green space within an ancient parish of national heritage importance.

The comparison with Crawley New Town is misplaced. Crawley was built to provide high-quality, affordable homes in an era of genuine public housing and social reform, not to deliver unaffordable market housing under corporate-style development models that erode local democracy. West of Ifield, by contrast, threatens to destroy the very natural and historic assets that make Crawley liveable and distinctive.

Local authorities, whatever their limitations, are the democratic guardians of place. Once national quangos begin granting themselves planning permission — effectively bypassing the local process — we no longer have a “balance,” but a breakdown of accountability. Even if these powers technically exist under statute, that does not make their use legitimate, proportionate, or ethical in this context.

As for the housing crisis, I agree entirely that the shortage of affordable homes is acute. But that crisis cannot be solved by erasing the green lungs of our towns and villages. The answer lies in using the vast reserves of brownfield land, reviving truly affordable council housing, and reforming the planning system to prioritise need over numbers. West of Ifield does neither.

I would therefore urge you to use your position to advocate for a genuinely democratic, locally-led review of housing provision across North Sussex — one that protects our shared natural heritage, addresses genuine social housing need, and restores public confidence in planning as a fair and lawful process.

With best wishes

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