

HORSHAM DISTRICT COUNCIL CONSULTATION

TO:	Jason Hawkes
FROM:	Horsham District Council – Planning Dept
LOCATION:	Land West of Ifield Charlwood Road Ifield West Sussex
DESCRIPTION:	<p>Hybrid planning application (part outline and part full planning application) for a phased, mixed use development comprising: A full element covering enabling infrastructure including the Crawley Western Multi-Modal Corridor (Phase 1, including access from Charlwood Road and crossing points) and access infrastructure to enable servicing and delivery of secondary school site and future development, including access to Rusper Road, supported by associated infrastructure, utilities and works, alongside: An outline element (with all matters reserved) including up to 3,000 residential homes (Class C2 and C3), commercial, business and service (Class E), general industrial (Class B2), storage or distribution (Class B8), hotel (Class C1), community and education facilities (Use Classes F1 and F2), gypsy and traveller pitches (sui generis), public open space with sports pitches, recreation, play and ancillary facilities, landscaping, water abstraction boreholes and associated infrastructure, utilities and works, including pedestrian and cycle routes and enabling demolition. This hybrid planning application is for a phased development intended to be capable of coming forward in distinct and separable phases and/or plots in a severable way.</p>
REFERENCE:	DC/25/1312
RECOMMENDATION:	Advice / No Objection / Objection / More Information / Modification / Refusal

<p>SUMMARY OF COMMENTS & RECOMMENDATION:</p>	<p>Horsham District Council welcomes the inclusion of employment and commercial uses within the West of Ifield proposals. However, based on the submitted Planning Statement and supporting Employment and Economic Development Strategy, the current quantum, mix and delivery framework for these uses appear insufficient to support the needs of a 3,000-dwelling community and misaligned with the strategic economic objectives set out in the Council's Enterprising Horsham Economic Prospectus (2024).</p> <p>The proposals are weighted towards low-density industrial and logistics space and lack commitments to higher-value, flexible, and green employment opportunities. Without a more ambitious approach, there is a risk that West of Ifield will function as a commuter-led residential extension to Crawley rather than a self-sustaining, mixed-use community that contributes meaningfully to Horsham District's long-term economic growth and resilience.</p>
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<p>MAIN COMMENTS:</p>	<p>Employment and Commercial Mix</p> <p>According to the applicant's submitted information (Table 3.1 / Appendix C):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 40,130 sqm of Class E (Commercial, Business and Service), including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 5,200 sqm retail (E(a)) including a foodstore, Minimum 3,400 sqm leisure, Minimum 1,500 sqm healthcare, and Minimum 1,100 sqm early years provision. Up to 5,200 sqm Class B2 (general industrial). Up to 7,200 sqm Class B8 (storage and distribution). <p>This equates to roughly 52,000 sqm of non-residential floorspace, yet only a small proportion—primarily within E(g), B2, and B8 classes—would directly generate employment. The balance of uses (retail, community, leisure, health) provides important social infrastructure but does not represent a sustainable employment base for the population envisaged.</p> <p>The projected job yield equates to less than 0.5 jobs per dwelling, substantially below the district's average job density. This weakens the development's ability to function as a balanced and resilient neighbourhood consistent with national and local planning policy on sustainable communities.</p> <p>Strategic Alignment with Enterprising Horsham</p> <p>The Council's 'Enterprising Horsham Economic Prospectus' (2025) sets out the shared Vision:</p> <p><i>"To improve prosperity and the quality of life for residents whilst enhancing the area as an attractive and sustainable place to live, work, visit, invest and do business — with a focus on driving job creation and retention for the benefit of current and future generations."</i></p> <p>The Prospectus establishes five guiding principles — <i>Securing Green Prosperity; Nurturing Business Development; Creating and Curating Sustainable Quality Places; Attracting Investment; and Enhancing the Skill Base</i> — supported by 12 Priority Actions. The West of Ifield proposals currently do not demonstrate how they would deliver against these principles, particularly in the following areas:</p> <p>Priority 8: Invest Horsham</p> <p>The application lacks a clear inward investment strategy or delivery framework for attracting occupiers to the proposed employment areas. The Council would expect alignment with <i>Invest</i></p>
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	<p>Horsham objectives to promote high-quality, accessible employment sites that strengthen the District's overall offer to investors.</p> <p>Priority 9: Site Delivery</p> <p>Enterprising Horsham commits the Council to ensuring <i>"the allocation of sufficient employment land within the Local Plan to meet current and future business needs."</i></p> <p>The quantum and type of employment floorspace proposed at West of Ifield do not currently meet this test. The Council would expect a higher share of flexible E(g) workspace and advanced manufacturing / clean growth sectors to reflect local demand and support the wider economic base.</p> <p>Priority 10: Workspace</p> <p>The Prospectus seeks to develop a <i>Workspace Forum</i> and promote modern, flexible workspaces across the district. The current proposals lack any indication of affordable, flexible or co-working space that would enable SMEs, start-ups and home-based businesses to thrive within the new community.</p> <p>Priority 12: Skills Group</p> <p>Enterprising Horsham emphasises the importance of aligning education and skills provision with employer needs. Given the scale of this development and proximity to Crawley College and Brinsbury Campus, the application should include a Skills and Employment Plan co-designed with the Council, West Sussex Careers Hub and DWP to secure training and apprenticeship opportunities during both construction and occupation phases.</p> <p>Securing Green Prosperity</p> <p>The Council's Prospectus commits to <i>"developing a Green Business Strategy and supporting the transition to a low-carbon economy."</i></p> <p>The West of Ifield application offers no defined provision for green business or circular economy uses, nor any link between its employment space and the Council's climate action objectives. Future revisions should incorporate:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Dedicated green innovation or retrofit business space, • Sustainable construction and local supply chain commitments, and • Integration of renewable energy or low-carbon workspace design standards. <p>Conclusion and Recommendations</p> <p>While the inclusion of employment land and a Neighbourhood Centre is supported in principle, the current proposals fall short of delivering a truly mixed-use and economically sustainable new</p>
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	<p>community consistent with the Enterprising Horsham Economic Prospectus and Council Plan priorities. The Council therefore recommends that Homes England and the applicant team:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Increase and diversify employment floorspace, particularly in Class E(g) uses suited to SMEs, clean growth, and innovation. 2. Develop a Local Employment and Skills Plan linked to local training providers and the Enterprising Horsham Skills Group. 3. Introduce workspace flexibility and affordability, aligned with the Prospectus' Workspace and Green Business priorities. 4. Integrate design quality and placemaking principles that promote sustainable prosperity and reflect Horsham's economic identity. 5. Work with Horsham District Council to identify land at this logistically strong location for an Enterprise Centre that can provide flexible, high-quality workspace for SMEs, start-ups and green innovation businesses. An Enterprise Centre of this kind would directly support the aims of the Enterprising Horsham Economic Prospectus to nurture business development, attract investment, and create sustainable prosperity. 6. Commit to monitoring and governance mechanisms in partnership with the Council to track delivery against economic outcomes. <p>By embedding these commitments, the West of Ifield development can make a positive contribution to Horsham District's economy, consistent with the Council's vision of <i>creating sustainable prosperity across all communities and places</i>.</p>
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DATE:	13/10/25