
Sent:

[REDACTED]
03 February 2026 14:08

To:

Jason.Hawkes
[REDACTED]

Subject:

Fw: WEST OF IFIELD PLANNING INSPECTOR - DEFERRED DECISION ON HOLD

Categories:

Comments Received

Dear Jason Hawkes and Team

For your information (below)

Kind regsrd

[REDACTED]
The Ifield Society

[REDACTED]
Thank you for this — I agree with you on part of it, but I think the conclusion goes a little too far.

You are absolutely right that the Local Plan and the planning application are legally separate exercises, and that a site does not need to be allocated in a Local Plan to receive permission. I also accept that the West of Ifield application is speculative, and that in normal circumstances the Council has a duty to determine a live application unless it is withdrawn.

Where I think the position is being overstated is in the suggestion that the decision is therefore “entirely” within councillors’ hands, irrespective of the Local Plan Examination.

While the application can, in theory, be determined independently, in practice councillors are still required to have regard to the wider development plan context, including the status and direction of an active (and now unsettled) Local Plan Examination. West of Ifield is a strategic, large-scale proposal whose justification, impacts and

phasing are closely bound up with housing numbers, spatial strategy and infrastructure assumptions that sit within the Plan process.

In that context, councillors' formal decision-making powers are not removed, but they are materially constrained. Proceeding to determine a scheme of this scale while the Examination is paused or potentially being reset would carry obvious risks of pre-emption, appeal vulnerability and procedural challenge. That is why, in practice, authorities often seek extensions of time or defer determination in comparable circumstances.

I don't disagree that a decision must ultimately be made on the application, but I do think it's misleading to suggest that the unsettled Local Plan has no bearing on whether or how safely that decision can be taken at this point.

Best

[REDACTED]

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[Sent from the all-new AOL app for iOS](#)

On Tuesday, February 3, 2026, 1:30 PM, [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

This is not accurate.

The Local Plan and the Planning Application are 2 separate exercises.

A planning application can be approved whether or not the site is allocated in a Local Plan - where a site is not allocated in the LP and a planning application is submitted it is known as a speculative application. Homes England's West of Ifield application was speculative. Now that the application is in HDC MUST make a decision on it in due course (unless HE withdraw the application) regardless of what happens with the stalled Local Plan. So the decision on the application is entirely within the councillors (Planning Committee) hands.

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/determining-a-planning-application>

<https://squiresplanning.co.uk/index.php/news-updates/86-how-are-planning-applications-determined>

https://www.google.com/search?q=must+a+council+determine+a+planning+application+once+it+is+submitted&sca_esv=b88fcdf3d66975f7&hl=en-GB&sxsrf=ANbL-n65F6t0ekprGEzQLJQOVctQJBQNxw%3A1770124952616&source=hp&ei=mP

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[Redacted]

Sent: 03 February 2026 12:43 PM

[Redacted]

Subject: Re: WEST OF IFIELD PLANNING INSPECTOR - DEFERRED DECISION ON HOLD

WEST OF IFIELD: DECISION NOT IN COUNCILLORS' HANDS

The Horsham Local
Plan Examination
is now controlled
by the Inspector.

- Councillors cannot approve or reject West of Ifield.
- It's the Inspector's call whether to proceed, revise, or restart

**NO ADOPTED LOCAL PLAN
NO PLANNING PERMISSION**

26 February decides if democracy returns

Morning [REDACTED] Team

With the Local Plan Examination now unsettled following the appointment of a new Planning Inspector, an important point needs to be stated clearly.

There is currently no adopted Local Plan allocation for West of Ifield, and no planning permission.

In those circumstances, there is no lawful basis for development to proceed.

Any suggestion that West of Ifield is approaching inevitability is therefore misleading. With the Examination potentially being reset, councillors are not in a position to make a decision, objections remain unresolved, and the planning framework itself is in flux.

Whatever preparatory or promotional activity may be taking place behind the scenes, the reality on the ground is simple: without permission, nothing can lawfully happen.

In planning terms, the bulldozers are parked up.

Best

[REDACTED]