

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 11 October 2025 16:39
To: Planning
Cc: [REDACTED]

Subject: SUBJECT: OBJECTION TO PLANNING APPLICATION D/C25/1312 -WEST OF IFIELD HYBRID APPLICATION

Categories: Comments Received

Dear Mr Hawkes

I attended a Homes England Consultation/Presentation first in early 2020 and since that date have kept up to date with their proposals through further public consultations and webinars. All this has done is to convince me even further that their proposals for this rural area are totally wrong, unjustified and unwanted.. Since the start of this process I have written regularly to Horsham District and Ruster Parish Councillors and Members of Parliament to express opposition to this outrageous and wanton destruction of the our countryside. True to form Homes England have sought to put a spin on the "success' of their consultation process in spite of being unable to answer basic questions on the effect on health/community service, local roads and wildlife for example.

HOUSING NEEDS

Although this planning present application is for 3,000 houses, Homes England were clear in April 2025 that the full 10,000 houses proposal joining Crawley and Horsham is a "future opportunity" that is being kept under review. In other words if this initial phase of 3,000 houses is approved then Homes England will start planning for the additional 7,000 homes. Homes England claim to be helping to meet an acute need for new homes in the area and that it satisfies a requirement of Crawley Borough Council for homes for its residents. However there is no mention of 'affordable housing' at 40% cheaper than market price or rent that Crawley actually needs and the so called 'affordable housing' will not help. Crawley Borough Council stress emphatically that they do not want this development, being well aware of the unwelcome impact it will have on the town and surrounding area. CBC's Local Plan requires the character of the countryside surrounding the town to be protected. I understand Horsham District Council has a statutory "Duty to Cooperate" with its neighbouring local planning authorities and "*to engage constructively, actively and on an ongoing basis*". As Crawley Borough Council are clearly opposed to the Homes England proposal, it is hard to comprehend that this duty has been satisfied. I understand that the HDC's Local Plan will need to have been prepared by the local planning authority "in consultation with its community" The only consultations I am aware of are the Homes England presentations their recent 'Webinars'. It is apparent from these that there is considerable opposition in the community to this monstrous development. A visit to their 'Commonplace' website reinforces the view that this development is not wanted but one must ask if the views of the local community on this site will be made public and respected? Horsham District Council has a duty to reflect the needs and wishes of local residents who, like myself, have both spoken out and written on numerous occasions over recent years against development in this area. We all appreciate the need for housing in the UK generally but we must protect against the destruction of pristine countryside and productive farmland such as that found West of Ifield. There are far more suitable brownfield sites in this area and beyond on which we should focus attention before we destroy what is left of our beautiful West Sussex countryside for the sake of greedy developers and enhanced profits. As far back as May 2021, Sir Roger Gale MP wrote that '*There are a million unused planning consents for houses waiting to be built and brownfield sites available for housing construction and empty inner-city commercial properties that can be tastefully converted into new homes before we need to touch another blade of green grass for development*'. On 26 October 2022 Former Chief Whip Wendy Morton MP asked the Government for reassurances that planning laws would not be torn up to allow more housing on the green belt. In response the then Prime Minister, the Rt Hon Rishi Sunak replied '*She is absolutely right; we must protect our green belt and we are adopting a 'brownfield first' strategy*'. Why then are Homes England, a government quango, being allowed to persist in this wanton destruction of the green and pleasant Land West of Ifield?

HEALTH CARE

Homes England have made no mention of GP surgeries, dental practices and similar, presumably because Homes England are well aware that existing practices are unable to obtain the services of doctors and surgery staff!! The three existing medical practices in the Ifield area already at capacity with patient lists capped. I am not aware of any plans to increase/improve existing facilities at Crawley or East Surrey Hospitals both of which already operate at full capacity. It is said that the Maternity Unit at ESH has a maximum capacity for 5,000 births a year. In December 2022 East Surrey Hospital declared a 'critical incident' as record numbers of patients attended A&E. Even the initial proposal of over 3,000 houses will only exacerbate the problems and put a further strain on already overstretched NHS resources.

TRANSPORT LINKS

Ifield station already operates at peak capacity in rush hour. Initially built as a 'Halt' it has a short platform capable of servicing only four coaches for passengers to board or alight. There are no plans to improve the facilities there to cope with the additional commuters this development would produce and who would have to travel out of the area to find gainful employment to purchase their houses. There is no parking at the station which is surrounded to the south by residential housing and to the north by an Esso Petrol Garage, a Volkswagen Van dealership, a school and further residential housing. Thus there is no capacity to expand either the railway station or provide additional parking. Homes England are proposing a Fastway, or alternative bus service to run from the development along the east-west stretch of Rusper Road. Sadly, they do not seem to have visited the site because, if they had, they would have spotted that this road is only 4.9 metres wide, by no means sufficient for a bus route, or to accommodate commercial or construction traffic. Lorries or buses cannot pass each other without (illegally) driving on the pavement!! Homes England have apparently calculated that each household will have an average of 1.4 vehicles per home! .In spite of their intention to limit the use of private vehicles I fear that this is misplaced. One has to look only at the Martin Grant and Bovis Homes developments on Rusper Road to see that most households have two vehicles. Thus even the initial proposed development will mean some 5,000 extra vehicles to the already existing traffic congestion though apparently Homes England seek to convince us that the residents of these new homes will use bicycles and walk to the station/use buses. This is simply not true. They are being completely unrealistic, finding excuses to justify their preposterous plans with very little if any understanding of the unique issues we already face on a daily basis and that will make our lives a misery if they are allowed to proceed with these proposals. Another point of note is the state of repairs (or lack of!) of our local roads which are in a shocking condition which will only deteriorate further. Can you imagine the problems that will be faced by residents when another 20,000+ vehicles hit those roads, let alone the many vehicles that will need to pass along them to build the houses in the first place? Homes England's proposals means that the existing road between Ifield and Rusper will be closed near or by Furlong Farm. When did a developer have the power to close the King's Highway? This will mean that existing traffic between Crawley/Ifield/Rusper will have to be routed through Ifield Wood to Ifield Avenue and Ifield Green, routes specifically mentioned by Homes England. Apart from making the present journey longer and more time consuming, Ifield Wood is a very narrow country lane and not sited to this volume of traffic of all shapes and sizes. Ifield Green is a residential area with many parked cars on the roadside, speed bumps and a blind bend.

LINK ROAD

The proposed route from the development will also exit on to Ifield Avenue somewhere near to Bonnets Lane adding even more congestion and the effects on nearby village such as Rusper, Faygate and Charlwood have been completed underestimated. Hopefully the Council can see that both proposals are poorly thought through and inappropriate. The proposed route will lead to the next phase of road development decimating the Bowls Club, the Rugby Club and, outrageously, Willoughby Fields Local Nature Reserve. - all in Crawley Borough Council's back garden.. Wildlife-rich habitat will be decimated by this relief road which will bring even more congestion to unsuitable minor and residential roads in Crawley, Ifield and Rusper..

CONSTRUCTION TRAFFIC

Local roads either in the residential areas of Ifield, Crawley or the lanes through Rusper and Faygate are not suitable for this size and volume of heavy traffic. The damage a development of this magnitude would cause cannot be overstated. According to Home England the construction traffic will exit the A23 Crawley By Pass into Gossops Green and from there into Overdene Drive, Tangmere Road, and Rusper Road. These are residential streets not suitable to such traffic and the route takes vehicles past a busy garage, Ifield Railway Station and The Mill School. Again this must raise questions regarding congestion and safety of cyclists and pedestrians alike. At a Homes England consultation venue in 2020 it was said that there could be a move away from the traditional methods of building for these new homes and the normal building site process. Rather the houses could be manufactured remotely and the sections brought

in for construction on site. Having watched such programmes as 'Grand Designs' the process would surely require even larger vehicles to deliver the necessary sections. It cannot be stressed often enough that our local roads/lanes are not suitable for this type of heavy traffic.

SCHOOLS

Homes England claim that there is a pre-existing local need for a secondary school. However, the West Sussex County Council "Planning School Places 2021" report seems to suggest the the need for places is falling. I understand that this secondary school is to be fed by pupils from a junior school at Forge Wood which is the other side of Crawley. If this is correct then this will mean even more increased traffic as parents will have to bring children to this school by cars there is not way they would be able to walk this distance. Providing school buses at peak times will do little to ease the congestion on Rusper Road and the surrounding streets. Furthermore it is regularly reported in the main stream media that established and experienced teachers are leaving the profession in droves causing a recruitment crises. Where are the teachers to be recruited for this new school and how will they travel there? By car, by bus by train?

IFIELD GOLF CLUB

The course was was designed and built nearly 100 years ago by golf club architects Fred Hawtree and John Henry Taylor, architects for the re-modelling of Royal Birkdale Golf Club. Taylor was five times Open Champion. He was made an honorary member of The Royal and Ancient Golf Club of St Andrews in 1949 and was made president of Royal Birkdale. He went on to design more than 100 fabulous courses, including Aldeburgh Championship course and Royal Mid Surrey Golf Club. It is a privilege to have the work of such a golfing giant in our midst and how bizarre would it be if Horsham District Council was the first Authority in the UK to permit the destruction of such a precious piece of golfing history. Homes England have not managed to demonstrate, in accordance with NPPF 104 clause a), that Ifield Golf Club is clearly surplus to requirements. Indeed, it is clearly required by the more than 500 members of the only membership club in Crawley and by the 1,485 society players and 3,940 green fee golfers who played in 2024. I live opposite the entrance to the car park and the number of cars gives the lie to it not being required. On many occasions stewards are needed to control the parking such is it popularity as is confirmed by the number of visitors shown above. It is required as the most accessible golf course in the area because you can get there by car, bike, foot, bus and train. All of this is available to non-golfing social members. By comparison, Tilgate Forest Golf Centre has sat alongside Ifield Golf Club for 50 years and despite having a driving range and until recently a lovely 9 hole par golf course, its membership last year was only some 120 persons. Ifield Golf Club has prospered because of the accessibility quality and desirability of the course. In a desperate attempt to satisfy NPFF 104 clause c) Homes England put forward alternative uses that offer benefits outweighing the loss of Ifield Golf Club. They promote some sports and recreation provision in their West of Ifield proposals. Their first offering is a new sports hub comprising 3G and grass pitches. However, the Crawley Borough Council Playing Pitch Strategy says that there is currently 32% spare capacity for 3G pitches in Crawley. Homes England also offers a field athletics facility but this is already splendidly provided by Crawley Athletics Club at K2 Leisure Centre. Finally, they propose 4 new tennis courts/multisport facilities. But Crawley BC PPS Stage 'C' says that there is currently 53% spare capacity for tennis courts in Crawley. Homes England are, therefore, seeking to satisfy Clause 104 c) by offering a redundant running track and redundant sports pitches in place of a thriving, historical golf club and a course which has taken nearly 100 years to develop. The proposals are therefore not deliverable. Horsham District Council's own Golf Supply and Demand Assessment, December 2022 states in its summary:-- "Supply is currently deemed to be sufficient to meet demand, however, it is also clear that each facility is meeting a need due to current membership and usage levels. Potential future demand provides further evidence that each existing facility is required. It is unlikely that any loss of provision could be supported without appropriate mitigation being secured due to capacity pressures that would be created,...". Homes England are clearly unable to provide evidence that Ifield Golf Club is surplus to requirements or demonstrate that their assessment, December 2022 states in its summary:-- "Supply is currently deemed to be sufficient to meet demand, however, it is also clear that each facility is meeting a need due to current membership and usage levels. Potential future demand provides further evidence that each existing facility is required. It is unlikely that any loss of provision could be supported without appropriate mitigation being secured due to capacity pressures that would be created,...". Homes England are clearly unable to provide evidence that Ifield Golf Club is surplus to requirements or demonstrate that their proposed alternative leisure/recreation facilities could compensate for the loss of the Club. Homes England simply suggest that all of Ifield Golf Club's players would need to relocate if the Club is lost.. But to where? Copthorne has only 50 vacancies, Cottesmore is almost full and only offering country club membership. GoAs Park Pitch and Putt and "Foot Golf" - say no more!! Tilgate golf course, with around 120 members, has not satisfied the needs of Crawley residents to date and has made no inroads into Ifield's membership after 50 years and despite the Club being under Homes England's threat recently. Can Tilgate be expected to take on an additional 500 member golfers and approximately 5,500 additional golf rounds!!! Furthermore, availability of facilities is exacerbated by on-going golf course closures in our area at West Chiltington, Rusper, Redhill and Reigate, Effingham Park and the approved closure of Horsham Golf and Fitness. Additionally there is ongoing reduction of holes at Mannings Heath and Cottesmore and Gatton Manor has applied for change of use so yet another closure is imminent. In total this represents the closure of 117 holes of golf in an area already under provided. Thus how can Homes England justify the claim that Ifield Golf Club is surplus to requirements?

IFIELD COURSE COURSE

There are many well established and long standing original oak trees many of which would have to be felled as part of the Homes England proposals. The Forestry Commission was responsible for planting some 8,000 trees on the golf course some years ago which are again now well established. Again many of these would have to be felled to meet the housing density. Where is the logic in that when the Government is campaigning - as has been massively covered in the media - for the planting of thousands of trees to combat climate change? A recent BBC programme stressed the important of trees for the well being of our planet. In spite of - or It is also a haven for wildlife such as deer, [REDACTED] foxes and squirrels to name a few.

SURROUNDING LAND

The existing - and productive - farm fields would be lost as would the essential crops these produce. Disruption to food supplies cause by the war in Ukraine has brought home the perils of relying on imports from abroad. These fields are surrounded by mature hedgerows and interspersed with areas of woodland. At the recent Climate Change Summit in Glasgow it was agreed that hedgerows are great for climate, nature and for a green and fair recovery. In addition to storing millions of tonnes of carbon they are home to 130 of our most precious species, there is little these often overlooked hedgerows don't do.. This is one of the few areas of Crawley with direct access to the rural landscape and acts as a 'green lung'. As well as the damage caused by the housing proposals this area would suffer additional pollution as a result of the proposed relief road. The loss of these rich habitats was raised at a Homes England consultation venue and produced the response that '*it was the intention to replant ancient woodland*'. One can but wonder - or perhaps despair!!! Homes England claim that they will be protecting and enhancing Ifield Brook Meadows. What are they protecting the Meadows from? Ifield Brook Meadows is a delightful country space thoroughly enjoyed by the public that needs no enhancement and only needs protection from the assault by Homes England themselves!!

BIODIVERSITY

Homes England is proposing to cover 50% of the site with school buildings, flats, warehouses, offices, redundant playing fields, shopping precincts and a 35 metre wide estate road. Homes England proposes to destroy all of this land and overshadow Ifield Wood Nature Reserve, Ifield Brook Meadow and Ifield Conservation Area.....and still, miraculously, achieve a 10% net gain in biodiversity! It is hard to see how this can be a credible claim. Ifield Golf Course, Ifield Meadows and Ifield Brook and surrounding fields are already homes to a wide variety of wildlife - deer, foxes, rabbits, small mammals, birds of prey, geese, owls, woodpeckers and kingfishers for example - and support a thriving variety of wild flowers. All of this would be lost and irreplaceable. The Bovis Homes development on Rusper Road - 70+ dwellings - is small in comparison to these proposals but has already impacted on the local wildlife we used to see and enjoy. *"Forests are among the richest biological areas on Earth. They offer a magnificent variety of habitat for plants, animals and micro-organism. They release oxygen, generate rainfall, aid natural flood management, filter pollution from the air, regulate temperature in urban areas, prevent soil erosion, mitigate the effects of climate change and enhance our well-being. Quite simply we cannot live without them. It is 'ABSOLUTELY VITAL' for more of the right trees to be planted in the right places."* Not my words but those of our present King, then Prince of Wales, supported by the then prime Minister who stated *"Our trees stand at the front line of our fight against climate change. By sustaining our beautiful countryside for generations to come, the Queen's Green Canopy is a fitting tribute to her Majesty's years of service to this country, I urge everyone to get involved"*.

FLOODING

There is no acknowledgement of the impact this will have on existing sewage treatment, water supply and rainwater run-off which would result from paving over nearly 50% of the hundreds of acres of green land. The sites of the proposed development have always been prone to flooding as we local residents witnessed all too well again last winter. It is reported that an established oak tree can drink at least 100 gallons of water per day, Thus the large scale felling of established trees and substituting these with houses, hard standing, roads etc. can only exacerbate the problems of flooding. Where is the water supposed to go? Already last winter there were many regular flood warnings for Sussex and this is unlikely to change by all accounts. Climate change has apparently altered rainfall pattern not only in the UK but also in Europe where these has been serious flooding. This change in rainfall, its effect and how it is dispersed means that historical evidence on flood risk area as '100 years cycles' are having to be revisited. It is often said that much of the problem comes from the replacing existing front gardens with hard standing leaving rainwater which would have once soaked into the ground with nowhere to go. Multiply that with the lost of natural earth to this monstrous development and flooding is inevitable.

SEWAGE

This application ignores the fact that Crawley sewage treatment plant already works at capacity, and both Crawley Borough Council and Thames Water have raised this as a concern. Homes England documents contradict each other about whether Thames Water has been consulted over the matter. As previously stated I live opposite Ifield Golf Club and the main sewer runs through my rear garden. It has overflowed on several occasions due to 'hydraulic overload' and as such Thames Water have paid me compensation for the inconvenience and distress on several occasion. Are we to have the farcical position as in Norfolk where Anglian Water cannot afford to upgrade the sewage system to accommodate new developments, the builders have planning permission, but any houses built the houses cannot be sold because of the sewage problem?

Building some 3,000 houses as the first phase of 10,000 can only make the problem worse because a) the flood water this will generate by concreting over the landscape and b) the additional foul waste water from these houses poses a risk of more sewage overspills polluting the River Mole. Similarly there have been repeated warnings for swimmers against using local beaches in Sussex because of the amount of sewage emptied into the sea either because of equipment failure or heavy rainfall.

WATER SUPPLY

Water neutrality is a key requirement for new developments and is especially problematic in this area due to the strain that the existing supply reservoir is under with seasonal droughts and the demand from other housing developments in West Sussex. Building another 10,000 homes will further add to the problems. To support their plans, developers will no doubt promise various water saving measures such as flow restricting control valves and shower heads, more efficient shower units and limited water consumption per household resident per day. 90 litres per person per day was suggested by Homes England, but this seems to have been plucked out of thin air. From other reports a more realistic estimate would be 143 litres per person per day. Time and time again we hear the same mitigation promises from developers. Simple cheap solutions that pay lip service to the planning depts without really addressing the problem. Water neutrality must mean exactly that and there is no viable way to achieve that without the construction of a new reservoir, assuming that it can be filled. According to water regulator Ofwat, currently around a fifth of water running through pipes is lost to leakage. Droughts are becoming more frequent and parts of England came close to running out of water in 2022 during one of the driest summers on record. Southern Water's situation is particularly acute, with the firm saying it would face a shortfall of 166mn litres a day in Hampshire alone during a drought. The Environment Agency attribute the firm's contingency plans to its delayed delivery of crucial supply schemes. The Regulator said it will be reviewing the company's plans through public consultation and consider its environmental acceptability. It is also in contact with the Norwegian regulators about Southern Water's proposed scheme to import 45 million litres of water **PER DAY** by tanker from Norway, the costs of which would be added to customers' bills.

SURROUNDING NEIGHBOURING LAND

As touched on earlier in relation to Ifield Golf Course, both it and the surrounding fields are abundant with wild life, with many species of birds, butterflies, bats as well as smaller mammals. Why are Homes England so intent on destroying their habitat? We in this country are keen to criticise countries in South America and the Far East for destroying their rain forests in the name of profit, thus reducing the so called lungs of the world and the natural habitats of their wildlife all in the name of greed and profit. How can we in all honesty criticise others when these outrageously destructive proposals by Homes England of smothering the rural area west of Ifield with cheap-to-develop, expensive-to-buy three, four and five bedrooomed estate homes, destroying the 'green lungs' of Crawley and the myriad of local wild life all in the name of greed and profit?

HOUSING REPORT

In 2018 a housing report by Horsham District Council ruled that the West of Ifield site was not currently developable. Since then we've had a pandemic and a cost of living crisis brought on by the war in Ukraine. Nothing has happened in those 4 years to make the area developable. Far from it, jobs have been lost locally, incomes have become increasingly stretched from increased food and energy costs and more costly servicing of mortgages reduces affordability and demand for housing in this area.
https://www.horsham.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0017/66221/SHELAA-2018-FINAL-v7-App1MSDC.pdf

For all of these reasons I ask that you, the elected representatives, heed the concerns of those constituents who will be severely and dramatically impacted by these proposals, and refuse this hybrid Planning Application and send Homes England and their monstrous proposals packing.

Yours aye

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CC: Horsham District Councillors