

Sent:

14 November 2025 13:17

Subject:

Attachments:

CALL FOR A COUNCIL JOINT ACTION PLAN - UNDER SUSSEX NATURE RECOVERY LNRS - TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE HISTORIC IFIELD COURT FARM MOATED AREA WITHIN ANCIENT PARISH - AND PREVENT AN ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY
thumbnail - 2025-11-14T100650.605.jpg; thumbnail - 2025-11-14T100623.863.jpg; thumbnail - 2025-11-14T100519.623.jpg; thumbnail - 2025-11-14T100505.253.jpg; thumbnail - 2025-11-14T100452.149.jpg; thumbnail (100).jpg; thumbnail (99).jpg; thumbnail (98).jpg; thumbnail (97).jpg; thumbnail (96).jpg

Categories:

Comments Received

CALL FOR A COUNCIL JOINT ACTION PLAN - UNDER SUSSEX NATURE RECOVERY LNRS - TO PROTECT AND ENHANCE THE HISTORIC IFIELD COURT FARM MOATED AREA WITHIN ANCIENT PARISH - AND PREVENT AN ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY

To:

The Chief Executive, West Sussex County Council
The Chief Executive, Crawley Borough Council
The Chief Executive, Horsham District Council

Cc: Gatwick Airport Limited

Dear Chief Executives,

Call for a Council Joint Area Action Plan [JAAP] - under the Sussex Nature Recovery LNRS - to protect and enhance the historic Ifield Court Farm moated area within the ancient parish - and prevent an Ecological Emergency ['Country park and reserve'/'Map of Ifield's treasures', Crawley Observer, Nov 12\]](#)

I am writing to call for an immediate Joint Area Action Plan [JAAP] - under the Sussex Nature Recovery LNRS [Local Nature Recovery Strategy] - from West Sussex County Council [WSCC], Crawley Borough Council [CBC] and Horsham District Council [HDC], especially in the light of three significant developments concerning the threatened landscape of the ancient Parish of Ifield - in particular the Ifield Court Farm moated area, a nationally-protected Scheduled Monument within the geographical heart of the parish [along with St Margaret's Grade 1 listed church']

1. Historic England's formal assessment (24 September 2025)

Historic England has now issued a clear and unambiguous warning regarding the current West of Ifield planning application (DC/25/1312):

"The proposals cause harm to the significance of the Medieval moated site at Ifield Court [Scheduled Monument] and St Margaret's Church [Grade I listed]"

This authoritative statement establishes beyond any doubt that the proposed development would cause national-level heritage harm to both the Scheduled Monument and the Grade I listed parish church — the two most important historic assets within the 1,000-year-old parish.

No responsible council can ignore such an assessment.

2. Rediscovered documents confirming existing council and airport commitments

Two long-forgotten documents have now resurfaced, each recognising the same landscape — Ifield Court Farm, Ifield Brook Meadows, and the Upper Mole Valley heritage corridor - as an area of ecological and archaeological importance:

- Horsham District Council's 1999 position

HDC formally protected the Ifield Court Farm area as part of the strategic gap, recognising its heritage, landscape and ecological value and its importance to the setting of the Ancient Parish.

- Gatwick Airport Ltd's "Appendix 13" (November 2014)

Gatwick's own published Habitat & Landscape Plan proposed that the Ifield Court Farm complex could serve as:

"an operational centre to manage the habitat areas" ...a visitors' centre to display archaeological finds, and a combined heritage and nature-education hub"

Both documents demonstrate a long-standing commitment — by both HDC and Gatwick Airport — to protecting, enhancing and conserving the very landscape that is now under threat.

3. The rediscovered "Treasure Map"

The 1996 illustrated guide 'Ifield & Beyond – A Taste of the Sussex Countryside' — jointly funded by WSCC, CBC, HDC and the Countryside Commission [now Natural England] - and supported by Gatwick Airport Ltd - prominently highlights the Ifield Court Farm Moated area as a central landmark in the heritage landscape of the ancient Parish - its geographical centre along with St Margaret's church.

This rediscovery provides a powerful reminder that all three councils - and Gatwick - once formally celebrated and promoted the historic and ecological importance of this landscape.

A clear and unavoidable conclusion

Historic England's 2025 assessment, combined with the 1999 and 2014 precedents and the rediscovered 1996 Map Guide, establishes a consistent 30-year record of recognition by councils, government agencies and Gatwick Airport that:

1. The Ifield Court Farm Moated Site is a nationally significant Scheduled Monument
2. St Margaret's Church (Grade I) forms part of the same historic core
3. The surrounding Upper Mole Valley landscape is an ecological and cultural corridor of exceptional importance
4. The West of Ifield mass-housing masterplan is incompatible with these historic commitments

Call for an immediate Joint Area Action Plan [JAAP]

In light of the above, I respectfully request that:

1. WSCC, CBC and HDC jointly recognise Historic England's conclusion of harm and issue a coordinated statement confirming that the historic centre of the ancient Parish of Ifield must be safeguarded - particularly the Ifield Court Farm area.
2. WSCC, as administrator of the Northern Runway Project's Landscape and Ecology Fund, convene an urgent cross-authority meeting to explore conservation-led alternatives — including the

proposed Ifield Nature & Heritage Corridor — consistent with statutory heritage protections and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy [LNRS].

3. The three authorities reaffirm their own past commitments as evidenced in the 1996 Map Guide, the 1999 HDC decision, and the 2014 Gatwick ecological plan.

This is a moment of critical decision for the future of Ifield's thousand-year landscape.

The Scheduled Monument, the Grade I church, and the ancient parish that surrounds them deserve nothing less than full and coordinated protection.

Thank you for your urgent attention to this matter.

Yours sincerely

[REDACTED]
The Ifield Society

2 Lychgate Cottages

Ifield Street, Ifield Village

Crawley, West Sussex

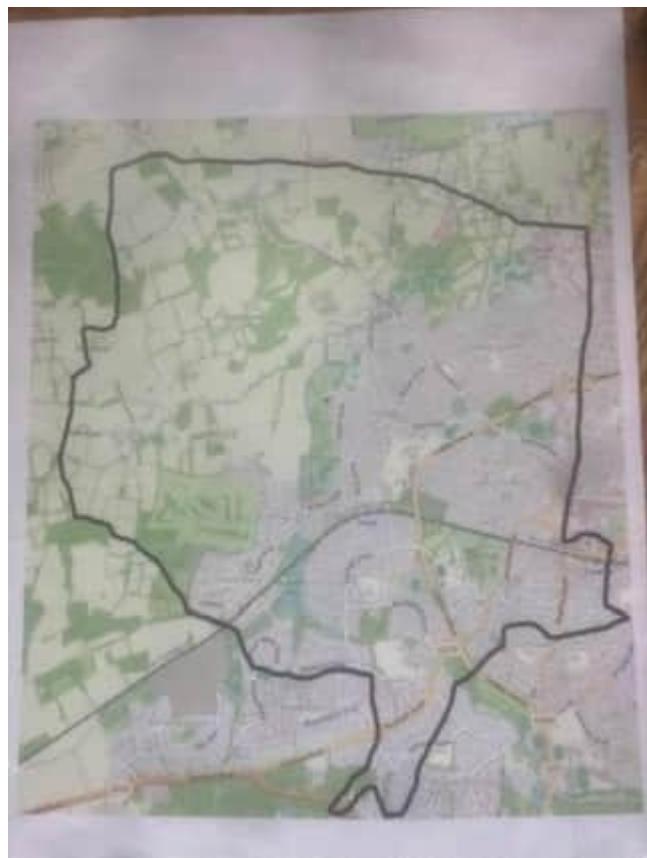
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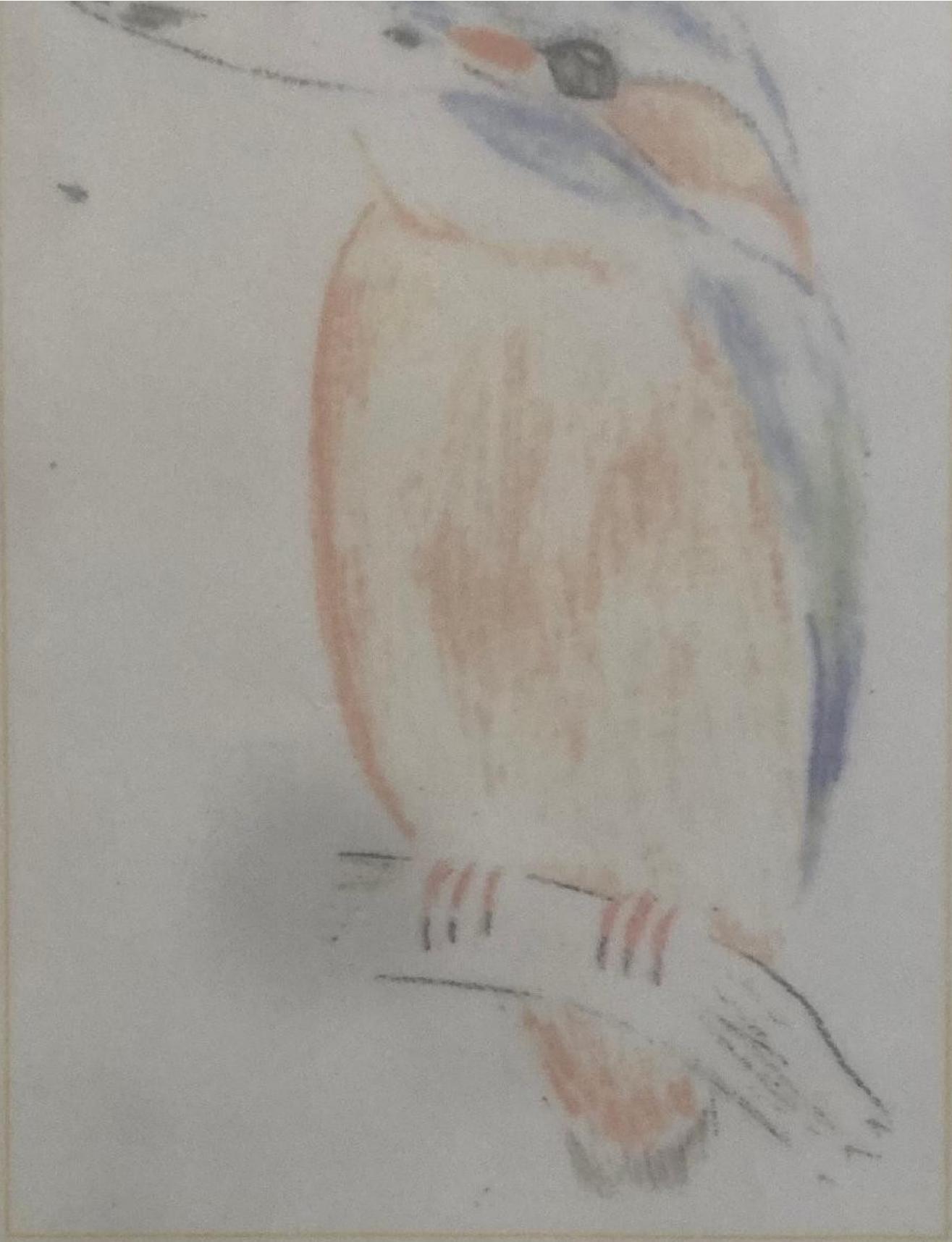


for Protection

Gatwick's 2014 ecological plan envisioned Ifield Court Farm as 'an operational centre to manage the habitat areas.'







*A taste of the
Sussex Countryside*





The Horley Cranley Project was established in 1994 to help to improve areas of the countryside in and around Horley & Cranley in association with local people and groups. One of its main aims is to help to improve access to the countryside for the peaceful enjoyment of all members of public. Other Project aims include:

- To act as a focus for the co-ordination of management input into the countryside of the project area.
- To conserve the character of the landscape and enhance its quality.
- To identify and conserve the archaeological, ecological and geological features of the area.
- To increase public awareness, knowledge and understanding of the Project and the countryside.
- To encourage greater community participation in practical work to enhance the countryside.
- To encourage sensible land management which is sympathetic to the above aims, whilst respecting the interests of existing land users.

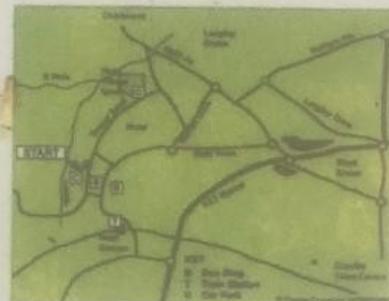
Please Follow The Country Code

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work.
- Guard against risk of fire • Put out all fires
- Keep your dogs under close control • Keep to public paths across farmland • Use gates and stiles to cross fence, hedges and walls • Leave fences, crops and machinery alone
- Tidy your litter home • Help to keep all water clean
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees • Take special care on country roads • Make no unnecessary noise

The 'Ifield & Beyond' walk has been developed through the Horley Cranley Project in association with local groups and local authorities to enable people to enjoy the countryside on that journey. Most of the route follows the rights of way network, and is unsupervised accordingly. Dogs will be needed during wet months. For further guidance on this walk and other rights of way in the area, please see the Guidance Journey Pathfinder D247 1:25,000 Ordnance Survey map. Report any problems you encounter on this walk to: Horley Cranley Project, Redgate Lane, Off Millers Mead Avenue, Pound Hill, Cranley, West Sussex, RH20 2RN. Tel 01293 825875.

HOW TO GET THERE

- **By Train (D)** From Ifield Railway Station on the Horsham to Victoria main line.
- **By Bus (B)** London & Country Ifield West Service (alight at Tanyngate Road) NCL Miners Cranley Chafford - Horley - Smallfield Service. (alight Royal Oak Pub).
- **By Car (C)** Parking is available at the car park on Upper Road or alternatively at the Ifield Village Green. Please park thoughtfully.



THIS LEAFLET HAS BEEN FUNDED BY



Horsham District Council



COUNTRYSIDE COMMISSION



The Horley Cranley Project is supported by Surrey County Council, West Sussex County Council, Cranley Borough Council, Horsham District Council, Mole Valley District Council, Brighton & Hove Borough Council, and Gatwick Airport Ltd, with assistance from the Countryside Commission.

Ifield & Beyond



Ifield Village Conservation Area

Ifield was once a village in its own right before the New Town of Cranley absorbed this village into its boundaries in 1956. Ifield is clearly marked on 16th century maps and within Cranley it forms one of Cranley's three Conservation Areas. It has been designated as a Conservation Area because it has retained its character as a small scattered rural settlement.

Some of the most attractive buildings in this area are the Plough Inn, The Church of St Margaret (which dates from the 13th Century the tower being added in the 19th Century) and the Ifield Barn Theatre, a former threshing barn which is now used as a delightful setting for a local theatre.

Local residents interested in caring for this appealing village have formed the Ifield Village Conservation Area.



St Margaret's Church

Advisory Committee which liaises with Cranley Borough Council on issues concerning the management and development of the area. They have also developed more detailed walk leaflets for the area.

Ifield Brook Meadows

Ifield Brook Meadow, with the River Mole and Ifield Brook forming the Horsham/Cranley District boundary, is an attractive area on the edge of Cranley. From the Ifield Village Conservation Area the meadows extend south towards the Ifield Mill Pond through which the brook flows. The whole site forms part of a neutral grassland habitat, with wild garlic, knapweed and yarrow flowers abundant and cuckoo flower flourishing in the wetter areas.

A careful walker might catch sight of a kingfisher along the brook. The area fills in the middle fields indicate the undisturbed history of these herb rich meadows.



Cuckoo Flower

The River Mole

The River Mole starts its journey to the west of Cranley and flows some 60km north to its confluence with the River Thames. The Weald clay plain, which the river meanders through, is characterised by a gently rolling landscape and scattered settlements. The deeply incised banks with overhanging vegetation become fully exposed in the summer as the river drops to a trickle.

A 4 mile walk

Ifield & Beyond



A taste of the Sussex Countryside

Once winter, the full force of the winter can be seen at the tops of the banks. To the north, the Mole was culverted underground during the development of the runway at Gatwick Airport; in effect living up to its name and acting like a water

Ifield Wood

Ifield Wood is one of the many areas of ancient woodland in the Weald. Wood is an old Saxon word for wood. Ancient woodland is the name given to woodland which has been in existence since at least 1500. It is a habitat rich in wildlife and contains species of wildlife which are not found in woodland which has been cleared at some point in the past.



Wood Anemone

In the spring, bluebell and wood anemone burst into flower on the woodland floor, while hornbeam and oak create the woodland canopy overhead. Attractive ponds, recently improved by the Ifield Wood Conservation Volunteers can be seen where the footpath crosses the Ifield Wood Road.

Other woods, up towards Little Prestwood Farm, show signs of being coppiced (repeatedly cut at ankle height over a period to provide a timber 'crop') with hornbeam dominating these 'hedges', narrow strips of woodland, that fringe the footpath in a thin line.



Ifield & Beyond.....a taste of the Sussex Countryside



Start from the car park in Rusper Road and go left along the road (north) a short way and turn left, along the public footpath opposite St Margaret's Cottage, leading into the Ifield Brook Meadow (see description overleaf). Follow this north (right) to (1) St Margaret's Church with its 19th century low tower and two bells, which date back to the 13th Century. It also contains 14th Century effigies thought to be of a local man and woman, Sir John de Ifield and his wife.

Pass through the churchyard via the kissing gate and cross to the barn (buttery). Keep to the path by the dew pond which may be dry or full depending on weather conditions. (2) Many ponds dry up in hot summer, which is not always a bad thing as they can support a wider range of wildlife than a permanently wet one. Go past the pond kissing gate and walk north across the meadow for about 250 metres to a further kissing gate and turn right before the footbridge and on towards Rectory Lane where you head north (left) after another kissing gate. (3) Turn right up Rectory Lane you pass The Tiled Barn a patterned brickwork and timber framed building.

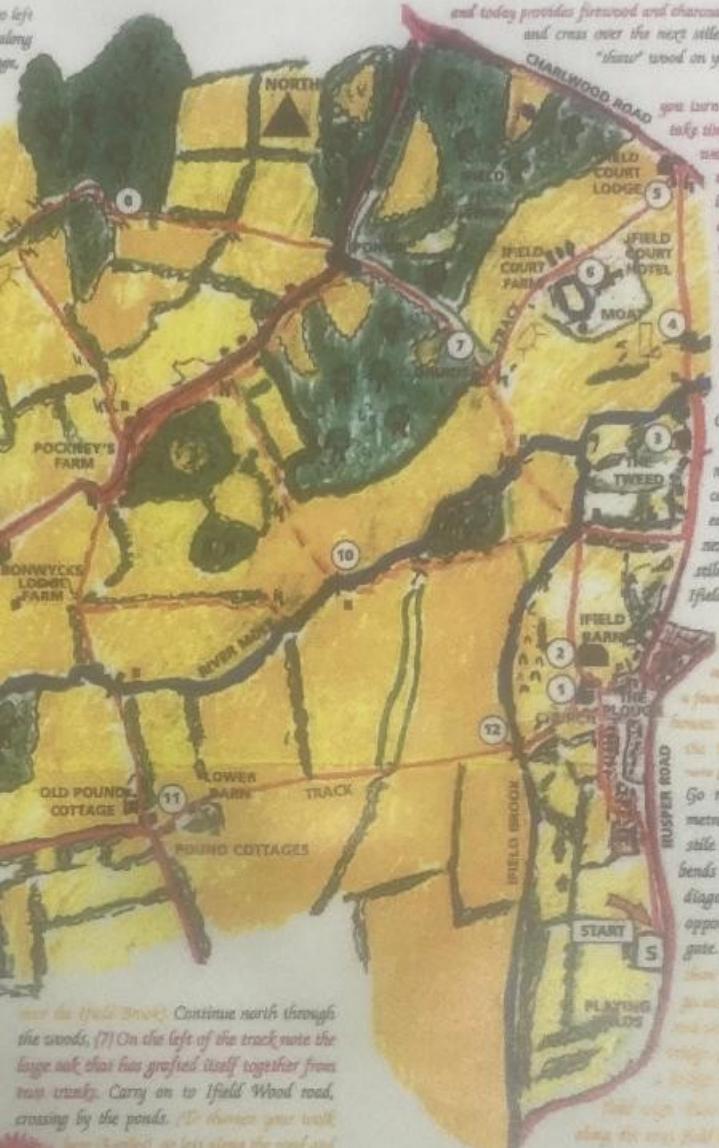
The house was previously the Ifield Workhouse until 1834 when the Poor Law came about. After this it was divided into two cottages and is now one again. Note the wattle fencing on your left before taking the footbridge over the River Mole.

As you cross the stream you are entering the Horsham District from Crawley Borough. Continue across the field, following the old hedge-line of oak, heading for the opposite corner of the field by the house. (4) The field is very wet and boggy in the winter and former courses of the stream line can be seen across the field. At the field corner, go over the stile and turn left by (5) Ifield Court Lodge, built in 1846, and along the track, towards Ifield Court Hotel, keeping to the track and straight ahead.

Knapswood

through the farm area. (6) During the middle ages, Ifield Court was the principal house and Court of the Manor of Ifield, but now all that remains from those days is the moat. The old barns are in various stages of repair. Note the local Horsham stone on the roofs and old oak timbers. Carry on the track through the farm buildings, closing the gate behind you before you cross the field. The gradual rise in the land can be seen as you look left towards Ifield and the Church. After closing the next gate, take the path right over the stile towards Ifield Wood, passing the house 'Druid's'.

Turn right, cross the river bridge, turning left back towards the church, crossing the boundary



cross the Ifield Brook. Continue north through the woods, (7) On the left of the track note the large oak that has grafted itself together from two trunks. Carry on to Ifield Wood road, crossing by the ponds. (8) Turn right, walk along the track, go left along the road and take the footpath left between the houses towards the trees. Cross the footbridge (9) and turn directions as noted.

(10) Continue over the stile, up the hill, into the fields along the left fence line. Go over the next stile and continue up the field on the right fence line, taking the stile into the small wood, following the signs. (11) The hornbeam on the right as you come off the stile in the past have been topped at about 1 metre off the ground, indicating they may have been former boundary trees to a wood or track. On the left, hornbeam previously cut for a timber crop (coppiced) can be seen with their multiple stems as the base. Hornbeam is a common tree in the area in account of its excellent burning properties. It was used to fire the furnaces of the Middle Age iron industry in the Weald.

Hornbeam

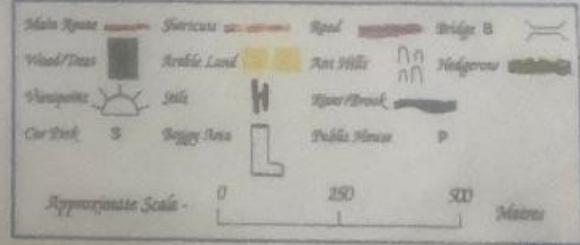
turns as the right as you come off the stile in the past have been topped at about 1 metre off the ground, indicating they may have been former boundary trees to a wood or track. On the left, hornbeam previously cut for a timber crop (coppiced) can be seen with their multiple stems as the base. Hornbeam is a common tree in the area in account of its excellent burning properties. It was used to fire the furnaces of the Middle Age iron industry in the Weald.

and today provides firewood and charcoal. Walk through the woods and cross over the next stile, along the field edge and 'sheaf' wood on your left (see notes on Ifield Wood overleaf). (9) Before you turn left to cross the next stile, take time to enjoy the views looking west towards Jordans Wood and Orleton Copse and crossing the next stile, return across to Tilgate Forest and Buxham Country Park. These views show how wooded the area has been as the Weald still is today.

West Sussex is one of the most heavily wooded counties in England. Carry on down the middle of the field to its edge where it meets the wood again and continue along the left field edge, crossing a stile, across another stile and a footbridge to join the Ifield Wood road. (10) A short cut from (9) is to go left and walk the road for about 1/2 mile before heading right along a footpath off the road between the houses that will join the footpath to the Upper Mole footbridge - see route 11A.

Go right along the road for 50 metres or so and take the concrete stile on your left where the road bends to the right. Cross the field diagonally left, towards the opposite corner and go through the gate. (11) A slightly shorter finish from the full route (about 4 miles), go along the field edge, over a stile and so on the return - cross the footbridge and then go right over the road, along the field edge, then cross the field edge or the footbridge over the River Mole and back to the church.

Carry along the right side of the field, pass over the old trackway bridge that spans the River Mole and take the path past a market garden holding, passing through the stile and onto the main Rusper Road at (11) Old Pound Cottage, so named because it has a 'pound' where formerly, stray animals were driven and kept until their owners claimed them and paid for their keep. Join the Rusper Road for 20 metres or so, then turn left again onto the footpath, noting the old cart shed on the right and continue along this track until you cross the Ifield Brook, continuing on towards the church. (12) If you are quiet you may be lucky and see one of Britain's more colourful birds, the Kingfisher, darting along the brook. Before you reach the church, note the Alder trees in the wet depression. These show where a former drainage line existed in the area which still gets damp in the winter. The Sycamore is a tree which feeds off these trees. Finally, continue to the churchyard and take the footpath you set out on back to the car park.



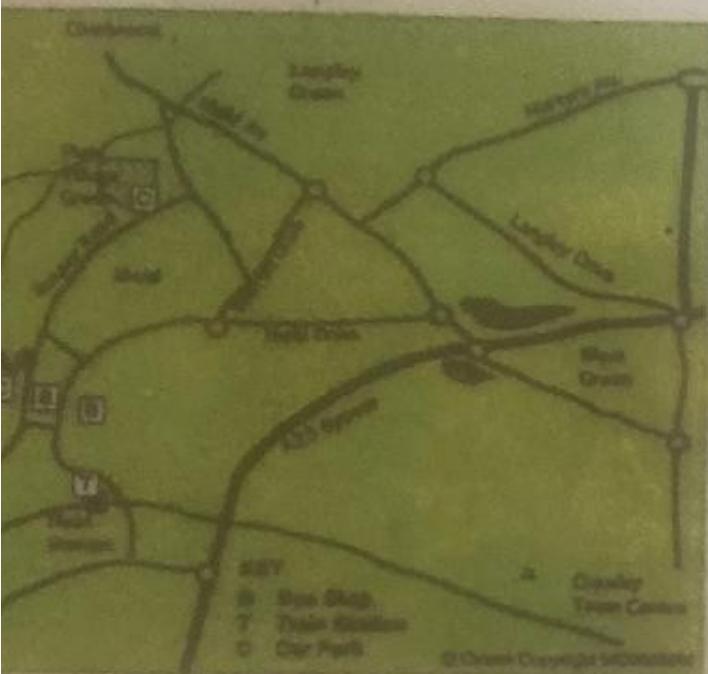
KEY

HOW TO GET THERE

Train (A) From Ifield Railway Station on the Horsham to Victoria main line.

Bus (B) London & Country Ifield West Service (alight at Tangmere Road) W.H. Motors Crawley - Ifield - Horley - Smallfield Service. (Alight Royal Pub).

Car (C) Parking is available at the car park on Ifield Road or alternatively at the Ifield Village Inn. Please park thoughtfully.



THIS LEAFLET HAS BEEN FUNDED BY



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A
4 mile walk

Ifield & Beyond

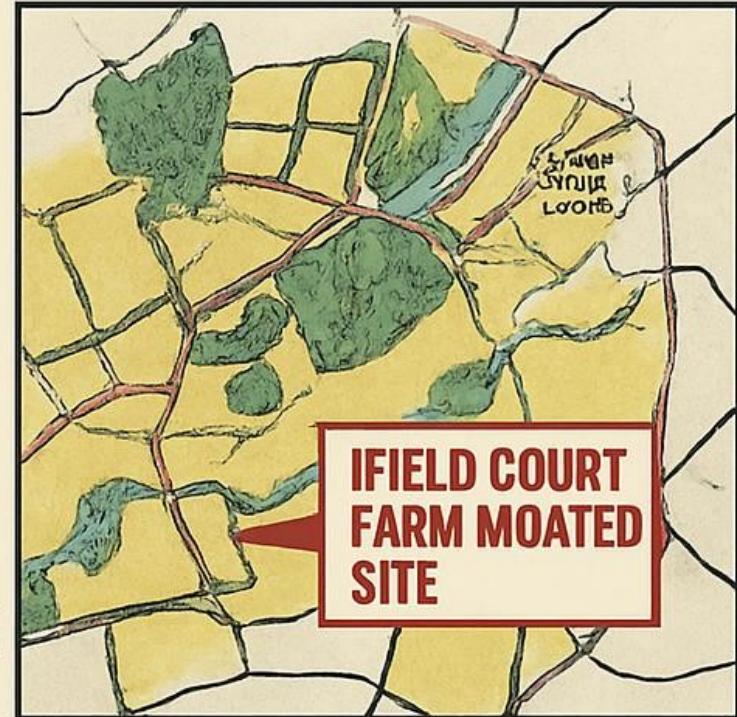


**A taste of the
Sussex Countryside**

PROTECTING THE HISTORIC HEART OF THE ANCIENT PARISH OF IFIELD IFIELD COURT FARM MOATED SITE

1. HISTORIC ENGLAND: FORMAL WARNING (24 SEPT. 2025)

“ The proposals cause harm to the significance of the Medieval moated site at Ifield Court [Scheduled Monument] and St Margaret’s Church [Grade I listed].”



2. REDISCOVERED EVIDENCE

- (a) Horsham District Council - 1999 Planning Precedent
- (b) Gatwick Airport Ltd - Appendix 13 (2014)
- (c) The 1996 “Treasure Map” - Ifield & Beyond

3. THE SCHEDULED MONUMENT AT THE CENTRE OF EVERYTHING

- Nationally protected (Scheduled Monument)
- The geographical centre of the Ancient Parish of Ifield
- Surviving medieval field systems and watercourses
- Surrounding archaeology
- Harm to setting – harm to national heritage

4. WEST OF IFIELD PROPOSAL: CONFLICTS WITH POLICY

- Historic England’s assessment
- National Planning Policy Framework
- Strategic-gap protection (1999)
- Local Nature Recovery Strategy
- Councils’ own commitments

6. SUMMARY

- Jointly acknowledge harm conclusion
- Suspend support for the proposal
- Convene a cross-authority meeting
- Develop

**THE HISTORIC CORE
OF THE ANCIENT
PARISH OF IFIELD
MUST BE
PROTECTED –
NOT DEVELOPED**

**TO PROCEED WOULD
BE KNOWNINGLY
CAUSE HARM TO A SEC-
HURED MONUMENT**

PROTECTING THE HISTORIC HEART OF THE ANCIENT PARISH OF IFIELD

“THE PROPOSALS CAUSE HARM TO THE
SIGNIFICANCE OF THE MEDIEVAL MOATED
SITE AT IFIELD COURT [AND ST MARGARET'S
CHURCH.]” – Historic England, 2025

“THIS LANDSCAPE IS A HERITAGE
AND ECOLOGICAL ASSET.”

1996 “TREASURE MAP”

IFIELD COURT FARM MOATED SITE – SCHEDULED MONUMENT

