

Sent:

14 November 2025 13:17

Subject:

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
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Attachments:

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 Signature]

The Ifield Society

2 Lychgate Cottages

Ifield Street, Ifield Village

Crawley, West Sussex

RH11 0NN

[Redacted Signature]

[Redacted Signature]



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 Crawley Project was established in 1994 to help to improve areas of the countryside in and around Horley & Crawley 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 - Fasten all gates.
- Keep your dogs under close control - Keep to public paths across farmland - Use gates and stilets to cross fences, hedges and walls - Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone.
- Take your litter home - Help to keep all water clean.
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees - Take special care on country roads - Noisy no unnecessary noise.

The 'Ifield & Beyond' walk has been developed through the Horley Crawley Project in association with residents groups and local authorities to enable people to enjoy the countryside on their doorstep. Most of the route follows the right of way network and is waymarked accordingly. There will be marked during wet months. For further guidance on this walk and other rights of way in the area, please see the Ordnance Survey Pathfinder Map 1247 1:25,000 Crawley. Please report any problems you encounter on this walk to: Horley Crawley Project, Ridgely Court, Off Millers Mount Avenue, Pound Hill, Crawley, West Sussex, BN9 0JN, Tel (01293) 425973.

HOW TO GET THERE

- **By Train (T)** From Ifield Railway Station on the Horsham to Victoria main line.
- **By Bus (B)** London & Country Ifield West Service (Right at Bognor Regis) WPC Motors Crawley Chichester - Horley - Smallfield Service. (Right Royal Oak Pub).
- **By Car (C)** Parking is available at the car park on Roper Road or alternatively at the Ifield Village Green. Please park thoughtfully.



THIS LEAFLET HAS BEEN FUNDED BY



COUNTRYSIDE COMMISSION



The Horley Crawley Project is supported by Surrey County Council, West Sussex County Council, Crawley Borough Council, Horsham District Council, Mid Valley District Council, Brighton & Hove City Council and Brighton & Hove City Council. With assistance from the Countryside Commission.

A 4 mile walk

Ifield & Beyond



A taste of the Sussex Countryside

Ifield & Beyond



Common Blue

Ifield Village Conservation Area

Ifield was once a village in its own right before the New Town of Crawley absorbed this village into its boundaries in 1956. Ifield is clearly marked on 16th century maps and within Crawley it forms one of Crawley'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 main attractive buildings in this area are the Plough Inn, The Church of St Margaret (which dates from the 13th Century) and the Ifield Barn Theatre, a former threshing barn which is now used as a delightful setting for a local theatre.



St Margaret's Church

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

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Advisory Committee which liaises with Crawley 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 Meadows, with the River Mole and Ifield Brook forming the Horsham/Crawley District boundary, is an attractive area on the edge of Crawley. 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 yellow flowers abundant and cuckoo flower flourishing in the water areas.

A careful walker might catch sight of a kingfisher along the brook. The ant hills 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 Crawley and flows some 10km 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 dries to a trickle.

Come winter, the full force of the water can be seen at the top 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 mole!

Ifield Wood

Ifield Wood is one of the many areas of ancient woodland in the Weald. Weald is an old Saxon word for wood. Ancient woodland is the name given to woodland which has been in existence since at least 1600. 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.

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 when 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 'thinnings', (narrow strips of woodland), that fringe the footpath in a thin line.



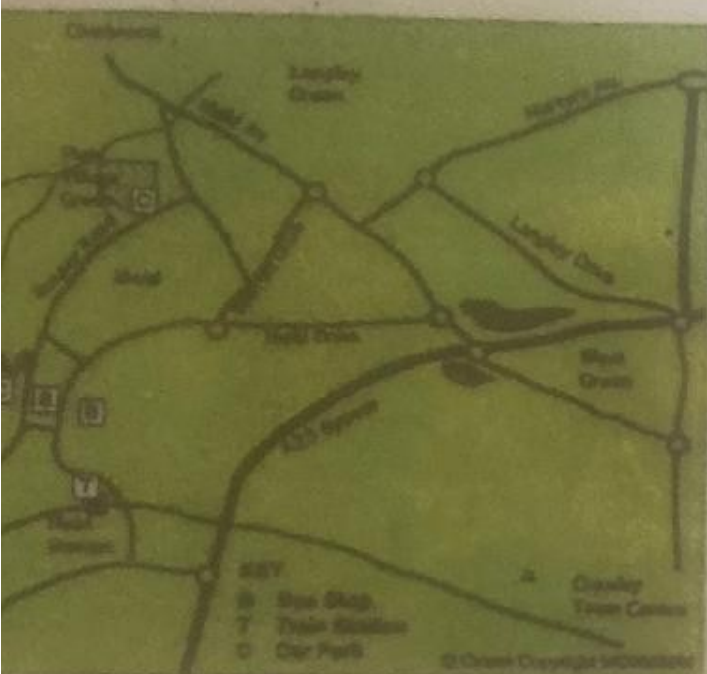
Wood Anemone

HOW TO GET THERE

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

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

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



THIS LEAFLET HAS BEEN FUNDED BY



**Horsham
District
Council**



**west
sussex
county
council**

**COUNTRYSIDE
COMMISSION**

The Horley Crawley Project is supported by Surrey County Council, West Sussex County Council, Crawley Borough Council, Horsham District Council, Mole Valley District Council, Reigate & Banstead Borough Council and Guildford Borough Council, with assistance from the Countryside Commission.

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)

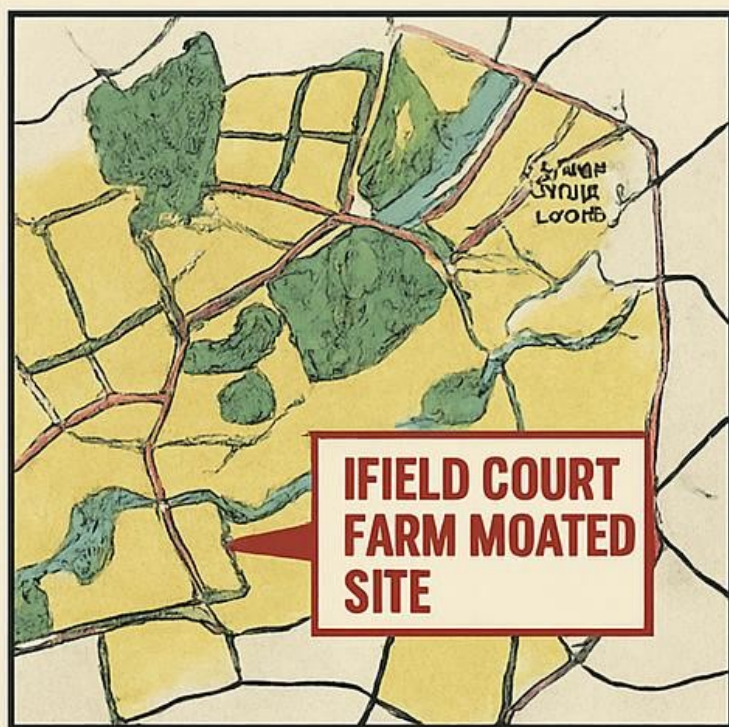
“The proposals cause harm to the significance of the-Medieval moated site at Ifield Court [Scheduled Monument] and St Margatet’s Church [Grade I listed].”

2. REDISCOVERED EVIDENCE

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

3. THE SCHEDULED MONUMEN 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 TO KNOWINGLY
CAUSE HARM TO A SEC-
HUED 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

