



Sussex County Golf
Dyke Golf Club
Devil's Dyke Road
Brighton BN1 8YJ

Mr Jason Hawkes
Principal Planning Officer
Planning Department Horsham District Council

07 November 2025

Dear Jason

Objection to Planning Application [DC/25/1312] – Including the proposed loss of Ifield Golf Club

We write in objection to the above application as the representative body for all golf clubs in Sussex. Golf is a popular and growing sport providing opportunities for social interaction and exercise for all ages from the very young to the very old. Golf clubs provide an opportunity at all levels of ability from the elite golfers with eyes on international competition or those who simply enjoy the opportunity to have regular exercise and meet others. The loss of any golfing facility is to be deplored, particularly where no alternative provision of a similar standard is made.

The governing body for golf in England is England Golf who have already submitted a comprehensive document describing why the needs assessment used in the original submission was based on inappropriate data, together with a detailed argument against this proposed development.

Golf clubs and courses are often viewed unfavourably by some who assume they are simply consumers of precious resources. The reality is quite different. Golf clubs invest heavily in protecting their natural environment, flora and fauna. It is part of what makes them great places to be and take exercise. Ifield Golf Club is a typical example.

The R&A are actively promoting sustainable agronomy and promoting that awareness. See environmental benefits of golf: <https://www.randa.org/sustainability/environmental-benefits>
Many clubs are signing up to the GEO Certification Programme.

The issues at the heart of the west of Ifield development

A substantial housing development with a number of dwellings that could form a significant proportion of the targets set by central government to Horsham District Council has, at its heart, a problem that will have lasting impact for the local population. There is a mountain of supporting documentation with the application and the objections. The following is provided to give some context to all the paperwork.

The removal of a one-hundred-year-old sporting amenity

Ifield golf course is a successful members club with value as a community venue and asset. It is also successful in raising funds for a variety of charities. It has almost 600 members and attracts over 5,500 unique visitors in a season. The membership demography reflects the “game for life” aspect of golf:

- 10% are juniors under 18 years of age
- 17% are aged 20 to 40 who receive much reduced pricing in membership subscriptions amplifying the “game for life” aspect of golf
- 60% of the membership is over 55. This cohort cannot play the alternative sports Homes England propose. They have passed the age that high energy sports are physically possible. Golf helps keep the local community active in middle to old age and is therefore beneficial for physical & mental health.
- The aging demographic alongside the growing local population requires extra sports access and not removal of successful amenities

Golf courses vary in their accessibility, usually with price to play being the driver. Ifield Golf Club subscriptions and casual play fees are pitched to provide a quality playing experience at competitive rates reflecting the local community’s financial mix. Reduced availability will see the price to play increase in the area and threaten the younger and pensionable council tax-payers the most.

Provision for the local community

Availability of golf in North Sussex has been dramatically reduced in recent years through loss of facilities and is further under threat with the recent approval of planning for 800 houses at Horsham Golf & Fitness. If Ifield Golf Club were to close the local community will see a 50% reduction in availability and, even without population growth, the local residents would face the worst provision for golf per capita in Sussex. Population growth will be met by a desert of golf provision.

In the past, 9 holes have been lost at Mannings Heath and Cottesmore Golf Clubs, further diminishing the availability of golf in the local area.

Many inaccurate assertions were made in the Planning Statement submitted as part of this application. As cited by England Golf in their objection to the application: ‘The needs assessment underpinning this application is out-of-date and inaccurate, failing to reflect current realities of golf participation and local provision. England Golf recommends a full update to ensure decisions are based on robust evidence.’

Inadequate Proposals for Mitigation

Parties to the proposed development agree that the golf course at Ifield is **not** surplus to local requirements. The application focuses on mitigating the impact of closure with limited improvements to municipal facilities that in no way can replace the capacity or the quality in loss of sports provision. This is not compliant with NPPF para 99.

Alternative comparable courses within reasonable travel time are either closed to new members or only seeking a handful of new members. The only logical mitigation would be construction of a replacement golf course at a nearby location. As the cost of this would be likely to exceed £20m the offer in the application is no more than a shameful attempt to avoid Homes England’s true responsibilities for mitigation under planning law.

Despite the difficulties created by the knowledge that their golf course is under threat, the club has managed its finances successfully through a creative approach of flexible subscriptions and greater casual play capabilities. However, removal of the threat of closure would open up further opportunities to modernise the offering to include greater social use and participation in other sports through investment that remains impossible while the blight of potential development exists.

Summary

Developers by their nature will create a constant supply of house building applications but by comparison building on golf courses is very costly and time consuming. Legacy facilities are vital to the future of golf participation - a lost golf course is gone forever. Ifield Golf Course should be viewed as an asset at the heart of the community. These 130 acres of open countryside and multi age sports provision can also prove a vital ecological asset through sustainable agronomy management practices.

Golf courses are not sacrosanct and where uneconomic or where over supply exists, they could be regarded as suitable for development. This is not the case with Ifield golf club. We ask that you reject this planning application and protect your current and future council taxpayers' access to one of our great mass participation sports.

Your sincerely,


President
Sussex County Golf

**SUSSEX
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