

Dear Planning Department,

Please accept this written objection to DC/25/1312: Land West of Ifield Charlwood Road Ifield West Sussex Proposal: Hybrid planning application (part outline and part full planning application) for a phased, mixed use development comprising: A full element covering enabling infrastructure including the Crawley Western Multi-Modal Corridor (Phase 1, including access from Charlwood Road and crossing points) and access infrastructure to enable servicing and delivery of secondary school site and future development, including access to Rusper Road, supported by associated infrastructure, utilities and works, alongside: An outline element (with all matters reserved) including up to 3,000 residential homes (Class C2 and C3), commercial, business and service (Class E), general industrial (Class B2), storage or distribution (Class B8), hotel (Class C1), community and education facilities (Use Classes F1 and F2), gypsy and traveller pitches (*sui generis*), public open space with sports pitches, recreation, play and ancillary facilities, landscaping, water abstraction boreholes and associated infrastructure, utilities and works, including pedestrian and cycle routes and enabling demolition. This hybrid planning application is for a phased development intended to be capable of coming forward in distinct and separable phases and/or plots in a severable way.

The key points of my objection are:

Biodiversity, Trees and Green Infrastructure

Homes England is proposing to concrete over a very important local site for wildlife consisting of an environmentally rich range of habitats. Many species have been recorded with Sussex Wildlife Trust and similar organisations and acknowledged as rare, threatened and legally protected. Even Homes England's own ecological surveys recognise that the area has high biodiversity value. NPPF 174 requires protection and measurable net gain. No matter how much mitigation and how many BNGs are put in place, the bottom line is that with an influx of heavy machinery, noise, light, destruction, people and upheaval of soil, the chances of any existing wildlife remaining is remote. It will take hundreds of years for any replantings to offer the same food and shelters as now. Those that do remain will struggle to survive as their habitat will have been depleted, their corridors and food chains reduced and cars and human activity will turn the once wildlife rich area into a barren housing estate like all the many other housing estates that have been thrust on green fields in and around Horsham and Crawley. Using part of the site as a country park is laughable, making it sound like a zoo. Wildlife currently roams freely all around the area. Removing ancient hedgerows and ancient trees will not encourage them to remain. Ifield Brook Meadows, the River Mole and the surrounding wetlands will all suffer as a result of the proposed development. The CWMMC will cut off Ifield Brook Meadows from the surrounding countryside and increase water pollution in the river. The cycle path alongside the River Mole through Ifield Brook Meadows will increase noise, lighting and footfall and reduce the wildlife. This area, despite its proximity to Gatwick, is a peaceful green area, much loved for many years by people from far and wide for rambling, dog walking, bird watching and mental calm. It is a place to recharge one's batteries after a stressful day, which ironically both the government (who are the ones promoting this development) and the NHS promote as being essential for mental health.

In their consultation supporting statement (July 2025) DFL in their lighting assessment stated that, "The Lighting Impact Assessment was based on a desktop study and baseline survey." The night sky around this rural area and up to Rusper has been dark for many years, which is why Rusper Neighbourhood Plan has adopted a Dark Skies Policy. Planners need to visit Rusper on a clear dark night to see this for themselves and not come to a decision by looking at a desktop study. They will also be able to see how the sky has been detrimentally affected by the recent large development of Woodgate, Pease Pottage: I'm assuming that they too did a desktop lighting assessment, thus not realising how far away the real time impacts of their very bright street lighting would have on the

rural character and dark skies of Rusper.

Traffic

We live in the small village of Rusper, surrounded by countryside. Tractors and farm machinery are a common sight on our rural roads and lanes, which local residents accept as a part of our rural community. Since the advent of Sat Navs, our narrow lanes have been subjected to rat-running traffic that does not respect these lanes, driving too fast and unsafely, becoming impatient with farm machinery, pedestrians and the many horse riders, carriage drivers and cyclists that abound around here. Yet HE are proposing to cut off our main access road to Ifield station and Crawley around Furlong Farm on the Rusper Road, necessitating a long detour through the new estate and back through Ifield village to reach the station. They even suggest that we would be able to go through Ifield Green and Ifield Wood. Have they ever travelled these routes? Ifield Green is a narrow road in a Conservation Area, with speed humps and cars parked along the side (no verges, so no room to widen the road.) Ifield Wood is another country lane, narrow and with nasty bends that is not a good road to drive down, especially during the rush hour and school run times.

The A264 to Horsham is extremely congested, especially during rush hours and school times, causing a huge volume of traffic from Crawley, Horsham and beyond, the new CWMMC will encourage drivers to cut through Rusper in order to use this fastest route to travel to Gatwick. With the new CWMMC dual carriageway and nearly 3,000 houses presently being built at Mowbray, North Horsham (many of which are also in Rusper Parish) a further increase in traffic will squeeze through Rusper's narrow lanes to the new road, in order to avoid the congestion on the A264. NPPF 110-112 requires, "safe and suitable access" and states that, "refusal is justified where impacts are severe." There are no A or B roads in Rusper Parish, yet HE are proposing that vehicles from 3,000 houses would enter and exit the proposed CWMMC road onto minor rural roads - Complete insanity.

The existing Ifield West (the very fact that HE has named the proposed development the almost identical name of "West of Ifield" demonstrates how little knowledge they have of this area) has one road, Hyde Drive, that connects the houses to Ifield. During the rush hour and school times, especially in the winter months, the roundabout at the bottom of Hyde Drive leading onto the Rusper Road is congested with traffic heading towards Ifield. HE's ideas to use this as a main route is incredible. Rusper Road is very narrow, as are the pavements. There are no verges, so the possibility of widening the road is out of the question. This road is used by many children walking to schools with or without parents, with buggies that barely fit on the narrow pavements, commuters walking to Ifield station and brave cyclists. The prospect of making this the main road to the proposed secondary school is an accident waiting to happen and a real safety concern. Buses and lorries can barely pass each other at the moment, without adding years of heavy construction traffic and extra school traffic. HE's proposal of increased bike useage, though laudable, would be an unsafe option and is unrealistic with no room for cycle paths on the Rusper Road. The negative impact on local traffic hotspots will be severe even with the suggested mitigations of traffic lights, chicanes and speed bumps. There will be more congestion and delays on Ifield Avenue with rat-running through Langley Green, Ifield Green and Ifield Wood, with associated safety issues. Congestion, along with cyclist and pedestrian safety concerns, around the Tangmere Road, Overdene Drive, Ifield Drive and Ifield Station area, are heightened as this will be the route for construction traffic. Short films and images adeptly showing everyday traffic congestion on Rusper Road and Ifield station can be viewed on <https://www.savewestofifield.co.uk/media>

The impacts on nearby villages such as Rusper, Faygate and Charlwood have been underestimated. HE's aspiration to move to more sustainable travel is to be applauded, but is unrealistic in real life. HE's models may be overly optimistic about the extent to which residents will shift away from car use towards walking, cycling and using public transport. The models assume that this shift will also apply to existing Crawley residents. The Rusper Road closure will mean much longer journeys for existing Rusper residents to reach Ifield station and for Ifield residents to reach Rusper. HE has specifically mentioned Ifield Wood and Ifield Green as suitable routes for additional diverted traffic

but both are unsafe and narrow routes for large volumes of traffic.

National Highways stated in their consultation response (24/09/2025) that they have not been consulted on the plan since June 2020 and require a lot more information. Surely this and related research should have been done well before submission?

Housing

This is a premature plan from HE, who are presenting their plan to Horsham before the Horsham District Local Plan has been made. It is not in the existing adopted and valid HDPF, so is a speculative attempt from HE: the NPPF (paras 15 and 33) states that a plan-led approach should be taken, which is clearly not happening. Although stating that 3000 homes will be built, HE has made it very clear that they see 10,000 homes as a future opportunity to join Horsham and Crawley, which has always been something that, as completely distinct towns, both Horsham and Crawley strongly oppose. HDC should be looking at this plan with a view to the 10,000 homes that HE would like to see and respond accordingly.

Whilst there is a need for housing, the proposed development fails to meet the needs of local people. Crawley have made it very clear that they are opposed to the development, one of the reasons being the lack of social housing provision. There is a severe lack of social housing, both in Crawley and Horsham, which has not been addressed by HE. Affordable housing will still be out of reach for many people as the price for affordable houses in the south-east, although discounted, is still way above the average UK house price and not affordable for those managing to get by on a living wage. There is no guarantee that developers would not renege on 35% affordable houses as has so often happened in this area.

Health

The West of Ifield site is part of Ruspur Parish, Horsham but is situated on the Crawley border meaning that Crawley will inevitably bear the brunt of the resulting extra traffic and extra people requiring doctors, dentists, hospitals, schools, nurseries, playgroups, all of which are already overstretched. In recent years, waiting times for GP or hospital appointments have become very long, visits to East Surrey A and E department involve hours and hours of waiting in an overcrowded, run down waiting room and NHS dentists are unable to take on more patients. NPPF 20 requires adequate infrastructure, yet none of the above are in HE's plan, or other authority plans.

Flooding

The fields, the River Mole, Ifield Brook and the surrounding wetlands on the site are locally well known flood sites and with climate change this is predicted to worsen. HE have addressed this with landscaping and drainage systems to manage surface water run off, but what about the flash floods? NPPF 159-161 require the sequential test and avoiding risk.

The LLFA (consultation response 2/10/25) have serious concerns about flooding in this area and have requested a lot more information from HE which should have been researched and provided well before submitting a plan. The Environment Agency(consultation response 24/09/25) have also requested further detailed information in order to assess the impacts on the environment before they are able to issue a decision..

Ifield Golf Club

Ifield Golf Club is a thriving club for members of all ages that is almost one hundred years old. It has more than survived through Covid and the cost of living crisis, even though other golf clubs in the area have collapsed. It has 500 golfing members and 50 social members. In the 2022-23 season it was used by 3940 green fee players, 1485 society players and the clubhouse was used for 19 parties, 8 wakes, 18 other private parties, carveries and Christmas events. Should the golf club be closed, there would be a severe drop in money raised for charities. The golf course itself is vast and

is well used by all ages, juniors and seniors, for playing and coaching golf and for restoring mental calm. One only has to pass the entrance to see its popularity by the very full car parks at the front. It also provides a place to meet, to socialise and to hold competitive, charity and family events. The public footpath that runs through the course allows many people to walk their dogs, or just to take in the beautiful scenery, the wildlife and the regular bird visitors. This is a vital way of mentally and physically decompressing after a day's work and is now prescribed by doctors to improve mental well being.

Removing Ifield Golf Club would be sacrilege. It has a thriving junior section and offers affordable membership and coaching. Apart from the loss of nature, habitat and environment, members of this very popular club would have nowhere readily available to play golf. Copthorne and Mannings Heath are at capacity or have high costs and joining fees that are unaffordable to many golfers. There are no other comparable 18 hole courses nearby nor are there any other affordable courses nearby and Rusper Golf Course closed recently making this situation worse. The suggestion that Tilgate and Rookwood Golf Courses could replace Ifield with minor improvements is untrue. Placing Goffs Park pitch and putt in the mix is complete nonsense as it is a completely different game on a much smaller scale.

The NPPF paragraph 104 is the national policy related to the loss of a golf course, yet none of these three parts of this policy have been addressed:

- a) The golf course is NOT surplus to requirements, which HE have admitted.
- b) The proposed replacement facilities are NOT in an equally suitable location, one of them being 9 miles away and the other one with marginally worse accessibility.
- c) The proposed development is NOT for alternative sports, but for housing.

HDPF Policy 43 is the relevant local policy on the lack of sporting facilities, but HE has not provided the relevant requirements, ie "an alternative facility of equivalent or better quality and scale to meet community needs is available".

NPPF 99 protects open space, sports and recreation land unless equivalent or better provision is secured.

Infrastructure

I commend HE for planning to build the school first, but the chosen site is unsustainable and is not where a school is needed. Since the overdevelopment of Southwater, WSCC spends vast sums of money bussing children to and from secondary schools in Horsham and beyond. Residents at Forge Wood (a large, new, growing development next to the M23 in Crawley) find it difficult to get places for their children at nearby secondary schools. Heathy Wood, (a new, growing development in Copthorne) were promised a primary school, but this didn't materialise and Kilnwood Vale (a large, new developing estate along the A264) has no secondary school nearby. All of these sites have been built in isolated areas, where local infrastructure has not been provided, putting immense pressure on children, parents, roads, GP surgeries, playgroups, nurseries, hospital and emergency services. Parents have no option but to drive their children to school, especially if they have more than one child at different schools. HE are about to create another one of these massive isolated estates on Ifield Court Farm (West of Ifield) concreting over an acknowledged wildlife rich area and productive farmland and introducing more traffic into the area with children being driven or bussed across town to get to a school that should have been built elsewhere.

The idea of a cycling community sounds good and ticks the boxes, but in practice it will be difficult to carry out. This development will be a long way from shops and services so cars will still be needed. Ifield railway station is mentioned for commuting and there is talk of improvements to the station. However, Ifield station has just been named as the worst station in the country for cancellations. There are very few parking spaces nearby so with an influx of new residents there would be nowhere to park, or leave cycles. Dropping off and collecting people at the station is already difficult with nowhere to turn around or wait. During the school drop off times and rush hours, the area around the station is badly congested with school and work traffic (there are already four schools in this area.) There is frequently nowhere to sit during the commute as carriages are

often already full by the time the train reaches Ifield, even after the lengthening of the platforms. HE say that they will provide bike spaces, but the width and length of the platforms would make this difficult.

Water

Southern Water's response has been terse, merely one sentence commenting that they can supply water to the area, along with a map showing current water supplies, water sources and 3 blue circles not referenced in the key but on the proposed site. Only this week, we have learned that SE Water who supply some parts of West Sussex, have announced that Ardingly Reservoir is only 27% full. Spokespersons for the area stated that there is now officially a drought and expressed grave concerns as to how long the water supply would last. Ardingly reservoir is a back up for the Horsham and Crawley area and streams and rivers here are also very low. HE's plan is to take potable water from boreholes from outside the area, thus depleting that area of water supplies for customers outside of Southern Water's area.. I also understand that the volume of water from the boreholes is very low and is contaminated with fluorine, chlorine and boron. HE propose to use grey water for toilets and outside use, which is a positive, but how will that succeed with increasing droughts due to Climate Change? It is interesting that HE are proposing rainwater capture as a nod to saving water and Climate Change, but they have made no reference to solar panels being fitted anywhere in the new development.

Sewage

Sewage from the new development would be treated at Crawley sewage treatment works, yet HE make no mention of the fact that these treatment works are almost at capacity. Crawley and Thames Water have raised concerns about this. There have been sewage overflows in the River Mole, and with 3,000 more houses, the resulting pollution into the River Mole is a very serious concern. Thames Water (consultation response 24/09/25) stated that “ the existing foul water network does not have sufficient capacity to support the proposed development”

Police

Sussex Police have raised objections due to the additional strain that would be placed on resources, resulting in negative impacts in the area. No financial contributions have been proposed from HE, without which there would be a deterioration in services.

The creation of safe and accessible environments where crime and disorder, and the fear of crime do not undermine the quality of life or community cohesion is fundamental to planning for sustainable development as confirmed in the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF, December 2024).

The adopted Horsham District Planning Framework (November 2015) lists one of the six priority themes for the Council as ‘safer and healthier’.

HDPF Policy 33 (Development Principles) states that development shall be required to ‘Incorporate measures to reduce any actual or perceived opportunities for crime or antisocial behaviour on the site and in the surrounding area...’

HDPF Policy 39 (Strategic Policy: Infrastructure Provision) states that ‘the release of land for development will be dependent on there being sufficient capacity in the existing local infrastructure to meet the additional requirements arising from new development, or suitable necessary mitigation arrangements for the improvement of the infrastructure, services and community facilities caused by the development being provided...to ensure required standards are met, arrangements for new or improved infrastructure provision, will be secured by planning obligation / Community Infrastructure Levy...’

In their response, Sussex Police have quoted many successful High Court appeals requiring developers to make financial contributions to essential policing infrastructure.

One would hope that financial contributions would also be made to schools, hospitals and GP surgeries that are struggling to cope with the massive influx of people into this area, as a result of unprecedented overdevelopment and reductions in government financial contributions in recent years.

Heritage and Listed Buildings

The rural setting of Ifield Village Conservation Area will be lost, along with the historical link between the village, Ifield Court Farm, Ifield Wood and the rest of the ancient parish of Ifield. Ifield Green, a village street within the conservation area, is designated in the plans as a route for additional and diverted traffic from the new development. Not only will this be inadequate for the volume of extra traffic but it will be highly detrimental to the appearance of this Conservation Area. 3,000 houses will destroy the significant, historic rural views and tranquility that have existed for centuries

Historic England have raised significant concerns, regarding the impact on nearby listed buildings. “Historic England notes that this application would lead to harm to nationally important assets, and recommends that the issues outlined in our advice should be considered in order for the application to meet the requirements of the NPPF (paras 77, 208, 212, 213, 215 and 219.)”

“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). The ES identifies significant adverse effects to these assets. We consider that in NPPF terms this would translate to less than substantial harm, in the middle of the range. There would be a direct and cumulative impact to both assets, with harm caused by development within their setting. Harm to nationally important heritage assets requires careful consideration, particularly as to whether harm might be demonstrably avoided/minimised further. We recommend that the issues outlined in our advice below should be considered for the application to meet the requirements of the NPPF (paras 77, 208, 212, 213, 215 and 219).” NPPF 199-202 gives great weight to conserving heritage; Inspectors regularly refuse where that balance isn't met.

Surrey County Council Environmental Planning (consultation response (18/09/25) request that “no development shall take place until a programme of archaeological work has been secured in accordance with an overarching Written Scheme of Investigation that has been submitted to, and approved in writing by, the Local Planning Authority” and that this is due to the site” being of archaeological significance and it is important that it is recorded by excavation before it is destroyed by development in accordance with Policy 34 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015.)”

Name and address supplied separately