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From: [REDACTED]
Sent: 27 December 2025 23:48
To: Jason.Hawkes
Cc: [REDACTED]
Subject: MAKING A FURTHER CASE FOR THE WITHDRAWAL AND/OR REJECTION OF HOMES ENGLAND'S WEST OF IFIELD PLANNING APPLICATION
Categories: Comments Received

Dear Jason Hawkes

I am writing in relation to Homes England's planning application for development west of Ifield.

The purpose of this letter is to make a clear procedural point.

Horsham District Council is presently being asked to determine a planning application which it cannot lawfully or rationally determine, for precisely the same reason that the Planning Inspector concluded Horsham's submitted Local Plan could not be examined or found sound.

In both cases, the decision-maker is confronted with a framework so incomplete, internally inconsistent, and unresolved that no informed planning judgment can properly be made.

As you will be aware, the Planning Inspector did not merely disagree with elements of Horsham's Local Plan. The Inspector concluded that the plan contained such fundamental uncertainties—particularly in relation to strategic allocations, deliverability, infrastructure dependency, cross-boundary impacts, and unresolved objections—that the examination could not meaningfully proceed. In short, the evidential and policy foundations were not adequate to support decision-making.

Homes England's West of Ifield application suffers from the same defects.

The application is expressly dependent on strategic matters which remain unresolved or untested, including but not limited to:

- the absence of an adopted Local Plan capable of providing a lawful policy framework;
- unresolved cross-boundary and strategic infrastructure issues;
- fundamental objections from statutory and non-statutory bodies;
- uncertainty over deliverability, phasing, and long-term impacts;
- reliance on future decisions, agreements, or mitigation measures which are not secured or capable of proper assessment at this stage.

In these circumstances, Horsham District Council is not being asked to exercise planning judgment within a coherent policy framework, but rather to speculate—something the planning system does not permit.

The Planning Inspector recognised that such speculation is impermissible when assessing the Local Plan. The same principle must apply here.

If the Council was unable to proceed with its own Local Plan examination because the evidence base and strategic context were inadequate, it follows logically and legally that it cannot make an informed determination on a planning application which depends upon that same unresolved strategic context.

To proceed regardless would expose the Council to significant legal risk and undermine confidence in the integrity of the planning process.

Accordingly, I respectfully submit that Horsham District Council should apply to Homes England’s application the same reasoning applied by the Planning Inspector to the Local Plan: namely, that the application cannot properly be determined in the absence of a sound, adopted, and coherent strategic framework.

If the Council considers that it lacks the powers or policy footing to refuse or defer the application on this basis, then the only appropriate course is referral for Government intervention.

This is not an admission of failure by the Council. It is recognition of the limits of lawful decision-making in circumstances where national agencies are advancing proposals which outstrip the existing planning framework.

The planning system does not permit decisions to be taken “in hope” or “in anticipation” that unresolved matters will somehow be resolved later. The Inspectorate has already affirmed this principle in relation to Horsham’s Local Plan. It must now be applied consistently.

I would be grateful if you could confirm how the Council intends to address this fundamental procedural issue before any determination is made.

Yours sincerely

Richard W. Symonds

MCIPD

Co-Founder, The Ifield Society

2 Lychgate Cottages
Ifield Street, Ifield Village
Crawley, West Sussex
RH11 0NN

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]