

[REDACTED]

Sent:

[REDACTED]

20 February 2026 13:19

To:

[REDACTED]

Subject:

UNTANGLING THE WEST OF IFIELD ISSUE

Attachments:

thumbnail - 2026-02-20T111104.236.jpg

Categories:

Comments Received

[UNTANGLING THE WEST OF IFIELD ISSUE](#)

Dear Editor,

There is understandable confusion at present regarding West of Ifield, because two separate legal processes are running in parallel — and they are often discussed as if they were one.

They are not.

The first is the speculative planning application submitted by Homes England. That application is being considered by Horsham District Council [HDC]. Objections are being collated, reports prepared, and at some point the Council must decide whether to grant, refuse or defer permission. That process assesses the specific proposal — its technical detail, infrastructure implications, environmental impact and policy compliance.

The second is the Horsham Local Plan examination, conducted by an independent Planning Inspector. The Inspector does not determine the speculative planning application. Instead, the examination tests whether the Local Plan as a whole is sound, justified, effective and consistent with national policy.

The examination has now been restructured. Stage 1 will consider housing requirements and the overall spatial strategy. Only at Stage 2 will specific site allocations — including West of Ifield — be scrutinised.

That sequencing matters. Strategy before allocation. Numbers before geography.

A crucial point is that objections submitted to the planning application to HDC do not automatically become part of the planning inspector's Local Plan examination record. These are legally distinct systems. If concerns relate to housing numbers, spatial distribution, infrastructure realism or over-reliance on a single large allocation, those issues must be raised within the Local Plan process itself if they are to be formally tested there.

It is also worth noting that Ifield Brook Meadows is a Crawley Borough Council [CBC]-designated Local Green Space [LGS]. Under national policy, that designation carries protection equivalent to Green Belt. This does not mean nothing can ever occur there, but any development — including engineered works or infrastructure [eg lighted cycleways] — must preserve openness, and respect the reasons for its designation [Note: a question arises as to why Homes England has not submitted a separate planning application for Ifield Brook Meadows as it is within the CBC boundary - not the HDC boundary].

The situation regarding Ifield Golf Club - within the HDC boundary - understandably carries strong feeling within the parish community. National planning policy contains specific tests regarding the loss of sports and recreational facilities, including requirements relating to equivalent or better provision and accessibility. If the loss of the golf course is to be justified within the planning system, those policy tests must be met clearly and transparently.

The speculative planning application by Homes England to HDC, and the planning inspector's Local Plan examination, are separate legal tracks. Horsham District Council is not automatically prevented from determining the application. However, planning in England is intended to be planned. Where housing numbers and spatial strategy are under active examination, sequencing becomes important.

Nothing has yet been decided. The Local Plan has not been adopted. The Inspector's staged approach indicates that evidence and justification must be tested carefully.

Whatever view one takes on West of Ifield, clarity about process is essential and critical. Calm, informed and structured participation will be more effective than confusion, speculation or noisy political rhetoric.

Yours sincerely

Richard W. Symonds MCIPD

2 Lychgate Cottages

Ifield Street, Ifield Village

Crawley, West Sussex

RH11 0NN

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

WEST OF IFIELD: UNTANGLING THE PROCESS

VS.

PLANNING APPLICATION

Handled by Horsham District Council



PLANNING APPLICATION

- ✓ Specific Proposal
- ✓ Technical Reports
- ✓ Planning Decisions

LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

Overseeing the Horsham Local Plan



LOCAL PLAN EXAMINATION

- ✓ Housing Numbers
- ✓ Spatial Strategy
- ✓ National Policy

SEPARATE LEGAL PATHS

DIFERENT ISSUES • DIFFERENT DECISIONS • DIFFERENT TIMETABLES