

Sent: 24 October 2025 12:39
To: Planning
Subject: DC/25/1312: Land West of Ifield Charlwood Road Ifield West Sussex
Categories: Comments Received

I am writing to object to the proposed closure and redevelopment of Ifield Golf club as part of the above planning application.

The loss of existing open space, sports and recreational buildings is restricted at paragraph 104 of the National Planning Policy Framework unless the following can be demonstrated:

"a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use."

Policy 42 of the Horsham District Planning Framework (2015) also protects existing community, leisure and recreational facilities.

Homes England have engaged Sports Planning Consultants to prepare a Golf Needs assessment. This report concludes that:

"Although IGC is not deemed clearly surplus to requirements, the overall position is considered marginal. Given the market characteristics, it does not require replacement on a like for like basis, given the supply and demand position set out and the nature of the existing provision. The deficiency in the 20- minute core catchment is considered marginal so a full replacement 18 hole golf course is not proportionate or warranted. Instead targeted enhancement to the local golf offer- designed to support existing members and attract new- would provide more appropriate mitigation."

The report makes a host of unsupported claims and I do not believe the research undertaken supports the conclusions. It claims that, displaced golfers from Ifield, can be absorbed through existing capacity at other golf clubs within the catchment area, subject to some mitigation actions. This conclusion is erroneous:

1. As the report itself acknowledges, courses cater for a range of needs from beginners, to occasional players, to full time golfers. Of the golf facilities listed, Cuckfield (a 9 hole course) and Goffs Park (Pitch and Putt) can be immediately discounted as suitable replacements for regular golfers displaced from Ifield. Tilgate and Rookwood are municipal courses. They are highly unlikely to be attractive as suitable alternatives as they are generally of an inferior quality and, by their nature, attract a far larger number of occasional and inexperienced golfers. This detracts from the playing experience for regular golfers.
2. This leaves Copthorne, Cottesmore Horsham Golf & Fitness and Mannings Heath as potential alternatives. Copthorne and Cottesmore both have waiting lists, Horsham Golf & Fitness has itself been sold for development and will add to unfulfilled demand, Mannings Heath is also reportedly "full". The available alternative courses are not, therefore, in a position to satisfy the demand from displaced golfers. The result of this is that:

- many golfers will be forced to travel outside the catchment area
- prices at the other courses will be driven up as a result of the supply & demand imbalance

3. The report appears to suggest that the supply situation can be improved by further investment at Rookwood and Tilgate. As stated above, these courses are unlikely to be considered suitable by displaced Ifield golfers. Even if they were, the proposed investments like improving bunkers, building driving ranges etc. will not increase supply and therefore do nothing to alleviate the demand/supply imbalance. The proposal to invest in "adventure golf" at Rookwood is laughable. Whilst this may be attractive to some members of the public, it is not a serious proposal for regular golfers.

I do not, therefore, believe that appropriate mitigation has been proposed and the planning department needs to either keep I filed open, or make other proposals which will replace the lost 18 holes on a like-for-like basis.

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