

Sent: 22 September 2025 23:18
To: Planning
Subject: Objection to application ref: DC/25/1312

Categories: Comments Received

Dear Jason Hawkes,

I object to planning application DC/25/1312 West of Ifield for the following planning reasons.

The planned closure of **Ifield Golf Club** would represent a serious and irreversible loss to the local community, especially in light of existing policy, local supply and demand, and examples elsewhere. Below I set out additional evidence and precedents to support my objection.

1. Evidence of Local Demand & Shortage of Golf Facilities

- Horsham District Council itself commissioned a *Golf Supply & Demand Assessment* (February 2021) by Knight, Kavanagh & Page (KKP). According to that report, golf is the **5th largest participation sport in England**, with ~650,000 members in affiliated clubs and about two million people playing independently outside club membership. [Horsham District Council](#)
- The same report shows that in Horsham District there is a measurable demand for golf facilities and that current supply is already under pressure. The loss of Ifield would increase the shortfall. [Horsham District Council](#)

2. National Context – Golf Under Threat

- An article from *The Telegraph* warns that, under current housing and development pressures, “one in five clubs [are] on the brink” of permanent closure. This shows the issue is not isolated — many communities are experiencing the loss of golf facilities as development proceeds. [The Telegraph](#)
- There is a growing public and governmental awareness of the risk posed to playing fields and recreational spaces. Sport England in 2022–23 protected over 1,000 playing fields from development [The Guardian](#) — emphasising how significant playing/sporting spaces are to national well-being and policy.

3. Precedents and Policy Interventions

- In a case in Wyre Forest District, Sport England objected to the loss of a golf course and clubhouse, pointing out that while demand had changed, the assessment had failed to consider alternative golf offerings, entry-level provision, and accessibility for casual users. They emphasised the importance of retaining some form of golf access, even if a traditional 18-hole course was no longer viable. wyreforestdc.objective.co.uk
- Local government legal precedent also demonstrates that when councils try to remove or repurpose sports and recreation facilities, policy and judicial review often hinge on whether provision of equivalent quality and accessibility is demonstrated, and whether the loss is justified in terms of need and public benefit. For example, a case examined whether a facility was “existing” for planning-policy purposes and required equivalent replacements. [Local Government Lawyer](#)

4. What This Means for Ifield Golf Club

Putting this local and national evidence together:

- Ifield Golf Club is not surplus, but rather part of a network of golf provision already under strain (per Horsham’s own assessment).
- There is no evidence (so far as I am aware) that an *equivalent or better provision* is proposed: accessible to current users, affordable, in a suitable location.
- The loss will likely disproportionately affect casual players, juniors, the elderly, and those for whom membership at higher cost clubs is a barrier.
- The sporting value (health, wellbeing, social) of maintaining Ifield is significant, and cannot be replaced simply by alternative uses of land or development.

5. Suggested Additions / Remedies

To align with Sport England policy, the NPPF, and Horsham’s Local Plan policies:

- Any application must include a full replacement provision (both quality and quantity) of golf or recreation facilities, accessible to existing users, with equivalent cost.
- Evidence should be provided showing that all other options have been considered (e.g. non-18-hole golf offers, shared use, subsidised rates).
- If the proposal cannot retain Ifield, perhaps a condition could be imposed that ensures a community-run facility remains, or that part of the course is preserved or repurposed for golf (pitch & putt, par-3, or similar) as part of the development.

Conclusion

In conclusion, closing Ifield Golf Club would mean more than just losing green space—it would be losing a crucial component of local sport infrastructure. Given the documented demand, limited supply, and national policy resisting loss of sports facilities without replacement, I respectfully urge Horsham District Council to **refuse this hybrid planning application**.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours faithfully,

[Redacted Signature]

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