

Sent:

28 October 2025 12:32

Subject:

'ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY: RENEWED CALL FOR IMMEDIATE JOINT DECLARATION WITHIN ANCIENT PARISH OF IFIELD' - CRAWLEY OBSERVER-SUSSEX WORLD - OCTOBER 28 2025

Attachments:

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Categories:

Comments Received

ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY: RENEWED CALL FOR IMMEDIATE JOINT DECLARATION WITHIN ANCIENT PARISH OF IFIELD - CRAWLEY OBSERVER-SUSSEX WORLD - OCTOBER 28 2025

Dear Editor

In the light of Daily Telegraph, CPRE-Sussex, and Crawley Observer coverage ['Planning reform', Telegraph Letters, Oct 28 / CPRE West of Ifield Objection, Oct 27 / 'Parishioners' Revolt against government land-grab within ancient parishes', Observer Letters, Oct 23], Crawley Borough Council, Horsham District Council and West Sussex County Council are jointly called upon - again - to make an immediate declaration for an Ecological Emergency within the ancient Parish of Ifield.

The CPRE Sussex objection to Homes England's West of Ifield planning application (DC/25/1312) especially provides a deeply evidence-based foundation for declaring an Ecological Emergency:

1. Grounds for Declaring an Ecological Emergency

(a)

Severe and Irreversible Ecological Harm

The CPRE submission endorses the Sussex Wildlife Trust's objection, confirming that:

1. The application fails to provide adequate mitigation or compensation for biodiversity loss.
2. It would destroy floodplain wetlands and aquatic habitats in Ifield Brook and the River Mole, contradicting the developer's claim that these would be "maintained."
3. The Environment Agency itself warns of "permanent degradation" of river and wetland habitats and an "inadequate" biodiversity assessment.

 **Ecological Emergency Criterion: Irreversible loss of wetland ecosystems and species habitats central to local biodiversity.**

(b)

Breach of Statutory Environmental Protections

The proposal conflicts with multiple Horsham District Planning Framework policies:

1. Policy 25 – Natural Environment and Landscape Character
2. Policy 26 – Countryside Protection
3. Policy 31 – Green Infrastructure & Biodiversity
4. Policy 35 – Climate Change
5. Policy 38 – Flooding

 These cumulative breaches demonstrate that the development undermines the environmental objective of sustainable development (NPPF §8) and violates the precautionary principle central to ecological emergency declarations.

(c)

Failure of Water and Climate Safeguards

The Environment Agency raises grave concerns about:

1. Aquatic habitat damage and loss of floodplain function.
2. Unproven water neutrality claims — the private groundwater system lacks credible testing data.
3. Thames Water confirms that the Crawley wastewater treatment system is already at capacity, risking sewage pollution in Ifield Brook.
- 4.

 These are systemic failures of environmental infrastructure that justify emergency-level intervention to prevent ecological collapse.

(d)

Climate and Air Quality Impacts

Homes England's plan is inconsistent with local and national climate policies:

1. The destruction of mature meadowlands and woodland carbon sinks.
2. Substantial increase in vehicular emissions from 3,000+ homes and new road corridors.
3. Aircraft noise and emissions from Gatwick's second runway pose a direct threat to human and ecological wellbeing.

 The CPRE rightly calls for a precautionary approach — the same principle underpinning official ecological emergency declarations such as at Brislington Meadows.

2. Supporting Evidence for an “Ecological Emergency” Declaration

Category	Key Finding	Evidence
Biodiversity Loss	Permanent loss of wetlands, floodplain habitats, and aquatic ecosystems	Environment Agency response; SWT objection
Water Stress	Crawley WwTW near capacity; private borehole yields unproven	Thames Water letter; EA concerns
Climate Breakdown	Destruction of natural carbon sinks, increase in transport emissions	CPRE Sussex summary; NPPF §8 non-compliance
Noise & Air Pollution	Measured levels already exceed WHO safe limits	CPRE Sussex technical noise data

Legal/Policy Breaches	HDPF Policies 25, 26, 31, 35, 38 violated	
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3. The Ancient Parish of Ifield Context

1. The Ifield Brook Meadows area is an interlinked ecological system connecting to the River Mole catchment, with ancient hydrology and recorded biodiversity of regional importance.
2. The Ifield Society's call for an Ecological Emergency aligns directly with the Environment Agency's warning that the area's wetlands and watercourses face permanent degradation.
3. The CPRE's national mission—to "promote, enhance and protect a thriving countryside"—provides institutional support for Ifield's community-based declaration.

 In this sense, the Ancient Parish of Ifield is a microcosm of the national ecological emergency, making it an ideal site for a formal, symbolic, and practical declaration.

4. Policy Implication

Based on this document:

"Permission should be refused" (CPRE Sussex, §3.1)

The evidence base demonstrates:

1. Significant and irreversible damage to protected ecological systems.
2. Contradictions between applicant data and independent environmental authority findings.
3. Systemic planning failure following the suspension of the Horsham Local Plan examination.

Together, these justify an official joint declaration by Crawley Borough Council, Horsham District Council and West Sussex County Council that:

"An Ecological Emergency exists within the Ancient Parish of Ifield due to imminent and irreversible harm to biodiversity, hydrology, and climate stability caused by speculative large-scale development"

In conclusion, the Government's master-developer Homes England has submitted a speculative West of Ifield planning application [DC/25/1312] which is ecologically and environmentally insane, and must be rejected - without hesitation.

Yours sincerely

[Redacted signature]

The Ifield Society

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THE ECOLOGICAL EMERGENCY



WITHIN THE ANCIENT
PARISH OF IFIELD



ESTABLISHED 1855

Letters

SIR – Richard Gibbs (Letters, October 27) writes: “In my parish, the church appears to have very little relevance to local people.”

May I recommend a visit to the parish of Ifield in West Sussex – one of the oldest in the county – where a parishioners’ revolt is taking place? They are rising up against the destruction of local democracy and the commodification of ancient land through Homes England’s West of Ifield housing development plan.

The Government speaks of empowerment and growth, yet we witness only disempowerment and loss – of voice, countryside, heritage and trust.

Richard W Symonds
Crawley, West Sussex



