

Sent:

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Subject:

WEST OF IFIELD: HUMAN IMPLICATIONS OF DEVELOPER-LED PLANNING WITHOUT DEMOCRATIC CONSENT

Categories:

Comments Received

HUMAN IMPLICATIONS OF DEVELOPER-LED PLANNING WITHOUT DEMOCRATIC CONSENT

Ifield Brook Meadows within the ancient Parish of Ifield

Dear Editor

The debate over large developments 'bolted-on' to communities is increasingly framed in terms of housing numbers, land supply and planning process ["Opponents of West of Ifield housing plans not very happy with Christmas 'present' from Homes England", Crawley Observer/WSCT, Dec 16].

What is being overlooked - requiring public attention and government intervention - are the human implications of developer-led planning pursued without democratic consent.

West of Ifield is not being advanced through a sound, adopted Local Plan endorsed by elected councils and local communities. Instead, Homes England, a government housing agency and master-developer, is pressing ahead with a speculative planning application in the absence of democratic mandate, despite clear and formal objections from Crawley Borough Council, Gatwick Airport Ltd, environmental groups

and local community residents and parishioners.

This approach reverses the proper planning hierarchy. Planning should be plan-led, community-led and consent-based, not developer-led and imposed. When large-scale schemes are pursued without local agreement, the consequences are not abstract. They affect people's daily lives: community cohesion, public trust, mental wellbeing, safety, access to services, and the sense of belonging that defines place.

Ifield is an ancient parish with a strong identity, shared spaces, and valued landscapes such as Ifield Brook Meadows and the Golf Club.

These are not "constraints" to be worked around after the fact; they are living parts of a community. To disregard them is to treat residents and parishioners as obstacles rather than citizens of a community.

History shows that developments imposed without consent carry long-term social - and economic - costs: fractured communities, infrastructure lag, permanent mistrust in public institutions, and a sense that decisions are being done to people rather than with, and for, them. These costs are rarely captured in viability assessments or planning statements, yet they are borne by residents for generations.

Housing need is real — but so is the need for democratic legitimacy and accountability. Without it, planning becomes predatory exploitation and bullying - rather than good stewardship of public land.

West Sussex, particularly Horsham and Crawley, now face a choice: whether planning remains a democratic process - abiding by democratic planning principles and rooted in local consent - or whether it becomes an autocratic, top-down exercise driven by land deals and targets...with human consequences treated as collateral damage.

That is the real issue at West of Ifield.

Yours sincerely

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