

A RESET TO THE LOCAL PLAN MEANS..

**COUNCILLORS
CAN'T DECIDE
WEST OF IFIELD**

- POLICY SHIFT -

- EVIDENCE SHAKY -

KEY ISSUES UNCLEAR?



ONLY A REVISED PLAN GOES TO A VOTE

**FOR NOW, WEST OF IFIELD IS IN
PLANNING LIMBO**

Dear Editor,

With the Planning Inspectorate now having replaced the Inspector overseeing the Horsham Local Plan Examination, an important democratic question needs to be asked.

If the new Inspector decides that the Examination must be reset — whether because the policy context has changed, the evidence base is unstable, or key documents require revision — then Horsham District Council [HDC] councillors will not be in a position to make a decision on West of Ifield at this stage.

That is not a political opinion; it is how the planning system works.

Once a Local Plan has entered Examination, decisions about whether it can proceed, be paused, or be reworked sit with the Inspector, not with councillors. Councillors only regain decision-making authority if and when a revised Plan is lawfully brought back before them.

A genuine reset therefore removes any assumption that West of Ifield is approaching a democratic decision point. It places the allocation in limbo, pending the Inspector's assessment of whether the Plan — and the evidence supporting strategic sites — can properly continue at all.

This matters because irreversible actions appear to be occurring on the ground - such as Homes England's Golf Club closure - before the Examination has reached any conclusion, and before councillors have any lawful role to play.

The forthcoming 'exploratory' meeting between the new Planning Inspector and HDC on February 26th - livestreamed - will therefore be pivotal. It is not about speeding decisions up, but about deciding whether decisions can be taken at all.

For public confidence in the planning system, clarity matters. If the democratic planning process is being reset, that reality should be acknowledged openly — not obscured by the suggestion that outcomes are imminent or inevitable.

Yours sincerely

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