

SAVE WEST
OF IFIELD
Together

Newsletter December 2023

All newsletters can be found here: <https://www.savewestofifield.co.uk/newsletters>

Please email us with comments and to receive future editions via email: savewestofifield@gmail.com.

The battle was lost - now to win the war!

As expected, HDC has voted to approve their draft Local Plan. But the decision to include West of Ifield CAN still be overturned. Why do we say that?

But first a huge thank you to all who came to protest outside the council offices on 11th December – we generated some good publicity. SWOI chair Fenella Maitland-Smith was at the meeting putting a question to Councillors, and reported that *"The meeting was long and painful, and I don't feel we heard much meaningful debate of the important issues. One thing was clear – that residents and Parish Councils feel that consultation has been inadequate and community views ignored. It was also surprising to hear that 30% of the houses and the school are for Crawley, when Crawley Council is so strongly opposed to the development. And to hear that West of Ifield is 'well positioned for transport'!"*

Crawley Councillor and Labour Parliamentary Candidate **Peter Lamb** agrees: *"Crawley Borough Council has one of the best track-records in the country for delivering new housing, particularly affordable housing. Crawley already has the land supply for meeting the five-year requirement for a Local Plan. Any argument that West of Ifield is required during this Local Plan period to meet Crawley's housing need simply doesn't match the facts. As things stand, Crawley is faced with another urban extension without the infrastructure, the affordable housing, or the environmental safeguards necessary to offer any benefit to the community, and in which residents have yet again been deprived of any voice."*

Horsham Councillor **Liz Kitchen** (Conservative – Colgate and Rusper) said after the meeting:

"I am very disappointed, to put it mildly, that I was not supported in trying to get this site removed from the local plan. It's obvious, at least to me that that this is a totally unsuitable site for numerous reasons. The wildlife and old woodland is in many ways as important as Buck Barn which has been removed. I will continue to support Wol in their efforts to get this site excluded or at worst scaled right down."

So what do we do now?

Now we fight!

The next step in the process is a 6-week public consultation from 19th January to 1st March.

This is when everyone MUST send formal objections to HDC. These will then be passed to an independent Planning Inspector, who has a **legal obligation to read and consider them all**. They will then decide whether the Plan is sound, ie whether the Plan complies with legislation and Horsham's own policies.

SWOI has been preparing for this consultation for over two years, working with professional Planning Consultants and other experts to analyse the technical issues and arguments around the following priority topics. Some of this analysis is now available on our website:

<https://www.savewestofifield.co.uk/documents>

- Housing numbers – see website for arguments on housing targets sent to Michael Gove.
- Transport – Rusper PC has commissioned and shared an expert report.
- Ifield Golf Course – analysis by Denis Taylor plus other expert advice.



- Water Neutrality – working with other campaigners across Horsham.
- Biodiversity – see website for arguments sent to HDC and Homes England
- Visual Impacts on Landscape – Rusper PC has commissioned an expert report.
- Flooding – expert report commissioned.
- HDC’s Spatial Strategy – expert report commissioned.

SWOI is also preparing responses on:

- Heritage
- Health infrastructure
- Wastewater treatment infrastructure
- Air Pollution
- Gatwick noise
- HDC’s site assessments in their Sustainability Appraisal.

You will see that your donations have been invaluable in enabling the best possible advice. Thank you so much for this, and for the time that many of you give to help protect our area from this devastating overdevelopment. The need for professional help will continue through 2024, so if you are considering making donations over the festive period please do think of SWOI.

SWOI’s responses alone will not be enough – the number of objections DOES matter, so everyone needs to send in a formal response during the consultation period. Please don’t send anything before – as it won’t be logged.

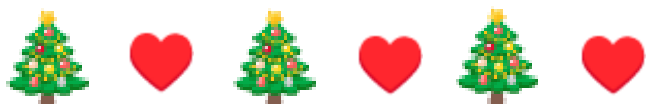
Leader of Crawley Council - **Michael Jones** (Lab) – is clear:

"I am deeply unhappy that Horsham District Council has chosen to continue to mass further housing developments directly on the border of Crawley Borough and remain very concerned about the potential significant impacts of the proposed West of Ifield allocation on Crawley, given the many unanswered questions relating to the infrastructure requirements by Homes England.

The Council has a statutory responsibility to respond to the Horsham DC Local Plan consultation as a neighbouring authority, and we will certainly do so, including a detailed technical response to the West of Ifield proposals, which are a step much too far."

As soon as we know the format for responding we will update supporters via the usual channels. We will also be holding workshops in late January/early February to provide further help. We will also continue to add new resources to our website <https://www.savewestofifield.co.uk/documents>

HDC’s main argument for rushing this Plan through is ‘If we do not approve the plan, then the district is vulnerable to speculative building out of our control’. This was used against all counter arguments and questions from members of the public and Parish Councillors.



The Planning Inspector, however, will consider ALL arguments and decide whether the plan complies with legislation or not. So PLEASE respond when the consultation is live – 19th January to 1st March 2024
That is why we think we can still win and why must all keep fighting.

Henry Smith MP presents petition against WOI to Parliament



In December Henry Smith, MP for Crawley, presented a public petition for the proposed Homes England West of Ifield development to be withdrawn.

He told the House of Commons;

"This petition to stop the West of Ifield development is supported by over 7,300 local people. Homes England has put forward proposals for up to 10,000 housing units on a greenfield site that is prone to flooding, and these proposals would put intolerable pressure on already strained local public infrastructure such as highways and doctors’ surgeries”.

Full footage can be seen here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KSWoqH4SOX4&t=14s>

THANK YOU ...

... to everyone who has supported SWOI this year.

The battle will renew with vigour in January!

With warmest wishes for Happy Holidays, a Merry Christmas and a Cool Yule!

