

Response to the 2021 Consultation on the Crawley Local Plan 2035 from Ifield Village Conservation Area Advisory Committee (IVCAAC)

Sent by email to: strategic.plannin@crawley.gov.uk

We have read the plan and are aware of the competing and often conflicting demands, such as the requirement for houses conflicting with the water stress in the area and the need for sufficient green space for a growing population. And COVID has also changed the situation.

In responding, however, IVCAAC has focused on the sections that particularly refer to policies that are relevant for Ifield Village Conservation Area.

Policy CL8 Development outside the Built-Up Area

IVCAAC is pleased that West of Ifield Rural fringe has been identified as a particularly sensitive area and the need to protect the positive relationship between the urban fringe and wider countryside. Although nature conservation is mentioned in the description, the fact that Ifield Brook meadows have SSSI status is not.

We note that the Upper Mole Farmlands Rural Fringe, is acknowledged as a buffer between Gatwick and the town, is much used for recreational purposes and has biodiversity opportunities. However, a western link road is being sought through it.

Heritage Strategies HA1 – HA8

IVCAAC supports the full range of Heritage Strategies. We support the policies with respect to Conservation Areas, Listed Buildings and Areas of Special Local Character.

We note that Ifield Village retains its status as a conservation area and that a stretch of Rusper Road retains its status as an Area of Special Local Character.

We would, however, like to have Village Greens included in the list of Heritage assets (HA1). In your heritage statements there is no mention of Ifield Village Green, which is the only registered village green in Crawley.

The designation of the Ifield Brook Meadows as a Local Green space (Strategic Policy 14) is important. The meadows make a much-used rural environment, invaluable for general health and well-being of the community.

Urban extensions 'At Crawley'

IVCAAC notes in 12.17 the comment that much piecemeal development has occurred on the periphery of Crawley and linked to the existing urban infrastructure. The logic of this is followed through into 12.23 ii where a 'comprehensive Western Link Road connecting the A264 to the A23 should be agreed prior to any development west of Crawley'. Admittedly the plan reads 'If development is proposed to the western side of Crawley...'

If a comprehensive Crawley Western Link road were built, the result will be a town completely surrounded by traffic noise: Gatwick to the north; M23 to the East; A264 to the

South and the Western Link Road to the West. And there is the A23 running through the centre.

Such a road (and subsequent development) would have detrimental effects on the character of the Ifield Village Conservation Area (IVCA) and the amenity that the Conservation Area and surrounding countryside offer for health walks away from urban areas. This countryside links IVCA to the rest of the rural parish of Ifield and is crossed by well used footpaths.

We also note that this access to the countryside helps part of the town to meet the standards of Natural England and the Woodland Trust for access to open green space and woodland (as set out in 14.16).

Policy GAT2: Safeguarded Land

The plan outlines the reasons why the land still has to be safeguarded even though the expansion of Gatwick by a second runway seems unlikely. The unlikelihood of a second runway is welcome to the Conservation Area as the runway would have been uncomfortably close. The impact of COVID on the airport is acknowledged. We query whether the recovery to pre-covid levels of use will take only a 'few years' as indicated in the plan.

Strategic Policy G11: Green Infrastructure

We certainly support this but wonder how easy it will be to retain sufficient connected green infrastructure with the demand for housing. Is it possible to increase the area of green space with an increasing population?

Strategic Policy G12: Biodiversity Sites

SNCI (Sites of Nature Conservation Interest) are not mentioned in the list. Is there a reason for this? The meadows in Ifield have SNCI status.

Strategic Policy G13: Biodiversity and Net Gain

Is there a requirement for ecological studies of proposed development sites to be made public? Should it be a requirement that knowledge of ecology be sought from the local community who know an area well?

Strategic Policy14: Local Green Space

We strongly support the designation of Ifield Brook Meadows and Rusper Playing Fields as a Local Green space. They are a valuable and important local feature much valued by the community.

Policy ST4: Safeguarding of a Search Corridor for a Crawley Western Link Road

The reservations that we have about the link road are given above in the section on Urban extensions.

The arguments set out in the plan for the road are sound from the point of view of both reducing traffic round the many roundabouts in Crawley and giving drivers a simpler drive from the south to Manor Royal. We note 'Connectivity by non-vehicular modes of

transport between Crawley’s urban neighbourhood and the wider Sussex countryside should be maintained and enhanced’. There is also acknowledgement of the importance of not taking any routes across Ifield Brook Meadows and into Rusper Road.

However, the negative effects of the road through the countryside have not been outlined (see our comments above re the urban extensions above). There is also no mention of the disadvantage of it going through land which floods easily, nor the known fact that opening up new roads frequently increases traffic in an area overall.

[REDACTED]
Secretary of IVCAAC, on behalf of Ifield Village Conservation Area Advisory Committee
30 June 2021

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