



Homes  
England

HOMES ENGLAND

Making homes happen

# West of Ifield – Responding to your questions

Version 1 April 2020



# West of Ifield – Your questions answered

Homes England, the Government's housing accelerator, is promoting plans for new neighbourhoods which can provide 10,000 new homes over the next 30 years to the West of Ifield. These new neighbourhoods create the opportunity to provide vital infrastructure to the area including new schools, road improvements and community facilities.

In January 2020 we held a series of public engagement events to introduce our proposals and listen to people's ideas, concerns and aspirations. During and following these events we asked for your feedback on the proposals. We received over 500 feedback forms and this document provides our current thinking on the main questions and issues raised in this feedback.

As we hold further public engagement events, more questions and issues may arise, and our plans will become more detailed. This document will be continually updated and uploaded to our website [www.westofield.co.uk](http://www.westofield.co.uk) over the course of the planning process.

## The Opportunity

### 1. How will Homes England work with the community to shape the proposals?

Ongoing community engagement is a vital part of shaping our plans. We want to create an environment where everyone can have their say and genuinely inform our future development proposals. We held a series of public engagement events in January 2020 and received feedback from over 500 residents, we have compiled all the responses into a report which highlights what is important to local residents the key concerns and opportunities to deliver wider benefits through the proposed scheme.

We want to continue to actively involve and speak with the community; we will hold further public engagement events later in the year subject to COVID-19 restrictions and continue this conversation through the planning and delivery stages. In the meantime, we will be publishing more material through social media and online at [www.westofield.co.uk](http://www.westofield.co.uk) starting with the initial public response to the consultation which is now online.

When possible we will restart face-to-face meetings and presentations and we plan to start up a community liaison group that will be made up of representatives from across the existing communities and those who might live in the new communities we are planning. We have already had discussions with elected members representing the wards most affected by the scheme and will continue to engage with your representatives throughout the process. Where possible, we also want to work with local schools/colleges, heritage and civic groups, resident's groups, faith groups, transport groups and business groups to ensure that all perspectives and needs are considered throughout the development of the proposals for the site.

If you have further thoughts on how we should engage and involve you and the wider community in our plans for West of Ifield, please get in touch.

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## Design

1. How will you make sure that there is enough water and electricity for the new and existing residents?

### **Water**

We are actively engaging with utility providers to ensure the necessary infrastructure can be provided. Southern Water has already confirmed that there is enough capacity to supply the West of Ifield scheme and we will continue to work with them and Horsham District Council as part of a comprehensive infrastructure planning process to ensure a sustainable water supply can be provided to the larger Garden Town.

To help ensure there is sufficient water supply we will include a number of sustainability measures within our plans to reduce the water consumption and maximise its reuse wherever possible. Potential measures currently being considered include:

- Water efficiency measures combined with household education to improve water use. Water efficiency measures could include water efficient fittings such as taps, dual flush toilets, low flow shower heads and efficient washing machines.
- Using a rainwater harvesting systems to provide water for domestic use. Rainwater can be used for non-drinking needs such as toilet flushing and gardening.
- The installation of a 'grey water' recycling system for water. This is water generated from domestic processes such as washing dishes, laundry and bathing.

### **Electricity**

We are actively engaging with utility providers to ensure the necessary infrastructure can be provided. While we will include measures within the development to reduce electricity demand as much as possible, a move towards cleaner energy and electric transport is expected to require an upgrade to the electricity supply. We will work with UK Power Networks to identify the best solution.

In addition, we are also looking at opportunities to incorporate onsite electricity generation and smart energy solutions. This will help reduce and manage future electrical demand and reduce the dependency on the National Grid.

## Living

1. How can you ensure that there will be affordable housing in the development?

a. What do you mean by affordable?

Affordable housing is homes that are available to buy or rent below market values. There is no set price for affordable homes and there are a number of different affordable home products, which include social rented housing, shared ownership, affordable rent and new products such

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as the recently announced First Homes. We will work with a range of providers to ensure the widest range of different affordable housing types are provided within the site to ensure as many people as possible have access to the new homes.

### b. Will this development be for Crawley or Horsham residents?

Affordable housing needs are identified in the North West Sussex Strategic Housing Market Assessment (2019) which covers Horsham, Crawley and Mid Sussex. The exact requirements will be confirmed by Horsham District Council through the preparation of their Local Plan Review (2020 – 2036). We will work with Horsham District Council as the Local Planning Authority and affordable housing providers to ensure that the identified needs are met.

## Environment

### 1. How will the new neighbourhoods improve the environment and combat the loss of green space?

Delivering new sustainable neighbourhoods is at the heart of our plans. We are committed to taking a landscape led approach to development, protecting the most sensitive environments (including Ifield Brook Meadows), ensuring at least 50% of the development is dedicated open space and that we achieve a 10% net gain in biodiversity. We are exploring options for the long-term stewardship and community ownership of open spaces so that these spaces are protected in perpetuity.

Through the new buildings we are looking to ensure the design of the buildings helps protect the environment by promoting energy efficiency, incorporating large areas of new landscaping and 'greening' and encouraging the use of sustainable transport modes. Wherever possible, we will look to futureproof the design and layout of the built environment to ensure it can adapt to changing technologies that could further help improve the environment in the medium – long term.

### 2. Will wildlife be protected?

We have undertaken a significant number of ecological surveys to understand what wildlife uses the sites. Further surveys are also planned for this year when appropriate to do so and these will inform our plans.

Based on these surveys areas of key ecological value have been identified. This includes Ifield Brook and Ifield Brook Meadows, Hyde Hill Local Wildlife Site and areas of ancient woodland. These areas will be protected with appropriate "buffer zones".

In addition, the surveys will identify key ecological corridors which are important to enable animals such as bats to cross the site and move into the open countryside. The proposed development will safeguard these corridors as far as possible, retaining key habitats and ensuring ecological connectivity is maintained.

We will avoid significant impacts on protected species as far as possible. If it is possible that there could be any effects on protected species, (such as bats, badgers or great crested newts), as a result of the proposed development, then following planning consent (if granted) we will apply for a Natural England licence under relevant separate legislation. This licence, which is legally enforceable, requires that the developer undertakes suitable mitigation measures (such as undertaking works at appropriate the required times of the year and under ecological supervision) as well as planting up

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suitable new habitat to compensate for the impacts caused. By building at scale, we can ensure that any compensatory habitat is provided on site as much as possible

### 3. What does a 10% net gain in biodiversity mean?

Biodiversity net gain means ensuring there is more nature on site after development than before. This requires assessing the biodiversity value of a site in its existing pre-development condition, then the value post development. A 10% biodiversity net gain requires a 10% improvement in biodiversity value over the existing situation following the development. This is determined by an independent Natural England biodiversity calculation tool.

We appreciate that the idea of developing a site may appear counter intuitive to improving biodiversity value. However, a site such as West of Ifield comprises a wide mix of greater and lesser areas of biodiversity value. The areas of lesser value such as simple, species poor grassland can be enhanced and improved by habitat management to develop into a species-rich grassland with far greater biodiversity benefits. Further enhancement measures could include creating new ponds, woodland, wetland areas or a whole variety of different habitats. This is the method used to 'balance' the biodiversity loss from proposed buildings and roads on-site.

The approach to biodiversity 10% net gain will be agreed with relevant ecological groups and supported by a long-term habitat management plan.

### 4. How can the development protect the land from flooding? How do you know that the development will not make flooding worse?

We know that flood risk is an important issue. There are two types of flood risk we need to be aware of, surface water flood risk and fluvial flood risk (also called riverine flooding) and these will be both be fully considered as part of a site-specific flood risk assessment. We are already aware of a number of potential flood risks and are taking the following steps to ensure they are fully accounted for within our emerging plans:

- **Fluvial Flooding** – we are reviewing the Environment Agency's flood mapping to ensure that our scheme complies with planning policy requirements and takes account of climate change impacts and will ensure that the most vulnerable development being directed away from flood risk areas. By working with the Environment Agency and through our commitment to retain 50% of the site as open space, we will retain the existing flood plain area and maximise opportunities to incorporate further flood alleviation measures within the scheme.
- **Surface Water Flooding** – there is currently variable surface water runoff across the site which is uncontrolled. In some areas this has led to localised flooding on parts of the site where surface water accumulates. As part of our integrated drainage solution, we will use sustainable urban drainage systems (SuDS) to help manage this runoff, which in many instances will help address existing flood issues.

## Healthy Communities

### 1. Community infrastructure

- a. It can be difficult to get doctors' appointments already. What health services will be provided?

This was an issue many people raised and one we are discussing with the relevant Clinical Commissioning Groups. By delivering at scale and with more certainty about the location of future population growth, it is easier for health providers to understand what the future needs might be. While we cannot control how or where health services, we will ensure that where needs are identified we will ensure we address the impact of the scheme – through the provision of onsite infrastructure and / or necessary financial contributions.

In addition to addressing medical services, we will be designing the proposals in line with NHS Healthy New Town principles – following the approach taken at our Northstowe scheme. These principles include developing health services that will help people stay well, maximising active travel, fostering health in homes and buildings and connecting, involving and empowering people and communities. This will help future residents to stay fit and healthy – reducing the demand on health services.

- b. What education facilities will be provided?

As a minimum we will provide for primary, secondary and SEND education requirements arising from the development as well as supporting opportunities to accommodate wider lifelong learning. There is also a need for new schools within the Ifield area to serve the existing community and we are working with education providers to identify opportunities to deliver new education facilities early, in a way that can meet these wider needs.

## Movement & Transport

### 1. 10,000 homes and 10,000 jobs will generate a lot of traffic.

- a. How will you address this?

The proposals are for a new community to be built over 30 years – during which we expect the way in which people travel to change dramatically. However, we recognise the existing issues and immediate concerns of residents and are in the process of identifying opportunities as to how the new development can help address these. Our plans will be informed by detailed transport modelling and preparation of a Transport Assessment that will consider both the construction and operational stages.

To promote the use of sustainable transport modes, the priority in the new neighbourhoods will be to walk first, then cycle, then public transport and then use the car. This hierarchy will inform the design of our scheme and infrastructure investment plan so as to ensure new residents are

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not over-reliant on the car from the outset and we will prepare a site wider Travel Plan to ensure these measures are successful.

Where necessary, we will ensure that any measures build on the success of existing transport opportunities – such as the use of the Arun Valley Line and Metrobus Fastway – and are designed so that they can adapt to future changes in transport provision.

### b. When and how will the Western Link be provided?

Opportunities for a new Crawley Western Link are being considered. In line with our transport strategy, we will ensure that we maximise the use of sustainable transport while helping to address existing congestion issues. We will ensure that the Crawley Western Link can be accommodated within the site and will work with WSCC and local authorities to identify an appropriate delivery strategy for the scheme as a whole.

## Working

### 1. You've said that you will create 10,000 jobs.

#### a. What type of jobs will be created by the development?

There will be spaces created for a range of jobs close to the new homes, including those in schools, shops and community facilities as well as specific employment areas. There will be a wide range of jobs created for flexible working to support modern lifestyles, including opportunities for start-ups, smaller businesses and social enterprises. The site is strategically located at the heart of the Gatwick Diamond, with strong links to existing employment centres such as Manor Royal, Gatwick Airport, Horsham and Crawley Town Centre and the proposed neighbourhoods are well placed to help support the future growth of these areas. We will work with the Coast to Capital LEP, major employers and local economic development teams to ensure the opportunities are realised.

By building at scale, the development will create a large number of construction jobs over a long-time frame. In line with Homes England's wider objectives to diversify the housing market and promote modern methods of construction, there is also an opportunity for the development to improve skill set of the local construction sector.

#### b. Will these benefit existing residents?

These new jobs are not limited to new residents, existing residents will also benefit from access to new employment opportunities, both within the development and across the wider area.

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**If you have any further questions regarding the development or any queries about the information provided, please do not hesitate to contact us:**

- **Telephone:** 020 8629 7209
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We are still in the early stages of the proposal and as more information and details become available, we will share this with you. As previously stated, community engagement is a vital part of this process and we hope that this document has the answers to any questions you have.