

Homes England
Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
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Dear Sir / Madam,

West of Ifield, West Sussex

Railfuture is Britain's leading, longest-established, national independent voluntary organisation campaigning exclusively for a better railway across a bigger network for passenger and freight users, to support economic (housing and productivity) growth, environmental improvement and better-connected communities.

We seek to influence decision makers at local, regional and national levels to implement pro-rail policies in transport and development planning.

We note that the planned development of three new neighbourhoods, totalling in excess of 10,000 new homes (c.25,000 people), and 10,000 jobs, is anticipated over the next 30 years. That happens to coincide with the time-horizon of "*Sustainable route to growth*", the adopted Transport Strategy of shadow sub-national transport body Transport for the South East of which West Sussex is an integral part. That chosen scenario, "*Sustainable route to growth*", requires a more than doubling of trips by rail (108%) over the 30-year life of the adopted Transport Strategy – and anticipated build-out of the West of Ifield neighbourhoods.

The 29th July 2019 presentation to local authority members, at slide 14 "A new sustainable green neighbourhood", appears to be the sole, and very limited, reference to rail with an indication only of the current service and journey time in one direction from one of the two stations closest to the new development (the other being Faygate, to the west). We are most concerned that this is a very serious apparent down-playing of the significance of the potential role of rail in contributing to the new green neighbourhood being genuinely sustainable from a travel options perspective.

At this early stage in the development of the proposals for the new neighbourhoods it would be inappropriate to prescribe particular interventions to maximise the use of rail by incoming residents and businesses, and their visitors. That said, it is to be hoped that an assessment framework to help define such future interventions against a set of agreed objectives, such as ambitious levels of mode share and contributing to that 108% growth figure, will be available at an early stage to inform the project's evolution.

It goes without saying however that a half-hourly train service will be completely inadequate in offering an attractive travel choice to the potential market for travel by rail, and that capacity must not be limited by station platforms of less than maximum train length, as now.

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www.railwatch.org.uk



We are not wedded to the retention of either or both of the two existing stations closest to the new development, Ifield and Faygate. The number and location of a station or stations as the most convenient points of passenger access to the rail network are for determination. It may be, for example, that the new development would be best served by one new purpose-built station and the closure of the existing two, but that is only one among a number of possible scenarios to be assessed.

Probably the biggest single current constraints to rail capacity affecting the ability of rail to properly serve these proposed new neighbourhoods are the Brighton Main Line in general and 'the Croydon bottleneck' – East Croydon station / 'the Selhurst triangle' – in particular. Network Rail's planned Croydon Area Remodelling Scheme, incorporating the East Croydon to Selhurst Junction Capacity Enhancement Scheme, while still in its relatively early stages of project development would when completed add significantly to both the capacity and performance of one of the already-busiest and most congested sections of the national rail network. While currently unauthorised, the project has a high priority in national rail enhancements development planning and would be taking place during the development and early occupation of the West of Ifield neighbourhoods, and completing well before the new neighbourhoods are fully built out. Current constraints should therefore be discounted in anticipating the future role of rail in supporting the new neighbourhoods, which should instead be guided by the increased capability of the rail network in the years to come.

With so many national, sub-national and local policy objectives pointing towards sustainable travel and away from car-dependency it will be absolutely vital in our view that substantial new developments such as the West of Ifield neighbourhoods are best practice exemplars.

We look forward to further opportunities to engage in constructive, if necessarily sometimes challenging, consultation as stages of this new community's development are taken forward.

Yours faithfully,

Roger Blake BA, MRTPI (Rtd), MTPS
Railfuture
Director for Infrastructure & Networks, national Board
Vice-Chair London & South East regional branch