

FRAMFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Planning Committee Details of Delegated Comments July 2025

Decisions can be delegated to the Chairman (or Vice-Chairman) plus two other members if agreed by the Chairman.

The following decisions were made under delegated authority by Trishia Blewitt (Chairman), Keith Brandon and David Jenner. (The Chairman has the casting vote in any tie).

- **WD/2024/2941/MRM – Reserved Matters (appearance, landscaping, layout and scale) pursuant to outline permission WD/2021/0573/MAO (Outline application [all matters reserved, aside from principal means of access] for up to 58 new homes [including 35% affordable housing], new access road, open space and soft landscaping).**

<https://planning.wealden.gov.uk/Planning/Display/WD/2024/2941/MRM>

[Councillor Trishia Blewitt took no part in the comments as an adjacent neighbour to the site].

The Parish Council objects to the application on the grounds of unresolved and serious concerns relating to drainage, flood risk, design quality, site access safety, housing mix, and the unsuitability of local infrastructure to support development of this scale in Framfield.

The applicant's own drainage strategy confirms the site lies directly within an active overland flow path, with baseline modelling showing the principal access point subject to flood hazard levels described as 'Danger to All'. During a 1 in 100-year storm event (with climate change allowance), the only entrance would be impassable for up to three hours. This renders the development unsafe by national policy standards, which always require safe access and egress for both emergency and residential use.

The drainage solution put forward is fundamentally speculative. With infiltration ruled out and no nearby watercourse or sewer available, the applicant proposes to connect to an existing highway drain. However, this outfall remains unconfirmed, pending CCTV survey and agreement from East Sussex County Council. In the absence of secured discharge rights, the drainage strategy should be considered incomplete. The proposed system relies entirely on engineered features—bunds, culverts, and impermeable "permeable" paving, without natural infiltration or robust long-term maintenance arrangements. The risk of eventual failure is high, particularly where maintenance regimes are unspecified or unenforceable.

Moreover, the modelling shows surface water leaving the site under developed conditions at significantly greater volume and velocity than baseline flows, placing further strain on downstream capacity. Attenuation measures are minimal and described by the applicant as having only a "slight" mitigating effect. This approach is wholly at odds with the requirement in national policy that development must not increase flood risk elsewhere. Modelling results diverge from national flood mapping and are acknowledged by the applicant as "possibly conservative", raising further

questions about their reliability. Framfield Stream regularly floods, filling the surrounding land and engulfing the road and bridge on Brookhouse Lane.

It is critical to note the wider context. On 6 July 2025, Southern Water recorded a discharge into Framfield Stream from the adjacent pumping station, lasting 2 hours and 57 minutes. This followed a period of intense localised flooding in the village. These events are not anomalies, they reflect an already fragile drainage and foul water infrastructure network operating under strain. The sewage system in Framfield is frequently over capacity, leading to near-continuous use of tanker lorries to manage demand. In the summer of 2024, tankers were operating 24/7. The system is reportedly reliant on a 4-inch pipe and back-up pumps, which routinely fail. No upgrade to this system has been presented. The village also has enhanced drain and gully maintenance regimes due to the poor drainage in the whole of the village. To add 58 new dwellings without first resolving these issues would be reckless. If approved, a Grampian Condition should be imposed, at minimum, to prevent any development until the necessary foul water improvements are in place.

Turning to design, the amendments presented in the June 2025 Design and Access Statement Addendum appear reactive and superficial, focused more on addressing isolated officer comments than producing a well-considered or coherent design. The layout remains dense and overly formal, lacking the variation, informality and rural character appropriate to Framfield. Despite the merging of some plots, much of the scheme still presents a rigid, suburban format with insufficient space, compromised amenity, and a sense of overdevelopment. Replacing 1.5-storey dwellings with full two-storey homes along the site's rural edge only exacerbates the issue, resulting in abrupt massing and an overbearing interface with the countryside.

Claims that garden sizes and separation distances have improved are not supported by a thorough reassessment of spatial quality. Many plots continue to fall short of Wealden Design Guide expectations. Likewise, the revised parking and access arrangements remain problematic. Narrow alleyways are still present, and rear parking areas, particularly behind the apartment buildings, which remain exposed to poor surveillance and elevated risk of anti-social behaviour. The applicant declined to introduce elevational detailing recommended by WDC, such as brick banding or architectural variety, and offered no suitable alternative. The outcome is an uninspired scheme, repetitive in appearance, and lacking the detail or richness needed to create a genuine sense of place.

Addressing an 'elephant in the room', concerns raised over the site's access remain unresolved. A professional road safety audit commissioned by a local resident highlights significant flaws in the visibility splays provided in the application documentation, findings which reinforce concerns already raised by the Parish Council at outline stage. It is evident to anyone familiar with the site that the required sightlines, particularly for HGVs turning right into the site, cannot be achieved safely at the 90-degree bend on Framfield Road. Vegetation routinely obstructs visibility, despite over 2 years of local campaigning – to this very day! This results in a dangerous situation where drivers, including large vehicles and buses, have insufficient information to judge whether it is safe to proceed. Siting the sole access to a 58-dwelling development here is illogical and hazardous. The local roads are not suitable for extra traffic. Conditions are demonstrably unsuitable by virtue that the local 29 buses now have bull bars fitted to the upper deck due to poor maintenance by ESCC Highways and residents. Arguably, this should be dealt with in separate matters, but it is a reality of real life and has been like this for many years.

The applicant's revised housing mix and affordable allocation also remain out of step with identified local needs. 23 of the 58 dwellings are large 4 or 5-bedroom homes, while demand locally is strongest for 1 and 2-bedroom properties. Although the headline affordable housing quota is met, the mix is skewed towards three-bedroom units and the affordable plots are heavily clustered. This spatial segregation undermines social integration and contradicts best practice in inclusive development. No meaningful update has been provided to justify the housing mix in relation to local evidence.

Transport claims presented in the Travel Plan lack credibility. Assertions that the development offers good access to services are not borne out in reality. Proximity to a beauty salon does not qualify as meaningful infrastructure. References to closed amenities such as Blackboys Preschool further demonstrate the applicant's lack of local understanding. Suggestions that residents will regularly cycle to Uckfield or beyond are unrealistic given the nature of the surrounding roads, speed limits, and lack of safe cycle routes. Repeated efforts by the Parish Council to reduce local speed limits have been unsuccessful, and it is unclear how any site-specific speed enforcement will be delivered. The proposed contribution to public transport is welcome in theory, but its destination and function are unclear, whether it will fund enhanced service levels in Framfield or simply be absorbed elsewhere across the county, or even further afield.

Claims around footpath improvements are similarly vague. The proposal speaks in general terms about better connectivity but does not specify which footpaths are to be upgraded, or how. Existing rights of way are frequently boggy and under water in winter and overgrown in summer. Despite statutory requirements, they are poorly maintained, and it is not feasible to present them as reliable walking routes without a clear and enforceable improvement plan.

The commitment to encourage car sharing and broadband use, as a justification for reduced transport pressure, lacks substance and practical enforceability. This does not substitute for the absence of genuine infrastructure investment. Despite recent petitioning to our local MP by the Parish Council, the main phone and broadband provider BT/Openreach have stated that 'there are no plans to offer fibre optic broadband in the near future'. Despite this, it is believed that a 3rd party company will bypass the existing village to provide sustainable communications in this development, leaving the rest of the village with archaic infrastructure.

In addition to the matters outlined above, the Parish Council wishes to see material or financial benefits provided directly to the community in which this development will sit, rather than this development be a self-contained annex to the village. Specifically, investment in local assets such as improvements to the Memorial Hall or enhancements to the recreation ground would represent an appropriate and proportionate means of contributing to the social sustainability of the scheme if it were to be approved. Another reason for protecting the CIL contributions is because the Parish Council believe that due to the multiple and large-scale approved developments surrounding the Parish, a higher proportion of contributions will need to be set aside for improvements along the small lanes (rat runs), that are wholly unsuitable for the extra traffic that will be created. At a previous application meeting for Cysleys Farm on Eastbourne Road, a WDC officer made comment that our lanes would not be used for those 'rat runs'. We wholly contest this remark, which also relates to this development. This is an unacceptable oversight by WDC and ESCC Highways, that the parish will be left to pick up. In accordance with paragraph 58 of the National Planning Policy Framework 2023, planning obligations may be used to mitigate the impact of development and to make otherwise unacceptable proposals acceptable in planning terms. This is reinforced by Regulation 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy

Regulations 2010, which permits obligations where they are necessary, directly related to the development, and fairly and reasonably related in scale. The Parish Council believes such contributions, other than by CIL, are justified in this instance and should be secured by condition or legal agreement. It should not be down to the Parish Council to manage and implement a reactive road improvement scheme due to the infrastructure managing and planning authorities disregarding problems outside of the immediate development bubble.

Finally, it is worth stating that the development offers no meaningful community benefit. There are no new amenities for Framfield residents, and the proposal does not deliver high-quality open space or usable facilities except for its own residents. As we have previously stated on many occasions, this isolated development will lead to a 'them and us' attitude. As an example – why would the residents of the proposed development want the wider parish community visiting the play areas and open spaces when they are paying management fees to maintain it? Additionally, the green infrastructure figure is inflated by the inclusion of drainage basins, which may not be safe or accessible year-round.

In conclusion, this application is demonstrably unsustainable in its current form. It presents an unconfirmed and unsafe drainage strategy, a compromised and dangerous access arrangement, a poor design response to its rural setting, and offers little to no benefit to the wider community. We strongly urge the Planning Authority to refuse permission unless substantial revisions are made to address these serious deficiencies in infrastructure, layout, and public safety.

- **WD/2024/1040/F – Construction of a single storey garden gym building. Highlands, Etchingwood Lane, Framfield TN22 5SA. Amended plans and reports received 24 June 2025.**
<https://planning.wealden.gov.uk/Planning/Display/WD/2024/1040/F>

The Parish Council continues to object to this application as before. It is still uncertain whether the gym will be used solely for the occupants of the house, or whether in a long term plan, they may open it as a commercial enterprise. The gym is a long way from the house and situated by a track which could be used by the public. It is not understood why it is not situated closer to the house. It is in an area of deciduous woodland. The noise of the air conditioning will cause pollution for protected species such as bats and great crested newts. Although the removal of the rooflight is an improvement to reduce light pollution.

- **WD/2025/1449/FR – Proposed new 18m x 9m building for agricultural, forestry and land management purposes and retrospective application for existing hardstanding access track. Owls Acres, Brookhouse Lane, Framfield TN22 5QJ.**
<https://planning.wealden.gov.uk/Planning/Display/WD/2025/1449/FR>

The Parish Council supports the proposals. The building will be similar to those at other farms in the area and is required so that machinery and equipment can be kept onsite, rather than be moved backwards and forwards to the site when required. There is also a requirement for forestry and land management and will be well screened from the road and public rights of way.

If approved could a condition be included to prevent the installation and use of industrial shredders on site. This would cause a serious concern due to its valley location, similar to another in the Parish that has involved ESCC Enforcement.

Also, to note 'disappointment' that a retrospective application is being submitted.

- **WD.2025/1380/LB – Addition of 3 No. high level windows to the southern elevation of the barn structure.**

Hobbs Barton, Streele Lane, Framfield TN22 5RY.

<https://planning.wealden.gov.uk/Planning/Display/WD/2025/1380/LB>

The Parish Council supports the application but it is critical that the proposals and any works are carried out to the highest standard to protect the 16th Century building. The three new high level windows are in keeping with the windows below, they also match the existing two high level windows. They are also in keeping with the high level windows in the eastern elevation. They will let in more light to the barn upstairs.

However, there is an anomaly on the proposed concept drawing on page 8 of the D&A Statement where it shows the visual concept and drawing with windows and door at two different elevations.

Circulation: Planning Committee/All other Parish Councillors. Jul 18, 25