

FRAMFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Planning Committee Meeting held on Tuesday, 9 January 2025, at 6.30 pm in the Memorial Hall, Framfield.

Present: Committee Members: Maria Naylor (Chairman), Keith Brandon, David and Linda Jenner.
Public: 8.

Councillor Keith Brandon, on behalf of the Committee Chairman welcomed the members of the public present and explained how the meeting would be run. Five members of the public spoke – all strongly against the proposals.

1. Apologies.

Councillor Trishia Blewitt and Parish Clerk, Ann Newton.

2. Declarations of Interest.

Councillors to give notice of declarations of personal, prejudicial and pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda. Councillors Keith Brandon and David and Linda Jenner. Personal interests only as residents of the Becketts Way estate.

3. Minutes of the Last Meeting/delegated comments for Approval.

It was agreed that the delegated comments having been circulated, be approved, adopted and signed as a correct record. (MN/KB).

4. Planning applications for consideration

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). Land at Old Nursery House, The Street, Framfield TN22 5PN.
<https://planning.wealden.gov.uk/Planning/Display/WD/2024/2941/MRM>

The Parish Council strongly objects to this application.

Despite access being approved during the appeal process, a professional road safety audit commissioned by a local resident demonstrates significant inaccuracies in the visibility splays provided within the approved documentation. The Parish Council previously raised similar concerns during the outline application stage, based on local knowledge and site visits.

It is evident to all familiar with the area that the approved access point cannot achieve the required sighting distances, particularly for heavy goods vehicles (HGVs) turning right into the site from Framfield. Visibility is severely compromised on the 90-degree bend, creating a dangerous scenario where drivers cannot evaluate whether it is safe to cross the road. Furthermore, the sighting lines cut across a public footpath, which is frequently obstructed by overgrown vegetation—a situation the Parish Council has been campaigning to rectify for over 18 months, with only limited success.

This fringe acceptance of inadequate visibility distances is unacceptable and poses a significant risk of serious injury or fatality. It is incomprehensible to place the sole access for a 58-dwelling site in such a hazardous location. We urge WDC and ESCC to reassess the technical details of this matter urgently.

The safety risks are further exacerbated by the presence of large vehicles from other directions as well, such as HGVs and buses, which would frequently obscure sightlines. The road infrastructure is wholly inappropriate for the traffic volume associated with a development of this scale.

Other Key Concerns:

a) Housing Mix

- a. Of the 58 proposed dwellings, 23 (40%) are large four- or five-bedroom properties, which do not align with local housing needs.
- b. While the minimum 35% affordable housing requirement has been met, the majority of these homes are three-bedroom properties, whereas there is a clear demand for one- and two-bedroom homes in this district.
- c. The Parish Council questions the basis for the applicant's housing needs assessment, which appears outdated and out of touch with current requirements.

b) Affordable Housing Placement

- a. The affordable homes are clustered in a single area of the site, creating an apparent segregation from market-value properties. This discriminatory approach undermines community integration.
- b. Affordable homes should be dispersed throughout the development to promote inclusivity.

c) Design and Style

- a. The development's design is uninspired and urban in appearance, with repetitive brick-and-cladding construction that lacks character, almost 'Lego-Like'.
- b. The luxury five-bedroom homes, featuring full-height glass frontages, are entirely out of keeping with the rest of the development and the local vernacular, creating a sense of division within the site.

d) Flood Risk Management and Drainage

- a. The proposal to divert high-risk surface water runoff using bunds and ditches to a southern swale is inadequately planned. Existing water flow patterns and additional runoff from the new development will overwhelm this system, putting nearby properties, including the Grade II-listed Framfield Grange, at risk.
- b. Regular flooding in the Becketts Way area is already a significant issue, with pumping trucks frequently required to manage surface water. The Sustainable Drainage System (SuDS) proposed is insufficient and unsustainable. The local area on and around the site is already inadequately drained during poor weather. Diversion of water is clearly not fully understood by the applicant. Full onsite tests and surveys are needed to assess the problems. No desktop exercise will gain this, and any surveys should be carried out during multiple periods of weather conditions, not simply a dry 24-hour period.

e) Foul Water Infrastructure

- a. Framfield's sewage system is already over capacity, leading to regular failures and the need for 24/7 pumping truck interventions.
- b. The result of repetitive failures are regular tankers having to pump the local sewage pumping station. Last summer (2024) tankers were queuing in the village 24/7 waiting to get on site and pump sewage. This is due to the poor and old condition of the pumping station and link to Blackboys. Only last week there was a requirement for similar with HGV pumping vehicles having to facilitate waste removal. The existing system is believed to be made of a 4-inch pipe which runs 24/7. If this fails, there is a backup pump, but the system is over capacity already, hence the regular failures.
- c. Adding 58 dwellings to an already strained system will result in catastrophic failures. A Grampian Condition must be imposed to ensure that the developer addresses these deficiencies before proceeding.

f) Transport and Accessibility

- a. The travel plan is unrealistic and misleading. Claims of local amenities, such as a beauty salon, being "key facilities" are unconvincing.
- b. Cycling to nearby areas, such as Uckfield or Blackboys, is unsafe due to high-speed roads and frequent accidents. References to closed facilities, such as Blackboys Preschool, further undermine the credibility of the plan. This only proves that the applicant does not know the local area.

- c. There is suggestion by the applicant that people could cycle beyond the local area. The reality is that it will not happen, and there is some reference to this by the applicant themselves.
 - d. Proposals to improve footpaths are vague and insufficient, failing to address existing issues with overgrowth, boggy terrain, and poor maintenance. It talks about replacing some paths, but doesn't specifically identify where, to and from. This at a minimum should be detailed. Current routes are often overgrown, boggy, or impassable, with maintenance rarely carried out by ESCC despite complaints.
 - e. To make these paths primary walking routes is not feasible. Again, with many years of campaigning by the Parish Council, the paths are generally too boggy in the winter months, and overgrown in the summer, even though there are statutory requirements to keep them accessible, it does not happen.
- g) **Traffic Safety and Speeds**
- a. The assertion that the development will create a "low-speed" environment is contradicted by the high-speed limits on surrounding roads (40, 50, and 60 mph). The applicant has not detailed how speeds within the site will be enforced or reduced, or even what those speeds will be.
 - b. Efforts by the Parish Council to reduce local speed limits have been unsuccessful, raising doubts about the enforceability of any measures proposed for this development.
 - c. A commuted sum of money is referenced towards the local bus service. Recently, the bus service has been improved. What will this money be used for exactly, or will it simply be given to the local bus company and used in other areas. Perhaps a fuller day and weekend service would be implemented to cater for 58 dwellings of new residents?
 - d. There are proposals to introduce tactile paving at bus stops. However, there appears to be little in the way of a sustainable approach by the applicant. They are required to make good the footpaths directly adjacent the site, yet will then either turn onto muddy/overgrown tracks before leading to a tarmac into Becketts Way, or the main footpaths on The Street, which are full of holes and cracks, and are very uneven. We have local residents with mobility issues, that now cannot traverse the paths in Framfield due to the condition of local paths. This will remain if the application is approved due to the lack of supporting infrastructure planned by the applicant.
- h) **Broadband and Car Sharing**
- a. The applicant has stated that they will encourage broadband subscriptions and car sharing as strategies to reduce commuting trips and promote home working.
 - b. This lacks substance and practical enforceability. It is simply a lazy justification for not providing sustainable solutions to support their application.
- i) **Community Benefit**
- a. The development offers no tangible benefits to the local community, nor does it provide adequate facilities for its own residents.

Conclusion

This application is fundamentally flawed and unsustainable in its current form. The approved access remains a significant safety concern, and the proposed solutions to drainage, housing mix, and transport are wholly inadequate. Allowing this development to proceed without addressing these issues would demonstrate a disregard for the safety and wellbeing of both current and future residents.

The Parish Council strongly urges the Planning Committee to refuse this application unless substantial revisions are made to address these critical concerns.

5. Any Other Planning matters for reporting at the Discretion of the Chair.

To include any other planning applications which may arrive after the agenda has been published at the discretion of the Chairman in line with the terms of reference of the Committee.

Councillors were informed that a new major application within the Parish has been submitted and will require another meeting to discuss:

WD/2024/2955/MAO Land Off Eastbourne Road, Framfield, Uckfield
Outline application for the erection of up to 145 dwellings with public open space, landscaping and sustainable drainage system (suds), vehicular access point and provision for suitable alternative natural green space (sang). all matters reserved except for means of access.

<https://planning.wealden.gov.uk/Planning/Display/WD/2024/2955/MAO>

6. Date of Next Meeting – 23 January 2025, at 6.30 pm, in the Memorial Hall, Framfield.

The meeting closed at 8.15 pm.

Circulation: Planning Committee