

FRAMFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Planning Committee Meeting held on Wednesday, 29 July 2026, at 6 pm in the Memorial Hall, Framfield.

Present Councillors Keith Brandon (Chairman) David Jenner (Vice Chairman)
Trishia Blewitt
Penny Grainger Trevor Boughton
Maria Naylor Robin Grainger

In attendance Ann Newton – Parish Clerk Members of the Public – 30.

Councillor Keith Brandon took the Chair for the meeting opened the meeting, welcomed the members of the public present and explained how the meeting would be run. Several members of the public spoke against the application.

1. Apologies.

There were none.

2. Declarations of Interest.

Councillors to give notice of declarations of personal, prejudicial and pecuniary interests in respect of items on the agenda. There were none.

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

There were none having been approved at the meeting on the previous day.

4. Planning applications for consideration

- **WD/2026/1348/MAO – Outline application with all matters reserved (except access) for a development comprising demolition of existing buildings and provision of up to 215 no. dwellings (use Class C3), including affordable dwellings, with associated suitable alternative natural green space, public open space, landscaping and infrastructure works.**

Land to the North of Bird-in-Eye Hill.

<https://planning.wealden.gov.uk/Planning/Display/WD/2026/1348/MAO>

Framfield Parish Council strongly objects to this outline application for up to 215 dwellings. Although most matters are reserved, access and the principle of development are for determination.

1. Principle of development

The site is outside any adopted development boundary, within open countryside and is not allocated for housing in the adopted Local Plan. The applicant acknowledges conflict with Saved Policies GD2 and DC17.

The site was rejected in the 2024 Sustainability Appraisal but reappeared two years later as a proposed allocation in the Regulation 18 Draft Local Plan. It is disappointing that the site was rejected for many years, and then coincidentally there is now an application for 215 dwellings on a site that WDC officers deem suitable for up to 215 dwellings. Other than relying on the approval of Bird in Eye South site for 190 dwellings, this site has no other mitigating circumstances for the change.

The applicant repeatedly relies upon the approval of 190 dwellings at Bird in Eye South to argue that this site is also sustainable. This does not remove the need to assess its individual constraints or the cumulative effect of 405 additional homes on Bird in Eye Hill, Framfield Road, and the surrounding road networks of Framfield and Uckfield.

The Parish Council considers this an unsustainable and potentially car-dependent extension into the countryside, resulting in further urbanisation and loss of rural character. It is another step of villages losing their identities and being swallowed up by the towns around them.

2. Access

Access is the only detailed matter submitted for approval and must therefore be demonstrated to be safe and suitable at this stage.

Parish Councillors and residents know that vehicles travel quickly along Bird in Eye Hill, particularly downhill towards Uckfield. Visibility from the existing industrial access is limited and pulling out towards Uckfield can require prompt acceleration. This is especially concerning for refuse vehicles, delivery lorries and construction traffic which will be travelling a lot slower. The access is dangerous.

The applicant's surveys recorded 85th-percentile speeds exceeding 40 mph, yet the access relies heavily upon a proposed 30 mph limit and one chicane. A speed-limit change does not itself demonstrate that drivers will comply. Residents have sought a lower limit for years without success, but it may now be considered necessary to facilitate more than 400 additional homes across both sites and potentially up to 800 cars.

The applicant's Road Safety Audit identifies:

- motorists increasing speed when leaving Uckfield, with that behaviour likely to continue;
- an isolated chicane which may not reduce speeds adequately or consistently;
- downhill braking and loss-of-control risks, particularly in freezing conditions;
- restricted forward visibility potentially causing heavy braking; and
- large and potentially fast-moving vehicles passing close to pedestrians.

Surfacing and lighting remain for consideration at detailed design. As access is not reserved, the Parish Council questions why all elements affecting its safety remain unresolved.

One pedestrian route has a maximum gradient of 8.33%, despite the assessment quoting 8% as the acceptable maximum. The secondary route is approximately 12%, with those unable to manage it directed towards an alternative route. This raises concerns for people with disabilities or reduced mobility, pushchairs and young children. Is the applicant going to put up signs stating the footpath is not suitable for disabled people? This is poor planning and should be designed out.

There is no existing continuous footpath from where these routes reach Bird in Eye Hill. The development therefore depends upon off-site works and infrastructure associated with Bird in Eye South for onward connections. There is concern that the footpaths end at the main road with nowhere to go and will put pedestrians at risk from having to cross the dangerous section of road which has seen multiple road traffic collisions at the same spot as the westerly pedestrian access. The approved Bird in Eye South roundabout would be approximately 125 metres away. The Parish Council questions why another junction should be created using a partially obscured industrial access rather than properly examining whether a coordinated connection involving that roundabout would be safer. The same arguments for safety that Bird in Eye South had apply to this site too. It cannot be ok for one but not the other!

The Parish Council does not consider that safe and suitable access has been convincingly demonstrated.

3. Construction traffic

The Parish Council accepts that construction traffic and routing is deferred to a future Construction Traffic Management Plan. The present commitment is only to keep HGVs on classified A and B roads and suitable distributor roads "where possible".

It therefore remains unclear whether construction traffic would travel through Uckfield, Framfield or both. Building 215 homes could generate considerable HGV movements on roads already

under pressure. Add on the already approved 190 dwelling development across the road, it will be chaos if they travel through our rural roads and lanes, or through Uckfield which is already at capacity, especially at peak times, but often throughout the day.

Experience of construction activity elsewhere in the parish demonstrates why enforceable routing, delivery times and monitoring should be established before permission is granted rather than left entirely to a future plan. The Parish Council have been disappointed with WDC, ESCC and Sussex Police over construction traffic at other sites in the parish causing dangerous situations for motorists and pedestrians. At no time did any authority step in using their powers available. It was left to a social media campaign aimed at the applicant, which had limited effect.

4. Flood risk and public safety

The site includes land within Flood Zones 1, 2 and 3. Although the dwellings are proposed in Zone 1, this does not remove the risks affecting the wider development, public open space and SANG.

The Environment Agency Flood Map baseline derives from April 2012 modelling. The applicant has produced updated modelling in 2026, but appears very conservative.

The Flood Risk Assessment describes three pedestrian bridges and routes within the SANG as “floodable” and confirms they would not provide safe access or escape during a flood. The proposed response includes warning signs - this is ridiculous.

Whilst modelling assists development, it should be noted that many local residents are aware of flooding over the years that has seen floodwater rise to flood zone 1 and 2. Some residents are able to demonstrate this with photographs.

Three large ponds/lakes are proposed. They surround the existing industrial area. What happens when water runoff floods the ponds and then the local businesses. With current water flow rates of the River Uck during heavy rains, these ponds will be insignificant to supporting site flooding. Also, if these ponds overflow into the River Uck, they will cause a significant impact downstream, where flood protection methods are already in place.

It should be noted - signage alone does not remove the risk, particularly for children and vulnerable users. NPPF paragraph 102 specifically requires their safety near open water and other hazards to be considered. The safe management of these recreational routes has not been adequately demonstrated.

5. Water, sewage and electricity

Potable-water capacity had not been confirmed when the Utilities Appraisal was prepared, and a response from South East Water remained outstanding.

Southern Water’s 2024 foul-sewer capacity check had expired. Its consultation response dated 22 July 2026 states that the proposal still requires assessment by its modelling team, with a response expected by 12 August 2026. The applicant’s statement that Southern Water is “obliged to accept the flows” does not prove that the existing network has sufficient capacity without reinforcement.

The application should not be determined until the current Southern Water assessment and any outstanding South East Water response have been received and considered. Foul and potable water systems are crippled in the area already. Reliance on “they have a duty to provide...” is not good enough.

The indicative electricity proposal requires a new high voltage power cable along Bird in Eye Hill and Framfield Road, up the High Street and to a substation behind the Civic Centre, together with two on-site substations. The disruption caused by these works must be considered alongside the development’s cumulative effects.

6. Flora, Fauna, and Established Businesses

A Tree Preservation Order affects the northern corner of the site. Ancient and semi-natural woodland lies within or adjoining it, and two trees are treated as potential veteran trees.

The Transport Assessment describes a proposed boardwalk “cutting through the wooded area”, while the Tree Survey states that proposed paths avoid the ancient woodland, veteran trees and

their buffers. This apparent discrepancy must be clarified. Any route through ancient woodland or its protective buffer would be unacceptable.

The development also surrounds established industrial and construction-related uses. The Noise Impact Assessment expects the yard to continue operating and considers workshop activity, forklifts, deliveries and aggregate movements.

Introducing housing around these businesses creates a foreseeable risk of complaints and subsequent pressure on established operations. NPPF paragraph 200 requires new development to integrate effectively with existing businesses and places responsibility upon the applicant, as the “agent of change”, to provide suitable mitigation.

It is also disappointing to see yet another area of agricultural land and established green space proposed for development, only for a SANG to be created to compensate for what is being lost. Apparently, replacing an existing wildlife-rich environment with a manufactured and inferior version now counts as environmental mitigation.

7. Planning policies and conclusion

The principal relevant policies are:

- **GD2 and DC17:** development outside settlement boundaries and housing in open countryside;
- **TR3 and TR13:** traffic, safe access and pedestrian routes;
- **EN8:** protection of the Low Weald’s landscape character;
- **Draft Policy FF5:** safe access and appropriate responses to flooding, landscape and noise, although it currently carries limited weight; and
- **NPPF paragraphs 115 - 116:** safe and suitable access and refusal where highway-safety effects would be unacceptable or residual cumulative road-network effects severe.

The claimed housing benefits do not outweigh the cumulative harm caused by development in open countryside, loss of rural character, unresolved access and pedestrian-safety concerns, additional traffic, construction routing, floodable recreational routes, outstanding utility information, risks to protected trees and woodland, and potential conflict with existing businesses. These matters affect whether the site is suitable in principle and cannot all be left to reserved matters, conditions or detailed design.

Framfield Parish Council therefore strongly objects and requests refusal. We would also like to see Wealden District Council robustly defend any appeal should it happen and not determine this application based on the approval of Bird in Eye South following the appeal. As planning officers keep saying – each site should be determined on its own merits.

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.
There were none.

6. Date of Next Meeting – when required.

The meeting closed at 6.40 pm.

Circulation: Planning Committee