

FRAMFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of a Planning Committee Meeting held on Monday, 16 January 2023, at 6 pm in the Village Hall, Blackboys.

Present: Committee Members: Keith Brandon (Chairman), Tony Hall (Vice Chairman), Peter Friend and Maria Naylor.
In attendance: Ann Newton (Parish Clerk).
Public: 5.

At the meeting, the order of the items on the agenda may be varied in line with public speaking. However, the minutes are detailed in the order of the agenda.

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.

It was agreed that the minutes of the last meeting held and delegated comments having been circulated, be approved, adopted and signed as a correct record. (TH/KB).

4. Planning applications for consideration

- **WD/2022/2785/MAO – Outline application for the erection of up to 210 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.**

Land north of Eastbourne Road, Uckfield.

Five residents spoke strongly against the application. At the end of these comments there is also a diagrammatic and link with videos to flooding issues on the site sent into the Parish Council by a resident.

The Parish Council **strongly objects** to this application as detailed below:

It appears that ESCC as lead flood authority have not objected based on a desktop study only. It is our understanding that they have not been to site and looked at the impact of flooding in the area that has been highlighted us and residents.

Wealden District Council's countryside officer has stated there are no records of flooding in the area. We have included footage of regular flooding in the area and with all of the ponds, fishing lakes, streams and rivers we would suggest that desktop data is out of date. The comments within the drainage team's report are very short sighted. There is far too much emphasis given within both authority's reports that the site is suitable simply based on desktop studies. The same team have also said that 210 houses will not affect the existing rural footpath abutting the north west boundary, which is also a direct contradiction to the East Sussex Countryside Officer from the Ramblers' Association.

It is disappointing that Natural England cannot even be bothered to look at the application and now issue generic planning comments with links to policies and standards.

The Ecological Impact Assessment states that the site is species poor grassland with isolated areas of marshy grassland. Whole fields submerged are not isolated areas.

eDNA results has only been supplied for 1 of 23 ponds surrounding the site and the data is out of date. There are twenty-three ponds close by, which should suggest a red flag. Two are within 5m, 13 within 250m and 8 within 500m. Page 4 of the document states that habitats on site were considered to be no more than local importance. This suggests little consideration is given to the local environment.

The ancient woodlands are referred to with quite a derogatory status. To plan a new development on the premise of carving a footpath through the middle is preposterous.

At our meeting, amongst many concerned residents that came along was a member of the Ornithological Society. It was interesting to hear some of the real-life statistics that have been collated from a location near this application site.... It is totally different to the desk survey, one hour site visit or modelling that the applicant has provided.

There are unacceptable mitigations for every element of flora and fauna mentioned. The grassland, hedges and trees were classed as species poor, limited quality for bats, and great crested newts do not like it because there is no shelter or places to rest... despite this, there are all of these recorded on site and appear to be flourishing. There were 11 protected dormice nests found on site including adults and juveniles, but it is stated the habitat is not optimal..... a contradiction in terms. This is of grave concern to the Parish Council.

There are approved developments for fifty houses in Blackboys and fifty-eight in Framfield. There are various other smaller isolated sites that have also been approved locally. There are proposals for Bird in Eye Farm, the developments behind the hospital, and the magnitude of other building in Uckfield..... at some point wildlife are going to have nowhere to migrate.

There is also a 314-page transport assessment. The first thing that was noticed at the beginning of the document is the KSI data (Killed and seriously Injured) for the stretch of Eastbourne Road from near New Road, Uckfield to past the Raj Dutt Restaurant. There is a legend to identify seriousness of accidents, with a 'star' for people killed (figure 2.8, pg. 13). However, there are none identified on the map. The data recorded was referenced as a 5 year period up September 2019, and it is referenced throughout as 5 years. Despite this, there is a date range given of September 2017 to September 2019 – which does not match. Sadly, on March 12th 2017, 2 local residents were both killed in a motor vehicle near to the Palehouse Common junction – within the assessed area and within the specified data collation period. The data is flawed, and any interventions or mitigations would possibly be inadequate if actual deaths were recorded and included. The actual supporting data included in the application is from September 17 to August 2022 – yet another inconsistency.

Car ownership and travelling to work has been based on the 2011 Census. It is 12 years out of date and completely irrelevant to 2023 in every sense. Why would data from the most recent 2021 Census not be used.

There is a long list of suitable distances to walk to various services. Briefly, the IHT Walking Standards state that at the lowest – a 25 minute/2000m walk to school or recreation would be considered and 15 minutes/1200m walk to anything else. Out of the list, it means you can get to 2 primary schools, Ridgewood recreational park, Ridgewood Post Office and industrial park. The point being made by the Parish Council is that section 2.25 of this report states that "Given the level of local services and amenities, the site is well located in terms of walking". This provides limited service to the local area and is clearly not well located. All of the other services listed were over the distance of acceptable walking distances. Many of the distances were also incorrectly calculated.

With the poor state of our roads and footpaths, adding more infrastructure is only going to exacerbate the problem. The Parish Council have already been waiting over 2 years for road repairs in one place, so there is serious concern about adding more roads and footways.

The report is very confusing depending on which part is being read. It states that they are going to increase the width of Eastbourne Road footpath which is not even a metre wide to 2m (at the moment it is completely blocked by fallen bushes for several months). That means that the 210 houses worth of school children will have to cross the Eastbourne Road to get to a path, and then walk along with vehicles including HGV's rattling past on a fairly narrow road, as it would have to be narrowed to make the footpath wider.

The report also states that the roads are suitable for all levels of cyclists. There is no way that the roads are suitable for all levels of cyclists!

There is a drawing on page 72 of the Transport Assessment that show the road as 9m wide, with 3 lanes. The east and west road, along with a centre lane to turn right into the site from the Lewes direction.... Where is all this extra width coming from? (a conflict with section 2.30).

It states that the bus service is a realistic option to travel to work. The 28 bus service is a limited service, severely reduced at the weekends and is hardly on time. There is lots of reference to people travelling towards Uckfield with little regard to those heading to Lewes and Brighton. The 54 bus service to Eastbourne is another limited service, not running past approximately p.m. on any day, and not at all on a Sunday.

They state that there is a 4th bus service as well, just a short walk from the site. With no reference to a third service. However, the service referred to as the fourth is the 29 bus. They quote "just outside of a 400m walk, close to the junction of New Road. The 29 stops at the Highlands and Ridgewood Post Office on the Lewes Road as the two nearest stops. From the application site they are approximately 1.1km away... not 400m as stated by the applicant.

They quote a whole list of bus services from Uckfield bus station but clearly as the applicant is not local they don't realise that some of these double up as school services on same routes. There is not a mass of public transport.

The train service capacity is also overstated. Uckfield is on a single line and is generally restricted to one service per hour. However, Govia Thameslink Railway terminate the service at Crowborough on a regular basis due to late running trains. That means that Buxted and Uckfield often lose out with passengers stranded.

The data in the application is full of inaccuracies and the data is flawed. There is sincere concern for safety, especially those having to walk to the new development. Reference is made to dropped kerb crossings and tactile paving, but what happens on the few months of the year when the high school children are walking back the 2.8km from UTC along the dark unlit Eastbourne Road, as there appears to be no reference to lighting. It would be presumed that this would be picked up during a reserved matters application.

Some further points within the Transport Assessment:

- In section 5.16 of the traffic assessment, the Parish Council would suggest ESCC, and the applicant look at committed development. One or both are incorrect in reference to approved development elsewhere in the Parish and surrounding.
- It is suggested that the applicant speaks with ESCC about junction capacity. As far as we are aware, ESCC have still not modelled and issued their strategic plan for Uckfield. With all of the other developments before this one, the junctions were at, or over capacity. However, the applicant has done some modelling to state that there will be no issues whatsoever up to at least 2027. Clearly this is incorrect based on current data and not in line with requirements of the statutory authority as other key issues have not been considered.
- Section 2.8 states that a westbound (towards Uckfield) layby will be included with new bus stops. The reason for a shelter westbound is more people will travel to Uckfield – which the Parish Council would accept. It is stated that the opposite way will not have a layby or shelter. What really does not make sense is that the bus layby is shown adjacent to the site – which is not towards Uckfield. The drawing and wording contradict itself. You can see this on page 72.
- Traffic surveys were done 5 years ago and would be wholly irrelevant to today's traffic and movements. This will lead to serious oversight and potential road management issues if up to date data is not used.
- The site is isolated in every way. It is not integrated with any other development, and to a large degree never can be due to terrain and the obstructions.
- There are massive problems with the sewage pumping station in Framfield and the regular need for tankers. This has been going on for a long time and keeps reoccurring.
- Uckfield sewage treatment plant is regularly going into excess flow condition and causing problems. There is concern as to where the excess overflow goes as tankers cannot always get to site.

- The site is wholly inappropriate over development of a greenfield site.
- The site is unsustainable, and the applicant has provided zero tangible support to offset the negative impact that this application will have.
- The B2102 from Framfield to Uckfield is constantly flooding, as is the area around Uckfield hospital, Brookhouse lane, and many other local roads. This isn't one off freak storms any more, they are a regular occurrence. We implore the planning authority and appropriate statutory authorities not to hide behind policies for approval without taking into account local known and highlighted issues of concern including road conditions, flooding and infrastructure capacities.
- Importantly and detrimental to this application, the applicant has supplied a statement of community involvement where it is stated that "Gladman have completed a comprehensive programme of community engagement". We cannot speak for Uckfield Town Council, but Framfield Parish Council **have not** been approached or sent a letter as shown in the application. We have not been made aware of any residents in the Parish being approached either.
- The engagement letter was also sent to the wrong district councillor for the ward where the application is.
- In summary of this, Framfield Parish Council believe that they have not complied with Section 122 of the Localism Act 2011, and the NPPF.

This application is riddled with inaccuracies/errors/flaws, misinformation, and fact...sadly, it will be with devastating effects if approved. There are significant supporting policy reasons for this application to be refused by Wealden District Council.

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.

- **WD/2022/0055/F – Part retrospective application for new office building and storage building.**

Oak Tree Barn, Lewes Road, Blackboys TN22 5JL

The Parish Council supports this application subject to the rear velux windows being fixed and opaque due to the impact on the amenity of Oak Lodge. The Parish Council is very disappointed that these changes have been made retrospectively.

6. Date of Next Meeting – to be advised.

The meeting closed at 7.15 pm.

AEN/24.01.2023

Circulation: Planning Committee.



Clip 2 is water draining from the proposed site directly off the field that is adjacent to the footpath and Eastbourne Rd. It then washes over the track/footpath into the lower pond and floods over the top into the fields below. If an expert could calculate the volume/flow from these clips it would clearly show a few SUD ponds would be overwhelmed quite quickly.

Link to clips

https://www.dropbox.com/sh/uopnwev3235y1nd/AAA8eZw4yN0wOneA7W4S_YLNa?dl=0