

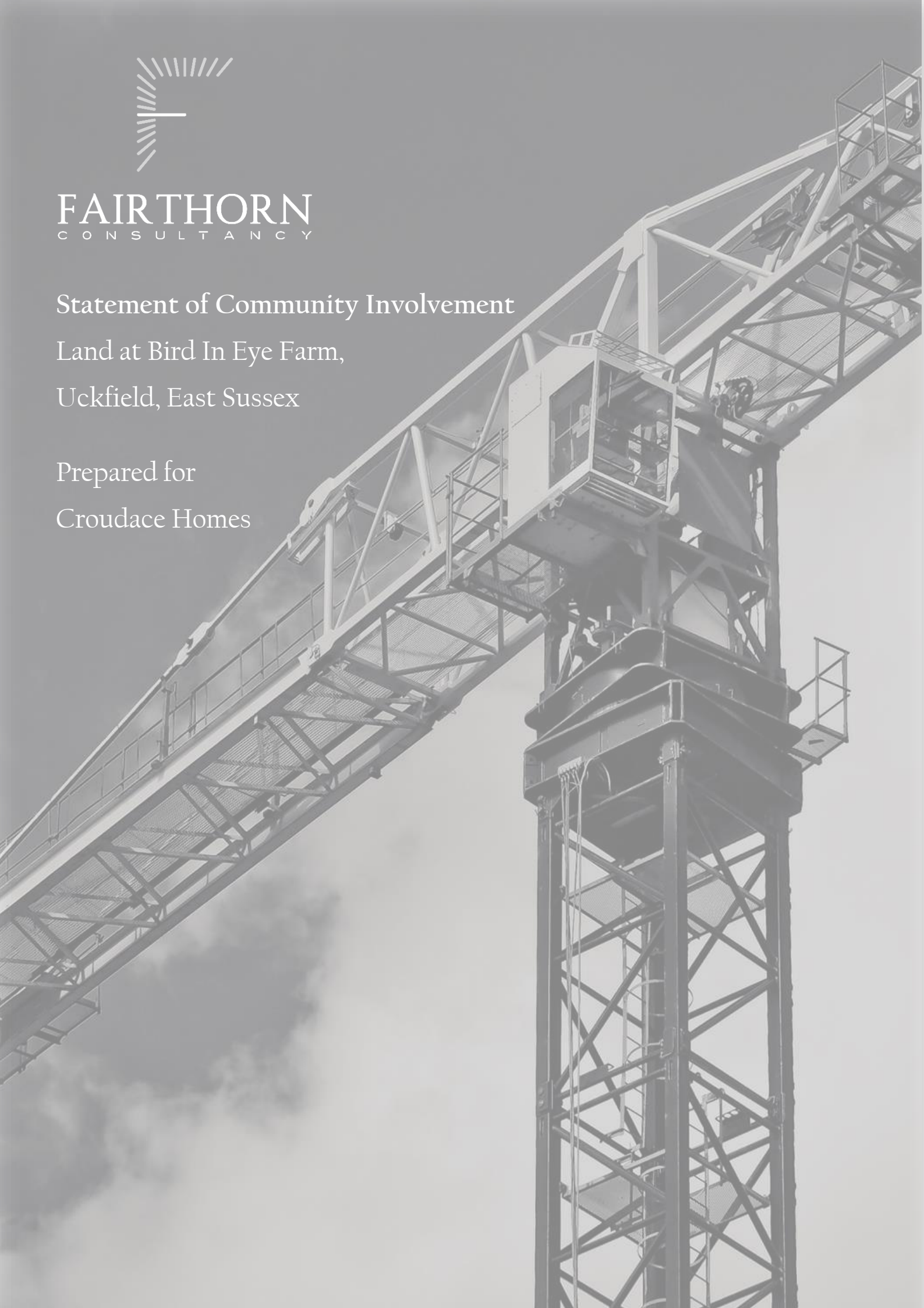


FAIRTHORN
CONSULTANCY

Statement of Community Involvement

Land at Bird In Eye Farm,
Uckfield, East Sussex

Prepared for
Croudace Homes



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Executive summary

Croudace Homes is committed to consulting with the community regarding its proposals for Land at Bird In Eye Farm, Uckfield, East Sussex.

Residents and other important local stakeholders were given the opportunity to give feedback regarding the proposals via a host of different channels. A freephone information line along with a project email address were both made available throughout the process for interested parties to receive further details and to provide feedback.

Additionally, a virtual consultation was held on the project's website, **uckfield.your-feedback.co.uk**, from **Thursday 11th July 2024** to **Monday 29th July 2024**. Along with displaying all the key information about the scheme, it included a portal where visitors could submit their views.

The website was promoted with a community flyer, which also included details on how residents and other important local stakeholders could request paper copies of the plans along with a feedback form and return postage if they were unable to access the internet. This was to ensure everyone was able to comment who wished to do so.

During the consultation period, we received **65** responses. It comprised **53** feedback forms submitted by those who visited the website and there were also **12** emails received by the project team.

The feedback included some positive features, such as the need for more housing for local families, and there was support for the importance placed on environmental and sustainability measures. However, there were also a number of respondents opposed to the principle of developing the site, regardless of what the proposals entailed. Concerns were also raised regarding the ability of local infrastructure to accommodate more homes, especially the local road network. It is worth noting that in the event of planning permission being granted, contributions would be made to address the majority of concerns raised, such as infrastructure improvements.

The project team has carefully reviewed all the feedback received, and the main comments raised have been addressed within this document and the wider material submitted as part of the application. This document also provides a chronological account of the pre-application consultation undertaken and a review of the feedback received.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Croudace Homes is bringing forward development proposals for Land at Bird In Eye Farm, Uckfield, East Sussex as follows: *Outline planning application for the erection of up to 190 dwellings, with associated works, parking, landscaping, publicly accessible open space and SANG provision, with access from the B2102.*
- 1.2 From the outset, Croudace has been committed to consulting local stakeholders with regards to its proposals. They have included locally elected councillors, businesses, and residents living near the site.
- 1.3 This document has been produced to clearly and concisely detail a chronological account of the community engagement undertaken by the applicant in respect of its proposals.
- 1.4 To assist with the community engagement process, Croudace brought Fairthorn Consultancy, a specialist communications agency, into its wider project team for the proposed development.
- 1.5 All feedback received is accounted for and represented within this document.

2. Background

2.1 Proposal site

- 2.1.1 The proposal site is located on Land at Bird In Eye Farm, Uckfield. It lies on the eastern edge of the town and has previously been put forward for housing development.
- 2.1.2 A larger scheme for 290 homes was previously rejected by the Planning Inspectorate, though it did not disagree with the principle of housebuilding at the site. Its primary concerns included the impact on the nearby ancient woodland along with the listed building at the farm, and vehicular access to the site.
- 2.1.3 By reducing the number of homes from 290 to 190, altering the layout, and designing a new roundabout, our project team has now addressed all three of the issues highlighted by the Planning Inspectorate.



The proposed layout of our development at Bird In Eye Farm, Uckfield

2.2 Proposals

- 2.2.1 The project team aims to deliver a good mixture of 190 homes at the proposal site of which 35 per cent would be affordable, providing 67 properties for local families in need.
- 2.2.2 We would also deliver environmental and biodiversity improvements, along with sustainable drainage systems, and new public open green spaces including a children's play area.
- 2.2.3 Our green vision also includes electric vehicle charging points and promoting the use of sustainable travel. For example, we are aware the proposal site lies within reach of Uckfield railway station.
- 2.2.4 We would also use energy efficient construction materials and heating systems, helping to reduce costs for the incoming residents, and the carbon footprint of the development. Croudace Homes will also provide a host of other significant benefits including payments towards local infrastructure.
- 2.2.5 Overall, we aim to create a development that is attractive, sustainable, green, and provides much-needed affordable housing for local families.



A recent example of one of Croudace Homes' high-quality developments

3. Community Engagement

3.1 Statement of community involvement

3.1.1 The Localism Act 2011

Section 122 of the Localism Act 2011 outlines that a person proposing to make a planning application on land in England should carry out consultation on the proposed application. This should include publicity considered likely to bring the application to the attention of a majority of the persons who live at, or otherwise occupy, premises in the vicinity of the land.

3.1.2 National Planning Policy Framework (2012, updated 2018, 2019, 2021, and 2023)

The National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) sets out the Government's policies for England and outlines how these policies should be applied. The applicant has had regard to the NPPF at Paragraph 39 when it states that *"early engagement has significant potential to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the planning application system for all parties."*

3.1.3 The NPPF goes on to highlight at Paragraph 40 that *"Local planning authorities have a key role to play in encouraging other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage. They cannot require that a developer engages with them before submitting a planning application, but they should encourage take-up of any pre-application services they offer. They should also, where they think this would be beneficial, encourage any applicants who are not already required to do so by law to engage with the local community and, where relevant, with statutory and non-statutory consultees, before submitting their applications."*

3.1.4 Paragraph 41 outlines that the Local Planning Authority should encourage other parties to take maximum advantage of the pre-application stage, noting that *"the more issues that can be resolved at pre-application stage, including the need to deliver improvements in infrastructure and affordable housing, the greater the benefits."*

3.1.5 Wealden District Council

Engagement activities have been undertaken with due regard to the expectations laid out in Wealden District Council's Statement of Community Involvement document, which was adopted in July 2020. Based on that document, in conjunction with developing the plans, Croudace undertook a programme of community engagement, as outlined in this report.

3.2 Engagement with statutory bodies

- 3.2.1 Before the proposals were shared with the community, appropriate steps were taken to discuss the principle of development with statutory bodies and other experts. The detail of this is included within the planning statement.

3.3 Stakeholder engagement

- 3.3.1 Croudace felt it was important to engage proactively with key stakeholders regarding its proposals at Bird In Eye Farm. As a result, the project team reached out to local politicians shortly before the wider community consultation began. This ensured they had early sight of the proposals ahead of residents raising any queries or comments with them about the scheme.

- 3.3.2 The stakeholders contacted shortly before the wider public consultation included:

- Leader of Wealden District Council
- Relevant cabinet members at Wealden District Council
- District Councillor for Framfield & Cross-in-Hand Ward (which covers the site)
- District Councillors for Uckfield New Town Ward (which adjoins the site)
- East Sussex County Council division member for Uckfield South with Framfield
- Framfield Parish Council
- Uckfield Town Council
- Member of Parliament for Sussex Weald Constituency (which covers the site)
- Member of Parliament for East Grinstead and Uckfield Constituency (which adjoins the site)

- 3.3.3 Resulting from this initial phase of consultation, some stakeholders acknowledged receipt of the information but provided no further comments. In the case of Uckfield Town Council, they asked to meet the project team and this meeting was being arranged at the time of writing this report. We would like to record our thanks to the Town Council for agreeing to meet the project team.

3.4 Wider community engagement

- 3.4.1 After reaching out to key stakeholders, Croudace launched its wider community consultation on **Thursday 11th July 2024.**

- 3.4.2 To commence the process, a community flyer was circulated in the area surrounding the proposal site. It outlined the vision for the land and details about the virtual consultation. It also included the freephone information line number and project email address.
- 3.4.3 A total of **1,000** copies were sent via Royal Mail first class postage on **Thursday 11th July 2024**, and the distribution area included residential and commercial properties.
- 3.4.4 A map of the distribution area for the flyer is shown below.



A map depicting the community flyer distribution area – the proposal site lies in the exact centre of the circle, marked by the white dot

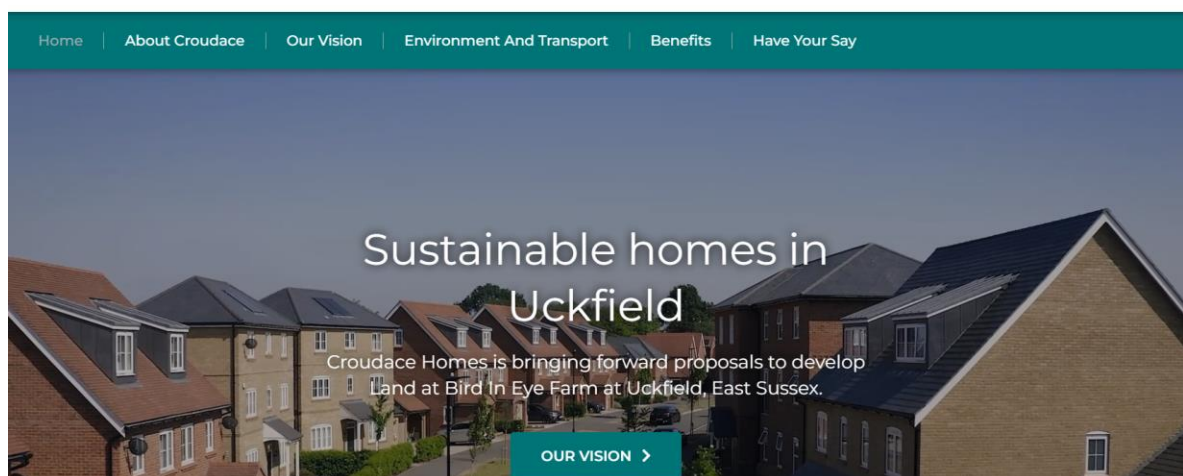
- 3.4.5 The community flyer contained the following:
- Background to the site
 - An overview of the proposals
 - Details regarding the community consultation
 - Information about Croudace Homes
 - Details of the project team's freephone information line and email address
- 3.4.6 A copy of the flyer can be found in the Appendix.

3.5 Virtual consultation

- 3.5.1 In the wake of the Covid-19 pandemic, Croudace recognises that the way in which community consultations are carried out has fundamentally changed, and hosting a virtual engagement is now considered a vital component of any such exercise.
- 3.5.2 As a result, a virtual consultation regarding the proposals was hosted on the project website. This allowed the local community and other key stakeholders to explore the proposals in detail and respond to them with their views, comments, and suggestions.
- 3.5.3 The virtual consultation was open for comments on the project's website between **Thursday 11th July 2024** and **Monday 29th July 2024**.
- 3.5.4 The website was hosted at <https://uckfield.your-feedback.co.uk/>.
- 3.5.5 The information displayed on the website included:
- Welcome and overview
 - Details about Croudace Homes
 - Background information about the site
 - Details about the proposals, landscaping, and greenspace
 - Information about transport, access, and ecology
 - Key benefits of the scheme
 - Next steps and how to provide feedback

croudacehomes

Consulting the community



The home page of the project website, including the virtual consultation

3.6 Dedicated project email address

- 3.6.1 A specific project email address – mail@your-feedback.co.uk – was set up to receive feedback and answer any queries both during and after the consultation period.

3.7 Freephone 0800 comment facility

- 3.7.1 During and after the consultation, access to a freephone telephone information line – **0800 099 6712** - was offered to those who wished to find out more about the proposals, or register comments via the telephone.

4. Community Engagement

4.1 Feedback

The community consultation generated **65** items of feedback. It included **53** forms submitted via the project website and **12** emails submitted directly to the team. No phone calls were received during the consultation period.

The project team has carefully reviewed the data and all the responses have been accounted for in the tables and graphs that follow.

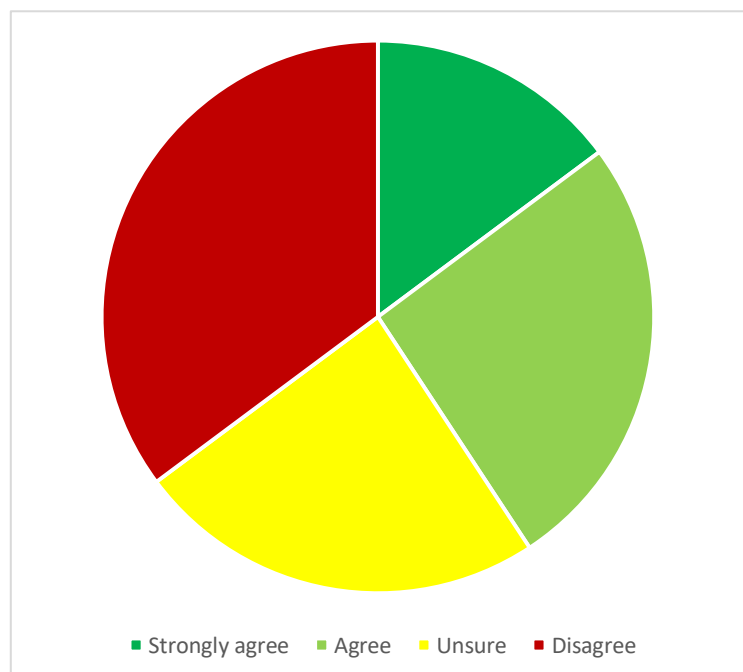
The first question we asked on the feedback form was:

Q1: We propose to deliver 35% affordable housing at our scheme in Uckfield – do you feel there is an unmet need for affordable homes?

The project team acknowledges that **36%** of respondents disagreed with this statement, but **40%** either agreed or strongly agreed, so views were mixed. The remaining **24%** of respondents were unsure.

Strongly agree:	8	14%
Agree:	14	26%
Unsure:	13	24%
Disagree:	19	36%
Total replies:	53	

The project team then looked into the comments in more detail and all the issues raised by respondents have been catalogued in the table that follows overleaf:



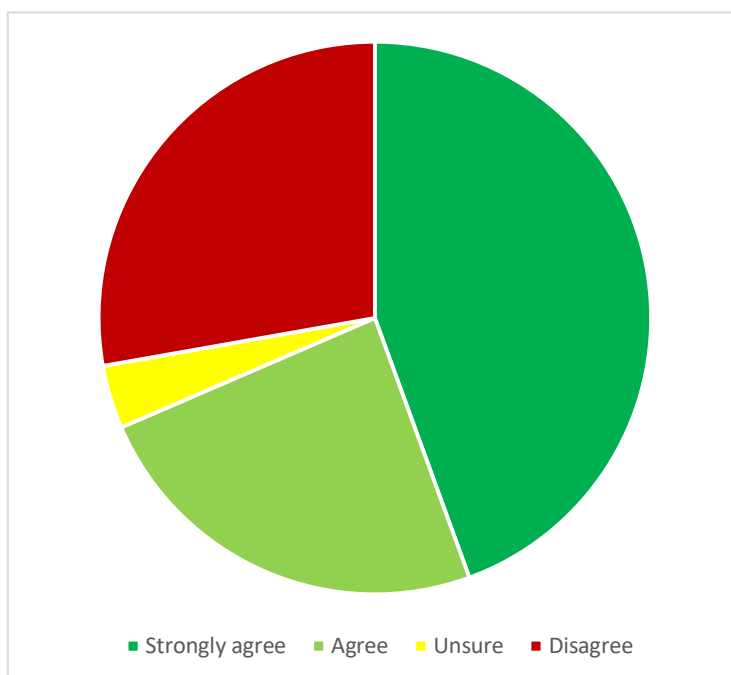
Issue	Frequency of being raised
The road network is already too congested	10
More homes are not needed in Uckfield	9
Uckfield lacks adequate infrastructure for more homes, especially GP and dental surgery capacity along with school places	7
Concerns the “affordable” homes will not be affordable	5
More affordable homes are needed in Uckfield	4
Concerns about the impact on the nearby ancient woodland	4
There are existing parking problems in Framfield Road	4
Concerns about flood risk on the site	4
Against greenfield development	3
Development will generate too much traffic	3
Local infrastructure cannot support more homes	2
Affordable housing should be delivered in larger towns and cities instead	2
Local applicants will miss out on the affordable homes	1
More homes are needed for young families	1
General opposition to the scheme without giving any reasons	1
A higher percentage than 35% affordable housing is needed	1
Affordable housing is only being offered as a subterfuge to gain planning permission	1
Against the loss of any farmland	1
Would like guarantees that 35% affordable housing will be delivered	1

Q2: Do you feel it’s important to include sustainability and biodiversity measures in our plans?

Generally, the feedback was positive, with **68%** of respondents agreeing, of which **44%** strongly agreed. Meanwhile **4%** of those who replied were unsure and **28%** believed sustainability and biodiversity measures were unimportant. Further data is shown overleaf.

Strongly agree:	24	44%
Agree:	13	24%
Unsure:	2	4%
Disagree:	15	28%
Total replies:	53	

The project team then looked into the comments in more detail and all the issues raised by respondents have been catalogued in the table that follows. In many cases, they ticked the box for 'strongly agree' but then left no further comments.

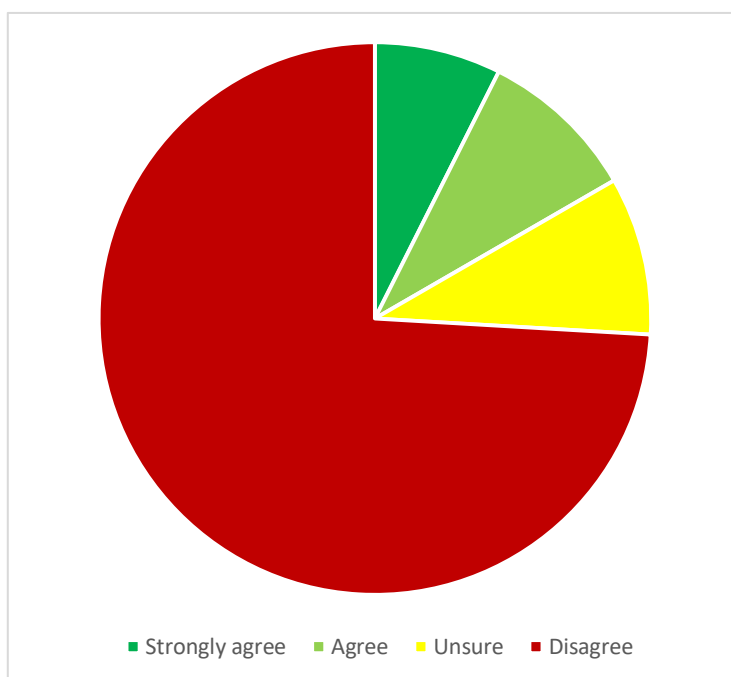


Issue	Frequency of being raised
Building on the site will not promote biodiversity	11
Proposals will damage the environment	6
Would like the site to be retained as farmland	5
Development will increase the risk of flooding	4
Do not believe biodiversity improvements will be delivered	3
All new homes should have solar panels	2
General opposition to the scheme without citing any reasons	2
Protecting the environment is important	1
Unclear how biodiversity improvements will be delivered	1
Air source heat pumps should be used	1
Would like to see a commitment to Net Zero development	1
Providing cycle storage is just a gimmick	1
Concerns the development will add to air pollution	1
If around 180 homes are being built, that's likely to mean around 400 more cars	1
Would prefer brownfield sites to be developed	1

Q3: Do you feel our suggested highways upgrades – including a new roundabout – will be an improvement?

Regarding this question, **72%** of respondents disagreed, while **18%** either agreed or strongly agreed. The remaining **10%** were unsure.

Strongly agree:	4	8%
Agree:	5	10%
Unsure:	5	10%
Disagree:	40	72%
Total replies:	53	



The project team then looked into the comments in more detail and all the issues raised by respondents have been catalogued in the table that follows:

Issue	Frequency of being raised
There is already too much local traffic	21
There are existing parking problems in Framfield Road	12
The proposed road access to the development is not safe	8
More homes are not needed	3
Concerns about construction noise and highways disruption	2
A roundabout must be provided before development takes place	2
A lack of safe routes will be a deterrent for walking and cycling	2
A roundabout would be an improvement	2
Existing congestion is holding up the emergency services	1
A roundabout would not be an improvement	1

Uckfield lacks adequate infrastructure for more homes, especially GP and dental surgery capacity along with school places	1
Request for a pedestrian crossing in Framfield Road	1
The residents in the new development will not walk or cycle but will use cars	1
The development will generate more traffic	1
Framfield Road is prone to flooding	1
Would support upgrades to promote walking and cycling	1
Calls for traffic calming in Framfield Road	1
Would like to know if research has been carried out regarding the impact on wild deer in the area	1
Development will increase the risk of flooding	1

Q4: Do you have any further comments about our scheme?

As this question was an invitation for residents and other important stakeholders to cover any points not already raised, these responses were not grouped into categories as with the previous three questions. However, the project team paid close attention to the replies, and all the issues raised, and their frequency, is detailed in the table below:

Issue	Frequency of being raised
Existing road network cannot cope with more development	19
Concerns about the impact on the nearby ancient woodland	14
There is a shortage of capacity for doctors and dentists	13
The scheme will damage the character of Uckfield	12
Would like the site to be retained as farmland / countryside	11
Proposals will harm the environment	10
Framfield Road already has parking problems	9
Development will generate too much traffic	7
Uckfield needs more affordable homes	5
More school places will need to be provided	5
General opposition to the scheme without citing any reasons	4

Concerns about flooding on the site / increased flood risk	4
General support for the development	3
There is extensive wildlife on the proposal site that would be lost	3
The proposed roundabout will not solve road safety issues	3
The site is outside Uckfield and shouldn't be developed	3
More homes are needed for young families	2
Concerns that the new homes will not be "affordable"	2
Want to ensure promises on affordable housing are kept	2
Enough homes are already being built in Uckfield	2
Concerns about construction noise and dust	2
Do not understand how a scheme that has previously been refused can be submitted again	1
Concerns that the development will create light pollution	1
Would prefer to see brownfield sites developed instead	1
The proposals are too vague and need to be more specific	1
Would like to see traffic calming in Framfield Road	1
The development is not needed	1
There are inadequate water supplies for new homes	1
The homes need to be a "sensible" price	1
Starter homes are needed, rather than executive housing	1

4.2 Email feedback

- 4.2.1 In addition to the feedback forms received via the website, the dedicated project email address received **12** messages during the consultation period.
- 4.2.2 All comments received via email have been reviewed and the project team has tallied the issues that have been raised, which are presented in the table below. As a result, all email feedback has been accounted for, and recorded accurately.

Issue	Frequency of being raised
Concerns about additional traffic	8
Uckfield lacks adequate infrastructure for more homes, especially GP and dental surgery capacity along with school places	7
The site is prone to flooding / concerns about increased flood risk	4
Enough homes are already being built in Uckfield	3
There will be an adverse impact on the nearby ancient woodland	3
The site is outside the development boundary of Uckfield	2
The plans are too vague and need to be more specific	2
The scheme will damage the character of Uckfield	2
Road access will not be safe	2
Providing a children's play area is not sufficient mitigation for the harm caused by the development	2
Despite improvements to the scheme, it still isn't acceptable	1
Concerns about overlooking of neighbouring properties	1
Cycle connections are inadequate and unsafe	1
The new homes should have solar panels and heat pumps	1
The site is inappropriate for development	1
Preserving green fields is more important than affordable housing	1
The ratio of affordable housing at 35% is not high enough	1
Would like to see bungalows included in the scheme	1
The proposals will harm the environment	1
Concerns about overspill parking	1
The affordable homes will not go to local families – they will all be bought by London borough councils	1

4.3 Response to comments

- 4.3.1 All comments received during the process have been reviewed and the project team has attempted to respond to the most recurring themes that have been raised.
- 4.3.2 The project team noted that there was support for the emphasis placed on sustainability measures proposed in the plans, along with the need for new housing, especially affordable homes. However, there were also a number of respondents who were opposed to the principle of developing the site, regardless of what the proposals entailed.
- 4.3.3 Concerns were also raised regarding the impact on the local road network, and the ability of Uckfield's infrastructure to accommodate more homes including school and health surgery places. It is worth noting that in the event of planning permission being granted, contributions would be made towards local infrastructure improvements, helping to address these issues.
- 4.3.4 The project team is seeking to continue its dialogue with residents and other local stakeholders as the scheme moves forward, for example, the upcoming meeting with Uckfield Town Council.

5. Appendix

- Copy of the community flyer

SUSTAINABLE HOMES IN UCKFIELD

Our vision for Land at Bird In Eye Farm

Consulting the community

High-quality housebuilder Croudace Homes is seeking to develop Land at Bird In Eye Farm at Uckfield, East Sussex.

We are proposing approximately 180 dwellings including 64 that will be affordable, comprising 35% of the total scheme.

Sustainability is at the forefront of our vision with extensive landscaping works, including the delivery of new public green space.

There will also be a net gain in biodiversity and promotion of green travel, including cycle storage, and electric vehicle charging points.

Before submitting our planning application, we wanted to consult with residents and other important local stakeholders about our scheme.

As a result, we are holding a community consultation on our project website – uckfield.your-feedback.co.uk – which includes more details about our vision, and the option to leave comments up until **Monday 29th July 2024**.

To ensure our consultation is inclusive, for those without internet access we are happy to provide printed copies of our exhibition materials by post on request. Our contact details are shown below.



Our site – Land at Bird In Eye Farm at Uckfield – is shown by the red line

Our virtual exhibition

Our online consultation is now live at uckfield.your-feedback.co.uk and will be open for comments until **Monday 29th July 2024**.

Please scan the QR code to visit our project site.

For those without internet access, please contact us via the details in the box below to register your views, and we can post printed copies of our plans to you for free on request.

Contact us

✉ mail@your-feedback.co.uk

☎ Call 0800 099 6712, leave a message, and our project team will ring you back

Please scan the QR code to visit our project website:



Key benefits

Croudace Homes is a local family-owned business with a proven track record of delivering high-quality housing. Developing Land at Bird In Eye Farm at Uckfield will deliver a host of significant benefits, including:



Delivering approx. 180 high-quality and much-needed homes, including 35 per cent affordable housing



Highways upgrades and delivering parking including electric vehicle charging points



Protecting the setting of nearby ancient woodland



Helping Wealden District Council to meet its housing needs



Creating new public open green spaces and a children's play area



Creating local jobs during the construction phase



Promoting sustainable travel on a site close to Uckfield railway station



Investing in the local economy



Delivering landscaping and biodiversity improvements



Providing new footpaths to improve connectivity