

The Planning Inspectorate

COMMENTS ON CASE (Online Version)

Please note that comments about this case need to be made within the timetable. This can be found in the notification letter sent by the local planning authority or the start date letter. Comments submitted after the deadline may be considered invalid and returned to sender.

Appeal Reference: APP/C1435/W/24/3356658

DETAILS OF THE CASE

Appeal Reference APP/C1435/W/24/3356658

Appeal By CROUDACE HOMES LTD

Site Address
Land at Bird In Eye Farm
South of Bird in Eye Hill
Framfield Uckfield
East Sussex
TN22 5HA
Grid Ref Easting: 548398
Grid Ref Northing: 120758

SENDER DETAILS

Name

Address

Company/Group/Organisation Name FRAMFIELD PARISH COUNCIL

ABOUT YOUR COMMENTS

In what capacity do you wish to make representations on this case?

- ☐ Appellant
- ☐ Agent
- ☒ Interested Party / Person
- ☐ Land Owner
- ☐ Rule 6 (6)

What kind of representation are you making?

- ☐ Final Comments
- ☐ Proof of Evidence

- ☐ Statement
- ☐ Statement of Common Ground
- ☒ Interested Party/Person Correspondence
- ☐ Other

YOUR COMMENTS ON THE CASE

Appeal Reference: APP/C1435/W/24/3356658

Site Address: Bird-in-Eye Farm, Framfield Parish

Application Reference: WD/2024/1799/MAO

Formal Representation from Framfield Parish Council

Framfield Parish Council submits this formal representation in strong opposition to the appeal submitted in respect of the above application. We consider the proposed development to be wholly inappropriate and fundamentally incompatible with the rural character and infrastructure capacity of Framfield Parish.

We are also deeply concerned by the manner in which this appeal process is being conducted. To allow only two weeks for consultation on an appeal of such scale and complexity is unacceptable and profoundly undemocratic. It denies the public and representative bodies the opportunity for meaningful participation, contrary to the principles underpinning the planning system. Due to the previous failure by Wealden District Council to publish the application in a timely and accessible manner, the general public - our community has had no meaningful opportunity to view or engage with this application prior to the appeal.

Lack of Recognition of Framfield Parish and Severe Local Impact

This site lies within Framfield Parish, not Uckfield, and yet the application barely acknowledges this fact. There has been little to no engagement with Framfield Parish Council throughout the process, and the documentation fails to address the substantial and lasting impacts this development would have on our community.

Our rural lanes including Brookhouse Lane, Pump Lane, Sandy Lane, and Stonebridge Lane, all of which are narrow, single-track roads are already under extreme pressure and increasingly used as rat runs to bypass congestion elsewhere. With further developments already approved in the south-western area of the parish, this proposal would significantly worsen an already unsustainable situation. The cumulative impact on traffic and road safety has been wilfully ignored by the applicant.

We are particularly frustrated and perplexed by the applicant's assertion that the Highways Department at East Sussex County Council are now supportive of the scheme. This is frankly bizarre, especially given that previous comments from ESCC highlighted serious concerns. If their position has changed, this must be scrutinised in full. If not, then the applicant's statements are at best selective and at worst misleading.

Dangerous and Inappropriate Access Proposals

The proposed roundabout is grossly inappropriate for a rural setting. It would dominate the landscape, create confusion for drivers and pedestrians alike, and irreparably damage the rural character of the B2102. The complexity of the proposed design with multiple mini-islands, another mini-roundabout, pedestrian crossings, and inconsistent speed limits is not only visually intrusive but also inherently dangerous.

The original access design already confirmed that a standard, safe, and policy-compliant access was not possible. That should be a red flag for any rural development of this scale.

From the Framfield approach, the proposed roundabout is so skewed into the site that drivers will almost have to turn left to access it - an absurd and unsafe arrangement. Approaching from the

Uckfield direction, the design creates a risk that impatient drivers will cut across the roundabout on the wrong side, particularly when continuing towards Framfield, a problem previously seen at Fernley Park in Uckfield. This points to a pattern of making do with poor design rather than delivering sustainable, safe, and well-engineered solutions. This is simply not good enough.

We strongly urge all parties to visit the site in person to fully appreciate the implications of this flawed access design.

Destruction of the Environment and Harm to Heritage Assets

This development would result in the loss of ancient woodland and vital habitats, continuing the environmental degradation already caused by neighbouring schemes. The so-called "SANG" is little more than countryside repurposed for marketing purposes, it is not genuine mitigation.

The Grade II listed Oast House, once a prominent heritage asset in a rural setting, will be visually diminished and hemmed in. The so-called "buffer field" is a token gesture and fails to protect the setting of the asset, as required under national and local planning policy. Much like the access concerns, there appears to be an apathy towards proper heritage protection. Removing a handful of dwellings from one side of the Oast House does not mitigate the overall harm caused by the development. This is a classic example of 'out of sight, out of mind' - and it is wholly unacceptable.

Inadequate Infrastructure and Unrealistic Assumptions

The local road network, drainage systems, and essential services are simply not capable of supporting development at this scale. The site lies nearly a kilometre from the town centre and cannot reasonably be considered accessible for the majority of users, especially those who are elderly, disabled, or otherwise vulnerable. Car usage will inevitably increase, yet the proposal includes no credible infrastructure to accommodate this growth.

Claims about walking, cycling and public transport are purely aspirational and bear no relation to the lived reality of rural life. These assumptions are not backed by evidence and ignore well-established patterns of rural travel behaviour.

Going back beyond 2021, ESCC highlighted that a strategic highways modelling exercise was required. To date, we are unaware of the results. In the initial assessments, it was clearly highlighted that the centre of Uckfield was already at capacity. Since then, multiple other large developments have been carte blanche approved without the impact assessments on the surrounding areas. There is a strong element of each application being assessed in their own right, which is not highly unusual. However, when developments of mass scale are introduced, the road networks must be carefully assessed. Uckfield centre gets gridlocked regularly despite the traffic light monitoring systems in place. In essence – there is no amount of rejigging that can be done compared to the overwhelming increase in traffic – the math does not add up. Driving along Framfield Road in Uckfield and the tributary roads is chaotic. There simply is not the capacity to cater for the influx already introduced by poor planning decisions – let alone the multiple large-scale developments approved and still to be built out. WHY is this not being addressed?

Failure of Proper Process and Local Engagement

Despite the site being squarely within our parish, the applicant has made no effort whatsoever to engage with Framfield Parish Council. This is a clear failure of the duty to consult and demonstrates a complete disregard for community involvement, as required under the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and the Localism Act 2011.

This lack of consultation, along with the failure to assess or acknowledge the impact on Framfield Parish should in itself be sufficient grounds for this appeal to be dismissed. How has it been allowed that this can happen?

Conclusion

Framfield Parish Council urges the Planning Inspectorate to dismiss this appeal in full.

This proposal is wholly unsuited to the site, dangerous to highway users, environmentally damaging, and deeply disrespectful to the local community and its democratic processes. It is a speculative, poorly considered, and misleading application that has been rightly rejected before, and should be again.

The residents of Framfield Parish should not bear the consequences of a developer-led scheme that disregards our infrastructure, our environment, and our identity.