



c/o Old Chapel Cottage, Lower Froyle, Alton, Hampshire GU34 4LS

Our ref. FPC/26/005

Date: 3rd September 2026

Dear Sir/Madam,

Planning Application EHDC-26-0619-OUT re Land South of the Car Park, Ryebidge Lane, Upper Froyle, Alton, Hampshire. Outline application for up to 25 dwellings with associated landscaping and car parking with access from Ryebidge Lane (Access only to be considered).

Froyle Parish Council (FPC) has reviewed the above application and would wish to formally **OBJECT**.

While the Parish Council recognises East Hampshire District Council's (EHDC) current 5-year housing land supply (5YHLS) position and the material weight associated with housing delivery, it considers this site to be fundamentally unsuited for a residential development of this scale for the following reasons. The proposal:

- a) represents an inappropriate development in the open countryside;
- b) harms the setting of the Upper Froyle Conservation Area and nearby Grade II* and Grade II listed buildings;
- c) directly conflicts with EHDC's own evidence base - the *Upper Froyle Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (2025 Draft)*; and
- d) presents unresolved issues regarding highways safety, pedestrian connectivity, ecological impact, drainage infrastructure, and sustainability of the development.

FPC considers that the harm to landscape, heritage, local ecology, and village infrastructure significantly and demonstrably outweighs the housing benefits offered by up to 25 units in a rural setting.

FPC appreciates the proactive engagement of the applicants with the Parish Council prior to their submission of this application, informing us of their proposals as they developed.

Principle of Development & "Tilted Balance"

1. Outside Settlement Policy Boundary:

The application site lies outside the defined Settlement Policy Boundary for Upper Froyle. It is located within the open countryside where Policy CP19 (Development in the Countryside) of the East Hampshire Joint Core Strategy and Policy S5 (Principle of development outside settlements) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) apply. Development in such locations is strictly controlled to protect the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside.

2. Justification Not Provided Under Latest NPPF Framework:

The applicant's representations quote in various places from the superseded December 2024 NPPF and relies on the "tilted balance" under paragraph 11d. For sites outside the settlement boundary, the applicable test is now Policy S5 of the latest NPPF issued in August 2026, which is materially different from the old 'tilted balance' in a number of respects. In particular, under the August 2026 framework, a deficit in housing land supply no longer automatically triggers a presumption in favour of development.

The relevant clause of Policy S5 is (1)(j) which, in addition to requiring evidencing unmet need, also requires the development to *"be physically well-related to an existing*

settlement [...] and be of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure”.

The applicant has not provided sufficient evidence to suggest that the proposed development can be accommodated within existing infrastructure. In addition to the specific issues noted by FPC below, there is also pressure on the local capacity of GPs, drainage, schools etc. The applicant has provided no evidence on any of these issues to support their case.

Even where S5(1)(j) is engaged, the balancing issue is expressed in different terms to the previous NPPF. Policy S5(1) only approves qualifying development *“unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects”*. The application presents significant adverse effects, as shown in more detail below.

Landscape and Visual Impact

1. Conflict with EHDC Landscape Capacity Study (Parcel 4b.1):

EHDC’s own evidence base - the *EHDC Landscape Capacity Study* - places this site within Landscape Parcel 4b.1, which is assessed as having medium/low capacity for development. Constraints identified in EHDC's study include:

- a. Its strong rural character and integral role within the Wey Valley landscape and proximity to the South Downs National Park;
- b. Its direct contribution to the rural setting of Upper and Lower Froyle and their respective Conservation Areas;
- c. Important historic character and views from public rights of way (PROW) including the long-distance St Swithun’s Way.

The Landscape Capacity Study explicitly concludes that while *“a very small amount of development”* might potentially be accommodated within or around existing settlements if sensitively integrated, *“The area should otherwise remain undeveloped”*. FPC does not consider that a proposal for up to 25 dwellings can reasonably be reconciled with *“a very small amount of development”*.

2. Flawed LVIA Seasonality (High Summer vs. Winter Worst-Case):

The Landscape and Visual Impact Assessment (LVIA) submitted by the applicant was undertaken in high summer when trees and hedgerows were in full leaf. A truly representative LVIA assessment requires a reasonable worst-case scenario conducted during mid-winter when deciduous screening is bare. FPC recommends that EHDC requests that a winter LVIA is provided before any determination is made.

3. Mitigation vs. Urbanising Effect:

The applicant relies heavily on supplementary planting and setbacks for landscape screening which FPC considers cannot recreate the current open agricultural field. Introducing 25 dwellings, internal access roads, hard standing, street lighting, parked vehicles, and domestic paraphernalia permanently transforms the open countryside into a residential estate, conflicting directly with Policy CP20 (Landscape).

FPC would note that if the principle of this development is approved, any subsequent applications covering layout, scale, landscaping and appearance will require significant design development and close engagement with all stakeholders, including ourselves. The planners should also consider using a Design Panel to review and challenge the proposals, in order to help them secure the most appropriate layout.

Heritage Assets, Historic Setting & Conflict with CAAMP

1. Disruption of Linear Settlement Pattern & Urban Grain:

EHDC’s draft *Upper Froyle Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan* (CAAMP) establishes that the primary special interest of the village relies on the *“retention of historic settlement pattern and configuration”* defined by a *“loose, linear plan form”* with

"generous gaps between buildings" along Ryebidge Lane (Section 3.1).

- CAAMP Recommendation 3 explicitly states: *"Any future development should have due regard for the established settlement pattern, which is linear and dispersed with generous gaps between buildings."*
- The proposal for a suburban cul-de-sac development is not in accordance with Recommendation 3 and disrupts the established spatial structure of the settlement.

2. Cumulative Harm from Back-land / Cul-de-Sac Enclaves:

The CAAMP explicitly warns against further non-linear development, noting that: *"The characteristic plan form has been somewhat eroded in recent years by the construction of the housing estate around the former Treloar School, which has a far tighter grain than the historic settlement and disrupts the linear arrangement... Aside from the housing estate on the site of Treloar School, modern infill/back-land development has been minimal."* (CAAMP Section 3.1).

Inserting a second suburban cul-de-sac development into an open agricultural field on Ryebidge Lane compounds this cumulative erosion of the village's historic spatial integrity.

3. Erosion of Rural Approach & "Sense of Arrival" (CAAMP Section 3.1):

Section 3.1 of the CAAMP highlights that *"The absence of modern development [...] to the north-eastern/south-western ends of Ryebidge Lane preserves the visual relationship between the Conservation area and its landscape setting and creates a strong sense of arrival/departure at the edges of the settlement."*

Developing this site removes this relationship between the Conservation Area and its landscape setting on Ryebidge Lane, which forms the primary historic visual gateway into Upper Froyle, by converting an open historic approach into a suburban residential frontage. Constructing 25 dwellings on this prominent rising slope fails to respect the topography and completely 'drowns out' the rural, open character that defines the approach to the Conservation Area. It turns a scenic countryside transition into an urbanised corridor.

4. Conflict with Recognised "Modest Public Realm":

The CAAMP specifically identifies Upper Froyle's *"modest public realm"* as a defining element of its special interest (Sections 2.6 & 3.1) noting that the *"notable lack of street-lighting, pavements, street furniture and road marking paint contributes to the informal, rural character of the settlement"*.

The development required for 25 dwellings - including vehicular bell mouth access, street lighting, domestic light spill, and formal urban pavements - undermines this designated public realm character.

5. Upper Froyle Conservation Area & Grade II* Listed Assets:

The site directly adjoins the Upper Froyle Conservation Area and forms part of the rural setting for the Grade II* listed Manor House, as well as the Grade II listed Stables & Malthouse.

Under National planning policy and Section 66/72 of the Planning (Listed Buildings and Conservation Areas) Act 1990, great weight must be given to asset conservation; and **CAAMP Recommendation 7** specifically mandates that *"Development within the setting of the Conservation area which harms its character should be resisted."*

6. Internal Inconsistencies in Applicant's HIA:

The applicant's Heritage Impact Assessment (HIA) identifies 'less than substantial harm' to the significance of the Manor House and Conservation Area setting yet subsequently concludes that there would be *"no harm"* and that settings would be preserved.

FPC does not understand the criteria of ‘substantial harm’ that has been referred to, and considers that ‘*harm to setting*’ **is** ‘*harm to significance*’ under any circumstances.

Highways, Speed Boundaries, and Access Safety

1. Proximity to 60mph Speed Boundary on Ryebidge Lane:

Vehicular access is proposed directly onto Ryebidge Lane. The access point to the proposed development lies at the boundary of the current 30mph limit and is adjacent to the start of the 60mph national speed limit zone which extends down Ryebidge Lane to its junction with the A31 at the Hen & Chicken public house. Vehicles frequently travel at high speeds up and down this road, creating visibility and collision risks for emerging traffic from the housing development opposite. Such risks will be exacerbated by the location of this proposed development and increased traffic volumes.

It must also be recognised that the road is heavily used by :

- Pedestrians, walking on the road to and from the nearby Hen and Chicken public house, as a result of the permissive footpath in the adjacent field (provided by this developer in a previous application, see below) is now overgrown and unusable;
- Commercial, heavy goods and large agricultural vehicles accessing both the small business units at West End Farm and Home Farm via Colthouse Lane; and
- Up to 300 guests attending events at the nearby Froyle Park Wedding Venue who frequently travel from outside the area and therefore have little/no understanding/appreciation of local road and traffic conditions. Such events are often held on a daily basis through the summer months,

The Transport Statement references the applicant’s Traffic Survey which indicates that the average speed of vehicles at the two locations surveyed (within the 30mph zone, and in the 60mph zone) reflects an average speed at both locations of around 30mph (para 4.7). This masks significant variations in vehicle speed that increase the risks for both vehicles turning into or out of the access to the new development, or pedestrians walking on the road (see section below).

FPC would dispute these findings based on the bi-directional vehicle speed data which it has collected for a number of years by means of a SID (Speed Indicator Device) located just within the 30mph limit boundary on Ryebidge Lane. This shows between 3% and 6% of vehicles on Ryebidge Lane pass the proposed access travelling in excess of 40 mph, and with maximum speeds recorded up to 70mph (this data can be made available to the Case Officer on request).

FPC therefore considers that the visibility splays proposed in para 4.10 of the Transport Statement are likely to be insufficient.

2. Parish Requirement for Speed Limit Extension:

Given the body of evidence that the Parish Council has collected over a number of years regarding the speed of traffic on Ryebidge Lane in this area, FPC would insist that the 30mph speed limit zone be formally extended to the bottom of Ryebidge Lane to its junction with the A31 (funded via a Section 278 agreement) as a prerequisite, alongside appropriate traffic calming measures, if development is to be considered. The mention of this proposal in the Transport Statement is welcome.

It is also relevant to the traffic impact that there have been a number of accidents including fatalities on the A31 over the last 3 years at or close to the junction of Ryebidge Lane and the Hen & Chicken public house. Hampshire Highways have conducted safety reviews following these accidents and proposed measures to mitigate risk to users of the junction which are scheduled to be installed in autumn 2026. The level of usage of this junction will inevitably increase if this development proceeds increasing the risk of further accidents at this location.

Sustainable Movement, Pedestrian Access & Services

1. Complete Reliance on Private Vehicles:

Upper Froyle lacks daily essential services, including a primary school, GP surgery, post office, or substantial retail provisions within safe or reasonable walking distances, aside from a small shop at the petrol station at the bottom of the hill. This is accessed via a 60mph road with no footpath.

The nearest public transport is the Stagecoach 65 service from Alton to Guildford which stops on the A31. Aside from this hourly service, future occupiers of these 25 homes would be entirely reliant on private motor vehicles for day-to-day needs, conflicting directly with national policies promoting sustainable development locations supporting climate change mitigation. This is confirmed by the applicant's Transport Statement which predicts 18 vehicle movements per hour at peak times, but only one cycle movement, highlighting the reliance on private motor vehicles.

If this proposal is minded to be approved, FPC would request that the developer is required to pay for improvements to the bus shelter facilities on both sides of the A31, including improved access arrangements, possibly including a Section 278 commuted sum to cover long-term maintenance to support the long-term viability of the shelters and provision of a footbridge over the busy dual carriageway to allow bus passengers, including school children, to safely access the bus shelter on the Alton bound carriageway.

2. Issues with Transport Statement with respect to Walking and Cycling

The Transport Statement provided by the applicant is deficient in a number of ways that undermines its use in this context. For example:

- The use of "Strava" data to demonstrate walking and cycling suitability is inappropriate (para 2.12). For example, a number of the walking routes shown relate to an enclosed dog exercising area at West End Farm, south of the site. Cycling routes are shown across fields that have no public footpaths, which seems unlikely and would in any case require agreement from the landowner to become a permanent route;
- The claim that the A31 is used by "confident cyclists" to access Alton (para 2.13) is false. The only cyclists typically present on the A31, and why it appears on Strava, are for regular cycle racing time trials by the Farnborough and Camberley Cycling Club (see <https://www.fccc.org.uk/time-trials/>). This does not demonstrate reasonable use of the A31 as a cycling route for residents of this proposed new development;
- The Transport Statement chooses to discount the poor DfT scoring of walking and cycling ability and infrastructure, preferring to rely on flawed Strava data (paras 3.4 and 3.6).

3. Failure of Proposed "Permissive Footpath":

The applicant proposes a "permissive footpath" through the site to the bottom of the hill. FPC strongly opposes reliance on permissive paths as these offer no statutory long-term protection, maintenance guarantees, or public rights of access and, in this case, would specifically note that:

- a previously approved permissive footpath by the same developer on the opposite side of Ryebriar Lane was never properly surfaced and as a result became neglected over time and is now completely overgrown making it impassable and unusable by the public;
- the applicant's proposed permissive path exits onto the highway 65 metres from the Hen and Chicken public house, leaving pedestrians to walk on the roadway near a busy junction to reach the public house, petrol station and bus stops.

4. Required Pedestrian Infrastructure:

To provide safe, sustainable, and permanent pedestrian connectivity to local bus stops, the Hen & Chicken Public House, and local facilities, the applicant must provide either:

- A dedicated, legally adopted Public Right of Way (PROW) across the applicant's land, exiting onto the highway as close as possible to the Hen and Chicken Public House; OR

- A formally adopted, hard-compacted surfaced (not tarmac, to prevent excessive urbanisation), pedestrian footpath alongside Ryebidge Lane, to be fully funded by the developer again via a Section 278 agreement.

Biodiversity, Ecology & Statutory Net Gain

1. Impact on Protected Species:

The site serves as an established foraging and commuting buffer for protected species, including bats, dormice, and breeding birds linking to the Wey Valley network and South Downs National Park whose boundary is c.1km away. The conversion of open green fields into residential hardstanding and introduction of artificial lighting will disrupt these critical ecological zones.

FPC requests that full, multi-season ecological surveys be verified by EHDC's Ecology Officer prior to determination, as these do not appear to have been done to date.

Drainage, Foul Sewerage & Surface Water Runoff

1. South East Water Infrastructure Constraints:

South East Water has highlighted the lack of water supply infrastructure in the area in their recent response to Basingstoke & Deane's Local Plan consultation (see <https://consult.basingstoke.gov.uk/submission/bsgd-c14-dlp25-3122>).

This highlights that until major infrastructure works are completed (scheduled for the early 2030's) *"any growth in demand in the short term will pose a risk to the security of supply to customers and to the environment"*. It is relevant that households in Upper and Lower Froyle already suffer from frequent low water pressure events and outages.

2. Foul Drainage Infrastructure Discrepancies and Constraints:

The local wastewater and foul drainage network serving Upper Froyle operates at or near full capacity, with frequent reports of sewage surcharge from the Gid Lane pumping station during heavy rain events. The addition of 25 residential dwellings may exceed the existing network capacity requiring major off-site infrastructure upgrades.

In addition, the applicant's Drainage Strategy claims there is a foul sewer 120m north in Ryebidge Lane, whereas EHDC's drainage response says there is no foul sewer in Ryebidge Lane. If EHDC is correct, this is another indication that there is insufficient infrastructure to support this development.

Loss of Best and Most Valuable (BMV) Agricultural Land

1. Impact on Agricultural Land:

The application site comprises productive agricultural land, on the boundary of Grade 3a and 3b. National planning policy emphasizes the protection of high-quality agricultural land (Best and Most Versatile land - Grades 1, 2, and 3a) to support domestic food production and sustainable land use. Removing active greenfield agricultural land from production for speculative housing, where alternative non-agricultural or brownfield options exist, is unviable and unsustainable.

Planning Balance & Recent Appeal Precedents

FPC acknowledges EHDC's current 5-year housing land supply shortfall (~2.9 years). However, recent planning appeal decisions demonstrate that housing shortfalls do not automatically override demonstrable landscape, ecological, infrastructure, and heritage harm:

- **Burghclere (APP/H1705/W/24/3350581 - April 2025):** Appeal for 25 dwellings dismissed despite a 2.46–2.76 year housing supply shortfall. The Inspector ruled that landscape mitigation could not overcome the harm caused by losing an open, rural site contributing to village setting.
- **Bentworth (APP/M1710/W/24/3347921 - EHDC area):** Appeal for residential development dismissed despite EHDC's 3.59-year housing supply. The Inspector cited the urbanising effect of houses, hardstanding, and domestic paraphernalia on an open rural site.

- **Bentley (APP/M1710/W/23/3332327 - EHDC area):** Appeal for 33 dwellings dismissed due to landscape and settlement harm outweighing significant housing benefits.

Furthermore, while the current housing supply figure represents a temporary administrative snapshot, particularly amidst ongoing local government reorganisation and unitary transition, the loss of this historic setting, landscape and ecology, would be permanent and irreversible.

In mitigation, FPC is strongly supportive of the 40% proportion of affordable housing proposed for the site. Should EHDC be minded to approve this application, FPC would suggest that the proportion of affordable housing is established as a planning condition thus ensuring that this can be maintained if other aspects of the proposed development change through the planning process.

Developer Contributions (CIL)

Should EHDC resolve to grant outline planning permission contrary to the strong objections of the Parish Council, FPC formally gives notice that it will seek its full statutory entitlement to Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) neighbourhood portion monies generated by the development, to fund necessary local infrastructure and mitigations within Upper and Lower Froyle.

Conclusion & Actions Requested

The proposed outline development of up to 25 dwellings represents an unmitigated suburban expansion into an open, rural parcel of low landscape capacity, causing direct harm to the Upper Froyle Conservation Area, Grade II* heritage assets, local highway safety, ecological networks, and rural infrastructure.

Prior to determination, FPC specifically requests that clear formal assessments be obtained from EHDC's statutory officers viz:

1. **Conservation Officer:** Evaluation against the draft *Upper Froyle Conservation Area Appraisal and Management Plan (2025)*, specifically testing compliance with Recommendation 3 (linear settlement pattern), Recommendation 7 (resisting harm to setting), and the protection of the Ryebidge Lane "sense of arrival", as well as assessment of the specific impact on the setting of listed buildings within the Conservation Area;
2. **Landscape Officer:** Whether up to 25 dwellings can be reconciled with the "*very small amount of development*" envisaged in Landscape Parcel 4b.1, and requirement for a winter LVIA;
3. **Ecology Officer:** Verification of statutory 10% Biodiversity Net Gain calculations and hedgerow removal impacts;
4. **Highways Officer:** Verification of safety of access and pedestrian routes in the 60mph zone of Ryebidge Lane.

FPC respectfully requests that EHDC **REFUSE** outline planning permission and the Case Officer takes the above comments into consideration when determining this application.

Yours faithfully,



Andrew Potter

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