UCKFIELD TOWN COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the Plans Committee held in the Council Chamber, Civic Centre, Uckfield on Monday 28 September 2026 at 7.00pm

Cllr. J. Love (Chair)	Cllr. C. Macve	Cllr. K. Bedwell
Cllr. K. Butler	Cllr. T. Murray	Cllr. D. Bennett

IN ATTENDANCE:
3 members of the public
District Cllr. B. Reed
Linda Lewis – Administrative Officer
Holly Goring – Chief Officer (Town Clerk)
Minutes taken by Linda Lewis

1.0 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Members and officers were reminded to make any declarations of personal and/or prejudicial interest that they may have in relation to any item on the agenda, but none were forthcoming.

2.0 STATEMENTS FROM MEMBERS OF THE PUBLIC ON MATTERS ON THE AGENDA AT THE CHAIRMAN'S DISCRETION

P50.09.26 It was **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to allow members of the public to speak.

Resident 1 said that, having reviewed the planning documents when they were first submitted and subsequently the updates issued earlier in the year, he was concerned that climate change, traffic pollution, nature, water supply and sewage issues would effectively have to be disregarded if the proposed development proceeded.
He considered that the proposed approach to incorporating nature through trees, ponds and separated areas within the development was unlikely to be effective. He referred to comments made by various official bodies in relation to the application and said that these raised significant concerns about the application.

The resident said that members of his church in Uckfield, including long-standing residents and people who had moved to the area, had struggled to identify positive aspects of the proposal other than the potential provision of affordable housing and suitable housing for older people, both of which were needed. He expressed concern that the number of affordable homes could subsequently reduce prior to delivery onsite, as this had been witnessed with other developments in Uckfield.

He criticised the proposed pedestrian crossings over the A22 and A26. He said that the arrangements appeared unsafe and impractical. He also referred to the developers' own traffic figures, which indicated that vehicle numbers would increase beyond the capacity of the existing Uckfield Bypass.
The resident said that the proposals for pedestrians, cyclists and buses were also problematic. He referred to their prediction that around 3% of journeys might be made by these modes and said that this proportion was expected to decrease over time. He questioned whether this reflected the attractiveness and safety of the proposed routes.
In conclusion, this resident said that he did not consider the proposal to be an extension of Uckfield but rather the creation of a new village with no facilities. He said that he and others he had spoken to could not identify a convincing justification for the proposal beyond the general pressure from the UK Government to increase housing supply.

Resident 2 and member of the Wealden Line Campaign
This resident spoke on behalf of the Wealden Line Campaign. He said that his principal concern was the railway trackbed and the need for it to be fully safeguarded fence to fence.

This resident said that claims that the railway would be adequately protected through the provision of the Greenway were misleading. He argued that if the Greenway went ahead, this would threaten the reopening of the railway line.

He questioned how a future train service between Uckfield and Lewes could operate alongside a Greenway on the trackbed, particularly where cyclists and pedestrians would be present, and said that this would create significant practical difficulties.

The resident said that if the Greenway were constructed on the railway trackbed, the opportunity to reopen the Uckfield Line to Lewes and potentially Tunbridge Wells could effectively be lost. He also referred to what he considered to be a weak economic case for electrification of the Uckfield line and said that re-signalling and electrification appeared increasingly distant.

He emphasised that he was not opposed to the principle of a Greenway and said that he regularly cycled himself. However, he argued that a Greenway did not have to occupy the railway trackbed and could instead be constructed alongside it at a safe distance.
The resident also said that, before the proposed bridge at Lewes proceeded, and before the contribution of £558,000 from Wealden District Council was committed to construction, the Greenway proponents should produce a proper business case. He said that this should include agreements with all affected landowners and provide clarity on the total cost of the scheme.

Cllr. Bernadette Reed (ward member for Ridgewood & Little Horsted)
She explained that District Councillor French, had sent her apologies.
Cllr. Reed questioned why three Uckfield district councillors supported the proposed site, saying that this did not appear to represent the position taken by the Town Council in its previous objection.

She said that she personally objected to this application on the grounds that it was neither vision-led nor landscape-led and was contrary to the National Planning Policy Framework. She said that the spatial strategy did not adequately reflect the rural identity of the Low Weald, landscape setting and environmental constraints of Little Horsted and Isfield. She emphasised that Little Horsted was a separate rural parish, with a historic church (Domesday), approximately 100 houses and around 220 residents, as well as Horsted Place (with rural park and garden). She described it as an agricultural parish and considered an increase of approximately 1,500 houses to be unwarranted.

Cllr. Reed said that the landscape around Little Horsted was particularly important and that repeated representations from the parishes did not appear to have influenced the proposed pattern of growth. She considered that the evidence was being used retrospectively to justify a development pattern rather than the development being shaped by the landscape. She described community engagement as poor and largely procedural rather than meaningful. She said that residents had repeatedly been presented with near-identical Masterplans and technical documents, resulting in consultation fatigue, while the substantive material had not changed. She questioned whether the plan-making process demonstrated the necessary iterative adaptation.

Cllr. Reed also raised concerns about the environmental evidence and its application under the National Planning Policy Framework. She referred to the Local Nature Recovery Strategy, which she said should have been reflected in the proposals, and said that she could see little resemblance between the strategy and the development.

She highlighted concerns regarding ancient woodland and reminded members that it had the most protection in the UK. She also raised public safety and flooding concerns on the proposed site of the SANG. She said that some of these areas were not accessible throughout the year.

Cllr. Reed referred to concerns raised by Cllr. French regarding the fly-swarms from the Sewage Treatment Works and said that the removal of tall vegetation and habitats could undermine the effectiveness of the proposed 600-metre zone.

She said that the cumulative impact of the proposals on Little Horsted and Isfield had not been adequately considered. She also raised concerns about the impact on the wider road network and referred to existing indications that other developments would affect locations including Earwig Corner, Cuckfield Tunnel and the A27. She questioned the potential effect of a development of approximately 1,500 homes.

In summary, Cllr. Reed said that she did not consider the process to have been properly plan-led, landscape-led or environmentally compliant and raised concerns about public safety. She said that the proposals failed to reflect the character of the rural parishes and the Local Nature Recovery Strategy. She also questioned whether the proposals were compliant with Habitats Regulations and raised concerns about the proximity of new facilities to the fly swarms from the sewage treatment works.

Finally, Cllr. Reed referred to requirements concerning surface water and climate-change allowances. She said that the Masterplan appeared to show only Flood Zones 2 and 3 and asked where the climate-change flood-risk mapping was. She noted that planning appeals elsewhere were seeking the removal of housing from flood-risk areas and said that, without the relevant climate-change mapping, it was difficult to determine whether the same issue applied to the proposals under consideration.

Resident 3, a long-term Uckfield resident, questioned whether the proposed developments would include a new secondary school, noting that Uckfield College was already full. She raised concerns about the safety and practicality of children travelling to school, predicting that many would be driven, increasing traffic and parking pressures.

She also questioned where additional parking, healthcare facilities and a GP surgery would be provided. She was concerned that older residents in sheltered accommodation could become isolated from the town centre and essential services.

Finally, she asked for evidence of the actual need for affordable housing and the number of affordable homes being built and sold. She expressed concern that developers might later claim that there was insufficient funding for community facilities and infrastructure, particularly where developments included large houses.

P51.09.26 It was **RESOLVED** to reinstate Standing Orders.

3.0 APOLOGIES

None.

4.0 MINUTES

4.1 Minutes of the meeting held on 14 September 2026

P52.09.26 It was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the Plans Committee of 14 September 2026, be taken as read, confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5.0 PLANNING APPLICATION

WD/2025/0922/MEA LAND WEST OF UCKFIELD - OWLSBURY FARM, HORSTED GREEN, LITTLE HORSTED, TN22 5TJ

Demolition of poultry farm and associated dwelling; erection of up to 1550 new dwellings (including 35% affordable housing and 50 residential care/late living units (C2)); mixed-use centre with retail, commercial and community uses; 2FE primary school including early years provision; multi-purpose sports hub; community allotments; new and enhanced pedestrian/cycle links; open space including new SANG; Sustainable Urban Drainage features; children's play areas; landscaping; and creation of two points of access onto A22.

The Chair invited members to speak on the application, inviting Cllr. Macve to speak first. Cllr. Macve raised concerns in relation to access, the railway line and proposals for methods of sustainable transport (i.e. walking and cycling).

Highways and access

- The secondary access onto the A26 would require substantial tree removal to accommodate the approach and exit slip roads. East Sussex Highways had expressed concern about the extent of the tree removal required, and Cllr. Macve said that the works would significantly alter the landscape and appearance of the area, which was currently heavily wooded.

Railway line

- The re-opening of the railway line was detailed within the Transport for the South East's Strategic Investment Plan. Network Rail were also strongly opposed to this application, due to its potential impact on the track bed and eventual reinstatement of the line.
- The left-in, left-out junction onto the bypass for the employment space on the Seghers Place site, was previously noted as impacting the potential reinstatement of the railway line. He explained that a bridge would be required where the road crossed the railway, and that these developments could hinder meeting the necessary design requirements. The secondary entrance needed to be repositioned as a result. If the bridge was built, a much steeper incline would be necessary.

Sustainable modes of transport

- Referring to the Transport Plan and Transport Assessment, the two documents were inconsistent – quoting different journey times to key facilities, on foot. For example, one document stated that it would take 31 minutes to walk from the site to Tesco, while the transport assessment stated that the journey would take 20 minutes. Cllr. Macve had checked the journey time on foot from the site to Meads Surgery and being a reasonably fast walker, it took him 7 minutes one way, and 8 minutes return. Not the quoted 5 minutes. Cllr. Macve considered this unrealistic and said that the discrepancy cast doubt on the other figures and information contained within the transport documents.
- In an earlier document, it stated there was a direct connection to Haywards Heath and Wivelsfield! These inaccuracies cast doubt and undermined confidence in the transport documentation presented by the applicant. The proposal for the introduction of three traffic light control crossing points did not take account that the A22 or A26 were already recorded as being at capacity. This was without the full build out of new developments (750 - Seghers Place) and (340 - Horsted Pond). East Sussex Highways/ESCC had previously noted that the A22 was the busiest section of highway in East Sussex and it was pleasing to see that ES Highways had acknowledged that this application should not be considered in isolation. These new crossings would also require lighting, which would be counterintuitive to the dark skies policy. The applicant's description that the site was surrounded by urbanisation, with reference being made to the industrial estate and St Philips Church, was confusing. The site was currently agricultural. The A22 Uckfield Bypass had historically been the boundary of development.
- Proposals for the bus service were not definitive at this stage, and members were sceptical this would be maintained for 10 years, due to it not being commercially viable. The location of bus stops for existing bus services such as the 29 (Tunbridge Wells to Lewes), were unsafe – either crossing the bypass to Ridgewood Place or Little Horsted Church on the A26.
- East Sussex Highways recorded their concerns with the pedestrian crossing nearest the roundabout due to the recent road widening improvements.
- The documentation listed 19 routes of Public Rights of Way (PROW), but only three crossed this site. Some of the others were located at least two miles away.
- To conclude Cllr. Macve addressed access to the town's shops, schools, hospital and other facilities. He said that residents, particularly children travelling to the College or those travelling to hospital, were unlikely to walk from the proposed development and would instead rely on cars or other motorised transport. This would increase traffic flows and add to congestion in the town.

Cllr. Bennett wished to echo the comments made in relation to the proposed sustainable travel options for residents of the new development. The topography of Uckfield was not kind to cyclists, and the journey times being proposed on foot, were inaccurate.

Cllr. Bennett was particularly concerned, with:
Sustainable modes of transport

- The safety of pedestrians seeking to cross the A22 Uckfield Bypass;
- The bus service would be at risk of being underutilised due to the dependence on cars;
- Indicative vehicle movements for 1550 homes, with an average of three vehicles per property, would have an extensive impact for filtering out onto the A22 and A26;

Railway line

- The positioning of the properties adjacent to the railway fence line, would be of concern with the reinstatement of the railway line. For a modern standard gauged railway, fence to fence was approximately 15metres or 50feet. This would be further expanded where there were embankments or drainage issues (of which this site and adjacent land recorded evidence of both). A gap of at least 2-3metres would be needed from the railway boundary fence, for access for construction and maintenance, but 30metres was often recommended to mitigate noise, and light pollution for houses from passing trains. There was also technically the ability to see up to eight trains per hour should the line be reinstated.
- The discussions on both this development and the Greenway had concerned him.
- To note, before the railway line closed in Uckfield, over 70% of ticket sales were for travel south to the Coast (Brighton and Eastbourne).

Cllr. Love, as Chair, reiterated that this was not a disused railway line, but a protected trackbed. The objections from Mr Hart and Mr Grear should be noted by the Planning Officers. The response by Network Rail (Mr Hatton) to a recent planning application for Bird in Eye North, and more specifically in relation to the erection of specific barriers and restriction of access underneath the railway lines, would be just as appropriate for this application. Cllr. Bedwell, noted that at present, the protected trackbed was a green corridor full of biodiversity, and both the development of houses and reinstatement of the railway line could be seen to be counterproductive to conservation. Whereas a Greenway would enable local residents to enjoy a safe space for walking and cycling as well as improve health and wellbeing. Cllr. Bedwell reminded members that there was a large number of residents within Uckfield who were keen to see the Greenway delivered to have a safe recreational space for walking and cycling.

In response to the comments received at this stage, the Chair, Cllr. Love, highlighted her own observations from the documentation and members' feedback:

Railway line

- The reinstatement of the railway line, would affect the proposed route of access to the SANG. The applicants were therefore asked to consider a Plan B for access.

Highways, access and parking

- A number of objections had been received which demonstrated concerns about the highway proposals. The A26, A22, A267, A272 and A27 all needed full assessments in addition to the main access corridors into Uckfield to consider the impact of vehicle movements from 1550 homes.
- Had the impact of the SANG on Buckham Hill been considered. At present West Park Local Nature Reserve and Lake Wood, saw walkers parking on the roadside as close as possible to these sites. This hadn't been factored into the documentation. Cllr. Bennett echoed this point, commenting on the parking impacts along the cuckoo trail.
- The A22 Uckfield Bypass was built to reduce heavy traffic through the town centre. Cllr. Love could not see anything within the documentation which considered the impacts of the proposed pedestrian crossing on traffic flows on the Bypass. An impact assessment was needed. There were currently no toucan crossings on the A22 from Hailsham as far as she was aware.

- Consideration was needed to the impact on existing High Street junctions such as High Street/Bell Farm Road by Boots and the Tesco roundabout, which were already backed up at peak times. Members noted the additional movements through town to primary and secondary education from the site, as well as additional parking pressures, particularly at Uckfield College.
- Cllr. Bennett referred to the Proof of Evidence supplied by an Officer of ESCC relating to Planning Application Ref: WD/2022/1637/MEAPINS Ref No: APP/C1435/W/23/3321978" and the Officers detailed refusal 7 of that application. Cllr. Bennett and members felt that this was relevant to this application.
- The constraints from a railway bridge was acknowledged alongside a greater volume of vehicular movements onto the A22 Bypass from the Seghers Place employment space.

Sustainable modes of transport

- There was also a risk to life, as seen daily within Uckfield, pedestrians often didn't use the crossings available and crossed the road at the easiest points. This related to NPPF TR6 – concerns of community impacts and highway safety. This was echoed by Cllr. Bennett, who referenced the footbridge installed on Detling Hill following the death of a young girl.

Councillor Bedwell noted the height of the river, coming up to her waist near to the existing access point to Horsted Green, as well being advised previously that transport plans for Uckfield were very much linked to the Local Plan, so surely these proposals needed to be considered after the adoption of the Local Plan.

The ES Highways consultee report to WD/2022/2785/MAO Land North of Eastbourne Road, Uckfield, stated that the town centre junctions were already at capacity.

There was also no consideration of impacts on traffic flows from north and south of the site, such as the Invinity EV Charging site, and proposal for a David Lloyds Club and retail area. The cumulative effect would be negative.

Cllr. Butler also reiterated that the directional markings and signage on the current roundabouts would need updating.

Cllr. Butler wished to reflect on the infrastructure within Uckfield as the main service centre for this development, despite being on the opposite side of the Bypass:

Settlement gap

- It would urbanise a very rural part of Sussex/Wealden and was outside of the settlement boundary (of the current adopted Local Plan);
- Owlsbury Farm was located within the parish of Little Horsted, and this application would erode the physical and visual separation between the urban and rural, and prevent the coalescence between Uckfield and its surrounding villages.
- It would create a substantial new neighbourhood rather than a modest extension to Uckfield;

Housing mix

- Needed a much more balanced mix of housing – 2 bed houses, 2 bed bungalows, 1 and 2 bed accessible apartments and age restricted retirement living. Wealden DC's own Housing Business Plan 2025-2055 stated there was significant demand for smaller accommodation;

Healthcare facilities and mobility

- No consideration had been given to healthcare facilities (GP or Dental). Consideration therefore needed to be given to existing facilities.
- Mobility Hub – consideration was needed to the addition of facilities for improved accessibility to a Greenway, for example the inclusion of mobility scooters;

Education

- ESCC closed Holy Cross Primary School at the end of 2023, due to decreased pupil intake. Was there a need for further primary provision?
- Uckfield College was forecast to have 1,680 pupils within a capacity of 1,750. The Town Mayor, Cllr. Bedwell, corrected Cllr. Butler having attended a Mayoral engagement the previous week, where she had been advised the College was currently operating with 1,750 pupils, so was already at capacity.

- Cllr. Butler concluded that the application in its current form, worked against current planning policies:
  (i) NPPF S1 – Sustainable Development Objectives, and HO1 and HO7.
  (ii) NPPF HO13 – Large scale development and WCS6 Settlement Hierarchy
  (iii) Wealden WCS6, NPPF DP2 and DP3 Design and Character Policies
  (iv) NPPF DP2 Local Landscape Characteristics, and WCS6 Settlement Strategy
  (v) Wealden HO4, NPPF HO1(2) and HO7 – Housing Mix
  (vi) NPPF HO1 (2)b, and Wealden Local Housing Needs Assessment
  (vii) Wealden WCS7 and NPPF HC1 – GP/Medical provision
  (viii) WCS7 and NPPF HC1 and HC4 – existing GP services under pressure
  (ix) WCS7 and NPPF HC2 & HC4 – primary school provision
  (x) WCS7 and NPPF HC3 and HC4 – secondary school capacity
  (xi) NPPF TR1, TR3 and TR6 – Mobility Hub

Cllr. Murray wished to support Cllr. Butler's points around education.

Education

Cllr. Murray felt the application did not fully reflect the current picture of falling rolls for primary education within the Uckfield area.
The application did also not consider the existing commitment for a two-form entry primary school onsite at Seghers Place. What liaison had there been between the applicants and ESCC?

Cllr. Murray also noted the observations of both Cllrs. Butler and Bedwell, regarding Uckfield College. This site was at capacity, and this planning application was likely to bring a large number of this age. This would also affect traffic movements at school drop off and collection times.

Healthcare

Healthcare services had not been adequately considered by the applicants. Even without consideration of the capacity within the GP practices to the number of GP's at each practice, the car parks for each (Meads and Bird in Eye) were already at capacity. This needed to be re-evaluated.

As a newly elected Town Councillor, Cllr. Murray's main observation of this application was that it had been considered in total isolation, with some reference being made on occasion to other sites, rather than a holistic view being taken on its impact on the adjacent villages, and main service centre of Uckfield. If this site had to go ahead, what else would be happening around it? The cumulative impacts on highways, education, drainage, healthcare, policing, water and sewage infrastructure, biodiversity and the character of Uckfield were fundamental considerations.

Cllr. Bedwell concurred with the previous Committee members. She acknowledged the engagement that had taken place between the developers and Uckfield Town Council which was very worthwhile but had hoped for an on-site meeting involving Wealden District Council and the applicants to walk the site.

Cllr. Bedwell supported the issues raised by members previously around the housing mix, which additional points being raised on housing need:

Housing mix

- Noted the effort made by the applicant to review the mix of unit sizes. The information supplied by WDC Housing identified 1,165 applicants on the housing register:
  - 587 required one-bedroom accommodation – 50%
  - 309 required two bedrooms – 27%
  - 208 required three bedrooms – 18%
  - 61 required four or more bedrooms – 5%

The proposed rented housing did not entirely reflect that need. Forty per cent was proposed as one-bedroom accommodation, 47% two-bedroom, 13% three-bedroom and zero four-bedroom rented properties.
WDC Housing has also raised concerns about the proportion of one-bedroom properties and has asked for four-bedroom accommodation to be included.
Those were matters that needed to be resolved at this stage before proceeding further.
Cllr Bedwell felt that it must be the right housing, in the right place, with correct supportive infrastructure; for the people who actually needed it.

Highway access and parking
Cllr Bedwell supported the previous points noted by members and felt the matters raised were contrary to NPPF policies TR1, TR3, TR4, TR6 and DM1.

Trees, woodland and biodiversity

- Raised concerns with:
  the site's 400 trees and groups of trees, including 16 Category A and 184 Category B trees, as well as ancient and semi-natural woodland, veteran tree features and mature tree belts being at risk. It noted that oaks and willows in good health would need to be removed;
- The Biodiversity assessment identifying a proposed loss of approximately 1.2km of hedgerows and tree lines with no due regard for their ecological and landscape importance.
- Proposed buffers and protection measures were noted however an assessment was needed to establish whether the trees, ancient woodland, veteran features and hedgerows would retain their ecological, landscape and amenity functions following development.
- Policy NE4, required appropriate ecological and arboricultural surveys and adequate buffers around ancient woodland and veteran trees, with these protected from development and ancillary infrastructure. Arboricultural matters should form part of the scheme's fundamental design rather than being dealt with solely through conditions.
- There was an identified loss of approximately 89 hectares of temporary grassland, winter stubble and non-cereal crops, 14 hectares of poor-condition modified grassland, areas of scrub and woodland, 1.2km of hedgerows and tree lines, ponds and ditches, and part of the existing ecological network.
- The proposed biodiversity improvements were welcomed but noted that net gain did not offset the loss of mature trees, ancient woodland and established habitats.

Flooding and drainage

- Raised concerns regarding flooding, particularly given the presence of the River Uck floodplain and Ridgewood Stream.
- The enhancement measures for sustainable drainage were welcomed but it needed to be assessed cumulatively alongside other developments being considered through the Local Plan.

Prematurity and strategic planning

- The development needed to form part of a wider strategic plan for Uckfield, addressing housing, infrastructure, transport, flooding and environmental impacts.

Relationship with Uckfield, governance and funding

- As Uckfield would be the key service centre for residents on this site, the relationship between the development and Uckfield required greater consideration. A Community

Governance Review and parish boundary review, would be necessary if the new community became functionally dependent upon Uckfield.
- The CIL funding arrangements needed reflect where the additional demand created by the development would fall.

P53.09.26 Members **RESOLVED** to suspend Standing Orders to extend the meeting for a further 10 minutes past 9pm.

Cllr Bedwell raised a series of questions for the applicants and the local planning authority, which still needed to be answer before a development of this scale could be considered further. These questions were compiled together with questions raised previously by members into one list within Appendix A.

Cllr. Love as Chair brought to conclusion the meeting but wished to make some final points:

Sewage and Water
- Members requested further information from Southern Water, noting that the area was water-stressed.
- She requested an assessment of the impact of SUDS on ancient woodland and natural water flows.

Trees, woodland and biodiversity
- She requested further assessment of surface and underground water flows, including 1841 historic mapping which showed long established woodland in areas 16 and 17 as detailed on the concept map and the potential impact on the Sussex Oaks.
- Further assessment was necessary of the proposed woodland buffers, particularly around areas 16 and 17, Stroodland Wood, and also in relation to the Owlsbury Wood buffer going across the proposed school playing field.

Heritage
- Members raised concerns regarding the impact on Owlsbury Farm and College Farm, including changes to historic access routes, their settings and pedestrian safety.

Drainage and Flooding
- She welcomed the drainage mapping but raised concerns about three proposed ponds in Flood Zone 3, including potential pollution and floodwater impacts.
- Further assessment of SUDS and drainage impacts on ancient and long-established woodland was requested.

Site Design and Infrastructure
- Members noted that the plan was illustrative and raised concerns about potential future changes and the loss of previously proposed infrastructure, including the cricket pitch.
- Concerns were raised about whether the proposed sports hub and two rugby pitches provided sufficient sports provision, particularly given Sport England's concerns. This location was often water logged, so raised questions about feasibility.
- Members also raised concerns about the location of later-living accommodation adjacent to the school.

P54.09.26 Members **RESOLVED** to strongly object to the application for all of the above concerns and matters raised during the discussion, together with the questions outlined in Appendix A.

The meeting closed at 9.04pm

QUESTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION BY THE APPLICANTS, LOCAL PLANNING AUTHORITY AND EAST SUSSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

Strategic Planning

1. Does the emerging Regulation 18/19 Policy SA1 allocation of 1,500 dwellings include or exclude the proposed 50 C2 later-living/care units?
2. If the allocation is for 1,500 dwellings, what is the planning justification for the application proposing 1,500 C3 dwellings plus 50 C2 units?
3. What weight does the local planning authority consider can lawfully be given to SA1 at its current stage of plan preparation?
4. Has the Council independently assessed whether the proposed scale of development remains consistent with the emerging Local Plan's infrastructure and environmental evidence?

Education

1. What is the agreed trigger for delivery of the 2FE primary school?
2. How will the County Council ensure that children generated by the first 621 occupied dwellings are accommodated without unacceptable pressure on existing schools?
3. Has ESCC formally confirmed that the existing primary-school network can accommodate the interim demand?
4. How will approximately 220 secondary pupils generated by the development be accommodated?
5. Has ESCC confirmed that the claimed secondary-school capacity remains available after taking account of all committed and emerging development around Uckfield?
6. What financial contribution will be required for secondary education and when will it become payable?

Highways and transport

1. Has ESCC confirmed that the proposed A22 crossings are safe and compliant for pedestrians and cyclists of all ages and abilities?
2. Has the Council accepted that the proposed development is capable of being served by a genuinely viable public transport service rather than merely providing roads capable of accommodating buses?
3. Who will fund the proposed wider bus strategy and for how many years?
4. Has the transport assessment considered the combined impact of all identified Uckfield developments rather than assessing each junction independently?
5. Why doesn’t this proposal form part of the statement of common ground?
6. Has the applicant's traffic modelling been tested?
7. What is the cumulative impact of the developments on the A22, particularly at Owlsbury, Copwood and other constrained junctions?
8. What measures will prevent traffic generated by the development diverting through existing residential and rural roads?
9. How will flooding be mitigated in the SANG underpass which is an access point. Last winter it flooded to waist level - photos available.
10. Could applicants review the accuracy of their Transport Assessment and Transport Plan, for details on journey times, and accessibility to sustainable modes of transport.
11. Had the applicants looked to the future and the potential reinstatement of the railway line, and impact this would pose to adjacent properties if due regard wasn’t given to adequate distances.
12. Had the applicants prepared a Plan B for an alternative route of access to the SANG, in light of the reinstatement of the railway line.
13. Had the applicants given consideration to the impact of parking on Buckham Hill from pedestrians trying to access the SANG on foot? We noted our experiences on Rocks Road, next to Lake Wood, and West Park LNR.

Ecology

1. Please resolve the contradiction in the EcIA regarding skylark, which states both that skylark is confirmed breeding on site and that there are no skylark territories within the site.

2. Why has no updated 2026 breeding-bird survey been undertaken?
3. Why has no updated 2025/26 wintering-bird survey been undertaken?
4. Please provide the complete EPR bird technical note, including all species records and territory maps.
5. Please identify every Red-listed, Amber-listed, Section 41 and Schedule 1 bird recorded within the site.
6. How many yellowhammer territories will be lost or disturbed?
7. What mitigation is proposed for the applicant's own conclusion that increased cat numbers will likely significantly increase predation risk?
8. How will recreational activity, dog walking and public access be prevented from causing chronic disturbance to ground-nesting birds?
9. Has the current Sussex Biodiversity Record Centre and ornithological records been independently checked?

Ancient Woodland and dormice

1. Can the applicant demonstrate that the proposed buffers will prevent deterioration of Ancient Woodland rather than simply preventing buildings within the buffer?
2. How will increased lighting, footfall, dogs, cats and recreational activity be controlled around Ancient Woodland?
3. Has Natural England been consulted specifically on the proposed Ancient Woodland mitigation?
4. Given that dormice have been confirmed and are presumed present throughout suitable connected habitat, is the local planning authority satisfied itself that the development will maintain favourable conservation status?

Biodiversity Net Gain

1. Does the submitted BNG calculation fully reflect the final amended 1,550 unit masterplan and all associated access works?
2. How will the claimed BNG be monitored to ensure its delivery and maintained for the required period?

Flooding and drainage

1. Given that the applicant concludes that the whole site is at risk of groundwater flooding, how will the safety of residents and properties onsite been maintained for its lifetime?
2. Has the Environment Agency confirmed that the proposed development will not increase flood risk elsewhere?
3. Has the Lead Local Flood Authority independently approved the proposed drainage strategy?
4. What evidence demonstrates that the River Uck and Ridgewood Stream can accept the proposed additional discharge without deterioration of their ecological status?
5. Who will oversee the assurance that SuDS are delivered before the relevant housing is occupied?
6. Has the cumulative impact of all surrounding development on the River Uck catchment been assessed?

Water and wastewater

1. Is the 2025 Southern Water capacity response still valid for the amended 1,550-unit scheme?
2. Has Southern Water confirmed that adequate wastewater capacity exists taking account of all committed and emerging development?
3. What safeguards will apply if wastewater capacity or treatment performance proves inadequate?

Landscape and visual impact

1. Given that the applicant itself identifies Major Adverse landscape effects, why does it consider these acceptable?
2. How has the local planning authority assessed the permanent change from rural/agricultural landscape to an urban settlement?

3. Has the cumulative landscape effect of approximately 3,465 additional homes around Uckfield been independently assessed?

Cumulative effects

1. What is the combined total number of additional homes now proposed, approved or under construction around Uckfield?
2. What is the cumulative impact upon:

- schools;
- highways;
- public transport;
- healthcare;
- drainage;
- wastewater;
- biodiversity;
- Ancient Woodland;
- recreation;
- and landscape?

Members felt those issues should be considered before, not after the houses were occupied. Ultimately, this was about building a new community, not simply building houses.

Until those questions had been answered and a clear understanding of the full impact of this development could be assessed, this development could not be justified on environmental, social, or infrastructure grounds. It was premature, and lacked alignment with the Draft Local Plan. It also failed to meet multiple critical criteria set out in the current National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF).