

FARMBOROUGH PARISH COUNCIL

Response to Planning Application 25/04918/OUT

Application: 25/04918/OUT

Site: Parcel 4679, land south of Hayeswood Road, Timsbury

Proposal: Outline planning permission for the erection of up to 170 dwellings (including affordable housing), with associated parking, access roads, walking and cycling routes, public open space, drainage and other associated works. All matters reserved except access (part).

To: Development Management, Bath & North East Somerset Council (“B&NES”) (for the attention of David MacFadyen, Case Officer)

From: Farmborough Parish Council (“the Parish Council”)

Recommendation: Farmborough Parish Council OBJECTS to this application and recommends refusal, for the reasons set out below.

Note on national policy referenced below: paragraph references are to the National Planning Policy Framework as currently in force (published December 2024). A wholly restructured revised Framework was published in draft for consultation on 16 December 2025 (consultation closed 10 March 2026) and remains unpublished in final form at the time of preparing this response, with government indications pointing to Summer 2026.

Update (25 August 2026): the revised Framework referred to above has since been published. See the Parish Council's Supplementary Note to this response, which sets out the correct current policy references and confirms that the Parish Council's objection and recommendation, as set out below, are unaffected.

1. Introduction and Basis of the Parish Council's Interest

Although the application site lies wholly within Timsbury Parish, Farmborough Parish Council is directly and materially affected by this proposal and considers it has legitimate grounds to comment. The site's single vehicular access is onto The Avenue, from where the great majority of trips generated by the development will travel north to the A39 Bath Road / Timsbury Road junction – a junction used daily by Farmborough residents, and one which already suffers well-documented safety and capacity problems, including existing “rat-running” through Farmborough itself via Old Lane. Farmborough also shares the 522 bus corridor with Timsbury, and is directly affected by decisions taken on individual, unallocated sites ahead of the emerging B&NES Local Plan.

2. Principle of Development and Housing Land Supply

- The Parish Council notes that B&NES cannot currently demonstrate a five-year supply of deliverable housing land (2.5 years, per B&NES's own Five Year Housing Land Supply Interim Statement, as cited in the applicant's Planning Statement), and that the Core Strategy (adopted 2014) is more than five years old and therefore out of date for housing land supply purposes. This engages the “tilted balance” at NPPF paragraph 11(d).
- Engagement of paragraph 11(d) is not, however, determinative. Sub-paragraph (ii) still requires that permission be refused where “any adverse impacts of doing so would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits, when assessed against the policies in this Framework taken as a whole.” For the reasons set out in Sections 3 and 4 below, Farmborough Parish Council considers this to be the case.
- The site is presently identified only within B&NES's Regulation 18 Local Plan Options Consultation (October–November 2025) as one of several options for future growth – it has not been examined or adopted. That document itself records the site as having been “promoted for up to 120 homes,”

albeit with a stated capacity of “between 160-220 homes.” The current application, for up to 170 dwellings, sits well above the figure the site was promoted for at pre-application stage, while delivering a density of 33 dwellings per hectare – below the minimum of 35dph that B&NES's own pre-application advice required. Taken together, this suggests a scheme shaped as much by land-supply opportunity as by any plan-led assessment of what the site or the surrounding road network can properly accommodate.

3. Highway Safety – A39 Bath Road / Timsbury Road Junction and Old Lane, Farmborough

This is the principal harm of direct relevance to Farmborough, and the Parish Council gives it the greatest weight in this response.

- B&NES's own Transportation and Highways team has formally objected to this application (consultation response dated 5 February 2026). Farmborough Parish Council associates itself fully with that objection and asks that it be given full weight in the determination of this application.
- The Highway Authority's assessment confirms that the A39 Bath Road / Timsbury Road junction already has a poor collision history, and that its layout – an awkward, angled approach with a gradient on the give-way – makes visibility difficult for some drivers. It further confirms what Farmborough residents have long experienced first-hand: that motorists already divert through Farmborough via Old Lane specifically to avoid this junction, adding to congestion, noise and danger on a minor village lane never intended to carry through-traffic.
- The Highway Authority's own modelling – using data supplied by the applicant – shows the development would increase average driver delay on the Timsbury Road approach to 98.04 seconds in the AM peak and around 70 seconds in the PM peak, with the junction's Ratio of Flow to Capacity (RFC) exceeding 0.85, the point beyond which queuing and delay can increase rapidly. Officers have specifically warned that this is likely to increase pressure for poorly judged manoeuvres at a junction with an already poor safety record, and that further diversion of traffic through Farmborough via Old Lane – and potentially via Hayeswood Road itself, which also has limited visibility onto the A39 – is a realistic and foreseeable consequence.
- The Highway Authority has also identified that the Transport Assessment's AM peak modelling may understate the true position, since background traffic on the A39 is heaviest earlier in the morning than the assessment's chosen peak hour reflects, and that the assignment of Bristol-bound trips via Hayeswood Road (rather than the more logical route via Bloomfield Road) requires correction before the true impact can be understood.
- NPPF paragraph 116 confirms that “development should only be prevented or refused on highways grounds if there would be an unacceptable impact on highway safety, or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network would be severe.” Local Plan Policy ST7 similarly requires that “highway safety is not prejudiced” and that there be “no introduction of traffic of excessive volume, size or weight onto an unsuitable road system.” Given the Highway Authority's own conclusion that these tests are not met, Farmborough Parish Council considers the application to be in direct conflict with both national and local policy on this ground alone.

Should Members nonetheless be minded to approve this application, or should it proceed to appeal, Farmborough Parish Council requests that the decision-maker secure, by condition or planning obligation: (i) a corrected and independently verified assessment of trip distribution and AM peak impact at the A39 Bath Road / Timsbury Road junction; and (ii) a scheme of physical and/or traffic-management measures for Old Lane, Farmborough, to prevent and discourage further rat-running arising from this development.

4. Genuine Travel Choice and Sustainable Transport

At the time the application was submitted, and when B&NES's Highway Authority prepared its consultation response (5 February 2026), the evidence on public transport serving the site was

genuinely weak, and the paragraphs below set out that position before turning to more recent developments that B&NES should take into account.

- The Department for Transport's Connectivity Tool scores the site 43 overall – the lowest 20th percentile nationally – with a weaker score of 38 for access to workplaces. This strongly suggests a significant proportion of commuting journeys from the site would need to be made by private car.
- At the time of the application and the Highway Authority's assessment, the site's only meaningful bus service, the 522, was subsidised by the West of England Combined Authority and not commercially viable, with funding due for review in the near future and no confirmed long-term settlement; the WESTlink 2V community service serving the wider area was similarly described as being of uncertain future.
- Local Plan Policy ST1 requires development to “reduce the growth and the overall level of traffic and congestion,” “reduce dependency on the private car,” and “give priority to pedestrian and cycle movements, and have access to high quality public transport facilities.” NPPF paragraph 115 requires a genuinely vision-led approach to transport assessment. The Highway Authority found the applicant's vision-led case limited to a single paragraph of assertion, unsupported by any multimodal trip assessment or analysis of how travel behaviour might realistically change.

Update since the application was assessed

Farmborough Parish Council wishes to be even-handed and to ensure the Local Planning Authority is not given an outdated picture. Since the application and the Highway Authority's consultation response were prepared, the bus network serving both Farmborough and Timsbury has materially improved. Following the West of England Combined Authority's latest three-year Bus Grant settlement from the Department for Transport, changes took effect from 26 July 2026: funding for the 522 has been renewed; a new hourly service, the 100, now runs between Bath and Bristol via Timsbury, Farmborough, Bishop Sutton and the Chew Valley, replacing the former 2V and X91 routes and creating new direct and interchange connections – including towards the A37 corridor, the Chew Valley and, via onward connections, Wells; and the existing 768 service (Writhlington–Radstock–Timsbury–Bath) has been expanded with additional early and late journeys. WECA's Mayor has indicated that this settlement secures funding for these routes until at least spring 2029.

This is a genuinely positive development for both villages, and Farmborough Parish Council acknowledges it accordingly. It materially reduces the weight that can be placed on arguments that public transport in this corridor is precarious or about to be withdrawn, and the Parish Council recommends this ground of objection be read in that updated light.

This update does not, however, resolve the Highway Authority's separate and more fundamental criticism of the application's own evidence base: that the Transport Assessment did not carry out a genuinely vision-led, multimodal assessment of likely travel behaviour, and that the Connectivity Tool's low score for access to employment (38) reflects the dispersed nature of most job destinations relative to the site rather than the frequency of any single bus route – a factor the July 2026 changes do not directly address. On that narrower basis, Farmborough Parish Council maintains that the application's transport evidence base remains inadequate, contrary to NPPF paragraph 115, even though the underlying public transport offer itself has since improved.

5. Cumulative Impact Across the Somer Valley

- This application cannot be considered in isolation. B&NES's emerging Local Plan reflects a housing requirement that has increased sharply (from 717 to 1,466 dwellings per year), and the Regulation 18 Options Consultation identifies this site alone as capable of accommodating up to 220 homes – over and above other growth options being tested elsewhere in the Somer Valley, including around Farmborough itself.
- Farmborough Parish Council is concerned that speculative applications of this kind, submitted while B&NES's Local Plan remains unexamined (Regulation 19 publication is not expected until

Autumn 2026, with adoption anticipated in 2027), risk locking in significant additional traffic and infrastructure demand on a corridor – the A39/Timsbury Road – that is already recognised as a safety concern, ahead of any strategic, cumulative assessment of the Somer Valley's transport and infrastructure capacity through the plan-led system.

The Parish Council would prefer to see growth of this scale directed and tested through the plan-led process, where cumulative, cross-boundary impacts on shared infrastructure can be properly assessed, rather than through piecemeal decisions taken under the tilted balance.

6. Community Infrastructure – Health Capacity

Farmborough Parish Council understands that St Mary's Surgery, Timsbury – identified in the applicant's own Planning Statement as the nearest GP practice to the site, approximately 250m away – is already operating at or near capacity. Any further significant increase in patient demand arising from up to 170 new dwellings warrants specific assessment, given that some Farmborough residents also rely on shared health infrastructure across the wider Somer Valley area.

NPPF paragraph 96 requires that planning decisions “aim to achieve healthy, inclusive and safe places,” and Local Plan Policy CP13 requires that “new developments must be supported by the timely delivery of the required infrastructure.” The Parish Council notes the applicant's own Draft Heads of Terms anticipate a “financial contribution towards healthcare facilities” being secured through any Section 106 agreement, and considers this essential should permission be granted.

7. Positive Elements Acknowledged

In the interests of a balanced response, Farmborough Parish Council acknowledges the following:

- The scheme would deliver 40% affordable housing (up to 68 units), contributing toward a recognised area-wide housing need.
- The applicant proposes a Biodiversity Net Gain of 29.05%, comfortably exceeding the statutory 10% minimum.
- CIL receipts generated by the development are, in principle, available under B&NES's Regulation 123 List for “Strategic Transport Infrastructure including walking, cycling and public transport” and “Green infrastructure” on a district-wide basis. If actively pursued and ring-fenced, a share could in principle support improvements to the shared A39/Timsbury Road corridor, although this is not currently secured or guaranteed within the application as submitted.
- The site itself is physically remote from Farmborough village and does not directly affect Farmborough's own landscape, heritage assets, or Green Belt setting.
- Separately from this application, the Parish Council also welcomes the improved bus provision described in Section 4 (the renewed 522, new 100, and expanded 768 services, secured until at least spring 2029), which benefits both Farmborough and Timsbury residents regardless of the outcome of this application.

Farmborough Parish Council does not consider these benefits – most of which accrue to Timsbury or the district as a whole – outweigh the direct and specific harm to highway safety on a junction and lane used daily by Farmborough residents.

8. Recommendation

Farmborough Parish Council RESOLVES to submit formal comments to B&NES Development Management OBJECTING to application 25/04918/OUT, on the following grounds:

1. Highway safety – contrary to NPPF paragraph 116 and Local Plan Policy ST7, for the reasons set out in Section 3;

2. Deficiencies in the Transport Assessment's evidence base on sustainable travel choice – contrary to NPPF paragraph 115 and Local Plan Policy ST1, for the reasons set out in Section 4 (noting that bus provision along this corridor has since improved, which the Parish Council has acknowledged, but which does not cure the inadequacy of the applicant's own multimodal assessment);
3. Prematurity and cumulative impact – the application pre-empted the plan-led process and has not been assessed cumulatively alongside other Somer Valley growth, as set out in Section 5.

Should the Local Planning Authority nonetheless be minded to grant permission, whether at committee or on appeal, Farmborough Parish Council requests that the following are secured by condition or Section 106 obligation:

- (i) a corrected, independently verified assessment of AM peak trip distribution and its impact on the A39 Bath Road / Timsbury Road junction;
- (ii) a scheme of measures to prevent and discourage rat-running through Old Lane, Farmborough;
- (iii) a financial contribution toward local health infrastructure; and
- (iv) a ring-fenced contribution from CIL and/or Section 106 toward active travel and public transport improvements on the shared A39/Timsbury Road corridor.

Agreed at the meeting of Farmborough Parish Council held on 28 July 2026.

Signed: Debbie Tutchell

Parish Clerk to Farmborough Parish Council

Date: 25 August 2026