
Planning Committee MINUTES

**Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on
Thursday, 23 October 2025 from 7.00 - 9.50 pm**

Present: Councillors Chris Whately-Smith (Chair), Elinor Gazzard, Oliver Cooper, Harry Davies, Steve Drury, Philip Hearn, Stephen King, Keith Martin, Chris Mitchell and Debbie Morris

Also in Attendance:

Parish Councillor James Alder (Sarratt Parish Council), Parish Councillor Andrew Gallagher (Croxley Green Parish), Councillor Rue Grewal, County Councillor Vishal Patel (Rickmansworth and East Oxhey), Councillor Ciaran Reed, Councillor Narinder Sian and Councillor Jon Tankard

Officers in Attendance:

Matthew Barnes, Principal Lawyer - Planning
Emma Lund, Senior Committee Officer
Tom Norris, Senior Planning Officer
Suzanne O'Brien, Principal Planning Officer
Adam Ralton, Development Management Team Leader
Matthew Roberts, Development Management Team Leader
Kimberley Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services

PC47/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies were received from Councillors Chris Lloyd, Abbas Merali and Christopher Alley (who had been appointed as substitute for Councillor Merali).

Councillor Keith Martin substituted for Councillor Chris Lloyd.

PC48/25 MINUTES

The minutes of the Planning Committee meeting held on 11 September 2025 were confirmed as a correct record subject to the addition of the following wording within minute PC44/25:

Councillors Lloyd, Drury, and Nelmes objected to Councillor Edwards speaking as a ward councillor. The Chair responded, under officer advice, that there was no prohibition or restriction on Councillor Edwards speaking and then recusing herself from discussion of the item, as had been arranged per the Declaration of Interests at PC39/25.

PC49/25 NOTICE OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

PC50/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Debbie Morris declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 9 (25/1055/FUL – Land to the Rear of Woodlands Cottage, Oxhey Lane, Carpenders Park). Councillor Morris declared that she would leave the room whilst the application was discussed and would not participate in determining it.

PC51/25 24/1812/FUL – DEMOLITION OF EXISTING OUTBUILDINGS; SUBDIVISION OF THE SITE AND CONSTRUCTION OF FIVE TWO-STOREY RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS INCLUDING PARKING, LANDSCAPING, CYCLE AND REFUSE STORAGE AT LAND REAR OF 219 NEW ROAD, CROXLEY GREEN, RICKMANSWORTH, HERTFORDSHIRE WD3 3HE

Councillor Cooper, being absent from the meeting room for part of the item, did not participate in the debate or vote on this application.

The application was for demolition of existing outbuildings; subdivision of the site and construction of five two-storey residential dwellings including parking, landscaping, cycle and refuse storage at Land Rear of 219 New Road, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth.

The Planning Officer reported that the recommendation for approval shown in the report required the addition of provision for the amendment of the existing Traffic Regulation Order to prevent future occupiers from obtaining parking permits within the Controlled Parking Zone.

Parish Councillor Andrew Gallagher of Croxley Green Parish Council and a local resident spoke against the application. The agent spoke in favour of the application.

Committee Members asked questions about the detail of the application which were responded to by officers. The Committee's discussions included the following:

- In response to points made by those speaking against the application, the Planning Officer responded that the relevant policies in the Croxley Green Neighbourhood Plan were the HO policies (relating to meeting housing need) and RE policies (relating to the loss of employment use). The officer's assessment of compliance with both sets of policies was addressed within the report. There had been no objection to the proposal in relation to parking provision from Three Rivers District Council as the parking authority, or from Hertfordshire Highways on highways grounds or access. Cycle spaces were included in the scheme, and the parking spaces were compliant in terms of size. Hertfordshire County Council was also satisfied with the size of the turning area and access.
- The siting of the bin storage was within recommended walking distance for waste collection operatives. The Council's Environmental Protection team had confirmed that the waste collection arrangements were satisfactory regardless of whether the bins were stationed at the bin storage on collection day or brought to the edge of the highway.
- A Committee Member commented that the amenity space for each proposed dwelling was very small. Officers considered that this was mitigated by the site's location close to the Barton Way Play Area and fields. In response to a question about the route and distance between the two, clarification was given that it would involve a circa 300m walk. The boundary to the rear of the development, facing towards the play area and fields, was solid fence; addition of gates to facilitate pedestrian access to the play area and fields would require consent either from the Council or the landowner. It was suggested that this should be communicated to the applicant by way of an informative should planning permission be granted.
- A Committee Member welcomed the reduction in the density of the development from 7 dwellings to 5 but raised concern that the revised proposal may still represent overdevelopment of the site. Further comment was made about the design of the development, which was considered to be out of character with the surrounding area.

- A Committee Member commented that the parking standard for a development of the proposed size would be at least 10, where the proposal under consideration offered only 6. Notwithstanding that the parking authority was satisfied with this shortfall, the Member expressed concern that it offered the potential to cause parking issues. Officers responded that based on the level of parking provided and the sustainability of the location, it was considered on balance to be acceptable. In the event that planning permission were granted, there would be a restriction on future occupiers applying for parking permits within the Controlled Parking Zone.
- Several Committee Members objected to the proposal for an electric gate across the vehicular access point from New Road, thereby creating a separation from the wider community. A Member commented that inclusion of the gate would be contrary to the Croxley Green Neighbourhood Plan.
- A Committee Member recommended that, due to the paucity of amenity space, in the event that planning permission were granted condition 13 should be amended to include Class E so as to remove permitted development rights for future outbuildings.

Councillor Gazzard moved, and Councillor Whately-Smith seconded, that the application be deferred to seek amended plans to remove the vehicular gate. In the event the applicant agreed to its removal, the application should be delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services to grant planning permission subject to (i) the addition of conditions relating to the removal of Class E Permitted Development rights and Part 2 Class A rights (means of enclosure); (ii) to secure the restriction on parking permits for future occupants and financial contribution towards an amendment to the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) via a Section 106 agreement; and (iii) completion of a Section 106 agreement securing the affordable housing contribution and parking permit controls / TRO. In the event the applicant did not agree to removal of the vehicular gate, the application should be presented to a future Planning Committee meeting for determination.

On being put to the vote this was carried, the voting being 5 in favour, 4 against, 0 abstentions.

RESOLVED: that that the application be deferred to seek amended plans to remove the vehicular gate. In the event the applicant agrees to its removal, the application shall be delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services to grant planning permission subject to (i) the addition of conditions relating to the removal of Class E Permitted Development rights and Part 2 Class A rights (means of enclosure); (ii) to secure the restriction on parking permits for future occupants and financial contribution towards an amendment to the Traffic Regulation Order (TRO) via a Section 106 agreement; and (iii) completion of a Section 106 agreement securing the affordable housing contribution and parking permit controls / TRO. In the event the applicant does not agree to removal of the vehicular gate, the application shall be presented to a future Planning Committee meeting for determination.

PC52/25 25/1012/RSP - RETROSPECTIVE: INSTALLATION OF PARCEL LOCKER FACILITY AT 57 - 59 HIGH STREET, ABBOTS LANGLEY, HERTFORDSHIRE WD5 0AE

Councillor Cooper re-joined the meeting.

The application was retrospective for installation of a parcel locker facility at 57 - 59 High Street, Abbots Langley.

Officers reported that since the previous committee meeting, the applicant had provided details of a revised external appearance for the locker in order to address the committee's previous concerns. A grey colourway was now proposed, in place of the existing yellow. An assessment of the impact of the new colourway was given in the report and officers remained of the opinion that the proposal was acceptable.

Councillor Jon Tankard spoke on the proposal.

Committee Members asked questions about the detail of the application which were responded to by officers. The Committee's discussions included the following:

- A Committee Member commented that the new colourway represented an improvement. However, the Conservation Officer had considered that the proposal would result in less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area and this should be given great weight. Whilst the service which the locker provided was of great benefit to the community, there was no shortage of land available on which it could be sited and alternative locations could be considered. For this reason, the Committee Member considered that the less than substantial harm to the Conservation Area was not outweighed by the benefit to the local community. This was supported by another Committee Member who commented that the proposal did not preserve or enhance the Conservation Area and by virtue of its prominence and proximity to listed buildings caused harm to the Conservation Area.
- Another Committee Member considered that alternative locations which had been suggested such as the rear of the retail premises or the car park were not suitable and would not represent an improvement. The issue of the reasonableness of seeking further changes to the application, given the previous deferral and the fact that the structure was in place, was discussed. Officers clarified that the Committee could only consider the application before it, but it was open to Members to refuse it if grounds were considered to be sufficient. It would be open to the applicant to challenge any refusal by way of an appeal.
- A Committee Member commented that most, if not all, of the centre of Abbots Langley was in the Conservation Area and so other nearby locations would likely give rise to similar concerns. There were other areas where a locker could cause significantly more harm to the Conservation Area. The Member considered that on balance, given the more muted colourway and the benefit which the locker provided to residents, the proposal was acceptable.

Councillor Drury moved, and Councillor Gazzard seconded, that retrospective planning permission be granted subject to conditions. On being put to the vote this was carried, the voting being 9 in favour, 1 against and 0 abstentions.

RESOLVED: that retrospective planning permission be granted subject to conditions.

PC53/25 PRELIMINARY REPORT 25/1020/OUT – OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR UP TO 256 HOMES (C3 USE CLASS) (INCLUDING AFFORDABLE AND SELF/CUSTOM BUILD HOUSING), HOUSING WITH CARE (C2 USE CLASS), A CHILDREN'S HOME (FOR LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN) (C2 USE CLASS) TOGETHER WITH ASSOCIATED ACCESS (INCLUDING OFF-SITE HIGHWAY WORKS), PARKING, OPEN SPACE AND LANDSCAPING (APPEARANCE, LAYOUT, LANDSCAPING AND SCALE AS RESERVED MATTERS) AT LAND EAST OF OXHEY LANE, CARPENDERS PARK, HERTFORDSHIRE

The Committee received a preliminary report on an outline application for up to 256 homes (C3 use class) (including affordable and self/custom build housing), housing with care (C2 use class), a children's home (for looked after children) (C2 use class) together with associated access (including off-site highway works), parking, open space and landscaping (appearance, layout, landscaping and scale as reserved matters) at Land East of Oxhey Lane, Carpenders Park.

The Committee was invited to note the report, comment on any material planning considerations and consider undertaking a site visit. The application would be brought back to the Committee in due course for determination. In response to a request, officers confirmed that Committee Members would be provided with a set of plans prior to the site visit.

The Planning Officer reported that one further comment of objection had been received since publication of the officer report. This had related to matters which were already set out within the report. The Planning Officer also clarified that paragraph 7.6.14 of the report contained a typing error and should refer to Carpenders Park Railway Station being 1km from the site.

The Committee received a presentation from the Planning Officer providing an overview of the proposal and setting out the context of the site, topography, site access and ownership.

County Councillor Vishal Patel and Councillor Rue Grewal spoke on the proposal.

A local resident spoke against the proposal.

The applicant spoke in favour of the proposal.

Committee Members asked questions about the detail of the development which were responded to by officers. Members' comments included the following:

- In speaking on the proposal, Councillor Grewal had recommended a number of views which would assist Members in properly assessing its impact. At the request of the Chair, Councillor Grewal undertook to provide a written copy of her comments to the Planning Officer so that Committee Members could be made aware of them prior to the site visit.
- The issue of whether the site was Green Belt or Grey Belt was a key consideration. A Committee Member commented that Members should be provided with very clear evidence on this point when the application is brought before the committee for a decision, along with an analysis of the legal opinion of Lord Banner.
- If the site was assessed to be Grey Belt within the new Green Belt review it would be difficult to refuse the application. Whilst the strategic parcel had previously been assessed as Green Belt, this comprised only part of the application site.
- Herts Highways had responded that the impact of trip rates on the transport network was not considered to be significant in terms of capacity or congestion. A Committee Member questioned how this conclusion had been reached given that the proposal involved 256 new homes and included a care home. Further information was requested to enable Members to better understand the reasons for Herts Highways' view. Another Committee Member commented that there were also other highways issues (for example, in relation to buses / public transport and active travel). Officers reported that a meeting had recently been held involving Herts Highways, the Council and the applicant to discuss Herts Highways' response and this had included exploring options in relation to some of the issues mentioned. Further meetings would continue to be held.
- The Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board had commented that all surgeries were at capacity and had limited ability to accept additional patients. It was requested that clarity on the details of the deficiency of healthcare provision should be sought, along with information as to which surgeries had been looked at (only Carpenders Park, or did the assessment include South Oxhey and possibly Watford surgeries?). Further information was also requested about how and where the primary healthcare contribution would be allocated.
- Thames Water had identified an inability of the foul water network infrastructure to meet the needs of the development and were seeking a condition for foul water upgrades to be completed prior to first occupation. However, there was no information about how this would work in practice and any associated costs. The undercapacity of the water network and the implications for the development would need to be fully understood.

- Watford Rural Parish Council had responded that the only local primary school, St Meryl's, was already near full. As it was only one form of entry it would have limited capacity for expansion. It was requested that further information on how the primary school need arising from the development would be met (including SEN provision) be added.
- A Committee Member requested the further explanation with regard to flood risk and the objections from the Woodland Trust be included.
- Section 7.1.46 of the report relating to the sustainability of the site was currently brief, and further detail would be needed regarding the officers' assessment and the factors which were considered to contribute to the location being considered sustainable. Comment was made that it would be difficult to consider the site sustainable without there being additional primary school provision.
- A Committee Member drew attention to the need for the Carpenders Park railway bridge to be widened and requested that consideration be given to seeking a financial contribution to enable this to happen, given the potential impact of additional car journeys should primary pupils need to travel to Woodhall School.

The Chair moved the recommendations in the report, which were agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: that

- (1) Members agree for officers to arrange a site visit prior to this application being presented to Planning Committee for a decision; and
- (2) the Committee notes the report.

PC54/25 25/1028/FUL – ERECTION OF 20 DWELLINGS (USE CLASS C3) WITH ASSOCIATED PARKING AND LANDSCAPING, PROVISION OF NEW VEHICULAR ACCESS TO CHURCH LANE AND PEDESTRIAN LINK TO PUBLIC FOOTPATH AT LAND REAR OF 76-78 CHURCH LANE, SARRATT, HERTFORDSHIRE

The application was for erection of 20 dwellings (Use Class C3) with associated parking and landscaping, provision of new vehicular access to Church Lane and pedestrian link to public footpath at Land Rear of 76-78 Church Lane, Sarratt.

The Planning Officer reported that since the report had been published, the Lead Local Flood Authority had confirmed that it had no objection to the proposal, subject to four conditions. Accordingly, recommendation (2) was no longer required. The revised recommendation was to delegate authority to the Head of Regulatory Services to refer the application to the Secretary of State, and subject to the Secretary of State raising no objection and following the completion of a Section 106 agreement to secure the affordable housing and the biodiversity net gain monitoring fee, grant planning permission subject to the conditions in the report and the conditions requested by the Lead Local Flood Authority.

The Planning Officer reported that there were also a number of changes proposed to the published conditions. These were: merging the requirements of conditions 9 and 13 into condition 11 and removing conditions 9 and 13 as a result; merging the requirements of condition 17 into condition 7; and changing the trigger points for conditions 21, 25 and 30 so that their terms had to be met before the first occupation of the dwellings.

The Planning Officer also reported that a correction was required to paragraph 7.3.30 of the report. The reference to the development failing to comply with purpose (b) of paragraph 155 of the National Planning Policy Framework should refer to purpose (c).

The Planning Officer reported that outline planning permission for 20 houses, with all matters other than access being reserved, had been granted at appeal in July 2023, with a Section 106 agreement to secure all of the housing as affordable. The current application was a full application. The differences between the two applications were set out in the report and included a reduction in the amount of affordable housing which was proposed to 50% affordable (split 70/30 between social rent and intermediate) and 50% market housing. The Planning Officer summarised that whilst it was considered that the proposed development was inappropriate in the Green Belt and would cause some harm, officers considered that very special circumstances existed which would outweigh this and the other harms identified.

Parish Councillor James Alder of Sarratt Parish Council and Councillor Ciaran Reed spoke on the application.

A local resident spoke against the application.

The applicant spoke in favour of the application.

Committee Members asked questions about the detail of the application which were responded to by officers. The Committee's discussions, and concerns raised by speakers, included the following:

- In addition to a reduction in the amount of affordable housing, the development also proposed a change in the dwelling size mix, with a significant number of 4-bedroomed properties which were not in great need in the area.
- The proposal included a reliance on footpath 30, adjoining the site at the rear, to enable pedestrian access to Sarratt, as there was no footpath on Church Lane. Footpath 30 was considered to be unuseable for a significant part of the year by those using wheelchairs or buggies or with other mobility difficulties due to being unpaved and was also unlit.
- Other concerns raised by speakers included a lack of parking provision and the lack of overspill parking; oversight into other properties; insufficient sewage capacity; the harm to high quality Green Belt; the reduction of affordable housing; the dwelling size mix and associated lack of compliance with the emerging Sarratt Neighbourhood Plan; impact on the conservation landscape area; impact on wildlife and nearby woodlands by light and noise; and impact of increased traffic on already congested roads.
- Officers responded that the amount of affordable housing remained in excess of what was required by the Local Plan and had been weighted on that basis; the benefit of the footpath link had only been given limited weighting for the reasons set out in the report; the distances and use of obscure glazing had been considered sufficient to prevent overlooking of nearby properties; the dwelling size mix and lack of compliance with the emerging Sarratt Neighbourhood Plan was acknowledged and addressed in the report, but was not considered to result in a harmful situation. The delivery of housing was important, particularly given the district's lack of a 5-year housing land supply and housing need and this had been given great weight. Finally, officers confirmed that the appeal decision had not been the main reason for officers reaching a recommendation for approval but had been one of a number of considerations.
- A Committee Member commented that the district's current Local Plan set out that 1% of total housing delivery should be provided within small villages over the plan period. The amount of housing which had been proposed for Sarratt had exceeded this, and the cumulative impact of development in a location which was not sustainable needed to be considered. The appeal decision was not considered to be a fall-back position, as the applicant mentioned that that scheme was not viable and so would not be implemented. Further, the reduction in the amount of affordable housing down from 100% would preclude the site's classification as a rural exception site; the key ratios given by the Inspector in the appeal decision no longer applied; and the affordable housing provision

was less than 50% when calculated by floor space and therefore was not compliant with either the Local Plan or the new NPPF (if the site was found to be Grey Belt). In summary, the reasons which the Inspector had given for approving the development no longer applied, and justifiable reasons for refusing the application did apply. Sarratt village was not a sustainable location: there was only one shop, a lack of other amenities and highways connections, and experienced significant traffic congestion. The Inspector found harm to the AONB (now National Landscape), harm to the character of the area, and found it wasn't sustainable for highways reasons. The previous benefits no longer existed.

- Other Committee Members commented that the reduction in affordable housing had affected the 'tilted balance' test and that the public benefit of the proposal did not outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and the National Landscape and the other harms identified. In considering the benefits of the scheme, Committee Members agreed that although there had been a reduction in affordable housing since the previous application, 10 affordable homes would be provided in an area where there was an identified shortfall and this should be given weight. However, provision of housing (whilst still a benefit) was in contradiction with PSP4 and therefore overall a disbenefit of the scheme, particularly where it was not the type of housing required in the area.

Councillor Cooper moved, and Councillor King seconded, that the application be refused due to it being inappropriate development in the Green Belt, impacting the setting of the national landscape, impact on the character of the village and it being contrary to the emerging Sarratt Neighbourhood Plan, the Local Plan and the NPPF. Final wording would be circulated to Committee Members before the decision was issued. On being put to the vote this was carried, the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED: that the application be refused due to it being inappropriate development in the Green Belt, impacting the setting of the national landscape, impact on the character of the village and it being contrary to the emerging Sarratt Neighbourhood Plan, the Local Plan and the NPPF. Final wording to be circulated to Committee Members before the decision is issued.

PC55/25 PRELIMINARY REPORT 25/1055/FUL - DEMOLITION OF EXISTING STRUCTURES AND CONSTRUCTION OF 96 RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS (USE CLASS C3), FLEXIBLE COMMUNITY FLOORSPEACE (USE CLASS F), WITH THE PROVISION OF AN ACCESS, VEHICLE AND CYCLE PARKING, LANDSCAPING, SUSTAINABLE URBAN DRAINAGE SYSTEMS AND OTHER ASSOCIATED WORKS AT LAND TO THE REAR OF WOODLANDS COTTAGE, OXHEY LANE, CARPENDERS PARK, WATFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE WD19 5RF

Councillor Morris left the meeting and did not return.

The Committee received a preliminary report on an application for demolition of existing structures and construction of 96 residential dwellings (Use Class C3), flexible community floorspace (Use Class F), with the provision of an access, vehicle and cycle parking, landscaping, sustainable urban drainage systems and other associated works at Land to the Rear of Woodlands Cottage, Oxhey Lane, Carpenders Park.

The Committee was invited to note the report, comment on any material planning considerations and consider undertaking a site visit. The application would be brought back to the Committee in due course for determination, and Committee Members were invited to note that it was a full application.

The Committee received a presentation from the Planning Officer providing an overview of the proposal and setting out the context of the site, topography, and site access.

County Councillor Vishal Patel and Councillor Rue Grewal spoke on the proposal.

The applicant spoke in favour of the proposal.

Committee Members asked questions about the detail of the application which were responded to by officers. Members' comments included the following:

- A speaker highlighted that there were a number of objections from consultees pending further evidence. These included Herts Highways, the Lead Local Flood Authority, Herts Ecology and National Grid. Additionally, a number of consultees had objected, and the Council's Housing Team had responded that the tenure split was not yet aligned to the Council's policies and local need. Updates on all of these matters and a number of others identified by the speaker (to be provided to officers by the speaker following the meeting) would be needed when the application came before the committee for decision.
- A Committee Member commented that there was a need for consistency with application 25/1020/OUT, particularly in relation to urban sprawl and the consequences for other developments nearby of the argument that the site is 'detached' from Carpenders Park. Another Committee Member disagreed with this view, and highlighted the need for a site visit so that Members could form their own conclusions.
- A number of issues (such as whether the site was Green Belt or Grey Belt, access, and highways impacts) would be the same as had been discussed under application 25/1020/OUT earlier on the agenda.
- A number of sustainability features within the development as mentioned by the applicant were to be welcomed, although there was a need to fully understand how they would work in practice.
- A Committee Member recommended that consideration be given to staggering the access from and onto Oxhey Lane, in order to help alleviate the issues identified by Herts Highways.

Councillor Mitchell moved, and Councillor Drury seconded, that Members agree for officers to arrange a site visit prior to this application being presented to Planning Committee for a decision, and that the Committee notes the report.

RESOLVED: that

- (2) Members agree for officers to arrange a site visit prior to this application being presented to Planning Committee for a decision; and
- (2) the Committee notes the report.

PC56/25 ITEM WITHDRAWN 25/1122/FUL – CONSTRUCTION OF SINGLE STOREY SIDE EXTENSION AT 16 MONEY HILL PARADE, UXBRIDGE ROAD, RICKMANSWORTH, HERTFORDSHIRE WD3 7BE

This item was withdrawn from the agenda prior to the meeting.

CHAIR