
Planning Committee MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Thursday, 26 February 2026 from 7.30 - 10.00 pm

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

Also in Attendance:

County Councillor Paula Hiscocks (Rickmansworth West), Parish Councillor Kingsley Jolowicz (Croxley Green Parish Council) and Councillor Narinder Sian

Officers in Attendance:

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

PC101/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

There were no apologies for absence.

PC102/25 NOTICE OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

PC103/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Councillor Debbie Morris declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5 (25/1055/FUL – Land to the Rear of Woodlands Cottage, Oxhey Lane, Carpenders Park) and stated that she would leave the room whilst the application was discussed and would not participate in determining it.

Councillor Chris Mitchell declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 6 (British Red Cross, Community Way, Croxley Green), having been previously involved with the application, and stated that he would leave the room whilst the application was discussed and would not participate in determining it.

PC104/25 25/0484/OUT – OUTLINE APPLICATION: ERECTION OF UP TO 75 NEW DWELLINGS, PARKING AND LANDSCAPING WITH ASSOCIATED ACCESS ONTO CHALFONT ROAD (APPEARANCE, LAYOUT, LANDSCAPING AND SCALE AS RESERVED MATTERS) AT LAND AT NORTH OF CHALFONT ROAD, CHALFONT ROAD, MAPLE CROSS, HERTFORDSHIRE

The application was outline, for erection of up to 75 new dwellings, parking and landscaping with associated access onto Chalfont Road (Appearance, Layout, Landscaping and Scale as reserved matters) at Land at North of Chalfont Road, Chalfont Road, Maple Cross, Hertfordshire.

The Planning Officer provided updates and clarifications as follows:

- Following consideration of a preliminary report by the Committee in December 2025, and a site visit, the officer report had been updated to provide full justification for the officer recommendation, including in relation to the material points raised in discussion of the preliminary report.
- Since publication of the report the Growth and Infrastructure Board had provided further comments withdrawing its request for the development to provide financial contributions towards primary education. Following discussions with officers it was considered appropriate to facilitate primary education funding through CIL in order to mitigate the impact from the site. The Board had, however, maintained its position in respect of contributions towards secondary education and SEND, and further discussions would be required to complete the S106 agreement. Therefore, the recommendation before the Committee was that in order to allow for those discussions, authority be delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services to grant planning permission following the completion of a S106 securing Heads of Terms and subject to planning conditions; and that authority be delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services to make any minor amendments necessary to the Heads of Terms and planning conditions in consultation with the Planning Committee Chair.
- Two further objections had been received since publication of the agenda. Officers did not consider that they raised any new material planning considerations which were not already addressed in the report.
- The proposed development was for 75 dwellings, and the published report set out the officers' view that the proposal was development of Grey Belt land which satisfied the requirements of paragraph 155 of the NPPF. Officers therefore considered that it was an appropriate form of development. Furthermore, the site was considered to have met the 'Golden Rules' set out within paragraphs 156 and 157 of the NPPF. The Planning Officer highlighted that the NPPF emphasised that a development which complied with the 'Golden Rules' should be give significant weight in favour of the grant of planning permission.
- Members were reminded that the application site was included within the Council's Local Plan Regulation 19 site allocations document, which had been approved at Full Council in January 2026. Although the Regulation 19 consultation had been paused following intervention by the Minister for Housing, Communities and Local Government, this was nevertheless a material consideration in the assessment of the principle of residential development at the site.

The applicant spoke in favour of the application.

County Councillor Paula Hiscocks spoke against the application.

Points raised by the speaker in favour of the application included: a legal opinion sought by the applicant had agreed with the officers' view that the site met the definition of Grey Belt land and met the relevant tests within the NPPF; the applicant had worked closely with the Council and key consultees, including engagement with the LLFA and Herts Highways and a public exhibition and as a result there were no outstanding technical or statutory objections; the issues which had been raised during consideration of the preliminary report had been addressed; benefits of the proposal included 75 homes of which 38 would be affordable, as

well as a significant new public open space and connectivity, a sensitively designed scheme on the edge of a settlement location, delivery of at least 10% biodiversity net gain, off-site highways improvements to Chalfont Road and bus stop facilities, and flood storage and SUDS arrangements which would result in a reduction of flood depths and a betterment to existing properties.

Points raised by the speaker against the proposal included: the site was not Grey Belt but was instead open, functional green space forming the last buffer before the Colne Valley Regional Park; Colne Valley Regional Park had objected to the proposal, as had the Campaign to Protect Rural England; the proposal was unsuitable due to the impact on the already congested Chalfont Road as the addition of further properties would intensify an existing unsafe situation and increase air pollution; the site suffered from drainage problems and there was insufficient evidence in the application that the land could be engineered to cope with the increased hard surfacing without displacing flood risk to neighbouring homes; there was uncertainty about the real impact of the proposal as appearance, layout, landscaping and scale were reserved matters; and the effect of recent and pending developments in Maple Cross had not been properly assessed, resulting in incremental urbanisation and a lack of strategic planning, infrastructure investment or environmental safeguards.

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

- The Stage 4 Green Belt Review had suggested that the site was Grey Belt. In assessing the application, officers had given consideration as to whether it strongly contributed to purposes (a), (b) and (d) of paragraph 143 of the NPPF. As set out in the report, officers did not consider that Maple Cross was a large, built-up area; or that the site prevented the neighbouring towns of Rickmansworth, Chalfont St Peter, Chalfont St Giles and Gerrards Cross from merging; or that it had historical significance. Therefore, the site was not considered to strongly contribute to purposes (a), (b) and (d) of paragraph 143 of the NPPF and could be regarded as Grey Belt land. Some Committee Members did not agree with this assessment, considering that the site comprised Green Belt land.
- The surface water flooding on Chalfont Road was noted; however, the LLFA had been consulted and had raised no objection. The applicant had provided an evacuation plan and the proposal included a compensation basin and other ponds and basins across the site which would reduce the extent of surface water pooling on Chalfont Road and was considered to be a betterment to the site and the surrounding area.
- Several Committee Members disagreed with the officers' assessment of the sustainability of the site, raising concerns about the distance to schools, play areas, sports facilities, underground station, health and dental services and the lack of shops in close proximity, none of which was considered to be within safe walking distance of the site. The Planning Officer provided the reasons why the site was considered by officers to be sustainable (as set out at paragraph 10.1.22 of the report) and highlighted that the proposal also included a contribution for electronic timetables and improvements to bus stops which would comprise a betterment to the local bus network. Several Committee Members considered that, notwithstanding these improvements, the development would be car dependent and expressed the view that because of the unsustainability of the site the proposal represented inappropriate development.
- Committee Members also raised concerns about the ability of existing infrastructure to cope with the development, and in particular the condition required by Thames Water which prevented the occupation of the development until all sewage works upgrades required to accommodate the additional flows from the development had been completed, or a development and infrastructure phasing plan had been agreed. A Committee Member recommended that the Chief Executive be asked to write to Thames Water to convey dissatisfaction with the requirement to include such a condition. In responding,

the Planning Officer reported that legal advice obtained on the matter had concluded that the approach taken by Thames Water was appropriate and acceptable.

- Committee Members agreed that great weight needed to be given to the need for housing, particularly in light of the council's limited housing land supply. Following the ministerial direction, Committee Members commented that only limited weight could be given to the emerging Local Plan.
- Whilst acknowledging that Hertfordshire Highways had not objected, several Committee Members remained concerned about the highways implications associated with the proposal.
- In response to a Committee Member's questions on road safety, officers clarified that whilst there weren't any 30mph speed limit signs of that section of the road, the access road to the development was close to the existing residential development of Oakhill Road. Relocating the access further up the road had been considered but dismissed due to the loss of additional trees and hedgerow and the further urbanisation of Chalfont Road which it would involve. The siting of the access closer to Oakhill Road would allow drivers rounding the bend of Chalfont Road to see the access point. Other modifications to the access point included improving the visibility splay; widening of the carriageway and access road (to 5.5m) and existing footpath (to 2m); linkage of the existing footpath to a new footway within the development which would provide a walking route to The Reach Free School and primary schools; and dropped kerbs and tactile paving for a crossover across Oakhill Road.
- In debate it was noted that paragraph 10.18.2 of the report set out that Hertfordshire County Council was seeking a contribution of £864,943 for the delivery of a new secondary school at Carpenter's Park. In response to a Member's question, the Planning Officer reported that HCC had subsequently clarified that the reference to Carpenter's Park was incorrect and should refer to The Reach Free School.
- Several Committee Members expressed concern about the inclusion of shared ownership as part of the affordable housing tenure mix, expressing the view that First Homes would be a preferable option.
- A Committee Member recommended that whilst great weight was given to the provision of housing and affordable housing, and weight was also given to the economic benefits during construction and the contributions to be secured through S106, the application should be refused on the basis that the unsustainable location of the site would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt and there were no Very Special Circumstances which outweighed the harm caused. Particular factors contributing to the unsustainability of the site were cited as a lack of GP facilities; primary and secondary school inaccessibility; and the distance from the public transport network. This was endorsed by other Committee Members.

Councillor Cooper moved, and Councillor Whately-Smith seconded, that the application be refused on the basis that the development is not in a sustainable location and would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and the development fails to secure contributions through a S106 agreement. Final wording of the reasons for refusal would be circulated to Committee Members separately.

On being put to the vote this was carried, the voting being 10 for, 0 against, 1 abstention.

RESOLVED: that the application be refused on the basis that the development is not in a sustainable location and would be inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and the development fails to secure contributions through a S106 agreement. Final wording of the reasons for refusal would be circulated to Committee Members separately.

PC105/25 25/1055/FUL - 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, WATFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE WD19 5RF.

Councillor Morris left the meeting.

The application was 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, Watford.

The Planning Officer reported that amendment was needed to Condition 25 to remove reference to the construction vehicle access as this was covered under separate conditions. Condition 27 also required a change to refer to plan number WCO_006 P05 only.

A speaker on behalf of Carpenders Park Residents' Association spoke against the application.

The applicant spoke in favour of the application.

Points raised by the speaker against the application included: the site was considered to be Green Belt and not Grey Belt, and to be of fundamental importance to the wider Green Belt; the proposal was considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt without Very Special Circumstances to outweigh the harm; there was a significant parking shortfall; the nearest station was a 23 minute walk away with only one bus per hour on Oxhey Lane so that the development would be car dependent and therefore unsustainable; amenity space was below standards; the amount of affordable housing had been significantly reduced; there was a lack of healthcare facilities; and the water infrastructure would not be able to cope with the development leading to a high risk of surface water.

Points raised by the speaker in favour of the application included: engagement had taken place with the community and stakeholders as part of the design process in order to understand the local need and provide benefit to the community; further improvements for pedestrians and cyclists had been incorporated following the consideration of the preliminary report and holding objections from Herts Highways and the LFFA had been removed; the site was sustainable, with access to doctors, dentists and two train stations; the site was considered to be Grey Belt and not Green Belt and to meet the 'Golden Rules'; the proposal would provide much needed housing; other benefits included rejuvenating a forgotten woodland, provision of pedestrian friendly streets and a community building, an electric vehicle car club and electric bicycles for use by residents, a S106 contribution towards other local infrastructure, and homes which generated more energy than they consumed.

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

- Due to its proximity to Bushey station the site was considered to be sustainable in terms of access to public transport. A pedestrian and cycle access to Carpenders Park would be provided as part of the scheme, along with a toucan crossing across the A road into Carpenders Park. The site was therefore considered to be sustainable for, and represent an improvement for, pedestrians and cyclists. Local schools, a play area and a doctor's surgery were located less than a mile from the site. It was acknowledged that accessing the GP surgery would involve an uphill walk on the return. Residents would also be able to access electric bikes.

- The proposal would involve a change to the speed limit on Oxhey Lane from 40mph to 30mph.
- In response to a question from a Committee Member, the Planning Officer responded that the proposal was considered to form part of a continuous pattern of development along Oxhey Lane, and did not form incongruous development.
- Committee Members discussed the issue of flood risk. Given the location of the site within Flood Zone 1 it was agreed that there were no grounds for refusal of the application on that basis.
- A Committee Member welcomed the sustainability features of scheme but highlighted the need to ensure that they were achieved.
- In response to a Committee Member's question about the internal arrangement of the community building, the Planning Officer advised that a condition could be added to require details to be provided prior to its construction. This was agreed by the Committee.

Councillor Whately-Smith moved, and Councillor Gazzard seconded, that the application be approved subject to conditions, amendment to conditions 25 and 27 as outlined above, and with an additional condition requiring details of the internal arrangement of the community building to be provided prior to its construction.

On being put to the vote this was carried, the voting being 4 in favour, 4 against and 2 abstentions. The Chair's casting vote was used.

RESOLVED: that the application be approved subject to conditions, amendment to conditions 25 and 27 as outlined above, and with an additional condition requiring details of the internal arrangement of the community building to be provided prior to its construction.

Councillor Morris re-joined the meeting.

PC106/25 25/1943/FUL - DEMOLITION OF EXISTING BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION OF A NEW THREE STOREY BUILDING TO PROVIDE COMMUNITY CENTRE AT GROUND FLOOR LEVEL AND 8 RESIDENTIAL UNITS TO THE TWO UPPER FLOORS WITH ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING, ACCESS, AND PARKING ALTERATIONS AT BRITISH RED CROSS, COMMUNITY WAY, CROXLEY GREEN, HERTS WD3 3HB

Councillor Mitchell left the meeting.

The application was for demolition of existing building and construction of a new three storey building to provide community centre at ground floor level and 8 residential units to the two upper floors with associated landscaping, access, and parking alterations at British Red Cross, Community Way, Croxley Green.

The Planning Officer reported that the second sentence of paragraph 7.5.4 of the report contained a typo and the word 'noted' should read 'not'. The full sentence was therefore: *'No. 1a Barton Way is a first floor flat with amenity space at ground floor. As above it is noted that the proposed building would be taller than the existing building however owing to the separation distance it is not considered that overall the proposed building would result in such an overbearing impact or loss light so as to result in demonstrable harm to the rear gardens of the properties to the north.'*

Additionally, the numbers at paragraphs 4.1.10 and 4.1.9 had been transposed. The Planning Officer confirmed for clarity that 71 people had been consulted on the application and 12 comments had been received.

Finally, the use class referred to in the first sentence of condition 19 should be Use Class F2(b) and not F2(d), although the description in brackets was correct.

Councillor Narinder Sian spoke on the application. Points raised included that the scheme would provide a sustainable long-term community hub, in line with the aims of the Croxley Green Neighbourhood Plan, which would secure its future; an aging building would be replaced with a modern, accessible community hall which would provide offices for the Parish Council as well as eight affordable rented homes in a sustainable location; the community facility would help to alleviate loneliness and isolation for local older people; the proposal was not considered to be out of character with the area; and residents were strongly in favour of the proposal.

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

- Whilst expressing reservations about the building design, a Committee Member supported the principle of the development.
- Another Committee Member recommended that priority for the housing units should be given to local Croxley Green residents, rather than those from across the district as a whole. The Planning Officer confirmed that the affordable housing condition as written in the report did not contain and reference to Croxley Green residents specially, but rather it would be for those in housing need / on the housing register across the district as a whole. It was agreed that officers would add an informative to draw this to the applicant's attention.

(Note: subsequent to the meeting the Council's Housing Team advised that properties advertised via the Council's Housing Register are allocated strictly in accordance with the Council's Housing Allocations Policy. Preferential treatment to residents from any particular area could not be offered / specified, as the local connection test applies district wide).

Councillor Drury moved, and Councillor Lloyd seconded, that the application be approved subject to conditions, amendment to condition 19 as outlined above, and the addition of an informative relating to occupancy.

On being put to the vote this was agreed unanimously.

RESOLVED: that the application be approved subject to conditions, amendment to condition 19 as outlined above, and the addition of an informative relating to occupancy.

Councillor Mitchell re-joined the meeting.

**PC107/25 25/2120/FUL - REMOVAL OF CONDITION 3 (LIGHTING HOURS)
PURSUANT TO PLANNING PERMISSION 25/1012/RSP AT 57 - 59 HIGH STREET,
ABBOTS LANGLEY, HERTFORDSHIRE WD5 0AE**

The application was for removal of condition 3 (Lighting Hours) pursuant to planning permission 25/1012/RSP at 57 - 59 High Street, Abbots Langley.

The Planning Officer reported that there no updates.

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

- A Committee Member reported that they had undertaken a visit to the site at night. In addition to the light emanating from the parcel locker, there was also light from street

lights and shops, so that the locker downlight was not considered to be significantly contributing to the overall illumination.

- No complaints had been received from residents in relation to the locker lighting.
- A Committee Member commented that the street lights were switched off between 1am and 5am, and it was questioned whether the same could be required of the light which illuminated the locker. However, in debate it was noted that the shop lights remained on all night and so conditioning of the hours of operation may not be reasonable. In relation to a suggestion from the Parish Council that a motion sensor be installed, Committee Members considered that this would serve no useful purpose as the sensor would be likely to be triggered by wildlife. Additionally, the periodic switching of the light on and off may prove more disruptive.
- A Committee Member commented that the level of the lighting appeared excessive in relation to what was needed to operate the locker. Whilst Committee Members did not object to the lighting in principle, it was recommended that the Planning Officer should discuss with the applicant whether the level of brightness could be reduced or changed to a warmer tone. This was supported by Committee Members.

Councillor Lloyd moved, and Councillor Whately-Smith seconded, that authority be delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services to request a change to a warmer lighting tone and a reduction in brightness, and subject to that change, to grant planning permission.

On being put to the vote this was carried, the voting being 10 in favour, 0 against and 1 abstention.

RESOLVED: that authority be delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services to request a change to a warmer lighting tone and a reduction in brightness, and subject to that change, to grant planning permission.

PC108/25 25/2182/FUL - CONSTRUCTION OF SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION, GARAGE CONVERSION AND LOFT CONVERSION WITH SIDE ROOFLIGHTS AND WINDOWS TO SIDE ELEVATION, RELOCATION OF ENTRANCE DOOR AT 99 BYEWATERS, CROXLEY GREEN, WATFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE WD18 8WH

The application was for construction of single storey rear extension, garage conversion and loft conversion with side rooflights and windows to side elevation, relocation of entrance door at 99 Byewaters, Croxley Green.

The Planning Officer reported that there were no updates.

A local resident spoke against the application.

Parish Councillor Kingsley Jolowicz of Croxley Green Parish Council spoke on the application.

Points raised by speakers against the application included: there were two further planning applications for the site which were currently under consideration and which, if approved, would result in a significantly different development; there would be a loss of parking due to the conversion of the garage, and officers' view that the garage was not suitable for its intended use was not accepted; there were implications for privacy arising from overlooking; the proposal was contrary to the design principles of the Byewaters estate and the Croxley Green Neighbourhood Plan; the loft extension sought under separate application would be overbearing and have an adverse effect on the streetscene; the applications when considered together suggested that the property was being adapted for multiple occupancy; and the Parish Council objected to the hip to gable loft extension, the conversion of the garage to living accommodation and the proposed garden room.

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

- In light of the points raised by speakers about other applications at the site, a Committee Member recommended that permitted development rights for extensions, roof extensions and outbuildings be removed in order to prevent over-development. The Planning Officer responded that a condition could be added to require this if considered reasonable and necessary by the Committee; however, it was important to note that it would only become effective once the planning permission were implemented. In the event that permission was granted for the outbuilding and it was constructed first, it would remain lawful.
- The Planning Officer clarified that subsequent to the publication of the agenda, application 25/2183/PDE had been approved. Application 25/2184/CLPD had not been determined but did not form part of this application. Concerns about the head height in relation to the loft conversion would be a matter for building control rather than a planning consideration; however, no changes to the roof form were proposed within this application.
- A Committee Member endorsed the concerns of the public speaker in relation to the potential change of use facilitated by the conversion of the garage to living space and the potential impacts on the streetscene, character and parking in the area. It was therefore recommended that permitted development rights to convert from C3 to C4 land use class be removed by condition. This was supported by other committee members. In responding, the Planning Officer highlighted that the condition would again only become effective when the planning permission was implemented. In the event that the use class was changed prior to this, then there was a mechanism by which the condition could be circumvented. Additionally, the removal of the permitted development rights for multiple occupation may be difficult to defend as the application was for extension of a single family dwelling and not an HMO.

Councillor Cooper moved, and Councillor Drury seconded, that planning permission be granted subject to conditions with an additional condition removing permitted development rights to convert from use class C3 to C4 and removing permitted development rights for extensions, roof extensions and outbuildings.

On being put to the vote this was carried, the voting being 10 for, 1 against and 1 abstention.

RESOLVED: that planning permission be granted subject to conditions with an additional condition removing permitted development rights to convert from use class C3 to C4 and removing permitted development rights for extensions, roof extensions and outbuildings.

CHAIR