
Planning Committee MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Thursday, 19 March 2026 from 7.30 - 9.58 pm

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

Also in Attendance:

Councillor Christopher Alley, Councillor Rue Grewal, Councillor Narinder Sian, County Councillor Vishal Patel (Rickmansworth East and Oxhey Park), Parish Councillor Jon Bishop (Chorleywood Parish Council) and Parish Councillor Andrew Gallagher (Croxley Green Parish Council)

Officers in Attendance:

Emma Lund, Senior Committee Officer
Matthew Roberts, Development Management Team Leader
Kimberley Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services
Alan Story, South-West Herts Development Manager, Hertfordshire County Council
Lilly Varnham, Planning Officer
Claire Westwood, Development Management Team Leader

PC109/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Harry Davies and Steve Drury. The substitutes were Councillors Keith Martin and Louise Price respectively.

PC110/25 MINUTES

The minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 16 and 26 February 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PC111/25 NOTICE OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

PC112/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

PC113/25 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 application was for outline planning permission 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 Planning Officer provided the following updates:

- Since the publication of the agenda, 104 further objections had been received. These had reiterated objections previously received and summarised in the committee report at section 4.2.
- Additionally, a number of submissions had been made by a Ward Councillor. These included an objection letter with 502 residents' signatures; an objection letter citing the most recent opinions provided by Lord Banner KC; an objection letter relating to the canvassing undertaken by the applicant; and an objection letter relating to flooding matters.
- A correction was required to paragraph 7.2.53 of the report which referred to Green Belt parcel S02 of the Stage 2 and 4 Green Belt reviews and which should instead refer to S03.
- Herts Ecology had provided updated comments which had been circulated to Members. It did not object to the scheme subject to recommended conditions. These already formed part of the officer recommendation, with the exception of Condition 7 which required amendment as shown below:

The CEMP shall include details of the mitigation proposed in the March 2026 Ecological Assessment for protected species, including breeding bird mitigation if required following the completed breeding bird surveys and GCN Non-Licensed Method Statement.

The CEMP shall include details of trees with potential to support roosting bats, construction exclusion zones, a pre-works re-inspection (if any works take place within proximity to the trees), ecological watching brief and method statements.

- Finally, in a letter dated 18 March 2026 from Matthew Pennycook MP, the government had directed the Council via the powers in section 21(1)(a) of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004, to include the application site (NCFS12 Land East of Oxhey Lane) within the emerging Local Plan. The site would therefore be an allocated site for the purposes of the future Regulation 19 Consultation. As the Regulation 19 process had not yet commenced officers were currently applying limited weight to the emerging Local Plan. However, Members were advised of the need to strongly consider the likelihood that the site would form an allocated site in the future Local Plan.

It was noted that following the preliminary report which had been discussed at the 23 October 2025 Planning Committee meeting, members of the committee had visited the site on 14 February.

A member of Carpenders' Park Residents' Association spoke against the application.

The applicant spoke in favour of the application.

Councillor Rue Grewal spoke on the application.

Councillor Christopher Alley spoke on the application.

Hertfordshire County Councillor Vishal Patel spoke on the application.

Matters raised by speakers against the proposal included: highways concerns and the cumulative impact on traffic on Oxhey Lane and other local roads arising from this and other applications both granted and pending; lack of primary school capacity; lack of sewerage capacity and insufficient sewerage infrastructure; insufficiency of the local GP healthcare provision; lack of drainage infrastructure and flood risk due to the site's proximity to a flood storage area; the site is Green Belt and not Grey Belt; the development would cause harm to the Green Belt and is inappropriate; there is strong local objection and concern; lack of sustainability of the site; and urbanisation and encroachment.

Points raised by the speaker in favour of the application included: counsel opinion that the proposal met the tests in the NPPF for development in the Green Belt and was Grey Belt; there was unmet need for the type of development proposed; the site location was sustainable; the proposal was compliant with paragraph 155 of the NPPF, the 'Golden Rules' and national policy; very special circumstances existed if the site were considered to be Green Belt; the proposal offered significant benefits which were set out in full in the officer's report and included over £3.7m of S106 infrastructure investment towards schools, health and transport; and the proposal would contribute towards meeting the unmet housing need, and in particular the need for affordable homes.

Officers responded to the points which had been raised by speakers, clarifying the reasons for the officer's assessment of the site as Grey Belt; the reasons why the site was considered to be sustainable; the consultation undertaken with regard to healthcare, education, transport and infrastructure provision and the relevant authorities' views on the proposal; the consideration which had been given to the cumulative impact of other developments in close proximity; and the consideration which had been given to the risk of flooding, all of which issues were addressed in more detail in the report. It was noted that the application was outline, and further details with regard to several of the issues raised would form part of the reserved matters application.

With regard to the points raised by speakers relating to highways, officers clarified that the proposal involved the creation of a signalised junction which had been subject to a road safety stage 1 audit and found to be acceptable and in accordance with national design guides and local standards. Collision data had been reviewed, with nothing to indicate that the proposal would be unsafe. It was acknowledged that there was stress on the local roads network arising from traffic volumes, not only within Three Rivers District but across the county as a whole. For this reason, the highways authority supported development in the right areas where alternatives to private cars could be utilised. Given the proximity to London Underground stations and the proposed off-site highways improvement works to improve walking and cycling routes to the station, local centre and schools the site was considered to be sustainable. A financial contribution was also being sought for improvements to bus services to improve connectivity. The impact of the additional private car trips generated by the development had been modelled and had not been found to be severe, which was the test within the NPPF.

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

- In response to a Member's questions, officers reported that there was a secondary access to the south of the site which would predominantly be for pedestrians and cyclists but which would be 3.7m wide and therefore sufficient for use by emergency vehicles. There was no proposal to change the speed limit on Oxhey Lane from 40mph, and this limit was in accordance with HCC's Speed Management Policy. The new signalised junction had been designed to be appropriate for the 40mph limit, with appropriate levels of visibility from each direction.

- The distance from the centre of the application site to Carpenders Park Station was estimated by officers as c 1 mile or a 20-minute walk. The distance to Bushey Station was c 1.3 miles, or up to 30 minutes on foot. A Committee Member expressed the view that the gradients involved would markedly add to these walking times. In response to further questions about site sustainability officers confirmed that a financial contribution was also being sought towards a docking station for Beryl Bikes at the site and near Carpenders Park Station.
- Details of the bus route were currently indicative, but the bus stop would be located within 400m of the site and would provide a direct link to Carpenders Park Station and the shopping area, as well as linking with primary schools, the leisure centre, library at South Oxhey, and Bushey and Watford. A Committee Member commented that bus routes operated by commercial providers could be withdrawn where not sufficiently profitable, and this had been the case previously. There was also some local dissatisfaction with bus services. Therefore reliance should not be placed on the new bus service in terms of contributing to site sustainability.
- Offsite highways improvements to be provided as part of the proposal included highways resurfacing and footway widening on Oxhey Lane, south of the existing care home; highways resurfacing on the south side Carpenders Avenue up to the junction with Foxleys; and provision of tactile paving and dropped kerbs at junctions along Carpenders Avenue.
- In relation to site sustainability, a Committee Member drew attention to a lack of cycle parking at Carpenders Park Station, which was also difficult to access from the Carpenders Park side. Comment was made that there was also a lack of cycle parking at Bushey Station. Several Committee Members endorsed the concerns raised by speakers in relation to traffic congestion, particularly around Bushey Arches, with some Committee Members considering that the proposed mitigations of Beryl Bikes, walking and cycling routes and a bus service would not result in a realistic modal change (as the inclusion of a care home meant that many residents were likely to be older) and that for this reason the sustainability of the site was in question.
- Committee Members debated the issue of whether the site was Green Belt or Grey Belt. The reasons for the officers' assessment of Grey Belt were noted, as well as the weightings given in the assessment of the planning balance. However, many Committee Members took a different view, considering that the site was not Grey Belt. Additionally, it was considered to perform strongly against purpose (a) and conflict with purpose (c) of paragraph 143 of the NPPF. Finally, it was suggested that the proposal did not meet the 'Golden Rules' requirements on the grounds of sustainability and also because it fell short of the 50% requirement for affordable housing as no affordable housing was to be provided in respect of the Housing with Care units. In response to the latter point, officers reported that Policy CP4 did not apply where in cases where use was considered to be 'institutional'. Therefore, a financial contribution towards affordable housing of 15 percentage points above the highest existing affordable housing requirement which would otherwise apply was being sought in respect of the Use Class C2 Housing with Care. A Committee Member suggested that a 50% affordable housing contribution could be sought within the provisions of paragraph 157 of the NPPF, and so the 15% contribution was not sufficient.
- Several Committee Members commented on the adverse impact of the development on views of the Green Belt from South Oxhey to Carpenders Park and on the landscape, character and streetscene of Oxhey Lane.
- Councillor Cooper moved, and Councillor Mitchell seconded, that the Committee should vote to determine Members' views on whether the site was Grey Belt. On being put to the vote the Committee resolved that the site was Green Belt, the voting being 10 against the assessment of Grey Belt, 0 in favour and 1 abstention. Consequently, having deemed

the site to be Green Belt and as the proposal did not comply with paragraph 155 (a) of the NPPF it was therefore inappropriate development in the Green Belt.

- Some Committee Members expressed concern at the Hertfordshire and West Essex Integrated Care Board's view that services being provided in Bushey were sufficiently 'nearby', and that financial contributions to the Bushey sites of either Manor View or Attenborough surgeries were considered acceptable benefits to support the proposal. It was not considered that this would result in any benefit to the district and recommended that in the event of approval assurance be obtained that contributions towards primary care went to a surgery in either South Oxhey or Carpenders Park.
- Several Committee Members endorsed the concerns about flooding and also Thames Water's position with regard to the application and the inclusion of the 'Grampian' condition.
- Having determined the site to be Green Belt, the Committee considered that the following weightings should be given with regard to benefits in the planning balance:

Housing Provision: very significant weight. Additionally, the adverse impact on landscape, character and streetscene of Oxhey Lane should be weighted as significant.

Affordable Housing Provision: significant weight, due to the failure to provide a full contribution for the C2 Use Class units and the level of shared ownership provision.

Self/Custom Build Housing: significant weight.

Housing with Care: significant weight.

Compliance with Golden Rules: significant weight.

Economic Benefits: moderate weight.

Childrens' Home: moderate weight.

Public Open Space: limited weight, as a large part of the site was already used by the public for activities such as dog walking and had been for a significant number of years. Additionally, there would be harm to trees and to the natural habitat of several species of wildlife.

Sustainable Transport Initiatives: limited weight.

- In conclusion, a Committee Member suggested that very special circumstances for development in the Green Belt did not apply with respect to the application, and that the harm to the Green Belt outweighed the benefits. These harms included the harm to Merry Hill Wood, harm to the openness of the site and loss of hedgerow, and the harm to the purpose of the Green Belt.

Councillor Cooper moved, and Councillor Mitchell seconded, that the application be refused for the reasons that (1) it would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, harm openness, and conflict with purpose (a) and (c) of the Green Belt and very special circumstances would not exist to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm identified; and (2) in the absence of a S106 agreement, the failure to secure infrastructure contributions. Full reasons for refusal would be circulated 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 for the reasons that:

- 1) it would constitute inappropriate development in the Green Belt, harm openness, and conflict with purpose (a) and (c) of the Green Belt. Very special circumstances would not exist to outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and any other harm identified; and
- 2) in the absence of a S106 agreement, failure to secure infrastructure contributions.

Full reasons for refusal would be circulated separately.

PC114/25 25/1346/FUL – CONVERSION OF EXISTING BUILDING INTO 6NO. (USE CLASS C3) RESIDENTIAL UNITS WITH ASSOCIATED BIKE STORE, PARKING AND LANDSCAPING WORKS AT CROXLEY HOUSE, CROXLEY GREEN, RICKMANSWORTH WD3 3JB

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

PC115/25 25/1347/LBC – LISTED BUILDING CONSENT: CONVERSION OF EXISTING BUILDING INTO 6NO. (USE CLASS C3) RESIDENTIAL UNITS WITH ASSOCIATED BIKE STORE, PARKING AND LANDSCAPING WORKS AT CROXLEY HOUSE, CROXLEY GREEN, RICKMANSWORTH WD3 3JB

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

PC116/25 25/1984/FUL - CONSTRUCTION OF PART-SINGLE, PART TWO STOREY FRONT AND REAR EXTENSIONS, FIRST FLOOR SIDE EXTENSION; LOFT CONVERSION INCLUDING ROOF EXTENSION WITH REAR DORMERS AND ROOFLIGHTS, RELOCATION OF ENTRANCE DOOR, INTERNAL ALTERATIONS AND ALTERATIONS TO FENESTRATION AND RAISED TERRACE TO THE REAR AT 43 CHESTNUT AVENUE, RICKMANSWORTH, HERTS WD3 4HA

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

PC117/25 25/2228/RSP – PART-RETROSPECTIVE: CONSTRUCTION OF SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION AT 10 GADE BANK, CROXLEY GREEN, RICKMANSWORTH, HERTFORDSHIRE WD3 3GD

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

PC118/25 26/0041/RSP - PART RETROSPECTIVE: DEMOLITION OF EXISTING GARAGE, WORKSHOP AND FRONT CANOPY; CONSTRUCTION OF PART SINGLE, PART TWO-STOREY REAR EXTENSIONS; TWO-STOREY SIDE EXTENSIONS; FRONT AND REAR DORMERS; INSTALLATION OF CHIMNEY; RAISED REAR PATIO; ALTERATIONS TO FENESTRATION INCLUDING INSTALLATION OF ROOF LIGHTS; RELOCATION OF FRONT ENTRANCE AT 11 PEMBROKE ROAD, MOOR PARK, NORTHWOOD, HERTFORDSHIRE HA6 2HP

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

PC119/25 26/0073/RSP – PART-RETROSPECTIVE: CONSTRUCTION OF TWO STOREY SIDE EXTENSION, LOFT CONVERSION INCLUDING HIP TO GABLE EXTENSION AND REAR DORMER AND FRONT/REAR ROOFLIGHTS AT 9 THE CRESCENT, CROXLEY GREEN, RICKMANSWORTH, HERTFORDSHIRE WD3 3DU

This item was deferred to a future meeting.

CHAIR