
Planning Committee MINUTES

Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on Thursday, 23 April 2026 from 7.30 - 9.07 pm

Present: Councillors Chris Whately-Smith, Elinor Gazzard, Oliver Cooper, Philip Hearn, Stephen King, Chris Lloyd, Chris Mitchell, Keith Martin, Debbie Morris and Sarah Nelmes

Also in Attendance:

Parish Councillor Jon Tankard (Abbots Langley Parish Council)

(Note: Councillor Tankard joined the meeting after the conclusion of application 25/2202/FUL).

Officers in Attendance:

Clara Loveland, Senior Planning Officer
Emma Lund, Senior Committee Officer
Adam Ralton, Development Management Team Leader
Kimberley Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services
Claire Westwood, Development Management Team Leader

PC129/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Harry Davies, Steve Drury and Abbas Merali.

Councillor Keith Martin replaced Councillor Harry Davies and Councillor Sarah Nelmes replaced Councillor Steve Drury for this meeting only.

PC130/25 MINUTES

The minutes of the Planning Committee meetings held on 19 and 31 March were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

PC131/25 NOTICE OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

PC132/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

The Liberal Democrat Group declared a non-pecuniary interest in agenda item 5 (126 Toms Lane, Kings Langley) as the agent is a member of the authority and a member of the Liberal Democrat Group.

PC133/25 25/2202/FUL - DEMOLITION OF AN EXISTING BUILDING TO THE REAR OF NO.126 AND CONSTRUCTION OF 2NO. TWO STOREY DETACHED SELF BUILD DWELLINGS WITH ASSOCIATED SUBDIVISION OF THE SITE AND ALTERATIONS TO

ACCESS, PARKING, LANDSCAPING WORKS AND CONSTRUCTION OF WORKSHOP AND GARAGE AT 126 TOMS LANE, KINGS LANGLEY, HERTFORDSHIRE WD4 8NR

The application was for demolition of an existing building to the rear of No.126 and construction of 2no. two storey detached self build dwellings with associated subdivision of the site and alterations to access, parking, landscaping works and construction of workshop and garage at 126 Toms Lane, Kings Langley.

The Planning Officer reported that officers were aware of the circulation by the applicant of additional information to Planning Committee members. Having reviewed the material, officers did not consider that it altered the officer assessment or recommendation for refusal as set out in the report.

The Planning Officer also reported that paragraph 7.4.21 of the report referred to a 1.7 year housing land supply. However, the updated published figure was 1.2 years. The Planning Officer confirmed that this did not alter the weightings or officer recommendation as detailed in the report.

A local resident spoke against the application.

The applicant spoke in favour of the application.

Points raised by the speaker against the proposal included: the different and harmful nature of the backland form of the development; the site is Green Belt and not Grey Belt and the development would cause harm to a Green Belt site which had an important role in preventing coalescence; the potential for a precedent for development to be set, leading to similar developments in neighbouring plots and an incremental erosion of the Green Belt; and concern about assessing the site as Grey Belt in isolation rather than as part of a wider land parcel.

Points raised by the speaker in favour of the proposal included: the development would provide accommodation for family members who would otherwise not be able to afford the very high local housing prices; there had already been significant infill and splitting of plots in Toms Lane; the site was Grey Belt, the plot size was adequate, and there were no highways objections; and consideration had been given in the design to ensure that there would be no residential overlooking.

With regard to points which had been raised by speakers, officers clarified that the assessment of Grey Belt related to the application site only, and not to any wider parcel of land. In assessing the application consideration had been given to the site's contribution to purposes (a), (b) and (d) set out at Paragraph 155a of the NPPF. For the reasons set out in the report, officers considered that the site made a weak contribution to all three purposes. Therefore, whilst officers were recommending refusal on the grounds of harm to the character and appearance of the area and amenity, the site was Grey Belt and there were no reasons for refusal arising from harm to the Green Belt.

Moderate weight had been attached to the provision of housing; however, in assessing the balance this benefit was not considered to outweigh the harm which would arise from the development.

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

- A Committee Member recommended that the assessment of Green Belt or Grey Belt status should take account of all sites within an area which would be similarly classified, so that the test should be whether purposes (a), (b) and (d) set out at Paragraph 155a of the NPPF would be undermined if more, or all, of these sites were also to be developed. Officers responded that Paragraph 155 referred to 'the development' as a singular, and so

this suggested interpretation was not considered to be correct and the test, as outlined in the report, had been correctly applied. The reason for refusal on the basis of harm to the character and appearance of the area reflected the importance of the Green Belt classification of the wider area and the significance of the linear boundary of Toms Lane. In response to a further question about the apparent disparity in approach which allowed a site to be classified as Grey Belt within an area which was identified in the Local Plan to be of fundamental significance to the Green Belt, officers responded that the large areas identified in the Local Plan were assessed at a high strategic level. In appraising individual applications, officers were required to make assessments at a more granular level, on a site-by-site basis.

- A Committee Member recommended that reference to backland development should be included within the reasons for refusal, and this was supported by other Committee Members.
- A Committee Member noted that the speaker in favour of the application had stated that there were no issues of overlooking; however, the reasons for refusal recommended by officers referred to 'unacceptable levels of overlooking and a perceived loss of privacy'. The Planning Officer clarified that the concern about overlooking largely related to overlooking between the proposed two new units. Additionally, whilst there was no overlooking of neighbouring properties, there was a concern that the development would be overbearing and un-neighbourly. In light of this, it was recommended by a Committee Member that the weighting given in the consideration of harm to neighbouring amenity should be increased from 'moderate' to 'significant.'
- Some Committee Members questioned the officers' assessment of the site as Grey Belt. One Committee Member strongly considered that the site was Green Belt, and that the proposal would fundamentally undermine the purpose of the Green Belt. It was suggested that inappropriate development in the Green Belt should be added to the reasons for refusal, as this would be the case even if the site were to be accepted as Grey Belt. This was because of the unsustainable nature of the site due to its rural location and lack of transport options.

Councillor Morris moved, and Councillor Lloyd seconded, refusal of the application for the reasons set out in the report and subject to the inclusion of reference to backland development within reason for refusal 1. Additionally, the weighting given to the consideration of harm to neighbouring amenity should be increased from 'moderate' to 'significant.'

Councillor Cooper tabled an amendment, seconded by Councillor Hearn, that inappropriate development in the Green Belt be added as a further reason for refusal. The amendment was accepted by Councillor Morris (the proposer) but was not accepted by Councillor Lloyd (the seconder).

Councillor Nelmes then moved, and Councillor Lloyd seconded, refusal of the application for the reasons set out in the report and subject to the inclusion of reference to backland development within reason for refusal 1. Additionally, the weighting given to the consideration of harm to neighbouring amenity should be increased from 'moderate' to 'significant.'

On being put to the vote the amendment fell, the voting being 5 for, 5 against, 0 abstentions. The Chairman's casting vote was used.

On being put to the vote the substantive motion was carried, the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

That the application be refused for the reasons set out in the report and subject to the inclusion of reference to backland development within reason for refusal 1. Additionally, the

weighting given to the consideration of harm to neighbouring amenity should be increased from 'moderate' to 'significant.'

PC134/25 26/0118/FUL – DEMOLITION OF EXISTING SHED, STORAGES AND GARAGE; CONSTRUCTION OF TWO-STOREY SIDE EXTENSION AND SINGLE-STOREY REAR AND EXTENSION; LOFT CONVERSION INCLUDING REAR DORMER; CONSTRUCTION OF REPLACEMENT GARAGE; SOLAR PANELS AND HEAT PUMP AT 62 STATION ROAD, KINGS LANGLEY, HERTFORDSHIRE WD4 8LB

The application was for demolition of existing shed, storages and garage; construction of two-storey side extension and single-storey rear and extension; loft conversion including rear dormer; construction of replacement garage; solar panels and heat pump at 62 Station Road, Kings Langley.

Parish Councillor Jon Tankard joined the meeting.

The Planning Officer reported that following consultation, the views of the Conservation Officer had now been received. The Conservation Officer considered that the proposal would not have an adverse impact on the setting of the listed cottages which were located further down the road, or their special interest.

The Planning Officer also reported that reference to Toms Lane at paragraph 7.3.7 of the report had been included in error and should be omitted. The impact of the proposal on neighbours was assessed in full in the remaining paragraphs of section 7.3.

Finally, the Planning Officer reported that officers had undertaken a site visit earlier in the day to confirm the site's status. This had confirmed that a rear dormer window and front solar panels had been installed at the site under permitted development.

A local resident spoke against the application.

The applicant spoke in favour of the application.

Parish Councillor Jon Tankard (Abbots Langley Parish Council) spoke on the application.

Points raised by speakers against the proposal included: the applicant had obtained change of use permission for a 6-bedroom HMO under permitted development rights, but if the application were to be approved it may result in a larger HMO at the property in the future; there was insufficient parking; the extension and garage would leave little outside amenity space; the proposal represented over-development of the site and was out of character; the extension would reduce visibility at the turning into Egg Farm Lane, with associated safety implications; use of the property as an HMO would result in additional traffic movements, noise, refuse, and infrastructure pressures which would impact on neighbours and the character of the area; there would be a harmful impact to the setting of the listed cottages on Station Road and a likelihood of cars being parked across their frontage; and there was a lack of a detailed heritage assessment.

Points raised by the speaker in favour of the proposal included: the operation of the property as a small HMO had already been granted consent and was lawful; a significant proportion of the proposed work was permitted under a separate Certificate of Lawfulness; the proposal was designed to be an example of high-end, eco-friendly and energy efficient housing for young professionals, addressing a local need and was of high quality design; and the extension was designed to be a sympathetic addition to the property and the character of the surrounding area.

In response to the points raised by speakers, the Planning Officer reported that the application had been assessed as a householder development and not as a development for an HMO. Regard had been given, in considering the acceptability of the scheme, to the fact that a lawful

development certificate for up to 6 occupants existed. The issue of over-development was addressed in the report at section 7.2.5 and elsewhere in section 2. Finally, the Highways Officer had been consulted on the application and had raised no objections on the grounds of highway safety; additionally, there was an alternative access at the rear of the site which had been in use for some time.

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

- The Planning Officer confirmed that the proposal relied on one parking space within the garage to the rear of the property, accessible via an existing access. No parking spaces were proposed to the front of the property. In addition, the application site was eligible for two parking permits for the controlled parking zone. For these reasons, and due to the sustainable location of the development, officers were satisfied that the proposal was acceptable in terms of parking provision. A parking shortfall already existed at the property and this situation would remain unchanged under the proposed scheme, so that this was not considered by officers to represent sufficient justification for refusal.
- In response to a question as to why the application had been assessed as a householder development, given the applicant's stated intention to operate the property as an HMO, the Planning Officer clarified that a change from Use Class C3 (residential dwelling) to C4 (small house of multiple occupation) for a maximum of 6 occupants had been granted under permitted development. An HMO with more than 6 occupants would require express planning consent. Whilst the lawful fallback position was important in assessing the acceptability of the scheme, it did not infer that it was being proposed within this application. It was noted that the applicant had previously submitted an application for a larger (9-bedroom) HMO which was subsequently withdrawn; the Planning Officer commented that whilst the planning history was a material consideration, officers were only able to assess the application as presented and with regard to the submitted plans, which in this case were for a householder application for extensions to the property.
- Some Committee Members commented on the value of HMOs as a housing option, especially for younger people, noting that many were of high quality and well-run.
- A Committee Member expressed concern about the lack of parking provision within the proposal, irrespective of how the property would be used, and commented that there were already significant parking pressures in the nearby roads. This was endorsed by another Committee Member.
- A Committee Member commented that as use of the property as an HMO for up to 6 occupants had been consented, there was a need to consider the impact on neighbouring amenity of the property being used in this way. Significant weight should be given to the addition of parking demand in an area where availability of parking was already lacking. It was also considered that there was insufficient mitigation of the harm to neighbours arising from the intensification of use, such as the harm from noise and the parking shortfall.
- A Committee Member commented that the proposal would result in a lack of outdoor amenity space for occupants (33sqm, compared with a standard of 105sqm for a four-bedroomed property). The officer justification of the proximity of Primrose Hill Playing Field was not considered to be sufficient mitigation for this significant shortfall in amenity space.
- Another Committee Member commented that, whilst noting the concerns of residents, there did not seem to be sufficient planning grounds to refuse the application, and that the demand for parking would not be significantly different to that which could be needed were it to be used as a dwelling house where adult children resided.

- In response to a question, the Planning Officer clarified that the only element of the scheme which could not be implemented under permitted development was the two-storey side extension. A Committee Member expressed the view that the side extension may represent over-development of the site, and this was endorsed by other Committee Members. Another Committee Member expressed the view that the application should be refused on the grounds of parking shortfall, lack of amenity space, adverse impact on the character of the area and adverse impact on neighbouring amenity, in addition to the over-development of the site.
- Another Committee Member commented that the two-storey side extension appeared to be excessively prominent in relation the adjacent property and would serve to make number 62 dominant to number 64.

Councillor Morris moved, and Councillor Mitchell seconded, that the application be refused on the basis that the proposal, by reason of the lack of car parking and lack of amenity space, would result in a harmful impact on the character of the area. Full 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 8 for, 0 against, 2 abstentions.

RESOLVED:

That the application be refused on the basis that the proposal, by reason of the lack of car parking and lack of amenity space, would result in a harmful impact on the character of the area. Full wording of the reasons for refusal would be circulated to Committee Members separately.

CHAIR