
Planning Committee MINUTES

**Of a meeting held in the Penn Chamber, Three Rivers House, Rickmansworth, on
Thursday, 20 August 2026 from 7.30 - 9.43 pm**

Present: Councillors Elinor Gazzard (Vice-Chair, in the Chair), Oliver Cooper, Stephen Cox, Raj Khiroya, Chris Mitchell, Debbie Morris, Krutika Patel, Louise Price and Tom Smith

Also in Attendance:

Parish Councillor Diana Barber (Batchworth Community Council) and County Councillor Vishal Patel

Officers in Attendance:

Emma Lund, Senior Committee Officer
Adam Ralton, Development Management Team Leader
Kimberley Rowley, Head of Regulatory Services
Lilly Varnham, Senior Planning Officer
Scott Volker, Development Management Team Leader

PC166/25 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Chris Whately-Smith and Reena Ranger OBE.

Councillor Louise Price replaced Councillor Chris Whately-Smith and Councillor Krutika Patel replaced Councillor Reena Ranger for this meeting only.

In the absence of Councillor Chris Whately-Smith the meeting was chaired by the Vice-Chair, Councillor Elinor Gazzard.

PC167/25 MINUTES

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

PC168/25 NOTICE OF URGENT BUSINESS

There were no items of urgent business.

PC169/25 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

There were no declarations of interest.

PC170/25 25/2168/OUT - OUTLINE APPLICATION: CONSTRUCTION OF UP TO 70 RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS (USE CLASS C3) WITH ASSOCIATED ACCESS ONTO OXHEY LANE AND INFRASTRUCTURE (APPEARANCE, LAYOUT, LANDSCAPING AND SCALE AS RESERVED MATTERS) AT LAND ADJACENT TO WOODLANDS COTTAGE, OXHEY LANE, CARPENDERS PARK, WATFORD, HERTFORDSHIRE

The application was outline for construction of up to 70 residential dwellings (Use Class C3) with associated access onto Oxhey Lane and infrastructure (Appearance, Layout, Landscaping and Scale as reserved matters) at Land Adjacent To Woodlands Cottage, Oxhey Lane, Carpenders Park, Watford, Hertfordshire.

The Planning Officer reported that since publication of the agenda, two further letters of objection had been received. One of these had raised points which had already been addressed in the report. The other had been circulated to committee members earlier in the day; the majority of the points raised in that representation had also been addressed within the report.

The Planning Officer drew attention to a required correction to the meeting date at the top of the report, which should show 20 August 2026 and not 26 February 2026. Additionally, the recommendation referred to the Heads of Terms at paragraph 7.21, where this should read paragraph 7.20.

The Planning Officer also reported that subsequent to the issuing of the agenda, a new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) had been published. An addendum to the report had therefore been provided to committee members which set out officers' consideration of the scheme against the updated NPPF. In conclusion, officers did not consider that the updated NPPF changed the recommendation to approve. It was noted that paragraph 7.5.7 of the addendum should be amended to read that the benefits of approving the development would not be substantially outweighed by the adverse effects, namely the harm identified to the heritage asset. This was to reflect the new test within the new NPPF that proposals should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects.

A speaker on behalf of Residents Protecting Oxhey Lane Fields spoke against the application.

County Councillor Vishal Patel spoke against the application.

Points raised by the speakers included that the classification of the site as Grey Belt was unreasoned; no assessment of openness had been carried out; the Council's own Green Belt evidence had been set aside without analysis; Policy GB7(1)(h) was not engaged; the density position was inconsistent as the site could not simultaneously be close enough to the station to engage GB7(1)(h) and too constrained to meet the density that proximity requires; Golden Rule (c) had not been assessed against the standards now in force (GB8(1)(c)); the planning balance had not been struck under the Framework in force; infrastructure capacity had not been demonstrated and there was insufficient road capacity; limited weight should be given to the allocation of the site in the emerging Local Plan given that the Regulation 19 Consultation was still open; and there was an objection from the Conservation Officer and there would be harm to designated heritage assets.

The Planning Officer responded that whilst the addendum introduced the ability to consider the application against one of the new parts of the NPPF (the introduction of GB7(1)(h)), the other parts of the NPPF remained applicable, as set out in the original report, and officers had assessed the application against all of the criteria. It was acknowledged that the site was more than 800m from the station. Notwithstanding that the updated NPPF was very new and had not been tested at appeal, the wording of the policy referred to distance being 'around 800m' and 'a reasonable walking distance'. Officers' judgement was that the proposal met these criteria.

In relation to a speaker's comment that a site cannot be Grey Belt where heritage gave a strong reason to refuse, the Planning Officer responded that this had been removed from the new NPPF. Officers therefore maintained the position that the site was Grey Belt.

In response to a comment that no assessment of openness had been provided in the report, the Planning Officer responded that this was because the officers' assessment was that the proposal was appropriate development in the Green Belt. Therefore, no assessment of the impact on openness was required.

In response to a comment that very special circumstances had not been addressed in the report, the Planning Officer clarified that the reason for this was that the application was not considered to be inappropriate development in the Green Belt. Committee members were referred to paragraph 7.21 of the report where the harms and benefits of the proposal were presented. In the event that the committee's view differed from that of officers, committee members were invited to consider these and decide whether the benefits outweighed any harm caused and amounted to very special circumstances.

In relation to the harm to the heritage asset, the Planning Officer commented that whilst the wording in the NPPF had changed, and it was acknowledged that there would be harm to the heritage asset, officers did not consider that it would be heavier harm. Rather, it was a low level of harm which would be outweighed by the public benefits.

With regard to infrastructure concerns, the comments of Thames Water and the Integrated Care Board were noted. The Planning Officer outlined that these impacts would be mitigated by conditioning that the development could not be occupied until water upgrades had been completed, and by securing a financial contribution towards healthcare.

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 expressed concern that the proposal would fill the last remaining green space between Watford and Carpenders Park. The Planning Officer summarised the reasons, set out in full in the report, why officers had formed the view, having regard to the Planning Practice Guidance, that the site did not make a strong contribution to checking the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas or preventing neighbouring towns from merging and was consequently Grey Belt.
- A committee member commented that it was difficult for members to fully understand the implications of the new NPPF given how recently it had been published. Additionally, it could be argued that the Council now had an emerging five year housing land supply. It was suggested therefore that examination as part of the Local Plan process may provide a more appropriate forum for testing the site allocation. The Planning Officer acknowledged that the site was allocated within the emerging Local Plan, which suggested that it be found as Grey Belt. However, officers were of the view that any appeal would be judged on the existing housing land supply which could be evidenced, and this was currently 1.2 years. It was agreed that Examination was the appropriate forum to consider the sites proposed to be allocated in the Local Plan; however, that was a parallel process to the planning process which required an application to be determined on its planning merits. Refusal on the basis of prematurity would require the grant of planning permission to undermine the plan making process. This was a high bar which was not considered to be met by this application and having regard to the stage of the emerging Local Plan. In responding to the first point the Planning Officer advised that there was an option for the application to be deferred to allow committee members more time to obtain further information about the implications of the new NPPF. It was noted in debate that in the event of deferral, should the applicant not agree a further extension to the determination deadline they would have the option to appeal against the Council on grounds of non-determination.

- In relation to policy GB(7)(1)(h), a committee member expressed the view that whilst Bushey was undoubtedly a well-connected station as defined by the new NPPF, its distance of c1100m from the site did not meet the test of 'around 800m'. Accordingly, there was a need for consideration to be given to GB(7)(1)(g) and whether the development was inappropriate in the Green Belt. The committee member expressed the view that the proposal amounted to an incongruous pattern of development and would result in fully built-up form all the way into Watford. Additionally, the cumulative impact of multiple developments in the area, which would result in c90% of the gap between built-up areas being closed, required consideration. The Planning Officer responded that due to the status of the neighbouring sites and the fact that development had not yet started, there was no certainty that they would be developed in accordance with granted permissions. It would therefore be difficult to attach weight to the cumulative impact argument. In addition, the application required consideration on its own merits and according to the current site circumstances.
- A committee member questioned the sustainability of the site, given the distance to the station, shops, primary schools and health services and the infrequency of bus services. It was suggested that the development would therefore be heavily reliant on cars, with implications for traffic on Oxhey Lane. The Planning Officer summarised the reasons why officers considered the site to be sustainable, which were set out in detail in the report. Another member questioned whether the moderate weighting for sustainable development which was given by officers indicated a lack of confidence in the sustainability of the site. The Planning Officer responded that officers would find it difficult to give significant weight to a development on the basis of a sustainable location alone, as there were many other factors which fed into whether a proposal was acceptable in planning terms. Additionally, consistency was needed with judgments across the district of other sites that might be nearer to, or further from, facilities or have different levels of accessibility. Whilst the distance to the station was more than 800m, the site remained accessible to many facilities. Moderate was therefore considered to be a reasonable weighting to give to the location of the development, and remained a weighting in its favour. Several committee members expressed the view that the distance to the station, the fact that there would be no doctor's surgery accessible on foot, the infrequency of bus services, and the lack of facilities within walking distance meant that the site could not be considered sustainable.
- A committee member raised the impact of the development on Oxhey Grange Lodge and the role of the Green Belt in protecting heritage assets. The Planning Officer reported that officers accepted that there would be a level of harm to the Lodge. In line with the NPPF, officers had considered whether there were any public benefits and had considered that the provision of housing and affordable housing and the other benefits set out in the report were sufficient to outweigh the harm to the heritage asset. There was also mitigation in the illustrative masterplan as the development was set back from Oxhey Lane, maintaining some level of openness around the Lodge, and included open space and planting as a buffer between the built form.
- A committee member welcomed that the Integrated Care Board's submission had expressly stated a preference to use the S106 monies for healthcare in the Carpenders Park and South Oxhey area. This had not been the case for the two other nearby applications, which had led to concerns that the contributions may be used for other branches of the GP practice network which were outside the area.
- A committee member considered that the proposal would result in an incongruous pattern of development which was out of place with the rural nature of Watford Heath. Furthermore, the site made a strong contribution to the prevention of the unrestricted sprawl of a large built-up area. For this reason, there was a strong argument that the site was not Green Belt. The proposal was considered to represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt, and very substantial weight should be given to this and the harm which would be caused to the Green Belt, including harm to the openness of the Green Belt. As the proposal was considered to represent inappropriate development in the Green Belt,

there was also a need to consider whether very special circumstances applied. The committee member expressed the view that the following weightings should be given to the scheme's benefits:

Market housing: substantial weight, due to the lack of a five-year land supply
Affordable Housing: substantial weight
Accordance with Golden Rules: significant weight
Infrastructure: no weight
Sustainable Development: limited weight
Green Infrastructure: no weight

Moderate weight should also be given to the fact that self-build plots were to be provided on site, due to the lack of self-build availability in the district.

- Another committee member recommended that the harm to the Grade II listed building should also be included in any reason for refusal and this was accepted.

Councillor Cooper moved, and Councillor Khiroya seconded, that the application be refused for the reasons that it was inappropriate development in the Green Belt; would cause harm to the Grade 2 listed heritage asset; and there was a failure to complete a S106 Agreement to secure the contributions set out at section 7.20 of the report. These harms outweighed the benefits arising from housing, affordable housing, self-build, sustainable location and adherence to the Golden Rules. Final wording of the reasons for refusal to be circulated following the meeting.

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

RESOLVED:

That the application be refused for the reasons that it was inappropriate development in the Green Belt; would cause harm to the Grade 2 listed heritage asset; and there was a failure to complete a S106 Agreement to secure the contributions set out at section 7.20 of the report. These harms outweighed the benefits arising from housing, affordable housing, self-build, sustainable location and adherence to the Golden Rules. Final wording of the reasons for refusal to be circulated following the meeting.

PC171/25 26/0645/FUL - DEMOLITION OF EXISTING TWO STOREY SIDE EXTENSION, SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION AND FRONT PORCH; CONSTRUCTION OF TWO STOREY SIDE EXTENSION AND SINGLE STOREY REAR EXTENSION, LOFT CONVERSION INCLUDING ALTERATIONS TO ROOF FORM, WITH FRONT/REAR DORMERS, REAR JULIET DORMER AND FRONT/SIDE ROOFLIGHTS; INTERNAL ALTERATIONS AND ALTERATIONS TO FENESTRATION AT 75 NIGHTINGALE ROAD, RICKMANSWORTH, HERTFORDSHIRE WD3 7BU

The application was for demolition of existing two storey side extension, single storey rear extension and front porch; construction of two storey side extension and single storey rear extension, loft conversion including alterations to roof form, with front/rear dormers, rear Juliet dormer and front/side rooflights; internal alterations and alterations to fenestration at 75 Nightingale Road, Rickmansworth.

The Planning Officer reported that, as noted earlier in the meeting, a new National Planning Policy Framework has been issued following the publication of the report for the committee meeting. Officers had considered the application with regard to the new NPPF and were satisfied that the assessment and recommendation remained as set out in the committee report.

A local resident spoke against the application.

Parish Councillor Diana Barber of Batchworth Community Council spoke on the application.

The applicant spoke in favour of the application.

Points raised by speakers against the application included: the impact on neighbouring amenity arising from the proximity of the side extension to the neighbouring boundary, facing the main means of entry into the rear garden; the officer report did not take account of the fact that the existing two storey side extension was in two parts, only one of which was on the boundary. The new proposal would involve a continuous two storey extension which was only one metre from the boundary, reducing the separation in part from 3m to 1m; the proposal did not meet the Council's guidance requiring a minimum 1.2 metre separation in low density areas; the proposal changed a stairwell window, where overlooking was incidental, to a new first floor kitchen window overlooking the neighbouring patio and garden; the new Juliet balcony also created additional overlooking; the proposal did not meet the objectives of the Batchworth Community Council Neighbourhood Plan and would be detrimental to the character of the street scene; the Conservation Officer had expressed concerns and these were supported; there was harm arising from the excessive scale of the dormers and the number of rooflights; and whilst there was now an internal access point to the extension, the side access door was being retained. Changes to the internal access in the future could therefore result in a self-contained flat within a family dwelling rather than an extension.

Points raised by the speaker in favour of the application included: the proposal involved the removal of an existing inappropriate extension; the total floor space was negligibly more than the existing and the footprint would be smaller; materials and building styles would be more in keeping with the Conservation Area; the roof would be somewhat higher, but remained set down 1.45m from the height of the existing house; and other extensions had been approved within the Conservation Area which were of a greater height.

In responding to a point made by a speaker about the impact of the extension on neighbouring amenity, the Planning Officer reported that the spacing had been considered and was addressed fully in the officer report. It was acknowledged that the spacing fell short of the guidance. However, considering the extension and design as a whole it was considered that it did not project beyond the rear building line of the host building. The use of a Dutch hip roof and the reduced ridge height would also limit its visual prominence. It was accepted that the outlook from the neighbouring property would change; however, it was not considered that the resultant change would create an unacceptable sense of enclosure or have an overbearing impact on the neighbour's amenities.

In responding to a point made by a speaker about overlooking arising from the first floor window in the side extension, the Planning Officer reported that a condition would be attached to any grant of planning permission requiring this window to be fitted with obscure glazing. Additionally, whilst the Juliet dormer did introduce glazing at the second floor level and could afford views over neighbouring properties, it was considerably set in from both boundaries. The position of officers was that views would be afforded predominantly over the application site's rear amenity space, and it was not considered that any views based on the separation to the boundaries would cause sufficient harm to justify refusal.

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

- A committee member drew attention to the concerns of the Conservation Officer regarding the number of proposed rooflights and the scale of the dormers in the roof and questioned whether potential mitigations had been explored. In respect of the rooflights, Planning Officers responded that there were other examples of rooflights within the Conservation Area, and those proposed within the application would be of a heritage style design. Only one rooflight was proposed to the front roof slope of the dwelling - which arguably made the greatest contribution to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area, as an

article 4 direction in Upper Nightingale Road restricted roof lights to the front roof slope. Disregarding the rooflight in the extension, the two rooflights on both flank elevations would otherwise be allowable under permitted development.

- With regard to the dormers, the scale and number had been reduced through the receipt of amended plans. The dormers were, in the view of Planning Officers, set in from all planes of the roof slope and were of a modest scale such that they would be read as subordinate additions in the context of the roof form. In assessing the application, the Conservation Officer's comments had been carefully considered. However, Planning Officers had reached a different professional judgment on those two points and concluded, based on the limited number and design of the roof lights, their position, and the scale of the dormers, that the proposal would preserve the character of the Conservation Area.
- A number of committee members endorsed the concerns of the Conservation Officer, particularly with regard to the number of rooflights and the first and second floor dormer windows. Concern was also expressed with regard to harmful impact on neighbouring amenity, particularly the proximity of flank windows between the two properties.
- A committee member expressed the view that the removal of the unsympathetic garage extension would represent an improvement on the existing situation, and as such would enhance the Conservation Area. The replacement garage extension would be smaller and more set back, and the rooflights were therefore likely required in order to make the improvement viable.
- Several committee members shared the view that the removal of the garage extension would represent a benefit and an enhancement to the Conservation Area, whilst supporting the Conservation Officer's concerns about the rooflights and dormer windows and the concerns relating to neighbouring amenity. It was suggested by officers that the application could be deferred to allow for further discussions with the applicant with a view to addressing the concerns raised and improving the scheme. This should also include consideration of whether the proposal could be amended to meet the Council's guidance of 1.2m separation.

Councillor Morris moved refusal of the application on the basis that the application failed to preserve or enhance the Conservation Area and would result in a harmful impact on neighbouring amenity. The proposal was subsequently withdrawn following the officers' suggestion that the application be deferred.

Councillor Mitchell moved, and Councillor Cox seconded, that the application be deferred to allow for further discussions with the applicant. On being put to the vote this was carried unanimously.

RESOLVED:

That the application be deferred.

PC172/25 26/1042/FUL - LOFT CONVERSION INCLUDING HIP TO GABLE ROOF EXTENSION; CONSTRUCTION OF A REAR DORMER; INSTALLATION OF ROOFLIGHTS AND REMOVAL OF CHIMNEY STACK, SINGLE STOREY FRONT EXTENSION AND FRONT PORCH, ALTERATIONS TO FENESTRATION, ALTERATIONS TO FRONT AMENITY GARDEN AND CONSTRUCTION OF FRONT PEDESTRIAN GATE AT 36 GIRTON WAY, CROXLEY GREEN, RICKMANSWORTH, HERTFORDSHIRE WD3 3QN

The application was for loft conversion including hip to gable roof extension; construction of a rear dormer; installation of rooflights and removal of chimney stack, single storey front extension and front porch, alterations to fenestration, alterations to front amenity garden and construction of front pedestrian gate at 36 Girton Way, Croxley Green, Rickmansworth.

The Planning Officer reported that, as noted earlier in the meeting, a new National Planning Policy Framework has been issued following the publication of the report for the committee meeting. Officers had considered the application with regard to the new NPPF and were satisfied that the assessment and recommendation remained as set out in the committee report.

It was noted that the application was before the Committee as a District Councillor lived within the consultation area.

Councillor Gazzard moved, and Councillor Cooper seconded, that planning permission be granted, subject to conditions. On being put to the vote this was carried, the voting being unanimous.

RESOLVED:

That planning permission be granted, subject to conditions.

CHAIR