

PLANNING COMMITTEE – Thursday 20 August 2026

Item 5 - Addendum to the Committee Report following the 2026 publication of the National Planning Policy Framework

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.

This addendum provides an update to the parts of the published Committee report which are required to be updated following the publication of the new National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) on 17 August 2026.

The revised NPPF is a material consideration to the assessment of the application as a whole. This addendum covers the items of the analysis where the update to the NPPF directly affects the direct references to the NPPF as set out within the published report and any changes to the assessment of the scheme following the publication of the NPPF.

Recommendation: The changes to the NPPF has not resulted in any changes to the recommendation as set out in the published committee report thus the recommendation remains as:

That authority is delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services to grant planning permission, following completion of a S106 Agreement (securing the Heads of Term set out at 7.20 including affordable housing provision, travel plan, contributions to infrastructure including education, healthcare and waste infrastructure and monitoring fees) subject to conditions AND to make any minor amendments to the Heads of Terms and Planning Conditions in consultation with the Planning Committee Chair.

To view all documents forming part of this application please go to the following website:

<https://www3.threerivers.gov.uk/online-applications/applicationDetails.do?activeTab=documents&keyVal=T7AT05QFJ9300>

Revised Executive Summary

This report makes a full assessment of planning application 26/2168/OUT, Outline consent for the 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).

The assessment has considered all relevant material planning considerations, including the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) and The Three Rivers Local Development Plan. The responses from consultees have also been considered, and a list of all consultees is included at section 4 of the published Committee report with their full comments provided in **Appendix 1** attached to the published report. With the exception of the Conservation Officer who has commented that the proposal would result in a lower level of less than substantial harm (now referred to as low level harm following the NPPF publication) to the setting of the nearby Grade II Listed Building no objections were raised by the consultees.

The primary planning considerations include the principle of the development in the Green Belt; impact on landscape and impact on green infrastructure, character and heritage; housing provision; highways and access considerations and residential amenity. Officers

have assessed these matters and all other planning considerations and conclude that the proposal is acceptable.

In relation to Green Belt, officers consider that the site is Grey Belt and the proposal accords with NPPF Policy GB7(1)(h) and meets the Golden rules as set out within Policy GB8 of the NPPF. As such, it is considered that the development is an appropriate form of development in the Green Belt. A low level of harm to the setting of the neighbouring Grade II Listed Building was identified however public benefits would outweigh this harm. Subject to conditions/ S106 legal agreement there are no objections on highways, amenity or other grounds. The site is allocated (Site CFS13) in the emerging Regulation 19 Site Allocations.

Considering the character of the site and sustainable location no significant adverse impacts or reasons for refusal of the scheme have been identified.

The benefits of the scheme, which are considered at section 7.21 of the published report, include the need for housing, the need for affordable housing and compliance with the 'Golden Rules'. These hold substantial and significant weight in favour of the development.

Overall, the report clearly demonstrates that the benefits of the scheme, when assessed against the policies in the Framework, clearly outweigh the lower level of less than substantial harm to the heritage asset.

This executive summary provides an overview. It is not exhaustive and should be read in conjunction with the full report for a complete understanding.

1. Relevant Planning Policy, Guidance and Legislation

1.1 National Planning Policy Framework and National Planning Practice Guidance

In August 2026 the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) was published and should be read along with the National Planning Practice Guidance (NPPG) as relevant government planning guidance. As is recognised in the NPPF, planning law requires that applications for planning permission be determined in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise. The NPPF and NPPG are 'material considerations' relevant to planning decision making.

A number of NPPF chapters are relevant to the consideration of this application, with the most important being:

- 3 – Decision making policies
- 4 – Achieving sustainable development
- 5 – Meeting the challenge of climate change
- 6 – Delivering a sufficient supply of homes
- 12 – Making efficient use of land
- 13 – Protecting Green Belt land
- 14 – Achieving well-designed places
- 15 – Promoting sustainable transport
- 16 – Promoting healthy communities
- 17 – Pollution, public protection and security
- 18 – Managing flood risk and coastal change
- 19 – Conserving and enhancing the natural environment
- 20 – Conserving and enhancing the historic environment

2. Planning Analysis

7.1 Green Belt (Section 7.2 of published report)

7.1.1 The application site falls entirely within the Metropolitan Green Belt.

- 7.1.2 Chapter 13 of the NPPF states “the objective of Green Belt policy, as set out in this chapter, is to prevent urban sprawl by keeping land permanently open. The Government attaches great importance to Green Belt, the essential features of which are their openness and permanence”. Policy GB2 identifies the that Green Belt serves five purposes:
- a) to check the unrestricted sprawl of large built-up areas;
 - b) to prevent neighbouring towns merging into one another;
 - c) to assist in safeguarding the countryside from encroachment;
 - d) to preserve the setting and special character of historic towns; and
 - e) to assist in urban regeneration, by encouraging the recycling of derelict and other urban land.
- 7.1.3 Whilst paragraph 153 of the NPPF has been changed to Policy GB6 the ethos that inappropriate development is by definition harmful to the Green Belt and should not be approved except in very special circumstances and that substantial weight should be given to any harm to the Green Belt including harm to its openness is reflected within this policy.
- 7.1.4 Policy GB7 replaces paragraph 154 and sets out the categories of development that are not inappropriate in the Green Belt, and therefore should not be regarded as harmful to the Green Belt or required to demonstrate very special circumstances:
- a. Development which is for agriculture, horticulture and forestry, or which is solely for nature conservation, restoration and/or enhancement;
 - b. The reuse, extension, alteration or replacement of an existing building, provided that the existing building is of permanent and substantial construction, is lawful in planning terms, and any extension or alteration will not result in a disproportionate increase in size compared to the original building⁴⁰. In the case of proposals for a replacement building, it should be for the same use and not materially larger than the one it replaces;
 - c. Limited infilling in villages lying within the Green Belt;
 - d. Limited affordable housing for local community needs under policies set out in this Framework or the development plan (for instance, on a rural exception site);
 - e. The redevelopment of previously developed land (including a material change of use to residential or mixed-use including residential), which would not cause substantial harm to the openness of the Green Belt;
 - f. Certain other forms of development, provided the impact on the openness of the Green Belt is minimised, and there would not be a significant conflict with the Green Belt purposes. These are:
 - i. Mineral extraction and processing, engineering operations, and transport, electricity network, water and telecommunications infrastructure required in a Green Belt location);
 - ii. Development brought forward under a Community Right to Build Order or Neighbourhood Development Order;
 - iii. Material changes in the use of land (such as changes of use for outdoor sport or recreation, or for cemeteries and burial grounds); and

iv. The provision of appropriate facilities (in connection with the existing use of land or a change of use), including buildings, for outdoor sport, outdoor recreation, cemeteries and burial grounds and allotments.

g. Development where all of the following apply:

- i. The development would utilise grey belt land and would not fundamentally undermine the purposes (taken together) of the remaining Green Belt across the area of the plan;
- ii. There is an evidenced unmet need for the type of development proposed⁴¹;
- iii. The development would be in a sustainable location, with particular reference to policy TR3 of this Framework⁴²; and
- iv. In the case of major development involving the provision of housing, the development proposed complies with policy GB8.

h. Residential or mixed-use development which would:

- i. Be within reasonable walking distance of a well-connected station (applying the definitions in the glossary at Annex B);
- ii. Be physically well-related to the station or the settlement within which the station is located;
- iii. Be of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure;
- iv. Not prejudice any proposals for long-term comprehensive development in the same location; and
- v. In the case of proposals for major development, comply with policy GB8.

7.1.5 The most relevant change between the 2024 and 2026 version that is applicable to this application is the introduction of GB7,1,h. The published report identifies that the development would be on Grey Belt land and would meet the requirements as set out in paragraph 155 and 156 of the NPPF (replaced by Policies GB7,1,g and GB8). The development is considered to comply with the updated Grey Belt criteria, which do not materially depart from the 2024 criteria. The proposal would therefore represent an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt. This judgement is still considered to apply.

7.1.6 However, as the development is for residential development GB7,1,h. would be applicable. With regards to h(i). the site is within reasonable walking distance of a well connected station. Bushey provides links to Watford Junction and London Euston. As identified within the published report Bushey station is located approximately 0.7miles (1100m) from the site (an approximate 16 minute walk). Annex B defines 'Reasonable Walking Distance' and 'Well Connected Station' as:

'Reasonable walking distance: For the purpose of policies S5, L3, GB7 (relating to land around well-connected stations), this should be considered to be around 800 metres, or around 10 minutes' walk time if topography, route availability and quality or physical barriers would prevent or discourage walking from up to 800 metres away. ... Where a reasonable walking distance is required to be calculated when applying policies S5(1)(h), L3(2)(c) and GB7(1)(h), and only part of the site falls within the reasonable walking distance, those sub-paragraphs of policies S5, L3 and GB7 only apply to the area of the site within that reasonable walking distance.'

'Well-connected station: Railway stations and underground, tram and light rail stops located within a top 80 Travel to Work Area located partially or fully within England by Gross Value Added (GVA)⁷² and which, in the normal weekday timetable, are served (or have a

reasonable prospect of being served due to planned upgrades or through agreement with the rail operator) throughout the daytime by at least four trains or trams per hour overall, or at least two trains or trams per hour in any one direction.'

- 7.1.7 Bushey Station is some 300m above the 800 meters but is considered to fall within a reasonable distance that would encourage people from the site to walk to the station. The station is easily accessible from the site by existing lit footpaths with safe crossing points. It is noted that the furthest part of the site would exceed this 1100m but the site is small in area (covering just 2.7 hectares) that has a relatively flat topography. It is considered that the site as a whole is within a reasonable walking distance from Bushey Station that provides a legitimate alternative to public transport links than the use of private motor vehicles. Bushey Station meets the definition of a well connected station providing a number of hourly services in each direction.
- 7.1.8 With regards to h.ii. the site is surrounded by residential development and is considered to be well related to the existing settlement of Watford of which Bushey Station is located within.
- 7.1.9 h.iii. as identified within the published report the proposal would be subject to infrastructure contributions that would provide necessary improvements to local infrastructure that would accommodate the proposed development.
- 7.1.10 h.iv. the application site is an allocated site within the emerging Regulation 19 Local Plan Site Allocations and is an independent site that would not prejudice the any long term comprehensive development in the same location.
- 7.1.11 h.v. requires proposals for major development to comply with Policy GB8. GB8 states:
- '1. Where major development involving the provision of housing is proposed on land released from the Green Belt through plan preparation or review, or on sites in the Green Belt subject to a planning application, all of the following contributions ('Golden Rules') should be made:
- a. Affordable housing which reflects either:
- i. Development plan policy requirements for major development on land within or released from the Green Belt (as established under policy HO5(1)(a)(ii)); or
- ii. Until such policies are in place, a contribution which is 15 percentage points above the highest existing affordable housing requirement which would otherwise apply to the development, subject to a cap of a 50%. In the absence of a preexisting requirement for affordable housing, a 50% affordable housing contribution should apply by default.
- b. Necessary improvements to local or national infrastructure; and
- c. The provision of new green space, or improvements to existing green space, which is accessible to the public. New residents should be able to access good quality green spaces within a short walk of their homes, whether through on-site provision or through access to offsite spaces. This provision should:
- i. Make a positive contribution to the landscape setting of the development;
- ii. Support nature recovery; and
- iii. Meet local standards for green space provision where these exist in the development plan. Where no locally-specific standards exist, development proposals should meet national standards relevant to the development (these include Natural England's standards on accessible green space and urban greening factor and Green Flag criteria). Where land has been identified as having potential for habitat creation or nature recovery within Local Nature Recovery Strategies, proposals should contribute towards these outcomes.

2. In considering applications for major development involving the provision of housing on land released from the Green Belt through plan preparation or review, or on sites in the Green Belt subject to a planning application, substantial weight should be given to the importance of complying with the Golden Rules.'

- 7.1.12 Paragraphs 7.2.39 – 7.2.41 of the published report identifies how the development meets these Golden Rules and this assessment is still considered to be applicable following the NPPF changes:

'In respect of paragraph 156 (a), the development is proposing 50% affordable homes, with a mix of 71% rented (mix of 70% social rent and 30% affordable rent (capped at LHA)) and 29% shared ownership. The proposal would meet the requirements of paragraph 156(a) of the NPPF. The quantity, tenure mix and unit sizes of the affordable housing provision is discussed in greater detail in Section 7.4 of this report.

'In respect of (b), the development would provide monetary contributions towards off site infrastructure which would be secured by S106 obligations including monetary contributions to education, waste transfer and healthcare facilities. The infrastructure provisions are set out in detail in Section 7.21 of this report. The proposed development would provide necessary improvements to local infrastructure in accordance with paragraph 156 (b).

'In respect of (c), the development would provide new green spaces on site including a play area that due to its siting would be accessible for occupants outside of the site. Merry Hill and open space would be accessible on foot from the application site. The proposal would therefore meet paragraph 156(c).'

- 7.1.13 In accordance with GB8,2, it is considered that the proposed development would comply with the Golden Rules and significant weight should be given in favour of the grant of permission. The proposed development would therefore meet the requirements of Policy GB7,1,h. and would represent an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt.

- 7.1.14 The proposal would therefore represent an appropriate form of development within the Green Belt. An assessment of impacts on openness is therefore not required as the proposal is considered an acceptable form of development within the Green Belt in accordance with Policy CP11 of the Core Strategy, Policy DM2 of the DMP LDD and NPPF.

7.2 Impact on Character (Section 7.3 of published report)

- 7.2.1 Chapter 12 of the NPPF states that this chapter is to promote the effective use of land in meeting the need for homes and other uses, whilst safeguarding and improving the environment and ensuring safe and healthy living conditions.

- 7.2.2 The contents of the revised NPPF does not change the assessment of the impacts of the outline application as set out within the published report.

- 7.2.3 Notwithstanding this, it is noted that NPPF Policy L3 identifies that development should meet appropriate densities stipulating that for sites within reasonable walking distance of a well connected station that provides twice the minimum required for a well-connected station a higher density of 45 dwellings per hectare should be achieved. The developable area of the site is 1.7 hectares resulting in a density of 41 dwellings per hectare. This is just below the 45 dwelling per hectare threshold however consideration is to be had to the constraints of the site including siting of a pipeline buffer and siting of the dwellings to minimise the impact on the heritage asset as discussed in section 7.6 of the published report. The proposed density is therefore considered to be acceptable.

7.3 Impact of proposal on heritage assets (Section 7.6 of published report)

- 7.3.1 Chapter 20 of the NPPF seeks to conserve and enhance the historic environment.

7.3.2 Policy HE5 replaces Paragraphs 212 and 213 of the 2024 NPPF, stating:

'2. Assessments of the potential effects of development proposals on the significance of heritage assets (including through effects on their setting) should identify whether proposals would be likely to:

- a. Have a positive effect, which is where the significance of a heritage asset would be enhanced, or better revealed; or
- b. Have no effect on the significance of a heritage asset; or
- c. Result in harm to the significance of a heritage asset, either from work affecting the asset itself or from development within its setting. The degree of harm should be identified: substantial harm would occur where the development proposal would seriously affect a key element of the asset's significance; or
- d. Cause the total loss of the significance of a heritage asset.

3. In making this assessment it is the effect on a heritage asset's significance rather than the scale of the development which should be considered.

4. Decision-makers should be satisfied that assessments accurately reflect the effects on heritage assets caused by development proposals.

5. Where a development proposal involves, or has the potential to involve, a heritage asset with archaeological interest, an appropriate desk-based assessment should be undertaken and, where necessary, a field evaluation. These should be used to help understand the asset's significance and the potential effect of the proposal on this, which should inform the design, mitigation and implementation of the development.'

7.3.3 Less than substantial harm to heritage asset has been replaced with harm to heritage assets. Policy HE6 states:

1. 'When considering the potential effect of a development proposal on the significance of a designated heritage asset, substantial weight should be given to the asset's conservation (and the more important the asset, the greater the weight should be). This is irrespective of whether any potential effect amounts to a positive effect, harm, substantial harm, or total loss of its significance.
2. Development proposals which would have a positive effect on a designated heritage asset should be supported.
3. Any harm to a designated heritage asset will be a matter of considerable importance and weight, which should be dealt with in accordance with paragraphs 4 to 6 of this policy.
4. Where a development proposal would harm the significance of a designated heritage asset the effect on the asset and its significance should be weighed against any public benefits resulting from the proposal. Important public benefits can include securing the long-term reuse of a vacant or underused listed building, and enabling energy efficiency and low carbon heating measures to be employed.'

7.3.4 As identified within published report a low level of less than substantial harm to the setting of the Grade II heritage asset was identified. This would fall within the harm threshold of the 2026 NPPF, subject to the condition that the development should be carried out in accordance with the Design Code. As set out in detail within the published report public benefits are considered to exist to outweigh the low level harm to the heritage asset and this assessment is still considered applicable.

7.4 Highways & Transport Impacts (Section 7.7 of published report)

7.4.1 The 2026 NPPF places an emphasis on delivering sustainable development including providing development that allows for a choice of transport modes. Due to the location of the site it is considered that choice of transport modes would be accessible to future residents; this is set out in detail within the published report. It is not considered that the changes to the NPPF, including potential impact on road networks, do not change the assessment of the scheme as set out within the published report.

7.5 Presumption in favour of Sustainable Development and Planning Balances (Section 7.21 of published report)

7.5.1 Although the NPPF still requires a presumption in favour of sustainable development, the previous Paragraph 11 has been replaced. Section 4 of the NPPF states that the objective of the policies in this chapter is to meet development needs through sustainable patterns of development, including maximising the potential for growth on suitable land within settlements.

7.5.2 Whilst the application site would be closely related to the settlement of Watford due to its proximity to the services provided within the Borough of Watford, the site sits outside of any of the identified settlement boundaries within Three Rivers. NPPF Policy S5 'Principle of development outside settlements' is therefore applicable and states:

'Only certain forms of development should be approved outside settlements, as set out in the following list. These should be approved, unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework:

h. Residential and mixed-use development which would:

i. Be within reasonable walking distance of a well-connected station (applying the definitions in the glossary at Annex B);

ii. Be physically well-related to the station or the settlement within which the station is located;

iii. Be of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure; and

iv. Not prejudice any proposals for long-term comprehensive development in the same location.

j. The development of land allocated for that purpose in the development plan (where this lies outside settlements); and Development which would address an evidenced unmet need (including, but not limited to, development proposals involving the provision of housing where the local planning authority cannot demonstrate a five year supply of deliverable housing sites or scores below 75% in the most recent Housing Delivery Test), and where the development would:

i. Be physically well-related to an existing settlement (unless the nature of the development would make this inappropriate) and be of a scale which can be accommodated taking into account the existing or proposed availability of infrastructure; or

ii. Comprise major development for freight and logistics purposes which accords with policy E3.'

7.5.3 S5 h. is the same criteria as Policy GB7 h. which is discussed in detail at paragraphs 7.2.4-7.2.9 of this addendum which concludes that the criteria is met. It is also prudent to note that the site is identified as an allocated site as set out within the Regulation 19 Site allocations document although currently this document holds limited weight. The proposal would also meet criteria S5. j. i. where the delivery of 70 residential units would address an evidenced

unmet need, where the Council can only demonstrate a 1.2 year housing supply. The site is also considered to be well connected as identified within this addendum and as set out in detail within the published report and will make contributions to infrastructure.

7.5.4 Notwithstanding the above Policy S5.5 further states:

‘5. This policy does not apply to development proposals in the Green Belt or on land designated as Local Green Space, which should instead be determined in accordance with policies HC8, GB6, GB7 and/or GB8 (as appropriate). However, where development would not be inappropriate in these locations (through the application of policies HC8 and GB7), proposals should be approved unless the benefits of doing so would be substantially outweighed by any adverse effects, when assessed against the national decision-making policies in this Framework, and applying paragraph 2 of this policy’.

7.5.5 As the development is considered to represent an appropriate development within the Green Belt as per the requirements of NPPF Policy S5.5 is applicable.

7.5.6 Section 7.21 of the published report sets out in detail the balancing between the effects of the development and benefits of approving the development and against the policies set out in the NPPF which are also applicable to the 2026 version. The balancing and overall conclusion of Section 7.21 (paragraphs 7.21.7 to 7.21.13) set out within the published report is still considered applicable to the assessment of the application following the 2026 publication and do not need to be reiterated within the addendum.

7.5.7 Notwithstanding, overall, it is considered that the significant weight attributed to the low level harm caused to the heritage asset, would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of the scheme, when assessed against the policies in the Framework taken as a whole, having particular regard to the policies for directing development to sustainable locations, making effective use of land, securing well-designed places and providing affordable homes.

8. Recommendation

8.1 That authority is delegated to the Head of Regulatory Services to grant planning permission, following completion of a S106 Agreement (securing the Heads of Term set out at 7.20 including affordable housing provision, travel plan, contributions to infrastructure including education, healthcare and waste infrastructure and monitoring fees of the published report) subject to conditions AND to make any minor amendments to the Heads of Terms and Planning Conditions in consultation with the Planning Committee Chair.