

QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

TO THE PLANNING COMMITTEE ON 24th February 2026

Item 6 – 25/01025/FUL – Land North of Highwood Road Roundabout, Writtle, Chelmsford, Essex

Question from Mr C

I live close to this site and have also been asked to speak on behalf of neighbours. Whilst I note the reasons for the recommendation, this is still inappropriate development. Many of the key reasons for refusal in previous applications remain. The site is apparently “grey belt”, but the government’s rationale for grey belt land is to provide substantial public benefits, none of which are apparent here. Even if it is accepted the tilted balance applies, it is perfectly acceptable for councillors to insist those previous reasons for refusal are mitigated as far as possible.

The report concludes the development will result in residual harm to the character and appearance of the area. There are three key aspects which could be amended to offset this.

Firstly, there will be a quarter of an acre of hard standing along the frontage of the site at this key gateway into Writtle. This is by any measure significantly in excess of the area reasonably needed to accommodate a mobile home, caravan, and two car parking spaces. The plan submitted shows substantial areas with no specified use, but it is inconceivable this will be unused, giving rise to a substantial risk of intrusive visual clutter. If we must permit the concreting of the Green Belt, councillors should be satisfied it is the absolute minimum necessary, and here it could quite easily be much reduced without impacting on the proposed use. The applicant has not justified the amount of hardstanding, and this infrastructure will also make future applications to intensify the use of the site much more difficult to resist.

Secondly, condition 6 must be tightened to control all forms of open storage, to prevent future argument whether it is for commercial or domestic use.

Thirdly, the well-established existing hedges around the land have recently been cut back, giving rise to very permeable views into the site. A condition is required to ensure they are not reduced further. As the proposed new planting is stated as an important benefit of the application, it would also be reasonable for councillors to require details now, rather than leaving it to a condition.

Councillors should refuse this application on the basis that the level of hard standing is excessive, and the draft conditions are not yet sufficient to mitigate the harm. At the very least, a decision should be deferred to allow further consideration of those points.

Question from Mr B

Good evening. I would like to start by thanking the chair and fellow members for allowing me to speak on behalf of the applicant.

The application seeks consent for the proposed material change of use of the land to create a single Gypsy/Traveller pitch. Specific to this case, the applicant relies on policy compliance rather than personal circumstances.

The key change since previous refusals is the Green Belt position, and that previous conclusions that the development would amount to inappropriate development have had to change due to the introduction of Grey Belt within the 2024 NPPF. The site itself has been found to not strongly contribute to Purposes A, B, or D of the Green Belt. There is also a lack of a five year supply, and officers conclude that the site is sustainably located. Accordingly, the required tests of NPPF 155 are passed.

Other issues that were considered previously, such as the safety of the access, impacts to protected species, and trees, have all been addressed through further comprehensive reporting work and a redesign of the scheme itself, whilst it remains the case that a single pitch is all that is sought permission for.

Officers and Statutory Consultees have considered the proposals in detail, and concluded that those matters outlined are adequately addressed, and that any potential impacts can be made acceptable through the imposition of planning conditions. In short, the advisors to the Council do not wish to restrict the grant of planning permission.

In terms of character and appearance, visibility in winter months does not equate to unacceptable harm. Indeed, it is important for any Traveller site to not be designed counter-intuitive to the PPTS objective of ensuring that sites are designed to not give the impression that they are deliberately isolated. Even then, the applicant does concur the conclusions of the Officer in that the adverse impacts are not significant in scale.

Overall, the applicant supports the conclusions that the development proposed represents a Policy DM3 compliant scheme, which would provide a windfall site to meet the current unmet need. Whilst it is the case that the Plan-led approach has failed the travelling community, it is consequential to the change in definition, but nevertheless, as the Council cannot demonstrate an appropriate supply of Gypsy and Traveller sites against the 2024 definition, the tilted balance is engaged.

As such, the applicant invites members to support the conclusions of the planning officer in this case, and grant planning permission for a single pitch site that would contribute towards addressing the identified shortfall in sites within this area, on a site where the harms are admittedly very limited, and therefore, where the benefits would significantly and demonstrably outweigh the identified conflict with the Local Plan.

Items 7&8 – 25/01195/FUL & 25/01194/FUL – Field at Greenacre Lane, Stock, Ingatestone, Essex

Collated public questions statements submitted by Mrs C

These questions and comments have been collated and submitted on behalf of over 40 local residents from Stock Village.

Questions

1) Whilst we are aware there are no legal obligations to a new planning application being considered on land that is currently under investigation due to the four existing barns at the site (the 2014 permissions) which have not been constructed in accordance with the planning permission (see 4.3 page 3) What enforcements/checks will be made to ensure the new proposed structures will comply.

2) 6.27 (page 8) Can Councillors confirm that without the Condition of prohibiting livestock the amenity conclusion would be different?

*Can you assure us that the no livestock condition will prevail for future years and that if change of use is sought it will require further planning applications that would then be assessed under the permitted development rights under Class 6 of the General Permitted Development Order i.e. the need for planning permission for livestock buildings within less than 400m of residential property

3) 6.8 (page 5) Further landscaping and tree planting will be provided if required by the LPA. The design ensures a low visual impact within the Green Belt landscape.

*The current barns are visible from surrounding areas and in particular very visible from the Bridleway/Footpath/Garden Centre

We note in point 6.4 (page 5) the applicants agent states : “The applicants own and operate Fristling Hall Farm (approx. 265 acres) and Little Tressells Farm (approx. 100 acres) near Stock, Essex. Significant improvement works have been undertaken: refencing, pond restoration, hedge and tree planting (200+ native trees), and re-surfacing of tracks and public footpaths”

*We believe that further landscaping is required as the new proposed barns will be even closer to the Bridleway/footpath and request that a condition be imposed on this along with a detailed landscaping scheme with replacement planting secured.

4) The Applicant and the Report is keen to state that there will be a Reduction of Traffic – Points 1.9 (page 2) 6.7 (page 5) 6.22 (page 7) 6.23 (page 7) 6.36 (page 8) 6.47 (page 10) 6.49 (page 10)

*However Point 6.3 (page 5) states: These applications are for a hay/feed barn and an agricultural storage barn to serve the wider Fristling Hall Estate and Little Tressels Farm. The aim is to provide adequate covered facilities for feed and forage storage, supporting livestock welfare and efficient farm operations.

This is confusing as suggests that Hay/Feed will be stored here for other farm operations – in which case it is impossible for Traffic to be reduced and will only increase if the barns are to support the applicants other farms.

The current operation for the 125 livestock that was previously imposed has been running for the last 3 years or so, so unless the applicant intends to use the storage for his other businesses we don't understand why they are needed.

We respectfully ask can it be clarified and/or restrictions imposed that the barns will only be used to store Hay/Feed for the Livestock on the farm on Greenacre/Smallgains Lane which will therefore hopefully ensure as the applicant/reports state Traffic is likely to reduce.

5) With Regards to point 6.32 Page 8) Paragraph 116 of the NPPF seeks to ensure that developments should only be prevented on highway grounds if there would be unacceptable effects on highway safety or the residual cumulative impacts on the road network.

*We believe there are unacceptable effects on highway safety and there are residual impacts on the road, photographic evidence has been provided on both applications along with an email sent on the 26th of September 2025 to Planning Comments and a registered letter to the Director of Sustainable Communities at Chelmsford City Council – pictures which clearly show the damage the applicants vehicles have caused since their operation commenced.

* Our question is:

1)When did Highways visit the location and is the report that they made that led them to their conclusions available for Public Viewing?

If it becomes apparent that Highways have not actually constructed a report/visited the location then we feel that this does not comply with Paragraph 16 of the NPPF and this needs to be actioned prior to any approval given.

6.35 (page 8) The lane is already used by agricultural vehicles and with a nursery and stables nearby is likely to be used for larger delivery trucks and horse boxes periodically.

*The lane has been used for over 60 years by HGV vehicles from the Nursery's that have been established for over 100 years, comparison photos of the lane have been provided showing no damage until the applicant commenced their operation.

6.38 (page 9) There is no information to conclude that the level of traffic arising from the proposals would result in undue wear on road surfaces and verges. There is nothing to suggest that the local road would not be acceptably maintained.

*This statement is unfounded, even if level of traffic was to stay the same or reduce, we have provided proof that the current vehicles the applicant is using for the field are causing roadside and verge damage, there has been no maintenance on Smallgains Lane that we are aware of to repair the deep ruts and road falling away caused by the applicants vehicles that currently use the lane so there is nothing to suggest the roads would indeed be maintained.

Our Question is :

*1)Who is responsible for maintaining the road, as nothing has happened so far

6.39 (Page 9) Concern has been raised in relation to the effects of the proposal on pedestrian safety and the safety of horse riders. There does not appear to be a firm basis for these concerns and the local Highway Authority have not raised objections to the proposal on the basis of any impact on highway safety or any effect on the local highway network.

*Again Evidence has been provided of this, Horses forced to enter onto verges and we are also in possession of a Video of a dog walker who had to embed themselves in a hedge to avoid a vehicle that was just inches away from them.

Our Question is:

Please can you confirm if Hghways have visited the lane/location when they vehicles have been there and are they in possession of the photographs/videos showing how large the vehicles are?

6.49 (page 10) There is no evidence to suggest that undue damage would occur to the

local lanes as a result of the proposed barns in that a reduction of traffic may well result from the development once completed

*We believe this is incorrect as evidence has been provided of the damage caused and is ongoing from the applicants existing business

6.33 (Page 8) As stated previously, the access to the site is off of Smallgains Lane at its junction with Greenacre Lane which is also a bridleway. Smallgains Lane is a narrow road with passing places to facilitate passing vehicles. There are no pavements in the vicinity.

*Smallgains Lane and Greenacre Lane are comparatively the same size in many locations – (10 ft wide) Greenacre Lane shows no signs whatsoever of verge damage despite the use of HGV Vehicles and the lane has been maintained by the owners for over 60 years.

Passing points aside from two which are often flooded and full of pot holes are residential driveways, the farm machinery/vehicles cannot fit into these driveways, the passing places that are available are only suitable for cars

6) 6.45 (page 9) states that Neither barn would be used to accommodate livestock.

*Understandably due to prior restrictions being broken, we are concerned that the restrictions to be put in place will be policed.

Our Question is :

Who is responsible to police and enforce these restrictions and what is the outcome should livestock be placed in these barns?

7) 4.3 (page 3) We note you are awaiting a reply from the applicants legal adviser and a submission of a regularising application

Our Question is :

Please can you explain what this is and if the end result could have any effect on the current applications?

8) On Notes to Applicant – you strongly recommend guidelines regarding hours of work/operations

*in order to protect the residents of the 15 houses within close confines of the development can these be made into actual Conditions with an exception for the Applicant for emergency operations, we do understand that the welfare of the animals may be compromised at rare times.

9) 6.28 (page 8) Representations received suggest there may have been some confusion regarding the use of the barn (Application A) and its potential use to house livestock (see also paragraph 3.2 of this report). This may have arisen from the agent's initial covering letter which states that "additional livestock will be transported to the site". The applicant has subsequently confirmed that the storage will be solely for hay and forage.

*To Clarify there was no confusion, the original application was made for a Cow Barn and the yellow planning notices that are still up have not been amended.

Incorrect information, backtracking, and amendments have been very consistent by the applicant throughout the whole planning application from the beginning.

For example even now the proposed site plan in this latest application in the agenda for Hay/Feed Barn still states Cow Barn.

We accept that the officer report relies heavily on the proposed barns being storage only. We therefore strongly support the livestock restriction remaining in place to protect the neighbouring amenity.

10) With regards to the applicant now lodging an appeal on both applications – Please could this be explained as to why the appeal has been made and what the next relevant steps are?

Question from Mr M

1. Compliance & Enforcement

Given that earlier permissions relating to the existing barns are currently under review, what monitoring or enforcement mechanisms will be in place to ensure that any new buildings are constructed and operated strictly in accordance with approved plans and conditions?

2. Traffic Conclusion

The report concludes that traffic is likely to reduce. However, it also states that the barns will serve the wider Fristling Hall Estate and Little Tressells Farm.

- Has any transport assessment or traffic modelling been undertaken to substantiate the conclusion of reduced traffic?
- If not, on what evidential basis has this conclusion been reached?

3. Highway Safety & Lane Condition

Residents have submitted photographic evidence of verge damage and raised concerns regarding pedestrian and equestrian safety.

- When did the Highway Authority last visit the site?
- Is any written Highways assessment available for public viewing?
- Who is responsible for maintenance of Smallgains Lane where wear has occurred?

4. Landscaping & Visual Impact

Existing barns are visible from surrounding public rights of way.

- Would Members consider securing a detailed landscaping condition, including replacement planting and long-term maintenance, to mitigate cumulative visual impact within the Green Belt?

5. Livestock Restriction & Enforcement

The report states that neither proposed barn will accommodate livestock.

- Who is responsible for enforcing this restriction?
- What enforcement action would follow in the event of a breach?

6. Appeal Procedure

Given the non-determination appeal, how will the Council's position on cumulative impact and evidential sufficiency be articulated in its formal Statement of Case?

Question from Mr T

Good evening,

I'm speaking on behalf of over 40 local residents, many of whom have submitted comments and objections regarding these planning applications

The 2 proposed barns represent an expansion to the existing operations that have caused considerable concern for us over the last few years.

Whilst we welcome the strict condition of no livestock within the proposed barns we still remain extremely concerned about the disruption to our daily lives caused by the noise levels, the smells, the farm traffic and consequent damage to our narrow country lane, verges and hedgerows.

If the 2 new barns are to be used to support the wider business (as stated by the applicant) then traffic and disruption will not be reduced and our lives will continue to be adversely impacted to an even greater extent.

Many of us have lived here for a long time and we respect the countryside and our strong village community. We do not want to see it destroyed by this over-development.

We trust you understand our position and ask you to please reject these planning applications

Thank you

Question from Mr X

The proposed hay/feed barns are to be used solely for storage to support the existing Cows on site and other various locations.

At present the existing Cow Sheds are only allowed to be used for overwintering. If access to the site is now needed for 12 Months of the year to collect feed for other locations this will mean an increase in vehicle movement not a lessening as the site will be active all year round

Please confirm that the site will still only be used for overwintering?