

MINUTES
of the
PLANNING COMMITTEE
held on 6 October 2026 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor H. Ayres (Chair)

Councillors, H. Clark, P. Clark, S. Dobson, S. Hall, E. Sampson, J. Sosin and A. Thorpe-Apps

Also in attendance:

Cllrs A. Davidson and Lee

1. Chair's Announcements

For the benefit of the public, the Chair explained the arrangements for the meeting.

2. Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Cllrs Hyland, Pappa, Rajesh, Tron and Wilson.

3. Declarations of Interest

All Members were reminded that they must disclose any interests they knew they had in items of business on the meeting's agenda and that they must do so at this point on the agenda or as soon as they became aware of the interest. If the interest was a Disclosable Pecuniary Interest they were also obliged to notify the Monitoring Officer within 28 days of the meeting. Any declarations are recorded in the relevant minute below.

4. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 15th September 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. Public Question Time

One public statement had been submitted in advance for Item 7, which is summarised under the relevant item [and can be viewed via this link](#).

6. 26/00742/OUT – Land North East of 17 Old Bell Lane, Rettendon, Chelmsford, Essex

Cllr P. Clark declared a non registrable interest and left the Committee for this item, to instead speak as the local ward member.

The Committee considered an outline application for the erection of two four-bedroom detached dwellings, with all matters reserved. This being so, it was noted that the principle of the development was the main focus of the application. The Committee were informed that the application had been called in by the local ward member, due to a high level of local interest, objections from public consultation and previous refusals for residential development at the site. [The Committee also noted the green sheet for the item](#), which confirmed that the ecological assessment recently provided by the applicant, confirmed officer findings that the site was of low ecological and biodiversity value, that the proposal would not impact protected species or habitat and the recommended conditions remained applicable.

The Committee heard that there had been two previous refusals for the site, one being upheld on appeal, but that since then the national and local policy context relevant to the proposal had changed, leading to an unmet need for the supply of homes. It was also noted that the proposal was now for two residential properties, instead of four, leading to reduced residential paraphernalia and improved spatial setting as a result of the lower number of homes. The Committee were informed that the proposal was acceptable to officers and based on the National Planning Policy Framework should be approved. The Committee heard that the proposal did result in low-moderate harm to the character of the Rural Area, but the harm was not considered to substantially outweigh the presumption in favour of sustainable development, as set out in the NPPF.

The Committee heard from a local ward member who stated that, previous refusals on the site, one upheld at appeal, had stated significant harm on the Rural Area, which now was viewed as low-moderate harm in the new proposal. They stated that nothing had changed physically and that the tilted-balance argument didn't hold as a result, as there would still be damage to the countryside and rural communities. The Committee were also informed that the privacy of existing residents would be affected, the land in question was not within the defined settlement boundary, the lane and bridleway were regularly used by walkers, cyclists and horse riders who would be impacted by an increase in traffic. They also highlighted that the Council were now being asked by Government to meet unreachable targets and that the Council were much closer to a 5 year housing land supply than many other authorities.

In response to the points raised, officers stated that;

- The Highways Authority had considered concerns raised on highway safety and had confirmed there was no conflict, due to the impact of just two dwellings being insignificant.
- The application was only in outline at this stage, privacy and amenity issues including any concerns on overlooking, would need to be considered and addressed if required at the reserved matters stage instead, when sufficient detail is submitted to enable assessment. It was noted that policies and standards at that time would have to be met, with the application assessed against them at that point.

In response to questions from the Committee, officers stated that;

- The land was not designated as Green Belt, instead it was designated as the 'Rural Area'.

- The plans were indicative at this stage with all matters reserved, so the Committee were being asked to take a view on the principle of the land use, rather than finer details.
- Market dwellings such as the ones proposed, would contribute to the Council's 5 year housing land supply figures.
- The site was enclosed on two sides by housing which represents the current extent of Defined Settlement boundary, with a strong hedgerow on the other side, meaning that further development creep wasn't a large concern and consideration was largely focussed on views from the south of the site. Views which officers considered were sufficiently contained by the existing attributes of the site context.
- Even if the Council had a 5 year housing land supply, harm would still need to be demonstrated to refuse the application and that the housing need figure was a floor rather than a ceiling.
- The NPPF is clear that external legislation should be relied upon to work as intended and that this decision should be taken in that context. Legislation already exists to protect bridleways and public rights of way and a suggested informative instead of a condition, would bring this to the attention of the applicant.

The meeting was adjourned at 19:27 until 19:44, due to members of the public disrupting the meeting.

RESOLVED that the application be approved subject to the conditions detailed in the report.

(7.02pm to 7.44pm)

7. 24/00228/OUT – Site at former St Peters College, Fox Crescent, Chelmsford, Essex

The Committee considered an outline application with all matters reserved, for up to 185 dwellings, non residential uses, extra care/independent living accommodation, community use, formal and informal open space, public open space and play areas along with all associated highway infrastructure, drainage works, car parking/servicing and all associated ancillary buildings and works including services and utilities. The Committee heard that a mixed use scheme would be delivered, in addition to the other requirements of the growth site policy, in a manner consistent with the previously approved masterplan for the site. It was also noted that the proposal demonstrated conformity with the Local Plan and had therefore been recommended for approval subject to conditions and the completion of the S106 agreement. [The Committee also noted the green sheet for the item](#), which amended condition 1 to acknowledge the approval of partial access details.

The Committee were informed that the application had followed an extensive masterplanning process, shaping both the form and detailing of the proposal and that it would be a positive contributor economically and socially, with any minor negative environmental impacts mitigated. It was also noted that the development was required to meet the Council's identified growth needs and was a direct consequence of the plan-led system, satisfactorily meeting the requirements of Strategic Growth Site Policy 1b of the Chelmsford Local Plan.

The Committee heard from a member of the public who spoke in support of the proposal. They highlighted the accordance with the masterplan, housing numbers and three hectares of open space, exceeding the Council's policy requirement. They also highlighted the provision of 35% affordable housing, up to 60 independent living units and lack of objections from the Highways Authority and the lead Local Flood authority. The Committee also heard about other benefits including the transfer of land to the City Council for the provision of a community centre.

The Committee heard from a local ward member who stated that, the three ward Cllrs supported the proposals and were pleased to see the empty site changing into much needed houses, alongside a much-needed community building too. They highlighted some resident concerns which had been raised including, traffic and parking on the existing local roads, capacity at surgeries and dentists, and how local the school provision would actually be. They also urged that all green spaces should be maintained by the City Council's Parks team rather than a management company and that consideration should be given to heat resistant planting, along with birdboxes, bat boxes and hedgehog highways.

In response to the points raised, officers stated that;

- The Highways Authority had not made any objections and that there would initially be a net increase in existing on street parking by one space, but that it would be up to the Highways Authority, when considering junction protection measures following the reserved matters stage, that might affect this further.
- The reserved matters stage would also pick up sustainability matters, possibly under the Council's new Local Plan.
- A healthcare contribution had been requested and secured via the Section 106 agreement.
- A planning condition could not require the developer to pass over green spaces to the Council to manage, but it was the Council's preference and this would be negotiated for accordingly.
- The Education Authority had not made any objections
- A condition had been proposed to cover construction traffic.

In response to questions from the Committee, officers stated that;

- More detailed aspects would be considered at the reserved matters stage, which may or may not be a Committee level decision in the future, due to the implementation of the National Scheme of Delegation of Planning Functions with effect from 31 October 2026.
- The Council could not mandate, via a planning condition, that green spaces be managed by the Council, but that would be the preferred option, the ultimate decision on the matter was for the developer though.

RESOLVED that the application be approved subject to the completion of a S106 agreement together with compliance with the conditions detailed in the report, the details of those items and variations that may be considered necessary and appropriate to be delegated to the Director of Sustainable Communities/Assistant Director of Sustainable Communities/ Planning Development Services Manager in consultation with the Chair and/or Vice Chair of the Planning Committee and the amended condition 1 on the green sheet.

(7.45pm to 8.12pm)

[Items 8-11 22/01959/OUT & FUL – Zone 1 Chelmsford Garden Community, Pratts Farm Lane, Little Waltham, Chelmsford, Essex and 23/00124/FUL & OUT – Zone 3 Chelmsford Garden Community, Beaulieu Parkway, Chelmsford](#)

The Chair agreed to consider Items 8-11 together, before taking individual votes on each item respectively.

The Committee were asked to consider granting a two month extension for each item, from the expiry of the agreed resolutions that had been extended in May 2026, to 15th December 2026, to allow sufficient time for the completion of the Planning Framework Agreement, the

CIL reinvestment Funding Agreement and the S106 agreement. The Committee were informed that since May, positive progress had been made on the agreements, which were now at final stages, with final drafting matters being discussed. It was noted that all parties remained committed to completing the agreements, but timings were becoming complicated, so extensions were being sought.

RESOLVED that a two month period from the expiry of the agreed resolution (minute PL-2) to 15th December 2026 to extend the period for completion of the Planning Framework Agreement, the CIL Reinvestment Funding Agreement and the S106 Agreement for applications 22/01959/OUT, 22/01959/FUL, 23/00124/FUL and 23/00124/OUT be approved.

(8.13pm to 8.19pm)

12. Planning Appeals

RESOLVED that the information submitted to the meeting on appeal decisions between 31st August and 17th September 2026 be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.20pm.

Chair