

**MINUTES**  
of the  
**PLANNING COMMITTEE**  
held on 24 March 2026 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor R. Lee (Chair)

Councillors, J. Armstrong, H. Clark, R. Hyland, J. Lardge, J. Raven, A. Thorpe-Apps and C. Tron

### 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 Dobson, Frascona, Hall, Pappa, Sampson and Wilson. Cllr Raven substituted for Cllr Dobson.

### 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 24<sup>th</sup> March 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 6 which is summarised under the relevant item and [can be viewed via this link](#).

## 6. 25/01563/FUL - Twitty Grange, Twitty Fee, Danbury, Chelmsford, Essex, CM3 4PG

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

The Committee considered an application for a change of use from retail members only club (Sui Generis) to flexible employment use (use class E(g)(iii), B2, B8), which covered the carrying on of an industrial process, the use as storage or as a distribution centre or for any industrial process which can be carried out in any residential area without detriment to the amenity of that area. The Committee were informed that the application had been called in, by a Local ward member due to concerns about intensification of use, harm to the character of the rural area and protected lane, insufficient weight placed on the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan dark skies policy, insufficient planning balance placed on consultees, past enforcement records and complaints or retrospective elements within the application.

The Committee heard that the site was located within open countryside in the Rural Area, approximately 300m northeast of the defined settlement of Danbury and set back approximately 27m from the road. The Committee were informed that in 2022 the building had received permission to change to a sui generis use and currently remained in that use. It was also noted that the site was on a protected lane, with two Grade II listed building within the vicinity, with the closes neighbouring dwelling 200m from the site. The Committee also heard that no external changes were proposed to the building, the proposed uses would have no greater impact on the protected lane or listed buildings than previous uses and that due to distance, the uses would not adversely affect the neighbouring amenities of the nearest dwellings. It was also noted that the proposed uses were unlikely to generate unacceptable traffic levels, it complied with the objectives of the Chelmsford Local Plan and Danbury Neighbourhood Plan and had therefore been recommended for approval, subject to conditions.

The Committee heard from a member of the public who spoke in support of the application. They highlighted that the proposed use would not be an intensification of use, in fact the opposite, it would provide local jobs and was fully in line with national and local policies. They also stated that there would be no physical changes to the building, previous lighting concerns had been dismissed, the suggested condition for any new lighting was acceptable and everything on the site had already been agreed and approved, this was simply a change of use application.

The Committee also heard from a Local Ward Member who highlighted concerns from the local Parish Council regarding, issues for the protected lane, the removal of roller shutters being unsympathetic to the rural area, and regarding the effect on the dark skies policy. They also highlighted the previous uses on the site and previous change of use applications and issues regarding the shutters not being installed after the previous change of use and then their installation not being enforced afterwards. They also highlighted to the Committee that the request for B8 use, could lead to issues for the character of the area and the protected lane and also that bright lights from the building had been seen in neighbouring listed residential properties, which was distressing for the rural area. The Committee also heard that the requested class E use was much more appropriate for the site than the B2 and B8 classes that had also been requested.

In response to the points raised, officers confirmed that;

- No shutter doors were currently fitted, or proposed as part of the application and it was acceptable to officers without the shutter doors.
- The internal lighting was not viewed as harmful and conditions were proposed to restrict external lighting, it would be unusual for planning conditions to be placed on internal lighting.
- The previous non installation of the shutters had not been one officers felt needed to be enforced, as it was deemed acceptable with or without them and was therefore not harmful enough to warrant enforcement action.

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

- The E(g)(iii) use class, covered any light industrial type use that could be carried out in a residential area, without any harm to nearby residents living conditions, examples were provided such as a painting studio or pottery studio. The B2 use had been viewed as acceptable, due to the distance between the site and the nearest residential property.
- The Highways Authority had considered the application and were content with it, had not raised any objections, nor had they requested any further information. The site was of a limited floor area, that would lead to lower traffic levels and was viewed as unlikely to be above what already takes place on the lane. Officers were also content that sufficient information on that topic had been provided.
- The 200m distance to the nearest residential property had satisfied officers, that the uses would not impact on those properties and there were also conditions proposed that would restrict timings of deliveries and the hours of operation.
- Conditions had not previously been used to restrict internal lighting and officers did not feel there would be harm from the internal lighting.

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

(7.03pm to 7.28pm)

#### [7. 25/01448/FUL – Land Rear of 7 The Greenway, Runwell, Wickford, Essex](#)

The Committee considered an application for the demolition of existing outbuildings and construction of four bungalows with a new access road. The Committee were informed that the application had been called in, by a Local ward member due to concerns from local residents. The Committee heard that the site had been in equestrian use for some time and part of the site had been used as a residential garden with a number of single storey storage/domestic/equestrian buildings at the eastern and northern end of the land, with open land to the west enclosed by a heavy tree and hedgerow boundary.

The Committee were informed that the proposal followed a previous grant of planning permission for the demolition of existing buildings and construction of two new bungalows with a new access road, rather than the four bungalows now under consideration. It was noted that the application was on previously developed land to the edge of Runwell and was considered to be acceptable development in the Green Belt and acceptable in all other matters of consideration. The Committee were informed that the new dwellings were in a sustainable location, bringing positive weight to the planning balance and that economic and social benefits were also present. The Committee heard that due to the lack of a five year housing land supply, the titled balance in favour of development was engaged and there were no strong reasons to recommend the application for refusal. The Committee also noted that the proposal

was also considered appropriate development under National Planning Policy Framework Grey Belt Policy. The Committee heard that the development would only result in a limited impact on the openness of the Green Belt, partly offset by new landscaping including tree planting and had therefore, been recommended for approval, subject to the recommended conditions.

[The Committee were also reminded of the Green Sheet of amendments which can be viewed here, which detailed amended conditions, due to two of the proposed properties now being allocated as self build properties.](#)

The Committee heard from a Local Ward Member who highlighted the strong objections from local residents and the Parish Council, the disappointment of the 2024 application being granted and then the further distress of a larger replacement application. They stated that there had been delays in contacting residents and that they had not had a fair and reasonable opportunity to participate and that the item should be deferred for that reason. They also informed the Committee that the new application was a 100% increase against the already approved one, there would be substantial increases in vehicle movements, fences, outbuildings, parked vehicles and light pollution. They also raised concerns regarding a precedent for the road being extended for even more development, a lack of enforcement of nearby Tree Preservation Orders, gardens being classed as previously developed land, flood risks and that it was outside of the defined settlement boundary. They also highlighted that it was too easy to circumvent greenbelt protections, that grey belt land was open to interpretation and that they did not feel the development was of very special circumstances and would be harmful to the greenbelt.

In response to the points raised, officers confirmed that;

- Site notices had been correctly issued at the appropriate times and photographic evidence was provided to the Committee. The site notices, contained all of the necessary information to make comments on the application and how to view drawings etc.
- A local resident had submitted concerns later than the consultation period, which had also been extended and these had instead been highlighted on the green sheet. That resident had not been sent notification of the Committee meeting, as their objection had been received after letters had been emailed notifying of the Committee date, to those who had made comments during the consultation period. Officers confirmed that the application did not need to be deferred.
- The Committee could only consider the application before them, not the potential spread from future applications. Future applications would instead be judged on their own merit, but it was noted that harm would increase exponentially if development was applied for further into the more open part of the site and that appeal precedents had considered that issue.
- The proposed dwellings did not impact on the trees due to the distance from them.
- Gardens were classed as previously developed land and this had been confirmed by appeal caselaw.
- The proposal met the parking standards, of two spaces per dwelling.
- The site was in Flood Risk Zone 1, and not an area with a high probability of surface water flooding and the driveways/access road would be made of permeable surfacing.

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

- The new road was between property numbers 6 and 7 and parking on those sites would be retained.
- The increase from two to four dwellings had likely come about due to the change in the NPPF, stating that development in the greenbelt had to cause substantial harm, instead of any harm, it was noted that this was a change in Government policy, rather than local policies.
- The 2023 application had been acceptable in all regards, but refused due to the lack of a bat survey, which had then been resolved before the grant of the 2024 application.
- Any future applications on the site, would be considered on their own merit, against the policies in place at that time and proposals for the open areas of the site would have to be considered differently as they would not be on previously developed land . Conditions could not be placed on the current application that would prejudice future applications.
- The proposal was compliant with greenbelt policy, irrespective of whether the tilted balance had been engaged as substantial harm wasn't evidenced.
- Tests against greenbelt and grey belt policies had been carried out, to cover all requirements, with both saying development should be approved.
- The development site did not strongly contribute to green belt purposes because the site sits within an inset corner relative to the Runwell Defined Settlement boundary, the heavy vegetative boundaries help to contain the site and the site is already developed.
- The site was instead seen as making a moderate contribution to green belt purposes, therefore not reaching the threshold for this to not be considered grey belt.
- The Highways Authority had no concerns about access or safety from the highway changes and the turning head on the site would allow for any vehicles to leave the site in a forward gear.
- Three nearby trees that had been subject to Tree Preservation Orders, were felled after approval from the Planning Committee due to subsidence concerns.
- The site was viewed as sustainable by officers, in terms of its relationships to community services and reasonable distances to shops or doctors for example. Runwell is a Key Service Settlement.

**RESOLVED** that the application be approved subject to the conditions detailed in the report and on the green sheet of amendments.

(7.29pm to 8.24pm)

## 8. Planning Appeals

**RESOLVED** that the information submitted to the meeting on appeal decisions between 11<sup>th</sup> February and 6<sup>th</sup> March 2026 be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.25pm.

Chair