

QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC

TO THE PLANNING COMMITTEE ON 26th May 2026

Item 10 - 25/01780/OUT – Land North East of Little Fields, Danbury, Chelmsford, Essex

Question from Mr F

APPLICATION 25/01780/OUT should be refused.

Quite apart from the fact that this is speculative, non plan-led development outside the adopted Neighbourhood Plan, I want to focus on the serious ecological concerns arising from the applicant's own Preliminary Ecological Report.

Chelmsford's adopted Local Plan Policy DM16 is clear. The presence of protected species is a material consideration, and the extent to which they may be affected must be properly established before permission is granted.

In this case, that has not happened.

First, badgers.

The report is both inaccurate, incomplete and in conflict with the information contained in the confidential badger report related to 16/01810/OUT. There is clear evidence of significant badger activity immediately adjacent to the site, including setts, trails and latrines identified in the earlier ecological evidence. Regular badger activity has been observed in the area and photographic evidence can be provided if required.

The applicant's report fails to properly identify this activity. That raises serious questions about the robustness and integrity of the ecological assessment.

Second, bats.

The report itself acknowledges significant limitations in the bat surveys. Data was lost due to hardware failure, only limited recording was recovered, and the report admits the survey results are indicative only.

Despite those limitations, the surveys still recorded an extraordinary range of bat species, including Barbastelle bats — one of the rarest and most light-sensitive mammals in the UK, and a recognised priority species.

This is critically important.

New housing development, particularly with street lighting, can severely disrupt bat commuting routes, feeding behaviour and roosting activity. The Danbury Neighbourhood Plan specifically recognises this risk through Policy DNP10 on light pollution and protection of night skies.

Artificial lighting near woodland edges, hedgerows and green corridors is known to fragment habitat and isolate bat colonies.

Danbury is already the subject of an important Barbastelle conservation project investigating local roosts, commuting routes and maternity colonies across the Danbury Living Landscape.

Given those known sensitivities, the absence of a robust mitigation strategy is deeply concerning.

The Neighbourhood Plan was created to protect the character, ecology and landscape of Danbury and should not be undermined by unplanned speculative development outside of that plan.

For those reasons, I respectfully urge you to refuse this application.

Thank you.

Question from Danbury Parish Council

Danbury Parish Council strongly objects to this application.

The Parish Council acknowledges the officer report is detailed and carefully prepared. However, the Council respectfully disagrees with the conclusions reached on the overall planning balance and the weight that should be given to the Neighbourhood Plan strategy.

The Parish Council believes this proposal conflicts with both the adopted development plan and the principles of the plan-led system.

The Danbury Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in December 2024, already allocates land for around 100 homes in accordance with Chelmsford's Local Plan strategy. This site is not one of those allocations.

That level of growth was reached following extensive evidence gathering, site assessment, consultation and independent examination. Chelmsford City Council has itself recognised that future development in Danbury is constrained by landscape, ecology and highway considerations.

The Neighbourhood Plan therefore established a carefully considered spatial strategy for the village.

Approving an additional 26 unallocated dwellings immediately following adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan would undermine confidence in neighbourhood planning and weaken the community-led strategy that has already been agreed.

Importantly, the emerging Chelmsford Local Plan Review continues to support the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan strategy and does not propose additional housing allocations for the village beyond those already identified.

The Parish Council also remains concerned regarding the suitability of access through Little Fields, the intensification of development at the rural edge of the village, and the impact on the setting of the Grade II listed Garlands Farmhouse and Key View 3 identified within the Neighbourhood Plan.

While the officer report concludes these harms are acceptable, members are entitled to give greater weight to the cumulative impact on the countryside setting and village edge.

Danbury has planned positively for growth. This proposal is speculative, unallocated, and contrary to the agreed spatial strategy for the village.

For these reasons, the Parish Council respectfully asks the Committee to refuse planning permission.

Thank you.

i National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) Paragraphs 2,11,12 and 15

ii Chelmsford City Council Local Plan Strategic Growth Policy 13 and Danbury Neighbourhood Plan.

Question from Mrs F

I fully appreciate the careful and detailed work undertaken by officers in assessing this application. However, I respectfully suggest that the planning balance in the report gives insufficient weight to the adopted development plan and too much weight to benefits that are either already expected by policy or counted more than once.

The key issue is not whether this site could physically accommodate housing. The key issue is whether this is the right site, in the right place, through the right process.

The officer correctly acknowledges that:

- the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan is up to date,
- paragraph 14 of the NPPF applies,
- and the tilted balance is not engaged.

That is important because paragraph 14 exists specifically to protect communities that have positively planned for growth.

Danbury has done exactly that.

The Neighbourhood Plan already allocates around 100 homes. And crucially, since adoption of that plan, the Council has now reviewed future growth again through the Regulation 22 Local Plan Review process.

Yet even after reassessing housing need and future allocations across the district, the Council still has not allocated this site, nor increased Danbury's housing requirement.

That point, respectfully, is not fully reflected in the officer's weighting exercise.

The report repeatedly gives moderate positive weight to housing delivery, social benefits, sustainability and affordable housing — but many of those benefits arise from the same 26 dwellings and risk being counted several times over.

At the same time, the report substantially downplays the strategic harm arising from:

- conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan,
- development outside the settlement boundary,
- erosion of the rural edge of Danbury,

- and the precedent created by approving speculative development immediately after adoption of a neighbourhood plan.

Those are not minor harms.

They go to the heart of the plan-led system.

Members are not being asked whether housing is needed in Chelmsford.

“Danbury has not simply accepted the 100 homes allocated through the Neighbourhood Plan. The village has also continued to accommodate additional windfall development.

The issue before members is therefore not whether Danbury should contribute to housing growth — it already has and continues to do so.

The issue is whether this particular unallocated site should override the recently adopted plan-led strategy that the Council itself has effectively reaffirmed through the advancing Regulation 22 review.

Respectfully, the planning balance can reasonably be reached differently.

When proper weight is given to the development plan, paragraph 14, the Regulation 22 review, and the cumulative environmental harms identified, the balance falls clearly in favour of refusal.

Question from Mr H

My name is xxxx a resident of Danbury since 1989, and I was involved in the preparation of the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan.

This representation expands upon the key points summarised in my verbal committee statement to object to application 25/01780/OUT, Land Northeast of Little Fields.

The key issue before members tonight is not whether 26 houses can physically fit on this site. Instead, it is whether speculative development outside the agreed spatial strategy for Danbury should be approved so soon after the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan was independently examined and adopted.

The officer report accepts that:

- the site is outside the settlement boundary,
- the site is not allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan,
- and there would be countryside and landscape harm.

However, I believe insufficient weight has been given to those matters.

I acknowledge the officer report is comprehensive and carefully considered. However, members are entitled to reach a different conclusion on the overall planning balance and the weight that should be given to the recently adopted Neighbourhood Plan.

The report places considerable emphasis on the fact that the Neighbourhood Plan does not contain an explicit restrictive policy preventing development outside allocated sites.

But neighbourhood plans are expected to contain positive planning policies and allocations, not blanket restrictive wording. Throughout preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan, guidance from Chelmsford City Council was that overtly negative policies were unlikely to pass examination.

Who is correct, the Officer or Policy?

The absence of a restrictive policy does not reduce the importance of the spatial strategy established through the Neighbourhood Plan process.

That process (over 7 years) carefully assessed sites, allocated appropriate locations for growth, and established the planned level of development for the village.

This approach is now reinforced through the emerging Chelmsford Local Plan Review which confirms that growth for Danbury is expected to be delivered through the made Neighbourhood Plan allocations.

Approving additional speculative development immediately after adoption risks undermining confidence in neighbourhood planning and the plan-led system itself.

The report also places significant reliance on the site technically being previously developed land because of a stable and access track.

In reality, the site remains overwhelmingly open in character and forms part of the rural edge and setting of Danbury.

Members are entitled to conclude that the landscape and countryside impacts are greater than the report suggests and that approval would undermine the carefully planned growth strategy for Danbury.

For these reasons, I respectfully ask the Committee to refuse planning permission.

Thank you.

Question from Mr S

My name is xxx. I have lived in Danbury for 35 years and currently serve as Chair of The Danbury Society. I was involved in preparing the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan, adopted in December 2024.

This application should be refused because it conflicts with both local and national planning policy and undermines the plan-led system.

Paragraph 12 of the NPPF is clear that decisions should be made in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicate otherwise.

This site lies outside the settlement boundary and is not allocated in either the Local Plan or the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan. That conflict should carry substantial weight.

Danbury has already planned positively for growth. The Neighbourhood Plan allocated sites following detailed assessment, consultation and independent examination. As the examiner concluded, the Parish Council had identified the acceptable sites for growth and there was no need to consider further alternatives.

That strategy has now effectively been reaffirmed through the emerging Chelmsford Local Plan Review, which still does not allocate this site or materially increase Danbury's housing requirement.

Chelmsford also continues to significantly exceed Housing Delivery Test targets, most recently achieving 116%.

While the Council cannot currently demonstrate a full five-year housing land supply, Paragraph 14 of the NPPF specifically protects recently adopted neighbourhood plans such as Danbury's.

Government Planning Practice Guidance is clear that where a proposal conflicts with an up-to-date neighbourhood plan, planning permission should not usually be granted.

This is exactly the situation Paragraph 14 was intended to address — communities that have planned positively for growth should not immediately face speculative development outside the agreed strategy.

Recent appeal decisions, including Tiptree, show that neighbourhood plans can still carry decisive weight even where housing land supply falls below five years.

Respectfully, the officer's report repeatedly elevates housing benefits while progressively reducing the significance of conflict with the adopted spatial strategy.

Members are, of course, fully entitled to reach a different planning balance from officers provided clear planning reasons are identified and recorded. This application raises legitimate policy issues concerning conflict with the adopted Neighbourhood Plan, the plan-led system, countryside encroachment and ecological uncertainty. Those are all material planning considerations capable of supporting a reasoned refusal decision.

The issue before Members is not whether Danbury should contribute to housing growth. It already has.

The issue is whether this speculative and unallocated site should override a recently adopted neighbourhood plan and undermine confidence in the plan-led system.

For those reasons, I respectfully ask Members to refuse planning permission.

Thank you.

Question from Mr T

I have read the officers report with the pros and cons. The thing to me that is missing is the recognition that, to voters, development should local plan led. The empowerment of local areas to choose sites was the point of the local plan process. The local plan was put together at significant expense to the Danbury tax payer and involved 1000s of hours of volunteer time. It was then democratically voted on by residents of the village. The use of obtuse planning priorities in the report obliterates this concept, indeed it directly overrides the desires of local people that are in the plan. There has already been one site allocated adjacent to little fields and it is inconceivable that a second would have been added had this site been brought forward in a timely manner as part of the local plan development.

I urge members to refuse this application to ensure that both confidence in local democracy and the planning process is upheld.

Question from Mr M

Good evening Councillors,

Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak on behalf of, who are the applicants for this scheme.

The application before you was submitted in December 2025. We have been working closely with Officers and other key stakeholders pre- and post-submission including through formal pre-application engagement. We also engaged with the local community ahead of submission which highlighted a range of views on the proposals, including support for development of the Site, and the provision of new homes and affordable homes.

The result of the work completed to date is a well thought-out scheme which is sympathetic to the character of the surrounding area.

The Site is located in a discreet location, on the edge of the sustainable settlement of Danbury. It is in easy walking distance of a range of existing services and facilities, as well as nearby bus stops.

Access would be delivered through Little Fields, an existing cul-de-sac of homes which was built by Martin Grant in the 1980s. Whilst the current application is submitted in Outline, the parameters and Illustrative Masterplan demonstrate how development on the Site could successfully integrate with neighbouring residential uses.

The proposals provide the opportunity for the Council to support much-needed housing and affordable housing, in a suitable location. Homes would be located within an enhanced landscape framework, strengthened by new planting and open spaces, including play provision.

Whilst not allocated in the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan, in the context of the Council's need for more family homes and the discreet nature of the Site we consider the proposals are logical and should be supported.

The work completed to support the application, alongside the responses received from technical officers and consultees, demonstrates that there are few harms which would arise from the proposals.

We therefore support the Officer's view that the proposal do not give rise to any clear planning harms and would result in no substantive conflict with the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan. Further, we agree with their conclusions that the benefits of the development weigh strongly in favour of allowing the current planning application.

We therefore respectfully request that Councillors approve the scheme, in line with the Officers' recommendation set out in the report.

Thank you.

Question from Mrs F

My name is . I am a Danbury resident .I will focus briefly on one key issue.

The NPPF is clear that plans should provide a positive vision for the future of each area and be a platform for local people to shape their surroundings.

Chelmsford City Council has recently progressed its emerging Local Plan Review to Regulation 22 specifically to maintain a plan-led approach to growth and reduce vulnerability to speculative development.

At the same time, Members are now being asked to approve a speculative and unallocated development contrary to National and Local Policy which is outside both the adopted Danbury Neighbourhood Plan and the emerging Local Plan Review.

Members will understand that residents like me will struggle to reconcile those two positions.

If neighborhood plans can be overridden in circumstances such as these — where the plan is recent, housing has already been allocated, and the emerging Local Plan Review continues to support that strategy — residents will understandably question what practical value neighborhood planning really has?

In this case where clear planning reasons exist to refuse the application, I request that members reach a different planning decision to that recommended by officers.

Item 11 - 25/00339/FUL - Land East of Premier Lodge Hotel, Main Road, Boreham, Chelmsford, Essex

Question from Mr P

1. Has there been a sufficient risk assessment undertaken regarding storing high-pressure Bio-CNG so close to other businesses and residential homes?
2. Is there enough information to ascertain whether Bio-CNG is sustainable long term as there is a concern locally that if planning permission is granted for a Bio-CNG depot that it would then revert to a filling station for fossil fuel or other similar development?

Question from Mrs I

This application represents a key opportunity for Chelmsford to take positive action in addressing sustainable transport solutions in response to the Climate Emergency. This will be the first facility of its kind along the A12 corridor and at the leading edge of environmental sustainability.

Diesel powers almost all HGVs and is one of the worst polluters of the atmosphere primarily because of the toxic smog-forming and health-damaging pollutants they emit.

Powering a vehicle fleet with compressed natural gas from a sustainable bio methane source is a radical environmentally friendly option. It gives rise to about 90% less CO2 emissions and 75% less Nitrous Oxide and so is an extremely positive contributor to decarbonisation.

In the search for a suitable site, 15 other locations along the A12 were considered, but none met the relevant criteria, in particular access to high pressure gas.

Policy DM8 of your Local Plan encourages exactly this kind of innovative transport and we have adhered to the strict policy criteria, in particular the provision of an extensive landscaping scheme, which will be a significant improvement on the existing unscreened lorry park.

We are conscious of the objections raised by Boreham residents who understandably wish to maintain the separation of the village. We believe that the green wedge is not threatened by this application as the proposed development consolidates and concentrates transport related development, including the existing hotel, close to the adjacent junction in a logical and defensible way with vehicle movements directly to and from the A12.

No objections have been raised by New Hall School following their acquisition of Boreham House

In conclusion, this proposal provides necessary transportation infrastructure to assist with the transition to Net Zero and we believe warrants your strong support.

Question from Mr E (Boreham PC)

1. Visual Impact on Boreham Village in its raised position in an agricultural landscape and long views.
2. The Safeguarding Zone to keep Boreham separate from Chelmsford's urban sprawl has been part of the long discussions with CCC Planning in the preparation of the Neighbourhood Plan.
This is one of the most important issues for the Boreham Village Community and is reflected and incorporated in the Neighbourhood Plan, having previously been incorporated in the Village Design Statement adopted in 2010. The Neighbourhood plan has now been reviewed and approved by an Independent Planning Inspector and becomes a material consideration in planning applications, and decision-makers must give it weight when assessing development proposals in the area. If this application was now to be approved it would fly in the face of the Neighbourhood Plan Process and go against one of the most important and Planning considerations for the Boreham Village community.
3. Many previous applications have been refused for this site, Three applications are listed and refused on the Chelmsford Planning Website and all of the others were withdrawn by applicants when they realised they were unlikely to succeed therefore do not get listed on the Planning Portal.

Question from Mrs R

Bio CNG is derived from renewable sources like agricultural waste, food, or sewage sludge. It is typically over 95% methane, compressed at high pressure for use as a transportation fuel or for industrial heating.

However, its production is energy intensive and there is little available independent data to support its claim to be sustainable. Making bio CNG involves a substantial investment in equipment - anaerobic digesters, cleaning, upgrading and compression and storage equipment. Much of the data available relative to Bio-CNG is generated by or with vested interests. Sustainability of bio CNG across the entire processing and use life-cycle is unclear.

As a transportation fuel, it is typically used for city buses, delivery fleets, and long-haul trucks.

CNG Fuels wants to expand its network of 16 UK refuelling stations. It states that locations should be near dense logistics or distribution hubs with a high level of HGV traffic. Boreham is not such a location.

It's a rural village with shops, pubs and restaurants - no haulage firms, no delivery fleets, no long-haul trucking companies.

Existing refuelling stations include:

- Knowsley, on a large industrial estate located next to a haulage firm
- Newark, on a large industrial estate next to Curry's national distribution centre
- Corby, on a large industrial estate surrounded by road freight and logistics companies.

All 16 existing stations look very similar.

If the City Council believes there is a need for bio CNG in Chelmsford, will it please select a more suitable location?

We ask you to refuse this Application.

Question from Mr K

The above Planning application should be refused because it fails the test on all of the following questions. Both NH and ECC Highways have responded without reflection on the true situation and as clear from other proposals do not seem to be held accountable for the failure of current highways infrastructure

Why – National Highways (NH) raised no objections when they predict J19 will be at “worse operating conditions” in **2027**. Approval would add 250+ HGV exits from J19 on to Main Road and consequently 250+ HGV entries from Main Road to J19 every working day.

Why – Essex Highways (EH) do not raise the difficulties and dangers from HGV's attempting to cross Main Road to enter the traffic queuing back from J19.

EH are naïve to accept that London bound HGVs will queue at J19 rather than coming off the A12 at Hatfield Peverel and through Boreham to enter the site or that Colchester bound HGVs will use J19 to access the A12 rather than turning left, through Boreham to join the A12 at Hatfield Peverel. It is also unlikely that the Applicant's instruction not to turn left through Boreham would be a deterrent. EH have not even proposed a “No Left Turn” sign or a reduction in speed limits on Main Road (at least to 30 mph through Boreham) should this Application be approved.

Why – CCC have sought to minimise residents' concerns by mis-representing these in their Executive Summary “Main concern is the traffic associated with this site for when Boreham House is being used as an educational facility for younger children as cars and pedestrians will be entering and exiting from Boreham House close to the roundabout. This is a high risk,

and this was not mentioned in the highways report especially if students need to cross the road to get to the bus stop on the other side of the road by this site.”

WHY – CCC have ignored their report stating “6.1.2 Scope of ‘Without Widening DCO’ Sensitivity Test Preliminary findings from AECOM’s modelling suggests that the delivery of Boreham Interchange improvements associated with the A12 widening DCO proposals is required as a minimum to ensure that Junction 19 has the capacity to accommodate proposed development across Chelmsford identified in the Adopted Local Plan and the LPRPS. Should funding for the DCO proposals be withheld following central government review in Spring 2025, modelling suggests that these capacity improvements would require funding by alternative means. AECOM’s findings therefore suggest that a scenario whereby Local Plan development could be delivered without capacity improvements at the Boreham Interchange, is unrealistic”. We now know that the DCO has been cancelled and with it any funding. We also know that adding hundreds of HGV exits and entries to J19 is unrealistic and must not be approved.

We ask you to refuse this Application.

Question from Mr M

1. There have been many previous applications for this site and they have all been refused, so clearly CCC in the past has not been in favour of any development on this site.
2. It is clear that the landowner wishes to clear this plot from his holding as it is probably uneconomical to farm. To this end he appears to be taking offers from all types of development. It has become uneconomical due to previous ad-hoc development diminishing the size of the plot.
3. This application is hoping to tempt CCC into some form of development agreement using the GREEN ticket.
4. Biofuel filling facilities are better located near or within industrial development where there is constant movement of HGVs geared up to use this type of fuel within the local area. To have this type of facility adjacent to a trunk road, relying on passing through route HGV traffic is not economically sustainable; as the number of HGVs fuelled by this type of fuel is likely to be low on this route. I am not aware of any other similar facility on the A12. Hauliers will be taking considerable risks to run CNG fuelled fleets along the A12.
5. The facility will be a 24/7 operation creating a very urbanised environment.
6. The area of land between Junction 19 and Boreham Village is referenced in the Boreham Neighbourhood Development Plan (BNDP) as being an area that must remain rural to maintain the separation between Chelmsford urban area and Boreham Village. This has been accepted by Chelmsford City Council in the draft BNDP which has also been accepted by the Independent Inspector. The BNDP is judged to be sound and is due to go to referendum shortly seeking approval from the wider electorate. If this application is approved, then one of the key issues raised in the BNDP will be ignored even before the Plan is published. This cannot be allowed.
7. I strongly urge CCC not to be tempted by the GREEN ticket and refuse this application.

Question from Mr S

1. How do the traffic assessments not take account of Junction 19 capacities as currently recognised by ECC and NH
2. Does the recommendation to approve recognise the NPPF guidelines for the proposed impact on highways
3. How do current proposals impact on emergency diversion routes and emergency services.
4. How have projected HGV journeys and volumes been assessed.
5. What alternative better located sites were considered by both the applicant and CCC

Boreham Conservation Society believes that this application cannot be justified as appropriate for this location and sustainable and ask you to refuse this application