

MINUTES
of the
PLANNING COMMITTEE
held on 7 July 2026 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor H. Ayres (Chair)

Councillors, H. Clark, S. Dobson, S. Hall, R. Hyland, S. Rajesh, J. Sosin, A. Thorpe-Apps
and P. Wilson

Also in attendance:

Cllrs Lee and Walsh

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 P. Clark, Pappa, Sampson and Tron.

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. Public Question Time

Public questions had been submitted in advance for Item 5 and are summarised under the relevant item [and can be viewed via this link.](#)

5. 25/01003/FUL – Car Park, Meteor Way, Chelmsford, Essex

The Committee considered an application for the erection of 18 temporary residential units with associated parking, landscaping and off-site highway improvements at the Council's Car Park on Meteor Way. The Committee were informed that the site was a sustainable city centre location, within the ownership of the City Council and that the 18 units would provide homes for homeless families at a time, when the Council were in the midst of a housing crisis with an urgent need for temporary housing solutions. It was noted that development of the site would result in the loss of a community building for the air training corps (but they had already

relocated), along with the loss of the car park. The Committee noted that the loss of the car park would mainly impact the adjacent community uses, who utilise the car park during evenings and weekends, but that a footpath link would be provided to ensure a safe pedestrian route from Meteor Way up to Waterhouse Lane/Rainsford Lane, then connecting to the pavement towards Coval Lane Car Park, approximately a 5 minute walk away, which is already lit by streetlights. The Committee heard that significant cycle parking provision was included, and that the modular units were quick to install, energy efficient and would be arranged around green spaces to create a sense of community via shared open spaces. The Committee were also informed that the Council currently had 586 households in temporary accommodation, with many housed in nightly lets and that the highest demand was for larger family homes, as proposed in the application.

The Committee heard that the critical need for the development and the greatly beneficial accommodation that would be provided to house homeless families in urgent need, was considered to outweigh the negative effects of the proposal and it had therefore been recommended for approval. [The Committee also noted the green sheet of amendments to the item, which detailed an additional condition requiring up to five disabled parking spaces to be provided as part of the application.](#)

The Committee heard from members of the public who raised concerns with the application, regarding vehicular access to the Miniature Railway site, impacts on revenue losses, a lack of secure safe access for the community facilities including turning, drop off and collection arrangements for children and community users. Concerns were also raised regarding the dropping off of equipment at the community uses, safeguarding issues, non-compliance with Policy DM21, the proposed use of Coval Lane car park not being an equivalent replacement, highway safety concerns and that the Coval Lane car park had also been identified as a potential development site.

The Committee also heard from a local ward member, who noted the severe need for housing of this type and thanked the community groups who had engaged with their Councillors on the proposals. They stated that despite not being like for like, the mitigations put forward did go some way to solving the issues raised and that it was important that the community uses were able to continue, as they played an important role for residents. They stated that if the application were approved, they would encourage officers to continue to work with the local groups to resolve any unforeseen issues and that any traffic disruption during building works would have to be carefully managed. The Committee also heard from the Cabinet Member for Planning and Place-Shaping who highlighted the Council's Housing Crisis and that it was the Council's responsibility to work towards solving the Housing Crisis. It was noted that schemes such as the one proposed on the Council's land, would provide homes for those who desperately need them, in addition to financial savings for the Council that could be put towards other necessary services. They detailed the significant rise in budgeted spend on temporary accommodation for the Council and also the fact that many families were having to be housed outside of Chelmsford, leading to significant impacts on especially children, who were having to be taken out of their schools and support networks. The Committee heard that the concerns of the local community groups were acknowledged, but that Coval Lane Car Park was nearby and that work had taken place to mitigate/identify alternatives, including the footpath towards Coval Lane Car Park and the disabled parking spaces. The Committee heard that it was in the Council's interest to continue to work with users of the site during and after any works and that approving the application would mean some families would be able to stay living in Chelmsford, near their families and schools.

In response to the points raised, officers stated that;

- The access to the Miniature Railway was maintained with the route through the site, similar to the current crossing of the existing car park that was required.
- The nearby Coval Lane Car Park was only five minutes away and access to it would be made easier with the proposed footpath.
- Meteor Way was already lit with streetlights, and all of the route to Coval Lane Car Park would be lit.
- A turning head to assist with vehicular access, already existed in Meteor Way.
- The 90m section of private road would also provide some parking, and the existing apron of hardstanding near the community facility could be used for the dropping off of heavy equipment.
- The critical need for the housing, outweighed the loss of the Car Park.
- Coval Lane Car Park was a future growth site, but no firm decision had been taken on how or when to develop it.
- The usual Construction Management Plan would ensure that the community uses were not severely affected during the construction period.

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

- The entire length of the walking route to Coval Lane Car Park was lit by streetlights already.
- Coval Lane Car Park had plenty of capacity, especially in the evenings and weekends.
- The lifespan of the buildings was 15-20 years, and an evaluation of them would normally be carried out at that time, the site would also remain under the control of the City Council for any alternative future uses if required.
- A turning head already existed on the site to assist with vehicular movements.
- New developments were not able to join the resident's parking scheme, but officers felt the level of parking provided was sufficient, especially with the high provision of cycle spaces and the fact that the City Council would manage the site.
- Best use of the site in terms of housing numbers had been achieved and the high numbers of cycle parking provisions had not impacted the amount of housing possible.
- Any development on the site was not expected to coincide with a separate development opposite the site.
- The parking survey that had been carried out showed a small number of cars using the existing Meteor Way Car Park during the week, with higher numbers at evenings and weekends, but that the alternative provision at Coval Lane Car Park would be sufficient for the community uses.

Members of the Committee expressed some concern about the impact on the community uses and that it would be important for the Council to continue conversations with them, but that the severe need for the housing could not be ignored and that there would be a significant positive impact on the Housing Crisis, as a result of the application being approved.

RESOLVED that the application be approved in accordance with the conditions detailed in the report and the additional condition on the green sheet.

(7.03pm to 8.06pm)

6. Planning Appeals

RESOLVED that the information submitted to the meeting on appeal decisions between 2nd and 24th June be noted.

The meeting closed at 8.06pm.

Chair