

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

Present:

Councillor R. Lee (Chair)

Councillors, J. Armstrong, H. Clark, J. Frasca, S. Hall, R. Hyland, J. Lardge, J. Raven, E. Sampson, A. Thorpe-Apps, and P. Wilson

### 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, Pappa and Tron. 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 meetings on 9 and 15 December 2025 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

### 5. Public Question Time

Public questions had been submitted in advance for Items 6-8 which are summarised under the relevant item. [The questions and statements submitted in advance can be viewed via this link.](#)

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

The Committee considered an application for a change of use of land to one Gypsy/Traveller pitch, comprising of one mobile home, one touring caravan, associated works and the formation of new access. The Committee heard that the proposal had been referred to them by a Local Ward Councillor, due to the level of local interest and opposition which warranted public scrutiny. The Committee were informed that previous applications on the site had been refused but that since then the Council's position in terms of supply and delivery of Gypsy/Traveller pitches had not improved, with an unmet need remaining. The Committee heard that Government policy was clear in this scenario and that the provisions in paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) therefore applied, commonly known as the 'titled balance'. The Committee noted that this meant the planning balance was in effect 'tilted' in favour of approving the application and that the site was considered 'grey belt' land, paragraph 155 of the NPPF was complied with, resulting in it not being viewed as inappropriate development. It was noted that some adverse impacts were present such as the character of the site, but that these would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits of providing a further pitch within a sustainable location.

The Committee were informed that the application had been accompanied by the required ecological surveys, revisions to the access improving visibility, a financial contribution to mitigate the likely significant adverse effects on Habitats sites and a Flood Risk Assessment. This meant that the previous reasons for refusal had been suitably addressed by the new application and it was recommended for approval subject to conditions. [The Committee noted the green sheet of amendments which detailed an amended condition for this item.](#)

The Committee heard from a member of the public who spoke in support of the application, detailing the introduction of 'grey belt' land within the 2024 NPPF and that the site had met the required tests of paragraph 155 of the NPPF. They also detailed the changes to the application before the Committee compared to previous refusals, which officers had stated were adequately addressed. The Committee heard that the application represented a Policy DM3 compliant scheme providing a much need windfall site to meet current unmet need.

The Committee also heard from a member of the public who felt that the application was still an inappropriate development, with key refusal reasons from previous applications still remaining and despite being 'grey belt' did not provide required substantial public benefits. They also detailed concerns regarding residual harm to the character and appearance of the area and concluded that the application should be refused based on the level of harm standing being excessive and that the proposed conditions did not sufficiently mitigate the harm of the proposed development.

The Committee also heard from a Local Ward Member who viewed the application as an opportunistic one, taking advantage of the Council's temporary shortfall of pitches as a result of Central Government's changes to the NPPF. They also highlighted significant concerns with walking into Writtle from the application site, being dangerous due to the national speed limit road, potential residents would have to navigate and cross. They also stated that the previous refusal reasons still applied in their view, that the site was in the Green Belt and that harm would be caused to the appearance and character of the village.

In response to the points raised, officers confirmed that;

- Their view was that all of the relevant tests of Paragraph 155 of the NPPF had been met so the development was seen as appropriate.
- The Committee could only consider the planning application that had been submitted and that the proposed conditions were viewed as appropriate.
- The previous refusal mainly related to a lack of technical information being provided, which had now all been addressed.
- It was a matter of fact that the Council could not demonstrate a sufficient 5 year housing supply for Gypsy/Traveller pitches and as a result the tilted balance in favour of development was engaged.
- The access was viewed as safe and suitable by officers who had visited the site and also by the Highways Authority, who had made no objections.

In response to questions from the Committee officers stated that;

- The Local Plan review was set to allocated 30 Gypsy/Traveller sites against a need of 44, so the Council would remain reliant on some windfall sites.
- The Highways Authority were content with the proposal, in terms of safe access and egress from the site, also that for a refusal on highway grounds a significant impact would need to be demonstrated.
- The site was in a sustainable location, close to the village, comfortably within walking distance to the local school and community facilities.
- The application met all required tests to be considered as 'grey belt' land and officers could not offer more information on this.
- Approving the application would not set a precedent as each case would continue to be judged on its own merits

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

(7.03pm to 8.16pm)

[7 & 8. 25/01195/FUL & 25/01194/FUL – Field at Greenacre Lane, Stock, Ingatestone, Essex](#)

*The Committee considered the two similar applications together and then voted on individual resolutions for each item.*

[The Committee were reminded of the Green Sheet of amendments which detailed that an appeal had been lodged by the applicant for non-determination against both applications.](#) This meant that the Council could no longer make a formal decision on the applications, with the Planning Inspectorate now the official decision maker for the two applications. Therefore, the Committee considered the applications and were asked to provide what their decision would have been if they had been able to determine the applications.

The Committee were asked to consider the two applications, one for a Hay/Feed Barn and one for an agricultural storage barn on at Greenacre Lane in Stock which had been referred at the request of a Local Ward Member due to the high number of local objections to both applications. The Committee heard that neither barn would accommodate livestock, that they formed part of a wider agricultural holding and that access would be via a farm track which connected the site with Smallgains Lane. The Committee heard that despite being in the greenbelt, as they were for agricultural purposes they did not constitute inappropriate development. The Committee were informed that the effect of the two buildings and their use

would not unacceptably harm the character and appearance of the area, there was reasonable distance to residential dwellings and that traffic levels were likely to be reduced to storage being available on the site. The Committee also heard that due to the proposal being on existing hardstanding and with an existing access, there was unlikely to be an impact on local habitat as no groundworks were proposed and that the likelihood of surface water flooding would not increase. The Committee were informed that the proposed barns complied with the Development Plan as a whole and were therefore recommended for approval subject to conditions.

The Committee heard from local residents who raised concerns with the two applications. These concerns included compliance and enforcement on other applications on the site, increased traffic, Highway Safety and condition of the lane, landscaping and visual impacts, enforcement of livestock restrictions and the appeal procedure. Concerns were also raised about the expansion of the livestock operation, damage to the local lane, adverse impacts from traffic and noise and general overdevelopment of the area if approved.

The Committee also heard from Local Ward Members who echoed the concerns raised by local residents. They also highlighted how narrow the lane and nearby lanes were, which were regularly used by local residents which would conflict with increased vehicle movements from the development. They also stated that they felt vehicular movements would increase rather than decrease as a result and that a condition should be added that any verge or road damage from construction traffic should be repaired at the applicant's cost. They also referred to other enforcement cases on the site that had concerned local residents and that this combined with the two proposed barns had led to greater concerns.

In response to the points raised, officers confirmed that they did not foresee increased traffic levels, the Highways Authority had not raised any concerns and that responsibility for the Highway and verges laid with the Highways Authority. The Committee heard that any damage to the Highway should be reported to the Highways Authority and that public nuisance from smells should not increase, as the barns were for storage but that any of those concerns should be reported via Environmental Health if required. They also stated that other applications on the site or ongoing enforcement cases were separate matters, that should not be considered by the Committee.

In response to questions from the Committee officers noted that;

- Any impact from what was just two barns, was deemed to be modest rather than moderate on the local area.
- The barns would be situated on current hardstanding, meaning that drainage and soakaways would not be affected.
- The Committee were only tasked with considering the two barns applied for, not any other barns on the site.
- They did not view the proposals as having an adverse impact on the Green Belt.
- It was viewed as appropriate for the barns to be grouped in the Southeast corner of the field, rather than spread wider across it.

**RESOLVED** that if the Council were determining application 25/01195/FUL it would have been approved subject to the conditions detailed in the report and on the green sheet.

**RESOLVED** that if the Council were determining application 25/01194/FUL it would have been approved subject to the conditions detailed in the report and on the green sheet.

## 9. Planning Appeals

### **RESOLVED** that

1. the information submitted to the meeting on appeal decisions between 25th November 2025 and 10th February 2026 be noted.
2. Officers be thanked for their hard work and time in supporting the Committee's decision on the Fox and Raven appeal, which the Planning Inspectorate had supported by dismissing the appeal.

(8.17pm to 8.45pm)

The meeting closed at 8.45pm.

Chair