

QUESTIONS AND STATEMENTS FROM THE PUBLIC TO THE PLANNING COMMITTEE ON 7th July 2026

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

Question from Mr N

1) Chelmsford Miniature Railways only vehicle access to their site is across the car Park. Is it possible to have a dedicated access route rather than expecting us to cross the new development? The planning proposal mentions we will have access but we are concerned this might be unavailable for whatever reason.

2) Many of our visitors use the car park and we anticipate the development will have a significant impact on our revenue. We are non profit organisation who only just cover the it's as it is. Can alternative parking arrangements adjacent to our site on a formal basis

3) Should over time it prove to be the case that our revenue is impacted as to make us unsustainable are their plans to offer an alternative site? Our current lease mentions such an arrangement.

Chelmsford Society of Model Engineers Ltd

Question from Mr K

Dear Chair and Committee Members,

I am speaking on behalf of Chelmsford Young Generation Amateur Musical Society, known as Young Gen, based at our headquarters on Meteor Way.

Young Gen is a youth theatre charity for children and young people aged 8 to 18. Our HQ is used regularly for rehearsals, workshops and youth activities, often with large numbers of children arriving and leaving at the same time. Evening rehearsals can finish as late as 10pm.

We fully recognise the need for temporary accommodation and we do not object to supporting families in housing need. However, we strongly object to this application in its current form because it does not properly secure safe access, turning, drop-off and collection arrangements for children and community users.

The officer report itself acknowledges that Young Gen can have up to 70 children attending at one time, that the existing car park is used for drop-off and collection, including after dark, and that community users need access for props, costumes and equipment.

These concerns are not raised by Young Gen alone. The officer report records 181 letters received, with repeated concerns about child safety, loss of parking, Meteor Way being narrow, unlit and without a pavement, conflict between vehicles and pedestrians, and the effect on established community facilities.

For Young Gen, this car park is not an optional convenience. It is essential to the safe and supervised operation of our HQ.

This is not simply a parking issue. It is a safeguarding issue. Removing the car park without a secured replacement arrangement creates risk when children are most vulnerable: leaving rehearsals in large numbers, often after dark, and being handed back to parents and carers.

The recent fatal incident in nearby Central Park has understandably heightened local concerns about children and families walking in the area after dark, and reinforces why safe, supervised drop-off and collection at Young Gen HQ is essential.

A footpath to Coval Lane does not answer the key practical question: where do parents safely stop, wait, turn and collect children late at night?

We were previously advised that a turning circle or turning head was being investigated. However, the report now confirms that it does not form part of this application. The proposed condition appears only to secure a footpath link. It does not secure a turning area, drop-off zone, replacement parking, stewarded collection point, emergency access arrangement or traffic management plan.

The report also accepts that the proposal is not fully compliant with Policy DM21 because it removes a community building. Separately, it identifies the car park loss as a main planning issue. Taken together, this is a significant loss of community infrastructure.

Young Gen respectfully asks Members to defer this application until safe access, turning, parking and drop-off arrangements are properly assessed, agreed and secured. If Members are not minded to defer, we ask that the application is refused in its current form.

Thank you.

Question from Mrs E

Dear Chair and Committee Members of the Planning Committee,

I object to planning application 25/01003/FUL on the grounds that, while I fully recognise the urgent need for temporary accommodation for homeless families, this proposal is not appropriately located and would result in unacceptable harm to essential community infrastructure, access arrangements and highway safety. The planning officer's own report identifies significant policy conflict and unresolved impacts which, in my view, are not outweighed by the benefits of the scheme in this location.

The proposal would result in the permanent loss of the Meteor Way public car park, which is integral to the operation of several long-established community organisations, including the Scouts, Rifle Club, Miniature Railway, CYGMAS, CAODS and Parkrun.

These organisations provide important recreational and social opportunities and rely on accessible parking, particularly during evenings and weekends when attendance is high and includes children, families, volunteers and those with mobility constraints.

This concern is strongly reinforced by representations from directly affected organisations, including Chelmsford Young Generation Amateur Musical Society

(CYGAMS), which operates a youth theatre based on Meteor Way. Young Gen confirms that it regularly hosts up to 70 children at evening rehearsals finishing as late as 10pm, with parents relying on the existing car park for safe drop-off and collection. It also highlights that the car park is essential for unloading props, costumes and equipment. This evidence demonstrates that the car park is not an incidental facility but a fundamental part of the safe operation of established community uses.

The proposed alternative parking at Coval Lane is not an equivalent replacement. It requires users to walk a significant distance, often in darkness and poor weather, while carrying equipment or supervising children. Although the officer's report considers the route acceptable in principle, it does not adequately address the practical safeguarding implications identified by local users or the impact on evening activities.

Of particular concern is that the application does not secure a safe, permanent and operational vehicle turning or drop-off arrangement to replace the existing informal but essential arrangements used by community organisations. Young Gen, as a key occupier directly affected by the proposal, has made clear that the absence of such provision directly affects safe arrival, collection, supervision and emergency access for children. This is a material planning consideration that has not been resolved within the application before the Committee.

The proposal also conflicts with Policy DM21 of the Chelmsford Local Plan, which seeks to protect community facilities unless it can be demonstrated that they are no longer needed, no longer viable, or that suitable replacement facilities are provided. The planning officer acknowledges that the proposal is not fully compliant with Policy DM21. While the former Air Training Corps building has relocated, the report accepts that the site remains capable of accommodating community use and continues to provide infrastructure that supports a range of established community organisations.

No equivalent replacement community facility or replacement parking has been provided. The loss of the Meteor Way car park therefore results in the loss of community infrastructure without replacement, placing the proposal in conflict with Policy DM21.

The fact that the officer considers this conflict to be outweighed by housing need does not remove the policy breach or its significance.

Although described as temporary, the development would remain in place for approximately 15 years, representing a long-term loss of community infrastructure rather than a short-term disruption. This significantly increases the weight that should be given to the harm identified.

There are also unresolved highway safety concerns. The report distinguishes between the adopted and private sections of Meteor Way and proposes changes to parking and waiting arrangements, but it is unclear how these will function in practice or how they will be enforced. Restricting waiting on the adopted highway may displace vehicles further into Meteor Way without providing any safe turning, waiting or collection solution, thereby increasing conflict between vehicles, pedestrians and vulnerable users, particularly during evening use.

The concerns raised by Young Gen and other local users highlight that these issues are not theoretical but relate directly to the safe operation of established community facilities involving children. These concerns are not adequately addressed by the current application or secured by proposed conditions.

While I recognise the acute need for temporary accommodation in Chelmsford, this does not justify proceeding with a scheme that removes essential community infrastructure and fails to secure safe and workable access arrangements for existing users.

For these reasons, I respectfully request that the Planning Committee either:

- defers the application until safe access, turning and replacement arrangements are properly designed, assessed and secured; or
- refuses planning permission due to conflict with Policy DM21, unresolved highway safety impacts, and the loss of essential community infrastructure without adequate replacement.

If Members are minded to approve the application, I request that no closure of the Meteor Way car park is permitted until enforceable and fully operational replacement arrangements are secured, including safe turning provision, protected access arrangements and suitable drop-off and collection facilities for community users, agreed in consultation with affected organisations such as Young Gen.

This proposal should not proceed until the safety, access and long-term operational needs of existing community facilities are properly resolved.

Thank you

Question from Mr W

25/01003/FUL Car Park on Meteor Way - Council Planning Committee meeting 7th July 7pm
- Question Through the Chair, could officers please clarify the site-selection and mitigation position?

I understand that Waterhouse Lane/Meteor Way car park was not on the list of potential urban development sites evaluated by Chelmsford City Council, whereas Coval Lane Car Park was considered and remains identified as a potential development site.

In those circumstances, can officers explain why this particular car park has been selected for temporary accommodation, despite the direct impact on established local community groups using Meteor Way?

Also, if Coval Lane Car Park is being presented as a suitable alternative car park for displaced Waterhouse Lane/Meteor Way users, how can that be relied upon as a robust long-term mitigation when Coval Lane itself is also identified for potential future development?