

MINUTES
of the
PLANNING COMMITTEE
held on 26 May 2026 at 7pm

Present:

Councillor H. Ayres (Chair)

Councillors, H. Clark, P. Clark, S. Dobson, J. Frasca, S. Hall, R. Hyland, E. Sampson, J. Sosin, 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 Pappa, Rajesh and Tron. Cllr Frasca substituted for Cllr Rajesh.

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 24th March 2026 were confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

5. Public Question Time

Public questions had been submitted in advance for Items 10 and 11 which are summarised under the relevant item [and can be viewed via this link](#).

Items 6-9 22/01959/OUT & FUL – Zone 1 Chelmsford Garden Community, Pratts Farm Lane, Little Waltham, Chelmsford, Essex and 23/00124/FUL & OUT – Zone 3 Chelmsford Garden Community, Beaulieu Parkway, Chelmsford

The Chair agreed to consider Items 6-9 together, before taking individual votes on each item respectively.

Cllr Hall was not present for this item.

The Committee were asked to consider granting a four month extension for each item, from the expiry of the agreed resolutions that had been agreed in December 2025, to 15th October 2026, to allow sufficient time for the completion of the Planning Framework Agreement, the CIL reinvestment Funding Agreement and the S106 agreement. The Committee were informed that substantive progress had been made since December 2025, but that work was still ongoing and separate funding approvals were still required from Essex County Council and National Highways, which were expected in July. The Committee heard that as a result, the initial time period to June would not be sufficient, but that the extension would allow officers time to negotiate, settle and complete the Planning Framework Agreement, the CIL Reinvestment Funding Agreement and the s106 Agreement. It was noted that completion of all three agreements, would then enable approval of the Stage 1 Masterplan and the grant of planning permission.

In response to questions from members, officers confirmed that as external funding approvals were expected in July, the time extension to October should be sufficient and would allow a bit of extra time cover if required. They also confirmed that the applications would only be brought back to the Committee for consideration, if they were no longer in line with the December 2025 resolutions, for example if the affordable housing provision was altered then that would need to be considered again by the Committee.

RESOLVED that a four month period from the expiry of the agreed resolution (minute PL-24) to 15th October 2026 to extend the period for completion of the Planning Framework Agreement, the CIL Reinvestment Funding Agreement and the S106 Agreement for applications 22/01959/OUT, 22/01959/FUL, 23/00124/FUL and 23/00124/OUT be approved.

(7.02pm to 7.18pm)

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

The Committee considered an outline planning application for the erection of up to 26 residential dwellings, including 35% affordable housing, with new access, public open space, sustainable urban drainage systems, landscaping, infrastructure and earthworks, with access sought and all other matters reserved. The Committee was informed that the application had been called in by a local ward member because it conflicted with the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan, and that the two other ward members had also supported the application being considered by the Planning Committee. The Committee heard that the site was previously developed land, but with minimal physical development, remaining predominantly open and in low-key horse grazing use. It was noted that the site adjoined the eastern edge of Danbury, a key service settlement, with access to Little Fields.

The Committee was informed that the principle of development was finely balanced. Although the site lay in the rural area, officers advised that the site was well related to the village envelope of Danbury which is a Key Defined Settlement in the Local Plan's Settlement

Hierarchy, and adjoined a Neighbourhood Plan allocated housing site – Site A. The Committee heard that, because Danbury had a valid and up-to-date Neighbourhood Plan, this would outweigh the tilted balance resulting in the application being considered on a standard planning balance. Officers advised that, despite the conflict with the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan, there was overall weight in favour of granting planning permission because of the contribution to housing supply and affordable housing at a time of identified need. The Committee was informed that, notwithstanding the conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan, the proposal did not give rise to clear planning harms or conflicts with the Neighbourhood Plan sufficient to justify refusal.

The Committee heard from a representative for the applicant who spoke in support of the application, who highlighted the discreet location of the site within easy walking distance of a range of existing facilities and services. Support was also expressed for the provision of needed market and affordable housing in what was said to be a suitable location. It was further submitted that, although the site was not allocated in the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan, the proposal was logical in the context of the Council's housing need and would not give rise to clear planning harms.

The Committee also heard from members of the public who spoke against the application. Concerns raised included the presence of bats and badgers on the site, the speculative nature of the proposal, conflict with both the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan and the Council's Local Plan and the effect of approving unallocated housing so soon after adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan. The Committee also heard about the risk of undermining confidence in neighbourhood planning, the view that existing allocations already met Danbury's required growth, the relevance of Paragraph 14 of the NPPF, the suitability of access through Little Fields and the impact on nearby listed buildings.

The Committee also heard from the Parish Council and local ward members, who echoed residents' concerns. They referred to the work involved in preparing the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan, including constraints associated with traffic on the A414, and stated that the Plan had nevertheless allocated sufficient housing growth for future years without the need for this proposal. Further concerns were raised about the suitability of the access, the types of housing proposed, additional pressure on an already ambitious Neighbourhood Plan, increased pollution on the A414, and the importance of maintaining a plan-led approach.

In response to the points raised, officers confirmed that;

- In their view, the conflict with Paragraph 14 of the NPPF was not sufficient to refuse a sustainable development, with an evidenced housing need.
- The Neighbourhood Plan did not contain restrictive policies, specifically blocking development outside of allocated sites and the site was directly adjacent to an allocated site and other housing, and would be well connected to a key service settlement. Also, the development would not project into the countryside, it would sit within development to the north and south as allocated. It is rare for a proposal site to have three developed sides to it, which much reduces its impact on Rural Area and landscape and it was considered these factors elevated the prospect of development being accepted under Paragraph 14 of the NPPF.
- The Little Fields junction fully met visibility requirements in both directions and the impact to traffic flows would be less than 0.5% of the current movements, so had been considered as acceptable.
- Assessments had been carried out by qualified individuals regarding wildlife activity on the site and it had been found that activity from bats and badgers had been found, but that environmental protections would be secured by condition 6 which required an

ecological management strategy to ensure wildlife protections would be in place. It was also noted that conditions 5 and 14 would cover lighting impacts on wildlife.

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

- The junction design was fully compliant with standards, a road safety audit had been carried out, which only resulted in minor points about lines being painted correctly, minor visibility points, etc and there would be space for refuse and fire vehicles to access the site safely.
- Housing need was a significant factor in the assessment, and officers advised that approval would make a meaningful contribution to housing supply. Officers also stated that the targets were minimum numbers to be met and that, without a demonstrable five-year housing land supply, any harms arising from the proposal would need to be identified and weighed accordingly.

Members of the Committee expressed concerns regarding the site not being in the Local Plan and not being an allocated site within Danbury's Neighbourhood Plan, in addition that no additional housing had been proposed during the Local Plan Review for Danbury either. On this point, Members were advised by officers that this site was considered suitable for housing, but the access at that time had not been resolved, but the application now confirms how access can be achieved.

The Committee voted on a motion to approve the application, but this was not carried. The Committee then voted on a motion to defer the application to the next meeting, as the Committee were minded to refuse it, due to it not complying with the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan and with Paragraph 14 of the NPPF, regarding Neighbourhood Plans which was voted on and carried.

RESOLVED that the item be deferred to the next meeting, as the Committee were minded to refuse the application and that officers would report back with detailed reason or reasons for refusal at the next meeting based on it not complying with the Danbury Neighbourhood Plan and with Paragraph 14 of the NPPF.

(7.19pm to 8.26pm)

11. [25/00339/FUL](#)– Land East of Premier Lodge Hotel, Main Road, Boreham, Chelmsford, Essex

Cllr Wilson declared a registerable interest for this item and left the meeting.

[The Committee were directed to the green sheet for the meeting, which considered the content of the Boreham Neighbourhood Plan, in respect of the proposal, which can be viewed via this link.](#)

The Committee considered an application for the development of a Bio-CNG vehicle fuelling facility comprising fuel pump islands, a plant compound, amended access, landscaping and associated development. The Committee heard that the application had been called in by a local ward member because the area was not allocated for development in the Local Plan or the recent Local Plan Review, because of the impact on green areas around Boreham, because of traffic associated with the site once Boreham House was used as an educational facility, and because of the visual impact on Boreham House. The Committee was informed that the proposal complied with policies relating to development in the rural area, would

provide environmental benefits by facilitating an alternative to diesel for HGV fleets, and that the impacts on nearby heritage assets would be largely mitigated by enhanced landscaping. Officers advised that the public benefits would outweigh any remaining low level of less than substantial harm. The Committee also heard that access arrangements were acceptable and that neither the strategic nor local road network would be adversely affected in highway safety terms. The application was therefore recommended for approval.

The Committee heard from a member of the public in support of the application, who referred to the opportunity to address sustainable transport solutions in response to the Climate Emergency. It was also stated that policy DM8 of the Council's Local Plan supported this type of innovative transport proposal and that the policy criteria had been met, particularly through the proposed landscaping scheme, which was said to improve the appearance of the existing unscreened lorry park. It was further submitted that the green wedge would not be harmed by the application, which would instead concentrate transport-related development closer to the A12.

The Committee also heard from members of the public who spoke against the application. Concerns raised included the risks associated with storing high-pressure Bio-CNG, its long-term sustainability, the suitability of the proposed location close to a village, overcapacity at Junction 19 of the A12, and resulting traffic impacts on Boreham. Additional concerns were raised about road safety if Boreham House were used as a school, previous refusals on the site, whether bio-fuelling facilities were better suited to industrial locations, and the potential for increased HGV traffic.

The Committee also heard from the Parish Council and a local ward member, who echoed residents' concerns. They referred to the site not being allocated in either the Local Plan or the Local Plan Review, the time it would take for landscaping to mature to an effective height, and safety concerns regarding pedestrian movements near the site, particularly in connection with the new train station.

In response to the points raised, officers confirmed that;

- The Transport assessment had not detailed the vehicle movement estimates as having a severe or significant impact, hence why no objection had been raised by the Highways Authority.
- The majority of vehicle movements would be generally spread across a 24 hour period with no significant peaks.
- The site in question would not be expected to generate any pedestrian movements, so no pedestrian infrastructure had been proposed.
- Any future applications at Boreham House, would need to be considered at that time, rather than whilst discussing an application for this site.
- The site was 600m away from Boreham's defined settlement, so any perception of the development would be quite limited from that distance.
- Given the distance to Boreham and the proposed additional landscaping and planting, officers did not consider the harms sufficient to warrant refusal of the application.

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

- HGV's tended to join the Strategic road network as soon as possible, rather than using local roads, but technically they may choose to drive away from the A12, if there were issues on the A12 junction.
- Historic England had raised concerns regarding the application, but it was felt that any harms were significantly outweighed by the benefits of the development.
- It was expected that most vehicles would turn right out of the site to rejoin the A12.

- Health and Safety concerns were not within the remit of the Planning Committee and would be dealt with under separate legislation and were not for the Planning Committee to consider.
- No objection had been raised by the Highways Authority, regarding pedestrian or road safety.

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

(8.27pm to 9.11pm)

12. Planning Appeals

RESOLVED that the information submitted to the meeting on appeal decisions between 1st April 2025 and 31st March 2026 be noted.

The meeting closed at 9.12pm.

Chair