



# East Cambridgeshire District Council

## **Minutes of a Meeting of the Planning Committee**

Held at The Grange, Nutholt Lane, Ely, CB7 4EE at 2:00pm on  
Wednesday 4 March 2026

### **Present:**

Cllr Chika Akinwale  
Cllr Christine Colbert  
Cllr Lavinia Edwards  
Cllr Martin Goodearl (Vice-Chair)  
Cllr Keith Horgan  
Cllr Julia Huffer  
Cllr Bill Hunt (Chair)  
Cllr James Lay  
Cllr Alan Sharp  
Cllr John Trapp  
Cllr Christine Whelan

### **Officers:**

Patrick Adams – Senior Democratic Services Officer  
Kevin Breslin – Locum Planning Lawyer  
David Morren – Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager  
Juleen Roman – Planning Enforcement Team Leader  
Christopher Smith – Environmental Health Officer  
Gavin Taylor – Major Projects Officer

### **In attendance:**

Cllr Alison Whelan, as local member  
ECDC Comms  
Members of the public

## **49. Apologies and substitutions**

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith, Cllr Mark Goldsack and Cllr Ross Trent. Cllr Keith Horgan substituted for Cllr Ambrose Smith and Cllr Julia Huffer substituted for Cllr Goldsack.

## **50. Declarations of interest**

Cllr Alan Sharp stated that with regards to agenda item 6, he was an observer on the Board of the East Cambs Trading Company. He was coming to the Committee with an open mind.

## **51. Minutes**

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

## **52. Chair's announcements**

The Chair thanked officers for their work in bringing the application 25/00639/FUM back to the Committee so promptly.

## **53. 25/00639/FUM – Hightown Drove, Burwell**

Gavin Taylor, Major Projects Officer, presented a report (AA148, previously circulated) recommending approval for the erection of a battery energy storage facility and associated infrastructure on land south west of Hightown Drove, Burwell. He stated that Planning Committee on 14 January 2026 had voted to defer this application.

The Committee received the following statement from an objector, Julia Rogers:

“Despite amendments, we will lose the last non-industrialised view in the area. We will lose our peace and tranquillity and the community cricket pitch, riding arena, woodland walks, memorial benches and turtle dove pond. The amendments place the battery closer to the family dwellings, and we are more likely to lose lives in the event of a fire because critically there is only one entrance to Hightown Drove for vehicles. If the wind direction is across Hightown Drove, or towards the entrance, the Fire Service cannot access the site at all. This increases the risk to humans and wildlife, due to the inhalation of fumes that cause pulmonary edema and respiratory distress. As a nurse I have seen how dying with respiratory distress will be to those who inhale the fumes. Please protect us.”

The Committee received the following statement from an Objector, Sara Phipps of Burwell Energy Awareness Team (BEAT):

“Councillors, our question to you is: ‘do you have enough reliable information to conclude that this development is safe and that it is appropriately located?’

“First, safety. Planning is the only stage where risks can be fully evaluated and in this case, we feel that key assumptions remain unresolved. The risk assessment of the applicant assumes a single container failure, yet the proposal includes 144 of these containers. Planning permission is not a safety approval, and no single authority can ensure safety after consent. National policy mandates that decision makers must anticipate and address potential malicious threats to public safety, as outlined in paragraph 102 of the NPPF. This BESS will rely heavily on digital connectivity for trading and the industry acknowledges that cyber initiated loss of control scenarios are credible. You only have to look at what happened in the UK last year. Land Rover, Marks and Spencer and the Co-op. Having no food on the shelves of Burwell Co-op made

it very real to us. But a cyber threat in this case is not about food, it could be about fire. This surely demonstrates that a worst case scenario should not be limited to a single container fire. Grenergy's position that one battery container fire represents a worst case scenario does not reflect the reality of an increasingly sophisticated and coordinated cyber threat. This totally underestimates the potential scale of harm. Therefore, we ask of you, please ensure that Grenergy have assessed cyber threats and that the fire safety strategy for Hightown Drove is adequate. Councillors, you are not being asked if battery storage is good policy, but whether this specific proposal, with unresolved safety concerns and an uncertain environmental impact, is acceptable. We believe that there is strong evidence to refuse this application on grounds of safety, but if you are minded to approve, we strongly request that condition 11 is strengthened. Please ensure that the role of DNV includes ongoing safety oversight throughout the lifetime of the facility. We request this to ensure that conditions are indeed implemented and as we know at Weirs Drove, BESS conditions are still outstanding, four years after being operational.

"Low frequency noise concerns are next. We are deeply concerned that the applicant's assessment of the noise impact relies mainly on the LA90 background level. This is an average figure, which does not reflect how intrusive low frequency noise can be, especially at night. Residents already report that low frequency noise from Weirs Drove Bess is highly disturbing. It is the persistent hum that penetrates our homes, even with the windows closed. This is an everyday lived experience. I know, I live there. We have been concerned about Grenergy's noise assessment, particularly as they have excluded the very thing that has affected residents, which is low frequency noise at night. Residents organised an independent baseline noise survey, which has been submitted to planning. The residents' survey highlights how quiet this area truly is and emphasises the importance of properly assessing low frequency noise, especially at night, which Grenergy quite simply haven't done.

"Councillors, please reconsider this, so that the same mistakes are not repeated as at Weirs Drove BESS. The consequences of which, we experience every day. Our complaints reflect our lived experience. We have the reliable evidence. So, in conclusion, again, our question to you is 'do you have enough reliable information to conclude that this development is safe and that it is appropriately located?'"

Councillors were invited to ask questions to Julia Rogers and Sara Phipps.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, Sara Phipps confirmed that she lived on Weirs Drove, she was already bothered by low frequency noise but was not aware that the Council had offered residents noise monitoring equipment. The Environmental Health Officer confirmed that noise monitoring equipment could be offered to residents who had made complaints about the noise.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, Julia Rogers confirmed that Hightown Drove only had one access point and she believed that the development threatened the amenities that could only be accessed via Hightown Drove.

The Committee received the following statement from Jonathan Cooper, Head of Development for Grenergy:

“As the scheme was discussed at length at the Committee meeting in January, I will use my time to go over the key discussion points. Members may have seen that we shared a briefing note ahead of the meeting, addressing how we have responded to queries about the need case, safety matters and concerns of public amenity. Regardless, I will talk through these points now. Firstly, whether we need this proposal and in this location. Whilst the national planning policy is clear, that applicants are not required to demonstrate a need, we feel it is important that we make our case for this. Batteries play a critical role in securing a clean, cheap and abundant supply of energy. Given current geopolitics, it has never been more critical to ensure that the UK has a resilient and self-reliant energy security strategy. In terms of cost, UK taxpayers pay the highest in Europe due to our reliance on natural gas, a fossil fuel. This causes pains for domestic and industrial users alike, hurting economic and social growth. Energy storage fits in by playing a pivotal role in harnessing our natural resources of wind and solar capacity, reducing reliance on fossil fuels and imports. National Grid predict that if deployed, energy storage will save UK taxpayers up to £40 billion by 2050. As for the location, renewable energy developers are limited, with few places to link into the electrical network, where physical connections must be made. For utility stage projects, such as this proposal, this is typically limited to major substations, such as Burwell and there is not another suitable location for 25 miles in any direction. Once a point of connection is confirmed, developers must find land that meets commercial, practical and planning requirements, which limits options further.

“The next major debating point is fire safety. The Case Officer has made clear the national policy position on this point in their report and additionally has highlighted the stringent regulations and legislation that the technology is governed by outside planning controls. We also highlight that the Government targets and the deployment of this technology internationally is an endorsement of the safety standards. Regardless, we acknowledge the members’ concerns at the previous Committee meeting and we have sought to address these in several ways. We have provided a site specific risk management and emergency response plan. We have moved battery units further from overhead lines and we have added water tanks on site to ensure an adequate supply of water in the unlikely event of an emergency.

“The next key discussion point is noise impact, which has drawn focus due to another storage scheme located significantly closer to residential properties. On the Grenergy proposal, the audible impact of the plant has been thoroughly assessed by qualified and experienced professionals, against British Standards, on behalf of ourselves and by the Council’s Environmental Health Officers. The officer has reviewed our assessment as well as the assessment delivered by local residents, of which they are clear, they do not anticipate any adverse impact by way of noise of the plant on the residents. A planning condition is proposed, which includes regular noise monitoring and a noise

complaint action plan, which can be found in the officer's report. It is of the officer's opinion that noise should not be a deciding factor in this proposal.

"Lastly, we recognise concerns regarding visual screening of the site, brought primarily by the National Trust. We have sought to address these by providing an additional hedgerow, with scattered trees on our western boundary, which will provide an enhanced visual buffer to the Wicken Fen. To conclude, the application before you has been thoroughly put together, with detailed plans including technical assessment into environmental and social considerations, which have been produced by qualified professionals, against national guidance, who have given their advice to the Case Officer. After considering this and weighing the planning balance, they recommend that the scheme be approved and we ask that you support your officer's conclusion."

Councillors were invited to ask questions to Jonathan Cooper.

In reply to Cllr Julia Huffer, Jonathan Cooper explained that the national guidance stated that there should be at least 30 metres between the battery and residential properties, as toxic chemicals would be limited to within 20 metres of a container if there was a fire. The application complied with this guidance. He added that he would live 30 metres away from such an installation, providing the data showed him that it was safe.

In reply to Cllr Alan Sharp, Jonathan Cooper reported that noise consultants had been employed by Grenergy and they had found the noise levels to be acceptable, according to British Standards. He also explained that in the unlikely event of a fire, the plant could be closed down and the Fire Service notified. The nearest fire station was only a mile away.

In reply to Cllr Chika Akinwale, Jonathan Cooper explained that each container could be managed separately and the power turned off if overheating, smoke, heat or light was detected. Consultants had been employed to ensure that if there was a fire it would be isolated. If necessary, an operational team could turn up to the site, but it was standard practice not to have workers on site. He further explained that the frequency of fire drills would be agreed with the Fire and Rescue Service, but he expected them to be annual or bi-annual.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, Jonathan Cooper confirmed that the purpose of the water was to stop any fire from spreading, that the system would automatically shut down in the event of a fire and if necessary, a team could arrive promptly to make the site operational again.

In reply to Cllr Christine Whelan, Jonathan Cooper stated that the Fire and Rescue Service had looked at the design of the site and the battery safety plan. They had confirmed that the plans met the national guidance.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, Jonathan Cooper explained that 100,000 litres of water would be available on the site, the tank would be supplied by rainwater and the fire hydrants would be capable of delivering 15,000 litres of water per second. The system would be enclosed and so the runoff would be contained.

Jonathan Cooper added that the battery was 30 metres from the nearest overhead powerline and UK power network had raised no objections. There were two access points to the site for vehicles, although only one point of access from the main road onto Hightown Drive.

In reply to Cllr Christine Colbert, Jonathan Cooper confirmed that there was an integral, aerosol based, fire safety system that would remove power to any affected container.

In reply to Cllr Martin Goodearl, Jonathan Cooper explained that whilst power to the battery could be turned off remotely, power could only be restored manually, when it was safe to do so. There was a battery management plan.

In reply to Cllr James Lay, Jonathan Cooper reported that it was impossible to predict how long a battery fire would last and the key factor was to ensure that it was safely contained whilst the fire burnt itself out.

Cllr Julia Huffer expressed concern regarding the risk to residents from toxic fumes in the event of a battery fire. Jonathan Cooper reiterated that the proposed distance between the installation and the nearest residents met the national guidance.

The Committee received the following statement from John Hughes of the National Trust:

“The National Trust opposes the proposed development.

“The development sits within Burwell Fen, an area with significant solar schemes both in place and those with planning permission awaiting construction. These sites form a block of approximately 140 hectares or 350 acres, which stops at Hightown Drive. By permitting the proposed development, this block of industrialised landscape will move into a new, distinct section of the fen, one that still maintains its character. Policy ENV 1 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan requires proposals to ‘conserve and enhance local landscape character’. This development will do the opposite. I don’t agree that this is moderate or negative weight to what you can see to the left of Hightown Drive, where there is no solar development and the right where there is hundreds of acres of solar development. This is moving that development across Hightown Drive to a completely different section of the fen.

“The development sits adjacent to land managed as part of Wicken Fen National Nature Reserve’s ‘Wider Wicken Fen Vision Project’. We are undertaking species recovery work here for turtle doves and other protected species and have, working with Reach parish Council, delivered trails and other well used community spaces. This work is aligned with East Cambridgeshire Climate and Nature Strategy. It has become a valued space for both wildlife and people, providing access that allows an immersive experience in nature away from the noise of urban areas and into one dominated by wildlife. Policy ENV 9 protects this tranquillity. It states that

'proposals should ensure no deterioration in air and water quality and not harm the natural environment, general amenity and the tranquillity of the wider rural area'. This development, and its industrial infrastructure with noisy fans will undoubtedly damage the amenity of the wider rural area and have significant effects on the land that lays adjacent to it.

"The National Trust has a duty to protect and care for special places, so people, nature, and culture can thrive. We believe that climate change poses one of the greatest threats to them. We understand that decision makers will increasingly need to give weight to the importance of reaching net zero, and that this could result in some effects to landscape and places of significance. However, we believe this should be avoided where possible and this development would be better placed in a more suitable location. We urge you to reject the application."

Councillors were invited to ask questions to John Hughes.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, John Hughes confirmed that the National Trust had objected to this application when it was considered by the Committee on 14 January 2026 and were objecting a second time to the amended application that was being considered by this Committee.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, John Hughes explained that the National Trust objected to the cumulative effect of the development on this site.

In reply to Cllr James Lay, John Hughes stated that the proposed fencing would have a detrimental effect on wildlife in the area.

The Committee received the following statement from Nick Acklam of Reach Parish Council:

"I am representing both Reach and Burwell Parish Councils. Both parish councils oppose this application. Thank you for your persistence with this application. I imagine that this is one of the tougher applications that you have had to tackle. From my perspective, it is tough because the guidance in the National Planning Policy Framework is insufficiently precise or detailed, there are no national health and safety guidelines to proscribe acceptable locations for BESS and East Cambridgeshire Local Plan is silent on green energy developments, especially in the vicinity of the substation at Burwell. Yet the decision today is hugely significant and has ramifications way beyond most of the planning applications determined at local level. The developers have said that it is only through planning approval that they can seek a connection from the National Energy System Operator (NESO) to access the national grid. This seems to me to be the wrong way round and you are being asked to give approval for a BESS that will bring much harm to our communities, as previous speakers have demonstrated and you are being asked to do this without an independent assessment of the business case, demonstrating the benefits of this scheme. To some extent you are restricted by the National Planning Policy Framework. One assumes that the developer sees benefit in this scheme, but who else benefits? Notwithstanding the generalised nature of what the

developer said today about the benefits of electricity supply, where is the hard evidence in front of you that this BESS is needed by the electricity supply industry? In what is termed a rebuttal letter of 18 February, the developer's agent states that there is a grid connection, but it can only be secured when planning permission is granted. No evidence is produced to support this assertion. Certainly, there is no evidence in the public domain that NESO can provide a connection for Grenergy. In December of last year, NESO published its connections reform report, which showed that there is a huge oversupply of BESS schemes in the pipeline. The pipeline includes schemes such as this, all the way through to schemes that have planning permission, approval from NESO and a confirmed connection date. The assessed level of oversubscription varies, but some industry insiders have suggested that it might be eight times what the country needs up until 2035. Congestion is particularly acute in our region, T6 in NESO terms. It is clear that many BESS schemes are ahead of this application in the queue and will need to be withdrawn if this scheme is to be connected to the grid. In light of what I have said, you might say that this doesn't really matter, but I would argue that it very much does. Approval of this scheme will blight the land and will require the local authority to commit resources to prepare for the possibility of it being built. So that's where I see the lack of benefits in respect of this scheme. The two parish councils see no benefit to the community or the wider country for this application, but we do see major harms, which have been touched on in more details by the previous speakers and I reiterate that the scheme is simply in the wrong place. It is too near homes in Reach and Burwell, given the low frequency noise that the scheme will produce and the manifold shortcomings in its safety provisions. Mr Morren mentioned earlier the national fire chief's recent report. That requires a cyber assessment to be included and as far as I can tell that doesn't exist for this scheme. Members of this Committee have already started to consider the implications of a cyber attack and where it might lead in terms of being able to manage thermal runaway at this site and I think that this is a massive issue and we have already seen a catalogue of Russian sponsored cyber crime against critical national infrastructure in eastern Europe. Who knows how that will change in the 40 years of the lifespan of this scheme. So it seems to me that there is a huge gap there. The scheme is the tenth energy development on Burwell Fen in the last six years. The accumulative impact of this proposal, alongside the other nine is not adequately assessed in the paperwork in front of you, in my view. You have heard others saying how the Hightown Drove is a Rubicon and crossing it will prejudice all of the land so valued by our communities. The land adjacent to this forms a key element of Reach Parish Council's nature recovery plan, which has been endorsed by East Cambridgeshire District Council and as Mr Hughes has already said it is also a fundamental part of the National Trust's wider Wicken vision project, which also enjoys strong support from the County Council. In conclusion, I urge you to stick with the instincts that you showed at the previous meeting, as representatives of local people first and foremost and reject this scheme, which is bad for our community and brings not benefit to our community or the wider country."

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan's question on whether any form of fire prevention measures could be introduced that would address his concerns regarding the

scheme, Nick Acklam stated that the scheme was simply too close to local residents to viable.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, Nick Acklam explained there was a consensus that there were far more BESS schemes being planned than the country needed and there was no strategic plan.

In reply to Cllr Chika Akinwale, Nick Acklam reported that he was unaware of any fire safety plan and the way in which residents, livestock and pets could be evacuated needed to be considered.

The Chair invited comments from officers.

The Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager explained that under the National Planning Policy Framework, fire safety was not the responsibility of the planning authority. The original National Planning Policy Framework was broadly supportive of BESS schemes and this support was strengthened in the new draft Framework. Planning authorities needed to give substantial weight to the benefits of new zero, energy security and economic development. Applications outside development areas should be acceptable as the need for renewable energy does not need to be proved.

Councillors were invited to ask questions to the officers.

In reply to Cllr Alan Sharp, the Environmental Health Officer explained that using British Standard 8233 as guidance, sounds exceeding 35 decibels during the day and 30 decibels at night in a home were seen as unacceptable. In reply to Cllr Julia Huffer, the Environmental Health Officer stated that sound emissions would be measured with the home windows open. In reply to Cllr Christine Colbert, the Environmental Health Officer explained that these regulations were assessing the impact on humans and not on livestock or pets. It was noted that accurately measuring sound emissions was challenging.

The Committee moved into debate.

Cllr Alan Sharp reported that he was concerned about the detrimental effect of noise on residents and the impact on the landscape. He was also concerned about development on agricultural grade 2 land and the fire risks that it would pose to residents.

Cllr James Lay opposed development outside the village framework and he had concerns about the safety of residents.

Cllr Julia Huffer opposed the development on the grounds that it would mean the loss of five hectares of farming land, the loss of an amenity for local people, it would create a noise nuisance for residents with a continuous low frequency humming and there was a safety risk from fire and the resulting toxic fumes. The sight of 5 metre by 3 metre containers would also have a negative visual impact on the area.

Cllr Lavinia Edwards noted the concerns of the residents from Reach and Burwell and did not consider the safety issues had been resolved. She also opposed the development.

Cllr John Trapp recognised the need for the BESS but was not convinced that the development was in the right location. The concerns of residents needed to be considered, and he stated that there had been occasions in the past where the Committee had disagreed with the advice of the statutory consultees, usually due to local knowledge.

Cllr Keith Horgan thanked the Major Projects Officer for providing the Committee with all the evidence and incorporating the views expressed at the meeting in January in his well-written report. He understood the concerns from residents; however, the Fire and Rescue service were the experts and were satisfied with the measures in place. He explained that that policies in the National Planning Policy Framework were weighted in favour of renewable energy technology applications and he warned that if the Committee voted to refuse this application it could go to appeal and the reasons for refusal would be tested against these policies. He also understood why more battery storage units for renewable energy were required.

Cllr Chika Akinwale stated that she would be voting to refuse this application due to the noise nuisance and the risk of fire and resulting fumes. She also considered that concerns regarding the storage capacity of the BESS had not been addressed.

The Strategic Planning and Development Manager reminded members that none of the statutory consultees had objected to the application and that developments of this type could be built outside a village's framework, according to national planning guidance.

Cllr Christine Whlean was concerned about the impact that the development could have on the biodiversity of Wicken Fen and the fire risk. She was resolved to vote against.

Cllr Alan Sharp explained that he was concerned about the impact the development would have on the landscape in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework ENV1 and noise and fire pollution in accordance with National Planning Policy Framework ENV9. He stated that he heard the noise on that morning's site visit. He agreed with Cllr Trapp that there had been times when the Committee had objected to matters when the statutory consultees had raised no concerns. He was resolved to vote against the application.

Cllr Christine Colbert said that she was unhappy with the application but respected the advice of officers.

Cllr Julia Huffer asserted that the application contravened National Planning Policy Framework ENV1, due to the visual impact of the development, ENV2, due to the detrimental impact of the amenity for residents and ENV9, due to the

noise and toxic fumes. In conclusion, the development would make it impossible for residents to enjoy the quiet in their homes. It would spoil the nature of the area and there was a potential fire hazard.

Cllr Julia Huffer proposed and Cllr Lavinia Edwards seconded that the application be refused. A vote was taken and with 9 votes in favour, 0 votes against and 2 abstentions the Committee

resolved to **refuse** the application, on the grounds that it contravened the following policies in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023):

- (i) ENV 1 Landscape and settlement character, due to the visual impact of the development in a rural area;
- (ii) ENV 2 Design, due to the loss of an amenity for public recreation; and
- (iii) ENV 9 Pollution, due to noise pollution and the risk of toxic fumes in the event of a fire.

#### **54. 25/00717/F3M – Land South of Princess of Wales Hospital**

Gavin Taylor, Major Projects Officer, presented this report (AA149, previously circulated), which recommended that the application for 13 new homes with access parking and landscaping be approved.

Objector Michael Judkins made the following statement:

“My objection today relates to the inadequate provision of vehicular access to the intended site. You have seen there is a pedestrian footway. It is recognised as such within the applicant’s transport assessment. The nature of the footway, which serves three houses, is entirely consistent with non-vehicular usage. The applicant acknowledges a 4.8 metre width at maximum, but it narrows at the intended development site to barely the width of two small cars adjacent to each other, and if this development goes ahead there will be hundreds of journeys over many months by construction vehicles taking up the whole of this width and of course there is no pavement. You will be aware that continuing on towards Williams Close this footway is a through route, a regular passage, not only popular, but for many people a necessity. So, what is the usage of the pedestrian footway which has to be accounted for? Well cyclists, dog walkers, young and old, the elderly, the disabled, some in wheelchairs and very significantly school children. In one direction there is the Isle of Ely Primary School and in the other two schools, Spring Meadows and St Mary’s. The crucial time for conflict between pedestrians and vehicles will be half an hour before the start of the school day. At the moment, one sees many mothers with pushchairs and other mothers with children 7-8 years of age. The children ride on scooters ahead of the parent. Now one could imagine the vulnerability of a child in that situation to a driver from this new estate, coming out into the roadway or footway as it now is, without due care, not seeing the child and a

huge safety risk rises from that potential scenario. Opposite, there is proposed development for eight units, with two parking spaces each, so 16 cars. If this development goes ahead as intended, there will be 22 parking spaces that we didn't have before. The wider area is not compatible with such an increase in vehicular traffic. It's not just that it is 140 metres from the proposed site entrance to the junction of Redman Close and Heaton Drive, it is also another 0.2 miles from there to any footpath, a total distance of almost 500 metres, which is carrying a very significant increase if this goes ahead, along which pedestrians are also having to walk, again with no pavement. Every Monday and Thursday evenings, marching army cadets, with accompanying parental traffic, have to be parked and driven there to pick them up. As I advised the Planning Officer, on Sunday, between 11am and 12 noon, not a particularly busy period, between 40-50 pedestrians were observed using the footway beside the site entrance. Whilst the transport assessment has attempted to predict traffic density, which to some extent must be speculative, no attempt at all has been made to survey, research or look into actual pedestrian and non-vehicular usage and I am sorry, but I think that this is disgraceful. It should have been done and should be done. It is important in this context to look at important areas of reference for those involved in the making of planning decisions and I would suggest that there are three. We have the National Planning Policy Framework, which in fact is acknowledged with the transport assessment and that emphasises the needs of people with disabilities and reducing the scope for conflict between pedestrians, cyclists and vehicles. Secondly, the Cambridgeshire Highway Development Management General Principles for Development, January 2023, in paragraph 2.7, headed Generic Adoptable Street Standards, talks of a shared surface street, which is what this is, to be 6 metres in width and this applies to streets to be adopted, but surely that document gives a yardstick and a standard of acceptability for a street of this nature. Thirdly, we have the national manual, which I don't have time to refer to, but what I'm asking you to do is dismiss this application on these grounds and if not, defer to a new date to allow discussion between the applicant and the Princess of Wales Hospital regarding a route of access to the north, particularly at the point of construction and secondly, if the Princess of Wales Hospital will not agree that, to have a proper consultation with all those affected by the development."

Councillors were invited to ask questions to Michael Judkins

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, Michael Judkins explained that the road narrowed at Redman Close to something less than 4.8 metres. He also reported that pedestrians would have to walk along a road with no pavement to the nearest bus stop.

In reply to Cllr Chika Akinwale, Michael Judkins stated that the problem was not pedestrians crossing the road but walking along the footway, which had no pavement.

In reply to Cllr Bill Hunt, Michael Judkins confirmed that whilst vehicles could not turn right out of the proposed site, pedestrians could.

In reply to Cllr Alan Sharp, Michael Judkins understood that the road would remain narrow after construction work had finished.

The agent, Sam Robinson, waived his right to speak but explained that he was happy to answer any questions.

In reply to Cllr James Lay, Sam Robinson estimated that 40-50 cars had used the site, which had been a car park, but they had accessed the site from the hospital side. This car park had been replaced by a multi-story car park to the north of the hospital.

In reply to Cllr Bill Hunt, Sam Robinson stated that pedestrians could turn right out of the site, but bollards prevented vehicles from doing so.

In reply to Cllr Chika Akinwale, Sam Robinson explained that there was a shared surface for cars and pedestrians, but he believed this to be safe due to the small volume of traffic, and it had been deemed acceptable by Highways. He also reported that following an acoustic assessment, units 12 and 13 had been turned 90 degrees to protect the rear gardens, which were closest to the site used by the hospital. In addition, the windows had been redesigned, and mechanical ventilation would be installed.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp and Cllr Chika Akinwale, Sam Robinson explained that the narrow road was outside the area of development and it would be up to Highways to widen it. Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager confirmed that this road was outside the area of development being considered as part of the application and in any case, could not be widened without encroaching on residents' front gardens.

In reply to Cllr Christine Whelan, Sam Robinson confirmed that the developer had not met anyone from the County Council Highways department on site.

In reply to Cllr Christine Colbert, Sam Robinson stated that 8 homes were being built opposite the construction site.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, Sam Robinson stated that he understood that when construction was completed there would be no pedestrian access to the hospital site.

The Mayor of the City of Ely, Mike Banyard, made the following statement:  
"I am the Chair of the City Council and sat in their Planning Committee in August last year and we are a consultee of the district council, and we recommended refusal due to the loss of amenity, the loss of green space that is used by local people and overdevelopment. There are three points that I wish to make. The NPPF and the importance of public rights of way. I visited on Sunday and saw the enormous numbers of pedestrians using the footway, which is not a road, it is a footway and it is only 4.8 metres, which is not wide enough according to the planning rules. An enormous numbers of parents use the road, because the air cadets and army cadets meet up there on Mondays, Tuesdays and Thursdays, and there are some 70-80 cadets who are taken there by car,

sometimes parking there when they can't park anywhere else. Your own Council's transport assessment states that the footway is significantly less than 4.8 metres wide, so less than the minimum permissible according to the planning officer's report. Secondly, there is public safety. A large number of people walk that way on their way to school and certainly if you turn right out of the proposed development you will not meet any cars because it is not wide enough. I have to thank the Council for cleaning the street for the last two days, so that your site visit could be without the mud, which is there normally. Thirdly, overdevelopment. We objected on this basis, in accordance with the East Cambridgeshire District Council's Local Plan 2015 as amended in 2023, paragraph 4.31, which states that whilst higher densities may be appropriate in major developments in town centre locations, where public transport is good and urban form is dense, lower densities may be appropriate in established sub urban areas, in villages, in areas with an open character or on the edge of settlements. It is quite clear that this is not a town centre location, suitable for high density development. That are the main points that the City Council wants to put before you and recommend refusal of this particular development. It looked to me to be impossible to access the hospital site from the new development, when I was there on Sunday and the new car park that has been put there is certainly helping enormously, but it needs another footway.

Councillors were invited to ask questions to Mike Banyard.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp and Cllr James Lay, Mike Banyard explained that another footpath was needed that went northwards and allowed hospital access. The Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager reported that this was outside the development area and so beyond the scope of the application under discussion.

In reply to Cllr Alan Sharp and Cllr Bill Hunt, Mike Banyard stated that the City Council wanted the green space to remain and were against the application, which was not suitable for an area outside the town centre.

The Committee heard the following statement from Cllr Alison Whelan, District Councillor and County Councillor for the area:

"I welcome affordable housing in our city as there are far too many residents who are being outpriced by market forces, but the Committee must determine whether this application for 13 dwellings meets the policy for safe access, walkability and neighbourhood amenities. The application's own design and access statement confirms that there is a footpath and a cycleway from Redman Close to the south and along the south edge, which connects towards Williams Close. Another minor detail is the confining restraint that the access strategy relies on a place that already functions as pedestrian and cycle infrastructure. This narrow stretch of highway will bring motor vehicles into conflict with existing pedestrian and wheelchair users. NPPF paragraph 105 requires that planning decisions protect and enhance public rights of way and access. Separately, NPPF paragraph 115 requires that the decision maker ensures that safe and suitable access can be achieved for all users. Paragraph 117 states that applications should give priority first to pedestrians and cyclists and should create places that minimises conflict between pedestrians, cyclists

and vehicles. This route is heavily used on foot by families, dog walkers, elderly people and disabled people with carers. The brain injury unit regularly takes people round that route. I also draw members' attention to the Equality Act public sector equality duty section 149, which requires councils to have due regard to advancing equality of opportunity for disabled people. In practice that means the Committee should treat safe pedestrian routes as a priority and conflict minimisation, as more than a box ticking exercise. The core problem here is the safety aspects that have been discussed due to the pinch point on that road and the lack of a separate footway there. What it comes down to is that the NPPF is showing that there is that conflict. You cannot give priority first to pedestrians and cyclists and minimise conflict if the design forces pedestrians into the same narrow corridor used by construction vehicles and resident traffic. The cleaning of the street has been mentioned, this happened because residents contacted me to complain that it was getting dangerous due to the state of those roads. That 4.8 metres that has been talked about is not the minimum along there. The Highways Authority has raised no objection but they do not have a direct connection to that site onto the adopted highway, so they would not be putting in an objection. If that was an entrance onto an adopted road you would be getting a completely different response from them. It is a real pity that more thought was not put into this because the properties on the southern side of that road could have been pushed back a little bit, widening the road and actually giving the space that they need. So, with those uncertainties I would say first, if you are not satisfied on the evidence that the access arrangements deliver safe, suitable access for all users, then this should be refused. Secondly, as a minimum, the decision should be deferred to allow time for a revised access strategy, including an independently verified width survey of the entire corridor, a pedestrian cycle safety audit at peak times and a clear confirmation of the route's legal status and protections and a construction management plan that prevents construction and delivery vehicles from using the pedestrian cycle corridor. This is about safety. Please think about the safety that has not been taken into account on this application."

Members of the Committee were invited to ask questions to Cllr Alison Whelan.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, Cllr Alison Whelan stated that she would support affordable housing on the site if pedestrian safety could be assured. Deferring a decision could allow the Committee time to give that assurance.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, Cllr Alison Whelan confirmed that there was no footway between Heaton Drive and Redman Close.

Officers were invited to make any additional comments.

The Major Projects Officer explained that the consultant who provided information on transport had been employed by the applicant not the Council and 13 dwellings on a site of half a hectare was not considered to be high density.

Members of the Committee were invited to ask questions to the officer.

In reply to Cllr James Lay, the Major Projects Officer explained that the site had been used as a car park and there had been a through route to the hospital, not a vehicular route to Redman Close. Currently the hospital was allowing pedestrian access from the site, but this matter was outside the scope of the application.

In reply to Cllr Christine Colbert and Cllr John Trapp, the Major Projects Officer explained that the land north of the proposed development was not owned by the applicant.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, the Major Projects Officer stated that infiltration testing had been carried out, and surface water management was the subject of a condition.

In reply to Cllr Christine Whelan, the Major Projects Officer explained that if approved, the impact of construction vehicles would be subject to a standard condition that would be added to the decision. The Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager requested that the Committee give delegated approval to officers to ensure that this condition be added to the decision.

In reply to Cllr Julia Huffer, the Major Projects Officer confirmed that the land being considered for development was a brownfield site, previously owned by the hospital.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, the Major Projects Officer confirmed that the development would achieve at least a 10% biodiversity net gain, but due to its location and the current number of trees on site it would be likely to achieve more than this statutory minimum.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, the Major Projects Officer explained that additional car parking spaces would be provided for visitors and EV chargers would also be on site.

The Committee moved into debate.

Cllr Bill Hunt expressed his support for development on a brownfield site that had previously been a car park, as it would deliver much needed affordable homes.

Cllr Keith Horgan supported the officer's recommendation, as the site seemed quiet and safe. He was confident that the homes would be of sufficient quality and he himself would be happy to live there.

Cllr Christine Colbert expressed her support for the development but was concerned about the safety of pedestrians wanting to walk to Lynn Road. She stated that she would abstain.

Cllr Julia Huffer supported the building of affordable housing on a brownfield site. She understood safety concerns but construction traffic was currently driving on the roads in question and she was unaware of any incidents.

Cllr James Lay wished that all development sites were as beautiful as this one and he supported the application.

Cllr Christine Whelan stated that she could not support the application due to her safety concerns for the pedestrians and wheelchair users on the shared road space.

Cllr Alan Sharp considered the site to be suitable for housing and did not agree with the suggestion that it amounted to overdevelopment. However, he did have safety concerns for pedestrians. Cllr John Trapp agreed and suggested that more careful planning in the past could have prevented the current access and safety concerns.

Cllr Bill Hunt stated that there was a desperate need for small, affordable homes. He believed that officers could enforce the necessary conditions.

Cllr Chika Akinwale proposed that the application be deferred. Cllr Christine Whelan seconded this. Cllr Bill Hunt stated that the recommendation for approval had already been proposed and seconded and so the Committee would vote on this first.

Cllr Bill Hunt proposed and Cllr Keith Horgan seconded the recommendation in the report, with delegation to the Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager to finalise the conditions, including a construction management plan and other pertinent conditions. A vote was taken and with six votes in favour, three against and two abstentions the Committee agreed

to resolve to **approve** the application in accordance with the following terms:

- (i) The Committee delegates authority to finalise the pre-commencement conditions and terms and completion of the S.106 legal agreement to the Strategic Planning & Development Management Manger; and
- (ii) To delegate authority to the Strategic Planning & Development Management Manager to finalise the wording of the standard pertinent conditions; and
- (iii) Following the completion of the S.106, application 25/00717/F3M be approved subject to the planning conditions at Appendix 1; or,
- (iv) The Committee delegates authority to refuse the application in the event that the applicant does not agree to any necessary extensions to the statutory determination period to enable the completion of the S106 legal agreement.

Cllr Chika Akinwale and Cllr Julia Huffer left the meeting at 6 pm.

## **55. Planning Performance Report – December 2025**

David Morren, Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager, presented a report (AA150, previously circulated) summarising the performance of the Planning Department in December 2025.

Cllr Keith Horgan asked why 66% of major applications had been determined on time, missing the target of 90%. The Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager explained this there had been only three major applications in December 2025 and one had not been determined within 13 weeks. He stated that it was not appropriate to ask for a time extension if the officer was minded to refuse an application.

Cllr Bill Hunt informed the Committee that an appeal regarding the application on Cambridge Road, Stretham was being heard that day and the day after. The Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager explained that he would inform the Committee of the Planning Inspector's decision, which could be expected in approximately six weeks.

The Committee agreed

to resolve:

to **note** the report.

## **56. Planning Performance Report – January 2026**

David Morren, Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager, presented a report (AA151, previously circulated) summarising the performance of the Planning Department in January 2026.

The Committee agreed

to resolve:

to **note** the report.

## **57. Planning Performance Annual Report**

David Morren, Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager, presented a report (AA152, previously circulated) summarising the performance of the Planning Department for 2025. He highlighted the fact that the number of determinations had increased since 2023. It was noted that the number of applications receiving time extensions had decreased.

The Committee resolved:  
to **note** the report.

**58. Exclusion of the Press and Public**

The Chair proposed that the meeting should go into private session. It was resolved unanimously:

that the press and public be excluded during the consideration of the remaining item because it is likely, in view of the nature of the business to be transacted or the nature of the proceedings, that if members of the public were present during the items there would be disclosure to them of exempt information of Categories 1, 2 and 7 of Part 1 Schedule 12A to the Local Government Act 1972 (as amended).

**59. Quarterly performance in resolving planning enforcement cases**

The Committee considered a report (AA153, previously circulated) which considered the Quarterly Performance in Resolving Planning Enforcement Cases. Officers replied to a number of queries from councillors regarding specific sites. The Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager explained that local members were not routinely informed of planning enforcement cases in their area, as this information was not in the public domain and, if challenged, it could prove difficult to justify that the sharing of this information was in the public interest.

It was resolved that:

the Quarterly Performance in Resolving Planning Enforcement Cases be noted.

The meeting concluded at 6:32 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....