



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 6 May 2026

Present:

Cllr Chika Akinwale
Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith
Cllr Lavinia Edwards
Cllr Mark Goldsack (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Martin Goodearl
Cllr Bill Hunt (Chair)
Cllr Alan Sharp
Cllr John Trapp
Cllr Ross Trent
Cllr Mary Wade
Cllr Christine Whelan

Officers:

Patrick Adams – Senior Democratic Services Officer
Olivia Akroyd – Planning Officer
Kevin Breslin – Locum Planning Lawyer
Sophie Browne – Planning Team Leader
David Morren – Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager
Juleen Roman – Planning Enforcement Team Leader

In attendance:

ECDC Comms
Members of the public

68. Apologies and substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Christine Colbert and Cllr James Lay. Cllr Mary Wade substituted for Cllr Lay.

69. Declarations of interest

None

70. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 1 April 2026 were agreed as a correct record.

71. Chair's announcements

The Chair stated that this was the last meeting of the 2025/26 civic year and he wanted to thank Committee members and officers for all their work and support over the past year.

David Morren, Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager, explained that the Council was likely to receive the planning specification for the Kingsway Solar Farm project later this month. The authority would have 28 days to respond, so hopefully the matter could be taken to Committee. If this was not possible, a draft copy of the response would be shared with the Chair of Planning, the Leader of Council and the Opposition Leader before being submitted, in line with the protocol agreed by members at Planning Committee.

72. 26/00009/FUL – North East of 70 St Johns Avenue

Olivia Akroyd, Planning Officer, presented a report (AA187, previously circulated) recommending approval for the construction of a two bedroom, single storey, detached dwelling. She explained that the area of the site given in the report was incorrect, as it was actually 0.04 hectares or 0.09 acres.

Tom Beamond, Objector, made the following statement:

"I am grateful to speak to you on behalf of the residents most affected by this application. I want to provide some context before detailing our specific objections. This piece of land was left by the original developer as public land and the reason for this is because this land has public services running through it, including the main electricity cables for the surrounding houses. The previous owner of number 70 St Johns Avenue fenced off a section of this land to extend his garden. This was done back in the 1990s. He then sold his house in the early 2000s but kept the land he had fenced off, with the intention of building a house, which was to be sold at profit. Permission was never granted, despite years of trying, including at appeal. He eventually gave up and managed to sell the land to a developer and in 2016, as has just been shown, permission was granted for a brick-built bungalow. That bungalow was never built and the land was then sold again, via auction, to a different developer. Two further permissions were granted for a brick bungalow, neither of which were ever built. The reason that no-one has built on this land before is because the developers realised that they needed to pay UK Power Networks to move the electricity cables that move across that land and doing so was going to add significant cost to the land and make the build non-viable financially. If you roll the clock forward to now, this latest application appears to be trying to avoid breaking the ground by placing a large static caravan on top of the land. The assumption, I think, is the developer believes that this gets around the need to have the cables moved, but if this is the case, then it is an incorrect assumption. UK Power Networks have been very clear with those of us who have made contact with them. They expect any developer to engage with them and pay for the work involved to move those cables. The fundamental point is that the company needs to access those power cables, whenever they might need to. The plan

says buff coloured facing bricks, but we believe that the intention is to use concrete cladding to cover the caravan, as opposed to using actual bricks and something built on poured concrete footings. This is the way all other houses on the estate are built. The residents object to this proposal because it will fundamentally change the nature and impact on the existing character of the area and it in no way fits in with the local landscape, the design or the intent of the existing development. All the existing houses are two storey detached houses with large gardens, front and back. All have driveways and garages, and I am not sure that the measurement given for the front of the proposed dwelling is accurate. As I have already alluded to, UK Power Networks, who own the substation, have objected to any development at this site and they have said that they have serious concerns about a dwelling being built or placed on this land and they believe that they have made that clear in their response. As well as the cables being moved and kept accessible, they have also made clear that they must have 24-hour access to the substation as they do today. The proposer of this application appears to have assumed ownership of public space to the right of the fenced area, the land that provides access to the UK Power Networks' power point today. The plan effectively creates an access road to get to the rear of the proposed dwelling. It seems very clear to us that in reality, any future resident would not bother driving their car to the rear of the dwelling and would instead simply park on the access road and in doing so would block access to the substation. Furthermore, the land in question is on a blind bend and the road can become very busy, not least during school drop off and pick up times. The fact is that this land has never been suitable for development. It is far too small, it has important utilities running through it, it sits on a blind bend, and it was never intended to be developed. We don't believe that it was a correct decision in 2016 to give permission for this brick built bungalow and the fact that we are sitting here 10 years later and no-one has built on the land should, in my view, be all the evidence needed to confirm that this land is not suitable for a dwelling at all and most definitely not suitable for a mobile home."

Councillors were invited to ask questions to Tom Beamond.

In reply to Cllr Chika Akinwale, Tom Beamond stated that the land in question was open land when residents first moved onto the road and in reply to Cllr Alan Sharp, he explained that in the 1990s the owner of 70 St Johns Avenue took the open space at the back of the property.

In reply to Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith, Tom Beamond stated that he was not representing UK Power Networks but they had formally objected to the application and residents were concerned that if development went ahead and there was a power outage, UK Power Networks would be unable to access the site.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, Tom Beamond explained that there would be insufficient room on the driveway of the site for a car to turn round, meaning that it would have to reverse out into a busy road, on a bend.

In reply to Cllr Mark Goldsack, Tom Beamond stated that in his view the static home that was being proposed in the application equated to a caravan.

In reply to Cllr Chika Akinwale, Tom Beamond explained that he understood that previous developers had decided not to build on the site due to the cost of moving the power cables and the time it would take.

The Senior Democratic Services Officer read out the following statement from Cllr James Lay:

“For the following reasons I oppose the recommendation to Approve:

1. The Street Scene. This well-established development consists of two-story houses and not a single one-story property as suggested in the application.
2. UK Power Network has objected due to the underground power cables. I agree, as this problem could be overcome with the power cables being re-sited.
3. Non-Standard Development. This mobile home covered in a brick jacket does not take away the fact that it would not be acceptable on most sites.

May I conclude by saying that as planners we have always considered how important retaining the street scene is to developments and on this occasion this applications design does not fit the bill.”

The Chair invited comments from officers.

David Morren, Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager, explained that what was proposed was not a caravan, as defined in legislation, but an alternative construction. The Committee would need to consider if the proposed development was compatible with the current street scene. The Committee was also asked to note that the granting of planning permission was no guarantee of development.

Councillors were invited to ask questions to the officers.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, the Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager, explained that there was no need to include a planning condition regarding the need to move the power cables, as this was covered by separate legislation. The National Planning Policy Framework was clear that conditions were unnecessary if the matter in question was covered by alternative legislation.

In reply to Cllr Mark Goldsack, the Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager explained that there were no definite planning rules on tandem parking or frontage parking. He explained to Cllr John Trapp that the parking needed to be laid out before occupation of property and condition 8 stated that cars would be required to be able to leave the property in forward gear.

It was noted that the Planning Committee had agreed planning permission for development on the land in question in October 2016.

The Committee moved into debate.

Cllr Alan Sharp asserted that the application contravened planning policies ENV1 and ENV2 of the Council's Local Plan as it was incompatible with the street scene in St Johns Avenue, due to its design and size of front garden. He also expressed concern regarding road safety, as the proposed property was on a bend. UK Power Networks had also objected. He proposed that the planning application be rejected. Cllr Chika Akinwale agreed with Cllr Sharp and seconded this proposal.

Cllr Martin Goodearl stated that concerns regarding access to power cables was not a planning consideration and so there was no reason to refuse permission. He proposed that the Committee approve the application. Cllr John Trapp seconded this proposal.

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith raised concerns regarding the ownership of the land. Cllr Bill Hunt explained that as it was possible to apply for planning permission on land that did not belong to the applicant, the actual ownership of the land was not the Committee's concern.

Cllr Mark Goldsack stated that it was clear from the site visit that the proposed development did not complement the surrounding area. He expressed concerns about the proposed parking and stated that the Committee had to look at the current facts and not be influenced by previous decisions made regarding the site. Cllr Ross Trent agreed and stated that the application was not appropriate for the site. Cllr Christine Whelan also agreed, and she stated that applications were often refused by the Committee due to the street scene and the proposed materials to be used in the development.

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith suggested that this was a suitable location for infill development and so she supported the application. Cllr John Trapp agreed, stating that not all the homes on St Johns Avenue were of the same design or on the same sized sites. He concluded that more homes were needed and this location had good links to public transport.

Cllr Mary Wade agreed with Cllr Sharp and declared that she would be voting to reject the application, as it contravened the planning policies in the Local Plan.

The Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager stated that the Committee had approved planning permission on this site in 2016 and with the exception that the National Planning Policy Framework was now more in favour of development, it was unclear what else had changed.

Cllr Lavinia Edwards expressed concerns regarding the impact the application could have on the street scene but recognised that the planning history indicated that permission should be given.

Cllr Alan Sharp proposed and Cllr Chika Akinwale seconded that the application be refused as it contravened planning policy ENV 2. A vote was taken and with 8 votes in favour, 3 votes against and no abstentions the Committee

resolved to **refuse** the application, on the grounds that the alternative method of construction and the use of modern materials was considered to be out of character with the street scene and the character of the area in contravention of policy ENV2 in the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 (as amended 2023).

73. Planning Performance Report – March 2026

David Morren, Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager, presented a report (AA188, previously circulated) summarising the performance of the Planning Department in March 2026. He reported that unfortunately the Planning Inspector had allowed the appeal on the application for up to 126 dwellings at Cambridge Road, Stretham. The Chair stated that both he and the Chair of Stretham Parish Council had spoken against the appeal and there was considerable local disappointment in the Planning Inspector's decision.

The Committee agreed

to resolve to **note** the report.

74. Annual Planning Performance Report in Resolving Planning Enforcement Cases

Juleen Roman, Planning Enforcement Team Leader, presented a report (AA190, previously circulated) which detailed the Council's performance in resolving planning enforcement cases and its development monitoring caseload between 1 April 2025 and 31 March 2026.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, the Planning Enforcement Team Leader explained that the team had reviewed and closed a number of old cases and this explained why more cases had been closed than received in 2025/26.

The Committee agreed

to resolve to **note** the report.

75. 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).

76. Quarterly performance in resolving planning enforcement cases

Juleen Roman, Planning Enforcement Team Leader, presented a report (AA189, previously circulated) which detailed the Council's performance in resolving planning enforcement cases and its development monitoring caseload for the last quarter.

It was resolved that:

The Quarterly Performance in Resolving Enforcement Cases be noted.

The meeting concluded at 3:47 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....