

31st May 2026

Dear Planning Committee Members,

REF 26/0032/FUL - Land South West of Willow Cottage, Upend – Planning Committee
Agenda Item 11

I am writing on behalf of all residents of Upend who strongly object to this planning application.

I will personally be attending and speaking to you at the upcoming planning committee meeting.

Unfortunately, the 5-minute restriction on speaking does not allow adequate time for me to detail all the problems with this development and the way the planning application has been assessed.

We have read the committee report (Agenda item 11) and are appalled to see that the case officer has recommended approval of this application. It is our strongly held opinion that the proposal very clearly conflicts with your Local Plan policies which are designed to protect, preserve or enhance conservation areas, rural areas and residential amenity.

Upend is a beautiful ancient rural hamlet full of listed houses and a street scene that has hardly changed in over a hundred years. It is a peaceful place characterised by a narrow road, thatched cottages, open paddocks and dark skies at night. For these reasons Upend is a Conservation Area.

The site is in the very heart of Upend on a hill above most of the village. The site is surrounded by homes and is highly visible, particularly during winter when the trees and hedgerows drop their leaves.

The application before you proposes an oversized commercial scale stable block and riding arena, which can be floodlit for 15 hours per day, starting at 6am, every day. A new entrance whose design is not fully defined and is too steep to be practical, major earthworks without any detailed definition of final land levels, a large spoil heap spanning 50m+ that is completely undefined. A muck heap that has been sited as close as possible to neighbours, without any consideration for others. No overall consideration for neighbours, the dark skies and tranquillity, or the conservation area, causing long term harm.

The case officer's report ignores the negative impact of this proposal on the conservation area and residents amenity and fails to suggest any conditions which would act as safeguards.

We have made numerous recommendations, including changes and conditions, all of which have been completely ignored by the applicants and the case officer.

As a community the majority of Upend residents are either horse owners, riders or horse lovers and we live peacefully alongside the well managed Fittocks Stud, which has no negative effect on us. As such we are not against an appropriately designed stable at the site. However, the current application, particularly the scale and flood lit arena, is completely unacceptable to us and will ruin our hamlet.

Upend residents love being here and chose to live here for a reason. We request your help in preserving this historic place and our peaceful lifestyle by preventing this development.

Planning Process

The case officer has determined that this application should be approved, but the supporting justification and process is significantly flawed.

During the planning process we have noted that multiple significant changes have been made to the planning application, but we have only been reconsulted on two of these changes. Other key documents are, at the time of writing, missing from the planning portal.

- The floodlighting is our most significant concern – the Ecology report was published on the portal, recommending that lights were only allowed for 3 months of the year. The committee report shows this restriction as been lifted by negotiation with Ecology, but no pertaining information is on the Portal.
- The committee report was published last minute which restricts the time available to submit concerns
- Residents should not be expected to monitor daily the planning portal for significant material changes to the application; residents should have been notified and consulted on all material changes, and we were not.

This application should NOT BE APPROVED.

I will attend the planning committee meeting and summarise the following concerns.

- **Character and Appearance of Conservation Area**

Upend is a very special historic and unchanged hamlet in a conservation area. The site in question is right in the heart of the village with houses on all sides. This is the most densely populated part of the hamlet, that enjoys tranquillity, a scenic outlook and dark skies.

I am disappointed that the case officer has recommend approval of such a large-scale development right in the heart of the hamlet. The proposal neither preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the Upend. For some residents, such as 2 New Cottages, the impact will be massive. As part of your visit to Upend, you must view the site from 2 New Cottages – you have been given permission by the owner.

I would like to state that the Conservation Officer was initially consulted and responded 13 minutes later simply with “no heritage concerns”. How can a Conservation Officer have fulfilled his duty in 13 minutes based on the initial complex 26 document submission. Subsequently, I emailed the Conservation Officer directly and received the following response,

Mr Davies

The impacts you have identified are amenity issues which my planning colleagues are perfectly capable of assessing. I am the sole conservation officer for East Cambridge and must prioritise my time to areas such as my own listed building caseload, where my technical input is pivotal.



Christopher Partrick
Conservation Officer
Planning
01353 665555
www.eastcambs.gov.uk
eastcambsgov
@EastCambs
East Cambridgeshire District Council, The Grange, Nuthol Lane, Ely, Cambridgeshire CB4 4EE
[Privacy Notice](#)
[Pay, report, apply online 24 hours a day](#)
Please consider the environment before printing this email.

This response was not added to the portal and has been ignored in the committee report, point 70, which is very misleading.

This application has not been adequately assessed by the conservation officer or the case officer. The Conservation Officer clearly did not participate, and the case officer has not considered many factors that contribute to the characteristics of the Upend conservation area. Upend is a small rural hamlet surrounded by equine uses, as stated in the case officer's report. But there are many other key elements that comprise its character and appearance we have not been considered, such as

- Dark skies – the village has no streetlight or other isolated lighting
- Domestic scale buildings as well as listed buildings
- Beautiful historic hedgerows
- Historic street scene
- Many well-maintained undeveloped grass paddocks
- A quiet tranquil environment

The proposed development harms the character and appearance of Upend.

The development comprises a large stable building, with a footprint bigger than many houses in this Upend, and a 55m x 25m floodlit arena which is similar to those found in a commercial setting. There are 8 floodlights on 5m columns which will be clearly visible from the road and surrounding properties, particularly in the winter months with no leaves on trees.

Engineering works will be required to significantly change the topography of the sloping site to provide level areas for stables and arena. This is not detailed and neither is the height of the soil dump (see Engineering section). This soil ridge could have a significant impact but is NOT DEFINED.

Additionally, 3 to 4m section of historic hedge and verge will be removed to provide a new vehicular entrance whose appearance is largely undefined. This alone will have a significant impact on the street scene

The conservation area impact has not been adequately assessed and key information is missing

- Floodlighting

The proposed development includes 8 floodlights, on 5 metre poles, on an elevated paddock, spanning a 55m x 25m arena area. Additional lighting for the stables will be likely required but are not mentioned.

The proposed lighting is not compliant with Policy ENV1, EMP5, or ENV9

- Policy.ENV9 requires all development proposals to minimise light and noise pollution;

The application will introduce light pollution into an area that is currently dark. Even with low lux levels this introduces light pollution where it doesn't exist. The residents of Upend have chosen to live in a dark place which is free from light pollution.

The initial published Ecology response conditioned that lighting should only be used between 6am and 21.00 in Dec, Jan, Feb. The case officer report now recommends a condition allowing use from 6am to 21.00 every day. The applicants have already fought to successfully overturn the initial Ecology restriction which disallowed lighting for 9 months of the year. Additionally, there is no published supporting information, from Ecology, on the portal.

This recommendation is highly irresponsible and unnecessary in a dark rural village as it provides the potential for light pollution for 15 hours of every day. The objectors are also concerned about how any such condition could even be enforced.

If you approve this, you will allow the centre of a dark hamlet to be floodlit for 15 hours per day, every day. It does not matter what the applicant's intention is but it does matter what you permit.

- Policy.ENV.7 states any permission must protect the nocturnal character of rural areas from light pollution;

The floodlights clearly do not protect the dark skies we currently enjoy in Upend, especially with the potential for the floodlights to be on for 15 hours per day.

- Policy.EMP1 states the amenity of nearby residential properties must not be adversely affected for example in relation to floodlighting changes in levels or noise and disturbance;

The lights may be low spill lights but they are on 5m poles and will be detrimental to adjoining neighbours, particularly 2 New Cottages whose principal windows all look directly at the site.

The lighting impact has not been adequately considered or conditioned in respect of the conservation area or residential amenity

- **Scale of Development**

The case officer repeatedly mentions small scale domestic stables and arena. Relative to the size of the hamlet and the local residential properties this CANNOT BE CONSIDERED SMALL SCALE. Every element of this development is oversized

- **Policy EMP5 Equine Development**

The local plan requires that new buildings for horse-related activities including stables, field shelters and tack rooms should be no larger than is essential (5.6.3).

The proposal is not compliant with Policy EMP5

- The proposed stable block comprises a building measuring 14.4m x 9.2m containing 3 stables, 4 other separate rooms and a wash bay, so 8 areas in total. All of this for 1 horse and a companion pony.
- It also includes a large floodlit arena, measuring 55m x 25m. This is not of minor scale as stated in the case officer report and is equivalent to a commercial scale facility.

This development is clearly not compliant with the planning requirements as it would be significantly larger than is essential. We disagree strongly with the committee report, point 40.

Further, the objectors are significantly concerned about the commercial scale of this development and the potential to intensify or convert to a commercial operation in the future.

I would also like to point out the build is not of particularly high-quality materials (committee report, point 48). It is a softwood shiplap with a fake tile roof. Particularly high-quality materials may be hardwood with a pantile or peg tile roof.

The Scale of the development does not meet planning policy

- **Noise & Smell**

Loud music is commonly used to prepare horses for events. Whilst it may not be the applicants intention, future owners have to be considered. In our objection letter we raised the risk of music being played across the arena which would disturb the tranquillity of the Upend conservation area. This is the heart of the village. The case officer has completely ignored our request to implement a “no music” condition.

Additionally, the siting of the manure heap is massively disrespectful to the occupants of Walnut Tree Cottage. The manure heap will smell, attract flies and rodents and is located closer to this property than Willow Cottage! We requested that this muck heap was relocated, but have been ignored by the applicants and the case officer. There is space within the site to relocate the manure heap away from watercourses and residential properties.

Additionally, point 62 of the committee report, the case officer mentions “many instances of stabling and muck heaps within Upend close to residential dwellings”. There are NO MUCK HEAPS anywhere near as close to other residential properties and any muck heaps that exist are on the periphery of the village and only close to the owner’s property and not others. This is an incorrect and misleading statement.

- Policy ENV9 Pollution

All development proposals should minimise, and where possible, reduce all emissions and other forms of pollution, including light and noise pollution to prevent unacceptable impacts arising from the development on the natural environment, general amenity and the tranquillity of the wider rural area.

The proposal is not compliant with Policy ENV.5

- The potential for noise pollution associated with playing music across the arena during riding sessions, which is common in this type of facility – this has not been conditioned despite our written request.
- Introduction of a manure heap that is in close proximity to residential property that is downwind of the typical prevailing wind which will result in an unpleasant smell.

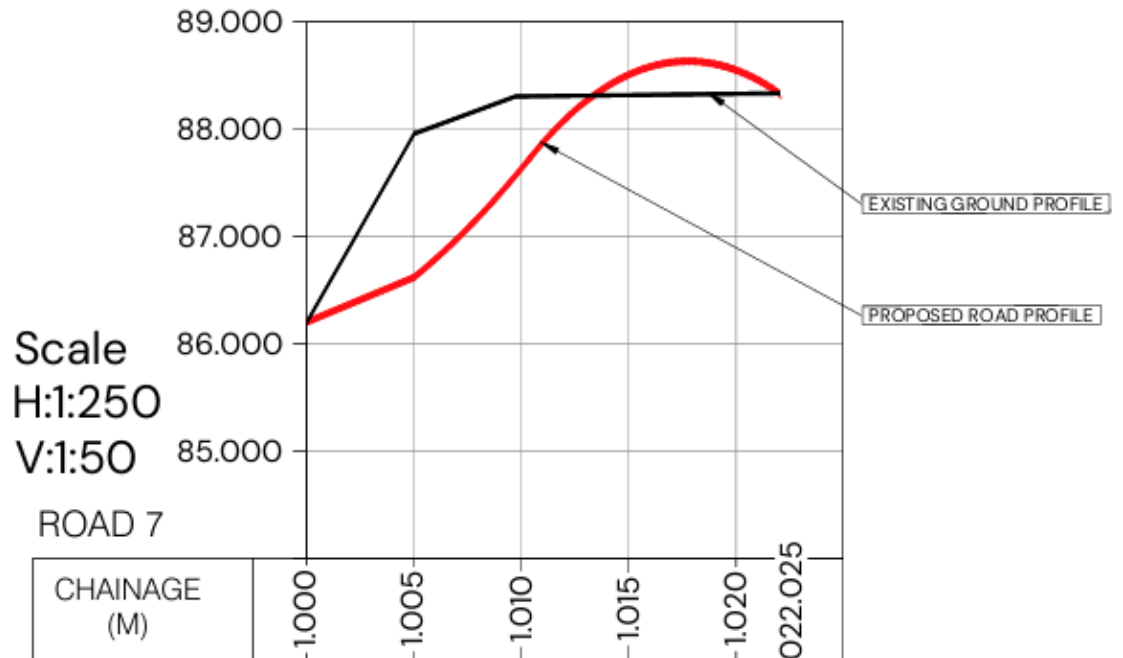
Noise & Smell have not been adequately assessed against policy and our request to relocate the muck heap has been ignored.

- Engineering Works

There have been several significant iterations of the submitted plan including

- Changes to entrance road profile – The Highways authority rejected the initial design enforcing a 5m section of road that should not exceed 1 in 12, adjoining the highway. This forced a re-design, which now makes the access 1 in 6 with a hump at the top. This is now a very steep and relatively narrow entrance that I do not believe is suitable for large vehicles to navigate to deliver feed or remove manure (See the red line road profile below). The reality is that vehicles will not use it and will park on the road. This is not helped by the narrow main road through the village with limited turning space.

There is no point in building an entrance that won't be used by large vehicles! If you are minded to approve this application, I strongly suggest that the application is deferred to consider a more holistic approach to ensure safety and practicality.



- New drainage schemes have been introduced very late in the process and we had to push the case officer to even consult the Lead Local Flood Authority. This will result in a significant amount of soil excavation.
- There are no details defining the overall changes to ground levels to allow for the stable block and arena. This is a site with a significant slope and will require major engineering works.
- There are NO DETAILS on the spoil volume and how significant the planned dumping ridge is per the green area in the plan below.
- There are no details of how the spoil ridge will be treated once in place. Will it be planted? The soil ridge has the potential to be a major eyesore and yet has been completely ignored by the case officer.



In summary, there have been many significant engineering changes that have not been retrospectively considered on a holistic basis to determine how these collective changes affect flood risk, ecology etc.

You cannot approve the application in a conservation area without understanding the ground level changes and visual impact of the soil bank.

Iterative Changes to engineering works have not been assessed holistically and there is critical missing topography information

Conclusion

For the above reasons we strongly urge you to refuse this application.

However, if the Committee is not minded to refuse the application, we urge you to defer rather than approve, for the following reasons

- 1) Conservation – the application has not been properly assessed in relation to the statutory requirement to preserve and enhance the character and appearance of the conservation area. As mentioned, I was subsequently in direct contact with the Conservation Officer who stated that they did not have time to assess the application and had other priorities. The case officer has not considered a broad range of factors that define the Upend Conservation Area and has only considered equine heritage.

Whilst I have sympathy for resourcing levels, this response is not adequate and leaves any approval open to a successful legal challenge.

- 2) Assessing the full scope of development

The application has not been dealt with per your 'right first time' promise but instead has been subject to 4 sets of amendment submissions between Jan and May.

The cumulative effect of considerable engineering changes has not been re-considered as a whole. This has resulted in several significant areas that the objectors consider have not been adequately addressed in the committee report.

There is critical topographic information missing that is required to adequately assess visual impact, ecology and flood risk.

This application has been rushed at the end due to deadlines and has not been adequately dealt with. Do not ruin a conservation area and what makes Upend special for residents.

Thank you for taking the time to read our letter. I look forward to meeting you at next week's committee meeting

Yours sincerely,

Simon Davies

Walnut Tree Cottage, Upend