



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 3 June 2026

Present:

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith
Cllr Christine Colbert
Cllr Martin Goodearl (Vice-Chair)
Cllr Keith Horgan
Cllr Bill Hunt (Chair)
Cllr Alan Sharp
Cllr Ross Trent
Cllr John Trapp
Cllr Lucius Vellacott
Cllr Christine Whelan

Officers:

Patrick Adams – Senior Democratic Services Officer
Olivia Akroyd – Planning Officer
Kevin Breslin – Locum Planning Lawyer
Rachel Gordon – Planning Team Leader
Shayleen Kirkland – Locum Planning Lawyer
Yole Medeiros – Major Projects Officer
David Morren – Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager
Charlotte Sage – Planning Officer
Christopher Smith – Environmental Health Officer
Gavin Taylor – Major Projects Officer

In attendance:

Cllr Lorna Dupré, as local member
Cllr Mark Hugo of Haddenham Parish Council
Cllr Gareth Wilson, as local member
ECDC Comms
Members of the public

1. Apologies and substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Lavina Edwards, Cllr Mark Goldsack and Cllr James Lay. Cllr Keith Horgan substituted for Cllr Goldsack and Cllr Lucius Vellacott substituted for Cllr Edwards.

2. Declarations of interest

None.

3. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 6 May 2026 were agreed as a correct record. The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 6 May 2026 were also agreed as a correct record.

4. Chair's announcements

The Chair noted that the Committee had shrunk in size following Annual Council and he thanked Cllr Chika Akinwale for her work on the Committee over many years and her intelligent comments during debates.

5. 24/00757/FUM – Wisbech Road, Littleport

This item was discussed after agenda item 6. Rachel Gordon, Planning Team Leader, presented a report (AB6, previously circulated) recommending approval for the retention of a building, erection of extensions and proposed external crane rails.

The Committee received the following statement from objector Peter Preston, read out by the Senior Democratic Services Officer.

“Residential Households located close to the proposed developments covered by the above planning application respectfully request that the following statement be read out at this Planning Committee Meeting. This statement is supported by all the households shown below. We all object to this Planning Application being approved by the Committee and request that Members take careful notice of the following matters before they vote in the Decision.

“For some reason, not clear to residents, the Council’s Local Planning Authority (LPA) allows this developer carte-blanche to build anything at this site without planning permission (there are at least five previous examples). No enforcement action is ever taken, and the Council simply goes on to recommend retrospective approval. At some point the Planning Committee needs to draw a line in the sand and ask this developer and the LPA to respect a planning process that seems to apply to everybody else.

“It is not clear why the LPA chose to change the, more reasonable, description of this application from that given by the developer on their application form. This submission does not concern retention; it concerns authority to build a factory on former agricultural land. Also, because of the passage of time and the LPA’s decision not to invoke any enforcement action in light of the unapproved construction works, the whole of this Planning Application is Retrospective – not just part retrospective.

“Residents are advised that approval of this scheme on a “drop in” basis potentially would be contrary to planning case law and, if approval is granted,

is likely to result in a judicial review in the High Court if Residents decide to invoke such action.

“Councillors will need to be mindful of the fact that residents’ specialist legal advice that the Council was previously pursuing an illegal course in respect to the 16/01121/FUL application. This ultimately resulted in the Council having a previous approval at this site quashed and significant costs awarded against the Council.

“Specialist advisors seem confident that a case would be successful in Court, and we anticipate that residents would be supported on a no win/no fee basis. The financial risk of losing in Court therefore would sit with the Council in that scenario.

“The LPA previously recommended refusal of a scheme for a smaller factory at this site on noise grounds under the original 16/01121/FUM proposals. This never came to fruition due to lack of an up-to-date agreement date for the application determination date and was followed by an immediate appeal on grounds of non-determination. The appointed Planning Inspector devoted a whole day to consideration of numerous specialist submissions and assessments of the noise impact leading to strict planning conditions. Despite this, no serious analysis has been commissioned by the LPA into the noise disturbance likely to be caused by this factory twice the size and with external gantry cranes.

“Objectors point out that there are numerous legitimate grounds to refuse this application including:

- Approval would be potentially contrary to Planning Case law.
- The scheme does not comply with several aspects of the Local Plan.
- It will cause substantial noise nuisance to residents and to recreational users of the area.
- It is indisputable that the proposed building will have (in fact already has) a grotesque visual impact.

“Residents believe and submit that there are serious errors in the LPA’s published August 2024 EIA Screening Opinion. Not least that further information (e.g. noise impacts) has since been provided by the Applicant and Residents that should be reflected in the Opinion.

“The extended lighting of the much greater building extends the impact of light pollution far beyond that previously approved by the Planning Inspector. The building changes the character of the landscape from agricultural to industrial.

“The impact on recreational amenity, far beyond that envisaged by the Planning Inspector, is extremely significant. NB the Appeal Planning Inspector identified the area just beyond the site as a recreational amenity area that the original 16/01121/FUM proposal would impinge on the quiet enjoyment these areas provide. This area is similarly related to the current application under consideration.

“The existence of a previous approval, with conditions, for a smaller building on a similar site does not imply something larger and completely different in nature should also be approved.

“The best course of action would be to refuse the application and (realistically) anticipate the developer to appeal. This would enable them to justify to the Planning Inspector why the Secretariat’s previous decision has been disregarded.

“Signed Peter Preston

“Supported by residents at: Marefen Farm and First Bungalow, Little Marefen Drove; Horseshoe Farm, Mare Fen; Foxwood Lodge and Broad Piece, Mare Fen; Red Lodge and Silver Birches, Wisbech Road.”

The Committee received the following statement from Paul Hamill, Estates Director for the applicant FP McCann.

“Thank you chair and committee members for allowing me to present to you this afternoon. My name is Paul Hamill; I am the Estates Director for FP McCann. I have been involved with our Littleport site since it was purchased from Aggregate Industries back in 2013. I acted as agent for the parent application which was submitted in 2016 and was later approved following a non-determination appeal.

“We very much welcome the officer’s recommendation and we thank the planning team for their efforts in preparing our application for presentation today. As witnessed during your visit, the development is located entirely within an existing operational area. The overall site was approved for B2 uses following that appeal decision in 2021. The application before you today relates solely to alterations to the production building itself, all other aspects remain unchanged.

“The Committee will know that the site has already been the subject of a detailed assessment by the Council, in its own preparation of the Local Plan. Following this assessment, part of the development site, along with other lands, were identified as a suitable location for employment. To our knowledge there were no concerns raised by neighbours or consultees at that time and the lands were subsequently allocated for employment uses.

“As outlined by the planning officer, the principle of a large production building has already been established by the previous application. The key issue for consideration here is the extent of the proposed amendments to the production building.

“Aspects relating to highways, visuals, ecology, noise and drainage have been assessed again in detail and no significant impacts have been identified. Expert consultees such as Environmental Health and the Lead Local Flood Authority have been duly consulted and have raised no objections or concerns, subject to appropriate conditions. On this basis, the planning officer has made a

balanced, professional judgement and has concluded that the proposal accords with all relevant policies and would not result in unacceptable harm.

“As voiced by the previous speaker, a small number of residents remain opposed to our plans, and indeed to our very existence at Littleport. For more than 10 years, there has been an orchestrated campaign of opposition from a few individuals who claim to represent the wider community. The same objectors were involved with the 2016 application. This is why we were forced to take that application to the Planning Inspectorate – at considerable cost to both FP McCann and the Council. We have tried (in vain) to engage these individuals on a number of occasions. From the latest submissions you will see accusations of collusion, negligence and lies. This has been a common theme over many years, an attempt to frustrate the process and to deter the Planning Department from making a decision.

“It should be noted however, that the objectors do not speak for everyone in the community. Littleport Town Council supports our application and letters of support have been submitted by other local residents. Steve Barclay MP also previously visited the site to show his support, following the appeal decision. It is notable that the neighbour list for this application is some 17 pages long and it contains more than 100 addresses, all of whom were invited to provide comment. Many of these properties sit much closer to the proposed development and yet their owners were not inclined to comment, let alone object to the application.

“In conclusion, the proposed development fully accords with the requirements of the Local Plan and National Policy and uses lands which have been specifically identified by the Council for this purpose. The wider site already benefits from planning permission, and the potential impacts of the proposed amendments are not judged to be significant, either by the planning officer or the expert consultees. In these circumstances, it is difficult to identify any valid planning reason to refuse this application.

“The proposed development, if permitted, will enable the continued operation of an established business, a business which makes positive contributions to the area in terms of employment and the wider economy. The changes proposed here relate solely to the operational requirements of the applicant; the increased demand for off-site concrete products and a wider push to use low-carbon ingredients in our manufacturing processes.

“On balance, I would suggest that the significant benefits here, far outweigh any negative impacts and I would respectfully ask that the Committee agrees with the officer’s recommendation to approve this application.”

Councillors were invited to ask questions to Paul Hamill.

In reply to Cllr Martin Goodearl, Paul Hamill explained that the application in 2016 was undecided, then unanimously approved, after it sat undecided for four years. The reasons for change were related to mitigation.

The Chair stated that the fact that the application was retrospective was irrelevant in planning terms and should not be considered by the Committee.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, Paul Hamill admitted that it would have been better if the 2016 application had included concrete pipes and converts in the plans. In the meantime, the modular system had been purpose built.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, Paul Hamill explained that the proposed application would allow for additional operational facilities, which were not included in the original application. The improvements in technology had allowed concrete to be reinforced in ways that were not readily available in 2016. This was why the application included the need for overhead cranes and changes to the structure of the building.

In reply to Cllr Christine Whelan, Paul Hamill stated that this application was the result of enforcement action. The variations could have been applied for 3-4 years ago.

The Chair invited comments from officers.

David Morren, the Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager, stated that retrospective planning applications should be assessed on their planning merits exactly like any other planning application.

Councillors were invited to ask questions to the officers.

In reply to Cllr Martin Goodearl, Rachel Gordon, Planning Team Leader, explained that the lighting on the wider site already had approval. A condition would be included for the lighting in the application.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, the Planning Team Leader explained that all the issues raised by the consultees' assessments could be mitigated by conditions.

The Committee moved into debate.

Cllr Keith Horgan understood that there was a demand for lower carbon concrete and this business was satisfying this demand. It was regrettable that it was a retrospective application but this made no difference to the planning rules. He proposed that the Committee agree the application, in line with the officer's recommendations.

Cllr Martin Goodearl supported the application, as the business brought employment to the area and he seconded Cllr Horgan's proposal. Cllr Bill Hunt agreed and stated that the main objections appeared to be on the fact that this was a retrospective application and this was not relevant.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott supported the application. He noted that retrospective planning applications would come under more scrutiny when the Government's new National Development Planning Framework came into force, but this was not relevant to this application.

Cllr Alan Sharp raised a concern about the lighting on the wider site and the survey which detailed the effect that this could have on bats. However, this did not relate to this application and so he would be supporting it.

Cllr Keith Horgan proposed and Cllr Lucius Vellacott seconded the recommendation in the report with the updated plans condition. A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed to

resolve to:

approve the application, subject to the conditions set out in Appendix 1 and the updated plans condition, as presented at the meeting.

6. 25/01320/FUM – De Freville Farm, Aldreth

This Item was discussed before agenda item 5.

Gavin Taylor, Major Projects Officer, presented a report (AB7, previously circulated) on an application for a change of use, extension, alteration and part-demolition of buildings for offices, laboratories, staff facilities for research and development, manufacturing facilities and new vehicle access with associated parking, hard and soft landscaping and a sustainable drainage system. The report recommended refusal on the grounds that it was contrary to policies EMP 2, EMP 3, EMP 4, COM 7 and ENV 2 of the East Cambridgeshire Local Plan 2015 and policies HAD1 and HAD4 of the Haddenham and Aldreth Neighbourhood Plan 2019-2031.

Mike Wells, Chair of the Aldreth Community Association, spoke as an objector to the application and made the following statement:

“I am Mike Wells an Aldreth resident and chairman of Aldreth Community Association, here to voice residents’ and my objections to the proposed development. I find it hard to believe that consideration is being given to moving a factory to the heart of probably the smallest hamlet in East Cambridgeshire. A hamlet of less than 100 houses that residents cherish for its peace and tranquillity. This development goes against our neighbourhood plan which was democratically voted for by the residents to protect our local amenity. This development would change Aldreth dramatically with noise, odour, traffic and lighting.

“When the site was a farm, agricultural machinery was used intermittently and primarily during seasonal periods such as harvest. Such activity is part and parcel of living in a rural farming community. An industrial factory, however, is a fundamentally different proposition. Its scale, intensity and pattern of operation is not inherent to the countryside and would be completely out of keeping with the character of this rural hamlet. We have a strong local community that got together to buy our old disused chapel and turn it into our village centre that provides community events and a regular playgroup on

Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. This is heavily subscribed, no doubt you witnessed that on today's visit, with parents bringing their children from Haddenham as well as being attended by our Aldreth youngsters. The prospect of ten HGV tankers a day thundering in and out of the hamlet with young children walking the footpaths is concerning. Many residents have expressed concern over the noise, odour, traffic increase, and disruption of our amenity by the factory.

"We received no initial contact or notice from the applicant. When we organised a meeting to discuss the application and invited the applicant to attend, more than 100 residents came to express their views, concerns, and objections. As the number of objections on the planning website shows, local opposition is significant.

"On a personal note, I live next to the proposed site. My 120-year-old house has shallow foundations, so I am worried about tankers using the new access road just 5 metres away. Similar factories are usually located at least 500 metres from residential properties and are typically built on business parks. Why is this proposal so close to homes and treated as an exception? For the past 15 months, this application has been a constant source of worry for my wife, me, and many of our neighbours. It dominates local conversation. We spend a great deal of time in our garden, which would be affected by the noise of forklift alarms, HGVs, staff traffic, odour and intrusive lighting. We are also concerned about the proposed SUDS lake, - the long stretch of stagnant water running the length of my property on the clay soil.

"A lot of residents chose Aldreth as a tranquil place to live and to retire to enjoy nature and peace, not to be an annex to a factory. I urge you to support the planning officer's recommendation to refuse this application and allow us to return to normal life."

Councillors were invited to ask questions to Mike Wells.

In reply to Cllr Christine Colbert, Mike Wells explained that the factory was currently operating in Chittering and so there would not be any employment opportunities for Aldreth residents, as the expectation was that the workers would transfer to the new factory.

In reply to Cllr Lucius Vellacott, Mike Wells stated that in comparison to the expected level of factory traffic, the farm vehicles that had operated on the site was negligible. Farm traffic was expected in rural areas, especially during the harvest. Factory traffic was not and would be constant.

In reply to Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith, Mike Wells explained that there was no through route through Aldreth, which added to its tranquillity. He doubted that housing would be built on the site, due to the lack of facilities and services in Aldreth. The Major Projects Officer clarified that the old farmhouse was within the village envelope, whilst the buildings to the rear of the site were not.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, Mike Wells explained that his main concern was the noise, light and smells from the industrial site and the detrimental effect that this would have on the tranquil village.

In reply to Cllr Bill Hunt, Mike Wells explained that the cars parked on the High Street, seen by councillors on their site visit, belonged to parents whose children were using the nursery in the community building.

Aalbert Remijn made the following statement on behalf of the applicant:
“We bought De Freville in early 2024 and spent the following 14 months preparing our planning application to convert the derelict farm buildings into what we hope will become the next home for our business.

“We are a family business, with the next generation already involved, and we would like to move from rented premises into premises that we own. We provide high-quality employment for 25 families, more than half of whom live within a 10-mile radius of Aldreth.

“We are opening two new manufacturing units overseas in the coming year, but the UK will remain our main technical hub, as the expertise needed to analyse and design flavours is concentrated in only a few locations worldwide.

“We have already sympathetically restored the farmhouse and would now like to restore the brick buildings and barns, creating a smart, campus-style site. This approach has been strongly supported by the Conservation Officer. The plans will enhance biodiversity and deliver a highly sustainable and energy-efficient development.

“Over the last year, we have addressed all the requirements raised by the planning officers and relevant agencies, and we have received no objections from any of the statutory consultees.

“I understand that people are concerned about change and the unknown. However, traffic generation would be much more modest than some residents fear, a point that has been accepted by Highways.

“We want to be part of the community as good neighbours, and I hope your decision will help us all move forward in a positive and constructive way.”

Councillors were invited to ask questions to Mr Remijn.

In reply to Cllr Lucius Vellacott, Aalbert Remijn stated that the site would receive 3-4 lorries a day and the business would have a car park for 17-25 spaces for employees. In reply to Cllr John Trapp, he explained that the delivery vehicles would be a mixture of articulated lorries and fixed axel transit vans. In reply to Cllr Christine Colbert, he stated that if an HGV vehicle needed to stay overnight, it would remain on site and not on the road.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, Aalbert Remijn stated that the amount of noise generated by the factory was negligible, as it would be a well-insulated building.

He would be prepared to mitigate any traffic noise. He would prefer to have used the current entrance to the site, but the Highways Authority had ruled against this.

In reply to Cllr Alan Sharp, Aalbert Remijn explained that the current factory was not fit for purpose, whilst the new factory would be state of the art, which would ensure that noise or odour would be controlled. He expected that operating hours would be 8 am to 4 pm Monday to Thursday and 7:30 am to 2 pm on Fridays. In reply to Cllr John Trapp he stated that not all staff would start work at 8 am. In reply to Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith he explained that he did not want staff to work long hours.

Cllr Bill Hunt expressed concern that the entrance of the site was very close to the community centre, which provided childcare to the local community.

The following statement was made by Haddenham Parish Councillor Mark Hugo:

"I am Mark Hugo, a parish councillor and one of your district councillors from 2015 to 2019. I am speaking on behalf of Haddenham Parish Council to object to this application for a chemical processing factory in Aldreth. Our Chairman and Clerk are here today as well.

"Haddenham Parish Council support the planning officer's recommendation for refusal. At the heart of this case is a very simple issue:

- This development is in the wrong place.
- The site lies outside the Development Envelope, hence in the countryside, as defined in both the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan.

"Therefore, this application conflicts with Policies HAD1 and GROWTH 2. These permit development in the countryside for agriculture, equestrian or forestry or uses that can clearly demonstrate a need to be in the countryside. This chemical factory does not fall into any of these categories. Other more suitable sites do exist - such as Haddenham Business Park or Lancaster Way. Our research shows that all other flavouring chemical factories in the UK are on business parks or industrial sites.

"This Parish Council has a strong track record of working with ECDC to improve life for residents. That partnership has delivered real outcomes – including: Affordable CLT homes for local families, new recreation and football facilities and most importantly the recent Neighbourhood Plan.

"Approving this application would undermine such work with ECDC going forward and would set a dangerous precedent. As you all know, but it's worth emphasising, this Neighbourhood plan required a democratic vote of residents to approve it.

"The impact on residents' amenity would be significant. Aldreth is a small rural hamlet of just 90 houses. Industrial activity of this nature with associated noise, very substantial odour (as is quite clear from visiting their existing site)

and heavy extra traffic does not belong in this setting - particularly where that activity involves chemical processing and HGV (indeed tanker) movements in very close proximity to homes. The company currently operates on a business park where the nearest properties are approximately 500m away. Almost all properties in Aldreth are within 400m of this site and over 50% are within 150m.

"The proposed factory entrance is less than 5m from a house over 120 years old with shallow foundations. As the officer has stated this would introduce an unacceptable urban form into the rural street scene. There are a substantial number of objections from residents, with real concerns about their daily lives being affected. Indeed over 50% of Aldreth homes have sent written objections with real planning issues.

"Noise projections indicate a doubling of decibel levels compared to the existing measured 20db baseline. This is a 100-fold increase in sound intensity which translates to roughly 400% increase in perceived sound level. A significant and harmful change!

"The proposal would be a clear intensification of use. This is not just reusing farm buildings. It introduces machinery, more traffic, more staff, deliveries, loading, lighting - a completely different level of activity from farming. The character of the village would be fundamentally altered by introducing a chemical factory in the centre of the hamlet. The roads in both Aldreth and Haddenham, through which all traffic must go to get to Aldreth, are constrained and residential in nature and include a 20 mph zone and are in many places very close to houses with narrow or no pavements. This zone was introduced recently to mainly reroute HGVs away from Haddenham. It is not adequate for frequent HGV movements and there is no alternative suitable routing plan that avoids this 20mph zone. The road into Aldreth is narrow and an HGV and a car cannot pass without mounting the verge in places. In Aldreth itself, the proposed new road entrance is opposite the Village Centre which is mainly used as a regular pre-school, meaning cars are often parked all along the high street with parents delivering young and unpredictable children who would have to negotiate frequent HGVs (including tankers with possible hazardous contents) arriving and then turning using both carriageways.

"The application also presents an inaccurate picture of sustainability. It suggests good cycle routes and public transport. In reality, Aldreth has no cycle routes and only one bus a week on Thursdays.... at 10am! This means the development would rely heavily on private vehicles - which conflicts with the national policy of sustainability.

"No external security lighting plan has been submitted. Clearly there would need to be some and it's difficult to see how that would not conflict with the Neighbourhood Plan's dark skies policy.

"Finally, a previous Section 106 agreement required a building on the same site to cease operation specifically to protect nearby residents from noise

pollution. This proposal would introduce a chemical factory on that same site - with greater noise, activity, and disturbance than the use that was previously told to stop. That directly undermines the purpose and spirit of that agreement.

“Haddenham Parish Council strongly supports the officer’s refusal as this plan would ruin the lives of many people sitting here and many others back in Aldreth. We urge you to support the officer and reject this plan.”

In reply to Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith, Mark Hugo stated that the technology restricting odour in the factory was untested and it would be difficult to enforce if it proved unsuccessful. The officer had stated this in the report.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, Mark Hugo explained that the community hall had many users and so having a condition restricting traffic to the factory to certain times would not solve the safety issue. Cllr Trapp suggested that a car park for the village hall should be considered.

Cllr Gareth Wilson, ward councillor, explained that Aldreth was different to Haddenham, which had large houses and an industrial site. The application was better suited for Lancaster Way, Haddenham. The problem was that the well-meaning applicant was putting the factory in the wrong place. Aldreth was not a suitable location for this factory. If the business was successful, it will grow in size and more staff will be driving to the site, as there was no proper bus service or cycle route. The people in Aldreth want it to remain a quiet place and nobody there wants a factory. The building plans were acceptable as was the use of the barns but the plans were not right for this area, it was the wrong place and will create a real problem if it goes ahead. The area will become an industrial site, with permission for 70 car parking spaces. The area will become an industrial site forever. This would not be right. This place was a hamlet, so he urged the Committee to refuse the application and ask the applicant to find a different site.

Officers were invited to make any additional comments.

Gavin Taylor, Major Projects Officer, stated that the Highways Authority were concerned that the current agricultural access was a bridleway and in close proximity to adjacent accesses and therefore not suitable as access for a factory site. The applicant’s transport assessment had predicted a 29% increase in traffic, which equated to 166 movements a day, with staff arriving during peak hours and HGVs operating outside peak hours. He warned that any condition on restricting the hours of traffic would be difficult to enforce. It would not be reasonable to give planning permission and then make it difficult to operate by imposing such a condition.

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

Cllr Alan Sharp asked how effective the mitigation equipment would be at restricting odour, as the report implied that it was untested. Chris Smith, the

Environmental Health Officer, assured the Committee that the actual mitigation process was not new and the extract filtration system would prevent odours from being emitted by the factory.

In reply to Cllr Lucius Vellacott, the Major Projects Officer explained that the applicant had put forward a drainage strategy, including storage tanks to address the concerns of the Internal Drainage Board, subject to a final drainage design which could be secured via planning condition. In reply to Cllr John Trapp, the Major Projects Officer stated that the drainage strategy would need to store surface water, regardless of whether the hardstanding was permeable or not.

In reply to Cllr Lucius Vellacott, the Major Projects Officer explained that the bulk of the development was outside the village envelope and so would have to be considered to be an exception in order to comply with HAD 1 of the Neighbourhood Plan.

The Committee moved into debate.

Cllr Keith Horgan stated that the Committee need to balance the benefits of redeveloping a derelict site and the resulting economic development against the harmful effects that the increase in traffic and the development itself would have on the character of a rural village. He proposed that the Committee agree with the officer recommendation and reject the application.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott stated that the Internal Drainage Board and the Highways Agency had concerns and that it was contrary to policies in the Neighbourhood Plan. Whilst he saw merit in the application, he recognised that that it was not suitable for such a rural setting and so contravened policy Growth 2 of the Local Plan. He seconded the proposal to agree with the officer recommendation and so reject the application.

Cllr Bill Hunt stated that he had been the County Councillor for Aldreth for about 20 years and he knew that people lived there to enjoy the peace and quiet of the rural setting. He supported the officer recommendation to reject the application.

Cllr John Trapp praised the application and its imaginative plans but he stated that it was in the wrong location. He was concerned about the amount of traffic and the access issue for the site.

Cllr Alan Sharp stated that this was not an easy decision to make. It was unclear what impact the increase in traffic would have on the village. He recognised concerns about the location of the factory and the odours it might emit. He supported the officer's recommendation to refuse the application.

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith agreed with Cllr John Trapp regarding the high quality of the plans in the application. She suggested that those who lived in the village had an exaggerated fear of something new that they did not recognise. However, areas do change and she felt that given time, this new business could

find a place in the community. She supported the planning application, which would replace a derelict building and she warned that if the application was refused, something else might be built in its place that was far worse for the area.

Cllr Christine Whelan stated that she had concerns about the safety of the village's residents due to the increase in traffic, the access to the site and its proximity to the community centre. She supported the officer recommendation to refuse the application.

Cllr Keith Horgan proposed and Cllr Lucius Vellacott seconded that the application be refused, as recommended by the officer. A vote was taken and with 8 votes in favour, 1 against and 1 abstention it was agreed

to resolve to **refuse** the application, for the reasons set out in the report.

7. 25/01097/MPO – Garden Close, Sutton

This item was discussed after agenda item 11.

Gavin Taylor, Major Projects Officer, presented this report (AB8, previously circulated), which recommended that the Committee refuse the application for the modification of planning obligation 17/01445/OUM for outline planning application for erection of up to 53 houses to include public open space and details relating to access.

Conor Gallagher stated that he was the Director of Abbey Investors and he asked the Committee to give permission to build on the site without delay. He explained that there had been a market shift, which made it unviable to deliver the agreed number of affordable homes. The application proposed a commuted sum of £310,000 towards off-site affordable homes provision. He reported that the site could deliver 26 bungalows and 21 further homes. He warned that there was evidence that the local authority did not have a five-year land supply and there clearly was a shortage of homes. He hoped that an appeals process could be avoided. He concluded that in the opinion of officers, this application was finely balanced and he respectfully requested that councillors use their discretion to agree the application and so deliver beautiful homes for the local area.

Councillors were invited to ask questions to Conor Gallagher.

In reply to Cllr Lucius Vellacott, Conor Gallagher explained that a profit of under 9.5% for the project was not viable and so it was not possible to deliver 30% affordable homes on the site, as home prices had stagnated over the last three years, whilst building costs had greatly increased. He also explained that due to independent research, he believed that the authority did not have a five-year land supply and so a Planning Inspector would probably give permission for the development.

In reply to Cllr Bill Hunt, Conor Gallagher stated that delivering affordable housing with Homes England funding had not been considered for this site.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, Conor Gallagher explained that larger sites, such as the development in Littleport, could deliver more affordable homes than this proposed development in Sutton. He reiterated that an increase in the cost of building supplies, combined with the stagnation of house prices, had made 30% affordable homes unviable.

In reply to Cllr Ross Trent, Conor Gallagher was unable to give an exact figure of what 9.5% profit represented in cash term but he explained that a third party assessor agreed with the 9.5% profit figure for a project to be viable.

In reply to Cllr Alan Sharp, Conor Gallagher explained that he represented a business and if the project was not viable it would not be built.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, Conor Gallagher explained that the cost of the land was not relevant to the viability of the project and the reduction of the number of homes from 53 to 47 had only a marginal impact.

In reply to Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith, Conor Gallagher stated that any alternative developer would face the same profit margins and so the same issues on this site.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, Conor Gallagher explained that building costs had been 40% cheaper in 2020, but the developer had been unable to progress the site until the appeal in 2024 had been heard.

Cllr Lorna Dupré spoke to the Committee, as local ward member, with the support of Cllr Mark Inskip the other member for the Sutton ward. She supported the recommendation to refuse this and the subsequent application. Sutton Parish Council had accepted 25 bungalows on the site as part of the Neighbourhood Plan. This was to allow older people to downsize. The proposal to have a greater number of homes on a larger site was refused by the Committee but then granted on appeal. The site was sold to Abbey Homes and the reserved matters application was eventually approved by the Committee. The process had taken so long because the development was larger than originally proposed. The Parish Council had objected, as all affordable housing, which is sorely needed in Sutton, had been removed. The proposed commuted sum would do little to help. Cllr Dupré hoped that the Committee would agree with the officer recommendation to refuse planning permission. However, if the Committee did approve the application, she hoped that some of the homes would be sold at less than market value.

Councillors were invited to ask questions to Cllr Lorna Dupré.

In reply to Cllr Lucius Vellacott, Cllr Dupré explained that the local needs assessment had identified the need for affordable housing in Sutton and 30% of affordable homes on the proposed site would be very welcome.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, Cllr Dupré urged the Committee to stand by its principles and insist that affordable housing be built on sites such as this.

Officers were invited to comment.

The Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager stated that if necessary, the Council would robustly defend its five-year land supply and it was clear from a recent decision taken at Stretham, the Planning Inspectors recognised the importance of affordable housing, so the Committee should take this seriously.

There were no questions for officers and so the Committee moved into debate.

Cllr Christine Whelan proposed that the Committee refuse the application, in line with the officer recommendation. Cllr Christine Colbert seconded this proposal.

Cllr Keith Horgan understood the financial pressures faced by the applicant, however the whole country needed more affordable homes and he did not want to set a precedent by agreeing such a reduction in affordable housing. He therefore agreed with the officer recommendation to refuse the application.

Cllr Lucius Vellacott said that to deliver virtually no affordable housing was contrary to the Local Plan and so he was going to vote to refuse the application. Cllr John Trapp agreed, stating that the building of affordable housing was the main issue.

Cllr Christine Whelan proposed and Cllr Christine Colbert seconded that the application be refused, as recommended by the officer. A vote was taken and the Committee unanimously

resolved:

to **refuse** the application and to determine that, in accordance with Section 106A, paragraph (6)(a) of The Town and Country Planning Act 1990, as amended, the planning obligation shall continue to have effect without modification, for the reasons set out at paragraph 7.33 of the report.

8. 25/00667/VARM – Gardon Close, Sutton

Gavin Taylor, Major Projects Officer, presented this report (AB9, previously circulated), which sought to vary Condition 1 (Approved Plans) of application 22/00057/RMM approved at appeal APP/V0510/W/23/3328203 for Reserved Matters for appearance, landscaping, scale and layout for the erection of 47 homes including public open space of previously approved outline planning application 17/01445/OUM for erection of up to 53 houses to include open space and details relating to access.

Conor Gallagher explained that the application included a clause for a commuted sum of £310,000 towards off-site affordable homes provision and two bed homes below the national average cost.

The Committee had no questions.

Cllr Bill Hunt proposed and Cllr Martin Goodearl seconded that the application be refused, as recommended by the officer. A vote was taken and the Committee unanimously

resolved:

to **refuse** the application for the reasons laid out in the report.

9. 25/00966/VAR – Land Near Hill Farm, Reach

This item was discussed before agenda item 7. Olivia Akroyd, Planning Officer, presented this report (AB10, previously circulated), which sought to vary condition 11 (width of access) of previously approved 18/01397/OUT for demolition of existing agricultural buildings, construction of two detached bungalows, associated parking and infrastructure.

The following statement from Ben Elvin, on behalf of the applicant, was read out by the Senior Democratic Services Officer:

“This written submission is made in support of the officer recommendation to approve application 25/00966/VAR, which seeks to vary Condition 11 of outline planning permission 18/01397/OUT by reducing the minimum width of the access track from 5 metres to 3.5 metres.

“The two dwellings permitted under this consent are nearing completion. Indeed, one is now occupied. During construction, it became apparent that the earth banks flanking the existing Byway - which would need to be removed to achieve the original 5-metre width - provide critical structural support to the historic outbuildings of Hill Farm immediately adjacent to the access. Removal of those banks risks undermining the shallow foundations of those buildings, several of which are already in a fragile condition. As such, this request to vary the condition is not simply a commercially convenient change of mind. It is a genuine structural constraint identified on site, evidenced by a Structural Inspection Report prepared by J P Chick & Partners Ltd. The report confirms that widening to 5 metres would undermine Buildings 1 and 2 - the structures closest to Fair Green - and that vehicular surcharging from a wider road would place further loading on the walls and foundations of Buildings 2, 3 and 4, where level differences of up to 1.77 metres exist. In simple terms, there are reasons for seeking the variation of the condition that go well beyond a desire, and which arise from a sound understanding of the technical issues that have resulted during the physical process of construction that were not recognised at the time of the original permission being sought.

“The revised width of 3.5 metres has been assessed in a Highway Technical Note prepared by Civilistix. The note demonstrates that the access continues to comply with the visibility splay requirements set out in the Manual for Streets (2.4m x 43m for a 30mph road), and swept path analysis confirms that emergency vehicles including fire tenders can safely navigate the Byway. The Local Highway Authority has reviewed this information and raises no objection. It acknowledges that whilst two vehicles cannot pass simultaneously within the Byway, the forward visibility available means drivers can observe the Byway before entering and wait safely on Fair Green if necessary. Given that the access serves only two dwellings, the LHA considers the proposal would not result in any significant adverse impact on the public highway. The NPPF is clear that development should only be refused on highway grounds where impacts would be unacceptable or severe - that threshold is not met here.

“The outbuildings of Hill Farm are curtilage-listed structures forming part of the Grade II listed Hill Farmhouse. The Council's Conservation Officer and the County Archaeology Team both support the proposed variation precisely because maintaining the earth banks - and keeping the access as narrow as feasible - protects the structural integrity of these designated heritage assets. The NPPF requires great weight to be given to the conservation of designated heritage assets, and the proposed variation actively serves that objective.

“Every technical and statutory consultee - the Local Highway Authority, the Conservation Officer, the County Archaeology Team, the Ecologist, the Waste Strategy Team and the Definitive Map Officer - has either raised no objection or actively supported the variation.

“The concerns raised by the Parish Council and Ward Councillor are noted and understood, but the LHA as the relevant highway expert has addressed those concerns on their merits and found the proposal acceptable.

“In summary, this variation is sought because the original condition cannot safely be complied with. The reduced width satisfies the relevant highway safety standards, has been confirmed acceptable by the Local Highway Authority, and protects listed heritage assets. The recommendation to approve this application is well-founded, and Members are respectfully invited to support it.”

The following statement from the neighbour Hannah Jackson, was read out by the Senior Democratic Services Officer:

“I speak as the intended occupier and beneficiary associated with plot 1, and therefore I am directly affected by the completion and compliance issues relating to this development.

“I wish to make clear that my concern has never been opposition to a reasonable solution regarding the access width itself. I recognise the heritage and structural concerns identified in the officer report.

“However, I do wish to highlight the importance of ensuring that the remaining planning conditions are properly complied with and completed. The committee

report appears to confirm that this application relates only to varying the width requirement, and that the requirement for the access to be metalled to County Council specification remains in force. I believe it is important that this distinction remains clear.

“I should also make clear that I do not have direct control over how these planning conditions are implemented or discharged, as those matters are being managed by the trustees and applicants rather than myself. As the future occupier of plot 1, I therefore rely upon the council to ensure that these conditions are properly monitored, enforced and completed.

“I also note that the report acknowledges that one dwelling is already occupied, despite the original condition requiring the access works to be completed prior to first occupation.

“Given the lengthy history of this matter, and given that future occupation of plot 1 remains linked to completion of these works, I would respectfully ask the committee to ensure that:

- the revised conditions remain enforceable;
- the required access works are completed within the stated timeframe; and
- the remaining planning obligations and conditions associated with the development are properly monitored, verified and formally discharged where required through to completion.

My intention is not to obstruct the process, but to ensure that the development is ultimately completed lawfully, consistently and fairly in accordance with the planning permissions and conditions.”

Officers were invited to make any additional comments.

The Planning Officer stated that that outline conditions were listed in appendix 1 and condition 2 took the occupation of a plot into account.

Councillors were invited to ask questions to officers.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, the Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager acknowledged Cllr Horgan’s concerns regarding access of Fire and Rescue vehicles to the site. However, he advised that the Committee should not consider matters controlled by other building regulations and legislation. Building control had signed off the plans. He added that there had been no objection from the Highways Authority to the proposed application.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, the Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager explained that his concerns regarding the sturdiness of the nearby Grade 2 listed building was outside the remit of the application.

The Committee moved into debate.

Cllr Keith Horgan explained that he was concerned that Fire and Rescue vehicles would be unable to gain access to the site and so he could not support the application.

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith suggested that a Fire and Rescue vehicle would be able to force access to the site in an emergency. Cllr John Trapp stated that metalling on either side of the road would increase the width to the 3.7 metres required for Fire and Rescue vehicle access.

Cllr Alan Sharp expressed concern regarding the retrospective nature of the application but he supported the officer recommendation to approve it.

Cllr Bill Hunt proposed and Cllr Lucius Vellacott seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and with 7 votes in favour, 1 against and 2 abstentions

it was resolved:

To **approve** the application because the approved variation to the wording of condition 11 which seeks to amend the width of the access track is not considered to result in significant and demonstrable harm to highway safety. Furthermore, it is considered that it has been adequately justified that the widening of the access as previously agreed could not be achieved without risking the structural integrity of the Grade II Curtilage Listed Building at Hill Farm to the north west, and national planning policy requires that “when considering the impact of a proposed development on the significance of a designated heritage asset, great weight should be given to the asset’s conservation” (NPPF, Paragraph 212).

10. 25/01223/RMM – Saxon Business Park, Littleport

The Planning Officer, Olivia Akroyd, presented this report, (AB11, previously circulated) regarding a reserved matters application seeking approval of appearance, landscaping, layout and scale for 197 dwellings and 20 self-build plots pursuant to hybrid planning permission 20/01238/FUM (as varied by 20/01238/NMAA and 20/01238/NMAB) Phase 2. It was noted that Members had an update sheet, amending the proposed conditions.

Jessica Groome, made the following statement on behalf of the applicant:

“My name is Jessica Groome, Senior Planner for Barratt David Wilson Homes Anglia. Thank you for the opportunity to speak today in support of the Officer’s recommendation for approval. The officer’s report and presentation are both very comprehensive and so I will focus only on a few key points.

“At Barratt David Wilson, we pride ourselves on building high quality homes and place customer satisfaction at the heart of everything we do. This commitment is reflected in our recent award of 5 stars from the Home Builders Federation for a record 17 years running.

“Our success is rooted in a comprehensive and thoughtful approach to design and planning. This enables us to bring forward schemes that reflect local need

and deliver on quality and we are confident that this is what has been achieved with the application before you today.

“Turning to the application, the site is allocated for residential development in the adopted Local Plan and already benefits from Outline Planning Permission, where the principle of Development was firmly established. This Reserved Matters for Phase 2 delivers 197 high-quality homes and 20 self-build plots, providing a good mix of house types and sizes and making a meaningful contribution to local housing supply.

“The quantum and mix of the affordable housing has been verified by a viability review, in line with the S106 agreement linked to the outline permission. The Council’s Strategic Housing Team supports the provision of 20% affordable housing equating to 43 dwellings, which will deliver a balanced mix and help meet identified needs both locally and across the district.

“The design has been informed by the principles established in Phase 1 which we understand has been well received. This ensures cohesion between the two phases, in the interests of good place-making.

“In preparing this application, we have engaged extensively with the Council, and I would like to thank officers for their collaborative approach, which has undoubtedly added a lot of value to the proposals. These have also been informed by feedback received through the conversations with Littleport Town Council and other key consultees. This process has helped shape the application before you today, resulting in several refinements, including the introduction of bay windows and amendments to parking layouts and corner plots.

“The development is supported by a comprehensive landscape strategy, with a central area of public open space and an additional play area complementing the 3 to be provided in Phase 1.

“We are committed to building energy efficient homes, all designed to achieve an EPC rating of B or above. A combination of solar panels, energy efficiency measures and responsible resource management will reduce carbon emissions and ensure that sustainability is embedded throughout the development.

“All homes have been designed using a fabric-first approach optimising insulation, airtightness and natural ventilation. Water efficiency measures will ensure consumption levels remain well below building regulation requirements. In addition, all homes will benefit from their own dedicated electric vehicle charging point or access to EV capable parking alongside a Full Travel Plan to further promote sustainable modes of travel.

“Finally, whilst these matters do not form part of today’s application, we are aware of concerns raised by the Town Council regarding access via Woodfen Road, and I would like to clarify and hopefully provide some reassurance.

“Access to the site is via the new roundabout off the A10 only, and there is no vehicular connectivity through the development to or from Woodfen Road. The 20 Self-Build plots do have access from Woodfen Road; however, these are unlikely to come forward for a further two to three years due to the required marketing period. By that time, the S278 highway improvement works along Woodfen Road will be in place.

“Our technical team has been working closely with Cambridgeshire County Council Highways and the detailed technical drawings for Woodfen Road have now been agreed as acceptable. The remaining actions primarily relate to the S278 legal agreement and largely sit with the Highway Authority.

“In the meantime, we remain committed to minimising disruption as far as possible and are actively exploring options for the provision of a temporary footpath to ensure safe pedestrian access to and from Woodfen Road until the final works have been completed.

“As noted in the Officer’s report, the Highways Authority reviewed the proposals and raised no objections at the time of assessing the offsite works as part of the hybrid application.

“In summary, this is a policy-compliant, landscape-led, sustainable development that responds to local needs and national priorities. There are no objections from Statutory Consultees. It delivers much needed homes and community benefits on an allocated site in a way that respects the site context.

“As we have heard, there are no planning reasons as to why planning permission should not be granted. I therefore respectfully ask that you approve this application in line with your officer’s recommendation.

“I thank you again for your time and we’d be pleased to answer any questions.”

Members were invited to ask questions to Jessica Groome.

In reply to Cllr Martin Goodearl, Jessica Groome explained that the first occupation had taken place a week ago. The Section 106 payment to the County Council for a bus stop would be paid this week. The proposed traffic calming measures for Woodfen Road had been approved by the Highways Authority. Cllr Goodearl stated that the speed limit was 60mph and this should be reduced.

In reply to Cllr Christine Whelan, Jessica Groome explained that three play areas would be delivered in Phase 1, the plans had not yet been finalised and would be informed by advice from officers. Cllr Christine Colbert hoped that there would be a sensory area in the play area.

In reply to Cllr Christine Whelan, Jessica Groome explained that mitigation procedures were in place to control the dust caused by soil removal.

In reply to both Cllr Bill Hunt and Cllr Keith Horgan, Jessica Groome stated that the site was viable, the affordable homes would be built to the same standard as market homes and there was no need to make additional savings during construction.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, Jessica Groome noted his concerns regarding the narrowness of the road leading to self-build plots, especially for bin lorries, but explained that the Highway's Authority had approved the plans.

Officers were invited to make comments.

Yole Medeiros, Major Projects Officer, stated that the speed limit on Woodfen Road was not part of this application and would require a Section 278 agreement. The Section 106 Agreement would ensure play equipment in phase 1 and phase 2, which would include different play equipment for different ages. There were four access points to self-build homes, which had been agreed with the outline planning permission.

The Committee were invited to ask questions to officers.

In reply to Cllr Lucius Vellacott, the Major Projects Officer confirmed that the forms of affordable housing in the application complied with the Council's policies.

In reply to Cllr Martin Goodearl, the Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager explained that the Council had no control over arrangement that the County Council had with the developer over the payment of the Section 106 funds to build the bus stop.

In reply to Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith, the Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager stated that the internal furnishing of the affordable homes was not a matter for the Committee but these houses would be built to the same standards as the market homes. The Major Projects Officer added that the layout of the affordable homes would meet the same national standards.

The Committee moved into debate.

Cllr Martin Goodearl stated that the proposed calming measures on Woodfen Road had allayed his fears regarding road safety. He proposed that the Committee agree the application in line with the officer's recommendation. Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith seconded this proposal.

Cllr Alan Sharp accepted that the concerns raised by the Committee were outside the remit of the application, which he supported.

Cllr Christine Whelan suggested that there should be an additional condition on dust control during development. Cllr Martin Goodearl assured the Committee that he lived adjacent to the site and the developer looked after it properly. The Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager stated that

ensuring dust from the site was controlled was a condition that would be monitored.

Cllr Martin Goodearl proposed and Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith seconded that the application be approved, with the conditions listed above. A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed

to resolve:

To **approve** the application subject to the recommended planning conditions set out in Appendix 2 (as amended in the update sheet), for the following reason:

the proposals form the reserved matters details for the second phase of the development following outline consent ref.: 20/01238/FUM, aligning with this consent, and in the absence of significant adverse impacts in terms of visual and residential amenity, highway safety and all other relevant material planning considerations.

11. 26/00032/FUL – Willow Cottage, Upend

Charlotte Sage, Planning Officer, presented this report (AB12, previously circulated) on the erection of stables and associated stores and wash bay. Construction of a fenced outdoor arena with secure gated entrances and associated works. Installation of a surface water drainage grid, associated infrastructure, and solar lighting and creation of a new vehicle access with a gate.

Simon Davies made the following statement, as an objector:

“My name is Simon Davies. I live at Walnut Tree Cottage, which is across the road from the application site.

“The majority of residents strongly object to this application, demonstrated by the number of objections submitted and the number of residents here today.

“Why is Upend a conservation area? Upend is characterised by a beautiful and unchanging street scene of historic buildings, trees, high hedges, green space, tranquillity and dark skies. The residents chose to and enjoy living here for all of these reasons.

“We do not object to the applicant keeping a horse on their paddock and building stables of an appropriate scale, but we do object strongly to this proposal.

“The site in question is right in the very heart of the hamlet, surrounded by houses, and is effectively the village green.

“The proposal is to build a large floodlit arena, with permission to use the floodlights for 15 hours per day, between 6am to 9pm, every day. Even with low-spill lights you would be approving a huge glowing box of light right in the centre of a dark village. If the lighting is bright enough to safely ride a horse, there is no way this is not creating significant light pollution.

“There are no conditions to prevent music playing. We requested a condition and were ignored. A muck heap has been sited as close as possible to my house, which will smell. We requested relocation and were ignored. This proposal is not compliant with Policy ENV9 which requires all development proposals to minimise light and noise pollution. This proposal is not compliant with Policy ENV 1 which states any permission must protect the Nocturnal character of rural areas from light pollution. This proposal is not compliant with Policy EMP5 which 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 proposal is to build a stable block 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. The stable block is larger than most houses in Upend. Both the arena and stable block are similar in size to those found in a commercial setting. The stable block and arena are at the top of the sloping site, with floodlights on 5m poles. It will be highly visible, prominent location in the heart of the village, especially in winter when there are no leaves on the trees and a new entrance is created.

“This proposal is not compliant with Policy EMP5 which requires that new buildings for horse-related activities including stables should be no larger than is essential. This proposal is not compliant with Policy EMP5 all requires the development is not sited in a prominent or isolated location away from existing buildings. The proposed stable block is larger than essential for a domestic setting and sited in a prominent position.

“Finally, this proposal neither preserves or enhances the character and appearance of the Upend conservation area and the impact has not been adequately assessed by the conservation officer or the planning officer. The proposed development harms the character and appearance of Upend. Significant Engineering works are planned as large areas of the existing sloping site need to be excavated and levelled for the stables and arena. There are no details on final levels. Unwanted soil will be used to create a ridge that spans the whole paddock, but there is no detail on this. Therefore, the impact on the conservation area cannot have been assessed. A 4m section of historic hedge will be removed to provide a new steep entrance whose appearance is largely undefined. This will have significant impact on the street scene.

“For the reasons just stated we request that this application is refused. However, if the Committee will not refuse the application, we urge you to defer rather than approve, for the following reasons. 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. The

Conservation officer responded within 13 minutes of the initial consultation and in a follow up email stated that listed buildings were his priority.

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

“The application has been subject to 4 sets of amendments, but the cumulative effect of significant engineering changes has not been re-considered. As a result of highways objecting to the original proposal, the applicants have squeezed in a steep 1:6 drive which we do not believe any large vehicle will actually use in reality. No detail on final land levels. No details on the spoil heap that will span the entire paddock, or the resulting drainage impact. Insufficient detail on the proposed entrance design, which could have significant impact on the street scene and the character of the conservation area.

“Policy EMP 5 states ‘Particular regard will be had to the cumulative effect of proposals’. I would like to thank the Committee for listening and hope that you will refuse or at the very least defer.”

Members of the Committee were invited to ask questions.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, Simon Davies explained that the hedges did not screen the site, as it could be viewed via the entrance and the hedges would provide less cover in winter.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, Simon Davies stated that he believed that the flood lights on the arena would cause light pollution despite the claims that these were downward facing.

In reply to Cllr Alan Sharp, Simon Davies stated that the applicants had made no effort to speak to the residents about their planning application.

Dr Sarah Burley made the following statement, as the applicant:

“Good afternoon. I'm Sarah, the applicant, and I live opposite the paddock at Willow Cottage with my partner Mike.

“I'd like to briefly tell you who we are and why this application matters to us. Horses have always been part of my life — alongside a career in neuroscience, never as a business or profession. I met my horse Oscar in Scotland and he's travelled the country with me ever since — most recently to Cambridge, and now hopefully to Upend. He isn't just a hobby. He's been my closest companion through years of living and working away from home, and he matters to us deeply.

“When Mike and I decided to find a permanent home together, we spent two years specifically searching for somewhere Oscar could finally be at home with us. We chose Newmarket because it felt like the right place — one of the most renowned equine places in the world, where horses have shaped the landscape, the economy and the identity of the area for centuries. We found

Willow Cottage, with a paddock already in equestrian use directly opposite the front door. It felt like exactly what we'd been looking for.

"This application is the final step to properly housing Oscar and his companion on our own land, right where we live. So I would like to be clear about what that means in practice — and equally clear about what it does not mean. This is entirely for private use. No commercial activity, no competitions, no events, no amplified noise, no HGV deliveries, no toilet facilities or foul sewage, one horse box parked permanently at Willow Cottage, no vehicles parked on site or on the grass verges.

"The site has been in continuous equestrian use for many years and sits behind an exceptionally high hedgerow that provides a complete year-round screen from the road.

"The stable block has three stalls — two for our horses and one isolation stall, which is a welfare requirement to manage the risk of infectious disease. Connemara ponies require restricted grazing to prevent laminitis — a serious and painful condition caused by excess grass — making the arena essential both as an exercise space when the ground is too hard or wet to ride on, and as a safe turnout area when grass levels need to be managed for their health. The new access exists because without it, our vet, farrier and equestrian services would have to drive across open grazing land from the existing entrance at the far end of the paddock — impractical in wet conditions, and unsafe when horses are turned out. It also ensures the site is fully and safely accessible for a disabled member of my immediate family. Every element is there because it genuinely needs to be — this is confirmed by the British Horse Society as meeting the required standards for horse welfare.

"We've engaged specialists at every stage to make sure we get it right, and every consultee has supported us or raised no objection. Our lighting scheme was designed by equestrian lighting experts and confirmed by your council's own ecologist as fully compliant with ILP 2023 guidance — directional, solar powered, with zero light spill above the horizontal, protecting both the dark skies and any protected species in the boundary trees. Our drainage scheme was reviewed in full by the Lead Local Flood Authority, who raised initial concerns which we addressed with a full day site visit by a Flood Officer on the 23rd April, revised drawings, and a full drainage model — they have formally lifted their objection and are fully supportive. The Highways Authority raised a concern about the access gradient, which we resolved through technical drawings, and they have confirmed full compliance. The Tree Officer, the Conservation Officer and the council's ecologist have all either supported the application or raised no objection.

"Our biodiversity net gain stands at over 25%, more than double the mandatory 10% threshold. We are reseeded the paddock with an enhanced grass mix, planting a wildflower meadow, planting a new native hedgerow, and installing bat boxes, bird boxes and hedgehog habitats. The land will be left in a measurably better state for local wildlife than it is today.

“Throughout this process we have followed the planning officer's advice from our very first pre-application meeting in June 2025. Every concern raised — by statutory consultees, by residents and at the Parish Council meeting we attended — has been responded to with amendments, additional surveys or further evidence. We haven't dismissed concerns, we've addressed them. The planning officer has conducted a thorough and detailed assessment and has recommended approval. Every statutory consultee is either supportive or has no objection. The proposal is fully compliant with Policy EMP5 for equine development, and all other relevant planning policies. We genuinely understand why some of our neighbours have concerns. We share the same hamlet, the same dark skies, and the same appreciation for what makes Upend special. This application has never been about changing that character — it's about allowing us to care properly for our horses on land we own, which has been in equestrian use for many years and will remain so. We respectfully ask the committee to follow the planning officer's recommendation.”

Committee Members were invited to ask questions to Sarah Burley.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, Sarah Burley explained that she would be using the arena for a maximum of 1 hour in the morning and 2 hours in the evening. The lights would not be required in the summer.

In reply to Cllr Lucius Vellacott, Sarah Burley stated that construction could start immediately, providing that the ground was dry. Pat Burley stated that the construction could be completed in 25 days.

In reply to Cllr Bill Hunt, Sarah Burley stated that she had moved to the property last year and she had two horses. She considered that the site only had the capacity for two horses.

In reply to Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith, Sarah Burley understood that the application proposed a change in the area, but it would have little visual impact on the neighbours as the arena was lower than the hedge.

In reply to Cllr John Trapp, Sarah Burley explained that the horse manure would be put in a receptacle with enclosed sides and a roof and so the neighbours should not be affected by odours and the lights had zero up spill.

In reply to Cllr Alan Sharp, Pat Burley explained that she had spoken to the clerk of the Parish Council about the application. Ad hoc conversations had been had with the neighbours.

In reply to Cllr Christine Colbert, Sarah Burley stated that the arena would not be used for dressage with accompanying music. It would only be used for exercising her horse.

Comments were invited from officers.

The Planning Officers stated that according to the British Horse Standards the site was only suitable for two horses.

The Committee moved into debate.

Cllr Alan Sharp stated that in his view the development would cause some peripheral light pollution. He expressed concerns about the removal of the hedge and considered that the gradient of the slope to access the site was too steep. He could not support the 15 hours a day of use of the arena, with lights and so he proposed that the Committee reject the application as it contravened policy EMP 5, due to a negative accumulation on the area and EMP 9 due to the light pollution. This proposal did not have a seconder and so it fell.

Cllr Alan Sharp suggested that a condition should be amended to restrict use of the lights from 6 pm to 9 pm to 5 pm to 8 pm. This amendment was not supported, as it was seen as too inflexible for the applicant and that the noise and light resulting from the development would be minimal.

Cllr John Trapp stated that the visual impact of the site was mitigated by the hedge, the access slope was on a gradient acceptable for a wheelchair. He proposed that the Committee agree the application, in line with the officer's recommendations. Cllr Bill Hunt stated that he considered the application to be compatible with the area and so he seconded this proposal.

Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith stated that the condition allowing 15 hours of use allowed the applicant a reasonable degree of flexibility.

Cllr John Trapp proposed and Cllr Bill Hunt seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and with 9 votes in favour, 1 against and 0 abstentions

it was resolved:

To **approve** the application subject to the recommended planning conditions set out in Appendix 1, for the following reason(s):

- a. The principle of constructing stables, an outdoor arena and associated works in this location is considered to be acceptable by virtue of compliance with Policy EMP 5.
- b. The proposals is not considered to result in a detrimental impact to the character and appearance of the Conservation Area or wider rural character of Upend.
- c. The proposal is not considered to create detrimental impacts to residential amenity.
- d. The proposal is considered to satisfy all other material planning considerations.

12. EXT/00008/26 – Land between Burwell & Balsham

The Major Projects Officer, Yole Medeiros, presented this report (AB13, previously circulated) on the Council's response to the Development Consult Order relating to Kingways Solar Farm.

In reply to Cllr Keith Horgan, the Major Projects Officer explained that if the Planning Inspector agreed with the Council's submission, the application may have to be resubmitted or the application could be rejected. The Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager reported that this was unlikely but it was important for the Council to register its opposition to the application early in the process.

In reply to Cllr Alan Sharp, the Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager explained that the Planning Inspectorate was responsible for the timescales, but if these allowed, the matter would come back to the Committee. Members and the three relevant parish clerks would be kept updated on this matter.

Cllr Bill Hunt proposed and Cllr Keith Horgan seconded the recommendations in the report. A vote was taken and it was unanimously agreed

to resolve to:

- a. Approve ECDC's draft response (Appendix 1), stating that the Applicants to the Development Consent Order, Kingsway Solar Farm Limited, have complied with Sections 42 and 48, however have not complied with Section 47 of the Planning Act 2008, for the reasons set out in the proforma;
- b. Delegate authority to the Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager to carry out minor amendments to the response post-committee decision if required; and
- c. Delegate authority to the Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager to submit the response on behalf of ECDC.

13. Planning Performance Report April 2026

This item was deferred until the next meeting.

The meeting concluded at 7:41 pm.

Chair.....

Date.....