



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 5 February 2025

Present:

Cllr Chika Akinwale
Cllr Christine Ambrose Smith
Cllr David Brown (Vice Chair)
Cllr Lavinia Edwards
Cllr Martin Goodearl
Cllr Keith Horgan
Cllr Bill Hunt (Chair)
Cllr James Lay
Cllr John Trapp
Cllr Ross Trent
Cllr Gareth Wilson

Officers:

Patrick Adams – Senior Democratic Services Officer
Harmeet Minhas – Senior Planning Officer
Dan Smith – Planning Team Leader
Angela Tyrrell – Senior Legal Assistant

In attendance:

Steve Ripley - Applicant

One other member of the public

ECDC Comms

62. Apologies and substitutions

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Alan Sharp and Cllr Christine Whelan.

Cllr Keith Horgan was attending as a substitute for Cllr Sharp.

63. Declarations of interest

None

64. Minutes

It was noted that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15th January 2025 would be received at the next meeting on 5th March 2025.

65. Chair's announcements

The Chair announced that

- Due to unforeseen circumstances, this meeting would not be livestreamed.
- In the future, planning reasons should be provided for any call-ins for a decision, to ensure that they are considered by this Committee.

66. 24/00373/FUM – Land North of Padro House, Cambridge Road, Stretham, Cambridgeshire

Harmmeet Minhas, Senior Planning Officer, presented a report (Z133, previously circulated) recommending approval for the construction of a new Anaerobic Digestion Plant on land north of Padro House on Cambridge Road, Stretham.

The Senior Planning Officer provided an overview of the proposal and showed associated photographs and site plans.

The Chair invited Members to ask questions to the applicant Steve Ridley.

Councillor Martin Goodearl asked how many Heavy Goods Vehicles currently served the site and how waste would be disposed of. Steve Ridley replied that currently 15-30 Heavy Goods Vehicles visited the site, which would increase by 8 to 12 visits if the application was approved. He explained that there was no waste as the by-products were all collected and resold.

Councillor James Lay expressed concern regarding the lack of screening on the west of the site. Steve Ripley explained that additional trees would be planted and replaced if necessary. This not only provided screening of the site, it was also good for security.

Councillor Christine Ambrose Smith asked how much odour would be given off by the plant. Steve Ridley replied that the work on the site was a sealed process and that odour management checks would be carried out regularly.

Councillor John Trapp asked how straw bales would be moved onto the site. Steve Ridley replied that the straw bales would be transported using a sealed trailer. Some straw would be transported from Mepal.

Councillor Gareth Wilson asked for assurances that Heavy Goods Vehicles would not be driving through the villages of Wilburton and Haddenham whilst driving to and from the site. Steve Ridley explained that the vehicles would remain on the A10 which was more fuel efficient and safer. Drivers who went through one of the surrounding villages could expect to be reprimanded.

Councillor Chika Akinwale asked whether there would be any impact on the foul water drainage. Steve Ridley explained that there would be no impact on the foul water drainage, as the site was not connected to the system and had a separate septic tank.

Councillor Keith Horgan asked if the slip road of the A10 was privately owned. Steve Ridley replied that he believed that the road was publicly owned, although his company was prepared to repair the pot holes, as they had done this in the past. The Chair, Councillor Bill Hunt, asked about road marking. Steve Ridley replied that he was prepared to engage a company which could carry out this work to Highways standard.

Councillor John Trapp expressed concern that vehicles leaving the site would have to cross a busy lane of traffic if they wished to go north. Steve Ridley replied that vehicles currently left the site and travelled north and south without difficulty.

The Chair thanked Steve Ripley for his replies and welcomed comments from officers.

Councillor James Lay asked if an additional roundabout could be considered. Dan Smith, Planning Team Leader, advised that the Local Highways Authority considered the junction to be safe and that it was unlikely that a roundabout would be installed for such a limited increase in traffic.

Councillor John Trapp reported that on the aerial view plan, two of the towers looked larger than the four others, whilst the elevation view appeared to show no difference in size. It was agreed that whilst this matter should be investigated after the meeting, it made no material difference to the assessment of the application and if approval was given, officers would ensure any errors on plans were corrected before issuing a permission.

The Chair invited debate.

Councillor James Lay suggested that the application was essentially an extension of the existing site and so he supported the recommendation in the report to approve it.

Councillor Keith Horgan expressed his support for the application, as the site appeared to be well run and would be monitored by the Environment Agency.

Councillor Gareth Wilson stated that having received assurance from the applicant that delivery vehicles would not be driving through the surrounding villages, he would be supporting the application.

Councillor David Brown, Vice Chair, stated that he was reluctant to support an application that could add traffic to the surrounding villages' roads, as the number of complaints he received from villagers indicated that this was a growing problem.

Councillor John Trapp supported the application in principle, but he expressed concern about the increase in traffic and suggested that it would be preferable to have a number of smaller sites instead of one big site.

The Chair expressed his support for the application. He felt reassured by the applicant's guarantee that delivery vehicles would not be driving through the villages of Stretham, Wilburton and Haddenham and that work on drawing white lines on the junction would commence before construction work started.

Following up on an earlier question, Harmeet Minhas, Senior Planning Officer, confirmed that it was condition 4 regarding contamination that had been requested by the Environment Agency. He noted that in the light of the Committee's comments, condition 13 would be reworded so that it required that the highway be marked prior to any construction. It was also noted that conditions 18 and 19 had been added, as detailed in the published Update Sheet and that condition 13 had been amended to remove the words "and vehicle tracking".

Councillor Christine Ambrose proposed and Councillor Chika Akinwale seconded the recommendation in the report, as amended. A vote was taken and

It was resolved with 10 votes in favour, 0 votes against and 1 abstention:

That planning application ref 24/00373/FUM be **Approved**, subject to the conditions recommended in the report Z133 and the Update Sheet, with a further amendment to condition 13 that the road remarking will take place before the commencement of the development.

67. Planning performance reports – December 2024

Dan Smith, Planning Team Leader, presented a report (Z134, previously circulated) summarising the performance of the Planning Department in December 2024.

The Planning Team Leader amended the numbers in the "Determined on time (%)" row for Minor from 89% to 94% and for DIS/NMA from 31% to 69%. Two valid appeals had been received, not four. The number of determinations should be 120 and not 128.

Performance on validations had dipped slightly in December due to the Christmas holidays, with 83% of applications being validated within 5 working days compared to an internal target of 85%. This had now improved.

The Planning Team Leader explained that an application on Northfield Road, Soham had been appealed, a hearing had taken place on 14th January and the Inspector's decision had now been received. Whilst the inspector had

quashed the enforcement notice and allowed the appeal, the result had been the issuing of a new permission with a new condition being added to the property that restricted it to rural workers. The inspector had agreed with the Council that that the site was not in a sustainable location for new market housing and that the marketing, which was a key requirement of the relevant policy, had not been carried out. Officers were satisfied with this outcome, although statistically it would go down as a loss.

The Planning Team Leader reported that Technical Support Officer, Wendy Hislop had retired in January after 25 years of service and Service Development and Technical Support Team Leader, Lucy Flintham, had left the department after 16 years and had moved to the role of Community Infrastructure Manager in the Community directorate. Both officers would be much missed and had made significant contributions to the high performance of the Technical Support Team which was recently described in an external review as being “a support team that would be the envy of most Planning Services in the country”. The Planning Team Leader thanked both Wendy and Lucy for their long service and hard work in establishing a support team with an excellent reputation. The Chair thanked the officers for their long service and contribution to the department.

In response to a query from Cllr Keith Horgan, the Planning Team Leader explained that the nationally set timescales for determining applications varied, usually being either 8 or 13 weeks. Extensions of time were used in order to allow applicants to bring their applications up to an acceptable standard in line with the Council’s negotiation protocol. Some applications remained undetermined for a long period of time. Cllr Keith Horgan asked whether additional information could be provided on the performance report, for example, how many applications remained undetermined after six months and how many after a year. The Planning Team Leader agreed to discuss this matter with the Strategic Planning and Development Management Manager.

It was resolved unanimously:

That the Planning Performance Report for December 2024 be noted.

The meeting concluded at 15:20pm.

Chair.....

Date.....