

## **NORTH HERTFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL**

### **PLANNING CONTROL COMMITTEE**

**MEETING HELD IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBER, DISTRICT COUNCIL OFFICES,  
LETCWORTH GARDEN CITY, SG6 3JF  
ON THURSDAY, 18TH SEPTEMBER, 2025 AT 7.00 PM**

### **MINUTES**

**Present:** *Councillors: Nigel Mason (Chair), Emma Fernandes (Vice-Chair), Clare Billing, Ruth Brown, Val Bryant, Ian Mantle, Caroline McDonnell, Louise Peace, Martin Prescott, Tom Tyson, Jon Clayden and Mick Debenham.*

**In Attendance:** *Amy Cantrill (Trainee Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer), Faith Churchill (Democratic Services Apprentice), Sam Dicocco (Principal Planning Officer), Susan Le Dain (Committee, Member and Scrutiny Officer) and Stephen Reid (Locum Planning Lawyer).*

**Also Present:** *At the commencement of the meeting approximately twelve members of the public, including registered speakers.*

#### **54 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

*Audio recording – 1 minute 33 seconds*

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors David Winstanley, and Bryony May.

Having given due notice Councillor Mick Debenham substituted for Councillor Winstanley and Councillor Jon Clayden substituted for Councillor May.

#### **55 MINUTES - 21 AUGUST 2025**

*Audio Recording – 2 minutes 8 seconds*

Councillor Nigel Mason, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Ian Mantle seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That the Minutes of the Meeting of the Committee held on 21 August 2025 be approved as a true record of the proceedings and be signed by the Chair.

#### **56 NOTIFICATION OF OTHER BUSINESS**

*Audio recording – 2 minutes 51 seconds*

There was no other business notified.

#### **57 CHAIR'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

*Audio recording – 2 minutes 56 seconds*

(1) The Chair advised that, in accordance with Council Policy, the meeting would be recorded.

- (2) The Chair drew attention to the item on the agenda front pages regarding Declarations of Interest and reminded Members that, in line with the Code of Conduct, any Declarations of Interest needed to be declared immediately prior to the item in question.
- (3) The Chair clarified matters for the registered speakers.
- (4) The Chair confirmed the procedure for moving to debate on an item.
- (5) The Chair advised that Section 4.8.23(a) of the Constitution applied to the meeting.
- (6) The Chair confirmed the cut off procedure should the meeting proceed at length.

## **58 PUBLIC PARTICIPATION**

*Audio recording – 5 minutes 39 seconds*

The Chair confirmed that the registered speakers were in attendance.

## **59 24/02758/FP GUYSFIELD RESIDENTIAL HOME , WILLIAN ROAD, LETCHWORTH GARDEN CITY, HERTFORDSHIRE, SG6 2AB**

*Audio recording – 6 minutes 35 seconds*

The Principal Planning Officer presented an update and highlighted that:

- Hertfordshire County Council Growth and Infrastructure Unit had confirmed that there was no requirement for a Section 106 (S106) contribution.
- Since publication of the agenda one of the public responses had changed from neutral to an objection, meaning there were 10 Public objections in total.
- In paragraph 5.18.4, the wording should be amended to 'moderate' rather than a 'neutral' impact.
- The condition '10' should have the word 'The' at the start of it.

The Principal Planning Officer then presented the report in respect of Application 24/02758/FP supported by a visual presentation consisting of plans and photographs.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Nigel Mason
- Councillor Clare Billing
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Ian Mantle
- Councillor Louise Peace
- Councillor Jon Clayden

In response to questions, the Principal Planning Officer advised that:

- Two of the Category B trees would be felled, their location was indicated to the Committee, and that the Category B tree at the front of the property was being retained.
- Clarified the definition of Category B trees and stated that to replace the 14 trees to be felled 96 would be planted.
- The extension originally built in the 1980s was not fit for purpose due to updates in patient care and technology.
- The land was categorised as green belt but was specified in the report as grey belt as it fitted the criteria due to the specific need for care home beds.

- The replacement extension would reflect the colour of the original building but with modern high-quality materials.
- Use class C2 was an independent living facility and use class C3 is a independent residential home, which can provide for people with care needs.
- There would be 2 lifts in the building providing access to all bedrooms.

*N.B. Councillor Tom Tyson entered the Chamber at 19:27.*

The Chair invited the first Public Objector, Mr Michael Stoddard to speak against the application. Mr Stoddard thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, and highlighted the following:

- His objection was founded on design guidance published by Letchworth Heritage Foundation and North Hertfordshire District Council (NHDC) Supplementary Planning Guidance (SPG).
- The SPG states that extensions to listed buildings should be designed to respect the existing buildings characteristics.
- The proposed flat roof did not match that of the existing building or any of the surrounding dwellings.
- Any development performed in a conservation area should be to enhance or preserve the area, this proposed extension would not do so.

The Chair thanked Mr Stoddard for his presentation and invited the second Public Objector, Mr Martin Drake to speak against the application. Mr Drake thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, and highlighted the following:

- The planned extension was not in keeping with the existing one.
- The development doubled the size of the existing building, and a large four-story building would overwhelm the beauty of the existing building.
- The plans reminded him of an open aired prison not that of a care home.
- That the area surrounding the building already had traffic issues and that increasing the bedrooms would make the problem worse with additional staff, visitors and emergency services vehicles.
- He believed that the application contradicted the Local Government, Planning and Land Act 1980.

The Chair thanked Mr Drake for his presentation and invited the third Public Objector, Mr Mike Dandy to speak against the application. Mr Dandy thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, and highlighted the following:

- He was residing in one of the residences behind the development.
- The planning permission for the original extension was dependent on planting trees for screening, these trees were now 6 metres tall. He believed retaining these trees should be a condition of this application.
- Replacing these trees with holly would not provide adequate screening in his lifetime.
- He agreed with the development and the need for more care home spaces.

The Chair thanked Mr Drake for his presentation and invited the Agent to the Applicant, Mr Douglas Bond to speak for the application. Mr Bond thanked the Chair for the opportunity and provided the Committee with a verbal presentation, and highlighted the following:

- This proposal had been in development since 2020 and ongoing discussions with NHDC planning team and Letchworth Heritage Foundation had led to amendments making this a plan that both groups now supported.

- The existing building was no longer fit for care purposes, nor was it financially viable therefore this development was overdue.
- The planned development would add an extra 20 care beds for the district to use and create jobs in the area.
- The NPPF puts the land in the grey belt and the need for these care beds outweighed any negative impact of the development.
- The applicant was happy to discuss options in regard to felling trees which screened neighbouring residence.

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Clare Billing
- Councillor Emma Fernandes
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Louise Peace
- Councillor Jon Clayden

In response to questions, Mr Bond advised that:

- It was confirmed to Mr Dandy before the meeting that the applicant would be willing to keep the trees screening his dwelling.
- If the Committee thought it necessary, the trees screening all three dwellings at the back of the development could remain.
- The development would use heat pumps and insulation to create a more energy efficient building as laid out in page 36 of the published report pack.
- Residents would be relocated to either a home in St. Albans owned by the applicant or somewhere closer if they preferred. Once the construction was completed, they would be invited back. Staff would also be relocated during construction.
- Hertfordshire County Council Highways confirmed that the plan had a big enough turning circle for both fire engines, construction vehicles and waste removal lorries.
- The existing private contractor would continue to provide waste and recycling services when needed again.

The Chair thanked Mr Bond and invited the Principal Planning Officer to respond to any concerns raised.

The Principal Planning Officer advised that the existing trees were not native and were known to create foundation issues due to the roots, stating Holly would be a good replacement which was a native species, would continue to screen residence while providing food for animals in the winter months.

The Locum Planning Lawyer advised the Agent for his client to consider some form of Planning Obligation to cover the retention of trees rather than for that issue to be dealt with as a planning condition.

The Agent gave assurance on the public record that a Planning Obligation was not necessary because the Applicant would not go down the route of an application to vary or strike out a relevant planning condition as to the trees.

Councillor Nigel Mason proposed to grant permission, and this was seconded by Councillor Martin Prescott.

The following Members took part in the debate:

- Councillor Ian Mantle

- Councillor Martin Prescott
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Clare Billing
- Councillor Val Bryant
- Councillor Louise Peace

The following points were made as part of the debate:

- Queried whether a condition should be included to ensure the trees were retained.
- If trees were to be retained it should be for all residents, not just the objector.
- Leylandii were not a native tree species, it would be better for a native tree species to be used as screening.
- Unfortunately, Leylandii trees were used for screening in the past due to the rate in which they developed, which was also problematic.
- St Albans was a considerable distance for existing residents to be relocated especially if family wished to visit them daily.
- The design was compelling, and the energy efficiency seemed to be good.
- There were no planning reasons to reject the application even if the aesthetic design was not desirable.
- A pointed roof would be preferable to a flat one.

Having been proposed and seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That application 24/02758/FP be **GRANTED** planning permission subject to the conditions set out in the report of the Development and Conservation Manager.

*N.B. There was a break in proceedings following this item and the meeting reconvened at 20:38*

**60      24/01444/FP LAND BETWEEN HUNTSRIDGE AND ASHWELL HOUSE 5, HIGH STREET, ASHWELL, HERTFORDSHIRE**

*Audio recording – 1 hour 38 minutes 6 seconds*

The Principal Planning Officer presented an update and highlighted that:

- The published supplementary document related to amended conditions and an additional condition.
- Hertfordshire County Council Countryside and Right of Way Team had written to clarify comments made on 19 August 2024, which were related to the Committee by the Principal Planning Officer.

The Principal Planning Officer then presented the report in respect of Application 24/01444/FP supported by a visual presentation consisting of plans and photographs

The following Members asked questions:

- Councillor Clare Billing
- Councillor Tom Tyson
- Councillor Jon Clayden
- Councillor Ruth Brown
- Councillor Martin Prescott

In response to questions, the Principal Planning Officer advised that:

- That some of the affordable housing was accessible with a 2-bedroom bungalow and a 3-bedroom bungalow with wheelchair access.
- A section of Ashwell Road would be updated to highways standards but not Station Road.
- The Greenspace Service Manager at North Herts Council had stated that Ashwell Parish Council usually maintained greenspaces within the village.
- The Planning Officer stated that a reduced amount of accessible housing was acceptable on balance against all other policies in the Local Plan.
- The applicant already had planning permission for the site which, would not be overturned by this application.
- It was thought that solar panels would not fit the rural design of the houses.
- The previous application was refused by the Planning Control Committee and then approved via appeal. The applicant had decided to continue with this application, which if approved, the applicant could choose which plan to develop.

Councillor Nigel Mason, as Chair, proposed and Councillor Ruth Brown seconded and, following a vote, it was:

**RESOLVED:** That application 25/00949/FP be **GRANTED** planning permission subject to:

- a) The completion of a suitable legal agreement in line with the agreed Heads of Terms.
- b) An agreement to an extension of time to the statutory determination date to allow for a) to occur.
- c) The conditions set out in the report of the Development and Conservation Manager subject to the amendments to conditions 6 and 8, an additional condition and removal of conditions 13 and 14 resulting in renumbering of all subsequent conditions, as detailed in the published supplementary documentation as shown below.

*'Condition 6:*

*Prior to the first occupation of the development hereby permitted the vehicular access shall be completed and thereafter retained as shown on drawing number 190-TA10 rev N (of Transport Note rev D November 2024 by Martin Andrews Consulting Ltd) in accordance with details/specifications to be submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the highway authority. Prior to use appropriate arrangements shall be made for surface water to be intercepted and disposed of separately so that it does not discharge from or onto the highway carriageway.*

*Reason: To ensure satisfactory access into the site and avoid carriage of extraneous material or surface water from or onto the highway in accordance with Policy 5 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).*

*Condition 8:*

*Notwithstanding the details indicated on the submitted drawings, no on-site works shall commence until a detailed scheme for the off-site highway improvement works as indicated on drawing number 190-TA10 rev N (of Transport Note rev D November 2024 by Martin Andrews Consulting Ltd) including surfacing, traffic calming and pedestrian/cycling facilities on Ashwell Street have been submitted to and approved in writing by the Local Planning Authority in consultation with the Highway Authority. B) Implementation / Construction Prior to the first use of the development hereby permitted, the improvement works referred to in part A of this condition shall be completed in accordance with the approved details.*

*Reason: To ensure construction of a satisfactory development and that the highway improvement works are designed to an appropriate standard in the interest of highway safety and amenity and in accordance with Policy 5, 13 and 21 of Hertfordshire's Local Transport Plan (adopted 2018).*

*Condition 24:*

*Prior to the occupation of the development hereby permitted, a fire hydrant shall be installed at no cost to the County Council, or fire and rescue service.*

*Reason: to ensure that there is adequate water supplied available for use in the event of a fire.'*

**61 APPEALS**

*Audio recording – 2 hours 10 minutes 4 seconds*

The Principal Planning Officer provided an update on Planning Appeals and advised that the appeal on 25/00381/FPH had been dismissed.

The meeting closed at 9.13 pm

Chair