

DRAFT

Note: These Minutes will remain DRAFT until approved at the next meeting of the Committee

EASTERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF THE MEETING HELD ON WEDNESDAY 8 APRIL 2026

Councillors Present: Alan Macro (Chairman), Richard Somner (Vice-Chairman), Jeremy Cottam, Geoff Mayes, Justin Pemberton, Clive Taylor and Jane Langford (Substitute) (In place of Ross Mackinnon)

Also Present: Simon Till (Development Control Team Leader), Paul Goddard (Team Leader - Highways Development Control), Anna Hart (Lawyer (Planning)) (Jessica Bailiss (Democratic Services Officer), Emma Nutchey (Principal Planning Officer) and Darius Zarazel (Principal Democratic Services Officer)

Apologies for inability to attend the meeting: Councillor Paul Kander, Councillor Ross Mackinnon and Councillor Vicky Poole

PART I

1. Minutes

The Minutes of the meeting held on 14th January 2026 were approved as a true and correct record and signed by the Chairman.

2. Declarations of Interest

Councillor Alan Macro declared an interest in Agenda Item 4(1) by virtue of the fact that the objector to the application had been his family doctor for many years. He reported that, as his interest was a personal or an other registrable interest, but not a disclosable pecuniary interest, he determined to continue as Chairman of the meeting and to take part in the debate and vote on the matter.

3. Schedule of Planning Applications

(1) 25/00912/FUL at Appletrees, Chapel Row, Reading, RG7 6PB

1. The Committee considered a report (Agenda Item 4(1)) concerning Planning Application 25/009/FUL in respect of the erection of two standalone supported living units, staff facility, elevational external and internal alterations to the existing activities building and conversion to a self-catering unit associated with the existing care facility.
2. Ms Emma Nutchey introduced the report to Members, which took account of all the relevant policy considerations and other material planning considerations. In conclusion the report detailed that the proposal was acceptable in planning terms and officers recommended that the Development Manager be authorised to grant planning permission subject to the conditions outlined in the main report.
3. The Chairman asked Paul Goddard if he had any observations relating to the application and he raised the following points:

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- The proposed two units were expected to generate approximately three to four additional vehicle movements in, and three to four vehicle movements out of the site per day.
 - Concerns regarding the maintenance of the bridleway were acknowledged, however, it was explained that maintenance was covered under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000.
 - The bridleway would continue to be maintained as it was currently, to a standard appropriate to serve existing dwellings and the proposed development.
 - The increase in vehicle movements was not considered sufficient to warrant a highways objection and adequate car parking already existed within the site and was not expected to change. On this basis, highways officers raised no objection to the planning application.
4. In accordance with the Council's Constitution, Mr James Bywater, objector, and Mr James Smith, agent (Ridge and Partners), addressed the Committee on this application.

Objector Representation

5. Mr Bywater addressed the Committee. This representation can be viewed on the recording: [Eastern Area Planning Committee - Recording](#)

Member Questions to the Objector

6. Members asked questions of clarification and were given the following responses:
- The foundations of the bridleway along the section the application referred to was an unmade, stone hoggin surface. It was noted that further along its length the surface became mud, grass and clay. The hard-surfaced section was about two metres wide, allowing access for only one vehicle at a time. Long ruts and potholes regularly formed.
 - It was confirmed that the bridleway was the sole access to the farm at the northern end of the site and continued north to Stanford Dingley. It was explained that while access was mainly by road vehicles, agricultural vehicles including tractors and trailers used the bridleway during hay-making and apple-picking periods.
 - In planning terms, it was felt the proposal represented an excessive increase in the footprint and level of accommodation at Appletrees. The site was described as having evolved gradually from a former fruit farm into supported accommodation for young adults with difficulties. There were no issues with the existing use and a positive relationship had been maintained over many years.

Agent Representation

7. Mr Smith addressed the Committee. This representation can be viewed on the recording: [Eastern Area Planning Committee - Recording](#)

Member Questions to the Applicant/Agent

8. Members asked questions of clarification and were given the following responses:
- Residents were typically aged from approximately 17 up to around 60, with the facility operating as middle-care rather than elderly care.

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- There was an activity room at the northern part of the site and this would be converted as part of the proposed development, to a single living accommodation facility. If the application was approved, the activity space would be provided within the main house and its rear garden. It was expected that there would be the same level of noise at the new activity space location as there was currently.
- Regarding insulation, it was confirmed that the building would be fully sustainable through the use of heat pumps and triple glazing. The pitched roof formed part of the existing building and the flat roof formed part of the proposal with the aim of reducing the profile of the building, which would have a modern, timber-clad, cabin design.
- The two new residential buildings would be constructed on a concrete foundation with raised supports and a small plinth. The buildings would be modular timber structures with vegetated insulation materials and cedar cladding that would weather over time.
- The agent was unable to confirm details of the site's water supply and the Chairman advised that this should be clarified with officers.
- Works had previously been carried out to the bridleway following discussions between local residents and Choice Care. Choice Care had contributed significant funding towards resurfacing works to improve access for all users. It was thought the bridleway was owned by the Lord in the local area. The works had been undertaken at risk rather than with permission, in agreement with those using the access.

Ward Member Representation

9. Councillor Chris Read addressed the Committee. This representation can be viewed on the recording: [Eastern Area Planning Committee - Recording](#)

Member Questions to the Ward Member

10. Members asked questions of clarification and were given the following responses:
 - It was explained that maintenance of the bridleway was typically carried out informally, with residents contributing collectively when the surface deteriorated or became difficult to use, rather than through a regular maintenance fee. It was stated that the most recent maintenance works to the bridleway had been undertaken by the care facility and that the standard of repair was considered reasonable.
 - It was suggested, given the expected increase in vehicle movements, that residents would welcome a planning condition to ensure the care facility maintained the surface of the track to a reasonable standard.
 - Regarding concerns raised about the location of utilities, it was confirmed that the water supply ran via private mains from the road, beneath the track.

Member Questions to Officers

11. Members asked questions of clarification and were given the following responses:
 - Officers advised that they were not aware of any formal complaints regarding vehicle passability on the bridleway, aside from concerns raised in letters of objection. Maintenance of the track would continue to be undertaken by the frontages under existing arrangements, supported by powers under the

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Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000, and it was suggested by Officers that this could not be secured through the planning application.

- In response to questions about the five miles per hour speed limit, it was advised that the local highway authority was unlikely to have imposed such a restriction on a bridleway and that the signage may have been installed by residents. It was noted that lower vehicle speeds would assist in reducing wear on the bridleway and support its ongoing maintenance.

Debate

12. Councillor Justin Pemberton opened the debate by stating that the objections raised were understood and considered valid, particularly concerns about the expansion of a care facility close to neighbouring properties. He considered however that an increase of three or four residents was unlikely to fundamentally change the way the facility operated. He acknowledged that additional residents could bring additional issues but noted that similar objections would likely arise wherever such a facility was located. Drawing on his personal experience as a foster carer, he expressed strong support for the provision of facilities for vulnerable residents and confirmed that he was comfortable with the Officers' recommendation to approve the application.
13. Councillor Jeremy Cotton agreed with some of the points raised but expressed concern about the balance between harm and gain for the local area. He highlighted the fragile condition of the bridleway and considered that even a relatively small increase in traffic could have a significant impact on its surface. He raised concerns about construction traffic and an increase in carers using the access track. He was concerned that the application did not adequately mitigate the impact on the bridleway and local environment and referred to planning policy requirements relating to permanent vehicle access. He expressed concern that local residents could be left to address damage to the track.
14. The Chairman sought clarification from officers on whether the Construction Environmental Management Plan (CEMP) would address potential damage to the bridleway during construction. In response, Officers confirmed that during construction the CEMP would address construction related impacts, including additional impacts on the public right of way and access track. Officers reiterated highways advice that maintenance of rights of way was governed by other legislation and strongly advised against attempting to control such matters through planning conditions.
15. Councillor Richard Somner commented on references to HGV use, noting that he often considered HGVs to include large agricultural vehicles. He suggested that such vehicles had likely been using the track prior to the surrounding development being built. He highlighted the importance of supporting appropriate development in villages and felt that the key consideration was that the condition of the bridleway following development should be no worse than its condition beforehand. He noted that, while historic imagery showed the track in poor condition, more recent works had been undertaken and residents appeared willing to work together to maintain it. He did not consider the proposal to be significantly detrimental and expressed support for the Officers' recommendation.

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- 16. Councillor Pemberton proposed to accept the Officer's recommendation and grant planning permission subject to the conditions listed in the main report. This was seconded by Councillor Somner.
- 17. The Chairman invited Members of the Committee to vote on the proposal by Councillor Pemberton, seconded by Councillor Somner, to grant planning permission. At the vote the motion was carried.

RESOLVED that the Development Manager be authorised to grant planning permission subject to the conditions in the main report.

(The meeting commenced at 6.30 pm and closed at 7.25 pm)

CHAIRMAN

Date of Signature