

PLANNING & REGULATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Monday, 19 January 2026 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 4.48 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Diana Lugova – in the Chair

Councillor Tony Worgan (Deputy Chair)
Councillor Ron Batstone
Councillor Mark Cherry
Councillor Stefan Gawrysiak
Councillor Jenny Hannaby
Councillor Gavin McLauchlan
Councillor Paul Austin Sargent
Councillor Geoff Saul
Councillor Roz Smith
Councillor Ian Snowdon

Other Members in Attendance: Councillor Emma Markham (Agenda Item 5)
Councillor Bethia Thomas (Agenda Item 5)

Officers: Jack Ahier (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Armid Akram (Senior Transport Development Officer), Haidrun Breith (Technical Lead – Landscape and Green Infrastructure), Jennifer Crouch (Principal Solicitor – Regulatory), David Periam (Planning Development Manager), Robin Rogers (Director of Economy and Place).

The Committee considered the matters, reports and recommendations contained or referred to in the agenda for the meeting, together with [a schedule of addenda tabled at the meeting][the following additional documents:] and decided as set out below. Except as insofar as otherwise specified, the reasons for the decisions are contained in the agenda and reports [agenda, reports and schedule/additional documents], copies of which are attached to the signed Minutes.

20/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1/26)

Apologies were received from Cllr Malik, substituted by Cllr Snowdon, and from Cllr McLean.

21/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE BELOW

(Agenda No. 2/26)

Cllr Sargent declared a non-pecuniary interest in respect of Item 5, Land at Former Wicklesham Quarry, Faringdon, SN7 7PH, as he had led scientific field trips to the site in the past.

The Chair noted that she intended to step down from the Chair for Item 6, Land at Thrupp Farm, Radley, Abingdon, Oxfordshire Grid (Ref: SU 51539 97065) and would not participate in the debate or vote on the application. Item 6 would be chaired by the Deputy Chair.

22/26 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

(Agenda No. 3/26)

The minutes of the meeting held on 24 November were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

23/26 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda No. 4/26)

Twenty-three requests to address the Committee on the following agenda items had been received from:

Land at Former Wicklesham Quarry, Faringdon, SN7 7PH

- Cllr Bethia Thomas (Faringdon)
- Cllr Emma Markham (Shrivenham)
- Vale of White Horse District Cllr Katherine Foxhall (Watchfield & Shrivenham)
- Vale of White Horse District Cllr Viral Patel (Watchfield & Shrivenham)
- Faringdon Town Cllr Mike Wise
- Peter Black
- Dr Anna Hoare
- Scott McBeath
- Samantha Gould
- Glen Yarwood
- Andy Benford
- Nick Evans
- Sebastiaan Evans
- Olga Mazur
- Spencer Cooper (Applicant)

Land at Thrupp Farm, Radley, Abingdon, Oxfordshire Grid (Ref: SU 51539 97065)

- Andrew Coker
- Roger Thomas
- Chris Henderson
- Craig Woolhouse
- Richard Dudding
- James Lodge (Applicant)
- Nick Dunn (Applicant's Agent)

24/26 LAND AT FORMER WICKLESHAM QUARRY, FARINGDON, SN7 7PH

(Agenda No. 5/26)

The Chair introduced the item to the meeting and invited the Planning Development Manager to introduce the application, which was an outline flexible planning application for a total of up to (29, 573) sq m GIA of commercial floorspace for Use Classes E(g) i (offices); and/or, E(g)(ii) (research and development); and/or, E(g)(iii) (light industrial); and/ or B2 (general industrial); and/or B8 (storage and distribution); and ancillary uses, with all matters reserved for future determination except for access.

Officers provided updates to the report, outlined below and in the Addenda published:

- Policy 4.5b of the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan remains part of the Development Plan, with references to Core Policy 4 of the Vale of White Horse Neighbourhood Plan 2031 Part 1 not applicable to this application as it was related to housing need.
- The presence of a Geological Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) doesn't necessarily render that development isn't sustainable.
- Natural England had not objected to the application subject to the mitigation outlined in the report, including the submission of a Geological Management Plan and provision for long-term access to geological features, provided for in the suggested Section 106 agreement conditions.
- Any development that may be proposed on adjacent land, including at Lodge Farm, would be subject to separate planning applications and therefore is not a material consideration in relation to this application.

The Planning Development Manager presented maps and photographs of the proposed application site.

The Chair invited speakers to address the Committee.

Councillor Bethia Thomas (County Councillor for Faringdon) raised concerns about the application relating to highways provision and mitigation and landscape impacts, despite the intentions of the application to provide Faringdon with high quality employment. It was important to protect the geology of the area, given it was a SSSI. If the application was to be approved, Councillor Thomas noted she would support further mitigation particularly with respect to highways.

Councillor Emma Markham (County Councillor for Shrivenham) opposed the outline planning application due to its contravention of the Vale of White Horse's Local Plan and its lack of suitability for being a development site; the damage it would do to the SSSI; its negative impact on biodiversity and the congestion it could cause on surrounding roads, including the A420.

Vale of White Horse District Councillor Katherine Foxhall (Watchfield & Shrivenham) noted the conflict that the application posed with the Vale of White Horse Local Plan's

spatial strategy (Core Policy 20), which had seen the former Wicklesham Quarry site been rejected several times. District Councillor Foxhall noted there were alternative sites that could be explored within Faringdon and opposed the planning application being approved.

Vale of White Horse District Councillor Viral Patel (Watchfield & Shrivenham) opposed the application, citing other spaces such as Milton Park, meaning there was not an urgent need for life sciences. District Councillor Patel noted the conflict this application had with Core Policy 32 of the Vale of White Horse Local Plan and the road safety issues this application could cause.

Faringdon Town Councillor Mike Wise supported the application and noted the opportunity for increased employment opportunities for local residents and that the development would provide a safe crossing over the A420, as well as pedestrian and cycle access. Town Councillor Wise stated that the access plans outlined would help support understanding of the geological importance of the site.

Councillor Snowdon asked Town Councillor Wise about the application's compliance with the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan and whether he was speaking on behalf of the Town Council, or as a Town Councillor. He confirmed that Use Class Category E didn't exist in 2016 as it was introduced in 2020, hence why it wasn't included in the Neighbourhood Plan. He reiterated that he was speaking on behalf of Faringdon Town Council.

Councillor Sargent questioned whether this application would lead to greater prospects for residents in Faringdon or if it would lead to further commuting from outside of Faringdon and thus potentially meaning a greater need for housing. He noted that he felt approving the application would attract more people to live in Faringdon and that adequate housing provision was present already, with developments in and around the town under way.

Councillor Hannaby asked if the Town Council undertook any informal consultation of the residents of Faringdon relating to the application. He responded that the Neighbourhood Plan was approved at a referendum by the residents of Faringdon and that the Town Council hadn't undertaken a consultation on this application.

Councillor Gawrysiak asked if the Neighbourhood Plan had been updated since 2016 and if the A420 was safe to cross currently, without a bridge. He clarified that the Neighbourhood Plan hadn't been updated since 2016 and a safe crossing was proposed as part of the application, which did not include a bridge even though the Town Council had advocated for one.

The Deputy Chair asked if the Town Council would support the application in the absence of any high-quality jobs on the site. He responded that the Town Council would not support the application in that instance.

Peter Black spoke in favour of the application as the application would drive innovation and growth that would benefit Faringdon's businesses, noting that the key issues such as traffic, environmental controls and landscaping had been managed through the conditions as set out in the report.

Dr Anna Hoare opposed the application due to the conflict between the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan and the Vale of White Horse Local Plan, noting that the application did not contribute to sustainable development and which had already impacted Faringdon's businesses and residents.

Councillor Gawrysiak asked for a summary of the timeline between the adoption of the Neighbourhood Plan in 2016 and the court ruling in 2017. Dr Hoare responded that the challenge by local people was made immediately after the decision by the District Council to accept the plan, which was in conflict with strategic policies of the Local Plan; but that the High Court was unable to award a remedy as the Neighbourhood Plan had been passed in a referendum.

Councillor Cherry queried the job losses referenced in the statement. Dr Hoare accepted that the town centre had deteriorated, referencing the retail site at Faringdon Business Park which was subsequently not developed for several years.

Scott McBeath, speaking on behalf of Professor Keith Jeffrey, spoke to oppose the application, citing concerns about how the proposal would damage scientific discovery, education and research. He referenced how Wicklesham Quarry was vital in allowing field research on the Faringdon Sponge Gravels, where over 150 fossil species had been identified previously.

The Chair noted Natural England didn't object to this application and asked the speaker if he felt the Geological Management Plan was sufficient for the proposal. He noted that the proposals were not consistent with preserving and enhancing the SSSI for present and future generations for Section 28 authorities.

Councillor Hannaby asked how the quarry had been accessed over the previous 5 years given that it was the period of time when the quarry had been filled in. It was confirmed that there had been no access during that time period.

Samantha Gould spoke in opposition to the application due to it being unsustainable and unplanned, referencing the detrimental impact that the proposals would have on Faringdon's highway networks, particularly on key junctions.

Glen Yarwood, Chair of Little Coxwell Parish Council, spoke to oppose the application due to the impacts on bottlenecks on the A420, concerns over the need for infrastructure upgrades as highlighted by Thames Water and the harm the proposal would cause to the SSSI site.

Andy Benford spoke in opposition to the application due to the biodiversity impacts that this development would have on the SSSI site. The site was an exceptional site and a priority under National Planning Policy, the Biodiversity Action Plan and the Local Plan (Core Policy 46).

Nicholas Evans spoke in favour of approving the application due to the benefits that the proposals would have on Faringdon's businesses, hotels and shops; as well as for the potential future employment opportunities such as apprenticeships for local residents.

Councillor Gawrysiak asked if there were developments within Faringdon's Neighbourhood Plan that had led to housing or retail parks being built. Nicholas Evans responded that in his view, it seemed there were lots of houses being built across the west side of Faringdon.

Councillor Sargent asked how the application would increase business footfall if the amount of newly built houses hadn't already. It was reflected upon that weekends in Faringdon town centre were busy, but that weekdays were quieter, so these proposed jobs would help Faringdon to thrive throughout the week.

Sebastian Evans addressed the Committee and spoke in favour of approving the application, citing the potential economic improvements for Faringdon businesses through proven spending cycles if the development was approved.

Councillor Sargent noted that examples of Milton Park and Harwell Science Park had been mentioned as examples of improvements to Faringdon, but that they had on-site food halls for lunch, for example, which local businesses don't see the benefit of. This was noted, but taking clients out for formal meals, meetings or social gatherings post-work were given as examples of how local businesses could be positively impacted by the proposals.

Olga Mazur spoke in favour of approving the application by highlighting that redevelopment of underused quarries can be beneficial to manage modified land and create well-planned green spaces. The creation of skilled jobs would benefit local residents.

Dan Knight noted that he was the son-in-law of the landowner and spoke in favour of the application, highlighting that the careful management of traffic and highways issues should not be a limiting factor in approving the application. Farming the land was highlighted as not viable due to rising costs and flooded lands, with the proposals outlined seen as sensible.

Spencer Cooper, the applicant, spoke in favour of the Committee approving the application. The applicant highlighted the constraints of electrical power in Oxford and that the Swindon grid, which serves Faringdon, provides an opportunity to help grow life science and technology companies. It was explained that the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan allocated Wicklesham Quarry for development and that this was seen as an opportunity for Faringdon. The applicant noted the support from Faringdon Town Council and referenced how the proposal secures the SSSI, with quarry faces, biodiversity and ecology funded and managed by companies that, in the future, would be based on site. The potential for highly skilled jobs, alongside construction jobs during the building phase, would help to provide greater resilience for Faringdon's local economy.

Councillor McLauchlan asked if any companies were earmarked to be part of this development, if planning approval was given, as it was important to understand the type of companies that could be involved with the development. It was confirmed that no companies had interest in the site before outline planning consent had been

granted, but that the years of work at the site indicated there was the need for sites to facilitate the expansion in this sector.

Councillor Smith queried why companies were not looking at sites on the edge of Faringdon several years ago, which were now retail sites. The applicant stated that the sectors interested in these sites had developed rapidly within the last 7 years in Oxfordshire.

Councillor Batstone questioned whether this site would be turned into a housing development if sufficient businesses could not be found or a data centre, which would have less high-quality jobs. The applicant noted that the electrical grid has the ability for the high technology companies' requirements, which was unique to Faringdon and reiterated that a data centre was not sought under the application.

The Deputy Chair asked the applicant that if the Committee was minded to give planning approval, that there was no control over the types of jobs. The applicant confirmed the application was for flexible planning consent and that the electrical grid situation would favour jobs from high technology companies.

Councillor Batstone questioned how the site would link with Faringdon town centre given that it was separated by the A420. It was confirmed that access and mitigation strategies had been worked upon with Active Travel England and the County Council highways team, to improve traffic flow into Faringdon and provide safe crossings across the A420.

The Chair thanked all public speakers for their contributions and asked Members if they had questions to put to officers, which included:

- Why the landscape officer, who initially objected to the application, now did not have an objection? Officers confirmed that the applicants had responded positively to concerns from officers, resulting in the building height being reduced from 25m to 12m and more space for soft landscaping being secured. This had reduced the landscape and visual impact, meaning that on balance, officers decided that the development could be integrated into the landscape.
- Whether the application was legal, given the differing opinions related to the Local Plan and Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan? Officers confirmed the application was legal. The Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan remained part of the development plan, which meant that the policy stood and the Committee had to consider it against that policy. The site was confirmed to be in the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan (2016), but the land was not designated in the Local Plan in the same way. It was confirmed that District Council officers do not re-designate land that is already designated within neighbourhood plans. The Development Plan was the Local Plan and the Neighbourhood Plan.
- Can the decision taken by the High Court on the Wicklesham Quarry site be taken into account? Officers noted that there was a judicial review of the decision to adopt the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan and the Court declined to interfere with it. The legal officer read out the relevant part of the Court judgment.

- What was the cost of the traffic measures relating to the A420 in the Section 106 agreement? The Travel Plan would be monitored throughout the development process as part of the legal agreement.
- If outline planning approval was approved, would the subsequent planning applications be heard by the District Council or remain with the County Council? Further applications pertaining to this site would return to the County Council. If the application was refused and a completely new application was submitted, it would be submitted to the District Council.
- Why was the bridge removed as an option from accessing the site from Faringdon town centre, given the A420 was one of the most dangerous roads in Oxfordshire? The footway bridge was considered as unviable as it did not meet planning infrastructure tests and the land-take which fell beyond the control of the land owner and the Highways Authority. The signalised toucan crossing was LTN 1/20 compliant and had been subject to a Stage 1 Road Safety Audit, which found no outlying concerns. No recorded incidents were reported near the site access during the reported period (2019-2023), when the assessment began on 9 impacted junctions from Fernham Road to the Coxwell Road mini roundabout.
- Whether the 'buffer zones' around the SSSI and the geological features were sufficient and whether it would be open to the Committee to ask for an increased 'buffer zone'? Geological information was submitted by Oxfordshire Geology Trust, who'd been engaged by the applicant, were content that the geological information was satisfactory. Natural England wanted a 'buffer zone' of 25m but did not object to the application. The total buffer proposed by the applicant was around 21m, including some planting. Officers confirmed it was open to the Committee to ask for an increased 'buffer zone' as a condition if it was felt necessary, but a knock-on effect would be decreased space for landscaping.

During debate, Members considered the implications of the buffer zones and the traffic concerns; crossings on the A420 to the proposed site and the occupation of the site in the future; as well as the importance in maintaining the economic viability and employment opportunities of Faringdon, the Faringdon Neighbourhood Plan and mitigations that protected the geological elements of the site.

The Deputy Chair raised concerns as to whether the proposed Toucan crossing would be safe and if alternatives could be considered. Officers confirmed that a bridge could not be mandated by a condition, but further consideration of the A420 crossing proposals could be looked at.

Councillor Gawrysiak proposed the recommendations as set out below subject to further consideration of satisfactory highway treatments for crossing the A420 by highways officers, with the applicant and planning officers; which would come back to the Chair for consideration and a 25m buffer zone on the SSSI. Councillor Cherry seconded the recommendations.

It is RECOMMENDED that subject to a Traffic Regulation Order to secure the raised island crossing and a Section 106 agreement to cover the matters outlined in Annex 2, planning permission for MW.0151/23 be approved subject to conditions to be determined by the Director of Economy and Place, to include those set out in Annex 1.

RESOLVED: that the Committee approved the recommendation as stated above, subject to further consideration of satisfactory highway treatments for crossing the A420 by highways officers, with the applicant and planning officers; which would come back to the Chair for consideration and a 25m buffer zone on the SSSI, by a majority vote.

25/26 LAND AT THRUPP FARM, RADLEY, ABINGDON, OXFORDSHIRE GRID (REF: SU 51539 97065)

(Agenda No. 6/26)

The Chair, Cllr Diana Lugova, stood down from the Chair before the beginning of this item and the Deputy Chair, Cllr Tony Worgan, took up the Chair.

The Deputy Chair, now in the Chair, proposed that the consideration of agenda item 6 be deferred until the next meeting of the Planning & Regulation Committee on 23rd February 2026, due to the insufficient time remaining to discuss the item.

The Deputy Chair apologised to all those who had come to speak on agenda item 6.

RESOLVED: that the Committee unanimously agreed to defer item 6 to the next meeting of the Planning & Regulation Committee on 23rd February 2026.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing