

PLANNING & REGULATION COMMITTEE

MINUTES of the meeting held on Monday, 13 April 2026 commencing at 2.00 pm and finishing at 4.18 pm

Present:

Voting Members: Councillor Tony Worgan – in the 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

Officers: Jack Ahier (Senior Democratic Services Officer), Matthew Case (Team Leader – Planning Applications), David Mytton (Solicitor), David Periam (Planning Development Manager), Jason Sherwood (Head of Regulatory Planning Enforcement).

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.

31/26 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND TEMPORARY APPOINTMENTS

(Agenda No. 1/26)

Apologies for absence were received from Cllr Diana Lugova, Cllr Saj Malik and Cllr Lesley McLean.

32/26 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST - SEE GUIDANCE NOTE BELOW

(Agenda No. 2/26)

There were none.

33/26 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

(Agenda No. 3/26)

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2026 were approved and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

Officers updated the Committee on correspondence received following the decision of the Committee in January to approve the former Wicklesham Quarry application. Matters raised included alleged misdirection, policy reference errors, the Gunning Principles and consultation issues, all of which officers had comprehensively reviewed. It was confirmed that an incorrect policy reference did not materially affect the decision and that the Secretary of State had declined to call in the application.

Officers further updated the Committee on the decision of the Committee in February to refer the Radley ROMP application for determination by the Secretary of State, confirming that no final decision had been made by the Secretary of State but that the Committee would be informed when the decision was confirmed.

34/26 PETITIONS AND PUBLIC ADDRESS

(Agenda No. 4/26)

Five requests to address the Committee on the following agenda items had been received from:

Item 5: Land Adjacent to Ferris Hill Farm, Sibford Road, Hook Norton, Banbury (OX15 5JY)

- Chris Jarvis (Applicant's Agent)
- James Clarke
- Nathan Matthews (Applicant)
- Tim Lunel
- Nigel Davis (Milcombe Parish Council)

35/26 LAND ADJACENT TO FERRIS HILL FARM, SIBFORD ROAD, HOOK NORTON, BANBURY (OX15 5JY)

(Agenda No. 5/26)

The Chair introduced the item to the meeting and invited officers to introduce the application, which was a part retrospective application for the creation of a development platform, erection of a new building and installation and operation of a Combined Heat and Power Plant along with associated landscape works.

Officers presented maps and photographs of the areas that would be affected by the application.

Officers referenced some further information that had been provided in an addendum, which had been published on the website. Statements of support for the application had been received from Hook Norton Parish Council and several local businesses. The applicant had also provided further information on the heat network and electricity grid connections.

Whilst this was informative, officers confirmed that the extra information did not change their recommendation to the Committee of refusing the planning application as set out in the report.

Members raised several points of clarification on the presentation, before public addresses, including:

- The extent of hedgerow removal and how loss would be mitigated through proposed landscaping and tree planting. Officers confirmed that hedgerow removal would be limited and mitigated through replacement planting and long-term management plans.
- Clarification on the retrospective elements of the application and the planning status of the existing works on the site. Officers confirmed that the development platform had been partially constructed without planning permission. If the Committee was minded to refuse the application, these works would be unauthorised and could be required to be removed.
- The visual and landscape impact of the application, particularly around the proposed building and bunding. Officers noted that the building would be significantly screened from views, particularly with the proposed tree planting and bunding.
- Whether the site should be considered as greenfield land given previous permissions and earthworks. Officers confirmed that the area of expansion should be considered as greenfield land.
- The lighting impacts and connectivity to electricity and heat networks. Officers advised that lighting, noise, hours of operation and waste throughput could be tightly controlled through planning conditions, should permission be granted. Officers also clarified that grid and heat connectivity were not secured at present and would require separate approvals.
- Clarification was sought on the waste hierarchy, including whether operation of the CHP plant could divert recyclable material from higher-value recycling streams, the expected waste throughput, and how the proposal aligned with waste policy objectives. Officers acknowledged that energy recovery sat above landfill but below recycling. Evidence drawn from Environment Agency waste data indicated that a substantial proportion of waste leaving the site was currently recycled elsewhere. Officers advised that it had not been robustly demonstrated that operation of the CHP plant would not divert material from higher-value recycling streams, which formed a core element of the refusal recommendation

The Chair invited speakers to make their addresses to the Committee and confirmed that Members may ask questions of clarification after they had finished their speech.

Mr. Chris Jarvis, the applicant's agent, spoke in support of the application, noting that the proposal was a small-scale CHP facility capable of supplying electricity and heat to the local area. He emphasised the absence of technical objections from consultees, the delivery of biodiversity net gain and the reduction in long-distance waste transport. He stated that planning permission would enable grid connections and environmental permitting and that conditions could prevent operation prior to secured connections.

Councillor Sargent asked how heat generated by the plant would be distributed and give benefit to local communities. Mr. Jarvis confirmed that heat would be supplied through private agreements with nearby businesses and community facilities, using insulated pipework.

Councillor Saul questioned whether the proposal might lead to recyclable material being incinerated to maintain viability. Mr. Jarvis confirmed that it was in the applicant's interest to maximise recycling as it was how significant value for the business was generated. He couldn't commit to not incinerating any recyclable material but reassured members that processes were in place to try and recycle as much material as possible.

Councillor Gawrysiak queried how the proposed CHP plant could operate viably given the existing cap of 24,999 tonnes of waste per annum at the Ferris Hill site. He asked how the available waste within that limit would be divided between recycling, landfill, and energy recovery, and expressed concern that the figures did not appear to add up if the plant required a significant annual throughput to operate efficiently. Mr. Jarvis explained that 24,999 tonnes per annum was the planning cap and design capacity for the overall site but did not represent the actual throughput currently achieved and that recycling remained a priority.

Mr. James Clarke spoke in favour of the application as a local business owner and resident, highlighting the energy-intensive nature of rural industry. He described the proposal as a significant opportunity to reduce reliance on fossil fuels, improve local energy resilience and support jobs. He emphasised the potential long-term sustainability benefits for businesses and the wider community.

Councillor Hannaby asked for clarification on the extent of business support for the proposal and whether the development would provide genuine benefits to the local business community. Mr. Clarke explained that he was part of a long-established local low-carbon and sustainability network and that a number of local businesses were already engaged with, or supportive of, the proposal. He stated that energy costs and reliability were critical issues for rural businesses and that access to locally generated heat and electricity would significantly improve resilience and reduce reliance on fossil fuels.

Mr. Nathan Matthews, the applicant, spoke in favour of the application and addressed concerns relating to the use of agricultural land and the waste hierarchy. He stated that suitable sites for such infrastructure were limited, that recycling would remain a priority, and that energy recovery was preferable to landfill. He highlighted reductions in waste transport mileage, local employment creation and long-term investment as benefits of the application if it was approved.

Councillor Sargent asked if biomass would be considered for the tree planting. Mr. Matthews confirmed it has been considered but the site was too small.

Councillor Smith asked about lighting and night-time impacts due to concerns over light pollution. Mr. Matthews noted that the majority of lighting would be inside the building and that the application shouldn't cause any additional light pollution.

Councillor Smith questioned whether any **sustainable** travel measures were proposed in connection with the development to reduce private car use, particularly in light of the additional staff that would be required to operate the CHP plant. Mr. Matthews advised that many employees were expected to be recruited locally and

that opportunities for informal carsharing could be explored. It was noted that staff travel impacts would be limited compared with the overall reduction in HGV movements arising from the application.

Councillor Saul questioned whether the operation of the CHP plant could result in waste moving down the waste hierarchy. Mr. Matthews noted that processes were in place to remove recyclable material before any energy recovery took place and that landfill avoidance represented movement up the waste hierarchy.

Dr. Tim Lunel spoke on behalf of a local community sustainability group, supporting the proposal because of reduced waste transport emissions, increased local energy security and benefits to existing community energy schemes. He described the development as a clear environmental net gain aligned with climate and fuel poverty objectives.

Mr. Nigel Davis (Milcombe Parish Council) spoke in support on behalf of Milcombe Parish Council, emphasising the reduction in HGV movements through the village, associated noise impacts, local employment opportunities and the importance of reliable, locally generated energy for rural communities.

Councillor Sargent asked for the views of Milcombe Parish Council. Mr. Smith confirmed that the Parish Council as a whole was generally supportive of the application.

The Chair thanked public speakers for their contributions and moved onto debate, focusing firstly on recommendation b) regarding the retrospective nature of the application.

Officers advised that, in policy terms, the retrospective nature of the platform works did not alter the land's status and that the proposal involved development of previously undeveloped agricultural land.

Members also highlighted the biodiversity net gain figures, which they regarded as substantial, and noted that landscape and ecological consultees had raised no objections following submission of additional information. Some Members expressed the view that the designation of the land as greenfield, while technically correct, did not fully reflect the existing context of the site or the nature of the proposal.

Overall, Members concluded that the use of greenfield land, in this case, did not outweigh the benefits of the development and did not justify refusal, particularly when considered alongside the proposed mitigation and community benefits.

Relating to recommendation a) regarding the waste hierarchy, officers had advised that recyclable material currently leaving the site should continue to be managed at a higher tier of the hierarchy and that it had not been conclusively demonstrated that operation of the CHP plant would avoid drawing in material capable of recycling.

Members acknowledged this concern and the Environment Agency data cited within the report, which showed that a proportion of waste from the site was currently recycled elsewhere.

However, several Members questioned whether the recommendation fully reflected the existing position. It was noted that significant quantities of waste were currently transported long distances for landfill or energy recovery, and Members considered that treating residual waste on site would represent an improvement when compared with the current baseline. Members emphasised that landfill avoidance should be regarded as movement up the waste hierarchy rather than down.

Members referenced the community benefits that the application could bring through jobs, support to achieve net zero emissions and benefits to the local economy. The level of local support for the application was also noted.

It was also noted that from a landscaping perspective, there were significant mitigations in place to ensure that the new building could not be seen due to the bunding.

Members also noted the enthusiasm from the applicants in wanting to improve things in the local area who were committed to waste recycling.

Members also took account of assurances given by the applicant and agent that recycling would remain a priority and that it would not be economically sensible to burn recyclable material.

Councillor Sargent proposed that the Committee accept the application.

The Planning Development Manager noted that it was clear that the direction of the Committee was moving in favour to approve the application and that officers had prepared a set of draft heads of terms for conditions, which were circulated. These draft heads of terms for conditions are appended to the minutes below.

Councillor McLauchlan stated that it would be important to hear the views of the applicant as well as the Committee.

The Solicitor advised the Committee that if they were minded to approve the application subject to suitable conditions, then a delegation could be given to officers to agree the conditions in consultation with the Chair and Vice Chair of the Committee.

Councillor Hannaby proposed the application be approved subject to suitable conditions to be determined by the Director of Economy and Place in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair. This was seconded by Councillor Cherry.

RESOLVED: that the Committee unanimously approved the application, subject to suitable conditions to be determined by the Director of Economy and Place in consultation with the Chair and Deputy Chair.

The exempt minutes of the meeting held on 23 February 2026 were approved by the Committee and signed by the Chair as a correct record.

..... in the Chair

Date of signing

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