

WEST OXFORDSHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

Minutes of the meeting of the **Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee**

Held in the Council Chamber, Council Offices, Woodgreen, Witney, Oxfordshire OX28 1NB
at 2.00 pm on **Monday, 20 April 2026**

PRESENT

Councillors: Mark Walker (Vice-Chair), Lidia Arciszewska, Mike Baggaley, Andrew Beaney, Adam Clements, Genny Early, Roger Faulkner, Andy Goodwin, David Jackson, Elizabeth Poskitt, Geoff Saul and Nigel Ridpath

Officers: Chris Hargraves (Head of Planning), Mike Cassidy (Principal Planner), Lorna McShane (Planning Solicitor), Andrew Brown (Head of Democratic and Electoral Services) and Mathew Taylor (Democratic Services Officer) and Anne Learmonth (Democratic Services Officer).

Other Councillors in attendance: None.

84 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Julian Cooper. Councillor Nigel Ridpath substituted for Councillor Cooper.

In Councillor Coopers absence the Vice Chair Mark Walker, chaired the meeting.

85 Declarations of Interest

There were no declarations of interest received.

86 Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The Chair proposed the approval of the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 16 February 2026. Councillor Andrew Beaney seconded the proposal which was put to the vote and agreed by the Sub-Committee.

The Sub-Committee resolved to:

- I. Agree the minutes of the previous meeting held on Monday 16 February 2026.

87 Applications for Development

88 23/03071/FUL Land South of Forest Road, Charlbury

Mike Cassidy Principle Planner presented the full planning application for the erection of thirty-seven dwellings including access road, landscaping, and associated earthworks.

The Principle Planner explained the history of the application as it had come to the Uplands Area Planning Sub-Committee on 28th May 2025 and 21st July 2025 and a decision had subsequently been issued on 29 January 2026. It was explained to Members why the application was again before the sub-committee as set out in the introduction of the report. The Principle Planner highlighted that there had been no material changes to the application since it had last been presented to the Sub-Committee. An updated ecology response had been provided by the applicant confirming that there had been no material change in ecological circumstances since the original 2023 surveys were undertaken. A Phasing Plan had also been provided for the purposes of the calculation of CIL only and this did not form part of the

assessment. Oxfordshire County Council and West Oxfordshire District Council had both reassessed the application on a fresh basis, with specific regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) and had concluded that the accessibility arrangements within the scheme were acceptable and compliant with PSED requirements. The Principle Planner brought the Members attention to the Additional Representation report and explained that the additional objector and support comments received had been summarised in this report. Further representation received post publication of the Additional Representation report were also verbally brought to the sub-committee's attention.

The Principle Planner brought members attention to page 70 of the application report and highlighted that informative 6 was the same as previously reported in July 2025, however, the Biodiversity Officer's updated comments suggested a slightly different wording. The Principle Planner read the revised wording out to the Members for clarity.

The Principle Planner turned to an overview of the application and highlighted the following points:

- The site was west of Charlbury and joined the rear of the Charlbury Railway station with Rushy Bank to the western boundary of the site and was within the Cotswolds National Landscape and Charlbury Conservative Area. Access to the site was from Forest Road.
- The previous now lapsed planning permission granted in January 2020 had been for 25 dwellings with 12 supported living dwellings. The new application was for 37 dwellings with a mixture of single and two storey buildings including 1-4 bedroom dwellings with 21 affordable housing units, 7 assisted living bungalows and 12 self-build plots. There were also 66 allocated car parking spaces and 12 garages proposed.
- Also included was a 5 metre buffer zone on the boundary of the ancient woodlands together with a further 10 metre buffer zone where permitted development rights had been removed. In combination with the existing extensive boundary treatment planting, there was also plans to include the planting of 84 additional trees, an extended woodland area next to Forest Road and a local play space area. Sustainable urban drainage had also been included on the eastern boundary.

The Principle Planner outlined the merits of the application and that the proposal had been assessed by officers against all relevant policy considerations, including its landscape, heritage and environmental impacts, and those impacts have been found to be acceptable or capable of being mitigated, with harm identified where relevant and weighed accordingly. The conservation officer has identified that there would be less than substantial harm to nearby heritage assets.

The proposal delivers a number of planning benefits which have been taken into account in the overall planning balance, including the delivery of much-needed housing with a policy-compliant and substantial level of affordable housing (57% of the total), alongside specialist accommodation which meets an identified local need. The scheme provides public realm improvements, including enhancements to pedestrian connectivity along Forest Road, and would deliver economic benefits through construction activity and local investment.

In environmental terms, the proposal includes biodiversity net gain, new woodland planting to enhance the setting of the adjacent woodland, and energy-efficient sustainable homes incorporating solar panels and renewable technologies.

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The Council is currently unable to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply, and as a result, the relevant policies for the supply of housing are considered to be out of date. In applying the planning balance as directed by paragraph 11 of the NPPF, officers consider that the adverse impacts would not significantly and demonstrably outweigh the benefits.

For those reasons, the application is recommended for approval, subject to the completion of a Section 106 agreement and the conditions set out in the report.

The Chair then invited the speakers to address the Sub-Committee.

The Friends of the West Oxfordshire Cotswolds, Jim Clements, spoke in objection to the application and raised the following points; The site would fail the initial test as set out in policy OS2 of the Local Plan, the site did not adjoin Charlbury and was open countryside in planning terms. The speaker highlighted unmet local housing need and the threat to the ancient woodland. The suitability and safety of pedestrians, wheelchair and family access was to be assessed members not Oxfordshire County Council. The application was contrary to the environment policies of the neighbourhood plan. The speaker highlighted that there had been a high number of objections to the application and the West Oxfordshire District Council Conservation Officer was not in support of the application. The speaker asked that members considered a site visit. The members asked for clarification on the conservation officer's comments, the speaker confirmed that the Conservation Officer had identified there would be significant harm.

Councillor Philippa Phelan, Charlbury Town Council, spoke in objection to the application and raised the following points. The development of the site had remained unresolved for 10 years as it was a site sensitive location due the adjacent ancient woodlands and being within the conservation area. The application was in contrary to policy CH1 due to being outside the built up area. Other similar applications had been beneficial within other locations. The speaker raised concerns regarding public use of access with focus on wheelchair users and pushchairs. With unsuitable footpath access concerns were raised over the increased use of cars in and out of the town centre.

Laura Bisbey, agent for Harper Crew spoke in support of the application and raised the following points. The application was back before the Sub-Committee due to a procedure error. There were no changes to the Local Plan, the Neighbourhood Plan or to the scheme. The Council could not demonstrate a 5 year housing land supply and asked that if members refused the application that clear reasons should be given. The housing would be meet local need and include adapted and affordable housing. Natural England guidance had been considered and the buffer on the boundary to the ancient woodland had been extended. The speaker asked that members followed the recommendations by the officer as set out in the report.

The Chair opened the debate and reminded members to look at the application afresh.

Members raised concern regarding resident access of the footpath and the suitability of the footpath for all users. The Principle Planner confirmed that the footpath, including the upgraded areas proposed, was considered acceptable and those restricted sections were reflective of the existing network already within Charlbury. Members also noted concerns raised regarding the location of the site in open countryside, its proximity to the ancient

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woodland and the impacts on the woodland. Whether the site could be considered major or minor development was also discussed together with which viewing points the housing would be visible from. Members discussed the option of a site visit to further consider concerns regarding the site's location within the open countryside and the accessibility of the footpaths.

Councillor Andrew Beany proposed a site visit on Thursday 4 June 2026 at 9.30am. This was seconded by Councillor Lidia Arciszewska and put to the vote.

Voting Record For 11 against 0 and 1 abstention.

The Sub-Committee resolved to:

1. To attend a site visit on Thursday 4 June at 9.30am.

89 Applications Determined under Delegated Powers

The report giving details of the applications determined under Delegated Powers was received, explained by officers and noted by the Sub-Committee.

Councillor Andrew Beany highlighted that even though he had requested to be notified of planning applications he was not getting all the notifications covering his ward and asked that this be looked into. The Chair asked that Democratic Services follow this up.

90 Appeal Decisions

The report giving details of the appeals was received, explained by the officers and noted by the Sub-Committee.

Councillor Beany thanked the officers and the Chair for all their hard work this civic year.

The Meeting closed at 3.02pm

CHAIR