

## PLANNING COMMITTEE

### Minutes of the Meeting held

Wednesday 4th June 2025, 11.00 am

**Councillors:** Tim Ball (Chair), Paul Crossley (Vice-Chair), Fiona Gourley, Ian Halsall, Hal MacFie, Ruth Malloy, Toby Simon, Shaun Hughes, Dr Eleanor Jackson and Tim Warren CBE

#### 1 CONFIRMATION OF CHAIR

**RESOLVED** that Cllr Tim Ball be confirmed as Chair of the Planning Committee.

#### 2 CONFIRMATION OF VICE-CHAIR

**RESOLVED** that Cllr Paul Crossley be confirmed as Vice-Chair of Planning Committee.

#### 3 EMERGENCY EVACUATION PROCEDURE

The Democratic Services Officer read out the emergency evacuation procedure.

#### 4 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE AND SUBSTITUTIONS

Cllr Ruth Malloy was substituting for Cllr Deborah Collins who had submitted apologies for absence.

#### 5 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

Cllr Paul Crossley and Cllr Tim Warren declared interests in the following items on the main applications list and withdrew from the meeting during consideration of these items:

1 - 25/00791/VAR, 2 - 25/00790/VAR and 3 - 25/00789/VAR - Bath Rugby Club, Bath Recreation Ground, Pulteney Mews, Bathwick, Bath.

#### 6 TO ANNOUNCE ANY URGENT BUSINESS AGREED BY THE CHAIR

There was no urgent business.

#### 7 ITEMS FROM THE PUBLIC

The Democratic Services Officer informed the meeting of the process for public speakers to address the Committee.

#### 8 MINUTES OF THE PREVIOUS MEETING

**RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting held on Wednesday 7 May be confirmed as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

## 9 **SITE VISIT LIST - APPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING PERMISSION ETC FOR DETERMINATION BY THE COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered:

1. A report by the Head of Planning on the applications under the site visit applications list.
2. Oral statements by members of the public and representatives. A copy of the speakers' list is attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes.

**RESOLVED** that in accordance with the delegated powers, the applications be determined as set out in the site visit applications decisions list attached as Appendix 2 to these minutes.

### **1. 24/03894/FUL - Parcel 2882, Water Lane, Paulton, Bristol**

The Planning Officer introduced the report which considered an application for the temporary installation of a ground-mounted solar photovoltaic (PV) farm with battery storage along with continued agricultural use, ancillary infrastructure and security fencing, landscaping provision, ecological enhancements and associated works. The application had been deferred from the previous meeting for a site visit.

The Committee was advised of the following updates:

1. There had been 2 new objections submitted, and these were sent directly to the Committee and a copy was included in the public file.
2. In light of these submissions there was an update to the report to confirm that in terms of the landscape sensitivity assessment, the site was in area 7c and not 3b. The planning application has been assessed as being in an area of low potential so there was no substantive change. The amended wording of paragraphs 5 and 6 on page 24 was as follows:  
"The Policies Map illustrates the geographically assessed landscape potential for renewable energy development within the district. A landscape led approach, based on the Landscape Sensitivity Assessment (LSA) for Renewable Energy Development (LUC, 2021), is set out by the Council. The proposed development is a Band D solar development (which covers 15-30 hectares). The application site is located within area 7C (Peasedown St John Ridge), which has low potential for Band C solar development (10-15 hectares) and low potential for Band D solar development. The proposals are a Band D proposal. The LSA clarifies that the maps within it should always be used alongside the assessment information and guidance prepared. The results are based on a strategic assessment of landscape potential, As such, the information shown does not replace the need for full technical assessments for individual sites as part of the planning process.

Therefore, each application must be assessed on its own merits and there is no reason why applications cannot come forward in areas set out in the LSA which have low potential for solar development of different scales.

Impacts to landscape are further assessed within this report.”

3. The comments received set out that the development was a Nationally Significant Infrastructure Project (NSIP) as it would generate more than 50MW of electricity. This was not correct as the solar panels would generate 9.2MW and the battery storage would allow storage capacity of 49.5MW. The batteries themselves were not generators of electricity
4. The EIA process had regard to the decommissioning process as this was part of the project.
5. The applicant had submitted a briefing note which set out why rooftop/brownfield site solar was not a substitute for ground mounted solar.

The Case Officer confirmed the officers’ recommendation that the application be permitted subject to the conditions set out in the report.

The following public representations were received:

1. Richard Slater and Dan Cains, local residents, objecting to the application.
2. Callum Wright and Luke Shackleton, applicants, supporting the application.

Cllr Liz Hardman was in attendance as adjacent ward Councillor and read a statement on behalf of herself, Cllr Grant Johnson and Paulton Parish Council summarised as below:

1. The ward Councillors and Paulton Parish Council were in favour of the application.
2. The application site was well screened with noise mitigations and traffic management measures would be in place during construction.
3. The majority of local residents were in favour of the applications.
4. There were concerns about the POC mast, but these were mitigated by it being sited near the electricity pylon.
5. Low quality agricultural land would be lost but this would be balanced against renewable energy supply.
6. The applicant had pledged support for the local community, and it was hoped that this could be pursued including a reduction in energy costs for local residents.

In response to Members’ questions, it was confirmed:

1. The land was graded as agricultural land grade 3a. Although the NPPF directed development away from grades 1, 2 and 3a, the Council’s placemaking plan policy RE5 only related to from grades 1 and 2. Policy RE5 was considered to be sound in the context of the NPPF and there had also been an assessment to consider if the sustainability benefits outweighed the loss of agricultural land. Officers had concluded that there were significant sustainability benefits which would outweigh the loss of agricultural land.
2. In terms of battery storage and safety measures, there was a condition to secure confirmation of fire safety compliance.
3. In relation to why a POC mast would be used rather than underground cables, this was a viability issue in terms of connecting with the national grid.
4. There would be a major impact on the view of the site from the public right

of way during the first year, but this would downgrade to moderate harm as the additional hedgerow planting would grow to screen the development.

5. There would be 49 storage containers in total, 36 for Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) covering an area of approximately 2 hectares.
6. The application would result in built form, but it was not in the green belt and there would still be a significant gap between Paulton and Midsomer Norton.
7. The application was temporary for 45 years, there could be a period of decommissioning, but this would need to be completed within a reasonable timescale. Any change to the lifetime of the development would need to be agreed by the Council.
8. The applicant's offer to give money to the local community was outside of the planning process and was not a material consideration. The public benefits considered by officers included the production of renewable energy, significant biodiversity net gains and the creation of new jobs through construction and maintenance of the site.

Cllr Shaun Hughes opened the debate as ward Councillor and reported that he had received representations from local residents both supporting and objecting to the application. He expressed concerns about the loss of grade 3a agricultural land, which was against NPPF, the visual impact of the POC mast, the safe storage of the batteries and traffic management during the construction phase. He was further concerned that there would be no direct benefits for local residents in terms of reduced energy costs and confirmed he would not support the application.

Cllr Ian Halsall expressed the view that there would be benefits in terms of achieving net zero targets and that there would be appropriate mitigations. He recognised that there were moderate adverse impacts but these were outbalanced by the public benefits in terms of renewable energy production, biodiversity net gain and the creation of jobs.

Cllr Toby Simon concurred with this view and emphasised the importance of retaining good agricultural use alongside the development. He proposed that officers be delegated to permit the application with an addition to the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan to require details of agricultural /horticultural land uses such as animal grazing that would take place alongside the solar farm operation. This was seconded by Cllr Ian Halsall.

Cllr Tim Warren spoke against the motion expressing concern about the loss of agricultural land and questioning the long-term benefits of the development.

Cllr Fiona Gourley spoke in support of the motion and the proposal to ensure an ongoing agricultural use for the land alongside the development.

On voting for the motion, it was CARRIED (7 in favour and 3 against).

**RESOLVED** that officers be delegated to permit the application subject to the conditions set out in the report with an addition to the Landscape and Ecological Management Plan condition to require details of agricultural /horticultural land uses such as animal grazing that will take place alongside

the solar farm operation.

## 10 **MAIN PLANS LIST - APPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING PERMISSION ETC FOR DETERMINATION BY THE COMMITTEE**

The Committee considered:

1. A report by the Head of Planning on the applications under the main applications list.
2. Oral statements by members of the public and representatives. A copy of the speakers' list is attached as Appendix 1 to these minutes.

**RESOLVED** that in accordance with the delegated powers, the applications be determined as set out in the main applications decisions list attached as Appendix 2 to these minutes.

(Cllr Paul Crossley and Tim Warren declared an interest and withdrew from the meeting during the following 3 items).

The Chair reported the procedure for considering the 3 Bath Recreation Ground applications as follows:

1. The Case Officer would introduce the 3 Bath Recreation Ground reports.
2. The public speakers would be called to speak on the applications and the speaking time would be combined.
3. Members would be invited to ask questions on the 3 applications.
4. There would be a separate debate and vote on each of the 3 applications.

1. **25/00791/VAR - Bath Rugby Club, Bath Recreation Ground, Pulteney Mews, Bathwick, Bath**
2. **25/00790/VAR - Bath Rugby Club, Bath Recreation Ground, Pulteney Mews, Bathwick, Bath**
3. **25/00789/VAR - Bath Rugby Club, Bath Recreation Ground, Pulteney Mews, Bathwick, Bath**

The Case Officer introduced the first report which considered application 25/00791/VAR for the variation of condition 1 and removal of condition 2 of application 24/01261/VAR to facilitate the retention of the existing temporary stands in situ through to May 2027 and facilitate the retention of the East Stand during both summer 2025 and 2026.

She confirmed the officers' recommendation that permission be granted subject to the conditions set out in the report.

The Case Officer introduced the second report which considered application 25/00790/VAR for the variation of condition 1 of application 21/05529/VAR to facilitate the retention of the existing temporary stands in situ through to May 2027.

She confirmed the officers' recommendation that permission be granted subject to the conditions set out in the report.

The Case Officer introduced the third report which considered application 25/00789/VAR for the variation of condition 1 of application 21/05528/VAR to facilitate the retention of the existing temporary stands in situ through to May 2027.

She confirmed the officers' recommendation that permission be granted subject to the conditions set out in the report.

The following public representations were received:

1. Ceris Humphries, Pultney Estate Residents Association and Rosemary Carne, local resident, objecting to the applications.
2. Tim Burden, agent, Tarquin McDonald Chief Executive of Bath Rugby and John Finn, Chief Executive, Bath Recreation Ltd, speaking in support of the applications.

Cllr Manda Rigby was in attendance as ward Councillor and read a statement summarised as below:

1. Temporary planning permission had originally been given to all stands with a condition that the east stand would be taken down during the summer.
2. The city of Bath had double heritage status, and the views should be protected.
3. Local residents supported the stand being taken down and views being restored during the summer.
4. The first application to retain the east stand during the summer was during the Covid pandemic and there were exceptional circumstances at that time.
5. While there was an argument for retaining the other temporary stands, there were no exceptional circumstances and no public good in retaining the east stand and it had always been intended that this would be taken down every year.
6. Reference was made to the carbon emissions associated with removing and reinstalling the stand, but extra events over the summer would also result in carbon emissions.

In response to Members' questions, it was confirmed:

1. The entire stadium was temporary. Very limited weight should be given to the upcoming application for a permanent solution as each application needed to be judged on its merits.
2. The stand was due to be removed for approximately 23% of the year which equated to 11-12 weeks. The removal and the reinstatement of the stand would take approximately 7 weeks and there would need to be a period of reseeded.
3. In response to concerns raised about flashing signs on the site, this was not part of this application.
4. If the applications were refused, any impact on planned events such as graduations would be an issue for the organisers to resolve.
5. The cost of removing and reinstalling the stand was not a material consideration. The public benefits were retaining the use of the toilet and bar facilities for various events and the avoidance of construction traffic and noise associated with the removal and reinstallation of the stands.
6. The west stand had not been removed in recent years.

**Debate and vote on item 1 - 25/00791/VAR - Bath Rugby Club, Bath Recreation Ground, Pulteney Mews, Bathwick, Bath**

Cllr Toby Simon opened the debate as ward Councillor. He expressed the view that there were benefits to the application such as increased public use and the avoidance of the disturbance of removing and reinstalling the stand and associated loss of car parking at the pavilion and leisure centre and that these outweighed the visual disbenefits. He also referred to the timescale for the stand to come down which had been narrowed to approximately 6 weeks allowing time for reseeded. He moved the officers' recommendation to permit the application subject to the conditions set out in the report.

Cllr Halsall seconded the motion and expressed the view that use of the recreation ground should be optimised all year round.

Cllr Fiona Gourley concurred with the view that the recreation ground should be used to its fullest extent for the benefit of more people.

Cllr Shaun Hughes stated that although he sympathised with objectors, he supported the motion due to the logistics involved in removing and reinstalling the stand.

On voting for the motion, it was CARRIED (8 in favour and 0 against - unanimous).

**Debate and vote on item 2 - 25/00790/VAR - Bath Rugby Club, Bath Recreation Ground, Pulteney Mews, Bathwick, Bath**

Cllr Toby Simon opened the debate as ward Councillor and expressed the view that 2 years was a reasonable time period. He moved the officers' recommendation to permit the application subject to the conditions set out in the report. This was seconded by Cllr Ian Halsall.

On voting for the motion, it was CARRIED (8 in favour and 0 against - unanimous).

**Debate and vote on item 3 - 25/00790/VAR - Bath Rugby Club, Bath Recreation Ground, Pulteney Mews, Bathwick, Bath**

Cllr Toby Simon opened the debate as ward Councillor and moved the officers' recommendation to permit the application subject to the conditions set out in the report. This was seconded by Cllr Ian Halsall.

On voting for the motion, it was CARRIED (8 in favour and 0 against - unanimous).

**RESOLVED** that the application be permitted subject to the conditions set out in the report.

(At this point in the meeting Cllrs Paul Crossley and Tim Warren returned to the Committee and Cllr Toby Simon left due to another Council commitment.)

**4. 24/03941/FUL - Ravenswell Lodge, Access Road to Ravenswell House, Charlcombe, Bath**

The Planning Officer introduced the report which considered an application for the erection of replacement rear extensions, landscaping and associated works to follow the partial demolition of Ravenswell Lodge.

He confirmed the officers' recommendation that the application be permitted subject to the conditions set out in the report.

The following public representations were received:

1. Lesley Craddock, local resident, objecting to the application.
2. Professor Robert Tavernor, applicant, supporting the application.

Cllr Mark Elliott was unable to attend as ward Councillor and a statement was read on his behalf as summarised as below:

1. He supported the property being updated and turned into a viable family home and recognised that the applicant had addressed some of the concerns raised by local residents.
2. He had asked for the application to be determined by committee due to it being a sensitive site in the Green Belt and the Cotswold National Landscape.
3. He was concerned about the proximity to Soper's Wood as this was an ancient woodland.
4. There was a contested enforcement notice around change of use of some surrounding agricultural land and woodland into residential land.
5. The original property had already been significantly extended so the proposal would see a significant increase in size from the original.
6. The residents of Ravenswell Cottage next door were concerned about the scale and mass of the building its effect on their residential amenity.
7. He recommended that the Committee undertake a site visit before making a decision.

In response to Members' questions, it was confirmed:

1. A bat survey had been undertaken and there were found to be bats roosting in the existing extension requiring a license to be secured in advance of the development. There had been a reduction in glazing in the proposed development to protect the bat flight corridor
2. Soper's Wood was an extensive woodland and part of A Site of Nature Conservation Interest (SNCI). There was also an extent of woodland in the applicant's ownership which did not form part of the SNCI.
3. Officers had accepted that there was a disproportionate increase in relation to the original property and therefore consideration was given to whether there were very special circumstances to allow the development in the green belt. It was noted that the replacement would not result in a material increase when compared to the current property.
4. In relation to the potential impact on the Scots Pine tree, the view of the Tree Officer was that the development could be constructed without impacting on the tree. Extra planting had also been secured as a condition to offset any potential damage to the tree in the long term.
5. Ravenswood Cottage was approximately 3m north of Ravenswood Lodge. The proposed extension pulled the built form of the host dwelling away from the northern boundary of the site. The two dwellings were on the same level and the land sloped to the east.

Cllr Tim Warren opened the debate and acknowledged the intention of the applicant to turn the property into a sustainable home and expressed the view that there would be sufficient screening to minimise the impact on the surrounding area. He moved the officers' recommendation to permit the application subject to the conditions set out in the report. This was seconded by Cllr Paul Crossley.



Cllr Shaun Hughes expressed reservations about the impact on the residential amenity on neighbouring properties and stated that he would support a site visit to understand the relationship between the development site and neighbouring properties, in particular Ravenswell Cottage.

Cllrs Fiona Gourley and Eleanor Jackson agreed that it would be useful to visit the site in advance of making a decision.

Cllr Tim Warren and Cllr Paul Crossley, as mover and seconder, confirmed that they were not willing to withdraw their motion to allow a further motion to come forward proposing a site visit and therefore a vote was taken on the motion to permit the application.

On voting for the motion, it was CARRIED (5 in favour and 4 against).

**RESOLVED** that the application be permitted subject to the conditions set out in the report.

#### **5. 25/01724/TCA - Audley House, Park Gardens, Lower Weston, Bath**

The Tree Officer introduced the report which considered a tree works notification in the conservation area.

She confirmed the officers' recommendation that no objection be raised to the works.

Cllr Ian Halsall moved the officers' recommendation. This was seconded by Cllr Tim Warren.

On voting for the motion, it was CARRIED (9 in favour and 0 against - unanimous).

**RESOLVED** that no objection be raised to the tree works.

#### **6. 25/01692/TCA - Audley House, Park Gardens, Lower Weston, Bath**

The Planning Officer introduced the report which considered a tree works notification in the conservation area.

She confirmed the officers' recommendation that no objection be raised to the works.

Cllr Paul Crossley moved the officers' recommendation. This was seconded by Cllr Tim Warren.

On voting for the motion, it was CARRIED (9 in favour and 0 against - unanimous).

**RESOLVED** that no objection be raised to the tree works.

### **11 NEW PLANNING APPEALS LODGED, DECISIONS RECEIVED AND DATES OF FORTHCOMING HEARINGS/INQUIRIES**

The Committee considered the appeals report.

**RESOLVED** that the report be noted.

The meeting ended at 2.50 pm

Chair .....

Date Confirmed and Signed .....

**Prepared by Democratic Services**