

PLANNING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON TUESDAY, 20 MAY 2025

Present:

Councillor Lee Hartshorne (Chair) (in the Chair)
Councillor Tony Lacey (Vice-Chair)

Councillor David Cheetham
Councillor Christine Gare
Councillor Heather Liggett
Councillor Kathy Rouse

Councillor Andrew Cooper
Councillor William Jones
Councillor Fran Petersen

Also Present:

D Thompson	Assistant Director of Planning
A Kirkham	Planning Manager - Development Management
G Cooper	Principal Planning Officer
A Smith	Legal Services Manager and Deputy Monitoring Officer
A Bryan	Governance Manager
T Fuller	Governance Officer

PLA/ Apologies for Absence and Substitutions

1/25-

26 Apologies for absence were received from Councillors M Foster and P Elliott.

Councillor P Jones attended as a substitute for Councillor M Foster. Councillor S Clough attended as a substitute for P Elliott. Councillor H Wetherall attended as a substitute for Councillor A Cooper for items PLA/1/25-26 to PLA-5/25-26.

PLA/ Declarations of Interest

2/25-

26 Regarding item **NED/23/01089/FL - Morton**, as the application was within Pilsley and Morton Ward, which Councillor A Cooper represented, Councillor Cooper would speak as Ward Councillor then leave the room and would not participate in the Committee's consideration or determination of the application.

Regarding item **NED/24/00781/FL - Ashover**, as the application was within Ashover Ward, which Councillor H Wetherall represented, Councillor Wetherall would speak as Ward Councillor then leave the room and would not participate in the Committee's consideration or determination of the application.

PLA/ Declaration of Predetermination

3/25-

26 There were no declarations of predetermination made.

PLA/ Minutes of Last Meeting

4/25-

26 RESOLVED – That the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 April 2025 were approved as a true record.

The Committee considered an application that had been submitted for the installation and operation of a renewable energy generating station comprising of ground-mounted photovoltaic solar arrays together with inverter/transformer units, BESS units, control house, substation, onsite grid connection equipment, storage containers, site access, access gates, internal access tracks, security measures, other ancillary infrastructure, and landscaping and biodiversity enhancements (Major Development/Affecting Public Right of Way) (Amended Plans) at land to the North of Stretton Road, Morton. The application had been referred to Committee by Councillors K Gillott and A Cooper, who raised some concerns about the impact on the landscape character, cumulative impact of this and other solar developments, proximity to residential properties, loss of agricultural land and its potential impact on highway safety. An update report had been circulated which set out late representations regarding the application.

The recommendation by officers was to conditionally approve the application, with a legal agreement to mitigate Skylark nesting. The report to Committee explained the reasons for this.

The report accepted that the proposal would cause harm to the character, quality, distinctiveness and tranquillity of the immediate landscape setting. However, the potential harm would be outweighed by the environmental, biodiversity and socio-economic benefits of the scheme. Further to this, the report highlighted that the proposed development could be made acceptable in many respects by the imposition of planning conditions and legal agreement.

Officers concluded that the proposal was in accordance with the overall aims of National Planning Policy Framework and Local Plan to achieve sustainable development. They recommended, therefore, that the application be approved, subject to conditions and legal agreement.

Before the Committee considered the application it heard from Local Ward Members, Councillors K Gillott and A Cooper, and a representative from Morton Parish Council, Neil Radford. Committee also heard from objectors, Sarah Barraclough, Rebekah Spackman and Eddie White, as well as the Applicant, Ben Kwok, and the Agent, Kenny Dhillon.

Committee considered the application. It took into account the relevant Local and National Planning Policies. These included Local Plan Policy SS9, concerning development in the countryside, Local Plan Policy SDC3, concerning landscape character, and Local Plan Policy SDC10, concerning renewable and low carbon energy generation.

Committee discussed the application. Members accepted the benefits of solar farms in terms of the push towards renewable energy generation. However, it was suggested that this did not mean all applications for solar farms should be passed. In this context, some Members highlighted the adverse impact that this scheme had on biodiversity in the area, on the footpaths that crossed and overlooked the site, and the amenity of local residents. Some Members suggested that the value of the land should be determined by the amenity it provides to the local community. In this context, it was suggested that the

proposal represented significant harm to the amenity of the area and to Morton residents. It was concluded that the benefits of the proposal did not outweigh the harm caused and it was, therefore, not in accordance with policies in the Local Plan.

At the conclusion of the discussion Councillor H Liggett and Councillor W Jones moved and seconded a Motion to refuse the application, contrary to officer recommendations. The Motion was put to a vote and approved.

RESOLVED –

That planning permission be refused, with the final wording of the reasons for refusal delegated to the Planning Manager (Development Management).

Councillor H Wetherall left the meeting, and Councillor A Cooper joined the meeting.

PLA/ NED/24/00781/FL - Ashover

**6/25-
26**

The Committee considered an application that had been submitted for comprehensive redevelopment of the site including retention of the existing 14 days motocross, barn conversion for a manager's dwelling, reinstatement of "Where the Rainbow Ends" Cafe for use as a reception, heritage and information centre (with occasional kiosk/cafe), and erection of three holiday lodges with associated parking and turning and private drainage plant, at Butts Quarry, Butts Road, Ashover. The application had been referred to Committee by Councillor H Wetherall, who supported it. An update report had been circulated which set out late representations regarding the application.

The recommendation by officers was to refuse the application. The report to Committee explained the reasons for this.

The report contended that the proposed development would be contrary to the spatial strategy of the Council and the character of the area. Officers accepted that the proposal offered some tourism benefits, however they were considered to be limited and carried little weight. The report contended that the design of the proposal would be harmful to the character of the area and lead to increased light pollution to this sensitive landscape character. Additionally, officers attributed further weight against the development in terms of the adverse impact on Public Rights of Way and the urbanising impact of the formalised parking and turning areas.

Officers concluded that the proposal did not conform to the provisions of the Development Plan when read as a whole and there were no other material planning matters that supported it. They recommended, therefore, that the application be refused.

Before the Committee considered the application it heard from Local Ward Member, Councillor H Wetherall, and Chair of Ashover Parish Council, Ed Willmot. Committee also heard from a supporter, Michael Lawton, as well as the Applicant, Barry Dring, and the Agent, Charlotte Stainton.

Committee considered the application. It took into account the relevant Local and National Planning Policies. These included Local Plan Policy SS9, concerning development in the countryside, Local Plan Policy, concerning visitor and tourism development, and Local Plan Policy SDC1, concerning the re-use of buildings in the countryside. Committee also considered Ashover Neighbourhood Plan Policy AP19, concerning dark skies.

Committee discussed the application. Some Members expressed concern over the design of the hardstanding and holiday lodges included in the proposal. In this context, Committee discussed the light pollution that would result from the design of the holiday lodges. It was suggested that both issues could be suitably addressed via condition. Some Members expressed support for the application in terms of its benefits to tourism, return of a building of local heritage value and the limited number of objections from Ashover residents.

At the conclusion of the discussion Councillor H Liggett and Councillor S Clough moved and seconded a Motion to approve the application, contrary to officer recommendation, with appropriate conditions including redesign of the frontage. The Motion was put to a vote and approved.

RESOLVED –

That planning permission be **conditionally approved**, with the final wording of the conditions and legal agreement delegated to the Planning Manager (Development Management).

PLA/ Planning Appeals - Lodged and Determined

**7/25-
26**

The Committee considered a report which set out planning appeals that had been lodged and determined. The report set out that two appeals had been lodged, no appeals had been allowed, three appeals had been dismissed, and no appeals had been withdrawn. The relevant applications the appeals were in respect of was set out in the report.

PLA/ Matters of Urgency

**8/25-
26**

None.