

**SOUTH WOODHAM FERRERS TOWN COUNCIL
PLANNING & ENVIRONMENT COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a Meeting held on Tuesday 28th April 2026
at 7.30p.m.
at Champions Manor Hall

Present:

Councillor S Wilson (Vice Chair)

Councillor A Shearring	Councillor D Thompson
Councillor I Roberts	Councillor P Price
Councillor F Knox	Councillor M Sismey
Councillor P Ferry	Councillor J Birch

In attendance: Environment Officer, Councillor D Eley & Councillor A Cash

Apologies for absence were **RECEIVED** and **ACCEPTED** from Councillor O Brien

PE-25-424 Dispensation Considerations

None received.

PE-25-425 Declarations of Interest

None received.

PE-25-426 Confirmation of Minutes

The minutes of the Planning and Environment meeting held on 31st March 2026 were agreed as a true record.

Proposed: Councillor Knox

Seconded: Councillor Birch

Vote: All in favour

At 7.33pm Councillor D Eley joined the meeting

PE-25-427 Public Questions

None

PE-25-428 Budgetary Position

The budgetary position as of 31st March 2026 was **NOTED**.

PE-25-429 Previous Planning Decisions and Appeals

Committee **NOTED** planning decision differences from Chelmsford City Council.

PE-25-430 Planning Applications

26/05062/TPO 5 Clevis Drive

T1 Oak - Crown reduce by 2m back to previous pruning points, remove lowest dead limb back to branch collar. Reason: Tree will be too large for location, safety risk.

The Planning and Environment Committee has **NO OBJECTIONS** to this application.

26/00378/FUL 2 The Chase

Erection of a new fence for extension of new garden space with associated landscaping.

The Planning and Environment Committee **OBJECTS** to this application, of the proposed installation of a 1.8m fence as its height and proximity to the highway junction severely compromise visibility splays and road safety. Furthermore, the enclosure of a front garden with a high solid boundary is detrimental to the open-plan character of the street scene, contrary to Policy DM14.

26/00437/FUL 9 Ormesby Chine

Change of use of garage for dog grooming business

The Planning and Environment Committee **OBJECTS** to this application.

1. Conflict with the Development Plan & Spatial Strategy

Under the South Woodham Ferrers Neighbourhood Plan (Policy SWF TC3), commercial activity is directed toward the Town Centre. This proposal facilitates "commercial creep" into a residential cul-de-sac. Granting permission would set an unsustainable precedent: if a dog grooming business is permitted in a residential garage here, the Council would find it difficult to resist similar applications for gyms or workshops elsewhere, leading to the gradual erosion of the town's residential character.

2. Noise Impact and Residential Amenity (Policy DM14)

The Council is concerned that the application provides no evidence regarding acoustic impact. Dog grooming involves high-decibel barking and the use of high-velocity industrial dryers.

Formal Requirement: We request that the Planning Officer mandates a Noise Impact Assessment before this application is determined. Without professional evidence that the noise levels will not exceed ambient background noise for neighbouring properties, the proposal is in direct conflict with Policy DM14.

3. Inadequate Waste Management & Environmental Protection

The applicant's claim of "no commercial waste" is a matter of significant concern. Under the Environmental Protection Act 1990, animal hair and chemical-laden wash water are classified as trade waste and cannot be disposed of via domestic means.

Drainage: Domestic pipes are not equipped with industrial hair traps. We request that the Officer consults Anglian Water regarding the suitability of the domestic sewer for trade effluent.

Waste Plan: We request a full Trade Waste Management Plan be submitted to show how the applicant intends to legally dispose of biological and chemical waste.

4. Highway Safety and Cumulative Traffic Stress (Policy DM27)

Ormesby Chine is a narrow residential road already operating at capacity due to existing home-based business activity.

Traffic Intensification: A Dog Grooming Parlour requires frequent short-stay "drop-off and pick-up" movements. This "turnover" of traffic is significantly more disruptive than standard residential use or existing business.

Loss of Parking: The permanent conversion of the garage results in a loss of off-street parking, forcing vehicles onto the street and impeding access for emergency and refuse collection vehicles, contravening Policy DM27. There is risk of blocking the side access road to residences at the rear of the property.

5. Lack of Community Benefit

The proposal offers no community benefit that outweighs the harm to the local residential amenity. It provides an unfair advantage over established local businesses within the designated commercial zones who contribute to the town's infrastructure through commercial rates and rents.

26/000330/REM Land North Of South Woodham Ferrers Burnham Road

Application for the approval of reserved matters (layout, scale, appearance, and landscaping) pursuant to outline planning permission 22/00311/OUT, comprising 190 residential dwellings (Use Class C3), internal roads, public open space (including children's play space and SuDS), allotments, and a pumping station, together with associated landscaping and car parking.

The Planning and Environment Committee has the following comments and concerns to this application. The Town Council expresses significant concern regarding the omission of formal sporting facilities in the current application, which is split between Bellway and Countryside Vistry. The application fails to reflect the requirements set out in the Chelmsford City Council Playing Pitch Strategy (PPS) — specifically report BG003/F—and contradicts the agreed Master Plan for Site SG10.

The evidence provided in the BG003/F Chelmsford City Council Playing Field Action Plan highlights a critical deficit in local provision. It is imperative that this application addresses the following data:

Disproportionate Burden: While South Woodham Ferrers (SWF) accounts for only 9% of the City's population, it currently bears approximately 39% of the total shortfall in playing field capacity for the entire Chelmsford district.

Specific Deficits: The report identifies an immediate need for:

- 4.5 Adult Football Pitches.
- 8 Youth 11v11 Pitches.
- 1 Senior Rugby Pitch.

The Master Plan previously designated this land specifically to facilitate the relocation of the South Woodham Ferrers RUFC to alleviate chronic overplay at Saltcoats Park.

Policy Conflict: The current layout appears to remove this allocated land, which is a direct contradiction of Policy SG10 of the Local Plan. "Green Wedge" vs. Sports Provision: We strongly object to any attempt to reclassify designated recreation and sports space as "green wedge" or wildflower meadows to satisfy "planning gain" requirements. While biodiversity is welcomed, it must not be used as a substitute for the active sporting infrastructure required by the community with both being equally important.

Therefore, there is a significant concern regarding the lack of provision of sporting facilities within the development, which is currently split between Bellway (one-third) and Countryside Vistry (two-thirds). The current application lacks any mention of the required sporting facilities, which is a critical oversight given that South Woodham Ferrers (SWF) currently faces a disproportionate shortfall in sports provision. Although the town accounts for only 9% of Chelmsford's population, it bears approximately 39% of the city's total shortfall in playing field capacity. Specifically, the town faces current shortfalls of 4.5 adult football pitches, 8 youth 11v11 pitches, and a 0.5 shortfall for senior rugby.

The Master Plan previously indicated that land would be allocated for use by the local Rugby Club, and the Chelmsford City Council Playing Pitch Strategy explicitly supports relocating South Woodham Ferrers RUFC to a new sports ground within this development to alleviate overplay at Saltcoats Park. This should be re-instated. The Town Council notes that the current layout appears to show a loss of this allocated land. Any space designated for recreation or sports should be strictly retained and not reclassified as a "green wedge" to meet planning gain requirements. This is essential to remain in line with the Local Plan and site SG10. While the importance of preserving wildflower meadows is recognized, it should not come at the expense of necessary sporting infrastructure and both should be equally part of an application.

Layout and Allotments

The proposed layout includes 9 hectares of open space, which is viewed as a positive attribute of the development. However, while one play area and allotments are mentioned, there is no specific detail regarding the size of the allotments. The current proposal suggests a small size that may not meet community needs or expectations. Allotment provision should be based on usable plots of an appropriate size, typically around the recognised 10-rod standard. The current proposal offers no specific dimensions or capacity for the allotments.

Based on the current layout, the provision appears significantly undersized for a development of this scale and fails to meet the expected standards for community food growing space.

Water and Drainage

The development site presents extraordinary drainage challenges rooted in the ground's extremely low permeability, (estimated at e.g., 1×10^{-8} to 1×10^{-9} m/hr). This data confirms that the land is effectively impermeable and incapable of absorbing surface water. Consequently, the entire development is critically dependent on

gravity-fed discharge into the Fenn Brook. This is a significant concern given that the Fenn Brook is a tidal watercourse already prone to flood risk. The Town Council insists that Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) must be designed holistically across the entire development area, encompassing the Countryside Vistry proposal. Currently, technical calculations indicate that Basins B and C fail to meet the mandatory 24-hour "half-drain" time required by Essex SuDS regulations, representing a fundamental failure in the current design's ability to manage storm events safely.

While the developer's technical notes claim sufficient sewer capacity, these assertions directly conflict with regional studies. Evidence indicates that the South Woodham Ferrers Water Recycling Centre (WRC) is already operating at its legal capacity limit. This discrepancy poses a severe risk: new homes may be unable to legally discharge waste until significant infrastructure upgrades are secured and completed. Without a confirmed and funded strategy for capacity expansion at the WRC, any further connection to the network represents an unacceptable risk to both public health and environmental standards.

The Fenn Brook is not an isolated watercourse; it flows directly into areas protected by RAMSAR and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) status. Any discharge of pollutants or untreated runoff would have a devastating and potentially irreversible impact on these internationally recognized wildlife habitats. Furthermore, local residents and landowners are deeply concerned by the potential for increased siltation caused by the "wash effect" of higher-velocity discharges. The application currently lacks a robust monitoring and control framework to mitigate these risks, leaving the town's natural assets and the river's ecosystem dangerously exposed.

Maintenance Responsibility and Liability

There is a concerning lack of clarity regarding the long-term maintenance of the creek and the essential rights of access for water passage. The area surrounding Old Wickford Road is already documented as being liable to flood, and the Town Council is particularly wary of the potential for future legal and financial liability should maintenance responsibilities remain undefined. The Council notes that the Environment Agency is currently facing significant resource constraints, which limits their ability to provide active oversight. Given that the developer has a recorded history of failing to meet obligations on previous sites across the UK, the Town Council requires ironclad assurances regarding who will monitor, control, and fund the maintenance of these critical watercourses in perpetuity.

Roadways and Infrastructure

While the Town Council is not commenting on general traffic volume at this stage, but there are specific concerns regarding internal roadways. Clarity is needed on which roads will be adopted by the local authority versus those remaining as private roads. Particular attention should be paid to "mews roads" to ensure they are suitable for refuse collection vehicles and other essential services. We want to

ensure that roads installed including 'brick' covered roads are compliant with highway standards and will not suffer sinkage which is a known issue in this area due to the soundness of the soil.

Public Transport

While South Woodham Ferrers Town Council acknowledges that transport contributions were secured at the Outline stage (22/00311/OUT), we strongly object to the current Reserved Matters (Layout and Landscaping) due to the total absence of physical transport infrastructure. Integration with Bus Strategy: The Outline permission relies on a 'Bus Strategy' to mitigate the impact of 190+ dwellings. However, the proposed Layout shows no practical integration with the 336-bus route on Main Road. There is a lack of clear, safe pedestrian conduits from the heart of the development to the main road bus stops.

Sustainability and Permeability: To meet Local Plan sustainability targets and as there is an element of bus strategy funding, the Layout must prioritize public transport. We request that the applicant includes specific provisions for hard-standing bus stop cages, high-quality shelters, and tactile paving at the site boundaries as part of the Landscaping and Layout approval using the funding from the developer.

Condition Request: We ask that the Planning Officer refuses to discharge the 'Layout' matter until a Pedestrian Access Audit is provided, demonstrating how residents will safely and efficiently access the 336 service without increasing car dependency, and current lack of bus stops in Main Road which should be added. This also could assist with the school bus network, avoiding long walks.

Housing Design

The proposed mix of housing heights and designs is generally considered acceptable. The inclusion of only a few three-storey houses is noted as a positive aspect of the design that maintains the character of the area. We want to ensure that going forward with this development, there will be no permitted dilution in the number of affordable houses which will be part of the scheme.

PE-25-431 Love your bus grant

Committee considered the report with regard the successful award from Essex County Council for the Love Your Bus Phase 2 scheme to restore a Sunday bus service to the 336, and to promote bus travel.

Proposal: To authorise the signing of the bus grant agreement between Essex County Council and South Woodham Ferrers Town Council and the Town Clerk and to act in this matter on behalf of the Town Council.

Proposed: Councillor Wilson

Seconded: Councillor Knox

Vote: All in favour

Proposal: To approve the allocation of £400.00 from the marketing budget, along with any other agreed expenditure within existing

operating costs, to support initiatives aimed at promoting the use of the local bus network, as required.

Proposed: Councillor Roberts

Seconded: Councillor Birch

Vote: All in favour

PE-25-432 Items to Note

Committee **NOTED** the following –

- The letters to Heaven Post box at the garden of Remembrance remains well used, with busiest times at Easter and Mother’s Day with around 20 items a month
- The trees have been planted at John Cox and are being monitored and watered weekly.

PE-25-433 Lease Woodham Fen Nature Reserve

Committee considered the first draft lease from the Essex Wildlife Trust.

Proposal: To recommend to Council, the draft lease with the removal of the last section of the document regarding the 400 trees and for the Clerk to act on amendments to the document as required.

Proposed: Councillor Roberts

Seconded: Councillor Shearring

Vote: All in favour

PE-25-434 Report to Council

- Signing of the ECC bus agreement and associated marketing
- Response to the planning application for 190 homes on land North of South Woodham Ferrers
- Essex Wildlife Lease

PE-25-435 Media Coverage

- Signing of the bus agreement and the new bus service starting
- New E-newsletter and associated transport marketing coming soon.

PE-25-436 Next Meeting

The next meeting is to be held on 26 May 2026 at 7.30pm.

The Vice-Chair thanked the Committee, Clerk and Officers for their work on the committee during this period, on behalf of himself and the Chairman.

There being no further business to discuss the Vice-Chair closed the meeting at 20:48

Signed

Date: 26th May 2026