

WESTERN AND SOUTHERN AREA PLANNING COMMITTEE

MINUTES OF MEETING HELD ON THURSDAY 26 FEBRUARY 2026

Present: Cllrs Neil Eysenck (Vice-Chair), Belinda Bawden, Matt Bell, Simon Christopher, Paul Kimber, Craig Monks, David Northam, Louie O'Leary, Pete Roper and Kate Wheller

Apologies: Cllrs Dave Bolwell and David Shortell

Officers present (for all or part of the meeting):

Bob Burden (Senior Planning Officer), Ann Collins (Area Manager – Western and Southern Team), Philip Crowther (Legal Business Partner - Regulatory), Joshua Kennedy (Democratic Services Officer), James Lytton-Trevers (Lead Project Officer), Emma Thornett (Senior Planning Officer) and Louis Wicks (Democratic Services Officer Apprentice)

64. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Monks declared that he was pre-determined on item 5 and would leave the room for the debate and vote of that application.

Cllr Bawden declared that she was pre-determined on item 7 and would leave the room for the debate and vote of that application.

65. Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 29 January 2026 were confirmed and signed.

66. Registration for public speaking and statements

Representations by the public to the Committee on individual planning applications are detailed below. There were no questions, petitions or deputations received on other items on this occasion.

67. P/FUL/2022/02899 - Wintergreen Barn, Higher Meerhay Farm Access Road, Meerhay, Dorset, DT8 3SB

The Senior Planning Officer presented the application. The application site was identified on the location plan, together with adjoining land in the applicant's ownership outlined in blue. An aerial view and the proposed site layout were shown. The elevations of the workshop building were presented, illustrating a natural-stone structure with a pitched roof, timber cladding and natural slate roofing. The wider site included orchard planting, a new hedgerow, and seven zones forming part of an agreed woodland management plan.

A series of photographs were shown, including views from Meerhay Lane, public rights of way and the main workshop building. Images of the parking area, hedging, access onto the lane, as well as the main static mobile home and workshop were shown. A view taken from the south of the site during winter demonstrated the extent of vegetation cover. Additional images included the stream crossing and a view of the site from the footpath, along with photographs of the woodland proposed for enhancement through the application.

The Officer advised that the Council could not demonstrate a five-year supply of traveller sites and that paragraph 11(d) of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) therefore applied. The Senior Planning Officer referred to Policy SUS2 and explained that the site's proximity to Beaminster meant it had reasonable access to a wide range of local facilities and services and was a sustainable location. The applicants' traveller status had been examined in detail, including assessment of their historic travelling patterns. Information on their movements had been shared with the Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer, who had met with the applicants and was satisfied that they met the relevant definition. The Senior Planning Officer highlighted the clear and growing unmet need for traveller sites within the area.

It was explained that the materials proposed were subdued and used natural finishes appropriate to the National Landscape. Existing planting had already contributed to mitigation and the woodland management plan would deliver further improvements. The nearest dwelling lay approximately 40 metres from the site and officers concluded that there would be no overlooking or loss of amenity and there was no objection raised by Dorset Council Highways.

Public representation was received in opposition to the application from James Green, Katherine Haskins and John Steel KC. They raised concerns about the application including about setting a precedent in the area for allowing traveller site applications, the lack of alternative sites that had been explored and questioned the traveller status of the applicants.

Public representation in support of the application was received from Reverend John Herbert, Catherine Burton on behalf of Paula Tuff, Simon Ruston and Cllr Monks. Amongst their points of support, it was noted that the applicants traveller status was supported by the Council, Planning Inspectorate and the charity, Kushti Bok. In addition, it was mentioned that the applicants had not been offered an alternative permanent pitch by the Council and that even if they had, it would not impact the application.

Cllr Monks left the Council Chamber 10:43.

In response to public statements, the Senior Planning Officer noted that the applicant's traveller status had been determined by looking at the past four years' worth of travelling to festivals and was supported by the Gypsy and Traveller Liaison Officer and the Chair of Kushti Bok. It was also explained that the recommendation related to the specific application, which included benefits such as woodland management and so there was not a concern of a precedent being set.

Officers provided the following responses to members questions:

- It was not considered that the application would set a precedent as the recommendation for approval was based on the specific activities of the family at the site and the low level of impact of activities, which were mitigated by the landscape management.
- The applicants produced art and metal work in their workshop on site, which they sell at festivals and this level of activity is considered to be low impact.
- Members were advised by the Legal Business Partner that the application of policy was a matter of judgement for them and they would only be acting unlawfully if they made a decision outside the remit of a planning committee or if they failed to apply the relevant policies properly.
- A separate application relating to the business activities on site was not considered necessary, as the workshop was specifically listed in the application proposal.

It was proposed by Cllr Wheller and seconded by Cllr Kimber that the application be granted.

An amendment was proposed by Cllr Northam and seconded by Cllr Bawden, that the wording of condition 2 be changed from 'their resident dependents only' to 'their children, subject to continuing traveller lifestyle'.

Upon being put to a vote the motion to amend the substantive motion fell.

Decision: That the application be granted subject to the conditions set out in the appendix to these minutes.

68. P/FUL/2025/05240 - Sidney Gale House, Flood Lane, Bridport, DT6 3QG

Cllr Christopher left the meeting at 11:39.

Cllr Monks returned to the Council Chamber at 11:39.

The Lead Project Officer presented the application for the demolition of an existing building and the erection of a 56-bed reablement centre. The site was shown on a map, situated south of the town centre and currently occupied by a disused purpose-built care home. The site included large gardens and was bordered by West Bay Road and the A35, with Flood Lane providing access. Photographs of the existing building were displayed, showing predominantly lawned areas with a number of trees, as well as views from the A35.

The proposal involved demolishing the existing building, which was described as having little architectural merit and replacing it with a single new structure. The proposed building had been designed to appear as four separate elements, with pitched roofs over two storeys, linked by flat-roofed sections. The design incorporated three internal lightwells, allowing light to enter from both sides of the building.

The proposed elevations and materials were presented, including the use of soft red brick and a mix of modern materials. The Lead Project Officer highlighted the proposed landscaping, the layout of the car park at the end of Flood Lane and the building footprint. Plans identified both retained trees and new planting. The existing access via Flood Lane would remain unchanged, with the car park intended primarily for staff and visitors. Artist's impressions illustrated how the building would appear from the exterior.

In terms of the principle of development, it was explained that the site lay within Bridport and within the Defined Development Boundary (DDB). The proposal made use of previously developed land, a form of development strongly supported by the NPPF. There was no objection to the demolition of the existing building from statutory consultees. The vertical emphasis of window design and the use of soft red brick were considered appropriate and characteristic of other developments in the town.

It was noted that the only immediate neighbour was Gordon's Court, and no concerns had been identified regarding overlooking. It was confirmed that the nearest listed buildings were located on the opposite side of the road and their setting was not considered to be harmed by the proposal. The biodiversity elements of the scheme were shown on the site plan. The application was considered acceptable in terms of highway matters and the existing access remained suitable. Several of the trees on site would be retained and where removals were necessary, higher-quality replacements were proposed.

Regarding flood risk and drainage, a small corner of the site lay within Flood Zone 2. The applicant had undertaken a sequential test and found no suitable alternative sites. Surface-water flood risk affected only a small part of the site in a 1-in-1000-year event, and engineers had confirmed that this could be mitigated without difficulty.

Public representation was received from the applicant, Samuel Poole. He noted that the centre would provide short term recovery for people after leaving hospital and would prevent people from moving into long term care accommodation prematurely. The site had been designed with input from care specialists and safety advisors to create a purpose-built development.

The following responses were provided by officers, in response to questions from members:

- Negotiations had taken place with Dorset Councils Tree Officers and as a result a row of proposed Beech trees had been changed to garden trees to better reflect the space.
- The applicant had carried out an exercise and determined that it would not have been economical to repurpose the existing building and that new development was preferable.
- It was not considered necessary at this stage to condition that permeable surfaces be provided, as it was not yet known if this would be an appropriate solution in addressing potential flooding.
- A detailed surface water management scheme was required to be submitted and would have to meet the relevant standards. Due to the low risk of flooding, it was not required to be submitted at the planning application stage.

Having had the opportunity to discuss the merits of the application and an understanding of all that this entailed; having considered the officer's report and presentation; the written representatives; and what they had heard at the meeting, it was proposed by Cllr Northam and seconded by Cllr Bawden that the application be granted.

Decision: That the application be granted subject to the conditions set out in the appendix to these minutes.

69. **P/FUL/2024/05592 - Farnham House Flat 9, Stile Lane, Lyme Regis, DT7 3JD**

The Senior Planning Officer presented the application for the erection of a replacement dwelling, explaining that it followed an earlier proposal which had been refused and subsequently dismissed at appeal.

An aerial view was shown identifying the existing dwelling and the site for the proposed replacement. It was explained that the property was accessed from Stile Lane, where a shared parking area was situated and lay within the grounds of Farnham House. The site constraints were outlined: it lay within the DDB, within the Dorset National Landscape and inside the Lyme Regis Conservation Area. The plan also highlighted areas vulnerable to coastal erosion and identified nearby listed buildings. Farnham House was described as a non-designated heritage asset.

Elevations of the existing single-storey dwelling were shown. The previously refused scheme was shown alongside the current proposal for comparison. The earlier design had been considered visually prominent and harmful to the setting of Farnham House. The revised proposal would be constructed in natural stone with a natural slate roof and would include a significant reduction in glazing compared with the previous application. Two small roof lights were proposed at first-floor level. The ridge height would increase by approximately 1.5 metres over the existing building.

Photographs of the site were presented, including the protected yew tree adjacent to the property. Further images showed the relationship between the existing dwelling, the modern addition of Flat 8 at Farnham House and Farnham House itself. It was explained that the proposed dwelling would feature dormers and materials similar to those used on Farnham House. Additional views were shown from the entrance to Farnham House and from the public footpath, illustrating the change in levels across the site. The modern Flat 8 was visible from these viewpoints, as was a shed within the application site. Wider views from the mini-golf area were also shown.

In setting out the key planning issues, the Senior Planning Officer explained that the site lay within the DDB and that a replacement dwelling was acceptable in principle. Regarding the Dorset National Landscape and trees, the appeal inspector had found that development could be undertaken without harming the adjacent yew tree, subject to an appropriate construction plan. On heritage matters, the inspector had concluded that although the site was visible from

nearby listed buildings, the proposal would not harm their historic open settings. In respect of the Conservation Area and the non-designated heritage asset, it was advised that the revised scheme would result in less than substantial harm and any harm identified fell at the lower end of the "less than substantial" scale.

The application was recommended for approval subject to conditions, including the removal of permitted development rights for additional windows facing Farnham House, and the implementation of a construction method statement to ensure the protection of the yew tree and maintain ground stability.

Melanie Gradden spoke in opposition to the application. She noted that the revised scheme had not reduced in size or bulk from the previously rejected application and that the prominent location of the dwelling would cause harm to the Conservation Area, with no wider community benefits.

The applicant, Denise Russell, spoke in support of the application. She explained that they had worked with architects and planners to create a design that was softer and smaller than the previous proposal. In addition, the new design would have a lower roof height than other buildings in the area.

Mark Green spoke on behalf of Lyme Regis Town Council. He stated that the Town Council had unanimously agreed to object to the application, as they did not view the new proposal as materially different from the previously refused application. They considered that it was out of keeping and unsympathetic to the character of the area and neighbouring buildings.

Cllr Bawden spoke in opposition to the application. She noted that the area of Lyme Regis in which the development site was proposed had a significant number of heritage and listed buildings and that this proposal would be out of keeping with the existing buildings, due to the modern design. There were also concerns about the unstable ground, as part of Stile Lane had recently collapsed.

Cllr Bawden left the meeting at 12:39.

The following responses were provided to members questions:

- A Landscape Visual Impact Assessment was not required for a replacement dwelling.
- The main changes compared with the previous application were the reduced width of the building, the changed materials and the reduced glazing.
- The public benefits that had been identified were the replacement of an outdated dwelling with a modern building that would be more thermally efficient.

It was proposed by Cllr Kimber and seconded by Cllr Wheller that the application be granted.

Decision: That the application be granted subject to the conditions set out in the appendix to these minutes.

70. Urgent items

There were no urgent items.

71. Exempt Business

There was no exempt business.

72. Update Sheet

Decision List

Duration of meeting: 10.01 am - 12.55 pm

Chairman

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