Planning Committee

Minutes of the meeting held on 7 August 2026

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Present

Tim Jickells – in the Chair, Harry Blathwayt, Stephen Bolt, Tom Daly, Tony Grayling, James Harvey, Leslie Mogford and Matthew Shardlow (from item 10).

In attendance

Jason Brewster – Governance Officer, Sarah Cowley – Chief Executive, Jack Ibbotson – Planning and Heritage Officer (item 12), Kate Knights– Heritage and Design Manager (item 11), Callum Sculfor – Assistant Planning Officer (item 9.1), Rob Rogers – Director of Delivery, Ruth Sainsbury – Head of Planning and Lorraine Taylor – Head of Governance.

Steven Bell (solicitor) of Birketts attended for item 9(1).

Members of the public in attendance who spoke

Sandra Forder, an objector, Oliver Pennington, the agent, and Councillor Chris Brown, councillor for Ditchingham & Earsham ward, for item 9(1) - BA/2026/0116/FUL Maltings Meadow Sports Ground, Pirnhow Street, Ditchingham.

1. Apologies and welcome

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting.

Apologies were received from Gary Champion and Martyn Hooton.

Openness of Local Government Bodies Regulations 2014

The Chair explained that the meeting was being audio-recorded. All recordings remained the copyright of the Broads Authority and anyone wishing to receive a copy of the recording should contact the Governance Team. The minutes remained the record of the meeting. He added that the law permitted any person to film, record, photograph or use social media to report on the proceedings of public meetings of the Authority. This did not extend to live verbal commentary. The Chair needed to be informed if anyone intended to photograph, record or film so that any person under the age of 18 or members of the public not wishing to be filmed or photographed could be accommodated.

2. Appointment of Chair

Tim Jickells was proposed by Tony Grayling and seconded by Harry Blathwayt.

There being no other nominations, Tim Jickells was appointed Chair of the Planning Committee for the forthcoming year 2026/27.

3. Appointment of Vice-Chair

Tony Grayling was proposed by Tim Jickells and seconded by Harry Blathwayt.

There being no other nominations, Tony Grayling was appointed Vice-Chair of the Planning Committee for the forthcoming year 2026/27.

4. Declarations of interest and introductions

Members indicated that they had no further declarations of interest other than those already registered.

5. Minutes of last meeting

The minutes of the meeting held on 3 July 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chair.

6. Matters of urgent business

There were no items of urgent business

7. Chair's announcements and introduction to public speaking

Public Speaking: The Chair stated that public speaking was in operation in accordance with the Authority's Code of Practice for members of the Planning Committee and officers. Those who wished to speak were invited to come to the Public Speaking desk when the application they wished to comment on was being presented.

8. Requests to defer applications and/or vary agenda order

No requests to defer or vary the order of the agenda had been received.

9. Applications for planning permission

The Committee considered the following applications submitted under the Town and Country Planning Act 1990 (also having regard to Human Rights), and reached the decisions set out below. Acting under its delegated powers, the Committee authorised the immediate implementation of the decisions.

The following minutes relate to additional matters of information or detailed matters of policy not already covered in the officer's report, which were given additional attention.

(1) BA/2026/0116/FUL Maltings Meadow Sports Ground, Pirnhow Street, Ditchingham

Creation of a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with perimeter fencing, hardstanding areas, storage container, floodlights, access footpath, landscaping bund and overflow grasscrete parking area.
Applicant: Mr Jon Fuller

The Assistant Planning Officer (APO) provided a detailed presentation of the application that proposed the creation of a 3G Artificial Grass Pitch (AGP) with perimeter fencing, hardstanding areas, storage container, floodlights, access footpath, landscaping bund and overflow grasscrete parking area at Maltings Meadow Sports Ground, Pirnhow Street, Ditchingham.

The presentation included location maps, a site map, an aerial photograph equivalent of the site map, various photographic views of the site taken from points along Pirnhow Street and from the application site itself, a plan diagram depicting the AGP, the overflow parking and the bund (with shortest distances marked to the nearest property and house), a plan diagram of the AGP depicting the planting scheme, a diagram depicting the elevation plans of the fencing, lighting and storage container, a diagram depicting a plan view of the bund plus an elevation view and two cross sectional views, a plan view of the AGP detailing the fencing, infill containment barriers and hard standing areas, a diagram showing the predicted light spill for various combinations of the site's lighting infrastructure, a diagram of the predicted AGP noise emissions plus an inset image of a noise mitigation measure and a diagram depicting the lifecycle of an AGP from end of life to its replacement showing various steps to reclaim and re-purpose the existing materials.

In assessing the application, the APO addressed the key issues of the principle of development; the design, the impact on landscape, the impact on the environment, neighbour amenity and highways.

The proposal would replace an open grass pitch with a more developed facility, introducing visible fencing and lighting columns that reduced the openness of the immediate area. These additions would facilitate more frequent and later use which would affect the experience of the immediate neighbours.

The development would take place on an existing established sports ground which would retain the land for recreational use and was supported by the relevant Local Plan policies for protecting and enhancing sports, recreation and community facilities. The proposal would provide an all-weather facility that delivered a number of public benefits including improved grassroots sports provision, reduced cancellations due to poor pitch conditions, improved opportunities for children and young people, physical and mental health benefits, and wider community access to sports facilities.

The technical consultees, including the Environment Agency, Environmental Health, Highways, Natural England, the Authority's Landscape Consultant, Ecologists, Arboricultural Consultant and Historic Environment Advisor, had not objected. No Habitats Regulation Assessment was required.

The identified impacts could be mitigated through the revised layout and through enforceable planning conditions. On balance, the Authority considers that the policy support and significant public and community benefits outweighed the identified localised harms subject to the recommended conditions. The proposal was in accordance with the Local Plan for the Broads and the recommendation was for approval subject to the conditions detailed in section 8 of the report.

A Member, noting that the EU was proposing to ban the material used in the proposed artificial grass pitch, asked what alternative materials had been considered. The APO confirmed that no alternative materials had been considered. He reminded Members that the

planning process was predicated on assessing the application presented, that no objections to the material had been raised and that the proposed mitigations were considered sufficient.

In response to questions the APO confirmed that various physical measures to prevent micro-plastics leaving the site could be conditioned including the maintenance of this infrastructure and there would be no monitoring of drainage water for possible leaching of plastic. The APO reminded Members of recent discussions regarding plastic leachate in the context of plastic piling where the long term impacts of these materials were unknown and beyond the scope of the planning system. He added that Natural England and the Authority's Ecologists had raised no objections.

Mrs Sandra Forder spoke as an objector to the application believing the mitigations proposed were insufficient to address the harms to the amenity of the neighbouring residents. She believed the noise levels for the existing pitch already exceeded on occasion the 50dB, deemed a "moderate community annoyance" by the World Health Organisation, with levels up to 70dB having been measured (a slide was presented showing various meter readings above 50dB). The intensification of the site would exacerbate these noise problems with an increase in shouting, the screaming of foul language and whistles. Not to mention the slamming of car doors and car alarms which were already prevalent on the site. She believed the bund would have no impact on reducing the noise levels.

Mrs Forder believed the site was too close to her property which was less than the 45m, as stipulated in the environmental consideration survey, and that other councils were more considerate as demonstrated by the 45m measured, using Google Earth, between the nearest property and the AGP at Beccles.

She highlighted that some of the proposed lights would be taller than the neighbouring properties and would, she believed, shine directly into neighbouring resident's windows. She noted that the application stated that there were three existing lights when in reality there were five. If the application was approved the result would be seven sets of lights in a concentrated area which would cause unacceptable light intrusion for nearby residents.

Mrs Forder suggested there were more suitable locations for this development, including near the tennis courts away from neighbouring properties or at an entirely different location such as Skinner's Meadow, Bungay.

The site was regularly used as a car park as indicated by a slide depicting three photographs of parked cars taken over three consecutive weekends. Residents had previously contacted the local council regarding traffic calming measures along Pirnhow Street without the additional usage proposed by this development.

With the five minutes allocated for speaking completed, Mrs Forder ended her statement with a slide depicting a computer generated image of the completed development as viewed from an upstairs window in her property. In response to a question, she confirmed that the image had been produced using artificial intelligence.

Mr Oliver Pennington, as the agent working on behalf of the sports club and the Football Foundation spoke in support of the application. This development would provide modern training and playing surfaces with year round access which would avoid the postponements or cancellations that the club had experienced historically due to water logged pitches. It would serve not just the sports club but the wider community with partner groups and other organisations being able to benefit from the AGP.

This revised application had incorporated a number of comments raised on the previously withdrawn application. As a consequence, the parking had been reduced and additional planting introduced on both the northern and eastern boundaries improving the site's biodiversity net gain. The bund would be created from top soil excavated on site reducing the number of HGVs visiting the site during construction. A low-level fence and signage would be used to prevent spectators from accessing the bund.

The addition of an overflow car park, in conjunction with the existing car park, would reduce on street parking and improve road safety during peak periods of use. The overflow car park would be constructed with grasscrete, a more sustainable material.

The flood lighting met recognised industry standards and was designed to minimise the light spill experienced by both the nearby residents and ecologically sensitive surroundings.

Mr Pennington stated that this sustainable development supported the continued and enhanced use of the Maltings Meadow sports ground and would deliver significant public benefits.

In response to questions, Mr Pennington explained that other pitch materials, constructed using olive pips and cork, had been assessed within the industry. These more sustainable materials did not provide as good a playing surface and rubber crumb remained the most effective, lifelike material available. He confirmed that the planting scheme was consistent with the representations from both the Authority's Ecologists and Norfolk Wildlife Trust (NWT). He added that the planting would aid the site's Biodiversity Net Gain and help soften the impact of the development within the surrounding area. He indicated that the AGP's location at the Maltings Meadow Sports Ground reflected demand analysis undertaken by the Football Foundation.

A Member asked why the AGP was necessary and, given the size of the sports ground, why this location was chosen. Mr Pennington explained that the AGP addressed the existing problem of water logged pitches. This all-weather surface and its improved drainage would eliminate the need for cancellations. The increased capacity of the facility would provide local sports clubs and the local community with greater opportunities to use it. The siting of the AGP reflected the greater flood risk at other areas within the wider sports ground and minimised its impact on the visual amenity within the surrounding area.

Given the increased risk of heavy rainfall events, a Member asked whether the proposed infill retention and drainage systems' capacities would be sufficient to ensure no pollution entered the river. Mr Pennington explained that there was no regulated discharge from the site

currently. The new drainage system would regulate the movement of surface water from the site to the river in a controlled fashion.

The Member, noting NWT's representation, asked what steps would be taken to change people's behaviour to help minimise the transfer of microplastics off-site. Mr Pennington explained a number of measures to control microplastics as detailed in the conditions including boot cleaning stations and kick boards. He added that access to and from the AGP was via hard standing areas to minimise the spread of the infill.

A Member asked whether there was scope to choose an earlier time for closing at weekends. Mr Pennington suggested it was possible to consider 6pm as a closing time, given a reduction in bookings after that time.

Cllr Brown provided a statement in support of the application commenting that he had been approached by the sports club following the withdrawal of the previous application. Cllr Brown believed the current application was a vast improvement on the previous one, and he had called it in to enable the committee to fully weigh up the benefits and concerns associated with this proposal. With over 100 positive representations, including from both the Parish and Town Councils, there was strong support for this development which equated to a £1 million plus investment in the area. This facility would satisfy unmet demand in the area as demonstrated by the difficulty in booking training time at the Beccles AGP when the existing pitch was unavailable. The councillor was pleased to see the mitigation taken to address the potential noise and light impacts. He believed the landscaping and the bund were an improvement on the current situation where cars could park right up to the boundary fence. The facility would support the physical and mental wellbeing of hundreds of local adults and children and was consistent with East Suffolk's leisure strategy.

A Member asked, given the unknowns regarding the long term impacts of microplastics, whether the infill retention measures were sufficient. Cllr Brown indicated that, with over 2000 pitches of this type in England, there was a lot of experience of managing this type of facility. He acknowledged that effort would be required to change people's behaviour to ensure the mitigations were fully effective.

In response to a question, the solicitor for the Authority reminded Members that the determination of this application must be in accordance with the development plan unless material considerations indicated otherwise. The committee had to be guided by expert opinion and that planning law indicated that great weight was to be given to those expert views as Members were potentially not qualified to challenge them.

Members welcomed the mitigation to reduce the development's impact on the amenity of the local residents. Despite this, one Member had reservations regarding the noise levels and believed that further respite should be afforded the neighbouring residents at weekends. Members supported a change in the condition restricting the operating hours of the AGP.

Leslie Mogford proposed, Harry Blathwayt seconded

It was resolved unanimously to amend the site-wide hours restriction to impose a closing time of 18:00 for weekends only (the 20:00 closing time would remain for bank holidays or public holidays).

A number of Members acknowledged the need for this development however they were concerned by the veracity of the technical fixes required to mitigate the harm from the rubber crumb. Given the environmental significance of the Broads, one Member wanted greater certainty regarding the risk of this material leaching into the water course. Other Members recognised these concerns but believed the mitigations would be adequate and any residual harm would be outweighed by the benefits offered by this development.

Leslie Mogford proposed, Harry Blathwayt seconded

It was resolved by five votes for, one against and one abstention to approve the application subject to the following conditions:

i. Time Limit

ii. Approved plans

iii. Site-wide hours restriction as amended above.

iv. Automatic lighting shut off.

v. No additional external lighting.

vi. Lighting installed as approved.

vii. Site-wide Management Plan and Code of Conduct.

viii. No amplified sound or PA system.

ix. Parking Management Plan.

x. Highways

xi. Grasscrete parking delivered before first use.

xii. Landscaping and bund planting.

xiii. Biodiversity Gain Plan and HMMP.

xiv. Ecological mitigation.

xv. Tree and Hedgerow Protection and Replacement Planting

xvi. Infill retention and microplastic control.

xvii. End-of-life recycling plan.

xviii. Surface water drainage and maintenance.

xix. Construction Environmental Management Plan.

xx. Archaeological Written Scheme of Investigation.

The committee adjourned at 11:35am and reconvened at 11.43am when Matthew Shardlow joined the meeting.

10. Enforcement update

Members received an update report from the Head of Planning on enforcement matters previously referred to the Committee. No further updates were provided at the meeting.

The report was noted.

11. BA/2026/0001/TPO Woodland To The North Of Long Dyke, Wayford Bridge - site visit decision

The Heritage and Design Manager (HDM) presented the report to determine whether a site visit was required in relation to a woodland Tree Preservation Order (TPO) for mixed deciduous woodland, including oak, ash, willow, alder and birch trees, located to the north of Long Dyke, Wayford Bridge. The condition of the trees was considered to be fair, with a retention span of between 40-100 years. The woodland was not large in size, with limited views of it but it was considered to contribute to the amenity of the area within which it sat. A parcel of woodland at the eastern end of the woodland had been sold and the new owner had carried out significant felling and clearing of the understory. It was considered there was a risk of further felling in this area and the potential for further erosion of the woodland should other parcels of it be sold. A provisional woodland TPO had been served on 11 June 2026 which protected everything that could become a tree including the understory. The HEM indicated that this TPO would need to be confirmed by 11 December 2026.

Two objections had been received, one from the new owner and the other from the previous owner who continued to own the wider woodland.

Both objections had been received within the 28-day consultation period and as per the Authority's Scheme of powers delegated to the Chief Executive and other officers, paragraph 50 (ii), this matter would need to be determined by the Planning Committee. In preparation for this determination the HDM explained that Members could undertake a site visit however, in this instance, a detailed photographic survey of the woodland and its surrounds, in conjunction with information provided by the Authority's Arboricultural Consultant, would be adequate to determine the provisional TPO. The recommendation was therefore not to undertake a site visit.

Members agreed that there was no value to a site visit in this instance.

Stephen Bolt proposed, seconded by James Harvey

It was resolved unanimously to not undertake a site visit before the provisional woodland TPO BA/2026/0001/TPO was considered at a future Planning Committee meeting.

12. Norfolk Community Safety Partnership: Norfolk Heritage Watch - Strategic Delivery Plan 2026-2029

The Planning and Heritage Officer (PHO) presented the report which detailed the aims of the newly formed Norfolk Heritage Watch and supporting Heritage Crime Partnership in responding to heritage crime in Norfolk. The PHO explained that this initiative had been arranged by the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) for Norfolk and the Norfolk Community Safety Partnership. The intention was to bring together the Norfolk Community Safety Partnership, police, fire and other stakeholders including members of the public in an effort to tackle heritage crime using preventative measures in conjunction with improved monitoring and reporting.

The Authority would be engaged via the Norfolk Heritage Crime Partnership which would provide a forum for all the various stakeholders to share their knowledge and experience within three delivery areas: Crime prevention & Security measures; Communications & Engagement and Children & Young People. This partnership would meet biannually and the Authority, represented by the Planning and Heritage Officer or Heritage and Design Manager, would participate but was not expected to lead on this activity. This forum was consistent with the Authority's commitment to actively tackle and promote awareness of heritage crime as stated within the National Parks Joint Statement for Historic Environment.

In response to questions, the PHO confirmed that the bodies that endorse this strategic delivery plan may change due to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) however LGR was not expected to impact the agencies responsible for delivering this plan. He indicated that this strategic delivery plan was not expected to change with the recent election of a new PCC for Norfolk and that the Norfolk Heritage Crime Partnership would consider LGR's replacement of PCCs as and when it was necessary.

Stephen Bolt proposed, seconded by Harry Blathwayt

It was resolved unanimously to endorse the Norfolk Community Safety Partnership - Norfolk Heritage Watch - Strategic Delivery Plan 2026-2029.

13. Circular 28/83 Publication by Local Authorities of information about the handling of planning applications – Q2 (1 April to 30 June) 2026

The Head of Planning (HoP) introduced the report, which provided the development management statistics for the quarter ending 30 June 2026. The HoP highlighted that all minor and other applications had been determined within statutory timescales or within an agreed extension of time as shown in table 2 (of the report) and exceeded the national performance indicators as shown in table 3 (of the report).

The report was noted.

14. Appeals to the Secretary of State

The Committee received a schedule of appeals to the Secretary of State since the last meeting. The Head of Planning highlighted an appeal relating to the site of the TPO discussed during item 11 of the agenda. An Enforcement Notice had been served in regard to an unauthorised container/storage unit located at 18 Long Dyke, Wayford Bridge which the site's owner had appealed.

15. Decisions made by officers under delegated powers

The Committee received a schedule of decisions made by officers under delegated powers from 19 June to 23 July 2026 and any Tree Preservation Orders confirmed within this period.

16. Other items of business

There were no other items of business.

17. Date of next meeting

The next meeting of the Planning Committee would be on Friday 9 October 2026 at 10:00am at the National Centre for Writing, Dragon Hall, 115-123 King Street, Norwich.

The meeting ended at 12:10pm.

Signed by

Chair