

WOODHAM FERRERS & BICKNACRE PARISH COUNCIL

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Report following a Public Meeting held on the 18th September 2026 at 7.00pm

The meeting was facilitated by Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre Parish Council
Convened at Bicknacre Memorial Village Hall, Bicknacre

Present:

63 Members of Public

Chair: Cllr Paul Walton

Parish Councillors: Cllr R Webster, Cllr Richard Poulter, Cllr A Mair, Cllr R Watling
Cllr J Sharman

County Councillor: Cllr Chris Benn

City Councillor: Cllr Paul Clark (deputising for Cllr Sue Dobson & Cllr Mark Taylor)

Resident speaking: Frances Mollinghoff

Jesters Kids Club: Alison Doherty

Parish Clerk: Miss Lucy White

The applicant/developer, Gladman Developments, had been invited to attend but declined, advising the Parish Council that, having previously met with the Council and heard its views, they did not consider this type of meeting to be constructive.

Purpose of the meeting

Woodham Ferrers & Bicknacre Parish Council held a public meeting to provide residents with an opportunity to hear information and discuss planning application 26/00896/OUT, an outline application for up to 99 dwellings, including affordable housing, with associated public open space, landscaping, sustainable drainage and vehicular access at Horseshoe Farm, Main Road, Bicknacre.

The Parish Council has formally objected to the application. The purpose of the public meeting was to explain the Parish Council's position, hear views from residents and other elected representatives, and identify any additional matters that residents considered should be brought to the attention of Chelmsford City Council as the planning authority.

The meeting was also held against the background of the recent decision by Chelmsford City Council's Planning Committee on 15 September 2026 to approve the separate Barbrook Way development for approximately 250 dwellings in Bicknacre. That application and its implications for the area were discussed during the meeting, although it was recognised that the two planning applications must ultimately be considered separately.

Opening remarks

Paul Walton welcomed residents and explained that the meeting had been arranged at relatively short notice to provide an opportunity for the community to discuss the proposed development.

He referred to the recent Barbrook Way planning decision and thanked those who had represented the village at the City Council Planning Committee Meeting, including Cllr Richard Poulter, Cllr Paul Clark and other representatives and residents.

Paul expressed frustration at the outcome of the Barbrook Way application and referred to what he considered to be a growing level of development pressure on Bicknacre and surrounding villages.

He stressed that, although the Parish Council had objected to the Horseshoe Farm application, the meeting was a public meeting and the intention was to hear residents' views and consider whether any additional matters should be included in the Parish Council's representations.

Residents were reminded that they could submit their own comments directly to Chelmsford City Council and that information explaining how to do so was available at the meeting.

Parish Council's Planning Position

Cllr Richard Poulter outlined the Parish Council's principal reasons for objecting to application 26/00896/OUT.

He referred to a previous application for development on the site, considered in 2015, which had been refused and subsequently dismissed on appeal.

He explained that the previous refusal had included three principal considerations:

1. The site was outside the defined settlement boundary.
2. The development would adversely affect the character and beauty of the countryside.
3. At that time, the Council was able to demonstrate a five-year housing land supply.

Richard explained that circumstances had changed since 2015, particularly in relation to the amount of development which had subsequently taken place in Bicknacre and surrounding areas.

Although Chelmsford City Council could no longer demonstrate a full five-year housing land supply, Richard referred to the current figure as approximately 4.74 years. He considered the relatively small shortfall to be an important consideration in determining whether this additional site should be released for development.

He also considered that the character of the countryside surrounding the site had not materially changed since the earlier refusal.

Traffic was identified as another significant issue.

Richard referred to the proposed access, which would be located on Main Road opposite the former shop known as Petals. He noted that the access would serve both vehicles entering and leaving the proposed development.

He referred to the volume of traffic already using Main Road and to the potential additional traffic arising from developments in Bicknacre, South Woodham Ferrers, Maldon and surrounding areas.

At the time of the meeting, the Highway Authority had not yet provided its consultation response to

the application.

Richard stated that the Parish Council would concentrate its formal objections on matters which it considered capable of carrying appropriate weight in the planning process.

Traffic and highway concerns raised by residents

A number of residents raised concerns about existing traffic levels, vehicle speeds, congestion and road safety.

One resident described carrying out informal traffic counts from their property on White Elm Road. They reported recording approximately:

- 660 vehicles in one hour during a morning observation; and
- approximately 1,107 vehicles during a one-hour afternoon period.

These figures were described as informal observations rather than official traffic data.

The resident offered to carry out a further traffic count during school term time, when traffic levels were expected to be higher.

Another resident suggested that a community speed-watch/traffic survey could be undertaken near the proposed access point to provide evidence of vehicle speeds and traffic conditions.

Cllr Paul Clark explained that traffic counters could provide information on vehicle volumes and average speeds without requiring people to stand at the roadside.

Residents also described difficulties crossing Main Road, particularly when children from Jesters Nursery and Kids Club

Contribution from Frances Mollinghoff – Horseshoe Farm resident

Frances explained that she had lived at Horseshoe Farm for approximately 29 years.

She specifically clarified that she does not own the land proposed for development and is not affiliated with the development proposal.

She gave some historical background to her property, explaining that the house is more than 450 years old and has previously formed part of the wider Horseshoe Park estate. She described the historic agricultural character of the area and the subsequent conversion and renovation of the property.

Frances expressed concern about the cumulative impact of development and traffic around her property.

She referred particularly to:

- existing traffic on Main Road;
- the approved Barbrook Way development;
- the proposed convenience store;
- the proposed access to the rear of her property;
- noise, dust and vehicle emissions during construction;

- loss of privacy;
- the potential impact on her family and grandchildren; and
- the impact of development on the rural character and views surrounding Horseshoe Farm.

She also expressed concern that the plans appeared to provide green buffers around some neighbouring properties and facilities but not along her boundary.

Frances stated that she considered the proposed development to represent a significant change to the existing character of the area and encouraged residents to continue making their own representations to the planning authority.

Contribution from Alison – Jesters Nursery & Kids Club

Alison spoke about the potential effect of the proposal on **Jesters Nursery and Kids Club**, which has operated in the area for approximately 25 years.

She explained that the location of her business had originally been granted planning permission with consideration given to its rural setting, privacy and the need to provide a safe environment for children.

Alison described the surrounding fields, wildlife and agricultural activity as important aspects of the environment enjoyed by the children.

She raised concerns about:

- additional traffic;
- road safety for children, parents and staff;
- noise and disruption;
- construction activity;
- pollution and dust;
- the effect of development on the children's outdoor environment; and
- drainage and surface water.

Alison explained that Jesters had experienced significant problems with drainage in the past. She said that the business had incurred substantial expenditure dealing with drainage and had previously experienced standing water affecting areas used by the children.

She therefore questioned how the proposed development and associated drainage arrangements would affect the existing situation.

Alison confirmed that Jesters intended to submit its own formal objection to the planning application.

Contributions from elected representatives:

Cllr Chris Benn – Essex County Council

Cllr Chris Benn explained that planning decisions are principally a matter for Chelmsford City Council, rather than Essex County Council, although Essex County Council has responsibilities including highways.

He expressed his support for residents raising concerns about development and said that he would assist in raising relevant issues within his role.

Highways and the cumulative impact of development on the area's infrastructure were discussed.

Chris noted that individual planning applications are generally considered on their own merits, which can make it difficult to assess the combined effect of several developments on roads and infrastructure.

Cllr Paul Clark – Chelmsford City Council

Cllr Paul Clark, who had attended the City Council Planning Committee meeting concerning Barbrook Way, discussed the planning system and the implications of the Council's housing land supply position.

He referred to the "tilted balance" provisions of national planning policy and explained his view that the lack of a five-year housing land supply can make it more difficult for the City Council to refuse applications.

He provided figures illustrating that a number of planning authorities in Essex and elsewhere also have less than a five-year housing supply.

Paul also discussed the Government's national housing targets and expressed the view that the pressure to increase housing numbers was contributing to development pressure in villages.

He argued that greater consideration should be given to brownfield sites and to the cumulative infrastructure impact of developments.

Paul also referred to changes expected to the National Scheme of Delegation for planning applications, which were discussed as potentially reducing the number of applications that would be determined by elected members through a planning committee.

Flooding and drainage

Flooding was raised by a resident as a significant concern which they felt should be addressed in relation to the application.

The resident described having experienced flooding from surface-water runoff from the fields on a number of occasions, including in 2011, 2012 and 2016.

They stated that they had spent approximately £25,000 attempting to protect their property from flooding and remained concerned about the effect of developing the fields.

They questioned how the proposed attenuation pond and drainage system would cope with the additional development and whether the previous flooding evidence had been adequately taken into account.

Cllr Richard Poulter acknowledged the history of flooding in the area and referred to previous investigations by Essex County Council.

He explained that the current application included an attenuation pond, intended to hold surface water and release it gradually so that the drainage system is not overwhelmed.

Richard's view was that, because the relevant authorities had previously considered the flood risk

and the application contained proposed mitigation measures, the Parish Council should concentrate its formal objection on matters where it considered there was stronger planning evidence.

Cllr Paul Clark added that the County Council's flood-risk and drainage specialists would be able to consider the proposed drainage arrangements and the effect of development on surface-water flows.

The discussion highlighted the importance of ensuring that any drainage modelling takes account of the actual existing conditions and the extent of proposed development.

Cumulative development and infrastructure

Considerable discussion took place about the cumulative effect of developments in and around Bicknacre.

Residents referred to the recently approved Barbrook Way development of approximately 250 dwellings, as well as other proposed or approved developments in surrounding areas.

It was acknowledged that, as a matter of planning law and procedure, applications generally have to be considered individually. However, residents questioned whether the cumulative impact on roads, schools, medical facilities, drainage and other infrastructure was being adequately addressed.

The potential future development of other sites around South Woodham Ferrers, Maldon and neighbouring villages was also discussed.

Cllr Paul Clark explained that developers' proposals are assessed through the planning process, including infrastructure contributions and planning obligations, but expressed concerns about whether the wider cumulative effect was adequately addressed.

Brownfield land and alternative locations

Residents questioned why additional development was being proposed on greenfield land when brownfield sites and vacant properties exist elsewhere.

The Meadows/Waterside area in Chelmsford was discussed as an example of a larger brownfield opportunity which has been subject to proposals for residential development.

Cllr Richard Poulter explained that Chelmsford City Council maintains a brownfield register and that the Parish Council had made representations concerning brownfield land as part of the review of the Local Plan.

The discussion also touched on the costs associated with bringing some brownfield sites forward, including potential contamination and remediation costs.

Neighbourhood Plan

A resident asked whether the Parish Council should consider preparing a Neighbourhood Plan, referring to the experience of Danbury.

Cllr Paul Clark explained that a Neighbourhood Plan can carry significant weight in the planning process but requires considerable time, work and community involvement.

He referred to Danbury's experience and indicated that its Neighbourhood Plan had been relevant

in the determination of a previous planning application.

The possibility of Bicknacre and Woodham Ferrers pursuing a Neighbourhood Plan was therefore raised as something which the community could consider for the future.

No decision was taken at the meeting to commence preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan.

Planning portal and submitting objections

Several residents reported difficulties accessing the Chelmsford City Council planning portal and viewing the documents relating to application 26/00896/OUT.

Cllr Paul Clark acknowledged that the planning portal had experienced problems and said that he had also experienced difficulty accessing documents.

Residents asked whether paper copies of the application could be viewed elsewhere.

It was explained that hard copies could be made available at Chelmsford City Council, Duke Street, and that residents could submit representations by email or in writing if they were unable to use the online system.

Cllr Paul Clark advised anyone delivering a written representation by hand to request a receipt/time-stamped acknowledgement, so that there would be evidence of when the objection had been submitted.

Individual representations

Residents asked whether several members of the same household could each submit an objection.

The advice given was that individuals should submit their own representations where they wished to do so and, where appropriate, should explain their own individual concerns rather than simply submitting identical copies.

It was also explained that the Barbrook Way application and application 26/00896/OUT are separate planning applications.

Residents can refer to the existence of other approved development as part of explaining their concerns about infrastructure and the wider context, but the Horseshoe Farm application itself must be assessed on its own planning merits.

What happens next?

Residents asked what further action could be taken beyond submitting objections.

Cllr Richard Poulter advised that the most important immediate action was for residents who wished to object to submit their representations to Chelmsford City Council before the consultation deadline.

He emphasised that representations should identify relevant planning matters and that residents should not assume that their views would be taken into account simply because other people had submitted objections.

It was also discussed that, should the application be recommended for approval under delegated powers, there may be circumstances in which an elected member could request that the application be considered by the Planning Committee. The precise arrangements and deadlines were

discussed in the context of the forthcoming changes to the national scheme of delegation.

The Parish Council will continue to monitor the application and consider the responses from statutory consultees, including highways and drainage/flood-risk consultees.

General views expressed at the meeting

The meeting demonstrated significant concern among those attending about the scale and cumulative impact of development in Bicknacre and surrounding villages.

Residents raised concerns relating to:

- highway safety and traffic volume;
- vehicle speeds;
- pedestrian safety;
- cumulative traffic from surrounding developments;
- flooding and surface-water drainage;
- construction disruption;
- noise, dust and pollution;
- impact on children and Jesters Nursery;
- impact on neighbouring properties;
- loss of countryside and rural character;
- infrastructure capacity;
- housing numbers and housing land supply; and
- the use of greenfield land rather than brownfield opportunities.

Conclusion

Cllr Paul Walton thanked the speakers, elected representatives and residents for attending and contributing to the meeting.

Residents were reminded to submit their individual comments to Chelmsford City Council before the consultation deadline.

The Parish Council will continue to pursue its formal objection to planning application 26/00896/OUT and will consider the matters raised at the meeting when finalising or supplementing its representations.

The meeting closed with an encouragement to residents to remain engaged with the planning process and to ensure that their own views are formally submitted to the planning authority.

Note: This report is a summary of the public meeting and does not constitute formal Parish Council minutes. Statements attributed to individual speakers represent views expressed during the meeting and do not necessarily represent the views of the Parish Council or any other organisation.