

Boston Borough Council

Minutes of a meeting of the **Planning Committee** held in the Committee Room - Municipal Buildings, West Street, Boston, PE21 8QR on Tuesday 1st July 2025 at 10.00 am.

Present:

Councillor David Middleton, in the Chair.

Councillors David Scoot (Vice-Chairman), Alison Austin, Peter Bedford, Dale Broughton, Stuart Evans, Andy Izard (substitute for Anne Dorrian), Claire Rylott, Suzanne Welberry and Stephen Woodliffe.

In attendance:

Councillor Helen Staples.

Officers:

Assistant Director – Planning & Strategic Infrastructure, Group Manager – Planning and Development, Development Manager, Senior Planning Officer, Senior Planning Lawyer and Democratic Services Team Leader.

1 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Anne Dorrian, with Councillor Andy Izard substituting, and from Councillors Barrie Pierpoint, Lina Savickiene and Sarah Sharpe.

2 Declarations of Interest

Standing declarations of interest were received for all members of the Council who are also members of:

The South East Lincolnshire Joint Strategic Planning Committee:
Councillors Peter Bedford and David Middleton.

The Internal Drainage Boards: Councillors Peter Bedford, David Middleton, Claire Rylott, David Scoot, and Suzanne Welberry.

Several Members declared that they had been lobbied in relation to the application under consideration but confirmed that this would not affect their impartiality or decision-making.

3 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting held on 6th May 2025 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

4 Public Questions

No questions were received.

5 Planning application B 23 0379**Full Planning Permission**

Proposed residential development of 89 dwellings and associated infrastructure, drainage and open space in accordance with amended plans received by the Local Planning authority on 31-Oct-2024

Land to the East of Gaysfield Road, Fishtoft, Boston PE21 0SF

The Chairman opened the item by welcoming Members and members of the public to the meeting. He introduced the application and invited officers to present the report.

The Senior Planning Lawyer addressed the Committee at the outset. She advised Members that following the previous Committee meeting on 6 June 2025, the Council had obtained independent legal advice in relation to the application. As a result, officers had taken the decision to return the application to Committee for fresh consideration. This was to ensure that any decision taken would be robust and defensible, and that the risk of legal challenge would be minimised. Members were reminded that their role was to consider the application on its planning merits, and that any procedural concerns raised by third parties should be directed through the Council's corporate complaints process.

The Development Manager presented the application in detail. He outlined the site's location to the east of Gaysfield Road, Fishtoft, and confirmed that part of the site was allocated for housing in the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (allocation Fis046), with the remainder benefitting from two extant planning permissions. The proposal was for 89 dwellings, including 20% affordable housing, with associated infrastructure, drainage and open space.

The Development Manager explained that the application had been amended since its original submission, with revisions to layout, house types, materials and drainage strategy. The presentation included site plans, street scenes, landscaping proposals and photographs of the site and surrounding area.

Key planning considerations included:

- The principle of development was established through the Local Plan and previous consents.
- The proposed density was considered acceptable and reflective of modern developments in the area.
- The design had been revised following officer feedback and was considered to be of suitable quality.
- No significant harm to neighbouring amenity was identified.
- The drainage strategy, including an attenuation basin and interceptor drain, had been reviewed by statutory consultees with no objections raised.
- Highways officers raised no concerns regarding access or traffic impact.
- Section 106 contributions included £400,000 towards education and healthcare.
- The proposal would result in some harm to the nearby heritage asset of Fishtoft Manor but the extent of the harm was less than substantial and outweighed by the benefits of the scheme.

- The scheme would deliver Biodiversity Net Gain across the site despite not being required to do so.

The Development Manager concluded that the proposal was in accordance with the development plan when taken as a whole, and that the benefits of the scheme, particularly in addressing the borough's housing shortfall, outweighed any identified harm. The application was recommended for approval, subject to conditions and the completion of a Section 106 agreement.

The Committee heard from four registered speakers in relation to planning application B/23/0379.

Mr Ian Scott – Objector

Mr Scott addressed the Committee in objection to the application. He raised concerns regarding the adequacy of the proposed sustainable drainage system (SuDS), citing government guidance from the CIRIA SuDS Manual. He argued that the attenuation pond was undersized and incorrectly designed, with its base level below the maximum water level of the Internal Drainage Board (IDB) ditch, which would prevent effective discharge during periods of heavy rainfall. He suggested that the pond would act as a detention basin and require significantly more capacity to accommodate multi-day rainfall events.

Mr Scott also questioned the accuracy of the housing density figures presented in the officer report, alleging discrepancies between reported and actual densities in neighbouring developments. He claimed that these discrepancies indicated an intention to mislead the Committee.

In relation to flood risk, Mr Scott stated that the sequential and exception tests had not been properly applied and that existing flooding issues had not been adequately assessed. He further criticised the drainage calculations for excluding contributions from swales and boundary drains, and for assuming uninterrupted discharge.

Mr Scott concluded by asserting that the application failed to comply with national drainage design standards and should be refused or resubmitted with a revised drainage strategy and reduced housing numbers.

Members sought clarification from Mr Scott regarding the location of the photographs included in his submission and the relevance of the examples provided. Mr Scott confirmed that the images were representative of drainage conditions in the wider area and reiterated his concerns about the design and capacity of the proposed drainage infrastructure.

Ms Fiona Beddoes – Applicant (Gleeson Homes)

Ms Beddoes spoke in support of the application on behalf of Gleeson Homes. She outlined the company's commitment to delivering affordable, energy-efficient homes for first-time buyers and families on low to middle incomes. She confirmed that the proposed development would include 89 dwellings, 20% affordable housing, and significant financial contributions via a Section 106 agreement, including £341,000 for education, £59,000 for healthcare, and £5,000 for travel plan monitoring.

Ms Beddoes stated that the drainage scheme had been designed to accommodate 1-in-100-year storm events with climate change allowances and included an interceptor drain along the western boundary to address existing surface water issues. She confirmed that the scheme had been reviewed by qualified external consultants and that no objections had been raised by statutory consultees.

She also highlighted the inclusion of a local equipped play area and biodiversity enhancements through landscaping and planting. Ms Beddoes concluded by expressing the applicant's hope that the Committee would support the scheme, which she described as a much-needed low-cost home ownership opportunity.

Members queried the design of the internal roads, the adequacy of parking provision, and the qualifications of the drainage consultants. Ms Beddoes confirmed that the roads would be built to adoptable standards and that the drainage consultants used were local specialists familiar with Lincolnshire conditions.

Councillor Helen Crawford – Fishtoft Parish Council

Councillor Crawford addressed the Committee on behalf of Fishtoft Parish Council. She raised concerns about the impact of the proposed access road on the safety of children using the adjacent Scout Hut and field. She explained that the Scout group had used the field for over 40 years and that the proposed road would bisect the site, creating a hazard for children crossing between the Hut and the field, particularly during evening meetings.

Councillor Crawford requested that the Committee consider relocating the access road or, if that was not possible, securing a Section 106 contribution to provide toilet facilities on the field and a pelican crossing to ensure safe access. She emphasised the importance of protecting youth facilities and maintaining safe recreational space for the community.

Members asked for clarification on the frequency and timing of Scout meetings and the extent of the land affected. Councillor Crawford confirmed that meetings occurred three evenings per week and that the field was used for a variety of outdoor activities.

Councillor Helen Staples – Ward Member

Councillor Staples spoke in objection to the application. She expressed concern about the scale and density of the development, noting that the original Local Plan allocation was for 45 dwellings and that the current proposal represented a 98% increase. She argued that the elevated land levels and two-storey dwellings would be overbearing and out of character with the surrounding area.

Councillor Staples raised further concerns about flood risk, citing the heavy clay soil and questioning the effectiveness of the proposed interceptor drains. She also highlighted the financial burden of rising insurance premiums for residents in Flood Zone 3 and queried whether first-time buyers would be able to afford such costs.

She criticised the lack of local amenities and public transport in Fishtoft and questioned the sustainability of the development. Councillor Staples concluded by urging the Committee to refuse the application or revert to one of the previously approved, smaller schemes.

Members sought clarification on the soil conditions, insurance implications, and the impact on neighbouring properties. Councillor Staples reiterated her concerns and emphasised the need to protect the character and amenity of the village.

Following the public representations, the Development Manager and the Senior Planning Officer provided a detailed response to the issues raised.

In relation to drainage and flood risk, officers confirmed that the proposed scheme had been subject to extensive consultation with statutory consultees, including the Lead Local Flood Authority (LLFA) and Witham Fourth Internal Drainage Board (IDB). Both bodies had reviewed the submitted Flood Risk Assessment and drainage strategy and raised no objections, subject to conditions. Officers emphasised that the proposed attenuation basin, interceptor drain, and associated infrastructure had been designed to accommodate a 1-in-100-year storm event with climate change allowances. It was noted that the interceptor drain along the northern and western boundaries was a proactive measure to address existing surface water issues affecting neighbouring properties.

Officers acknowledged that anecdotal evidence of localised flooding had been submitted by objectors, but reiterated that the planning authority must rely on the technical expertise of statutory consultees. It was confirmed that all third-party submissions, including those from Mr Scott, had been shared with the LLFA and IDB for review. No new evidence had been presented that would alter their professional conclusions.

In response to concerns about the safety of the Scout Hut and adjacent field, officers confirmed that the proposed access road would be located adjacent to the Hut, with a tactile pedestrian crossing included in the plans. A post-and-rail fence would be installed to separate the access road from the Scout field. Officers indicated that the precise location and design of the crossing could be reviewed further in consultation with Lincolnshire County Council Highways and the Scout group. It was confirmed that the majority of the Scout field would remain in use and that officers were open to exploring additional safety measures, including traffic calming or alternative crossing types, through planning conditions.

Regarding housing density, officers explained that while the Local Plan allocation for the site (Fis046) indicated a notional capacity of 45 dwellings, this figure was not prescriptive. The application site also included land covered by two extant planning permissions, which together permitted a comparable number of dwellings. Officers advised that the proposed density was consistent with other modern developments in the area and would not result in demonstrable harm to the character or appearance of the settlement.

On the matter of design, officers confirmed that the applicant had worked positively with the Council to revise the layout and house types. The resulting scheme was considered to be of acceptable quality and responsive to the local context. The development would include a mix of dwelling types, landscaping, and public open space, including a play area. Officers confirmed that the play area would be appropriately located and could be fenced if necessary to ensure safety near the attenuation basin.

In relation to highway safety, officers advised that the application had been supported by a transport assessment and that Lincolnshire County Council Highways had raised no objections. The internal road layout would be constructed to adoptable standards and

would accommodate refuse and emergency vehicles. A Construction Management Plan would be secured by condition to manage construction traffic and minimise disruption.

Officers also addressed concerns about sustainability and access to services. It was noted that Fishtoft was designated as a Minor Service Centre in the Local Plan and was considered a sustainable location for development due to its proximity to Boston. While public transport options were limited, the site was within cycling distance of key services and facilities.

In conclusion, officers advised that the application complied with the development plan when taken as a whole. The principle of development was established, and the proposal would deliver affordable housing and contribute to the borough's housing supply. Any identified harm was not considered to be significant or demonstrable and would be outweighed by the benefits of the scheme.

Following the officer presentation and public representations, Members of the Committee engaged in a detailed discussion of the application.

Several Members raised concerns regarding the proposed housing density. It was noted that the Local Plan allocation for the site (Fis046) indicated a notional capacity of 45 dwellings, whereas the application proposed 89. Members queried whether the increased density would be out of keeping with the character of the surrounding area and whether it would result in a cramped or overdeveloped layout. Officers responded that the density figure in the Local Plan was not prescriptive and that the site also included land covered by two extant planning permissions. It was further noted that the proposed layout included adequate separation distances, landscaping, and public open space.

Concerns were also raised in relation to flood risk and drainage. Members referred to the representations made by objectors and queried whether the proposed attenuation basin and interceptor drain would be sufficient to prevent surface water flooding, particularly given the heavy clay soil in the area. Officers reiterated that the drainage strategy had been reviewed by the Lead Local Flood Authority and Witham Fourth Internal Drainage Board, both of whom had raised no objections. It was confirmed that the drainage infrastructure would be secured by condition and maintained in perpetuity.

The impact of the proposed access road on the adjacent Scout Hut and field was discussed at length. Members expressed concern about the safety of children crossing the new road to access the field, particularly during evening meetings. Officers confirmed that a tactile pedestrian crossing had been included in the plans and that a post-and-rail fence would be installed to separate the road from the field. Officers also indicated that further discussions could be held with the applicant and Lincolnshire County Council Highways to explore additional safety measures, such as traffic calming or an alternative crossing design.

The location of the play area in proximity to the attenuation basin was also raised. Members queried whether fencing would be provided to ensure the safety of children. Officers advised that while a knee-high fence was standard practice, additional measures could be considered at the condition discharge stage.

In relation to sustainability, Members debated whether Fishtoft was a suitable location for a development of this scale, given the limited public transport and local services. Officers confirmed that Fishtoft was designated as a Minor Service Centre in the Local Plan and was considered a sustainable location due to its proximity to Boston. It was noted that the site was within cycling distance of key services and that the development would include pedestrian and cycle links.

The quality of the proposed housing was also discussed. Members queried whether the dwellings would be of sufficient size and design to meet the needs of families. Officers confirmed that the house types had been revised during the application process and were considered to be of acceptable quality. The development would include a mix of dwelling types and tenures, including 20% affordable housing.

During discussions Councillor Stephen Woodliffe declared that he was a member of the Lincolnshire Wildlife Trust. He confirmed that he paid a monthly subscription but held no decision-making role within the organisation. The Senior Planning Officer acknowledged the declaration and confirmed that the Wildlife Trust had submitted a holding objection prior to the submission of biodiversity net gain information. It was noted that the application had been submitted before the statutory commencement date for mandatory biodiversity net gain, and therefore the requirement did not apply. Officers advised that the Trust's comments had been considered but did not constitute a material planning objection under current legislation.

In conclusion, Members acknowledged the need for new housing in the borough and the benefits of delivering affordable homes. However, concerns remained regarding density, drainage, and the impact on local infrastructure. A motion to approve the application in line with officer recommendation was proposed and seconded.

The recommendations were moved by Councillor Stephen Woodliffe and seconded by Councillor Stuart Evans.

Resolved:

That the committee approve the application in line with officer recommendation and subject to the conditions, outlined within the report, the additional conditions, outlined below, and signing of the Section 106 agreement.

Revised Conditions:

Condition 7 – No part of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied before the works to improve the public highway (by means of widening the existing footway on the west side of Gaysfield Road from the site entrance to the school to 3m and footway connection/tactile crossing at the access over Gaysfield Road) have been certified complete by the Local Planning Authority. No part of the development hereby permitted shall be occupied before works to complete a pedestrian crossing of the new entrance road in the vicinity of the Scout Hut to a design and in a position to be agreed in writing by the Local Planning authority, together with any signage deemed necessary by the Authority, have been completed. The highway improvements approved under this condition shall thereafter be so maintained.

Reason: To ensure the continuity of safe and suitable pedestrian access, in the interests of pedestrian and public safety, in accordance with Policies 2, 32 and 33 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan (2019).

[Councillor Helen Staples left the meeting at 10.55am following consideration of the above item.]

The Meeting ended at 11.35 am.