

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 24th March 2026 at 10.00 am.

Present:

Councillor Peter Bedford, in the Chair.

Councillors David Scoot (Vice-Chairman), Alison Austin, Stuart Evans, David Middleton, Claire Rylott, Lina Savickiene, Sarah Sharpe, Suzanne Welberry and Stephen Woodliffe.

Officers:

Interim Group Manager – Planning and Development, Development Manager, Planning Officer, Senior Planning Lawyer and Democratic Services Officer.

30 Apologies for Absence

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors Andy Iazard and Barrie Pierpoint.

31 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 Bedford, Pierpoint, Scoot and Welberry. Councillor Alison Austin acts as a substitute.

The Internal Drainage Boards: Councillor Bedford, Evans, Rylott, Scoot and Welberry.

32 Minutes

The minutes of the meeting on 24th February 2026 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman, subject to the inclusion of Councillor Evans' declaration of interest for item 2, and his withdrawal from the room for that item, which had been omitted in error.

33 Public Questions

No questions were received.

34 B/25/0356 - Land to the west of Cowbridge Road, Bicker, Boston

Application Type: S73 – Major

Proposal: (Application under s73 for the Variation of Condition 7 (Delivery Route) of permission B/22/0356

Site: Land to the west of Cowbridge Road, Bicker, Boston

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 Planning Officer presented the application. Members were reminded that planning permission had been granted in July 2023 for a 49.95MW photovoltaic solar array, grid connection, battery storage and associated development. He advised that Condition 7 of that permission had imposed a prescriptive one-way routing arrangement for Heavy Goods Vehicles (HGVs) during construction, with loaded vehicles required to arrive via the Viking Link haul road and North Ing Drove, and unloaded vehicles required to depart via Cowbridge Road and Ing Drove. The intention of the condition had been to reduce the likelihood of construction vehicles meeting on narrow fenland roads and to minimise impacts on residential amenity and highway safety.

The Committee was shown a series of images, including satellite images of the location plan, and the two existing access routes (Routes 1 and 2). The Planning Officer described the relationship of these routes to Bicker village and the A52, highlighting the constrained nature of Cowbridge Road and Ing Drove and the long-standing concerns raised by residents throughout the wider phases of construction on Bicker Fen.

Members were advised that the applicant sought to vary Condition 7 to bring the routing requirements into alignment with the approved Construction Management Plan (CMP), which already allowed for more flexible routing options depending on the phase of construction. The CMP identified circumstances in which sole access or egress via Route 2 was necessary, particularly during phases of internal construction activity, and differed in important respects from the fixed one-way system imposed by Condition 7.

The Planning Officer confirmed that the proposal included a cap of four two-way HGV movements per day, alongside formal monitoring and record-keeping requirements. The Committee was shown the updated Highway Technical Note (February 2026), which evidenced that construction was now at an advanced stage, with 107 HGV movements remaining between January and July 2026 – an average of one movement per day. The Note included a monthly table of projected movements, identifying March 2026 as the peak remaining month, with 35 trips, but with only 24 further trips anticipated from April to completion. Members were advised that these levels were significantly lower than those experienced during earlier phases of construction.

It was further reported that the Highways Authority, Lincolnshire County Council, had raised no objection concluding that the revised arrangements would not result in an unacceptable impact on highway safety.

The application had been called in by Councillor James Cantwell, Ward Member, due to concerns raised by residents regarding amenity and the cumulative impacts of traffic associated with long-running infrastructure projects on Bicker Fen.

The Planning Officer summarised the representations received. Objections had been submitted by residents, the local action group, and the Parish Council, raising concerns including:

- past non-compliance with Condition 7
- deterioration of local roads and verges
- intimidation reported by residents when meeting construction traffic

- concerns about the suitability of narrow fen roads for HGVs
- cumulative amenity and safety impacts from multiple concurrent energy projects in the area
- perceived lack of monitoring and enforcement of the existing condition

Members were reminded that the scope of a Section 73 application was limited: the Committee was permitted to consider only matters arising directly from the variation of the condition itself, and not the principle of the development.

The Planning Officer provided additional detail on the proposed routing arrangements under the revised condition. He reiterated that the proposal would move the development from a fixed routing system to one governed by the CMP and the updated transport note, allowing the developer to manage access and egress in a way that was responsive to the remaining stages of construction.

He emphasised that this was not a relaxation of control, but rather a change in the form of mitigation, shifting emphasis from rigid route separation to tight limits on daily movements, active monitoring, and the use of the approved haul roads. He highlighted that:

- the overall volume of remaining traffic was now very low
- the nature of remaining works was limited
- cumulative construction activity in the broader area had diminished as other projects neared completion
- the Highway Authority considered the proposed variation acceptable

Members were advised that material weight should be given to the stage of construction, which was now close to completion. The revised condition sought to secure proportionate and enforceable control for the small number of remaining movements.

The Planning Officer concluded that the approved CMP, the February 2026 Highway Technical Note, the limited scale of outstanding works, and the proposed limit of four two-way HGV movements per day, provided a reasonable and proportionate approach to routing and traffic management for the remainder of the development.

The application had been recommended for approval.

The Committee then heard from four registered speakers.

The first speaker was Simon McArdle-Daniels, who objected to the application. He advised that he had lived on Longhedge Drove for more than 20 years and described long-standing difficulties for residents using Cowbridge Road, which included damage to verges, conflicts with construction vehicles, and concerns about highway safety arising from what he characterised as “industrial volumes” of HGV and LGV traffic. He cited concerns for a wide range of road users – not only drivers, but also cyclists, dog walkers and horse riders – and he felt that the applicant’s operations demonstrated a disregard for village amenity.

The second speaker was Tim Edmunds, Head of Compliance for AGR Renewables, who spoke on behalf of the applicant. He emphasised that construction of the solar farm was now 99% complete, that the remaining works required only limited HGV activity, and that the proposed variation simply sought to regularise routing flexibility already contained

within the approved Construction Management Plan (CMP). He further advised that the application followed a protracted dialogue with the Council, which sought to resolve an inherent conflict between condition 7 and the CMP. He confirmed that the applicant had engaged fully throughout the construction process and had participated in a joint transport group examining traffic issues in the Bicker area, attending all meetings. He assured Members that the applicant placed a high priority on safety, recognising the impact HGVs had on vulnerable road users. He cited the applicant's record of no safety incidents on either construction route

The third speaker was Councillor Colin Bateson, Chair of Bicker Parish Council, who objected to the proposal. He indicated that multiple companies were using the transport routes and did not communicate with each other, which exacerbated traffic issues. He stated that vehicles were failing to comply with the 20 mph speed limits, that the roads were ill-suited to HGVs, and that there was a continuous flow of different vehicle types associated with ongoing projects in the area. He drew attention to community concerns regarding speeding, poor compliance, lack of monitoring of traffic management measures and the cumulative impacts of construction traffic.

The final speaker was the Ward Member, Councillor James Cantwell, who also objected to the application. He outlined residents' experiences of distress, property damage and amenity loss from many years of infrastructure development on Bicker Fen, urging the Committee to uphold the existing condition. He asserted that Condition 7 had been disregarded by the applicant, and that the Traffic Management Plan had largely failed, with numerous incidents having occurred. He stated that both the Bicker Fen Action Group and Bicker Parish Council regarded the impacts on residents as immense.

To illustrate this, Councillor Cantwell read to the Committee a statement from long-term residents on Cowbridge Road, the Bowlers, which summarised the amenity impacts in relation to Policies 2.4 and 2.6.

Councillor Cantwell concluded by highlighting the long-term issues created by HGV traffic, which he said had produced a tangible adverse impact on residential amenity.

Following his contribution, Councillor Cantwell left the meeting in accordance with the Committee's public speaking policy.

During debate, Members discussed the history of the application and the cumulative burden placed upon rural roads and nearby residents.

The Committee acknowledged the officer assessment and the Highway Authority's conclusion that the revised routing would not result in an unacceptable safety risk. However, Members gave significant weight to the loss of amenity that residents had experienced over time. They cited the lived experience of those using Cowbridge Road, including repeated concerns regarding road and verge condition, disturbance, and difficulties caused when meeting construction vehicles on narrow fen roads.

Several Members expressed concern about reliance on developer-led monitoring and enforcement, observing that previous management measures had not fully mitigated the issues raised by residents.

The Development Manager advised that the Council would not routinely monitor the routes, but would consider alleged breaches where reported, and he confirmed that enforcement investigations had taken place.

Members questioned whether relaxing routing controls at this late stage of the project would undermine the protection intended by the original condition. They also explored the extent to which the Highway Authority had visited the site, undertaken independent monitoring, or held records of difficulties on the routes. The Development Manager clarified that the Highway Authority was not obliged to undertake such actions and that the Borough Council could not require them to do so. Members were advised that it was for the Committee to judge the adequacy of the information available.

Officers reiterated the legal framework of Section 73, confirming that the principle of the development could not be revisited. Members considered that the evidence of ongoing disturbance amounted to continued adverse amenity impacts, which the original routing requirement had been designed to address.

The Committee also discussed whether deferral was appropriate, either to obtain additional information from the Highway Authority or to undertake a site visit.

Members ultimately formed the view that, despite the reduced number of HGV movements remaining, the proposed variation would continue to negatively affect residents living along Cowbridge Road and Ing Drove. They considered that the existing condition remained necessary to safeguard amenity for the remainder of the construction period.

Deliberation continued on the specific grounds for refusal and the need for demonstrable harm to be established.

A motion for refusal of the application was proposed by Councillor Claire Rylott and seconded by Councillor Lina Savickiene.

Resolved:

That application B/25/0356 be refused on the grounds that the proposed variation of Condition 7 would result in adverse and unacceptable impacts to the amenity of residential dwellings along Cowbridge Road, contrary to the requirements of Policies 2 (criterion 6), 3 (criterion 11) and 31 (criterion 2) of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan.

[Councillor James Cantwell left the meeting at 10.27, during consideration of the above item.]

35 B/25/0485 2 Leicester Square, Boston PE21 8RR

Application Type: Full Planning Permission

Proposal: Proposed external steel staircase to serve first floor apartment/Flats 03 & 04, including removal of a first-floor window in lieu of a new access door at first floor level.

Site: 2, Leicester Square, Boston PE21 8RR

The Planning Officer presented the application and confirmed that it had been referred to Committee because Boston Borough Council was the applicant.

The Committee was shown the site location plan, together with existing and proposed floor plans and a series of photographs illustrating the rear elevation and the surrounding context.

Members were advised that the application related to an existing two-storey detached building located adjacent to St George's Road Car Park, containing residential flats arranged across the ground and first floors. The proposal comprised the installation of an external galvanised steel staircase on the rear elevation to provide an additional means of fire escape from the first-floor. Associated works included the replacement of an existing first-floor window with a new door to facilitate the escape route.

The Planning Officer explained that the staircase would be positioned within the enclosed rear yard, a location with significantly limited public visibility and where no loss of residential amenity would arise.

Members were advised that no objections had been received from neighbouring residents or consultees.

The application was recommended for approval.

In considering the application, Members acknowledged the importance of ensuring adequate fire-escape arrangements for residential premises. The Committee noted that the staircase was not intended to serve as a primary means of access and would therefore not materially increase activity or access at the rear of the property.

The application was proposed by Councillor Stephen Woodliffe and seconded by Councillor Sarah Sharpe.

Resolved:

That planning permission be granted in accordance with the officer recommendation and subject to the conditions set out in the report.

Conditions:

1. The development hereby permitted shall be begun before the expiration of three years from the date of this permission.

Reason: Required to be imposed pursuant to Section 51 of the Planning and Compulsory Purchase Act 2004.

2. The development hereby permitted shall not be carried out except in complete accordance with the following details shown on the submitted plan(s):

- DSA 25 - 063 10 Existing Plans, Elevations, Site Plan & Location Plan;
- DSA 25 - 063 100 Rev A Proposed Plans, Elevations, Site Plan & Location Plan – received 03-Mar-2026.

Reason: To ensure that the development is undertaken in accordance with the approved details, in the interests of residential amenity and to comply with Policies 2 and 3 of the South East Lincolnshire Local Plan 2019.

The Meeting ended at 11.15 am.