Extraordinary Meeting of Colne Engaine Parish Council

Friday 6th March 2026 at St. Andrews Church, Colne Engaine

Present: Cllr Alan Barnard (Chairman), Cllr Sarah Dignasse (vice-chair), Cllr Nigel Warwick, Cllr Helen Biscoe-Davis, Cllr Terry Floyd, Cllr Ian Messenger, Cllr Mary Ashby, BDC Cllr Gabrielle Spray, BDC Cllr George Courtauld and 76 residents.

26/01/EGM Welcome by the Chairman and Apologies for absence: There were no apologies for absence. The chairman welcomed the residents for attending the meeting and explained the format for public participation within the meeting, as well as explaining the objective of the evening was for the Parish Council to consider their response as a consultee to the planning application on the agenda. The Chairman also confirmed that the Parish Council were not part of the decision process for this application but were a consultee in the same way as ECC, Highways, BDC Ecology and other consultees.

26/02/EGM Declaration of Interests.
There were no declarations of interest. The chairman explained that he lived on Mill Lane as does Cllr Nigel Warwick, but both are at least a mile away from the planning application area and as such should not be classed as a non-pecuniary interest in this planning application.

26/03/EGM 26/00189/FUL – Land adjacent to Millbrooks Farm Lane, Colne Engaine – erection of stables, menage, access improvements and associated works

A resident enquired whether the planning application had to be specifically related to horses? Cllr Alan Barnard replied that the application was for an equestrian facility.
A resident enquired whether the Parish Council had read all the documents relating to this planning application and would it save time for the Parish council to offer their opinion? The Chairman explained that the Parish Councillors had read all the documents on this planning application but could not influence the public on this matter and that it was important for the Council to hear from the public on their views on whether they approved or objected to this planning application.
A resident enquired about rumours relating to the site and about the possibility of the site being used for other purposes. The Chairman explained that these rumours might relate to comments which were on google domain and could be seen by any member of the public.
A resident who lives in close proximity to the planning application was initially happy when it was proposed as an equestrian centre but now had

reservations about it and was concerned about the lack of boundaries with existing fields and property.
A resident suggested that the planning application documents looked to be AI produced and was concerned over future intensification on this site.
A resident who lives in close proximity to the site stated that a lot of the things on the planning application were simply not true and explained that the access to this site would create dangers to the traffic coming around the bend where the access is planned. The resident explained that this area had no signage of any kind to show the sharp bend coming up and is not suitable for residential or equestrian traffic.
A resident asked the question : do we need any more equestrian places around the village?".
A resident who lives near to the site was concerned that horse boxes, trailers, feed lorries and horses would be too large to access this area in a safe manner as it is on a dangerous corner with poor visibility to the access point.
A resident stated that the Parish Council should consider that this may set a precedent for planning applications in the village and the area around the site.
A resident informed the meeting that there seems to be no names listed on the planning application and was concerned over traffic issues given that Mill Lane is a quiet rural country lane. The proposed planning application would increase the traffic on this road.
A resident who has applied themselves for planning permission on their own site stated that BDC had refused parts of their planning application based on visibility splays. The proposed planning application site is currently bordered by hedges of 45 metres and 120 metres and permission to remove them would be required to improve the visibility splays of this site. The resident was concerned with the visibility splays on this site, the size of vehicles that would use this site and the fact these people were not known to the local area and may at some stage in the future put a caravan on the site.
The Chairman explained that we need to comment on this planning application with what has been put before us and explained that Highways views are taken seriously by the planning department when it comes to making a decision on planning applications.
A resident informed the meeting that this site would change the nature and outlook of the Colne Valley and that any proposal should enhance this area. Any development will have an adverse effect on the landscape and will change the whole nature of this area.
A resident asked about other emails and what should be put down on objections to this proposal? The Chairman explained that for an objection to be valid, it must state or prove that the application does not meet the planning policy/criteria.

Any comments should relate to policy documents with the correct number associated to them and object by showing that it does not meet the criteria required. All comments should be made on planning grounds.
A resident informed the meeting that the manure from the horses would contaminate the water coming from the nearby spring.
A resident asked if the planning application could be called to committee at Braintree District Council?

BDC Cllr Gabrielle Spray explained that BDC had received numerous e-mails asking for this to be called to committee. She explained that planning decisions were made as a scheme of delegation that falls into three parts.
Part (A) – These come straight to committee (over 10 houses or relating to businesses or anyone related to BDC that might have an interest).
Part (B) – These would normally be decided by a case officer – only if less than 10 houses and only for residential homes.
Part (C) – All other applications – these are called minor applications.
Change of use would not qualify to bring this to committee. BDC Cllr Gabrielle Spray confirmed this with a Senior Officer from the Planning Department that this would not meet the criteria to be called into committee.

BDC Cllr Gabrielle Spray further informed the meeting that the case officer for this planning application would make a decision on this one. The case officer is very experienced in planning and has completed due diligence into back-ground work including completing a site survey. This planning application is getting a lot of attention at BDC and once the case officer has made a decision, it will go to an area manager to sign it off – either in favour of it or against it.
If there are a large number of objections then this may go straight to the chair of the planning committee and they might choose for this application to be called to committee. BDC are very well aware of the large number of objections received so far.

A resident asked if there was a threshold for the number of objections to take it to committee. BDC Cllr Gabrielle Spray informed the meeting there was no such threshold for numbers but the number of objections currently stood at 37.

A resident asked if the case officer who does the site visit looks into water, electricity for the site, sewage and possible run-off or contamination from the site. This was answered as “yes” all of these things are looked at with on-site visits.

A resident informed the meeting that in many of the objections, LP51 has been quoted and in his opinion this application would fail all 5 criteria in regards to this Planning application.

The chairman suggested it would be a good idea to gauge how the residents present at this meeting feel in regards to the planning application and asked for a show of hands to show those who objected to the application and those who had no objection.

No Objection Application: 1 Object to Application: 75

The chairman explained that this was the end of the public participation part of the meeting and explained that the Parish Councillors would now discuss this planning application – all members of the public could stay if they wanted but would only be there as observers and would not be able to speak in this part of the meeting.

Cllr Sarah Dignasse wished to thank the members of the public for sharing their concerns to the Parish Council around this application. The Parish Council would need to make clear comments in line with planning policy and criteria.

Cllr Mary Ashby informed the meeting that the Parish Council would need to be very specific in regards to planning policy and procedures.

Cllr Sarah Dignasse wished to thank BDC Cllr Gabrielle Spray for her input in regards to BDC planning, the information relayed to the residents of Colne Engaine had been very helpful in explaining the planning application process.

Cllr Terry Floyd informed the meeting that the number of objections had been very helpful to the rest of the village in showing people how to put objections forward themselves.

Cllr Alan Barnard stated he had never seen such professionalism or diligence in regards to objections to a planning application. His own first impression on first looking at this planning application was that it was just for stables but concerns were raised in relation to the agent and the hard-standing area outlined on the application but was aware that this was not reason enough to object on these grounds.

Cllr Sarah Dignasse stated that we needed to capture the feeling of the residents who attended this evening and asked how we would go about doing this?

Cllr Alan Barnard expressed that he had a methodology on how to go about this in form of a response and stated that it didn't necessarily need to reflect the feelings of the public at the meeting tonight. The professional advice the Council had already sought covered all the objections raised by the public this

evening and we should send a copy of this evening's minutes along with a covering letter accompanying our response.

The Parish Clerk was actioned to send a copy of this evening's minutes along with a covering letter when responding to this planning application.

Cllr Nigel Warwick informed the meeting that the Parish Council had obtained professional advice and had received a report on how to put forward a message in regards to this planning application which had been circulated to Council Members prior to the meeting.

Cllr Ian Messenger said it would be good to use the report for the basis of discussion and that the report had been circulated to all councillors in advance of the meeting.

Cllr Alan Barnard informed the meeting that the report covered the relevant criteria for comment on this application. Cllr Alan Barnard suggested we should use the headings from the report and use the professional advice to formulate a response from the Parish Council.

Cllr Sarah Dignasse said it would be sensible to use the professional advice and add an appropriate comment regarding LP51 (equestrian facilities).

It was proposed that the Parish Council adopt the report as our response to this application together with a comment regarding LP 51.

Proposed: Cllr Sarah Dignasse Seconded: Cllr Mary Ashby
Agreed by all

Cllr Nigel Warwick was actioned to put together a covering letter and make any adjustments necessary before sending it round to all parish councillors for approval.

It was proposed that concerns not necessarily strictly relevant to planning matters nonetheless could be included in the covering letter rather than the planning application response itself. It was proposed that the covering letter could be prepared, amended and circulated to all.

Proposed: Cllr Nigel Warwick Seconded: Cllr Ian Messenger

The Chairman brought the meeting to a close at 9.22 pm.

26/04/EGM Date and Time of next meeting

Parish Council meeting on Thursday 12th March 2026 at 8.00 p.m.