

**CHIGWELL PARISH COUNCIL
PLANNING COMMITTEE – 11 JUNE 2026**

**Officer Report: Planning Application EPF/1012/26
Grange Farm Camping and Sports Centre, High Road, Chigwell, IG7 6DP**

Proposal: Construction of a multi-purpose community hall to be used mainly as replacement premises by 1st Chigwell and Chigwell Row Scout Group, Essex Wildlife Trust, Voluntary Action Epping Forest and Colebrook Royals FC, with storage, new WC facilities, a Changing Places WC, parking, drainage, landscaping and biodiversity works.

Officer recommendation: Chigwell Parish Council objects to the application.

The application is for a new community hall next to the existing Grange Farm pavilion. The submitted plans and planning statement indicate that the building would have a gross floor area of about 290 square metres, a volume of about 1,693 cubic metres, and a height of about 6.9 metres. This would therefore be a substantial new building, not a small or minor addition.

The building would be used mainly by the Scout Group, but also by other community and sports groups. The Parish Council recognises the value of these organisations and the benefits they bring to Chigwell. The issue for the Committee is not whether these groups do good work. They clearly do. The issue is whether this particular building, in this particular location, is acceptable in planning terms.

The site is in the Green Belt. The proposed building would not be a small addition. It would introduce a sizeable new hall, storage areas, hardstanding, parking and extra activity. This would add to the amount of built development at Grange Farm and would harm the openness and character of the Green Belt.

The application does not clearly show that a building of this size is essential, or that smaller or less harmful alternatives have been properly considered. It is also not clear that the storage and ancillary space proposed is the minimum necessary.

There is also concern about the scale and appearance of the development. The building would be close to the existing pavilion, but it would still add a significant amount of new built form. Together with the storage areas, new surfaces and extra activity, it would change the character of this part of Grange Farm. Existing trees and planting may reduce some views, but landscaping should not be relied on to justify development that would otherwise be too large or harmful in the Green Belt.

The nearest homes at Chigwell Grange are close to the site. The proposed hours include use until 10pm from Monday to Saturday. The submitted noise report says the likely noise impact would be low, but the Parish Council should be cautious because the use would involve children, young people, evening arrivals and departures, car doors, voices, outside movement, lighting and different community groups using the building. The concern is not just noise from inside the hall, but the overall disturbance from a more intensive use of this part of the site.

There are also transport concerns. The proposal may improve the current parking situation at the existing Scout hut on High Road, but it would move and increase activity at Grange Farm. The submitted transport information shows that Scout use is likely to remain heavily car-based. This means more vehicle movements on Grange Farm Lane, especially at drop-off and pick-up times. The site is not in a highly sustainable location for public transport, and many users, especially younger children, are unlikely to walk or cycle in the evening.

The Committee should also note that National Gas has identified the area as being within a high-risk zone in relation to gas transmission apparatus. This is a serious matter. The Parish Council should ask the Local Planning Authority not to grant permission unless this has been fully resolved with National Gas and any other relevant safety body.

There are ecological and biodiversity matters too. The County Council's ecology adviser has not objected, subject to conditions. However, the biodiversity gain depends on future planting, management and monitoring. If officers were minded to approve the application, these matters would need to be tightly secured by condition or legal agreement. The same applies to tree protection, drainage, lighting, hours of use, noise management and construction management.

On balance, officers consider that the application should be opposed. The community benefits are acknowledged, but the proposal has not shown that this scale of development is justified in the Green Belt, that less harmful alternatives have been ruled out, or that the effects on nearby residents and the local area would be acceptable.

Recommended comments to Epping Forest District Council

Chigwell Parish Council objects to application EPF/1012/26.

The Parish Council recognises the value of the Scout Group and the other community organisations referred to in the application. However, the Parish Council considers that the proposal would result in substantial additional built development in the Green Belt. The proposed hall, storage areas, hardstanding and associated activity would harm Green Belt openness and the character of this part of Grange Farm.

The Parish Council is not satisfied that the application demonstrates that the development is appropriate in the Green Belt, or that very special circumstances exist to clearly outweigh the harm to the Green Belt and the other harm identified. The submitted information does not adequately demonstrate that a building of this size is the minimum necessary, or that smaller, less harmful or non-Green Belt alternatives have been fully explored.

The Parish Council is also concerned that the proposed use would intensify activity close to residential properties at Chigwell Grange. The proposed evening use, vehicle movements, car doors, voices, external movement, lighting and use by several groups could cause unacceptable noise and disturbance to nearby residents. The submitted noise assessment does not, in the Parish Council's view, fully address the practical day-to-day impacts of the proposed use.

The Parish Council further considers that the proposal would be heavily dependent on private car travel and would increase traffic movements on Grange Farm Lane, particularly at drop-off and pick-up times. The Parish Council is not satisfied that the site is sufficiently accessible by sustainable transport or that the local traffic and amenity impacts have been adequately addressed.

The Parish Council also notes the National Gas high-risk zone issue and considers that planning permission should not be granted unless this matter is fully resolved.

For these reasons, Chigwell Parish Council objects to the application and requests that planning permission be refused.