

WINFARTHING PARISH COUNCIL
Minutes of the Parish Council meeting held on
Thursday 23 July 2026 at 7.30 pm at
Winfarthing Village Hall, Hall Road, Winfarthing IP22 2EJ

Councillors Present: Cllr Eric Cole (Chair), Cllr Lynne Rogers, Cllr David Rix, Cllr Jono Smith, Cllr Peter Mackay, (1 vacancy)

In attendance: Karen Rix (Clerk), Rachel Leslie Managing Director and Daniel Lummis Responsible Individual, Atlas Children's Homes

Members of the Public (MOP): 40 - including County Cllr Margaret Thomas, District Cllr James Easter, Banham Parish Cllrs Robin Plom and Jeff Burrell

1. To receive and consider apologies for absence

Apologies from Cllr Steel were noted.

Cllr Cole was proposed by Cllr Rogers to act as Chair for the meeting. Cllr Rix seconded

2. To receive or update any declarations of pecuniary interest

None received

3. To receive questions and comments from members of the public regarding planning application 2026/1872:

Applicant: Mr Nick Poturicich, Atlas Children's Homes
Location: Acorn Barn, The Willows, Chestnut House, Silver Birch and Hazelwood, Mitchells Yard, Mill Road, Winfarthing, IP22 2BF
Proposal: Change of use of five existing detached dwellinghouses from Use Class C3 to five children's homes (Use Class C2) with associated residential care, ancillary staff accommodation and parking.
Application Type: Full Planning Permission

Cllr Cole welcomed everyone and invited Rachel Leslie and Daniel Lummis from Atlas Children's Homes to make a short presentation.

Daniel Lummis outlined Atlas proposal to purchase the 5 properties and use them as residential children's homes for children aged 7-17 with learning disabilities, emotional and behavioural issues. There would be a maximum of 9 children over the 5 homes, 2 in the four bed and 1 in the 3 bed. There would be 2 staff members in each home and 2 managers overseeing the whole site. There would be no external changes to the properties, but an additional bathroom would be installed for staff use. Rachel Leslie explained that if planning was successful, they would still need to go through an Ofsted inspection. Rachel added that she had also been working closely with a Norfolk County Council (NCC) representative who had visited the site and had provided a letter of support for the proposal.

Signed Chair

Date

The Chair invited questions from Cllr's. These questions had been submitted by an MOP who was unable to attend the meeting.

Cllr Smith explained that the MOP was an adoptive parent of a child with a trauma background and was concerned about the 'standards' expected from these children. They know that children with complex needs do not fit into the normal mould. As Atlas do not know what children will be placed in these homes, they cannot reasonably expect anything from them, their wellbeing should come first not how they behave. Daniel Lummis explained the children's wellbeing would always come first, each child's referral paperwork would be studied to make sure their needs could be met from this setting. Rachel Leslie explained that Atlas had several children's homes and their aim was to make children competent and confident young people and they would be cared for by very experienced and well-trained staff. Cllr Smith asked what the typical age would be of children placed in these homes. Daniel Lummis explained that whilst the application states age 7-17 it was more likely to be age 11-15.

Cllr Cole remarked on Rachel's comment that Atlas had several children's homes and asked exactly how many they had. Rachel explained that they had 1 site with 2 properties and were in the process of buying another site with 3 properties. These were working in conjunction with both Norfolk and Suffolk local authorities, adding that these clusters of housing were beneficial to the children.

Cllr Rogers stated that whilst the MOP agreed that these homes would individually replicate the family home environment, it did not replicate the average housing development. The MOP had researched Pupil Yields for both Norfolk and Suffolk which stated that the average number of children in a development consisting of 5 houses with 3 bedrooms would be 2. This was significantly less than the 9 children proposed by Atlas Children's Homes for Mitchell's Yard. This would have an immediate impact on neighbouring properties especially as Atlas state children would have 'access to vehicles for activities which cannot be reached on foot', as this would be nearly every activity the children took part in outside of the home. Rachel Leslie stated that a typical home would usually contain 2 children.

Cllr Rix advised that the MOP challenged points relating to Atlas Children's Homes Location Risk Assessment:

1. That the village hall was referred to as the focal point of the village 'hosting events and social gatherings'. The hall's last event suitable for children was held almost a year ago, there were no regular activities held at the hall so any children placed in Mitchell's Yard would need to be transported to the cited local events, youth activities and volunteering activities. Cllr Rix explained that the MOP suggested the pub was the village focal point which was not suitable for children.
2. That Winfarthing lends itself to walking however there are no public footpaths leading from Mitchell's Yard so to gain access to one of the footpaths children would have to cross private land or walk along a verge adjacent to a 60 mph stretch of road.
3. That there is only one bus link in the village, the 37D, which runs on a Monday, Wednesday and Friday leaving at 10.25 and returning from Diss at 12.10. giving the user just 1.5 hours in Diss. The 371 is in fact the school bus to Diss High School. The Flexibus does not pick up in Winfarthing and the Borderhoppa requires payment of a membership and must be booked 24 hours in advance.

Signed Chair

Daniel Lummis recognised the transport links were limited and that the village had very little to offer. He added that each house would be allocated a 'pool car' to help transport children to activities, they might also need to use taxis. Rachel Leslie explained that a rural location can actually provide a protective environment for some children and help them thrive. Rachel stated that the homes in Mitchell's Yard would be matched to the children.

Banham Parish Cllr's Robin Plom and Jeff Burrell were invited to address the meeting. They explained that Atlas Children's Homes had a 2 property site located in the middle of a residential street in Banham. Consent was granted for 3 children in each house but it currently holds just one in each. They reported that Atlas Children's Homes application was approved on the basis that:

- Proposed use was deemed to be equivalent to residential use
- Concerns raised around increased vehicle traffic and parking were dismissed as no worse than if they were being used as private residential homes.
- Concerns raised that the road was already very busy due to zoo events, during school holidays and at school pick up and collection times were dismissed. The road was presented as a quiet road.

They explained that there have been numerous issues:

- Numbers of cars at any one property has reached as many as 10.
- Staff parking cars in shop car park, blocking residents driveways
- Regular incidents and disturbances that require Police and ambulance attendance
- Elderly neighbours experiencing foul and threatening language
- Children out unsupervised
- Complaints been made but as yet nothing has improved

Cllr Cole commented on how all these issues were from just 2 properties and Mitchell's Yard would have 5. Rachel Leslie explained she was in regular contact with the Banham neighbours and offered to speak with Banham Parish Councillors outside of the meeting. Cllr Cole referred to the Norfolk Police Crime Map for the road in Banham where the children's homes are located, adding that in Feb, Mar, April and May 2026 there were 6, 9, 1 and 7 crimes reported respectively.

An MOP residing in Mitchell's Yard raised a number of concerns:

- The scale and location of the business being inappropriate for a small residential setting.
- Numbers of vehicles needing to park which could realistically amount to as many as 5 per property at a staff handover, including the pool car. The risk assessment also indicates that more staff might be required increasing vehicles further.
- 5 children's homes together in this way would be an institution and the children living there would not have a normal domestic environment.
- Atlas Children's Homes are already advertising for support staff to work at the site. They are not required to have any qualifications but have offer of training.
- For Nick Poturicich the company owner this is a pure business venture!

County Cllr Margaret Thomas stated that as far as she was aware this was not part of the strategic plan for Norfolk so who would be paying for taxi's and transport to schools and

Signed Chair

activities? Rachel Leslie stated that NCC were supporting this. NCC were funding child places.

District Cllr James Easter asked if Atlas Children's Homes had looked at the site before deciding to turn the properties into children's homes? The children living on the site already should not be influenced by inappropriate language and behaviour. Dan Lummis acknowledged the comment. District Cllr Easter advised that the planning application was a matter for planners at South Norfolk District Council not NCC.

A range of questions and concerns were raised by MOP's and addressed by Rachel Leslie and Daniel Lummis.

Q What was the level of learning disability or behavioural issues?

A It could high learning disability, autism, complex needs but Atlas would work with NCC to identify the needs of the children.

Q Can Atlas guarantee there will not be a disruptive child living there?

A No, sometimes there are issues, but children will be matched to the home setting to ensure their needs are met.

Q The original planning consent included fencing the border with the field behind Mitchell's Yard, will this be carried out if this planning application is approved?

A Yes, close boarded fencing will be erected at each property.

Q How will children access activities?

A Using pool car.

Q What was the proposal for safety and security of existing residents of Mitchell's Yard?

A This would be addressed through quality and experienced staff as well as policy and procedures they should follow.

Q To what level will staff be qualified and what will the staff structure be in the houses and across the site?

A A typical structure would be for a manager at level 5 and a support worker at level 3 in each house. A Level 5 manager and a Deputy working towards level 5 across the site.

Q Experienced personnel have applied to Atlas many with teaching backgrounds, have now all left. On 'Tester Day' staff children were used for photo marketing session which portrayed a different image of the setting.

A Not allowed to take photographs of placed children for child protection reasons.

Q If an incident occurs in one property will staff have to leave their assigned home to support incident in another home?

A No they would stay in assigned home. Atlas wouldn't take children with that level of need at this site. Properties would be registered as 'multi-build registration' i.e. 2 registrations - a group of 3 and a group of 2 homes.

Q The village suffers from flooding and is cut off in the middle so emergency vehicles cannot access parts of the village. What happens if staff cannot access the site?

A The staff present in the home will have to complete a double shift.

Q Would you live in a property in such close proximity to a children's home such as these?

A Dan – would need to look into it. Rachel been in similar situation in own residential area so does sympathise but children need to live somewhere. With the right staffing the impact would be less.

Signed Chair

- Q Have you purchased properties?
- A No not yet.
- Q Why have you chosen Winfarthing?
- A They like properties close together so as the Banham site was already established Winfarthing offered lots of positives. However, the challenges were recognised and they were working to overcome these.
- Q Did you look at the community before choosing the site and how its location would impact the community? How does Winfarthing benefit the children? What benefit will this bring the community?
- A It was hoped that the children would be embraced into the community, that they would integrate in activities like grass cutting or cleaning cars.
- Q The community is expected to befriend the children but they don't feel this is the right place for them, how will this impact them.
- A It will be very difficult for the children.
- Q Will the children be allowed out unsupervised? If so would the community be responsible for making sure they were safe?
- A It was understood that the community would feel responsible.

Common concerns raised:

- The number of properties on such a small residential site.
- Speed of traffic on B1077 outside Mitchell's Yard
- Too many vehicles trying to enter, manoeuvre and park in Mitchell's Yard
- The entrance/exit onto the site is too narrow for two vehicles to pass at same time so vehicles have to wait on the main road until entranceway is clear.
- Value of property in Mitchell's Yard is likely to fall which cannot happen.
- Not all residents of Mitchell's Yard or surrounding neighbours/landowners have been informed of planning application.
- Documents are full of inconsistencies, contradictions and errors implying the application has not been properly researched:
 - Defibrillator is located at the village pub not Bowmans garage in Shelfanger, which has now closed.
 - Youth Centre in Diss closed in 2023
 - Bus links are incorrect
 - Suggestion that Banham Zoo is within walking distance of Mitchell's Yard when it is several miles away with no footpath access.
- As these children are in full time residential care they will be challenging, gathering them together will not give them a quiet life and it could make them worse especially with nothing to do in the area.
- The location is not in the best interest of the children.

Cllr Cole thanked Rachel Leslie and Daniel Lummis for attending. They left the meeting at 21.08.

Cllr Cole thanked everyone for attending and urged them to submit their comments via the South Norfolk Planning Portal by 3 August 2026.

Meeting closed 21.10

Signed Chair