

# Westmeston Parish Council

## Minutes of the Council meeting held on Tuesday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2025 at 6.30 pm at Westmeston Parish Hall

**Present:** Councillors Cathy Mills (Chairman), Joyce Dudeney, Clare Farrands, Tessa Haughton, Rob Mills, Vincent Tickner.  
Paul Vidler, Clerk.  
No members of the public were present.

1. **Apologies for absence:** Apologies were received from Councillor Mark Clark.
2. **Declarations of interest:** None.
3. **Public questions:** None.
4. **Minutes of the previous meetings held on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025:**

**RESOLVED:** The minutes of the previous meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> January 2025 were agreed as an accurate record of the meeting and were signed by the Chairman.

5. **Financial matters:**

(a) **RESOLVED:** Payment of the following invoices:

Payee	Reason	Amount
Tessa Haughton	Defibrillator battery	£133.80
Paul Vidler	Clerk's pay January to March 2025 and backpay April to December 2024	£1,070.10
HMRC	PAYE	£267.60
Paul Vidler	Clerk's expenses January to March 2025	£32.85
C. Mills	Website hosting	£78.00

(b) **2024/25 Quarter 3 Budget Report and Bank Reconciliation:**

**NOTED:** Members noted the Quarter 3 Budget Report and Bank Reconciliation.

6. **Annual Risk Assessment:**

**RESOLVED:** Members resolved to adopt the Annual Risk Assessment.

7. **Planning:**

(a) **Land opposite Westmeston Place, east of Lewes Road and Blackdog Farm east of Lewes Road:**

**NOTED:** Lewes DC Planning Enforcement has investigated the planning issues at the land opposite Westmeston Place, east of Lewes Road. The enforcement notice served against the unauthorised structure requires its removal by the end of March 2025. Removal works are under way. The agricultural gate and access from the B2116 are established and their current use is not a breach of planning control. Applications have been approved in 2024 and 2025 confirming the temporary use of the land as a camp site at weekends in June and July is permitted development.

**RESOLVED:** Members raised concerns about highway safety resulting from the camp site access from the B2116 given there being no speed limit below 60 mph, its location on a blind bend, mud on the

highway and the history of accidents with vehicles driving into the hedge at Westmeston Place. Members resolved for these issues to be raised with East Sussex Highways.

There was no further update on Blackdog Farm.

**(b) LW/24/0820 Land South of Green Road, Wivelsfield Green**

**Outline application for the erection of up to 150 dwellings, with associated works, parking, landscaping, publicly accessible open space, land for education or community use, with access from Green Road and Eastern Road.**

**RESOLVED:** Members agreed to comment as follows:

Westmeston Parish Council objects to this development on the following grounds.

Housing development outside of the settlement boundary

The site is not allocated for development in either the Lewes District Council Local Plan Part 2 (LPP2) or the Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Plan (DSWNDP).

The site is located outside the planning boundaries, as set out in LLP2 Policy DM1, where the distinctive character and quality of the countryside will be protected, and new development will only be permitted where it is consistent with a specific development plan policy or where the need for a countryside location can be demonstrated.

The development strategy in the DSWNDP seeks to preserve the character of the plan area through the careful control of development. Westmeston is identified as a rural parish unsuitable for significant new development. Development should generally only be allowed within Ditchling's settlement boundary. Development in Westmeston should only be allowed in exceptional circumstances.

DSWNDP Policy DS1 sets out the exceptional circumstances where development will be permitted outside of the settlement boundary, where it complies with relevant policies in the development plan. In particular, within Westmeston parish:

- (a) The site is not allocated for development or safeguarded for the proposed housing use as part of the development plan.
- (b) Whilst affordable housing is proposed as part of the development, its location is not identified.
- (c) The proposal is not for the replacement or extension of existing dwellings.
- (d) The development is not small scale which supports an existing rural business.
- (e) Low-key countryside recreation and tourism is not proposed.
- (f) Community infrastructure is not proposed.
- (g) This is not a previously developed site.

Even if the proposals did comply with the exceptional circumstances set out in Policy DS1, it is considered they would not comply with other relevant development plan policies.

Impact on landscape and biodiversity, including West Wood

Policy CONS2 of the DSWNDP requires new development to be of a high standard of design in harmony with the distinctive character of the area, including that natural and local landscape features are protected.

Figure 3.7/2 of the DSWNDP identifies West Wood as a local landscape feature. Policy CONS6 requires the distinctive landscape of the plan area to be conserved and enhanced.

West Wood is identified in Figure 3.7/4 as a deciduous ancient woodland forming part of the local ecological network. Policy CONS9 requires the protection of habitats and biodiversity and for proposals to give regard to the core elements of local ecological networks identified in Figure 3.7/4.

West Wood is also identified in Figure 3.7/10 as a notable area of green infrastructure in the plan area. Policy CONS12 requires the safeguarding of the existing infrastructure network from the adverse effects of new development.

There is a public footpath between Eastern Road and Hundred Acre Lane across the south-western part of the application site and through West Wood, identified as a notable green link in Figure 3.7/12. Policy CONS13 requires proposals for developments that lie on or adjacent to footpath links not to prejudice the retention and enhancement of these routes.

The development of the four distinctive open fields with hedgerow boundaries in the south-western part of the site within Westmeston, which currently provides a large area of open land to the south of Wivelsfield Green village, would have a significant adverse impact on the setting of the West Wood ancient woodland and the landscape of this part of the DSWNDP area. Whilst the proposals include a buffer zone between the proposed housing and West Wood, the nearest part of the developed area would be only 40m from the northern boundary of the ancient woodland at its nearest point, thereby destroying the open character of the four fields and the setting of West Wood, identified in the DSWNDP as a local landscape feature, part of the local ecological network and a notable area of green infrastructure in the plan area.

Whilst there is an existing public footpath through West Wood, its usage would be significantly increased by residents of the proposed 150 houses. Improved public access to West Wood and a landscaped buffer zone are proposed as part of the development. However, these are not considered to be sufficient to effectively manage increased footfall to West Wood and protect the ancient woodland from future harm and damage. Whilst protection and enhancement measures can be provided to mitigate the impact of increased usage of the public footpath within the application site, this would not be possible within West Wood, which lies outside the applicant's ownership.

#### Traffic impacts

The most direct vehicular route between the new development and Westmeston parish is along Hundred Acre Lane. This is a dangerous, narrow country lane which is unsuited to the increased traffic levels which would result from the proposed development of 150 houses on the site. Not only will traffic to Westmeston use Hundred Acre Lane, but southbound traffic will also use this Lane, Middleton Common Lane and Spatham Lane in part to avoid the severe Ditchling bottleneck. The bottleneck would get worse and tailbacks increase significantly.

#### Infrastructure impacts

Several new housing-estates have been built on the south side of Burgess Hill and in Hassocks. This will stress infrastructure and facilities such as roads, health facilities and schools which are already under strain.

### **(c) Submitted responses to the following applications:**

**NOTED:** Members noted the responses made on the following applications since the previous meeting:

- (i) LW/24/0354 Land Adjacent To Mid Sussex Golf Club, Spatham Lane**  
**Provision of 4no. padel courts (Class F2) with ancillary office unit and casual seating area, provision of vehicle parking area, bicycle storage and soft landscaping. (Reconsultation)**

Westmeston Parish Council reiterates its initial objections to this planning application.

- (ii) SDNP/24/05218/HOUS The Old School, Lewes Road**  
**Single storey rear extension to replace existing store and conservatory, and alterations to fenestration at all elevations.**

Westmeston Parish Council welcomes the removal of the conservatory and store, and requests that if planning permission is granted, to ensure the external materials are sympathetic to the original building, the north elevation of the proposed extension is finished with flint, rather than render as proposed.

- (iii) LW/24/0694 Little Dobells, Dobells Farm Lane, Ditchling Common, Ditchling**  
**Variation of condition 1 (Plans) relating to approval LW/22/0240 - Omission of second storey over the garage area, 4No. Velux windows in the rear roof area, using the original roof line.**

Westmeston Parish Council makes no comment on this application.

- (iv) SDNP/25/00293/HOUS The Barn, Lewes Road**  
**Single storey first floor rear extension, new front porch, gable end side roof extension and fenestration alterations.**

Westmeston Parish Council makes no comment on this application.

- (d) SDNP/23/05134/FUL Ditchling Rugby Club, Keymer Road, Ditchling**  
**Engineering works, to consist of re-profiling of site and realignment of pitch, new drainage system, creation of new access from Clayton Road leading to new parking area, erection of groundsman's store/facilities, associated landscaping, and extension to the existing allowed playing season.**

**RESOLVED:** Members agreed to comment as follows:

Westmeston Parish Council (WPC) reiterates its previous objections to the planning application.

The refusal of the original application was unequivocal and based on being contrary to policies of the Ditchling, Streat & Westmeston Neighbourhood Development Plan (DSWNP), the South Downs Local Plan 2019, the National Planning Policy Framework 2023, and the first purpose of a National Park.

The development is in Ditchling not Westmeston, but seeks to hard-landscape the open site and WPC supports Ditchling Parish Council's objection and South Downs National Park Authority's refusal of the original application.

The proposed development would fail to conserve and enhance the landscape, in conflict with the first purpose of the National Park. It would erode the open character and the designated strategic gap between Ditchling and Keymer. The proposals are therefore contrary to policies CONS 6 and CONS 7 of the DSWNDP.

WPC sees no grounds for a legitimate appeal and urges that it be turned down accordingly.

- (e) Inter Parish Working Group on Housing/Eton College Site/Lewes District Council Local Plan/South Downs Local Plan:**

**NOTED:** Members noted that consultation on the review of the South Downs Local Plan ends on 17th March 2025.

## **8. Mayoral Combined County Authority across East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove:**

**NOTED:** Members noted the devolution proposals to create a Mayoral Combined County Authority across East Sussex, West Sussex and Brighton & Hove, with each being a unitary authority. Whilst the district and borough councils in East and West Sussex are proposed to be abolished, there are no changes proposed for parish and town councils. The Government consultation ends on 13<sup>th</sup> April 2025.

**9. East Sussex Rights of Way Access Plan:**

**NOTED:** Members noted the consultation deadline has been extended to 11<sup>th</sup> April 2025. Councillors Cathy Mills and Joyce Dudeney will submit comments on behalf of the council.

**10. Bodycams for use by litter pickers:**

**RESOLVED:** Following a recent incident with a motorist in Spatham Lane, members resolved to fund the purchase of three bodycams for use by the litter pickers.

**11. Any other information for noting:**

**(a) Highway maintenance and repairs:**

**NOTED:** Members noted that East Sussex Highways had advised the Chairman that despite having reported this matter five times since April 2023, whilst the road surface at the north end of Spatham Lane was uneven, it was not currently of a condition to warrant repair. The rubbish by the finger post had not been removed, despite reporting this four times since December 2024. Members agreed to continue to report these issues.

**(b) Church Corner bus stop timetable:**

**NOTED:** A resident has raised concerns that there is no timetable displayed at the bus stop. Whilst there is a QR code, this discriminates those without a smart phone, which is needed to view the timetable. The Chairman will contact the bus company.

**12. Date of next meeting:** 13th May 2025 Annual Parish Meeting at 6.30pm and Parish Council Meeting at 7.00pm.

Meeting closed at 7.36pm.