

WESTHAM PARISH COUNCIL

Minutes of the Extraordinary Full Council Meeting held at 7.00pm on
Wednesday,

03 December 2025 at The Amenity Hall, Stone Cross School,

Adur Drive, Stone Cross, BN24 5EF

Present: Cllr D Axell, Cllr P Baldwin, Cllr L Comfort, Cllr F Durling, Cllr M Fairweather*, Cllr K Farley, Cllr M Hallett, Cllr C Hanson, Cllr A Taylor, Cllr D Upton*

(* denotes WDC Councillor)

Also present at the meeting:

S. Sanders (Clerk)

5 member of the public

Cllr Upton thanked everyone for attending the meeting and they were welcome to ask questions and make comments on items on the agenda. Cllr Upton then said that Councillors would be given time to discuss the planning applications on the agenda

289. Apologies

Cllr P Quanstrom

290. Declarations of Interest

No Councillor declared an interest in the agenda items

291. Questions from members of the public

Five questions / comments were asked by the members of the public. All spoke on about WD/2025/2269/MAO Land at Peelings Lane, Westham

292. WD/2025/2269/MAO (Major Application Outline)

LAND AT PEELINGS LANE, WESTHAM

Description:

OUTLINE PLANNING APPLICATION FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF UP TO 150 RESIDENTIAL DWELLINGS (INCLUDING AFFORDABLE HOUSING), VEHICULAR ACCESS ROAD FROM PEELINGS LANE, INTERNAL ROADS, CAR PARKING, LANDSCAPING, PUBLIC OPEN SPACE, AND OTHER ASSOCIATED WORKS AND INFRASTRUCTURE. ALL MATTERS TO BE RESERVED WITH THE EXCEPTION OF THE MAIN SITE ACCESS

RESOLVED: OBJECTION

The objections to this planning application include:

The reasons for the earlier historic appeal are still relevant

There are omissions from the Ecological Report that need to be addressed

Errors in the Design and Access Statement

The visibility splay at the entrance to site is not sufficient

Ecological challenges

The following objections are in depth comments:

Environmental

For many reasons, the proposed development is FAR TOO CLOSE to the Pevensey Levels Ramsar SAC SSSI Site.

The Habitat Regulations will be unavoidably violated for several reasons, not least the cat predation upon wetland ground nesting birds.

The SAC and SSSI Protected Species will be put at Risk by the many pollutants associated with human habitation and construction that SuDS cannot ameliorate sufficiently.

Light, noise and fume emissions will unavoidably affect the Ramsar Site environ.

Social and Tourism

The adjacent 1066 Country Walk and E9 Coastal Path will be avoidably degraded by loss of open views and a multifold increase in traffic will ensue from this 140-150 house estate.

The Wellbeing of hundreds of local users, walkers, cyclists, horse riders and dog walkers will be compromised, in addition to the tourists, ramblers and other users from outside the locality without a voice.

There are many physically and mentally infirm residents, who may not be able to ramble across the fields but are able to manage the exercise of walking the lane, which benefit from the daily relief that the natural country setting brings.

There are many schoolchildren who benefit from the 300m+ walk down this single track lane without footpaths to school as is recommended, to enhance their studies and reduce the carbon footprint of a car journey.

Traffic

The traffic increase in the single lane with no footpath will unavoidably multiply several fold.

The heavy goods vehicles accessing and leaving the site will cause extremely dangerous congestion at the entrance on Peelings Lane, the junction with St. John's Drive and the junction with Gallows Lane (already a very dangerous junction with substandard visibility).

The eastbound traffic from the site will add to the Peelings Lane risk to pedestrians and will add to the existing daily gridlock and dangers at the Village Hall and High Street especially to school children.

This eastbound traffic will also add to existing exceedance levels of vehicle pollution outside the Primary School in the High Street of particular danger to those children who have walked to school along Peelings Lane.

The westbound traffic will compound the extreme delays and pollution levels at the Stone Cross crossroads and the Dittons Roundabout.

The southbound traffic will extend the extreme queueing at the Pevensey and Westham railway crossing and junction with Rattle Road. Some residents will choose to drive through the St. Johns Drive estate creating an intolerable change to the quiet retirement aspect of the estate and add to the very poor road condition.

Landscape Impact

This development would make a mockery of the Planning Inspectorate who, in 2015, decided that a development of just 10% of the size of this proposal here would constitute an unacceptable Landscape Intrusion upon the open views of the Levels and lose the visual barrier of the tree-lined Peelings Lane from the Westham settlement.

The development would break past, and reduce, the tree line barrier of the Ketcham Corner Exception Site between settlement and the Levels. Exception Sites should remain so and not be included automatically in the Local Plan.

The development would have full view of the Castle and therefore the Castle environ would have full view of the encroaching housing in detriment to its Historic Setting.

Flooding and Drainage

The site is a valuable lowland micro-valley extension of the Levels incorporating a flood capacity that assists the avian migration from the wetlands and transition feeding territory.

The micro-valley forms part of the Martins Gut and Ditch drainage complex and as such floods regularly into the site to assist flood capacity thereby leaving NO room for SuDS to work effectively. It is also a Flood Management Priority High Zone and Groundwater Vulnerability Red Zone.

Flooding along Ersham Road demonstrates the incapacity of SuDS to ameliorate the silty runoff from surfaces of the new estates and therefore runoff here would pollute the Levels unavoidably. The area of the catchment to this micro-valley is over 200,000 sqm and flows through this site could easily exceed 200m³ per min! (Amber Warning Heavy Rain event 70mm/hr). The planned houses are also within the Surface Water Flood Zone in the western field.

Services

All Local Services are saturated and taking residents/children from Eastbourne and Hailsham and are now 'beyond capacity' according to those operating these services

but FORCED to accept new residents! GP appointments over the phone and alternative paramedic appointments are now the norm for residents here. No NHS dental service places are available. Water treatment services are beyond capacity leading to untreated releases.

Other Comments

1) The development would cause a permanent destruction of the locally distinctive characteristics of the narrow ancient lane, which has wide vegetated verges at some points. It is ancient Wealden, "sunken" lane. There is evidence of its use in Roman times.

The appearance is important to its designation as part of the designated 1066 heritage tourist trail. Developers comment that building on the North side would not impact the 1066 character because there are already some houses on the south side. Most residents consider that the character would be severely compromised.

2) Herons Development (2014): 18 dwellings north of Peelings Lane, east of St Johns Drive

The proposed development lies in the open countryside outside the development boundary. It represents an unjustified and unacceptable development.

It is both isolated and intrusive into the landscape and contrary to saved policies GD2 and DC1.

Herons Developers Appeal- 2015, The inspector refused the appeal, citing-

The landscape impact of the intrusion into the fields

The rural nature of the lane.

The drainage ditch and areas of trees and vegetation at the back of the Romans Way properties

Further east, the wide vegetated banks of the lane.

The inspector concludes that the current proposal is not acceptable because" it would be intrusive in the landscape, in conflict with CSLP Policy WCS9. Due to the

conflict, the proposal gains no support from Policy WCS14. It would also conflict with WLP Policies GD2 and DC17. There is no evidence that the CSLP is out of date, and I have not identified any material considerations that would be appealable that should be determined other than in accordance with the relevant policies of the development plan

3) Surface water from the site will go to the Levels, which start around 70m from the site. This surface water could well contain a load of nasty chemicals from the roads (brake dust, petrol/diesel/oils), from gardens (fertilisers, pesticides), etc. Natural England advises that if two SuDS stages are used to “treat” the surface water, then this will be clean enough to enter the levels. SuDS stages include measures such as permeable paving, swales, ponds. Whereas these will provide some degree of cleaning, there is no information to confirm that they will clean all the nasties, some of which will undoubtedly enter the Levels.

Pevensey Levels is a special area of conservation (SAC), a Ramsar site and an SSSI. SACs are protected by the Habitats Regulations, whilst the NPPF says that Ramsar sites should be afforded similar protection. SSSIs have surprisingly far less protection.

Peelings Lane is not just a strip of countryside on a map. It is a living, breathing part of Westham’s identity. Every single day it is used by walkers, joggers, dog-walkers, children walking to school, families, cyclists and horse riders. It is one of the very few safe, quiet walking routes remaining in our area — a place where people of all ages can enjoy fresh air, space, and the simple peace that is becoming harder and harder to find.

Along this lane, residents and visitors alike enjoy birdsong, wildlife, open country views, and the feeling of being truly connected to nature. This is not a luxury; for many, it is essential for wellbeing and mental health. The tranquillity and natural beauty of Peelings Lane are valued deeply, not only by the Westham community but by hundreds who use it as part of the 1066 Country Walk and the E9 European long-distance path — a route stretching from Estonia to Portugal, chosen to come through here precisely because of its rural character.

If this development goes ahead, we are not just losing fields. We are losing a cherished amenity — a rare and irreplaceable landscape that supports wildlife, supports people, and defines the rural character of our village. The harm would be permanent, and it would be felt far beyond Westham.

Cllr M Fairweather left the meeting before the next item

5. WD/2025/1901/MAJ (Major Application)

SHARNFOLD FARM, HAILSHAM ROAD, STONE CROSS, BN24 5BU

Description:

CHANGE OF USE OF REDUNDANT AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS TO USE CLASS E (COMMERCIAL, BUSINESS AND SERVICE) TO PROVIDE FLEXIBLE WORKSPACES FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS USES (EXCLUDING RETAIL USES), TOGETHER WITH: (i) INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS TO AGRICULTURAL STORAGE BARN, (ii) INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS AND SINGLE STOREY EXTENSION TO FORMER CATTLE SHED, AND (iii) DEMOLITION OF AGRICULTURAL STORAGE BUILDING, CHICKEN SHED AND STABLES, AND CONSTRUCTION OF REPLACEMENT BUILDING; AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING AND CAR CYCLE PARKING LAYOUT

RESOLVED: OBJECTION

We object in principle to this application which will contribute to the demise of the successful Sharnfold Farm.

The agricultural buildings are not “redundant” as described by the applicant and are used for storage of vegetable and fruit produce, essential farm machinery, and animal housing. If there is now a surplus of buildings on this farm, why was planning permission granted only five years ago for a new building if there was no need?

We quote the policies that support rejecting this application -

Extract from Wealden Adopted Local Plan 1998 19.34.27 *The scale of new residential development envisaged at Stone Cross has clearly necessitated the provision of improved public recreation facilities. Various facilities have been or will be provided as part of the development proposals, including playing pitches, public open space and children’s play spaces.*

The removal of the Sharnfold Farm Pick Your-Own, which is not publicly owned but is a green space available to the public, is in contravention of the above policy.

As we already have sufficient housing in the wider area, this application, by removing the ability of Sharnfold to operate to its full ability, will contravene **Para 8 of the NPPF February 2019** which states

c) an environmental objective – to contribute to protecting and enhancing our natural, built, and historic environment; including making effective use of land, helping to improve biodiversity, using natural resources prudently, minimising waste and pollution, and mitigating and adapting to climate change, including moving to a low carbon economy.

All these buildings are essential, as an integral part of the sustainable food production on the site, to ensure that tourist visits and income are maximised to the benefit of the local economy.

Currently the number of small commercial spaces in the area is increasing. Spaces at Sovereign Harbour which were built 5 years ago are still being advertised, so there is no need for this development. There is also the likelihood of a net loss of employment as businesses will just transfer staff from Eastbourne and agricultural employment is lost

The Planning and Heritage Statement Addendum issued by the applicant expresses many opinions as if they are fact, but are not supported by close scrutiny,

For example-

The single story to the Northeast of the Flint Barn will be replaced by a three-storey building, larger than the Flint Barn that it supposedly "enhances". It seems reasonable to expect that this building will hide the Flint Barn viewed from the northeast and thus reduce and harm the Flint Barns aspect.

Full height glass the front of the barn is likely to turn it from a fine example of an old Sussex barn to a "Converted Barn"

In conclusion there is no evidence that the change of use of the barn and the proposed other changes are of benefit to the area, so this application should be rejected.

While the notion of a 'creative arts' space is, on the face of it, an attractive and suitable use for the barn and outbuildings, we know that local rural workspaces are underused. While not a valid planning reason, the rents required to justify the considerable expense in carrying out the proposed alterations will be beyond the

means of craftspeople and the fact of the matter will be that the barn in particular, which uniquely has a Sussex marble floor, will in effect be turned into office space and / or industrial use.

There has been insufficient local consultation for development in this rural area, which is situated within an important rural gap between Stone Cross and Hailsham, set out in the Wealden Core Strategy Plan 2013. (NPPF 132)

- The barn and cart shed are not redundant, but are an integral part of a valued and well used tourist and local amenity [NPPF 53 and 130(c)]
- Tourism and leisure have been identified as key local sources of income and employment. Sharnfold Farm is one of the few green space attractions in the south of Wealden and attracts both tourists and local residents. [NPPF 84(c), 98 & 99]. This has been of particular importance to health and well-being during recent Covid restrictions.
- The conversion of the buildings from agricultural to workshop space will change forever the views from the 1066 footpath which goes past them [NPPF 100]
- There will be irreversible impact on pre-existing wildlife, including protected species of bats, due to building work and later use of the premises destroying a breeding site and wildlife corridor. Lighting, noise and effluents from semi-industrial units will impact on the immediate environment. [NPPF 120(b), 176, 179(a), 185(c)]
- Given the sensitivity of the Pevensey Levels, the drainage proposals are inadequate and unacceptable. The water table at this site has not been determined, but as a local resident I am aware of how near the surface it is. [NPPF 180(b), 181, 185 and 188]
- There are existing under-used workshop spaces nearby at Peelings Manor and Priesthawes, and at Hankham Hall Cottage in Hankham and Chaucer Park in Polegate, all of which are available to meet the same need as is being addressed by application. [NPPF 85, 197(b), 202]

Historic England commented on how fine the heritage is for these buildings.

Of the barn, they noted the survival of the threshing floor with characteristics of Sussex marble, 'a very intact timber frame' and that later extensions and modifications reflected changes in farming practices. They also noted that 'the original historic character and early form, extent and evolution of the barn are clearly legible.'

On the Cart Shed they said its historic value lies in the fact it was "a representative example of a cartshed built during the important English farming period of 1750 to 1880 which was enabled by the widespread adoption of improved grasses and

winter feed-crops.” In other words, this building is an historic relic from the Agrarian Revolution and, as such, is part of all our histories.

These buildings are a testament to local farming history.

The listings of the Threshing Barn and Cart Shed are both for architectural and historic reasons. They take us back to the time of the Agrarian Revolution and represent heritage of genuine quality and interest.

The proposed changes to the listed Threshing Barn with its unique Sussex marble floor will have a mezzanine floor installed, taking away the sense of volume and light the magnificent floor deserves as a setting.

The current building to the right of the listed Threshing Barn is much lower. Under the proposals, this building would be replaced by a modern agricultural style building taller than the Threshing Barn. This would be completely out of keeping with the rural aspect of the listed buildings, and block views of the Threshing Barn.

Under the Applicant’s original proposals, the Cart Shed (to the left of the Threshing Barn) would have been demolished.

The revised plans now show a new larger building running parallel with the Cart Shed and blocking any view of it from the south-west. This building is taller than the Cart Shed along its entire length. It will hide the entire south-west wall of the Cart Shed, whose flint and brick walls are one of the features particularly noted by Historic England.

Historic England (Advice Note 9) states: Whether contemporary in design or based on an existing structure, extensions and new buildings should be subordinate in scale.

The proposed additions are not subordinate.

6. WD/2025/1900/LB (Listed Building)

SHARNFOLD FARM, HAILSHAM ROAD, STONE CROSS, BN24 5BU

Description:

CHANGE OF USE OF REDUNDANT AGRICULTURAL BUILDINGS TO USE CLASS E (COMMERCIAL, BUSINESS AND SERVICE) TO PROVIDE FLEXIBLE WORKSPACES FOR THE CREATIVE ARTS INDUSTRY AND BUSINESS USES (EXCLUDING RETAIL USES), TOGETHER WITH: (i) INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS TO AGRICULTURAL STORAGE BARN, (ii) INTERNAL AND EXTERNAL ALTERATIONS AND SINGLE STOREY EXTENSION TO FORMER CATTLE SHED, AND (iii) DEMOLITION OF AGRICULTURAL STORAGE

BUILDING, CHICKEN SHED AND STABLES, AND CONSTRUCTION OF REPLACEMENT BUILDING; AND ASSOCIATED LANDSCAPING AND CAR CYCLE PARKING LAYOUT

RESOLVED: OBJECTION

Objection to application WD/2025/1900/MAJ to develop the listed barn and cart lodge at Sharnfold Farm for the following reasons.

Development of the barn and associated buildings into a business centre and creative hub will mean that Sharnfold farm will no longer be able to operate as a pick your own leisure facility as it currently does. At present the barn and cart lodge are not redundant (as stated by the applicants), they are used for seasonal events such as Halloween, Christmas and Easter celebrations and are essential to the continuing operation of the pick your own business, which was profitable and award winning under the previous owners.

The 1066 countryside walk passes directly in front of the barns. It is an internationally recognised footpath – and not intended to be a pathway through a built up, commercial area.

The development plans include the construction of a large agricultural building (on a smaller footprint but of greater height) to the northeast of the listed barn. This will dwarf the barn as seen from the 1066 countryside walk. The current building is shown in a photograph on page 16 of the developers heritage addendum report, figure 3.3. On page 17 of their report the developers state “3.6 The farm equipment shed currently obscures views of the principal elevation of the timber frame barn when looking west from the existing access and public right of way, which passes along the eastern boundary of the Site.”. Yet the proposed new building is taller and will therefore obscure the view of the barn even more (see Elevations_1909PFB108B_FlintBarnElevsProp2.pdf)

The Ecological Report identified the site as a significant bat roost. Continuous use of the barns throughout the day is likely to disturb the bats. The bat survey discovered the presence, if not actual roosting, of rare bat species, but certainly the roosting of more common species. Also noted was the low numbers of bats in the building; this is used as a reason to dismiss the importance of bat presence, although quite the contrary can be argued: given the low levels of bat habitat, these few bats should be conserved at all cost. In addition to added human presence, associated light pollution is also likely to have a discouraging effect on wildlife and bats in particular. The Sussex Police response to this proposal suggested the importance of lighting throughout the night – which would be detrimental to wildlife.

Continuous daily use of the buildings for offices and workshops (and other uses within Class E) is likely to generate a significant increase in water use and

drainage. The developers assume that drainage will take place into the ditches that feed Drockmill Gut, which in turn discharges into Pevensey Levels SSSI. Similarly, foul water might be processed in an onsite waste unit, which the drainage report says would be emptied into the Drockmill Gut; this water carries unsuitably high level of nutrients which are detrimental to low-nutrient wetland species. Drockmill Gut is part of the Pevensey Levels SSSI, and its waters empty into its wetlands. The ecology report notes that the cumulative effect of development and in particular car and drainage pollution, must be assessed by WDC, but erroneously assumes WDC must therefore have already done so. It is on the public record that this is not the case.

The site is very close to several ponds and to ditches, which in the summer are partially dry, but from autumn to spring are subject to flooding. These reservoirs are habitat for many wetland species, although the ecology report only tested for the presence Great Crested Newt. Under no circumstances should these water courses be contaminated with surface or foul water run-off.

An important local amenity and tourist attraction will be undermined. Loss of the barn as a resource will inevitably render the current PYO operation and farm trail impossible to continue, which will lead to the loss of a further extensive acreage of farmland.

The cumulative effects upon the UNESCO RAMSAR site on the Pevensey Levels have not been adequately addressed and, indeed, are all but absent from the application. Nor has a Habitat Regulations Assessment has been completed for either of the above-mentioned applications.

The applicant has not sufficiently addressed the impact on pre-existing wildlife, given that specifics about intended use have been omitted.

The proposal remains incomplete on drainage solutions. Southern Water have not provided consent for foul wastewater. If the option of using an onsite treatment plant is selected, this has water quality implications for the Pevensey Levels UNESCO RAMSAR site.

The proposal will add to the dangerous conditions on this section of Hailsham Road.

There has been insufficient local consultation for development in this rural area or scoping of the need for further small business facilities. Currently facilities offered nearby at Peelings Farm, Glynleigh, Priesthawes and Chaucer Park are under used

NPPF: 99. Existing open space, sports and recreational buildings and land, including playing

fields, should not be built on unless:

- a) an assessment has been undertaken which has clearly shown the open space, buildings or land to be surplus to requirements; or
- b) the loss resulting from the proposed development would be replaced by equivalent or better provision in terms of quantity and quality in a suitable location; or
- c) the development is for alternative sports and recreational provision, the benefits of which clearly outweigh the loss of the current or former use.

NPPF: 100. Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails.

174. Planning policies and decisions should contribute to and enhance the natural and local environment by:

- a) protecting and enhancing valued landscapes, sites of biodiversity or geological value and soils (in a manner commensurate with their statutory status or identified quality in the development plan);
- b) recognising the intrinsic character and beauty of the countryside, and the wider benefits from natural capital and ecosystem services – including the economic and other benefits of the best and most versatile agricultural land, and of trees and woodland.

175. Plans should:

- distinguish between the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites
- allocate land with the least environmental or amenity value, where consistent with other policies in this Framework (Where significant development of agricultural land is demonstrated to be necessary, areas of poorer quality land should be preferred to those of a higher quality)
- take a strategic approach to maintaining and enhancing networks of habitats and green infrastructure

179. Plans should

- Identify, map and safeguard components of local wildlife-rich habitats and wider ecological networks, including the hierarchy of international, national and locally designated sites of importance for biodiversity; wildlife corridors and stepping stones that connect them; and areas identified by national and local partnerships for habitat management, enhancement, restoration or creation; and
- promote the conservation, restoration and enhancement of priority habitats, ecological networks and the protection and recovery of priority species; and identify and pursue opportunities for securing measurable net gains for biodiversity.

180 (b) development on land within or outside a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and which is likely to have an adverse effect on it (either individually or in combination with other developments), should not normally be permitted. The

only exception is where the benefits of the development in the location proposed clearly outweigh both its likely impact on the features of the site that make it of special scientific interest, and any broader impacts on the national network of Sites of Special Scientific Interest.

185. Planning policies and decisions should also ensure that new development is appropriate for its location taking into account the likely effects (including cumulative effects) of pollution on health, living conditions and the natural environment, as well as the potential sensitivity of the site or the wider area to impacts that could arise from the development. In doing so they should:

- a) mitigate and reduce to a minimum potential adverse impacts resulting from noise from new development – and avoid noise giving rise to significant adverse impacts on health and the quality of life
- b) identify and protect tranquil areas which have remained relatively undisturbed by noise and are prized for their recreational and amenity value for this reason; and
- c) limit the impact of light pollution from artificial light on local amenity, intrinsically dark landscapes and nature conservation

While the notion of a ‘creative arts’ space is, on the face of it, an attractive and suitable use for the barn and outbuildings, we know that local rural workspaces are underused. While not a valid planning reason, the rents required to justify the considerable expense in carrying out the proposed alterations will be beyond the means of craftspeople and the fact of the matter will be that the barn in particular, which uniquely has a Sussex marble floor, will in effect be turned into office space and / or industrial use.

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industrial units will impact on the immediate environment. [NPPF 120(b), 176, 179(a), 185(c)]

- Given the sensitivity of the Pevensey Levels, the drainage proposals are inadequate and unacceptable. The water table at this site has not been determined, but as a local resident I am aware of how near the surface it is. [NPPF 180(b), 181, 185 and 188]
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Historic England (Advice Note 9) states: Whether contemporary in design or based on an existing structure, extensions and new buildings should be subordinate in scale.

The proposed additions are not subordinate.

**293. To resolve to exclude Members of the Press and Public (Public Bodies
[Admission to Meetings] Act 1960**

There were no matters to be discussed

The Meeting closed at 20.15pm

