



HEATHFIELD AND WALDRON PARISH COUNCIL
PLANNING AND HIGHWAYS COMMITTEE MEETING HELD ON
MONDAY 27th JANUARY 2025, IN THE MAIN HALL OF HEATHFIELD COMMUNITY CENTRE AT
6.30pm

Present: Cllrs Coffey (Chair), Dunstall, Draper, Garnett, Leney, Pert, Stemp and Whitehouse.
Also in attendance was Wealden District Councilors' Gadd and Benton.

The Assistant Clerk was in attendance

3 members of the public was present

25/18 **Public questions-** To **resolve** to close the meeting to enable questions from the Public to be taken, (no more than 15 minutes in total and a maximum of 3 minutes per person)

A member of the public, who has lived near the proposed development site for over 20 years, shared their views on planning application WD/2024/2366/MAJ. While they are not opposed to the principle of development, they expressed significant concerns about the current proposal.

One of their primary concerns relates to access to the site. Both the east and west access points are on a busy, fast main road with a speed limit of 60 mph. The road has a history of accidents, including fatalities and serious collisions, often attributed to its narrowness and the challenges of turning into or out of the access points. Drivers are forced to slow down or stop on the main road to turn, and due to poor visibility, other drivers may not slow down in time. The proposed 18 properties would significantly increase traffic at these access points, exacerbating the existing dangers. Additionally, the area lacks public transport links and pavements, making pedestrian and cyclist access impractical and unsafe.

Another concern is sustainability. The development proposal does not include provisions for green energy, such as solar panels, which the resident believes is essential given the density of the proposed housing and the impact on the local environment.

Light pollution was also raised as an issue. The area is recognized as a Dark Skies region within a National Landscape, and increased lighting from the development would affect such characteristic.

Members asked the following questions:

- *A member asked the resident about the fact that he had stated he was not opposed to the development per se, but from the concerns he had raised, it seems the sheer volume and access issues that are the problem?*

The resident explained they are not opposed to development in principle but believe it should be limited to ensure the practical use of the area. The primary concerns are the access issues and the volume of people this development would bring.

- *Another member asked the resident that he had stated that the west access was better than the eastern, but was visibility still an issue there? The resident explained that, yes, visibility at the west access is still quite limited.*
- *It was also asked who has the right of way to these access roads? The resident explained the eastern access is owned by Home Farm, which has the right of way. However, he was unsure about the ownership of the western access.*

Another member of the public also expressed concerns about the proposed development under application WD/2024/2366/MAJ. In addition to agreeing with the previously mentioned concerns regarding access and the number of houses proposed, they highlighted issues with waste disposal and water management. They noted that the proposal does not comply with waste disposal requirements and that the area would struggle to handle the volume of water generated by the development. The reed beds and runoff systems required for this proposed number of properties would need to be very large, and the separate attenuation ponds would be located in an area already prone to excessive wetness.

The resident also pointed out that the application suggests walking and cycling as part of the justification for the development. However, the resident argued that the narrow and unsafe conditions of the area make such activities impractical and unviable. Furthermore, they explained that the access points cannot be widened because the land required for this does not belong to the developers. Overall, they emphasized that the area is unsustainable for the increased population and movement the development would bring.

Members asked the following question:

- *Whether they had natural gas in this area? The resident explained some houses in the area do have natural gas, but not all, especially to the south of the development.*

Cllr Benton, speaking as a member of the public and not in his capacity as a councillor, raised objections regarding planning application WD/2024/2900/F. His concerns focused on the scale of the proposed development and its impact on the surrounding environment, particularly the proximity to Darch's Wood and the adjacent Ancient Woodland. He noted that the development breaches the recommended buffer zone, which is currently 15m and may increase to 35m under the new Wealden District Council Local Plan. However, this proposal places the development within 5m of the Ancient Woodland. Such proximity poses a significant risk to local wildlife and the ecological environment. He also raised concerns about light pollution, highlighting that the excessive glazing proposed in the development would intrude upon the standards of a Dark Skies area and could cause severe ecological damage. Additionally, he pointed out discrepancies in the application, which claims that no trees have been felled, although 19 trees have been removed from the area. These trees were not subject to Tree Preservation Orders (TPOs), but their felling would have required a Felling License, which was not obtained, it is understood.

Members asked the following questions:

A member noted that the potential extension of such buffer zones outlined in the new Local Plan under Regulation 18 can only be given limited weight, as it has not yet been adopted. However, the garage appears to be within 5m of the existing buffer zone.

The resident agreed the garage is entirely encroaching into the ancient woodland.

Another member asked about the removal of the trees, including when this occurred, the size of the trees, and whether the issue of the felling licence had been raised with Wealden District Council. The resident explained the trees ranged in size from half a meter in width to 0.2 metre and were felled recently, just before the application was submitted. However, it is unclear whether this matter has been taken up with Wealden District Council. Again he wanted to highlight he is speaking as a concerned resident not a councillor.

Cllr Gadd provided the following updates:

- *The Wealden Cabinet met today to discuss the Local Plan. The report on the Regulation 18 consultation responses is nearing completion and should be published within the next couple of weeks. Following this, a Local Plan Sub-Committee meeting will decide on any changes, based on that report, including any sites to be added following the extended SHELAA process. The deadline for the Local Plan has been extended from 30th June 2025 to December 2026.*

Members asked the following questions:

How would Wealden address the point in the NPPF 2024 that implies the plan might need to be restarted? This will be determined by the Local Plan Sub-Committee.

Will the report on the consultation, to which parishes contributed, be a full report? The Sub-Committee will decide what changes are to be included, and this will need to be agreed upon.

Is the new deadline for the final report or just the Regulation 19 stage? The plan will be ready to go to the inspector by this deadline.

- *Cllr Gadd explained that three key stages for devolution have been agreed upon, along with three meetings to discuss progress. He will provide updates after each meeting and believes the devolution process is moving forward. He also reported that a meeting on social housing among Authorities in East Sussex, has taken place to determine how to proceed.*
- *He will be attending a planning appeal inquiry for the Orchard House site in Horam. He plans to speak about issues raised regarding Southern Water, protecting biodiversity, and supporting both current and future residents across the district. He emphasized that there should be no occupation of the development until Southern Water provides evidence that they can cope with the additional demand or presents concrete plans to address the situation. He has evidence that they cannot currently cope and intends to raise this issue.*
- *Cllr Gadd also shared correspondence from Wealden MP Nus Ghani regarding a question he raised with the Government about the District being blamed for not building enough houses. He provided evidence showing that delays are not solely the responsibility of the planning authority but also due to developers, legislation and other areas. He highlighted that it was pointed out that local planning authorities already have the power to issue completion notices for stalled developments, which could result in planning permissions lapsing if the development is not completed. He noted that 12,000 houses are currently in the system: 9,000 with planning permission and 3,000 awaiting decision notices.*

A planning application for 145 houses, previously refused by Planning Committee North, has been resubmitted under a new application number. It was revealed that the Police and Crime Commissioner had written a 222-page report on this application, requesting Section 106 funding due to the inability to cope with increased development across Wealden and Sussex without additional resources. The Commissioner indicated that they would object to the application if funding is not provided. East Sussex County Council (ESCC) has also requested infrastructure funding. Cllr Gadd noted the significant pressure to address the situation.

Members asked the following question:

Will the Police and Crime Commissioner be submitting reports like this regularly in the future? Cllr Gadd was unsure, noting that this is a new situation. However, it could have implications for the Local Plan.

25/19 **Apologies for Absence**

*Apologies received from Cllrs Mian and Cllr Thomas due to Illness
These were approved and noted by members.*

25/20 **Disclosure of Interests in matters on the Agenda**

Cllr Leney declared a personal interest in planning application WD/2025/0095/F as he knows the applicant in a personal capacity.

25/21 **To receive and sign the Minutes of the meeting held on Monday 13th January 2025 (previously circulated)**

The minutes of the meeting held on the 13th January 2025 were approved and signed by the Chairman of the Committee

25/22 **Action points from previous minutes**

A previously circulated report was noted by members.

25/23 **To consider Planning Applications received since the last meeting**

WD/2024/2900/F - West Lodge, Back Lane, Cross in Hand, Heathfield, TN21 0QB. Single storey front extension, ground and first floor side extension including roof extension to the main house and erection of new 4 bay oak framed garage.

OBSERVATIONS: *The committee object to this application on the following grounds:*

- **Ancient Woodland Infringement:** *The proposal fails to comply with the required buffer exclusion zone for Ancient Woodland protection leading to potential impacts in such zone.*
- **Excessive Glazing in an area of National Landscape:** *Significant light pollution risks adversely impacting the woodland's wildlife from both the proposed dwelling extension and the detached garage.*
- **Impact on High Weald AONB:** *The development is not in keeping with the character of the High Weald National Landscape and undermines the purposes of its protected status.*
- **Tantamount to a New Dwelling:** *The scale and nature of the proposal including the mezzanine accommodation, suggest it is more than an ancillary structure, and tantamount to the formation of a new dwelling in terms of character and potential.*

- **First-Floor Accommodation:** The use of the proposed first-floor space is unclear and raises concerns about additional light pollution impacts.
- **Missing Design and Access Statement:** The absence of this key document hinders adequate assessment of the proposal's justification and context.
- **Garage Size and Appearance:** The proposed garage is overly large and visually intrusive, especially given the sensitive setting and encroachment into the Ancient Woodland.
- **Buffer Zone Non-Compliance:** The application does not meet the minimum required buffer zone to satisfactorily safeguard the Ancient Woodland.

WD/2024/2366/MAJ - Tootingworth Grange, Burwash Road, Heathfield, TN21 8UN. Conversion and extension of redundant building to provide 18.no. dwellings, access, landscaping and other associated infrastructure.

OBSERVATIONS: The committee objects to this application on the following grounds:

Drainage Concerns: Both foul and surface water drainage issues remain unresolved. Concerns regarding the proposed treatment plant being used further down the site, with no clarity on outfall relocation. Surface water drainage proposals are unclear, especially regarding discharge into a watercourse in an already wet area and potential adverse impacts beyond. Certain areas are prone to flooding, and the proposal risks exacerbating these issues.

Access Concerns: The proposed sole use of the eastern access, from a very busy main road to a narrow road, raises safety issues due to high speeds and limited visibility, beyond the site, and potential congestion and hazards within it. Furthermore, the applicant does not own the land needed to implement any access improvements, making these elements impractical and the whole scheme unviable in this context.

East Sussex Highways Reservations: The pre-application references a previous scheme rather than the current proposals, and East Sussex County Council (ESCC) Highways expressed reservations about the access in any event. No updated application was submitted for consultation, and ESCC noted discrepancies in vehicle movement data.

Environmental Impact: Initial plans to include solar panels and heat source pumps have been replaced with proposals to use gas, with solar panels discretionary, which is an unsustainable approach, and an unacceptable reduction in the proposed environmental standards. The applicant should consider renewable and environmentally sustainable energy solutions throughout the development.

Contradictions with NPPF Policies: The application fails to comply with the provisions of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF), particularly paragraphs 116, 189, and 198.

Visibility Controls: The proposed visibility splays are outside the applicants' control, relying on vegetation management without adequate provision and offsite structures. This makes the proposal unsafe.

Fire Hydrant Provisions: No provisions have been made for fire hydrants or sufficient water supplies for fire emergencies.

Application Deficiencies: The application fails to adequately address existing concerns regarding access, drainage, and environmental impacts due to a lack of detail and supporting information.

Unsustainable Location: The location of the site lacks the infrastructure necessary for realistic safe walking, cycling, or sustainable transport options, making it unsuitable for

development. The implementation of a bus stop or layby would not be feasible as the applicants do not own the necessary land or access rights, and the operation of the bus stops would be impractical, especially on the north side of the main road, given high traffic speeds, lack of visibility and poor lighting at times.

Impact on High Weald National Landscape: The proposal would have a negative impact on the High Weald National Landscape, including harm to wildlife and the local environment in general.

Scale of Development: The scale of the proposed development is considered unsustainable and inappropriate for the area, which cannot support the proposed number of properties in terms of all the criteria set out, not least in terms of traffic generation.

Excessive glazing- The proposed glazing would cause a negative visual and environmental impact into Dark Skies area.

Affordability: There is a total lack of satisfactory justification for the suggested reduction in the proposed affordable provisions or contributions.

WD/2025/0069/F - Beacon Down, Lewes Road, Cross in Hand, Heathfield, TN21 0TA. To build small enclosed bike store with adjoining open log store.

OBSERVATIONS: The committee members supported the application, considering the size and appearance to be in keeping with the locality. Members welcome the rainwater harvester provisions.

WD/2025/0077/LB - Highlands Cottage, Church Street, Old Heathfield, TN21 9AJ. Roof covering renewal using existing and reclaimed roof tiles to match existing. Provision of insulation internally.

OBSERVATIONS: This application was withdrawn.

WD/2025/0027/F - Oakland House, Pook Reed Lane, Heathfield, TN21 0AU. Demolition of existing porch, erection of two storey projecting bay to provide adjusted main entrance and alterations to fenestration.

OBSERVATIONS: The committee members supported the application, considering the size and appearance to be in keeping with the locality.

WD/3506/CC/ WD/2025/0100/CC- CONSULTATION UNDER ARTICLE 13 OF THE TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING (DEVELOPMENT MANAGEMENT PROCEDURE) (ENGLAND) ORDER 2015 – Variation of condition 2 of planning permission WD/3488/CC to omit the originally approved entrance lobby, roof overhang and sedum roof, move the building by 1500mm to the east and associated amendments to the landscape scheme, amend external material details and omit any works to the external treatment of the barn.

Location: Heathfield Youth Centre, High Street, Heathfield, East Sussex, TN21 0UP

OBSERVATIONS: The committee members support the amendments to the application and raise no objections.

25/24

To consider Planning Applications after the agenda was published

WD/2025/0094/F - 9 Uplands Park, Broad Oak, Heathfield, TN21 8SJ. Proposed rear dormer & garage extension.

OBSERVATIONS: *The committee members supported the application, considering the size and appearance to be in keeping with the locality, subject to the window to be obscured glazed, as stated.*

WD/2025/0095/F- Silveroaks farm, Hawkhurst Lane, Waldron, TN21 0RS. Construction of a temporary (30 years) small-scale photovoltaic solar development including a change of use of agricultural land.

OBSERVATIONS: *The committee members supported the application. However, they requested that the change of the land be limited to the agreed timeframe for the solar panels, with the land reverting back to agricultural use once the time limit has lapsed. Additionally, members requested the implementation of appropriate lighting controls to minimize any light pollution*

NO CONSULTEES but comments from personal knowledge are allowed

WD/2025/7000/AD - Wish End Farm, Scotsford Road, Broad oak, Heathfield, TN21 8UD. Four bay open-fronted building for hay/feed storage and machinery storage/maintenance.

OBSERVATIONS: *Members noted the details submitted but feel there are insufficient details to make any comments.*

25/25

Planning applications approved: Parish Council Comments are in *Italics*. Please note any decisions that vary from the parish council comments are attached.

WD/2024/2644/F – Kimbles, Alexandra Road, Heathfield, TN21 8EH. Proposed single storey garage. Approved/*Support*

WD/2024/2473/F- Summerfield, Spinney Lane, Waldron, TN21 0NU. Proposed swimming pool. Approved/*Support*

WD/2024/2608/F- 65 Gorse Hill, Broad Oak, Heathfield, TN21 8TP. Extension of semi-detached garage to form workshop. Approved/*Support*

WD/2024/2239/FA- 13A High Street, Heathfield, East Sussex, TN21 8LU. Variation of condition 5 of WD/2022/2086/F (Single storey extension with first floor extension over, to floor area of existing flat and to form a residential annexe) to alter design of first floor flat extension. Approved/*Support*

These were noted by members

25/26

Planning applications refused

WD/2024/2258/MAO- Snatchells Farm, Cross in Hand, Heathfield TN21 0LS. Outline application for the construction of 24 no. residential dwellings with associated access, parking, landscaping, public amenity space and associated highways works- all matters reserved for future determinisation except for access to the site. Refused /*Objected*

This was noted by members

25/27 **Planning applications Withdrawn**

WD/2024/2377/F- Heathfield Park, School Hill, Old Heathfield, TN21 8RL. Alteration to existing outdoor riding arena to create two hard surface tennis courts, together with construction of an associated single storey outbuilding and installation of fencing; and alterations to existing hard surface tennis courts to create two padel tennis courts and installation of fencing. Withdrawn/*Objected*

This was noted by members

25/28 **Planning Appeals**

APP/C1435/W/24/3341961. Appeal Decision: WD/2023/1927/F - SILVER BIRCHES, STREET END LANE, BROAD OAK, HEATHFIELD, TN21 8TS. Allowed

This was noted by members

25/29 **Tree Works**

None

25/30 **Streetlights**

(i) ESCC contract and concerns – *The Assistant Clerk reported that the current officer at East Sussex County Council, with whom she had been engaging, has left. This has caused delays in the process. A replacement officer has since contacted the Assistant Clerk, apologised for the delay, and has fast-tracked the information we are waiting for. It is hoped that an update will be provided at the next Planning and Highways Committee Meeting.*

25/31 **High Street Pavement** – *No further updates at this time*

25/32 **Planning Decisions**- *This was noted by members.*

25/33 **Changes to Southern Water's surface water management policy** – *This was noted by members.*

25/34 **Environment** – to identify agenda items where the environment has been considered by the Council/Committee in their deliberations and decision making
The Committee considered the environment in all of the planning applications and other matters.

25/35 **Crime & Disorder Act 1998 Section 17** – to consider effects (if any) arising from items on the Agenda.
Speed limits and road safety were considered.

25/36 **Risk Management:** -To consider effects (if any) arising from items on the Agenda
Speed limits, High Street pavements and planning applications, trees and, Southern Water policy, drainage and water run off were considered.

25/37 **The next Planning and Highways Meeting will be held on **Tuesday 18th February 2025 at 6.30 pm** in the Main Hall, Heathfield Community Centre, Sheepsetting Lane.**

This was noted by members

Meeting closed at 20.39pm