

Westwell Parish Council
Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council
Held on Wednesday 5th April 2023 at 7.00pm at Westwell Parish Hall

1. Present and Apologies

Cllr Drury (Chair), Cllrs Bainbridge (Vice-Chair), Lister, Hutchinson, Butcher, Richards, Farrington, Bartlett and Wyatt.
 Acting Clerk – Sonia Young

Apologies were received from Cllr Bartlett due to prior commitments. These were accepted.
 25 members of the public were present.

2. Declarations of Interest

Cllr Bainbridge – near neighbour to application: PA/2023/0273 Blackberry Mead Farm, Pilgrims Way, Westwell.

3. Planning

3.1 Planning applications

Chair Cllr Drury reminded the public present that it was Ashford Borough Council that made the decisions on planning applications and not Westwell Parish Council.

3.1.1 PA/2023/0283 Land adjoining Holly House , The Street, Westwell

Erection of three detached sustainable dwelling houses. Associated access, parking, ecological enhancements and landscaping.

Chair Cllr Drury said the application should be considered on fact and not on rumour. One comment had been made in favour of the application and several against.
 In the interests of transparency, Westwell Parish Council has asked for this application to be decided by ABC Planning Committee. Cllr Drury said this would most likely be held in July/ mid-summer at the earliest.

The Chair opened the meeting for public debate at 7.14pm

Public comment made:

Preference for a development of three new homes vs a sprawling new estate.

Questions raised about the impact of the development on the established village confines as the development would fall outside of the existing confines.

WPC was asked if it would consult with the village if it was deemed that the village confines would have to change and, if a change was made, where further changes would stop if another planning application was received in future years.

The danger of traffic pulling in and out of the proposed development onto a busy road with a 60mph limit and with already challenged site lines including two blind corners which were not shown on the proposed plans.

Concern that no site notice had been posted.

The meeting was closed to the public at 7.43pm

WPC agreed that it would if practical review similar/neighbouring planning cases where an application would challenge the agreed village confines

WPC needed to understand if the development would be considered possible under the 2030 Local Plan policies and if Westwell, because it is in AONB, would be subject to those constraints too.

It also needed to better understand if all housing development should only be within the confines of the village and if that happened what impact this would have on the character of the village including on the Conservation area.

WPC will also need to consider whether to explore how the confines of the village could be reviewed.

The council noted that the proposed plot had seen one prior application in 1997/8 that had been refused but agreed that there had been substantive change to planning and housing policy in the intervening years.

They agreed that the proposed development was on a relatively busy rural road for not only vehicular traffic, especially delivery vans, but also pedestrians and cyclists. They noted there was recent data on traffic speeds on the road in question.

WPC questioned whether it needed to support a small development such as this application rather than be faced with far greater density of new housing development being imposed.

It was agreed that the Stodmarsh issue of excess nitrate and phosphates flowing into the Stour arising from new housing developments would also impact the application, as set out in requirements and methodology from Natural England. Cllrs agreed that the issue of construction disturbance was unlikely to be a material consideration as the site would be subject to normal construction management practice.

Cllrs confirmed that Westwell was not one of the villages due for development in the Local Plan and had little to offer by way of sustainability without a school, public transport or shop but also recognised that ABC was under pressure to meet national new housing targets. Three or four WPC Cllrs will have a site meeting to look at the proposed design and site, including elevation.

Chair Cllr Drury asked if the applicant, who was present at the meeting, if he wished to make comment at this stage. The applicant hoped the application would be on the 17 May agenda in order to prepare full and rounded responses to the comments made.

Cllr Drury thanked the public for their participation.

Resolved

To summarise all comments and to circulate a draft comment to all Cllrs for agreement and submission to Ashford Borough Council by the given deadline.

3.1.2 PA/2023/0273 Blackberry Mead Farm, Pilgrims Way, Westwell Demolition of existing buildings. Erection of detached replacement dwelling

Chair Cllr Drury opened the meeting for public debate at 7.55pm

Public comment made:

Concern re the principle of destroying one house simply to build another in its place.

Damage caused by heavy construction traffic to the nearby highway and verges.

Safety of walkers using the Pilgrims Way during the construction period.

Impact of the new building roofline on an important/ protected view up from the village.

The meeting was closed to the public at 8.14pm

WPC had had a site meeting and raised concerns with the applicant and their architect about the choice of newly bright orange roofing tiles and their impact on the long view up from the village as they will be unduly prominent.

WPC acknowledged that sustainability was at the core of the build, with materials to be re-used and reclaimed as much as possible, and a ground sourced heating system. They also

acknowledged the wish of the applicant to minimise the impact of the replacement build by ensuring a road cleaner was available to keep the road clean during construction.
Cllrs agreed that the proposed design of the house as single storey was welcome as this would moderate its impact on a prominent site.

Resolved

Cllr Richards proposed WPC support the application with conditions pertaining to traffic management and that materials chosen should be visually recessive to diminish the impact of the proposed house on the long views up from the village and the escarpment. Such materials to include the colour of the chosen roof tiles which WPC would like to see amended from the currently proposed colour to something much less visually arresting and close to local mature peg tiles.

Proposed: Cllr Richards

Seconded: Cllr Hutchinson

All in favour. Cllr Bainbridge did not take part in the vote due to a conflict of interest.

ACTION JR/CD

3.1.3 PA/2023/0425 Beech House, The Street, Westwell.

Single storey extension following removal of conservatory. Existing garage to be re-roofed with plain tile hipped roof.

WPC discussed the design of the proposed replacement extension and agreed that the glazed window design gave the impression of slim profile Georgian style windows which would be welcome and an improvement on the existing conservatory. It was agreed that the UPVC proposed would improve the energy efficiency of the extension.
WPC confirmed Beech House is not listed but is located within the village's conservation area.

Resolved

Proposed: Cllr Drury proposed WPC support the application.

Seconded: Cllr Lister

All in agreement.

ACTION CD

4. Items for next Parish Council meeting

- 4.1 – parking on Gold Hill
- 4.2 – cherry tree in churchyard
- 4.3 – appointment of a new clerk
- 4.4 – approval of the AGAR

5. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 17th May

The meeting closed at 8.55 pm

Chairman's Signature.....

