

FLETCHING PARISH COUNCIL

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6th July 2023

Mr Trevor Scott
Chief Executive
Wealden District Council
(Sent via email only)

Dear Mr Scott,

Parish of Fletching – Designation of Neighbourhood Area

I am writing as Chairman of Fletching Parish Council, pursuant to Regulation 5 of The Neighbourhood Planning (General) Regulations 2012, in order to submit a statutory application for the designation of a Neighbourhood Area.

Neighbourhood Area

A map is attached¹ identifying the area to which this application relates. The Parish Council has passed a resolution (3rd July 2023) for the creation of a Neighbourhood Plan and has also resolved that the Neighbourhood Area to be designated should be the whole of the Parish.

Statement of appropriateness

It is considered appropriate to designate this area because:

- i. Fletching is a small² rural parish with a noteworthy history. The village of Fletching is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1085. Its parish church of St. Andrew and St. Mary the Virgin dates from the late 12th century, completed in 1230. It was here, in 1246, that Simon de Montfort with his barons held a vigil of prayer on the eve of the Battle of Lewes, while his men camped on Fletching Common. The Parish also includes the scattered dwellings in the hamlet of Piltdown and at Sheffield Green, Splaynes Green, Down Street, Shortbridge and amongst the rural lanes of the Parish;
- ii. The predominant land uses of the Parish are farmland, mainly classified as Grade 3, and woodland, much of which is Ancient Woodland³ (including Park Wood in Piltdown) and/or forms part of the National Forest Inventory⁴.
- iii. The northern area of the Parish is a part of the designated High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.
- iv. The southern area lies within the Low Weald and contains a number of areas of historic commons. These include Piltdown Golf Club, founded in 1904, which since 1996 has been subject to a Course Management Policy in liaison with DEFRA and Natural England, to restore the heathland nature of the course and maintain a balanced environment across the common as a whole.

¹ Appendix A

² Population 2021 was 1,045

³ <https://naturalengland-defra.opendata.arcgis.com/datasets/a14064ca50e242c4a92d020764a6d9df/explore?location=50.994731%2C0.043338%2C14.00>

⁴ Wealden District Council Landscape Character Assessment

- v. All the Parish lies within the Upper Ouse Valley⁵. The River Ouse flows through the Parish (forming much of the western boundary) and close to Fletching Village; some of the tributaries in the River's catchment spring and flow from the Parish;
- vi. The entire Parish lies within the 7 km Buffer Zone of the Ashdown Forest Special Area of Conservation ("SAC") and Special Protection Area ("SPA");
- vii. The Parish contains approximately 100 designated heritage assets⁶ including Sheffield Park House (Grade I), Sheffield Registered Park and Garden (Grade I), Fletching and Splaynes Green Conservation Area, Fletching Church (Grade I), and numerous other listed buildings across the Parish;
- viii. The Parish lies within in a Biodiversity Opportunity Area⁷;
- ix. The Historic Landscape Character is one of Fieldscapes⁸;
- x. The Parish is predominantly an area of relatively High Tranquility⁹;
- xi. In terms of Dark Skies, the Parish has the lowest level of light emitted¹⁰.

Thus, in the light of these factors and the need to promote a sustainable pattern of development in accordance with economic, social and environmental objectives and to support the wellbeing of the local community, the Parish Council wish to prepare a Neighbourhood Plan in respect of the proposed Neighbourhood Area.

Any area smaller than the Parish, such as the village of Fletching alone, would not be appropriate because such an approach would exclude a substantial proportion of the residents of the Parish from this important opportunity for public engagement and active participation in planning the future of the Parish. At a meeting of the Parish Council on 6th February 2023, some 100 parishioners attended and voted overwhelmingly in favour of the preparation of a Neighbourhood Plan for the whole Parish.

Relevant Body

The Parish Council was first established by the Local Government Act 1894 and has been in continuous existence since then. The Parish Council is a public body constituted by law and thus a relevant body for the purposes of the principal Act.¹¹

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely,

Richard Hannay

Richard Hannay

Chairman, Fletching Parish Council

cc Cllr Christina Coleman – Wealden District Council

⁵ Ibid.

⁶ <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/results/?searchType=NHLE+Simple&search=fletching&page=5>

⁷ Wealden District Council Landscape Character Assessment

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Town and County Planning Act 1990 Section 61G (2) (a)