

Westwell Parish Council
Minutes of a Meeting of the Parish Council
Held on Wednesday 10th January 2024 at 7pm, Westwell Parish Hall

1. Open Forum

No members of the public were present.

2. Present and apologies

Present: Cllrs Drury, (Chair), Bainbridge (Vice Chair), Farrington, Butcher, Hutchinson, Lister, Richards and Wyatt. Clerk – Sonia Young

Apologies: Cllr Bartlett. Borough Cllr: Larry Krause

3. Declarations of Interest

None.

4. Approval of the minutes of the meetings held on 6th December 2023

Resolved:

That the minutes of the meetings of Westwell Parish Council held on 6th December be approved and confirmed as true records.

Proposed: Cllr Richards **Seconded:** Cllr Bainbridge. **All in agreement.** Cllrs Butcher, Hutchinson and Lister abstained as not present at the 6 December meeting.

Resolved. It was resolved to approve the minutes as a true record of the meeting.

Matters Arising

4.1 The Westwell Eye was discussed. It was agreed that the Westwell Eye Working Group comprising Cllrs Wyatt, Bainbridge and Hutchinson would meet to review the financial position of the Eye and discuss all related matters.

Cllr Drury gave a vote of thanks to all those volunteers who have in the past, and continue, to deliver the Eye to households in the parish to keep everyone informed. Cllr Drury will also ask the Editor of the Westwell Eye to include a similar note of thanks in the February issue.

Action: Cllrs Wyatt, Bainbridge and Hutchinson to meet. Cllr Drury to draft proposed content for the Eye as noted above.

4.2 Tutt Hill noticeboard

The clerk has written to the owners of the land where the Tutt Hill noticeboard has been enclosed and asked them to re-site it in the position agreed at the meeting with Cllrs Drury and Wyatt so that parishioners can access it. No response has been received.

Action: Cllrs Wyatt and Drury to try and meet again with the landowners to discuss the re-siting, and to reengage with KCC Highways as it was their non-enforcement against enclosure that has caused the problem.

5. Planning applications received for comment

5.1.1 PA/2023/2211 Sandbar Business Park, Maidstone Road, Hothfield, TN26 1AR

Change of use from Oakover Nurseries to storage and distribution including erection of warehouse, workshop, office and ancillary buildings. Car parking, HGV parking, hard-standing, landscaping and lighting with access from Ashford Road.

Westwell Parish Council resolved to request that this application is decided at the ABC Planning Committee, and to object to the proposal for the following reasons:

This is a rural site in the parish of Westwell, previously used for horticultural activities by Oakover nurseries after it was no longer required as an ancillary construction site for the M20. It is not an allocated site in the current local plan, and it is in the setting of the Kent Downs National Landscape. There is residential property at Lake House immediately adjacent which is also a holistic therapy centre providing mental health support and treatments to adults and children. These activities rely on the tranquillity of a location which is in the countryside with wildlife and has good access.

A previous planning application by Vatre Terracotta (16/01387/AS) was considered by the Planning Committee in September 2017. At that time the key issues focussed on exceptional circumstances for a rural location which revolved around the need for a long-established local business- Apta pots - providing local employment for 38 years, to find a suitable area for expansion including low density, open-air storage for their pots. There was a long list of conditions attached to the permission, including Apta as the first occupant because of the exceptional circumstances, although this was waived in a subsequent application to enable Apta to secure loan finance for the development. (19/00356/AS) The IDB also commented as the site is close to a watercourse which is part of the Stour catchment. Apta pots no longer have any interest in the site as their operations have moved to Goole in East Yorkshire following sale of the brand to Ames Inc.

There are no exceptional circumstances given in the application to justify this B8 application in a rural location in the setting of a designated landscape. It would be non-compliant with EMP1 and EMP5. Specifically in relation to EMP5 (c): the amenity and activity of Lake House would be impacted; under EMP5(d): the access impacts off and onto the A20 would be significant and non-compliant.

There are a number of inconsistencies and omissions in the application, including:

- There is a preliminary ecological assessment of the site, but this appears to be generic; omits key data including from the Kent and Medway Biological Records Centre (KMBRC) and does not consider the proposed use of the site. Without a more specific assessment the proposal is non-compliant with EMP5 (b)
- The lighting plan is put forward as 'suburban'. This suggests the applicant is unaware of the sites rural context or the policies that apply including ENV4 and Ashford's dark skies SPD.
- The transport assessment fails to consider the 24 hr operation and has inconsistencies with the Design and Access document, there is confusion about whether that application is for only 30 HGV parking space. The further 50 is an area for either be trucks or pallets, but for that reason would need to provide structure and runoff attenuation for up to 80 trucks. (this is vastly more than the 4 truck spaces considered in the Apta pots application).
- The noise assessment document appears to be a reissue of the original Vatre Terracotta document from 2017, apart from "24-hr operation. It does not take account of the increase in truck movement indicated by the increase in truck parking spaces – from 4 to 80 and still refers to pots and the Dencora Rd site neither of which are now relevant. The noise assessment should therefore be disregarded as inadequate, and a new one requested if the proposal is considered further.
- Workshop operations for trucks imply noise and wastes which would need containment, attenuation of rain runoff and special provisions approved by the EA and the IDB given the proximity to a watercourse. None of this is considered in the documents.
- Much of the office building is shown as being kitchens, toilets, showers, and washer driers indicating that the water intake and sewerage output could be significant. This is also not considered.
- The proposal is transparently on behalf of IKRA, an international transport and logistics company with its HQ in Adana, Turkey, and an existing depot in Dartford. There are no local employment connections, or other such reasons given for this rural site being developed in this way. Nor is there a description of the operations that would be undertaken there.
- Detailed comments on the proposals from a CILT expert advising the Parish Council:
- The layout shows a small industrial storage area of only 12,000sq ft plus 6392sq ft of office i.e more than 50%. the normal ratio would be 5% office. This needs further explanation. E.g. is more storage work to be undertaken externally - with consequent noise and light pollution and

disturbance for neighbours or is the office area more of an amenity facility for drivers as suggested by the facilities, such that the whole operation would be more of a truck park than a largely enclosed storage and distribution facility.

- The HGV parking spaces layout as shown is narrow and too tight for long, articulated HGV manoeuvring. This suggests the actual operation on site might be different from that shown, and the plans not sufficiently clear for an appropriate decision to be made.
- The main building elevations shown on page 12 of the D&A statement shows a row of 3 depressed docks with dock shelters consistent with chilled store use, but a deeper yard would normally be provided in front for turning. This also raises the question of what operations are expected on the site. [The applicant may have wrongly assumed this is a zoned industrial area along the A20 because of the ARDO Cold store nearby. That was an isolated rural site that evolved from Stelmo steelworks in the 1980s through progressive expansion to frozen food manufacture and warehousing. It remains an isolated industrial site in a sensitive rural location and is not a precedent for unrelated development nearby.
- The transport assessment should be clear that this is a Turkish / UK transhipment depot, operating under TIR (as Turkey is outside the EU) which is also likely to be handling EU goods for transport to Ireland. The operation is therefore likely to include trailer swaps, not mentioned, as well as workshop activities which are mentioned - but need to have the same planning considerations as garage operations – runoff, containment, waste oil, noise etc. Also, the TRICS data-base reference is meaningless and wrong without considering data for this size of truck park or interchange. The 23 additional trips quoted does not take account of 24 hr operation nor the transit operations of 80 HGVs and is meaningless.
- This incompleteness of the transport assessment means that the impact assessment on the A20 as part of the strategic highway and a relief road under Operation Brock is also unreliable.

Proposed: Cllr Wyatt. **Seconded:** Cllr Hutchison. All in agreement.

It was resolved to object to the application.

Cllr Richards thanked Cllr Drury for the work on this application.

5.1.2 PA/2023/2204 162, Sandyhurst Lane, Westwell TN25 4NX

Proposed attached carport and garage to front of dwelling with habitable ancillary accommodation above.

Westwell Parish Council resolved to support this application for the following reasons:

This application is for an L-shaped coach house style extension to the front providing a carport attached to the existing bungalow and a garage, with chalet accommodation above. There are no windows overlooking the adjacent property to the south, no 154, and there are no changes to the north-east side of the property adjacent to no 158. The existing bungalow is set back in the site with a substantial front amenity and parking area on this triangular site. The L-shaped extension would be slightly forward of the existing building line on this section of Sandyhurst Lane but there would still be a substantial front area and no loss of visibility on this bend in the road, so the character of the lane would be retained. The massing of the extension would be a slightly intrusive change to the north-east of no 154 but the two properties continue to be separated by the currently unused track between them that leads to the Grosvenor bungalow to the rear (part of the Trinity Lakes development site).

Proposed: Cllr Drury. **Seconded:** Cllr Butcher. All in agreement.

It was resolved to support the application.

5.1.3 NOT/2023/2318 Telecommunications mast on land at Hothfield Works

Westwell Parish Council resolved to ratify the comment submitted, having previously been discussed as a pre-application reply to the applicant.

Proposed: Cllr Richards. **Seconded:** Cllr Farrington. All in agreement.

It was resolved to ratify the comment submitted: no objection.

5.2 Other planning matters

5.2.1 PA/2022/2068

Change of use of land for stationing of 3 mobile homes. Appeal date 13 December 10 am. ABC Portal Ref: AP-90637

Cllrs Drury and Bainbridge attended. The format was structured discussion. WPC circulated a prepared statement to the participants – ABC, the Agent & the Inspector and the points in it were made during the course of the structured discussion. The Appeal decision was issued on 19 December: dismissed as landscape harm would conflict with AONB policies plus habitat harm to Stodmarsh Lakes are not outweighed by unmet need for traveller sites, or personal circumstances.

5.2.2 Other appeals

There is an appeal ref **AP-90641** lodged against ABC's refusal of planning permission for three sustainable dwellings on land adjacent to Holly House - **PA/2023/0283** but no progress yet by the Planning Inspectorate.

5.2.2

A planning update has been submitted for the January Westwell Eye.

5.2.3

Cllrs asked if there was an update available re the Enforcement notice served on Elvey Cottage.

Action: Clerk to request an update from the ABC Planning

6. Financial Report

6.1 Approval of payments in accordance with the budget

WPC main account

Expenditure to approve for Jan 2024		Cheque No	£
Salary payment Jan	clerk	BACS	766.06
Tax & NI	HMRC	BACS	191.40
Reimburse expenses	clerk	BACS	96.98
Mowing	All Seasons Gardening Services	BACS	558.40
Mowing – correction of an underpayment of VAT on invoices 4271 and 4393	All seasons Gardening services	BACS	226.14
NEST payment	Reimburse Clerk	BACS	26.69
Payroll and pension management	SHS Bureau		60.00
Total			£1,925.67

Income			
HiP refund	ABC	BACS	7,859.42
Total			£7,859.42

Bank Reconciliation Balance at 31 December 2023 = £18,078.09 less unrepresented cheques as follows

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Actual balance = £18, 078.09 as at December 31 2023

WPC deposit account

Expenditure			£
Total			£00.00

Income			
11 Dec	Interest	BACS	40.69

Total			£40.69
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Bank Reconciliation Balance £39, 407.36 at 31 December 2023 Less un-presented cheques as follows:

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Actual balance = £39, 407.36 as at December 31 2023

General reserve	£21,190.59
Grant	£2, 279
Deposit	£15,937.77

WPC No 2 Account

Expenditure		Cheque No	£
Total			£00.00

Income			
Total			£00.00

Bank Reconciliation Balance £3.44 at 31 December 2023

Actual balance = £3.44 at 31 December 2023

WPC resolved to approve the accounts as noted and payments in accordance with the budget.

Proposed: Cllr Wyatt. **Seconded:** Cllr Bainbridge. All in agreement.

Resolved. WPC approved the accounts as noted and payments to be made in accordance with the budget.

Action: Clerk

6.2 KCC Highways reimbursement

KCC Highways have refunded £7859.42 to WPC for the HIP.

The parish had paid £5000 in February 2022 followed by £16,488 in April 2023. This was a total of £21,488.

WPC had been advised originally by KCC to budget for a total of £25,000 and obtained member grants of £9500 towards this. Now that the schemes have been installed, the total cost is £7859 less than the £21,488 paid: an actual cost of £13,329.

The parish council has been refunded the difference.

WPC is extremely grateful to County Cllr Simkins and Borough Cllr Krause for their grants and will be reporting to them the outcome of their grant funding.

Information items

7. Correspondence

Cllrs confirmed Cllr Tessa Wyatt as the liaison between WPC and the PCC.

Action: clerk to write to the PCC to confirm the new appointment and to advise that WPC minutes will be sent to the PCC secretary and to ask that PCC minutes are circulated by return to WPC as they would find them helpful.

8. Highways update

8.1 HiP project update

Cllr Drury confirmed that the works were under warranty for 12 months and also that the HiP works would now be listed as a KCC Highways Asset and as such, will require maintenance Under KCC Highways Assets management plan.

8.2 Flooding

Cllrs discussed the increase in the incidence of road flooding and the resultant road closures in the Parish. They agreed that the flooding was due to a number of different issues but that the Parish could expect more of the same due to the increased levels of rainfall. It was agreed as important to work towards mitigating some of the worst of the flooding by investigating the possibility of defining and retaining a "lengthsman" to help clear blocked culverts and drains.

Action: Clerk

9. Cemetery

9.1.1 Survey Project

Meetings with two survey companies will take place at the cemetery on 17 Jan.

9.1.2 Deed of Grant of Burial

To be discussed at the February meeting.

10. Playground – new equipment installation

The replacement panel on the playground shelter will be installed on the 11 January.

It was agreed to consider the two estimates to replacement the playground swings and wobbler at the February meeting.

Action: Cllr Farrington to prepare a short report with her recommendations and circulate that to all Cllrs ahead of the next meeting. Clerk to ask the two companies who have quoted for the work to confirm how long it would take for the equipment to be installed once the order is placed.

11. Hall Management Committee

Cllr Bainbridge confirmed that the toilets at the hall were being refurbished.

Action: Cllr Bainbridge to circulate the village hall meeting minutes to all Cllrs.

12. Additional items

12.1 Meetings.

The date for the March meeting was confirmed as 13 March – not 6 March and the July meeting was confirmed for 10 July not 3 July.

The other WPC meeting dates are 7 February, 17 April, 8 May, 5 June, 7 August, 4 September, 2 October, 6 November and 4 December.

The Annual Parish Meeting will take place 20 March. Cllr Drury asked Cllrs to suggest ideas on who to invite to speak.

12.2 Anti-social behaviour

Cllr Drury to contact Laurel Niven at ABC about incidents of anti-social behaviour reported to Cllrs.

13. Date of next meeting

Wednesday 7 February 2024.

The meeting closed at 21.05pm

Chairman's Signature.....