

Proposed Local Green Spaces in Wivelsfield parish – C&E Focus Group Report

Sheila Blair, Alan Janes, Anne King, John Wigzell



The Parish of Wivelsfield lies in the north-west of East Sussex and covers some 4.2 sq miles/2,688 acres/1088 hectares. The population at the 2011 census was 1,980 and is concentrated in and around three settlement areas of Wivelsfield.

There are large rural green areas within the parish, but recent developments have concentrated around existing housing creating ribbon developments along Green Road, North Common Road, South Road and Valebridge Road, giving rise to concerns that are reflected in the community Housing Survey results.

We conducted a further survey of the green spaces within Wivelsfield to identify those within and adjacent to the built up areas that are considered valuable green space assets for the community, either because of their recreational value or because of their wildlife, historic significance and/or beauty.

The associated map of Wivelsfield illustrates the green spaces within the Parish, only a few of which already have protection as they are within a Conservation Area; or are a registered Common (Lunces); or are owned by the Village Hall & Playing Field Management Committee. If we discard those green spaces that are really just large grassy verges left over from earlier developments and that are too small to accommodate any building, then there remain a number of areas that are considered valuable assets for the community and should therefore be formally registered as Local Green Spaces.

1. Land to the south of Green Road and west of Wivelsfield Primary School.

This agricultural land is valued by the community because, apart from the recreation ground, it is the only truly rural break in the ribbon development which stretches from the B2112 to the Mormon Meeting House in North Common Road. It is also an important landscape feature providing the primary school pupils with a real sense of rural values. It is also a fitting background to the War Memorial which is sited in the west corner.



The Neighbourhood Plan includes a policy to protect the green buffers between Wivelsfield parish and neighbouring parishes, and this field qualifies as a buffer between Wivelsfield and Westmeston parishes. It is also adjacent to Ancient Woodland.

2. Wivelsfield Recreation Ground

This area of flat, well maintained land was gifted to Wivelsfield Parish Council in 1975 by a trust set up by the owner, Jim Dinnage. It provides the parish with excellent facilities for football, cricket, stoolball and community events, and includes a well equipped Parish Council funded playground for younger children. Restrictions are already in place to prevent any development.

3. Land to the south of South Road

Part of this area of rising land crowned by woodland has already been acquired for a small development of affordable housing. What remains offsets the ribbon development on the other side



of South Road and provides a pleasing landscape feature for this entrance to Wivelsfield Green. Any development on this ridge of land would have considerable visual impact as well as being detrimental to the rural environment.

4. Land to the east of Eastern Road

An area of currently fallow land enclosed to the north and west by housing, to the east by a medieval track into West Wood and to the south by the Westmeston Parish boundary. The ancient trackway is mentioned in the 8th Century charter concerning Wivelsfield land once know as Stanmer hamlet. It has historically been used as a footpath and frequented by hikers, dog walkers, children, horse riders and grazing deer.

The Neighbourhood Plan includes a policy to protect the green buffers between Wivelsfield parish and neighbouring parishes, and this field qualifies as a buffer between Wivelsfield and Westmeston parishes. Development of this area would deprive the community of a valued environmental amenity and green buffer.

5. Land to south of Antye House and east of Orchard Close.

This land is crossed by an ancient trackway giving access to fields and footpaths in the west of the parish and is extensively used by hikers, dog walkers and horse riders from both Wivelsfield and Burgess Hill. Theobalds Road, which leads to this Green Space, and its continuation as a footpath across the Green Space are thought to follow the line of a prehistoric ridgeway route which may have continued in use during the Romano-British period linking the London to Brighton Roman road with either the Greensand Way or the London to Ouse Valley road.

The majority of this Green Space lies within an Archaeological Notification Area defining an area of Late Iron Age, Roman and medieval activity centred on Theobalds Farm to the west. Excavations immediately adjacent to the Green Space have revealed extensive evidence for Late Iron Age and Roman settlement, including buildings, kilns, enclosures and a field system (ref. ASE 2008). The southern part, which does not have public access, is historically significant, very probably being the Celtic 'High Enclosure' or tye from which Antye took its name. Part of its double-ditched triple-banked boundary still survives. Surviving enclosures such as this are rare in the Weald and should be treasured for their historical importance.

Being on high ground this area has landscape value and views across the parish.

6. Land on north-west boundary of parish.

This is of landscape significance being on the south facing ridge to the north of the parish and forming a significant part of the view from a number of places within the residential areas. The land is owned by MSDC and adjacent to their proposed cemetery and allotments. MSDC is agreeable to its proposed Green Space designation.

To quote from Haywards Heath's Draft Neighbourhood Plan

"10.8: Haywards Heath whilst having some wonderful green spaces does not have the benefit of a country park. An opportunity for a modest park arises from the proposed allocation of land for a new cemetery and allotments as these can be contained within a park setting which would enhance the two new facilities and help maintain an attractive rural setting on the built up edge of the town. Other elements which contribute to this location are

- part of the land is already in public ownership,
- it is also close to existing residential areas, and so can serve both existing and future residents,
- it is served by footpaths,
- its provision will help maintain the rural setting of the town,
- there is an important belt of ancient woodland along one boundary."

7. Land to the south of North Common Road and east of the Mormon Meeting House

An area of uncultivated land containing a wide variety of flora and fauna including wild orchids and deer. It is well used by dog walkers and provides the only safe play area for children at the east end of Wivelsfield Green. Its loss would severely affect the local community and be highly detrimental to the rural environment. It also forms a green buffer between Wivelsfield and the neighbouring parishes of Chailey and Plumpton.

This area was put forward by a number of residents and it is considered that their support for this Green Space should be acknowledged, not withstanding that planning consent was granted on the land after the green space suggestions had been collated.



Map of proposed Green Spaces

