

Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Development Plan

**Voting Information for Referendum
on
19th April 2018**



Introduction

A referendum will be held in Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston on Thursday, 19th April 2018 asking eligible voters whether the Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Plan should be used by Lewes District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority to decide planning applications:

We are required to produce “a statement that sets out general information as to town and country planning (including neighbourhood planning) and the referendum”. This document has been produced to meet this requirement.

This document provides:

- Information about the planning system
- Information about the referendum
- Information stating where more details relating to the Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Plan can be found.

Information about the planning system

As is made clear in legislation, most development requires consent, known as planning permission, to go ahead. This is usually done by submitting a planning application to a local planning authority, which decides whether to approve or refuse a planning application. Local planning authorities use planning policies, whether they are produced at a national, local or neighbourhood level, to make such decisions.

In the Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Parishes, Lewes District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority are the local planning authorities that decide planning applications. Part of Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Parishes are located within the South Downs National Park; therefore the South Downs National Park Authority is the local planning authority that decides planning applications in that area. Whereas, Lewes District Council is the planning authority for the remainder of the parishes (located outside of the Park).

National Policy

National planning policy is contained in the National Planning Policy Framework, commonly referred to as the NPPF, as well as other related documents. The NPPF sets out policy on a range of different topic areas to aid in the determination of planning applications and ensure that development contributes to the achievement of sustainable development.

The NPPF sets out policy to local planning authorities regarding the production of Local Plans and makes clear that local policies should be consistent with the NPPF. It also contains relevant policy and advice to local communities that undertake neighbourhood planning.

Local Policy

Local planning authorities produce Local Plans to introduce policies to guide development within their area. For Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Parishes, the current Local Plan in the Lewes District area and the South Downs National Park is the Local Plan Part 1 (the Joint Core Strategy), adopted 11 May 2016 by Lewes District Council and 23 June 2016 by the South Downs National Park Authority¹. The policies within the Lewes District Local Plan Part 1 are consistent with the NPPF are

¹It is noted that further to a High Court ruling, Joint Core Strategy Policies SP1 and SP2, where they relate to the South Downs National Park, have been quashed. Therefore, these policies only apply within the area outside of the South Downs National Park.

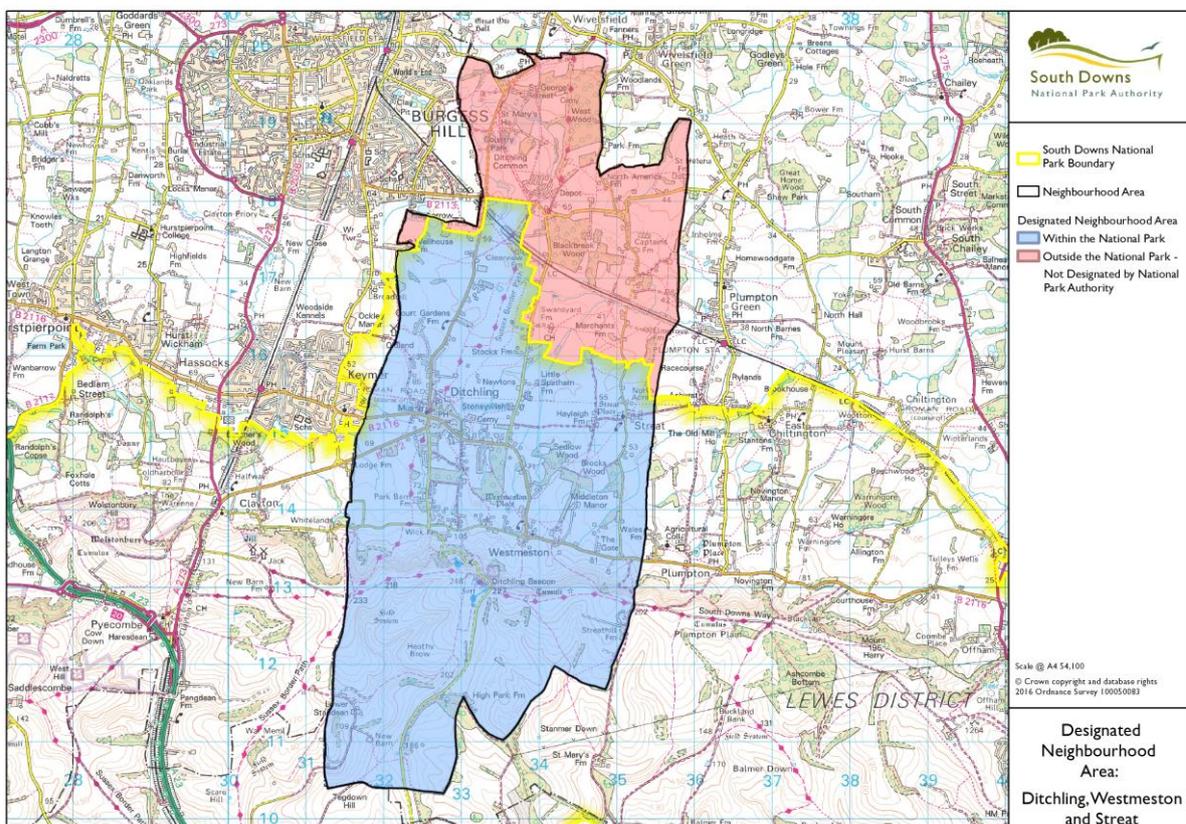
used to determine planning applications. The Local Plan is supplemented by retained 'saved' Policies from the Lewes District Local Plan 2003.

Lewes District Council has recently completed pre-submission consultation on the emerging Local Plan Part 2 (and Sustainability Appraisal, incorporating Sustainability Environmental Assessment), which will allocate land for different types of development as well as land to be protected². This document will also set out detailed development management policies and review retained 'saved' 2003 Lewes District Local Plan policies to establish if they are appropriate to take forward.

The South Downs National Park Authority has completed pre-submission consultation on the South Downs Local Plan and is reviewing the representations made³. The South Downs Local Plan will replace the existing planning policies operating across the South Downs National Park. In spring 2018 it is due to be submitted for examination.

Neighbourhood Planning

The Localism Act and subsequent Neighbourhood Planning Regulations allow communities to guide and shape development in their locality by undertaking neighbourhood planning. The most common neighbourhood planning tool is the neighbourhood development plan, usually known as a neighbourhood plan. A neighbourhood plan contains specific policies relating to land use and development within a particular area, usually a parish, which has been designated as a neighbourhood area. The Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Parishes have been designated as a neighbourhood area. This is shown in the map below (outlined in black, shaded in red and blue).



²Further information about the Local Plan Part 2 can be found via this link: <http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/planning-policy/local-plan-part-2-site-allocations-and-development-management-policies/>

³Further information about the emerging South Downs Local Plan can be found here: <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/national-park-local-plan/>

A neighbourhood plan follows a statutory process that ensures that members of the local community, as well as relevant organisations, have the opportunity to influence the development of the plan. The plan is then subject to an Examination whereby an Independent Examiner reviews the neighbourhood plan and associated material against statutory requirements known as basic conditions and then writes a report (which may include modifications) recommending whether it should proceed to a referendum.

The local planning authority then decides whether to accept the Examiner's recommendations and whether to put the neighbourhood plan to a referendum.

Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Parish Councils have prepared a Neighbourhood Plan that has been through the relevant statutory processes and subject to an Examination by an Independent Examiner and, with modifications, has been recommended to proceed to referendum.

Information about the referendum

The referendum will be conducted based on procedures which are similar to those used at local government elections. The referendum asks eligible voters the following question:

'Do you want Lewes District Council and the South Downs National Park Authority to use the neighbourhood plan for Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Parishes to help them decide planning applications in the neighbourhood area?'

Voters will be asked to mark a cross (X) in either the 'Yes' or 'No' box on a ballot paper to indicate their preference. Should more than half of those voting at the referendum vote in favour of the neighbourhood plan, then Lewes District Council should adopt the neighbourhood plan at the earliest opportunity and use it to determine planning applications.

Voter Eligibility

Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Parishes make up both the neighbourhood area and the referendum area and have been mapped on page 3 of this document. You can vote in the referendum if you live in Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Parishes and:

- you are registered to vote in local council elections; and
- you are 18 years of age or over on **Thursday, 19th April 2018**

You have to be registered to vote by **Tuesday, 3rd April 2018** to vote in the referendum. You can check if you are registered to vote by calling our Helpline on 01273 471600.

Ways of Voting

There are three ways of voting. This can be done:

In person on 19th April 2018:

- At your local polling station. It is easy and a member of staff will always help if you are not sure what to do.
- In Ditchling, the polling station is Ditchling Village Hall, Lewes Road, Ditchling, BN6 8TT and Wivelsfield Village Hall, Eastern Road, Wivelsfield, RH17 7QH. For Streat, the polling station is Westmeston Parish Hall, Lewes Road, Westmeston, BN6 8RL In Westmeston, the polling station is Westmeston Parish Hall, Lewes Road, Westmeston, BN6 8RL.
- You will receive a poll card confirming your polling station for this referendum.
- The polling station is open from 7am to 10pm.
- If you do not receive your poll card, you can contact our Helpline on 01273 471600 or email us on electoral@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk.

By post:

- If you have a postal vote already, you will receive a poll card confirming this.
- To vote by post, you will need to complete an application form and send it to the Electoral Registration Officer to arrive by 5pm on Wednesday, 4th April 2018 to Lewes District Council, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes, BN7 1AB.
- Postal votes can be sent overseas but you need to think about whether you will have time to receive and return your completed postal vote by Thursday, 19th April 2018.
- You should receive your postal vote about a week before polling day. If it doesn't arrive in time, you can ask for a replacement up to 5pm on Thursday, 19th April 2018 by contacting our Helpline on 01273 471600.

By proxy:

- If you have a proxy vote already, you will receive a poll card confirming this.
- If you can't get to the polling station and don't wish to vote by post, you may be able to vote by proxy. This means allowing somebody that you trust to vote on your behalf.
- To vote by proxy, you will need to complete an application form and send it to the Electoral Registration Officer to arrive by 5pm on Wednesday, 11th April 2018 at Lewes District Council, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes, BN7 1AB.
- When you apply for a proxy vote, you must say why you cannot vote in person.
- Anyone can be your proxy as long as they are eligible to vote and are willing to vote on your behalf. You will have to tell them how you want to vote.
- Postal and proxy vote application forms are available from our Helpline on 01273 471600 or by emailing electoral@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk.

Voter Registration

If you're not registered, you won't be able to vote. You can check if you are registered by calling our Helpline on 01273 471600.

If you are not registered to vote, you will need to complete a voter registration form and send it to the Electoral Registration Officer to arrive by Tuesday 3rd April 2018 at Lewes District Council, Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes, BN7 1AB.

Registration forms are available from our Helpline on 01273 471600 or by emailing electoral@lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk. You can also register to vote at www.gov.uk/register-to-vote.

Additional Information

The relevant regulations state that we must make available the following specified documents:

- The referendum version of the Ditchling Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Plan
- The independent examiner's report on the draft Ditchling Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Plan
- A summary of the representations submitted to the independent examiner
- A statement setting out that the District Council believes that the Ditchling Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Plan meets the basic conditions (included within the document known as the Decision Statement)
- A statement setting out general information as to town and country planning (including neighbourhood planning) and the referendum (included within the Ditchling Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Development Plan: Voting Information for Referendum on 19th April 2018 document)

These documents have been made available online at <https://www.southdowns.gov.uk/planning/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/neighbourhood-development-plans/ditchling-westmeston-streat-neighbourhood-plan/> and <http://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/planning-policy/neighbourhood-planning/>. This webpage also contains additional information about the Ditchling, Streat and Westmeston Neighbourhood Plan as well as links to related documents.

Copies of the documents can also be viewed at the South Downs National Park Authority's offices at the South Downs Centre, North Street, Midhurst, West Sussex, GU29 9DH. The offices are open between 9am and 5pm Monday to Thursday and 9am and 4.30pm Friday.

They can also be viewed at District Council's offices at Southover House, Southover Road, Lewes, BN7 1AB. The offices are open between 9am and 5pm during weekdays.