



SELMESTON PARISH PLAN 2022

Responses from the recently circulated questionnaire, show that the most important aspects of the Village and Parish that residents want to see retained and preserved are:

- The peaceful, rural environment, which includes the absence of pavements and street lighting;
- Our Conservation Area status;
- A strong sense of community, fostered by neighbourliness and by community events.

Of the things with which people are not happy and which they would like to see changed, the most prominent issues are:

- Speeding traffic through the Village and on local roads;
- Safe access to the A27;
- Perennial uncertainty as to the possible dualling of the A27;
- Poor public transport

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There is no real evidence that the quote attributed to Benjamin Franklin: "failing to plan is planning to fail" was ever said by him. Nonetheless, it is a wise adage and it is as relevant today as it was in 1790 when Mr Franklin wasn't saying it.

Selmeston last produced a formal Parish Plan in 2005. The principal objectives of our community at that time were: to retain the rural character of the Village and surrounding area, largely unspoilt by streetlights, pavements and other signs of urbanisation; and to maintain its community spirit. A number of useful initiatives came from that plan, including some new communal activities at the Village Hall, the development of a website to capture the history of the village and a sharper focus on issues such as speeding through the village and the perennial problem of the A27.

The current Parish Plan began with the formation of a Committee and the publication of a questionnaire that was circulated to all households with occupants on the Electoral Register. The objective of the questionnaire was to identify the principal issues that currently affect our community, so as to be able to draw up action plans to address them where possible. Findings from the questionnaire were presented to residents at an open day and feedback from that event has been incorporated into this draft. [A copy of the detailed responses to the questionnaire is available on request].

Subject to approval by the Parish Meeting, the Plan will be adopted and will be sent to Wealden District Council, East Sussex County Council and our Member of Parliament. The approved Plan will be the basis of detailed action plans. It will also be a document of record for future plans and future generations.

Background

Selmeston is a village and civil Parish in the Wealden District of East Sussex, located some eight miles to the east of Lewes. The village is principally focused on The Street, which runs north from the A27, but the Parish covers a total area of 2.6 square miles both north and south of the road. The population at the latest census was 159.

Selmeston has an unusually rich history. Excavations in the 1930s discovered Mesolithic pit dwellings close to the church and artefacts from this site and from the Neolithic, bronze and iron ages can be seen at the museum in Lewes. There is considerable evidence of Roman activity in the area and the track that runs east from the church may have been a Roman road. Between AD 400 and 600 a Saxon community established itself here and these people left behind a substantial burial site, which has been partially excavated. The name "Selmeston" is of Saxon origin.

The church is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086, which also refers to a local community called "Sidenore". All evidence of this had disappeared by 1350, possibly because of the impact of the Black Death. Some of the present houses were built in the C15th or incorporate timbers taken from other medieval buildings of that period.

The church was damaged by fire in 1860. Its restoration was overseen by Rev WD Parish, whose claims to fame include a fascinating Dictionary of Sussex dialect and his friendship with Lewis Carroll, who is said to have written parts of "Alice Through the Looking Glass" in the summer house of what is now The Old Vicarage.

The Village Hall, which dates from the 1930s was built directly on the boundary of Selmeston and Alciston and is used by both communities. Adjacent land provides a cricket field which is also used for local events such as the annual Flower Show.

The greater part of the Village is now designated a Conservation Area.

Responses to the Questionnaire

1. Demographics

The Electoral register at 1st December 2021 showed 73 properties in the Parish and 133 registered voters. These properties are scattered across a wide area but are principally located on or close to The Street. Inevitably, some of the residents who live in more outlying locations do not identify closely with Selmeston and did not respond to the questionnaire.

Of the 73 relevant properties, 3 were unoccupied at the time of the distribution of the questionnaire. The number of households to whom a copy was sent was therefore 70 (2005:73). Responses were received from some 61% of households (2005: also 61%) representing 78 residents, just under 60% of those on the Electoral Register. This is a satisfactory level of response, given that only one questionnaire was returned from the 8 households located on the Lewes Road to the west of the Village and in Tilton.

More than 46% of the adult population is older than 64 (2005: 49%) and 46% of these people have lived here for over 20 years. There are more than 14 children under the age of 16 in the Parish, most of whom are younger than 12. Comparative data is not available but it is believed that this is a greater number than in 2005.

2. Key findings

People were asked to identify things they like and would want to preserve about living in Selmeston and things that they do not like and would want to change. As in 2005, the preservation of a peaceful, rural environment and the maintenance of a sense of community were most frequently cited. On the negative side, traffic-related matters, including speeding on local roads, remained very prominent. There was interest in a variety of traffic calming measures, most significantly in the possibility of a 20mph speed limit through the Village.

Most of us travel by car and we have an average of 1.7 cars per household. Of those who travel to work 68% do so by car: it is notable, however, that working from home increased significantly during the Covid pandemic and that this is expected to continue at current levels.

Bus services are little used and, although timetable changes and more frequent services might help, it appears that many people do not envisage using the bus in any circumstances.

There is a very low level of satisfaction with the train service at Berwick, particularly with the frequency of London trains stopping there. This results in many residents driving to Lewes. Other issues raised regarding rail services include the cost of parking.

There may be a growth of interest in cycling. Just under 20% out of 68 respondents to the questionnaire said that they use a bike on a daily or weekly basis but some 40 respondents said that they expect to use the new cycle path from Polegate to Lewes, mainly for recreation.

Local infrastructure has seen significant changes since 2005, with the closure of the Berwick stores and the Rose Cottage pub in Alciston. The shop at the A27 garage has developed to serve many of the needs identified in 2005 and is in popular use with 90% of people using it at least occasionally and 50% regularly (recent canopy controversy notwithstanding). Post Office use at Berwick scores similarly. On the other hand, the Barley Mow does not figure strongly in village life despite the closure of the Rose Cottage. The motor repair facility set up at Lower Mays has added to traffic problems in the Street.

Medical services remain contentious, with more than 50% of residents unhappy with their GP service. This is particularly so for the Seaford/Alfriston GP surgeries, where the level of dissatisfaction exceeds 62%. This is a long-standing issue that has been exacerbated by Covid. There is a 75% confidence level in other medical services but there is a lack of awareness of where certain services are available as well as concerns relating to “rationalisation” between Eastbourne and Hastings. Despite the problems that have plagued the ambulance service, very few people report problems with transport to hospitals/clinics now. We cannot of course disregard the few who do and a good neighbour scheme can help here.

There is little appetite for additional housing in the village for environmental and infrastructure reasons, with a preference for no additional housing but some support for a few starter homes or perhaps 3 or 4 “affordable” homes.

There is significant interest in the idea of additional services in the Parish, which were not considered in 2005, including services such as mobile food vendors.

There is a heightened sensitivity to environmental issues since 2005 and around 60% of respondents indicated their intention to implement energy saving projects in the next 3 years whilst 80% of respondents are interested to understand/explore possibilities for parish-wide carbon emissions reduction. However, the number and scale of solar farms being developed in the area is becoming a cause for concern. There is considerable interest in programs that can preserve and nurture local flora and fauna.

Since 2005, there has been very significant progress with the availability of fast and reliable broadband and over 60% of respondents now rely on a computer to do some work from home. Digital services and social media, which did not figure in 2005, have become important for both social and business contact and very few people are not using email and one or more social media services.

The Parish Magazine is widely used to keep in touch with local events and is now available online. Unsurprisingly, with greater computer literacy, there is interest in using the Parish website and social media to facilitate communications and the dissemination of information throughout the Parish. A WhatsApp group was recently initiated and is proving popular. The website has continued to develop.

We rate ourselves a much safer Parish than we did in 2005. The almost total absence of a police presence is noted but this does not seem to worry most people. There is considerable support for a good neighbour scheme with an increase in the proportion of positive respondents over 2005.

The church and the Village Hall continue to be important in the community and there is a good level of interest in further social activities in the Village Hall. As ever, progress with any of these will require interested individuals to make them happen! Over 60% of respondents attend the Parish Meeting, slightly up on 2005.

The key items for focus and for action will be:

- Traffic** The A27; traffic speeds on local roads; the state of roads and verges; traffic diversions onto local roads; and air pollution
- Community:** Maintaining community spirit through: social activities; providing help and support to neighbours; and the availability of information
- Infrastructure:** Local bus and train services; medical services; footpaths and bridleways; and housing
- The environment:** Reducing carbon emissions; maintaining our rural environment; ecological and conservation activities

The Action Plans that will be used to address the issues raised in the Parish Plan questionnaire are set out in the following pages. If you have any questions on the Plan or the Action Plans, please get in touch with one of the Parish Committee who have prepared this document:

David Quysner; Colin Buckthorp; Brigitte Chandless; Emma Drew; Laura Francis; Janie Jellings; Lewis Lewis-Grey; Graham Shaw; Bryan Stevens; Michael Weller.

PARISH PLAN 2022 ACTION PLANS

ISSUE FROM PP QUESTIONNAIRE	PP MEDIAN SCORE	ABILITY TO INFLUENCE	PRIORITY	HOW THIS MIGHT BE TACKLED	PARTNERS	TIMESCALE	LEAD RESPONSIBILITY	RESOURCES NEEDED
TRAFFIC ISSUES								
Speeding on the A27	7	L	L	Part of ongoing set of A27 issues under RIS3	National Highways; Neighbouring Villages	Ongoing	Traffic and Roads Committee	
Safe & reliable access to A27	10	L	H	Part of ongoing set of A27 issues under RIS3	National Highways	Ongoing	As above	
Speeding on local roads	10	M	H	Initiate discussions with ESCC re traffic calming, incl. 20's plenty. Meet ESCC under their SLRM programme	ESCC; Maria Caulfield MP	By end of 2022	As above	
Poor state of roads/potholes	8	M	M	Publish information on reporting potholes & damage to verges	ESCC	By early autumn 2022	DQ	
Traffic diversions that increase through-traffic	8	H	H	Maintain liaison with relevant bodies to ensure adequate notice/signage where possible	ESCC; Southern Rail; Southern Water; National Highways	By end of 2022	As above	

TRAFFIC ISSUES Cont'd

Tractors and lorries speeding and damaging verges	n/a	M	H	Photograph/ note details of offenders and report to police/ farm owners	Local farmers/landowners	Ongoing	ALL	
Air Pollution	7	L	L	Part of ongoing set of A27 issues under RIS3				

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COMMUNITY								
New Social activities e.g. Bridge; Running/ Walking Group	n/a	H	H	Ascertain level of interest and who might organise	Interested individuals	By 31/12	DWQ	
New neighbourhood help/good neighbour scheme	n/a	H	H	WhatsApp for general support requests. 2. Identify people needing support	All Group members Interested individuals	Ongoing By 31/12/22	From open-day sign-ups	
Maintain and update information services	n/a	H	H	1.Establish Parish WhatsApp Group 2.Further develop WhatsApp and website	All interested residents	Done Ongoing	Janie Jellings Janie Jellings Laura Francis	
Dissatisfaction with Mobile Phone Signal for some users	8-9	L	H	Ascertain difference between networks	Residents; mobile phone service providers	By 31/3/23	DQ	
New services e.g. Mobile food vans		L	L	Community too small to justify	Use WhatsApp to inform if services available nearby	Ongoing		
Absence of Police presence		H	M	Re-establish relationship with local Police; Provide email link to Police news	Sussex Police	By 31/12	DWQ	

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INFRASTRUCTURE								
Train Services- more frequent trains from Berwick & better fare structure	5	L	L	Work with transport groups, other parishes & our MP.	Southern Rail Maria Caulfield MP	Ongoing	Selmeston Parish Committee	
Bus Services - more frequent buses to and on the A27.		L	L	Work with bus companies, other parishes & our MP for more frequent & diverse services.	Compass, Cuckmere Bus Co., ESCC, Maria Caulfield MP	Ongoing	Selmeston Parish Committee	
Bus Services - Timetables				Put timetables on website			LF	
Medical Services – improvements to appointments & communications		M	M	Work with GP surgeries and support services.	Old School & Lewes GP’s; ESHC; Maria Caulfield MP	Ongoing	DQ	
Medical Services – Awareness of services & facilities available		H	M	Organise parish information meeting or information sheet	ESHC	By 2022 year end.	DQ	
New Housing –zero or small scale (max 4) individual developments consistent with village layout		M	L	Keep abreast of WDC strategy and plans. Ensure WDC are fully conversant with PP objectives.	WDC; ESCC; Other local Parishes(?)	Ongoing	Selmeston Parish Meeting	

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ENVIRONMENT								
Reducing carbon emissions	9	M	H	Workshop at the VH to understand available options.		By end of 2022	From open day sign-ups.	
Ecological & conservation activities		M	H	1. Appoint a Tree/ Conservation Warden and establish Committee 2. Develop Ecology & Conservation Plan		1. By 9/11/22 (next Parish Mtg.)	1. From open day sign-ups 2. Conservation Committee	
Maintaining rural environment		M	H	1. Preserve low levels of light & noise pollution. 2. Encourage more tree planting. 3. Maintain linear village with minimal housing development. Links to Infrastructure plan. 4. Reduce HGV and rat run traffic. Links to Traffic Issues Plan.		1. Ongoing 2. Ongoing 3. Ongoing 4. Ongoing	Conservation Committee 2. As above 3. Planning Committee 4. As for Traffic Plan	
Footpaths & Bridleways		H	H	Parish working parties supported by ESCC & landowners	ESCC; local landowners	Ongoing	Footpath Warden - Andrew Thomas	
Litter		H	H	Arrange litter picking days	All	Twice a year	Conservation Committee	