

**THE MINUTES OF THE MEETING OF THE WHEATLEY HILL PARISH COUNCIL  
HELD ON 13 OCTOBER 2025**

Present: Councillor J Miller (Chair)  
Councillors E Carr, N Craggs, J Huntington,  
L Johnson, B Miller, C Stogdale

**1 APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE**

Apologies for absence were received from Councillors L Stewart and L White.

**2 DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST**

Councillor E Carr declared an interest in item number 7(1).

**3 The Minutes of the last meeting held on 8 September 2025, a copy of which had been circulated to each Member, were approved and signed by the Chair.**

**4 PUBLIC QUESTIONS**

The Chair welcomed A Mole to the meeting.

A Mole advised that he was present at the meeting to outline his concerns in relation to the following planning application that was to be considered by a Special Meeting of the County Planning Committee on 20 October 2025.

DM/24/01404/FPA - Full planning for the erection of 137 dwellings and associated infrastructure at land to the north west of 17 Quilstyle Road, Wheatley Hill for Gleeson Regeneration Ltd.

A Mole advised that the application was originally considered at a meeting of the County Planning Committee on 3 September 2025 and deferred. A Mole had attended the meeting to object to the application and outlined his concerns in relation to the application. He also outlined concerns he had related to the County Council's committee procedures related to the voting which resulted in the application being deferred.

County Councillor Craggs reported that he was also present at the meeting to object to the application. He outlined the procedure related to the voting that took place at the meeting and explained that the application was deferred to allow for further information to be provided on what could be sought and delivered through S106 contributions for education.

It was pointed out that Durham County Council were the planning authority, and the Parish Council had no legal authority over the County Council. The Parish Council were consulted on the application, but the County Council, as the local planning authority, had the final say.

A Mole advised that he was unable to attend the Special Planning meeting on the 20 October and asked if the Parish Council were able to attend.

The Chair advised that, given the timescales, the Parish Council would investigate the matter and assist if possible.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

**5 POLICE MATTERS**

There was no Police report.

## 6 COUNTY COUNCILLORS REPORT

County Councillor Craggs provided a report on the following issues.

- Front Street – Problems related to the number of vehicles parked around the junction at Fast Fry. Vehicles leaving the Community Centre were unable to see oncoming traffic due to the number of vehicles parked around the junction. The vehicles were causing an obstruction and hindering visibility for motorists leaving the Community Centre. Durham County Council had agreed to extend the junction by 5 metres to allow vehicles, at the junction, more room to see oncoming traffic.
- Durham County Council had re-painted the white lines on the Zebra crossing at Vincents corner.
- Speeding – The Police had been asked to gather data on speeding traffic at various locations in the village. This would assist when looking at road safety measures to reduce speeding.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

## 7 CORRESPONDENCE

### (1) Request for Financial Assistance - All Saints Church Christmas Fayre

The Clerk reported the receipt of a request for financial assistance from All Saints Church for the annual Christmas Fayre.

RESOLVED that a donation of £200 be made from the Section 137 Budget.

### (2) Thomas Kenny – 4 November 2025

The Clerk reported the receipt of correspondence from M Hedley advising that on 4 November 2025 it was 110 years since Thomas Kenny won his VC for bravery during the First World War. M Hedley was seeking approval to arrange a small commemoration of this occasion at his paving stone located in the cemetery.

It was proposed that the event would start at 10.30am and last approx. 30 minutes. M Hedley would be inviting children from St Mary's RC School, Wingate, the school T Kenny attended. The DLI Association would also be invited to say a few words, as well as W Oswald and J O'Neill from the local Royal British Legion. Members of the Parish Council were also invited to attend.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

### (3) Invitation – Concert of Remembrance

The Clerk reported the receipt of an invitation from Wheatley Hill Mothers Club to attend a Concert of Remembrance on 5 November 2025.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

### (4) Cuppa with a Copper

The Clerk reported that the next Cuppa with a Copper would be held on 30 October 2025 at 2pm in Wheatley House.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

## 8 PLANNING APPLICATIONS

- (1) DM/25/02255/FPA – Proposed battery energy storage system (BESS) together with associated infrastructure, engineering works and landscaping at land to the northwest of High Crows House, Wheatley Hill, DH6 3QL for NP SPV 29

The Clerk advised that this application was not in the parish of Wheatley Hill. It came under the Easington and Shotton ward and was in the parish of Shadforth.

Members discussed the above planning application at length and raised the following concerns based on material planning considerations and in accordance with the County Durham Plan.

### 1 Safety and Security

There was a fire and explosion risk associated with Battery Energy Storage Systems (BESS). Batteries could overheat and catch fire, releasing toxic fumes and it could take days to extinguish.

There was a danger of contamination. Fires could result in serious soil and groundwater contamination that could reignite.

There was the potential for thermal runaway, a dangerous and self-sustaining chain reaction that posed a significant risk to nearby properties.

There was a danger that the batteries could explode leading to a serious risk for nearby residents, properties, and the emergency services. There was concern that local emergency services did not have the capacity or specific training to deal with a large-scale battery fire. There was a risk of contaminated water run-off from firefighting efforts, which could pollute local watercourses and land.

This was particularly relevant to Policy 31 (Amenity and Pollution), which required developments to avoid unacceptable risks to public health.

### 2 Environmental and Visual Impact

The proposed BESS would be visually intrusive and dramatically alter the appearance of a rural and scenic area, negatively affecting the local character and views.

The industrialisation of the countryside and the use of industrial scale batteries, together with all the associated infrastructure would negatively and permanently change the character of the rural landscape and green space. This conflicted with Policy 39 (Landscape).

There was concern at the lack of any clear plans for the safe disposal of the batteries at the end of their lifespan.

The proposed BESS was not the only one proposed for the East Durham area and the cumulative impact of multiple developments in the area would transform the rural landscape.

The supply chains for materials like lithium and cobalt were linked to environmental degradation and ethical issues.

### 3 Loss of Agricultural Land

The Parish Council was concerned about the loss of agricultural land. This undermined both local and national objectives for rural sustainability. It also contributed to the potential for food insecurity.

### 4 Wildlife

The destruction and fragmentation of local habitats to make way for the BESS would have a significant and negative impact on local wildlife. The need for security fencing around the batteries could also potentially disrupt wildlife migration routes.

## 5 Community and Infrastructure Impacts

The construction of a BESS, together with the associated infrastructure, could create significant noise, dust, and traffic. Residents were concerned about the disruption to their homes, the local area, and the loss of valued open space.

The operation of a BESS could create noise pollution that could affect the quality of life and residential amenity for nearby residents. These were serious considerations under Policy 31, which protected residential amenity.

The on-going operational noise from the battery storage units, cooling fans and inverters would impact nearby residents and could exceed acceptable levels, particularly at night.

The proposed development was a commercial project that would result in no genuine benefit to the local community, contrary to what may be claimed.

There were misleading claims regarding the promotion of BESS as a green energy generator.

The proposal failed to meet the standards set out in the County Durham Plan and posed unacceptable risks to the local environment, landscape, and community wellbeing.

RESOLVED that;

- (i) the Parish Council object to the application on the grounds outlined and the County Council be asked to refuse planning permission.
  - (ii) the County Council be asked to refer the application to the Area Planning Committee and a site visit be held to allow Members of the Planning Committee the opportunity to view the site and the surrounding area.
- (2) DM/25/02619/FPA – Single storey extension to form babies' room at Wheatley Hill Primary School, Wheatley Hill, DH6 3RQ for Wheatley Hill Community Primary School

Members discussed the above planning application at length and raised the following concerns based on material planning considerations and in accordance with the County Durham Plan.

### 1 Traffic and Parking Impact

The proposed baby room would significantly increase traffic volumes outside the school during peak hours, as parents of infants would typically require closer access to the school and longer drop-off times. This raised serious concerns under Policy 21 (Delivering Sustainable Transport), which required developments to ensure safe and sustainable access. There was well documented evidence of existing problems related to parking around the school, this would only exacerbate the situation.

The proposed expansion would require the implementation of further extensive traffic and parking measures, to manage the increased congestion caused by increased pupil numbers. This was also due to the approval of a housing development opposite the school for 78 new houses. On this one stretch of road, there would be an increase in traffic from the housing development, and increased traffic from parents.

The lack of drop-off facilities and the risk of obstructing footways, posed a danger to other children and pedestrian safety. There needed to be a thorough traffic assessment and infrastructure

planning before any further expansion at the school was approved.

## **2 Noise and Residential Amenity**

The introduction of a baby room would increase noise levels, particularly increased vehicle movements. This may negatively affect residents living near the school. Under Policy 31 (Amenity and Pollution), developments must avoid unacceptable impacts on residential amenity.

## **3 Overdevelopment and Site Capacity**

Over recent years the school had been extended and re-modelled to accommodate increasing numbers of children. The school site was already operating near its spatial and operational capacity. Adding a further extension would lead to overdevelopment. It would also lead to overcrowding and place additional strain on shared facilities. This contravened Policy 29 (Sustainable Design), which required developments to be appropriate in scale and layout.

**RESOLVED** that;

- (iii) the Parish Council object to the application on the grounds outlined and the County Council be asked to refuse planning permission.
- (iv) the County Planning Committee be asked to hold a site visit to allow Members of the Planning Committee the opportunity to view the site and the surrounding area.

## **9 CLERKS REPORT**

### **(1) Allotments**

#### **(i) Annual Rents**

The Clerk reported that the annual rent letters were issued at the end of September 2025.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

#### **(ii) Applications for an Allotment**

The Clerk reported the receipt of an application for an allotment.

**RESOLVED** that applicant number 4/2025 be accepted onto the waiting list for an allotment.

### **(2) Annual Governance and Accountability Return for the Year Ending 31 March 2025**

The Clerk reported that Forvis Mazars LLP had completed the annual audit for the year ended 31 March 2025.

Members were advised that Forvis Mazars had reviewed Sections 1 and 2 of the Annual Governance and Accountability Return (AGAR) and in their opinion the information was in accordance with proper practices and no other matters had come to their attention giving cause for concern that relevant legislation and regulatory requirements had not been met.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

### **(3) Remembrance Sunday 2025**

The Clerk reported that this year's annual Remembrance Day service would be held on Sunday 9 November 2025.

Members were advised that a Remembrance Service would be held at All Saints Church followed by the laying of wreaths at the Cenotaph where Trimdon Brass band would be playing. The Heritage Centre would be open for refreshments before and after the service.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(4) Lamppost Poppies

The Clerk reported that the Parish Council had approximately 85 lamppost poppies that would be erected on the lampposts between All Saints Church and the Cemetery for Remembrance Sunday.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(5) Christmas Trees

The Clerk suggested that the Parish Council order Christmas trees for the Cemetery, the Workingmen's Club, Wheatley House, and the Community Centre.

RESOLVED that Christmas trees be provided at the Cemetery, the Workingmen's Club, Wheatley House, and the Community Centre.

(6) Cemetery

The Clerk reported that following the last meeting the Parish Council had contacted C Gregory to discuss the possibility of purchasing a strip of land at the bottom of the Cemetery.

Members were advised that C Gregory was open to the idea and had passed the matter to his land agent, Youngs. They had advised that they would contact the Parish Council in due course.

RESOLVED that the information given, be noted.

(7) Updates

(i) Dog Fouling

The Clerk reported that following the last meeting Durham County Council were advised of the increase in dog fouling on the footpaths around East View and Woodlands Avenue.

The County Council advised that the Neighbourhood Wardens were asked to check these areas as part of their routine patrols and the areas reported were cleaned.

(ii) Fly Tipped Rubbish

The Clerk reported that following the last meeting Durham County Council were advised of the fly tipped rubbish on land adjacent Greenhills Terrace.

The County Council advised that the rubbish was on private land, and they would not remove it. The issue was passed to the Neighbourhood Protection team who would carry out an investigation and ask the landowner to remove the rubbish within a set period of time. If the rubbish was not removed within the timescale, the landowner could be issued a legal notice to remove it. Failure to comply with the legal notice could result in prosecution.

As a result of data protection and confidentiality, investigations must be conducted in private. The County Council will not advise us of the outcome of the investigation. The service request has been closed, and we will receive no further updates.

(iii) Rubbish in Gardens

The Clerk reported that following the last meeting Durham County Council were advised of the rubbish in the gardens of properties at Granville and Greenhills Terrace.

The County Council advised that the investigation was complete but provided no further detail.

As a result of data protection and confidentiality, investigations must be conducted in private. The County Council will not advise us of the outcome of the investigation. The service request has been closed, and we will receive no further updates.

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted.

## 10 MEMBER ISSUES

### (1) Fly Tipped Rubbish

Members reported fly tipped rubbish in the vicinity of Miners Villas/old quarry site.

**RESOLVED** that the matter be reported to Durham County Council.

## 11 PAYMENTS

The following schedule of payments was circulated together with figures for all income and expenditure at 30 September 2025.

PAYMENT	TO	DETAIL	COST	VAT	TOTAL
Direct Debit	E-on Next	Gas - Heritage Centre	23.12	1.16	24.28
Direct Debit	E-on Next	Electric - Heritage Centre	58.70	2.94	61.64
Internet Banking	Carrs Billington	Machine Parts	100.64	20.12	120.76
Debit Card	Amazon	Safety Boots	100.24	20.05	120.29
Debit Card	Amazon	Safety Boots	70.82	14.17	84.99
Debit Card	Asda Stores Ltd	Machine Fuel	22.33	4.47	26.80
Debit Card	The Family Cobbler	2 New Keys Cut	6.25	1.25	7.50
Internet Banking	Durham County Council	Recharge for 1 May 2025 Parish Election	3296.00		3,296.00
Internet Banking	Anglian water Business	Water - Allotments	102.02		102.02
Internet Banking	All Saints Church	Section 137 Donation	200.00		200.00
Internet Banking	J Davies	Reimbursements	101.05	14.42	115.47
Internet Banking	J Davies	Reimbursement - Mobile	51.54		51.54
Internet Banking	J Davies	Reimbursement - Milage	47.00		47.00
Internet Banking	J Davies	Heating Allowance - 2nd Instalment	100.00		100.00
Internet Banking	J Thompson	Telephone Allowance	25.00		25.00
Internet Banking	Payroll	Wages - October 2025	5,861.74		5,861.74
Internet Banking	HMRC/DCC	PAYE/Pension - October 2025	4,026.93		4,026.93
Internet Banking	JAC's Accountancy Limited	Payroll Services - October 2025	37.50	7.50	45.00

## Wheatley Hill Parish Council – 13 October 2025

Direct Debit	Information Commissioner		Data Protection Registration				47.00		47.00
Direct Debit	British Telecom		Telephone/Internet				37.02	7.40	44.42
Invoice 101	Co-Op Bank		Charges				13.05		13.05
							<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>14,327.95</b>	<b>93.48 14,421.43</b>

**RESOLVED** that the information given, be noted and the payments be approved.

## 12 RISK MANAGEMENT

The Clerk advised that there was nothing to report.

..... Signed

.....Dated