



Section 2

The current structure of the Peasmarch Neighbourhood Development Plan [the Plan] is :

- 1 Introduction to the Peasmarch Neighbourhood Development Plan
- 2 Peasmarch : an Historic Rural Parish
- 3 Landscape, the Environment and Heritage
- 4 Transport and Infrastructure
- 5 Business and the Local Economy
- 6 Housing and Site Allocation
- 7 Design and the Built Environment
- 8 Implementation and Monitoring

Most sections are still being prepared. However, on the following pages is a draft of Section 2, **Peasmarch : an Historic Rural Parish**.

The intent of this section is to introduce the good – and bad – points of our parish to readers of the Plan who don't know or don't fully understand Peasmarch.

It is being published now to the residents of the parish so that the contents of the section can be corrected or adjusted as necessary. The more of us who contribute the better the Plan will be :

have your say!

You may find it easier to navigate using the bookmarks on the left.

Do you agree with what is said? If you want to suggest any changes then either post feedback on Facebook or use the online feedback form :

<https://s.surveyplanet.com/s2a119jz>



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2 Peasmarsh : an Historic Rural Parish

2.1 Introduction

The parish of Peasmarsh, East Sussex, lies in the north eastern quarter of Rother district. It stretches south from the Kent border along the banks of the River Rother, over a central ridge and down to the banks of the River Tillingham. The parish is approximately 3.5 miles from north to south and 1.5 miles east to west. It is about 4 miles from the town of Rye.

It is an atypical parish in several ways :

- the core of the one village – also Peasmarsh – is tucked hard up against the eastern boundary of the parish on the north side of the ridge;
- it is cut in two by the A268, the busy road that runs from the A21 through the middle of the village to Rye and Camber;
- the village has some of the characteristics of a ribbon development stretching beyond its core along the A268;
- the parish church is not in the village but up on the ridge in the presumed location of the pre-plague village;
- despite the parish having a small population – about 1200 in 2011 – it has a very large supermarket [with fuel station, post office, pharmacy and ATM] on the outskirts of the village that attracts customers from all over the district and beyond; as a result the other shops in the village have all closed;

Despite the supermarket, the essential character of the parish – which lies entirely within the High Weald AONB – is that of a rural village.

2.2 Environment

Because of its geography the parish has a variety of ecosystems which range from the flood plain of the Rother to the ridge south of the village.

Almost one third of the parish land area of 1,580 ha [3,900 acres] is designated priority habitat, mainly deciduous woodland [20.7%] and grazing marsh [7.4%]. Several of the woods are designated as Ancient Woodlands or Plantations on Ancient Woodland Sites. That includes Malthouse and Cock woods immediately north of Peasmarsh Village, essentially blocking any expansion of the central village in that direction.

Although there are no Sites of Special Scientific Interest [SSSI's] within the parish, there are several in proximity and one – Leasam Wood Heronry – is less than 1km from the parish boundary. Accordingly, most of the parish is within one or other SSSI Impact Risk Zones.

Similarly, the parish is not within a Wetland of International Importance [known as a 'Ramsar' site] but it is only 1.6km from the internationally recognised Dungeness, Romney Marsh and Rye Bay Ramsar site.

Geologically, Peasmarsh is at the lower end of the Wealden formation where the sandstone runs out and the underlying clay is exposed. [Up until the late 19th century Peasmarsh had its own brickworks in the village using the local clay.] Because the sandstone is permeable but the clay is not, there are many springs along the line between the two layers.



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The issue is that the clay results in much of the parish being a critical drainage area. The potential for surface water flooding is further exacerbated by the effects of climate change which seem to be trending to downpour rain events.

2.3 Heritage

The origins of Peasmarsh [variously 'Pesemersse' and Pesemerssheare] are lost in the mists of time. Traces of a Roman bloomery have been reported on the central ridge of the parish and the parish church is recorded as having been built in about 1070 on the site of a, presumably wooden, Anglo-Saxon minster.

The parish does not appear in Domesday but that is said to be because it was already part of King William's holdings when he was Duke of Normandy. By the time of Pope Nicholas' 'Taxatio' survey, undertaken in 1291 and 92 during the reign of Edward I, Peasmarsh was the dominant local parish with the parishes of Beckley, Northiam, Iden and Playden all paying 'pensions' to Peasmarsh.

The parish church is on the central ridge but the modern village lies about 750m north at the bottom of the hill. The most popular theory for this move – on the basis that the original village was around the church – is that it occurred during plague times when those who survived wanted to be well away from where the infections had started.

There are 55 listed buildings in Peasmarsh parish, including the Grade I listed 11th century parish church and, two Grade II* buildings. The oldest houses date from the 15th or 16th centuries.

East Sussex County Council [ESCC] has designated much of Peasmarsh village as an Archaeological Notification Area [ANA] in recognition of its special heritage status. The designation runs on either side of the A268 for nearly 2km plus at the lower end of School Lane.

2.4 Transport

Peasmarsh is not well served by public transport and there are no cycleways so the population is very reliant on cars for moving around. In any case, being a rural community means that those not living in the village itself need to use cars in order to get to whatever public transport services are available.

The results of the initial public survey undertaken for PNDP showed that, overall, stakeholders rated the public transport services as only 39% adequate.

Bus

The village has one bus service [which runs from Rye to the village of Northiam through Peasmarsh along the A268 and back again]. However, there are only 7 buses per weekday from Rye and 5 per day to Rye [7/d during school holidays], Rye being the more important destination. The first bus to Rye is at nearly 07:30 [but only during school holidays] and there is no service after 16:00, sometimes with 2 hour gaps between buses. [The first bus from Rye only arrives at nearly 09:00 and the last at only 19:14.] There is a reduced service on Saturdays and none at all on Sundays.

However, buses from Peasmarsh are timed to arrive at the station either too close to the [punctual] train departures to allow purchase of tickets or just after the service has left. Even when there should be interconnection, the bus service is frequently late.



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Rail

Rye railway station is 3.8 miles by road from the junction of the A268 and School Lane [reducing to 3.5 miles if a short-cut is taken via a narrow, potholed lane]. The line runs from Ashford to Hastings and onwards to the west. There is an hourly service in either direction with each route taking about 20 minutes to reach the mainline station. Depending on the time of day and direction of travel, interconnection times are sometimes good but not good at all at other times.

Traffic

The A268 is the route for traffic from London to Rye and Camber. Whilst Rye is a destination throughout the year, Camber is a seasonal destination. The traffic ranges from HGV's heading to distribution depots in Rye to motorcycles. There is also a considerable amount of traffic that delivers to the large supermarket as well as the shoppers visiting from the region.

The parish has a Black Cat traffic flow monitoring device so has recorded a considerable amount of traffic data. For example, in the seven day period April 18th to 24th 2022, the total volume of traffic travelling on the A268 in both directions was 40,241 at the recording point in the middle of the village. 69% of the vehicles exceeded the 30 mph speed limit and the 85th percentile of speed westward was 35.9 mph. The total number of vehicles above 45mph [for both directions combined] during the period was 382.

2.5 Infrastructure

Some aspects of the infrastructure required to support parish life are decidedly below the standards expected. The results of the initial public survey rank those by priority for improvement as perceived by the stakeholders :

- 1st drainage [both foul and surface water]
- 2nd roads and traffic
- 3rd electricity supply
- 4th telecommunications

Gas is not considered as it is expected to be phased out but, in any case, there are no known current issues for those who have a gas supply.

Foul Water Drainage

Peasmarsh does not have a foul water [sewage] treatment works and not even all of the village is connected to the system that does exist.

Approximately two thirds of the 592 houses in the parish are connected to the foul water system which leads to a pumping station on the site of the original treatment works. From there the foul water is pumped 3km to the treatment works in a neighbouring parish.

Southern Water, the responsible authority, considers the system a 'foul only' system even though a considerable number of the properties have a mixed [foul and surface water] system discharging to the sewer. This is particularly an issue when a rain downpour event occurs : the pumping station recorded overflow spills to the local stream 38 times for a total of 193 hours during 2021 alone.



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One of the issues, which the company does acknowledge, is that there is a low point in the sewer as it passes under the A268. Solids accumulate in that section which leads to local sewage spills and, consequently, has to be routinely flushed at intervals.

Surface Water Drainage

This issue has already been touched on when discussing the environment.

There are various points in Peasmarsh parish where heavy flooding occurs at regular intervals. The issue seems to be that existing culverts are either damaged or inadequate for the amount of surface water to be handled.

Electricity

The parish – sometimes just parts of it – experiences frequent supply disruption ranging from less than a second to hours or even days. This is because the supplies are, in general, spurs from high voltage lines and not rings [which would provide secure supplies]. There is little likelihood of the network being upgraded.

Telecommunications

The broadband service in Peasmarsh village was upgraded about 5 years ago to deliver fibre to the cabinet so that only the final line to the property is copper. This means that householders are able to have 70 Mb/s download service if they wish to pay for it. The problem is that the way that the network has been implemented means that some properties do not get good service at peak periods due to bandwidth issues.

The broadband service in the rest of the parish relies entirely on copper and is, accordingly, poor to very poor.

The cell phone coverage has been improved in the last five years, at least outdoors : OFCOM reports that all four networks have 'OK Coverage' outdoors throughout the parish other than a few isolated places with 'Some Problems' rating. That does not necessarily tally with residents' experiences.

Indoor coverage is much poorer with only a 'good' or 'OK' service in the village itself and even that depends on which network is being used. Service away from the village varies from 'Some Problems' to 'No Coverage' and again depends on which network is being used.

An important issue is the power supply to the local cell towers which, as with domestic supply, experiences frequent disruption. The cells do not seem to have generators so any lengthy disruption exhausts the batteries in the uninterruptible power supplies and the cells close down.

2.6 Facilities

The nature of the facilities in Peasmarsh has changed substantially over the last 20 years as all of the shops and other outlets along the village's Main Street have closed. Instead the Jempson's campus at the west end of the village has taken over many of the roles previously served by separate companies. It has a regional supermarket, a fuel station, a post office, a pharmacy, a cafeteria and an ATM. It does not open on Sundays.



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In some ways, having such a campus is good for the village but, because people from quite some distance come to Jempson's and because of the number of deliveries, there is a considerable strain on the road system, particularly the junction of Tanhouse Lane with the A268.

Other facilities, all in Peasmarsh village, include the Memorial Hall, the primary school [see section 2.9 below] and the recreation ground which has its own substantial pavilion.

The parish also boasts two public houses, both in the village, and two hotels, one on the fringes of the village and the other in a totally rural setting.

However, there are many facilities which the parish does not have : library [a mobile library used to visit], secondary school [see section 2.9 below], doctor or dentist [see section 2.10 below], bank [not even in Rye : the nearest bank is in Tenterden, about 8 miles away], railway station or adequate bus service [see section 2.4 above], adequate communication systems away from the village [see section 2.5 above] and services for youth.

2.7 The Local Economy

Throughout most of the 19th Century almost 70% of the people living in Peasmarsh worked directly in agriculture with another 22% in occupations [retail, service and manufacturing] that supported this. The remaining 8% were classed as professional or capitalist. Peasmarsh was virtually self-sufficient as a village with a wide range of shops, its own nurse, policeman, postmaster and lawyer, workers in the building trade and, of course a licensed victualler or two. Residents in the village today remember the forge, butchers, baker, Spar shop, Post Office, garage / repair shop etc..

The economy of Peasmarsh today is primarily driven by some agriculture with tourism and retail [because the Jempson's campus serves a wide region, not just the parish] featuring strongly. There are, however, many small – typically self-employed people operating from home – businesses too.

Stakeholders, in general, view the parish as a dormitory location rather than an economic centre and wish it to stay that way.

In the village there is a facility called 'Malthouse Rural Business Park' owned by RDC which is a group of six very small [45 sq. m each] light industrial units with electricity, water and a WC. However they seem to be used as storage bases for small businesses rather than as production units. There are no known people that work in the facility.

The economic drivers are not known for paying high wages. This is reflected in the government indices of deprivation, last published in 2019, which show that the parish [combined with part of Rye Foreign as area 'Rother' 002D] was in the 5th decile [40 to 50% so poorer than average] of the Index of Multiple Deprivation and in the same decile for income and employment indices.

2.8 Population and Housing

The latest information available at the time of writing is from the 2011 census. This section will either be updated or a codicil added once the data from the 2021 is published.

The population of the parish in 2011 was 1,191, formed into 504 households. There were 557 dwellings recorded, the difference presumably being empty dwellings and holiday lets. The Office for National Statistics [ONS] indicated that the population in mid-2019 was 1,294, an increase of 103 since 2011, but that is an estimate, not a verified figure.



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The age profile of the parish population in 2011 was typical of many rural villages with fewer younger people and more older people than England as a whole :

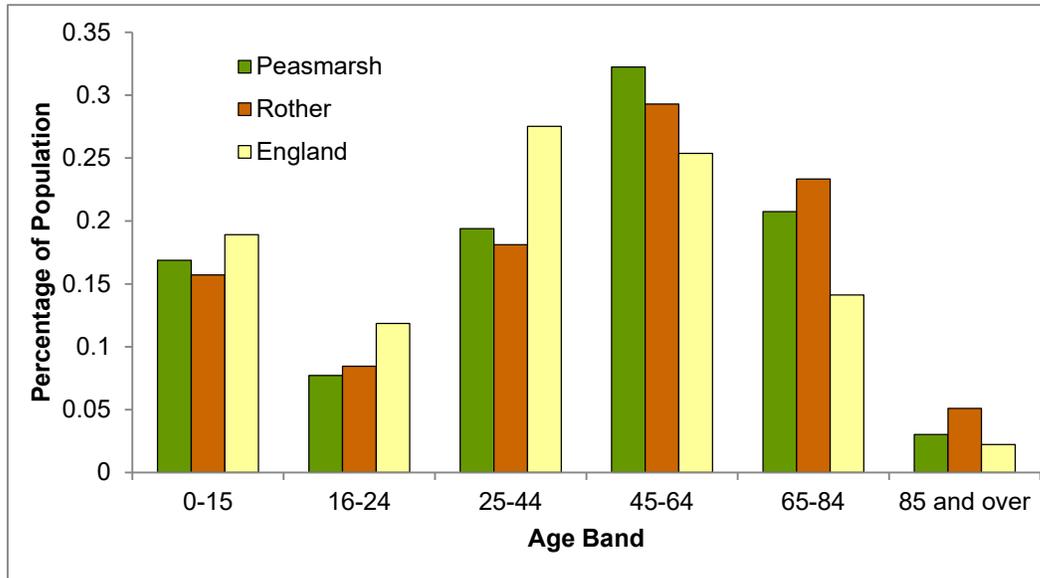


Figure 2 : 2011 Population Age Profile

However Peasmarsh has a reducing percentage of people over the age of 85, reflecting anecdotal evidence that people leave the village as they age whereas Rother as a whole has an increasing population in that age group.

In the same year, ~ 16% of the population worked in skilled trades, ~ 14% were in professional occupations and ~ 12% were in management roles.

The number of houses in 2011 was 557, an increase of 73 since 2001. The Post Office states that in 2022 there are 592 properties in the parish. On the other hand, RDC states that 27 new homes were built since the 2011 Census which makes the total dwellings to mid-2022 to be 584.

Again in 2011, slightly over two thirds of the houses were owned, the rest were rented. Of the rented houses, about two thirds were social rentals and one third were private rental. The social rental percentage was more than that in England as a whole and double that in Rother.

The parish has a very eclectic mixture of house styles. The houses in the village range from traditional clapboard styles through tile hung exteriors to modern brick-built houses. Roofs are similarly varied ranging from traditional thatch through clay tiles and slates to modern cast tiles.

2.9 Education

Peasmarsh has both a pre-school and a Church of England primary school, both on the same site on the southern edge of the village centre.



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The pre-school operates from purpose-built facilities in the grounds of the primary school and accepts children from the age of two onwards. Although co-located with the primary school, the pre-school operates quite separately from it. Most of the children come from Peasmarsh or Rye.

Peasmarsh Church of England Primary School operates on the site of the original parish school in School Lane. That was founded in 1841 and the original building is still in use as part of a much larger complex. The school is rated as 'Good' by OFSTED.

There are seven year groups at the school, each with a Published Admission Number [PAN] of 15 children so a total of 105 children. The PAN is, in theory, the maximum number of pupils that the education authority will admit to that year group. However, the school has an obligation to accept children who live in the area so in some year groups the number of children is already over PAN.

What Peasmarsh does not have is a secondary education facility within the parish. Children from 11 years of age and on have to travel to secondary schools. The nearest East Sussex schools are Rye College [about 3 miles from Peasmarsh] and Robertsbridge Community College [about 12 miles along country lanes]. Neither is particularly well perceived and neither has a sixth form. The nearest East Sussex sixth forms are in Hastings and Bexhill.

The majority of Peasmarsh children therefore go to Homewood School and Sixth Form in Tenterden which is across the county border in Kent [about 8 miles, again on country lanes]. That is the case even though the school is currently rated by OFSTED as 'requires improvement'. The problem with that school is that the existing bus service may be withdrawn because Kent is not obliged to provide a service for children living in East Sussex. There is also talk of Homewood no longer accepting children from East Sussex in the near future.

It is worth noting that the government indices of deprivation, last published in 2019, reveal that area Rother 002D – Peasmarsh plus part of Rye Foreign – is in the 3rd decile [20 to 30%] of the Education, Skills and Training index.

2.10 Health Services

Peasmarsh is within the area of the East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust which has two main hospitals, one in Hastings [Conquest, about 12 miles away partly on country lanes] and one in Eastbourne [EDGH, about 30 miles away mostly on main roads].

There is a small intermediate care hospital in Rye [Rye Memorial Hospital, about 2½ miles] from which the NHS offers some services on the basis of professionals visiting from the main hospitals.

The residents of the parish are mainly [perhaps exclusively] registered with three main practices : two in Rye and one in Northiam. They tend to be loyal to their particular practice. The parish does not have a medical centre or surgery although Rye Medical Centre does offer a once per month visiting doctor service in the Peasmarsh Memorial Hall.

The Northiam practice no longer accepts registrations from Peasmarsh residents.

Travel to all three practices is difficult due to the public transport issues.

There is a pharmacy within Jempson's supermarket and there is an ambulance station at the Rye Memorial Hospital.