

EGERTON PARISH COUNCIL

2nd February 2021

**The meeting of the Parish Council was held on Tuesday 2nd February 2021
Via Zoom at 8.00pm.**

Present

Richard King (Chairman), Peter Rawlinson (Vice Chairman), Sarah Elworthy, Claire Foinette, Jeff Hopkins, John Lawton, Tim Oliver, Pat Parr, Lois Tilden, Ken Mulholland (Ward Councillor) and Sonia Young (Clerk)

Jane Carr NHP Chairman

22 members of the public were present

1) Apologies

None

2) Declarations of Interest

Pat Parr: gift of land

Tim Oliver: a relation of his is the owner of Gale Field which is proposed for development in the Neighbourhood Plan.

John Lawton: stated that as a matter of record he lives in Harmers Way which is adjacent to land put forward for development in the Neighbourhood Plan

Lois Tilden: declared no financial or business interest in any matters on this agenda nor in any land put forward for development in the Neighbourhood Plan or any land excluded from development in the Neighbourhood Plan

Richard King: declared no financial or business interest in any matters on this agenda nor in any land put forward for development in the Neighbourhood Plan or any land excluded from development in the Neighbourhood Plan

Peter Rawlinson: declared no financial or business interest in any matters on this agenda, no ownership or interest in any land put forward for housing development in the Neighbourhood Plan or any land excluded from housing development in the Neighbourhood Plan

Claire Foinette: declared no financial or business interest in any matters on this agenda nor in any land put forward for development in the Neighbourhood Plan or any land excluded from development in the Neighbourhood Plan.

3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting

The minutes of the meeting on 5th January 2021: The minutes were approved and signed as a true record of proceedings.

Proposed: Pat Parr. **Seconded:** Claire Foinette.

All agreed except

Abstain: Sarah - absent from 5th January meeting.

4) Matters Arising from 5th January 2021

a) Apologies for absence 5th January 2021

Sarah Elworthy wanted it recorded that she was absent from the meeting due to her unresolved complaint.

b) Footpaths Report

Report No. 129 of the Egerton Footpaths Representative – February 2021. See attached report at end of minutes.

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c) Highways Report

See attached report at end of minutes.

d) Flooding at the Forstal

John advised that debris had been removed from the drainage ditch and a new channel built to clear the flooding at Crocken Hill.

The two imminent closures of Rock Hill Road have been communicated to Charlie Simkins to ensure diversion signage is clear to stop traffic using Green Hill Road which is unsuited to heavy use.

Action: Pat Parr to communicate the closures via Egerton Nextdoor.

Claire thanked John for his work, and also Kent Highways for swiftly dealing with erosion caused by flooding at Crockenhill.

Action: clerk to send a letter of thanks.

e) Government grants

The clerk advised that grants totalling £6,763.29 had been awarded to The Games Barn due to the 2nd lockdown and loss of normal activity and income. The Clerk and Ken Mullholland wished to thank the team at Ashford Borough Council for their assistance on this.

f) Trees in the recreation ground

Felling licence underway with clerk to allow felling to proceed.

g) Lenham Heath Garden Community

- In view of the obligations of neighbouring Local Authorities to cooperate, SOHL are preparing a report to MBC setting out their concerns and objections to the proposed development. This report will be available by the end of Feb and we will be sent a copy. John will make the report available to Ken Mulholland and Clair Bell in their capacity as Borough Councillors for Weald North and Upper Weald.
- SOHL were copied in on approx. 500 objections to the LHGC proposal resulting from the Public Consultation 18b. This exceeded expectations.
- MBC will be publishing the result of the Public Consultation 18b at the end of February.
- A solicitor's letter has been received by the group of 18 (small) landowners who objected to MBC including their property in the Lenham Heath plan. MBC have appointed external legal advice Pinsent Mason to deal with this. In the letter the solicitors have threatened the landowners with compulsory purchase if they do not cooperate. It remains the understanding that CPOs are not used to acquire land for housing development and are only used to acquire land for infrastructure. This is being seen as a very aggressive by the group.
- MBC are in discussions with Homes England to become the promotor of the project. Homes England have submitted Heads of Terms and a draft collaboration agreement will be considered by the Policy and Resources committee in March.
- A new master plan has to be submitted by the end of March with revised boundaries in time for the next stage of consultation (19). There are expected to be changes to the boundaries particularly in respect of the land to the north of the Ramsgate – London railway line. Development of this land is in clear view of the North downs AONB and is likely to attract much criticism and objection.
- Consultation 19 is due to take place in June when MBC must have their final or very near final plan ready. Only very minor changes are allowed before submission to the inspector in September.

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h) GDPR: A report will be submitted ahead of the next EPC meeting 2nd March.

I) Sale of the village shop

No update available

j) Roles and responsibilities and interface with the Clerk

Sarah advised that unless another councillor had stated they were making a complaint about the roles and responsibilities and interface with the Clerk, this was not the issue she had raised with the monitoring officer. The contentious emails and allegations the chairman referred to at the December meeting did not relate directly or in their entirety to the roles and responsibilities and interface with the clerk.

k) Village planters

Claire reported that the planters are in place and would like to extend thanks to a number of people for their help: David Hopkins who has volunteered to keep them planted and tended; Evelina and her son Adam who assisted with lifting the compost and filling the planters; Tim Oliver for advice on where to site them.

l) School Parking

The Clerk reported that a letter had been sent to Mrs Julia Walker and a detailed response had arrived that morning to be circulated for discussion at the next EPC meeting.

m) Broadband and fibre to the home

John reported that not enough signatures had been collected and that the bid to secure funding from the KCC had failed as available funds had been exhausted. He advised Egerton was not alone in this as Pluckley's bid for funds was also unsuccessful. The next step is to engage proactively with all areas of the village to explain the benefits of a village-wide bid and get the best outcome for the entirety of Egerton when a 2nd round of funding becomes available.

5) Public Discussion

The meeting closed at 8.30pm and opened for public discussion. Meeting re-opened 8.50pm

6) Planning

Planning applications submitted to Ashford Borough Council this month for Egerton Parish Council to consider and decisions recently taken by ABC to be noted, details of which may be accessed on line at: http://www.ashford.gov.uk/online_planning/ Individuals may also register via the website with ABC to receive regular alerts of new applications and decisions.

New

20/01715/AS	Egerton	Weald North Ward	Land north east of The Low House, Forstal Road, Egerton, Kent Application for planning in principle for an entry level exception scheme in accordance with Paragraph 71 National Planning Policy Framework 2019 comprising the erection of up to 9 entry level (discounted market sales) dwellings
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Object: Unanimous decision to lodge a firm objection

Proposed: Jeff Hopkins

Seconded: Pat Parr

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EPC decided to object to this application for reasons set out in the attached report, as presented at the meeting by Lois Tilden. Lois will submit a full copy of the report to Ashford Borough Council. See attached report at the end of the minutes

On behalf of all councillors, Peter thanked Lois for compiling such a thorough and comprehensive report on the proposed development.

Decided

20/01546/AS Refuse	Egerton	Weald North Ward	Sun Patch, The Street, Egerton, Ashford, Kent, TN27 9AL Variation of condition 2 on planning permission 20/00799/AS (Demolition of existing bungalow and erection of two detached dwellings with associated amenity and parking) to approved plans to allow a material amendment to include a first floor to plot 1 with dormer windows and additional window to SE elevation in kitchen
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20/00903/CONB/AS Grant Consent	Egerton	Weald North Ward	Stone Hill Oast, Stone Hill Road, Egerton, Ashford, Kent, TN27 9DU Discharge of condition 5
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20/01619/AS Permit	Egerton	Weald North Ward	Rockhill Oast House, Rock Hill Road, Egerton, Ashford, Kent, TN27 9DP Erection of external staircase/access door to rear elevation of garage and rooflights
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20/01667/AS Grant Consent	Egerton	Weald North Ward	Poplar Farm, Forge Lane, Egerton, Ashford, Kent, TN27 9EJ Revision to listed building consent 20/01338/AS (Front porch extension and single storey rear extension) to provide slimline double glazing in lieu of single glazing to single storey rear extension
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7) Neighbourhood Plan Update

Pre submission draft plans to be removed from boxes outside Hall and inns.

Action: NP Steering Group.

Jane Carr, chair of the Neighbourhood Plan (NP) Steering Group, confirmed on behalf of the steering group, that the only interest the group has is in consulting in as wide a cross section of the Egerton community as possible and in reflecting those views.

All councillors have been sent a copy of the latest draft NP to consider ahead of the joint meeting hosted by the NP Steering Group scheduled for Tuesday 9th February. As a Steering Group meeting it will not be open to the public. EPC are invited to comment on the current draft before it is formally presented for approval at the March EPC meeting. The plan will then be submitted to Ashford Borough Council, will be subject to external Examination and will then be presented to village residents at Referendum.

Jane urged the need to maintain pace on the NP.

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Jane advised that JC/ RK/ LT had met with ABC head of planning, Simon Cole, plus Dan Carter and Ian Grundy to try and resolve some of the inconsistencies in the advice given by ABC over time and try, with Ken Mulholland's help, to find a way forward working together to get the plan to the final stage. Jane thanked Ken for setting the meeting up.

Jane reported that as a result of the amended submission on the North Field, and because of the Clarendon submission, the site assessments were having to be re-done and recalibrated which has caused another delay. The revised assessments will be posted on the website once externally assessed.

The steering group is also working on all the documents that have to accompany the submission of the plan: a basic conditions statement, a communications statement, and various other reports that have to be in a particular format to satisfy not just ABC, but also an Examiner.

Timetable after discussion with councillors 9th February is:

- i) NP Steering Group complete drafting by the end of February, after submitting to ABC informally for advice
- ii) EPC review the revised plan at the March meeting
- iii) Amended plan is posted on the website for everyone to view
- iv) Plan submitted to ABC for a required six week consultation after which an Examiner is appointed
- iv) Examiner works through all of the evidence, the plan, and reviews the policies
- v) Examiner works with the NPSG on any amendments
- vi) Public referendum held - likely to be Autumn.

Jane advised that the Steering group has summarised a mass of data in the plan, including the Housing Needs Survey outcomes. She advised that the interpretation of what constitutes affordability is complex in planning terms generally; but in the specific case of Egerton is based on the results of the Housing Needs Survey and – as explained in the Plan – applies specifically to the two main housing needs – for local needs rentable affordable housing and for housing for local older people wishing to downsize.

Older People's Accommodation

The update on the offer made by the EPC Older People's Accommodation Working Group to the owners of the proposed New Road development to purchase access to the Orchard Nurseries Site is a commercially confidential matter. As such, it was proposed to update members in private session at the end of the meeting.

Proposal to discuss in closed session: Richard King

Seconded: Claire Foinette

All resolved to exclude the public from this discussion

8) PCSO- Kyle Farnfield PCSO 46061547- report not received this month. Kyle expects to join all future meetings.

9) Social Media

Lois raised concerns about the false information and suppositions being posted on Egerton Nextdoor, particularly about the role of EPC and individual councillors. She advised a number of the comments directed at individual councillors, including herself, were extremely defamatory and could become the subject of legal action. Lois advised that she had taken legal advice and was considering taking action against individuals who had posted the comments concerned.

EPC considered what it could and should do about the questions that had arisen in relation to the conduct of EPC via Egerton Nextdoor in order to allay any fears or anxieties people in the village might have that EPC was not representing them appropriately.

John questioned what EPC could or should do about people who chose to use social media platforms to spread their own views.

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He said it was important for EPC and not engage in any such debate.; EPC responsibility was to the village as a whole and not to any one particular cause.

It was agreed that it was extremely difficult to have a forum to rebut such content and that both the EPC meetings and Parish Assembly were public but that a number of individuals chose to follow Nextdoor rather than attend and engage positively.

All agreed that the aim for the EPC should be to continue to do all that it does, and to publicise the results of all those efforts via the website and Egerton Update and bring everyone in to positive discussion.

Claire said that, as an individual, Lois had the right to follow up on the comments in whichever way she felt most appropriate. However, the EPC as a body had an established channel for comment, and that remained via The Clerk.

Ken advised that another council had faced similar 'keyboard warriors'.

Peter said it was hard not to take it personally. He advised he was tired of the keyboard warriors attacking EPC councillors who all voluntarily undertook the work to help the village and the people in it.

Richard identified a requirement to consider taking other steps - legal or otherwise - but proposed that it was not appropriate to consider that in public session.

Proposed to move to private session: Richard King

Seconded: Peter Rawlinson

Abstain: John Lawton

After further discussion it was agreed to continue the discussion at the March meeting

10) Village signs and noticeboards

Quotes have been received to repair the post for the village sign. Peter asked for his £100 prize in the February Egerton 100 Club to go towards the cost of this. All agreed to the quote for repair.

Claire said that a generous £240 had been donated towards the village planters from the 100 Club so she would donate the £200 she planned to donate towards the planters towards the village sign instead.

Action: Clerk to confirm repair to go ahead

Repair for the village noticeboard on The Glebe which is in a bad state of repair.

A public-spirited citizen who wishes to remain anonymous has agreed to manufacture a new noticeboard free of charge. The only costs needed will be for materials such as Perspex for the door.

The EPC wished to thank the anonymous villager for their generous offer. Mike Crump has offered £500 towards the manufacture which the EPC wished to thank him for and would use towards the cost of materials.

11) Playground and skate park

The playground inspection has been delayed due to COVID but has been chased again by the Clerk.

An offer has been made by a villager to repair the skate park – EPC wishes to thank him for the offer and will pick up with him once the Inspector's report has been reviewed.

12) Correspondence

EPC has received two complaints from the same member of the public. Following KALC advice, the response and next steps have to be treated confidentially and discussed in private session at the end of the meeting as it relates to individuals.

Proposed: Tim Oliver

Seconded: Pat Parr

All agreed to exclude the public from this discussion

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All circulated by email in advance unless marked with a *

Note

Letter of thanks to Rural Task Force: PR 7/01
 Letter to Egerton Primary ref parking issues: Clerk. 7/01
 Leader's Briefing – Holocaust Memorial Day: All 12/01
 NALC – May local elections to go ahead: All 14/01
 ABC budget consultations: All 19/01
 NALC bulletin and summary of 12 Jan Policy Committee Meeting: All 19/01
 Rural Services Network bulletin: All 19/01
 NALC training - routes to widening representation in local councils: 19/01
 Local Govt Bulletin: All. 19/01
 Message via EPC website from a villager ref repair of Skate Park: CF/SE 19.01 – then All
 KALC environmental briefing: All. 21.01
 Kent Rural Housing Development: Jeff/Claire/Pat. 21/01
 KALC Jan briefing: All . 26/01
 Rural Services Network bulletin: All. 26/01
 KALC call for council examples of community support in lockdown: All. 26/01
 KCC road safety strategy for Kent: John. 27/01/2021
 KALC call for capital project funding ideas: RK/PR. 28/01

Web Items

December minutes
 February agenda
 Draft January minutes

13) Finance

Approval of the accounts for the month, for cheques to be signed and Internet transfers to take place.

Proposed: Tim Oliver.

Seconded: Lois Tilden

All agreed

Expenditure		Cheque No	£
Reimburse Sonia Young	Ryman printer paper and ink	BACS	84.97
AT Palmer Builders	Hire of digger for land clearing	BACS	408.00
Sonia Young Salary	February	BACS	953.34
HMRC	February	BACS	22.00
			£1,468.31

Income			

Bank Reconciliation Balance as at 31st January 2021 £1,136.39 less un-presented cheques as follows

Actual balance = £1, 136.39 as at 31st January 2021

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Clerk advised that the EPC deposit account had sufficient funds to transfer back into the current account if required to meet all outgoings to year end.

Sarah asked The Clerk to review cost categories for budget.

Action:The Finance Sub-Committee to review the categories and cost allocations ahead of the next financial year.

Peter confirmed to Pat that he would fund the cost of 12 additional Welcome Packs.

Accounts for Egerton update magazine

Expenditure		Cheque No	£

Income			
Advertising			

Bank Reconciliation Balance as at 31st January 2021 £4,072.70 less un-presented cheques as follows:

Actual balance = £4,072.70 as at 31st January 2021

Accounts for Village Projects

Expenditure		Cheque No	£

Income			
Interest			0.19
			0.19

Bank Reconciliation Balance as at 31st January 2021 £20, 603.32 less un-presented cheques as follows:

Actual balance = £20,603.32 as at 31st January 2021

Village Projects fund

Pre-school move	£11,288.65
Village Hall	£ 9,314.67
TOTAL	£20,603.32

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Accounts for Neighbourhood Plan

Expenditure		Cheque No	£

Income			

14) Discussion on the proposal for a policy change to require dogs to be kept on leads whilst on the Egerton Recreation Ground

Sarah requested a correction to the discussion of the proposal at the 5th January 2021 EPC meeting. The proposal from the Playing Fields Committee did not, as discussed 5th January, include a proposal to change the use of the lower sheep field to a dogs off lead area.

EPC had been asked by the Playing Fields Committee to adopt a policy which required dog owners to keep their dogs on leads while exercising them on the playing fields and recreation ground in order to control dog fouling. As secretary of the Playing Fields committee Sarah stated that concerns had been consistently raised by representatives from the Cricket and Football clubs to the EPFC. She reported: "We are in the fortunate position to have a thriving junior cricket section and re-emerging junior football and wish to support them in providing a safe environment for their members. Because of the risks of Toxocariasis (particularly in children) and in order to show our Insurers we are taking due care in mitigating the risk, Egerton Playing Fields Committee unanimously agreed at their meeting in November to implement a 'dogs on leads' requirement to enable dog owners to be more aware of when their dog poops! The Committee is asking for the 'dogs on leads' requirement to be agreed by the Parish Council as the owners of the Playing Fields. For consistency and to save confusion it may be more practical for the Parish Council to consider the whole of the Recreation Area (excluding the lower sheep field) to be included in this 'dogs on leads' policy."

EPC agreed that such a policy, if agreed, could not realistically be enforced but that signage could be used and positioned, with the support of the Dog Warden and ABC, to communicate the change to a dogs on leads policy.

EPC agreed to a six- to twelve-month trial implementation of a dogs on leads policy with signage on the cricket field and Lower recreation (football pitch) area only (not the sheep field or Upper recreation area) for a period commencing in March and to be monitored for impact on the level of fouling. Sarah will report back on costs and proposed signs and siting at the March meeting. Sarah advised that the impact on those who are not guilty of allowing dog fouling had been considered and balanced with requirements of health and safety and cleanliness. **Proposed:** Peter Rawlinson
Seconded: Tim Oliver
All in favour

Deleted: ¶
¶

15) Formal ceremony (post covid) to mark and appreciate locals who have gone above and beyond in helping the community

Proposal from a villager
EPC's view is to incorporate some kind of proposed ceremony into The Parish Assembly.

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Proposed: Pat Parr
Seconded: Peter Rawlinson
All in favour

16) Any other business

The issue of fly tipping in the village was raised by Lois who had personally organised for items dumped at the foot of Crockenhill to be removed. Kent Clean Watch accepts reports of information anyone has on fly tipping as often people fly tip and leave addressed envelopes in the rubbish. Kent Clean Watch have enforcement officers. It is a Kent Highways issue but ABC is the authority that removes the dumped items.

Promotional flyers have been sent to EPC from KALC to highlight contact phone numbers. Article proposed for inclusion in the next issue of Egerton Update with all contact numbers

Action: clerk to print and put the flyers on the Parish noticeboards

17) Confidential Item

Resolution to exclude the public and meet in private (See Items 7 and 12)

A confidential note of the business conducted is on file.

The meeting closed at 10.52pm

Next meeting: Tuesday 2nd March 2021

Egerton Parish Council meeting held via Zoom due to lockdown from Covid-19 Report no. 130 of the Egerton footpaths representative – February 2021

4 Closed Issues – Issues 6 and 7 of Outstanding Issues and Issues 2 and 3 of New Issues to be removed at next report

4 New Issues have been reported since the December 2020 report.

5 Outstanding Issues from the December 2020 report remain.

*The outstanding issues below are listed with the KCC Reference, the date reported, the footpath number, the location, the difficulty experienced and the status of action. *Issues 4 and 6 have a new note at the end.*

1. **PROW549664.** 14/05/19. AW84 Egerton House Road/Coach Road from the Court Lodge orchard. Erosion of steps down to the road. Status: "Work Scheduled"
2. **PROW359025.** 09/09/19. AW94 Coldbridge. Broken stile on the right-hand side of the lane, (just before woodyard). Status: "Awaiting Allocation"
3. **PROW191180108.** 06/11/19. AW65 Behind Jollis Field, Coldbridge Lane, at River Bridge, a tree has fallen. Status: "Awaiting Allocation"
- *4. **PROW 200491079 and PROW 200484748.** 19/04/20 and 24/04/20. AW90 Green Wickets, Rockhill Road. The outcome of the complaints received about being unable to use the public

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right of way at Green Wickets is that KCC said because of the spread of the virus a temporary block was put on that part of AW90 with signs either end, there being an alternative footpath nearby. Keep on list to reinstate access once the situation changes back to normal. This part of footpath AW90 is still closed. Status: "In Progress".

*Twice since ramblers have ignored the temporary closure signs and the second time actually removed the new sign and red danger tape. The owner had failed to follow my advice to make sure they had a temporary sign at the stile into their back yard where people were still entering. Advised the owner she needs to keep replacing signs at back and front ends if they get removed as there is nothing else we can do. Finished the call with a very disgruntled owner who does not seem to appreciate what steps we have taken to get this temporary stop for them.

5. **PROW 200992767.** 01/09/20. AW88 Greensand Way at Elm Close. Wooden fingerpost at the steps down to the hall is rotten and needs replacing. Status: "Work Added to Forward Maintenance Plan"
- *6. **PROW 201114812.** 22/11/29. AW84 At graveyard of Egerton Church out to open field behind Glebeland houses. This short stretch of AW84 footpath was closed to the public in November due to several areas of subsidence from what would appear to be badger setts. KCC will investigate and liaise with Natural England and take action accordingly. Status: "Resolved – Work Completed"
7. Item 2 of New Issues in the December 2020 Footpaths Report concerned one of the steps of footpath AW23 leading down to Stonebridge Green from Orchard Cottage had subsidence occurring and was therefore filled with rocks and soil. Status: checked a month later, "Still Satisfactory". To be removed from Outstanding Issues.

NEW ISSUES

1. AW90 at Ragged Barn, Mundy Bois Road. 04/01/21. Complaint that it is not clear when coming down AW90 from the north to Ragged Barn where the exit is. Ramblers went wrong and had to climb over a 5-bar gate which was padlocked and they thought it was the correct way. Need to put waymarkers in two places to make it clear. Will do asap.
2. AW89 Rockhill Farm, Rockhill Road. 15/01/21. A new 5-bar gate has been erected on the footpath at the entrance to the working yard on the path leading through to Link Hill. Ramblers were a bit confused whether it was still a public footpath if coming from Rockhill Road end. With the knowledge of the owners yellow waymarkers were put on the post either side of the new gate to avoid confusion.
3. AW74 Wanden Lane. 17/01/21. Complaint received that the entrance gate to this footpath (not the one at Heronsdale but further down the lane) was very difficult to open and a really vicious thorny hedge had overgrown the gate making it impassable. This was cleared by myself and Dee Wall on a cold, sunny, beautiful day in mid-January!
4. **PROW 210133402.** 17/01/21. AW101 at property Netherfield in Chapel Lane a mini railway track has been erected partly along the line of the footpath to the right of the property which means the footpath is very narrow in places with the danger of slipping and falling down into the ditch which at the present time is flowing nicely! Status: "Awaiting Allocation"

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Report no. 19 of the Egerton Highways Representative - February 2021

Summary

Closed Items	3
Open Items	5
New Items	9

Closed Issues

Reference	Description & Status
489008	Chapel Lane - Drainage & Flooding - Ditch Problems
Logged	14th February 2020
Status	Not highways – passed to others
527709	Bell Lane – Finger post sign knocked over at junction of Green Hill Lane and Bell Lane.
Logged	30 th September 2020
Status	Works being programmed/Order raised
Note	Not within EPC Boundary
540076	Mundy Bois Road/Greenhill Lane – Soft Verge Damage
Logged	Dec 2020
Status	Works complete
Note	No actual works have been carried out; this is just KHS clearing this from their list. This will be raised again with KHS along with other verge issues in the spring. A list of verge issues has been compiled and will be added to with any new reports. See below under other matters.

Outstanding Issues

Reference	Description & Status
505386	Crocken Hill road -Blocked Drain/Gully
Logged	12 th May 2020
Status	Works being programmed
507083	Forstal Road/Bedlam Lane – Flooding
Logged	26 th May 2020
Status	Enquiry under investigation
517224	Munday Bois Road – Flooding & Drainage
Logged	3 rd August 2020
Status	Works being programmed

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525179	Field Mill Road, by Field Mill – Drainage & Flooding, Blocked drain/gully
Logged	16 th September 2020
Status	Job attended, more work required
494493	Kingsland Lane – Drainage and Flooding, Carriageway flooded
Logged	29 th February 2020
Status	Works being programmed

New Issues

Reference	Description & Status
549280	Stonebridge Green Road – Potholes
Logged	27/01/2021
Status	Works being programmed
42003189	Stone Hill Road – Multiple Potholes
Logged	22/01/2021
Status	Works being programmed
546626	Rock Hill Road – Drainage & Flooding, Blocked drain
Logged	17/01/2021
Status	Works being programmed
544281	Rock Hill Road – Drainage & Flooding, Blocked drain
Logged	07/01/2021
Status	Works being programmed
544278	Rock Hill Road – Drainage & Flooding, Blocked drain
Logged	07/01/2021
Status	Works being programmed
549467	Crocken Hill Road – Drainage & Flooding, Blocked drain
Logged	28/01/2021
Status	Enquiry under investigation
549460	Crocken Hill Road/Forstal Road – Multiple Potholes
Logged	28/01/2021
Status	Works being programmed
546693	Link Hill Lane - Drainage & Flooding, Blocked drain
Logged	17/01/2021
Status	Enquiry under investigation
549713	Coach Road – Northern section – Multiple Potholes

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Logged	29/01/2021
Status	Works being programmed

Other Matters

<p>Forstal Road Flooding – Birchners</p> <p>Kent Highway Services have confirmed that they are not responsible for the ditches that when blocked threaten Birchners. The problem is caused by an area of open ditch alongside a field, which in turn flows through a metal grid into a covered culvert that runs along the front of the properties along Forstal Road as you head towards Bedlam Lane. The responsibility lies with two different landowners – the ditch along the front of the field and the part of the ditch and grid in front of a trackway next to Birchners. The renter of the field ditch has taken action to clear it as has the owner of the trackway and for the time being water flows freely. This, however, needs to be constantly monitored and any blockage cleared.</p> <p>The owner of Birchners has advised that the ditch does not take water from the sewage works.</p>
<p>Crocken Hill Road/ Gale Field</p> <p>The ditch that takes water running off Gale Field and presumably from higher up the village is in need to be cleared, dug out, deepened. Water from the ditch in turn flows into a large pipe which takes water under the road and then into the part culverted/part open ditch that runs along Forstal Road. This pipe was completely blocked. KHS have carried out some works on the opposite corner which was taking water away and into another ditch, but this was not taking the water that was flowing across the road caused by the ditch and pipe issues referred to above. The Landowner of Gale Field is taking action to have the ditch and pipe cleared.</p>
<p>Verge issues to be reported in the spring (please advise if others need to be added to this list)</p> <p>1) Forge Lane 2) Field Mill Road - between Woodside Bungalow and Horseshoe Cottage 3) Greenhill Lane - either side of the junction with Mundy Bois Road 4) Egerton House Road - by Star & Garter Cottage.</p>

PLANNING REPORT FOR EPC MEETING 2 FEBRUARY 2021

20/01715/AS	Egerton	Weald North Ward	<p>Land north east of The Low House, Forstal Road, Egerton, Kent</p> <p>Application for planning in principle for an entry level exception scheme in accordance with Paragraph 71 National Planning Policy Framework 2019 comprising the erection of up to 9 entry level (discounted market sales) dwellings</p>
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Background

1. There has been major local objection to this application. There were 20 emails or letters of objection sent to me, most of which were also sent to ABC; and over 130 objections logged on the ABC website. However, this figure is made up of multiple objections from the same household. One lodged 27 objections – each one mentioning just one aspect of objection at a time. Unfortunately, the local impression was that the greater number of objections would sway ABC's decision. In fact, it

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is the quality of objections on material planning grounds that contribute to the decision. This report takes into account points made by residents.

2. This application has arrived without any prior communication with EPC or with the Neighbourhood Plan Group. Some nearby residents were not notified of the application. The field in which this proposal is situated was one of the proposed sites for development as part of the Neighbourhood Plan call for sites. It was rejected for several reasons and was not favoured by the majority taking part in the NP consultations. The key reason the NP group ruled it out was that the proposals had been to develop it with detached homes for sale on the open market. The Egerton Housing Needs Survey showed that the only need (over and above the indicative 6 generally affordable homes out of 15 houses designated by ABC on the New Road field) was for local needs affordable homes. The Forstal landowner had proposed substantial open market houses for the site and chose not to put forward the site to cater for local affordable needs homes for rent. The site was not therefore included in the draft Neighbourhood Plan.

Points of principle

3. This application is for “**entry level exception site status**” under para 71 of the National Planning Policy Framework. “Entry level” means homes for first-time buyers or equivalent for those looking to rent. An exception site is one outside the village confines that would not normally be permitted for development, except for local needs housing in perpetuity. An example of this is Chantlers Meadow in Forstal Road developed by English Rural Housing Association in cooperation with EPC. Those homes are for rent or shared ownership.

Para 77 in the National Planning Policy Framework states:

“Rural Housing

In rural areas, planning policies and decisions should be responsive to local circumstances and support housing developments that reflect local needs. Local planning authorities should support opportunities to bring forward rural exception sites that will provide affordable housing to meet identified local needs.”

Local needs housing is for those who already live in the village or who have family connections or employment in the village.

4. This application refers to affordable homes on the open market at 80% of market value. It is not until the end of Clarendon Homes’ submission that they refer to local needs:

“The units will be sold at a maximum 80% of the market value with local applicants getting the first opportunity to purchase. The homes will be entirely owned by the buyers and will have a restriction placed upon the title so that property can only trade at a maximum of 80% of market value, which will ensure the homes stay genuinely affordable in perpetuity. This can be secured by a Section 106 Agreement which will preserve the housing discount for future eligible households in perpetuity.”

There is nothing in the documents that explain how local people would be given the first opportunity to buy them nor the cost of these homes.

5. Furthermore, to qualify as an affordable home, eligibility is determined with regard to local incomes and local house prices. ABC’s Strategic Housing Market Assessment prior to finalising its 2030 Local Plan identified that in Egerton and Smarden, those in local employment were being marginalised from the housing market. It concluded that they are less able to afford local properties because the price of homes in this part of Ashford borough are higher than in the town. At the time

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of the Egerton Housing Needs Survey in 2018 it was recognised that property prices and a predominance of privately owned homes meant that some local people were unable to afford a home within the parish. At the time, the cheapest property for sale in the parish was a 3-bed semi-detached house for £300,000; to afford to buy this home a deposit of approximately £45,000 would be required and an income of £72,857. The cheapest 2-bedroom property was for sale at £325,000; a deposit of £48,750 and income of £78,928 would be required to afford this home. To afford to rent privately, an income of approximately £50,000 would be required. The cheapest property found available to rent in the parish then was a 4-bed house for £1250 pcm. There was only one other property available at the time of writing the report, a 2-bed house for £1350; an income of approximately £54,000 would be required to afford this home.

6. The current average sold price in Egerton for a three- bedroom semi-detached house is £320,000. 80% of that is **£256,000**. In 2014 ABC showed that 40% of the population in Egerton and Smarden earned well below £40,000 p.a and the figure for lower-tier employment (unskilled labour, semi-skilled labour, agriculture, retail, leisure, administrative work) was an average under £24,000 p.a. To secure a mortgage, a multiplier of 3.5 is used. Today if two people each earn £27,000 it results in £189,000. A shortfall of £67,000. It is quite clear from this, and the evidence in the Housing Needs Survey conducted for the Neighbourhood Plan, that Clarendon Homes would need to build homes costing well under £200,000. If any were to be rented out, the evidence in the ABC Housing Assessment is that rents would need to be at only 60% of the market rate in order to provide homes for local people.

Clarendon Homes do not state how they have assessed local incomes or the cost of homes for sale.

7. ABC's housing policy states that proposals for local affordable homes should be negotiated with the parish and borough council to cater for specific needs of a community rather than being speculative. Clarendon Homes is a commercial house builder, not a Housing Association. Para 40 of the NPPF states that local planning authorities should encourage applicants to engage with the local community. They did not, yet it is clear that the developer was advised – and was aware - of the draft Neighbourhood Plan when pre-application advice was provided by ABC.

Contrary to what is stated in the planning application, there has been no attempt to engage with EPC or the NP Group about this proposal.

8. As part of the Neighbourhood Planning process, the local Housing Needs Survey and the allocations for housing by ABC shows the following table:

	Total No. of homes	Affordable homes	Open Market homes
Housing Needs	2	1	15
Survey 2018-2023	7	2	
Land on New	1	6	9
Road (Ashford	5	i	
Local Plan Policy			
S30)			
Gale Field (ENP			1 ⁱⁱ

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	1 1	1 0	
Policy D4) Orchard Nurseries (ENP Policy D5)	8		giii
Total provision in	3 4	1 6	18
Ashford Local			
Plan & ENP			

- i The HNS analysis of incomes for the local needs affordable housing indicated that 8 should be rented and 1 shared ownership. Only 1-2 houses on the New Road site would meet this need, resulting in a shortfall of 10 local needs affordable dwellings, of which 3 would be for older residents.
- ii The NPPF provides scope for cross-subsidy for local needs affordable housing in rural areas and this may be a consideration.
- iii The open market homes at Orchard Nurseries will be for older people with a local connection to the parish.

The proposed housing provision in the draft Neighbourhood Plan and the site on New Road allocated by ABC in the 2030 Local Plan for indicative 15 homes including 6 affordable would slightly exceed the overall housing need. But there would still be a shortfall of affordable homes for local people to rent on the understanding that the affordable homes allocated on the New Road site (and in the submitted plans) are all for sale and not for rent.

So, the proposals by Clarendon Homes would exacerbate the need for rented homes and the “entry level exception site status” claimed by the developers is invalidated by the evidence that the need for affordable homes to purchase is already being met – indeed, exceeded - by the New Road proposals.

Draft Neighbourhood Plan

9. The applicants make negative references to the draft Plan in several instances and have cherry-picked their way through it. Whilst of course the draft has not yet reached the stage of Inspection and a Referendum, the comments on it received so far from a long list of outside bodies as well as the village do not amount to “objections” as the applicants’ claim, nor a rejection of its policies. The majority view of the village to date is a favourable one. Indeed, this is further evidenced by the many positive comments from residents about the Neighbourhood Plan and its community-led proposals whilst objecting to this planning application. EPC will have just received a revised version of the Neighbourhood Plan that takes account of detailed issues that have been researched further. Whilst its final outcome at referendum cannot be presumed, on the basis that the majority views to date are contained within the redraft, you are invited to regard it as being reasonable that the draft Neighbourhood Plan should be a consideration when deciding on how EPC should comment on Clarendon Homes’ planning application.

OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

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10. There are significant deficiencies in the application. There are fundamental errors in the aerial photograph which incorrectly identifies several existing buildings and roads. That does not engender confidence about professionalism in this application. No survey documents or reports were submitted with this proposal as would normally be expected, as indicated below:

i Design of buildings and materials – No report

Nothing appears in the applicants' planning statement about conforming to the Parish Design Statement. Indeed, the references in the application suggest there will be little attention paid to attractiveness in design by simply stating "*a) it is of a layout, design and appearance that is appropriate to and is compatible with the character and density of the surrounding area.*"

This proposal is incompatible with that statement. The plans show a cluster of homes built around a new access road, right up against existing dwellings all with direct access to Forstal Road. Whilst there have been some questionable decisions in past years to allow densely compacted development on small sites around the junction with Forge Lane, that is not a precedent to be repeated. The character of the village is of a variety of styles and the examples on Clarendon Homes' website would not reflect the best of Egerton's characteristics.

ii Drainage – no reference to SuDs or any survey

A significant and real concern from residents. Run-off from the field already flows through the gardens of the Low House and the Grange, the ground and paths already become flooded in heavy rain and puts the houses at risk. Development immediately adjacent (one proposed house is shown only 2.5 metres away from the exterior wall of the Low House) will make this situation worse. There is no reference in the application to sustainable drainage or any provision for water storage or rainwater harvesting.

iii Sewerage and surface water drainage – no reference to research but a controversial statement

This is another major concern due to recent and regular problems of sewage backing up due to the inadequacy or failure of the pumping station and localised flooding. Residents report site visits from Southern Water that confirm the sewerage network and pumping station is not coping. Clarendon Homes make no reference to any approach to Southern Water to establish the capacity. On the contrary, para f) of their statement says "*It does not need substantial infrastructure or other facilities to support it.*" There are obvious difficulties with the existing load on local infrastructure, the compounding of the existing overloading of sewerage and drainage and the potential risk of increased flooding due to rainwater run-off as a result of new development. It is a poor reflection on the applicants not to have done more research and become familiar with the village.

iv Built heritage statement – nothing submitted and no reference to the Parish Design Statement.

ABC had suggested the possibility of a "farmstead" design to suit the rural setting rather than add to the existing ribbon development, but the applicants have not taken this up.

v Layout and site

The applicants state "*The site layout plan is submitted as illustrative information only. It demonstrates the developability of the site for up to 9 dwellings, which has evolved through a comprehensive design approach and Council's pre-app comments.*"

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As it stands, the layout plan and the document "Site Analysis" are very thin and do not go far to reassure local people about the need to protect green space, trees and hedges nor about the access point. There is a lot missing from the drawing. But it is clear that the proposed houses would be severely over-bearing and out of scale with the single-storey bungalow abutting this site. Scaled from the plan, there is only 2.5 metres between the wall of the Low House and the wall of one of the proposed two-storey houses. That has a detrimental effect on the overall setting and especially on the existing property. The site plan shows development of a much higher density than the overall density of the existing village. And contrary to the assertions in the application, "ribbon" development in the village is, in reality, short strips of housing regularly interspersed with green spaces.

There is serious concern about the impacting of this proposal unnecessarily close to the neighbouring property to this site. Indeed, it is insensitively planned, sandwiching the proposed houses against the Low House, with no regard to maintaining a green space. The avoidance of extending any existing ribbon development is one thing; but creating an odd road and "estate" suburban-style extension back into the field simply creates another planning conundrum that sits uneasily here. Whereas the applicants state "*It would not create a significant adverse impact on the amenity of existing residents*" this proposal would create immediate, significant adverse impact on the amenity of residents.

vi Other infrastructure – no reference to water supply or other utilities or the poor-quality road network and its capability with an increase in road use. Residents point out the low water pressure and frequent burst water mains.

vii Design and Access statement – nothing except short references in the main document

Local people are very concerned about access and disruption during and after any development proposed. The exit points are left vague.

viii Transport statement – nothing except a few references in the main document

Local concerns relate to extra traffic that would be generated, the 19 car parking spaces that imply a large number of cars, car dependency and poor state of roads, the visibility on exit from the site and the proximity to the existing houses on a narrow frontage. ABC had concerns about this access point too when pre-application advice was sought.

ix Biodiversity and Ecology – no report and no references to this.

Item d) in the application states "*It would not result in significant harm to the landscape, heritage assets or biodiversity interests.*" Yet the compression of houses into this corner will reduce the immediate green environment. There is local concern about the existence of crested newts, bats, owls and other wildlife. There are no signs of any mitigation on the site plan for wildlife habitat or of any additional features that would provide a net environmental gain. A full survey would need to be completed but not even a preliminary survey has not been conducted.

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The applicants' para c) is strange: *"It would not result in significant harm to or the loss of public or private land that contributes positively to the local character of the area (including residential gardens);* we should hope not! This is hardly a plus point. A greenfield site will always be harmed if built on. With very few brownfield sites in Egerton and not one available for development, any development must include features that include protection of trees, hedges, more native planting and wildlife zones. Based on this proposal, the effects on the green landscape - which is currently grazing land, and its natural habitat - are harsh.

x Dark skies – light pollution – no mention of the need to avoid this, quite the opposite.

Para g) is a concern: *"It is capable of having safe lighting and pedestrian access provided without a significant impact on neighbours or on the integrity of the street scene."* Egerton has no street lighting, in keeping with its rural nature and should not have any introduced. As Egerton is in one of the Borough's darkest sky zones, any such lighting from new development would cause light pollution and disturbance to residents and wildlife.

xi Sustainability & carbon footprint – scant mention

References throughout the application are to the bus service, which is limited, the proximity to Headcorn and Pluckley stations and shops but no acknowledgement that the locality is highly car-dependent and that there are no facilities or services in Egerton Forstal.

xii Floor plans – no information

xiii Elevations – no information

xiv Energy conservation/green energy – nothing mentioned.

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATION

10 Granting planning permission to build 9 houses on this site runs counter to the majority wishes of Egerton residents as expressed in the draft Egerton Neighbourhood Plan. The support for the draft Plan is clear from many of the objectors to this application. It is therefore important that the views of the community are recognised. The housing needs in Egerton are for local needs affordable homes for rent or shared ownership. The ability to buy a new home even at 80% of the market value is beyond the financial scope of the residents who seek to remain living here or return here. It is therefore appropriate to restrict new development to site 30 on New Road in the ABC 2030 Plan and to the two sites in the draft Neighbourhood Plan that provide for local needs affordable homes to rent and specialist housing for older people. If this proposal from Clarendon Homes were to be permitted, it would demonstrate that Ashford Borough Council does not give credence to well-researched community wishes and it would undermine an impending Neighbourhood Plan. That draft Plan is well known to Ashford Borough Council; and it is clear it complements the objectives of its 2030 plans for housing and sustainability in the borough. Speculative development proposals that have not engaged with or take account of the community would weaken the principles of neighbourhood planning and the principles established in the NPPF and ABC's 2030 Plan.

11. Other principal issues relate to the unsuitability of the site, its layout, its density, its setting with unreasonable impact and over-bearing on immediate properties, the impact on wildlife, its deficiency in carrying out or submitting appropriate surveys, the lack of empathy with the Parish Design Statement, lack of consideration to existing poor infrastructure and roads, local flooding, lack of input

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to mitigate climate change, inadequate recognition of increases in car dependency and inattention to sustainability – in all, pointing to a firm objection to this application.

12. To avoid the risk that planning officers may approve this application, I suggest we seek Cllr Ken Mulholland's input: a) to establish the likely direction this will take; and if it is heading for approval b) to elevate it to be considered for a decision by ABC's Planning Committee.

Lois Tilden

February 2021

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