



**The meeting of Egerton Parish Council was held on Tuesday 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2024  
7pm Committee Room, Millennium Hall, Egerton**

**Present**

**Cllrs: John Lawton, Jeff Hopkins, Claire Foinette, Simon Palmer, Pat Parr, Susan Stone, Richard Wall, John Harper. Clerk Sonia Young.**

Four members of the public were present.

**1) Apologies**

Cllr Rawlinson. Borough Councillor Kayleigh Brunger-Randall, County Councillor Charlie Simkins.

**2) Declarations of Interest**

**Cllr Parr:** Neighbour to the Orchard Nurseries site proposed for development and neighbour to one site put forward for consideration for the Ashford Borough Council Local Plan 2041.

**Cllr Harper:** Neighbour to the Orchard Nurseries site proposed for development.

**Cllr Palmer:** Neighbour to the Orchard Nurseries site proposed for development.

No councillors have a pecuniary interest in any of the sites put forward for consideration in the Ashford Borough Council Local Plan 2041

**3) Minutes of the Previous Meeting – 4 November 2024**

The minutes were approved and signed as a true record of the proceedings.

**Proposed:** Cllr Wall. **Seconded:** Cllr Foinette. **All in agreement.** Cllr Lawton abstained as not present at the 4 November meeting.

**4) Matters Arising from 4 November 2024 (not covered by the agenda below).**

- **Waste bins**

One installed on The Glebe and one adjacent to the football field steps.

- **Trees**

The arborist report was circulated to Cllrs and the recommendations accepted apart from the suggestion to examine the trees at the same level annually; Cllrs agreed on a full arborist inspection every other year.

**Action:** Clerk has sent the tree surgeon the report and asked for recommended work to be undertaken by Christmas – weather permitting.

The Clerk will write to householders regarding trees on their lands that are overhanging the highway and ask for them to be cut back.

- **Installations**

Cllr Hopkins confirmed work to install the French drain around the cricket field has been delayed due to wet weather. The replacement cricket steps have been installed.

- **HiP**

HiP to be dealt with under Item 7.

- **Protection of the verges at Harmers Way and New Road**

It was agreed that protection of these verges – which are owned by Kent Highways - should become part of a HiP. In the interim, logs will be placed to prevent any more lorries driving over the wet ground and causing deep ruts, ruining the entrance vistas into the village from New Road.

**Action:** Cllr Stone

**5) Chair to close the meeting for public discussion**

Meeting closed at 19.14pm

Meeting re-opened at 19.27pm



## 6) Footpaths Report 174 (See Appendix 1)

Cllr Pat Parr has taped off the footpath to the north-west of St James churchyard as an urgent measure due to increased burrowing by badgers which has left the path very unsafe. Cllrs agreed that they wished Kent footpaths to repair this ancient route and not divert it to another footpath to save on maintenance costs.

**Action:** Cllr Parr.

## 7) Highways Report

Cllrs Stone and Harper reported that all outstanding reported issues had been actioned/solved, including the longstanding problem of flooding at the junction of Harmers Way and New Road.

Three new issues have been reported re flooding on Greenhill Lane and a dangerous trench that has opened up.

Solving the problem of blocked drains and water flowing down Stonehill Lane into Rock Hill Road and which is causing much concern re flooding for homeowners lower down Rock Hill Road, remains a priority.

**Action:** Cllr Stone to report each blocked drain by location; there are fourteen in all on lower Rock Hill Road – many of which are blocked. The issues are exacerbated by the road cambers changing over time which means that surface and run off waters are not flowing into the drains that are unblocked. The culvert outside South Broadham also appears to be blocked. Cllrs Stone and Harper to investigate.

A bad pothole on Crockenhill Road will be reported.

The Kent officer in charge of HiPs will be invited by Cllrs Stone and Harper to come to the village to look at the highways issues holistically, with a view to building an action plan.

## 8) Planning and Development

*Planning applications submitted to Ashford Borough Council this month for Egerton Parish Council to consider, details of which may be accessed online at:*

<http://www.ashford.gov.uk/onlineplanning/>.

<b>Case Reference:</b>	<b>PA/2024/2094</b>
<b>Location</b>	Dering Farm, Greenhill Lane, TN27 9EY
<b>Proposal</b>	Proposed annexe link attached to main dwelling

**EPC view:** The dwelling of Dering Farm has recently been built under reference 21/00349/AS. It is a well-designed property which offers a family home in line with modern living. There is also a holiday let on-site which was once an agricultural store approved under Ref: 22/00593/AS. This proposal appears to be an annexe suited to habitation by a relative and more acceptable than the prior application for a separate three-bedroom dwelling that was withdrawn. EPC does not wish 'hamlets' to be created from what were once farm buildings. Should the ABC officer be minded to approve this application, EPC would like to see conditions added to ensure sustainability via use of high-quality insulation materials, solar, an electric car point and rainwater recycling.

**Proposed:** Comment only as above.

**Proposed:** Cllr Wall **Seconded:** Cllr Lawton. **All in agreement.**

<b>Case Reference:</b>	<b>PA/2024/2110</b>
<b>Location</b>	Old Harrow Farm, Link Hill, TN27 9BH



<b>Proposal</b>	Listed building consent for re-roofing and associated works including replacement of tiles, installation of new TLX bat-safe membrane, repair/replacement of lead to two projecting windows; replacement of cement mortar flashing to chimney with lead.
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**EPC view:** Old Harrow Farm is Grade II Listed. The extensive statement of works gives a useful description of the building, its history and the requests for repair using sympathetic modern solutions. There will be no visible changes and both the owners – and the bats – should benefit from these works.

**Proposed:** Support

**Proposed:** Cllr Wall **Seconded:** Cllr Harper. **All in agreement.**

### **Other planning**

#### **Resolution to Exclude the Press and Public.**

Chair Cllr Lawton proposed that under Section 1(2) of the Public Bodies (admission to meetings) Act 1960 that, because of the commercially sensitive nature of the business to be dealt with, the press and public leave the meeting at the end of the main business items to allow non-conflicted Cllrs to debate proposals made by the Egerton Working Group on Housing and Development re the site known at Orchard Nurseries.

**Proposed:** chair Cllr John Lawton. **Seconded:** Cllr Stone. **All in agreement.**

**It was resolved to hold a closed session as Item 15 on the agenda.**

- **Gale Field**

Egerton Working Group on Housing and Development confirmed that outline planning permission had been granted by ABC to English Rural Housing to build local needs affordable housing, plus one open market property to help fund the development.

### **9) Parish Plan and Future Projects Working Group – update**

No update available.

### **10) Ashford Local Plan 2041 Working Group update**

The clerk confirmed that details of the Ashford Local Plan 2041 and EPC's submissions to the consultation have been uploaded to EPC's website. It is understood that ABC has yet to start work considering the sites submitted for development within the Parish under the Local Plan 2041 and no further formal communications will be issued by ABC until late Spring 2025.

### **11) Village Websites Working Group – update**

Working Group member Cllr Wall advised that a meeting of the Group took place on 19 November. Market assessment supported a proposal to remain with the current provider of Hugo Fox in terms of value, service, ease of use and available support. It will cost £199 plus VAT to develop the new site and £125 for allied Cllr .gov.uk email addresses. The existing village domain has been renewed and will continue until the sites are merged. The expectation is that a new combined site will be live by the end of March 2025. The plan includes software to allow on-line booking of village venues.

Proposal to remain with provider Hugo Fox and accept the estimated costs and outline plan for the merger of the village and EPC websites plus allied costs as discussed.

**Proposed:** Cllr Wall. **Seconded:** Cllr Lawton. **All in agreement.**

### **12) Correspondence**

A letter from Egerton Arts Society was received about improving provision for disabled parking at the village hall. The clerk confirmed that the current provision of three spaces was more than the regulatory number of disabled spaces vs the number of non-disabled bays.



However, Cllr Palmer will investigate if studs are available to embed into the block paving to better delineate the disabled bays. EPC has looked at a number of solutions for improving provision; moving the spaces to a flatter area would increase the length of the walk into the hall vs the current provision, which is very close to the hall, but on a sloped area. EPC Cllrs will also review the link to the Govt consultation on legalising remote local authority meetings.

**Action:** clerk to recirculate the link and Cllrs to circulate observations on the consultation via email.

### 13) Accounts for payment (in accordance with EPC Financial Regulations)

December 2024		METHOD	£
Clerk December salary incl HMRC	Clerk	BACS	1448.29

#### EPC Reserves

Statutory reserve	10,000.00
Specific reserve – tree works	3456.00
General reserve	1,415.37
<b>Total</b>	<b>14907.37</b>

#### 13.1 Proposal to approve the expenditure for Dec as presented

**Proposed:** Cllr Harper. **Seconded:** Cllr Parr. **All in agreement.**

As per the EPC Financial Regulations, the chair approved all other budgeted expenditure as circulated to him by the clerk prior to the meeting.

Cllrs discussed the monthly cost of the Adobe software needed by the Clerk to comply with legal requirements. It was agreed that the clerk would review the cancellation options and report findings via email to all Cllrs.

#### 13.2 Proposed budget 2025-2026 for review and approval. Proposed budget was circulated in advance of the meeting to all Cllrs.

Cllr Lawton said that the precept increase was the result of the changes announced by Government to significantly increase the National Insurance payments made by employers. The village precept request for the 2025-2026 financial year will mean that a Council Tax Band D residence in Egerton will pay an additional £0.10p per week.

**Proposed:** Cllr Lawton. **Seconded:** Cllr Foinette. **All in agreement.**

**Action:** Clerk to submit the precept request to Ashford Borough Council.

### 14) Additional items

- **Welcome Packs.** Cllr Parr has distributed one pack to new residents at Henshaw Place.
- **Hedges.** Cllr Lawton confirmed that hedges along New Road towards Pluckley had been cut. Cllr Parr to contact the landowners of the hedges yet to be cut to enquire about the timeframes for the work to be done.
- **Future of the Computer Centre.** Cllrs to revisit this topic at the January meeting.
- **Proposed EPC meeting dates for 2025.** Cllrs raised no concerns about the proposed meeting dates for 2025.  
**Action:** Clerk to check availability of the village hall committee room for all proposed dates.
- **Social Media**  
Since the announcement that Ashford Borough Council (ABC) had granted planning permission to develop affordable housing for local needs on Gale Field on Crocken Hill Road, Chair Cllr Lawton said several Egerton residents had been in touch concerning recent social media posts.



He said that unfortunately, since the announcement by ABC, messages from members of the public have been posted on social media platforms which are incorrect and misleading along with some other more serious allegations and inferences.

Cllr Lawton regretted that a few people seemed intent on pedalling misinformation. It was encouraging that most people living in Egerton who subscribed to social media were not engaging in or fuelling such toxic and untruthful allegations.

He added the following comments on the assertions made:

- It is untrue that only Gale Field was considered for the development of affordable local needs housing.

The Neighbourhood Plan process started with an open call for sites to meet the development needs of the village. The Egerton Neighbourhood Plan Steering Group (ENPSG) had considered all of those put forward, taking into account the Housing Needs Survey which identified the needs as:

1. Affordable homes for local people, and
2. Homes more suitable for local, older people who wish to downsize.

The ENPSG selected the most suitable sites which met stringent criteria, and which provided for the two identified housing needs.

Gale Field was the only site that was put forward for affordable local needs housing.

- It is untrue that EPC made no effort to secure social housing for local needs on the Henshaw Place development or North Field. EPC had no say or sway with ABC in relation to the land off New Road, now Henshaw Place, which ABC had allocated for housing in 2019. The ENPSG had approached the landowners of North Field (and other landowners who had suggested land for housing in the “call for sites”) to ask if they were prepared to sell land to a housing association for local affordable needs. This was declined.
- The Authority which decides on planning matters is the ABC Planning Dept. ABC consults with various stakeholders including EPC and Kent County Council (KCC). KCC has important responsibilities that are material to planning matters such as Highways and Education.

KCC objected to the development on sustainability grounds. EPC agree that Egerton is not a sustainable village given the lack of facilities and public transport. EPC's position is that the need for affordable housing for local needs was of such importance that this application should be dealt with as an exception site.

As an exception site, ‘sustainability’, along with other planning considerations, can be set aside for social housing, not least because local people have their own networks in the village and know its limitations, and how to overcome them.

Gale Field is not in an isolated rural location. It is an extension of an already developed area, there are remaining council houses in Crocken Hill Road and Forstal Road and affordable homes for local people in the Forstal at Chantlers Meadow. These sites have provided satisfactory housing for many families for many years.

- There have been comments that the properties on Gale Field are not exclusively for local people. It is very clear, and always has been, that the priority for these homes will be for local people.

There was a clearly identified local need that drove this in the first place and English Rural Housing (ERH) tested demand before they applied for planning permission. The sheer volume of the expressions of interest ERH received for the project was further hard evidence of the need. As with all applicants who want to live at Chantlers Meadow, ERH always seeks information from EPC to confirm all applicants’ claims to local



connections and family ties.

There is every reason to expect that these homes will be taken up by those with an Egerton connection. In the unlikely event that they aren't, eligibility will be extended to our neighbouring villages. If this wasn't the case the properties would be left empty, a situation that would be nonsensical.

- It has been alleged that the rents will not be affordable. EPC chose to work with English Rural Housing (ERH) which is a non-profit organisation that exists solely to provide and manage rural affordable housing which helps to sustain the economic and social life of rural communities. ERH Rent Setting Policy sets rents which are affordable and maintain long-term financial viability. It is clearly nonsensical to suggest that a non-profit organisation with such a clear purpose will not set rents at levels which families can afford.
- Cllr Lawton said it was incorrect that the affordable homes on Henshaw Place and North Field are to be priced at £850-£900,000. This is the price of a four-bedroom open market home as shown on estate agents' websites and not for the affordable homes being handled separately. ABC will determine the rents and type of tenancy/ownership of the 'affordable' homes on both Henshaw Place and North Field.
- The affordable homes on Henshaw Place and North Field will not be specifically for local needs. ABC will determine the affordable element, and the nature of the tenancy/ownership to meet borough-wide demands for affordable housing. Although this does not prioritise Egerton people it does NOT exclude Egerton people or Egerton connections either.
- It is untrue that EPC had not been concerned about infrastructure. EPC has consistently raised issues with ABC and the water companies about the capacity of the sewage treatment plant and the pumping station in the Forstal, as an example.  
EPC had suggested to English Rural Housing at the outset that Gale Field should be self-contained for sewerage and not rely on the existing pumping station. These are not decisions for EPC but are ones for ABC and the water companies. The treatment plant is in the process of being upgraded, and EPC has been told that there are plans for improvements to the pumping station in the Forstal.
- It is an egregious accusation that former Councillors are an active and persuasive influence within EPC. Both former Cllrs named in the social media posts are only involved as far as they are members of a working group that makes recommendations to EPC. Neither has any involvement in decision making. This can be witnessed by anyone interested through monthly public meetings and by reading the minutes of meetings. Many people past and present have contributed to village projects through their work on working groups - the Neighbourhood and Parish Plans being clear recent examples. The involvement of non-Councillors is an important contribution as it involves more people directly in helping shape the future of the Parish and brings specific skills and helps spread the workload.
- The accusations of a lack of transparency by EPC are both unfair and extremely tiresome. EPC may be on the lowest tier of local government but is still subject to the requirements for Open and Transparent government.  
Cllr Lawton added that:
  - All Council meetings are open to the public to attend.
  - Minutes of meetings are published on the EPC website and three village noticeboards (The Glebe, the Village Hall and the Forstal).
  - Four times each year Egerton Update is distributed to every house in the village.





- The Parish Assembly is held every year
- The Parish Accounts are open for inspection by the Public for 30 days every year
- At any time, anyone can speak to/ask questions of the Clerk or a member of the Council. Contact details are on the website.
- Allegations that EPC 'misled' ABC and the Inspector who examined the Neighbourhood Plan by stating that Gale Field was allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan are untrue. As an 'exception' site Gale Field could not be classified as an allocated site, however, this does not prevent an exception site from being part of a Neighbourhood Plan Affordable housing on Gale Field was very clearly referred to in the Plan for meeting local needs housing on pages 55 and 59 of the adopted Plan. This was the Plan that the village voted on and overwhelmingly supported.
- The suggestion that EPC is distancing – or will distance – itself from the development of Gale Field for affordable housing is nonsense. Starting with the Neighbourhood Plan, which is a Parish Council initiative developed by the ENPSG and culminating in the Planning application which EPC and Councillors have openly and actively supported, EPC continues to work with ERH to ensure the successful delivery of this development. Cllr Lawton concluded that it was a great pity that EPC was consistently forced to refute malicious, false and misleading allegations from a small group of users of social media. The dis-service to the village is frequently displayed through the misuse of social media by this tiny minority of the public and not from the Parish Council nor the majority of the residents of our village.

#### **15) Closed session**

Cllrs Parr, Palmer and Harper left the meeting to allow the Egerton Housing and Development Group to update Cllrs on a commercially sensitive matter relating to Orchard Nurseries. A confidential minute of Item 15) will be drafted and read for approval in a Closed Session held at the 14 January 2025 meeting and retained following approval in a closed confidential file.

**The meeting closed at 21.23pm. Next meeting Tuesday 14 January 2025.**

## **Appendix 1**

**Report no. 174 of the Egerton footpaths representative for December 2024 Meeting**

**3 Outstanding Items remain from the September 2024 report.**

**0 Closed Items**

**1 New Item**

The outstanding items below are listed with the KCC Reference, the date reported, the footpath number, the location, the difficulty experienced and the status of action.

1. **PROW211126930. 09/11/21.** Part of AW87 to the west of the church behind the Glebeland houses where the path is quite narrow has collapsed due to badger activity. Status: Still Work Scheduled but it is accessible with matting in place until a more permanent solution is found. Status: Still In Progress.

2. **PROW230732955. 28/07/23.** AW96. Barhams Mill Road, before Frasers, on the right-hand side from Egerton village end. Broken stile at the entrance to the footpath from the road. Status: Still Awaiting Allocation.

3. **PROW240835559. 04/08/24.** AW74 Wanden Lane. Reported by Egerton Running Club. This short footpath starting/ending part-way down the side of the property Heronsdale (but not within that property boundary) is obstructed at the gate entrance. The footpath exits/starts further down Wanden Lane but is completely obstructed at both ends, the Heronsdale end gate is obstructed



and the Wanden Lane end with tall thorny hedging and tree overgrowth which is completely hiding the footpath sign and the small metal gate attached to the locked 5-bar gate. Status: Awaiting Allocation.

**NEW ISSUE**

1. **PROW241298717. 03/12/24.** Part of AW87 to the west of the church (see Outstanding Item Number 1 above for previous item on this issue). Further subsidence at the edges of the rubber matting placed there in 2021. Because of the danger it has been reported to KCC and it has been taped off either end with red warning tape until KCC can get there to close it officially.