

A NEIGHBOURHOOD PLAN FOR EGERTON

WORKING GROUP

Minutes of meeting Thursday 25 October 2018 @ 1pm with working lunch in Committee Room, Village Hall

Present: Jane Carr (Chair), Chris Burgess, Elaine Graham, Richard King, Graham Howland, Ian Mella, Claire Stevens, Lois Tilden (Secretary), with Sarah Nelson, South Downs National Park Authority (planning consultant).

1. **Apologies for absence** Jerry Crossley (Mel Rawlinson & Peter Rawlinson no longer attend).
2. **The minutes of the meeting on 20 October** were approved.

It was agreed that discussion would focus on Egerton NP's draft framework and its vision, policy and objectives in order to make best use of Sarah Nelson's time and input. Action points arising from the last meeting not covered in this meeting would be covered at the next meeting.

3. **NP Framework Vision, Objectives & Policy: Protect, Sustain, Develop**

a) Sarah Nelson (SN) advised us that her colleague Alma Howell had unfortunately left the Authority and that she had not yet been replaced. Nevertheless SN had done a lot of background work before the meeting. She had reviewed the documents sent to her and had concluded overall that the draft framework, using the headings Protect, Sustain, Develop, was a good way of structuring Egerton's Plan. An **Introduction** should explain how the Plan meshed with the NPPF and ABC's 2030 Plan and what was already protected in the village (for example the Conservation Area, Listed Buildings, Tree Preservation Orders). Images and diagrams would enhance this. SN also said it was important to tie in each of the policies being developed back to the objectives.

Vision

b) SN felt that the vision did not quite cover all the three headings specifically enough and she would follow up her comments in writing. SN's main observation, based on various examples of NPs that had been finalised, was that it was necessary to focus on the characteristics that made Egerton distinct from other parishes. For example, from the more generic countryside features such as the Greensand Way, hilltop, Weald, orchards, small arable fields & grazing pasture, field hedges, road & footpath patterns, we should draw out special features that residents valued as unique to Egerton. SN gave some examples of these in other NPs.

Protect

c) SN said that we should define the content of this section more precisely and avoid ambiguous wording. At the same time she emphasised that we should not replicate the protection already designated by authorities and which would be referred to anyway in the vision and introduction. Off-the-cuff suggestions included local heritage assets (old and newish) such as: Egerton's old cast-iron road signs, its tiny winding roads that did not serve

as any through routes from village A to village B, the village hall and its commanding view, local wildlife sites, key views and vistas – but they could only be itemised if based on evidence. SN undertook to provide a template for us to use in determining heritage features that were not already listed or given official protection. It was acknowledged that our earlier workshops had helped to identify views and vistas, so maps with GPS and/or direction arrows would be needed. It would be important to highlight the balance to be struck between the need for any development and the need to avoid or minimise the effects of it on views and vistas that were of importance to the residents as a whole. It was agreed that the growth of trees that were in private ownership that might affect a view could not be curbed and that a policy on this should be avoided. Some advice or input should be sought from the Kent Wildlife Trust and Steve Kirk (local wildlife expert) where there was a possibility of bestowing habitat protection under the NP. (**Action point**)

d) The Parish Plan could be used as part of the evidence base to support some policies to be included in the NP. SN added that we should not try to achieve everything in one go – for example, East Preston village had set out its vision quite narrowly and had set just four objectives and five policies. Most policy gaps would be filled by Ashford Borough Council's 2030 Plan when finalised but we should focus on "Egertonising" relevant policies where there was an evident need through our consultation process (for example, perhaps softening the edges beyond the boundary of the Conservation Area). (**Action point - all**)

Sustain

e) Again, SN thought the draft contained good material but it needed more detail. As an example of how to sustain the parish in neighbourhood planning & development terms, SN said that the Parish Design Statement (PDS) was a good starting point. She acknowledged that it was listed as a Planning document by ABC and it was a very polished publication. Since it dated to 2007 it was a good idea to review it - in particular, to assess the new houses that had been built since then against the PDS guidelines and to determine which buildings met these and any which did not. This task should be included on the NP website with a view to acquiring buy-in from residents. An update would then be needed and this could be turned into a policy to include in the NP. It was agreed that JCr should be asked to lead on this, since he had chaired the original Parish Design Statement project. (**Action point**)

f) An additional suggestion was that key pedestrian routes could be mapped to see what improvements might be needed to aid accessibility and connectivity throughout the village such as safe footways to the School. Existing local green spaces such as the recreation ground (upper and lower), Pemples Cross, Stonebridge Green, the Glebe and any other green sites would also need to be catalogued. SN would supply a template to help classify them. SN also suggested looking at other neighbourhood plans to help identify sustainability factors that chimed with Egerton's needs and aspirations. She noted that designation of green spaces needs to be carefully considered as, in her words, 'it is a very strong designation' ie irreversible. (**Action Point SN**)

Develop

g) SN had noted that there was already one site allocated by ABC for development in New Road (an indicative figure of 15 dwellings as in the 2030 draft Plan) and that Egerton Parish Council had been gifted a plot of land (Orchard Nurseries) near to it that was earmarked for

a development of about 8 bungalows. These would be to meet the needs of older and disabled residents. A Community Land Trust was being established to develop the latter. In SN's view there was no imperative to identify any more sites, but the view of the NP Group had been to "future-proof" the parish a stage further, as well to as protect sites from development. SN was aware of the local landowners' proposals. The evidence to support more development sites, and the composition of development (local needs, low-cost rented or owned, for older or younger people etc) on the New Road and Orchard Nurseries sites would flow from the Housing Needs Survey.

h) Once the criteria for development has been refined and matched against detailed ABC criteria, strategic environmental screening and habitats regulation screening would be necessary before the development policy for the NP could be decided. SN said that Ashford BC should be asked to carry this out on our behalf. Detailed aspects of a development policy could include: fences, grass verges, pavements, car parking, softening of the built edges of the village, layout of new development, PDS blueprint and new recreation facilities (subject to a willing landowner coming forward with a plot in a suitable location, a s106 agreement could be reached for this, given enough evidence to justify it).

i) A recent meeting between members of the NP Group and ABC about the 2030 Plan, neighbourhood planning and a proposed "village confines" exercise - to be carried out by this Group on behalf of the Parish Council - had aided clarification on a number of national and ABC planning policy issues. This clarification and the exercise (**Action point**) would help to rule out the need for, or to underpin, or help develop NP policies, particularly with regard to the location of new development including infill, edge of settlements, windfall and in open countryside. The inclusion of up-graded utilities provision and super-fast broadband for new development was clearly an economic and community development factor common to most NPs – it could have an impact on the scope for home-working as well as on more obvious businesses.

j) The benefits of the Community Infrastructure Levy was discussed: it is a tool for local authorities to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of the area. Charges are levied on developers constructing new development (subject to certain criteria). Where a Neighbourhood Plan is in place, the levy increases to 25% and can accumulate over 5 years. Such sums available to a NP area should go towards projects that have been assessed as parish priorities, such as through the Parish Plan (like the pre-school and improved and additional recreation facilities) but these would need reviewing and updating. SN advised that a statement on the parish priorities for use of CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) should be included in the NP further to emphasize infrastructure requirements. for new development projects.

4. Any other business & action:

a) Everyone thanked SN for her advice and encouragement, JC for her generosity and finesse in providing a delicious and very welcome lunch and for everyone else who helped set up the room and cleared up.

b) RK had sent CS the note EPC compiled in response to the Parish Plan – CS would copy it to all. (**Action Point**)

c) LT would obtain and circulate ABC's site assessment sheets relating to the New Road site. (**Action point**)

d) JC asked everyone to be wary of how we expressed ideas about policies & proposals and to avoid stating personal points of view.

e) GH would withdraw from the "confines of village" exercise" in view of a potential conflict of interest.

f) CB announced his decision to resign from the Group.

g) At the next meeting, focus would be on individual tasks and projects to meet the points highlighted by SN.

The meeting closed at 3.25pm. Next meeting 5th December at 7.30pm (EG to confirm booking of Committee Room or Pavilion)