

Eastertown Evolution Community Interest Company

Proposal to develop Eastertown Common

Background

We want to create Eastertown Common, a beautiful environment friendly green space for the residents of Eastertown and our visitors for generations to come.

We have the opportunity to buy Dr Ann Codman's field in the heart of Eastertown and build on her generosity of allowing people to use her field for recreation, dog walking and occasional events over the years.

Ann bought the field 45 years ago to keep it as a green space. She kindly allowed local residents to walk their dogs and hold several events. She also enabled a local farmer to use the land in return for a pepper corn rent AND farming it sensitively.

Sadly, Ann died in June 2023, however Ann will live on forever as we plan to implement her wishes for her field to remain a 'green' space. The land is likely to be up for sale in March 2024. Helen Brown, Ann's niece who is the beneficiary of the land, wants us to buy the field so that together we can create a lasting legacy to her aunt.

The land is being sold; the local farmer is retiring in September 2025 – so things will change. Perhaps not for the better, so by buying the land and creating Eastertown Common we can create a beautiful green space for generations to come.

A lot of people both from Eastertown and Lympsham walk their dogs through Eastertown lane and complain of the speed of some of the traffic and feeling unsafe.

Local parents are increasingly concerned about their children's safety whilst riding their bikes in the lane. Whilst there is a lovely children's play area in Lympsham, access from Eastertown means walking along a narrow road, with blind bends and no footpaths. There are plans for a footpath, however when this will happen is uncertain. It's been talked about for years and is linked to a housing development, though approved, has yet to commence.

Some residents who are hard of hearing like to walk the Eastertown lane but can't hear the traffic and the camber of the road makes it difficult to keep closely to the side. The increase in home deliveries brings the dangers of fast driving delivery vans.

We have also learnt that Eastertown had a common and held a fair in the 1800's so really this is re-instatement of Eastertown Common, not a creation of something new. It would also help to address the safety concerns about walking in our lane.

We have set up Eastertown Evolution Community Interest Company limited by guarantee (CIC). This is a transition of Eastertown Evolution Community Group which we set up during 'lock-down', to support our local community during difficult times AND to do our bit for the environment. Then, we had ideas but no land, now we have the opportunity of the land to realise our aspirations.

During 'lock down' we pulled the community together: people actually met and spoke to people they had only waved at for years as they passed in their cars. People have made new friends and continued to regularly meet up. Many of our older residents lament the return to 'normal' life and the end of our 'lockdown' activities.

Local views matter

The views of local people are vital to this proposal to ensure their suggestions and concerns contribute to the proposed development of Eastertown Common, after all it is a common for the people.

As Eastertown Evolution Community group changed to Eastertown Evolution Community Interest Company, so did the management board and proposed steering group. Some resigned due to changes in personal circumstances, some (three) because they changed their minds and decided not to continue to support the proposal. This was actually helpful, as it started to raise the potential concerns that needed to be addressed. It also highlighted the importance of independent people to invite people to express their view, as we were told some people 'liked', the main proponent of the proposal, and 'didn't want to say what they thought, as they didn't want to upset her'.

Some people raised their objections with the Lympsham Parish Council, which led to the parish council expressing their concerns and adapting their position about the proposal and wanting to see wider community engagement. This was already planned and underway, and was again helpful to make sure we took actions to increase both our information sharing and opportunities for people to give their views.

Community engagement isn't a one-off event and needs to be continuous and embedded into the planning, implementation and review processes of this initiative.

Methods of engagement to date:

Building on the ideas many of the local people involved in the community activities of Eastertown Evolution group during lockdown, we have sought the views of more people by:

- Local people who are keen for this development talking to their friends and neighbours to tell them about the possibilities and get their views
- We have produced information leaflets and distributed them to every household in Eastertown outlining the proposal and inviting them to give their views
- We have provided information and updates to Lympsham Parish Council and attended their meeting to discuss the development and respond to concerns
- We have had the information leaflet published in Lympsham News
- We have had an independent person to visit every household in Eastertown to discuss and gain an insight to the resident's views
- We have delivered flyers to every household in Eastertown and Lympsham inviting them to an engagement event in The Manor Hall in Eastertown to learn more and give their views, ideas and concerns

- We have posted the information and flyer on local newspaper websites, Lympsham Village Community Facebook group, Eastertown – Somerset Facebook group, Lympsham - old photos Facebook group and the Lympsham Community shop and Lympsham Sports Club
- We have informed and invited specific groups and organisations – Women’s Institute and the local school and pre-school.
- We informed and invited our MP, and representatives of other political parties and independent councillor
- Our parish council clerk informed neighbouring parish councils

Partners and/or supporters

Lympsham Parish Council - supporter in principle

The parish of the Three Saints - supporter

Lympsham School – supporter

Green Wedmore – supporter and partner

Tessa Munt, Councillor Wells - supporter

James Heappey, MP for Wells constituency – supporter

Somerset Council – partner as will contribute to a host of council strategies/plans e.g. Biodiversity plans, Climate & Ecological plans,

The Food Forest Project – supporter and partner

The Transition Network - partner

Plant life – partner

Somerset Wildlife - partner

Ecologi - partner

Open spaces - partner

Wildspaces – partner

Osprey Outdoors – supporter and partner

Proud gay bar - supporter

A diverse range of local residents and people who live outside our area but once lived here are supporters

Some local businesses are supporters in principle, others yet to be approached

We are also developing links with Lympsham W.I., Lympsham Café, Lympsham Sports Social Club, Lympsham Cricket club, Lympsham Tennis Club, Lympsham Manor Hall, Brent Area Medical Centre, local Village Agent, local Police Support Officers, local voluntary organisations, local artists and local residential and nursing homes.

Peoples views so far

A full report is being compiled by Matt Small and Alex Davies, students of the University of the West of England studying architecture, and leading on engagement and consultation. Matt and Alex will produce a visual representation of the proposed common incorporating people's comments that will be presented and fine-tuned.

The engagement day at The Manor Hall was facilitated by Matt Small and Alex Davies. Three Directors: Lynne Booth, Peter Smith and Debbie Smith and steering group member Geraldine Jones were available for questions on and off through the day.

The format of the day:

- Open drop-in between 10 – 4pm, with opportunities to discuss developments with Matt Small and Alex Davies and Directors and steering group members there at the time
- Maps of the field were available to view: one from the 1800s showing the then Eastertown Common, one that showed when Ann's field had a pond and then a hand created one for people to draw on
- Updated information documents were available to read and/or take away
- An anonymous comments box was made available
- Refreshments and places to sit and chat.

Attendees:

- 33 people attended
- People came from Eastertown, Lympsham, Burnham-on Sea and Weston-Super-Mare and neighbouring villages
- Age range – approximately 14 years to 80 plus.
- Some were new to the area, whilst others had moved away but used to live here and still attended a popular monthly group – Lympsham in old photos.

What people have said they want to see on the proposed Eastertown Common, will be included in the visual representations that will be presented as widely as possible for people to help us fine tune and agree on the design.

However, below is how we have responded to the concerns and what people DON'T want to see.

How what people have said ‘they don’t want to see and/or are concerned about’ have shaped developments so far

Feedback to date has helped us to modify our proposal and business plan. Of course, there are other factors that will determine the final proposal such as planning permission, environmental assessment, highways assessment and health and safety assessment however they have advised that they will be required AFTER the land has been purchased.

What we have changed

What we proposed	What people said they didn’t want and/or were concerned about	What we did/are doing
A wooden building for socialisation, potting seeds and plants – complete with solar panels and compost toilets	They didn’t want: houses, a structure or solar panels (except for one who wanted a few bungalows for older people & a community centre)	Removed the proposed wooden building from our business plan
	• Fires and disposable barbeques • People mistreating the area • Littering • Lots of dog poo • Lots of dogs	We will build this into a welcome sign of what is and isn’t permitted Put in poo bins and rubbish bins Learn from other similar projects and limitation to number of dogs an individual can walk together
	Traffic & access concerns: • People accessing safely (no pavements) • Easier and safer to access (blind bends and fast drivers) • Current speed of cars, tractors and scaffolding trucks etc • Too much traffic coming through Eastertown • Traffic/Housing	Seek advice from Highways re: access and safety Seek advice from Highways about restricting speed limit to 20mph Gather data on increase in traffic similar initiatives have experienced (anecdotal evidence is ‘very little’) Gather data on volume of traffic now
	Health & Safety concerns • Safety around water/ditches	We will ensure any water and ditches are fenced

Below are the transcripts of the comments people writing on the engagement day at The Manor Hall, Lymsham on 20th January 2024.

What would you like to see on Eastertown Common?

- *Wildflowers*
- *Nature reserve*
- *Accessible for all (children and elderly)*
- *Wheelchair access*
- *Information points (wildlife)*
- *Quiet place*
- *Bird hide*
- *Pond*
- *Football goal*
- *Duck pond*
- *Small Park*
- *Climbing frame*
- *Path to walk through*
- *Dog friendly park*
- *Swimming pool*
- *Little forest*
- *Garden/veggie patch – community allotment*
- *A little bridge over the pond/ Rhyne*
- *Benches*
- *A swing*
- *Little café/shop*
- *Gym*
- *Paved area/walkway*
- *Woods*
- *Outdoor fairy light for late afternoon on the path*
- *Bird bath – bird feeding area*
- *Wild flower meadow- no access for walkers*
- *Woodland – native trees and log piles, shrubs*
- *Access for walkers /dogs*
- *Orchard*
- *Grassy area for dogs and walkers*
- *Bird hide*
- *Nest boxes*
- *Insect houses*
- *Benches*
- *Information points (wildlife)*
- *Small parking area near the gate*
- *Keep it as a green & wild site*

- *Part open space with a few affordable house/bungalows for the elderly and village community centre*
- *'It is not in our human nature to enjoy change, yet it is our only constant'. All we can do is manage and perfect that change.*
- *Local people enjoying nature*
- *Forest school? Planting for children. e.g. Farm to Fork?*
- *Bug hotels, magnifying glasses etc Educating our children for the future*
- *Raised beds for those less able?*
- *Good walking/wheelchair surface*
- *Community area for all to use*
- *Wildflowers*
- *Orchard*
- *Forest school*
- *Something for everyone!*

What you WOULDN'T like to see on Eastertown Common

- *Houses*
- *Solar panels*
- *Houses*
- *Structures*
- *Houses*
- *House*
- *Unused & unkempt*
- *People mistreating the area*
- *Littering*
- *Dropping rubbish*
- *Dog poo*
- *Fires & disposable barbecues!*
- *Houses*
- *Lots of dogs*
- *Houses*

Your concerns about Eastertown Common

- *People accessing safely (no pavements)*
- *Easier and safer to access (blind bends and fast drivers)*
- *Current speed of cars, tractors and scaffolding trucks etc*
- *Safety around water/falling into the ditches – dogs/people*
- *Too much traffic coming through Eastertown*
- *Traffic/Housing*
- *EXCELLENT IDEA. LET'S KEEP IT GREEN LAND. IF YOU ALWAYS DO WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS DONE, YOU'LL GET WHAT YOU'VE ALWAYS GOT*

What do you remember about the field that we hope will become Eastertown Common

- *I remember it once being used as a market garden*
- *It was a private field (1945 – 65)*
- *Childhood memories – being an outside space/play*
- *I remember playing with my sister on the hay bales*
- *Walking our dogs around in lockdown*
- *All the sheep/lambs Farmer George puts in the field*
- *Being able to use for dog walking*
- *Nothing!*
- *Always a field*
- *The dog show*
- *Sitting in the field, with wine and friends trying to watch the lunar eclipse*

Engagement with our local community is growing, however we know we need to reach more people, we want to reach more people and will endeavour to do so.