

## MR. BEAT HOCKSTRASSER

Hearing Statement:	“Off Mill Lane Eastry”	Site ref 393
Reason for Statement:	Explanation of the ongoing work on this site	
SDLP Comment No	468	PM5 – Protection of Open Space
	951	Appendix A: Evidence Base 2 Attachments
	1150	SP3 Housing Growth 2 Attachments
	1153	Eastry 2 Attachments

My wife, an RHS qualified gardener, bought this site in early 2010 via a Clive Emson auction with the view to create a home, garden and a managed wild nature area. According to the auction catalogue, the site was said to have had planning permission in the past but that this has now elapsed. The site consists of a fully fenced-in private ground which is fenced off by gates and is not accessible to the public and two access roads to the site over which several families have a Right of Way. On the West access road, two families use the road to drive to their garages off that road, on the East access road one resident further along has the right to drive onto our main property to be able to circle back into their own back garden for parking. The site had a brick-built garage just inside the main area at the end of the East access road, but this is now a ruin and is not usable. See annotated site picture submitted for the location of these objects.

Part of the work actual work going on over the last 13 years is to maintain the two access roads, which are threaten to deteriorate into overgrown and potholed tracks.

As for the site itself, it is overgrown by brambles, littered with debris and roof tiles and sports a great slag heap consisting of several tons of building rubble. Neighbours told us the site it was part of an old builder's yard. This makes sense, giving the state of the site and the two access roads to it. This site as is is a threat to wildlife, cannot be used for animals to graze on, to grow vegetables or to build a garden. Please see additional pictures taken September 2023.

We are not sure why this property has at some point been categorised as Amenity Greenspace and why our planning application for a single dwelling in June 2010 has been refused.

In 2011 we put a caravan on the site as a base and started clearings the surface debris and cutting back the brambles using brush cutters. We did not touch the slag heap when we realised that we need heavy machinery to make an impact. We invested in a lockable shipping container to store our tools. We still strim, clean and maintain the site as good as we can. Given the size of the site, we decided to prioritise on the two access roads and the entry point to the site (Note: only the East entry point is currently used to drive onto the site). We pay a farmer to mow the main area of the sites wherever feasible and accessible.

However, we found that the work required to turn the site around is too extensive without a permanent presence. To get rid of the brambles permanently we either need a lot of poison, which we do not want to do, or we need to dig them out. To get rid of the slag

heap we need heavy machinery. We also have a problem with the leylandii trees which surround the property – they are growing too big and are getting brittle and need trimming. During August 2023 we were alerted by Eastry Parish Council that a large branch of one of our Leylandii trees fell onto a gardening shed at the allotment site next door. We have since cleared this up.

Our previous submissions for Reg 18 highlighted how DDC's Open Space Assessment Report and DDC's Open Space Standards Paper both singled out this site as the very lowest scoring amenity green-space site in the district, and being "below quality".

We would like to make the point that the site designation in this case is unsound and contrary to the benefit of the community.

What is required is a substantial investment to work and rejuvenate this site and the two access roads. We are willing to do that but need a permanent presence for ongoing maintenance.

While we would like to have the Open Space designation removed from the whole site, what we are seeking now is to remove only a small area of the site from the open space designation. This would enable us to apply for planning permission for a single dwelling.

Living on site would enable us to conduct the necessary work. We believe this will result in an enhancement to Eastry's open space provision, increase biodiversity, and in a net benefit to the neighbourhood and the community.

We would also invest into restoring and maintaining the two access roads. As several neighbours have rights of way, this will result in a clear benefit to them.

Additionally, if the proposed amendment to the Local Plan is approved and subsequent planning application to DDC for a single dwelling is authorised, provisions will be made to alleviate the notorious traffic congestion on Mill Lane by providing a car parking space on our property for our immediate neighbour. This will help to reduce traffic congestion on Mill Lane and will result in a further measurable and concrete net benefit to the community.

See pic. next page

