

# Arkesden Parish Council

The Village Hall,  
Arkesden,  
Saffron Walden,  
Essex,  
CB11 4HB  
<https://arkesdenvillage.com/>



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## Annual Parish Meeting

### Chair's Report

Provided by Alistair Mclean

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Good evening and welcome to the Annual Parish Meeting of Arkesden Parish Council. It has been my pleasure to act as Chair alongside Sophie Garrod over the past year, and I'd like to begin by thanking my fellow councillors for their efforts and work this year.

### 1. Councillors and meetings

Over the past year, we held 10 meetings where we have maintained a good attendance record and have worked together constructively on a range of matters affecting the village.

We welcome Wendy Dyce to the parish council this month, filling the casual vacancy that has existed since the 2023 elections. We are grateful to Wendy for joining us and look forward to working with her in the years ahead.

### 2. County and District matters

As you may have heard, Essex have been accepted for the Priority Devolution Programme which brings about changes to the way local government operates in Essex, with a directly elected Mayor and a new unitary council structure. Under current plans, Parish Councils will be unaffected and will remain as your closest tier of local government. District and County Councils will be amalgamated into unitary authorities of around 500,000 residents, so Essex could in theory be divided into 3 or fewer unitary authorities. This means that matters such as planning permission, and the priority of pothole repairs would be decided at the unitary level. It is important to clarify that the allocation of health service locations is not impacted by the reorganisation.

The Parish Council is keeping an eye on key developments with updates provided regularly by our District Councillor, Edward Oliver and County Councillor, Paul Gadd during our meetings. The devolution programme is still in its early stages but to date the Parish Council have fed into a consultation organised by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government. We will continue to provide feedback and keep the village informed as more information becomes available.

Separate to this, Uttlesford District Council is currently in the process of developing a new local plan which sets out how land in the district will be used for housing, employment, infrastructure, and green spaces over the next two decades (2021-2041). It plays a major role in shaping the future of our towns and villages, including how much development may take place and where.

The plan has now entered a stage of independent examination. Planning Inspectors Guy Davies and William Cooper have been appointed by the Secretary of State for Housing, Communities and Local Government to carry out the examination, which will determine whether the plan is 'sound' and complies with all the legal and procedural requirements.

We will continue to monitor the process and keep an eye on any proposals that may affect Arkesden but to date no additional housing numbers have been allocated to the village.

### **3. Village improvements**

We were very pleased with the success of this year's village litter pick, which resulted in a large amount of rubbish being cleared. It was a great example of what can be achieved in a short time when residents come together for a shared goal. Our thanks go to everyone who took part.

A special mention goes to Mark Newey for his perseverance in tackling local highways issues. Working closely with Cllr Paul Gadd, Mark has helped ensure that many of the worst potholes in the village have now been repaired. He dedicated considerable time to photographing and providing accurate locations of problem areas, which were reported to Essex Highways. He has also played a key role in progressing improvements to drainage issues at Clanver End.

We were pleased to see a new bench installed in the village this year, generously donated to the village by the Bull family in loving memory of George and Tessa Bull, who lived in the village from 1971 until 2024. It's a welcome addition and a fitting tribute.

Our thanks also go to the Village Hall Committee for replacing the village hall notice board, which now continues to be a valuable source of local information for residents.

### **4. Planning matters**

The council reviewed 34 planning applications this year which were submitted along with numerous tree orders. Where appropriate, we submitted comments to either support applications or raise objections based on planning grounds. In some cases, the council adopted a neutral stance.

Uttlesford District Council issued decisions on planning applications as follows:

- **26 approvals comprising of:**
  - One approval with no conditions
  - Eight approvals with conditions
  - Nine approvals to discharge conditions in full
  - Five approvals to discharge conditions in part
  - One deemed approved
  - One prior approval
  - One prior approval not required
  
- **6 refusals comprising of:**
  - 4 refusals
  - 2 refusals for certificates of lawfulness
  
- **2 withdrawals**

Although not included in these figures, we would like to give special mention to a planning application just outside our parish boundary, where a number of Arkesden residents submitted objections in an effort to save the Clatterbury oak tree, a much-loved and ancient feature of the local landscape.

In addition to commenting on planning applications, we have responded to several concerns raised by residents about possible planning breaches. Where appropriate, these concerns have been referred to the Uttlesford District Council Enforcement Team for investigation.

When a potential breach is reported, Uttlesford assesses and classifies the issue as an 'alleged planning breach.' This classification determines whether a formal case is opened and influences the priority and timeline of any investigation.

The enforcement team's role is to prevent and address unauthorised development, and to take action where necessary to minimise or reverse any harmful impacts on the local area. However, it is important to note that official enforcement action is relatively rare and informal negotiation is usually the first step before any formal notice is considered. This can mean that outcomes are not always immediate or visible, even where concerns are valid.

## **5. Finance and precept**

The council starts the year in a sound financial position due to a conservative 2024/25 financial year. We approved an increase to the precept this year to cover rising costs, build some financial resilience and enable the council the scope to undertake projects within the parish. Further information on our finances will be provided in our financial report.

## **6. Traffic survey**

We're pleased with the number of responses to our recent traffic survey, which was created to build on views gathered in the survey run last year. Across both years, we've now gathered feedback from 80 residents, giving us a valuable picture of local concerns and priorities. We'll be reviewing what action we can take over the coming months based on the survey results. Sophie Garrod will provide a summary of the results later in the meeting.

## **7. Looking ahead**

In the coming year, our priorities include:

- Continuing to act as a consultee in the planning process where applications require our input
- Carrying out a stream clearance
- Scheduling another village litter pick
- Exploring grant options from the Hundred Parishes
- Submitting an entry into the village of the year competition
- Scoping out the possibility of creating a village book for 2025
- Taking forward actions as a result of the traffic survey

My final comments are a big thank you go to you, the people who live in the village and make it such a special place to live in. We undertake so many things, just look at the number of committees that we will have here from later in this meeting. It's amazing for such a small village. In addition we have the monthly village coffee morning with thanks to Chris Coady, musical events, the music on the village green, the various Christmas and easter events arranged in the year and last year the hugely successful Advent Calendar event which really grabbed the village's attention and had some 24/25 homes all participating. For that a special thank you to Tom Dudson for single handedly organising and promoting it. I think we are all hoping that he will do it again this coming Christmas. So a big thank you to you all for your volunteering and participating in village activities. And of course I can't finish without saying a huge thank you to my joint chair Sophie Garrod who's been great to work alongside this year and to my fellow councillors for their tireless efforts on the Parish Council and last but by no means least, Beth

Savory for her work as the Parish Council Clerk. She's a star and we are very lucky to have someone so able and competent.

**Alistair Mclean & Sophie Garrod**

**Joint Chair  
Arkesden Parish Council.**