

**Neighbourhood Partnerships Meeting Paper
Hengrove and Whitchurch Community Orchard update
24 November 2014**

Background

There have been lengthy negotiations through early summer with Steve Glover (Severn Projects) regarding his offer to use part of his land along Oatlands Avenue for the Orchard. Discussions centered on his concerns regarding the security of the site, and a request from him for either BCC or the Orchard to pay for a new fence at a cost of £12 -15K, which was negotiated successfully.

Unfortunately in early October he withdrew his offer, we believe due to Severn Projects losing the use of land at Temple Meads and in Keynsham. He therefore needed the land for his own use.

This was very disappointing as it was a great site, and all approvals were in place from the Friends group and BCC officers. Since then Bristol City Council officers and the Future Perfect Orchard team have been researching potential sites particularly around the Oasis Academy area.

Current position

The Friends of Hengrove and Whitchurch Community Orchard and the team have given considerable thought to the practicalities of available sites, bearing in mind the fact that funding needs to be allocated by March 2015. To research and obtain permissions for a new site is likely to take the project into late 2015 or later. The opinion of the Orchard team is that the Whitchurch Village Green is at present the only feasible site given the time and funding constraints, and they asked the Friends Group at the meeting on 10 November to consider this option.

Note John Button and Ray Andrew's, members of the Friends group were also key members of the community group that campaigned to have Whitchurch Village Green turned into a Village Green, so their support for the Orchard has been a key factor in proposing this area as a location for the project.

Discussion included how to increase security and reduce potential vandalism; there is 20% in the budget as contingency for replacing trees should any be damaged in the early years; it was stressed that the trees would be mature and of a reasonable size therefore less likely to be damaged; the Orchard will need water and this could be produced through rain water capture using run off from a small building – we are exploring the possibility of using a container or building a temporary shelter.

A vote was taken and approved by six out of the seven residents present. There was a general consensus for the use of Whitchurch Village Green, and the

participants of the meeting stressed that plans must be realistic, achievable and take account of security and that the consultation should include a temporary building.

Community consultation

The Orchard team are now liaising with Julian Cox (BCC Parks), advised by Richard Fletcher (BCC) on carrying out a residents consultation which will take place from November 25 - 8 December 2014. Residents will all receive a letter and SAE envelope for replies and a consultation event will be held on Saturday December 6 from 2.30 – 4pm at the Bamfield Road Scout Hut which is situated adjacent to the proposed site.

Opportunities and threats

H&W Community Orchard presents a wonderful opportunity for community engagement, learning new skills and fun with events such as an autumnal wassail and summer fete as well as workshops to learn about traditional crafts such as basketry and cider making not to mention the sharing of horticultural skills.

The Friends voiced concerns regarding vandalism and maintenance. Residents should be reassured that the H&W Community Orchard budget includes funding for a twice yearly maintenance programme which will be carried out by Horticultural students from the Oasis Skills Academy over the first five years of the Orchard. The budget also includes funds for a series of workshops over 2 to 3 years to embed the Orchard into the local community and develop the Friends group.

The long term aim is to hand the care and control of the Orchard over to the Friends group within this period.

Bristol City Council suggested that funds were allocated to maintain the Orchard over a ten year period, beyond the first five years, should the Friends group require additional support, and this has been provided.

Impact on the Whitchurch Village Green

Richard Fletcher Parks Manager is advising the Friends on use of the Village Green, and the need to provide water during the first one to two years of tree growth. The idea of putting a temporary shelter/building near to the Orchard has been put forward, with capacity for rain water collection. Richard Fletcher is handing over the South side of Bristol to Clive Smith, who will comment on permissions to erect a temporary structure.

The land in the proposed area is quite wet and Theresa Bergne Curator Future Projects was advised that the land will need a french drain. One of the arboral officers from BCC will advise further on water retention.

Time line from consultation to delivery

2015 is Bristol European Green Capital and we are keen to capitalise on this event, by including the Orchard in this citywide programme. There is also pressure for the project to be confirmed by March 2015 in order that the funds allocated are not lost back to the developers.

The aim is to plant the Orchard in February – March 2015. To achieve this time scale

the community consultation will take place from 24 November and returns in by 8 December to provide comments for the Neighbourhood Partnerships meeting on December 10 2014.

Otherwise we will need to wait another three months for this opportunity.

Tessa Fitzjohn Project Manager Hengrove and Whitchurch Community Orchard