

NORTHILL PARISH ALLOTMENT ASSOCIATION**EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE****23 OCTOBER 2014****ALLOTMENT PLANNING REPORT (DRAFT)**

Purpose of Report:	To outline the processes and procedures to be undertaken by the NPAA and Northill Parish Council prior to and following the securing of land suitable for the provision of allotments within the Parish of Northill.
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1. ACTION RECOMMENDED

- 1.1 It is recommended that the NPAA Executive Committee consider the content of this report with a view to agreeing that the actions and any subsequent suggestions or omissions form the basis of a work plan in line with the draft plan outlined in Appendix 1.
- 1.2 It is further recommended that the report and work plan be presented to the Parish Council through the Parish Clerk and the Allotment Working Group and that it be used to form the basis of early dialogue and more detailed discussion with the Parish Council.

2. INTRODUCTION / BACKGROUND

- 2.1 In 2010 the Parish Council received a petition from local residents requesting that, in accordance with current allotment legislation, consideration be given to the creation of allotment facilities within the parish boundary. The Parish Council is required by law to take all reasonable steps to secure such provision for local people.
- 2.2 The Parish Council has subsequently made, to date, two attempts to secure land but neither has come to fruition for a variety of reasons. The Parish Council has recently reaffirmed that it remains committed to securing such provision and has set up an allotment working group consisting of two parish councillors, the chair and vice chair of the NPAA and the Parish Clerk. Whilst it is frustrating that Parish Clerk is unable to give sufficient time to the project at present it is likely that at some point in the future a willing land owner will be prepared to sell or lease land to the Parish Council.
- 2.3 It is the nature of such transactions that they often arise out of opportunity or changes in circumstances when least expected and it is therefore considered appropriate for the NPAA and the Parish Council through its Executive and the allotment working group to be prepared to move quickly to create a vibrant successful allotment site once land is secured.
- 2.4 The NPAA remains committed to working with the Parish Council to secure a site with the Parish Council continuing to take the lead and it is further intended that once land is secure the NPAA will become the managing agent on behalf of the Parish Council. The NPAA therefore continues to raise funds and keep the dream of an allotment site for the parish alive and on the agenda for the Parish Council.

3.3 Infrastructure, Design and Implementation

The design and layout of the site will depend on a number of factors including the location of the site, existing vegetation, neighbouring land and uses, existing access arrangements, proximity of utilities and services, soil type and exposure and size of the land secured. It is therefore not possible to design the site at this stage. However, the following activities can be undertaken prior to the land being secured.

- 3.3.1 **Planning consent** – If the land in question is currently used for agriculture, horticulture, fruit and seed growing or the keeping of livestock it should not be necessary to seek planning permission. The Parish Council prior to finalising any deal with the landowner should determine this matter. It will also be necessary to establish if there are any restrictive covenants or other planning obligations associated with the land. **ACTION PC.**
- 3.3.2 **Existing Vegetation** – The site may contain existing trees, hedges, scrub and vegetative cover and may also be home to valuable wildlife habitats worthy of retention. Whilst it is not suggested that a full ecological survey is completed it would be beneficial, prior to designing the layout of the site, to establish which features are worthy of retention and which can be sacrificed. These features may enhance the site in the longer term particularly if they provide security, enhance the visual amenity of the site or benefit the grower. **ACTION NPAA**
- 3.3.3 **Access and parking** – The location of the site, its proximity to existing roads and current access, if any, will inform what basic infrastructure will be required before the site can go live. As a minimum a gated secure access wide enough to comfortably accommodate large delivery vehicles will be required. If the creation of a new access is required from an existing public highway it may be necessary to seek formal approval from the highway or planning authority. Informal advice can be sought from Amey who currently work on an agency basis with Central Bedfordshire Council to deliver highway management. **ACTION PC**

It is recommended that the designs for the site make provision for communal parking spaces equal to 20% of the number of plots created. The design should also provide for a haulage road around or through the site to provide direct access to plots by drivers wanting to drop off materials, plants and equipment direct to the plot. This matter, however, may be restricted by the size of the site and other site constraints.

Ideally, the main access, the parking area and haulage road should be surfaced to ensure good access during the winter months and avoid the transfer of soil from vehicles to the main road. A consolidated permeable stone or crushed stone surface would be ideal to allow the free draining of surface water but road planings should be avoided as they can be contaminated with potentially harmful oils and metals.

Access, parking and roadways will be major elements of site implementation and as such should be lead by the Parish Council with support from the NPAA.
ACTION PC TO LEAD ON PROCUREMENT AND INSTALLATION.

- 3.3.4 **Security, fencing, gates and hedging** - Again the location of the site and its existing features will inform the extent to which these key elements are required. Ideally a strong metal palisade fence 1.8m in height would provide the best protection from unauthorised. However, it can be expensive to provide and install

Consideration should be given to ploughing, harrowing and preparing the soil as part of the implementation plan and at this point consideration should also be given to importing suitable top soil as well as fertilising and incorporating organic matter across the whole site. ACTION PC

- 3.3.8 **Communal areas** - If the site is large enough, the design and implementation stages provide an ideal opportunity to set out or set aside space for future communal use activities such as an association shop or meeting area, communal composting, recycling and the like. ACTION NPAA TO IDENTIFY SIZE REQUIREMENTS TO INFORM THE DESIGN PROCESS.
- 3.3.9 **Signage and notice boards** – The erection of signs and notice boards in strategic locations will help create an immediate sense of identity for the site and will also assist with communications with plot holders on an ongoing basis. They are also useful for providing contact information for both the NPAA and the Parish Council more especially if people wish to take up plots or go on a waiting list. Signs are also an ideal focal point at which to hold an opening or unveiling ceremony. ACTION NPAA TO RESEARCH SIGNAGE REQUIREMENTS, OPTIONS AND COST ESTIMATES.
- 3.3.10 **Composting areas** - Communal composting areas are worthy of some consideration to inform the design process. However, if they are to provide good quality compost for re use they need to be well managed and maintained and strict guidelines on the material deposited for composting must be adhered to, to avoid contamination. ACTION NPAA TO RESEARCH IMPLICATIONS and REQUIREMENTS.
- 3.3.11 **Grants and funding** - This matter is developed more fully in section 4 of this report. However, the NPAA would have better access to grant funding once land is secured and should therefore research and develop a comprehensive list of such opportunities, amounts available and timescales as well as essential criteria that must be met when applying. ACTION NPAA TO SET UP A DATABASE OF GRANT AND FUNDING OPPORTUNITIES.

3.4 Management

A number of the management arrangements, procedures and documents can be agreed with the PC or within the NPAA ahead of the securing of any land.

- 3.4.1 **Management agreement between NPAA and Parish Council** – A draft management agreement has already been prepared and could form the basis of any future agreement. It would be beneficial to revisit the main heads of terms even without suitable land having yet been secured. This will enable both parties to move to an agreed management position once land is acquired. ACTION NPAA TO LIAISE WITH PC RE OUTLINE AGREEMENT.
- 3.4.2 **Tenancy agreement and Rules and Regulations** - It would be beneficial to establish with the PC what tenancy agreement the Council would wish to use. Options would include previous drafts from the NPAA, the model agreement provided by the NSALG or other forms of agreement use by other Town and Parish Councils. ACTION NPAA TO DISCUSS WITH PC
- 3.4.3 **Fees and Charges** - It is most likely the case that these will be set by the Parish Council and collected by the NPAA as part of the management agreement. A

- Annual Expenditure

NPAA

Grant and Fundraising

The management agreement will set out the key responsibilities once a site is secured and developed

5. APPENDICES

- 5.1 Draft action plan – TO BE ADDED ONCE NPAA EXECUTIVE HAVE DISCUSSED THIS REPORT

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

- 6.1 NSALG and Government published guidance notes

7. AUTHOR

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