

**BRIDGNORTH TOWN COUNCIL
TOWN COUNCIL MEETING
1st February 2022**

LJ/2022

25th January 2022

REPORT TO TOWN COUNCILLORS

AGENDA ITEM 6 II) – HAZELDINE FOUNDRY – COMMUNITY GARDEN

AIM

1. To consider correspondence relating to a community garden in the area of Hazeldine Foundry

BACKGROUND

2. The Town Council has received correspondence from an individual looking to set up a formal group to create and maintain an area of land owned by the Town Council as some form of community garden. A summary of the correspondence to date is enclosed.

DISCUSSION/ COMMENT

3. The Town Council currently undertakes some low-key maintenance of the land (grass cutting and hedge pruning).
4. A small parcel of land close to the Trevithick memorial is already gardened by a small number of volunteers.
5. The correspondence includes a basic sketch of the proposal and demonstrates some considered thought.
6. The general idea appears to be reasonable on the face of it. However, there are a number of factors to consider before any firm commitment by the Council can be made including:
 - a. The parcel of land has a covenant on it stating; Not to use or permit the property otherwise than for public open space nor otherwise to use the property or permit or suffer the property to be used for any offensive noisy dangerous or perilous trade business manufacture or occupation or for any purpose in any manner which may be a nuisance to the Council or the owners or the occupiers of neighbouring or adjacent premises and on written notice being served on the Purchaser by the Council or its Chief Technical or other appropriate officer requiring the abatement of any nuisance with all reasonable dispatch after the service of such notice to abate such nuisance accordingly.

- b. The proposal for a pond would need some consideration bearing in mind that we are of the view that the ditch is there to allow the runoff from Bandon Lane to make its way to the river and damming it to form a pond would cause the rainwater to back up and flood Blackham's garage on the corner of the lane. Secondly, the area is prone to flooding and so the contents of the pond would become polluted with river water.
 - c. Some type of formal agreement with agreed parameters with a constituted body would be wise to ensure that all activity is undertaken as a collective, in an agreed manner and so that all members of the community are aware and to help with the sustainability of the project over many years.
 - d. Ongoing safety of the volunteers and members of the public needs consideration and depending on the scale of the activity it is likely that some notice to Town Council's insurance company is required (this might (or might not) incur some extra insurance costs).
 - e. Some documented procedure about how the Council might take back the basic gardening of the land should the proposed volunteer group disappear over time is required and return it to its current state (minimal maintenance).
 - f. Any agreement with a small (or large) group of volunteers should not detrimentally impact on the use of the land by all members of the public (it should not become -unintentionally- a private gardeners club.). Understanding its current community benefit and uses would be prudent.
 - g. It is not clear that the Council's labour force could discontinue with any maintenance of the land. Any part of the land left to grass will need mowing (presumably) and some larger scale hedge works might be beyond volunteers using small handheld equipment.
 - h. Some thought should be given to the thoughts that the allotment holders nearby (who pay for the opportunity) might have about a free to use community allotment in close proximity e.g., likely comments will probably be asking why they pay an annual fee when the community group don't for a similar privilege. Furthermore, some consideration should be given to security and the potential of ensuring that the site is not vandalised (because it has attractive produce) or where there might be more wanting produce than is available.
7. A covered area to house compost bins, with guttering and drainpipes to collect rainwater in water butts will need some more detail (e.g., dimensions) to understand if there are any planning constraints (e.g., formal planning permission required). It might be worth noting that generally there is likely to be no shortage of river water.

8. A community-based project such as this is likely to have many benefits including: beautifying the site; increasing community cohesion and some physical and mental health benefits.
9. It might be beneficial for the proposed project to begin on a small scale initially and be developed to over time.
10. The Council has a Green Spaces Working Group that might wish to explore the matter in some detail before the Council makes a decision on the matter.

FINANCIALS

11. Gardening of the land could reduce the Council's labour force having to tend to the land if the entire responsibility for it is delegated to volunteers.
12. There are no funds budgeted currently by the Council to finance some or all of the project.

RECOMMENDATION(s)

13. It is recommended that the Town Council RESOLVES to:

Support in principle the general idea of some of the land owned by the Town Council to be gardened by a volunteer community group and that the Green Space Working Group consider the proposal in more detail and prepare a draft plan (to include options) for the Town Council to consider, at a later date.

Lee Jakeman
Town Clerk

Enclosure:

1. Summary of correspondence (Nov '21 thru Jan '22), Community Garden, Hazeldine Foundry.

ENCLOSURE 1

SUMMARY OF CORRESPONDENCE – COMMUNITY GARDEN – HAZELDINE FOUNDRY

14th November 2021 - Email correspondence – Catherine Brown to Town Clerk

Dear Mr Jakeman,

I am writing to the Town Council to ask if it would be possible for a group of us from within the community to take on the management of a plot of Council-owned land to develop a community garden? The land is at the Hazeldine Foundry site (currently a grassy area behind the statue and flower bed/bench area, which extends up to some large trees at the edge of an area used by the Rugby Club for parking).

The purpose of the garden would be to provide:

- an educational space where people of all ages could learn about, and put into practice, sustainable ways of living, including growing fruit, vegetables and herbs, and wildlife gardening;
- a demonstration of how growing some of your own food can mitigate the effects of climate change;
- a social space where people of all ages could come together to help maintain the garden, harvest produce, enjoy other activities (e.g. craft projects);
- a peaceful haven full of plants and wildlife for people to sit and enjoy;
- a meeting space for different organisations to use.

Our aim would be to create a garden designed and managed according to the principles of permaculture – ‘a practical method for developing ecologically harmonious, efficient and productive systems that can be used by anyone, anywhere’¹ – through which we would hope to inspire, encourage and enable people to put such principles into practice in their own or other community spaces.

We would have a group of people managing the site, organising volunteer workdays, workshops, visits, etc.. We would apply to different national organisations for funding, as well as fundraise locally. We would also hope to engage with local businesses and other community organisations to help the garden to become a thriving and sustainable community project.

I would welcome the opportunity to present this idea to the Town Council at their next (or another future) meeting, if this would be possible.

Thank you for your attention.

With kind regards,

Catherine Brown

24th November 2021 – E-mail - Town Clerk to Catherine Brown

Dear Catherine,

Thank you for your enquiry.

In the first instance it would probably be appropriate for me to take some advice from our Outdoor and Property Manager to understand your intentions, confirm precisely the parcel of land and consider any activity that we undertake there already, there is. I am of the understanding that there is already small group of volunteers gardening part of that area. Furthermore, there will need to be some consideration of health and safety matters and public liability and ensuring that the existing public right of way is maintained; nothing insurmountable I would imagine but best to get the detail addressed at the start.

If there proves to be reasonable mileage in the request, then I can then take the matter to Full Town Council for some form of approval.

Please note that I have copied all councillors into this correspondence to let them know that some work will be going on in the background.

24th November e-mail Catherine Brown to Town Clerk

Dear Mr Jakeman,

Thank you very much for your reply to my email, for considering our request, and for making the necessary enquiries regarding health and safety, public liability, etc..

Helen Beevers, who coordinates the group of volunteers who already work on the beds around the bench and statue at the Hazeldine Foundry site, is part of the small group of us who are interested in managing the area of land which extends beyond the bench/statue area.

We are all very keen to develop the site into a place that will be of significant benefit to our community in many different ways, and look forward to your future correspondence.

Thank you once again.

With kind regards,

Catherine

3rd January Email – e-mail - Catherine Brown to Town Clerk

Dear Barry and Lee,

I hope you have had a good break over Christmas and the New Year.

Following the meeting that we had with Barry at the Hazeldine's Foundry site before Christmas, we have drawn up a draft plan for features that we propose to include, if it is agreed that the Bridgnorth Community Garden Project can manage the 10m x 20m area immediately behind the train statue at the site.

As you will see, the approximate plan includes:

- a series of octagonal raised beds, in which we would plant vegetables, herbs and flowers
- a wildlife pond, in the existing ditch
- a hedgerow with native plantings
- using the existing bed around the base of the willow tree for perennial plants and fruit bushes
- a covered area to house compost bins, with guttering and drainpipes to collect rainwater in water butts

We would ensure that a clear path is kept from the riverside through to the grassed area beyond the proposed garden site.

We are hopeful that our plans will meet with your approval, and that we might be able to move forward with this community project as soon as possible. We are currently exploring funding sources, one of which is an award offered by the National Garden Scheme specifically for community gardens, the deadline for which is 28th February of this year.

Thank you for your support and consideration so far, and we look forward to hearing from you soon.

With kind regards,

Catherine Brown

on behalf of Bridgnorth Community Garden Project

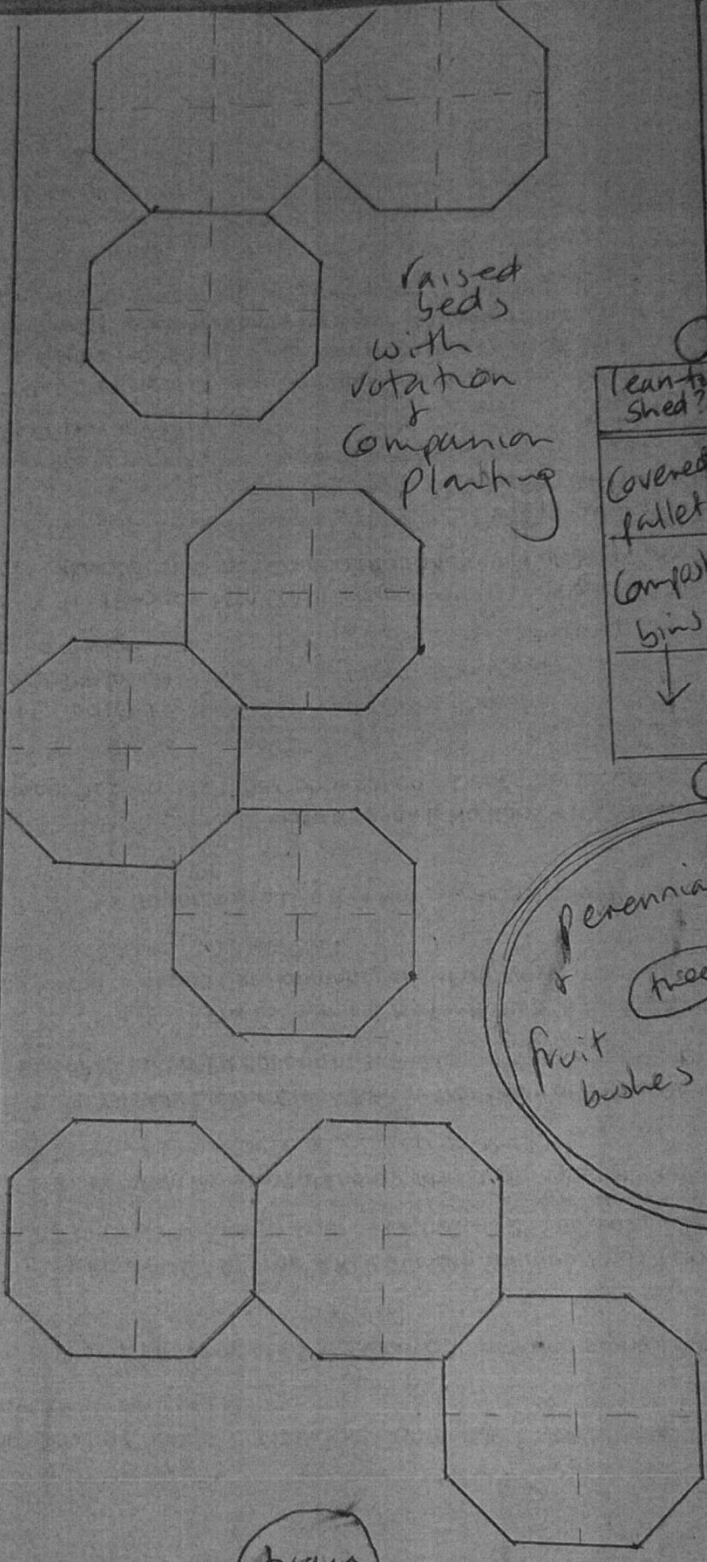
Attachment – Site Plan :

hedgerow
wildlife
garden

wildlife
pond

fruit
tree?

P A T #



water
butts

4th January 2022 – e-mail - Town Clerk to Catherine Brown

Dear Catherine,

Happy New Year to you.

I will forward your proposals to Barry Ince for some consideration now that we have some light touch documented proposals.

I appreciate you desire to press ahead quickly however we will need to ensure that we comply with the covenants on the piece of land. Furthermore, we would need to have some relatively formal arrangement to ensure the ongoing maintenance of the land for future generations and some form of contingency should the volunteer group ever disappear.

I have copied in Councillor Liz Rochelle into this email as she is the head of Councils Working Group for Green Spaces who might need to have a view on the proposal. General gardening of the area and the hedgerow would likely be a relatively simple thing to approve; the inclusion of some hard structures makes it a little more complicated.

We will look to get back to you as soon as practicably possible.

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