

Agenda Item 3

Reference number: GTP/03/20

Report title: Provision of an Allotment at Great Notley Country Park	
Report to: Great Notley Country Park Joint Venture Partnership Board	
Report author: Paul Partridge, Head of Operations, Braintree District Council	
Date: 2 December 2020	For: Consideration
Enquiries to: democratic.services@essex.gov.uk	
County Divisions affected: Not applicable	

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek the Board's approval to allocate two areas of uncultivated (unused) open space at the Country Park for allotments for the Parish of Great Notley, as set out in the report and appendix below.

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1. PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING NOTE

To seek the Board's approval to allocate two areas of uncultivated (unused) open space at the Country Park for allotments for the Parish of Great Notley.

2. BACKGROUND

Braintree District Council has been working with Great Notley Parish Council (GNPC) to identify suitable land within the parish boundary that could be allocated for use as allotments. This has proved somewhat challenging as the availability and location of land suitable for this purpose is very limited within the village envelope.

In recent times there has been an upsurge in the demand for allotments as they play a vital role in enabling people to grow fresh, cheap food, whilst reducing food miles. At the same time, they provide opportunities for people to remain healthy and active, meet other people and share knowledge, information and the produce they have grown, helping to develop more cohesive communities.

Within Great Notley there is currently a waiting list of 40 residents wanting an allotment and demand will continue to grow as more and more people recognise the considerable environmental benefits that having an allotment can provide.

3. LEGAL CONTEXT

Under the 'The Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908' (SHAA) councils have a duty to provide allotments where there is a demand. The Local Government Act 1972 provides that the functions under the Allotments Acts 1908-1950 (including the SHAA) shall be provided by a Parish Council in a parished area.

Whilst Braintree District Council (BDC) does not have a legal duty to provide allotments within the Gt Notley Parish, it can allocate and let land acquired/designated for another purpose, commonly known as a non-statutory allotment site, of which the Council has a number across its District in addition to statutory sites. The main difference between the two is that statutory sites which are acquired for the purpose of allotments are legally protected, whilst non-statutory sites that have been acquired for other purposes and are being used as allotments are not.

4. LAND AT GREAT NOTLEY COUNTRY PARK

As part of the research into land that might be suitable for an allotment site, BDC in discussion with Essex County Council (ECC) has identified two areas of land within the boundary of the Country Park (see Appendix 1). These are currently uncultivated and unused and have the potential to be redeveloped. The location of the land is not ideal given the distance between the access, location of the car park and route through the Country Park, however, in the absence of any other suitable land, it is the best option currently available and one that ECC is happy to support. Following a site meeting with the Parish

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Council representatives it has been decided that Site B is the preferred location for development.

The land forms part of the existing Country Park Lease with ECC and it will be necessary to surrender it with suitable access rights. In addition, a restrictive covenant not to use the land other than as open space will need to be put in place. Further legal advice and guidance will be sought on this issue as the project progresses including the option of entering into a long-term lease for the land or disposing of it to GNPC.

A planning application to change the use of the land will also be required. In addition, under the original Covenant for the Country Park with Countryside Properties plc, their consent will be required to change the landscaping scheme. Further discussions will take place with ECC as to whether any other consents/formalities are needed, given the land has been formally designated as part of the Country Park.

5. THE WAY FORWARD

Subject to the JVPB agreeing in principle to the land being allocated for use as allotments, it is proposed that detailed discussions take place with GNPC on moving the project forward including:

- I. Undertaking a soil survey to assess the suitability of the land.
- II. Commissioning a Feasibility Study to assess how the land can be developed as allotments including the cost of providing the infrastructure and full site preparation to enable the Parish Council to allocate plots to residents (tenants).
- III. Considering what funding opportunities there are from the Parish Council to support the overall delivery of the project.
- IV. Whether BDC wishes to contribute any funding to the project given that it would directly support and achieve a number of the Council's own aims and objectives within its Corporate Strategy. This is in line with similar projects it has supported in the past, especially where it has transferred rural facilities to parish councils to directly manage and maintain including allotments, car parks, public conveniences and village halls etc.

6. CONCLUSION

There is clearly a genuine and growing demand within the GNPC boundary for allotments. Whilst the statutory responsibility for providing these rests with the Parish Council, BDC does have the option of being able to allocate and let land for this purpose, along with a financial contribution to support the delivery of the project as outlined above. In the absence of any other suitable land being identified, it would seem sensible to explore the suitability, feasibility and costs as set out in Section 5 above.

7. RECOMMENDATION

Members of the Joint Venture Partnership Board are **RECOMMENDED** to:

- (1) Approve in principle that the land identified in Appendix 1 be allocated for the provision of allotments for the parish of Great Notley.

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- (2) Support further discussions taking place between ECC/BDC and GNCPC as set out in Section 5 above.

**Paul Partridge
Head of Operations**

19 November 2020

Provision of an Allotment at Great Notley Country Park

Title: Potential Allotment Sites at Discovery Centre



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Date: 12 Nov 2020

Author: Web AppBuilder for ArcGIS

0 15 30 60 90 120 Meters

Scale: 1:2,717

