



To: Executive Councillor for Housing
Report by: Alistair Wilson
Relevant scrutiny committee: Community Services 14th March 2013
Wards affected: All

Former Councillor Margaret Wright, Memorial Orchard
Non Key Decision

1. Executive summary

1.1 At the Council meeting in July 2012, Cambridge City Councillors paid tribute to former Councillor Margaret Wright, who had recently passed away. It was agreed that a fitting memorial should be established.

1.2 A member's panel, made up of one member from each group, met to agree on the memorial, and decided that a community orchard would be appropriate.

1.3 Officers were asked to explore options in the Abbey Ward, and the members panel agreed to support the officer recommendation of the establishment of an orchard on land to the rear of 24-38 Whitehill Road, subject to local consultation.

1.4 The land at 24-38 Whitehill Road is currently registered as a Village Green¹ and is an asset of the Housing Portfolio.

1.5 Officers have now undertaken a local consultation exercise to seek views of residents living in Whitehill Road and Elfleda Road, directly in the vicinity of the proposed Orchard. The consensus is for support for the Orchard to proceed.

1.6 The Executive Councillor is asked to consider the recommendation for change of use of the land, to enable the creation of the Orchard.

¹ Town and village greens were defined in the [Commons Registration Act 1965](#), as amended by the [Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000](#),
Report Page No: 1

2. Recommendations

The Executive Councillor is recommended to:

- (i) Permit the use of the land at 24-38 Whitehill Road to allow the creation an orchard to be dedicated to the memory of Councillor Margaret Wright.

3. Background

3.1 Following the Council meeting in July 2012, Officers investigated three potential sites within Abbey ward where Councillor Wright served, under the direction of a Member panel created to facilitate this memorial.

3.2 Site where identified and assessments undertaken at Barnwell Recreation Ground, Peveral Road Play Area and land to the rear of 24-38 Whitehill Road properties.

3.3 The Members panel decided that it was land to the rear of 24-38 Whitehill Road that was the more suitable and asked the lead officer to further this option in greater detail.

3.4 A map outlining the land is attached at Appendix A.

3.5 Local residents designated this land as a village green four years ago. The residents were keen to retain the space in its current format and avoid any risk of development.

3.6 A Town and village greens are defined in the [Commons Registration Act 1965](#), as amended by the [Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000](#), as land:

- i. which has been allotted by or under any Act for the exercise or recreation of the inhabitants of any locality
- ii. or on which the inhabitants of any locality have a customary right to indulge in lawful sports and pastimes
- iii. or if it is land on which for not less than twenty years a significant number of the inhabitants of any locality, or of any neighbourhood within a locality, have indulged in lawful sports and pastimes as of right.

3.7 The land is managed by City Homes and is not included in the current programme of sites that are being considered for development. The Director of Customer and Community Services is supportive of the proposal to create a community orchard.

3.8 The land at 24-38 Whitehill Road was chosen as the preferred site as it had the following key attributes:-

- i. It was the largest of the three sites originally proposed and would make a substantial orchard.
- ii. It borders an allotment, which would extend the ability of food production in this area.
- iii. The site has historically been colonised by edible fruiting plants, for example Elderberry and Blackberry.

3.9 The proposal would make good use of land that is currently under-utilised and offers great potential to be enjoyed by local communities.

3.10 Preparatory groundwork needs to be undertaken to get the fruit trees established successfully without competition from the vigorous species mentioned above. This would be in the form of light earthworks to remove existing material by the root. Some new soil may be replaced to re-establish levels. Elder species should be retained as part of the scheme and even with these still present it is estimated that approximately 20-25 trees could be established in this area.

3.11 It is recognised that this area of scrub currently colonised by a mixture of bramble, elder and coarse grass is of local value to wildlife. It will therefore be important to integrate existing habitats into the new design and subsequent maintenance regime.

4. Implications

(a) Financial Implications

The cost of planting, setting out, and establishment of the Orchard will be met from the budget approved by the Executive Councillor for Arts, Sports and Public Places in January 2011². The expected revenue costs of maintenance will be met from Streets and Open Space.

(b) Staffing Implications

None identified.

(c) Equal Opportunities Implications

No, as there is no material change to the current use other than tree planting

(d) Environmental Implications

The project will have a low positive impact, in that it will create opportunities for local produce food and enhance wildlife.

² PPF2641 Tree Planting Project for Parks and Open Spaces

(e) **Procurement**

The supply and planting will be included in the existing contracts with suppliers.

(f) **Consultation and communication**

A consultation has been undertaken by letter drop to the houses in Whitehill Road and Elfleda Road in the immediate vicinity of the land.

Eighty-five letters were delivered on 8th February 2013 with the consultation period closing on Monday 25th February 2013.

A total of nine responses were returned directly to the Open Space Officer who is managing the project:

- Six responses were returned by E-mail
- Two responses were by hand written letter
- One response was by telephone

Due to the low response to the consultation the full and unedited E-mail responses and this is available as one of the background reading documents.

(g) **Community Safety**

Some issues have been raised by respondents to the consultation regarding increased possibility to anti social behaviour in the area, and the security of back gardens. Repairs to fencing of tenanted properties have been ordered and the perimeter planting will be retained to form a buffer between all properties and the new orchard.

5. **Background papers**

These background papers were used in the preparation of this report:

- Site Appraisals
- Consultation summary - February 2013

6. **Appendices**

Appendix A – Site Plan of land to the rear of 24-38 Whitehill Road.

7. **Inspection of papers**

To inspect the background papers or if you have a query on the report please contact:

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