

Calne Without Parish Council Proposal to establish a Community Orchard

1. Background

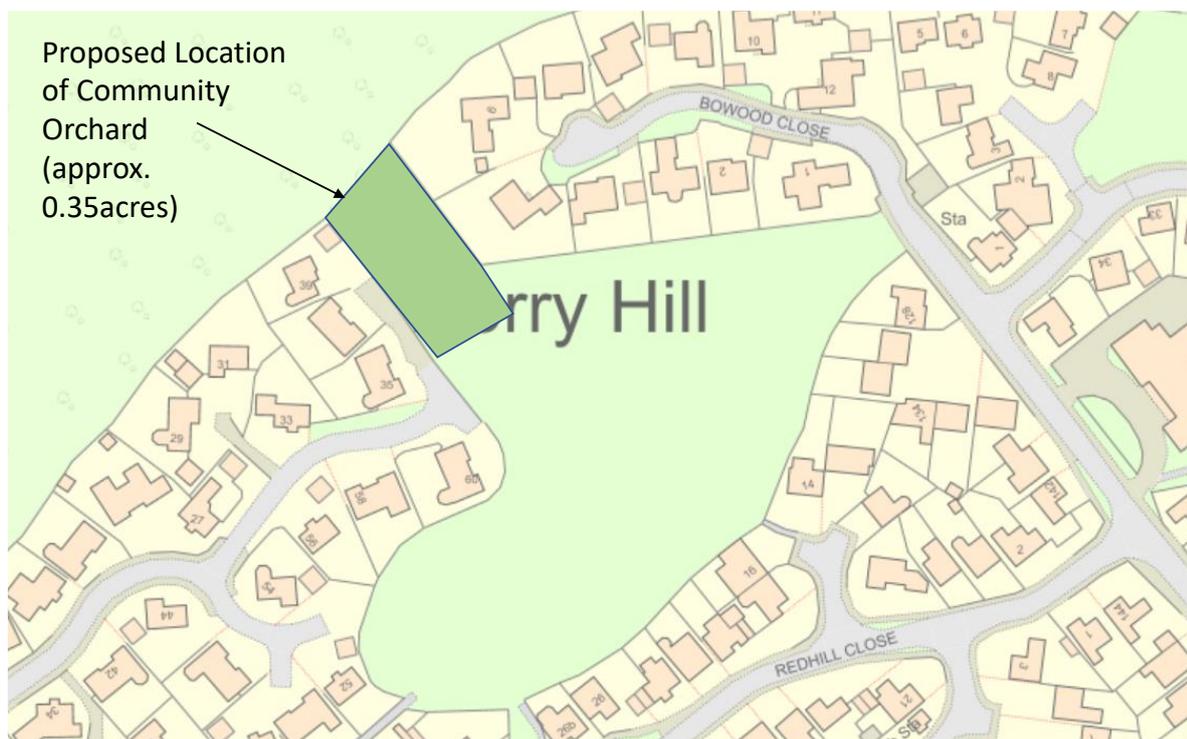
A Community Orchard is a collection of fruit trees shared by communities and growing in publicly accessible areas such as public greenspaces, parks, schools, churchyards and allotments. Of the people who responded to Calne Without Parish Council's 2022 Climate Survey, 55% expressed an interest in a community orchard project.

The benefits of community orchards include:

- They provide a source of free locally grown produce to residents.
- They can provide a focal point for community activities, such as Orchard Days, Apple Pressing, picnics, story-telling events, Wassailing, etc., increasing community cohesion.
- Traditional orchards have been designated as a priority habitat in the UK Biodiversity Action Plan because of the wildlife (flora and fauna) that can be supported by this environment.
- Two thirds of Britain's orchards have been lost since 1960. Community orchards can help to sustain local and rare varieties of fruit trees.
- Community orchards may be used as an educational resource for local schools and children.
- They provide an opportunity for community members to learn new skills – both through the maintenance of the orchard trees and through the use of the fruit.
- They can provide a pleasant outdoor space for people to relax and socialise in.
- They can enhance the visual and aesthetic environment.

2. Proposed Site

It is proposed to develop the Community Orchard on a small limb of the Petty Acre open space, in the centre of Derry Hill, as indicated on the plan below:



The site measures approximate 25m by 50m (0.125 hectares or 0.31 acres). The site is bounded to the west by Lansdowne Crescent West, to the north by woodland, to the east by Bowood Place and to the south by Petty Acre.

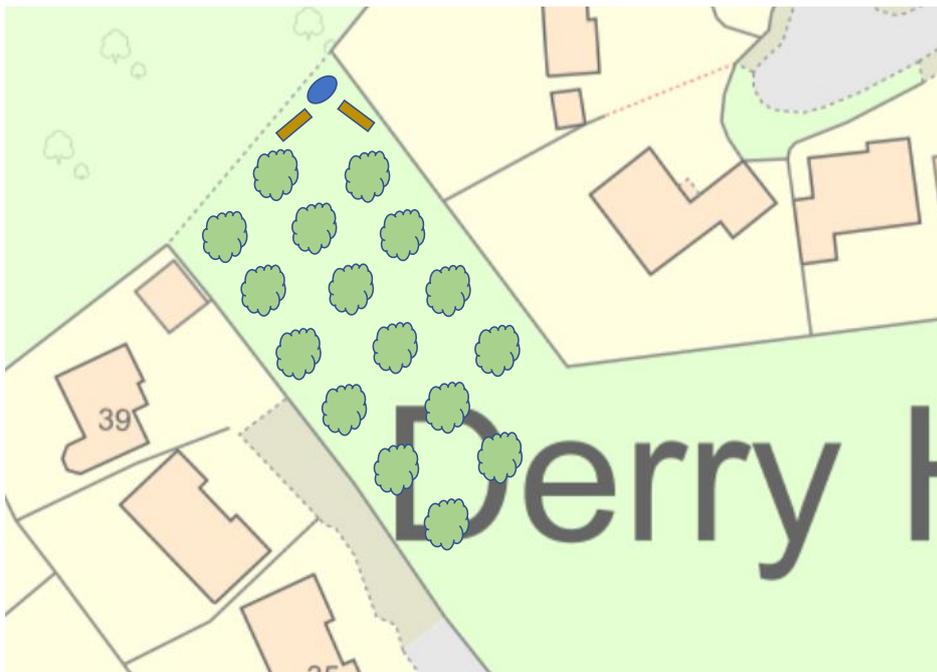
The reasons for proposing this site are:

- (a) It is in the centre of the Derry Hill, the largest village within Calne Without Parish.
- (b) It is already public open space, so no land acquisition is likely to be required.
- (c) It will enhance the existing public open space with detracting from other uses of the site (such as recreation, casual sports or exercising dogs).

It is our understanding that the site is leased by Wiltshire Council from the Bowood Estate, under a long-term lease. It is likely that the Parish Council would be required to enter into a formal undertaking for the future maintenance of the orchard.

3. Layout of Site

An indicative layout of the site is provided below:



The site would be large enough to accommodate approximately 15-16 orchard trees (or more, if dwarf varieties are selected). Depending on demand, the orchard could be expanded in the future by further planting around the margins of the main open space.

Trees should be spaced at a minimum 7m separation, for full-sized standards. This allows for enough light and air penetration to each tree and reduces the susceptibility to and spread of pests and diseases.

The variety of trees to be planted remains to be determined, but it is anticipated that the orchard would comprise a mix of apple, pear, plum and potentially other fruits, with a strong emphasis on traditional local varieties.

The layout of the orchard should include seating and potentially a pond to enhance the wildlife value of the site.

4. Management

It is proposed that the Orchard would be managed by a management team comprising parish councillors and volunteers from the community, with the Parish Council providing oversight through the Climate Emergency and Environment Working Group. A quarterly report will be provided to the Council during the initial phase of the project, moving to an annual report once the orchard has become established.

5. Establishment, Establishment and Maintenance

Planting

Trees will be sourced from a suitable nursery. Assuming the orchard trees are purchased bare-rooted (rather than potted), these should be planted between November and March. Materials will need to be sourced to plant the trees, including:

- Stakes – to support the tree and wire mesh.
- Wire mesh – to protect the trees from predation by deer.
- Spiral guards – to protect the base of the tree from damage by rabbits.
- Mulch mats or wood mulch – to suppress weed growth and help retain moisture.

Establishment and Maintenance

Orchard trees, such as apple and pear, will generally start bearing fruit in four to six years.

As the orchard develops, there will be a range of maintenance activities throughout the year, as follows:

	Jan	Feb	Mar	Apr	May	Jun	Jul	Aug	Sep	Oct	Nov	Dec
Plant young trees	█										█	█
Formative pruning - young apple & pear.	█											█
Form. pruning - plum, cherry, apricot, peach.			█									
Remove blossom from trees <=3 years				█								
Cut grass from under young trees					█							
Thin fruit if needed						█	█					
Harvest cherries							█	█				
Staggered sward cutting								█	█	█		
Summer pruning								█	█			
Harvest plums								█	█			
Harvest apples									█	█	█	█
Harvest pears										█	█	
Restorative pruning of mature trees	█	█										█

6. Cost and Funding

Capital and ongoing maintenance costs will need to be determined in detail. No approval of expenditure is sought at this stage, although a ballpark estimate is given below for indicative purposes:

Orchard trees	16nr x £65 each	£1,040
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Stakes, protective mesh, spiral guards, mulch mats & pegs	16 x £20 each	£320
Benches, including materials for fixing	2 x £450 each	£900
Training		£500
Sundry additional costs		£240
Total		£3,000

Funding will be from the Parish Council's CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) reserve.

7. Next Steps

The Council's endorsement is sought to further develop the proposal, including the following next steps:

- a) Approach Wiltshire Council, as the long-term leaseholder for support for the proposal.
- b) Approach other parish councils who have developed community orchards to gain knowledge and understand lessons learned in order to develop the proposal into a plan.
- c) Consult with local residents.
- d) Recruit community volunteers to help develop the plan.
- e) Identify potential nurseries for the supply of trees, with a local preference.
- f) Research orchard design and local varieties; develop a planting plan.
- g) Cost up the plan in detail.
- h) Return to Council for approval.

Additional sources of information:

People's Trust for Endangered Species: - <https://ptes.org/campaigns/traditional-orchard-project/>

Common Ground - <https://www.commonground.org.uk/community-orchards/>

The Orchard Project - <https://www.theorchardproject.org.uk/>

Orchard Network - <https://www.orchardnetwork.org.uk/>

Department of Communities and Local Government -
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/community-orchards-a-how-to-guide>