

Allotments site - an update

Now that the planning application and appeal to develop the northern part of the site has been decided in favour of the applicants, we thought that it may be useful for us to provide you with an update on what is happening to the allotments as we know them today. Before we start there must unfortunately be a caveat in that this explanation is only as far as we understand it today as some of the details have not yet been finalised. We recognise and empathise with the issues that this uncertainty is having, we are unfortunately not masters of our own destiny.

Summary:

The C.R.E.W. Wilcox Trust, as landowner of the whole allotment site, submitted a planning application to Rugby Borough Council (RBC - Application R19/1411) to develop for housing the northern part of the site (the portion of the allotments site within the Wolston village boundary, being all the land between the right hand edge of the track and Warwick Road). This application was refused by RBC but subsequently allowed at appeal. There is nothing we can do about this and as an organisation we need to look to the future and move on.

The future:

We know how disappointing this was to a lot of the members, and it was not the outcome that had been hoped for. Yes, a setback, but the reason the development working group was set up in the first place was to put actions in place should this be the outcome. We believe that we can still move forward, and with a very positive future of the Association. The work that has been agreed for the south side of the allotments site, as part of the agreement to develop the north part of the site, represents a very considerable investment in the site and provision of significant new facilities. We will also have a proper lease of our own – at the moment the Association do not have a lease and technically all the plots are leased from Wolston Parish Council. The new lease will also be much longer with a 20 year (15+5) minimum term with a five-year notice of termination rather than the rolling 12 months notice we have at the moment. This is important as it will enable us to apply for external grant funding which we are not able to do at the moment because we don't have long term security of tenure. The Association will also receive a lump sum amount as 'compensation' to the association and to assist those members who will suffer loss – the distribution of this will be worked out on an individual basis and administered by the Association's Committee.

As some of you know there has been some discussion about a community purchase, at the time of writing we have no knowledge of such a bid. Cllr Wright we believe is leading this option, as yet they have yet to meet. Once we have more information, please be assured we will let you know.

The work on the site will be split into three phases:

Phase 1: Clearance of the whole site including removal of all existing structures, with the exception of the Trading Shed and store shed. Plot holders who wish to retain any plants or structure will be given the opportunity to do so but they will be removed and replanted or stored on the north side of the site during the work. There will also be at least one secure container provided for storage of tools and other reasonably small items until the site is ready for occupancy again. Once the south site is clear it will be fully cultivated to a standard agreed by the working group and the new plots will then be laid out in accordance with the site plan ([click here to look at the site plan](#)). A total of 76 new plots will be provided (46 x 250 m², 20 x 125 m² and 10 x 60 m²) and each full and half size plot will have its own shed or greenhouse (at the plot holders choice) and the small plots will be provided with cold frames. The new sheds etc. and water points will be installed and new roadways constructed ([click here to see the roadway and parking areas](#)) – note that all plots will be accessible by vehicle. A temporary road will be laid around the rear of the Trading shed to allow access and to enable us to keep the Trading Shed in business during the main work although this will mean that two or three plots in this area will not be available until the phase 3 work is complete –

see below. One point that we know a lot of members will be very happy about - the whole site will be surrounded by rabbit proof fencing ! The details of how all this work will all be achieved and how we communicate with plot holders before and during this work are still being developed but I will keep you informed as we learn more. This phase 1 work will take about six months and we understand that unless a community bid is successful, it is highly probable (**although not yet confirmed**) that the work will start in October 2021 and be complete for hand back and occupancy by March 2022.

Phase 2: This is construction of the new building, and will start some time after the plots are handed over. The exact date of completion and handover of this building is not yet known as it is tied into the delivery and occupancy schedule for the houses on the north site, but is likely to be up to 12 months after the plots are handed over for cultivation. The new building will provide a garage for our maintenance equipment, a workshop, meeting room, toilets, kitchen and the Trading Shed and storage area. ([Click here to see the new building elevations](#) or [Click here to see the new building floorplan](#)). The building will be fully DDA compliant to enable access by persons of reduced mobility. There will also be a lawn area adjacent to the new building for BBQs and other social events. Until the new building is handed over the Trading Shed will continue to operate from where it is now.

Phase 3: The Trading Shed will move from where it is now to the new building, the existing sheds removed, the installation of the new road completed, the temporary road removed and the last few plots handed over.

We know that the coming year or two will be a difficult period for the Association but, as we will be provided with major new facilities and more plots than we currently have plot holders, we are convinced that long term the investment into the site will pay dividends. Instead of having a site that is more than 30% vacant we should be able to encourage more people to take on an allotment so that we have a short waiting list, which is always a sign of a well managed and popular allotments site.

As more information becomes available we will ensure that you are kept updated, but in the meanwhile if you have any queries then please, as usual, contact us at admin@wbaga.co.uk .

The Committee.

Other links you may find useful:

RBC Planning application R19/1411 and all the supporting documents for the **north** part of the allotments site [is here](#).

RBC Planning application R20/0172 and all the supporting documents for the **south** part of the allotments site [is here](#).

The S.106 agreement [is here](#). This outlines the responsibilities that the developer of the north site has to agree to. The summary for the requirements for the south site are in Schedule 2, Part 2 on page 24. The detail requirements for the south site are set out in the various documents as part of the approval of planning application R20/0172 above.