

Proposed Plan for Ettington Allotments, 3 April, 2019.

As you know, to date, we haven't managed to make much progress in securing a patch of land for allotments in Ettington. What it seems to have come down to is, local landowners do not respond to us, they don't take us seriously, or they want to use us to further their attempts to secure planning permission to build more houses within the village.

In order to try to get some land, we propose:

- In the first instance we pursue the owners of the plots of land we have already identified as suitable for allotments (if any further suitable plots within the village parcel materialise, then we can also pursue these too)
- We state that we are prepared to buy, or rent land for allotments, whichever the owner prefers
- We focus exclusively on land within the village and do not get side-tracked by owners offering plots distant to the village, or plots on the other side of the village to the A429, or Fosse.
- All correspondence is sent out by an officer of the Parish Council (The chairman or clerk?). Hopefully this will result in the landowners taking us a little more seriously than previously. The text for the correspondence can be prepared by the Allotment Association based on the steps outlined below and can be put on to Parish Council headed paper, signed by the designated Parish Council officer and sent off.

Below I have outlined a staged/structured and time-limited plan to try to move things forward:

1. An official letter (no. 1) is sent to all the landowners owning land within the village that we have identified as suitable for allotments, outlining our position i.e.
 - the existence of the village allotment society with 14 current members and our membership of the UK's National Allotment Society
 - the commitment of the Parish Council to provide allotments in the village
 - our financial position with £10,000 S106 money currently available to us (with a further similar amount becoming available when the Spitfire development property sales pass the threshold) to buy land for allotments
 - the Ettington neighbourhood plan states that there is no significant chance of planning permission for any further housing developments being granted in the village before 2031
 - our willingness to rent land at a reasonable rate, as well as purchase, and
 - renting land for allotments at the same rates as charged for grazing would keep the land in good order with no input required from the owners.
2. If there is no response within 3 weeks from any of the people letters have been sent to, the same letters (no. 2) are sent to these people by recorded delivery, where they have to sign for receipt of the letter.
3. If there is still no response after a further 3 weeks, the designated official from the Parish Council phones the owners to determine whether they have received the letters and to ask whether they are prepared to sell, or rent any land for village allotments.

4. Three weeks later, if it has not been possible to contact any of the landowners by phone and we still have no offers, we send the next official letter along the lines of, 'Further to our earlier correspondences (reference numbers X and XX) of date of letter no. 1, date of letter no. 2 and subsequent phone call(s) of date of phone call 1, date of phone call 2 etc., we are writing to inform you that at this moment in time, our considerable efforts to secure some land for allotments in the village of Ettington have not been successful. If we are unable to secure an offer of land for allotments, we will have no option but to pursue the final option of compulsory purchase. Please could you inform us whether you are prepared to change your position and provide some land for allotments in the village'.

5. If there is no response within 3 weeks from any of the people letters have been sent to, the same letters are sent to these people by recorded delivery, where they have to sign for receipt of the letter.

6. If there is still no response after a further 3 weeks, the designated officer on the Parish Council phones the owners to determine whether they have received the letters and to ask whether they are prepared to sell, or rent any land in the village for allotments.

7. If we get to this point without any reasonable offers, the Allotment Society will then have to discuss what options are open to it and investigate compulsory purchase in consultation with the Parish Council and/or the District Council.

If we have to go down the compulsory purchase route, the paper trail from above will hopefully be helpful to our case, showing we have done everything humanly possible to obtain allotments through non-compulsory purchase routes.

Needless to say there may be slippage in the plan, but at least at each stage we will know what the next action will be, despite any slippage and hopefully we will not give up, or lose sight of where we are going!

John Wade, Secretary
John Walsh, Chairman

John Walsh,
Chairman of 'The Diggers', Ettington Village's Allotment Society.