

## **Weir Meadow & Northern Fields, and Pynes Victorian Orchard Projects Report on Community Consultation and Involvement**

For presentation at IPC Extraordinary meeting 2 March 2022 - Annex 2  
Nick Bradley, Chair IPC

### **A. Report on Community Consultation Exercise on Proposal to Borrow conducted 15 January - 18 February, 2022**

#### **1. METHOD.**

On 15 January 2022 parish councillors delivered by hand consultation survey papers to every household in Ide Parish. Envelopes contained a paper for each adult in the household and an explanatory leaflet setting out the background to the Weir Meadow and Orchard projects. The survey paper and leaflet accompany this report as attachments.

The Parish Council proposed borrowing £161,000 from the Public Works Loan Board to make up the balance in funding to purchase the two sites, in addition to the £96,000 already raised in donations and grant. Adult residents were invited to respond individually to this proposal either online using Survey Monkey or on paper using the tear-off reply slip.

The survey ran for 5 weeks from 15 January to 18 February 2022. During this consultation period, the Parish Council also held two public open Question and Answer sessions on Zoom (because of Covid-19), at 1pm and 5pm on 22 January 2022, to answer questions and explain its thinking on the borrowing proposals. The sessions were recorded. District Cllr Andy Swain chaired both sessions; Parish Council chair Nick Bradley answered questions at both sessions. The sessions were attended by 8 and 11 people respectively. A list of the topics addressed appears at the end of this report.

Number of registered electors in Ide Parish: 469.

#### **2. RESULTS.**

135 replies plus 1 spoiled paper: 75 used reply slip, 60 used online Survey Monkey.

Question A: 125 (92%) replied YES, 10 replied NO

Question B: 118 (87%) replied YES, 17 replied NO.

#### **3. CONCLUSION.**

87% of those who responded support Ide Parish Council in proceeding with the Project by borrowing from the Public Works Loan Board in order to service the loan repayments if it includes a Parish Council precept increase of 79%, which is the equivalent of an additional £1.89 per month (£22.68 per year) on the council tax for a band D household.

#### **4. COMMENTS AND QUESTIONS.**

**Anonymised collated comments made on consultation survey responses**

##### **4.1 SURVEY MONKEY REPLIES ONLINE**

These are wonderful projects for the village and I wholehearted support this.

Well done to all involved in getting these projects this far. I wholeheartedly support this approach.

Thank you for all your hard work.

These are both worthwhile projects, that will provide much needed additional space for the village, and a green belt protecting the village from future property development.

These acquisitions for the benefit of the village are going to be invaluable to so many different groups. The benefit will be felt for many years to come and the proposal to raise part of the funding via precept is entirely proportionate.

reality check - proposed rise in precept = less than the cost of half-a-pint of beer per week per household ! well done ipc, well done, smiley face smiley face.

I am happy to donate money to add trees and make like Britford garden.

Overall the increase is slight compared to what a wonderful space and facility this will bring to the village.

I object because. I purchased a property ..... to create a home for my family and any building work that has needed planning permission to better our family home has never received any support from anybody in the Ide village so sadly you don't get our support for this project.

Thank you for supporting this amazing scheme for the village.

Whilst I support the purchase of the Victorian Orchard wholeheartedly, as far as Weir Meadow & Northern Fields are concerned, I do have strong reservations. Whilst I do appreciate that the Church Commissioners always expect the very top price for anything they sell, I feel the price being paid for what is fairly low grade agricultural land, particularly in respect of the meadow is much too high. Weir Meadow in particular will spend a good part of the year water logged and unuseable. I am sure this has been taken into account and there will be plans to put drainage systems in place which once again will need to be funded. I'm also uncomfortable with potentially being forced into paying for something I don't totally agree with on the basis of a majority decision.

It's clear from the fundraising that people support the orchard much more than Weir Meadow. Forcing people to pay through the precept is unfair, especially as it would likely lead to a cessation of fundraising activity (it isn't clear from the info shared whether this is a stopgap or a longer term solution). If there was a commitment to continue fundraising, AND a majority of residents supported the purchase of Weir Meadow then that could be an option, but as the questions stand it's hard to support them.

I would like to see wildlife areas included within weir meadow plus all consideration to providing breeding bird nesting options including making space for swallows in sheds.

Thank you for all your work in getting this organised for the village!

The benefit to the Village is clear. The lack of open space in which numerous groups, clubs and individuals can exercise in a safe environment. The wider context of covid has meant that outdoor space is a physical and mental health benefit. This is a legacy that all our children and grand children will thank us for.

I agree in principle to project but am concerned by high price to be paid for poor to average agricultural land. I am not in favour of increase in Parish Precept as contributions should be voluntary not compulsory. Also these facilities will be used by people from outside the village who will be contributing nothing.

Looking forward to having more accessible community green space locally.

Great idea

I would be happy to support with adhoc donations and/or fundraising initiatives however do not agree for it to be forced upon residents. I also have concerns about further increases in council tax for local policing given the attraction weir meadow will bring to teenagers/adults as a hang out and potential antisocial behaviour it will bring, vandalism, petty crime & drug/alcohol abuse that we already see however will be magnified.

#### **4.2 PAPER REPLY SLIPS RETURNED**

Neither project is of interest to me and I'm not likely to venture into either of the fields. I would rather spend any available funds on health care.

Increase in council tax unfair to many in the village who will see no benefit.

They are important projects that could transform the village.

Am prepared to contribute through fundraising events etc. Am not happy with the "vote" being made public.

Very much looking forward to community events in the future.

Good luck. Look forward to the fundraising events.

I think it makes sense to obtain the loan in order to get the projects off the ground.

There have been longstanding flooding near entrance to Weir Meadow. This needs drainage - will cost be on IPC?

Do the purchase costs include the costs of developments on Weir Meadow?

Traffic: the project will lead to increased traffic (mixed - horses, children, tractors, minibuses etc). How will the council deal with this?

We are with you all the way on this and thank you for all your tireless work.

Great idea.

Will Weir Meadow be able to be accessed from The College? Any planned extension of footpaths?

I heartily concur with the need to form a legal framework to ensure the land remains "green space" in perpetuity for all and does not get sold through any "entryist" activities.

Seems a fair price to pay for a very important community asset.

£1.89 seems a fairly insignificant amount in today's cost of living and what it will bring is very good value for money.

Great idea! You have my full support.

I think it is well worth it, can't wait to use the green spaces.

Happy to support.

Fantastic opportunity for the community to fund a public space for all.

It does need to be for everyone, walkers, children, dog walkers not just the sports clubs. Well done for such an ambitious project.

Very happy to support.

## **5. TOPICS ADDRESSED AT OPEN Q&A SESSIONS ON 22 JANUARY 2022**

Q. Why should I pay for something I'll never use?

*A. We think the vast majority of residents and families will enjoy the benefits of one or other or both pieces of ground, some for exercise, some for being in open green space, some for sport, some for relaxation and time with friends outside.*

*It is a prime responsibility and duty of councils to provide and improve local facilities.*

*We have no significant public accessible green space in Ide other than the tiny Green, bounded by road.*

*It will prevent unwelcome development on these two sensitive sites, right on the edge of the village. They will provide a "lung" for residents in a village blighted by traffic.*

Q. Why can't the people who want this raise the money for themselves?

*A. We've already raised a very large sum by donation and grant, which reduces the amount we need to borrow substantially.*

*The projects are likely to benefit everyone in one way or another.*

*This is a classic public work initiative, of the sort that Parish Councils were created to undertake.*

*All local councils face this issue: Exeter City builds a swimming pool, but not everyone goes swimming.*

*We judge the price to be good value for the money, reasonable and in proportion to the long term benefits.*

*We are all being encouraged to exercise more. We agree that is right. This is a contribution the Council can make towards that.*

*This will provide sage, grassy areas for children.*

Q. Won't this mean more traffic?

*A. The cricket club have held matches throughout the summer next to Weir Meadow for 30 years, attracting away teams, without problems of parking or traffic.*

*Most local people using Weir Meadow will walk there.*

*On site car parking has been approved as part of planning permission, to prevent parking problems. The orchard is near the village car park; and we expect it to be used mainly by local residents.*

*The 50 other community orchards in South Devon do not report large numbers of outside visitors coming to use their orchards.*

Q. Will you be asking for more money when it comes to developing Weir Meadow? This is just the beginning.

A. *The orchard will require little or no future fund raising. We have grants for equipment, and it will be managed by volunteers.*

A. *Weir Meadow will need further fund raising, as set out in the prospectus brochure, in Phase IV of the project. Owning the land will open up access to grant giving and sporting bodies reluctant to fund capital projects.*

Q. Couldn't the money be better spent on car parks?

A. *We are providing car parking on site at Weir Meadow.*

A. *There is no other land suitable and available for car parking in Ide.*

A. *Current expert opinion advises against building more car parks in residential areas: they encourage more car use and purchase, and encourage parking by non residents.*

Q. We are completely surrounded by green space. Why do we need more?

A. *Ide residents live in the countryside, yet have little or no access to it.*

A. *Unlike their counterparts in towns and cities, park, public open green spaces and playing fields are rare in rural villages.*

Q. Will you allow dogs on the playing fields?

A. *There will need to be agreement and compromise to honour the competing and valid interests of dog owners and the public, especially children playing, and those running the sports pitches..*

A. *There will be waste bins provided, with signage requesting no fouling.*

A. *There will be limited, specific areas where dogs are not permitted.*

A. *Commercial dog walking by companies outside Ide will be discouraged*

A. *Triangular Field will remain wild ground, ideal for exercising dogs.*

A. *There will be a public footpath created up/down Northern Fields linking College Lane and Station Road across Weir Meadow*

Q. Will we receive CIL (Community Infrastructure Levy) money from Pynes Farm and Springwell developments?

A. *No for Pynes Farm.*

A. *Quite likely from Springwell if the planned development proceeds. But we cannot rely on it or factor it into the plan: we do not know if, when or how much. The Parish Council of the day will take a view on how best to use it if and when it materialises.*

Q. If we do receive CIL would the Parish Council use that to repay the loan?

A. *It could. But it cannot determine a decision ahead of the event.*

Q. Can we repay all or part of the loan if we decide to?

A. *Yes. As long as the interest rate is not lower at the time than it is now, we would pay no penalty for doing so.*

Q. Can you guarantee that the Parish Council won't sell the land on for houses, like Devon County Council is doing at the moment?

A. *The Parish Council does not have pressing budgetary commitments like education, social services or highways in the way that Counties and Districts do. So there is no pressure to raise funds on the back of cuts to stay solvent.*

*A. One of the prime reasons for pushing ahead with these projects is exactly to protect these pieces of land against possible unwelcome development.*

*A. The current owners of land surrounding Ide have track records of selling and applying for development. They are much more likely to sell for profit than ever the Parish Council is.*

*A. The variety of overages and conditions in the option agreements will make it pointless for future Parish Councils to sell on, for they would not benefit financially.*

Q. Why can't we use the orchard yet since we pay to rent it?

*A. We had to agree that a condition of renting it is to use it only as a private orchard, not open for public access.*

*A. We rented it (we share the rent 50:50 with Andy Bragg) to remove horses from it; to start protecting the mature trees; and start replanting ahead of being in a position to buy it.*

Q. How will we fund the further developments of Weir Meadow?

*A. See above*

Q. Will the Orchard be overrun with people from outside the village?

*A. See above.*

Q. What happens if the survey shows that people don't support increasing council tax to pay for it?

*A. We will decide that when we know the survey result.*

-----

## **B. Previous milestones consulting on and involving residents in the projects.**

**1.** The Council held a public open meeting in January 2017 to float the idea of a community orchard and recreation ground. Attended by 62 residents, the meeting gave enthusiastic support to both ideas. Following this, the Council set up working groups for the Meadow (12 members) and the Orchard (10 members) in March 2017 and October 2017 respectively, drawing in active support from members of the community not on the Parish Council, with sporting interests, legal, financial, agricultural, horticultural and environmental expertise, and leadership skills. These working groups have reported to the Council at every meeting.

**2.** Ide Neighbourhood Plan [see [idevillage.org.uk](http://idevillage.org.uk)] was formally 'made' in September 2018. Its production over a period of four years involved a series of consultation exercises including an exhibition in the village hall with a survey, two public meetings, a formal consultation exercise organised by Teignbridge District Council, and a village referendum confirming support for the policies. Two of the plan's seven policies cover Weir Meadow and the Orchard. Policy IDE05 is titled Weir Meadow and sets out the village's aspirations, which began in 2016, to buy the Meadow from the Church Commissioners to use as a recreation ground. Policy IDE06 is titled Local Green Spaces, and singles out four parcels of land, one of them Victorian Orchard. It sets out the village's aspiration to restore this neglected orchard and run it for the community. The Plan attracted huge support at the referendum, 88.3% voting in favour.

**3.** In February 2020 two public open meetings were held on Sat 22 and Wed 26 February, at 1pm and 6pm, to hear the Council's proposals to buy Northern Fields as well as Weir Meadow. 17 and 21

people attended respectively, and asked questions following a presentation by the Parish Council chair - see document attached. In discussion all present supported the proposals.

4. The Parish Council applied for in April 2020, and was granted planning permission in October 2020 for change of use of Weir Meadow to a recreation ground with erection of a single storey sports pavilion and associated car parking [Application Refs 20/00668/MAJ and 20/00669/FUL]. This was supported by the district and by the parish community without a single objection.

5. A third parish council working group of 11 members formed in January 2021, to bring together co-ordinated fund raising efforts for both projects. An appeal launched in August 2021 raised £64,975 from 65 individual residents. Added to the funds raised between 2018 and August 2021 by 12 different community groups and organisations, to enable the Council to negotiate options to buy the sites, a total of £86,845 has been raised in donations by the village community: strong evidence of community support.

6. *Ide Times* is the monthly village magazine delivered by hand free to every household in the parish. From inception as far back as 2015, the regular Parish Council article has carried monthly reports of progress on the projects. The magazine is also published on the village website.

7. All minutes of all three working party meetings are published on the village website. Fund raising leaflets, prospectus brochures and fund raising events are published on the website, under Green Space for Ide.

END

NCAB 24 2 22