

Have your say – a new community orchard or wildlife meadow for land behind the Slaughterhouse?

It might surprise some residents to know that there is a little pocket of green space behind the Slaughterhouse on Church St which belongs to Stapleford Parish Council; others will be very familiar with its charms and history. The land was spare after Collier Way was built and was sold to the Parish Council in 1982 (the idea of there being 'spare' land post-development these days is absurd!). Part of it was used by the District Council for a footpath leading from Cox's Close to Church Street. A further part has been devoted to the Villedômer garden, celebrating the village's twinning with the place of that name in France, and a millennium capsule has been buried in the centre. The area currently accommodates a few seating areas and children's play activities. It is valued by the community but not widely used.

The Parish Council proposes a new chapter in the land's history, using mainly grant funds to develop it as either a community orchard (with fruit freely available to residents) or a wildlife meadow. With respect to the former, we have sought expert opinion regarding the site's suitability for an orchard and have been told that it can accommodate around 15 fruit trees. Rowan, crab apple and hawthorn would dominate if the land was to be a wildlife meadow. It might also be possible to incorporate a pond into the plan, recognising that it would need maintaining and to be made secure. The Villedômer garden and millennium capsule would stay broadly as they are, unless there are very good reasons for change.

We would like to know whether residents support either of these plans. A Facebook poll to gather opinions is active on the 'Great Shelford and Stapleford Community' Facebook page, but some residents may prefer to email or write to the Clerk with their thoughts (clerk@staplefordparishcouncil.gov.uk; 14 Crawley End, Chrishall, Herts., SG8 8QL). If this is you, we would very much like to know:

1. Overall, do you support a modified use of the land behind the Slaughterhouse?
Yes/No
2. Would you prefer it to become a community orchard, mainly with fruiting trees and plants? Yes/No
3. Would you prefer it to become a meadow, mainly with plants designed to benefit wildlife? Yes/No
4. Would you prefer a mixture of meadow and orchard, benefiting both residents and wildlife? Yes/No
5. Do you support the inclusion of a secure pond? Yes/No
6. Would you be prepared to volunteer a few hours 2-3 times a year to help with establishing and maintaining the land? Yes/No
7. Please feel free to add any further comments.

To ensure that feedback is useful to SPC's decision making, please only respond to the poll either via Facebook or to the Clerk, not multiple times and not via multiple channels! The closing date for receipt of responses is Friday 21st October, so outcomes can be discussed at the Parish Council's November meeting.

Cllr Michael Gatward