



February 2016



Our garden offers opportunities for people of all ages and abilities to get involved in working the land, growing food and developing a sense of community. In addition the site will offer many other opportunities for the community and visitors to witness demonstrations of more sustainable living in the wider sense.

## **FIRSTLY**

Members of the Transition Chesterfield community group began to put together a plan for a demonstration working organic garden following permaculture principles during the early part of 2015. At a strategy open meeting the group decided to concentrate on at least one large collective project. The Organic Community Demonstration Garden was the most popular choice.

To begin the work we were seeking a derelict plot of land to be a base for the garden, and after discussions with the Sustainability Officer for Chesterfield Borough Council and a search of the Chesterfield area several possible sites were found.

We have also made contact with people from the local Permaculture Association learning and demonstration network (LAND) and with several members of Garden Organic at Ryton (Coventry), including the Chief Executive, James Campbell, and both organisations have offered to work with us to support the venture.

## **OUR POTENTIAL SITE**

In January 2016, after a number of enquiries and viewings, a site was suggested to us between the 'Fairplay Garden' and the Westfield Allotment site on Ashgate Road, Chesterfield. The site was originally part of the Westfield Allotment site, which was

leased from Chesterfield Borough Council by the charity 'Fairplay' to build a safe outdoor space for their children and young people with disabilities.

Please see Appendices 1 & 2 on pages 4 & 5.

(1) Is an old CBC Plan of the site with the Fairplay Garden and the waste land marked. (2) Is an aerial photograph of the site.

## **INITIAL DISCUSSIONS**

After initial discussions with Heather Fawbert, the Chief Executive of Fairplay it was discovered that they had no requirement for the waste land beyond their fenced-in garden. A clause on their Lease documentation stated that they were unable to sub-let the land to us, which was a potential problem.

At this point we contacted Peter Corke, the Sustainability Officer for Chesterfield Borough Council, who is responsible for land of this type owned by the Borough. After discussions with his colleagues, he agreed that, subject to Fairplay agreeing to sub-let the waste-land to us, CBC would draw up a Licence to sub-let which would be attached to their current 20 year lease. Peter suggested an initial period of five years for the Agreement.

## **INITIAL CONTACTS AND VISITS**

At this point, before we proceed with the above, contact and visits have been made with Fairplay and Westfield Allotments. We consider that our project will be richer and more sustainable if our two potential neighbours are aware of and involved in our project.

A visit was made to the Fairplay buildings and site to see the work of the charity. As a result of this we now have a much better understanding of their amazing work with hundreds of disabled young people in North Derbyshire. Their facilities and outdoor space are purpose built and designed for the needs of their users. It seems very likely that if our garden goes ahead, our volunteers and activities will be available to complement and support the work of the charity.

Contact was also made with Alan Millington, the site manager of Westfield Allotments. A very friendly and informative discussion was held with Alan and another experienced plot holder on the Allotment site. We had discussions about the land, the established fruit trees on the plot, the 2/3 settlement tanks on site, the wildlife (badgers & foxes) and, in particular, the high quality soil on the site.

We walked on the site from the allotment and discovered a large 'sink hole' near to the top end of the site near to the allotment. Several interesting aspects were discussed, including that, in the past, when the complete site formed Westfield Allotments, the settlement tanks retained water and the stored water was hand pumped and used on the plots.

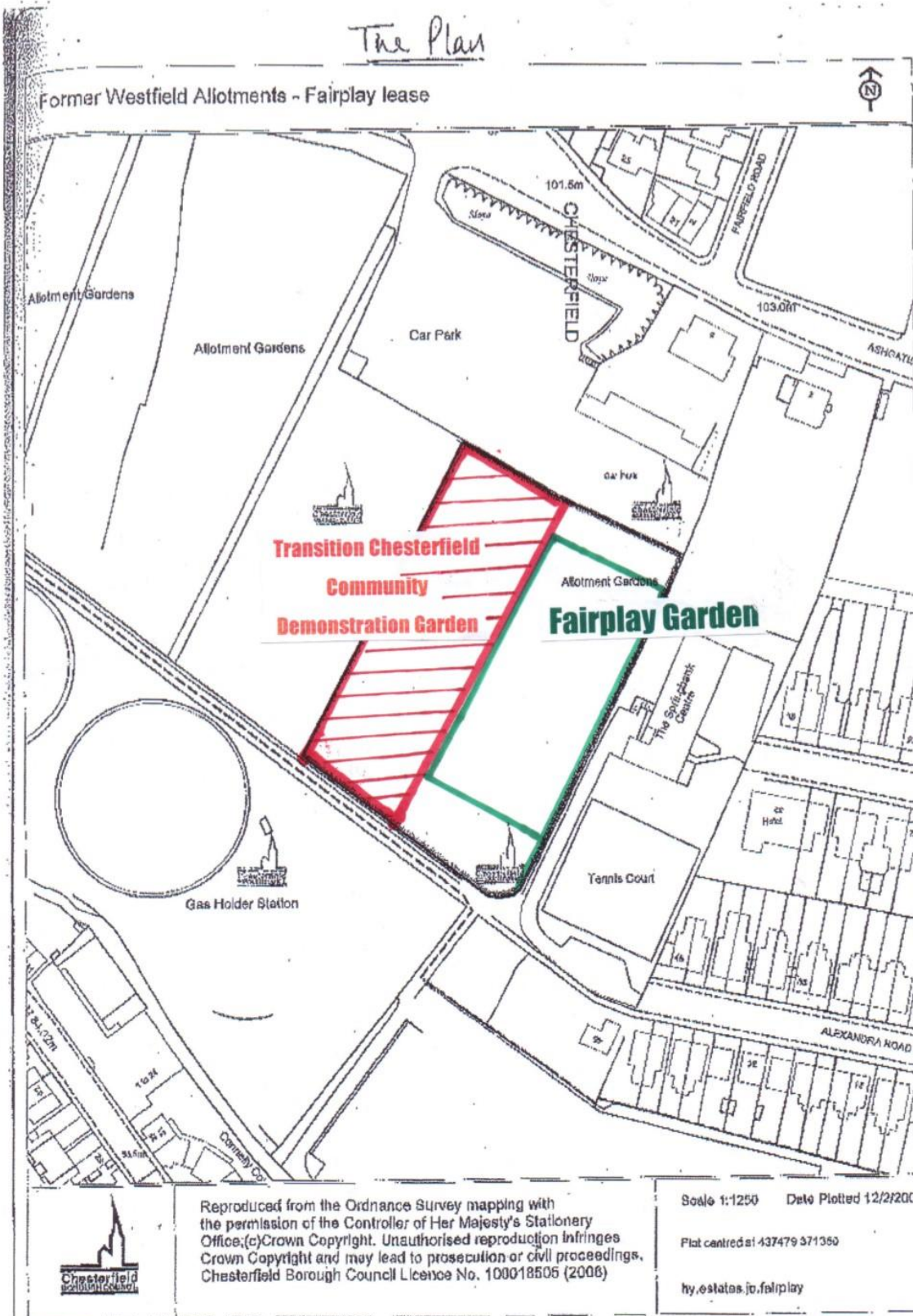
### **THE NEXT STAGES**

In order to move things forward it is suggested that the following steps are taken, these will not necessarily happen in this order:

1. Begin publicising the project to our mailing lists, asking for interested people to make themselves known.
2. Clear a few pathways on the land so that a site visit to look at the possibilities is possible.
3. Arrange a meeting of interested people and at the same time a site visit.
4. Jointly confirm that the land is suitable for the project and press the 'green' light.
5. Ask for people who would like to join a 'management group' for the garden.
6. Arrange an Agreement which Fairplay and Chesterfield Borough Council that they are both happy with.
7. Produce a working 'Project Plan' to determine the scope of the project, particularly for the first year.

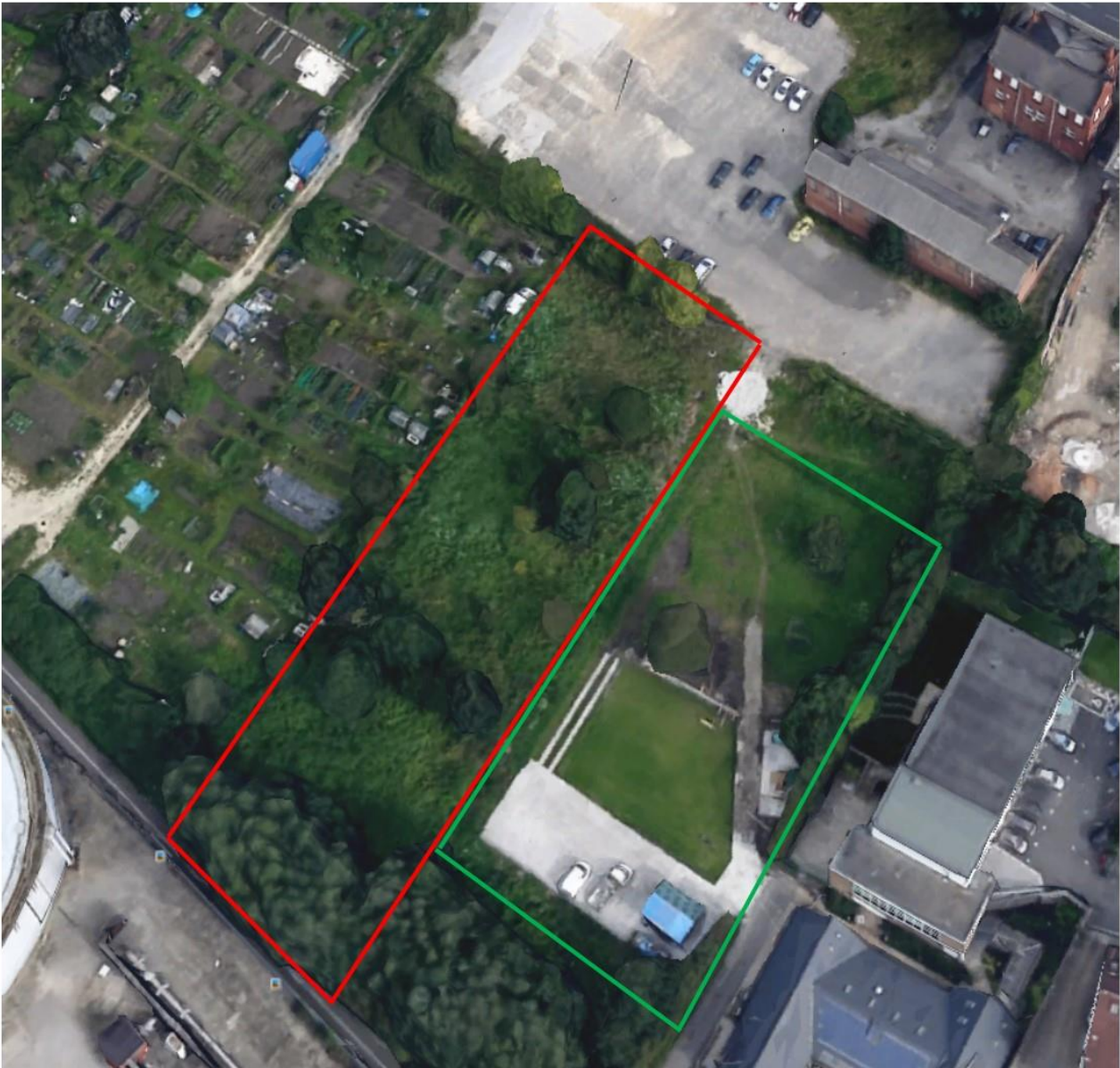
ORGANIC COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT

APPENDIX 1—An old CBC plan of the Westfield Allotment site





**APPENDIX 2—Aerial Photograph of site**



**Wasteland**—Red boundary

On a slope with many trees, and much scrub etc.

**Fairplay Garden**—Green boundary

Fenced and grassed with raised beds, polytunnel & outdoor play equipment.

## **Appendix 3 – TEXT & IDEAS FROM AN EARLIER DOCUMENT**

### **STRATEGIC GOALS**

To develop skills and knowledge within communities in relation to organic gardening and healthy eating.

To support the development of healthy, inclusive communities through working in partnership with them to create other organic community gardens.

To promote and increase awareness of the benefits of organic community gardening; the value of food security; and the importance of sustainable development.

To advise public authorities and community/voluntary groups on the development of strategies and action plans for creating organic community gardens and addressing food poverty.

### **MISSION**

Transition Chesterfield is guided by a concern for future generations as well as our own. We believe that strong communities, based on co-operation, will be more resilient and sustainable. We strive to be honest and open in our communication, and to base our decisions on the best scientific understanding, while remaining flexible and open to change.

This project aims to do that through promoting and developing organic community gardens and initiatives to address food poverty. We aim to build an evidence base which will influence our political leaders to make decisions which take account of the value of organic gardening, the need to address food insecurity in our communities, and the imperative of developing strategies for sustainable development.

### **OUR ACTIVITIES IN THE COMMUNITY**

At the heart of what we do will be community building and eco-therapy, so whether we are working with a community to reclaim some land and create an edible organic garden, or developing projects to tackle food poverty, we believe our work will not only improve the health and well-being of those individuals involved but also act as a springboard for other community development and action.

## ORGANIC COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT

We will provide courses; support, represent and promote community-managed gardens, allotments and other green spaces; and create opportunities for local communities to grow. We consider local wildlife to be very important too; to support this we will hold sessions to encourage and support wildlife conservation in the garden. We will work with other community groups to help empower local people of all ages, backgrounds and abilities to build better communities and to make a positive impact on their surrounding environment.

We will particularly promote community gardens and urban green spaces, demonstrating their value to decision-makers, funders, the public and the media.

Specifically, we will work with Garden Organic to deliver the Master Gardeners and the Master Composters Programmes to encourage those who wish to mentor others to gain the qualification and experience.

We recently held an evening talk on what Permaculture is, presented by the manager of a Permaculture Association LAND garden in Nottingham (Ecoworks). He has agreed to help us and to share his experience as we embark on our project.

Transition Chesterfield is famous for its Potato Day, which is held in late January each year and which has grown to become one of the largest in the country. 2016 will be our 8<sup>th</sup> year of holding the event, which provides seed potatoes, onion sets, shallots, garlic, peas, beans and other vegetable seeds for the public, to encourage people to grow their own vegetables. We also propose to grow plants for sale in the spring to help growers who are not able to start off their crops under cover. This could include bedding and vegetable plants.

We already run an extensive programme of Skill-share Workshops, which will be extended when we are constructing the site and particularly when we have begun to establish the garden areas. As well as the Master Gardeners & Composters courses we will be in a position to run many new skill-share events as a direct result of having the space.

### **IMPORTANT POINTS**

- No experience is necessary for people to get involved.
- People joining us will work alongside experienced community gardeners and 'Master Gardeners' each time they visit, learning how to grow vegetables and flowers.
- Informal education will feature in many activities to strengthen the community.

## ORGANIC COMMUNITY GARDEN PROJECT

- The project will improve health and wellbeing through working outside and connecting with others.
- Community members can take part in as little or as much as they want.
- We will have a community space, connecting people to people and to the community.

### **HEALTHY EATING AND COOKING**

In addition to promoting the community garden we will promote healthy cooking and eating as another key objective. By focusing on reducing costs by growing your own food, and as a way of tackling food poverty, we plan to ensure that people on low budgets benefit from growing and eating locally produced organic fruit and vegetables, which can often be prohibitively expensive when bought from more commercial sources.

We will run cooking demonstrations and healthy-eating workshops as part of our Community Garden. For our cookery days we will harvest what we grow and then openly cook it on site, providing recipes and sharing the food with participants. We will also run other events where participants cook with the produce grown in the garden.

### **FUNDING THE PROJECT**

Transition Chesterfield will support the early stages of this project, and, assuming we can find and lease a suitable plot, we will at that stage look to find ways of funding each individual part of the whole project. Each of the component parts will be prioritised, fully described and completely costed. When this is done we will engage in much fundraising activity, looking at all possibilities locally and nationally. It will not be an expensive project because we will always look to practice the five R's: reduce, re-use, repair, recycle and review!



**MAIN PROJECT IDEAS:**

- 1) Several **COMMUNITY GROWING BED AREAS** – to be the centre of outdoor organic vegetable production.
- 2) A **FRUIT GROWING ORCHARD** – to allow for the cultivation and propagation of traditional fruits (apples, pears, plums etc.) and some unusual and interesting tree fruits too.
- 3) A **SOFT FRUIT AREA** – where strawberries, raspberries, black and red currants, gooseberries etc. would be cultivated and propagated.
- 4) A **HERB GARDEN** – where culinary and medicinal herbs would be grown: this could be used when we do more workshops on herbal medicine.
- 5) An example **GREENHOUSE** – made from plastic bottles and other waste materials, similar to the one that has been produced by Whitecotes Primary School.
- 6) An array of **COLD FRAMES** – constructed from waste and recycled materials.
- 7) A **COMPOSTING CORNER** – with specific pens to demonstrate how this can be most effectively done using waste and recycled materials.
- 8) Demonstration **WATER HARVESTING** by various methods throughout the site.
- 9) A **WORKSHOPS AREA** – where we could run our many workshops, e.g. general mending, DIY solar, straw or cob building construction, seed swapping, or pruning.
- 10) Various forms of **SHELTER** for inclement weather.
- 11) An area for **PLANT PROPOGATION**
- 12) A **STORAGE AREA** for materials and tools.
- 13) An **APPLE PRESSING HUB** – where people can bring their spare fruit in season for processing into juice for consumption, storage or perhaps cider production?
- 14) A **PRODUCE AREA** – where spare produce can be made available for vulnerable local residents, schools, soup kitchens, food banks, etc.
- 15) A **SAFE PLAY AREA** – for young children to enjoy in the garden.
- 16) A **PEACEFUL QUIET CORNER** – with seating where visitors can relax, read a book and chill out.

**POSSIBLE SUGGESTED IDEAS AFTER LOCAL CONSULTATION:**

- 1) A **MULTI-PURPOSE COMMUNITY BUILDING** – either straw bale rendered construction or cob construction. This would be built by traditional methods and would be a low-cost shelter to hold events and workshops, for storage, and as a focus for much general community activity. We envisage solar panels on the roof, a battery bank, LED lighting, cameras located for wildlife monitoring and security, water collection from the roof etc.



- 2) A **POLYTUNNEL** – to extend the growing season and to allow us to consider growing vegetables and fruits that would be impossible without it. It will also be used in the early season to grow plants for sale to raise funds.

- 3) An **OUTDOOR COOKING AREA** – with barbeques, a pizza oven, a solar oven, a tandoor, a food preparation area, tables and seating, etc.
- 4) Several **BEE HIVES** – to help pollinate our crops, produce honey and enable us to encourage bee keeping.
- 5) Some **CHICKENS** – for egg production and to enable us to run courses on keeping hens at home.
- 6) A **COMPOSTING TOILET** – for obvious reasons!
- 7) A **WILDLIFE POND** – which would be a great thing to have, although important safety issues would have to be considered.

All of the above will be designed to be functional, but will also be created so that they can be used to demonstrate ways in which these things could be done at home by the local community or visitors.