

# SAVE COMBE DOWN ALLOTMENTS

## Background and Update

Since the widely attended public meeting at Combe Down Primary School in December 2023 a number of actions are in progress. A committee has been formed with sub groups for specific activities. Detailed action plans have been agreed and allocated. We are very fortunate to have strong and experienced support from the Allotment Association and a range of skills available from committee members. We do though need more volunteers with further skills, in particular around helping to manage social media traffic and potentially finance and legal skills. **PLEASE CONTACT Chris Pearce IF YOU CAN ASSIST:**

[combedown@banes-allotments.org.uk](mailto:combedown@banes-allotments.org.uk)

You may have heard that no new allotments are being allocated – this is not true, plots continue to be allocated to those on the waiting list as they come available. We have had notice to quit but no actual date has been indicated.

## Key Facts

**January 2023:** Council notified the AA that they expected to sign a 15 year lease extension once the issues of the proposed public footpath diversion (PROW) was resolved. Planning services advised that permission was not required for a proposed new vehicle access point for additional proposed plots. Council had permission from the landowner and work would begin in Spring 2023.

**March 2023:** A campaign was implemented from residents of St Winifred's Drive who wished to retain the grass field area and not have it returned to allotments. Allotment holders were unaware of any opposition. As a result the AA was informed by the Council that additional allotments would not be going ahead.

In addition at this time, the Council ceased working on the lease issue 'until after the May council elections'.

**April 2023:** the PROW application was withdrawn.

**7 November 2023:** The AA was informed of the landowners advance notice.

**2 December 2023:** Allotment holders were notified by Lynda Deane, Head of Service at BANES, that 'the Council had been given advance notice by the landowner of his intention to end the lease on the land occupied by the allotments **AND** the area off St Winifred's Drive, in 2025.'

Council '**is considering options available**' and set up a dedicated email address for enquiries [combedown\\_projects@bathnes.gov.uk](mailto:combedown_projects@bathnes.gov.uk)

**12 December 2023:** A well attended public meeting was held at Combe Down School where Councillor Pankhania spoke in support of the allotments. Councillor Saini also attended. As a result an action group was formed, a petition launched addressing the Council and the landowner.

**26 January 2024:** Council declined application to designate site as Green Space protection in the Local Plan, citing perceived conflicts with existing Mineral Protection policies.

**1 February 2024:** Cllr Pankhania presented our 5000+ signature petition to the meeting of BANES Cabinet which was discussing the Draft Local Plan.

**12 February 2024:** consultation on Local Plan commences – **EVERYONES SUPPORT IS NEEDED.**

## Next steps, Key Actions and Key Dates

### **Action 1: Local Green Space process and current status**

Very disappointing that the Allotment Association (AA) nomination for designation of the site is not being supported by the council officers. On 12 February the Council will launch its public consultation on the Options for the New Local Plan. The AA will be posting more info and a form for responding on its web site. We need as many people as possible to write in and support our case.

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## **Action 2: Key stakeholder engagement/ Communications update**

We are in communication with key stakeholders - Council, MP, landowner (not directly but via his solicitor), and wider interested parties with extensive related interests and legal obligations such as:

- allotment provision, education, health and wellbeing, climate/net zero, sustainable food production, environment, biodiversity, protected species, planning, partnerships, other allotment campaigns, media (newspapers, TV, radio). Further supporters are identified and contacted almost daily.
- We have established an online petition on Change.org alongside paper signatories which has currently reached a total in excess of 5000. We have established dedicated pages on FaceBook, Instagram and X (formerly known as Twitter) – please see links below.

## **Action 3: Asset of Community Value update**

An Action Group is Investigating the processes needed to register the CD allotments as an Asset of Community Value (ACV). Including how we can raise the money within a set time frame.

If granted it emphasises its value to the community and allows us the right to bid if the landowner wants to sell the land. However It doesn't give us the right of first refusal but does give a breathing space during which the land cannot be sold.

**In order to apply quickly, we need 21 people who are on the electoral register for Combe Down to support the application. It costs nothing and will be the quickest way to nominate the allotment land for Asset of Community Value – see action 5 below.**

## **Action 4: Self - Management Option Appraisal update**

An Action Group is looking into how we might form such a Self-Management Group for the site – as they have in Lansdown for example. With the aim to inform the landowner on how we can offer this option if he no longer wishes to deal with the Council.

This will include the cost and procedures necessary to operate the CD allotment site by the plot holders.

## **Action 5: WHAT CAN YOU DO?**

- CONTINUE TO SHARE THE PETITION WITH ALL YOUR FRIENDS AND CONTACTS
- LIKE, FOLLOW, COMMENT, SUPPORT THE CAMPAIGN ON SOCIAL MEDIA VIA LINKS BELOW
- VOLUNTEER YOUR SKILLS TO SUPPORT ACTIONS AND ACTIVITIES
- SEND EMAIL TO CHRIS PEARCE: [combedown@banes-allotments.org.uk](mailto:combedown@banes-allotments.org.uk) and agree to be part of an Unincorporated Body to nominate the allotments as Asset of Community Value
- MAKE YOUR VOICE HEARD – KEY TO GAINING INFLUENTIAL BACKING FROM THE COUNCIL AND OTHER REPRESENTATIVES AND ORGANISATIONS
- RESPOND TO THE COUNCIL LOCAL PLAN CONSULTATION DUE TO OPEN ON FEBRUARY 12 AND SUPPORT OUR CASE.



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