

**LAND OFF PUMP LANE
RAINHAM
KENT
ME8 7TJ**

**TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNING ACT 1990
APPEAL REFERENCE: APP/A2280/W/20/3259868**

APPEAL BY A C GOATHAM & SON

INQUIRY DOCUMENT: Community Orchard Implementation and Management

PREPARED BY:

Robert Hughes

26/02/2021

INQUIRY DOCUMENT REF: ID 26

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Inquiry Document is provided in regard to the Planning Appeal at Land Off Pump Lane Rainham Kent ME8 7TJ (Appeal Reference: APP/A2280/W/20/3259868) and has been prepared by Robert Hughes.
- 1.2. It includes details of the work and approach of The Orchard Project, a charity that supports communities to create new orchards. The note provides a summary of the Community Orchard Model that has been successfully used by The Orchard Project to design and deliver community orchard projects across the United Kingdom.

2. THE ORCHARD PROJECT – COMMUNITY ORCHARD MODEL

- 2.1. During the inquiry, the Inspector raised queries of Mr Hughes regarding the implementation and management of the community orchards proposed. Mr Hughes has been in discussion with The Orchard Project regarding their work to implement and manage community orchards and how this could work in relation to the appeal scheme.
- 2.2. The Orchard Project are keen to work with communities and schemes such as the proposed development to establish new community orchards, and have prepared the attached proposal document to outline their approach and use of a Community Orchard Model to this opportunity.
- 2.3. The approach is built around supporting and training local people to be involved and learn the skills to maintain the orchards themselves. This is achieved through community engagement, skills development, and ongoing support.
- 2.4. The work undertaken by The Orchard Project through their Community Orchard Model reflects the aspirations of the appellant to enable residents of both the proposed development and the Twydall and Rainham area to be actively involved in the creation and stewardship of new community orchards and to enjoy the associated social, health and environmental benefits.
- 2.5. Key elements of the Community Orchard Model include the following:
 - I. Initial community consultation and design workshops, enabling communities to design their own orchards;
 - II. Forming teams of orchard leaders and volunteers within the local community;
 - III. Preparation of an Orchard Management Plan co-created with the orchard volunteers. These may also include involvement with landscape management firms if these are involved with the site;
 - IV. Providing training and support for volunteers, including horticultural skills, group working, community fundraising and wider community involvement;
 - V. Continued support for 5 years;
 - VI. Assisting with future maintenance – organic pest and disease management, pruning and harvesting;

- VII. On-going orchard support and training after completion of the project – this extends to both volunteers and landscape management staff; and
 - VIII. Supporting orchard groups with celebrations and events to bring people into the orchards.
- 2.6. Further details of the Orchard Project can be found on their website:
www.theorchardproject.org.uk
- 2.7. The Orchard Project have a reported 95% tree survival rate across the orchards they have worked with communities to design, deliver and manage. This demonstrates the effectiveness of their approach and the Community Orchard Model.
- 2.8. In addition, the Community Orchard Model allows for flexibility in the management of the community orchards by both local volunteers and management companies, ensuring the long-term survival of the orchards into the future.

Robert Hughes

26.02.2021

Lower Rainham Community Orchard Proposal

Proposal to: Incola

Date: 25.2.21

About The Orchard Project

The Orchard Project is the UK's only charity dedicated to bringing orchards into the heart of urban communities. We believe community orchards transform lives and help nature to thrive, so we support people to create new orchards or restore existing orchards back to health.

We have a proven model of designing and delivering community orchard projects across the UK. Our model has been developed to maximise community ownership of the project and optimise the chances of success of the trees; we have a 95% tree survival rate across 500+ orchards.



Benefits of community orchards

A community orchard is a green space with 5 or more fruit or nut trees planted in it. At the heart of a community orchard is the vibrant common space it creates for its community. Our community groups tell us their orchard is a place to meet their neighbours, to bring people together, and a much-needed place to enjoy nature within urban settings.

Training local people in orcharding skills like pruning means their orchard can be healthy and productive, which in turn provides more free locally-grown fresh fruit for the community. Community orchards improve health and wellbeing for local residents through outdoor activity and promoting healthy eating. The orchard also creates opportunities for learning new skills. Lastly, of course, community orchards offer vast environmental benefits; increasing biodiversity, capturing carbon and protecting local heritage fruit varieties.

Our community orchard model

Our orchard delivery model revolves around supporting and training communities to look after the fruit trees and green spaces themselves. It is primarily rooted in skills development and support for communities, and we offer the groups we work with an extensive support package focused on tree aftercare and continued community engagement. We continue support for 5 years as new orchards take time to fully develop and thrive. Community engagement is a fundamental part of The Orchard Project's core model of delivery, developed over almost a decade's practice.

The elements of our model to ensure sustainable community orchards

Our model relies on the energy and drive of the local community who will benefit from the fruit trees and orchard green spaces. We work closely local people to form a team of orchard leaders (these are the lead orchard volunteers who will be managing the orchards), during and after the life of the project.

The trees and spaces are cared for as per the arrangements put in place in each Orchard Management Plan which is co-created with the orchard volunteers. The arrangements will vary but will typically be carried out by the orchard leaders and local residents but can also include involvement from local landscape management firms if these are involved in the site.

We offer ongoing orchard support and training after the project has been completed (both for local residents and the landscape management staff), as well as help with future maintenance including around organic pest and disease management, pruning and harvesting.

Each group we work with is automatically part of our network of community orchard groups which includes: seasonal training days, networking and knowledge sharing events, access to expert advice, newsletters, email reminders of maintenance activities and other ongoing engagement channels.

Each orchard starts with a community consultation and design workshop, resulting in bespoke orchards which communities have designed themselves.

Volunteers receive training and support so that they have the relevant horticultural skills to look after their orchard.

This training also addresses: group working skills; community fundraising to cover ongoing maintenance costs; creating a strong and engaged volunteer base; and involving the wider community so that more people will benefit.

We also support the group to put on local celebration events in the orchard such as blossom picnics, apple days and wassails, to help bring people into the orchard.

This approach to orchard delivery enables groups to have the skills and confidence to look after their own community orchard, long-term.

96% of our beneficiaries say that their involvement in the orchard has helped them to meet people and feel more involved in their community.

Previous projects

Olympic Park community orchard with Churchman's Landscape Architect

We were commissioned by Churchman's, working on behalf of the Paralympic committee, to create an orchard in Queen Elizabeth's Park in celebration of the London 2012 Paralympic Games. We planted an orchard of over 30 heritage variety fruit trees – including apples, pears, plums and cherries, each variety representing the home town of the UK medal winners. The project involved substantial community consultation and engagement to create a new community group to plant and look after the orchard. This took the form of a series of fruit themed workshops in local schools and community venues, events on the site and meetings with local residents to form a group. The orchard is now being managed by a group of volunteers based around the Park.



Kath Rosen (CEO)
The Orchard Project
ceo@theorchardproject.org.uk
www.theorchardproject.org.uk