



PRESS RELEASE

Godalming Town Council looks to the future needs of residents

Godalming Town Council has agreed that alternative use of allotment land at More Road, Farncombe may bring bigger benefits to the community. The town's emerging Neighbourhood Plan has identified a lack of community infrastructure in the area. These needs include a new medical centre, an NHS dentist, playgrounds and other recreation space, small office space, employment land and affordable housing. At a meeting of the Town Council's Policy & Management Committee held on Thursday 13 October 2016 Councillors indicated that meeting one or more of these needs may be better use of the underused allotment land.

Speaking after the committee meeting Councillor Stefan Reynolds Chairman of the Policy & Management Committee said: "The chief worries expressed by residents when it comes to planning applications in this area is the lack of infrastructure and paucity of affordable housing. This suggestion from the council seeks to look at the possible use of an underutilised asset for the greater benefit of the local community".

Since January 2014 Godalming Town Council has been supporting the process of developing a Neighbourhood Plan for the town. Volunteers have been researching the current and future needs of the town, looking at issues such as housing, transport, community infrastructure, environment, the local economy and heritage & design. As part of the Neighbourhood Plan process a call has been made to local landowners inviting them to identify possible sites which could address needs identified in the Neighbourhood Plan.

As a landowner, Godalming Town Council has a duty to manage its assets to best serve the current and future needs of the town's residents. As part of its review the committee looked at how allotment land is used. The majority of allotment provision for the town is located to the north east of the town with little provision elsewhere. The committee agreed that the community's potential need for additional infrastructure merited putting the More Road allotment site forward to the Neighbourhood Plan's call for sites. The council would of course look at alternative allotment provision for those plots currently in use.

The identification of the More Road site does not mean that it will actually prove suitable for an alternative use. However the committee considered that debate about the overall needs of the community and how the town council can support is one that should be conducted openly. In deciding to include More Road in the Neighbourhood Plan call for sites, councillors were presented with information indicating that approximately 50% of the site is poorly maintained with little evidence of the land being actively cultivated. Councillors acknowledged that putting forward any land for an alternative use will result in some residents losing a valuable resource, but that such loss needs to be balanced against the potential for a wider community benefit. If, at some future date, it is agreed to use the land for a specific alternative use the ultimate decision will rest with the Secretary of State.

Ends

In case of query please contact:

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