

REPORT TO ASSETS AND OPERATIONS COMMITTEE

SPRINGFIELDS ALLOTMENTS PROPOSAL



Report Reference A-24-03
Meeting Date 10th June 2024
Agenda Item 9
Prepared by Town Clerk

1.0 BACKGROUND

Great Places approached the Town Council concerning a plot of land they own between 4 and 10 Springfields, the site was previously a community operated garden, *the Secret Garden of Springfields* but had since become overgrown and neglected. Great Places asked if the Town Council would like to utilise the site for the benefit of the local community.

The Town Clerk and Planning and Facilities Officer met the Great Places officer on site to view the space and it was agreed it would make a good small allotment site.

2.0 PROPOSAL

2.1 PROPOSAL SUMMARY

The proposal is for the Town Council to lease the land from Great Places on a 10-year peppercorn lease for the purpose of creating a small allotment site. The site would be managed by the Knutsford Allotment Society as with the council's other sites.

The creation of new allotments would contribute to the shortfall in allotment provision in Knutsford for which there has continued to be high demand. It would also provide a site in part of the town which is not in close proximity to allotment provision.

The allotment plots would be smaller than usual and would be marketed as such, making them ideal for someone who does not need or could not tend a larger space, or someone who would like to try allotment gardening for the first time. Letting priority would go to residents of the St John's Wood ward.

2.2 LEGAL CONSIDERATIONS

The arrangement would involve entering into a lease for the site. It is envisaged Great Places will provide a standard form lease which would be reviewed by the Town Clerk; if it was felt necessary legal advice would be obtained but it is anticipated it would not be necessary. As the lease would be in excess of 7 years, it would be registrable with the Land Registry, this would be undertaken by the Town Clerk as it is reasonably simple.

The council has express powers to lease land for the provision of allotments. It is likely that there would be a priority on to letting allotments to people living in the St John's Wood ward, as a means to minimise the need for parking (as there is no parking provision) and to support the locality.

2.3 FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The upfront costs will involve clearance of the site. This will predominantly require manual labour: volunteers would be sought (such as through corporate social responsibility programmes with local businesses) for a clear up day working with the Town Ranger. The site would then be rotavated.

The lease would be a peppercorn lease (£1 pa). The site would generate a small income of c. £50 per year from allotment fees (based on m² fees as per other sites, net of allotment society commission and OAP discount). There would be no major ongoing costs, ad hoc repairs would be funded through the overall allotments income.

There would be a small upfront cost for the installation of a sign for the site (c. £200). Great Places has agreed to provide £1,500 towards the upfront costs which would cover the cost of waste removal and hire of equipment to renovate the plots and probably the sign.

2.4 OPERATIONAL CONSIDERATIONS

Knutsford Allotment Society has confirmed it would manage the site on a day-to-day basis, as it does for the council's other sites. The ongoing operational impact is therefore minimal and it is considered it would not place any significant additional burden on the council.

The creation of the allotment site would have some operational impact. It would require a clearance day to be planned and executed and the plots to then be prepared for cultivation. This would be led by the Planning and Facilities Officer with operational staff, the allotment society and volunteers.

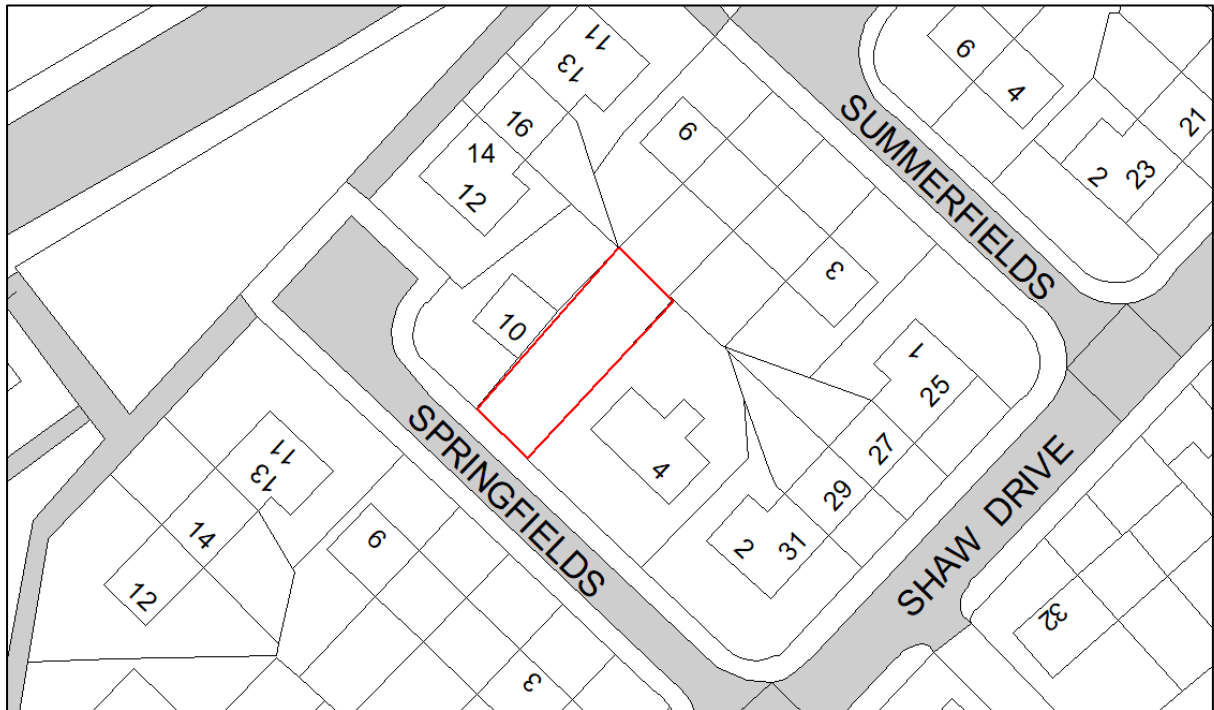
It is envisaged four plots would be created. Existing materials (raised beds, paving etc) would be retained to make one plot a raised garden.

3.0 DECISIONS REQUIRED

The committee should consider the proposal.

As the proposal involves the acquisition of a long-term asset, should the committee wish to proceed it should resolve to recommend to Full Council that approves entering into a lease as outlined.

SITE LOCATION PLAN



SITE PHOTOGRAPHS

