

13 Buttermere
Hemsby
Great Yarmouth
NORFOLK
NR29 4JZ

26th October 2009

Peter Warner

Head of Department
Planning and Development
Great Yarmouth Borough Council
Maltings House
Malthouse Lane
Gorleston
Great Yarmouth
NR31 OGY

Dear Peter,

I write to you as Chairman on behalf of the Hemsby Allotments and Leisure Gardeners Association, regarding the provision of Open Spaces for an affordable and accessible community garden amenity in Hemsby. We have around 40 paid up members and maintain a list of some 90 persons requiring these facilities.

You will, no doubt, have seen in the media of these modern, eco friendly, family and community oriented projects. Our aim is for an inclusive facility that would bring together many facets of the community.

Great Yarmouth Borough Council has itself recommended gardening and allotments in their report 'Getting Great Yarmouth Fit and Active' which can be viewed on the web.

Our association with it's goals has made contact with Jim Shrimplin (LDF) and Tony Wright MP, who have offered us their support.

I shall try to describe below a list of facilities that we have agreed would provide such an amenity :-

First of all we would consider safety. We propose a carefully designed secure entrance and off road parking. Also there should be a safe area for children to play nearby away from cars.

Secondly we consider inclusion. We would wish to provide some plots close to the road with level access, smaller plots and raised seed beds for the disabled, elderly or infirm. It would also require fair, affordable prices so that those on low incomes can participate.

Women and children make up a large proportion of modern allotment and leisure gardeners. Proper toilet facilities therefore need to be made available to the site. This might include a modern eco-friendly composting loo, designed to look just like a big garden shed.

Social and community benefits could be enhanced by providing an area for meeting, barbeque and picnic seating.

Other features should include drainage, water supply, permission for sheds and greenhouses on each plot, roadways to access the plots especially for delivering manure, pathways between plots and screening / security fences for the site.

If land was to be purchased specifically for allotments, these would become Statutory Allotments and come under the protection of the Secretary of State. As such this would represent an enduring legacy for the village.

It is possible, if not desirable that many of the above requirements be met by siting the amenity close to existing facilities such as parking, toilets and children's play area. This would be possible if a suitable site could be found adjacent to the village hall.

During a number of meetings with the Hemsby Parish Council, we have been informed that;

- 1) that the Parish Council does not own any land
- 2) there is no land available for allotments
- 3) that there are no funds available to purchase or lease land for allotments

With this in mind our members have researched other ways to meet our needs. It would appear that there is a procedure known as a Section 106 Agreement that could be useful. It is our understanding that these agreements can be made with developers to make planning applications acceptable to local planning authorities.

We understand that this procedure is already quite familiar to the Parish Council and has been used recently to acquire new open spaces for the village. For example, the agreement with Norfolk Homes to provide monies to extend the local playing field.

Clearly there is a need to provide and improve upon open spaces and leisure areas within the village. Allotments and leisure gardens are a valuable form of open space for leisure and recreation. With modern homes having increasingly smaller gardens this is even more important. Currently there are no allotments within the village. A demand for affordable allotments within the village has been demonstrated by our petition earlier this year, with signatures from around 40 Hemsby electors / council tax payers delivered to the Parish Council.

We believe that by using Section 106 Agreements it would be possible to acquire land to provide allotments/ leisure gardens for the village without any capital cost to the Parish Council and therefore without impact upon the level of Council Tax in the area.

The 90 Hemsby residents on our list are typically not isolated individuals, but have partners and / or children who intend not only to participate in but to benefit from these plots, say 1 per applicant. This gives a total of some 180 people with a direct link to these requirements. That is approaching 10% of the population of Hemsby. We therefore estimate a requirement of some 6 acres at 14 plots to the acre to provide 84 plots. This would allow for a 'waiting list' to be maintained ensuring efficient use of the plots.

Since there is no land for sale in Hemsby, I appreciate that this may be a matter of compulsory purchase. I have already spoken at length to Chris Skinner, Head of Central Services on this matter. I appreciate that this may be a lengthy process but it would ensure that land is acquired at open market prices. This is essential if we are to provide affordable plots and amenities.

Demand for allotments and leisure gardens has been growing for many years. Most organisations that provide them in the surrounding area have waiting lists and are looking to expand. Therefore this cannot be dismissed as simply a passing fad. We would hope that land would be acquired where further expansion onto adjoining land would be possible in the future.

We would be much obliged if you could reply to us with your comments on the above proposal and the use of Section 106 Agreements to acquire land in Hemsby. Perhaps I could also ask that you consider our request in the light of any suitable planning applications in Hemsby, in particular the redevelopment of the Pontins site and Richardson's proposals re. Kings Loke.

We look forward to receiving your response.

Yours sincerely,

Noel Galer

Chairman

Hemsby Allotments and Leisure Gardeners Association (HALGA)

Allotments Hotline

0845 5082926

FAX

0845 6381930

Email

chairman@hemsby-allotments.org.uk

Website

www.hemsby-allotments.org.uk