

## The Vision

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- **To create a communal woodland/orchard for the Rodney Stoke and Draycott Parish.**
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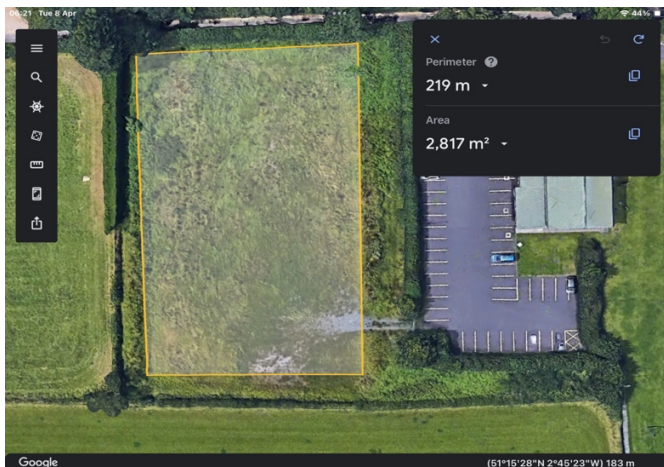
**Problem/Opportunity:** The land at the rear of the Memorial Hall is currently named as an overflow car park but it is rarely used. The surface of the land is partly covered in hard standing to provide a firm surface for cars, however the lower section in the winter becomes very wet and is subject to run off.

**Proposed Solution:** Changing the use of the land to a community woodland/orchard to allow a variety of fruit and shade trees to provide year round stability and protection for the area. It is also envisaged that it will provide a community asset providing a place to enjoy the changing of the seasons.

**Project Scope:** It is now common knowledge that trees are an essential part of our ecological wellbeing and planet health. Somerset Council has been involved in increasing the number of trees across the county and there are numerous charities/organisations willing to help. The size of the land we are talking about will make a small but valuable contribution. Given the history of the orchards that once crossed the land in Somerset returning the land to a woodland/orchard seems the right thing to be doing.

## The Assessment

### 1 Where is the plot of land and how large is the area?



These are two google earth photographs that show the area of land we are proposing to use.

The land itself is largely flat with a sloping area to the north. The sloping area would not be included in the orchard design.

It is known to be muddy on the south side during the wetter months of the year and it is also covered in a thin level of hardstanding to support the use of the area as a car park. The view from the Woodland Trust is that the hardstanding would, in time, restrict the growth of the trees and they recommend skimming of the hardstanding

## The Design

### 2 Can we use mature trees rather than saplings?

With a view to having sizeable trees rather than saplings the advice given was that it would be best to purchase 2 year old fruit trees, such as apple, cherry and pear, anything older would be highly risky and increase the likelihood of tree loss. The following information was found on the OrangePippen website and provides a clear explanation of why we should choose 2 year old fruit trees

#### ***Mature fruit trees***

*We generally do not supply trees older than 2-3 years, because older trees are much more difficult to transplant successfully. It is very important to get a fruit tree established in its final location before it reaches "adulthood" and stops growing. This is different to ornamental trees which will often continue growing for many years (oaks being the obvious example). Planting fruit trees is a long-term investment and unfortunately there are no short-cuts. The only reliable way to get that feature pear tree in your lawn or that established apple espalier growing up the side of your house is to decide and plant a young tree now - and then enjoy watching it grow and transform into a lovely mature tree.*

#### ***Photos of our fruit trees as supplied***

*Nearly all our trees are 1 or 2 years old, the best age for successful establishment. At this age most fruit trees are up to 1.5m tall, and some of the rootstock influence can already be seen in the relative sizes. 1-year old cherries and plums may be taller but we will cut them back before delivery if necessary. 1-year bare-root trees are usually "whips", but some will have side-shoots ("feathers") - this is mostly varietal, and not something we control.*

*The girl in the photos is 1.7m (5ft 6") tall.*

*Although the photos show trees with leaves, note that trees supplied during winter will not have leaves, because fruit trees lose their leaves during winter. Trees supplied during early autumn (plums and cherries) and late autumn (apples and pears) may have leaves which appear discoloured, or curled, or torn or holed. This is perfectly normal, and a natural part of the process of decay as the tree slows its growth before winter dormancy.*



### ***A. Apple trees***

*A two-year premium half-standard apple tree on MM106 rootstock, presented in a 12-liter pot.*



### ***D. Cherry trees***

*A 2-year-old cherry tree in a 12L pot, on Colt rootstock, with half-standard growth.*

### **3 Can we create a less formal orchard to be enjoyed by our wider community?**

The conventional layout of an orchard would be in rows, largely to enable tractors to pass along, however the option of creating a central seating area means we can create an orchard that is less formal.

Here is a list of advice we found online.

***How to create an orchard with a seating area:***

## **1. Choose the Right Trees:**

- **Size and Shape:**  
*Select fruit trees appropriate for the space and desired aesthetic. Consider options like full standard, half standard, or even espalier or cordon trained trees for a smaller footprint.*
- **Fruit Variety:**  
*Choose fruit trees based on personal preference and regional climate. Consider varieties that thrive in the Cheddar area (BS27).*

## **2. Design the Seating Area:**

- **Location:**  
*Choose a spot that is sheltered from strong winds and receives ample sunlight. Consider natural features like a small knoll or existing wall for support.*
- **Seating Options:**  
*Incorporate various seating options like benches, chairs, or even a hammock for different relaxation preferences.*
- **Materials:**  
*Use natural materials like stone, wood, or even reclaimed items to complement the orchard setting.*
- **Privacy and Ambiance:**  
*Consider adding features like hedges, trellises, or strategically placed trees to create a sense of privacy and enhance the ambiance.*

## **3. Layout and Planting:**

- **Spacing:**  
*Ensure adequate spacing between trees to allow for growth and sunlight penetration. Consider planting trees in rows or a more informal arrangement.*
- **Ground Cover:**  
*Utilize ground cover like grass, mulch, or even a gravel path to define the space and provide a clean look.*
- **Access:**  
*Design pathways to easily access the seating area and throughout the orchard.*

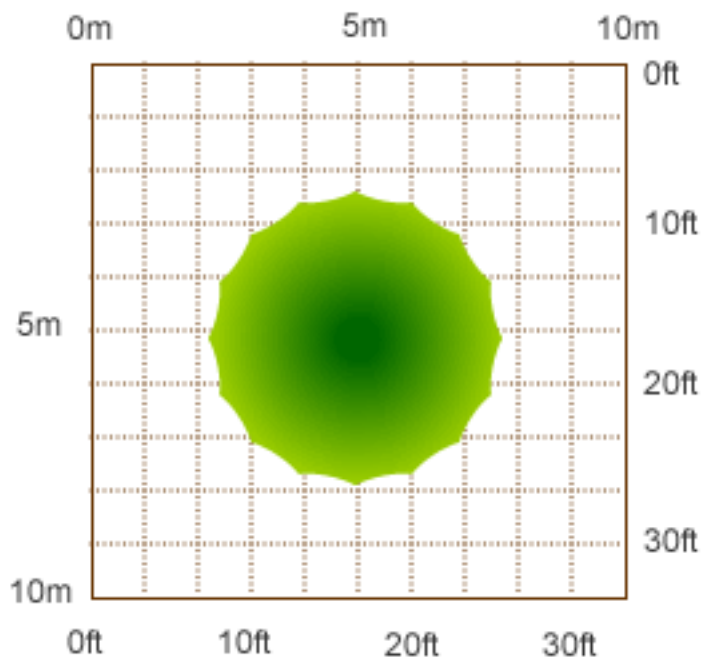
#### **4. Additional Enhancements:**

- **Interpretation Panels:** *Consider adding panels with information about the trees, their history, or local pollinators.*
- **Birdhouses and Wildlife Habitats:** *Attract birds and other wildlife by providing nesting boxes and creating habitat areas.*
- **Water Features:** *A small pond or fountain can add to the serenity of the orchard.*

*By carefully planning and implementing these design elements, you can create a beautiful and functional orchard with a seating area that is a true haven for relaxation and enjoyment*

If we choose an informal orchard the professional advice on spacing of the trees was that each tree needs about a 5.5m space to spread the canopy.  
See below.

Vigorous (standard) rootstocks.



Apple - M25

Plum, Damson - Brompton

Pear - *Pyrus communis*

Cherry - F12/1

**Distance between trees:** 6m - 8m

**Spread:** 5.5m+

Generous spacings are needed for these vigorous "standard" rootstocks, but they offer the visual appeal of the traditional orchard.

#### 4 How many trees can we plant in the area?

The area was mapped to provide a scale that will help us plan the actual location of the trees and how many trees we can plant in the area.

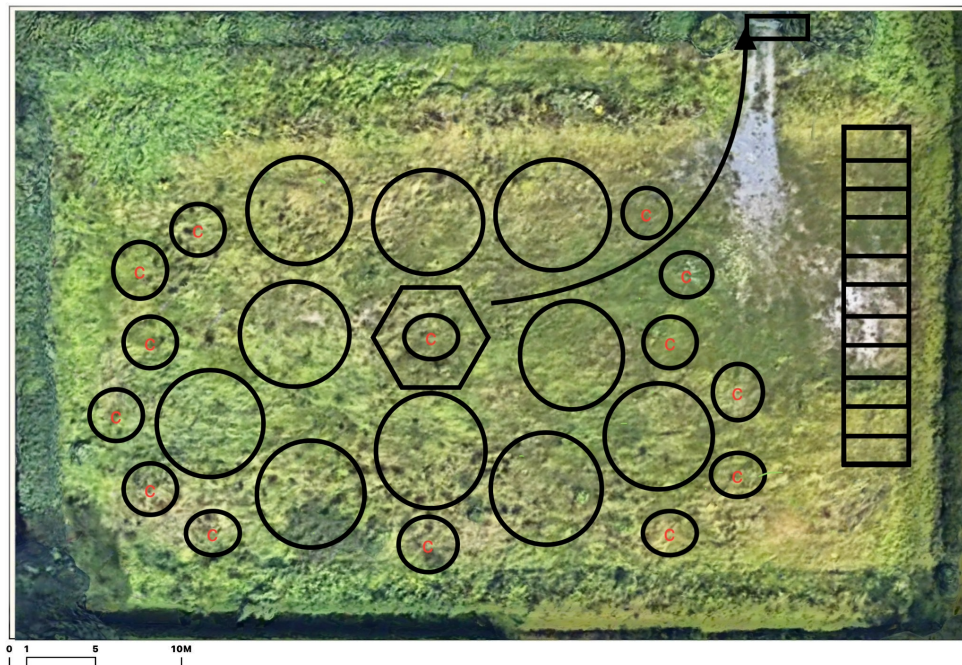
We recommend an informal layout arrangement of the larger fruit trees that surround the central seating area. Smaller trees, some native trees such as Rowan, Field Maple, crab Apple and Victoria

plum trees can be planted around the perimeters, still allowing room to grow for their growth

Using the google earth image and using a mapping website we created a scale so that we can see how many trees we could grow with the maximum 5.5 space for each. Please note, the trees on the periphery don't need to be confined to the spacing.

The plan could include overflow parking if needed.

See below



This layout is not by any means the final layout. It is planning guide for consideration providing useful information to help us estimate costs. The large circles represent ten large 2year old apple and cherry trees. The smaller circles represent a variety of fruit trees, plum, crab apple and native trees such as field maple, rowan, silver birch, blackthorn, wild cherry, hazel, The centre represents the seating/meeting area with a centre of wildflowers

## 5 How much will it cost?

## **Preparing the site**

Clearing the land - to be estimated

## **Finding the right suppliers**

We were advised that the cost of fruit trees we shouldn't be paying more than £65 - £85 for two year old M106 trees that are vigorous. Along with an additional £10 for a tree guard to protect the tree from wildlife and a mulching mat initially. The average cost per tree could then be £100. As you can see a small orchard of ten fruit trees would cost in the region of £800. The smaller trees would cost less and may even be bought for around £10 or gifted from the woodland trust.

## **Finding Grants**

At this stage we are looking at a wide range of possible sources to fund the project. We have discovered numerous sources and we would need to have a clear idea of what we need to achieve for any application to be successful.

## **Asking for Donations**

Having received a donation already we would like to offer the opportunity for members of our Parish to buy a tree to be named for a family member or perhaps in the celebration of a child's birth. This would be a part of our plan to make this community orchard a place for residents to own and enjoy.

## **Fundraising activities**

We could engage the community in a number of ways and invite them to take part in raising funds to support the project. We will embark upon a communication strategy during the next few months.

- Churches,
- Local businesses
- WI
- School
- Shop

## **6 How will the orchard be managed?**

### **Pruning and Training:**

Regular pruning is essential for the health and productivity of the trees. We have both companies and individuals offering tree pruning services. We have requested an estimate for the maintenance of 20 trees, which is done at least once a year.

In Somerset there are opportunities for people to receive training in pruning and it would be worth considering offering a training opportunity for the residents of the parish. £150 per person per day at the Newt.

### **Pest and Disease Control:**

We will need to implement preventative measures to protect the trees from pests and diseases.

### **Watering and Fertilizing:**

We will also need to ensure proper watering and fertilization, especially during dry periods or when trees are young. The source of water has yet to be determined.

All of these will need to be costed to create a preliminary budget.

## **7 How long will it take to create the orchard?**

We believe we now have gathered enough information on how to create a community orchard, but more work is needed before we can begin the implementation phase. The following objectives will guide us.

1. gain support from the community
2. clear away the hard standing
3. identify sources of funding/grants/donations and establish a budget

4. establish a water supply for the orchard
5. make a comprehensive list of apple and cherry trees that will be suitable
6. identify the fruit tree stockists

if we can achieve these objectives by August 2025 we can place an order for the first batch of trees for delivery for planting November through to March 2026.

If we are unable to achieve them by August 2025 then the order and subsequent planting will take place August 2026.

## **Summary**

This paper describes the steps we need to take if we change the overflow carpark into a community orchard. Should the Parish Council agree to this change of use we will need to go out to residents of the parish to gain a mandate to proceed. This will involve a comprehensive communication strategy with the working party acting on behalf of the Council. We will report back on our progress at the September meeting of the Parish Council.

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