



Commemorate VE Day Planting Opportunity for Belmont Green, Wroughton CA&OS Tuesday 8 July 2025

Background

1. This report details an exciting proposal for fully funded memorial planting to commemorate the Victory in Europe 80 Year Anniversary this year. The Community Grants and Projects Officer has been liaising with the Swindon Borough Council Trees for Climate (TfC) team to scope some options which would be feasible for this Wroughton Parish Council owned site.
- 1.2 The 'Trees for Climate' programme is part of a National Government-led, Nature for Climate Fund Programme, supported by DEFRA and is a key initiative aimed at tackling climate change and boosting biodiversity. Over £500 million of the £640 million Nature for Climate Fund is dedicated to trees. DEFRA's England Trees Action Plan aims to better protect our existing trees and woodland and set us on the path to ensure that we have at least 12% woodland cover by the middle of the century. Locally, this is being delivered by 'The Great Western Community Forest' founded in 1994, where local people and organisations are working together to create a better environment.
- 1.3 Unlike traditional forests, community forests aren't geographically restricted to one place. Instead, they are spread across a mix of community woodland, private woodland, on-street, urban woodland, wooded habitat corridors and hedgerows. By growing trees where they are most needed, corridors of woodlands better connect communities to nature, helping people enjoy the benefits of being close to trees and woodlands, enhance biodiversity and provide resilience to help reduce the effects of climate change on local communities through carbon capture and mitigating flooding and drought.

VE Day Commemorative Planting Proposal

- 2.0 Located at Belmont Green, the WPC owned green space next to the Lister Estate, the concept is for an avenue of 27 Ornamental Flowering Cherry trees (to reflect the number of World War Two fallen soldiers listed on our war memorial) which leads to a single, large memorial oak tree. Companion planting nearby of heritage orchard trees, other native species and the option of some wildflower areas is also offered as part of this scheme together with further work to enhance the hedgerow and natural screening along the perimeter of the Hill's site next to North Wroughton playing field.
- 2.1 Attached at Appendix One is the proposed layout* which would constitute:
 - An avenue of 27 flowering Ornamental Cherries - a selection of 'Light Standard' trees which are approximately 200cm–250cm tall with a 6cm–8cm trunk diameter.

- A cluster of dwarf or semi dwarf fruit/orchard trees - these would be either 'bushes' approximately 1.5m tall or 'Half Standards' with a clear stem to 1.2m, and 1.5m–1.8m tall.
- Memorial Oak - a 'Standard' tree, approximately 250cm–300cm tall with an 8cm – 10cm trunk diameter.
- Wildflower planting options underneath some of the new planting and as a separate 'meadow' area. Bulbs and or seed mix are being proposed.
- Mixed native hedgerow planting with scattered hedgerow trees of Field maple and Pedunculate Oak along the existing treeline to enhance the North Wroughton Playing Field perimeter
- A small Rowan/Silver Birch tree cluster

*Please note we are waiting for more information relating to underground utilities for the large field area at the end of Burderop Close which we suspect may show an electrical cable crossing it diagonally. We have avoided any planting in the area we suspect the power supply may be located. We expect to have final details of this by the end of July 2025.

The size of the trees on the layout plan at are their mature canopy size, so English Oak approximately 10m canopy, Flowering Cherries, hedgerow trees approximately 5m canopy and orchard fruit trees approx. 3-4m canopy dependant on rootstock chosen. It will take a long time before they reach their mature canopy size.

Increasing biodiversity, visual appeal and resident experience of Belmont Green

- 3.0 As part of the overall scheme design WPC would increase biodiversity by introducing wildflower planting underneath the trees of the cherry tree avenue/orchard areas and potentially a separate wildflower area too. This would improve the wildlife value of the grassland and improve the aesthetics of the area for residents during the Spring/Summer whilst also reducing the need for mowing these areas.
- 3.1 The additions of semi dwarf orchard trees would also enable residents to harvest any fruit produced which would reduce any fruit falling to the ground, but the majority would be taken by the wildlife foraging. Extending the planting at Belmont Green would complement the existing mature trees and newly planted saplings introduced by WPC in Feb 2022 at this site, Maunsell Way and Falkirk Road.
4. **Wildflower Planting**
 With regard to the wildflower meadow area (indicated on map opposite the Memorial Oak, the TfC proposal would be that WPC Grounds Team strip the turf and plant with a pictorial (annual seed mix) interspersed with a more traditional wildflower mix (perennial seeds). The seeds would be funded as part of the scheme. The first one or two years should then see a show of colour from March to possibly November giving the perennials time to get established. The suggestion is that this is a small patch initially with the option to extend if successful.

- 4.1 As well as a separate meadow area 'Wildflower' plugs or bulbs would be planted directly underneath and the cherry trees in the avenue. Species would include bluebells, wild garlic, even snowdrops and plugged with more 'thuggish' hedgerow plants such as red campion, garlic mustard, etc. This would mean that the avenue between the trees and the perimeter only would be mowed (and not between the trees.)
- 4.2 The Trees for Climate scheme won't fund the whole costs of creating a wildflower meadow, but would be able to offer some funds towards these costs as it would enhance the tree planting. They would help cover the cost of supplying a turf cutter and the cost of purchasing the wildflower seed, plugs and bulbs if some WPC Grounds Team staff time could be used as a 'contribution in kind'. The ground staff would also need to ensure they could either manage these areas, rely on volunteers or be an extension of the existing tree warden scheme (more details later in this paper).

WPC Grounds Team Feedback on Proposals

5. WPC Grounds Team have requested a clearance of 3.5metres around the sides and the back of the cherry tree avenue for tractor/flail access to maintain the hedgerow and this is indicated on the plan.

The WPC Grounds Team would prefer a straight line avenue vs more natural tree line. However, the Trees for Climate team are proposing a more natural layout in keeping with the wildflower planting, as shown on the plan.

WPC GT have requested a minimum 1.6m width between the avenue of cherries to accommodate their mower and this is indicated on the plan.

WPC Grounds team would prefer that the separate wildflower meadow was not included in the proposals.

WPC Grounds Team are supportive of wildflower/bulb planting under new trees and would be happy undertake the planting themselves.

Seating Options

6. As part of the Trees for Climate application WPC could consider the addition of 2 simple benches to promote the use of the area by local residents for informal recreation. Currently the nearest bench is located to the west of Belmont Green under the memorial planting trees for former Councillors.
- 6.1 The Community Projects Officer and Head of Grounds team are proposing bench locations as denoted on the plan. These would allow for clear mowing access and be away from houses. WPC Grounds Team would install these as part of our contribution in kind to the scheme. Please refer to attachment to see the bench specification that would be funded by TfC as part of the bid.

7.0 Maintenance/Volunteers and Funding

WPC currently have a volunteer, Steve Lichfield, who acts as Tree Warden and is pruning the existing 4 orchard trees at Belmont Green. He has attended training run by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust and his activities are covered by their insurance. As part of our CfT bid we can include additional funding for two members of the WPC Grounds Team and other volunteers to be trained in assist with pruning and maintenance of the new trees.

- 7.1 The Trees for Climate Project will fund the complete costs of the initial tree planting and protection costs, plus the 'Maintenance and Aftercare' which includes watering in Year 1 only, spot spraying/hand weeding around the trees, checking/repairs/replacement of tree stakes, guards, mulch, etc for the first 15 years. In addition this also includes a sum of money in Year 3 and 5 to assist with any further 'Beating-up' (replacing any dead trees in Year 1). Usually the first year maintenance is completed by the contractor who initially planted the trees, as they are liable to complete any 'Beating-up.' For years 2 – 15, this responsibility will transfer to Wroughton Parish Council who could deliver this in-house using the Grounds team, contract out, use trained volunteers or a hybrid approach.
- 7.2 The Trees for Climate Project ask for a 'Contribution in Kind' which could be in the form of volunteer time or offering the time of the grounds team for free/subsidised cost to carry out the agreed maintenance schedule.
- 7.3 Once the 15 year maintenance schedule is agreed and approved the TOTAL maintenance grant payment will be paid to Wroughton Parish Council as an upfront lump sum together for monies for benches, turf cutter hire, wildflowers, trees and training.

- 8.0 **Opportunity for Commemorative event on Armistice Day, Tuesday 11 November 2025**
If planting were to take place in November 2025 during winter dormancy this could tie in with Remembrance commemorations in Wroughton. An event involving Councillors, VIPs, selected guests or others could take place on the afternoon of Tuesday 11 November after wreath laying at the War Memorial. Please note that the trees this time will be much larger in size and fewer in number than at the community planning event in 2022 so this event is likely to involve unveiling/ceremonial planting only.

9.0 **Grant Funding and Procurement**

Once the proposals outlined in this paper are agreed, the Community Projects Officer will work with the Trees for Climate team to prepare a detailed specification. This will be circulated to a selection of contractors from SBC's preferred list. WPC will commission the contractor and pay them directly for planting costs (and any capital works such as benches). The same contractor would be required to deliver maintenance over the first year and any replacement of trees. WPC would receive the maintenance grant in advance. In future years WPC may wish to hold some money back or even direct to our own grounds team.

It may be that we choose to offer some aspects of the planting as part of a community planting day (e.g to plant the orchard element and wildflower bulbs. This would be in conjunction with Wiltshire Wildlife Trust who would purchase the trees and bulbs and reclaim the payment direct from WPC or direct from Trees for Climate).

10. **Public Consultation**

If CA&OS endorse proposals for a commemorative planting scheme at Belmont Green the Community Projects Officer will arrange for a public consultation which will include a display board at Belmont Green as well a online information including the WPC Website and social media feeds. Any public feedback involving significant changes to the scheme will be discussed with the Chair of Community Assets and Open Spaces, Clerk and Head of Ground Team who will agree on a way forward without further discussion at Committee. This is to allow for advance ordering of trees in readiness for planting in line with Armistice Day, 11 November 2025.

11. **Recommendations**

WPC discuss and approve the proposals included in this paper including a layout plan of:

- 11a) Cherry Avenue and Memorial Oak with wildflower planting underneath and mowed central avenue
 - 11b) Wildflower Meadow opposite Memorial Oak
 - 11c) Dwarf/Semi Dwarf Orchard planting with wildflowers underneath
 - 11c) Rowan and Silver Birch Cluster
 - 11d) 2 x new benches located as shown on plan
 - 11e) And also for the bid to Include monies to hold an orchard tree pruning and maintenance training session on site.
- 11.1 WPC discuss and agree that WPC Grounds Team as part of the 'Contribution in Kind' will install new benches, plant wildflower plugs/bulbs, attend appropriate training and be involved in ongoing maintenance as outlined in this paper.
- 11.2. Delegate to the Community Projects Officer, under the supervision of the Clerk finalising the grant funding bid, procurement and delivery of these proposals.
- 11.3 Agree that the Community Projects Officer should organise a public consultation both online and on display boards at Belmont Green with feedback reviewed by Chair of CA&OS or Vice Chair CA&OS in conjunction with the Clerk//Deputy Clerk and any adjustments made to allow the timely progress of the project.
- 11.4 WPC agree that the Community Projects Officer explores any opportunities for public involvement in planting of wildflowers or semi dwarf orchard trees whilst noting that there are time restrictions relating to the launch event and winter dormancy periods.
- 11.5 WPC delegate authority to the Community Projects Officer to arrange an appropriate launch event on 11 November 2025 involving key stakeholders including WPC Councillors and the Royal British Legion.