



## Fletton Field Vision



### Background

Fletton Field is currently a beautiful but undeveloped green space nestled at the very heart of Oundle. It is close to a number of key amenities; the council offices, the doctors, Library, Police Station, sheltered accommodation and a home for the elderly. For most Oundle residents the field is within easy walking distance. It is owned by North Northamptonshire Council and has had a number of proposed developments rejected. An active campaign (Save Fletton Field) for its preservation as a green space has been running since 2016 and has gathered significant support with over 500 signatures including monetary pledges from Oundle Town Council and School.

**Blooming Oundle** was established in February 2021 inspired by the RHS *In-Bloom* and *Incredible Edible Todmorden* initiatives. A vibrant group has now developed a number of civic pride initiatives in and around Oundle including planters around our Market Square and Town signs, wild flower borders in verges, cleaning up street furniture, a community seed swap and gardening club and mentoring a Primary School gardening group. **Save Fletton Field** and **Blooming Oundle** have collaborated to reinvigorate the campaign for **Our Green Space**. Oundle has significantly less publicly accessible green space per capita than comparable towns in North Northamptonshire; Fletton Field is one of only two green spaces within the town's boundaries and as our population grows with new developments, we would like to redress the balance.

### Our Vision

Calming green spaces are crucial to allow escape from the pressures of everyday life; scientific evidence shows that spending time in such an environment can reduce stress and boost the immunity, and the wellbeing benefits of such a shared community space which is a place for learning, relaxing, spending time and working together are well documented.



Our vision has been developed with input from the Oundle community, so it is designed to have broad appeal. It's ambitious, but why not; others have done it, Kettering Green Patch for instance. Over time, with the support of our local council and elected county councillors, and our community we can achieve our goals. Our Vision is;

### **Queens Green Canopy**

Next year in celebration of Platinum Jubilee her Majesty has invited people to plant trees. As a community activity we will invite local schools and youth groups to partake in planting trees requested from The Woodland Trust. To hasten progress we will also approach our local garden centres for some more mature specimens. We will engage specialist knowledge to ensure that we only plant trees that are suitable for the space and our changing climate. A section of the planting will include orchard species to act as a community fruit garden. Over the May Bank Holiday weekend in 2022 we will have a community picnic to celebrate our Queens 70 year rule.

### **Wildlife Garden Zone**

Curated by local naturalists, an area will be designated to specifically encourage wildlife, such as wildflower meadow, bug hotels, bird boxes and hedgehog shelters. Information panels will highlight the lifecycles of various creatures will be erected; schools and community groups will be encouraged to visit contribute and learn about our impact on the environment and how to protect it.

### **Raised Bed Garden**

To enable the elderly or disabled to take part in gardening activity a series of raised beds will be established that can be managed from a sitting position. There will be a mixture of vegetable growing and flower borders and educational sessions for those new to gardening.

### **Memorial Sensory Garden Zone**

In memory of those lost in our current crisis we will create a beacon, a place to stimulate the senses see, feel, smell, hear, there will be colour galore, surface features to touch and feel texture, scented plants and a variety of wind chimes, maybe a wooden glockenspiel. Local youth groups will be asked to create maybe a Gaudi dragon mosaic. Local poets will be asked to pen verses in memory of those lost that will be set in stone for perpetuity.

### **Sculpture and Art**

Local artists will be asked to contribute sculptures that could be dotted around the park. There will be a variety of both fixed and displays that change. An annual exhibition / sale will be established around the grassed picnic zone using pop up gazebos and the covered seating area.

### **Wheelchair, Walking Trail, Fitness Circuit**

Throughout the various garden zones a winding all weather gravel trail will enable access. Benches, (maybe be sponsored as a memory of a lost one) with wheelchair parking alongside will provide areas for quiet contemplation. An exercise circuit with instructions and appropriate equipment to encourage health and well-being will be established. Gated access



from Abbott House for the elderly will be explored as a possibility. This is the only public area in Oundle that is not bounded by a road making it safe and quiet for dog walkers and young children alike.

### Community Picnic Zone/Exercise area

A grass area probably similar to that that exists today will include a number of picnic benches, so that visitors can enjoy the space and have a meal when they visit. This area will also be available for the audience for outdoor performances where they can bring their own picnic chairs. There are a number of local yoga and tai chi groups that in the summer seek quiet outdoor spaces to educate their classes in a relaxed cool ambiance.

### Covered Seating / Performance Area

This will be a multipurpose building that will be positioned bordering the Picnic Zone. Somewhere to shelter when it rains but also a stage that local bands could perform or an outdoor theatrical performance could take place, Scouts and Guides can meet. This could include public conveniences changing room, gear storage for local community groups and tool storage for maintenance. Local Architects will be invited to submit their ideas to a community competition based on a brief established by the project.

### Amenities

With increased public usage there will be a need to provide litter and doggie poo bins, cycle racks, a low maintenance building and public conveniences and the use of 'sustainable', environmentally sound technologies to build them will be explored. Local visitors will be encouraged to ride or walk to the Field and there is limited parking on Glapthorn Road. Most events would take place outside of normal business hours so parking at the Council Offices, the Library and permission will be sought to use the Doctors Surgery car park. Access ways from Glapthorn Road and from the council offices need to be formally established. To enable equipment unloading at the performance area and grassed space, a wider gravel path to the council office entrance will be created.

### Next Steps

Developing a vision is relatively easy; delivering will require significant funding, resource, time, effort and buy in from key stakeholders. It is critical to persuade North Northamptonshire Council that this community asset; once owned by Oundle <sup>1</sup>, but given at no cost to County Council be re-established as an asset for the express use of Oundle residents as **our green space**. We will develop a robust plan and management team is established to implement this ambitious project. So our next steps are:-

1. Set up a meeting with the key decision makers at County Council to confirm that our time and effort to do this will be supported and not wasted.

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<sup>1</sup> Owned by Guardians of the Poor in Oundle 1899 and was used as allotments for the workhouse, title passed to Northamptonshire County council at no cost under the local government act in 1929.



2. Establish an appropriate vehicle for delivery (trust, charity etc.) and committees, to oversee and do the detailed planning needed for delivery.
3. Create a vision slide pack/video that can be shared online to the public and to key stakeholder groups.
4. Create events to encourage the local community to visit the field and gain further input and buy in to the vision.

We estimate this initial planning work will take 4 to 6 months at which point we would like to formally present the plan to local people at a town meeting and to county councillors for approval.