

CLIMATE, BIO-DIVERSITY AND PLANNING COMMITTEE

Date: 9th March 2021

Title: Land Purchase Request 67 Thorney Leys.

Contact Officer: Operations and Estates Advisor – John Hickman

Background

The purpose of this report is for Councillors to consider the request from the owners of 67 Thorney Leys to purchase a piece of Witney Town Council's amenity land.

Current Situation

The owner of 67 Thorney Leys has requested to purchase approx. 18' x 12' of Witney Town Councils land that is part of the boundary between the Thorney Leys Estate and the Curbridge Road.

The Operations and Estates Officer has been carrying out works in this area for several years now to bring the hedge to the front of the area that had become overgrown very thin at the base and full of debris placed there by the property owners to try to stop members of the public cutting through what remained of the hedge.

The remaining old hedge is being steadily reduced to 8-foot height with stands of trees where they are suitable and safe to remain. The whole length of the hedge has been cleared of all the debris in the base and replanted some 3 years ago.

The grass area between the rear of the hedge and the properties boundary is currently a rough-cut area on the Grounds Contract and has become used as a dumping ground for rubbish. The grass is cut annually currently and any debris or fly tipping cleared.

The rough grass area, hedge and trees are important for the wildlife in this area, and there are many wildflowers in amongst the grass. It is the Operations and Estates Advisors intention that once the hedge has been reduced to the intended height of 8' and is again forming an impenetrable barrier between the properties and the road with the remaining tree stands that the grass would be looked at to ensure the wildflowers and wildlife are able to flourish.

It can be expected that if this property can extend its garden out to the hedge more properties will make the same request. This will not only make maintaining the hedge and trees and remaining grass area very difficult to maintain as areas will no longer be accessible it will also take away the wildlife and wildflowers that are in the area.

Environmental impact

Having declared a Climate Change Emergency at its Council meeting on 26 June 2019 – with this in mind Councillors should have due regard to the environmental impact of any decisions they make with regard to its facilities and services it operates. Council should consider the affect that this may have on wildlife currently in this area and the future wildlife if the land is allowed to be purchased by the houseowner as an addition to their garden.

Risk

In decision making Councillors should consider any risks to the Council and any action it can take to limit or negate its liability.

Financial implications

- Not currently known. If the request is accepted, the Town Council would need to negotiate terms with the owner on the transfer of the land.

Recommendations

Member are invited to note the report and consider the following.

1. If the request to purchase part of the Amenity land to the rear of 67 Thorney Leys is granted or refused.