

## **Cadbury Barn Trust - update on the project to develop facilities at the entrance to Manor Farm Park**

### **Paper for the Trusts and Charities Committee on 30<sup>th</sup> October 2020**

**Background:** The Stakeholder Group, led by Friends of Manor Farm Park (FoMFP), has been meeting since 2012 to develop this project. Previous reports to the Committee have been presented by the Friends, but a new CIO has now been established to lead the project. This report updates the Committee on the plans to provide community facilities on the site of the former Cadbury Barn in Manor Farm Park, Weoley Ward.

In November 2019 FoMFP representatives met Sue Amey, Parks Manager and Nigel Oliver, Property Services to consider Council surveys of the remaining buildings; FoMFP rejected the development proposed for the two and single storey farm buildings on the basis of the excessive cost of renovating an old building of no architectural or heritage value. However we confirmed that we wished to retain the Lodge as part of the transfer of the site for community use, via a long lease. Following this meeting an Options Report was finalised indicating the preferred way forward - a mix of restoration, demolition of the single storey building and new provision. The Report included a full business plan and other studies and was submitted to Sue Amey and Nigel Oliver in December 2019.<sup>1</sup>

In January 2020 FoMFP again met Nigel Oliver and Sue Amey and agreed a paper to be presented to the Trusts and Charities Committee meeting later that month. At that meeting the Committee gave in principle support to progress the transfer subject to full Council approval. Given the subsequent delays we would request the support of the Trusts and Charities Committee on 30<sup>th</sup> October to take whatever next steps are required, including submission to the Council meeting on 3<sup>rd</sup> November if necessary, to enable the project to progress.

**New developments:** Since January 2020 there have been three significant developments which have impacted on our original proposal, but the overall aims and purpose of the project remain the same.

1. **New Charity:** The Stakeholder Group and the Friends have established a new Charitable Incorporated Organisation, the Cadbury Barn Trust (CBT), (reg. 1190666) which will be the body taking forward future negotiations and hold the future lease. For the public benefit, the object of the CBT is: -
  - To further or benefit the residents of Northfield, Birmingham, and the neighbourhood, without distinction of sex, sexual orientation, race or of political, religious or other opinions by associating together the said residents and the local authorities, voluntary and other organisations in a common effort to advance education and to provide facilities in the interests of social welfare for recreation and leisure time occupation with the objective of improving the conditions of life for the residents.
  - In furtherance of these objects but not otherwise, the trustees shall have power:
  - To establish or secure the establishment of a community centre at Manor Farm Park and to maintain or manage or co-operate with any statutory authority in the maintenance and management of such a centre for activities promoted by the charity in furtherance of the above objects.
2. **New partnership:** The Cadbury Barn Trust (CBT) is now working in partnership with the Birmingham School of Bell Ringing (BSoBR) (registered charity number 1170942)<sup>2</sup> to develop the site of the former Cadbury Barn and repurpose the remaining unused buildings at the entrance to Manor Farm Park in Weoley. Together, the two Trusts have a shared vision to revitalise the area for the public benefit, by upgrading and reusing the buildings for a range of uses including community space, toilets, refreshments and what will be an innovative new Bell Ringing School, building on Birmingham's reputation as the 'First City of Bells'.

The BSoBR aim to restore the Lodge and add an iconic new bell tower which will form an attractive feature at the main park entrance. The CBT and the BSoBR believe that their separate purposes will be complementary and synergistic, jointly attracting more people to use the services and facilities on the site, as well as the park, than either organisation on their own. Further, they believe that their combined

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<sup>1</sup> The full document can be accessed here: [Manor Farm Park Proposed Developments - Options Report V2 0 Final.pdf](#)

<sup>2</sup> The Birmingham School of Bell Ringing was established in 2013 as is widely regarded as the gold standard for teaching change ringing in the English style.

expertise and networks will be mutually beneficial in developing their own projects in tandem. While there is still work to be done on the detail of the partnership and future arrangements, discussions with the Council to further the plans for the site should be undertaken with representation from both parties.

3. New restrictions - scaling down of plans: The Covid-19 pandemic has necessitated a rethink of the nature and timescale of the development by the CBT. There is a need to future-proof the design of buildings and activities by ensuring that future social distancing through smaller numbers of users or participants, in larger and/or more open spaces can be accommodated, along with enhanced cleaning and sanitation measures and other appropriate changes. Since the length of time until removal of current restrictions is unknown, it seems sensible to defer opening the original style café until such time that we can be sure of achieving the projected numbers in the business plan. Instead we would propose starting with a less ambitious offering with smaller scale premises, limited opening times, smaller selection of food and drinks, which could be pre-packed and portioned, alongside a greater amount of covered open space for seating allowing better ventilation and social distancing.

Similarly, there would be a greater emphasis on providing smaller scale group activities outdoors, utilising the covered outside space. Some office space could be made available subject to suitable screening and other measures. Toilets would be included but made available only to those participating in activities or using the facilities.

One approach, which has not been discussed with Officers, but is similar to that taken in Cotteridge Park, could be using converted shipping containers with interior modifications to provide space for catering with storage, toilets and community space. They could surround a large courtyard covered by a canopy, with an open terrace overlooking the park. The containers would be sited on the car park overlooking the park to take advantage of the view and attract visitors. In order to retain the same level of car parking space it is proposed that the single storey farm building be demolished (toilet facilities having been reprovided for the depot staff). As time progressed and demand and support increased either the number of containers could be increased, or new modular pods could be added, or ultimately larger scale new build could be considered. The two storey barn would be retained and as both funds and Covid restrictions permitted, restored to include office space on the first floor and hireable community / exhibition space on the ground floor.

We believe we could obtain that sufficient funding from a variety of sources to undertake ground works and purchase or extended lease the containers and canopy and related security measures, including the ring fenced Section 106 and insurance monies subject to confirmation that they can be used in this way. As the project develops the CBT will seek additional funding from other sources to enable future developments to supplement the income generated in the first phase. A phased approach has previously suggested by Council officers and given the changed circumstances it seems appropriate to adopt it subject to discussion and agreement with the City.

Next steps: The Council is therefore asked to proceed with the steps necessary for a community asset transfer to enable the Trust to further the plans outlined above, procure and fit the containers, and start delivering interim activities and services. Specifically:

- Applying to the Charities Commission for a deed of variation to allow the Council as Trustee for the George Cadbury for Public Parks Trust, to lease part of the site, and to allow trading activities and additional uses.
- Invoking the Council's Community Asset Transfer protocol as it applies to sites held in trust.
- Starting discussions with the Cadbury Barn Trust and Birmingham School of Bell Ringing on the heads of terms of a potential lease as preferred provider.

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