



June Newsletter

Planning Update: A Positive Step Forward

After a long wait, we have finally received initial feedback from Wiltshire Council regarding the proposed farm access and infrastructure for Pear Tree Community Farm.

We're pleased to share that the planning officer has confirmed that the Community Farm is acceptable in principle. This is an encouraging step forward for a project that aims to bring together sustainable food production, education, well-being and community engagement.

As many of you know, our site sits within the Cotswolds National Landscape and Green Belt, close to the Grade II* listed St Mary's Church. These special surroundings bring additional planning considerations and the council has highlighted that the potential impacts on these designated assets are significant. Importantly however, they also recognise the substantial social and community benefits that the farm will provide.

What Has Been Supported?

The council has confirmed a number of positive aspects of the proposal:

- The land will remain in agricultural use, with no change of use required.
- The need for poly-tunnels, storage facilities, welfare provision, and a packing shed is accepted as supporting the farm operation.
- The development is not considered inappropriate within the Green Belt, provided community activities remain closely linked to the agricultural use.
- Highways officers have not identified any significant highway concerns.

What Are the Key Concerns?

- The most contentious issue is the creation of a new field access and the resulting change to the character of Church Lane. We will mitigate this essential requirement through the planting of native hedgerows, ivy and ferns.
- The proposed building floor-space is considered ambitious and we will need to demonstrate that the recognised standard sizes are necessary to accommodate volunteers and staff during peak harvesting and packing periods. Adequate storage is also essential to keeping the site neat and tidy and minimising visual impact.
- Community events, educational activities and volunteering opportunities have been questioned as not being strictly necessary for agricultural purposes. However, this is a community farm, and our business model as well as the many social, educational and well-being benefits it delivers depends on their inclusion.
- A Heritage Statement has been requested to demonstrate that the public benefits outweigh the "less than substantial harm" to the setting of St Mary's Church. A RIBA-chartered conservation architect will provide an independent assessment as part of our application.

We welcome this feedback, which has helped shape what we believe is the best possible design, balancing farm functionality, care for the landscape and consideration for our neighbours.

We are continuing to work closely with specialist consultants, including engineers, landscape architects, ecologists, highways experts and heritage advisers, to ensure our planning application is thorough, evidence-based and capable of withstanding the scrutiny it deserves.

What's Next?

In the coming weeks, we will be ready to share our final plans. You will be able to:

- Visit Pear Tree Community Farm's stall at the Freshford & Limpley Stoke, Hinton and Westwood village fetes.
- View the plans on our website (sign up to our newsletter to be notified when they are published).
- Arrange a meeting with the team to discuss the proposals.

We hope to submit our planning application in June.

None of this would have been possible without the incredible support of the Wiltshire Area Board, FLiSCA and our wonderful community. Your donations of money, time, expertise and encouragement have helped us reach this stage and we are ^{deeply grateful.}
Neil)

At a time when global events, climate change and rising food costs continue to highlight the fragility of our food system, the need for resilient local food production and strong community connections has never been greater. We hope you will continue to support Pear Tree Community Farm and when the time comes, lend your voice in support of the planning application.

As always, if you have any questions, ideas, or suggestions, we'd love to hear from you.

Warm wishes,

The Pear Tree Community Farm Team

hello@peartreecommunityfarm.org

www.peartreecommunityfarm.org

<https://www.instagram.com/peartreecommunityfarm>

The Farm Team (Jake, Elli, Debbie, Tania, Fiona, Gemma, Clare and Neil)