

INTRODUCTION

The potential for a new community garden is being explored in Hemel Hempstead on land bound by Redbourn Road to the north, Cherry Tree Lane to the east, the Nickey Line to the south and Britannia Close and Phoenix Walk to the west*. The Crown Estate is partnering with local charity, Sunnyside Rural Trust for this project.

These panels provide advance information on our approach, the benefits and potential features of the community garden.

We are asking local people what they think about our initial ideas, and whether they would be interested in using the garden. We hope to raise awareness about how the garden might deliver benefits for the community and wildlife alike.

Thanks to all for the interest and support. We welcome your thoughts and views.

PROJECT PARTNERS

The Crown Estate

The Crown Estate is one of the country's largest landowners with a portfolio that stretches across England, Wales and Northern Ireland, covering 200,000 acres of land. Our diverse portfolio includes land within the Hemel Garden Communities growth area, in addition to other significant areas such as London's West End and Windsor Great Park. We also manage the seabed and much of the coastline around England, Wales and Northern Ireland, playing a major role in the UK's world leading offshore wind sector. We aim to make a meaningful difference, by making sure our activities have a positive environmental and social impact that will help local communities to thrive.

Further information can be found at thecrownestate.co.uk

Sunnyside Rural Trust

Sunnyside Rural Trust (Sunnyside) is a charity and social enterprise that offers training and work experience to over 170 vulnerable people across Dacorum and St Albans. We train people with learning disabilities to acquire skills in a number of rural activities including beekeeping, looking after chickens, growing a wide range of plants and produce, landscaping and garden maintenance.

Further information can be found at sunnysideruraltrust.org.uk



- 01 Potential stepped pedestrian access
- 02 Gated pedestrian access
- 03 Indicative area of tree planting
- 04 Potential future tree planting
- 05 Mown paths
- 06 Seating
- 07 Indicative location of Quaker burial memorial (extents to be confirmed)
- 08 Species rich meadow
- 09 Perennial garden



Species rich meadow



Seating



Fruit trees / community orchard



Perennial garden planting

Sketch diagram showing how the community garden could be laid out

EXAMPLES OF COMMUNITY GARDENS

Community gardens can have a range of features that together provide a positive experience for all visitors and help you relax, learn, exercise, and enjoy the surroundings. To make these things happen, ensuring there is a good design and considered layout is vital. Here are some ideas of features that could be included at Cherry Tree Lane Community Garden:

Seating

Incorporating a range of seating can provide you with a place to relax and enjoy your local surroundings. It is also an opportunity to use sustainable materials that complement the local area or use local craftspeople and designers.

Plants and Flowers

Different planting throughout the garden can create a rich and vibrant look and feel for a community garden. A mix of colourful flowers could provide the opportunity to create shapes and images in flowerbeds, using hardy and adaptable plants would ensure you could enjoy the garden all year round, and incorporating vegetables, herbs and fragrant plants could create a sensory experience for everyone.

Paths

Ensuring everyone can access Cherry Tree Lane Community Garden is crucial. Well-designed pathways can create an informal sense of being guided around a natural space while also providing step-free options and easy surfaces to make the garden accessible and inclusive to all who wish to enjoy the garden.

Public Art

Public art can be used to make a community garden truly unique to a local place and its residents. It can capture the identity of a community, geographical area or local heritage and history, and be incorporated into the garden in a natural way. Including artwork in a garden also creates a focal point for you to meet friends and could showcase the work of an artist or group local to Hemel.

Ecology and biodiversity

Various features such as ponds, a woodpile, bug hotels, scented flowers and nesting boxes can be included to help provide a habitat for animals and help protect and encourage greater biodiversity. Wild meadow and grassland can also be maintained longer than a lawn, help bees, butterflies and insects to thrive.

Learning opportunities

Cherry Tree Lane Community Garden could be a fantastic place for learning opportunities, where you can find out more about local plants, animal wildlife, the climate and much more.



Plants & flowers



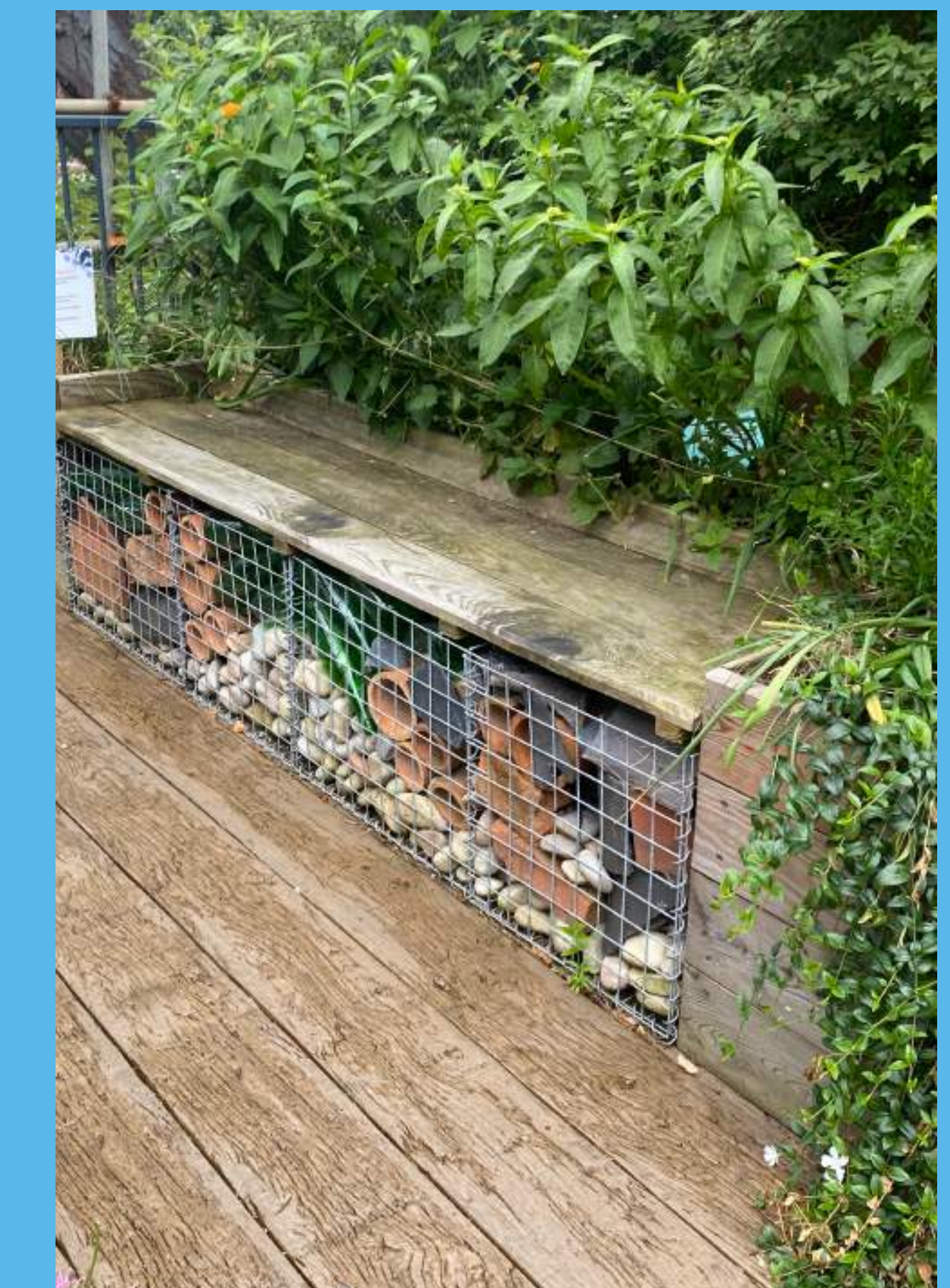
Community garden exemplar



Educational information boards



Ecology & Biodiversity



Seating



Plants & flowers



Train planters



Learning opportunities

BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY GARDENS

A Community Garden at Cherry Tree Lane offers a number of benefits for local residents including:

Physical health

Gardening exercise, which is linked to better physical health, with exposure to the outdoors is shown to improve the immune system's functionality. A walk in the Cherry Tree Lane Community Garden can also be an effective form of low-intensity exercise, with benefits for bone and muscle strength, and improves cardiovascular fitness. It has been shown that people who do regular physical activity have up to a 35% lower risk of coronary heart disease and stroke.

Mental health and wellbeing

There are links between participating in community gardening and improved mental wellbeing, including lower levels of stress. Studies have suggested that community gardeners report higher levels of happiness, resilience and optimism. They indicate that just 30 minutes of gardening a week has a beneficial effect on mental health and that safe, green spaces may be as effective as prescription drugs for treating mild to moderate forms of depression and anxiety.

Sensory planting

Cherry Tree Lane Community Garden could be exciting and comforting across the full range of senses;

- **Sight** - with plants of bright, bold colours to attract birds and insects and create a beautiful environment;
- **Taste** - with opportunities to grow herbs, vegetables, fruit, nuts and seeds;
- **Smell** - with a range of aromas that attract insects to flowers for pollination and some smelly leaves that deter insects from eating them;
- **Sound** - with natural noises such as wildlife and the elements, but also opportunities for creativity and installations; and
- **Touch** - with a range of natural plant surfaces such as leaves that are rough to smooth, furry to spiky, or bark that might be rugged and ridged or smooth and shiny.

Ecology

A Community Garden at Cherry Tree Lane could also help to contribute to a healthier environment, including improved soil structure, nutrients, organic matter, and soil biodiversity. Soil health is a very important part of cultivating healthy, balanced ecosystems. They can boost local biodiversity and tackle air pollution, providing improved habitats for local wildlife, including important birds and insects to aid nature recovery.



Mental health & wellbeing (Kent Community Oasis Garden)



Physical health (Pauline Bernard, Unsplash)



Sensory planting



Ecology



BENEFITS OF COMMUNITY GARDENS

Further benefits associated with community gardens include:

Educational

Many schools use gardening and planting as an opportunity for pupils to engage with environmental and health and wellbeing issues, and to learn skills such as researching, patience, teamwork and creativity. For many young people, classroom environments can be difficult, and this can be an opportunity to express themselves and learn and demonstrate skills.

Skills development

Community gardens offer local people of all ages and abilities the opportunity to learn new skills, such as how to grow fresh tasty food, how to support wildlife and how to improve the local environment. They also promote community empowerment and offer a learning environment that goes beyond the skills associated with horticulture to include individual health, self and community wellbeing and democratic citizenship.

Volunteering opportunities

Another benefit of Cherry Tree Lane Community Garden would be the opportunity it offers for local residents, community groups and skills providers, such as Sunnyside Rural Trust, to provide formal and informal volunteering opportunities. Volunteers have found that volunteering improves their ability to communicate, influence and lead, and build better relationship skills.

Assets for the local residents

An important benefit for residents living locally to Cherry Tree Lane Community Garden will be a cleaner, greener environment and space for walking and cycling. Such spaces have been linked to lower crime rates and reduced anti-social behaviour. Community gardens have also been known to provide opportunities to develop strong local communities, where users meet new people and form stronger local networks and relationships.



Educational opportunities



Skills development



Educational opportunities



Assets for local residents



Volunteering opportunities

CHERRY TREE LANE GARDEN IDEAS

The following are some ideas, suggested by Sunnyside, that could form a feature within the wider community garden. The aim is to bring pride to Hemel and this hedged and perennial garden will bring interest and colour all year round.

1. Cyclists

This is a nod to wellbeing and the fantastic cycling route we have along the disused Nickey Line. Sunnyside would plant out the bikes in evergreen hedging, with low growing perennials interplanted and surrounding, some offering year round interest, and others offering insect friendly summer colour.

2. Wheel sculptures at the centre of a wheel shaped bed

A way of linking today with the past – the wheels represent wheels from the old steam trains, and wheels from current bike users bringing the history and present use of the Nickey Line together. The overall garden design would be in the shape of a wheel, with perennial planting filling the segments created by railway sleeper spokes. At the centre of the wheel design, old wheels would be used to create a sculptural display that could then be planted through with climbers.

3. Bike sculptures at the centre of a wheel shaped bed

Recycling old bikes as displays and planters within a central bed. Gentle climbers, such as clematis could be trained along the bike frames. The overall garden design would be in the shape of a wheel, with perennial planting filling the segments created by railway sleeper spokes. At the centre of the wheel design, old bikes would be used to create a floriferous display that could then be planted through with climbers.



Cyclists idea



Wheel sculpture idea



Wheel sculpture idea



Bike sculpture idea



Wheel sculpture idea



CHERRY TREE LANE GARDEN IDEAS

4. Train Carriages

A tribute to the history of the Nickey line, and the steam trains that used to run along it. We would construct a wooden steam train with carriage planters, filled with evergreen and colourful perennials, beneficial to wildlife.

5. Straw Plait Garden

A garden to highlight the straw plaiting industry in Hemel, which used the Nickey Line to transfer handmade straw plaits to hat makers in Luton. The overall garden design could be in the shape of a loose plait, marked out with low, evergreen hedging, and filled with naturalistic grasses and wildlife friendly perennials, as a tribute to the wheat grass used in straw plaiting.



Train carriage idea



Train carriage idea



Straw plait garden idea



Straw plait garden idea



Straw plait garden idea

WOOD END QUAKER BURIAL GROUND 1693 to 1780

A Symbol of Freedom of Religion for All

Approximately 30 Quakers were buried here between 1693 and 1780. A few of them had actively opposed the power of the established Church; at least one had been jailed for his beliefs.

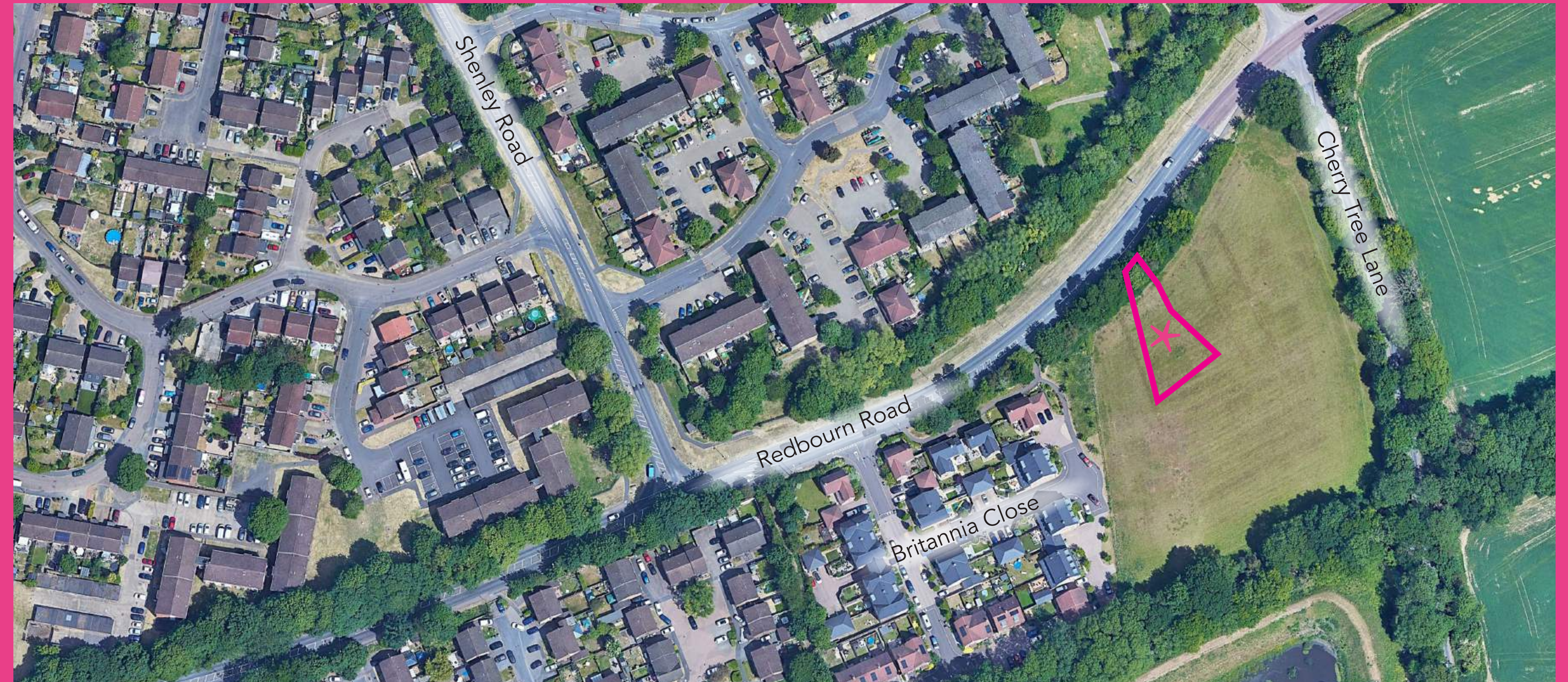
The area of this field that is staked out with orange posts was described in 1678 as 'a rood [1/4 acre] of arable land' and granted to Joseph Hackney, a Quaker and a tanner.

In 1682, Joseph Hackney gave the land over to 12 Quakers who would later be called Trustees.

In 1689, The Act of Toleration allowed Quakers and other Protestant dissenters to worship legally.

By 1691, a wooden Meeting House had been built. This was in use until 1793, and finally torn down in 1797.

"Today Quakers are known for our world-wide activities that follow from our testimonies of Peace, Equality, Truth and Simplicity. We hope our burial ground field will be used as a place of quiet and contemplation in this busy world"



Quaker Burial Ground site, outlines and marked with an asterisk



Photos shows the area of the Quaker Burial Ground