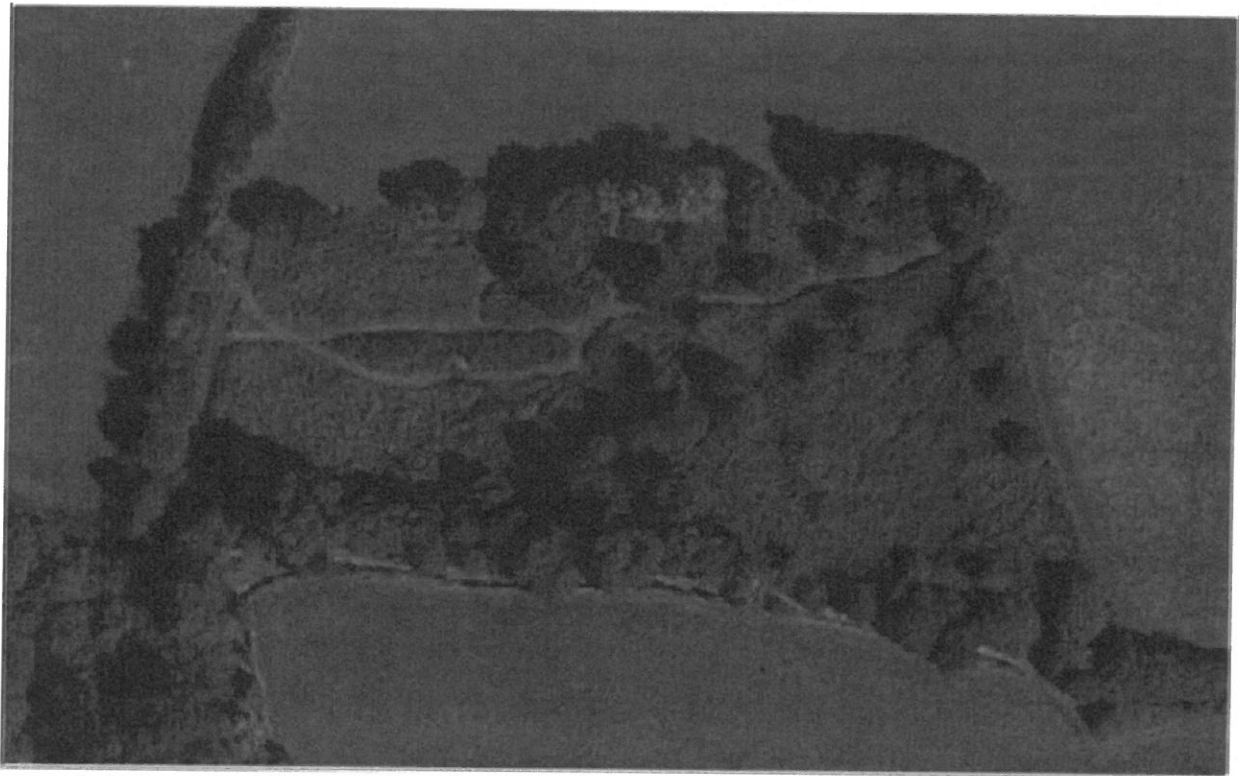


**Cleeves Close Management Proposals  
Ilminster Town Council - Open Spaces Team**

**Introduction:**

Cleeves Close is a patch of land covering an area of 3.13 acres, situated in the South West corner of Brittons Field, Ilminster. This area currently contains a number of trees and shrubs, including Pedunculate Oak, Willow, White Poplar, Hawthorn, Silver Birch and Holly. A small number of Apple trees have also been planted in memory of local residents which include plaques.

The open areas of Cleeves Close had become overgrown with a large amount of scrub, consisting of Bramble, Common Nettle and Rosebay willowherb. During the Summer of 2016 the Open Spaces Team cleared a large area of this scrub using Brushcutters and a Tractor mounted Flail.



An aerial view of Cleeves Close.

**Aim:**

The aim of this report is to provide suggestions to Ilminster Town Council on potential projects for the Cleeves Close area. The purpose of each of the projects should be to enhance the accessibility and improve the cultural and/or natural value to the area. Each project will include a community aspect, either by directly involving members of the public in the work to be carried out, or by providing a service to them once the project is completed.

**Objectives:**

- Detail three potential projects for the Cleaves Close Open Space.
- List the positive impact that each project could provide to the general public and Ilminster Town Council.
- Explain any negative consequences that each project may have to the general public or Ilminster Town Council.
- Summarise how each project should be undertaken.

**Option 1; Memorial arboretum:**

To use the area as a memorial arboretum, allowing the people of Ilminster to plant trees in memory of lost family members and friends.

The Ilminster Open Spaces Team could provide a service where a local resident can choose a species of tree or shrub to be planted in memory of a deceased person. The option of having a plaque installed with a short message could also be made available.

With limited space available at the Ilminster cemetery this option could provide an area of remembrance to the people of Ilminster, should burials be moved to a cemetery outside of the town in the future.

A wide variety of exotic tree and shrub species could be planted, providing an interesting range for people to enjoy. Care should be taken to prevent potentially invasive species being selected which could impact the local natural flora and fauna.

If this plan were to be implemented, uptake by the public could potentially be slow, which would mean that the area would require ongoing management to prevent natural succession returning the area to scrub.

The council could use this plan to create a small amount of revenue, by including a profit margin on the purchase of the tree, memorial plaque and the labour for its installation.

**Option 2; Create a woodland space:**

The Woodland Trust offer tree packs to small organisations and community groups, which could be acquired by Ilminster Town Council to create a small area of woodland at Cleaves Close.

These tree packs are available at no cost and are distributed by the Trust during the months of November and March.

The packs come in sizes of either 105 or 420 young saplings, coming in a variety of native species. These packs include a Wild Harvest variety of Rowan, Hazel, Blackthorn, Crab apple, Dog rose and Elder. Other packs include species to improve wildlife habitat, provide year round colour, provide wood working species and also trees selected to grow in exposed wet areas.

Selecting the Wild Harvest pack would provide the local community with a wild food resource, which could be used by local schools or community groups to make crab apple jelly, elderflower cordial, dog rose syrup and to collect hazel nuts. These species would also provide a food source for local wildlife.



The planting of the trees can be carried out by volunteer groups or local schools, enabling the community to take an active role in enhancing their green spaces.

Creating a woodland space in this area would also be beneficial to local residents who enjoy woodlands but are unable to access Herne Hill due to its steep topography. Providing a easily accessible wooded area could help promote nature to a larger group of people with reduced mobility.

It would be advisable to use stakes and tree guards when planting the saplings, to improve the chances of them becoming established. This may mean a cost to Ilminster Town Council unless funding could be found from elsewhere.

In the future, once the planted trees have matured, the need to actively manage the area would be reduced. However this would be many years off, until then the area would need regular maintenance to prevent scrub from returning and overrunning the site.

### **Option 3; Community natural teaching/gardening project:**

A third suggestion for Cleaves Close would be to use the space for community projects such as a gardening area, to be used to teach and encourage the growing of fruit and vegetables.

Similar to an allotment garden, a designated area could be used to grow crops communally by willing volunteers.

Schools involvement would also be beneficial and could provide excellent educational value to local children.



Raised beds as part of a community garden.



The ability to grow your own food is a valuable skill that many people do not have either the facilities or knowledge to partake in. This plan would require a dedicated team of volunteers to help organise and maintain, as it would require a larger amount of labour-hours than the Open Spaces Team can currently provide.

Any area used to plant crops would need to be protected from wildlife with fencing, as Cleeves Close is also home to a large population of Rabbits and there are also multiple Badger setts close-by. The protection the area would require would likely incur the largest cost of each of these options.

Alongside any planned gardening area could be a designated area for natural teaching/forestry school. The easy accessibility of Cleeves Close is ideal for younger children or those with decreased mobility to use as an area for outdoor education. Seating areas and props can be provided by the Open Spaces Team from felled timber brought from Herne Hill.

Due to the location of Cleeves Close it may be difficult to prevent vandalism or abuse to the area, as the area is obscured from residential view. However the benefit of having a project of this type would likely outweigh the risks and the council may wish to proceed in good faith.



Children taking part in Forest School activities.

### **Conclusion:**

I believe that any one of the suggested options has the potential to provide a good service to the local community and could be considered an improvement on the sites current use.

Each option has the ability to be scalable and a combination of each could be used to provide the maximum range of benefits to the residents of Ilminster.

To use the area for a gardening project has the most potential to teach people useful skills, however it would be the most difficult to organise and maintain, as well as potentially costing the most amount of money to the council overall.

The information provided in this report is accurate to the best of my knowledge.

Adam Willis  
Open Spaces Warden  
Ilminster Town Council