



**Westhill Farm**

SHOTOVER PARK COMMUNITY PROJECT

DRAFT

**Business Plan**

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## 1 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Westhill Farm is located on the edge of a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) which is both environmentally unique and near to several areas of deprivation in Oxford City.

We propose to improve the current derelict site to become a thriving centre for community land based activity. The farm will be restored with the site developed in a way that demonstrates the value and potential of a community managed enterprise within an urban hinterland.

The project has three key strategic objectives which together aim to demonstrate the value of nature and permaculture to the Oxford City community.

1. LEARN – To provide people with opportunities to learn and evolve their expertise and confidence through participation in land and team building/life skills courses and activities such as growing food, bush craft, beekeeping, and permaculture.
2. HEAL – To create an environment within which people can be healthier in body and mind; access the natural amenities and classes, treatments and healing activities such as mentoring, nutrition, ecotherapy, mindfulness classes, and creation of a place of sanctuary.
3. GROW – To restore the farm as a going concern, inherently demonstrating the viability of permaculture. Growing food for own consumption on the site and for sale to the local food market, and the provision of space and support to incubate social enterprises.

There is a huge body of support for the project, which substantiates the ambition and viability of the WHF project:

- Over 500 followers from the City community, with individuals and agencies, local residents and schools, councillors and the Shotover Park Management team all prepared to be involved with time and from some, with finance.
- Support comes from prospective users of the farm, course and service providers, social enterprise tenants, agencies and charities involved in supporting our target customers, and grant issuers.

The plan supports all four of Oxford City Council's corporate objectives, with particular synergy around supporting stronger and more active communities, a cleaner and greener Oxford and a vibrant and sustainable economy.

The plan also fully enables the fulfilment of the development and management plan of the Shotover Country Park; all of Natural England's priorities (three of which are made possible only by this site); and supports much of the Oxford Strategic Partnership Programme.

The site will be developed to enable activities and services over five phases culminating in the opening of a new eco-build fit for purpose educational facility/farmhouse by 2019.

- This approach allows space for fundraising, reflection and for refining the business model according to local priorities and demand.
- Phased delivery enables effective project management with review of progress and learning ahead of decisions to move to the next phase of investment and activity.

The commercial case outlines a business model that seeks to use both income and grants to support socially excluded groups. Other activities come free to all as they are either gifted by volunteer support, or as a result of the site's location and development.

Delivery of the activities and services is financially self-sustaining after a 3-year period, with rollout of our activities phased over a 4-year period.

- The project will be supported during its start-up period by various funding streams, with a crowd fundraiser as central.
- The project will be primarily sustained by income from the running of courses related to sustainable and healthy living, the sale of produce, as well as rent from social enterprises.
- Other costs will be offset by securing grants to enable courses and apprenticeship schemes. These will be run on-site alongside local charities for the benefit of disadvantaged sections of the local community

Risks to the Project's success have been identified and assessed in terms of likelihood and impact to identify the sub-set that requires highest priority to address.

Failure to secure long-term lease from Oxford City Council (OCC)

- Creation of a detailed Business Plan to enable OCC feedback and input to strengthen plan and support collaborative delivery.
- OCC have confirmed their main resistance to the project is due to management of a farmhouse tenancy being incongruent to their current strategy and worries over excessive traffic to site.

The Project therefore proposes to constitute as a Community Interest Company (CIC). This enables it to assume ownership of the properties and thereby assume full responsibility for the cost of building, renovation and on-going maintenance of the properties. It is believed that by WHF assuming this responsibility; it significantly removes the tenancy management implications for OCC.

A traffic management plan will be inherent to the planning application. Our permaculture ethos will ensure minimum environmental impact to the site and Park due to vehicles.

- The phased approach and strong governance structure will ensure that the health and progress of the project will be managed in a professional and timely manner. OCC (e.g Parks Dept.) representation on the WHF Advisory Board would be invaluable.

Failure to secure residential status for farmhouse new build

- Residential status is important to provide on-site security.
- A limited area of accommodation is deemed necessary for a stockman/farm manager for livestock husbandry.
- The current residential status of the derelict house will enable residential status for the new build to be secured if the application is made before its demolition. The Project Team are prepared to pay for this.

- South Oxford District Council has communicated their support for the WHF project through the numerous discussions on the development of the WHF project and appreciates the value of on-site security.<sup>1</sup>
- The WHF CIC ownership of liability for the risks, costs and management of the site and farmhouse are designed to mitigate OCC concerns over administering its tenancy management responsibilities.
- Delivery of this plan's benefits has significant synergy with delivery of OCC's corporate priorities.

#### Failure to secure sufficient funds as planned

- The site has minimal on-going costs, with the phased approach enabling lack of funds to extend current phases until desired funds are in place.
- We have a track record and experience at managing social enterprises and have factored in volunteer fatigue and potential delays within the plan.
- We have experienced fundraisers on the Steering Group and already have a number of funding bids identified and crowd funding ideas. We will be active in trying to also secure in-kind business support. Funding bids must show evidence of a long lease agreement.

## 2 PROJECT CONTEXT

### 2a Wider context to project within Oxfordshire

There are a number of relevant strategies, policies and trends that create a supportive context to this Business Plan.

There is a growing interest among policy makers and local authorities in smaller-scale and sustainable forms of agriculture, and in reconnecting urban dwellers to the land management processes that support them. There is therefore much scope for a model farm near the city to demonstrate techniques and host trainings.

From evidence presented by MIND (*Feel Better Outside Feel Better Inside Report, 2013*) and Natural England (*A Review of Nature-based Interventions for Mental Health Care Report, 2016*), it is clear that 'Ecotherapy', or 'Green Care', has a role to play in building and supporting our wellbeing and resilience, and keeping us all healthy. Through referrals from the NHS, schools, probation services and other statutory bodies, we see opportunities for Westhill Farm as a thriving hub for physical and mental wellbeing, through the production of local food, conservation education and practice, and training in land-based skills.

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<sup>1</sup> E.G Pre-application advice letter from South Oxford District Council Planning Department dated 27<sup>th</sup> October 2014.

## **2b Academic case supporting Westhill Farm Project**

There exists an abundance of international academic research detailing the positive social, economic and environmental impacts of agriculture and food production in and around towns and cities, frequently termed urban/peri-urban agriculture.

Food production in and around towns and cities can contribute significantly to process of community building and strengthening, particularly for marginalised groups (see for example, Cabannes & Raposo, 2013; Saldivar-Tanaka & Kransey, 2004; Smit, Bailkey, & Van Veenhuizen, 2006), and reconnects urban consumers with processes of food production (Kneafsey et al., 2008).

Significant research has also established the contribution of urban/peri urban agriculture to the health of urban inhabitants (Bellows, Brown, & Smit, 2003; Brown & Jameton, 2000; Hodgson, Caton Campbell, & Bailkey, 2011), as well as the therapeutic impact of food growing (O'Brien, 2010). The significant potential of peri-urban agriculture to create jobs, provide skills training and generate livelihoods (Mougeot, 2005; Redwood, 2008), is also well documented.

Productive urban/peri-urban farms are also notable for their capacity to foster diverse communities (Holland, 2004), for engaging children and young people in community-oriented projects (Hung, 2004), and for putting women at the centre of decision-making processes (Hovorka, de Zeeuw, & Njenga, 2009; Slater, 2001).

The environmental case for urban/peri-urban food production is also clear, for its ability to absorb 'grey water' and other waste materials produced within the city (Pinderhughes, 2004); for reducing 'food miles', and in terms of "closing the nutrient loop" (Mougeot, 2006).

(Details of references available on request).

## **2c Background to Westhill Farm**

Westhill Farm is located in beautiful ancient woodland near a meadow and stream, overlooking the city. Being just three miles from some of the most densely populated areas of Oxford, it is much loved and valued by the 600,000 users who visit Shotover Country Park every year, and it is close to areas in the City of highest social deprivation.

Shotover Country Park is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest. Oxford Preservation Trust, with the help of benefactors, acquired the freehold to cover 180 acres of land on the southern slopes of the hill at Shotover. In 1952 Trustees conveyed the land (which includes Westhill Farm) to the Mayor Aldermen and Citizens of Oxford (now Oxford City Council) to keep and manage it in its natural state as an open space or park to which the public would be allowed access. Shotover Park Rangers lived at Westhill farm from 1938 to 2011. Following an arson attack a few months after the property was vacated in 2011, the property has been left derelict and without a roof, and what is left of the farmhouse has deteriorated further. The site has become a liability and a health risk, and is due to be demolished. However, Westhill Farm is vital to the future of Shotover as it is the only existing facility in the country park.

Long before it was used as a tied cottage for an OCC Countryside Ranger to live on site, it was a viable farm, and the potential for restoring that former function to the site, and meeting the obligations of the OPT Covenant, through a permaculture model farm is a core objective.

## 2d Westhill Farm project creation and the journey so far

Our group approached Oxford City Council in 2013 to take on the site, to renovate it and return it to agricultural use, with additional benefits to the community. In 2014, the Social Investment Business awarded our group a pre-feasibility grant to help us deliver a proposal to Oxford City Council to take on the management of the site. On the strength of this proposal Oxford City Council awarded our group a licence to occupy land at Westhill Farm and the barn; but which excluded the farmhouse. On approval of a business plan, Oxford City Council have agreed to award the team a long term, peppercorn lease and to give us time to raise funds to realise our vision.

## 3 STRATEGIC CASE

### 3a Project Vision and Values

Our vision for Westhill Farm is to be a living demonstration of a community managed permaculture land space that will support our goal of learning, healing and growing.

#### Our core values

**Participation and opportunity** - To provide opportunities for socially excluded groups to access growing activities –from agriculture to horticulture and gardening; and growing people as they deepen their connection with nature. Emphasis will be on physical and mental wellbeing and outdoor education.

**Learning and educational experiences** - To provide a facility and participatory activities for the benefit of learning through experience.

**Building collaboration** – through teamwork and taking this spirit back into the community

**History and heritage** - To create an historic working farm sympathetic to the history of the site, and re-establish farm activities replicating heritage crafts and traditional skills.

**Embody Exemplary design** - To create a pioneering learning environment demonstrating the most innovative design methods of agro-ecology, eco buildings and designing for biodiversity; applied with the highest ethical standards.

### 3b Project objectives and offer

There are 3 objectives which together enable the vision to be realised:

LEARN; to give people opportunities to learn and evolve their expertise and confidence through participation in growing and nature based courses and activities e.g. apprenticeships, food production, bee keeping, team building, and bush craft.

HEAL; to create an environment within which people can be healthier in mind and in body:

- Fully realise the benefits of eco-therapy, or 'green care', from use of nature, the WHF amenities and from classes, treatments and events.
- To create a place of sanctuary and peace

GROW; to restore the farm as a going concern, inherently demonstrating the viability of permaculture and inspiring others to use these skills and approach-

- Planning and growing crops on the managed land for private and external sale.
- Enabling growth of social enterprise providing mentorship, space and support.

The business plan will show how, over five phases, diverse activities and income streams will be developed to deliver each of these objectives.

### **3c Target users of Westhill farm activities and services**

Our primary user groups are:

- Charitable groups and community services looking for a 'venue' or operation where engaging activities can be sourced for their clients.
- The local community seeking to take part in practical land-based activities as well as courses related to health and wellbeing.<sup>2</sup>
- Schools, students and local residents seeking skills, a healthier way of living, access to nature and a chance to support community activities.
- One of the principal roles provided by the farm will be to improve accessibility for disadvantaged sections of the city, and the disabled, in order to reach out to people who do not currently use Shotover Park.
- Potential customers include other social enterprise schemes that are looking for office space in an area where office space is at a premium.

### **3d Strategic benefits to Oxford City Council - A shared vision**

It is valuable to note that the vision and values of the Westhill Farm Project synergise very well with the long-term vision for the Council, and of the Oxford Strategic Partnership whose aim is *'That Oxford should be a city in which all our citizens feel happy to live and experience a high quality of life'*.

- Fundamentally, the Westhill Farm Project is a community project, which seeks to play an important part in the shared stated aim to *'develop strong communities that break the cycle*

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<sup>2 2</sup> The New Economics Foundation report; 5 ways to well-being describes; connection, keeping active, taking notice, learning and giving as the essential ingredients to wellbeing and resilient mental health – all of which are at the heart of WHF.

*of deprivation which cause some families and communities to suffer poverty, poor education and reduced life expectancy'.*

- Its work will play a part in the preservation and enhancement of Oxford's natural environment and bio-diversity, another key aim of the Oxford Strategic Partnership.
- A complementary asset to Shotover country park by enabling deeper and different engagement with the park in addition to other activities

There are a number of important ways in which the Westhill Farm Project supports and enables delivery of the five City Council's corporate priorities.

## **Priority 1: a vibrant and sustainable economy**

### **Improve the skills of the workforce – in particular with young people**

- We will offer mentoring, training and apprenticeships for young people that will help prepare youth for work. This benefit will also extend to those who are out of work, and include those who are ex-offenders.
- We will create a unique and needed space for different social service providers to meet and where greater collaborative working can be facilitated.

### **Promote growth of enterprise – in particular by growing a low-carbon economy and supporting an ethical economy**

- We will offer unique and high-quality training in environmental skills that:
  - build a lower carbon Oxford
  - support a better, more sustainable farming and horticultural capability
- We will nurture social enterprise by:
  - providing an affordable base for social enterprise businesses
  - offering mentoring and training support

## **Priority 2 - meeting housing needs and strategy for land management**

The Westhill Farm Project will NOT provide a housing asset for any Oxford citizen (other than for the onsite security guardian). However, it can help contribute to a couple of Council Housing priorities. The project also uniquely addresses seven of the eight requirements of Natural England Advisory Board and is a major enabler of the Management plan for the Shotover Country Park SSSI.

### **Reducing homelessness**

- Skills training and mentoring can be targeted towards those who are homeless helping to build confidence and wellbeing as well as developing skills to improve work capability.

## **Build homes that are environmentally low in carbon impact**

- We wish to renovate the barn and build the educational facility/farmhouse using exemplar eco-design and innovative approaches and uses of materials. This could be of national interest and provide a centre of excellence for other builds in the City to reference.

## **Strategic use of agricultural land and offset local food security concerns**

- We will enable strategic use of agricultural land:
  - encouraging young people into rural-based livelihoods and agricultural jobs
  - restore the land to its agricultural potential and grow foods for local consumption
- Work with university and others to enhance techniques and understanding of more sustainable means of production

## **Priority 3 - strong and active communities**

Delivery of our plan will help to address five of the six key issues outlined in Oxford City Council's priority – it is therefore the area of greatest synergy with the Council's strategy for the City.

Being located close to three of Oxford's most socially deprived areas (Barton, Blackbird Leys and Wood Farm), the Westhill Farm Project will create new and unique activities and support services that are right on the doorstep of many who will really benefit from them. It will also provide an enhanced leisure space that will increase the health and wellbeing of all who visit, including the elderly.

## **Reduce the extent of inequality and improve the lives of the most vulnerable – particularly to help young people open the doors to positive life opportunities**

- We will offer volunteering, education, and apprenticeships to those from the most deprived social groups in Oxford.
- We will support 'back to work' and meaningful livelihoods initiatives for youth and other target groups, including those living in the nearby, deprived communities.

## **Support older people to have improved wellbeing**

- This project provides a purpose, watching and participating, for older people to engage with.
- It offers the benefits of being outdoors and mixing with others.
- The site amenities and activities will be designed to be accessible to the elderly and disabled offering an inclusive environment to support the whole community.

## **Promote and improving healthy living for all**

- Westhill Farm and Shotover Country Park are an important focus of leisure in the area that is free and accessible. We will nurture environmental awareness and connection with nature, which, in turn will help strengthen social cohesion and increase numbers valuing and accessing green space.

- We will promote, educate through courses and ecotherapy, embody the benefits of healthy living, and nurture a value and desire to build personal and collective wellbeing through stronger and happier communities.

### **Build a safer community in Oxford**

- We will help ex-offenders transition better into society and to working life through the 'Band of Brothers' courses and mentoring.

### **Celebrate culture and community events**

- We will actively seek to host a wide range of arts and cultural events on-site that will energise those attending and help to achieve our vision of a sustainable, land-based community facility. Ideas include:
  - fringe literacy and arts festival
  - eco-sculpture national competition
  - corporate 'away-days' and organisational change retreats
- We will host a comprehensive plan of events that will bring together people from all walks of life, helping to overcome social barriers and build a stronger sense of local identity and belonging.

## **Priority 4 - cleaner and greener Oxford**

### **Reduce the amount of waste sent to the energy recovery facility and increase the amount of re-cycling, re-use, composting and anaerobic digestion of waste**

- We will play an active part in the education and empowerment of citizens to lower their personal waste carbon footprint.

### **Actively promote use of public transport, cycling and walking**

We will promote the local bus service as it is adequate to bring people from the nearby communities if they prefer. However, the remaining distance will be by foot. Disabled access is right up to the farmhouse by car and will be permitted via The Ridings road but this is not anticipated to be significant.

Cycling will be encouraged and measures to support this introduced. Walking the last km from the Old Road car park will be central to the mindful introduction of Westhill farm to users.

### **Enable delivery of Natural England Priorities that help to protect England's nature and landscapes for people to enjoy and for the services they provide**

- The Westhill Farm Project fulfils all eight priorities including three, which are yet to be met by anyone else.
- Natural England support the proposed grazing of the scrubland on Shotover Park by having Dexter cattle on the hill, as recommended to the City Council by their ecology consultants, but not yet acted upon.

## **Priority 5 – efficient and effective Council**

### **Prudent long term planning**

- The site will be secure and, with this project, be maintained as an asset for the people of Oxford into the future
- We will deliver the project using strong governance with regular reviews with the key stakeholders (which include the City Council), to ensure all are aware of progress and ongoing health of the organisation.
- A plan will be developed and agreed with key stakeholders for contingency action in the event of project failing to continue as planned. In this scenario, it is envisaged that all liabilities will be managed and covered by the organisation, with the land returning to the leaser in a better condition than at present.

### **Managing through austerity**

- We will develop the site and offer community enriching activities and services that will considerably enhance the Council's social reach without incurring additional costs

### **Investment to improve city leisure and retail offer from Oxford**

- We will play an important part in the delivery of the Shotover Country Park Management and Development plan:
  - we have full support of park rangers
  - we will be the only facility in the park
  - we will be an ideal storage location
- Our location offers the nearby communities and all citizens' access to beautiful natural green and woodland space.
- We will grow and maintain the farm to harvest produce that will feed into the local Oxfordshire food economy, a growing and as yet to be fully met, demand.

### **3e Key dependencies**

Securing the long term lease and planning permission for use of the site as outlined is central to our plan's vision and delivery plan. This includes ensuring effective 24-hour security for the site, achieved by an on-site guardian residing temporarily in the barn, moving to the educational facility/farmhouse once built.

To ensure this critical dependency can be successfully managed we will

- Constitute the organisation to become a CIC limited by guarantee. As a CIC the management of WHF can assume the responsibility and ownership of the costs of building works and maintenance. This significantly reduces the tenancy management requirements OCC would have for the site.

- Ask for a representation from OCC Parks Department to join our Advisor Board who will support the CIC's director group. Through this strong and proven governance structure, OCC can be assured of involvement and timely updates of plan delivery progress and key decisions.
- Continue our positive discussions with South Oxford District Council to apply for detailed planning permission for the site in its entirety.

### **3f Critical success factors**

There are number of factors that we will successfully manage to deliver the project.

- Recruiting and keeping the management team
- Structuring and managing the fund raising as well as ensuring the financial management is effective and sustained
- Working effectively with key stakeholders and partners
- Securing enough volunteers and gifts in kind to support
- Ensuring the land is well managed to enable growth of produce
- Securing an onsite guardian to provide 24 hour security

## **4 COMMERCIAL CASE**

### **4a Outline of commercial model**

We will deliver our objectives of 'Learn, Heal and Grow' through delivery of a portfolio of activities. The portfolio is composed of activities and services which either generate profit, have costs offset by grants, or can be offered free as they can be either delivered by gift of volunteer involvement or are made possible inherently from the on-going exiting of the Westhill Farm project. A further source of income will be from friends of Westhill Farm.

Profit generating activities and services

- Crops with known profitability
- Courses competitively priced and with known demand
- Rental space to social enterprises with confirmed tenants and rental figures discussed
- Therapy treatments
- Venue hire
- School study trips

Grant supported activities and services

- Mentoring
- Forest school and other educational activities
- Courses and training
- Gardening services

Free activities and services

- Disabled and elderly access
- Therapy
- Interpretation centre
- Seasonal events

Activities and services will be implemented in a phased approach. The phases take into account the stages to develop the site. They also allow the team and the project's key stakeholders' time to manage resources, fundraise and realise the potential of the site.

	PHASE 1	PHASE 2	PHASE 3	PHASE 4	PHASE 5
Timing	Jan to Oct 2016 Business Planning and capability build	Nov 2016 - May 2017 Restoration of the barn - Preparation and build	June 2017 Launch Barn based activities and services	Aug 2018 Rebuild Farmhouse Barn enabled activities and services optimised	Jan 2019 Launch Farmhouse activities and services
Capability build	* Secure stakeholder support * Resolve tenancy issues * CIC incorporation & management in place * Crowd funding initiated * Premises lease and planning secured * Farmhouse demolished	Funds raised - Barn restored with volunteers	Establish barn as a venue to host courses, work and growing space  Review farmhouse plan  Fundraise for Farmhouse build	Optimise activities enabled by the Barn and outdoor facilities	Activities enhanced through access to dedicated and purpose build inside facilities  Onsite guardian moves to farmhouse, as does the catering facility  Revised use of barn space
Offer - Learn	Courses; Permaculture, bushcraft, growing, hedgelaying	Some outdoor based training and classes - basic	Interpretation Centre  Adult courses: Permaculture, Apprenticeships, Mentoring Child Learning: Bushcraft and forest school	Have established courses with people from our target groups  More ambitious and effective event hosting	New services enabled: * Residential Courses * Larger lecture rooms * Bigger wider scale events  Improved Interpretation Centre
Offer - Heal		Outdoor therapy classes Mentoring and apprenticeships for barn renovation Begin growing activity to pilot/learn best methods	Targetted courses to build confidence and team skills  Open Ecotherapy Centre  First harvest of produce for own use	Optimise activities enabled by the Barn and outdoor facilities	Activities enhanced through access to dedicated and purpose build inside facilities
Offer - Grow	Land preparation	Early social enterprise tenants	Experiment with produce sales	More confident crop/farm management	More space for social enterprise rent

## 4b Competition

There are several other land-based facilities in Oxon. Together they evidence the demand for land based educational facilities. Rather than competition, we see many opportunities for collaboration, and regard these projects as inspiring allies in a growing agroecology movement.

**Oxford City Farm**, Cowley, is the only farm-based site located in the City area (comparable to Westhill Farm). However, their site does not have facilities to offer the range and type of therapy and learning.

**Hill End Outdoor Education Centre**, Eynsham, is a great outdoor activities centre primarily targeted at selling residential courses targeted to under 18's, mainly school groups. It is hard to reach in a rural location with no connection to a local community.

**Earth Trust**, Wittenham, is an established charity offering heritage skills and land-based events. There is contact with livestock, and their heritage courses are very popular. The site is relatively far from the City and hard to get to without a car.

**Farmability**, Wytham: a popular day service for adults with learning disabilities and autism. They practice the empowerment model: adults with learning disabilities are regarded as co-farmers. Provision is limited to just this target group.

**L.O.V.E.** operates at various sites in Oxfordshire. A land-based social enterprise, which aims to empower communities to take responsibility for their own wellbeing. The project demonstrates how strong ethics and bonds come out of a voluntary-based community. We see opportunity for collaboration -project does not have a permanent base, but is dependent on being granted access to various sites across the county.

**Barracks Lane Community Garden**, once a derelict Oxford City Council owned site attracting anti-social behavior; a local group transformed this place into a thriving hub supporting stronger communities.

## 4c Demand for offer substantiated

The team have conducted numerous public consultations since 2013, hosting well-attended events in Cowley, Horspath, at local festivals, and through door-to-door conversations with local residents. Our proposals have been met with universal support. With minimal promotion to date we already have a database of 500 followers, and 50 active volunteers attending weekly work-days.

The first course, a four-day immersion in permaculture design, was fully subscribed. The income enabled us to offer five free places to low waged volunteers to take the course and take a lead implementing the design.

There is much scope for a model farm near the city to demonstrate techniques and host courses and trainings.

The government has asked local councils in England to research demand for self-build plots in their area and to prioritise sales of brownfield sites to self-builders. Westhill Farm could offer apprenticeships and accredited training in eco-build techniques.

The concept of urban gardening and edible cities has attracted much interest in recent years. For example, many local schools have introduced raised beds, small vegetable plots and herb gardens into their playgrounds; but these could often be better utilised. A subsidized gardening service that improves the work prospects of local residents through the provision of free training will be something that will attract almost all housing associations and charitable trusts within the area. Other customers would be those in advance years with gardens and those concerned with the management of their residential environments including communal or private gardens. The long-term unemployed will form the majority of participants taking part in gardening courses.

<i>Area of demand</i>	<i>Numbers</i>
Charities	Six letters of support from leading charities with excellent fundraising records have been received
Local Schools	Five schools that have been approached so far would use the site for forest school activities and are keen to look at partnership for a site of alternative education through Pupil Referral Units.
University of Oxford, Brookes University, Ruskin College, College of Further Education, etc.	Success working with architect students at Brookes University and Oxford Hub; we have also had discussions with art and ecology departments. Rycotewood Furniture college, Ruskin College and others will be approached.
Probation services	A Band of Brothers are a charity contracted to take 35 young men over the next 3 years from the Thames Valley area through a mentoring scheme; which could be based at Westhill Farm.
Social enterprises	2 organisations want to rent office space and run several trainings a year from Westhill Farm.
NHS	MIND research confirms the intent to offer ecotherapy (including Mindfulness) to build and support wellbeing and personal resilience.
General public	600,000 visitors a year to Shotover, yet no public amenities. 50 volunteers turn up regularly for workdays at Westhill Farm. We currently have 500 supporters on our database. We were fully booked for our first permaculture course held in March.
Tourists	This is an under exploited market. Tolkein and C.S Lewis based their books on walks in Shotover woods, and Oxford attracts large numbers of visitors thanks to its literary heritage. Many of the popular Oxford festivals could run "fringe" events hosted by Westhill Farm e.g. Oxford Literary Festival.

#### **4d Provision of offer substantiated**

The Council's Parks department fully support our project, and will use the farm as a base from which to deliver restoration and biodiversity work set out in their management plan for Shotover Park.

Our Pre-Feasibility report included a letter from the Planning Department of South Oxford District Council outlining support for our development plans.

We will attract the support of investors and donors. The following organisations are willing to partner with us, because they see value in developing a stake in the project. All of them have the skills, resources and expertise to deliver the vision. While the project is in start-up phase, it will be important to work with these organisations, and the team of people listed. Each one has a strong track record of delivering projects.

#### **Social Enterprise Partnerships**

- Insightshare – established social change catalyst with 16-year track record, world-class training supplier, and international reach with firm roots in Oxford.
- Gaia Veda – established landscaping business and permaculture design courses
- A Band of Brothers – charity delivering probation services for Thames Valley
- Permaculture Association – UK national organisation and charity
- Archetype Design – ethical design consultancy

#### **Partnering Academic Institutes**

- Centre for Agroecology and Water Resilience (CAWR) Coventry University
- Brookes University
- Oxford University

#### **Partner charities and schools**

- The Blackbird Academy Trust
- Oxford Spires Academy
- Lark Rise School
- MIND
- Refugee resource
- Restore
- Aspire Oxford
- Crisis
- Oxfordshire Youth
- Ark-T
- Nature Effect

A large pool of volunteers has been established and good links with local and national organisations has resulted in organisations such as 'Vodafone' providing volunteers and well developed links with Oxford Brookes University.

Local Suppliers, Builders, Roofers, and Joinery firms have pledged support through in-kind and subsidised work, and this will have significant potential to reduce building costs if fully realised.

To address OCC's genuine concerns over managing a tenancy that is incongruent with it other properties, Westhill Farm will constitute as a Community Interest Company (CIC). This will enable it to assume ownership of the properties and to thereby assume full responsibility for the cost of building, renovation and maintenance.

- A long term (ideally 40-60 year) lease from OCC, paying a peppercorn rent and zero rates is sought to support the project and minimise the costs and liability between the 2 parties.
- In the event of the project's failure, disposal of the farmhouse asset would be the responsibility of the CIC who would put contingency plans in place for this eventuality.
- For us to enable an onsite guardian in residence, both OCC and SODC must approve our proposal.

## 5 FINANCIAL CASE

### 5a Cost and revenue profiles over the phases

#### Outline costs to develop the facilities

It is our belief that the decision to demolish and rebuild the farmhouse is the correct one. Although a renovation fits with the objectives of the project overall, the risk the current structure poses to the public and the compromises its renovation would impose on the finished building prevent this being a practical solution.

There is a far cheaper option to a historic renovation, which also offers fewer risks to Oxford City Council and Westhill Farm project. We have a professional quote from a local firm, Sylva, to rebuild the farmhouse like-for-like, using a sustainable new-build timber-frame approach, which delivers an environmentally efficient building at a cost of £35,000 plus interior fittings. Much of the finishing work such as exterior cladding, will be undertaken by volunteers, and we expect some sponsorship for materials and in-kind work to be offered by local firms.

We believe this to be a time efficient solution which minimises risk to Oxford City Council, the project and the public. What is left of the structure will be taken down to a level slab; leaving the project team free to focus immediately on running activities on site without risk to the users; and thus able to deliver benefits to the city, whilst developing sustainable income streams from the outset.

The costs of a conversion of the barn to temporary living quarters, office and workshops are estimated at around £50,000. It is necessary to secure the site and any future capital investments from vandalism<sup>3</sup>, as soon as possible. The fundraising team will be able to stagger efforts to raise the capital required; initially to cover the barn renovation in Phase Two; and then to cover the farmhouse rebuild in Phase Four.

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<sup>3</sup> Vandalism of a toilet facility occurred in summer 2015, which along with the arson attack is indicative of the high likelihood of further damage without on site security that a resident would bring.

## Revenue

A lease agreement and strong business case will reassure investors and donors.

The business plan does not assume any financial support nor depend upon any seed funds from Oxford City Council. As the cashflow forecast shows, our target is to raise capital investment of £100,000 in Phases One and Two from grants and a crowd funding campaign, and a further £100,000 in Phase Three and Four. Growth of trading income across the phases is substantiated by the development of improved facilities.

Renovating the barn in Phase Two will secure the site from further vandalism, and allow us to get some of the income generating activities under way. At that stage our projections show a quarterly income in excess of £10,000 (excluding grants) generated from hiring the space to partner organisations, running our own courses, and renting space in the barn. Phase Four will see the farmhouse/educational facility rebuilt, and the provision of larger and improved facilities to enable us to run residential courses and some corporate events, raising our quarterly income in Phase Five to £30,000 (excluding grants). By Phase Five we will be relying less on grant income, but making a healthy surplus – enabling us to reinvest in the project mission to serve socially deprived sectors of the community.

## Income and expenditure

Phase/Year	Cost	Income
Pre-feasibility 2014-15: Build team Planning advice Pre-feasibility study Market research Governance Public liability insurance Community consultation Site design Business Plan	£10,000	£10,000 -Received as a SIB grant in 2014 plus private donations.  Over £50,000 worth of people hours has been invested developing the business plan, project vision, in consultation processes, and overseeing site works to date.
Phase One 2016: Sign lease Incorporation and Governance Planning permission Reconnect services Communications and outreach Fundraising for stables	£3,500 plus (£50,000 in kind skilled volunteer hours)	We expect to raise over £5,000 from fundraising events, and acquiring small local grants to support set up costs.  Over £50,000 worth of people hours has been pledged by Management team, advisors and volunteers.

Phase Two (2016-17): Crowd funding campaign Renovate stables 24 hour security Launch Membership Scheme Promotion and marketing Strategic partnerships Land works -implement designs Tools and equipment	£100,000 plus (£30,000 in kind skilled volunteer hours).	£100,000 will be raised from grant applications, some income generating activities, crowd funding and other community fundraising efforts towards renovating the barn.  An additional £30,000 worth of people hours has been pledged.
Phase Three (2018): Fundraise for farmhouse First sales from produce Open Interpretation Centre and café Rent office space Public events Ecotherapy Hub	£100,000 We will also begin to pay some core staff costs.	Raise £100,000  By Phase Three we have £10,000/quarter income from rent, courses, sales from produce, membership fees, events, etc. Rising to £40,000/quarter once farmhouse is furnished. Supplemented by grant funding for specific projects.
Phase Four (2018): Build farmhouse	Annual running costs of around £75,000	The project is breaking even. Average of £40,000/quarter income from rent, courses, sales from produce, membership fees, events, etc. Supplemented by grant income.
Phase Five (2019) Residential courses Oxford Literary Festival Fringe Theatre, arts and sculpture events Nationally established Sustainability Centre Corporate Events Professional fundraiser	Annual running costs of around £130,000	The project is making a small surplus from courses and other activities. The project could now invest in a part-time fundraiser.

## 5b Cashflow Forecast

Year	2016				2017	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
Phase	1	1	1	2	2	2
<b>INCOME</b>						
(Starting Balance)	£1,000					
<b>Funding</b>						
Investment funding/donations			£1,000	£2,000	£35,000	£500
Grant income						£35,000
Fundraising events			£500	£1,500	£500	£500
Big Charity Event					£5,000	
Membership Fees						
Solar/heating grants						
Interest free loans					£5,000	£5,000
<b>Trading Income</b>						
Produce sales						£1,000
Corporate Events						£500
Festival Events						£500
Venue Hire fees charged					£500	£1,000
Course fees charged	£1,000				£1,000	£1,000
Ecotherapy/Green Care activities						
<b>Rental Income</b>						
Rent of Offices						
Manager's accommodation						
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	£2,000		£1,500	£3,500	£47,000	£37,500
						£15,500

Year Quarter Phase	2016				2017	
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
	1	1	1	2	2	2

EXPENDITURE

Start-up Costs						
Design costs		£1,000				
Planning Application, advice, drawings		£800				
Governance set-up costs		£100				
Meetings		£50		£50	£50	£50
Legal expenses		£250				£500
Risk Assessment						£500
Health & Safety Expenditure						£500
Implementation of permaculture design				£500	£500	£500
Fencing			£250		£250	
Stable Block Renovation						
stove connection				£250		
services reconnection				£4,000		
Repair of roof					£12,000	
renovation of offices \ kitchen						£35,000
Heating System						£3,000
Solar PEV						£2,000
Farmhouse Build						
Farmhouse						
Farmhouse fittings						
External cladding						
Project management						£500
Improvements to access track						£1,000
Storage unit (Shipping container)						£250
Tools				£250		£250
Contingency				£250		£500

Year Quarter Phase	2016		2017			
	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2
	1	1	1	2	2	2
<u>Running Costs (Overheads)</u>						
Insurance		£500				£500
Marketing / Fundraising costs		£100		£100	£1,000	£500
Rates / Council tax						£250
Heat, Light, Water Rates and power						£250
Phone / Internet						£100
Accountant						£250
Maintenance						£100
loan repayment						
<u>Direct Costs of Trading</u>						
Produce						£500
Corporate events						
Hospitality/events						
Courses Direct Costs				£200	£200	£400
Ecotherapy/Green Care activities						
Outreach						
Travel Expenses				£100	£100	£150
Stationery						£50
<u>Staff Wages</u>						
farm manager					£2,000	£2,000
course manager					£2,000	£2,000
communications					£1,000	£1,000
NICs on the above					£183	£183
					£183	£183
					£45	£45
<u>Freelance Fees (expansion phase)</u>						
Operations support						
Youth work						
Professional fundraiser						
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£3,017	£601	£1,951	£6,702	£21,129	£51,912
Surplus (Defect)	-£1,017	£899	£1,549	£40,298	£16,371	-£36,412
CUMULATIVE Surp / Def		-£118	£1,431	£41,729	£58,100	£21,688



Year Quarter Phase	2018				2019					
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	5	5	5
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>										
<b>Start-up Costs</b>										
Design costs										
Planning Application, advice, drawings										
Governance set-up costs										
Meetings	£50	£50	£50	£50	£50	£50	£100	£100	£100	£100
Legal expenses										
Risk Assessment										
H&S Expenditure				£500				£500		
Implementation of permaculture design	£500									£1,000
Fencing										
Stable Block Renovation										
stove connection										
services reconnection										
Repair of roof										
renovation of offices \ kitchen										
Heating System										
Solar PEV										
Farmhouse Build										
Farmhouse										£35,000
Farmhouse fittings										£20,000
External cladding										£3,000
Project management										£3,000
Improvements to access track										£1,000
Storage unit (Shipping container)										
Tools										
Contingency	£250	£250	£250	£250	£250	£500	£750	£750	£750	£750

Year Quarter Phase	2018				2019					
	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4
	3	3	3	3	3	4	4	5	5	5
<u>Running Costs (Overheads)</u>										
Insurance				£500				£500		
Marketing / Fundraising costs	£250	£1,000	£250	£250	£250	£250	£250	£250	£250	£250
Rates / Council tax								£500		£500
Heat, Light, Water Rates and power	£250	£250	£250	£250	£250	£250	£250	£500	£500	£500
Phone / Internet	£100	£100	£100	£100	£100	£100	£100	£150	£150	£150
Accountant				£500				£500		£150
Maintenance	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500
loan repayment								£5,000		
<u>Direct Costs of Trading</u>										
Produce	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500
Corporate events	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000
Hospitality/events	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500
Courses Direct Costs	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000
Ecotherapy/Green Care activities	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£500	£1,000	£1,000	£1,000
Outreach								£3,000	£3,000	£3,000
Travel Expenses	£150	£150	£150	£150	£150	£150	£150	£500	£500	£500
Stationery	£50	£50	£50	£50	£50	£50	£50	£100	£100	£100
<u>Staff Wages</u>										
farm manager	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
course manager	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£5,000	£5,000	£5,000
communications	£2,500	£2,500	£2,500	£2,500	£2,500	£2,500	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000	£3,000
NICs on the above	£321	£321	£321	£321	£321	£321	£321	£597	£597	£597
	£321	£321	£321	£321	£321	£321	£321	£597	£597	£597
	£252	£252	£252	£252	£252	£252	£321	£321	£321	£321
<u>Freelance Fees</u>										
operations								£3,000	£3,000	£3,000
youth work	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500	£1,500	£2,000	£2,000	£2,000
Professional fundraiser								£2,000	£2,000	£2,000
TOTAL EXPENDITURE	£16,496	£16,746	£18,014	£17,496	£19,247	£19,247	£88,868	£36,888	£36,369	£36,869
Surplus (Defect)	£10,754	£504	£5,514	£8,504	£48,253	£48,253	£59,868	£1,612	£7,631	£7,131
CUMULATIVE Surp / Def	£32,442	£32,945	£27,431	£35,935	£84,188	£84,188	£24,320	£25,932	£33,563	£39,824

## **Rent**

In return for taking on the full running and maintenance costs for the site and to reassure our funders and partners, we request Oxford City Council to provide a long lease on Westhill Farm, including the farmhouse, at a peppercorn rate. Our lease should allow us to generate an income from sub-letting, and hiring space.

With these agreements in place, based on our assumptions of the popularity of Shotover among the citizens of Oxford and the willingness of the public to support and donate to the project, by Phase Four we can achieve a surplus to enable us to reinvest in the site and activities benefitting the city.

## **Supporters donating regular income**

In the long term, a tiered membership scheme comprising of, say, 500 “partners” paying £50/year, and 1000 “friends” paying £20/year could bring an income of £45,000 annually. In addition to feeling satisfaction at supporting a good cause, members could be offered benefits such as access to courses or special events at discounted rates, occasional use of the site for private functions such as birthday parties. This way people are participating in producing stronger, safer communities and a cleaner, greener Oxford.

The farmhouse/educational facility will be equipped with dormitories and improved facilities for hosting groups, including occasional corporate hospitality events. Income from residential trainings, corporate events and wellbeing retreats will rise year on year to create a surplus to reinvest in the project. Community membership fees will provide an annual income of unrestricted funds, also giving the wider community a stake in the project.

## **Evidencing income projections**

A first round of funding applications has been completed. £12,000 funding has been received which included a Locality grant through SIB for an initial pre-feasibility study, and personal donations.

A further 12 potential funders have been identified comprising grant giving bodies and private businesses. These include WREN, TOE2, European Social Fund, Esmee Fairbairn, Heritage Lottery Fund, Tolkein Trust, Wates Foundation, Garfield Weston Foundation, Vodaphone, BMW, Unipart, W Lucy & Co. and Grundys.

Local support to save the farm from dereliction or demolition must not be underestimated, as shown on our Facebook page following local news articles. There is every chance a campaign could help successfully raise all or most of the capital funds required from the Oxford community. Looking at similar cases across Oxfordshire, such as £300,000 raised by community in Horspath to buy the village chapel, now known as Horspath Hub; we believe a crowd-funding campaign would generate funds towards the costs of renovating the stables and rebuilding the farmhouse/educational facility.

Local charities have been contacted. Of these 6 have shown some genuine interest in providing funding opportunities and requested further information. Oxfordshire Aspire are part of the Local Enterprise Partnership; and have agreed to apply with us to a new community grants programme for Oxfordshire funded by the European Social Fund later this year for a

grant of £50,000. A Band of Brothers and Refugee Resource are two other well-established charities keen to apply for funding to run projects at Westhill Farm.

Research of local market rent indicates that an annual income of around £10,000 may be raised from rent fees for the barn. A site guardian is willing and able to move in as soon as possible. At least two social enterprises are interested in renting small office space and running trainings on the site.

Rental income from any of the existing buildings as premises for providing educational activities may also provide an income within the region of £500 per month. However this requires initial seed funding to renovate the barn and to provide a kitchen area.

## 6 MANAGEMENT CASE

### 6a Marketing plan

#### Phase One

- Develop and strengthen existing network of support partners and links to outreach social service partners
- Build awareness and support for Westhill Farm project. This will be in the form of newsletters, a new website, and events promoted primarily online and on Daily Info.

#### Phase Two

- Create and deliver the crowd funding campaign. All individuals who give money will become 'friends' of the Westhill Farm project organisation. The campaign will use a mix of media including social media, use of own and partner websites, video, press and events. A mailing list will be created, building on our existing 500-follower list. We have been offered advice on crowd fundraising from other successful organisations including Cultivate and The City Farm project.
- Deliver an on-going series of campaigns to attract volunteers to be involved in the barn renovation.
- Fund raising activities will continue, primarily via events on site or by social media.

#### Phase Three

- Launch the opening of the barn and its facilities with an event and associated on and offline marketing activity including press.
- Promote the activities, services and courses now available. Fliers, posters as well as online and social media marketing activity planned. Create a course booking system that links to subscriber and membership databases
- Develop a calendar of events and courses at the Westhill Farm and promote these effectively across the county and City. Identify potential annual events that can be hosted on site.
- Deliver a Lottery bid for farmhouse build.

#### Phase Four

- Consolidate activity and funding base
- Build funds and momentum for the rebuild of the farmhouse.

## **Phase Five**

- Launch opening of farmhouse – National press as well as local, with an event
- Promote new and larger activities in farmhouse and on site
- Revise promotional material to include residential activities and any other new and changes services available.

Marketing costs will be closely managed and minimised where possible by the wonderful support of volunteers and support partners. The Westhill Farm website and use of social media will be the primary marketing communications tools, as well as promotion through support network websites and events.

## **6b Site development plan**

### **Planning permissions**

- A letter of support for our development plans has been given by the planning department of South Oxford District Council; this was included in the Pre-feasibility report.
- We have received further advice from the Planners that a planning application to replace the current building should be submitted before demolition takes place. Otherwise the plot becomes "vacant" and may not be granted planning permission in future. We have requested permission to apply for planning permission, to replace the building with like-for like: a low impact eco-building of the same footprint.

### **Phases of site development**

#### **Phase 1**

- Sign Lease
- Submit planning applications to rebuild farmhouse/educational facility and temporary accommodation for a site manager
- Reconnect water, electricity and telephone services
- Community communications and outreach
- Fundraise for stables and workshops

#### **Phase 2**

- Improvements to access
- Renovate stables and workshops
- Complete temporary accommodation for a site guardian
- Establish 24 hour security
- Rental income from on-site guardian living in barn
- Community consultation meetings on designs
- Promotion, volunteering events, pilot courses, permaculture design
- Launch Membership scheme
- Implement land designs

### Phase 3

- Consolidate programme of activities.
- Additional rental income from social enterprises
- Establish an annual calendar of specialist courses
- Annual calendar of seasonal events
- Harvest first produce
- Open Interpretation Centre
- Open Café and farm shop
- Second wave of fundraising through crowd funding and membership campaign
- Establish Ecotherapy hub
- Maintenance of access

### Phase 4

- Build educational facility on site of old farmhouse

### Phase 5

- Residential courses
- Significantly raise income from produce, and venue hire
- Market specialist products e.g. shitake mushrooms, organic Elderflower and Rose cordial

## 6c The Steering Group – key members

**Nick Lunch**, project co-founder, has a keen interest in indigenous rights, the environment and climate change, and has channeled this passion into establishing numerous successful local, national and international environmental campaigns and social inclusion projects. Nick was the founder in 1996 of RAP Community Action, a local charity that inspired local volunteers and trained staff to support marginalised youth in Oxford through Local Agenda 21 youth-led eco-clubs. He also founded Insightshare in 1999, an organisation that is one of the global leaders of participatory video running projects for the United Nations, Oxfam, CARE, PLAN, DfiD in over 50 countries.

**Matt Morton**, project co-founder, is Director of Gaia Veda, a successful landscaping company, and has an impressive range of skills and experience related to the environment and permaculture, working with communities, councils, schools and nature. He worked at the Permaculture Institute from 1996; a passion he's continued via gardening work at Barrack's Community Garden; was Green Oxford City Councillor from 2008-2012; and an Environmental Management and Science teacher at Oxford Montessori School.

**Adrian Hicks** has over 25 years' experience as Managing Director and Financial Director in a number of companies. He has recently resigned his commercial directorships to concentrate on creative projects, and to advise and participate in social enterprises and community projects.

**Dominic Woodfield** is Director of Bioscan (UK), an environmental consultancy specialising in applied ecology. Dominic brings a huge amount of expertise in business management, ecology, SSSI management, environmental and planning policy and law.

**Clare Ridley** is director of Unite Ignite; a change management consultancy. She has extensive senior management experience, and was awarded an MBE in recognition of her work in Japan. Her recent work within the social enterprise arena, notably with Cultivate Oxford, leverages her commercial skills to support and enable focus to enable community benefit.

**Alison Noel** had a portfolio career as a manager and consultant in learning and development, specialising in employability skills, and training evaluation mainly for individuals with few or no qualifications. More recently she was working part-time in the field of charity management and community development, including as manager of Cutteslowe Community centre –where she was highly successful in raising funds.

**Conroy Harris** has a Certificate in Counselling, is an experienced Mental Health practitioner, CBT Group worker and Workshop Leader within the Oxford Mental Health community. He is an accredited trainer with the Oxford Mindfulness Centre. Since the late 1990s, he has worked as a Mental Health advocate, a Mind Mental Health Day Centre Manager, BME out-reach worker and Fathers Development worker with Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Parenting Forum. He is currently in the process of setting up 'A Band of Brothers' group in Oxford, supporting and mentoring young men within the Criminal Justice system.

**Michael Phillips** is director of the Oxford-based design consultancy, Archetype Design. He has experience of organisation and management, most notably as Chair of the Governing Body of a Steiner School.

**Christopher Yap** is currently working towards his PhD on community-managed urban agriculture at the Centre for Agroecology, Water and Resilience at Coventry University. He previously worked as a researcher at University College London, where he was involved in a range of action-research projects relating to urban development planning and urban governance.

**Richard Luff** is an independent Oxford based disaster management consultant having worked with Oxfam, DFID and the UN over a period of 27 years, and is a trustee of Bridewell Organic Gardens.

**Cliff Jordan** set up a small Social Enterprise and led several small Charities, as founding Trustee, Chair and CEO.

## 6d Governance

The West Hill farm project (A Model Farm. For the community, run by the community<sup>4</sup>) has to date been run through a Ltd company with 2 directors; Nick Lunch and Matt Morton. Now is the right time to choose a different organisational and legal entity that better reflects the aspirations of the not for profit social enterprise nature of the endeavour and that gives greater confidence to a wide variety of potential supporters. A small meeting of key individuals<sup>5</sup> agreed that a Community Interest Company (CIC) would be the best organisational entity at this stage to move forwards as it both represents the social purpose of the endeavour and is simple to set up. This is envisaged as an intermediate entity for a period of up to 18-24 months before potentially evolving into another social organisation structure that can accommodate a much bigger active group of supporters that will be brought together as momentum is built.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://westhillfarm.weebly.com/>

<sup>5</sup> Meeting on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2016 Nick Lunch, Clare Ridley, Cliff Jordan, Christopher Yap and Richard Luff

## **Skills and experience requirement**

Among them, Directors ideally will have experience and skills in (\*essential):

- Governorship/directorship\*
- Finance\*
- Project management\*
- Volunteer management\*
- Permaculture\*
- Business management
- Social Enterprise management
- Horticulture
- Construction
- Marketing
- Fundraising (both from grants and individual donors)
- Education
- Academia

Where directors don't collectively have all this experience, it will be complemented from advisory support, much on a pro bono basis, along with some on a paid basis where required.

## **Other Westhill Farm supporters**

The directors will need to build and work with a much bigger supporter base. The categories of supporters envisaged are set out below. Individuals and organisations may fall within one or more of these categories.

- Advisors. Committed individuals who will provide supplementary specialist expertise and time (pro bono unless otherwise agreed).
- Volunteers; individual, groups and organisations, who will provide pro bono time to assist on both regular and ad hoc basis.
- Friends. Envisaged as a category of individual and organisations who will be willing to provide regular financial contributions to the project.
- Stakeholders; such as potential farm user groups, Councils (City and South Oxfordshire), local resident's association and others as required.
- Patrons; high profile individuals who will be champions of the Westhill farm project.

As noted above the Community Interest Company may be replaced by a different organisation entity in due course, which would allow for more democratic control by all those contributing to the project. Until then the Directors are not formally accountable to supporters, although they depend on goodwill and support, so will seek to take decisions that they can demonstrate are in the interests of WHF and/or its aims.

The key areas of work that currently require a Director to take a lead on include:

- Finance (keeping a handle on the money, and on financial planning)
- Volunteers (keeping our pool of volunteers connected and informed)
- Project Planning (keeping an updated chart of what has to happen when, by who, with what etc)
- Lobbying/campaigning (talking to all the right people to ensure we secure a lease and Planning Consent to do all we want on site)

## 7 RISK MANAGEMENT

The table below outlines the 11 key risks that would affect the success of the Westhill Farm Project, together with a summary of the key strategies and actions planned to mitigate their possible outcome. An assessment of each risk in terms of the likelihood and potential impact of the risk taking place is mapped in the subsequent matrix. This enables the team to ensure it has prioritised its efforts to manage risk. Reviews of risk will be an inherent discipline of the Steering Group and be reviewed regularly and as a part of the critical path of the plan implementation.

### Risk 1 - Management of the project cannot be delivered

- The set up team leaves: Matt or Nick either burn out or re-locate. Risk is for Phase 1 in particular
- We cannot attract and retain people with the right skills or experience to the management team and advisory board
- We are unable to attract and sustain sufficient numbers and/or appropriately talented volunteers

#### Mitigation

- A Steering Group led the development of the business plan and developed the phases. Others with necessary skills have joined to lead Phase 1.
- Engagement in the project has been consistent for 3 years. There are 50 people regularly turning up to Sunday work sessions and occasional events at the farm. We've built up a database of over 500 supporters, growing daily (e.g. Facebook page has 451 likes).
- We currently have 10 qualified people on a Steering Group; nobody has required for payment for services to the project. People are happy to be in-service to the greater vision.

- There is a high level of talent and qualification being offered. We will conduct a proper recruitment drive for volunteers once the lease is secured; and we intend to cover much of the running of the site with volunteers through to Phase 3.

## **Risk 2 - Insufficient funding during the implementation phases**

- To develop the site, capital investment
- To run the on-going operations
- To offer free-to-user facilities and events

### **Mitigation**

- The site has minimal on-going costs (e.g. no rent); with few or no overheads Phase 1 can be extended until funding targets are reached.
- The 5 phases of project development are realistic, and take account of natural volunteer fatigue and anticipated delays.
- We have the track record and experience in setting up successful social enterprises and charities in Oxford; we have the skills, partnerships and support necessary to succeed.
- We have a fundraiser on board identifying funders and we have agreements with existing charities.
- Funding bids for 2016 with A Band of Brothers, Refugee Resource, Coventry University, and an opportunity to bid for Skills Funding Agency money (£50,000) with Oxford Aspire.

## **Risk 3 - Partner organisations (agencies and charities) decide not to support the project**

- Harder to find customers, secure grants, administer courses

### **Mitigation**

- There is no shortage of organisations willing to partner with us. It is a unique site and we have consulted with Oxford's leading charities to ensure our services meet real needs in the city.
- We have prioritised working with those organisations which dovetail with our vision and which enable us to deliver on the strategic benefits to the City.
- Our competitor analysis shows the unique selling points of Westhill Farm, particularly in terms of proximity to the 3 most socially deprived areas of Oxford, and we can offer meaningful participation and a genuine stake in the project.

## **Risk 4 - Oxford City Council will not grant residential status or use of the farmhouse**

### **Mitigation**

- We believe this position works against the needs and desires of Oxford City Council, and the terms of the covenant since it affects the future sustainability and security of the site. It affects the potential benefits of the site to the public, and places a barrier to our vision to bring the land back into use as a working farm.
- In sympathy with Oxford City Council's concerns around public safety and liability, we support the demolition of the farmhouse. This streamlines the process for Oxford City Council to grant us a long lease on the whole site; freeing us to talk to investors and donors.
- We require the residential status to be upheld to allow an on-site guardian– and for this a planning application must be submitted before demolition takes place. We are willing to cover the cost of this.
- Without residential status we will struggle to secure the site from vandalism or arson, and will not be able to keep animals safely on site.
- Financial sustainability of the project could also be affected. The impacts and strategic benefits to Oxford City Council and the citizens of Oxford, could be compromised by losing the residential status. We don't require seed investment from Oxford City Council to restore the barn, the land, or rebuild the farmhouse/educational facility, but we do need rental and hire income from the farmhouse. We are able to show we can generate a surplus by Phase Five to sustain the project and invest in our charitable objectives.

## **Risk 5 - Fail to secure planning permission for the farmhouse (including its continued residential status)**

### **Mitigation**

- We have had on-going communication with South Oxford District Council Planning Department since 2014 and most recently consulted them about the proposed demolition. We have received advice stating that a planning application must be submitted while the building is still standing. On this basis we anticipate to be granted planning permission to replace like-for-like residential premises for a farm guardian, and educational facility.

## Risk 6 - Damage to site due to vandalism

### Mitigation

- We plan to install a live in guardian who will provide 24 hour security and be a consistent point of contact for the Project. SODC has agreed to allow temporary residential use of the barns for the onsite guardian to reside in until the farmhouse is built.
- Once the lease has been awarded we plan to install CCTV cameras and lighting. We will erect signboards and mend the boundary fence.
- Replace our compost toilet, which was burned down last summer.

## Risk 7 - Resistance to the project by near local residents

### Mitigation

- For over 3 years we have communicated with local residents, published bi-annual newsletters through Shotover Preservation Society, and organised annual meetings in Horspath.
- We are now meeting local Councillors, who are very supportive. We are confident we have a great majority of people on board. We have held the licence for nearly a year and had no complaints; just support.

## Risk 8 - Overload to local roads due to increased visitors to the park to attend Westhill Farm activities

### Mitigation

- Staff and volunteers travel to the farm on bicycles via Brasenose Woods, or walk down the hill from the car park on Old Road. We are committed to not increasing traffic on The Ridings beyond previous usage by the resident park warden. We will make the *last km walk* into WFH from Old Road car park as part of a key mindfulness experience for able-bodied users as a key experiential aspect of Westhill farm, which will also reduce traffic on The Ridings.
- Our plans to replace the farmhouse with a timber frame construction ensure we will minimise weight and mass of building materials entering and leaving the site. We can save the Council having to clear the site fully by reusing much of the demolished farmhouse on site, for example, to mend boundary walls.

## **Risk 9 - Key stakeholders object to the project**

Oxford City Council, Oxford Preservation Trust, South Oxford District Council, Shotover Preservation Society, Shotover Wildlife Preservation Group, Natural England, local residents

- Block the creation of the project
- Create significant challenges to operational management of the project plan

### **Mitigation**

- All key stakeholders are strategic partners and integral to the vision. We will create a stakeholder group to engage in regular consultation.
- Our vision and actions are entirely in keeping with the covenant to maintain the farm for public benefit and agricultural use.
- Oxford City Council Parks Department are liaising with Oxford Preservation Trust and Natural England around the Westhill Farm project – since the farm is the only amenity left in Shotover Country Park. They support the idea of an interpretation centre, management of a herd of cows to graze and re-establish acid grasslands; a place to store tools, coordinate volunteers, and attract new groups to visit the park.

## **Risk 10 - Westhill Farm liabilities and assets are not managed properly if the project fails**

### **Mitigation**

- We are setting up a Community Interest Company, a not for profit entity with an asset lock on the buildings and other assets being developed. In case the project fails all assets will be transferred to a not for profit organisation with similar charitable aims.
- We propose a lease agreement, granting a long-term lease to the project (to provide us and our funders with security), with a break clause inserted at around 5 years. If we do not raise the capital to renovate the barn and before rebuilding the farmhouse/educational facility, we will be able to give up the site at that point. At that stage, Oxford City Council can reclaim the site, the barn could be demolished or put to use by the Parks Department, or the site returned to nature.
- We are willing to look at all possible strategies to minimise risk and liability to Oxford City Council. We believe our proposal minimises all risk and gives the management team a good chance to establish the project within 4 to 5 years.
- We are the licence holders, and as the current guardians/tenants we have already substantially improved the site, improved the barn and secured it from vandalism, and put the land to positive community use. We have proven our worth over the past 10 months. We already have all the necessary public liability insurance in place.

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