

Report of the Access Working Party - 27th November, 2025**Background.**

On the 30th of August 2025, Travellers with two vehicles and two caravans drove onto the Wheatfields public open space. Access was gained via the footpath from the dropped curb off Barleyfields and via Pantulf Road. The Travellers subsequently left the site on the evening of the 31st August.

This was the first time an incident of this nature had occurred on any public open space owned by the Town Council, but local residents had been greatly disturbed by the incident and naturally feared a repetition.

The matter was reported to the Town Council at its meeting on 25th September, 2025 and a Working Party was established to look into the matter and report back with options for preventing vehicular access to all of the Town Councils managed public open spaces. The Working Party comprised the Groundsman and Councillors Cotterell, Nash and Parry.

Information

Prior to meeting as a group, members of the Working Party undertook separate site visits, and the Clerk supplied information regarding alternative bollard options. The Working Party also noted the offer of financial assistance received from a member of the public (and reported to the Council meeting held on 30th October, 2025).

Meeting as a group on 7th November, 2025, the Working Party first took into account the information previously advised by the Clerk to the Council on 25th September, and then discussed the options, offer of assistance, alternative bollard designs and possible tree and/or hedge planting.

Careful thought was given to the 'Do Nothing' option, as it was well understood that the incident was the first of its kind. However, the Working Party were mindful of the level of public concern, and the fact that there had subsequently been another illegal use of land (albeit owned by the Shropshire Council) by Travellers in the meantime. It was therefore agreed that the do nothing option should not be recommended.

Regarding the offer of financial assistance; whilst the Working Party appreciated the offer and the spirit in which it was made, it was agreed that any works undertaken by the Council should be wholly funded by the Council.

Noting the access points used by the Travellers the Working Party considered various bollard options (fixed and retractable/removable), possible locations for same, and strategic tree planting. Regarding the large open area to Wheatfields off Barleyfields, the option to extend the existing hedging was also considered, as was the provision of knee-high railing (similar to that in use at the Recreation Ground). However, members felt that, as far as possible, it was important to retain the long established open aspect off Barleyfields. There could, however, be some tree planting along this boundary, together with a retractable bollard by the existing dropped kerb (used by the Groundsman to access the site for grass cutting). Tree planting was also thought to be the best solution for preventing future vehicular access via the footpath off Barleyfields and the footpath off Pantulf Road (plan attached).

The Working Party noted that the Council had other areas of public open space; namely Trentham Road, Oakley Meadow, Kynaston Drive and Love Lane Cemetery/ Allotments. If the Council were to now agree to take action regarding the Wheatfields site, it was agreed that these other sites should also be looked at and, where works to prevent access were considered necessary, a program of one area a year be agreed.

The Working Party acknowledged that there were no specific monies in the current 2025/26 budget for any works of the nature under consideration. Consequently, if the Council were to agree that works should be progressed then, in the current year, monies would have to be drawn from general reserves or, for the year 2026/27 and beyond, a specific budget would have to be identified. Initial investigations regarding the cost of trees and a retractable bollard suggested that, for the Wheatfields site, a procurement budget of some £2000 would be needed. The actual planting and bollard installation would require additional monies.

It was also noted that future maintenance costs would be incurred if the works now identified were actioned. Trees would require future pruning, muching and probably thinning in time, and grass cutting would be more difficult/time consuming than with the current open aspect.

Conclusion

The Working Group concluded that doing nothing was not an option, and that the Council should look to implement a scheme whereby the Wheatfields site receive strategic tree planting off the footpaths to Barleyfields and Pantulf Road, together with tree planting to the open aspect off Barleyfields, along with the provision of a retractable bollard by the existing dropped kerb.

The Working Group also concluded that, should the Council agree to take the action now recommended regarding the Wheatfields site, a program of works be established regarding the Council's other public open space sites at Trentham Road, Oakley Meadow, Kynaston Drive and the Love Lane Cemetery/Allotments.

Recommendations

- 1. That, to secure the Wheatfields site from unauthorised vehicular access, the tree planting and bollard installation now identified be undertaken.**
- 2. That the works now identified be undertaken in the current financial year, and the required budget monies be allocated from General Reserves or**
- 3. That should it be decided to undertake the identified works during 2026/27, appropriate monies be allocated within the budget for that year.**
- 4. That, subsequent to the completion of the works in respect of the Wheatfields site, the remaining Council owned sites identified in the report receive similar consideration on the basis of one site per financial year.**