Orchard Park

Near Rilla Mill, Liskeard, Cornwall PL14 5BD

Plot 1 (Barefield) – 3.7 acre smallholding

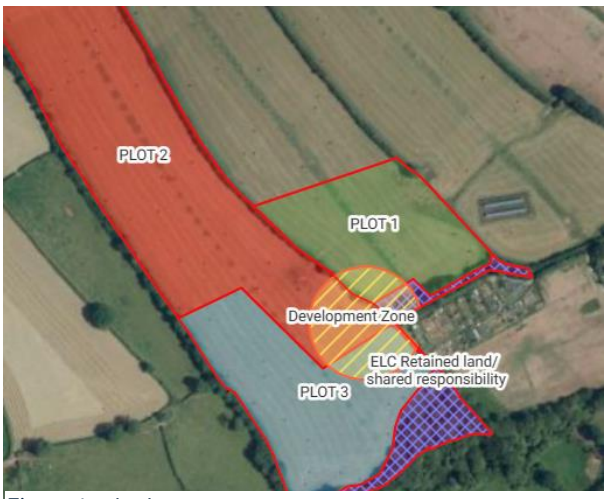


Figure 1- plot layouts

Plot 1 offers a rare opportunity to become the first land steward of this bare-field plot at our Cornwall site, Orchard Park which is located on the edge of Bodmin Moor. The site is approximately 3.7 acres of free draining, slightly acidic loamy soil. The plot is available to steward/s looking to start an agroecological small farm business; we consider the site suitable for horticulture, a tree nursery or other intensive land-based enterprise, and we would welcome a business that fits well with the others on the site.

Plot 2 is home to Wild Tor Organics (*stewards Ellis Bowdler and Kris Fowler) who run a market garden supplying customers through a veg box scheme, local markets and an honesty stall.

Plot 3 is home to Trelowen Flowers (stewards Wayne and Tamsin McMaster) who grow cut flowers, foliage, fruit and willow; they run floristry and weaving workshops.

The ELC also has a retained area of land adjacent to the stream on the southern edge of the site and around the shared barn (not accurately shown in figure 1). There is no retained land on the plot 1 field (a recent decision was made to remove this).

The site gained planning permission in 2022 for a 5-year temporary residential permission. We now have confirmation that the 5-year temporary planning phase has been extended as the site was not occupied until 2024/5. We expect to submit the permanent planning application in summer 2029, as the end date for the temporary permission is now August 2029. The plot is offered on a rental basis of £539.88/month for the temporary planning phase with the option to purchase a 150-year leasehold or continue to rent once permanent planning permission is achieved.

*Stewards= leaseholder member of the co-operative

1. Joining the Co-operative

The ELC is run as a co-operative; taking on a leasehold involves becoming a steward member and we would like applicants to explore and understand fully what this means. Stewards are expected to become active members involved with running the organisation, for example sitting on decision making councils or interviewing new applicants and organising co-op gatherings. The staff team is very small and members' work is vital in supporting the organisation; activities are often taken on for set time periods (6 weeks to 1 year in a particular role) with all roles being

rotated among members. There are roles available to suit people with different skills and experiences, and all are currently undertaken on a voluntary basis.

To inform this, during the application process you will be invited to join certain activities/ processes as an observer, to join a site tour and meet existing stewards. We would also expect you to spend time volunteering (for example one workday or a couple of mornings at different plots) on site with another steward and we will provide you with further information about opportunities on offer. We would like all potential applicants to join the co-op as a supporter member before applying for stewardship. You do not need to sign up to make a regular donation; we consider section 3 (for people working in aligned sectors) to be applicable to potential stewards. Follow this link to our website...
Join the ELC as a Supporter Member - Ecological Land Cooperative

The leasehold is an agricultural tie i.e. only available for people running a land-based business. Stewards must work full time hours (40 hours +) on the land or equivalent (i.e. a couple could work 2 part-time roles). Stewards must live on the land as their main residence and will have to show that after an agreed period, they can generate more than 50% of their essential expenditure from the land (e.g. food, vehicle costs, insurance, utilities, council tax etc). All stewards have a management plan that is reviewed annually and submissions are made, where necessary to local authorities. There is an annual monitoring fee of £400 charged to all steward members.



Figure 2- Community Gathering 2026

2. Site Challenges/ Complexity:

A 1-3 star rating is used to indicate the particular challenges of this site: *= lower level of complexity, *= higher level of complexity.**

- Growing or land working (*)

This is one of the smaller plots the ELC offers and we would expect it to be intensively managed in order to generate an appropriate level of income. The site has a slight southeast facing slope beneficial for cultivation and is currently used as grazing or for a hay cut. The field is a blank canvas offering the opportunity to design the site layout from scratch.

- Business development (**)

The applicant will need to operate a successful small farm business and develop a business plan as part of the application process. We anticipate the new business will dovetail with the existing site enterprises and will make intensive use of the available plot. We would welcome applicants who are new entrants to farming. The main challenge will be to establish the business and generate an income within the temporary planning period.

- Community living/working (**)

Applicants will need to share resources and co-operate with other stewards on the site to find shared agreements and solutions to issues that arise. There is always a reasonable level of complexity to this feature of ELC stewardship

- Construction (***)

The plot currently has no infrastructure (other than ELC provided shared infrastructure), and the new stewards will need to build/ develop everything they need to run their business from scratch. This is a challenging proposition, especially given the time constraints of applying for permanent planning permission in 2029. A clear financial plan will also need to be in place for developing the site infrastructure needed.

- Off grid infrastructure (*)

The shared energy and water infrastructure at Orchard Park was installed in 2024 and is operating well, with the generator required to support the system in the winter months (Nov-Feb) due to very low light levels. Stewards are collectively responsible for operating, monitoring and maintaining the shared water and power systems, and meeting the associated costs. Due to its recent installation, we consider this to be quite accessible to applicants with a willingness to learn about off-grid living.

3. Shared Infrastructure:

The site offers a shared hardstanding and parking area, one bay of a shared barn, off-grid systems for water (bore hole with solar powered pumps), power (4.92kW of panels situated on shared barn roof), 14.4kWh of lithium battery storage and a back-up generator.

If an applicant is planning to run a business that has additional power and water requirements (above basic domestic and growing uses e.g. food processing) then we will need to explore how this additional need can be met; at some sites stewards install their own solar panels that feed into the shared system.

Plot 1 is not currently connected to the shared barn/ systems; armoured cable and water pipes will need to be installed by the new stewards so that any new gardens and dwelling are connected. Ducting has been laid under the current hardstanding to the point where we anticipate providing an entrance to plot 1 through the existing hedge/bank.



Figure 3- Shared barn build 2024

4. Plot Infrastructure:

The plot is a bare field; it has solid perimeter fencing and hedges/ mature trees to the south and west boundaries. The north boundary has a newly established hedge, and it is stock fenced to the east. The water and power are not currently connected to the plot and the ELC will provide a new entrance way from plot 1 to the shared barn.



Figure 4- plot 1 north boundary

5. Housing:

There is no current housing on plot 1 and stewards will be supported to develop a housing and low impact living plan as part of the steward application process. Temporary accommodation will need to comply with the Caravan Act 1968 which provides a legal definition of a caravan for planning purposes. The ELC will provide access to research on a housing options project conducted in 2024-2025 looking at designed solutions for agricultural dwellings that are sustainable, have high ecological credentials, and are aimed at better long-term health and wellbeing outcomes for inhabitants.

Price: Rental terms: £539.88/month for the temporary planning phase with the option to purchase a 150-year leasehold or continue to rent once permanent planning permission is achieved.

Timescale: The plot is currently vacant and the ELC would like to have new stewards for the plot in 2026; applicants should anticipate the application process to take 6-10months to complete.