

FAQ's Hartcliffe City Farm

8 June 2021

Heart of BS13 and Windmill Hill City Farm are joining forces to create a new venture that will build Hartcliffe City Farm into a thriving hub of community activity. Since we announced ([Hartcliffe City Farm - Windmill Hill City Farm](#)) that we were preferred bidders for the site we have had a great deal of interest and many questions.

We've put together some answers to the questions we are being asked. If you have more questions, then drop us an email and we'll make sure we respond.

Question: Do you have a lease for Hartcliffe Farm?

Answer: No, not yet. We have solicitors undertaking due diligence enquiries about the land and properties on the land. Both organisations have a professional obligation to fully understand any risks associated to the site before we can enter into any contractual agreement with the council to take on the site.

Question: Does that mean you might not take on the lease for Hartcliffe Farm?

Answer: That is always a possible outcome. If the due diligence findings come back telling us that there is a significant risk in taking on the site, then we would not take it on.

Question: When will you have a lease?

Answer: As we write this (beginning of June 2021) we don't yet know. Taking on a lease is a complicated business. The site needs to be clear; a new company needs to be set up to take the lease; the lease terms and conditions have to be negotiated and agreed; and all of it has to go through lawyers to make sure it's done properly.

Question: Why wouldn't you take on existing tenants if you do become leaseholders?

Answer: The old Hartcliffe Farm model failed. It was built on small groups of private tenants paying rent to the leaseholders. Private tenants bring obligations to the main leaseholder and occupy building and site space that cannot be considered for new innovation and development. In order to give the best chance of future success to the site, the council offered the asset transfer in Vacant Possession. This means with no existing people or businesses on it. That is what we bid for.

Question: Who has given agreement for Windmill Hill City Farm and Heart of BS13 to become the preferred option to take over Hartcliffe Farm?

Answer: Bristol City Council own the land. They ran a Community Asset Transfer process with an open call for interest in the site. Our partnership were chosen by them to take forward options for the site. They are the only body who can give agreement to what happens to the land.

Question: Why can't the community decide who takes the Farm over?

Answer: The transfer has to be fair and transparent and each party who bid for it had to go through the same process. It was like an exam, and the documents had to be 'judged' by a panel from Bristol City Council against the same criteria. If members of the local community were making that decision, then the risk would be that they would favour people they know and make decisions that were based on personal relationships rather than likelihood of making the new farm site a success.

Question: Why have you changed the name to Hartcliffe City Farm?

Answer: We need to register the farm under a new name with the Charity Commission and Companies House so that it is clear that the farm is a new entity and not associated with the old tenants and board of trustees.

Question: What community engagement work are you doing to gather people's opinions about what should happen on the farm?

Answer: Our bid to the local authority proposes many exciting ideas and options for the development of the space over the coming years. It will be our opportunity to build a city farm for the 21st Century and we will focus on creating opportunities for the BS13 community through volunteering, vocational training and jobs in the green economy and low-carbon sectors as well as offering a wide range of new and fresh visitor attractions.

Over the years, Hartcliffe Farm has become a run-down and neglected asset and it is our job to take it in an exciting direction for the whole community.

- Everything we do to regenerate the Farm has to happen with a strong and open commitment to [climate action](#) and low-carbon regeneration.
- The potential for the site is massive but it's hard to envision what it could become if the community knowledge and experience of innovation and opportunity is limited to what they have known historically on the site
- We want to honour this space for future generations and put opportunities for young people at the front and centre of design and development.
- We have an opportunity to create a farm for the 21st Century and this will mean that much of what we do may be seen as non-traditional in terms of an urban farming culture.

Community Engagement:

What this means

- A focused set of activities that ask the community (across all ages) to engage with the ideas and innovations that we think could work at the farm
- A process through which we ask people to extend their vision and imagination about what is possible in the space.
- A talking and listening exercise where we understand what spaces mean for people in BS13 what feels welcoming, and what feels excluding.
- Finding mechanisms (such as vision boards and short films) so that ideas and options come alive
- Taking this engagement process as wide as possible throughout the community.

What it does not mean

- Creating a list of options that people vote on in order to decide what develops at the Farm
- Favouring small groups or individuals and privileging their demands, desires, and opinions over the majority
- Over-promising and under-delivering on actions and timescales