

Allotments and community gardens

Definition

- 11.1 This includes all forms of allotments with a primary purpose to provide opportunities for people to grow their own produce as part of the long-term promotion of sustainability, health and social inclusion. This type of open space may also include urban farms.

Specific strategic context and consultations

- 11.2 Like other open space types, allotments can provide a number of wider benefits to the community as well as the primary use of growing produce. These include:
- bringing together different cultural backgrounds
 - improving physical and mental health
 - providing a source of recreation
 - wider contribution to green and open space.
- 11.3 Leicestershire's Cultural Strategic Partnership states that one of its aims is to develop more community use allotments to include young people's schemes and to provide a habitat for wildlife.
- 11.4 There is no current allotment strategy, however the existing Harborough District Local Plan states that although there currently appear to be sufficient allotments within the district to meet current demands, it acknowledges that latent demand is more difficult to determine.
- 11.5 The plan therefore suggests "any proposals to develop an existing allotments should make provision to replace allotments in use within the preceding five years and to satisfy future demands. Planning permission will therefore be granted where alternative provision adequate to meet current and future needs is provided.
- 11.6 Research conducted, as part of this open space needs assessment concluded that allotments across the district are almost at capacity. There are only six sites that currently have spare plots. These are:
- Welland Park Road, Market Harborough
 - Bufton Allotments, Misterton with Walcote
 - Crescent Road, Lutterworth
 - Gilmorton
 - Lubenham
 - Husbands Bosworth.
- 11.7 Spare capacity at these sites is minimal, with no more than five plots available at any site. All other allotment sites are currently thought to be full. Internal consultation highlighted that there is a waiting list for certain sites.
- 11.8 Consultation highlighted that the Deverdon Road Allotments in Lutterworth are particularly highly valued, however there is concern from allotment holders and residents alike that they are soon to be relocated. Many existing tenants expressed the view that they would prefer the site to remain at its current location, due to the work they had put in to developing their specific plot.

Picture 11.1 – Deverdon Road Allotments



- 11.9 The Local Plan Review Issue Papers highlighted a strong support for the protection of well-used allotments against community development.

Quantity

- 11.10 Harborough District Council currently manages five allotment sites around the district. Three are in Market Harborough - at Welland Park Road, Douglas Drive and Little Bowden, one is at Great Bowden and one at Saddington. There are waiting lists at four of these sites. All other sites are privately managed, or owned and managed by Parish Councils.
- 11.11 The largest sites outside the ownership of the district Council is the Western Willows Allotments in Broughton Astley, which has 88 plots, all of which are occupied and the Deverdon Road allotments, which are again all occupied.

Setting provision standards

- 11.12 The process for setting local quantitative standards is described within PPG 17 Companion Guide 'Assessing Needs and Opportunities' and this process has been followed in order to set a local standard for the district of Harborough. A diagrammatic format of this process is provided within Appendix C – 'Quantity Standards' along with a summary of all calculations.
- 11.13 There are no definitive national standards for 'allotments and community gardens' and there are currently no local standards set by the District Council. The National

SECTION 11 – ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

Society of Allotment and Leisure Gardeners suggests 20 allotment plots per 2,200 people. This standard does not take into account local demand or demographics.

- 11.14 At present within Harborough District Council there is a total of 22.16 hectares of allotments. This amounts to a level of just under 0.3 hectares per 1000 population.
- 11.15 Overall, consultation through questionnaires indicated that on balance, residents think that the provision of allotments is about right – only 35% responses suggested that there was an deficiency where as 62% indicated that provision matched their expectations. More qualitative consultation indicated the importance of allotments as a recreational facility particularly for older citizens and there was concern regarding the potential loss of some sites.
- 11.16 More specifically the urban area of Market Harborough and Lubenham has a current provision levels of 0.32 ha and per 1,000 population and all respondents indicated that this was about right. In the other urban area, Western Area (Lutterworth and Broughton Astley), there is a current provision level of 0.35 ha per 1,000 population with the majority (77%) indicating this was about right. These outcomes are perhaps due to the proximity of Market Harborough Allotments and the Deverdon Road Allotments in Lutterworth but support a local standard at this level.
- 11.17 In support of this, the main shortfall within the district was perceived to be in the North East rural area and this is where provision per hectare per 1000 people is lowest – equivalent to just 0.09.
- 11.18 There are no significant differences in the level of provision and perceived local need for allotments between the rural and the more urban areas of the district, hence the suggested standard should be applied to all analysis areas.
- 11.19 There are no significant differences in the level of provision and perceived local need for allotments between the rural and the more urban areas of the district, suggesting the same standard could be applied to the whole of the district. Also, allotments is a typology that one would expect to be realistically provided both in urban and rural areas.
- 11.20 From this analysis it is suggested that for the district of Harborough the **local provision standard of 0.35 hectares per 1000 population** is applied.

Applying provision standards

- 11.21 The total provision of 0.29 hectares per 1000 population translates into a shortfall of just 4.64 hectares of allotments across the whole district. This deficiency is likely to increase slightly by 2016.
- 11.22 When applying the provision standards in the five areas, only one area – Peatling and Bosworth, is deemed to have sufficient allotments. The only consultee suggesting that there were too many allotments within the district was also based within this area.
- 11.23 The other issues which can be extracted include:
- there are deficits of provision of over three hectares in total in the North East Rural Area and in Kibworth, Fleckney and Central
 - allotment provision within both Market Harborough and Lubenham and the Western Area is almost at it's optimum level – there is a shortfall of just 0.4

SECTION 11 – ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

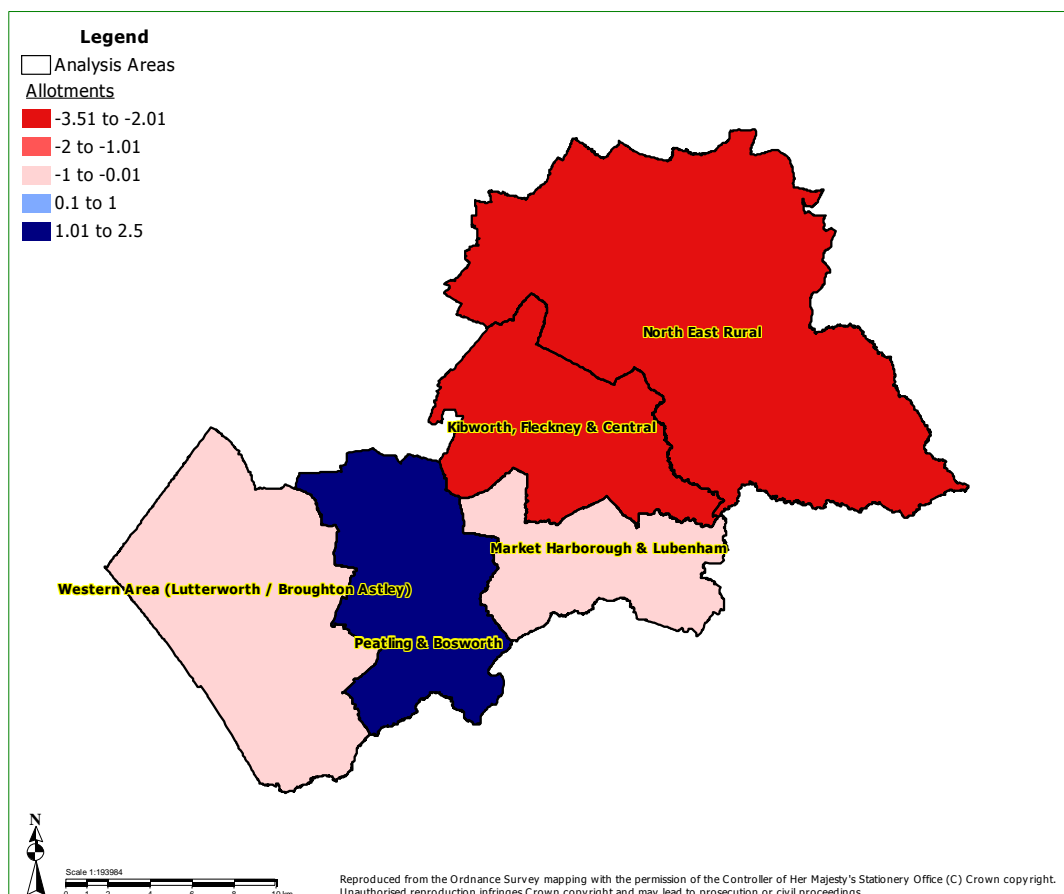
hectares in Lutterworth and Broughton Astley, although population increases will see this rise to almost a hectare by 2016

- these findings are supported by consultation, which highlights waiting lists at some sites, indicating that there is a need for additional provision
- the full applications of the suggested local allotments standard can be found in Appendix C. In addition, they are summarised in section 19.

11.24 Full details of the application of quantity standards for allotments can be found in Appendix C.

11.25 Figure 11.1 below demonstrates the surplus / deficiencies within each analysis area based on the provision standard of 0.35 ha per 1,000 population for 2004. All maps are provided in Appendix O including projection surplus and deficiency maps for 2016 based on future populations.

Figure 11.1 - Current Surplus & Deficiency of Provision for Allotments by Analysis Area (2004)



Quality

11.26 45% of allotments in the district are considered to be good or very good quality, the lowest percentage of any open space typology within Harborough. 17% of sites were considered to be poor or very poor the highest percentage for any type of open space within the study. This suggests that investigations into improvements of quality of open space sites may include some allotment sites in the short term.

SECTION 11 – ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

- 11.27 Although no allotments in Market Harborough and Lubenham are considered to be very good, only 1 site is considered poor, Northampton Road Allotments in Market Harborough.
- 11.28 There are only 2 allotment sites that have been rated which are located in analysis North East Rural. One of these is the allotment plots in East Norton which are considered to be very poor.
- 11.29 No allotments in Kibworth, Fleckney and the central part of the district are rated as poor or very poor and the allotments in both Smeeton and Westerby and Thorpe Langton are thought to be very good quality sites.
- 11.30 The Western area has a number of highly rated allotment sites namely those in Broughton Astley and Dunton Bassett and Deverdon Road allotments in Lutterworth. The Deverdon Road allotments were frequently discussed in consultation and are considered to be an important site in this area.
- 11.31 There is only 1 site rated as very poor in analysis area 5 (Peatling and Bosworth) - the Gravel Hole at Walton.

Accessibility

- 11.32 In terms of accessibility, 56% of allotment provision in Harborough District is considered to be good or very good and only 9% is considered to be poor.
- 11.33 Both Market Harborough and Lubenham and Kibworth, Fleckney and Central areas have no allotment sites which have poor or very poor accessibility ratings.
- 11.34 Across the other analysis areas there are 3 sites which have poor or very poor accessibility ratings. These are the allotments at Claybrooke Parva, East Langton and the Gravel Hole at Walton.

Catchment

- 11.35 In order to develop accessibility standards for each type of open space, opinions of parish clerks and other consultees regarding the distance they are willing to travel to reach allotments have been captured in table 11.1 below.

Table 11.1 - Time prepared to travel

	Overall - Harborough District - Parish Councils						Members
	Median	Mean	Mode	Min	Max	75%	General Consensus
Walk	10	12	20	5	20	10 minutes	
Cycle	9	8	10	2	10		
Bus	8	8	8	5	10		
Car	5	7	5	1	15	10 minutes	

SECTION 11 – ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

- 11.36 People are more prepared to drive to allotments due to the need to transport equipment to and from the site.
- 11.37 Consultation indicates that 75% of people expect to find allotments and community gardens within a ten minute drive of their property. Both the median and mode responses were 5.
- 11.38 In line with PPG17, which suggests that accessibility standards should consider the distance / time that 75% of the population are willing to travel, table 11.2 below sets out the suggested accessibility standard for allotments.

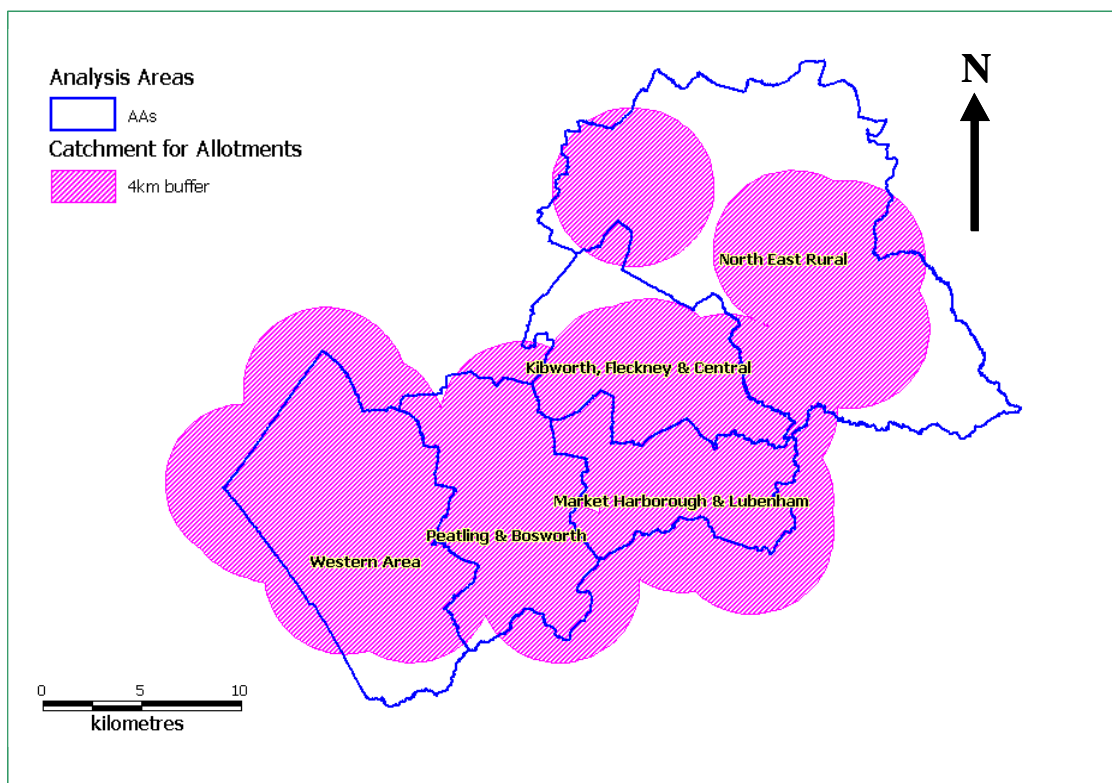
Table 11.2 - Recommended Accessibility Standard

Local Standard - Allotments	
Recommended Travel Time	Estimated equivalent distance
10 minute drive	2 - 4km

Assessment of value (Usage v Quality v Accessibility)

- 11.39 Figure 11.2 below illustrates the application of this standard for allotments within the district. All maps are provided in Appendix O which demonstrates clearly the areas outside the recommended catchment area.

Figure 11.2 - Accessibility Threshold – Allotments



SECTION 11 – ALLOTMENTS AND COMMUNITY GARDENS

- 11.40 Most sites that have a high level of use would normally have a good or very good quality and accessibility rating. Most sites with a low level of use would have an average or poor quality and accessibility rating.
- 11.41 There are two allotment sites where usage is high and both quality and accessibility are very good. These sites are valued sites to the community and should be prioritised for protection. These are:
- Main Street Allotments – Thorpe Langley
 - Weston Willows Allotments – Broughton Astley.
- 11.42 There are a number of other well used sites, located across the district.
- 11.43 There are no allotment sites where usage is high and quality and accessibility is poor or very poor. Additionally, there are no sites where usage is low and quality is good or very good. It appears that there is a direct correlation between level of usage and the level of quality and accessibility.
- 11.44 The allotments in East Norton and the Gravel Hole Allotments at Walton are two examples where quality and accessibility is very low, and usage is low. In their current form they therefore have limited value. Investigations should therefore be undertaken to consider improving the quality and accessibility and if this fails to increase usage, analysis should then be considered in order to establish whether the primary purpose of open space on these sites is correct.

Summary

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| 11.45 | Research showed that almost all allotments were fully occupied and that many had waiting lists. Consultation highlighted that allotments are a valuable recreation facility for older citizens |
| 11.46 | The application of a local standard of 0.35 ha per 1000 population has been suggested and when applying this standard only Peatling and Bosworth are considered to have sufficient allotment sites. Consideration to the increased provision of allotment sites may therefore be required. |
| 11.47 | A drive time of between 5 and 10 minutes is considered an appropriate accessibility standard for allotments and community gardens. |
| 11.48 | When considering both the quantitative deficiencies and accessibility deficiencies in terms of catchment areas, the main areas are the more rural areas particularly in the North East rural area. |