

Hounslow Allotment Strategy 2007-2012



 **Hounslow**

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1.0 Executive Summary

Allotments offer a wide range of benefits and are valued by the community. However in common with most parts of the UK, the allotments of Hounslow have not benefited from any recent significant capital investment and many allotment sites now exhibit signs of deterioration in condition and appearance.

The management of allotments has reached a critical point. With limited funding and no dedicated Allotments Officer, issues such as repairs to infrastructure, marketing vacant allotments, and management of tenancies cannot be pursued in a pro-active manner. In addition, issue such as contaminated land within allotment sites stirs deep passions in the community and requires sensitive management in order to ensure a safe environment and continued provision of allotments.

The key aims of this strategy are to:

- To repair and invest in the infrastructure of allotments and projects which benefit existing and potential users.
- To support existing allotment societies and foster the creation of self or partial management groups.
- To increase tenancy and make best use of all allotment sites.
- To develop opportunities for allotments including alternative usages for vacant or unused sites

Fundamental to the success of this strategy is the funding of a dedicated Allotment Officer to tackle the key issues facing allotment provision in the London Borough of Hounslow. Unless funding is secured for this strategy the problems arising from these issues will continue and progress will only be able to be made in a very minor way. This funding is suggested for only a limited period to achieve a level of sustainability for future provision. Possible funding sources are identified in section 4.3

Poor infrastructure and the need for repairs are problems not only to existing tenants but may be a significant contribution in the decline of usage in certain areas of the Borough. The Allotments Officer would ensure this programme of works is carried out and ensure that a plan to deal with ongoing repairs is adopted.

Some sites with a high level of use have demonstrated a desire for self or partial management. The support of existing societies and new self-management groups, by the Allotments Officer, until they could manage their own sites, would provide a sustainable future and enable resources to be directed towards other priority needs.

The problem of vacant sites requires the pro-active management which an Allotments Officer can provide. The ideal situation would be to have all allotments let thereby increasing revenue and reducing maintenance costs. This would require a marketing plan to increase tenure. Charitable projects and complementary uses may be suitable for some sites such as use by schools or wildlife gardens. If all plots cannot be let alternative uses will be investigated such as advertising or urban forestry. Finally, if no use can be found for the land it will be recommended that it is considered surplus and potentially sold to fund future allotment provision.

2.0 Introduction

2.1 Benefits

It is now widely recognized that allotments offer a wide range of benefits as well as a great way of producing high quality low cost food as part of a healthy diet. Public health campaigns have highlighted the necessity of a diet high in fruit and vegetables along with adequate exercise.

Allotments are not only sources of fresh fruit and vegetables but make a contribution to a healthy and active lifestyle through exercise. Increasingly allotments are also being valued for their therapeutic benefits in providing a quiet refuge where people can have the sense of gardening in an urban context.

Allotments also offer a way to make social contacts and learn new skills which means the benefits are not only confined to the individual. Communities are strengthened through active participation in an inclusive and sociable activity and they provide opportunities for creativity and learning, producing organically grown crops, for example.

The environmental benefits and opportunity for increased biodiversity and sustainable open space should not be overlooked. As part of the open space provision within the urban fabric they offer opportunities to enjoy their amenity, wildlife and recreation space particularly for those who have no individual garden.

2.2 History

The provision of allotments in Hounslow is determined by a combination of historic factors, central government legislation, the Council's own strategic documents and community aspirations for such facilities.

Many allotment sites were originally designated from initiatives, such as the wartime "Dig for Victory" campaign, or where space was available rather than provision on a needs basis or on the best available agricultural land. Consequently some sites are more popular than others, some have waiting lists and others are largely vacant.

2.3 Legislation

Section 23 of the Allotment Act of 1908 makes it a duty of the local authority to provide allotments where there is sufficient demand for them by residents living in the area although the Secretary of State has no power of default against an authority that does not comply.

An authority that provides allotments has obligations under other legislation including Allotment Acts 1922, 1926 and 1950 which further define the responsibilities of tenant and authority and the Town and Country Planning Act 1971 and the Local Government Act 1972.

2.4 Community aspirations

The Council's Unitary Development Plan recognises the value of allotments (Policy ENV-N.1.13) specifically that '*The Council will retain existing allotments and resist their loss*'. This belief is reflected in other strategic documents from the Executive Business Plan, the Community Plan and the Parks and Green Spaces Strategic Framework.

2.5 Current provision

While there is no recognised national quantitative standard for allotment provision, the National Allotment Survey of 1996 revealed an average of 15 plots per 1,000 households. The London Borough of Hounslow (LBH) currently has 2,107 allotment plots on 34 sites across the Borough (see Appendices 1 & 2). This gives Hounslow approximately 38 plots per 1,000 households, significantly above the national average.

Most allotments in Hounslow are statutory having some degree of protection in law and requiring any disposal to be agreed by the Secretary of State (Appendix 1).

The day-to-day management and letting of Hounslow Council owned (33) and leased (1) allotments is provided by the CIP Group Limited, working in partnership with the local authority, and reporting to Hounslow's Head of Leisure and Cultural Strategy.

3.0 Issues Facing Hounslow's Allotment Sites

3.1 Poor infrastructure

The continuing revenue pressure placed on parks and open spaces is also reflected in the lack of investment in its allotment fabric. The allotments of Hounslow have not benefited from any recent significant capital investment. Fences are often in poor condition offering limited security. Paths are also often in poor condition; water supply is primitive often subject to leaks. There are no buildings or toilets provided within the tenancy agreement. The current poor infrastructure plays a significant part in the retention of existing and attraction of new allotment holders and is considered to be a key component of this Strategy.

3.2 Vacant allotment sites

In 1993 the Council carried out a review of its allotment provision which resulted in a reduction in the number of sites, achieved by returning all but one of the leased sites to their respective owners. Some sites continue to suffer from low occupancy rates, particularly in the west of the Borough, despite local efforts to promote their use in the interim. Some of these sites are now partly derelict and require higher maintenance and therefore impacts on scant resources. Other uses have not been found for them with no agreed strategy and their designation as statutory allotment sites. Fashion and changing lifestyles, such as the increasing use of convenience foods, may be contributory factors to a decline in interest, but this trend is not experienced across the entire Borough.

3.3 Highly popular allotment sites

Evidence shows the concept of allotments is alive and well in some parts of the Borough with waiting lists for some sites. Historically there has always been a greater uptake for plots in the east of the Borough (see Appendix 2). While a number of factors may contribute to this, it is partly due to the lack of allotment land in neighbouring boroughs leading to a waiting list on particular sites. The feasibility of increasing the numbers of allotments by utilising part of existing available open spaces has proven to be impossible due to legal restrictions on the disposal of open space.

3.4 Allotment Officer

As part of the 1993 Hounslow Allotment Review the full time post of Allotment Officer was deleted. Consequently, there is:

- No monitoring of updates to allotment law
- Limited opportunities for consultation and engagement of community
- Limited marketing of allotments
- No regular inspection and repair of fabric
- No regular inspection for non-cultivation and inappropriate use
- No agreed strategy for provision and investment
- Limited opportunities to apply for funding
- No enforcement of regulations (e.g. for hosepipes)

3.5 Imbalance in income and revenue

A disappointing allotment tenancy rate has ensured depressed income levels. At the same time expenditure such as management costs, water charges and the costs of disposal of both green and household waste have risen significantly in recent years. Consequently the allotment service effectively suffers from a budget deficit. (see section 4.1.1). This imbalance would be considerably greater if capital investment was made in the allotment infrastructure without a corresponding increase in the revenue budget to support such improvements.

3.6 Contaminated land

Recently identified contamination on some sites had led to a recommendation for closure of some sites. Ironically those affected have been popular rather than vacant sites.

3.7 Funding opportunities

Funding from outside sources often precludes local authority applications and is available only to Allotment associations and allied organisations. Allotment associations in Hounslow often need the support and inputs of a dedicated officer before they feel able to sustain applications of this nature.

4.0 The Allotment Strategy

This strategy complements the aims of Hounslow's Parks and Green Spaces Strategy document: providing a good basic service; engaging the community and developing opportunities for investment. Its three principal aims are:

- To manage available resources, repairing and investing in the infrastructure of allotments, for the benefit existing and potential users.
- To engage the community and existing allotment societies in order to market and promote allotments and foster the creation of self-management groups
- To increase tenancy and develop opportunities and partnerships for investment in allotment infrastructure and projects which makes best use of all allotment sites.
- Promote sustainability and biodiversity.
- Encourage organic gardening.
- Encourage take up from BME groups, those who are disabled and those who have mobility difficulties and those on low income.

4.1 Resources

Aim: To manage available resources, repairing and investing in the infrastructure of allotments, for the benefit existing and potential users.

4.1.1 Revenue Budget

This Strategy demonstrates actions which, at the end of five years, will provide a balanced budget and include the possibility of a programme of proactive investment and repair, currently the budget is as follows:

Description	Expenditure 2006/07 (£)
Income	
Rents	33,250
Contract and Grant Income	18,000
Revenue Funding outside Grant	0
Capital Funding	0
Expenditure	
Management overhead	18,500
Maintenance	9,000
Repairs	1398
Water Charges	17, 822
Waste Disposal	2420
Infrastructure improvement/replacement	1870
Subcontractors	240
Surplus/(Deficit)	0

Note:

Management overhead includes letting, administration and management costs incurred in providing the core service.

4.1.2 Income

The current proceeds from the allotments service comprise a combination of rental income, plus an element of the grant paid by LBH to CIP for its overall parks and open space services provision. It is unlikely that this grant component will increase in the near future. Income to cover increased expenditure must therefore come from rent or other income streams.

4.1.3 Rent

The Allotment Act of 1908 allows an authority to make rules for the letting of allotments including rents. This income to the service is proportional to:

- The number of tenants
- Pricing structure for tenants (e.g. senior citizen discount)

Consideration will be given to the allotment rents applied by adjacent local authorities and a fair pricing structure will be agreed. However, in order to encourage higher usage in the west of the borough it may be prudent to offer a reduced rent to encourage higher uptake in these areas. Marketing and promotion of allotments will increase the number of tenancies thereby increasing income and reducing the cost of maintenance on vacant plots.

4.1.4 Other income possibilities

Other income possibilities such as grants and alternative land uses will be fully explored. This has not been explored in the past primarily due to the lack of a dedicated Allotment Officer. Options are discussed in Section 4.3 to address this area.

4.1.5 Expenditure

The main expenditure lines for allotments are: utilities (water), repairs, waste disposal and weed control. This leaves little for infrastructure improvement or replacement. Capital will be sought for initial repairs and ongoing expenditure managed within budget.

It should be borne in mind that costs exist in the form of management overheads to cover lettings, inspections, consultation and management of issues relating to allotments including general enquiries to customer services.

4.1.6 Allotment Officer

Since the deletion of the Allotment Officer post and its supporting budget in the 1993 Allotment Review there has been no full time member of staff to manage the service. Supporting duties are currently split between a Customer Services Officer, a Team Leader and other officers employed by CIP within its Parks and Open Spaces Directorate.

Adequate officer time needs to be made available to carry out this Strategy. In the long term self managed groups might be the answer for some sites for some tasks but a short term to medium term investment (1-3 years) needs to be made to set the strategy in motion. Including:

- Initial marketing and survey work
- Fostering self managed allotment groups
- Identifying the resource required for long-term strategic management

It is unlikely that this investment will be from the existing CIP grant provision since this will have serious implications in other service areas. The recommended solution to create this post is short term funding through either i) an increase in the Council's revenue allocation, ii) via existing (or future) Section 106 planning agreements or iii) as part of the Council's "Invest to Save" budget and Modernisation Agenda, which can involve a short term financial investment to secure longer term financial benefits, as in this instance.

If this investment is not made then this strategy will not be achieved.

4.1.7 Immediate repairs and improvements to infrastructure

Pressure on revenue budgets means investment in the allotment fabric has fallen below acceptable levels. In 2003 a Customer Satisfaction Survey (see Appendix 3) was carried out and indicated the poor condition of some allotments is dissuading many would-be tenants. If funding was provided for the Allotment officer a new survey would be instigated in the first year to explore if any other aspects or issues need to be considered going forward. Capital funding is required to repair and make good before a successful marketing campaign can begin to take effect. Adequate officer time needs to be made available to survey this need and make bids for available capital and grants.

4.1.8 Water consumption

A particular area requiring investment is how water is supplied and managed. The provision of water on sites is an essential requirement to users and the cost of water consumption is a significant expenditure. Hosepipes are not allowed under the tenancy agreement; however there is no policing of this regulation and it is widely ignored. Many of the older respondents to the Customer Satisfaction Survey stated that they needed to use a hosepipe as they were not physically able to carry heavy cans of water to and from their plots.

Water consumption is metered but, although there was some support in the 2003 Customer Satisfaction Survey for a proposed surcharge to allow hosepipe usage, there will only be effective water conservation if there is:

- Effective policing (e.g. through local association enforcement)
- Payment according to use
- Adoption of measures to conserve water (e.g. modifying the existing water tanks)

A requirement under the Water Regulations of 1999 will require changes to the water supply and, depending how this is implemented (e.g. it could prevent hosepipes being fitted), this may affect consumption. This would form part of the capital investment required in infrastructure (see action plan).

4.1.9 Contaminated land

Another area of cost is the closure of certain sites. During the past two years tests have been carried out through the Council's Pollution Control Division on sites within the Borough, the results of which have shown levels of heavy metal contamination on some sites that makes any form of allotment gardening unsustainable. Part of Barnes Farm and the whole of Whitton Dene allotments have been or are imminent to close. The tenants concerned have been notified by the Council and have been offered alternative plots. Further tests on other sites will take place and may result in further closures for allotment cultivation, although to what extent is not yet known.

Although the cost of moving the tenants and making the sites safe will be borne through additional funding to the allotment budget, there is likely to be adverse publicity which may affect the drive to recruit to new tenants. Dealing with the future use of contaminated requires careful thought and consideration to its long term position. A suitable alternative use would be for Urban Forestry and community woodland projects, which offer a potentially acceptable use for contaminated land sites.

A multi-partner steering group has been established within Hounslow to drive forward a local/regional urban forestry initiative for vacant, unused and contaminated land sites. Such sites will undoubtedly offer social, economic and environmental benefits to local communities via large and small scale forestry plantations, short rotation coppices, and Bio fuel production. Capital finding to enable such projects to develop is currently being identified and secured.

4.1.10 Administration of lettings

Since August 2000, the CIP Lettings Section has been using a software package called Colony to manage customer details, waiting lists and vacant plots. It is able to:

- Produce the latest increases/decreases in tenancies as a useful performance indicator
- Produce an effective audit trail showing all invoices, credit notes and reminder notices

The software is adequate for the task and there is no proposal to change this.

The current terms and conditions under which allotments are let have been in place for at least 15 years. A review of these terms has been carried out in consultation with the allotment societies (see Appendix 4.) It is hoped that this will give greater clarity for users and managing agents.

4.2 Community involvement

Aim: To engage the community and existing allotment societies in order to market and promote allotments and foster the creation of self-management groups

4.2.1 Customer consultation

Constructive and effective dialogue with allotment users is essential for good service provision. Meetings are held with representatives of the allotment societies twice a year to highlight issues and developments in the service and allow specific issues of concern regarding their sites to be identified.

A Customer Satisfaction Survey, issued every two years and last sent in October 2003 (see Appendix 3) asked all allotment tenants to gauge their satisfaction. Of 402 replies received the key findings were:

- 96% of the respondents considered allotments to be good value for money
- Some aspects of the service (repairs, maintenance of vacant plots) were thought to have at best remained the same but in some cases to have declined during the interim period

A questionnaire distributed to the Hounslow Resident's Panel in 2004 (see Appendix 5) addressed the wider community, including non-allotment holders. The key findings of this questionnaire were:

- The main improvements suggested by those with an allotment were better maintenance of the area (75%) and increased security (51%)
- The main changes suggested by those without an allotment to encourage them to have one were: more information about availability (24%), better security (16%) and better maintenance (15%)

Useful information has been gained through recent surveys, but this needs to be extended further to consult with non-users as well. Failure to address issues already identified in such surveys will impact negatively on the service.

4.2.2 Marketing and promotion

A good marketing campaign should link with other initiatives on health and education and promote a currently underused resource in some areas of the Borough, focusing on the benefits for health, value for money and the availability of plots. In addition the campaign should have some measurable targets such as:

- To increase tenancies across the Borough by 3% each year
- To increase customer retention
- To increase use by black and ethnic minority groups

In the multicultural community of Hounslow, many ethnic groups have a tradition of growing their own produce and there must be a potential for wider allotment use. By offering an opportunity to produce specialist fruit and vegetables, allotments could play a key role in sustaining the cultural cuisine of these culturally diverse communities.

Marketing the product will be pointless however, without investment to address and improve the current condition of allotment sites.

4.2.3 Self or Partial management schemes

The report “The Future of Allotments” compiled by the House of Commons Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs Committee stated *“There is little doubt that, when successfully implemented, self-management schemes ensure greater control of a site by allotment holders and tend to work for the benefit of the site.*

Devolved management schemes can benefit both the local authority and the allotment holders. The authority benefits from the reduced costs of administration and maintenance, whilst the allotment associations get a more responsive control over the day-to-day management of the site. This control may result in a number of other benefits including:

- Identification of repair needs
- Policing of water consumption
- Action groups to clear derelict plots and/or rubbish
- Local marketing of vacant plots
- Bulk purchase of materials and seeds
- Provide a discussion forum
- Offer good practice and foster new members

The willingness and enthusiasm for self-management is an important aspect of an allotment strategy. But it will not come free of charge. There will be costs to establish and foster these groups, to provide training and possibly some small incentives to the representative of each site for, for example, a discount on their tenancy or a retainer fee.

The strategy needs to recognise the costs involved to the authority in taking back responsibility for sites if a scheme fails.

4.2.4 The legal responsibilities and regulation of allotments

Although there are advantages to self-management there will be elements which continue to be managed strategically including:

- Management of sites where there is no self-management scheme in operation
- Management of complementary projects giving additional value to service.
- Management of surplus allotment land and explore possibilities of alternative revenue opportunities
- Legal responsibilities and regulation of allotments, including issues of water consumption, contaminated land, land ownership, byelaws and terms and conditions of lettings and insurance.

4.3 Developing opportunities for allotments

Aim: To increase tenancy and develop opportunities and partnerships for investment in allotment infrastructure and projects which makes best use of all allotment sites.

4.3.1 Allotments Officer Partnership Working

A dedicated officer is required to increase tenancy, develop the strategy and aid allotment groups and associated partners in delivering this strategy for the wider community benefit. The following sections will outline areas where increased value and benefits will be realised.

4.3.2 Increased Tenancy

The most obvious and satisfactory solution to the issues associated with vacant allotments would be to increase tenancy. This would require a marketing plan as outlined in 4.2.2.

4.3.3 Complementary projects

Central to this Allotment Strategy is an action plan that identifies partnerships with which it can form complementary projects. Hounslow's strategic documents, such as the Unitary Development Plan (UDP), recognise the value of allotment cultivation as an important leisure and recreational facility. In addition allotments relate to a number of other strategies and offer possibilities for complementary uses such as community gardens, wildlife and nature conservation gardens, sensory gardens, orchards and community woodlands.

4.3.4 Health opportunities

The cultivation of an allotment has proven health benefits, including the exercise that is undertaken in managing it and the consumption of the fruit and vegetables produced on it. A growing awareness of issues such as chemical residues in commercially produced vegetables and child obesity links with a diet of "junk food" have a partial remedy in the growing of one's own vegetables. An awareness campaign will be needed to demonstrate the link between such activities.

4.3.5 Economic opportunities

For families on low incomes an allotment can be a way of eating healthily using home grown produce that is cheaper than produce bought from the supermarket.

4.3.6 Educational opportunities

Research has shown that many children have no idea what many common fruits and vegetables look or taste like. A project initiated by the Environmental Strategy Unit in Hounslow four years ago has resulted in a number of schools adopting a plot on an allotment near to them enabling the children to see first hand how food is produced and the health benefits it could have. This project should be marketed once again to develop links and opportunities to use allotments for the national curriculum.

Allotments also offer opportunity for training through the New Deal scheme such as allotment working, boundary hedge planting and community woodland seed sowing.

4.3.6 Biodiversity and wildlife opportunities

Allotments can be important wildlife habitats. The security needs of allotment sites often means a secure, safe site for some of the more vulnerable and sensitive species of flora and fauna. The SUN project, an EU-LIFE funded initiative recently co-ordinated in Hounslow by CIP, worked with allotment holders to encourage wildlife friendly gardening. This project involved the local community in surveying and monitoring wildlife on allotments, sharing best practice techniques to enhance allotment plots for wildlife and undertaking innovative projects on vacant plots.

4.3.7 Alternative revenue opportunities

The action plan contained within this strategy identifies funding schemes for which allotments would be eligible. A number of charities and companies now offer funding to community groups and allotment associations to enable them to carry out projects and programmes for allotments. The criteria of some of these preclude local authorities or similar bodies from applying for these funds. In these cases a partnership between the authority and the allotment associations would need to be demonstrated in any bid to secure funding.

4.3.8 The management of surplus allotment land

Vacant plots still require repair, management and increased grass cutting and weed control with no rental income. However, there are other revenue opportunities to be explored including:

- Large areas of uncultivated allotment land could be used for alternative purposes. This would be especially useful on statutory sites where the Secretary of State's approval is needed for their disposal. For example:
 - i) The granting of grazing rights to replace the informal arrangements that occur in the Green Belt
 - ii) To offer space within allotment sites under the Heathrow Airport flight-path to companies for advertising purposes
 - iii) Urban forestry also offers the same potential for generating income streams from allotment sites, albeit in the longer term and only after initial capital investment

- Sale of sites where surplus capacity is proven is allowed under section 32 (2) of the Allotment Act of 1908 provided that proceeds from the sale of allotments can be used for acquiring, adapting or improving other allotments, and that any surplus remaining may be applied for any other purpose
- Developing partnerships with the local Probation Service for using Community Service Orders to carry out maintenance of allotments

5.0 Action Plan

This action plan directly addresses the main themes of the preceding chapter: resources; community involvement; and, developing opportunities for allotments.

The action plan's targets will, at the end of five years, provide a balanced budget and includes the possibility of continuing with a programme of proactive repairs and investment.

Initial actions focus on the repair of allotments and investigating the possibilities to fund a full time Allotment Officer for at least three years.

This post, when secured, will then facilitate and coordinate a range of actions to engage with the community and develop opportunities for allotments.

➤ Resources

Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Resources	Notes
Revenue Budget				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Monitor expenditure and Income 	Ongoing	Director of Parks and Open Spaces	Within budget	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore opportunities to reduce expenditure 	Ongoing	Team Leader Contracts	Within budget	
Allotment Officer				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify what other opportunities are available to fund a full time Allotment Officer for 3 years. 	April 2007	LBH Executive	Not yet identified	Executive to determine if this is a priority and make provision Full time officer would enable delivery of key Actions within Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Appoint full time Allotment Officer 	June 2007	LBH Executive	£120,000 to be sourced from new funding from the Council over three years	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Explore other mechanisms to manage allotments e.g. of self managed groups 	March 2007	Director of Parks and Open Spaces	Not yet identified	
Repairs to Infrastructure				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey sites to determine what repairs need to be made. Including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective fencing and gateways Accessible paths Signage 	September 2007	Allotments Officer	Not yet identified	Survey to water supply included as separate item
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Prioritise works, make bids for funding and implement. 		Allotments Officer	Not yet identified	Cost to be determined. Will require bid for capital funding or 106 funding

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Maintenance					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Control weeds on vacant plots 	Ongoing	Team Leader Contracts	Within budget		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Remove all identified hazards 	Ongoing	Team Leader Contracts	Subject to available funding	Some removal esp. asbestos will require additional funding from the council	
Water Consumption					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey sites to identify need and Implement requirements of the 1999 regulations 	September 2007	Allotments Officer	Not yet identified	Estimated expenditure of £1,000 per site required subject to further survey work	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Promote efficient water management. 	Ongoing from June 2007	Allotment Officer and self or partial management groups	Not yet identified	Subject to funding of Allotment officer and successful self or partial management groups.	
Contaminated Land					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Survey & analysis of allotment sites 	By March 2007	Pollution Control Unit	Within separate LBH budget		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notify affected plot holders & agree alternative plots 	March 2007	LBH officer	Within separate LBH budget		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify alternative use for allotment land 	From March 2007	Allotment Officer/ LBH officer	Within budget	Subject to funding of Allotment Officer	
Administration of Lettings					
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review pricing structure including discounts, Leisure Cards and non-Hounslow residents. 	June 2007	Allotment Officer	Not yet identified		

➤ **Community**

Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Resources	Notes
Customer Consultation				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue established consultation and engagement: Representatives meeting Bi-annual survey 	October 2007	Allotment Officer	Not yet identified	To consider if this group should have a more formal nature e.g. steering group for the Strategy
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Tackle issues raised in consultation: 	March 2008	Allotment Officer	Not yet identified	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Further surveys and engagement Investigate possibility of toilets for site Investigate possibility of secure storage on site Address issues of landscape quality Survey leavers to discover why they not renewed their tenancy. 	March 2011	Allotment Officer/ Self-management groups	Not yet identified	Subject to funding of Allotment Officer and successful self or partial management groups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Continue the programme of providing notice boards on sites. 	Ongoing	Allotment officer	Not yet identified	Estimated expenditure of £2,000 per site for two thirds of sites, subject to further survey work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Review of Allotment Strategy 	October 2010	Director Parks and Open Spaces/ LBH Officer	Within budget	

Marketing & Promotion				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a marketing strategy that will: • Identify community likely to use sites • Identify how privately owned land and allotments in adjacent authorities may affect the strategy • Develop outreach links to groups such as refugees, women, young people and the unemployed. • Identify and designate plots suitable for those with mobility difficulties • Ensure that some publicity material is available in main ethnic languages. • Instigate a poster campaign to advertise availability of allotments in libraries, parks, doctors' surgeries, etc • Link with other promotions by the council and other bodies e.g. PCT • Promote the benefits through websites and allotment associations • Encourage existing allotment holders to act as ambassadors 	March 2008	Allotment Officer/ Self or partial management groups	Not yet identified	Subject to funding of allotment officer and successful self-management groups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage new tenants by: • Providing starter packs • Rotovating new plots • Establishing a mentoring scheme • Reduced rate for high vacancy sites • Let ½ size plots as an option • Keeping waiting list up to date 	From June 2007	Allotment Officer/ Self or partial management groups	Not yet identified	Subject to funding of Allotment Officer and successful self-management groups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide an allotment practice guide 	September 2007	Allotment Officer	Not yet identified	Estimated expenditure £5,000

Self-management Schemes				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To continue to develop a pilot for self-management scheme with the Chiswick Horticultural Society 	June 2007	Allotment Officer	Not yet identified	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate the level of interest in self-management and the skills and expertise available within allotment sites If self or partial management not an option ensure a system of site reps Promote the benefits to encourage other associations Ensure allotment agreements and health and safety policies are in place Ensure all sites are managed with probity, equity and equality with records available for scrutiny. Consider local allotment users who could be responsible for the collection of rent inspections and liaison To join national allotment organisations and raise the profile of allotments Investigate incentives such as at cost service to prepare existing plots or skip for bulk clearances of rubbish 	March 2009	Allotment Officer	Not yet identified	Subject to funding of Allotment Officer and successful self-management groups.
Legal Responsibilities and Regulations				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Investigate options to increase provision in areas of waiting lists. e.g. to take advice of Head of Planning with regard to creating allotments as part of developments Plan action to follow closure of Heston Fairground Site and Green Lane 	March 2009	Allotment Officer	Not yet identified	

➤ **Developing Opportunities for Allotments**

Action	Timescale	Responsibility	Resources	Notes
Complementary Projects				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Seek out good practice from other local authorities and organisations and establish a network of contacts to enable a free flow of information between the societies and other parties. • Explore partnerships that value the use of allotments or provide an alternative use where the cultivation of allotments is not demanded or cannot be continued. For example: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure publicity campaign is extended to include doctor's surgeries • Support the Environmental Strategy Unit to encourage school use of allotments • Improve education and learning opportunities • Develop outreach links to new customers • To have an environmental management policy including reduced use of chemicals, improved waste management, encourage recycling, reduced pollution on allotments and use of sustainable or green technology in building and site design 	March 2009	Allotment Officer/ self or partial management groups	Not yet identified	Subject to funding of Allotment Officer and successful self-management groups.

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<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To improve Biodiversity and conservation: • Identify allotment areas of wildlife value • Prepare biodiversity action plans for larger site • Improve the range of habitats if practical • Replacement of fences with hedgerows where possible 				
Alternative Revenue Opportunities				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To explore opportunities for charitable or other funding to support allotment use 	March 2009	Allotment Officer/ Self-management groups	Not yet identified	Subject to funding of Allotment Officer and successful self - management groups.
Management of Surplus Allotment Land				
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To examine all sites with over 50% vacancies or where 2ha (5 acres) of allotment land is unused and investigate: • Ascertain demand and other allotment provision within the area. • Marketing possibilities to increase tenure. • Other possible uses for site. 	March 2009	Allotment Officer/ Self - management groups	Not yet identified	Subject to funding of Allotment Officer and successful self-management groups.

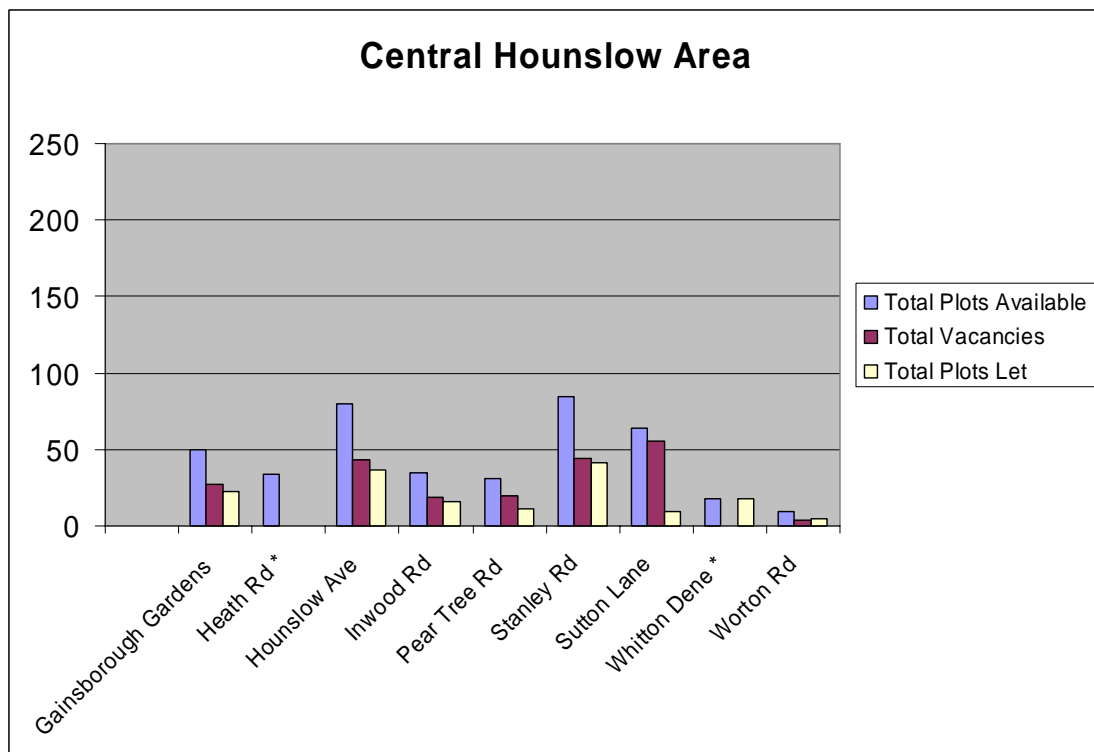
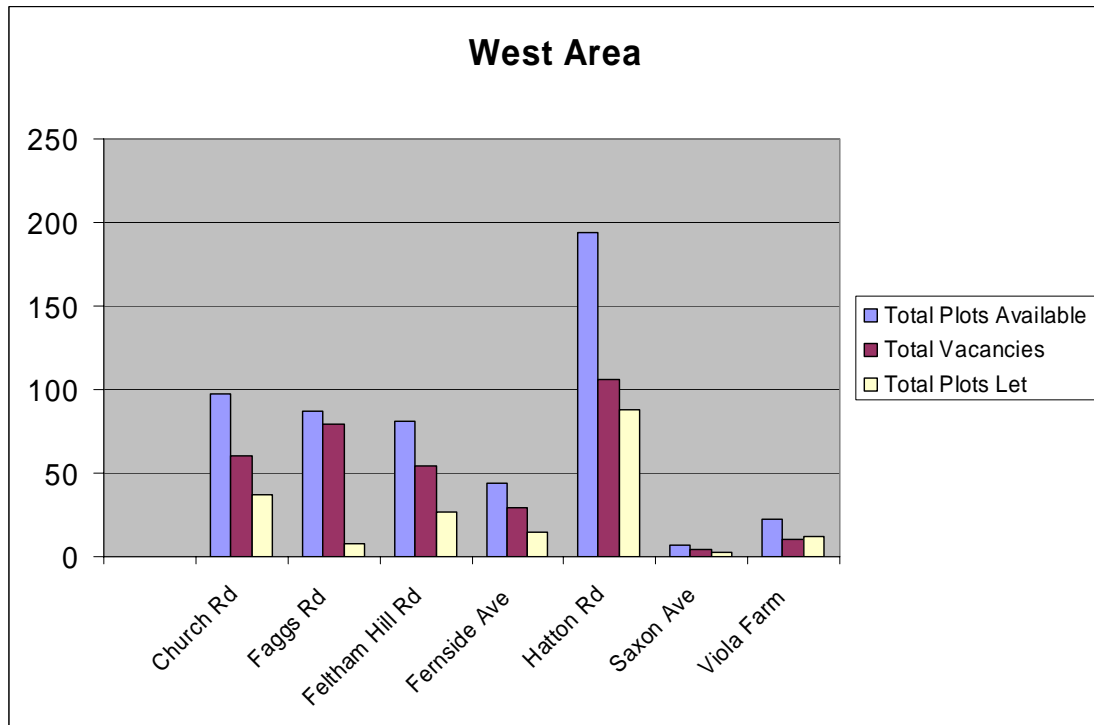
Appendix 1: List of allotment sites in Hounslow

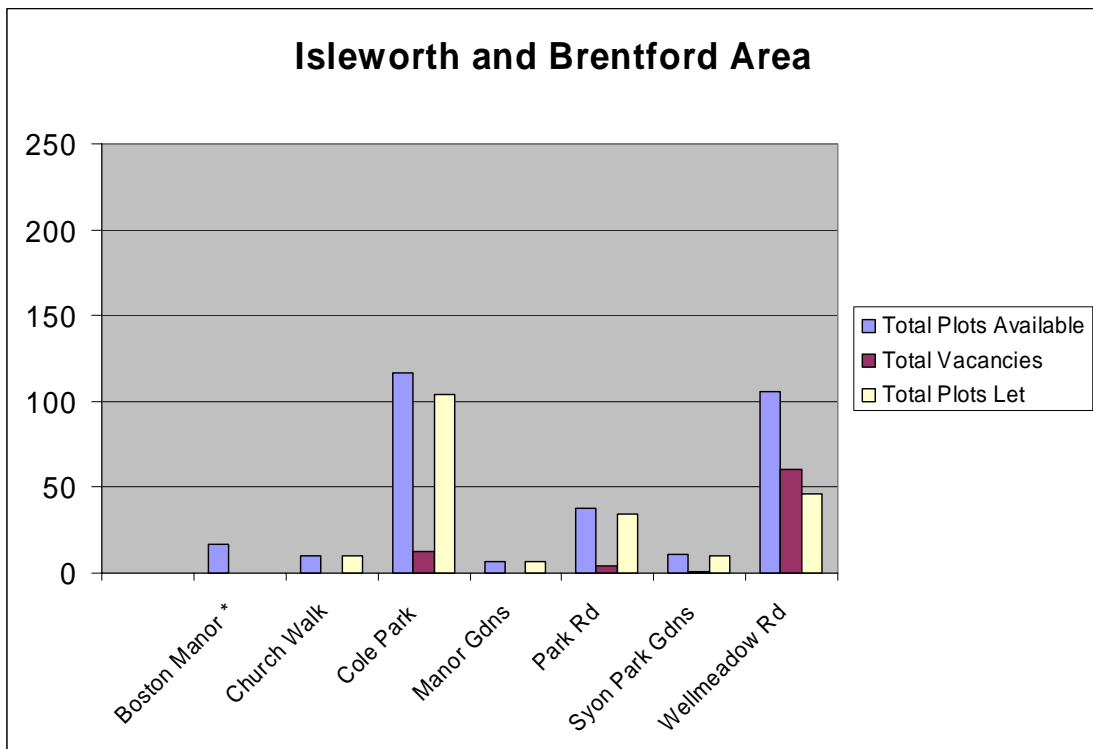
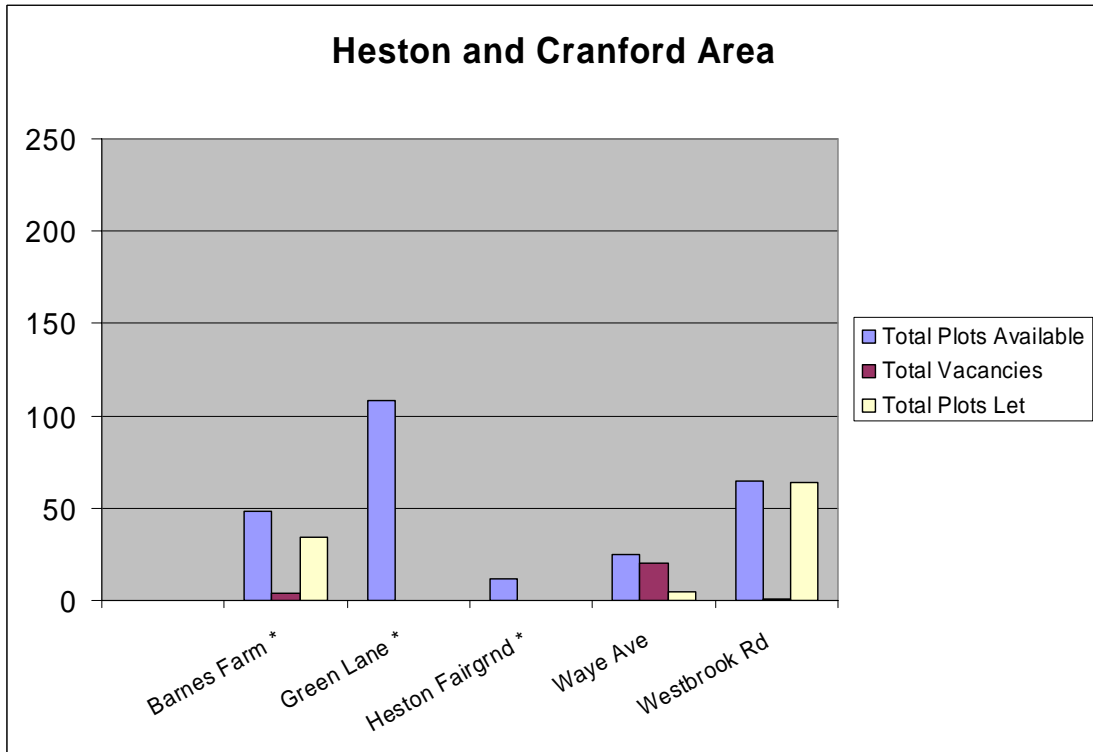
NUMBER	COMMITTEE	SITE	AREA (ha)	STATUS
1	West	Church Rd	5.03	Statutory
2	West	Faggs Rd	3.57	Statutory
3	West	Feltham Hill Rd Aka Snakey Lane	2.23	Statutory
4	West	Fernside Ave	1.16	Statutory
5	West	Hatton Rd	5.78	Statutory
6	West	Saxon Ave	0.15	Non-statutory
7	West	Viola Farm	0.44	Statutory
	TOTAL		18.36	
8	South Central	Gainsborough Gardens	1.28	Statutory
9	South Central	Heath Rd *	0.92	Statutory
10	South Central	Hounslow Ave	2.45	Statutory
11	South Central	Inwood Rd	1.07	Statutory
12	South Central	Pear Tree Rd	0.81	Statutory
13	South Central	Stanley Rd	2.51	Statutory
14	South Central	Sutton Lane	1.96	Statutory
15	South Central	Whitton Dene *	0.54	Non-statutory
16	South Central	Worton Rd	0.19	Non-statutory
	TOTAL		11.73	
17	North Central	Barnes Farm *	1.41	Statutory
18	North Central	Green Lane *	3.10	Statutory
19	North Central	Heston Fairgrnd *	0.29	Non-statutory
20	North Central	Waye Ave	2.60	Non-statutory
21	North Central	Westbrook Rd	1.98	Statutory
	TOTAL		9.38	
22	Islewth/Brtd	Boston Manor *	0.36	Non-statutory
23	Islewth/Brtd	Church Walk	0.56	Non-statutory
24	Islewth/Brtd	Cole Park	4.22	Statutory
25	Islewth/Brtd	Park Rd	1.17	Non-statutory
26	Islewth/Brtd	Syon Park Gdns	0.36	Non-statutory
27	Islewth/Brtd	Wellmeadow Rd	2.94	Statutory
	TOTAL		9.61	
28	Chiswick	Burial Ground	1.91	Non-statutory
29	Chiswick	Chertsey Rd	2.18	Statutory
30	Chiswick	Dukes Meadows	2.95	Non-statutory
31	Chiswick	Manor Gdns	0.20	Non-statutory
32	Chiswick	Staveley Rd	0.92	Statutory
33	Chiswick	Thames Rd	0.48	Non-statutory
34	Chiswick	The Promenade	2.90	Non-statutory
	TOTAL		11.54	
	GRAND TOTAL		60.62	

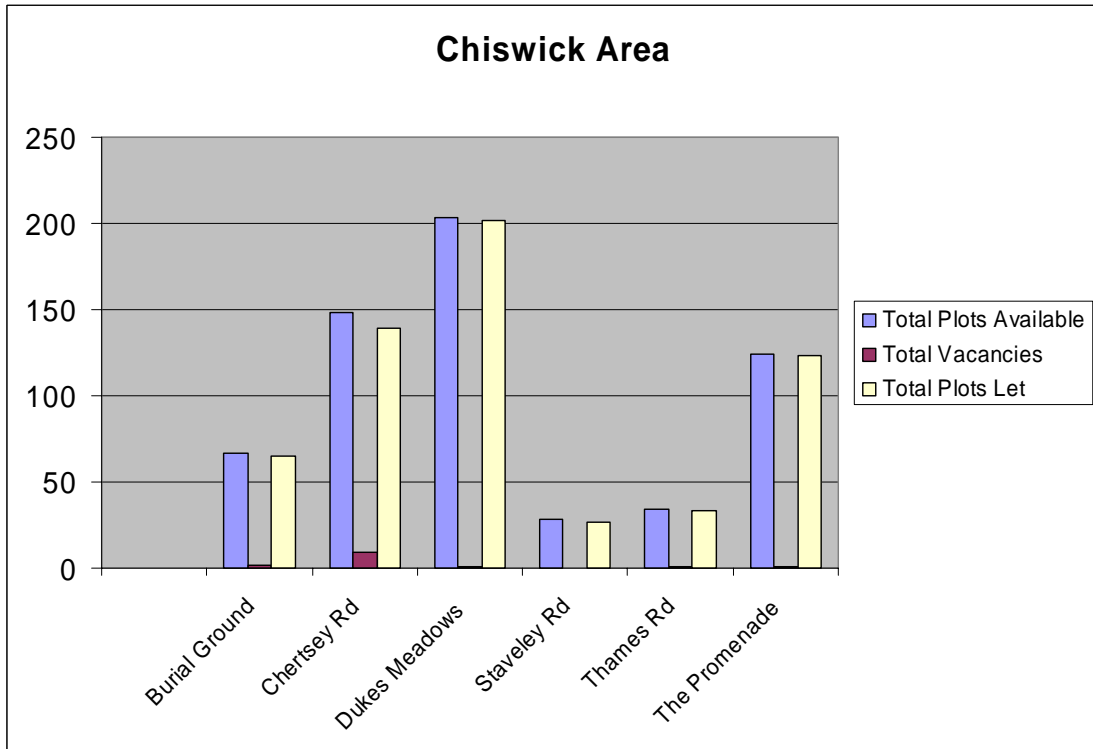
Note:

*These sites are closed/due to close, either due to land contamination or redevelopment.

Appendix 2: Provision of allotments in the Borough by plots/vacancies







Appendix 3: Customer Satisfaction Survey

HOUNSLOW ALLOTMENT SURVEY

Two years ago CIP's Parks Development Section undertook our first allotment survey in Hounslow as part of a continued drive to improve the service to meet tenants needs. The results were fed back to representatives from the various sites at one of our liaison meetings and proved a useful guide to targeting repair and maintenance works on sites. At that time and as part of the Allotment Strategy, due out for consultation this autumn, it was proposed to send out questionnaires every two years to gauge progress in the service.

All completed questionnaires that have the respondents name and address on them will be put into a draw and one lucky plot holder will receive their allotment **rent-free for one year**. Please send completed forms to the address at the end. **All information will be treated as confidential.**

ABOUT YOUR ALLOTMENT

ALLOTMENT SITE.....

- 1) How many years have you rented an allotment in Hounslow? ()
 - 2) How far do you live from your allotment?
Less than 0.5 mile ()
Between 0.5-1.0 mile ()
More than 1.0 mile () if more than 1.0 mile – how far? ()
 - 3) How do you travel to your allotment?
On foot () By bus ()
By car () By cycle ()
Other () please specify.....
 - 4) How often do you visit your allotment?
Every Day () 2-4 times per month ()
3 or more times per week () 1 time per month ()
1 time per year ()
 - 5) Approximately how long do you stay at each visit?
Less than 1 hour () Half a day (4hrs) ()
1-3 hrs () Whole day (>4 hrs) ()
 - 6) Do you compost green waste on your plot?
Yes () No ()
 - 7) Do you use pesticides/herbicides on your plot?
Yes () No ()
 - 8) Water conservation is becoming an important issue. Would you
a) support a total, enforceable hosepipe ban Yes () No ()
b) be prepared to pay a surcharge/ increased allotment fee to use a hosepipe
Yes () No ()
- Do you have any comments/ suggestions that we may consider on this Issue?.....
- 9) DO you know if your site is represented at liaison meetings with CIP?

Yes () No () Don't know ()
 If no, would you be prepared to represent your site? Yes () No ()

10) Do you know if your site is part of a local horticultural/allotment association?
 Yes () No () Don't know ()

ABOUT THE SERVICE

11) Given the relatively small budget for the allotment service, how important do you consider the following improvements to be on your site? *Please number boxes 1-9, with 1 being the most important, 9 the least*

Security fencing/gates	()	Promotion/advertising	()
Water supply	()	Footpath improvements	()
Rubbish clearance	()	Composting toilet	()
Clearing vacant plots	()	Communal composting	()
Notice boards	()		

12) Do you consider that the following allotment services have during the last 2 years got

	BETTER	WORSE	SAME
Response to enquiries	()	()	()
Response to phone calls	()	()	()
Response to letters	()	()	()
Response to onsite repairs	()	()	()
Maintenance of vacant plots	()	()	()

13) Do you consider the provision of allotments to be good value?
 Yes () No ()

14) Do you use the Leisure Card **solely** to rent an allotment?
 Yes () No () Don't have a card ()

ABOUT YOU

15) gender Male () Female ()

16) Age Under 25 () 26-45 () 46-65 () over 65 ()

17) Are you?

In full time employment	()	looking after home/family	()
In part time employment	()	student/training	()
Self employed	()	unemployed	()
Retired	()		

18) How would you describe you ethnic origin?

White British	()	White Irish	()	White other	()
Mixed white + black Caribbean	()	Mixed white + black African	()		
Mixed white + Asian	()	Mixed other	()		
Asian Indian	()	Asian Pakistani	()	Asian Bangladeshi	()
Black Caribbean	()	Black African	()		
Chinese	()	Other	()	Not given	()

19) Are you registered disabled? Yes () No ()

20) Name and address (optional – but we need this information if you wish to be entered in the prize draw). This information will remain confidential and no reference will be made to individuals when reporting results of the survey.

.....
.....
.....
.....

Please return completed forms to:

Mrs P. Thankraj
Allotment Lettings Section
Isleworth Recreation Centre
Twickenham Road
Isleworth
Middlesex
TW7 7EU

Appendix 4: General Conditions for the Cultivation of Allotments

1. Cultivation

- 1.1 Allotments must be kept in a good state of cultivation and fertility, and in good condition. Non cultivation will result in termination of the tenancy.
- 1.2 In the case of non-cultivation due to ill health, a 3 month period of grace will be allowed. Each case will be reviewed on its merits.
- 1.3 Trees or shrubs growing on or near the site boundary must not be cut or pruned without permission from the Council. . Soil, gravel, sand or clay must not be removed from the allotment site.
- 1.4 Only fruit trees on a dwarf stock can be planted subject to permission from the Council. If permission is granted they must be planted away from paths, must not be allowed to grow over 2.5m tall, not allowed to overshadow other plots and be removed when the tenant leaves.
- 1.5 Shrubs must be kept under control and not cover more than 25% of the area of the plot. They must not overshadow other plots or encroach over paths.
- 1.6 Fruit bushes must be kept under control and not allowed to encroach over paths.
- 1.7 Boundary hedges forming part of an allotment or across an adjacent path must be properly cut and trimmed.
- 1.8 Wild flowers and areas informally cultivated for wildlife must not exceed 25% of the plot.
- 1.9 Invasive plants such as bamboo must not be planted.
- 1.10. Soil, ash and any other material likely to be contaminated must not be brought onto the allotments.

2. Water Supply, hoses, bonfires, barbeques, carpets and rubbish.

- 2.1 No connections or alterations can be made to the water supply (including pipes, taps and tanks) on the allotment site.
- 2.2 Hosepipes are not allowed.
- 2.3 Bonfires are not allowed. (Hounslow's Smoke Control Orders)
- 2.4 Barbeques are only permitted if no nuisance is caused to nearby tenants and residents, and must not be left unattended.
- 2.5 Carpets/underlay can only be used for a limited period (six months) and must be removed from the site by the tenant.
- 2.6 Compost must be stored in properly constructed, covered containers or well maintained heaps.
- 2.7 Rubbish (including tyres, industrial or building waste and household articles) must not be brought onto the allotment site. If the Council has to clear rubbish from a plot, the tenant responsible will be re-charged for the cost of removal.

3. Dogs, animals and bees

- 3.1 Dogs must not be brought onto the allotment site unless kept on a lead at all times and under proper control. Owners must abide by dog fouling byelaws.
- 3.2 Animals or livestock must not be kept on site, with the exception of hens or rabbits and only with permission of the Council.
- 3.3 The space for keeping poultry must not exceed 25% of the plot.
- 3.4 Bee keeping can only be permitted with authorization from the Council.

4. Sheds, greenhouses, structures, paths and plot markers.

- 4.1 No buildings or structures can be erected by the tenant on the plot other than sheds, greenhouses and fruit cages. All structures must be removed when the tenant leaves. Costs for removal to be borne by the tenant.

- 4.2 Sheds, greenhouses and polytunnels can only be erected after permission has been given by the Council. If permission is granted, they must be kept within the area dimension specified by the Council at the time. (currently 1.8m x 1.2m x 2m/6 x 6 x 6.5ft for sheds and 1.8m x 2.4m x 2m/6 x 8 x 6.5ft for greenhouses/polytunnels).
- 4.3 All paths, including main paths, must be kept clear of obstructions at all times and not be encroached upon. Paths must be reduced by plot extensions.
- 4.4 Paths between allotments must be at least 60cm/2ft wide and the adjacent tenants are responsible for keeping the nearest half to their plot in good order.
- 4.5 Enclosing of plots with fences is not permitted and the use of barbed wire is forbidden anywhere on the site.
- 4.6 Tenants are responsible for ensuring that the number of their plot remains clearly displayed.

5. Security and safety

- 5.1 Tenants are responsible for locking the site gate on entry and exit.
- 5.2 Site keys must be returned on termination of the tenancy.
- 5.3 Access to the site must only be gained by an authorised entrance, and tenants must not make any other means of entrance or exit.
- 5.4 Tenants are responsible for ensuring that no potentially dangerous articles are left on the allotment. All broken glass must be removed from the site.
- 5.5 Tenants must comply with legal restrictions and follow the manufacturers' instructions when applying herbicides/insecticides/fungicides.
- 5.6 Tenants must not use or store any poisonous materials/substances on the allotment for rodent control. The Council must be notified of rodent or other pest infestation to arrange suitable methods of control.

6 Further restrictions

- 6.1 Tenants must use allotments for their own personal purpose and must not carry out any business or sell produce from their allotments.
- 6.2 No advertisement or display can be erected on or near the allotment site for commercial gain.
- 6.3 Tenants, or any person accompanied by the tenant, are not permitted to reside on the allotment overnight.
- 6.4 Only the tenant or the person authorised or accompanied by the tenant is allowed on the site.
- 6.5 Sub-letting is not permitted. The Council, where appropriate, must authorise temporary cover in case of illness.
- 6.6 Sharing a plot will be permitted with permission of the Council or the managing association. The lettings register will be modified to reflect this change.
- 6.7 Tenants found taking produce, plants or other items from a plot without permission of the tenant of the plot concerned will automatically have their tenancy agreement terminated.
- 6.8 Tenants must not cause any undue annoyance or disturbance to other tenants or residents of houses adjoining the site. Any one committing acts of anti-social behavior may have their tenancy terminated.
- 6.9 Disputes between tenants should be resolved locally where possible. As a last resort disputes should be referred to the Council (or where the site is managed by an Association, to that Association first, but subject to the right of appeal to the Council). The decision of the Council will be binding on all the tenants involved.
- 6.10 Ponds are not allowed unless prior permission has been given by the Council.
- 6.11 Children must be accompanied at all times by an adult and not allowed to go onto adjacent plots.

7. General

- 7.1 Any officer of the Council or any person appointed by the Council must be permitted to enter the allotment site for inspection purposes.
- 7.2 The Council is not liable for any loss (including fire, accident, theft, flooding or damage of any tools or contents) of sheds and greenhouses.
- 7.3 Any special condition that the Council consider necessary to preserve the allotment garden from deterioration must be observed and carried out.
- 7.4 The Council reserves the right to revise, delete or add to the Conditions at any time.

Revised 30/3/05.

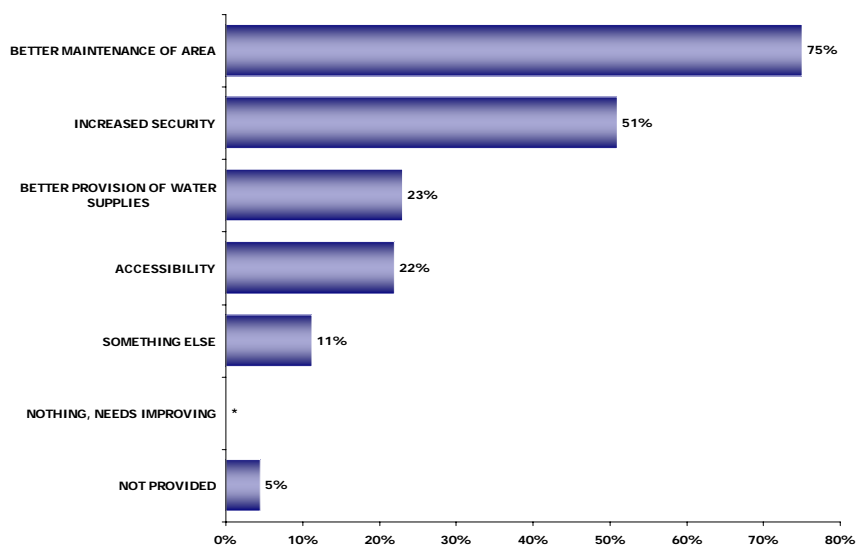
Appendix 5: Resident's Panel Survey March 2004

Three percent of the panel members currently have an allotment. With a base size this low analysis of owners by key subgroups is difficult however it is worth noting that this includes 3% of panel members of working age and 3% of non-working age.

Those with an allotment were asked what improvements they would like to see. The main improvements suggested were better maintenance of the area (75%) and increased security (51%).

Figure 16

IMPROVEMENTS RESPONDENT WOULD LIKE TO SEE MADE TO THEIR ALLOTMENT / ALLOTMENT AREA (RESPONDENTS WHO HAVE AN ALLOTMENT)



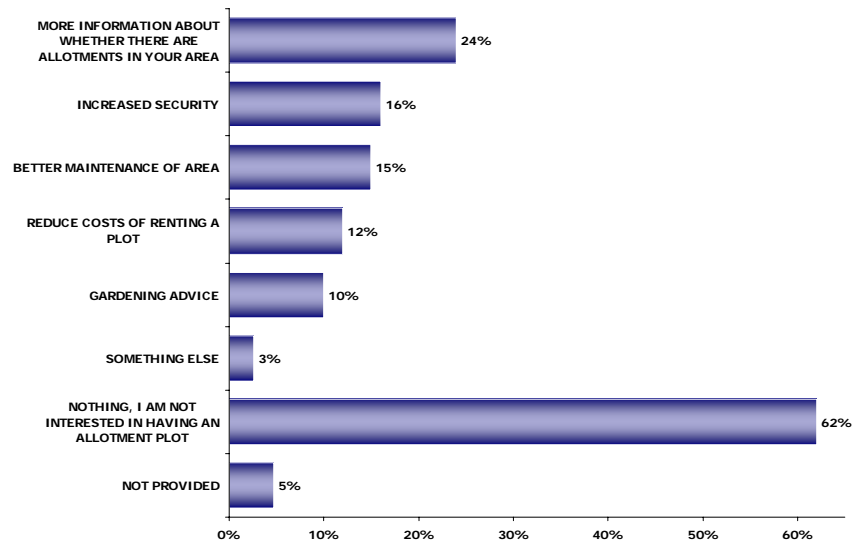
SAMPLE BASE = 31
* DENOTES ALL FIGURES LESS THAN 0.5%

Those without an allotment were asked what would encourage them to take a plot on. The results suggest that there is potential for increasing use of allotment plots with one in three panel members suggesting changes which encourage them to take on a plot.

One in four panel members (24%) said that more information about whether there are allotments in their area would encourage them to take on an allotment. This was followed by increased security (16%) and better maintenance of the area (15%).

Figure 17

WHICH, IF ANY, OF THE FOLLOWING WOULD ENCOURAGE YOU TO TAKE AN ALLOTMENT PLOT ON? (RESPONDENTS WHO DO NOT HAVE AN ALLOTMENT)



SAMPLE BASE = 956

Glossary

Plot an area of land for cultivation. A standard full size plot is 10 rods or 350 sq. m.

Infrastructure The fabric of the allotment apart from the plots themselves: signs, fences, gates, paths and water supply.