

1. What are the source documents / history of the 0.52 ha/1000 population number? Does it date back to the Thorpe report recommendations for Allotments (1969)? Any relevant document links would be appreciated.

The figure of 0.52ha/1000 population originates from Volume 1: A Strategic Open Space Assessment, an evidence report completed for Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) by Atkins in April 2005. The section of this report relating to allotments has been reproduced in full at the end of this note. The provenience of this figure is unclear outside of the fact that has been sourced from for the document.

It is unclear whether the figure relates to the Thorpe report (1969) which recommended a minimum standard allotment provision of 0.2 hectares (0.5 acres) per 1,000 population.

2. Do you have any evidence that the council has been following TB08 with regard to new allotment provision since its inception (2012?) for all new development, since this policy (specifically 0.52ha Allotments / 1000 population) was created?

Information on planning applications is available via the online portal. Applications can be searched by address and via a map. A link to where this can be accessed is below.

<https://www.wokingham.gov.uk/planning/>

Information on the application of Policy TB08 can be found within the legal agreements of relevant applications, and via subsequent delivery of new allotments.

Examples of new allotments which have been delivered include:

- Kentwood Farm East Phase 1 – Opened 2019 - Mulberry Grove Allotments – 0.31ha
- Keephatch Beech – Opened 2021 - Binfield Road Allotments – 0.35ha
- Montague Park – Opening spring 2022 – 0.365ha

Additionally, the following allotment was relocated to a new larger site by the council

- Old Forest Road – Opened 2018

Further allotments have been secured or will be delivered as part of planned developments.

8. ALLOTMENT NEEDS

INTRODUCTION

- 8.1 The role of allotments is in a period of transition and their value is undergoing reappraisal. Traditionally allotments were developed within urban areas from the latter half of the C19th onwards to provide the urban poor access to land to grow their own fruit and vegetables. The spread of allotments was linked to development of high density housing without gardens. Growth of allotments intensified once again during the first and second world wars when they were used to supplement national food production.
- 8.2 Since 1945, provision of allotments nationally has declined due to housing developments which include larger gardens, although there was a brief resurgence in the 1970s following the Thorpe Inquiry on the future of allotments and subsequent initiatives to reinvent allotments as communal 'leisure gardens'.
- 8.3 More recently interest in allotments has increased due to public awareness of 'green' issues and concerns over links between food and health. Modern housing developments are also being developed with smaller garden sizes which may stimulate demand for community gardens and allotments. Demographic changes including a larger number of older, but relatively healthy individuals could also stimulate demand for allotment plots as allotment participation is highest amongst the over 50s.
- 8.4 Within the policy arena, the contribution of allotments to urban regeneration, sustainable development and quality of life is being increasingly recognised. Benefits of allotments include:
- Providing access to affordable fresh vegetables, physical exercise and social activity;
 - Localised food production brings environmental benefits of reducing use of energy and materials for processing, packaging and distributing food. Allotments also perform a role in recycling of green waste;

Therapeutic value in promoting good physical and mental health. Gardening is identified as one of the Health Education Council's recommended forms of exercise for the over 50s;

- Allotments are an important component of urban green space and provide a green lung within urban environments;
- Cultivated and untended plots contribute towards maintaining biodiversity particularly where plots are maintained using organic methods;
- Allotments have an important role to play in the implementation of plans for encouraging local sustainable development and community development. potential links exist with local schools, and with the mentally and physically ill and disabled; and
- Allotments have an important historical and cultural role in community heritage, values and identity.

POLICY CONTEXT

National Context

The Allotment Acts

8.5 The legal framework for Allotments has developed in a piecemeal fashion and is encapsulated within a number of Acts identified below.

Table 8.1 - Principal Allotments Legislation

| Act and Date | Relevance |
|--|---|
| Small Holdings and Allotments Act 1908 | Consolidated all previous legislation and laid down the basis for subsequent Acts. Placed duty on local authorities to provide sufficient allotments according to demand. Makes provision for local authorities to compulsorily purchase land to provide allotments. |
| Allotments Act 1922 | Limited the size of an individual allotment to one quarter of an acre and specified that they should mostly be used for growing fruit and vegetables. |
| Allotments Act 1925 | Required local authorities to recognise the need for allotments in any town planning development. Established 'statutory' allotments which a local authority could not sell or convert to other purposes without Ministerial consent. |
| Allotments Act 1950 | Made improved provisions for compensatory and tenants rights. Confined local authority's obligation to 'allotment gardens' only. |

8.6 For legal purposes there are two types of allotment. "Statutory Allotment" status refers to land of which the freehold or very long lease is vested in the allotments authority, and which was either originally purchased for allotments or subsequently appropriated for allotment use. Statutory allotments are afforded protection under section 8 of the Allotments Act 1925 which provides that the consent of the Secretary of States must be obtained for disposal of land by a local authority which they have appropriated for the use of allotments, if it is proposed to sell, appropriate or use that land for a use other than allotments.

8.7 Such consent may not be given unless the Secretary of State is satisfied that:

- The allotment in question is not necessary and is surplus to requirements;
- Adequate provision will be made for displaced plot holders, or that such provision is unnecessary or impracticable;
- The number of people on the waiting list has been taken into account; and
- The authority has actively promoted and publicised the availability of allotment sites and has consulted the National Society of Allotments and Leisure Gardeners.

8.8 Various parameters have been laid down through case law to assist in the definition of "adequate provision" and "not necessary" etc.

8.9 A "temporary allotment" is land rented by the authority but ultimately destined for some other use. Unlike local authority allotments, privately companies and institutions are not under any obligation to provide allotments. Neither temporary nor privately owned allotments are afforded protection under the various allotment Acts although they are subject to protection through planning legislation.

Planning Policy Guidance Note 17 – Sport Open Space and Recreation

8.10 The national planning framework relating to allotments is set out in PPG17 published in July 2002. This guidance identifies the role of informal open space including allotments as performing:

- The strategic function of defining and separating urban areas;
- Contributing towards urban quality and assisting urban regeneration;
- Promoting health and well being;

Acting as havens and habitats for flora and fauna; Being a

- community resource for social interaction; and A visual
- amenity function.

PPG17 also identifies the issues which Local Planning Authorities should take into account in considering allotment provision and circumstances when disposal may be appropriate.

The Future of Allotments

8.11 The Fifth Report of the Select Committee on Environment, Transport and Regional Affairs prepared a report entitled "The Future of Allotments" in 1998. The report made recommendations including:

- Consolidation of allotment legislation;
- Need for increased recognition of the multifunctional value of allotments;
- Need to plan for increased allotment demand. Improvements to quality of provision are required in order to convert latent demand into actual demand;
- Allotments should be integral to local authority leisure strategies and local agenda 21 initiatives;
- Local authorities should publish annually details of allotment provision;
- All local authorities should make clear the designation of sites as either statutory or temporary within Local Plans. Furthermore temporary sites should be identified with their final intended use along with expected date of change of use;
- With the exception of sites which are ultimately intended for use as cemeteries, the report recommends that any "temporary" site which has been in continuous use as allotments for thirty years or more be automatically re-designated as "statutory" subject to an appeal by a local authority;
- All local authorities examine the potential for self-management of their allotment sites.

Growing in the Community

8.12 Following the "Future of Allotments" report a best practice guide on management of allotments was produced by the Local Government Association, DETR, GLA and the Shell Better Britain Campaign in 2001. This guide is referred to further in this chapter.

Local Context

The Wokingham District Local Plan

8.13 The Deposit Draft of the Wokingham District Local Plan (August 2003) includes a policy which seeks to protect allotment sites from development (Policy WR28, August 2003).

8.14 The District Council recognise that allotments represent one of the most important recreational uses of open land in the District. The Local Plan states that allotments provide a valuable form of informal recreation, which the Council would not wish to see lost. It is

appreciated that allotment space has an amenity value, as it provides a contrast in the built environment. However, where it becomes apparent that allotments are not being used as a result of significant and permanent downturn in demand, then the Council will give consideration to the acceptability of alternative uses on existing allotment Land (Wokingham District Local Plan, 2003, p160).

8.15 A number of allotment sites are adjacent to, or form part of a wider framework of green spaces. At least 7 allotment sites are located within the setting of a Green Wedge or Park (Recreation Lane; Hartley Court Road; Aborfield Road; Pound Green; St James; Bulmershe and Pinewood). These allotments contribute to the physical and visual break between major residential areas in Wokingham.

Council Strategies

8.16 The District Council, Parish Councils, Town Councils; Private Trusts and voluntary allotment associations are responsible for managing and administering allotments.

8.17 A strategy for the management of all District and Parish / Town Council owned sites could identify several objectives for the allotment associations:

- To improve the marketing of the service to encourage greater use of sites;
- To review use of these sites and consider whether or not they could be put to alternative use, such as nature reserves managed by local wildlife societies;
- To consider alternative sites in areas of the District that are lacking in sites;
- To establish regular meetings and consultation with Allotment societies and interested organisations;
- To review grounds maintenance operations and available budget to ensure optimum maintenance standards are available at each Council managed site; and

To investigate the possibility of establishing demonstration plots.

8.18 There is no council strategy that reflects the multi-functional role that allotments play within the District and there is no plan which sets out how management of allotments links with other corporate strategies and objectives such as the promotion of healthy living and active recreation or how objectives will be prioritised, funded and implemented.

Plan for Countryside, Landscape and Nature Conservation

8.19 The Council's Plan for Countryside, Landscape and Nature Conservation (CLNC) sets the approach of how countryside, nature and agricultural needs may be met while improving quality and diversity. The Policy has the potential to affect the land use provision of allotment sites. Various wildlife diversification strategies have been set in place on some allotment sites. Wildlife diversification strategies include hazel growing; the setting aside of allotment land for wildlife and sheep grazing (to control the grass growth).

ASSESSING ALLOTMENT NEEDS

8.20 The revised PPG17 states that in preparing development plans, local authorities should undertake an assessment of the likely demand for allotments and their existing allotment provision, and prepare policies which aim to meet the needs in their area.

8.21 There is no formal guidance on how allotment needs should be assessed, however the Local Government Association good practice guide 'Growing in the Community' identifies issues which should be considered. Local Authorities are duty bound to provide allotments for their residents if they consider there is demand, under section 23 of the 1908 Allotments Acts (as amended). The 1969 Thorpe Report recommended a minimum standard of allotment provision of 0.2 hectares (0.5 acres) per 1000 population. In the context of Wokingham this would equate to an area of 30ha. In 1996, the National Allotment survey identified an average provision in England of 15 plots per 1000 households. Wokingham compares favourably with this average providing 19.6 plots per 1000 households.

8.22 It will be important to ensure that local standards of provision reflect local circumstances of supply and demand. This assessment fulfils the requirements of the Revised PPG17 to provide a robust and defensible assessment of allotment needs accounting for different components of demand identified above.

ALLOTMENT SUPPLY

8.23 At present there are some 49ha of actively managed allotment land in Wokingham. There are currently 22 active allotment sites¹ within the District containing 1118 plots. All the sites are managed by the District and Parish / Town Councils together with voluntary allotment associations, the exceptions are Pound Green and Pearson Road that are privately managed. Table 8.2 summarises allotment supply and occupancy in the District.

8.24 Overall across the District some 1002 plots are currently occupied, this represents an occupancy rate of 89%. However, there are 16 sites which have occupancy levels of more than 90% and as such are at capacity. There are 116 vacant plots.

ANCILLARY FACILITIES

8.25 A range of facilities exist at allotment sites within the District, provision varies between sites.

8.26 The District Council is responsible for managing the majority of allotments within Wokingham. Involvement is limited to occasional mowing of paths between allotments,

¹ The Pinewood centre has been defined as a 'Neighbourhood Park' with Natural and Semi-Natural green space as its second open space type. However, a significant proportion of the site is designated for allotment use. The entire site is included in the allotment space analysis. In addition, Eustace Crescent has a secondary open space type defined under the 'Allotments, Community Gardens and Urban Farm' category, but, it is defined as such under the 'Community Garden' guise. Eustace Crescent has a primary open space type defined in the category of 'Amenity Green Space'.

maintenance and repair of boundary fencing and water supply, and clearance of vegetation and rubbish prior to an abandoned plot being brought back into commission.

8.27 Allotment associations play a major role in providing voluntary sector allotment management. At present 8 parish / town councils have voluntary allotment associations (Shinfield; Twyford; Henley; Wargrave; Wokingham Without) hence the allotment sites within them have a joint or separate management strategy. Sonning Parish Council together with the wider administrative boundary of Wokingham District Council do not have allotment associations (this is in stark contrast to Reading District Council which has a management obligation to the Bulmershe allotment site situated in Wokingham- East Reading Horticultural Society).

Table 8.2 - Allotment Supply and Capacity

| Site ID | Allotment Names | Size (Ha) | Total Plots | Total Occupied | % Occupied |
|---------|---|-----------|-------------|----------------|------------|
| 44 | St James Allotments | 0.174 | 8 | 7 | 87.5 |
| 67 | Latimer Road Allotments | 1.146 | 31 | 31 | 100.0 |
| 68 | Ormond Road Allotments | 1.405 | 116 | 113 | 97.4 |
| 106 | Greencroft Allotments | 2.217 | 70 | 64 | 91.4 |
| 116 | Allotment Site of Highwood South Bulmershe | 12.845 | 280 | 230 | 82.1 |
| 122 | Reading Road Allotment Site | 2.948 | 74 | 71 | 95.9 |
| 134 | Pinewood Centre | 14.000 | 53 | 53 | 100.0 |
| 163 | Glebe Gardens Allotments | 0.064 | 14 | 14 | 100.0 |
| 227 | Loddon Hall Road Allotments | 0.271 | 20 | 20 | 100.0 |
| 238 | Church Lane allotments | 0.686 | 9 | 8 | 88.9 |
| 242 | Millworth Lane Allotments | 1.222 | 37 | 37 | 100.0 |
| 253 | Pearson Road Allotments (Robert Palmer Almshouses) | 0.193 | 14 | 14 | 100.0 |
| 261 | Pound Green Allotments | 0.309 | 5 | 5 | 100.0 |
| 275 | Gipsy Lane Allotments (Wokingham District Council Allotment Site) | 1.070 | 63 | 63 | 100.0 |
| 296 | St Paul's Gate Allotment | 0.694 | 15 | 15 | 100.0 |
| 330 | Culver Lane Allotments | 1.469 | 73 | 73 | 100.0 |
| 337 | Allotment site Recreation Road | 2.491 | 70 | 49 | 70.0 |
| 344 | Hurst Road Allotments | 2.840 | 76 | 69 | 90.8 |
| 352 | Arborfield Allotment Site | 0.104 | 2 | 2 | 100.0 |
| 360 | Recreation Lane | 1.148 | 38 | 38 | 100.0 |
| 362 | Hartley Court Road | 0.901 | 20 | 1 | 5.0 |

| | | | | | |
|-------|-------------------|-------|------|------|------|
| 436 | Clares Green Road | 0.829 | 30 | 25 | 83.3 |
| Total | | 49.0 | 1118 | 1002 | 89.6 |

8.28 Overall there is significant scope for improvements in the quality of allotment sites through improving the attractiveness of communal areas and ensuring that selected sites are landscaped/ screened to minimise the visual impact of storage sheds and other unsightly allotment related structures. All of the larger sites should have adequate water supply and a communal area including toilets and a trading/storage area. The feasibility of realising such improvements will depend on attracting resources outside or within an allocated allotment budget.

DEMAND ASSESSMENT

8.29 In addition to manifest demand (i.e. the number of occupied allotments) there are also two forms of latent demand:

- Latent Suppressed Demand - comprises of individuals who would rent an allotment but are unable to do so and is indicated by existing allotment waiting lists. Figures are likely to fluctuate throughout the year with greatest demand in summer months.
- Latent Potential Demand - comprises of people who may rent an allotment now or in the future. Influences on potential demand include demographic characteristics, accessibility and availability of allotments, quality and standard of allotment management, public awareness and extent of allotment promotion, potential changes in demand resulting from diversification in allotment usage or initiatives to foster allotment cultivation.

8.30 The extent of unfulfilled demand needs to be considered in conjunction with the size and distribution of sites (see Figure 8.1). Although allotment sites exist in many parts of the District there are a number of settlements which do not offer allotment provision. The accessibility of allotment sites and allotment catchment areas are considered below.

Accessibility and Demand Catchments

Latent Potential Demand

8.31 In order to consider whether allotment provision is adequate it is necessary to analyse the accessibility of allotments within the District and demand catchments.

8.32 The open space hierarchy estimates that small open spaces under 2ha are likely to have a pedestrian catchment area of 400 metres and that most users will travel from within that area. However, the Residents' Survey suggests that people are prepared to travel further to reach an allotment. The Survey identified that 86% of users drove to their allotments and 71% of all journeys took about 5 minutes. It is likely that users

allotment users located within the principal settlements in the District are more likely to walk to allotments as there distribution of provision is more even compared with other parts of the District. Therefore we have used the 400m pedshed to indicate the effective catchment area of allotment sites. Outside of the principal settlements

where car travel predominates we have assumed a 5 minute car catchment area which equates to 2,500m.

8.33 Figure 8.1 illustrates 400m and 2500m catchment areas applicable to allotment sites. However, it cannot be concluded that there is sufficient need in the underserved areas for additional allotment sites from this information alone.

8.34 Previous studies have found that, although participation is highest amongst those who live in close proximity to their plot, the relationship between site size, occupancy, availability and catchment area indicates that some plot holders are able and prepared to travel to alternative sites where a plot is not available at their nearest site.

However, the extent to which local allotment demand can be satisfied outside of the immediate neighbourhood is limited. Many plot holders wish to be near to their plot for reasons of security and ease of access. Furthermore, given the age and socio-economic profile of existing and potential allotment holders, a significant proportion of plot holders are unlikely to have access to a car. Some residents are currently excluded from allotment gardening by the distribution and availability of vacant plots within the District.

8.35 At present parts of several wards are not well served by the existing distribution of allotment sites. Table 8.3 illustrates the extent of latent demand in least well served wards. The number of plots represents demand based upon an estimate of proportion of households lying outside of the 400m catchment of existing sites:

Table 8.3 - Estimated Allotment Needs Arising from Households Lying outside of Allotment Catchments

| Ward | Estimate of % Estimated outside of catchment | Estimated households No. of Households beyond 2001 | Households latent allotment demand (No. Plots) | |
|--------------------------|--|--|---|----|
| Arborfield | 60 | 715 | 429 | 8 |
| Barkham | 100 | 1208 | 1208 | 21 |
| Bulmershe and Whitegates | 30 | 3140 | 942 | 17 |
| Charvil | 0 | 1077 | 0 | 0 |
| Coronation | 75 | 2205 | 1654 | 29 |
| Emmbrook | 15 | 3040 | 456 | 8 |
| Evendons | 30 | 3306 | 992 | 17 |
| Finchampstead North | 100 | 2052 | 2052 | 36 |
| Finchampstead South | 100 | 2088 | 2088 | 37 |

| | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-----|--------------|--------------|------------|
| Hawkedon | 80 | 3734 | 2987 | 53 |
| Hillside | 45 | 3324 | 1496 | 26 |
| Hurst | 35 | 1084 | 379 | 7 |
| Loddon | 70 | 3536 | 2475 | 44 |
| Maiden Erlegh | 50 | 3263 | 1632 | 29 |
| Norreys | 80 | 3466 | 2773 | 49 |
| Remenham, Wargrave and Ruscombe | | | | |
| | 0 | 2251 | 0 | 0 |
| Shinfield North | 0 | 952 | 0 | 0 |
| Shinfield South | 0 | 1985 | 0 | 0 |
| Sonning | 0 | 1117 | 0 | 0 |
| South Lake | 0 | 2062 | 0 | 0 |
| Swallowfield | 50 | 1022 | 511 | 9 |
| Twyford | 0 | 2446 | 0 | 0 |
| Wescott | 20 | 2245 | 449 | 8 |
| Winnersh | 100 | 2950 | 2950 | 52 |
| Wokingham Without | 90 | 3005 | 2705 | 48 |
| TOTAL | | 57273 | 28177 | 584 |

8.36 Across the District it is estimated that the around 75% households within the District are not well served by the distribution of existing allotment sites. This equates to some 28,177 households based on current allotment gardening participation levels which are 17.6 plots per 1,000 households (assuming one plot per household). Assuming that plots holders will not travel beyond 400m to an allotment site, latent demand could exist for up to 584 plots if the distribution of allotment sites was improved.

8.37 Previous studies have shown that allotments may attract plot-holders from outside the local authority area. Within Wokingham most out of District plot holders are likely to live in areas just beyond the District boundary and may not have access to nearer provision within their own local authority area. It has been assumed that net cross boundary movements are neutral, given that the level of allotment demand in neighbouring authorities is not known.

Demographic Change

8.38 It is evident that the household population figures for Wokingham is expected to increase by 2016. The population of the District may increase by up to some 4,124 people (6538 households). Assuming one plot is rented per household and the allotment participation rate in Wokingham remains unchanged, it is estimated that there will be demand for up to 108 allotment plots between 2001 and 2016 due to

demographic change (see Table 8.4). Additional demand resulting from other factors is considered separately below.

Table 8.4 - Estimated Allotment Needs Arising from Demographic Change to 2016

| Year | 2001 | 2016 |
|--|----------|--------|
| Population Scenario | Baseline | |
| Population Estimate | 150229 | 154354 |
| Estimated No. Households | 57272 | 63810 |
| Estimated plot requirement (Assumes 17.4 plots per 1,000 households) | 17.4 | 17.4 |
| Additional Plots due to Population Increase | | 108 |

8.39 It is considered that this scale of demand could potentially be accommodated by the level of existing provision as there are some 116 vacant allotment plots at present. However, the distribution and accessibility of allotment sites within the District is likely to mean that a significant proportion of the additional demand for allotments will not be satisfied as the areas likely to experience the greatest increases in population are also those parts of the District where availability and accessibility to allotments is poorest.

8.40 To fulfil this need and existing latent demand, allotment land will need to be identified and brought forward for allotment use within those parts of the District underserved by existing provision. To summarise total latent demand amounts to between 584 and 692 plots (depending upon future population growth) and comprises:

- Suppressed demand □ Unknown (to be calculated from Council waiting list information);
- Net potential demand from areas underserved by existing provision □ 584 plots
- Demand associated with net household growth 2001-2016 □ Between no plots and 108 plots.

8.41 The average number of plots per ha at existing allotment sites within the District is around 22.82 plots per hectare. Based on these figures, Table 8.5 illustrates that it is

possible that 34.7ha of allotment land would need to be brought into use to meet existing deficiencies and needs associated with household growth within the District between 2001 and 2016. The wards which should be prioritised for the development of new allotment sites are identified Table 8.3 above (the greater the no. of plots the greater the deficiency). Wards which include areas of greatest open space need should also be prioritised for improvement as these areas have a high proportion of households who do not have access to a back garden.

Table 8.5 – Proposed Standard based on Total Land Need to 2016

| | No. Plots | Area (ha) Assumes 22.82 plots per ha |
|---|-----------|--|
| Under served areas | 584 | |
| Vacant Plots | -116 | |
| Demographic Change | 108 | |
| Marketing Initiatives (up to 10% increase on occupied plots) | 100 | |
| Needs arising from Under served areas (Vacant Plots, Demographic Change, Marketing Initiatives) | 676 | 29.6 |
| Existing Allotment area | | 49 |
| Total Need | | 78.6 |
| Standard/1000 | | 0.52 |

QUALITY AND MANAGEMENT

8.42 The quality, condition and management of allotments also influence potential demand. Allotments which are well maintained and have vacant plots which are available for use with little clearance of scrub and rubbish are likely to prove more attractive than overgrown plots.

8.43 At some sites it is unlikely that vacant plots will be taken up unless there are one or more plots which are cleared, rotated and are managed to enable cultivation with relative ease.

8.44 The condition and maintenance of facilities including fences, the water supply, toilets, communal huts, sheds and greenhouses, paths, and waste areas will also influence the attractiveness of allotment sites to potential plot holders, particularly if it is sought

to broaden demand and attract new users. Table 8.5 shows the condition of allotments in Wokingham.

Table 8.6 - Condition of Allotments

| Condition | No. of Allotments | % Total Allotments | Area (Ha) | % Area |
|-----------|-------------------|--------------------|-----------|--------|
| Good | 13 | 59.1 | 26.9 | 76.9 |
| Fair | 6 | 27.3 | 8.8 | 25.1 |
| Poor | 1 | 4.5 | 12.8 | 36.7 |
| Unknown | 2 | 9.1 | 0.5 | 1.4 |
| Total | 22 | 100 | 49.0 | 140 |

8.45 More than half of the allotment sites in Wokingham are considered to be of 'good' condition accounting for 26.9 hectares of allotment land. The survey identified 25.1% of sites as in a 'fair' condition which equates to a quarter of the total area occupied by allotments. One site occupying 12.8 hectares in area, was assessed as being in 'poor' condition. There were two sites which we were unable to access due to private access arrangements (a trust-fund site on Pearson Road, Wargrave- Robert Palmer Almshouse Trust Fund- and the Pound Green site in Grazeley).

Initiatives to Promote and Broaden Demand

8.46 The way in which plots are promoted and publicised also influences demand. There are various initiatives set in place from a voluntary and Parish Council level to promote the demand of allotment space within the District.

8.47 Winnersh Parish Council donates two plots gratuitously on the Reading Road allotment site. It is donated to a church community youth group as part of a healthy living and eating campaign.

8.48 The Wargrave allotment site on Recreation Road has an annual Harvest Festival that celebrates food and the offering of food to the less fortunate. The 'in-house' Tennant Association on Recreation Road are encouraged to produce 'allotment-grown' food for the annual event. Any publicity regarding the site is published in the 'Wargrave News', a local parish newspaper.

8.49 The Shinfield allotment association (Shinfield Allotment Holders and Gardeners Association - SAHGA) in collaboration with Shinfield Parish Council have set up an annual horticultural competition in order to motivate people to have the 'best plot'

or show evidence of having well grown produce. The Allotment Association and Annual Horticultural Event involve the following sites: Church Lane; Millworth Lane; Recreation Lane; Hartley Court Road; Clares Green Road. The SAHGA has actively set up a diversification strategy to broaden the demand of allotment space amongst the Shinfield allotment sites. The strategy includes the 'setting aside' of land for wildlife encouragement (two plots on Recreation Lane) and sheep grazing (Hartley Court Road). One of the sites in Shinfield (The Recreation Road site) also has a 'junior plot' strategy, where four plots are designated for local children who wish to grow their own produce.

8.50 The allotment site on Millworth Lane has a pepper-corn rate that is applicable to a local scout group. The scheme has been going on for seven years.

8.51 The Matson Drive allotment site, otherwise known as Greencroft Allotments in Henley-Upon-Thames, has its own allotment association who organise annual events themselves. Promotion is therefore strongly related to existing plot holders so as to stimulate demand within the locality.

8.52 Some allotment sites have a 'closed access' policy, because of formal access arrangements restricting wider-use (Pound Green, Grazeley, is only accessible through peoples back gardens); or non-council ownership (the Robert Palmer Almshouse allotments, Pearson Road). The two-plot allotment site on Aborfield Road has an independent 'closed access' association that separates it from the other allotment sites in Shinfield, therefore, despite being 'publicly' accessible to anybody wishing to go on the waiting list, it acts as a private site with a padlock policy.

8.53 The following sites rely on the Parish / Town Council websites/ leaflets; site Notice Boards, Parish Magazines and word-of-mouth to fulfil the gap between supply and demand: Culver Lane (Earley); Little Glebe (Sonning); Hurst Road (Twyford); Gipsy Lane, Latimer Road and St Paul's Gate (Wokingham), Church Lane; Hartley Court Road and Clares Green Road (all located in Shinfield); St James' Church (Twyford); Bulmershe (Reading Borough Council); and the Pinewood Centre (Wokingham Without).

8.54 In addition to the promotional initiatives mentioned above, the following channels could be used to promote and broaden demand for allotments:

- Diversifying use of allotments through promoting activities such as bee keeping, and horticulture (not for commercial purposes);
- Encouraging community plots or plot sharing and integrating allotments with other open space types (e.g. combining allotment provision with outdoor classrooms);
- Testing and encouraging demand by managing a number of demonstration plots at various locations;
- Developing links with voluntary sector organisations and community groups who may benefit from allotment gardening; and

- Improving assistance for new tenants and "aftercare" for existing tenants.

8.55 In addition specific groups likely to benefit from the health and economic benefits that may be derived from allotment gardening could also be targeted. Rent concessions are permitted by allotment law and are granted by many Local Authorities. Concessions could be promoted to additional target groups.

8.56 It is estimated that active promotion and marketing of allotments could lead to perhaps a 5-10% increase in the number of occupied plots within the District up to 2016 depending on the scale and success of initiatives. This would represent a take up of about 100 plots (between 55 and 100) at existing sites.

TOWARDS THE DEVELOPMENT OF AN ALLOTMENTS STRATEGY

8.57 The District Council has an opportunity to develop a coherent vision for allotments within Wokingham. This vision should recognise the multiple roles which allotments can play and the benefits of allotment gardening and be used as a basis to gather support and funding for improvements from other sources within the Council, external funding sources and relevant community and voluntary sector partners.

8.58 The vision should include an action plan which seeks to integrate allotment gardening within other strategies and programmes and identifies improvements to individual allotment sites and other projects and initiatives to foster participation in allotment gardening. It will be necessary to identify resources to implement projects including human resources to implement improvements.

8.59 The value of allotments as described earlier in this chapter includes their role as:

- Open space;
- Providing opportunities for informal recreation;
- A sustainable food source;
- A resource for health;
- A community resource;
- An educational tool;
- A resource for biodiversity; and
- A place for composting and the management of green waste.

8.60 At present not every allotment site within the District performs all of the above roles. All allotment sites do however form an important component of urban green space as defined in PPG 17.

8.61 Allotments also contribute towards the landscape character of the District by providing visual amenity in the form of relief from the built up area or by allowing views beyond the immediate area.

8.62 Allotment sites have some form of nature conservation value and can form part of Green Wedges or Sites of Nature Conservation Value. Sites not actively managed may have ecological value almost by default through lack of management.

8.63 Potential exists to increase the nature conservation value of some sites through identifying areas to develop as wildlife habitat, this may be appropriate at larger sites which have underutilised areas. At other sites, smaller areas could be enhanced with particular attention given to those allotments located within areas deficient in natural and semi-natural greenspace provision.

8.64 In addition to the functions outlined above, significant scope exists to develop active social and educational roles through links with schools and other community organisations. These roles can be encouraged through specific initiatives which integrate allotments within other strategies and programmes and fostering allotments within the wider community.

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Provision

8.65 There is currently provision for an additional 116 allotment holders within the District from vacant plots. Overall it is estimated that between 2001 and 2016 there will be demand for between no plots and 108 plots arising from demographic changes and 584 plots from areas underserved by existing provision. In addition, up to 100 plots at existing sites could be taken up through improvements to site management and initiatives to promote demand. Therefore, there is an estimated requirement for up to 676 plots or 29.6ha of allotment land (latent & future demand minus demand linked to improvements minus number of vacant plots) depending upon the success of marketing initiatives and the extent to which additional households are able to take up/access existing supply.

Distribution and Access

8.66 At present significant latent demand exists for allotments within certain parts of the District due to lack of accessibility. Suppressed demand is not known at present but if there is no significant waiting lists it could reflect the high proportion of residents with access to back gardens (refer to Figure 3.2).

8.67 Given that allotment sites do not have to be particularly large, allotment provision could be associated with new development in the District. Scope may exist within underserved areas to bring forward allotment land through diversification of existing open spaces such as playing fields and development of allotments on infill sites. Within other local authorities, school sites have proved good locations where there is sufficient space available as funding can be sought to develop allotments jointly as outdoor classrooms for curriculum use and as a community resource. Opportunities for bringing forward new allotment sites should be investigated within wards where there are the highest levels of latent demand and open space need.

8.68 At those allotment sites where there is unlikely to be demand even taking account of latent and potential demand then opportunities exist to diversify areas of underutilised plots or disused allotment land for other open space and nature conservation uses. If there is no existing or potential need for any other open space uses then it may be appropriate to consider other possible land uses.

Management and Resources

8.69 At present allotment provision is funded, owned and managed by the Local and associated Parish / Town Councils, both in and around Wokingham (Winnersh; Earley; Sonning; Henley Town Council; Shinfield; Twyford; Wokingham Without and Reading Borough Council). As the overall allotment provision is of good to fair quality (the exception of High Tree Drive allotment site), it is not urgent that additional funding is needed to upgrade their quality. However, additional funding would secure a more comprehensive management and maintenance strategy. This may be achieved by integrating the improvement of allotments within other initiatives relating to regeneration, neighbourhood renewal and Local Agenda 21 and bidding for external funding. Other ways of funding improvements to allotment sites are:

- Increased rents: the best value process provides an opportunity to compare allotment rents to those in surrounding areas and cost of other recreational and leisure activities provided by the Council. It will be important to consider the overall cost and the quality of the service provided and to consider whether service users wish to pay more for an improved service.
- Devolved management arrangements: used to cut the cost of allotment provision through passing day to day management of sites to plot holders. Best value provides an opportunity to consider possible options.

8.70 Several external funding sources exist which could be drawn upon to fund specific projects rather than ongoing management and allotment administration. These may include:

- Local Agenda 21 funds;
- SRB Budgets □ There is a possibility that these funds could be tapped for initiatives relating to allotments, subject to the initiative fulfilling the aims and objectives of the SRB strategy;

- National Lottery New Opportunities Fund;
- The SEED programme;
- The ENTRUST Landfill tax credit scheme;
- The Co-operative Group Community Divided;
- The Shell Better Britain Campaign; and
- Support in kind including B&Q Quest, BTCV, probation service.

PROPOSED ALLOTMENT STANDARD

Allotment Provision

Quantitative Component

8.71 To meet the needs of the District up to 2016 it is recommended that a standard of 0.52 ha of allotment land per 1,000 population is adopted. In order to meet this standard an area of up to 29.6ha would need to be brought forward up to 2016.

8.72 Proposals for new housing development should be accompanied by proposals to improve Allotment provision. The nature of such improvements should reflect the additional open space needs generated as a result of the proposed development but also take into consideration average garden sizes.

8.73 If the proposed development is located within an identified area deficient in access to allotment provision it will be necessary for additional land to be brought into use for this purpose. The developer will be required to make a contribution towards the provision of allotments. It may be appropriate for such provision to be incorporated within the curtilage of the development. Alternatively a contribution towards off-site provision may be appropriate.

8.74 If the proposed development is not located within an area which is deficient in access to allotment provision then consideration will be given to any deficiency in quality or value of existing allotment sites serving the development. The developer may be required to make a contribution towards the enhancement of existing provision.

8.75 The working paper on developer contributions will provide the rationale for calculating the contributions associated with individual housing proposals.

Accessibility Component

8.76 The following access standards are recommended:

- Within Principal settlements all households within the District should have access to an allotment garden within 400m of home;
- Outside of principal settlements all households should have access to an allotment garden within 2500m of home.

Qualitative Component

8.77 Allotment sites should be of adequate quality and support the needs of the local community. Allotment sites which under perform in terms of their value to the local community consistent with the criteria relating to the role of sites identified in Chapter 8 should be improved. Those sites identified within Chapter 10 should be prioritised for improvement.